

Chapter 1

Early Years: Sydney and Oxford

Mary Bull

Hedley Bull entered Sydney University in March 1949, at the age of 16, to study for an Arts/Law degree. He did not come from an academic background; his father, Norman Bull, worked in insurance, and his mother was born Doris Hordern of the Sydney department store dynasty. However, his elder brother and sister had both obtained degrees at Sydney, and law seemed the most appropriate career for Hedley, who never liked mathematics or science, but had done well in languages and school debating. Living in the suburb of Strathfield, he had been able to attend Fort Street High School, one of the most prestigious state schools in the New South Wales' system of selective high schools. However, he had not had an outstanding school career, for it was only in the last six months, he later said, that he decided that he wished to proceed to university and settled down to work. Nor had he been a sportsman; he was never interested in playing or watching team games, but preferred non-competitive exercise, primarily swimming, surfing, tennis and walking.

Students of the Arts/Law degree chose subjects in the Arts Faculty for their first year—Hedley took English, history, philosophy and psychology. When in the second year law subjects became the major part of the syllabus, Hedley decided that he preferred to continue studying for an Arts degree—and changed course to read for an Honours degree in philosophy and history. He never lost his interest in law, particularly in the influence of legal theorists in the development of political and international thought, and their concepts of natural law and justice. But for the next three years, Hedley's main interest was in philosophy, in which he was deeply influenced by the ideas of his professor, John Anderson.

Much has been written on Anderson's philosophical teaching, and of his influence on his students. He had been appointed from Glasgow to the Challis Chair of Philosophy at Sydney in 1927 and immediately shocked the staid citizens of Sydney by advocating atheism and communism. Demands for his removal ended in a compromise; the philosophy department was divided into two, and students had a choice of studying logic and metaphysics under Anderson, or moral and political philosophy under another Scot, Professor A.K. Stout. However, this did not prevent Anderson speaking outside the lecture room on these subjects. His support of communism did not last, and the Moscow trials

of the 1930s disillusioned him completely, so by 1950 he was supporting the freedom of all political views to be heard. Hedley chose Anderson's course, regarded as the tough option, and thus received a thorough grounding in the Greek and Western European classics of philosophy. But it meant that he did not then study political or moral theorists, even though, as Bruce Miller recalls, he attempted at this time to form a Political Science Association. He associated with other 'Andersonians' in the Free Thought Society, which was believed by other students to advocate free love as well as free thought, and which certainly attacked all conventional beliefs. Hedley learnt two major doctrines from Anderson which influenced him for the rest of his life. The first was that the academic life—a life to which he was increasingly attracted—should be a life of enquiry, in which no statement should be accepted without question, and that this questioning should lead to the investigation of basic truths—the big questions. The second was that any society should be seen as a collection of different and often competing interests, and that the main task of government was to find compromises and agreements between them which would lead to the promotion of their common interests.

Hedley was also spending much time on his other subject, history. He learnt European history from Dr Bramsted, concentrating on German and French history, and the following year studied 'The Expansion of Europe', in which the rest of the world was seen as becoming part of the European empires. The fourth year course, with its emphasis on original research, was mainly Australian history, with its British background.

Hedley took part in all other activities of Arts Faculty students; he wrote to the student newspaper *Honi Soit* on a variety of subjects, was elected to the student Arts Society and became its president, co-edited the Arts Faculty magazine *Arna*, took part in many debates; and even joined, for a short spell, the Sydney University Regiment—his only military experience. He had flirted with girls from his school days, and had a succession of girlfriends in his first three years at university. When I first met him at this time, I thought him far too full of himself, and, when he told me that he liked girls who did history and philosophy, thought him patronising. But I came to realise that he was genuinely interested in what I thought on these subjects and, unlike the other male students I knew, was not merely looking for a female audience for his own views, but for a genuine discussion.

In his fourth year, 1952, life became more serious. A fourth year honours course in one subject was intended to be a full-time course; Hedley was taking two—philosophy and history—in the same year, each with a substantial thesis to be written. He moved from home to the University's Wesley College, but concentrated on work rather than its social life. He graduated at the end of the year with First Class Honours in Philosophy and Second Class Honours in History.

In the first few months of 1953 he applied for every possible position that would help towards his goal of an academic career, and was finally much relieved by the award of the University's Woolley Travelling Fellowship for study overseas. He had not applied for a Rhodes Scholarship, lacking the necessary sporting qualifications. He was accepted by University College, Oxford, to study for a B.Phil in Philosophy—a College recommended by his Sydney mentors for its philosophy tutors. (The title B.Phil., Bachelor of Philosophy, was later changed to M.Phil, as 'Master' became the generally accepted title for a second degree.) He then spent a few months working a night shift in a glass factory, making tumblers, to accumulate some money before his departure for England in August.

The Woolley Fellowship gave £400 a year for two years and, out of this, travel, university fees and all costs of living had to be paid. Hedley was fortunate that the P&O steamship line decided at this time to offer free first class passages to Australian students travelling to study in Britain. He had been considering, even before he left, whether to change his course to politics rather than philosophy, and his visits during the ship's stopovers to the universities at Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth, where he was entertained by both philosophers and political scientists, encouraged this view—and gave him useful contacts for later years. Shipboard reading of the works of the Oxford philosophers, whose doctrines of linguistic analysis had been dismissed by Anderson, decided him.

After the luxurious life aboard the SS *Strathaird* and the stops at Bombay, Aden, the Suez Canal, Marseilles and Gibraltar, Hedley at first found England to be interesting, but cold, grey and lonely. In Oxford the term had not yet begun, and his primary tasks were to find student lodgings that he could afford, to buy a bicycle, and to learn how to feed himself within his budget. The discoveries of British restaurants (where a filling meal could be had for two shillings) and youth hostels (so that he could make hitchhiking expeditions to explore the countryside) were cheering. Better was the arrival back in Oxford of students he had known from Sydney—primarily David Armstrong, a good Andersonian and later Professor of Philosophy in Sydney, and his wife Madeleine, who were helpful on practical as well as academic matters, Rawdon Dalrymple and Henry Bosch, and then the West Australian Rhodes Scholar, Bob Hawke, who were convivial evening companions. University College had no politics tutor; this had the advantage that Hedley was sent to the best tutors from other Colleges, but the disadvantage that he never spent much time at College or became friends with non-Australian students there. He came to know a number of Americans—four of the eight students studying for the B.Phil in Politics were American—and some Europeans, but few English. In March 1954 I joined him in Oxford, and we were married in the College Chapel—and in the Oxford Registry Office, since the Chapel was not legally recognised to conduct weddings. Bob Hawke lent us his van for a honeymoon tour of the Cotswolds, and we then found a flat in central Oxford's Wellington Square. I was fortunate enough to

obtain the position of research assistant to Margery Perham of Nuffield College, the authority on Britain's African colonies, and this provided not only an interesting occupation, but a reasonable salary. As we both had been brought up to frugal habits, Hedley never worried about money or domestic matters again.

However, he found that he had to work hard. The B.Phil course assumed that its students had done undergraduate work in politics—the politics section of the Oxford Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) course, or its equivalent. Hedley had to catch up on the standard works on government and political theory. He chose to take six subjects for examination, rather than write a thesis and take fewer papers. Three basic papers in political institutions and political theory were compulsory, and his choices from the optional list included 'Theories of Law' and 'Hegel and Marx'. He did not choose the option 'International Relations'. He wrote tutorial and seminar essays, and learnt much from, among others, Isaiah Berlin, John Plamenatz, Kenneth Wheare, H.L.A. Hart, and Norman Chester, widening his outlook as well as his knowledge.

The degree of B.Phil did not have classes; students either passed or failed. So it was a genuine relief to Hedley in June 1955 to learn that he had passed. The B.Phil was then regarded as a qualification for university teaching, and doctorates were rare, although, under American influence, becoming more common. Hedley, however, did not want to spend two or three years in scholarly research, but to teach and argue amongst the students and staff of a university department. His aim was still to become an Australian academic, but he thought that a few years of teaching experience in Britain would improve his qualifications. We also wanted to see more of Europe before returning to Australia. He therefore applied for any possible academic post in Britain, even for the very unlikely one of assistant lecturer in international relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). The post, for which he was much better qualified, assistant lecturer in political philosophy at the University of Aberdeen, was offered to him on the phone; and for two days we told everyone that we were going to Aberdeen. But then Hedley was asked to an interview at the LSE, and shortly after received a telegram from the Professor, Charles Manning, telling him that he had been appointed. The Aberdeen Professor was most understanding when Hedley rang to decline his offer—of course, he said, anyone would prefer to go to London. It was hard to believe the LSE selection—Norman Chester at Nuffield, when I told him of it, said, 'But does he feel qualified to *teach* the subject?' We learnt in time that Manning did not want lecturers who had been taught the subject of international relations by anyone else; he wanted his staff to learn his own idiosyncratic view of it. What had been most important in Hedley's selection had been the reference provided by Herbert Hart, who had tutored Hedley for the 'Theories of Law' paper. Manning had trained as a lawyer, and had for some years been law tutor at New College, where

Hart had been his pupil. Hedley's background in philosophy and history, and his recent work in political and legal theory, suited Manning's conception of what was required in his department.

So in July 1955 we packed up our Oxford flat, spent £50 on a 1936 Austin taxi, loaded it with camping gear, and with another Australian couple, Clive and Jill Wood, set out on a six-week exploration of continental Europe. Fortunately Clive was an engineer; without his daily attention the taxi would not have crossed the Channel, and certainly not the Alps. After travelling through Germany, Austria, north Italy and France, we returned in September to start a new life in London.

Twenty years later we came to live in Oxford again. Hedley had left the LSE in 1967 (having been seconded for the previous two years to the Foreign Office as head of the government's Arms Control and Disarmament Research Unit) to become Professor of International Relations at The Australian National University in Canberra. During the eight years in Canberra, he had kept in close contact with British and American scholars, travelling each year to the northern hemisphere, with a visit of up to six weeks in September which enabled him to attend meetings and conferences of the International Institute of Strategic Studies and the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics. Study leave in 1970–71 was spent by all the family—now including children of six, four and one—at Columbia University in New York, and in London at the LSE and the IISS. The next study leave was split into two parts, October 1974–February 1975 at Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, and then October 1975–July 1976 as a Visiting Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford. Oxford had become a more attractive university for the study of international relations with the appointment of Alastair Buchan as Professor of International Relations in 1972, and the move of Michael Howard as Fellow in Higher Defence Studies and in 1977 as Professor of the History of War, both posts at All Souls. He was able to arrange for Hedley to become a Visiting Fellow, with a flat in North Oxford to accommodate the family, and we began the year as temporary visitors from Australia. But in February 1976, Alastair Buchan suddenly and tragically died. Hedley did not want to leave Canberra, where we had settled so happily, but he did realise the advantages to his study of international relations of being in a major world centre, and especially as an Oxford professor. So he applied for the Montague Burton Chair of International Relations, and it was on our way back to Canberra, holidaying for a few days in Venice, that he received a telegram from Michael Howard to say that he had been elected.

So our last eight months in Canberra were spent in preparations for leaving. We did not regard it as necessarily a permanent departure; we arranged to let our house, not to sell it. In April 1977 we moved once more to Oxford, and bought a house in North Oxford; fortunately the schools that the children had

been attending the previous year were able to take them back. The International Relations professor was also a fellow of Balliol College, so Hedley was given a room there, and had to learn the ways of the College; though there was also a faculty building where he shared a secretary. He lunched in College most days, appreciating the opportunity for discussions with those outside his immediate fields of study—one of these was the philosopher, and later Master of Balliol, Anthony Kenny.

Professors in Oxford supervise graduate students, while College Fellows teach undergraduates. Alastair Buchan had done much to attract graduate students to the new B.Phil (soon renamed M.Phil) in international relations, as well as for doctorates; and the numbers of students admitted rose steadily. Some of these graduate students could be supervised by other professors, especially Michael Howard, but most were supervised by College tutors in politics who were interested in international relations, such as Wilfrid Knapp, John Dunbabin, Christopher Seton-Watson and Peter Pulzer. However, the first priority of College tutors was to the undergraduates of their College—mostly to those taking the optional PPE paper on international relations. Hedley was anxious to create more posts whose holders could concentrate on the graduate students, and over the next eight years he raised funds and persuaded the university and the graduate Colleges to create an Alastair Buchan Reader, and an economic Fellow at St Antony's, and, with the help of the Ford Foundation, a University Lectureship in international relations at Nuffield College—the first holder of this, shortly after Hedley's death, was John Vincent, whom he had taught in Canberra, and who had become a good friend in the subsequent years when John was at Keele University. Adam Roberts moved from the LSE to become the Alastair Buchan Reader in 1981, and did much to make life easier for Hedley. He continued, however, to supervise a large number of graduate students, in whom he took great interest. Committee meetings took up a great deal of time, but the one committee which he was always made sure of attending was that which decided the admissions to the graduate degrees. There were always many more applicants than there were places on the M.Phil course, and he made sure of being involved, even when nominally on study leave, in selecting those whom he thought to be the best. One of the advantages of teaching at Oxford, he said, was that it attracted the best students from around the world, and he was stimulated by and learnt much from them.

The other obligation of an Oxford professor was to give at least six lectures each term—though for one term it was permissible to conduct a seminar, which Hedley normally organised for the third term; he also collaborated in seminars in the earlier terms. For the first term he alternated his two sets of standard lectures on the theory and the history of international relations, so that M.Phil students could hear both in their two years; in the second term he lectured on the subject on which he was currently working—for, he said, the best way of

making himself undertake the reading and develop his thoughts on a subject was to put himself down to lecture on it. In this way he worked on what was to be the book, co-edited with Adam Watson, *The Expansion of International Society*, and what was planned to be a following volume on *The Revolt against Western Dominance*. He also wanted to write on the history of international thought, and was collecting material and lecturing on writers dealing with the history and the events of their times from sixteenth to twentieth century Europe. He spent a considerable time preparing each lecture, and then took pride in delivering them without notes.

He also organised lecture series. In Hilary term 1982 he arranged eight lectures by international experts on the topic of 'Intervention in World Politics' and, with the addition of an introduction and a chapter of his own, they were published with this title in 1984. In 1983 he arranged for a series of lectures in honour of Adam von Trott, the German Rhodes Scholar who was executed in 1944 for his part in the plot against Hitler, in conjunction with Balliol College, where von Trott had studied, and David Astor, who had been his contemporary there. These were edited by Hedley and published in 1986 under the title *The Challenge of the Third Reich: The Adam von Trott Memorial Lectures*. In Michaelmas term 1983 he arranged a lecture series to mark the quatercentenary of the birth of Hugo Grotius. This series took longer to organise into a book, with several additional chapters commissioned, and was not published until 1990, after Hedley's death, as *Hugo Grotius and International Relations*, edited by Hedley Bull, Adam Roberts and Benedict Kingsbury. In 1984–85 he worked with Wm. Roger Louis to hold a series of conferences, sponsored by the Ditchley Foundation in Oxfordshire, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center in Washington, on Anglo-American Relations since the Second World War. These were published, with them both as joint editors, as *The Special Relationship* in 1986.

There were also meetings in London. He tried to keep Thursdays free of Oxford commitments as that was the day of most meetings of the IISS, of which he was on the Council, and of Chatham House, where he was for some years Director of Research. He was also on the Board of the Australian Studies Institute of the University of London, and a member of the Round Table, which studied Commonwealth affairs. But most time and thought went to the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics. This group of theorists of international relations was undergoing changes, and Hedley worked with Adam Watson to engage in a new project—the study of the expansion of European international society. The usual program was to hold weekend meetings—originally at Peterhouse, Cambridge, chaired by its Master, Herbert Butterfield, but now also in other universities, including Oxford. Members and guests contributed papers on relevant aspects of the spread of the European states system, and Hedley and Adam wrote an introduction and conclusion, as well as their own chapters. The

jointly edited book, *The Expansion of International Society*, was published by Oxford University Press in 1984.

In vacations, it seemed that he was always travelling to conferences and other meetings. He made many visits to the United States, and to Europe—Eastern as well as Western—and some to Australia and Asia. In the Easter vacation of 1984 he spent several weeks in South America. He had not previously been there, except for a conference in Chile on the Pacific Rim in 1970, and felt he should know more of the continent and its scholars. However, we did manage a family holiday each summer, most in Greece, in Corfu and Crete, for we all felt the need of beaches and sunshine. Swimming and snorkelling were still his favourite pastimes.