

CLASSICAL ASSOCIATIONS AND SOCIETIES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

During the 19th century in the United Kingdom Classical texts were studied not for themselves but for the prestige they brought, the rules they laid down by the reading of the best authors, and the guidance they furnished for correct living. Their cultural authority was supreme and, as the Classical past was assumed to be superior to the present, those who studied it considered themselves superior. They looked back to the golden age of Classical antiquity as a model for life and letters. For a small coterie of serious scholars the rigorous study of Classical texts was paramount. By contrast, amateur gentlemen of the aristocracy delighted in being dilettante antiquarians with their collections of Roman coins, medals and vases, and they met to discuss their possessions at the meetings of the well-established societies such as the Numismatic Society (founded 1836) and the Society of Antiquaries (founded 1717). That arrangement has of course long gone, and the study of Classical antiquity is no longer a privileged subject, not even a fashionable pursuit, nor a pastime in which to compose prose and verse in the Classical languages, and certainly no longer the necessary foundation for advancement in life. The Classical world is now studied as a subject in its own right, and we try to understand it on its own terms, not on ours. We look at that world as a whole, as societies that we must try to interpret. Our ability to do this has to be based on a thorough understanding of the evidence, not just text alone, and also on the exchange of new knowledge and new ideas. We can perhaps see the ways in which this change has taken place in the United Kingdom by studying the various scholarly societies of national standing that have emerged over the last century and a half and some of the individuals involved.

When we turn to look at the major societies and associations in the United Kingdom that today cater for the different levels of interest in the classical world and provide the necessary channels of research, we may start with those that concern the Hellenic element.

The Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies was founded in 1879 – it was a private venture, not centred on any single university, and

like the other societies I shall mention, not state-funded. It was in the first instance designed for those who had taken what was still an adventurous expedition to Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean – an extended Grand Tour, if you wish, in a newly free, but still dangerous, country. This meant that the Society was biased towards history and archaeology, monuments, sculptures, inscriptions and such – the material evidence, not the literary texts. It was a prestigious group of people who gathered together at the Inaugural Meeting in June 1879 and who became its first members. The church was represented by Bishops, the state by members of the House of Commons and the House of the Lords, and scholarship by eminent professors at the more ancient universities. One original member was the young Oscar Wilde (he was 24 at the time); he had visited Greece two years earlier under the guidance of J. P. Mahaffy, the Professor of Ancient History at Trinity College, Dublin, where Wilde had studied before moving to Oxford. The major instigators of the Society were Richard Jebb, at that time Professor of Greek at Glasgow University, and George Macmillan, son of the famous publisher, who had himself travelled to Greece with Oscar Wilde. Macmillan was only 24 at the time the Society was formed and was its first Honorary Secretary; he continued in that post for 40 years (1879–1919) and then became Honorary Treasurer for more than a decade after that (1920–1934). As a point of interest one might note that women were admitted to the Society from the start; this was in direct contrast to the Society of Antiquaries to which for a long time women were denied membership. An annual journal was initiated in the following year, and over the generations the *Journal of Hellenic Studies* has contained important items of research: there were articles on the new Bronze Age finds by Sir Arthur Evans, a whole series of researches into Greek vase-painting by J. D. Beazley, and later the *Journal* included Michael Ventris's article on the decipherment of Linear B as Greek. Articles on philosophy and literature are included but rarely items on textual matters. Its continued success is in sharp contrast to the many earlier journals that were short-lived (see pp. 218–219). I shall have more to say about the SPHS later.

Soon a base in Greece itself was felt to be appropriate; this would act as the foreign arm of the Society, and once again Richard Jebb and George Macmillan played major roles in its creation. A French School and a German Institute had already been established in 1846 and 1874 respectively, and the American School of Classical Studies was founded in 1881. So, in 1883 we find no less a figure than the Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VII, presiding over a committee to forward a plan for a British School at Athens, and this was duly established in 1886. Membership of the SPHS and the British School tended to overlap. One of the School's first students was J. G. Frazer who was gathering material for his massive six-

volume commentary on Pausanias published in 1898. One of the crazier, but certainly very attractive, suggestions for the location of the British School was a peripatetic yacht to house the postgraduate students. The discoveries and the research carried out by members of the British School were originally published in the *Journal* of the Hellenic Society. It was not until 1895, a decade after the founding of the School, that an annual journal was issued. This connection between the two institutions has not always been harmonious but is still to be seen in their joint publication of *Archaeological Reports*.

Rome lagged behind Athens in the provision of British research bases for postgraduate study both at home and abroad. But, when the time came, there was a reversal in the dates of their foundation. A School was created in Rome before a Society was established in the United Kingdom. The British School at Rome was founded in 1900, once again many years behind its French (1846) and German (1829) counterparts which had been established before the middle of the nineteenth century. Then from 1902 the School began to issue its own journal, *Papers of the British School at Rome*. The Athens School has always had more than a passing interest in Byzantine studies, and now that modern-day researches have widened beyond the restricted study of the central Classical centuries and turned more strongly to the post-antique history of the Eastern Mediterranean, the School has a flourishing postgraduate concern with those later centuries. Naturally, the British School in Rome has always catered for students interested in the fine arts of post-antique and Renaissance Italy.

We may pause here to mention finance. Foreign schools and institutes are very expensive undertakings. The Athens and Rome Schools (and indeed the British Institute at Ankara) are now mainly funded by the British Academy (see p. 225). The Academy has a wide remit that covers both the humanities and the social sciences, and there is of course never enough funding to cover all deserving causes. Now, with the recent economic downturn, there are serious financial difficulties facing the all foreign schools.

2010 sees the centenary of the foundation of the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies; Dr Stray has compiled a brief account of its history (see list at end). Its birth was not without its problems (see pp. 219–221). Once again, history, archaeology and art are the mainstays with a cut-off date at AD 700. However, because the wide embrace of Roman imperial power reached as far as Britain, the *Journal of Roman Studies* which was first published in 1911, had always attracted research into the archaeology of Roman Britain. So, while the Hellenic Society joins with the British School at Athens in publishing a brief resumé of work carried out in the whole of Greece and its geographical spread, the Roman Society has since

1969 issued a separate large annual *Britannia* that deals with Romano-British matters and saves the main *Journal* from being overloaded with material that some would consider to be of little more than local interest.

At this point I may perhaps turn to the matter of books, periodicals and libraries. Right from the start, the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies began to build up a library, with its base in London, thus forming a centre unconnected with Oxford or Cambridge. Once the Roman Society had been formed, it also helped to expand the holdings of what has come to be known as the Joint Library, one of the best in the world for all aspects of Classical studies. I think it is worth pointing out for those accustomed to closed collections that all the materials are on open shelves (except for a small percentage of rare and antiquarian material, which is in any case retrievable almost immediately upon request to the library staff); and the majority of the books can be borrowed by members. Both Societies still depend for their finances on subscriptions from members, and this money enables the Societies to finance their publications and the Joint Library to purchase those books which are not sent for review or in exchanges of periodicals. Soon after the Second World War both Societies were in financial difficulties (a constant theme, as you will continue to hear). They were rescued when in 1953 the University of London founded an Institute of Classical Studies, a constituent part of the School of Advanced Studies of London University which includes such Institutes as Legal Studies, History, and Art. The Institute of Classical Studies has become the base for the Joint Library and its own Library which together form a consolidated whole. Since 1954 the Institute has issued its own *Bulletin*, together with numerous supplements; it has organised national and international seminars and created archives for drama, papyrology and Mycenaean studies. The combination is a *mariage de convenance* for the Societies and the University, and, like all marriages, has had its problems but continues to work well. It has been a successful example of a state-funded institution coming to the aid of two private concerns.

We must now go back to the 19th century. In that fertile decade of the 1880s a new periodical appeared. The *Classical Review* was first published in 1887 in monthly instalments but was in its initial years a very different publication from today's serious research tool. It was not until 20 years later that the *Classical Quarterly* appeared, a journal that we now consider a twin-sister publication. The *Classical Quarterly* took over the publication of the articles on language and literature that the *Classical Review* had rather half-heartedly included. It too was issued on a monthly basis. In the first year there were no fewer than four textual articles by A. E. Housman – perhaps a pointer to what was to be the main backbone of *CQ*. Even as late as 1950 the *Classical Review* was said to be “a journal of meticulous Latin

and Greek scholarship in which don fights don to the death in arguments about a single word in Homer, a double meaning in Virgil” (*The Strand Magazine* Jan. 1950, p. 34). This witty remark was undeserved at that time, and both the *Classical Review* and the *Classical Quarterly* have long been admired for the detailed reviews and the serious, wide-ranging scholarship that they publish.

Both journals were initially private ventures, and financial troubles (yet again) were always near at hand. Both were saved by an association that came into being just over a century ago. To explain this we must turn our attention to what was happening on the educational scene in the United Kingdom.

In the background to high-level research there were changes taking place at school level. Already at the beginning of the 20th century Greek and Latin were losing their importance in schools – other subjects such as history, mathematics, science and modern languages were gaining ground. The whole education system was being reconstructed with more funding by the state and hence greater state control over subjects taught. Inevitably, this reduction in the teaching of Greek and Latin in schools continued throughout the last century. So, in the early 1900s moves were afoot to fight for the place of Classics. This led in 1903 to the foundation of the Classical Association. It may be said that the Classical Association has proved to be the most significant and successful society for the general health and continued existence of Classics in the United Kingdom. It is in a sense the umbrella organisation in a number of ways. It has a national centre based in London but also has local branches in major cities, usually where there is a university nearby. It caters for both university and school interests, and its Annual General Meeting which is held in a different part of the country each year is particularly popular with younger scholars and postgraduates as they have a non-threatening platform from which to advertise their new-found expertise. The local branches promote the Classical World in their own areas by lectures, discussions, competitions, study days, conferences, etc. The Association is not an inward-looking association; it is a pro-active body which fights for the rights of the Classical fraternity against governments, education authorities and examination boards. A valuable element in the structure of the Classical Association at Presidential level is the annual alternation between professional classicists and well-known individuals from the wider world of finance, law, literature, politics, science, etc. The proceedings of the Annual General Meeting are reported in the daily press and once again place Classics in front of the general public.

Not the least of the successes of the Classical Association in the more academic field was the rescue of the *Classical Review* and the *Classical*

Quarterly as long ago as 1909 when financial pressures looked likely to lead to the collapse of these publications. The Classical Association was joined in this take-over by the Oxford Philosophical Society and the Cambridge Philological Society. The journals are now administered by the Classical Association Journals Board. Over the last century the two journals have become increasingly specialist, addressing only the upper levels of scholarship. This soon led to the belief that, if Classics were not to be cut off from the mainstream of education, there was need for a journal that would more fit the interests of school students and their teachers (and also undergraduates), and so in 1931 the journal *Greece and Rome* was inaugurated. It suits the less advanced students of the Classics and introduces some of the newer thinking in a less intimidating way than the more high-powered journals. The annual *New Surveys*, which were first issued in 1967 as an additional publication alongside *Greece and Rome*, are more extended treatments of recent work on particular authors and subjects.

Developments in the educational curriculum in the United Kingdom never stand still for long; we are at the mercy of ministers and officials who have not always kept in touch with what is needed in schools. In 1960 Oxford and Cambridge ceased to require Latin as an entrance qualification (Greek had long gone in the 1920s), and it was once more felt that a new association was needed that concentrated on the organisation of education, curricula, courses, etc. So, *The Joint Association of Classical Teachers* was formed in 1962, and it is still keen at pointing out the misguided decisions of the educational authorities and inspiring resistance to their more foolish pronouncements. Margaret Thatcher was no ally of Classics; her reforms prompted protests and radical demonstrations, and much more recently London saw the Mayor, Boris Johnson, dressed in a toga, at the head of a march to the House of Commons in a protest against the abolition of Ancient History from the school curriculum. The protest was successful, but it is not clear what part the amateur dramatics played in the outcome. The *JACT* is now amalgamating with the *CA*.

Certainly our subject needs supporters from the wider community, and another new society called *Friends of Classics* was formed in 1986. As the name suggests, it is an association for those who love the subject and particularly for those who pursued it at school and university but took up other, more lucrative, professions as their careers. We have in some sense come full circle as its members resemble those who were founder members of the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies – people with influence whose voice will be listened to, particularly members of parliament who can put forward opinions before decisions have been made and can keep Classics newsworthy.

What of the future? There are a number of problems for societies that depend on private funding. One, as I have mentioned, is certainly finance. To maintain offices and a library in London is very expensive. Allied to this is the difficulty with space. The Joint Library and the Institute of Classical Studies Library which are shelved together, have well over 150 000 books, and about 2500 monographs and 700 periodicals arrive to swell their numbers each year. Storage space is not limitless. Is the answer the internet with publications on-line? Reading articles and books on-line is not restful and can be irritating when a reference to an earlier page, paragraph or note proves elusive. The problem over space is obviously not confined to the classics nor to the Joint Library; all university libraries are facing similar problems, and some administrators find it difficult to understand how we might wish to consult a journal or a book that was published five years old, never mind fifty or a hundred years previously. Hence older books and periodicals are stored away from the libraries, if not destroyed altogether. The other problem concerns education itself. There are not many schools in which Classical languages are taught, and they are mostly confined to private schools; in state-run schools the courses tend to concentrate on Classical Civilization in which the original languages do not feature. A recent venture to introduce Latin at primary level (e. g. mainly to 8, 9 and 10 year old children) through a course book *Minimus* that also helps with English language, has had some success. Universities have for some years provided for the teaching of the Classical languages *ab initio*, alongside more advanced teaching, but even so numbers are small, and in today's world, as we all know, big is beautiful.

However, let me not end on a pessimistic note. Classics itself may no longer be the privileged subject it once was, but it is healthy and vigorous. At school level the government has recently recognised Latin as a helpful subject for modern language teaching (*mirabile dictu*) and has reinstated Latin "as an official curriculum language". At research level the flood of monographs, essays and articles demonstrates that present-day interest in the Classical world in all its variety is strong, whether it is the long-established activity of textual criticism or the newer insights that the work of scholars in the field of archaeology, anthropology, sociology and such brings to light. The elements that comprise the study of the Classical world are certainly much wider and richer than they were in the 19th century and that, coupled with the increased ease of communication at an international level, can only give grounds for hope.

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Appendix

The Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies (founded 1879)

Address: Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU, UK.

Website: www.hellenicsociety.org.uk

Annual Publications: *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* (from 1880) and *Archaeological Reports* (from 1955). Also, occasional publications.

History: P. T. Stevens, *The Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies 1879–1979: A Historical Sketch* (London 1979).

The British School at Athens (founded 1886)

Address in Athens: Odos Souedias 52, Athens 106 76, Greece.

Address in London: The British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1 5AH, UK.

Website: www.bsa.ac.uk

Annual Publications: *The Annual of the British School at Athens* (from 1895) and *Archaeological Reports* (from 1955). Also, occasional publications.

History: G. A. Macmillan, “A short history of the British School at Athens”, in: *ABSA* 17 (1910–1911) i–xxxviii; H. Waterhouse, *The British School at Athens: The First Hundred Years* (London 1986). Also *On Site: British Archaeologists in Greece* (2005).

The Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies (founded 1910)

Address: Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1 7HU, UK.

Website: www.romansociety.org

Annual Publications: *The Journal of Roman Studies* (from 1911) and *Britannia* (from 1970). Also, Monograph Series for both *JRS* and *Britannia*.

History: M. Taylor, “The Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 1910–1960”, in *JRS* 50 (1960) 129–34; C. Stray, “‘Patriots and Professors’: A century of Roman studies 1910–2010”, in: *JRS* (2010) and *Britannia* (2010).

The British School at Rome (founded 1900)

Address in Rome: Via Gramsci 61, 00197 Rome, Italy.

Address in London: The British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1 5AH, UK.

Website: www.bsr.ac.uk

Annual Publications: *The Papers of the British School at Rome* (from 1902). Also, occasional publications.

History: T. P. Wiseman, *A Short History of the British School at Rome* (London 1990); A. Wallace-Hadrill, *The British School at Rome: One Hundred Years* (Rome 2001).

The British Academy (founded 1902)

Address: 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH, UK.

Website: www.britac.ac.uk

Annual Publications: *Proceedings of the British Academy* (from 1903/4). Also, occasional publications.

The Classical Association (founded 1903)

Address: Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7RU, UK.

Website: www.classicalassociation.org

Bi-annual Publications: *Classical Review*, *Classical Quarterly*, *Greece and Rome*. Also, occasional publications including New Surveys, Studies, *CANews* and an e-publication *Classicists in British Universities* on their website.

History: C. Stray (ed.), *The Classical Association: The First Century 1903–2003* (Oxford 2003).

The Institute of Classical Studies, University of London (founded 1952)

Address: Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU, UK.

Website: <http://icls.sas.ac.uk>

Annual Publications: *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* (from 1954). Also, *BICS Supplements*.

History: J. P. Barron, “The Vision Thing: The Founding of An Institute”, in *BICS* 43 (1999) 27–39.

The Joint Association of Classical Teachers (founded 1962)

Address: Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU, UK.

Website: www.jact.org

Tri-annual Publication: *JACT Bulletin* (from 1963), *Didaskalos* (1963–1977), *Hesperia* (1978–1983), *JACT Review* (1984–2003), *The Journal of Classics Teaching* (2004–). Also, *Omnibus* (from 1981) and *Good Texts Guide* on-line in the publications section of their website.

The Friends of Classics (founded 1991)

Address: Friends of Classics, 51 Achilles Road, London NW6 1DZ, UK.

Website: www.friends-classics.demon.co.uk

Bi-annual Publication: *ad familiares*.

The paper gives an overview of Classical scholarly societies and associations, for the most part not state-funded, which were founded in the United Kingdom in the 19th and the 20th centuries. It outlines their specific peculiarities, tasks, publications, problems and perspectives.

Автор предлагает обзор обществ и учреждений, связанных с изучением классической античности, в основном негосударственных, основанных в Великобритании в XIX–XX вв., с их спецификой, задачами, публикациями, проблемами и перспективами.

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