

THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS OF CLASSICS AND ANCIENT HISTORY AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

[Text of a public lecture given in October 2013 by Emeritus Professor John Melville-Jones, with
Power Point images, as described in the text that follows]

This is my second contribution to our centenary year. The first was a book on our Hackett Memorial Buildings which was published at the end of 2012. Now I am going to talk about my own Department, as it used to be called. Apart from my own memories, and conversations with my colleagues, I have conducted some researches into the surviving documents, and I am grateful to the staff of the University's Archives and the Reid Library's Scholars' Centre for chasing up the material that I needed. We should also all be grateful to the persons who made donations to the Mervyn Neville Austin Lecture Fund, which is sponsoring this lecture by providing refreshments afterwards (a fund which is not a closed one, in case anyone has some spare money and doesn't know what to do with it).

ALTERNATIVE TITLE: FROM MONARCHY TO DEMOCRACY TO BUREAUCRACY

I have an alternative title for this lecture. This will explain itself as I proceed from outlining what happened in earlier years to describing the present situation.

THE 'CHAIR OF CLASSICS AND ANCIENT HISTORY'.

My qualifications for talking on this subject are that I have been here for a long time, and that I have, in a sense, occupied the Chair of Classics and Ancient History, which you see on the screen, since 1964. Let me explain. When the Faculty of Arts was moved into the new Arts Building at the beginning of that year, the members of its staff were supplied with new chairs for their offices, desk chairs for everyone and armchairs for those who had larger rooms. The armchairs caused a problem for a while, because they had foam cushions cased in vinyl, which let out air with a soft *psssst* for the first few months when someone sat on them, something that was very embarrassing, particularly for the fairer sex, who like to be discreet about such things. The old chairs were about to be thrown away, but I thought that this was a pity because they were so solidly built, so I offered one Australian pound for the professor's desk chair, an offer which was accepted, and took it home. I had it reupholstered, and have 'occupied' it ever since.

So if anyone wants to 'occupy' the Chair of Classics and Ancient History briefly at the end of my talk, it will be possible to do so.



1912: SHOULD CLASSICS HAVE A PROFESSORIAL CHAIR?

Now let us start at the beginning. In June 1912 the Senate of the nascent University of Western Australia met to decide the number of chairs and lectureships that should be established, and which subjects should be taught by the holders of these appointments. It had previously been decided that seven chairs could be afforded in addition to the chair of Agriculture, which the Chancellor of the University, Sir Winthrop Hackett, had promised to endow from his own personal funds. Other subjects would be taught by less expensive lecturers. Votes were cast, and a clear majority was established for six of these seven chairs, with Geology and Classics being tied for the last place.

One of the chairs that had a clear majority of votes was English. The suggestion that 'if a good man could be obtained' this man could also teach the dead languages did not receive support, although the philological rather than sociological approach to the teaching of English literature that was normal at that time, and the fact that it was also normal for academics whose interests were in English literature to have descended to this after receiving a traditional education in the Greek and Roman classics, made this suggestion less unreasonable than it might appear nowadays.

PORTRAIT: SIR WINTHROP HACKETT (THE MORE CORRECT ST GEORGE'S COLLEGE ONE, WITH ROBES OF TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN, NOT THE ONE THAT IS IN THE SENATE ROOM, WHICH SHOWS HIM IN ROBES THAT WERE DESIGNED LONG AFTER HIS DEATH)



So a decision had to be made between Classics and Geology. According to the Senate's rules, the Chancellor had a casting vote when there was a tie, and since he was known to be a strong supporter of the Humanities in general and Classics in particular, many supposed that he would choose Classics. But he did not let his heart override his head. He knew that in Western Australia knowledge of the land that Europeans had lived in for such a short time was of overriding importance, and although it had already been decided that a chair in Engineering and Mining should be established, he cast his vote in favour of Geology.

APPOINTMENT OF GEORGE WOOD TO LECTURESHIP

This meant that Classics would be taught by a lecturer, and in due course Mr George Wood (Aberdeen and Oxford) was appointed to a lectureship in Latin and Greek, together with three other lecturers in the subjects that had not been established with full professorships, French and German (taught by one lecturer), Mental and Moral Philosophy and Veterinary Science.

Wood arrived in Western Australia with his family by sea at the end of March 1913, shortly before teaching began. Like other new members of the University's staff he was interviewed by a reporter for the local newspaper, *The West Australian*, and later contributed what in those days was a short article for that journal, as the other heads of departments had done, writing about the general state of classical studies.

There is not much that can be said now about Wood's teaching and other work during the first few years of his appointment. At the beginning of the third term of his second year, the First World War began, and many students, mostly male, disappeared. Then in 1919 numbers rose again as servicemen

returned. The first thing that I have found that might be worth mentioning is that in 1920 he joined a number of other junior members of the teaching staff to request that they should be granted study leave after serving for five years, so that they could update their skills. This request was not granted immediately, but in 1927 a scheme was put in place which allowed academic staff to have two terms of sabbatical leave on full pay after six years of service, with a third term of unpaid leave being taken to make up a full year if the staff member wished to avail himself of this.

In 1920 Wood was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor. This was not the result of his applying for promotion, but a belated attempt by the Senate to compensate junior academics in charge of departments, who were doing as much as a full professor, for the work that they had to do. Since Wood was in charge of a department, this promotion was automatic, and since by that time he had three children as well as a wife to support, it would have been most welcome. He was promoted to the rank of Professor in 1945, but in this case it was after the position had been advertised.

The portrait of him that follows has been taken from a group photograph which may be dated at some time in the 1930s.



Like many other academics of that time, Wood did not conduct any significant research (and indeed it would have been difficult for him to do this in the most isolated university in the world, with a library

at that time that contained little but the most basic books relating to his subject). But he was certainly busy with his teaching, for which he had little support, and with general matters of university administration.

1920: WOOD OPPOSES A PROPOSAL TO INTRODUCE FEES

In 1920 Wood was a leading figure in supporting the continuation of the situation in which students did not pay fees to attend lectures at UWA. He said that he would rather see a reduction in his salary than have the University 'saddled with those abominable twins – an unfair fee and a poverty plea.' The State Government at first decided to impose fees, but this decision was reversed, after the Labor Opposition with the support of the Country Party attacked this change.

1920: WOOD AND OTHERS ASK FOR STUDY LEAVE

In 1920 Wood also joined eight other members of the non-professorial staff in asking the Senate for study leave (and his name appeared at the head of the list). They requested a year's leave on full pay after five years' service, and although the request was not approved immediately, a few years later study leave of two terms out of three on full pay was approved after six years, with the option of taking unpaid leave for the third term. It should be remembered that since travel from Western Australia at that time had to be by sea, or by railway to the Eastern States, travel for study or to attend conferences was very difficult. In fact in 1933 when, during the Depression, Professor Shann (Economics and History) was given leave to attend a conference in New York, perhaps because it was hoped that he would discover something that would help the Australian economy, it was necessary to give him leave to be absent for the whole of the second term of the year.

WOOD'S TEACHING

At first, to judge from the surviving handbooks and examination papers, Wood's teaching was confined to teaching the Latin and Greek languages in a traditional way, demanding translations from and into both of them, and the writing of some essays. In the middle of the 1920s, however, he began to develop a wider curriculum. For several years he made only slight changes, adding to the advanced units in Latin and Greek extra teaching in Greek Literature and Roman History, with additional examination papers in those subjects, and then he obtained permission in 1927 to make these areas of study separate units, which were taught with the help of some part time assistance. It was at this time that the name of the Department was changed from 'Department of Latin and Greek' to 'Department of Classics and Ancient History'.

HAROLD BAILEY

Another thing that happened in the mid-1920s was exceptional: it was at this time that Wood taught the most memorable of his students, Harold Bailey. Bailey had come from England with his parents at the age of eight, and lived on a farm in the wheat-belt with them, but after teaching himself some languages he was accepted at UWA, and then completed a degree in Classics. In 1924 he completed his Honours year, and correspondence survives which shows that he was in danger of not being awarded First Class Honours. The problem was that although his translation papers were all extremely good, his essay papers were not judged to be equally good by the external examiner, Professor Woodhouse of Sydney University. Wood persuaded his interstate colleague to be merciful, and Bailey then stayed on as a part time tutor, completed a Master's degree at UWA, and was subsequently sent to Oxford University with funds provided from the Hackett bequest. He gained a D.Phil. A story is told about him, that when he was ready to submit his dissertation, examiners were sought, without the student's name being given, and one person who declined said that he couldn't do the job, that there was 'someone called Bailey' at Oxford who might be suitable. Bailey subsequently became Professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge, and was eventually knighted. I met him about 1960 when he came to UWA to receive an honorary degree, and although he behaved in a perfectly pleasant way, I remember that he seemed to have tunnel vision – nothing really interested him except matters that had some association with languages. It is easy to believe the statement that is attributed to him, 'I have talked for ten and a half hours on the problem of one word, without approaching the further problem of its meaning.' I can add another story that seems typical of him: he reported that he had travelled to Paris at the end of December to do some work in the Bibliothèque Nationale there, and had been disappointed to find out that it would be closed on Christmas Day.

EXPANSION AND CONTRACTION OF CLASSICS UNITS

As has already been said, in the 1920s George Wood began to expand the teaching programme that he was offering. Recognising that there many students were eager to become acquainted with the history and culture of the ancient world without necessarily concentrating on the classical languages, he gradually moved into this extra area of study. This was done in two stages: first, he introduced separate papers on Greek and Roman history into the language units, instead of simply relying on single essay questions tacked on to the end of translation papers. Then, in 1927, he obtained permission to develop separate units in Greek Literature and Roman History, to be offered in alternate years.

This excellent development, unfortunately, was soon brought to a halt because of the financial problems caused by the great depression of the 1930s, and although the units continued to be listed, they

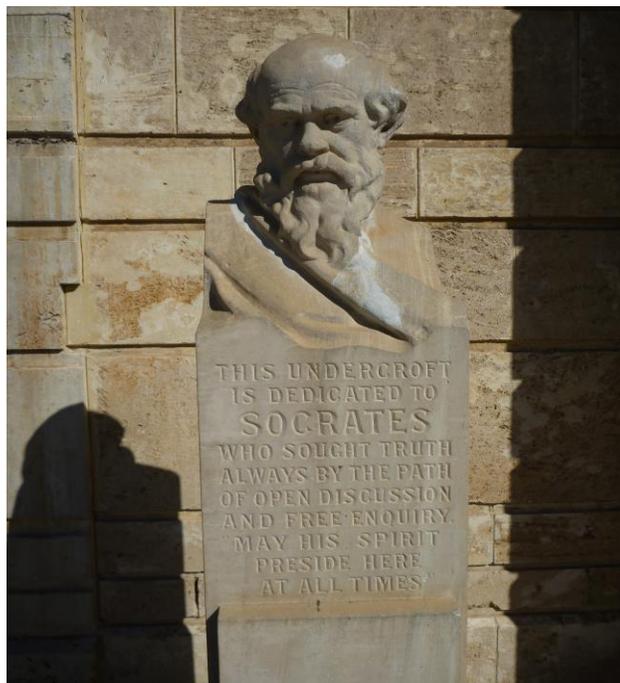
were said to be 'in abeyance', because no money could be found to pay the part time staff who were needed teach them (Wood himself was very heavily loaded, with, as he reported, fourteen and a half contact hours a week, together with marking, examining and administrative duties).

HUBERT WHITFELD

In 1926 it was decided that the University needed a permanent Vice-Chancellor (before that time, the appointment had rotated for one or two years at a time among the professors. Wood, like all the Heads of Departments, was invited to apply for the position, but wrote a polite letter saying that he did not think that he was a suitable person to take up the position. The Professor of Mining and Engineering, Hubert Whitfeld, who had been Vice-Chancellor twice before, was chosen, and held the position from 1927 until his unexpected death in 1939. Whitfeld, like so many excellent scholars of his time, had done a degree in Classics at Sydney University, and had then moved into engineering, so he and Wood had a good relationship.

SOCRATES

It was Whitfeld's love of the Classics that made him donate a bust of Socrates to the University (and later led him, together with his wife, to donate another of Diotima, a character in one of Plato's dialogues, to accompany it). I believe that this is the only occasion on which a Vice-Chancellor has donated a significant work of art to the University.



WOOD AS PUBLIC ORATOR

Wood was also appointed as the University's Public Orator, and the text of the oration that he composed (in Latin, of course) for the graduation ceremony of April 1932, when the newly built Winthrop Hall was formally opened, survives. The widow of UWA's effective founder Sir Winthrop Hackett was awarded an honorary doctorate, and because she was in mourning after the death of her second husband, the award was accepted by her daughter Patricia. The local newspaper, *The West Australian*, reported this part of the proceedings as follows:

'The eloquence that he imparted to the classic tongue was not received quite as decorum demanded. Certain outbursts of applause from the students were under the suspicion of not being entirely sincere and – as the Minister for Education suggested later – of occurring "in the wrong places." Shadowy smiles were observable even upon the austere faces on the dais.'

It was shortly before this that financial difficulties and rather low enrolments led to the suggestion that Ancient Greek should be withdrawn from the University's offerings. This spurred Wood to state his firm opposition to any such measure. He also stated that if it was thought that his teaching load was too great (he claimed, as has already been stated, to be averaging fourteen and a half contact hours each week, in addition to his administrative duties), he would be willing for his Greek classes not to be counted for the purpose of collecting statistics. I am glad to say that Greek was not cancelled.

In 1945, at the end of the Second World War, Wood was promoted to the rank of Professor, after the position was advertised. He had not published anything, and does not seem to have engaged in any kind of research, so it must be assumed that this was in recognition of his seniority and perhaps of his useful contributions to the general administration of the university. Again, the increase in salary would have been welcome; in fact, only three years later he joined other academic staff in pressing for an increase in salaries, because of the ravages that post-war inflation was inflicting on most people. His contribution to this appeal was to make a particularly Scottish point, that during his time at UWA the cost of a certain staple item of diet had increased from seven shillings and sixpence a bottle to thirty-two shillings and sixpence (in other words, more than four times, whereas academic salaries had only doubled).

Wood died at the end of 1949 when he was close to retirement. For the previous two years he had been in bad health, suffering from Parkinson's disease, and he had been given some part time assistance for the teaching of Latin. In 1950 the part time assistant, Mrs Ira Ward, continued to teach Latin and to do such administration as was required, and a school teacher, Mr Con Coroneos, who had studied Ancient Greek under Wood, looked after the few students of that language who remained.

Mrs Ward died many years ago, but Mr Coroneos is still with us, and I have visited him twice. He has good feelings about George Wood, and told me two stories about him. The first was that he had presented an exercise in Greek to the professor, written with the proper polytonic accents that were still used, even for modern Greek, at that time. Wood took his pen and corrected an accent, which impressed Mr Coroneos very favourably. The other thing that he told me was that in the Second World War one of Wood's sons was killed, and 'he didn't eat for three days.'

THE SURVIVAL OF CLASSICS AND ANCIENT HISTORY

In 1950 there was a debate over the future of Classics and Ancient History. Some thought that there was no point in spending money on a department which was so run down, with such a small number of students. But there was strong support for its continuance from some members of the Faculty of Arts, particularly the Professor of English, Alan Edwards, and the Reader (equivalent to what is now Associate Professor) in English, Alec King, who were supported by the Warden of St George's College, 'Josh' Reynolds, who was also a part time lecturer in History. So it was decided to advertise for a replacement, and this was done in the middle of the year. There were six applicants (including Mervyn Austin who in the end took the position, but was on this occasion not short-listed). The two applicants who were considered to be the most suitable were Professor J. R. Elliott, who already occupied the Chair of Classics at the University of Tasmania, and a much younger man, Patrick Daunt, aged only 25, who was a lecturer at the University of Sydney. Daunt was preferred. Reading what little evidence is available now, it is possible to conclude that although there was nothing obviously wrong with Elliott, and he had a satisfactory record as an administrator, he might have seemed to be unexciting, whereas Daunt performed very well on interview, had enthusiastic references that supported him, and had already shown that he could interest people in the Sydney community in his subject by organising performances of Greek plays.



In December 1950 Patrick Daunt came over to Perth and spent a few days at the University and some schools, making a favourable impression on everyone, and then went back to Sydney, planning to return to Western Australia in February before the beginning of the academic year. But he did not arrive, and soon it was learned that his clothes had been found on Bondi Beach. It was of course assumed that he had committed suicide, but a few weeks later he was discovered in Queensland, working on a road gang, and saying that he was 'fed up with academic life'. This was exciting for the media, who enjoyed telling the story of 'Australia's walkabout professor'.

A swift decision had to be made, and the Senate cancelled Daunt's appointment, arranged for Mrs Ward and Mr Coroneos to look after the small number of remaining students for another year, and readvertised the position. This time they selected one of the previous applicants who had not been short-listed before, Mervyn Austin, and he arrived in Perth with his family at the beginning of 1952.



The new Professor was a graduate of Melbourne University who had been awarded a Rhodes Scholarship and had then gone to Oxford and taken the Oxford BA, as was the normal practice for Australian students at that time. He had played cricket for Oxford (as a slow spin bowler), but was not

awarded a 'Blue', because at the time of the match against Cambridge (an essential qualification in both universities for receiving this award), he had broken a finger, and so was unable to take the field on this occasion. He had also acquired a Bachelor of Divinity degree, thinking that he might take Holy Orders, but, as he later said, with characteristic modesty, he did not pursue this idea because he thought that he did not have the right legs for bishop's gaiters. He had seen service in the Second World War, flying as an observer in Mosquito fighters, and had then, after obtaining a lectureship at St Andrew's University in Scotland, been appointed to the headmastership of Newington College in Sydney.

Before describing the next period in the history of the department, I will jump to the beginning of 2013, when I was talking about the Daunt story in Sydney, and was told that after he had left academic life he had at a later stage worked for the European Economic Community (as it was called then). So I began to search for him, using Google, from which no one can hide. It was useful that he had an unusual middle name, Eldon, and I was soon able to find that he had indeed worked for the EEC, and had written a book on caring for people with disabilities. Further research showed that he was still alive, aged 88, and was living in little Abington, a few miles from Cambridge, a churchwarden at the local Anglican church and offering free lessons in New Testament Greek to anyone who wished to study this subject.

The church's web site gave his e-mail address, so I sent a message saying that I would like to meet him in May of that year, when I would be in England. He did not respond, so I telephoned him, and at first received a cool response, because he said that he did not want to revisit that period in his life. But I assured him that after this temporary hiccup things had gone well for the Classics at UWA, and I posted a letter to him that gave him details of this, together with a biography of Mervyn Austin that I had prepared for the Australian Dictionary of Biography. When he had read this, he relaxed, and the result was that we then had a most enjoyable lunch in Cambridge which lasted nearly two hours.

He told me that after service in the Royal Navy in the Second World War (when one voyage took him to Sydney, which he found a most exciting place), he had completed a degree at Oxford, and soon afterwards had managed to be appointed to a lectureship at Sydney University. He explained that he had been encouraged to apply for the vacancy in Perth, and was happy to do so, because at Sydney there were two professors, one of Latin and the other of Greek, who did not get on with each other, and this made life there less pleasant than it would otherwise have been.

He then indicated that when the time came to take up the appointment he had had an identity crisis and some personal problems (he hinted at a failed romance), but had not been brave enough simply to withdraw from the position to which he had been appointed, because he feared that so much pressure would be applied that he would have to take it; hence the faked suicide.

When we parted he was very relaxed, and extremely interested in hearing about the revival of Classics and Ancient History that took place from 1952 onwards.

Mervyn Austin and his family arrived in Perth at the beginning of that year. For a year he had a little assistance with the teaching of Latin from Mrs Ward, who then bore a child and retired, as was the custom in those days. He also gave an inaugural lecture 'The Presence of the Past', as new professors were supposed to do in those days. He began this lecture by alluding delicately to the 'fortuitous' nature of his appointment, and to the fact that he had been warned that the department was in a very poor state because of the illness and death of its previous head – but nevertheless, he said, he remained 'undaunted'.

At first the subjects offered remained the same, and only units in the classical languages were presented, although the name of 'Classics and Ancient History' was still used. But a unit in elementary Greek began to attract more students, and a unit in elementary Latin was introduced, which could be taken by those who had not done this language at school. Professor Austin's energetic promotion of his subject attracted more students at a time when enrolments at every university in Australia were increasing. At the beginning of 1956 a full time lecturer (Paul Weaver, Canterbury and Cambridge) was appointed as a full time assistant, and a single unit in Ancient History was introduced. I followed in the middle of 1957.

In 1959, after Professor Austin had taken a year's study leave, he was allowed to introduce a new unit in Ancient History that he had devised, one that proved to be a great success. It was based on the concept of 'great books', and required students to read complete translations of Homer's *Iliad*, the *Histories* of Herodotus and the *History* of Thucydides and the *Republic* of Plato. It could be said that there was too much material to be properly worked through in one year, and it is true that in the third term Plato did not get as much attention as the other authors, but at that time students were more able to read long books than they are now, and had fewer distractions (television did not arrive in Western Australia until 1959, and even then was only on for a limited number of hours each day), so it worked very well.

1957, the year of my arrival in Australia, was also the year in which the Murray Committee recommended greatly increased spending on Australian universities, a recommendation that was accepted with wonderful speed by the Menzies government, in spite of the fact that with the exception of the Australian National University the universities were state organisations. So money began to flow from Canberra, and by the end of 1958 it had even trickled down to our level to such an extent that we were able to buy a typewriter (although we did not at that stage have a secretary, and I became the *de facto* secretary for a while because I could type). We also bought a slide projector.

In 1959 another member of staff arrived, John Jory (University College London), bringing our numbers up to four, and after that Ancient History was expanded to include a second year unit in Roman history, taught by Paul Weaver. The undergraduate numbers were increasing rapidly, and it was not

difficult in those circumstances to expand our offerings. As a result, two more lecturers joined the Department in 1961, Patrick McGushin and Cornelis ('Jim') de Heer. They had emigrated from Ireland and the Netherlands after the Second World War, and had become secondary school teachers in Perth, and taken degrees in Classics and Ancient History in Perth with First Class results.

I can find no evidence that their positions were advertised before they were appointed. It seems that at this time, if a professor was able to assure his Dean and Vice-Chancellor that a suitable person was available to fill a position, that was enough. That is why I have described the first sixty years of the history of this department as a period of monarchy.

The result was that the Department gained two very experienced school teachers. Patrick McGushin had taught at Scotch College, and Jim de Heer had taught at Wesley College. I have mixed feeling about their appointments, because their teaching skills were valuable (and they both produced some useful publications), but I sometimes feel that at this time in Australia the universities were poaching teachers from the secondary school system, and this was perhaps not entirely a good thing.

Again, in 1962 and 1964-6, something unusual happened, not of great importance but relevant because it illustrates the greater freedom that professors had in those days to shape their departments in whatever way they thought appropriate. At the Australian National University a young lecturer from New Zealand had made a very good impression, not only on the Head of the Classics Department Dick Johnson, but also on the guru of Classical Studies in Australia, Professor Dale Trendall who had moved from Sydney to Canberra to take up the position of Master of University House, an establishment that at that time provided accommodation for postgraduate students and a few academic staff (it has now been turned into a sort of hotel for academics). Between them they decided that it would be good for this young scholar, Graeme Clarke, to have some experience elsewhere, and it was arranged that he should exchange positions for a term with someone in another university. I have no idea why I was the one who was offered the chance of spending a term in Canberra, but of course I thought that it was a good idea, so I drove my little yellow sports car to Kalgoorlie, put it on the train to Port Pirie (the road to the east was not fully bitumenised at that time), and drove on to Canberra. The change of scene was good for me, and I came back with some new ideas and copies of other people's lecture notes which came in handy afterwards. As for Graeme Clarke, he was set to teaching our recently devised third year Ancient History unit, and it so happened that one of the students was the Vice-Chancellor's daughter Elizabeth Prescott, who like her brother Nigel had been encouraged to major in this subject, but had not been a very successful student. Later, the Vice-Chancellor reported to Mervyn Austin that this was the first time that his daughter had seemed to show any interest in her studies, and so it seemed to him that it would be a good idea to arrange a permanent job for Graeme Clarke here. The position was not, of course, advertised. He came back here as a senior lecturer in 1964, but stayed for only three years, because being

very upwardly mobile and with good connections he obtained another promotion to an Associate Professorship at Monash University after that and later moved to Melbourne .to become a full professor.

None of the lecturers who joined the Department before 1962 had any qualification higher than a BA with Honours. All of those who stayed, however, gained PhDs afterwards.

The 1960s saw an increase in the research productivity of the Department. In the first place, in 1962 we acquired another member of staff, James Willis, an established researcher with a PhD, who came out to Western Australia in the first place for six months in exchange for John Jory, who was not yet entitled to study leave, but wanted to spend time at University College, London, so that he could work on his PhD. James Willis then stayed on. Again, the position was not advertised; Professor Austin was able to persuade the Vice-Chancellor that the Department was expanding so quickly that a senior academic was needed to assist with administration, so Dr Willis, who was internationally recognised as a fine Latin scholar, and had already been offered one Chair in Europe, was secured for UWA, with the rank of Reader (the title that UWA, as has already been explained, was using at that time instead of Associate Professor). He was followed in 1967 by Brian Bosworth, who was beginning to make a reputation for himself as a historian of the exploits of Alexander the Great. Again, these positions were not advertised, but were negotiated with the Vice-Chancellery on the basis of increasing student numbers, and the new members of staff were chosen because of contacts with academics in British universities.

The results of these appointments were spectacular, compared with what had happened previously. John Jory produced a major publication, a computerised index to Volume VI of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, a multi-volume collection of the ancient Latin inscriptions that had been discovered in the city of Rome. This was not only of importance to Classicists, because it also brought good publicity for the University at a time when computers were just beginning to be important in the life of the world, and showed that they could be useful for work in the Humanities as well as for scientists and mathematicians. Then Brian Bosworth began to publish a multi-volume commentary on Arrian, the principal ancient Greek historian of the deeds of Alexander the Great, and James Willis produced his second major work, an edition of a Late Latin text of considerable importance to educationists as well as classicists, written by Martianus Capella. These were accompanied by numerous other minor publications, and it can be said that by the end of the 1970s, the Department might have been considered a leading, if not the leading, Classics department in Australia.

1964 also saw the Faculty of Arts move from its original location on the Crawley campus above the Vice-Chancellery (with some outlying offices for staff along Fairway) to the newly completed Arts Building, where we have been located ever since. It was in this year that I can claim to have occupied the Chair of Classics, in a sense, for the first time.

In 1973 another appointment was made, in a very different way. This, I will claim, was the first emergence of democracy in departmental administration. While Mervyn Austin was on study leave, it was agreed by the Administration that our increasing enrolments entitled us to another full time member of staff (how times change!). At a meeting chaired by the Acting Head, Patrick McGushin, it was decided that another experienced school teacher, Norman Ashton, who had completed a degree in Ancient History with First Class Honours should be invited to take the position. The appointment was made, and although Professor Austin was not totally pleased with the democratic process in which he had not participated, he soon recovered from the shock. Norman Ashton was indeed successful both as a teacher and a researcher, because he not only completed a PhD, but also developed an interest in the history of two Greek islands, Siphnos and Kastellorizo, which led him also to develop a relationship with the Greek community of Perth.

Soon after this, however, a slow process of decline in student numbers in Classics and Ancient History began, partly because the difficult languages of ancient Greek and Latin were attracting fewer students, and also later because direct entry into Law was introduced, so law students no longer had to complete a first year in an area of general studies. Also, government funding began to fail to keep up with the needs of universities. At first, this was not obvious, although there was a sign of what was to come when Mervyn Austin and another member of staff retired at the end of 1978, and the budgetary stresses that universities were experiencing meant that only one replacement was provided.

Shortly before this, a new administrative system was instituted. Departments were no longer headed by professors who were appointed as permanent heads until they retired, but by heads who were at first elected, then appointed by the Vice-Chancellery, for periods of three years, renewable for another three years. In 1975, when this system was introduced, it was necessary for the non-professorial staff of existing departments to decide what they wanted to do. In our case, a meeting took place at lunch time one day at a hotel in Shenton Park, and the discussion was not a long one. Patrick McGushin wisely invited us to consider what it would be like if we had Mervyn Austin in the department when he was not its head, and after we had considered that for a brief moment, we decided to write a letter asking him to continue. I have no doubt that some other departments would have come to a similar decision.

However, after Professor Austin had retired, we moved over to the new system, and John Jory became Head of Department, alternating from time to time with Brian Bosworth, for the next eleven years. This worked well, particularly with regard to financing, because John Jory would spend all the money in our account, and would make a trip over to the Vice-Chancellery and beg for another few thousand dollars, a small sum which would be made available, and then while Brian Bosworth, a more retentive personality, replaced him for a while, the department would end up in the black, at least for a short time.

In another respect different procedures were adopted: whenever a new appointment could be considered, the whole Department (at least, everyone who was not on study leave) was involved in making decisions in a democratic manner.

In 1981-1983 there was another development which might have seemed to reverse the trend of gentle decline that had begun in this and in other departments, as funding from the Commonwealth Government, which had by that time taken over the universities and burdened them with expensive administrative requirements, failed to keep up with increasing enrolments. Modern Greek was added to the subjects offered; this, however was not funded by The University of Western Australia, but by the Greek community (principally by a major philanthropist, Michael Kailis). A lecturer was appointed, Dr Margaret Carroll, who had already been teaching this subject at the University of New England. One member of staff, Norman Ashton, had decided to make his major area of study the Greek island of Siphnos, and I and two other members of the academic staff joined him in studying Modern Greek for two years (the subject never achieved a full major). At first the total number of students who enrolled seemed to promise well for the continuance of this subject. After three years, however, the endowment had been spent, and the enrolment by that time was not enough for the subject to continue to be supported by the university, and it lapsed, although some years later the subject was taken up by Notre Dame Australia, and has had a good enrolment there.

The next major development was the appointment of David Kennedy to a lectureship in 1990. He had already established a reputation as an archaeologist, and applied to fill a vacancy that (almost surprisingly) had been created as a replacement for a lecturer who had come for a short time and departed. His brother had already emigrated to Western Australia, and he believed correctly that this would be a good place to bring up children. He was soon allowed to introduce units in Greek and Roman Archaeology, which attracted students who would not otherwise have enrolled in units in Ancient History, and also founded a Roman Archaeology Group which has flourished, and has attracted many people from the community.

At this time John Jory left the Department to take up the position of Executive Dean, a position that had been created as a result of a process of reorganisation of the University's administrative system. With a generosity that would be unthinkable now, we were allowed to have the equivalent of his salary to employ a replacement, and we decided that instead of advertising for someone at professorial level, we would use the money to appoint two lecturers. This worked very well. One of our former students, Jane Belmore, who was then at the Australian National University, came back to Perth, and Ian Plant came from New Zealand to take up the second place. This worked very well for three years, but then as financial pressures increased, we were no longer allowed to keep these positions, and although they were able to stay for a short time after that while they searched for other jobs, we lost them.

Some years after that the Department of Classics and Ancient History began to find itself in difficulties because a new system of financing subjects of study had been introduced: departments were funding according to their enrolments, and if these were not high enough to match the cost of their staff, they were declared to be 'in debt'. This system of financing subjects of study took no notice of the fact that departments had different histories (some departments were top-heavy with senior academics, some had a larger proportion of recently appointed staff), and that departments that were 'respectable' at one time could be expected to be 'in debt' ten years later, if their academic staff were good enough to be promoted. We were in trouble, because although the new units in Greek and Roman Archaeology (offered only in alternate years) were beginning to attract some students, we were top-heavy.

Another important thing that happened was that in 1989 we had been allowed to fill a vacancy, and we appointed a former student, Judith Maitland, who had completed an M.A. degree here, and had gone to the University of Adelaide and acquired a PhD. After she came here, she pressed us to introduce a unit in ancient mythology, and although at first it was feared that by doing this she would only split the existing first year enrolment, she was allowed to do this in 1994, and it became a great success, partly because of the nature of the subject which was so attractive to students, and also because it was well taught. It might also be said that Judith rescued the Department from a dangerous situation, because our enrolments had been slipping, and this increase in enrolments now made us more respectable.

From 1996 to 2001 I became Head of Department, and managed to keep things going in spite of the financial pressures that were caused by the new system. My strategy, if it deserves to be given such a name, was to follow the example of third world countries and run deficits (which the administrators called 'debts' and I called 'underfunding'). I also tried to increase the numbers in ancient Greek by copying a course that had been successful at ANU, introducing a one-semester unit which combined some elementary Greek and Latin, and was really intended to teach students some basic grammar which would help them with any language that they were studying, including their own. I wanted to call it 'Introduction to Formal Grammar', because I hoped that this would attract students from a number of different areas, but I was warned that this would immediately raise objections from other departments, particularly English, so I had to call it 'Introduction to the Classical Languages'. I enjoyed putting a text book together, but I cannot say that it brought in many more students, and although some of those who took it seemed to enjoy playing around with two languages that were different enough not to cause much confusion, there were some who made it clear that they wanted to study Latin, and considered the Greek part of the unit to be a waste of time. So after 2001 the unit was discontinued.

At this time there was an unfortunate development in the way in which our languages were taught. It was decided that since enormous pressure was being put on academics to produce refereed publications and win competitive research grants, it was necessary to reduce the hours spent in teaching, and our

language units were reduced to two contact hours a week. This meant that less ground would be covered, and, as might be expected, even if the pass rate in undergraduate units remained the same, the linguistic skills of students who aspired to postgraduate study would be inadequate.

Independently of this, a new administrative system had been devised. Instead of the original arrangement of departments within a faculty, a third level of 'schools' was created, and the former departments were rebadged as 'discipline groups', with 'chairs' instead of 'heads' in case they still had any idea that they might be important. At first, the administrative staff of the school in which we were placed, Humanities, consisted only of a Head (a professor who was notionally employed for 50% of his time on the administration of the school) and an administrative assistant, also 50%). This was too good to last, of course, and now we have a full time Head of School, with a manager and a bevy of other administrative personnel.

In my opinion the 'chairs' (I am pleased to think that my pouring of scorn on the title of 'convenor' to replace 'head of department' may have played small part in the adoption of this more respectable term) of 'discipline groups' have as much administrative work to do as old-style heads of department had to do in the past. But administration always expands, particularly in what future historians may come to describe as 'the age of compliance'.

All of this had a minimal impact on our teaching. We had changed from full year units to semester units some years before, and this had worked quite well for us, because we were able to break up the existing units into separate halves, the first year units being offered every year and the advanced units offered or withdrawn according to the availability of staff and their general teaching loads.

Then, after about seven years of planning, teaching at this university was reorganised in 2012 under a general programme which was called 'New Courses'. The main thrust of this, as far as we were concerned, was that because the number of undergraduate degrees that were being offered was reduced, and we were required to reduce the number of undergraduate units that were being offered, some units were cancelled. This was a pity in some cases, because if members of staff had developed units in which they were genuinely interested, they sometimes had to see them disappear. On the other hand, the additional requirement, that students had to take 'broadening' units outside the subject areas of the Faculties in which they were majoring, was good for us, because to our great pleasure (and perhaps to our surprise) our first year units in Latin as well as in Ancient History proved to be very popular, not only with students in Arts but also with students in other faculties who under the new arrangements had to take 'broadening' units in subjects quite different from the ones in which they intended to major.

The situation regarding our language units is that their quality has been reduced. In the negotiations that led to the establishment of New Courses, Ancient Greek was as usual under pressure, but in the end a miserable decision was made: that Latin and Ancient Greek should be retained, but that Latin should be

introduced only in the second semester of the first year, and Greek only in the second year. This was combined with an increase in the number of contact hours to three in each week, so that arithmetically at least the situation had not changed, but the result is still the same: honours and postgraduate students do not have enough control of the languages that they are using, and are dependent upon English-language translations that are perhaps generally adequate, but are not capable of being interpreted in the way that is appropriate to the particular matters that they are investigating.

At least, we are doing better than Adelaide University, where the classical languages were recently in danger of being completely banished from undergraduate courses by a Deputy Vice-Chancellor who claims that units with small enrolments are ‘vanity units’ (Greek has already gone). This takes no account of the relevance of some units to higher studies. Oh, how I wish that I could speak with this lady – I would say ‘Vanity units, Madam? You mean, like lipstick on a pig?’

In one respect, however, we are doing well. From the beginning, prizes were endowed in Latin and Greek, and later in Ancient History. And in the last twenty years we have received several endowments. One has created a beautiful medallion (the ‘Prider medallion’) which is awarded to students who complete an Honours degree with marks that can be compared with those of an exceptionally gifted student, Rodney Prider, and a scholarship supporting travel in Mediterranean lands that has also been named after him. The family of Judith Maitland, who died in 2012, have sponsored a prize in her name, and a bequest made by a former student, Margaret Braine, has allowed us to create a visiting fellowship for an international scholar that will help to maintain an international profile for our activities. So we do seem to have a future.