

## THE EMPLOYMENT OF HISTORY GRADUATES: AN UPDATE

### Introduction

When *The Employment of History Graduates* was published in 2005<sup>1</sup>, the discipline of history was facing a number of challenges the most significant of which was the pressure on its practitioners to demonstrate its 'relevance' to the economic needs of Britain in the twenty-first century. On the whole, the popularity of the subject had not been significantly damaged by the utilitarian and instrumentalist emphases in higher education policy and the skills-fixated agenda that had come to dominate political thinking about the purpose of higher education in the previous twenty-five years. It was also holding up remarkably well in the face of the introduction of tuition fees and the restriction on its potential market posed by two-thirds of school pupils dropping the subject at age fourteen. Indeed, the number of history undergraduates had risen quite dramatically in the 1990s by around 65%. Although this growth had stalled at the start of the new millennium, it soon resumed its upward trend; progress into postgraduate study remained among the best of all the arts and humanities disciplines; and employment opportunities were generally plentiful.

The challenges of 2005 pale in significance when set alongside those currently facing history. It has been hit with a double whammy: the savage increase in tuition fees recommended by the Browne Report combined with the slashing of the teaching grant to all but the so-called STEM (science) subjects projected in the government Spending Review. This extremely narrow, utilitarian approach to education threatens the very existence of subjects deemed not to have much 'market-value' and, coupled with the hike in fees, is likely to deter all but the most affluent from pursuing courses in the arts and humanities. At the time of writing, these proposals are meeting with fierce resistance and may well be amended, though almost certainly not abandoned, as they pass through parliament. However, if implemented anything like in full, they will almost certainly inflict substantial damage on university history. After an initial surge in applications for entry in 2011 as students seek places before the new fees kick in, the growth in numbers is likely to be put into sharp reverse and some departments may not survive. More critical is the fear that the progressive 'democratisation' of a history education will be halted as all but the well-off are deterred from pursuing a course of study that will saddle them with long-term debt.

It is in this context that the History Subject Centre, which has done so much to promote university history teaching in the last decade and is now itself a hapless victim of the cuts, has decided to issue an updated version of *The Employment of History Graduates*. The natural instinct is to resist and continue to rail against the marketisation and privatisation of higher education and to celebrate the virtues, and the continued importance, of a humane education properly funded by the state. These things are vital and must be done. But it was always a key contention, and a prime objective, of *Employment* to show that history was more than just an interesting subject of study and that, rather, it produced rounded individuals with the skills and talents needed in the modern world and that this claim was borne out by evidence of the great success in diverse walks of life of countless of its graduates. That case was made at length in the 2005 publication and will not be repeated here. Instead, the present short account provides an update on changes in graduate employment since 2005 and on the careers of yet more famous history graduates whose celebrity has come to my notice in the intervening period. I have also departed from my practice in 2005 of focussing only on first degrees from UK HEIs by including here history postgraduates who had pursued a different subject as undergraduates as well as some famous US history graduates. As a result, nearly one hundred names have been added to the repertoire of history's high achievers. While the message of this and the previous publication, of both collective and individual achievement, is unlikely to shake the government's *parti pris* agenda, it will hopefully provide some encouragement to those young people wondering whether the huge investment in a university history education is worthwhile and with some ammunition to teachers to persuade them of it.

David Nicholls

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## First Destinations

The annual Prospects publication *What Do Graduates Do?* remains the only comprehensive survey of graduate employment. The most recent, published in 2010, provides data on the graduates of 2009.<sup>ii</sup> The guide is compiled by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) using information supplied by all UK universities and records the destinations of graduates of all subjects six months after they have received their degrees. Although it provides a useful snapshot of early career choices, it does not tell us nearly enough about longer term employment. Almost a third of graduates pursue a further qualification when they have completed their first degrees, a sizeable number take casual or temporary jobs and a small percentage have not by then found employment. These limitations have been long recognised but, as yet, nothing has been done to rectify them through the provision of a regular series of statistics on jobs three or more years after graduation when employment patterns are more settled. The cautionary advice in the first edition of *Employment* about using the HESA statistics must therefore still be heeded.

Overall, the number of history graduates has continued to increase quite dramatically year-on-year in the first decade of the twenty-first century apart from slight dips in 2002 and also in 2009 when there was a small decline following a considerable increase in 2008. The total number of history graduates rose by 65% from 3177 in 1989 to 5248 in 1998. By 2009, the total had reached 9800, an increase of nearly 87% on the 1998 figure and more than trebling that of just twenty years earlier. In 1989 there had been 16% more men than women; by 1995 there were virtually the same number of female as male graduates; thereafter the balance shifted in favour of women but the gap has narrowed from 20% in 1998 and 2002 to just 5% in 2009.

The banking-induced recession has had a significant impact on the proportion of history graduates entering UK employment within six months of graduation. This figure had remained steady at around 50% for most years after 1989 and had reached as high as 54% in 1998, but in 2009 it slumped to 47.1%. There was a corresponding rise in the number unemployed from 6% in 1998 during the economic boom to 9.2% in 2009 though this is still slightly below the levels reached in the late 80s and early 90s and, indeed, was less than the previous year. As the Prospects guide observes: 'This is remarkable given the effects of the economic recession in 2009 when graduate recruitment by the members of the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR) fell by 8.9% with a proportionate effect on all other graduate employment.' The extremely strong showing of history in terms of the percentage of its students compared with those from other disciplines going on to postgraduate study has continued. 14.4% of all history graduates were pursuing a higher degree, a proportion considerably higher than the national average of 8.1%. When other forms of postgraduate study are included, the figure for 2009 rises to 32.2% which is above the average of 29.2% for the four years analysed in the 2005 edition of *Employment*. The increase may be a product of the rise in the total of those with first and upper second-class degrees but it is perhaps more a reflection of the difficulty history graduates are now encountering in the jobs market. The high uptake of postgraduate study nevertheless confirms the point made in the previous report – namely, that a history degree provides a firm basis for further career development in a wide range of vocational occupations. Among those cited in the Prospects 2010 report were multimedia broadcast journalism, museum studies, real estate, law, teaching, automotive engineering and pilot training. One change in the way the Prospects Guide now records the numbers engaged in further study that was not present in the statistics for 2002 is the inclusion of the percentage of those who are working while studying – nearly a quarter of the total. This may be symptomatic of the impact of tuition fees and the rising

costs of higher education but without comparable data for earlier years, it is impossible to be certain.

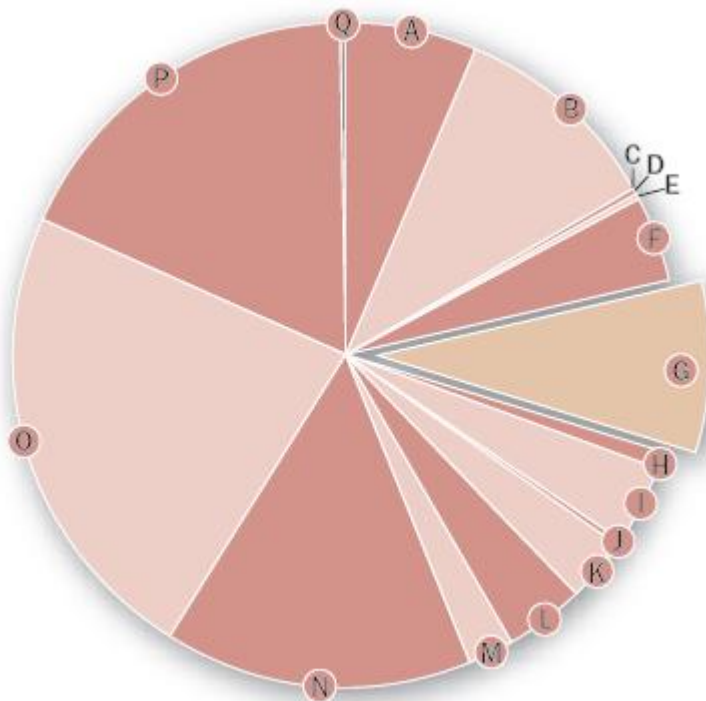
The following pie-chart and data taken from page 59 of the Prospects Guide provide a detailed breakdown of the jobs of the 4445 history graduates of 2009 who told the survey that they were in some form of paid employment six months after completing their courses.

**Type of work for those in employment**

**2420** Female

**2030** Male

**4445** Total (Note: Five respondents did not disclose their gender)



Occupations of those in employment	%	Examples
<b>A</b> Marketing, Sales and Advertising Professionals	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>Marketing Executive:</b> Capital group
<b>B</b> Commercial, Industrial and Public Sector Managers	<b>10.3%</b>	<b>Management trainee:</b> Enterprise Rent a Car
<b>C</b> Scientific Research, Analysis and Development Professionals	<b>0.0%</b>	
<b>D</b> Engineering Professionals	<b>0.2%</b>	
<b>E</b> Health Professionals & Associate Professionals	<b>0.5%</b>	
<b>F</b> Education Professionals	<b>4.0%</b>	FE Lecturer <b>Tefl:</b> British Council

		<b>Careers Advisor:</b> Connexions
<b>G</b> Business and Financial Professionals and Associate Professionals	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>International Manager:</b> HSBC <b>Tax inspector:</b> HM Revenue and Customs <b>Financial crimes Associate:</b> RBS
<b>H</b> Information Technology Professionals	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>Web project officer,</b> Political party <b>Librarian,</b> Stockport <b>Games tester,</b> SEGA
<b>I</b> Arts, Design, Culture and Sports Professionals	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>Editorial assistant:</b> History press <b>Gallery assistant:</b> Art gallery in Manchester
<b>J</b> Legal Professionals	<b>0.3%</b>	
<b>K</b> Social & Welfare Professionals	<b>3.2%</b>	
<b>L</b> Other Professionals, Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	<b>3.9%</b>	Police Officer <b>Chef,</b> Brewers restaurants <b>Proofreader,</b> Global Data <b>Auctioneers assistant,</b> Auction house
<b>M</b> Numerical Clerks and Cashiers	<b>2.1%</b>	
<b>N</b> Other Clerical and Secretarial Occupations	<b>15.0%</b>	
<b>O</b> Retail, Catering, Waiting and Bar Staff	<b>23.0%</b>	
<b>P</b> Other Occupations	<b>17.9%</b>	<b>Personal trainer:</b> Fitness First
<b>Q</b> Unknown Occupations	<b>0.2%</b>	

Category G, Business and Financial Professionals and Associate Professionals, consists of chartered and certified accountants (1.1%), finance and investment analysts/advisers (1.2%), personnel and recruitment consultants/officers (1.9%), and other business and financial professionals and associate professionals (4.6%).

The analysis of the trends in history graduate employment using the Prospects statistics for 1989, 1995, 1998 and 2002 showed a fairly consistent distribution over that thirteen-year period with three sectors accounting on average for over 55% of the first time jobs – namely, the clerical, retail and managerial sectors – and the several types of ‘professional’ employment creating a fourth with 20% of the total. Because of changes in the way jobs are categorised in the Prospects Guides it is

very difficult to make comparisons over time. However, what can be said is that the four general sectors of employment identified in the 2005 analysis still preponderated in 2009 accounting for over 82% of the first jobs of history graduates, though the distribution has shifted somewhat. The most significant change has been the growth in the proportion employed in retail and catering – from under 10% in 1998 to 23% in 2009 and a corresponding fall in the proportion in managerial, business, commercial, marketing and financial positions. This is probably a result of students holding on to term-time jobs while waiting for employment more suited to their qualifications. The proportion entering clerical positions has also halved from around a third in 1998 and 2002 to a sixth in 2009. The more ‘conventional’ areas for history graduates such as the library, museum information and educational services have held steady at around 7% as has the proportion, approximately 6%, entering teacher training.

The Prospects Guide observes that the average salaries for ‘Arts, Creative Arts and Humanities’ graduates in 2009 was £17,387, somewhat below the average salary across all disciplines of £19,695. However, this generic category includes art and design, English, media studies, language and performing arts as well as history graduates and salaries varied from £14,625 for a Fine Arts graduate to £20,012 for a European Studies graduate, the latter subject more akin to history than the former. Also, those graduates entering training schemes with major employers earned on average £25,000 per annum.

The most striking change, then, since 2005 in the employment destinations of history graduates six months after graduation is the shift in the balance from managerial and clerical to retail jobs. This is symptomatic of the difficulties they have faced in an increasingly competitive labour market with many of them in jobs (such as waiting and bar staff) that do not require a graduate qualification. This trend is likely to continue for the foreseeable future where, it has been estimated, there will be an average of forty-five applicants for every graduate job. It is important, however, to reiterate that the non-graduate jobs are usually temporary and casual and many history graduates will, within three years of graduating, as the 2005 report showed, have found employment that is more commensurate with their academic qualifications while some will have embarked on careers that will lead to fame, celebrity and prosperity.

### **Famous History Graduates**

*The Employment of History Graduates* included a section on famous history graduates designed to show that a history degree is the pathway to a wide-range of careers in which its graduates have been eminently successful. It was followed up with a DVD - *Choosing History at 14* - produced on behalf of the Historical Association that included film of interviews with many distinguished history alumni drawn from different occupations.<sup>iii</sup> These famous graduates spoke eloquently about how important studying history had been both to their careers and their life experiences. History graduates were shown to have been successful not only in conventional occupations such as teaching, academic, clerical and administrative, PR, retail and catering, politics, and library, museum and information services but also in some which at first sight might seem more unlikely, such as business, finance and law. A history degree, it was suggested, introduced its students to transferable skills that made them well-equipped to pursue a multiplicity of careers and to do so with great success.

Inevitably, a few famous graduates were missed in the 2005 publication. Several more have attained celebrity since 2005. The following account therefore supplements the 2005 text and, taken together, the two provide a more complete and up-to-date survey of distinguished history alumni, though the cautionary note registered in 2005 still applies, namely that there are no doubt many more still to be identified. The job-categories here are the same as in the 2005 publication and are treated in exactly the same order to ease cross-referencing.

## Media

History graduates are to be found in all branches of the media and *Employment* furnished examples of famous news and sports journalists in newspapers, radio and television; celebrity entertainers from comedians to more serious documentary broadcasters and presenters; and editors and managers. This last group might just as easily be included in the business category for it embraces individuals with the same entrepreneurial skills. New names uncovered since 2005 in the realm of media management include Mark Damazer (Cambridge), the Controller of BBC Radio 4 and 7; Ilse Howling (international history and politics, Leeds) who, after several years at the BBC, became the managing director at Freeview; Daisy Goodwin (Cambridge), a TV producer and writer and the founder of Silver River Productions; Jane Featherstone (German and history, Leeds) who is the creative director at Kudos Films responsible for such popular television 'hits' as *Life on Mars*, *Ashes to Ashes*, *Spooks* and *Hustle*. Sian Williams (English and history, Oxford Brookes) can be seen regularly on the presenters' sofa of BBC 1's *Breakfast Show*, but those who prefer the radio for their morning's news and light entertainment can tune in instead to Harriet Scott (Hull), Breakfast Show presenter for Heart FM. Dan Snow (Oxford), the son of TV journalist Peter Snow, is a presenter and populariser of history on the BBC appearing most frequently on *The One Show*. There are many history graduates working in the press, and two who have attained senior positions are Martin Ivens (Oxford), deputy editor of the *Sunday Times*, and Lionel Barber (German and modern history, Oxford), editor of the *Financial Times*. Lastly, to the list of high-profile history graduates turned comedians cited in 2005, we can now add the name of David Mitchell (Cambridge).

## Politics

The general election of 2010 produced a large crop of MPs who had studied history at university, some of them entering the Commons for the first time. There are far too many to list here. As in 2005, attention is focused on those who have attained ministerial rank. With the change in government, history lost a prime minister but it gained four new Conservative cabinet members: George Osborne (Oxford), chancellor of the exchequer; Andrew Mitchell (Cambridge), international development secretary; Owen Paterson (Cambridge), Northern Ireland secretary; and Caroline Spelman, environment secretary, whose degree in European studies from Sussex included a large element of history. Those with ministerial positions outside the cabinet are Greg Barker (modern history, economic history and politics, Royal Holloway), minister of state for energy and climate change; Simon Burns (Oxford), minister of state for health; and Chris Grayling (Cambridge), minister of state for employment. Angie Bray (St Andrew's) is parliamentary private secretary to Francis Maude, the minister for the cabinet office and paymaster general.

The public school, Oxbridge, Bullingdon Club cast of the Conservative cabinet has attracted much adverse comment but the Labour shadow cabinet is only marginally less elitist, demonstrating just how narrowly class-based UK governance is. As many shadow cabinet ministers – six – studied PPE at Oxford as did Tory cabinet ministers. One of the shadow cabinet studied history at university, Rosie Winterton (Hull), chief whip, and for a further four it was a part of their degree programmes: Liam Byrne (politics and modern history, Manchester), work and pensions; Caroline Flint (American literature, history and film studies, UEA), communities and local government; Douglas Alexander (politics and modern history, Edinburgh), foreign office; and Hilary Benn (Russian and east European studies, Sussex), leader of the house of commons and the only survivor from the historians in the 2005 cabinet. Outside of Westminster, mention should be made of Huw Brodie (Cambridge), director for rural affairs and heritage in the Welsh national assembly.

## Civil Service

History graduates enter the civil service as naturally and ineluctably as they do politics but without becoming household names in quite the same way. A historical education provides an excellent

foundation for a career in the diplomatic service as evidenced by the number of its graduates who work in the foreign and commonwealth office. A further six ambassadors can now be added to the four noted in 2005. They are: Keith Shannon (St Andrew's), ambassador to Moldova; Alexander Ellis (Cambridge), Portugal; Nigel Baker (Cambridge), Bolivia; Rupert Joy (Oxford), Uzbekistan; Damian Todd (Oxford), Poland; and Patricia Phillips (Cambridge), Angola. In addition, Jolyon Welsh (Cambridge) is the deputy high commissioner in Canberra, and Simon Manley (Oxford) is director of strategic threats at the FCO. Elsewhere, in the civil service, James Drummond (Cambridge) is director of the South Asia division in the department of international development; Stephen Kershaw (Oxford) is director of police reforms and resources at the home office; Alison Drayton (history and politics, Royal Holloway) is a director of the United Nations development programme; Nicola Roche (Birkbeck), at the department for culture, media and sport, is director of strategy on the government Olympic executive planning the 2012 London Games; and Nicholas Joicey (Bristol) is an international director at the treasury.

*Employment* also provided numerous examples of history graduates who were active in, or running, political 'think-tanks', watchdogs, national charities, or more general advisory bodies. More have now come to light. Peter Wanless (international history and politics, Leeds) is chief executive of the Big Lottery Fund; Angela Mason (Royal Holloway) is director of the women and equality unit and of Stonewall and chair of the Fawcett Society; Anne Longfield (Newcastle) is chief executive of 4Children, formerly the Kids Club Network; Alex Bole (modern history and politics, Southampton) is the campaign officer for UUK and former general secretary of NUS Europe; Mike Taylor (Staffordshire) founded the charity First Aid Africa; and Jane Ashcroft (Stirling) is managing director of Anchor Trust, the largest provider of housing, care and support for older people throughout England. History graduates continue as well to find senior posts in the sphere of public health: David Fulligan (Cambridge) is chief executive of Bolton NHS foundation trust. On this, admittedly limited, evidence of history graduates who work in the public sector, the FCO and other branches of the civil service, like the upper reaches of politics, are still the fiefdom of male Oxbridge graduates while charities attract graduates, including many women, from less privileged bastions of academia, which tells us something about the persistence and character of the Establishment in twenty-first century Britain.<sup>iv</sup>

### *Church*

I have found no new names to add to the 2005 list of history graduates who are pursuing a career in the church.

### *Security Services*

A small number of history graduates serve in the armed forces, police and prisons but, again, their education appears to be no bar to their rising to the top. In the police service, Paul Hancock (Leeds) attained the rank of chief constable of Bedfordshire, while lieutenant general Sir Alexander Shirreff (Oxford) has had a distinguished career in the army and, in 2008, became commander of the Allied Rapid Reactions Corp.

### *Law*

Many history graduates go on to study law and many rise to senior positions. Once again, Oxbridge's role in underpinning the Establishment is evidenced by its contribution to filling the judiciary. The following four QCs all studied history at Oxford – James Guthrie, Christopher Butcher, Duncan Matthews and Bankim Thanki, while a fifth - Alistair Schaff - did so at Cambridge (jointly with law). Robert Warnock (UEA) is a circuit judge.

### *Trade Unions*

As was observed in 2005, it would be wrong to conclude, on the evidence of the career trajectories of its Oxbridge graduates, that studying history inevitably leads to service on behalf of the Establishment. As we saw then, there are many history graduates who pursue more 'radical' careers, though in most cases they have not studied at Oxbridge! Frances O'Grady (politics and modern history, Manchester), the deputy general secretary of the TUC, can now be added to the list of trade union leaders from 2005.

### *Museums, Libraries and the Arts*

This sector is a major employer of history graduates and many more names can be added to the sizeable number referenced in 2005. The museum and heritage sectors inevitably attract history graduates and several are now running major galleries, managing national collections or organising heritage sites. To the nine named in 2005, we can add six more: Baroness Kay Andrews (history and social studies of science, Sussex) is the chair of English Heritage; David Fleming, who studied at Leeds and Leicester, is director of the National Museums, Liverpool and president of the Museums Association; major-general Jonathan Riley (Leeds) is master of the Royal Armouries, Leeds; Jane Roberts (history and history of art, Queen Mary) is curator of the Windsor Castle print room; Alexander Nairne (history and economics, Oxford) is director of the National Portrait Gallery; and lieutenant-general Jonathon Riley (BA geography, MA history, Leeds, PhD modern history, Cranfield), director general and master of the Armouries. Jonathon might just as readily have been included under security services for he had a distinguished thirty-six year career in the army prior to his current position. He is also a prolific author of military histories. Mention should perhaps also be made of Alan Davey, chief executive of the Arts Council of England, who studied English at Birmingham and Oxford before beginning a part-time PhD in history at Birkbeck.

History, as we know, teaches excellent research and writing skills and many of its graduates go on to pursue postgraduate qualifications in the subject and to teach and write about it. However, as in 2005 I do not intend to include the many well-known authors of academic or popular history as I'm more concerned to show the 'transferability' of historical skills to other careers. But creative writers are fair game. Hence Kate Williams (BA Oxford, MA Queen Mary, DPhil Oxford) appears here not because she is a best-selling author of historical biographies (Emma Hamilton and Queen Victoria) but because she also writes historical novels, securing a £1 million book deal with Penguin in 2010 to write two of them, and because she is also involved in work for stage, screen, radio and television. William Smethurst (Lancaster) is a novelist, BBC journalist and television and radio scriptwriter, with *The Archers* among his credits. Others include the author Anne Fine (history and politics, Warwick) who has written over fifty books for children and was appointed the second Children's Laureate, and John Charles Wilsher (English, history and art, Lancaster), the prolific writer of police and crime dramas for radio and television whose credits include *Between the Lines* and *The Bill*.

There are still very few actors and 'popstars' to report. Sean Gilder (history and geography, Queen Mary), best-known for the role of Paddy Maguire in Channel 4's *Shameless*, is the only UK actor of note I have found, but there are several from the USA who are mentioned below. Phil Selway (English and history, Liverpool John Moores) is the drummer of *Radiohead*. *Iron Maiden's* Bruce Dickinson (Queen Mary) joins Chris Martin and Neil Tennant from 2005 in the category of lead singers of platinum-selling popular musicians. He also merits inclusion as the author of two comic novels and for his sporting prowess as an Olympic standard fencer. In 2005, there were too few sports personalities to merit a separate category and Steve Coppel was relegated to a footnote. Now we can put him in the company of Mike Atherton (Cambridge), the former England cricket captain and latterly commentator, and Martin Cross (history and politics, Queen Mary), who won a gold medal in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games in the coxless fours rowing alongside Steve Redgrave. He is now a journalist for the *Guardian* and a sports commentator. Lastly, we have Carol



Isherwood (Leeds), founder and director of the Rugby Football Union for Women and a former captain of the Great Britain rugby union squad.

### *Universities*

When I first analysed the degree-subject backgrounds of vice-chancellors in post in January 2001, I found that 'the number of historians who had reached this pinnacle of academic leadership and management was considerably larger than would be produced by a proportionate distribution across all disciplines'. Only economics had produced more - just - 11.5 to history's 10.5.<sup>v</sup> I concluded that 'the capacity of historians to attain such high positions in statistically significant ways says something about their all-round abilities'.<sup>vi</sup> But was 2001 a 'rogue' year, unusual in the over-representation of history graduates among university heads? When I looked at the data again in 2005, five of the history VCs from 2001 had gone but four new ones had been appointed thereby maintaining their disproportionately high representation. For the present report, I have examined the subject backgrounds of the heads of 126 HEIs in post in February 2011.<sup>vii</sup> History (12.83) has now moved ahead of economics (10.5). Engineering (10) and physics (6.83) occupy third and fourth places respectively, reversing their positions of 2001. Even if the VCs are ranked by counting every subject they studied as one, rather than *pro rata*, the rank order remains substantially the same, though history's overall lead becomes still more impressive with fifteen to economics' eleven. The fact that the top four places are occupied by the same subjects<sup>viii</sup> suggests some correlation between degree background and academic leadership, though empirical evidence from a much longer time-span would be needed before any firm conclusions could be drawn.

The numerical preponderance of history cannot be explained away by the persistence of the same people in these jobs. Only one (Sir Rick Trainor) survives from 2001 and a further two (David Eastwood and Madeleine Atkins) from 2005. Trainor (Brown and Oxford) has moved from Greenwich to King's College, London and Eastwood (Oxford) from East Anglia to Birmingham. Atkins (history and law, Cambridge) remains at Coventry. The other current incumbents are: Louise Richardson (Trinity College, Dublin) at St Andrew's; Edward Acton (York) at East Anglia; Clive Behagg (Birmingham) at Chichester; Pat Loughrey (Ulster) at Goldsmith's College, London; Peter John (Swansea) at Thames Valley; Van Gore (history and politics, Sheffield) at Southampton Solent; Geoffrey Crossick (Cambridge) at London; Sir Howard Davies (history and modern languages, Oxford) at the LSE; Joan Stringer (history and politics, Keele) at Edinburgh Napier; Robin Baker (history and eastern European languages, London) at Canterbury Christ Church; Joan Stringer (history and politics, Keele) at Edinburgh Napier; Mary Stuart (history and drama, Cape Town) at Lincoln; Steve Olivier (history, philosophy and sports science, Rhodes) at Abertay Dundee; and Graham Upton (history and English, Sydney) at Cumbria. The last two were acting VCs at the time of the survey. Crossick replaced another history graduate, Sir Graeme Davies (Cambridge) as London's VC in September 2010, moving from Goldsmith's to make way for yet another historian, Loughrey. It is interesting to note the diverse range of universities where these VCs took their first degrees; university leadership does not appear to be an Oxbridge fiefdom like many of the top jobs in Britain.

Coincidentally, John Morgan of *Times Higher Education* undertook a survey of the education and pay of the UK's vice-chancellors at much the same time as my own. He covered 157 HEIs, the additional thirty-one comprising mainly university colleges and specialised institutes (such as the Institute of Cancer Research) which I had excluded from my investigation. Nevertheless, even this more extensive coverage yielded the same conclusion regarding history's predominance. It is, wrote Morgan, 'the most commonly read undergraduate degree among the sector's bosses'.<sup>ix</sup> Historians were in charge at two of the additional HEIs: Chris Husbands (Cambridge) at the Institute of Education and Margaret Noble (history and geography, Aberystwyth) at University College Plymouth. Morgan's finding that only 16% of VCs had sat their undergraduate degrees at Oxford or Cambridge also confirmed my own regarding the recruitment of VCs from non-traditional elites.

The replication in 2011 of the results for 2001 and 2005 suggests that the capacity of historians to continue to attain high positions in university management in significantly disproportionate numbers to their representation among the academic profession as a whole is more than coincidental. The managerial, organisational and leadership skills required to run large academic institutions are not dissimilar to those which have led history graduates to similar success in the realms of business and finance.

### *Business and Finance*

The finding in *Employment* that occasioned most comment, probably because it was not expected, was the great success of history graduates in the world of business and finance. But it isn't so remarkable. As I argued at the time, a history education fosters many of the skills that are intrinsic to entrepreneurial flair and achievement. So, it is no surprise that many more successful business people with history degrees have been identified since 2005. Most of their names will be less familiar, other than to readers of the financial press, than the companies for which they work. Tanya Sarne (Sussex) is the founder and creative director of the fashion company Ghost. Mark Cashmore (Lancaster) is the group chief executive officer of Smith News plc, the news division of WH Smith. Guy Vaughan Black (Cambridge) is the corporate affairs director and chairman of M & C Saatchi UK. Paul Chandler (Oxford) is chief executive of Traidcraft, the leading UK fair trade organisation. Benjamin Page (Oxford) is the chief executive of Ipsos MORI, the market research company well known for its public polls. Thomas Bloxham (politics and history, Manchester) co-founded and is now chairman of the property company Urban Splash. Timothy Matthews (Cambridge) is the chief executive of Remploy, the leading provider of jobs for people with disabilities or complex problems that hamper their employment prospects. In the financial sphere, Ben Hackham (economic and economic history, Manchester Metropolitan) is the managing director of Renaissance Capital, the Russian investment bank; Lindsay Bury (Cambridge) is chairman of the Electrical and General Investment Trust; and Michael McLintock (modern history and economics, Oxford) is chief executive of M & G Group Ltd, formerly Prudential M & G Asset Management. Lastly, the professional services company KPMG employs two Sussex history graduates: Mike Blake, chief finance officer, and David Elms, head of media.

### **Time and Place**

For the most part, the famous people identified here and in 2005 studied history at UK universities and are still alive. The list could have been hugely augmented by the inclusion of history graduates of other countries and of those now deceased. This would have entailed a great deal of additional research and was deemed of lesser interest to a UK readership and also unnecessary for the integrity of the central argument about the relationship between a history education and career success, though it would have reinforced it. However, some sense of how widening the scope of the research in terms of both time and place might enhance the overall argument can be gleaned from evidence from the United States. Shortly before *Employment* appeared in 2005, a book entitled *Top Careers for History Graduates* was published in America.<sup>x</sup> The book is nearly four hundred pages long and lists thirty-four careers most of which are equally valid for UK history graduates. They include: teachers from primary to university level; book, magazine and newspaper editors, writers and journalists; archivists, librarians, book conservators and museum curators; anthropologists, archaeologists and ethnoscientists; politicians, political scientists and lobbyists; cultural advisers and information brokers; demographers and genealogists; national and local government agents and officials, including intelligence officers; lawyers and judges; linguists; market researchers; and tour guides. It also lists a few famous US history graduates, some no longer alive and including four presidents (Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Richard Nixon and George W. Bush), three prominent statesmen (Henry Cabot Lodge, George McGovern and Newt Gingrich), four leading

business executives (Martha Stewart, Lee Iacocca, Carly Fiorina and Steve Forbes) and a sports broadcaster (Chris Berman). The success of UK history graduates in the realm of business and finance finds echoes in the US where, according to *Fortune* magazine, 38% of CEOs at the time *Top Careers* was published were majors in liberal arts. The careers of US history graduates therefore suggest that the UK experience is by no means unique.<sup>xi</sup>

## Conclusion

In 2005 I concluded that a 'truly remarkable number of history graduates have gone on to become the movers-and-shakers of modern-day Britain' and illustrated this by reference to the many top jobs they occupied. That conclusion remains substantially unchanged today. It might be averred that this success in the employment world is purely accidental or coincidental and has little or nothing to do with the education that these big hitters have experienced if it were not for the fact that, in the interviews with many of them for the Historical Association's DVD, they confirmed the important role that the skills they had acquired from studying history had played in preparing them for their careers. The question that naturally arises is – if a history education is such a boon to employability, why is its place in the curriculum not more widely promoted by the politicians who shape education policy, many of whom are themselves beneficiaries of just such an education? The threat posed by government policies to the future of a history education seems positively contradictory if not perverse. It is not that they don't appreciate its value as the interviews amply demonstrate. Could it be that, having themselves benefited, they are now pulling up the drawbridge? This explanation is too simple. Rather, what seems to be happening is a movement towards concentrating humanities subjects, including history, in a more select number of universities recruiting from an elite that has the capacity to pay the inflated fees that are now being demanded. In this way, that elite will continue to reproduce its control of the key jobs in civil society, the state and the economy. A history education will still play its part in this process but it will be increasingly denied to a large section of society thereby undoing the progress that has occurred gradually over the last fifty years in the democratisation of higher education. This is a depressing prospect for it means that attempts like the present one to trumpet the values of studying history and humanities generally will run up against policies designed to confine these benefits to a select few. Nevertheless, it is important to understand and continue to promote the virtues of such an education in order to encourage resistance to policies designed to restrict access to it.

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<sup>i</sup> David Nicholls, *The Employment of History Graduates* (HEA Subject Centre for History, Classics and Archaeology, 2005). A pdf version of this report can be found on the History Subject Centre website: [http://www.historysubjectcentre.ac.uk/elibrary/internal/br\\_nicholls\\_employability\\_200502xx\\_01](http://www.historysubjectcentre.ac.uk/elibrary/internal/br_nicholls_employability_200502xx_01)

<sup>ii</sup> It is available on the Prospects web-site at <http://www.prospects.ac.uk>. The HA kindly made some of the short interviews available to the Subject Centre. These can be viewed on the ***Graduates with Impact website*** on the 'High Achieving Graduates' page: [http://www.historysubjectcentre.ac.uk/research/gwi/about\\_gwi/high\\_achievers/](http://www.historysubjectcentre.ac.uk/research/gwi/about_gwi/high_achievers/)

<sup>iii</sup> Copies are available from the Historical Association.

<sup>iv</sup> The public schools certainly recognise the importance of a history education to access to important jobs and to employability in general. As the recent Ofsted Report *History for All* (March 2011) acknowledges, while only 30% of pupils in maintained schools took GCSE history in 2010, 50% did so in independent schools. The Report can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). This point should be hammered home to the pupils (and their parents) and, indeed, some headteachers in maintained schools who question the value of history in relation to career prospects.

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<sup>v</sup> Joint and combined degrees are counted here *pro rata* in order to match the overall total of VCs. This means, of course, that in many cases there are more VCs who have studied each subject at least in part.

<sup>vi</sup> *Employment*, p. 13.

<sup>vii</sup> The increase over the ninety-two of 2001 is partly accounted for by the creation of new universities since then and partly by the inclusion this time of the heads of the constituent colleges of the University of London and the vice-chancellor of the independent University of Buckingham. Once again, however, I have excluded the masters and provosts of the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge even though several of them boast historians among their number.

<sup>viii</sup> There has, however, been some movement lower down the scale. For example, biology with six in 2001 only had 2.5 in February 2011 while psychology has moved the other way from one in 2001 to 6.66. It is interesting to compare history with another humanities subject and one with a larger undergraduate intake, English, which had just one VC in 2001 and has four, counted by the *pro rata* method, at present.

<sup>ix</sup> John Morgan, 'Identity check: Vice-chancellors' education and pay revealed', *THE*, 24 March 2011. Morgan noted that the degree background of the VCs was 'no guarantee of loyalty'. The fact that 57 had studied the humanities or social sciences did not appear to have led them to vigorously defend these areas from the 'unprecedented attack from the government'.

<sup>x</sup> Checkmark Book, New York, 2004. Curiously, the only name on the cover is 'Ferguson' but it is not clear if this is the author.

<sup>xi</sup> The very selective list of famous US history alumni cited in *Top Careers* is indicative of just how extensive any global compendium would be. Without any attempt at systematic research, I've come across other US examples, including Hollywood *glitterati* Katherine Hepburn, Amanda Peet, Stockard Canning., Ed Norton and Ellen Barkin, musician Lauryn Hill, TV host Conan O'Brien, US vice-president Joe Biden and presidential candidate John McCain. Just how far one might press the argument can be illustrated by the case of the Colombian singer Shakira who, though she has never taken a history degree, finds the subject so fascinating that she has attended history classes *in cognito* at UCLA.