

**Historical Geography Research Group
Annual General Meeting
2nd September 2021 (Virtual Meeting)
Agenda**

In attendance: Hannah Awcock, Cheryl McGechan, Alan Baker, Adam Lundberg, Camillo Riva, Dean Bond, Ed Armston-Sheret, Hannah Neate, Hilary Bishop, Innes Keighren, Jake Hodder, Jo Norcup, Juliette Desportes, Leonardo Porcelloni, Nichola Thomas, Oliver Dunnett, Pete Merriman, Stephen Legg, Emily Hayes, Ruth Craggs, Patricia Silveira (total: 21).

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Briony McDonagh, James Kneale, and Ruth Slatter.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Confirmed.

3. Matters arising not on the agenda

None.

4. Reports from committee members

(a) Chair's Report (Cheryl McGeachan)

It has been another exceptionally challenging year for everyone in the academic community and beyond and I would just like to take a moment to say thank you to everyone connected to the HGRG for their incredible efforts, patience, and kindness throughout the year. Despite the ongoing challenges, HGRG activities have continued: The 26th Practising Historical Geography events took place online to the theme Decolonising Historical Geographies and a big thank to Dr Joanne Norcup for organising and running these sessions and to all our speakers and participants. The Virtual Writing retreat took place in January this year and again thanks to Jo for running this. We are currently sponsoring 6 sessions at the RGS_IBG Conference and running an informal postgraduate lunch session tomorrow as a sister event to the conference. Whilst there has been a relatively modest set of activities over the past year within the Group we are really pleased that we have been able to continue some activity and that this has all been positively received.

A few updates:

As reported at the last AGM, we are now using JISC Mail for our mailing list communications. We have experienced a few technical hitches with this but despite these it appears to be working well. A reminder that members can continue to contribute items for the mailing list and twitter by emailing HGRGRGS@JISCMAIL.AC.UK.

As reported in the minutes of the last AGM, we discussed the possibilities of extending the Chair Elect role. Whilst there was agreement that this role should continue the practicalities of this have yet to be put in place. Due to the complexities of the last few years and the stretch on individual capacity has meant that a Chair Elect position has not been tenable at

present. A proposal to revisit this position and to make the necessary constitutional arrangements at the next AGM.

We would like to discuss the potential to add to the Committee a role relating to Diversity and Inclusion, in reflection to ongoing decolonial debates in the discipline (and beyond) and in line with our discussions at the PHG event. This item will be openly discussed later in the meeting.

(b) Secretary's Report (Hannah Awcock)

We have not had any applications to the various grant schemes this year. I think this is partly due to the ongoing pandemic, but may also be due to the lack of awareness of the grants. I will consult with the new Communications Officer to discuss strategies to promote the grants more effectively.

All of the sessions that the group had agreed to sponsor at last year's RGS-IBG Annual Conference were carried over to this year's conference. Most session organisers accepted this offer, and we also got one or two new requests for sponsorship, which were successful. As such we sponsored 6 sessions over a total of 9 slots, including 3 New and Emerging Research in Historical Geography—thanks to the RGS for allowing us an extra slot for these sessions so that we could support new postgrads as well as those that were planning to present last year.

Innes Keighren suggested that one way to promote the grant schemes is to publicise the reports of recipients on the website, so potential applicants can see how they might be used and Ed Armstron-Sheret agreed.

(c) Treasurer's Report (Hannah Neate)

A financial report for the period September 2020-August 2021 has been prepared for submission to RHED, RGS-IBG. It has been a quiet year in terms of both expenditure and outgoings due to ongoing impacts of the pandemic.

HGRG receives a subvention from the RGS-IBG, and membership subscriptions continue to play a vital role in supporting our work (rates: £12 full member; £6 postgrad). It would be useful if members could check they are paying the correct amount (e.g. those who are no longer postgrads, members who signed up before the full member fee was set at £12).

The main expenditure for the year was for Practising Historical Geography events covering guest speakers (£500).

We continue to hold ring-fenced funds (£21,000) to support travel bursaries for the postponed International Conference of Historical Geographers (date/venue tbc). HGRG will administer these bursaries.

Financial Report in Summary:

INCOME	£
RGS-IBG subvention	400.00
Subscriptions	1555.00
Interest	0.36
Total income	1955.36

EXPENDITURE	
Conference costs	500.00
Website	9.81
Other (banking charge)	6.00
Total payments	515.81

Opening balance (September 2020) 31042.70

Closing balance (August 2021) 32482.25 Includes £21K ringfenced for ICHG bursaries

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

Good progress on the next two volumes that have been delayed due to the pandemic, but it is hoped that Volume 46 will be in print shortly. A copy edited version of the text is complete and quotes sought from Booknow for final copy editing and setting has been requested.

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

Membership numbers for HGRG remain healthy. The membership numbers given here are incomplete, however, because I was unaware that the membership rosters had migrated from Dropbox to OneDrive. As a result, this report is based July 2021 to October 2021 rosters.

Based on the rosters available, I have been able to identify the following year-on-year changes:

Changes in HGRG Membership, 2020 to 2021 (percentage change)

	Total Members	Fellow	Life fellow	Long-serving	Postgraduate
July 2020 to July 2021	-10	-6	-20	-13	-28
Aug 2020 to Aug 2021	-8	-6	-20	-13	-15
Sept 2020 to Sept 2021	-8	-7	-20	-13	-14

Between January and April 2021, I had no direct applications to the HGRG for membership. I suspect this had to do with the ongoing upheaval of the pandemic.

The figures for direct applications in the following months are listed below:

Direct applications to HGRG, May to October 2021

	Number of joiners	Fellow	Postgraduate fellow
May 2021	2		2
June 2021	2		1
July 2021	1		1
August 2021	3	1	2
September 2021	1	1	
October 2021	2		2

Overall, total membership will likely strengthen as things begin to return to a more normal state of affairs at universities.

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

The academic year 2020/2021 saw a number of online initiatives and shifts for conferencing and writing retreat activities. These included the shift of Practising Historical Geography from a one-day face-to-face event to two half-days of online seminars, keynotes and workshops (details to follow) and an HGRG virtual Writing retreat in January 2021.

Practising Historical Geography 20/21

For the 26th PHG event, the format was shifted to accommodate the global COVID pandemic which consisted of two half-day events, one on Tuesday 24th November and the other two weeks later on Tuesday 8th December 2020. Both events were held between 12 and 3pm GMT in the hope that this time slot would facilitate greater virtual attendance from as many historical geography practitioners as possible around the globe. The event was free to attend as we were not having to pay for rooms or catering. I would like to thank Dr Innes Keighren and the London Group of Historical Geographers (LGHG) for facilitating use of the LGHG Zoom account platform for these two PHG sessions.

The theme of both sessions was *Decolonising Historical Geography? Creating the space and opportunity for participants to discuss the capacities, challenges and necessities of historical geographers in attending to the sub-discipline's complicity in perpetuating colonial ways of thinking, practising and perpetuating colonial and racial inequalities through the production and reproduction of historical geographical research.*

Mindful of the theme and the structural and systemic ways in which non-white historical geographers are in the minority in tenured posts in UK academic departments, it was a priority for these session to have historical geographers of color speaking about their knowledge, skills and experience. Both keynote speakers for PHG are experienced archivists, researchers and historical geographers working on themes of global historical geographies of empire and colonialism with a focus on the lives of African and Asian heritage and both have contributed much to such research over the past decade. Both Chandan Mahal (November's Keynote) and Clifford Pereira (December's Keynote) have worked extensively for years as experienced archivists, researchers for exhibitions as well as scholars in their own right. The keynotes offered up rich personal and professional insights through their

empirical work, and they are to be thanked for creating time in their busy schedules to give such stimulating presentations.

The HGRG paid both speakers the rate of pay offered by the Society of Authors in acknowledgement of the work they would have undertaken in order to present to PHG. As neither were tenured academic staff, it was important to remunerate for their skills, knowledge and contribution to these sessions.

This was a one-off agreement negotiated between the Conference officer and the HGRG committee who agreed that while in the past most keynotes were in tenured positions and therefore giving a keynote at this event was unpaid beyond academic salaries, there was a greater need to look at how best to uplift and support those historical geographers whose work beyond tenured academic posts serves to inform and enrich the practise of historical geographies. The minority presence of non-white scholars in historical geography (and those already present proportionately over-worked in discussing themes of racial inequalities in academia immediately after – in the UK – Black History Month) meant that the HGRG wanted to show professional value and commitment to historical geographers of color and financial payment of their time and attendance in accordance with professional salaries of authors was deemed to be the best way forward.

While this was a one-off arrangement for this event, it underscores the very real need for research groups at the RGS to create space and pay fairly to support those non-tenured in academic posts who work and whose contributions are used by the RGS to uplift their public outreach. These are themes that intersect the work of the RGS RACE group and as such one of the outcomes of the PHG was to find ways the HGRG could work more closely with the RACE group in order to explore how the HGRG as a research group might sustainably and systemically work to practically create greater capacity and racial equity in its working practices, empirical research, conference and student activities, and via outputs.

At this point thanks must be given to all HGRG committee members for their help and assistance with chairing break-out groups during these sessions, and special thanks to Dr Hannah Awcock for her digital geography technical skills with Eventbrite and Zoom, and to Dr Ruth Slatter for web support. Thanks also to Dr Cheryl McGeachan and Dr Hannah Neate for committee advice and support, and to additional PHG 2021 contributors: Dr Catherine Oliver, to Etienne Joseph and Connie Bell for the use of their video art from Decolonise the Archive (DTA) and to Dr Jo Norcup (Geography Workshop Productions) for devising the two days and creating the support workshop booklet to accompany and support participants over the two sessions with activity prompts and wider references.

HGRG Virtual Writing Retreat 2021

This was organised by Dr Jo Norcup (via Geography Workshop Productions) between 5th and 7th January 2021. This was the fourth annual writing retreat organised in the first week in January for HGRG members and, as with previous years, proved popular in creating a virtual community of scholars meeting to undertake non-directed writing, allowing a collegial space in which to pursue individual writing aims.

As with the previous virtual retreats, we were joined by historical geographers from across all stages of research (postgraduates for tenured academic staff) and from across the globe: (from across the UK, Europe, South America and Australia). This has rapidly become an affirming part of the HGRG calendar, and possibly because of the global pandemic, it felt all the more nurturing to connect with historical geography colleagues.

One spin-off initiative that continued from the HGRG Virtual Writing Retreat was Dr Jo Norcup's Geography Workshop productions began weekly Sunday Scholarly Writing Sessions. Initially piloted to run from the end of January until the end of February, weekly Sunday zoom meet ups of an hour long were scheduled as 'drop-ins' between 8 – 9pm (GMT/BST). These sessions were attended by practitioners across the UK, Europe and the Americas and the initial 6 sessions were extended further into the end of April 2021 and then again until the 18th July. The sessions were free with suggested donations for those who were able and were run entirely by Geography Workshop Productions. While the majority of donated funds went to support the ongoing work of Geography Workshop Productions (freelance creative contracts being hit by the global pandemic), 10% funds donated were given to Black Curriculum and a further 10% to Arts Emergency. Four two-day virtual writing retreats were organised between May and July again to support historical and cultural geography practitioners via Zoom and via twitter. The Sunday Scholarly Writing Sessions are due to resume on Sunday 12th September 2021. Further details please follow Geography Workshop / Dr Jo Norcup on Twitter or else look up via Eventbrite.

This is my last report as Conference Officer of the HGRG. I have since 2018 very much enjoyed the collegial support of the HGRG committee members past and present and organising the events over the last three years has been a very real privilege and joy. I very much look forward to possibly speaking / presenting at future PHGs and wish my successor every ongoing success.

Innes Keighren noted that the LGHG will probably be online again next semester, so we should be able to use their Zoom account for the PHG event again this year.

Adam Lundberg noted that the Sunday writing sessions, as well as the virtual retreat, was extremely rewarding during such an extraordinary time. I really want to thank Jo and the HGRG for making it happen.

Nicola Thomas also thanked go for the amazing work undertaken.

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

I have continued to edit the HGRG newsletter over the last year and have been consistently impressed by the effort that contributors have put into their articles (despite everything 2020/21 has thrown at them). I've been keen to increase the space given to early career researchers in the publication and this has, I think, resulted in some interesting articles. Unfortunately, I have to step down from this role as I am starting a new position at the RGS-IBG in September but am looking forward to seeing what the new editor does with this publication.

Jo Norcup extended thanks to Ed and noted that she really loved the newsletters over lockdown with Nicola Thomas agreeing with the wonderful news editing work.

Innes Keighren stated that the Practising Historical Geography event and the Newsletter really are the jewels in the HGRG's crown and Nicola Thomas absolutely agreed. Ed Armston-Sheret stated that he would just like to echo the fact that they were very good and it was a joy to read them all

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

We received submissions from nine UK departments this year, and these were read by Paul Griffin (Northumbria), Ed Armston-Sheret (RHUL) and myself. The quality of the dissertations was very impressive; these students have produced fantastic work despite the pandemic, and departments are clearly doing an excellent job supporting them.

We decided that the best two dissertations were both so strong that it was impossible to decide between them, and so we would like to award the 2021 Prize to:

Bethany Walsh (Edinburgh), 'Nature, Nation and Narrative: The Visual and Discursive Representation of National Park Tourism in Brochures for Riding Mountain National Park, Manitoba, 1932-1970'

AND

Jamie Arnaud (Cambridge), 'Roads to Improvement: The Construction of "Destitution Roads" by the Edinburgh Section of the Central Board as a response to Highland Famine, 1847-1850'

And the Highly Commended dissertation is: Sorcha Mc Kee (Glasgow), 'The 1984-85 Miner's Strike: An investigation into the spaces of political involvement constructed by women during the strike in mining communities.'

Congratulations to the authors of these dissertations, and thanks to Paul and Ed for reading these dissertations at a difficult point in a challenging year.

James Kneale

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

During the 2020-21 academic year, the HGRG e-circulation has continued to be sent via our private jiscmail list. This continues to be a very effective tool that automatically removes out of date email addresses and prevents human error leading to the email addresses of members being accidentally shared. The HGRG 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@JISMAIL.AC.UK

The number of emails sent out via the e-circulation continues to be relatively low (probably in relation to the reduction in number of events during the course of the past academic

year). But the e-circulation is a useful way of engaging with members and those interested in historical geography, currently sent to 463 individuals. Therefore, members are encouraged to use the e-circulation to share news about events, publications, calls for papers, PhD scholarships etc. that may be of interest to our list members.

Since last year's AGM, the website has attracted nearly 3000 visitors and nearly 6000 views from a range of countries (similar numbers to the 2019-20 academic year). It is also worth noting that the website had a significantly higher numbers of views and visitors in October and November, due to people visiting the Practising Historical Geography page.

Finally, Twitter continues to be useful in reaching an audience beyond our immediate membership. Many thanks to Hannah Awcock and James Kneale who have contributed to HGRG Twitter content over the past year.

I have now been the Communication Officer for three years and as I will be on Maternity Leave from August 2021 – April 2022, I am stepping down from this role. I have really enjoyed being part of the HGRG committee and working with so many fantastic colleagues. I wish the next Communication Officer and the whole HGRG Committee the best of luck!

(j) Postgraduate Representative's Report (Ed Armston-Sheret, Ruth Quinn and Jenna Kirk)

Working on organising the New and Emerging Research in Historical Geography sessions at the RGS—3 time slots in order to include everyone who applied to last year's conference as well as some new ones.

We have also been working to encourage Postgrads to attend PHG and contribute to the Shelfie section of the newsletter, and the feedback from last year's PHG was positive.

5. Items for discussion

- **Possible new committee role: Diversity and Inclusion Officer (Cheryl)**

Cheryl: Recent discussions and events have highlighted the necessity for the group to engage with discussions around diversity and inclusion. Seeking the views of members on the role, which would begin in August/September 2022.

Nicola Thomas: This role is important for every role on the committee—shouldn't be silo'd into one role. Creating a new position when there's so much turnover of committee members might be a challenge—should we perhaps review the whole committee over the next year. There are benefits to having one committee role to champion these issues.

Jo Norcup: It shouldn't be an add-on--need to be careful about how such a role is seen/used. The issue of systemic racism in geography is a big issue that we need to discuss with all the research group. Should investigate what research, if any, is being done, about diversity across geography as a discipline. If such a position is created, we need to ensure it facilitates long-term, meaningful progress.

Innes: Having a defined figurehead could be useful, but we should also have a defined outcome in mind e.g. a revised strategy for the group/changes to the group's mission statement. It is difficult to fill all the committee roles—should we rest some of the committee positions (e.g. Research Series editor) in order to focus our efforts into what we prioritise at this moment in time.

Cheryl: These suggestions have been helpful. If anyone else has any input, please put them in the chat or email me. This is going to be an ongoing discussion.

Nicola Thomas suggested that an EDI review would make for a good research group application for RGS-IBG RHED grants, perhaps employing someone to research and present a strategy for HGRG and Ed Armstron-Sheret and Ruth Craggs agreed.

- **Workshop Sponsorship (Ruth Craggs and Hannah Neate).**

Ruth Craggs: As part of the research that Hannah and I are doing on geographers experiences of decolonisation in Africa, they want to hold a workshop probably in January. Links into important discussions on diversity and inclusion—want to foreground the voices of African geographers in this event. Would like to have sponsorship from the HGRG—not a request for funding, but for publishing, badging, and accessing a different audience. Also seeking sponsorship from the RGS RACE group. Would like to record some of the segments to be lasting teaching resources for historical geography.

Cheryl: Is the group happy to support this event?

The group: Yes!

- **Book editor for the Journal of Historical Geography (Nicola Thomas)**

Nicola Thomas: Time of transition for the journal at the moment. Published an editorial last year that they are looking for community feedback on. Part of that review was the shape of the book review section—just put out a call for 2 review editors (scholarly outputs wherever they are found). Encourage members to share the advert with anyone who might be interested. Thanks to Cheryl and Innes for their contribution to the review section over the years.

Cheryl: As a community, it would be great to encourage people to apply, so please so share as widely as possible.

Innes Keighren stated that this is a really exciting development and a great way of keeping the journal relevant!

- **Update on the ICHG (Felix Driver and Nicola Thomas)**

Nicola: Hoped to be in Brazil this summer for the ICHG, but the pandemic and political situation in Brazil made it too difficult to organise an event. The local organising committee has unfortunately decided to cancel. A small group of the International Scientific Committee are now trying to decide what happens next—are going to put out an open call to see who would like to host the event in 2024. There hasn't been the appetite for a virtual event, so we're just going to focus on the next one. Not unexpected with everything that's been going on, but unfortunate that we are missing out this year.

Oliver Dunnett: There has been some discussion amongst Irish universities (north and south) about hosting the ICHG, but it probably won't be until 2027 as the IGU is being held in Ireland in 2024.

6. Election of new committee members

Cheryl: Thank you to all of the committee members who are stepping down, your work has been appreciated.

Hon. Treasurer: Jo Norcup
Proposed: Cheryl McGeachan
Seconded: Hannah Awcock

Newsletter editor: Jenna Kirk
Proposed: Hannah Awcock
Seconded: Jo Norcup

Research Series Editor: Hilary Bishop
Proposed: Jo Norcup
Seconded: Cheryl McGeachan

Communications Officer: Philip Jagessar
Proposed: Dean Bond
Seconded: Hannah Awcock

Conference Officer: Patricia Silveira
Proposed: Cheryl McGeachan
Seconded: Jo Norcup

Postgraduate Representative: Juliette Desportes
Proposed: Hannah Awcock
Seconded: Jo Norcup

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

Nicola Thomas noted that it is brilliant to see wonderful new positions in place for the HGRG committee and Innes Keighren thanked Cheryl for all her hard work.

7. Forthcoming meetings

PHG will take place online this year autumn/winter.

8. Any other business

None.

9. Date of next AGM

Next AGM will probably take place around this time at the RGS conference next year, hopefully in person!