



The BERTRAND RUSSELL RESEARCH CENTRE NEWSLETTER

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CENTENARY SUCCESS. FILM ON TRACK

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The year just passed marked the centenary of one of Russell's most important contributions to philosophy, his theory of definite descriptions, which he published in 1905 in his famous paper, "On Denoting". In the paper Russell proposed a way of treating definite descriptions within the resources of what is now known as classical predicate logic without treating them as names. This may seem like an arcane topic, but the ramifications of Russell's theory of definite descriptions—in logic, philosophy of language, metaphysics and epistemology, even in the way it was thought philosophy ought to be conducted—were enormous. Some people see the paper as inaugurating analytic philosophy; others as the paper in which analytic philosophy came of age; and almost everyone would list it as one of the most important philosophy papers written in the twentieth century.

The centenary of Russell's paper is being widely

recognized: by no less than three special issues of journals, including *Mind*, where the paper was first published; by conferences in The Netherlands, Hungary and Italy; and by a new collection of articles on the theory. It was obvious that the Bertrand Russell Research Centre could not ignore it. Over five days last May, the Centre held a large and very successful conference on the theory. Forty-one papers were presented and around 100 people attended from at least fourteen countries: Canada, the US, the UK, Austria, Australia, Poland, Israel, France, Finland, Portugal, Italy, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands. One distinctive feature of our conference was that it dealt not only with Russell's theory of descriptions but also with the theory of objects put forward around the same time by the Austrian philosopher, Alexius Meinong. Meinong's theory of objects is often thought to have been refuted by Russell in "On Denoting", but, as the conference heard, vigorous defences can be put forward, and the theory of objects is far from finished. Bringing Meinongians and Russellians together at the conference allowed each side to learn more about the other.

The conference was made possible by financial support from McMaster University and Wilfred Laurier University and a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. We also had support from the Austrian Cultural Forum and the *Mind* Association to pay the expenses of some of our invited speakers from Austria and Britain, respectively. In organizing the conference, I was fortunate in having the assistance of Dale Jacquette, a prominent Meinong scholar at Pennsylvania State University. Without his help, the conference would not have been possible. Nor would it have been possible without the help of the staff at the Russell Research Centre, who gave up parts of their weekend to help out. Sheila Turcon volunteered to open the Russell Archives over the weekend. As a result, the Archives were open for most of the conference and had a steady stream of visitors throughout. A number of those attending the conference came with the purpose of doing serious research in the Archives, and some plan to return. It was particularly gratifying to see philosophers who, to my knowledge, had not previously undertaken archival work, nonetheless react with delight and enthusiasm to discovering the original documents. Now that the conference is over, Jacquette and I are editing some of the papers for a volume of proceedings.

At the same time as the “On Denoting” conference, the Bertrand Russell Society held their Annual Meeting at the Russell Centre. This was the second such meeting they had held at the Centre, the previous one being in 2001. The Society put on a reception on the opening night of the conference, to which the “Denoters” were generously invited, and their usual banquet on the Saturday night, which also was attended by many Denoters. Although I didn’t get a chance to see much of their conference, it was a pleasure to welcome them back and I hope they will come again soon.

A number of volumes of *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell* are nearing completion, notably Volume 21, edited by Michael Stevenson and Andrew Bone, which covers Russell’s political and social writings in the years 1935–38; and Volume 18, edited by Stephen Heathorn and William Bruneau, covering the years 1927–31. The former is dominated by Russell’s advocacy of pacifism in the face of the deteriorating international situation in the late 1930s; the latter covers the period during which Bertrand and Dora Russell ran their experimental school at Beacon Hill and includes many of Russell’s writings on education. Ken Blackwell continues to

work on two volumes covering Russell’s political and cultural writings in the late 1940s.

The Bertrand Russell Audio-Visual Project, a collaboration with Central Connecticut State University under the direction of David Blitz, has digitized approximately 12 gigabytes of sound material and 220 gigabytes of visual material, and is now entering the DVD-mastering phase of the project. Initially, a total of 18 DVDs will be produced: 13 featuring Russell being interviewed by Woodrow Wyatt, three of Russell being interviewed by Ralph Miliband, and two featuring a debate between Russell and Edward Teller, moderated by Edward R. Murrow. All DVDs will be made available to the Bertrand Russell Archives for research purposes. Redcanoe Productions’ film on Bertrand Russell is now well underway; an article on the trip to shoot footage in the UK appears elsewhere in this newsletter.

The collaboration with French logicians and philosophers of mathematics continues to gather momentum. It was aided by the “On Denoting” conference, which brought two of the French participants to McMaster for the first time. The collaboration has now been extended to include philosophers at the Université de Montréal, the Université de Québec à Montréal, and McGill University. Next June some of the Canadian participants will visit France for a conference at Université Blaise Pascal in Clermont-Ferrand and other events. One by-product of the collaboration has been the signing of an undergraduate student exchange agreement between Université Blaise Pascal and McMaster. Another related development is that the first full French translation of Russell’s *The Principles of Mathematics* is underway.

One area in which progress has been limited is the *Collected Letters* project. The problems there are entirely financial. We have still not been able to secure the funding necessary to put images of around 30,000 of Russell’s letters up on the web linked to their BRACERS entries. The Russell Centre operates on a shoestring, far less than is appropriate for a research centre that is responsible for such a large and important body of work as Russell’s. Never in the history of human scholarship, I am tempted to say, has such a large task been undertaken by so few with so little.

Nicholas Griffin

REDCANOE: FILMING IN U.K.

After months of planning, the crew from Redcanoe Productions set off for London on 22 May 2005 to begin shooting the UK portion of the long-anticipated television documentary, “The Three Passions of Bertrand Russell”. We were traveling with a relatively small crew consisting of executive producer and director David Wesley, co-director and cinematographer Will Pascoe, sound person Bob Rouse, and myself, producer Jennifer MacLennan. We boarded the Air Canada flight in Toronto with the understanding that Nicholas Griffin would be joining us in London as our resident Russell expert within a few days of our arrival.

Our shooting schedule was ambitious, considering we had only planned for a week in England and our trip would take us from London to Cornwall and back again with several stops in

between. We had scheduled interviews with Caroline Moorhead, Anthony Grayling, Alan Ryan, Vivienne Westwood, and Katharine Tait at the Russell family home, Carn Voel. We had also arranged to film at Pembroke Lodge, Bagley Wood and



Vivienne Westwood with terrorist tee-shirt design: “Please don’t arrest me”

Telegraph House as well as remaining flexible to any other Russell opportunities that might present themselves.

We arrived at Heathrow at the very early hour of 6:30 am and after an uneventful trip through British Customs, hopped on the train for our trip into the city. Keeping with the Russell theme we had chosen to stay in the Bloomsbury area of London, near Russell Square and its Tube Station—also close to the Russell Pub where in the spirit of the project we felt the

need to sample several pints. Once settled into our tiny hotel rooms we travelled to Sands Studios in Southwark, where our London interviews would be filmed.

Sands Studios is located just south of the Thames in two old warehouse buildings. This is where the films *Little Dorrit* and *The Fool* were filmed and where Alec Guinness and Derek Jacobi were once frequent guests. Right beside the studio is the Mayflower Pub, where you can now have a pint on the moorings that held the Mayflower before her voyage to North America. Along with the studio facilities, Sands also specializes in costume design and boasts an incredible list of films for which they’ve provided costumes including *Amistad*, *Topsy-Turvy*, and *Vanity Fair*. The cafeteria is a communal meeting place, with the studio often feeding breakfast and lunch to people in the neighbourhood and where women from the area chat while doing fine hand-embroidery on the period costumes. The experience there was quite unique—our filming was taking place at the same time as an action film, complete with a chase scene and guns outside on the cobbled streets, and when the main studio space had been transformed into a winter wonderland in May for a Christmas special. We set up in the building’s tiny movie theatre where we rearranged seating and erected bookshelves. We proceeded to raid Sands’ extensive prop department to dress our “set” with vintage books and knick-knacks. With the proper lighting and through the magic of television the result is that of a cozy library. After a long day of travel and preparation we returned to the hotel for a much needed rest.

The following morning we joined the commuter crush on the tube and made our way to the studio. Our first scheduled interview was with one of Russell’s biographers, Caroline Moorehead. She arrived right on time and was eager to begin. Moorehead did say that it had been some time since she had been immersed in the world of Bertrand Russell and wanted to ensure that we wouldn’t force her to recount each date and detail of his life. Once seated in our “library”, Moorehead proceeded to recount Bertie’s early life, his relationships and, perhaps most interestingly, the challenges of writing the biography of a subject whose life was so full and whose archives are so vast.

After a break for lunch we had an interview scheduled with fashion designer Vivienne Westwood. Westwood has been an icon in the fashion industry for over thirty years and is often credited with being the mother of the punk fashion movement

as she used to design the costumes for the Sex Pistols. Today she still embodies an anarchist ideal and remains passionately committed to social justice and change. In our research we had been thrilled to discover that Westwood was a huge Russell fan and has often been quoted as saying that “to understand the twentieth century, one must read Bertrand Russell.” During our interview, topics ranged from Russell’s impact on popular philosophy to the imprisoned Indian rights activist Leonard Pelletier and rocker Marilyn Manson. Westwood finished the session by showing us the photograph of Bertie that she keeps on the mantle in her South London home. It was an eight by ten of Russell that we hadn’t seen before, probably taken in the mid-1940s, in which Bertie’s eyes stare penetratingly into the camera. Talking about the photograph and Russell himself, Westwood left little doubt about the philosopher’s enduring impact.

The next day we journeyed west to Richmond Park to film Pembroke Lodge, Bertie’s childhood home. Although the morning was cloudy and it was raining slightly, the weather



Pembroke Lodge entrance with wisteria in full bloom

lifted as we began to shoot. The gardens were in full bloom and it was quite moving to walk the grounds where Russell played as a child more than 100 years earlier. The house itself had gone through many changes over the years and become increasingly run-down. However,

beginning in 1998, Daniel Hearsom, in partnership with the Crown, began to restore the Lodge. The cafeteria was re-done, modern banquet, reception and conference rooms created, and the Russell Suites, which commemorate the Russell family, opened. After a successful day of shooting we headed back to London to meet Nick Griffin and update him up on the week’s events. The following day we were scheduled to interview

philosopher Anthony Grayling, and we wanted to ensure we were all prepared.

Grayling arrived the next morning and immediately disarmed everyone with his charm and humour. He took the interview chair like a pro and proceeded to give clear explanations of Russell’s philosophy—including an understandable interpretation of the Russell Paradox—as well as detailing Bertie’s early career as a logician, his relationships with Whitehead and Wittgenstein and what Grayling felt had been his lasting impact on philosophy and mathematics. We spent the remainder of that day shooting in and around London, looking for images that would work well to visualize our story and conceptualize aspects of Russell’s life. We also discovered how quickly a park attendant in Russell Square would approach someone with a large camera and demand a filming permit! Nevertheless we felt that our time in London had been very successful as we prepared for our trip to Cornwall the following day.

We had decided that we would travel towards Oxford and another of Russell’s homes, Bagley Wood, where we would interview Alan Ryan, Warden of New College, Oxford. After a few wrong turns and just a little bit of panic we eventually found the house. A walk around it and the grounds was further proof of how much Russell must have loved living in peaceful environments and close to nature. Ryan arrived and we interviewed him in what was probably Bertie’s sitting room. He spoke about Russell’s political leanings and influences and gave an interesting overview of his activism. Once Ryan was on his way back to Oxford, we headed back to our cars for the long drive to Cornwall. In our planning we had neglected to consider that this particular Friday afternoon was the beginning of a Bank Holiday weekend and thus our trip took considerably longer as we were slowed by a long line of caravans.

Arriving late in the evening in Penzance, the smell of the sea was immediately apparent. We checked into a hotel with a view of the ocean and woke early to a traditional English breakfast. We had been concerned about the weather in Cornwall in May, but that morning proved bright and sunny—an ideal day for a drive to Carn Voel and a visit with Russell’s daughter, Kate Tait. Kate greeted us at the house, which Russell and his second wife Dora acquired as a holiday home in the 1920s, wearing the trademark Russell smile. During the interview it was quite uncanny to see how much she resembles her father. Kate answered all of our questions

graciously and candidly. Her reminiscences of her family were very moving. After several hours we left the house with the promise that she would join us that night for dinner (“As long as it didn’t interfere with Dr. Who!”). We spent the rest of the afternoon filming the spectacular cliffs and beach where Russell often spent time with his children and then had a great dinner with Kate that evening. It felt as though our time in Cornwall was not quite long enough, but our priority had been spending time with Kate and that had been accomplished.

The following morning we began our drive back to London, stopping at Telegraph House, the former home of Beacon Hill School (operated by the Russells in the 1920s and 1930s) along the way. Again, Telegraph House is in a location where you can visualize the children and Bertie and Dora Russell being very much at home. The grounds haven’t changed much, the fields are still spacious and the woods still take up a large part of the property; however, most of the outbuildings used by the School have been removed. The tower where Russell spent so much of his time is still a prominent part of the house. It was easy to imagine him there, writing or teaching lessons to the schoolchildren.

We spent our last day in England taking a much-needed break and being tourists. Upon our return to Canada we were incredibly pleased with our footage and how much we had accomplished in such a short time. Currently, we are finishing up our Canadian interviews and beginning the editing process. We expect the films to be completed in June 2006, and the series should air on TV Ontario sometime in the fall of 2006.

Jennifer MacLennan

RUSSELL’S RELEVANCE

Twice during the autumn of 2005 the Russell Centre’s Andrew G. Bone brought Russell studies to the attention of non-specialist audiences. On 1 October he spoke about “The Russell–Einstein Manifesto and the Origins of Pugwash” to the annual Eric Fawcett Memorial Forum organized by Science for Peace and the Canadian Pugwash Group at the University Women’s Club, Toronto. At the end of the month he participated in the Harry Crowe Foundation’s conference on “Academic Freedom Post–9/11”, also held in Toronto, where he gave a talk on Russell’s dismissal from Trinity College,

Cambridge, in 1916.

The Science for Peace/Pugwash gathering took place in the 50th anniversary year of the Russell–Einstein manifesto, whose sentiments continue to serve as an eloquent statement of the Pugwash movement’s guiding principles. For example, the manifesto’s much-quoted concluding appeal—“as human beings, to human beings: Remember your humanity, and forget the rest”—was invoked most recently in the Hiroshima Declaration of the Pugwash Council, a document framed at the 55th Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs, staged at Hiroshima to mark the 60th anniversary of the atom bombing of Japan.

Bone’s first Toronto talk examined some of the antecedents to the involvement of the international scientific community in peace campaigning generally and in the struggle against nuclear weapons in particular. In the mid-1950s, Russell, by then in his mid-80s, played a pivotal role in mobilizing scientists from opposite sides of the Cold War divide who shared his growing apprehension about the very survival of the human race. By that time both superpowers had developed hydrogen bombs, and the escalating nuclear arms race stood on the cusp of the still more dangerous long-range missile era. Russell was confident, however, that scientists could help to break the Cold War impasse or, in the words of the manifesto, enable “the titanic struggle between Communism and anti-Communism” to be transcended somehow. He believed that scientists not only had a singular responsibility to perform such a role but a special aptitude for it as well. Notwithstanding the formidable Cold War obstacles to cooperation with Soviet bloc scientists or Western Communists and fellow-travellers, Russell was adamant that such political diversity was essential to the success of any peace initiative. This conviction ensured that the inaugural meeting of Pugwash scientists at the Nova Scotia location from which the movement took its name was balanced and representative. From its fairly modest beginnings Pugwash soon became a respected, constructive and independent voice of reason on nuclear testing, disarmament and related Cold War issues. In 1995 the organization was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for Peace jointly with its president (and Russell’s close political associate), Joseph Rotblat.

Pugwash remains very much animated by the anti-war spirit of the Russell–Einstein manifesto and its foreboding about the nuclear peril. The agenda of the recent Science for

Peace/Canadian Pugwash Group meeting in Toronto was entitled “Creatively Advancing the Nuclear Abolition Agenda”. After Bone had attempted to place some of Pugwash’s current activities and concerns in historical perspective, different speakers and discussion groups talked about the possibility of transforming Canada into a nuclear-free zone, the continuing threat of accidental nuclear war, and the risk of nuclear terrorism.

On 28 October Bone brought another crucial episode in Russell’s public life—the loss of his lectureship at Trinity College, Cambridge, during the First World War—to the attention of the delegates at the Harry Crowe Foundation’s conference on “Academic Freedom Post–9/11”. Russell was a staunch upholder of the principle of academic freedom throughout and beyond his professional career, and he would surely have approved the work of the Foundation, a charitable organization established by the Canadian Association of University Teachers to undertake education and research on freedom of academic expression, institutional autonomy, and the independence of university research.

At their Toronto meeting, the organization wanted to situate current controversies surrounding academic freedom in a historical context, and this was provided by the personal testimony of two distinguished mathematics professors, Lee Lorch and Chandler Davis, both of whom suffered political persecution in the McCarthy era in the United States, as well as by Bone’s discussion of Russell’s dismissal from Trinity. This action was taken by the College authorities after Russell’s anti-war activities had led to him being prosecuted and convicted under Britain’s emergency powers legislation. Bone’s paper examined the dimensions of Russell’s wartime dissent, the system of academic governance at Trinity which made it so easy to deprive him of his lectureship, the political atmosphere of wartime Cambridge, and the “cultural combat” which so many British academics engaged in willingly on behalf of the Allied propaganda machine.

The First World War was not the only occasion on which Russell’s academic freedom was contravened. In addition to falling foul of his academic peers at Cambridge in 1916, Russell was subjected to a vicious campaign of vilification in New York in 1940 and prevented by the state Supreme Court from taking up his appointment to teach mathematics and philosophy at City College. He remained acutely sensitive about *all* possible challenges to academic freedom, whether

these were posed by the totalitarian ideologies of Right and Left, the stifling of anti-war dissent, the outraged religious moralism that worked to his undoing in 1940, or the political hysteria engendered by McCarthyism.

The Harry Crowe Foundation also emphasizes the need for vigilance in defence of academic freedom. The principal focus of its Toronto conference rested upon the heightened concerns about national security which have placed civil liberties as a whole, not just academic freedom, in jeopardy. In successive sessions of the conference the speakers assessed the Canadian, American and international situations, while the penultimate session tackled the separate but related issue of the challenge to unfettered scientific inquiry posed by the demands of secrecy in medical research.

WHAT’S NEW



Website Visit our website which is updated regularly. It contains information on editors, staff, and visitors as well as the all-important progress of volumes: <http://russell.mcmaster.ca>.



Publications Vol. 29, *Détente or Destruction, 1955–57*, edited by Andrew G. Bone, was published by Routledge in Britain and the U.S.A. early in 2005.



Students Amanda White did excellent work over the summer; Alan Judson joined her in September 2005. Dominique Déry continued her superb input for BRACERS.



San Diego Nicholas Griffin spoke to a group in January 2006, sponsored by the Humanist Fellowship there. His talk on Russell’s life was a great success, emphasizing the importance Russell had for the virtues of kindness and veracity.

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Editor: Sheila Turcon

BRRC contact: duncana@mcmaster.ca

Russell portrait by Carola Spaeth Hauschka

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