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# Join one of Europe's leading centres for the study of the History

The School of History, Classics and Archaeology offers a diverse and energetic research culture covering many periods, geographical areas, themes and approaches across the subjects of History, Classics, and Archaeology.

The University of Edinburgh is ranked in the World's top 20 for Arts and Humanities (Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2016/17). The University is committed to delivering world-leading research and knowledge exchange, and in order to do so we have a number of cross-School research groups including: Digital Humanities; Global and Transnational History; Political History; Intellectual History; Late Antique and Byzantine Studies; Material Culture; the History of Science and Medicine and Technology, as well as three Research Centres: The Centre for the Study of Modern Conflict; the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies; and the Scottish Centre for Diaspora Studies. Graduate students participate actively in our lively research culture through our research groups and centres and through staff and student-led workshops and seminars.

With over 100 academic staff, all experts in their own research fields, the School offers a diverse and energetic research culture grounded in a tradition of excellence that dates back to the late 19th century. We cover a wide variety of periods, geographical places, themes and approaches, from prehistory to the contemporary world. Whilst retaining the traditional strengths of our three subjects of Archaeology, Classics and History, the School cultivates new synergies and inter-disciplinary collaborations that bring together dynamic

groups of experienced academics, early career and postdoctoral researchers, and postgraduates.

**Please read on to discover some of the fascinating research undertaken within the School of History, Classics and Archaeology.**



**Professor Diana Paton**  
BA, PhD, William Robertson  
Professor of History

I grew up outside London and studied at Warwick and Yale Universities. I'm a historian of the Caribbean; my work broadly focuses on slavery and post-slavery societies. In my most recent project I explored the significance of the Caribbean creole phenomena known as obeah, which is often translated as witchcraft but could more accurately be defined as a form of spiritual healing. Obeah was used by enslaved people in rebellions in the eighteenth century, and has always been seen with suspicion and hostility by Caribbean elites. The research involved collecting nearly 2,000 cases in which people in Jamaica, Trinidad, and other Caribbean societies were prosecuted for obeah and other kinds of religious crimes, between 1760 and 1980. I also traced the development



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of the laws against obeah over that period, and showed how discussions of obeah were involved in many cultural and political conflicts in the Caribbean, from the debate about the abolition of the slave trade, to discussions about Caribbean independence. My research was funded by the AHRC, Leverhulme Trust, and British Academy and was published as a monograph, *The Cultural Politics of Obeah*, by Cambridge University Press in 2015. Some of the material is also available on a website: *Obeah Histories* ([obeahhistories.org](http://obeahhistories.org)).

I got interested in obeah as a result of previous research, on punishment and the penal system in Jamaica during the transition from slavery to post-slavery society. I found then that in debates about punishment in the early years after slavery, obeah was repeatedly discussed as a particularly serious crime, that should be punished harshly. I was surprised about that, because most historians who have written about obeah have focused on the period of slavery itself, not the emancipation period.

Many people have thought that obeah would disappear over time, but in fact it remains an important part of Caribbean society. I wanted to figure out both why that was, and what was at stake in the substantial efforts made by Caribbean states to suppress obeah.

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