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ROMAN STUDIES



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Elaine Matthews

Elaine Matthews was born in Netherton (Yorkshire) on 19 August 1942 and died on 26 June 2011 in Michael Sobell House, Oxford, after a long battle with cancer. Her contributions to the activities and the well-being of the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies and to its joint endeavours with the Hellenic Society were outstanding and were signally complemented by a distinguished career in research on Greek onomastics, about which much has been written elsewhere by way of tribute.¹ In the mid-1970s, after several years devoted to bringing up her young family, Elaine began what was to be her long and important association with the Roman Society and the *Journal of Roman Studies*. Initially, she became involved in the complex and demanding editorial work for the Journal and was at the same time Secretary of the Joint Committee of the Hellenic and Roman Societies. A principal responsibility of the latter was the organization of all aspects of the joint Triennial Conference of the Societies which was and continues to be much more than another forum for university academics to present their research to each other. It has served as a showcase for teaching and research in the UK in all fields of Classical Studies, encouraging the presentation of lectures on subjects in new and developing areas and attracting participants from universities, schools, museums and the general public. Elaine's vision of this as part of the Roman Society's responsibility to the whole of the spectrum of its constituency and its membership has been an important factor in maintaining vital support for the teaching of classics in higher education and in schools, which has ensured the survival, and even the health, of the subject through some critical times. The healthy attendance at the 2011 Triennial Conference in Cambridge bore eloquent testimony to the lasting effects of this synergy.

From the late 1980s, Elaine's role in the Roman Society became more prominent. In 1989 she became the Honorary Secretary of the Society, following the much regretted and premature death of Elizabeth Rawson, a position which she occupied until 2010. For almost twenty years the irreducible core of Elaine, the Secretary Helen Cockle and the Treasurer Graham Kentfield, along with a succession of Presidents, ran the affairs of the Society with an efficiency, sensitivity and sense of propriety which (*experto credite*) made the office and the duties of the President seem like a privilege and an honour. Elaine's role in attempting to ensure the health of the Society and the disciplines it promotes is more readily appreciable in the context of the fact that in the 1990s it was on her initiative that the Advisory Committee to the Council was established. Elaine chaired this as Honorary Secretary and convened it annually on a Saturday morning in May in St Hilda's in order to identify and consider the broader strategic issues facing the Society in the longer term. These were valuable occasions for relaxed and thoughtful debate on issues in the broader context to which Elaine brought her hallmark of calm and incisive analysis.

Some aspects of the Society's activities were less than straightforward during her tenure. In the new world of the early twenty-first century, the symbiotic relationships of the Hellenic and Roman Societies with the University of London, its School of Advanced Studies and the Institute of Classical Studies became much more complicated than they had earlier been, for institutional and financial reasons which were not of the Societies' own making. The future of the Library of the Hellenic and Roman Societies and the

¹ R. W. V. Catling *et al.* (eds), *Onomatologos Studies in Greek Personal Names Presented to Elaine Matthews* (Oxford, 2010).



Elaine Matthews

Institute was a particularly delicate issue. Elaine's commitment to scholarship, her knowledge of the institutional background and history, as well as her thoughtful and authoritative judgement, made a crucial contribution to reaching viable solutions (happily put in place before she died) which should enable the Societies to continue their work and respond to the needs and wishes of their members, particularly the users of the Library, for the foreseeable future. In this respect and in many others their debt to her is immense, as is that of the Faculty of Classics at Oxford and St Hilda's College, where she was particularly active on its Information Technology Committee and in helping to administer the Jacqueline du Pré Music Building.

Elaine Matthews was quite exceptional in her ability to combine fundamental scholarship, a vision of how research can and should respond to complex developing technology and active promotion of the national institutions which are essential to the discipline. Her legacy to our discipline will long endure.

Alan Bowman