



THE SEELEY History Faculty Newsletter

Issue 2
July 2011

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Mark Goldie



There's a somewhat surreal quality to being Chair of the History Faculty. Most noticeably, scarcely any of my colleagues are actually here in the Faculty building; they're in their College offices. For another, I can't give orders – even if I wished to – for the History Faculty is essentially a self-governing republic of citizen scholars. And yet it works – brilliantly. The Faculty's members are motivated, not by line-managers, but by sheer self-propulsion, absorption in their research, and devotion to their students, mingled with that edgy anxiety that hangs in the Fenland air. It helps that History students are – usually – a dream to teach. The members of my Part II Special Subject class on 'John Locke's politics, 1660-1710' are remarkably erudite, articulate, and generous in sharing their knowledge with one another. Among the Faculty's senior members, almost never does a colleague decline when invited to take on one more chore. And – so far – I've not received a single abusive e-mail, even though the Faculty Chair is the natural lightning conductor for indignation.

Cambridge University is under pressure and set for dramatic changes. Will it be possible to continue trying to offer all the attractions of both a global research university and a liberal arts college? I hope so, but there's an inevitable tension. We will never abandon the intensive teaching of undergraduates, and the supervision system remains our envied USP – 'unique selling point' in the jargon. Weekly essays, rapidly composed from alarmingly long reading lists and then subjected to close scrutiny and robust critique, are an unrivalled training for any career, producing sought-after graduates who can construct and defend sound and quick judgments, based on finite and ambiguous evidence, at the drop of a hat. But such training is hugely expensive and, in an atmosphere of cuts, students fear that small-scale supervisions are at risk – they're not. But given the massive cuts in the teaching budget, the controversial new fee regime will not ease the pressure – grant-funded research projects and philanthropy will become even more important to sustaining our intensive system of undergraduate supervision.

The greatest change in my academic career has been the expansion of postgraduate education, especially at Master's level. Indeed, the History Faculty now admits around 200 undergraduates each year and around 150 postgraduates, and some colleagues now spend as much time teaching the latter as the former. One wit recently remarked that these postgraduates must be a mirage, since the British students

find it increasingly difficult to obtain funding and the non-British students – who comprise around half the postgraduate population – find it increasingly difficult to get visas if they're from outside the EU. Yet Cambridge University is correct to support the expansion of postgraduate numbers, whilst remaining 'steady-state' at undergraduate level. A year for a Master's course – or, preferably, four for a Master's and a doctorate – studying under some of the world's star historians, is an inestimable attraction for the brightest graduates from Yale, Berlin, Delhi or Sydney. In a recent poll, Cambridge, alongside Oxford and Tokyo, was the only non-US university to feature in the 'Top 10' for world reputation. Students will always need to be talented to study as postgraduates in Cambridge, and, as with undergraduate admissions, we seek to be needs-blind. Although the University now funds more History postgraduates from its own financial resources than receive state funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, more financial support is needed.

Meanwhile, in my office on the fifth floor of the Faculty, vertiginously high above the Seeley Library, I wonder, with mild anxiety, how to sustain the elixir that keeps this Faculty's miracle going – all those books and articles to be researched, written and published, and yet, a stubborn resistance to any diminution in teaching commitments. But it will soon be time to attend the latest book launch party at Heffers in honour of a colleague.



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INSIDE

.....
DESERT ISLAND HISTORIES	2	RECENT PUBLICATIONS	5
.....
THE OLD SEELEY LIBRARY	3	MATURE THOUGHTS	6
.....
FROM CAMBRIDGE TO CAMBRIDGE	3	PERKINS, PURITANS AND PLENTY OF COFFEE	6
.....
THE RED TRILOGY	4	HISTORY AND POLICY: A FACULTY WEBSITE	6
.....
MASTERING CAMBRIDGE	4	WHAT OUR READERS HAVE TO SAY	7
.....
MEMORIES OF CAMBRIDGE HISTORY	4	J.H. PLUMB: CENTENARY EVENTS	8
.....



DESERT ISLAND HISTORIES

The Newsletter posed this question to a variety of people teaching in the History Faculty:

If you were stranded on a desert island and could take one history book with you, what would it be?

Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* and the *New Dictionary of National Biography* can already be found on the island.

Ulinka Rublack of St John's, who lectures in early modern European history and has just published Dressing Up: cultural identity in Renaissance Europe (OUP) writes:

I am not superstitious, but books have had intriguing effects in my life. Once I bought Orhan Pamuk's *Snow* at Stansted Airport and got snowed in at the conference I was attending. Another time I ordered a first edition of Auerbach's *Mimesis* from a second-hand book dealer and received it stamped with the seal of my German scholarship foundation's library. Then I ordered Stuart Clark's *Thinking with Demons* from Amazon and three times was sent completely different items, including a Sister Sledge CD. So for the desert island my choice to be further surprised would be Marshall Sahlins' *Islands of History*. His thoughts about Captain Cook's encounter with Hawaii and the symbolic relations of cultural order never tire me. And I wouldn't even have to order it, pack it, or buy it at the airport – it's now on Google Books (assuming I have a computer...).

Sujit Sivasundaram, from Caius, lectures on the Indian and Pacific oceans and has written about the history of Ceylon

as well. Like Ulinka Rublack, he takes the view that books about desert islands are well suited to those condemned to live on them:

I think I'll choose Greg Denning, *Islands and Beaches: Discourses on a Silent Land, Marquesas, 1774-1880* (1980). If I were to be stranded on an island, I would need some help to think through what that means and what it has meant in history. Greg Denning's wonderful book is both an anthropology and a history of the Marquesas, which tells the tragic meeting of *Te Enata* ('The Men') with *Te Ao* ('The Strangers'). Denning reflects on islands not simply as geographically bounded units, but opens up the question of how islands of the mind are created through cultural encounters, and 'crossings of the beach.' Its poetic writing is matched by deep reflection on the dynamics of colonisation. As a tribute, I am proposing to run a new Specified Paper in the Faculty that takes the title of the book, *Islands and Beaches* as its own title.

Eugenio Biagini (Sidney Sussex College), an expert on nineteenth-century Britain, Ireland and Italy, clearly hopes for an island destination nearer home than the Pacific:

It might be Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the age of Philip II*, ideally the original French thesis of 1949. I enjoyed a lot reading it as an undergraduate but I have had no time to go back to it since then. If not, some nineteenth-century, historian of the ancient world, George Grote's *History of Greece* for example, or Mommsen on Rome.

Still thinking of the Mediterranean is Richard J. Evans, Regius Professor of History and President of Wolfson College:

I would want to take Sir Steven Runciman's three-volume *History of the Crusades*. I know it's old-fashioned and has been superseded by later, duller works, and so my medievalist colleagues will probably disapprove, but for me this remains a superbly written epic history that conjures up in unforgettably vivid prose one of the most extraordinary episodes in modern European history.

[The eminent Byzantinist Steven Runciman (d. 2000) lectured in the History Faculty before the Second World War and was a Fellow (later, Honorary Fellow) of Trinity].

Others would rather take finely-edited source material. Here is the view of John Robertson, Professor of the History of Political Thought and Fellow of Clare College:

To the deep pleasures of Gibbon's prose I shall add those of reading the greatest English political philosopher, Thomas Hobbes. I shall take the Oxford edition of his *Correspondence* edited by Noel Malcolm (2 vols, Oxford 1994), having also placed an advance order (to be delivered, perhaps, by parachute drop) for the forthcoming critical edition, also by Malcolm, of *Leviathan*, in both English and Latin versions. Elegant in composition and pugnacious in argument, Hobbes's letters are examples of the early modern European Republic of Letters at its best; his *Leviathan* is quite simply a masterpiece of rigorous political argument, in wonderfully pointed prose. At the same time, I shall be enjoying the introductory and editorial matter by Noel Malcolm, the finest historical scholar of my own generation. I shall also, I hope, be improving my Latin.

[Noel Malcolm, formerly a Fellow of Caius, is currently a Senior Research Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. In Michaelmas 2010 he gave the Faculty's George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures on Early Modern Europe's Encounters with Islam.]

And some prefer Locke. Here is the view of Mark Goldie, Reader in History and Faculty Chairman, Fellow of Churchill College:

My choice is *The Correspondence of John Locke*, ed. E.S. de Beer, 8 vols. (Oxford, 1976-89). The lives of few philosophers are so intimately and intricately known as that of Locke, and there can be few people in world history before 1700 who have left behind as many as 3600 letters. Not only do we learn about the evolution of this polymath's thinking on philosophy, politics, religion, education, economics and science, but also we plunge into the later Stuart new worlds of coffee houses, the stock market, Grub Street polemic, and party politics.

David Abulafia is Professor of Mediterranean History and a Fellow of Caius; his latest book The Great Sea: a human history of the Mediterranean was published by Penguin in May:

My lectures are concerned with late medieval and Renaissance Europe, but I would want to have by my side what is often seen as the first work of history written in Europe (well, not actually Europe but what is now the coast of Turkey): Herodotus's *Histories*. It is an extraordinary mix of ethnography, oral history, travelogue, gossip and set-piece drama, with a cast of many thousands and a curiosity about everything the author encounters that would stimulate me to find a significant story in every sand dune and every coconut tree on the island.

Gideon Mailer is a Research Fellow of St John's, primarily interested in North America:

I'd like to have Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* with me. It's an ambiguous account of American history from the theologian who believed that man's capacity for justice made democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice made it necessary: an anxious reflection of what it means to found a nation, to 'make new beginning in a corrupt world', an analysis of the tendency for 'politics to generate idolatry', and another way of understanding Durkheim's suggestion that religion is society worshipping itself. It offers an Augustinian account of universal pain, whose historical manifestation humbles historical actors without providing an excuse for their cynicism and inaction.

The medievalist Rosemary Horrox, Fellow and Director of Studies in History at Fitzwilliam College, is transported into a still darker mood by her island exile, only relieved by Samuel Pepys:

I can't think of any history book I could bear to make my only reading for long periods of time. My desert island book would be Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, which probably doesn't count. And I'd make a plea to be relieved of Gibbon in favour of the complete edition of Pepys' *Diaries*.

THE OLD SEELEY LIBRARY

Professor Gavin Stamp, who denounced Stirling's History Faculty building in the first issue, returns to praise the Seeley Library as it was until 1968.

By matriculating in 1967, I think I timed my arrival in Cambridge to read History rather well. It meant that, in my second year, I enjoyed the dubious excitement and, for me as an architectural historian, the seminal experience of using the new building by James Stirling on the Sidgwick site. But it also enabled me, during my first year, to experience the pleasure of working in the old Seeley Library then housed in the ground floor of the building in the very centre of Cambridge designed by that truly great architect C.R. Cockerell – a magnificent work of architecture in itself which was, as I later learned, but one executed side of an intended complete quadrangle which could and should have been carried through to house the University Library.

The lawyers had grabbed the best part

of the building vacated in 1934, the glorious barrel-vaulted library upstairs. But the ground floor, with its shallow vault supported on Doric columns, was a fine thing, well converted into the Seeley Library by Murray Easton in 1935. So, for a year, I could read and work in an interior which was dignified and calm, and which imposed, as a good library should, the need to be quiet and assiduous. It also had the type of architectural form which, I believe, a library should have: that is, a dominant noble coherent interior space but one with smaller intimate study spaces opening off. So, in the Old Seeley, the side bays between the columns, framed by bookshelves and well lit with natural light from Cockerell's large and elegantly functional windows, provided ideal spaces in which to read, write and snooze. At the end of that year I still looked forward with anticipation to using the intriguing new home for the Seeley Library which had risen on the other side of the Cam, but soon I was looking back to Cockerell's building with nostalgia as well as affection and admiration.

Occasionally I would venture upstairs to have a peep at the much more magnificent Squire Law Library. But only later did I come to appreciate the genius of Cockerell in creating a sophisticated and eminently practical modern Classical architecture which was not only inspired by Greece and Rome but which absorbed lessons from the Italian Renaissance, Wren, Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor as well as from contemporary French rationalism. David Watkin's study of *The Life and Work of C.R. Cockerell* did not appear until 1974, so my first initiation into the subtleties of that architect's work came with the architectural tours conducted by the classicist Hugh Plommer, who, amongst other things, would place his hat on one end of the stylobate in Senate House Passage and reveal the use of *entasis* by inviting us to see that it was not visible from the other end because of the slight upward curvature of the intervening masonry.

What a pity it was that it was the historians rather than the lawyers who moved out in 1968. But it is more than consoling that not only did they eventually move over the river to a building even more stupid and pretentious than Stirling's posturing exercise in 'anti-architecture' (Pevsner's term) but above all that, in the end, both floors of Cockerell's masterpiece – surely the finest work of architecture in Cambridge after King's Chapel – became the library of my old college.

After the historians left in 1968, the entire Cockerell building became the Squire Law Library, and when the

lawyers left Caius acquired the building; what was the Seeley Library is now Caius Lower Library, containing the college's large collection of manuscripts and early printed books.

FROM CAMBRIDGE TO CAMBRIDGE



Alexandria Hall

Each Cantabrigian I meet is intrigued when I say that I am an exchange student from MIT (the Massachusetts Institute of Technology), but there are no words to describe their astonishment when I then proclaim that I am an undergraduate studying History. To be fair, I do study both Biology and History at MIT, but most people are surprised that MIT even teaches the humanities.

In truth, MIT's humanities courses are taught in a nearly identical manner to the scientific courses, meaning there is an emphasis on lecture attendance with one large group discussion session per week. In contrast, History at Cambridge focuses on weekly one-to-one supervisions that discuss the essay written that week. Reading at MIT is generally limited to one or two books per week, while my Cambridge reading lists have consistently numbered between six and over a dozen books and articles. Where MIT relies heavily on continuous assessment via examinations, Cambridge encourages essay writing and revision and only one exam per year.

For the average MIT student, with work from many other classes and extracurricular activities, the MIT method of teaching humanities courses ensures continuity between scientific courses and a minimal increase in stress and work. I have no doubt that when I return to MIT next year, I will appreciate the continuity of teaching styles as I juggle Biology and History courses, but for the devoted study of History, I have become endeared to the Cambridge system. The wide range of reading provides me with far more information and multiple perspectives on a given topic that is lacking in a lecture-focused course. It is far easier to make a connection with Faculty members and History experts through the supervision system. The dedication to improving essay-writing techniques prepares each student for the final product of their degree, the dissertation.

My brief Cambridge education has prepared me to return to MIT with a number of new skills, ones which will help me tackle my MIT History courses and my dissertation with greater ease and enthusiasm. I have no doubt that my year at Cambridge will allow me to succeed in my final year of university, and I plan to strive to return to Cambridge's History methods in the future.

Alex Hall has spent the academic year 2010-11 in our Cambridge reading History as an undergraduate.

THE RED TRILOGY

Linda Washington

Anyone interested in gaining further insight into the architectural context and significance of the History Faculty Building, will welcome the recent appearance of Alan Berman's landmark analysis in *Jim Stirling and the Red Trilogy: three radical buildings* (London, Francis Lincoln, 2010). Drawing together a series of essays by renowned architectural historians and practitioners, he first sets the scene with a look at British modern architecture before Stirling and his sometime partner, James Gowan, made such an impact with three university buildings that combined sensational, far-reaching design concepts with often poor technical and functional performance. Yet the Engineering Department at Leicester, the Florey Building in Oxford and the History Faculty, Cambridge, are all now listed by English Heritage and strict planning regulations dictate the limits of work to remedy the problems that arose from the contemporary building materials which were unequal to the architects' structural ingenuity.

Part Three of the book provides an overdue counter-balance to the onslaught of criticism hurled at Stirling and his posthumous reputation. Entitled 'Why do architects love these buildings?' it answers the question with contributions from many who found their own careers inspired by Stirling's work, including some who have felt privileged to be involved in aspects of remedial work. Mark Cannata (formerly of McAslan and Son) tackled a variety of environmental complications in the History Faculty building ('The Redoubtable Shining Monument'), yet still finds its 'power to represent an aspirational future undiminished by these shortcomings'. At the time of writing, an exhibition at the Tate offers a further insight into the genesis and evolution of Stirling's designs through his own original sketches and drawings, giving a further perspective on

his often troubled career. (*James Stirling: Notes from the Archive*, from 5 April to 21 August 2011.) Andrew Saint, writing in *The Guardian* on 2 April, feels that it 'will no doubt redraw the balance [of opinion] in his favour'.

Dr Linda Washington is Seeley Librarian.

MASTERING CAMBRIDGE



Jacob Abolafia

One of the great changes in the last twenty years has been the massive expansion of Master's degree courses, often taken by students who have read a different subject as undergraduates in Cambridge or elsewhere. Here Jacob Abolafia of Clare College writes about one of the most successful of the Faculty's M.Phil. degrees.

I arrived for an M.Phil. in Political Thought and Intellectual History at the Faculty directly upon receiving a B.A. from the Philosophy department at Yale. Having accustomed myself to the faux-Gothic architecture and Puritan winters of New Haven, Connecticut, the real Gothic architecture and mild mists off the Fens have been by turns bewildering and enchanting. I have also been gradually acclimatizing to the Cambridge speed of life. If the University Library closes at seven, the Elmtree and the Maypole are viable alternatives, if not for volumes on Spinoza then at least for the bracing pint that seems to grease the scholarly wheels here. I've also found college life at Clare more than accommodating. Owing to the terms of my Mellon scholarship, I live in the heart of Clare Memorial Court, a stone's throw from the Faculty (and a six-minute morning dash from lectures).

Before I first spied the spires of King's Chapel, I was unaware that at Cambridge it is indeed History that should call itself the Queen of the Sciences. My experiences in the Political Thought M.Phil. have set me straight. Whether it is the spirit of old dons such as Quentin Skinner and Gareth Stedman-Jones, or new arrivals like John Robertson, the M.Phil. is proving to be a place of strong opinions and no small measure of erudition. As anyone who attends the Monday seminar series knows,

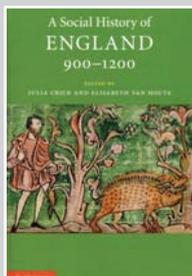
Cambridge History of Political Thought knows where it stands and isn't afraid to show it. After having had some success in my first attempts as a Cambridge student through examining the origins of the word *theocracy* in Roman Judaea, I'm now working on my dissertation, a broader study of civil religion in Rome, from Cicero to Augustine. On balance, I like to think that my time in Cambridge and the History Faculty is providing the exact mix of Cambridge tradition (I write this after Formal Hall as a guest at Christ's) and academic opportunity that my benefactor Paul Mellon intended, when he provided for the Trans-Atlantic education of colonials such as myself.

MEMORIES OF CAMBRIDGE HISTORY

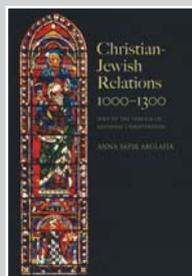
Charles Saumarez-Smith

I read History Part 1 from 1972 to 1974 as a prelude to doing history of art. I had applied to King's on the advice of the brother-in-law of one of my history masters, but he hadn't mentioned that it wasn't a good college for history. Christopher Morris had run history there for years in an old-fashioned, schoolmasterly way and still ran the so-called Political Society, which met in his rooms to discuss historical subjects, and observed arcane rituals. During my first week he read a paper on the duty of irrelevance and was attacked by the young Turks amongst the Fellows, including Tony Judt. I was taught medieval history by Arthur Hibbert, who had a broad-ranging intellect, but had never written the promised book, and Tudor history by Martin Ingram, a pupil of Keith Thomas. Unfortunately, because I had been extraordinarily well taught at school I was rather lazy, although I loved the open stacks of the University Library and I have spent the rest of my life reading and being inspired by the works of people I wish I had been taught by at Cambridge, including Jack Plumb, John Brewer, David Cannadine and Simon Schama. But then I remember Christopher Morris saying that the whole point of being an undergraduate was that it taught one to teach oneself ('you come here not to be educated but to be made educable'); and writing weekly essays certainly taught me useful skills of writing and analysis.

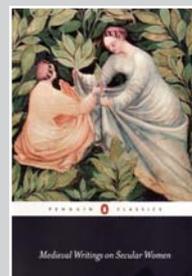
Charles Saumarez-Smith, Secretary and Chief Executive of the Royal Academy, was formerly Director of the National Portrait Gallery and of the National Gallery.



Elisabeth van Houts and Julia Crick, eds., *A Social History of England 900-1200*, Cambridge University Press, £22.99

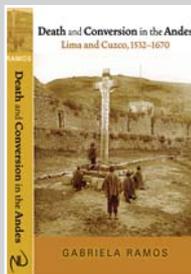


Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations 1000-1300: Jews in the service of medieval Christendom*, Pearson/Longman, £19.99

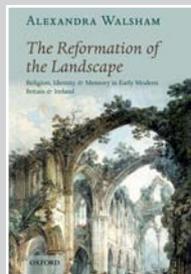


Medieval Writings on Secular Women, translated by Elisabeth van Houts and Patricia Skinner, Penguin Classics, £12.99

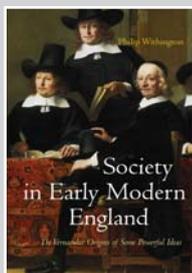
Gabriela Ramos, *Death and Conversion in the Andes: Lima and Cuzco, 1532-1670*, University of Notre Dame Press, £33.20



Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland*, Oxford University Press, £35



Annabel Brett, *Changes of State: Nature and the Limits of the City in early modern Natural Law*, Princeton, £24.95/\$35



Philip Withington, *Society in Early Modern England: the vernacular origins of some powerful ideas*, Polity Press, £16.99

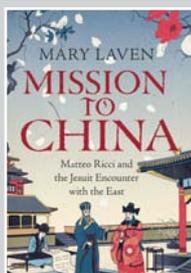


Jacqueline Rose, *Godly Kingship in Restoration England: the politics of the Royal Supremacy, 1660-1688*, Cambridge University Press, £60

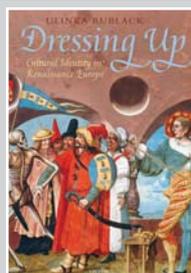


Craig Muldrew, *Food, Energy and the Creation of Industriousness: work and material culture in agrarian England, 1550-1780*, Cambridge University Press, £60

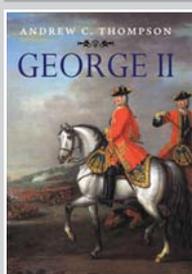
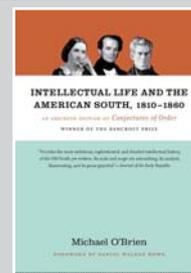
Mary Laven, *Mission to China: Matteo Ricci and the Jesuit Encounter with the East*, Faber, £17.99



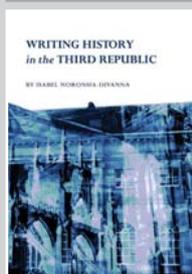
Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up: cultural identity in Renaissance Europe*, Oxford University Press, £30



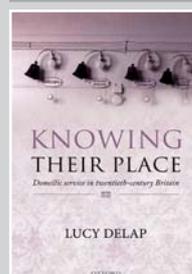
Michael O'Brien, *Intellectual life and the American South, 1810-1860: an Abridged Edition of Conjectures of Order*, University of North Carolina Press, £35.50



Andrew C. Thompson, *George II: King and Elector*, Yale University Press, £25/\$40

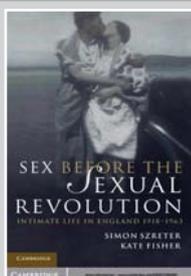


Isabel Noronha-DiVanna, *Writing History in the Third Republic*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, £39.99

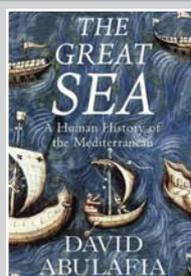


Lucy Delap, *Knowing Their Place: Domestic Service in Twentieth Century Britain*, Oxford University Press, £65

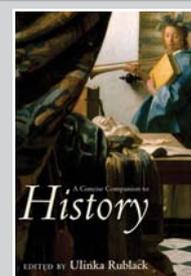
Simon Szreter and Kate Fisher, *Sex before the Sexual Revolution: intimate life in England 1918-1963*, Cambridge University Press, £19.99



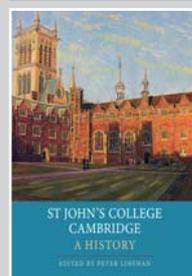
David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: a human history of the Mediterranean*, Allen Lane/Penguin, £30



Ulinka Rublack, ed., *A Concise Companion to History*, Oxford University Press, £25



Hubertus F. Jahn *Armes Russland: Bettler und Notleidende in der russischen Geschichte vom Mittelalter bis in die Gegenwart (Poor Russia: Beggars and the Needy in Russian History from the Middle Ages to the Present)*, Schöningh, €34.90



Peter Linehan, ed., *St John's College, Cambridge: a History*, Boydell and Brewer, £50

MATURE THOUGHTS



Linda Stone

Cambridge is proud of the opportunities it offers to hundreds of mature students, many of whom are members of Lucy Cavendish (a women's college), Wolfson, Hughes Hall or St Edmund's, colleges that combine the teaching of mature undergraduates with large communities of graduate students. Linda Stone is a mature student who has allowed one thing to lead to another: first a BA, then an MPhil., and now the excitement of a PhD.

I came to Cambridge to study history somewhat later than many of my peers, and although the journey has been long, first as an undergraduate, then an MPhil. and now a PhD, I have relished the experience. History was always a passion but the curse of inflexible timetabling at school meant that I could not study it at A-Level. I never lost my enthusiasm, however, and eventually decided to fulfil an ambition: study History at university. Cambridge, and Lucy Cavendish College, where I believed I would find a supportive environment, became my goal. The rest... is history!

I thought I understood pressure, having to obtain 'A' grades, while maintaining a family and a career, but nothing had prepared me for Cambridge. I recall the overwhelming endurance test that was Part I; the rush of deadlines, combined with a dissertation-footnoting obsession that was Part II. The MPhil. year passed in a haze of Latin, palaeography, and 25,000 words on twelfth-century Christian-Jewish relations. Even now, I pinch myself to believe I am undertaking the PhD marathon.

Sometimes, as a mature student, the journey has felt lonely. As an undergraduate sitting in lectures I could sense curious eyes, as students wondered who among the cohort had brought along their mother. Occasionally, I felt like 'aunty in the trenches', the one who had spare paper, pens or paracetamol, but as recompense, many students made me feel welcome, engaged me in discussions, challenged my perceptions. The coterie of Medieval History graduate students have done much the same thing – the 4 pm 'tea-time' in the UL Tea Room is a life-saver!

However, I am also grateful to my supervisors who have taught me the rigour of historical argument, the friends I have made in the Faculty and at Lucy, and most importantly my family. One more advantage of being a mature student: younger students in the Faculty hold open the door for you; they are not sure whether you are a professor or not! And, sometimes, even the professors are not sure if you are a professor or not!

PERKINS, PURITANS AND PLENTY OF COFFEE



Leif Dixon

I came to Cambridge in 2008 on a BA postdoc to study the theological culture of early modern English puritanism, and particularly the worldview of the Elizabethan minister William Perkins. Perkins was based at Christ's College, although I decided to go for St Catharine's – conveniently located, I was delighted to discover, between the Faculty/UL on one side and a vast range of coffee shops on the other. Research, of course, demands coffee. Through my previous experiences in Oxford, I also assumed that administration demanded coffee. It was most pleasant to discover, though, that the Faculty administrators in Cambridge seemed to be appointed because of their competence and generosity of spirit, rather than despite them. This sense of accessibility was enhanced by the open, airy and bright environs of the Faculty building; again, *pace* previous experiences of passing through narrow tunnels on basement floors only to find an old man in a crazily disorganised room telling you that he didn't know what you were talking about, and that even if he did then he most certainly was not the person to be discussing it with.

A particular highlight has been my involvement in setting and marking one of the Prelims papers over the last three years. There have been several advantages to this. The small financial benefits aside, getting involved in this sort of way does help to create on one's CV an impression of activity – even of being linked in to some terribly important network or something (little do they know ...). It is also character

building; or at least it builds up a certain tolerance of long meetings in which the participants debate obscure matters with as much gusto as they do vital ones. Why, in exam questions, should the setter write 'Magna Carta' rather than 'the Magna Carta,' or 'Catholics and puritans' not 'Catholics and Puritans'? Once, I neither knew nor cared; now I both know and can discourse upon such matters enthusiastically. It was, in truth, great to find out how seriously the setting and marking process is taken, and how smoothly the Faculty runs the whole operation. Indeed, I now feel no guilt about telling my students to work very hard – for I know that their assessors will have to do so also.

Leif Dixon arrived from Oxford as the holder of a British Academy Post-Doctoral Fellowship, and is also a Junior Research Fellow of St Catharine's.

HISTORY AND POLICY: A FACULTY WEBSITE

Simon Szreter

History and Policy was launched in 2002 as a website by two Cambridge historians, Simon Szreter of St John's and Alastair Reid of Girton. The aim of *History and Policy* from the start was to provide a platform for the voices of historians and for the historical perspective to be heard by policy-makers. Whether professional historians like it or not, history is there all the time in policy. Politicians' speeches and government policies are invariably informed by implicit historical assumptions or explicit historical claims. However, before the launch of *History and Policy*, the expertise of professional historians was seldom consulted, quite unlike that of other academic experts, such as economists or medical scientists.

The website, hosted at Cambridge University and still edited by Simon Szreter and Alastair Reid, ably assisted by Lucy Delap and Paul Warde, now has over 120 Policy Papers which can be freely consulted at www.historyandpolicy.org. These are short, accessibly written summaries of historians' published historical research. Each starts with summary bullet points and no footnotes are allowed! Contributions from current members of the Cambridge History Faculty have included Chris Andrew on the Intelligence Services, David Reynolds

on Prime Ministers and an (accurately) prophetic paper from Robert Tombs after the election of Nicholas Sarkozy. The *History and Policy* website is certainly not exclusively interested in UK policy, nor is it restricted to contributions from modern historians, nor to any particular political line. It has developed into a national resource for the profession. Three hundred colleagues have joined the network of historical experts; there is a regular feature in the *BBC History Magazine*; and there is a London-based External Relations Officer, housed at KCL, who manages a daily flow of news, opinion and twitter and has been increasingly successful in bringing historians and their research to the attention of Select Committees, the Cabinet Office and the media. *History and Policy* has been funded by a sequence of philanthropic donations for the last five years.

Simon Szreter, who is a Fellow of St John's College, holds the first professorship of History and Public Policy in the UK.

WHAT OUR READERS HAVE TO SAY

We were delighted with the response to issue 1, a stream of e-mails and letters of which we can only, alas, print a small selection. But we hope you will continue to write to the editor, Prof. David Abulafia, either at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge CB2 1TA, or by e-mail to him at newsletter@hist.cam.ac.uk

We invited comments on Gavin Stamp's vigorous denunciation of the Stirling building. Few were willing to rush to its defence, so here are some further criticisms:

Chris Dawes, who read history at Peterhouse from 1972-5:

Beyond the obvious problems of greenhouse and heat lurked the crucial question of space. For a large man Stirling seemed to have no appreciation of just how much room the average human needs to feel comfortable. Between lectures and seminars the staircases were a hopeless confusion of struggling book-bound students labouring past each other on the narrow steps. Seminars were conducted in an elongated shoebox, the speaker a mere conductor at the end of the carriage.

Roger White (Christ's, 1969-73) read History for two years and had had enough of the building by the time he changed to History of Art:

I had initially been full of naïve enthusiasm, being then passionately keen on modern architecture, but two years were enough to get the scales falling from my eyes, and I suppose for that at least I must be grateful to Stirling.

Joy Richardson (New Hall 1967-70) was able to cross-examine James Stirling:

Working for *Varsity*, I took the opportunity to interview James Stirling and I remember asking him how the open plan arrangement had come about – so different from the book lined booths of the old library. His answer was pure essence of the 1960s: “I wanted to give you a wide variety of reading experience.” James Stirling was unrepentant on all fronts. The criticisms had been “rather exaggerated”, he said, “but that’s what you would expect in Cambridge.”

There were vivid memories of Cambridge historians of the mid-twentieth century; space prevents us from printing as many as we had hoped, but we shall continue to collect these memories with interest and pleasure.

Geoffrey Rider (Selwyn 1950-3) on an eccentric Fellow of King's:

You probably know this story about John Saltmarsh, but I will tell it anyway. In the first lecture of his Economic History course, he was keen to make the point that correct understanding depended upon correct categorisation, and did so by recounting the following tale, about the gentleman going up from the West Country to London by train. He arrived at the station, accompanied by his pet tortoise, and as he booked his ticket, enquired whether his tortoise also required a ticket. This unusual request prompted a prolonged trawl through the voluminous regulations, resulting in this official pronouncement: “Dogs is dogs, cats is dogs, parrots is dogs, but this ‘ere tortoise is a inseck, an ‘e don’t need no ticket.”

Edmund Havilland, King's 1942/1947 on John Saltmarsh:

Slightly absent minded he seemed at times. Martin Scott, a contemporary of mine, told me he went for a supervision one evening. A few times he knocked on his door without response, then at length Mr Saltmarsh appeared with “Oh dear, I’m so sorry to have kept you waiting. I

was just wanting to find out how many socks I had. Do you know how many you have? No, nor did I. I find I have twenty-seven pairs, all unwashed.”

[On the other hand, he was notorious for always wearing sandals without socks, so twenty-seven pairs seems a fair quantity – ed.].

Roy Whittle 1967-70, Clare:

I recall Geoffrey Elton commenting that the easiest way to stifle student protest was to elect them onto committees, where they would be easily bored (not the experience of the Bolsheviks). The rivalry between Elton and Plumb was palpable and a source of some amusement.

[One of the first student representatives on the Faculty Board was Diane Abbott of Newnham, now a Labour MP. Prof. Jonathan Riley-Smith recalls that she was silent throughout all meetings – ed.].

Finally, we are of course very happy that there were so many letters of appreciation about the first issue. This letter makes an important point about the supervision system:

Nigel Baker 1985-8, Caius, writes:

The purpose of this note is really just to congratulate you and your colleagues on the History Faculty newsletter, which arrived rather unexpectedly in the diplomatic bag in my Bolivian fastness (I am currently British Ambassador to Bolivia, based in La Paz). I think it a tremendous initiative... I was delighted to see in Gemma Steinhart’s note a vindication by the modern scholar of the supervision system, for me the great *raison d’être* of a great university such as Cambridge at least on its undergraduate teaching side.

[We congratulate Nigel Baker in turn, on his appointment as British Ambassador to the Holy See from Summer, 2011].

STOP PRESS: LATEST PROMOTIONS

Many congratulations to Dr Eugenio Biagini (Sidney Sussex), who has been promoted to a Professorship, and Dr Ulinka Rublack (St John’s) and Dr Jon Lawrence (Emmanuel) who have been promoted to Readerships, from 1 October 2011.



J.H. PLUMB: CENTENARY EVENTS

This year is the centenary of the birth of J.H. Plumb – remembered in person by older Cambridge alumni and still a name to be conjured with in the roster of twentieth-century British historians.

Jack Plumb was born on 20 August 1911. A Fellow of Christ's for over fifty years and Master in 1978-82, he also held a personal chair in the University as Professor of Modern English History. Plumb was best known for his works on various facets of 18th-century history, including the Pelican history *England in the Eighteenth Century*, biographical volumes such as *The First Four Georges* and *Walpole*, and studies at the intersection of political, social and cultural history, notably *The Growth of Political Stability* and the co-authored *Birth of the Consumer Society*. In his heyday in the 1960s and 1970s he was also a leading public intellectual who disseminated history to a general

audience on both sides of the Atlantic, through his essays and reviews, through the commissioning of serious works of history aimed at the wider public and also through the pioneering TV series *Royal Heritage*.

To some people, Plumb was a formidable and crusty figure: his feuds with colleagues such as Geoffrey Elton are the stuff of legend. But he was also a great patron, almost in the 18th-century manner, of both culture and education. He collected art and porcelain, he hosted elegant parties and he was immensely generous to talented young people. Historians certainly benefited, as a succession of now famous names bear witness, but Jack was also a great 'College man' and many of his tutorial pupils in subjects other than history still warmly remember his interest and support.

To mark the centenary of his birth, Christ's College held a symposium on his

work in early July and will host a gala dinner at the National Portrait Gallery at the end of October.

Saturday 2 July: J.H. Plumb and the Writing of History

An afternoon symposium exploring his life and writings against the background of how the historical discipline has changed over the last half-century. Each session commenced with presentations by two noted historians, one of whom was a protégé of Plumb:

- Plumb and the 18th century: Linda Colley and Paul Langford
- Plumb and social/cultural history: Neil McKendrick and Rosemary Sweet
- Plumb and the historian as public intellectual: David Cannadine and Stefan Collini

Monday 31 October: A gala dinner at the National Portrait Gallery, London.

Guest speaker Simon Schama – one of many distinguished historians mentored by Jack Plumb. For further information please contact Catherine Twilley at cmt23@cam.ac.uk

ALUMNI WEEKEND 2011

24-26 September

Come and hear Professor Christopher Clark lecture on *The Sarajevo Murders and the Outbreak of War in 1914* at 9.30am on the Sidgwick Site on Saturday; and revisit the Faculty between 10.30am and 11.30am on Sunday morning, when there will also be a chance to hear Professor John Morrill talk about Cromwell, Ireland and genocide.

Further information on the Alumni Weekend programme and how to book is available at www.alumni.cam.ac.uk/weekend

FACULTY FACTS:

FELLOWS OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY

Eleven Fellows of the British Academy hold teaching positions in the History Faculty (and there are a good many more among retired Faculty officers):

Medieval:
Prof. D.S.H. Abulafia.

Early Modern:
the Rev. Prof. John Morrill, Prof. Alexandra Walsham.

Modern (since 1800):
Prof. Sir Christopher Bayly, Prof. Chris Clark, Prof. Martin Daunton, Prof. Richard Evans, Prof. Boyd Hilton, Prof. Michael O'Brien, Prof. David Reynolds, Prof. Megan Vaughan.

Please address all communications to the editor, Professor David Abulafia, at:

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