

The President's Column

The last three months have been a very busy period for the HA. The consultation on the draft National Curriculum for History ended on 16 April and we remain in dialogue with the Department for Education on the revised proposals. In May the HA's annual conference was held at York with nearly 300 attendees and more talks on offer than ever before. Keynote lectures by Sir Richard Evans on 'Writing Nineteenth Century History' and by Marc Morris on the 'Norman Conquest' were very well attended.

The HA staff are to be congratulated on organising such a successful, large-scale event. Meanwhile, in June, David Cannadine received the Medicott Medal for services to history, at a gala evening when we also celebrated the best historical fiction for children and the achievements of our latest honorary fellows.

There is no doubt that the majority of history educators have been disappointed with the draft National Curriculum. During the eight week consultation, the HA conducted an open online poll, which received over 1,600 responses. We held regional meetings attended by over 500 teachers and a further 100 teachers responded to these forums online. We also carried out our annual survey of teachers in secondary schools and did a shorter survey with primary school teachers. Only 4% of those who replied to the HA's poll thought that the curriculum was a positive change. 96.2% of all the secondary teachers surveyed also felt that not enough attention had been given to the views of history teachers.

The secure evidence collected by the HA has been the basis of one of the fullest responses to the draft proposals and it can be read in full at: history.org.uk/news/news_1779.html. Our findings chime with the criticisms that have been widely expressed in the press by David Cannadine, Richard Evans and other leading historians. There is general agreement amongst historians that the proposals were too Anglo-centric with little British,



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European, or global history. They were also angled at political history with hardly any social history.

The overwhelming criticism of the proposals by professionals is having an effect. At the Parliamentary Education Select Committee on 15 May Michael Gove said that the changes to the History proposals 'may be proportionally greater' than in other subjects. I am confident that these changes will reflect the hard work that the HA has done in canvassing and representing the views of history teachers.

One issue that has arisen from this public debate is the need for excellent resources for teachers to deliver the new curriculum. The HA will fill this gap by reviving the General Series pamphlets for e-readers. Throughout the twentieth century, the series provided classic contributions from eminent historians such as Edward Acton, Helen Cam, Geoffrey Elton, Christopher Hill, Diarmaid MacCulloch and C. V. Wedgwood. The series was very popular with general readers and

students alike. It was discontinued in the mid-1990s, because of the costs of paper production, but the advent of the digital book has allowed the HA to use this innovative format instead.

New pamphlets on Henry V by Christopher Allmand, on the end of the English witch trials by Clive Holmes and on Tom Paine by Bill Speck will soon be available from Amazon for kindle. They are designed to inform school and university teachers, and their students, about key historical debates and thinking on these topics. The e-readers series was launched in March by a new edition of Susan Edgington's pamphlet on the First Crusade with an up to date bibliography. Pamphlets on Magna Carta, Shakespeare and Queen Anne have already been commissioned, and if you have any suggestions for topics we should be covering, please let me know.

I have greatly enjoyed meeting many of you at the annual conference in York and during my visits to the local branches. In April I was pleased to make my first ever visit to the Isle of Wight, where the local committee and members were most welcoming. As a civil war historian, I was particularly keen to see Carisbrooke Castle, where Charles I was imprisoned before his execution. My visits to Winchester, Nuneaton and Durham were also most congenial and included an overnight stay at Durham Castle and breakfast with the Durham University students the next morning.

My branch talks have come to an end for this academic year, but next term I will visit Hampstead, Swansea, West Surrey and Reading amongst others. I would like to thank everyone involved in organising all of my visits, both this year and last year, for their hard work and hospitality. I will also look forward to meeting many more HA members during my final coming year as President.

Jackie Eales