

The House of Commons, 1832-1945

Vacancy for a Research assistant / Research fellow

The History of Parliament has a vacancy for a research assistant / research fellow on its 1832-1945 House of Commons project. The successful candidate will have a PhD (or be close to completing one) in a relevant area of history or a related field and will join a small team of professional historians writing articles for the 1832-68 volumes and undertaking research on the period after 1832.

The History of Parliament

The History of Parliament is one of the largest and most comprehensive research projects in British history. It consists of detailed studies of elections and electoral politics in each constituency, and of closely researched accounts of the lives of everyone who was elected to Parliament, together with surveys drawing out the themes and discoveries of the research and adding information on the operation of Parliament as an institution. Since it formally began in 1951, forty-one volumes have been published covering the House of Commons in 1386-1421, 1509-1558, 1558-1603, 1604-1629, 1660-1690, 1690-1715, 1715-1754, 1754-1790, 1790-1820 and 1820-1832. All of these volumes, containing over 25 million words, are available in print and on the History of Parliament website.

The History's staff of professional historians are currently researching the House of Commons in three additional periods: 1422-1504, 1640-1660 and 1832-1868. When these are complete, the History will provide a continuous and authoritative account of the House of Commons and electoral politics over four hundred and eighty years, from 1386 to the Second Reform Act of 1867. Since 1998 the project has also been researching the House of Lords in the period 1660-1832 (split into 1660-1715, 1715-1790, and 1790-1832) and, more recently, 1604-60. The History is funded by both Houses of Parliament and governed by trustees drawn from their membership and officers. It maintains offices in London and currently employs twenty-one research staff.

The 1832-1945 project

In 2009 the History embarked on a new programme of work collating information and compiling new sources for the period after 1832. Continuing the scholarship of previous publications, the project began producing biographies of all the 2,589 MPs who sat between the first and second Reform Acts and studies of all the related 401 constituencies in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Taking advantage of the proliferation of digital resources in nineteenth-century history, these 1832-68 volumes are being produced far more rapidly than previous publications. When completed the articles are also being made available online in a new web-based

format providing additional links to original sources. Biographies, for example, are being supported by links to an MP's *Hansard* speeches, committee work, archive material and (in a significant new resource) every MP's voting record. Some 1,300 articles containing almost 3 million words have been completed so far. Drawing on this growing body of work a separate survey volume, interpreting the discoveries of the research and investigating the operation of the Victorian Commons, is also being prepared.

As well as offering fresh perspectives on the traditional themes of early Victorian politics – electoral reform, party development, radicalism, religious controversy, economic change – the 1832-68 volumes are paying particular attention to the work of the Commons in overseeing and regulating the rapid growth of a modern industrial state. Parliament dealt with an unprecedented range of 'non-political' issues in this period, unaided by the bureaucracy associated with the civil service of later years, and its inquiries and administrative activities had a profound impact on the nation's infrastructure and virtually every aspect of life. The 1832-68 website has already become a key resource for political and local historians and all those interested in UK's early democratic development, as the growing number of references to its content in recent publications clearly indicates. In addition we hope that it will begin to offer valuable new gateways into the vast array of information associated with the Victorian period more generally, becoming a hub for researchers working across a variety of different disciplines.

The 1832-1945 project is being produced under the direction of Dr Philip Salmon (editor) and Dr Kathryn Rix (assistant editor) with the support of three (since 2013 two) research staff. Three-quarters of the 1,300 articles completed to date have been written by the in-house team, who are closely associated with a number of related PhD projects, including two current Joint Collaborative Doctoral Award programmes based at the Institute of Historical Research. The remaining articles have been completed by external experts recruited from universities and libraries around the world. Alongside their research and writing duties, full-time staff give regular talks about the project, attend and help organise academic conferences, and respond regularly to media related inquiries, including those from BBC Parliament. Further information and updates on progress can be found on the project's blog, The Victorian Commons, which also has a twitter feed.

Job Description: research assistant / research fellow

The 1832-1945 History of Parliament project is seeking a research assistant / fellow to work on the 1832-68 volumes and the compilation of new resources for the post-1832 period. The appointment will initially be for three years, although this may be extended. Under the direction of the project editor the postholder will be responsible for:

- Researching and writing articles for the 1832-68 volumes to a high academic standard, using online digital resources supplemented by work in libraries and archives
- Delivering written articles to an agreed timeframe, making changes required by the editors, and uploading edited articles and supporting materials to the project website

- Actively assisting the History of Parliament's social media and outreach activities, preparing and delivering occasional public talks / conference papers on themes related to the project, and assisting with inquiries from the public and media
- Contributing to the ongoing compilation of historical resources used by the 1832-1945 project as a whole, helping to maintain existing databases and create new ones

Person specification:

Qualities/skills	Essential	Desirable
Education/Qualifications	A good degree in history or a closely related subject; a doctorate in history or a closely related subject (or should be close to the completion of one); interest in and knowledge of British / Irish political, parliamentary and electoral history in the period 1832-1868.	Some knowledge of British / Irish political and parliamentary history in the period 1868-1945; publications in the field of nineteenth-century political and parliamentary history.
Work and other relevant experience	Knowledge and experience of researching nineteenth-century history using online electronic resources; capacity to work independently and produce written work of a high academic standard to strict deadlines; familiarity with using Microsoft Word, Powerpoint, Excel and Access applications.	Experience in the creation and uploading of content for websites and blogs; experience of using social media; experience of constructing and maintaining databases.
Personal qualities and abilities	The capacity to work co-operatively with a small team of professional historians; the ability and confidence to give talks / conference papers; willingness to engage with the general public and media.	

This appointment is initially for a fixed term of three years commencing on point 22 of our pay scale (currently £26,909 per annum inclusive of London weighting of £2,134 per annum) based on a full time working week of 35 hours. There will be a probationary period of eleven months from commencement. The post carries eligibility to join the Universities Superannuation Scheme. Annual leave is 30 working days excluding public holidays and dates in line with the closure of the Senate House offices of the University of London. The appointment may be extended at the end of the term subject to a review by the Editorial Board.

Applications

If you would like to discuss any aspect of the appointment please contact the director Dr Paul Seaward at pseaward@histparl.ac.uk or the project editor Dr Philip Salmon at psalmon@histparl.ac.uk, from whom a password for accessing the 1832-68 online preview site can also be obtained. Further details about the 1832-68 volumes can also be found at <https://victoriancommons.wordpress.com>. More information about the History of Parliament and its staff can be found on our website at <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org>

Please complete the application form overleaf and send **5 copies** together with 5 copies of your current CV to the Administrator, History of Parliament, 18 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2NS **by Monday 27 July 2015**. If you wish to receive an acknowledgement of your application, please include a stamped, addressed envelope. Long listed candidates will be asked to complete a health questionnaire and (a) submit up to three recent pieces of written work (b) complete a brief written exercise related to the work of the project by Friday 21 August. Short listed candidates will be invited for interview in London on Tuesday 8 September.