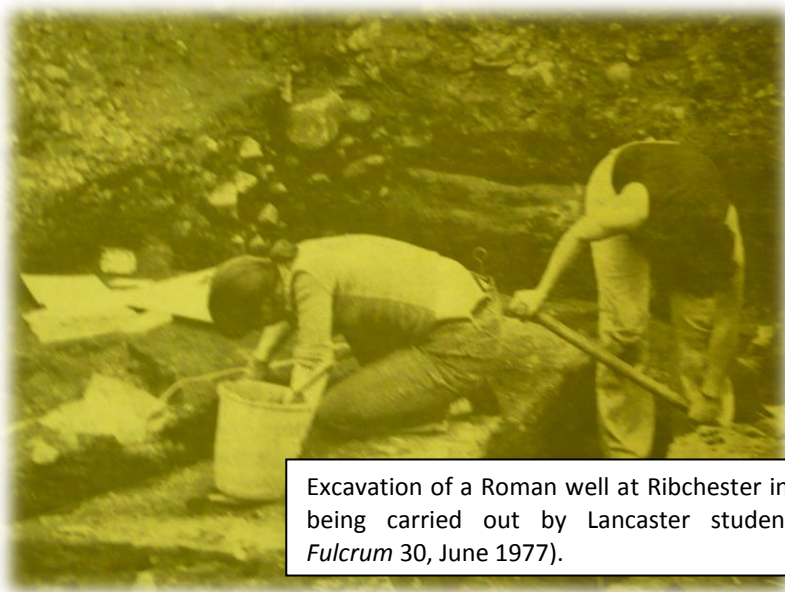


Classics at Lancaster

In 2013/2014, as Lancaster University was about to celebrate its 50th anniversary, Ancient History was reintroduced in the Department of History after its former Classics Department was closed in the 1980s. This not only makes Lancaster one of the few British universities which offer Classical Studies within a History curriculum, but also recognizes the importance of Classical antiquity and the increase in student interest in the subject. This article traces the early history of the former Classics Department at Lancaster and outlines recent developments in Ancient History.

Classical Studies was one of the founding subjects when Lancaster University was established in 1964. Set up in 1965, the Department of Classics flourished in the next two decades, and was one of the few fully established Classics departments in the new universities of the 1960s. The first chair of Classics was Malcolm Willcock, a specialist in Greek and Latin literature, who brought a wide range of scholarly talents into the Department. Recruits included John Creed (Aristotelian philosophy), Gerard O'Daly (Latin language and literature), Michael Osborne (Greek history and epigraphy), John Randall (Latin), John Salmon (Greek history), and David Shotter (history and archaeology of Roman Britain). From its early days Greek and Latin were taught at various levels; yet this interest in ancient languages did not prevent a range of courses being offered which could serve a wider community.

A great variety of options, covering the history, culture, literature and philosophy of ancient Greece and Rome, was offered in the Classics major degree and various combined degree schemes. Students could study Greek history from the Archaic period through the Classical to the Hellenistic period; Roman history from the rise of Rome down to the late Roman Empire; thematic topics including Greek religion, Greek philosophy, ancient political



Excavation of a Roman well at Ribchester in Lancashire being carried out by Lancaster students (source: *Fulcrum* 30, June 1977).

thought, Greek art and architecture, Greek and Roman historiography; and Greek and Latin literature ranging from Homer, Aristophanes, Greek tragedy, to Augustan poetry. Members of the Department were actively engaged in research as well as teaching. Some of the most important publications were Osborne's *Naturalization in Athens* (Brussels, 1981-3), Randall's *Learning Latin* (Liverpool, 1986), Salmon's *Wealthy Corinth* (Oxford, 1984), and Willcock's *A*

Companion to the Iliad (Chicago, 1976) and *The Iliad of Homer* (Basingstoke, 1978-84). After their early or mid career in Lancaster, most of these academics have become established scholars in the field. In c.1968, the University acquired the valuable personal library of Sir Frank Adcock, Professor of Ancient History at Cambridge and one of the chief editors of *Cambridge Ancient History* (first edition); part of his collection still remains in the Lancaster library today.

The Department was soon expanded to include archaeological studies, and was renamed the Department of Classics and Archaeology in 1973. Courses offered ranged from Prehistoric, Classical and Medieval Archaeology, particularly in the Mediterranean, to Roman architecture, coinage, ceramics, and practical archaeology. New academic appointments included Hugo Blake (Medieval archaeology), Simon Hillson (environmental archaeology), Henry Hurst (Roman archaeology), Roger Jacobi (early prehistory), Timothy Potter (Etruscan and Roman archaeology), and Ruth Whitehouse (later prehistory). The Department was actively involved in rescue archaeology, and the University had funded excavations both in Britain and abroad. Academic staff and students took part in fieldwork and survey projects, including excavations in medieval sites in northern Italy, an Iron Age site in southern Italy, the Punic city of Carthage in north Africa, and Roman sites in northwest England such as the Lune Valley, Watercrock, Burrow-in-Lonsdale and Lancaster itself. In 1979 the Cumbria and Lancashire Archaeological Unit was established within the Department to oversee rescue archaeology in the north-west; this later became the Lancaster University Archaeological Unit in 1986, and since 2001 Oxford Archaeology North. Lancaster is also home to the Lancaster Archaeological and Historical Society: founded in 1973, it continues today with a regular programme of public events in history and archaeology.

As a result of Margaret Thatcher's public spending cuts in the 1980s, the Department was closed on 31 July 1989. Some of its members were incorporated into the Department of History, whereas others moved on to often outstanding academic careers elsewhere, as for instance at the University of Nottingham, University College London and the British Museum.

In 2013/2014, Ancient History was reintroduced in the History Department with the creation of a permanent academic appointment in Greek history. Current courses cover Greek history from Homer to Alexander and the coming of Rome, and a specialized module on Greek religion and society will soon be offered. Within a short time Ancient History has proved to be popular with students: some are writing their dissertation in Greek history and are considering continuing with graduate work in the field; others have taken part in excavations in northern England and the summer programme at the British School at Athens. Given increasing student demand for Ancient History, digital Classics and Roman history may be introduced in future years.



One of the current Lancaster students (Tom Clements, second row first from the right) taking part in the British School at Athens undergraduate summer course

Theodora Jim

t.jim@lancaster.ac.uk

* I am grateful to the Lancaster University Archive and its archivist Marion McClintock for helpful information.