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## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Steering Committee held on 9 May 2015 at University of the West of England, 11a.m.**

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Present: Dr Andrew Dilley Co-Convenor (Aberdeen), Dr Marcus Collins Co-Convenor (Loughborough), Dr Daniel Grey, Secretary (Plymouth), Dr Robert McNamara (Ulster); Dr Andrew Roach (Glasgow); Dr Richard Hawkins (Wolverhampton), Dr Karin Dannehl (EHS), Dr Daniel Gordon (Edge Hill), Dr Philip Ollerenshaw (UWE Bristol), Dr Charles Insley (Manchester), Dr Rachel Bright (Keele); Dr Rachel Lock-Lewis (South Wales); Dr Joan Allen (Newcastle); Dr Paul Corthorn (Queen's University), Mr Tom O'Donnell (History Lab).

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Dr Sarah Bastow (Huddersfield), Dr Jamie Wood (Lincoln), Meg Arnot (Roehampton), Dr Mark Clapson (Westminster), Prof. Rainier Schulze (Essex), Dr Bill Aird (Edinburgh); Dr Sara Wolfson (Canterbury Christ Church)

### **1. Minutes of the Last Steering Committee Meeting**

*Confirmed but p.2 Ryan Air*

### **2. Matters Arising from the Minutes**

Liaison meeting with research councils (discussion between AD and Maureen Galbraith and materials from the Economic History Society have been circulated)

SC role and format – DG to seek reports from regional and representative posts a month in advance.

MC returns to question of SC running. Question of whether we cut down on the number of meetings?

Joan Allen: Perhaps we should combine October and plenary? But we are all working on different calendars

Charles Insley: Well, I am in the middle of marking but appreciate a few hours on the train to do this

AD: Strong case for rolling the SC into the Plenary. The only time it would be useful to have them separate is if we needed to make our own fundamental decisions that you then wouldn't want to combine with the meeting. Because one governs the policy of the organisation it might be awkward to then be presenting those decisions 2 hours later?

Robert McNamara: Could we move the plenary to February then?

Karin Dannehl: To what extent is the plenary the best forum for announcing matters? Especially with social media being able to push out information that matters to those who are attracted to the talks?

MC: The idea of having a steering committee meeting separate from the plenary is probably a good idea – am not sure everyone is coming to hear about our latest accounts! So let's keep this in November.

*DG to discuss with Sue possibility of a SC meeting before the 11am plenary (say 9.30am?) and scrapping the October meeting.*

AGREED.

Robert McNamara: Can we put on the next agenda to consider moving the plenary to February?

AD: This might be something we can discuss in November when the room bookings are done, otherwise it can be done over email.

### **3. Convenors' Reports:**

#### **i. Succession**

AD: We have had a formal resignation from Rainier Schulze who is making an enormous number of films about German history at present, and he has stepped down as SC member and treasurer. Fortunately, and we are very grateful for this, Richard Hawkins (Wolverhampton) has agreed to step in as treasurer. This means we are  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way there in terms of changing of the guard. However, this is likely my last meeting and so it has become a bit more pressing to arrange my successor as co-convenor and ideally having a handover in the summer. So this is a second call for SC members to come in and take over this very interesting

role which really gives a chance to understand history in the UK in a way that is not really apparent from other positions.

MC: This is a fantastic opportunity, and we would welcome anyone stepping up for this – but especially since the current continuing exec is exclusively white, male, and based in England: it would be particularly good if we moved past that with the next convenor.

AD: Part of the reason we came to Bristol is that the HA are holding their meeting on the same day. Marcus has a few points from that discussion to share.

MC: I was really pleased to be at the conference over the last day, as well as a meeting on Thursday evening with the executive of this. We seem to have areas where we can collaborate with them if we wish to. Becky Sullivan is organising the next conference in a year's time, and she is keen to operate a sort of 'matchmaking service' between historians who want to do impact case studies and teachers. Most of the HA are very passionate teachers keen to increase academic involvement, and Becky is very keen to likewise increase academic involvement in the HA conference (20-21 May 2016). The emphasis here should be on knowledge exchange as a 2 way street, and that you might have a more developed idea for an impact case study having spoken to teachers. Becky will be at a meeting of the secondary committee of the HA in a month's time – this will be chaired by Catherine Burn, who runs teacher training at Oxford, and is also keen to work with us on this. I will draft something shortly for this meeting that they can consider.

AD: The idea of HUK functioning in a way to link up people working in universities and schools is a really good one, something we can offer to subscribers that we need to think about.

Charles Insley: Something that has come up recently is that 1 impact case study is equivalent to 5 monographs. So this is something we really need to think about.

AD: The chances are that we are likely to move to increasing numbers of impact case studies per capita, and since this is a really hard thing to do, then we should definitely be talking to teachers – this is something very hard to do well in working with schools.

#### **4. Treasurer's Report**

AD: Accounts have been circulated, and this is largely good news for a change. We have now pulled in sufficient to cover our costs for next year already, and we have a healthy balance in the bank. When one turns this into an annual

accounting system, we look likely to have a £2500 surplus, although this relies on us bringing in another 20-25 subscriptions. The new treasurer will doubtless want to look at how we might want to raise funds in the future, but at least we are handing on a projected surplus. As the changing of the guard completes this is something we can move forward with.

## **5. Secretary's Report**

*DG urges SC to give full details of information they may want shared at SC meetings in advance*

## **6. Website and Social Media**

MC: This is something I put together in a morning. What it consists of informationally is not much different to the existing website. I have tried to spruce this up a bit, but all of this information about activities and minutes is straight from the old website. The news is integrated with Twitter but not very well – this is one of many areas we will have to customise the wordpress template. The teaching area is the only one I have begun to populate. Jamie Wood and I intend having the teaching area duplicate another site we are both working on, History\_Europe. Lots of this is duplicating material from the old Warwick teaching history site, but this is really useful stuff and we need to think about what else we might want to put there. You have all very kindly sent in your bios, and photos, we also have a link to websites of history departments in the UK. We have had technical issues, which I will discuss with Rachel, but in terms of hosting we need to have the ac.uk. address – we are buying the domain name off the IHR, and it is likely the site is going to be hosted on the University of Lincoln's web server and this will give us some technical help. It is not however going to be the property of Uni Lincoln, but a multiauthored document and when Jamie is no longer working for HUK he will not be running off with the website! We have set up a rota system of 5 people meant to be tweeting each week – that has not always worked so well and we need to sustain the account much better than we are doing at present. If anybody would like to get involved in tweeting please let me and Jamie know and we would be delighted to either add you to the rota, or to just tweet things of interest to the profession on an ad-hoc basis.

AD: We owe Jamie and Marcus a great deal of thanks, but I think there are a few issues with Twitter – this is a challenge and I think we do need people to help with this.

Daniel Gordon: Thanks so much

Rachel Bright: This just looks so much better

MC: Thanks, although I am aware there is a lot to do.

AD: Stuff on the research side could be useful in the call for materials? The plenary will certainly be something which we can add to this.

MC: Let me know if there are any history blogs out there which you would recommend – I am hoping that we will not be generating all that much material. This is meant to be a shop window, with the main business of HUK being done face to face.

## **7. Plenary 2015**

AD – we have 3 speakers agreed, and the title will be something like “Reflecting on the REF” which seems very timely as it will be very likely there will be a consultation on the REF just closing when the plenary is happening. Chris Wickham and Becky Sullivan (who was an impact case study assessor) will both be speaking. It will be very good to have an angle towards impact and working with schools that will be very beneficial.

MC: Professor Susan-Mary Grant (Newcastle) will be our 3<sup>rd</sup> speaker offering illuminating and forthright views on the REF process.

AD: I will mock up a flyer and circulate this, and I think we will get a very good turnout for this event – and perhaps even a profit. We can really showcase the progress we are making here.

MC: We spent £700 on catering last time round – do we want to go outside of Senate House for lunch

Karin Dannehl: Perhaps we could have the SC in the morning and then schedule the plenary itself for after lunch, and avoid this?

Charles Insley: We could start the plenary at 1:30?

Rachel Bright: Running till 5 or so might actually be better for everyone?

AD: For this year we are constrained by room bookings

Charles Insley: a longer tea break might still allow networking opportunities?

Rachel Bright : Or post-plenary drinks?

MC: We could certainly do this, but also advertise a conference lunch (not paid for by us) that we could book at a nearby restaurant?

Paul Corthorn – The chance to talk was really important, although we could do this with drinks. My concern is moving off site, when groups tend to fragment.

AD – We might need to think about what time the IHR closed that day? These are all good things to discuss but we certainly shouldn't let it stop us publicising the plenary early.

Robert: Can anyone attend?

AD: I think anyone can come along if they pay the £40 attendance fee. The only limit is the size of the room (capacity approximately 60-80)

## **8. Future Activities**

AD: Marcus circulated a rich paper with a lot of ideas – this presents several possible avenues for HUK.

MC: This was brainstorming possible things we could do, and is by no means exhaustive. It is clearly beyond our budget at present if we were to do all of these. We also need to think about the time it would take to organise all these things, and the benefits that might accrue from them. This is particularly something for people who want to be more involved in the organisation, but not serve on the executive- we would be delighted by this. Sarah Bastow and Jamie Wood have both sent me their thoughts on the paper so far. On the subject of awards, a couple of conversations I had at the HA conference were with the exam boards (OCR and Excel Pearson). We might think that 6<sup>th</sup> form essay prizes are beyond the ambit of the organisation, but we might also think this is a good way to build links with schools. OCR have suggested they could do the first run through these entries, and then present us with a shortlist to consider. Awards are cost effective in getting us publicity and giving people a line on their CV which is valuable. We could send out postcards to people asking about dissertations

Charles Insley: Concerned about going through particular exam boards – this runs the risk of endorsing particular companies

Rachel Bright: I have quite a bit of experience administering awards- these are definitely time consuming. If people are keen on doing awards, maybe teaching higher education, I would be much more comfortable with putting in the time and resources for something directly in our remit. I am more wary of something that would be nice, but is outside our remit.

Karin Dannehl: My problem with prizes- which can be a very heavy burden on people – is it is always about the best, the best, the best. We have issues with BME applications at A-level for example and getting nominees for this through. Is there a teamwork award, for example, given the importance of this for the profession?

MC: One of the great things about HUK is it includes all universities of different types, and this could include all sorts of submissions from across the UK. Giving awards could challenge people's preconceptions about what counts as "the best" – I don't think it is necessarily a pernicious form of elitism

Charles Insley: If we drew the criteria carefully – maybe address issues of inclusion/exclusion?

AD: I agree with Rachel – there are real concerns about exam boards, subject organisations and endorsements. We also have major time pressures. What if we had all departments submit their 'best essay'- who would like to read and photocopy 74 essays next June for marking?!

Charles Insley: Do we have banners? This might be a dirt cheap but visually striking way of attracting attention

Daniel Gordon: This is a great idea – I was going to offer to represent us at the French History Society conference, and having publicity materials would really help with that.

Rachel Bright: Make sure it is something that will last about 3 years. This can be expensive to put together and print – so make sure it is not tied to one person, give contact details.

MC: It is about £150 for a set of cards, so it is not something we should worry about hugely

AD: I think these aren't mutually exclusive points – we should time-proof it as much as possible.

Charles Insley: If we could tie ourselves to the increasing number of sessions for the Leeds Medieval Conference dealing with pedagogy this would be really good

Robert McNamara: What about doing something with the Historical Association and the journal *History*, sponsor a first-time scholars prize or similar?

MC: The issue with awards, and people have raised very legitimate misgivings, is we should try and find something the RHS doesn't do and have our own prize. I am very keen on collaborating with other organisations but I don't think we need to subsume our own identity when this is about raising our own profile and giving back to subscribing institutions something that is tangible. If subscribing organisations are allowed to nominate someone for a prize, regardless of whether or not they are on the SC, this would be something that would really help us build links with individual history departments. I really think we could do it ourselves by finding a niche organisations have not explored.

AD: I think we need to be very conscious of time pressures. We could sponsor events and networks, which depending on the largesse of our treasurer would meet several of the goals of the constitution. That would spread the workload by making the SC the adjudicating committee, and require the successful applicants to feed something back to our website.

Rachel Bright: I think we could combine the two, and there is still administration involved, but there is a practical thing there and nobody wants to mark 74 essays – but we could have say sessions for postgraduates giving papers at a conference.

Marcus Collins: I still don't want the essay award idea to die a sudden death, but I cannot do it on my own.

Daniel Gordon: Well, it rather depends on how many entries we get...!

AD: I am sorry, but I think the SC overwhelming feedback is that we don't have the resources or time.

Robert McNamara: I am not against it but we would need some way to winnow this down to six or seven for consideration.

Charles Insley: I am of the same view. I like the idea but am very conscious of the workload and time pressures involved.

MC: Ok – if I were willing to go through however many entries there are and get down to 10 or 12 would it be workable?

Robert McNamara: No, you would need a group looking at particular categories and have it done by groups.

AD: I am sorry but I think sponsorship is a much more manageable and achievable goal here



Marcus Collins: OK, well I will email people on the SC and scout out potential members willing to work on this.

AD: If we are becoming an awarding body we will need to review our grants. Does anyone else have any comments on this?

Kate Hill: It would generate content for the website, which would be good

Charles Insley: Would it be worth extending one of the committee meetings per year by half an hour and getting an external speaker in to talk about REF or similar?

MC: I'm really grateful to the people who have made it here today, but it is really rare we get more than half of the SC attending. Part of that is I think SC members do not see enough value in coming to discuss the internal matters of the organisation. In that sense I do not feel it is an inward facing measure, it is about facing outwards and organising that.

Philip Ollerenshaw: I found Marcus' paper really helpful on focusing our minds, are we going to prioritise on a rolling year to year basis? Do we start with 'these are our top 3 priorities for 2015-16' and then potentially identify others for the year after?

MC: I think we should revisit our priorities this time next year in terms of seeing how our finances and plans work out.

Charles Insley: Actually, some of these goals are fairly low hanging fruit, and which if done properly we can recoup the costs over the next three or so years?

AD: Could I check priorities that

- 1) publicity/conferences are seen as low hanging fruit
- 2) Social media next
- 3) Sponsorship at events
- 4) Guest speakers at events
- 5) Awards the thing most SC members would be willing to wait and see on

Charles Insley would recommend raising guest speakers above sponsorship

SC AGREED WITH CHARLES INSLEY'S SUGGESTION

MC: I have arranged for a postgrad to work on the website about once a week – is it worth it to continue with this?

Rachel Bright suggests and AD seconds that we now leave this discussion until finances are confirmed in November.

## **9. Reports from:**

### **i. Northern Irish Representatives**

Robert McNamara notes that there are heavy predicted cuts to Higher Education as a whole in Northern Ireland.

### **ii. Scottish Representatives**

AD notes that we did not have a Scottish funding council decision at last meeting. Until the last REF the Scottish funding council funded on a ration of 3.11 to 1. They moved in totally the opposite to England, and the Scottish funding council funded on the combined instead of individual council. The broad brush effect is most of the large Scottish institutions (which tend to be where History is located) are suffering cuts. Some institutions are facing challenges as a result.

### **iii. Welsh Representatives**

Rachel Lock Lewis notes that the Welsh Assembly is increasingly very keen to embed employability throughout humanities degrees, which has a number of implications.

Daniel Gordon – I work at an institution with a very strong vocational set of priorities- we used to have a compulsory module on employability. It was not popular with students and was replaced with an optional version which very few students take. But the lack of module choice is very worrying - which goes against a number of other priorities such as the student experience and choice.

MC: The question is (and the issue with the QAA is a very real one) what would you like us to do? We can talk to the RHS, if you think it would be useful for us and others to say that this is not a history programme that passes muster then we will.

Charles Insley: We need to be very careful there so people don't take it as an excuse to close history programmes

AD: We can certainly put you in touch with people to discuss this further

Rachel Bright: I think we should ideally discuss differences between England, Scotland and Wales in funding at the 2016 plenary

## **10. Reports from:**

**i. Historical Association**

MC notes we need a new HA rep

**ii. Royal Historical Society**

Paul Corthorn: The RHS education committee met yesterday, and they remain very keen indeed to collaborate with us in investigating PGT MA numbers across history departments in the UK. This information is often guarded, we are not entirely clear, and there is constant pressure at institutions to increase numbers which are probably in fact comparable.

*Charles Insley to return to correspondence with Arthur Burns on this.*

Charles Insley: What would we consider a representative sample? There are 90 history departments in the UK and I would be stunned if we heard from all of them, but we could get 40?

AD: Keeping the questions simple will dramatically increase response rates. Set up the sample in a way that allowed departments to identify the broad region of the country they are in, for example?

Rachel Bright: Surely this is one thing the SC should all be able to contribute to?

MS: How could we ensure anonymity and that members actually do fill in the form?

CI: I think we need to design and circulate a form, and urge people to fill it in?

Karin: Perhaps along the Jackie Eales line as with questions about marking turnaround?

AD: There are software packages like surveymonkey or Snap which we could use to decouple the results of the survey from individuals, that the software does that for you. If you ask individuals to self-identify, e.g. the Russell Group, that does cause issues for anonymity

CI: Well, we just make that a non-essential category

Paul Corthorn: The RHS would like I think to make a big push on this in the Autumn.

AD: Well, if we mock up a survey and can take that to the RHS then this would be helpful?

**iii. Institute of Historical Research**

Teaching History in HE conference is in September, the CFP has been extended until 17 May. Peter D'Sena is very keen to have people putting in proposals.

**iv. History Lab/History Lab Plus**

**v. Postgraduate Representative**

Tom O'Donnell notes History Lab seems to be continuing well.

**11. Any other business.**

MC will be in Bielefeld in 2016 for History\_Europe, and urges people interested in teaching history in HE to get in touch with him.

AD notes there is a good chance there will be a consultation on the next REF before our next meeting.

**12. Dates of future meetings**

17 October 2015

14 November 2015 – Plenary

13 February 2016

14 May 2016

*Vote of thanks to AD from the SC for all his work on behalf of HUK since 2008.*