

The St Andrews Historian

A magazine for History graduates of the University of St Andrews

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A Letter from the Head of the School of History, Professor Colin Kidd

Red gowns. Seagulls. A clear blue sky. A sea view. A chill in the air. A cosy perch, perhaps, in the University Library. Welcome back to St Andrews. I am delighted to introduce the latest issue of The St Andrews Historian magazine, and indebted to my colleague Dr Gillian Mitchell and her team for putting it together.

Some things – the red gowns, the seagulls and the chill – never change. But other aspects of life in the School of History have been changing in recent years. Our primary concerns remain high-quality small-group teaching in our traditional buildings and world-leading research across the range of history from mediaeval to modern. However, external assessment of Universities now asks all institutions to demonstrate the public benefit of research by way of its impact on the wider community. In the field of History this can take the form of bringing historical wisdom to bear on policy making, or raising wider public awareness of the historical background to certain issues, or contributing to the activities of the heritage sector, or outreach to secondary education, or making TV documentaries on historical questions, or... The list is endless. However, St Andrews, so happily cut off from many of the downsides of modern life in a traditionalist time bubble in the rural wilds of Fife, is not, it seems, best placed to contribute to public life. We are too remote from major centres of population, from major media outlets, from the raw aspect of modern social problems. Certainly, when I came to St Andrews two and a half years ago from Queen's University Belfast I felt that my new colleagues at St Andrews had a much harder job than my former comrades in Belfast when it came to showing the impact of History on the public realm. Nevertheless, at the end of 2014 when the results of the UK's REF (the Research Excellence Framework) were announced, St Andrews had come sixth on Impact in the UK as a whole. The School owes an enormous debt to the authors of our selected Impact case studies – Rob Bartlett, Michael Brown (and our former staff member Keith Brown), John Clark, Ali Ansari, and Tom Dawson – and to Frances Andrews and John Hudson who marshalled the case studies and set out our Impact Strategy.

Although St Andrews was top of the Scottish universities for History, and twelfth in the UK overall, we cannot rest on our laurels. Given our peculiar situation, we need to pay careful attention to Impact. I am particularly grateful to those members of the School's community of alumni, staff and emeriti who have already agreed to serve on our Impact Advisory Board and I am only too happy to hear from any of you who have ideas about how the School can communicate history to a wider audience. If any of you happen to be in Westminster or Holyrood or Whitehall or the UN or NATO or the National Trust or Madras College, tell us how we can contribute historically to policymaking, heritage or educational outreach. If you have any ideas please do contact me at cck3@st-andrews.ac.uk

In the meantime, I wish you every success in your own ventures during 2015, and hope that our magazine brings back fond memories of seagulls, red gowns and even perhaps the bonechilling haar.



The Parliamentary Archives and the Fire of 1834



Caroline Shenton is Archives Accommodation Programme Director for the UK Parliament, and read Mediaeval History at St Andrews between 1985 and 1989, winning the John Adamson Honey Prize for her finals performance. Her first popular history book *The Day Parliament Burned Down* (OUP, 2012) was shortlisted for the Longman – *History Today* Prize, was a Book of the Year for the *Daily Telegraph*, *New Statesman*, *Daily Mail* and *Herald Scotland*, and won top prize at the Political Book Awards in 2013. She blogs at www.carolineshenton.co.uk and tweets @dustshoveller

In the early evening of 16 October 1834, to the horror of bystanders, a huge ball of flame exploded through the roof of the House of Lords, creating a blaze so enormous that it could be seen by the King and Queen at Windsor, and from stagecoaches on top of the South Downs. In front of hundreds of thousands of witnesses the great conflagration destroyed Parliament's glorious old buildings and their contents. No one who witnessed the disaster would ever forget it. The fire of 1834 was incredibly shocking and significant to contemporaries – yet today this national catastrophe is a largely forgotten disaster, not least because Barry and Pugin's monumental new Palace of Westminster has obliterated all memory of its ancient predecessor. But how did a Mediaeval History graduate from St Andrews end up bringing this story back to life in 2012?

Looking back on my career I can see that everything I've done since leaving the Auld Gray Toon has led to this point, but it certainly didn't feel like that at the time. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do when I graduated. For some reason I had got it into my head that a good route into working for a heritage body like the National Trust was through PR, so I applied for an entry level job in a small

public relations agency in Cambridge. (Incidentally, this was a deeply misguided move – to work in a curatorial role you need at least a Masters in your chosen specialism). It wasn't for me: though it did teach me a wide range of IT, writing and marketing skills which came in handy later. A year later I had left, and gone back to university – this time at Worcester College, Oxford, to do a doctorate on the court and household of Edward III. Researching the king's domestic arrangements in the Exchequer records at the Public Record Office I discovered the old Palace of Westminster for the first time, and the royal chapel of St Stephen, which became the House of Commons chamber at the Reformation. I remember puzzling over the exotic names of the rooms where the King received the Great Seal from his Chancellors: the Painted Chamber, the Oriel Chamber, the Cage Chamber.

After three years, and with my funding running out, I saw a small postcard pinned to the noticeboard in the coffee room at Chancery Lane advertising for mediaeval historians to catalogue mediaeval and early modern collections. I applied, was successful, and spent most of the 1990s working there and at what is now the National Archives at



The Burning of the House of Lords and Commons (1835) by J.M.W. Turner

Kew. While there, I qualified as an archivist after two years of evening classes at UCL while holding down a full-time job. I catalogued a huge range of record series, including a set of cupboard doors and some rather obscure wooden receipts for government income known as tallysticks. I also discovered that I had a knack for computer programming: all those years of mediaeval Latin and palaeography made for great pattern-recognition and coding skills. I became the National Archives' first webmaster.

But back to the fire at the Houses of Parliament. When I started a new job as Head of Cataloguing and Online Services at the Parliamentary Archives in 1999, I found myself constantly having to tell researchers who visited that nearly all of the House of Commons records before 1834 were lost in that terrible conflagration. I became increasingly curious about it. But I couldn't find out very much – mention of the disaster was usually confined to a paragraph or two in books about the great neo-gothic building which now rises up beside the Thames and is famous the world over. Then I became frustrated. Surely it must have had a massive impact on contemporaries? What did people think at the time? What was the old Palace like? Why did the fire spread so quickly? What was lost and what was saved? Who was killed? And why had no-one written in detail about it? I found the report of the official inquiry on the cause of the fire. Then I looked at some newspaper accounts of the disaster. One thing led to another, and eventually some nine years later I found I had gradually gathered enough material together – testament to a growing obsession – to write that book myself. It took me another two years to complete it in my spare time. I found

an agent. He found me a publisher. And in the summer of 2012 *The Day Parliament Burned Down* finally hit the shelves of a bookshop near you.

In fact, the fire was the result of a catastrophic records management disposal decision – the need to destroy stacks of those tallysticks, the remnants of which I had catalogued at the PRO years before. Burning them in the underfloor heating furnaces of the House of Lords chamber rather than outside in a bonfire led to the most significant blaze in London between 1666 and the Blitz. But it wasn't just a massive architectural disaster. It was an archival one too. The great fire led to a government competition to design a new Houses of Parliament which carefully included 'fireproof repositories for papers and documents'. That building became the Victoria Tower, Parliament's purpose-built archive store, where I have worked for the last fifteen years, six of them as Director of a staff of thirty undertaking records management and archival activity across both Houses of Parliament. I now also teach postgraduate Public History by distance learning for the University of Dundee's Centre for Archives and Information Studies and have a thriving practice outside work lecturing, reviewing, broadcasting, blogging, tweeting, and writing more books. I also sit on the advisory board of the University of York's AHRC-funded project to reconstruct a Virtual St Stephen's. Now the next stage of my career has just started, to find a new home for the Parliamentary Archives, outside the Palace of Westminster where they have been since 1860. So I feel that the book encapsulates all my interests, both historical and professional, in one neat package. And it all began thirty years ago in St Andrews.



The Old Palace Yard on fire

Undergraduate History Conference 2015

Charlotte Gorman and **Laura Löser** describe the innovative student-run conference organised by the University's History Society.

On Saturday 7 February 2015, the University of St Andrews History Society held the second annual Undergraduate History Conference following last year's highly successful launch event. This year's chosen theme was 'Tradition or Innovation? – Calls for Change and Restoration in History'. It is one of a small number of conferences organised by a student society in St Andrews and is entirely run by undergraduates.

Initially, this event was planned with the aim of engaging undergraduate history students with topics and issues that interest them. The idea was to allow participants to develop their skills at a professional conference, while also creating a supportive environment to encourage students at this level. Last year's conference looked at 'Individuals and Impact in History' and featured a keynote address by Professor Gerard de Groot, followed by ten papers focusing on individuals from Alexander the Great to E P Thompson, all of which were published as a special edition of the *St Andrews Historical Journal*.

In anticipation of the 2015 conference, the History Society resolved to establish the position of Conference Coordinator in the Constitution. Applicants were interviewed and the new Coordinator chosen by the Committee in early summer last year. After that preparations were made to ensure that this year's Conference built on the successes and shortcomings of the previous year's event to result in a more popular and polished conference. The theme 'Tradition or Innovation?' was chosen with care in order to allow students from all historical disciplines, from Ancient to Modern, to develop their ideas; and indeed submissions were plentiful and varied, ranging from the Ancient Egyptians to the American Civil War. Our participants hail from as far afield as Dickinson College in Pennsylvania and as close to home as our very own Mediaeval History Department.



Keynote speaker Peter Kruschwitz (back row in pale blue shirt), student speakers and History Society committee members gather at the close of this year's conference.

(Courtney Lewis, third year History student)

On the morning of the conference, the participants, both speakers and public, were welcomed in the Arts Lecture Theatre with tea and coffee before the keynote paper, delivered by Professor Peter Kruschwitz from Reading University, which was entitled 'And now for something entirely... the same?! Tradition and Change in the Works of Sallust'.

Every student paper was followed by questions, thoughts and comments by a keen audience. After lunch, the Society welcomed Dr Ben Carter from the Careers Centre of the University who gave a helpful presentation on careers in academia. A highlight of the conference was the lively plenary discussion towards the end of the day that allowed for unanswered questions and further comments on the theme and the desired direction of the discipline from the professors, speakers, and audience. The Conference brought together students from far-flung universities who share common interests, as well as affording opportunities for socialising and networking with St Andrews History students and staff, especially at the Friday pub social and the dinner that followed the Conference.

We feel that the atmosphere of the Conference, social, yet professional, allows both student speakers and the St Andrews students who attend to engage in academic discourse in a unique way. The vision statement of the History Society is to 'enhance the academic and social lives of St Andrews students interested in history'; and we feel the Conference is a wonderful addition to our calendar of events. We hope to sustain and continue to expand the event in future years.

Thus, the Society is indebted to the Schools of History and Classics for their generous support, without which the Conference could not take place.



Plenary discussion audience joins moderator Professor Gerard de Groot (far right) for final thoughts on the conference theme.

(Courtney Lewis, third year History student)

Stabilising a ‘Great Historical System’? Researching the Role of Royal Heirs in the Nineteenth Century



Professor Frank Müller (School of History) explains the scope and significance of *Heirs to the Throne in the Constitutional Monarchies of Nineteenth-Century Europe (1815-1914)*, the five-year AHRC-funded project on which he is principal investigator.

Ever since Sherlock Holmes referred to the ‘curious incident of the dog in the night-time’ we have known that, sometimes, it can be very important to pay attention to what did *not* happen. Perhaps the most important – and generally unnoticed – *non*-event of the long nineteenth century was that there was no mass extinction of the continent’s monarchies. The age started with the guillotining of King Louis XVI in 1793 and went on to generate unprecedented change: revolutions, industrialisation, mass literacy, urbanisation, migration, technological and scientific progress and the enfranchisement of tens of millions of (male) voters to name but a few. By the eve of the First World War, Europeans were using wireless telegraphy, aeroplanes and X-ray machines – but they still lived in an almost completely monarchical world. France, Switzerland, Portugal and San Marino were the only republican exceptions that proved an overwhelmingly monarchical rule. The kings and queens, the crowns and courts had survived and looked in remarkably rude health. But monarchy was not just a

surviving relic: all of the newly-formed European states – from Greece and Belgium to Italy, Bulgaria and Norway took the step into their independent future with a monarch at the helm.

Our AHRC-funded research project ‘Heirs to the Throne in the Constitutional Monarchies of Nineteenth-Century Europe’ digs into this remarkable story of monarchical survival and continuity. It seeks to understand why monarchical systems of rule succeeded in maintaining the support and endorsement (or, at least, the acquiescence) of the populations of a rapidly modernising age. It does so by exploring the roles played and functions fulfilled by royal heirs. The heir to the throne, the next-in-line in a chain connecting the past with the present and the future is a crucial element in any hereditary system. Managing a valid and smooth succession was not just a challenging and potentially crisis-prone necessity for nineteenth-century monarchies, it also offered great opportunities.



Nine European monarchs attending the funeral of Edward VII in 1910

The heir to the throne was a political resource that could be utilised to advertise and popularise the dynasty. The young man, who would – one day – occupy the throne, could attract the people's affection as a young child, impress them as a gallant soldier, resemble them as a husband and father and continuously reflect the attitudes and hopes of the generation that was growing up alongside him. During their decades of waiting for the throne royal heirs were acting as the very embodiments of the continuation of their dynastic-monarchical systems and also functioned as canvases onto which different stakeholders could project their own versions of their monarchies' futures. Some contemporaries were unequivocal about the importance of the heirs' contribution. There never was a time, William Gladstone observed in 1885, 'at which successors to the Monarchy could more efficaciously contribute to the stability of a great historical system, dependent even more upon love than upon strength, by devotion to their duties and by a bright example to the country.' Our investigation of how crown princes and crown princesses fared in this task against the background of the challenges of the late nineteenth century thus offers a new analytical perspective on the political-monarchical culture of Europe between the French Revolution and the First World War.

The St Andrews project began its work in 2012. It is led by Frank Müller, whose awareness of the role of royal heirs was raised when he was working on a life of German Emperor Frederick III (1831-1888): an eternal crown prince who spent 56 years of his life waiting for the throne only to outlive his father by no more than three short, agonising months. Within the project Frank pursues research on princely education and is currently writing a comparative study of the three heirs who would end up as the last kings of Bavaria, Saxony and Württemberg. Heidi Mehrkens, the postdoctoral researcher, is the central hub of the project's activities: in addition to her own research on the various spheres of encounter between royal heirs and the elements of the constitutional state Heidi is in charge of the website (<http://heirstothethrone-project.net/>) and is the main organiser of the project conferences. The first of these took place in St Andrews in August 2013 and investigated the place of monarchical succession in the political culture of nineteenth-century Europe. Our next conference (scheduled for August 2015) will focus on the uses royal heirs made of various forms of 'Soft Power'. The project team is completed by a number of doctoral researchers, some of whom are directly funded through the AHRC grant. Their research topics range from the popularisation of the princes of the Savoy dynasty in nineteenth-century Italy (Maria-Christina Marchi) to the relationship between the military elites and royal heirs in Spain (Richard Meyer Forsting), from the creation of the monarchical brand 'Sailor Princes' (Miriam Schneider) to Prince Albert's foreign policy networks (Charles Jones).

Alongside our individual research and the preparation of our conferences (the first of two edited volumes will be published this year), the project team also maintains a regular essay series 'Heir of the Month'. Published via our website these short pieces are written to highlight individual aspects of our research in a manner that is, we hope, entertaining and accessible to non-specialists. In October 2014 we celebrated



Heirs and graces: four generations of British monarchs (1898)

the completion of our first year by collating our twelve published 'Heirs of the Month' into a free and easily downloadable 'Royal Annual'. Our activities also reach into the more traditional forms of publishing, though. In anticipation of the studies which will be generated by the project, Palgrave/Macmillan have recently launched a new monograph series ('Studies in Modern Monarchy') with both Frank and Heidi serving as series editors.



The cover of the first annual edition of 'Heir of the Month' online essays.

St Andrews seems to be the perfect place for research into what was, in the nineteenth century, the future of monarchical Europe – not least because of the University's own recent role in preparing the House of Windsor for the twenty-first century. The University and the School of History are great hosts for research projects such as ours, and the 'Heirs Team' very much appreciates the support we receive from the institution. We are keen to repay this support by engaging as many people as are interested in our work. So if any of our graduates would like to get involved – contribute an 'Heir of the Month', attend our conferences, or just visit our website every now and then – we would be delighted. After all, monarchy is not the only 'great historical system' that needs a bit of stabilising every now and then. Venerable universities, also 'dependent even more upon love than upon strength', can do with a little help from old and new friends as well.

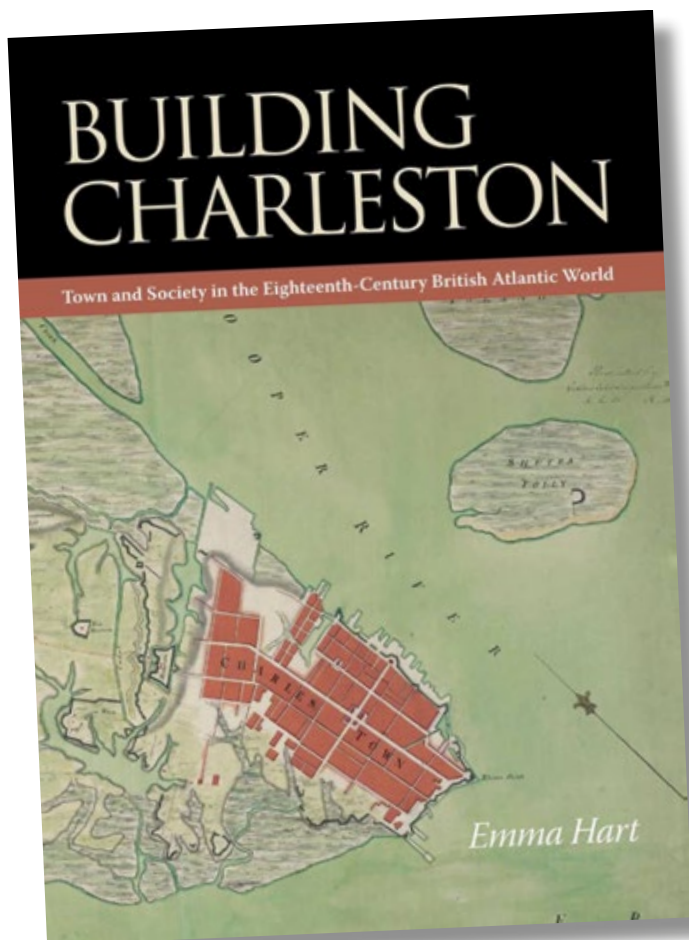
Atlantic Crossings: Experiences of a British American Historian in St Andrews

Dr Emma Hart (School of History) offers a personal reflection on the challenges and rewards of researching American History from a British perspective.



When I say 'American' in answer to the question 'What kind of history do you do?', the reply usually prompts a surprised reaction. If my interrogator is British, the comment is often along the 'that must be easy as there's hardly any American history' lines. If the questioner is American, the astonishment lies in the fact that a British person, whose own country has so much history, would want to study a nation with so little. My response is usually that, despite the fact that the history of America after the arrival of Europeans on the continent IS relatively brief, the pace of events and their dramatic nature always keeps me engaged. Even during its early history the USA was a bundle of contradictions. It was a nation founded on freedom that kept people in slavery, one that celebrated the 'self-made man' while harbouring an increasingly unequal society, and a place that promoted its democratic vision even while hesitating to extend voting rights to all those who lived within its own borders. It is these complexities that continue to draw me to the history of this fascinating place.

I first got interested in American history when I was an undergraduate myself. Having decided that the eighteenth century was my favourite era, I chose a final year option on the American Revolution. Within a few weeks I was completely hooked, and I knew that if I was going to continue studying history it would be of the American variety. After a small divergence into the London art world, working for an organisation that recovered stolen antiques, I packed up and left the UK to study for my PhD at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, USA. *The Wire* was not yet on HBO, so I had little trepidation about what awaited me in 'Charm City' (as it is known locally). When I decided to write my dissertation on eighteenth-century Charleston, I was soon making research trips to South Carolina; a place that, more than most, encapsulates the nation's contradictions. One of the largest towns in America during its colonial era, Charleston is often called the African-American 'Ellis Island' as it was the port through which the most enslaved people arrived on the mainland following their traumatic transatlantic journey. Yet, the city was also known as one of the most picturesque early American towns, its well-proportioned Georgian buildings making it a haven for wealthy colonists seeking out polite society and high culture. Now, it is one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the United States, surrounded by beautiful beaches and loved by tourists who come to see its pristine historic downtown and eat in its ever-increasing choice of gourmet restaurants. Neglected for many decades, Charleston's role in the slave trade is now finally incorporated into the tourist trail with the opening of the Old Slave Mart museum just a few years ago.



Thinking that I would most likely stay in the US after finishing my PhD, I was both surprised and delighted to be appointed to a lectureship at St Andrews. Once back in the UK, I found myself part of a growing cohort of 'early Americanists' working outside the USA. Preoccupied with finishing my PhD and finding employment, I had not given a lot of thought to what it might be like to research and teach this period of history while based in Europe. However, like many British and continental European American historians, I found that my situation did indeed inform my outlook on my research. First of all, it has prompted me always to think about eighteenth century America in a comparative context. My history of colonial Charleston ended up being a story about how the city was much like other growing towns in the English-speaking world of the 1700s, even though its large population of enslaved Africans simultaneously made it unique. So, while in the past historians tended to see the American experience as an exceptional one, the internationalisation of academia has strongly challenged this mode of interpretation. Many Americans working on their own history have keenly supported this shift in understanding, making

comparative and transnational points of view central to new interpretations of US history in both its colonial and national eras. Indeed, the *American Historical Review* – one of the most important US academic periodicals – recently devoted a whole issue to the question of how non-American US historians have changed our thinking since they became more involved in writing the nation's history. My recent research on the early American market place underlines the continuing importance of writing American history from a comparative perspective. My project explores how people bought and sold goods in market places on both sides of the Atlantic, and I have visited archives in England and Scotland, as well as America. By piecing together evidence from letters, newspapers, and court and government records, I have been able to observe how keen Americans were to re-establish the market places they knew in the Old World in their new one.

A second surprise to me when I first started out at St Andrews was the University's large number of international undergraduates. Since at least 15% of the student population is from North America, teaching American history at the University is just as fascinating as researching the subject. Often, about half of my class are Americans, while the other half are Europeans, and this always makes for lively discussions. While the US contingent has usually been saturated in their history in high school, Europeans often know very little. Both groups of students, however, come with their own particular ideas about America's past – especially when it comes to foundational events like the Revolution. Rarely does the course end with the class members thinking the same way about the topic as they did when they began studying it. But that, I suppose, is the beauty of a history degree.



Digital Humanities: the Big and the Little

Dr Konrad Lawson (School of History) discusses the richness and complexities of the emergent field of Digital Humanities.

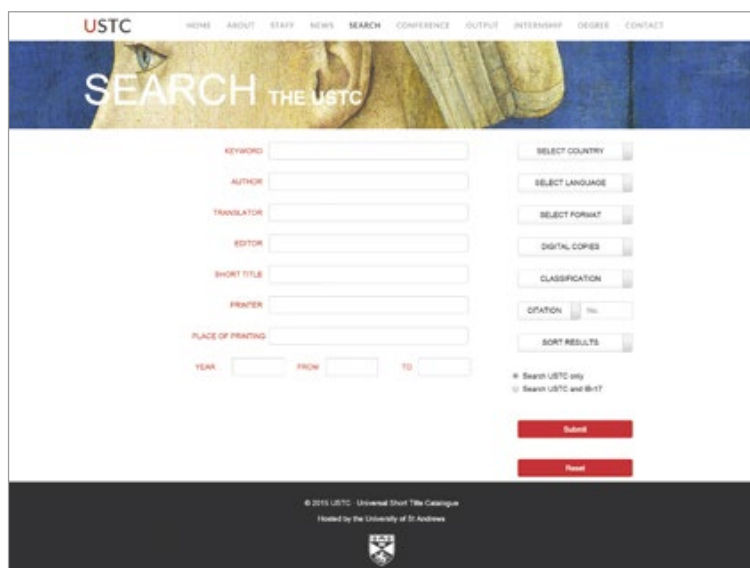


Over the past decade or so the term 'Digital Humanities' has been making an impact in university departments teaching literature, history, as well as among librarians, archivists and the broader technology fields. It is a blessing and a curse that many scholars who are comfortable with calling themselves 'digital humanists' spend a lot of time explaining what the digital humanities are. Some might argue that a certain 'fuzziness' in the term is a sign of weakness

or, even worse, a magician's trickery. On the other hand, these conversations turn into a dialogue about the arbitrary and often unproductive disciplinary boundaries which shape our research as well as our teaching. When time is short, I often redirect those interested to the website What is Digital Humanities (<http://whatisdigitalhumanities.com/>) which offers no shortage of definitions.

I use the term digital humanities, or DH, to refer very broadly to the creative use of technology in both teaching and researching, in my case, history. But at an even simpler but more abstract level, DH is a crack in the walls of our disciplinary boundaries and a place of communal shelter occupied by those who pass through. The evidence of this crack is undeniable. Every DH workshop, 'unconference', or project in which I have been fortunate to participate has been remarkable for its disciplinary diversity and the refreshingly egalitarian exchange of voices between research and teaching practitioners, librarians, and technologists.

In practice, I think it is productive to think of DH as having a different character when it operates at different scales. Let us call this big and little DH. Big DH is where you see the great potential of large-scale collaboration. In our own School of History, it is best represented by the Universal Short Title Catalogue (www.ustc.ac.uk), a project directed by Prof Andrew Pettegree which has at its heart a massive catalogue of European published books over a span of



several centuries. My own experience in big DH comes from working as a project manager for the Digital Archive of Japan's 2011 Disasters (<http://jdarchive.org>). Other big DH projects revolve around the development of important tools that facilitate our research and enrich our teaching. Leading examples of this are the academic reference manager

Zotero and the archival hosting platform Omeka developed by the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media (<http://chnm.gmu.edu>).

Little DH is about community, perspective, and methods at the level of the individual practitioner. The result is interdisciplinary collaboration and community of another sort, not necessarily unified by a single project but an overlapping set of skills, challenges, and questions. It is fed by a spirit of experimentation and humility and often involves teaching each other and ourselves new skills, whether that means exploring new computational approaches to historical networks and the analysis of sources, or the innovative use of technology in teaching history and sharing our work more widely beyond the academy. Dr Bernhard Struck and I are very much engaged in little DH as we run our new undergraduate module, 'Doing and Practising Transnational History'; the module includes skills workshops, the option of a digital component to a final student project, and a student-run blog.

In the end, I would argue that the most significant gains of DH are not found in the development of databases, software tools, new computational methodologies, or pedagogical techniques, but rather its value in starting new conversations about the boundaries of our discipline, and the relationships we develop beyond them.

Discovering Postcolonial Paris

Dr Stephen Tyre (School of History) and History graduate Olympia Severis reflect on the unique value of the historical field trip.



One of the most rewarding aspects of Honours teaching in the School of History is the year-long special subject that most students take in their final year. For staff, this is often the most enjoyable class to teach, with class sizes small (typically around six students) and the class meeting for up to three hours every Wednesday morning throughout the year. It offers an opportunity to explore the subject in depth – which is usually the closest staff get to teaching on subjects directly related to their current research and to get to know the students well. One key theme that runs through my special subject on modern French imperialism is the lasting presence of imperial legacies in contemporary France; the class encourages students to consider the way in which contemporary attitudes to issues such as race, cultural diversity, immigration or religion have been shaped by the colonial past. For students and scholars of contemporary French culture, politics and society, it is almost become commonplace to assert that the nation struggles to ‘come to terms’ with its colonial history; the module attempts to flesh out this rather vague assertion. After two semesters’ close contact with the written sources and the historical debates, students taking the module in 2013-2014 participated in a three-day field trip to ‘postcolonial Paris’. The trip was designed to introduce those who might already have been familiar with the city’s historical landmarks and tourist sites to a different way of seeing a twenty-first century post-colonial metropolis. One such student, for whom Paris was already a frequent and familiar destination, now picks up the story...

As part of the ‘France and its Empire in the Twentieth Century’ special subject, our class set off to enjoy Paris in the springtime. The essence of our student learning experience is encapsulated in Isaac Asimov’s observation that one can read a hundred books but there is no education for a historian as challenging or fulfilling as

actually walking the grounds of the place which he or she has studied. For our class, this meant visiting the post-colonial Quai Branly Museum, designed to ‘decolonise’ the displays of non-western art that had previously been dispersed in various other Parisian collections; walking the grounds of the 1931 Colonial Exhibition in the Bois de Vincennes; and marvelling at the Great Mosque built in 1926 on the edge of the Latin Quarter. We were better able to conceptualise the dichotomy between academic history and public history by experiencing the state-sponsored Charles de Gaulle exhibition at the Musée de l’Armée which glossed over the ugliness of colonialism in order to create a coherent patriotic public memory. Our immersive learning experience was most poignantly felt at the Algerian War Memorial which one needs to experience in order to comprehend fully France’s struggle in dealing with the memory of a brutal, inhumane war. The unimposing, almost obscure, garish twentieth-century memorial, composed of digital names on columns, lacks the permanence or respect needed to honour fully the tragedy of war, and the class took its time confronting and discussing this historical anomaly. Overall the trip added a previously unknown colonial dimension to the understanding of those who had previously visited Paris and followed the usual tourist track. We had already noticed how separate imperial history is from the usual French historical narratives; this disjunction is emphasised in Paris as an urban space that defines the metropole, but has colonial history both interwoven everywhere and also somewhat obscured. In short, the trip proved invaluable for our understanding of how the recent colonial past has shaped the contemporary landscape of Paris in a way that we might well not have otherwise appreciated.



The Great Mosque
(LPLT / Wikimedia Commons)



Algerian War Memorial
(Guilhem Vellut / Wikimedia Commons)

Academic Books Published in 2014 by Staff in the School of History

James Palmer

The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages
(Cambridge University Press;
ISBN: 978-1107449091)

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Rab Houston

*Peasant Petitions:
Social Relations and Economic Life on
Landed Estates, 1600-1850*
(Palgrave Macmillan; ISBN: 978-1137394088)

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Katie Stevenson

*Power and Propaganda:
Scotland 1306-1488*
(Edinburgh University Press;
ISBN: 978-0748645862)

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Rab Houston

*Bride ales and penny weddings:
recreations, reciprocity, and regions
in Britain from the sixteenth to the
nineteenth century*
(Oxford University Press; 978-0199680870)

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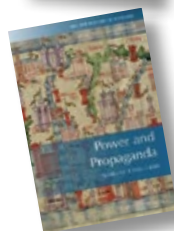
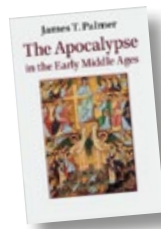
Andrew Pettegree

*The Invention of News: How the World
Came to Know About Itself*
(Yale University Press; ISBN: 978-0300212761)

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Gerard de Groot

*Back in Blighty:
The British at Home in World War One*
(Vintage; ISBN: 978-0099582229)



Rab Houston

*The coroners of northern Britain,
c.1300-1700: Sudden Death, Criminal
Justice, and the Office of the Coroner*
(Palgrave; ISBN: 978-1137381064)

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**John Hudson and
Ana Rodríguez, eds.**

*Diverging Paths?
The Shapes of Power and Institutions in
Medieval Christendom and Islam*
(Brill; ISBN: 978-9004277366)

* * * * *

Guy Rowlands

*Dangerous and Dishonest Men:
the International Bankers of
Louis XIV's France*
(Palgrave Macmillan;
ISBN: 978-1137381781)

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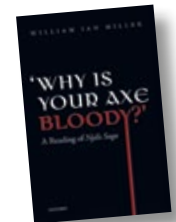
William Ian Miller

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