



**ANDREW
SEATON**

**HISTORY
THROUGH
A NEW
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Alumnus Dr Andrew Seaton first came to the College to study Fast Track GCSEs in English, Maths and Citizenship Studies, with BTECs in ICT and Business Studies, followed by A Levels in History, Law, English and Politics. He recalls that, "It was a bit of an adjustment going from being home educated and moving around, to going into a more formal educational setting."

Asked for his enduring memories of attending College, Andrew said, "Going into a supportive, vibrant teaching environment where there were such great teachers and friendly people was a fantastic, life-changing thing for me." He fondly recalls lunchtimes spent with friends ("quickly made" in Andrew's words), the "amazingly well-equipped" College, and supportive staff who "eased any anxieties" he felt about re-entering the classroom setting.

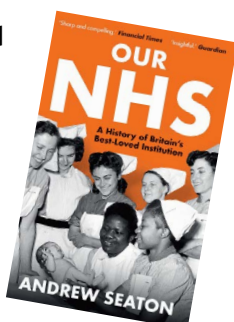
Following a gap year, Andrew completed a BA in History at the University of Oxford. During a subsequent brief period working for the Civil Service, he returned to education and pursued an MA in the History of Science, Technology and Medicine at King's College London, leading to specialisation in the history of science and medicine, and a PhD at New York University, for which he wrote his thesis on the NHS. In describing this experience, Andrew remembers, "It took about seven years to finish but in that time you take classes, you learn languages, you teach undergraduates."

A lot of stuff is restricted and locked for very good privacy reasons, so I had to find other ways of writing about this.

Click here to hear Andrew's response to challenges in research.

Having graduated in 2021, he recalled, "It was quite hard finishing the PhD. New York was hit hard by the pandemic, in full-on lockdown, and it was difficult to access books. So, it was challenging in that sense, but I loved it."

He subsequently wrote a book, titled *Our NHS: A History of Britain's Best-Loved Institution*. The book has recently been shortlisted for the Wolfson History Prize, the leading award for history in the UK. Our NHS explores the question 'Why is it that the NHS is so culturally important



in the UK?'. Andrew's initial interest was sparked by watching the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics (when the NHS was featured in "What it meant to be British, the projection of the country on the world stage") as well as by American friends who were confused by national pride in a healthcare system.

One reason Andrew has enjoyed writing about the NHS is that: "You can use the NHS to talk about politics, or healthcare and medicine and how that's changed over time, or gender and women's changing place in society, or even immigration and the extent to which the NHS has relied on workers from overseas both in the past and still today."



Click to hear from Andrew on surprises in research into the NHS.

There are inherent challenges in being a historian. Andrew explains, "You're trying to look at the history of an institution and let it exist on its own terms and not let it be clouded by what's going on now. The most important thing is asking interesting questions and, then, hopefully, using history to understand where we are now and where we might be in the future."

Andrew's parting words advise aspiring writers that:

You'll write best if it's something that you care about and that you're interested in. Some of the best writing, whether that's novels or journalism, comes from a place where you can tell that the writer really cares.

Written by Annabelle Arrowsmith

COURSE EXPLAINER

GCSE Fast Track

This course allows students to complete four GCSEs in one year, combining lectures, group work, and independent study. Unique in the UK, it offers strong support while encouraging self-directed learning for motivated students.