

# The Historical Journal

## Retrospects Call for Proposals

'Retrospects' are digital collections of articles from across the archive of *The Historical Journal*. The editors call for proposals from scholars interested in introducing and curating such digital collections. This initiative is intended to highlight both long-standing and emergent concerns addressed by the *The Historical Journal*.

Proposals for a 'Retrospect' collection should include a list of articles from the journal's archive together with a short statement of the intellectual importance of such a collection and how it would advance appreciation of the changing currents of historiography. The editors expect 'Retrospect' collections to align with the usual length of a journal issue. The guest editor's introduction will also appear in the print-copy of *The Historical Journal* and can be between 2000 and 8000 words in length.

Proposals from post-doctoral fellows and early-career scholars are especially welcome. The editors of *The Historical Journal* are happy to answer queries on this call. There is no deadline for receipt of proposals, but the editors hope to schedule 'Retrospects' collections for the next three years by **1 July 2017**.

To mark this initiative, the editors also announce that the inaugural 'Retrospect' collection, will be edited by the journal's former editor, Prof. Mark Goldie, and entitled *The Ancient Constitution and the Languages of Political Thought*.

**To submit your 'Restrospects' proposal please contact:**  
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## Inaugural 'Retrospect' collection

The inaugural 'Retrospect' digital collection is entitled *The Ancient Constitution and the Languages of Political Thought* edited by Mark Goldie.

Abstract. Historians of political thought are accustomed to speak of 'languages' of politics. A language provides a lexicon, a toolbox, an available resource for legitimating a position. It is a looser term than 'theory', because it is plastic, and not predictive of particular doctrines. Some languages attract considerable scholarly attention, while others languish, for all that they were ambient in past cultures. In recent scholarship on early modern European thought, natural law and civic humanism have dominated. Yet prescriptive appeals to national historiographies were equally pervasive. Many European cultures appealed to Tacitean mythologies of a Gothic ur-constitution. The Anglophone variant dwelt on putative Saxon freedoms, the status of the Norman 'Conquest', whether feudalism ruptured the Gothic inheritance, and how common law related to natural and divine jurisprudence. Levellers and Chartists alike talked of liberation from the 'Norman Yoke'. Whigs rooted parliaments in the witenagemot; though, by the eighteenth century, 'modern' Whigs discerned liberties as the fruit of recent socio-economic change. These themes were explored from the 1940s onward under the stimulus of Herbert Butterfield; one result was J. G. A. Pocock's classic *Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (1957; 1987). This first digital archive issue of the Historical Journal includes articles published between 1941 and 2015, and spans the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.