

# Historical Association Reading Branch Programme 2022 – 2023

16 July 2022.

**Friday 14 October 2022, 8.00pm (AGM 7.30pm.)**

**Dr Elizabeth M. Barnes, University of Reading**

*“Equal and exact justice would have taken this officer’s life”*: sexual violence, military justice, and enslaved women during the American Civil War (1861-1865).

As civil war raged in the United States, thousands of enslaved people seized their freedom. Many did so by fleeing to Union lines, allying themselves with the war effort that sought to preserve the United States and, from 1863, abolish the institution of slavery. This flight brought enslaved people under the remit of military justice, a series of codes that offered radical new rights yet familiar limitations. This lecture will explore formerly enslaved women’s attempts to find sexual justice in the midst of the conflict, navigating Army law to carve out gendered meanings of freedom.

**Friday 11 November 2022, 7.30 p.m.**

**Dr Perry Gauci, Lincoln College, Oxford**

*Walpole and his critics.*

Three centuries after his rise to power Sir Robert Walpole is rightly held to be a key figure in the development of modern British politics. This talk reassesses the nature of his achievement in surviving twenty years in office and asks why his opponents were unable to unseat him. Recent research has enlivened our understanding of his success, and a review of key crises will demonstrate how he mastered the precarious world of early Georgian politics.

**Friday 9 December 2022, 7.30pm**

**Dr Mark Hailwood, University of Bristol.**

*What did women do all day in Tudor and Stuart England?*

This talk will look at a range of different historical sources – advice literature, wage information, wills, and court witness statements – to explore the question of how women went about their day-to-day lives in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The talk will draw on research done as part of a project on ‘Women’s Work in Rural England, 1500-1700’ and will ultimately show that women performed a much wider range of work activities in this period than is often recognised, and as such they played a key role in England’s emergence as an economic superpower.

**Continued Overleaf.**

**Friday 13 January 2023, 7.30pm**

**Professor Peter Mandler FBA, Gonville and Caius College,  
Cambridge, President of the Historical Association.**

***The Crisis of the Meritocracy: How Popular Demand (not Politicians)  
made Britain a Mass Education Society***

This talk traces the rise of mass education in the UK since 1945, from a society in which only a small minority went even to secondary school or only 1-2% to higher education, to one where everyone goes to secondary school and half to higher education. The origins and drivers for this transformation are not necessarily what you might expect - not the well-known acts of politicians and legislators, but changes in the needs and expectations of the wider public.

**Friday 3 February 2023, 7.30pm**

**Dr Oliver Finnegan, The National Archives**

***The Prize Papers in the National Archives.***

The Prize Papers at the UK National Archives is a vast and largely unused collection for the history of overseas exchange and European colonialism post-1600. This talk will showcase some of the most striking finds in the Prize Papers, including letters sent from the seventeenth-century Caribbean, papers from the slave trade out of Angola and silk samples made in Canton during the early 1800s. It will also detail ongoing work in the UK and Germany to make this collection accessible online in open access that will make it free to researchers across the world.

**Friday 10 March 2023, 7.30pm**

**Professor Helena Hamerow, St Cross College, Oxford.**

***The Origins of Wessex: Recent Archaeological Perspectives***

It is well known that the kingdom of the West Saxons – Wessex – was ultimately the most successful of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. What is less well known is that the early heart of Wessex lay in the Upper Thames Valley, and not around Winchester, its later capital, and that its origins lie with the emergence of a rather obscure group referred to by Bede as the Gewisse. My talk will examine how archaeological sites and finds in the Upper Thames Valley reveal its development as a riverine cultural zone and political frontier and suggest new insights into the emergence of the Gewisse during the 6th-7<sup>th</sup> centuries.