



“Goodbyeee”

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Let me start the last Water History editorial that I should write for a very, very long time – if not ever – with an apology to the authors of the papers in this first issue. This editorial is more about me than about their work – as I was invited to use this text to reflect on my co-editorship of Water History. Anyway, readers may skip my contribution and start reading the amazing collection (yet again!) of contributions on hydraulic engineering of Roman water infrastructure, on bringing water to the city of Columbia, South Carolina, on urban water infrastructure in Grudziądz (Poland), on a milling dispute in the thirteenth-century Crusader States, on artesian wells and bathing in Mexico, on settler colonialism and the Ewaso Ng’iro river in Kenya, and on the water supply system of ancient Piraeus (Greece). As such, this latest issue is doing what we have tried to do since the start of the journal. Water History has introduced its readers to themes as diverse as rivers, urban water systems, irrigation, health, water quality, and state-led engineering, just to name a few.

In 2009, the launch of IWHA’s journal *Water History*, with the support of publishing house Springer made it possible for the founding co-editors (Heather Hoag, Johann Tempelhoff and myself) to consolidate and advance the growing scholarly interest in water history – including to spearhead scholarship on the importance of water history to contemporary environmental concerns. The co-editors also sought to promote the complexity of historical narratives and analyses, with the idea that historical narratives delineating relations between various actors, settings and problems, would require a high level of detail in the papers. After several changes in the editorial setup (with Johan Tempelhoff leaving after a few years, and Ellen Arnold stepping to replace Heather Hoag a few years ago), these central ideas have not changed (yet) – or at least I like to think so.

What has changed for me, especially in the last few years, are two things. First, there is the obvious major interruption of what we thought we could consider as normal, by the pandemic. Working rhythms changed drastically, our routines to engage with each other

“Goodbyeee” is the final episode of *Blackadder Goes Forth*, the fourth series of the British historical sitcom *Blackadder*. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goodbyeee>)

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could not be maintained because of travel restrictions, and live in general was disrupted. Our third issue of 2020 tried to answer some of these challenges by publishing papers (in extremely and very short versions) under the theme of “Water history in the time of COVID-19: cancelled conversations”. Apart from the observation that in the year after this issue, there were not that many cancelled conversations left – as most conferences were simply not organized – my second personal development may partially explain why we did not produce a second COVID-19 issue: finding the time to work as a serious co-editor was a challenge. I apologize again to all the authors that have suffered delays because of that – and to the many colleagues at Springer that supported the editorial process and manuscript production. I do realize that working with me must not have been as easy as it should have been, although I would like to think that my commitment to the journal stayed on level.

There is enough to be proud of. *Water History* has certainly managed to show a diversity of topics, times and regions. *Water History* is yet to engage more closely with salt water (although the thematic issue of June 2015 on writing water histories includes some articles on sea-related topics). Indeed, given the multitude of possible topics, regions and periods, one of the policies of the journal has been to encourage the publication of thematic issues. The themes of these issues have included methodologies and interdisciplinarity, indigenous histories, Roman canals, big dams, and sediments. In terms of time periods, contributions to *Water History* are predominantly about the ancient world or on the last two centuries. The term “Dark Ages” may no longer be in vogue among historians, but the scholarship on water history on what is generally labelled as the (European) medieval period is definitely scarce. Regions ranging from the southern United States, the North China Plain, Iran, to central Europe have appeared on the pages. In terms of regional focus, however, the majority of published articles in *Water History* focus on Europe or Asia. This probably reflects regional differences in access within the academic world, with USA-based water historians finding options to publish within the USA, but scholars from Africa facing huge challenges in terms of budgets, archival access, and publishing options.

Equal access is a topic that has become more important on my own working agenda, and is a topic that goes beyond scholarship on old, wet stuff. Concerning these wet narratives, what I would have liked to see more is contributions on methodological and historiographical issues. My dislike of grand narratives of water may be well known, but that does not mean that water history needs to stay a field of individual stories. *Water History* has the potential to connect, for example by continuously asking the question whether we talk and write about the same water! One of the aspects I am rather proud of is that *Water History* publishes historical and archaeological texts – a combination that is not necessarily happening much. Another aspect I am proud of is that we publish(ed) manuscripts that include a fair amount of quantification. I do realize that the observation that my own work can be well described with these two aspects does bring up the understandable question whether Maurits the editor did not push too much the research of Maurits the researcher. The readers may judge for themselves, but I would argue that, while certainly stimulating this type of work, my interference with *Water History* has established it as a rich and diverse journal – and not as Maurits’ journal.

One of the great benefits I experienced throughout my co-editorship is that working on *Water History* is indeed a team effort. *Water History* is not the project of an individual, it is the effort of many. I want to thank our first advisory board, without whom the journal would not have started. Martin Melosi, Petra van Dam and Verena Winiwarer, I trust you will

understand that I want to mention Tony Wilkinson in particular: I cannot imagine a stronger supporter of the journal – nor a kinder person. I still miss him. It has been my pleasure and honor to have worked with all the support staff of the production office of Springer, with Tamara, Alex, and Fritz, our contact persons at the press, and especially with my co-editors Heather, Johann, and Ellen. Within the many fascinating contributions in the journal, the thematic issue on Vienna and the Danube from 2013 may be the highlight of my editorial period – and was (unsurprisingly) (guest-) edited by Ellen. The fact that Martin Schmid, the new co-editor-in-chief of *Water History*, was one of the key researchers in that same project makes me happy: the journal is in excellent hands for the years to come. Perhaps I might be able to contribute a paper or two in the coming years....

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