

MINUTES  
of the  
118<sup>th</sup> Historical Association Annual General Meeting  
held on  
Wednesday, 4 June 2025 at 6.30 pm  
(by Zoom)

Present

Host/Panellists: Alex Walsham (President), Katharine Burn, Sally Burnham, Helen Crawford, Peter Hounsell, Mike Maddison, Richard Walker (a full list of members attending can be found at the end of the minutes)

Staff: Rebecca Sullivan (CEO), Olivia Dent, Mel Jones, Paula Kitching, Rosemarie Koroma, Emily Randall.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from a number of members.

2. WELCOME FROM THE PRESIDENT

2.1 Professor Alex Walsham welcomed attendees to the meeting. She asked those present to observe a minute's silence in memory of Helen Snelson, former Deputy President, whose death last summer was a great loss. Helen was widely admired as an outstanding teacher and teacher educator, and as a thoughtful and generous colleague.

2.2 As President, Alex reflected on her visits to Branches across the country during the past year and said she looked forward to further engagements in the year ahead. She thanked members for their hospitality and welcome and noted how much she had learned during her term of office to date.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 20 MAY 2024

3.1 Approval of the Minutes:

Tim Lomas proposed that the Minutes be accepted. This was seconded by several members, and the Minutes were agreed as a true record.

3.2 Matters Arising from the Minutes:

There were no matters arising.

4. CONSIDERATION OF THE ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

4.1 Annual Report:

4.1a Alex said she hoped members had had the opportunity to read the Report on the website, and invited the CEO, Becky Sullivan, to comment.

4.1b Becky invited members with comments or queries on the written report to raise their hand or post in the chat and said she would follow up. She noted that the Annual Report covers the year ended 30 September 2024 and that an update on more recent activities would therefore be most helpful.

4.1c Volunteers: Becky thanked the many volunteers on whom the HA relies, including Branch Officers, journal editors, committee members and others who support the delivery of the Association's work.

4.1d Repairs and improvements to the HA's offices: Becky reported that, following a slight delay, the final move back to 59a took place in late June 2024 and staff are now fully based there. Members wishing to visit were invited to email the office to arrange a suitable date.

4.1e Editorship of History: From September 2024, a new editorial team assumed responsibility for the HA's academic journal, History. Becky welcomed Dr Daniel Laqua and the History Department at Northumbria University to the role, and thanked Jane Gifford and Danielle Shaw (UEA) for their service.

4.1f Annual Conference: Becky reported that the Conference in Liverpool was highly successful and thanked the keynote speakers and all those who delivered talks and workshops. This year's Dawson Lecture, delivered by Michael Riley, would be made available online, and recordings of last year's discussion with Penelope Harnett and other teachers were available on the HA website. Becky also announced that Mike Maddison would deliver the 2026 Dawson Lecture at the Annual Conference in Newcastle on 15 and 16 May 2026.

4.1g Teacher Fellowships: Becky reported that three Teacher Fellowships were in progress at different stages. The Economic History of Colonialism (with LSE) was in its final stages, with resources due to be published online over the summer. Henry VIII on Tour (with Historic Royal Palaces) began in early 2025. Recruitment was open for Caribbean, Monarchy and Legacies of Empire (with City University and the University of Southampton).

4.1h Continuing Professional Development: Becky reported that the varied and expanding CPD programme had been maintained, despite the challenging economic circumstances faced by schools.

4.1i Short Courses: Becky reported that the World War II course had recently concluded and that this initiative continues to perform strongly and is popular with members. Paula noted that one member in Mongolia had been joining live sessions at 3.00 am local time. A history and literature course (The World of Jane Austen) would begin shortly.

4.1j Virtual Branch: Becky reported that the Virtual Branch continues to be well attended and valued by members.

4.1k 2025 Great Debate: Becky reported that the final was very successful and that recordings of the finalists are available on the HA website. Raybourn Tours will sponsor the 2026 Debate, with a question anticipated to be along the lines of How important are personal and public records as evidence? Becky added that, building on the Great Debate, the Primary Committee trialled a new competition, Talking History, during 2024; this was well received and will run again, with a view to establishing it as an annual competition.

4.1l Young Quills: Becky noted that, now in its 16<sup>th</sup> year, the historical fiction competition is well established with authors and publishers, and that increasing numbers of schools are participating through reading and reviewing the books.

4.1m Website: Becky reported that a major activity over the next 12 months would be the redevelopment of the website, and she thanked Simon and Harvey Edser for progressing this work.

4.1n Medicott Medal: Becky announced that this year's medal would be awarded to Christine Counsell on Wednesday 2 July at Foyles, Charing Cross Road. Members wishing to attend were invited to email the office to obtain tickets. Members wishing to nominate for the following year's Medicott Medal were directed either to the criteria on the website or to contact Becky directly.

## 4.2 Annual Accounts

4.2a The Honorary Treasurer, Richard Walker, introduced the Annual Accounts for the year ended 30 September 2024. He noted that the Accounts comprise approximately 20 pages of detailed figures and explanatory notes and said he would focus on three key pages. He emphasised that the HA remains financially sound overall, while acknowledging recent financial pressures and the likelihood of future challenges.

4.2b Statement of Financial Activities (income and expenditure): Richard reported that income was slightly higher than in 2023/24. He noted the difficulty, for a membership charity, of maintaining income levels, and that sustaining the previous year's income while delivering additional activity represented a significant achievement in challenging economic conditions. Expenditure increased by approximately 13%, with 'charitable activities' costs rising from £1.2 million to nearly £1.4 million. This included increased salary costs (including higher employer National Insurance contributions) and some temporary staffing. Richard added that a principal factor was the auditors' conservative treatment of marketing and branding expenditure of approximately £40,000, which was not carried forward.

4.2c Balance Sheet (a statement of what the HA owns and owes): Richard noted significant changes already referenced by Becky. Fixed assets increased by approximately £350,000, reflecting the refurbishment of the HA offices, with a corresponding reduction in cash of approximately £400,000 as funds were invested in the building. Branch funds remained unchanged.

4.2d Reserves: Richard explained that reserves support prudent financial planning. He noted that the Charity Commission expects charities to be able to justify both the holding of significant cash balances and the management of low cash balances. Over the coming months, Richard, Becky and Rosemarie Koroma (Finance Manager) will review the HA's cash flow closely. He said he remained confident about the organisation's future, citing its premises and membership base, while noting the need to identify new ways of working, such as reducing print and increasing digital publication.

4.2e Richard noted that this was a brief summary, and Alex invited comments and questions. (Comments.have.been.recorded.from.both.spoken.contributions.and.chat.messages;)

4.2f Computer costs and risks: Tim East asked whether sufficient investment was being made in cyber protection, in light of recent high-profile ransomware attacks. He noted that the website might also be at risk and suggested commissioning a penetration test. Richard invited Becky to respond. Becky said the principal risk would be through the membership database, which is hosted by an external provider and protected by its security controls, including firewalls. She added that she and Mel Jones had reviewed cyber insurance and that this would be reconsidered at renewal. She agreed this was an area requiring ongoing attention. In relation to the website, Becky said most content could be protected. Emily Randall confirmed that safeguarding measures, including data protection controls, had been reviewed and continue to be monitored. Becky noted that the HA pays reasonable costs to secure an improved level of protection and confirmed that options for a penetration test would be explored.

4.2g Members agreed by an online vote to accept the Report and Accounts for the year 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024.

## 5. ELECTION OF DEPUTY PRESIDENT

Alex confirmed the nomination of Mike Maddison as Deputy President for 2024–2027 (to succeed the late Helen Snelson). The appointment was approved by an online vote. Alex thanked Mike for agreeing to serve; this is his second term and the HA expressed its appreciation for his experience and contribution. Mike thanked colleagues for their support.

## 6. MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

6.1 Alex invited Emily Randall to present her report, which was illustrated with slides.

6.1a Membership statistics: Emily reported that, as at April 2025, the HA had 8,571 members, representing a 15% decrease over the previous year and a level similar to 2020. She noted that membership had grown rapidly from 2020, peaking in summer 2022, and had since declined gradually. She added that the past 12 months had been particularly challenging and that this trend was affecting many membership organisations.

6.2 Statistics for membership groups: Emily reported a 1% increase in Historian membership. Primary and Secondary membership continued to contract over the past year; Secondary was down 7%, with the most significant reduction in Primary, down 24% (over 1,000 members). She noted this was also reflected in reduced engagement with the HA's website and communications, including email.

6.3 Retention and recruitment: Emily reported that retention of existing members had been a focus in recent years and remained relatively stable at 75% overall. Recruitment, however, was down 24% year on year, with the decline particularly marked in Primary. She noted that Primary membership can be more volatile and sensitive to external factors such as education policy. She said proposed changes to the Ofsted framework, including the removal of subject deep dives, may affect recruitment, alongside potential curriculum changes, uncertainty about investment priorities, and increased budgetary pressures. Feedback from departing members referenced academisation and Trust-level direction on curriculum content, pedagogy and, in particular, the CPD and resources used to support teaching, contributing to a challenging environment for subject associations.

6.4 Opportunities: Emily noted that, despite these challenges, opportunities remain. Ofsted continues to emphasise the importance of subject-specific professional development, and the HA maintains a varied CPD offer tailored to audience needs. Primary.History has published three redesigned curriculum plans with expanded resources, which have received positive feedback. During the week of the AGM, the 100<sup>th</sup> edition of Primary.History was published, providing an opportunity to highlight three decades of support for teachers across five curriculum changes since the first national history curriculum. The 200<sup>th</sup> edition of Teaching.History will be published in September, reinforcing similar messages; Teaching.History supports the exchange of knowledge and contributes to leadership development in secondary history education.

6.5 Monitoring the reach of the HA's activities: Emily reported that the reach and impact of the HA's activities had been monitored, particularly within specific networks and education settings. She noted positive engagement, particularly in lifelong learning and CPD. Selected impact figures were included in the latest edition of HA.News.

6.6 Continuing Professional Development (CPD): Emily reported that the HA continues to provide CPD at all career stages. This year saw the successful launch of the Experienced Teacher Development programme, delivered by Rachel Lewin and Andrew Sweet, for teachers who are beyond early career stage but are not yet subject leaders and who wish to develop their practice and responsibilities. In September, a course for non-specialist history teachers will be piloted and the Chartered Teacher of History programme relaunched.

6.7 Lifelong Learning: Emily reported that the Public Engagement Manager, Paula Kitching, continued to deliver a successful programme of short courses (free to members). Courses could also be purchased by non-members, supporting the development of structured learning resources on the website. The series on 'Power and authority in Russia and the USSR' had concluded, and follow-up events involving contributors were being considered for autumn. Emily noted that these activities help the HA to broaden its audience and develop relationships.

6.8 History: Due to changes to academic publishing in the UK, the journal History is now available free on the HA's website for all HA members.

6.9 Emily said this was a brief overview and emphasised that the HA's work was underpinned by its commitment to supporting members and sustaining the Association as a uniquely member-led organisation. Questions were raised in the chat and are recorded below.

6.10 Tim East asked whether a second tier of corporate membership could be introduced for academies with more than one school. Emily explained that multi-academy trust (MAT) membership is available for multiple schools to join in bulk.

6.11 Ian Dawson thanked the HA for making History available.

6.12 Yvonne Mason asked about students participating in online courses run by private tutors, such as herself. Becky suggested that she email Emily to discuss this further.

6.13 Alex thanked Emily for her report and encouraged members to continue recommending the HA to others, in order to support recovery from the recent decline in membership. She noted, however, the challenging financial environment.

## 7. MEMBERSHIP FEES

Council had approved the following membership fees, effective from July 2025:

Individual with The.Historian	£ 73.00
Individual with Teaching.History	£ 73.00
Individual with Primary.History	£ 53.00
Corporate with The.Historian	£143.00
Corporate with Teaching.Histoy	£143.00
Corporate with Primary.History	£ 87.00
Concessionary with The.Historian	£ 46.00
Concessionary with Teaching.History	£ 46.00
Concessionary with Primary.History	£ 42.00
Secondary Trainee 2-year subscription	£ 77.00
Primary Trainee 2-year subscription	£ 52.00

## 8. COMMITTEE REPORTS

8.1 Primary Committee: Alex invited the Chair of the Committee, Helen Crawford, to give her report, which outlined the following areas of their work:

8.1a Representation: Helen noted that Primary faces particular challenges and that the Committee had focused on ensuring broad representation across sectors and stakeholders. The Committee included representatives from schools, local authorities, multi-academy trusts, initial teacher education, the heritage sector and consultancy.

8.1b Primary.History: Helen reported that the Editorial Board had been reviewed over the past year and that, for the first time, associate editors—mainly school-based—had been appointed. While they may have less capacity to edit full editions, they bring school perspectives that help identify content of greatest value to teachers. She added that increased use had been made of case studies from Gold Quality Mark schools, both to provide examples of good practice and to sustain engagement with these schools.

8.1c The Primary survey: Helen reported that the survey, undertaken in 2024 and published in January 2025, examined what is working in the current curriculum from a school perspective and what could be improved. It was designed to inform the curriculum review. She noted that Primary schools appear to be making greater efforts to ensure a diverse curriculum, but that there was a sense of content overload, particularly at Key Stage 2. She added that the non-statutory content in the existing curriculum could contribute to overload in the ways schools choose to implement the curriculum. Other findings reinforced the need for CPD at Primary level, where many teachers do not have a secure grounding in history, and she noted that changes in teacher education may be exacerbating this issue.

8.1d CPD: Helen reported that a range of high-quality, often phase-specific CPD had been available (for example, Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)), as well as theme-specific provision (for example, approaches to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)). She noted that the most popular recent CPD focused on securing disciplinary thinking in Primary history.

8.1e Supporting engagement: Helen reported that the Committee had trialled regional TeachMeets. While feedback was positive, uptake was uneven. She added that the Committee was exploring the development of a podcast series that may appeal to a Primary audience.

8.1f Helen concluded by thanking Primary Committee members and the Primary.History Editorial Group for their work, and HA staff for their support.

8.1g Alex thanked Helen.

## 8.2 Secondary Committee:

8.2a Alex invited Sally Burnham, Chair of the Committee, to present the report. Sally began by paying tribute to the late Helen Snelson, who had played a significant role in the Committee's work.

8.2b Committee membership: Sally reported that the Committee had 15 members at different career stages, drawn from regions across the country, and representing a range of stakeholders, including classroom teachers from a wide range of schools, teacher educators and consultants.

8.2c Continuing Professional Development (CPD): Sally reported that, over the year, Committee members had supported the Beginning Teachers programme, the Experienced Teachers programme, Subject Leaders' Development, and the webinar for senior leadership teams (SLTs). She noted that the most popular series focused on disciplinary thinking in history, led by Richard Kennett and Hugh Richards, alongside the assessment series led by Johnny Grande.

8.2d Making history accessible and Oracy in History: Sally reported that resources to support the teaching of students who find history challenging included short video sessions and A4 summaries on disciplinary and substantive concepts, and that development of these resources continued. She added that further materials for Oracy in History were being produced, with support from Voice 21.

8.2e Driving your Discussions: Sally reported that this series was developed to support professional dialogue and ensure developmental meetings do not focus solely on administration. It comprises a set of prompt cards with reading suggestions, which can be used within a school, across a multi-academy trust, or in meetings between schools.

8.2f One Big History Department continued to perform strongly, with 263,580 overall views and 2,664 views in the last month alone. Sally thanked Phil Arkenstall for leading this work.

8.2g The Great Debate: Sally reported that the Great Debate had remained very popular with Secondary schools. She noted that schools were increasingly working with Branches, including discussing which talks would best link to the curriculum.

8.2h Conference: Sally reported that the Conference was a highlight of the year, with many Committee members contributing as workshop leaders and supporting delivery. The Committee expressed its thanks to those who developed a wide-ranging programme.

8.2i Sally concluded by thanking Committee members for their work and HA staff for their support. Alex thanked Sally for chairing the Committee under challenging circumstances. She invited comments or questions; none were raised.

### 8.3 Branches and Members Committee

8.3a Alex invited Peter Hounsell, Chair of the Committee, to present his report. Peter noted that the Committee had a relatively quiet year in 2023/24.

8.3b Supporting existing Branches and encouraging the development of new ones: Peter reported that there were currently 45 Branches, with some gaps in geographical coverage, including in major cities such as Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, Southampton and Newcastle, often where Branches had previously closed. He reported encouraging indications of potential revival on Merseyside and Tyneside. A new Sussex Branch had opened in Eastbourne, and the new Conway Borough Branch, based in Colwyn Bay, had increased the HA's presence in Wales.

8.3c Branch Officers' Meeting: Peter reported that the Committee organised the Branch Officers' Meeting. Following a period in which meetings were held online due to Covid-19 and then affected by rail disruption, the meeting had, for the past two years, again taken place in person. He noted that this was the principal annual opportunity for Branch Officers to meet collectively and included both social and information-sharing elements, including presentations on topics of interest.

8.3d Branch finances: Peter said that the Committee had previously considered Branch finances and the financial pressures faced by Branches. Progress on identifying a revised funding model has been limited to date; however, he noted this remains a priority, particularly given the risk that one or two Branches may face significant financial difficulty.

8.3e Branch relationships with schools: Peter noted that Branches maintain links with schools to varying degrees, including through providing resources, speaking to pupils (for example, on local history), and hosting or supporting heats of the Great Debate. The Committee seeks to encourage and develop these activities.

8.3f Listening to members: Peter said the Committee aims to respond to members' needs, whether or not they attend a Branch, and that members are welcome to contact the Committee via HA staff. He noted that the Committee intends to survey Branch-only members in the autumn. Branch-only members represent approximately 10% of the HA's total membership, and

the Committee wishes to understand their motivations and experiences in order to inform future planning.

8.3g Recruiting new Committee members: Peter said the Committee was keen to recruit new members, whether or not they attended a Branch, and would welcome enquiries, particularly from newer and younger HA members.

8.3h Peter thanked Suzanna Stern and Anne Marie Stephenson for supporting the Committee's work and maintaining the link with Branch Officers. He also thanked Branch volunteers who sustain Branch activity and respond to the challenges involved in running local programmes.

8.3i Alex thanked Peter.

#### 8.4 Higher Education

8.4a Alex invited Paula Kitching to provide a brief update on the HA's Higher Education activity. Paula explained that the former Chair of the Higher Education Committee, Professor Adam Hughes, had stepped down towards the end of 2024 due to illness and family circumstances. On his advice, and following discussion with other parts of the HA (including the Executive Committee and Council), the HA decided to review how best to formalise its positive relationship with Higher Education going forward. It was suggested that the HA should no longer operate a Higher Education Committee in its current form, as it does not deliver to the Higher Education sector in the same way as it does to other sectors, and should instead appoint an Advisory Board of Higher Education members to support the HA's work in a range of ways.

8.4b Alex thanked Paula and added that the HA remained in close contact with other history-related organisations, forming a 'quartet' with the Royal Historical Society, the Institute for Historical Research and History UK, and continued to work effectively with them to advance the interests and address the challenges facing History in HE. The HA was also part of a network of Societies with which the British Academy regularly consults.

#### 9. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

Members were asked to approve the re-appointment of Kingston Smith until the next AGM, and this was agreed following an online vote.

#### 10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No items of business had been requested by members, nor were any items raised at the meeting.

Professor Alex Walsham thanked members for attending and all those who had contributed to the meeting and supported its smooth running. She said she looked forward to meeting members at future events.

Members in attendance:

Ian Aldridge, Barbara Anderson, Ilona Aronovsky, Ken Checinski, Ian Dawson, Hazel Dickinson, John Dolan, Tim East, Bev Forrest, Tim Glasby, Jim Greenwood, Christine Lloyd, Tim Lomas, Peter Mandler, Yvonne Mason, Mike Short, Robert Sutton, Antonia Tyers, Sioned Vos, David Waller, Mark Zwizlo.