

# ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

..... NEWSLETTER .....



..... OCTOBER 2015 .....



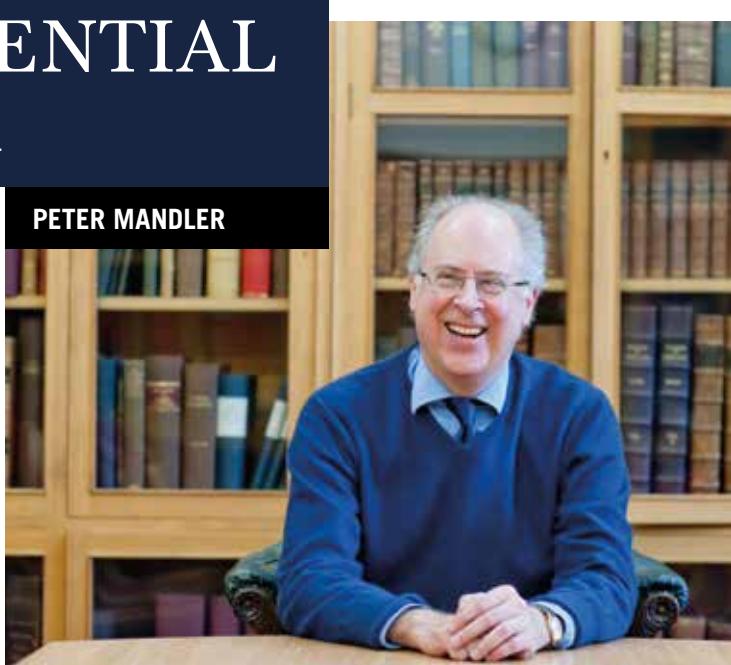
ROYAL  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

# PRESIDENTIAL LETTER

The death of our Executive Secretary in the 1970s and '80s and the election of my successor to 2020, both reported elsewhere in this newsletter, have naturally induced thoughts this season about the long-term trajectories of a learned society – our learned society – over what will soon be 150 years of its own history.

Some things have stayed the same; a lot has changed. Actually there were features of the late Victorian historical profession that are eerily familiar today. As early as 1872 we can find one eminent Victorian (Edward Freeman) writing to another (Bishop Stubbs), complaining about a circular on the "subsidy of research", which I did not understand, and I see that it has grown into a meeting for the "organisation of study", which I don't understand either. If it means that they will give you and me... something, instead of wasting it on a parcel of idle youngsters in London, I shall not object.'

**PETER MANDLER**



And already in the 1880s the Society was working with the British Museum and the Public Record Office to raise historical issues of public interest, such as the teaching of history in schools, just as we now work closely with their successors the British Library and the National Archives. Of course we also continue to fulfil the functions that all learned societies seek to fulfil in all times and places: that is, maintaining the infrastructure for scholarly publication, communication and debate, sponsoring public lectures and conferences, publishing primary sources and secondary works, seeking to pump-prime

the future of the discipline by encouraging early-career historians with grants to do research and outlets through which to publish their research. Just as we did 150 years ago, we publish our annual volume of *Transactions* – containing the best in new scholarship by leading figures of our discipline – and multiple volumes in the *Camden* series of original documents in British history (in the case of *Camden* for more than 150 years, having inherited an older series from a defunct society).

The biggest change witnessed in the 20th century was the entry of the State into the

funding and organisation of higher education – hardly a whisper of this in evidence in 1868, and not much more in 1938, but by 1968 the State was responsible for nearly three-quarters of all university funding, and of course (despite the panoply of ‘arm’s-length’ bodies designed to protect academic freedom) also demanding more say in how academic research was carried on and even in what directions. I think it is fair to say that the Society did not devote much of its time and energy in those postwar decades of the State’s rise to predominance in the world of higher education to following or seeking to influence government policy. It left that to the arm’s-length bodies, like the University Grants Committee, and although social and economic history was included in the remit of the new Social Science Research Council (later Economic and Social Research Council) from 1965, the Society, reasonably enough, continued to proceed on the assumption that the State had little interest in or impact on historical research. Much of that research was carried on by individuals, with little funding, a good deal of it outside universities altogether, and in some ways the Society became more inward-looking in those decades, carrying on

its own scholarly activities with little reference to government, the general public, or indeed to anyone who wasn’t a historical scholar. Joy McCarthy’s reminiscences of the Society’s offices under Jean Chapman’s supervision in the 1970s and ‘80s give a pungent and accurate flavour of the times – amiable, inertial, traditional, deeply immersed in the practice of history but rather oblivious of the wider cultural and political context.

That began to change, not when the State was increasing its role in the funding of academic research, but when it began to contract that role, during the ‘run-down’ of universities announced by Sir Keith Joseph in the 1980s. The Society did not respond quickly to the threats posed by the run-down, and a History at the Universities Defence Group (HUDG) was established in 1982 to lead a more public campaign in defence of historical teaching and research in a beleaguered university system. Nor did the Society respond quickly to the dramatic expansion of the higher-education system (and indeed of the numbers studying, teaching and researching history) that took off from the late 1980s. However, by the mid-1990s, under the leadership of a

sequence of very sensitive and acute Presidents, the Society did begin to become much more responsive to the new breadth of activity in historical research and to the new tasks that should naturally have fallen to the country’s leading learned society in history. Today Council is more fully representative of the range of historians from wherever they hail, new and old universities, museums, libraries and archives – we would like to see, too, independent scholars without institutional bases, who form a large and important part of our Fellowship, putting themselves forward for election to Council and answering our calls for self-nomination to officer positions that we circulate every year. This coming year, for example, we will be seeking a new Literary Director and a new Honorary Director of Communications, and I hope Fellows from all sectors will consider stepping forward and offering to take on these important jobs which, while voluntary, are the lifeblood of the Society’s work.

I hope you don’t need me to recite the range of issues that the Society has taken up in the last twenty years in fulfilment of its new, wider brief – not only to service historical research, but to evangelize for it, and to ensure that

the counsels of government, funding bodies, the universities and academic bodies across the full range of subjects are made constantly aware of the distinctive needs and flavour of the discipline of history. In my own time as President we have made special efforts to influence the rewriting of the history curriculum in schools, to ensure that government plans for 'Open Access' to academic publications take a form that protects academic freedom and quality (which may be a quite different form for the humanities than for the sciences), and to defend the arm's-length autonomy of the funding bodies from government's attempts to impose its own short-term 'strategic priorities' on academic research. We have reached out to ever-widening circles to build audiences for serious historical scholarship – putting all of our public lectures and symposia online for free access to the general public, sponsoring workshops and prizes in 'public history', and making our own publications 'Open Access' in more generous and appropriate forms than government mandates suggest. And we have made renewed efforts to invest in the future of our discipline by extending our grants to early-career

researchers (with help from our friends in the *History Workshop Journal* and at *Past & Present*), organising workshops around the country with History Lab Plus, drafting (also with History Lab Plus) a code of practice for the employment of temporary teaching staff, and working to ensure gender equality in hiring and employment practices in academic institutions.

I do believe that the Society is in a stronger position today than it has been for many years – engaged in a wider range of activities, drawing in more direct participation from its members, using its resources more nimbly and effectively. (And this is a good point to remind you that all donations to the Society continue to benefit from a matching grant from Dr Lisbet Rausing and Professor Peter Baldwin – please do consider making a donation through the easy facility available on our website at [royalhistsoc.org/support-the-rhs](http://royalhistsoc.org/support-the-rhs), where every pound you give will be doubled.) Of course new challenges await – not least the year-on-year reduction of the government's share of higher-education funding that we have endured for the last five years and will now endure for the next five. In these circumstances it is

only learned societies like ours that can and will step up to defend scholarship. It is a great consolation to me to know that for four of those next five years the Society will be led by a wonderful scholar, someone exceptionally well-informed about the politics of higher education, and an agile and creative strategist. I shall do my best in my last year of office to keep the legacy of my predecessors intact so as to be able to hand over an organisation in the best-possible shape to meet any new challenges as well as to continue our traditional role of maintaining infrastructural support for historical research as we head towards our 150th year.

# MEETINGS

## 2016



**Friday 5 February 2016  
at 6.00 pm**

Dr John-Paul Ghobrial:  
‘Hard Times’: Eastern Christian  
Migrants in Early Modern Europe’  
*Gustave Tuck Lecture Theatre,  
UCL*

**Friday 29 April 2016**

The Gerald Aylmer Seminar  
In conjunction with the Institute  
of Historical Research  
‘The Experience of the Archives’

**Friday 6 May 2016  
at 6.00 pm**

Professor Bruce Campbell:  
‘Global climates, the 1257  
mega-eruption of Samalas  
Volcano, Indonesia and the  
English food crisis of 1258’

*Gustave Tuck Lecture Theatre,  
UCL*

**Wednesday 6 July 2016  
at 6.00 pm**

The Prothero Lecture  
Professor Pauline Stafford:  
‘The making of chronicles  
and the making of England:  
the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles  
after Alfred’

*Gustave Tuck Lecture Theatre,  
UCL*

**September 2016**

Symposium: Political  
Discourses in Revolutionary  
Ireland, 1912-23

*Teesside University*

**Friday 23 September 2016  
at 6.00 pm**

Professor Sarah Pearce:  
‘The Cleopatras and the Jews’

*UCL*

**Wednesday 5 October 2016  
at 6.00 pm**

The Colin Matthew Memorial  
Lecture for the Public  
Understanding of History in  
co-operation with Gresham  
College, London

Speaker: Dr Tristram Hunt

**Wednesday 26 October 2016**

Speaker: Dr Adrian Gregory  
University of Leeds

**Friday 25 November 2016,  
6.00 pm**

Presidential Address

Professor Peter Mandler:  
‘Educating the Nation.  
IV: History’

*UCL*

2016-2020

ROYAL HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY PRESIDENT

# MARGOT FINN

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Margot Finn, Chair in Modern British History at UCL and historian of Britain and the British colonial world in the ‘very long 19th century’ (c. 1750-1914), has been appointed to the presidency of the Royal Historical Society from November 2016-2020.

Former editor of the *Journal of British Studies*, she is the author of monographs on nineteenth-century English radical politics and on debt and credit in English law and culture. A Vice-President of the Society from 2009-12, she was ‘honoured’ to continue ‘the tremendous work of predecessors’ in this role.



Margot will consider the priorities for the Society during the shadowing year with current President Peter Mandler. She is already keen to enhance the Society's conversations with archivists, curators and other historians outside the university sector. Margot knows the value of such interactions, as a Trustee of the V&A and through her own 'East India Company at Home' project—which saw her co-curate an exhibition at Osterley House and Park (a National Trust property in Hounslow) entitled 'The Trappings of Trade: A Domestic Story of the East India Company'. This project sought to co-produce research with a local community, exemplifying Margot's firm belief that the Society should actively engage public interest in history alongside its policy work and service to the discipline as a whole.

One of the challenges facing the discipline, Margot explains, is 'making the "global" something that is less of a shibboleth and more of a practice, problem and opportunity' in both teaching and research. The implications of global history transcend period and also reflect more recent historical research into the histories of Africa, Asia and Latin America—affording new opportunities for the RHS to expand its membership and activities.

Margot also sees the potential for working beyond the humanities. Indeed, she took her first degree in biology and bio-chemistry, and it is little known that one of her most cited publications is in molecular genetics ('Sequence and structure analysis of end-labeled RNA with nucleases'), datum she interprets as an interesting comment on the problematic value of metrics for measuring research impact. A History sub-panel member for REF 2014, she believes firmly in the importance to the discipline of preserving the 'diverse, variegated landscape of history provision in the UK'. A key challenge will be to retain the strength of the many and variegated institutional units that are home to UK historians. Although REF remains controversial, Margot points out that it forcefully demonstrated the healthy and diverse state of the discipline in Britain.

It is only natural to note that Margot becomes the second female President in the Society's history, following in the formidable footsteps of Dame Jinty Nelson. Being a pioneer in this respect is not new to her – she was the first female Head of Department of History at Warwick University. Margot, however, prefers to focus attention on the issues flagged in the recent RHS Report on gender equality. As President, she hopes

to encourage a 'bricolage' of excellent behaviours, scholarship and leadership qualities within the discipline. She especially admires those who facilitate, recalling the best piece of advice she received as a new Head of Department (from former RHS President, Colin Jones): 'if something is a good idea and you can enable it, always enable it'. If she could give her younger self advice now? 'Be generous to junior colleagues' and remember 'the huge and disproportionate difference that even small acts of kindness can make: constantly remind yourself of that.' Having accumulated five years of service on the RHS's Research Support Committee, she is especially aware of the key role the Society plays in fostering (and funding) early career researchers.

She intends to bring these qualities to her Presidency and the work of Council in representing history as a discipline, promoting the vitality of historical scholarship, and encouraging historians at all stages of their careers.

### **Jo Fox**

*Honorary Director of Communications*

## IN MEMORIAM

# JEAN CHAPMAN

## 1934-2015

The Society's Executive  
Secretary, 1977-87

Jean Chapman was Executive Secretary to the Royal Historical Society between 1977 and 1987 when the office and library were located on the third floor in the building which now houses a larger Petrie Museum at UCL.

The Officers, in particular the President, Gerald Aylmer, led the negotiations to move to its current rooms at the end of UCL Library, adjacent to the Gustave Tuck Theatre, but I think Jean must have had all the day-to-day problems to sort out, as well as the actual move, which must have been very challenging. I know she was pleased with the new kitchen which was shared with UCL library staff and was adjacent to the offices; this was much better than the

very small space the Society was allocated in the previous building.

I doubt members would recognise the office as it was then. Jean had a manual typewriter with carbon paper for copies, a Gestetner duplicating machine (with its wonderful pink correcting fluid), and a telephone, and that was it. There were no data files with details of the membership; records were kept on manual slips in binders, designed by Moore's Modern Methods. There was no Sage Accounting; financial records were entered manually in large red double-entry books. In fact, Jean preferred things this way, and would never hesitate to smile if, when she made a social visit to the offices, I told her the computer was 'down'. 'Ah, well. That's computers for you', she would say.

Jean had an assistant, Olive Smith, who worked two days a week and kept the records of the subscribing Libraries – 900 worldwide in those days – on similar slips to those of the members. In order for members and libraries to receive the Society's volumes, addresses were typed on to cards which had an inked backing, and which were duplicated on to gummed labels by a small special machine. The labels were then collected by a representative of the publishers, Butler & Tanner, so that they could be stuck on to the book packaging and posted on to the subscribers from the publisher's premises at Frome, Somerset.

With the help of the Honorary Secretary, Jean also dealt with the investment changes and related certificates. These had



to be marked with the Society's seal for authentication.

Banking was certainly not the same as now; subscription cheques for both members and libraries would arrive by post, and have to be recorded and then taken to the local Barclays Bank on the corner of Tottenham Court Road and Torrington Place. This was a very time-consuming exercise. There were few standing orders in those days; direct debits were 'not to be trusted' by some. Many cheques were in foreign currencies, particularly US dollars, and these required extra form filling, as did postal orders, which also involved a trip to the nearest Post Office. Bearing in mind, UCL is situated in an area often frequented by tourists, these exercises all took time. Thank goodness for internet banking today.

Despite the heavy work load, I hope it is not detrimental to Jean to say that in those days everything stopped for coffee in the morning and tea in the afternoon, as well as a hearty lunch in the UCL refectory. The eulogy at Jean's funeral service mentioned her affection for two cats she seems to have adopted, and I think she always had a love of nature. Any spare biscuits were put on the office window sill for the local birds to enjoy. I gather members of Council would often be intrigued by the sight of the birds at the window; I am not sure if they realised why the birds were so friendly.

I think Council met probably the same number of times annually as now, but Officers had a 30-minute pre-meeting before the main Council meeting, and there were certainly fewer committees

and subcommittees. I can only recall a Publications Committee, a Finance Committee and possibly a General Purposes Committee.

The Honorary Secretary would visit on the Monday afternoon following a meeting, and dictate letters or check any actions required.

Everything was done according to the annual timetable. Personally I found the order of the office wonderfully soothing. I think it is the only job I have ever had which had a system, certainly one which worked. It was a wonderful basis on which to introduce a computer, and is responsible for the smooth-running of the Society today. Thank you, Jean.

**Joy McCarthy,**  
*(Executive Secretary,  
1987-2005, 2006)*

# ARCHIVES INSPIRE

## AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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Matt Greenhall

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In April, The National Archives launched its new strategic priorities and goals for the next four years. *Archives Inspire* is both a visual and significant departure from the previous strategy – it focusses on our key audiences and reflects the diverse nature of the work that we do with, and for, these audiences: the public, the government, the archive sector, and the research and academic communities.

*Archives Inspire* sets out who we are, what we do and what we want to achieve as an organisation, a partner, and a leader. As the official archive for UK government, we are the custodian of the public record and trusted experts in managing, preserving and using information.

For the public we provide free access to more than

1,000 years of the nation's history and connect people with the millions of stories contained in our collection. As a cultural institution, we are committed to enhancing our visitors' experience by creating a vibrant and welcoming environment to explore and study our rich collections.

For the wider archives sector we give leadership and support, helping archives to build the skills and capacity needed to sustain the nation's archival heritage. Our role as archive sector leader in England is cemented in a clear vision for this leadership, which builds upon the strong foundations we have laid since we assumed these responsibilities in 2011, but also recognises the very real and considerable changes occurring within the archive and wider heritage sectors.

For the academic community and others engaged in scholarly research, we offer opportunities for collaboration and partnership across a broad range of disciplines. We already have strong relationships with

the academic and research communities. The development of our research priorities over the next four years is filled with great ambition for the future.

At the heart of *Archives Inspire* is a confident and overarching digital strategy. We cannot just look to 'bums on seats', but in a changing world of growing user and researcher demands, we must continually examine how we can expand the reach of our collections and expertise. Parchments and pixels go hand in hand.

### WHERE HAVE WE COME FROM?

We have made great progress in engaging with our academic audiences in new and innovative ways in recent years. We have been designated as an Independent Research Organisation by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in recognition of our capacity to carry out research that materially extends and enhances the national research base and reflects our independent capability to undertake and lead research



Chief Executive and Keeper of The National Archives, Jeff James, launches *Archives Inspire*

Delegates from the heritage, cultural and academic sectors come together for this year's Discovering Collection, Discovering Communities conference, delivered in partnership with Research Libraries UK, 12th-14th October 2015.



programmes. We have also been awarded 'knowledge base' status from the Technology Research Board. Both of these designations recognise the valuable, varied and ground-breaking expertise held by staff across The National Archives, not only in the historical sphere, but also in diverse disciplines ranging from Heritage Science and Digital Humanities to Information Management, Legal Informatics and Education.

The programmes and initiatives that have emerged from these specialisms have relied on our own knowledge and expertise of the collections we hold, as well as on our ability to collaborate meaningfully with individual academics, universities, and other independent research organisations. In our position within the Thames Consortium (comprising ourselves, The National Maritime Museum, The National Gallery, and University College London), we have successfully delivered collaborative doctoral awards, shared our knowledge and

expertise, and built firm foundations for future collaboration. Through working with colleagues in the Doctoral Training Partnerships, we have delivered training sessions to hundreds of students through our Postgraduate Archives Skills Training workshops. In so doing, we play an active part in creating and equipping the researcher of the future with the transferable skills they require, not only to complete masters' and doctoral degrees, but to go on to have extensive and interdisciplinary research careers. We have co-delivered major academic events and conferences which have looked to strengthen the ties between academic research and the cultural and heritage sectors, whether through the *Gerald Aylmer Annual Seminar* (delivered in partnership with the Royal Historical Society, Institute of Historical Research, and the British Library) or the *Discovering Collections, Discovering Communities* conference series (delivered in partnership with Research Libraries UK). All of

these focus on the sharing of research and the delivery of skills, training and opportunities to our academic and research audiences, yet we also have a strong track record of doing things 'for ourselves'.

Colleagues from across The National Archives regularly publish their own research in peer-reviewed journals, make high-profile contributions to national and international conferences, and actively contribute to many diverse research projects, which underline our own expertise and ability to collaborate with a wide portion of the academic community. They often bring a unique insight into the meaning of the collections we hold, the historical context in which they sit, and the contribution that understanding them can make to the wider research landscape. Whether through academic supervision, skills training, or conference participation, we would like to think that we have laid strong foundations upon which we can build our academic engagement in the future. *Archives Inspire* embodies these strengths and experiences, while placing them against the backdrop of our ambition moving forward.

## WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Our work with the academic and research sectors centres on a number of goals which collectively underpin our desire to advance knowledge through exemplary academic liaison and outstanding interdisciplinary research. At the centre of these is ensuring that we are not only able to respond to the

changing needs of the academic and research sectors, but that we can also proactively identify new opportunities in emerging areas of research, particularly in the digital sphere. These goals will involve us thinking and appearing differently, and will depend on a strategic and grounded approach. The latter will be first achieved through the clear identification of the changing needs of the academic and research sectors, and how they relate to our current activities and offers. Understanding these changes will form the basis of our future academic engagement and will underpin our aim to establish a research centre to coordinate and galvanise our long-term research programming.

Work has already begun to identify these changes through the commissioning of an academic scoping study, which will establish where The National Archives currently sits within this changing landscape. How do academics currently view The National Archives? Are our services meeting their needs? What programmes might we develop in the future? The results of the scoping study will then underline our other strategic goals, including our desire to better communicate the countless possibilities for innovative research contained within our collections, and to share these with national and international audiences. This will involve us developing a new collections, collections development, and cataloguing strategy for the records we hold and being able to communicate these clearly to our diverse audiences. These



new strategies will enable us to provide greater oversight of our collections, and will allow us to communicate their breadth and depth clearly and coherently to our academic and research users and partners. In tandem with this will be our Unknown Treasures project, which will enhance the discoverability of portions of our collections, enriching the descriptions of some of our medieval and early modern files and making these available through Discovery, our [online catalogue \(discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk\)](http://onlinecatalogue.discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk).

We will also use our unique position as both an Independent Research Organisation and archive sector leader in England to look at strengthening research dissemination and knowledge exchange between the academic and wider cultural and heritage sectors. This will be particularly visible in regards to the shaping of a programme of digital research, addressing some of the key challenges being faced by the archive sector, including those concerning digital preservation, big data management, and digital transfer. It will also be evident through our efforts to build and

shape a wider research culture within the archive sector itself through well-placed collaboration, such as those already developed between ourselves and Research Libraries UK. In taking this collaborative and disseminative approach, we not only intend to strengthen the role of research within The National Archives, but that within the wider cultural and heritage sectors.

## SUMMARY

These ambitions will only be realised through working in partnership with the academic community. Only by doing this will we ensure that our academic offer is pertinent, proactive in identifying opportunities, and strategic. We want to bring the academic community into Kew, not just as researchers, but as speakers, partners, and advocates for the amazing collections we hold and all learn from.

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/  
about/our-role/plans-policies-  
performance-and-projects/our-  
plans/archives-inspire](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/our-role/plans-policies-performance-and-projects/our-plans/archives-inspire)

**Dr Matt Greenhall**  
*Head of Academic Engagement  
The National Archives*

## THE IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM,

# THE STUDY OF HISTORY AND THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR



*Far left:* Hilary Roberts, Research Curator in Photography, speaking to an audience about First World War photographs

*Left:* Collaborative Doctoral Students currently doing their PhDs at IWM. Left to right: Clare Carolin, Hannah Mawdsley, Jessica Douthwaite, Emily Whittaker, Anna Maguire

In an elegant Georgian room at Kings College London's East Wing, one of our PhD students, Anna Maguire, uses a PowerPoint presentation to describe to an audience of 25 or so the day in June 1917 that a Zulu dance was performed on the beach at Dannes in Northern France, photographed extensively by the British official photographer Ernest Brooks. The photographs have been in IWM's archive for decades but Anna gets her audience to see them with today's enhanced understanding of the prism of the colonial gaze, with all the complexities that that involves.

The event – a workshop on *Colonialism, War and Photography* – was held as one of several organised by Dr Santanu Das as part of the international HERA project *Cultural Exchange in a Time of Global Conflict*. The day was packed with papers looking at different colonial photography and war – and at the end of it we were treated to a summary by Jay Winter, who had much to say on the impact of the advent of the affordable Kodak during the First World War.

In the past seven years IWM has pushed ahead an initiative to increase its reputation as a research organisation. Academic engagement has been a vital part of our work for decades. Our exhibitions have long had expert advisory groups and our staff have regularly participated in conferences and seminars. Today though we have a dedicated department – Research and

Academic Partnerships – to ensure that we are strategic in how we engage with the higher education sector. It is in the nature of their work that academics will always have more time than curators to pursue our subject matter in cutting edge ways, and we can only gain by close interaction with them.

In 2005 the Research Councils gave all national museums the opportunity to apply for Independent Research Organisation status. A consortium of these 'IROs' (which I currently co-chair with Tim Boon of the Science Museum) meets regularly. Museum-based research is a very specific kind of activity, and we share our strategies, codes of conduct, competency frameworks, legal agreements and other documents - allowing best practices to emerge and saving a lot of time.

We all face the challenge of getting research to feed into our public programmes at the right time and in the right format. Exhibition timetables tend to be driven by a range of immoveable factors – capital building projects, major anniversaries - and getting an academic research project to accurately target the ‘window of opportunity’ to feed into a display is not always easy.

Since acquiring our IRO status in 2010 IWM has led two very different projects - both carried out with Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funding and both bringing UK universities and IWM together to address specific issues.

In 2012 we ran a project called *Whose Remembrance?* which asked how far there was an understanding of the role of colonial peoples in the two world wars, particularly among those communities in the UK today for whom it is part of their heritage. In other words how far do peoples of the Indian, Pakistani, Nigerian, and West Indian heritage and others in this country realise the role their forebears played during the two world wars, and how those conflicts affected the development and in particular the independence movements of their ancestral homelands? Also how inter-generational dialogue within these communities can foster a sense of ownership of a history which is all too often portrayed much more narrowly. We made a film about our findings which can be seen on YouTube, and we held screenings of the film and discussions in several

community centres, mainly in London but also in Luton, at IWM North in Salford, and at Leeds University. It was a much more public-facing project than I might have imagined for our first AHRC-supported research endeavour, but it brought new takes on our collections and gave us a closer engagement than we would otherwise have had with community historians who are using history as a way to bring people together.

This year we are pursuing a more narrowly archival project – an AHRC Network, examining the potential of the BBC Monitoring Service transcripts of wireless broadcasts from 1939–1980. These first accounts of ‘history as it happened’ are the raw evidence of precisely what was broadcast from Axis countries during the Second World War and Communist countries during the Cold War. Our hope is to make academics and the BBC – who owns the collection – aware of how the archive can be used and opened up in the future.

Together with a number of other cultural organisations, IWM has an allocation of PhD studentships which it uses to further our understanding of our collections or deepen our knowledge for exhibitions. We currently have eight students at various stages of their PhDs. One is studying the vision and achievements of an earlier Director-General of the IWM, Dr Noble Frankland, who significantly modernised the IWM in the 1960s and 70s. Another is embarking on a study of the Spanish Influenza pandemic

of 1919, for which we have a rich collection of reminiscences gathered by the historian Richard Collier for his 1974 book *The Plague of the Spanish Lady*. The experiences of prisoners of war on Sumatra was another topic - pursued by a student whose grandfather had been a POW of the Japanese during the Second World War. Another is examining our collection of Ministry of Information photographs of bomb damage in London, and has interviewed families whose homes were destroyed by bombs that fell in the neighbourhood surrounding the IWM’s Southwark building.

The students bring fresh thinking, ideas and energy directly into the curatorial and exhibition departments. They also run our Research Blog, contributing pieces about their own research, or reflections on new exhibitions, and editing contributions from our staff.

Competition for these opportunities is intense, drawing particularly bright candidates, and our students’ ‘next steps’ after their studentships are always rewarding to hear about. Having gained a taste of the museum industry, some will choose this area of work, and we have former students in the Handel House Museum in London and the Museum of Science and Industry Manchester. Others stay in the academic sector. Hope Wolf produced a very impressive PhD based on correspondence held in our Documents Section between veterans and the researchers for the BBC’s *The Great War* in the early 1960s. She is now lecturing

at Sussex, following a research fellowship at Girton, and co-authored with Sebastian Faulkes the anthology *A Broken World: Letters, diaries and memories of the Great War*. Laura Johnson now works at the Bodleian Library as an archivist, but is also a Theme Leader on our current AHRC project on the BBC Monitoring Service – the subject of her PhD.

University students approach IWM regularly for information and advice. A particularly strong trend has been for students working towards Master's degrees in Cultural Studies or Museums Studies to focus on the Holocaust Exhibition, now fifteen years old, but still the exhibition which has produced the most intensive interaction with the university sector. Scores of MA students have taken 'the display of challenging history' and related topics as their theme, and around four PhDs have focussed on the making of this ground-breaking exhibition, either partially or wholly. The Holocaust Exhibition has also been a focal point for the triennial international conference, *Beyond Camps and Forced Labour*, which brings scholars working on research into victims of Nazi persecution to the IWM for three days of paper-giving and discussion.

What are the challenges for the future? There are many and I will mention just one – the huge scope for stronger international collaboration. So much of what we own is propagandist in its intention and this provides opportunities for particularly lively dialogue.



Just yesterday Diya Gupta, who is writing her thesis about the Indian soldier's experience of the Second World War, came into our Research Room to make a short film about her work. It was fascinating to hear my colleague Fergus Read discuss with Diya IWM's collection of Japanese aerial propaganda leaflets. These were dropped over the Indo-Burmese border for the consumption of Indian troops – the hope being that they would

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## *Second World War Japanese air-dropped leaflet targeting Indian troops*

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defect to the Indian National Army. Colourful, very unflattering caricatures of Churchill are accompanied by anti-British commentary in Hindi or Bengali. Diya gave on-the-spot translations of these, and an intriguing commentary, and we realised how much there is still to learn about the vast collections that we hold.

**Suzanne Bardgett**  
*Head of Research and Academic Partnerships, Imperial War Museums*

# REVIEWING COMMITTEE ON THE EXPORT OF WORKS OF ART AND OBJECTS OF CULTURAL INTEREST

Naomi Tadmor, Lancaster University



Every once in a while, news about the sale of national historical treasures reaches the headlines and issues a debate, and every once in a while, we hear of impressive success stories.

In April 2012, for example, the British Library acquired St Cuthbert's Gospel, 'Europe's oldest book still in its original binding', after 'the most successful fundraising campaign in the Library's history'. The manuscript has not only been added to the British Library's collection, but its digitised image has been made available through the BL's website. In September, the Erasmus Manuscript was saved for the nation. This rare text, which had been in the Duke of Northumberland's collection since at least 1872, contains the earliest known translation into English of any work by the great humanist scholar and reformer, Desiderius Erasmus (d. 1536), and is likely to

have been the work of William Tyndale. This manuscript had been sold to an overseas buyer, but export was stopped after a temporary bar had been placed by the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, on the grounds that the manuscript is of outstanding significance for the study of cultural movements towards the Reformation in England, the earliest known translation of Erasmus into English, and is also of significance for the study of scholastic links between Erasmus and Tyndale. The acquisition of the Erasmus manuscript by the British Library has been made possible thanks to generous grants from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Friends of the British Library, the Friends of the National Libraries, and an anonymous donor.

Members of the RHS may not often come across such rare and important objects, in private hands, and potentially

facing sale. Yet it may be of interest to them to acquaint themselves with the work of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, and the criteria which guide it, known as the 'Waverley Criteria', and named after the 1950 committee which defined them. The leading historical question is: is the object closely connected with our history and national life? The key aesthetic question is: is it of outstanding aesthetic importance? The third criterion is whether the object is of outstanding significance for the study of some particular branch of art, learning or history. Only if an object satisfies one or more of the three criteria, and the committee considers that its departure from the UK would be a misfortune, can it be defined as a 'national treasure'. The Arts Council gives regular notice of intended sales, and also offers several paths in lieu of sale and export with tax incentives.

# MAGNA CARTA & DECOLONISATION

To mark the 800th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta and the publication of the RHS Camden volume on the constitutional scholar Sir Ivor Jennings, Harshan Kumarasingham reflects on the relationship between the 'Great Charter' and decolonisation.

During the era of decolonisation from the 1940s to the 1960s, states emerging from British rule engaged in the task of constitution-making and state-building. The advice of one British constitutional scholar Sir Ivor Jennings (1903-65) above all was sought across the Commonwealth to frame their new constitutions. Despite very different contexts and cultures and questionable appropriateness, Westminster and the ideals of the Magna Carta were invariably drawn upon. Rather than having centuries of evolution, as was the case in England, the concepts and conventions of the Magna Carta and

Westminster needed to be operable in months and weeks after independence in settings far removed from Runnymede. Jennings' papers related to 20th century constitution-making across the world were recently published earlier this year in the Society's Camden series and investigated the remarkable and problematic process of exporting and applying British constitutional ideas and institutions overseas through the ubiquitous role of Ivor Jennings.

The Magna Carta was an emblematic political and historical doctrine that for many validated the superiority of English law and principles.

The most famed and oft-quoted part of the charter was chapter 39: 'No freemen shall be taken or imprisoned or disseised or exiled or in any way destroyed, nor will we go upon him nor send upon him, except by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land'. However, as Jennings recognised, like modern counterparts such as Hazell and Melton's 2015 *Magna Carta and its Modern Legacy*, there was little literal value in the Magna Carta: instead the ideals and symbolism of English Law, and arguably its most identifiable document, provided its most substantial bequest.



This allegory of law was no less in evidence in Bars and Benches far removed from the saturated traditionalism of London's Inns of Courts and Palaces of Justice. Bush courts, law faculties, fraternities, and other flattering international imitators often consciously sought to manifest the imagery and association with British law to legitimise or obscure their own inevitable deviations from it. The Common Law almost inevitably followed the Commonwealth, however improbable or inappropriate the setting. Jennings saw that these historic-cultural phenomena, more than a specific document such as the Magna Carta, shaped generations of lawyers across the majority of the world. As he recorded:

In most parts of the Commonwealth there are councils of legal education or law schools teaching the essential principles of Magna Carta. If an English lawyer goes into a court in Accra, or Lagos, or Dar-es-Salaam, or Lahore, or Delhi, or Colombo or Kuala Lumpur he finds himself very much at home. The technique of parliamentary drafting by government draftsmen is everywhere the same. Sir [Thomas] Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice* is on the table of every legislature from Victoria, B.C., to Nairobi, and from Dar-es-Salaam to

Hong Kong or Wellington, New Zealand. In every legislature there are lawyers who speak the language of Magna Carta.

For most of his career Jennings like many English lawyers, before and since, (and seemingly including the present Government), saw Bills of Rights as 'un-British' and saw the sovereignty of Parliament and the Common Law (with the Magna Carta enshrined within it) as more than enough to safeguard the majesty of British justice. Much of the 'new' Commonwealth disagreed or painfully came to accept the inadequacy of relying on English shibboleths to answer their own unique problems. India, for example, saw the insertion of Fundamental rights into what I have described elsewhere as its Eastminster constitution as vitally important to its health as a democracy and so it has continuously proved. Until just before his death, Jennings was highly critical of such legal rights regimes as being 'unreasonably restrictive' by limiting parliament's prerogatives and being overly definitional. The package of institutions, conventions, laws and styles of Westminster was viewed axiomatically at that time by Whitehall and frequently by those seeking to be freed from its imperial reach as the only way to build

New Jerusalems. For the 750th anniversary of the Magna Carta, Jennings quoted the words of his predecessor as Downing Professor of Laws of England at Cambridge, Edward Christian, written at the beginning of the 19th century, that for any person with any 'acquaintance' to the law and constitution of England will always be the most convinced, that to be free, is to live in a country where the laws are just, expedient, and impartially administered, and where the subjects have perfect security that they will ever continue so; and, allowing for some slight and perhaps inevitable imperfections, that to be free, is to be born and to live under the English constitution.

This sentiment like the Magna Carta was exported across the world and its 'nobility', Jennings judged, was never in doubt. The difficulty was giving meaning and consequence to such words and emotions that travelled awkwardly through both time and space.

#### **Harshan Kumarasingham**

The Camden volumes are published by Cambridge University Press, and are available for purchase online: [www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)



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