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The St Andrews Historian

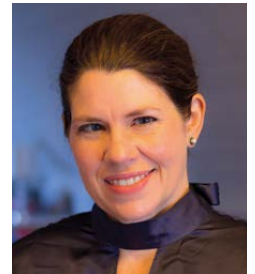
A magazine for History graduates of the University of St Andrews

Issue 8 – 2021



From the Editor

Welcome to this 2020-21 issue of *The Historian*. Since we were unable to send out the magazine last year due to Covid, this is a double issue, including the 2020 articles, as well as 2021 features. This will be the last print edition of *The Historian*. For reasons budgetary and environmental, we'll be going to an online format from next year, so please look out for us in your inbox in May 2022.



This year's issue is focused around the theme of 'resilience', one that I am sure will resonate with many of you. It is true that many aspects of recent history have been unpleasant at best. Our alumni and staff write of sorrows ranging from missed graduations to lost career opportunities to increasing deprivation among the children they serve, but they also speak of overcoming difficulties and finding unexpected compensations. Staff and students have demonstrated impressive creativity and flexibility this year in the face of frequent and sudden changes to restrictions. Technology has made it possible to connect with historians the world over and to access research material in new ways. We also have some things to celebrate unreservedly, not least the smashing victory of our PhD student Jonathan Gibson, who became the youngest ever champion on the quiz show *Mastermind* this April!

Being historians gives us some helpful perspective on our current circumstances. We know that we are not the first to have undergone abrupt changes and to have to adapt to

circumstances not of our liking. Kate Ferris's article uses the kerfuffle over whether a scotch egg constitutes a 'substantial meal' to reflect on the tactics that people have historically used to navigate restrictive regimes, while Sarah Frank's piece on prisoners of war in Occupied France and James Palmer's on 'Dark Age' science remind us of the resilience that people have demonstrated in times perhaps considerably more difficult than our own.

As I write this, there is both hope on the horizon for a return to a more normal student and staff experience in 2021-22, as well as worries about the impact of new variants. We will continue to draw upon the resilience of our community of staff and student historians, as well as our own individual strength as we move toward whatever the future holds.

Dr Justine Firnhaber-Baker



Message from the Head of School, Professor Simon MacLean

Dear Friends and Alumni,

Welcome back to the School of History, 2021. Although this magazine is intended as a celebration of the School's work, it's impossible to write this year without mentioning the elephant in the room.

Covid-19 has affected all of us in numerous ways, and we extend our sincere best wishes to all in our alumni community who have suffered as a result of the pandemic. Inevitably, the pandemic had – and continues to have – a major impact on the work of the School and the University. The sudden shift to online teaching in March 2020 (and then to blended in-person/online in September, and back to online in January) presented significant challenges to all staff and students. That we have been able to continue teaching uninterrupted, without limiting our aspirations to the highest standards, reflects a huge logistical effort behind the scenes, and is a testimony to the exceptional hard work, resilience and collegiality of all concerned. Postgraduate students were particularly affected by the shutdowns, given the solitary nature of their work and the restrictions on their movement. Inevitably there has been a cost to research activity more

generally, as travel to archives and libraries, the essential resources for most historians, all but ceased. Conferences and seminars moved online, if they were not cancelled, and external funding became more precarious. There have been some benefits born of necessity – it is now, after all, surprisingly easy to attend a research seminar in Princeton, or to have an academic in Australia deliver a research paper 'in' St Andrews. In any case, it seems inevitable that the pandemic and its after-effects will continue to shape how we work for years to come. In the meantime, we hope that the rest of this year's magazine will give a taste of some of the fascinating and important research that colleagues have been able to pursue over the last couple of years. As we hopefully inch back towards some kind of normality, we are ever grateful for your interest in and support for the School.

Crossing the Demarcation line: tales of POW escape in Second World War France

Written by **Dr Sarah Frank**. Dr Frank is a social and military historian specialising in the French Empire during the twentieth century.



Prisoners of war have a complicated place in the public's mind – there is a tendency to see captivity as a binary experience. Prisoners were, as Donald Trump argues, either people who gave up, or, as popular culture tells us, heroes plotting complicated and daring escapes. Many of us immediately picture Steve McQueen flying over a barbed-wire fence on a motorcycle in *The Great Escape* (1963). Fans of French films will certainly remember the complicated ending to *The Cow and the Prisoner* (1959). These competing ideas do not tell us very much about the everyday life of prisoners of war, or how few actually managed to escape (only 5 percent of French prisoners according to French historian Yves Durand). In the French case where 1.8 million French soldiers were captured, the circumstances around the defeat in 1940, the rhetoric of the Vichy government, four years of German occupation, and the difficult liberation all complicated the narratives around captivity and war, which in turn continues to inform our understanding of POW experiences.

Luckily for historians of captivity, escape reports are tremendously fun to read. They illuminate many fine details on lived experience of war and reinforce that captivity during the Second World War was not just a white experience. After France's rapid defeat in June 1940 over 100,000 colonial soldiers were among the 1.8 million soldiers captured by the German Army. In an extraordinary move, the Germans decided to intern the colonial prisoners of war in camps throughout Occupied France instead of bringing them to Germany with the white prisoners. Captivity in France brought certain advantages: slightly better

climate, friendly civilian population, fewer food shortages, and critically, much shorter distances to travel for prisoners hoping to escape. Any prisoner who made it across the demarcation line (the frontier between the occupied Northern zone and the unoccupied Vichy zone) before November 1942 was considered free.

Escape reports from the colonial prisoners recount exciting tales of hardship and sacrifice. The journey to the unoccupied zone was lonely, long, and could be terrifying. Prisoners risked recapture, getting lost or shot, and running out of food and water. Mohamed Ben Brahim and Mohamed Ben Ali spent nine days walking and swimming across two rivers to reach the southern zone. All the colonial prisoners who escaped praised the generosity and assistance found among the French civilians.

Creativity was as essential as good directions and civilian clothes to successfully escape. Colonial prisoners could not blend in with the civilian population as the white prisoners did. Instead, they sought advantages where they could. Albin Bancilon hid in plain sight on a French farm, pretending to be the farmer's servant. Mohamed Ben Ali took a risky but simple approach – carrying a bucket and dressed in civilian clothes, he walked across France pretending to be a North African civilian worker. It worked! Escaping captivity took patience, effort, and daring. Prisoners took time to study the different possibilities. It took Michel Gnimagnon over a month of planning, and several abortive attempts, before he was able to escape. He wrote a long and dramatic report of his escape from a work assignment after slipping through barbed wire, climbing ramparts, using secret codes – owl cries – to find his guide, and, of course, disguises. Eventually Gnimagnon was hidden aboard a train for Marseilles where he caught bronchitis due to the cold.

Other prisoners looked to the French resistance to help them escape. Pierre Choffel, leader of the Vesoul network, was also the locksmith for the POW camp which gave the resistance a rather large advantage over the camp guards. In the early days, there was a certain complicity between the resistance and the German camp commander Lieutenant Boehm who felt the prisoners were only doing their duty in escaping. Less than six months later Boehm had been replaced because too many prisoners had escaped, after which the German guards were more vigilant and the escapees more creative. One prisoner escaped from a work group composed of four men while Choffel was nearby. The German guard accused Choffel of facilitating the escape (which he denied), and complained that he could not return to the camp with only three prisoners. Choffel offered to find a fourth, decoy prisoner so the guard would not be blamed for the escape. A medical officer working with the Red Cross agreed to assist as he had more freedom of movement than other prisoners. Slipping out of his Red Cross armband, the guard was able to return to the camp with his four prisoners, and nothing

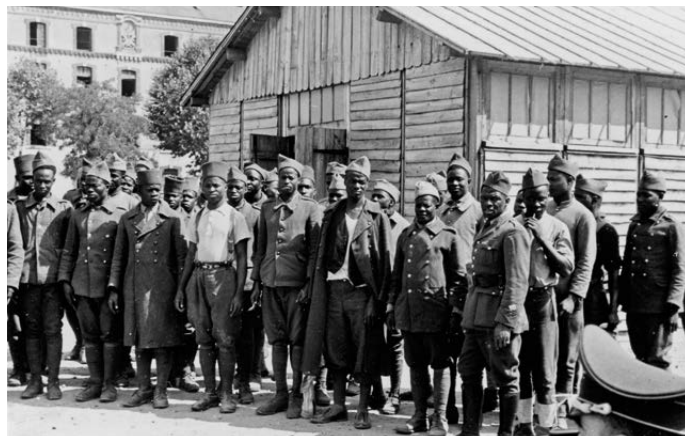


Guerre 1939-1945. Epinal (Vosges).
ICRC representative speaking with POW.
Photo credit: ICRC Archives, V-P-HIST-03439-12, 24 / 06 / 1941.

out of the ordinary was noted. Later that day, the medical worker simply put on his Red Cross armband and walked out of the camp. The escape was not reported until the next morning, leaving Choffel and the guard in the clear.

These escape stories are inherently interesting, but they serve another more important pedagogical role. Historians working on indigenous people subject to French or other colonial rule must wrestle with issues of agency, especially in the primary sources. Many white prisoners, French and British, kept diaries and published memoirs after the war. With a few notable exceptions colonial prisoners did not leave written records of their captivity. As such, much of the information about their captivity is filtered through a white European lens—via camp inspection reports from the Red Cross or correspondence between local French officials worrying about how to integrate colonial prisoners into the local economy. For a variety of reasons, the French authorities interviewed most of the escaped colonial prisoners of war about German propaganda they might have encountered, morale in the camps, and relations with French civilians. These testimonies constitute the largest records of colonial prisoners' captivity experience, containing first person narratives from surrender and capture, through

to camp life and escape. While this is a fantastic source where we can finally hear from the prisoners themselves, it of course remains problematic. One of the challenges is then how to draw out the voices of those people whose every interaction with the French, who represented the colonial authority, was impacted by hierarchies of race and citizenship.



Guerre 1939-1945. Melun. Group of Senegalese prisoners.

Photo credit: ICRC Archives, V-P-HIST-03440-36, 17/08/1940.

The Ills of Haute Cuisine: Chef Carême's Saucy Nationalism

Written by [Dr Claudia Kreklau](#). Dr Kreklau is an Associate Lecturer in Modern History, and her research focuses on the history of food.

The history of art knows many great names—Da Vinci, Rembrandt, van Gogh. Cuisine works in a similar way, and one of the most influential chefs in the last two hundred years was Marie Antonin Carême.

Carême was the chef of kings who cooked for Napoleon at his wedding. His impact on 'modern cuisine'—a term he used—was profound. Carême brought about a lower utilisation of spices compared to the early modern period in modern European *haute cuisine*, as well as a great increase in butter and cream in French cooking and the creation of the famous four sauces *Béchamel*, *Velouté*, *Espagnole* and *Allemande*.

Carême certainly counts among one of the most influential 'modernisers' of cuisine, yet he himself claimed to be deeply sceptical of political change and the French middle class. In his cookbook, he confessed to be an ardent royalist, called the French Revolution a 'disaster' and condescendingly described the bourgeoisie as the 'new rich'.

Oddly enough, Carême's food theory further carried bitter undertones of nationalism. He called Spanish sauce 'a brunette' sauce (*sauce brune*) and German sauce (*sauce Allemande*) a 'blond sauce'. He spoke to any reservations towards the German and Spanish sauces that his readers might feel due to their lack of French origin by assuring his readers that he had so greatly altered these 'foreign' sauces, the German and the Spanish, so as to successfully render them 'entirely French'. This, he argued, made these 'nationalized sauces' fit for French consumption.



He ardently celebrated the alleged inherent superiority of French cuisine and French chefs beyond the *Grande Nation's* borders, expressing gladness that he had seen cuisine in 'England, Russia, Germany, and Italy' and found everywhere that it was the French chefs 'who held the first place in all foreign courts'.

The implicit ideology of Carême's cuisine held surprisingly long-lasting social implications. His cuisine aided the myth that there was such a thing as a 'national' cuisine in France, or indeed elsewhere, though, beyond popular customs using local products and preservation methods. 'national dishes' were a recent invention of politically-minded cooks like Carême. Similarly, elite *haute cuisine* used more fat and less spice than previously, allowing Europeans to forget that any and every elite European dish in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance had been heavily spiced with primarily South Asian imports. Further, Carême's food theory carried hidden undertones of anti-Semitism. All of his four sauces contained ham; the *Espagnole* also included animal fat of unspecified origin and gelatine, while the other three were based on a combination of animal stock and butter, and the *Espagnole* and *Allemande*, cream. Strict kosher food laws allowed for neither pork nor the combination of dairy and meat. This in turn rendered modern elite European cuisine incompatible with kashrut consumption. It was exclusionary, nationalistically minded, and oblivious of its previous reliance on tasty treasures from abroad.

Carême was not alone in his French culinary exclusions. One specific text by an anonymous author translated as *The Art of Cooking* into German by 1820 read: 'In all ...Christian-Catholic contemplative practices...the pig plays a key role...not without reason. Most probably the earliest catholic Christians sought to distinguish this good animal on our tables, in order to differentiate themselves from the Jews...all the more clearly'. The author assumed that food could productively segregate between the confessions but used the idea to differentiate between 'Jewish Jews' who reject pork and 'our Christian Jews', who 'eat bacon and sausage just like all other good Christians'.

Compared to the professed royalist Carême, the unnamed author of the *Art of Cooking* expressed more ambiguous attitudes towards the French revolution and its secularist effect. The author called 'the Brumaire' of Napoleon Bonaparte's rise to power the 'Eighth year of Freedom of happy France'. They criticised Catholic mass and claimed that with the revival of religion Christmas night meals 'returned'— crucial to revive those who they argued suffered through the four-hour long midnight mass on Christmas. Heavy foods after mass, they argued, were necessary to recover from the strenuous exertion of church service.

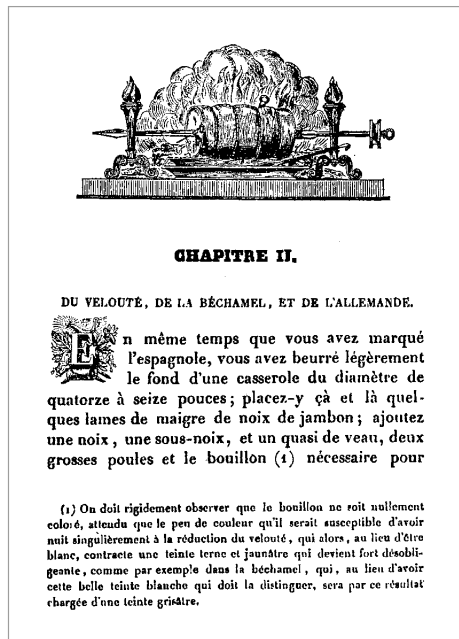
The monarchical royalist Carême and the author of the *Art of Cooking* did not necessarily agree on political ideas, yet they probably did concur on who belonged in France according to confessional lines. Carême's exclusion was not explicitly textual,

but culinarily symbolic. Making pork the foundation of *fonds* and sauces, which accompanied a great variety of foods, made it unpalatable to the pork-averse. The anonymous author's commentary, by contrast, overtly identified pork as a useful tool with which to differentiate between 'good Christians' and

'Jewish Jews'. While Carême and the anonymous author may have differed in who they politically revered, they likely both agreed on whom their cuisine could easily exclude.

In my current book manuscript, *Making Modern Eating*, I examine the impact of Carême and translations of French gastronomic literature on elite and middle-class cuisine in nineteenth-century Central Europe. French chefs indeed set food trends for Europe more largely and dominated the grand estate kitchens of royal courts all over the continent like Carême claimed. My work shows that the repercussions of the middle classes' appetite for French cooking included a redesign of middling food towards a higher degree of exclusion—specifically, through a slow increase in the use of invisible pork. Carême's odd, saucy nationalism therefore caused public establishments like restaurants to be virtually inhospitable for anyone

wishing to avoid pork, or indeed meat, at any point of the week by the middle of the nineteenth century. This included Jews, as well as Catholics and the growing number of central European vegans and vegetarians.



An image from Carême's cookbook, containing both a roast and a mention of sauces.

Credit: *L'art de la cuisine française au dix-neuvième siècle*, edited by Renouard and Dentu, 1847.

What are the Stakes of Global Political and Social Thought?

Written by **Dr Milinda Banerjee**. Dr Banerjee is a Lecturer in Modern History. He specialises in History of Modern Political Thought and Political Theory, post-1700.

We live in a world of globalised production and circulation. From the mobile phones and computers we use to the fruits we buy at the supermarket, we inhabit planetary chains of resource extraction, labour, and flows of capital and commodities. Basic concepts we use to make sense of the world today – like democracy, state, and market – are also global concepts with traction across social borders. How should we interpret this globality of thought?

This question lies at the heart of my research and teaching. At St Andrews, together with Margarita Vaysman (Modern Languages), I direct the MLitt Global Social and Political Thought, harboured at the Graduate School for Interdisciplinary Studies. Our students come from across the world. Whatever they are working on – subjects spanning

from Hawaiian Indigenous activism to feminist environmental thought – they debate the political stakes involved in the globalisation of ideas. They are nourished by the new field of global intellectual history which investigates the production and exchange of ideas across world-regions.

How do ideas achieve global circulation? Some scholars, influenced by an American version of Marxism, attribute responsibility to the globalisation of capitalist production and exchange. People living in different parts of the world come to mentally resemble each other in thinking about concepts like property or culture, because they inhabit a similar and connected planetary economy. Against this view, other



scholars emphasise that the circulation of ideas happens primarily through political difference and conflict.

In my research and teaching, I outline a third space beyond this distinction between the capitalist-economic and the political: Subaltern Studies theory. I was born in Calcutta, earlier the capital of British India and now the capital of the Indian state of West Bengal. I spent the first two and a half decades of my life there, before doing my PhD at Heidelberg. Later, I taught in Calcutta for four years. I have been deeply nourished by Subaltern Studies theory, built by scholars of Indian, especially Bengali, origin, like Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Partha Chatterjee, and Dipesh Chakrabarty. For Subaltern Studies theorists, dialectical struggles between elites and subalterns lie at the heart of social and intellectual history. This perspective is shaped by the South Asian heritage of anti-colonial and anti-elite battles, as well as by the tradition of dialectical theorising embodied by the German philosophers G. W. F. Hegel and Karl Marx.

In my research, I use a dialectical lens to interpret the globalisation of ideas. I emphasise socio-economic contexts, but for me, these contexts cannot overdetermine intellectual forms. Actors exert their ethical-political agency to negotiate material power structures. Subaltern actors – such as peasants, industrial workers, minorities, refugees, and women – expropriate, resist, and overcome elite grammars of power. They produce novel democratic practices and thought. This lens also animates my work as a founder-editor of the series 'Critical Readings in Global Intellectual History' (De Gruyter) and as an Associate Editor of the journal *Political Theology* (Routledge).

In my PhD, published as *The Mortal God: Imagining the Sovereign in Colonial India* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), I showed how such dialectics led to the decolonisation and democratisation of structures and ideas of kingship and sovereignty in late nineteenth and twentieth century India. With Charlotte Backerra and Cathleen Sarti, I edited *Transnational Histories of the 'Royal Nation'* (Palgrave, 2017), to further explore the nexus between kingship and nationalism across modern Asia, Europe, North Africa, and South America.

I have been inspired by developments in transcultural and global history, which I encountered during my years of research in Heidelberg and Munich. With Ilya Afanasyev, I recently edited a special issue 'The Modern Invention of 'Dynasty': A Global Intellectual History, 1500-2000' in the journal *Global Intellectual History* (Routledge, 2020). My essay emphasised how state sovereignty and capital are personified, sacralised, perpetuated, and globalised in connected ways.

Figures like the Indian merchant-king-god Agrasen (image) personify sovereign capital. The volume as a whole showed how the globalisation of 'dynasty' as a concept is grounded in dialectical histories of modern state sovereignty, capitalism, and colonial violence as well as anti-colonial resistance.



The Indian merchant-king-god, Agrasen.

Photo credit: Milinda Banerjee

Can anti-colonial resistance transform elite power structures in the international arena? My work on the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (Tokyo Trial, 1946-48) explored how non-Western ideas can help decolonise debates in international criminal law. These excavations in global legal thought led me to co-edit a special issue with Kerstin von Lingen on 'Law, Empire, and Global Intellectual History', in the journal *Modern Intellectual History* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

I have recently started work on global refugee history. In the international media, refugees are often exclusively portrayed as victims of state terror. But there are also inspiring stories to be told about how refugees build new democratic thought and politics and become agents of change. My work is part of a journal special issue, co-edited with

Kerstin von Lingen, on refugee resettlement in the long 1940s, in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the Second World War in Europe, and partitions and civil wars across Asia.

Another issue which is paramount when we think about the global today is the environmental question. Any serious political thought needs to centre the non-human. After all, human beings, especially in the age of industrial capitalism, have catastrophically transformed the environment. Scholars therefore label our epoch as the Anthropocene or the Capitalocene. I am now collaborating with the anthropologist Jelle Wouters to think about more equitable human-nonhuman relation forms, which can challenge regnant structures of hyper-centralised state sovereignty and capitalist commodification that are responsible for the Anthropocene/Capitalocene crisis. We are drawing insights from non-Western societies, such as highlander communities in Asia and Indigenous communities in South America, to equip a new subalternist theory which can wrestle with the current catastrophe.

The stakes of the 'global' in global thought are ultimately about our survival as planetary beings, with ineradicable responsibilities to each other that transcend communitarian, national, or even species borders. Through our research and teaching, we have to build a generation who will gather thought in common from different parts of the world to address these questions that constitute the very conditions of our planetary life.

New Frontiers of the History of Books, Media, and Libraries

Written by **Dr Arthur der Weduwen**. Dr der Weduwen is a postdoctoral fellow with the School of History. His research focuses on history of communication, the early modern print world, the development of the state, and the growth of a politically-engaged public.



I first enrolled at St Andrews as an MLitt student in 2014, after which I took up a PhD in Modern History the following year. As a postgraduate student, my research developed in two areas, both focussed on the history of the Netherlands. I firstly embarked on a study of the emergence of newspaper publishing in the seventeenth century. The Netherlands was a hotbed for the development of the newspaper, and Amsterdam was one of the earliest newspaper centres of the world, responsible not only for multiple competing Dutch papers, but also the first English (1620), French (1620) and Yiddish (1687) newspapers in the world. My work with these early papers, which took me to dozens of libraries in thirteen countries, was published in 2017 as the first complete bibliography of the early Dutch press.

While my interest in these newspapers allowed me to gain insights into the development of commercial news media in the early modern Netherlands, my PhD subject allowed me to acquire a complementary perspective: that is, how government engaged with printed media. The authorities of the highly decentralised Dutch Republic increasingly relied on printed matter – edicts, ordinances, tax forms – to communicate with their citizenry. Based on archival research throughout the Netherlands, my research revealed for the first time to what extent the oligarchic regents of the seventeenth-century Netherlands were at pains to solicit the consent of ordinary citizens to support their administration. At the same time, this work brought home to me how non-commercial jobbing print, like government ordinances, was essential work for the printers of the Dutch Republic: the work was steady, well paid, and increasingly lucrative.

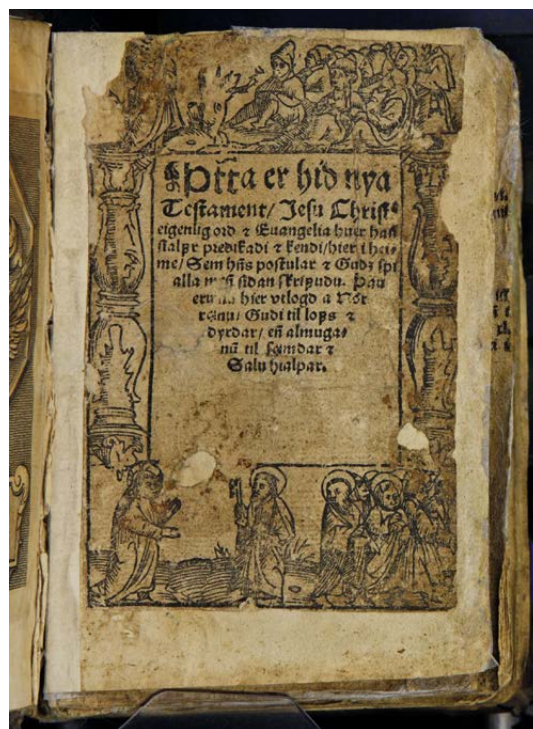
St Andrews was, undoubtedly, the best place to work as a postgraduate student in history. I had the continuous support of the sizeable group of scholars and students who work at the school, not least the group working on early modern book history, revolving around the [Universal Short Title Catalogue \(USTC\)](#) project. The USTC, which was started in St Andrews in 1995 by Professor Andrew Pettegree, is a free online resource that aims to provide descriptions of all books printed before the year 1650, covering the first two centuries following

Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press. I first encountered the project as an undergraduate student at Exeter when I joined the USTC for its annual summer volunteering programme. Once at St Andrews, I continued to work on the project, mostly on my area of expertise, the Low Countries. From the autumn of 2018 onwards, after finishing my PhD, I had the good fortune to be able to stay at St Andrews and work as a research associate of the USTC project. Since then I have worked closely together with

Andrew Pettegree on two further projects: a general history of book publishing and trading during the Dutch Golden Age (published last year by Yale University Press as [The Bookshop of the World](#)) and a two-volume history of the invention and development of newspaper advertising – a process that also took place in the precociously innovative Dutch Republic.

The global pandemic threw a spanner in the works for many research plans this year, not least the cancellation of the symposium on newspaper advertising in Amsterdam that was to accompany the publication of our [latest project](#). Nevertheless, I was lucky to be able to turn to other work that could be done from the safety and convenience of home in St Andrews. One of the most exciting aspects of this work was the advancement that the USTC team – staff, students and volunteers – made to expand its coverage of the national print cultures of Scandinavia and Eastern

Europe. The art of printing, invented by Gutenberg in Mainz in the 1450s, spread rapidly throughout Europe but failed to settle permanently in broad swathes of northern and eastern Europe. For this reason, countries like Latvia (where printing started in 1588), Estonia (1632), Finland (1642) and Norway (1643) did not feature strongly in the first iterations of the USTC. We have now rectified this, adding records of thousands of books printed in these countries, as well as in Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, Lithuania and Belarus. It is a real pleasure to bring this work to a global audience. It has also allowed me to introduce myself to a whole new range of European scholarship and languages (I'll admit that my Swedish is getting on better than my Estonian). We are keeping up with progress as I write: our current work concentrates on Hungary,



A copy of the oldest book printed in the Icelandic language, a New Testament, produced in Roskilde, Denmark (1540).

Credit: Proquest

Romania and Poland – more sizeable, but equally remarkable print domains.

The period of lockdown also proved to be an amenable time for writing. The past eight months has seen Andrew Pettegree and myself write the text of a new book, *The Library, a Fragile History*, to be published by Profile in 2021. In this work we survey the global history of libraries, from ancient Alexandria to the present day, and frame the current crisis of public library funding and closures within a broader narrative in which institutional libraries have always struggled – for funding, status, and survival. It has been exciting to write on such a broad topic, and to learn so much in the process about different time periods of history and different cultures. Although I'm certain that the early modern Netherlands will always remain dear to my heart, it has been a fantastic experience to move seriously beyond its remit.

I received the happy news earlier this summer that I will be able to stay in St Andrews on a three-year postdoctoral fellowship funded by the British Academy. One thing is clear to me – I would not wish to work anywhere else. The new teaching and research regime imposed by the pandemic will undoubtedly bring its challenges, but I am confident that staff and students at the school of history will flourish as before.



In *The Library, A Fragile History*, we write about libraries of all shapes and sizes, including the mid-twentieth century vogue for an organised pack horse library service that ran throughout the Appalachian range.

Credit: University of Kentucky Library



Baroque glories. The eighteenth century saw the transformation of many libraries in German and Austrian monastic houses from humble work rooms to grand library halls – impressive for visitors, not much congenial for study.

Credit: Wikimedia Commons

The Resilience of Old Science

Written by **Professor James Palmer**. Professor Palmer's research centres on culture and religion c. 400-900. He currently holds a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship (2018-21) for the project *Science and Belief in the Making of the Early Medieval World*.

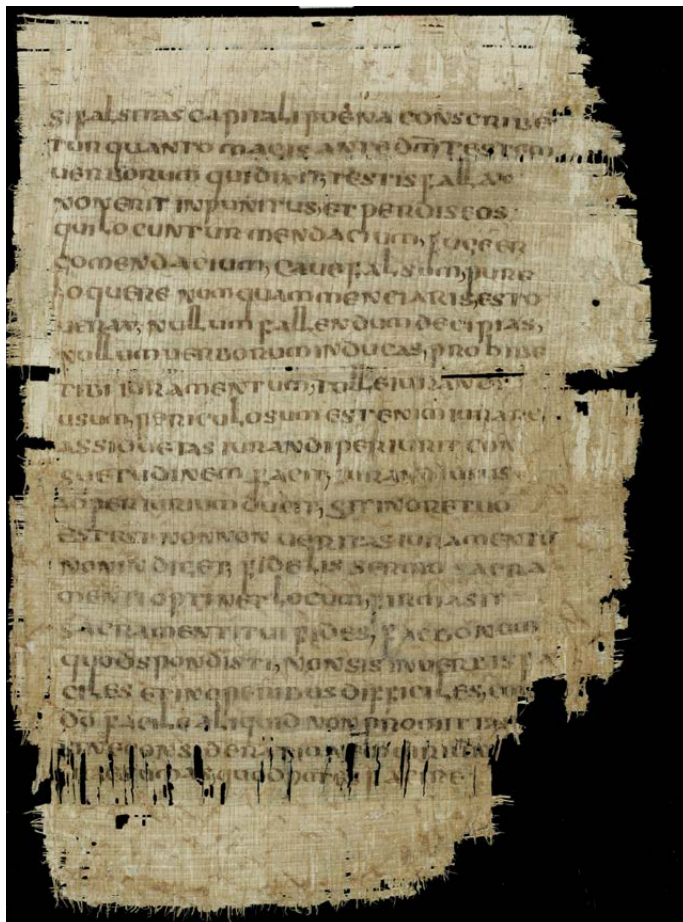


My present research focuses on early medieval sciences and medicine between the Fall of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century and height of the Carolingian 'renaissance' in the ninth century. It surprises many people that there are sources for such a project. This was, after all, supposed to be a 'dark age' of barbarism and superstition, when people allegedly rejected reason and the study of nature as somehow un-Christian. Happily, that is very much a post-Enlightenment myth, told to celebrate the self-confidence and progress of modernity. In practice, there has been a resilience to interest in the logic of the natural world.

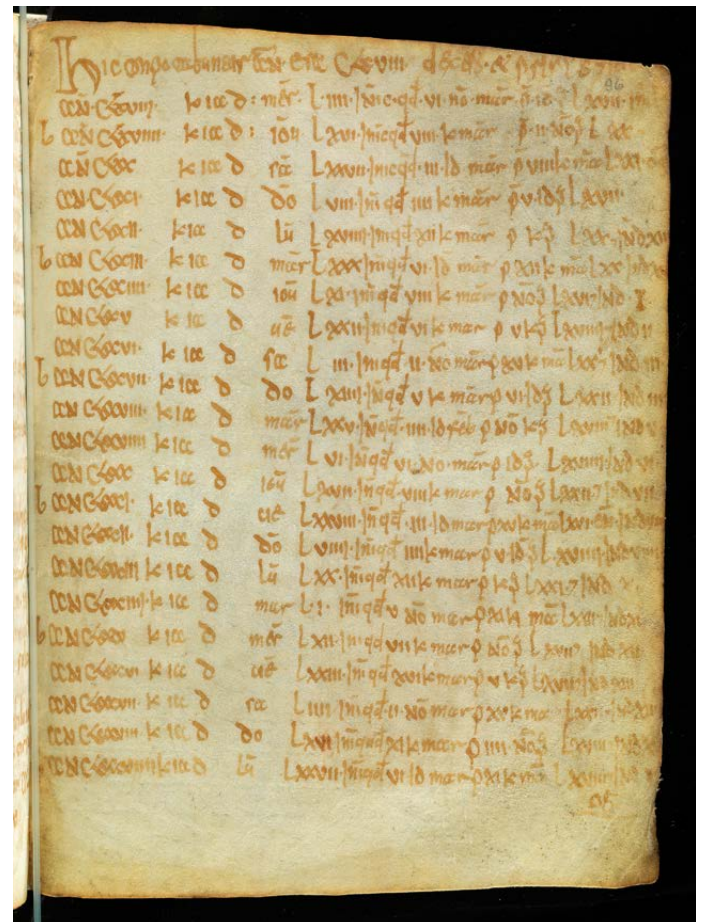
The early Middle Ages is often contrasted with the more enlightened and inquisitive world of Greek and Roman science. All those great foundational philosophers, from Ptolemy's mathematical astronomy to Hippocrates' theories of illness and cures, were long in the past even when the Roman Empire still looked robust in the fourth century, but they were still read and studied. As the Latin and Greek worlds drifted apart, many areas of the Latin-speaking West lost connections to Greek science, if they had ever had much anyway. New philosophers were thin on the ground.

This did not mean that ancient knowledge was lost. In fact, without early medieval scribes, we would know virtually nothing about Roman sciences. There are no pre-medieval manuscripts of Pliny's *Natural History*, Hyginus' *Astronomy*, or the translated works of Galen. Our evidence today relies on the efforts of the same kind of people who are usually accused of being hostile to such learning.

What happened to all those older books? It is yet another myth that they must have been destroyed by uncivilised barbarian hordes or religious fundamentalists. There is no evidence for such mass cultural sabotage. At worst we find a few figures such as Augustine of Hippo or Venantius Fortunatus being a bit lukewarm about having to read pagan books – and usually because most of their friends were quite happy to read those texts. Such ambivalence may have meant monks were not always the quickest to make new copies, of course. And new copies were almost certainly needed: manuscripts do not last forever if they are being used, and many Roman books were made using papyrus, which can be very fragile. Ancient books were not as resilient as their contents.



St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 226, p. 1, www.e-codices.ch



Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 611, 96r, www.e-codices.ch

Much of the fun of my research project lies in the unpredictable nature of the evidence. Medieval scribes rarely went around copying old books simply for posterity. The parchment they needed was too expensive and in limited supply. The priority therefore was to compile useful knowledge. The idea of useful knowledge, however, was as much of a moving target then as it is now. A lot of effort went into putting together dossiers of mathematical and astronomical material that would help construct reliable calendars, because there was a legal imperative to co-ordinate religious observances at different churches. People also endeavoured to make compilations of medical recipes so that they could alleviate common conditions from headaches to gout. The joy of making a manuscript in the early Middle Ages was that one was not always constricted by ideas of a 'published text' – compilations of useful knowledge could be assembled according to need, according to taste, and according to what books were available from which to copy.

Some aspects of these compilations addressed key issues about how to understand the natural world. It was common for people to get freaked out by comets, eclipses, earthquakes, or plague. Could it indicate Divine Judgement or, worse, magic? Time and again, even early medieval theologians moved to shut such speculation down by appeal to mundane laws

of nature. In perhaps the most radical example, a seventh-century Irish writer under the pseudonym 'Augustine' used ideas from natural philosophy and medicine to illustrate how many of the miracles in the Bible were impressive because they conformed to the rational plans of God's Creation rather than because they departed from such rationality. In the ninth century, the conservative bishop Hrabanus Maurus of Mainz suggested teaching lay people about luni-solar cycles so that they understood eclipses were merely caused by the regular juxtaposition of heavenly bodies.

Many of these examples point to the importance of a practical, everyday understanding of natural order. What people in the early Middle Ages appreciated about ancient sciences and medicine was that it was useful for such purposes. There were extremes, such as when it got to speculation about the nature of stars or monsters. In many ways, however, it was easy to adopt the writings of philosophers into an early Christian worldview, because they shared many principles of physics and causation. The common elements in the respective cosmologies allowed for the resilience of a basic scientific view of nature. The early Middle Ages may not have produced (m)any great scientists, but nor was it a period of rank superstition and barbarism.

Negotiating everyday life in extraordinary circumstances: the scotch egg and the pandemic



Written by **Dr Kate Ferris**. Dr Ferris is a Reader in the School of History. Her research explores the field of modern European history, with a particular focus on Italy and Spain from the late nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century. She is the Principal Investigator of the ERC-funded research project, *Dictatorship as experience: a comparative history of everyday life and 'lived experience' of dictatorship in Mediterranean Europe (1922-1975)*.

Like everyone, my family and I have found our everyday lives profoundly affected by the pandemic, lockdowns in the UK and internationally, home schooling, and so on, in ways that are particular to us. At the same time, as a historian interested in the ways in which 'ordinary people' experience and navigate day-to-day life in extraordinary circumstances, it's been impossible for me not to connect some of the analytical tools I and other historians use to some of the new and modified forms of behaviour that we've seen exercised since the start of the pandemic. I run an ERC-funded research project that explores the 'lived experience' of dictatorship in Fascist Italy, Salazar's Portugal, Francoist Spain and Greece under Metaxas and the Colonels. As part of this, my team and I are interested in how 'ordinary' people react to restrictions placed on what they can do, where they can go, and what they can say, and how they are able to navigate up to and sometimes around the limits of acceptable behaviour placed on them by the state. We could not help but be struck by similarities and parallels with contemporary lockdown settings in Europe in terms of people's 'ways of behaving', 'ways of relating', and the kinds of manoeuvring 'tactics' they deploy, which allow them to negotiate within and around very tricky, often restrictive and

shifting, situations governed by rules and regulations that are inevitably largely out of the control of ordinary people. To be clear, this is in no way intended to equate life under lockdown with life under the historical dictatorships I research—these are clearly vastly different circumstances and experiences. This is also not intended in any way as a comment on the legitimacy of lockdown restrictions. Rather, it's simply a reflection on what seem potentially instructive and interesting ways of understanding and thinking about our changing behaviour during the pandemic, which in turn have given me fresh insights into the historical actors I study in the mid-twentieth-century dictatorships I research.

There are many examples of 'everyday comportment' during lockdown that have reminded me of the tactics and modes of behaviour familiar to me from my research. The 'clap for carers' ritual, for example, as a new ritual of 'unisonality' and form of 'social bond' which sprang up 'from below' in March 2020, was the first I noticed. However, the example I'm going to discuss here is that of the scotch egg. Yes, you read that right: the scotch egg!

People may remember the furore that developed towards the end of 2020 over the humble scotch egg and its decisive intervention in shaping the experience of lockdown restrictions in England. From my slightly removed vantage point in Scotland, I certainly watched it play out with fascination. The scotch egg controversy arose in relation to the introduction of new tiers of restriction in England in November 2020. As part of this tier system, pubs in the newly prescribed Tier 2 were forbidden from serving alcoholic drinks to customers unless they were consumed alongside a 'substantial' 'table meal'. This new regulation gave rise to much discussion and speculation, a great deal of which played out in the media between journalists and politicians, as to what might constitute 'substantial' or 'table meal'. The discussion came to centre particularly on the scotch egg and whether or not it was sufficiently substantial to allow people to order an alcoholic drink alongside it after the Environment Secretary, George Eustice, suggested on LBC radio on 30 November that a scotch egg 'probably would count' under the new Tier 2 restrictions. This was then reinforced by Michael Gove, who told Piers Morgan on Good Morning Britain on 1 December that a scotch egg 'is probably a starter', later clarifying on LBC radio he meant 'a couple [...] with pickle on the side', and finally determining 'a scotch egg is a substantial meal' that evening on ITV news.

The inevitably nicknamed 'scotch-egg-gate' episode is interesting to me not because of the politicians' pronouncements or media poking fun of the situation but because of what it hints at in terms of innovative, opportunistic, enterprising, and also tongue-in-cheek behaviours that the discussion and the restrictions occasioned. Publicans responded to the changed regulations by making and selling foodstuffs specifically intended to fall just within, arguably at the edge of, the Tier 2 'substantial meal' caveat, including—naturally—scotch eggs. One pub in South London, for example, made scotch eggs (with a side of chips, priced at £10) a part of their table meal offering when they reopened in December, a dish they hadn't served previously, and found them 'flying out' and 'a real lifeline'—so much so that they started experimenting with different versions of scotch egg, including ones using salt beef, jerk chicken, and smoked haddock, as well as a seasonal offering of a pigs-in-blanket egg. Another London bar reopened selling drinks alongside 'meals' brought in from a next-door fast-food restaurant (because there was no stipulation in the law that the meals must be made on premises), while a Brighton publican offered a hand-pulled pint named—what else?—'substantial meal'.

For me these practices contain real echoes of everyday life historian Alf Lütcke's concept of seeking 'room for manoeuvre': working right up to, around, and perhaps with an occasional toe over, the boundaries of everyday behaviour sanctioned by the

authorities. Moreover, the sense of humour evident in many of these manoeuvres is reminiscent of Lütcke's analytical tool of *'Eigensinn'*, usually translated as 'self-willed' behaviours, which Lütcke used to refer to modes of workplace behaviour, such as pranks and jokes, that used humour and light-heartedness to punctuate daily routines and allow workers to gain (temporary) breathing space in an otherwise relentless working day. We might also find the notion of 'tactics', which comes from another leading scholar of everyday life history, Michel de Certeau, useful to understand how and why the innovative scotch egg responses of English publicans worked. For de Certeau 'tactics' were differentiated from 'strategy'; the latter refers to modes of operating used by those in positions of power or with access to authority within a given spatial or institutional location. Tactics on the other hand are described as 'weapons of the weak' in so far as they relate to modes of behaviour that operate in spaces in which an individual actor holds no or little access to authority. They are necessarily flexible because they operate within structures that are imposed upon them and not chosen

or defined by them; unlike a strategy, a tactic cannot plan a comprehensive scheme of action but rather must act opportunistically to take advantage of any favourable occasion that presents itself. Arguably, by adding scotch eggs to their menu, or by bringing in fast food 'meals' to serve alongside their own drinks, the publicans and bar-owners mentioned above were effectively deploying De Certeauian 'tactics', which allowed them to take what advantage was available to them in limiting circumstances without substantially calling into question or overstepping the restrictions.



Scotch Egg.

Credit: Kevin Doncaster, CC BY 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

Believe it or not, there's more that might be said on the scotch egg, especially in relation to what it reveals about class-based consumer practices and interactions in different parts of the country. It's worth remembering, as Jed Meers, a Lecturer in Law at the University of York did in a recent article for *The Conversation*, that linking the serving of a 'table meal' or 'substantial meal' to the granting of licenses to serve alcohol is nothing new—on the contrary it is, as Meers put it, the 'bread and butter' to English local authority licensing systems and the way that local authorities deal with licensed premises in areas of high concentration and in particular so-called 'wet led' pubs, which rely above all on alcohol sales for their revenue. But alas, time is up at the bar. For what it reveals about how individuals work creatively and find 'room for manoeuvre' up to the very edge of limitations placed on expected behaviour, for the sake of economic self-preservation or profit as may be, done with a sense of humour and light-heartedness that helps smooth its progress, for me the humble scotch egg will remain an iconic object of the lockdowns. And perhaps—and I'm aware that this may be the most controversial thing I've written—one of the tastiest!

History in the Making: PhD Student Jonathan Gibson on his Mastermind quiz win and enduring love of history



Blog written by second-year PhD student **Jonathan Gibson**. Jonathan recently won BBC's Mastermind quiz. At age 24, he is the youngest contender ever to win the show.

I first came to St Andrews in 2017 as an MLitt student in Early Modern History, having previously done my undergraduate degree at Magdalen College, Oxford. I am now in the second year of my PhD here at St Andrews. Since my final undergraduate year, my focus has been on the period of the British revolution and the interregnum, and particularly the ways in which radically opposed constitutional visions were mediated through institutions of dialogue and debate. Having previously written about the Army debates at Putney, and about the operation of parliamentary orders in the Protectoral Parliaments, I am currently interested in the rhetorical trope of 'plain speaking' and its particular relevance to the language of Cromwellian politics.

However, in the last few weeks I have perhaps become somewhat better known, at least on certain corners of Twitter, as 'that lanky nerd who looks like he's just funnelled a case of Red Bull' through my appearances on the BBC quiz show *Mastermind*. I have been a quizzier for most of my life, from falling in love with *The Weakest Link* as a child, to now competing alongside the very best in several national and global quiz leagues (even more now that they're all on Zoom!). In my latest exploit, I have been lucky enough to win the *Mastermind* Grand Final, the youngest contender ever to win the quiz.

For about as long as I can remember, history and quiz have been my twin driving passions. I have no idea which came first. In many ways, the correlation feels fairly natural. Both as a historian and as a quizzier, I love the fact that there is always more to learn. The canon is never fixed, or at least it never should be, and the

greater the diversity of voices involved in developing theses or setting questions, the more exciting and surprising the task of responding to them becomes. I also love that both occupations involve a constant process of forming intellectual connections. Every quizzier knows that two facts which are related to each other, particularly in a creative or unexpected way, are far easier to remember than one discrete fact without context, just as many of the most exhilarating historical theses involve juxtaposing a familiar story with a novel disciplinary framework, a neglected body of sources, or a broader chronological or transnational development. Perhaps most importantly, I've got a lot better and had a lot more fun at both when I've been supported by a community of teammates and friends, sharing new facts, pooling collective knowledge, and being inspired to rise to higher and higher levels.

Admittedly, the more quizzes I do, the more I am reminded of the vast swathes of knowledge, particularly historical knowledge, of which I remain embarrassingly ignorant. I still remember the first pub quiz I ever did, where, as five first-year history undergrads, our academic confidence took an early knock when we achieved our worst score of the night on the history round (for what it's worth, we still won the quiz, aided largely by our knowledge of early noughties girl groups and '80s tennis players!). But the joy of quiz, like the joy of academia, is that there will always be unexplored territory, always a question that you can't answer this time but will the next, always the potential to get better. And for as long as I can continue chasing those unanswered questions, I can't see myself ever tiring of either.

Reflections on a Career in History

Written by **Emeritus Professor Jerry De Groot**.

Here Professor De Groot talks about his long career at St Andrews and the lessons he both taught and learned along the way.

When I started at St Andrews in 1985, there was a wall in Berlin, a working nuclear reactor at Chernobyl and American cruise missiles at Greenham Common. Mrs. Thatcher was Prime Minister, Ronald Reagan was President. I had hair on my face and on top of my head. That was a long time ago.

During my last few years at St Andrews, beardless and bald, I was teaching about events that had occurred while I was a lecturer in the late eighties. That's partly the advantage of being a late



Herd, De Groot, and Arnott.

Credit: Sharon Roe, 1990

modern historian, but also an indication of a long career. Toward the end, I got rather accustomed to new students coming up to me and saying 'Professor DeGroot, you taught my mother.' At first it seemed unsettling, but then it made me proud. A few years ago, a man by the name of Campbell Dye brought his

daughter to my office on an Open Day. 'You taught me in 1985,' he said. 'Yes,' I replied, 'I remember. That was my first ever tutorial group. I only remember one other student from that group, a girl named Rachel Copp.'

'Yes,' he said, 'she's my wife.'

Old people indulge in nostalgia; young people patiently nod. It's not my intention to bombard readers of this piece with memories of long ago, since that gets quickly dull. I want instead to offer some reflections that might carry worth. In any case, I don't feel particularly old, though my knees suggest otherwise.

I don't feel old because my job kept me young. There's something enervating about having a steady stream of clever young people passing through one's life; it's a fountain of youth. For that alone, I feel that I had the best job in the world. St Andrews students are wonderful, once you put aside their overwhelming privilege. And, during my career, those students have gotten consistently better—not just smarter, but much more harder working. It was an immense honour to have them grace my life and to have a tiny effect on their development.

I'm a historian, but I identify as a teacher. For me history was never more than something that enabled entry to the classroom. At university, I preferred maths, but I quickly discovered I wasn't very good at it. So, history was my second choice. I admire colleagues who live and breathe the subject to the point of taking history books on holiday. That's not me. I wrote a lot of books mainly because I adore the craft of putting mellifluous sentences together. History itself was always just a gateway to doing the things I love—teaching and writing.

I doubt that someone like me would get a job on a history faculty today. That's unfortunate, I think. When I started out, academia was like a giant zoo with all sorts of exotic animals. Eccentricity was admired and cultivated. Over the course of my career, however, there's been a homogenization of staff, the result, I think, of all those systems of measurement that have been imposed upon us. The RAE and REF forced us into a singular definition of worth and broke our careers into neat packets of five years. There's now, it seems, just one avenue to success, and colleagues strive to craft that requisite profile. When I look at the CVs of younger colleagues, I sense an unfortunate, if understandable, effort to check the boxes—to demonstrate those essential definers of success. Major monograph? Check. Journal editorship? Check. AHRC grant? Check. Fellowship abroad? Check. There's not a lot of room left for individuality, yet individuals we all are.

Granted, when I was young, incompetence often masqueraded as eccentricity. When I was briefly a lecturer at Edinburgh, a senior colleague told a student that he'd not been able to read his dissertation chapter (for three months) because he couldn't find a pencil. Another esteemed colleague would hide to avoid interaction with students. He was caught literally coming out of a closet. The common reaction to this sort of behaviour back then was: 'Ah, bless, he's such a character.' My first head of department at St Andrews, John Kenyon, once told me that hiring women was always a bad idea. Back then, you could get away with this sort of behaviour if you'd managed to convince your colleagues of your genius.

Those days are gone, and good riddance to them. In other words, some changes that I've witnessed have been positive. The rather appalling behaviour of some colleagues thirty years ago would not nowadays be tolerated, though we do still allow reputation to excuse reprehensible actions. There are not enough sanctions against those who exploit the privileges (and freedoms) of academia. Things have improved, though not comprehensively enough.

For the most part, however, I look back over the last four decades and struggle to find evidence of fundamental improvement in the profession, despite all that relentless do-goodery designed to make us better at our jobs. The ever-changing regulations didn't make us better teachers or researchers; they just increased our anxiety. I can now laugh at the way we changed the essay return form every single year, but never managed to improve the process of assessment. Universities are very good at constructing piles of paperwork that masquerade as virtuous endeavour.

We all measure change from our own Year Zero, and my Year Zero was 35 years ago. To those entering the profession today, a job in academia is still coveted, but to me it seems something degraded from what I first encountered in 1985. I stopped encouraging my brilliant students to do postgraduate work since the job no longer seems that attractive, and it's far too precarious. It remained attractive to me, but that's because I'd reached a stage where I could ignore most of the petty paperwork that makes life for the young academic so difficult. When I look back to my Year Zero, it seems that something rather wonderful has gone.

So, what remains? There are still those lovely students, to whom we have a sacred duty. All of us have in our past life a teacher who once inspired us, who set us on the course we now pursue. The only way to pay back a gifted teacher is to strive to be a gifted teacher. We pay forward for graces once received. Some might consider teaching a small part of our remit, preferring instead to identify as professional historians—researchers. But history has little worth unless it is passed on to future generations, and that happens best through good teaching.

I'd like to think that the decline in the quality of the profession is not our fault. It's instead the fault of our masters—those who don't remotely understand the ethos of academia yet never allow their ignorance to impede action. There's been too much meddling by those who don't understand higher education. One of the reasons I so loved my job was because I managed to retain the autonomy that characterised the profession back in the 1980s. Nowadays, that's difficult. The profession has become rather brutal, with incessant intrusions into our lives. We're no longer trusted to be good at what we do.

I never considered my job to be particularly difficult, and that's probably why I loved it so much. I could do my work well and still have evenings and weekends with my family. It was a vocation, but one which did not consume my life. That has changed. The academic today finds it difficult to satisfy all the expectations of the profession while still maintaining a normal life. That's especially true for female colleagues who struggle to succeed in what is still a grossly patriarchal realm.

I'll end with some advice I offered at my retirement party. Be kind. Your job is nowadays difficult enough; don't make it more so by meanness towards colleagues or staff or students. Don't let competitiveness erode compassion. With a little everyday

kindness this can still be a wonderful, fulfilling job. And there may come a time when you'll need the support of loyal colleagues. Look out for one another. We all need friends. Be kind.



Jerry De Groot Retirement Party.

Credit: Chandrika Kaul



Jerry De Groot Retirement Party.

Credit: Chandrika Kaul

2020 Alumni Updates

Dr Lizzie Swarbrick

Dr Swarbrick completed her PhD at St Andrews in 2017 and is now a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the Edinburgh College of Art, University of Edinburgh.

Well, suffice to say that 2020 has been Not Good. We've each had to sit with the headlines every morning, working out on our own personal scales how traumatic the news is today, and what we might subsequently expect from our levels of concentration and hope. The majority of my colleagues in academia have been at full tilt, working out how to manage teaching during a global pandemic. All the normal rituals of summer – research visits, conferences, perhaps even a holiday – were cancelled. Of course, the people this hits hardest are those on precarious contracts, staff who are carers, and individuals vulnerable to Covid19. It's as if we are all just a little out of our depth whilst swimming on East Sands; our tiptoes grazing the sea floor, our noses just above the water. For some the sea is rougher than others.

I have to admit that, for me, whilst the sea is painfully cold, it's also largely calm. My postdoctoral research position as a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow means I'm protected from a great deal of the tumult. It has been profoundly odd to research in this environment though. My particular work is focussed on the complicated ways Scottish medieval church architecture – and all the multi-media art forms it once contained – moved audiences, both physically and spiritually. It's near-impossible to get a sense of the kinetic experience of space somewhere, when you can't actually inhabit it. For months I've been an architectural historian with no buildings.



Orphir, taken on one of Dr Swarbrick's recent research trips.

Credit: Lizzie Swarbrick

It's the end of September and I've just come back from finally experiencing some art 'in the flesh' once more. Lugging my research kit (camera, zoom lens, binoculars, head torch, os maps, pencils, paper, mask, anti-bac) to Bristol, London, Aberdeen, and Orkney. I'm used to sombre atmospheres in medieval churches, but this is definitely heightened by being masked-up in near-deserted interiors. That said, I did get that rush of wonder I'd been hoping for on Orkney. Clambering over medieval vaults never gets

old and being able to roam around St Magnus cathedral was spectacular. Perhaps most moving was the c.1100 round church at Orphir, built under the patronage of Earl Haakon Paulsson (killer of St Magnus) after a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. I'd been in the (much flashier) Temple church in London just a week earlier, but walking solo along a country lane to the bay where Orphir church stands felt free. I picked up a homemade chocolate cookie from a socially-distanced 'honesty bun box' and, after, dipped my hands in the waters of Scapa Flow. It was a remote spot for me.

Remote from my university in Edinburgh, my family in Oxford, and even more so from the Holy Sepulchre which inspired this church's architecture. And yet, the building here shows that this place was connected in the Middle Ages, and it's certainly still connected now. I just hope that I can manage to feel similarly connected, however much I have to work remotely.



Dr Ingrid Ivarsen

Dr Ivarsen finished her PhD in St Andrews in April 2020. She is currently a Junior Research Fellow at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where she will be working on the language, manuscripts, and sources of English law in the twelfth century.



I'm not sure I've ever imagined living through a pandemic, but I'm certain I've never imagined completing and submitting my PhD thesis, having my viva and graduation and starting new jobs during one – all while sitting at the same desk in my house.

This can only be described as a time of ups and downs. Sadly, I couldn't celebrate the completion of my PhD with my friends in person, but on the bright side, those endless dark lockdown nights at home in March gave me ample time to proofread my thesis. Unfortunately, work on my new project was slowed down by the lack of books, but on the bright side those endless lockdown nights at home in May, June, July, and August meant that I had more time than usual to dedicate to time-consuming work. (And clearly, I've worked on the art of putting a positive spin on things.)

After submitting my thesis, I started working as a research fellow on the project Common law, Civil Law, Customary Law at the School of History in St Andrews. My job was to compile a handlist of all extant manuscripts containing legal texts that existed in England between c.1050 and 1250 and of manuscripts containing English legal texts owned or produced outside England in this period.

In a world without access to a physical library, this proved difficult. Only a few archives have decent online catalogues, and most of the newer printed catalogues are not digitised. I've therefore spent most of lockdown focusing on archives that have good online catalogues and archives for which our

only catalogues are those compiled in the early twentieth century, most of which are digitised.

Many of these catalogues were compiled by M.R. James, who – it seems from some of his prefaces – was not hugely enthusiastic about law. Perhaps that explains why many texts are described very generally, sometimes only as 'canon law' or 'civil law'. Once I got over my incredulity at such an attitude, I started thinking that there might be much under-studied (perhaps even undiscovered) legal material in these manuscripts. Therefore, much of my time has been spent trying to identify such texts more precisely.

Doing online work with manuscripts also has its ups and downs. I've experienced the (relatively rare) thrill of finding that an intriguing manuscript has been digitised and the (relatively frequent) disappointment when there is no digital trace of a manuscript. I've also experienced the immense value of searchable databases, such as *In Principio, Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, and *Ames Foundation*, and online catalogues. However, I have also realised just how much information is still nowhere near being available online (or, indeed, at all).

In October, I will move from St Andrews to Cambridge, where I will be a Junior Research Fellow at Emmanuel College. While I've learnt not to have too many expectations for 2020, I am hoping that the reading rooms open up soon so that I can finally see some of those mystery manuscripts in person.

Dr Drew Thomas

Dr Thomas finished his PhD at St Andrews in 2018. He is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at University College Dublin where he works on the book trade in Reformation Germany.



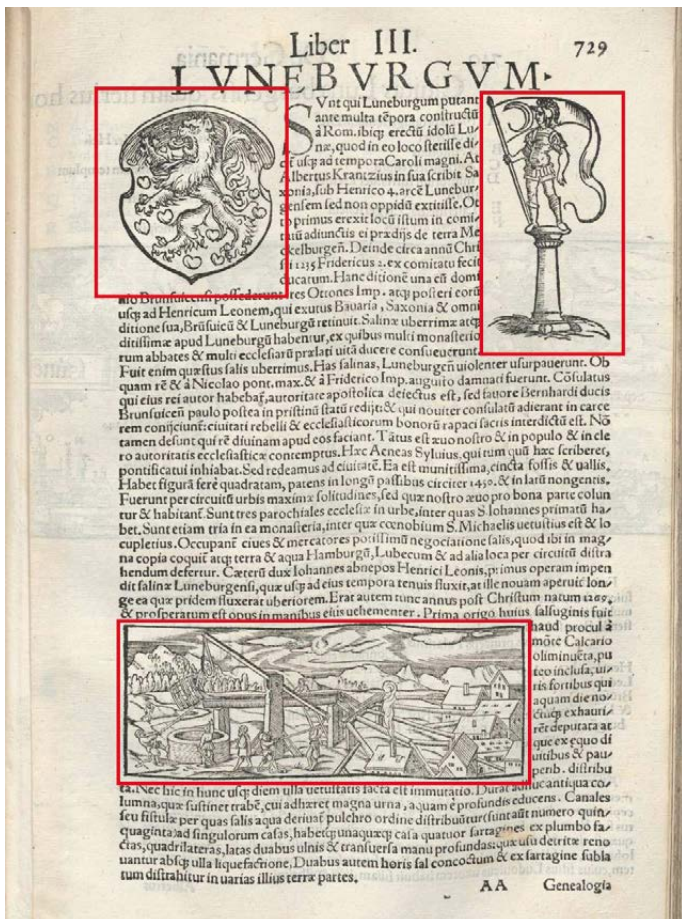
The rumours started spreading early. The university was preparing to shutdown campus as the coronavirus pandemic continued to spread, so I went to my office, packed up my large, external monitor, hard drives with important research data and books I knew I would need in what I thought would be the coming weeks. Those weeks soon turned to months and the internet was flooded with tips on creating the perfect home office.

Currently, I am a Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Research Fellow at University College Dublin working on a digital humanities project on the book trade in Reformation Germany. I am interested in how printers used images and ornamentation in their publications, which can assist in identifying popular iconographies and changing tastes or help identify unknown printers and places of publication. To achieve this, I have spent the last year downloading millions of images of early modern books that have been scanned by research libraries. These images are then processed on

Kay, a supercomputer managed by the Irish Centre for High-End Computing (ICHEC). The final goal is to use machine learning and image recognition software to match instances of the same woodcuts used across multiple books.

Due to the digital nature of this project, I have not been as severely affected by the closure of research libraries and archives as other colleagues. However, rather than primary sources, the loss of access to secondary literature has been a constant nuisance. To remedy this, I have purchased more books than I normally do, having reallocated portions of my research budget.

As a research fellow with no teaching requirements and no children of my own, the impact on my daily routine has been minimal, other than working at the desk in my flat, as opposed



Sebastian Münster, *Cosmographiae universalis*, vol. VI (Basel: Heinrich Petri, 1550). Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Hbks / E 4.

Credit: Creative Commons

to my office. I continue to admire my peers who must balance research, teaching, and parenting all at once in a home office environment. I look to them for advice and inspiration as I prepare for remote teaching this autumn.

While I have been able to adjust my research routines to a home office, it has proven much more difficult to adjust my office social life. I share an office with several other postdoctoral researchers and although we work in different historical periods, the community was vital to our wellbeing, our collective experience of navigating the world of early career researchers and the general scholarly stimulation from discussing research ideas.

My co-investigator and I have managed this by regularly communicating daily or weekly via text, email or on the phone. With my officemates, we have hosted virtual hangouts via Zoom, with the accounts provided by the university at the beginning of the lock down. Although these tools were originally supplied for remote teaching, they have proven useful for keeping a semblance of our previous community. Once the lockdown rules were loosened to allow small gatherings between friends, we coordinated some socially distanced gatherings in a local park.

I would love to return to my office soon, but given it is a shared office, this will be unlikely for some time. Meanwhile, I continue to conduct research from home and encourage you all to set up a phone or video call with some colleagues. Be sure to raise a glass virtually and toast to getting through this together.

Dr Kimberly B Sherman

Dr Sherman finished her PhD at St Andrews in 2018. She now resides and works in Wilmington, North Carolina. Here she recounts her experiences with history during the global pandemic.

Post-PhD life has been unlike anything I could have predicted. I'm currently living in my hometown where I am a Lecturer in History at our local community college in Wilmington, North Carolina. I was actually in Edinburgh spending time with family and friends just as the seriousness of COVID-19 became clear and a worldwide pandemic was declared. I flew back to North Carolina as borders closed and quarantine restrictions were announced around the US and UK.

Staying productive for the past few months has been challenging, especially as my teaching transitioned from seated, on-campus courses to online instruction. Like many other faculty at institutions worldwide, it was a huge learning curve for me. Despite the challenges, being at home presented new opportunities including more time to make one of my history dreams come true—starting a podcast!

I've been an avid podcast-listener since 2014, just as the medium came into its own, and I've long wanted to use podcasting to bring history to a wider audience. In 2018 I was awarded a short-term research fellowship at the Winterthur

Museum and Library in Delaware. My research project would focus on attitudes toward death in the early American South—a place where tropical diseases and an intense climate combined for often deadly results. I worked in residence at Winterthur during summer 2019 where I learned methodological practices for studying material culture, examined mourning art and jewelry, and steeped myself in written sources like funeral poetry. It was a fantastic experience, but I did not know where the research might take me.

My interest in deathways and environmental history in the American South, as well as ongoing research in the history of the family, led Bellamy Mansion Museum to invite me to speak on the topic of a yellow fever epidemic that raged through Wilmington in 1862. The response to the event was huge—the main parlors of the house were packed, people sat on the main staircase, on the floor, and even more were turned away due to space and sound constraints. I had so much fun sharing the research I had begun several months earlier and



conversations with attendees helped me see that this was a topic people were interested in—not just yellow fever, but how people in the past have dealt with death.

Enter *Historia Mortis*. By Spring 2020 I began planning episodes, social media, guest lists, and more. I expected to launch in August with the first season chronicling the 1862 yellow fever epidemic, beginning on the anniversary of the arrival of the *Kate*, the blockade-running ship that brought the disease to Civil War Wilmington via the Bahamas. Coronavirus intervened. With closures of libraries and other cultural institutions across the US, I was left without access to any sources that were not freely available online. Those amazing manuscripts I hoped to get my hands on for Season One? Not happening anytime soon.



Burial site for victims of the 1862 yellow fever epidemic in Wilmington, NC.

Credit: Kimberly Sherman

As I write this in early July 2020, North Carolina still remains in an extended 'phase two' of reopening the state, not including libraries and museums. I had to decide whether I would postpone my launch into 2021 or revise my first season. Season One will now be a 'mini' deep-dive into a range of topics related to early American deathways—everything from the material culture of mourning and the experience of widowhood, to the work of early modern ghost hunters! I also hope to feature the research of fellow University of St Andrews students and alumni in various episodes.

It's been a crazy, fun route to learn more about producing historical research for podcasting and I can't wait to share it with the world! For more information about *Historia Mortis*, visit www.historiamortispodcast.com and follow us on Instagram at [@historiamortis](https://www.instagram.com/historiamortis).

2021 Alumni Updates

Connor Roberts

Connor graduated with an MA (Hons) in Modern History in 2016. Since then, he has worked with various politicians in Washington, DC and is continuing his studies at the US Naval War College.



Ever since I was a kid, I have had a keen interest in history. So when I arrived at St Andrews, history was the clear choice for my studies, and I eagerly embraced the breadth of courses offered by the School of History. Guy Rowlands' and Frank Müller's courses on the Military Revolution and German foreign policy around the World War I era, respectively, expanded my understanding of military and political history, and Emily Michelson's courses on the Catholic Reformation pushed me to be a better, more articulate writer. Bernhard Struck and Konrad Lawson's course on transnational history not only reinforced the independent research skills I would need to complete my honours project in fourth year, but also set the direction of my postgraduate studies.

After graduation, I continued my studies at Leiden University, earning a master's in Colonial and Global History. My thesis covering the Angolan Bush War enkindled an interest in government service. A chance reunion with an old friend during a trip to Washington, D.C. led to an opportunity to intern in the House of Representatives after completing my master's. Since then, I have served in various roles in the offices of four Members of Congress. I have also restarted my studies and am currently enrolled in graduate courses offered to military officers, congressional staff, and federal civilian employees through the U.S. Naval War College.

Skills honed during my time in St Katharine's Lodge continue to give me distinct advantages in my professional life. My

history background prepared me well to assess and evaluate information and sources. Congressional offices must sift through massive amounts of information available both through office connections and the wider internet, and it is vital to identify and prioritise information relevant to your work, lest you be stuck beneath a mound of data that ultimately hinders effective decision making. This is especially important in the era of 'fake news' and a multipolar information market.

Additionally, the research and writing elements of my history background have helped me in my day-to-day tasks, from drafting speeches and responses to constituent mail to keeping up with introduced legislation. Composing my undergraduate essays trained me to distill complex ideas into a shorter, more comprehensible format, a process that I apply in my professional work.

More broadly, history helps us more clearly contextualise the present. This understanding of how we got to the present is crucial for finding effective long-term solutions to problems facing policy makers today.

I am grateful for the opportunities afforded me through my St Andrews education and affiliation with the School of History. I hope that future generations of students at St Kat's will be inspired to pursue careers in government. We need more individuals with an appreciation of history in public service!

Francesca Wood

Francesca graduated with an MA in History in 2019 and now works as a teacher in Yorkshire.

Becoming a teacher was always on the cards as a future career, and I think that's one of the reasons I enjoyed my time at St Andrews so much. As well as being able to learn from some of the best during my four years, I was advised to take the 'Teaching Module' in Fourth Year to test my skills in the classroom. Writing a 5000-word essay on the merits of Horrible Histories (much to Dr Matt McLean's bemusement) was definitely a highlight, but more importantly, the module made me realise that teaching was the profession for me and helped me to see what kind of an impact I could make outside of 'The Bubble'. Fast-forward two and a half years, I am proud to say that I am a Newly Qualified Teacher in history and politics at one of the most incredible and diverse schools in Yorkshire.

Needless to say, last year was an 'unprecedented' time to start my teacher training. My PGCE was cut short by three months, and teaching switched to remote learning overnight. I was lucky enough, however, to secure a job at my school in North Leeds and start my career in September. This year has been tough for teachers for numerous reasons. Talking to a sea of blank screens on Zoom and telling children to put their masks on properly was not how I had envisaged my first year at the front of the classroom! However, this is all trivial compared to the impact the pandemic has had on students. My school is in a relatively affluent area, but the majority of our students come from one of the most deprived areas in Leeds. One in ten of our students 'officially' receive free school meals, although the unofficial number has increased greatly during the pandemic. Throughout the lockdowns, School have organised their own hardship fund to raise money for food parcels and then deliver

them to our families most in need. It has been humbling to see School pull together to provide the support needed, and I am proud to be part of such an amazing community.

Another more positive change that has unfolded during the last twelve months has been, of course, the push for a more diverse curriculum. It has been an exciting time to join the history community, and I have loved playing a part in the diversification and decolonisation of the curriculum by showing children that there is more to history than the Battle of Hastings and the Nazis. One of my big pushes has been discussing gender in the classroom, especially when teaching my Year 7's about mediaeval kingship. As an ode to ME4815 with Dr Justine Firnhaber-Baker, I taught my groups about how cool, powerful and not wholly unusual Blanche of Castile was, which I hope they enjoyed as much as me! Bringing stories such as this from my time in St Andrews is something I consistently try to do in order to show my pupils that History doesn't have to be 'pale, male and stale', which I hope inspires them to take up History, too.

The decision to become a teacher, perhaps second to studying at St Andrews, is the best decision I have ever made. Although cliché to say, every day is a challenge, yet the role is incredibly rewarding. I couldn't recommend a career in teaching more, and I am so excited to be able to see where the future takes me and what doors I can help unlock for my students.



Alumni News

Andrew Craig, MA (Hons) Modern History (1971), has been recently involved in historical research again when he helped to create a photo essay about 'Dr Minor's Lambeth, 1872' to introduce his partner Mark Bunyan's online musical theatre drama, *Defining Dr Minor*. You can learn more at www.definingdrminor.com.

Eliot Wilson, MA History (2000) & MLitt Reformation Studies (2002), co-founded a digital-first culture, arts, and lifestyle journal called CulturAll (<https://culturall.io/>) in December 2020.

Ashley Douglas, MLitt Scottish Historical Studies (2016), is currently involved in the National Library of Scotland's 'Wee Windaes' project, which focuses on showcasing the richness and significance of the Scots language throughout Scotland's history, which won the title of 'Scots Project of the Year' at the 2020 Scots Language Awards. She has now contributed five 'Wee Windaes' to the website on a variety of topics.

Leif Bjarne Hammer, MLitt Early Modern History (2020), won the prestigious Norwegian Aker Scholarship and will begin a fully funded DPhil in History at the University of Oxford in October.

Nina Walter, MSt History (2020), has been appointed the George L. Mosse Distinguished Graduate Fellow in European Cultural History at the University of Wisconsin – Madison's Department of History and offered a scholarship for the completion of her PhD studies in the United States. She will begin her PhD this September.

Please send any alumni news that you would like to share in future editions to hiscommms@st-andrews.ac.uk

Scholarships in the School of History

Exceptional students are the lifeblood of a University and enabling the brightest and best students to attend the University of St Andrews, no matter their situation, is of the utmost importance to us. The University and the School of History are committed to ensuring that students of all backgrounds, regardless of circumstances, are afforded the opportunity to become a part of our unique community of learning and knowledge creation.

The critical importance of financial security to studying at St Andrews was recognised by the very first donor to our University. In 1450 Bishop Kennedy gifted the tithes of four local parishes to provide six bursaries. Since then, through the generosity of generations of donors, promising students have been supported in their studies here, enabling them to reach their full academic potential.

Our Wardlaw Scholarship programme for undergraduates was established in 2002 in response to the increasing financial pressures on students and works in tandem with our highly regarded outreach programmes to widen access to the University. Awards are made purely on the basis of financial need and help to reduce some of the financial stresses associated with university, allowing our students to unlock their potential and participate fully in rich and varied student life here in St Andrews.

Students such as Molly are currently benefitting from the generosity and foresight of our fellow alumni.

“ My time spent in St Andrews during second year has been incredible and I am amazed each day by the town that is so beautiful and rich in history. The scholarship had provided me with immeasurable support, allowing me to enjoy the full university experience and to get involved without limitations. I cannot emphasise enough how large the impact has been on my life here. ”

Molly, MA (Hons) Modern History. Recipient of a Wardlaw Scholarship.

We also offer several scholarships at postgraduate level, which help to cover the increasing costs associated with research degrees. Natalee has recently completed her PhD in Modern History and has been supported throughout by a generous donation.

“ My time at St Andrews has been a true gift, and I feel incredibly fortunate to have experienced it. Throughout the past three years my scholarship has paid for tuition fees, living costs, rent, research trips, and conference fees. I would have been lost without it, and I feel very privileged to have been the recipient of this scholarship. ”



Natalee, PhD in Modern History. Recipient of the Dorothy Miller Fellowship.

If you would like to contribute to Scholarships within the School of History, please contact our Development Officer Craig Rutherford (cr265@st-andrews.ac.uk) to talk about ways you can make a difference to the lives of our current and future students.

Academic books published in 2019 and 2020 by staff in the School of History



The *St Andrews Historian* is published by the School of History of the University of St Andrews, primarily for former students of St Andrews who read for an undergraduate or postgraduate degree in history or a joint degree involving history. Please visit the School of History website for electronic versions of this magazine: www.st-andrews.ac.uk/history

If you need to update your details – please contact the University’s Alumni Relations Office, who keep the mailing list up to date:

email: alumni@st-andrews.ac.uk

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