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Edited by S. N. Broadberry and N. F. R. Crafts

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During the 1950s and 1960s, research on the prewar British economy was influenced strongly by ideas from Keynesian macroeconomics. After two decades of onslaught on Keynesian macroeconomics, it is important to reexamine this period of history, asking to what extent the Keynesian vision still offers useful insights into the behaviour of the economy at this time. The essays in this volume make use of advances in time series analysis as well as developments in macroeconomics to answer this question. They show that a modified Keynesian approach continues to offer useful insights into this period of history. In particular, in the face of wage and price rigidities, shocks to aggregate demand are seen as an important source of fluctuations in real output and unemployment. Furthermore, a rigid attachment to simple rules rather than the exercise of discretion in policy making is seen to have had serious costs in the disturbed environment of the interwar period.

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University of Warwick



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For Alec Ford

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Foreword

When it became known that Alec Ford was to retire from his Chair in the Department of Economics at the University of Warwick after twenty-five years, his colleagues and friends decided to hold a Festschrift in his honour. The papers in this volume were presented on that occasion in July 1989 and are a tribute to his academic work. That the occasion was funded by the University of Warwick was a tribute to his contribution to the growth and success of that University both in the heady days of its inception and, perhaps more importantly, during the financial cuts of the eighties. The papers here can be categorised as both ‘quantitative’ and ‘non-quantitative’, their topics as ‘economics’ and as ‘economic history’. And that is as it should be, for Alec Ford was both an economist and an economic historian who used the developing techniques of his profession as tools and not as shibboleths.

Alec is an old friend and I count it an honour to join in this celebration. We first met in 1966 when, interviewing me for a post in economic history at Warwick, he first railroaded me with Fogel and then gave me a hard time over flexible exchange rates. Rather to my surprise we became colleagues and it was then that I discovered the cheerful, gentle, ever-helpful, private man that is Alec Ford. His presence in a new, rapidly growing, Department of Economics was a boon; unflappable and totally reliable he became a bulwark around which washed the troubled tides of dissent and experiment, of disappointment and excitement. In those early years at Warwick he was as much concerned with the establishment of the University as with the Department and his subject. The Student’s Union – and the Athletics Union in particular – benefited from his help and he was rewarded, almost uniquely, with an Honorary Life Membership. The reputation he gained at that time was to stand him in good stead during the troubles that beset Warwick in the late sixties and early seventies.

When Alec joined Leicester’s Wyggeston Grammar School in 1934 at the age of eight, few would have thought him a potential Professor of Economics at Warwick. His parents, both teachers, set him on a Classical

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path but there were, perhaps, two auguries of the future. The first was his insistence on taking mathematics with classics for his Higher Schools Certificate, a blasphemy accomplished only with the connivance of his father who overcame the school's opposition by threatening an even greater sin, a transfer to science. The second was his paternal grandfather, a Suffolk blacksmith, whose unique skill in repairing reapers overcame the wrath of his farmer customers and allowed him to join Warwick's Joseph Arch in promoting the Agricultural Workers Union. At Wyggeston, Alec shone as both scholar and sportsman, he acquired a life-long love for rugby, set a school mile record that stood for ten years and won a Major Classical Scholarship to Wadham College, Oxford. The war intervened. Called to the colours in 1944, Alec served in the Middle East as a sergeant with the Royal Artillery (the fate of many economic historians, John Saville and Tom Kemp to name but two) until his demobilisation in 1947.

January 1948 saw him at Wadham, taking up his Classical Scholarship but after Classical Moderations in March 1949 he changed to philosophy, politics and economics. Part cause of this was some disillusion with ancient history and philosophy but a greater factor was his growing interest in economics, stimulated both by his reading of the *Economist* and by his service in the Royal Artillery. The khaki-clad Alec, to the intense delight of his classical senses, had served in Palestine, Egypt and Greece, but his joy at seeing the cradle of civilisation was severely tempered by the shock of the poverty and underdevelopment in which that world was now clad. And he had wanted to know why. None the less, a change of course at that stage brought problems, but Alec was encouraged by the knowledge that a previous Wyggeston pupil, Michael Parkin, had studied economics to become the school's first First and their first Professor. In the event, a still athletic Alec nimbly covered the field and, in the summer of 1951, scored a First in PPE, was awarded the Webb Medley Senior Scholarship for Research in Economics, and gained a Studentship of Nuffield College.

At Nuffield his choice of research topic was guided by Donald MacDougall with 'Why don't you look at gold?' and furthered by John Hicks' suggestion 'try South America, some funny things happened there'. The result was a thesis 'The gold standard and Argentina 1880–1914' rewarded with a DPhil in 1956 and with the publication of his *The Gold Standard 1880–1914. Britain and Argentina* by Oxford University Press in 1962. One result of this work was that although he considered himself an economist he developed a deep interest in economic history – and came to enjoy tackling historical problems and issues using economic analysis and quantitative methods, the latter a somewhat *avant-garde* approach at that time. This proved to be his life work, the gold standard led him to British overseas lending and the transfer problem, the trade cycle and economic

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development followed. His contribution to the Cambridge Economic History of Europe he believes, encapsulates his work – not least in its demonstration of the superiority of Keynes to the classics in explaining the world economy and capital flows in the period before 1914. He has also had a long-term interest in the development of quantitative methods in economic history. Whilst modestly describing himself as a ‘competent arithmetician’ he has been associated with the Quantitative Economic History workshop since its inception and used his position on the Economic History Section of the Social Science Research Council to push the development of quantitative methods in the hope that we might catch up with the Americans.

In 1953 he was appointed an Assistant Lecturer in Economics at the University College of Leicester, was promoted to Lecturer in 1956 and, in 1963, to Senior Lecturer in what had become the University. Leicester brought contact with Arthur Poole, Peter Donaldson and Harold Dyos, all of whom served to further enhance his interest in economic history. It had also provided experience of ‘all hands to the pumps’ teaching in a three-man economics department and of the problems of rapid growth in a new institution, all that was to stand him in good stead at Warwick. Appointed Reader in Economics at Warwick in 1965 with dewy-cheeked Professors Dick Sargent and Graham Pyatt, he was one of the five founders of a bright, bushy-tailed economics department devoted to the new quantitative approach to the discipline. Alec also found the opportunity to teach more economic history and to teach it to economists, offering in those first prospectuses – with but a single colleague – no less than eight economic history courses as well as a substantial contribution to core economics teaching. A personal chair followed in 1970, the result, I hasten to add, of the quality of his work rather than the quantity of his teaching! A measure of that quality is that no less than five current UK economic historians – Steve Broadberry, Ian Gazeley, Tim Hatton, Peter Howlett and John Redmond – are products of the Ford/Warwick stable, probably the largest group coming from a single source since the sixties. This achievement, in Nick Craft’s words, is ‘pretty amazing when you think of what has happened to Universities in general and to Economic History in particular’.

A new university, however, demanded more of its founders than the simple ploughing of an academic furrow. A university must be created and, to be successful, some of its academic staff must be people of imagination and administrative ability as well as devotees of their disciplines. Alec was one of those, and, after some jolly days helping to found the Student’s Union, the Rugby Club and the Athletics Union he was drawn into a more serious involvement. Voted a Pro-Vice Chancellor during Warwick’s crisis

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years of 1971–2, he was elected Chairman of the Department of Economics 1972–5. In 1977 he was again pressured into a Pro-Vice Chancellorship and Chairmanship of the Estimates and Grants Committee (the Treasury of the University) and was maintained in that position until 1989. That last was not a trivial matter, the University contrived to hold him in place for twelve years despite Charters and Statutes to the contrary by resort to some imaginative ‘early resignations’ and ‘re-elections’. It did so for good reason. Allocating scarce resources during a sustained assault by successive governments on university finances required not only allocative skills but, more importantly for the health of the institution, the creation of an atmosphere of trust, of a belief that the distribution is just. Alec Ford was the just man, the honest broker who, almost single handedly, created that trust. As one very senior source put it: ‘He succeeded where others might have failed, simply because he was known to be a thoroughly decent man.’ It would be hard to find a better testimonial.

But it must not be thought that Alec Ford is a man of righteous solemnity. He is not. He is a very cheerful chap, much given to swapping jokes, to Wadham gaudys, to supping ale of the right quality, a steam railway enthusiast, a railway photographer of great skill and even greater modesty, a family man, a kind man and a good colleague.

BRYAN H. SADLER