PRESIDENTIAL LETTER

It must be conventional to offer in my valedictory Presidential letter a survey of the ‘achievements’ of the Society during my four-year term, closing with some predictions (or warnings?) of what is to face my successor.

But, whether out of cowardice or modesty or some other unknown psychological factor, I’ve chosen a different course. This month marks not only the end of my term but also the end of a longer period of office-holding in the Society. Over the course of more than 20 years, I’ve seen many changes, crises, improvements, modest achievements, a few triumphs – but what will remain longest in the memory is none of these, but rather the people alongside whom I’ve worked. In the end, the lifeblood of this learned society is the continuing flow of voluntary labour – civic-minded, unremunerated, idealistic, pragmatic and (appropriate to an historical society) both backward- and forward-looking – which is necessary for it to maintain its representative function and its ability to gauge and respond to the needs of the community of historians. Fortunately we also have a skeleton crew of paid staff, loyal and meticulous and hardworking, who maintain the core administrative functions of the Society and sustain the institutional memory, and they will figure here too, a connecting sinew for everything else.

I was elected a Fellow of the Society in February 1992, shortly after the publication of my first book in 1990 (a standard qualifying criterion), and just a few months after I had returned to live in the UK after an absence of 13 years, taking up a permanent position at what was then the City of London Polytechnic. My sponsors (you needed two then) were Alice Prochaska, Secretary of the Institute of Historical Research, and Roland Quinault, whom some years later I would succeed as Honorary Secretary. My first proper job for the Society began in 1995 when I was
appointed to the editorial board of the Studies in History monograph series, now coming to the end of its successful run of over 40 years. Though at that point I had already served on the Anglo-American Historical Committee (which organized the Institute of Historical Research’s great annual conclave of historians from both sides of the Atlantic, also recently come to the end of an even longer run, of 90 years or so), the Studies board was my first taste of formal committee responsibility, with proper agendas and minutes, Parliamentary procedure, and a regular roster of tasks to be monitored and performed. It was also my first exposure to the great administrative talents of Joy McCarthy, the Society’s Executive Secretary, who then ran the Society’s affairs pretty much single-handedly, and was at the time in the process of wrenching the Society from the quill-and-ink into the computer age (see her memories of her own predecessor, Jean Chapman, in the October 2015 newsletter: http://royalhistsoc.org/publications/newsletter/). Joy would be the source of much gossip, tips on the best theatre, good sense on matters of procedure and even better sense on personalities, as well as those immaculate agendas, for years to come. The board was then small – six people and three of its members, Martin Daunton (the convenor) and Colin Jones, plus me, would be future Presidents of the Society. Rees Davies, the then President, sent me a nice but very formal letter of appointment with stirring injunctions to hard work and scholarly standards. Anyone who thinks the internet has necessarily added to our burdens should see the enormous file I have of formal paperwork generated by the Studies board in the three years I sat on it. One of the pieces of paper which I have enjoyed revisiting was the report – I don’t think I am revealing confidences – by the much missed Tim Reuter on a MS by Sarah Hamilton (now my colleague as Honorary Treasurer), ‘of a clarity and originality which give it an unusually high quality’. But it’s not the paper that I treasure – it was the good company and generous judgements of Martin and Colin and the other board members who came and went, and especially the cheerily astringent views of Christine Linehan, then as now the series editor.

I escaped that particular frying pan only by jumping into the fire. Peter Marshall rang me up early in 1998 to ask me if I would consider taking up the post of Honorary Secretary in succession to Roland Quinault. I must have shown some aptitude for admin on the Studies board; plus I knew I had the then politically valuable trait of working for a post-1992 university. I accepted readily because I was finding academic life in London rather anomic and wanted a more regular point of contact with fellow historians; also because no-one could say no to Peter Marshall, one of the kindest and most persuasive humans to walk this planet. It turned out to be my best professional decision. As I wrote to a friend after my first set of meetings (the day of the Anniversary Meeting in November 1998), ‘I found the whole thing surprisingly uplifting - first because there are a lot of smart and reasonably well socialized people about, including lots whom I would never see or know otherwise (medievalists, etc.); second because they are all so responsible, and concerned to do well by the profession.’ Honest! A direct quote from an email (like a good historian I’ve been archiving my emails since 1996).
It would be invidious to single out individuals from amongst that lot of smart and responsible people, but I’m going to do it anyway, with sincere apologies to those I have by chance omitted. Peter Marshall was surreptitiously turning the Society outwards, steering it towards a bolder role in respect of government policies and relations with other academic bodies, along with a team of likeminded folk (something noted in another early email to me from another future President of the Society, Margot Finn) – to name a few, Pat Thane (an unusually sensible Treasurer, who liked stewarding and spending money in equal measure), Ludmilla Jordanova, Peter Hennessy, Sarah Tyacke, David Eastwood, David Cannadine. Colin Matthew was another, and Peter Marshall’s characteristically imaginative response to his sudden loss was to start up a lecture in conjunction with Gresham College in Colin’s name, to promote the public understanding of history, which dovetailed nicely with his initiative to co-sponsor a prize for undergraduate dissertations with History Today. Both these initiatives remain fixtures in our work.

At that time the Honorary Secretary – who was essentially the dogsbody who worked with Joy to implement the decisions of President and Council – had a four year term at the midpoint of which the Presidency changed hands. I was unbelievably fortunate in exchanging in 2000 one great President for another – Jinty Nelson – until now (but just now no longer) the Society’s only woman President. She maintained the outward-looking direction that Peter had set and brought her own distinctive contributions of quite exceptional human and intellectual intensity to the job.

I will always remember her succinct, learned and insightful introductions to speakers at our public lectures.
– even for those well outside her own fields of expertise, you sensed at the end of her introduction that you had already grasped the essence of the lecture to come – and I feel every time I have had to give my own introductions how far short of that standard I fall. By then I was settling into my responsibilities, and working as part of a well-oiled machine with other officers. For some reason publications seemed then to loom particularly large. John Morrill and Ian Archer – two of the great workhorses of the Society – were getting the RHS Bibliography online. David Eastwood, Aled Jones and Andrew Pettegree were good strategic thinkers as well as excellent Literary Directors. Ella Harris (now Colvin) was the linchpin of our relationship with Cambridge University Press.

Midway through Jinty’s term my own term came to an end, and for a few years my contacts with the Society were more distant though respectful. I had just moved to Cambridge so I didn’t even have the same regular opportunities to drop by the office for a gossip with Joy or attend the main series of public lectures at UCL. I missed entirely Martin Daunton’s Presidency and the first year of Colin Jones’s, Joy’s departure and her replacement by Sue Carr, but I was getting more interested in policy issues – stemming in part from service on the AHHRB (pre-AHRC) Research Panel, the RAE panel for the 2008 exercise, and some IHR, National Archives and British Library initiatives – and was thus genuinely happy when Colin asked me to return to harness as Vice President, with responsibility for education policy, in 2009.

Since then I have been in service continuously as Vice President and President. Some old friendships were renewed. Andrew Pettegree had returned as Vice President for publications. Ian Archer, it seems, had never left! Two further Vice Presidents, Jo Innes and Margot Finn, combined mastery of policy detail with immense good sense. Arthur Burns whom I have known and worked alongside for decades did a superb job standing up to Michael Gove and the Department for Education in defending the interests of history in the schools and in the examination business. Emma Griffin proved an imaginative and meticulous Literary Director. And new friendships were made: Sue Carr and Mel Ransom, who had inherited and upgraded Joy’s administrative machine; Nicola Miller and Mary Vincent, who took charge successively of research policy and of one of our most popular and successful policy initiatives, the enquiry into gender in the historical profession. Mike Hughes made everything possible with his steady, generous hand on the fiscal tiller. Jo Fox professionalized our communications – how we looked, how we spoke, to whom we spoke and what we said. Above all, Adam Smith was always there through thick and thin to solve tricky and technical problems, as a sounding-board, a planner, and, most importantly, as a returning officer for STV elections.

As President I had the opportunity to reach out far beyond the Society’s own ranks in ways that I had not when my responsibilities lay chiefly in domestic affairs. Chris Wickham at the British Academy, Alex Walsham at Past & Present, Helena Djurkovic, the chief executive of the Political Studies Association, and Karin Wulf at the William and Mary Quarterly were doughty allies in the fight to get Open Access rules that helped rather than hindered humanities scholars.
One of the pleasures of that campaign was reconnecting with my former student Ellen Collins. Arthur and I developed a very close relationship with the Historical Association – and especially its chief executive, Becky Sullivan, and education officer, Mel Jones – in forging a united front against government manipulation of the history curriculum. The Society and the Institute of Historical Research have always maintained a natural and amicable division of labour, and the IHR has been a constant resource throughout my time with the Society – not least in the person of Jane Winters, whom the Fellowship have cleverly just chosen to elect to Council at the moment when she has migrated the short distance from the IHR to the School of Advanced Study elsewhere in Senate House. Valerie Johnson at the National Archives has been another constantly. Through the Arts and Humanities Alliance I got to know a number of representatives who have been seeking to do for other disciplines what we try to do for history, notably Greg Woolf amongst the classicists and Stephanie Kitchen amongst the Africanists. More recently – not least after the Brexit vote – we have been developing closer ties to the German and French historical professions, to put alongside relationships I had already been developing with the American and Australian historical associations.

Yes, this has been a litany of names – but they, and dozens of others, deserve this brief burst of recognition before I bow out. They are, precisely as I put it in my first week as Honorary Secretary in 1998, ‘a lot of smart and reasonably well socialized people...all so responsible, and concerned to do well by the profession’. I am sure Margot will find many more where they came from.
Friday 25 November 2016
at 6.00 pm
Presidential Lecture
Professor Peter Mandler
‘Educating the Nation. IV: History’
UCL

Friday 10 February 2017
at 6.00 pm
Professor Claire Langhamer
‘Who the hell are ordinary people? Ordinariness as a category of historical analysis’
UCL

Friday 24 February 2017
The Gerald Aylmer Seminar
‘Archives and Teaching in Higher Education’
Wolfson Suite, Institute of Historical Research

Friday 21 April 2017
Symposium: University of Chester
‘Putting History in its Place: Historic Landscapes and Environments’

Friday 5 May 2017
at 6.00 pm
Professor Gary Gerstle
‘The Rise and Fall of America’s Neo-Liberal Order’
UCL

Friday 7 July 2017
at 6.00 pm
The Prothero Lecture
Professor Simon Dixon
‘Orthodoxy and Revolution: The Restoration of the Russian Patriarchate in 1917’
UCL

Friday 22 September 2017
at 6.00 pm
Professor Chris Marsh
‘The Woman to the Plow and the Man to the Hen-Roost: Wives, Husbands, and Best-Selling Ballads in Seventeenth Century England’
UCL

October 2017
The Colin Matthew Memorial Lecture for the Public Understanding of History in co-operation with Gresham College, London
Professor Mary Beard (tba)
London

Friday 24 November 2017
6.00pm
Presidential Address
Professor Margot Finn
‘Material Turns in British History. Part I: Loot’
Arguably, a SWOT analysis is not the most charismatic way to inaugurate one’s Presidency. Bureaucratic exercises to evaluate Strengths and Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats annually bedevil historians across the UK, whether in university departments, schools and faculties or in the wide variety of organisations—archives, heritage institutions, libraries, museums and policy bodies, among others—in which members of our discipline are employed.
That said, with the prospect of four years at the helm of the Royal Historical Society before me, it’s timely to take stock, and the virtue of SWOTting is that it provides a systematic framework for so doing. What are the strengths and weaknesses of History in Britain today, and what should the RHS do to defend against threats whilst seizing opportunities? As an historian, I’m acutely aware that predicting the future is not our disciplinary forte. Nevertheless, here goes:

**Strengths:**

Here there is so much to say that I’m already in danger of exceeding my word limit. One of the strongest impressions that remains from my time on the REF 2014 sub-panel (so ably chaired by Chris Wickham) is that academic historical research—whether assessed in terms of quality or impact—is in rude good health in the UK. University-based historians at all stages of career and across a rich tapestry of time, place, polities and cultures produce insightful, memorable publications based on deep and original research. Increasingly, they also share those insights with broad public audiences in arenas that include (but are by no means confined to) broadcasting, government, the heritage sector, hospitals, museums, the music industry, NGOs, popular publishing, schools and theatre. The strength of historical research within these sectors themselves—sectors which provide many of the Society’s Fellows and Members—both feeds from and significantly enhances the UK’s academic research base. It’s worth noting that this synergy, although not exclusive to the British historical landscape, is far better developed here than is typical elsewhere in Europe, and indeed globally.

The first RHS Public History Prize, awarded a year ago, recognised several sterling projects that exemplify this particular strength of History in Britain. The overall winner, ‘For King and Country’, Bankfield Museum (Halifax), illuminated local experiences of the First World War with hundreds of objects and images. Attesting to historians’ willingness and ability to work productively across a variety of geographical and disciplinary borders, awards for broadcasting, web & digital design and film went to BBC 2’s ‘Britain’s Forgotten Slave Owners’, the British Library’s ‘Voice of Science’ and the film ‘Body Games: Capoeira and Ancestry’ (UK/Brazil/South Africa). Heritage Quay, Huddersfield, was commended for its British Music Collection in particular, while the prize panel recognised Exeter & Falmouth university students for ‘Falmouth and the Great War’ and Exeter’s Centre for Imperial & Global History for its open-access online course on ‘Empire: The Controversies of British Imperialism’. In an institutional context in which teaching and research are too often presented as competing for a finite pot of human and financial resources and in which arts organisations (especially in the regions) are so very stretched, it was especially heartening the see so much cross-fertilization between students, teachers, researchers, archivists and curators, and to such impressive effect. Details of these awards can be found on our website: [http://royalhistsoc.org/public-history-prize-winners/](http://royalhistsoc.org/public-history-prize-winners/). I’m especially delighted that our incoming Honorary Director of Communications, Alix Green, will be bringing abundant expertise in these areas to the Society when she takes up her post in November.

From the perspective of the Royal Historical Society’s activities, it’s vital to note how much all these achievements benefit from the robust framework of learned bodies and societies that support History as a practice in the UK, and from the extraordinary generosity (of time, commitment and money) of our own and these organisations’ members. One of the many happy legacies I am inheriting from Peter Mandler is a combined Fellowship and Membership of 3,927. A decade ago, that figure was c. 2,500. The force of these
numbers is magnified by the hard graft and canny strategizing devoted to the Society by its Officers and Councillors. Several outgoing individuals in these capacities are noted in discussion points below, but a brief mention (with many thanks) of three portfolio-holders belongs here: Sean Connolly (who as a Vice President and chair of the Membership Committee) has overseen the admission of so many new Fellows and Members to the RHS ranks, meanwhile also chairing the committee to identify a new President); Mark Stoyle (the Council member who, as chair of the Research Support Committee has orchestrated the competitive allocation of thousands of pounds of RHS funding, to allow early career researchers [ECRs] to travel to archives and libraries, undertake foreign language study or fieldwork and present their research at national and international conferences; and Council member John Henderson (wearing two hats, serving on both the Membership and the Publications Committees) are all warmly appreciated for their contributions.

The Research Support Committee’s ability to fund an increasing number of ECR applicants—and to raise the value of our awards—illustrates just one of the ways that History benefits from cooperation with other learned bodies and societies dedicated to the discipline. A generous grant from the Past & Present Society now allows the RHS—in challenging financial times—to support far more ECRs’ research and conference attendance than we could possibly sponsor with our own funds alone. The ability to collaborate with other charities dedicated to History, such as the Economic History Society and the Historical Association, is a tremendous strength. History is much better placed than most Humanities disciplines to articulate and defend our practitioners’ interests. The RHS is both a product of that privileged place within the Humanities, and an essential instrument for maintaining it.

**Weaknesses:**

As an instinctively glass-two-thirds-full, not a glass-half-empty historian, I turn reluctantly from this partial list of strengths to our weaknesses. One weakness arguably stems from the growing scope of our remit. This is the rising strain placed on Officers and Council members by the increasing ambition (and need) for the Society to engage in policy debate and policy making. Responding to government policies is a dimension of our work that has risen steeply in the past decade, and especially in the past five years or so. The burden of work the Society performed for the profession previously lay in our roster of excellent publications, public lectures and itinerant visits to university departments. The Society’s Literary Directors continue to devote substantial time and thought to ensuring that we attract first-rate material for both the *Camden* series and our *Transactions*—these publications are intrinsically valuable in scholarly terms and are also key points of contact with the Fellowship and Membership. I’ll miss outgoing Literary Director Emma Griffin’s measured and decisive judgments on proposed publications: listening to her contributions to discussions on this topic at Society meetings reminds me of why I rate her articles and books on modern British history so highly, and find them so thought-provoking in the context of my own research. (It’s a relief that with Richard Toye’s selection to serve as Literary Director with Andrew Spicer we retain a dream team in this capacity, but many thanks indeed to Emma for her successive contributions to the RHS).

In addition to the vital scholarly activities overseen by the Literary Directors, however, we now enter much more actively—both in public and off-stage—into debates on issues such as changes to curriculum and examinations at school level, funding for Humanities research and postgraduate training and
university-level teaching. The Society has in the past few years made important interventions of issues such as funding bodies’ policies on open access publication and the content and configuration of the History A-level. Arthur Burns, outgoing Vice President in charge of Educational Policy, has done a simply super job advocating for the discipline on the latter issue (among many others), bringing to bear on thorny debates about the educational value of History a wealth of knowledge gleaned not only from years of university teaching but also from service as a school governor and the experience of piloting three children through primary and secondary education. He is a very hard act to follow, and we’re tremendously fortunate to have been able to appoint Ken Fincham to replace Arthur in this capacity. A longstanding friend of the Society, and experienced past Officer, Ken is ideally placed to help us help UK historians navigate the sandy shoals of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

It’s precisely historians such as these, already over-extended in such public-spirited ways, who bring so much knowledge and experience to discussions around the Council table and beyond. But we place real pressure on the incumbents of these posts, as I am acutely aware, and finding Officers with the requisite experience, talent and commitment to serve can be a real challenge. Adam Smith’s prolonged tenure as Honorary Secretary is only now, at last coming to an end—repeatedly delayed as we sought to identify an individual willing and able to take on the role he’s filled so ably and with such panache, while meanwhile also completing a major monograph on nineteenth-century American conservatism, winning teaching and broadcasting awards, orchestrating and training up over twenty teaching assistants, and parenting three daughters. It’s characteristic of the generosity of our Officers that Zoë Laidlaw takes over from Adam while still on maternity leave.

The escalation of policy work taken on by the Society poses especial challenges in the context of the profession’s geographical and institutional diversity. As I write, we have Officers and Council members based in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This range of representation significantly enhances our ability to speak to and and for the profession and the discipline in an increasingly devolved national policy framework. Issues such as Widening Participation and Equalities agendas play out very differently across English, Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh institutions, for example. Attending carefully to intra-British institutional differences is an essential part of the RHS brief, but can also be very time-consuming work. Our London base, which gives the RHS easy access to many nodes of British government, can also be conducive of undue Anglo-centrism in policy-orientation and personnel. We need, likewise, to ensure that the severe time constraints experienced by colleagues at smaller, teaching-intensive institutions do not preclude their full engagement, as Officers and Council members, with Society business. Within the university sector, small clusters of historians—often dispersed in much larger interdisciplinary units—play vital roles in diversifying and extending undergraduate and postgraduate students’ access to excellent historical research and history teaching nationally, wherever they live. Time, cost and geography can compromise access to Society activities, unless we’re proactive in guarding against this outcome.

Opportunities:

One of the most impressive tendencies of the Society’s approach to supporting History under Peter Mandler’s leadership has been the willingness of the RHS to convert potential threats into opportunities.
Two particularly good examples of this strategy are found in the Society’s response to the digital revolution in scholarly publishing and in the conception, production and dissemination of its Gender Report. The demise of the book—and the murder of the monograph—have figured prominently in academic discussions throughout my career. I have a vivid memory of an induction session for new staff in the late 1980s, when I began my first permanent academic post, at which a senior professor brandished a pack of floppy disks and proclaimed the demise of print in messianic tones. New digital technologies have, indeed, transformed how historians conduct and publish our research. But they have challenged rather than obliterated the monograph and the printed book—formats which so ably serve the kind of sustained and complex research at which historians excel. In this context the winding up of the Society’s Studies in History series, which has fostered the first books of so many ECRs in past decades, marks not the end of our commitment to the monograph but rather our commitment to preserving and enhancing book publication in a digital age. The launch of our New Historical Perspectives series will allow the RHS to publish books in conjunction with the Institute of Historical Research in open access digital versions. The digital revolution, which might easily have been seen as a threat to our long tradition of book publication has instead become a strategic opportunity to expand our publication profile in new directions and to reach wider audiences. It is characteristic of the kinds of historians elected to serve on Council that Penny Summerfield—who is leading NHP’s editorial team together with Simon Newman—stepped into this new role while still serving out her tenure as a Council member.

The Society’s Gender report, undertaken under Nikki Miller’s leadership as Vice President responsible for Research Policy and then adopted by Mary Vincent when she took over that weighty charge, likewise exemplifies the Society’s ability to magic a problem into an accomplishment. I’m writing this article from Leeds University, whose historians this afternoon have, under Mary’s guidance, been discussing how the Report’s findings speak to equality and diversity issues in their department, and how inequalities might be addressed and redressed in the next few years. This is only the most recent of the Report’s many outings to UK (and Irish) universities in the past year, and it is proving an extraordinarily effective means of assisting colleagues to discuss and implement change without requiring them to reinvent the wheel to do so. Jo Fox, our inspiring outgoing Honorary Director of Communications was, when I visited the RHS office last week, sitting at the Council table updating the Report’s data, researching the wider implications of the report for (among other issues) TEF, notwithstanding she is currently HoD at Durham and inevitably had a mountain of email and form-filling to attend to. If you’ve not yet read the Gender Report, please do. It’s an eye-opener, and sets a high bar for us to reach for in thinking through the structure of the discipline in the next few years: http://royalhistsoc.org/rhs-report-gender-equality-historians-higher-education/.

Looking forward, I am acutely aware that even as we build on the findings of the Gender Report, we need to extend the Society’s attention to other forms of diversity. The community of professional historians in the UK is strikingly more diverse than it was a few decades ago. But we don’t remotely reflect the wider composition of British society (at any level, from History in schools to cultural organisations and universities), and urgently need to take strides to address the underrepresentation of black and ethnic minority groups (among others) in the discipline. As the projects that won the Society’s inaugural Public History Prize last year make clear, first-rate research that speaks to diverse historical experiences is now conspicuous in historical scholarship. We have an opportunity in the next few years to apply some of the insights we gained from the Gender Report to wider equalities issues. History as a discipline will be the stronger for it if we do.
Threats:

Looking toward and beyond 2017, it would be naïve to suggest no threats loom on the horizon. That Brexit means Brexit does little to clarify what Brexit means for History as a discipline in the UK. Many colleagues are concerned about the potential impact of Brexit on student recruitment and exchanges, foreign language study, access to research funds and staffing. Regardless of individuals’ views on the Referendum and its likely consequences, the Society remains wholeheartedly committed to an outward-looking discipline, as Peter Mandler stated forcefully in July: http://royalhistsoc.org/rhs-letter-regarding-eu-referendum/. (Peter has been such an extraordinary excellent President that I’m tempted to list completion of his four-year term as a key threat facing History in Britain, but I’ll spare his blushes here). Working with colleagues to monitor the impact of Brexit and devising ways of ensuring that the quality and diversity of History in Britain are not threatened by our changing place in Europe are very much at the forefront of my mind.

The career prospects of ECRs—who are the future of our discipline—is a topic of real concern. The proliferation of fixed-term contracts—very often lasting less than 12 months—the tendency of many managers to imagine that the separation of teaching and research staff into separate silos will result in higher rankings in university league tables, and the repeated hiatuses created in institutional staff planning (in response to the constant churn of policy reformulation) all place severe pressure on early career historians. The best scholarship in our field relies on long gestation periods, conditions of employment that are increasingly threatened. The Society does very well indeed at supporting ECR archival and library research, paper-giving and publishing, and our website is now awash with resources designed to assist the transition from PhD student to published postdoctoral scholar. We need to be thinking strategically, however, about the wider damage that short-termism may inflict on historians now embarking on postdoctoral careers, and think more imaginatively about how RHS support for ECRs should evolve as the twenty-first century beds in.

Inevitably, TEF is also a worry. However much historians rail against the REF, many of its modes of assessment are familiar to us from the peer-review processes that shape our research, whether through publication or grant capture. TEF is a different animal, relying on very different methodologies, at least some of which are bound to be problematic. I take heart here however from the fact that when it comes to navigating the implementation of new government policies such as these, the RHS has ‘form’. We are well-positioned to counteract the pervasive expectation that we will flourish most if we think of our colleagues primarily as competitors in a marketplace. We know from the Royal Historical Society’s long history—nearly 150 years of it, now—that adopting collaborative, cooperative models of scholarly organisation and strategy best serves our discipline’s short, medium and long term interests. And with your help, that’s what I aim for the Society to continue to do.
This November I will step down after four years as Vice-President (Education) of the Royal Historical Society. It therefore seems an opportune moment both to reflect on what has been happening over the last few years in the field of historical education in the UK, and to look ahead to the challenges that will be faced by my successor, Professor Kenneth Fincham of the University of Kent.

It has been an exceptionally interesting and rewarding time to be involved in the education strategy of the Society. In some ways, the discipline is fortunate in that it has not to date faced some of the challenges that currently beset other Humanities subjects. The week in which I write has seen the announcement of the closure of the last History of Art A-level, while the numbers taking A-levels in German and French have continued to decline despite the inclusion of languages in the English Baccalaureate (E-Bacc) school performance measure, with all the implications that carries for these subjects both in schools and universities. In contrast, History remains a popular option, buoyed by its own presence in the E-Bacc at GCSE level, and a subject performing well at A-level, not least thanks to the high-quality teaching delivered by subject specialist teachers. At university, History departments deliver impressive scores in the National Student Survey (NSS), a fact sometimes masked by the league tables which give misleading significance to sometimes microscopic differences in performance within a single subject area. Some 86% of History Departments achieved satisfaction of 90% or over in the latest NSS on the ‘Teaching on my course’, and 44% of over 95%; compare this both to some other Humanities disciplines (for example French 68% and 30% respectively, Music 55% and 17%) and subjects beyond the Humanities (Human and Social Geography 62% and 26%; Law 44% and 5%; Computer Science 13% and 4%). Figures on
employment prospects for graduate historians make plain that although historians are unlikely to command the very highest salaries available, significant numbers of them will do very well indeed, and few will face an uncertain future on account of their choice of degree, earning median salaries not dissimilar to those studying Mathematics and Computer Science. Recruitment at university remains strong. That’s the good news (and not to be forgotten). However, one lesson I will take from the last four years is just how rapidly things can change, and the need for all engaged in delivering historical education to remain alert to the possible consequences of a whole variety of factors converging in unexpected conjunctions. This was very much the experience early in my time as VP with regard to History in schools, when Michael Gove was driving change across the curriculum from primary to sixth-form at the same time as encouraging the introduction of free schools and renewed support for academization. In the debates and reforms that followed, History experienced both the benefits and pitfalls of being a subject about which politicians cared. The discussion of the future shape of the History national curriculum was probably the most intensive, serious and detailed for any subject, with high-powered summits at the DfE and extensive behind-the-scenes discussions; but at the same time those involved had to navigate a tricky, tendentious and sometimes angry public debate in which politicians and pundits would present a rather less nuanced picture than they acknowledged in private. In the meantime, front-line teachers suffered the most, both in terms of the expectation that they could retool rapidly to new syllabi, assessments and performance measures, and also in often crude caricatures of their classroom approaches or political opinions. As we discussed at the time, the Royal Historical Society was engaged in the heart of these discussions...
with our colleagues in the Historical Association. Looking back, I take considerable satisfaction in the fact that we were able to help fashion a national curriculum that acknowledged the importance of non-British history in the education of all (something that feels all the more important in these Brexit times!) and secured attention to the importance of place and time-depth in historical studies. We did not win all the battles – non-examination assessment has become less significant, and the GCSE specifications in particular feel a bit overcrowded -- but there are at least some welcome developments that reflect outcomes we fought for – and here our president has drawn particular attention to some of the new material now being taught at A-level, such as the pre-colonial Africa option offered by OCR. We also forged a new and enduring collaboration with the Historical Association and staked our claim to be a key point of reference in future discussion of schools history.

Such discussions will certainly be ongoing. As the new specifications for GCSE and A-level bed down, and the new performance measures for schools kick in, all in a climate where cuts to sixth-form funding in particular are already imposing serious strains on the delivery of teaching at all levels of secondary education, we will need to work closely with our allies to ensure that university History Departments remain up to speed on what now constitutes history in schools. They also need to understand what they can do to help schools prepare their students both for the new courses and for the switch to university thereafter (where patterns of assessment are moving in the opposite direction to that now being implemented in schools).

All concerned need to work to ensure that the increased demand for History promoted by E-Bacc does not come into unhelpful tension with the means for renewing the History teaching profession, where the past 18 months did not reflect well on ministerial understanding of how to ensure that the UK’s very high reputation for teacher training in our discipline is best maintained. My successor will also face a more difficult task in keeping abreast with these issues as they develop along potentially divergent lines in different parts of the UK. It is therefore particularly welcome that Kenneth Fincham brings with him to the post a longstanding interest in History in schools, not least through himself having taught in a school early in his career.

It is nevertheless clear that in the immediate future History in the universities will be at least as important a focus as History in the schools. As already indicated, History remains a popular choice for students at university. But its constituency does not reflect the diversity of the student body as a whole, let alone of the wider population, and the same is true of the staff that deliver it. This is a complex issue which will require care in addressing, but the Society will surely seek to follow up its effective intervention in issues around gender
equality in the History profession with a discussion of other issues of equality and diversity. Inevitably, Brexit also poses significant questions for the future shape of both staff and student bodies in UK History departments.

Again, the popularity of the subject does not mean that in a world without caps on student numbers in History Departments in England (and this is another area where experiences in the component parts of the UK are diverging) there is not considerable uncertainty around the future of subject provision in particular institutions, and the prospect of ongoing instability across the sector putting at risk many outstanding units. If undergraduate number planning is getting more challenging, so is that for MA programmes, and we will need to pay particular attention to doing what we can to protect this vital bridge between the history student and the professional historian which, despite recent changes to the availability of support for students pursuing such studies, remains especially vulnerable, above all where it aims to offer a highly focused training of the kind likely to appeal to those hoping to join the academic profession.

Looking slightly further ahead, my successor will no doubt find that the implementation of the government’s Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) will absorb much of his time. Here the devil will almost certainly be in the detail – of which once we get down to subject level, there will no doubt be a lot. There must be concern that the desire of the government to clearly delineate ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ – as encapsulated in the current proposal for the award of ‘gold’, ‘silver’ and ‘bronze’ classifications, may have particularly undesirable consequences in a subject like ours where, as already discussed, NSS scores, a key ingredient for TEF judgements, are generally high across the discipline. Ministers have made reassuring noises when fears were raised early in the development of TEF that metrics might include such crude measures as contact hours, and stressed their commitment to the importance of the relationship of research and teaching in HE, but there will be real difficulties in establishing effective measures that if imposed uniformly across the sector will not inflict unequal and unjustifiable reputational damage on institutions and departments serving very different constituencies to a very high standard. Veterans of discussions of the RAE/REF over the past couple of decades will be aware that of no less importance than the rules established will be the understanding of those rules that develops within the management of HEIs.

I think one other major form of support that the RHS will be seeking to deliver is support to our fellows, members and their colleagues teaching History in universities as both individuals and institutions seek to navigate the potentially choppy waters ahead. If the ‘student experience’ is a headline concern for all HEIs today, the ‘staff experience’ has in comparison suffered some neglect. Over the last few years the RHS has provided some important support on staff issues, notably through our Gender Equality report, which has been very widely welcomed, our work on terms and conditions for temporary staff, and the support we have provided for early career historians (a term we prefer to the more usual ‘early career researchers’) both through our new website and
in institutional visits, and through running successful ‘New to Teaching’ events in 2015 and 2016 under the leadership of Peter D’Sena, one of our Education Committee members, who has also been responsible for helping us sustain the disciplinary teaching conference which he used to run under the auspices of the Higher Education Academy.

However, I think there is more we could (and should) do. While HEIs are thankfully now giving more thought to the mental wellbeing and support needs of their staff, it is clear from talking to colleagues across the country that there is widespread concern about the working conditions and pressures staff currently experience as they attempt to deliver on the various duties expected of them as academics. What some university leaders would prefer to see as progressive change and the pursuit of efficiency, can feel all too often like erosion of conditions in ways that can generate new sets of inefficiencies for the employee. Here the RHS could provide a significant service to colleagues not least by establishing what is actually taking place in terms for example, of the movement from single-occupancy offices to a model of shared or open-space accommodation for academic staff, or the changing balance between permanent and temporary/casual employment, or the use of KPIs (key performance indicators) for performance management. It could also help promote a better understanding of the variety of work History academics undertake and the conditions they need to execute these tasks efficiently. This is not just an education issue, and is one indeed where the balancing of education and research is a key question to investigate. But it is really important as an education issue nevertheless, and not just from a staff perspective: it is clear that happier staff, by and large, means happier students. We’ve begun discussing in council how best to take this forward, though this will inevitably now fall to my successor. We’d certainly be interested to hear from the fellowship and members about those issues that concern them in this area, but it is already clear that there is more than enough here to ensure that Kenneth Fincham should have as interesting and rewarding, if also demanding, time as VP, as it has been my privilege to enjoy.
The Society is delighted to announce the publication of volume 51 of the Camden Series: *British Envoys to the Kaiserreich, 1871–1897* (Markus Mössling and Helen Whatmore eds).

The RHS (and its predecessor body, the Camden Society) has published editions of primary sources on British History since 1838. It is an excellent collection of editions of sources and important unpublished texts for historians, with expert commentary, and many of the early volumes remain in regular use. The publication is on-going (two volumes per annum), and is currently published by Cambridge University Press. The series now comprises over 325 volumes.

The latest volume, *British Envoys to the Kaiserreich, 1871–1897*, concentrates on Anglo-German history prior to German Weltpolitik. The first volume presents official diplomatic reports from the British embassy at Berlin (German Empire) and from the four minor – however still independent – diplomatic missions in Darmstadt (Hesse and Baden), Dresden (Saxony), Stuttgart (Württemberg), and Munich (Bavaria) during the years 1871 to 1883. The selection reveals the attitudes of British observers and their perceptions of a wide variety of political, social and cultural developments in a period of great diplomatic activity and changing Anglo-German relations. The dispatches offer new perspectives on Bismarck's imperial chancellorship, on the integration of the German states into the new Kaiserreich, as well as on the varied British interests in Germany and its regional peculiarities.
Black History is commonly understood as the history of people of African descent. The term has made the headlines recently with Birmingham City University offering the first Black Studies Course in the UK. BCU is by no means the first institution in Britain and indeed in Europe to offer modules that look into various aspects of the past, present and questions related to people of African descent but it is the first to use the politicised words Black Studies. The term encompasses a multidisciplinary approach to questions related to challenges.

The history of people of African descent in relation to colonial history has been studied for centuries. Even though the term was not in use, what is understood nowadays as Black History in Britain dates back at least to the 18th century, a pivotal time for Britain’s colonial history. When so-called historian of Jamaica Edward Long was writing about colonial life and sharing his controversial views about the colonies and their inhabitants with his contemporaries, one could argue that he was already doing Black history.
Long’s contempt for people of African descent did not prevent him from positing himself as an expert on all things colonial including enslaved communities. Still, in the Americas, while African-Americans were organising economic, social and even political emancipation in the 19th century in various states as shown by Manisha Sihna, Britain was promoting abolition on the one hand and shaping a discourse around so-called racial hierarchy and Blackness as a curse on the other.

It was mainly people of European descent who taught what was known as the history of the colonies, in Britain over the following century. Historian Eric Williams’ seminal book *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944), opened the door to new narratives in Britain about colonial history. Generations of researchers both racialised as Black and White contested or supported Williams’ thesis. They all had to take into account the question of viewpoints. Colonial History or even World History was slowing delving into the viewpoints of those who have been enslaved or colonised. Black History as a recognised subject was slowly emerging.

Pan-Africanism and then Black history as a locus for political struggle became a term that made sense for a variety of groups between and after the World Wars. From the Civil Rights movements in the USA to the struggles of minority ethnic groups in the 1970s in Britain, Black history became the history of those who refused to be seen as only the oppressed or the former colonial subjects. African American Activism was echoing British militantism within and outside academia. American singer James Brown’s words ‘Say it loud, I’m Black and I’m proud’ resonated amongst intellectuals including Francophone historians of African descent such as Cheik Anta Diop and Joseph Ki-Zerbo.

In Britain, while a large number of historians racialised as Black were teaching history outside academia, a competitive higher education environment allowed but a few to teach and research Black History at University level. A sharp distinction was being made between community history, local historians and academics. Meanwhile, the salient question of representation and positioning was becoming central to historical research. Whose history was being studied? Who should teach those various histories? The answers to these questions were and still are complex.

Britain and the USA’s close historical connections have made the words Black history, understandable by most but the term is carefully avoided in other European countries because of its links with the contested notion of race. In France, despite key texts that regulated relationships between people racialised as Black and White, such as the two versions of the Code Noir or Black Code (1685 and 1724), and the Indigenous Code of 1887 as well as French academics’ infamous participation in the development of so-called scientific racism, contemporary French national identity is officially constructed around citizenship rather than race. Historians are expected to delve into history as objective experts who can move past ‘colonial traumas’.

The challenge posed by such a stance is that the material used by historians
is expected to reflect the nation’s grandeur through recognised volumes. The books of ‘dead white men’ were for a long time supposed to be used as references first and complemented by the research done by people of African descent in some instances. Cheik Anta Diop is rarely used in class but Jean-Francois Champollion is not frowned upon.

In that context, recruitment of historians at university level is based on strict criteria that take into account the precise number of publications and administrative duties. Race is put aside theoretically, in order to remove potential partiality from the equation. Despite some discrepancies, full Black professors are not rare occurrences in French academia. In Britain however, out of the 14,000 the professors, 60 are Black and the nation has yet to count more than one Black History Professor. The lack or representation poses a number of problems. Academics racialised as Black find it hard to navigate the already competitive environment of the academy while facing micro-aggressions and discrimination. The exacerbated tensions in the higher education work environment can be enhanced by gender biases as well. These points hinder research and lead to isolation. The phenomena is by no means solely linked to Black history researchers.

Academics racialised as White also face challenges when working on Black History. The post-colonial British and American academy assumes that the motto ‘nothing about us without us’ is relevant when working on the history of people of African descent. Yet it fails at times to deal with the underlying tensions that occur when academics racialised as White, are involved in historical research that looks at so-called Black narratives. Assumed activism in these instances becomes a common ground that allows those academics racialised as White to access family stories about people of African descent. The term ‘ally-ship’ is invoked in some cases. A ‘White ally’ is a person racialised as White who is working on Black history or/and with communities racialised as Black in order to uncover hidden histories or to promote social justice and equality. The term is contested but highlights the sensitive nature of post-colonial trauma and the workings of post-memory. Working on Black history for the sake of doing history as a fascinating subject without any activism is perceived with suspicion in many instances. This brings to light the question of the motives of the historian and the nature of history as a discipline. Should historians necessarily do history as an act of activism? The answer to the question is complicated by various debates about the memories of the past and in particular the representation of the past in public spaces in contemporary Britain. The Rhodes Must Fall movement, the Colston debate and former education minister comments about ‘post-colonial guilt’, the polls about the way Britain considers Empire or more recently Black Lives Matter UK have a certain impact on the way historians ‘do’ Black history. That history becomes a mirror held before the nation and a geyser so to speak, that shows how history, memory of the past, policy and politics influence our perception of the present and the past.

These constant developments force Historians of Black history to update their teaching material by balancing ‘traditional’ sources such as monographs and academic articles with new
materials and debate initiated on social media.

Another key challenge faced by historians working on Black history is about sustaining students' interest in the course. Within academia, historians tend to incorporate Black history into colonial history in order to attract a broader range of students in an environment where student experience and satisfaction include 'module attractiveness'. This could be seen as a compromise but it may allow educators to show students that Black History is an important part of the History of the world and that it takes into account multiple narratives. This approach can however be seen as controversial especially when historians are taught to bring about ways for the learner to sympathise or empathise with the topic while remaining “objective”. The challenges of the educator are multiple when it comes to the target audience. In a diverse class, studies have shown that students do not want to identify with the oppressed colonial subject. One of the many ways to teach that history is to examine Black history as a whole. It entails having sessions that delve into African history, encounters with Europeans and the long history of migrations as well as the study of Black agency in the process of emancipation during and after transatlantic slavery for example.

Black history also looks at the legacies of empires in contemporary Europe. This topic allows the historian to analyse the very important question of multiple identities and the history of Afro-Europeans. Finding a balance between students' interests while sensitively but rigorously opening what has been for decades a Pandora's box of the history of colonial oppression is vital to understand parts of Black history. It therefore makes sense to use the term Black as a political stance that examines communities whose history was also shaped by the questions of race and ethnicity. Using the European gaze and archival sources as the starting and end point to understand the past when it comes to colonial history has been challenged over the last two decades in Britain. Historians working on the narratives of people of African descent in Britain have shown that Black history is also about national histories of Europe. Teaching and researching Black history is a fantastic opportunity for historians to delve into the history and memories of people of African descent. It provides them with the ability to move from a history of the oppressed to histories of diversity, survival, independence and pride.

Academic institutions across Europe have strong centres that look at the long history of people of African descent. These centres are doing Black history. In Britain, several other centres are also looking at Black history by focusing on crucial notions such as Race and Rights. Many other historians in the country who are not permanently affiliated to higher education institutions or who do not belong to research centres dedicated to Black history are researching and teaching Black history in engaging ways. There are varied Black histories just as there are various ways to render those histories accessible to all. In order to expand our knowledge about Black history, we need to bridge the gap between so-called community histories and historians. It has been argued that the academy is a male dominated white space. Promoting Black history and providing funding opportunities for students who are part of under-represented groups in higher education will provide us with means in the long run to broaden our perspective about our common history.
For around a decade now, IWM has enjoyed the presence of a group of PhD students, embedded within our curatorial departments and exhibition teams. They have come to us through the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s Collaborative Doctoral Award and Collaborative Doctoral Partnership schemes, which have furnished the national museums, galleries, and other cultural organisations in the UK with a steady throughput of PhD students – enriching our understanding of a wealth of themes across several disciplines.

The Imperial War Museum’s collections were amassed over the past century, from the moment when our first director-general visited the trenches in France in 1918 and identified items he wanted brought back to London, to the present day when we have curators sourcing memorabilia from ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The research carried out by staff in museums and galleries tends to be different from that done in universities. It will often involve the development of intimate understanding - sometimes over years - of particular media or types of collection. At the IWM a very large proportion of what we curate derives from government initiatives. Our paintings are, by and large, the product of the official war art schemes of the two world wars; our posters the product of ministries of information who co-opted the graphic artists of the day to press particular points on the public. The same goes for much of our film and photographic collections – the output of government-led efforts to record the two world wars as they were happening, or propaganda aimed at the home front or at neutral countries. So a familiarity with these various schemes is paramount for the proper custodianship and interpretation of the IWM collections.

The individual’s perspective is represented by hundreds of collections of personal papers (letters, diaries etc) and sound recordings made by men and women who lived...
through the momentous events of the last century and committed accounts of what they went through to paper or to tape. Here the expertise will tend to be in the form of evidence likely to be present in different types of logbook, diary or personal correspondence, or in the possibilities and pitfalls of oral history.

CDP students get to immerse themselves in these collections and to produce a thesis based on what they find. Sometimes they will focus on an aspect of museum practice or the museum’s own history – making for a study which combines archival research with oral history or work within a current project team.

Curators at IWM share supervision of a student with a university co-supervisor. The students are prepared for the fact that they are in a rather singular situation – needing to negotiate two institutions. If there are tensions, they are generally healthy ones.

Our policy is to decide on the topics within the museum, according to what we know will be useful. The student has a better chance of being involved in key activities if their topic is relevant and timely for IWM’s wider objectives. We advertise the opportunities to universities to co-supervise, and then, having selected an academic partner, we jointly advertise the studentships themselves. They are much sought-after opportunities, with as many as sixty applying for one studentship.

Here are some glimpses into our students’ work:

Anna Maguire has just submitted her PhD on ‘Colonial encounters during the First World War’. Santanu Das of the Department of English at King’s College London and I have co-supervised Anna, each of us bringing our own perspective on her topic – Das that of a literary historian, mine that of someone who knows the potential of IWM’s archives to illuminate the colonial story. Anna has been notably energetic, taking herself off to conferences and going to New Zealand in her second year, to work in archives there. She has drawn our attention to some overlooked sources in our collections – investigating, for example, the autograph books kept by nurses working at the military hospital at Seaford in Sussex where West Indians who had fallen sick on the sea-journey to Europe were treated. Anna brought the fruits of her research to a particularly engaged audience last month at our Black History Month First World War workshop where she discussed the messages
and poems written by Caribbean soldiers to their nurses. A special insight into the dislocation felt by the young men who had so eagerly joined up and who found themselves sick and far from home.

Hannah Mawdsley, who is researching the 1918-19 Influenza Pandemic, with co-supervisors at Queen Mary University of London, applied some fine detective-work to locating a missing portion of a collection into the wider whole. Hannah was working on the large collection of personal accounts amassed by the author Richard Collier for his 1974 history of the pandemic, *The Plague of the Spanish Lady*. Hannah realised that over two hundred Australian survivors’ accounts – some of which were cited in Collier’s book – had not been accessioned at the time of the original bequest. Happily, although the house where the papers were stored had changed hands, the papers were still there and were duly reunited with the rest of the collection. Hannah is interested in the cultural memory of this devastating event, which has been overshadowed by the deaths on the fighting fronts, and this will be the focus of her study.

The IWM’s own history has drawn the attention of students keen to understand how different functions have developed and how our public image has modernised. Rebecca Coll – co-supervised by Professor David Reynolds at Cambridge – took as her subject the impact of Dr Noble Frankland, Director of the Imperial War Museum from 1960 to 1982. Her IWM co-supervisor, Roger Smither, worked under Dr Frankland for twelve years, and Roger has guided Rebecca to former IWM staff whom she interviewed for their recollections of that time, as well as introducing her to the former director himself – still keen to engage with Rebecca’s study at the age of 93. Frankland was a moderniser who saw the value of television for IWM and Rebecca’s paper ‘Autobiography and history on screen: “The Life and Times of Lord Mountbatten”’, has recently appeared in *The Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*. 
Laura Johnson’s study of the BBC Monitoring Service during the Second World War – instigated by Dr Peter Busch of King’s College London – faced the challenge of how to home in on a manageable portion of a truly vast collection. (The BBC Monitoring transcripts collection runs to 15 million sheets of paper.) Laura’s pioneering work was invaluable when, in 2015, we came to run an AHRC-funded International Research Network to better understand the collection’s academic value. Laura had made contact with a number of former monitors in the course of her work and was able, with Hilary Footitt of Reading University, to put together an involving and interactive programme for the Network’s first workshop at the BBC Monitoring Headquarters in Caversham.

Jessica Douthwaite (Strathclyde) is conducting oral history interviews to investigate British civilian lives in the 1950s, focusing on everyday anxieties towards nuclear weapons development and a possible third world war. She has found the international conference scene a rewarding one to engage with, travelling to Valencia in March this year to attend the European Social Science History Conference, where she gave a paper ‘An “age of fear”? Deciphering untold emotions in oral histories’, and a few weeks later to Montreal for the Association of Critical Heritage Studies 2016 conference where she spoke about ‘Immediate emotion: heritage in oral histories’.

Jessica has also joined the board of the oral history charity Eastside Community Heritage – gaining a useful insight into governance, projects, funding and strategy.

Just five examples from eighteen PhD students we have hosted since our first involvement with the scheme. For IWM staff there are numerous satisfactions: seeing a once-neglected collection given new life and meaning; seeing the students develop knowledge, skills, confidence; and reconnecting in a very hands-on way with the academic sector – sometimes many years after they were themselves in full-time education. IWM’s students have been notably proactive in organising conferences about the CDP scheme itself – high-profile events that have been praised at a senior level for stimulating debate. The students run our Research Blog, in the process learning about writing for online audiences and copyright clearance. Our Research Manager, Emily Peirson-Webber, ensures the smooth-running of the scheme, spotting opportunities and generally making sure that each student gets the best they can from their time with us. We have occasional reading sessions where students share extracts from conference papers or chapters in progress. Very often the students are grappling with the sharp end of the human experience of frontline combat, the bombing of cities or the dislocation that so many individuals experienced in wartime. It can be cathartic to share with each other and with us the intensity of working day-in-day-out with the darker side of human nature. There is a wider network which plays a valuable role for the students. The Consortium of CDP holders brings together everyone studying and co-supervising under the scheme. Energetically overseen by the head of research at the British Museum, J D Hill, the Consortium ensures that the fifty or so CDP students who start their doctorates
each year get to know each other and join together as often as possible for shared activities. Foremost among these are specialist courses in professional development run by experts in the Consortium for the benefit of the entire intake: the students have full-day sessions on topics such as open access; copyright; object-based scholarship; and making exhibitions dealing with challenging history. While for the third year students ‘making money’ and ‘careers’ provide useful pointers at the end of their time with us.

Our CDP students have in nearly every case found employment within the academic or cultural sectors. In today’s world this will sometimes mean an initial portfolio existence - the same mix of the practical and the academic that they have experienced with us. So Anna Maguire is currently teaching in the History department at King’s College London, carrying out research for new displays on Churchill and the Middle East at the Churchill War Rooms, assisting 14-18 NOW with a potential new commission to mark the First World War centenary, and helping Santanu Das with an anthology on colonial writing during the First World War.

Several past students have gone on to work in academic departments – to date at the universities of Leeds, Exeter, Cambridge and Sussex. They have also taken up posts in the Henry Moore Institute; the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust; Manchester Museum of Science and Industry; the Handel House Museum; and the Bodleian Library.

Our chosen topics to start in October 2017 and for which we are now seeking co-supervisors can be found on the IWM website. One will support the new Holocaust galleries being developed for 2020, ensuring that we capture for posterity the photographs of UK-based Holocaust survivors’ families. Another aims to look at British soldiers’ encounters with Italian civilians during the Second World War. We know much from the British perspective – there are numerous written and spoken accounts. An Italian speaker will, we hope, interrogate written and spoken accounts of the years 1943 to 1946 to build our understanding of the other side of the story.

Of particular interest to students of propaganda and film will be a project offering the opportunity to study the vast collection of Second World War ‘dope sheets’ – the forms compiled by army film cameramen to record the detail of each reel of film they had shot. There is plentiful social history detail in these documents, as well as insights into the working lives of the cameramen themselves – so often caught between the role of dispassionate military observer and human being seeing tragic events unfold before them.

By the end of our current Collaborative Doctoral Partnership in 2020, twenty-five PhDs will have studied at IWM. As I write, the new intake are about to arrive. Briefing packs, security passes, tours of the archives, a host of introductions and the museum photographer are all lined up. Literature reviews should be done by Christmas and we will have got to know new colleagues in several universities. Our students are at the sharp end of creativity here at IWM, and we hugely value what they bring to our work.
Our work around gender, diversity, and equality is among the fastest developing areas at the Royal Historical Society.

Much of this springs directly from the RHS Report on Gender Equality and Historians in UK Higher Education, led by Professor Nicola Miller, and published in January 2015. This is available on the RHS website. Since the report was published, events organized around its findings have been held around the country. A follow-up questionnaire to Heads of Department in May 2016 found that many schools and departments had discussed it in meetings, used it to reflect on their own work in this field, or incorporated it into work towards an Athena Swan award. Some Universities have held more formal workshops around the RHS Gender Report, including Hertfordshire, Leeds and, as part of their doctoral training programmes, the White Rose and Midlands3Cities AHRC consortia. Recently, the Report was the subject of a discussion initiated by the Irish Historical Society and hosted at the Royal Irish Academy.

With many universities encouraging participation in Athena Swan, and the possibility of research funding being dependent on an Athena Swan award — as in STEM funding, and as recently recommended by the recent Irish HEA gender equality report — this area of the Society’s work will only grow. We are therefore looking to develop materials that will encourage departments to develop equality and diversity policies, drawing on, for example, departmental experiences in preparing for an Athena Swan submission.

Among the Report’s most striking findings is the conclusion that, if policies against ‘overt discrimination’ were ‘working effectively, there would by now be far more women professors of history and a more equal balance among academic staff’ (p.3). Measures against discrimination have been in place for decades but the figures speak for themselves, and the ‘leaky pipeline’ persists. Why, given that women win 55.3% of AHRC doctoral studentship, are women still in the minority in the academy?

This was the starting point for a workshop held in October on the theme of ‘Challenging Inequality’. Run by the Women in Humanities research group at the University of Oxford, this was open to women historians in UK universities and the day began with a discussion of the RHS Report, introduced and led by Professor Miller and Professor Mary Vincent.
There was further RHS input from Professor Jo Fox, who spoke on a panel on ‘Gender Equality Across UK History Departments’ and it was a particular pleasure to see Jinty Nelson, the RHS’s first woman president, at the event. In a day of wide-ranging discussions, one focus was the continuing fall off among women, which leaves them underrepresented at senior stages of the profession.

Another aspect of gender discrimination came under attention in June 2016 when Nicola Miller and Mary Vincent took part in a round table led by Paul Boyle (VC, University of Leicester) for the Science and Technology Foundation on gender bias in research grant awards. This built on work Professor Boyle conducted with Professor Henrietta O’Connor and others, published in *Nature*, which pointed to worse funding application results for women in science compared to social science. A summary of the discussion and report is available at www.foundation.org.uk.

Clearly, much still needs to be addressed, not only at departmental and institutional level, but within the academy as a whole. The Stern Report was notably silent on gender equality, beyond the obvious platitudes, despite evidence from REF2014 that demonstrated that the least likely group to be returned were women between the age of 30-50. In History, some 75% of impact case studies were authored by senior men. The RHS will be actively lobbying that data about gender be collected as part of REF2020.

While some journals are transparent about publication rates by gender – here the *Economic History Review* and the *Historical Journal* stand out as having confronted the issue – others are more reticent. Not only does the profession need to keep an eye on the composition of editorial boards, but on the proportion of research articles published by women in leading journals. There is evidence to suggest that female historians’ voices are
often confined to the reviews section.

While ‘good practice’ is frequently circulated within institutions, most are reluctant to consider adopting more radical policies. Frequently, student assessments of teaching are used for probation and promotion purposes despite compelling evidence that they are inherently gendered.

In one study, Anne Boring surveyed data drawn from a sample size of 22,665 evaluations by 4,423 first-year undergraduates of 372 different teachers at Science-Po. She found that: ‘the average first year male student is 40% more likely to rate a male professor as “excellent” compared with a female professor, while female students are only 10% more likely to do so; Male students tend to rate male professors as better in every metric; and female students also rate male professors as better on stereotypically male qualities.’

Those of us who frequently see references as part of hiring or promotion processes may be struck by the prevalence of writing in code, and indeed in describing individuals in gendered ways, by, for example, praising a female candidate’s commitment to pastoral care and student-facing work compared to a male candidate’s rigour or leadership skills.

We all share the responsibility for diversity and equality. The Heforshe Campaign or the recent Report on ‘Collaborating with Men’ authored by colleagues at Murray Edwards College, Cambridge, are opening up the debate to suggest ways in which men can become more involved in these issues. ‘Collaborating with Men’ is a particularly timely intervention, laying out how men perceive women in the workplace, why men think women’s voices are silenced or not heard, and why women are sidelined in networking events, and encouraging men to take individual responsibility in supporting women in the workplace.
Importantly, the Report points to the high levels of support among men for gender equality, and this should be of some comfort to all involved in changing workplace cultures and attitudes.

The Report is full of ideas about sharing views, making action visible, training opportunities (including bystander training, the gender balance of teams, challenging behaviours), and building closer formal and informal relationships between men and women at work.

Much research continues to emphasize the importance of role models. In recognition of this and in celebration of International Women’s Day in March 2016, we developed a short series of interviews with women historians from a range of backgrounds, asking about their inspiration and their role models as well as the obstacles they had faced and the barriers they perceived for women. We would like to thank Anindita Ghosh, Bobby Anderson and Margot Finn for participating in this and we intend to expand the series soon.