

**Historical Geography Research Group  
Annual General Meeting  
18<sup>th</sup> September 2020 (Virtual Meeting)**

**CONFIRMED**

In attendance: Briony McDonagh, Ruth Slatter, James Kneale, Hannah Neate, Innes Keighren, Stephen Legg, Martin Mohony, Hannah Awcock, Michael Bravo, Ruth Quinn, Jenna Kirk, Heather Winlow, Dean Bond

**1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Joanne Norcup, Emily Hayes, Ed Armston-Sheret.

**2. Minutes of the last meeting**

Confirmed.

**3. Matters arising not on the agenda**

None.

**4. Reports from committee members**

(a) Chair's Report (Briony McDonagh)

**Chair's Report**

It's been a strange year for HGRG, as for everyone else. We held the Practising Historical Geography conference at University of Hull in November 2019; Virtual HGRG Writing Retreat in January 2020; published several editions of the newsletter; sponsored various events and individuals in 2019. This includes £500 to Ben Newman for his work on archiving the HGRG Collections at the RGS, Conference Funding for the The 1919 Land Act Conference, organised by the University of Highlands and Islands and Postgrad Funding to support attendance at North American Conference of British Studies for Ed Armston-Sheret; and continued to sponsor the Harley Prize for the final time; BUT activity has been relatively modest during the pandemic as committee members focus on core areas of teaching and pastoral care, and their own health and family commitments.

Some updates...

The mailing list now up and running on JISC mail. Members can continue to contribute items for the mailing list and twitter by emailing HGRGRGS@gmail.com

Virtual HGRG writing retreat took place in January 2020. Again very successful. The committee propose it takes place again next year.

BM noted the continuing work done on consolidating and rationalising the HGRG membership list. BM reminded members to ensure they were paying the correct subscription rate (details on the website and in the newsletter).

HGRG archiving – report to follow.

### **Chair elect role**

This was a new role, lasting 12 months, put in place at last year's AGM. The idea was to allow for an improved sense of continuity and a robust handover process, helping HGRG to continue to be (one of) the most active of the RGS-IBG research groups. It extends the current practice of the outgoing chair continuing as an ex-officio member of the committee. Our proposal was that a Chair Elect be appointed for a one-year trial period (to take on the Chair's role at the AGM 2020) and the position be discussed at next year's AGM with a view to continuing it or otherwise, depending on the perceived success of the arrangement.

\*\* Item – continuation or otherwise to be discussed at the AGM. This was discussed at the AGM and there was agreement that this role should continue. Members also suggested that the Elect role could also be extended to other executive committee roles.

\*\* Action – BM reminds the incoming Chair and Secretary that the HGRG constitution will need to be amended as appropriate. RHED confirmed prior to last year's AGM that this didn't need to happen in the 2019/20 reporting year, but ought to be actioned should the post continue beyond that.

### **New initiatives...**

The executive committee agreed to sponsor catering a seminar series run by Emily Hayes at last year's AGM. BM asks Emily to get back in touch as and when there's a possibility of running the seminar series and/or a need for funding (assuming that a catering budget won't be needed for an online series, should the organisers make the decision to proceed virtually in the first instance).

A range of discussions regarding support, particularly for PGRs and early-career researchers, in relation to archive closures due to COVID-19 are being discussed by the group. Jo Norcup and Ruth Slatter have been particularly active in gathering suggestions for supportive activities, including the creation of a digital archive resource list and a supportive set of informal mentorship drop-in sessions. These will aim to be implemented across the coming months.

### **(b) Secretary's Report (Cheryl McGeachan)**

Due to the current situation the various grants schemes were under-subscribed and applications became redundant due to the cancellation/postponement of conference events. We hope to relaunch the promotion of these schemes in the coming months.

The Group planned to sponsor 6 sessions at this year's RGS-IBG conference (and a total of 10 slots), including 2 new and emerging sessions. Due to the postponement of the RGS-IBG Conference until 2021 it is hoped that these sessions will continue to run and further sponsorship of sessions will be discussed and encouraged in line with the plans for the conference.

### (c) Treasurer's Report (Hannah Neate)

A financial report for the period September 2019-August 2020 has been prepared for submission to RHED, RGS-IBG. HGRG's financial position continues to be strong allowing us to support a range of different initiatives and projects.

We continue to receive a subvention and grant from the RGS-IBG, and membership subscriptions continue to play a vital role in supporting our work. It is time for the annual reminder for members to make sure they are paying the correct amount (£12 full member; £6 postgrad).

Certain expected outgoings were put on hold due to the pandemic, in particular:

- grants (where applications dried up or became redundant because of conference cancellation)
- monograph expenditure

This means that as a research group we spent less than we might have expected for this financial year. However, prior to March 2020 we did make some generous grant payments and also supported the group's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration at the Practising Historical Geography Conference.

A key payment into the account this year was £20,000 to support travel bursaries for the next International Conference of Historical Geographers (postponed). HGRG will administer these bursaries and send out information about them nearer the time.

### (d) Research Series Editor's Report (Briony McDonagh)

Work on the series has stalled under Covid, due both to staff workloads and the fact that the printers shut at the beginning of the pandemic. Work will restart imminently on the series with an expectation of one volume to be published very soon and another in preparation.

### (e) Membership Secretary's Report (Dean Bond)

Membership numbers for HGRG remain healthy. From September 2019 to August 2020, we had 13 joiners (10 postgraduate fellows, 3 fellows), and 26 leavers.<sup>1</sup> Five months in this period saw an increase in membership, and five months saw a decline in membership. The largest increase in total membership was 0.6% (Nov. 2019 and Jan. 2020). July 2020 saw the largest decrease in members (-2.1% total members, -2.6% PGR fellows). This decrease perhaps had to do with pressures related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In terms of the relative share of member grades for the period October 2019 to September 2020, Fellows make up roughly 70%, Postgraduate Fellows 20%, Long-Serving Fellows 7%, Life Fellows less than 2%, and Staff and AAG Reciprocal Fellows less than 1% each.

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<sup>1</sup> Data on member grades for all leavers is unavailable, because several of the leavers are absent from previous full membership rosters. In addition, one long-serving fellow disappears from the full members list in March 2020, but is not recorded in the corresponding leavers files.

It should be noted that the membership lists have a margin of error, as it were. Several leavers in 2019–2020 were not included in the full membership rosters for the previous months. One of my tasks for this coming year is to consult with the HGRG treasurer and others to figure out how to make the membership roster more accurate.

(f) Conference Officer's Report (Joanne Norcup)

Over the past academic year the HGRG has organised a virtual writing retreat and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary Practising Historical Geography conference.

### **HGRG Virtual Writing Retreat 2020.**

As agreed at the HGRG AGM in 2019, the 2020 Writing retreat was planned as a virtual event due to escalating costs for residential retreat, to increase the potential for wider inclusion and participation by historians and historical geographers across their careers, and to enable wider geographical inclusion from colleagues across the globe.

This year it was held between 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of January via Twitter. I acted as an informal time keeper across the three days, posting my own writing progress as well as pre-writing retreat tips and documents that were uploaded by Ruth Slatter to the HGRG website (twitter directions to this posted regularly the week before the writing retreat began along with encouraging people to share recipes / writing tips and life/work discussions). This enabled people to join in but remain anonymous if they wished, promoted the HGRG as inclusive and encouraging of research and enabled members and non-members alike to have virtual company and encouragement while focusing on a range of writing projects.

The first or second week in January has in the last three years become a now regular timeslot in the HGRG calendar for such an event, and given the current global pandemic, am confident that this would prove an encouraging and timely prospect for January 2021 (either Tues 5<sup>th</sup> – Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> Jan 2021, or Tues 12<sup>th</sup> – Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> Jan 2021)

Please can committee members get back to me with any additional suggestions or ideas.

### **HGRG 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary Practising Historical Geography conference.**

The 25<sup>th</sup> annual Practising Historical Geography Conference took place on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019 in the Department of Geography, University of Nottingham. The pre-conference meal the night before at Baresca in Nottingham was attended by 14 of the 35 delegates who attended the conference. The theme was 'Digitizing Historical Geography'.

Delegate packs included promotional materials for Wiley Digital archives and the RGS/IBG RACE group research findings on Black British archives. Also an excellent archive ready 'Historical Geographer' pencil and eco tote bag. 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary gifts for delegates. Special thanks from the HGRG to all speakers and workshop convenors for agreeing to gift their time in preparing for and supporting this event for postgraduates (each speaker was given a thank you card from HGRG). This included (in order of appearance): David Lambert, Peter Martin, Olivia Russell, Tallulah Gordon, Susanne Seymour, Lisa Robinson, David Matless,

Philip Jagessar, Caroline Bressey for excellent and engaging presentations. Thanks also to Sue Davis and the Admin office in the School of Geography, University of Nottingham, Ian Conway for setting up rooms, and to V-Spot Nottingham and University of Nottingham catering for providing sustainable, ecological and vegan catering. Thanks to Geography Workshop (me!) for overseeing the planning of two 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary cakes, booze, and overseeing taxi arrangements and logistics for delegates. Thanks also to Innes Keighren for his rousing 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary speech.

Feedback from delegates was unanimously positive and affirming.

### **Practising Historical Geography 2020 – Necessary changes for this year (a suggestion).**

Regarding PHG for 2020 – Theme discussions prior to a global pandemic had been to focus the event on 'Decolonising Historical Geography'. I suggest this remains, if we are to go ahead with PHG. However, the global pandemic and its ever changing dynamics as directed by the Westminster government suggest that any event will be virtual.

Given the heavy workloads of the autumn term and the increasing problem of logistically organising a whole one-day event, I propose that rather than not have anything, that PHG takes a different form this year. Rather than having one day around which to fit and to request overworked potential contributors and delegates to attend, I suggest that funds we would have spent on an actual conference location be spent in paying a standardised fee (to be discussed with Treasurer and Chair) to non-salaried speakers / virtual workshop organisers for a PHG series of 4 – 6 one-off readings / talks around the theme of 'Decolonising Historical Geography' that can be attended virtually (Eventbrite log-in) from October – December 2020. This would, in effect take place either at a lunchtime or else early evening at a time that doesn't clash with any other virtual historical geography events (please can committee members who are aware of LGHG or other historical seminar series let me know so events can be arranged to avoid clashes). I would also propose that remaining funds that would have been spent on PHG conference be put towards turning this series into learning resources that can be downloaded and accessed via HGRG website.

Any suggestions of people, contributors, readings, etc, please do forward to me. Equally any specific themes that people would wish to discuss within the PHG theme of 'Decolonising Historical Geography' would be splendid and gratefully received.

Any thoughts, further suggestions, or offers of help, please let me know.

Apologies once again for not being with you all virtually today, but a clash in virtual meetings has occurred. It would have been ace to see your fabulous faces. Wishing all well and take good care.

Connections with the London Group of Historical Geographers sessions were discussed. Innes will send the schedule to Jo to develop links between the two events and to avoid potential clashes. Possibilities of using the LGHG's Zoom account to host the PHG events to be considered by Innes and the committee.

(g) Newsletter Editor's Report (Ed Armston-Sheret)

Taking over as newsletter editor has been a real learning experience—and has really made me appreciate all the hard work the previous editor Jake Hodder put into the design and editing of it. Getting the Autumn 2019 Newsletter out proved relatively straightforward. However, the Winter 2019/20 Newsletter was plagued by a series of issues, including UCU industrial action, a pandemic, and the fact that it is not possible to get publisher on a Mac laptop (who knew?!). Unfortunately, this meant that the Winter 2019/20 Newsletter was so delayed that it had to be rolled over into the Spring 2020 Newsletter. Despite this, we had some positive feedback on the Newsletter and normal service should be resumed for the next edition.

(h) Dissertation Prize Coordinator's Report (James Kneale)

In response to the disruption caused by the pandemic the committee agreed to extend the submission deadline until the 1st of October. I have received seven dissertations so far, including our first from a department in the Republic of Ireland.

We normally have one reader from the committee and one from the wider community of historical geographers. Hannah Neate has kindly agreed to be our committee reader. I have had a number of suggestions for the other reader and will have someone in place by the 1st of October.

We will announce the ranking of the dissertations by the end of the Practising Historical Geography series planned for this winter (ie in December 2020).

(i) Communications Officer's Report (Ruth Slatter)

The big change this year is that the e-circulation is now being made through a JISCMail account: [HGRGRGS@JISCMAIL.AC.UK](mailto:HGRGRGS@JISCMAIL.AC.UK). This is a private jiscmail list, which means that potential subscribers have to ask to join and all posts and replies to messages are monitored and moderated by the communications officer before they are sent to everyone on the list. The main advantage of this system is that it automatically removes out of date email addresses and prevents human error leading to the email addresses of members being accidentally shared. The gmail account is still monitored, but members are kindly asked to send any communications they would like to have circulated to our mailing list to:

[HGRGRGS@JISCMAIL.AC.UK](mailto:HGRGRGS@JISCMAIL.AC.UK)

While there has been a reduction in the number of communications sent out via the e-circulation since lockdown in March, the e-circulation continues to be a useful way of engaging with members and those interested in historical geography. The e-circulation is currently being sent to over 450 individuals.

Over the past year the website has attracted nearly 3000 visitors and just over 7000 views from a range of countries. Twitter continues to be useful in reaching an audience beyond our immediate membership.

The Teaching Historical Geography resources are now available on the RGS-IBG website as part of their higher education teaching and learning resources:

<https://www.rgs.org/research/higher-education-resources/>

(j) Postgraduate Representatives' Report (Ed Armston-Sheret and Ruth Quinn)

As HGRG reps, we have continued to edit the 'Shelfie' section of the HGRG newsletter, finding contributors and editing their contributions to fit with the newsletter's style. This hasn't proved too difficult, as postgrads seem keen to share their wider ideas with the HGRG community. We also spend much of the early part of this year organising the New and Emerging Research Session at the RGS-IBG annual international conference and had a strong selection of speakers lined up. Of course, the conference has been delayed due to the pandemic, but a number of the speakers have expressed their desire to speak at next year's event.

## **5. Items for discussion**

None.

## **6. Election of new committee members**

Chair – As Chair Elect, Cheryl is to assume the position of Chair for a three year term, 2020-2023.

Hon. Treasurer: Hannah Neate will stay on in the role until 2021.

Hon. Secretary – Hannah Awcock

Proposed – Briony McDonagh

Seconded – Cheryl McGeachan

PG representatives – thanks to Ruth Quinn (who continues in post) and Ed Armston-Sheret (who steps down, but stays on as newsletter editor with thanks). One PG place remains vacant.

Jenna Kirk

Proposed – James Kneale

Seconded – Hannah Neate

All other committee members continue in their roles. Thank you to all outgoing committee members for their contributions.

## **7. Forthcoming meetings**

PHG November 2020 to be held online.

RGS-IBG annual conference, here at the Society, late August 2021.

## **8. Any other business**

Reminder that a mid-season committee meeting is required (in March). This did not happen this year due to COVID disruption.

**9. Date of next AGM**

To be confirmed; likely to be held at 2021 RGS-IBG AIC.