

## PROFESSOR ALEXANDRA WALSHAM

Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*

Professor Alexandra Walsham is a pioneering Australian historian whose work has transformed the way we understand the radical changes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe. Professor Walsham is currently Professor of Modern History at the University of Cambridge. She also served as Chair of the Faculty of History between 2019 and 2022. She is the first woman to hold both positions.

Professor Walsham's academic career to date is truly stellar. Following a BA and MA in History at the University of Melbourne, where she topped her year, she won a prestigious Commonwealth Scholarship to Trinity College, Cambridge, where she wrote her prize-winning doctorate on belief in divine intervention in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. Following a research fellowship at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, she moved to the University of Exeter, where she quickly rose to Professor, serving as Head of Department from 2007–2010. From Exeter she returned to Cambridge in 2010 to take up the established chair in Modern History.

Professor Walsham's first publication appeared in 1989 while an MA student at Melbourne – a study of the problem of leisure in late Elizabethan and early Stuart society. She certainly has not taken a leisurely approach to publication since. To date five monographs, at least ten edited collections, and innumerable journal articles and book chapters have appeared addressing questions ranging from the history of tolerance and intolerance to the role of angels in the period and the memorialization of the English Reformation. Among her monographs are *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford University Press, 1999), which won the Longman-History Today Prize and the American Historical Association's Morris D. Forkosch Prize. Her 2011 book *The Reformation of the Landscape* (OUP) was the joint winner of the Wolfson History Prize, winner of the American Historical Association's Leo Gershoy Award and winner of the Sixteenth Century Studies Conference Roland H. Bainton Prize. Her latest book, *Generations: Age, Ancestry and Memory in the English Reformations* (OUP, 2023): arises from her delivery of the prestigious Ford Lectures at the University of Oxford in 2018.

Professor Walsham's history hews close to the sources, gathered in painstaking work in archives and libraries across the world. She sometimes describes herself as a collector of butterflies in the archive. Anyone who has read her work knows that these butterflies are displayed in an elegant and direct style that is distinguished for its argumentative clarity and clear interventions in the field. She has driven, for example, new approaches to the complex and intimate relationships between early modern Protestants and Catholics, where continuity and change are not easily disentangled. And she has alerted us to the myriad ways that religion changes attitudes to community, place, memory, and time itself.

Beyond her publications, Professor Walsham has been a tireless servant of the discipline of History. She was editor of the field-defining journal *Past & Present* for a decade and has served as Vice President of the Royal Historical Society, as President of the Ecclesiastical History Society, and as Chair of the Advisory Board for the Institute for Historical Research, London. She is currently President of the Historical Association, the UK's national charity for promoting the teaching and study of History. One of her most enduring contributions is her devotion to doctoral supervision. Thanks to her attentive guidance, her students now hold posts across the world and continue to follow in her path of careful, rigorous historical scholarship. Throughout her career Professor Walsham has continued to offer generous support to the University of Melbourne, including delivering the 2019 Kathleen Fitzpatrick Lecture, and mentoring and supporting staff, students and alumni.

In recognition of her pathbreaking contribution to historical understanding, Professor Walsham was elected as a Fellow of the British Academy in 2009 and to the Australian Academy of the Humanities in 2013; in 2017, she was awarded a CBE for her services to history. These honours reflect Professor Walsham's incisive and brilliant historical scholarship and her indisputable status as a world authority in the field of history.