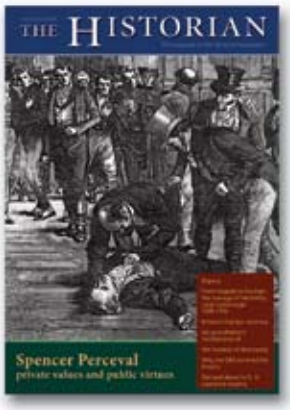
Number 98 | Summer 2008

THE HISTORIAN

The magazine of The Historical Association



Assassination of Spencer Perceval

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The Historical Association
The voice for history

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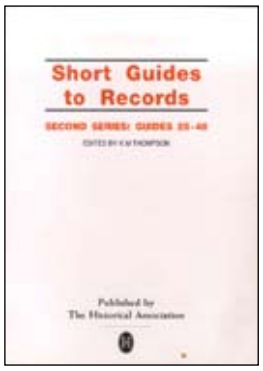

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Day Four: Morning visit to Rouen to see the cathedral, old market square, Palais de Justice, and the Church of St.Maclou. Continuing in the afternoon to Honfleur and Harfleur. Return to the hotel for dinner.

Day Five: Check out of the hotel and return to the Eurotunnel via the Chateau d'Eu. After a late afternoon crossing return to London in the early evening.

There is a tour planned to Cheshire from 3rd – 10th June 2009, If you would like further details please e-mail: kathleen_morris3@hotmail.com

editorial

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A short while ago I travelled to Happisburgh to observe at first-hand the effects of present-day coast erosion. The dramatic retreat of the coast-line can be interpreted in different ways but it is a reality for the people who live there and in the surrounding area. For me this natural phenomenon at Happisburgh is also a confirmation that history is a process that we experience as well as being something that we analyse and record. The huge parish church at Happisburgh reveals that local experience must have been very different in medieval times when optimism and prosperity led to its construction. For me an important question is *how* the people of the past or present, in Happisburgh or elsewhere, experience the process of history in their time and place and what that means for us in contemporary society.

What follows from this is how we encourage such an understanding in the wider community. As the Historical Association has a very strong commitment to the teaching and learning of history, I would like to share with you what I saw, and enjoyed, on a recent visit to Warren Wood Primary School in Stockport. Last autumn the Year 5 and 6 pupils at this school participated in a cross-curricular initiative, entitled 'Out of Africa', to support Black History Month. In the course of their studies a great deal of empathy was aroused as they explored the experiences, including the very harrowing ones, of the black population of Africa and what happened to them on their way to, and in, America. Important historical figures had been encountered – such as Martin Luther King, Harriet Tubman and Nelson Mandela – and crucial events on the pathway to civil rights had been studied in depths. The history was studied amidst a wider curricular context of geographical awareness, the use of appropriate artistic skills, the poetry of Benjamin Zephaniah and highly imaginative creative writing. Other inputs had been from visitors who shared their own experiences of Africa, the use of appropriate African artefacts and a visit to the Slavery Museum at Liverpool. The quality of this learning was extraordinarily high and these girls and boys were being carefully prepared to take their places in a world where they will know *how* to understand the process of history.

Within this edition of *The Historian* you will find a report on another approach to promoting the historical understanding of primary-aged pupils, this time through activity-based learning at Tutbury Castle in Staffordshire. Again, the young people who experience such learning will carry the skills of observation and empathy learned during such activities into their adult lives.

Because this edition is due to appear in the weeks approaching the forthcoming Beijing Olympic Games, we have slipped in a topical item to provide some British background to the modern Olympic Movement! I do also wish most warmly to thank our other contributors who have offered their expertise to this magazine. Hugh Gault has contributed a very significant re-evaluation of the importance of Spencer Perceval and, from my personal point of view, has fully explained his position in the evolution of the British political system from Pitt the Younger to Sir Robert Peel. Arnold Harvey's highly original exploration of archival sources has led him to examine the changing attitudes to, and scale of, bigamy as a social phenomenon. Audrey Duggan has explored the emotional turmoil of a thoughtful and intelligent woman in eighteenth century Britain. Trevor Osgerby has taken us 'out and about' in D. H. Lawrence Country in manner which will encourage us to follow him. Finally Daisy Black's item is a very highly celebrated winning entry from last year's Young Historian Awards. Collectively they do not point to a theme but they do have a common agenda: they represent and reflect the interests of Historical Association members.

Because *The Historian* is a members' magazine and, therefore, in effect circulates privately, it is the intention of the present editor that we should continue to seek articles and materials which are out of the ordinary, and unlikely to appear in the columns of the commercial magazines with whom we are regularly compared. I hope that the present edition comes close to fulfilling that objective. Please do write in with your letters and comments because that will enable us to develop *The Historian* from being a magazine *for* members to a magazine which is 'owned' by, and reflective of, the wider membership of the Historical Association.

Trevor James

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Incorporated by Royal Charter
Registered charity 1120261

Originated and published by The Historical Association and printed in Great Britain by Blackmore Limited, Longmead, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 8PX

ISSN 0265-1076

Spencer Perceval

private values and public virtues

Hugh Gault

The public man and his career

Spencer Perceval's career as a public figure lasted from 1796 when he became a King's Counsel and MP for Northampton until his murder sixteen years later at the age of 49. He was shot in the lobby of the House of Commons at 5.15pm on Monday 11 May 1812. He is the only British Prime Minister to have been assassinated.

Perceval had become Prime Minister two and a half years earlier at the age of 46. This made him older than Tony Blair and William Pitt on becoming Prime Minister, but much younger than most who have held this office before or since. Like Pitt, he had already been Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons.

Perceval's initial career was as a lawyer. His income from private practice kept slightly ahead of the expenses of his growing family. He was first widely noticed as a junior prosecuting counsel for the government in the trials of Thomas Paine and Horne Tooke in 1792 and 1794 respectively. As the French Revolution became bloodier, and Britain turned against it, Perceval subsequently led a further prosecution of Paine on behalf of the government.

Perceval joined the government in 1801 as Solicitor General. The following year Addington promoted him to Attorney General, the government's senior law officer. He retained this position when Pitt returned to government in 1804. After Pitt's death in January 1806, Perceval and other Pitt supporters refused to join Grenville's government, not least because they would not serve in a Cabinet that included Fox as Foreign Secretary.

George III ensured that Grenville's government was soon replaced in 1807 when it sought army commissions for Catholics. This remained an issue of conscience for the King, but it also provided the opportunity to remove them that he had been waiting for. The excluded Pittites, such as Canning, Castlereagh, Liverpool and Perceval, returned to government in an administration ostensibly led by Portland. Perceval was both Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House.

Perceval was a staunch opponent of Catholic emancipation (in line with George III's position rather than Pitt's). Irish and Catholic issues proved particularly troublesome for Portland's government in early 1808, with a split between the Perceval protestants (supported by George III) and moderates such as Canning and Castlereagh. Hinde says that 'Perceval, who usually showed such moderation and good sense, could only see the intractable and explosive affairs of Ireland through an opaque haze of religious bigotry.'[1] The Maynooth issue in April 1808 reduced the government's majority twice, partly because of Perceval's opposition to any increase in grant to the Catholic seminary.

Perceval was aware that the Curwen Act in June 1809, preventing the sale of seats in parliament, would eventually lead to constituency and electoral changes and, ultimately, the reform of Parliament itself. The Bill was supported in committee by Charles Abbot, the Speaker of the House of Commons. Nevertheless, Perceval made sure that it was heavily amended. In particular, he insisted that the words 'or implied' were removed from the phrase prohibiting contracts for money 'express or implied'. This ensured that government patronage through payments in kind, rather than cash, could continue. Perceval recognised that the time for change was fast approaching and saw his role as ensuring this happened gradually. It might be argued that he was prepared for reform, but not for revolution.

William Cobbett objected to the army's reaction to an alleged 'mutiny' by soldiers at Ely in 1809. Cobbett abhorred the use of flogging by the army and publicly condemned the 500 lashes each soldier received as barbaric as well as undeserved. This was a challenge too far and Ingrams[2] says it gave Perceval the opportunity he had been looking for to prosecute Cobbett. He served his sentence in Newgate prison, and Cobbett was there long enough to see Perceval's murderer led to his execution in May 1812.

Perceval formally became Prime Minister in October 1809 on Portland's demise, though effectively he had been the leader of the government for some time. Canning and Castlereagh were out of the running after the duel that had led to their resignations, and in addition Canning had alienated the King. Perceval became Prime Minister

mainly because George III thought him principled, their views on Catholic emancipation were the same, and, most importantly, he was neither Canning nor a Whig.

Perceval led a government that proved to be an improvement on preceding ones – despite its unpromising start. Hilton says that his 'administration … was probably unparalleled for mediocrity and inexperience'.[3] According to Watson, 'If any other administration could have been invented, that of Perceval would not have existed'.[4] This seems somewhat harsh, but makes the point. Thorne says that 'An administration which had only two cabinet ministers in the Commons seemed to lack weight and was not expected to last; but the King backed Perceval and he was at least an effective head of government.'[5] With these beginnings, subsequent successes are all the more remarkable.

Perceval re-introduced Pitt's Regency Bill after George III lost his sanity again in 1810. Initially, this restricted the Prince Regent's powers and limited them to twelve months in the expectation that George III might recover. When this hope was not realised, the regency was confirmed in February 1812.

Perceval had stood firm in the face of agitation for rapid and far-reaching reform by Burdett and others in 1810 and had survived a number of defeats in the House of Commons. His growing political skills and pre-eminence in Parliament in 1811 were remarked on at the time. For example, Liverpool wrote that Perceval had 'acquired an authority' in the House of Commons 'beyond any minister in my recollection, except Mr Pitt'.

Most critically, the Peninsular War was transformed from defeat to victory on his watch. He found the funds for Wellington, ensured that Liverpool succeeded Castlereagh in 1809, and that Wellington's views were still sought and supported. This war marked the start of the end for Napoleon and his army.

It is said that Wellington did not always feel at the time that he was receiving the support he required. However, some would argue that Wellington should have complained at the time more strongly and directly and, in any case, no soldier feels as well supported by the politicians as he would wish.

The future George IV chose not to remove Perceval as Prime Minister. By 1812 Perceval had won him over at the expense of the Prince Regent's natural support for the Whigs. This was against all the odds. The Prince Regent eventually gave him his full support in early 1812 when his own position as Regent was resolved. This says much for Perceval's increasing powers and the Prince Regent's confidence in him. Perceval then re-introduced Castlereagh to a strengthened Cabinet in 1812, having manoeuvred the resignation of Lord Wellesley. Castlereagh returned as Foreign Secretary, the position Canning had held in 1809, and bolstered Cabinet representation in the House of Commons, taking some of the load off Perceval.

Lord Mulgrave, First Lord of the Admiralty in Perceval's Cabinet, commented that Perceval only wanted 'something more of the Devil to be a very good premier'.

Parliament's response to the assassination

A nervous Government concluded that Perceval's assassin had acted alone. His assailant John Bellingham was tried and executed for murder within the week. Perceval was privately buried at Charlton on Saturday 16 May.

In the meantime Parliament had debated at some length the appropriate grant to pay to his wife and 12 children. Perceval had not been well off – either as a barrister or, even less so, as a politician. Although he was the son of the Earl of Egmont, he was the second son of the Earl's second wife. Perceval's limited finances (and large family) had been one of the reasons he felt unable to stand aside in order for Canning to succeed Portland as Prime Minister.

Castlereagh had proposed to the House of Commons that 'The sum should be an handsome one, but still regulated by a regard to economy, and consistent with the present circumstances of the country'. Other MPs had their own views and the matter was not resolved until the 15 May when annuities were settled on his wife and eldest son (£2,000 and £1,000 per annum respectively), and a capital grant of £50,000 was made on behalf of the children.

It is worth noting that some historians report that the level of support was decided on the day after Perceval's murder. Although the Prince Regent agreed on 12 May that provision should be made for the family, it was left to Parliament to decide the amount. It took some time to achieve unanimity, a matter that was just as important to the family as the money itself.

Eulogies in Parliament and elsewhere concentrated on Perceval's principles as a public servant and his virtues as a family man. The Times even went so far as to compare him to Pitt and Fox. While inevitably it did not accord him the same political and debating skills, he did as well on the count of integrity and stood out for his private virtues.

His legacy then

It is said that Perceval's '… claim … to the title of a good man has been seldom disputed; [but] his claim to the title of a great one is still to be established.' This quotation is taken from *The Times* review of his grandson's biography sixty years after his death. The review comes close to saying that Perceval abused his pre-eminence in the Cabinet and House of Commons in 1811.

Perceval's death was much mourned by his colleagues at the time. This contrasts with the popular reaction. His murder is said to have led to 'savage rejoicing' among those outside Parliament. (Some people thought the Prince Regent would be next.) This alarmed Robert Southey and others who had welcomed Perceval's strong and dogged war leadership. However, it explains why the Privy Council ordered out additional constables to keep the peace in London on the night of his murder, especially in the context of the recent Luddite riots.

Bartlett is one of those who refer to Perceval's competence. He says, 'Perceval had no stamp of greatness, but he had courage, determination and industry in ample measure. Above all he was trusted and respected …'[6] These remain important and pertinent measures. There are several ways of leading as a Prime Minister. Perceval's preferred approach seems to have been to adhere to his principles. It was his own standards that he would have to test his actions against in due course. These were devoutly Christian, enlightened with respect to his family and female emancipation, liberal even – with the exception of Catholic emancipation.

Perceval was determined to protect Britain's interests and ensure Napoleon's defeat. However, he was also realistic about the financial and human cost of this. Watson says that '… the Perceval government … groaned at the cost of … perpetual war, but they had resolved to bear it. They had at last put away … the mirage [of] their predecessors that the French might be beaten by one great and sudden masterstroke.'[7] Napoleon's system was 'anti-social and anti-commercial' in the government's view, but they understood that its defeat would require more than just success in the Peninsular War.

Perceval was as realistic about his own deficiencies in talent. He compensated for these through energy and hard work, by his sense of duty and by his evangelical beliefs.

As well as success abroad, Perceval stood firm in the face of the radicals

at home. This was welcomed by those who saw a risk of revolution at this point, despite the salutary conclusions that were often drawn from the French Revolution. Others see this as a misguided confusion of reform with revolution. Merit should replace wealth in determining influence, but the issue was one of pace and, for people such as Perceval, the existing system was the only one they knew. They were not prepared to see it replaced by something that might produce unforeseen consequences.

His legacy now

The most common reaction to mention of Spencer Perceval is 'Who?' If his name is recalled, it is rare for his achievements to be. But there are several reasons for remembering him:

- The reputation of Prime Ministers can only rarely be recalled 100 years later. But war leaders and others who brought about major changes are exceptions. Pitt, Peel, Disraeli and Gladstone stand out. Perceval was not of their political calibre, but the Peninsular War ended in victory. He laid the foundations for this as both Prime Minister and, out of necessity, his own Chancellor of the Exchequer.

- Despite its early limitations, his government improved as it went along. There had been little Cabinet co-ordination since Pitt, and none at all under Portland. Perceval provided it again, with the whole proving to be more than the sum of its parts. Perceval grew into the role of premier. He may have been called 'little P' for other reasons originally, but it came to be seen as a reasonable comparison.[8]

- He followed some very short-lived governments that achieved little of lasting consequence. His two and a half years as Prime Minister were followed by Liverpool's fifteen. Inevitably, his record suffered by comparison, but several historians see the two governments as one. Both he and Liverpool had to deal with considerable turbulence – at home as well as abroad.

- He left a wife and 12 children who might be expected to keep his memory alive. For example, his youngest daughter, Frederica, died in 1900 aged 95. Her will specified that All Saints Church, Ealing, was to be built in memory of her father. It is also known as the Spencer Perceval Memorial Church.

So why has he been forgotten? There seem to be several possibilities:

- Assassination itself goes against British experience and expectations. Castlereagh described the atrocity in Parliament on the 12 May as 'an act so abhorrent from the principles of our nature, and so new to the annals of this nation'. Once the initial horror had been dealt with, forgetting it may have been an appropriate reaction in these circumstances.

- Perceval's most recent (1963) and influential biographer Denis Gray has mixed views of his achievements. Some would see his summary as balanced, but Gray says Charles Dickens thought Perceval 'palpably a third-rate professional politician scarcely fit to carry Lord Chatham's crutch'.[9] This is a very memorable quote. It is a pity that it is not referenced. Nor is it clear on what evidence Dickens based this judgement or whether it was produced primarily for effect. Nevertheless, it cannot have helped attitudes towards Perceval.

- Some of Perceval's achievements are linked to those of an authentic British hero in Wellington. Inevitably, the latter has been celebrated, while Perceval has been forgotten (or at least consigned to the shadows).

- He refused to engage in self-promotion or public relations. Both his self-effacing manner and his Christian values made this impossible. This resulted in him faring badly against contemporaries such as Canning and Pitt who were aware of the importance of 'image'. He may also have been the victim of pursuing principles rather than popularity.

- He saw politics as a profession that should not be allowed to interfere with the real life of family and friends. This sounds like a recipe for personal fulfilment, but may not necessarily lead to political success.

Perceval biographies have been rare in the 200 years since his death. It might be argued that this is a consequence rather than a cause of his reputation, but will not have promoted it. The same might be said of the jump in many history courses from Pitt to Liverpool as if the intervening years from 1806 to 1812 never happened (outside the Peninsula). This is most odd, given the pressures for reform at this point.

Perceval was personally benevolent and scrupulously honest in public affairs. His administration included future Prime Ministers in Liverpool and Palmerston, and another, Peel, was his protégé. He persuaded those with an appetite for hard work, such as Castlereagh, to re-join the Cabinet. He was trusted by everyone. They knew where they stood with him because 'What you saw was what you got'. Leigh[10] says '… there was nothing wrong with Perceval except his opinions' on Ireland and Catholic emancipation.

The cynical, but perhaps informed, view of many public servants was put by Lord Lansdowne in 1809: '…public virtue is all a farce and … private ends, not patriotic principles, activate the puppets that dance before our eyes.'[11] In other words, most people were motivated by money rather than by duty or other less tangible rewards.
It would seem, therefore, that Spencer Perceval was in a minority at the time for this reason too. His public virtues and principles appear to have reflected his private values. Both defined his sense of purpose as a politician.

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4. J Steven Watson *The Reign of George III 1760-1815* (OUP, Oxford, 1960) p485
5. *The House of Commons, 1790-1820* ed RG Thorne, *History of Parliament Trust* (Secker & Warburg, London, 1986) volume 4, p770
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8. Pitt himself had a high opinion of Perceval, seeing him as a future Leader of the House and as the 'most equal to Fox'. See Denis Gray *Spencer Perceval – The Evangelical Prime Minister. 1762-1812* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1963) p41
9. Gray, op cit, p468. The reference is not to Pitt's gout, but to his father's speech in the House of Lords against war with America.
10. Ione Leigh *Castlereagh* (Collins, London, 1951) p219
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Hugh Gault is an independent consultant on health and well-being. He has written recently on John Perceval, the mental health reformer and one of Spencer Perceval's twelve children.

Bigamy

A.D. Harvey

Though people are still sometimes prosecuted for repeatedly marrying immigrants to rescue them from the attentions of the Home Office, while forgetting to get divorced between times, one uncovenanted result of the now common practice of living together without matrimony is the decline of that celebrated Victorian institution: bigamy.

In the seventeenth century, when bigamy prosecutions numbered only a dozen or so a year in England, both men and women were occasionally sentenced to hang for the offence, though most of those convicted were able to prove they could read and, claiming benefit of clergy, escaped with being branded on the thumb, or, as they phrased it in those days, 'burnt in the hand'. In an unusually large proportion of cases however – 16 out of 22 in Kent between 1617 and 1684 for example – the jury acquitted, perhaps because of inept prosecutors' failure to produce conclusive proof of a previous marriage, or to secure the attendance in court of previous spouses. From 1706 even illiterates could claim benefit of clergy, and branding on the thumb was replaced by a gaol sentence by the end of the eighteenth century.

Elizabeth Chudleigh, so-called Duchess of Kingston, escaped even branding on the hand when in 1776 she was found guilty of bigamy after a four-day trial before an unusually crowded House of Lords: she was able to claim privilege as a peeress as her first husband was the Earl of Bristol. (She had divorced him in 1769, but in this period divorce did not automatically confer the right to remarry.) In 1777 a man was acquitted at Croydon Assizes because he was able to prove that what the prosecution thought was his first marriage, in 1768, was in fact invalid – because he had an even earlier marriage in 1757 to a woman who was still alive at the time of his 1768 marriage, but had died previous to what the prosecution thought was his bigamous marriage of 1777.

The fascination with bigamy for a scandal-hungry public began to manifest itself in the early nineteenth century. *The Annual Register,* which presented the whole of the public affairs of Britain and Europe for twelve months, including the parliamentary debates at Westminster, in just over 1200 columns of small print per annual volume, devoted 8½ columns of reporting a single bigamy trial in its 1816 edition, and 6¼ to reporting another in 1818. In the latter case the bride, doubtful of the legality of an earlier marriage, performed in India without witnesses, and under the impression that her husband from this wedding had married again, had carefully explained her situation to her betrothed: sentencing her to six months in Lewes Gaol the sympathetic judge directed that her confinement 'should be attended with a gentle treatment as was suitable for her condition.'

Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre,* in which the Byronic Rochester attempts to marry his daughter's governess even though his deranged wife is locked up at home in a 'third-storey room', was regarded on first publication in 1847 as so daring that potential imitators seem to have been deterred,but after about a decade and a half there was a positive rash of what a critic in *The Quarterly Review* described as 'Bigamy Novels'. The critic explained: 'Much of the popularity is, no doubt, due to the peculiar aptitude of bigamy, at least in monogamous countries, to serve as a vehicle of mysterious interest or poetic justice.' He might also have added the *frisson* of sexual two-timing, edited down to criminal deception and the violation of a sacred oath to suit Victorian notions of propriety. An American scholar, Jeanne Fahnestock, has identified twelve 'Bigamy Novels' published in 1864 and no less than sixteen in 1865, most of them in the first six months of the year. Thereafter a decline set in: as indeed there did in the incidence of bigamy. In the mid-1860s there were about a hundred cases reported each year: in 1913, by which time the number of women in England and Wales aged between 25 and 49 had more than doubled, there were only 133 cases.

This was a measure of the growing stability of society in the later Victorian and Edwardian period, and the growing regard for 'respectability'. The most notorious bigamy trial of the day, that of the second Earl Russell, elder brother of Bertrand Russell the philosopher, in July 1901 was on a dubious technicality: his Reno divorce would only have been valid in England if he had been domiciled in Nevada, whereas his subsequent remarriage in Nevada was regarded as substantive, justifying prosecution in this country. 'Few people probably know – or at all events knew before this case – that bigamy forms a curious and striking exception to the general rule that acts committed abroad are not cognisable by English criminal law,' H.B. Simpson, a Principal Clerk at the Home Office, noted complacently. Russell was sentenced to three months' imprisonment by his fellow Peers in the House of Lords: he claimed in his autobiography that at the Old Bailey he would have escaped with a nominal sentence, though Simpson found that three-quarters of those recently convicted of bigamy served more than three months. As a special concession Russell was permitted to see his wife,

'without a grille between them', not more than once a week.

Then came the First World War. The mobilization of a growing proportion of the nation's adult male population and their despatch to the killing fields overseas resulted in a massive drop in crimes of violence and sexual offences, but a large increase in the number of petitions for the dissolution of marriage and a six-fold increase in bigamy cases. The 917 bigamy cases tried in 1919 represented nearly half the prosecutions for sexual offences in that year. At Leeds Assizes in May 1919 seventeen out of thirty criminal cases tried were for bigamy: in December 1919 Mr Justice Bray claimed he had sentenced over 150 men and women for bigamy during the past two or three years. Sentences ranged from six months to three years in prison. Alfred Henry Shaw, who had received a twelve months' sentence for bigamy at Maidstone Assizes in 1917, was given four years at Newcastle Assizes for a second conviction in the summer of 1919. Sometimes, however, the judge was inclined to be merciful: sentencing Richard Cox at the Old Bailey to a nominal four days' imprisonment in April 1923 the Recorder of London, Sir Ernest Wild, told him: 'you have not in vain thrown yourself on the mercy of the court… You married in 1901 an unworthy and wicked woman… then you met this splendid girl who is as much a contrast to your real wife as night is to day… She is the only woman who has ever been a real wife to you…for eighteen years you have been in the same employment, except when you went to serve your country in its hour of need, and went to maintain the liberty of this land. But for men like you we should not be sitting here administering justice… I think it is a great pity that greater discretion does not rest with the authorities with regard to instituting prosecutions of this kind…'

The number of prosecutions fell after 1919, though during the 1930s they were still at twice the 1913 level, but with the coming of another world war the number of cases began to increase again, and by the beginning of 1941 one judge was talking of 'an epidemic' of bigamy. Trials for bigamy averaged 726 a year between 1940 and 1944; in 1945 there were 847 cases tried.

Incidentally, though in 1919 Mr Justice Salter said: 'It was very cruel to women who were ruined without knowing it,' most serial bigamists contracting fourth or fifth illegal marriages seem to have been women. Not that serial bigamy ever seems to have been common. For most of the last three hundred years it has been the difficulty of divorce rather than anything more sexually titillating that has been the principal cause of bigamy. Today's love-expired couples, held together only by the impossibility of dividing up their CD collections, might console themselves with how much more difficult – and dangerous – things were for our ancestors.

The government files quoted in this article are HO 144/951/ A62795, MEPO 3/390 and RG 48/1690, all in The national Archives at Kew.

A.D. Harvey's most recent book, *Body Politic: Political Metaphor and Political Violence,* was published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing in 2007.

From tragedy to triumph

the courage of Henrietta, Lady Luxborough 1699-1756

Audrey Duggan

Why is Henrietta Luxborough, who was born in 1699, of interest today? In the first place because of whom she was; in the second because of what happened to her; and in the third because of her courage which enabled her to overcome adversity and lead a life utterly different from the one to which she had been accustomed.

Henrietta St John, as she then was, was born into one of the most privileged and powerful families in the land and, if she had played by the rules, her future, married to a wealthy husband – any wealthy husband – would have been secure. Unfortunately for her this was not to be and, to understand why, it is first necessary to place her life within its historical context.

In Henrietta's day, women had few rights. They were conditioned from childhood for marriage and the rules of the marriage market were inviolate. Girls must be chaste and bring with them an acceptable dowry. Wives were expected to be "passive, maternal, submissive, modest, docile and virtuous". As mothers they would have had little influence over the fate of their children and none at all in any sphere other than the household where ultimately they were still subject to their husband's authority.

Before the husband, of course, came the father whose authority was absolute, one who, in Henrietta's case, was by all accounts a disaster. She was the daughter of Lord St John of Battersea and his second wife, Angelica Magdalene Wharton, a woman as pious as her husband was not. Lord St John, a profligate drunkard, had killed a man in a drunken brawl outside a tavern in London's Shoe Lane. This had happened before the little girl was born but is of relevance because of the then massive fine of £16,000 he was obliged to pay Charles II in order to avoid the hangman's noose at Tyburn. Thereafter, the St John coffers were depleted – Henrietta's dowry would suffer and as a consequence her price on the marriage market fall.

There is more. Henrietta was also the half-sister of Henry, later Lord Bolingbroke and Queen Anne's Foreign Secretary. He was twenty-one when she was born and quick to see that here was no ordinary child but one perceptive and intelligent beyond her years. He became her mentor and supervised her reading and in return, the little girl idolized him. All very admirable one might think but not necessarily so, for his private life was scandalous. He was sexually voracious and a regular client of Sally Salisbury who worked at a Covent Garden brothel run by Mother Wisebourne – a woman who procured her girls by posing with her Bible as a prison visitor so that she might arrange their "freedom". Undoubtedly, Bolingbroke was a man for whom the cut glass goblet and the gutter held equal sway. These then were the men who, together with Robert Knight, Henrietta's future husband mentioned later, were to be responsible for her fate.

But not all is gloom. If she were unfortunate in her family, Henrietta was at least blessed in her friends. Among them was Frances, Countess of Hertford, and later Duchess of Somerset, a young woman destined to become a literary hostess of considerable repute. Then there was Elizabeth Rowe, the Somerset poet much admired by Alexander Pope. Two well read women who provided the intellectual stimulation so necessary to counter the social merry-go-round that was the London scene – the masquerades, balls, opera, and theatre to which young aristocratic ladies were expected to play court. At Frances' invitation the three would meet up at her ancestral home, Marlborough Castle, where they would read and discuss Dryden or Spencer and Shakespeare. From here they went for long walks in the New Forest with poems in their heads and notebooks in their pockets. It was not the expected way that young women were encouraged to take. Education for many girls at this time was rudimentary, although all were encouraged to play the spinet and dally with a little embroidery.

These were happy days but by 1718 there was a cloud on the horizon. Henrietta had fallen in love – an affair to which the family swiftly put an end. In Bolingbroke's words: "A man of narrow fortune, a mean birth or a bad character

shall never by my consent have you thrown away on him". There was to be no future here. To make matters worse, by this time Frances was already married to the Count of Hertford and the mother, at seventeen, of her first child, Lady Betty. She was blissfully happy. Elizabeth Rowe was now a widow, but her marriage, too, had been a joyous one. For Henrietta, warm hearted and idealistic, the end of her romance was a bitter blow.

So the years passed, and, as in the 1700s it was usual for girls to marry young, by the time Henrietta was in her mid twenties the clock began to tick more insistently. In the event she was not to marry until she was twenty-eight and, by then, it is arguable that she would have married almost anybody.

Henrietta's husband was to be Robert Knight, a young man with the necessary prerequisites for such a role. He was rich and he was a friend of Henry Bolingbroke. His father, also Robert Knight, had been cashier of the ill-fated East India Company at the time of its collapse and when the "bubble" burst, had absconded with his ill-gotten gains to France. The marriage settlement is of interest as it demonstrates how much the St Johns were to benefit from the alliance. Their daughter was off their hands and their contribution towards her future considerably less than it might otherwise have been. Robert Knight's father contributed £40,000 towards the young couple's future and Lord St John £6000, which meant that the former's influence would be proportionately more.

Robert and Henrietta were married in June 1727 at St Mary's Battersea. It had taken nearly eight years for them finally to walk down the aisle and one is not surprised to learn that the marriage was soon to show signs of strain. There are a number or reasons for this but one of the most obvious must surely be the arduous journeys to and from La Planchette, her father-in-law's opulent estate outside Paris, which he insisted she take. This was so that she could, on occasion, act as his hostess instead of his invalid wife. Almost from the beginning, Henrietta's was a marriage on the move as she trundled miserably from her London home to Paris.

At La Planchette there were no like-minded people; no Frances or Elizabeth to keep her stimulated. Instead, drinking, hunting and card playing were the order of the day. Henrietta, friend to "the great Mr Handel", to John (Johnnie) Gay of *The Beggar's Opera* fame, was unhappy. She was obliged to leave her children – by 1734 she had two, Henrietta and Henry – at home with the Hertfords and it is understandable that she looked forward to returning to see them.

It was on a visit home that she met the Reverend John Dalton at Marlborough Castle. At the time, in 1734, he was employed by the Hertfords as tutor to their son Lord Beauchamp and, as might be expected, was interested in music, poetry and literature. Both he and Henrietta formed a friendship – whether anything more is doubtful and not open to speculation here. The point is that he was everything that Robert Knight was not. He was good looking, well educated and good fun and he spoke the same language. The Knights had been having problems. Robert Knight was of the opinion that his wife was not as submissive as he would like, had too much of a mind of her own.

So when he came across an indiscreet letter penned to John Dalton by Henrietta, he acted with all the fury of an eighteenth century husband. Henrietta's innocence, tearfully reiterated that it was "a silly platonick passion", nothing more, fell on deaf ears; and her husband's refusal to see her meant that she was to suffer the "most terrible affliction", beseeching him with abject humility "to let me see you and beg your pardon on my knees".

It was to no avail. She had been indiscreet and it was an era when men made decisions. Knight, supported in his belief that it was not "fitting" ever to see his wife again in this life, first had Henrietta "banished" to a couple of attic rooms upstairs in their Grosvenor Street, London home. There she was allowed no books nor paper or pen to communicate with the outside world. This was until she became ill, when an alternative, her removal to a tumbledown old farmhouse called 'Barrells' at Ullenhall, near Henley-in-Arden in Warwickshire, was decided upon. Here, she was to be "airbrushed" from London society, hidden away in the middle of nowhere, never to return to her old haunts again. That is how Henrietta came to 'Barrells' – and how she came into her own.

At Barrells, Henrietta showed her courage in a number of ways. When she first arrived, in around 1735, "There was not half the windows up, no doors to the house and the roof uncovered". And yet, little by little and painfully, the building work repaired, the wilderness that was the garden cleared, she was to preside over a gem of an eighteenth century farmhouse and an estate that people travelled many miles to see.

In a gesture which may have necessitated her stepping daintily down the social ladder, but not so far nor so fast as to make her regret what she did, Henrietta first made friends with the local clergy who welcomed her with friendliness. It was the Reverend Richard Jago, Rector of Beaudesert Church, who introduced her to the poet, Sir William Somervile, Squire of Edstone Hall. In turn she met William Shenstone, the poet and landscape gardener from Halesowen; young Richard Jago, Richard Graves and Richard Whistler. All were literary men, all destined in one way or another to make their name.

Somervile, author of *The Chase*, a popular poem as the name suggests concerned with hunting, became a close friend and when he died, in 1742, she had lost, as Henrietta tells Frances "the best friend and neighbour that anyone could have". She was interested in the novels of Richard Graves and the poetry of Jago whose *Peto's Ghost* with its emphasis upon the supernatural reminded them all of stories about his Cornish ancestors, including his great great grandfather who had been one of the best known "ghost-layers" of his day. Whistler, too, was a welcome guest; a young aristocrat with manners to match, and author of *The Shuttlecock*, a mock heroic poem which his hostess found entertaining.

So it snowballed and, within a year or two, her "Warwickshire Coterie" was an established fact. Henrietta Knight, soon to become Lady Luxborough when her estranged husband was elevated to the peerage in 1742, was now a successful literary hostess. Those girlhood years of reading and discussion had not been wasted!

All these men of letters wrote verses to Henrietta. She was 'Asteria', 'Star of their Night' and 'Queen of their May' – their "beauteous maid". They extolled her "honoured bower", the "fair enchanting scene(s)" she had created. She was in her element.

The most important member of the Coterie was William Shenstone who not only helped her redesign her garden but encouraged her to write the poetry from which we glimpse her often lonely life:

No cheerful voice with witty jest,
No jocund pipe to still the sound.

She, in her turn, became involved in the reading of his verses and was responsible for the recasting, with him, of a number of his best known works such as *A Pastoral Ballad*. Henrietta's letters to Shenstone offer vignettes of country life. They tell of games of bowls by moonlight, the enjoyment of a whole barrel of oysters one Christmas with her chaplain, Parson Holyoake; of Parson Allen who kept her up until three in the morning with his stories. They recount her farming activities – telling of her hens, guinea fowl and turkeys; of how she kept a cow and churned her own

cheese – "The best I ever ate", records her brother. All things never dreamed of back in London.

In them we learn much of what it meant to live in a quiet corner of Warwickshire in the mid eighteenth century: of "rumpled" egg shells and guests arriving in time for breakfast. Of life which, as on a screen, has flickered and died. They illustrate Henrietta's determination, chart her achievements and provide a backdrop against which her aspirations can be measured. Above all, they remain a permanent reminder of one woman's courage.

Henrietta died in March, 1756, from what is likely to have been influenza. She was ill for several weeks but her son and his wife, who at the time, were in the area on a visit to Edstone, did not bother to call. She was buried at St Peter's, Wootton Wawen, on 12 April and her death, briefly recorded in *Gentleman's Magazine* for that month, "Lady Luxborough of Lord Luxborough of Ireland", must imply that her husband did not encourage mourners.

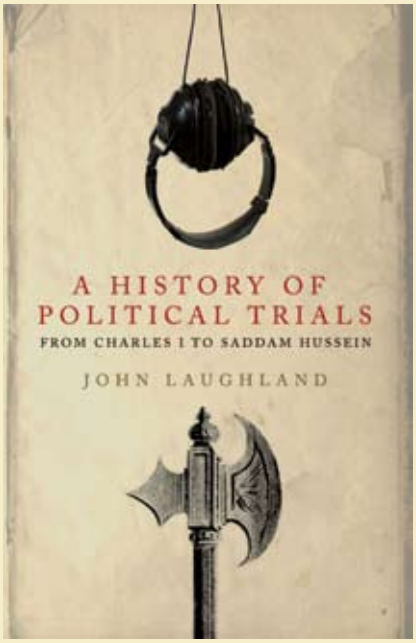
Henrietta died, not within the loving circle of her family, but in the care of her devoted chaplain and his wife, the Reverend and Mrs Holyoake. She left behind her devoted servants and friends to mourn. Not so her husband, who was quick to stake his claim and move into 'Barrells', there to entertain numerous young ladies procured for him by "Moll Clever Legs", a London brothel keeper he had met when staying at her establishment. So ends a brief glimpse into Henrietta's life. A life of highs and lows – of tragedy and triumph. A life remembered by her achievements. One which can encourage modern women to be grateful that fewer inequalities exist today.

References

All references are taken from *Chequered Chances: A Portrait of Lady Luxborough* by Audrey Duggan. Published by Brewin Books Ltd, ISBN: 978-1-85858-290-0 www.brewinbooks.com

Audrey Duggan was educated at Olton Convent in Solihull and at the Children's Hospital in Birmingham. Later she obtained a graduate diploma in Speech and Drama at the London Guildhall and an honours degree in English at the Open University. For a number of years she was head of the English Department at a Birmingham college. She also indulged in her interest in local history and upon taking early retirement, has produced two biographies: *A Lady of Letters*, a life of Catherine Hutton, and *The World of William Shenstone*, the poet and landscape gardener. She is at present working on a second edition of *A Sense of Occasion*, an account of the first performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* at Birmingham's Town Hall.

Review



A History of Political Trials: From Charles I to Saddam Hussein – John Laughland

Peter Lang, Oxford, £12-99. ISBN 978-1-906165-00-0.

John Laughland provides an extensive backdrop to the very topical contemporary issue of 'political trials'. In recent times we have witnessed the events at the International War Crimes Tribunal at The Hague and the continuing Iraqi trials in Baghdad but this book places them in the context of an historical phenomenon from the time of Charles I.

In his very carefully researched and detailed analysis, Laughland basically argues that, in embarking on such trials, there is a presumption that the accused will be found guilty, and generally sentenced to death, and that therefore there is an absence of impartiality and real justice. He reasons that, apart from the seeming enormity of the 'supposed' crimes committed, part of the paradox is that most constitutional arrangements, how ever underdeveloped, do not allow for the trial of the head of state: indeed in some constitutional contexts, such as our own in Britain, the head of state is technically the fount of justice and so is inevitably above the law.

This is a complex work but it is interesting to delve into what did happen, in personal terms, to those subjected to 'political trials' in our times and previously. We read that, although Charles I refused to plead directly to the High Court of Justice in 1648-9, his objection to the court was not, as we might expect, that he was commissioned as monarch under 'the divine right of kings' but that he, as with all his predecessors back into Saxon England, was technically an elected monarch.

From my perspective what Laughland does not do, possibly because it is beyond his intended brief, is to explain what alternatives there would have been to test the integrity of such people as Vidkun Quisling, Nicolae Ceausescu or Saddam Hussein, and to achieve outcomes other than execution. Equally he does not explore the Hobbesian notion that, if a people give their assent to monarchy, in whatever form, at one time, they must be permitted to withdraw it at another time. Notwithstanding these two latter observations, this is a very interesting and accessible piece of research in an area of continuing topicality, especially as we await the outcome of events in Zimbabwe and Burma.

Trevor James

Members' Offer

Born in 1699, into an aristocratic family, Henrietta St John as she then was had the world at her feet. But an unsatisfactory marriage to Robert Knight, later Lord Luxborough, alleged misconduct and subsequent banishment – first to an upstairs suite of attic rooms where she was allowed no contact with the outside world – then to a dilapidated farmhouse, Barrells Green, in Ullenhall near Henley-in-Arden – could have destroyed a woman of lesser character.

That she was able, in the face of such adversity, to maintain her health, reputation and dignity, was a minor miracle. But she did. She became a literary hostess and corresponded with men of letters; and she revealed her turbulent inner life in poetry which still speaks of her heartbreak today.

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Britain's Olympic visionary

Trevor James

Forty-six years before the modern Olympics began, the small Shropshire market town of Much Wenlock was the seemingly unlikely setting for the establishment of an 'Olympian Games'. Commencing in 1850, they were to become an annual festival in the town. The architect of this sporting enterprise was a local surgeon and J.P., William Penny Brookes. Initially these Games were the 'Olympian Class' of the Wenlock Agricultural Reading Society, which Brookes had started in 1841, but they came to be organised separately by the Wenlock Olympian Society. Brookes exercised a very personal and extensive influence over the proceedings until his death in 1895.

His purpose in creating these Olympian Games was that he wished to encourage and improve the horizons of the people of his town, especially those of the working class. This was merely an extension of the philosophy which had earlier led him to establish the Agricultural Reading Society. The philosophy behind his Olympian Games is well-expressed by a statement in the Olympian Society committee book, written by Brookes on 25 February 1850. An

> *'Olympian class'* was to be established *'for the promotion of the moral, physical and intellectual improvement of the inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood of Wenlock, and especially of the working classes, by the encouragement of outdoor recreation and by the award of prizes annually, at public meetings, for skill in athletics exercises and proficiency in intellectual and industrial attainments'.*

In deciding the format for these Games Brookes was conscious, because of his educational background, of two separate sporting traditions. His education, with its classical emphases, had introduced him to the athleticism of the ancient Greeks and, in particular, to their Olympic tradition. His provincial background, together with reading Joseph Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes of Rural England*, had made him conscious of the sporting heritage of rural England. He wanted, therefore, to create a festival which was a mixture of these two traditions. In a sense he was looking to the past in both cases but his underlying purpose was to benefit the future.

The first Games were held on 22 October 1850 on the Much Wenlock race-course. The occasion

Image courtesy of the Wenlock Olympian Society.

began with a procession, led by the Wenlock town band, and this procession was composed of the officials and competitors marching three abreast. It started from the Raven and Gaskell Arms inns and proceeded along the High Street to the race-course. Vast crowds converged on Much Wenlock to see this spectacle and the local newspaper, *Eddowes's Journal*, reported the great enthusiasm and interest of the crowd. These feelings were especially stimulated by the pageantry and classical flavour of the occasion. The latter aspect was, for example, expressed by banners with Greek inscriptions; by having ladies crown kneeling victors with laurel leaves; and by the fact that the race-course was re-named the 'Olympian Fields' for the day. When the day's competition was over, another procession, with the victors resplendent in their laurel leaf crowns, brought the celebrations to a close.

The events included in the first Games give a clear indication that this occasion was a mixture of the two great traditions which had influenced Brookes' thinking. There were football and cricket matches and competitions at quoits, together with five truly 'athletic' events. These latter were the high jump, the long jump and three foot-races – one for adults and two for boys. The prizes were in cash, ranging from £1-2s for the winning cricket team to 2s 6d for the winner of the foot-race for boys under seven years of age.

By 1859 these Olympian Games had become a much more elaborate occasion. Of the sixteen events in the programme, eight were recognisably athletic but the remainder had the flavour of rustic sports, the most memorable being 'Throwing a Spear through a Ring' and 'Tilting at a Ring'. In the athletic events there was one very unusual inclusion. The Javelin was not a common discipline in English athletics until the Twentieth Century but it was introduced at Much Wenlock in that year. Its inclusion was probably partly connected with Brookes' determination to give his Games a classical tone and, of course, the Javelin was an event found in ancient Olympic competitions. In 1859 competitions in poetry and essay writing were arranged for the first time. The latter was for an 'Essay on Physical Recreations, Ancient and Modern, their Moral and Political Value'. This was also another attempt to imitate the ancient tradition because the Greek Olympics had always had a cultural backcloth.

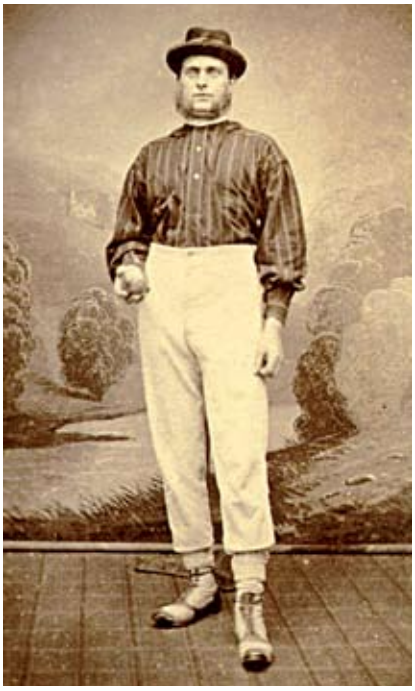
These Olympian Games certainly attracted newspaper coverage in the immediate locality. *Eddowes's Journal* was quite effusive in its enthusiasm for this event. Later Games were reported in the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* and the *Wolverhampton Chronicle*. As the years went by the local press enthusiasm continued and the proceedings, including long speeches by William Brookes about the importance of physical health, were much reported. There does not, by contrast, seem to have been any national coverage. *Bell's Life in London*, which gave a very good reception both to early amateur athletic events and to professional pedestrian races in various parts of the country, does not appear to have mentioned it. This cannot have been as a result of ignorance on the part of the national press because Brookes was a determined publicist, very much confirmed by surviving archive material. Part of the explanation may be that these Olympian Games were considered quaint and unfashionable. In addition to this, developments elsewhere tended to overshadow the innovations and enterprise shown at Much Wenlock.

The plain fact is that by the time Brookes began his Olympian Games the

That De Coubertin cast it in the form of an Olympic Games can be attributed to a notable degree to the activities of William Penny Brookes in Much Wenlock.

Juan Antonio Samaranch, President of the International Olympic Committee, leading a tribute at the Brookes family grave in Much Wenlock in 1994 to commemorate the Centenary of the Congress of the Sorbonne at which the modern Olympic movement was launched.
Courtesy of the Wenlock Olympian Society.





(from left to right) H.W. Brooke winner of the 1869 Pentathlon, T. Sabin winner of the 3 mile bicycle race, William Roberts winner of the 150 yards food hurdle race.
Image courtesy of the Wenlock Olympian Society.

Royal Military Academy at Woolwich [1849] and Exeter College at Oxford University [1850] had already initiated events where the emphasis was decidedly athletic. The events at Woolwich in 1849 were: 100 yards, 880 yards, 1 mile, Hurdles, Shot Put, Running High Jump, Standing High Jump, Running Long Jump, Standing Long Jump and Cutting the Lead with a Sword. Only the last was uncharacteristic of a modern-day athletics meeting.

The schools and colleges began to imitate this pattern rather than that set at Much Wenlock. The events at Woolwich and Oxford were also 'respectable' and 'fashionable' because, unlike Brookes' creation at Much Wenlock, they did not include working-class competitors or indeed the very large and unruly crowds which it attracted from the Black Country. As the 1850s unfolded ever-increasing reporting of school, university and military sports days can be found in *Bell's Life in London* but the Much Wenlock events were simply ignored.

Brookes nevertheless continued to have an evangelical determination to share his 'Olympic' ideas with other people. As a result of his initiative other Olympian festivals were held in Shropshire – at Wellington in 1861 and Shrewsbury in 1864. In 1865 Brookes became involved in a scheme to organise a national Olympic festival and which led to the launch in Liverpool later that year of a National Olympian Society. During the deliberations at Liverpool Brookes was a prominent contributor and the *Liverpool Mercury* reported his desire to see various popular 'assemblies' of the countryside become more athletic in emphasis. He believed that the National Olympian Society would pave the way for this to happen. Its first Games were held at Crystal Palace on 1 August 1866. This, although reported in *Sporting Life*, again seems to have attracted very little national attention. The reason, almost certainly, is that the formation of the Society was overshadowed by the establishment of the Amateur Athletic Club, the predecessor of the Amateur Athletic Association. It had held its inaugural championship in the spring and so, although junior in foundation, was in a sense the first on the scene. It, therefore, attracted a lot of attention for that reason and the Amateur Athletic Club also had the advantage, through its amateur rule, it tended to represent the same respectable and fashionable element who enthused over sport in schools, universities and the army. The National Olympian Society did hold a second Games at Birmingham in 1867 but then it became an entirely Shropshire-based body.

Brookes' Olympic aspirations and interests were by no means merely restricted to the British Isles. For example in 1859 his Wenlock Olympian Society sent £10 to pay for a prize at a Greek Olympic Games being held in Athens. In the 1870s and 1880s he is believed to have been considering an international Olympic festival and certainly in this latter period he came into contact with Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who was to become the founder of the modern Olympic movement. De Coubertin, a much younger man, was already developing his own ideas on the importance of physical exercise and was beginning to formulate the ideas which were to lead to the foundation of the modern Olympic Games. He did, however, freely acknowledge his debt to Brookes in an article in *La Revue Athletique* in December 1890. Indeed, in that same year he had even visited Much Wenlock to see Brookes' Olympian Games and to meet Brookes who was by this time aged 81. Nonetheless, in that De Coubertin went on to establish the international Olympic movement about which Brookes had dreamed, it might seem that once again he had been overshadowed.

De Coubertin was the genius behind the modern Olympics which began in Athens in 1896 but the genesis of his creation is to be found elsewhere. The increasing sophistication of sport and the increased desire for competition in the late nineteenth century meant that an international festival was likely to be a natural outcome. Such international competition had been heralded by cricketing contests between England and Australia and by the visits of American athletes to Britain. It may be argued that De Coubertin merely fashioned the detail of this development. That he cast it in the form of an Olympic Games can be attributed to a notable degree to the activities of William Penny Brookes in Much Wenlock. His death in December 1895 meant that he did not live to see his dream of an international Olympic Games enacted but posthumously Brookes warrants some recognition as one of the creative figures who pointed the way to the modern Olympic Games. William Penny Brookes was born in 1809 and his two-hundredth anniversary will be celebrated amongst sports historians in various ways next year.

Trevor James' previously unpublished Leicester University Ph.D thesis on 'The Contribution of Schools and Universities to the development of Organised Sport up to 1900' has now been digitised and will soon be available on-line through Leicester University.

My grandfather's recollections of the invasion of Normandy

Daisy Black

My grandfather just after enlisting.

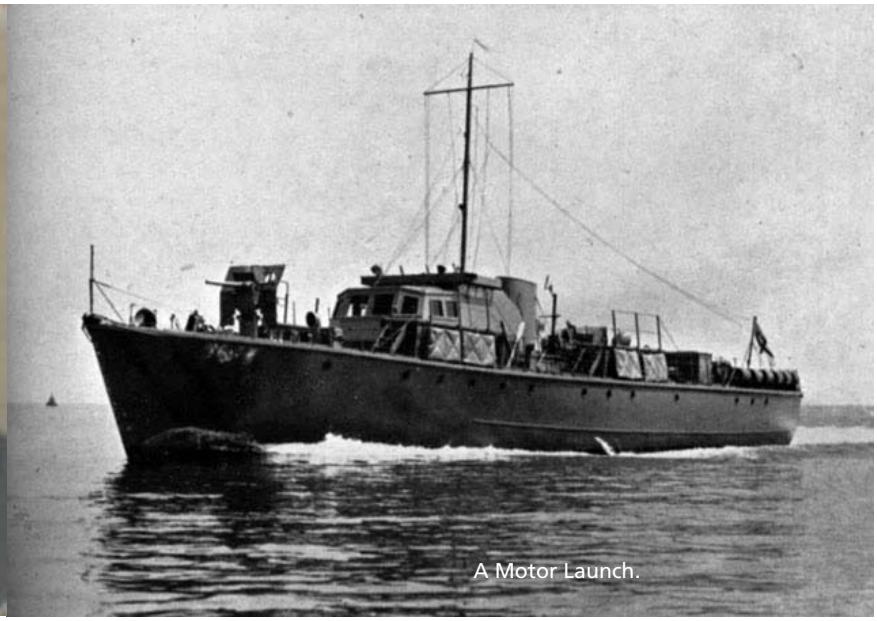
16 year old Daisy Black of Newcastle-under-Lyme School in Staffordshire was the Senior Award winner in the Spirit of Normandy Trust Young Historian competition in 2007. Having been judged the winner by the Young Historian panel, the Spirit of Normandy Trsutees were so taken with her entry that they gave her an additional award in memory of General Peter Martin who was one of the heroic force who landed at, and secured, Pegasus Bridge as part of the Normandy Landings in 1944.

The Battle of Normandy was fought in 1944 between Nazi Germany in Western Europe and the invading Allied forces as part of the larger conflict of World War II. *Operation Overlord* was the codename for the Allied invasion of northwest Europe, which began on 6 June 1944. *Operation Neptune* was the codename given to the naval bombardment which was the initial assault phase of *Operation Overlord;* its mission, to gain a foothold on the continent on the date commonly known as D-Day.

In many ways Sword Beach was the key to success in the Normandy landings. It was the nearest beach to Caen, the capital of the area and the prize that would need to be taken to allow a breakout. The plan was to land the 3rd Infantry Division ('Monty's Ironsides'), who would then link up with 6th Airborne Division on the Eastern Flank. The 3rd Division would be assisted in the landings by Lord Lovat's 1st Special Service Brigade, which also included French commandos. Their opposition would be units from the German 716th Division, with 21st Panzer Division located in the Caen area – a possible major threat if tanks arrived to block the invasion.

The landings on Sword Beach began at 7.25am, with the infantry of 3rd Division coming under heavy fire as they hit the beach. However, many Sherman DD tanks had landed successfully and were able to lay down fire support. The commandos did well, but encountered stiff resistance as they battled through the streets and bunkers at Ouistreham. Units pushed gradually inland and organised the defences beyond the beach at Morris and Hillman bunker complexes. Meanwhile 1st Special Service Brigade linked up with

My grandfather before the invasion.



A Motor Launch.

6th Airborne at Pegasus Bridge, and by late afternoon infantry and tanks from 3rd Division had also moved to Caen canal.

A counter-attack from 21st Division came in the late afternoon, when a *Kampfgruppe* (Battle group) advanced on the Perriers Ridge. Although some units gained sight of the sea, the attack was driven back with heavy losses in tanks, equipment and men. The Germans withdrew to the high ground north of Caen, and the landings at Sword Beach were now secure. But Caen had not been taken – and wouldn't be for some time to come. Over sixty years later, the Normandy invasion still remains the largest seaborne invasion in history, involving almost three million troops crossing the English Channel from England to Normandy.

Before the Second World War started, my grandfather, John Storrey Black, worked on a farm in a small village, Fauldhouse, in West Lothian, Scotland, having left school at 14. Although he enjoyed his farm work very much, when the war started he felt that he would be stuck on the farm as the country needed to keep food supplies up and he wanted to do more. When the opportunity came for him to enlist he falsified his age and volunteered at 17. My grandfather initially wanted to join the Army but failed the medical due to a perforated ear drum. This also ruled him out for his next choice as a sub-mariner but finally he was accepted by the Royal Navy and left home within six weeks.

His naivety of the gravity of the situation can be summed up by the fact that he left for the local train station completely alone and remembers his mother calling to him: "John, you've forgotten your sandwiches and your football". The Navy was hard work; however, my grandfather has marvellous recollections of his years spent at sea and he really enjoyed it.

My grandfather was an Officer Steward aboard a small craft with the number of men in the crew ranging from only fifteen to eighteen. He worked in the convoys travelling to and from Africa. The first time he went out to Africa was in October 1942 when he travelled on a Cruiser to Cattle Boat 50 where he transferred to a Motor Launch which was a small military vessel of British design. They had two petrol engines and armament was a single three-pound gun and a number of machine guns. The MLs had a completely different feel and movement to all previous boats he had been on and he became very sea-sick and was extremely ill for two whole days. However, there were no men to take his place so he could do nothing about it and he just had to get over it. The positive aspect about this was that after these two days he was never ill again and remained on the sea for the rest of the war. He came back from Africa around January 1944 and then became involved in combined operations with the Allied forces around the Isle of Wight.

At the end of May my grandfather was assigned to Motor Launch 246. The Lieutenant on board attended meetings every day regarding the D-Day landings and, at the beginning of June, was summoned to a meeting on the Isle of

My grandfather's badges.

My Aunt Jean's ATS badge.

My Aunt Jean's membership card.

Wight with Commander Ryder VC, who was a highly respected commander in the Royal Navy. The whole Navy realised the importance of this as there was a feeling of anticipation and the South coast was full of personnel getting ready for something big.

Robert Ryder had joined the Royal Navy in 1925. On 27-28 March 1942 he led the naval force in Operation Chariot, with the aim of wrecking the gates at the entrance to the huge dry dock at St Nazaire, where the Germans were refitting and repairing many of the boats in their fleets. The force, commanded by Ryder in MTB 314, comprised sixteen motor launches, a motor torpedo boat, and the destroyer *HMS Campbeltown* which was loaded with explosives on a time fuse as well as 257 commandos, who were to demolish dockside installations.

Just before 1.30am on 28 March, Ryder's force reached its objective, where *HMS Campbeltown* succeeded in ramming the dock gates. Ryder remained on the spot to conduct operations, at one stage going ashore to look around. Returning to MTB 314, by then under intense close-range fire, he organised the evacuation of men from the destroyer. After being in action for well over an hour, MTB 314, still under fire and full of dead and wounded, at last withdrew and eventually reached England. The Victoria Cross awarded to Ryder was one of five won during the raid. My grandfather met Commander Ryer a few days later and thought he was a real gentleman, treating everyone with respect and as his equal. He was a regular officer who had shown bravery at St. Nazaire – he was a hero known to all the sailors at the time.

When Commander Ryder asked for a boat to lead the troops into Sword Beach, the ML246 was chosen. Once aboard he asked for the most experienced sailor to steer the boat. The sailor who usually steered the boat had been taken ill and his replacement became dreadfully seasick. My grandfather was a first class gunner and the most senior man at the time; being aboard such a small craft meant that you had to be multi-skilled and able to do everything required. From cooking to steering his skills were well known and consequently he was 'volunteered'. His feelings of nervousness were overtaken by apprehension and numbness. My grandfather remembers the terrible rough seas at the time and wondering what was going to happen. They had all been told the basic details of what was to be required of them, yet it still felt as if they were heading into the unknown.

Also at this time, my grandfather's sister, Jean Black, who was in the Auxiliary Territorial Service and a cook in the officer's mess, was based in the Isle of Wight. During the build up to the invasion she was not allowed off the island for a whole ten months as she was catering for all the officers who were involved in planning the invasion and assembly of troops in the South. She remembers weeks of rapid comings and goings of people on the island and the number of boats she saw in the Channel was amazing. All the women on the island had heard that Southampton had been ploughed up by the number of tanks and other vehicles that were going along the roads. Normally the noise was deafening, but on the night of the invasion itself, after the main fleet had left, what she remembers most was the silence. The sea was so rough that many boats did not leave until the 5th of June, my grandfather included, to make their way across that small stretch of water. As she had been in regular contact with her brother by letter during the war, she knew he would be at sea with the fleet on that historic day and was extremely anxious.

Aunt Jean, who is now ninety one and still an active member of the ATS, was on holiday on the South coast during the fiftieth anniversary of the invasion. She remembers vividly that day and said she felt a sadness as she looked at the empty horizon and sensed the lack of empathy and understanding shown by other holiday makers for the magnitude of the events of 1944.

As the ML246 set sail Commander Ryder asked for the heading and they led the ten landing craft in two columns of five into Sword Beach. Sword Beach was the codename of one of the five main landing beaches in *Operation Neptune*, stretching eight kilometres from Ouistreham to Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer; it was the furthest east of the landing points and around fifteen kilometres from Caen.

Canadians were to the starboard of the vessel as they led the landing craft across the Channel that night. As the boats approached Caen, it became evident that they were two degrees off course. Commander Ryder asked for an alteration and my grandfather had to circle round and then motor between the fleet of landing craft carrying personnel and steer the two degrees course to one side as ordered. From onboard, they could clearly see the men on the shore and he says they all had the feeling that history in some way was being made that very night.

As the ML246 approached the coast they peeled off to port and took up station outside the line of vessels to

watch for any incoming German boats. The sailors were told to expect E boats and U boats and for the rest of D-Day my grandfather's boat patrolled the shore for torpedoes. Five pound charges were dropped to destroy the torpedoes, yet were mainly used to scare the Germans and to boost the morale of the British. The planes flying overhead also helped in boosting morale as it raised their spirits when they saw the three white stripes on the bottom of the wings. The men could not see the shore anymore yet heard all the shooting and explosions. Commander Ryder stayed on board the boat for five days and then transferred to the much larger *Royal Sovereign*.

For my grandfather all the days that followed patrolling the coast, seemed to roll into one. The men were given pills to keep them awake and that, combined with the daily rum ration, kept them alert. One day, when off duty but still on board, my grandfather stopped taking the pills and immediately fell asleep. The boat came under fire from shore and a shell exploded extremely near. My grandfather, perhaps due to his intake of rum, remained asleep, despite being knocked out of his bunk by the explosion. He landed on the floor yet slept on, unaware until afterwards of what had gone on up top!

On the beaches at this point troops were continuously landing and the sound of explosions and the fighting could still be heard whilst on board the boats. One day the men had to free up a trapped landing craft. They took on board a diver from another ship who, in order to cut the cables and free the craft, had to wear a bell helmet and my grandfather had to pump the device, like a see-saw, which supplied his air.

During the bombardment of Caen in June 1944 the boat continued to patrol the Channel helping to prevent any attack from the German fleet. Whilst on board the sailors could clearly see the *Lord Roberts* which was a monitor specially built for bombardment constantly firing into Caen. There were very large boats, such as the *Lord Roberts*, which helped in the bombing of France in order to aid the Allied troops. Around the 8 June my grandfather had to help in the shelling of a large building on shore as the Army could not reach it.

During the three weeks my grandfather was in France he entered one of the Mulberry Harbours, Mulberry B, which was at Aramanches. It was then that he saw Churchill, Eisenhower and General Smutz coming ashore. They appeared very imposing, standing together on an MTB (Motor Torpedo Boat) which my grandfather later served on. The MTBs were designed for high speed and manoeuverability on the water in order to get close enough to launch torpedoes at enemy vessels. With next to no armour, the boats relied upon their agility at high speed to avoid being hit by gunfire from bigger vessels.

One day whilst moored to the large sunken boats at Arromanches, my grandfather discovered many boxes of American rations on the other side of the Mulberry Harbour. The rations were made up of a variety of things such as socks, cigarettes and chocolate. They had been abandoned and were just going to be wasted but the men on board my grandfather's boat were very happy to make use of them!

Still at Arromanches the men heard ongoing stories via the radio and heard more when they spoke to other sailors whilst refuelling and tied up alongside other vessels. One story was about a group of twenty one Americans found with their throats cut in a local brothel in France, it seems that the 'ladies' had killed them! Another story was about the American tanks; they had unloaded the DDs (amphibious swimming tanks) from the landing craft too early and they had all sunk before getting to Omaha Beach – good planning! My grandfather also recalls that the Americans had run a big trial near Falmouth before *Operation Overlord*. Unfortunately German E boats were patrolling near-by and killed hundreds of men due to insufficient air cover and, in his view, America's notorious bad planning. Rumors and stories such as these were common amongst the service personnel but as they were constantly reminded that 'talk costs lives' they kept it very 'hush-hush'.

After D-Day and spending three weeks patrolling the shores of Normandy, my grandfather was involved in escorting the boats carrying men back to England and the empty boats back to Normandy to collect more men. Two months after the invasion he was transferred to MTBs where he was very lucky. They had come out of Ostend one day and it was heard that twelve other MTBs had blown up in dock with twelve crews lost – that is three hundred and eighty four men. This was not due to an attack or torpedoes but the design and nature of the boats; they were petrol driven and the fumes from the empty tanks had ignited and then spread to the other boats. "Poor lads," he mused.

To this day my grandfather remains a very humble and modest man. He says "I didn't do that much really, it was the men on the beach that did all the hard work." At this point he stayed quiet for a long time.

However, after my visit to the Normandy beaches and listening and learning about my grandfather's recollections of D-Day and the whole war, I have realised that this is not the case. The Navy played a crucial part in the war and in the Normandy landings. Without the Navy, without people like my grandfather, there could not have been an invasion. My grandfather played an important role in the D-Day landings and I feel that it is vital to appreciate every aspect of the invasion. When people think of the invasion of France, it is the Army's perspective that seems to be the most recognized. However, millions of people were involved, without whom it would not have been possible. This essay and the time spent talking to my grandfather has not only allowed me to write about his part in the D-Day landings but has enabled me to learn more about my grandfather's past and understand the importance of his role and the necessity of the Navy in the Second World War.

The Navy played a crucial part in the war and in the Normandy landings. Without the Navy, without people like my grandfather, there could not have been an invasion.

John Storrey Black
October 1944.

Why the OBE survived the Empire

J.M. Lee

An anomaly of the British honours system is the name of the award most frequently given – the Order of the British Empire created in 1917.[1] Each medal carries the words: 'For God and the Empire'. When the connection between the person honoured and the church is often very tenuous and the Empire no longer exists, except in the form of those small territories which could not be given the status of a nation state. The chapel of the Order designed by Lord Mottistone in 1959-60[2] is part of St. Paul's Cathedral but its religious services attract little public attention. Why do these conditions persist?

Any reform requires a set of circumstances that will not give offence to existing members of the Order. There are five ranks – Grand Cross, Knight or Dame, Companion, Officer, and Member – and, in association at a sixth level, the British Empire Medal. Intended originally only for civilians, the Order acquired a Military Division in 1919. There has to be royal approval, as the Crown is 'the fount of honour'. The question has to be handled through the Prime Minister who by convention recommends the names of those to be honoured. Because the OBE is from time to time awarded to non-British subjects, it is necessary to consult the Foreign and Commonwealth Office about possible reactions overseas to any change. None of these requirements involves the Cabinet or the routine procedures of government departments for the consideration of policy.

In the 1960s there were two initiatives designed to remove the OBE from its associations with Empire. Neither was successful. Their failure illustrates the sensitivities of British official opinion at a time of hesitation surrounding the prospect of withdrawal from East of Suez. It seemed impossible to create a set of circumstances in which the renaming or the replacement of the OBE by another Order would appear a natural, legitimate, and acceptable accompaniment to the process of granting independence to former colonies. The logic of this readjustment could not be followed because it belonged to the sphere of the royal prerogative, not that of statute law. There was no ineluctable pressure on the Prime Minister to advise the monarch about the advantages which a reform might bring. The conduct of government business could not give such matters any priority.

The first initiative was taken by Duncan Sandys, Sir Winston Churchill's son-in-law, while he held two ministerial posts in the same portfolio, the offices of secretary of state for both the Colonial Office and the Commonwealth Relations Office between July 1962 and October 1964. Plans were already in hand to amalgamate these two departments. The secretary of the Order at the time was the joint permanent secretary of the Treasury, Sir Laurence Helsby. The principal officials involved were the Treasury Ceremonial Officer and those serving on the Honours Committee. Mr. Sandys discussed the matter with Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, who had succeeded Queen Mary in 1953 as the Grand Master of the Order. The Duke was strongly in favour of some kind of reform. There was considerable support for an 'Order of the Commonwealth'.[3] *The Daily Mirror* suggested that there should be a new Order of Elizabeth.[4] The surviving records do not give the views of the Prime Minister, Sir Alec Douglas-Home.

The second initiative was taken by the Duke of Edinburgh himself after he and the Queen had returned from a five-week tour of the West Indies in 1966.[5] Each had come home separately. The Duke had proceeded alone to the United States to fulfil a number of engagements designed to raise money for Variety Clubs International and to promote British exports, and then passed through Canada on his return journey.[6] He may have been informed of Canadian plans to introduce the Order of Canada which would place that country's highest award outside the British honours system. Lester Pearson, the Canadian Prime Minister, had already succeeded in persuading the Canadian people to accept a new symbol of national unity – the maple leaf flag. The Dominions of the Commonwealth and other former colonies in which the OBE had been regularly awarded were beginning to consider what kind of honours system they wished to see for their own citizens. The Duke wrote a memorandum on the OBE which the Queen passed to the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, at an audience just after the General Election of March 1966.[7] The timing of the Duke's proposal was set largely by the prospect of the fiftieth anniversary of the Order – 1917-1967. As Grand Master the Duke thought that the occasion might make a suitable moment on which to announce a modification in the honours system.

On both occasions an obstacle to any reconsideration of the Order was the sheer size of its membership. At any given time it was likely to contain more than 40,000 people. It had never been a traditional order of chivalry on the lines of the Knights of the Garter or of St Michael & St George. The Order

Badge of Members of the Order of the British Empire, obverse and reverse

had been deliberately created to honour the services of the ordinary man or woman – and in certain conditions those of the non-British subject. The first distribution of awards had been without precedent. There were far more than the monarch could present personally at a single investiture and more than could be allotted to different countries overseas by some kind of formula.

In 1921 Burke's thought it worth publishing a *Handbook to the Order of the British Empire* which contained the biographies or just the names of 26,409 people who had received the award by that date. The names were indexed by order of precedence. The preface of the handbook proclaimed the honour as 'British democracy's own order of chivalry'. The intention had been to allot a quarter to the Empire proper – dividing the number between the Dominions (Australia, Canada, Newfoundland, New Zealand, and South Africa), India, the protectorates, the mandates, and the crown colonies. The number appropriate to allies and other foreign nationals was difficult to determine. Among the first to receive the Grand Cross were seven Indian princes and, as honorary members, eleven Frenchmen, three Italians, and three Americans. High Commissioners and Governors could make recommendations in the Empire; ambassadors elsewhere. They were required to discriminate between people of different ranks or positions so that awards were made according to the grade to which the holder was entitled. Fewer British Empire Medals were distributed – 2,014 between 1917 and 1923.

The Order had been constructed as a hybrid between a general award open to all and a parallel honour to the existing orders of chivalry. Nearly all the arguments surrounding its creation had been about whether or not it should contain the ranks of knight and dame, and about where its holders should stand in the system of precedence. It seemed impossible to escape from the conventions of Court etiquette when the

monarch was the fount of honour. Sir Frederick Ponsonby, the Keeper of the Privy Purse, had envisaged in 1915 only three grades of medal – an international or allied war medal, a British war medal, and a ' war star' that could be given to civilians for their contribution to the war effort. He was also prepared to consider some modification of the existing Imperial Service Order. But his proposal quickly became entangled in questions of precedence after the King had decided that he wished to see a permanent honour and not just a special recognition of civilian contributions to bringing victory in 'the Great War'.[8]

On the second occasion discussion on the future of the Order was coloured by a recent demonstration of the award's appeal to the common man. Harold Wilson in 1965 had recommended to the Queen that the MBE should be awarded to each of 'the fabulous four' members of the Beatles whose group had been an astounding success in popular music. This gesture had given the Order a much higher profile in public awareness. The investiture ceremony for the Beatles at Buckingham Palace on 28 October had attracted large crowds of fans and a massive press coverage.

There was a division of opinion in 1966 on whether the OBE should in future simply be renamed or whether it should be replaced by another Order deemed more appropriate for 'the end of Empire'. The essential difference between the consultations of 1962-64 and the consideration of the Duke's proposal in 1966 was that Mr. Sandys was arguing only for a change of name while the Duke wanted to see a new Order. The Duke's first suggestion was for an 'Order of St. James', but he then thought that the addition of two or three ranks to one of the existing orders of chivalry might be equally appropriate. The Duke went on to bring the subject to the fore by asking the armed forces to rethink the principles of awards for gallantry. He suggested that all gallantry awards should be open to all three services and that the award should be the same for all ranks. The distinction between a cross for officers and a medal for other ranks ought to be abandoned. The failure of the Chiefs of Staff to agree a way forward across all services later seemed symptomatic of the treatment already given to the Duke's principal suggestion.[9]

Mr. Sandys' initiative failed because there was no general agreement about a new name for the award. All kinds of proposals were considered from 'Order of British Excellence' to dedications to saints such as 'Order of St George'. In these conditions the Honours Committee was unable to make a clear recommendation to the Prime Minister and the Queen.

The Duke's initiative failed because it came at a critical moment in the history of the reduction of British power. The fiftieth anniversary of the Order in 1967 happened to coincide with major shifts in the disposition of British influence. Cabinet was faced with the possibility of having to take unpopular decisions. The Defence and Foreign Policy Committee of Cabinet (OPD) chaired by the Prime Minister became a major forum for considering the options. An unforeseen obstacle to thinking about the alternatives to be considered on economic policy was the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) by Southern Rhodesia in October 1965. The agenda of the OPD Committee came to be dominated by items on Rhodesia during the spring of 1966. Significantly ministers asked civil servants to consider where economies might be made in order to reduce foreign exchange expenditure. The principal decisions on such reductions were made after a working party under the chairmanship of Philip Rogers had reported on the costs of defence and overseas aid.[10]

What came to be called 'the July measures' were the decisions taken in the summer of 1966 to deal with the balance of payments problem. Ministers placed a moratorium on key areas of public expenditure during three anxious days, 19, 20 and 21 July. England's victory in the Football World Cup match on 30 July did not lessen the tension inside government. The working party had emphasised the differences in the practicability of timing the cuts. The 'confrontation' with Indonesia could not be abandoned immediately and the withdrawal from Aden had to be phased. Savings could only be made by some kind of planned rundown of expenditure in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

Some of the strains imposed on civil servants in 1966 also came from the redundancies and early retirements envisaged as a consequence of these proposed departmental mergers. The Prime Minister's delay in implementing the Colonial Office/Commonwealth Relations Office merger was made more stressful by the question of a second merger coming onto the agenda. Instead of one service but two departments, there was a strong possibility of further redundancies if the newly created Commonwealth Relations Office was then taken into the Foreign Office. The plan for the first merger was ready in March 1966. Doubts then still surrounded a possible second merger. Sir Paul Gore-Booth, the permanent secretary of the Foreign Office but not the head of the Diplomatic Service, found himself responsible for recommending who should be appointed to fill the new pattern of senior posts and who should be made redundant. It was at this point that he was compelled to ruminate on the future of Britain as a second rate power.[11]

The United Kingdom itself, awash with ideas on 'modernisation', had for twenty years faced the prospect of what was required 'after Empire'.

The Duke's proposal came just at the moment when there seemed to be no alternative to a repetition of the 1961 application for Britain to join the European Community. For the first time in 1965 the volume of trade between Britain and Europe exceeded that between Britain and the Commonwealth. There seemed to be few economic benefits for Britain in Commonwealth trade. Furthermore, 1966 was also the moment of danger for the pound sterling. The United Kingdom balance of payments was sufficiently weak for government to be faced with the prospect of having to devalue the currency. Harold Wilson's renewed administration was compelled to devalue in the following year.

The argument used by officials against the Duke's proposal was that there was simply no demand from overseas countries for a change in the Order of the British Empire. But this in fact disguised their much more serious concern about a rapidly changing pattern of Commonwealth regimes and of British overseas responsibilities. Overseas countries could not be expected to contribute with any enthusiasm to discussions of the honours system. The United Kingdom itself, awash with ideas on 'modernisation', had for twenty years faced the prospect of what was required

'after Empire'. By 1966 there had already been much reflection on the diminished superiority of the 'white races' from Europe which had secured colonial empires.

The Prime Minister himself, Harold Wilson, in so far as he was prepared to spend time considering the principles of the honours system, began to come round to a view that the most obvious and popular reform would be to decouple the award of honours from steps in the promotion of rank through the Diplomatic Service, the Home Civil Service and the armed forces. It sometimes looked as if the principal contents of any list of names submitted to the monarch were those of recently promoted officials. Honours seemed as automatic as pay and allowances. They followed promotions in rank. His announcement on 5 July 1966 suggested that he was more interested in this 'decoupling' than in any new awards.[12]

It seemed an inopportune moment to introduce an 'Order of Britain' which might be awarded in a manner similar to that of the 'Order of Canada' or any similar innovation. In spite of a leak to the *Daily Express* which announced that the OBE was to be replaced by a new Elizabethan Order, the Honours Committee on 7 October 1966 therefore decided to take no action on the Duke's proposal. It was agreed that the OBE was anachronistic, but that the British people would be better served if they gradually became accustomed to this anomaly rather than suddenly having to face a more 'modern' recognition of the services given by ordinary people. No subsequent regime has dared to challenge this conclusion.

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John Michael Lee is an emeritus professor of politics in the University of Bristol. Two of his books dealt with colonial policy: *Colonial Development and Good Government* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1967) and, with Martin Petter, *The Colonial Office, War and Development Policy* (Maurice Temple Smith, London, 1982).

Out and about in D. H. Lawrence country

Trevor Osgerby

Eastwood is a busy, small town, about twelve miles west of Nottingham. It lies just within the county boundary with Derbyshire. Its name probably derived from a settlement in a clearing of the old Sherwood Forest. It sits mostly on a hilltop, which is the meeting place for main roads from Derby, Mansfield and Nottingham. At this junction is the still flourishing 'Sun Inn', where, in 1817, the 'Pentrich Uprising', led by Jeremiah Brandreth, mostly petered out and where, in 1832, so a plaque informs us, the Midland Railway was formed by a meeting of interested parties. The irony about the latter event is that Eastwood lost both its railway station and its line in the 1960s and is now some distance from the rail network.

But Eastwood's main claim to fame is literary. The novelist David Herbert Lawrence was born on 11 September 1885 at No. 8a Victoria Street. A brown sign just after the start of Nottingham Road now directs the visitor to his Birthplace Museum, a former terraced house. He was baptised on 29 November, at St. Mary's, the Eastwood Parish Church, which a visitor interested in history would find disappointing, as the only old part now left is the tower, the rest being a modern structure, which replaced the main building after a disastrous fire in the 1960s. But there are still many historical Lawrence associations in Eastwood and the surrounding area.

D. H. Lawrence's Birthplace Museum

In Lawrence's time, Eastwood was a mining town, at the centre of a large coalfield. Now, all the pits are long gone and the former slag heaps grassed over, making the area much more pleasant. Lawrence's father, Arthur, was a mining contractor. He was born at Brinsley, about two miles from Eastwood, and worked most of his life at Brinsley Pit (closed in the 1950s and now the Brinsley Headstocks Country Park, part of the Lawrence Trails). Lawrence's mother, Lydia, originally from Manchester, was well educated and had been a teacher. She had a love of reading and books, mostly borrowed from the nearby Mechanics Institute, a building now marked with a Lawrence plaque. She did not want any of her three sons to go down the pit, like their father, but was only really successful in this ambition with 'Bert' (as he was known in the family). As he grew up, he also used the Institute for learning, but she mostly failed to inspire a lasting love of this in her other children. She always felt an 'outsider' in the tight mining community of Eastwood and resented the town. Lawrence shared this feeling with her and strove to be different.

For those wishing to explore Lawrence's associations, there is a 'D.H.Lawrence Literary Trail', marked on the pavements in Eastwood by a continuous blue line and by many plaques affixed to buildings, or sites, connected with him. Some of these contain appropriate quotes from his

Images courtesy of Trevor Osgerby

Nottingham High School

works, especially *Sons and Lovers*, written by Lawrence in 1913. This book has become famous for his early life, on which it was based, but, as Lawrence pointed out, many events and people in it were fictitious and he himself was *not* 'Paul Morel', the hero (or anti-hero) of the book. Nevertheless, it is possible to recognise the Eastwood of his time in his descriptions.

The Blue Line Trail links the Birthplace with three other addresses in Eastwood where the Lawrence family lived before 1914. Two of these Lawrence residences are confirmed in the 1891 and 1901 Censuses. Anyone following the Trail should be aware that these three houses are private residences and they are asked not to disturb the current occupants.

The most important building on the Trail is Durban House, which stands on the Mansfield Road, just below the top of Eastwood hill. Well restored, this imposing Victorian building is the main Lawrence Museum. In Lawrence's time, it was the offices of Barber, Walker & Co., who owned the Brinsley Pit and other mines in the area. The families of both Barber and Walker lived in grand houses nearby, one of which survives today further down Mansfield Road as Eastwood Hall, a modern Conference Centre. Since Lydia knew that Arthur would drink his wages away in his favourite pub, 'The Three Tuns' (also on the Trail), she would send the young Bert to collect his father's money from Durban House. Lawrence hated this task, but realised that it was necessary if the family were to survive. The present Durban House has a Lawrence Exhibition, mementos of his life and writings and local tourist information, together with a pleasant café and ample parking.

Although he disliked Eastwood, the young Lawrence loved the local countryside, with its wide views. He called it 'The country of my heart' and often spoke fondly of it in later life, when he was far away. He and his companions would go for long walks, usually on Sundays, enjoying the fresh air. Many of these walks are preserved today by local footpaths, where boards identify the features mentioned by Lawrence. A favourite walk was to Haggs Farm (about three miles from Eastwood), where he was made very welcome by the Chambers family, whose daughter, Jessie, provided his first romantic adventures. Now, although you cannot approach Haggs Farm, it is possible to enjoy much of the same walk via Moorgreen Reservoir.

Lawrence's escape from Eastwood and its pits came through education. Near the Trail is the former Beauvale Board School, which Lawrence attended. The buildings remain much as he knew them and part of them is now named

Durban House


Beauvale School

after him. Although Lawrence hated the life there, he absorbed the learning and the Headmaster coached him so that in 1898 he became the first boy from Eastwood to win a County Scholarship to the fee paying Nottingham High School. In 1902, he was a pupil-teacher at the British School in Albert Street, Eastwood, the site of which is marked by a Trail plaque. Soon after this, he enrolled on a Teaching Certificate course at the then Nottingham University College, attending tuition in the present Arkwright building of Nottingham Trent University, where another plaque to him is situated inside. At the time of writing, this building is not open to visitors, as it is being renovated by the University.

Although Lawrence left the area to teach in Croydon, he frequently returned, especially when his mother became ill. Her death in 1910 changed his life and made him determined to become a writer, as she had encouraged. His first work, *The White Peacock* appeared in 1911, followed soon after by *Sons and Lovers*. Both books draw heavily on his early life in Eastwood and Nottingham. Indeed, it was in Nottingham in 1912 that his life changed forever. Enjoying the hospitality of Professor Weekley from the University College, he talked to his wife, Frieda. This meeting quickly turned to love and Lawrence went away with Frieda. Not only had he gone off with another man's wife, but she was also German, from a country with which war was likely. After that, he rarely returned to the Nottingham area. He died in France in 1930 and Frieda took his ashes to the U.S.A., where they had lived happily.

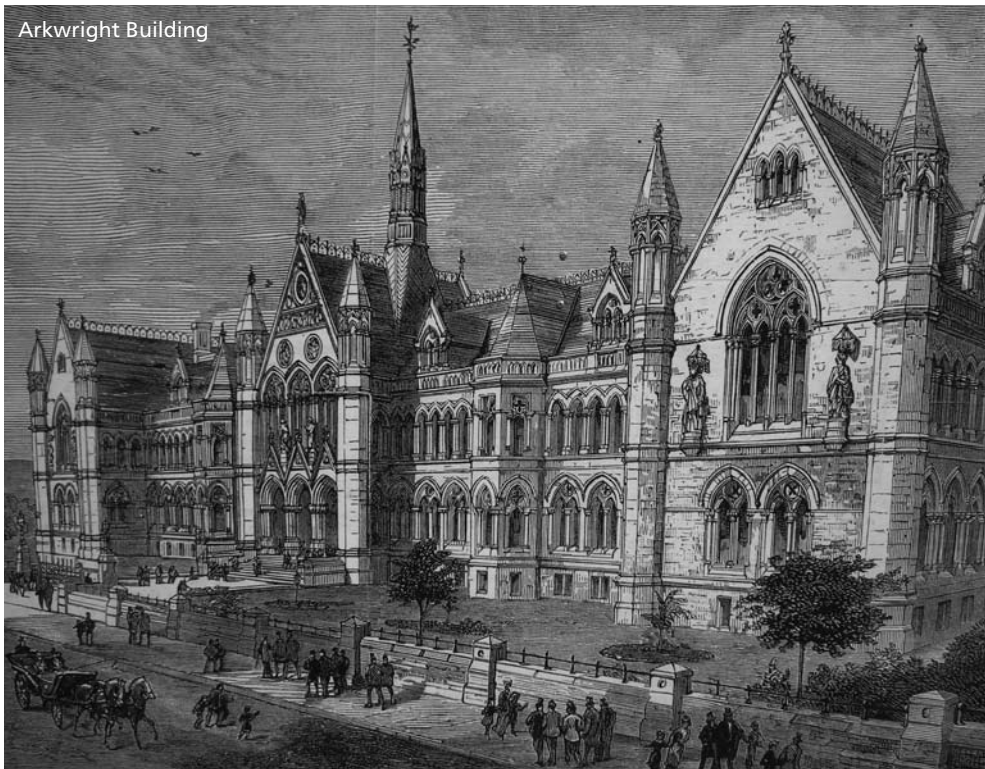
Lawrence has remained a controversial figure, especially in his native country. Many in the Eastwood area still regard him as 'Dirty Bertie', especially after his most notorious book, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, published in 1928, but banned until the famous trial in 1960. Some point out his many disparaging remarks about the people and towns of Eastwood and Nottingham, despite his professed love for the surrounding counryside. There are those who condemn his private life and one indicator about the strength of local feeling was shown recently when a campaign to bring his ashes back from America to either Nottingham or Eastwood was rejected and not just on the grounds of expense.

Yet, a visitor to Eastwood cannot miss the promotion of Lawrence. Apart from the Trail and Museums, his personally chosen 'Phoenix' symbol is prominent in the town. The Library has a large collection devoted to him and there are regular 'Lawrence Festivals'. Many people walk the Lawrence Trails each year, guided by informative leaflets, which follow the sites of his early life. For a 'Lawrence' visit to nearby Nottingham, there is the excellent new tram service, starting at Phoenix Park, not far from Eastwood. If a more serious study is required, there are many books available on the life and works of Eastwood's own literary genius.

Trevor Osgerby is a retired history teacher. He is also Chairman of the Mid-Trent Branch and served recently on H.A. Council for six years.


Brinsley Headstocks


The Sun Inn


Arkwright Building

Enjoyable and constructive learning at Tutbury Castle

Imagine, within the setting of a medieval castle, a decidedly Tudor ambience being enjoyed by two hundred and twenty primary school pupils aged between seven and eleven. This was the recipe for the annual Young Historian Day promoted and organised by the Young Historian Project on Wednesday 14 May at Tutbury Castle in Staffordshire. Part of the Duchy of Lancaster estate, with strong associations with John of Gaunt and having been one of the more notable sites where Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned, the Castle towers over its neighbouring town and the River Dove, which separates Staffordshire from Derbyshire. Its bailey offers a safe and creative environment for active historical learning. This year three schools participated in the programme of events: John of Rolleston Primary School from Rolleston-on-Dove, Tower View Primary School from Burton-upon-Trent, and St Michael's Church of England Primary School from Lichfield.

On the three previous occasions, an audience with Mary Queen of Scots [aka Lesley Smith, the curator and lessee of the Castle] had been the high point of the day's programme but, as she had been expected to be away filming for her Sky television programme, Henry VIII had been booked instead. He captivated the imagination of the children of various ages and took them back to the complications of Henry's marriages and his children. Alongside this the torturer explained graphically the punishments that could be applied in those days and Father Jerome revealed the uncertainties of his life on the run after the dissolution of his monastery. A demonstration of late medieval crafts and cooking materials and techniques completed the two hours of experience offered to each child. As it happened Lesley Smith's filming was cancelled and so many children did get a glimpse of Mary Queen of Scots in the bailey at lunch-time.

Members of the public who were visiting the Castle that day commented not just on the good behaviour of the children but also on the degree of concentration that they were all exhibiting. What the public were observing was very focused and intensive learning: the children were developing historical awareness by participating in role play, they were developing their sense of empathy with other people's experiences of life and they were gaining straightforward historical knowledge. This was evident to Roy Hughes of Leeds University and Dr Trevor James, the Director of the Young Historian Project, as they monitored the children's responses on the day but it has also been reflected in the subsequent evaluative feedback from the three schools.

What happens in this activity-based learning at Tutbury Castle is at the heart of what the Young Historian Project seeks to achieve: the essential intention is to encourage young people to develop a life-long enthusiasm for history which goes beyond the issue of whether or not they participate in history examinations to a frame of mind which recognises the importance of history to an understanding of everyday life. We believe that investment in this type of activity-based learning will bring substantial dividends in terms of future popular support and respect for history.

Images courtesy of Roy Hughes.