

THE EMPLOYMENT OF HISTORY GRADUATES

A Report to the Higher Education Academy
Subject Centre for History, Classics and Archaeology

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Preface

The first edition of this report was published in electronic form by the Subject Centre for History, Classics and Archaeology in 2002 under the title 'What's the Use of History? The Career Destinations of History Graduates'. It has now been updated and revised and is being issued in paper form as a companion to the same author's recently published *The Employability of History Students* (Subject Centre for History, Classics and Archaeology, March 2005). That report focuses on the preparedness and capacity of history students for employment while this one is concerned with the jobs and careers they enter. It is hoped that, taken together, the two reports will provide clear information for students, teachers, careers officers and employers on the skills that are typically developed by a history education and the careers open to those who have pursued such an education.

There are three main parts to the report:

- The employment of history students six months after they have left university is examined using the first destination statistics produced by the Higher Education Statistics Agency.
- The second section discusses the employment prospects of graduates three years after graduation by which time the majority have found settled careers that better reflect their qualifications.
- In the third part, the investigation of the longer term career prospects of history graduates is supported by reference to the many and varied careers pursued successfully by famous history graduates. The part played by personality in explaining their success, especially in business, is tentatively explored.

Finally, the report concludes with observations on the relationship between the history curriculum and employment prospects and with pointers for further research, some of which are taken up and considered at greater length in *The Employability of History Students*.

Introduction

The British state has been concerned to ensure, at least since the time of the Education Act of 1870, that the education system meets the needs of the economy. In the case of higher education, this concern became particularly acute in the wake of the recession of the early 1980s and led to a concerted effort to bring about a paradigmatic shift in pedagogic practice. The following decade saw the articulation of a new language in higher education which hummed with buzzwords like ‘enterprise’, ‘capability’, ‘transferable skills’, ‘graduateness’, and with concepts such as ‘stakeholding’. It culminated in many months of heated debate on standards and quality in learning and teaching, at the heart of which was the elaboration of subject benchmarks that were intended to encapsulate the kinds of knowledge and skills essential to the disciplines taught in universities. While the benchmark groups naturally stressed the skills that were peculiar to their subjects, they had perforce as well to respond to the government’s agenda. Accordingly, they included other, more ‘generic’, skills alongside the subject specific ones: skills that students would acquire in the course of their education and which would be of use to them in their future careers. In the case of history, the skills so identified were self-discipline, self-direction, independence of mind and initiative, ability to work with others, ability to assemble, manage and use evidence and information, analytical and problem solving capabilities, good oral and writing skills, intellectual integrity and maturity, empathy and imaginative insight.¹

By its very nature the benchmarking exercise was a ‘craft-controlled’ one, inevitably focussing upon the skills which the guardians of the discipline regard as inherent to it and expect students to have upon graduation. An altogether different way of approaching the question of graduateness is to look at career destinations and to try to identify the skills associated with those careers. History graduates, of course, may be predisposed by many factors towards particular careers and they certainly acquire many intellectual qualities and capabilities during the course of their employment. Nevertheless, it might reasonably be inferred that their education has played no small part in preparing them for these jobs (particularly where there are statistically significant clusters) and in making them sufficiently adaptable to adjust to them. It is also worth examining career destinations for other reasons. In 2001, the government made ‘employability’ a performance indicator for higher education, a defining moment in that ongoing process of change in higher education alluded to earlier.² While one might bridle at this rather crude economic approach to employment statistics – not least because, as we shall see, there are serious reservations about the reliability of first destinations as a guide to graduates’ later, more permanent employment – it does underline the responsibility of university history departments to satisfy the quite legitimate interest of their present and prospective students in knowing where a history qualification might ultimately take them. What follows is intended to answer that need. Beyond that, it will be shown that historians have been remarkably successful in reaching the top of their chosen careers and often in unexpected sectors of the economy, thus opening the way for some conclusions about the employment skills of historians as evidenced by their career trajectories.

First Destinations

The annual Prospects publication *What do Graduates Do?*³ provides a detailed breakdown of the first destinations of history graduates. The information is collated by careers advisers at every university and relates to destinations recorded six months after graduation. Four sample years (1989, 1995, 1998 and 2002) have been selected as a guide to trends since the late 1980s, when the polytechnics were still in existence and before the rapid expansion of higher education had got fully underway.

Table 1: First destinations of history graduates

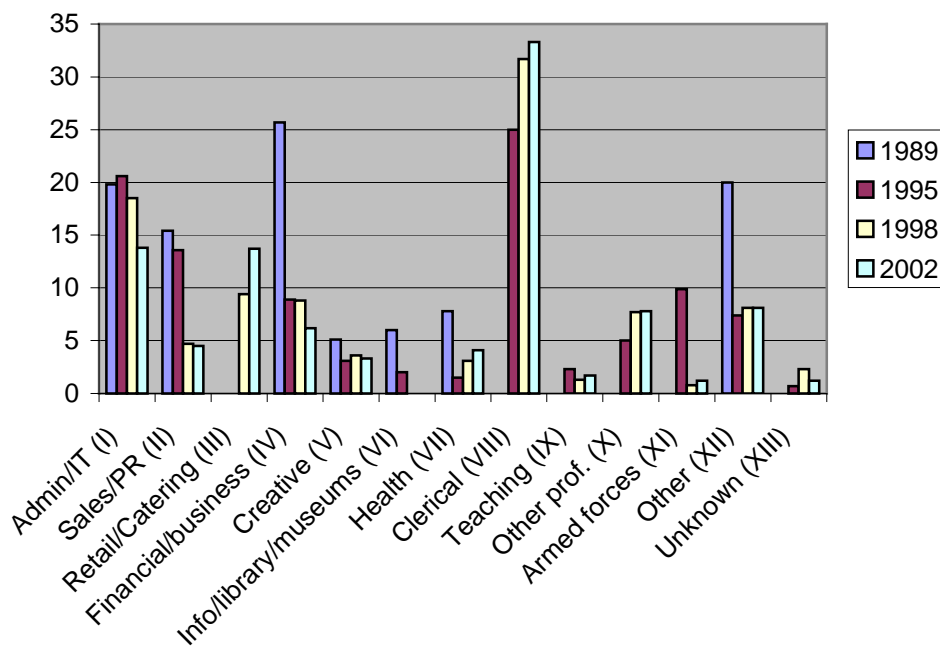
Year	Total	% in Survey	Known 1 st Destinations		Destinations (%)					
			Men	Women	Emp. UK	Emp. Abroad	Further Study	N/A	Unem.	Seeking Emp.
1989	3177	85.3	1469	1242	50.3	5.2	26.7	8.4	9.4	-
1995	5101	86.4	2206	2200	49.5	3	30.7	5	9.6	2.2
1998	5248	86.5	2132	2410	54	2.5	29.9	6.4	6	1.2
2002	5095	85.9	2070	2305	51.6	2.3	29.5	7.6	8	1.1

Table 1 shows the quite dramatic rise in the total number of history graduates in the 1990s, an increase in the order of 65%, between 1989 and 1998, and the gender shift that has taken place with female outnumbering male graduates by the latter half of the decade. Despite the significant numerical increase in history graduates, the proportions going into UK employment and on to further study have remained reasonably constant at around 50% and 30% respectively. History has a strong record in terms of the percentage of its students going on to postgraduate study; in this regard it is, of all the arts and humanities subjects, only narrowly surpassed by English and is well-ahead of the average of 19% across all subjects. A history degree is also clearly a sound basis for further career development with many of its graduates taking up vocational training in such areas as law, accountancy, journalism, librarianship, teaching and IT. The level of unemployment among history graduates dipped temporarily towards the end of the millennium mirroring the macro-economic improvement that took place in the late 1990s, though it is the case that in history in most years it is slightly above the average for all degree subjects. Nevertheless, in general, employment opportunities for history graduates have been plentiful, though not necessarily in the areas of first choice.⁴ It remains the case, however, that humanities, language, and biological science graduates have the highest initial unemployment, the lowest proportion entering graduate jobs, and lower initial earnings than graduates in other subject areas.⁵ By rolling together all history graduates, the Prospects statistics hide what has been another significant trend – namely, the collapse, despite the big rise in recruitment to history degrees, in the popularity of economic and social history following a sharp fall in ‘A’ level entrants. It may be that economic history is perceived as ‘hard’ or ‘dry’. It is certainly lacking in appeal to the widening ability range that higher education now caters for and has led to the merging of many university History and Economic History departments. Moreover, since the turn of the millennium the rise in history entrants has gone into reverse. Combined with ever increasing staff-student ratios and the competition between universities generated by the need to meet targets to secure funding, this is leading to contraction in some parts of the sector (witness the closure of history

departments at Luton, Thames Valley and Staffordshire) and reinforcing the imperative, especially among those who feel threatened, to demonstrate the relevance of what they do, particularly in preparing students for future employment.

A breakdown of the employment destinations of history graduates provided by the Prospects Guide also reveals some interesting trends, though there are some methodological problems in interpreting the data. In particular, the categories of occupations used in the Guide have changed over time – they have become more discriminating, incorporated new areas of employment in response to changes in the wider economy, and the terminology used to describe some occupational categories has been altered. Hence, for example, ‘PR and Advertising’, and ‘Retail Assistants, Catering, Waiting and Bar Staff’ were new categories in 1998 and could be viewed as spin-offs from ‘Sales and Marketing’. A similar point applies to the inclusion for the first time in 1995 of ‘Clerical and Secretarial’. Also, the statistics for polytechnics and universities were presented separately in the 1989 survey. In order to facilitate comparison and to indicate general trends, I have simplified and codified categories, and the results are presented in Table 2. This should be interpreted with the above caveats in mind; anyone wanting the precise but more complex listing of the myriad occupations pursued by history graduates should consult the annual Guides.⁶

Table 2: Breakdown of Occupations of History Graduates, 1989, 1995, 1998 and 2002



Allowing for some adjustments in the methods of categorisation, it is possible to identify those areas where the proportional distribution of history graduates by employment has been more or less constant, and those that have seen either growth or decline. Three sectors have preponderated over the years, accounting on average for over 55% of the first time jobs taken by history graduates – namely, the clerical, retail and managerial sectors – while aggregating the several types of ‘professional’ employment produces a fourth, accounting for a further 20%. Administration and Operational Management (I) has remained fairly constant at about 20%, though with a dip in 2002, as has Sales (II) at around 15% once Retail (III) has been factored in from 1998 onwards. At first sight there appears to have been a significant decline in Finance and Business Professionals (IV) but this has to be considered alongside the

introduction of a separate category (VIII) for Clerical and Secretarial in 1995. There has been a rise overall in this area of white-collar work but much of the expansion has been in its lower echelons, at clerical and secretarial grades. The creation of the new categories III and VIII in the annual survey, then, is symptomatic of national macro-economic trends: the continued growth of a service economy employing a graduate (and rising female) labour force that is competing for jobs previously regarded as non-graduate and which are, in general, lower paid and of lower status.⁷

It is difficult to draw firm conclusions from some of the data. The decline in Creative jobs (V) is too small to be statistically significant. The comparatively high figure for employment in the 'Security' services (IX) in 1995 is because of the grouping together in that year of 'personal' and 'protective' services. The statistics for other years suggest that the annual intake of history graduates by the police and armed forces is typically small. Also, the allocation of 20% of the 1989 cohort to 'Other' (XII) compounds the difficulty of making comparisons across time.

What is clear is that there has been a decline in what might be thought to be traditional occupations for historians. Category VI, 'Information, Library, Museum', embraces areas of the public sector that have been notoriously under-resourced, and employment of history graduates here, at least without a postgraduate qualification, no longer registers statistically. The low percentages for 'Teaching' (IX) are not a real guide because the majority of new graduates who eventually enter this profession will have gone on to further study. For example, 7.4% of the 1998 cohort went on to teacher training courses. However, other evidence suggests that the proportion of history graduates entering teaching has gradually decreased.⁸ At the same time, it is important to note that the decline in employment in these traditional areas is proportional rather than numerical. The year-on-year increase in the number of history graduates has provided sufficient replacements to maintain a stable but not expanding workforce and history has been one of the few subjects where schools have not had difficulty in recruiting teachers in recent years.

The statistics for teaching should also serve as a timely reminder that the annual Prospects Guide is a snapshot of employment taken shortly after graduation. In addition to the 30% who immediately go on to further study, the occupational breakdown includes many casual or temporary jobs and the picture is further distorted by short-term unemployment. If, therefore, we are to come to any fair assessment of the relationship between a history education and a postgraduate career, we need must look at employment patterns at a rather longer period of time after graduation.

Three Years On

The government has acknowledged the limitations of the first destination surveys. It nevertheless defends their use as an employment indicator on the grounds that, in the absence of sufficiently robust information on longer term employment or on 'job quality', they provide the most complete data currently available. Moreover, what limited evidence we do have suggests that there is some correlation between employment six months after graduation and employment and job quality at a later remove.⁹ However, without more systematic research on longer term career patterns, the reliability of first destination statistics as a performance indicator remains in question. For the time being, we have only one such detailed piece of recent research.

In 1999, the Institute for Employment Research (IER) at Warwick University published an analysis of the career destinations of the 1995 cohort of university graduates based on a survey of 10,000 of them three years after graduation.¹⁰ The survey was not history-specific but covered all subject areas. It nevertheless produced

findings that are pertinent to understanding the career trajectories of history graduates. Three years on, unemployment among the class of 1995 stood at only 2% and was declining. The survey concluded that unemployment was a short-term problem and was not related to 'type' of university (old, new, Oxbridge, redbrick or whatever),¹¹ though class of degree was important: the higher the class the less the likelihood of unemployment.¹² The graduates themselves stressed the importance of their class of degree in getting them the right kind of job. The Warwick survey also found that further study enhances employability. By 1998, 65% of the sample reported that they were in jobs that required their degree, and 82% said that they were using skills acquired in the course of their studies. Both figures were slightly lower for arts and humanities students, undoubtedly because a significantly higher proportion of these (compared to graduates with science or vocational degrees) were employed in clerical/secretarial and manual/routine jobs. Gender was not found to be significant here. Rather, it was the growth in the graduate labour market overall that was leading to underemployment and 'overqualification' (that is, graduates taking jobs traditionally done by non-graduates). However, science graduates were more sheltered than humanities graduates from this due to the increase in demand from industrial and commercial employers for employees with technical (especially computing and IT) skills.

The 1995 graduates were asked if they thought the subject they had studied mattered in terms of doing their jobs. Overall 85% believed it did, though once again vocational graduates were more likely to be positive (95%) than those from the humanities (64%). Given the entrenched view, held both within and without the academic profession, that a humanities education is essentially a liberal, non-vocational one, it is perhaps surprising, encouraging even to those who have been proselytising the cause of a more explicit skills-based curriculum, to find that two out of three humanities graduates have connected their employability to their education; but, it is impossible to say whether or not this has anything to do with the more explicit promotion, in the last fifteen years or so, of transferable skills. The migration of humanities graduates into the non-graduate sector of the labour market perhaps explains why only 46% found their jobs interesting, a lower figure than for all other types of graduate. The compensation, however, for humanities graduates was that they were second only to language graduates in feeling that they had been widely educated (78% compared with just 59% of maths and computing graduates).

They also, on balance, have different career aspirations to undergraduates from other disciplines. They are less concerned about 'extrinsic rewards' (high salaries, promotional opportunities, fringe benefits etc.) and more likely to want 'altruistic rewards' (helping others, performing a public or social service etc.). They are less likely to know precisely what they want to do after graduation and this might explain why they are more likely to be unemployed or in non-graduate jobs for a time, and, indeed, why they chose to do a non-vocational degree in the first place. Reflecting on these characteristics of the typical humanities student, Chris Boys observed: '...while humanities undergraduates may develop a wide range of skills which employers may want, they are not as conscious of their value as other undergraduates. They need, I suggest, to be made more aware of their value on the labour market.'¹³ By demonstrating to history students just how successful they can be, this report will hopefully contribute to raising that awareness.

The IER survey raises two issues pertinent to the present inquiry. The first concerns the imperative of providing employment guidance for prospective students. The changes in the labour market (the emergence of the overqualified graduate) and in

higher education (the introduction of fees and the replacement of grants with loans), have made it even more incumbent upon universities to inform their students about potential career destinations, not only through careers offices but in prospectuses and other recruitment literature. Many of the respondents to the IER survey demanded as much; indeed, some of them went so far as to propose that university departments arrange talks on careers by their alumni. Careers advice has improved quite significantly in recent years but there is still much to be done.¹⁴

The other key issue concerns the value of work experience placements. In many subject areas, particularly those with a vocational or quasi-vocational orientation, these are a familiar part of the higher education landscape. They remain tangential, however, to most humanities, including history, degree-courses.¹⁵ With the emphasis now on 'employability' (and its role as a performance indicator in the pernicious university 'league tables'), on 'value-for-money' (in the wake of fees), and in the face of demands by employers for graduates with general and employment-related skills (regardless of subject), work experience will remain squarely on the agenda of all degree courses, including those, like history, that do not have a particular vocational thrust. Strong resistance from within the academy to the perceived adulteration of liberal arts courses by such functionalist and utilitarian elements will no doubt continue to be vented. The IER survey reveals, however, that graduates who have completed a quality placement will subsequently have a better experience of the labour market.¹⁶ In this context, it should be remembered that the majority of jobs advertised do not specify subject requirements and in theory are open to graduates from any discipline. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that students value anything that gives them the edge in a competitive jobs market. Moreover, because the jobs market is so open, history graduates have pursued a multiplicity of careers demanding a wide range of talents and have done so extremely successfully.

Famous History Graduates

In a short essay, published in 1996, Peter Beck endeavoured to make a case for the continuing relevance of a history education to the world of work – a world increasingly obsessed with utilitarian outcomes and driven by employer and government concerns about vocational relevance. 'History degrees are not job specific,' Beck concluded, 'but are work-related in the sense of providing a useful and cost-effective education fostering transferable skills, including the element of flexibility valued by employers.'¹⁷ What follows attempts to build upon Beck's conclusion by demonstrating through the force of empirical evidence just how successfully flexible history graduates have been.

Distinguished history alumni are to be found in a whole range of occupations. Some, such as politics and the media, are perhaps predictable; others, notably business and finance, may occasion some surprise. In the course of preparing this article, I have assembled a large database of individuals who have achieved great success in their chosen careers.¹⁸ There are undoubtedly many famous and important names still to be added to it. There are also thousands more at very senior, but subaltern levels: MPs, civil servants, solicitors, journalists and writers, pro vice-chancellors and so forth, too numerous even to contemplate. Some of these will be fairly recent graduates yet to make their full mark. My database therefore only represents the tip of a very large iceberg. Even so, it is not possible to include here every name from it and in what follows I have concentrated instead upon making some general observations supported with examples.

Media

Key positions in the media have been colonised by historians. They appear to have a particular penchant for sports journalism – practitioners include the BBC motor racing correspondent, Jonathan Legard (Leeds), and the BBC presenter Martin Tyler (UEA), while Radio 5 Live boasts at least four history graduates on its team: Alan Green (Queen's, Belfast), John Inverdale (Southampton), Nicky Campbell (Aberdeen) and Simon Mayo (history and politics, Warwick), the last two former Radio 1 DJs. The daily appearance of news and current affairs presenters on 'the box' has made several history graduates household names: notably, the BBC's foreign affairs correspondent, Jeremy Bowen (UCL), the former MP and latterly BBC political pundit, Brian Walden (Oxford), the BBC newscaster Dermot Murnaghan (Sussex) and the ITN journalists, Bill Neelly (Queen's, Belfast) and Tom Bradby (Edinburgh). Others are well-known locally but not (yet) nationally – my list includes several newsreaders and journalists in regional television.

In addition to news journalism, there are several history graduates in the entertainment areas of the media. Simon Thomas, a presenter of *Blue Peter* from 1999 to 2005, is a Birmingham graduate. Timmy Mallett (Warwick) also began his career as a children's presenter but has since diversified into acting and producing. The comedians Sacha Baron Cohen (Ali G), Al Murray and Richard Herring, the former Python and latter-day traveller Michael Palin, and the idiosyncratic interviewer and popular documentary-maker, Louis Theroux, are Oxford graduates. The television presenter Jonathan Ross, who is rarely off our screens, studied history at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies while the broadcaster and journalist Joan Bakewell was at Cambridge. Melvyn Bragg (Oxford) has extensive television and radio experience. He has presented the weekly arts programme *The South Bank Show* since 1987. Michael Wood (Oxford) is another familiar face on television, the author of over sixty films shown not only here but worldwide.

History graduates also occupy important positions behind the scenes of television and radio as senior managers, such as James Moir (Nottingham), Controller, BBC Radio 2, Alan Watson (Cambridge), chair of the Corporate TV Network, Rachel Attwell (Warwick), Deputy Head BBC TV News, John McCormick (Glasgow), Controller BBC Scotland, and Lesley Anne Dawson (Keele), Head of the Press Office at ITN. Sir Marmaduke Hussey (Oxford) was chair of the BBC Board of Governors from 1986 to 1996. Many more work as researchers, producers and editors.¹⁹ Keeping a watchful eye on their activities is Suzanne Warner (Sussex), Deputy Chair of the Broadcasting Standards Commission. The press also boasts a fair number of historians working, *inter alia*, as education correspondents, home affairs editors, journal editors and freelance journalists. Two of these are particularly well-known: Peter Wilby (Sussex), the editor of the *New Statesman*, and David Montgomery (history and politics, Queen's, Belfast), Director of News UK and former chief executive of Mirror Group Newspapers.

Politics

Many historians have entered politics. In local government, several are chief executives of district councils and directors of education. A sizeable number have been elected to the House of Commons and some have attained distinction in senior government positions. If we pushed too far back in time the list would be unmanageable. However, the link between a history education and a political career, and the importance of the one to the other, can be illustrated by the simple expedient of examining the educational backgrounds of the current (April 2005) Labour cabinet.

A breakdown of the first degrees of its twenty-two members reveals the following: law (6); history (5); social work and social policy (2); sociology (1); European studies (1); maths and economics (1); economics and political science (1); economics (1); English (1); metallurgy (1); no degree (2). The preponderance of law graduates in an executive body drawn from the nation's legislature is perhaps to be expected; the small representation of economists rather more surprising. The significant presence of historians, however, is striking testimony to the all-round talents of the graduates of the discipline. The history cabinet ministers are: Gordon Brown (Edinburgh), Chancellor of the Exchequer, Alan Milburn (Lancaster), Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Dr John Reid (Stirling), Health Secretary, Paul Murphy (Oxford), Northern Ireland Secretary, and John Prescott (Hull), Deputy Prime Minister. The contribution by historians is even more impressive when it is noted that Hilary Benn's European Studies degree at Sussex was, to all intents and purposes, a thematic history programme, and that David Blunkett (history and politics, Sheffield) had, until his resignation in December 2004, been Home Secretary.

The high profile of historians in the Labour government of April 2005 is by no means an aberration. At the time of the survey for the first version of this report in March 2001, there were five history graduates in the cabinet, and one, Nick Brown (Manchester), who had studied both history and politics. The contemporaneous Conservative shadow cabinet also included several history graduates: Francis Maude (Cambridge), shadow Foreign Secretary, Tim Yeo (Cambridge), shadow Agriculture Secretary, Edward Garnier (Oxford), shadow Attorney-General, and Michael Portillo (Cambridge), shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, while Sebastian (now Lord) Coe (economics and social history, Loughborough), former Olympic champion and world record-holder at 800 metres, was William Hague's private secretary.

Nor is the considerable representation of history graduates in recent politics an unusual phenomenon. A number of historians served in the Thatcher and Major governments, though, it must be said, not always with great distinction. It is galling to relate that it was historians who, almost to a man, mismanaged the great BSE crisis as Agriculture Secretaries during its unfolding: John McGregor (history and economics, St Andrew's), John Gummer (Cambridge) and Douglas Hogg (Oxford). The propensity of historians for the agriculture portfolio can only be surmised. Other former Conservative history cabinet ministers include Kenneth Carlisle (Harvard College, California and Oxford), Kenneth Baker (Oxford), Douglas Hurd (Cambridge), John Biffen (Cambridge), Michael Forsyth (St Andrew's), Chris Patten (Oxford) and Sir Nicholas Lyell (Oxford). Neil Kinnock, the former Labour leader, is a Cardiff graduate of history and industrial relations, and Alex Salmond, the leader of the Scottish Nationalist party studied history and economics at St Andrew's. Finally, several historians have gained political influence as a result of their elevation to the Lords in recognition of their academic attainments, notably Asa Briggs (Cambridge), Kenneth Morgan (Oxford), Hugh Thomas (Cambridge) and Patricia Hollis (Cambridge).²⁰

Civil Service

If history has produced more than its fair share of Jim Hackers, it has also produced the Sir Humphreys to advise them. Most civil servants do not, of course, share the limelight with their political masters, though there are exceptions. Lady (afterwards Baroness) Falkender (QMW, London) attained rather more publicity during Sir Harold Wilson's premiership than is the case with most private secretaries. Clive Ponting (Reading) shot from obscurity overnight as an official at the Ministry of

Defence following his challenge to state secrecy. John Scarlett (Oxford), Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service, was thrust into the public eye for his role, as then chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, in the provision of intelligence to the government in the run-up to the war with Iraq. Others will perhaps only be known to those with a particular knowledge of the civil service, though they are none the less distinguished for all that: Anna Blackstock (Oxford), Director General at the Department of Trade and Industry; Eric Sorensen (Keele), holder of many important posts but perhaps best known as chief executive of the Millennium Commission; Alexander Russell (Edinburgh), Deputy Chair HM Customs and Excise; William Mackay (Edinburgh), Clerk to the House of Commons; and David Wilkinson (Bedford College, London), Head of the Cabinet Office's Central Secretariat. One of his colleagues in the Cabinet Office is another history graduate, Dr Ruth Ingamells (Durham). In addition, there are several permanent secretaries, such as David Normington (Oxford), and under-secretaries and chief executives serving in a variety of Whitehall departments. Sir William Ryrie (Edinburgh), now retired, attained distinction at the Treasury before moving to the World Bank.

The diplomatic branch of the civil service in particular has provided an outlet for the talents of history graduates. A handful work in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and in senior overseas postings as embassy secretaries or heads of mission. A select few have reached the dizzy heights of ambassador: Sir R.R. Betts (UCL), Christopher Crabbie (Liverpool), Stephen Wright (Oxford) and Roderick Lyne (Leeds). Peter Smyth (Queen's, Belfast) is Northern Ireland representative in the British Embassy in Washington. Sir Crispin Tickell (Oxford), currently chancellor at Kent University, had a long and distinguished career in the diplomatic service and, after retiring, became a champion of environmental causes. Finally, the UN diplomat charged with negotiating the establishment of a representative postwar government in Afghanistan, Francesc Vendrell, studied history at Cambridge.

History graduates can also be found on political 'think-tanks', watchdogs, national charities, or more general advisory bodies – notably, Dame Ruth Runciman (Cambridge), Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs; Iona Hauser (Warwick), Senior Arms Control Analyst at the Institute for Public Policy Research; the writer, television and newspaper journalist Michael Ignatieff (Toronto), who is currently Director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University; Ceridwen Roberts (Sussex), Director of the Family Policy Studies Centre; Frances Crook (Liverpool), Director of the Howard League for Penal Reform; David Edmonds (history and politics, Keele), Director-General of Ofcom since 1998 and chairman of Crisis, the national homeless charity; David Collett (Keele), Director of VSO, Water Aid and a member of WHO; Victor Craggs (Warwick), Director of the Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council; Susan Daniels (Keele), Chief Executive of the National Deaf Children's Society; Brian Vale (Keele), Assistant Director with the British Council; and Martin Gorham (QMW), Chief Executive of the National Blood Service and one of several historians who have attained prominence in the sphere of public health, either as members of regional health boards or as executives in the NHS. In this context, we should not forget the 'spin-doctors' – like Anji Hunter (history and English, Brighton), who resigned as PA to Tony Blair in November 2001 to become BP's director of communications, or Andrew Adonis (Oxford), senior policy adviser at Number 10.

Church

The knowledge of politics and international relations which studying history imparts has clearly been of advantage to these servants of the state; but there is more to it than accumulated knowledge. Historians must, as well, possess particular personality or character traits that lead them into such roles. For example, it is surely more than their knowledge of religious history that has influenced some of them towards a career in the church. From its upper echelons I have found a provost and four bishops (Blackburn, Guildford, London and Norwich) – one of them, Richard Chartres (Cambridge), the Bishop of London, was among the favoured candidates to succeed George Carey as Archbishop of Canterbury in 2002. Success has not been confined to Anglicans – witness, for example, the career of Rabbi Lionel Blue (Oxford), the well-known broadcaster and writer.

Security Services

An altogether different mind-set has persuaded other historians to serve in the armed forces, police and prisons. John Abbott (Sussex) rose through the ranks of the police force to become Director General of the National Criminal Intelligence Service until his retirement in 2003. Other historians in senior positions in the police force include the Assistant Chief Constable of Sussex, the Chief Constable of Gloucester, the Chief Superintendent of Hampshire Constabulary and the Assistant Chief Constable of South Wales police.²¹ Roger Brandon (Keele) was the Governor of Ford Open prison until 1998. Peter Collins (Birmingham) retired as Air Vice Marshall in 1985 and went on to act as a company director and consultant to firms dealing in military technology, and Earl Jellicoe (Cambridge) enjoyed a successful military, diplomatic, business and political career, including a spell in government as First Lord of the Admiralty.

Law

None of the careers considered thus far could be said to require a ‘subject-specific’ training, though further education will have been a prerequisite in certain instances. Hence, for example, it is not difficult to conceive of a history graduate going on to study theology or take religious orders in preparation for a life in the service of the church. Some career paths, however, are not quite so easy to comprehend. A profession like law, for example, cannot be pursued without vocational training and qualification and it has long-established academic routes into it. Yet, there are a significant number of lawyers whose first degree is in history. My database includes a dozen barristers, some of them working in private chambers, others on behalf of major companies. By virtue of their prominent part in big trials, two are particularly well-known: Michael Briggs (Oxford) and Michael Mansfield (Keele), both QCs. It should also be noted that several of the cabinet politicians whose first degree was in history afterwards studied law and were called to the bar.

Trade Unions

Politics, civil service, church, army, police, law – it may seem that historians are strongly inclined towards serving the establishment. This would, however, be a misleading conclusion to draw. It is certainly not the case that they are by temperament ‘conservative’. Indeed, one of our distinguished lawyers is known for his defence of ‘radical’ causes, and our politicians cover a broad spectrum. Moreover, historians have also pursued careers that might be regarded by many (though not all) as anti-establishment. Several, for example, are trade union activists and have risen

through the ranks to become leaders of their unions. Philip Bowyer (Sussex) is General Secretary of the Postal and Telecommunication Workers, David Davies (Keele), General Secretary of the Managerial and Professional Officers, and, once again, it is a historian who has reached the very top in the person of John Monks (Nottingham), the former General Secretary of the TUC and now General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation.

Museums, Libraries and the Arts

There are also occupations that seem to have a more organic connection to a history education and which, though they perform a public service, are less directly linked to the 'establishment' as such. By virtue of my focus on transferable skills, I am not concerned here with the many historians who have become teachers of their subject, though it should be recorded that some, through their facility as managers and administrators, and seduced no doubt by the aphrodisiac of power and Ofsted inspections, have gone on to become headteachers. One, John Sutton (Keele) served as General Secretary of the Secondary Heads Association from 1988-98. A history degree has also been a natural passport to service in the museums, libraries and arts. Prominent names here include Christopher Brown (Oxford), Director of the Ashmolean, Catherine Ross (Sussex), Deputy Head of the Museum of London, Richard Gray (history and art history, Bristol), Director of Compton Verney, Mark Taylor (Birmingham), Director of the Museums Association in London, David Dykes (Oxford), Director of the National Museum of Wales from 1986 to 1989, Sir Roy Strong (QMW, London), former Director of the Victoria and Albert, John Tusa (Cambridge), previously at the BBC but now Managing Director at the Barbican Centre, and Sarah Tyacke (London), Chief Executive, and Elizabeth Hallam Smith (London), Director of Public Services, both at the National Archives, Kew.

Many history graduates have attained distinction in the 'private' pursuit of the arts, notably as writers. Good writing is a quality highly prized by historians and one that, as the benchmark group rightly stressed, should be cultivated by an undergraduate history education. I am not concerned here with the writing of academic history where there are, of course, many skilled practitioners, nor with the many popularisers of history, though Andrew Morton (Sussex), the biographer of Princess Diana, Madonna and Posh and Becks, should perhaps be mentioned if only to show that it is possible to make a good living in this way. Nor is there space to rehearse the names of the many historians who have established their own special authorial niche – whether as travel-writers, pedagogues, or sex counsellors – though I have examples of all of these and more. Rather, the focus here is on creative and fictive writing. Here there are some 'big names' – for example, the novelists Anthony Powell (Oxford, died March 2000), Salman Rushdie (Cambridge), Penelope Lively (Oxford), Matthew Kneale (Oxford) and Pat Barker (LSE), the playwrights Alan Bennett (Cambridge) and Howard Barker (Sussex) and the poet Wendy Cope (Oxford). Some, such as Pamela Thomas (Sussex), have explicitly drawn on their education and have built a reputation as 'historical novelists' in the Catherine Cookson mould. There are, predictably, fewer historians in the creative field of music. Nevertheless, and covering the range from highbrow to lowbrow, we have on the one hand Peter Shellard (Warwick), Director of Development at the Royal Academy of Music, and the opera tenor Ian Bostridge (Oxford) and, on the other, Neil Tennant (North London) and Chris Martin (UCL), lead singers respectively of the *Pet Shop Boys* and *Coldplay*, and perhaps the most famous of history's 'popstars'.²² I have also

uncovered only one actor of note: Bernard Lloyd (Keele), a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Universities

Although I have deliberately excluded academic historians from my survey, it is instructive to consider the related domain of academic management where a wider deployment of transferable skills is essential to success. In the first edition of this report, I examined the degree-subject backgrounds of ninety-two university vice-chancellors in post in January 2001.²³ At that time, the number of historians who had reached this pinnacle of academic leadership and management was considerably larger than would be produced by a proportionate distribution across all disciplines. Over 61% were drawn from just seven subject backgrounds: economics (11.5); history (10.5); physics (9.5); engineering/electrical engineering (8); biology (6); chemistry (6); and sociology (5). The distribution by subject of the remaining 39% was as follows: mathematics (4); geography (3); law (3); politics (3); philosophy (2.5); metallurgy (2); social science (2); medicine (2); accountancy/finance (1); economics, natural science, biochemistry with molecular biology (1); educational psychology (1); English (1); environmental science (1); geology (1); linguistics (1); modern languages (1); music (1); social anthropology (1); Welsh (1); computing (0.5); psychology (0.5); no first degree (1).²⁴

The universities with vice-chancellors who had studied history were: Aberdeen (C. Duncan Rice - Aberdeen), Brighton (Sir David Watson - Cambridge), Greenwich (Rick Trainor - Brown and Oxford), Hertfordshire (Neil Buxton - Aberdeen), Kingston (Peter Scott - Oxford), Lampeter (Keith Robbins - Oxford - who was also senior vice chancellor for the whole of the University of Wales), London Guildhall (Roderick Floud - Oxford - who, shortly after the survey, became president of Universities UK, the committee of vice-chancellors), Oxford (Colin Lucas - Oxford), Staffordshire (Christine King - Birmingham), Teesside (Derek Fraser - Leeds), and Manchester Metropolitan (Alexandra Burslem - history and politics, Manchester). Once again, the 'over-representation' of historians at the top of their chosen profession is not a rogue finding, occasioned by the date of the sample. Hence, although five of the above have now moved on or retired (Fraser, Buxton, Lucas, Robbins and Trainor, who is now Principal of King's College, London), the rest²⁵ have been joined by four newcomers: Deian Hopkins (Aberystwyth) at South Bank; David Eastwood (Oxford), former chief executive of the Arts and Humanities Research Board, at East Anglia; Madeleine Atkins (history and law, Cambridge) at Coventry; and Alan Gilbert (Oxford) at Manchester, which he took over following the merger with UMIST. As a result, ten of the current incumbents studied history at university, confirming the subject's position as consistently at or near the front in the vice chancellor stakes. This can be further demonstrated by reference to the many distinguished history vice-chancellors immediately prior to 2001 - such as H.J. Hanham (Auckland, New Zealand) at Lancaster, David Dilks (history and politics, Oxford) at Hull, Alan Bullock (Oxford) at Oxford, Kenneth Morgan at Wales and Asa Briggs at Sussex - while York University seemed for some time to be a veritable fiefdom for historians with first George Carstairs (Edinburgh) and afterwards Berrick Saul (Birmingham) in charge there. While it would be absurd to claim that the managerial skills required for these positions were inculcated through first-degree education, nevertheless the capacity of historians to attain such high positions once again in statistically significant ways says something about their all-round abilities.

Business and Finance

This facility to reach the top through the application of diverse skills is reaffirmed by the success of historians in business and finance. Of all the categories in my database of distinguished history graduates, this is by far the largest. It might at first seem surprising that students of dusty old history rise to become captains of modern industry. Those historians who have linked British economic decline to the persistence of a traditional education at the expense of an entrepreneurial training will no doubt see this as confirmation of their thesis.²⁶ I would prefer to see it rather as yet another demonstration of the enormous capabilities of historians, of their flexibility, adaptability and versatility, and of their innate and acquired skills. Most of the business leaders are not household names, but a roll call of their jobs will give some indication of their successes. Historians have in significant numbers become: company directors, chief executives and managing directors, e-commerce millionaires, chief accountants, business partners, directors of strategic development, heads of personnel and of human resources, fund managers, management consultants, chief financial officers, divisional directors, presidents and vice-presidents, directors of sales and marketing, company secretaries and so forth. Many work for large and long-established companies; others are managing directors or partners in companies which they established or helped to set up.

A few examples will have to suffice. Gerald Corbett (Cambridge), formerly of Dixons, Redland and Grand Metropolitan, and now of Woolworth, attained notoriety as chief executive of Railtrack at the time of the Hatfield train crash. Historians have attained particular prominence with ICI: Anthony Hudson (Birmingham) is a former chairman, and Charles Miller Smith (St Andrew's), now chairman at Scottish Power, a former chief executive. Sir Bob Reid (political economy and history, St Andrew's), has had a long and varied career mainly in the oil, banking and railway sectors. A former chairman of Shell, he was chair of the British Railways Board at the time of rail privatisation and afterwards became deputy governor of the Bank of Scotland. Sir Patrick Gillam (LSE), former managing director of BP, is currently chairman of Standard Chartered Bank. Lord Sainsbury of Preston Candover (Oxford) was chair of the family supermarket business until 1992 and is now its president. Robert Gunn (Oxford), chair of the Further Education Funding Council of England, is a former director of Boots. David Lyon (Oxford), now retired, was chief executive of Rexam (formerly Bowater), a company with annual sales of £3 billion. The late Sir Roland Smith, director of the Bank of England from 1991 to 1996, was, until shortly before he died, chancellor of UMIST and chairman of Manchester United plc. It is not, of course, unusual for businessmen to involve themselves in football management. Another example is Phil Soar (Keele), the managing director of Blenheim Publishing Group and chief executive of Nottingham Forest. Christopher Tugendhat (Cambridge), chairman of Lehman Brothers Europe, has a string of company directorships to his name including Blue Circle, BOC, Abbey National and Rio Tinto and was made a life peer in 1993. Others, more briefly, include: Martin Bandier (Syracuse), chairman of EMI Publishing; Julia Cleverdon (Cambridge), chief executive of Business in the Community; Richard Lambert (Oxford), member of the Bank of England's monetary committee and former *Financial Times* editor; Martha Lane-Fox (Oxford), founder of lastminute.com; Angus McDougall (Sussex), vice-president of Lloyds Bank; Michael Morris (Keele), managing director of Reed Information Services; Stephen Page (Bristol), chief executive of Faber and Faber; Terry Smith (Cardiff), chief executive of the City brokerage firm Collins, Stewart Tullett; Sir Howard Stringer (Oxford), chairman of Sony Corporation, the first non-

Japanese to hold this post; Raymond Seitz (Yale), a director at GEC, Rio Tinto, BA, Cable and Wireless; Andrew Sinclair (Cambridge), a prolific writer and managing director of Timon Films; Anita Roddick (Bath Spa University College), the Body Shop entrepreneur; Clara Freeman (Oxford), former executive director at Marks and Spencer and current chair of Opportunity Now, the business in the community campaign to maximise the contribution of women in the workplace; and John Varley (Oxford), chief executive at Barclays Bank.²⁷

The success of historians in the world of business and finance was systematically demonstrated by Richard Barry in a survey of company directors carried out on behalf of the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Engineering Council in 1998.²⁸ He analysed the educational background of the 956 men and 55 women who were on the boards of the FTSE 100 member companies as at 1 December 1997.²⁹ 86% of these executive and non-executive directors held an academic or professional qualification. Engineers constituted the single largest group of graduates but fell to second place behind accountants when non-graduates were included. The directors, for the most part, had qualified about thirty years previously, mostly at Oxbridge, though with St Andrew's performing strongest of all when relative size was taken into account, and with 17% non-British. Of the 976 directors about whom some educational background could be ascertained, 68% (668) had at least one degree while 25% also held a higher degree. The breakdown by subject of these 668 directors' first degrees was as follows:

Table 3: First Degrees of Company Directors

<u>First Degree Subject</u>	<u>Number of Directors</u>	<u>%</u>
Engineering	109	16.4
Science	100	15.0
Economics	97	14.5
Law	67	10.0
History	66	9.9
Languages	56	8.4
Commerce	45	6.7
Social Studies	37	5.5
Rural Studies	16	2.4
Health	4	0.6
Architecture	2	0.3
Other	29	4.3
Not known	40	6.0
Total	668	100.0 ³⁰

Barry looked at the ratio of a degree-subject's proportion among the directors to its proportion among the population at large in order to ascertain whether any subject was 'over' or 'under' represented on the nation's Commanding Heights. He concluded that 'engineers, linguists and agriculturalists are about proportionately represented while scientists, medics and architects are under-represented. The three business-orientated vocational subjects (economics, law and commerce) are over-represented, just as one would expect. The only surprise is the very strong showing by historians.'³¹ Indeed, in terms of relative performance, that is the number of directors in proportion to the number of graduates in each subject, history did particularly well, outperforming law, science and engineering.

Elsewhere, in a less academic presentation of his findings for the *Guardian* newspaper, Barry sought to explicate his surprise at the performance by historians.³² In doing so, he drew upon concepts employed by Liam Hudson in his book *Contrary Imaginations*. Hudson had famously distinguished in this, a ‘psychological study of the English schoolboy’, between what he called ‘convergers’ (those with high IQs and a very focused approach to problems) and ‘divergers’ (usually with lower IQs but with a wider-ranging approach to problems that would more likely yield novel solutions).³³ He concluded, on the basis of his research on boys studying ‘A’ levels, that those following ‘hard’ physical science were convergers while those studying arts subjects including history were divergers. Of all subject-pairs, the gap between ‘history’ and ‘hard’ science was the widest. Barry, with some licence,³⁴ summed up the key characteristics of each group as follows:

Table 4: Characteristics of Divergers and Convergers

<u>Divergers</u>	<u>Convergers</u>
intuitive	realistic
tense	placid
disorderly	perfectionist
sceptical	trusting
iconoclastic	conservative
emotionally volatile	calm
ideas-oriented	solution-oriented
non-conformist	rule-conscious
warm	emotionally distant
socially pushy	shy
individualistic	group oriented ³⁵

Barry added that ‘a few years ago’ he had given a personality profiling test to 83 first-year engineering undergraduates and 43 first-year historians, and that the results had confirmed Hudson’s hypothesis: ‘The personality differences between the engineers and the historians were stark, and transcended gender.’³⁶ Barry was of the view that the qualities of the converger – clever and highly-focused – were particularly well-suited to middle managers. However, at boardroom level different qualities are called for – especially the ability to make sense of poor data and conflicting demands – and this is where the skills of the diverger come into their own. Hence, the progress of history graduates to the commanding heights of the British economy.

These may well be the innate characteristics that predispose individuals towards studying history, and historians reading this will have to decide for themselves whether or not they fit Hudson’s template. However, they are not, for the most part, the attributes trumpeted in the benchmarking statement. This does not mean that the skills stressed by the history profession are irrelevant or have been wrongly identified. For that exercise was concerned not with personality traits but rather with the main skills developed by a history *training*. While personal psychology is important (explaining why one history graduate enters the church and another the army and, indeed, why, as Hudson has shown, some are predisposed to study history in the first place), it does not in itself explain why historians have succeeded in so many walks of life. Historians have always made a virtue of the importance of reaching objective judgements based upon wide reading and an understanding of a multiplicity of oft-conflicting sources. They value also the ability to write clear, literate, synoptic, analytical accounts that represent a balanced assessment of the

sources and evidence but which do not fight shy of drawing conclusions from them. Rightly emphasised by the benchmark group, these are surely vital qualities, not just for business but for many of the other careers where history graduates have so palpably achieved.

Conclusions

The attempt to demonstrate the relevance of a history education to future employment had begun in earnest in the 1980s, partly driven by demands from employers and politicians, and through related incentives like the Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative, and partly by concerns within the profession about the steady decline in the number of pupils taking 'A' level history. One result was the formation of pressure-groups, like History in the Universities Defence Group (HUDG), to defend and promote the discipline. The imperative of showing relevance did not, however, go away when the fall in student numbers was suddenly put into sharp reverse by the rapid expansion of higher education in the 1990s. University history departments now faced different problems – rising staff-student ratios and a declining unit of resource – but the question of work-related skills remained squarely on the agenda, not least because the new students entering higher education for the first time brought with them different expectations, including market-oriented ones.

The history curriculum was responsive to these external drivers. It evolved to include, or to promote and cultivate in a more self-conscious way than hitherto, the 'personal and transferable skills' that would be needed by students in their later working lives and which were being demanded by employers and included in their job and person descriptions. Some of the skills associated with a humanities education were highlighted in a pamphlet published by the Council for Higher Education and Industry in 1990 – not least, the ability to assess complex evidence and arguments in a critical and objective manner and thereby reach informed judgements.³⁷ Employers themselves called for graduates who were literate, numerate, problem-solvers, team-players, adaptable, possessed of good oral and communication skills, with leadership and managerial capabilities, and trained in using IT. It was not subject knowledge that they were looking for in their recruits but a range of transferable skills and, above all, evidence of flexibility.³⁸ The attempts by university history departments to embed these skills in the curriculum – at first patchy – were evident in the steady increase during the 1990s in the number of seminars, workshops and conferences promoting them, and in the activities of the many like-minded individuals who came together in History 2000, a government-funded project to promote the development of teaching and learning in history.³⁹ The new universities and colleges of higher education tended to be in the van of the movement for change, largely because they felt under greater pressure than the old universities to demonstrate the 'relevance' of what they were doing. The latter did not, however, remain entirely aloof – partly because they had, perforce, to engage with the new agenda but partly also because they too had enthusiasts within their ranks who wanted change. The initial interest in embedding skills in the curriculum was followed during the nineties by concerns about how to assess their attainment and, latterly, by a shift from a preoccupation with teaching aims and objectives (or what students are expected to know and understand) to learning outcomes (or what students can *do* as a result of their education). The overall impact of these developments upon the provision of degree-level history could be measured by the strength of the debate, with which this report began, surrounding the benchmarking exercise, and the resultant acknowledgment in the final statement of the importance to a history education of 'generic skills' that were not dissimilar to

those urged by employers. It is not an exaggeration to say, therefore, that, in general, history teachers today are much more reflective about the subject's objectives than they were fifteen years ago and that they are much more comfortable with the employability skills agenda.⁴⁰

It will not, however, have escaped the notice of attentive readers that the majority of the distinguished alumni surveyed here graduated well before the curricular innovations of the late 1980s and 1990s and, moreover, from old universities where the need to demonstrate 'relevance' has been less pressing and where, accordingly, the emphasis on knowledge content that characterised the traditional curriculum remained more immune to change. It does not automatically follow from this that the attempts to broaden and reform the curriculum have been misguided or irrelevant. It is not surprising that most of the successful graduates have come from the oldest universities, notably Oxford and Cambridge in England, and Edinburgh and St Andrew's in Scotland. They are able to cream off the strongest 'A' level candidates and have therefore an advantage in recruiting students with strong intellectual capabilities and innate talents. The relationship between natural ability, personality and education has emerged at various points in this essay, especially in consideration of the 'diverger/converger' thesis, and it is undoubtedly a complex one. But, because innate talent will inevitably out, this does not in itself negate the importance of augmenting the skills of the naturally talented or of cultivating them in those less naturally gifted. Indeed, the *pedagogic* arguments for improving teaching and learning are not neutralised simply because the current stars in the firmament had no experience of the practices predicated by them. These practices have to be judged upon their intrinsic merits. They will be more or less successful according to their capacity to deliver desirable learning outcomes that are appropriate to a history education and their proponents will rightly continue to promote innovations in the curriculum or improvements to it that satisfy this ambition.

We will never know if our successful graduates would have been served even better by a 'capability' curriculum. Nor is it yet possible to determine what impact the recent changes will have on the careers of history graduates. It may be that such a curriculum will prove of greatest value to that majority of students who are not part of the innately gifted elite. What *can* be said, on the evidence of the Warwick survey, is that innovations such as work placements are highly regarded by graduates competing in the jobs market and are *perceived* to have given them an advantage. Some of these issues are explored further in the complementary report on *The Employability of History Students* which considers, *inter alia*, how highly history graduates value the importance of their university education to their subsequent careers, their assessment of the skills which they believe they acquired as part of that education, and their views on the relationship between their education and their personality in accounting for their success. However, there is need for yet more research. For example, more information is needed about the relationship between the class, race and gender of students and their subsequent employment, and about the influence of other variables, such as chance, that shape an individual's career. Another such variable that has been little studied in relation to education, employment and employability is age. Here, there are fascinating questions to be explored about the prior experience of the world of work which many mature students bring with them when they enter higher education, and about its implications for the curriculum in preparing them for their return to employment. Their experience is a resource which has been little used, if at all. The biggest gap in our knowledge, however, is the paucity of information about long-term career trajectories. The Warwick survey is the only recent one of its kind,

but it is not subject-specific and provides only a picture of careers three years after graduation. We might also learn, from follow-up research on history graduates generally, more about the value of innovatory practices, such as 'profiling', 'records of achievement', or 'careers' courses in helping to make them more employable. There is ample scope, therefore, for further national projects or, even, more limited subject-focused one. Many alumni offices now possess detailed databases on the careers of their graduates which could be used for particular case-studies. These would, in time, allow a more complete picture of the relationship between history and the graduate career to emerge. The market experiences of our graduates are, like those of mature entrants, a sadly neglected and under-utilised resource with enormous potential.

So what, given these qualifications and the exhortation to further research, may we conclude, is the use of history in the world of work? A history degree undoubtedly provides an opening to a wide range of careers. Some will come as no surprise: teaching, academia, clerical and administrative, PR, retail and catering, politics, and library, museum and information services. Others, notably business, will raise an eyebrow among those not familiar with Barry's work. Perhaps most surprising, though, is the extent to which historians have risen to the very top of a diverse range of professions and to key positions in civil society and in the attainment of which their education must have played no mean part. A truly remarkable number of history graduates have gone on to become the movers-and-shakers of modern-day Britain. Many top jobs are within the grasp of historians. With a history degree you can aspire to be prime minister, press baron and media mogul, overlord of the BBC, 'the most famous lawyer in the land',⁴¹ archbishop of Canterbury, top spook, leading diplomat, police chief, Oxbridge chancellor and vice-chancellor, England footballer and football manager⁴² or chairman of the richest football club in the world, famous comedian or celebrated pop musician, best-selling novelist, trade union boss, business millionaire, and perhaps even, one day, monarch of the realm.⁴³

References

- ¹ The History Benchmark statement is available on the Quality Assurance Agency's web-site at www.qaa.ac.uk. For a more detailed account of the rise of the skills agenda, see *The Employability of History Students*, pp. 2-4 (hereafter *Employability*).
- ² HEFCE, *Indicators of Employment*, Report 01/21 (HEFCE, April 2001). The document is also available on the web at http://www.hefce.ac.uk/Pubs/HEFCE/2001/01_21.htm.
- ³ The first destination statistics compiled by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) are published annually on the Prospects web-site at <http://www.prospects.csu.ac.uk>.
- ⁴ The most desired career across all graduates is management consultancy, with marketing and journalism tying for second place. Competition for the most sought after positions remains cut-throat.
- ⁵ Richard Pearson, 'What the future holds for graduate employment', *THES*, 17 March 2000.
- ⁶ A more precise breakdown of the most recent, the return for 2002, can be found in *Employability*, Appendix A. Cf. this with the breakdown for the period 1988-92 in Peter Beck, 'History, the Curriculum and Graduate Employment', in A. Booth and P. Hyland (eds), *History in Higher Education: New Directions in Teaching and Learning* (Blackwell, 1996), p. 246.
- ⁷ As a consequence of the expansion of higher education at least 4 out of 10 of all graduates go into non-graduate occupations on graduation. The proportion may be even higher for history. The categories used in the Prospects Guides are not sufficiently discriminating to allow for a precise calculation but, on the evidence of employment in the administrative, clerical and retail categories, it would appear that nearly half of history graduates take on 'non-graduate' work initially.
- ⁸ See, for example, D.J. Milne, *A Century of History: the Establishment and First Century of the Department of History in the University of Aberdeen* (University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, 1998), Appendix 1.
- ⁹ HEFCE, *Indicators*, p. 5.
- ¹⁰ DfEE-CSU-AGCAS-IER, *Moving On – Graduate Careers Three Years after Graduation* (Institute for Employment Research, Warwick, 1999).
- ¹¹ Other surveys, however, have questioned this finding. See, for example, the report by Sarah Whitebloom in the *Guardian*, Jobs and Money Section, 4 Nov. 2000.
- ¹² This is also the case six months after graduation. HEFCE, *Indicators*, p. 26.
- ¹³ C.J. Boys, 'Employment, Skills and Career Orientations: English and History Undergraduates Compared with Other Undergraduates', in H. Eggins (ed.), *Arts Graduates, Their Skills and Their Employment: Perspectives for Change* (Falmer Press, 1992), p. 122.
- ¹⁴ The provision of careers advice is discussed at greater length in *Employability*.
- ¹⁵ See, *Employability*, p. 35. Cf. also the survey by the National Centre for Work Experience which calculated that only about 6% of arts students had undertaken academically recognised work experience and usually for placement periods of less than three months (compared with a more typical 12 months in the sciences). *NCWE News*, March 2000.
- ¹⁶ It is possible to devise placement programmes for history students that enable them to apply and refine their historical skills while at the same time broadening their range of competences and I have described elsewhere my own attempts to do this. See D. Nicholls, 'Making History Students Enterprising: "Independent Study" at Manchester Polytechnic', *Studies in Higher Education*, 17 (1), pp. 67-80. Several universities, mainly, but not exclusively, the new ones, introduced work-placement schemes and a range of innovatory practices such as role-play, bibliographical searches, oral presentations, group work, and IT training during the 1990s. For a compendium of initiatives to promote 'employability' skills, see Pauline Elkes, *Directory of 'Employability' Provision in History Departments in HE Today* (2004; available from the Subject Centre for History, Classics and Archaeology). A survey of the 1985 cohort of humanities graduates found that 56% wished they had been offered work experience - E.S. Lyon, 'Humanities Graduates in the Labour Market', in Eggins (ed.), *Arts Graduates*, p. 138 – but little has changed since then.
- ¹⁷ Beck, 'History, the Curriculum and Graduate Employment', p. 254.
- ¹⁸ I owe a huge debt to the many alumni officers and colleagues in university History departments who supplied me with the names of their distinguished graduates. I have tried to cross-check this information and to gather more evidence from the internet and from conventional sources such as *Dod's Parliamentary Companion* and *Who's Who*. But, *caveat emptor*, such sources do not always give the first degree of their subjects and are not comprehensive. I would welcome therefore corrections from readers as well as further information for my database.
- ¹⁹ There are also many academic historians, such as David Starkey and Simon Schama, who have drawn on their expertise to front or appear in programmes that popularise history. They are too

numerous to list here and besides do not quite meet the concern of the article to concentrate on careers that are not subject-specific.

²⁰ In this context it is worthy mentioning two published historians who became MPs: Austin Mitchell (Manchester) and Gordon Marsden (Oxford), the former editor of *History Today*.

²¹ The last two graduated with joint honours degrees.

²² Others include Richey Edwards, now presumed dead, and Nicky Wire, both graduates of Swansea, and founder members of *The Manic Street Preachers*, and Tom Rowlands and Ed Simons, *The Chemical Brothers*, graduates of Manchester University.

²³ The analysis did not include the independent University of Buckingham or the masters and provosts of the constituent colleges of Cambridge, London and Oxford (where there were, and still are, yet more history luminaries) though it did include those of Wales as their heads are designated vice-chancellors. Moreover, it should be noted that the prominence of historians in the list is heightened when we consider that it includes the small 'technological' universities (such as Cranfield and Robert Gordon) which are more likely to have vice-chancellors with a science background.

²⁴ Professor David Chiddick, at Lincolnshire and Humberside, who became a surveyor and afterwards took an MSc in Transport Studies at Cranfield.

²⁵ Albeit Roderick Floud has since been re-designated vice chancellor of London Metropolitan, created by the merger of Guildhall with North London.

²⁶ There is an enormous literature on this. For a classic statement of the thesis, see M.J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Entrepreneurial Spirit 1850-1980* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981) and for a counter explanation, see D. Nicholls, 'Fractions of Capital: the Aristocracy, City, and Industry in the Development of Modern British Capitalism', *Social History*, 13 (1), 1988, pp. 71-83.

²⁷ This is just a small selection from my database. It includes as well many joint honours graduates. For example, Isabel Maxwell (Oxford, history and modern languages), daughter of the late newspaper baron, is president of one of the USA's major internet companies, CommTouch.

²⁸ R. Barry, *The One Thousand. The Men and Women Who Command the Heights of the UK's Economy* (Institute for Employment Research, Warwick, 1998).

²⁹ The list changes over time and is designed to represent the 100 UK companies with the greatest stock market value. Of the approximately 2,400 publicly quoted UK companies listed on the London Stock Exchange, the top 100 account for about 70% of the total value. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7. Barry advises cautious interpretation of this table. For example, he remarks that if history and languages were aggregated as 'Liberal Arts' they would outrank engineering. Likewise, if engineering was split into electrical, civil and mechanical, each constituent part would be well down the list. 'Science' includes maths; 'Languages' includes English, English literature, modern foreign languages and classical languages; 'Commerce' includes accounting, commerce and business studies; 'Social Studies' includes politics, government, geography, sociology, and psychology; 'Health' includes medicine and pharmacy; 'Rural Studies' includes land economy, agriculture, veterinary science, forestry, estate management; 'Architecture' includes planning; 'Other' includes PPE and moral science. The fact that history (along with economics and law) is an irreducible category reinforces its overall importance.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8. Eight of the 66 directors whose first degree was history went on to take an MBA or equivalent and seven an accountancy qualification.

³² *Guardian*, Education Section, 16 Feb. 1999.

³³ Hudson drew on the work of American psychologists who had developed tests to distinguish between two types of child: the 'High IQ' and the 'High Creative'. He renamed these the 'converger' and the 'diverger' respectively, in large part because he found the American emphasis upon one group as creative and the other non-creative as far too simple. In his tests, he found the schoolboys covered the spectrum from 'extreme divergers' (10%) and 'moderate divergers' (20%) to 'extreme convergers' (10%) and 'moderate convergers' (20%). The other 40% were 'all-rounders'. Of all subject-groups, historians were the most pronounced of the divergers. L. Hudson, *Contrary Imaginations. A Psychological Study of the English Schoolboy* (Methuen, 1966), pp. 38-42, 157.

³⁴ Hudson (*ibid.*, pp. 158-9) tabulated the relative performance of convergers and divergers in his various tests whereas Barry appears to have compiled his list on the basis of a summary of the descriptive profiles provided by Hudson in passing. There are therefore some notable differences between their respective lists. In particular, Hudson identifies divergers as having a high degree of fluency in describing the use of objects, convergers a low degree; and divergers are much more likely to be controversial, vehement, anti-authoritarian, highly imaginative, and represent minority attitudes but less likely to be happy at school or to perform well in IQ tests requiring verbal, numerical or

diagrammatic skills. The interests of convergers were, on the whole, technical and narrow, of divergers broad and cultural. If historians in general had lower IQs, they had very high general knowledge and much stronger cultural and political interests than other subject-groups. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

³⁵ The 'Grauniad' characteristically made an error in the listing by including 'individualistic' in both columns.

³⁶ *Guardian*, 16 Feb. 1999. Other tests on university students, at Keele (1969) and Keele and Nottingham (1997), supported, with some qualifications, Hudson's general hypothesis that arts students are more likely to be divergent, and science students convergent, thinkers. See J. Hartley and M.A. Greggs, 'Divergent Thinking in Arts and Science Students: *Contrary Imaginations* at Keele revisited', in *Studies in Higher Education*, 22 (1), 1997, pp. 93-7.

³⁷ Council for Industry and Higher Education, *Towards a Partnership: the Humanities and the Working World* (CIHE, 1990). The pamphlet included the views of employers on what qualities humanities graduates might be expected to bring to employment.

³⁸ See, for example, Eiggins (ed.), *Arts Graduates*. Part One includes chapters on 'Employers' Requirements and Expectations', with contributions from representatives of Prudential, British Rail, IBM and Nat West Bank. Helen Perkins, chair of the Association of Graduate Recruiters, summed up (p. 28) the broad range of skills which employers were looking for as communication, presentation, conceptual, problem analysis and solution, team working, leadership, numeracy, and verbal reasoning. See also, *Employability*, pp. 2-4.

³⁹ These activities resulted in a considerable output of publications, too numerous to list here. Some sense of the extent and diversity of published work can be got by reference to the bibliography in A. Booth and P. Hyland (eds), *The Practice of University History Teaching* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2000).

⁴⁰ The ways in which the skills agenda has been integrated with the curriculum is described in *Employability*, pp. 2-8. It is instructive to compare the current position with that in the late 1980s when the academy was grappling in a very defensive way with the economic and political pressures to revise the curriculum. See, for example, M. Kogan, 'History', in C.J. Boys et al, *Higher Education and the Preparation for Work* (Jessica Kingsley, 1988), ch. 2.

⁴¹ Michael Mansfield, according to Marcel Berlin, *Guardian*, G2, 8 Jan. 2001.

⁴² Like Steve Coppell (Liverpool), manager of Reading.

⁴³ Prince Charles studied history at Cambridge as did his younger brother, Prince Edward.

