



# HISTORY & POLICY

## **What will Gordon Brown do next? - Historian examines ex-Prime Ministers' lives after Number 10**

Thursday 19 May 2010

Kevin Theakston, of the University of Leeds, explores what Prime Ministers do after leaving office, and gives some advice for Gordon Brown, in a new History & Policy paper launched today, with a companion article in the Yorkshire Post.

Prof Theakston shows that while some former prime ministers disappear from the political scene, others have a 'second act', carving out a continuing role in politics and public life. He examines what former prime ministers have done in the past, including:

- Join the House of Lords. Asquith said this was 'like speaking by torchlight to corpses in a charnel-house'. However, Douglas-Home and Callaghan thrived in their 'elder statesman' roles.
- Write. Brown could follow Lloyd George and Blair and do a lucrative deal for his memoirs, or perhaps devote himself to a scholarly project, like Churchill.
- Set up a foundation. Thatcher and Blair did this to maintain a platform on the world stage, and secure their legacies.

Prof Theakston outlines the varying fortunes of former PMs, from those who made money - Lloyd George, Churchill and Blair – to those who ran in to money troubles, such as the Pitts, whose massive debts were paid off by parliament, and Melbourne who borrowed money from Queen Victoria.

As there is no established role for former British prime ministers, Gordon Brown will have to carve out a role for himself in the years to come. Prof Theakston concludes that many former PMs have done worthwhile, interesting and significant things in the years after Number 10.

*-ends-*

## Notes to editors

1. Kevin Theakston is Professor of British Government at the University of Leeds and author of *After Number 10: Former Prime Ministers in British Politics* (Palgrave, 2010).
2. Prof Theakston's paper *What next for Gordon Brown?*, is published today at [www.historyandpolicy.org](http://www.historyandpolicy.org).
3. *Brown begins his adventures in the afterlife* is published today in the Yorkshire Post: <http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/opinion/Kevin-Theakston-Brown-begins-his.6303113.jp>
4. The 2008 Research Assessment Exercise showed the University of Leeds to be the UK's eighth biggest research powerhouse. The University is one of the largest higher education institutions in the UK and a member of the Russell Group of research-intensive universities. The University's vision is to secure a place among the world's top 50 by 2015. [www.leeds.ac.uk](http://www.leeds.ac.uk)
5. History & Policy (H&P) is an independent initiative working for better public policy through an understanding of history, see [www.historyandpolicy.org](http://www.historyandpolicy.org) for further details. The initiative was founded by historians at the Universities of Cambridge and London and is based in the Centre for Contemporary British History, at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London. History & Policy's current work is funded with charitable grants from [Arcadia](#) and [The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation](#).
6. H&P was founded in May 2002 by Alastair Reid and Simon Szreter and has now published 100 short papers in which historians explore current policy issues; they are all freely available on the website. H&P now supports a [network](#) of around 250 historians, based at UK universities, who are willing and able to engage with current policy discussion.
7. You can [sign up on our website](#) to receive H&P's monthly newsletter. To receive our latest news as it happens, you can follow 'HistoryPolicy' on [Twitter](#) or contact the office to receive email updates.
8. For further information or to request an interview with a historian, please contact:  
Mel Porter, External Relations Manager, Tel: 020 7862 8768, email: [mel.porter@sas.ac.uk](mailto:mel.porter@sas.ac.uk), or Ruth Evans, External Relations Officer. Tel: 020 7862 8783, email: [ruth.evans@sas.ac.uk](mailto:ruth.evans@sas.ac.uk)