

Nostalgia Ain't What it Used to Be: Editorial, Volume 11, Part 4

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Reg: All right, but apart from the sanitation, the medicine, education, wine, public order, irrigation, roads, the fresh-water system, and public health, what have the Romans ever done for us?

PFJ Member: Brought peace?

Reg: Oh, peace? SHUT UP! (Life of Brian, 1979)

Introduction

Welcome to the twenty ninth edition of *Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, our third issue of 2024 and eighth special issue to reach publication. As always if you are a new reader, thanks for joining us and read on to learn a little more about the journal, alongside advice on how you can contribute to future issues. If you're a returning reader welcome back, and hopefully you'll find this editorial a useful introduction to this issue too. Alongside this content, readers will also find advice for potential authors and an update on our social media channels.

To Begin at the Beginning

It barely seems five minutes since I was writing the editorial for our previous special issue, but here we are again with another volume of varied and interesting material. Aside from the above quote, my thoughts in the past month as I collated this issue, have turned to the historical and cultural – as I confess they often do when I am away from the office.

Along those lines, I recently had the pleasure of visiting Guisborough Priory, in Cleveland while on vacation in the region. It's an incredible sight (**Figure 1**), ruined though it is, and perhaps often unfairly overlooked by visitors to the region who charge 30 miles further east to visit Whitby's iconic abbey. I was lucky enough to visit Guisborough on a glorious summer's day – another rarity this year – and was able to take a long and leisurely amble around the grounds. As I strolled, walking in the footsteps of the priory's long-gone monastic inhabitants, I was struck by a thought. What I do for a job today – working in higher education to facilitate and disseminate knowledge – was actually a role I shared with the people who once lived and worked here.

Figure 1: Guisborough Priory Ruins, August 2024 (picture credit, author's own)



I guess this particular conceptualisation may well have surfaced partly because it's Armytage's (1955) opening thesis that monasteries and priories were the first universities on British soil. This is a book I recently inherited from late mother-in-law and have been dipping into as time allows. The genesis and evolution of higher education establishments was something I wrote on during my doctoral work, with a particular lens on publication and communication. I suspect though, these ideas of scholarly heritage – and possible hermitage – were probably also there because at the back of my mind I knew that once upon returning to work, my focus was going to be on bringing the year long journey of the issue you're reading now to publication. A scholarly, focused, if often isolating endeavour, I have often found in these final weeks pre-publication. However, the wearing of hessian robes at least is an optional work-wear choice these days!

The Modern Records Centre, usually referred to by most as the MRC given the name's a bit of a mouthful, celebrated 50 years of operation last year. This milestone was marked with a daylong symposium (**MRC, 2023**), which I was delighted to be able to attend. An interesting day which not only served to mark a semi-centennial milestone, but which also brought many speakers and key figures together to share their memories and personal histories of the MRC along with others showcasing the kind of work which has been enabled and inspired through its outstanding historical archival

materials. I had been approached beforehand by an old collaborator to see if we could use this event as a springboard to create another of our special issues. I was more than happy to do so, if nothing else as a valuable way to share, document and create our own archive around the day's events. While we did reach out to all of the contributors on the day, as is always the case, not all of them were able to contribute to this volume. Nevertheless, I am pleased to say we have a strongly representative collection of articles in this issue – so even if you weren't there, you can have a clear idea of the discourse on the day. Who knows, if fifty years perhaps someone will be writing about the contents of this issue as the MRC celebrates its centennial!ⁱ

Personal reflections

Incidentally, in case you have never had the opportunity, the MRC itself is a truly fascinating place, which has been populated by some incredibly talented staff and scholars over these five decades too. It's also been instrumental in supporting some groundbreaking and revelatory research, a mere taste of which you'll find detailed in the articles below. I suspect we'd need a regular annual journal to really give true justice to quite how much work the MRC has enabled over the past fifty years. I would argue here that as an archive the MRC is possibly even closer to propagating the monastic work of our hooded forbears than myself. Perhaps, once again this is why I suspect my brain made the connection as I wandered around Guisborough last month.

Figure 2: The Modern Records Centre, August 2024 (picture credit: author's own)



I personally first encountered the MRC as part of my staff induction, back in 2005 – the first time I worked for the University of Warwick. Back then the archive was yet to enjoy the makeover which makes the current facilities such a joy to visit and work within (**Figure 2**). Nevertheless, I was permitted to look ‘behind the curtain’ and experience some of the collections first-hand – catalogued and pending alike – which the MRC held. I was struck at the time by the egalitarian nature of the collection, with smaller collections of personal archives rubbing shoulders with extensive reams of material from public bodies and organisations. As an ethnographer, rather than a historian, such quotidian ephemera has always fascinated me for the insights it gives or suggests into the everyday lives of people I’ll never meet or work alongside. I have such a deep respect for those scholars who go beyond my surface readings and experiences and synthesise deeper, more meaningful and insightful analysis. Telling these kinds of stories is important in understanding the human condition and appreciating those who went before us. Not just the great and significant, but the normal, mundane, people who laboured, lived and loved, who each helped create the societies we experience today.

Now, this is just my personal take on this vastly important resource, and if the tales and experiences in this issue intrigue you, I’d strongly suggest arranging to visit or contact the MRC yourself. I think you will be very pleasantly surprised by what you find there, and who knows where your own archival explorations may take you.

Anyway, enough about *Exchanges*’ journey, let us turn now to the core of this exciting issue and consider the many articles appearing within it.

Papers

This issue then is entirely comprised of articles arising from or inspired by the MRC@50 Symposium hosted last September. Like the event itself, the idea was to offer a *smorgasbord* of content, illustrating the vast variety of work the MRC has enabled. It was also intended to comprise a potted history of the centre itself too, especially with respect to its origins and genesis. As is our custom, you will find below a brief description of each paper, its authors along with a direct access link for reading access convenience. You might also want to consult the opening article below for a more detailed exploration of the issue’s themes and contents.

Introduction

We begin with **Pierre Botcherby** and **Rachel MacGregor** offering us some further context on the issue, its contents and importantly the MRC itself. In *The Modern Records Centre: Fifty years on* the authors consider the role the MRC has played for researchers, community engagement and local communities alike. They offer a particular historical insight into the foundation and development of the Centre, which readers will note resonates strongly with some of the later papers too (1).

Critical Reflections

We then move to the main contents of this issue, appropriately enough with **Peter Ackers'** insightful biographical exploration. Entitled *Hugh Clegg (1920-95), the new 'Warwick School' of Industrial Relations and the creation of the Modern Records Centre* the author explores the formative years of some key figures and organisations at the University of Warwick. In particular, the paper focuses on the influence on the MRC alongside Clegg's work on trade union history – a theme which a number of other papers explore further (14).

In our next paper, *On the Doorstep*, **Carolyn Steedman** examines the disjuncture between student users of the MRC and the author's own use of the Centre. Steedman also takes pains to examine some of the historic interpersonal dynamics their work has uncovered in correspondence held within the MRC's collections (21).

We divert to wartime France as **Jessica Wardhaugh** explores *Transnational Encounters and Popular Propaganda*. The author explores the fringes or 'penumbra' of the French Resistance, and those organisations whose activities can commonly be overshadowed by the more 'central organisations' in histories of the period. Wardhaugh explores in particular the surprising trade union links in the UK with these anti-Nazi groups, alongside an illustrated close analysis of some of the Resistance's flyers received in Britain and held at the MRC (29).

We continue in a similar historical period but shifting from resistance to labour, as **Mike Esbester** and colleagues reflect on *Collaboration in the Archive*. Foregrounding the Railway Work, Life & Death project the authors explore the co-productive work which has made freely available accident records from Britain's railways. In particular Esbester and collaborators offer a range of personal reflections on how this project has worked in practice and the legacy of knowledge it has enabled (45).

Our next paper brings us closer to today, as **Klára Řiháková** considers how the authors was *Getting Informed and Inspired* at last year's MRC@50 signature event. The paper explores both the MRC's collections and offers an evaluation of the value of the anniversary symposium from an early

career scholar's perspectives. Excitingly, the paper offers an alternative, fresh perspective on the speakers and papers presented with Řiháková drawing some intriguing, original conclusions of the overarching discourse on offer (61).

In synergy with the prior paper's perspectives, **Nia Belcher** considers the value obtained from *Using the Modern Records Centre as an Undergraduate*. Focusing in on the MRC's materials from the Chile Solidarity Campaign, the author explores what this clarifies about the experience of refugees from the country's 1973 coup. Belcher also offers useful reflections and considerations on their experiences of using digitised archival collections, from their undergraduate researcher perspective (72).

The synergies continue as **Verónica Díaz-Cerda** and **Alison Ribeiro de Menezes** further reflect on *The Modern Records Centre's Chile Collections as a Space for Memory and Recognition*. Their paper highlights how refugees often lack access to public and official platforms to share their experiences. As such, the authors identify the particular value derived from non-state, international archives like the MRC as both historic resource but also as a crucial pathways for achieving 'symbolic redress' (77).

We move next to considerations of *British Labour Movement Responses to Strikes and Riots in the English-speaking West Indies 1934-1939*. In their paper **Roger Seifert** pursues the British labour movement's reactions to 'disturbances' in the pre-Second World War West Indies. Drawing on scholarly thought, archival sources and the author's own forthcoming book, the paper paints a rich illustration of the tensions, provocations and domestic responses to these acts of 'colonial labour disruption' (87).

Our next piece, by **Mélanie Torrent**, continues our exploration of colonial tensions albeit this time concerning the Algerian war of independence from France. In *Not on the French radar?*, the author considers how the war impacted and influenced conceptions of socialism in Britain in the 1950s and 60s. Drawing once more on the MRC's unrivalled collections, the piece also reflects on the importance of archives as resources for understanding processes of domination and routes to liberation (99).

We continue our labour considerations closer to *Exchanges'* headquarters with **Ben Richardson's** piece on *The Transport and General Workers' Union in Leamington Spa*. The article explores the little-known linkages between the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) and Leamington Spa, in Warwickshire. The author recounts the TGWU's formation in the early 1920s and its post-World War Two operations through a biographic exploration of its eventual General Secretary, Jack Jones (117).

A shift from labour to law now, as in 'A Particular Kind of Job' author **Amy Longmuir** explores the Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting (PROS) during the mid-1970s and early 1980s. Longmuir examines how this grassroots movement for political and legal change related to the lives of sex workers and those soliciting for their services. The author also highlights the problematic tensions which existed between the PROS and the British Women's Liberation Movement, noting the routes to effective change which emerged from their interactions ([124](#)).

Following on, **Kirstie Stage** next invites us to 'Do your duty; get together, work together and take action together, with confidence and pride'. Drawing on MRC union materials, Stage unpicks the National Union of the Deaf 's (NUD) ongoing dialogues from the mid-1970s onwards with the Trades Union Congress (TUC). The author especially argues the importance of deaf histories in better understanding trade unions, working conditions and political pressure groups alike ([136](#))

Then, in *Social Work Archives and the 'Classic' Postwar British Welfare State*, **Michael Lambert** treats us to a thorough and in-depth consideration of how the MRC resources' played a key role in their research. The stories which emergence from a myriad of archival documents, help to create a rich tapestry and historically contextualised authentic narrative. Lambert uses these to shed a particular light on the complexities of policy and practice which served to configure the postwar welfare state from the 1940s to 1970s ([142](#)).

Next it is time to take a literary trip next as **Setara Pracha** invites us to consider *Moving on from Manderley*. The author shares their experiences of working with MRC resources in reconsidering the life and work of Daphne de Maurier. The focus is especially on personal correspondence between de Maurier and her publisher, illuminating both the genesis of their authorial work and contextualising its contemporary subtexts, meaning and representation ([177](#)).

At long last, all things come to an end, and our journey concludes on two wheels as **Neil Carter** considers *Cycling and the British*. The article provides a taster of the author's book of the same name, alongside highlighting some of the archival resources which proved invaluable in enabling its creation ([184](#))

Hopefully, these articles will have captured some of the debates, thoughts and reflections present at the MRC's half-century symposium. Additionally, I'm sure readers will agree they have highlighted just a fraction of the invaluable resources which the archive contains in support of past – and hopefully future – research endeavours!

Calls for Papers

While this issue is now live, we would like to remind all readers and potential authors of our various other open calls for papers. Readers and potential authors alike might also wish to register for our email newsletter or engage with following our social media to keep up with our very latest announcements and opportunities. You will find the links for these towards the end of this editorial.

Open Calls for Paper

Exchanges continues to invite and welcome submissions throughout the year on any subject. There are **no manuscript submission deadlines** on our open call and submissions will be considered throughout the year. Manuscripts therefore may be submitted for consideration via our online submission portal at any point. While *Exchanges* is an interdisciplinary journal, we define this as presenting a cross-disciplinary range of published works. Hence, while articles which draw directly or indirectly on interdisciplinary methods, methodologies, praxis and thinking are warmly welcome, this is *not* a pre-requisite. Hence, any topic, written in a manner suitable for a broad, scholarly, academic audience is likely to be accepted for consideration in our pages. Likewise, articles from researchers, practitioners and independent scholars are all equally welcome.

Manuscripts can be submitted for consideration as traditional peer-reviewed research or review article formats, which will undergo a rigorous, double-anonymised external review process. Alternatively, manuscripts may be submitted as one of our editorially reviewed formats - briefer formats which often are able to transit to publication faster.ⁱⁱ The editorially reviewed formats can be especially suitable for first-time authors, or those looking to embrace reflexivity, posit an opinion or share professional insights. It is notable that all article formats receive extensive reader attention and downloads.ⁱⁱⁱ

Word counts and requirements for all content formats vary slightly, and prospective authors are strongly encouraged to review our author guidance and advice ahead of submission.^{iv} Where an exception to the norm is required, authors should discuss their anticipated manuscript with the Chief Editor *before* submission. Manuscripts passing our review processes and accepted for publication will subsequently appear in the next available regular issue, which are normally published in late April and October.

Notably, *Exchanges* has a core mission to support the development and dissemination of research by early career and post-graduate researchers (IAS, 2024), we are especially pleased to receive manuscripts from emerging scholars or first-time authors. However, contributions from

established and senior scholars are also welcomed too. Further details of our open call requirements can be found online (**Exchanges, 2024a**).

Informal Approaches

As Editor-in-Chief I welcome approaches from potential authors to discuss prospective article ideas or concepts for *Exchanges*. However, abstract submission or formal editorial discussions ahead of a submission are *not* normally a prerequisite, and authors may submit complete manuscripts for consideration without any prior communication.^v Authors are always encouraged to include a *note to editor* outlining the [article format](#) or call under which their manuscript is to be considered along with any other considerations they wish to bring to my attention.

Exchanges is a diamond open-access, scholar-led journal, meaning there are no author fees or reader subscription charges, and all content is made freely available online (**Fuchs & Sandoval, 2013; Bosman et al, 2021**). Furthermore, authors retain copyright over their work but grant the journal first publication rights as a submission requirement. *Exchanges* is happy to support translations of our published articles subsequently appearing in other suitable journals, and requests only that a link back to the original piece is incorporated for completeness. Authors may wish to familiarise themselves with *Exchanges'* journal policies for further information on how we handle author contributions (**Exchanges, 2024b**).

All submitted manuscripts undergo initial scoping and originality checks before being accepted for editorial review consideration. Manuscripts seeking publication as research articles additionally will undergo one or more rounds formal peer-review by suitable external assessors. Editorial decisions on manuscript acceptance are final, although unsuccessful authors are normally encouraged to consider revising their work for later reconsideration by the journal.

Further advice for prospective authors can be found throughout the *Exchanges* and IAS websites (**Exchanges, 2024c, IAS, 2024**), as well as in our editorials, podcast episodes and blog entries.

Forthcoming Issues

We're not quite done yet with issues this year, as our regular autumnal issue of the journal is scheduled as always for later October. Unsurprisingly this will be where I'll be switching my attentions shortly. Beyond that we move into the realm of our other developing special issues: *Gender & Intersectionality*, *Sustainability Culture*, and *Queerness as Strength*. These are all tentatively scheduled for appearance during 2025. On top of this as well, we will hopefully be developing a second volume of papers relating to research culture for summer 2025, drawing on and derived from this September's International Research Culture Conference (IRCC '24): about which more information will doubtlessly follow this issue's publication.

Acknowledgements

As always, I would like to offer my thanks to all those people who helped make this issue a reality. Firstly, I'd like to thank all the associate editors who worked on the issue: **Pierre Botcherby**, **Hannah O'Brien**, **Eren Delaney**, **Rachel MacGregor**, **Isobel Hadlum** and **Emil Rybczak**. There have been a few challenging circumstances behind the scenes, so I'm doubly grateful for their efforts. You have all been a genuine pleasure to work with, and I will miss our semi-regular get-togethers and chat. I hope the publication of the issue will be a personal milestone for each of you too. An additional tip of the hat to Pierre, who served to originate the idea of this volume, becoming only the second person to collaborate with me as a co-lead on two special issue projects.

I would like to formally thank the MRC as a whole for their support, and especially the permission to include so many images from their collections in this issue.

My thanks too to all our authors for their vital intellectual contributions towards this particular edition as well. Likewise, my thanks to our Editorial Board for their continued support and efforts on behalf of *Exchanges*, and Associate IAS Director **Fiona Fisher** and the [Institute of Advanced Study](#) for their continued support of *Exchanges'* diversifying mission.

Continuing the Conversation

Exchanges has a range of routes, groups and opportunities for keeping abreast of our latest news, developments and calls for papers. Some of these are interactive, and we welcome comments from our readership and contributors alike.

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The Exchanges Discourse Podcast

exchanges.warwick.ac.uk/index.php/exchanges/podcast

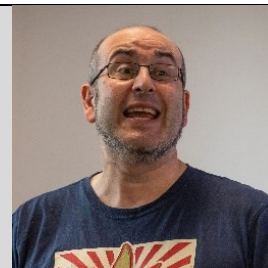
After a quiet few months we are ramping up production on the *Exchanges Discourse* podcast once more, with a number of issues recorded or scheduled for production in the coming weeks. So, if you've not listened before, you might find now a good time to start! I am hoping we will be joined in conversation by a number of authors from this issue over the next few months as well. In the meantime, there's over 50 episodes in our back catalogue – freely available – for listeners to dive into as you wait for new episodes to drop.

There's also a handy list of [past episodes](#) available or you can stream the content from most popular podcasting platforms – and specifically our host at [Spotify for Podcasting](#).

Contacting

As Editor-in-Chief I am always pleased to discuss any matters relating to *Exchanges*, our community, contributions or potential collaborations. My [contact details](#) appear at the start of this editorial.

Alongside a doctorate in cultural academic publishing practices, Gareth also possesses various degrees in biomedical technology, information management and research practice. His varied career includes running regional and national professional bodies, managing academic libraries alongside various applied research roles. Based at the University of Warwick's Institute of Advanced Study (IAS), he has been the interdisciplinary *Exchanges* journal's Editor-in-Chief since 2018. Today, he retains professional interests on power-relationships and evolution of scholarly academic publication practice, within social theory and political economic frameworks. He has aptitudes in areas including academic writing, partner relationship management and effective communication praxis, and remains a vocal proponent for academic agency through scholar-led publishing. A longtime fellow of the Higher Education Academy, he regularly contributes to a various podcasts and is also a director of a property management company.



List of Images

Figure 1: Guisborough Priory Ruins, August 2024 (picture credit, author's own)

Figure 2: The Modern Records Centre, August 2024 (picture credit: author's own)

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Endnotes

ⁱ Sadly, short of downloading my consciousness to a non-organic host I suspect I won't be around to join in these celebrations. But perhaps some of our younger contributors to this issue and the symposium will, providing a wonderful bookend to our endeavours. 'See' you in 2073 everyone!

ⁱⁱ **Editorially Reviewed Formats:** e.g., Critical Reflections, Conversations (interviews) or Book Reviews. As these do not undergo external peer review, they are also usually able to be more swiftly published in the journal – provided they pass our editorial scrutiny.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Top Articles:** This diversity of format interest is frequently reflected in our annual Top Articles list, which appears in the IAS annual report, and on our blog pages early in the new year.

^{iv} **Word counts:** For the purposes of considering a submissions' word count, we do not typically include abstracts, references, endnotes or appendices. While submissions just over or under their word count will still be initially considered for review, any significantly in excess will normally be declined and returned to their authors with advice for revision.

^v **Expressions of Interest:** We do on occasion solicit expressions of interest ahead of submissions for special issues. For regular (open or themed) issue submissions though, authors may submit their manuscripts without any prior contact.

^{vi} Yes, we too would like to jump off Twitter/X given its current owner's recent political lurches, but for now we're still there given most academics seem to have retained their accounts. But we're increasingly favouring Bluesky.social as a strong alternative.