

A Brief Account of Classics at Carleton

"The past", L.P. Hartley once wrote, "is a foreign country; they do things differently there." In 1942, street cars still ran down Bank Street and the ice-man still delivered. Much of the world was pre-occupied with Mars and Vulcan, but the founding fathers of Carleton College were sufficiently compotes mentis to realise the value of a classical education. Thus from the very foundation Latin occupied a vital place in the curriculum of the fledgling institution. Survival in those years of war was often precarious. A succinct notice in the Carleton College Calendar of 1943-44 states baldly: "Latin 2 will be offered in 1943-44 provided registration is not less than eight." But survive the language did and it still survives today in spite of efforts, at one time or another, to kill it off.

In 1944, with the liberation of Athens only a matter of weeks away, a new subject, modern Greek, was added to the curriculum and, in the following year, classical Greek took its place beside its offspring. In retrospect it is ironic to reflect upon how soon the modern language died and for how long the "dead" language has survived, for by 1948 modern Greek had vanished from the Calendar, whereas its parent language was robust enough to command, with Latin, the appointment of its first full time lecturer, D.M. Shepherd, M.A., to replace the loyal sessionals who had seen the languages through their early years. In 1949 the two languages, Latin and Greek, were formally joined together under the name of Classics. Immediately the combined program was extended

and enriched by the introduction of the first course on classical civilization, which, in the course of time, provided the basis of a long and fruitful association between the Departments of History and Classics.

Years of growth are full of pain, and, in the early 1950s, child mortality was still a threat. In a solemn address on the state of the union in 1951 the then President of the College, Maxwell MacOdrum, announced that, as a result of declining enrolment, Classics was to be subject to the executioner's axe in the following year. Amid much consternation certain wise men of the Science Faculty, at the instigation of Professor W. Illman of the Biology Department, contrived to thwart the President's edict of execution. The Committee on Admission and Studies began to move with breathless haste; the requirements for a Bachelor of Science degree were changed and incoming science students were offered the opportunity of taking a course on classical civilization as their Arts' requirement. Thus the crisis was averted.

If the survival of Classics in its early years owed much to the diligence of its early lecturers and other well disposed members of the Carleton community, the Department also owes a great debt of gratitude to Dr. F.E.M. Swallow. First appointed to the Faculty in 1954-55 to replace the departing Professor Shepherd, Ellenor Swallow served as Chairman of the Department almost continuously until 1967. It is Ellenor Swallow who should take much of the credit for building the Department as it exists today. Through her initiative a Major program in Classics was introduced in 1956, and it was

followed by an Honours program in 1958. The amount of effort and energy expended by Professor Swallow in these years can be judged by her teaching load. She regularly taught five full courses a year and contributed a component to English/Classics 305, Classics of the Western Tradition, which she co-taught with Professor Gordon Wood. Members of the present Department can testify only too well how physically and intellectually exhausting such a heavy teaching load can be and how little time and energy it allows for personal research. Teaching has and always will be the backbone of the Department's strength.

Under Professor Swallow's chairmanship the majority of the present faculty were appointed. The first, in 1960, was Dr. A. Trevor Hodge, currently senior professor in the Department. In the same year Professor Hodge made his mark on the scholarly world with the publication, by Cambridge University Press, of his highly acclaimed book on The Woodwork of Greek Roofs. Since then he has written extensively on the subject of Greek architecture and certain aspects of Greek History. He has also enjoyed considerable success as a television lecturer on University of the Air.

The appointment of Professor T.R. Robinson followed in 1962. A linguist of much ability, Dr. Robinson has for many years conducted research on the campaigns of Alexander the Great. His book, when it is published, is expected to provide a significant contribution to the extensive scholarship that has already appeared upon that remarkable and enigmatic Macedonian king.

If 1966 was not an annus mirabilis for the Classics Department, it was, nevertheless, not without significance. William Watts, an honours student in Classics, won the Governor General's Medal and went on to Cambridge University for post-graduate studies. In the same year a Master of Arts program was introduced. This program, which has always remained small, has nevertheless attracted a number of excellent students. Also two new faculty appointments were made, R.C. Blockley and D.G. Beer. Roger Blockley's career has been remarkable in several ways. The author of several books and articles, he has established himself as an authority of international repute on the Later Roman Empire. In more recent years Dr. Blockley has also made valuable contributions to the administration of the university. Mr. Beer has served for many years as Chairman of the Department.

The years from 1966 to 1968 saw the last expansion of the Department with the appointments of Dr. A.S. Fotiou in 1967 and Dr. M.E. Welsh in 1968. A Hellenist and a Latinist respectively, both scholars have made significant, if different contributions to the success of the Department. Thanos Fotiou, a teacher of broad interests, has, in addition to his research on Aristophanes and Catullus, devoted himself to the world of Byzantium. Michael Welsh, whose main interest centres upon the major poets of Augustan Rome, has proved himself an exceptionally conscientious and valuable teacher. Also, in 1968, Carleton University acquired St. Patrick's

College and the Classics Department two new instructors. Of these Dr. R.L. Jeffreys quickly became an established member of the Department. Both his excellent teaching and his scholarship have given it added strength.

By 1968 it was becoming increasingly clear that the study of Classics at Carleton was about to undergo some major changes, which were not altogether welcomed by the Department. These changes largely affected the position of Latin within the university rather than Greek. The number of students studying Greek had never been large and, with rare exceptions, new students began the study of the language at Carleton. The case with Latin was somewhat different. Previously students entered the university with an Ontario High School qualification in Latin and, in addition, Latin could be taken as part of a student's B.A. requirement. Thus enrolment was quite healthy. Over a short period of time all this changed and the number of students studying Latin suffered a severe decline. The reasons for the changes are clear. Latin lost the central position that it had held in the Ontario high school curriculum. As a result fewer and fewer students arrived at Carleton with any knowledge of the language. Secondly the University dropped its first year language requirements for a B.A. degree.

In spite of the problems that the new situation presented, the department was not without resources to meet the challenge. A large variety of classical civilization courses had been developed over the years, not just to serve the Department's own requirements but also in response to the needs of other departments who wished

to avail themselves of the expertise that the Classics Department could offer. Thus the Department found that as many as nine of its courses were crosslisted by such departments as Art History, English and History. At the same time the exposure of a larger number of students to classical civilization courses brought its own compensations. Many students began inquiring about the possibility of taking Major and Honours programs in classical civilization. The result was that in 1972 combined Major and Honours programs in classical civilization were introduced.

Nor was the situation in Latin entirely bleak. There were still students at Carleton in different programs and students arriving at Carleton who required a knowledge of Latin. The Department responded to this need by introducing in 1971 a beginning Latin course. Since the Department later also demanded a language requirement for some of its classical civilization programs, beginning Latin attracted a healthy number of students. Currently it enjoys an enrolment of about 30.

The combined classical civilization programs proved to be popular. Between 1972 and 1976 they accounted for more than half the students graduating at the B.A. level from the Department. In the meantime, further developments were taking place. High Schools began introducing classical civilization programs, and teachers, not previously trained in this area, found themselves in need of an undergraduate program. Also pressure from students at Carleton

began to be applied for full programs in classical civilization. Thus in 1976 full Major and Honours programs were introduced.

The success of the classical civilization courses caused a dramatic increase in the enrolment of the Classics Department in the late 1970s. In addition to the more traditional types of courses on classical history, literature and art that maintained a stable and healthy enrolment, new courses such as Classical Mythology, Ancient Science and Technology, Methods and Techniques of Archaeology and Women in Antiquity appealed to students with diverse interests. As a result, enrolment in Classics in 1977-78 topped 900 students and the Department enjoyed greater success in attracting students than any other Classics Department in Ontario. Although these numbers have not been maintained, the Classics Department still commands an extremely large enrolment in comparison with other Classics Departments in the province.

The foregoing outline of the history of the Classics Department at Carleton has only touched upon the main developments over the past forty years. What should be stressed and is too often overlooked is the sheer burden of work, placed upon a small faculty (currently six in any one academic year) by the number of programs taught within the Department. Classics is probably unique in that at the undergraduate level it teaches three separate disciplines to the Honours level, each with its own degree requirements: Latin, Greek and Classical Civilization. In addition, the Department offers a modest M.A. program.

Although there are three separate disciplines at the undergraduate level, it is convenient to say a few more words about them under two separate headings: language and civilization. Let us take the languages first, since they have traditionally formed the core of what is known as Classics. There can be no doubt that Latin and Greek have declined as subjects of study both at the secondary and post-secondary levels of education; so much so that in Ontario High Schools Greek has completely disappeared from the regular curriculum and Latin is taught in fewer and fewer schools. This decline has placed a serious responsibility on the Classics Department. It has become all the more imperative that the university maintain the study of the two languages that have provided the roots of our Western intellectual tradition, since without a knowledge of these languages serious research in this important area must ultimately wither and die. For example, a political scientist, wishing to study Plato, is heavily dependent upon the scholarly tools of the classicist, however invisible the connection may seem to be. It is unfortunate, therefore, that since the number of students studying the languages to an advanced level has declined, the Department has been forced to teach many of its upper year language courses as an overload. Nor should it be assumed that the teaching of Latin and Greek at Carleton is aimed solely at the training of specialist students in Classics. Courses in Greek, especially Beginning Greek, have been taken regularly by students in the Department of Religion who wish to concentrate on New Testament studies. Latin courses provide essential aids to

graduate students in the literature and history departments. Thus the classical languages serve the larger university community.

The position of classical civilization is somewhat different. Here enrolment has grown and has room for further growth, were the resources available. But the classical civilization program has, in its own way, also presented difficulties to the Department, difficulties which it has successfully sought to overcome. Members of the Department were trained to teach Classics as it had been taught traditionally. The introduction of classical civilization programs opened up many new fields of interest which had to be mastered in the very process of teaching. Women in antiquity is but one example. What is remarkable here is not only the diversity of the types of courses but also the diversity of the student constituencies to which these courses appeal. In addition to the obvious examples of the crosslisted courses, one should mention Ancient Science and Technology, a regular Arts' option for science and engineering students; Classical Mythology and Methods and Techniques of Archaeology are highly popular with students in the social sciences.

The success of a department can in part be measured by the success of its graduates. Although the number of students graduating from the Classics Department has been small, there have been notable

successes. In addition to William Watts who won the Governor General's Award, two students have won the Chancellor's Medal and two the Senate Medal in Arts, the latest being in this anniversary year of 1982. Nor have these been the only successes. Graduates from the Department have gone on to win other awards including Woodrow Wilson Fellowships and Commonwealth Scholarships. A number have taken higher degrees at other universities and filled academic positions at institutions of higher learning as well as at high schools. Several launched out into new fields, including modern language teaching, librarianship, social work, international affairs and game inventing. One former M.A. student was recently appointed to the prestigious position of Curator of Collections at the City of London Museum in the United Kingdom.

If it is in the area of teaching that the backbone of the Department's strength lies it is nevertheless a measure of the Department's commitment to scholarly excellence that in spite of the heavy pressures of work each member is still actively engaged in research. Throughout the years the Department has faced many challenges and difficulties and there are likely to be still more in the future but as yet the barbarians have not reached the gates of Rome nor will they, if the Department has any say in fortuna urbis.