Hugh Last Fund Grant Report

Risk and seafaring: an ecological approach to religious life in Caesarea Maritima
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The grant awarded to me by the Hugh Last Fund supported my attendance at the Classical Association Conference (CAC) where I presented a paper entitled ‘Risk and seafaring: an ecological approach to religious life in Caesarea Maritima’. My paper examined the impact of the local environment on the development of religious life in the city and I argued that the mitigation of maritime risk was a major theme due to the especially hazardous stretch of coast on which Caesarea was situated (see photo). The experience gave me the opportunity to disseminate my research to an interdisciplinary audience, from whom I received constructive feedback. In particular, I benefitted from comments on the continued interaction between the sea and religious life at Caesarea in the Christian period, which I will apply to my future research. Furthermore, the conceptual development of this paper has been invaluable to the methodological progression of my doctoral research, such that I am now exploring the potential application of ecological approaches to my thesis. I also had the opportunity to attend other panels at the CAC, of which many were highly relevant to my current research. The ‘Latin eco-criticism’ panel featured several innovative papers, including Marian Makin’s analysis of ecocritical perspectives on landscapes of loss in Roman poetry. This paper in particular was an excellent paradigm for the successful application of ecocriticism to literature, which will benefit my future research. I also attended two particularly thought-provoking papers by Arkadiy Avdokhin and James Corke-Webster in a panel on ‘Christianizing classical tropes’. The arguments presented in these papers have prompted me to think about how I can critically approach the Christian sources I am using in my thesis. Overall, the CAC was an intellectually-stimulating experience that has advanced both my current and future research.