Welcome from the Editors

Harshan Kumarasingham¹ and Kate Smith²

¹School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK and
²Department of History, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, UK
Email: trhs@royalhistsoc.org

Welcome to volume one of the seventh series of the *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*. We hope this series, and more particularly, this volume, marks a new departure for the *Transactions*. We have been working as the editors of the journal since January 2022, the year that marked its 150th anniversary. From the beginning of our tenure, we have been keen to shape the journal in new ways to ensure it represents the relevance, dynamism and diversity of the historical discipline today. We have worked together with our UK Editorial Board and International Advisory Board to foster such change.

At its core, the purpose of the *Transactions* remains to publish excellent historical scholarship. Academic journals are fundamental to the ecology of the discipline, providing a space where original research is shared, reviewed, communicated and discussed. They create spaces in which scholars come together and talk with each other. The ways in which journals foster such engagements are not always obvious. Peer review is the lifeblood of academic journals. It continues quietly in the background of academic life, but often shapes our research anew, generating fresh lines of enquiry and prompting different questions or approaches. We are deeply grateful to our peer reviewers who make ready their expertise and set to reading, analysing and commenting on submissions. The engagements with research begun at the peer review stage continue as the piece is reworked, published and read. In publishing new research, the *Transactions* seeks out work that is methodologically exciting and geographically, conceptually and chronologically diverse. It does so and will continue to do so by identifying and promoting new voices, approaches and ways of working across the discipline.

In editing the journal, we are particularly committed to ensuring it reflects the full diversity of geographical and chronological areas at stake in the field. We seek to further the journal’s current work in this area by particularly welcoming submissions from historians whose research sits outside British and European history. Alongside geographical diversity, we want the *Transactions* to demonstrate the dynamic nature of the field. We are

© The Author(s), 2023. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the Royal Historical Society
particularly energised by methodologically innovative and cutting-edge work
and have sought to encourage such publications through our workshop
scheme. Begun in 2022 and funded by the Royal Historical Society, we
have set up an annual call for proposals for workshops. The purpose of
this scheme is to support scholars at different career stages by providing
the funds needed to bring colleagues together to discuss a particular histor-
ical, historiographical or methodological problem. The organisers of funded
workshops work closely with us as editors to also develop a publication
which has the potential to be included in the journal. The scheme funded
four workshops last year on topics such as environmental history and parlia-
mentary culture in colonial contexts. In 2023 the scheme has allocated funds
to five workshops on topics such as barter in the Global Middle Ages, the
role of historical scholarship in video games, and mothers and motherhood
on the left in the twentieth century. Rather than simply benefiting UK-based
scholars, the workshops support the work of historians in different countries.
For instance, a workshop considering ‘Collective Reflection on Oral Histories of
Pakistan’s Women Constitution-Makers’ will take place at the Institute of
Development & Economic Alternatives in Lahore, Pakistan, in November this
year.

As well as the workshop scheme providing support to enable new discus-
sions to take place, we have also worked to create new spaces for different
forms of publication. The Common Room is a new section within the
Transactions and has been introduced this issue. The name of the section
plays upon the long history of the journal and the changing nature of the insti-
tutions in which we work. With perhaps fewer common rooms in which to sit
and discuss (and less time to do it), the Transactions’ Common Room creates an
alternative site in which issues pertinent to our discipline can be shared, dis-
cussed and collectively worked through. It is a space open to all interested in
History, which welcomes shorter pieces that might focus on methodological
problems, historiographical issues, intellectual debates or engage with recent
publications.

While we have made these changes and seen their fruition in this issue, we
have further plans afoot for the next volume. With one volume a year, it is not
feasible for Transactions to host special issues, but we are introducing the
possibility of a ‘Special Section’. There will be one Special Section per issue
made up of around four articles and a brief introductory text explaining the
theme at stake. The Special Section will allow scholars to contribute a range
of research articles on a particular theme or problem, giving more space for
different perspectives to be represented. As such they provide the possibility
of unpacking the different facets of an issue from various angles and to
work together to show their complexities.

Together we seek to ensure that the Transactions publishes research which is
original and vital. It is a space where we come together as a field to see what is
new and where we might be going next. In an age when humanities scholarship
seems to be under threat, the Transactions seeks to underscore the ways in which
our discipline is thriving, a place in which historical scholarship is seen to be
ever more relevant. With over 150 years of publishing the highest-quality pieces
across the discipline we hope that Transactions will not only build on those traditions, but with its changes in scope and approach will reach a wider readership and represent the full diversity and dynamism found in History.