

Real Historians series



"History shows us the endless possibilities of human existence, good and bad, that everything is contingent and that we are humble passengers in time."

- Paul Lay



Paul Lay,
Editor, History Today
<https://www.historytoday.com/>

What was your education?

I did a history degree at Birkbeck, University of London.

What is your occupation?

I have a new role as Senior Research Fellow in Early Modern History at the University of Buckingham following my last role as editor of History Today. I am also a Trustee of the Cromwell Museum in Huntingdon and I review for The Times newspaper amongst other publications. I am also the author of **Providence Lost: the Rise and Fall of Cromwell's Protectorate** (Head of Zeus, 2020), which was shortlisted for the Cundill History Prize.

What do you love about history?

It shows us the endless possibilities of human existence, good and bad, that everything is contingent and that we are humble passengers in time.

Why does history matter in the world?

History is what makes us who we are today, it makes us aware that those who disagree with us in good faith are human too.

What piece of work are you most proud of and why?

My book **Providence Lost: the Rise and Fall of Cromwell's Protectorate**, though I am also proud of my career, doing something that I am passionate about.



Do you think there are any individuals or periods in time that you think should be studied or given more time to?

Yes. I believe in Britain, the 17th Century should be studied more as it's such an interesting period of time. Globally, I think more time should be given to Late Antiquity - the period of time of transition from classical antiquity to the Middle Ages in Europe.

What would you say to students thinking about taking their history studies further?

Do it and when you do, don't restrict yourself to the reading lists. Read everything! There are some amazing resources out there.

If you could go back in time, where would you take yourself and why?



St. Marys Cathedral Lincoln. (c) Shutterstock / Apogee Images

I would go back to The Fall of Tenochtitlan. I think it is among the most extraordinary events in history, when two worlds clashed and our world was changed forever.

Which historical site in the UK is your favourite and why?

I really like Lincoln Cathedral, because of the beauty of both the building, its history and its setting.

To see where studying History could lead you take a look at other Real Historians in the series.