

University  
of  
St Andrews

# Classics News

Summer 2009



2008-9 has been another buoyant year for the School of Classics. We have seen both our teaching quality and our research achievements highly rated by outside bodies; individuals have won awards and prizes for their work; we have continued to host a programme of international conferences; and, last but not least, we held a very successful Alumni Reunion, our first ever, on Saturday June 27th 2009.

The reunion was attended by over fifty former students of the School, together with a number of current staff and postgraduates. Those present had graduation dates spanning an astonishing sixty years, from Emeritus Professor Ian Kidd, who graduated in 1947 and whom many will remember from his period as Professor of Greek, through to some who graduated as recently

as 2008. Former students travelled from as far away as Canada and the USA to attend.

In addition to events organised centrally within the University, the programme for the reunion included talks by current staff (Dr Jon Coulston on the archaeology of conflict landscapes and Dr Emma Gee on 'a short history of hell') and a highly entertaining performance of A. E. Housman's *Fragment of a Greek Tragedy* by the outgoing Head of School, Prof. Greg Woolf, and the recently retired Prof. Adrian Gratwick.

Guests had an opportunity to explore the fine facilities of the Swallowgate and Craigard buildings, with expert guidance and information from current postgraduates. The School hosted a drinks reception in the Library of Swallowgate, which provided a good opportunity for

This is the second issue of an annual newsletter which is designed to keep our former students and staff more closely in touch with what is going on in the School. We welcome contact from anyone who has spent time in the School. Email news, comments and suggestions to [classicsnews@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:classicsnews@st-andrews.ac.uk) For more information on all our activities plus news for our alumni and alumnae and more pictures from the 2009 Classics reunion visit <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/classics/alumni>



*Classics Drinks Reception in the School Library*

people to catch up with former classmates and staff and to reminisce about the past. A formal dinner at the University's Gateway building followed in the evening. The picture at the head of this *Newsletter* shows the group photo taken outside the Gateway before guests sat down to a four-course meal. We would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who attended and invite readers to visit [www.st-andrews.ac.uk/classics/alumni](http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/classics/alumni) to view more photographs.

The end of 2008 saw the results of the latest Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) announced, a moment of truth for all UK university departments and one which has a big effect on their research council funding. We are happy to say that the School of Classics came very well out of the exercise. A total of 60% of all our research activities (which includes things like the conferences we host and the quality and quantity of our post-graduate research and training, as well as our individual publications) were rated as either world-leading or internationally excellent, and almost all the remainder as of national importance. These results placed us seventh among UK Classics departments in research strength. For an example of the way in which conference activity translates into published research and new topics for undergraduate and postgraduate study, see later in this *Newsletter*.

Equally pleasing was the amount of good publicity we had during the past year for the quality of our teaching. We were ranked as third-best Classics Department in the UK

(behind just Oxford and Cambridge) in the subject league-tables accompanying the guides for 2010 university entrants published by the *Guardian*, *Independent* and *Times*. For all the reservations one might have about such figures, it is gratifying to be so consistently acknowledged as a School which offers its students excellent all-round academic care. At this year's annual Honours dinner, the final-year students stressed that we are regarded as a friendly, accessible department. They also cited the enthusiasm of young staff who teach innovative and exciting modules: new subjects on offer during the past year included Hesiod and the near east, the history and archaeology of Carthage, and the social and historical significance of Roman burial practices.

As in previous years, students have had the opportunity to take advantage of the resources and courses on offer at the British Schools in Athens and Rome. See back page for further details.

The quality of the research work that takes place in the School of Classics has been recognised on an individual as well as a collective basis. Pride of place in this respect goes to the outgoing Head of School, Greg Woolf, who was awarded a prestigious three-year Leverhulme

Major Research Fellowship to pursue a project on the evolution of religion in the Roman empire. Prof. Woolf will be trying to understand in particular what it

was about the social and cultural conditions of the empire which made it such a fertile environment for the emergence of new religions. He will be spending the first year of his award in Germany, holding a fellowship in the Department of Comparative History of Religion at the University of Erfurt (with which the School is developing an ongoing series of collaborations).

Another Roman historian, Christopher Smith (who has most recently held the office of Proc-

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*Front cover: Classics Reunion 2009,  
group photo courtesy of Peter Adamson*

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tor in the Principal's office), is also preparing for a period abroad, having been appointed to the important post of Director of the British School at Rome for the next five years. He is not leaving the University, however, but will be on secondment for that period.

Greg Woolf's successor as Head of School, Stephen Halliwell, has been celebrating the award of two international prizes during the past year. One is the Criticos Prize 2008 for his book *Greek Laughter: a Study of Cultural Psychology from Homer to Early Christianity* (Cambridge 2008). This prize is awarded annually to a work of outstanding scholarship from anywhere in the entire field of Hellenic studies, from ancient to modern; it will be presented to Prof. Halliwell at a ceremony in London in October 2009. Stephen Halliwell's previous book, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton 2002), was awarded the Premio Europeo d'Estetica 2008 by the Società Italiana d'Estetica and was presented at a ceremony in Rome last year.

Yet another striking achievement by a member of the School is the special Research Leave Grant won by Dr Jason König from the Loeb Classical Library Foundation, based in Cambridge Mass. This will enable him, in the course of 2009-10, to complete a book on the symposium literature of the Roman Empire (to be published by Cambridge University Press). The tradition of recording learned, philosophical conversation in the symposium, following Plato's *Symposium* and Xenophon's *Symposium*, had a rich and fascinating afterlife in later centuries, and Dr König will be studying works in this tradition by pagan authors like Plutarch, Athenaeus and Macrobius, but he will also be examining some of the peculiar and ambivalent adaptations of this tradition in certain early Christian writings.

The School of Classics maintains a high international profile in part because of the conferences and academic visitors we host in St



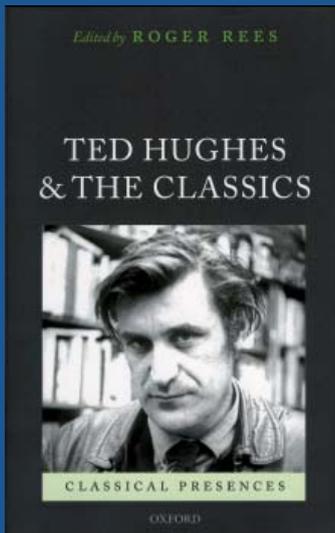
*Classics Reunion Talks in the New Arts Building*

Andrews, as well as the regular foreign invitations accepted by individual members of staff (including lecturing engagements in all five continents during the past year). Highlights of our conference programme during 2008-9 were two events in the ongoing (Leverhulme-funded) Science and Empire project, one on Scientific Writing in the Roman empire, the other (a major conference, with participants from all round the world) on Ancient Libraries in their cultural and intellectual contexts. Moving in the other direction, April 2009 saw several staff travel to Odense in Denmark to take part in a joint conference on the theme of Double Vision: Literary Responses to Roman Power in the 2nd and 3rd Centuries. Another Danish connection was the appointment of Karla Pollmann as Honorary Professor at the Faculty of Theology in Aarhus, where she is involved in research activities designed to promote collaboration between Classics and Theology.

With such a wide range of vigorous activities and connections on the research front, and with our student numbers and satisfaction ratings thriving, the School of Classics is facing the future with a great deal of confidence.



# Ted Hughes and the Classics



Dr Roger Rees has been Reader in Latin in St Andrews since 2006. His primary research and teaching interests centre on Latin panegyric writers, including Pliny the Younger, and the history and culture of late antiquity. But he has also developed an interest in classical elements in the poetry of Ted Hughes (1930-98). While the popular image of Hughes is that of a poet of nature, it is striking how many of his major works engage with the culture and history of ancient Greece and Rome. Long before his prize-winning *Tales from Ovid* (1997), Hughes had produced his own versions of Homer and several Greek and Roman tragedies. He also produced a collection called *Prometheus on his Crag* (1973). In order to investigate this rich but neglected aspect of Hughes' poetry, Roger organized a conference at the University of Edinburgh which brought together scholars from Classics and English studies. The presentations and discussions which took place at this gathering, back in November 2005, formed the basis of a collection of essays edited by Roger. *Ted Hughes and the Classics* (Oxford University Press, 2009) includes an essay by Roger himself which deals with the way in which Hughes manipulated classical models of praise poetry in the poems he produced in his role as Poet Laureate between 1984 and 1998. This new research on Hughes' classical influences has also fed back into our postgraduate teaching at St Andrews. Roger has taught on the subject at MLitt level and is currently directing a Masters dissertation on Hughes' interest in the anthropology of Greek religion.

## Studying Sites in Greece and Rome



Katie East completed an MLitt in Ancient History in 2009. In September she will be starting a PhD at Royal Holloway on an 18th century text by John Toland about Cicero. As part of her MLitt, Katie took an integrated study-abroad module. She spent eight weeks at the British School at Rome – an unparalleled opportunity to learn about the ancient city through site visits as well as independent research. Katie found the whole experience very rewarding: 'one of the key attractions of doing this course with the British School is the access granted you to otherwise inaccessible parts of the city: we climbed to the top of Marcus Aurelius' column, visited closed tombs on the Via Latina, and even went inside the Aurelian walls to visit the house where Lucas Cozza was born. This course was a revelation, as previously my studies has focused almost exclusively on literary evidence.'



With the help of the Margaret Mitford Travel Bursary Adam Mullen attended the 2008 Summer Undergraduate Course run by the British School at Athens. This three-week trip was divided between Attica and the Peloponnese; some thirty site-visits included Mycenae, Athens, Olympia and Delphi. 'There was also time to relax, whether that involved visiting the winery in Nemea (great place for getting souvenirs) or going for a swim in the sea. We got special access to many of the areas and talked with people working on the sites about archaeological methods and the problems of historical reconstruction. Overall, it was a fantastic three weeks, giving me a great insight into archaeology, along with many fond memories and new friends.'