

## INTRODUCTION

# Editors' Introduction: Anniversary Lectures

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The academic year 2023–4 saw three major anniversaries celebrated in Cambridge: three hundred years since the establishment of the Regius Professorship in History by George I, one hundred and fifty years of the Historical Tripos (the name given to the Cambridge undergraduate degree in History), and one hundred years since the launch of *The Cambridge Historical Journal*, which in 1958 became *The Historical Journal*, as it is still known today. As part of its year-long anniversary programme, the Faculty of History invited three distinguished scholars to reflect on these milestones with a lecture that addressed each as a subject of historical inquiry.<sup>1</sup> We now publish those lectures, offered in 2023–4 by Ludmilla Jordanova, Michael Bentley, and David Cannadine respectively, in *The Historical Journal* – a publication which, while it no longer aims to solely produce ‘a record of the historical work...being undertaken in Cambridge’,<sup>2</sup> remains shaped by its closeness to the Faculty, the University, and the Press.

We have chosen to allow the lectures as reproduced here to retain something of their original spoken quality. While they were based on conventional archival research and have been lightly revised by their authors for publication, we recognize that they are also valuable historical records in themselves: of communal and collegial events held in Cambridge during this anniversary year; of views of the profession by scholars who have been first-hand witnesses to and protagonists of the very changes they outline; of past and present attitudes and approaches to the craft of history. The lecturers were, by design, invited to contribute from the perspective of institutions outside of Cambridge – Jordanova at Durham, Bentley at Oxford, and Cannadine at Princeton – since the intention was not to produce encomia or self-congratulation, but rather to invite robust reflection from ‘critical friends’, able to reflect on the contribution of Cambridge institutions to the historical profession from without, rather than from within. These lectures were intended to hold

<sup>1</sup>For further details on the anniversary programme, see the Faculty of History’s anniversary website <https://anniversaries.hist.cam.ac.uk/about-us/>.

<sup>2</sup>David Cannadine, ‘One hundred years of *The (Cambridge) Historical Journal*’, anniversary lecture, *Historical Journal* (2025).

a mirror up to the journal, the Regius professorship, and the Tripos – they set developments in Cambridge in the context of broader patterns of change both in the historical profession and in the wider world.

We publish these with the understanding that they are not traditional academic articles, though each is grounded in extensive research. They interrogate their sources while also being sources in their own right, and which thus in turn invite their own interrogation. They are snapshots of ways of doing history and thinking about the profession at a noteworthy inflection point. Delivered to packed rooms across the 2023–4 academic year, each lecture prompted lively discussion among those who attended, and they continue to animate conversations about how history is done at Cambridge, and the place of ‘Cambridge history’ – if such a thing exists – in the wider discipline and profession. The three institutions whose anniversaries are marked in this issue of *The Historical Journal* have never been immune from critique or contestation. It is our hope that in publishing these anniversary lectures, we can bring those debates to the readership of *The Historical Journal*.