



MINUTES

of the Annual General Meeting of History UK, 14 November 2020, 11 am (via Zoom).

Present: Yolana Pringle (Co-Convenor, Roehampton); Jamie Wood (Co-Convenor, Lincoln); Charlotte Alston (Secretary, Northumbria); Sarah Holland (Education Officer, Nottingham); Sara Barker (Research Officer, Leeds); Simon Peplow (ECR Rep, Warwick); Manuela Williams (Communications Officer, Strathclyde); Karin Dannehl (EHS Rep, Wolverhampton); Martin Johnes (Swansea); Euryng Roberts (Bangor); Tracey Loughran (Essex); Fabian Hilfrich (Edinburgh); Heidi Mekhrkens (Aberdeen); Stewart McCain (St. Mary's); Kristen Brill (Keele); Grainne Goodwin (Leeds Beckett); Antonio Sennis (UCL); Adrian Howkins (Bristol); Inge Dornan (Brunel); Leanne Calvert (Hertfordshire); Bronach Kane (Cardiff); Deborah Toner (Leicester); Ruth Atherton (South Wales); Andrew Jotischky (Royal Holloway); Margaret Small (Birmingham); Tim Grady (Chester); Ross Balzaretto (Nottingham); Karen Jones (Kent); Graeme Morton (Dundee); Panikos Panayi (De Montfort); Michael Rapport (Glasgow); Charles Insley (Manchester); Tim Reinke-Williams (Northampton).

Apologies: Sara Wolfson (Open University); Sarah Hackett (Bath Spa)

1. Matters arising

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

Jamie reiterated History UK's thanks to Lucie Matthews-Jones for all the work she had done as co-Convenor right up until August, and formally welcomed Yolana Pringle as History UK's new co-Convenor. Yolana had also been heavily involved since the spring, working on the pandemic pedagogy project, and it had been great to have three convenors working together over the summer when there was so much to do. Jamie welcomed Sara Barker, who has now been confirmed in the post of Research Officer.

Jamie intends to step down as co-convenor next summer, and Jamie and Yolana invite expressions of interest for someone to act as co-convenor, ideally taking up the role in the spring in order to be able to shadow Jamie. We have a rough role description: **anyone interested should email Jamie/Yolana to have an informal chat about what is involved.**

At the last meeting we had discussed the theme 'History Matters' for the autumn plenary. Given how things have been since then, how tight time is for everybody, and the events we've been running online, we decided to make this a standard meeting rather than holding a full plenary session, and to focus on finding out how things are going, making plans for things we can helpfully do, and involving SC members/AGM participants in that planning.

2. Co-Convenors' Report

a. Pandemic Pedagogy

Kate Cooper from RHUL led on this project, and coordinated the work of Jamie, Lucie, Yolana and Manuela. We also paid two PhD students to do some work gathering

material that we could edit and develop. The work was concentrated in June and we released the guide quickly. The idea was to make this a user friendly, short, practical resource which would give hints and tips that would be helpful to deal with teaching challenges in a pandemic context. It has had quite a lot of traction: in July it had 5 and a half thousand views on the website. There was also a lot of retweeting and activity around the related blog posts. We followed up the release of this resource with a twitter chat on challenges in teaching. We'd like to do more to follow up on this and would welcome any thoughts about practical things we could do.

AGM participants mentioned how useful the pandemic pedagogy guide had been, and that it had been circulated around departments. In the discussion, suggestions for future work included focusing on socially distanced teaching in the classroom, as this also brings challenges. Most of the focus so far has been on strategies/techniques for online teaching.

The AGM discussed some of the challenges in online, face to face and 'blended' approaches. It was clear from the discussion that there is currently significant diversity in the approach of different institutions and departments. Some are fully online, others are doing on-campus teaching, and others have been teaching on campus and are now back online during the lockdown. Some institutions are insisting on a minimum number of hours teaching onsite per module or per student cohort. Some are allowing academic colleagues to choose the mode of delivery, while others insist on some face to face unless there is an exceptional reason. Likewise, in some cases students were given the option at the outset as to whether they wanted to study onsite or remotely. In some cases face to face was being focused on pastoral support. At many institutions there were not yet firm plans for the mode of delivery in January.

There was also a discussion about how students are engaging with either/both classroom and online teaching, and the balance between the two – i.e. which is regarded as 'core' or additional. Some institutions were using HyFlex to broadcast from the classroom to those studying remotely. First year students at many institutions seemed to be more engaged/keen on face to face teaching than those further up the programmes. There were issues across the board with students not having good bandwidth or technology to access online classes, with mental health and community building, and with generating student engagement both online and in the socially distanced classroom.

The AGM also discussed the possible long-term use of some of the resources that were being developed, and how our teaching practice might be expected to change over the long term. The enormous amount of work that colleagues have put into developing online delivery means we are collectively developing potentially very useful resources for students in the future. How will we build on remote content and new resources, and use these to our benefit? Should we collate material on best practice in anticipation of this longer-term shift?

Sarah Holland (education officer) is looking at ways to put together co-produced materials, to look at the positive things we can take forward, and perhaps organize some activities and events that focus on what this shift means for the future. It would be really helpful here to have insight from across different departments, as it is clear that there is much variation in terms of what is being done. This might also help us all to make the

case, where there are particular institutional requirements, that there are other options that are being explored across the sector. **Please get in touch if you want to get involved or have ideas.**

b. Statements and letter-writing

Over the last few months there had been multiple announcements, and rumours, about cuts to arts and humanities departments across the UK. Back in February 2020 HUK wrote a statement protesting the closure of the History programme at the University of Sunderland. Since then we have heard about the teaching out of history programmes at other institutions. A couple of weeks ago we released a statement about cuts to Humanities at Roehampton (where colleagues in History may have to reapply for their own jobs), and about the closure of two Institutes at the University of London's School of Advanced Study. We are anticipating that we will need to do more along these lines, and **would like to ask for volunteers who are willing to help on an ad hoc basis**, in order to avoid cut and pasting material but also in order to include multiple voices and perspectives. **If you are aware of similar issues at your own or other institutions, please get in touch and let us know.**

Yolana and Jamie are also in touch with the Arts and Humanities Alliance, who are thinking about more coordinated action that goes beyond different disparate associations writing statements. Yolana and Jamie will attend an upcoming meeting with the AHA, and will share news about that.

Tim Reinke-Williams reported on the situation at Northampton, where colleagues in History have been asked to take FTE reductions, and Euryan Roberts gave an update on the situation at Bangor, where colleagues are also facing compulsory redundancies. Karen Jones (Kent), Christienna Fryer (Goldsmiths) and Stewart McCain (St Marys) each gave updates about developments at their institutions, as did Inge Dornan and Tim Reinke-Williams about Kingston where they had been external examiners. **The following SC members volunteered to join a pool of authors and/or help where possible:** Tracey Loughran; Bronach Kane, Christienna Fryar; Tim Reinke-Williams; Rosie Knight; Deborah Toner; Fabian Hilfrich; Margaret Small; Grainne Goodwin; Stewart McCain; Simon Peplow; Euryan Roberts; Tim Grady; Karen Jones; Antonio Sennis; Leanne Calvert; Ruth Atherton; Andrew Jotischky; Charles Insley.

The AGM discussed ways that we might counter the arguments for closures and redundancies, particularly by making sure that we have accurate data about recruitment, marketing, and also research performance, in order to counter the often hazy data presented by institutions and demonstrate the value of our programmes; and ways of increasing the profile of our subject in schools. There was also a discussion about the best strategies for publicizing / opposing these kinds of cuts. While the value of being vocal about the situation was recognized, colleagues at institutions where programmes were under threat noted the problems with soliciting support and signing statements when managers were making decisions about redundancies and about the closure of specific programmes.

3. Treasurer's report

HUK has a healthy bank balance at present. In May we had decided not to chase unpaid accounts this year, but we have started doing this since the autumn and more institutional subscription payments are now coming in. Given how much we have done this year we don't want to lose the budget. Given our healthy bank balance, **if people have ideas for projects we might support then please get in touch.**

4. Communications Officer's report (Manuela Williams)

HistoryUK's engagement on social media, and particularly on Twitter, has been and continues to be successful. During the summer, the Pandemic Pedagogy project, with its weekly provocations and the release of the handbook, seemed to have generated strong engagement on Twitter and significantly increased traffic on our website. At the end of July, Jamie Wood calculated that the Pandemic Pedagogy had drawn around 5500 views in that month alone, over 50% of the 10,000 views for the first seven months of the year.

The current Twitter Chat about lessons learnt from online/blended teaching in the first semester seems to be generating a good discussion. It will be interesting to continue to unpack the data concerning Twitter responses and traffic on our website.

It is clear that as well as establishing our advocacy role through social media, we have also discovered, and consolidated another area in which we can have considerable impact, the scholarship of learning and teaching in History.

Within this in mind, it would be useful to consider ways in which we can expand our engagement with the student body in the 12 months. The limited uptake of our Student Video competition shows that we need to develop direct relations with student representatives in History departments across the sector. We can consider ways to achieve this: do we want to have a student rep on this committee? Do we want to build contacts through our Universities' Student Unions? Departmental student reps? By increasing our engagement with our student bodies, we will be able to seek their views and perspectives on our initiatives and activities, so that those can become truly meaningful to students and enhance their experience; we can also tap into students' established communication channels (for example, I ask my contact the the Student Union of my university to retweet History activities – open days, special seminars, etc.).

5. Research Officer's report (Sara Barker)

Thank you to everyone who helped to complete History UK's submission for the PlanS consultation. We were able to put in quite a full response, which in particular brought attention to the inequalities of research support available across the UK HE sector and the potential impact the plans suggested would have on international cooperation. I hope we managed to reflect the wide constituency of historians we represent. UKRI have pushed back when their response will come out – this will now be in the second quarter of 2021.

We are in the process of putting together a statement for the website (slightly but not directly in response to the work of Policy Exchange over the summer) provisionally entitled 'What Historians Do and Why Their Work Matters' – this is still very much in a draft stage at the moment, but please let me know if you would be interested in

contributing to its development. It will be shared with the Steering Committee before it is posted online.

The usual autumn research event has been postponed because of the ongoing pandemic, however we are discussing an possible online event with TNA (date to be confirmed) that would look at the challenges of researching remotely – both in light of the current pandemic-related circumstances, but also taking into account other aspects that prevent people from accessing archives in person.

HUK might also want to consider making a statement in response to UKRI's statement about support (or lack thereof) for research students.

6. Early Career Report (Simon Peplow)

The 'Life After the PhD' event, co-organised and run with History Lab Plus, ran successfully as a rescheduled online event on 26 August, and feedback has been very positive. A number of pre-recorded presentations and 'live' panel discussions covered topics such as navigating the academic job market, careers and engagement beyond academia, publications, and other general issues. Many thanks to all involved, particularly to Sarah Holland for organising!

Simon will begin organising our Academic Job Boot Camp to run as a virtual event in 2021, and will in due course be sending around messages hoping to recruit some (as always) very greatly appreciated volunteers! As previously discussed, some 'silver lining' benefits of this move online will allow us to incorporate experiences of online interviews and alleviate some issues faced previously, such as commuting to London events from elsewhere in country.

Building on collaboration with History Lab Plus, Sarah Holland and Simon Peplow are beginning an initiative looking at university affiliation for those recently finishing their PhDs. As maintaining this 'institutional connection' (library access, university email address, etc.) is something often cited as being very uneven between universities and raises significant difficulties for ECRs, only exacerbated with the current ongoing situation, we think this will be quite timely.

7. Education Officer's report (Sarah Holland)

Sarah has been **co-opted onto the Royal Historical Society Education Committee and the Historical Association Higher Education Committee as the History UK Education Officer** – there may be scope for collaborative projects with RHS and HA (e.g. the transition from school/college to Higher Education - potential to build on a 2018 History UK event and the work of HA)

Teaching History in the Age of Covid - a proposed teaching event (or events) to discuss the ways in which the pandemic has changed or affected subject-specific teaching practice (and is still doing so) including questions about how history is taught and assessed, the way in which subject-specific skills are acquired, what engagement looks like in the socially distanced classroom or online learning environments, how have issues of diversity and inclusivity been affected, how do students perceive and understand the changes, and what implications may these changes have for the future of history teaching in Higher Education - the event would invite contributions in the form of presentations but also feature workshops to stimulate conversations about these issues. It would build on the excellent Pandemic Pedagogy and a proposed EMC event that could feed into this. As well as being the basis of a teaching event, we could have

co-produced workshops with staff and students to stimulate discussions and build on the History UK video competition.

History, Diversity and Higher Education (provisional title) - a proposed teaching event that engages with the issues of diversity (and inclusivity) - many of which have been raised as in the recent RHS Surveys. Three main themes/strands: content, pedagogical approaches, staff and student representation and experiences. As with the first event, research-informed presentations to showcase existing projects and initiatives and workshop activities to stimulate discussions

The **history assessment event** scheduled for May 2020 was postponed due to Covid-19 – scope to revisit this in 2021, although the two aforementioned events may now take priority over this.

8. Report from Representatives from Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland

Euryn Roberts mentioned the £27 million recovery fund that has been announced for Higher Education recovery in Wales. This does not seem to be altering the situation with threatened redundancies though. There is also a further £10 million for student hardship from the HE funding agency.

Alex Titov mentioned that in NI colleagues shared all the concerns and issues that had been raised earlier in the meeting about blended learning.

Mike Rapport submitted a report on developments in HE in Scotland, as follows:

Covid-19: HistoryUK's working group's guide to teaching in time of pandemic – Pandemic Pedagogy - was very well-received (at least, at Glasgow!) and it was good to follow the conversation on Twitter. The restart in the autumn caused some initial upset, but, as elsewhere, students seem to have settled in to the 'new normal', although different institutions have combined different approaches – some, for example, have mixed face-to-face with online teaching; others have eschewed blended and gone straight for online learning. Looking ahead, the challenge – or rather opportunity – is to use the material developed in the pandemic in the medium- to long-term: how to develop it and use it as a resource for future use – either in support of a return to full face-to-face teaching, or whether or not some courses continue with blended delivery.

History matters: there has been a lot of activity over the course of 2020, especially since May, with a flourish of interest in Scotland's relationship with slavery and the slave trade. Both Historic Environment Scotland (equivalent of Historic England) and National Trust for Scotland have embarked on initiatives that address these issues. Questions of heritage, in particular, have put history – and historians of Scotland's role in trans-Atlantic slavery, and empire more generally - in the spotlight. It has been good to see a spike in public engagement with the past, particularly its more challenging aspects – and for the opportunities that have arisen for colleagues who work in the area, with MOOCs, involvement in media programmes, engagement with built heritage, etc. The question is how to build on this.

Postgraduate/doctoral training: The Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities (SGSAH) – the AHRC-funded consortium for doctoral funding and

training across at HE in Scotland - delivered all of its training programme from March 2020 online, but its summer school for doctoral students was severely thinned because of the difficulties in delivering some of the more 'hands on' sessions remotely. The programme for 2020-21 is currently planned for remote delivery until the end of March – thereafter it is hoped to return to face-to-face, but on the understanding that this may need to be revised.

9. Nomination of new Steering Committee members

We have five Steering Committee members standing down at this AGM. Sara Wolfson (Open University) and Rachel Lock-Lewis (South Wales) have both reached the end of their second three-year term, which means they have served the maximum term our constitution allows. Nandini Chatterjee (Exeter), Adam Morton (Newcastle) and Mike Rapport (Glasgow) have opted to step down at the end of their first three-year term. The AGM thanked all these members for their work and engagement with the SC. We have eleven vacancies and the AGM confirmed the appointment of eleven new SC members, as follows:

Fabian Hilfrich (Edinburgh)
Grainne Goodwin (Leeds Beckett)
Antonio Sennis (UCL)
Leanne Calvert (Hertfordshire)
Deborah Toner (Leicester)
Ruth Atherton (South Wales)
Andrew Jotischky (Royal Holloway)
Margaret Small (Birmingham)
Tim Grady (Chester)
Ross Balzaretti (Nottingham)
Rosie Knight (Sheffield)

10. Steering Committee Roles (including amendment to the constitution to create the role of EDI Officer)

The AGM discussed and agreed the tabled amendments to the constitution which will create the role of EDI officer. Their role will be to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusivity are considered in all elements the Association's work, including its policies, management, online presence, meetings, events, and funding.

The AGM also agreed a proposed amendment to the constitution to rename the position of 'IT and Communications Officer' simply 'Communications Officer'.

As already stated, Jamie plans to step down across the course of the next year. Anyone interested in acting as co-convenor should get in touch.

We had a couple of PhD students do social media work on the Pandemic Pedagogy project. We've been employing one of them for 1 hour a week but 2-3 hours if we're doing an online event, to keep the twitter feed updated and regular. We'd like to continue that. Its obviously a good thing as we have over 5000 followers.

11. Any Other Business / Date of Next Meeting

The next Steering Committee meeting will take place on **Saturday 6th February 2021.**