

BERYL RAWSON

(July 24, 1933-October 22, 2010)

by Bruce Marshall

Beryl Marie Wilkinson grew up in a small town in the hinterland of Innisfail in North Queensland (Australia). Apparently, because it was a small town and her father was the school teacher, she was allowed to start school early. She attended the University of Queensland in Brisbane on a full state government scholarship and distinguished herself in Classics, winning more scholarships and developing her interest in Roman history. After graduating with first class honours in Latin and French, she was offered two travelling scholarships, one to the United Kingdom and the other to the United States. She chose the Fulbright Scholarship to attend Bryn Mawr College, where she completed a doctorate under the Roman Republican historian, Lily Ross Taylor.

She returned to the University of Queensland in 1961 to take up a lectureship in the then Department of Classics, under the formidable headship of Gordon Cooper. Ancient History had a low profile in that department, and Beryl taught mainly Latin courses. She shared an office with Don Barrett, and the two bonded through a shared commitment to Classics and through a common experience of Cooper's demanding régime. Beryl's busy academic life became even busier when she filled in as Acting Principal of Women's College at the University. She revived the Queensland Classical Association (dormant since 1939) and served as its Secretary. She organised conferences for that Association and for the International Federation of University Women — activities presaging some of her more extensive endeavours at the height of her career.

With the feisty determination we know Beryl had, it is not clear how she coped with Cooper's régime, but maybe this is the answer: she moved. In 1964 she was appointed to a Senior Lectureship at the Australian National University in Canberra and remained there for the rest of her career. One of her colleagues from that time remarked that "she brought a tone of academic rigour and scholarly seriousness which has marked the department ever since". She rose through the ranks, as it were, being appointed in 1989 as Professor and Head of Classics, a position from which she retired in 1999, but as Professor Emerita she continued to engage actively in the academic life of the university. She devoted more than 45 years to her work at the ANU as a "determined scholar" and "dedicated advocate of humanities", to use the words of her colleagues. As a teacher at all levels she was painstaking, considerate and inspiring, as students consistently testified. She also involved herself with secondary schoolteachers in the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales, offering her expertise and stimulus to develop the relevant subjects at that level.

Beryl was elected Dean of Arts at the ANU in 1981 and held that position until 1986. As the current Professor, Elizabeth Minchin, says, "she took any role that she played on campus very seriously and tried very conscientiously to fulfil it". As with her teaching and lecturing, so with her Deanship, she made sure that she was prepared in every detail. The ANU had a system of regular reviews of the performance of departments; Beryl took it a step further, instigating a review of the whole faculty. Despite the commitment of time which her activities as Dean and other administrative responsibilities demanded, she won five research grants between 1979 and 1991, and continued a high rate of publication. She was sought out to serve on committees of the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee, the Australian Research Council (the major body which distributes government research funding) and other bodies concerned with research in the humanities. In recognition of her international academic standing and productivity, Beryl was elected as a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities in 2006, and the university honoured her in early 2010 by naming the administrative offices of the College of Arts and Social Sciences the "Beryl Rawson Building".

She was President of The Australasian Society for Classical Studies (ASCS) in 1988-89. She was a foundation member of the Society when it was formed in 1966-67, one of only two women out of 69 members then. She continued to be a keen participant in ASCS affairs up until the time of her illness, sending regular messages to its executive officers about how things ought to be

run. She displayed an interest early on in supporting postgraduate students and early-career researchers. One of her students has an abiding memory of her encouragement of younger scholars and her enjoyment in being around them. She had urged ASCS to include papers by postgraduate students at its regular conferences, and from small and uncertain beginnings a postgraduate panel grew and became increasingly accepted. That encouragement has borne increasing amounts of fruit over the years, for papers by postgraduate students at ASCS conferences now constitute a significant proportion of the total, making the events lively and enthusiastic. Beryl was the first female President of the Australian Historical Association (AHA) in 1991-92. She had always promoted the link between the various branches of History; for example, in 1992 she made sure that the ASCS conference in Canberra was held at the same time as the AHA conference so that the two could run together.

In her twenties she had married the political scientist Don Rawson, but they eventually divorced. By then she was well known as Beryl Rawson, and she decided to keep the surname. In 1984 she married the historian Allan Martin; following his death in 2002 she provided the funds for the AHA's Allan Martin biennial award to support the work of early-career historians, and endowed an annual lecture at the Australian National University also in his name.

Beryl's early publications were related to Roman Republican history; her first book was *The politics of friendship: Pompey and Cicero* (1978). From 1976 onwards her career really took off. Having learned to use computers for storing masses of data and applying statistical measures, from the mass of funerary inscriptions commemorating slaves and freedmen, their spouses and children, she built up a picture of family life in the Early Roman Empire. In drawing attention to the lower classes of Roman society Beryl was increasingly invited to conferences and universities overseas. She then began organising international conferences (1981, 1988, 1994) in Canberra on the Roman family and related topics and publishing the collected papers, which included contributions of her own. The best known perhaps is *Children and childhood in Roman Italy* (2003). At the time of her illness she was still putting the finishing touches to another edited collection, *A companion to families in the Greek and Roman worlds* (reviewed in the present issue), which fortunately she was able to see through to the final typescript stage. She died on October 22, 2010 from a brief but aggressive illness at the age of 77.

Honorary Secretary, The Australasian Society for Classical Studies

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SELECT LIST OF PUBLICATIONS OF BERYL RAWSON

Books

- The politics of friendship: Pompey and Cicero* (Sydney University Press 1978, repr. 1981).
The family in ancient Rome: new perspectives (ed. and contributor) (Croom Helm, London-Sydney/Cornell University Press 1986; Routledge paperback 1992).
Marriage, divorce and children in ancient Rome (ed. and contributor) (Oxford University Press 1991; Clarendon paperback 1996).
The Roman family in Italy: status, sentiment, space (ed. with P. Weaver and contributor) (Oxford University Press 1997; Clarendon paperback 1999).
Children and childhood in Rome Italy (Oxford University Press 2003; revised paperback 2005; OUP E-Books).
A companion to families in the Greek and Roman worlds (ed. and contributor) (Wiley-Blackwell, Boston-Chichester 2010).

Articles and chapters in books

- "Family life among the lower classes in Rome in the first two centuries of the Empire," *CPh* 61 (1966) 71-83.
 "Roman concubinage and other *de facto* marriages," *TAPhA* 104 (1974) 279-305.
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- "The iconography of Roman childhood," in ead. and P. Weaver (edd.), *The Roman family in Italy: status, sentiment, space* (Oxford 1997) 205-32.
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- "Death, burial and commemoration in Roman Italy," in D. Balch and C. Osiek (edd.), *Early Christian families in context. An interdisciplinary dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI 2003) 277-97.
- "The future of childhood studies in Classics and Ancient History," in K. Mustakallio *et al.* (edd.), *Hoping for continuity. Childhood, education, and death in antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Acta Inst. Rom. Finl. 33, 2005) 1-11.
- "Finding Roman women," in N. Rosenstein and R. Morstein-Marx (edd.), *A companion to the Roman Republic* (London 2006) 324-41.
- "The family," in L. Foxhall, D. Mattingly and G. Shipley (edd.), *Cambridge dictionary of classical civilization* (Cambridge 2006) 338-41.
- "Banquets in Rome: participation, presentation and perception," in D. Kirkby and T. Luckins (edd.), *Dining on turtles: food, feasts and drinking in history* (London 2007) 15-32.
- "Family and society," in W. Scheidel and A. Barchiesi (edd.), *The Oxford handbook of Roman studies* (Oxford 2008) 610-23.
- "Marriages and households," in P. Erdkamp (ed.), *The companion to ancient Rome* (Cambridge 2009).
- "The role of public life and its physical setting in the socialisation of Roman children," *AmS-Skrifter* 23 (2010) 107-14.