

## RESEARCH REPORTS

### BALDSON FELLOWSHIP

doi: 10.1017/S0068246224000199

#### *Weapons of hell: guns and society in early modern Italy*

Having held a Rome Fellowship in 2009–10, I was very pleased to return to the BSR for the autumn term 2023 in Rome as Baldson Fellow to work on ‘Weapons of Hell’. The project explores the impact of firearms in the first century during which they became a widely used technology. Beginning with the context of the Italian Wars of 1494 to 1559, it investigates the development of an arms industry in the Gardone Valtrompia area near Brescia, the roles of middlemen and arms dealers, attitudes towards guns at the Italian courts and in the cities, and the establishment of gun control legislation. It sets these developments in European, Mediterranean and global contexts.

The fellowship allowed me to make significant progress on a monograph, which I hope to complete in the calendar year 2024. I was able to consult a range of relevant primary source material in the BSR Library, as well as materials held at the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma that are not available in the UK. In addition, I examined archival holdings at the Archivio Storico Capitolino and the Archivio di Stato di Napoli. The fellowship was particularly fruitful in terms of the opportunity to examine key visual sources at first hand, including the Avalos tapestries designed by Bernard van Orley (depicting the 1525 Imperial victory over France at Pavia) now at the Capodimonte Gallery in Naples, and the extensive depictions of firearms in the frescoes of the Uffizi Gallery and Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. Discussions with other residents about my work led to the inclusion of Creative Wales-BSR Fellows Beau W. Beakhouse and Sadia Pineda Hameed on a grant application for a future project with the Royal Armouries in Leeds.

Besides this principal project, I also gave a lecture on the cultural history of the roads to Rome, the subject of a forthcoming book, and arranged a walk for residents on the Via Appia. A visit by my PhD student Lauren Johnson, whose project concerns sixteenth-century Anglo–Papal relations, provided an opportunity to organize a trip to the Venerable English College, kindly facilitated by Maurice Whitehead. I was further able to undertake some scoping work for future writing projects with visits to relevant sites in Rome and Naples. As ever, residence at the School proved an enormously stimulating experience and I very much look forward to returning in the future.

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