

THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE
1972-2012

An Informal History

Keith Thomas

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This account draws upon the History Prize archives of the Wolfson Foundation, to which I have been given unrestricted access. I have also made use of my own papers and recollections. I am grateful to Paul Ramsbottom and Sarah Newsom for much assistance. The Foundation bears no responsibility for the opinions expressed, which are mine alone.

K.T.



Lord Wolfson of Marylebone

Trustee of the Wolfson Foundation from 1955 and Chairman 1972-2010

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FOREWORD

The year 1972 was a pivotal one for the Wolfson Foundation: my father, Lord Wolfson of Marylebone, became Chairman and the Wolfson History Prize was established. No coincidence there. History was my father's passion and primary source of intellectual stimulation. History books were his daily companions. Of all the Foundation's many activities, none gave him greater pleasure than the History Prize. It is an immense sadness that he is not with us to celebrate the fortieth anniversary.

1972 was also the year that Keith Thomas was awarded one of the first Wolfson History Prizes for his celebrated book *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. Keith, who would later be President of the British Academy and President of Corpus Christi, Oxford, set his stamp on the first year of the Prize by demonstrating that great and compelling history books could be written in a clear and lucid style. Three years later he joined the judging panel, ensuring that his exemplary standards of clarity and scholarship were reflected in the choice of nominees. We are all extremely grateful to Sir Keith for writing this history of the Wolfson History Prize and for chairing the judges with such care and distinction since 1995. The reputation of a prize rests on the calibre of its decision making and our thanks are extended to Sir Keith's fellow judges, both past and present, who are listed at the end of this publication.

My father had a clear and compelling vision for the History Prize. History, he believed, should come out of the academic closet and be appreciated by a wider general public without compromising standards of excellence. A roll-call of the British historians who have won the History Prize over the last 40 years is annexed to this publication – testament to the immense success of his strategy, which we shall continue to support with great enthusiasm.

We are all delighted to mark the 40th Anniversary of the Prize with this publication as well as a dinner most generously hosted by the National Gallery.

Janet Wolfson de Botton
Chairman, The Wolfson Foundation

THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE, 1972-2012

Origins

The Wolfson History Prizes have been awarded annually for the last 40 years. They owe their existence to the generosity and vision of the Trustees of the Wolfson Foundation and, in particular, to the enthusiasm and support of Lord Wolfson of Marylebone (1927-2010), who was their Chairman for almost the whole of that period. The Prizes are intended to recognise and reward the authors of books on history which embody the highest scholarly standards, but are also written in such a way as to engage the interest and imagination of readers who are not themselves professional historians. They have come to occupy a highly-esteemed place in British literary and academic life; and the list of Wolfson History Prize-winners over the years constitutes a dazzling galaxy of historical talent.

What is not generally known is that the Wolfson History Prizes in their present form are the sole survivors of an altogether more ambitious scheme proposed by Mr Leonard Wolfson (as he then was) in early 1971. His idea was that the Wolfson Foundation, set up in 1955 for the advancement of science and medicine, health, education and the arts and humanities, should extend its activities by establishing a range of major awards in various fields of scholarship and artistic achievement. These awards would be along the lines of the Nobel Prizes, but would avoid any overlap with them. To help him to work out the details, he consulted other Trustees of the Wolfson Foundation and several knowledgeable friends. Sir George Weidenfeld (now Lord Weidenfeld) replied enthusiastically, welcoming this ‘most inspiring and exciting suggestion’ and suggesting that there might be eight separate awards – in History, Social Studies, Social Relations, Management, Environmental Studies, Philosophy, Literature and Music. He thought that the prizes need not be as large as the Nobel Prizes, but should nevertheless involve impressive sums of money. Encouraged by this advice, Leonard Wolfson invited the Trustees to consider giving annual awards of £25,000 each to about ten British writers on such subjects as History, Economics, Business, Biography and Journalism.

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Sir Isaiah Berlin

History Prize judge (1972) and first President of Wolfson College, Oxford

Sir Isaiah Berlin by Bernard Lee ('Bern') Schwartz, 6 July 1977
© National Portrait Gallery, London

ORIGINS

Reactions to this suggestion were cautious. Sir Isaiah Berlin, President of the newly-founded Wolfson College, Oxford, warned that such a scheme would need very careful preparation and an apparatus of publicity, ‘otherwise it really will fall flat, like the other 60 prizes which go on being awarded obscurely today.’ Martin Paisner, the Foundation’s solicitor, thought that the distinction of the awards would not depend on their monetary value and proposed a much smaller figure of £2,000 - £2,500. Sir Alan Bullock (later Lord Bullock), Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University and a Wolfson Trustee, believed that confining the awards to British authors was to set the sights too low: there might not be enough ‘alpha-quality talent’ in the UK to justify annual awards. He cited the French literary prizes, ‘which are believed to be awarded by literary coteries, have a poor reputation and little, if any, prestige’.

Professor J.H. (later Sir John) Plumb, another Wolfson Trustee, was more bullish. He drew up a memorandum on ‘The Wolfson Prize for the Humanities’ which envisaged that it would ‘quickly become the leading literary prize in this country – comparable, if not to the Nobel Prizes, at least to the Pulitzer Prizes in America’. Plumb suggested four annual awards, covering half-a-dozen subject areas and worth £5,000 each. They should be awarded by ‘five to seven men of judgment, distinction, catholic tastes and large contacts in the world of letters’. He stressed that it would be crucial to keep the awards in the public eye, so as to maintain momentum and interest.

By August 1971 the scheme had been reduced to three awards: in History and Biography; Politics and Public Affairs; and Economics and Social Sciences, though with the possibility of additional prizes in the arts and creative literature. When negotiations were opened with the Arts Council, with a view to their administering these ‘Wolfson Literature Prizes’, they had shrunk to only two: of £5,000 each, one for History and Biography, the other for Business or Economics. The Arts Council proposed a list of possible awarders; it included the Lords Balogh and Kaldor, whose names Leonard Wolfson promptly crossed out. Sir George Weidenfeld suggested that the prizes should be given for a historian’s total *oeuvre* as well as for individual

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books, pointing out that ‘quite a few of international fame find themselves at the end of their career with a very modest pension and no capital of any kind at their disposal’. With this addition, the scheme was approved by the Arts Council in February 1972.

At this point misgivings arose. Professor Plumb had always believed that the Arts Council lacked the necessary academic weight for such a responsibility. His objections were powerfully endorsed by Sir Isaiah Berlin, first in a note to Leonard Wolfson of 5 March 1972 (written from Air India’s Maharajah Lounge at Heathrow Airport), in which he reiterated that the Council was too remote from academic business to be a suitable vehicle for the awards, and then in a longer letter of 15 April, which proved to be decisive. History and Biography, he declared, were fields in which standards of excellence, though not as universally recognised as in the natural sciences, did undoubtedly exist. But Business, the Social Sciences and Economics, save in its most mathematical form, were a ‘shark-infested sea’. Apart from six or seven names, there was no agreement about merit: ‘those who count as high-ranking specialists in one fairly small group are regarded as out-and-out charlatans by another.’ He did not believe that enough work of quality in these fields was published in Britain to deserve an annual prize of such dimensions and he declined to be a member of any body awarding prizes in such a disputed area.

The upshot was that Sir George Weidenfeld, with Berlin’s support, proposed that the Award should be confined to ‘History’ in its widest sense. This fitted in well with Leonard Wolfson’s personal passion for historical literature. The proposed link with the Arts Council was severed and a separate Wolfson Award Fund was established in July 1972 to administer the scheme, with Berlin as its chairman and Bullock, Plumb, Weidenfeld and Professor Asa Briggs (later Lord Briggs), Vice-Chancellor of Sussex University, as its other members. The objects of the Fund were defined as ‘the advancement of education by means of prizes, awards or grants . . . for the promotion and encouragement of standards of excellence in the writing of and concerning

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Sir John Plumb

Trustee of the Wolfson Foundation and History Prize judge 1972-1986

Sir John Harold Plumb by Bernard Lee ('Bern') Schwartz, 9 May 1978

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history and such other charitable fields of learning as the Prize Trustees may (with the consent of the Foundation Trustees) from time to time determine, whereby public taste, discernment and knowledge in such fields of learning or any of them may be advanced and increased'. The Prize Trustees were to appoint the judges, who could be paid an honorarium. They were never to be fewer than three, nor more than five, and they could form separate panels for each of the several categories of award.

Armed with this authority, the Prize Trustees lost no time in appointing awarders. They in turn made their decision very quickly and on 23 November 1972 the first Wolfson Literary Awards for History were presented at a luncheon in the Dorchester Hotel. As Plumb proudly noted, there were many prizes for creative literature and some for biography, but this was the first time that prizes of such significance had been created for historians.

The Wolfson Literary Awards for History were 'Literary' because they had originally been envisaged as one of several awards for different branches of literature; and they were 'Awards' not 'Prizes', because they were to be bestowed unsolicited upon the recipients, whereas a prize would have been a trophy for which candidates competed. From the start, however, the Awards were widely referred to as 'Prizes'; and since 1989 they were often described as such in the Foundation's press releases. The word 'Literary' was dropped in 1988, on the suggestion of Kenneth Rose, then one of the judges, who pointed out that the term was redundant, since all written history was by definition literary. Today, the Wolfson Literary Awards for History are generally known as the Wolfson History Prizes.

From the start, the Wolfson Literary Awards were intended to encourage the writing of scholarly history for the general public. As a press notice explained, their object was 'to encourage and reward the writing by British historians of distinguished works of history which can be enjoyed by a general readership and will stimulate public interest in history'. The Prize-winning books were expected to combine intellectual and scholarly distinction with accessibility; and in making their decisions the judges were to take their

ADMINISTRATION

literary qualities into account. When Sir Moses Finley won an award in 1974, the press release commended him as ‘not only a scholar of great perception and originality, but also a writer who could make the Homeric world comprehensible to a wide public without sacrificing any professional standards’. Similarly in 1982 it was said of Sir Steven Runciman that ‘he fulfils the aims of the Wolfson Prize to perfection – the combination of erudition with literary grace’. Alan Bullock recalled in 1989 that ‘when we set up the prizes, the object was to encourage British historians to write in such a way that they would reach a general public and not barricade themselves behind their scholarly expertise to conduct a private debate. . . and I think we have kept to this objective fairly successfully’.

Administration

Although the Prize Trustees were active in the early years, the Wolfson Award Fund was never formally registered as a separate charity and it gradually fell into abeyance, though invitations to the Prize-giving reception continued to be issued in the name of its Trustees, and the Award Fund was not formally wound up until 1995. Meanwhile, the costs were met by the Wolfson Foundation and its staff handled the administration. Each year Lord Wolfson would consider whether or not to continue with the Prizes and, if so, on what terms. He always agreed to keep them going, but his consent could never be taken for granted. Alan Bullock, when retiring as chairman of the judges in 1991, actually proposed that the Prize should be discontinued and replaced by a different scheme for encouraging historians. But nothing came of this suggestion.

By comparison with the huge sums distributed annually by the Foundation in the fulfilment of its main charitable objectives (£30 million in 2010-2011), the outlay on the History prize (a total in excess of £800,000 over 40 years) has been relatively slight. Its administration, however, has been disproportionately time-consuming. Each year a member of staff has to correspond with publishers, request catalogues, check eligibility, ensure that

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the books reach the judges, schedule the judges' meetings and arrange the Prize-giving reception. The Foundation has been fortunate in having a series of able and devoted individuals to carry out these tasks. Its successive chief executives, Major-General A.R. Leakey, Dr John Black, Dr Alun Jones, Dr Barbara Rashbass, Dr Victoria Harrison and Paul Ramsbottom, have all taken a keen interest in the Prize, most of them attending the judges' meetings and giving helpful advice at every stage. Within the Foundation's office, the successful working of the Prize has owed an immense amount to the meticulous care and attention devoted to it in recent years by, successively, Elinor Lord, Lin Richardson, Simon Fourmy and Sarah Newsom.

From time to time, however, the Trustees have understandably felt that the administration of the Prize requires too much of their staff's time and have explored the possibility of putting it out to another administrator. In 1988 overtures were made to the Book Trust, but their proposed charges proved to be too high. Ten years later, it was suggested that the British Academy might take over the administration of the Prize, but it turned out that nothing would be gained by this move, since the Academy would also have to be reimbursed for its work. The idea was resurrected in 2008, when there was the possibility of the Academy doing the work without a fee, as the Wolfson Prize would have fitted well into the 'Prizes and Medals' section of its new Strategic Framework. On further reflection, however, the Foundation concluded that the independent identity of the Prize would be best ensured if it continued to be administered in-house.

Eligibility

When the Wolfson History Prize was established in 1972, the Foundation's solicitor, Martin Paisner, advised that 'the internal rules and workings of the scheme should not be publicly disclosed, since it is of importance for the Trustees to retain a measure of flexibility without risk of being charged with uncertainty of purpose'. This was prescient advice, for the rules and workings of the scheme have indeed changed over the years.

ELIGIBILITY

The original idea was that there should be two Prizes, one of £5,000 for an established historian who had published an important book during the previous year, but whose work over the years the Trustees wished to celebrate; and one of £3,000 for an historical work published during the previous year which had made an original contribution to the understanding of history. The first of these awards duly went to Professor Michael Howard for his book *Grand Strategy* and for ‘the body of work which he has produced on military history’. In the following two years, Dame Frances Yates and Sir Moses Finley were similarly rewarded for their work as a whole, as well as for the book they had published during the year. In 1975, however, the judges decided that no ‘established historian of great standing’ had recently published a work worthy of the £5,000 for *oeuvre*. Instead, they gave two prizes for single books. The *oeuvre* Prize returned in 1976, when it was won by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, and it continued to be awarded annually until 1983, though sometimes for the winner’s ‘notable contribution to the writing of history’ rather than in connection with a book published in the relevant year. Thereafter, Prizes for *oeuvre* were given only intermittently, the judges explaining in 1999 that since the scheme had been in existence for nearly three decades, most of the obvious candidates for an *oeuvre* Prize had already received one for a particular book. The judges, however, continue to look out for historians with a distinguished body of work which has gone unrecognised. Although there has been no *oeuvre* Prize since 2004, the possibility of future awards in that category remains open.

The prizes have always been limited to British citizens, a requirement which has excluded several outstanding historians working in the UK who would otherwise have won prizes. An additional stipulation that candidates should also be resident in this country was enforced in 1979, when Professor Michael Roberts, the historian of Sweden, who had moved to South Africa, was deemed ineligible, but it was tacitly suspended in the following year, when the Prize went to Professor F.S.L. Lyons, Provost of Trinity College, Dublin. Thereafter, several Prizes were won by historians based in the USA. In 1988 some of the Foundation’s Trustees suggested that it was unfair to UK-

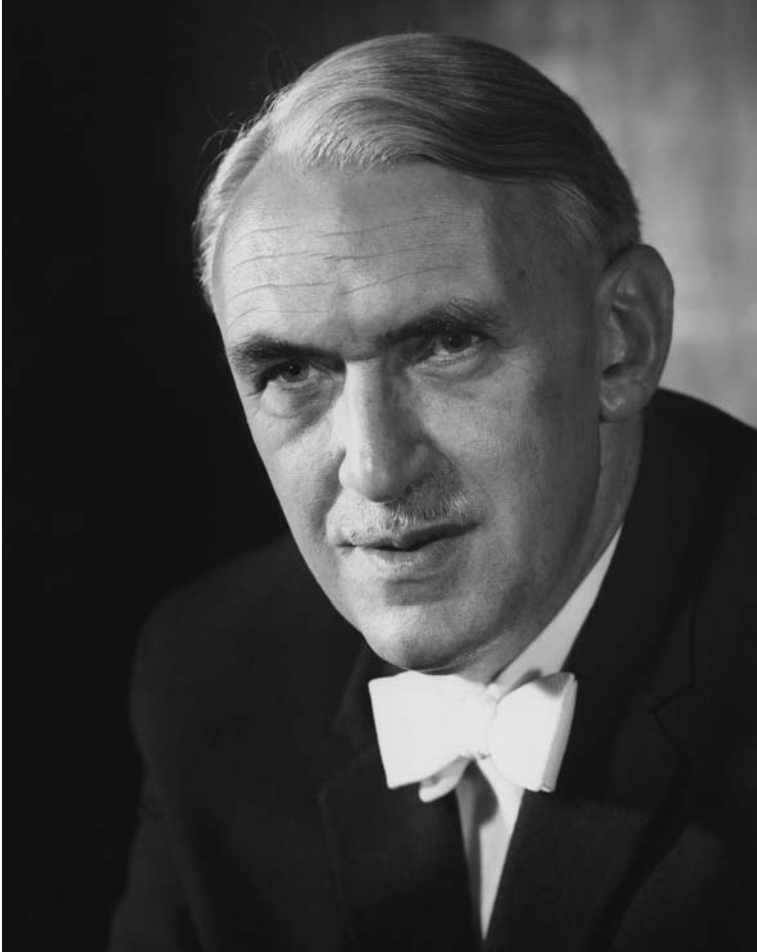
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based historians to give Prizes to expatriates, who had higher salaries and more time in which to write books, but a majority agreed that the judges could continue to make awards to non-residents. In November 1999, however, Lord Wolfson decided that eligibility should be confined to British citizens normally resident in the UK. He also ruled that previous Prize-winners, who, up to that time, had been debarred from winning the Prize twice, could remain eligible for the Prize for a single book, but not for the one for *oeuvre*. In practice, the judges have taken the view that only in exceptional circumstances should a previous Prize-winner be made a second award; and, so far, such circumstances have not occurred, though many of the Prize-winners have continued to write extremely distinguished books.

The Judges

It is a truism that the standing of a literary prize depends primarily upon the qualifications and impartiality of its judges. The sponsors of many literary prizes think that this result is best achieved by having a different judging panel every year. Most of the Wolfson History Prize judges, by contrast, have enjoyed a long tenure of office. In the first year of the Prize, the three ‘awarders’, as they were then known, were Alan Bullock, a Wolfson Trustee famous for his pioneering biography of Hitler; J.H. Plumb of Cambridge University, celebrated for the first two volumes of his biography of Sir Robert Walpole and also a Wolfson Trustee; and Asa Briggs, an outstandingly influential social historian of the nineteenth century. This powerful trio continued to act for the next 13 years, though augmented between 1973 and 1978 by a changing pair of additional judges, who included Professor A.G. Dickens, Director of London University’s Institute of Historical Research; Roy (later Lord) Jenkins, politician and historical writer; the Countess of Longford, a much-admired biographer; Michael Ratcliffe, prominent literary editor and reviewer of historical works; and the eminent historian Dame Veronica Wedgwood. The present writer joined the panel in 1975 and is still there. The quartet of Bullock, Plumb, Briggs and Thomas were the sole judges from 1979 to 1984, though joined on one occasion by John Gross, the editor

THE JUDGES



Lord Bullock

History Prize judge 1972-84, 1987-91 and History Prize winner 1992

Alan Louis Charles Bullock, Baron Bullock of Leafield, by Godfrey Argent, 8 October 1969
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Lord Briggs

History Prize judge 1972-95 and winner of *oeuvre* prize in 2000

Asa Briggs, Baron Briggs, by Godfrey Argent, 6 January 1970
© National Portrait Gallery, London

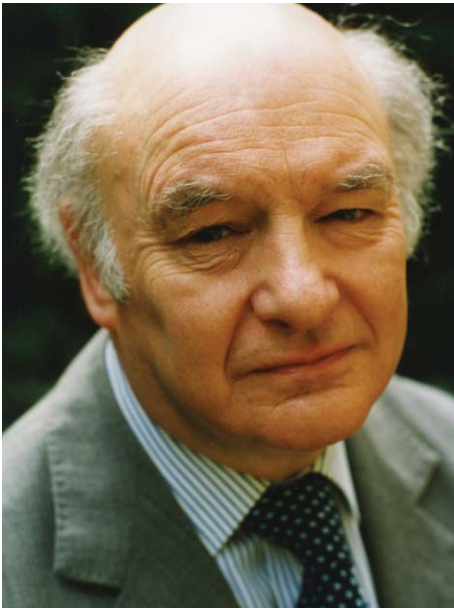
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of the *Times Literary Supplement*. In 1987, however, Plumb, who had, from the start, been the animating spirit of the project, resigned as both judge and Wolfson Trustee, and in 1991 Bullock also retired from the panel, thereby becoming himself eligible for the Prize, which he duly won in the following year for his *Hitler and Stalin*. They were succeeded by the biographer and journalist, Kenneth Rose, who had won the Prize in 1983 for his *King George V* and served between 1985 and 1996; the ancient historian, Professor Michael Crawford, who served in 1985; the economist, historian and life peer, Lord (Robert) Skidelsky, winner of the 1993 prize for *John Maynard Keynes*, who did five years (1997-2001); and the Oxford Professor of Late Antique and Byzantine History and Warden of Keble College, Professor (later Dame) Averil Cameron, who was a judge from 1993 until 2010, when she was succeeded by the medievalist, Professor Julia Smith of the University of Glasgow. Professor Richard J. Evans of Birkbeck College, London, and a former Prize-winner for his *Death in Hamburg*, became a judge in 1996 and is still serving, though now based in Cambridge as Regius Professor of History and President of Wolfson College. Professor (later Sir) David Cannadine, joined the panel in 2002, when he was Director of the Institute of Historical Research. He is now a professor at Princeton University, but continues to act as a judge and was recently appointed a Wolfson Trustee.

When he received a Prize in 2000 for his *Salisbury: Victorian Titan*, Andrew Roberts told the *Evening Standard* that it was a great honour to ‘have a prize where the judges are at the top of their field rather than ex-wives of pop singers’. Yet it might be thought that a panel, however distinguished, whose members have served for as long as 11 years (Kenneth Rose), 11 years and still going (David Cannadine), 15 years (J.H. Plumb), 17 years, all as chairman (Alan Bullock), 17 years not out (Richard Evans), 18 years (Averil Cameron), 23 years, with six as chairman (Asa Briggs), and a monstrous 35 years, with 17 as chairman (the present writer) is liable to become set in its ways, limited in its sympathies and confirmed in its prejudices. It is not for the most blatant example of this immobility to say otherwise. Nevertheless, a

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look at the record of decisions taken during the last 40 years suggests that the choices made by the judges have conformed to no single pattern, but have reflected a catholic outlook and a readiness to recognise distinction wherever it is found. The list of Prize-winning titles is nothing if not eclectic. It contains a wide range of genres and periods of history; and the winning authors vary enormously in their institutional backgrounds and, so far as they are known, their political or religious sympathies. All they have in common is that they have written books which rest on original scholarship, are of high intellectual quality, and can be read with pleasure by any reasonably intelligent and educated reader.



Kenneth Rose

History Prize judge 1985-1996
and History Prize winner 1983

© Kenneth Rose



Dame Averil Cameron

History Prize judge 1993-2010

© Lucy Dickens

THE JUDGES

Nevertheless, some of the Trustees and their advisers have from time to time felt uneasy about the judging panel's long tenure. In October 1989 Lord Weidenfeld, one of the architects of the original scheme, urged that the team of judges should be 'rejuvenated'. In response, Alan Bullock warned that being a Wolfson History Prize judge was 'quite a burden for a conscientious person' and that it was not a kindness to recruit younger historians, who needed to conserve their time for research and publication. Undeterred, the Trustees expressed a wish to appoint an additional judge who was from a younger generation and not based in Oxford or Cambridge. Dr Richard Fletcher of the University of York, who had recently won a Prize for his book *The Quest for El Cid*, was invited to join the panel, but he declined, pleading pressure of work. In 1991, the first year after Alan Bullock's retirement, two Trustees (Lords Quinton and Quirk) were appointed as 'advisers' to observe the judges' deliberations at close quarters. Apparently satisfied, they did not repeat the experience. But Lord Wolfson tended to grow restive when the judges gave the Prize to a book on a subject which struck him as inappropriately arcane, and when Kenneth Rose retired in 1996, the Trustees requested that his replacement should be someone 'well-qualified to represent the interests of the lay reader'. The other judges were agreeably relieved when this representative of lay readers turned out to be the former Prize-winner, Lord Skidelsky, Professor of Political Economy at the University of Warwick. As Alan Bullock had earlier remarked, nothing gave more pleasure to those Wolfson History Prize-winners who were not academics than the fact that it was a group of academics who had made the choice.

The Foundation had originally been nervous that the choice of Prize-winners might arouse public controversy. 'Given that this Prize will cause as great a stir as it deserves to,' warned Sir Isaiah Berlin in 1972, 'every decision will be bitterly controverted.' The Trust's solicitor Martin Paisner agreed: 'Most writing awards are fraught with the prospect of adverse criticism and professional jealousies,' he thought, adding that 'the charge may be levelled that prizes are awarded by a clique to a clique which is self-perpetuating and

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incestuous'. At one time it seemed as if Sir John Plumb had an unduly sharp eye for the merits of his own pupils and protégés, and they certainly fared well when he was a judge. In a private letter, Alan Bullock remarked sardonically that perhaps the simplest thing was for the judges to get a list of Plumb's pupils and work their way through it without the bother of going to London for a meeting. But Plumb knew literary and intellectual distinction when he saw it, and Professors John Burrow, Simon Schama, Quentin Skinner and Norman Stone would have won Wolfson History Prizes whoever the judges were; similarly, two more of Plumb's pupils, Professors Linda Colley and John Brewer, were given awards long after he had ceased to be a judge. No decision on the Prize has ever been publicly contested, and, though some authors must have felt hard done by, they have kept their disappointment to themselves. Among the judges, serious disagreements have been very rare, though I recall Plumb going into a prolonged sulk after he had failed to prevent the award of the Prize to someone whose work he thought overrated.

Of course, all judges are fallible. The *oeuvre* of some notably accomplished British historians still awaits recognition; and it would be possible to compile an impressive list of distinguished and accessible history books which did NOT win the Wolfson History Prize. But no one would claim that it rivalled the roll-call of those which did. The most outstanding near misses had the misfortune to be published in a year when the competition was particularly strong. In 2005 (for books published in 2004), for example, the short list included books by no fewer than ten Fellows of the British Academy. The periodic attempts by the Higher Education Funding Councils to assess the research 'output' of universities by means of the Research Assessment Exercise and similar schemes have tended to produce a great rush of books in the deadline year, followed by a lull thereafter.

Overall, the record suggests that by appointing a panel of competent judges and letting them continue for a long period, the Wolfson Trustees have ensured a continuity of standards which has not always been a feature of other literary prizes. When Professor Richard Cobb (a Wolfson History Prize-

PROCEDURE

winner) chaired the Booker judges in 1984, he scandalised the literary establishment by announcing that he had never read Proust. The Wolfson Trustees have never been embarrassed by a chairman of their judges claiming not to have read Gibbon.

Procedure

It has never been possible for either authors or publishers to nominate books to be considered for the Prize. The judges alone decide which titles they will look at. In the early years, the judges drew on their own knowledge of the field to identify and read the works they thought worthy of consideration, in practice seldom more than a dozen or so. If they did not already possess them, they bought the books for themselves and were refunded by the Foundation. As time went on, however, the volume of historical publication in Britain steadily grew. This was partly because the Research Assessment Exercise required university-based scholars to be endlessly productive, partly because commercial publishers and television producers were becoming increasingly aware that popular history was a marketable commodity. Judges could no longer be expected to keep track of the year's publications from their own personal knowledge. It was therefore decided to invite publishers to submit their catalogues of forthcoming books, in order that judges could make an informed selection. Publishers have willingly co-operated with this arrangement and generously supply each judge with a copy of every book requested.

For many years, all the judges read all the books under consideration. But this became harder to do with the huge expansion of history publishing and the judges' concern that no potentially deserving work should be overlooked. By 1997 the total number of titles called in was 160, and in the current year the number exceeded 200, though, fortunately for the judges, some of these proved on closer examination to be ineligible. Confronted by this mountain of books, judges have had to make some compromises. Every eligible book is read initially by several of them, but, in the first round, they are not each

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required to examine every book, though most of them still manage to do that.

The next stage is the compilation of a shortlist. In the early years of the Prize, the judges used to agree this by correspondence during the year, then meet in London to make their decision, adjourning afterwards to dinner at a restaurant or in Brooks's Club, where Sir John Plumb was a member. Nowadays, the judges each send in a list of their top ten books at the end of January without previously conferring. Their choices tend to overlap, so the consolidated short list is not usually more than 20 or so. These are then read or re-read very carefully by everyone, in preparation for a meeting in late February or early March at which the short list is discussed and the decisions made. The discussion is lively, but the outcome is usually unanimous, and the atmosphere at the ensuing dinner, held nowadays in an Oxford or Cambridge college, is festive. The Chief Executive attends the meeting and reports the decisions to the Foundation's Chairman. When the Chairman has given the necessary clearance, the winners are informed under strict seal of secrecy and preparations for the presentation ceremony get underway.

The value of the Prize is substantial. When it was established in 1972, the *Guardian* commented that 'taken together, the awards [of £5,000 and £3,000] add up to the most valuable exercise in literary prize-winning in Britain today'. Four years later, a publisher remarked, in a letter to Plumb, on 'the extreme generosity of the two awards – £9,000 must surely be one of the largest literary prizes offered anywhere'. Moreover, because the winners had not entered for their prizes, the awards were tax-free. In 1983, when £15,000 was divided between the two winners, the press release could still describe the Wolfson History Prize as the largest literary prize in Britain. But six years later Alan Bullock was reporting that publishers had told him that awards of £7,500 were too small to give the Prize the cachet it deserved. He must have been gratified in 1992 to receive a prize of £15,000, with his fellow Prize-winner Professor John Bossy getting £10,000. That total outlay of £25,000 was not matched in the following four years, but was exceeded in 1997, when Professors Eric Hobsbawm and Orlando Figes each received £15,000.

THE ROLE OF LORD WOLFSON

Thereafter, the value of the Prize fluctuated, with Professor Ian Kershaw's award in 2001 setting a new record at £20,000. In the present year the two Prize-winners will each receive £25,000. This is not a trivial sum, but it is less than the current value of the Whitbread Book of the Year and the Orange Prize (£30,000), the David Cohen Prize for Literature (£40,000), the Man Booker Prize (£50,000) and the Man Booker International Prize (£60,000). The Bank of England's inflation calculator suggests that if the £8,000 devoted to Wolfson History Prize money in 1972 had been index-linked, the sum available in 2011 would have been roughly £82,000, i.e. more than any of these.

The role of Lord Wolfson

As the Chairman of the Wolfson Foundation, Lord Wolfson was crucial to the whole process. Although the Wolfson History Prize was very much his idea, and although he invariably read some of the books under consideration, Lord Wolfson never acted as a judge himself and left the choice of Prize-winners to the professionals. He did, however, take a lively interest in their proceedings. He often suggested books that he felt the judges ought to read and historians they should consider for the *oeuvre* prize.

The judges took his suggestions very seriously, but did not allow them to influence their choice. When they reached their decision, their hapless chairman was sometimes summoned to explain their reasons; and the value of the prizes awarded tended to reflect Lord Wolfson's varying degrees of enthusiasm for their choice. He was particularly concerned that the winning books should be reader-friendly and he tended to be happiest when the books chosen were on political, military or economic topics in recent history. He regarded works on ancient or medieval history with some suspicion. On one occasion, after the judges had yet again declined to give the Prize to one of his favourite nominees, they suggested that he might like to institute a special 'Chairman's Prize', which he himself would judge and present at the awards ceremony. He declined this invitation.

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Lord Wolfson could be capricious, even wayward in his reactions, and his constant changes of mind, about the ground rules of the awards, the number to be given, their value and the way in which they were to be presented, did not always make the judges' task easier. But they all knew that the History Prize was his personal creation and endowed by his generosity. It would not have survived without his continuing support.

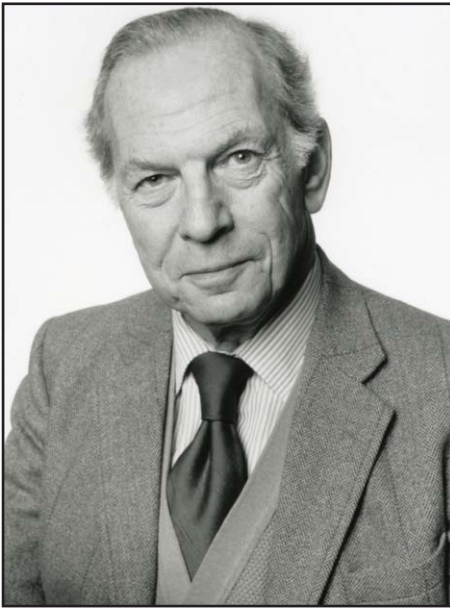
The Prize-winners and their books

There have to date been 85 Prize-winning authors, seven for *oeuvre* without any named book in the citation, 78 for a book (sometimes linked with *oeuvre*). They have come from many different backgrounds. At the time of receiving their award, 20 were academics at the University of Oxford, 12 at Cambridge, 11 at London, three at Sussex, two at York and one each at Aberystwyth, Belfast, Bristol, East Anglia, Essex, Exeter, Reading, St Andrew's, Sheffield, Southampton, Swansea and Warwick. Three were in the USA (two at Yale and one at the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study), one in Ireland and one in Europe. No fewer than 20 had no university base, but either worked as freelance historians or combined their writing with one of a wide range of occupations (including politics, law, local government, journalism and librarianship). That nearly a quarter of the Prize-winners were not professional academics is striking proof that it is still possible for independent scholars without any current university affiliation to achieve the highest standards. The degree of determination required to accomplish work of such quality when simultaneously holding a full-time professional post is very impressive.

Women have been among the Prize-winners since the second year of the Prize. In 1975, which by chance happened to be International Women's Year, both winners were female (Lady (Frances) Donaldson and Professor Olwen Hufton), though this did not happen again until 2008, when Professors Mary Beard and Margaret McGowan received the Prizes. In total, 66 Prize-winners have been men and 19 women, a slightly higher proportion of women than that among the present university professoriate or the fellowship of the British Academy.

THE PRIZE-WINNERS AND THEIR BOOKS

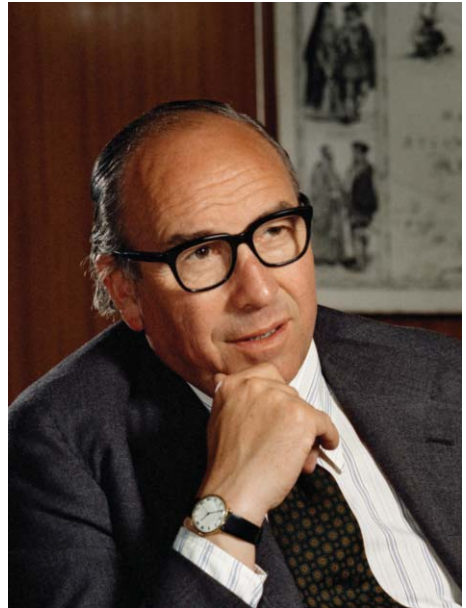
The list of Prize-winning books might have been expected to reflect changing fashions in British historical writing over the last 40 years, a period when the concerns of historians have greatly diversified, many moving away from the study of politics and public affairs into social history, cultural history and the history of gender, sexuality and race. In fact, the interests of some of the early Wolfson History Prize-winners were at least as diverse as those of their successors, and there is no immediately obvious difference between the subject-matter and approach of the Prize-winning books of the 1970s and those of the 2000s.



Sir Michael Howard

History Prize winner in the first year of award
(1972)

© Sir Michael Howard



Lord Jenkins

Winner of the *oeuvre* prize in 2002

Roy Harris Jenkins, Baron Jenkins of Hillhead,
by Bernard Lee ('Bern') Schwartz, 2 June 1977

© National Portrait Gallery, London

THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE

The list is revealing nonetheless. Of the 78 winning books, only three relate to extra-European history and, significantly, they were all published during the last decade, when historians were becoming more conscious of globalization. Thirty-three are on British or Irish history, reflecting the enduring concern with national history, and 42 on the history of Europe, a reminder of the way in which British historians have established themselves as leading authorities on the history of Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Russia, whereas historians on the continent have tended to stick within their own national boundaries.

When the 78 books are classified by genre, we find that 22 are either biographies or studies of major political figures in the context of their time; this would have pleased Sir John Plumb, a biographer himself, who was keen that historical biography should be fully eligible for the awards. Thirty-three others appear to be primarily concerned with the traditional subject-matter of history – politics, war and international relations. Of the rest, nine could be regarded as works of social history, eight as cultural history, four as economic and business history and three each as architectural history, intellectual history, and the history of religion. But this classification is very arbitrary and many of the titles defy the categories altogether. The whole point of works like Dr Theodore Zeldin's *France 1848-1945* or Professor Sir Rees Davies's history of medieval Wales is that they embrace many different dimensions of human experience.

In terms of periodization, the pattern is clearer. Medieval history is modestly represented with just under a dozen titles and ancient history has only two. It is undoubtedly harder to write fluent books about periods for which the evidence is scanty and hard to interpret. Fifty-three of the prize-winning books relate to the period after 1700 and at least 27 are concerned with the history of the twentieth century. Of those, no fewer than 14 relate in whole or part to World War II. Three have been won for works relating to Winston Churchill and two for comparative studies of Hitler and Stalin. Other prizes have gone to studies of the history of Prussia, the origins of the War,

THE PRIZE-WINNERS AND THEIR BOOKS

the fall of France, the subsequent German occupation, the grand strategy of the Allies, the psychology of troops in combat, Hitler's career, the economics of the Nazi regime, the battle of Stalingrad and the empire of Mussolini. If we add to these the works on the Eastern Front in World War I and on the Russian Revolution, it would be tempting to conclude that the Wolfson judges have a penchant for books on twentieth-century violence and warfare. In fact, they have merely reflected a trend in contemporary scholarship and popular taste. The two World Wars, the Holocaust and the history of Soviet Russia dominate secondary school syllabuses; in bookshops the History section is largely given over to works on these topics; and their study absorbs the energy of a large proportion of the most talented historians. It is easy to lament this unbalanced concentration on the most recent past, but the history of the modern era has been so horrific that it is not difficult to understand the continuing attempt to explain it.

The list of Prize-winning books is also revealing about the pattern of history publishing. The publishers whose books have won most Wolfson History Prizes are Oxford University Press (18), Penguin Press under its Viking and Allen Lane imprints (14), Yale University Press (nine), Weidenfeld & Nicolson (six), Cambridge University Press and HarperCollins (four each), Macmillan/PanMacmillan (three) and Chatto & Windus, Faber & Faber and Heinemann (two each). These figures conceal a remarkable trend. Yale did not win the Prize until 1984 and Penguin not until 1994. If we counted only the prizes of the last 20 years we would find Penguin coming top with 14, followed by Oxford with eight and Yale with five. If we took only the last ten years, Penguin's lead would appear even more decisive, with a score of nine, as against Oxford's four and Yale's three. Free from a university press's duty to bring out research monographs, the Penguin Press has concentrated in recent years on ambitious, large-scale reinterpretations of long periods and major topics, directed at both students and intelligent general readers. When such books draw extensively upon the authors' own research and are written with clarity and verve, they become strong candidates for a Wolfson History

THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE

Prize. Fortunately for British publishing, the ability to produce such books is not confined to Penguin, and the publishers and imprints figuring on the list of winners at one time or another include Atlantic Books, Jonathan Cape, Cassell, Eyre & Spottiswoode, Granta, HMSO, Hodder & Stoughton, Hutchinson, Longmans, Methuen, Profile Books, Routledge & Kegan Paul, Thames & Hudson and Unwin Hyman. While some of these have disappeared, new ones have arisen and the judges continue to be cheered by the large number of publishers who take on serious works of history.

Publicity

In 1972 the Trustees' solicitor Martin Paisner issued a warning: 'Special care should be taken in the matter of all announcements made via the press: the Booker prizes have suffered from over-enthusiastic coverage at the outset followed by continual changes of direction and policy on the part of the promoters. The moral is perhaps for the Trustees to refrain from indulgence in grandiose statements of objective and to set a modest target which will acquire lustre in the manner in which the awards are conferred.' In accordance with this advice, the attitude of the Trustees to publicity has always been cautious. Their belief in doing good by stealth has stemmed from a conviction that a charity ought not to spend much money on public relations. The Foundation publishes an impressive Annual Report, but has traditionally not sought to draw attention to the huge scale of its charitable work. In the case of the Wolfson History Prize, publicity has been confined to a modest announcement in the press and usually (though not always) a presentation ceremony for invited guests.

In 1972 the first Wolfson History Prize awards were presented by Sir Isaiah Berlin at a luncheon in the Dorchester Hotel attended by Trustees, friends of the Wolfson family and many distinguished historians and literati. This pattern of a lunch, with over 100 guests and a speech by a well-known public figure, was followed for the next ten years, though when the Dorchester changed ownership the venue was moved first to the Savoy and then to

PUBLICITY



Guests at the Wolfson History Prize reception at Claridge's in 2003

© Grainge Photography

THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE

Claridge's. The speakers were Lord Bullock, Roy Jenkins, the Countess of Longford, Lord Goodman, Lord Briggs, Dame Veronica Wedgwood, Harold Macmillan, Lord (R.A.) Butler, Edward Heath and Lord Carrington. Lord Wolfson, however, found the formal luncheons expensive and emotionally taxing. He worried a great deal about who was to be invited ('only Lady Longford, NOT the Earl') and how they were to be seated ('Sir Leonard Wolfson is anxious that Mr [Kenneth] Rose is put at a table with high-powered people'). Sir John Plumb was strict about the instructions to be given to the Prize-winners ('I think you should tell Sir Nikolaus [Pevsner] that his speech had better be nearer five than ten minutes. I have certainly told [Norman] Stone that he will have to make a gracious little speech and a witty one').

In 1983 the presentation ceremony was scaled down to a dinner for only 30 people. The practice of inviting distinguished public figures to present the prizes was dropped and so, in 1989, was the holding of any ceremony at all. Instead, the Prize-winners simply received a cheque in the post. This, thought Alan Bullock, would be a relief to the Prize-winners, some of whom, he believed, found it an ordeal to have to make a speech at the ceremony. In 1993 there was an unsuccessful experiment with a low-key drinks reception at the British Academy, and only in 1997 was the present pattern established of a champagne reception in Claridge's for between 100-150 people, with the judges taking it in turn to present the Prizes.

The receptions have been followed by a press release and a short paragraph in one or two newspapers announcing the names of the Prize-winners. In addition, Kenneth Rose used regularly to report the awards in his 'Albany' column in the *Sunday Telegraph*. But for a prize of such distinction and monetary value, the publicity has been minimal. After the otherwise highly successful opening luncheon in 1972, the *Guardian* commented that 'the Wolfson Trustees have a long way to catch up in the gentle art of attracting publicity, explaining themselves and avoiding clashes with other awards' (the luncheon had been on the same day as the Booker Prize presentation). Plumb agreed: 'the major weakness has been the publicity and I hope to give that greater attention.'

PUBLICITY

Nowadays, literary editors are regularly invited to the Prize-giving receptions, but they seldom attend. On one occasion photographs of the Prize-winners appeared in the *Sunday Times*, but Lord Wolfson rejected the subsequent offer by a picture agency to take photos at the awards ceremony. The Prize's low public profile has attracted repeated comment. In 1986 Ivon Asquith of the Oxford University Press wrote to the Foundation, suggesting that more publicity would help the cause of history writing in general and the sale of prize-winning books in particular. He pointed out that, whereas the Booker Prize had done much for the reading and sales of contemporary fiction, there was no communication between the Wolfson Foundation and the publishers of Prize-winning history books, and the press coverage was minimal. The Prize, he noted, was financially equivalent to the Booker; the publicity for it about one five-hundredth of the Booker's.

Lists of Britain's literary prizes often fail to mention the Wolfson awards. In 1995 a columnist in the *Observer* remarked that 'if you've never heard of the Wolfson History Prizes, which have been awarded by the Wolfson Foundation to fizzy, distinguished and accessible historians ever since 1972 . . . that's because the Foundation's generosity is exceeded only by its desire to remain out of sight. So whisperingly modest is it that a press release has been issued announcing this year's winners without saying who decided them or how much the prizes are worth.' Even those who had heard of it were under-informed: reporting William Dalrymple's success in 2003 with *White Mughals*, the *Scotsman* explained that it was an award for Britain's best History book, 'judged by the Fellows of All Souls'. In 2004, when an aggrieved literary agent wrote to lament the lack of publicity for her author's prize, it was explained to her that the History Prize represented only £25,000 - £30,000 of the Foundation's annual distribution of some £30 million and that there was a limited amount of time which could be devoted to so small an aspect of its work; moreover the office would be unable to cope with the greater volume of queries which would flow in as a result of greater publicity. The obvious way of fomenting public interest is to publish a shortlist in advance of the judges' decision. But this would create its own problems, and

THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE

the pros and cons of such a step continue to be discussed.

It thus remains the case that whereas the Man Booker Prize, despite (or perhaps because of) its inconsistency of standards, periodic rows and frequently controversial decisions, is a household name, the Wolfson History Prize, for all its unquestioned authority and impartiality, is little known outside the historical profession. When each year the Wolfson Trustees read of the quarrels which beset other literary prizes, of the second-guessing of judges' decisions by trouble-making journalists, of embarrassing speeches by prize-winners, and of disgruntled judges flouncing out to give interviews to the *Evening Standard*, they were able to draw some consolation from the knowledge that their History Prize was continuing along a sedate and dignified course.

What has the Prize achieved?

It is impossible to say how far a Wolfson History Prize helps to sell a history book, though publishers invariably cite the award on the jacket when the work reprints. For the Prize-winners themselves, the Wolfson History Prizes have often been a crucial career-changing form of recognition and encouragement. The files are full of their letters of gratitude for the Foundation's munificence. In 1973 Professor W.L. Warren, author of *Henry II*, wrote from Queen's University Belfast to say how greatly his award had been welcomed in strife-torn Northern Ireland: it was 'a boost to morale and a public recognition that it was possible to maintain academic standards even in adverse circumstances'. In 1981 Patricia Williams of the Cambridge University Press wrote to say that 'to publishers and authors of academic books the Wolfson Awards for History are a really marvellous source of encouragement, particularly at a time when many authors feel insecure in their jobs and many publishing editors have a hard time in convincing their firms' accountants to allow them to continue to produce distinguished historical monographs'. Some Prize-winners have used the money to finance their researches. Others have contributed to good causes: Barbara Harvey gave some of her prize to

WHAT HAS THE PRIZE ACHIEVED?

buy books on medieval history for Somerville College; Professor Paul Kennedy shared his between Newcastle University and his old secondary school, St Cuthbert's Grammar School, in recognition of the teachers who had first awakened his interest in history; and Sir Alistair Horne used the money to top up the Fellowship he had founded at St Antony's College, Oxford.

In the historical profession the Prize is a firmly established accolade and those who receive it often gain additional forms of public recognition. Three Wolfson History Prize-winners have become members of the Order of Merit, one a Lady of the Garter, three Companions of Honour and one a Justice of the Supreme Court. Five have been created life peers, two made Dames, 16 knighted and 51 elected Fellows of the British Academy. Many have won other literary prizes, sometimes for the same book which gained them a Wolfson award.

In 2005 the highly experienced commentator Anthony Howard wrote in *The Times* that 'whatever the publicity fanfare that may attend the Booker, the Whitbread – and now the Orange – literary prizes, the Wolfson History Prize has always struck me as the most distinguished piece of recognition that any serious writer can capture . . . On pedigree grounds alone, it leaves all other literary prizes looking remarkably transient.' The same sentiment was expressed by Jonathan Sumption QC, when he wrote in June 2010 to thank the new Chairman of the Wolfson Trustees, Janet Wolfson de Botton, for his Prize for volume III of his history of the Hundred Years War: 'I want to take my hat off to the Trust for its contribution over four decades to raising the profile of serious history for a wider readership. One has only to look down the list of past winners to see how well it has succeeded.'

The Wolfson History Prize is a public statement of the importance of historical writing for the cultural life of any civilized society. Of course, it does not reward all forms of historical literature. The progress of historical knowledge and understanding requires scholars to edit texts, compose learned articles, and publish highly specialised monographs, none of them activities

THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE

eligible for the Wolfson History Prize. But the culmination of historical writing remains a major work of narrative, analysis or interpretation, carefully composed and memorably expressed. This is the kind of book which the Wolfson History Prize seeks to recognise. It is founded on the belief that at a time when many academic disciplines have retreated into a private hermetic world of their own, with a subject matter and a language intelligible only to initiates, history remains a subject in which it is still possible to command simultaneously the interest of both professional scholars and the intelligent reading public. This does not mean popularity for popularity's sake. The judges of the Wolfson History Prize attach importance to a book's accessibility, but they see no need for authors to compromise scholarly standards. The list of Prize-winning books and authors over the past 40 years suggests that this conviction is well-founded.



The current judges

Sir David Cannadine, Professor Julia Smith, Sir Keith Thomas and Professor Richard Evans

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WINNERS OF THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZES 1972-2012

(The dates are those of the year in which the Prize was presented. Until 1987 they were awarded at the end of the competition year. Thereafter they were awarded in the following year).

1972

Professor (Sir) Michael Howard
Grand Strategy, vol. IV
(HMSO) (£5,000)

Mr (Sir) Keith Thomas
Religion and the Decline of Magic
(Weidenfeld & Nicolson) (£3,000)

1973

Dr (Dame) Frances Yates
The Rosicrucian Enlightenment
(Routledge & Kegan Paul) (£5,000)

Professor W.L. Warren
Henry II
(Eyre & Spottiswoode) (£3,000)

1974

Professor (Sir) Moses Finley
The Ancient Economy
(Chatto & Windus) (£5,000)

Dr Theodore Zeldin
France 1848-1945: Ambition, Love & Politics
(Oxford University Press) (£3,000)

1975

Lady (Frances) Donaldson
Edward VIII
(Weidenfeld & Nicolson) (£4,000)

Professor (Dame) Olwen Hufton
The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France
(Oxford University Press) (£4,000)

THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE

- 1976** Professor Sir Nikolaus Pevsner
A History of Building Types
(Thames & Hudson) (£5,000)
- Dr (Professor) Norman Stone
The Eastern Front 1914-1917
(Hodder & Stoughton) (£4,000)
- 1977** Mr Denis Mack Smith
Mussolini's Roman Empire
(Longman & Co) (£5,000)
- Mr (Professor) Simon Schama
*Patriots and Liberators: Revolution in the
Netherlands 1780-1813*
(Collins) (£4,000)
- 1978** Mr H.M. (Sir Howard) Colvin
Notable contribution to the writing of history
(£7,000)
- Mr (Sir) Alistair Horne
A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962
(Macmillan) (£5,000)
- 1979** Professor Richard Cobb
Death in Paris
(Oxford University Press) (£5,000)
- Lady (Mary) Soames
Clementine Churchill
(Cassell) (£3,500)

WINNERS OF THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE

Professor Quentin Skinner
The Foundations of Modern Political Thought
(Cambridge University Press) (£3,500)

1980 Professor F.S.L. Lyons
Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890-1939
(Oxford University Press) (£7,000)

Dr (Professor) Robert Evans
The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy 1550-1700
(Oxford University Press) (£5,000)

1981 Reverend Professor (Sir) Owen Chadwick
Notable contribution to the writing of history
(£7,000)

Dr (Professor) John Burrow
A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past
(Cambridge University Press) (£6,000)

1982 Professor Sir Steven Runciman
Notable contribution to the writing of history
(£8,000)

Professor John McManners
Death and the Enlightenment
(Oxford University Press) (£5,000)

1983 Dr (Sir) Martin Gilbert
Winston S. Churchill, vol. VI: Finest Hour
(Heinemann) (£7,500)

THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE

Mr Kenneth Rose
King George V
(Weidenfeld & Nicolson) (£7,500)

1984 Lady Antonia Fraser
The Weaker Vessel: Woman's Lot in Seventeenth-Century England
(Weidenfeld & Nicolson) (£6,000)

Dr Maurice Keen
Chivalry
(Yale University Press) (£6,000)

1985 Mr John Grigg
Lloyd George: From Peace to War 1912-1916
(Methuen) (£7,000)

Dr Richard Davenport-Hines
Dudley Docker: The Life and Times of a Trade Warrior
(Cambridge University Press) (£7,000)

1986 Professor J.H. (Sir John) Elliott
The Count-Duke of Olivares: The Statesman in an Age of Decline
(Yale University Press) (£7,500)

Professor Jonathan Israel
European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism 1550-1750
(Oxford University Press) (£7,500)

1987 Professor R.R. (Sir Rees) Davies
Conquest, Coexistence, and Change: Wales 1063-1415
(Oxford University Press) (£7,500)

WINNERS OF THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE

Dr John Pemble
The Mediterranean Passion
(Oxford University Press) (£7,500)

1989 Professor Paul Kennedy
The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers
(Unwin Hyman) (£7,500)

Professor Richard Evans
Death in Hamburg
(Oxford University Press) (£7,500)

1990 Professor Donald Cameron Watt
How War Came
(William Heinemann) (£10,000)

Mr Richard Fletcher
The Quest for El Cid
(Hutchinson) (£10,000)

1991 Professor Colin Platt
The Architecture of Medieval Britain
(Yale University Press) (£10,000)

1992 Lord Bullock
Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives
(HarperCollins) (£15,000)

Professor John Bossy
Giordano Bruno and the Embassy Affair
(Yale University Press) (£10,000)

THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE

- 1993** Professor Lord Skidelsky
*John Maynard Keynes, vol. 2:
the Economist as Saviour 1920-1937*
(Pan Macmillan) (£15,000)
- Professor Linda Colley
Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837
(Yale University Press) (£5,000)
- 1994** Miss Barbara Harvey
Living and Dying in England 1100-1540
(Oxford University Press) (£10,000)
- Professor Robert Bartlett
*The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and
Cultural Change 950-1350*
(Allen Lane) (£5,000)
- 1995** Ms Fiona MacCarthy
William Morris: A Life for Our Time
(Faber and Faber) (£10,000)
- Professor John C.G. Röhl
*The Kaiser and his Court: Wilhelm II and the
Government of Germany*
(Cambridge University Press) (£10,000)
- 1996** Professor H.G.C. Matthew
Gladstone 1875-1898
(Oxford University Press) (£15,000)
- 1997** Professor Eric J. Hobsbawm
For his distinguished contribution to the writing of history
(£15,000)

WINNERS OF THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE

Dr (Professor) Orlando Figes
A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891-1924
(Jonathan Cape) (£15,000)

1998 Professor John Brewer
*The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture
in the Eighteenth Century*
(HarperCollins) (£10,000)

Baroness Hollis of Heigham
Jennie Lee: A Life
(Oxford University Press) (£10,000)

1999 Mr Antony Beevor
Stalingrad
(Viking) (£10,000)

Dr (Professor) Amanda Vickery
*The Gentleman's Daughter:
Women's Lives in Georgian England*
(Yale University Press) (£10,000)

2000 Lord Briggs
For his distinguished contribution to the writing of history
(£15,000)

Mr Andrew Roberts
Salisbury: Victorian Titan
(Weidenfeld & Nicolson) (£12,500)

Professor Joanna Bourke
An Intimate History of Killing
(Granta Books) (£10,000)

THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE

- 2001** Professor (Sir) Ian Kershaw
Hitler 1936-1945: Nemesis
(Allen Lane) (£20,000)
- Professor Mark Mazower
The Balkans
(Weidenfeld & Nicolson) (£7,500)
- Professor Roy Porter
Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World
(Allen Lane) (£7,500)
- 2002** Lord Jenkins of Hillhead
For his distinguished contribution to the writing of history
(£15,000)
- Professor (Sir) Barry Cunliffe
Facing the Ocean: The Atlantic and its Peoples 8000 BC-AD1500
(Oxford University Press) (£10,000)
- Professor Jerry White
London in the Twentieth Century: A City and its People
(Viking) (£10,000)
- 2003** Professor Robert Gildea
Marianne in Chains: In Search of the German Occupation 1940-1945
(Macmillan) (£15,000)
- Mr William Dalrymple
White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India
(HarperCollins) (£10,000)

WINNERS OF THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE

- 2004** Professor (Sir) Diarmaid MacCulloch
Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700
(Allen Lane) (£10,000)
- Dr Frances Harris
*Transformations of Love: The Friendship of John Evelyn
and Margaret Godolphin*
(Oxford University Press) (£7,500)
- Professor Julian Jackson
The Fall of France: The Nazi Invasion of 1940
(Oxford University Press) (£7,500)
- 2005** Professor (Sir) Christopher Bayly
For his distinguished contribution to the writing of history
(£15,000)
- Professor David Reynolds
*In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and
Writing the Second World War*
(Allen Lane) (£12,500)
- Professor Richard Overy
The Dictators: Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia
(Allen Lane) (£10,000)
- 2006** Professor Evelyn Welch
*Shopping in the Renaissance: Consumer Cultures in Italy
1400-1600*
(Yale University Press) (£15,000)
- Professor Christopher Wickham
*Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the
Mediterranean 400-800*
(Oxford University Press) (£15,000)

THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE

- 2007** Dr (Professor) Adam Tooze
The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy
(Allen Lane) (£15,000)
- Dr (Professor) Christopher Clark
Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia 1600-1947
(Allen Lane) (£10,000)
- Professor Vic Gatrell
City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London
(Atlantic Books) (£10,000)
- 2008** Dr John Darwin
After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire since 1405
(Allen Lane) (£20,000)
- (Dr) Rosemary Hill
God's Architect: Pugin and the Building of Romantic Britain
(Allen Lane) (£20,000)
- 2009** Professor Mary Beard
Pompeii: The Life of a Roman Town
(Profile Books) (£20,000)
- Professor Margaret McGowan
Dance in the Renaissance: European Fashion, French Obsession
(Yale University Press) (£20,000)

WINNERS OF THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE

- 2010** Mr Jonathan (Lord) Sumption
The Hundred Years War, vol. III: Divided Houses
(Faber & Faber) (£20,000)
- Professor Dominic Lieven
Russia Against Napoleon: The Battle for Europe
1807 to 1814
(Allen Lane) (£20,000)
- 2011** Dr (Professor) Ruth Harris
The Man on Devil's Island: Alfred Dreyfus and the
Affair that Divided France
(Allen Lane) (£20,000)
- Professor Nicholas Thomas
Islanders: The Pacific in the Age of Empire
(Yale University Press) (£20,000)
- 2012** Mrs Susie Harries
Nikolaus Pevsner: The Life
(Chatto & Windus) (£25,000)
- Professor Alexandra Walsham
The Reformation of the Landscape
(Oxford University Press) (£25,000)

WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE JUDGES 1972-2012

(The dates are those of the year in which the Prize was awarded.)

1972	Trustees:	Sir Isaiah Berlin Professor Asa Briggs Sir Alan Bullock Professor J.H. Plumb Sir George Weidenfeld
	Judges:	Sir Alan Bullock Professor J.H. Plumb Professor Asa Briggs
1973	Judges:	Sir Alan Bullock Professor J.H. Plumb Professor Asa Briggs Professor J.H. Elliott Dame Veronica Wedgwood
1974	Judges:	Sir Alan Bullock Professor J.H. Plumb Professor Asa Briggs The Rt Hon Roy Jenkins MP Professor A.G. Dickens
1975	Judges:	Sir Alan Bullock Professor J.H. Plumb Professor Asa Briggs The Countess of Longford Mr Keith Thomas
1976	Judges:	Lord Bullock Professor J.H. Plumb Lord Briggs The Countess of Longford Mr Keith Thomas

WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE JUDGES

1977-1979	Judges:	Lord Bullock Professor J.H. Plumb Lord Briggs Mr Keith Thomas Mr Michael Ratcliffe
1980	Judges:	Lord Bullock Professor J.H. Plumb Lord Briggs Mr Keith Thomas
1981	Judges:	Lord Bullock Professor J.H. Plumb Lord Briggs Mr Keith Thomas Mr John Gross
1982-1984	Judges:	Lord Bullock Professor Sir John Plumb Lord Briggs Mr Keith Thomas
1985	Judges:	Lord Briggs Professor Sir John Plumb Mr Keith Thomas Mr Kenneth Rose Professor Michael Crawford
1986	Judges:	Lord Briggs Sir John Plumb Mr Keith Thomas Mr Kenneth Rose

THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE

1987	Judges:	Lord Bullock Lord Briggs Mr Keith Thomas Mr Kenneth Rose
1989-1991	Judges:	Lord Bullock Lord Briggs Sir Keith Thomas Mr Kenneth Rose
1992	Judges:	Lord Briggs Sir Keith Thomas Mr Kenneth Rose
1993-1995	Judges:	Lord Briggs Sir Keith Thomas Mr Kenneth Rose Professor Averil Cameron
1996	Judges:	Sir Keith Thomas Mr Kenneth Rose Professor Averil Cameron Professor Richard Evans
1997-2001	Judges:	Sir Keith Thomas Professor Averil Cameron Professor Richard Evans Professor Lord Skidelsky
2002-2006	Judges:	Sir Keith Thomas Professor Averil Cameron Professor Richard Evans Professor David Cannadine

WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE JUDGES

2007-2009	Judges:	Sir Keith Thomas Professor Dame Averil Cameron Professor Richard Evans Professor David Cannadine
2010	Judges:	Sir Keith Thomas Professor Dame Averil Cameron Professor Richard Evans Professor Sir David Cannadine
2011-2012	Judges:	Sir Keith Thomas Professor Richard Evans Professor Sir David Cannadine Professor Julia Smith



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