

## READING HISTORY AT WORCESTER, OXFORD (1960-3)

Alan MacFarlane

One effect of the Oxford system of examinations at that time, where one was examined on the whole course of three years right at the end, was that it was essential to keep all one's notes and essays pretty carefully for the final revision. So all my contemporaries must have done this. But what is perhaps unusual is that I should then have kept all the folders of work until now. There are over ten large folders and boxes of notes and essays and these will form the basis of an attempt to enrich the accounts of social and other life with some insight into how my thoughts were developing - as I have done with my Sedbergh writing.

It is worth putting on the record the experience of learning history of one undergraduate in the early 1960's at Oxford. As far as I know, no-one has done this before. And the project is given some extra interest and perhaps authority by the fact that I became a professional historian later in my career. On the other hand this is not easy to read, especially for non-academics and non-historians. I have therefore put the full account of my academic effort as a separate section at the end of the book for those who are interested and as a historical record of how we were taught.

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I was of average ability and had learnt at Sedbergh, and before that at the Dragon School, that only by hard and well-organized effort could I bring myself up to the level of naturally cleverer boys. So I put a great deal of effort into developing my abilities as a historian through hard work and organization. I greatly enjoyed the course, even if it was a considerable strain.

The nature of the course and our two most important teachers' characters can be sketched in briefly here so that the reader can imagine better the background of constant intellectual stimulation, an extended high level conversation with really well read and thoughtful teachers who later became friends.

I had been peculiarly fortunate both at the Dragon and in my last two years at Sedbergh in that I had outstanding teachers. When I went to Worcester it might have been thought that my luck would be over. Until the end of the 1940's Worcester was a relatively small, poor and intellectually undistinguished College, and this applied to history as to other subjects.

The situation began to change with the arrival of Harry Pitt in 1949, and then was consolidated when a young medievalist called James Campbell joined the College in 1957. Neither Harry nor James, as I shall now term them, ever attained international recognition except among specialists but they turned out to be as good a pair of tutors as one could possibly imagine.

Each was excellent and they complemented each other beautifully. Harry, as I shall now call him, was one of the very best teachers of his generation. Robert Darnton, one of his pupils and later a distinguished historian, writes that 'I later discovered, he had won a reputation within the Faculty as the supreme master of that peculiar art, the

Oxford tutorial.' [ref]. James also soon developed into a formidable teacher and it is unlikely that any other pair of historians in either Oxford or Cambridge could have been better. They worked together for thirty-three years and each of them must have supervised more than seven hundred students during their time at Worcester. Harry, in particular, put almost all of his energy and genius into his teaching and Alan Bullock rightly commented that 'Harry's books are his pupils'. [Ref.] The enormous stimulus to my intellectual development, and the value of the Oxford tutorial teaching system can be seen through my time there. As the historian John Roberts said at Harry's memorial service, 'Like others of us here today, he was lucky enough to enjoy what now seems Oxford's golden age, and the Indian summer of a certain kind of academic society, one in which, as he once said, "colleges and dons were masters of their own world"'.

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The degree course was mainly concerned with the history of England between the end of the Roman occupation of Britain and 1914. There were also a few extra themes and topics. In the first term we prepared for the only formal university written exams we would take before our Final exams at the end of three years. These were called 'Prelims' and consisted of the study of historiography as represented by Edward Gibbon, Thomas Babington Macaulay, Alexis de Tocqueville and the Venerable Bede. There were also Latin and French tests based on the latter two authors. Like several of my friends I failed a paper, the Latin unseen, but fortunately managed to pass on the retake. James Campbell tells me that if I had failed again I would probably have been sent down (expelled) from Oxford.

In the subsequent years we moved gradually through the English history syllabus [details will be given in a time-line diagram which also shows other aspects of my life]. Most of this was done with James and Harry, though I went to Lady Rosalind Clay for the Tudors and Stuarts and Peter Dickson for late seventeenth and early eighteenth century history.

In our third and fourth term we chose a period of European history and I studied later medieval and the early modern period with Karl Leyser of Magdalen and Roger Howell, then a postgraduate student. In Spring and Summer terms of 1962 I studied political theory, basically Aristotle, Hobbes and Rousseau, with some J.S. Mill and Marx at the end, again with James.

In the last academic year we chose a special subject which was to introduce us to the use of original sources and I studied the Interregnum of Oliver Cromwell. We also chose a special theme, in my case Tudor and Stuart economic history, which I studied with G.D. Ramsay of St Edmund's Hall. In the spring term of our last year we did some wider general reading under the guidance of Harry Pitt and then some revision tutorials with both Harry and James in our last term.

There were several different ways in which we learnt. One was through writing a long essay roughly every week which we would take to an hour-long tutorial where, usually paired with another, we would either read it out or listen to the other essay and the comments of our tutor. These tutorials ('supervisions' with supervisors in

Cambridge) were the really special part of my Oxford education. I had experienced them in a simpler form at Sedbergh, but my teachers were now expecting higher level work and the grilling was more intense.

Another teaching method was particularly important in the first term and in the special subjects - Cromwell and economic history - where there were set texts. These were the 'gobbets'. These consisted of about short essays of less than a page each commenting on some quotations from our chosen authors. We were asked to set the passages in their proper context and explain the wider significance of the quoted extract. Again this was something I had been introduced to in my last two years at Sedbergh but it was now more stringently marked.

In preparation for the essays and gobbets we were set a good deal of reading to do both before each essay and in the fairly long vacations (over half the year) and were sometimes required to do an essay or two as well out of term. We were tested on this reading, as well as our previous term's work at the start of each new term in what were called 'Collections'. These were done on the first Friday and Saturday morning of the term, and consisted of two three-hour unseen exams, usually papers from a previous year. The marks did not count towards our final results, but prepared us for writing under pressure and they were again marked by our tutors. They kept our tutors informed of our progress and enabled them to see our strengths and weaknesses. Thus, although formally we only had exams at the end of our first and ninth terms, in fact we had them every term.

Most of what we learnt came either from our tutor's comments, or from articles or books. We would read in the undergraduate library at the top of the spiral steps in Worcester, but it was not well equipped with recent books, though I found some strange Victorian classics amidst the dusty shelves. We were not normally allowed into the rather grander old library looking out onto the back courtyard. Most of our books, therefore, were in the Bodleian library, and particularly in the beautiful round Radcliffe Camera, where I spent much of my work time. I had very little money to buy books and depended almost entirely on libraries.

We also went to some lectures, though these were not compulsory and some people hardly went to any. Our tutors would recommend a few lecture series, but many felt that it was a waste of precious time breaking up a morning for a lecture. As my fuller account shows, I tended to go to three or four sets of four or eight lectures a term, each lasting an hour. They were usually by good lecturers and sometimes I would indulge in the pleasure of going to hear a famous lecturer like A.J.P. Taylor or Isaiah Berlin even if it was not part of my course.

Finally there were seminars two of the papers, the economic documents and Cromwell special subject. Between six and a dozen students met their teacher for an hour and a half or so and one or two would read out longer papers and we would be expected to comment.

At the end of all of this intense teaching, a mixture of coaxing, scolding, praising, criticising, with largely self-motivated and self-organized work within a careful framework of supervised study, we would be ready, in theory, for the exams.

Our progress through the course was monitored by our two College tutors. Unlike Cambridge, there were no instituted 'Directors of Studies' in Oxford. In my case, James tells me that he and Harry shared the decisions about who should teach us. James did more of the teaching of College students in return for the fact that Harry dealt with the administration involved, contacting external tutors and arranging schedules.

The end of term report reading or 'Collections', as they were also confusingly called, used to be held until shortly before my time in the Dining Hall of Worcester in front of all the dons. By my time they were held in upper Senior Common Room. The Provost (Sir John Masterman in my first year, Lord Franks in my second and third) would sit at the end of a long table, with our two history tutors and the senior tutors, and one or two other tutors who might be awaiting their students. Written reports from those who had taught us for that term were read out and Harry and James might make further comments.

This is an account of the formal structure, a combination of teaching methods which I believe both supported and stretched me in an almost perfect way and which has remained with me in my own teaching at Cambridge over the years. But what was it actually like to be taught like this?

I have memories of a number of my teachers, and vivid flashes of particularly high and low points. I shall, however, mainly leave it to others to describe Harry and James below, but I also remember the gentle and erudite Karl Leyser sliding out of his inner room like an over-grown school-boy to teach me in his outer room. And I remember summer afternoons sitting on Lady Rosalind Clay's sofa in her beautiful north Oxford flat, looking out at the garden and hearing stories of an earlier Oxford and being entranced by her enthusiasm for the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

This apprenticeship-based teaching system is extremely difficult to describe or capture, especially at its best.. Let me try to give a picture of it through a closer study of my main two teachers.

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Harry Pitt was born in 1923, the son of a Herefordshire farmer, so he was 37, a year younger than my mother, when he started to teach me. He was a very small man, pugnacious and slightly heavy jowls, a sort of over-grown hobbit in a way. I am not surprised now to learn that he was an effective tank commander towards the end of the war. Harry introduced me to the concept 'counter-suggestible', in other words he would argue with almost anything one said, but one could see that it was for the fun of it. He had a great sense of humour, I think I sensed dimly that he was at times an unhappy and depressed man, but who lit up when he was with people. He was fair, encouraging and immensely stimulating.

His contrary character, which reminds me very much of a robust Englishness whose archetype is Cobbett, is well caught by Lesley Le Claire, former librarian of Worcester, who worked closely with Harry for many years.

He was very much a creature of paradox: he usually displayed a large tolerance but could be fierce and caustic when confronted with humbug; a youthful left-winger who later, like Clarendon, cherished England's 'old good manners, its old good humour and its old good nature'; a devoted Johnsonian and admirer of Gibbon who also loved Schubert and Keats; a Southron who fell under the spell of the lone shieling and the misty island... always remained something of an impish small boy himself... as Copper Le May puts it, 'many of the more amiable characteristics of Peter Pan. (p.3, 'For Harry', ed. Lesley Le Claire (2003).

His special strengths as a tutor are well caught by several other historians and colleagues. His teaching-companion over those years, James Campbell, writes:

Harry was, indeed, an outstanding tutor... He was seriously interested in what he taught and in those whom he taught. He read widely and had a deep store of knowledge on which to call. His tutorial method was often sharp, though seldom abrasive. He sought to make his pupils think, often by means of provocative statements or questions. He did not mind particularly if they were not outstanding intellectuals... He did mind if they were intellectually dishonest. A great advantage of Harry's was that he was a genuinely cultivated man... He was concerned to educate his pupils as well as to instruct them. [James Campbell, Memorial to Harry Pitt - Worcester College Record 2001, pp.19-23]

One of his pupils, who came up to Worcester to read history the year after me and became a distinguished medievalist at Oxford, was John Maddicot. He describes Harry's teaching methods as follows.

Harry was always a great encourager... Weekly sessions with him were educative in a broader and more humane way. His comments drew on literature and modern politics as well as history and, while inviting your opinion too, gave the impression of a cultivated intellect moving discursively but penetratingly, over a wide trace of historical country side, illuminating it with anecdotes, provocative asides and firm judgements, often moral ones, and acting in general, as a powerful stimulus to further thought and, above all, to interest. You left his tutorials as a near contemporary said to me, "fizzing".

That is exactly as I remember it - constant challenging, opening out new vistas, particularly in Victorian history, forcing one to think and re-think basic ideas. He was like a very good tennis or cricket coach, showing one new moves and to have confidence in one self.

Part of the magic was his lovely room. We spent the first term with him learning in college teaching rooms of no great beauty. But in that last year we went for tutorials in the drawing room which opened out onto a magical garden. This was on the top of the wall at the far end of the 'mansions' or fifteenth century cottages which were among the oldest continuous college living accommodation in Oxford. Underneath this wall was Alice's passage into wonderland, and in his room above we explored our ideas together, sometimes over a sherry or beer in our last terms. The room, like James' or Lady Clay's room, was filled with special objects and many books. It is described by a

colleague of his, the historian John Walsh. I now realize that the many years in which I tried to fill my room with strange anthropological treasures to intrigue and relax my students may have been based on his inspiration.

His tutorials were not only occasions for imparting information or technique; they were part of a civilising process, full of allusion to literature and music, unpretentiously offered, which pointed a pupil towards fascinating worlds which needed further investigation. In his appealingly furnished set of rooms he had an assortment of objets trouvés - a lump from the Parthenon, shards surreptitiously scraped off a Fort Sumner cannon, Gladstone's neck-tie - which he prized as physical contact with the past through which he could earth the electricity of his own historical imagination and arouse that of his pupils. [see photo, p.39 of his room; also my photo from outside]

What was happening was that I was becoming an apprentice to a master - hence a Master of Arts. Someone the age of my parents was trying to tease out my mind through a prolonged and focused conversation. It is what is special about Oxford, and its quintessence is described by the distinguished historian Robert Darnton, who had come from America to do his D.Phil. with Harry.

I had no idea of ... the Oxford way of handling such things [Essay writing] - something that goes by the name of empiricism in the outside worlds but that actually is quite different: a conception of history as argument, endless debate in a contest to win a case by rigorous use of evidence and a touch of rhetoric, nothing fancy, but enough plain English to drive the points home. (pp.39-40)

I owe more than I can express to Harry and he remained someone to whom I wrote occasionally and visited much later, always continuing to take an interest in my career and showing considerable courage, not least when he stood up to one of his former pupils, the publisher Rupert Murdoch.

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James Campbell was born in 1935 and was likewise from a non-academic background, being brought up by his grandparents in East Anglia. He was deeply myopic from early childhood and very scholarly, going from Lowestoft Grammar School to Oxford and then winning a Junior Research Fellowship after sharing the prestigious Gibbs History Prize with my future D.Phil. supervisor Keith Thomas. James came to Worcester in 1957, only three years before I arrived, and was only seven years older than me - the same age gap as that with my young Worcester trained historian uncle Robert.

I remember James as a wonderful teacher. I was in awe of his prodigious knowledge and mildly biting wit, but recognized the quirkiness, the real passion for originality and the deep scholarship. Again I find it easier to see him through other's eyes as he is in

many ways still too close. The following observations ring absolutely true to my memories of being taught by him.

Let us start with what the fellow teacher wrote about his colleague. Harry Pitt wrote a tribute:

James was just twenty-one when he arrived, and shy... very soon he grew into a formidable conversationalist and controversialist who loved learned talk and a good argument above all: he could never be accused of a predictable or rigid consistency in argument and he has at his disposal an almost polymathic expertise. ... His astonishing range of knowledge and interests owed much to his skill as a fast reader and a Napoleonic capacity for doing without sleep.

From the beginning James quickly established his position as a deeply committed tutor and as a Fellow with a strong sense of collegiality. As a tutor he believes completely in the usefulness of his position: with undergraduates of ability he can stretch them far and deep and he has always shown great if stern patience with idlers. He takes infinite trouble with lame dogs, many of whom he has helped over the stile at the end of three years.

All this was true. Going to tutorials with James on Anglo-Saxon history changed my life, for it was his inspiration which set me on my most sustained work on English individualism and its deep roots.

John Maddicott, who followed James into medieval history teaching, describes James' manner and teaching at exactly the time I was at Worcester.

The essay would then be read. Its termination would be followed by a long session of pipe-lighting, involving much tapping, packing, tamping, and striking of matches. Then would follow a magisterial summing up and reorganisation of your few jeujeune and lightweight thoughts into a flatteringly comprehensible argument, which would be as magisterially demolished. Then there would be a discussion (if James's interlocutors could find anything to say which didn't sound hopelessly infantile). As like as not, it would be interrupted by James's frequent disappearances into his inner room, which we assumed housed the bulk of his library, to check some doubtful point. ...

With a Johnsonian regard for truthfulness and exactitude, and Macaulayesque powers of recall, he combined a critical intelligence which could penetrate to the heart of any argument and test every unguarded salient with heavy fire...

By guidance and example, he taught two lessons in particular: the importance of getting things right, and the intrinsic interest of the subject. He inspired, and often a causal remark might open up the widest vistas... His extraordinary range of knowledge and his ability to deploy it in an instructive, vivid and often amusing fashion made tutorials both stimulating and arduous. You were expected to keep up.'

[John Maddicott on James Campbell (College Record, 2003), pp.48-51]

Another of his pupils, from ten years later, was David Hargreaves, who became a school history master. He provides three delightful vignettes which bring back the voice and ambience. The first is of the tone and dry wit.

Most fascinating of all, and enduringly attractive, were his rhythms and idioms of speech, famous for their exactitude – occasionally pedantic, but never pompous. On this occasion, he took the leading role at interview, taking me to task for an essay on the decline of the Carolingian Empire.

“Well”, he said, “you certainly make a jolly plausible case for its collapse.” With a disarmingly regretful note in his voice (a device I later interpreted as a sure sign he was moving in for the kill), he went on “I just can’t help feeling it’s so jolly plausible, I’m just left wondering how it ever staggered to its feet in the first place”.

A second is of the scene, so well remembered, of the end of term collections in the Senior Common Room when the Provost, Harry, James and others would be seated with dimmed light behind a huge table and we would learn what they thought of our term’s work. By David’s time the Provost was no longer Lord Franks, but the returned Asa Briggs.

At Provost’s Collections at the end of term, I was introduced to yet another of Oxford’s many oddities – a verbal report in the third person. Asa Briggs sat at the head of his table, smiling and nodding at me in a way I blithely interpreted as mark of personal favour, rather than a part of his armoury of avuncular blandness.

Harry Pitt, in his wonderful staccato, dealt with me briskly and gently. There followed an extended, pregnant pause. Asa muttered questioningly in James’s direction, but he was staring myopically at sheaves of paper and said nothing at all.

‘James!’, barked Harry.

He looked up, flustered.

‘Oh, my apologies, Provost.’, he said, ‘I’m afraid I was dreaming. All too typical of me.’

Harry and Asa tried not to smile, and me also. After some preliminary courtesies, he warned:

“He has yet to learn the difference between speculation and fact. And it’s going to be someone’s duty next term – indeed, I fear it will be mine – to make his life a total misery until he does so.”

Most evocatively of all, David describes the room where I was taught and precisely catches the way in which a supervision was conducted.

James’s rooms, for so many years on the first floor of Staircase Five, were another delight. There was a huge mahogany bookcase the entire width of the room, and an extended table on which endless papers, books and monographs lay scattered. The furniture was comfortable, and the whole impression that of somewhere whose owner cared for comfort, but not much for effect. Whatever reluctance he may have felt at either the first or the sixth tutorial of the day, he always greeted me warmly enough, staring as usual anywhere but directly at me, possibly fiddling with pipe or cigarette (he alternated between the two constantly). The famous black cat might also be putting in an appearance.

‘Well then’, he would say, sucking in his breath adenoidally, ‘What have you got for me today?’

I would paraphrase whatever title it was he had set me the previous week.



‘Good, good.’ He would nod rapidly with his eyes tightly shut. ‘Go on then, my dear fellow. Edify me...’

A tall order. Occasional hints of restiveness might penetrate if it became clear that I was enjoying my own declamation too much. Clicking of teeth or even spluttering might be provoked by a split infinitive, clumsy syntax or the pretentious pronunciation of a foreign name, but otherwise he was a restrained and polite audience.

The only eruption occurred during an essay on the legacy of King Stephen.

‘If you ever write again about a monarch’, he spluttered, ‘medieval or other, having a track record – good, bad or otherwise – I’ll break your bloody neck.’ ...

I relished the résumé’s above everything. He could hear my concluding paragraph from about three miles away as my voice and idiom moved into best Churchillian mode, but would hear me out patiently.

For a few seconds there would be silence.

‘Now then’, he might begin, eyes still closed in concentration, ‘let me understand. What you are suggesting is...’

About twenty seconds of beautifully articulated and lucid exegesis would follow, and then his eyes would open and he would ask me with apparent anxiety: ‘Now is that about right?’

I always thought so. It always sounded so frightfully plausible when he said it.

He then would settle back in his chair and close his eyes again.

‘Well, that’s not a bad essay... indeed, I think it’s probably rather a good one. It’s not, however, a very good one – and I’ll tell you why.

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It was the Olympian ability to see immediately to the structure of our argument, to re-state it, and then show how it could be improved which was so stunning. As with any great teacher, whether of an academic or artistic kind, he was able to show one the future path, to correct errors, to play up strengths. The higher reaches of any intellectual or artistic skill are amazingly difficult to teach and few can do it really well. James and Harry in their different ways were able to do that, just as earlier my best Dragon and Sedbergh masters had worked on the earlier slopes and later Keith Thomas would show me how research should be done. I was indeed fortunate.

Given the importance of James in my education, and the colourful portraits above, I asked whether I could talk to him about his teaching style. He kindly consented and in a long conversation in August 2012 at his home, he added some further points to the above.

I asked him whether it was true that he and Harry could really be described as the best College history team in Oxford. He naturally doubted whether this was the case, citing his own experience of being taught at Magdalen by Karl Leyser, Bruce McFarlane, A.J.P. Taylor and John Storey [?Story]. He did concede, however that while some of these teachers were very keen, some were less so, while for many years he and Harry devoted almost all their energies into teaching.

I asked about what happened when two of us came to a supervision and James confirmed that only one would read the essay and it was uncommon for the other to be

taken in to be read by the tutor. Part of the reason was sheer pressure. In the 1920's and 1930's tutors had often supervised for up to and more than 20 hours a week. James himself did between 12 and 18 hours a week. Supervising is exhausting work and if, on top of this, there had been a flow of a dozen or more essays to mark, it would have been too much.

I asked about what the main changes had been in teaching since those early days. He singled out two. One was that teaching was now regarded as less important than writing - indeed it is often spoken of and regarded as a 'burden'. James believed that this pressure towards research and writing and away from teaching undergraduates came as much from the German university tradition as the American.

A second change was in the sheer amount of second literature available. When I was an undergraduate, my tutors could expect me to read a dozen or so books or articles for an essay and this would cover most of what had been written in the last few decades. Now there are hundreds if not thousands of secondary sources for any essay. It is difficult to know how to handle this - and I myself have noted this in my teaching and the simple device of some students, which is to ignore everything written more than, say, ten years ago.

A third change is in the quality of the students and their preparation. The tutorial system is based on the pupil already having the knowledge and training for there to be a proper discussion. A few universities such as Keele have a four year course, in which the first year is getting the students up to the level where they are properly equipped to start on an undergraduate course. Yet in many universities, students are accepted who do not have any of the basic - they cannot spell, write, read intelligently and they know nothing in advance. This made me realize again how fortunate I was to have covered the whole of English history up to the end of the nineteenth century in some depth at Sedbergh, before coming to Oxford. Even with this, I struggled. I cannot imagine what it would have been like to start with no previous knowledge and without the careful preparation in essay writing techniques I had received.

I quoted from some of the accounts of James' tutorials and he confirmed that they were substantially accurate, but added a few explanations and elaborations. He felt that tutorials were effective because they made sure that the student does a lot of work, when they might be disinclined to do so or under many competing pressures. But he admitted that the system could be pretty bad with a bad tutor and it was often very difficult to get rid of those who could not practice this art. He himself had learnt from a wonderful teacher at Lowestoft grammar school, Stuart Spalding, and put into practice his methods and those he had learnt from his tutors at Magdalen.

He remembered his technique of giving back a summary of the main argument of the essay. He thought it encouraged the student to know that the tutor had listened carefully and understood the argument. It then gave a basis for a discussion, a shared area for the backwards and forward of the debate. Reading the essay out loud was also good for the student as it revealed its weaknesses. Listening to oneself is an education in itself.

On the other hand, he admitted that supervising in this intense way for say 14 hours a week was very demanding indeed. Concentrating deeply to get the gist of an

argument, and switching from subject to subject, takes huge effort. Thus he confessed that his habit of fiddling with the fire, of loading and lighting his pipe, and other habits was partly to cover up patches of thought. Without this, it would have been necessary to talk straight away and without a break and the quality of the comments would have deteriorated. Bad tutors often talk all the time, but one needs time to think. He also admitted that when he disappeared in pursuit of a reference around 12 o'clock in the morning after non-stop supervisions, he would sometimes be keener on a small glass of sherry to spur him on than the supposed book he was searching for. I found myself in my later years that sharing a cup of green tea, or a small glass of sherry, with my students was valuable in relaxing us and clearing the mind.

Finally, an important point made by James concerned the relationship between tutors and examiners. The tutors might be examiners from time to time, but mostly they were not official examiners – and even if they were only examined a very small part of the final exams. So they were basically on the side of their students, playing a kind of elaborate doubles against the wily examiners they would come to face. This, I can see, was the same with me in my teaching over the years and meant that there was a camaraderie, a shared task, between teacher and taught, which makes learning more pleasurable and equal.

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With this brief context, we can look at some impressions I have in my documents of the first term at Worcester. The longer essays are reproduced in the section at the end.

The surviving letters for my first term suggest that I found myself having to work pretty hard because the first and only examination I would face until my final term three years later, 'Prelims', was at the end of the first term.

The considerable work pressures in my first term haven been revealed by my letters home, already quoted, for example that on November 11 which gives a small vignette worth repeating: I find I haven't much time for anything else except work, for although cutting entertainment down to a minimum and not indulging in having cups of coffee with people I still don't get much done. All my "history" friends are very depressed and each seems certain that he will fail so if they want any of us to pass they will have a pretty low pass-mark. Next week for instance I have got to write an essay on Bede [and] on Macaulay and have to do a 2½ hour exam paper on "de Tocqueville" ...'

The general shape of the work can be abstracted from my work notes and essays as follows. The following does not include the frequent classes, language courses and other lectures.

October

Thursday 7 Arrive at Worcester College

Friday 8 Meet with Tutor James Campbell

Make notes on Gibbons' 'Autobiography'  
Monday 10 First of nine lectures by Campbell on Bede  
Tuesday 11 Take notes on Gibbon's Abridged 'Decline and Fall'  
First set of 'gobbets' [short essays] on Tocqueville  
Wednesday 12 Planning first essay on Gibbon  
Thursday 12 Also planning first essay on Gibbon  
Thursday 20 Second set of gobbets on Tocqueville  
Friday 21 Planning second essay on Gibbon  
Wednesday 26 Planning third essay on Gibbon  
Thursday 27 Third set of gobbets on Tocqueville

November

Tuesday 1 Planning fourth essay on Gibbon  
Monday 7 First essay on Bede  
Tuesday 8 Plan first essay on Macaulay  
Friday 11 Writing summary of Tocqueville's book from memory  
Saturday 12 Writing summary of Tocqueville's book from memory  
Fourth set of gobbets on Tocqueville  
Monday 14 Second essay on Bede (approx. date)  
Wednesday 16 Plan second essay on Macaulay  
Friday 18 Writing summary of Tocqueville's book from memory  
Friday 21 Third essay on Bede  
Wednesday 23 (approx.) Plan third essay on Macaulay  
Wednesday 30 (approx.) Plan essay comparing Gibbon and Macaulay  
Two undated pieces towards the end of term - on Tocqueville

Finally, at the end of term, I have a note stating.

### MODERN HISTORY

Gentlemen reading History should return into residence NOT LATER THAN THURSDAY,  
12 JANUARY 196.

Collections [College examinations] will be set on Friday and/or Saturday

1st year: English History 400-1215

1 December 1960 H.G.P., J.C. (Harry Pitt and James Campbell)

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The organization of my work started off with high intentions. I have discovered a small black notebook which I clearly envisaged would be my work planning diary for

my first term, but seems to have petered out quite quickly. I shall extract a few relevant bits indicating the start of work.

It starts with a quotation:

“He had been all things, and all was of little value.” Emperor Severus.

Latin. Mr Campbell

Tuesday 5 p.m.

1. Stenton - A-S England
2. Vol I - Ox Hist of England
3. A-S Eng - Hunter Blair
4. Whitelock - Pelican

Charles Plummer - essential notes. Bede Commentary.  
Lectures on Monday & Fridays

By Tuesday.

A-S History - Bede Bopk 3. (Read the text-books above)

Mr Hyde - Gibbon & Macaulay.

Friday Gr III. 6.0 Friday

5 St John's Street - middle flat (middle bell)

Thursday 5.0 Latin Class - Lecture Rm A. (Unseens)

1st Wk. Ch 1-15 Incl. - Gibbon.

Potic for Essays & Discussions.

Position of Gibbons' contribution to the historiography of his time. (short essays plan)

Momogliano, Dawson, Young, Fuglum

There are some notes on what bits of Bede I should read and translate.

French. Wk 1. Comment & translate pieces given by Pitt - Tuesday (by Fri lunch). Unseen

Gibbon & Macaulay.

Wk 1. Set (a) Read & study Ch 1-15 Gibbon (incl) (b) Essay plan.

Not set: Read the Vindication (if possible) ( with special reference to the effects of his education & surroundings) - See Bury ed'n

Make a selection of his work (static & narrative)

- does G's title beg the question. (effects Byzantine Emp & Christianity)\_ - fall from golden age.
- -why did he choose the fall?

- Isn't there too much characterisation of the Em's – too much detail – rather than institutions – consider his portrayal of m'ty govt
- never made his mind up about the (benefit?) of bringing the barb's in to fight.
- He never says that the barb's fighting for were not as strong as those that fought against them (Ch 1-16)
- Make a collection of quotations
- Write on: "How does Gibbon convey his interpretation of Christianity" – The techniche [sic]
- Ch 15-21 inclusive
- Style, omission, emphasis, sarcasm, irony – see also the vindication.

There are also short lists of books to be read for De Tocqueville, Bede, Gibbon and Macaulay.

At the back are notes on when I should attend for tutorials and unseens. And right at the end a few biblical quotes, ending appropriately:

"Oh Lord enlighten and lead us in our study of thee And make us strong in thy faith".