

# ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF PPE 1920 – 2020



2020 marks the hundredth anniversary of the Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) degree being established in Oxford. To mark the occasion, the Humanities and Social Sciences Divisions commissioned Dr Bethany White, Dr Samuel Wainwright and DPhil candidate Lilly Schreiter to research and write this report. It was unveiled at a virtual panel discussion chaired by the ex-PPE BBC broadcaster Evan Davis, and featuring prominent PPE alumni on 12th September. The panelists, novelist Monica Ali, politician Pete Buttigieg and journalist Mary Ann Sieghart, share their memories and reflections on the degree towards the end of this report. One line from Mayor Pete stands out: “I use PPE every day.”

Within the UK, the perception of the degree is often shaped by the surprising number of PPEists who have become government ministers and even Prime Minister. But this report demonstrates that the impact of PPE has been much broader: Oxford PPE graduates

have gone on to a very wide range of careers, and the degree has been replicated at 172 institutions in 33 countries. With changes to Oxford’s admissions process, the profile of UK PPE students has changed too. In the most recent statistics, for UK students admitted between 2017 and 2019, 60.1% came from state schools; 20.4% were from BME backgrounds; and 10.1% came from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2 (areas of low progression to higher education).

During the centenary year of the degree, global leaders were forced to confront the worst pandemic since the Spanish Flu which was the backdrop to the degree’s first year. In 2020, the acronym PPE became better known for the ‘Personal Protective Equipment’ needed to keep health workers safe while treating COVID-19 patients. Given the need for global leadership to tackle the virus, it could be argued that the skills taught by PPE are more important than ever.



## INTRODUCTION

When PPE was first imagined by the academics of early twentieth-century Oxford, it was as a modern take on a classical education. One hundred years later, the degree course has educated thousands, and has been debated, celebrated, critiqued and challenged by many more. PPE has contributed to the political and cultural life not only of the United Kingdom but of the world, with PPE courses now offered in over one hundred institutions globally. At its core, PPE is a trinity of disciplines that, taken together, seek to unfurl and understand our modern world.

But the story of PPE at Oxford is not only a story of the twists and turns of politics, philosophy and

economics, and how they relate to each other. It is a story about people: the people who envisaged it; the people who taught and administered it; and the people who sat through the tutorials, wrote the essays, and sat in cafes and libraries on Cornmarket Street and Turl Street, considering the existence of God, the meaning of democracy, and the economic development of Communist countries. Taking a whistle-stop tour of PPE in Oxford over the past hundred years can tell us much not only about the development of the three academic disciplines, but also about our changing world and the people that have shaped it.

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## THE ORIGINS OF PPE

When the first cohort of PPE students matriculated in the autumn of 1920, they did so in the midst of change and upheaval in Oxford and across the world. Two years earlier, the First World War had come to an end, and as it did so the Spanish Flu pandemic hurtled across the globe. In 1919, the Board of Education established a Royal Commission to look into the position of Oxford and Cambridge; the following year, after years of an increasing number of female students filling Oxford's lecture halls and the women's colleges, women were finally allowed to take degrees at the University.

PPE emerged at a time of change. In 1919, *The Brown Book*, the chronicle of Lady Margaret Hall, reflected that 'since influenza, and Armistice, the sense of surprise at the "new" Oxford is persistent... a sense of life and development seems to mark University doings.'<sup>i</sup> After the disruptions of the war in particular, many in Oxford were ready to return to the comforts and challenges of regular learning. Norman Chester, later warden of Nuffield College, wrote that 'by 1919 with the return of peace there was a strong urge to get back to pre-war activities and aspirations.'<sup>ii</sup>

Discussions about the need for a new degree School for Oxford undergraduates had been brewing since the early years of the century. 'Greats', or *literae humaniores*, the famous tri-partite School, was the only combined honours program at Oxford. The School combined classical languages and history (classical civilization) with philosophy. It was widely considered the best that Oxford had to offer, but it was not open to students who had not learned Greek or Latin. In 1909, an anonymous pamphlet entitled *Wanted! A New School at Oxford* appeared. The author proposed the creation of 'a modernside Greats, based on Philosophy', to include subjects such as politics or philosophy.<sup>iii</sup> Ten years later, in June 1919, a committee was finally appointed to consider the possibility of a new honour school based on modern philosophy.<sup>iv</sup>

The debates on what this new school might look like were shaped by many figures across the faculties, departments, and colleges of the University, and were informed by broader shifts, movements and debates in higher education in the early decades of the twentieth century. Two figures in particular shaped the eventual





creation of the school of Philosophy, Politics and Economics. Benjamin Jowett, who had come to Balliol College as a scholar aged 18 and remained there until his death, aimed to transform Balliol into a place where higher education was tied to active public service.<sup>v</sup> He even remarked that he would like “to govern the world” through his pupils.<sup>vi</sup> He attracted scholars from outside the United Kingdom—emigrants domiciled overseas, indigenous colonial inhabitants, and international students—and was convinced that it was “important to provide a means of giving the best education to the best intelligences in every class of Society.”<sup>vii</sup> It was Jowett who appointed Alexander Dunlop Lindsay as the Jowett Lecturer in Philosophy in 1910. A. D. Lindsay, like Jowett, was concerned with making education available to the best students, without regard to their financial circumstances. His broader educational ideals were reflected in his active support for university extension, extramural teaching, and adult education, and he was closely involved in Tutorial Classes and the Workers’ Educational Association. Lindsay was dedicated to educational reform: his aim was to open first-class education to a wider demographic.

The creation of a new school, built on the ‘Greats’, was one of these efforts at reform that would open Oxford to wider demographics. Many believe that, if Oxford was to attract the best applicants, it needed a combined honours programme more connected to modern life: the creation of PPE would, it was hoped, provide the University with a new, more modern image, and would train up a new generation of civil servants.<sup>viii</sup> Before the First World War, in the time of the publication of the anonymous pamphlet, there had been several unsuccessful proposals for a new School. During the war years, discussions subsided, but the war had inaugurated a renewed interest in educational reform.

By June 1919, it was resolved that the time had come to discuss a philosophical course connected with subjects other than classical civilization and language. A. D. Lindsay and others prepared a report for an honour school in modern humanities. From the outset, the report proposed to teach pupils “philosophy from other sides than classical literature and history ... [and] politics and economics on a broad and systematic basis.”<sup>ix</sup> The cosigners envisaged an honour school that would cover economics and politics or natural sciences with philosophy providing the common theme: candidates could select to specialise in either philosophy and economics and politics or philosophy and science. The proposal failed to generate sufficient enthusiasm from either the philosophers or the scientists and was defeated. Instead, a slightly different proposal, incorporating not natural science but economics, politics, and philosophy, was passed. ‘Greats’ had given its pupils

insight into civilizational structure and prepared them for public office and service. ‘Modern Greats’ sought to replicate this framework and adapt it to modern conditions.

With these intentions in mind, when the Statute for PPE finally appeared in the *Oxford University Gazette*, the preamble read, “it is expedient to promote the study of the structure, and the philosophical, political, and economic principles, of modern society.”<sup>x</sup> This was, in the economist Norman Chester’s words, a ‘major step in the development of social studies in Oxford’, and would later lead to the creation of a Board of Studies, a Faculty, college appointments in economics and politics, and the creation of Nuffield College and the Institute of Economics and Statistics.

Not everyone was convinced by the new Honour School. The junior proctor, H. J. Paton, argued that the new school could not possibly compare with *literae humaniores*, and would instead likely be ‘a soft option for the weaker man’.<sup>xi</sup> Nonetheless, the statute passed. Out of a wide set of debates on the merits of education and who should have access to it, and debates about the value of the classics and the need for modern approaches in a world forever changed by a devastating world war, PPE was born.

## NEW HONOUR SCHOOL AT OXFORD.

### PHILOSOPHY, POLITICS, AND ECONOMICS.

(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT.)

OXFORD, Oct. 10.

In Congregation to-day two important statutes were promulgated. One, which was introduced by Mr. A. J. Jenkinson, Brasenose, had for its object to establish a final Honour School in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. It would, he said, provide a sound general education for men of ability intending to take administrative work or business posts and for students coming from overseas to study British institutions. The facilities for the necessary teaching already existed and its establishment would not involve extra expense. Dr. Stuart Jones, Brasenose, objected to the multiplication of honour schools. He held that the proposal was an ineffective modern version of *Literæ Humaniores*, and would not provide the essential advantages to be gained in the older school. Mr. L. R. Price, Oriel, stating the view of the economists, said that this proposal might interfere with the natural development of an economic school. What was required was the effective study of economics and politics in themselves.

On a division the preamble of the statute was carried by 46 votes to 29. The other statute provides that the examination for the degree of B.A. shall be held, as far as possible, in the eighth and ninth weeks of full term or in vacation. The Rev. G. B. Cronshaw, Queen’s, who proposed it, urged that it would materially assist towards the fulfilment of the present requirements of the university statutes that there should be eight full weeks of lecturing and tuition. The additional expense to undergraduates who would have to be up in vacation would be but slight. Dr. Headlam opposed the statute, arguing that it would curtail the period of work in vacation and that the higher studies would in consequence be injured. The President of Magdalen, on the other hand, held that a period of 24 weeks could not be regarded as excessive for the teaching of a great university, and on a division the preamble was carried by 49 votes to 47.

## CURRICULUM AND CRITIQUES

The curriculum that had been so hotly debated at its inception continued to shift and change over the course of the coming decades. In his contribution to the history of the University, Robert Currie argued that the 1920s saw some ‘striking changes of image’: instead of focusing on the merits of the classics, the University now advertised its PPE course according to how it could prepare students for the modern, post-war world. PPE would offer them ‘the intellectual discipline of Philosophy’ combined with training in history and economics that would prepare them for ‘business, the Civil Service, or public life’.<sup>xii</sup>

The first curriculum included a relatively traditional mixture of philosophy, political history, political economy, and an unprepared translation from French, German, and Italian. The School grew by almost 10 per cent per year between 1923 and the outbreak of the Second World War. This expansion forced colleges to appoint specialised tutors dedicated to modern studies such as economics and politics.<sup>xiii</sup>

However, the philosophers, the economists, and the politicians continued to debate how their subjects could be best taught and combined. In 1929, the curriculum saw its first major overhaul: political economy was replaced by economic theory, statistical methods made its first appearance, and a paper on political institutions was introduced.<sup>xiv</sup> The 1930s, a decade of tumultuous economic and political upheaval across Europe and the world, saw a creeping mathematical component to the economics strand, and language requirements were abolished in 1937. Students were still taught in the traditional Oxford tutorial.

The years after the Second World War saw another change in the fortunes of PPE. The burgeoning field of social studies found a home in the newly-founded Nuffield College, as well as the Institute of Statistics; social change in the post-war world saw an increased interest in social studies and their ability to solve real-world problems. Post-war government funding encouraged new work in social science, while the Education Act of 1944, which introduced a tripartite system of universal secondary education, meant that applications to the University gradually broadened to include students from the grammar schools. By the late 1950s, applications to study social sciences were increasing rapidly, and by the end of the 1960s, PPE had risen to be one of the largest Honour Schools within arts and humanities.<sup>xv</sup> This development provided PPE with an incredible resource base of career academics. It was in this period, however, that debates began to surface about the use of teaching all three disciplines in tandem:

some claimed that students of PPE should study only two of the three subjects, and prize intellectual depth over breadth.

### Number of students reading for Honour Schools

	1938-9	1968-9
Modern History	869	925
Literae Humaniores	584	587
PPE	495	769
Jurisprudence	464	565
Modern Languages	463	724
English	360	678

From Norman Chester, *Economics, Politics, and Social Studies in Oxford, 1900-85* (1986), p.169.

The 1960s saw further change, as the Robbins Committee began an investigation into higher education, ultimately resulting in the expansion of the sector; and the student body began to raise its voice, not only through student activism focused on Vietnam, South African apartheid, and women’s liberation, but also through reforming efforts within the universities themselves, focused on syllabus reform, changes to the curriculum, and student representation. The Franks inquiry of the mid-1960s examined, among other topics, teaching provision, the tutorial system, and final honour schools. In 1968, in the midst of broader debates about the contents of the curriculum, a pamphlet entitled *The Poverty of PPE* appeared. Written by Trevor Pateman, who had studied PPE between 1965 and 1968, the pamphlet did not temper its criticisms. The PPE syllabus, it claimed, provided a ‘thin gruel’ for undergraduates’ ‘intellectual diet’. In fact, it gave its students:

*No training in scholarship, only refining to a high degree of perfection his ability to write short dilettantish essays on the basis of very little knowledge... The examination questions are frequently absurd. If the aim is to provide lessons in party management for aspiring Conservative politicians, then that may be achieved, but it is not the proper role of PPE.*<sup>xvi</sup>

Interestingly, the pamphlet also claimed that prospective students of PPE had high ambitions. Pateman reflected that:

*A questionnaire of the intentions of students coming up to study PPE would undoubtedly show that a large majority were in some loose way avowedly concerned to develop their consciousness in ways which would better equip them to go out into the world to change it, directly or indirectly, to make it a better place for all.*<sup>xvii</sup>

Out of this period of protest, official exploration, and fevered discussion came several changes to the PPE course, which was among many degree courses to see an overhaul of its curriculum in the 1960s and 1970s. The changes included the introduction of a wider range of optional papers, and, in 1970, students were allowed to drop one of the three disciplines and specialise solely in two for the first time.

Snapshots of the exam papers for the final honours school of PPE over the course of the century reflect this gradual broadening of topics. The papers also give an insight into the historical changes that politicians, economists and social scientists were grappling with, including the rise and fall of Communist states; the end

of colonialism and the British Empire; and the growth of the connected global world. A student sitting their finals in 1923 dealt with questions of moral and political philosophy, British colonial policy, and currency and banking. Almost thirty years later, a student sitting their finals in 1952 could add statistical methods and economic theory to their revision notes, while a student in 1975 had a dizzying choice of possible papers, including the politics of developing countries, Communist government in the Soviet Union, econometrics, and sociological theory from Comte. At the dawn of the millennium, finals students were considering Cold War international relations, social policy, the philosophy of physics, and post-Soviet government.

**OXFORD UNIVERSITY EXAMINATION PAPERS**  
**Second Public Examination**  
**Honour School of Philosophy, Politics and Economics**  
**Trinity Term 1923**

**Papers:**

History of Philosophy; Moral and Political Philosophy; Political Economy; Political and Economic Organisation; British Constitutional and Political History; British Social and Economic History since 1760; Metaphysics and Moral Philosophy; Political Philosophy; Political Economy; Logic; Public Administration; The Development of International Relations since 1815; The Reform Movement in British Colonial Policy; Capital and Labour; Currency and Banking; Labour Movements from 1815-1875; Unseen Translation Paper

**Example questions:**

- What is democracy?
- Has the theory of knowledge to take into account of events below the threshold of consciousness?

**OXFORD UNIVERSITY EXAMINATION PAPERS**  
**Second Public Examination**  
**Honour School of Philosophy, Politics and Economics**  
**Trinity Term 1952**

**Papers:**

General Philosophy; Moral and Political Philosophy; Logic; The Philosophy of Kant; Theory and Working of Political Institutions; British Political and Constitutional History since 1830; Political History from 1871 to 1918; Political Theory from Hobbes; Local Government in England since 1830; Modern British Government; British Labour Movements, 1830-1939; The Political Structure of the British Commonwealth; International Relations; Principles of Economics; Economic Organization; British Social and Economic History from 1760; Statistical Method and the Use of Statistics in Economics; Currency and Credit; Public Finance; Economic Theory; Economics of Colonies and 'Underdeveloped' Societies

**Example questions:**

- Discuss in detail any one argument for the existence of God.
- Was the creation of Pakistan inevitable?

**OXFORD UNIVERSITY EXAMINATION PAPERS**  
**Second Public Examination**  
**Honour School of Philosophy, Politics and Economics**  
**Trinity Term 1975**

**Papers:**

General Philosophy; Political Institutions; British Politics and Government since 1865; Principles of Economics; Economic Organisation; Political Theory from Hobbes; Ancient Philosophy; Political Sociology; The Philosophy of the Rationalists; The International System; Economic Development of Communist Countries; Modern Social Institutions; Economics of Developing Countries; Philosophy of Kant; Politics of Developing Countries; Philosophy of Mind; The Philosophy of J. S. Mill; Labour Economics and Industrial Relations; Money; Communist Government in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe; Russell and Wittgenstein 1905-1921; Public Finance; Industrial Sociology; International Relations 1919-1941; International Relations since 1941; Econometrics; Sociological Theory from Comte; Formal Logic; Economic Theory; Modern British Government; Quantitative Economics; Government and Politics of the United States; Logic; Economics of Industry; British Economic History since 1870; Government and Politics in Western Europe; International Economics; Social History; Marxism.

**Example questions:**

- 'Atomic weapons have lent added importance to conventional methods of deterrence'. Have they?
- How does one know when one is hungry?

**OXFORD UNIVERSITY EXAMINATION PAPERS**  
**Second Public Examination**  
**Honour School of Philosophy, Politics and Economics**  
**Trinity Term 2000**

**Papers:**

History of Philosophy from Descartes to Kant; Metaphysics and Theory of Knowledge; Ethics; Philosophy of Mind; Philosophy of Science and Psychology; Philosophy of Science and Social Science; Philosophy of Religion; The Philosophy of Logic and Language; Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Criticism; Medieval Philosophy: Aquinas; Continental Philosophy from Descartes to Leibniz; The Philosophy of Kant; Post-Kantian Philosophy; Theory of Politics; Plato: Republic; Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics; Frege, Russell, and Wittgenstein; The Later Philosophy of Wittgenstein; Formal Logic; Intermediate Philosophy of Physics; Advanced Philosophy of Physics; Philosophy of Mathematics; Comparative Government; British Politics and Government in the 20th Century; Theory of Politics; Modern British Government and Politics; Government and Politics of the United States; Government and Politics in Western Europe; Soviet and Post-Soviet Government and Politics; Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa; Politics in Latin America; Politics in South Asia; Politics in the Middle East; International Relations in the Era of Two World Wars; International Relations in the Era of the Cold War; International Relations; Classical Political Thought; Foundations of Modern Social and Political Thought; Marxism; Sociological Theory; The Sociology of Industrial Societies; Political Sociology; British Social History since 1870; Labour Economics and Industrial Relations; The Government and Politics of Japan; Social Policy; Comparative Demographic Systems; Statistical Methods in Social Sciences; Macroeconomics; Microeconomics; Economic Theory; Money and Banking; Public Economics; Economics of Industry; Labour Economics and Industrial Relations; International Economics; Command and Transitional Economies; Economics of Developing Countries; British Economic History since 1870; Classical Economic Thought: Smith, Ricardo, and Marx; Statistical Methods in Social Sciences; Econometrics; Economics of OECD Countries.

**Example questions:**

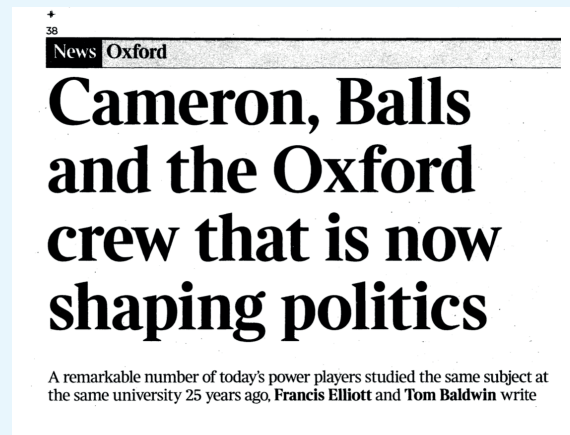
- 'It is impossible to exaggerate the impact of oil on the political economy of the Middle East'. Do you agree and why?
- Can metaphysical questions about particle individuality be resolved by empirical considerations?



The changes to the curriculum did not convince everyone. In 1976, the Oxford University Student Union published its own 'Students' prospectus', which aimed to be a 'frank and concise' guide to studying and living at Oxford. It candidly informed its readers that the PPE room at the Bodleian was 'cramped, stuffy and uncomfortable', while the content of the course itself had made 'very little progress in its fifty years of existence'. The prospectus did, however, give credit to the course for its study of Marxism.<sup>xviii</sup>

Throughout its existence, PPE has never been a stranger to criticism. Since its inception as a sort of training for the civil servants of the modern world, the PPE course has been accused, among other things, of being both too broad and too specialist, and of providing both too little practical knowledge and clear lessons in party politics. Academics, students, and media commentators alike have attempted to grasp the true impact of PPE on their alumni, and on British cultural and political life in particular.

Taking a full look, however, at the people of PPE, and diverse and varied paths that brought them to Oxford and carried them beyond it, gives us a better chance to appreciate the very many different ways that PPE has impacted the world around us.



## THE PEOPLE OF PPE

### SNAPSHOT: EARLY TEACHERS OF PPE

There were numerous educators whose passion shaped and influenced PPE in the early years.

Lionel Robbins, the economist, was an early appointee. He taught for three years at Oxford, first as a lecturer before being elected to an official fellowship in 1927. James Meade remembered his lectures as: 'a memorable experience... he was not interested in devising new elaborate theoretical constructions, but used his first-rate analytic mind to discover and teach us how the application of good economic theory to the real problems around us could make an important contribution to the formulation of wise and effective policy.'<sup>xix</sup>

G. D. H. Cole was appointed to University College in 1925. Soon after his appointment he formed the so-called 'Cole Group', which brought together a group of select undergraduates to take part in seminars, based on the WEA tradition of 'free, informal discussion'.<sup>xx</sup> Previously, Cole had tutored with the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), and the 'Cole Group' carried on the habits he had established as an adult educator. The 'Cole Group' counted among its members Hugh Gaitskell, Michael Stewart, Evan Durbin, Harold Wilson, and James Meade. Cole's influence permeated the PPE course, and successive members from his discussion group rose to prominence within the Parliamentary Labour Party. Of equal importance, though, were those who became trade union secretaries, adult educators,

and social reformers.<sup>xxi</sup> Cole helped his students articulate their own positions and implanted within them a desire to further educational, industrial, and democratic reform.

Cole and Robbins are only two examples of early figures who made an impression on the students and development of PPE. Other key figures and inspirational tutors include John Maud, Alfred Zimmern, Kenneth Wheare, and H. G. Nicholas, to name but a few. Nor were these appointments limited to men. The historian Agnes Headlam-Morley was elected to a fellowship in economics and politics at St. Hugh's College in 1932, before becoming the first woman to be appointed a chair at the University of Oxford, as the Montague Burton Professor of International Relations. Sibyl Crowe received a lectureship in politics at St. Hilda's College in 1938. What all of these educators had in common was a conviction that the new School could provide candidates with a transformative education which would prepare them for diverse careers within a modern society.

### SNAPSHOT: PPE WOMEN IN THE CIVIL SERVICE

In 1925, the examination for the administrative grade of the civil service was opened to women for the first time. Two participants in the 1925 exams were recent PPE graduates from Oxford: Alix Hester Marie Meynell from Somerville College and Mary Guillan Smieton from Lady Margaret Hall. Both passed the examination and pursued long careers in the civil service. Following her work as

an Assistant Keeper in the Public Record Office, Smieton worked for the Ministry of Labour and National Service and the Home Office, and in 1946 she moved to New York to work for the newly-founded United Nations. In 1959, she became the first woman Personal Secretary of the Ministry of Education. The breadth of Oxford's PPE degree prepared the two women well for the diverse projects and responsibilities in the public sector, while their intellectual independence helped Meynell and Smieton to work in a continually male-dominated field. However, women working in the civil service were still often restricted to certain departments—the Consular and Diplomatic Service, for instance, remained out of reach for women until after the Second World War.

A letter to the editor published in *The Times* on the 26th May 1936 by the principals of Oxford's four women's colleges, Lynda Grier, Helen Darbishire, B. E. Gwyer, and J. de L. Mann, along with the Mistress of Girton College, the Principal of Newnham College, and the Principal of the Society of Oxford Home Students, condemned the limitations of women in the civil service. The authors pointed to PPE, among other degrees, as an excellent educational foundation for potential female civil servants.

*The comparatively new Schools of Modern Languages, Modern History, Economics, and, at Oxford, Modern Greats (philosophy, politics, and economics) are attracting a proportion of the ablest women at our universities, whose interest carry them naturally into international affairs. There has never been a time when the State had more need of the best brains of the nation, and it would seem to be a mistake to make any limitations, on whatever ground, of the field from which these can be drawn upon for important State services.<sup>xxii</sup>*

Since its inception, PPE proved to be a promising foundation for women civil servants, providing them with the tools to climb ladders that had, until recently, been off-limits to them.

## SNAPSHOT: PPE AND ADULT EDUCATION

Through the influence of lecturers like G. D. H. Cole, the PPE course at Oxford has had unique connections to the adult education movement, and has always welcomed mature and non-traditional students. In 1908, a committee made up of members of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and the University was established to examine how the University could improve on their education for working-class students. They published a report, 'Oxford and Working Class Education', in 1908. They found that, of the working men who

came to study at Oxford, many wanted to study political science, and many were reading for Diplomas, particularly the Diploma in Economics, which was a prelude to the eventual PPE course. In a recommendation that contributed to the introduction of political science study in Oxford, the authors wrote,

*We hold strongly... that not only in the interests of workmen students, but in the interests of the scientific study of political problems, political science in the broadest sense of the term, or sociology, should be given a much more prominent place in the curricula of Oxford.<sup>xxiii</sup>*

In a way, then, education for 'working men' played a role in the eventual introduction of the modern PPE course. Once PPE was established as an undergraduate degree, over the course of the past hundred years, many mature students and students from non-traditional backgrounds have contributed to the degree course. R. W. Livingstone, the educationalist, wrote to *The Times* newspaper in 1942 to call for an organized system of adult education and calling attention to Oxford's role in recruiting adult learners:

*Oxford University admits a limited number of students who, having missed a secondary education, are unable to pass its entrance examination, but who show evidence of ability to read for a degree. Over a period of 10 years 14 such students entered for the honour school of philosophy, politics, and economics. Four of them got first classes, seven got seconds. They had attended WEA tutorial classes, but had had no secondary education; they came from such occupations as miner, iron-worker, railway clerk, ironmonger's assistant, etc.... it might have seemed absurd for them to compete with undergraduates who had all the advantages of a full secondary education. But they had one advantage which outweighed these: they were adult students who knew at first hand, as the ordinary undergraduate cannot, something of the realities with which philosophy, politics, and economics deal.<sup>xxiv</sup>*

Tutors who had experience working in adult education, like Cole, contributed to an ethos that encouraged adult learning. In 1966, a dockworker wrote to *The Guardian* to emphasise the unfair generalisations made about dockworkers and education in the press. He noted that many took courses at colleges or universities, and one was studying for a degree in PPE at Merton.<sup>xxv</sup> As the decades went on, the PPE course increasingly opened its doors to a wider cohort of students, of different classes, backgrounds, and nationalities.





## SNAPSHOT: PPE ALUMNI IN THE WORLD

From economists to activists, writers to musicians, and anthropologists to politicians, students of PPE over the past one hundred years have gone on to varied careers across the world, some building on their degree education and others using it as a launchpad towards less well-trodden and more unconventional paths. Fourteen snapshots of student careers over the course of a century give us a fuller picture of how PPE graduates have shaped our world.

### **Henry Phelps Brown, Wadham College, Economist**

British economist Henry Phelps Brown was born February 10, 1906 in Calne, Wiltshire. He began his academic career in Oxford at Wadham College in 1924. As well as being an active member of the college's athletic and hockey teams, he was also president of the Diagnostic Society in 1926 and a member of the Literary Society. In 1925, Brown won the Gibbs scholarship in Modern History. In 1927, he graduated with a First in History and won the OU Junior Medley Scholarship, which allowed him to continue his economic studies. He did so quite successfully – in 1929, he earned another First degree in PPE. Brown's academic excellence, clearly, was noticed. The University offered Phelps a fellowship in Economics at New College as well as the Rockefeller Travelling Fellowship. The latter enabled him to go to the United States for a year, where he took a class with American economist Henry Schultz. Before the severe disruptions of the Second World War, during which he served in France, Italy and North-Africa, Brown published his first book, *The Framework of the Pricing System*, in 1936 and was actively involved in the new Institute of Statistics at Oxford. Brown taught and researched at Oxford until 1947. Then, he took over the chair in the Economics of Labour at LSE. Brown used his PPE-foundation to pursue a life-long successful academic career in Economics. He was knighted in 1976, and died December 15, 1994, in Oxford.

### **Alix Hester Marie Meynell, Somerville College, Civil Servant**

Alix Hester Marie Meynell, born February 2, 1903 at Felixstowe, Nottingham, came to Oxford on a scholarship, which allowed her to study PPE at Somerville College. At Oxford, she befriended Evelyn Sharp: both women would pursue life-long pioneering careers in the British civil service. In 1925, upon her graduation, Meynell passed the examination for the administrative grade of the civil service. It was the first year the examination was opened to women, and Meynell scored twelfth place out of the 200 applicants. She began to work for the Board of Trade and found herself promoted to Private Secretary in 1929. In 1932, Meynell was the first of the female examination entrants to become a principal. As a member of the Council of Women Civil Servants, Meynell would continually push for women to be allowed into the diplomatic service – a cause that would only be fulfilled after the Second World War in 1946. During the conflict, Meynell was responsible for food-import control and furniture rationing. The latter led her to be involved in the founding of the Institute of Management and the Council of Industrial Design. After 1943, she worked for the reconstruction department. Meynell's devotion to the civil service was honoured with a DBE in 1949, and she continued to work in the sector until 1955. She spent her early retirement actively and obtained memberships in multiple councils, including the South Eastern Gas Board (1956-69) and the Monopolies Commission (1965-58). In the 1980s, she ran for positions in the Social Democratic Party. Meynell died on 31st August 1999.



**James E. Meade, Oriel College, Economist**

James Meade was born June 23, 1907 and grew up in Bath, Somerset. He joined Oxford's Oriel College in 1926. Initially, Meade studied Greats, but he switched to its modern complimentary – PPE – in 1927. Meade graduated with first class honours in 1930 and was offered a fellowship in Economics at Hertford College. Meade accepted, but took a year off to study at Cambridge. There, he met the members of the infamous 'Cambridge Circus': Richard Kahn, Piero Sraffa, Austin Robinson, and Joan Robinson, a group of young economists who were heavily inspired by John Maynard Keynes and his *A Treatise on Money*. Meade frequently joined events of the Political Economy Club, where he could converse with Keynes in person. In 1931, he returned to Oxford and began his fellowship. Six years later, intrigued by the international sphere, he left Oxford to work for the League of Nations. He joined the League's Economic Intelligence Service for four years and produced the World Economic Surveys for 1937-8 and 1938-9. The outbreak of World War Two brought Meade back to England. He worked for the government, researching war finances and national income, and predicting post-war challenges. In 1947, Meade was a founding father of the GATT – the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade – which paved the way for the World Trade Organisation. In 1947, Meade finally decided to return to academia, teaching at LSE and Cambridge. His many professional achievements were crowned with the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics, which he jointly won in 1977 with Bertil Ohlin. Meade died on 22nd December 1995 in Cambridge.

**Alison Munro, St Hilda's College, Civil Servant and Headmistress of St Paul's Girl's School, London**

Born on 12 February 1914 in Liskeard, Cornwall, Alison Munro was forced into independence at an early age. Her mother, concert pianist Helen Barrow, passed away in 1927, followed by the death of her father, a medical doctor, only a few months later. After attending St Paul's School in London, Munro studied PPE at St Hilda's College between 1933-1936. At Oxford, Munro met her husband, Alan Lamont. Lamont became an Air Force flying officer and died in an air crash in 1941. Despite this tragedy, Munro went on to dedicate a great part of her life to aviation. In 1942, she began working for Sir Robert Watson-Watt at the Ministry of Aircraft Production. Three years later, she moved to the newly formed Ministry of Civil Aviation, and in 1958 became under-secretary at the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation. Finally, in 1960, she was appointed under-

secretary at the Ministry of Aviation. In 1964, Munro decided to turn her back on the civil service. Revisiting the school of her childhood, Munro became headmistress of St Paul's Girl's School and was honoured as CBE the same year. An article published in The Times on 24th June 1974 under the headline *The no-nonsense head who has no time for punishment* explained her pedagogical approach: "I am not keen on the idea of punishment", Mrs Munro says. 'I prefer to work on the girls, to talk the matter over with her. One thing you must never have is a punishment which humiliates the child, which destroys her self-respect.'" Munro was honoured as DBE in 1985 and died on 2nd September 2008 in West Wittering.

**WOMAN IN THE NEWS**

**CIVIL SERVANT AND AVIATION ENTHUSIAST**

Mrs. Alison Munro, tall and distinguished looking, has just achieved the distinction of being the first woman to lead the British delegation at Anglo-American talks to review the working of the bilateral air services agreement signed at Bermuda in 1946. The latest in the series of reviews was opened yesterday in Barbados.

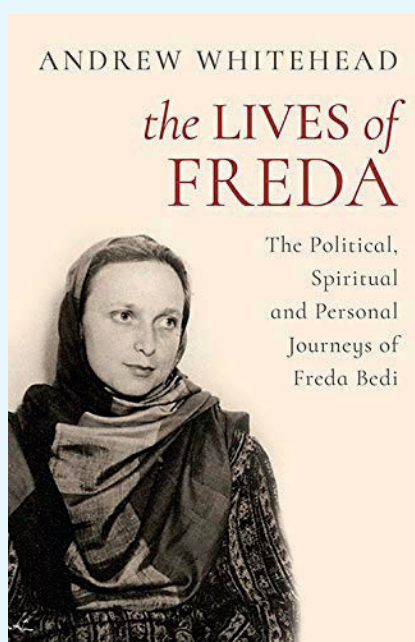
Although, at the age of 46, Mrs. Munro has reached the senior post of Under-Secretary in charge of oversea policy for civil aviation at the Ministry of Aviation, she became a Civil servant "by accident." After obtaining a degree in philosophy, politics and economics at Oxford she completed a course at a secretarial college. Already engaged to be married, she took a temporary post as secretary to the late Professor C. L. Fortescue, who was then Professor of Electrical Engineering at the Imperial College of Science and Technology.



**Freda Bedi, St. Hugh's College, First British woman to take ordination into Tibetan Buddhism** (also known as Gelongma Karma Khechog Palmo)

Freda Bedi was born February 5, 1911 to Francis Edwin Houlston, watchmaker and jeweller, and Nelly Diana Swan. She matriculated at St. Hugh's in 1929: "it was really the opening of the gates of the world."<sup>xxvi</sup> At Oxford, she found friends for life – Barbara Betts, later Barbara Castle, and Olive Shapley, who became an influential broadcaster. Through her PPE class, Bedi met her future husband, the Indian Sikh Baba Pvara Bedi. Upon their graduation in 1933, the two married in the Oxford Registry Office. In 1934, the couple moved to Lahore with their newborn son. The Bedis worked for the Freedom Movement and became increasingly politically involved in the Kashmir conflict. Bedi also toured and reported on Tibetan refugee camps, helping women and children "suffering not only physical hardship in the desperate cold, but often mental torture when relations and children had been killed."<sup>xxvii</sup> In 1950, Bedi started working for the pioneer college for women at the University of Kashmir. Deeply invested in the Buddhist religion, in 1963 Bedi founded a Mahayana Buddhist nunnery at Tilokpur, India. Three years later, she became a Buddhist nun. In 1977, she was ordained Gelongma, the highest ordination available to a Buddhist nun and not awarded in India for many centuries. Bedi died on 26th March 1977.

*Forty years after their Oxford days, Barbara Castle entertained her old friend to lunch at Westminster. 'She sailed into the House of Commons dining room in her flowing Buddhist robe, serenely indifferent to the covert stares at her shaven head.'*<sup>xxviii</sup>



**Chad Varah, Keble College, Activist, Priest and Founder of Samaritans**

The founder of the Samaritans, Chad Varah, was born November 12, 1911 in Barton upon Humber, Lincolnshire. In 1930, Varah matriculated at Oxford's Keble College. He began studying natural sciences but eventually switched to PPE. During his time at Oxford, Varah was secretary of the University's Russian and Slavonic club and founding president of the Scandinavian club. He appears to have enjoyed his time at Oxford. According to Keble College's magazine *Past and Present*, his tutor George Parks wrote in 1931 that Varah was 'absolutely lacking in self-control when it comes to matters of expenditure on tobacco and similar matters.'

After he graduated in 1933, Varah went on to the Lincoln Theological College and was ordained deacon in 1935 and priest in 1936. In November 1953, Varah founded the Samaritans. Instead of religious counselling, Varah developed the method of 'befriending' to aid desperate and often suicidal people. He continued to pursue a religious career and became rector of St Stephen Walbrook Church in London in 1953. Varah was appointed OBE in 1969, CBE in 1995 and CH in 2000. In the same year, he also won the Pride of Britain Award for lifetime achievement. Varah died on November 8th 2007 in Basingstoke, England.

*The Personal concern and goodwill of fellow-humans is a desperate need, the satisfaction of which may avert disaster as well as help to repair disaster already suffered. It is for the former purpose, namely the provision of friends for those who without them might take their own lives, that The Samaritans exist.*<sup>xxix</sup>

**Albert Habib Hourani, Magdalen College, Historian**

Albert Habib Hourani, historian of the Middle East, was born March 31, 1915, in Manchester, England. His parents, Fadlo and Soumaiya Hourani, were Lebanese immigrants: "My father was torn by the question of our identity. He wanted us to be assimilated into English life, but at the same time he didn't. He didn't wish us to reject the world from which he had come."<sup>xxx</sup> A history scholarship brought Hourani to Oxford's Magdalen College, but he switched to PPE and graduated in 1936. Instead of continuing his studies at Oxford, Hourani decided to explore his roots. In 1937, he moved to Lebanon and began teaching Middle Eastern history and English literature at the University of Beirut. He wrote, "At my first sight of the Mediterranean world I realized that I had never known light before."<sup>xxxi</sup>

The Second World War, however, provided a brief period with the civil service. In 1939, Hourani was convinced to join the Middle Eastern Section of the research department of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. He worked with Arnold Toynbee and H. A. R. Gibb, and in

1942 travelled to the Middle East again. After spending some time in Cairo as an assistant to the adviser on Arab affairs, Ilyrd Clayton, to the British minister of state resident in Cairo, and two years of work in the Arab Office, a fellowship at Magdalen College brought Hourani back to Oxford in 1948. In 1951, he became the University's first lecturer in the modern history of the Middle East. In 1958, he moved to St Antony's College as the second director of its newly created Middle East Centre.

*I still remember my first lecture because nobody came. Under the Oxford system you advertise your lecture. You put an advertisement in the University Gazette which comes out at every term. For some reason they lost my advertisement, my notice. I remember the odd experience of going there dressed in my gown, the first lecture written, and waiting, and waiting, and nobody came at all.<sup>xxxii</sup>*

The books *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (1962), and *A History of the Arab Peoples* (1991) remain staple works of Arabic history. Hourani died on the 17th January 1993 in Oxford.

### Mary Irene Levison, Lady Margaret Hall, First Woman Chaplain to the Queen

Mary Irene Levison was born on January 8, 1923, in Oxford. Levison studied PPE at Lady Margaret Hall between 1941-43, obtaining a first-class honours

degree. She then secured a Bachelor of Divinity in Edinburgh and pursued further theological studies in Basel and Heidelberg before going on to seek a clerical career. From 1954 to 1958, she worked for the Church of Scotland as a Deaconess in the parish of Inveresk, Musselburgh. Between 1958 and 1961, she was a tutor at St Colm's College in Edinburgh, laying the grounds for the following position as assistant chaplain at the University of Edinburgh.

Levison was determined to promote female participation in the Church of Scotland, and the year 1967 marked a special moment for her cause. Levison was one of the six signatories of an open letter to the general assembly, calling for women's ordination. They were successful. Only two years later, Rev. Catherine McConnachie was ordained by the Presbytery of Aberdeen as the first female minister. In 1978, Levison herself was ordained as assistant minister of St Andrew's and St George's Church, Edinburgh. Levison was not only the first woman to be appointed moderator of the Presbytery of Edinburgh: in 1991, she became one of the ten chaplains to the Queen in the Church of Scotland. Again, it was the first time this position was assigned to a woman. In her book, *Wrestling with the Church: One Woman's Experience*, Levison described the institutional challenges she faced and her campaign for women's ordination. In 1994, Levison received an honorary Doctorate of Divinity from the University of Edinburgh. She died on 12th September 2011 in Edinburgh.

## The Queen to appoint first woman chaplain



The Rev Mary Levison: may preach at Balmoral

By RUTH GLEDHILL  
RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

THE Queen is about to announce the appointment of her first woman chaplain. The Rev Mary Levison, aged 67, will become one of ten chaplains to the Queen in the Church of Scotland, according to church sources.

The appointment of Mrs Levison to the Queen's ecclesiastical household is certain to be seen by some in England as a sign that she does not hold strong objections to women priests. The Church of England is to vote on the issue next year. The Church of Scotland's general assembly agreed to ordain women in 1968.

Mrs Levison was chosen on the advice of the Very Rev Robert Barbour, chaplain to the Queen and dean of the Chapel Royal in Scotland, who retires on May 11, his 70th birthday. Professor

Barbour, while declining to confirm Mrs Levison's appointment, said the duties of a chaplain to the Queen were largely honorary. She would be invited to preach and to stay at Balmoral when the Queen was in residence. Appeals to the Queen on religious matters were sometimes dealt with by a chaplain, he said.

He said that the appointment of a woman as chaplain would not necessarily indicate that the Queen supported women's ordination to the priesthood in the Church of England, of which she is the head. "North of the border the Queen is bound to respect the law and practice of the Church of Scotland. She is not the head of the Church of Scotland."

Mrs Levison was one of the six signatories to an open letter to the general assembly in 1967 calling for women's ordination. Of the church's 1,250 ministers, 100 are now women.

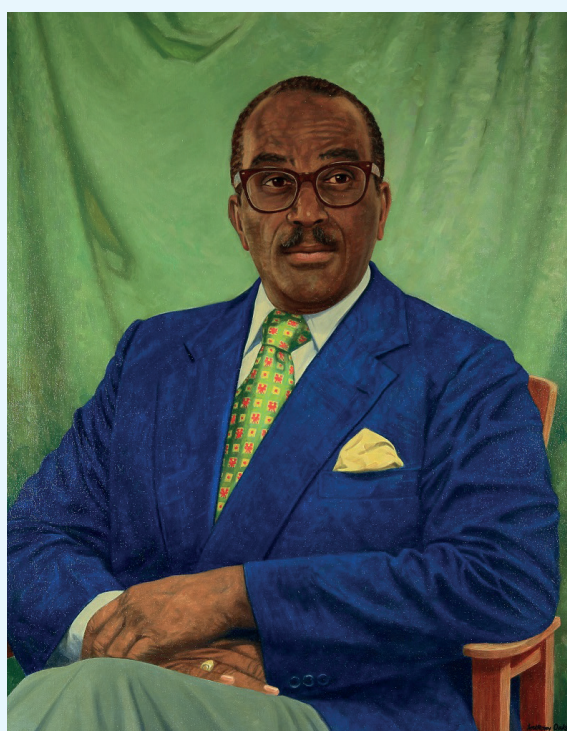
An Oxford graduate with an honours

degree in politics, philosophy and economics, Mrs Levison was a deaconess for many years until her ordination in 1978 as assistant minister of St Andrew's and St George's church, George Street, Edinburgh. In 1988 she was the first woman to be appointed moderator of the Edinburgh Presbytery. She declined last night to comment.

The Church of Scotland, a Presbyterian church, is one of the United Kingdom's two national churches but enjoys independence from the state in spiritual matters. The Queen has no formal place in the Church of Scotland, which recognizes Jesus Christ as its sole king and head, and describes itself as both "free" and "established". She is represented every year at the general assembly by a Lord High Commissioner. The Moderator of the Church of Scotland, Dr Robert Davidson, presides over the general assembly.

**Maurice William Cranston, St Catherine's College, Political Philosopher**

Born May 8, 1920, in Tottenham, Maurice Cranston was raised by his two aunts and a Quaker godmother. His mother had passed away in 1933, and his father had emigrated to Canada. Cranston attended a Jesuit College in France, where he learned French and prepared to pursue a career in journalism. World War Two temporarily disrupted these plans. As a conscientious objector, he served the London civil defence in firefighting and rescuing casualties of the bombing. In his free time, Cranston wrote for the Peace News. After the Blitz, he began to take evening classes at the University of London on Spinoza. Intrigued by these philosophical studies, Cranston moved to Oxford. He joined the debating society, wrote for St Catherine's student magazine *The Wheel*, and founded the Oxford University's Writers' Club together with Ludovic Kennedy. In 1948, he graduated with a second-class degree in PPE. He would go on to pursue a career as a philosopher. In the 1950s, Cranston became a part-time lecturer in social philosophy at the University of London and worked in journalism and publishing. He joined the Poets, Essayists, and Novelists (PEN) and was a permanent delegate to PEN International. Throughout his career, Cranston taught at distinguished institutions, including Harvard University, LSE and the European University Institute in Florence. In 1988, he became an honorary fellow of his old college, St Catherine's, and in 1991, an honorary fellow of LSE. Cranston died on 5th November 1993 in London.



PORTRAIT OF JAMES CAMERON TUDOR

**James Cameron Tudor, Keble College, Barbadian Politician & First Black President of the Oxford Union**

James Cameron Tudor was born October 18, 1919, in St Michael, Barbados. After initial flirtations with a law degree at the University of London, Tudor decided to study PPE at Oxford. He matriculated in 1940 at Keble College. Tudor quickly integrated himself into the University's political scene. He became Treasurer, Secretary, and finally President of the College's Junior Common Room committee and became chairman of the University's Labour Club. In 1942, Tudor became the first black president of the Oxford Union. This extraordinary achievement was widely reported upon. In 1943, he graduated in PPE. Tudor returned to the Caribbean in 1945 and was all set for a political career. He joined the Barbados Labour Party and participated in general elections in 1951. Upon disagreements with the BLP, Tudor became one of the founding fathers of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) in 1955. The party accompanied the country to independence in 1966. He served in numerous positions, including the post of Deputy Prime Minister, High Commissioner to the UK, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Representative to the United Nations, among others. Tudor died on 9th July 1995 in Bridgetown, Barbados. In 2018, Keble College honoured Tudor's lasting legacy with a portrait painted by Anthony Oakshett. The portrait hangs in the College's Dining Room.

**Mary Douglas, St Anne's College, Anthropologist**

The anthropologist Mary Douglas was born March 25, 1921, in San Remo, Italy, to a colonial family. Her parents worked for the Indian Civil Service in Burma, and their grandparents raised Douglas and her younger sister in England. She received a Catholic up-bringing and an education at the Sacred Heart convent which would have a lasting impact on her intellectual evolution. Upon graduating in PPE from St Anne's College in 1942, Douglas was quickly mobilized for the war. She worked for the Colonial Office until 1946: "I felt very lost, but the good side was that I met anthropologists, read their books, and decided that was what I really wanted to do. For me there was always going to be an internal dialogue between religion and anthropology, the one illuminating the other, reciprocally."<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Having found her definite field of interest, Douglas went back to Oxford in 1946 and obtained a master's degree in Anthropology, followed by a DPhil. Her research inspired her to undertake multiple field studies to the Belgian Congo, where she lived among the Lele. For over 20 years, she taught at the anthropology department at University College London. In 2007, shortly before her death on 16th May 2007 in London, Douglas was appointed DBE.

*So there I was, confident, loyal, rebarbative in defense of my faith, but utterly unprepared for university. Arrived at Oxford I found to my chagrin that exams and hard work were necessary. It put me in some discomfort not to be able to understand the lectures, still less do the maths or statistics. I was not qualified to justify either my good opinion of myself or my loyalties. I had chosen PPE [...] because it promised to lead into the social questions raised in the Certificate in Catholic Social Teaching. P stood for philosophy, which at that time, to my dismay, entailed symbolic logic. The second P was for Politics, a relatively soft option, but it entailed a lot of solid library work, and E, for economics, which was just beginning to move heavily into mathematics.<sup>xxxiv</sup>*

**Nina Bawden, Somerville College, Novelist and Children’s Writer, Somerville College**

Writer Nina Bawden was born January 19, 1925 in Ilford, Essex. Her father, Charles Mabey, was a marine engineer and her mother, Ellaline Ursula May, a schoolteacher. When the Second World War broke out, Bawden’s school was evacuated and relocated twice. She later revisited her war memories with the prized book *Carrie’s War*. Published in 1973, the book won the Phoenix Award in 1993 and was turned into BBC series in 1974 and 2003. After finishing high school, Bawden went to study PPE at Somerville College in 1943. Bawden had started writing from an early age, and in the 1950s, she began to publish literature seriously. Her first books included *Who Calls the Tune* (1953), *The Old Flamingo* (1954), *Change Here for Babylon* (1955), *The Solitary Child* (1956), and *Devil by the Sea* (1958). In the course of her life, Bawden published over forty novels, many of them on dysfunctional families and unsafe child experiences. Her children’s book *The Peppermint Pig* (1975) won the Guardian Prize in 1976. In 1995, Bawden was honoured

as CBE. She was part of the Royal Society of Literature, the Poets, Essayists, and Novelists (PEN) and the Society of Authors. She further served as president of the Society of Women Writers and Journalists. In 2004, Nina Bawden was awarded the Golden Pen for a lifetime’s contribution to literature. She died on 22nd August 2012 in London.

**Mary McIntosh, St Anne’s College, Sociologist**

Sociologist and political activist Mary MacIntosh was born on March 13, 1936 in Hampstead, London. After attending High Wycombe School for Girls, McIntosh matriculated at St Anne’s College, Oxford, in 1955. She graduated in PPE in 1958 and soon after moved to Berkeley, California, to continue her studies. This was without success, however: in 1960 she was expelled from the USA when she participated in a demonstration against the conservative House Un-American Activities Committee. Back in England, she became heavily involved in the 1960s gay liberation and women’s liberation movements. She joined the London Gay Liberation Front (GLF) from its inception in October 1970, co-wrote the GLF Manifesto in 1971, and joined the Counter-Psychiatry Group, which worked against psychiatric practices for homosexuals. She was also active in the Fifth Demand Group and Rights of Women, fighting for legal as well as financial independence for women. While pursuing her political goals, she worked as lecturer in sociology at the University of Leicester from 1963 to 1972, and in 1968-72 at the Borough Polytechnic. In 1972, she returned to Oxford for three years as a research fellow at Nuffield College. She used her time to conduct research on prostitution. At Essex University, 1975-1996, McIntosh became the first female head of the sociology department, pioneering courses on gender and feminist theory. She died on 5th January 2013 in London.



From the Somerville College Archives

CREDIT: SOMERVILLE COLLEGE ARCHIVES



### **Stanley Myers, Balliol College, Musician**

Stanley Myers was born on October 6, 1930, in Birmingham. After spending his early school days at King Edward's School, Myers completed his army service in 1948-49. He then matriculated at Balliol College and graduated with a degree in PPE in 1952, though his commitment to the subject was somewhat questionable: 'We called it a dropout's subject,' he wrote of his undergraduate life. 'I spent most of my time playing the piano in university shows.' Myers began his career playing piano in bars, restaurants, and cabaret shows. He went on to become a successful composer and conductor, working for television, theatre, and cinema. He won two Ivor Novello Awards for the best film score: one for *The Deerhunter* in 1978, and another one for *The Witches* in 1991. In 1987, Myers won the Cannes Film Festival *Prix de la Meilleure Contribution Artistique* for the score for *Prick Up Your Ears*. In 1992, he conducted the World Première of Concerto for Saxophone and Orchestra with the Florida Philharmonic Orchestra. Myers died on 9th November 1993 in London.

### **Lucy Sichone, Rhodes scholar, Zambian civil rights activist**

Lucy Banda-Sichone was born in Zambia on 15 May 1954. An activist for human rights, she studied PPE as a Rhodes Scholar at Somerville but returned to Zambia to work in politics, founding the Zambian Civic Education Association, practising law, and writing a series of popular newspaper columns, many of which were

fiercely critical of government corruption and abuses of power. Her outspokenness led to prosecution by the state – she was forced briefly into hiding – and won her an Independent Women in Media Foundation Courage in Journalism before her early death in 1998. After her death in 1998, Lucy was described after her death as Zambia's "voice of conscience". A portrait of her, by her friend and fellow Somerville alumna Deirdre Saunder, hangs in Rhodes House in Oxford.

### **Riz Ahmed, actor, rapper and activist**

Riz Ahmed was born in London on 1st December 1982, and he studied PPE at Christ Church. A 2018 New York Times feature on Riz said of his time at Oxford: "He started organising parties that celebrated his music and cultural touchstones, parties where he would get on the mic over drum 'n' bass records". Riz went on to become a successful rapper, performing as Riz MC and released his first hip-hop single in 2006. Following this, he acted in the Bafta-winning film *Four Lions* in 2010 and has since appeared in major films including *Jason Bourne* in 2016. He has won an Emmy Award and received nominations for a Golden Globe and three British Independent Film Awards. *Jason Bourne* (2016) and *'Rogue One'* (2016). Riz is also an activist, raising funds for Rohingya and Syrian refugee children and speaking at the House of Commons about diversity in the media. In 2017, he was also included on TIME magazine's annual list of the 100 most influential people in the world.



PORTRAIT OF LUCY SICHONE  
BY ARTIST DIERDRE SAUNDER

## PPE GOES INTERNATIONAL

Oxford's Philosophy, Politics and Economics degree has come far in its first hundred years since 1920. Not only have 33 universities in the United Kingdom integrated the successful trinity into their academic departments, but the degree has also spread across the globe, to 172 institutions in 33 countries. Today, students in Australia, Nigeria, South Korea, India, Turkey, the United States, Sweden, and many other countries have the opportunity to explore contemporary issues through PPE's multi-dimensional educational lens. Societies such as the Philosophy, Politics and Economics Society and the International Philosophy, Politics and Economics Conference hold annual meetings and publish their own journals, reflecting on multi- and interdisciplinary developments in the field. According to the Philosophy, Politics and Economics Conference, PPE is a 'field of research, a mindset and a context of rethinking.' It is clear, then, that PPE is now far more than an Oxford degree course: it is now an entire global field, with its own debates and unique approaches to the world.

### WHERE CAN YOU FIND PPE IN 2020?

In Europe: Durham University; Goldsmiths, University of London; King's College London, London, Lancaster University, London School of Economics, The Open University, Queen's University Belfast, Royal Holloway, University of London, Swansea University, University College London, University of Aberdeen, University of Buckingham, New College of the Humanities, University of East Anglia, University of Edinburgh, University of Essex, University of Exeter, University of the Highlands and Islands, University of Hull, University of Leeds, University of Liverpool, Loughborough University, University of Manchester, University of Nottingham, University of Oxford, University of Reading, University of Southampton, University of Stirling, University of Sussex, University of Warwick, University of Winchester, University of York, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, University College Dublin, American University of Paris, Bifröst University, CEVRO Institute, Central European University, Charles University, Charles III University of Madrid, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Pompeu Fabra University, Erasmus University College, Francisco de Vitoria University, Karlshochschule International University, Leiden University, Libera Università Internazionale degli Studi Sociali Guido Carli, Ludwig Maximilian Universität, Lund University,

National Research University – Higher School of Economics, Stockholm University, UCLouvain, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, University of Navarra, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, University of Deusto, Ramon Llull University, Comillas Pontifical University, Heinrich Heine University, University of Salzburg, University of Groningen, University of Hamburg, University of Lucerne, Utrecht University, Witten/Herdecke University

In North America: Mount Allison University, Queen's University, The University of British Columbia, University of Regina, University of Western Ontario, Austin College, Boyce College, Carroll University, Claremont McKenna College, Criswell College, Denison University, Drexel University, Duke University, Emory & Henry College, George Mason University, Georgia State University, Juniata College, The King's College, La Salle University, Mercer University, Minnesota State University, Mount St Mary's University, Northeastern University, Pomona College, Rutgers University, Seattle Pacific University, Suffolk University, Ohio Northern University, Ohio State University, Transylvania University, University of Akron, University of Michigan, University of Maryland, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Notre Dame, University of Pennsylvania, Taylor University, University of Washington Tacoma, Virginia Tech, Wabash College, Western Washington University

In Africa: Stellenbosch University, Obafemi Awolowo University, University of Cape Town, University of South Africa, University of Johannesburg, University of Witwatersrand, University of Pretoria

In Australia & New Zealand: Australian National University, La Trobe University, University of Adelaide, University of New South Wales, University of Otago, University of Queensland, The University of Western Australia, University of Wollongong, Victoria University of Wellington

In Asia: Seoul National University, Sogang University, Beijing University, Hanyang University, Nankai University, Beijing Normal University, Wuhan University, Nanjing Audit University, Liaocheng University, Renmin University of China, Tsinghua University, Rangsit University, Thammasat University, Waseda University, YaleNUS College, National University of Singapore, Ashoka University, Amity University, Asian University for Women, Koç University.



## ALUMNI INTERVIEWS

### MONICA ALI (WADHAM, 1986)

Monica is an award-winning, bestselling writer whose work has been translated into 26 languages. Her debut novel, *Brick Lane*, was shortlisted for the Man Booker prize.



#### What are your main memories of studying PPE at Oxford?

Two things: reading and writing. I read in lots of places, the Wadham College library, Rhodes House, the PPE Reading Room, and – my favourite – the Radcliffe Camera. In my room, on the lawn, in cafes. I have to confess I read more novels than I should have had time for, given that PPE reading lists were impossibly long. I always wrote essays in my room, and as there were two essays per week to write, most days were ‘essay crisis’ days.

#### Why did you choose PPE as your degree?

I’d never heard of it before my History teacher at school suggested it might interest me and explained it to me. Thanks, Mrs Palmer!

#### How did you find it?

My politics tutor, Dr Currie, told me in the first week that I shouldn’t attend lectures as they were a waste of time. I took him at his word and the first lecture I attended was in the third year. I went to a total of two lectures in three years. In a way I regret that, but I certainly learned how to study independently! I didn’t have a single female tutor during my degree course and I’m sure that will be different now, but I do think it put me off further study. Also I was the only girl at Wadham in my year who was accepted for PPE, out of a total (I think) of ten. That wasn’t ideal either.

#### How have you used PPE in your life and career?

I have often drawn on the knowledge and skills I learned during my course. Most importantly, the skill of critical thinking. That, above all, is valuable to me. I learned how to research a topic, digest it, interrogate it, write about it clearly and cogently. As a novelist interested in how society works and how it fails, I have drawn on my grounding in all three subjects. I’m grateful I didn’t choose to study English Literature. I feel that wouldn’t have equipped me nearly so well to write about the things that feel important to me.

#### How was PPE perceived when you studied it (either by the wider public or within Oxford) and do you think that reputation has changed since?

I think that as far as people are aware of it they think about politicians, coming from a particular background, with an expectation that they are destined to rule over the rest of us. Maybe that wasn’t too far from the truth back then. Now, I don’t know. I hope it isn’t. I hope it’s more diverse now than it was.

#### Is there anything else you’d say about your time doing PPE?

I’d love to do it all over again, and make better use of all the facilities and opportunities that I was too lazy or too apprehensive to tap into at the time.

### PETE BUTTIGIEG (PEMBROKE, 2005)

Since studying PPE as a Rhodes Scholar, Pete has served as two-time mayor of South Bend, Indiana and stood as a candidate for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States in 2020.



#### What are your main memories of studying PPE at Oxford?

First, I remember how demanding it was. Expectations were high, and you were expected to arrive in tutorials prepared. My other main memories are of the range of personalities of the tutors I studied with, and fellow students.

#### Why did you choose PPE as your degree?

By the time I arrived at Oxford, I had bachelors degree in history and literature and a year of political experience, but I knew my education was incomplete. I wanted the broadest possible grounding in how the world works, and found it in PPE.

#### How did you find it?

I had heard that PPE was a go-to course for American Rhodes Scholars, though it was in fact rare by the time I arrived. But once I heard it existed, it seemed like a perfect combination of disciplines to study.

#### How have you used PPE in your life and career?

I use PPE daily. The grounding in economics served me well in office and in business, and the politics and philosophy courses have anchored my approach not only to policymaking but to my ethical worldview.

#### How was PPE perceived when you studied it (either by the wider public or within Oxford) and do you think that reputation has changed since?

Oxford PPE is among the world's legendary courses of study because of the prominence of its alumni, but I think more than anything it is deserved because of the combination of depth, rigor, and range.

### MARY ANN SIEGHART (WADHAM, 1979)

Mary Ann has had a distinguished career as a journalist and broadcaster, including as Assistant Editor at *The Times*, and she presents programmes on BBC Radio 4 and BBC World Service.



#### What are your main memories of studying PPE at Oxford?

Twice-a-week essay crises. Last-minute dashes to the PPE Reading Room, only to discover that someone more organised had the book I needed.

#### Why did you choose PPE as your degree?

I wanted to be a political journalist and PPE was the closest degree I could do to current affairs. Also I loved its variety and breadth. In Isaiah Berlin's terms, I'm a fox rather than a hedgehog.

#### How did you find it?

The economics was very good, but some of the rest of the course felt quite old-fashioned and historical. I was disappointed that there was no specialist course at the intersection between philosophy and economics.

#### How have you used PPE in your life and career?

It's been a huge boon in my working life. My understanding of economics and politics has underpinned my journalism, while the philosophy has helped me to think more rigorously and critically.

#### How was PPE perceived when you studied it and has that changed since?

PPE was highly prestigious when I studied it, but I have watched its reputation wane as more and more arrogant, dilettante PPEists have run the country badly.

#### Is there anything else you'd like to say about your time doing PPE?

PPE was a wonderful degree for a generalist like me. At the time, Oxford courses had the reputation for being quite narrow, but PPE allowed us to spread our wings.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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<sup>ii</sup> Norman Chester, *Economics, Politics, and Social Studies in Oxford, 1900-85* (1986), p.30.

<sup>iii</sup> Robert Currie, 'The Arts and Social Studies, 1914-1939', in Brian Harrison (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford, Volume VIII: The Twentieth Century* (1994), p.112.

<sup>iv</sup> Currie, 'The Arts and Social Studies', 112.

<sup>v</sup> Benjamin Jowett, letter to Florence Nightingale, 9 June 1870, *Dear Miss Nightingale: A Selection of Benjamin Jowett's letters to Florence Nightingale, 1860-1893*, ed. J. M. Prest and Vincent Quinn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), pp. 188-189.

<sup>vi</sup> Benjamin Jowett, letter to Florence Nightingale, 4 December 1873, *Dear Miss Nightingale*, p. 249.

<sup>vii</sup> Benjamin Jowett, letter to Earl Russell, 27 October 1867, *Jowett's Correspondence on Education with Earl Russell in 1867*, ed. J. M. Prest (Oxford: Balliol College Record, 1965).

<sup>viii</sup> Scott, *A. D. Lindsay*, p. 49.

<sup>ix</sup> Quoted in *Economics, Politics and Social Studies in Oxford*, p. 31.

<sup>x</sup> *Oxford University Gazette*, 30 November 1920, p. 168.

<sup>xi</sup> Currie, 'The Arts and Social Studies', p. 113.

<sup>xii</sup> Currie, 'The Arts and Social Studies', p.116.

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<sup>xiv</sup> Currie, 'The Arts and Social Studies', p.120.

<sup>xv</sup> Jose Harris, 'The Arts and Social Sciences, 1939-1970', in Harris, *The History of the University of Oxford*, p. 222.

<sup>xvi</sup> Trevor Pateman, *The Poverty of Philosophy, Politics and Economics: A critique of the honour school of PPE* (1968)

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<sup>xix</sup> James Meade, 'A Renaissance Man Remembered,' *The Economist* (8 December 1984), p. 19.

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<sup>xxi</sup> L. P. Carpenter, G. D. H. Cole: *An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 119-120.

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<sup>xxiii</sup> Chester, *Economics, Politics and Social Studies in Oxford*, p.34.

<sup>xxiv</sup> 'Learning and the Realities – Experience at Oxford', *The Times*, 23rd February 1942.

<sup>xxv</sup> 'Dockers' education', *The Guardian*, 22nd October 1966.

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