

Birmingham, 1968-

At Roy Wake's suggestion, in the revolutionary year of 1968 John followed Roy into the Inspectorate. At John's interview for the position, across the room he could discretely notice his old friend Shirley Williams, who was by then a junior Minister for Education.¹

On his departure from the school at the end of 1967 after his 15 years as Boys' housemaster, the *Bedales Chronicle*, raved: 'For many of us, John Slater is all that is worthwhile at Bedales, and indeed *is* Bedales as we should like to remember it.'²

In their history of Bedales, Roy Wake and Pennie Denton commented that:

John Slater developed his ideas in dealing with controversy and political education during his time at Bedales, and took them into national work, playing a key role in advising the then Secretary of State, now Lord Joseph, when the uproar over [the subjects of] Political Education and Peace Studies was at its height; he remains extremely active in all matters concerning the teaching of history and politics, as professor in the London Institute of Education.³

In January 1967, John's friend Shirley Williams' became Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science in charge of schools. In her view, the post-war generation of teachers was the most impressive ever to enter state schools in the UK many had already had responsible roles in the armed forces and had benefited from the wartime government's Further education and Training Programme, offering ex-servicemen and women the opportunity and means to go to university and paying for them to graduate.⁴

On 20 December 1967, at the Court at Buckingham Palace, Her Majesty in Council was pleased on a Representation of the Secretary of State for Education and Science⁵ to appoint John Gilmour SLATER, Esquire, B.A. (Oxon), with seventeen others, to be eighteen of Her Majesty's **Inspectors of Schools**. HMIs were appointed directly by the Crown, as they were independent, and not within the Civil Service, or responsible to the Minister.

When John arrived at the Inspectorate⁶ in January 1968, he was posted to Birmingham, so he bought and moved into a bright eighth-floor two-bedroom Modernist flat in **Highpoint**, Richmond Hill Road, Edgbaston. Its view was as if from a high-rise block somewhere in Federation period Kew, or Camberwell, perhaps the only place I'd seen abroad that could have been middle suburban Melbourne, surrounded by comfortable upper middle class Edwardian villas.

¹ Shirley Williams was a junior minister for Education and Science in 1967-69.

² *Bedales Chronicle*, 1967, p 10, photograph and p 264.

³ Roy Wake and Pennie Denton, *Bedales School: The first 100 years*, 1993.

⁴ Williams, Shirley, *Climbing the Bookshelves*, Virago, 2009, p 76.

⁵ Shirley Williams.

⁶ Denis Lawton & Peter Gordon, *HMI*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1987.



8th Floor, Highpoint, Edgbaston, Birmingham.

It was a twelve-storied building designed by J D H Madin & Partners Architects in 1960-62, within a garden setting, on the Calthorpe Estate in Edgbaston, a residential suburb without any commercial or residential development and with substantial red brick c1890-1910 houses free-standing in their own generous gardens.⁷ In the meantime, his parents had retired to the beautiful Cotswold village of Willersey, in Gloucestershire, which was an easy drive from John's Birmingham flat.

In Victoria, the inspectorate had long been discredited as merely auditing and assessing teacher-performance and brought down by its dual role of both management and quality control. It was finally abolished in 1983, when the Education Department was 'reorganised'.⁸

So, John served as an HMI from 1968-87, with national responsibility for History and Political Education, and laterly for initiating Peace Studies.

Sadly, in the 21st century, the UK Inspectorate seems to have also deteriorated to that kind of role. But in the 1960s and 70s, it was respected by government ministers, universities, teachers and unions alike, in not only maintaining standards, but bringing to teachers the latest ideas, techniques and sources, that were of direct use in their teaching. Later John recalled that the '...unions felt that the Inspectorate was on their side'.⁹

John and Roy planned a joint history course with British historians and the American Historical Society to be held at the California Institute of Technology at Pasadena. Later there was a return match, organised at York. There were further joint courses with Sweden, Germany and Ireland.

⁷ Nikolaus Pevsner and Alexandra Wedgewood, *Warwickshire, The Buildings of England*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth (1966) 1974, p 162.

⁸ David Halloway, *The Inspectors*; and Bill Hannan, *Curriculum Leadership*, Vol 7, Issue 24, 7 August 2009, Bill Hannan 'Obedient servants,' extract from his: Bill Hannan, *The Best Of Times: The Story Of The Great Secondary Schooling Expansion*, Lexis, 2009. ISBN 9780949873972. Refer: **Appendix 2**.

⁹ Dr John Slater, to Richard Peterson, 3 March 2010.

From the Shrewsbury Shire Hall on 17 March 1971 until 15 July 1992 in Sheffield, John delivered numerous lectures to audiences, generally of teachers on aspects of education.¹⁰

Roger Hennessy first came across John at a conference (they were many, and nearly interminable, he said) in 1972, held at York University. Roger takes up the story:

Whilst conferees milled about waiting for the lecture theatre doors to open, John sat on a grassy mound reading *The Times*. Although entirely friendly and approachable, [he was] not strongly gregarious. In my first year as an HMI John was virtually second-in-command to the then history Staff Inspector, Roy Wake (I think they had worked together at Bedales school). He was so obvious a choice as Roy's successor by virtue of age, ability and character that he was known, behind his back, as 'The Dauphin.' I never put this to him, but doubt that he would have minded given his cheerful self-deprecation and sense of humour.

I was seconded to him for a week to work with him in the Birmingham/Black Country area. Two features of that week stick in my memory[:]. One was that he had a room in his flat full of unopened cases and boxes. It was, he said, his way of not committing himself fully to 'Brum' and living in hope that he might return to his beloved London.

Secondly, he took me into a rough, tough inner urban girls school, virtually all black pupils. It was clearly well known to him; the head teacher valued his advice and he had an unerring, unsentimental eye for what went on there.

I mention this because his few critics [see below] liked to imagine that JGS was a man of the high table, mixing with grandees at conferences, well away from the front line. This was highly selective nonsense, far from the truth. John made quite sure that he kept strong links with the front line. After he moved to London he deliberately asked to be a general inspector for the Isle of Dogs, an area [then] of legendary toughness in the London Docks. As a Staff Inspector he had no need to do this, but he did and would quote to us that which he had seen first-hand. [John was] definitely a 'hands-on' man who knew what went on in the trenches.

His critics were few, mainly moaners who would have whinged in the Garden of Eden. None of them could criticise his integrity and humanity, the carping was generally about style or imagined defects. The vast majority of his team had strong respect for him, a boss who could listen, who was eminently kindly in his treatment of subordinates (significantly, he hated the word) and always had the time of day for individuals with, or without, problems.

Upon taking over the HMI History Committee and its responsibilities (it was numbered 10, in bureaucratic terms) JGS carried out long overdue reforms, mainly merging a complex of hierarchical sub-committees into one, single body. His dislike of sub-committees, which dealt with private and grammar schools, or primary schools only ran against his liberal grain. So, we all became one and it worked well.

He started a system of inspecting history in particular local authorities, so that we might compare provision in different parts of England. Since I emerged as his general bureaucratic factotum, I kept a record of these exercises. I was also charged with maintaining a corpus of data about examination entries. The division of labour worked well: JGS would, for example, address a meeting of teachers, at some point turning to me: 'Roger, what are the figures? I can never recall them' (Not entirely true, but it was a good pedagogic tactic, and a way of bringing in another member of his team).

¹⁰ 42 of John's untranscribed handwritten notes on these lectures survive, as do the more formal typescripts of other lectures, which are listed in the Bibliography, and are all held by me.

In personal terms, we generally agreed 'on about 90% of the important issues' as he put it. He used to make friendly observations about my being of the 'puritanical' left, and I am sure he was of a warmer liberal inclination that I could manage. But of his firm commitment and courage there was no doubt. He went canvassing at General Election time (strictly speaking contrary to the rules, or 'custom and practice' of the Civil Service) and he would speak up without hesitation at open meetings or privately, and notably 'in the faces' of our chief inspectors, particularly if he sensed an injustice lurking about.

Douglas Thorburn was an HMI in John's history team from 1983 until John retired. But he had known him before that, as a history teacher in ILEA (the Inner London Education Authority), working in an inner city, multiracial, comprehensive school. John inspected the history department Douglas ran there in the 1970s, and was warmly complimentary. The staff there needed this, feeling permanently beleaguered, navigating all sorts of professional and even political problems.

History was a crunch subject in a society that was having difficulty finding its way, and streets not far from the school were on fire during riots and racial disturbances. Their pedagogy was pretty radical in its focus on individual pupils' needs within a clear understanding of history's role in the curriculum. They were about as non-traditional as it got, not bothering much with 'chalk and talk.'

So, to have John, clearly extremely well informed and with a very broad understanding of the school system, telling them they were making a good job of it, was a relief. A few days later, Douglas received a handwritten letter from John repeating his praise and moral support. John continued to put before Douglas opportunities, and in 1983 he joined HMI. In the Inspectorate John went out of his way to deflate some of the prevailing Olympian pomposity.

So, Douglas said, John's personal qualities of sensitivity, perceptiveness and kindness meant a great deal to him at a difficult time. But Douglas saw that John's lasting and national significance lay in what Roger Hennessey has already said about his influence on history teaching. His leadership of the HMI History Committee was fundamental, not just as the means of exercising his individual influence but as a means of developing an active corps of colleagues with a broadly unified sense, leavened by lively intellectual debate – no small feat in HMI, an organisation generally notorious for the often eccentric individualism of its members.

Colleagues from other disciplines often told Douglas how envious they were of the History Committee because of its renowned intelligence and sense of purpose. John made the most of what his committee members had to offer, and added to it very substantially himself.

Douglas continued:

I saw John in action at countless talks, conferences and discussions. Always, he showed a wonderful grasp of what history should do for young people, and how this would benefit a diverse and demanding society. His support for the Schools History Project, a controversial development and potentially very vulnerable to political attempts to squash it, was crucial to its future and allowed it to become very influential indeed. He made teachers believe in themselves, he identified what it was that good teaching could achieve, and above all he warned political masters that history was, in the best sense, a subversive discipline undermining conveniently accepted "truths".

But although his liberalism could give this impression to dogmatists, he was certainly no relativist. I remember him confronting and vanquishing someone asserting a relativist position at a meeting in which strongly opposed viewpoints were flying across the room just by raising one eyebrow and uttering one word: "Auschwitz?" That calm, understated, and firm presence of mind won many a day.

His role in inspecting Political and Peace Education has already been well described. Of course, his dispassionate analysis of these developments and his refusal to come up with hostile conclusions made him an enemy of the Far Right. He was even vilified by a speaker at that year's national Conservative Party Conference asking with anger "who is this Mr Slater?" To most HMI of the time, used to comfortable anonymity, this would have provoked great anxiety and high blood pressure. John laughed it off and said he didn't mind so long as they didn't stop his pay!¹¹

In 1973, John's boss, Sheila Browne (b 1923, later head of Newnham College, Cambridge), the Senior Chief Inspector since 1974,¹² suggested that he, without either wife or children, could be seconded temporarily to UNESCO in **Paris** as part of a support team to an international commission on the development of education. Edgar Faure who was twice French Prime Minister chaired it, with distinguished representatives from Chile, the United States, Syria, Russia, Iran and the People's Republic of the Congo. Most of John's work was based Paris, in the support team with a Yugoslav boss, and a team consisting of an American, two Frenchmen and a North Vietnamese historian, who shared John's office with their Peruvian secretary. John lived in a flat in Montmartre.

The Commission team visited various parts of the world in small groups of three, accompanied and supported by one adviser. John's initial task was provide a set of briefs to support the visit of the Minister of Higher Education and Science for Iran, which was still ruled by its monarch, the Shah, and the Minister for Education for the People's Republic of the Congo, a very perceptive and well-read member of the Commission, on their observers' trip to Mexico and Cuba, where he met Fidel Castro, and to report on what they had observed and advised.¹³ It would be interesting to know if the Cuban government implemented any recommendations of their report.

Soon after John's return from Paris, Roy Wake was transferred to London and promoted to Chief Inspector and John succeeded him as a Staff Inspector, supported by a team of able colleagues, with a responsibility for the teaching of history in schools and further education, and to respond to questions put to them by ministers or, to prompt ministers with information HMI thought they ought to consider. This involved John having contact with successive UK Ministers for Education,¹⁴ including his friend Shirley Williams, the 'unmissable' Margaret Thatcher, the remarkable, intelligent, and 'open-minded' right-wing minister, the Conservative Sir Keith Joseph,¹⁵ and the 'I have just seen the future and it smirked,' Kenneth Baker.¹⁶

¹¹ Douglas Thorburn HMI, 13 Westwood Road, Beverley, East Yorkshire, HU17 8EN, email to Richard Peterson 17 November 2011.

¹² Auriol Stevens, 'Former don in a minfield,' Education Forum, *The Observer*, 30 November 1980.

¹³ Edgar Faure, et al, *Learning to Be, the World of Education, Today and Tomorrow*, UNESCO, Paris 1972, p 4. (Held).

¹⁴ Secretaries of State for Education & Science, whom John advised between 1968-87, were: Edward Short: 1968-70 (Labour), Margaret Thatcher: 1970-74 (Conservative), Reginald Prentice, 1974-75 (Labour), Fred Mulley, 1975-76 (Labour), Shirley Williams, 1976-79 (Labour), Mark Carlisle, 1979-81 (Conservative), Sir Keith Joseph, 1981-86 (Conservative), and Kenneth Baker, 1986-87 (Conservative). [*Wikipedia*, accessed 11 January 2011].

¹⁵ The Right Honourable **Sir Keith Joseph**, 2nd Baronet for most of his political career, became The Lord Joseph. Keith Sinjohn Joseph, Baron Joseph, CH, PC (1918-94) was a British barrister, politician and Conservative Cabinet Minister for three different Ministries. He is widely regarded as the 'power behind the throne' in the creation of 'Thatcherism.' He was Secretary of State for Education and Science from 11 September 1981 until 21 May 1986.

'He cared as much about the relief of poverty as the young Macmillan ever had, and when he came to Education, he turned what had been a mere cost-cutting exercise in higher education into a crusade to boost applied science and de-throne the set of studies that went by the fraudulent name of social science. He put his finger on the weaknesses in secondary education... he... altered the tone of the debate about education... and embraced the intellectual revolution of the right. He was transparently decent and devoid of conceit or rancour.' Noël Annan, *Our Age: Portrait of a Generation*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1990, p 555.

¹⁶ The quoted expressions are from John.

John's work also involved constant travel, supported by his able team, throughout the UK, including links with inspectorates in Scotland, Wales and in the troubled and dangerous Northern Ireland. Since 1977, the Inspectorate's pace of publications quickened and John's team also published pamphlets to support teachers. Ms Browne was proud that in her time, no HMI report had been suppressed by ministers. Most notably welcomed by teachers, and then published genuinely with pride, was *Teaching History in the Primary and Secondary Years: an HMI View*.¹⁷

Later, Roger Hennessey imagined: ¹⁸

From time to time, and far too rarely, JGS gave an illustrated talk on Art, usually that of the Renaissance. It was a masterpiece – he must have been an inspiring teacher. I used to rib him that he was wasted as an official, being one of nature's great teachers. He always shrugged this off, quite genuinely modest about his gift.

At the time there was a growing concern from various pressure groups at the increasing number of courses in **Political Education**, which it was assumed were not only largely taught by left-wing teachers, but also indoctrinated by them. So HMI was asked to assess the aims and methodology of existing courses in political education across the curriculum. Also, to satisfy, or dismiss assumptions, by the right wing, that Political Education was unavoidably in the hands of biased and indoctrinating left-wingers.

The Politics association pursued a 3-year study which revealed a low level of awareness of politics in schools. It was published as *Political Education and Political Literacy*, Longman, London £3.95, paperback. The report recommended that a Senior HMI be given responsibility for political education and John was appointed to this role. He had produced a paper entitled 'Political Competence,' for the *Inspectors' Bulletin*, April 1973.

HMI found no evidence to support this. The right wing were not pleased, and also very disconcerted by the support for Political Education and for **Peace Studies** (or 'Education for Peace,' the term John preferred), of Sir Keith Joseph.

Roger Hennessey explains:

John and I took a close interest in the emerging political education movement, an attempt to do something to prepare young people to be informed citizens rather than gawping ballot fodder. We wrote a joint paper¹⁹ on the subject for a departmental curriculum document. It had to be anonymous, but in a short period of unusual enlightenment, our chief allowed it to be published also in a collection of essays, with our names. We were both amused to see ourselves quoted in footnotes thereafter, 'Slater J G and Hennessey R A S', just like the real thing. The paper²⁰ gave us a chance to raise long overdue questions about... corporal punishment that still was (1979-ish) disfiguring English education, abolished by the likes of Prussia, even, in the early XIX century.

¹⁷ [John Slater], *Teaching History in the Primary and Secondary Years: an HMI View*, HMSO, London 1985, which John was largely responsible for the writing. (Held).

¹⁸ I warmly thank Roger Hennessey for his generous 2,500 words of reflections on John's professional life, initiated at a unique meeting with himself, Gina Alexander and John, over a splendid and generous luncheon at the Alexanders' in North Oxford, a month earlier and subsequently recorded in emails to me from Roger in November 2009.

¹⁹ Not yet identified.

²⁰ R A S Hennessey and J G Slater, 'Subject Appendix on Political Competence,' HMI, 22 February 1977.

There was some hesitation in high places about the initial publication of this paper, because of the usual panics about 'politicising' education. It so happened that whilst these delays were taking place that JGS met Shirley Williams, Secretary of State for Education & Science, in a lift at our HQ. They knew each other from Oxford days, and fell into conversation. SW asked JGS about his work and he observed that our paper on political education was effectively being 'suppressed'. This was a red rag to the liberal-minded Education Secretary. The paper was cleared for publication in days. In short, John was no mere theoretician when it came to political activity.

JGS persuaded our chiefs to set up a 'Political Education Working Party,' which studied and reported on the national scene, c1978-85. John moved on from this to '**Peace Education**' where, as he noted to us, his objective and calm judgements proved helpful to ministers being assailed about that which the Far Right thought was soft-centred anarchism; hopelessly wide of the mark. Still, in those dying years of the Cold War, paranoia stalked the land, and to question the efficacy of nuclear weapons was in itself perceived as treachery by excited minds. As ever, John was courageous and accurate in his reporting.

John also became very friendly with the young **Peter Mandelson** (now Lord Mandelson) and his then life partner Peter Ashby, a political researcher with the TUC (Trades Union Council, the British equivalent of Melbourne's Trades Hall), when in the late 1970s Mandelson, aged 25, was director of the British Youth Council. This is an organization that represents young people in the UK under 25, run by young people for young people. Its leaders have frequently gone on to important public roles, including cabinet positions. The BYC received public money to support its various activities and John sat on its board as representative of the Department of Education, to monitor the effectiveness and function of its expenditure and policies.

John has followed Peter's subsequent colourful, but remarkably influential and successful career with interest.²¹ Peter admired and was profoundly influenced by his grandfather, the British

²¹ **Peter Benjamin Mandelson**, Lord Mandelson, PC, Baron Mandelson of Foy (born 1953) is a British Labour politician often referred to 'Mandy' by the British media, who has been the First Secretary of State, effectively Deputy Prime Minister, from 5 June 2009 and Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (formerly the Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform) from 3 October 2008. Mandelson is regarded as one of the main players, with Tony Blair and Gordon Brown of the modern Labour Party and its re-branding as 'New Labour,' astoundingly resilient as an operator and at making himself indispensable to British Labour, firstly in Opposition, and even more so in government.

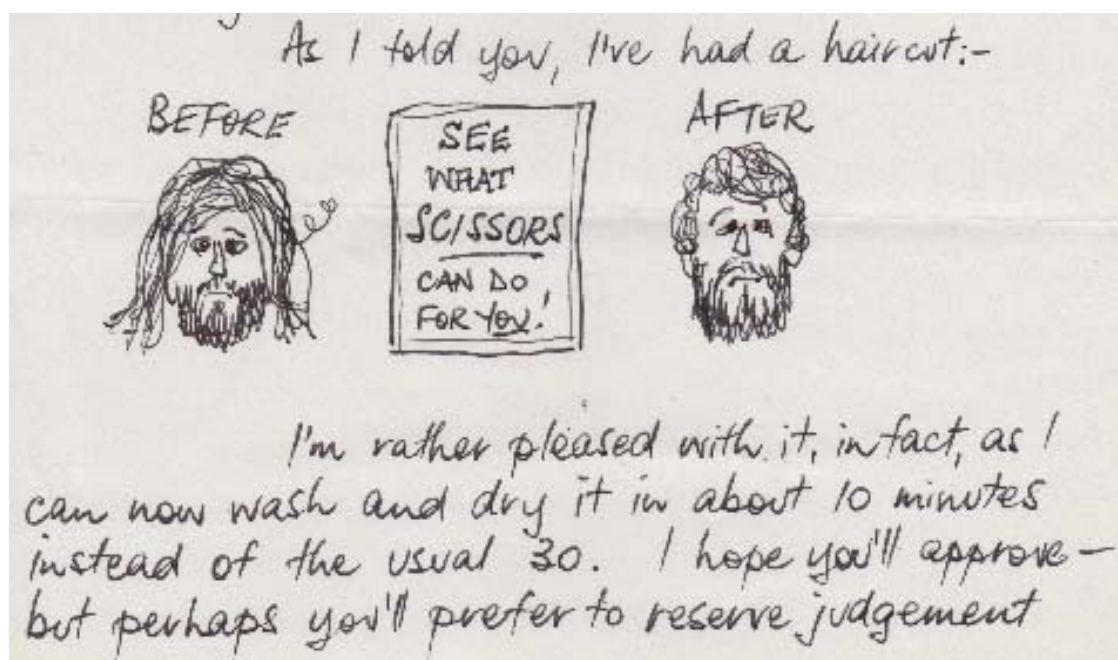
He was MP for Hartlepool for twelve years, which he vacated to become a European Commissioner. His father was the advertising manager at *The Jewish Chronicle*, but on his mother's side, he is the grandson of **Herbert Stanley Morrison**, Baron Morrison of Lambeth, CH PC (1888-1965) a British Labour Party politician who was Minister for Home Security, Home Secretary, Foreign Secretary, Leader of the House of Commons and Deputy Prime Minister and came close to attaining the leadership of the party at various times. As a conscientious objector, Morrison worked in a market garden in Letchworth during World War I. He was a founder of the London Labour Party and was chief sponsor of the Festival of Britain in 1951.

Peter read Philosophy, Politics and Economics at St Catherine's College, Oxford University (1973-1976) which had been designed by the eminent Danish architect Arne Jacobsen (1960-4) and of which Pevsner declared: 'Here is a perfect piece of architecture.' Peter briefly rebelled against his family's Labour tradition due to Labour's support of the USA in the Vietnam War and in 1971 he left the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) to join the Young Communist League, then the youth wing of the Communist Party of Great Britain. This move was partly because of disagreement with the Trotskyist Militant Tendency that had just won a majority in the national LPYS. After returning to the Labour Party, he became director of the British Youth Council in the late 1970s. As BYC director, he was a delegate in 1978 to the Soviet-organised World Festival of Youth and Students in Havana, Cuba, with Arthur Scargill and several future Labour cabinet colleagues. He was elected to Lambeth Borough Council in September 1979, but retired in 1982, disillusioned with the state of Labour politics.

Significantly, he then worked as a television producer with London Weekend Television on 'Weekend World,' where he formed a durable friendship with John Birt, then LWT's Director of Programmes, before his appointment as the Labour Party's Director of Communications in 1985. Mandelson then ruthlessly discarded his partner, Peter Ashby as a potential political liability and stood for parliament, serving as Member of Parliament for Hartlepool for twelve years (from 1992), a

Labour Party politician Herbert Morrison (Baron Morrison of Lambeth, 1888 -1965) who was Home Secretary in Churchill's wartime coalition government and became Deputy Prime Minister (1945-51). He also gave his name to the standard domestic air raid shelter, like the one that John's family built at Erridge Road.²²

In 1974, in the Garrick's Head pub in Bath, John met his first **Australian** since receiving Miss Bryce's card.²³ It was the lanky bearded, highly articulate, Ian Hayward from Adelaide but then living in Bath, who was working as a camshaft grinder, and part-time crossword compiler for *The Guardian* newspaper.



An extract from a letter from Ian to John, withn self-portraits, possibly around February 1974.

In 1975, in the Hampton Court Palace pub²⁴ in Kennington, through the agency of Ian, he met Richard Peterson who turned out to be a far more adhesive antipodean.

seat he vacated in order to become a European Commissioner (2004–2008). He was inducted into the House of Lords on 13 October 2008.

Having helped Labour come to power in 1997, he was then forced twice to resign from Blair's government, while holding Cabinet positions. After his second resignation he served as the European Commissioner for Trade for almost four years, before being brought back into British politics by Gordon Brown. Before Labour came to power, he was author (with Roger Liddle) of *The Blair Revolution* (1996). More recently, he contributed to the book *The City in Europe and the World* (2005). Clive James calls him: 'The guy who really can spin anything... with his blue suede shoes.'

Peter published his autobiography, *The Third Man*, in July 2010, two months after Labour was defeated.

²² The **Morrison air raid shelter** (Table (Morrison) Indoor Shelter) was designed by John Baker and named after Herbert Morrison, the then Minister of Home Security. Due to the lack of house cellars in Britain, it was necessary to develop an effective indoor shelter. They came in assembly kits, to be bolted together, 2000 x 750 mm high, had a solid 3 mm steel plate top, welded wire mesh sides, and a metal lath 'mattress' floor. There were 359 parts in a pack. It was one of the first structures designed using Baker's theory of plastic structural analysis to absorb the impact of debris falling on top. The sides could be removed to use it as a table. 600,000 Morrisons were distributed by 1943, to prepare for the expected German V-1 flying bomb (doodlebug) attacks, mentioned already.

²³ The Garrick's Head, 7-8 St Johns Place, Bath, Somerset, BA1 1ET, UK, is set within the Garrick Theatre.

²⁴ The Hampton Court Palace Hotel, 35 Hampton Street, London SE17 3AN, off Newington Butts, south of the Elephant and Castle.

Thus began the great **intellectual exchange** of Richard's life, and probably of John's, over some 40 years. It was expressed in conversation, travel, exhibition and museum visiting, but particularly in writing long letters to each other. There was not much wasted time. It was not that John introduced Richard to much that was new to him, but his existing interests were greatly developed and enriched. John was already interested in twentieth century architecture, and had travelled with Kidder-Smith²⁵ in hand, and Richard had already been alone to operas at Covent Garden, including three quarters of the Gotz Freidrich *Ring Cycle*. They shared a deep interest in urban culture, and the life and built fabric of cities, in food, politics, in almost all European and later Australian art (though not Rubens, Buffet, or Norman Lindsay), theatre, classical music including its radical extremes, and architecture of all periods. But probably John introduced Richard to the Renaissance, and Richard introduced John to Australia.

And so, with Richard, there followed a series of memorable **urban holidays**, initially driving and looking at pictures and architecture and enjoying food (and some drink) around the UK, radiating from John's flat in Birmingham, and then aboard.

The first jaunt was to Paris: it was the first time that Richard, having crossed the world by ship, had ever flown.

Later together they visited English towns, country houses, art museums, parish churches and cathedrals; to Rouen, Jumièges, Bayeux, Honfleur, Caen, Le Mans, Saumur, Angers and the chateaux and towns of the Loire Valley and Burgundy; to Bruges, to West Berlin and crossing into East Berlin at Checkpoint Charlie, to Warsaw and Krakow in Poland and to Prague and Brno in Czechoslovakia.

In Spain they went to Bilbao and Burgos, Madrid, Seville, Cordoba and Granada; in Portugal, Lisbon and Evora; and *Much Else in Italy*:²⁶ including Florence, Certosa, Pisa, Prato, Fiesole, Lucca, Volterra, Rome, Verona, Padua and Venice, as well as to Lucca, Pienza, Moncalino and Viterbo. In the USA they visited New York and Chicago, and in Australia: Melbourne and its regional hinterland particularly, but also Adelaide, Sydney, Tasmania and Canberra.

Both enjoyed John's trick of springing **cultural surprises** ('pounces,' in John's terminology) on Richard. These included: in London, Jean Cocteau's wall paintings of 1960, in the side chapel of the Crucifixion, called *Le Rappel à l'Ordre* (or Call to Order); in the French national church of Notre Dame de France, Leicester Place (north-east off Leicester Square); in Paris, Monet's vast *Waterlilies* paintings in the **Musée de l'Orangerie**, in the Tuilleries Gardens; **rue Furstenberg**, a short street that swells into one of the most perfect tiny public spaces in the world: consisting of only one four-branched lamp and four trees.

In **Venice**, there was **Santa Maria del Orto**; the Carpaccios in the **Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni**; and the perfect little **Santa Maria dei Miracoli**; in **Florence**: the fragmented frescoes possibly by Cimabue in the **Velluti Chapel in Santa Croce**; the Pontormos in the out-of-town **Certosa del Galluzzo**; the marvellous Andrea del Sarto frescoes from 1509-26 in the exquisite **Chiostro dello Scalzi**, Via Cavour, 69; and the ascent to **San Miniato al Monte**; and in **Rome** (never visited together): particularly **Santa Prassede**; **Santa Prudenziانا**; and **San Clemente**.

Some most remarkable surprises came when they drove together along 'the **Piero della Francesco route**' to Arezzo, Montercchi (particularly), Montepulciano, Borgo San Sepolcro, and

²⁵G E Kidder Smith (1913-97) New York architect, architectural writer, academic, activist and Modernist photographer, who wrote books that traced the modern architectural movement: *Brazil Builds*, 1943, to accompany an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art; *Italy Builds*, 1955, and others on Sweden and Switzerland, *The New Architecture of Europe*, 1962, which was used by John, and later *Looking at Architecture*, on architectural photography, 1990.

²⁶ Martin Boyd, *Much Else in Italy: A Subjective Travel Book*, 1958.

Urbino, a route described in Aldous Huxley's essay 'The Best Picture' and later in more detail by Sir John Pope-Hennessy. At that time, all of these works could still be found in situ.²⁷

Subsequently they have travelled together to New York and Chicago; to Hanoi, Tokyo, Kyoto and Nara, and later to Copenhagen, Dublin, Naples and Ravello. Most recently, in 2009, with Darrell Dear doing the driving, they travelled around England and Scotland.

When Richard returned to Australia in late 1978, John and he maintained their friendship by writing letters and postcards back and forth. John's contribution alone to this substantial **correspondence** now embraces 12 arch files and the first 60 letters are now being published on the Internet.

Islington

By 1980, John's parents had died, he had no need to live near to them in the Midlands, so he now felt able to work and live in **London**.

He moved to a sunny south-facing ground-floor corner flat in Neoclassical Thornhill Crescent,²⁸ on the corner of Crescent Street, in Islington, at the head of that large and uniquely elliptical, or hippodrome-shaped Thornhill Square, that had been designed by Joseph Kay in 1846-52. Kay had come to it from designing the Foundling Estate in Camden.²⁹ Until c1829, it was farmland owned by Sir George Thornhill MP, who then began to build, including a house for himself. The crescent embraces St Andrews Church, designed by Francis B Newman and John Johnson in the Decorated Gothic style in 1852-4, and built of Kentish ragstone with a broached spire, that John's shuttered windows romantically framed. Bridget Cherry, who John knew, described it as being '...like a medieval village church, transformed into classical suburban layout'.³⁰ It was 15 minutes brisk walk north of Kings Cross Station.



↑ □ Location of John's flat, in Thornhill Crescent.

²⁷ John Pope-Hennessy, *The Piero della Francesca Trail. The Walter Neurath Memorial Lectures*, Thames and Hudson, London 1992. he **Piero Trail**, the famous art trail across the Pennines from Arezzo to Rimini, looking at works by the Renaissance artist Piero della Francesca (c1415-92). These are: in **Arezzo** (*The History of the True Cross* (c1455-66), frescoes, San Francesco); **Montercchi** (*Madonna del parto* (1459-67), detached fresco, 260 x 203 cm, in the isolated and then unlocked Cemetery Chapel, but now displayed in a museum); **Borgo Sansepolcro** (Tuscany, *Polyptych of the Misericordia* (1445-1462) oil and tempera on panel, 330 x 273 cm, Pinacoteca Comunale and the *Resurrection* (c1463), fresco, 225 x 200 cm, Museo Civico); **Urbino** *The Flagellation of Christ* (c1460), tempera on panel, 59 x 81.5 cm (then in the Ducal Palace); the paired portraits (c1472) of Federico da Montefeltro and Battista Sforza, Duke and Duchess of Urbino; and the *Madonna di Senigallia* (c1474), oil on panel, 67 x 53.5 cm, now all in Galleria Nazionale delle Marche.²⁷

²⁸ www.thornhillsquare.typepad.com

²⁹ Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 4 North, the Buildings of England*, Penguin Books, London 1998, p 682.

³⁰ Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 4 North, the Buildings of England*, Penguin Books, London 1998, p 654. Cherry uses the disputed stylistic terminology: 'Middle Pointed' (James Stevens Curl's term) for Decorated Gothic, but I'm sticking to the latter as it is more generally used and understood, as I discussed with Peter Draper and he supports me.



John's flat, its green door visible, centre right.



John's sitting room, 18B Thornhill Crescent, looking south over the church and square.



John in his study, 18B Thornhill Crescent, with Barnsbury Wood just visible through the window.

John's flat backed onto and his miniature study overlooked the remarkable triangular acre of wild woodland of the secluded Barnsbury Wood. It has mature chestnut, lime, ash and plane trees, jays and owls, all left undisturbed since its layout as an ornamental garden for Sir James Thornhill, but had fallen into neglect soon after its enclosure in the 1850s. Developers had prowled from the 1960s, then in 1974 Islington Council bought it for public housing before realising, in those municipally penniless years, that they had no money to develop it.

The Barnsbury Wood Co-op was formed to fight development, but fortunately a rare 16-spotted orange ladybird (*Propylea 14-punctata*)³¹ was found there, and it became a London's smallest nature reserve. Other than for two hours a week from 2-4 pm on Tuesday afternoons, if the Council remembers, and at Mid-Summere eve when the Angel Band from Islington Folk Club has a concert there, there was generally no public access to it, there is a high steel fence onto Crescent Street adjoining John's house, formerly the site of two houses the council demolished, and as 'nature' it was of little interest to John.³²

³¹ In May 2012, John remembered: 'Decent women, I thought!' www.ladybird-survey.org/species_desc.aspx?species=6455%2059801

³² The Times Diary, *The Times*, 14 April 1981.



The special 14 spot ladybird.

More significantly for John, and tucked into the corner of the square, is Beresford Pite's Lethaby-like West Library of 1905-7. 'Clever, idiosyncratic and contextually self-confident, yet restrained, it continues the rhythm of the square, eclectically combining fret and acanthus capitals derived from the Temple of Apollo Epicurius at Bassæ (C5 BC), with red and yellow striped brickwork and a whiff of Art Nouveau'.³³

For the first few months in London, John shared his flat with Richard's and his musical friend David Wheeler.

Under Margaret Thatcher's ideologically divisive government from 1981-82, the UK was in recession: the rich were richer and the poor, poorer. It was a difficult time for schools: by 1980, a third of all schools were assessed to have unsatisfactory teachers and inadequate books and equipment. Even Thatcher herself wrote in her memoirs that her first Secretary of State, Mark Carlisle (1929-2005) '...had not proved a particularly effective Education Secretary' and so was dismissed in the September 1981 cabinet reshuffle, and replaced by Sir Keith Joseph.³⁴

John was still politically aware, active, and still a Labour Party member, but he then switched his political allegiance to the Social Democrat Party, when his friends Shirley Williams and Bill Rodgers founded it, with Roy Jenkins and Dr David Owen, the present Labour Foreign Secretary, on 18 January 1981, at a crucial meeting at Dr Owen's house in Narrow Street, Limehouse. John's letters were henceforth decorated with the nicely designed red white and blue SDP stickers. IN 1982, John's friend Bryan Magee, a Labour Party member since the 1950s resigned from the party.³⁵

I criticised John squarely for voting SDP, and then from 1987, Liberal Democrat. In this he was supporting his friends, Shirley and Bill, rather than Labour, in that he was voting strategically for parties that could never form government and taking a vote away from a socialist party that was capable of government, but he virulently disagreed. Indeed, Shirley Williams claimed that this point of mine was a 'canard'.³⁶

³³ Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 4 North, the Buildings of England*, Penguin Books, London 1998, p 666.

³⁴ Noël Annan, *Our Age: Portrait of a Generation*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1990, pp 602 and 603.

³⁵ This is the street with the famous and still charming **The Grapes pub**, Narrow Street, Limehouse. Several **Whistler** and **Tissot** drawings and paintings are views from the balcony over-hanging the river. It is said that **Lord Snowden** would bring **Princess Margaret** to his house here., where it is said the **Queen Mother** once played his piano. And the **Social Democrat Party (SDP)**, was founded here when John's friends **Shirley Williams** and **Bill Rodgers**, with **Roy Jenkins**, former Home Secretary and current President of the European Union and **Dr David Owen**, the then Labour Foreign Secretary, met at Dr Owen's house in Narrow Street, on 18 January 1981, to sign the Limehouse Agreement.

Bryan Magee, 'Why I quit the Labour Party,' *The Sunday Times*, 24 January 1982 and Bryan Magee, 'Why I have joined the SDP.' *The Sunday Times*, 10 March 1981.

By 13 May 1984, the *Sunday Times* was bemusingly referring to 'The Socialist Republic of Islington,' represented by Labour's Chris Smith MP, and which sported a red flag on the town hall.

In 1984, John published his paper 'An HMI Perspective on **Peace Education**' and in 1987, another on 'Teaching in a Multi-Cultural Society,' then two further papers on the issue of 'Teaching and Controversy'.³⁷

From 1981, ILEA appointed 35-year old 'bachelor' George Nicholson as head of its Political Education subject for primary and secondary schools.³⁸

John **won** the *Times Literary Supplement's* Author! Author! Competition No 198, in what the *TLS* described as a competition that drew an 'exceptionally large and opinionated entry.' The task was to identify three extracts of four to six lines from the words of German opera and lieder. John's answers were from Richard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg*, and from lieder, within settings by Schubert for *Die Winterreise* and Mahler for *Kindertotenlieder*.

Apart from his uncle (Sir) Charles Wilson, John's intellectual **mentor** figures, taken from the British generation immediately preceding his own, seem to me to have been Sir Isaiah Berlin (1909-97) social and political theorist, philosopher and historian of ideas, and Lord Annan, historian, educational reformist and scholar (1916-2000).

In 1983, John's boss, Sheila Browne, then aged 58, retired from the Inspectorate to return to academic life as principal of Newnham College, Cambridge. John had scrawled across the article 'Who next?'³⁹

In 1987, John himself reached the civil service **retirement** age. His hair was now a distinguished 'bogie silver.' His left-leaning friend, colleague and second-in-command, Roger Hennessey succeeded him as Staff Inspector for History, but whose more dirigiste and subtle approach, as John described it, was perhaps more appropriate to the changed Thatcherite political climate.

Later, Roger reflected on John's personal qualities and **characteristics**, which he expresses here in a series of apposite anecdotes:

JGS was one of the very few people whom I have met who virtually 'spoke prose'. Conrad Russell (Earl Russell, son of Bertrand R) was another. He was fastidious in the construction of sentences, often spiced with dry wit. He would never split an infinitive – *wholly to be deprecated* was a typical JGS utterance.

I cannot recall his employing clichés or catchphrases. Rather, he took a slightly amused view of them. There was, for example, a fashion in our HQ (Elizabeth House, London SE) to talk in reported speech with an odd construction, thus: 'I shall say to the Minister, O Minister, we must...'. Or 'We must say to the principals of polytechnics, O Principals'. JGS never employed this construction, dismissing it as *The Elizabeth House locative*.

³⁶ Later, I faced a similar issue in Australia, when after 45 years of voting Labor, I first voted Greens. (I had voted Greens in the Senate for the two previous elections, which is elected by proportional representation, rather than preferential voting). Shirley Williams, *Climbing the Bookshelves*, Virago, London 2009, p 322.

³⁷ John Slater, HMI, 'An HMI Perspective on Peace Education,' in *Educating People for Peace*, The National Council of Women of Great Britain, 1984, pp 22-27, John Slater, HMI, 'Teaching and Controversy,' in *Teaching History*, January 1987, pp 39-44 and J G Slater, 'Teaching of Controversial Issues in Schools, 17 April 1986, typescript.

³⁸ Sue Reid, 'The lesson George learned in the Science Museum,' *The Standard*, 5 October 1981, p 7.

³⁹ Wendy Berliner, 'Chief schools inspector resumes academic life,' *The Times Educational Supplement*, 15 January 1983 (?).

One of his favourite phrases was 'not ignoble', usually employed when discussing some worthy but dull initiative, arrangement, etc, which was boring rather than malevolent.

Although I can never recall JGS ever raising his voice, he could express annoyance by a series of statements, or nuances. For example, settling his bill at an overpriced Sussex hotel, I recall JGS sending for the manager: 'I cannot complain about the service or restaurant facilities of your hotel. They were good in all respects. But I can honestly say that I have never received less for so exorbitant a price. Good morning.' Collapse of manager. Staff and residents grinning hugely.

We had a colleague who ran courses for teachers, but each year manifested some curious concern or the other, such as asking people not to exchange addresses in case of fraud, or introducing weirdly marginal historians to speak to the members. I acted as 'bursar' (that is, administrator, or second in command) for him. I recall JGS arriving one year, at Brighton, and beckoning me. He spoke, sotto voce, from behind *The Times* (always with him!): 'Roger, what is this year's eccentricity?'

At a large gathering of subject chiefs, one well-meaning inspector suddenly suggested that the annual reports that we wrote for our chief and, ultimately, for the Secretary of State, might be shared. 'We could each send each other our reports so that we could make comparisons,' he went on. The assembled body groaned inwardly – just the kind of time-wasting high mindedness that would appeal to the hierarchy who would hardly say 'No' to it. There was an awful silence. JGS spoke up: 'Excuse me from asking, but what, exactly, is the problem to which this is an answer?' Triumph! The whole proposition collapsed, and John was hero of the day.

To a colleague who had spoken for well over an hour at a conference, droning on, JGS said this, at our next committee meeting: 'In our capacity as inspectors we see and hear a great deal, much of it of great importance. We naturally wish to share our findings with others. But I suggest we do not do so at so great a length that other people lack the opportunity to speak for themselves, or to question our assertions.' It was vintage John, courteous and kindly, putting someone to rights without humiliating them.

In his **historiographical methodology**, John was never one to only cherry-pick examples that supported his case; he had no interest in advancing a theory, but rather in trawling the evidence to seek whatever conclusion it would throw up. And that conclusion, as noted earlier, in a spirit of toleration, must always be maintained with doubt, and be available to be modified, as further evidence appeared.⁴⁰ This is related to what Jacques Derrida () called 'the community of the question.'

Examples of **John's dry wit** are legion and he frequently recycled them. In response to full page piece: 'My perfect day. Part 1: Sir Roy Strong,' in *The Times*, 12-18 May 1984, John scrawled: 'Well! 'Pseuds Corner' beckons!' He also noted the increaing resemblance of Sir Roy to Dr Miles Lewis, in Melbourne.

An overused example: 'It's only a naive domestic burgundy, but I feel you'll be amazed by its presumption.'

Across a sizeable science report in *The Times* headed: 'The crow exposed as an Australian bird,' John has scrawled: 'I thought you'd like to know. But does one mind?'⁴¹

⁴⁰ John's miost repeated maxim was: 'When you come to a conclusion, maintain it with doubt.'

⁴¹ This is no longer dated, but probably around September 1983.

Across the back of a postcard depicting a somewhat over-restored Queen's House at Greenwich, whose lobby is decorated with tightly manicured orange trees in pots more appropriate for a pretentious restaurant, he has written: 'Bogus trees.'

John enjoyed reciting humorous monologue impersonations in the relevant accent. A favourite was the dour American comedian Bob Newhart's 'Ledge Psychology' in which a New York cop (John) attempts to persuade a man standing on a high window ledge against his intent to suicide, successfully as it turns out. Also the 'Lydia the Tattooed Lady' lyric, which contains the immortal lines: 'And over her left kidney, /Was a bird's-eye view of Sydney.'⁴² Then, there was John as facial impersonator. Have you seen his 'Dame Joan Sutherland', or his 'Baroness Thatcher' faces? And John as sound mimic: his Queen Mother with a common Lancashire accent. I still laugh at his 'Ducks crossing a wet road' and more recently his 'Agnes and George Hinchelwood's pair of parrots' impersonations.

⁴²'Lydia the Tattooed Lady,' E Y Harburg & Harold Arlen, and sung by Groucho Marx at Carnegie Hall in 1971, with Marvin Hamlisch in the background vocals!

Oh Lydia, Oh Lydia
 Now have you met Lydia
 Lydia the tattooed lady
 She has muscles men adore-so
 And a torso even more-so
 Oh, Lydia, Oh Lydia
 Now have you met Lydia
 Lydia the queen of tattoo
 On her back is the battle of Waterloo
 Beside it the wreck of the Hesperus too
 and proudly above waves the red white and blue
 You can learn a lot from Lydia

There's Grover Walen unveilin' the Trylon
 Over on the West Coast we have Treasure Island
 There's Captain Spaulding exploring the Amazon
 And Lady Godiva--but with her pajamas on
 She can give you a view of the world in tattoo
 If you step up and tell her where
 Mon Paree, Kankakee, even Perth by the sea
 Or of Washington crossing the Delaware.

Oh Lydia, Oh Lydia, now have you met Lydia
 Lydia the queen of them all
 She has a view of Niagara which nobody has
 And Basin Street known as the birthplace of jazz
 And on a clear day you can see Alcatraz!
 You can learn a lot from Lydia!
 --Lydia the queen of tattoo!

Lydia, oh Lydia, have you met
 Lydia, the queen of them all!

But the relevant verse was added in the version by the Kingston Trio. Maybe John got this from a Bedales student:

And over her left kidney,
 Was a bird's-eye view of Sydney,
 But what we liked best
 Was upon her chest,
 My little home in Waikiki.

Scrawled across a piece by Roger Scruton in *The Times*, headed 'Out with the stately, enter the state,' John explained that Scruton was: 'A "philosopher" at Birkbeck + one of the most mischievous + irresponsible right wing thinkers. Approved by Mrs T. Has attacked Peace Studies.'

Invariably when closing a conference, or seminar, he would compare himself to the little man who, after the spectacular parade had passed by, tidies the place up by taking his broom and shovel and scraping up the horse droppings.

Another HMI colleague, Iain Paterson recalled another '...example of how John's ability to turn a situation round with an apt comment.'

He and I were inspecting a college together. The head of the history department made up an interview list headed with examples like "John to see Peter" and "Iain to see Mark". Having read his list and mine, John said, "Tell me, who is Peter and who is Mark?" The head then gave their surnames. "Oh, I see," said John. "How terribly friendly." The list reappeared as "HMI Mr Slater to see Peter Grayson", and so on.⁴³

Roger continues:

One of the history team noted that in the list of all officials in the Department of Education & Science there was a Mr V D Mongol. On hearing this JGS said, with a look of pained compassion: 'Some people do start life with distinct disadvantages.'

A lively and popular lady colleague had an unsuccessful operation for cancer. In the small group sharing the dread news was a curiously cold-fish character, who said: 'She ought to immerse herself into the job as a way of coping with the news.' JGS was definitely not of this opinion which he thought sounded: '...like the pronouncement of a tedious school prefect,' adding that detaching herself entirely from the cares of the job was surely infinitely preferable.

Concern was expressed at a meeting that the desire of senior management not to offend major interests was leading chief inspectors to 'fillet' reports, and causing weaker characters to anticipate such treatment by writing flat, uncommitted prose. JGS: 'The bland leading the bland, I fear.'

More recently, Roger and other former colleagues have enjoyed collecting these inimitable moments of what he dubs 'Slateriana.' Reminiscing with a friend recently, he recalled that one of John's favourite phrases was 'The Hey-Nonny-No Brigade'. The phrase derives, he thinks from a stereotypical Madrigal singing group, lampooned famously in the film *Lucky Jim*, based on Kingsley Amis' novel.

The people he had in mind tended to be self-consciously anachronistic in their tastes; medieval dances and music, wood fires, hand-knitted apparel etc. They emerged in a fairly big way back in the 60s and 70s, and often appeared in re-creation plays or historical demonstrations for schools. So long as they based their work on actual evidence (not always the case) they did not do much harm. Being John, his observations were kindly rather than critical & he looked upon it all with a tolerant, slightly amused eye. The H-N-N phenomenon still appears in various guises, of course.

Although folk dancing was for John a stereotypical senseless activity, it is known that in his youth he was seen highland dancing in a kilt: an altogether different pursuit.

⁴³ Email from Iain Paterson to Richard Peterson, 6 August 2010.

Education, JGS was fond of saying: '...is necessarily interventionist and bossy' and all those involved in it ought to bear in mind its arbitrary, compulsory nature.

At one meeting of the History Committee, John cooled heated exchanges by announcing: 'I keep in my office a file marked 'disagreements'; its contents grow steadily.'

Perhaps, following his mother's strictures about being not English but British, JGS was also a good European. He disliked people referring to 'Europe' as if the UK were not part of it. Once, on a conference at Brighton, a little Englander returned from the town centre grumbling that it was full of foreigners. 'Excellent,' said John, '...much to be welcomed.' Which stopped the nationalist in his tracks.

JGS used to attend various, seminars, under the aegis of the EC or the Goethe Institute, etc. He graced gatherings at such locations as Donau Eschingen, and returned to give us extensive reports about that went on beyond Dover. I imagine he was an excellent ambassador for the UK, so the echoes suggested, [and] listened to with respect. I think he even attended a NATO seminar although not particularly military in his tastes, but ever keen to learn what this or that side of an argument had to say.⁴⁴

One memory discussed at our Oxford lunch was my recalling JGS reminiscing, many years back, about the Glasgow Exhibition of 1938. He had visited it as a lad and, knowing my interest in technological history, he waxed eloquent on the 'Bennie Railplane'. This was a curious monorail, built on a complex of girders above an orthodox branch railway, near Milngavie about the time of the Exhibition. John's easy and correct pronunciation of Milngavie ('Mull-gye' in the vernacular) alerted me to his familiarity with Clydeside – hence I started to learn about his family connections there. He never made much of this; it was a fact of life. Some people would have worked the connection hard, but not JGS who was, probably, a good deal more at ease with his own identity than most.

Regarding the timing of John's retirement, Roger observed:

By then the storm clouds were gathering, and our HQ was issuing a series of short, punchy subject syllabuses: 'Curriculum Matters.' JGS was asked to organise a history version, but did not, I sense, find this to his taste. Nor did the small team he consulted on the matter. The chief inspectors pushed hard for these publications but they were not John's style at all – far too authoritarian. The enterprise got into the doldrums. When I succeeded JGS, I gathered all the material so far written, re-jigged and reorganised it and submitted it as a draft to the team that I now chaired. They went along with it, some even liked it! It passed muster in high places, including a reading by the Education Secretary. And, it was published [as]: *History 5-16*.

I go into this saga in some detail because it illustrates well the climate change that came in the Thatcherite era. John's style, of encouraging a diversity of approaches belonged to a more liberal era where he was certainly the man for the hour. He once said that he retired at the right time: he would not have liked the more interventionist, simplifying styles of the 1990s.

Looking back, it seems to have been a more civilised era even if it did not seem to be at the time. Discourse on school history was open, very much led by professionals. Post-John it got rougher and noisier with politicians and interest groups raising the volume. It is still like that. One of my tasks was to prepare his excellent team to operate in this new era of street fighting - possibly why the pure liberals viewed me askance.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ To my consternation, John still reads the flagrantly right wing controversialist, Andrew Bolt in the *Herald-Sun*, for this reason.

⁴⁵ Various emails from Roger Hennessy to Richard Peterson, the last paragraph on 21 September 2013.

John had indeed retired just in time. HMI remained with its priorities still jealously guarded, but there was a change in ministerial demands. John asked a colleague after he had retired: 'When you go into a school, are you assessing the qualities, or the fallibility of teaching, or its application of government policy?' This latter approach now increasingly dominated, and subsequent Chief Inspectors became for the first time, loyal servants to ministers. Alas what a decline there had been: from Keith Joseph to Kenneth Clarke!⁴⁶

Fortunately, John was by now on a good **income**: between 1945-87, UK civil servants' pay rose by a factor of 20, whilst general incomes rose only by a factor of 15: he was able to pay off the mortgage on his flat for the first time and he had the generous index-linked UK pensions based on a substantial percentage of pay at retirement, to look forward to. Yet by 2007, UK civil service pay had fallen well behind cost of living increases.⁴⁷

Kenneth Baker's **Education Reform Act 1988 prescribed radical changes**, removing control of schools from local authorities to a centralised framework, with a national curriculum, a system of school inspection accountable to the Secretary of State for Education and a rigorous regime of tests and reports. It ignored the long tradition that ministers did not enter the 'secret garden' of the curriculum. It superseded almost everything Shirley Williams as minister for Education and John as HMI Staff Inspector had tried to do, produced discontent in schools and universities, and was a no-confidence vote in those running them and transfer of power to parents and to control the curriculum.⁴⁸

Then, in the 1992 *Education (Schools) Act* (Department of Education and Science) required for the first time, that all state schools in England and Wales be regularly and rigorously inspected, rather than on a needs basis, as they had been since the first Her Majesty's Inspectors were appointed in December 1839; thus ending the 150 years of subtle and complex, yet most effective relationship between HMI and DES. But the greatest impact on UK education came under John Major, in replacing Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, who had come to be seen by the government as 'too soft,' by OFSTED (the Office of Standards in Education). Its head, Chris Woodhead was directly accountable to the Prime Minister.

John realised that the times had changed, and he would have been more than uneasy with the more deferential acceptance of political requirements now expected, than he was with HMI's previous independence and with more adventurous and popular developments in the teaching of history. Before his retirement though, he had already prepared preliminary discussion papers on the need, function and place of history within a future British National Curriculum.

In June 1988 John was invited to become **Visiting Professor of Education** at the Institute of Education, University of London.⁴⁹ His inaugural lecture was entitled: 'The Politics of History Teaching – a Humanity Dehumanised,' a title unlikely to have been acceptable from HMI by the late s.⁵⁰ At the Institute, he became friendly with the youngish urban historian, Martin Gaskell, with whom he shared several interests.⁵¹

⁴⁶ The Right Honourable **Kenneth Harry 'Ken' Clarke** QC MP (born 1940) is a British politician and Conservative Member of Parliament for Rushcliffe. He was a minister throughout all 18 years of Conservative rule from 1979 to 1997, serving in the Cabinets of both Margaret Thatcher and John Major. Since the Conservative defeat in the 1997 general election, he has been a backbencher. He contested the party leadership three times, but was defeated each time. He became Secretary of State for Education in the final weeks of Thatcher's government in 1990, and is a lover of Real Ale.

⁴⁷ Noël Annan, *Our Age: Portrait of a Generation*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1990, p 588 and http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/facts-about-civil-and-public-services/.

⁴⁸ Shirley Williams later regretted that she had respected this tradition for far too long and not acted on the curriculum herself. Shirley Williams, *Climbing the Bookshelves*, Virago, London 2009, pp 349-351.

⁴⁹ www.ioe.ac.uk

In organising many conferences for history teachers, John had become active in the **History Teachers Association** and in the **Historical Association**, and later its Curriculum Project, an attempt to save school history from being forced off the curriculum by Social Studies, or Sociology, or from being subsumed within courses of Integrated Humanities.

The Curriculum Project pursued a revolution in the way history was taught to young people. It placed critical analysis of source material at the heart of the subject. It helped children share in the pleasures and thrills that can be found in careful investigation of the past, through the evidence it has left behind. It aimed to move on from the traditional British history teaching, which Professor Slater is on record in memorably describing that the:

Content was largely British, or rather Southern English; Celts looked in to starve, emigrate or rebel; the North to invent looms or work in mills; abroad was of no interest once it was part of the Empire; foreigners were either, sensibly, allies, or, rightly, defeated. Skills – did we even use the word? – were mainly those of recalling accepted facts about famous dead Englishmen, and communicated in a very eccentric literary form, the examination-length essay. It was an inherited consensus, based largely on hidden assumptions, rarely identified let alone publicly debated.⁵²

John was one of 25 people in the UK awarded a Centenary Fellowship of The Historical Association 1906-2006.

Friendship with Richard led, from 1979, to John's first visit to **Australia**, staying initially in Richard and his partner's small North Carlton terrace. This was the first of John's ten visits to Australia: three times for about six weeks, and seven times for over six months of every two years. So eventually, John was spending 25% of his life in Melbourne. Whilst in Australia, John's reading would only consist of Australian books, or books about Australia. His reading programme included much of the greatest Australian literature, as well as writing about Australian art and architecture.

⁵⁰ The title would have been supported by John's HMI colleagues, but is unlikely to have been produced by HMI after John's retirement.

⁵¹ **Martin** was author of S Martin Gaskell, 'Gardens for the Working Class: Practical Pleasure,' *Victorian Studies*, S Martin Gaskell, *Building Control: National Legislation and the Introduction of Local Bye-Laws in Victorian England*, 1983, S Martin Gaskell, 'Housing History: A Story of Mean Streets?' *Journal of Urban History*, Vol 11, pp 371-382, 1985, S Martin Gaskell, *Model Housing. From the Great Exhibition to the Festival of Britain*, Mansell, London and New York 1987, S Martin Gaskell, *Slums*, Leicester University Press 1990. He also spent 21 years in the directorates of three very different public sector institutions and was the rector of University College Northampton for 13 years.

⁵² John, quoted by **Seán Lang**, then of Cambridge University, at the 16th annual Schools History Project Conference, 12 September 2004, recalling John's speech on the Historical Association Curriculum Project, refer: www.educationforum.ipbhost.com and Seán Lang, 'Where's the knowledge?' *History Today*, March 2010, pp 5 and 6. He has frequently quoted John's writing, and would seem to me to inherit and take forward John's approach to the teaching of history in schools. Dr Lang is a former teacher and now Senior Lecturer in History at Anglia Ruskin University. In 2007 he chaired the History Practitioners Advisory Group, which reported on history teaching for the Conservative Party.

Lang founded the pressure group **Better History**, in 2006 to advise the Conservative education team, and has supplied Michael Gove (Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Education in 2011), with many of his ideas, including that what most schoolchildren want from history is 'to find out what happened'. Dr Lang is now Senior Lecturer in History at Anglia Ruskin University, specialising in the history of the British Empire. In 2005 he chaired the group that produced the Historical Association's important report on 'History 14-19'. He regularly speaks on history on Radio 5 Live and on local radio. He has written textbooks and is joint editor of *Twentieth Century History Review* for which he writes regularly. He has written three works of popular history in the 'for Dummies' series.

Dr Lang is chair of **The Better History Group** www.betterhistorygroup.com; a small ThinkTank of experienced history teachers and lecturers concerned to improve the current position and quality of history in the school curriculum. He is currently researching the British crown and India from Queen Victoria to George V and the 'Hitlerisation' of the school history curriculum in England. sean.lang@anglia.ac.uk **This could be researched further.**

John also was engaged in various **consultancies** in Australia, where HMI had atrophied, stultified and then been scrapped, many years previously.⁵³ As part of one of these, John addressed the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of New South Wales from the floor of the House. He observed how much more developed, education in NSW appeared by comparison to the other states.

John's other consultancies were in the UK, including observing and reporting on history teaching in the Channel Islands. In 1988 he and another retired HMI wrote a report on the teaching in six Kenyan private schools to which the families of both the black and white establishments sent their children.

In an early application of the technology, he worked with Shirley Williams to produce a DVD based on the remarkable *Domesday Project*, to be used in European schools. A conference was held and proposed syllabuses and content were discussed.

John also contributed a suggested course on 'Urban Studies: Images and Themes,' but it remained unfunded.

During 1988-89, John was asked to work on the Department of Education and Science's **European Studies Project**, to engender in young people a greater awareness of European issues. They developed twelve pilot projects in UK local authority areas, including in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The diversity of strategies and their outcomes were then monitored, once again by John on his travels, and his report became the main theme of a subsequent conference he organised in London.

John was appointed **Co-ordinator of the European Awareness Pilot Project**, crucially supported by the Department of Education and Science and by the Central Bureau for Educational visits and Exchanges, responsible for 12 pilot education authorities including some in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and to prepare a report that was his independent view.

A notice for a conference that included papers from both **Sir Keith Joseph** and John, stated that 'The conference will conclude with a lecture by a distinguished historian,' to which John had annotated 'Not another one!'

The exchange with Sir Keith and its subsequent repercussions in the press revealed John at his finest. He admired Sir Keith, and their opposition as depicted in the press was more beat-up than real.⁵⁴

In 1995 John's book, that had been commissioned by the Council of Europe, *Teaching History in the New Europe*, was published by Cassell. It begins with the fundamental questions: 'What is Europe? Place, Past or Culture? Where is Europe? Has Europe a shared history?' This book bears reading still, as it summarises much of John's approach to both his professional and his leisure life, reflecting on European culture and its place in European history and education, as well as its uses, and the potential approaches to teaching it.

As with the Australian writer and John's contemporary Shirley Hazard, John reached '...the conviction that the ethical drive of the modern world must find its compass in the expanded geography and cultural mobility of the cosmopolitan.'⁵⁵

⁵³ Refer: Appendix 2: 'The Inspectorate in Victoria,' an extract from: Bill Hannan, *The Best Of Times: The Story Of The Great Secondary Schooling Expansion*, Lexis, Melbourne 2009. ISBN 9780949873972.

⁵⁴ The Historical Association, 'The Value of History... at School and After, A One-Day Conference,' Senate House, University of London, 10 February 1984. Speakers: The Rt Hon Sir Keith Joseph, John Slater and Keith Randall.

Then, in 1993, after 43 years away, John became a student again, plunging into a **post-graduate** MA course on the History of Art, held at London University's Birkbeck College. He was supervised by, among others, Professor William Vaughan, Renaissance historian Frances Ames-Lewis⁵⁶ and Peter Draper. Both Peter and Francis were initially appointees at Birkbeck of the eminent art historian Peter Murray.

John soon observed the disconnected relation between History and Art History methodologies that was first commented upon by Nikolaus Pevsner; although even in 1923, Walter Benjamin wrote that 'there is no such thing as art history... The attempt to place the work of art in the context of historical life does not open up perspectives that lead us to its innermost core.'⁵⁷

John had taught Peter Draper as small boy at Bedales. In the Acknowledgements section of his recent scholarly book, *The Formation of English Gothic. Architecture and Identity*,⁵⁸ Peter began by declaring that: 'My initial interests in the medieval period were aroused by the inspirational teaching of John Slater and Roy Wake...' Now Peter supervised John's final dissertation at Birkbeck and encouraged him to start a D Phil.

On 1 November 1995, John, of Birkbeck College, was admitted by the Senate of the University of London to the Degree of **Master of Arts** in the History of Art.⁵⁹

John's doctoral research question was no longer to be on late 19th century art, nor on aspects of early Renaissance Florence, but on how urban Australia had been depicted by artists in the years between the two world wars. From 1996, Peter Quartermaine of the University of Exeter supervised John's **research**.⁶⁰

John had observed that in this predominantly urban settled continent, most observers perceived Australian art to be dominated by its landscapes, and this indeed was the view that the establishment espoused as a positive and singular. So John decided to seek out and to concentrate on images of Australian suburbs and their cities.

He now patiently spent considerable time in the British Library, particularly with its newspaper collections that are housed in remote suburban Colindale on the Northern Line. He set himself the task of scanning all of the art reviews and articles in every single issue of the Sydney and Melbourne press from 1920-1945: in every copy of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Herald* and the now defunct *Bulletin*, as well as every exhibition catalogue from the period.

Tony Judt has said that '...no historian should undertake a source-based work of primary research unless he is assured of close access on a long-term basis to the archival materials.'⁶¹ This is what John indubitably had, in the BM Collindale, the SLV Melbourne, and in every

⁵⁵ Brigitta Olubus, "At home in more than one place," *ABR*, April 2010, p 10, writing about the life and work of Shirley Hazzard (b 1931).

⁵⁶ Frances Ames-Lewis (b1943-) retired in 2005 as Pevsner Professor of the History of Art, after teaching at Birkbeck for 36 years.

⁵⁷ Walter Benjamin, *The Correspondance of Walter Benjamin*, trans M R and E M Jacobson, Chicago University Press, Chicago 1994, p 224

⁵⁸ Peter Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic. Architecture and Identity*, Yale University Press and the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, New Haven and London 2006, p vi.

⁵⁹ Certificate, held.

⁶⁰ **Peter** was the author of the first monograph on the great Australian artist Geoffrey Smart: Peter Quartermaine (Forward: Germaine Greer), *Jeffrey Smart*, Gryphon Books, South Yarra, 1983. ISBN: 9780908131297.

⁶¹ Tony Judt, with Timothy Snyder, *Thinking the Twentieth Century*, The Penguin Press, New York 2012, p 152.

Australian state and regional art gallery, although he can only claim to be comprehensive on Sydney and Melbourne sources and images.

From this material, he developed a comprehensive and analytical database of texts and images of the pictures themselves. Later he continued his trawl in the libraries of the Australian state galleries, but above all in the State Library of Victoria, of which John remained an ardent fan, and later a neighbour.

The extensive time available to John enabled his **research practice** to be exhaustive. But it was also deeply contextual. During the eight years of his research (1996-2004), he read only books about Australia and by Australian authors, including most of the major historical, art historical, literary and general works of his period. His work was also unusual in covering all autonomous (non-commercial) images, in both fine art and photographs. Rarely in art books do photographers stand alongside painters.

John's research process is also unusual in that he decided to first gather data before formulating a research question. I am unaware whether John realised how his approach related to the grounded theory method in social sciences, a systematic methodology involving the discovery of theory through the analysis of data, developed by two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss and first published in 1967.

In fact John's topic evolved, as I recall it in our discussions and correspondence, from images of Australian nineteenth century poverty, realising that such images are so rare as to be insufficient for research, to asking why that may be so, to images of nineteenth century urban Australia, also relatively rare by comparison with the officially preferred rural images, to moving forward his time scale to the Inter-war period, later slightly expanded to include the most interesting World War II urban images, then confining the data to autonomous images, by excluding commercial material, which is an extensive topic in itself. John also chose to exclude any international comparative sampling, an approach with which I disagreed, being aware of how enlightening it can be to place Australia, however briefly, into a world context.

Prior to this post-graduate research in his early seventies, it seems to me that John had never worked in this way: he was much more used to scribbling a few notes on the back of an envelope on the train to a conference he was organising, and expanding on those thoughts on his feet before a professional audience, well-grounded in his clear-sighted understanding of the principles of historiography and pedagogy. This slog of exhaustive research was quite new to him.

But his Australian topic also provided further excuses to sojourn over large, very hot lattes in the numerous cafés and restaurants in Sydney and Melbourne, and to visit his friends there.

It also drew John into meeting many of the identities in the Australian art and cultural world.⁶² This he pursued, as acknowledges in his introduction to his later book, whilst imbibing on Friday lunchtimes at the neo-Tudor **Three Greyhounds** pub, in Old Compton Street, Soho, near Cambridge Circus, London. The pub was ably steered by its expatriate (Australian) landlady, the inimitable flame-headed Roxy Beaujolais, though John never realised that in the 1960s the eccentric Roger Gradridge had redesigned the pub (or as Alan Powers contends in Gradridge's *Guardian* obituary), 'turned up the decorative volume'.⁶³ It was then the invariable haunt of Australian artists and art writers whilst in London. Roxy later transferred her salon to the 'even more sublime' Seven Stars, Carey Street, off Chancery Lane, in the City of London.

⁶² It was John who pointed out that the word '**identity**' in this usage, is an Australian coinage.

⁶³ **More on RB**, www.theguardian.com/news/2001/jan/25/guardianobituaries.alanpower

John also frequented the **Commonwealth Centre**,⁶⁴ Kensington High Street (now sadly defunct), where he met and talked to many other Australian figures, such as the eminent expatriate Australian poet, Peter Porter (1929-2010).

In 2001, John was awarded his **doctorate**, although he does not approve of being styled 'Dr' Slater: which he finds a touch too pompous. His examiners urged him then to turn the thesis that had satisfied examiners, into a book that would please the public. In the end, he re-wrote it all substantially.

In April of that year, John officiated as **best man** at the wedding of his brother Andrew's second wedding, to Lesley.

John became intrigued by certain terms in local Australian **usage**, such as reference to a person as an 'identity;' architectural devices such as the pier extended above the parapet line in Federation commercial buildings,⁶⁵ and particularly 'suburb' to mean anywhere in a city beyond the CBD: 'Why do we not refer to such institutions as the Universities of Melbourne and Sydney... or most of the pictures of Sydney Harbour, or its Bridge with one foot planted firmly in The Rocks and the other in a North Sydney suburb, as 'suburban'?

Rather than identifying a style of a work, its place in the development in an artist's oeuvre, or what the artist might have felt or intended, John was concerned with looking at what he saw **represented** in a picture: looking indeed, through artists' eyes.

An extraordinary experience during John's research for the book was what may have been the last interview anyone had with **Albert Tucker** (1914-99). John was driven blindfold to the Tucker's house at Hurstbridge, a suburb 26 kilometres north of Melbourne, and spent the day talking with Bert about his work and his practice and enjoying the hospitality of Barbara. This may have been the last time anyone interviewed Tucker, who died shortly after.

Melbourne University Publishing agreed to publish John's book, through the Miegunyah Press, and in June 2004, at his favourite bookshop, the venerable Hill of Content in Melbourne's Bourke Street, the fine biographer, Brenda Niall launched **his book**: *Through Artists' Eyes: Australian Suburbs and their Cities*. It was widely and seriously reviewed, and later reprinted in a paperback edition. To promote the book, Philip Adams sympathetically interviewed John on Late Night Live, ABC Radio National, in Sydney, on 15 June 2004, discussing his book in detail. For his friend, the gallery director Geoffrey Edwards, he gave a subsequent lecture at Geelong Art Gallery on aspects he had noted in his book: 'The End of Certainty: Unease and Anxiety in Art.'

As well as a work of scholarship, it may also be read as an intellectual, biography: an encapsulation of John's view of the teaching of history, and of the relation between history and art history. He strove to find a philosophy of education. John had been thinking about the nature of both history and art history since he was taught it at Oxford, and a similar approach to that in the

⁶⁴The **Commonwealth Institute** was an educational charity of the Commonwealth of Nations, in a building it formerly owned in West London. The UK and various imperial governments established the Imperial Institute in 1887 to promote research to benefit the Empire, after the Colonial and Indian exhibition of 1886. The *Commonwealth Institute Act 1958* changed the name and its mission, to education rather than research. The 85 m Queen's Tower, off Exhibition Road, is the last remaining part of the Imperial Institute; the rest was demolished in the 1950s and 1960s to make way for Imperial College. In 1962, the Commonwealth Institute moved to a fine building in Kensington High Street, designed by (Sir) Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall and Partners, architects, now to be demolished. Plans for redevelopment of the site were by Rem Koolhaas' OMA in April 2009. The Commonwealth Education Trust, was established in 2007 as successor to the Commonwealth Institute. Its aim is to promote education in the Commonwealth, including through support for the Centre for Commonwealth Education at the University of Cambridge. It is based at New Zealand House with assets of \$25 million.

⁶⁵ The only non-Australian instance and precedent of this is Charles F. A. Voysey (1857- 1941), Sanderson Factory, Barley Mow Passage, Turnham Green (1902).

book's Introduction is outlined in a slightly different form in several of John's previous books, articles, papers and talks he gave. **What was this?**

For his 75th birthday, I called in imagined favours to his friends, and invited them to contribute more or less formal papers to a celebratory *Festschrift*,⁶⁶ which I then edited, Darrell Dear typed and Andrew Rodda digitally collated. There were diverse and fine contributions from: Richard Aitken, Andrew Boyle, William Boyle, Adrian Danks, Peter Draper, Geoffrey Edwards, Martin Gaskell, Richard Peterson, Stephen Peterson, Andrew Rodda, Andrew Slater and Bernard Smith. Roy Wake, Frances Ames-Lewis, Nic Peterson, Carl Andrew, Bill Rodgers and Shirley Williams each wrote that they regretted that they were unable to participate. Copies were completed in the nick of time, and were distributed to guests at the surprise party in Melbourne, we held in John's honour.

Melbourne

Then, in his 79th year, John decided to **emigrate** from London to Melbourne permanently, and so he arrived in November 2004. Initially he lived in a ground floor apartment, G6, at 320 St Kilda Road, Melbourne. In the following July, he moved into a southwest-facing eleventh floor, two-bedroom, two-bathroom, comfortable flat at City Gate, 33 La Trobe Street, an early Central Equity effort designed by Hank Span's Span Group. It was his first abode undescribed by Nikolaus Pevsner, but it offered fabulous views and sunsets towards John Wardle's elegant and then just completed, QV1 Apartments Tower (2005)⁶⁷ and, over the roof of the Trades Hall (Reed & Barnes, 1882-1961) to Allan Powell's RMIT University Building 94 (1996), and the distant You Yangs.

Here he re-established his library and recorded music in bookcases designed by Richard, and hung his picture collection, with some of furniture he brought from London. In 2007, he also began to enjoy regularly playing the piano on a small console model, we installed in his flat.

On 3 March 2006, John delivered a lecture at the Geelong Art Gallery.

For John's 80th birthday, I mentioned John's fine gift of friendship, in all its diversity. Looking around me I noticed John as a friend to:

2 accounts people, 7 architects (surely excessive?), 2 archivists, 2 activists, 4 artists, 3 arts administrators, 1 bar owner, 2 chefs, 1 clergyman, 2 computer nerds, 1 conservationist, 4 conservators (art, or buildings), 3 curators, 2 doctors of philosophy, 1 editor, 4 fathers, 2 gardens tragics, 1 glamour puss, 1 goth, 4 historians, 2 lawyers (non-practising), 1 uber-librarian, 6 mothers, 5 musicians, 1 natural remedyist, 2 nurses, 1 Pet Shop Boys obsessive, 1 award-winning poet, 2 star soccer players, 5 students, 1 taxi-driver, 5 teachers, 1 vacuumologist and 6 writers, in a pear tree...

So, John enters his 80s, I wondered what can we might expect from him? So I suggested that we watch keenly for the emergence of his **late style**.

In his final book, *On Late Style*, published in 2006, the great Edward Said defined 'late style' as:

the expression of serenity, composure, harmony and reconciliation.

but also:

⁶⁶ Richard Peterson, Ed, *John. An Informal Festschrift in Honour of John Slater at 75*, Melbourne 2002.

⁶⁷ Sadly, it was later obscured by an indifferent Brady apartment tower.

contrariness, alienated intransigence, difficulty, obscurity and unresolved contradiction, waywardness, awkwardness and stylistic eccentricity;

thus:

the abandonment of communication and unity, as if in concentrated summary, when realising that 'out of time' phase; found in the late works of artists, such as late Beethoven, Jean Genet and Luchino Visconti.⁶⁸

It is to the unruly late work of these artists, I suggest, that we must look, if we seek to predict where John might strike out next.

John always embraced good food and drink. He added the water to the scotch himself, insisted on refilling his own wine glass and fought to have the desert wine arrive with desert, never before. He could not see the point of tapwater, oysters, lettuce, bread, or even fruit. He abhorred the fashion for sunglasses.

He continued to love his life's rituals: collecting his morning paper, having George, later the brothers Chris and Bill at Café Decoy, and later Jean at Olivino's serve him laté, shopping in David Jones' Food Hall, visiting the State Library of Victoria 500 metres away from his flat, keeping up with NGV exhibitions, MSO Metropolis concerts each year, talking with Richard each morning, and having a drink and dinner together on Wednesday evenings. And he loved the cultural depth and experience of his own library. Taking a book from its shelves proved to be a powerful *aide-mémoire*.

On 80th birthday he initiated the tradition of generously inviting a large group of friends to dinner at Simon Denton's restaurant Verge, around the corner in Spring Street, which he declared was his 'village hall.'

In September 2007, John's friend the eminent music critic and writer, Alan Blyth (1929-2007) died, at Lavenham. The service included contributions from Sir Gerald Kauffman and soprano Dame Janet Baker. It was a musical feast. John would have loved to have been there.⁶⁹

Sadly, his memory began to fade, and he found it irritatingly difficult to think, to plan and to search for words, particularly nouns. The 35 years over which he was my companion and mentor in the life of the mind had drawn to a close. Following a stroke, in January 2011 he was diagnosed with vascular dementia, Alzheimers Disease, and Parkinsons Disease.

Thomas Shapcott (b 1935) the fine Australian poet, who was similarly afflicted, recorded '...the blight of being robbed of the power to articulate easily, a cruel fate for a literary intellectual.'⁷⁰ Though recently, John reassured me: 'I'll do my best not to be past it.'⁷¹ So his sense of humour survived intact. A health professional said to him they would need to be a bit didactic. John replied in a flash: 'Oh, I used to know her very well.'

By late 2011 at the age of 85, to enable John to continue in his strongest wish, to continue to remain in the home he had created, surrounded for the rest of his life by the environment of all of the books, pictures, furnishings and music that he had chosen for himself over his lifetime, Richard constructed a minor management enterprise.

⁶⁸Theodore W Adorno, 'Late Style in Beethoven' ['Spätsil Beethovens', 1937], in Theodore W Adorno, ed. Richard Leppert, *Essays on Music*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 2002, quoted extensively in Edward Said, *On Late Style*, Bloomsbury, London 2006. Said does not discuss the visual arts (except Visconti), **not** to mention architecture (c/f: decadence and primitivism).

⁶⁹ Order of Service, 14 September 2007, held.

⁷⁰ Quoting Martin Duwell, 'New modes,' *ABR*, April 2010, p 59, on Shapcott.

⁷¹ Dr John Slater, 10 May 2011, to Richard Peterson.

With all his family dispersed in England and no other close friends remaining in Australia, from August 2011 the VCAT (tribunal) within the Department of Justice, Victoria, appointed Richard as John's guardian, and so he set about organizing a team drawn from about ten young men he somehow found, each qualified only by their intelligence, common sense, reliability, interest in, and devotion to John, including: Amrin, Dandy, David, Darrell, Graham, Jimmy, Lee, Logan, Mereana and Sashi.

They were assisted by John's GP, Denise Wissmann of Alzheimers Australia, the Royal District Nursing Service, Mercy Health, John's Linkages Package Case Manager, Northwest Aged Care and Assessment Service, his pharmacist, ophthalmologist, the City of Melbourne, and at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, Professor David Ames geriatrician, doctors, nurses, its Memory Clinic, its Falls & Balances Clinic, its dietician, occupational therapists, psychologists and social workers.

From September 2012, Logan began living with John to support him, and from Mid-February 2013, John's care became 24-hours, consisting of three shifts every day, including overnight. John's carers were regulated by *The John Operating Manual*, which Richard compiled over the past two years, and now runs to some eight pages. Although Richard himself did no hands-on care of John, management of this frequently occupied half of his days.

On 5 March 2013, Richard received this message from Logan: 'John escaped today, snuck out without letting the door lock. Ended up downstairs in a flat, woman gave him breakfast and a cuppa and called the police.' The woman was a 25-year old Irish lass, and merely exemplified John's happy knack of attracting the kindness of strangers.

On 7 August 2013, following an eleven-week stay in the Royal Melbourne Hospital, John was transferred to The Gables in Camberwell, where he was given a very stable and regulated lifestyle, with very nice room, furnished with a selection of his books, his Tiwi owl sculpture, his pictures, and overlooking Riversdale Road, with its rumbling trams, and a lushly verdant view. By June that year, we began to realise that John need not be confined to The Gables, but could venture out with his carer-friends Portia ('Chynna') Milan and her 4-year old son Ike in excursions to local cafes, high tea with an tinkling pianist in a city hotel, exhibitions at the National Gallery of Victoria, and even David Jones department store food hall,

Google records that **John continues to be quoted** by UK educationists:

If history is not value-free, it is not a values-system. It does not seek either to sustain or devalue tradition, heritage or culture. It does not assume that there are shared values waiting to be defined and demanding to be supported. It does not require us to believe that a society's values are always valuable. If history seeks to guarantee any of these things, it ceases to be history and becomes indoctrination.⁷²

John Slater memorably parodied the content of this style of history, which he said was '...based largely on hidden assumptions, rarely identified, let alone publicly debated', as: [The content was] largely British, or rather Southern English; Celts looked in to starve, emigrate or rebel, the North to invent looms or work in mills; abroad was of interest once it was part of the Empire; foreigners were either, sensibly, allies, or, rightly, defeated. Skills—did we even use the word?—were mainly those of recalling accepted facts about famous dead Englishmen, and communicated in a very eccentric literary form, the examination-length essay.⁷³

⁷² John Slater, 1989, *The politics of history teaching*, London, ULIE, pp. 15-16.
www.uea.ac.uk/~m242/historypgce/cit/welcome.htm

⁷³ John Slater, 1989, *The Politics of History Teaching: A Humanity Dehumanised?* (ULIE), p1, quoted in Andrew Stone, 'What's wrong with school history?' *International Socialism*, Issue: 129, 4 January 2011,
www.isj.org.uk/index.php4?id=704&issue=129 and also by: Peter Yeandle, Lancaster University, Lancaster, in

If history does not guarantee attitudes or aspirations, it is a necessary if not a sufficient condition which might enable the making of informed choices. It not only helps us to understand the identity of our communities, cultures, nations, by knowing something of their past, but also enables our loyalties to them to be moderated by informed and responsible scepticism. But we must not expect too much. It cannot guarantee tolerance, though it can give it some intellectual weapons. It cannot keep open closed minds. Although it may, sometimes, leave a nagging grain of doubt in them. Historical thinking is *primarily* mind opening, *not* socialising.⁷⁴

And this from a recent, though rather gushy and waspish, interview:

...he'd then become acquainted with Roy Wake and in particular... and that very, very great man John Slater, who picked John up. John Slater was ... I came along when John Slater was stamping his b__ on history and he was a totally benign and positive influence and a very, very great influence. And his ...booklet – *History in the Primary and Secondary Years* was extremely important, extremely seminal... He was really very, very good...

Yes, but he was very important. He was 'behind the curtain' importance. And I don't know the politics of the Schools Council and all the rest of it and all the rest of it, but John was very influential in there.⁷⁵

Because, John's personal appeal has never faded. As Peter Craven has observed: 'The British of course, need to be rescued from their charm.'⁷⁶

This is not the place for analysis of such a culturally absorbed and beneficent life. Suffice to say that John made major contributions to the cultures of both Australia and the United Kingdom.

Over there, perhaps his greatest contribution was that he initiated secondary teaching of Political Education and was mid-wife to its difficult birth, also of Peace Education, of the teaching of controversy, and of the National Curriculum in History, and he was advisor to eight Secretaries of State for Education and Science, including Margaret Thatcher, Shirley Williams and Sir Keith Joseph, as well as 'some dimmer lights.'

In Australia, he completed and published groundbreaking doctoral research in a comprehensive analysis of urban and suburban images in the crucial period of 1920-45, when our view of ourselves as Australians was evolving so dramatically.

So his life effectively spanned three careers: as an exemplary and inspiring teacher, as a policy initiator, advisor and disseminator as Staff Inspector at HMI, and in art historical research in a previously unploughed field. I had the good fortune to know him well during the second (when confronted the greatest intellect in the Thatcher government, Sir Keith Joseph) and third of these (when he comprehensively trawled, analysed and extracted meaning from every autonomous image of urban interwar Australia).

Empire, Englishness and Elementary School History Education, c.1880-1914,
centres.exeter.ac.uk/historyresource/journal5/Yeandle.rtf

⁷⁴ John Slater (1989) *The politics of history teaching: a humanity dehumanised?*, London, Institute of Education: 16, quoted in: www.uea.ac.uk/~m242/historypgce/purposes/purpose_declaring_position.htm

⁷⁵ Institute of Historical Research, History in Education Project, Interviewee: Professor Jon Nichol, Interviewer: Dr Nicola Sheldon, 3rd August 2009.

⁷⁶ Peter Craven, 'Making the wrong turn right,' *The Age*, 17 July 2010, in reviewing Nicholas Shakespeare's *Inheritance*, Harvill Secker, London 2010.

At quite the opposite extreme of being a father-figure to his pupils, which John never was, for me and for many others, John was the sage mentor and teacher that I had unconsciously always sought. That I have been able to then embrace that role myself for others younger than me, is perhaps some perpetuation of John's approach, and values.

So the true value of John's life resides in the lives of all those it has enriched, and in the attitudes it inculcated. John's approach to all that life threw up was alive to possibility, to an open and undogmatic diversity, its traces are apparent in the work and lives of academics like Seán Lang, former pupils like Peter Draper and Nic Peterson, colleagues like Gina Alexander (who has known John since he was 25, both as his pupil and then as colleague) and Roger Hennessy, and in the hearts of all of his friends and carers.



John, with sceptre, escaping the advances of a sea-god, Carlton Gardens, Melbourne, April 2013.

Appendices 1,2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Refer a separate file.

