**Alumnus/Alumna of the month**

**Introduction**
Sarah Goudge graduated with an Upper Second Honours degree in Classics in 1976 from the UCL Department of Greek and Latin.

Sarah at Lake Avernus during a trip to Naples and Pompeii in her first year of teaching.

**What did you enjoy most about your time in Greek and Latin and at UCL?**
Although I was born in London, we moved away soon afterwards and I had never lived there until I became a student in Greek and Latin. I really loved the excitement of being in London and made a lot of good friends. At that time, the Department was located on the second floor of the Wilkins building, near the Gustave Tuck Lecture Theatre. I must admit that I enjoyed studying Latin more than Greek but there were great characters in the Department and I have lots of memories, some of which still make me smile. For instance, Dr Horsfall had an office in one of the round observatories in the Quad. He used to smoke all the time, even while lecturing, so when you were in his office for a tutorial, the air was thick with smoke. (Of course, that would never be allowed nowadays!)

Observatory in Quad

**What was your career path like after leaving UCL?**
After leaving UCL, I took a PGCE at KCL and then became a teacher – during my teaching career, I taught Latin, Greek and Ancient History to ‘A’ level, Classical Studies and Greek Literature in Translation. My first job was at Grey Coat Hospital, a girls’ comprehensive school in Westminster. I enjoyed teaching – it was very hard work but a lot of fun and I had very bright pupils studying Latin ‘A’ level in the sixth form.

I had always loved the Italian language so I took evening classes to get my ‘O’ and ‘A’ levels whilst teaching full-time and then I decided to study for a part-time BA in Italian at Birkbeck College. That was quite a commitment so I then got a part-time teaching post at the Ursuline Convent in Wimbledon for the next five years. I was
awarded my Italian degree in 1987. I had always been self-conscious about speaking a foreign language (which may have explained my choice of dead languages for my first degree!) but learning Italian gave me confidence and since then I have been to Italy many times. Actually, Italian people love it when you do talk to them in Italian!

Whilst at the Convent, I was the Head of Classics and the Department consisted of three other part-time teachers including one nun. After five years, I found that I wasn’t really enjoying being a teacher so much and was ready for a change. With the introduction of the national curriculum, I realised that it would be very difficult to find a job in the state system and I didn’t want to work in an independent school. So, my next step was to apply to the Inland Revenue to become a direct entry graduate trainee and I got in! So, I have been a tax inspector since 1989.

What do you like most about your current job?
I enjoy analysing accounts and I think my Classics training helped a lot with developing my analytical skills. I found that I am a good administrator with an organised approach, and I have met a lot of very nice people, including my husband! I am based in the Croydon tax office at present but I have worked in seven offices in South and Central London. The main thing that has made my work enjoyable over the years is the camaraderie and kindness of colleagues.

What was your first-ever job?
Picking raspberries at a fruit farm on Ashdown forest, near my family home, in summer 1973.

What has been your favourite job?
The eight years I spent as a tutor training others to be tax specialists. It combined the pleasure of being in a classroom again with the challenges of explaining the technical intricacies of tax. Great fun! The course lasts almost three years and nowadays people get a degree in tax administration at the end of it which was not the case when I was trained in the early 1990s. I met my husband, John, on the training course. Our careers have gone in different directions. He does policy work in Whitehall, which I would find very stressful. I am glad that my career has focused on examining accounts and records.

My job in the civil service has been flexible enough to allow me to become a magistrate in 2008. I have always been interested in criminal justice and I was inspired to apply by tax colleagues who were magistrates and also by the fact that my grandmother was also a magistrate. The selection process was the most difficult I have ever encountered – they were clearly probing for prejudice and it made me examine closely my own attitudes and opinions. I am very proud to have got through the process and to have been chosen as a magistrate. I usually sit three times a month and I learn something new on every occasion.

In what way did your studies help you in your subsequent work?
Clearly, my degree in Greek and Latin was essential to my teaching career and I could not have learned Italian so quickly without it. I also developed a very good eye for detail and am looked upon as something of a stickler for grammar and spelling!

What do you remember most about your time in UCL Greek and Latin?
The Classics corridor on the second floor of the Wilkins – all the students used to meet up there before classes. There was also a door at the side of the Flaxman Gallery, under the Portico, which led, via a ‘secret’ and very dusty staircase, to a
circular corridor and a back entrance to the Classics corridor – I liked that, too! I also enjoyed the two years I lived in Ramsay Hall and remember a lot of laughs with good friends.

Looking back, the teaching standard wasn’t marvellous then, to be honest, and perhaps we were left too much to our own devices. I was never as good at Greek as I was at Latin and so I was placed in an accelerated group for Greek but I feel we didn’t get enough help or enough feedback. At the time, it never occurred to me to criticise. I really liked Homer though and I hope to read him again, when I retire next year. For our Ancient History exam in the first year we had to submit a list of topics we would like to see on the paper...they were all there when we started the exam!

I remember lots of characters among the tutors: Alan Griffiths, Robert Ireland, Bob Sharples, Jack Kells; the only woman was Margaret Cunningham who loved Greek Tragedy. Once I was in a tutorial with her (one to one) and as she was reading a Chorus, rocking back and forth as she read, her necklace burst apart and the beads shot onto the floor like a hailstorm! She continued to read whilst I picked up the beads – and she gave no acknowledgement that any of it had happened! Once our Ancient History tutor, Dr Morris, set his trousers on fire while trying to light his pipe and had to slap his legs to put it out!

I also remember going to Cumberland Lodge in Windsor twice (I helped organise one visit) and going to see Greek plays, such as Medea and Clouds (in Ancient Greek) at the Cambridge Playhouse Theatre and KCL. I can’t pretend to have understood every word of them! I still like going to see Ancient Greek plays in translation, such as Medea with Fiona Shaw.

Although there were more at the beginning of the first year, only eight students in my year completed the full Classics degree. The degree was made up of course units which was the latest innovation.

Who at UCL (past or present) has most influenced you?
Mark Gretton, who was Departmental Tutor. He originally interviewed me with Professor Handley and offered me a place on the course. He was a very kind man, took a real personal interest in students and really tried to help those with problems. He was very patient with me as I struggled through Thucydides.

Of what are you most proud about UCL?
I am very proud that UCL is rated so highly (isn’t it number three in the world?!) and that I had the opportunity to get my degree here. I am also very lucky to have done my degree at a time when the fees were paid by the State and the only criterion in choosing a degree course was love of the subject, rather than worrying about debt, CVs and possible career choices.

What is your favourite part of UCL?
The Classics library on the first floor of the Wilkins building and the curved stairs which swept up to it past Upper Refectory (now the Jeremy Bentham Room). When I was a student, there were still war huts and the whole place looked a bit tatty – there was building known as The Garage where I used to do ballroom dancing (in the hope of meeting a nice young man!) I can’t believe how smart it all looks now.
Tell me something about yourself that most people don’t know!
When I was 51, I took grade 5 singing and got a distinction! I have always loved singing and the English choral tradition and, at UCL, I sang in a madrigal group as well as a large choir. I now sing with the Lewisham Choral Society.

I am planning to retire next year – it will be so nice not to be rushing around all the time! As well as looking after my 91 year old mother (and my two cats!), my plans include: working one day every week as a magistrate, reading Latin Poetry, going to choir practice, getting rid of the bindweed in our garden and going away with John for long weekends!

Sarah, in Berlin