A History of the Department of Experimental Psychology

including a few personal reminiscences 1949-1993

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The last, and only, recorded history of the Department was written in 1950 by R.C. Oldfield, then a Lecturer (later the Professor) in Oxford, "Psychology in Oxford, 1898-1949," published in The Bulletin of the British Psychological Society, 1950.** I joined the Institute of Experimental Psychology as Professor in 1967, but as it happens I was also here as a graduate student in 1949-50, with Carolus Oldfield as my supervisor, and so I have a link to the end of that earlier period. With the help of others, especially Peter Coughlin and Michel Treisman, I have filled in some of the gaps between 1950 and 1967 as best I can. I have not included the names of any research students beyond this period. They rapidly increased in number so that by the 1980s they totalled about 60 at any time (with just about as many research grants) in the Department.

The Department (it was the Institute of Experimental Psychology from its inception in 1936 until it moved into its new building in 1971/2 when it became the Department) was housed in the old St. Giles School building at 34 Banbury Road, subsequently enhanced by small hut in 1947. The hut had eight small rooms, one of which I occupied, next door to a Lecturer, Brian Foss (who left for Bedford College, Univ. of London in 1951, becoming its professor there and later when it moved to Royal Holloway), and opposite that of a Lecturer, Bernard Babington-Smith. Other rooms were occupied by three other research students, Clifford Jackson, John

**See also his "Experiment in Psychology - a Centenary and an Outlook," an address delivered at the Cardiff Meeting of the British Association in 1960, a copy of which is lodged in the Departmental Library.
Langdon, and Ronnie Benton. Oliver Zangwill, Lecturer and "Assistant Director" was in another room. Stuart Sutherland and Tony Deutsch were undergraduate students when I arrived, and both later became Lecturers in the Institute (Sutherland, 1959-65; Deutsch, 1951-60). There was a small workshop in the hut run by Dick Shrimpton and his assistant, Peter Coughlin, who joined as a 15-year-old lad in 1950. (Peter eventually became the Department’s Chief Principal Technician in 1966). Peter has reminded me that the workshop was ordered to cease using any noise-generating machinery on Thursday afternoons, because that was when Bernard Babington-Smith, whose room abutted onto the workshop, gave his tutorials. (I had to endure, politely, BBS’s offering of coffee made by him according to his recommended recipe, which meant brewing it the day before, leaving it in a cold stone jug overnight, and reheating it the next morning.). The final room was occupied by Anne Bachelor, a secretary. As it happened, she volunteered to be a subject for a perception experiment of mine on figural after-affects, in the course of which she was discovered to have remarkable after-imagery. It became the topic of an unscrupulous Daily Express article by Chapman Pincher, syndicated by newspapers throughout the Empire, and formed the basis of a research article of my own ("An unusual case of after-imagery following fixation of an 'imaginary' visual pattern." Quart. J. exp. Psychol., 1950, 2, 170-175.).

I have learned from Michel Treisman that there was also a nearby house that provided additional space for the Institute from the mid-1950s or earlier (Michael had a room there when he started as a graduate student in 1956). Permission for the use of the house for University purposes was given only reluctantly by the City unless it retained some residential accommodation. And so a flat was carved out, which was occupied by Roy Davis.
The old school building housed other senior members, together with Rosie Williams the Departmental Secretary, and Janet-Burnett-Brown, the Professor's secretary, and an upstairs flat for Dick Shrimpton, the workshop manager. Senior members of the Department during the interval between 1949 and my tenureship in 1967 were Harry Kay (Lecturer, 1951-59) who eventually became Vice Chancellor of Exeter University; Roy Davis (Junior Lecturer, 1955-61, subsequently Professor at Reading), Michael Argyle (Lecturer, 1952-69, then Reader, 1969-92), Nick Mackintosh, 1964-67, much later becoming Professor at Cambridge, Oliver Zangwill, (Asst. Director, 1945-52, senior Lecturer, 1948-52, when he left to become Professor at Cambridge), J. von Wright (Junior Lecturer, 1954-5). The Wilde Reader (see below) also had an office in the main building (Brian Farrell). Notable visiting academics attached to the Institute were George Miller (Fulbright Visiting Professor, 1963-4) and James Gibson (Fulbright Visiting Professor and his wife, Eleanor Gibson, 1955-56).

The Professor was George Humphrey, the holder of the first Chair of Psychology, who came back to Oxford - where he had studied classics - from Queen's University, Ontario, holding the posts there of Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Department of Psychology. Humphrey later told me that he first heard of his election to the Oxford Chair in 1947, by reading of it in the London Times. He held it until he retired in 1956, when he was succeeded by Carolus Oldfield.

The building was woefully inadequate by current standards, or even by the standards of the time. There was a single lecture-room/practical classroom, an office cum library (in which the bust of William McDougall was placed - I am not certain whether it was the original white plaster cast made by Angus McDougall who was, I believe, a relative, or the bronze bust made from the cast). There was also an office
occupied by the Wilde Reader, Brian Farrell, and offices occupied by Carolus Oldfield and Oliver Zangwill. The small office of the Professor, George Humphrey (appointed in 1947) was in an outside room which, as Oldfield aptly describes, "...in earlier days subserved a quite different and more fundamental purpose." ......... The attached photos and drawings (made some years ago Jeremy Broad, the staff photographer, and Liz Darley, histological research assistant) convey the atmospherics of the place. I am grateful for help by Anita Butterworth, Jeremy’s former assistant and his successor, in reproducing these photos, as well as those of (some but not all) former staff members during the 1949-1993 period.

The bust of McDougall calls to mind an incident in 1950 when I was the only person in the Institute on a Saturday morning. The doorbell rang and a visitor announced himself as J.B. Rhine - already famous for psychical research interests - who said he had been a student of McDougall’s at Duke University. He wished to visit and pay homage at the academic home of his mentor. I took Rhine on a necessarily very restricted tour of the place, leaving the Library to the end where McDougall’s bust was installed. When we entered, we saw that the bust was irreverently bedecked with a halo of rubber tubing - later revealed to have been placed there by Tony Deutsch. Rhine stormed out of the building absolutely incensed. Whether psychical urges prompted Deutsch to mar the occasion of an unannounced visit remains unknown.

As recounted in Oldfield’s historical account, there was no formal undergraduate teaching of psychology in any Honour School, but a Diploma course was established in 1935/6. Psychology in the more familiar guise came in 1947 with the establishment of PPP (Psychology, Physiology, and Philosophy) (see below). Candidates could read Psychology with either of other two P’s. (Some years later,
the degrees of freedom were further enhanced by allowing any two of the three P's).

Given limited space and staff, the General Board imposed a quota of 24 in 1947 on student numbers reading P.P.P. As the Department expanded this was lifted, but the pressure from student applications increased to such an extent that we had to ask for a quota, larger than the original, to be re-introduced temporarily until the new building could accommodate them in the practical classrooms. The Banbury Road building had to make way for a major development for Engineering in the mid-1950s. The demolition included not only the Institute, but also the small corner grocery/sweet shop on the near corner of Keble Road, a very welcome and popular convenience (especially in the late 1940s when chocolate rationing was coming to an end). Later, the pub on the other corner, The Pheasant, was also demolished. The Institute moved to 1 South Parks Road, opposite the Dyson Perrins Chemistry building, and next door to Rhodes House. It was a typical Oxford brick Victorian building, on three levels, somewhat more capacious than 34 Banbury Road, and included all staff offices as well as a small common room with a coffee machine. The generous garden also allowed space for a prefab workshop, and some research holdings. In 1967/8, a more substantial prefab was erected for primate research; the hut was not sufficient in itself for that research, which depended on a collaboration with the Department of Physiology. Also, outstations were established in two of the terrace houses on Keble Road, one for rodent research (led principally by Jeffery Gray, with a highly skilled technician, Martin Brown), and the other for social psychology (led by Michael Argyle). Also, connected with my move to Oxford, additional technicians posts were established, and a Research Officership post for my colleague, Alan Cowey, was created. David Vowles had already succeeded in getting a post for Administrator established, which could be filled soon after I took up
office in 1967.

My office was in a corner on the top floor, with Judith Shingler, the secretary in the next room with her varying population of dogs, usually averaging around three. The access was by a steep staircase. I wondered how we would make our escape in the event of a fire, and raised the matter with the University Surveyor. The result, in those refreshingly flexible days prior to the Health and Safety Executive constraints, was that a stout knotted rope was attached to my window. I often wondered how two relatively unathletic persons plus the dogs would fare during a real emergency. Also, internal telephones were not yet available, and so high tech surfaced in the form of an inter-com between me, Alan Cowey, and Judith.

A useful socialization experiment took place in the tiny “kitchen/common room.” A coffee machine was installed, which was programmed to become free every weekday from 11 to 11:30 a.m. The queue stretched far outside the room! The income from the machine for coffee purchased out of hours more than compensated for the free drink. It may have been our carefree attitude about such matters that prompted a request from the member of the University Chest a few years later, in our new building, who asked to see me and our Administrator. I asked why he wanted to see us, and he replied in hushed tones that he could not discuss such a matter over the phone. Suitably warned, with account books to hand, our Administrator (Richard Dennett) and I met the gentleman, who asked us, “Did you know that you had an unexplained £20 surplus in your coffee account?”! Such were the beginnings of experience with bureaucratic accountability.

Psychology had already joined the priority queue for a more suitable building. Progress occurred because a plan for a high-rise tower for Zoology (whose newly elected Professor, John Pringle from Cambridge, had been promised 80,000 sq. feet
of space for his Department) on the edge of the University Park was justifiably rejected by the City planners and by University Congregation. In the mid-1960s a new site was found on the corner of South Parks Road and St. Cross Road, which was large enough to house both the 80,000 sq. feet Zoology and a somewhat more modest allocation (roughly half) for Psychology in a building deliberately designed to be low-rise. Thereby ensued a somewhat uncertain relationship with the Zoology Department that subsequently went from very tense to cordial, depending on local circumstances and on who occupied its posts of Professor and/or Administrator. The Professor of Architecture at Cambridge, Sir Leslie Martin, was appointed as its architect. He had already designed the new Law Library on St. Cross Road, which was reckoned to be a success. The plan for the building had been approved prior to my arrival in Oxford - indeed it was one of the reasons affecting my move - and the foundations were already being dug when I arrived in 1967.

Sir Leslie was an ardent devotee of the low-rise, and he advanced an ambitious proposal for an inter-connecting network of buildings that would join ours, to be serviced by an underground road that would have its origin in the basement of our building. The plan never was approved, but the beginning of the underground route did materialize, and it was part of a larger area designated for car-parking. Even in 1967 car-parking was a vexed issue, and shortly after I arrived colleagues asked if the allocation of space in the underground car-park-to-be could be settled. Accordingly, one of my first encounters with Prof. Pringle occurred, when his response was, “but that is the Zoology car-parking space. You must have your own somewhere!” As we did not, I wrote to the Registrar, Sir Folliot Sandford, who shortly afterwards wrote to Pringle (with a copy to me) that as the area concerned was University property, unless a pro rata allocation between the two departments could
be agreed, Council had it mind to open the space to the whole University. Needless to say, an agreed allocation ensued! That was but one example of a relationship that went from direct conflict with Professor Pringle over various matters - especially of space - but to warm cooperation when we both agreed on other matters (e.g., the designated use of the building that eventually became Linacre College across the road from us). With Prof. Pringle's successor, Sir Richard Southwood (later the Vice Chancellor), however, relationships were invariably cordial, at least at the professorial level if not always at the Administrators' level, with frequent meetings of a small "Joint Users Committee," which reviewed conference applications in shared facilities, technical problems (a mysterious electrical "earth leak" was a perennial topic), and other matters. One such item had lasting consequences: after visits to other University buildings, e.g., Birmingham, a design for wall-rails to take inter-changeable hanging cupboards, shelving, poster boards, and other furniture was drawn up by our Department. Alas, the Zoology Administrator, Helen Statham, insisted on having their own design, with the result that no furniture could be exchanged between Departments. As it happened, the fact that we had, by joint agreement, installed our own design of hanging rails and attachments in Niko Tinbergen's laboratory space, served to our advantage over a later disagreement (see below).

Sir Leslie contributed to the adornment of the building in other less official ways. We had asked for his advice on artwork, including statues. Because of his personal contact with Barbara Hepworth, the Department was offered one of her sculptures on permanent loan, situated in the Departmental Library. Also, an open competition was advertised by the Department for a large canvas with a psychological theme to be displayed in any entrance hall or other suitable location. Several entries were made, and the winning sketch in 1975 was enlarged by the
artist, John McKinney, into a large mural which was sited on the ground floor. The Department also created an Arts Committee, consisting of Marianne Martin, my wife, and others from time to time, including Marianne Teuber, Raye Parsons (Young), Ruth Tulving, Ruth Campbell - all of whom, or their spouses, were professional artists or art historians - and the corridors took on a distinctly more colourful appearance.

The new building meant that dedicated facilities could be designed for the Department's particular needs. In particular, a large and very well-equipped mechanical workshop was put into service, with Roger Barnes in charge, with Nick Castle, Ray Bennett, Derek Clifton, and Brian Coyle on the staff, all superb craftsmen. I can recall several meetings of the Departmental Committee (one of two standing committees, the other being the Ethics Committee, both with elected as well as ex-officio members) in which we debated the niceties of various milling machines, drill presses, or welding gear in terms of cost and quality, or the advantages of particular photo lamps, or video editing equipment. I was (and still am) a strong believer in having independent facilities - engineering, photographic, electronic, reprographic, animal facilities, etc. - if there is sufficient demand to justify them, so that there could be a close interaction between those doing the job and those who knew what the job was meant to satisfy. I had experienced the unfortunate effects of centralization for such facilities on grounds of cost in other places. I can also recall a request for funding that came to the Departmental Committee for a "word processor," sometime in the late 1960s or early 1970s. The Committee turned it down - the device could not be more than a gimmicky toy, with no future! We did, however, approve requests for typewriters.

Departmental space is always the driving force of the territorial imperative. As
one of the occupants of a large building, retirements became the focus of expansionist aspirations. Fortunately there were some "pre-nuptial" agreements, so to speak, that smoothed such transitions. The distinguished Nobel Laureate Dorothy Hodgkin was assigned space in one wing of D level of the psychology block on agreement that it should revert to psychology on her retirement. It did, and very smoothly. During her occupancy from 1972-77 we enjoyed the benefit of a truly gracious and fascinating presence. A lovely copy of a portrait of her by Bryan Organ now adorns that corridor.

The retirement of Niko Tinbergen, also a Nobel Laureate, from Zoology was less harmonious, but not of his doing. On the contrary, he asked for office space in our Department when he retired, which was delightedly offered and its occupancy cherished. But there had been an agreement that his laboratory space - which comprised a wing on the psychology side of the building - should revert to psychology on his retirement, and accordingly we furnished all of it out of our budget. On his retirement, however, Prof. Pringle argued resolutely that the space should stay with Zoology, notwithstanding the earlier understanding. Accordingly, I took the matter to the Registrar, and Council decided to appoint an ad hoc judiciary committee consisting of three or four science professors - I cannot remember their names or the size of the committee. Much time was spent by both departments because the Committee naturally asked for details of history of space usage and occupancy, together with future plans and projections, but after several months of deliberation the Committee came down in favour of the original agreement that the space should be ceded to psychology, and finally Jeffery Gray was able to move in from Keble Road.

Returning to the pre-zoology era, staff membership had some continuity from the end of Oldfield's History, in the person of Michael Argyle, who held a Lectureship
in social psychology (later a reader) and Brian Farrell, the Wide Reader. When I arrived in 1967, in addition to these two, other staff members included Jeffrey Gray, David McFarland, Marcel Kinsbourne (who left the following year on sabbatical to America, never to return), Anne Treisman, who had been a research assistant to Prof. Oldfield until 1966 (spending 1966-67 at Bell Laboratories), appointed to a Lectureship in 1968, and David Vowles, who also left the two years later to a chair in Edinburgh. Treisman left in a Lectureship in the Institute in 1967 to take up the Chair at University of Reading, returning to Oxford in 1972, David Vowles, who had been acting Head in the Institute, with great effect and dedication in one-year period, when many plans for the building and other matters were in the offing, between my arrival and Carolus Oldfield’s departure for an MRC Unit in Edinburgh in 1966.

A record of staff movements, appointments and other activities during the period of my tenureship as Professor, from 1967 to 1993, is as follows

1967: inspection of dug-out pit for foundations of new building. 13 sub-committees formed to start preparing a possible syllabus from the Experimental Psychology Honour School (see below).

1968: approval of a mock-up of a prototypical room for the new building, with special attention to electrical screening for sensitive recordings, design of furniture, hanging rails for shelving and cupboards, etc. Mike Cullen joined our Department from Zoology. Anne Treisman and Patrick Rabbitt were appointed as Lecturers. Michael Treisman left for chair in Reading, to return to Oxford in 1972. Nick Macintosh left for Dalhousie University in Canada.

Our first administrator, Richard Dennett, was appointed. The Institute or the Department had never had the luxury of such a post, which soon became an absolute necessity. Our advertisement drew a very large number of applications, many from highly placed persons, such as retired ex-governors of British colonies, army officers. After the rigours of interviewing such persons, our committee made a firm exclusion rule: no one above the rank of colonel was to be considered for the post! Richard Dennett, a retired Naval Lieutenant Commander was an ideal appointee. He had been born in Egypt (Khartoum) and his main hobby was reading and reciting Arabic poetry. He soon became in demand as a tutor in Arabic. He was an amusing, devoted, efficient and - above all - a very humane administrator.

1969: David Vowles left for Edinburgh. Enough of the new building had been completed, on the second floor (above scaffolding, etc.) to allow the opening of the Practical Laboratories. The adjacent seminar room was completed and the first speakers attended, among them B.F. Skinner and Noam Chomsky.
The first outside a conference was held (the European Brain and Behaviour Society), coincident with the first flood in the building when the water supply was turned on for the first time.

1970: Move of the department from 1 South Parks to the new building. The Experimental Psychology School was inaugurated.

1971: The PPP Prelims was revised, the first of many such revisions.

1972: The building was formally opened by Sir Alan Hodgkin, the President of the Royal Society. Physical sharing of the building with Zoology started its evolution at a course. Nancy Waugh joined the Department. The final phase of negotiations reached over the Watts Chair, and Jerry Bruner was appointed.

1973: Bernard Babington-Smith and Richard Dennett retired. Bruce Henning, Edmund Rolls were appointed as Lecturers, and Ken Ford as administrator. The building received an award from the Concrete Association.

1974: Gordon Claridge arrived as Lecturer. The Clinical M.Sc. Course, started so optimistically, approached its closure. A major flood occurred in Lecture Room B (the smaller of the two ancillary lecture theatres in the basement of the building).

1975: Donald Broadbent, former head of the MRC Applied Psychology Unit in Cambridge, arrived with his coworker and wife, Margaret, with external MRC support. Also, Donald’s Deputy Director of the MRC Cambridge Unit, R. Conrad, moved to Oxford with MRC support. David McFarlane moved to a Readership (?......) in Zoology.

1976: Dick Passingham joined as Lecturer. Mike Cullen left for chair in Australia.

1977: Jos Jaspars resigned his chair in Holland to take up a Lectureship in the Department.

1978: The MRC took over support for LW for a two-year period dedicated to research. Pat Rabbitt and Michael Argyle took over the chairmanship of the Department on a rotating arrangement for three years. (The take-over for LW was initiated by the MRC itself, who suggested a period of five years, which the University declined - no professor had ever been given more than two years leave, including Lord Cherwell, Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government during World War II. In the end, the University accepted the offer from the MRC for two years, with LW relieved of headship for a further year, but continuing to give his lectures throughout the three years of leave). Pat Rabbitt and Michael Argyle took over the chairmanship of the Department on a rotating arrangement for three years.

1979: Alan Allport and Lynden Eaves arrived as Lecturer. Anne Treisman and Jerry Bruner left.

1980: Peter Bryant took up the Watts Chair. Brian Farrell retired from the Wilde Readership after 32 years.

1981: Lynden Eaves left, and Paul Harris joined as Lecturer.

1982: Pat Rabbitt left for chair in Durham.

1983: Peter McLeod arrived as Lecturer. Nick Rawlins was appointed as a "new blood Lecturer", a new scheme, alas, never repeated.

1984: Brian Rogers arrived as a Lecturer and Dave Popplewell as our first Computer Officer. Jeffery Gray left for chair at the Institute of Psychiatry in London.

1985: Ruth Campbell joined as Lecturer. Burt Rosner was appointed as a Visiting Professor. Burt, husband of Nancy Waugh, had been Chair of the Dept. of Psychology at the Univ. of Pennsylvania, and gave sage advice to the Oxford Department over many years. This year also saw the tragic and sudden death of Jos
Jaspars.

1986: Marianne Martin joined as Lecturer.
1987: Start of two years of discussions leading to revision of Honour Schools.
1988: Partial destruction of building to satisfy pyrophobic demands, despite the building having passed fire regulations when built.
1992: Michael Argyle retired after 40 years, a remarkable and highly productive career in which he was the longest-serving member of the Department, following his appointment as Lecturer in the Institute in 1952. Liz Styles took up the start of temporary Lectureship. Nancy Waugh and Donald Broadbent retired, and Kim Plunkett was appointed. The General Board required revision of Prelims and Honour Schools.
1993: Nick Emler arrived from Dundee. The grievous death of Donald Broadbent occurred.

An (incomplete) set of portraits of former staff members and senior visitors, during the 1949-93 period is appended. (It does not include those still in office in 1993.)

It will be noted that there was quite a lot of movement, both in and out of the Department, with new appointments arriving and staff members leaving for advancement elsewhere. The Department was also fortunate in being enlarged by “boot-strapping” and by attached externally supported posts. For example, one notable and important addition came via Kits van Heijningen, the Master of St. Cross College, a newly established Oxford graduate college. He also simultaneously held a Readership in the Department of Pathology, where he had a research collaboration with Jane Mellonby. He had tried to move his Readership post from Pathology to our Department. That did not work, but fortunately Jane Mellonby was able to join the Psychology Department with an M.R.C. grant and also attracted continuing support by her college, St. Hilda’s. She has remained in the Department well beyond the period of this review conducting her research on neurochemistry and behaviour.

Also, after Alan Cowey finished his 5-year stint as Henry Head Research Fellow of the Royal Society in 1973, his support on the Oxford academic scale was generously
taken over by the M.R.C. on an ad hoc basis, and he remained in the Department later acquiring the title of Professor. This was an important gift to the Department in retaining a very active and productive researcher, even though the post itself was not actually an established one and would terminate with his retirement. Susanna Millar joined the Institute as a part-time Lecturer in the late 1960s, and then remained in the Department with various sources of support. Cathy Parks returned to Oxford (where she had been an M.Sc. student on the clinical course) to pursue research with the support of the Health and Safety Executive. Olivera Petrovich joined in 1980 on external support, and Ann Dowker in 1996 with British Academy support. All remained at least until 1993. All of these "attached" persons remained actively engaged in invaluable tutorial and/or lecturing activities and supervising of D.Phil students, aside from pursuing their own research.

A project also would have added substantially via the "boot-strapping" route was a proposal for a new M.Sc. Clinical Psychology Course, under the joint auspices of the University and the NHS. The idea emerged out of discussions between some of us in the Department, especially Jeffrey Gray, in the early 1970s and May Davidson, the Chief Area Clinical Psychologist in the Oxford Area Health Authority. May had long been keen on making Oxford a leading centre for training clinical psychologists, and had provisional approval from the B.P.S. for the structure and teaching strength for the course. She was realistically optimistic that a post could be created by the NHS for a Lectureship in the Department to run the course, to which Gordon Claridge was ultimately appointed in 1974 (combined with a tutorial fellowship at Magdalen College). A tenured post for Elizabeth Warrington, a leading neuropsychologist at the National Hospital, was also proposed for teaching neuropsychology on the course. Another leading academic neuropsychologist, Tim
Shallice from U.C.L. applied successfully for a vacant lectureship in the Department. We had, therefore, the core of a development, combined with already existing strength in the Department, that could have allowed Oxford to play a leading role in the newly growing field of cognitive neuroscience. Unfortunately, the matter became very highly politicised, especially among some territorial contenders in Clinical Neurology and the NHS Department of Neurology, which were themselves rather badly split internally over neuropsychological ambitions - neurology would have been one of the clinical "placements" for students on the course. (The difficulty was, in fact, part of the larger scene in U.K. neuropsychology, which was fraught with reverberating conflicts surrounding territorial ambitions in this increasingly popular field, especially in London and Cambridge.). Tim Shallice resigned his lectureship shortly after arriving in Oxford, expressing deep disapproval of the local scene in his letter of resignation, and Elizabeth Warrington withdrew her interest. And so, very sadly, although the course did make a halting start for a few years, it never became firmly established given the political scene and the Faculty Board withdrew its support but, happily, with Gordon Claridge remaining as a Lecturer in the Department.

More than 15 years later, around 1988, the situation was ripe for a positive development that was to have importance for the future of inter-disciplinary research in the neurosciences.. The M.R.C. announced a new policy of creating a small number of interdisciplinary research centres in the U.K. Research in Oxford in individual departments had been carried out in relative isolation from each other and hence with minimal benefit from collaboration and sharing of expertise. After preliminary discussions with Dai Rees, the Secretary of the M.R.C. by Alan Cowey and myself, meetings took place in Oxford of an ad hoc steering committee consisting of several University neuroscientists, together with Heads of Departments of
Psychology, Physiology, Pharmacology, Anatomy, and Neurology. These discussions culminated in an application to the M.R.C. for an Interdisciplinary Research Centre in Brain and Behaviour (I.R.C.) covering a broad range of research projects outlined in considerable detail. After much deliberation and correspondence, the M.R.C. approved the application, with the first phase starting in 1990 and with a budget of £2.1 million spread more than seven years. Psychology was at the very heart of the Centre (and, fortunately, was also the recipient of the overheads!), with Alan Cowey as the Director of the I.R.C. The development was also the fore-runner of an application soon afterwards to the McDonnell-Pew Foundation in St. Louis for a Centre of Cognitive Neuroscience in Oxford, to be held in conjunction with the I.R.C. That, too, was approved - the only Centre outside of North America - with Colin Blakemore as Director. These developments were important for the future of a wide-range of research activities in Oxford. The influence, in fact, went well beyond Oxford because of the popular annual Autumn Schools in Cognitive Neuroscience organized by Edmund Rolls, under the joint auspices of the M.R.C. and the I.R.C. Networks grants were also awarded by the Centre for collaboration between scientists in Oxford, the U.K., and Europe. The developments put Oxford at the leading edge of research developments in cognitive neuroscience, in which Psychology Department was one of the principal leaders.

The period between 1985 and 1991 was relatively calm in terms of staff movements, but it was also a period of consolidation and remarkable productivity. It was also a period when Research Councils were much freer and flexible with innovative support. In 1992 the I.S.S. published the impact factors (based on citations of papers published in the preceding five years) of all of psychology departments in the world, and we appeared in third place tied with Princeton, the only
U.K. Department to appear in the top 50, and ahead of Harvard, Yale, Stanford, Berkeley, San Diego, Chicago, etc. In fact, when I calculated our I.S.S. impact factor to the third decimal place Oxford was actually just ahead of Princeton. In semi-jocular style I wrote to I.S.S. in Philadelphia pointing this out, and supposed that they must have had some Princeton persons on their staff because the printed list also placed Princeton ahead of Oxford. I asserted that P came after O. I received a reply in similar vein, in which it was explained that P comes before U - the University of Oxford. We fared very well, also, in various other surveys, e.g., one by the T.H.E.S. in which we were placed first both in teaching and research in the U.K.. Such judgments in surveys happened often enough that we actually came to believe them - in any event, they generated much collective pride. The Department contained four Fellows of the Royal Society (Broadbent, Bryant, Cowey, and LW) during the 1980/90s, a higher ratio per size of staff than in many other Oxford science departments, and three more Fellows joined as attached members of the Department (Niko Tinbergen, David Whitteridge, J. Z. Young).

The Department attracted a steady stream of lively and distinguished visitors who contributed greatly to its intellectual life. In the early 1970s both Noam Chomsky and B.F. Skinner visited to give talks, Skinner returning for a further visit as Herbert Spencer Lecturer in 1973. Hans-Lukas Teuber was the Eastman Visiting Professor in 1971/2, and gave a notable series of lectures. Endel Tuving came as a Commonwealth Visiting Professor for the academic year of 1977/78, accompanied by his wife, Ruth, a professional artist, some of whose works were displayed in the Department. Karl Pribram, my old mentor, was a frequent visitor, as was his former student and my former co-worker, Mortimer Mishkin. George Mandler and his wife Jean had two sabbatical stays in the Department in 1971/2 and 1978. A frequent
visitor during summer months was the social psychologist, Solomon Asch, whom I had known as one of my teachers as an undergraduate at Swarthmore College. J. Z. Young asked to join the Department after his retirement in 1974, and interacted enthusiastically with staff and students alike. His artist wife, Raye Parsons was active in the Department activities, with some of her paintings placed on display. Niko Tinbergen also moved to this Department when he retired from Zoology, as did David Whitteridge when he retired from the Chair of Physiology in 1979. Whitteridge carried out important research on cortical microcircuity during that period, in collaboration with Kevin Martin and Rodney Douglas.

The work by the Department cited covered a rather broad spectrum, from basic neuroscience to cognition, to social psychology, to developmental psychology to neuropsychology, to motor skills and aspects of applied psychology, and visual and auditory perception. In fact, as I pointed out at a retirement ceremony with the Vice Chancellor present, this world-class standing was achieved with the poorest staff-student ratio of any psychology department in the U.K., and indeed one of the poorest of any science department in Oxford.

PPP and the single honour school: In 1933, the Wilde Reader in Mental Philosophy, William Brown, wrote in the Oxford Magazine despairingly that "psychology has encountered more difficulty in breaking away and finding its own level than in any other University in the world except Oxford, psychology may be taken as a separate subject, and examinations are set in that subject." Prior to 1936, Brown wrote, "at Oxford the only way a student can show his knowledge of psychology is indirectly in some of the ‘Greats papers - and he does so at his peril."

As Carolus Oldfield noted in a letter to me in 1970, he thought the explanation for the option in Greats in the 1880s or 90s “must be that in those days enthusiastic Greats
tutors could get their own hobbies into the optional papers without much difficulty and someone - I can't imagine who - must have read Fechner and Wundt, etc. and decided that this was an offbeat ploy sufficiently naughty to be worthy of Oxford."

William Brown battled hard in the 1930s to get Oxford to create an Institute of Experimental Psychology without success until, without warning, one of his clients in 1935, Mrs. Hugh Watts (see attached photo in Appendices), donated £10,000 to the University to establish such an Institute. Her letter and cheque arrived with only the name of a London hotel, lacking legal instructions or any other return address. But it apparently prompted the University to act, establishing an Institute the following year. Indeed, the University generously allowed her gift to remain for miscellaneous expenditure by the Institute. Some of it was used, for example, to fund the 50th Anniversary celebrations. A diploma course was started soon afterwards, in 1936, but ended shortly because of the War.

After the War, there was a series of lively debates in Congregation, leading eventually to the establishment of P.P.P. in 1947. It was still thought, perhaps, that psychology on its own was too risky, but could be safeguarded by its joining with Philosophy and Physiology (candidates could offer any two of the three Ps, although the great majority offered psychology as one of these). This was, and continues to be a successful School, but Oxford was still anomalous at the time in not allowing students who wished to specialize to offer psychology on its own.

I had noted this before taking up my post in 1967, and wrote to the Registrar whether there had been any expression of interest or any prospect for a single honour school. To my surprise a huge parcel arrived for me in Cambridge containing a massive collection of Psychology sub-Faculty minutes in which that matter had been addressed, debated, and recommended. In 1967 a concerted effort was made
to design such a school, and the sub-Faculty minutes of June 1968 records the establishment of 13 committees to draft the syllabuses (one steering one, and one for each of the 12 proposed papers). There also started a period of rather intense diplomatic efforts with members of the General Board, and a rather tense presentation to the sub-Faculty of Philosophy, rightly identified as the source of likely opposition. In the end, formal approval was secured, and the Honour School of Experimental Psychology was inaugurated in 1970, coinciding with the first teaching to take place in the new building. The papers of the new school were deliberately designed so as to allow for the formation of new joint honour schools with other subjects, such as anthropology, biology, physics, mathematics, zoology, etc., as in the style of joint papers combined with Philosophy. P.P.P. also continued, sharing some of the same papers. A convenient summary of the make-up of both Schools is appended in a booklet prepared in the mid-1980s as a handout to interested student applicants. Revisions of detail occurred often, especially to Prelims, but broadly the pattern outlined in the booklet was stable from 1970 until my retirement in 1993. Important changes occurred later, but their description must form part of any future History.

Watts Chair: The traditional hierarchy at Oxford, especially in a science subject, was for there to be one imperial head of a department, the holder of the Chair. It came as a considerable surprise, but a delight, when we heard from the General Board in 1968 or 69 that it was minded to create a second chair in psychology. Various lobbying efforts had been made, but with little expectation of success. The Psychology Board was asked to suggest a suitable title for the chair, and with stunning lack of originality the Board suggested that it should be called "The Second Chair of Psychology". Happily, the General Board found this to be quite
unacceptable, and referred the matter back. Whereupon the Board pursued the idea of naming it after the principal benefactor who can be said to have launched the Institute of Experimental Psychology, Mrs. Hugh Watts. As Mrs. Watts had been a client of William Brown, the Wilde Reader, it was necessary to find out if the family had any objection to the suggestion. Prof. Oldfield wrote in 1969 that he had no idea where the family were located, and similarly my letter to Sir Cyril Burt (who had been a student of Brown's) yielded a further blank. And so in 1970 an insertion was placed in the personal columns of *The London Times* to locate them. We succeeded in reaching some far-flung members. No objection was raised, indeed there was pleasure, and I believe that one member of the family attended the official opening of the building in 1972.

Jerry Bruner, of Harvard University, who had an illustrious reputation and held one of the top chairs of psychology in America, was approached to see if he might be interested in applying. He was, and came over for discussions with Vice Chancellor Alan Bullock and others. (I transported Bruner to his various appointments as a pillion passenger on the back of my moped, not realizing that it was illegal for him to be so chafféured without headgear.). Bruner made one stipulation that he thought might prove difficult - namely, if appointed, he would wish to sail his yacht across the Atlantic and to have a mooring for it somewhere in the Solent. No problem. It turned out that the Registrar came from a family of boat builders and could readily arrange a mooring. And so Bruner came to Oxford in 1972/3.

This probably having been Bruner's first career venture outside of Harvard, it cannot be claimed that he found Oxford as congenial as he or we wished. He found British Experimental Psychology Society somewhat narrow and said so trenchantly in a Herbert Spencer Lecture (but in which he made a few exceptions of some members
of the Oxford Department). But it was an important broadening appointment, taking a
component of the Department smartly in the direction of developmental psychology,
which was a major shift. Paul Harris was another outstanding staff member with
similar interests, who later went off to Harvard around 1998. Bruner left Oxford in
1980 to return to the New School in New York, and he was succeeded by another
developmental psychologist, Peter Bryant, a Lecturer in the Department, who still
held the Chair in 1993.

The Wilde Readership of Mental Philosophy: This post, created in 1898, long
antedates the formal introduction of psychology into Oxford. It was endowed by
Henry Wilde, a wealthy manufacturer of lightening rods. Indeed, Wilde insisted that
the post should be “exclusive of the methods of experimental psychology”, by which it
is likely he meant the Wundtian “atomistic” and “microscopic laboratories” in
Germany (to which, as it happens, William James was also ill-disposed). He
stipulated that the Reader should “study the human mind based on observation and
experiences as distinguished from Experimental Psychology.” The bequest, inscribed
in the University Statutes, contained the following “job description:”

“.....the Reader shall lecture from time to time on the illusions and
delusions which are incident to the human mind. He shall also lecture, as far as
may be practicable, on the psychology of the lower races of mankind, as
illustrated by the various fetish objects in the Anthropological Museum of the
University and other Museums.”

The Statutes, needless to say, were later changed. The first Reader was a
philosopher, William Stout, who remained for only five years. The second, also
recruited from Cambridge, was William McDougall, who simply refused to be bound
by the terms of the Readership and carried out experimental research on colour
vision, attention, motor skills, and mental testing (applied for military purposes during
World War I). He also wrote several highly influential textbooks over a wide range of
psychology, and was a major figure in the history of psychology. But he was unhappy at Oxford. For several years he was not a member of any college, and he had to beg and borrow laboratory space from other departments, especially Physiology. Wilde was incensed by McDougall’s experimental bent and tried, un成功fully, to have him fired. Having lost his borrowed laboratory space when he returned from World War I duties, he left Oxford embittered in 1920 to go to Harvard, (where, it is said, he was also critical of its plumbing). A year later he went to Duke University and became increasingly drawn into an interest in psychical research - one of his pupils was J.B. Rhine. (Bruner, who was an undergraduate at Duke, later told me that he has a special indebtedness to McDougall because he was in danger of being expelled for non-attendance at compulsory chapel services, and McDougall argued successfully for an exception to be made for this young student.)

McDougall’s successor was one of his students, William Brown, who had come through the “Greats” route (as did Cyril Burt and J.C. Flugel). He was a psychologist with clinical interests, was important in campaigning for the establishment of an Institute of Experimental Psychology (see above). At the end of the War, Brown retired from the Readership in 1946, and was soon afterwards succeeded by Brian Farrell.

With Farrell’s appointment the tradition became firmly established that the Reader should be attached to the Institute of Experimental Psychology, with formal membership of the sub-Faculty, even though the post itself was in the gift of the Lit. Hum. Faculty Board. Brian Farrell took his Departmental duties very seriously, both in his lectures and seminars and his participation on the sub-Faculty. He was succeeded by a gifted young philosopher, Gareth Evans (1981-85) whose premature death was a deep loss. The next Reader was Colin McGinn (1985-1990), a
philosopher who also had a psychology degree, but his stay was also short-lived with his translation to America. He was succeeded by Martin Davies (1993-2000), who took up office at the end of this historical period. If there is a future history written of the Department, it will record his departure and subsequent return to Oxford (in 2006), by which time the Readership had been elevated to a Chair.

Other archival sources have evaporated, alas, and collective memories fade very rapidly. But one notable archival record has been saved. In 1986 the Department decided to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Institute. A festive occasion took place, with jollifications in a hired marquee sited on the terrrace of Level C of the building. A rather more formal ceremony (programme attached), skilfully recorded on video tape by Rad Babic, one of the electronics technicians, took place at which various speakers participated, including the Vice Chancellor (Sir, later Lord, Patrick Neal), who gave a short but witty, congratulatory offering. One of the speakers, Marcus Gregory, was an Egyptian ex-student who had registered for the Diploma some 50 years earlier in the Institute. He later presented his book (Our Wonderful Psychoneural Systems, Oxford: MGM, 1996) to the Department as a memento of the occasion. The ex-President of St. John's College, Prof. John Mabbott, reflected on the debate going on amongst philosophers as to whether psychology could safely be taught to undergraduates before the war, with deep divisions between the "psychoanalytic" and the "frog" support groups. The latter won, it would appear, by default. Prof. Brian Foss, a former member of the Institute (194-51) reminisced amusingly about various events and characters during his period here, mimicking some of them all too realistically. Brian Farrell, the former Wilde Reader, gave a splendidly rich and supportive account of his early experiences and his role in the Institute. A major turning point for support for psychology, he argued,