

Basil Yamey

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I was a graduate student at LSE in 1971-73, when Basil was already a senior professor in the department, but I had no contact with him at all because of our diverse areas of interest. Two years later I made the transition to the other side, joining my teachers as their colleague. Maybe people don't realise how difficult this transition is, especially how difficult it was in 1975, when relations between students and faculty were more formal than they are today. With the exception of some junior faculty, who had similar experiences, one person in the department knew all about it and did everything that he could to ease my transition: Basil Yamey. Despite our diverse areas of interest in economics, he patiently explained to me in a friendly and informal way all that was going on, how one could actually enjoy the SDR on a daily basis and flourish, he introduced me to other faculty, told me about the department's expectations and promotion procedures (much more secretive and random those days), and most important of all, invited me and others like me on a regular basis to his house in Hampstead Way for home cooking and friendly company. He even collected a group of us to spend Christmas with him and his family, at a time when travelling home to join our parents was not common. We had no mentors those days but Basil found the time and for me acted as the best mentor one could hope to have. He introduced me to life in London as a working man as well as the LSE and I found myself going to him whenever I had a problem to discuss. He made sure that I met some of our eminent Greek students of the time and I am still in touch with them. I thought of Basil as the "complete academic," relaxed about life and combining a perfect blend of the work ethic and social awareness, diversifying life and enjoying it to the full. An example to follow.