In keeping with Birkbeck’s mission, the Eric Hobsbawm Scholarship Fund was set up to encourage the next generation of talented historians, and make postgraduate history degrees accessible to all, regardless of their background.

Named in memory of one of the greatest historians of the last century, the scholarships provide the opportunity for postgraduate and PhD students to pursue their passion to undertake original, high-quality research in history.

Whilst President of Birkbeck, Eric Hobsbawm was passionate about ensuring that the College lived up to its mission; to give the chance of education to those who wouldn’t otherwise receive it and to deliver this through the highest standards of teaching and research.

The first Hobsbawm scholars graduated in 2016. As a supporter of the Eric Hobsbawm Scholarship Fund, I wanted to let you know what those students are up to now. I am pleased to inform you about the journeys of two previous recipients of the Eric Hobsbawm Scholarships and to also share with you the story of a current student completing her PhD here at Birkbeck.

2023 will mark Birkbeck’s 200th anniversary, and our unique commitment to accessibility and research excellence remains as strong as ever.

I would like to invite you to continue changing lives through access to education, by making a donation by returning the gift form included.

Scholarship recipients have gone on to pursue careers in academia and journalism, in think tanks and government, thanks to the skills acquired during their studies at Birkbeck. I hope you enjoy reading about the difference that you and the Eric Hobsbawm Scholarship Fund have made to the lives of these young scholars and ambitious historians.

Thank you for your generous support.
Best wishes,

Professor Jan Rüger
Head of Department
Department of History, Classics and Archaeology
Birkbeck, University of London
ZEHRA
SINMAZ
MA EUROPEAN HISTORY, 2018

Almost 10 years ago, I was inspired to start studying History at Birkbeck. A chance meeting with an inspirational woman in a hospital waiting room, and an interesting criminal case being revealed in my family history research, galvanised this decision.

After completing my undergraduate degree, my masters would have been impossible without the Eric Hobsbawm Scholarship. I started my MA immediately after my BA but had to pause my studies as it became apparent that I could not really afford it. I had grown to love my time at Birkbeck, alongside the reading, writing and intellectual endeavour involved in postgraduate study. The Eric Hobsbawm Scholarship has allowed me to return to complete my MA (2018) and engage in a diverse range of subjects from Public and Micro-history to private life in Stalin's Russia.

My approach to history has always been that everything is grounded in human experience. Dates and battles are a small part of the much wider study that goes into history. My dissertation has enabled me to produce a thesis on Turkish Exile in Europe - Turkish cultural history is a topic close to my heart, due to my own heritage.

The scholarship, whilst fantastic in terms of allowing me to undertake my degree has given me far more than money. It has given me the opportunity to present the early phase of my research to historians from Birkbeck and Hobsbawm’s wider family and friends – an experience which was nerve-wracking but also exhilarating. The scholarship has also opened up a new career path for me.

Without kind donations I would not have been able to pursue postgraduate study. I would have missed out on the incredible opportunities that have come my way as a result of being a Hobsbawm Scholar. I want to thank donors for their support and want them to know that this funding really is more than just money for people like me.

JACK MERLIN
WATLING
PHD HISTORY, 2018

I completed my PhD at Birkbeck in July 2018. The following September I joined the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) as a Research Fellow, responsible for the study of land warfare. In a competitive job market RUSI were not just interested in my academic research but also my professional experience. Birkbeck’s uniquely supportive environment allowed me to develop my career while pursuing my doctorate, enabling me to take up a post at the forefront of British defence policy.

None of this would have been possible without the Eric Hobsbawm Scholarship Fund. Upon completing my BA I did not have the financial means to pursue a Masters, which is a prerequisite for a doctorate. The Eric Hobsbawm Scholarship Fund supported my MA, and later paid for language tuition which was crucial in my PhD research. There are very few scholarships for MA students, and this represents a significant barrier to many aspiring researchers. Suffice to say that I would not be where I am today without generous support of the fund and its donors.
As I begin the last year of my PhD programme, I particularly recognise just how pivotal the Eric Hobsbawm funding has been to my work thus far. Proposing a project at a London university which required extended research trips to North American archives was a significant risk. However, the opportunity to work with my supervisor, a leader in my field of study, drew me to Birkbeck despite these prohibitive challenges. Whilst other funding covers my international tuition fees and the basic income requirements to live in London, these funds were not sufficient enough to cover any travel expenses. Receiving my first Eric Hobsbawm funding in the spring of 2017 was nothing short of an enormous relief. The receipt of these funds quite literally made my research goals possible. My project focuses on sexual violence during a formative period of Anglo-westward expansion in continental North America in the 19th century. This has important significance to the contentious debates around sexual violence that continue in the present. In many respects, the ongoing struggle around accounting for and responding to sexual violence has its roots in these formative moments of imperialism that I study. On one level, this makes my work feel urgent and important despite its historical nature and, more broadly, this is also precisely why I consider history itself such an important discipline. Ultimately, funding from the Eric Hobsbawm Scholarship has contributed to my work at seven archives in three cities. This required two separate archival research trips, and the funding greatly reduced the amount of debt I had to acquire to complete this necessary work. I see, time and again, the perspective-shifting possibilities in understanding the present through the lens of the past, and recognising the structures of knowledge that structure our current realities. After completing my PhD, I hope to go on to teach, and it is this that I most intend to communicate to students of history in the future. As a PhD student working with limited funds, finances are nearly always a source of incredible anxiety and limitation, so it is with nothing but great appreciation that I extend my gratitude to the donors that make the Eric Hobsbawm funding possible at Birkbeck. Thank you.