

## Maria

### **What did you study prior to arriving in Durham?**

Prior to going to Durham I did four A levels (and the old S level, which was a higher level) in English, French, Spanish and History, and crammed O Level Latin - as back then there were compulsory language requirements: Latin or Greek, and one Modern Language (other than a Mother tongue).



### **What were the highlights of studying at Durham?**

The highlights of studying at Durham.... I loved all aspects of it. It's such a beautiful place to live in. The high quality of history teaching naturally, and the opportunity to attend lectures in other subjects. Then there was the wonderfully varied student body and the student life that introduced me to so many things I hadn't done. I really enjoyed living at College too for all three years.

### **What was the topic of your dissertation?**

The topic of my third year dissertation was the marriage of Mary Tudor and Philip II, supervised by Professor David Loades.

### **What are you doing now and how did your degree help prepare you?**

I am currently a Professor Emerita of International History at the London School of Economics. Having taught International, Economic and Social History since the age of 24 at the universities of St Andrews, Newcastle-upon-Tyne and The London School of Economics and Political Science, I decided to take early retirement in order to focus on research, conferences and publication and move out of London.

### **What advice do you have for prospective applicants to History at Durham?**

The degree at Durham was fundamental in setting me up for my chosen career as a University Lecturer in History. The curriculum was very traditional and subject choice was restricted, but that had the advantage of making us do a wide period of history and giving us considerable depth by the third year. We were made to use documents from the outset - in Latin and Modern languages - and encouraged to use our language skills in essays. The Library even offered a few palaeography classes for third year dissertations using manuscript documents.

My advice to new applicants is to ensure that they try different types of history and different periods. It is essential to gain range as well as depth. I was convinced I would specialise in Franco-German diplomacy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and ended up as an Early-Modern International historian as a

result of being exposed to the different courses the department offered in this field. I would urge all students to study languages - they provide a great insight to diverse cultures too. Historians can be greatly improved by exposure to other subjects, so I would encourage students to attend open lectures in other courses and engage with different societies and student groups. University is a great place to broaden horizons, not just to do a specific subject.

**And do you have any advice for those considering a career in academia?**

As for how to get into Academic History... An independent mind, sharp analytical skills, and a capacity to think broadly were qualities I looked for. An excellent PhD and evidence of the capacity to present your research both in writing - preferably with publications - and in conferences, are vital. Sometimes you have to create your own opportunities to be able to demonstrate this. A potential candidate must offer a combination of depth and breadth, both in history and if their specialism requires it, in cognate disciplines. It is important to have identified areas of history to which one might contribute as a teacher beyond the narrow subjects of the doctoral thesis. The desire and capacity for hard work are also important, as is evidence of collegiality. Hence those who participate in diverse activities while at the same time securing top grades in their chosen subject tend to stand out better.