I am delighted to be Honorary President of the SHA. For many of my younger years my own history has been in astronomical research – in particular, the determination and interpretation of chemical element abundances in galaxies, and in the origins of interstellar dust. But as middle age settled in, I became fascinated by aspects of how astronomy (and by implication our conceptions of the Universe) had developed. I explored the ancient Greeks through research on the Antikythera Mechanism, and the early years of the Royal Astronomical Society in preparation for its bicentenary in 2020. Currently I have an interest in the diaries and letters of John Herschel, and (separately!) the development of exobiology. An eclectic mix. But surely that is one of the great joys of engagement with the History of Astronomy? It is wide-ranging, and fun! Just to read about the ideas, observations and opinions of the past is to take part in a great journey towards a better understanding of how we arrived at our present views. It is also a sobering corrective to being too dogmatic, and a fine preparation for recognising and enjoying exciting current developments. The role that the SHA can play has been clearly set out by my illustrious predecessor, Dr Allan Chapman.

https://societyforthehistoryofastronomy.com/dr-allan-chapman/

A knowledge and appreciation of history is surely a requirement for a civilized society. How we developed our present understanding of what exists outside our tiny World, and the timeline of the Universe, is important to all of us. We really are privileged as individuals – no matter what our background - to be able to investigate, contemplate and discuss these things. As the numerical count of my years increases apace, I certainly relish “thinking about it all” …….