As this newsletter’s theme is education, I thought the membership might appreciate an update about the Society’s continuing (time-consuming and strenuous!) efforts to influence the reform of the school curriculum for history. As historians might well imagine, casual observations of this process as charted in the newspapers do not give a very good picture of the real progress of reform. The loudest voices are not necessarily the most influential. A variety of self-appointed or government-appointed ‘history czars’ have weighed in, some to greater, some to lesser effect. Meanwhile, more haphazardly than we would have liked, new history curricula are emerging, and the Society - working closely with our schoolteaching colleagues in the Historical Association - has played an important role in their development. A real unsung hero in this process has been our Vice President for Education, Arthur Burns of King’s College London. Shortly after the current government came into power, our good friend Lord Cormack organised a dinner for the new Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, attended by representatives of the teaching and academic professions drawn together by my predecessor as President, Colin Jones. We had a wide-ranging discussion and put over a number of ideas about the history curriculum. Mr Gove was in full listening mode. One point which we emphasised strongly, and to which he seemed very receptive, was the need to make it impossible for secondary-school students to study primarily - indeed, exclusively - twentieth-century history for the last 5 years of their schooling (i.e. from the last year of the national curriculum, Year 9, through four years of GCSE and A-Level). That seemed to us to limit severely students’ entitlement to a broad and humane education in the millennia-long history of human experience. Then began an extended period of public discussion of the school history curriculum, kicked off by speeches from Mr Gove and his well-publicised encouragement of figures including Simon Schama and Niall Ferguson to contribute to a thoroughgoing reform. Attention focused at first on the national curriculum (Years 1-9). An Advisory Committee and an Expert Panel were set up. But surprisingly little happened for some time. The Expert Panel ultimately reported in December 2011, amidst evident disagreement within and beyond its membership, and little was heard of it thereafter. Some of the ‘history czars’ dropped out in disappointment. Ultimately a draft history curriculum surfaced in the autumn of 2012. This appeared to have originated entirely within the Department for Education. It bore the stamp of Mr
Gove’s widely-aired views that the spine of the curriculum should be provided by a chronological account of British history - mostly political history, the unfolding of English liberty and democracy - from earliest times in Year 1 to the 20th-century in Year 9. We took the opportunity to comment on this draft. We welcomed the overall aims but objected to the fixation on one kind of history, delivered chronologically over a long period, which would leave younger children in ignorance of modern history and older children in ignorance of pre-modern history. It would also, we pointed out, reinforce the obsession with the 20th century in the upper secondary years. After this draft was published in early 2013, the Society, the Historical Association and the chairs of the three historical sections of the British Academy issued a joint statement regretting these biases. Happily the Department for Education acknowledged these concerns. A series of roundtable meetings at the DfE was held with a healthy array of interested parties, including the HA and the Society, at which Arthur Burns represented us. A smaller working party was then appointed, again including the HA and the Society, with Arthur again speaking on our behalf. Gradually a revised history curriculum emerged. The chronological spine remained, but the centre of gravity was shifted so that secondary children would have exposure to British history from the middle ages to the present, and primary children would have some exposure in addition to modern topics. More non-British history was included, so that children might have at least opportunities for genuinely global coverage. The final draft, much improved, was issued in September 2013 - to general satisfaction, though hardly any coverage in the media. You can read it at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-history-programmes-of-study. It is not, of course, a national curriculum at all - not compulsory for secondary schools. But it will presumably remain a framework within which most primaries and secondaries will build their teaching practice.

Meanwhile, attention had shifted to GCSE and A-Level. The reform processes at post-14 were conducted quite separately from the debate over the national curriculum - itself a cause for concern. The Department for Education’s role in post-14 curriculum is rather different, since even the ‘national curriculum’ doesn’t hold here, and much depends on the regulatory framework laid down for the examination boards, which actually design the curricula. Mr Gove’s interests here lie less in content and more in form - his stated desire was to see modular courses replaced by ‘linear’ two-year courses for both GCSE and A-Level, assessed almost entirely by written examinations rather than by coursework. The Society took the view that GCSE required most repair. It was not so much modularity as - the point we had made to the Secretary of State in 2010 - the fixation on the ‘modern world’ that seemed to us most problematic. We have argued again for more diversity in both GCSE and A-Level curricula, including some compulsory elements of pre-20th century (ideally, pre-modern) and also extra-European history, and also for a more compelling mix of ‘long sweeps’ of history to provide context and exposure to big analytical structures, and depth studies within those long sweeps which allow closer attention to sources and conjunctures. At the time of writing, reform of post-14 history is still under way. Further roundtables and working groups at the Department for Education, at which Arthur again represented us, led to a draft GCSE specification which was put out to consultation in June 2013. This remains under consideration, but we are hopeful - and happy - that the grip of ‘the modern world’ on current GCSE curricula will be broken and a wider range of pre-modern and wider-world options will be available for 14-16 year olds. Our position has been that A-Level is the portion of the school curriculum that requires least repair, and this position seems broadly to be shared inside the Department for Education. This view was supported in May 2012 by the publication of an Ofqual report on ‘International Comparisons in Upper Secondary Assessment’, which argued that the History A-Level performs well in such comparisons (a finding that got almost no media coverage, compared to the ‘bad’ results in the PISA tests of younger children). Nevertheless - and here we speak with more confidence, since A-Levels are obviously closer to our experience as scholars and academics than the earlier phases of school teaching - we have been arguing strongly for a similar approach to A-Level as to GCSE, with ‘big sweeps’ and depth studies, and also (against Mr Gove’s exclusive preference for written examinations) for project work that will develop students’ capacities for independent study and research. We fed these views into a consultation process over the summer of 2013. This process, too, is still under way. Meanwhile, Arthur and I, as well as our Honorary Secretary Adam Smith of UCL, have all been in close contact with the examination boards, offering suggestions for the crafting of new curricula that will embody these improvements. The Secretary of State has set up an A-Level Content Advisory Board (ALCAB), run by the Russell Group. So far ALCAB has been preoccupied
with other subjects that are deemed to require more immediate and extensive repair. But we look forward to playing a role in ALCAB as we have in every other consultation and working group devoted to curricular reform over these last four eventful years. Watch this space — and, from this summer, our new and improved website, on which we will be posting all of our formal responses to government consultations on the school curriculum, as well as more up-to-the-minute news on the emergence of all these new curricula.

Peter Mandler

Forthcoming Events

Wednesday 2 July 2014 at 6.00 p.m.
Professor Tim Blanning
“Richard Wagner and the German Empire”
Venue: Gustave Tuck Lecture Theatre, UCL
The Prothero Lecture

Friday 26 September 2014 at 5.30 p.m.
Professor Mark Cornwall
“Traitors and the Meaning of Treason in Austria-Hungary’s Great War”
Venue: UCL

Tuesday 21 October 2014
Professor Alexandra Shepard
“Minding Their Own Business:
Crediting Married Women in the Early Modern Economy”
Venue: University of Huddersfield

Wednesday 12 November 2014
The Colin Matthew Memorial Lecture for the Public Understanding of History in co-operation with Gresham College, London
Professor Tim Hitchcock and Professor Robert Shoemaker
“Making History Online”
Venue: London

Friday 28 November 2014
Presidential Address
Professor Peter Mandler
“Educating the Nation. II: Universities”
Venue: UCL
One of the first tasks undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) founded in 1997 to monitor standards in UK higher education was the creation of subject benchmarking documents. Authored by teams of academics working in the relevant disciplines, these describe the essential nature and characteristics of BA Honours programmes, and the attributes and capabilities that students achieving these qualifications should be expected to have acquired or demonstrated. The statements are of considerable assistance to those creating new degree programmes, not least in helping them articulate relevant ‘learning outcomes’, as well as enabling institutions to evaluate their delivery of a particular discipline against agreed general expectations about standards and the subject. First published in 2000, the History benchmarking document was produced by a panel of sixteen historians drawn from a wide range of institutions and chaired by Professor Anthony Fletcher. The diversity of approach and topics addressed in History degrees mark the subject out from many others, and posed a particular challenge to the statement’s authors. The panel very deliberately sought to accommodate the extensive but highly varied good practice then current in a subject which the National Student Survey, introduced in 2005, would reveal as delivering high rates of satisfaction across the full range of the HE sector. Inclusivity and pluralism did not, however, come at the price of any abandonment of disciplinary rigour, coherence and standards, and as a result the History benchmarking statement has been a notable success, attracting the support of the subject community and regularly being called on either to help shape new programmes or to defend key elements in advanced historical training where institutional pressures for conformity threaten their continuation (notably the importance of the essay, lecture and dissertation/extended essay to disciplinary culture). In 2007 the statement was reconsidered by a review panel who updated the statement to reflect the changing context of HE, acknowledging
not only the increased use of technology in teaching delivery and a growing emphasis on graduate employability, but also changes in historical practice, thus paying more attention to the importance of visual and material culture as historical evidence. The time has now come for a second review, and we have just finished co-chairing the panel (its membership is listed below) charged with creating the ‘third edition’ of the History benchmarking statement, which will shortly go out for consultation. So what has changed this time? We think most colleagues will welcome the fact that the statement remains largely unaltered in shape and approach, and that QAA were fully supportive of this in light of its track record of support from the subject community. Once more the document will acknowledge technological developments, notably in e-learning and the need for digital literacy in history students, and recognises the ongoing importance of the employability agenda in stressing the transferability of historical knowledge and core skills to a wide variety of sectors beyond the academy. It reflects the importance of recent legislation on equality and diversity, but also offers greater clarity and emphasis on the intrinsic value of independent study within history degree programmes and the centrality of the notion of historical enquiry to the discipline. We also felt it necessary to emphasise the importance of taking full account of the ethical dimensions of historical practice, reflecting the creation of institutional codes of conduct which can be of particular significance for students conducting independent research on the recent past. The revised statement will be put out for consultation in May, and we will alert the membership when this happens. We hope that colleagues in HE will continue to find it of considerable value in designing and reviewing degree programmes suited to preserving the high reputation currently enjoyed by the historical education delivered in British universities.

The review panel consisted of Prof Arthur Burns (RHS/King’s College London), Prof Jane Longmore (Southampton Solent/History Forum HEA), co-chairs Prof Alan Booth (Nottingham), Dr Arthur Chapman (Institute of Education), Dr Marcus Collins (Loughborough), Dr Paul Corthorn (Queen’s University Belfast), Dr Pat Cullum (Huddersfield), Peter D’Sena (HEA), Prof Jackie Eales (Canterbury Christ Church/Historical Association), Dr Elaine Fulton (Birmingham), Dr Vicky Gunn (Glasgow), Dr Melinda Haughton (The National Archives), Dr Leif Jerram (Manchester), Dr Valerie Johnson (TNA), Dr Keith McLay (Chester/History UK), Dr Alison Twells (Sheffield Hallam), Dr Jamie Wood (Lincoln), and Dr Dave Wyatt (Cardiff).

Jane Longmore
Arthur Burns
Coming to an Admissions Process Near You...

Professor Arthur Burns

As Peter Mandler’s presidential letter makes clear, we don’t yet know the final outcome of the reform of History GCSE and A-Level. However, it may be helpful to highlight some features of the emerging landscape, since once announcements are made there will be a comparatively short period before the first student products of the new regime arrive at the doors of British universities. All readers involved in undergraduate admissions will be aware of elements of what follows, but the sheer speed of change means that many will be only partially up to speed on what is coming.

First, some good news. Although the balance of press coverage still tends to play to the ‘Humanities in crisis?’ agenda, History in the schools remains in good health thanks to high-quality teaching and the attractiveness of the subject. If anything it has profited from recent changes. History’s place in the EBacc has driven a rise in numbers taking History GCSE (a phenomenon happily duplicated in language subjects). Featuring among the ‘facilitating subjects’ identified by the Russell Group as those most useful to students seeking an appropriate portfolio for admission has probably had a similar reinforcing effect at A-Level. From 2016 EBacc will take centre stage in new performance measures for schools - ‘Performance 8’ and ‘Progress 8’ - which should cement History’s place among the core subjects delivered at GCSE. However, in the new system the key data for league tables will no longer relate to raw attainment, but to progress achieved by pupils since leaving primary school, making more schools - including those with ‘good’ exam results - vulnerable to falling short of their targets. In this context should one EBacc subject be generally judged to be more ‘difficult’ than another, there may be pressures within all schools to steer pupils towards ‘easier’ options which boost progress scores. It will therefore matter how the new History GCSE comes to be perceived in these terms.

Examination boards are currently developing new specifications to meet DfE and Ofqual requirements. As Peter notes, there is potentially much that will be welcome here, not least as it is intended to ensure that pupils are exposed to contrasting chronological frames and periods and a variety of approaches to history. Yet the devil will really lie in the detail. Particularly at GCSE, the new specifications must cram an awful lot into a few separate elements, each of which delivers two or more aspects of the requirements (such as ‘sources’ or ‘depth’). Much depends on how the various demands are bundled. We can be confident that students will be exposed to a greater variety of history over their school career at least in terms of periods studied - but the question is how much greater? There will be a temptation for examination boards, commercial competitors as they are, to play safe by offering curricula as close as possible to current options to appeal to teachers struggling with change across all years from Key Stage 3 to A-Level. Those teachers may themselves never have taught or indeed studied much beyond the Tudors and twentieth-century history. Our discussions with examination boards, however, indicate that some curriculum developers are seizing the opportunity to try something new and exciting, and where this is the case, the RHS will lend them our support.

There are other things that we can already say will almost certainly change for the better. Examination boards are reviewing how to set questions about primary sources, and will emphasise the currently blurred distinction between these and secondary sources. Some may demand more extended responses exploring longer source extracts. Despite Ofqual’s concerns about reliability and parity of assessment, longer pieces of writing requiring more subjective evaluation than multiple choice answers will remain central to assessment (though here a worry is the difficulty examination
boards currently experience in recruiting qualified senior examiners to lead such assessment. In addition, the DfE and Ofqual have refined assessment criteria following the publication of the first proposals in ways that will make them more fit for purpose with less emphasis on simple recall. Some serious causes for concern nevertheless remain. One is now what seems to be the almost certain removal of coursework from GCSE – though it might yet remain outside the formal qualification as what would surely be a largely unwelcome unassessed add-on. We regret this development while acknowledging the genuine concerns of the examination boards and government about the reliability of the associated assessment outcomes. This change may have other indirect consequences. The final public draft specification included a demand for study of the historic environment most readily accommodated within a personal study. With the study excised, the challenge will be to develop external assessment to examine study of the local historical environment other than through general generic questions encouraging teaching to the test.

At A-Level, the future of AS looks very uncertain as a stand-alone qualification not contributing to the A-level outcome. It is intended that it should be possible to teach the AS alongside the A-Level, but the demand that the assessment for A-Level must be clearly distinct in its level from that for AS will complicate attempts to prepare students for both assessments at the same time. Our discussions with teachers, especially those in Sixth-Form Colleges and schools which face an imminent and significant reduction in the unit of resource for sixth-form students, indicate that many are questioning whether to continue delivering AS; much will depend on HE sending clear messages on its value to applicants. For History in particular, its ability to recruit A2 students from those who have enjoyed AS History may mean such changes will impact on the numbers taking A-Level. Some teachers also worry that male students will suffer from the loss of the formal hurdle (a.k.a. wake-up call) that makes AS a useful spur to success at A-Level. Admissions officers may well miss AS and its ability to indicate talent in a subject as they take decisions about applicants. But more generally, it is clear that for a number of years they are going to need to have their wits about them. They will be deciding between candidates who - depending on the year they commenced their studies - will have a portfolio of ‘old’ or ‘new’ GCSEs, A-Levels and ASs. Moreover at A-Level the gradual phasing in of the new qualifications will see individual students with a mixture of old and new; and even once the new system is in operation, candidates from Wales and Scotland will have different qualifications from those from England, adding a new complexity to a qualification menu which will also include the IB and international GCSEs. All in all it is clear that the next few years will be particularly demanding for everyone in schools, examination boards and universities as they all seek to get to grips with the workings of the system and to learn to interpret its outcomes. Colleagues in universities will also sympathise with the demands faced by schoolteachers confronted with a sudden need to acquire new subject knowledge in unfamiliar aspects of History (this will be particularly the case for those who have been teaching Modern World options). It is clear that the lines of communication between schools, examination boards, universities and indeed the DfE and Ofqual need to be functioning effectively. As soon as the dust settles, the RHS hopes to facilitate such conversations by organising an event bringing all interested parties together.

Arthur Burns
Humanities at Work: Student Placement Modules

Dr Roberta Anderson

The purpose of student placement modules in History at Bath Spa University is to give students the opportunity to complete an undergraduate level project placement, building experience of, and confidence in, essential work place skills. The placement has many benefits. It allows students to develop new skills, build confidence and gain relevant experience in the organisation or industry of their choice.

A project placement can be a key part of personal and career development and provides opportunities for students to put theory into practice and to identify the relevance of their academic studies in the world of work; to value and develop the key skills that are in demand from employers including effective communication, time management, working as part of a team, self-reliance and the ability to solve problems; gain marketable experience and skills that will be of benefit when they are looking for a job following graduation; learn about workplace cultures; gain experience of working to deadlines; and to test whether a particular sector of work or individual company is of interest as a potential employer when they graduate.

Students taking the Humanities at Work modules can do so in Year 2, over the Summer vacation between Years 2 and 3 and in their final year. They are released from university one day a week and are expected to undertake a minimum of 120 hours on their placements.

There are a variety of placements available ranging from involvement in major Heritage Lottery funded projects, like that at Downside Abbey Library and Archive, to the recovery of local sites of historic importance: students support the work of the Cleveland Pools, a unique and yet neglected feature of our national heritage - the only surviving Georgian Lido in England, and at Fairfield House, the home to His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia (1936-41), during the five years he spent in exile from the invasion of Mus-
solini’s troops into his homeland, then known as Abyssinia. In both these projects students are researching the properties and the people who used their facilities or lived there and helping to archive documents and photographs which have been donated, in order that the trustees can uncover the history to their sites.

Other students are working in archives. We currently have four students developing the newly founded Bath Spa University archive. This group are collecting, conserving and accessioning archival material, which has, for years, lain in out of the way places around the institution. Students are currently working on the collection of Mary Dawson, the founding Principal at Newton Park; letters and student papers from Newton Park 1950 - 1952; and further collections of institutional documents and images, from various University offices.

Those students currently working at Downside Abbey are part of the ‘Beacon of Learning’ project, which will revitalise the Library collections. Students with a range of interests, who are seeking new skills and experience, are working on projects to restore old books and manuscripts, devise interesting content to put on the website and social media channels, and, working alongside the Librarian and Archivist, are learning archiving, library and conservation skills. Rachel Smith has had three consecutive placements at Downside: ‘My placement at Downside has given me the opportunity to practice archiving, transcribing and presentation skills. However, the most rewarding experience has been writing a chapter for a book, *Unexecuted Downside*, to be published in April, which will be excellent for my CV’.

In recent years students have played an important role in two high profile projects, both related to the 2012 legacy. Five students prepared ten practical activities designed to be fun, creative and educational. The activities provide opportunities for pupils to learn about the Olympic and Paralympic values, Greek mythology, the cultural differences between competing countries and local athletes. Jade Lewis explained, ‘Hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games in this country [was] a tremendous opportunity to inspire young people. Sometimes history can be taught in a way that’s a bit dull and uninspiring, so we wanted to do something different to help bring young people in the southwest closer to the Games’.

The students were delighted that their project was awarded the Inspire mark, which recognised and supported outstanding projects taking place around the UK that provided new opportunities for young people and their communities as a result of the Games.

The resource contains ten activities that celebrate local, ‘South West’ links with the Games. It creates opportunities for children to learn about Olympians and Paralympians who train in the south-west, local artists who have been inspired by the Games and important local people, such as Hodgson Pratt, who played key roles in the modern Olympic Games. The resource includes worksheets, PowerPoint presentations and audio files to support the activities.

Again, working with the Relays team, five students contributed to the Bristol Urban Sport exhibition, at MShed, Bristol, which explored the relationship between the fabric of the city and sport over the previous 200 years. The exhibition revealed how the people of Bristol manipulated both the natural landscape and man-made architecture for sporting activity. The students interviewed a range of people from local groups and clubs and identified photographs, memorabilia, objects and film that were featured in the exhibition. They uncovered some fascinating stories along the way e.g. the first modern bungee jump from the Clifton suspension bridge. They also decided that the exhibition needed a power boat to celebrate the much missed power boat races in Bristol Docks: Bethan got one!

Feedback from students shows that the majority agree that the placement experience adds significant value and learning within the framework of their academic programme. This aligns well with the employer view that placements contribute to the overall employability of the graduate.
‘Remember that teaching really matters.’ This gobbet of advice from one professional historian to those starting out in their academic career echoes the views of many of those we interviewed or surveyed for our project on the experience of teaching the subject in higher education. Why it matters, what works best and what it means to be and develop as a history educator are illustrated in an innovative website unique to historians called ‘Historians on Teaching’ (www.historiansonteaching.tv).

The project has involved a UK-wide survey that has recorded the views of over 200 academic historians, and filmed interviews with 50 historians, primarily in the UK, North America and Australia, talking about their teaching and their lives as teachers. The website, which went live in January 2014, contains approximately 200 clips from the filmed interviews and is divided into three main sections: being a history teacher in higher education; teaching strategies; and developing as a teacher. Each of these contains three sub-sections illustrating personal reflections and recollections about ‘motivations and satisfactions’; ‘hopes and outcomes for students’; ‘challenges and changes’; ‘the role of the teacher’; ‘approaches and methods’; ‘memorable teachers’; ‘what helped me develop’; ‘advice to new teachers’; and ‘community conversations’.

‘Historians on Teaching’ is an open-access resource for everyone interested in teaching history. When we began the research we were especially keen to provide online, subject-focused resources for postgraduates beginning to teach and early career history lecturers undertaking institutional training programmes. We were also conscious of the needs of the growing, and constantly changing, army of part-time tutors on whom many departments rely. The film clips of experienced historians talking about the values they hold, the approaches they take and the advice they want to pass on about teaching constitute a practical resource for all these history educators and an important source of encouragement and reassurance. The materials, however, have a much wider resonance. The site will be of value to any historian teaching in higher education, whatever the stage of their career. The film clips provide experiences and ideas that can help individuals or departments to think through what they do as a means to re-
fresh and enhance their practice. The site will provide a useful point of reference for those teaching (and studying) history at the higher levels in secondary schools and in colleges who want to find out more about perspectives on teaching and learning from the world of history teaching at university.

Whilst this site is specific to the history community, its content is relevant to all humanities lecturers who want to consider what they do as educators, and it offers a model from History as to how resources for teaching development might be delivered. A glance at the site would undoubtedly profit those who want to construct successful institutional training programmes and institutional senior managers who want to make policy on teaching that is effective as well as efficient. In short, ‘Historians on Teaching’ is a resource for everyone who wants to make the most of their teaching and all who want to join in the conversation about teaching and learning history in higher education. As our project illustrates, that conversation is growing and becoming more informed and more evidence-based. There is now a significant literature on the learning and teaching of history in higher education, and a growing community of practice forming around it. Historians in the UK, North America and Australia as well as in mainland Europe are producing work that is changing our perspectives on what we do and might do as teachers of our subject. This relates partly to the value and impact of new technologies, but also to the possibilities for the history classroom opened up by new, research-based conceptions of what higher learning in history means. Whilst our main focus in this project has been on history teaching ‘at its best’, we have not ignored the challenges that face historians (or indeed anyone) teaching in higher education today. A variety of these are related in the website sections relating to ‘changes and challenges’ and ‘community conversations’. Many of the obstacles mentioned arise from prevailing conditions of working. They include class sizes, the changing nature of the student population, competing demands on time, issues of control over working lives, the growing bureaucracy around teaching, unbalanced systems of reward and recognition, and, for early career lecturers, feelings of isolation. Yet if many historians are frustrated by the constraints they face in being the teachers they want to be, they also acknowledge that teaching is always going to be a challenge. It is unpredictable work. As one contributor to the project noted:

‘What I did not realise when I started as a history teacher was the imperfectability of teaching. I imagined that it was a skill that I would master after a number of years, or that this amounted to a professional competence that I could straightforwardly develop. Instead, teaching remains a work-in-progress and some questions about teaching and learning became trickier, not more straightforward, as I spent more time in the classroom.’

But, many attest, that very unpredictability is a key feature of what is attractive about teaching. Teaching history well, we heard, is demanding intellectual work. Like research it demands acute awareness (of subject and audience), attention to detail, a passionate curiosity and continuing openness to learning more.

This brings me to a final point. The website delivers a strong message about the importance for history teaching (and historians) of innovation - not necessarily in a grand or ground-breaking sense, but often as tinkering, experimentation, just trying things out. Whilst those we interviewed and surveyed were adamant that there is no ‘right way’ to teach history and that teaching well requires the injection of personality and highly contextualized judgment, they also commonly emphasised the importance of creativity and openness to new ideas. ‘Don’t be afraid to experiment’, urges one historian of those new to the teaching profession. ‘Be passionate about finding new ways to do things. Circumstances change and so you will need to change too.’ Passion and creativity are core components of both teaching and research. And to have full impact, these much-in-need qualities must be sustained by robust, evidence-based collegial conversation.
Talking about teaching ‘at its best’ (and encouraging it) is important for us as individual lecturers, as departments, as a discipline community. We need to pursue such conversations with purpose and some urgency, not just because our institutions increasingly demand it, but, and more importantly, because, as the historian at the beginning of this article remarks, ‘teaching really matters’: it matters to us, to our students and to the world we live in. This is ultimately the message of ‘Historians on Teaching’ - a message not only about the passion we feel as historians for our subject and making a difference to the learning and lives of our students, but also about the potential of our subject as an educational medium.

Now the website is live it has become community property. But it needs to be used and to grow. For it to do so, it needs help from the history community. To join the conversation, find out more about how you can contribute and get updates on the work, you can sign up to the mailing list using the link on the website (www.historiansonteaching.tv) and follow us on Twitter @historiansteach.

For those interested, I have produced a book, History Teaching at its Best: historians talk about what matters, what works and what makes a difference, which examines the issues raised in the survey and films in greater depth and connects the voices of historians on teaching to the recent literature. This is available as a paperback or eBook and can be purchased via the website or by emailing jeanne@historiansonteaching.tv. All profits from the book will be used to sustain and enhance the website.

Alan Booth

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RHS Grants for Postgraduates

Melanie Ransom

The Royal Historical Society is committed to supporting postgraduate students. We offer a number of research grants for those undertaking postgraduate research, and for students at UK universities it is not necessary to be a Member of the Society to apply. Funds are available to subsidise attendance at conferences and training courses, and to help defray the costs of archival visits. In addition, bursaries are available to help those organising conferences to provide subsidised rates for postgraduate attendees. We also offer the Martin Lynn Scholarship to assist an historian pursuing postgraduate research on a topic in African history and the Marshall and Centenary Fellowships to assist those writing up dissertations. In addition, we are pleased to announce that the Society’s funds for early career researchers have been generously augmented by subventions from both the History Workshop Journal (HWJ) and the Past and Present Society (P&P). HWJ funds are intended to support unfunded students with travel to conferences and research visits. P&P funds are intended to support students in research visits. In addition, the Past and Present Society would like to extend eligibility for their funding to overseas researchers who are not studying at a UK higher education institution. Eligible overseas students will be either Members or Postgraduate Members of the Royal Historical Society.

For further information about any of our grants, please visit: http://www.royalhistoricalsociety.org/postgraduates.php or email Melanie Ransom (m.ransom@ucl.ac.uk).
Recent funding from the Royal Historical Society allowed me to visit archives in both Warwick and Oxford in October 2013. My thesis examines English grammar schools from the late fifteenth to early seventeenth centuries, and how influences such as humanism, the Reformation and the changing social function of education affected grammar schools during that period. With the help of the Society, I was able to view a variety of relevant material which will be very helpful for two of my thesis chapters in particular, which address the founding and operating of schools, and the office of schoolmaster, respectively.

At the Warwickshire Record Office, much of the material I saw concerned the grammar school at Nuneaton, founded in 1553, including the rules for the school, or ‘orders’. While ‘orders’ like these represent the ideal rather than the actual practice of running a school, and often sound very similar to each other, I am interested in the changing ideals as well as changing practice, and in the practice, common at the time, of modeling one school on another, so these sources are still very informative, and among the most commonly extant documents related to early modern education.

The Old Library at Magdalen College, Oxford, contained somewhat rarer material, however: fifteenth-century texts by Plutarch and Cicero, heavily annotated by John Stanbridge, one of the first masters of Magdalen College School. It is unclear whether Stanbridge was reading these for himself or for a source of teaching material, but some of his annotations were in Greek; having sought some assistance in translating these, I learned that their grammatical quality was of a lower standard than the Latin annotations, reflecting the still-uncertain place of Greek in English education. Magdalen College School would quickly become a model for other schools in the sixteenth century, in terms of its teaching methods and curriculum, so it was important to visit its library and archives because of the influence which the school had upon so many smaller schools.

The archives of Magdalen College School contained a nearly complete set of accounts for the school from the foundation in 1480 to the seventeenth century, as well as a list of schoolmasters and ushers compiled in the nineteenth century. These accounts, or Libri Computi, indicate year by year how the school was run, and I was able to observe over several decades the various categories of expenditure; again, more administrative detail, but of a more practical, rather than ideal, nature. The list of schoolmasters and ushers filled in the gaps in the Libri, and provided in certain cases some biographical material. I could build up a picture of who these men were and where teaching fell within their lives: whether as a stepping stone to another career, or a lifelong career, as was increasingly the case later in the sixteenth century, and the schoolmasters of Magdalen College School provided more prosopographical examples to draw on than I had previously encountered. These were therefore very useful archive visits, and the assistance of the Royal Historical Society in making them possible is very much appreciated.
The Royal Historical Society offers an annual award of £1,000 for a history book published in English on any topic that is not primarily British history. To be eligible for the prize the book must be its author’s first solely written book on a historical subject which is not primarily related to British history. The book must also be an original and scholarly work of historical research and have been published in English during the calendar year by a scholar normally resident in the United Kingdom.

**2013 Gladstone Prize Shortlist**

Monica Azzolini  
*The Duke and the Stars: Astrology and Politics in Renaissance Milan*  
Harvard University Press

Sean Eddie  
*Freedom’s Price: Serfdom, Subjection, and Reform in Prussia, 1648-1848*  
Oxford University Press

Aaron William Moore  
*Writing War: Soldiers Record the Japanese Empire*  
Harvard University Press

Jessica Reinisch  
*The Perils of Peace: The Public Health Crisis in Occupied Germany*  
Oxford University Press

Astrid Swenson  
*The Rise of Heritage: Preserving the Past in France, Germany and England, 1789-1914*  
Cambridge University Press

Abdel Razzaq Takriti  
*Monsoon Revolution: Republicans, Sultans, and Empires in Oman, 1965-1976*  
Oxford University Press
The Royal Historical Society offers annually the Whitfield Prize (value £1,000) for a new book on British or Irish history. To be eligible for consideration the book must be on a subject within a field of British or Irish history and have been published in English in 2013. It must also be its author’s first solely written book and be an original and scholarly work of historical research.

**2013 Whitfield Prize Shortlist**

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**Alex Bremner**
*Imperial Gothic: Religious Architecture and High Anglican Culture in the British Empire, c.1840-1870*
Yale University Press

**Helen Gittos**
*Liturgy, Architecture and Sacred Places in Anglo-Saxon England*
Oxford University Press

**William Pettigrew**
*Freedom’s Debt: The Royal African Company and the Politics of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1672-1752*
University of North Carolina Press

**Levi Roach**
*Kingship and Consent in Anglo-Saxon England, 871-978*
Cambridge University Press

**Mark Roodhouse**
*Black Market Britain, 1939-1955*
Oxford University Press

**Michal Shapira**
*The War Inside: Psychoanalysis, Total War, and the Making of the Democratic Self in Postwar Britain*
Cambridge University Press

**Scott Sowerby**
*Making Toleration: The Repealers and the Glorious Revolution*
Harvard University Press
The Prothero Lecture

“Richard Wagner and the German Empire”

Professor Tim Blanning

Wednesday 2 July 2014 at 6.00 p.m.

Venue: Gustave Tuck Lecture Theatre, UCL

The (partial) unification of Germany as ‘The German Empire’ in 1871 was the great political event of Wagner’s life (1813-83). In August 1876 the new German Emperor William I went to Bayreuth to attend the first complete performance of The Ring of the Nibelung in the Festival Theatre Wagner had built for the purpose. The relationship between these two events, however, was much more problematic than the chronology suggests. In this illustrated lecture, Tim Blanning will argue that Wagner’s attitude to the new German state was highly critical, despite an initial burst of enthusiasm for Prussia during the war of 1870-1. He will pay particular attention to the influence of Friedrich Schiller and Constantin Franz, concluding with an examination of the much-misinterpreted final scene of The Mastersingers of Nuremberg.