

Editorial: Ripping Yarns

In this edition, we are delighted to include another autobiographical reflection. Ben Porter – a new member of the HES, joining in 2017 – was inspired by the contents of our May 2017 Anniversary Special Edition to submit his own autobiographical contribution. Although only just beginning to study and teach the history of education – with a particular interest in politics, class and English secondary schools – he has provided a thoughtful account, including about what provoked his interest in the field (going back to debates about education in his familial home) and his belief that it should form a part of the initial professional development of all teachers. He ends, in good humour, citing Michael Palin as a dream dinner party guest, and asking ‘why everybody seems to have forgotten about the marvellous Ripping Yarns series’. Well, we haven’t.

‘Ripping Yarns’ was a BBC 2 television comedy series, written by and starring Michael Palin and Terry Jones of Monty Python fame. Of particular interest is the first episode of the series which was called ‘Tomkinson’s Schooldays’. It was aired on 7th January 1976 and parodied – as its title suggests – Thomas Hughes’ well-known novel *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (1857). This precursor had already spawned several serious television and film adaptations (a 1916 silent film, 1940 and 1951 films, and a 1971 television mini-series). These represent just a small selection of a plethora of films and television programmes in which schools, teachers and pupils take centre stage. In many, such as ‘Goodbye Mr Chips’ (1939) and ‘The Browning Version’ (1951 and 1994 films, 1955 and 1985 television), traditional conservative values tend to be upheld. In others, mostly comedies, such values are ridiculed and inverted, for example, ‘The Belles of St Trinian’s’ (1954), ‘It’s Great to be Young’ (1956) and ‘Carry On Teacher’ (1959). In others still, and more radically, the values of school, church, armed services and state are overturned, e.g. ‘If’ (1968). Altogether, the canon of such films and television programmes points within wider culture to an enduring fascination and interest with schools. These institutions potentially have profound formative influences upon the developing individual and collective identities of citizens, and in many ways represent microcosms of society or at least certain communities within it. Such issues have been the subject of many works within the history of education as a discipline, including those that focus specifically upon the representation of teachers, for example:

- J. D. Trier. ‘The cinematic representation of the personal and professional lives of teachers’, *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 28 no. 3 (2001), 127-142.
- P. A. Grant, ‘Using popular films to challenge preservice teachers’ beliefs about teaching in urban schools’, *Urban Education*, 37, no. 1 (2002), 77-95.
- B. McCullick, D. Belcher, B. Hardin, & M. Hardin, ‘Butches, bullies and buffoons: images of physical education teachers in the movies’, *Sport, Education and Society*, 8, no. 1 (2003), 3-16.
- R. Xae & D. I. Rios. ‘Imaging Teachers: In Fact and in the Mass Media’, *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 2, no. 1 (2003), 3-11.
- M. M. Dalton. *The Hollywood Curriculum: Teachers in Movies*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2004).
- S. Ellsmore. *Carry on, Teachers! Representations of the teaching profession in screen culture*, (Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books, 2005).
- R. E. Chennault. *Hollywood Films about Schools: Where Race, Politics, and Education Intersect*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).

Just like film and television writers and directors, as historians of education we are well placed to tell our own ‘ripping yarns’ about educational settings, practices and professionals, as well as those who are the recipients of teaching and instruction. But we are also capable of ‘ripping yarns’ in another sense, that is, in terms of deconstructing stories; tearing, splitting and rupturing narrative threads and the conceptual, theoretical and evidential fibre out of which they are made. This is regardless of whether they are historical accounts or fictional tales. Like Ben Porter, we can set out to highlight economic and educational inequality, and bring about social justice, through an historical interrogation of politics and policy-making. Alternatively, or additionally, we may seek to contribute culturally to the production and/or critique of representations of education in art and the creative media such as in novels, plays, films and television series. These are merely two examples of possible aims and applications of our work. Public, political

and professional discourses can all be enhanced and enriched by the outcomes of the study of the history of education. Arguably, as a charitable learned society, we have a responsibility to contribute to this endeavor. And those of us who are academic researchers based in UK higher education institutions are increasingly being asked to demonstrate how our collective work might have an effect on, change or benefit the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia. In October 2017, the UK government's Minister for Universities and Science, Jo Johnson, announced his intention to introduce a 'Knowledge Excellence Framework'. This would run alongside the existing Research Excellence Framework and Teaching Excellence Framework which seek, whatever we might think of their respective methodologies, to assess the quality of research and teaching being undertaken in higher education institutions. The aim of the so-called 'KEF' is to increase the extent to which government funding for research, knowledge-transfer and knowledge-exchange strengthens businesses, local communities and the national economy. Whilst some might perceive this discourse as a threat, and have 'fight or flight' reactions, it does perhaps create opportunities that many will be eager to exploit. Not least amongst these opportunities are those that facilitate - through funding - public, professional and policy engagement with our research and scholarship.

In our role as editors of this journal, over the past few years, we have sought to balance our concerns for publishing research and scholarship, and engaging a broader constituency of readers. Here we've been keen to promote knowledge-transfer and knowledge-exchange. In our original expression of interest to the HES Executive Committee in 2013, we set out an agenda that included:

- widening the availability of materials published in the Researcher, perhaps by making articles available through the website;
- seeking to encourage new researchers to publish articles and established researchers to publish 'work in progress';
- facilitating greater links between the Researcher, the HES website and the postgraduate e-networks; and
- exploring the potential for developing more features within the journal focused on supporting UG, PGT and early PGR students in planning and carrying out their research projects.

Over the past four years we have been glad to move forward with these different ideas, including the posting of articles from the Researcher on the Society website (with a year-long embargo). We have introduced a series of 'Research Reports' alongside the full articles; in this edition, for example, we include a research report from Sandra Cumming, who has been working with books from the Dunimarle Library in Scotland. Over past editions, we have included a handful of similar items, and see them very much as reporting on 'work-in-progress'. We continue to strengthen links with the UG, PGT and PGR students through, for example, advertisements for forthcoming events in 'Notes and News', and through reports of events that have taken place. Jo Darnley writes in this edition about the History of Education Summer School that took place in Sardinia earlier in the year. This variety of content builds on our tradition of publishing fully peer-reviewed articles that contribute to scholarly knowledge about the history of education understood in its widest sense. Dr Richard Willis writes here about the Teachers' Registration Movement in both England and Australia. Amongst other things, Willis illuminates something of the historical background to the establishment of the Chartered College of Teaching, established in 2017.

Through the development of the 'personal biographical reflections' which made up the entirety of the May 2017 edition, we have attempted to further facilitate strong links between the membership; a number of conversations along the lines of 'I never knew that about you!...' have been catalysed. These reflections have balanced serious content about preferred methodologies, source selection and significant research findings, alongside more light-hearted content about the researchers behind the research. We intend to keep this as a regular item in forthcoming editions, so please let Jonathan (J.Doney@exeter.ac.uk) know if you are interested.

Our term of service as editors comes to an end in 2018, and we are keen to use the year as a transitional time, initiating a new editorial team into role. Expressions of interest for the role should be sent to the President of HES, Professor Stephanie Spencer (Stephanie.Spencer@winchester.ac.uk), by Monday January 15th 2018. Prior to this, if you so wish, informal enquiries about the nature of the role and the associated responsibilities can be submitted to Jonathan at the email address above. As part of the formal expression of interest, applicants should submit a document of no more than 2 sides of A4 (or equivalent), setting out their relevant experience, their editorial priorities for the journal, and, in the case of proposals for editorial teams of 2 or more people, an indication of how the work will be divided up

and distributed. In addition, a brief CV for each editor should also be included (maximum of 2 sides of A4 or equivalent).

We hope that our successors will be able to tell a convincing story about the future development, growth and reach of the journal, and that this narrative will address not only the rigour, originality, significance and potential impact of the research that they will publish, but also the capacity of the Society to achieve its charitable aims looking ahead. In this regard, the new editorial team has an opportunity to write the future history of the Society. Let's hope it is a ripping yarn rather than a yarn that is ripped!

Rob Freathy and Jonathan Doney