

**Royal Irish Academy Colonial Legacies Project**  
**Scoping Exercise – Report\***  
**15 January 2024**

**1. Overview**

**1.1 Background**

Founded in 1785, the Royal Irish Academy (RIA) was among a growing number of learned societies and academies in eighteenth-century Europe. These bodies sought to strengthen ‘intellectual culture ... bolstering a shift away from the conventional certainties of biblical, classical and traditional forms of knowledge towards a type of knowing that derived from observation, practice, and direct experience.’<sup>1</sup> Among other things, however, the pursuit of knowledge was an imperial impulse, and was, as such, inherently linked to the assertion of Western supremacy and colonialism. From its establishment, the Academy was closely associated with the British administration in Ireland, and was awarded a Royal Charter in 1786. Its early membership was drawn primarily from the Anglo-Irish Protestant Ascendancy, a minority ruling élite that descended from the New English settlers who colonised Ireland through plantation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The RIA was both a product of, and active participant in, the British Empire and colonialism. This was reflected in the Academy’s funding and dissemination of research, and its facilitation of knowledge exchange; the backgrounds, associations, activities and output of its Members (MRIA); and the contents of its Library and Museum collections. As defined in its Charter, the chief object of the Academy was to promote the study of science, polite literature, and antiquities in Ireland.<sup>2</sup> This was not achieved in a vacuum: the RIA served as a hub for scholars, many of whom were connected with Trinity College Dublin (TCD), and/or were members of other learned societies in Ireland and Britain. MRIA were conversant with scientific and scholarly developments beyond Ireland, actively engaging with transnational and transcolonial research networks; they were aided in this endeavour by the RIA Library, which collected and provided MRIA with access to academic journals from overseas. The Academy was concerned with the advancement of knowledge and from 1787 it published papers on science, polite literature and antiquities through its periodical *Transactions* (and later *Proceedings*).

The RIA thus funded and disseminated original research in Ireland while also contributing to a much larger body of scholarship, situated in a broader culture of enquiry; that culture was Western and White, shaped by ideologies of empire, and often colonial in intent. This was apparent in the research interests and approaches of various MRIA, including in the fields of anthropology, natural history and antiquarianism. As members of the Anglo-Irish élite and the British imperial ruling class, MRIA were often active participants in the British Empire (and in other imperial powers). MRIA benefitted from colonial service, including employment in the colonial administration and colonial armies. The participation of MRIA in the project of empire shaped their research, but it also had a material impact on the RIA Museum collection, with objects from overseas, including British colonies, dominions and protectorates, valued as ethnographic comparators.

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<sup>1</sup> Sherra Murphy, *‘The first national museum’: Dublin’s Natural History Museum in the mid-nineteenth century* (Cork, 2021), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *The Charter of the Royal Irish Academy, 1786.*

A relatively small but significant number of early MRIA were directly involved in and/or benefitted from the slave trade or enslavement, but many others profited from related economic and trading opportunities. This was not an unusual circumstance. The elite men who populated universities and academies in late eighteenth-century Europe were aware that their relative prosperity was built on overseas enterprises that were promoted by their governments and by entrepreneurs. These enterprises generated profits through the exploitation of African and indigenous people and the natural resources of conquered lands. For many, material comfort far exceeded moral discomfort, and members of the Western elite, their churches, and the institutions to which they belonged, continued to turn a blind eye to the bloody realities of colonisation and imperialism. Initial opposition to slavery – and later abolitionism – instead originated with Evangelical Protestants, who were outside the Established Church and who were not typically members of learned societies and academies. As the abolitionist movement grew, however, a number of MRIA became allies to the cause of ending slavery; this included the Dublin-born British civil servant, Dr Richard Robert Madden and (possible MRIA) John Elliot Cairnes, the political economist whose most famous work was *The slave power: its character, career and probable design* (1862), a utilitarian argument against slavery that was referenced by opponents of slavery in the US and influenced public opinion.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 Relevant developments:

In commissioning this scoping exercise, the RIA joins a growing number of public bodies and institutions in Ireland, the UK, the US, Europe, and elsewhere, that are reappraising their history through an examination of their imperial and colonial legacies. The RIA is the first learned society in Ireland to establish a project to investigate its colonial legacies and – as a recognised centre for excellence and integrity in academic research – it can provide an important blueprint for other bodies, encouraging a wider engagement with Ireland’s colonial past and the legacies of colonialism. In so doing, the Academy can demonstrate that decolonisation has a public benefit and that there exists a strong ethical basis for its inclusion in institutional strategy. The RIA occupies a space at the intersection of the higher education, museum and heritage sectors, and developments in those sectors – along with developments in libraries and archives – are relevant to this scoping exercise and to any future project on the Academy’s colonial legacies.

In recent years, universities, museums, heritage bodies and libraries have begun to interrogate their colonial legacies, with many engaged in a process of decolonisation (which in itself is not an uncontested term); this includes the decolonising of curricula, collections, spaces and interpretations. This has resulted from an expanding body of scholarship on the complicated legacies of empire and colonialism, a growth in academic and student activism – which is a product of greater racial, cultural and class diversity in higher education – and a consequent increase in public awareness. In this context, the emergence of the Rhodes Must Fall movement at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 2015 was a signal moment. This student-led campaign sought the removal of a statue of the British imperialist, Cecil Rhodes, from the UCT campus and inspired a similar campaign at Oxford University. It also invigorated a wider movement to decolonise universities in the ‘Global North’, including UK institutions like Oxford, UCL, SOAS, and Sussex.<sup>4</sup> A wave of Black Lives Matter protests after the murder of George Floyd by a policeman in Minneapolis in 2020 prompted widespread discourse on the legacies of imperialism and

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<sup>3</sup> Cormac Ó Gráda, ‘Cairnes, John Elliot’, *DIB*, <https://www.dib.ie/biography/cairnes-john-elliott-a1380>, accessed 15 Jan. 2024. Cairnes name is not included in the database of MRIA, but his position as Professor of Political Economy at TCD (after a professorship at Queen’s College, Galway), means it is likely he was a Member. I am grateful to Professor Nicholas Canny for this information.

<sup>4</sup> L. Moosavi, ‘The Decolonial Bandwagon and the Dangers of Intellectual Decolonisation’, *International Review of Sociology* 30, no. 2 (2020), pp 332–354; K. Pimblott, ‘Decolonising the University: The Origins and Meaning of a Movement’, *The Political Quarterly* 91, no. 1 (2020), pp 210–216.

colonialism, particularly the legacies of slavery, and reignited the Rhodes Must Fall campaign in the UK.

Progress has been made in decolonising universities, museums, heritage bodies and libraries in the UK, North America, Europe, and at institutions of imperial origin in former colonies, like UCT. In North America and the UK, much of the emphasis has been on legacies of slavery within the broader imperial/colonial context. This is not surprising, given that many institutions in the US, Canada and the UK benefitted from imperialism, and particularly from the slave trade and enslavement. In the US, Brown University was an early actor, establishing the Committee on Slavery and Justice in 2003 and publishing their report in 2006, with an expanded second edition produced in 2021.<sup>5</sup> In more recent years, the University of Virginia established the Universities Studying Slavery (USS) consortium, which now has over 100 members in the US and globally, while Harvard, Yale and Georgetown, among others, have established projects to interrogate institutional links to the slave trade and enslavement.<sup>6</sup> In the UK, a number of universities, including the University of Glasgow, Bristol University, and Cambridge University, have established projects to uncover and interrogate their links to slavery and have published reports of their findings.<sup>7</sup> Work has also been undertaken on university collections and museums within universities (e.g. the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford), with the researchers leading Trinity College Dublin's Colonial Legacies Project observing that 'much of the best practice [on decolonisation] we have observed thus far has emerged from university collections and museums within universities themselves.'<sup>8</sup>

There have been some important developments in Irish higher education. Universities and colleges across Ireland have signed up to the Higher Education Authority's (HEA) *Anti-Racism Principles*, which aims to instil a culture of race equality across higher education.<sup>9</sup> There have also been student/staff-led and institutional initiatives to decolonise curricula, to engage with colonial legacies, and to promote diversity and equality. At UCD, a student-led 'Decolonise the Curriculum' initiative has been running since 2017. The university's School of Sociology offers an MA/Grad Dip in Race, Migration and Decolonial Studies and Dr Ebun Joseph has founded the university's first Black Studies module there. Published in 2020, meanwhile, *Making Belfield: Space and Place at UCD* addressed the colonial legacies of the estates on which UCD's Belfield campus is built.<sup>10</sup> At Maynooth University, Race Equality Fora have been established for students and staff.<sup>11</sup> In 2018, UCC became the first Irish university to join the USS consortium and has stated its commitment

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<sup>5</sup> *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* (2006), <https://slaveryandjustice.brown.edu/sites/default/files/reports/SlaveryAndJustice2006.pdf>, accessed 22 Aug. 2023; (2nd ed., 2021), <https://slaveryandjusticereport.brown.edu/>, accessed 22 Aug. 2023. See also Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities* (New York, NY, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> See <https://slavery.virginia.edu/>, accessed 16 Aug. 2023; *Report of the Committee on Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery* (Apr. 2022), <https://legacyofslavery.harvard.edu/report>, accessed 16 Aug. 2023; The Yale and Slavery Research Project, available at <https://yaleandslavery.yale.edu/>, accessed 16 Aug. 2023; Adam Rothman and Elsa Barraza Mendoza (eds), *Facing Georgetown's History: A Reader on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation* (Georgetown, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> See 'Slavery, Abolition and the University of Glasgow' (Sep. 2018), [https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media\\_607547\\_smxx.pdf](https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_607547_smxx.pdf), accessed 18 Aug. 2023; 'The University of Bristol: Our History and the Legacies of Slavery', <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/university/documents/university-of-bristol-legacies-of-slavery-report.pdf>, accessed 18 Aug. 2023; 'University of Cambridge Advisory Group on Legacies of Enslavement Final Report' (2022), [https://www.cam.ac.uk/system/files/legacies\\_of\\_enslavement\\_report\\_21.09.2022.pdf](https://www.cam.ac.uk/system/files/legacies_of_enslavement_report_21.09.2022.pdf), accessed 18 Aug. 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Trinity's Colonial Legacies Project, 'Draft audit and summary document' (Feb. 2022), <https://histories-humanities.tcd.ie/assets/pdf/research/tcl/DraftAuditandSummary.pdf>, accessed 20 Aug. 2023.

<sup>9</sup> HEA, *Anti-Racism Principles for Higher Education Institutions* (2023), <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2022/03/Anti-Racism-Principles-for-Irish-Higher-Education-Institutions.pdf>, accessed 26 Aug. 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Finola O'Kane and Ellen Rowley (eds), *Making Belfield: Space and Place* (Dublin, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/edi/edi-projects/race-equality>, accessed 25 Aug. 2023.

to ‘participating in the international discussion regarding slavery, colonisation, postcolonial politics, and issues regarding race and equality in higher education.’<sup>12</sup> The University of Galway provides an MA in Culture and Colonialism and it was also home to the *Inclusive Learning at NUI Galway* project, which was undertaken ‘to improve the learning experience and environment, particularly for students from diverse backgrounds.’<sup>13</sup> In Northern Ireland, ‘iRise’, a peer network for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic academic and professional staff has been established at Queen’s University Belfast. QUB’s Library and Special Collections have highlighted sources for the study of Black history.<sup>14</sup>

Trinity College Dublin has been proactive in examining its colonial legacies. The Colonial Legacies Project – led by Dr Patrick Walsh, Dr Ciarán O’Neill and Dr Mobeen Hussein – was established in 2021. Described as ‘a research-led investigation into Trinity’s imperial and colonial past’, it is ‘broad in scope chronologically and thematically and open-ended in its coverage ... going beyond exploring financial and material connections to slavery and enslavement to explore Trinity’s entangled relationship with empire within and outside Ireland.’<sup>15</sup> The project has also resulted in the creation of the Trinity Colonial Legacies Review Working Group, which includes representatives from the student body, as well as from the university’s professional and academic staff. After a process of public consultation, the Working Group proposed the renaming of the Berkeley Library and the repatriation of human remains, which were removed from Inishbofin in County Galway by members of TCD’s Anthropometric Laboratory in the late nineteenth century. TCD also joined USS in 2021. With Dr Finola O’Kane of UCD, Dr O’Neill recently co-edited the ground-breaking collection, *Ireland, Slavery and the Caribbean* (Manchester, 2023).

Internationally, the museum sector has devised and implemented strategies for decolonisation, including plans for restitution and repatriation; notable European examples are the AfricaMuseum near Brussels, Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam and the Musée de Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac in Paris.<sup>16</sup> The UK-based Museums Association ‘unreservedly support[s] initiatives to decolonise museums and their collections’ and has established a campaign for that purpose.<sup>17</sup> A number of British museums are now engaged in the process of decolonisation; this includes the Imperial War Museum, Bristol Museums, the Great North Museum, National Museums Liverpool and the National Museum of Scotland. The British Museum, which has refused to repatriate items and/or collections of colonial origin, including the Benin Bronzes, remains at the centre of debates around decolonisation; in 2020, the museum introduced a Collecting and Empire trail, explaining the colonial origins of nineteen objects.<sup>18</sup> On the island of Ireland, Queen’s University Belfast is home to the ESRC-funded project *Museums, Empire and Northern Irish Identity*, which is interrogating ‘the complexities of Ireland’s relationship with the British Empire, [and] of Irish involvement in colonialism.’ The project involves cross-border partnership between National Museums NI,

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<sup>12</sup> <https://slavery.virginia.edu/university-college-cork-becomes-first-school-in-ireland-to-join-uss/>, accessed 25 Aug. 2023.

<sup>13</sup> Dinali Wijeratne, Lucy-Ann Buckley and Shivaun Quinlivan, *Inclusive Learning at NUI Galway: Centring the Student Voice in Higher Education* (2021),

[https://www.universityofgalway.ie/media/access/NUIG\\_InclusiveLearningReport2021\\_web-\(1\).pdf](https://www.universityofgalway.ie/media/access/NUIG_InclusiveLearningReport2021_web-(1).pdf), accessed 23 Aug. 2023.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/iRise/>, accessed 26 Aug. 2023;

<https://blogs.qub.ac.uk/specialcollections/decolonising-the-curriculum-sources-for-black-history-at-queens/>, accessed 26 Aug. 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Trinity’s Colonial Legacies Project, *Draft audit and summary document* (Feb. 2022), <https://histories-humanities.tcd.ie/assets/pdf/research/tcl/DraftAuditandSummary.pdf>, accessed 20 Aug. 2023.

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.africamuseum.be/en/about\\_us/history\\_renovation](https://www.africamuseum.be/en/about_us/history_renovation), accessed 19 Aug. 2023;

<https://www.quaibrantly.fr/fr/collections/vie-des-collections/actualites/esclavage-decolonisation-et-droits-civiques>, accessed 19 Aug. 2023.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/decolonising-museums/>, accessed 20 Aug. 2023.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.britishmuseum.org/blog/collecting-and-empire>, accessed 19 Aug. 2023.

Northern Ireland Museums Council, the Irish Museums Association (IMA), and the Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses and Estates at Maynooth University. As part of the project, QUB hosted the Ireland, Museums, Empire, Colonialism (IMEC) conference in April 2022. Dr Dominic Bryan, Dr Emma Reisz and Dr Briony Widdis have also produced an edited collection: *Museums, empire, colonialism: identities, memory and legacies in Ireland* (Routledge, forthcoming).<sup>19</sup> National Museums NI has stated its commitment to decolonisation, diversity and inclusion, launching the *Inclusive Global Histories* exhibition in August 2022 to highlight how it is re-evaluating its 4,500-object World Cultures collection.<sup>20</sup> The National Museum of Ireland (NMI), meanwhile, has appointed Dr Aoife O'Brien as Curator of World Cultures/Ethnography and is now exploring the contours of its ethnographic collection, which comprises over 15,000 objects.

Relatedly, there is also an emerging discourse around colonialism and Ireland's public heritage: Dr Dónal Hassett is PI on an IRC New Foundations-funded project, *Decolonising Irish Public Heritage*, based at UCC, which contends that 'Ireland was always part of the wider network of coercion and exploitation that underpinned not just the British but also French, American, and other imperialisms', and that this has shaped built and material heritage, including museum collections, stately homes and civic buildings on the island of Ireland. As part of this project, the Decolonising Irish Public Heritage Conference was held in UCC in May 2023.<sup>21</sup> Within the Irish heritage sector, the Office of Public Works (OPW) has signalled its willingness to engage with the colonial legacies of properties under its control. In March 2021, it was announced that the OPW had conducted an initial investigation into the National Botanic Gardens' links to colonialism and slavery, with the intention being to 'publish relevant information and findings in due course.'<sup>22</sup> As of September 2023, this report has not been published. There has been more progress in the UK, with the National Trust publishing a 115-page interim report on the connections between colonialism and properties in their care in September 2022 and making 'a commitment to research, interpret and share the histories of slavery and the legacies of colonialism at the places we care for'.<sup>23</sup>

Libraries and archives have also created strategies for decolonisation, with a focus on collection development, contextualisation of historic collections, metadata (e.g. using appropriate language in catalogues), arrangement of print collections, and expanding access to collections. Decolonisation is an emerging priority for libraries and archives in Ireland, but practical progress has been limited. Greater progress has been made in the UK, particularly in university libraries and archives, which are fundamentally important to campaigns to decolonise the curriculum. Among others, the libraries of SOAS and LSE have instituted strategies for decolonisation.<sup>24</sup> At Cambridge University, the Libraries Decolonisation Working Group was established to 'formulate guidance and policy for decolonisation work within Cambridge libraries and commission specific pieces of work to help encourage and embed best practice.'<sup>25</sup> The Institute of Historical Research (IHR),

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<sup>19</sup> <https://pure.qub.ac.uk/en/projects/museums-empire-and-northern-irish-identity>, accessed 28 Aug. 2023.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.nationalmuseumsni.org/news/inclusive-global-histories-exhibition>, accessed 24 Aug. 2023.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.ucc.ie/en/cacsss/research/spotlight/decolonizingirishpublicheritage/>, accessed 30 Aug. 2023; <https://irishmuseums.org/events/decolonising-irish-public-heritage>, accessed 30 Aug. 2023.

<sup>22</sup> *The Times*, 14 Mar. 2021.

<sup>23</sup> Sally-Anne Huxtable et al. (eds), *Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties now in the Care of the National Trust, Including Links with Historic Slavery* (Sep. 2020), <https://nt.global.ssl.fastly.net/binaries/content/assets/website/national/pdf/colonialism-and-historic-slavery-report.pdf>, accessed 21 Aug. 2023.

<sup>24</sup> Ludi Price, 'Challenging its Imperial origins: towards decolonising SOAS Library', in Jess Crilly and Regina Everett (eds), *Narrative Expansions: interpreting decolonisation in academic libraries* (London, 2022), pp 213-224; <https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/decolonising-soas-library/about-us/>, accessed 1 Sep. 2023; Kevin Wilson, 'Decolonising library collections: contemporary issues, practical steps and examples from London School of Economics', in *ibid.*, pp 225-250.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/about-library/diversifying-collections-and-practices/cambridge-university-libraries-decolonisation>, accessed 2 Sep. 2023; Cambridge University Decolonising Through Critical Librarianship Group,

meanwhile, has been proactive in promoting diversity and tackling biases in its Wohl Library collections.<sup>26</sup> Outside higher education, staff-led initiatives have made progress towards decolonising the British Library, with the BAME Staff Network forming the Decolonisation Working Group in 2018, and with the Library making a commitment to become ‘an actively anti-racist organisation’ in 2020. Among other things, the Working Group has conducted an audit of objects on display in public spaces and is seeking to introduce cultural-sensitivity content warnings and ethical metadata, and the Library has produced a Content Strategy.<sup>27</sup> Elsewhere, the National Library of Scotland has reportedly taken steps towards decolonisation, including the removal of discriminatory descriptions from its catalogues.<sup>28</sup>

### 1.3 Aims and Objectives:

Beginning in May, I undertook a three-month scoping exercise to provide initial insights into the Academy’s colonial legacies, encompassing its membership and collections, as well as its funding and publication of germane research. This is a complex topic, which requires careful and deliberate consideration; it is thus important to emphasise that this report is not a complete account of the Academy’s colonial legacies, but an advisory document and the foundation for future research.

The scoping project’s aims and objectives were as follows:

- To conduct an audit of relevant source material, including the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, RIA Museum Registers (held in the NMI), Academy Minutes and the Minutes of the Committee of Polite Literature and Antiquity.
- To create a database of artefacts donated to the RIA Museum, which were of imperial/colonial origin, providing information on individual items and donors.
- To ascertain the nature and extent of MRIA’s involvement in the project of Empire, particularly in relation to slavery and to Members’ employment in colonial administration and the British Army.
- To identify the RIA’s involvement in the facilitation of colonial scholarship through funding, publication and knowledge exchange.
- To identify RIA-funded research and associated activities that are of a sensitive nature (i.e., pertaining to human remains).
- To meet with key stakeholders from institutions that are engaged in the process of decolonisation or seeking to engage with their colonial legacies.
- To recommend additions of biographies to the *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, or alterations to existing entries.
- To provide a report outlining findings and providing recommendations for further action.

## 2. Findings

Following a select literature review, an emphasis was placed on the consultation of relevant manuscript and printed primary material; this encompassed the RIA Museum Registers, Academy Minute Books, Committee of Polite Literature and Antiquities Minute Books, as well as the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* and *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*. Research focused on a number of the RIA’s colonial legacies, encompassing past MRIA’s involvement in the trans-

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‘Cataloguing, Classification and Critical Librarianship at Cambridge University’, in Crilly and Everett, *Narrative Expansions*, pp 173-188.

<sup>26</sup> <https://blog.history.ac.uk/2020/02/diversity-and-inequality-in-the-library/>, accessed 2 Sep. 2023.

<sup>27</sup> Paradaad Chamzas (on behalf of and in collaboration with the British Library BAME Staff Network Decolonisation Working Group), ‘Towards decolonising the British Library: a staff-led perspective’, in Crilly and Everett (eds), *Narrative Expansions*, pp 153-172.

<sup>28</sup> *The Scotsman*, 17 Oct. 2021.

Atlantic slave trade and/or enslavement; the diverse participation of MRIA in the British Empire, including within the colonial administration and the military; the Academy's promotion of colonial research through funding and publication; and Library and Museum collections.

## **2.1 Colonial Slavery:**

This scoping exercise has identified a small number of MRIA who were directly involved in the slave trade, who enslaved people, and/or who benefitted from familial slaveholdings. Initial research indicates that other MRIA had familial connections to the slave trade and enslavement, but further research is required to identify clear links.

MRIA with evident connections to the slave trade and enslavement are as follows:

### **William Digges La Touche, MRIA (1811-1882):**

The Huguenot La Touches came to Ireland in the late seventeenth century, with David La Touche serving in the Williamite Army during the War of the Two Kings (1689-91), before establishing himself as a poplin maker in Dublin. In 1715, amid the financial revolution, he established the La Touche Bank in the city. In 1764, David La Touche's grandson, [William George Digges La Touche](#) travelled with Henry Moore, the British resident, to the Ottoman-controlled port of Basrah, where he worked for the East India Company. Returning to Ireland in 1784, William George married Grace (née Puget) and became a partner in the La Touche Bank, which was owned and operated by his cousins. The La Touches were now one of the most powerful families in Ireland; they were extensive landowners and had established a political dynasty, with six MPs in the Irish Parliament prior to the Act of Union, and six in Westminster thereafter.<sup>29</sup> William George and Grace's eldest son, [James Digges La Touche](#), married Isabella (née Cotter) and had at least four sons and three daughters. The couple lived with their family on St Stephen's Green and at Sans Souci, their country estate in Booterstown, County Dublin. They were heavily involved in charitable works, including with the Magdalen Asylum on Leeson Street in Dublin, where Isabella served as governor and vice-patron. James died in 1826, and one year later his young son, William, started work at La Touche Bank on Castle Street. He entered Trinity College Dublin as a fellow commoner in 1829, while continuing to work in the bank, where he was made a junior partner aged twenty-one. In 1842, he married Louisa L'Estrange; the couple had eleven children and lived at 34 St Stephen's Green, North. Following his parents' example, he was active in a number of charities in Dublin. The Digges La Touche family owned estates in Jamaica, which were originally acquired in the 1760s by William's granduncle, John James Digges La Touche – a younger son who established himself in Kingston, where he married a propertied widow and died childless.<sup>30</sup> William Digges La Touche inherited a share of the Cape Clear Pen and Konigsberg Castle plantations from his father, with the Jamaica Almanacs of 1815, 1824 and 1833 listing Patrick Lynch and William and Peter Digges La Touche as co-owners of both. On 28 September 1835, over two years after the passage of the Abolition of Slavery Act (1833), William was awarded a share of £3,729 2s. 11d. – along with Peter Digges La Touche and Edward Hyde East – as compensation for 212 enslaved people on the Cape Clear Pen plantation; the same men were awarded £3,086 17s. 6d. in compensation for 184 enslaved people on the Konigsberg Castle plantation.<sup>31</sup> Other members of the La Touche family were MRIA in the nineteenth century, namely John James Digges La Touche, George Digges La Touche, and David Charles La Touche.

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<sup>29</sup> [Anon], updated by P.J. Rupp, 'La Touche, William George Digges', *ODNB*.

<sup>30</sup> David Dickson, 'Setting out the terrain: Ireland and the Caribbean in the eighteenth century\*', in Ciarán O'Neill and Finola O'Kane (eds), *Ireland, Slavery and the Caribbean* (Manchester, 2023), p. 30.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Beaumont, 'La Touche, William George Digges', *DIB*, <https://www.dib.ie/index.php/biography/la-touche-william-george-digges-a4626>, accessed 28 Aug. 2023; H.H. Dickinson, *A brief memorial of William Digges La Touche, J.P., D.L., with a sermon preached on his death* (Dublin, 1883); Legacies of British Slavery, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/43378>, accessed 28 Aug. 2023.

### **Simeon Hardy Jnr, MRIA (1806-1873):**

The Huguenot Hardy family originated in La Rochelle, with Henry Hardy (1698-1749) leaving France for Holland, before relocating to England, where he eventually established himself as a merchant. One of Henry's brothers, Pierre Isaac, was active in the slave trade. Henry Hardy moved again, in the late 1720s, to Dublin, where he set up in the provision trade. One of his nine children, Henry Barthélmy Hardy, married Mary Boileau in Dublin, and the couple later relocated to Cork, and established a successful trading company there. Two of Henry Barthélmy and Mary's sons were killed at sea; John off the coast of Maryland, and Peter Harmer in the East Indies. Another son, Simeon Henry (1748?-1810), served a seven year apprenticeship to the Cork merchant, Harmer Delahoide, before opening a 'ware room for the sale of linens'. He also appears to have expanded the family's business interests into the sugar trade in the Caribbean. His son, also Simeon (1776-1834, who became known as Simeon Hardy Snr), sailed to Martinique in 1796, before moving to Dominica, where he married Mary O'Brien. He returned to Ireland in 1810, and his brother John Peter travelled to Barbados two years later, and the brothers worked in partnership trading sugar for Irish goods, establishing the firms of Simeon Hardy & Sons in Cork and Hardy Brothers in Barbados. Two of Simeon Hardy's sons entered the sugar trade: Simeon Henry (1806-1873, also known as Simeon Hardy Jnr) and John Peter. Simeon Jnr was elected MRIA in 1838. Around 1868, Simeon Hardy & Sons moved to London and continued trading as 'West Indian merchants', but the firm was dissolved in 1872. Acting as executor or administrator of his father's estate, Simeon Hardy Jnr was awarded £269 18s. 7d. compensation for thirteen enslaved people on the Regale Estate in Barbados in 1837. UCL's *Legacies of British Slavery* (LBS) project have identified Hardy's investments in a number of Irish rail companies as financial legacies of enslavement.<sup>32</sup> Other Hardys are listed as MRIA, but it is not clear if they were relatives of Simeon Hardy Jnr; they are Philip Dixon Hardy, Samuel Little Hardy and Francis Hardy.

### **Gervase Parker Bushe, MRIA (1744-1793):**

Gervase Parker Bushe was an MP in the Irish Parliament and a revenue commissioner. He was the only son of Amyas Bushe of Kilfane in County Kilkenny, and Elizabeth (née Parker), the daughter of General Gervase Parker, who served as Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Irish Army from 1740 to 1750. Having matriculated from Glasgow University, Parker Bushe continued his education at Christ Church, Oxford, but he did not graduate. He became a member of the Dublin Society in 1766 and he entered the Irish Parliament as MP for Granard one year later. Parker Bushe was a member of Henry Flood's – and then Henry Grattan's – Patriot Party. Having been absent from Parliament for two years, he contested a Kilkenny by-election in May 1768; he was defeated but was subsequently elected on petition. He would go on to serve as MP for Fore, County Westmeath (1783-90) and Lanesborough, County Longford (1790-93). He was also appointed a revenue commissioner in 1784. Parker Bushe was one of the first elected MRIA after the foundation of the Academy in 1785. In 1790 he submitted a paper on the population of Ireland (calculated using hearth tax returns), which was published in the *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy* and which has been described as 'the first considered analysis of Irish population size.'<sup>33</sup> Parker Bushe married Henry Grattan's sister, Mary, in 1768, which elevated his standing in patriot political circles. The couple had nine children – five sons and four daughters. Their son, Robert Bushe, made his fortune in the Caribbean, where he likely enslaved 127 people across six estates,

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<sup>32</sup> UCL, Huguenot Library/F/Ha/4/1, Apprenticeship indenture of S.H. Hardy to Harmer Delahoide of Cork, merchant, 1762.; Grace Lawless Lee, *The Huguenot Settlements in Ireland* (1936?), pp 50-6; LBS, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146632486>, accessed 19 Aug. 2023; LBS, 'Simeon Henry Hardy Junior', <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/1164>, accessed 19 Aug. 2023; LBS, 'Barbados 3930, Regale', <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/claim/view/1073>, accessed 19 Aug. 2023.

<sup>33</sup> David Dickson, Cormac Ó Gráda, and Stuart Daultrey, 'Hearth tax, household size and Irish population change, 1672–1821', *RLA Proc.*, lxxxii, C (1982), quoted in C.J. Woods, 'Bushe, Gervase Parker', *DIB*.



five of which were located in Trinidad, and the other in St Vincent. He is recorded as the buyer of thirty-one enslaved people on Dominica between 1817 and 1820, and he is presumed to have exported those people to St Vincent or Trinidad. Bushe's largest compensation award was £2105 4s. 5d., which was for a claim on the Waterloo estate in Trinidad, where he enslaved forty-three people. Bushe registered seventy-one enslaved people on the estate of Valsagne in Trinidad in 1834, as a trustee for the benefit of creditors. He was later awarded compensation for sixty-five enslaved persons on that estate, as a trustee for those creditors. He was probably the Robert Bushe listed as a claimant on three smaller claims for enslaved people on Trinidad. His interest in St Vincent is reflected in his successful claim for £73 4s. 10d., which was paid as compensation for twelve enslaved people. Bushe's son, John Scott Bushe, described as 'an English creole', served as Colonial Secretary of Trinidad between 1861 and 1887. His grandson, Sir Henry Grattan Bushe, was Colonial Governor.<sup>34</sup>

#### **Andrew Caldwell, MRJA, (1733-1808):**

Andrew Caldwell was a Dublin-based barrister, an MP in the Irish parliament, and connoisseur, who was a founding member of the RIA and was elected MRJA in January 1786. He was the eldest son of Charles Caldwell (1707-1776), solicitor to the customs, and Elizabeth (née Heywood). Andrew attended Glasgow University before being admitted to the Middle Temple, London in 1752; eight years later, he was called to the Irish bar. The 'well-mannered and urbane' Caldwell was not focused on practicing law, however, and instead established himself as prominent figure in Dublin society. He was passionately interested in the fine arts and had a particular interest in architecture. He was the author of five long articles on Dublin buildings, which were published in the *Freeman's Journal* between December 1768 and February 1769, and he later served on the Wide Streets Commission. (He was also acknowledged to have anonymously published 'Observations on the public buildings of Dublin' in 1770, but no such book or pamphlet has been discovered.) He inherited a sizeable estate on the death of his father in 1776 and in the same year, the Presbyterian Caldwell was elected MP for Knocktopher in County Kilkenny, having purchased the seat from Sir Hercules Langrishe; he later became MP for Downpatrick. In 1783, he became MP for Downpatrick and he subscribed to the Bank of Ireland; in 1802 – after the Act of Union – he acted as an adjudicator in a competition to redesign the former Parliament Building for use by the bank. An active member of the Dublin Society from 1766, Caldwell had a keen interest in natural history and was involved in purchasing land for the Botanic Gardens in Glasnevin.<sup>35</sup> The Caldwell Papers in the RIA provide an important account of the machinations of the British Empire, colonisation, slavery and colonial society. As Nicholas Draper observes, however, there are only eleven direct references to slaves or slavery in the 700-page catalogue; seven of those concern abolition, three are employed metaphorically and one incidentally refers to enslaved people in Honduras. This does not reflect the reality of the Caldwells' connection to the slave trade and enslavement, with Draper noting that 'colonial slavery permeated the family's history and – unseen – permeates the collection.'<sup>36</sup> Between 1759-1767, Andrew Caldwell's brother, Charles Caldwell (1737-1814) was listed as co-owner of fifteen slave voyages. In several instances, he co-owned those voyages with members of his mother's family, the Heywoods. The Caldwells also intermarried with the Abdy family, with Rev. George Caldwell marrying Harriet Abdy and Charles Andrew Caldwell marrying Charlotte Ann Abdy. Harriet and Ann's mother, Lady Jane Abdy, was the sister of James Gordon, who owned slave property on three estates in Antigua and St Vincent. Gordon died by suicide in 1822, leaving a remainder on his Caribbean estates in trust for Harriet

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<sup>34</sup> LBS, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/46820>, accessed 13 Aug. 2023; LBS, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/claim/view/28384>, accessed 13 Aug. 2023; LBS, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/claim/view/29794>, accessed 13 Aug. 2023;

<sup>35</sup> C.J. Woods, 'Caldwell, Andrew', *DIB*.

<sup>36</sup> Nicholas Draper, 'Ireland and British colonial slave-ownership', in O'Neill and O'Kane (eds), *Ireland, Slavery and the Caribbean*, p. 107.

Abdy, whose husband, George Caldwell, was named as one of his trustees. It was in this capacity that George Caldwell appears in the compensation records, as a co-awardee on the estates of Sandersons (314 enslaved people, £4677 11s. 11d. compensation) and Lavingtons (152 enslaved people, £2289 14s. 8d. compensation) in Antigua, and Fair Hall in Antigua (248 enslaved people, £6438 13s. 7d. compensation).<sup>37</sup> George's brother (and another of Andrew Caldwell's nephews), William, owned a store in Kingston, Jamaica. His will is silent on estate ownership, but the Jamaica Almanac lists him as the owner the Somerset Hall estate in St Dorothy's, where more than twenty people were enslaved between 1815 and 1817. His will instructed that 'all my slaves, viz. Joe, Prudence and her two sons Evans and Peter George and Jenny be sold.' He also instructed his executor, Thomas Addison, to manage the Cocoa Walk and Kelly's Pen in St Dorothy's for the Marquis of Sligo until a new power of attorney could be established *postmortem*.<sup>38</sup>

## **2.1 Collections, Collectors and Correspondents:**

### **a. Museum Collection**

The RIA Museum of Irish Antiquities, Geology and Natural History was established in 1790, and it initially acquired items for its collections through donations. The RIA and its Museum were first based at 114 Grafton Street and, in 1828, the Antiquities Committee directed two members to 'arrange and classify the Museum' there. The Museum collections suffered some losses during its time on Grafton Street; a number of items were mislaid during the construction of a library there in 1834, while a fire in the building three years later resulted in the loss of others. While donations continued to be an important foundation of the RIA Museum, from the 1830s the Antiquities Committee was provided with funds to purchase items of particular interest. In 1840, the Antiquities Committee acquired the Dawson and Sirr collections and by 1841 it was agreed that 'the formation of a National Museum of Antiquities is an object which the Academy should pursue and funds were sought to this end.'<sup>39</sup> As Marie Bourke observes, it was at this point – at 'a time when a wealth of antiquities was being unearthed', particularly through the Geological Survey of Ireland – that the 'first real effort of the RIA to form a "national collection" began.'<sup>40</sup>

While the Museum's primary focus was on collecting items of Irish origin, the antiquarian interests of MRIA (including, notably, the Academy's first President, [James Caulfeild, first earl of Charlemont](#)) ranged far beyond Ireland. This is exemplified by early donations, including three Persian manuscripts presented by William Harvey (1751-1819) in 1789; and an idol taken from a Pagoda in Bangalore and an Indian fable inscribed on a 'Cadjan or Palmoia leaf', deposited by William Caulfeild Lennon, Esq., in 1794. It is also demonstrated by the *postmortem* donation of items belonging to the first earl of Charlemont, by his grandson, the third earl, in 1868. Along with a significant collection of Roman busts and a terra cotta stopper from a Roman cinerary urn, the RIA received a 'terra cotta mummy', the 'Case of an Egyptian animal idol' and 'a Basaltic stone with some curious emblems in relief', all of which came from the Library at Charlemont House.<sup>41</sup> In 1838, George James Knox gifted the RIA two Egyptian papyri, which were 'taken from a tomb at Thebes.' These papyri are still held by the RIA Library.<sup>42</sup> In 1847, meanwhile, a notable donation was made by the civil servant and abolitionist, Dr Richard Robert Madden, who oversaw the liberation of Jamaica's slave population in the 1830s and investigated the illegal continuation of

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<sup>37</sup>LBS, 'Rev. George Caldwell', <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/44880>, accessed 30 Aug. 2023.

<sup>38</sup>LBS, 'Somerset Hall', <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/estate/view/12657>, accessed 30 Aug. 2023.

<sup>39</sup>Marie Bourke, *The story of Irish museums: culture, identity and education* (Cork, 2011), p. 156.

<sup>40</sup>Bourke, *The story of Irish museums*, p. 157.

<sup>41</sup>RIA, Academy Minutes, vol. v (Nov. 1867-Feb. 1880), f. 42. I am grateful to Emmet Jackson for alerting me to the contents of the Charlemont donation.

<sup>42</sup>RIA, Academy Minutes, vol. 2, p. 156 (10 Dec. 1838).

the slave trade on the west coast of Africa in the 1840s.<sup>43</sup> The items donated by Madden include slave shackles from the Gold Coast, ‘supposed to be of African manufacture’, spears from The Gambia and the Gold Coast, three African idols and four mummy figures and two scarabaei from Egypt.<sup>44</sup> Madden’s donation demonstrates the complexity of the RIA’s colonial legacies, as he was a committed abolitionist who – through his employment in the British Colonial Office – played an important part in the dismantling of Caribbean slavery and the African slave trade, but also collected and removed artefacts from colonised societies.

While these were important early donations, the RIA’s collection of objects originating overseas remained relatively small until the mid-nineteenth century. As the British Empire expanded in Asia, the opportunity for scientific, antiquarian and linguistic enquiry increased and, in turn, the number of artefacts of overseas – and particularly colonial origin – in the RIA Museum grew significantly. In 1928, at which point the RIA Museum Registers terminate, the collection included over 600 entries detailing items of overseas origin. These objects have a broad geographic footprint, coming from locations in Africa, Asia, North and South America and Oceania, with a significant proportion originating in British colonies, dominions or protectorates. Donations of objects from overseas were made by both MRIA and non-MRIA. The overseas collection was formed from both small (<10 objects) and large donations (>10 objects), with the latter accounting for the majority of objects donated; as a result, the overall number of individual donors is relatively small. Some examples of small donations from individual donors are:

- A large brass brooch worn by the women of Kanawar in the western Himalayas, presented by Captain George P. Heathcote in 1857;<sup>45</sup>
- An ‘Indian axe from Canada West’, which was presented to the Academy by Denis H. Kelly, MRIA, in December 1868;<sup>46</sup>
- A brass manilla, modern, green in colour, penannular and enlarged at extremities, described as being ‘Used in the African trade’, donated by [Rev. Charles Graves, MRIA](#), in 1870;<sup>47</sup>
- A javelin with a head made from obsidian, from New Ireland, Papua New Guinea, donated by Major Vigors in 1876;<sup>48</sup>
- Three objects ‘illustrating the ethnography of Sierra Leone’, donated by Major Berry in 1911; this comprised an axe, a ‘Musical instrument made of [an] old tin biscuit box with wooden top’, and a leather ‘Magic bag about 18” long, contains various charms and objects.’

Some examples of large donations are:

- Thirty-five items donated by Colonel Philip Meadows Taylor, which he procured from Sir George Yule of Hyderabad, India, in 1867. These objects were originally taken from a cairn at nearby Hyat Nugger and include earthenware objects, weaponry, shells and a bronze figure of a deer;<sup>49</sup>
- Fifty-one objects from British Burma, donated by Francis Fedder via [Valentine Ball, MRIA](#), in 1868. This donation included Buddhist idols and various items of jewellery, such as armlets, bracelets, rings, necklaces and ear ornaments;<sup>50</sup>
- Thirteen objects – eight flint implements and five enclosed rings from Egypt (mainly Thebes) – donated by Walter Meyers in 1884;

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<sup>43</sup> C.J. Woods, ‘Madden, Richard Robert’, *DIB*.

<sup>44</sup> *PRLA*, vol. 3 (1844-1847), p. 381; RIA Museum Registers, vol. 1, A1-F950.

<sup>45</sup> *PRLA*, vol. 6 (1853-1857), p. 525.

<sup>46</sup> RIA Museum Registers, vol. 4 (1886-1928), p. 123 (item no. 1302).

<sup>47</sup> RIA Museum Registers, vol. 3 (1859-1886), 1872-1876, p. 246 (item no. 2766).

<sup>48</sup> RIA Museum Registers, vol. 3 (1859-1886), 1872-1876, p. 411 (item no. 1674).

<sup>49</sup> RIA Museum Registers, vol. 3 (1859-1886), 1872-1876, p. 240 (items 2667-2701).

<sup>50</sup> RIA Museum Registers, vol. 3 (1859-1886), 1872-1876, pp 237-8 (items 2616-2666).

- A series of large donations made by Captain Heywood Walter Seton-Karr, including:
  - hundreds of flint implements from Fayoom in Egypt (1905);
  - ‘Flint Implements from India, Egypt, and the Argentine’ (1908);
  - ‘A selection of paleolithic implements from India’ (1908);
  - ‘Paleolithic implements from India’ (1912).

Other large donations originated in territories that were not part of the British Empire, but which were impacted by British and European imperialism and/or were shaped by the ideologies of empire. In 1857, for example, Francis M. Jennings donated eleven items of jewellery from Mogador in Morocco.<sup>51</sup> A significant collection of prehistoric objects from Japan was donated to the RIA by Dr Neil Gordon Munro between 1911 and 1912. The majority of these items belonged to the Ainu people, an ethnically distinct group native to northern Japan (particularly Hokkaido). In the nineteenth century, the Ainu were increasingly racialised and subject to forced assimilation and colonisation by the Japanese, with ‘the process of establishing Japanese domination greatly accelerated by the Meiji Restoration of 1868 when the modernising ... state established a colonial territory in the newly acquired territory of Hokkaido.’<sup>52</sup> Munro’s donations comprised pottery, tools, weaponry and jewellery.<sup>53</sup>

The Museum’s collection of overseas ethnographic objects illuminates the role that the RIA and other learned societies played in the project of empire, as they encouraged and promoted colonial scholarship and provided a space to display items of colonial origin. The collecting of such items was a colonial enterprise, with civil servants and army officers encouraged to acquire artefacts and specimens for inquiry and display in Britain and Ireland. The commonality of this practice in an Irish context has been observed by Sherra Murphy, in her work on the Natural History Museum.<sup>54</sup> The Fedder donation noted above came to the RIA from British Burma via the Anglo-Irish geologist Valentine Ball, MRIA.<sup>55</sup> Ball was connected to Fedder through their work on the Geological Survey of India (a project that was led by the TCD-educated geologist and MRIA, [Thomas Oldham](#)). Ball’s career demonstrates the interconnectedness of various institutions in Ireland and Britain; he was appointed chair of geology and mineralogy at TCD in 1881, leaving that position in 1883, when appointed Director of the Institutions of Science and Art (which included the museum, the library and the botanical gardens). He was a member of the RDS, a Fellow of the Royal Society, President of the Royal Geological Society of Ireland and honorary secretary of the Royal Zoological Society of Ireland.<sup>56</sup>

Military officers appear as donors to the RIA Museum with relative frequency; this includes the Englishman, Captain Philip Meadows Taylor, MRIA; Captain Borrowes of Gilttown in County Kildare, who donated a large block of syenite with a border of Egyptian hieroglyphs in 1854;<sup>57</sup> and Lieutenant-Colonel P.T. French, who deposited a large collection of Indian musical instruments in 1863.<sup>58</sup> These musical instruments – which were subsequently catalogued by Captain Meadows Taylor – hung on the walls and bannisters of the Academy’s staircase, before a motion tabled by William Wilde in 1867 resulted in their removal to the RDS; as Wilde noted, the

<sup>51</sup> *PRLA*, vol. 6 (1853-1857), pp 386-7, 451; *PRLA*, vol. 7 (1857-1861), pp 107-108; RIA Museum Registers, vol. 3 (1859-1886), 1872-1876, p. 249 (item nos 2796-2806).

<sup>52</sup> Richard Siddle, *Race, Resistance and the Ainu of Japan* (2012), DOI: 10.4324/9780203435465-1.

<sup>53</sup> RIA Museum Registers, vol. 4 (1886-1928), pp 368-370 (items 47 (1)-47 (140)); pp 380-381 (items 121-226); pp 393-395 (items 66-117); pp 411-412 (items 46 (1)-46 (42)).

<sup>54</sup> Sherra Murphy, *The first national museum*, p. 17.

<sup>55</sup> RIA Museum Registers, vol. 3 (1859-1886), 1872-1876, pp 237-8 (items 2616-2666).

<sup>56</sup> Patrick N. Wyse Jackson, ‘Ball, Valentine’, *DIB*.

<sup>57</sup> *PRLA*, vi (1853-1857), pp 88-9.

<sup>58</sup> *PRLA*, viii (1861-1864), p. 394.

instruments were ‘totally inapplicable to the objects and purposes of our Museum’.<sup>59</sup> The question of what to do with items of colonial/overseas origin had become more urgent as the RIA Museum collections expanded. In April 1855, it was resolved ‘To recommend the Council that the Museum Room shall contain only Irish Antiquities, and that the back parlour adjoining the Museum, be devoted to an Illustrative Museum containing such articles as, although not Irish, are important as throwing light on Irish antiquities.’<sup>60</sup> The majority of the RIA’s overseas/colonial collection was transferred to the National Museum of Ireland, after the creation of that institution in 1877, although objects continued to be donated to the Academy into the twentieth century.

The RIA Museum collection presents a significant challenge, as it has been absorbed into the NMI collections, meaning that provenance will have to be re-established for items. This also presents an opportunity, however, as – through cross-institutional collaboration – the Academy could help to highlight and contextualise the RIA Museum’s acquisition of objects of colonial origin. This would allow for a considered engagement with artefacts and collections and provide a space to interrogate the Academy’s colonial legacy as collector.

### **b. Library Collections:**

The limited nature of this scoping exercise did not allow for a detailed analysis of the RIA Library or its collection of books, journals, drawings and manuscripts. However, a sample of items available indicate that further research is essential to fully interrogate the Library’s colonial legacies and direct future strategies for decolonisation.

### **Main Catalogue (books, pamphlets, etc):**

A sampling exercise focusing on former British colonies and dominions and using colonial terminology provides some indication of the scale and scope of material originating from, focusing on or referencing colonialism. A keyword search for ‘India’ returned 486 matches across the Main Catalogue. A selection of this material includes:

- Robert M. Martin, *The history, antiquities, topography, and statistics of eastern India; comprising the districts of Behar, Shahabad... Surveyed under the orders of the supreme government and collated from the original documents at the E[ast] I[ndia] House* (London, 1838);
- Joshua Marshman, *Advantages of Christianity in promoting the establishment and prosperity of the British Government in India; containing remarks occasioned by reading a memoir on the Vellore Mutiny. By Joshua Marshman, D. D. one of the Baptist Missionaries at Serampore* (London, 1813);
- Jas. Burgess and Bhagwanlal Indrai Pandit, *Archaeological survey of western India: Inscriptions from the cave-temples of western India with descriptive notes, etc.* (Bombay, 1881);
- John Bowen, *Missionary incitement, and Hindoo demoralization: including some observations on the political tendency of the means taken to evangelize Hindoostan* (London, 1821). The Library also holds a second pamphlet by Bowen, addressing criticisms of this publication.
- J.D. Hooker (MRIA), *The flora of British India* (7 vols, London, 1875-1897).

### **Periodicals:**

Many Periodicals held by the RIA originated in and concerned British or European colonies. These publications reveal the networks that facilitated the dissemination of colonial research and knowledge exchange across the Empire; their presence in the RIA Library collection highlights the role that learned societies played in that process.

Again using ‘India’ in a key word search, the following is a small sample of material held by the Library (dating from pre-independence):

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<sup>59</sup> RIA, Minutes of the Committee of Polite Literature and Antiquities, vol. iv (1866-1869), f. 98, 2 Nov. 1867.

<sup>60</sup> RIA, Minutes of the Committee of Polite Literature and Antiquities, vol. ii (1850-1859), f. 64, 4 Apr. 1865.

- *Journal of the Agricultural Society of India*
- *Palaeontologia Indica*
- *The East India Register and Directory*
- *Annual Progress Report of the Archaeological Survey*
- *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*
- *General Reports of the Geological Survey of India*
- *Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India*
- *Memoirs of the Zoological Survey of India*
- *Linguistic Survey of India*

### **Manuscript Collections:**

The following is a sample of manuscript collections held by the RIA Library, which shine a light on the colonial preoccupations and connections of MRIA and provide insight into some of the Academy's colonial legacies.

#### **The Caldwell Papers (RIA 12 R 39 – 12 R 48):**

As noted, the Caldwell Papers – which constitute one of the Library's major manuscript collections – are heavily concerned with the machinations of the British Empire, colonisation, colonial slavery and society. The collection comprises the papers of the Caldwell family and of families with whom they intermarried; this includes the Heywoods and the Abdys, members of whom were involved in or benefitted from colonial slavery (see entry on Andrew Caldwell above).

The following is a selection of relevant items in the collection:

#### Volume 2. '1700-1870', RIA 12 R 40:

Includes correspondence and other papers providing details of the Caldwell family's service in the East India Company's Armies and the British Army and Navy.

#### Volume 3. '1704-1793', RIA 12 R 41:

Includes letter from Mrs A. Hunt, Glasgow, to 'Dear Sir' [probably Andrew Caldwell], dated 23 April 1792, in which she notes that there is much support for William Wilberforce's Bill to abolish the slave trade, with many people boycotting rum and sugar until abolition is achieved.<sup>61</sup>

#### Volume 4. '1732-1777', RIA 12 R 42:

Includes correspondence from Captain Benjamin Caldwell [later Admiral Sir Benjamin Caldwell], who enlisted in the navy and travelled to the Caribbean and was stationed in Antigua in the 1760s; among other things, Caldwell discusses items that he has sent back to his family in Dublin and informs them that he has been promoted.<sup>62</sup>

#### Volume 6. '1801-1808', RIA 12 R 44:

Includes a letter from Charlotte Caldwell to Andrew Caldwell, dated 8 April 1803, discussing the economic consequences of losing the West Indies and America.

#### Volume 7. '1809-1863', RIA 12 R 45:

Includes a letter from Charles Tindal of Birmingham to John Fortescue, dated 18 February 1846, which argues that Robert Peel 'will be in the minority if he attempts to support the [] duty on foreign free-labour sugar and it is hoped that he will abandon the idea as it will not do ought towards checking the slave trade.'

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<sup>61</sup> RIA 12 R 41/141.

<sup>62</sup> See RIA 12 R 42/122; 12 R 42/133; 12 R 42/135.

Volume 8. Abdy & Gordon, RIA 12 R 46:

Includes documents relating to the sale of a 185-acre sugar plantation known as Lavingtons and a tract of pasture land known as Monk's Hill in Antigua; both were owned by James Gordon, uncle of Harriet and Charlotte Ann Abdy, wives of Rev. George Caldwell and Charles Andrew Caldwell respectively. These papers include details of the 'stock and machinery' sold with both lots and a map of both estates.<sup>63</sup> This section also includes letter from James Caldwell, describing voyages around the Gulfs of Mexico and Florida, Cuba, Barbados and the wider Caribbean, and of his experience living on Barbados.<sup>64</sup>

Loose Documents, RIA 12 R 48:

Letters from naval officer Henry Caldwell, including correspondence sent from Coquimbo in Chile and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In one letter, dated 9 April 1834, he informs his sister Mary Caldwell that his friend Kyriston is to transport a former slave vessel to the coast of Africa and notes that it was miserable vessel, with 30 of the 400 slaves on board dying in their port.<sup>65</sup> Also comprises correspondence from Mary Eleanor Bulwer Caldwell and her daughters, from Cape Town, Natal, the Middle East, Cyprus and Italy, dated 1883. Includes, for example, a letter from Mary Eleanor's daughter Lily Caldwell, to her uncle Charles, telling him that they bought beads from a 'Kaffre' woman and had learned some 'Kaffre' words. In another letter, Lily informs Charles that the family had attended a local wedding.<sup>66</sup>

**R.R. Madden Collection:**

Dr Richard Robert Madden's papers provide significant insight into the administration of the British Empire and its colonies, including colonial slavery and abolition in the Caribbean, the administration of British settlements on the coast of West Africa and British rule in Australia. While a servant of the British Empire, Madden was also a committed abolitionist and vocal critic of exploitative colonial practices, and his experience demonstrates some of the complexities of the colonial past.

The son of Edward Madden, a wealthy Dublin silk manufacturer, and Elizabeth (née Forde), Richard Robert Madden studied medicine at Paris, Naples and London. He travelled in the Middle East and in 1829 he published an account of his experiences in *Travels in Turkey, Egypt, Nubia and Palestine*. By then he had returned to London to practise as a surgeon, where he married Harriet Elmslie, the daughter of a Jamaican plantation owner. While in London, Madden joined the Anti-Slavery Society and became a committed abolitionist. He travelled to Jamaica when slavery was abolished across the British Empire in 1833, to serve as a special magistrate, but he was frustrated in his efforts to deal fairly with former slaves and faced threats from former slave owners and resigned in late 1834. Two years later, he was appointed superintendent of liberated Africans and judge arbitrator in Cuba, positions he held until 1839. Before returning to Europe that year, Madden appeared in New York to provide evidence on behalf of 49 illegally enslaved Africans who revolted on board the Cuban ship, the *Amistad*. Having returned to London, he took part in the inaugural Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840. Madden was then part of a mission led by Sir Moses Montefiore, which travelled to Syria and Egypt to inquire into the treatment of Jews in Damascus. He took up a post as Special Commissioner of Inquiry into the administration of British settlements on the West Coast of Africa in early 1841, investigating allegations that slave factories in Gambia and on the Gold Coast were supplied from Britain. His report to parliament

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<sup>63</sup> RIA 12 R 46/23.

<sup>64</sup> RIA 12 R 46/122-123.

<sup>65</sup> RIA 12 R 48/2/12.

<sup>66</sup> RIA 12 R 48/2/23.

condemned the activities of certain London merchants and the conduct of Captain George Maclean, Governor of Cape Coast Castle, but the Tories' return to Government in August 1841 significantly reduced its material impact. Madden's career in the British Colonial Office subsequently stalled until 1847, when he became Colonial Secretary in Western Australia. He only occupied the role for a short time, but during his incumbency was active in promoting the interests of Aboriginal peoples and Irish Catholic settlers on the Swan River.<sup>67</sup>

The following is a small sample of relevant material from the Madden Collection:

- 24 O 11/9: Dating from around 1829, the copy of a letter to Madden (then Special Magistrate in Jamaica) from Present Pike, an African-born slave. Pike outlines the financial and legal difficulties she experienced after the death of her first enslaver.
- 24 O 11/11: Copy of a letter to Madden, then a Special Magistrate in Jamaica, from D. O'Reilly, Attorney-General, regarding the destruction of the slave ship *Estella* off the coast of Jamaica, and the subsequent arrest of the captain and crew. Dates from the nineteenth century.
- 24 O 11/17: Copy of a letter to Madden from H.S. Fox, British Minister to the United States, dated 29 Nov. 1839, concerning their recent correspondence on the plight and position of the illegally enslaved Africans of the *Amistad*.
- 24 N 1/9: Copy of a letter to James Stephen from John Barron, of the Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty, directing Stephen to notify all officers of British naval vessels to provide assistance to Madden, then appointed Special Commissioner of Inquiry into the Administration of the British Settlements on the West Coast of Africa. Dated 4 December 1840.
- 24 N 1/30: Copy of correspondence between Capt. John Lort Stokes of the H. M. S. 'Beagle' and John Hutt, Governor of Western Australia, concerning a forthcoming expedition to examine the 'position and qualities of Port Grey', Western Australia. Dating from December 1841.
- 24 N 1/47: Copies of despatches and reports on the position, 'protection' and 'civilisation' of aboriginal peoples in Australia, compiled and annotated by Madden. Dating from 1844.
- 24 N 1/49: Copy of a letter from Charles Symmons, Protector of Natives, to Madden, detailing a violent attack on and imprisonment of an aboriginal woman by a white settler. Includes an account of a sitting of the Petty Sessions at Busselton, Western Australia, at which George Guerrier was charged with 'having illegally imprisoned - and thereby hastened the death of an aboriginal native woman, named Mary'. Dated 10 May 1848.
- 24 N 1/71: Documentation and correspondence dating from 1846-8, concerning the affairs of the Roman Catholic Mission of Western Australia, particularly the provision of education for Catholics in Perth.
- 24 N 1/63: Papers relating to the discovery of mineral deposits in Western Australia, including correspondence on the discovery of coal and plumbago and on the possibility of developing the mining industry. Dated 1848-9.

### **The Graves Collection (24 O 39):**

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<sup>67</sup> Woods, 'Madden, Richard Robert', *DIB*; Andrew Boyd, 'The Life and Times of R.R. Madden', *Seanchas Ardmhaca: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society* 20, no. 2 (2005), pp 133-154.



The Graves Collection is an amalgamation of three distinct but related collections, which belonged to three leading Irish antiquarians; [John O'Donovan](#), [Rev. James Graves](#), and [Rev. Charles Graves](#). This collection provides valuable insight into the mechanics of empire, including the education of Irish men for employment in the colonial civil service and the role of Irish recruits in British colonial armies.

The **John O'Donovan Series (24 O 39/JOD)** includes correspondence from Donal McCarthy, which offers some insight into his elder son's career as an officer serving in the British Army in India and his attempts to teach his eldest son the skills he will need to succeed in Australia. McCarthy also expresses his hope that one of O'Donovan's sons will secure a post in the Indian Civil Service, through competitive examination. McCarthy also writes about his cousin, Sir Charles Justin MacCarthy, who was Governor of British Ceylon between 1860 and 1863.<sup>68</sup> An 1858 letter to O'Donovan from William Donnelly, Registrar General, meanwhile, includes information about the East India Company and Donnelly's brother in Bengal, who offers to find some subscribers to O'Donovan's work in India.<sup>69</sup> The O'Donovan Series – and the McCarthy correspondence in particular – reflects, to a degree, Ireland's complexity as a 'quasi-colonial' society seeking a national identity, while also actively participating in the British empire. This complexity is underlined by the contents of correspondence from Richard Monck, who compares the people of Rochestown to 'a savage race' and notes that although 'at a remote period Ireland enjoyed a degree of civilization to which perhaps her neighbours could lay little claim', there were at present 'places where they are worse than the "Bushmen of Southern Africa"'.<sup>70</sup> The O'Donovan Series also reflects the nineteenth-century interest in anthropometry and race 'science', with the English doctor, craniologist, polygenist, and prolific collector of skulls and skeletons, Joseph Barnard Davis, writing to O'Donovan in order to acquire an ancient Irish skull for engraving and inclusion in *Crania Britannica: delineations and descriptions of the skulls of the aboriginal and early inhabitants of the British islands* (co-authored with John Thurman).<sup>71</sup>

The **Charles Graves Endowed Schools Sub-Series (24/09/CG/ES)** references the open competition for positions in the Indian Civil Service, while the **Charles Graves Ogham Sub-Series (24/09/CG/OGH)** includes details of Graves's work with Indian Service students at TCD.

### **Day MSS:**

The nature and extent of material relating to British colonialism varies widely between collections. Individual or a small number of relevant items in larger collections can also illuminate our understanding of events in British colonies and provide greater insight into MRIA's colonial connections. This is true of the Day MSS, which includes correspondence between Robert Day, MRIA, and Sir Jack Day, Advocate General of Bengal. A letter from Jack Day provides details of his deployment to Madras (now Chennai) following a revolution, to direct prosecutions against insurgents. He gives an account of his negotiations with Ameer al Amrah, the son of the Nabob of Carnac, concerning British jurisdiction. He also describes a conflict with his secretary, Stephen Popham, who tried to bring three actions against Day – one of which was for defamation of character and 'hysteria' suffered by Popham's wife as a result of the lengthy journey to India. Dated 15 October 1778.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> RIA, 24 O 39/JOD/193-198.

<sup>69</sup> RIA, 24 O 39/JOD/68.

<sup>70</sup> RIA, 24 O 39/JOD/239.

<sup>71</sup> RIA, 24 O 39/JOD/58.

<sup>72</sup> RIA, 12 W 9 (38).

### **Members' Certificate Collection (MRIAC):**

The Members' Certificate Collection provide details of individuals who were proposed for election as MRIA and Honorary MRIA, often for their contributions to colonial research. These certificates provide insight into the rationale for proposing the election of individual MRIA and Hon. MRIA and, by cross-referencing Certificates with the RIA Members' Database it will be possible to identify individuals who were proposed but rejected, as well as those who were successfully elected. This could help to illuminate the colonial preoccupations of the Academy. The Certificates also provide useful details of the roles occupied by individual MRIA and Hon. MRIA in the British Empire and in other empires.

The following is a small selection of better-known and lesser-known individuals who were proposed for election as MRIA, including the reason(s) provided for their proposal:

- Charles R. Browne (1867-1931), an Irish headhunter. Browne was proposed and elected in 1892 and his Members' Certificate notes that he was 'an earnest worker in the field of anthropology.'<sup>73</sup> He is best known for his ethnographical surveys of communities in the remote West of Ireland in the late nineteenth century – these studies involved the practice of craniometry (or skull measuring). He was co-author, with Alfred Cort Haddon, of *The Ethnography of the Aran Islands*, published in *PRLA*.<sup>74</sup>
- Alfred Cort Haddon (1855-1940), an Irish headhunter. A Cambridge-educated zoologist and subsequent anthropologist and ethnologist, Haddon was proposed and elected MRIA in 1883, with his Certificate noting that he was 'attached to the study of natural science and also archaeology.'<sup>75</sup> Appointed Professor of Zoology at the College of Science in Dublin in 1880, he travelled to the Torres Islands in 1888 to study marine biology and to document the Islanders' customs. Haddon's experience on the Torres Islands caused him to shift his focus to anthropology. His legacy in that field is complex: he abhorred the destruction of indigenous communities and customs by colonists and he worked tirelessly to record the Torres Islanders' way of life before it disappeared, but he was also centrally involved in the 'skull-measuring business',<sup>76</sup> helping to establish the Anthropometric Laboratory at Trinity College Dublin. With Andrew Francis Dixon, Daniel Cunningham, and Charles Browne, he was engaged in studying the ethnography of communities in the remote West of Ireland, and in 1890 he and Dixon removed the skulls of islanders from Inishbofin without permission.<sup>77</sup>
- Francis Tyrrell was proposed in 1871. His Members' Certificate describes him as being 'well acquainted with archaeology, and with general mechanical & [ ] sciences; served in the public works department of India for many years with much distinction.'<sup>78</sup>
- Lieutenant-Colonel George T. Plunkett (1842-1922), proposed and elected in 1896, described having 'taken an active role in the [recent] archaeological explorations in Egypt.'<sup>79</sup>
- Henry Seymour Guinness, meanwhile, was proposed for election in 1910, when he was described as being an 'associate member Institution of Civil Engineers, London, and

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<sup>73</sup> MRIAC/882, Members Certificate Collection, Candidate: Charles Browne, 25 Apr. 1892.

<sup>74</sup> *PRLA* (1889-1901), ii (1891-1893), pp 768-830.

<sup>75</sup> MRIAC/784, Members Certificate Collection, Candidate: Alfred Cort Haddon, M.A., F.Z.S., 8 Nov. 1883.

<sup>76</sup> Patrick Geddes to Alfred Cort Haddon, 11 Dec. [1889], quoted in Ciarán Walsh, 'The skull measuring business: some murderous little facts from the forgotten spaces of anthropology in Ireland' (PhD Thesis, Maynooth University, 2020), p. 2.

<sup>77</sup> Steve Mullins, 'Alfred Cort Haddon (1855-1940), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/haddon-alfred-cort-10386>, accessed 15 Sep. 2023; see Walsh, 'The skull measuring business', *passim*.

<sup>78</sup> MRIAC/631, Members Certificate Collection: Candidate, Francis Tyrrell [Frederick Francis Tyrrell], 15 Apr. 1871.

<sup>79</sup> MRIAC/929, Members Certificate Collection: Candidate, Lieut-Col. George T. Plunkett, 1 Jan. 1896.

formerly attached to the Public Works Department, India. Hon. Treasurer and founder, of the Parish Register Society, Dublin; for which he has edited the Monkstown parish registers. 1669-1800. A skilled genealogist, and antiquary, sometime of the Royal Indian Engineering College Coopers Hill, and Argyll scholar in natural science (1879).<sup>80</sup>

Honorary membership was (and remains) reflective of the Academy's broader engagement with overseas scholarship across a variety of fields. It recognised (and still recognises) academic excellence and it demonstrated the Academy's engagement with colonial research. A small sample of individuals proposed and elected as Honorary MRIA includes:

- Adolf Engler, Professor of Botany at the University of Berlin and Director of the Berlin-Dahlem Botanical Garden (1889-1921), which became 'a clearing house for plant material from the German colonies and other colonial areas.'<sup>81</sup> Engler was described in his Honorary Members' Certificate as the 'Official Head of Botanical Work in the German Empire' and as the 'Founder of "Die natürlichen Pflanzenfamilien"'.<sup>82</sup>
- Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, government botanist in Victoria, Australia, who, with several other German speakers, was 'deeply entangled with the Australian colonial project', and 'intricately involved in imagining, knowing and shaping colonial Australia.'<sup>83</sup> von Mueller was recommended 'for election as honorary member in the section of science,' as the 'Author of many important botanical works: among them a monograph of the *Eucalyptidae*, contributions to the *Flora of Victoria*, *Iconography of [caudolleaceans] plants*.'
- William Matthew Flinders Petrie, proposed as Hon. MRIA in February 1904, described as 'Explorer of the Greek settlements at Naukratis and Daphnae, of prehistoric Egyptian at Koptos and Nagada etc. Author of many memoirs relating to his explorations.'<sup>84</sup>
- Alfred Russel Wallace, naturalist, recommended for election as Hon. MRIA 'for his eminent services to science in various branches of natural history.'<sup>85</sup>
- The online Members' Certificates do not include Augustus Fox Lane Pitt-Rivers, ethnologist and archaeologist, whose collection of overseas artefacts formed the basis of the Pitt-Rivers Museum at Oxford. Pitt-Rivers was elected an Hon. MRIA in 1895 and responded to the honour thus: 'I am glad to become an honorary member of your valuable society and hope in my state of health permits of it to be able at some time to be of use to it.'<sup>86</sup>

### **The Gorund, a Sikh MS in the Persian character:**

With accompanying letter from the donor. Presented to the RIA by Joseph Burke, Asst. surgeon of the 40th regiment. Found by him on 28 January 1846 on the battlefield at Aliwal and donated to the Academy in 1850.<sup>87</sup>

### **Three fragments of a Pentateuch scroll:**

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<sup>80</sup> MRIAC/1075, Members Certificate Collection: Candidate: Henry Seymour Guinness, 5 Dec. 1910.

<sup>81</sup> Katja Kaiser, 'Duplicate networks: the Berlin botanical institutions as a 'clearing house' for colonial plant material, 1891–1920', *British Journal for the History of Science* 55, no. 3 (2022), p. 280.

<sup>82</sup> MRIAC/1212, Members Certificate Collection: Certificate of Candidate: Adolf Engler, 8 Feb. 1904.

<sup>83</sup> L. Barrett, et al. (2018), 'Remembering German-Australian Colonial Entanglement: An Introduction', *Postcolonial Studies* 21, no.1, (Jan. 2018), p. 2.

<sup>84</sup> MRIAC/1179, Members Certificate Collection: Candidate: William Matthew Flinders Petrie, 8 Feb. 1904.

<sup>85</sup> MRIAC/1220, Members Certificate Collection: Candidate: Alfred Russel Wallace, 10 Feb. 1908.

<sup>86</sup> RIA, Academy Minute Books, vol. 6 (Mar. 1880-Jun. 1897), f. 381.

<sup>87</sup> RIA, 23 G 29; *PRLA*, iv (1847-1850), p. 586; *PRLA*, v (1850-1853), p. 275.

Fragments ‘found by Ford Leathley, Esq., in the tomb said to be Absalom’s tomb in Jerusalem’ and donated by him in 1852. Identified as Pentateuch scroll in April 1956 by Mr Pearson of SOAS, London.<sup>88</sup>

### **3. Research:**

#### **3.1 Publication of Colonial Research:**

The publication of research in the fields of science, polite literature and antiquities was a fundamental function of the Academy from 1887, when the first volume of *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy* was produced. Research published in *Transactions* and *Proceedings* reflected the imperial and colonial preoccupations that were characteristic of the late eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In some cases, papers focused on artefacts or specimens donated or exhibited by MRIA or invited speakers, and in other instances research was presented without the exhibition or donation of physical items (although these presentations were occasionally accompanied by illustrations). The research presented to the Academy by both MRIA and non-MRIA was often published in the *Transactions* and the *Proceedings*. Papers were presented under the broad headings of science, polite literature and architecture, but this encompassed a broad array of topics. A significant body of research presented to the Academy was the product of or was heavily shaped by imperialism and colonialism. This includes research in the fields of Egyptology, natural science and anthropology (especially ethnography and anthropometry). As such, the research included in the *Transactions* and *Proceedings* represents one of the RIA’s most significant colonial legacies. The following are some examples of relevant research:

#### **Natural Sciences:**

Both the *Transactions* and *Proceedings* published a diverse range of papers concerned with the natural sciences, and particularly life sciences. Among others, botanists, zoologists, anatomists, marine biologists and geologists were preoccupied with the flora, fauna and minerals encountered in British and other colonies across the globe. Research in this area furthered understandings of the natural world, but it was also often promoted by colonial governments as a means of identifying and exploiting resources for the Empire.<sup>89</sup>

Some examples of papers presented and/or published in the fields of natural science include:

- Robert Kane, ‘On the colouring matter of Persian berries.’<sup>90</sup>
- [W.H. Harvey](#), MRIA, ‘On the marine botany of Western Australia’ [Read 11 Dec. 1854].<sup>91</sup>
- E.P. Wright, ‘Contributions towards a knowledge of the Flora of the Seychelles’ [Read 14 Dec. 1868].<sup>92</sup>
- J.G. Baker, ‘On the Seychelles’ fern flora [Read 22 Jun. 1874].<sup>93</sup>
- F. Ogilby Ross, ‘On the myology of the cheetah, or hunting leopard of India’ [Read 30 November 1876]. The cheetah was donated by Viscount Southwell to the Zoological Gardens in 1872 and died ‘in convulsions’ in 1876. Ogilby Ross was permitted to dissect the animal by Professors [Alexander Macalister](#) and [Samuel Haughton](#) of TCD.<sup>94</sup>
- H.W. Mackintosh, ‘Note on the occurrence of a premaxilla-frontal suture in the skull of the koala (*Phascolactos Cinerus*) [Read 29 Nov. 1879]. Mackintosh examined two koala

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<sup>88</sup> RIA, 12 B(1) 13; *PRLA*, iv (1847-1850), p. 586.

<sup>89</sup> See, for example, Joshy Mathew, ‘Colonial exploitation of forest resources of the Western Ghats: 1792-1882’, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 80 (Dec. 2019), 591-599.

<sup>90</sup> *PRLA* (1836-1869), vol. 2 (1840-1844), pp 222-226.

<sup>91</sup> *PRLA* (1836-1869), vol. 6 (1853-1857), p. 152.

<sup>92</sup> *TRIA*, vol. 24, Science (1871), pp 571-578.

<sup>93</sup> *TRIA*, vol. 25, Science (1875), pp 509-518.

<sup>94</sup> *PRLA*, vol. 3, Science (1883), pp 23-32.

skulls; one was held by the Museum of Anatomy and Zoology in TCD and the other was in the Museum of the RDS.

- H.C. Hart, 'Report on the botany of Sinai and South Palestine' [Read 28 Feb. 1885].<sup>95</sup>
- A.C. Haddon, W.J. Sollas and G.A.J. Cole, 'On the geology of the Torres Straits' [Read 27 Jun. 1892].<sup>96</sup>

### **Egyptology and Assyriology:**

Modern fascination with Ancient Egypt emerged at the end of the eighteenth century, with the Napoleonic campaign there and the discovery of the Rosetta Stone. Across Europe, scholars energetically pursued knowledge and understanding of the Egyptian civilisation. This included Karl Richard Lepsius and Flinders Petrie, both of whom were elected Honorary MRIA,<sup>97</sup> and it also included [Rev. Dr Edward Hincks](#), MRIA, a Church of Ireland clergyman, Egyptologist and Assyriologist. One of the Academy's most prolific scholars in the nineteenth century, Hincks graduated BA from TCD in 1812, and was awarded the gold medal for outstanding merit. His interest in Egypt was encouraged during his time at university, when he served as an assistant librarian and encountered Trinity's Egyptian manuscripts. Hincks had a particular interest in the Egyptian language and he began publishing on that topic in the *Transactions* in 1838. His decipherment of Mesopotamian cuneiform (developed to write the Sumerian language) was perhaps his greatest contribution to scholarship. Hincks was an internationally renowned scholar and corresponded with some of the leading lights in his field. Some examples of papers presented or published by Hincks are:

- 'On the years and cycles used by the Ancient Egyptians' [Read 9 Apr. 1838].<sup>98</sup>
- 'On the Egyptian stele, or tablet' [Read 28 Jun. 1841].<sup>99</sup>
- 'A paper on the true date of the Rosetta Stone' [9 May 1842].
- 'On the defacement of divine and royal names on Egyptian monuments' [Read 26 Feb. 1844]
- 'On the three kinds of Persepolitan writing and on the Babylonian Lapidary characters' [Read 30 Nov. and 14 Dec. 1846].<sup>100</sup>
- 'On the Khorsabad inscriptions' [Read 25 Jun. 1849].<sup>101</sup>
- 'On a Babylonian tablet in the British Museum.'<sup>102</sup>
- 'On the chronology of the twenty-sixth Egyptian dynasty, and of the commencement of the twenty-seventh' [Read 13 Nov. 1854].<sup>103</sup>
- 'On the various years and months in use among the Egyptians' [Read 26 Jun. 1865].<sup>104</sup>

### **Anthropology:**

As Adam Kuper notes, 'In the 1830s and 1840s, an Enlightenment project, the study of the origin and variety of human populations, was made over into a natural science.' This new field, which was variously termed 'ethnography', or 'ethnology', or 'anthropology', was preoccupied with questions of 'race', 'culture', 'civilisation' and 'progress'; terms that 'became rallying cries in the

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<sup>95</sup> *TRLA*, vol. 28, Science (1880-1886), pp 373-452.

<sup>96</sup> *TRLA*, vol. 20 (1892-1896), pp 419-476.

<sup>97</sup> *PRLA* (1836-1869), vol. 5 (1850-1853), pp 44-45. Letter from R. Lepsius, Berlin, dated 27 Dec. 1850.

<sup>98</sup> *TRLA*, vol. 18 (1839), pp 153-198.

<sup>99</sup> *TRLA*, vol. 19 (1843), pp 49-71.

<sup>100</sup> *PRLA*, vol. 21 (1846), pp 233-248.

<sup>101</sup> *TRLA*, vol. 22 (1849), pp 3-72.

<sup>102</sup> *PRLA*, vol. 6 (1853-1857), pp 270-271.

<sup>103</sup> *TRLA*, vol. 22 (1849), pp 423-436.

<sup>104</sup> *TRLA*, vol. 24, Polite Literature (1867), pp 25-66.

culture wars of the day.’ Across the Western world, scholars engaged in heated debates on race and on the origin of the human species, with ‘monogenists’ favouring a single origin and ‘polygenists’ arguing for the separate origin of each race. These debates entwined with ideas about ‘civilisation’ and progress’, to provide a ‘scientific’ justification for imperialism and Anglicising colonial regimes (although those ‘of a Burkean persuasion were more inclined to shore up established authorities and to show respect for local sensibilities’).<sup>105</sup> It was in this context that Western scholars examined the culture and traditions of indigenous peoples. A significant body of such research was presented to the Academy and published in the *Transactions* and *Proceedings* in the late nineteenth century, including the following:

- W. Ball, ‘On a visit to the Andamanese “Home”, Port Blair, Andaman Islands’ [Read 13 Nov. 1871].<sup>106</sup>
- Valentine Ball, ‘Distribution of ancient stone implements in India’ [Read 30 Nov. 1878].<sup>107</sup>
- Edward T. Hardman, ‘Notes on a collection of native weapons and implements from tropical Western Australia’ [Read 22 Feb. 1886].<sup>108</sup>
- Idem, ‘Notes on some habits and customs of the natives of Kimberley District, Western Australia’ [Read 10 Jan. 1887].<sup>109</sup>
- S.H. Ray and A.C. Haddon, ‘A study of the languages of Torres Straits, with vocabularies and grammatical notes (Part 1)’ [Read 22 June 1891].<sup>110</sup>
- Idem, ‘A study of the languages of Torres Straits, with vocabularies and grammatical notes (Part 2)’.<sup>111</sup>
- Valentine Ball, ‘On the volcanoes and hot springs of India, and the folk-lore connected therewith’ [Read 23 Jan. 1893].<sup>112</sup>
- J.P. O’Reilly and Fournier d’Albe, ‘On a Pandean pipe from Tanna Island, New Hebrides’ [Read 30 Nov. 1894].<sup>113</sup>
- C.G. Young, ‘Notes on some shell implements from Barbados’ [Read 16 Jan. 1899].<sup>114</sup>

The centrality of ‘race’ to imperialism and colonialism was reflected in the flourishing of physical anthropology in the nineteenth century, including anthropometry and craniometry. A growing interest in physical anthropology in the nineteenth century underpinned ‘scientific’ racism. As Kuper observes ‘Measurements of the skull and brain were widely thought to reflect intellectual differences. Europeans were assumed to be not only more intelligent than members of other races but more adaptable, and uniquely fitted for civilization.’<sup>115</sup> These preoccupations are reflected in papers presented to the Academy and published in *Transactions* and *Proceedings*. In the 1880s, Professor Alexander Macalister, the Dublin-born Professor of Anatomy at Cambridge University and Secretary of the RIA, presented a series of reports to the Academy on the skulls and skeletons of Africans and Aboriginal people of the South Pacific, including:

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<sup>105</sup> Adam Kuper, ‘Civilization, culture and race: anthropology in the nineteenth century’, in Warren Breckman and Peter E. Gordon (eds), *The Cambridge history of modern European thought* (Cambridge, 2019), pp 398-399.

<sup>106</sup> *PRLA*, vol. 1 (1879), pp 65-68.

<sup>107</sup> *PRLA*, vol. 1 (1879), pp 388-414.

<sup>108</sup> *PRLA (1889-1901)*, vol. 1 (1889-1891), pp 57-69.

<sup>109</sup> *PRLA (1889-1901)*, vol. 1 (1889-1891), pp 70-75.

<sup>110</sup> *PRLA (1889-1901)*, vol. 2 (1891-1893), pp 463-616.

<sup>111</sup> *PRLA (1889-1901)*, vol. 4 (1896-1898), pp 119-373.

<sup>112</sup> *PRLA (1889-1901)*, vol. 3 (1893-1896), pp 153-169.

<sup>113</sup> *PRLA (1889-1901)*, vol. 3 (1893-1896), pp 511-515.

<sup>114</sup> *PRLA (1889-1901)*, vol. 5 (1898-1900), pp 221-222

<sup>115</sup> Kuper, ‘Civilization, culture and race’, p. 399.

- ‘On the osteology of two negroes’ [Read 30 Nov. 1880].<sup>116</sup>
- ‘On the cranium of a native of Lord Howe’s Island’ [Read 11 Dec. 1882]. As Macalister explained ‘Through the kindness of Lowry Armstrong, Esq., of H.M.S. *Cormorant*, I have obtained the skull of a native of this very-little-known island’ in the South Pacific.<sup>117</sup>
- ‘Further evidence as to the existence of horned men in Africa’ [Read 11 Dec. 1882].<sup>118</sup> This followed a letter from Macalister, which was read to the Academy in April 1881, and which included a letter and photograph from Dr Allan, Colonial Surgeon at Bathurst, New South Wales, ‘relative to a race of men in West Africa with horns on malar bone surfaces.’<sup>119</sup> Macalister’s paper in 1882 included an excerpt from a letter (obtained by Macalister from Professor O’Reilly, from his brother H.F. O’Reilly, at Cape Coast Castle) describing an attempt to transport a West African man to England ‘for examination.’<sup>120</sup>
- ‘On the crania of natives of the Solomon Islands’ [Read 22 Jan. 1883].<sup>121</sup>

Macalister also exhibited the impression of an Aboriginal hand from a cave in New South Wales, a necklace of human teeth from the Solomon Islands – both of which were part of the Trinity College Museum collection – and the mummified head of an Ancient Peruvian to the Academy.<sup>122</sup> Macalister was not the sole contributor in this area; in January 1881, P.S. Abraham’s presented ‘On a model of a human face from an island off the coast of New Guinea’ to the Academy; the paper subsequently appeared in the *Proceedings*. Abraham also presented ‘On a collection of crania and other objects of ethnological interest, from the South-West coast of Africa’ that year (also published the *Proceedings*).<sup>123</sup> In February 1881, meanwhile, Dr W.H. Hart, Colonial Surgeon in Sierra Leone, submitted notes on a number of crania sent to the Trinity College’s Museum.<sup>124</sup>

### **3.3 Trinity College Dublin Anthropometric Laboratory:**

The establishment, in 1891, of TCD’s Anthropometric Laboratory by Daniel Cunningham, MRIA, and Alfred Cort Haddon, MRIA, demonstrated Irish interest in the field of physical anthropology. Haddon and Cunningham were inspired by the research of Francis Galton, a significant proponent of eugenics and scientific racism, and Galton, in turn, gave Haddon and Cunningham’s efforts ‘the greatest encouragement and the fullest assistance.’ Speaking to the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland in 1892, Cunningham noted that

The physical anthropology of Ireland is almost an untrodden field. Little or no systematic work has as yet been undertaken in this direction, and yet there is no part of the United Kingdom which promises a richer harvest for the investigator. Anyone who has travelled through the country districts must be familiar with the very different types which are presented by the inhabitants. This is especially the case in outlying portions of the west coast and in the islands off the mainland.

These ‘ethnic islands’, as Cunningham termed them, would be the primary focus of the Anthropometric Laboratory in subsequent years.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> *PRLA*, vol. 3, Science (1883), pp 347-350.

<sup>117</sup> *PRLA*, vol. 3 (1883), pp 769-770.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 771-773.

<sup>119</sup> RIA, Academy Minutes, vol. 6 (Mar. 1880-Nov. 1897), ff 36-7.

<sup>120</sup> *PRLA*, vol. 3 (1883), p. 771.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 774-780.

<sup>122</sup> RIA, Academy Minutes, vol. 6 (Mar. 1880-Nov. 1897), ff 29, 31, 14 Feb. 1881.

<sup>123</sup> *PRLA, Polite Literature and Antiquities*, vol. 2 (1879-1888), pp 79-81, 82-90.

<sup>124</sup> RIA, Academy Minutes, vol. vi (Mar. 1880-Nov. 1897), f. 28, 14 Feb. 1881.

<sup>125</sup> D.J. Cunningham and A.C. Haddon, ‘The Anthropometric Laboratory of Ireland’, *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 21 (1892), pp 35-39.

The work of the Anthropometric Lab shines a light on Ireland's complex situation as both colony and coloniser and on the need to address the unethical and sometimes illegal procurement of collections. As noted by the TCD Colonial Legacies project team, 'skulls from across the empire were sent to TCD for anthropometrical experimentation and teaching on racial difference and disease. Many were donated by those aware of the work of Trinity's anthropometric laboratory and others were presented by naturalists or engineers connected to colonial surveying and teaching in Trinity', including Valentine Ball and [Professor Samuel Haughton](#).<sup>126</sup> Ethnographic research on island populations on the west coast of Ireland – and particularly the removal of thirteen skulls from Inishbofin by Haddon and Andrew Francis Dixon, MRIA, in 1890 – can be understood as part of the Academy's colonial legacy, not only by association, but as part of a cross-institutional culture of research that was rooted in ideas of white Anglo-Saxon supremacy and viewed the native Irish, like the aboriginal peoples in other British colonies, as a primitive race. The Anthropometric Laboratory at TCD is, for the RIA, a significant colonial legacy, not only because the men who established and operated the Lab were MRIA, but because the Academy provided the Lab with significant funding for anthropometric research over a number of years and published the findings of that research. This scoping exercise has identified the following awards to the Anthropometric Laboratory – amounting to £370 – in the Academy Minute Books:

Vol. 6 (Mar. 1880-Jun. 1897):

- f. 268, 23 June 1890: £100 awarded to a committee comprised of Cunningham, Haughton and Haddon, 'to assist in the purchase of Anthropometrical Instruments.'
- f. 346, 26 June 1893: £20 awarded to Cunningham, Haughton and Haddon, 'to assist in prosecuting Ethnological Investigations in the remoter parts of Ireland.'
- f. 361, 26 April 1894: £20 awarded to Haughton, Cunningham, Haddon and Dr Charles R. Browne, same as above.
- f. 387, 27 May 1895: £20 to Haughton, Cunningham, Haddon and Browne, to assist them in carrying on the work of the Anthropometrical Laboratory, and the Ethnographical Survey of the Remote Districts of Ireland.'
- f. 415, 8 June 1896: £25, same names and rationale as above.
- f. 436, 24 May 1897: £35, same names and rationale as above.

Vol. 7 (Nov. 1897-Nov. 1917):

- f.11, 16 March 1898: £35, same names and rationale as above.
- f. 37, 13 February 1899: £25 to Cunningham, Browne, and Haddon, to assist them in carrying on the work of the Anthropometrical Laboratory and the Ethnographical Survey of Ireland.
- ff 55-56  
12 June 1899: £25, same names and rationale as above..
- f. 86, 28 May 1900: £25 to Cunningham, Prof. E.P. Wright, Haddon and Browne, same rationale as above.
- f. 137, 10 June 1901: £20, same names and rationale as above.
- f. 164, 9 June 1902: £20, same names and rationale as above.

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<sup>126</sup> Mobeen Hussein, Ciarán O'Neill and Patrick Walsh, 'Working Paper on human remains from Inishbofin held in the Haddon-Dixon collection', p. 4.



The RIA's funding of the Anthropometric Laboratory reflects a broader interest in eugenics and race 'science' in the nineteenth century. The Laboratory's staff frequently presented findings to the Academy. This included the following papers:

- C.R. Browne, 'Some new anthropometrical instruments' [Read 4 Dec. 1892].<sup>127</sup>
- A.C. Haddon, 'Studies in Irish craniology: the Aran Islands, Co. Galway' [Read 12 Dec. 1892].<sup>128</sup>
- A.C. Haddon and C.R. Browne, 'The ethnography of the Aran Islands, Co. Galway' [Read 12 Dec. 1892].<sup>129</sup>
- A.C. Haddon, 'Studies in Irish craniology: II. Inishbofin' [Read 13 Nov. 1893].<sup>130</sup>
- C.R. Browne, 'The ethnography of Inishbofin and Inishshark' [Read 30 Nov. 1893].<sup>131</sup>
- D.J. Cunningham and C.R. Browne, 'On some osseous remains found at Old Connaught, Bray, Co. Dublin' [Read 11 June 1894].<sup>132</sup>
- C.R. Browne, 'The ethnography of the Mullet, Inishkea Islands and Portacloy, Co. Mayo' [Read 25 Feb. 1895].<sup>133</sup>
- C.R. Browne, 'The ethnography of Ballycroy, Co. Mayo'. [Read 11 May 1896].<sup>134</sup>
- A.C. Haddon, 'Studies in Irish craniology: III. A Neolithic cist burial at Oldbridge, County of Meath' [Read 25 Jan. 1897].<sup>135</sup>
- C.R. Browne, 'The ethnography of Garumna and Letter-Mullen, in the County Galway' [Read 20 Nov. 1898].<sup>136</sup>
- C.R. Browne, 'The ethnography of Clare Island and Inishturk, Co. Mayo' [Read 28 Jun. 1897].<sup>137</sup>
- C.R. Browne, 'The ethnography of Carna and Mweenish, in the parish of Moyruss, Connemara' [Read 12 Nov. 1900].<sup>138</sup>
- C.R. Browne, 'Report of the work done in the Anthropometric Laboratory of Trinity College, Dublin, from 1891 to 1898' [Read 9 May 1898].<sup>139</sup>

On 25 June 1906, meanwhile, Browne's paper on 'The Ethnography of Dunquin and the Basket Islands, Co. Kerry' was 'postponed to next session.'<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> *PRLA (1889-1901)*, vol. 2 (1891-1893), pp 397-399.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 759-767.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 768-830.

<sup>130</sup> *PRLA (1889-1901)*, vol. 3 (1893-1896), pp 311-316.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 317-370.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 421-427.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 587-649.

<sup>134</sup> *PRLA (1889-1901)*, vol. 4 (1896-1898), pp 74-111.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 570-585.

<sup>136</sup> *PRLA (1889-1901)*, vol. 5 (1898-1900), pp 223-268.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 40-72.

<sup>138</sup> *PRLA (1889-1901)*, vol. 6 (1900-1902), pp 503-534.

<sup>139</sup> *PRLA (1889-1901)* vol. 5 (1898-1900), pp 269-293; See also *Acad. Mins*, vol. 7 (Nov. 1897-Nov. 1917), f. 24.

<sup>140</sup> *RIA, Academy Minutes*, vol. 7 (Nov. 1897-Nov. 1917).

## **b. Peruvian Mummy:**

The ethical implications attending the acquisition of human remains must also be considered in relation to the Peruvian mummy purchased through subscription by RIA members in 1839. The mummy was bought from the Dublin-born Captain George Duniam, who became active in trafficking antiquities in the first half of the nineteenth century. In command of the *Thomas Wortbington*, Duniam arrived in Liverpool in March 1839, having sailed from the port of Arica, now in Chile but then part of Peru.<sup>141</sup> The ship's cargo included two mummies, one of which was transferred to Dublin. On 13 May 1839, Dr William Wilde, MRJA, read the first of two papers on the Peruvian mummy 'recently opened in Dublin.' He reported that Duniam was 'a gentleman involved in the South American trade', who on being

informed that a colony of Irish had settled on the western coast [of Peru] some years since, determined on visiting them; and having been hospitably received, was brought on a day's pleasure to a wild spot on the shore where the party, for his amusement, commenced digging up several mummies, the most perfect of which he brought away. In a letter he says: "This mummy was dug up from the sloping ground, about two miles and a half south-east of the Morro of Arica facing to the south-west on the coast of Peru".<sup>142</sup>

By the time Wilde delivered his paper, the mummy was already on display to the public (it would be displayed a second time, to meet public demand).<sup>143</sup> Prior to that, he had conducted an 'analysis' of the mummy, with contemporary reports noting that Wilde acted 'in the presence of the Dean of St Patrick's [Henry Dawson], Sir Philip Crampton, Sir Wm. Betham, Rev. Mr Todd, F.T.C.D., Rev. C. Dickson, F.T.C.D., Drs Crampton, Macartney and Croker, and a number of literary and scientific men who had subscribed for the purchase of this wonderful curiosity.'<sup>144</sup> Wilde's report to the Academy details several artefacts that had been buried with the ancestor and had been brought with it from Peru; these included pottery, basketry, weaponry and fishing equipment, as well as items of clothing. The ancestor was sold to the RCSI in 1841 and was later transferred to the NMI.<sup>145</sup> Drawings of the ancestor were made by Frederic William Burton and William Wakeman, with Wilde describing Wakeman's illustration in his first paper to the Academy thus:

This drawing shows the condition in which the mummy was found, bound up in a cloak, or outer garment, fitting so as to give a tolerably accurate idea of the posture in which it was placed; and over this was wrought a net of rushes, or other such substance, with large meshes, in the manner of a purse, wound several times round the neck and ankles, without covering the head or feet.<sup>146</sup>

The whereabouts of both Wakeman and Burton's drawings are currently unknown.

## **4. Observations and recommendations:**

- There are challenges attending the interpretation and treatment of artefacts in the RIA collections, a handful of which are still held by the Academy. Much depends on the nature of the object and its provenance, particularly the means and intent of its acquisition. In many instances, determining provenance will require time, resources and cross-institutional collaboration.

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<sup>141</sup> See Christopher Carter et al., 'South-American mummy trafficking: Captain Duniam's nineteenth-century worldwide enterprises', *Journal of the History of Collections* 29, no.3 (2017), pp 399-400.

<sup>142</sup> *PRLA*, vol. 1 (1836-1840), pp 305-312.

<sup>143</sup> Carter et al., 'South-American mummy trafficking', p. 400.

<sup>144</sup> *Dublin Evening Packet*, 2 May 1839.

<sup>145</sup> *PRLA*, vol. 1 (1836-1840), pp 305-312; *Freeman's Journal*, 3 May 1839.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306.

- Reflection on the Academy’s involvement in the acquisition of human remains – both through the activities of TCD’s Anthropometric Lab and the purchase of the Peruvian ancestor in 1839 – should be prioritised.
- In the short-term, the RIA should also carefully consider how to treat the two Egyptian papyri donated by Knox which were ‘taken from a tomb at Thebes’; the fragments of an ancient Pentateuch scroll ‘found by Ford Leathley, Esq.’, in Jerusalem; and a Sikh manuscript which was ‘found on the battlefield of Aliwal’ and donated by Joseph Burke.<sup>147</sup>
- Relatedly, strategies implemented in UK and international repositories can provide a blueprint to decolonise the RIA Library, which is central to the Academy’s mission:
  - Further enquiry into the colonial foundations of the collections can serve as an effective platform to explore the RIA’s colonial legacies. This could be achieved by highlighting particular items in the collections and linking them to historical events, schemes or individuals, particularly MRIA or Hon. MRIA. Work in this area can be effectively communicated to a general audience, for example through blog posts and public lectures.
  - Cultural-sensitivity warnings could be used on the RIA Library catalogue, to alert researchers to any outdated and potentially offensive language.
  - The catalogue could also be updated to contextualise or eliminate outdated and potentially offensive colonial language.
  - Consideration should be given to the cultural sensitivities surrounding certain artefacts in the RIA Library’s care (e.g. fragments of Pentateuch scroll, Egyptian). It is recommended that the Academy consider providing staff with training in how to appropriately store, handle and present such artefacts.
- This initial survey indicates that there is enough material to warrant a deeper and more wide-ranging engagement with the Academy’s colonial legacy.
- The Academy should consider funding a multi-year research project, which would allow sufficient time and resources for a thoughtful interrogation of the RIA’s colonial legacy, incorporating a broader range of sources (i.e. letters, memoirs, diaries).
- It is evident that a cross-institutional culture of research is key to understanding the RIA’s colonial legacy. It is strongly recommended that the RIA seek to work closely with relevant institutions, including NMI, NLI, RDS, TCD and RCSI. It is clear that effective collaboration can be achieved, as in the course of this scoping exercise initial contact was made with Dr Aoife O’Brien, Curator of World Heritage/Ethnographic Collections, NMI; Dr Audrey Whitty, Director of the NLI; Drs Ciarán O’Neill and Patrick Walsh of TCD’s Colonial Legacies Project; and Susan Leyden, Archivist, RCSI Heritage Collections.
- If feasible, the RIA could collaborate with those institutions to secure funding for a cross-institutional research project, which would most accurately and effectively reflect the colonial preoccupations, activities and attitudes of elements of Ireland’s research community from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century.
- It is recommended that members of these institutions be invited to sit on any steering or advisory committee appointed to oversee any future RIA-funded project.
- Any future research project could be realised through a PhD studentship or postdoctoral fellowship. The nature of the created position will be contingent upon the project’s scale, structure and intended outcomes and these factors depend upon the available and achievable opportunities for cross-institutional collaboration.

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid, pp 237, 245; *PRLA*, iv (1847-1850), p. 586; *PRLA*, v (1850-1853), p. 275.

- The endowment of a Postdoctoral Fellowship would allow greater input into any cross-institutional project, particularly in respect of project management. The appointment of an RIA postdoc to a PI position on a multi-institutional decolonisation project would underline the RIA's vital role in the academy, particularly its commitment to innovative and research.
- The appointment of a PhD student would potentially reduce the scope of any project, but it would allow for a focused engagement with the RIA's colonial legacies, and their situation within a broader context. A PhD student would require affiliation with a higher education institution, which provide greater oversight through supervision. This would reduce the demand on resources within the Academy. The PhD student could also contribute to any cross-institutional project.
- While contingent upon the project's scale and scope, a multi-strand approach is suggested as the most effective means of exploring the RIA's colonial legacies; this would encompass the Museum collection, the Library collection and catalogue, past MRIA and social, political and intellectual networks. Suggested (overlapping) strands are:

- The RIA and Networks of Empire:

- This strand could examine Ireland's position as both colony and coloniser, situating the Academy's foundation and development within the context of the island's colonial past, while considering the role of Irish men and women in colonialism across the British Empire and in other empires.
- This strand would examine the RIA's position as a learned society in the wider context of empire and colonialism. An emphasis would be placed on the networks – social, academic and intellectual, economic and geographic – that facilitated research and transnational and/or transcolonial knowledge exchange. This would encompass an investigation of MRIA's institutional affiliations (e.g. TCD), memberships of other Irish and British learned societies (e.g. the RDS, Royal Society) and employment or other involvement in British colonies, dominions or protectorates.
- It would also encompass the Academy and MRIA's engagement with learned societies overseas, including through the exchange of publications. The circulation of *Transactions* and *Proceedings* facilitated the widespread dissemination of Irish research, placing it within a much broader academic discourse; similarly, the RIA Library's acquisition of scholarly and scientific journals from overseas exposed MRIA to emerging research.

The following are some of the questions this strand might seek to answer:

- How did the Academy reflect and reinforce hierarchies in Irish society?
- How did the Academy reflect and promote the preoccupations of Empire?
- How did the Academy and MRIA interact with other learned societies within and outside the British Empire?
- What were other institutional/organisational affiliations of MRIA and Hon. MRIA?

- RIA Museum and Colonial Collections:

- This strand would examine the substance and meaning of the RIA Museum's collection. Using the RIA Museum Registers, *PRIA* and *TRIA*, this scoping exercise produced a database of objects of overseas origin, which formed part of the RIA Museum collection. The number of such objects is well in excess of 600. Additional items could be discovered in the course of a long-term study

- Cross-institutional collaboration with the NMI would help to ensure the identification of objects now held in the Museum; this, in turn, would allow the Academy to shine a light on particular objects, collections and MRIA collectors and donors. This would allow for a thoughtful and productive interrogation of the Academy’s colonial legacies and encourage public engagement (e.g. through blog posts and public lectures).
  - Initial findings indicate that a research project should consider the study of natural history as a colonial activity – and legacy – of the RIA. Natural specimens from colonised countries were donated to the Academy; this includes a section of the skull, brain and proboscis of a young Indian elephant that died in Dublin; *Apteryx Australis* (Southern Brown Kiwi); *Calwellia insignis* (an Australian algae); and stones and fossils from Brazil.<sup>148</sup>
- Members, Colonisers and Collectors:
- MRIA are integral to an understanding of the Academy’s colonial legacies. The current MRIA database is a ‘live’ resource with details of all current and historic Members and is only accessible to a small number of Academy staff. A standalone database of historic membership could be made available via the website to enable researchers and the general public to access information on past members, including their involvement in colonialism and colonial research.
  - This database could be enriched with information from the Members’ Certificates and other sources, which could, in many cases, supply the Academy’s rationale for proposing an individual for election
  - The database of colonial objects constructed during this scoping exercise can be used to identify MRIA who were employed in British colonies and who collected and donated/exhibited ethnographic or antiquarian artefacts, or scientific specimens.
  - The Members’ and Museum databases can help to identify MRIA who have yet to be entered into the *Dictionary of Irish Biography*. This scoping exercise has identified a number of noteworthy omissions, namely William Digges La Touche, Simeon Hardy, Captain Philip Meadows Taylor, Alfred Cort Haddon, Andrew Francis Dixon and Charles R. Browne.
  - This strand could include a sub-strand examining MRIA involved with the TCD Anthropometric Laboratory.
- Decolonising the RIA and the *DIB*:
- This strand would collate findings from other strands to propose strategies to decolonise the RIA, its collections and the *DIB* and to communicate the Academy’s progress with the general public. This might include a blog series on relevant MRIA and/or items/collections.
  - In respect of the *DIB*, it might also encompass an initiative to add or update individual entries and to create a platform to highlight entries of particular relevance.
  - The *DIB* can also provide a means through which the Academy can shine a light on Ireland’s ethnically diverse past. It might also be used to highlight the contribution of Irish people to colonial slavery and abolition.

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<sup>148</sup> *TRLA*, v (1793/94), p. 2; *PRIA*, iii (1844-1847), pp 247-248, 385-398; *PRLA*, vi (1853-1857), p.250.

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