



**ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE
ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

SESSION 2020-2021

1. OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIETY'S ACTIVITIES, DURING THE FINANCIAL YEAR, 1 JULY 2020 - 30 JUNE 2021

The scope of the Royal Historical Society's activity ranges across the following six areas:

- i. Advocacy
- ii. Events
- iii. Publications
- iv. Grants
- v. Prizes
- vi. Library & Archive

For a number of years our work has been sustained by a small staff of one full-time Executive Secretary and two part-time employees—an Administrative Secretary and a Research and Communications Officer.

With the significant expansion of the Society's activities across all areas, in particular in the sphere of advocacy, and owing to the pressures placed upon our office function by the Covid-19 pandemic, it was recognised in early 2020 that this staff structure no longer possessed the skills or capacity to adequately support the scope and ambitions of the Society. Consequently, much of the work in the year 20/21 has been devoted to reviewing and revising the Society's office function and structure so as to build in the capacity required for the organisation's ongoing health and vitality.

In the summer of 2020, the President, President-elect, and Honorary Secretary contracted the services of Ruth Lesirge and Hilary Barnard of HBRL Consulting in July 2020 to review our organisational structure. HBRL's Report, delivered in October 2020, made the following recommendations:

- to establish and recruit to the post of Chief Executive Officer
- to increase administrative secretarial hours to cover secretarial support to the Council and Committees
- to consider outsourcing the finance function within the Society

A working group of Officers and Councillors was convened to consider these recommendations, and agreement was reached to implement them in full. The President, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Director of Communications worked with external HR specialists, HRSP, to carry out the recommendations. This involved drawing up a new staff structure with modifications to existing staff roles, consulting with affected staff about the proposed changes, offering alternative employment where possible, and planning recruitment to the new structure.

By 30 June 2021, a new template for the Society's staff structure—comprising CEO, Academic Director and Membership Officer—was in place, and the restructuring process was partially complete. The roles of Academic Director and Membership Officer were successfully filled by the end of the financial year and the job description and application pack for the Chief Executive

Officer prepared and ready for launch in July, with a view to filling the role by 1 January 2022 at the latest. After a successful recruitment round, a new CEO was appointed and in post from October 2021.

In addition to these staffing changes, the Society operated in the environment of two national lockdowns during the Covid-19 pandemic. For the majority of the year 2020-21, the RHS office was closed. Staff worked remotely, before returning to partial office-working from June 2021. Against this backdrop, the Society continued to maintain its operations across all six branches.

i. Advocacy. The Society contributed to UKRI's Open Access consultation in the summer of 2020, as well as to the REF consultation on the Proposed Modifications to REF2021 in light of the pandemic. In response to government interventions in the museums and archives sector, and to the threat of the closures of history departments, we spoke in defence of our discipline in a variety of public forums. The Society's Race, Ethnicity and Equality Working Group published 'Roadmap for Change: II', the second update to its 2018 Race Report; the group's members also helped advise university departments seeking to decolonise their curriculum. In September 2020 a second Society Working Group published its *LGBT+ Histories and Historians* report, with a set of accompanying online resources. In November, the Society's outgoing VP for Education, Kenneth Fincham, led the launch of our Teaching Portal, designed to support younger entrants to the profession and establish the Society's commitment to supporting historical pedagogy as well as research.

ii. Events. The Society delivered a near full programme of lectures and events, with the exception of two planned campus visits, both of which have been postponed to 2022 owing to Covid restrictions. All our lectures and events have been delivered online, which has led to significantly larger and increasingly international audiences of c. 200+ attendees per session, a five-fold increase in certain cases. As we begin planning for a gradual return to some in-person events, we are actively exploring ways to retain digital delivery and maintain this service for Society members unable to travel to London for events.

iii. Publications. This was another successful year for the Society's publishing, which saw the publication of volume 30 of the *Transactions*, sixth series; volumes 59 & 60 of the Camden Series; four projected online updates to the *Bibliography of British and Irish History*; and four scheduled new monograph volumes by early career historians in our New Historical Perspectives series, as well as our first essay collection in this series. In addition, a major reorganisation of the *Transactions* was introduced by the journal's current editor, Andrew Spicer, involving the opening of direct submissions to the journal. We hope this development will help to make the *Transactions* more accessible and relevant to our fellows and members, as well as to the broader, global community of academic historians.

iv. Grants. The restrictions imposed by Covid-19 disrupted our usual grant-giving programme, which helps to support travel by early career historians to conferences and archives. In response to this, the Society launched a Hardship Fund—generously supported by the Past and Present Society and by donations to a JustGiving campaign—for those experiencing acute financial need as a result of the pandemic. In addition, the Society launched a new funding scheme—Early Career Fellowships—aimed specifically at those without full-time academic

employment. The scheme was designed to support postdoctoral historians working on a specific project, whether this be completing work on their first book, writing a journal article, or developing a grant application for new research.

v. Prizes. The Society awarded its two article prizes, two book prizes, Masters dissertation prize and two teaching awards according to its usual timetable, and celebrated the winners at an online ceremony. Details of the 2020-21 prize winners are provided below on pages 8 and 9.

vi. Library & Archive. The ongoing cataloguing project of the Prothero Papers contained in the Society's archive was disrupted by the closure of University College London (UCL) during the pandemic but has since resumed and is now scheduled for completion in December 2021.

The remainder of this Review provides a statement on the activities of the Society's committees between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021.

2. DIGITAL COMMITTEE

As a part of the Society's restructure, it was decided to move the responsibility for our digital systems out of the hands of trustees and other volunteers and into the remit of the Society's paid staff (Academic Director). In the light of the change, the Society is considering how best to situate its policy and advocacy work in the sphere of digital history within the organisation, and the meetings of the Digital Committee have been paused whilst this reflection takes place.

3. EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE (Chair: Peter D'Sena)

The Education Policy Committee meets regularly to consider all matters relating to History Education from secondary schools through to postgraduates.

Between June 2020 and June 2021, the Committee consisted of three elected councillors and nine officers, supported by five co-opted members all of whom bring a wealth of different perspectives and experience to our discussions. Co-opted members have included Dr Michael Maddison, formerly Ofsted's National Adviser for History, and currently Vice-President of the Historical Association; John Blake, policy educator and currently working for the Ark Schools; Dr Sarah Holland, Education Officer for History UK; and Dr Andrew Foster, a former Vice-President of the Society and Chair of this Committee 2007-9.

The Education Policy Committee's new chair, Peter D'Sena (Associate Professor of Teaching and Learning, University of Hertfordshire), has sought to create a balance of expertise and taken the view that co-opted members should also include representation from the History Teacher Educator's Network and an academic who is active in the pursuit of the scholarship of teaching and learning. This has seen, respectively, the co-opting of David Ingledeu and Dr Jamie Wood.

The Committee's work is varied. It watches and reports on government policy and, when necessary, responds to official consultations. For example, the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) was a major item in January 2021 since, after many months of inactivity, the government issued a set of proposals which will likely see the 'inspection' of departmental outcomes in late 2022. Additionally, committee sub-groups are active in creating resources, events and carrying out projects.

Importantly, the first phase of Society's new Teaching Portal was launched under Professor Ken Fincham's aegis in November 2020. This online site, which contains blogs, articles and resources, seeks to stimulate teachers of history to reflect upon and improve their pedagogic practice. Currently, the portal relies on the Fellowship and Membership to submit contributions. The next stage, as the portal grows, will be to solicit content from a wider range of contributors, and to provide in-house oversight to curate and quality assure the site's content.

Another sub-group oversees the Society's two annual Teaching Awards: the Jinty Nelson Award for Inspirational Teaching and Supervision, and the RHS Award for Innovative Teaching. Peter D'Sena took the opportunity, this year, to streamline the online application process, create a criterion-referenced scoring system and require a clear statement from applicants about the quality of their pedagogic practice. The team of adjudicators was also supplemented by last year's winner of the award for innovative practice, Professor Marjory Harper.

Finally, a small sub-group (Peter D'Sena and Jamie Wood) organised the New to Teaching event, which, for the first time in its ten-year history, was held online over two days. The programme was modified to take account of the ways in which the pandemic has brought changes to pedagogic practice. It is pleasing to report that attendance was higher than in previous years, with 120 participants on day one and almost 100 on day two. The committee will look to continue this and other modes of support for early career historians, and also seek to deploy an integrated strategy to showcase presentations and sessions on the Teaching Portal.

4. FINANCE COMMITTEE (Chair: Emma Griffin)

Following HBRL's recommendation that the Society review its financial function, Finance Committee has overseen a number of improvements to our accounting systems and processes during the course of the year.

As a first step, we investigated the possibility of outsourcing all elements of our payroll, bookkeeping and day-to-day financial administration. Quotes were obtained from three accountancy firms and the contract was awarded to Tudor John Chartered Accountants in February 2020, who have also taken over responsibility for our annual audit. The process of transferring the accounts was begun in March 2020 and largely complete by 30 June of that year. As part of this process, Tudor John have instituted a series of more robust checks for all aspects of sign-off for Society expenditure, including payroll, thereby addressing a long-standing concern about the Society's over-reliance on the capacity and probity of a sole member of staff for the execution of the Society's financial function.

At the same time, steps have been taken towards making the Finance Committee a more robust arbiter of the Society's decision-making and authority with regard to income and expenditure. The custom of permitting ad hoc sign-off by the President / Honorary Secretary / Honorary Treasurer to authorise in-year spending decisions has been replaced by review of all strategic spending decisions by Finance Committee. In addition, the committee has taken on the function of a Remuneration Committee to provide transparent oversight of the management of expenditure related to staff resources. In this capacity, in line with the recommendations of the HBRL report, Finance Committee agreed to increase the proportion of the Society's income spent on staff salaries. The Committee has also assumed ongoing responsibility for an annual inspection and review of individual staff salaries, as well as monitoring overall spend on salaries as a proportion of income.

Following the decision in 2019/20 to re-tender the contract to manage the Society's investment portfolio, the contract was awarded to Cazenove Capital. Cazenove now manages the Society's funds as part of a pooled fund, which provides additional security, minimises management fees, and ensures an ethically-informed investment portfolio. The process of transferring the portfolio began in the financial year 2019/20 and continued into 2020/21. On advice from the fund managers, the Society has increased the level of drawdown from its portfolio to £100K per annum. This figure remains in line with our overall investment policy and provides the Society with increased funds to finance its activities. In increasing the level of drawdown, the Society seeks to strike a balance between protecting the Society's assets for future generations, whilst also ensuring that our endowment is effectively and fully exploited for the benefit of the current generation.

The value of the Society's investments rose to £4.119 million in June 2021, an increase from the previous year's figure of £3.52 million. The Society's annual income was £421,729, with expenditure at £418,191¹ rather lower than budgeted. This was largely a result of reduced outgoings on events and meetings due to Covid-19, as well as a larger than predicted annual dividend from Cambridge University Press.

The Finance Committee reviews the Society's accounts for each financial year and recommends them for approval by the Trustees. The accounts, and the underlying processes and procedures that generate them, will be audited by Tudor John. Due to the considerable changes in the Society's structure, the accounts will be presented to the Fellows at a Special Meeting to be scheduled for early 2022.

Council records with gratitude the benefactions made to the Society by:

- Dr S.T. Ambler
- Peter J.M. Bell
- Ms G. Bennett
- Anand C. Chitnis
- Dr Sarah Easterby-Smith

¹ At the time of distribution final statutory accounts were being audited, as a standard legal requirement of our charitable status. The figures incorporated here do not incorporate gains on investments. An updated version of the report will be made available upon completion of the audit.

- Professor Sir David Eastwood
- Professor M.C. Finn
- Professor Jo Fox
- Professor Peter Frankopan
- Miss B.F. Harvey
- Professor G.A. Hosking
- Professor M.R. Hunt
- Dr M.D. Kerry
- Professor E.J. King
- Dr Jan Machielsen
- Professor P.J. Marshall
- Dr Duncan Money
- Professor H. Ono
- Dr L. Rausing
- Professor Catherine Rider
- Professor D.H. Sacks
- Dr Andrew Smith
- Professor R.H. Sweet
- Professor Richard Toyne
- Professor Jane Winters
- Past & Present Society
- Marc Fitch Fund
- Lund Trust

5. GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE (Chair: Alana Harris)

General Purposes Committee shares responsibility with the President and key Society staff for oversight of the Society's governance structures. This year, the committee completed its review of the governance of the Society by enlisting the services of Professor Lionel Bently, the Society's Honorary Barrister, to redraft By-Law VIII, which formalises the procedures for expulsion from the Society.

The new regulations were presented for ratification at the Anniversary Meeting (AGM) in November 2020 and accepted. In addition, the chair of the General Purposes Committee, the Honorary Secretary, has traditionally been responsible for the line management of the Society's salaried staff. This year, she has therefore played a key role in the management and administration of the restructure, in the design of new staff roles, and in the appointment of two new staff members. These line-management and administrative oversight responsibilities will transfer from the Honorary Secretary to the CEO in post since October 2021.

At the same time, the General Purposes Committee plays a major role in helping the Society to run its annual cycle of lectures and events and in overseeing the administration of our prizes. Details are provided below.

MEETINGS OF THE SOCIETY

At ordinary meetings of and public lectures sponsored by the Society, the following papers were read:

- Professor Derek Peterson, 'The Unseen Archive of Idi Amin: Making History in a Tight Corner' (23 July 2020)
- Professor Simon Ditchfield, 'Baroque around the Clock: Daniello Bartoli SJ (1608-1685) and the Uses of Global History' (21 September 2020)
- Professor Margot Finn, Presidential Address, 'Material Turns in British History IV. Erasures: Empire in India, Cancel Cultures and the Country House' (27 November 2020)
- Professor Linda Colley, 'What Happens when a Written Constitution is Printed? A History Across Boundaries', the 2020 Prothero Lecture (8 December 2020)
- Dr Katrina Navickas, 'The Contested Right of Public Meeting in England from the Bill of Rights to the Public Order Acts' (5 February 2021)
- Professor Catherine Holmes, 'The Making and Breaking of Kinetic Empire: Mobility, Communication and Political Change in the Eastern Mediterranean, c.950-1100 C.E.' (7 May 2021)

PRIZES AWARDED BY THE SOCIETY

The Society's annual prizes for 2020/21 were awarded as follows:

- **The David Berry Prize**, for the best published scholarly journal article or essay on a subject dealing with Scottish history, was awarded to: Dr Stuart McManus (Chinese University of Hong Kong) for 'Scots at the Council of Ferrara-Florence and the Background to the Scottish Renaissance', *The Catholic Historical Review* (Summer 2020).
- **The Alexander Prize**, for the best published scholarly journal article or an essay in a collective volume based upon original historical research, was awarded to Matthew Birchall (University of Auckland) for 'History, Sovereignty, Capital: Company Colonisation in South Australia and New Zealand', *Journal of Global History*, 16 (2021).
- **The Rees Davies Prize**, for the best dissertation submitted as part of a one-year full-time (or two-year part-time) postgraduate master's degree in any United Kingdom institution of higher education, was awarded to Tom Parkinson (University of Cambridge) for 'Space, Time and the Body: Muharram in Nineteenth-Century Singapore'.
- **The Gladstone Prize**, for a first book on a topic not primarily related to British history, was awarded to Dr Tom Stammers (Durham University) for *The Purchase of the Past: Collecting Culture in Post-Revolutionary Paris, c.1790-1890* (Cambridge University Press).
- **The Whitfield Prize**, for a first book on a topic in British or Irish history, was jointly awarded to Dr Jackson Armstrong (University of Aberdeen) for *England's Northern Frontier: Conflict and Local Society in the Fifteenth-Century Scottish Marches* (Cambridge University Press), and Dr Lauren Working (University of Oxford) for *The Making of an Imperial Polity: Civility and America in the Jacobean Metropolis* (Cambridge University Press).
- **The Jinty Nelson Award, for Inspirational Teaching & Supervision**, was awarded to Dr Lucinda Matthews-Jones (Liverpool John Moores University) for her work developing innovative forms of learning and assessment.

- **The RHS Award, for Teaching Innovation**, was awarded to Dr Jamie Wood (University of Lincoln) for his work developing students' reading strategies in an online environment.

6. MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE (Chairs: Helen Nicholson & Oleg Benesch)

In line with the move to professionalise elements of the Society's work some parts of the work of the Membership Committee have been moved from trustees to salaried staff, where it is appropriate and expedient to do so.

Pre-existing eligibility criteria for the Membership category were removed, which has both simplified the process of administering applications and made an important step towards our goal of making the Society a more welcoming and accessible organisation, and extending our reach to those with a genuine interest in the study of the past.

The Society's language and guidelines surrounding eligibility for Fellowship have also been reviewed and simplified. Whilst we expect that most new fellows will continue to be employed by a university and to base their application for fellowship on the publication of a historical monograph or comparable body of scholarly work, we have also sought to recognise a wider variety of ways in which librarians, archivists, curators, journalists, independent scholars and writers, as well as creatives in film, TV and radio, contribute to the production and dissemination of historical knowledge and understanding, and to recognise that contribution through admission to the Fellowship.

In addition to taking over elements of the administrative processes surrounding the election of fellows and members, the Society's staff have been charged with taking a more active role in the recruitment and retention of new members across all categories. We have instituted processes for contacting newly published authors, for reviewing the take-up of fellowship across different kinds of institutions, for engaging with historians based in University departments in which our presence has traditionally been less strong, and (in line with our recent Equalities work) for monitoring and seeking to improve applications to the fellowship from those who are traditionally underrepresented in the Society's Fellowship/Membership, with particular emphasis on gender and ethnicity. The RHS Office is also taking steps to identify and address incomplete applications on our online application portal, as well as to monitor those who leave the Society and seek to understand their reasons for doing so, with the aim of reducing these lapses and encouraging former fellows and members to rejoin the Society.

As the administrative workload has moved into the Office, the remit of the Membership Committee has been refocused and expanded. Oversight is provided by Dr Oleg Benesch (Reader in History, University York) who took charge from Professor Helen Nicholson as chair of the committee in January 2021. The committee is now charged with responsibility for taking a holistic overview of all our membership categories, regularly reviewing how well they serve the needs and profile of our changing community, and exploring ways to keep our membership categories and offer meaningful and relevant. The Membership Committee also continues to play a key role in the peer review of applications to the Fellowship.

Finally, at the same time as reviewing and updating our categories and administrative processes, we have continued to admit many new members across all our categories and to communicate their entry to the Society through our social media channels. Between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021, 256 new Fellows, 138 Members, and 273 ECR Members were elected to membership of the Society. At the end of the year, the Society's combined membership stood at 4379.

7. PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE (Chair, Jane Winters)

The Publications Committee remains responsible for the Society's ongoing portfolio of publications. Professor Richard Toyne represents the Society's interests on New Historical Perspectives (NHP, the Society's Open Access book series for early career historians), while Professor Andrew Spicer edits our journal, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*. Both share responsibility for Camden volumes. Professor Roey Sweet is the Society's Academic Director for the *Bibliography of British and Irish History* (BBIH), and Professors Elizabeth Hurren and Heather Shore are co-editors of the NHP series. From November 2020, the committee has been chaired by Jane Winters (Professor of Digital Humanities at the School of Advanced Study, University of London).

New plans for *Transactions* were announced in early 2021, ahead of its 150th anniversary in 2022. These saw the journal's move to accept direct submission of articles from researchers. Until this year, content published in the journal was by invitation only, with articles derived from lectures given at Society events or work submitted for Society prizes.

Under the guidance of Professor Spicer, a new editorial model and submission policy has been developed, with the aim of making *Transactions* more accessible to RHS Fellows and Members, and other would-be contributors, and reflecting the diversity of historical research in the UK and beyond. Society lectures will continue to be published in *Transactions*. However, the journal will from now include a much wider range of peer-reviewed articles, from both early career researchers and established historians. An annual volume will still be published, but articles will also be made available online as they become ready, ensuring that new research emerges quickly and the journal can be more responsive to current trends and concerns.

Transactions, Sixth Series, Volume 30 was published during the session, and although *Transactions*, Sixth Series, Volume 31 was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, it went to press on schedule and will be distributed to fellows and members in late November 2021.

In the Camden Fifth Series *The Papers of John Hatchell, Clerk of the House of Commons, 1768-1820*, eds. Peter J. Aschenbrenner and Colin Lee (vol. 59) and *The Letters and Reports of British Consular and Diplomatic Agents in Tripoli, 1792-1832*, ed. Sara ElGaddari (vol. 60) were published during the session. *Sir Earle Page's British War Cabinet Diary, 1941-2*, eds. Kent Fedorowich and Jayne Gifford went to press for publication in July 2021.

Despite challenges arising from the difficulties of conducting archival research during the pandemic, the past twelve months have seen a fairly steady flow of good quality Camden proposals, some in an advanced state of preparation. The publishing calendar is currently filled,

though the Literary Directors continue to welcome new proposals for texts which relate to any area of British history.

As in previous years, volumes in the Camden Series were offered to the membership at a favourably discounted price. Many Fellows and Members accepted the offer for volumes published during the year.

This year has seen a number of changes for the *Bibliography of British and Irish History*, including the departure of long-serving members of the team. Assistant Editor Sara Charles took up a new post at the University of London Press in January 2020, and in March 2020 BBIH Editor Simon Baker retired. In March 2021 Dr Philip Carter, who had an oversight role for BBIH at the Institute of Historical Research, took up the new post of Academic Director at the RHS, where he will be able to maintain his connection with the Bibliography. The Society is enormously grateful to all three for the dedication and enthusiasm with which they maintained and developed BBIH over many years, and particularly to Mr Baker for agreeing to see BBIH through the inevitable interregnum period before new editorial staff could be recruited, which occurred in June 2021.

Given these changes, which took place against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, activity this year has concentrated on updating the Bibliography as regularly as possible. It was quite an achievement to post a scheduled update in June 2021 at a point when no staff were in post. During this far from normal year, it was inevitable that some planned initiatives aimed at increasing usage have been deferred.

In July 2020, the first essay collection was published in the New Historical Perspectives series, *Individuals and Institutions in Medieval Scholasticism*, ed. Antonia Fitzpatrick and John Sabapathy. It was followed by four other titles showcasing research by early career scholars: Matthew Kerry's *Unite, Proletarian Brothers! Radicalism and Revolution in the Spanish Second Republic* (September 2020); Sarah Goldsmith's *Masculinity and Danger on the Eighteenth-Century Grand Tour* (November 2020); Ewan Gibbs' *Coal Country. The Meaning and Memory of Deindustrialization in Postwar Scotland* (February 2021); and *Church and People in Interregnum England*, ed. Fiona McCall (June 2021).

NHP titles have been downloaded 31,820 times by 30 June 2021, demonstrating the extraordinary reach of this open-access series. The first NHP book published, Edward Owens' *The Family Firm: Monarchy, Mass Media and the British Public, 1932-53* (October 2019) leads the way, with 10,170 downloads across multiple platforms (University of London Press, JSTOR and OAPEN).

8. RESEARCH POLICY COMMITTEE (Chair: Jonathan Morris)

The Research Policy Committee advises the Society on all aspects of the research environment. It coordinates the Society's relations with all the main bodies related to research funding and policy, manages its responses to research-related consultations and issues, and maintains relationships with other History and Humanities associations to lobby in the interests of the discipline.

The Committee has continued to engage actively with the REF 2021 exercise, both in terms of its framing and staffing. In July 2020 the Chair of the Research Policy Committee submitted a response to the REF consultation on the Proposed Modifications to REF 2021 in light of the pandemic. Although broadly supportive of the measures proposed, it indicated concern at the equality implications of some decisions, and the likely workload to be imposed on the panel as a consequence of rescheduling the exercise across two academic years, and particularly in light of the increased teaching loads being experienced across universities. The REF 2021 executive subsequently sent a letter to HEIs stressing the value of panellists' work, and requesting institutional understanding, though without proposing any concrete forms of support.

The Society was approached by the REF History Sub-Panel executive and asked if it would agree to nominate one further assessor for outputs and impact. After reviewing their records of achievement, the Society was happy to do so. Nine of the final set of additional appointments made to the Sub-Panel were endorsed by the Society.

The committee continued to monitor the impacts of the pandemic on archives and libraries, as well as research funding and careers. The committee benefitted from detailed reports given by representatives from The National Archives, notably Dr Emma Markiewicz, Head of Archives Sector Development, and Pip Willcox, Head of Research and Academic Engagement, who were co-opted onto the Committee.

The Society's VP Research and President attended the annual liaison meeting with History subject bodies, the Institute of Historical Research and the major funding organisations: AHRC, ESRC and Wellcome Trust. The boundaries between ESRC and AHRC are now a lot better defined. This has resulted in nearly all History applications being directed to AHRC; this is beneficial as success rates in the AHRC are much higher than those of the ESRC.

9. RESEARCH SUPPORT COMMITTEE (Chair: Clare Griffiths)

This has been a year in which so many in-person events disappeared from the calendar, conferences were postponed or moved online and archives were often inaccessible and travel impractical. In 'normal' times, the Research Support Committee focuses on awarding grants to doctoral students and early career historians to fund research trips and attendance at conferences. In responding to the changes brought by the pandemic, the committee's work shifted to find different ways to provide support both for those studying for PhDs and recent postdoctoral scholars moving onto the next stage in their career, in a climate marked by the challenging precarity of short-term contracts and limited employment opportunities.

In late spring and summer 2020, the committee introduced two initiatives as an immediate response to the circumstances posed by the lockdowns. The first was a scheme in partnership with Adam Matthew Digital to provide 12-month subscriptions allowing access to their digital collections of primary source material. These subscriptions provided a lifeline for many doctoral students adjusting their research plans to draw on digitised primary sources and for early career researchers devising follow-up projects and working on research for journal articles.

The second scheme, for which we operated two rounds of applications in summer 2020, awarded hardship grants to doctoral students and early career researchers experiencing acute financial need as a result of the pandemic. In funding these hardship grants we were able to redeploy part of the committee's annual budget normally allocated for travel funds and conference attendance. In addition, we also received generous financial support from the Past and Present Society and donations to a JustGiving campaign.

As institutions and travel began to open up again—albeit tentatively—the committee started to see more applications coming in for our standard grant schemes. However, it remained problematic for many researchers to make advance plans with confidence, and we have performed far fewer grants for these kinds of activity than in previous years. At this time, the committee was keen to develop a new type of scheme to support career development for early career researchers, addressing the challenging time so many experience in negotiating the transition from PhD study to further research and employment.

The result was our Early Career Fellowships scheme, launched in December 2020. For the first rounds of this scheme, in February and May 2021, the committee awarded 19 grants, each worth up to £2,000, to support postdoctoral historians working on a specific project, whether that be completing work on their first book, writing a journal article, or developing a grant application for new research.

The fellowships are aimed specifically at those without full-time academic employment, and were to contribute to general living costs, childcare or research expenses, the key concern being to enable time and opportunity for research. It has been very stimulating to read about the varied projects planned and underway amongst this cohort of historians, and we look forward to sharing the outcomes of the research funded by these fellowships.