

Friends of the ANU Centre for Economic History,

While the academic year down under is nearing its end, the conference calendar has been in full swing with a number of major meetings in recent months. Summaries of these and other events, including the 14th Annual ANU Archives lecture delivered by Centre affiliate David Merrett, are highlighted in this issue. We also want to draw your attention to the next Australasian Cliometrics Workshop to be held next month in Adelaide (program attached) as well as the opening of the Noel Butlin PhD Study Room at the Research School of Economics at the ANU. Thanks for your support and interest in economic history and the Centre.

John Tang, CEH Director

### ***Whither business history? The 14th ANU Archives Lecture***

Under this title, David Merrett of the University of Melbourne presented the 14th annual ANU Archives lecture on 11 August 2015. The lecture was jointly sponsored by the ANU Archives, the Centre for Economic History, and the Friends of the Noel Butlin Archives Centre. The full text is available [here](#) as part of the CEH Discussion Paper series.

David asked some probing questions in his lecture about the prospect of business history in light of the increasing reluctance of firms to make their archival records available for academic research. He noted that in the past many firms may have done so as a consequence of the pride they took in the achievements of companies and a sense of connection with the communities they served. Today, firms have become more reluctant to do so, as they increasingly see their role as delivering shareholder value in a context that is no longer part of a national narrative, but that is driven by international competition.

David argues that business historians no longer have a role in defining corporate identity, but that the task is relegated to marketing and PR departments of companies which are tasked with 'managing the message'. While this sounds like the death knell for business history, David's lecture also offered optimism, because the 'PR gatekeepers' may still be persuaded that there is value in a historical narrative to explain how Australian firms have succeeded in the process of globalisation. A quote: 'All the virtues of the old story are [still] required now: determination, resilience, the ingenuity to make do with little, and an optimism that you will eventually succeed.' -PvE



### **Featured Economic Historian: Professor David Merrett**

The Centre was pleased to host Professor David Merrett (Melbourne) recently for the ANU Archive lecture (see adjoining article). David is one of Australia's leading economic and business historians with numerous journal publications and books. His research addresses topics ranging from firm competition and corporate finance to industrial regulation and market studies. -JT

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## Conference Report on the NBER Summer Institute: Labor Studies



*The very secret meetings also meant no pictures were taken*

This year I was fortunate to attend the annual NBER Summer Institute (SI) session for labor studies organized by David Card, Caroline Hoxby, Amy Finkelstein, Edward Lazear, and Kathryn Shaw and the session on Children organised by Janet Currie. The SI takes place over several weeks in Boston over the northern summer. The economic history sessions take place at Harvard, however the rest of the program takes place at the Royal Sonesta Hotel overlooking the Charles River. The NBER books out the entire conference facility at the Royal Sonesta to accommodate the many fields within economics that meet over this period.

As you probably know, the SI is a relaxed conference setting where researchers can present their latest work to some of the experts in their respective fields. I say relaxed a little tongue in cheek as there were about 200 participants from top departments across the United States and while the atmosphere is informal the quality of the papers presented is outstanding.

Participants who know the NBER's secret URL are able to chop and change between fields, however the program is not easily available online, presumably to keep the meetings to invitation only. Each field's program is slightly different, labor studies had eight papers a day, each presentation about one hour long. A buffet lunch was available after the fourth paper providing a good opportunity to connect with old friends and make new acquaintances. Mid-week is a clam bake providing the best that New England seafood has to offer. I opted against cracking open a lobster with the risk that it might land on some distinguished professor's head. The mussels were good though.

I had an early night after the clam bake as my paper was second on the bill the next day in the Children's session. The session took place over two days and consisted of 15 papers. The papers covered a broad range of topics from issues relating to children's health and education in developed and developing countries to inter-generational mobility in the United States and intergenerational transfers in Scandinavian countries to name a few. My co-authored paper looks at the impacts of temporary out migration on the human capital attainment of children who remain behind in Malawi in the 1970s. We find that communities with higher rates of outmigration also exhibit higher adult educational attainment twenty years after the migration period ended showing the importance of migration opportunities for poor communities who are subject to credit constraints. I am pleased to say my co-author, Taryn Dinkelman, and I survived the presentation unscathed and are grateful for the useful feedback. The SI was a valuable experience, definitely worth the 30 hour trip to Boston just to stay four nights. -MM



*An unidentified clam*

## Centre for Economic History Discussion Paper Series

The CEH website hosts a discussion paper series on a variety of topics in economic history. Recent additions include the following (CEH affiliate in **bold**):

2015-12 "Whither Business History? Memory, Message and Meaning" by **David Merrett**

Centre affiliates and visitors are encouraged to submit working papers to the series. All papers are available at <http://rse.anu.edu.au/research/centres-projects/centre-for-economic-history/>

## Jetlog: Three Continents and Four Conferences



*WEHC venue: Kyoto International Conference sessions!*

### First Stop: World Economic History Congress

Every three years in the late summer, economic and business historians from across the world converge in a beautiful city of social and historical importance. This year, on 3-7 August, the 17th World Economic History Congress was held in the ancient (and sweltering) capital of Kyoto, Japan. Massive is an understatement for a conference of this size: 1,202 participants from 55 countries presented their research in 180 parallel

In addition to the regular sessions, there were also three plenaries with distinguished speakers including the former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and Professors Osamu Saito, Pranab Bardhan, R. Bin Wong, Abhijit



*Florian Ploeckl (L) and Martin Shanahan (R)*

Other Centre affiliates including Raj Banerjee, Martine Mariotti, Florian Ploeckl, Martin Shanahan, and John Tang presented throughout the week and enjoyed the lively activities planned by the local organizing committee. Chiaki Yamamoto (Osaka), who was on the committee, said that one of the most difficult tasks was budgeting for the large number of registrations (400 more than the previous congress) and ensuring that the first WEHC to be held in Asia was smooth and efficient. Many would agree that it was a great success.

Banerjee, Nicholas Crafts, and Avner Greif. There was also a competition for recently completed doctoral dissertations; our Centre affiliate Dr. Laura Panza (Melbourne) won for her thesis "Globalisation and the Ottoman Empire: A Study of Integration between Ottoman and World Cotton Markets".



*Laura Panza's prize-winning performance*



*Happy (and very warm) participants in the transport history session*

### Second Stop: Economic History Association Meeting

The 75th annual EHA meeting was held in Nashville, Tennessee on 11-13 September, under the theme "Diversity in Economic History." As always, the meeting was well attended throughout the weekend with 191 registrants, and there were two special plenaries: one on the future of economic history and another on contemporary inequality. In the first, Ran Abramitzky, (cont.)



*Downtown Nashville with live music and bbq at Rippy's*



## ***Jetlog: Three Continents and Four Conferences (cont.)***

(from page 3) William Collins, Naomi Lamoreaux, and Kris Mitchener offered various perspectives on the field, encouraging scholars to continue cross-disciplinary scholarship that is increasingly accepted by economics at large and aided by advances in technology and data collection. Outgoing EHA president Robert Margo thrilled attendees with his presidential address on racial inequality and then a live performance on the mandolin following the conference banquet.



*Bob Margo on mandolin*



*Zach Ward and Ann Carlos*

One of the highlights of the annual meeting is the dissertation prize session, where six of the top doctoral dissertations completed in the previous year are selected to compete for either the Nevins (North American topics) or Gerschenkron (international topics) Prizes. Centre affiliate Zach Ward (ANU) was one of the three nominees for the Nevins Prize this year, with his dissertation "The Circular Flow: Return Migration from the United States in the Early 1900s."



*No tourists at five in the morning*

### **Third Stop: New Disaggregated Bilateral Trade Data Workshop**

Given the increasing number of scholars working on archival trade data for different countries, Professor Nikolaus Wolf (Humboldt) organized a conference on 9-10 October at Humboldt University in Berlin to discuss issues relating to data



*Oh Humboldt!*

collection, analysis, and common research questions. While the period of analysis started largely from the mid 1800s (when data were more readily available), the countries spanned Asia (Japan, China), Europe (UK, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Russia), and the Americas (USA, Peru, Brazil, Chile).



*Participants thoughtfully listening to the travails of data digitalization*

The meeting gave attending scholars an opportunity to share insights from their own work and opened possible future collaborations. In addition, the organizers envision continued interaction among those present and others interested in historical trade data, such as expanding the scope of countries and sharing datasets through a common platform and harmonized classification. (cont.)



## *Jetlog: Three Continents and Four Conferences (cont.)*

### **Fourth Stop: Canadian Network for Economic History Conference**

(from page 4) The final destination of the multi-country conference tour was the 50th annual CNEH meeting, held 16-18 October in the UNESCO World Heritage city of Kingston, Ontario. Taylor Jaworski, Ian Keay, and Frank Lewis of Queen's University were the local organizers of the meeting, which is styled around intensive discussion of individual papers that are distributed in advance. The seventeen papers ranged in topic from infant mortality and Russian prostitution to the Spanish inquisition and market integration in the US and Canada.



*Beautiful (and chilly) waterfront in Kingston, Ontario*



*Frank Lewis making opening remarks to participants*

There was also a special session on the development of economic history in Canada to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the society. Marvin McNis and Hugh Grant discussed the contributions of two Canadian pioneers in the field, Malcolm Urquhart and W.A. MacIntosh.



*Yes, that is snow*

Memorial lecture was delivered by Martha Bailey this year, who talked about her research on fertility and the symbolism of "the pill", which coincided with behavioral and social changes in the United States. Participants also received warm hospitality in the evenings, with a reception in the Alan Green Reading Room in the Stauffer Library and a delicious home-cooked meal hosted by Frank Lewis and Donna Lounsbury. -JT

## **News and Announcements**

- The Research School of Economics at the ANU will seek expressions of interest in junior faculty positions to start in 2016. Applications will be accepted until **30 November 2015**. The positions are for any field within economics, including economic history, and are described in the AEA Job Openings for Economists website: [https://www.aeaweb.org/joe/listing.php?JOE\\_ID=2015-02\\_111453631](https://www.aeaweb.org/joe/listing.php?JOE_ID=2015-02_111453631)
- The ANU College of Business and Economics, in conjunction with the RSE and Centre for Economic History, will be formally dedicating the Noel Butlin PhD Study Room in the Crisp Building on **2 November 2015**. This room was recently refurbished and will house a small library of historical documents and books as well as have an area for quiet study. An informal reception in the ANU College of Business and Economics tea room (Copland Building) will be held at 3:15pm for those interested in attending.
- The 2016 Asia Pacific Economic and Business History Conference will be held at the University of Adelaide on 11-13 February. The call for papers is open until **15 November 2015**. Please see the conference website for more details: <https://apebh2016.wordpress.com/>



***Second Australian Cliometrics Workshop***  
*Monday, November 9, 2015*

Room H6-12, Hawke Building, University of South Australia  
 City West campus, 37-44 North Terrace, Adelaide SA 5000.

**Workshop format: 5-10 min. presentation; 15-20 min. discussant; 20-30 min. floor discussion**

*Programme*

**9.00-9:30: Welcome/coffee**

**9.30-10.20**

Paper title: *Democracy and Trade links*

Presenter: Florian Ploeckl (University of Adelaide)

Discussant: Laura Panza (University of Melbourne)

**10:20-10:30: Morning tea**

**10.30-11.20**

Paper title: *Behind the emergence of Zipf's law: evidence from Catalonia*

Presenter: Jordi Vidal-Robert (University of Sydney)

Discussant: Trevor Kollmann (RMIT University, Melbourne)

**11.30-12.20**

Paper title: *Railways and the prosperity of the Victorian Mallee before 1930*

Presenter: Lionel Frost (Monash University)

Discussant: Rohan Alexander (Australian National University)

**12.20-13.20: Lunch**

**13.20-14.10**

Paper title: *English Fluency and Migrant Assimilation: Evidence from United States History*

Presenter: Zach Ward (Australian National University)

Discussant: Ling-Yu Kong (University of Adelaide)

**14.20-15.10**

Paper title: *Being Bad by Being Good: Owner and Captain Value-Added in the Slave Trade*

Presenter: Tommy Leung (Chinese University of Hong Kong)

Discussant: Mandar Oak (University of Adelaide)

**15.20-16.10**

Paper title: *Who will own the shares of an unlimited liability bank? The Bagehot hypothesis revisited.*

Presenter: Lyndon Moore (University of Melbourne)

Discussant: John Turner (Queen's University, Belfast)

**16:10-16:30: Afternoon coffee break**

**16.30-17.30: Keynote address**

Paper title: *Banking in Crisis: The Rise and Fall of British Banking Stability*

Presenter: John Turner (Queen's University, Belfast)

**18:30: Dinner**

*The CEH welcomes courtesy announcements from affiliates and interested parties for inclusion in our newsletter. Please send news to [CEH.RSE@anu.edu.au](mailto:CEH.RSE@anu.edu.au) (subject to editing).*