

# **History Prelims 2011**

## **Examiners' Report**

**PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION IN HISTORY 2011  
REPORT OF THE EXAMINERS**

**I: Statistical overview**

**Table 1: Performance of candidates**

<b>Year</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>A1</b>	<b>B1</b>	<b>C1</b>	<b>A2</b>	<b>B2</b>	<b>C2</b>
<b>2011</b>	<b>223</b>	55 <i>24.7%</i>	168 <i>75.37%</i>	<b>107</b>	19 <i>17.8%</i>	88 <i>82.25%</i>	<b>116</b>	36 <i>31.0%</i>	80 <i>68.96%</i>
2010	236	47 <i>19.9%</i>	189 <i>80.1%</i>	106	17 <i>16.0%</i>	89 <i>84.0%</i>	130	30 <i>23.1%</i>	100 <i>76.9%</i>
2009	237	51 <i>21.5%</i>	186 <i>78.5%</i>	109	20 <i>18.3%</i>	89 <i>81.7%</i>	128	31 <i>24.2%</i>	97 <i>75.8%</i>
2008	228	54 <i>23.7%</i>	174 <i>76.3%</i>	99	14 <i>14.1%</i>	85 <i>85.9%</i>	129	40 <i>31.0%</i>	89 <i>69.0%</i>

Columns

A: number of all candidates

A1: number of female candidates

A2: number of male candidates

B: number of distinctions

B1: number of women achieving distinctions, with the second figure in italic providing the percentage of distinctions among the female cohort

B2: number of distinctions and percentages (similarly constructed) for male candidates

C: number of passes

C1: number of women passing, with the second figure in italic providing the percentage of passes among the female cohort

C2: number of passes and percentages (similarly constructed) for male candidates

**Table 2: Number of candidates for each paper in 2011**

<b>Paper</b>	<b>Main School</b>	<b>Joint Schools</b>	<b>Total</b>
History of the British Isles I - c.300-1087	34	3	37
History of the British Isles II – 1042-1330	58	3	61
History of the British Isles III - 1330-1550	26	1	27
History of the British Isles IV – 1500-1700	38	7	45
History of the British Isles V – 1685-1830	34	14	48
History of the British Isles VI – 1815-1924	24	9	33
History of the British Isles VII – since 1900	9	3	12
General History I – 370-900	59	18	77
General History II – 1000-1300	37	14	51
General History III – 1400-1650	82	22	104
General History IV – 1815-1914	45	24	69
OS 1 – Theories of the State	44	56	100
OS 2 – The Age of Bede	4	-	4
OS 3 – Early Gothic France	5	1	6
OS 4 – England and the Celtic Peoples	-	-	-
OS 5 – English Chivalry and the French War	14	3	17
OS 6 – Crime and Punishment in England c.1280-c.1450 (new)	8	-	8
OS 7 – Nature and Art in the Renaissance	4	1	5
OS 8– Witch-craft and Witch-hunting	14	6	20
OS 9 – Nobility and Gentry in England	4	3	7
OS 10 – Conquest and Colonization	39	5	44
OS 11 – Revolution and Empire in France	34	8	42
OS 12 – Women, gender and nation	9	3	12
OS 13. The Romance of the People: The Folk Revival from 1760 to 1914	14	7	21
OS 14 – The American Empire: 1823-1904	17	3	20
OS 15 - The Rise and Crises of European Socialisms: 1881-1921	12	6	18
OS 16 – Working-Class Life and Industrial Work	-	-	-
OS 17 – The World of Homer and Hesiod (AMH)	-	1	1
OS 18 – Augustan Rome (AMH)	1	8	9
OS [19] – Industrialization in Britain & France 1750-1870	-	11	11
Approaches to History	112	32	144
Historiography: Tacitus to Weber	67	24	91
Herodotus	-	-	-
Einhard and Asser	8	-	8
Tocqueville	25	7	32
Meinecke and Kehr	6	6	12

<b>Paper</b>	<b>Main School</b>	<b>Joint Schools</b>	<b>Total</b>
Machiavelli	2	-	2
Trotsky	-	-	-
Diaz del Moral	2	1	3
Quantification	1	3	4

### History of the British Isles (Sex/paper by paper)

<b>Class</b>	<b>Nos (both sexes)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Men</b>		<b>Women</b>		<b>Women as % of total in each class</b>
			<b>Nos</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Nos</b>	<b>%</b>	
<b>D</b>	57	21.68	35	25.73	22	17.33	38.59
<b>Pass</b>	206	78.32	101	74.27	105	82.67	50.98
<b>Ppass</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-</b>

### General History (Sex/paper by paper)

<b>Class</b>	<b>Nos (both sexes)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Men</b>		<b>Women</b>		<b>Women as % of total in each class</b>
			<b>Nos</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Nos</b>	<b>%</b>	
<b>D</b>	60	19.94	40	25.0	20	14.18	33.33
<b>Pass</b>	239	79.40	119	74.38	120	85.11	50.21
<b>Ppass</b>	2	0.66	1	0.62	1	0.71	50.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-</b>

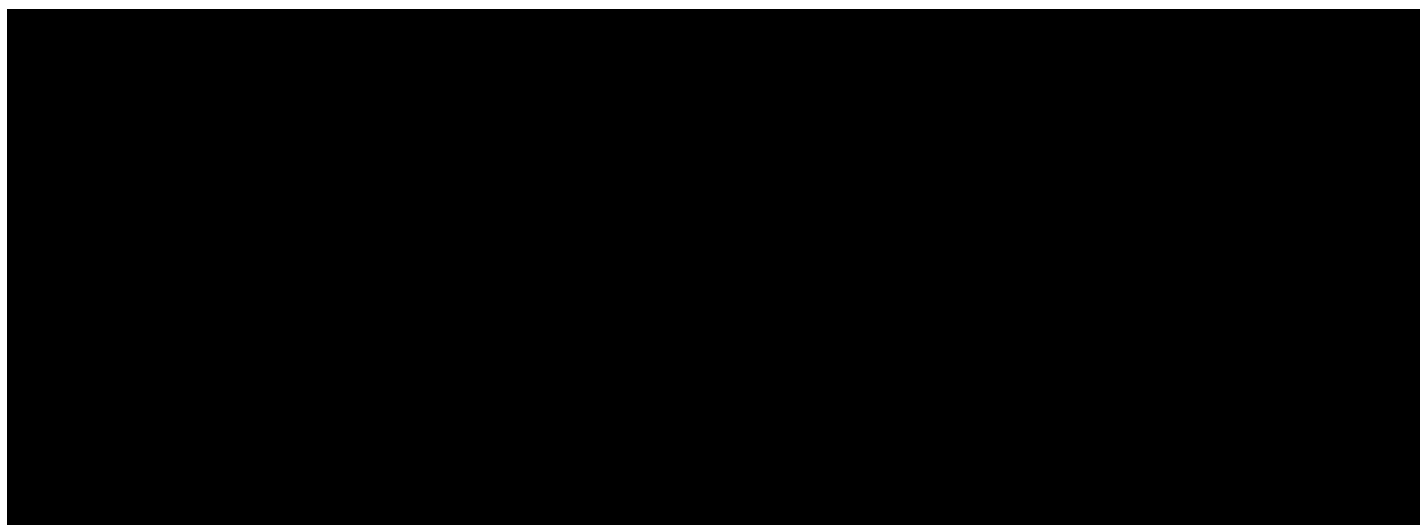
### Optional Subjects (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
<b>D</b>	82	23.77	53	28.34	29	18.35	35.37
<b>Pass</b>	262	75.94	133	71.13	129	81.65	49.23
<b>Ppass</b>	1	0.29	1	0.53	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-</b>

### Approaches to History (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
<b>D</b>	28	19.44	19	27.54	9	12.0	32.14
<b>Pass</b>	116	80.56	50	72.46	66	88.0	56.90
<b>Fail</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-</b>

### Quantification (Sex/paper by paper)



### Historiography (Sex/paper by paper)

Class	Nos (both sexes)	%	Men		Women		Women as % of total in each class
			Nos	%	Nos	%	
<b>D</b>	7	7.70	5	9.10	2	5.55	28.58
<b>Pass</b>	84	92.30	50	90.90	34	94.45	40.47
<b>Fail</b>	--	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-</b>

## II: Administration

Every year we say, and every year it is absolutely true, that the Chair, Secretary, and Examiners could not have functioned without the efforts of the Faculty Office. The force of these thanks should not lose anything through repetition: quite the contrary. The script, report, and mark storm which the Office negotiates is potentially overwhelming, yet [REDACTED] did their customarily superb job of creating order from chaos. [REDACTED] collated reports and data with [REDACTED] habitual punctiliousness; [REDACTED] more than once spotted potential procedural pratfalls. Special mention must again be made of [REDACTED], whose simultaneous command of examining practice, university regulations, tutors' foibles, and Mark-It software is simply miraculous. [REDACTED] is quite brilliant at what [REDACTED] does and it is important that this is loudly acknowledged.

Again this year it fell to [REDACTED] physically to convey all material between the Faculty Office and the Examination Schools, and this year we are happy to report that [REDACTED] was not knocked off [REDACTED] bike in the process. Recent FHS and Prelims Boards have questioned the geographical separation of the administrative and examining components, though there have been two reasons to stay put in Schools: firstly, the fact that the only usable rooms in the OBS have been commercially let during the examining period (and moreover that the income from that has been essential to the Faculty's budget); secondly, the Faculty's principled reluctance to acquiesce in the Examination Schools' strategy of seeking to evict examining boards. However, we may have reached the point where the case for hosting the boards in the OBS has become irresistible.

As has been the case for several years now, the actual examinations in the Examination Schools have been conducted by the Schools staff and their team of invigilators, with an appropriate Examiner present for the first thirty minutes of each session in order to address any queries arising from question papers. This all seemed to run very smoothly, though one or two assessors complained that the bagging of scripts was not as sequential and easily comprehended as in ye olden times. This was conveyed to the Schools.

The examiners were all troubled by the Prelims schedule this year. The late Easter, and the ensuing late Trinity Term, meant that our business was not concluded until the end of July. Especially given the almost immediate onset of the school holidays for some, and given the research pressures under which we all operate, this constituted a very serious erosion of what was only notionally a 'long' vacation. For this reason, Finals examining might now be regarded as a more congenial commission than Prelims examining. We therefore suggest that the Faculty gives serious consideration to an earlier timetabling of the FPE.

It follows from this that we would not have wanted the meetings to go any deeper into the vacation than they did. Last year's Board complained that 'the very tight timetabling of Examiners' meetings now verges on the unsustainable, in the light of the high proportion of rereads undertaken in accordance with the new procedures'. Some amendments to the conventions were made in the Faculty's Examinations Sub-

Committee in the light of that; also, this year the Chair and Secretary, with generous assistance from last year's Secretary ( ), took pains to establish all re-reads at the earliest possible stage in the process. This helped a great deal.

### **III: Examiners and Assessors**

Once again this year, the Board consisted of eight examiners: two medievalists, two early modernists, and four modernists (two British and two non-British in expertise). The burden on the medievalists remained substantial given the large number of candidates taking 'group I' British and/or General papers; although this was mitigated by a higher degree of off-Board medieval marking, the re-read burden remains heaviest at that end, and if the numbers continue in this direction consideration will need to be given to the balance of future Boards.

All the British and all but one of the General History papers were set by the Board, and all of these but one (General History I) revised by the Board. In the light of the numbers of candidates per paper, and examiners' other FHS and PG examining duties, some adjustments were then made at Easter in order to equalise marking burdens across the Faculty (this was done in tandem with the FHS Chair, in consultation with the Chair of the Examinations Sub-Committee, who was, conveniently if very onerously, also the Chair of Prelims). These burdens are of course now carefully recorded on the Faculty's Examining Burdens Spreadsheet. In consequence General History I was marked by an assessor; otherwise the outline papers were covered by the Board. The Optional Subjects and 'fourth papers' were divided between examiners and assessors in the usual way, with assessors marking significant proportions of the Approaches to History and the Historiography papers.

### **IV: Marking and classification**

The percentages of candidates ranked within each category were consistent with those in previous years, at least, taking the longer view: 24.7% of candidates (in the main school) achieved Distinctions, and 75.3% (ultimately) achieved Passes (there was initially one fail on one paper). As Table 1 indicates, the proportion of Distinctions is therefore up on the last couple of years (19.9% in 2010, 21.5% in 2009), but par with the three years prior to those (23.7% in 2008, 24.4% in 2007, and 23.9% in 2006).

It was the common view of the Board, which included some very experienced examiners, that the first mark run was the most consistent and least problematic they had seen: that is, that the impression gained of candidates, by four different examiners, was overwhelmingly a strikingly consistent one. Nonetheless (and as reported in section II), the Chair and Secretary, and last year's Secretary, met before the full Board meetings in order to identify those scripts requiring a re-read. This year, no single marker's average mark deviated significantly enough from the overall average to require moderating *per se* (such as re-scaling). Individual scripts that were significantly out of line with a candidate's average mark, which had borderline marks, which were flagged for further scrutiny by the first marker, or with marks of under 50, were all re-read.



As a result 82 candidates had 106 scripts re-read. 38 marks were confirmed; 68 marks were changed, of which 42 went up and 26 went down; 7 women and 4 men were raised from Pass to Distinction by re-reads; none were demoted from Distinction to Pass by re-reads. All in all therefore, about 37% of candidates had at least one script remarked. Given the striking consistency of the great majority of the initial run of marks, and the degree of re-reading of variously aberrant and borderline marks, the Board was satisfied that the subsequent outcomes were as robust as is feasible under a single-marked examination.

No changes in classification were made in consequence of a review of the medical evidence, though it might be noted that in one or two serious cases where the evidence may have warranted our discretionary intervention, candidates had already attained Distinctions.

## **V: Comments on papers**

### **General Observations**

#### **History of the British Isles I: c. 300-1087**

This paper was taken by thirty seven candidates, including three joint school candidates. Eleven scripts were adjudged first class, twenty were awarded marks in the 60-69 range (of which thirteen secured 66 or above), with the remaining six receiving marks in the 50-59 range. Overall this was a very creditable result for a paper studied in the first term by candidates who will have had no prior experience (post primary school) of medieval history and the particular challenges and demands it poses. All but four of the twenty questions attracted answers; the tendency to eschew the economy and peasantry has long been noted but this year candidates unusually also gave the cold shoulder to shrines and relics, saints and bishops and the difference between reformed monastic and minster communities – indeed religion only got a look in when some candidates wheeled out standard conversion essays under the guise of a question on sacral authority. For the most part candidates had worked hard to get to grips with this unfamiliar terrain, digesting quite a lot of material and in some cases engaging with primary sources with evident relish. As always those that came unstuck did so not so much due to lack of knowledge but rather because of a failure to focus on the specific implications of each question. Thus answers to the question on Mercia (Was Mercian hegemony more durable than its detractors suggest?) rarely bothered to unpick the reference to detractors or to take the reference to durability as a cue to look for evidence for continuing Mercian power beyond the demise of Offa. Similarly a number of the answers to the question on the extent to which aristocratic power and status depended on the warrior ethic tended simply treated it as a question about royal power and status as if stubbornly oblivious to the fact that the examiners had picked the word aristocratic with the precise intention of distinguishing between the two; moreover none of the answers seemed to realize that gauging the extent of dependence might require consideration of other factors besides the warrior ethic (landholdings, marriages, officeholding ...). The question “why did the late Anglo-Saxon state succumb to conquest from overseas given its apparent fiscal, administrative and military resources?” attracted some lively

and spirited conquest narratives about the nature of the conquests but only one or two candidates thought they needed to pay any attention to the second part of the question, be it by arguing historians have exaggerated the extent of these resources or by explaining how conquest could take place despite them. The observation that such failures to analyse and engage with the questions were more marked in HBI1 than in GH1 suggests that students progress intellectually as they proceed through the first year but are not always able to bring the fruits of this back to bear on their earlier work .

### **History of the British Isles II: 1042-1330**

61 candidates sat this paper. Overall the quality was high, but there were only a very small number of outstanding scripts. In general candidates were adept at managing the huge volume of information required by a paper for which the secondary reading is so extensive. Particularly in some answers to the less canonical questions, there were many clear signs of candidates having done extensive reading around subjects, well beyond the material provided in lectures and the standard accounts. However, the weaker answers were characterized by very limited reading and sometimes complete reliance on lectures for information and arguments. This is unacceptable at this level. Political history was most popular, but there were heartening numbers tackling the fascinating social and cultural issues of the period. Unfathomably, religious history hardly attracted any answers, except for the issue of church independence, which was almost universally approached from a high politics perspective. Quite a few scripts repeated certain lazy assumptions. Future candidates might be advised to remember: gender does not only mean women, politics is not always driven by lust for power without values or aims, Scotland is a kingdom with other interests than fighting the English, kings of Britain only exist in Geoffrey of Monmouth, religion is a major feature of human history and not some psychologically-dubious preference, and law is about enforcement and use as well as legislation.

Questions attracted the following numbers of answers; baronial wars (35), independence of the church (24), Norman conquest (23), towns (13), royal violence (12), Wales or Ireland (11), chronicles (10), common law (9), gender (8), monasticism (7), knights (6), England and the continent (6), Scotland (5), architecture and power (5), institutions and government (4), demography (4), Jewish life (1). No-one attempted popular religion, literacy, or the visual arts, all subjects on which there is a vibrant secondary literature and a great deal to say.

### **History of the British Isles III: 1330-1550**

Twenty-seven candidates took this paper, including one from History and Politics. The geographical range of questions attempted was, encouragingly, broader than in some other years. While royal success and failure, Lollardy and revolts were the most popular topics, warfare and government, nobility and monarchy, popular religion and the Reformation were joined in the second rank by Scotland, Ireland, Wales and extraordinary women. Economic and cultural history were not so well served, the rural economy and visual culture attracting only one taker each and universities, towns and communities none. Political history too seemed to run along certain tramlines, with only one answer each on the gentry and the bellicosity of the nobility,

none on political churchmen or the royal court, and the only ideas that might have been relevant to the Reformation being for almost all candidates the theological ideas of Luther.

Many answers showed a good sense of the historiography of the topics addressed or of the sources used by historians of the period, though each of these approaches could lead to difficulties when historians were name-dropped – often inaccurately – in every other sentence as a substitute for evidence or considered argument, or when broad questions were answered by a poorly contextualised exposition of a handful of primary sources. Some conceptual problems were better handled than others. Candidates dealt better with the slipperiness of the term Lollardy and with what might or might not have been weak about Scottish kingship than with what constituted or generated perceptions of successful rule and what counted as institutions of government that might have been strengthened by war. The overall impression, however, was of successful and thematically varied study of a period which had engaged the interests of candidates.

### **History of the British Isles IV: 1500-1700**

Forty-five candidates took this paper, including six from History and Politics and one from History and English. The English Reformation and court politics (mostly Henrician or Elizabethan) were the most popular questions, followed at some distance by revolts, further Reformation, witchcraft, patriarchy, civil war and foreign policy. But every topic except London and the Scottish Reformation found some takers, and there was some strong work on the later seventeenth century, Scotland, Ireland and the Stuart union of the crowns. Two problems characteristically produced weak answers in otherwise competent scripts, one an inability to cover more than one or at most two reigns when supposedly discussing Tudor rulers or Stuart rulers in general, the other an inability to set a familiar topic in a less familiar context. Thus there were some excellent essays comparing witchcraft with vagrancy, treason, defamation or violent crime, but others that simply asserted witchcraft was different and then discussed witchcraft.

The two most popular questions generated an impressively varied range of answers. Analyses of court politics placed very different weight on styles of kingship or queenship, succession problems, religious rivalries, debates about foreign policy, social tensions, the patronage system and the ambitions of individual courtiers in accounting for division, and indeed produced defensible depictions both of courts dangerously riven by faction and of courts well held together as centres of government. The English Reformation brought forth an even wider spectrum of well-argued views that suggest monochrome revisionism is well and truly dead. At one extreme were candidates who thought Ethan Shagan's assertion that the Reformation was done not *to* but *with* people 'totally inappropriate' or 'basically laughable', arguing for a fiercely contested and largely ineffectual campaign of change driven from above. At the other were those who saw the Reformation as 'a popular and largely voluntary transformation', certainly by the end of Elizabeth's reign, perhaps even by the end of Edward's. These scripts, together with the more chronologically, geographically, socially or thematically nuanced answers that came between them, suggest encouragingly that debate is alive and well among first-year early-modern historians.

### **History of the British Isles V: 1685-1830**

Forty-eight candidates sat this paper this year, fourteen of them in the joint schools. The range of topics undertaken, at which last year's report rejoiced, was largely sustained – if not their even popularity. The Glorious Revolution (26 takers) and the ideological impact of the American or French revolutions (twenty) were predictably very popular, followed by questions on foreign and imperial policy (fourteen), and national identity (twelve). Of the two habitual concerns of tutors and examiners of the modern British papers – getting candidates to write beyond English history, and beyond political history – the former was slightly better allayed in this year's distribution of answers. No candidate attempted the question on how far Scotland or Ireland could be characterised as an *ancien régime* in this period; however, the question on 'Britishness' attracted (as above) twelve takers, and ten addressed the question on the 1707 or 1800 Acts of Union (though overwhelmingly with regard to the former), which is a significant increase on only a few years ago. The issue was rather that too many answers throughout the paper were evidentially confined to England: this was frequently the case in the questions on the Glorious Revolution, and on the American / French revolutions, where the great majority of responses were quite startlingly anachronistic. Enthusiasm for broadly cultural topics was curiously, and – given recent trends in this paper – aberrantly, limited. The question on politeness generated six answers, gender roles five, poverty/crime, and the Enlightenment, both four; surely remarkably, the question applicable to art, architecture, or literature returned no echo. On the other hand, recently popular political topics such as Walpole (four), the unreformed electorate (four), and George III and the politicians (one) seem in decline. It is also worth noting that very few candidates write meaningfully into the nineteenth century. Only one addressed the question on early nineteenth-century politics. The 1815-30 overlap between *HBI V* and *HBI VI* appears to be something of a no man's land between the two, which is odd given the historiographical lengthening of the 'long' eighteenth century. The transcendent reflection is, as always, that too many candidates compromise their command of the period by simple inattention to the nuances of questions. There were far too many detailed and internally assured responses to a question on the popularity, violence, and divisiveness of the Glorious Revolution, which declined to consider its popularity, violence, and divisiveness; and far too many answers on the ideological consequences in Britain of 1776 or 1789 which declined to address ideology (or to range beyond London).

### **History of the British Isles VI: 1815-1924**

Thirty-three candidates sat this paper this year, nine of them in the joint schools. The diversity of topics undertaken was striking and gratifying: empire (18 takers), Chartism (13), and franchise extension/s (12) claimed the rostrum, but no other generated more than single-figures, with fairly even representation therefore distributed across all the other topics. Only one question generated no answer – predictably, given the comments of successive *HBI VI* examiners in both Prelims and the FHS – this was on British economic performance, which clearly nobody studies tutorially any more. Questions on sexuality, and education, generated an answer apiece. More encouragingly in terms of topical breadth, questions on religion, aristocratic decline, Irish nationalism, and the social/cultural impact of the Great War, proved fairly popular, while essays on the empire – certainly at their best – were creditably sensitive to the cultural dimensions prominent in recent literature and were

not confined to strategic narratives. No one should be troubled by any notionally enduring prominence of high politics, with the question on Gladstonian Liberalism enticing only six takers, the rise of Labour four, and late-Victorian Conservatism one – these were canonical only a few years ago. The same examiner marked both the *HBI V* and the *HBI VI* scripts and, unlike in the experience of many previous years (in both Prelims and the FHS), did not feel that the latter were the less sophisticated batch. It may, paradoxically, be that the decline of nineteenth-century British history in school syllabuses is *HBI VI*'s gain; that, put glibly, unable to regurgitate A-level conventions, candidates are forced to do it properly.

### **History of the British Isles VII: since 1900**

12 candidates took this paper (9 in the main school and 3 in joint schools). There was a lot of bunching of answers on three particular topics (sexuality, voting-patterns, the significance of 1945), while six of the 20 questions received no answers at all. As in the two previous years, topics like the economy and national identity had no takers; more surprisingly, neither did class distinction, or the two world wars. The best answers were highly competent, and displayed the understanding of 'broad developments within the period' enjoined by the examiners, but, as in previous years, there was a tendency from some candidates to rehearse tutorial essays and lecture notes.

### **General History I: The Transformation of the Ancient World, 370-900**

Seventy-seven candidates tackled this paper. Eighteen of these were from the joint schools underlining the attractions of this paper for those reading Ancient & Modern History (7 candidates) and History & English (6 candidates). Reports on individual papers tend to provide an opportunity for examiners to grumble about their pet hates but what was striking here was the way candidates rose to the challenges of this paper. Few if any will have had any prior acquaintance with the period, or indeed with any medieval history, but the majority managed to absorb a remarkable amount of information in one term of work and proceeded to use it to write with some confidence about topics across this five hundred year period. Candidates appeared to relish the chance to range widely and to take on big topics. Many of the questions had a comparative angle as they asked, for example, whether empires could ever be stable or whether the Vikings did much the same as barbarians of previous centuries. Somewhat to the examiners surprise candidates rose to these demands and drew sustained and intelligent comparisons – even when questions did not necessarily demand them. The contrast with the difficulty that many finalists have in drawing meaningful comparisons in the Disciplines paper was striking and would suggest that the format of this GH paper is a more effective one to teach students to think and write comparatively. Marking the scripts for both this paper and HBI1 also left a clear impression that candidates were operating at a more sophisticated level by the time they studied General History in their second term – although one might expect to find this, it is nevertheless reassuring to do so. Lectures and tutorials appeared to have dovetailed effectively and this will have played its part but there was a real sense that students had been gripped by both the period's grand narratives and the close knit evidence provided by primary sources. This is a paper that is working very well.

### **General History II: Medieval Christendom and its Neighbours 1000-1300.**

There were 51 candidates this year. Overall the quality was very good, with some excellent scripts demonstrating wide reading and a good understanding of the period. The number of candidates who had clearly engaged with the material, enjoyed finding out about the history and following the debates beyond the lectures, was gratifyingly high. However, there were also a large number who did little more than repeat the content of lectures, sometimes with personal names misspelt, suggesting a lack of reading. Quite a few candidates also grimly tried to dump tutorial essays into inappropriate exam questions. Having purposefully set demanding political history questions this year, with the aim of avoiding the dumping of endless rise-of-the-Capetians essays, it seems the examiner's method may have contained a good deal of madness. Political history of states was generally shunned, which was not the intention. However, there was a good deal of very interesting and purposeful use made of political history in answering a range of other questions, and many candidates approached their questions with the ideals of 'total history' in mind. The most popular questions were on heresy (32), crusades (28), multiculturalism (14) and the papacy (14). Twelve candidates answered on imperial rule, though few were able to think about the specific political challenges of empires as opposed to any other polity. Ten answered on feudalism, with most showing a high degree of understanding and wide reading. A surprising nine candidates answered on the rhetoric of authority, but only a minority were able to draw on a wide base of evidence. Questions on architecture/art/literature, patriarchy, education, monasticism, towns, Mongols, aristocracy, state power, dynastic politics, and trade received between one and six answers each. No-one was tempted by the material conditions of life, the idea of Rome, or the invitation to compare the political cultures of Latin Christendom and its neighbours.

### **General History III: Renaissance, Recovery and Reform, 1400-1650**

82 students took this paper in the main school. The majority stuck to the question set and produced coherent answers supported by accurate detail. A minority preferred to address questions they had done as tutorial essays or answer with a broad brush providing little information and were penalised accordingly. Even good answers were often unbalanced with too much attention being given to small points. Students universally found the question on humanism and the universities difficult to answer and few were able to demonstrate any knowledge of the university system in early modern Europe, or relied exclusively on a knowledge of Oxford and Cambridge. Those too who tackled the witchcraft question knew precious little about other persecuted groups. A surprisingly large number of students did not know what the regular orders were so talked generally about the Counter Reformation, while most of those who answered on peasant revolts seemed unable to distinguish peasants from townsmen. It would be wrong, however, to stress the negative. All the questions bar the one on the Republic of Letters was tackled, there was some good, crisp answers on the price rise, and candidates were more than ready to dispute with the examiner. Overall the standard was high. Foreign names do though remain a problem. It is good to see how much students are taking from the lectures but they should check that the names they are taking down are accurately recorded. They need to be aware too that the lecturer is generally distilling the work of others and is seldom the author of the point of view he/she is conveying. Too many candidates with a good grasp of the historiographical debate had no idea who the real protagonists were. All people taking this paper should be encouraged to read Braudel, still the master.

### **General History IV: Society, Nation, and Empire 1815-1914**

This year's crop of GHIV candidates did excellently. There were 69 candidates, forty five in the Main school and twenty-four in Joint Schools. What impressed me was their ability to work comparatively, to take individual cases from different countries and regions and to draw out important themes. In the past, scripts in GHIV have been marred by a tendency to remain too general, which meant that there was an annoying tendency towards superficiality. There were vague discussions of industrialisation or nationalism across the board, with only casual reference to specific developments in particular national contexts. This year, candidates seemed confident to start with precise case-studies, to assess different paths of development in different countries and to make reasoned arguments. Even more difficult questions about the middle-classes, for example, produced work of high quality, as students engaged not only with issues of material prosperity, but also values, aesthetics, family life and education. Some candidates over-used a small pool of books, but many others were more adventurous: they looked at articles in academic journals to justify their points and to bring more cogent detail to their argument. Tutors should be pleased with the results their pupils attained.

### **Optional Subject 1: Theories of State**

100 candidates sat this paper, 44 of them in the main school and 56 in the joint schools (of whom the vast majority were HPol students.) The overall quality of the scripts was very impressive, overwhelmingly 2.1 or above, and some scripts were outstanding. Most of the candidates knew their texts, and the basic arguments of all their authors. The best candidates thought about the tensions and ambiguities in their texts, but the weaker ones could be simplistic (especially on q. 5, on Rousseau). On the question about Hobbes' views on liberty (q. 4), a number of candidates were unaware of the specific meaning of 'negative liberty', and simply construed it as meaning that Hobbes was 'really negative' about liberty in the modern, colloquial sense. Some of the Marx answers got deep into Hegel, and were in danger of losing sight of Marx and the set texts. Overwhelmingly the most popular questions were qs. 3, 5 and 7, which led to something of a bunching effect. Nevertheless, all questions were attempted by somebody, and an encouraging number of students made good stabs at the comparative questions (though candidates who tried to include all four authors tended to struggle to do all of them justice.)

### **Optional Subject 6: Crime and Punishment in England c.1280-c.1450**

A total of 8 students took this paper: a pleasing number for a new paper in late medieval history. The scripts were of a good standard: 2 distinctions were awarded and there were no marks below 60. Some topics were particularly popular: heresy, Robin Hood, gender and the role of violence in society. Conversely, some questions were not attempted, which is surprising since these topics were covered in class and tutorial discussions at some length: the prosecution of crime and state growth, the involvement of families and strangers in violence. Nevertheless, there was a pleasing spread of questions attempted. Students provided answers as good on the thematic questions (e.g. on violence and everyday life), as on more specific issues (e.g. the Robin Hood ballads). Students were particularly impressive in their grasp of the

complex court structures of late medieval England. On the whole, students used the primary material effectively, although some sources were used much more readily than others (the *Crime, Law and Society* collection proved popular; the Armburgh papers were barely mentioned). The best answers not only used the primary material illustratively, but thoughtfully problematised the use of such legal sources, as well as weighing up statistical evidence (with all its problems) beside anecdotal evidence and the qualitative analysis it permits. Such candidates were also willing to address the complex methodological issues associated with the study of law and crime, and interrogated the terminology accordingly: all students should be encouraged to do this.

### **Approaches to History**

144 candidates sat this paper. The examiners felt that the Archaeology, Gender and some of the Art questions were largely well done. They differed in their opinions of the Economics section; one marker was impressed by the quality of answers, but another felt that there were too many recapitulations of familiar debates about the Great Divergence or the difference in economic growth between England and France. The examiners agreed that the Sociology and Anthropology sections were less well-answered, with too many students writing out pre-prepared speeches about how sociology/anthropology, etc do (or do not) contribute to the work of historians, though the better candidates succeeded in turning this into a personal reflection on the interface. Too many candidates responded to a question in the Sociology section on religion with a pre-cooked answer on secularisation. In the same section, two of the examiners also felt that candidates gave a simplistic account of Marx's theories of social distinction, which did not suggest that they had read Marx closely. In the Art section, the examiners felt that the answer on patrons' motives was too narrowly answered, with over-reliance on lecture notes.

### **Historiography: Tacitus to Weber**

The overall standard of the scripts this year was high. There were very few poor scripts, and the fact that the vast majority could write in assured fashion about a branch of the history of ideas that hardly existed a generation ago, and after only a year of university study, is a pedagogical fact of some note. The principal distinction between the solid mid-60s script and those that went higher is that the former typically displayed a good knowledge of the text but were surprisingly ignorant of context. For example when discussing the degree of Tacitus' pessimism about Rome, relatively few mentioned the obvious fact that he was writing under Trajan and Nerva at a time of intellectual liberty and freedom. Again many candidates were unaware of the fact that Ranke was not an advocate of Germany's political unification either when writing his *Reformation History* or in 1866-71; or that the end-point of his narrative – self-evidently – was the religious division of “Germany”. One failing to which attention should be drawn is that a few candidates came perilously close to failing the rubric requirement to ‘demonstrate knowledge of at least three authors’. They devoted all their energies to writing about only two authors, and dragged in a brief paragraph on a third in one of the “comparative” questions (qq.15-18). Such a tactic is bound to be punished, however good the first two answers may be.



## Quantification in History

Four students sat the paper for *Quantification in History*. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]