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The Monarchs' History Men: What Has Changed over Three Centuries?

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Abstract

Since its foundation in 1724, the regius chair has been held by twenty-two men. In this study, I consider a small selection of them, using a range of sources including a guard book in Cambridge University's archives and portraits in order to reflect on their lives, works, and reputations and on ways of analysing the history of one specific post. The central role of the university's registrary and the scope of incumbents' intellectual concerns are also discussed. Implicit is a measure of scepticism about 'professionalization' as an explanation for the nature of historical practice over three hundred years and about existing interpretations of past claims that history is a science.

On Thursday 13 June 1895, a meeting took place in the Senate House to discuss a suitable, tangible, and long-lasting memorial for Sir John Robert Seeley, who had died in Cambridge on 13 January, aged sixty, having suffered ill health for some time. The name Seeley is familiar to all Cambridge historians since the library in the faculty building recognizes the ninth incumbent of the chair founded three hundred years ago.[1] An account of the 1895 meeting appeared in the *Cambridge University Reporter* in October and it reveals an elaborate display of opinions and feelings concerning a man who was, after all, a public figure and a controversial one at that.[2] In using the notion of 'display' I mean to draw attention to the formality and careful choreography of such an occasion, as well as to any specifically visual-cum-material form a memorial would take. The ceremonial setting shaped how Seeley was invoked, his legacy and publications discussed. Among his publications, *The expansion of England*,

[1]On the foundation of the chair, see John Willis Clark, ed., *Endowments of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1904), pp. 183–92; Peter Searby, *A history of the University of Cambridge*, II: *1750–1870* (Cambridge, 1997), esp. p. 233; pp. 233–59 concern the history of the chair up to and including Charles Kingsley; Hannah Smith, *Georgian monarchy: politics and culture, 1714–1760* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 45, 35, 173–5.

[2]*Cambridge University Reporter*, inserted into UA/CUR 39 14, item 34. On Seeley, see Ian Hesketh, *Victorian Jesus: J. R. Seeley, religion, and the cultural significance of anonymity* (Toronto, Buffalo, NY, and London, 2017); Deborah Wormell, *Sir John Seeley and the uses of history* (Cambridge, 1980); and Gustav Rein, *Sir John Robert Seeley: a study of the historian* (Wolfeboro, NH, 1987; orig. publ. in German in 1912). Unless otherwise stated, all the (deceased) figures mentioned are in the *ODNB*.

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1883, was repeatedly mentioned.[3] It has received much attention in recent years, especially in relation to the idea of a 'Greater Britain'.[4]

Sir John was well known long before *Expansion* appeared, especially for *Ecce homo: a survey of the life and work of Jesus Christ*, published to considerable controversy in 1865. The book appeared anonymously, but it soon became an open secret who the author was.[5] Seeley, knighted by Lord Rosebery soon after he took office as prime minister in March 1894, was a man of wide interests, evidenced by his striking range of publications. Interest in him has never abated; many authors have engaged with him and his legacy and not just to suggest, as some have claimed, that he was the first 'proper' historian to occupy the chair.[6]

The history of the regius chair of modern history, as it was called until 2010, is considerably more complex than that claim implies.[7] Since reading lists and lecture notes survive from before 1869, when Seeley was appointed to succeed the Reverend Charles Kingsley, surely the most famous incumbent, we can get a sense of what history at Cambridge consisted of.[8] Seeley himself can help since he contributed to and seems to have been the organizer behind *The student's guide to the University of Cambridge*.[9] A strikingly comprehensive volume, it provides estimates of the costs students would incur, types of accommodation available, the nature of examinations, and lists of reading for subjects, such as moral sciences, law, and theology as well as mathematics and classics, and in every one except medicine, historical works are listed. Using the 2nd edition, I note that there was a paper on the history and philosophy of science, that mathematicians read Newton's *Principia*, classicists studied

[3]John Seeley, *The expansion of England: two courses of lectures* (London, 1883). There were further editions in 1906, 1909, and 1916; it was reissued in 1971 in the University of Chicago's 'Classics of British Historical Literature' series. There was also a reduced version, *Our colonial expansion. Extracts from the expansion of England* (London, 1887). Like his earlier book *Ecce homo: a survey of the life and work of Jesus Christ* (London, 1866), the publisher was Macmillan & Co. Lists of Seeley's publications appear in Rein, *Sir John Robert Seeley*, pp. 119–28; and Wormell, *Sir John Seeley*, pp. 211–14.

[4]E.g. Duncan Bell, *The idea of greater Britain: empire and the future of world order, 1860–1900* (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford, 2007); Hesketh, *Victorian Jesus*, esp. pp. 195–6.

[5]Ian Hesketh, *The science of history in Victorian Britain: making the past speak* (London, 2011), pp. 75–6; and Hesketh, *Victorian Jesus*, esp. ch. 8. *Natural religion* (London, 1882), also published anonymously, was understood as its sequel.

[6]E.g. Wormell, *Sir John Seeley*, p. 1; Rein, *Sir John Robert Seeley*, takes Seeley to shed light on '*the* historian', Rein's emphasis, p. 3; 'the nature of the historian himself', p. 4. Geoffrey Elton was quoted as saying that Charles Kingsley, Seeley's immediate predecessor, was 'the last of absurdities', Patrick Collinson, *The history of a history man* (Woodbridge, 2011), p. 179. Collinson succeeded Elton in the regius chair as its nineteenth incumbent. Kingsley was the eighth. Chapter 16 concerns Collinson's tenure. He had taught *Ecce homo* at King's College, London, in the 1960s, p. 143.

[7]It is now simply the regius chair of history. In the past, it was often referred to as the chair of modern history, since there could be no ambiguity. The inclusion of 'modern' did not exclude the appointment of John Bagnell Bury in 1902. Complexities are evident in UA/CUR 39 14 around appointments and money, for example.

[8]E.g. the small volume by James Plumptre in 1793, 'Notes taken at lectures in modern history, given by Dr. Symonds', Cambridge University Library, Add 5803, which indicates recommended reading and topics covered.

[9]*The students' guide to the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1863). See also Peter Slee, *Learning and a liberal education: the study of modern history in the universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Manchester 1800–1914* (Manchester, 1986), chs. 3 and 5.

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numerous historical works, by Arnold and Mommsen, for instance, the history of political thought loomed large, and Hallam's *Constitutional history* was frequently mentioned.[10] Before the advent of the Historical Tripos, then, there was apparently widespread interest in history as a subject and in sources from the past.[11] That it is possible to delve deeper into the history of the regius chair is thanks in no small measure to assiduous clerks and administrators. The record of the meeting in June 1895, likely compiled by John Neville Keynes, secretary to the Council of the Senate from 1892 and later registrary, has been pasted into a guard book in the University's archives. An intriguing artefact in its own right, it was probably assembled in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a few later items added.[12] It is not a systematic record, but a heterogeneous assemblage of manuscript and printed materials that go back to 1629, nearly a century before the regius chair was formally instituted during the reign of George I.[13]

The first document is an 1872 copy of a 1629 codicil to Lord Brooke's will in which he leaves money 'for the maintenance of a publique History Lecturer within the said University of Cambridge for ever', nominating Doctor Isaac Dorislaus as the first incumbent. The document demonstrates that a desire to provide history lectures existed long before 1724. In fact, Lord Brooke was not the only person who wished to institute a history post at Cambridge, since item 3 in the guard book is an undated proposal to found a Professorship of British Church History and the Anglo-Saxon Language by the antiquarian Sir Henry Spelman, who died in 1641.[14] Such papers alert us to another, rather different point concerning the role of the registrary – an elected post.[15] The 1872 copy was signed H. R. Luard. Dr Henry Richards Luard, a medieval historian at Trinity, was registrary between 1862 and 1891, in succession to Joseph Romilly, whose wonderfully evocative diaries mention three of the regius chairs – William Smyth, James Stephen, and Charles Kingsley, the sixth, seventh and eighth incumbents.[16] In contributing to and selecting papers for the guard book, Luard acted as a historian of the chair, along with others, possibly clerks, but also plausibly fellow registraries, who worked with remarkably small teams until well into the twentieth century.[17] Papers were copied from originals in the Public Record

[10] *Students' guide* (Cambridge, 1866), pp. 24; 103; 126; 153; 167; 13, 25, 167, 179, 204, 282.

[11] This point is made in Christopher Brooke's Epilogue in Victor Morgan, *A history of the University of Cambridge*, II: *1546–1750* (Cambridge, 2004), ch. 16.

[12] UA/CUR 39 14; Phyllis Deane, *The life and times of J. Neville Keynes: a beacon in the tempest* (Cheltenham, 2001), draws upon Keynes's diaries in Cambridge University Library; Heather Peek and Catherine Hall, *The archives of the University of Cambridge: an historical introduction* (Cambridge, 1962), is useful.

[13] In addition to works already cited, see William Smyth's note about the chair in his *Lectures on modern history* (2 vols., London, 1840), I, p. 24 He was the sixth incumbent, 1807–49.

[14] The document – UA/CUR 39 14, item 4a – was signed by Bishop Cosin, who was vice-chancellor in 1640, so presumably it was around then that the offer was made; see also items 4 and 4b.

[15] See J. R. Tanner, ed., *The historical register of the University of Cambridge...to the year 1910* (Cambridge, 1917), pp. 50–1; pp. 88–9 cover the regius chair and pp. 895–937 the Historical Tripos, 1875–1910, listing both examiners and candidates.

[16] J. P. T. Bury, ed., *Romilly's Cambridge diary 1832–42* (Cambridge, 1967); M. E. Bury and J. D. Pickles, eds., *Romilly's Cambridge diary 1842–1847* (Cambridge, 1994); M. E. Bury et al., eds., *Romilly's Cambridge diary 1848–1864* (Cambridge, 2000).

[17] This is made clear in Deane, *Life and times*, and also in Keynes's 1927 speech on the presentation of his portrait by Sir Gerald Kelly, included in Florence Keynes, *Gathering up the threads: a study in family biography*

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Office, letters to the vice-chancellor retrieved, items cut out of the *Reporter* as were articles in newspapers that related to the chair and these sit alongside communications from the government about the post, sent directly to the registrary, who was responsible, among other things, for giving the professors their share of the fees paid by those attending lectures. Romilly, registrary between 1832 and his retirement in 1861, himself attended lectures given by William Smyth, and, given the tiny size of what we might anachronistically call the central administration of the university, and the short tenure of vice-chancellors at that time, the registrary was a key figure, often, like Keynes, a person of intellectual distinction in his own right.[18] The registrary was closely involved with all the university's doings – a major player as well as an invaluable witness. Furthermore, registraries handled the money, which came from government, to pay incumbents' salaries.[19] Bearing these points in mind, I return to the June 1895 meeting and to John Robert Seeley, classicist, poet, literary critic, biographer of Stein and Napoleon, son of a London publisher and bookseller, Robert Benton Seeley, himself a published author on religious matters.

The proceedings of the meeting were recorded in some detail, but it was not the first to be convened to commemorate a regius professor of modern history, nor was Seeley the first public figure to hold the position, since a bust of William Smyth was commissioned in the late 1840s,[20] and both James Stephen and Charles Kingsley were well known to the public at the time of their appointments in 1849 and 1860 respectively. Nonetheless, the 1895 meeting is noteworthy by virtue of the attempt to embed Seeley's memory in the doings of what was then usually referred to as the School of History and in the University more broadly. Attention was paid, for example, to the library, which began with a bequest from John Symonds, augmented by William Smyth's collection, also bequeathed, and to a medal to be awarded in Seeley's name.[21] (Figure 1) Since the guard book contains a number of letters bickering about the process of determining winners, its administration was clearly a live issue at the end of the 1890s.[22]

Participants in the Senate House meeting engaged in forms of portrayal; speakers sought both to evoke the late professor and to recount their association with him in vivid terms. The occasion created and brought into being an imagined community

(Cambridge, 1950), as Appendix II. Kelly had been a student at Trinity Hall. See p. 113 for John Neville's comments on the portrait. See also J. W. Goodison, *Catalogue of Cambridge portraits* (Cambridge, 1955), p. 127 and p. 182 for a portrait of Romilly.

[18]E.g. his *The scope and method of political economy* (London, 1891). There were later editions in 1897, 1904, and 1917. Chapter 9 discussed the relationships between political economy and economic history, including 'the conception of political economy as a distinctively historical science', pp. 296–309.

[19]See Robert Neill, *The financial history of the University of Cambridge* (London, 2012), Appendix 1B, 'The number and pay of professors from 1852–1920', details of the regius chair are on p. 16.

[20]UA/CUR 39 14, items 13 (1–5). Goodison, *Catalogue of Cambridge portraits*, pp. 104–5, for Smyth's 1851 bust by E. H. Baily, who also sculpted Whewell.

[21]Symonds was Smyth's predecessor, appointed in 1771. David McKitterick, *Cambridge University Library: a history: the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 10–11 and 13 on the history of the library. On the library, see UA/CUR 39 14, items 24, 24 (a), 25. For the Seeley medal, see Laurence Brown, *A catalogue of British historical medals 1837–1901* (London, 1987), Number 3483, p. 424. Brown deems this medal rare, indicating that the only public collection to possess one in the UK is the British Museum. The artefact sports a bare-headed portrait of Seeley on the obverse and a Latin inscription 'In memory of John Seeley'.

[22]UA/CUR 39 14, items 36 (a–e).

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Figure 1. Seeley medal. Courtesy of the History Faculty, University of Cambridge. Photography by Lloyd Mann.

by, for example, noting those who could not be present, but wished to be associated with it, including Rosebery, Arthur Balfour, and Gladstone, by linking Seeley as an interpreter of the past with Tennyson, Wordsworth, and Milton, poets 'closely connected with Cambridge',[23] who were likewise interpreters, and by inviting the audience to distance themselves from critics of Seeley, such as the Lords Beaconsfield and Shaftesbury, while participating in the celebration of 'so unique a personality', as the vice-chancellor put it.[24] The twenty-two incumbents so far form another imagined community, a lineage rooted in an ever-changing institution, which exhibited

[23]Item 34 in UA/CUR 39 14, p. 59 (pagination in the *Reporter*).

[24]Ibid., p. 54. We can chart another aspect of this community in the list of financial donations in the guard book: UA/CUR 39 14, item 35. For example, Acton gave £20, Lord Rosebery £21, and Henry Sidgwick £10.

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a strong sense of its own history, even as the incumbents were notably diverse.[25] There is no simple pattern to be discerned in the sequence as implied by notions such as professionalization. The fragile coherence of this succession is shored up by a number of forceful figures, whose significance as historians is widely attested, even if few are uncontroversial. Seeley is such a figure, whose eminence rests on memory and carefully cultivated posthumous reputation as well as on his actual life and publications. The 1895 meeting is a valuable record of some of the processes through which the constructions 'Seeley' and 'Cambridge history' came into being.

The speeches necessarily contained broad assumptions and claims about the nature of history. In articulating Seeley's importance, speakers were not just laying out a kind of manifesto, they were in effect working through some intricate issues concerning the practice of history. Many of the interventions mentioned Seeley specifically as thinker and writer: the advantage of being a professor, the marquis of Lorne claimed, was having time to think, at least compared to those on the front line of politics. According to another participant:

> To have at such a time a great thinker, a man who was a master of style, bind the arguments of history together and in the quiet of his study develop a powerful chain of reasoning which showed that the true life of this nation could well be worked out on a scale commensurate with its past, and that it was not unreal to hope for a great united Britain in the future, was an event of the first importance.[26]

At the same time as Seeley 'was a great man of letters',[27] his commitment to 'political education' and 'the development of research' was also praised.[28] Speakers were clear that Seeley was not 'a mere cataloguer of records',[29] that he was not interested in burdening minds with facts.[30]

In stressing the importance of a historical library, the bishop of Peterborough asserted that it would be as vital to students of history as a laboratory was to those learning chemistry.[31] The idea of historical study as a 'school of statesmanship', a phrase that featured in Seeley's inaugural and remains strongly associated with him, was certainly mentioned, while it was asserted that he was not a doubter in matters of religion.[32] This was possibly prudence to forestall criticism, but it serves to remind us of the intense controversies around Seeley's religious publications, and of the tangles that ensnared James Stephen over his *Essays in ecclesiastical biography*,

[25]I take the idea of an imagined community from Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (rev. edn, London, 1991).

[26]UA/CUR 39 14, item 34, p. 60. The speaker was George Robert Parkin whose *The great dominion: studies of Canada* (London, 1895) was based on letters that had appeared in *The Times*.

[27]UA/CUR 39 14, item 34, p. 63.

[28]Ibid., p. 64.

[29]Ibid., p. 56.

[30]Ibid., p. 64.

[31]Ibid., p. 64.

[32]Ibid., pp. 56–7.

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first published in 1849, the year he took up the chair.[33] The speeches in 1895 thus reveal some careful negotiations over what it meant to be a historian, their duties and responsibilities. We might deem the meeting a moment of articulation, when participants sought to portray Seeley in such a way as to secure his reputation and that of historical studies at Cambridge. In addition to claims about his literary merits and status as a thinker alongside plans for lasting legacies, such as the library, a portrait, and the medal, several speakers stressed that he was a 'remarkable teacher', and most were happy to affirm the political relevance of Seeley's work on empire, while ensuring that his views on the matter were clearly stated.[34]

There was evidently concern that Seeley's views on empire were not misunderstood, not seen, as the master of Trinity put it, as jingoistic. The marquis of Lorne, who had been governor general of Canada, summed up Seeley's thesis by insisting that 'you must in the case of these great self-governing communities look upon them as in alliance with us rather than as part and parcel of our body politic at home'.[35] Seeley grappled with large issues of international significance, including foreign policy in general and over many centuries. This was the subject of his posthumous publication, *The growth of British policy*, and, like his work on Stein and Napoleon, it indicates Seeley's internationalism.[36] The study of living languages was an integral part of the original endowment, since the professor was responsible for employing modern language teachers to benefit students going into public service, thereby yoking together the study of history and contemporary life. Indeed in an introductory lecture, dated 1809 and published in 1840, William Smyth referred to 'the professorship of modern history and languages'.[37]

The last book to appear in Seeley's lifetime was on Goethe, published in 1894 by Seeley and Company, and designed to make 'a great and delightful poet' more accessible to English-speaking audiences.[38] *Goethe reviewed after sixty years* elaborated essays published a decade earlier in the *Contemporary Review*; it indicates the breadth and depth of Seeley's literary interests, which included Milton.[39] He was not just concerned with Goethe the poet, but discussed the whole range of his output including

[33]James Stephen, *Essays in ecclesiastical biography* (London, 1849), II, Epilogue. Stephen's letter to the vice-chancellor insisting on the orthodoxy of his beliefs is UA/CUR 39 14, item 15 (3).

[34]UA/CUR 39 14, item 34, p. 56. His teaching is also praised on pp. 60, 65, 70. The 1896 portrait by Clara Ewald is on the ArtUK website: https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/john-robert-seeley-18341895-195283/view_as/grid/search/2024–keyword:john-seeley/page/1 (accessed 1 July 2024). There is a 1900 copy in Christ's College, Cambridge.

[35]UA/CUR 39 14, item 34, p. 58.

[36]J. R. Seeley, *The growth of British policy: an historical essay* (2 vols., London, 1895). The memoir of Seeley in volume I by George Prothero, who saw the book through the press, is of considerable interest. J. R. Seeley, *The life and times of Stein, or Germany and Prussia in the Napoleonic age* (3 vols., Cambridge, 1878); J. R. Seeley, *A short history of Napoleon the First* (London, 1886).

[37]Smyth, *Lectures on modern history*, I, p. 24; on the same page, he refers to history as 'the school of mankind'. There is a list of books recommended, I, pp. xi–xx.

[38]J. R. Seeley, *Goethe reviewed after sixty years* (London, 1894), p. iv. Goethe had died in 1832. Prothero's memoir in *The growth of British policy* discusses this book, I, p. xvii, and is somewhat critical of it. Many commentators on Seeley have little or nothing to say about it.

[39]There are two essays on Milton in Seeley's *Lectures and essays* (London, 1870), which had previously appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1868 and 1869.

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the novels, the two parts of Faust, his colour theory, *Dichtung und Warheit*, and so on. At many points, Seeley addresses the theme of unity: 'if the variety of his work is remarkable, their unity is more remarkable still'; 'His wisdom...had unity about it'; 'when we look at his teaching as a whole, we find that it has unity'.[40] Seeley was no Goethe, as he knew full well, but it is possible to sense a profound admiration for 'the man who took almost as much interest in science as in poetry', 'who had a love of natural science'.[41] At one point, he compares Goethe with Bacon: 'both had a prophetic sense of the tendency of science, a profound and just instinct of new scientific developments at hand'.[42] Seeley sought, then, to give a fully rounded sense of Goethe, to offer his readers a sensitive portrayal. Holistic aspirations are articulated at many points in the book; they remain just as relevant to understanding the practice of history and historians as they were to Seeley's appreciation of Goethe's *oeuvre*.[43]

It may be tempting to assign Seeley's publications to different categories, such as 'religious', 'historical', 'literary history', and 'pedagogical', and to stress his own distinction between serious writings and more popular ones.[44] This encourages a focus on his supposedly more properly historical output, thereby supporting familiar ideas about changes in the discipline over the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is reasonable to assume that Seeley, like his fellow regius professors, took contexts of publication into account when writing, and adjusted claims and style accordingly as his career evolved. In his life and mind, however, matters were perhaps more fluid – a point for commentators to consider. Historians have adopted a range of emphases in relation to Seeley, with many embracing accounts that deploy a model of professionalization and specialization in the development of history as an academic field.[45] However, it is worth being sceptical about the teleology such an approach implies. There have been incumbents of the chair in the twentieth century who do not fit neatly into these familiar narratives, which arguably become more relevant in the period after the Second World War, although even then David Knowles does not fit this pattern.[46] Furthermore, there is no inherent tension between specialization and engaging with non-academic audiences; nonetheless, since the latter is time consuming, one might expect super-professionals to distance themselves from 'popularization'. Yet most of the regius professors have addressed diverse audiences over their careers, with J. B. Bury contributing to the 11th edition of the

[40]Seeley, *Goethe*, pp. 25, 43, 99. Such comments indicate Seeley's interest in the red threads that linked apparently disparate writings.

[41]Ibid., pp. 31, 42

[42]Ibid., pp. 45–6, quotation at p. 46.

[43]Seeley's book on Goethe may also be used to shed light on German influences on British historians.

[44]The bibliography in Rein, *Sir John Robert Seeley*, uses these categories, pp. 119–28; Leslie Howsam, *Past into print: the publishing of history in Britain, 1850–1950* (London, 2009), p. 52, stresses Seeley's claim about there being two kinds of books, made in the 1880s. Hesketh, *Victorian Jesus*, discusses his approach to writing styles, e.g. pp. 161–5.

[45]Cf. Bernard Lightman and Efram Sera-Shriar, eds., *Victorian interdisciplinarity and the sciences: rethinking the specialization thesis* (Pittsburgh, PA, 2024), esp. ch. 4 on history.

[46]Knowles, the fifteenth incumbent, held the chair between 1954 and 1963. His degree was in classics and he had not held a university post until he was appointed to Peterhouse in 1944 as a teaching fellow.

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Encyclopaedia Britannica, for example.[47] That very diversity suggests one way in which it is possible to assess their public profiles; others include forms of public service undertaken and the range of media in which they have been represented and which they deployed.

One strand of my arguments concerns the labile relationships between history and other fields, such as languages, literature, theology, and politics, in Cambridge in particular as well as more generally. Another is about intellectual breadth, clearly present in the case of Seeley, and of several other incumbents, including J. B. Bury, whom I take to be a central figure in any historical account of the chair. While he is often hailed as a quintessentially 'professional' historian, I incline to the view implied by Averil Cameron when she demanded: 'Where are they now, the polymaths like Bury?'[48] It is worth considering earlier incumbents too in terms of such breadth, so that, rather than dismissing a figure such as Charles Kingsley for not being a 'proper' historian – an issue which some of his contemporaries mentioned[49] – it is worth considering the kinds of fluidity that are a notable feature of the period and inherent in a notion as protean as 'history'. Kingsley's publications span natural history, public health, the Greeks, advice to women, heroism, architecture, the history of science and medicine, and more.[50] It was certainly the case that his royal connections played their part in his appointment.[51] As a 1919 article in *The Bookman* put it:

> He was an excellent and unconventional country priest, and by a freak of favouritism only possible in such a country as England, was for nine years professor of modern history at Cambridge. But if his history was picturesque, so were his lectures; and he gave enthusiasm and a love of colour to the service of a chair too often filled by dates and dust.[52]

J. B. Bury was regius professor when this article appeared: he was very far from the tired stereotype articulated here, with his linguistic virtuosity, intrepid travels,

[47]Norman Baynes, *A bibliography of the works of J. B. Bury* (Cambridge, 1929); the list of Bury's publications is on pp. 125–75, preceded by a detailed memoir. Seeley first published on Napoleon in the 9th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; see Wormell, *Sir John Seeley*, p. 213.

[48]Averil Cameron, 'Bury, Baynes and Toynbee', in Robin Cormack and Elizabeth Jeffreys, eds., *Through the looking glass: Byzantium through British eyes* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 163–75, quotation at p. 163. Cf. Doris Goldstein, 'J. B. Bury's philosophy of history: a reappraisal', *American Historical Review*, 82 (1977), pp. 896–919.

[49]E.g. Romilly's comment that Palmerston had been reproached for appointing Kingsley since he was ignorant of history: *Romilly's Cambridge diary 1848–1864*, p. 352.

[50]See e.g. bibliography of Charles Kingsley's works in Margaret Thorp, *Charles Kingsley 1819–1875* (New York, NY, 1969; orig. publ. 1937), pp. 191–204; Rev. Charles Kingsley, *Health and education* (Charleston, SC, 2015), which reprints many short items by Kingsley, gives a vivid sense of his breadth. See also Brenda Colloms, *Charles Kingsley the lion of Eversley* (London, 1975), esp. ch. 11 and p. 365 on the regius chair.

[51]Thorp, *Charles Kingsley*, suggests Albert, chancellor of the University, was keen on Kingsley, who had become a chaplain to the queen in 1859; for the Cambridge chair, see p. 147. See also *Charles Kingsley: his letters and memories of his life* (2 vols., London, 1901), II, pp. 88–9, ch. XIX and pp. 223–4 on the chaplaincy and Cambridge.

[52]R. Ellis Roberts, 'Charles Kingsley', *The Bookman*, 56 (1919), pp. 97–102, at p. 98.

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witty translations of contemporary verse into Greek and Latin, and his passionate rationalism – not a dry, narrow specialist at all.[53]

By 1860, Kingsley was a successful historical novelist, someone engaged with the social, political, and intellectual affairs of his day. He went to Devon to write *Westward Ho!* – part of it was set there – describing himself as 'living in those Elizabethan books'.[54] He published lectures on Alexandria and her Schools, Paracelsus and Vesalius, undertook research for *Hypatia,* his first historical novel about the female philosopher who died in 415 of the Common Era, and published his Cambridge lectures as *The Roman and the Teuton* in 1864. Kingsley's public profile is evident not just from his publications, but from the images of him that proliferated during his lifetime and after his death. Amongst all the Cambridge professors, he has been the most portrayed: there is compelling evidence in London's National Portrait Gallery (NPG), founded in 1856. In drawing on materials in its rich archive, I am emphasizing the insights to be gained from an institution required to assess the broad historical significance of those whose portraits were to be admitted to the primary collection, which cannot occur without the approval of trustees. Two members of the lineage, G. M. Trevelyan and Owen Chadwick, served in this capacity, in 1929–54 and 1978–94 respectively. We should note that distinguished academic historians are not necessarily deemed to meet the necessary criteria for admission to the primary collection. The gallery's secondary collections, mostly prints and photographs, reveal the wealth of author portraits, which have a very long history, including of historians as authors. The gallery's labels and website assign sitters to categories, allowing us to track changing occupational and social descriptions. Paintings and drawings come with varying amounts of information about provenance, at times scarce but at others wonderfully revealing. In the gallery's archive it is also possible to learn about loans and exhibitions, showing how, over substantial periods of time, a given portrait has been understood, valued, and displayed.[55] There are forty-seven portraits of Kingsley in the NPG – a drawing, bust, painting, and caricature, together with photographs and prints.

Consider NPG1284, a drawing presented by the artist in January 1901 and based on a photograph, not an obvious format for a major author. Letters from the artist in question, William S. Hunt, articulate his concern that Kingsley, 'whose works have given pleasure to thousands of English readers' is not represented in the gallery.[56] The bust of Kingsley by Thomas Woolner, based on the one in Westminster Abbey and thus emphatically celebratory, was then purchased in 1912, while the 1863 painting

[53]Cf. Hesketh, *Science of history*, pp. 161–3 on Bury as a member of the second generation of professional historians; Doris Goldstein, 'The organisational development of the British historical profession, 1884–1921', *Historical Research*, 55 (1982), pp. 180–93; Ludmilla Jordanova, 'Historians, accountabilities and judgement', *Historical Research*, 94 (2021), pp. 849–69, esp. pp. 850–2.

[54]*Charles Kingsley: his letters*, I, p. 330.

[55]Each item in the primary collection has a unique number and a file – registered package, henceforth RP – containing documentation about acquisition, conservation, loans, and so on. In addition, I have drawn on the sitters' boxes, which contain information on portraits of individuals when these are on the market and mentioned in print media. Images of items in the primary collection are provided on the website unless there are copyright issues.

[56]RP NPG1284. Hunt gave a drawing of Charles's brother Henry, also a novelist, at the same time, NPG1285.

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by Lowes Cato Dickinson arrived, by donation, in 1932 from, significantly enough, a member of the Macmillan family, whose publishing house served several of the regius professors.[57] Publishers have been important commissioners of author portraits. 'Author' is a capacious term as we can see from a composite photograph so labelled in which Kingsley appears a year after his death in 1875 – the others are J. S. Mill, Charles Lamb, Herbert Spencer, John Ruskin, and Charles Darwin, all of them *English celebrities* in the published album.[58] Most biographies, however brief like the one in *English celebrities*, do mention that Kingsley held the regius chair. The NPG archive also contains drafts of labels from various times. Kingsley is currently 'novelist and divine' on the gallery's excellent website, which captures but part of his multifaceted existence.

Kingsley's predecessor, fulsomely praised in his inaugural, was Sir James Stephen, a senior colonial administrator and author of the *Essays in ecclesiastical history*, which gave offence to some. He is represented in the National Portrait Gallery by a bust from 1858 by Marochetti, donated by Sir James's grandson, Herbert, in 1896 when his uncle, Leslie Stephen, was a trustee of the gallery.[59] Both Leslie, who disliked the bust, and Herbert were assiduous in managing and promoting James's reputation.[60] Joseph Romilly had judged Sir James 'a very disagreeable man' in 1854 when they were both at Trinity Hall for dinner, and letters from him in the guard book certainly suggest he was defensive and difficult: he protested his religious orthodoxy in the light of criticism and was especially prickly about money.[61] His broad intellectual interests were evident in the *Essays*, organized around key religious figures and based on book reviews that had first appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*: their subjects include Hildebrand and St Francis, the founders of Jesuitism, Martin Luther, Richard Baxter, and William Wilberforce. They are indeed ecumenical. A blend of

[57]Seeley and Bury as well as Kingsley published with Macmillan and developed strong relationships with members of the Macmillan family. The founders of Macmillan & Co. had worked for Seeley's father before establishing their own business. The oil painting of Kingsley was commissioned by the Macmillans during his tenure of the Cambridge chair – NPG2525. The bust is NPG1666. Charles Morgan, *The house of Macmillan (1843–1943)* (London, 1943); Sarah Harkness, *Literature for the people: how the pioneering Macmillan brothers built a publishing powerhouse* (London, 2024), discusses both Kingsley and Seeley.

[58]NPGAx132900, from *English celebrities of the nineteenth century part I orators, statesmen, authors, novelists, artists, philosophers* (London, 1876).

[59]RP NPG1029 contains correspondence with the Stephen family. The bust was donated by Sir James's daughter-in-law, widow of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, who had died in 1894 and her son Sir Herbert Stephen, but she did not wish to be named in connection with the gift. Sir Leslie Stephen was a trustee of NPG 1896–9.

[60]See, e.g., Leslie's 'portrait' of their father in the life of his brother, *The life of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen* (London, 1895), pp. 41–65; his comment about 'attempting a portrait' is at p. 43. Many editions of the *Essays* appeared after James's death in 1859: for example, the 1907 edition contains Herbert's preface, which affirms the continuing interest in the *Essays*. A letter from Leslie in RP NPG1029, dated 24 January 1896, expresses both his dislike of the bust and his belief that there should be a representation of his father in the gallery. See also Caroline Stephen, *Letters with biographical notes* (n.p., 1906), a privately printed volume by Leslie's sister. Chapters V–VIII are relevant to his tenure of the chair. See also James Stephen, *Lectures on the history of France* (London, 1851; 2nd edn 1852), especially the lengthy dedicatory letter to Whewell, where he discusses the chair, his approach to lecturing, and his research, examining 'all the authorities, both original and secondary, to which it has been in my power to refer', at p. xv in the 2nd edition.

[61]*Romilly's Cambridge diary 1848–1864*, p. 194. UA/CUR 39 14, items 14 (1), 15 (1–3), 17 and 19 (1–6) relate to James Stephen.

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biography, history, and theology, Stephen got into hot water by denying the existence of eternal damnation and doubting that it is grounded in authority. In order to make this argument, he invokes the linguistic skills required to do justice to the New Testament, indicative perhaps of approaches he encountered in Cambridge when he was a student at the beginning of the century.

Going back one step further to Stephen's predecessor, William Smyth, we encounter a lively, wide-ranging mind, a figure who has suffered from the condescensions of posterity. Despite being vulnerable to the accusations of 'jobbery', as Kingsley was, Smyth clearly took his professorial role rather seriously, judging by a printed list of *Books recommended and referred to in the lectures on modern history*, which runs to more than twenty pages.[62] Towards the end of his life, he penned *Evidences of Christianity*, drawing amongst other sources on well-known natural theological arguments.[63] The interest in commemorating Smyth with the posthumous bust by Baily, and the fact that his book collection contributed significantly to what came to be known as the Seeley Library, invites us to give him more consideration. At the same time, we learn from Romilly that he did good impressions, sang at parties, and could talk entertainingly for hours about the Irish playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan, whose son he had tutored.[64] There is an amusing privately printed lecture he gave in 1814 on the theme 'the history of the world...is the history of women'.[65] Smyth's humour, however, in no way detracts from the evidence of his sustained engagement with British, European, and American history over many centuries; his expectation that students read in a number of languages, grasp the essence of political economy via Smith and Malthus, encounter the Koran, if only by reading a few chapters, and consult libraries outside Cambridge. It is worth emphasizing that Smyth lectured on *contemporary* history as well as earlier times – born in 1765, he was well able to remember the French Revolution: his lectures on the subject were reissued in 1855 in 'Bohn's Standard Library', which included major historical works, for example by Ranke, as well as translations of Goethe and Schiller.[66]

I have sketched in some notable features of a small number of the (deceased) incumbents allowing some recurrent themes to emerge – ways of understanding 'history', the generous scope of their interests, and the sense in which they might be seen as public figures, for example. The 1895 meeting articulated some of the stakes that were present in efforts to commemorate Seeley, who was well known to the reading public, as well as the desire to make memorials as tangible as possible. Portraits provide exceptionally valuable evidence here: they are excellent

[62]William Smyth, *A list of books recommended and referred to in the lectures on modern history* (Cambridge, 1823). See also his *Lectures on the history of the French Revolution* (2 vols., London, 1855). Smyth may well have been best known for his *English lyrics*, first published in Liverpool, his birthplace, in 1797 and in its 5th edition by 1850, when it was published in London.

[63]William Smyth, *Evidences of Christianity* (London, 1845).

[64]*Romilly's Cambridge diary 1832–42*, pp. 9, 100, and 134; William Smyth, *Memoir of Mr. Sheridan* (Leeds, 1840).

[65][William Smyth], *Lecture [on woman]* (Leeds, 1840), quotation at p. 4.

[66]The point about contemporary history also applies to his treatment of American history: *Lectures on modern history, from the irruption of the northern nations to the close of the American revolution* (2 vols., London, 1840).

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reputation trackers, revealing relationships between artists, sitters, commissioners, and audiences as well as the workings and priorities of institutions. Records of formal procedures at the National Portrait Gallery provide evidence of the status of occupational groupings at specific moments and also of individuals' public standing. The portraits of two twentieth-century regius professors shed light on the representation of historians.

The first, George Macaulay Trevelyan (GMT), was Bury's successor – of the two Bury was much more obviously the 'professional' historian. In addition to ten photographs, there are two drawings of Trevelyan in the NPG's collections: one by Sir William Rothenstein, made in the 1920s and acquired in 1962 when Trevelyan died, and the other by Francis Dodd, who sold it to the gallery in 1944 during Trevelyan's trusteeship, having executed it eleven years earlier. Cambridge University commissioned a drawing by Dodd of Trevelyan, also in 1933.[67] Rothenstein was a prolific and well-connected portraitist, who knew Trevelyan in London – they were on corresponding terms by 1912.[68] Then, in 1937, Rothenstein published a slim volume, *Contemporaries*, which included a portrait of Trevelyan. Each image was accompanied by a biographical note, written by a friend of the artist, in this case by H. A. L. Fisher, historian, educator, and politician. While praising Trevelyan's historical gifts, Fisher hymns him as a 'stalwart Northumbrian landlord, sportsman and Nature-worshipper'.[69] This format – the combination of portrait image and brief biography, found in eighteenth-century magazines, for instance – reveals the most noteworthy elements of a life at one point in time, with Fisher also emphasizing GMT's talents as a biographer. His public profile and success as an author are well known and neatly evidenced by a well-produced booklet his publishers Longman, Green and Company circulated around Christmas 1926 in order to promote *History of England* as a gift.[70] It is illustrated by another portrait drawing, printed on card and stuck on. The biographical details provided are striking. They start with his pedigree as the great-nephew of Macaulay and son of George Otto Trevelyan, even listing some of the latter's publications. GMT's own publications are noted, followed by a paragraph that sets the type of history he writes in context:

> The modern writer of History is faced with a real difficulty. As is fitting in a scientific age the service of Truth is the ideal of all students, and the result is years of devoted labour spent in the production of learned monographs. Great as is the value of these works, the average man wants something in addition;

[67]Goodison, *Catalogue of Cambridge portraits*, p. 138.

[68]David Cannadine, *G. M. Trevelyan: a life in history* (London, 1992), p. 48. Rothenstein knew Trevelyan's brother Robert, a poet, who is not in the *ODNB*. H. A. L. Fisher was a mutual friend.

Robert Speaight, *William Rothenstein: the portrait of an artist in his time* (London, 1962); see p. 69 for Rothenstein's link with Robert Trevelyan. Fisher played a major role in Rothenstein's life, detailed throughout the book. There is also a drawing by Rothenstein at Wallington, the Trevelyan house in Northumberland.

[69]William Rothenstein, *Contemporaries* (London, 1937), p. 107. Fisher also deemed him 'one of our chief living masters of English prose'. It is clear from his *Men and memories: recollections of William Rothenstein* (2 vols., London, 1931 and 1932) that Rothenstein knew other members of the Trevelyan family: I, pp. 176 and 369; II, p. 132. The second volume was dedicated to Fisher.

[70]The book was published in 1926.

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> one who is an artist as well as scientist must translate them into a unity and illumine them with a philosophy of life.[71]

The reproduction of a sketch by John Mansbridge is telling. The medium of drawing, especially when used in portraits that focus on the face, is considered especially well suited to conveying intimacy.[72] Rothenstein made many such drawings over his life, starting with his student friends at Oxford, while 'intimacy' is a theme that will be noted in relation to representations of David Knowles, a more recent post-holder.

Owen Chadwick is the second twentieth-century post-holder whose presence in the NPG invites consideration: he was, like Trevelyan, both an NPG trustee and recipient of the Order of Merit, and someone who engaged exceptionally extensively with his predecessors in the chair.[73] He is the only incumbent since Acton to have a painted portrait in the gallery, completed in December 1990 by Derek Hill. The commission marked his chairmanship rather than his academic achievements. We have the sitter's verdict: 'It is wonderfully generous of NPG to do this for me. I like Derek Hill very much. The portrait is not ME but I admire it much as a piece of portraiture. Owen.'[74] Hill painted many academics, including historians, such as Asa Briggs and Christopher Hill, and his sketchy style is reminiscent of drawing. One biographical feature that links Trevelyan and Chadwick is extensive public service, which, in both cases, drew upon their historical expertise and passions. Academic history more strictly defined finds a less prominent place in the National Portrait Gallery, whether in the role of sitter or trustee, than might be expected. There is little evidence of historians entering the main collection primarily for their achievements as strictly scholarly researchers, even those as notable as regius professors at Cambridge.[75]

The fate of a depiction of J. B. Bury illustrates these points. His portrait was offered to the gallery in 2004 by his descendants, but was turned down by curators

[71]This booklet may be found in the sitters' boxes, NPG Archive, and invites a more detailed discussion, including of the extensive use of reviews and the romantic invocation of 'our forefathers' whose story is told in the book it promotes.

[72]Stephen Lloyd and Kim Sloan, *The intimate portrait: drawings, miniatures and pastels from Ramsay to Lawrence* (Edinburgh, 2008); Patrick Noon, *English portrait drawings and miniatures* (New Haven, CT, 1979), who invokes the 'freshness of direct observation', p. xiii, and 'the sense of immediacy', p. xvi, found in portrait drawings. See also George Morris's helpful historiographical review, 'Intimacy in modern British history', *Historical Journal*, 64 (2021), pp. 796–811.

[73]Chadwick was a trustee 1978–94, serving as chairman 1988–94. Examples of his writings on predecessors include *Acton and history* (Cambridge, 1998), a collection of his many essays on Acton, and *Freedom and the historian* (Cambridge, 1969), his inaugural lecture, which engages with Acton, Bury, and Trevelyan, paying most attention to Trevelyan.

[74]Letter from Owen Chadwick to Robin Gibson, 8 Dec. 1990, in RP NPG6132. Gibson was a member of staff at NPG. Acton's portrait, NPG4083, by Franz Seraph von Lenbach c. 1879 was purchased in 1958. There is also a drawing by Frederick Sargent, NPG5590, made in the 1880s along with other members of the House of Lords and purchased together in 1983. Acton is now described on the NPG website as 'historian and moralist'.

[75]Photographs include a larger range of historians, such as Simon Schama and Linda Colley, both Cambridge-trained. There are photographs of Kingsley, Seeley, Acton, Bury, Trevelyan, Clark, Butler, Knowles, and Chadwick in NPG. However, a portrait in oils of Eric Hobsbawm by Georg Eisler, NPG6111, 1989, was donated by the artist in the following year. Historians of 'Past and Present' by Stephen Farthing – NPG6518 – remains a striking exception in recognizing scholarly accomplishments more strictly defined rather than contributions, including in broadcast media, that reach big audiences.

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Figure 2. Portrait of J. B. Bury, by ? Frank Venables, 1889. Donated by the Bury family to the BSA Art Collection, reproduced with permission of the British School at Athens. Photography by Elizabeth Cowling.

without being brought to trustees for consideration. Bury was considered eligible in principle, but space was too tight for the offer to be taken further.[76] The painting was then offered to a number of other institutions with which Bury was associated, and has finally found a home in the British School at Athens (Figure 2). Bury travelled in and published extensively on Greece; *A history of Greece to the death of Alexander the Great* is highly esteemed and enjoyed an extended life in the revised editions by Russell Meiggs, which continued to be recommended to students until recently.[77] So far, I have been unable to find any information on the artist, a Frank Venables, judging by the signature, perhaps a competent amateur known to Bury

[76]Icon notes (Bury) offer 113/2004 in NPG archive, seen with permission of the Bury family. Only a limited portion of the primary collection can be shown at any one time, hence acquisitions have to meet stringent criteria and justify the use of limited resources. More recently, the drawing of David Knowles by Aidan Savage, now owned by Peterhouse, Cambridge, was turned down. This information is available in the sitters' boxes, NPG archive.

[77]Cameron, 'Bury, Baynes and Toynbee', p. 63, and personal information from colleagues.

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and his wife Jane, who was herself an artist. Bury was a research powerhouse and formidable linguist. In addition to French and German, Latin and Greek, he had Sanskrit, Syriac, and Hebrew, Hungarian and Russian. Bury's robust approach to religion sets him apart from so many others in the succession. Born in Ireland where his father was a clergyman in the Church of Ireland, Bury's anti-clericalism and secular rationalism may derive from experiences in his first forty-one years before he moved to Cambridge in 1902. He had already travelled extensively, but his institutional base was Trinity College, Dublin (TCD), where he was a student, fellow, and then professor of modern history from 1893 as well as regius professor of Greek from 1898.[78]

The case of J. B. Bury encourages reflection on a number of themes, including the ways in which the history of history is undertaken and the manner in which key texts are selected and interpreted. In addition to his publications on Greece and Rome, Bury wrote about Russia for the *Cambridge modern history*, edited and contributed to the Irish literary journal *Kottabus*, published on Robert Browning, and penned two books of particular relevance here: *A history of freedom of thought* (1913) for the Home University Library of Modern Knowledge and *The idea of progress*, 1920.[79] *Freedom of thought* was designed for a general audience, 'written with fire and force' according to one review.[80] If we also consider Bury's *oeuvre* in the light of his numerous contributions to the Rationalist Press Association Annuals, a more rounded picture emerges. He may have hated administrative tasks, been consumed by a phenomenal work drive and impatient with the Cambridge Historical Tripos as he found it, but here was a man of conviction and commitment, whose writings benefit from being interpreted accordingly. In histories of history, it is his inaugural lecture that commands most attention, prompting attempts to treat it as a theoretical statement and to reconcile it with his other publications. Bury's comments in that lecture, 'The science of history', delivered in the Divinity School on 26 January 1903, and critiqued by Trevelyan, have been treated quite selectively. The end of the address – 'though she [i.e. history] may supply material for literary art or philosophical speculation, she is herself simply a science, no less and no more' – is repeatedly cited, but generally out of the context of his life and work as a whole and without considering the rhetorical strategies that Bury was deploying. In that last paragraph, for example, Bury invokes a strikingly violent image – 'stripping the bandages of error from the eyes of men' – arguably a deliberate provocation, while his invocation of the advancement of science served his wider purposes as a critic of institutions and societies dominated by religion.

'Science' is as protean a notion as 'history'; historians of science have had much to say about the delineation of 'the scientific method' and of 'science' over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, that is, about their elevation to quasi-mythical

[78]It is possible to get a sense of TCD when Bury was there from a biography of his teacher, collaborator, and colleague, John Mahaffy: W. B. Stanford and R. B. McDowell, *Mahaffy: a biography of an Anglo-Irishman* (London, 1971). See also W. MacNeil Dixon, *Trinity College Dublin* (London, 1902), and R. B. McDowell and D. A. Webb, *Trinity College Dublin 1592–1952: an academic history* (Dublin, 2004).

[79]J. B. Bury, *A history of freedom of thought* (London, 1913), and *The idea of progress: an inquiry into its origin and growth* (London, 1920).

[80]Cited by Baynes, *Bibliography*, p. 37.

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status and availability for strategic use.[81] We should beware of making facile assumptions when reading such terms, of treating their meanings and uses as self-evident. Given Bury's interest in the French Enlightenment and figures such as Condorcet, and in Comte and Spencer,[82] his commitment to tracking changing understanding and practice with respect to freedom of thought and notions of progress was bound to involve engagement with 'science', including the history of science. Bury clearly possessed a grasp of Darwin's evolutionary explanations, for example.[83] The state of the world when he wrote *The idea of progress* was for him only temporary, and it is 'the wonderful history of science in the last hundred years' that had enabled commentators to gain this insight. Accordingly, he suggests, the value of the idea of progress is itself transient. I take the Preface to the book, written in January 1920, with its references to war and peace, to socialism and Russia, to a crisis of Western civilization, to be a political statement. This is not to doubt Bury's deep interest in the nature of knowledge, but to try and reach for the passions that manifestly lay behind his claims about science, passions that, for the sake of economy, I suggest may usefully be thought of as 'political' – enabling the blinded to see suggests as much.

Like so many of his fellow regius professors, Bury generated a substantial body of published work for later generations to work on and puzzle over. And like them, he has been interpreted, quoted, and name checked as convenient by later historians.[84] Shortly after his death in 1927, two substantial accounts appeared, both born out of friendship; in 1929 by Norman Baynes, a Byzantinist in London, and the following year by the modern historian, Harold Temperley of Peterhouse. Many of the incumbents have been similarly remembered and represented, including William Smyth, James Stephen, Charles Kingsley, John Seeley, George Macaulay

[81]E.g. John Schuster and Richard Yeo, eds., *The politics and rhetoric of scientific method: historical studies* (Dordrecht, 1986). Yeo's own chapter, 'Scientific method and the rhetoric of science in Britain, 1830–1917', pp. 259–97, reveals the stakes in public debates about science and scientific method. See also Richard Yeo, *Defining science: William Whewell, natural knowledge, and public debate in early Victorian Britain* (Cambridge, 1993); Jan Golinski, 'Is it time to forget science? Reflections on singular science and its history', *Osiris*, 27 (2012), pp. 19–36; Henry Cowles, *The scientific method: an evolution of thinking from Darwin to Dewey* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2020). Frank Westaway, *Scientific method: its philosophy and its practice* (London, 1912), sheds light on early twentieth-century discussions; it uses extensive historical examples, but is emphatic that history itself is not a science, pp. 38–9, which suggests he was responding to claims that it was, while admitting the difficulties of defining 'science'. The influential Cambridge figure Henry Sidgwick, a friend of Seeley, had commented on related issues, e.g. in the posthumously published *Philosophy its scope and relations: an introductory course of lectures* (London, 1902), lectures VI and VII on 'Relation of philosophy to history', which considered a broad concept of history as the study of change. See also Hesketh, *Science of history*.

[82]Bury dedicated *Idea of progress* to, amongst others, Condorcet, Comte, and Spencer.

[83]For instance, his 1909 essay 'Darwinism and history' reprinted in Harold Temperley, ed., *Selected essays of J. B. Bury* (Cambridge 1930), pp. 23–42; for his inaugural, see pp. 3–22. In his introduction, Temperley suggests that emphasis on the famous phrase has been unhelpful and that 'the word "science", as applied to history, has been adopted from the French where its meaning is not quite the same as in English', p. xv.

[84]E.g. John Kenyon, *The history men: the historical profession in England since the Renaissance* (2nd edn, London, 1993), p. 92, where he claims Bury abused the word 'science' and did not express himself well; Nancy Partner and Sarah Foot, eds., *The Sage handbook of historical theory* (London, 2013), p. 204, is fairly typical of the way Bury's inaugural is treated as is Daniel Woolf, *A concise history of history* (Cambridge, 2019), p. 183, where it is dated 1900. Cf. Michael Bentley's treatment of Bury in *Modernizing England's past: English historiography in the age of modernism* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 97, 194, 195.

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Trevelyan, and Owen Chadwick. In reflecting on commemorative drives, we might consider ideas of honour, respect, appreciation, and achievement, as if the *curriculum vitae* unproblematically elicits the response. Scholarly work on heroism could encourage us to go further, and think about forms of identification, where affective relationships are involved.[85] Forms of friendship and affection are central to responses to key figures; accordingly it is worth asking whether the notion of a labour of love might sometimes be appropriate, for instance, when applied to the extraordinarily meticulous work Norman Baynes did to commemorate Bury, despite the profound differences between them on matters of religion.[86] Baynes's memoir drew on materials from Bury's widow as well as his own memory and expertise, yet he is by no means uncritical of the work by the man he esteemed so highly.

Biography and portraiture taken in their widest senses inevitably raise these questions about forms of commemoration, types of affinity, mentorship, friendship, and affection within occupational contexts.[87] But the theme of love is inescapable when it comes to Rev'd David Knowles, born Clive Michael, who was manifestly so much loved by those who knew him and worked with him, perhaps precisely because it was a complex life, marked in some phases by considerable struggle, yet one so profoundly interwoven with the subjects he studied – a monk examining monasticism – that the person and their researches are inseparable. Knowles's entire life needs to be understood in the context of his vocation, albeit a somewhat unorthodox one, at times in conflict with his order. There is a striking intimacy here between person and work, between spiritual and intellectual life, between him and his colleagues and friends that propelled those close to him to record their affection in an unusually open way, invoking, for example, Thomas Hardy, whose novels Knowles loved: he 'was a good man and did good things'.[88] Depictions of him capture an austere simplicity that chimes with the tenderness expressed in tributes paid to him (Figure 3). According to David Crystal, 'Anniversaries make us reflect.'[89] In that spirit, I offer

[85]E.g. Geoffrey Cubitt and Allen Warren, eds., *Heroic reputations and exemplary lives* (Manchester, 2000).

[86]Cameron, 'Bury, Baynes and Toynbee', notes these differences. Baynes and Bury had met by 1903 (p. 164). On a labour of love in an occupational setting, see Ludmilla Jordanova, *Intricate threads and bigger pictures: lives in archives* (Dublin, 2022), esp. pp. 7–10.

[87]Ludmilla Jordanova, 'Portraiture, biography and public histories', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 32 (2022), pp. 159–75; Barbara Caine, ed., *Friendship: a history* (London, 2009), esp. chs. 7 and 8, is useful, but has little to say about occupational contexts; on Cambridge, see pp. 269–70.

[88]Christopher Brooke et al., *David Knowles remembered* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 26. See also Dom Adrian Morey, *David Knowles: a memoir* (London, 1979); a portrait drawing of Knowles by Michael Noakes, 1961, forms the frontispiece. Noakes was a devout Catholic, educated at Downside, like Knowles himself, who returned there 1923–33. Such deep affinities between artist and sitter contribute to the understanding of portraiture. See also Dom David Knowles, *The historian and character and other essays* (Cambridge, 1963). As the title page explains, the volume was 'collected and presented to him by his friends, pupils and colleagues on the occasion of his retirement as Regius Professor of Modern History in the University of Cambridge'. The list of subscribers is remarkable, pp. v–xii, and includes James Butler, Herbert Butterfield, Owen Chadwick, Geoffrey Elton, and Quentin Skinner, the fourteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and twentieth incumbents. It was 'a token of the admiration, gratitude and affection of your friends, colleagues and pupils' (p. v). The title derives from Knowles's inaugural, which forms ch. 1 and is suffused with his faith; pp. 363–73 is a list of his writings.

[89]David Crystal, *On anniversaries* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 46.

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Figure 3. Dom David Knowles, by Aidan Savage, 1926. By kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Peterhouse, Cambridge. Photography by Rachel Leow.

here some brief reflections on the task of marking three hundred years since the institution of the regius chair of modern history, which has necessarily entailed tough selection processes. For some of the early figures, little material is available. Although Seeley has received much attention, the nature and range of his writings together with the detailed account of the 1895 meeting invited further consideration, especially given his alleged status as the founding father of Cambridge history. Seeley's connections with bookselling and publishing, his poetry, and his project to make Goethe better known invite us to think of him in a more rounded way. Further, the diary of a young American woman in Cambridge, who attended Seeley's lectures and met him socially, gives a very different impression of the man and his family from the claim in the *ODNB* article that he and his wife were not 'at the centre of an agreeable social circle; he...lacked lightness of touch...they entertained badly'.[90]

[90] I am grateful to Spencer Drake for sharing the transcription of a diary: AML Newnham College Journal, box 19, folder 8, Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site (Cambridge, MA). R. T. Shannon, 'Sir John Robert Seeley', *ODNB*, XL, pp. 668–73, at p. 671.

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While I knew of Dom David Knowles, the emotional qualities suffusing commentaries on him were particularly striking. In acknowledging his complex, austere life, writers, especially Christopher Brooke, delineate a man of 'exceptional endowment' – 'it was hard for those who knew him well not to feel the world much poorer for his passing'.[91] The contrast with Seeley's successor Lord Acton, is noteworthy – he has been admired and respected rather than loved. Acton's legacy, not least the acquisition of his magnificent library for Cambridge, is undoubtedly important. 'One of the most significant figures in the intellectual and political life of Victorian England' according to one commentator, Acton is more discussed than Bury in histories of history, with his work for the *Cambridge modern history* receiving special notice.[92] A 1930 pamphlet for the Historical Association, which considered the inaugural lectures of the Oxford and Cambridge regius chairs since 1841, deployed a striking metaphor. Leonard Southern Wood gave pride of place to Acton: 'I began to write this paper thinking I was listening to an Orchestra of eighteen strings. Before I had finished I realised that I was listening to a solo with orchestral accompaniment. The soloist is Acton.'[93]

These points illustrate some of the difficulties the study of the history of history throws up, since the criteria for selecting the most noteworthy figures and what makes them so are rarely fully articulated. One issue is our complex, sometimes semi-conscious, reactions to forebears, another is the genuine challenge of assessing their significance and doing so in the contexts of their times, which include the publishing industries and the institutional infrastructures within which they operated as well as the political, economic, social, and familial factors in play. While canons are never static, something very like a canon has emerged, with a certain number of texts and authors, such as Acton, repeatedly cited. Bury's inaugural, and the endless quotation of a few phrases from it, are a case in point, where his claim about history as a science is quoted, generally without a meaningful discussion of what the claim might actually mean.[94] J. B. Bury has emerged as a fascinating, complex figure, the only historian to hold the chair who published on ancient, medieval, *and* modern history, with the enigmatic Knowles as the only other medievalist. Bury was in fact a staunch supporter of *modern* history.

The history of a specific post is a curious object of historical analysis. One difficulty that faces a historian of the Cambridge chair is the large number of contingent factors that led to one person rather than another being appointed. Even the mechanism of appointment seems to have varied, with the monarch and the prime minister involved to varying degrees. There was clearly consultation in the past, since we

[91]Brooke et al., *David Knowles remembered*, p. 26.

[92]J. Rufus Fears, ed., *Selected writings of Lord Acton*, II: *Essays in the study and writing of history* (Indianapolis, IN, 1986), p. xi. Acton was close to Gladstone and appointed by his fellow Liberal Lord Rosebery: Leo McKinstry, *Rosebery: statesman in turmoil* (London, 2005); for his political dealings with Acton, see e.g. pp. 220–1 and 303–4; pp. 334–5 for the regius chair and Acton's appointment, and pp. 122–3 on Seeley's *Expansion* and its political impact. Rosebery was himself a historian; his biography of Pitt was published by Macmillan in 1891. On Acton, see, e.g., Kenyon, *History men*, pp. 130–48; pp. 144–8 concern the Cambridge Modern History. He conveniently illustrates the influence of German scholarship on historical practice.

[93]L. S. Wood, 'Selected epigraphs of the regius professors of modern history at Oxford and Cambridge since 1841', Historical Association Leaflet No. 80, London, 1930, at p. 32.

[94]Temperley's introduction to the *Selected essays* addresses the science question.

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know that no one wanted Oscar Browning – the historian, *bon viveur*, and Cambridge character – to be appointed when Seeley died.[95] These matters were openly mentioned in newspapers, for example. There was nothing logical or inexorable about the sequence of appointments. Models of professionalization might encourage the thought that a direction of travel is discernible. Was Trevelyan more of a 'professional' than Seeley? Bury, appointed 1902, seemingly stood out in just this respect – he possessed the type of commitment to research and publishing in specialist journals from the very start of his career that is more commonly found well into the post-war period. But he was far more than a professionalized, specialized historian and his literary concerns never died. It is worth recalling here that Knowles published on the American Civil War and on Macaulay as well as on monasticism.[96]

It does not follow, however, that the story of the chair is a mere succession of individuals. Institutional memory was robust, with many of the incumbents engaging with their predecessors, especially in their inaugural lectures. The past of this position concerns university administration, financial arrangements, and political-cum-intellectual commitments just as much as 'historical theory'.[97] Large, complex phenomena – the changing map of knowledge, shifts in disciplinary definitions and in pedagogy, student demographics, reform in the university sector – all played a part. One shift, or rather suite of shifts, is particularly striking – the kinds of communities that the professors were part of. Romilly's diaries are particularly instructive in this respect for in them we glimpse the forms of sociability, friendships, and intimacies that were possible in a small institution in a small town, and this sense emerges too from the life of John Neville Keynes, the political economist and registrary. The power of heads of house and the centrality of colleges formed a central feature of the Cambridge lives of most incumbents; it is fortunate that colleges are still able to provide something akin to Romilly's and Smyth's experiences, while the machinery of the central university is in no way comparable to that of even a century ago when Keynes was reaching the end of his career.

There can be no simple answers to the question about what has changed since 1724, since it is implausible that ready narratives exist waiting to be plucked and then served up from the immense volume of source material, especially given the huge number of factors at work. Continuities should not be neglected. It has been possible here only to make some tentative suggestions about ways we might think about the history of the post, recognizing that the history the incumbents practised, like the broad contexts in which they did so, have been magnificently diverse. There is no virtue in tying 'history' down, but there is immense value in constantly reassessing how we tell the history of history, by thinking about publishers, administration, institutional memory, teaching, forms of portrayal, whether verbal or visual, identities, friendships, ideas, and deepest commitments, as well as the craftsmanship of researching and writing that are inherent in the role of historian.

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[95]E.g. McKinstry, *Rosebery*, pp. 334–5.

[96]Knowles, *The historian and character*, pp. 363, 372.

[97]Mary Fulbrook, *Historical theory* (London, 2002); Partner and Foot, eds., *Historical theory.*

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