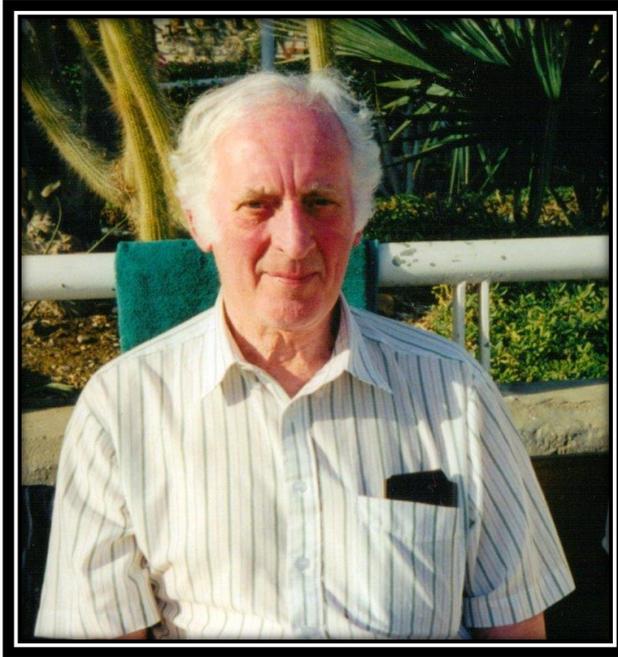


Patrick (Peter) Gerard Walsh



Internationally recognized for his numerous and ground-breaking publications, which range from large-scale monographs on Livy (1961) and the novels of Petronius and Apuleius (1970) to annotated translations of the medieval poems *Carmina Burana* (1976 and 1993), the history of William of Newburgh (1987 and 2007), and the tragedies of Scottish humanist George Buchanan (1983), Peter Walsh, well-known among colleagues and students for his generous kindness, his contagious cheerfulness and sense of humour, his skill in cricket and tennis, and his unfailing optimism,

died peacefully at the age of 89 in Glasgow on 16 January 2013. His wife Eileen, their five children, and eighteen grandchildren survive him. This brief obituary is a tribute to Peter's wonderful charisma as a teacher and a person. It is written jointly by Ronald Knox and Costas Panayotakis, both of whom had the good fortune to have been both his students and his colleagues at completely different stages in Peter's academic career. This started in 1952 at University College Dublin, where Peter obtained his PhD and was subsequently appointed Lecturer in Ancient Classics, and ended at the University of Glasgow, where he was a popular Professor of Humanity (Latin) from 1972 to 1993 and a supportive Dean of the Faculty of Arts in the difficult period of the late 1980s.

Many of Peter's former colleagues and students not only from UCD and Glasgow but also from the University of Edinburgh, where Peter taught from 1959 to 1971, will undoubtedly have their own memories of him and stories about him. Ronald remembers that he first encountered Peter just over 50 years ago when he (Ronald) was a Classics student at Edinburgh. In what was already a strong department of Humanity (Latin), Peter, along with David West, made an unforgettable impression on him, both as a lecturer and as a human being. At a time when most lecturers on set books confined themselves to translation and comment, Peter ranged impressively widely. In each lecture two thirds of the time was devoted to the text, but one third kept in hand for discussion of the broader literary, historical, and cultural context of the work. This teaching approach worked particularly well, Ronald remembers, with Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, where Peter's illumination of the rival philosophical and theological points of view was masterly. Most of Peter's teaching was classical, but already in 1965 he was introducing some of his Edinburgh students to the interest of medieval and Christian Latin, joining with John MacQueen to lead a volunteer classical and English literature reading group through Alan of Lisle. The discovery that

enjoyable Latin lasted a thousand years longer than Ronald and his fellow students had thought was inspirational. But, as with all great teachers, the attraction of Peter's intellect was inseparable from his humane personality. He cared for his students inside and outside the classroom. He and his wife Eileen regularly entertained his tutorial groups to tea, where in a warm family atmosphere the conversation needed none of the alcoholic stimulus sometimes desperately resorted to elsewhere. (Their welcoming hospitality was also extended to all the postgraduate students in the department of Classics until Peter's retirement from the Chair of Humanity at Glasgow in 1993.) Still more memorable was a three-week tour of Rome and the Bay of Naples, on which Peter led some of his Edinburgh students: well informed from his brothers who were priests Peter settled the group of students in a *pensione* near the Vatican, where half board with superb cooking was had for 2,000 lire per day!

When Peter moved to the Chair of Humanity at the University of Glasgow, he took charge of a department that had been strong in a traditionally linguistic way, governed by the autocratic C. J. Fordyce. Peter's broader teaching interests and his more relaxed and friendly style of leadership were exactly what was needed to face the challenges of the late twentieth century. He introduced Beginners Latin, Classical Civilisation in translation, and classes on Roman history. (Douglas MacDowell, who in 1971 was appointed to the Chair of Greek at Glasgow, made similar changes to the Greek side of the existing curriculum.) During Peter's teaching leadership, the Roman Novel and Medieval Latin became integral parts of the Latin syllabus.

Peter looked after his postgraduate students with great care and affection. Costas remembers that, when he was doing his PhD with Peter Walsh as his supervisor (1990-1993), he would always take Costas down to tea every third Friday at 3 pm to talk about Petronius and the work that had been submitted for comments. On the first Friday of each month he would have a supervisory meeting with Ivor Davidson, who did his PhD on Ambrose, and on the second Friday he would meet with Patricia Woods (now Brignall), who did her PhD on Abelard; the third Friday was reserved for the low and unholy Petronius. Peter was delighted with this alternation of authors, and for many years afterwards he would say to Costas that this was his most enjoyable period as a supervisor. All his informal messages to his postgraduate students were handwritten, and any official/formal letters he happened to send them were typed on his favourite typewriter, from which he never parted. Costas fondly remembers that Peter Walsh always encouraged him to be pro-active with his research and never made him feel subordinate; most importantly, Peter Walsh had a remarkable ability to guide his students to see their own weaknesses by themselves without him actually pointing them out in a patronizing or demoralizing fashion.

More broadly, Peter's personal warmth was welcomed not only by his colleagues and students, but also beyond the department in the wider world of the Faculty of Arts, leading to his election as Dean for 1985-1988, in a time when the Arts needed defence against Thatcherite contraction; as Dean he staunchly championed Arts colleagues and their disciplines, unlike many of the appointed "managers" of today, who see it as their business to toe a line handed down from above. Ronald remembers finding it immensely refreshing when Peter once told him with a smile

that he believed that if an action seemed clearly right one should just do it and not be deterred by nervous looking over the shoulder because someone else higher up might criticise. Better to get it done and apologise later than not do it at all.

No appreciation of Peter Walsh would be complete which ignored the extent to which both his intellect and his life were underpinned by his devout Catholic Christianity. In his retirement years he was a prolific translator of Latin authors (Apuleius, Boethius, Cicero, Petronius, and Pliny the Younger) for the Oxford World's Classics series, but he particularly enjoyed working on his annotated translations of St Augustine's *City of God*, and the last publication which he saw through the press was his edition of *One Hundred Latin Hymns: Ambrose to Aquinas* (Harvard 2012); he attended mass to the end; and his life reminded one of Chaucer's tribute to the truly Christian parish priest: "Christes lore and his apostles twelve / He taughte, but first he followed it himselve"; for although Peter did not formally teach the former, by his conduct he assuredly did the latter, without fuss or pomposity, in a manner deeply impressive. In 1983 he was elected to a Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and in 1993 he both received an Honorary DLitt from the University of Edinburgh and was appointed Knight Commander of the Order of St Gregory the Great. But he boasted about none of this. Ronald observes that in fifty years he never heard him say an unkind or unfair word. We shall not soon see his like again.

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