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## Editorial - Fifty Years On

2017 marks the 1000th anniversary of England's division into the four Earldoms (Northumbria, Wessex, Mercia, and East Anglia) by the Danish king of England Cnut, the 375th anniversary of the start of the English Civil War, the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Jane Austen, the hundredth anniversary of Rutherford's successful attempt to split the atom, and the 75th anniversary of the first broadcast of BBC Radio 4's Desert Island Discs. Fifty years ago, in 1967, the summer of love was shared by many, Donald Campbell died on Coniston Water, and the UK won the Eurovision Song Contest, thanks to Sandie Shaw's Puppet on a string. And, in December of that same year, at the C. F. Mott College of Education, in the city of Liverpool, 150 people gathered together, and the History of Education Society was born.

The first edition of the Society's Bulletin, published in Spring 1968, records that those 150 people, 'mainly teachers of the subject in colleges and departments of education', expressed a growing interest in the History of Education, forming the society with the aim of: (i) furthering the study of the history of education, (ii) providing opportunities for discussion among those engaged in the study and teaching of the history of education, (iii) organizing conferences and meetings, and (iv) publishing a bulletin.

Anniversaries are important opportunities, times to look back to where we have come from, to reminisce and celebrate the journey so far, and times to look forward to where we would like to go next, to plot out our next steps. On the occasion of the 21st Anniversary of the Society (December 1988), its coming of age, there was a sense of sober refection. In the Spring 1989 edition of The Bulletin, the President (Richard Aldrich) reflects on the position of the Society as 'vigorous and well organized', commenting on the 'very healthy state' of the Society's activities and publications. In the previous edition (Autumn 1988), written as the 1988 Education Reform Act was receiving Royal Assent, the editor reminds his readers that 'Historians of education have a special and valuable contribution to make to the discussion of contemporary educational issues. As the History of Education Society rapidly approaches its twenty-first anniversary in December 1988 it must show its maturity, strength and vigour to meet a challenge unprecedented in its history.'

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary, there is much to celebrate. On our journey to this point, much has been achieved, not least the sustaining of the organization for half a century! Today, we can be thankful for many things; the society's publications, activities, the support offered to early career researchers, fellowships, websites, a strong presence on Twitter and other social media platforms. Many of these things would have seemed impossible to that group of 150 gathered in Liverpool in 1967! Rightfully, then, we can perhaps echo Richard Aldrich's comments from 1988. We remain 'vigorous and well organized', and as then, we in 2017, must ensure that the Society can 'show its maturity, strength and vigour to meet a challenge unprecedented in its history.'

To celebrate our Anniversary, this edition is given over, in the main, to the publication of a series of short, autobiographical, and personal reflections on the past, present and future of the Society and on the research field of history of education more generally. As well as contributing to the 50th anniversary celebrations, we also hope to provide future historians of the Society and the wider academic field with a rich and revealing primary source. We believe that undergraduate, postgraduate and early-career researchers might find it interesting to learn more about others within our community, particularly how historians of education

explain their methodological orientations; describe their research processes and working assumptions; outline their approaches to teaching and learning; and perceive the nature and purpose of the Society. Authors were asked to write brief responses to a series of questions; a sort of written interview. The resulting autobiographical contributions have been presented as they have been received, with only minor editorial tinkering to adjust references to our house style. Some respondents have chosen to create a free owing narrative, others have responded to the questions provided. Throughout, as editors, we have attempted to maintain the voice of the writer as far as possible. Contributions are presented in alphabetical order by author's surname.

A number of calls for submissions were made, through the pages of the May 2016 edition of this Journal (sent to every member of the Society), a post on the Society Blog, and an announcement at the Society's AGM in Malvern in November last. We are grateful to those who responded to these calls, and we are pleased to be able to include here a range of contributions, although we recognise that a fairly restricted demographic group is represented. As editors, we have reflected on the dissonance between this group, and the enormous range of participants from across the globe (including most countries in Europe, the Americas, North, South and Central, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and China) who attend our annual conferences, who submit to this journal and *History of Education*, who contribute to the life and work of the Society in so many ways, including acting as reviewers for articles, books, and so on, and who support our work through their membership. We recognise that increased pressures and busy-ness for many may have held them back from making a contribution to this edition. Thus, we have decided that, in line with the commitment we made when we took on the editorship of the journal, to invite further contributions of this sort for inclusion in forthcoming editions of *The Researcher*. If you enjoy reading the autobiographies included here, and would like to contribute your own, then we would be happy to hear from you. If you are willing and able to tell us your story and share your responses to our questions, then please send us your contribution (in the first instance, please contact Jonathan, [J.Doney@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:J.Doney@exeter.ac.uk)).

In terms of the Society, we hope that appreciative appraisals, focusing on its benefits and successes, will implicitly and collectively articulate a desired future. In this regard, the collective responses to one of the questions posed is worthy of comment. The responses to the question: 'What would you like to see the Society achieve over the next fifty years?' coalesce around a number of themes. There is a strong desire to offer encouragement and mutual support to others working in the field, especially postgraduate students and early career researchers, and to advance the international nature of the society, both in terms of international perspectives and connections, and a greater diversity of international membership. There is an enthusiasm to strengthen links with other learned societies, and with those working in other disciplines who are working on and interested in the history of education. Further, there is a desire to increase our public and policy profiles; to find appropriate platforms through which we can reach a wider public audience and deepen public understanding of the history of education, as well as strengthening the position we have in influencing policy discussions, particularly in ensuring that history of education is included in initial teacher training.

In the 'Notes and News' section of this edition, you can read more about some of the initiatives that the Society is embarking on to address some of the priorities for the coming years, including details of the relaunched Website, a register of expertise, and the

announcement of some Anniversary Bursaries to support new and exciting activities. In addition, there is information about the Annual Conference in November, seminar series, and some recent book launches.

The current hopes and aspirations are similar to those voiced by the society in earlier years. For example, in the presidential message mentioned above, Richard Aldrich concludes by lamenting that 'there is a problem in respect of membership'. This issue of membership was raised a year earlier, at the December 1987 AGM: 'alarm was expressed by the President at the recent fall in membership, both individual and institutional.' Aldrich ended his message with a request: 'May I, as your new President, ask for the co-operation of each and every member of the Society in doing her or his best to provide at least one new recruit in 1989.'

As we look forwards, please do think about what you can do to help the Society move into the next fifty years of its history; perhaps you will be willing to add your name to the register of expertise, or to encourage a colleague or student, possibly in a different discipline, to join the Society and/or present at one of the Society's events.

Inevitably, as we celebrate our 50th anniversary, and we look back to where we have come from, to reminisce and celebrate the journey so far, we recognise that some of those who once played a key part are no longer with us. It is thus with great sadness that we convey the news that Robin Betts died earlier in the year. Robin was closely associated with the Society in earlier years, and had recently published a two volume work on the London School Board. We are grateful to Donald Leinster-MacKay for submitting a book review for this edition.

Jonathan Doney and Rob Freathy