

# UCL Classics Newsletter



<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/GrandLat/>

Department of Greek and Latin, UCL, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT Tel: 020 7679 7522 E-mail: [a.cater@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:a.cater@ucl.ac.uk)

For this, the first issue of what we hope will become an annual newsletter, we have aimed to bring readers up to date with developments over the past two years in Classics at UCL. You'll find some information here about people, plays and plans, and a couple of not-too-heavy articles to give you something to think about. We'd be grateful for any comments, on paper or by e-mail: you'll find our address on the front and back pages.

## Staff Arrivals ...

A notable contribution to the integration of study of various aspects of the classical world at UCL was the appointment in 1997 of Simon Hornblower to a joint appointment in History and in Greek and Latin. He will be known to many as co-editor of the third edition of the Oxford Classical Dictionary and the author of a three-volume commentary on Thucydides, of which two volumes have so far been published. He is also currently writing a completely new edition of his 1983 textbook *The Greek World 479-323 BC*, and is co-director, with Mogens Herman Hansen, of the Copenhagen Polis Centre, which is studying the ways in which the word polis was used and the settlements to which the word was applied.

Professor Hornblower took over responsibility for the inter-departmental Ancient World Studies degree and the interdisciplinary course on Life and Death in the Ancient World. This is intended primarily for first-year Ancient World students, and was set up in 1995 in response to suggestions from those taking this degree

programme. He and Professor Bob Sharples have also collaborated in the teaching of a course on Plato's dialogue *Gorgias* in the original Greek, drawing together the literary, historical and philosophical aspects of a text which combines a bitter critique of Athenian politics with a challenge to our thinking about the place of morality in politics generally.

Amanda Cater joined Frances Mills in our departmental office in August 1999. Amanda is an alumna of the department (1982). After graduating in Classics, she did a PGCE at Cambridge and an MA (Classics) in Canada, returning to teach Classics at The Leys School, Cambridge. She came to the department after four years at Imperial College as an administrator in the IC School of Medicine.

Dr Cornelia Roemer arrived at UCL from Cologne in Autumn 2000 to succeed Herwig Maehler as the department's papyrologist. Her special interests include papyrology, Egyptology, and the life of Mani (the founder of Manichaeism, a form of alternative mystic religion in which St Augustine became involved and from which he later revolted).

## ... and Departures

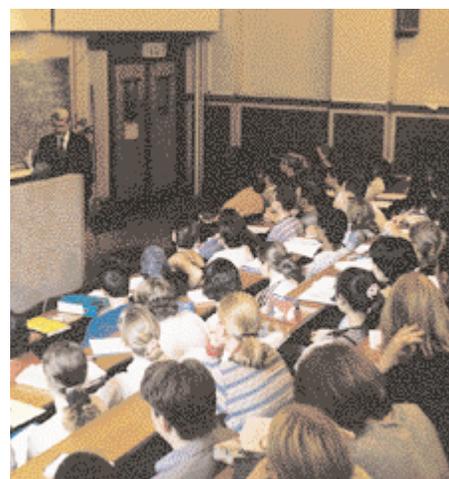
Herwig Maehler, Reader in Papyrology since 1979 and Professor since 1981, and Paddy Considine, lecturer in comparative philology since 1970 (part-time since 1997), both retired at the end of the last academic year.

In the context of increased collaboration with the School of Oriental and African Studies, a new joint full-time lectureship in Sanskrit and Comparative Indo-European Linguistics has been established, shared between the Department of Greek and Latin at UCL and the Department of the Languages and Cultures of South Asia at SOAS. Dr Elisabeth Rieken will teach Sanskrit to students of both institutions, and courses previously taught by Paddy – an Introduction to the Study of Language, for example – and the History of the Greek and Latin Languages. The department's and the University of London's tradition of offering students a wide range of specialisms is thus maintained.

## Lectures and Seminars

In addition to the department's usual extensive involvement in the literature and philosophy seminars at the Institute of Classical Studies of the University of London, its own regular lunchtime seminar has continued to provide an opportunity for graduate students, undergraduates and staff in all these areas to hear and discuss papers by visiting and local speakers, including research students. Topics in the past three years have ranged from Greek views on primitive diet to Antony and Cleopatra as seen by Plutarch, Shakespeare and Mankiewicz, from the portrayal of marvellous beasts in Hellenistic Art to the obscurities of interpreting financial accounts on papyri from the later classical period, and from the coherence of Sophocles' *Ajax* to St Augustine's *On the Teacher*.

Three staff have contributed recently to the College's popular series of open Lunch-Hour Lectures: Herwig Maehler on the new library now being constructed in Alexandria, Bob Sharples on the reasons for the decline of Aristotle's school in antiquity, Stephen Instone on ancient athletics. A report of Stephen's findings, exhausting merely to read, follows overleaf.





# Ancient Olympics

Stephen Instone

The modern Olympic Games have their share of problems, but so too did the ancient Olympics, and so do we when trying to interpret what went on in the ancient Olympics – as I found when I compared the ancient and modern Games in a Lunch-hour Lecture in College. One major problem concerns the ancient long-jump: they did it holding weights weighing several pounds; the general consensus of scholarly opinion reckons that this was because they did the jump as a standing jump with no run-up, and that if you do the long-jump like that you will jump further if you swing your arms holding weights. But will you jump further? In fact, has anyone ever done so? After years of painful practice I have failed to do so, and perhaps the real reason for the Greeks' use of weights was to make the jump harder

and more arduous to perform: no pain, no gain. This would put the long-jump on a par with some other peculiar events which the Greeks dreamt up for their Olympics, like the race in armour when you ran a length of the stadium and back with shield, helmet and greaves to weigh you down; or like the chariot race, probably a gruelling nine miles long at Olympia, and at the Pythian Games on at least one occasion so tough that only one chariot out of forty starters survived intact to complete the course. One can also compare modern steeplechase and hurdles events: having to jump over barriers does not facilitate running, but makes it harder: result, a more exciting and unpredictable event.

But how good were ancient athletes? It is difficult to evaluate their performances, but one indicator is the fact that we hear of multiple event winners: the same athlete winning running events over radically different distances, or events in different disciplines. The amazing Leonidas of Rhodes won all three running events (the stadion = c.192 metres, the diaulos = c.380 metres, and the dolichos = c.5000 metres) at four consecutive Olympics (164-152 BC). No athlete nowadays could be competitive at Olympic level at both the 200 and 5000 metres. The achievement of Leonidas, and the achievements of others who won, for instance, both the stadion and the pentathlon, or a running event and a physical event such as boxing, suggests that there was less event specialisation and less strength in depth for each event than nowadays. A parallel is provided by the early modern Olympics: in 1896 the same runner won both the 100m and 400m running events, the same swimmer both the 100 and 1200m swimming, and the same cyclist both the one-lap sprint and the 15km cycle races. If the opposition is generally weak, you do not need to be very good to have a chance of winning.

---

## Research Students

Research students make up nearly 20% of the total student numbers in Greek and Latin, and the breadth of their interests remains impressively wide. Theses currently in progress range from Greek lyric, Greek musical theory, Greek mythology, the Greek geographers (Ktesias, Dionysios of Alexandria), through the tragedians and comic poets (complete and fragmentary), then via the epigrammatists (Krinagoras), the novelists, the Hellenistic period (Apollodoros), and female characters in Roman silver-age epic, as far as later Greek and Latin literature (Prudentius, Prokopios, Ennodius of Pavia) and the complexities of late antique philosophy and religious thought (Augustine, Proklos, Origen, Plotinos).

Amongst these recently completed are: Nikos Athanassiou on Marginalia and commentaries in the papyri of Euripides, Sophocles and Aristophanes; Diana Burton on The search for immortality in archaic Greek myth; Armand d'Angour on The dynamics of innovation: Newness and novelty in the Athens of Aristophanes; Vanessa Champion-Smith on Pausanias in Athens; and Rafael Marrinan on The Ptolemaic army: its organization, development and settlement.



## From London to Lampeter (and back)

Naoko Yamagata

Since I took my Classics MA (1986) and PhD (1990) at UCL, I have had many opportunities to teach Classics in various contexts. In 1990-91 I taught at UCL as a part-time tutorial assistant. In 1991-2 I did my PGCE in Classics at KCL, which gave me an opportunity to teach Greek and Latin at school for a term. At the same time I started teaching Classical Civilisation courses for the Open University in London, which I continued until 1995. In 1992 I came back to UCL again as a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow, to teach Classics as well as to do research. From 1995 I was a full-time lecturer in Classics at the University of Wales, Lampeter, teaching a variety of courses in Greek, Latin and Classical Civilisation. Since April 2000 I have been back in London as a lecturer (staff tutor) in Classical Studies at the Open University, moving from one of the smallest universities in the UK to the largest. As a member of the Department of Classical Studies I shall soon be writing course materials for thousands of readers as well as teaching a small group of students.

When I first came to UCL from Japan in 1985 as an MA student with wobbly spoken English, I never imagined that I would one day be able to teach at a school or university in the UK. It is the excellent training that I received at UCL that has enabled me to teach Classics for the last ten years.

---

## MEDIO TVTISSIMVS IBIS

Michael Crawford

Teachers of Roman history tend to go to Rome, and I hope that students of Roman history will go there too. A few hints on crossing roads may be useful. It is important to remember that drivers in Italy do not stop for pedestrians, though I have noticed a slight recent tendency for police cars to do so. On the other hand, drivers are reluctant to hit pedestrians, because it might damage their bodywork. If you walk steadily and purposefully across a road, the cars will usually avoid you. The important thing is to avoid sudden movements and changes of mind. Crossing the road in a group is usually a bad idea, since its members are likely to behave differently and confuse the cars, unless of course the group is so large that the cars have to stop. You may however wish to give yourself an added sense of security by attaching yourself to a woman with a small child, or better still to a nun. But never forget that a car driven by a nun is no different from any other.

# The Show Goes On ...



## Robert Ireland

... and on and on. The departmental tradition of producing a classical play each year at the College's Bloomsbury Theatre, begun with the 1987 *Agamemnon*, is now firmly established, and we go from strength to strength. Recent successes – which some readers may have seen, and others may have appeared in – include Plautus's *The Rope* (our first Roman play at the Bloomsbury) in 1997, Euripides' *Orestes* in 1998 (a cut-down version of which was taken to the Edinburgh Fringe) – and our latest offerings, *Lysistrata*, transformed to a 1920s musical, which played in March 1999 to standing-room-only audiences for every performance, and *King Oedipus*, which played to very nearly full houses in March 2000.

Taking the *Lysistrata* as a 1920s musical meant that, in addition to the usual challenges of writing speakable modernised dialogue and intricately-rhymed verse, I was faced with the distinctly unusual challenge of turning strategic choruses into recognisable parodies of well-known songs by George Gershwin and Cole Porter. Translating Aristophanic lyrics into the stanza-forms and rhyme-schemes of 'Well, did you ever?', 'I got rhythm', 'Anything goes' and 'Let's call the whole thing off' was a stimulating

(though at times Procrustean) experience, and I have no doubt collected a substantial number of penalty points on my poetic licence as a result. But what fun it was!

The fabric of this vision has melted into thin air, leaving behind a series of snapshots taken at the dress rehearsal – the script, dumb and inert on the xeroxed pages – the heraldic device of the Bank of Ruritania, salvaged from the demolished set as a tasteful souvenir for the student common-room – and the memories: memories of the projector-noise (so chillingly like machine-gun fire) behind the silent footage from 1917 with which we opened; of Mike Lees' deeply decadent stage design, the stylish costumes, and the amazing cut-out car in which the Bank Governor arrived; the accurately-researched Charlestons and Black Bottoms, vigorously performed under a kaleidoscopic display of coloured lights; the solo lyrics, superbly sung and wittily accompanied; and last but far from least, the stupendous phalluses, one of which had to be revived during the dress rehearsal with superglue ...

*Lysistrata* having succeeded so splendidly as a '20s musical, we had naturally considered doing *King Oedipus* the same way: after all, a West-End

theatre company was planning, we were told, to do *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* in Gershwin style. But the story of a man who murders his father, marries his mother, brings plague on his city, and stabs his own eyes out, seems somehow unsuited to the Busby Berkeley treatment; so we decided to take the play straight, with a stylized set, simple robes, half-masks, expressive acting and a severely literal translation. The opening and closing scenes, dominated by plague and blinding, glowed in a blood-red light: the chorus hooded and dark-robed, the doomed king and queen regal in crimson, black and gold, Creon silver-caped in leather, the countrymen in torn, earth-coloured smocks, Tiresias and the final messenger statuesque in white, moved in symbolic choreography or natural action before black drapes, around and across a tilted, sand-covered, red-circled square at centre stage. Jocasta had something of the Sphinx about her; Oedipus' gestures repeatedly re-enacted the fatal scene at the cross-roads, and his on-stage movements – now without his stick, now with it, and finally crawling on hands and knees – impersonated the famous riddle. Unforgettable. And at least three of the students involved in our recent productions are going on, after graduation, to theatrical training, in direction, stage management, and acting: an interesting use for a Classics or Ancient World degree.

And what next? Well, I'm not alone in thinking that, after *The Rope*, we should try a Roman play again, soon: but for 2001, now that we've found out how much we can get away with when it comes to Aristophanes, we thought we'd have another crack at one of the great crowd-pullers, *Frogs*. It will be on, at the Bloomsbury, from 28 February to 3 March 2001: more information, in due course, from the department or the theatre's website at

[www.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsburytheatre](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsburytheatre)

Do come and see it. School students and alumni get cut-price tickets!



# HOMO DOCTUS IN SE SEMPER DIVITIAS HABET

## Yohan Graham

After having just completed my fifth-form at school, and having sat my external exams, you would have expected any self-respecting teenager to 'chill out', conducting his obligatory 'work experience' as an office teaboy or an assistant in the local hospital's geriatric wing. Oh no: I, fired with my love of the classical world, chose something quite different.

I heard that UCL were holding the annual London Summer School in Classics (which takes place at UCL and King's in alternate years): the object of the exercise being to teach Latin and Classical Greek to students of all ages and at all levels. So I eagerly applied to be an assistant at the Summer School as my work-experience placement in 1999. To my great joy, my application was accepted.

And so I embarked on a personal Odyssey. My duties ranged from gaining an intimate acquaintance with the departmental photocopier (see picture) to ushering lost students around the campus, helping the tutors to prepare for classes, and much more. I was there, also, to learn more about two of the world's greatest languages, and I left fattened with knowledge: some of the tutors were happy to let me sit in on their classes, and the UCL Classics staff didn't mind helping me either.

Looking behind the scenes was a memorable experience; rather an overwhelming one, too, with such eminent figures as Professor O'Daly in action, wielding (it seemed to me) the power of a Mafia Don. I was always impressed by the tutors' vigour and passion for their subject, which came out even when I was just talking to them on a social level.

I loved my experience at UCL, and have been back there since, harassing various tutors: I made many friends who, like me, want to see the Classics restored to their full glory. I think that I helped a great Summer School to run smoothly, and I intend to return, often. [He did, as director's assistant at the 2000 Summer school. - Ed.]

And when it was all over, I went to Bryanston ...



## Alumni

### Isabel Koprowski

A record number of alumni attended the departmental reception on Saturday 6 June 1998, when Joan Newey, an alumna from 1945, spoke about her experience as a student in the Second World War when the Greek and Latin Department was evacuated to Aberystwyth. The next reception was on Saturday 16 September 2000, when Gerard O'Daly brought our fifty or so visitors up to date with recent developments in the department and the College; Joan Newey spoke about the fascinating life of her fellow alumna, the late Catherine Chown; and Robert Ireland, dramatics maestro, reviewed 'The rise and rise of the departmental play'. (Oh yes he did.)

## Alumni Contacts

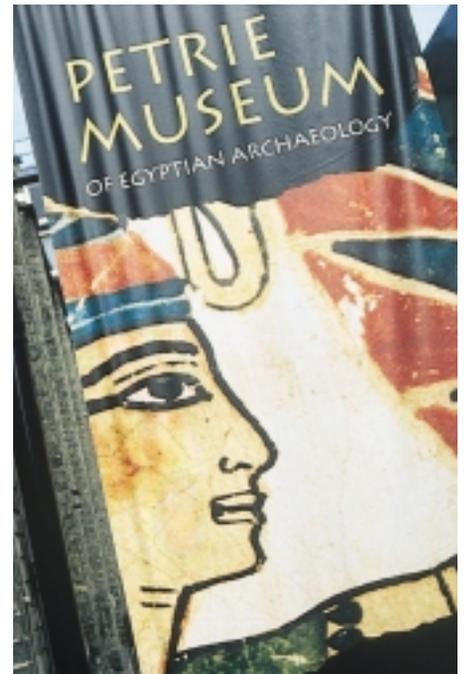
Following Malcolm Willcock's formal retirement from alumni matters and the untimely death of his successor Ian Martin, formerly the Classics librarian, your alumni representative is Isabel Koprowski (left 1985, but currently a research student in the department). Linda Robson (1975) and Tom Rimmington (1981) have kindly agreed to help behind the scenes (we call ourselves the triumvirate), while the Departmental Office looks after administration. If you have any suggestions or queries, news or views, please write to Isabel c/o Departmental Office (Alumni), Greek and Latin Department, UCL, Gower Street, London, WC1E 6BT. Do please keep in touch, and let the office know if you change your address, your job, your name...



Accommodation is guaranteed to all first-year undergraduates, including those whose homes are within the M25, provided that they apply for a residential place by the deadline, give firm acceptance of their offer of an academic place at UCL and have not previously undertaken higher education in London.

## UCL Benefits

A number of alumni have asked whether they can join the library, visit the Petrie Museum or drink in the bars. The answer is yes, if you apply for your UCL Alumni Card. Free of charge, it provides a wide range of benefits, which includes free access to the library. You can also borrow up to five books at any one time if you pay £30 a year. The Housman Room is available to alumni in the evenings, as are the UCL Union bars. Guided tours of the Petrie Museum can be organised, and (N.B.) you can get discounts for performances at the Bloomsbury Theatre. For details of these and other benefits, contact James Davis, Alumni Relations, FREEPOST WC5 128, UCL, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BR (tel: 020 7679 7677) or visit the website at [www.ucl.ac.uk/alumni/](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/alumni/). If you choose to join on-line, you can obtain discounts on books ordered on-line from W.H. Smith.



## \*\*\*STOP PRESS\*\*\*STOP PRESS\*\*\*

Congratulations to Chris Martin (BA Honours, Class I, Ancient World Studies, 1999) on the success of 'Parachutes', and we're sorry you missed the Toshiba award.

This newsletter has been produced for schools and alumni by the Department of Greek and Latin at UCL. You can find out much more about the department and about what's going on there by visiting the Departmental Web pages, at <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/GrandLat/> (There's even the opportunity to do some practice on-line Latin exercises!) At UCL, Greek and Latin, History, and the Institute of Archaeology collaborate to provide coverage of all aspects of Greek and Roman antiquity; their interests stretch back to Egypt and the ancient Near East and forward to the Dark and Middle Ages. Information about degree programmes can be found in UCL's *Undergraduate Prospectus* and departmental booklets, and on line at the address above.