



INTRODUCTION

Welcome

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Welcome to the second volume of the seventh series of the *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*. Last year's issue, edited by my predecessors, Harshan Kumarasingham and Kate Smith, marked the beginning of a period of change for our journal. While some of the content in this volume originated from invited lectures given at the Society's London premises, most comprises exciting new material submitted by the Society's fellowship and the wider historical community. All content undergoes double-blind peer review – a process that, as the journal of a learned society, the editorial board and I are working hard to make as transparent, constructive and timely as possible.

As part of this transition, it has been a particular delight – and a tribute to Kate's and Harshan's hard work – to see the new Common Room section of the *Transactions* taking form. This volume shows the Common Room shaping up in precisely the way they foresaw in last year's welcome, as 'an alternative site in which issues pertinent to our discipline can be shared, discussed and collectively worked through'. Through a combination of commissioned and pitched content, the contributions to the Common Room speak eloquently to the wider issues facing our discipline.

This year's virtual 'watercooler moments' cover an extremely broad range of topics. They include reflections on best research practices (such as whether to anonymise our sources), the latest historiographical trends and the difficulties experienced by independent scholars. Other contributions address questions of pedagogy and student well-being in our supposedly 'post-truth' world. Contributions also showcase the value of history in contemporary society, for instance by demonstrating the materiality of wills in the wake of a government consultation. Each is important in a different way, and their variety shows that while historians work on the past, they live in the present. We hope that these pieces will foster further discussion and possibly even fresh contributions in turn.

The year 2024 brought both opportunities and challenges. The *Transactions* and the Society have welcomed Cambridge University Press's move to Open Access, which means that henceforth all publications in our journal will be accessible to everyone without any cost to the author. Our publisher's move to a new funding model is an innovative response to the wider higher education landscape. Yet not all news is good news. A cyber incident at Cambridge University Press in June significantly affected the publication of many journals, including ours, and ultimately caused this year's volume to be delayed. A blocked publication pipeline has also impacted the *Transactions'* visibility, making it more difficult to trail and celebrate our publications.

The work of repositioning the *Transactions* as a leading general journal in the field will continue next year – and beyond. Our central objective has been to increase the visibility of the *Transactions* as a journal that covers the full breadth of human history. Our decision to organise this year's research articles roughly chronologically shows that more work is needed particularly to attract submissions that discuss the premodern past. But if you are reading this, regardless of your subject expertise, we would welcome a submission from you.

Finally, by the time this volume lands in your letterbox, a new co-editor may well be in place. We are moving to a system of staggered appointments, ensuring that there will be continuity as well as change. Next year's welcome will again be co-written.