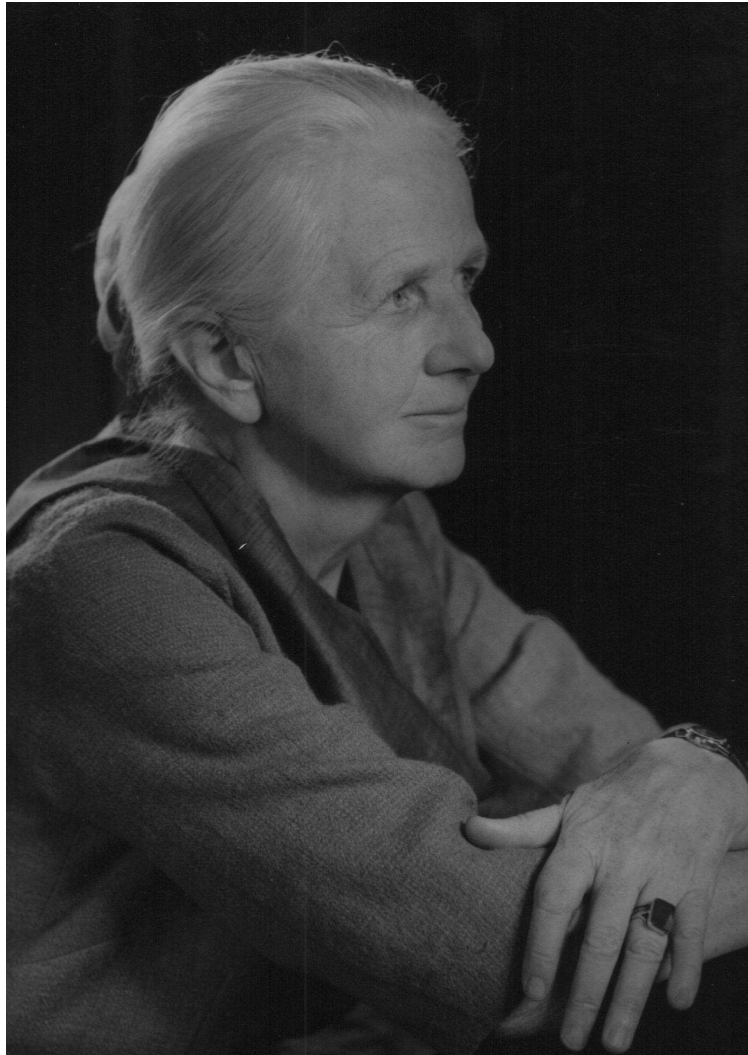


**University of Cambridge  
Faculty of Economics and Politics**

**Centenary Conference**



**Professor Joan Robinson, who is recalled in the memoirs of several alumni**

**Memoirs of the Tripos**

## **Background**

We did not originally plan to include a collection of "memoirs" in the Conference papers. It was sparked by some fascinating letters from alumni who couldn't get to the Conference. Their observations offered so many interesting and sometimes amusing perspectives on the Tripos that we thought they should be shared with the Conference participants on the day.

## **Invitation**

Having seen how effective such pieces can be, and realising that, with the Conference full, we shall only hear a limited sample of alumni experience and views in the discussion sessions, we are inviting those attending the Conference to contribute to a second edition of these memoirs. We shall put copies on the Faculty website, and in the Marshall Library, and send the full collection to those who contribute. Please consider contributing a short piece along the lines of what follows, and send it to me (ideally as a WORD file) by 15 October (geoff.meeks@econ.cam.ac.uk).

Geoff Meeks

**Memoirs**

**Contributors**

**The Thirties**

Michael Booth  
John Vickers

**The Forties**

Leslie Barnes  
Philomena Guillebaud

**The Fifties**

John Rees  
Ronald Somerville

**The Sixties**

Vincent Cable  
Andrew Crockett  
Howard Flight  
Alistair Ross Goobey  
William Keegan  
Martin Sorrell  
Dennis Stevenson

**The Seventies**

Tony Cockerill  
Gavyn Davies

**Thirties alumni on subsequent encounters**

Brian Hopkin  
Peter Trench

## **The Thirties**

I suppose that it would have been possible to have a more messed-up time at Cambridge than mine, but it would have been difficult. But I am eternally grateful to many people who made it possible for me to graduate, and even to achieve modest success.

At the outbreak of the War, the family was living in Newcastle upon Tyne. My father was what would now be called the Deputy Headmaster of a big Secondary School, and I was in the Sixth Form at the Newcastle Royal Grammar School. Even before the formal start of the War, all schools in Newcastle were evacuated to country areas; my father's was sent to Whitehaven and mine to Penrith. That meant that, for official purposes, Whitehaven became the family address. I went up to Christ's College in December 1939 to sit for a scholarship, knowing that, without one, my parents could not have afforded to send me there. The outcome of this was summarised in a telegram from Whitehaven to Penrith which, as rendered by the Post Office read: "Awarded Minor Scholarship Christ Well Done Father". I was accepted to read French and German.

The University and the Colleges had realised that, with all the uncertainties of war, there was not the time to have Scholars and Exhibitioners kicking their heels for two terms and going up to Cambridge the following September; so they were offered the choice of going up in January and taking the first year in two terms. On advice, I did that; but it was a real slog to try to catch up on the tuition I had missed. I got a 2.2, and my Tutor was congratulatory.

I then managed a whole year (1940-1941), taking a Prelim. at the end of it, and being pleased with a 2.1. Halfway through that year, I registered for National Service, and was told that I could stay at Cambridge to take the intermediate, but would be called up immediately afterwards. That happened that September; and, because of my languages, I was posted to the Intelligence Corps, and spent the next four months doing preliminary military training. Then I was allocated to an I.C. Unit (no. 82 Field Security Section), and, as might have been expected, given my languages (I was about bi-lingual in English and French, and my German was passable) the unit was posted to India. We became the Bombay Security Section, and my personal remit was the security in all types of Military Movement.

I must have done all right, because, in early 1943, my O.C. recommended me for a commission; and in May 1943, I went to Belgaum Officers' Training School, being commissioned into the 8<sup>th</sup> Punjab Regiment on passing out in November 1943, and seconded to Movement Control. I became the R.T.O. (Railway Traffic Officer) at Karachi Cantonment Station, being immediately promoted to Captain, and remained there until just after V.J. day in 1945. I may have worked harder since, but I don't really think so! Then, I was given an option; accept immediate discharge from the Indian Army, go back to England on the first available ship, go straight back to Cambridge, and pick up my University career as best I could; or wait for normal discharge. I took the immediate option. Of course, for all students in my position (we were collectively referred to as "Returned Warriors"), there was no hope of taking a Part II; so we were allowed to graduate on the strength of two Part Is. And I did not want to go on with languages, and was advised to take a Part I Economics.

Given my chopped-up background, I was pleased to achieve a 2.1. I was advised to sit a Civil Service Examination for admission to the Special Departmental Grade, which existed only in the Inland Revenue and the Ministry of Labour (and National Service – we mustn't forget that!); and so began a happy career, finishing as a Senior Principal (one grade short of Assistant Secretary) in Birmingham.

That was the period of serious skill shortages. Obviously, with the call-up, the apprenticeship system had broken down; and, with the reduction of the age of adulthood to 18, there was an urgent need for some transitional system. This resulted in the Training Opportunities Scheme

(TOPS for short – it had a nice slogan; “The wise man opts for TOPS”). The basic idea was that, if you were dealing with an adult with some knowledge of work, it would be possible to train a properly-assessed person up to skilled standard in six months. He (or she!) would know how to do whatever job it was up to some standard, and it would be easy for a skilled instructor to build on that to whatever level was required. I became the Regional General Manager of the training part of the scheme for the whole of the West and East Midlands, with an annual budget of £23 ½ millions; and I was accountable for the proper spending of that money. Once again my year of Economics came in! I simply cannot tell you how often some words of wisdom from Messrs Dobb and Dennison (but particularly the latter) helped me in the administrative side of my work.

Of course, my position was unusual, perhaps unique. My time in the Indian Army had given me a good grasp of man-management, and of the need of an efficient basic system without which man-management cannot succeed. But I can say that my staff have always enjoyed working for me, and have shown that in innumerable little ways; so that I in my turn can look back at my career with happiness.

*MICHAEL J BOOTH*

In October 1933 I went up to Christ's College, Cambridge to read Economics in preparation for entering our lubricants business. In the imposing Mills building one of my lectures was prefaced by "If you read the London Times every day - and really understand it - you will not need to read anything else!" Reading for the Economics Tripos parts 1 and 2 was a bit more than that. But I have, ever since, read the Times, when not out of its circulation range.

Looking over my lecture notes, essays and tutorials, I can now appreciate how much mind filling and broadening knowledge was given to me. But it has to be understood that the brooding rise of German, and Italian, power and that of Russia, formed the background of the times.

I recognise the talent of those who lectured - there were those giving the classical background like Pigou, Robertson, Fay, Barker, Robertson and Guillibaud. There was the vibrant duo of E.A.G. Robinson and his wife; one term I attended eight one-hour lectures by Maynard Keynes on full employment. Expecting a portrayal of the needs of people I was a bit stunned when after a few minutes he went into mathematical formulae for expressing solutions.

The practical knowledge about industrial relations given by Maurice Dobb and Prof. John Hilton, was absorbing. Hilton helpfully took numbers of us to see the newly opened Ford factory in Dagenham, Essex, the growing Pye Radio factory on the outskirts of Cambridge, and, after admonishing us not to cough "on air", to sit with him in the BBC studio in Broadcasting House, London, as he delivered his weekly radio address.

The oft repeated statement "Human nature being what it is" at the beginning of a lecture series, came up for discussion with my personal tutor Reginald Northam - whom I later met in his retirement to Swinton College, in Yorkshire. I commented that economics could be very different because that phrase was not inevitably true. I said that my human nature had become different, and this had a knock on effect on my father's daily management of our company. I regularly informed Reggie of the developing change of management style in our firm. His response: "It will take a 1,000 years of evolution for that to happen". We begged to differ!

Just this week, I have looked again at a copy of Professor Alfred Marshall's "Economics of Industry" (Third Edition) dated 1901. This copy belonged to my grandfather, who inscribed

his name in it, dated March 27, 1907 - almost the date of the centennial of the Cambridge Economics Faculty which we will celebrate this autumn.

In his Introduction, Chapter One (page one), Marshall says "Political Economy, Economics, is a study of man's actions in the ordinary business of life.... On one side it is a study of wealth, and on the other, and more important side, it is a study of man..... For man's character has been moulded by his everyday work ... and the great forming agencies of the world's history have been his everyday work and the material resources he procures ....(and)... his religious ideals." He goes on (on page 4): "The question is being asked whether it is really impossible that all should start in the world with a fair chance of leading a cultured life, free from poverty - it cannot be answered by economics alone. The answer depends partly on the moral and political capabilities of human nature."

After fifty years of Directorship and management, travelling the continents, and being President of our national trade federation at the time of the 1970's Oil Shocks crises, I am more than ever convinced of Marshall's words.

*JOHN F VICKERS*

## **The Forties**

Amongst the many memories of my "Economics Years" at Cambridge is that of receiving a letter from Professor Sir Dennis Robertson containing an invitation to join the Political Economy Club. In the late forties this club was run much as it had been when Keynes founded it in 1909. About a dozen members met in Professor Robertson's room at Trinity on Monday evenings and they were often joined by members of the faculty and visiting economists. Each week someone read a paper and by the luck of the draw someone else had to stand up and review the paper and lead off a discussion. This could be a demanding business but, as a friend remarked at the time, it was excellent practice of the useful art of standing up, thinking up and speaking up. On one occasion our guest was Professor Jacob Viner who enjoyed it so much that on his return to the States, he sent us a splendid fruitcake to be eaten at club meetings. Thus being the days of Marshall Aid we signed a round-robin bearing our thanks for Viner Aid!

Those Monday evenings were but one small facet of the many benefits of my "Economics Years" which stood me in great stead during a long and varied career, which included senior positions in the Canadian Civil Service and a fellowship at a Canadian University. To this day I remain most grateful.

*LESLIE W C S BARNES*  
(Fitzwilliam 1947)

### Memoir of an ex-economist.

In the autumn of 1944 I came up to Girton to read economics. I had just returned from America, where I had spent 4 years as an evacuee, 3 of them in Philadelphia at a Quaker school and one at Barnard College in New York.

The disparity between the school systems meant that the only way I could pass an English university entrance exam would have been to go back to school for at least a year, and consequently my father, himself a member of the Cambridge Economics Faculty, asked Girton whether, given the unusual wartime circumstances, they would consider letting me in without the proper credentials. After some hesitation they agreed (the fact that my father had been supervising all Girton economics students during the wartime absence of Marjorie Hollond no doubt helped), but subject to various conditions. The principal one was that I must agree to read only a subject for which one could not (at least in those days) prepare in school. That knocked out mathematics, all the sciences, languages, history, literature. I was told I had three options: Anthropology, which in 1944 was a moribund faculty, Moral Science, which I knew I could not survive, and Economics. Years later somebody asked me why not Divinity, and I can only say that nobody mentioned it at the time, and if they had I strongly doubt I would have chosen it.

So Economics was the lesser evil, though still pretty evil. The prospect of reading my father's subject in my father's university and on top that having my father as my supervisor was not attractive. It was hard on us both, but made easier by the fact that he had to supervise either two or three of us at a time because of staff shortages. He also had some sympathy for me, having himself had to live under the shadow of his uncle Alfred Marshall – and having the choice of tripos made for him by Uncle Alfred (he himself had hoped to study medicine). And of course the Economics Faculty in the mid-forties was an extremely lively place: Denis

Robertson, Shove, Dobb, Kahn, both the Robinsons, Fay, Postan, Ruth Cohen, Wilkie Rowe, my father and others..

Nonetheless as my Part I approached I was in terror. My father had told me an apocryphal tale of an older colleague who, when asked how he established his own marking standard, said he read the women's papers first and that gave him his standard for 2-2. I had already told my father I was not going to try for a first, and I think he was relieved because he knew it was beyond me, but a 2-2? Please God, a 2-1 or a third, anything but a 2-2.

Having fortunately emerged with a 2-1, I spent the next year indulging my fundamental lack of interest in economics by going to John Shepherd's lectures, getting involved with a Marlowe Society production of Anthony and Cleopatra, going to parties and in other ways enjoying myself at what was a very exciting time in the University, the autumn of 1945 when all the ex-service people poured back into Cambridge. Consequence: I got a 2-2 in the Prelim. But after all, it was only the Prelim.

But then the paternal foot was put down: Nose to the grindstone.

I chose to live at home my last year – Girton, who were very short of accommodation at the time, rather endearingly inquired anxiously whether I was quite quite sure I was ready to make this sacrifice – which meant I had a much shorter distance to bicycle to lectures and infinitely better food. It was also the year of the fuel crisis, and on a more personal level it was the year I first fell in love. First love, like mumps, is better caught as young as possible, the older you are the worse it hits, and the timing could not have been more disastrous. I attended all my lectures, mostly to gaze at the back of the neck of the object of my unrequited affections, and then would go home and sit hour after hour huddled over a tiny blue flame in the gas fire gazing fixedly at the General Theory on my lap and taking in not a word. I emerged from all that agony with a 2-1 in Part II and the firm (retrospective) opinion that Economics, at least as taught in my time, was not much more than applied common sense. I can only conclude that I got through on the basis of taking pretty thorough lecture notes, reading newspapers, and participating in some informal cram sessions. The list of books I read was lamentably short, and the number of those I had actually taken in was very much shorter. Could my genes have played any part?

If so, their effect was very limited. I have never enjoyed economics in the way that I enjoyed other subjects both before (mathematics) and after (history) my undergraduate days, and after a stint at graduate school in the States, where I almost embarked on a Ph.D but was luckily saved by running out of money, I made no effort to keep up with the literature. To this day, the idea of reading economic literature for enjoyment is inconceivable.

By now, I do not consider myself an economist, but there is another side to the coin: it was due to my training that I landed in a career which gave me a degree of job satisfaction rare in the experience of women of my generation. I may not have enjoyed it at the time, but in the long run having read Economics at Cambridge and later done graduate work at Columbia University stood me in very good stead.

*PHILOMENA GUILLEBAUD*

Girton

## **The Fifties**

In 1951 I went to Christ's College to learn what I could before "call-up" into the Royal Navy in 1952 - especially how to tackle the unemployment problem.

Having already absorbed some of the teachings of Marshall and Taussig, I was soon embroiled in the impact of Keynes and Imperfect Competition.

On the one hand lectures by Professor Pigou still nobly carrying on (into his 80's I was told), and on the other Joan Robinson (and later Austin Robinson) and Maurice Dobb and notably the impact of Harold Laski and the evacuated L.S.E. (London School of Economics) who thronged Cambridge.

But above all there was the impact of "Johnny" Knapp, my Romanian supervisor, who emphasised his points with his sword while combining his fencing exercises with our economics supervision. Perhaps we were sent to him in pairs for our own safety. An inspired teacher whom I greatly admired.

After "call-up" I learnt electrical engineering in the Royal Navy, and subsequently made my career on land erecting and maintaining overhead lines by day and night when storms did their worst.

I remember the visit of Jan Cristian Smuts to a great reception in Christ's Hall, and the lectures of the economic historian C.R. Fay, and of Nicholas Kaldor, and international lawyer Professor Oppenheimer and the crowd pulling of Bertrand Russell.

After my Naval service I returned to Christ's and met again several of my contemporaries who were also fortunate to return to "complete their studies".

### *JOHN C REES*

It is 1952, I am standing in Dennis Robertson's rooms in the Great Court of Trinity at the Monday evening meeting of the Political Economy meeting to read my paper on Sterling Balances, a subject that even Keynes' resolve failed before its complexity. A large kettle was boiled to make tea, lots were drawn and undergraduates had to comment. Looking back, little did we realise that the problem of the Sterling Balances was an Empire about to unwind.

I came to the Economics Faculty from a short start in Agriculture to prepare for the Colonial Service. It was a stunning experience that has formed a thread throughout my diverse life. Kenneth Berrill was my outstanding supervisor, 'Don't attend too many lectures but Kahn, Kaldor, Robertson, the two Robinsons, Dennison are essential'

So I entered that remarkable intellectual crucible with Dons of whom many went out and advised governments on the path to economic development and avoidance of the social horrors of the great depression.

Of course, lecturers lectured and students attended. Joan Robinson, however, broke the taboo with words to the effect that 'I suppose you have been listening to Robertson's monetarist rubbish,' and then asked a question; no answer, 'Are there no thought processes going on?' she demanded.

As Secretary of the Marshall Society I organised a visit of the Dockers Union Leaders; then it seemed a radical step.

From Cambridge to Courtaulds [then a great and respected company] to work first in the Economics Department. I recall working on a major study on where the textile industry would be in 20 years time. Looking back at the decline of U.K. manufacturing industry, how rarely are future projections correct. The rigour of the work consolidated my analytical approach as I gained wider and greater responsibility.

Later I was invited to chair the Economics and Finance committee of the C.B.I. when the Chancellor Nigel Lawson was informed that the C.B.I., on balance, supported the entry into the E.M.S.; was it really a mistake? Perhaps it has made for greater caution on an early entry into the Euro system.

Serving on the Executive Committee of the National Institute of Economics and Social Research, I promoted the importance of a radical reform of our educational system both to improve national wealth creation and to reduce social divisions.

Industrial life brought close involvement in former colonies such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Zambia, and here was scope to make some contribution to the economic development through effective training, management and technology.

At the end of my industrial career I became a project sponsor of the agricultural phase of the Libyan Great Man Made River, one of the largest civil engineering project in the world, recalling the great historic irrigation projects of the Romans and the Arabs. In this task I was in contact with some of the leading agriculture economists.

So there are some of the linkages to my Tripas. I am profoundly grateful to the Faculty.

Looking to the next 100 years of the Faculty, I would wish it to continue to be an international centre of excellence, which treated economics as a tool to be used in a multi-disciplinary manner with an underlying social purpose.

I am very sorry not to be able to attend the conference and wish it great success. I shall be pleased to have a copy of the proceedings.

*RONALD SOMERVILLE*

## **The Sixties**

I came to the Economics Tripos for Part 2, switching from Part 1 Natural Science, and since I tried to combine a new and difficult subject with politics, the Union and an emotionally turbulent love life I was rather relieved to come away with a 2.1.

There was a strong sense in the mid 1960's that the Cambridge Faculty was the centre of the economic universe. I felt rather awed to be lectured by Joan Robinson and Professor Kahn, who had worked with Keynes, and to be regaled by their acolytes with gossipy stories about the relationship between Keynes and the two Robinsons - together with other venerable greats like Maurice Dobb who taught a course in Russian economic history.

The Faculty exuded intellectual self confidence and also political importance derived from the fact that some of the lecturers had been co-opted into the higher reaches of the Wilson government. Nicholas Kaldor was a household name. Dr Posner was not but he had a fine sense of drama and would rush into the lecture hall dabbing himself with a handkerchief as he recovered from a hurried train journey from the heart of government.

The Keynesian tradition, and also socialist economics, seemingly died in the 1990's and Cambridge's reputation declined with them. But the, then, less celebrated work on applied economics has flourished and those less charismatic figures whose courses I attended left me with insights of lasting value: Brian Reddaway, Hans Liesner, Aubrey Silberston and Geoff Whittington (whose tutorials saved me from ignominy in Prelims.).

Less easily pigeon-holed were some young lecturers whom I recall as outstanding - Chris Bliss and Charles Goodhart - and who made their mark a generation later on the MPC, and Robin Matthews who was a brilliant lecturer and made sense of macroeconomics.

And perhaps for me, the dominant influence was James Meade. He could be pedantic and fussy and his theory lectures weren't exactly thrill-a-minute. But his clarity of thought, careful reasoning and unpretentiousness left an abiding impression. His deceptively simple "The Intelligent Radical's Guide to Economic Policy" is perfectly tailored for a modern liberal politician/economist - that I subsequently became.

*VINCENT CABLE*

## **A memory of the Economics Tripos at Cambridge**

My abiding recollection of the economics tripos at Cambridge is having supervisions with Joan Robinson in my final year. My encounters with this formidable woman had a special twist. My supervision partner, Richard Loftus, proposed to "Joanie", as he persisted in referring to her, that we have our weekly meetings over dinner in a restaurant in one of the villages around Cambridge. That way, he reasoned, we could triple our time with the great woman, having an hour or so over drinks, another hour over dinner and an hour over coffee afterwards. She fell in with this plan and we agreed that we would pick her up in his car each Tuesday evening from her home at 62 Grange Road.

She probably did not realise that the car in question was a Sunbeam Alpine, large enough for two, but only capable of accommodating a third on the knee of the passenger, and in intimate proximity, to boot. You have to have known Joan Robinson to appreciate the incongruity of the situation. I remember driving away on the evening of our first supervision with a deeply

suspicious Richard Kahn observing us from the doorway of the house (Austin Robinson was nowhere to be seen).

In any event, the supervisions were every bit as good as we had anticipated, and Joan held forth at length on every aspect of the discipline, with particular emphasis on the errors and failings of most of the false gods (usually American) of the subject. I especially remember one occasion when the topic for the week was welfare economics. I had crafted, I thought, a particularly well-reasoned essay, based largely on Graaff's book on the subject. I launched into a description of what I had written, only to perceive a deepening frown on Joan's face. My voice trailed away, and when I finally fell silent, she announced, to no-one in particular: "Welfare economics is porridge!" In case she had not been heard, she said again, more loudly: "Porridge, I tell you". By this time, the other diners were beginning to take note. Then she repeated, this time in her loudest and shrillest voice: "PORRIDGE!!!".

A waiter hurried over to ascertain what might be at fault with the meal, and Loftus and I hurriedly asked for the bill. I reread some welfare economics texts the following week, and I think I see what she means, even though I find more in the subject than she apparently did. (Incidentally, I believe she liked and admired Jan Graaff.)

Joan Robinson was a strong personality and I learned a lot from her. But I am always grateful that I had an antidote in Richard Loftus. Thinking back, I can see he was an archetypal Chicago economist, at a time when I did not have much, or any, idea what that meant. His views probably gave Joan apoplexy, but one thing you could say for her was that she loved an argument. Richard Loftus certainly gave her one, in about twelve different restaurants, by my count.

*ANDREW CROCKETT*

I was one of the few of my generation who had taken Economics A Level which gave me an advantage - it wasn't fashionable in the 1960s; but I read History Part I, changing to Economics Part II, both as I wanted to spend four years at Cambridge and the combination of the two represented Cambridge's answer to PPE! In the event I was thwarted, as I had the good fortune to be selected as the Power Scholar to the University of Michelin (an exchange scholarship with Magdalene) in March 1969, which I had to take up in Autumn 1969. This left me three months to do most of the work for the Economics Part II Tripos.

In my last year at Cambridge 1968/69 I was Chairman of Cambridge University Conservative Association and boosted its membership to over 2,000. We also had the distraction of a "sit in" at the Old Schools, in response to which we organised a massive counter demonstration. Enoch Powell was my lead CUCA speaker - speaking against Prices and Incomes Policies- but at the height of the "river of blood" controversy, as a result of which I spent hours with the police organising plans for of getting him in and out of the Union safely. The result of all this was there was little time for work between October 1968 and January 1969!

I made up for the lectures I failed to attend by working between midnight and 3 a.m. in the morning - a habit which stays with me! I confess the part of the Tripos I enjoyed the most was Russian Economic History, 1850 to 1914, where I was supervised by Clive Trebilcock. There was much to learn from what happened in Russia in the 50 years up to 1914, as well as in the rest of the world - which led me to predict disinflation and even the prospect of deflation being a major result of a return to a more open global market in the late 20th century.

My era was still dominated by Professors Joan Robinson and Lord Kahn. No-one appeared to have heard of Schumpeter or Hayek! I remember particularly studying growth theories - working population growth plus rate of technological advance - largely explaining why Continental Europe grew faster than the UK in the 1950s and 1960s, with a large growth in the industrial and urban labour force freed up from people leaving the land.

I had a marvellous Director of Studies, Brian Deakin, in Magdalene. We always had powerful economic debate at supervisions - even when my essays were not up to scratch. I recollect being advised the results of my 4 Tripos papers were strangely varied, with a 1st in one and a 3rd in another, and disappointingly a 2.2 in Russian Economic History: I always suspected the examiners did not like my political stance here!

I went on to study Schumpeter and Hayek at the University of Michigan as part of my two year MBA programme where I also specialised in exchange rates and international finance. In due course in my Guinness Flight commercial career this led me to set up the first managed currency fund and to have had a strong edge over competitors in understanding both what was happening on the exchange rate scene post 1979 and the forces driving exchange rate movements.

From my Cambridge economics I always believed monetarists were mistaken, and that by and large the demand for money determined the MV supplies and that the money and inflation relationship was dramatically different in a closed economy versus an open, global free market.

My real love remains for economic history from which I still believe a great deal relevant today can be understood; and where I view it as great sadness that it has fallen away as an academic subject.

### *HOWARD FLIGHT*

I was a terrible student. The unanswered question is whether this was just me, or whether the teaching had something to do with it. As a freshman in 1965 I turned up bright-eyed and bushy-tailed to all the lectures on offer. Some were wonderful, and I particularly recall Noel Annan and Denis Brogan on politics, but most of the serious economic lectures were not well prepared and were worse delivered. Furthermore, to someone who already had some experience of the commercial world, the economics taught seemed to bear a scant resemblance to the world as it was. Perhaps this was because the Faculty was dominated by the academic left, exemplified by Joan Robinson in her Viet-cong trousers and sandals. But it was a great disappointment to find the lectures of the Lords Kaldor and Kahn to be so unengaging.

Part I was bearable. It was new and, with politics and economic history included, just about maintained interest.

The second year was the low point. We began to study steady-state and closed economies, with some econometrics thrown in. This combination seemed so removed from the world I knew that I soon began to avoid lectures, concentrating instead on my burgeoning career as a member of the ADC, Marlowe Society and the Footlights. I became a stranger to Sidgwick Avenue.

By the end of my third year, I was painfully aware of my shortcomings. The nadir came at a supervision with Alistair Sutherland at Trinity, when he asked me to define value-added and I went into waffle-mode. I realised that some serious work needed to be done, even at that late stage. I think Alistair was astonished that I managed to achieve a III. Indeed, when I joined the Finance Committee of Trinity some years ago, it is reported that he commented 'I hear he has come on a bit'.

While I don't regret the time I spent not doing economics, I believe that I could now benefit from the course. It is a little late. As a result, I have always been very careful never to describe myself as an economist. That would be a breach of the Trade Descriptions Act. It may even be stretching a point to say that I read Economics.

*ALASTAIR ROSS GOOBEY*

As one who has made a most enjoyable career out of economic commentary, I feel that it is time to own up that I approached the subject, and the Tripos, with mixed motives. I was a classicist at school, but after two years' National Service and a year's teaching, I could not face translating Homeric texts. Alan Ker, my moral tutor at Trinity was most understanding about the fact that I abandoned my strong suit - Ancient History. A brief flirtation with the thought of Law was brought to an end by Glanville Williams' observation, half way through his "Learning The Law", that, if the reader was already bored, he certainly should not contemplate reading Law.

Rightly or wrongly, I did not want to ruin my love of English literature by reading it. Attendance at one Leavis lecture strengthened the case. From an early age I had been fascinated by politics. I also knew that I wanted to go into journalism. Economics seemed to crop up an awful lot in the political debate. So I decided to read Economics in order to understand what I read in the newspapers.

Happy Days! I had the good fortune to number among my supervisors Amartya Sen, Frank Hahn and Maurice Dobb. Dobb was the great expert on, and admirer of, Stalinist economics. He dispensed fine claret and was rumoured to live on an uncollective farm outside Cambridge. His supervisions were civilised and no attempts were made at recruiting one to serve a foreign power. But, my goodness, when the Soviet Union collapsed thirty years later one wondered about the great man's admiration for various plans.

All these supervisors were inspiring. Many years later, during the depths of monetarism, I encountered Frank Hahn, who had understandably forgotten that we had met before. 'You write sensible stuff' he said. I could not resist replying: 'I ought to. You taught me.' Forty years on, Amartya Sen, by now Master of Trinity, recalled that I had struck him 'as a pupil always suspicious of economics.' I may have been, but I have no regrets at having been at Cambridge during the heyday of Keynesian economics.

*WILLIAM KEEGAN*

Sadly I was never a mathematical economist. I applied to Christ's College Cambridge because I thought, mistakenly, that I would be taught by James Meade and Alan Prest. Needless to say, neither of them ever tutored me and I was assigned to Christopher Bliss - a highly

mathematical economist. As I did not even know calculus and did not progress beyond ordinary level maths - not even to AO level maths - I was well and truly stuck.

I always remember Joan Robinson dressed in her Chinese commune garb. Many of us were concerned as to whether she would make it or not across the blackboard, as her writing started very big and became more minute as she stretched across the blackboard. I also remember the canteen at the Sidgwick Site being rather poor, except for highly buttered rolls. On a more positive note, I have to confess that Robin Marris's book, "The Theory of Managerial Capitalism", made a great impact on me. I enjoyed it enormously and can still remember sections. I also remember my economic history tutor who was not a full professor, but thought he should have been, so as a result was extremely frustrated. At every tutorial each student was stopped at the end of his first three or four words of an essay. As a result nobody ever wrote a complete essay, but stopped at the end of the first sentence - that's it.

*MARTIN SORRELL*

It was unusual to switch from Part I in Classics to Part II Economics - Part I was fine, Part II was judged a stretch. I had to stay up for the long vacation and sit a paper by Luigi Pasinetti ... such was the dictum from the senior tutor at King's College, John Broadbent.

I stayed up, played a lot, worked a little and waited anxiously for the paper. None came! A certain amount of awkward shuffling of feet when it emerged that the aforesaid Pasinetti was not due to be in Cambridge for a few weeks. I was allowed to do the course ... probably wrongly!

From then on I have a blurred memory of absent supervisors. In the glory days of the first Wilson Government, Messrs. Berrill, Marris, Kaldor, Uncle Tom Cobbley and all were in London all the time ... essays were done in absentia ... not sure how much supervising or teaching went on but there was a vicarious excitement in being linked to the white heat of the Wilson revolution.

Curiously, Luigi Pasinetti was the most constant presence ... and in the nicest way a highly demoralising one. Nothing worse than doing the reading, bashing your head against a tricky essay knowing you have not quite licked it to sit down in front of him and have this brilliantly clear mind say "Well it is really very straightforward, there are three points ..." and feel like a complete fool for not having seen something so clearly.

My best experience of writing an essay in absentia, however, was when one (c. 25) Beatle look-alike, Bob Rowthorne, arrived ... the essay was set before we had met analysing the failures in the UK economy in the last 100 years. My supervising partner and I laboured, we produced. He swept in the supervision, threw the essays down and said "What are the two major mistakes made by Labour in the UK in the last 100 years?" My supervising partner and I fumbled around with botched answers. I cannot remember Bob's first mistake - something in the mid-nineteenth century. The second, however, was the failure of the Attlee Government to arm the troops and take over the commanding heights. Then ensued the most seriously stimulating teaching I had at College. I do not suppose he would teach in the same way today and I imagine if he did he would be thrown out. And that would be wrong.

Talking about being thrown out, I do remember a young American research student, I think by name of Ed Hopper, trying to stimulate American-style participative responses out of his leaden British undergraduates during his lecture. We were too British and po-faced. One day we arrived to find a gown over the lectern; when the gown was stripped away there was an instruction to switch on the tape-recorder. On the tape-recorder Ed Hopper had recorded

his lecture. I cannot remember whether he had got sacked but he was hauled over the coals, etc. etc. I do hope the Faculty has improved since.

Do I see a linkage between the Economics degree I did and my subsequent career? No. Everyone was passionate about macro-economics and so was I. It was the only bit I could understand because I could not do micro-economics. However, as the years went on I think I realised it was a con and an over-simplification of real life ... However, the process of thinking that through helped me understand the limitations on the one hand of model-building and the huge importance of psychology and human expectations on the other. As a by-blow, I bear the “chip” on my shoulder that it really was very difficult to be good at certain aspects of Economics without having studied Mathematics ... and I do not remember anyone telling me this or suggesting that I improve my Mathematics. I hope things have changed today.

*DENNIS STEVENSON*

## The Seventies

May You Live in Interesting Times : Tripos Teaching 1969-73

'May you live in interesting times' runs the ancient Chinese curse. If it was placed on me when I arrived in the Department of Applied Economics in 1969, it certainly worked. Recent and current events are the applied economist's stock-in-trade for teaching and research.

In 1969, the UK unemployment rate was 2.4 per cent, representing 500 thousand people registered as without jobs. This was considered high by the standards of the time. Unemployment had risen as the pace of economic activity had reduced. The slowdown was the result of deflationary fiscal and monetary measures taken to offset increasing inflationary pressure in the wake of the £'s devaluation in 1967. This had been forced by the flight of financial capital in the face of a growing balance of payments deficit. Devaluation and the growth slowdown was a severe setback to the Labour government that had come to office on the strength of a manifesto promising that planning would put an end to 'stop-go' cycles of activity.

But by the middle of the year there were signs of recovery. Economic growth was improving towards an annual rate of two per cent, while the balance of payments, benefiting at last from the effects of devaluation, was moving into surplus. Price inflation was at five per cent, and rising.

By the end of my time in Cambridge, Britain had at last joined the (then) European Economic Community and had decimalised its currency. Economic growth was at five per cent, helping unemployment to fall from a peak of more than one million. But prices were rising at 12 per cent a year, a rate that was to more than double over the next two years. The economy was in the throes of an inflationary boom that would end the following year amid the trauma of the miners' strike and the first oil shock. In a vain effort to bring inflation under control, Edward Heath's Conservative government had introduced an incomes policy, voluntary at first but soon to be given the force of law, intended to break the wage-price spiral.

In between the swing from recession to unsustainable boom, the Wilson government achieved a budget surplus in 1969/70, a feat not to be repeated for almost twenty years. Soon after, the government fell from office, brought down mainly by the recession, rising unemployment and opposition to industrial relations reform. The in-coming Conservative government won the election on a platform of reduced government intervention, increased self-reliance and the need for greater efficiency in public management, but without embracing fully the market economy. That was to come later. But policy was soon overwhelmed by events. Companies thought to be strategically important, in particular Rolls Royce and Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, faced bankruptcy, while unemployment continued to rise against the background of persistently slow economic growth. The government's response was a dash for growth, coupled with renewed intervention in the economy.

Puzzlement about the causes and consequences of Britain's economic performance underlay much of the teaching for the industrial organization, international and applied macro parts of the Economics Tripos. The issues also stimulated and informed the DAE's research programme. From my own perspective, a recurrent subject for supervision discussions, then as now, was the causes of Britain's slow rate of growth of productivity and, hence, output. Among others, George (1966, 1968) and Deakin and Seward (1969) had looked at the influences on productivity in the services sector of the economy. Reddaway (1973) and his team were finishing their study of the impact of the selective employment tax (SET). This tax was in essence Kaldor's creature (see Blackaby 1978) that was intended both to raise revenue

from general taxation and to boost productivity and growth in manufacturing, the sector that was seen by many as the prime source of economies of scale and international competitiveness. Cripps and Tarling (1973), in an early quest for the triggers of endogenous growth, made cross-national comparisons of advanced market-led economies.

Questions about growth and the twin problems of the balance of payments and inflation featured regularly in examination papers. Measures to stimulate growth seemed to lead inevitably to a balance of payments deficit, to pressure on the currency, and to rising inflation. Godley's arrival from the Treasury taught us about sector balances and their interdependence, at the same time raising doubts about whether, given exports' lack of competitiveness, the economy could reach external equilibrium at full employment.

The Phillips Curve, tying the rate of wage inflation to the state of the labour market as indicated by the rate of unemployment, came under increasing scrutiny. Accelerating price inflation seemed to be largely insensitive to variations in the unemployment rate over a wide range. Stagflation, the conjunction of rising inflation with increasing unemployment, focused both political and research attention on the part played by trade unions in wage settlements (Jackson et al. 1972).

All of these issues came together in the vigorous debate about Britain's application for membership of the EEC. Would access to the European market stimulate growth and increase jobs, or expose the economy's structural inefficiencies? Liesner and Han (1971) looked at the implications for Britain. Pratten (1971) showed the importance for efficiency of economies of scale in manufacturing, laying the basis for my own work on the association between international differences in industrial structure and variations in performance (Cockerill 1974). At corporate level, Whittington (1971) was looking at influences on company profitability, while Singh (1971) was identifying the elements in monopolistic competition that encouraged mergers and takeovers.

So much for the basis of my teaching. I also learnt a lot, in particular:

- a) Always to work from first principles, remembering that this requires a thorough grasp of those principles (Brian Reddaway).
- b) How to carry out evidence-based research in industrial organization (Cliff Pratten).
- c) How to be a Director of Studies in Economics (Brian Deakin)
- d) How to build an econometric model of the economy (Terry Barker)
- e) How working in the DAE can at times be hilarious (Frank Wilkinson).

To all of them, to my other former colleagues and students, and to the Faculty of Economics and Politics, my sincere thanks and best wishes for the next hundred years of the Tripos.

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### *TONY COCKERILL*

One of my most searing memories of the tripos was sitting the Part II examinations in 1972. About 90 minutes into the first paper, I was perched rather precariously on a rickety wood and metal desk, desperately trying to write as much as I could remember about liquidity preference, sweat pouring from every possible source, when I noticed a man dressed in purple calmly stand up, fold his papers and walk out of the room. Since the exam was only about half over, I assumed that he had not been able to answer the four questions required in the three hours allotted. I later rushed back to my last minute revision at St John's, only to see the same man enjoying a leisurely pint in the JCR - accompanied, as he was for the rest of the day, by his usual coterie of female admirers. There was no sign of any revision, or indeed studying of any kind. The next morning, the same thing happened, except this time he left after about an hour and a quarter, looking vaguely bored. And so on for the rest of the tripos. The man was David Begg, now a

distinguished Professor of Economics, and already in 1972 a student who could achieve more than anyone else in Cambridge, and in half the time. I need hardly add that he won a brilliant double first.

*GAVYN DAVIES*

## **Thirties alumni on subsequent encounters with the Faculty**

Cambridge Economists at Odds:  
The Council for Prices, Productivity and Incomes

In August 1957, while I was on a camping holiday in Wales, I was tracked down by the Treasury Establishment Officer and offered the job of Secretary to a body newly created, the Council on Prices, Productivity and Incomes (COPPI), or the Three Wise Men. I accepted and served COPPI for twelve months, sharing in the drafting of its first and second reports (February and August 1958).

The background to the creation of COPPI was concern about the continuance of inflation. It had averaged 4%-5% yearly since the end of the war, and this was quite exceptional for peacetime. The anxiety was not new, it had already existed in the time of Cripps, but at that time there was plainly excess demand ('too much money chasing too few goods') manifested in shortages and the necessity to maintain rationing. By 1957, many observers would have said there was no excess demand: so why did inflation continue? The idea arose that there was a source of inflation independent of the pressure of demand, an idea labelled as 'cost inflation'. That inflation could come from outside via import prices was familiar and widely accepted: the idea that it could also come from wages was not new (it had surfaced in 1948-49 and generated the Cripps Wages Policy). By 1957 some were beginning to think that it was the only kind of inflation we had, which no one had believed in 1948.

The terms of reference of COPPI were 'having regard to the desirability of full employment and increasing standards of life based on expanding production and reasonable stability of prices, to keep under review changes in prices, productivity and the level of incomes (including wages, salaries and profits) and to report thereon from time to time'. This is very open and gives no clear hint to the Council what its role should be. I was not in the Treasury in 1957, and have no doubt that different people from the Prime Minister (MacMillan) and Chancellor (Thorneycroft) downwards had different ideas about what COPPI could usefully try to do. I am sure that Robert Hall (the Treasury Chief Economist) and Matthew Stevenson (the Treasury Under Secretary handling the administrative side of anti-inflation policy) would have liked COPPI to espouse some kind of 'incomes policy' and unveil a 'guiding light' or target for wage increases.

If the government did want a guiding light unveiled, they did not choose their men well. The three were Lord Cohen, Dennis Robertson and Sir Harold Howitt. Lord Cohen was a distinguished lawyer, a clever, likeable, open-minded man, but self-confessedly no economist. He was not able— even if he had wished— to stand up against an able economist whom he knew, liked and trusted. Dennis Robertson was a greatly respected Cambridge economist, a gentle and shy man, intellectually very independent and even a bit stubborn. He had a gift for prose exposition and a good sense of humour: he was enjoyable to work with even when you disagreed with him. He believed that inflation was essentially demand inflation. Sir Harold Howitt was a pillar of the accounting profession (and a hero of the First World War). He contributed nothing, but at least he did not get in the way.

I was the Secretary; my Assistant Secretary was Frank Blackaby from the Treasury Information Division, afterwards in the National Institute. He had a gift for simple exposition of economic argument, including tables and charts. We agreed generally (and as I shall say, disagreed with Dennis Robertson). COPPI started work in August 1957 and published its first and most famous, or notorious, report in February 1958. In the early stages of this period there was an exchange crisis— a drain on the reserves, pressure on the pound, responded to by the Government's 'September measures'— fiscal and monetary deflation. These events were, so to speak, 'noises off' from COPPI's point of view. The Council did not take evidence in

public but invited along for talks the representatives of the principal institutions involved in the making of macro-economic policy [the Treasury, the Ministry of Labour, the Board of Trade, the Bank of England, the employers (the Federation of British Industry, etc) and last but not least the Economic Committee of the Trades Union Congress (TUC)]. For me—observer, note-taker and minute writer— all these sessions formed a wonderful education— what a privilege! A number of economists submitted memoranda, some of which were published independently later. A few individual people came and talked, including Lionel Robbins from the LSE.

The Council's report was essentially Dennis Robertson's work in its ideas and, indeed, in its drafting. Dennis had already written and published a paper in which he had argued that the major obstacles to stability of prices were the monopolistic powers of Trade Unions and the 'full employment pledge'. The attainment of this pledge might not in all circumstances be the absolute overriding aim of policy. 'I am far from desiring that this most sacred of all the cows should be led out relentlessly to sacrifice

'Lowing at the skies

And all her silken flanks with garlands drest'

That, I still fear, is what in the end may happen unless she learns not to try to jump over the moon'. I have to admit that this was prescient.

I as Secretary was permitted, indeed encouraged, to put forward an alternative view. I urged that in recommending policies to stop the inflation, the Council should put some of its weight behind those which operate by influencing the working of collective bargaining about wages. I proposed there should be a recommended average level of wage increase, say 3%. The Council was not convinced.

The main points made in their report were as follows.

- (1) The main cause of the inflation of 1946-57 had been an abnormally high level of demand for goods and services, maintained for an abnormally long period, this being assisted by the elasticity of the money supply and the full employment commitment.
- (2) The objective of policy should be to stop the inflation, not merely to moderate its course.
- (3) The 'September measures' were fully justified and urgently required.
- (4) A policy of damping down demand must be expected to lead to a rise of unemployment. This had already started, and 'no-one should be surprised or shocked if it proves necessary that it should go somewhat further'.
- (5) Because of inbuilt habits (of the Trade Unions) there was the possibility of a 'cost inflation' once demand inflation had ceased to be the main problem.
- (6) The proposal to have a guiding light was criticised on practical grounds— what was intended to be an average would tend to become a minimum (and it was bad to rule out falling prices).
- (7) 'We would hope that if any wage increases are granted in 1958, they will be substantially below the average of the last few years' (this was the closest the Council came to offering a 'guiding light').

The report was much criticised, especially its cool acceptance of a further increase in unemployment. The TUC were very much annoyed and said they would not talk to the Council again. The Treasury officials were, I am sure, disappointed. By a strange coincidence the date of publication of the COPPI report coincided with the date of an internal report which recommended the proclamation of a 'guiding light'.

I was not at all happy with the report, and nearly resigned but was persuaded to stay on until the autumn of 1958. In the summer months a second report was written; it was published in August. It was much less provocative than the first and therefore received less attention. It

was dominated much less by inflation and much more by the mild recession which had developed since October 1957. Paradoxically, prices were almost stable in 1958!

Dennis Robertson got a statement into the report saying that the policies of damping down demand (i.e., the September measures) had worked to an extent that fully justified their adoption and... 'while it is right that policy should aim at an expansion of demand, it must proceed gradually and with caution to that end'.

The Government had wanted a council which would address some strong words of advice to the community generally and above all to the Trade Unions. It got one whose strong advice (in the first and most important report) was mainly addressed to the Government itself. The Government inhibited their own objective by appointing Dennis Robertson to the Council. Why they did this is a mystery, given the statements he had already made.

Looking back now, I have a little more sympathy with Dennis, but not much. 1.6% was certainly a very low level of unemployment and it was not terrible to envisage calmly its going a bit higher. But I think an opportunity was missed. A report which had made much more of the great social advantages of full employment, made the case for a downward pressure on pay increases, offered a guiding light of 2½% to 3%, and left out all the unnecessarily provocative language, could have done some real good and given the Council a chance of a more productive life. In other words, I think it is a pity the Council did not take my advice.

The Council did in fact survive until 1961; Dennis resigned and with a different economist there was an evolution in its published views. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Reports the existence of cost inflation was recognised; removing excess demand was 'not enough'; some means of influencing directly the scale of wage increases was needed.

I am still very grateful to COPPPI for the education I received in the views and attitudes of the main institutions acting in the macro-economic scene and the characters of their leaders.

*BRIAN HOPKIN*

The only vivid recollection - concerning Professor Guillebaud - was that in 1965 - nobody knows why, I was appointed to be a member of the National Board for Prices and Incomes (this was at the start, a Royal Commission) I think the Federation of British Industry pushed me on!!?

During its first year it had a reference concerning some Industry's wages - and to my surprise, Guillebaud came as a witness. (I left Cambridge in 1939 to play some part in World War II!). I think he recognised me. I am sure he made a good impression - he was a splendid Professor - I tried to pull his leg about supply and demand. He used the phrase "Ceteris Paribus" and I suggested they were never "paribus" - and he didn't treat me as an economic success!!!! - quite rightly!

*PETER TRENCH*