

In brief

From Lucy to Language: The Archaeology of the Social Brain

In 2003, the British Academy announced a £1m research grant to explore how our social lives have influenced our evolutionary success and to redefine what it means to be human. The grant was awarded to From Lucy to Language – a proposal from a team of psychologists and archaeologists from the Universities of Liverpool and Southampton.

The project will, for the first time, bring together archaeologists, evolutionary psychologists, social anthropologists, sociologists and linguists to reconstruct our ancestors' social lives and behaviour from the archaeological evidence of bones and tools. New models developed for understanding primate behaviour can now be applied to the hard evidence of our ancestors to help us understand how our brains have enlarged three-fold since early hominid 'Lucy', four million years ago.

'This grant gives us an opportunity to understand whole new aspects of our ancestors' lifestyles,' said Professor Robin Dunbar, an evolutionary psychologist from the University of Liverpool, who is leading the project. 'What cognitive skills did we need to make and use tools, develop language or live in large social groups? How did our social life drive the enlargement of our brains? When did we develop recognizably human minds?'

The project aims to address current uncertainty about how five hominid species got whittled down to one species, and why we, rather than any of the others, survived. The research will shed light on our understanding of human ancestors in the same way that anthropology has helped us understand human cultures alive today.

'It will be like looking at the bones through a new pair of glasses. It's a big opportunity to find out how the human mind evolved, to recast our early ancestors,' said Professor Clive Gamble, one of the lead archaeologists on the project, from the University of Southampton. 'It's going to add a

whole new dimension to what the archaeological record can tell us. For example, remains of fire hearths can show us how we evolved to control fire, the size of the groups we gossiped with, and even how far our local networks stretched.'

This research may make us rethink the way we consider evolution an inevitable increase in complexity, from stone tools to computers, as our success is due to our social skills rather than our technological abilities. Understanding how the human mind is designed to cope with social solutions has implications for social policy, which might shed light on some of today's problems in society.

In announcing the award Lord Runciman, President of the British Academy said: 'I am delighted that the British Academy is able to bring together and support an outstanding team of archaeologists and psychologists, together with other contributors from across the range of disciplines which the Academy represents, to address the fundamental questions of what constitutes an authentically human mind.'

The grant represented the largest single funding commitment ever made by the Academy. It was selected from almost 100 entries to the Academy's Centenary Project Scheme, launched in 2002.

The Project Directors are Professor R.I.M. Dunbar FBA; Professor C.S. Gamble FBA and Professor J.A.J. Gowlett.

For further information on the project contact: rimd@liverpool.ac.uk

Project website: www.liv.ac.uk/www/evolpsyc/rimd.htm

Dictionary of Medieval Latin

In October 2003 the British Academy was honoured to be named as the recipient of a grant of £415,000 over three years from the Packard Humanities Institute for the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*. This project, based in the Faculty of Classics, University of Oxford, has long been supported by the British Academy and, more recently, by the Arts and Humanities

Research Board as well. This major research grant will enable work on the *Dictionary*, which has recently published the letter 'O', to progress at a much faster rate by paying for additional editorial staff to be employed.

Latin served for 1,000 years as the principal medium of writing in Britain, and the *Dictionary* is the indispensable guide to this usage from the sixth century to the sixteenth. Latin was as receptive as English was to the needs of everyday life (and to the needs of users often barely literate), and in charting these medieval developments the *Dictionary* is as important for cultural history as it is for linguistics. To confirmed dictionary browsers, even those with rusty Latin, it offers many delights.

papabilis, suitable as a pope, qualified for election as a pope.

a pope, papa . . . -is *Cath.A.*

papae [CL < *papa*], how amazing!

"est" aiunt [v. l. dixere] "papae divini numinis omen" *PRITH.* 43; "e" inquam, "quam citus es ad miserandos miseros!" *OSB. F. Danti.* 24; sed "el vehementer admiror quod scriptulum istud quo iam nepes regis quasi in domo Dedali intricatur legum conditores videntur providisse *FORTESCUE NLN* II 31.

papagabio [assoc. *vv.* papa + gabeo], parrot.

psittacus . . . vulgo ~io *NECKAM NR* I 36 (v. *gabeco* a); non culpae Sisyphum de curto brachio / . . . / sed pavo pecius vel papagabio *WALT. WIMB. Palpo* 185.

papagaia [assoc. *vv.* papa + jaia], parrot. **b** representation of parrot.

1427 de Eleisia Heyden' pro j papaga pi' xx s. *EEC* 487; **b** 1328 trin' tapacia crocei coloris pulverizata de papagais *Reg. Ebor.* 566; 1334 banarium crocei coloris cum papagais et rubris rossis *Invent.* *Arch.* 3 L111 281.

The project committee is chaired by Dr J.N. Adams FBA, of All Souls College, Oxford. The General Editor of the *Dictionary* is Dr David Howlett. Eight fascicules of the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* have been published to date, covering the letters A–O. Fascicule IX, covering P–Pel, is in press.

British Academy Book Prize 2003

The 2003 Book Prize was awarded at a ceremony on 28 November to Elizabeth Cowling, Reader in History of Art at Edinburgh University, for *Picasso: Style and Meaning*, published by Phaidon Press.

The other short-listed books were: *The Culture of Power and the Power*

of Culture by Timothy Blanning, (Oxford University Press); *Charles Darwin Volume II: The Power of Place* by Janet Browne, (Jonathan Cape); *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance* by John Butt (Cambridge University Press); *Marianne in Chains: In Search of German Occupation, 1940–1945* by Robert Gildea, (Pan MacMillan); *Power and Profit: The Merchant in Medieval Europe* by Peter Spufford (Thames and Hudson).

The judges for the 2003 British Academy Book Prize were Dame Gillian Beer FBA (Emeritus Professor of English, Cambridge University), Professor Stephen Bann FBA (Professor of History of Art, University of Bristol), Professor John Enderby, FRS (Vice-President, The Royal Society), Eva Hoffman (author), Professor Alan Ryan FBA (Warden of New College, Oxford) and Claire Tomalin (author).

Medals and Prizes 2004

The winners of the 2004 Medals and Prizes were announced at the AGM in July.

Derek Allen Prize (Musicology): Colin Timms, Peyton and Barber Professor of Music at the University of Birmingham.

Burkitt Medal for Biblical Studies: Morna D. Hooker, Fellow of Robinson College, Cambridge, and erstwhile Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity in Cambridge, 1976–98. Grahame Clark Medal (for the study of prehistoric archaeology): Barry Cunliffe CBE, FBA, Professor of European Archaeology, University of Oxford.

Rose Mary Crawshay Prizes (for female authors of historical or critical work relating to English Literature): Dr Maud Ellmann, for *Elizabeth Bowen: The Shadow Across the Page*; Dr Anne Stott, for *Hannah More: The First Victorian*.

Serena Medal (Italian studies): William Weaver, Professor of Literature at Bard College, New York, and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.