A WELCOME MESSAGE FROM THE NEW CHANCELLOR OF CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY, LORD SAINSBURY OF TURVILLE

People often assume that, because I read history for two years at Cambridge and then switched to reading psychology, I don’t value the teaching of history or think it has any relevance to the world outside the university. Nothing could be further from the truth. In my business and political careers I have found that what I learnt at Cambridge, which is the ability to assimilate a mass of information, pull out of it the key issues and then produce coherent and persuasive arguments on the basis of the evidence, is one of the most valuable skills one can have. How important a skill it is I didn’t realise until I went to an American business school to get my MBA and found that while I had to work hard to catch up in areas such as mathematics and computing, when it came to argument and debate or writing a paper about an issue, the American students struggled at things I could do in my sleep.

Also when I was a Department of Trade and Industry Minister in the House of Lords and having to answer questions and wind up debates on the whole range of subjects covered by the DTI, energy policy, company law, employment law, trade policy, industry and science, I realised that the ability to master a subject and to speak succinctly about the key issues was a very useful skill to have. It was also one that long hours in the House of Lords taught me was not one that everyone has.

I have also found in my business and political career that if one wants to understand what is happening in society or politics, history often provides the answer. A great interest in my life has been trying to understand why economic growth has been faster in particular countries at particular times, and what role governments have played. This is a subject which can be approached from many angles, but I would rate Why Nations Fail by Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, which has just been published, and which is basically an historical analysis, as one of the most interesting books on the subject.
A DIVINE COMEDY FOR HISTORIANS

Travelling through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, Dante, accompanied by Virgil and then by Beatrice, met all sorts of worthy and unworthy people from the past (and indeed some from the near-present he didn’t like very much). We invited several of those who teach and research in the History Faculty to imagine that they had the chance to dine with someone in one of those realms, at a table well out of range of burning pitch and lakes of excrement. Whom would they choose and why?

STEPHEN ALFORD is the author of several important books on Tudor England, including one on Francis Walsingham, and is a Fellow of King’s.

My guest would be Thomas Phelippes, an Elizabethan, and one of the murkiest characters I’ve ever worked on. He was Sir Francis Walsingham’s secret right hand who ran spies and was one of the best breakers of code and cipher in Europe. Almost everything about him is obscure, especially his motivations and passions in hunting down Elizabeth I’s putative enemies. His career had great successes – most of them achieved in secret – and yet also great failures. The greatest puzzle is how so able a man felt he could get away with embezzling thousands of pounds from his day job in the London Customs House.

There’s more I could say, of course. But my biggest reason for inviting him would be to try to make sense of a character who kept so much of what made him tick hidden away. A fascinating but also a mildly unsettling guest to have round the table...

ANNA ABULAFIA is Lecturer in History at Lucy Cavendish College; her most recent book on medieval Christian-Jewish relations appeared at the start of 2011.

I would invite Peter Abelard, the brilliant, accident-prone, self-absorbed twelfth-century philosopher. I would want to listen to his scurrilous gossip about the major masters of the day and hear his candid opinion of his great rival Bernard of Clairvaux. And if I plied him with enough drink, I might even learn what he truly felt about Héloïse. Did he love her as much as she loved him?

ROBERT PRIEST is a Research Fellow of Gonville and Caius College whose D.Phil. thesis at Oxford was concerned with Ernest Renan’s nineteenth-century bestseller La Vie de Jésus, which presented the life of Jesus in a manner far removed from contemporary pieties.

I would like to meet someone who is certainly in Hell: the French hoaxer Léo Taxil (1854-1907). While only a teenager he fooled the army that sharks had entered the port of Marseilles; and then as a young man he convinced archaeologists that there was a ruined city under Lake Geneva. In the 1880s and ’90s he strung along thousands of Europeans – including the Pope who invited him to the Vatican – with fabricated revelations of human sacrifice by the Freemasons. Over shark soup, I would ask him whether he regretted the alienation that followed when he confessed his grand prank. And one can only imagine what tricks he would pull on the waiters.

DAVID PRATT is Lecturer in History at Downing College and has published a study of the political ideas of Alfred the Great.

I would want to summon up the late Anglo-Saxon nobleman Eadric Streona, whom most would place in Hell but might equally have made it to Purgatory. Eadric has often been regarded as the ‘evil genius’ of the final years of King Æthelred ‘the Unready’ (978-1016), gaining a position of lofty influence over royal policy which he is held to have exploited through political killings and repeated disloyalty, both to Æthelred and to his son Edmund Ironside. Yet Eadric has suffered from a uniquely skewed ‘bad press’ in the sources; the reality of his motivations is unlikely to have been so straightforward, and I suspect that, of prominent individuals from the Anglo-Saxon period, he is likely to provide the most insightful interview.


Deciding whether the Spanish Jesuit José de Acosta should spend eternity in Heaven, Hell or Purgatory must have been a subject of heated debate among those in charge of dealing with such delicate matters.

Acosta was born in a world deeply transformed by the recent discovery of the Americas and throughout his life he contributed to change that world even further. Acosta joined the Jesuits when he was still a boy and rose to become one of the most influential theologians of his time. He lived in Peru at a time when the Spanish empire and his agents carried out crucial reforms in politics, economic and social organization, and was both a witness and a protagonist of the lasting changes those reforms elicited. Acosta travelled extensively throughout the Andes, encountered several descendants of the Incas, wrote what is perhaps the earliest description of soroche or altitude sickness, and left a vivid description of life in the Potosí silver mines. He had a central role defining the means, methods and contents of the evangelizing enterprise. Four hundred years after his death, his work is not only still discussed and read in universities, but its effects are also deeply felt in the lives of millions of indigenous Americans.
COLLEGE LECTURERS, UNIVERSITY LECTURERS: A DIVIDED SYSTEM

David Smith

Some years ago, a widely respected scholar, a long-term member of our Faculty, was asked how well the system works. Her answer was: ‘One of the very few things that has remained much the same since I first arrived in Cambridge back in the early 1970s is the Faculty building. Despite what seems like continual repairs and renovations, it still gets too cold in the winter and too hot in the summer – at least it does for me up there on the fifth floor! Needless to say, so many other things have changed over the course of the years.

It will come as no surprise at all to many of you to learn that the two that have pleased me most of all have been a significant increase in the number of women Faculty members and, allied with that, the recognition that gender is not only a valuable but also an essential area of historical investigation. Otherwise what seems to be a cyclical concern with reforming the Tripos is with us again and, as is usually the case, much of the discussion – and disagreement – is focused around whether Part One should be a one or a two-year course.

I am delighted to be able to say that American history continues to thrive in both Parts of the Tripos. For several years now we have had two Part One papers, with the break at the end of the Civil War, still both optional, and between them they attract around half of all the undergraduates offering Part One. In Part Two, our Special Subjects have included American Women in a Revolutionary Age (no prizes for guessing who taught that one!), Martin Luther King, and The Adams Family (not the cartoon family but the Massachusetts family). Teaching remains, as it has always been, something that I so enjoy and I have such enormous fond memories of the many of you who have passed in and out of Room 22 over the years. I wish all of you well. Many people have asked me how I am going to spend my retirement. To begin with, I intend to do something that was impossible for me to do between school and university, and that is to take a ‘gap’ year. And that is something I am really looking forward to!

PLUS ÇA CHANGE? HOW THE FACULTY HAS CHANGED IN NEARLY FOUR DECADES

Betty Wood

Dr Betty Wood, Reader in Early American History and Life Fellow of Girton, is a much-loved member of the History Faculty who retires in 2012. She has also been a long-time inmate of the History Faculty building, maintaining an office there in which to conduct her supervisions. She has thus seen more Faculty comings and goings than anyone else. We asked her bow, if at all, things have changed since the 1970’s.

One of the very few things that has remained much the same since I first arrived in Cambridge back in the early 1970s is the Faculty building. Despite what seems like continual repairs and renovations, it still gets too cold in the
The first thing I did after the first ‘Historical Argument and Practice’ lecture I went to at the start of my first year was to look up on Wikipedia what ‘Whiggish history’ was. I knew the Whigs had been a political party but I did not understand the connection between this fact and what I understood, throughout the course of lecture, to be a nineteenth-century positivist teleological approach to history. After nearly three years here, I marvel at the fact that the name still used for it portrays it as the invention of a single British party.

I moved from France to England when I came here for my degree. I had started learning English when I was 11, and it took a lot of reading on my own, a few friendships, and a gap year to be able to study History in English. My main problem for essay writing has been the fact that I come from an educational system which values the beauty of a long sentence. Thanks to my wonderful first-year supervisor, I learnt to make three sentences out of one. Given the length of my reading lists, I am grateful that a ‘well-written’ piece of scholarship on this side of the Channel is mainly ‘clear and to the point’.

It feels that my background has been overwhelmingly helpful. I have kept from it, for example, a good habit of planning before writing, resulting from what turned out to be a French obsession for plans in three parts. Of course, reading Hobbes’ Leviathan in a week was difficult, and writing three essays in three hours for Part I was tough. But these things are easy for no one here. They also are an essential component of the independence of learning from the books that I was looking for when I came here.

Given the political interest now being shown in the reform of History in schools, I decided to contribute to the discussion. The inspiration came from an article by our colleague Richard Evans in the London Review of Books, commenting that academic historians in Britain had expressed no support for change and taken little part in the debate – which sparked a lively correspondence. In collaboration with two co-authors, both originally from Cambridge – one, Abby Waldman, a specialist in public history, and Christopher Moule, a history teacher – we propose a radical change in the curriculum and the examination system. In brief, we believe that the present system, both at GCSE and A-level, is too fragmented, too complex and too specialized, and unsuitable for most school children. Many state schools no longer teach it at all even at GCSE. Many schools repeat the same material at successive stages to improve examination outcomes: notoriously, it is possible to study the Third Reich three times, to the neglect, inevitably, of vast swathes of English, European and world history, including almost everything before 1870. It would be highly undesirable – as the government appears to be contemplating – to make History in its present form compulsory.

We propose a simpler and broader curriculum covering the whole of English and British history, with examinations testing knowledge and understanding rather than (often spurious) methodology. The details of our proposal are contained in a short pamphlet Lessons from History: Freedom, Aspiration and the New Curriculum (Politeia), and those interested can read the full curriculum and sample examination papers online [www.politeia.co.uk/appendix]. Surprising to me was the amount of media coverage – this is clearly a subject that interests people – and most surprising of all a trickle of letters from teachers, parents and others expressing agreement, and even asking advice.
WHAT IS ‘RESEARCH EXCELLENCE’?
AN INTERVIEW WITH PETER MANDLER

Having experienced several ‘Research Assessment Exercises’ in which the quality of research in British universities has been placed under the microscope, we are now facing the ‘Research Excellence Framework’, and members of the Faculty are busily making sure that they know which of their publications they would like to expose to scrutiny. We have done very well in the past and are determined to show that we lead the field this time as well. Professor Peter Mandler is ‘Director of Research’ in the Faculty and has been charged with getting our submission into shape; in addition he has past experience of the RAE, and has found himself (and will again find himself) reading vast amounts of material submitted by historians at other universities. We asked him to explain what is going on.

1. WHY IS THE ‘RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK’ IMPORTANT FOR THE FACULTY AND UNIVERSITY?

Now that universities get relatively little funding directly from the government, most of what we do get depends on the REF. The History Faculty has been earning about £2,000,000 per annum from our performance in the last round of the Research Assessment Exercise.

2. REF, RAE... WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

Not a lot – it’s not clear why the funding councils wanted a change of name! The major change is the introduction of ‘impact’, which now counts for 20% of the assessment. Only 65% of the assessment is now based on the research we do. The remaining 15% assesses ‘research environment’.

3. ISN’T ASSESSING SO MUCH WORK A RATHER SUBJECTIVE PROCESS, IN THE END?

No more so than assessing a big stack of undergraduate scripts – and as with the scripts, the more you assess the better the comparative view you get. We have most of 2014 in which to do the work.

4. WHAT IS ‘IMPACT’ AND HOW DOES IT WORK IN THE HUMANITIES?

‘Impact’ assesses the dissemination and significance of academic research for the non-academic audience. One of the difficulties is that the indicators initially developed were all based on the impact of the hard and soft sciences, such as economic benefit. In the humanities, it is easier to assess dissemination than benefit. We can count how many copies a popular biography of Henry VIII sells, but how can we measure the benefit people got from reading it? And while we want some academics to write popular biographies of Henry VIII, do we want to put pressure on all academics to do likewise?

5. YOU ARE ALSO TAKING ON THE PRESIDENCY OF THE ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY, AND YOU HAVE WRITTEN ABOUT THE ROLE OF HISTORY IN NATIONAL LIFE. HOW CAN THE ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY PROMOTE THAT?

It’s going to be a rough ride. The humanities tend to do badly in periods of economic downturn. But we have a strong case. Learned societies like the RHS are amongst the few independent voices left unfettered by outside funding or political obligations or concerns about market position. We can argue for the humanities not on the terms set by government, the media or the private sector, but on terms which I think the general public will appreciate: history preserves, records, and teaches about the precious heritage of human experience across millennia and around the world; understanding it makes us richer (even if not wealthier).

6. WHAT ELSE DO YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE AS PRESIDENT?

If we can protect our traditional strengths as a learned society – supporting and showcasing research, publishing, lecturing – and at the same time develop our role as public advocates for history, I will be very happy.

7. THIS DOESN’T LEAVE MUCH TIME FOR RESEARCH, I SUPPOSE, BUT WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON AT THE MOMENT?

I am just finishing a book on the anthropologist Margaret Mead and her efforts to apply her study of culture to international relations in the Second World War and the Cold War; it will be published by Yale University Press in early 2013. I’ve got some new research going on the language of social science in everyday life in post-war Britain and America, and on the history of education policy in 20th-century Britain.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE UL TOWER: A NEW FUTURE FOR THE SEELEY

Linda Washington, Seeley Librarian

Libraries are changing. New technology is transforming how people learn and how they gain access to the materials they need. Electronic journals are displacing hard copies, especially in the sciences, and some even predict a similar fate for the learned monograph. The University has responded to these changes by drawing its libraries closer together, and here the Seeley Librarian describes what this means in an age when the University Librarian is decorated with the title Director of Library Services.

‘E’volution not Revolution’ has been the watchword as Faculty and departmental libraries move to a new status as ‘affiliates’ of the University Library. Since the acceptance three years ago of a ‘Review of Teaching and Learning Support Services’ which recommended the University Librarian should become ‘Director of Library Services’, the strategy has been to...
NEW FACES IN THE FACULTY

Following recent retirements a number of exciting new appointments have been made. Here are brief profiles of several new members of the Faculty – more details can be found on the Faculty website at www.hist.cam.ac.uk/directory/academic-staff. We begin with the newly-elected Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History, a post that has been held vacant since Jonathan Riley-Smith retired half a dozen years ago.

PROFESSOR DAVID MAXWELL
(Emmanuel College)
Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History

I am an historian of African Christianity who has written on mission history in colonial and post-colonial settings; the religious encounter of Christianity with African traditional religion; indigenous African Christian movements; Pentecostalism, ‘transnationalism’ and religious globalization. My first monograph considered the religious encounter in Zimbabwe and my second book was the history of a Southern African transnational Pentecostal movement. I am currently researching the missionary and African contributions to the creation of so-called ‘colonial knowledge’ in Belgian Congo/Democratic Republic of Congo. I also have an interest in religion and the media, particularly religious print and photography.

I studied for my BA in History at Manchester University. This was followed by 3 years teaching in a rural secondary school in Manicaland, Zimbabwe before returning to St Antony’s College, Oxford to take a D.Phil in African History. After a Fellowship in the Social Anthropology Department at Manchester University I was appointed Lecturer in International History at Keele University in 1994. I was made Professor of African History at Keele in 2007 before joining the History Faculty in Cambridge.

DR EMMA CHARTREUSE SPARY
(Corpus Christi College)
Lecturer in Modern French History

After spending my undergraduate and early graduate years at Newnham College, Cambridge, I completed my Ph.D. at Girton College while holding a Research Fellowship there, then moved to a Research Fellowship in the Department of History at the University of Warwick in 1995. I was appointed Senior Researcher at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin in 1998, and after a career break for family reasons, I joined the Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine at UCL in 2006. I have held my current post at the Faculty of History of the University of Cambridge since October 2010.

My publications include a monograph on the history of French natural history in the eighteenth century, Utopia’s Garden (2000), and a second monograph, Eating the Enlightenment, is due to be published in 2012. I have jointly edited three books of collected essays. In the pipeline are another monograph on the early history of French alimentary sciences, as well as a couple of journal special issues which I am editing alone or in company.

My research interests cover the history of natural history, medicine, chemistry and agriculture in eighteenth-century Europe, particularly France, but for various projects I have ventured into different areas of the world or of knowledge, from the Netherlands to the...
Mascarenes, from shell-collecting to rat-eating! I consider myself an historian of knowledge in all its various forms.

DR JEAN-PAUL GHOBRIAL (Churchill College)
Temporary Lecturer in Early Modern European History

I was born in New York and raised in southern California. I am interested in exchanges between the Middle East and early modern Europe. My dissertation explored the circulation of information between Europe and the Ottoman world in the seventeenth century. This work led to a renewed interest in Eastern Christians and their roles as intermediaries between Europe and the Middle East. Currently, I am working on two main projects. The first, Knowing Other Worlds, explores how communication networks acted as modes of encounter in the early modern world. The second is a book called The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon, a micro-history of the adventures and writings of a seventeenth-century Chaldean traveller to the Americas. Other interests include print, media, and Arabic autobiography in the early modern period.

Dr Ghobrial leaves his post in Cambridge in October 2012 to become a University Lecturer in History and Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford.

DR JOEL ISAAC
(Christ’s College)
Lecturer in the History of Modern Political Thought

My research focuses on the history of social and political thought in the United States. I have a particular interest in the ways in which theories of knowledge drove a key set of conceptual changes in the human sciences during the twentieth century. I define ‘human sciences’ capaciously: this complex of disciplines includes, in addition to core fields of study such as political science, sociology, and psychology, some traditionally humanistic areas of inquiry, notably philosophy, as well as aspects of mathematical logic and statistics. Much of my work in this area is presented in my first book, Working Knowledge: Making the Human Sciences from Parsons to Kuhn, published by Harvard University Press in 2012. I am also much interested in how the Cold War shaped political ideologies in the United States. I have pursued this topic in Uncertain Empire: American History and the Idea of the Cold War (Oxford University Press, 2012), which I have edited together with my colleague Duncan Bell. My current research centres on the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein and his impact on philosophy and the social sciences from the mid-twentieth-century to the present. A distinct but related line of research focuses on the history of the research university in Britain and America.

I was born in Devon and raised there and in the Netherlands. I trained as an historian at Royal Holloway, University of London, and at Trinity College, Cambridge. I took up a lectureship at Queen Mary, University of London in 2007, and remained there until assuming my current post in the Faculty of History.

My research addresses a number of questions relating to society, economy, and the law in England and Europe during the later middle ages (1200-1500). My doctoral research was on the history of credit in the rural economy in fourteenth-century England, and in 2009 my book on this subject appeared in the British Academy’s Postdoctoral Fellowship Monographs series. I am also interested in the place of law and institutions in medieval society and economy, and in particular their role in allowing people to enforce agreements and commercial transactions. Future research will focus on the possessions of rural people in the later Middle Ages, as part of an attempt to chart long-term changes in living standards. I have held a British Academy post-doctoral Fellowship and lectured at the University of Southampton before coming back to Cambridge.

DR CHRIS BRIGGS
(Selwyn College),
Lecturer in Medieval British Economic and Social History

So what happens when the Faculty of History has vacant professorships or lectureships? The Faculty decides on its priorities, and produces a ranked order with an academic case, and the Council of the School gathers together the lists from all other units. A decision then has to be made about which post to fill. Has a post been lost in a specialised area that attributes costs and revenues to each School. At the moment, one School is in healthy surplus; our School has a moderate deficit. Of course, it would be possible to work out the deficit or surplus of each individual Faculty or Department in the School, but at present this is not done.

Universities differ in their financial regimes. In some, each department or subject area has devolved powers, receiving (after deductions for central services) the revenue it generates from student fees and the allocation from the Research Excellence Framework (REF) based on the assessment of the academic publications and ‘impact’ of the staff. In Cambridge, budgets are only devolved as far as the six Schools, in our case the School of Humanities and Social Sciences which includes Law, Economics, Politics, Sociology, Archaeology and Anthropology amongst others. The budgets of each School are assessed using the Research Allocation Model or RAM, which attributes costs and revenues to each School. At the moment, one School is in healthy surplus; our School has a moderate deficit. Of course, it would be possible to work out the deficit or surplus of each individual Faculty or Department in the School, but at present this is not done.

And then there is the question of how we fill posts when money is tight. Here Martin Daunton, Professor of Economic History and Master of Trinity Hall, explains the workings of a devolved system whereby we have to argue our case whenever we want to fill a vacant slot.

PRIORITIES

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FACULTY NEWS

The Faculty takes pride in recording a long list of prizes:

- Prof. Alexandra Walsham FBA received the Wolfson Literary Award for History and the Leo Gershoy Award of the American Historical Association for her book *The Reformation of the Landscape: religion, identity, and memory in early modern Britain and Ireland* (OUP);
- Prof. David Abulafia FBA received the Mountbatten Literary Award from the Maritime Foundation for his book *The Great Sea: a human history of the Mediterranean* (Penguin);
- Dr Gabriela Ramos won the Howard F. Cline Prize of the Conference on Latin American History for *Death and Conversion in the Andes, Lima and Cuzco, 1532-1670* (University of Notre Dame Press);
- Dr Ulinka Rublack received the Roland H. Bainton Prize for History for her book *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (OUP);
- Dr Victoria Harris’ book *Selling Sex in the Reich* (OUP) has been awarded the 2011 Women’s History Network Book Prize, an annual prize for a first book in women’s or gender history.
- Dr David Motadel received the German Historical Institute’s dissertation prize as well as the International History Group’s annual prize for his doctoral thesis on ‘Germany’s policy towards Islam, 1941-1945’.

And our apologies to any people whose names may have been omitted.

STOP PRESS:

PROMOTIONS

In the latest round of promotions Dr Annabel Brett (Caius) and Dr Craig Muldrew (Queens’) have been promoted from Senior Lecturer to Reader, and Dr Leigh Shaw-Taylor has been promoted from University Lecturer to Senior Lecturer.

QUEEN’S BIRTHDAY HONOURS

The Faculty greatly rejoices in the conferral of a knighthood on Richard Evans, Regius Professor of History, which was announced on 16 June. “I’m absolutely delighted to receive this honour”, said Sir Richard. “It’s a recognition of the historical profession in Britain and especially those of us who work on the history of other countries. It demonstrates the strength of the Cambridge History Faculty.”

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