

# ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## *newsletter*

new series, 10, November 2012



## *Presidential Letter*

Colin Jones

Queen Mary  
University of London

Learned societies such as the RHS are the lifeblood of the disciplines. They constitute a kind of civil society of the research environment, promoting and defending the discipline, disseminating knowledge and fostering and nurturing the community. In the present world, it is difficult to imagine a flourishing research environment without a buoyant and dynamic ensemble of learned societies underpinning them.

These reflections about the value of learned societies in general are prompted by the fact that I am imminently to step down from my role as RHS President. From December 2012, Peter Mandler will be taking over the Presidency, allowing me to head for the hills, metaphorically at least (in reality I have just begun a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship Award).

I won't list the many things I have failed to achieve in my tenure at the helm of the RHS, nor the (shorter) list of what I have managed to do. I would, however, like to stress that I feel both humble and privileged to have been in a key role at the helm of history's foremost learned

society champion for the last four years.

The discipline and the profession have endured very challenging times over these four years, so it is particularly gratifying to be handing on the baton with the Society in pretty good shape. We have responded to the turbulence in our sector by building up our lobbying and advocacy role with government, with research councils, with A-level examination boards, and with Hefce, notably over REF issues. Our programme of publications, conferences and visits flourishes. Our first-book and essay prizes and our Centenary and Marshall Scholarships attract brilliant applications. It is encouraging to report that we have enhanced our research support activities, which are targeted at early career researchers: our budget in this area has expanded by over 50% since 2008. This has been all the more welcome in the context of shrinking provision in this area from universities and the research councils - and declining returns on our own investments.

If we have been managed to do a lot more than keep our heads above the water, this

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owes much to the unpaid time, service and advice for the good of the Society provided by colleagues who sit on RHS Council and our other committees. I freely acknowledge my own gratitude to these colleagues too. I would like especially to highlight the impeccable long-term financial management provided by successive Honorary Treasurers (Jon Parry, Mike Hughes in my time) and our Executive Secretary, Sue Carr.

The growth in the range of our activities has more palpable causes too. First, there is the role of charitable donations - in particular in this last year we recorded generous gifts to our Research Support Fund from our fellow learned society, the Past and Present Society, and the editorial collective of the History Workshop Journal. Increased subscription income, second, also plays a role in this: since I assumed the Presidency, overall membership has grown by over ten per cent, with particular gains in the pre-Fellow (often early career) category of Member. Third - last but certainly not least - our publications continue to make substantial profits.

## ***Research Support***

**Margot Finn, Chair of Research Support Committee, UCL**

Most Fellows of the Society are aware that the RHS offers bursaries to early career researchers based at UK universities. The Research Support Committee meets five times a year to peer-review applications from PhD students and recent postdoctoral scholars, for funding to conduct research in libraries and archives or to present papers nationally and internationally. Research Support is one of the most tangible and broad-ranging manifestations of the Society's commitment to the next generation of historians. Recipients come from UK postgraduate programmes across Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England and include funded and unfunded, full-time and part-time, UK and international early career historians.

Demand from high-calibre applicants consistently outpaces our supply of funding. This perennial shortfall has, in the past two years, been exacerbated by the recession (which places new constraints on university budgets for postgraduate research) and on changes in funding council allocations for postgraduates.

The importance of profits from our publications in our overall financial situation, and in determining what we can do within the historical community, needs stressing in the context of the government's proposals, following on from the Finch Report, to introduce Open Access. I have elsewhere expressed my concerns over those proposals, and the dangers they pose not only for learned societies but also for freedom of expression and for the research and publishing careers of those outside the charmed circle of an established university post. We have already begun to plan a public meeting on the subject of Open Access early in 2013. We will highlight the need to combine the highly desirable widening of access to research publications with due acknowledgement of the legitimate interests of the learned societies. The value of wider access to research publication will be seriously diminished if the quality of research production falls as a result of damage to the learned societies. If the last four years have taught me anything, it is the latter's enduring importance in the vitality of our disciplines.

The Society has responded proactively to these developments in three key ways. First, we have kept our peer-review policies under continuous review, to allow adjustments to our awards that reflect broader changes in the early career research environment. Second, the past two years the Society has allocated an additional £5,000 to research support, allowing us to fund (albeit not to fund fully) a higher proportion of deserving applications. Third and most happily, the RHS has sought and been awarded multi-year subventions by two scholarly societies that share its commitment to promoting early career researchers. A two-year subvention from History Workshop Journal (totalling £10,000) is being used to support PhD research, particularly doctoral work undertaken by self-funding students. A three-year subvention (totalling £15,000) from Past & Present is allowing us to support not only research and research dissemination by UK-based early career historians, but also from Members of the Society studying outside Britain.

Against a backdrop of declining support for Humanities research, the History Workshop and Past & Present subventions are a heartening development for the Society—one that we are keen to replicate with other generous donors!

# The Social History Society

Katrina Navickas, University of Hertfordshire  
Malcolm Chase, University of Leeds

The Social History Society was founded in 1976, the result of the efforts of the indefatigable efforts of its first chairman, Harold Perkin (1926 - 2004). Our mission is to encourage the study of the history of society and cultures by teaching, research, publication and other appropriate means. We act to represent the interests of social and cultural history and of social and cultural historians both within higher education and in the wider community. The Society is based in the UK but concerned with social history both internationally and in all its broadest forms. We welcome not only contributions and members from overseas, but also historians and interested individuals from both inside and outside the formal academic community. We actively seek to maintain links with other historical societies and bodies of all countries and periods.

Our vibrant annual conference is held each spring at a different university. Previous venues have included Glasgow, Manchester, Rouen and Rotterdam. The plenary speaker at our most recent conference (Brighton, 2012) was Catherine Hall, on the thought-provoking subject of 'On Being a Historian in 2012'. Conferences showcase a wealth of diverse papers based on original material fresh from the archives, from oral history interviews, and from the "speaking stones" of material culture.



The Committee of the Social History Society

Through our conferences and also through regional day-workshops in collaboration with bodies such as the Economic History Society and the British Association for Victorian Studies, we aim to foster

new young members and early career historians, as well as in the long-term loyalty and enthusiasm of older members. Our 2013 conference will be held at the University of Leeds from 25 to 27 March. The call for papers is available at <http://www.socialhistory.org.uk/annualconference.php>

Our other major endeavour is producing the peer-reviewed journal, *Cultural and Social History*, published four times a year by Berg. It has gained widespread recognition and citation since its launch in 2004. As our former chair Penny Summerfield has noted, the journal is particularly one of the means through which the Society refuses 'a polarized division between the social and the cultural'. Rather, it seeks to make connections across the broad territory of the disciplines and across chronological and geographical boundaries. Submissions from new and established scholars are welcome. See <http://www.bergpublishers.com/JournalsHomepage/CulturalandSocialHistory/tabid/522/Default.aspx> for more details.

The administrative centre of the Society is based in Lancaster. The current chair is Malcolm Chase (Leeds), who succeeded Penny Summerfield (Manchester) in 2011. Earlier chairs include Pat Thane and Michael Rose. Our president is Asa Briggs. The officers and members of the executive committee are elected by postal ballot, and the results are announced at the annual general meeting, held during the annual conference. The Society prides itself on its democratic ethos and anyone who has been a member of the Society for a year is eligible to stand for election to the executive committee, which also includes a postgraduate member (currently Alison Chand of the University of Strathclyde, and Helen Rajabi of the University of Manchester) and a representative of the Economic History Society

We welcome new members, all of whom will receive *Cultural & Social History*, advance notice of our conference and workshops, and regular newsletters. For more information contact our administrative secretary, Mrs. Linda Persson at [l.persson@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:l.persson@lancaster.ac.uk). You can also contact the Communications Officer, Katrina Navickas, [k.navickas@herts.ac.uk](mailto:k.navickas@herts.ac.uk), and of course visit our website, [www.socialhistory.org.uk/](http://www.socialhistory.org.uk/), like our facebook page 'Social History Society', <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Social-History-Society/201001306578431>, and follow us on Twitter @socialhistoc.



# History at the Higher Education Academy

Peter D'Sena

Discipline Lead for History at the Higher Education Academy

Just over a year ago, the Higher Education Academy (HEA) went through a period of restructuring and it made new arrangements for supporting individuals and groups involved in teaching and learning. Its twenty four Subject Centres, based across the country in different Higher Education Institutions, were replaced by a more centralised system, with 28 Discipline Leads. The History Subject Centre, at the University of Warwick, finally closed in September 2011 and since then, the wealth of resources produced there has been gradually transferred over to the HEA's new site.

Even relatively small organisations can be extraordinarily complex, but in a nutshell, the HEA's new arrangements have grouped Discipline Leads together in academic clusters with a view to still providing discipline-specific support, and also, when appropriate, work collectively to provide support in matters of shared concern. History sits in the Arts & Humanities cluster alongside six other disciplines: Art and Design, English and Creative Writing, Music, Dance and Drama, Languages and Linguistics, Media Communications and Philosophical and Religious Studies.

As Discipline Lead (DL), I represent history's concerns in strategic discussions about teaching and learning and the student experience on a number of national bodies, including the Royal Historical Society's Education Policy Committee. However, each DL's remit is large as it also includes supporting academic practitioners - everyone from early career historians to Deans - in their activities with students. Consequently, to manage the diversity and weight of work, we have started to deploy a number of 'Academic Associates' to convene or contribute to events and workshops, carry out research projects and to write papers and reports. Their work is crucially important in the production of resources and analysis of evidence for the community - the

annual evaluation of the National Student Survey satisfaction scores and other, new, publications such as Dr Jamie Wood's forthcoming study about digital literacy and undergraduate historians.

Despite the reconfiguration of resources and personnel at the HEA, it has remained possible to continue with some of the old subject centre's work - such as workshops, the Insights pamphlets (which provide advice and links to resources on teaching and learning), support for early career historians and, importantly, the annual conference. Indeed, in the past few months, workshops have been held on a variety of pedagogic issues, including Local History and Employability at Wolverhampton University, pre-modern History, Australian History, and e-learning at Senate House, London, and Economic History at Oxford Brookes.



These events were all well attended and well received, and the convenors commissioned afterwards to produce Insights e-pamphlets based, in part, on contributors' presentations and their own scholarly activity.

The workshops have also led to other activity. For instance, after the economic history event at Oxford Brookes, Chris Godden (University of Manchester) produced an Opinion Piece to stimulate broader academic debate and it has now been showcased on the new Arts &

Humanities blog, with an introduction by Glen O'Hara (Oxford Brookes). Please visit the site, enter the debate or, better still, write your own opinion piece to initiate and provoke other important pedagogic debates. Also, please keep an eye on the HEA site for more workshops in the coming months.

Other provision, specifically aimed at developing early career historians, also forms part of the HEA's portfolio. A workshop in Manchester for GTAs last April was extremely well received and helped to inform the structure and content of a two-day New to Teaching residential at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford in July. Academic Associates who contributed to that programme included Marcus Collins (Loughborough University), Catherine Armstrong (Manchester Metropolitan University), Richard Hawkins (University of Wolverhampton), Max Jones and Jamie Wood (both University of Manchester); and even the experienced historians were stimulated by Jo Innes' less formal, but fascinating 'meet the historian' session about the changing life of an academic. Discipline-specific training can be difficult to find in institutions, which often tend to support new appointments en masse with a more generic approach and so we plan to hold similar events in the coming year and work on their development with History Lab and History Lab+ (organisations providing support for early career historians affiliated to the Institute of Historical Research). Kimm Curran (University of Glasgow & History Lab+), who attended the residential, will publish a report that will help to inform future activity - available soon!

Working in partnership has proved to be a vital in taking HEA activity forward and only last month, after collaborating with the Institute of Historical Research, our 14th annual Teaching History in Higher Education Conference was held over two days at Senate House. In total, 80 delegates heard 40 presentations which showcased issues such as public history education and the symbiosis between pedagogies and practices across phases, particularly secondary and HE. The keynote speakers were Professor Rebecca Conard, former president of the National Council on Public History (Middle Tennessee State University), Professor Jackie Eales, president of the Historical Association and Dr Mike Maddison, National Advisor for History, Ofsted. As usual, the two-day event offered excellent opportunities for sharing

best practice as delegates from over a dozen nations contributed to robust discussion in formal spaces and engaged in less formal networking over an excellent conference dinner! The refereed conference e-proceedings will be made available on the HEA site next spring.

One important part of our work is to fund projects and in total, next year, the HEA will make £1.5m available to individuals, departments and to collaborating institutions working to research and develop research-informed teaching. Currently, Dr Richard Hawkins is leading a major project, *Historians Reflect*, about undergraduates and work-based learning; and staff at Canterbury Christ Church will soon begin a project about student transition and induction. Small travel grants are also available for academic staff looking to attend and present at events in the UK that support academic practise; and larger sums are also available to fund work internationally, for between three and six months, on collaborative projects with members of the host institution. I am keen to provide guidance to any colleagues thinking of making a bid, so please do not hesitate to contact me and, of course, encourage your colleagues to do so. It is important that the discipline accesses its share of the HEA's centrally held monies.

Our activity and funding streams also support:

- \* undergraduate student research and scholarly activity - most recently a small project evaluating the ways in which undergraduate journals can be designed and have an impact on their 'employability' skills.

- \* Conferences and events, to help others to initiate, gather and disseminate examples of good practice in teaching learning and assessment. Two due to receive HEA support next year are an event in February about World War I in the Classroom (a collaboration between Northumbria University and the University of Exeter) and an international conference in late July on *The Future of Holocaust Studies* (the Universities of Southampton and Winchester).

- \* Visits to departments to discuss individual needs and developments or give presentations. Please get in touch to find out more!

For details about our events, publications and resources, please visit the HEA's website: [www.heacademy.ac.uk](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk) and whilst there sign up to receive our monthly newsletter.

## Society News: RHS Fellowships

One of the most significant ways in which the Royal Historical Society supports the scholarly community of historians is through the funding of research fellowships for PhD students in the fourth year of their studies. In recent years, we have funded two Centenary Fellowships, funded by the Society's subscriptions and endowments, and a third Marshall Fellowship, funded through the generosity of past president Peter Marshall.

Here Robert Priest, the RHS Marshall Fellow in 2010-11 describes his time as a Fellow.

"In 2010 I was awarded an RHS Marshall Fellowship to support the completion of my doctoral thesis on the production, reception and legacy of Ernest Renan's controversial *Life of Jesus* in nineteenth-century France. After long months of archival research in France and even longer months in Oxford trying to figure out what it all meant, I was deep into the process of writing-up while very aware that time was slipping away. To make things even more pressing, I had become convinced that the historical developments I sought to describe really needed to be carried much further into the later nineteenth century than I had initially foreseen.

"Funding from the RHS Marshall Fellowship gave me the opportunity to finish my writing with a degree of financial security. It also allowed me to carry out the additional work that helped my project make a more substantial contribution to scholarship. I was now able to investigate how the meaning of Renan's book developed after his death, as the 'culture wars' over the place of religion reached fever pitch at the *fin de siècle*. I also had the time to make a last, short trip to Paris to verify and corroborate some manuscripts and newspapers.

"Beyond these tangible benefits, there was an invaluable confidence boost in knowing that the scholarly merit of my work had been visible to the very diverse panel of historians and benefactors at the IHR. Their faith was especially reassuring given the benign monomania that obtains in the later phases of a doctorate.

"In addition to financial support, I was encouraged

to contribute to the IHR's active seminar culture. I was invited to give papers at the Modern French History and Modern Religious History seminars. Each of these valuable pit-stops en route to submission provided the opportunity to hone my conclusions in the face of new audiences in London. Meanwhile, through a Director's Seminar at the IHR, I had the chance to disseminate my research in a digestible format to an audience of historians from disparate fields. These included former RHS President Peter Marshall, whom I had the good fortune to meet and thank for having endowed the award.



"As my RHS award drew to a close, I was very fortunate to be offered a Research Fellowship at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where I have been able to continue developing my research and converting it into publications. A monograph based on my thesis will be published in 2014 and I am now developing a comparative project on the historical Jesus in nineteenth-century Britain, France and Germany.

"I am certain that support from the RHS gave me an all-important stamp of credibility in the competition for postdoctoral research positions, where evidence of external funding is highly valued. It also provided the opportunity to forge networks with scholars that I am sure will be valuable for many years to come. At a more fundamental level, my research simply would not have developed so much, had I not had the opportunity provided by the Marshall Fellowship."



# Society News

The day-to-day running of our offices is undertaken by our two administrators - Sue Carr and Melanie Ransom. Both are due some well-earned congratulations for recent achievements outside work.

After an extended period of postgraduate study, Sue has been awarded a PhD in History. Here she describes what took her back to study and how she managed to combine a PhD with a full-time job.

“I took a very traditional route to a PhD after a hiatus of 14 years from my first degree and feeling the need for an intellectual challenge after years of working in university administration, by starting with a Masters in the history of Early Modern England and France at Birkbeck, University of London taught by Professor Julian Swann and the late (and much missed) Professor Barry Coward. I am sure any Birkbeck mature student will agree that completing a taught Masters degree whilst working full time is quite challenging but definitely the most practical option of getting back into research and writing, and Birkbeck’s focus on the working student makes it the ideal environment for such an enterprise.

“The self-discipline and invaluable research experience I gained on the course, plus a re-awakened interest in the French minor nobility encouraged by Julian Swann, gave me the confidence to undertake a PhD. It took ten years to finally complete it but the sense of achievement is palpable. Going back into research at a later stage in life is more enjoyable when enriched by the years of life experience brought to it, and opens up intellectual avenues that you never contemplated. Certainly I was fortunate in being able to conduct the majority of my research in the Archives Departmentales de la Côte d’Or in Dijon, a virtual one-stop shop of largely under researched early modern holdings, looked after by welcoming and knowledgeable staff who on more than one occasion were happy to help me decipher an unreadable piece of eighteenth century hand written script. The old-fashioned calm of this provincial archive provided a much pleasanter research experience than (in my opinion) the impersonal, bedlam-like atmosphere of national archives.

“Working in the ‘historical’ environment of the RHS, surrounded by the Society’s Council and

their varied (and often too distracting) research interests, and joining the amiable French history community of the nearby IHR European History seminar with whom I spent many convivial evenings, has been a pleasant experience, and numerous Fellows (you know who you are) have been both encouraging and helpfully critical of my research. Whilst I have no intention of entering into an academic career, I hope to be able at least to publish a couple of articles from the thesis, and start reading the stack of completely unrelated history volumes on my bookshelf without the shadow of ‘guilt’ that has been my constant companion for the last ten years!”



Sue in the RHS offices at UCL

Julian Swann adds: “Sue Carr’s thesis, ‘Gentilhommes simplement: the minor nobility of Burgundy 1682-1789’ is an investigation of the social lives and culture of provincial country gentlemen. Historians have long disputed the size of the noble population, and through a meticulous study of fiscal, administrative and familial records she is able to provide an impressive breakdown of the number, pedigree and professions of the Second Estate in the province. The minor nobility is usually seen as synonymous with the hobereaux, impoverished members of the old sword families, and yet as her examiners noted Sue demonstrates that were significant numbers of ‘hobereaux of robe as well as sword’. Yet if the different noble groups faced many of the same economic pressures, she concludes that it was the sword nobility that remained preeminent, explaining, in part, why in the elections of 1789 the Burgundian noblesse elected members of the sword to represent them.”

Congratulations are also due to Melanie Ransom on the birth of her first child this year. Aimee Stephanie Marie Ransom was born on 7th August 2012, weighing 9lb 3oz. Best wishes and congratulations Melanie!

## Forthcoming Events

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**Wednesday 7 November 2012**

*The Colin Matthew Memorial Lecture for the Public  
Understanding of History  
in co-operation with Gresham College, London  
Professor Justin Champion (Royal Holloway)  
“Why the Enlightenment still matters today”*

*6.00 p.m Museum of London*

**Friday 23 November 2012**

*Presidential Address  
Professor Colin Jones  
“French Crossings IV: The Vagaries of Passion and  
Power in the Enlightenment”*

*5.30 p.m. Gustave Tuck Lecture Theatre, UCL*

