

Not the day job ...

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Others in this volume are commenting on their appreciation of Basil as a researcher and teacher of economics at LSE and adviser to government bodies. Here I express my appreciation of his contribution to his 'sideline', accounting history. (He had begun as an accounting student of Professor Will Baxter at the University of Cape Town and later followed him to LSE). Basil's research into accounting history has explored the early stages of Italian double-entry bookkeeping (DEB)—he had mastered the linguistic and textual skills needed to read the originals—through to the 19th century and the development of UK company published accounts. It sets the standard for challenging pre-conceived notions of and myths about the significance of accounting. He has made seminal contributions, beginning in 1949, in challenging claims, such as that of Sombart, that 'it is simply impossible to imagine capitalism without DEB', and a variety of later claims about the supposed moral, social and political impact of DEB. His earlier papers are collected in two books of essays [Yamey, 1978; 1982] but he has continued publishing well into this century and he and I both featured in 2010 in the BBC Radio 4 series 'A Brief History of DEB' with Basil debunking some of the wilder claims of other contributors with scholarly appeal to the surviving archival evidence.

He supported Will Baxter's efforts in creating foundational collections of essential readings for students 'edited on behalf of the Association of University Teachers of Accounting (AUTA)', his own contribution for accounting history being in collaboration with the US historian and theorist A.C. Littleton in 1956, which was also edited 'on behalf of the American Accounting Association' ('AAA') (Littleton & Yamey, 1956; Zeff, 1997: 16, 25). In 1994 he collaborated with a former LSE colleague in editing a further collection of essays on accounting history (Parker & Yamey, 1994).

On Will Baxter's retirement he collaborated with Professor Harold Edey in editing a *festschrift* to which he also contributed a paper of his own [Edey & Yamey, 1974]. His admiration of his former teacher was stated at the Symposium held at LSE on Saturday 15 July 2006 to celebrate Will Baxter's life and career, when Basil contributed his own 'keynote' appreciation.

Although I myself never benefited from attending Basil's renowned *Economics of Industry* course, my own delvings into accounting history (where I am now exploring comparisons between European and indigenous Chinese accounting practice back (so far) to the late 16th century) have benefitted enormously not only from his writings but also from the conversations I have had with him in the SCR at LSE and from the scepticism he instilled in me regarding 99% of what is written about DEB, together with the recognition that one must always go back to the original sources (sadly, often mistranslated by others). One of his most valuable contributions has been his editing—including a full, detailed commentary—of the latest edition and translation of Pacioli's exposition of DEB (the first printed treatise on the subject, published in Venice in 1494) [Yamey, 1994].

With Harold Edey and the then librarian of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) he had produced the definitive guide to the early books on accounting that are held by their library [Yamey et al. 1963]; and in 2013 and 2014 he helped me in preparing presentations based on this material for meetings organised by Birkbeck College and by the Worshipful Company of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (WCCA EW).

So although it was not his 'day job' this eminent professor of economics has contributed a lifetime's worth of scholarly achievement to accounting history as well. This is symbolised by the establishment of an annual Basil Yamey prize for the best paper in the UK's leading journal *Accounting, Business and Financial History* (now renamed *Accounting History Review*). And he has clearly thoroughly enjoyed this area of research and exposition. Through it and his contribution to international history conferences he has made many friends in Europe (especially Italy) and the USA. What

has given him and so many of us particular pleasure has been his expert combination of two 'hobbies', art (he had been a trustee of both the National Gallery and the Tate) and accounting history, manifested in a uniquely authoritative and lavishly illustrated volume *Art & Accounting* (also published in Italian as *Arte e Contabilità*) [Yamey, 1989]. It is so well known that some of its contents are now featured in the recently established China Accounting Museum at Lixin University in the Songjiang district of Shanghai. And so future generations from very different cultures will also come to appreciate Basil's outstanding and delightful contributions.

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