

# Committee updates

The Historical Association is a membership organisation; the permanent office staff, led by the CEO, carry out the busy daily work but for an organisation of thousands of members and over 45 local branches to all work smoothly we rely on the incredible support of volunteers who sit on our committees, run the branches and contribute to our publications and events.

To help explain what some of those people do we will be exploring some of the roles of the committees and what they are doing in *HA News*. In the next edition we will be profiling two of the committees.

## Spotlight on HA volunteers

To support the valuable work of the HA there are committees made up of volunteers who meet, lead activities and provide and co-ordinate resources and journals. Without those volunteers we wouldn't be able to do the incredible job that we do.

In the last edition of *HA News* we provided an update of what the committees had done. In this edition we are looking at two of the volunteers themselves and how what they do matters to them and to what we achieve.

The Historical Association's branches around the country are one of the most important elements of what the HA does. When the Association was founded in 1906, the idea to bring academics and teachers together with anyone who had an interest in history started with branches spread across the UK. Today we have 50 working branches that host regular talks, events and gatherings. Some meet in universities, others in schools, village halls and church halls.

The local branches all rely on volunteers to put on their programme and organise themselves locally. In addition to that role some branch members volunteer for the HA Branches Committee that helps to support the branches nationally and to provide input on membership and resources to the HA as a whole.

Let me introduce you to a volunteer from the Isle of Wight branch:  
Gillian Burnett



### **Gillian Burnett – Treasurer of the Isle of Wight branch**

#### **Occupation:**

Now retired. First job – bank clerk, and then after a family break, I worked for Isle of Wight Tourism. You note they are both customer service orientated.

#### **How long you have been in that job?**

10 years as a bank clerk, finishing as a Personal Banker, and 12 years with Isle of Wight Tourism managing six Tourist Information Centres. I retired in 2008.

#### **How long have you been a member of the HA committee?**

I joined the committee in 1996 and became the treasurer of the Isle of Wight branch in 1998. Yes, I am now in my 21<sup>st</sup> year as treasurer! This is too long and succession planning is finally in place.

#### **What made you volunteer?**

When I joined the Isle of Wight branch, attendance at the monthly lectures averaged about 20. With speakers from the HA Panel, the lectures were first class but such small audiences. The reason – the branch was not welcoming. In 1996, I progressed to becoming a committee member. Everything changed the following year when the late Mrs Molly Pewsey became our chairman. She was determined to make the HA lectures accessible and enjoyable to all, not only academics and history teachers, but also those that enjoyed history as a hobby – through reading, watching certain television programmes. Her aim was for everyone to feel comfortable at a HA lecture.

I shared this vision. In 1998, the branch needed a treasurer and I volunteered.

#### **What have you done as part of the committee?**

Under Molly's chairmanship, we established 'meet and greet' at every lecture. As attendees entered the room, they were greeted by name and any visitors were made to feel very welcome. I undertook this task. With this policy, membership increased and I consider I played a part in that. Attendance at our monthly lectures now averages 75. We now offer an annual lunch, dinner, outings to the mainland and walks around local towns and villages during the 'non-lecture season' (April to October), – every month there is an HA activity. This maintains our profile within the membership. I help with the administration of these activities. I think my proudest achievement is the innovation of a monthly email to

all our members entitled 'Things of interest in (name of month)'. In this communication, I notify our members of activities/events coming up that are organised by other local history-based groups here on the island, as well as our own lecture/activity. This has proved very popular with the membership and created good partnership working with these other groups.

### **Have you learnt any new skills by getting involved with the HA?**

My IT skills have been enhanced. As treasurer, I work a great deal with spreadsheets – something I did not normally do. The implementation of the GDPR regulations also proved to be something of a learning curve.

### **How much time does being a volunteer for the HA take up?**

In my opinion, as much as you choose. I try to support our lectures and

activities, but this is not compulsory. With a proactive committee, every role can be covered by a colleague – no one is indispensable. My 'busy time' is the financial year end, preparing the accounts for our auditor.

### **What has been the best part of volunteering so far and what are you looking forward to?**

I have met so many very interesting people – people who would not have crossed my path had I not been involved with the HA. I also feel I have, in a small way, made a contribution to the success of the Isle of Wight branch. We are financially sound and now boast a membership of 225. We persevere with our attempts to establish good partnerships with the island's secondary schools. We have had some success, but have still some way to go. I look forward to the day when all secondary school students have knowledge of us and regularly attend our lectures.

### **What would you say to recommend to others why they should volunteer for an HA committee?**

It is an opportunity to work with like-minded people, to promote history. Without volunteers joining the committee, HA branches will be unable to continue and what a loss that would be. I would also stress that it is not an onerous task. Committees meet perhaps four times a year, with meetings lasting no more than 1½ hours. Every committee member brings their own skills to the table – administration, finance, publicity, creating posters, IT, organising an activity – the roles are many and varied. No one is asked to undertake a position they are not comfortable with.

For the education work that the HA does we have two committees: one for primary level and one for secondary level. The volunteers on those committees have a connection to education either as teachers, educators, PGCE tutors or advisors. These committees are involved with resource development, the journals, and sometimes policy for the HA. One of those who volunteers in this role is Stuart Boydell who is a senior teacher at King Edward's Pre-Prep School, Bath.

### **Stuart Boydell – Member of the HA Primary Committee**

### **How long you have been in your current job?**

This is my 14<sup>th</sup> year at KESPP and I became a Primary Committee member this year, but I have been a member of the HA through my school membership for the past 5 years.

### **What made you volunteer?**

I had done various projects for the HA over the past few years which included writing a scheme of work for the EYFS, completing the Quality Mark (which I thoroughly recommend co-ordinators getting involved with) and then, more recently, I volunteered to be a guinea pig for the Chartered History Teacher Status. I had great fun doing all of those things. It was extra work of course, but it was worthwhile and I was helping the children in my school



become more competent historians. Anyone who knows me will know that I am passionate about history, and making history a key subject within my school has been a real driver for my teaching career. Applying for the Primary Committee seemed the obvious next step as I could help other teachers beyond the confines of my school.

### **What have you done as part of the committee?**

I am a new member, but already I feel as though I have forged a role for myself within the committee. This is primarily because the Primary Committee welcomes new members with fresh ideas. From day one, I knew that I would have a voice within the committee. During my very first committee meeting in the HA office in

Kennington, for example, I suggested that the committee create regional lists of past significant local people who could form the basis of a local history study within Key Stages 1 and 2. I was given carte blanche to create a prototype document for consideration. The finished document covers seven counties in the West Country and includes people from different classes, genders, races and periods in history from King Edgar in Bath in the 970s to Eddie the Eagle in Gloucestershire in the 1970s/80s. Bev Forrest, the Primary Committee Chair, liked the idea and from that one small suggestion we will eventually have most areas of England covered as other committee members replicate the document for their own regions. My next plan is to create complementary lists which will include local places and local events with historical significance.

### **Have you learnt any new skills by getting involved with the HA?**

The HA has been fantastic for my own personal career development and, consequently, the CPD for the other teachers within my school. I cannot overstate the opportunities to be gained for skills development for staff and the children from being involved with the HA where you are surrounded by passionate and experienced history teachers. The single most valuable CPD was gained through the History Association's Quality Mark. It's a

considerable amount of work because the HA set high expectations for their awards, but it is fantastic CPD.

All teachers know that the National Curriculum doesn't help co-ordinators anywhere near enough with information and guidance about how they should help teachers in their schools with schemes of work or ideas for teaching children the necessary skills to become successful historians. After the implementation of the 2014 National Curriculum, I was stuck for ideas for measuring progress and attainment. But, through my involvement with the HA, I was able to access ideas and have the confidence to explore my own ideas for developing my school's history curriculum. It has helped me to become a better primary history teacher and, unexpectedly, it helped to establish myself as a co-ordinator who others could come to for help with schemes of work, assessment strategies or planning for progression. As history coordinators we can all too easily find history being forgotten by leadership teams. Through my work with the HA, I gained enough experiences and skills to establish history as a key focus within my school.

### How much time does being a volunteer for the HA take up?

Like all things, the more you put in, the more you get out of something.

It's helpful that I really enjoy what I do, so I don't see it as taking up time. I also believe that if I am going to do something, then I want to try my best which naturally takes a bit longer. There are busier periods like the time when I was creating the regional historical figures document or trying to put an article together for the HA's *Primary History* magazine. These periods need careful time management as all additional responsibilities do, but I haven't found any of it onerous or a chore. The south west significant people document, for example, took a few evenings to perfect, but some of the other committee work that I have done, like the proposal for a workshop at next year's conference didn't take too much time. Generally, I think the most important thing for those considering becoming a committee member, is that the work can be achieved in a reasonable amount of time.

### What has been the best part of volunteering so far and what are you looking forward to?

For me, the best part of volunteering for the HA is knowing that my work could have a positive impact on history education beyond my school. The work done by the members is out there for any co-ordinator or teacher to access anytime and anywhere. A school teacher's work is not the same

as that of university-based academics where research and publications reach a wide audience. Through working with the HA, teachers can share their ideas and experiences with a much bigger community. It works in both directions: you share your ideas, but you also gain other teachers' ideas. Personally, it's the sense that the time I spend on committee work can potentially help teachers and, ultimately, children to get the most out of their history lessons.

I am looking forward to (and a wee bit nervous) about presenting my first HA conference workshop in Bristol in May 2020.

### What would you say to recommend to others why they should volunteer for an HA committee?

If you are considering it, then I would suggest you are already most of the way towards getting involved. I do not regret it one little bit. It is a manageable workload, very enjoyable, looks good on your CV and you become a part of something that is known and respected around the country. The committee work (your work) is valued and contributes to the wider picture of primary history in our schools.

As time goes on we lose some of the people that have made the HA as special and wide ranging as it is today. Sadly we are unable to carry obituaries for all of them, but every now and again we are able to add a few small words to some of those that have shown long-lasting dedication to the HA and added to it when it most needed support.

## Lawrence Lyle 1923–2019



Lawrence joined the Historical Association in 1949 and in 1971 helped to re-establish the Canterbury Branch, which has become a thriving entity thanks to his early and ongoing stewardship. Lawrence became the longest-serving member of the branch committee and only recently stepped down from the role. A local boy, he was educated at Maidstone Boys Grammar school and Merton College, Oxford. He was called up after two terms for war service in 1942, when he served in the RAF, but later returned to finish his degree. Lawrence spent his career as a history teacher.

In 1991, Lawrence was co-opted onto the HA National Council and served until 2001. In 1993, he took on the position of Tour Organiser and Leader for the Association, organising 39 tours in the UK and abroad. In 2006, he and his wife Marjorie were made Fellows of the HA in its centenary year. Together they published a number of books about local history, including a jointly authored book on Canterbury and the Gothic Revival. Lawrence received the MBE in 2013 for his outstanding work as a teacher, as one of the founders of Canterbury Archaeological Trust and as a supporter of the many local history societies in Canterbury, as well as his long-standing service to the HA.

## Quiz answers

1. Eleanor of Aquitaine 2. Edward II of England 3. Empress Matilda - England and Germany 4. William Rufus - England 5. Queen Berengaria of Navarre 6. Charles IV, The Holy Roman Emperor 7. Louis IX of France 8. Isabella I of Castile 9. King Henry IV of England 10. King Richard III of England 11. Darwin 12. Epoch 13. Soviet 14. Zulu 15. Mao 16. Reformation 17. Blurb 18. Blurb 19. Cross 20. Darwin 21. Tea 22. Homer 23. Ivan 24. Ming 25. Jenkins 26. Soviet 27. Serbia 28. Elizabeth Regina 29. Tito 30. Soviet 31. Down 32. Defenestrations 33. His 34. Cos 35. Elizabeth Regina 36. Tilo 37. Zulu 38. Tom 39. Tom 40. Zulu 41. Hoffa 42. Marat 43. Osaka 44. Bligh 45. Exam 46. Meer 47. Che 48. Eon 49. Joe 50. Zulu