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S1 **10:00:01:09**

Christopher Smout is almost certainly Scotland's best known and most highly acclaimed historian. He has an apparently inexhaustible range of interest within the fields of economic and social history, trade, agriculture and rural society, demography, poverty and living standards and nationalism and national identity, to name but a few. He is the author of numerous articles and several books, most notably A History of the Scottish People and more recently, a Century of the Scottish People. Although most of Chris's published work has related to Scotland, his interests have never been confined to Scotland. The Scotland, of which he writes, has always been part of Northern Europe and the wider world. And this, I think, is one of a number of reasons why his work has attracted so much interest and admiration, not only within Scotland but also much further afield. Chris, throughout your career, you have remained a remarkably private man, but I wonder if you could say something very briefly about your early background, your life before going to Cambridge. The influence is on you. Surely. I was the youngest of five sons.

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S2 **10:01:17:17**

And my father was an industrialist and very much a late Victorian self-made man. He was the son of a colliery clerk who got a job in Kinnock's munitions factory and in the late Victorian way he got his son, my father, into the factory, and my father then went to night school and in due course made his way in the world through through this clinics was taken over by Eisai and he became ultimately a director of Eisai. And my my mother was a farmer's daughter, the daughter of a fairly prosperous dairy farmer on the outskirts of Birmingham in the late 19th century, when it paid both to have milk and land on the outskirts of Birmingham. So I was brought up in Birmingham and went to school, a prep school in Birmingham, and then went to a public school, the Lees School in Cambridge. And from there I went to Clare College, Cambridge.

S1 **10:02:27:02**

What stage did you develop? An interest in history, I mean.

S2 **10:02:32:03**

Yeah, it was jolly early. I am not quite sure, but certainly when I was at school we had a very, very good history master who once you got your sort of standard school certificate, as it was in those days, really relaxed about what he was doing and sort of went out of his way to make history interesting and broad and encouraged us to do things like local history and things like that. I became absorbed also in the local history of the farm, which my father had bought in Worcestershire, south west of here and there. It had a medieval history and I used to read the Victoria County history of Worcestershire and things like that. A lot of fun.

S1 **10:03:15:07**

So you had an early start? I had an.

S2 **10:03:16:18**

Early start in that way.

Clip: SMOUT CHRISTOPHER_CHRISTOPHER SMOUT WITH

S1 **10:03:18:14**

Right. And you went you went to Cambridge to do to study history?

S2 **10:03:21:13**

I did. Yes. That's right.

S1 **10:03:22:23**

Right. Well, you were at Cambridge, as I understand it, in the 1950s. No, I can't imagine that much. Scottish history was taught there. And you're an Englishman to boot. So what was it that inspired your interest in Scottish history? Was this as an undergraduate that this developed? Or perhaps was it because you were looking for a PhD topic?

S2 **10:03:48:15**

Well, I'll tell you the story because it shows how important things to me personally arrived from utterly trivial courses. My tutor in Cambridge was the very distinguished Geoffrey Nelson, and one of the things about Geoffrey Elton is that he is a very dominant personality and I, in due course, got my degree in which I learnt no Scottish history at all, had no interest in Scotland. I couldn't even have told you the date of the act of Union, sir. And Geoffrey wasn't a man to encourage much study of Scottish history. But then neither did the whole system in Cambridge do so. And I decided I very much like to do research in history, but I was completely unclear as to where or what this research should focus on. And I went to see Professor Nelson, and he suggested that there were still some minor topics in the foreign policy of Henry VII which interested him and. Maybe I would care to study that in some sort of self defense mechanism. Instantly triggered. And I could see that if I did that, I would not do what I really wish to do. I would do what Geoffrey Elton wished me to do. And much as I respect Geoffrey Elton, I didn't actually wish to do that. So I said no. I was really interested. I said in trade and that was more or less grabbed out of the air. Although I had enjoyed what economic history I was taught in Cambridge.

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S1 **10:05:32:01**

Who had taught it?

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S2 **10:05:34:05**

Saltmarsh was the lecturer at that time to history students. So I wasn't an economic history student. I was a straight history class and we didn't get very much, but we got saltmarsh and we got Checkland and Charles Wilson to Charles Wilson. Admirable. And when I said this, Geoffrey very reasonably said, Well, trade with where? So I said, Well, I wasn't very sure. And there was rather an awkward silence. He said, Well, maybe you'd better come back next week. Talk about it. Yeah. So I went back feeling very silly and I had a a very good friend, Yorkshireman. I shared room with Clare College and he said, It's perfectly simple. Do you prefer blondes or brunettes? So I said, I prefer blondes. And he said, Well, it's going to Navy. He said, Otherwise it would have been Italy. And it seemed to me to be as good an answer as any. And so I went to Professor Elton and said that I would like to do the history of trade between Denmark and England in the 16th and 17th century. And there was one of those awful silences where I felt he could see exactly into my soul and how shallow was my thinking. But he accepted all this and he then sent me to discuss this strange idea with other people, and he arranged that I should go down to London and join Ragnhild Hatton, a lecturer in London University who was Scandinavian expert after dinner, which he was having a dinner with the great Ashton and Astrid Friess, who was the leading Danish historian of trade. And I was really to get Astrid Freeze's advice about this, you say. So I went down and I was came in with a coffee like after eights, and they were extremely nice to me. These three very distinguished historian. And Astrid Fry said, Why do you want to study English history? Very boring. What you should do is to study Scottish history because there was a lot of contact between Scandinavia and Scotland, which has never been looked at in that period. And it came like a flash to me. That was a wonderful idea because I could spend half my time in Scandinavia and half my time Scotland and rather little time in Cambridge where I felt I'd been quite a long time going to school there. Sure. So that was how I became a Scottish historian.

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S1 **10:08:24:14**

You mentioned you're fair there to to the choice you had to make between blondes and brunettes, but I'm sure there's something there was a sequel.

S2 **10:08:32:16**

To that because I then had to learn Danish. And I remember sitting in Hall in college and saying to my friends, I was going to go to the Scandinavian Society dance in order to pick up a Danish girl who would teach me. Then issues here and strategy was entirely successful. And we've been married now happily for about 33 years. Good. So that's all worked out nice, right?

S1 **10:08:58:03**

Well, the book which resulted from your thesis was Scottish Trade on the Eve of the Union, and that was rightly acclaimed as it filled a great gap in Scottish economic history and brought forward the work of Edgar Leith on the 16th century. Was it that, though, that brought you north to Edinburgh, or was it simply that an academic post came up? Or were you by this time determined to work in Scotland or at least on Scottish history?

S2 **10:09:23:13**

By that time I was determined to work in Scottish history, and I was. I mean, you don't have any choice where job might come. And I would have gone anywhere as I was getting married that summer and would have, you know, me and a wife to to support. And I was incredibly lucky that a job came up in Edinburgh at exactly that time, just as I was finishing my PhD. And so I went to Edinburgh and that was wonderful.

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S1 **10:09:54:07**

Yeah. During the 60s after you'd arrived in Edinburgh, you. Broadened your interests and move forward to some extent into the 18th century and into the question of Scotland's economic transformation. Yes, you began to write about landowners and so on. What I want to ask about now is what took you toward your next major project and the book, which you're probably best known for, and that is a history of the Scottish people from 1560 to 1830. I mean, there's a sense in which this transformed the study of Scottish history and inspired, as you know, countless readers and many researchers. Since when are you conscious when you approach that topic? Well, can you tell us what what took you into it in the first place?

S2 **10:10:39:12**

Yes. What took me into it was a letter from Richard Allard, who was working for Collins in those days. And Richard was and is a historian of the 17th century. And in the course of doing his reading, he'd read the book on Scottish trade and he'd liked it. And he thought the first chapter, which was sort of rather general in its tone, might indicate that I would be prepared to write something of a general nature, you see. And he wrote to me and asked if I would be interested in doing a one volume social history of Scotland. And I thought it was very exciting because I was at that time reading extensively later than the 17th century. I was doing a lot of work in the in the 18th century because I was very interested in landowners and and things. And my colleagues in Edinburgh were 18th century people, at least Michael Flynn was an 18th century person, and there were others whom I was close to. And so I found that exciting. And I found the challenge of trying to write a general social history very exciting because they hadn't really been one of Scotland before, but it took an incredibly long time. I'm not a quick writer at all. I'm not a quick worker. And I think it took about seven years before from from Richard's first letter until it came out. And I was absolutely convinced on the day it was published that they had made a terrible mistake and that there was no way in which this was going to sell any copies at all.

S1 **10:12:24:23**
Well, you were wrong. I was wrong. Yes, happily. I mean, you you although you say that a social history hadn't been written, I mean, you are you do in your preface to that book, make very kind remarks about, say, people like Henry Gregory. I mean, where are you? Where are you conscious that you were doing something different? Were you conscious of the significance? Did you have any idea of the significance of what that work was?

S2 **10:12:51:12**
No, I didn't really. And I mean, I greatly admire Henry Greg Graham, when you consider that was written in 1899, the first edition is 1899. And although it now it reads it was a very slanted and old fashioned book. It was very much a source based book. And I wanted to write something which seemed to me to respect the sources and all the secondary scholarship that had gone on in Scotland since then. I won't say to update Henry Grey Graham because I had a different aim in mind, obviously because it was covering a different thing. But that was what I saw myself doing. And and I saw myself trying to write a History of Scotland, which was not political in its focus and not merely economic in its content. So something which would be, in a sense a general history, but focused firmly on the social development of the country.

S1 **10:13:58:19**
Given the state of Scottish historical writing in the 1950s and 60s, all the great gaps there were in knowledge about so many topics. And I suppose the highly coloured nature of so much of the secondary literature, much of it which was much of it which was Victorian. It must have been a difficult book to write. I mean, how did you go about it, given, as I say, that there was so little relative, little secondary material around and much that was had been produced 50, 60, 70, 80 years beforehand.

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S2 **10:14:31:01**

Um, well, I went about it in a fairly sort of systematic beginning at the beginning way. And I think the least successful part of it is the first chapter, which is about the Middle Ages, where I depended entirely upon secondary reading. I mean, good quality Scottish medieval history was being written then. And I mined it, but it wasn't really social and economic in its focus, and I was further removed from the sources at that point than in any subsequent chapter. The idea was originally that I should go on to the present day, but I had already written more than enough by the time I got to 1830 and I felt like I'd run out of puff. So I wrote to Richard and said, you know, sorry, but I'm not going to write anymore. And he said, But you'll do another volume. So I wrote in the end of the first volume that I would do another one, a thing which for many years I regretted because it was, I think, 13 years between then and then being able to produce a century of the Scottish people.

S1 **10:15:49:20**

Was easier to write the century of Scottish people where you could draw on a much more substantial body of secondary material.

S2 **10:15:58:13**

It would have been almost impossible to write a satisfactory century of the Scottish people when I just finished the history of the Scottish people, because I did depend on that 13 years scholarship, which other people did. And so in that sense it was easier to write. In other senses, it was less easy to write because my own mind had changed. My own views of what history is about had changed between the two. I had a fairly clear cut view, you know, a very Whig view when I wrote the history of the Scottish people. But I'm a century of the Scottish people. I was much more uncertain as what was an appropriate content for social history.

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S1 **10:16:43:21**

I think that comes over. But like virtually all you're writing, both the history of Scottish people and essentially of the Scottish people are in spite of the fact that you had some ideas. There are big ideas, if you like. They are refreshingly free from jargon and dogma. Now, obviously you're writing is informed by the social sciences. You are a social scientist. But what theatre is really, it seems to me anyway, really intrudes. Now, is this deliberate? Is this a conscious decision on on your part perhaps to make your work more accessible to a wider audience? Or is it perhaps that you just don't like theory or history, which is heavily laden with theory?

S2 **10:17:24:01**

It's a bit of both. I don't like history, which is heavily laden with theory. To me. It makes however good the history is. To me, the theory often intrudes and I would rather the theory was maybe stated, but and maybe a backbone for it, but no more than a backbone. The other thing is that I was not brought up as a social scientist. I had no training in Cambridge in economics. I had no training in Cambridge, in sociology. I had no training in Cambridge about theory of any sort at all. I mean, history was more or less what happened. And when I came to an economic history department, as I did, I felt in many ways very inadequately prepared. I felt there were whole areas for which I was not properly qualified to teach, which was indeed true. And so partly the absence of theory is because I didn't know enough to be confident in its use. Sure. But at the same time, I do enjoy, despite what I've just said, I do enjoy ideas in history. I mean, I have found Marxist ideas, although I'm not a Marxist, to be almost invariably challenging. You know, if I disagree, I have to work out why I disagree.

S1 **10:19:00:20**

But yet there doesn't seem to be much. I can't see a great Marxist influence in any of your work. No. I mean, do you consciously reject it? No, I.

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S2 **10:19:12:16**

Don't consciously rejected what I. I mean, I think the history of class is absolutely fascinating. It was a matter of fact, the history of how groups of people treat one another and how their relationships are articulated is absolutely at the core of history. And in that sense, I feel very close to to to to Marxists. It's the kind of rigour, maybe I'd say straitjacket, which I think they tend to force things which I react against sometimes, perhaps overreact against.

S1 **10:19:48:02**

Who then were the major influences on your historical writing thinking?

S2 **10:19:53:20**

I think if you go back to Cambridge, Geoffrey Elton was certainly one. He was a very rigorous tutor and I remember giving an essay in and he handed it back to me with a comment that you show your usual ability to conceal what you do not know. And he many a time I have crossed off a page because I realize that I was doing just that. There's a kind of standard. And the other one was Marjorie Chibnall, who was due to the medieval historian. And I call her getting totally carried away with the excitement of history and suddenly turning to be and saying, Tell me, Mr. Smith, have you read the Hungarian sources? And the idea that a tutor could reasonably expect somebody to have read the Hungarian sources suddenly made me realise there was no limit to this game. It wasn't a matter of the set books. It was just no limit to it. And it was a strange question, but intellectually that was the question that you would ask. And so that was the rigor. That's the rigor, yes. Those two I've often felt and encapsulated a lot. Also, when I was at Cambridge, I did a medieval special subject under Dom. David Knowles was the life of Saint Bernard and the Cistercian order. And although it resembled in no way, obviously in no obvious respects, the sort of work I've done since it he had the sort of mind which drew in everything. You know, he was interested in the legal history of the order, but also in the architecture of the order and in the social history of the

monasteries and the theology which underpinned it all. And it was immensely exciting for that reason. And I've often thought that I gained far more from that than I probably realised at the time in in defining what history was when I came to Edinburgh. I was very blessed in having two colleagues, Michael Flynn and Alan Millward, and we were all appointed within a year of one another and it was a golden age in my life in terms of intellectual excitement. And we used to sit in the Edinburgh Staff Club for maybe a couple of hours at lunchtime and simply talk about the things that we were teaching. I mean, problems that we were teaching that we didn't fully understand. And we would we would talk them all through. And it was extraordinarily stimulating. And both those two scholars had great influence on me. Sure. Michael, I think especially, again, because of the breadth of his interests and the passion with which he pursued knowledge and the complete integrity of his character, I thought were superb. Later on, I think I was very greatly influenced by reading E.P. Thompson. I think that made a great change in the way in which I came to perceive history. And how did you read that before you wrote History of Other People?

S1 **10:23:31:22**
Because you do think, in a sense, challenging. I do. And did you say there was no.

S2 **10:23:35:18**
That's right.

S1 **10:23:37:06**
Making of a Scottish working class?

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S2 **10:23:38:21**

That's right. Yes. No, it had been published before then, but a very considerable change came over economic history in the course of the 70s, which had a considerable influence on me and social history as well. Economic history, almost manically pursued the notion of growth. Yeah. And in fact, our department used to say that the history of what economic history was was the story of growth, you see, which was a very Whig approach to it. And I think that the, the history of the Scottish people is in a way informed by that approach. It is about progress, if you like, how it was sort of emerges and how Scotland is modernised and that is seemed to be progress. Can you see.

S1 **10:24:35:23**

That in your work in the 60s on the union as well? Yes, that's right. Yes, very much indeed.

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S2 **10:24:41:13**

It's absolutely true. Well, various things happened in the 70s. First of all, British economic history totally lost confidence in itself. It fell to pieces because it could not really solve the problems which it had set up. And it was. Wasn't tremendously sophisticated compared to the new economic history of of the Americans didn't quite know how to cope with this situation. And I remember feeling very alarmed and even more ill prepared as the 70s went through. And one was trying to to cope with trying to be at the cutting edge of economic history in Edinburgh, and I felt I was not there. Um, the other thing which I think happened was simply that people began to have doubts all over the world about growth. I mean, it didn't seem to be happening in the same way people anticipated. It seemed to have far more dis benefits than people had appreciated. And social historians began to be interested in other things, and geographers began to be interested in other things. And I think that economic history in Britain has probably been saved by geographers, as a matter of fact, because they began to ask quite different sorts of questions, the sorts of questions that Wrigley was asking, for example, or some of the agrarian historians were asking, hadn't very much to do with growth. They had to do with society and they had to do with the with the privilege, but not in a Marxist sense. And they had to do with people's relationships and spatial relationships too. And all these things I thought were very interesting.

S1 **10:26:24:18**

So, I mean, you said earlier on that there was your attitude to society, social change and so forth. It was different when you went about the writing of the century of Scottish people as opposed to the history of the Scottish people. What what what caused that change in your. Well, what can you can you tell us a bit more about the the nature of that change? And what do you think brought that change in your perspective, if you like?

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S2 **10:26:50:07**

Well, I think it was because I think it's probably two things. First of all, if you look at Scottish history, the theme of modernisation is not so striking, to put it bluntly, between 1830 and 1950, whereas the costs of being an industrial society, we're very obvious. Yeah. So that created, as it were, a different agenda to begin with. Um, and so that was part of it. Also, I really became very interested in. The costs of industrialization just for their own sake. Not because there wasn't another theme, but because I was interested in how people perceive themselves and how they reacted in an industrializing society and how they could defend themselves against these things. I think it was a change of interest in that way.

S1 **10:28:05:06**

I mean, you have been criticized, I think, for taking, you know, the picture you paint is an accurate one, but you have been criticized for not taking that further in or have you like a political sense.

S2 **10:28:20:00**

In the second.

S1 **10:28:20:12**

Volume? Yes, And.

S2 **10:28:21:13**

It is true. I mean.

S1 **10:28:22:21**

How do you respond?

S2 **10:28:24:18**

I think I respond to that by saying I didn't really feel that I had the expertise to carry it forward in a political sense. Perhaps I should have done. But it wasn't where my energy and my interests were. Sure at that time.

S1 **10:28:41:24**
But you have engaged sometimes with Scottish political questions, particularly question of nationalism and national identity. When when? What took you, What's taken what took you in this direction or in that direction?

S2 **10:28:53:24**
Well, I don't see how one can work in Scotland as a historian, particularly as a historian who tries to be accessible to more than his own colleagues. I don't see how one could work in Scotland without engaging with the problem of identity and with the problem of nationalism. Um, and as I was talking about the union, yeah, you know, from a quite early stage in my academic career. This obviously kept returning to me.

S1 **10:29:23:07**
Yes. Do you think a historian has a function in in wider society?

S2 **10:29:29:12**
Oh, yes. I mean.

S1 **10:29:30:23**
I feel.

S2 **10:29:31:19**
That very strongly indeed, that a historian has a function in society and should not be merely writing or not writing all the time for his colleagues generally.

S1 **10:29:47:12**
One of the things that I think your public, if you like, likes about your about you is this fact that you seem to enjoy the cut and thrust of historical debate you believe in the fervently I would think in dialogue and what dialogue between historians can produce. Yes, in positive terms.

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S2 **10:30:08:22**

Yes, I do. Very much so. And I believe also in comparison, I that very strongly. I think dialogue is even better when you're talking with somebody who has a different perspective sometimes from a different country, which is why I've always been interested in making comparisons with Europe or with or with Ireland, for example.

S1 **10:30:33:15**

Can you take us into that a bit? Because I think one of the major contributions, another of your major contributions has been this getting the Irish Scottish comparison off the ground with, of course, other other people. Yes. And you've also worked a fair bit in terms of comparison of Scotland with Scandinavia, especially in the rural area. Can you tell us what took you down that particular. Well, what.

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S2 **10:31:00:17**

Took me down that route was the very admirable fact that when I came to Edinburgh University, I wasn't allowed to teach my specialism very much. Um, and we had a second year course which was dealt with European economic history. And Professor Young, who was chairman of the department at that time, said to me, Your wife's Danish, Christopher, you can teach the Scandinavian side. And I was appalled. But I went away and I produced a set of lectures on Denmark and Norway and Sweden, and particularly Denmark, because I had taught myself Danish by that time. And the more I read of this, the more fascinated I was by the existence of a society. In some ways much more like Scotland and England was at that time. And then largely through coincidental and personal reasons, I got to know Louis Cullen in Dublin, and that gave me another extremely interesting insight. And Louis was exactly the same mind. I mean, his whole view of history was the importance of comparisons between small countries. And we really became excited about this. And I have always felt and continue to feel really quite passionately that Scottish historians must compare themselves with other countries. And if you compare yourself all the time with England, although it's relevant. It's not necessarily the most relevant. Yeah.

S1 **10:32:44:12**

So what? What has been produced? What for you has been the big achievement of the State of Scottish Irish comparative method or those periodic meetings between Scottish economic, social historians and Irish economic and social historians?

S2 **10:33:03:01**

I think it isn't so much that anybody has come up with a brilliant book or brilliant article which sets the two societies together and says they're. Yeah. I think it's much more that it's entering enters into the bloodstream now of social and economic historians in Scotland that does Ireland as well and that there are other countries as well and they keep thinking in these ways that I think is is what is emerging out of it.

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S1 **10:33:40:18**
So so it's helped bring Scottish history out of its parochial. Yes. Yes, it.

S2 **10:33:44:21**
Has. Yes. Yes, I think that's right. In most areas. In some areas, quite the contrary. I mean, the whole area of intellectual history in which I've never played very much part is nevertheless immensely international. And nobody would dream of talking about the history of the Enlightenment in Princeton, Oxford or Cambridge or anywhere else without reference to to to to the great Scottish thinkers.

S1 **10:34:16:15**
Because it strikes me that working in Scottish history just now is an extremely interesting and dynamic place to be. You've had the the benefit of being in this area now for for 30 years or so. What for you are the main differences between the subject as it is now and as it was in the late 50s, early 60s? What's been.

S2 **10:34:39:18**
Achieved? I think the achievements have been enormous and very wide ranging over almost every area of Scottish history, there's been a renaissance and an explosion of writing. If you just take the centuries that you and I are interested in sort of 17th century onwards and the increase in the volume of writing on economic and social history is extraordinary. I mean, one really has to pinch oneself to realise how little the was back in 1960. There was nothing published on the 19th century except Marwick book on economic developments in Victorian Scotland. It's incredible now.

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S1 **10:35:23:17**

Can you briefly, is it possible, briefly to account for that? Is it to do with the expansion of universities, higher education, more people in the research business or something uniquely Scottish or which you can link to see what's happening in Scottish society?

S2 **10:35:38:23**

I think you link it instantly to what's happening in Scottish society. Back in the 50s, people used to talk about a brain drain. If you read interwar accounts of Scotland, there's a terrifically demoralized sense. People like Edwin Muir right in despair of Scotland ever regaining sense as an intellectual centre. Well, that turned around in a quite remarkable way that turned completely round. The complaints are not now of brain drain, but too many Englishmen like myself coming in.

S1 **10:36:12:18**

You see, You're excused.

S2 **10:36:14:11**

I'm excused, but you know what I mean. The the there is there is immense vibrancy in Scottish society now and a very much greater sense of self confidence within Scotland. And as a self confidence grows, people don't feel they want to make any excuses. Studying Scottish history. It's just natural. And if it's natural, then people study it because it's part of their societies life and culture and existence. And so the whole thing has has come to life. And that's part of a very big change, I think, in Scottish life.

S1 **10:36:46:04**

To go to take us back specifically into into history. There are still great gaps. Yeah. I mean, for example, we don't have the sort of statistical database of Mitchell and Dean for England. What are the other big areas you think that we have to explore?

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S2 **10:37:09:19**

Well, the statistical one is very important one, and it's something which I think should be explored and should be on the agenda of the economic and social society of Scotland to explore. So, so, so there's certainly that. What interests me very much actually is the history of. People's consciousness, their answers to the question, Who do I think I am? Now, this, of course, has been central to a lot of Marxist history, particularly since E.P. Thompson really posed this about class. But it isn't just about class in Scotland. It's also about nationality. To really explore subtly, the nature of Scottish identity, I think, is a great and very difficult task for a social historian to undertake and one that will need all sorts of subtle tools to explore in terms of content analysis of language and things like this. I think there's a lot of questions about identity, about relationships between groups which still need teasing out, and I think they're good questions.

S1 **10:38:32:02**

I referred earlier to you, we talked earlier about your wide range of interests. And that last topic you mentioned is an indication of an increasingly wide range of interests. You have recently become director of the Institute for Environmental History in Saint Andrews. And presumably this is another road, pathbreaking road that you're going to make, so to speak. Yeah. Can you tell us where this comes from? And I will. This is going. Yes.

Clip: SMOUT CHRISTOPHER_CHRISTOPHER SMOUT WITH

S2 **10:39:02:12**

I retired from a chair in Scottish history two years ago, as you know. And at the same time I became involved with the new body, Scottish Natural Heritage, which is an amalgamation of the old Countryside Commission for Scotland and Nature Conservancy Council. And this made me very aware that the environment has a history and that this history is fundamentally misrepresented, unwittingly misrepresent wanted by many people who are actually interested in the environment, and that the history of the environment is almost unexplored and goes back within Scotland 10,000 years. Sure. And the impact of man on the landscape and man's changing relationship to nature is, I think, the smashing historical question, which has not been investigated. Well, I didn't think the idea of environmental history above my head. Sure, very influential in formulating my thoughts would be a good idea to try and create a little point of energy in Scotland about this. Well, the works of Oliver Rackham in Corpus College in Cambridge, who's a botanist and historian who's written about the history of the countryside in in England, and particularly about the history of Woods. And I found his work very inspiring. But the intention of it is both to explore these themes. What happened to the environment? Will they introduce sheep? You know, we know what happened to the people and the excellent writing about that. But what about the environment itself? Is it really degraded by centuries of misuse? What is the effect of the industrial revolution on all that? Did it accelerate or did it in some ways retard what had been an earlier tradition of misuse by giving a value to some of the things, say, timber, which it hadn't had before? There's a whole range of questions there which and I find that it's taking me back in time horizons in areas where I'm thoroughly incompetent and therefore need to talk to archaeologists and geographers and pollen analyses. And that's very exciting.

S1 **10:41:29:03**

So as as 20 years or so, you picked up social scientific techniques. You're now going to pick up the techniques of pollen analysis.

Clip: SMOUT CHRISTOPHER_CHRISTOPHER SMOUT WITH

S2 **10:41:36:00**
Well, I'm not going to practice the analysis because for that I would have to have a large lab and be totally re-educated. But I'm understanding how pollen analysis carries you forward in a very surprising and fascinating way.

S1 **10:41:54:21**
In your work, you use a tremendous range of tools, if you like, and borrow very heavily and admirably from a wide range of disciplines. Is this always been your method?

S2 **10:42:07:05**
Yes, I've always enjoyed thinking in different ways, and I do think historians don't probably take on enough different ways of don't don't use a wide enough range of tools that they could use. I think we were rather slow to take up oral history actually in Scotland and those who did practice oral history rather kept it in a little pocket by itself. Rather than trying to integrate it with the rest of of Scottish history. And now I'm much more interested in museums than I used to be. And I could see the interest of material culture in all this sort of thing.

S1 **10:42:47:19**
Well, Chris, you've recently retired from your chair of Scottish history, but you clearly haven't retired from the Scottish history business. And can I wish you all the very best in the future? Thanks very much.