

## Body and Mind



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*Historical Essays in Honour of F. B. Smith*

Edited by Graeme Davison, Pat Jalland  
and Wilfrid Prest



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**Graeme Davison** completed his PhD at the Australian National University under the supervision of Barry Smith. He was later Professor of History at Monash University. He has written widely in Australian, urban, cultural and public history. His publications include *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, *The Unforgiving Minute: How Australia Learned to Tell the Time*, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, *Car Wars: How the Car Won Our Hearts and Conquered Our Cities* and, as co-editor, *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*.

**Peter Edwards** is an honorary fellow at the University of Melbourne and a visiting professor of the University of New South Wales. He is the official historian of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War and other Southeast Asian conflicts, 1948–75. He has published extensively on the history of Australia's foreign and defence policies.

**Ken Inglis**, like Barry Smith, is a graduate of Max Crawford's Melbourne School of History. From there, less adventurous than Barry, he took the conventional road to Oxford. He too chose a 19th century English field, the social history of religion, for his doctoral thesis. Most of his subsequent writing has been about Australia, especially the history of broadcasting and the commemoration of war. He has taught at Adelaide, the ANU, and the University of Papua New Guinea, where he was also vice chancellor. He is now back in Melbourne.

**Pat Jalland** has been a Professor of History at the Australian National University since 1997. She previously taught history at Murdoch and Curtin Universities, and was a Research Fellow at Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge. She has published in British women's history, Anglo-Irish history, and the history of death and bereavement in Australia and Britain. Her seven books include *The Liberals and Ireland; Women, Marriage and Politics*, winner of the 1987 Western Australian Literary Award for non-fiction; *Death in the Victorian Family*, winner of the New South Wales Premier's Prize for History, and *Changing Ways of Death in 20th Century Australia*.

**Susan Magarey** has been Foundation Director of the Research Centre for Women's Studies at Adelaide University (1983–2000) and Foundation Editor of *Australian Feminist Studies* (1985–2005), and was recently made a member of the Order of Australia for pioneering Women's Studies as an academic field. Her most recent monographs are *Passions of the First Wave Feminists*, and *Roma the First: A Biography of Dame Roma Mitchell* with Kerrie Round. She is currently writing a history of the Women's Liberation Movement in Australia.

**Janet McCalman** is a Professor holding joint appointments in History and Philosophy of Science in the Faculty of Arts and in the Centre for Health and Society in the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, University of Melbourne. She is Director of the Johnstone-Need Medical History Unit. She has published two histories of Australian life and politics, *Struggletown* and *Journeyings*. The social history of women's health, *Sex and Suffering: Women's Health and a Women's Hospital*, was also published in the United States by Johns

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**Wilfrid Prest** was born in Melbourne to English parents. He has never quite managed to decide where he belongs, despite an attachment over more than forty years to the University of Adelaide, where he is now Professor Emeritus and Visiting Research Fellow in History and Law. His biography *William Blackstone: Law and Letters in the Eighteenth Century* was recently published by Oxford University Press.

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**Alex Tyrrell** is an Associate of the History Programme at La Trobe University, Melbourne. He is a graduate of Edinburgh and McMaster Universities. He is the author of numerous articles and chapters of books including , ‘La Ligue Française: The Anti-Corn Law League and the Campaign for Economic Liberalism in France’ in *Rethinking Nineteenth-Century Liberalism*, edited by Anthony Howe and Simon Morgan. His most recent books are *The People’s Bread: A History of the Anti-Corn Law League*, co-authored with Paul Pickering and *Contested Sites: Commemoration, Memorial and Popular Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, edited and co-authored with Paul Pickering and other scholars.



## INTRODUCTION

### **Origins: Book and Subject**

*Wilfrid Prest*

This collection of essays celebrates the remarkable contribution made by F. B. Smith to our understanding of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain and Australia. Its title couples his interest in the history of medicine, a field he has made especially his own, with his broader contribution to the history of attitudes, beliefs, ideas, and ways of life.

Generally known as and cheerfully answering to 'Barry', the scholar whom we honour has consistently preferred to publish as 'F. B.' Such authorial reticence creates occasional problems for the unwary. At least one English university library catalogue identifies F[rancis] B[arrymore] Smith as the co-author of a scientific paper, issued in 1989 by the UK Meteorological Office, on the dissemination of airborne debris from the nuclear reactor accident at Chernobyl. Yet even that mistaken attribution is not entirely implausible, given the chronological, geographical, and substantive range of Barry's published work listed in the bibliography on page 237. From an initial interest in mid-nineteenth century British political and constitutional history, the subject of his first book, *The Making of the Second Reform Bill* (1966), he has ranged through the history of art and the radical

underworld, the subject of his biography of the Mazzinian republican Chartist and engraver William James Linton, to the social history of medicine. His fundamental contribution to this new and rapidly developing field, signalled by successive editions (1979 and 1990) of his pioneering monograph, *The People's Health 1830–1910*, was reinforced by a series of seminal articles and papers, as well as a notably controversial 'study of some of Florence Nightingale's thoughts in action' (*Florence Nightingale: Reputation and Power*, 1982).

Yet from the outset of his scholarly career Barry has also engaged closely and productively with the history of his native land; indeed his Cambridge thesis opens with a quotation from Henry Parkes's *Australian Views of England*. With his former teacher and colleague, John La Nauze, he shared the conviction that Australian history is best studied against its British background. Only thus, he believed, could the distinctively Australian be distinguished from what was common to colony and metropolis. For more than forty years, Barry has maintained a steady flow of contributions to Australian history, alongside his work in British history. Besides articles on public health, examining attitudes towards and treatments of alcoholism, diphtheria, typhoid, and other bodily ailments, from 1979 he co-convened a trailblazing annual seminar on the history of culture and ideas in Australia. This generated both a new learned journal and an edited book of essays 'conceived as a minor counter to the inevitable bombast of the Australian Bicentennial' (*Australian Cultural History*, 1982, p. 2). His chapter on religion, 'Sunday Matters', written for the 1938 slice volume of the bicentennial history, and drawing, reticently, on his Oakleigh childhood begins: 'Sunday threatened boredom'. The history of belief, culture and ideas encapsulates that of education and universities, to which in colonial Australia, more particularly Barry's own alma mater, the University of Melbourne, the Irish made a distinctive contribution, as he has pointed out with obvious pleasure in yet another characteristically learned and lively article. Here as elsewhere sensitivity to the different expectations and experiences of English, Irish, and Scots, both within and beyond their island archipelago, makes Barry's scholarship representative of the best of the 'new', devolved, British history. Finally—and this brings us back to Chernobyl—Barry has involved himself in numerous issues of current concern, including the examination of PhD theses, the funding of

cultural institutions, the *bona fides* of the subject Australian Studies, and perhaps most notably, the controversy over the effects of Agent Orange on Australian Vietnam War veterans and their offspring.

The exceptional range of Barry Smith's scholarly interests, in matters of both body and mind, is reflected in the contributions to this book. They are the work of Barry's former associates, colleagues, and postgraduate students from the Australian National University and the University of Melbourne. Pressures of time and space have unfortunately prevented the inclusion of all those contributions which the editors were originally offered, or sought to commission. Yet the enthusiastic response to our initial enquiries left no doubt as to the admiration, affection and respect in which Barry Smith is held by historians around the world. They treasure his direct, argumentative, no-nonsense writing and conversation, full of anecdote, example, and detail, questioning orthodoxy and lambasting all forms of pretension, yet prepared to accept that there is more than one side to most questions. Cheerful, grumpy, enthusiastic, and sceptical, Barry evidently finds little difficulty in balancing seemingly conflicting attitudes and emotions, perhaps because he possesses so secure a sense of his own values.

Although Emeritus Professor Francis Barrymore Smith, FAHA, seems never to have supplied any autobiographical information to the reference work, *Who's Who in Australia*, he was prepared to assist with the following brief sketch of his pre-Canberra life. Francis Barrymore Smith was born in suburban Hughesdale, south-east of Melbourne between Carnegie and Oakleigh, on 16 May 1932. Barry describes his father, Frank, as an 'intermittent service station proprietor, ex-failed "closer settlement" farmer'; his mother Bertha was a primary school teacher. He attended numerous schools, Catholic and government, the latter including one at Wattle Creek, a miniscule settlement in central-western Victoria, mid-way between Stawell and Avoca, where he was taught by Edmund Foxcroft, a 'gentle man' and 'early exponent of scholarly Aboriginal History.' 'A tiny one-teacher school, with a dozen or so students', Barry remembers it as 'the only school—12–13 children—among about six or seven that I can vaguely recall—that I delighted in'. The last—after Sacred Heart (Oakleigh) and St Patrick's (Stawell)—was Dandenong High, where 'I had the life-changing experience of being taught history—morals, sceptical regard

for evidence and people of the past who lived with strange—to us—ideas, and much else, by the wonderful Mr [Wilfred J.] Ford ... He with Kathleen Fitzpatrick and Margaret Kiddle were the best teachers I ever had’.

Matriculating in 1949, Barry Smith entered the University of Melbourne in 1951 as an Arts pass student, funded by a Victorian Education Department secondary studentship. Two years later, after winning the H. G. Turner prize for Australian history, he enrolled in Part I History Honours, then studied for the first year of a Bachelor of Education in 1955. His decision not to continue in that line necessitated paying off the Education Department’s bond. This he did over the next few years, both by manufacturing prefabs at the Holmesglen Housing Factory, and as tutor and temporary lecturer in Max Crawford’s history department. A former pupil recalls ‘an excellent tutor, suppressing his own formidable knowledge and encouraging us to talk’. Meanwhile, after a brief transit through the Labor Club, where he had been ‘sharply dealt with—corrected’ after asking ‘an unintentionally deviant question about Russian support of Peace Congresses’, Barry ‘promptly joined the ALP Club—declared by the LC a Catholic Action-American bad lot’:

With members like Michael Roe, Jim Main, Barry Jones, Keith Hancock, and John Button, I received a rich alternate education. I ended up president. We did good work for Hungarian students in 1956—although not all turned out to have been “students” —but they still needed help. We also started an abortive—alas—Aboriginal Scholarship scheme which won support from the V-C [George] Paton, Sherbon Hills of Geology, Pansy Wright, Fritz Loewe of Meteorology, Cherry of Mathematics, R. M. Crawford and the people who ran Physical Education, amongst others—but not the Education lot, or the Labor or Liberal Clubs. Life was richer—generally—with more cross discipline and illuminating lunchtime meetings than I guess it is now.

At the end of 1956 Barry graduated with first class honours in History, and commenced an MA on ‘Religion and Free Thought in Melbourne 1870–1890’. Three years later a British Council scholarship

took him to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he wrote a doctoral thesis (which became his first book) under the supervision and with the ‘robust encouragement’ of George Kitson Clark. ‘Thanks to Geoffrey Elton—now I gather much maligned—a man of democratic usage and a friend to outsiders in what was a stuffy environment suffused with tricky snobbery’, Barry picked up some casual tutoring at Elton’s own Clare College, at St Catharine’s (where he met Oliver MacDonagh, his later Canberra colleague) and at Selwyn College. On graduation in 1962 he accepted the offer of a lectureship in Modern British History in his former Melbourne University department (conveyed, as was then standard practice, by private aerogramme).

An inspiring undergraduate teacher, Barry also supported history in schools with a Victorian Historical Association pamphlet on the World War One conscription controversy and two collections of articles from the journal, *Historical Studies*. He took up the editorship of *Historical Studies*, which he edited, at first jointly with Alan Martin from 1964 to 1967, continuing on the editorial board until 1974. During his Melbourne years he introduced a new edition of Vere Gordon Childe’s famously acerbic commentary on the Australian labour movement, *How Labour Governs*, with the suggestion that a re-reading might provoke reflections on ‘what is morally anaemic in contemporary political studies’. However, following John La Nauze’s appointment to Sir Keith Hancock’s chair in the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University in 1966, Barry was also transferred to Canberra.

\* \* \* \*

## The Canberra Years

*Ken Inglis*

‘I want you up there’, wrote John La Nauze in Melbourne to Barry Smith in Cambridge. The year was 1966. In Cambridge, under Kitson Clark, Barry had completed a PhD thesis in 1962, and now he was

back for a spell of research after service in Melbourne as Lecturer and Senior Lecturer as well as editor, with Allan Martin, of the journal *Historical Studies*. La Nauze had come to a second chair at Melbourne, alongside Max Crawford, in 1956, the year in which Barry graduated and became a tutor. They knew each other well. Barry recalls the following exchange in 1959 between the old Balliol man and the departing apprentice.

Smith: I've been accepted by Trinity.

La Nauze: You're not going there!

Smith: Cambridge, not Oxford.

La Nauze: Oh, that's all right then.

And so it turned out. In the year La Nauze called him to Canberra the PhD thesis became *The Making of the Second Reform Bill*, a book which established him at once as a respected contributor to the mainstream of British historical scholarship. He had also demonstrated a continuing commitment to Australian history by writing, among other things, *The Conscription Plebiscites in Australia 1916–1917*.

La Nauze had just replaced Sir Keith Hancock as head of the history department in the Australian National University's Research School of Social Sciences, and was looking for productive researchers and dedicated supervisors to occupy three vacant fellowships. In the event he chose all three from Melbourne.

The purposes of the institution known until 1960 as the ANU and then as the ANU Institute of Advanced Studies were to produce more and better research than the state universities in which research had to be combined with undergraduate teaching, and to generate a flow of people equipped with PhDs to staff those universities.

Justly envious outsiders, monitoring the ANU's performance, could point to under-achievers appointed for life to fellowships on the strength of promise they failed to fulfill. People in state universities could be possessive of outstanding students aspiring to academic careers, encouraging them to stay on for postgraduate studies rather than migrate to Canberra. Barry quickly became, and remains, an exemplary member of the ANU—Institute of Advanced Studies, an outstanding scholar, an attractive supervisor, an admired school citizen. Senior Fellow to 1974, Professorial Fellow to 1991, Professor to

1997 (William Keith Hancock Professor from 1995), Emeritus Professor and Visiting Fellow since 1998. Over thirty years he wrote more books than even he, the most diligent of producers, could have accomplished while teaching in Melbourne or anywhere; and demonstrated that given adequate resources for travel and research assistance, someone in Australia could do work in British history no less seminal than that of scholars who lived within a tube ride of the British Library and the Public Record Office. For La Nauze, who put a high value on the first-rate and the metropolitan, Smith was a quintessentially good man.

As a supervisor, moreover, he became revered for what Tom Griffiths has called 'pastoral care', blending attentiveness, learning, kindness and candour. Of eighty or so PhD theses submitted in the department during his time, Barry has been a supervisor for more than forty. Their authors testify to his counselling both wider and deeper knowledge, plain prose, few and short quotations, still fewer metaphors. As reader of draft chapters by students and by colleagues, he is known as the Acton Slasher. And his own writing has been a model for them all: in Oliver MacDonagh's words, 'the short, assertive, steely, brilliant, epigrammatic prose that is unmistakably his own'.

He invites colleagues young and old to comment on his own drafts, and often, though not always, makes changes they propose. 'Occasionally', he writes, 'I have persisted with dubious arguments and speculations against excellent advice'.

Barry has always been accessible to students, and to everybody else. Knock on the door and in you go, knowing that you're welcome, perhaps joining someone young or old already there. You are likely to be entertained by a reading or paraphrase of whatever Barry has been looking at before you came in, from the *Lancet* or the minutes of evidence to some obscure committee of inquiry, where he has found something diverting or horrifying or both. In the tea room a more general audience shares these discoveries. In the preface to *The People's Health*, Barry thanks people who have been 'cheerfully tolerant of my ghoulish anecdotes'.

Barry has enhanced the ANU's reputation by delivering lecture after lecture at conferences of academic and professional bodies throughout Australia and New Zealand, among them in 1989 the

inaugural F. B. Smith lecture at the annual meeting of a body which is a monument to his collegial creativity, the Australasian Modern British History Association. Less well known acts of national service are his stints of journeyman lecturing at other universities, which delivered relief and inspiration to hard-pressed colleagues and brought the first fruits of his own scholarship to lucky undergraduates. He returned from Adelaide or Brisbane with tales like Marco Polo's of marvellous happenings out there. Hardly known at all is the story of his coming to the rescue of another national institution, the Australian War Memorial, patron of the official history of Australia's involvement in south-east Asian conflicts. The volume to be called *Medicine at War* ran into difficulties. The general editor couldn't find an author willing and able to write on the effects of exposure to the herbicide Agent Orange in Vietnam. Barry was asked to suggest a possible author. 'Give me 24 hours', he said, and next day he volunteered to do that part of the book himself, putting all other work aside and knowing that he would be studying not just medicine at war but metaphorically a war about medicine, a war in which he himself became involved and even in physical danger from disturbed veterans. His findings were of much practical importance, though I think they have been largely ignored. This has not surprised him. I keep hoping Barry will tell the story some day as a case in what might be called the political sociology of knowledge, though he would have plainer and better words.

He has made many other contributions to the ANU, among them a number of entries for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, history's neighbour in the Coombs corridor and the annual series of seminars convened from 1980 by himself and another Coombs neighbour, Sam Goldberg, given permanence in their journal *Australian Cultural History*. This was a project at once unpretentious and ambitious, in a field which had not yet experienced its gold rush, and at the end of the eighties the makers produced a book of lucid essays well-timed for new courses in Cultural Studies.

One of Barry's few boasts is that he is a poor academic politician. At meetings of Faculty and Board he would mostly sit in grim and glaring silence, speaking abruptly if at all. He once bragged to me that his support for a motion at a Faculty meeting had guaranteed its

failure. He claims also to be no administrator. But consider the testimony of Oliver MacDonagh. 'When he stood in for me as Head of the Department, it was a bitter-sweet experience to find, on my return, files over which I had long agonized, delivered briskly dispatched with a bold "No" scrawled across the bottom.'

The first head of History RSSS respected Barry no less than the second. It was on Sir Keith Hancock's unsolicited recommendation that he enjoyed, or rather endured, a stint at All Souls in 1984; and towards the end of Hancock's record-breaking visiting fellowship in so-called retirement (a period much longer than his tenure of the chair), Sir Keith became movingly dependent on Barry's judgment of what he should and shouldn't do.

When Barry himself retired in 1997, the only changes in his role at the ANU were that he was now called a visiting fellow, that he was described as an adviser rather than a supervisor, and of course that he didn't have to attend those terrible meetings. He gave his mates reluctant and gruff permission to do him honour. I quote again from Oliver MacDonagh, who had come from his own retirement in Sydney for the occasion. He in turn began with a quotation:

When beggars die, there are no comets seen;  
The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes.

So, I had expected a riot of oratory, a long line of Barry's countless, nameless acts of kindness and of love queuing up impatiently for the lectern. But when I reeled off my felicitous quotation in his presence, I was met with the basilisk Smithian glare.

I later learnt that the field had been reduced to two, a grudging two, with strict riding instructions: that, under pain, more or less, of being stripped of my academic gown, my speaking time must not exceed and preferably should not reach, ten minutes.

Oliver spoke with characteristic wit and wisdom. He portrayed 'a Barry sombre, grave and worried, as one naturally expects of a native of Victoria, that state of conscience, combat and contumaciousness—I now speak of course as a Sydney layabout', and another Barry:

Who can forget those sudden shafts of laughter at someone else's *bon mot* or wild pun, or witty flash or the unexpected exposure

of an absurdity. When I think, as I often do, of 'The Corridor', that sacred grove of learning, in my misty, sentimental memory, it is always associated with the warmth of comradeship expressed in such moments of common joy and—dare I say the word in a speech on the Victorian Barry?—fun.