

# The St Andrews Historian

A magazine for History graduates of the University of St Andrews

Issue 2 – 2014



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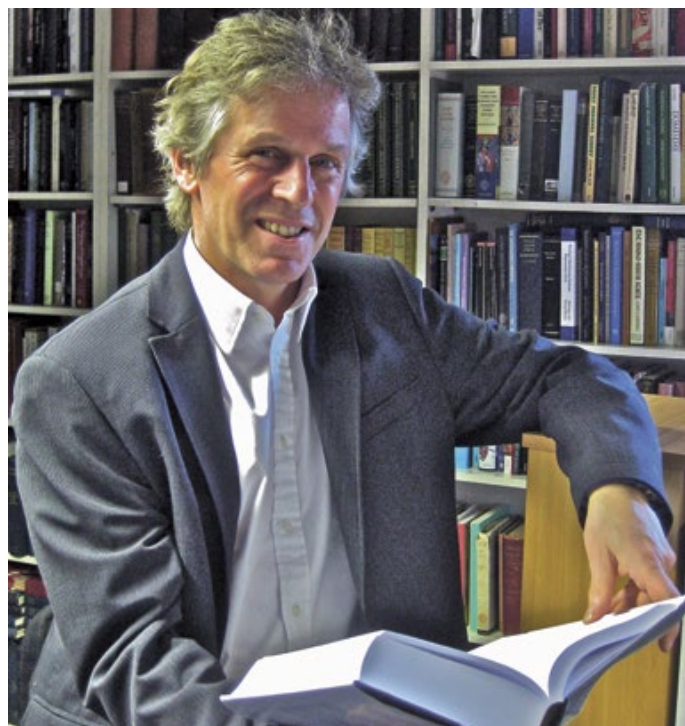
# A Letter from the Head of the School of History, Professor John Hudson

This second issue of the School of History magazine for alumni comes after the completion of the University's 600th Anniversary celebrations. We were delighted that two of those honoured at a special 600th Anniversary Academic Celebration were historians, Diarmaid MacCulloch and Natalie Zemon Davis. Profiles of both appear on the page opposite, profiles which show why they were such obvious candidates for honorary degrees: the quality of their scholarship, the wide accessibility of their work, and their engagement with issues of contemporary interest. Both have been and will continue to be great friends of History at St Andrews.

Both also have come to the attention of a wider public through media other than books. Natalie Davis was the consultant for one of the finest of historical films, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, whilst Diarmaid MacCulloch has made television series of astonishing breadth: 'How God made the English' and 'A History of Christianity'. The contribution made by St Andrews staff to television history has also been extensive. You may, for example, have caught Bridget Heal's appearance on a documentary in which John Eliot Gardiner looks at Bach's choral music. Meanwhile Rob Bartlett's latest series, on the Plantagenets, will no doubt have been watched by many of you.

Often television history programming is linked to significant centenaries, as is clear from 2014's focus on the First World War. So far coverage arising from the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn has been surprisingly muted, despite or because of the run-up to the vote on Scottish independence. It will be particularly interesting to see how the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta is covered. Celebrating and analysing a document, especially one of limited visual impact, raises different issues for the programme maker compared with those raised by wars, discoveries, or personality-driven politics. It remains the responsibility of academic historians to make sure that all these celebrations are subject to proper scrutiny – but scrutiny need not mean disparagement.

Within the School over the last year a major new development has been the founding of the Institute of Intellectual History, under the leadership of Professor Richard Whatmore, who joined us in 2013. This Institute gathers the remarkably large number of academics in St Andrews who are interested in the history of ideas, academics not just within the School of History but also in Art History, Divinity, English, International Relations, and Philosophy. The Institute's inaugural lecture was given by John Robertson, Professor of the History of Political Thought at Cambridge, and – like some other events – is available as a podcast: [www.intellectualhistory.net/lecture-podcasts/](http://www.intellectualhistory.net/lecture-podcasts/). The Institute is already host to the archives of several highly distinguished intellectual historians; for further information on these and other aspects of the Institute's work, see [www.intellectualhistory.net/](http://www.intellectualhistory.net/).



Individuals too have enjoyed considerable success. Professor Ali Ansari has become President of the British Institute of Persian Studies. Dr Kate Ferris has won an AHRC Early Career Fellowship, to support her work on the place of alcohol in life in Fascist Italy. And Professor Rob Bartlett's latest book, *Why can the Dead do such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation*, won the Prize for World/European History in the American Publishers Awards for Professional and Scholarly Excellence. We look forward to bringing you more news from your university in the years to come.

**Editors' note {GR & KS}.** Modesty forbids Professor Hudson from also mentioning his own significant achievement: election as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, among whose ranks there are several other distinguished St Andrews historians.

# Honorary Graduates of the University – Distinguished Historians of our Age

In the early autumn of 2013, as part of the University's 600th Anniversary celebrations, the School of History was proud to promote the granting of the honorary degree of DLitt (honoris causa) to two distinguished historians, whose profiles we offer below.

## Natalie Zemon Davis

Natalie Zemon Davis is one of the world's most distinguished and best-known historians. She is famed for the depth of her archival research and her at once disciplined and vividly imagined reconstruction of the past. She received her doctorate from the University of Michigan in 1959 for her thesis on 'Protestantism and the printing workers of Lyon: a study in religion and social class'. She then taught at Brown University, University of York in Toronto, and the University of Toronto, before spending much of the 1970s at the University of California at Berkeley. In 1978 she moved to Princeton, where she was Henry Charles Lea Professor of History until 1996. She now retains connections with both Princeton and Toronto, residing in the latter city.

Professor Davis's influence upon scholars of early modern France and upon early modern cultural history has been immense. Her first book, published in 1975, was a highly influential set of

inter-related essays on *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*. Wider fame came with her acting as historical consultant for the film 'The Return of Martin Guerre' and from the book that she published on the same subject in 1983, while she has maintained an interest in the interplay between autobiography, story-telling and history in subsequent books. For many years she was working on a major study of the practice of gift-giving in early modern France, which appeared to acclaim in 2000. Like much of her other work, this displayed the interdisciplinary nature of her approach, seen most obviously in this case in the influence of the anthropologist Marcel Mauss upon her work. Professor Davis was also developing her ideas on the relationship between historical writing and historical film, and in 2000 published *Slaves on Screen: Film and Historical Vision*. Her interest in relations between religions and between cultures is manifest in her most recent book, *Trickster Travels: a Sixteenth-Century Muslim between Worlds*. In recognition of her distinction,

Professor Davis was chosen as President of the American Historical Association in 1987, and in 2010 she won the Holberg International Memorial Prize. But the range of honours bestowed upon her goes beyond those of the immediate academic profession: in 2012 she became a Companion of the Order of Canada, and last year she was presented with the 2012 National Humanities Medal by President Obama.



## Diarmaid MacCulloch

Diarmaid MacCulloch, Professor of the History of the Church at Oxford University, is one of the United Kingdom's leading public historians. He is the author of three formidably successful books that collectively have won some of the greatest prizes available to historians, while he has published a host of other books, essays and articles. His history of Christianity also became a lavish BBC series in 2009.

The MacCulloch family has a deep and long-standing connection with St Andrews, and in 1909 the university awarded an honorary degree to the Rev. Canon John Arnott MacCulloch, our honoree's grandfather, for his distinguished work on Scottish and European folklore. Professor MacCulloch himself was educated at Churchill College, Cambridge, where he graduated from the demanding school of Professor Geoffrey Elton. After twelve years teaching at Wesley College, Bristol, a Methodist institution, in 1990 he left to become a freelancer. Five years later he took up a Fellowship at St Cross College, Oxford, where he has held the chair in the History of the Church since 1997. The immediate fruits of the years between Wesley College and Oxford were his monumental



biography of Thomas Cranmer, the principal architect of the English Protestant church and the author of the superb liturgy that has somehow withstood numerous attempts at modernisation. In 2003 Professor MacCulloch also published his wonderful study of the European Reformation – *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* – a book of breathtaking range, balance and poise. But this, as it turned out, was only the preliminary to a still more ambitious work, *A History of Christianity*, subtitled 'the First Three Thousand Years!' Here the years at Wesley brought their ultimate reward, for he was able to expound a learning that ranged

across the whole of Christian history, including, as the title suggests, the Hebrew Bible in the millennium before Christ. For his contributions he has justly gained great academic recognition, including most notably election as a Fellow of the British Academy in 2001 and a knighthood for services to scholarship in 2012.

Professor MacCulloch's latest book, *Silence: a Christian History*, addresses a subject close to his heart. Through the centuries Christians have often kept silent: as an act of devotion or conscious aestheticism, but also through fear, prudence or ambition. Professor MacCulloch traces the history of these silences, those who imposed and enforced them, and those who suffered in silence: often a silence tortured by guilt and self-recrimination. It is a passionate book, but also a book of hope, as changing social mores permit the previously silent to find their voice. In an age where institutional churches are beginning, albeit with great reluctance, to embrace the reality of the twenty-first century, Professor MacCulloch makes clear that the oppression and intolerance that have so often characterised Christianity, a religion of charity and forgiveness, will not be forgotten.

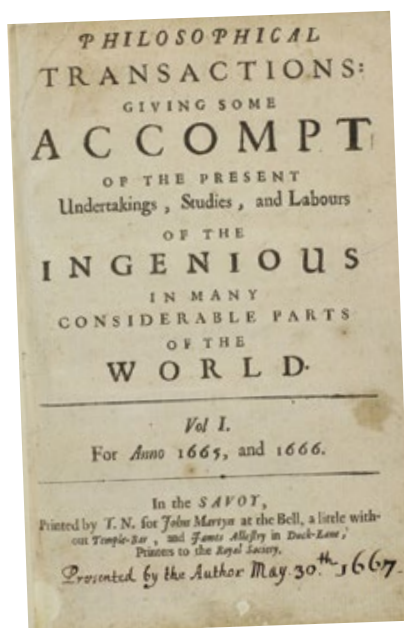
# Publishing the Philosophical Transactions: an AHRC-funded Research Project in Partnership with the Royal Society

Aileen Fyfe, Noah Moxham and Julie McDougall-Waters



In March 1665, the secretary of the Royal Society of London, Henry Oldenburg, issued the first number of what has become the world's oldest-running scientific journal: the *Philosophical Transactions: giving some accompt of the present undertakings, studies and labours of the ingenious in many considerable parts of the world* (commonly known as *Phil Trans*). Its pages were stuffed with extracts from his extensive correspondence with scholars across Europe, accounts of books that had come his way, and reports of experiments carried out in the Royal Society and elsewhere. Fast-forward to 2014, and *Phil Trans* is approaching its 350th anniversary. It is one of the most prestigious scientific journals around, publishing high-quality original research in themed special issues.

The two full-time researchers on the project, Noah Moxham and Julie McDougall-Waters, are systematically assessing the Royal Society's archival holdings on the *Phil Trans* (the photo shows Julie hard at work!). These include the correspondence of the early secretary-editors; the minute books of the eighteenth-century editorial committee; the reports of referees from the nineteenth-century onwards; and the financial ledgers. We are putting together a story that reveals the challenges and opportunities of scholarly publishing over the past 350 years.



Title page of the first issue of the *Philosophical Transactions* (1665)

Historians of science recognise the importance of *Phil Trans* in turning privately-conducted experiments and observations into publicly-acknowledged facts, and for communicating knowledge among the scholarly community throughout Europe. Sociologists of science and scholars working on science communication have treated *Phil Trans* as a corpus of texts for investigating the evolution of the modern scientific article, with its very particular literary and rhetorical format. But nobody has yet studied the behind-the-scenes story of its editorial and commercial practices. That is what our project is doing, thanks to an AHRC award of £790,000 to Dr Aileen Fyfe, the project leader.



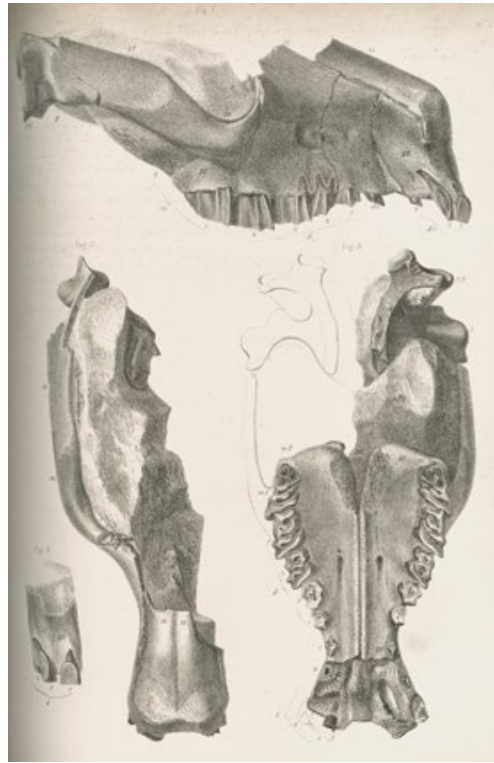
Dr Julie McDougall-Waters at work in the Royal Society's library

One of the intriguing issues is that *Phil Trans* seems to have been widely read and highly respected, and yet was distinctly unprofitable until the mid-twentieth century. Despite Oldenburg's initial success in making about £40 a year from his venture into publishing, for most of its history *Phil Trans* was routinely draining the Royal Society's coffers. The commitment to high-quality illustrations was a major factor. In the mid-nineteenth century, the celebrated comparative anatomist, Richard Owen, published a series of lavishly illustrated papers: two of those papers ran up printing costs high for their day, of £500! The scale of the problem can be seen in the 1868 figures, when the printing, engraving, binding and distribution costs of *Phil Trans* and its sister journal, *Proceedings of the Royal Society* (f.1832), came to £1,650, yet the journals generated just £371 in sales income. The shortfall was met, as ever, from the Society's general income (mostly from fellows' membership fees). The contrast with today, when journals are usually considered income-generators for their sponsoring societies, is astonishing.

Although the Committee of Papers was increasingly aware of the need for reform, it was not until the early twentieth century that any significant change was agreed upon. In 1907, the biologist and council member, E Ray Lankester, proposed that the cost of each paper submitted should be estimated and considered by the Committee of Papers alongside referees' reports on content. Thus we know that when the Committee considered J H Ashworth's paper on the nervous system of worms, in 1908, the members were told that the expected cost was £96, of which £41 was for illustrations. They accepted the paper, but placed limits on the illustration costs that would be covered by the Society. Despite such measures, *Phil Trans* continued to cost more than it earned well into the twentieth century, suggesting that the desire to produce authoritative and well-illustrated science was more important than profit.

As well as the finances, our project has uncovered fascinating glimpses of the processes for refereeing papers that are the precursors of modern scholarly peer review. Although *Phil Trans* is believed to have been the first to institute formal peer review, there was – unsurprisingly – no clear-cut moment of transition. The official process for selecting papers for publications was in theory regularised after the Society officially took over the management of the journal in 1752, but the fact that all papers considered for *Phil Trans* had first been read at one of the Society's meetings meant that those who acted as gate-keepers to the meetings (e.g. the long-serving and autocratic President, Sir Joseph Banks) were in fact exercising significant invisible control over the contents of the journal.

The journal's relationship to manuscript culture has also proved fascinating. It is well-known that the early *Phil Trans* relied heavily upon Oldenburg's extensive European correspondence networks. But a hundred years later, despite the emergence of printed scientific journals, it is clear that personal communication and the circulation of manuscript papers remained important channels for the communication



One of Richard Owen's many (expensive) illustrations: the skull of an extinct South American mammal, published in 1853



Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society for over 41 years until his death in 1820

of research. And it was sometimes necessary to be careful whom you lent a paper to... In March 1783 Joseph Banks received a paper of observations of the effects of a series of earthquakes in Calabria from the English resident ambassador at the court of Naples, Sir William Hamilton. It was read to the Royal Society shortly afterwards and scheduled for publication in *Phil Trans* that summer. But then three things happened: Banks went off to spend the summer in Lincolnshire, as was his habit; the Foreign Secretary, the great Whig politician Charles James Fox, asked for a copy of the paper to read at his leisure; and the Secretary of the Society, Joseph Planta, failed to send the paper off to the printer immediately. Fox, who was also Leader of the House of Commons at this time in coalition with Lord North, heedlessly gave his copy of the paper to a journalist, and, as Banks remarked irritably in a note on Fox's letter, the *St James's Chronicle* printed the whole thing. Fox himself was generally fairly careless of newspapers – he actually collected the most vituperative caricatures and satires against him, and there were lots of those – but his actions

meant that under the rules the Society had set for itself the paper could not now appear in the *Phil Trans*. Several other newspapers subsequently reprinted Hamilton's paper, adding insult to injury. The incident led to a tightening of the circulation of papers sent to the Society prior to publication, but it also reveals a growing preoccupation with originality in science publishing.

By the time we complete the project in 2017, selecting which of these stories to include in our book will be quite a challenge. Before then, 2015 is the anniversary year, and there will be a variety of academic and public activities at the Royal Society and on

its website, including a conference, a reminiscence event for fellows of the Royal Society, and an exhibition and illustrated catalogue. We hope St Andrews alumni will be able to enjoy at least some aspects of this commemorative period.

URL list:

<https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/philosophicaltransactions/>  
<http://royalsociety.org/events/>

# Communicating the Past: the School of History, the Media and the Digital Age

**Katie Stevenson**, Senior Lecturer in Late Mediaeval History, has been one of the Communications Officers in the School over the past two years, and has been the driving force in moving the School into much greater use of digital social media.




We are constantly being told by the media that the internet has revolutionised the way we communicate; even the UK Ministry of Defence has acknowledged that when a Russian warship entered Scottish waters in January 2014, the MoD found out on Twitter. In the new age of Open Access (a hotly-debated mandate to provide unrestricted – i.e., ‘free’ – access to peer-reviewed scholarly research) historians have been in the vanguard, making their research accessible to more diverse audiences than ever before. We are increasingly moving towards utilizing enormous databases, complex GIS mapping and big data, to name but a few of the innovations set to change the course of historical studies in the coming decades. Yet pencils and paper remain the mainstay of much historical research, and traditional methods of disseminating research ideas and findings – lectures and books – have been supplemented, but certainly not yet surpassed, by digital media. At present we are all grappling with new technologies without really being sure where they might lead.

Similar confusion surrounded the transition from manuscript to print five hundred years ago. As St Andrews historian Professor Andrew Pettegree demonstrates in his new book on *The Invention of News*, publishers immediately saw that print would allow them to reach a new audience, but could not fathom quite how. For example, the newspaper, which first appeared in the early seventeenth century, was not a sure-fire success. In fact it took two centuries to establish its supremacy as the principal vehicle for news, a supremacy which is now, of course, fast dissolving.

In 2012 the School of History reviewed its communications. We found that we were hosting dozens of events, working on fascinating projects and publishing influential research,


but we had no system for communicating this to people beyond the ‘Ivory Tower’. And so, with some trepidation, we launched on Twitter, Facebook, Wordpress and YouTube. The results have been astounding. Our number of Twitter followers runs well into four figures, and this is now how we communicate with many alumni, institutions, supporters and students. Facebook attracts a more local audience, mostly our undergraduate and postgraduate body. Our Wordpress blog – where we have the space to elaborate on events, and explore and discuss matters at length – has had nearly 40,000 views from all corners of the globe in just short of two years. As we continue to grow our social media presence, and to use the sites in more adventurous ways, we hope that you, our alumni, will want to follow our progress through your platform of choice. As historians, our inherent instinct is to look back, but we are excited about the possibilities of the future and look forward to sharing these with you.

 follow us on Twitter  
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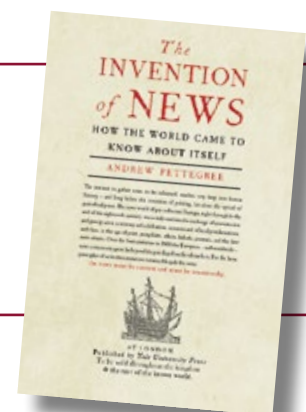
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Professor Andrew Pettegree's *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know About Itself* was published earlier this year by Yale University Press. There are now several historians of media in the School of History, including Dr Chandrika Kaul who has published extensively on media and the British Empire. The School runs an occasional Media History seminar organized by Dr Aileen Fyfe, who is interested in nineteenth-century science publishing.



# Language and Nationalism between Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Russia: the Case of Latgale



**Catherine Gibson** graduated in 2013 with an MA(Hons) in English and Modern History, and she is now a graduate student at University College, London. Last summer she spent time on a research trip to the Baltic which she describes here.

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth disappeared from the map in 1795. From its territories, the nation states of what are now Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine emerged during the following two centuries. However, nestled in the borderlands between these successful nation states were many historic regions and peoples that are now largely unknown.

Latgale, in present-day eastern Latvia, is an excellent example. It forms the Latvian border with Belarus, Lithuania, Russia and, during the interwar period, Poland. Latgale retains a distinct regional identity largely due to the continuing use of Latgalian – officially it is a ‘dialect’ of Latvian but arguments are made for it being a separate language. I first became interested in Latgale while taking Dr Tomasz Kamusella’s module on the break-up of Poland-Lithuania into nation states in my third year, and went on to write my fourth-year dissertation on Nazi population policy in this region during the 1941 occupation.

During the summer of 2013, thanks to a generous scholarship from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland, I spent six weeks researching the development of the uses of printed Latgalian in the long nineteenth century. I travelled to Latvia to view manuscripts in Riga, Daugavpils and Rēzekne, and to work on my Russian and Latvian language skills.

I found that Latgalian was first printed in the mid-eighteenth century due to the efforts of Jesuit priests in Wilno (Vilnius) when Latgale, as the Inflanty *Voivodeship*, was governed by Poland-Lithuania (1561-1772). After Latgale was incorporated into the Russian Empire in 1772, devotional works continued to be printed in Latgalian during the early nineteenth century, but Latgalian was affected by the imperial ban on

use of the Latin script between 1864 and 1904. After the ban was lifted, Latgalian underwent a degree of standardisation and a number of Latgalian newspapers were published in the years before the First World War. This study therefore serves as a reminder of the multiple ethno-linguistic national projects which emerged in the region, in addition to those more widely known national projects which successfully formed titular nation-states. My findings were published in the Polish Academy of Sciences’ journal *Sprawy Narodowosciowe/Nationalities Affairs* at the end of 2013.

During my stay in Latvia, I was also invited to participate in the workshop, ‘Life as Testimony: a Tribute to Daugavpils’, organised by Professor Irena Saleniece at the Oral History Centre in the University of Daugavpils. Along with local Masters and PhD students, I participated in seminars on the history of Daugavpils and shadowed life-story interviews with elderly residents of the city about their memories of interwar Latvia and the early Soviet period. I was also lucky enough to stay at the recently opened Mark Rothko Centre in Daugavpils – the artist’s birthplace (at that time, the Russian imperial city of Dvinsk). My colleagues were all extremely welcoming and enthusiastic about sharing the history of their city with me and I made many contacts and friends.

I am continuing to pursue my interest in Latgale and Baltic history by doing an International Masters in Economy, State and Society with reference to Central Eastern Europe and Russia (IMESS), specialising in the Nation, History and Society track. My first year is spent at UCL’s School of Slavonic and East European Studies in London, followed by a year at the University of Tartu in Estonia doing Baltic Sea Region Studies. Throughout this time I am focusing on acquiring some of the many languages required to study the history of this complex multi-ethnic and multi-lingual region.



The workshop participants in Daugavpils Unity Square



The main building of the University of Daugavpils

# In the History Classroom – Continuity and Change

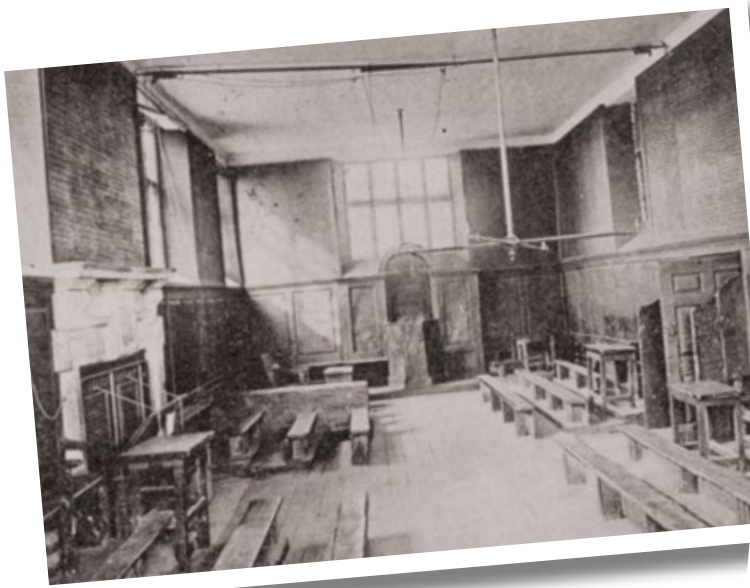
**Graham E Seel** is Head of History at St Paul's School, London, and read History at St Andrews between 1982 and 1986. He is the author of *King John, An Underrated King* (Anthem Press, 2012), and he can be contacted at [ges@stpaulsschool.org.uk](mailto:ges@stpaulsschool.org.uk). Here he shares with us his own perspective on recent developments in History teaching and offers pointers to the future.



*Tempus fugit.* The speed with which time passes never ceases to unsettle. Whilst it seems only yesterday that I was strolling the streets of the Old Grey Town with my red gown billowing in the breeze, it is in fact disturbingly close to three decades since I made my last appearance at a Sunday pier-walk (not unlike the one on this magazine's front cover) or emerged from a lecture room in Saint Salvator's quad. Nonetheless, I can still recollect some particular experiences with an almost peculiar clarity. Prominent amongst these are visions of Tuesday afternoons between the hours of 2 and 4 pm, occasions when third year historians would seek a place on one of the wooden chairs placed outside Geoffrey Parker's office on the top floor of the History Department building. These were Professor Parker's surgery hours and they were always popular, hence the carefully arranged chairs. On one occasion I recall waiting in line to discuss an essay I had submitted the week before on the European witch craze. I had found it an especially compelling topic and had read a considerable chunk of the available literature. Marrying my reading of Macfarlane et al to my notes from a course I had taken the year before on social anthropology, I had developed what I thought was a compelling new interpretation for why witches were persecuted in the 1600s.

In short, I argued that effective persecution amounted to a manifestation of efficacious authority. Professor Parker was effusive in his observations and praise: 'a compelling and clever thesis'; 'you must give this as a formal paper'. I still have the essay and read it through recently. Professor Parker was without question over-generous, but I now realise that the effect of this praise marked the moment when I resolved upon becoming a history teacher.

My teaching career has since then stretched over four schools, all in the independent sector. Some schools are of course ahead of others, but it is interesting to reflect upon how tools of the classroom have been changing during this period: chalk, blackboard, videotapes and slides have already in many places been replaced by smart TVs, interactive whiteboards, data projectors, Youtube, computer tablets and wireless technology. Of course, new technology brings with it new challenges, but we must not forget the days of having to share with several colleagues a single ragged videotape and an overly large (and usually temperamental) TV hosted on a trolley determined to fashion its own course of travel. From today's standpoint one looks back and is tempted to ask: how did we cope?



A classroom at Harrow School, around 1900  
(Courtesy of the University of St Andrews Library, ID. JV-32556)



A classroom ancient...



There is also no doubt that the administrative burden has grown, not only in response to increasingly complex internal procedures in schools but also, especially, because of the ever-growing demands of the examination boards. The delivery of controlled assessment and coursework is now so hedged in with rules and procedures that they make the passing of the 1867 Reform Act seem blessedly straightforward. Similarly, the large number of forms to be filled by a teacher seeking to take students out of the classroom and into an historical landscape is a process not for the fainthearted, if nonetheless invariably worth the effort.

When I started teaching in 1987 it was said that one needed periodically to move schools in order to keep oneself fresh. Whilst there remains obvious truth in this, the constant bombardment of initiatives from successive governments – and most especially the current Department for Education in England – has rather changed the equation. I recognise that change has always been a constant and appreciate, as Churchill said, 'To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.' Yet to seek to change *everything at once* imposes certain stresses and challenges, some of which are rewarding to deal with and yet others seem only to impede the rhythms of the classroom. Historians nonetheless owe some thanks to the current Secretary of State for Education in England, Michael Gove, for placing History at the centre of a sustained national debate, focussing on 'What is History?', 'What periods of History should be taught in schools?' and 'How should History be taught?'. As Oscar Wilde remarked, 'It's better to be talked about than not talked about at all.' As a consequence, even as I was writing this piece, a colleague who teaches Computing dropped me an email asking me what I thought about the latest exchange between Mr Gove and his

Labour shadow, Tristram Hunt, and wondering if I have ever made use of *Blackadder Goes Forth* in my teaching of the First World War. (The answer to the second question is 'yes'.) Meanwhile, it is encouraging to report that my inbox is regularly populated by enquiries from those in professions other than teaching – mostly banking – seeking to enter the classroom.

As we move forward how will the History classroom change? Predictions are always dangerous, but it is very likely that within the next few years all students will have tablet computers (indeed, many classrooms have already taken on the appearance of a franchise of PC World), textbooks will be electronic and history exams will include video material. Podcasts will become de rigueur. Yet at the same time the essential requirements of good History teaching will not – dare I say, must not – change a jot: an honest enthusiasm; an ability to narrate a historical narrative in a clear and interesting way; a capacity to ask pertinent questions; a palpable sense of pleasure obtained from being in the company of those one teaches. These would seem to me to be the key constants required for good teaching – and I am eternally grateful that during my time at St Andrews I was regularly exposed to just such. Oh, and to praise.



... and classrooms modern: seminar debates, staff-student co-presenting, and IT labs for the humanities

# View from afar: Iranian Studies at the University of St Andrews

**Professor Ali Ansari** is Director of the Institute of Iranian Studies, embedded in the School of History, and is current President of the British Institute of Persian Studies.



The University of St Andrews has enjoyed a long tradition of teaching Middle East history and Arabic but the development of Persian and Iranian studies has been much more recent. The Institute of Iranian Studies was founded in the School of History in 2006 with a view to developing a national centre of excellence in a part of the Middle East that had at best enjoyed a marginal role in most departments and institutes of Middle East studies in the United Kingdom. This in many ways reflected funding priorities towards the Arab and Islamic world, but also the reality that research in Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution had proved a difficult and often problematic venture. Before the revolution, there was a healthy exchange of students and scholars, with many UK-based academics taking advantage of opportunities to improve their Persian through long sabbaticals in the country. After the revolution, although some UK universities were able to maintain their 'year abroad' for students studying Persian, the temperamental nature of the relationship between Iran and the West meant that long term planning was difficult. In time, university administrations fell out of love with Iran, and Persian studies was rapidly on the way to becoming a minority interest.



Former president Khatami with the former Principal Dr Brian Lang, opening the institute

But a crisis can often yield an opportunity and in 2006, following a generous donation, it was decided to launch a new Institute of Iranian Studies in St Andrews as a focus for the development of the field. The strategy for the Institute was founded on the twin pillars of a dedicated postgraduate course and the development of a Persian-language Iranian studies collection for the university library. The development of the library – largely it must be said from scratch – would provide St Andrews with a durable resource that would firmly situate it as a centre

of excellence for research. The postgraduate course would provide a focus for teaching while preparing students for research programmes, and, of course, provide an 'income' in both financial terms and student numbers, which would clearly reflect the growing interest and relevance of the subject. The Institute was launched with much public fanfare (and no little tribulation – but that account will have to wait!) by former President Mohammad Khatami, whose visit resulted in nationwide coverage for the Institute and the University including the decision by Channel 4 News to anchor its 7pm bulletin that evening from Saint Salvator's Quad.

There can be little doubt that we hit the ground running, but the success of the Institute has been about paying attention just as much to details as to the longer term vision that we have had. Indeed, central to our strategy has been the belief that patience and methodical progress are key to the development of the Institute. And this has yielded results. Since 2006 we have built and catalogued a collection of over 5,000 volumes containing one of the largest concentrations of Persian-language periodicals anywhere in the UK and very probably in Europe. What we lack in manuscripts we make up in published sources that few libraries are able to match, providing the University with an invaluable resource. We have also been able to increase staff provision partly through the expansion of student numbers and further fundraising that has provided seed money for the development of Persian language and literature teaching through the School of Modern Languages. We probably now have more academic staff working on aspects of Iranian history than any other higher education institution in the United Kingdom. But building on this academic base we have extended our reach into the policy world, emphasising our relevance – and 'impact' – to other institutions, not necessarily governmental ones, who are thinking about and developing policy positions towards Iran. In this context, we are one of the few institutes to have affiliates drawn from the world of journalism as well as honorary lecturers and associate fellows from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Austrian Foreign Ministry. We also invite input from politicians and policy makers from the UK, the rest of Europe, the USA and of course, when possible, Iran. The Institute therefore functions as a centre of academic excellence that connects with the policy world and seeks actively to apply that excellence to current problems. It makes for a dynamic environment and one in which students can benefit from diverse opinions and problems, from the conceptual to the practical.

For my own part, the Institute offers a stimulating environment for the pursuit of my own research, with excellent colleagues, students and of course an enormously rich resource in the library. I am currently working on two papers, both of which have relevance for our contemporary understanding of Iran. The first relates to Anglo-Iranian relations and in particular nuclear cooperation in the 1970s, drawing on papers released relatively recently. These show that potential for collaboration (the promise was never fulfilled) was enormous, with suggestions that Iran and Britain ought to form a joint nuclear company. The second relates to my longer term work on Iranian identity and historiography with an assessment of the intellectual contribution of one of the giants of early Iranian nationalism, Mohammad Ali Foroughi (d.1942). He has been largely airbrushed out of official narratives in part because of his adherence to the central ideas of the Enlightenment, and because it has only been in the last decade that his papers have been collected, edited and published, allowing historians for the first time to see the breadth of his vision.

Foroughi's detailed understanding of the necessity for constitutionalism and good governance go to the heart of the problems that face Iran and the Iranians to this day.

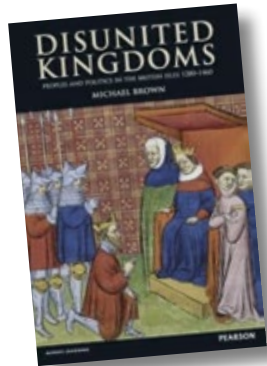


An Iranian Institute conference

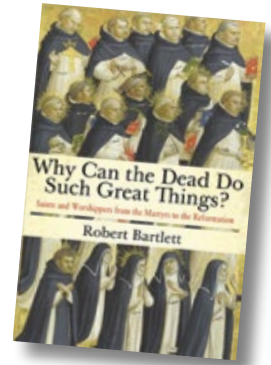


Depictions of seventeenth-century Europeans at the Chehel Sotoon Palace, Isfahan.

# Academic Books Published in 2013 by Staff in the School of History



**Robert Bartlett**  
*Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?  
Saints and Worshippers from  
the Martyrs to the Reformation*  
(Princeton University Press; ISBN: 978-1400848782)

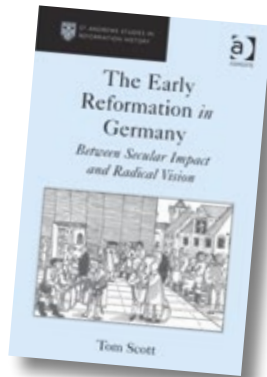


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**Michael Hunter Brown**  
*Disunited Kingdoms:  
Peoples and Politics in the British Isles 1280-1460*  
(Pearson; ISBN: 978-1405840590)

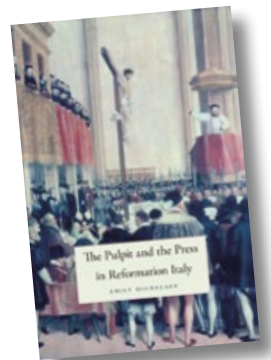
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**Emily Michelson**  
*The Pulpit and the Press in Reformation Italy*  
(Harvard University Press; ISBN: 978-0674072978)



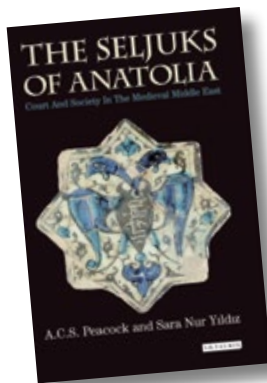
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**Tom Scott**  
*The Early Reformation in Germany:  
Between Secular Vision and Radical Impact*  
(Ashgate; ISBN: 978-1409468981)



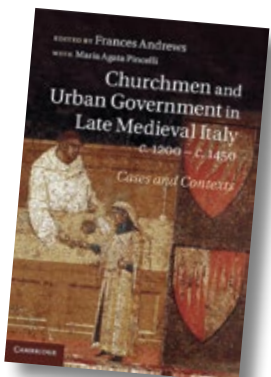
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**Frances Andrews (ed.)**  
*Churchmen and Urban Government in  
Late Medieval Italy, c.1200–c.1450:  
Cases and Contexts*  
(Cambridge University Press; ISBN: 978-1107044265)



\* \* \* \* \*

**A.C.S. [Andrew] Peacock and  
Sara Nur Yildiz (eds.)**  
*The Seljuks of Anatolia:  
Court and Society in the Medieval Middle East*  
(IB Tauris; ISBN 978-1848858879)



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