

HENRY SWEET SOCIETY COLLOQUIUM Luton, 10th-13th September 1997

Conference Report

THIS year's colloquium took place at the University of Luton, from Wednesday evening 10 to Saturday morning 13 September. It was an outstanding success. Not only had the organiser, Dr Andrew Linn, managed to put together a singularly diverse and attractive programme, but he and his helpers, themselves mostly students of the history of linguistics, also saw to it that participants were singularly well looked after, in all of sorts of ways. The venue for the majority of lectures and meals was the attractive Conference Centre at Putteridge Bury, situated about four miles from the main campus and from the student accommodation used by most of us. Since this issue of the *Newsletter* contains full abstracts of papers given, this report will try to add an idea of how the programme impressed this particular member of the Colloquium audience.

The programme began at the Main Campus in Luton itself, on the Wednesday evening, with a paper by the President of the Society, Professor Werner Hüllen, who had chosen 'habent sua fata libelli' as the motto for his Leslie Seiffert Memorial Lecture. In it he had much of interest to tell us about the interconnection of 'books' and 'ideas' as 'facts' and 'arguments' in the historiography of linguistics.

On Thursday morning, we travelled to Putteridge Bury. The morning's work got to an excellent start with the account by Cram and Maat, of Dalge[sic]rno in Paris. Then followed a paper on the not very well known German Germanist, Hebraist and Comparativist, Martin Aedler; Fredericka van der Lubbe had come all the way from Sydney to deliver this fine paper.

Thereafter we heard a paper by Masataka Miyawaki, who had come equally far (from Yokohama), to give us a meticulous and obviously very well researched account of James Harris's revision of *Hermes*. Lieve Jooke presented an equally erudite view of James Beattie's foundation of grammatical categories, compared to Condillac's *Grammaire*. Gerda Haßler then finished off the morning's work with some rather thought-provoking and challenging remarks on Hervás y Panduro's position in the history of anthropological linguistics.

After lunch, we proceeded to hear Dirk Schenkeveld on some to my mind quite compelling reasons for the non-development of syntactical theory in the Hellenistic Period. This was followed by a surprisingly lively and most enjoyable (apart from simultaneously being very erudite) symposium on the history and nature of figures and tropes, in which James Murphy, Lynette Hunter, Peter Mack and (once more) Dirk Schenkeveld took part.

Following an obviously well deserved tea break, Hanne Lauridsen and Inge Kabell presented a splendidly lively account of the study of English in Denmark, during the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. They dealt, in turn, with separate

periods, but the two papers meshed in together so well that it seems appropriate to take them together.

After dinner, we were treated to a welcome surprise: Andrew Linn turned out to be not only a wonderful conference organiser but also a highly accomplished organ player, as his concert of 'linguistic organ music' in Luton's delightful St. Mary's Church conclusively demonstrated.

Friday morning started with the perhaps best presented paper of the Colloquium; in it John Joseph sorted out Humboldt's fascinating views on the genius of the Chinese language. Ann Wehmeyer then also took us to the Far East, dealing as she did with Keichû and native Japanese linguistic tradition. Immediately following, Cristina Altman treated us to a lively account of South American missionaries and their description of the 'General Languages'.

Coffee was followed by Kibbee's extremely informative and (as always, in his case) well-researched case-study of the politics of Anglo-Norman language and dialect. Jon Mills then gave us a balanced and interesting view of Cornish lexicography from its very beginnings. The last paper before lunch was given by Adel Sidarus, who managed to pack a lot of useful information about early multilingual (Greek-Coptic-Arabic) glossaries into the twenty minutes at his disposal.

After lunch, Kjell-Åke Forsgren, from Skövde, presented us with his insights into German Valency Grammar in the 19th Century, in a very clear and excellently prepared paper. Else Elffers then took a good hard look at the division of labour between linguistics and psycholinguistics. Béatrice Godart-Wendling dealt with quantification from Adjukiewicz to Montage, in what obviously was a very deeply read talk, even if this auditor in places found it somewhat technical. Finally, the last paper was given by Pius ten Hakken, from Basle, who managed to 'show that Chomskyan linguistics is conceptually and historically a unity in a non-trivial sense', in a wide-ranging and helpfully organised paper.

The Annual General Meeting followed, and the formal part of the Colloquium concluded with a very convivial Conference Dinner, ably prepared and pleasantly served by the staff of Putteridge Bury. Everybody dispersed after breakfast on Saturday, by which stage it was more than obvious that we all felt that coming to Luton for the Colloquium had been well worth it. Finally, it remains to observe that meeting the Luton students of was one of the numerous very positive aspects of the Colloquium. It is clear that the history of linguistics plays a deservedly important role as part the Luton course of linguistics.

Anders Ahlqvist
School of Irish
National University of Ireland, Galway