

The President's Column



I am delighted to be taking over from Anne Curry as President of the Historical Association for the next three years. Anne has been a terrific president and I know her record of visiting local branches will be hard to match, but I do look forward to meeting as many of you as possible during the next three years at branch meetings, conferences and other events. Like many of you, I have been a supporter of the HA for quite a while and I remember first attending a lecture at the Bromley and Beckenham branch, when I was still at school. Our teacher, Gwenda Pearson, took a group of A-level history students to a couple of events organised by the HA, including a conference, and it made quite an impression on us. It is so true that you never forget the teachers who influence you at school, and Gwenda and her colleague Jessica Saraga certainly had a tremendous effect on my later interests. They both taught sixteenth and seventeenth century history at A-level, so it is no surprise that I have ended up as an early modernist. As a lecturer I am still drawing on the information and understanding that these two inspirational teachers gave me when I was at school. I am sure that many of you will also remember history lessons with the same enthusiasm that I do! Taking on the role of President has also made me think back to when I first joined the HA. I can date this precisely, because I subscribed to the HA's journal *History* and I still have the volumes on my shelves at work. My very first issue for February 1976 included an article by my then PhD supervisor at London University, Conrad Russell, on 'Parliamentary History in Perspective, 1604-1629', which has since become an absolute classic. Conrad is another example of how much teachers influence their students. I arrived at university convinced that I wanted to be an expert on the Tudors, but it was not long before I decided that the English Civil War was going to be my specialist subject. The journal is in its 96th year and is still going strong, of course, with recent articles on The Dissolution of the Monasteries, Witchcraft in Exeter and Oswald Mosley, which I have read with great interest. The

HA's *Short Guide to Records* was another essential publication for me as a postgraduate and it is good to see that these are now available to members on our website – if you have not looked at them, they are a marvellous starting point for research into a variety of records such as the hearth tax, tithe maps and quarter sessions records.

More recently, I have been involved with the HA organisation at local level as a member of the branch committee in Canterbury. I joined the committee as our departmental representative in 2002 and have hugely enjoyed meeting a variety of lecturers over the years and benefiting from their expertise. Our branch has also been active in organising special events for local schools including the Great Debate, which this year is on the topic of 'Why does History matter to you'. One of the great attractions of the HA is its wide appeal to historians with different requirements. Students, teachers, researchers and those with a more general interest can all benefit from the branch lectures, publications and the website. The web has, of course, transformed the way in which we access information, just as the new technology of printing did in Europe in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The HA web pages have a terrific range of information, which falls into the category of Public History or History for all, and if you have not looked at these pages recently, then there are some very exciting developments. These pages are open access and include podcasts by Nick Barratt about using archives for the first time and how to research local history, as well as information about careers and professional development for historians. There are free samples of some of the HA's publications and lots of information about forthcoming events across the country. You may have a younger relative or friend studying history at school or university, or training as a history teacher, so do introduce them to the HA. You will be encouraging the careers of our future historians.

As I am writing the new academic year is just beginning. I started my teaching this year, though, with an adult education class for a course on the 1611 King James Version of the Bible. I am sharing the teaching with colleagues from English, Music and Theology, and my contribution was on the sixteenth century English Bibles. My students were all rather shocked to discover that William Tyndale, the first translator of the New Testament in print, was executed as a heretic by the imperial authorities of Charles V. The publication of the Bible in English had such an enormous impact on so many areas of life, not just on religion, but also on political debate and even on people's views about the role of women in society. These, of course, are ongoing debates and it is worth delving into the history of such an important publication, in order to understand how it has shaped some of our own terms of reference today. It is also another reminder of how influential the access to information can be. In this 400th anniversary year since the publication of the King James Bible there are still a number of exhibitions, lectures, concerts and other events to enjoy across the country, including some branch talks in Swansea, Bedford and elsewhere. It is good to see that the HA is so involved in this national commemoration. I wish you all well during this coming year of HA events.

Jackie Eales