

Anastasia (“Ana”) Healey, 1932-2014



I offered to write this obituary as my association with Ana goes back to 1981 when she agreed to a period of a month’s work placement at the Institute of Classical Studies/Joint Library of the Hellenic and Roman Societies as part of my postgraduate Library course in Aberystwyth. After the course I obtained a post in a business/law library and became a Subject Librarian but my real interests lay in Classics and I was pleased to return to Gordon Square and take up the post of Library Assistant in 1990. Ana had already retired but I later heard that she had been very supportive of my application.

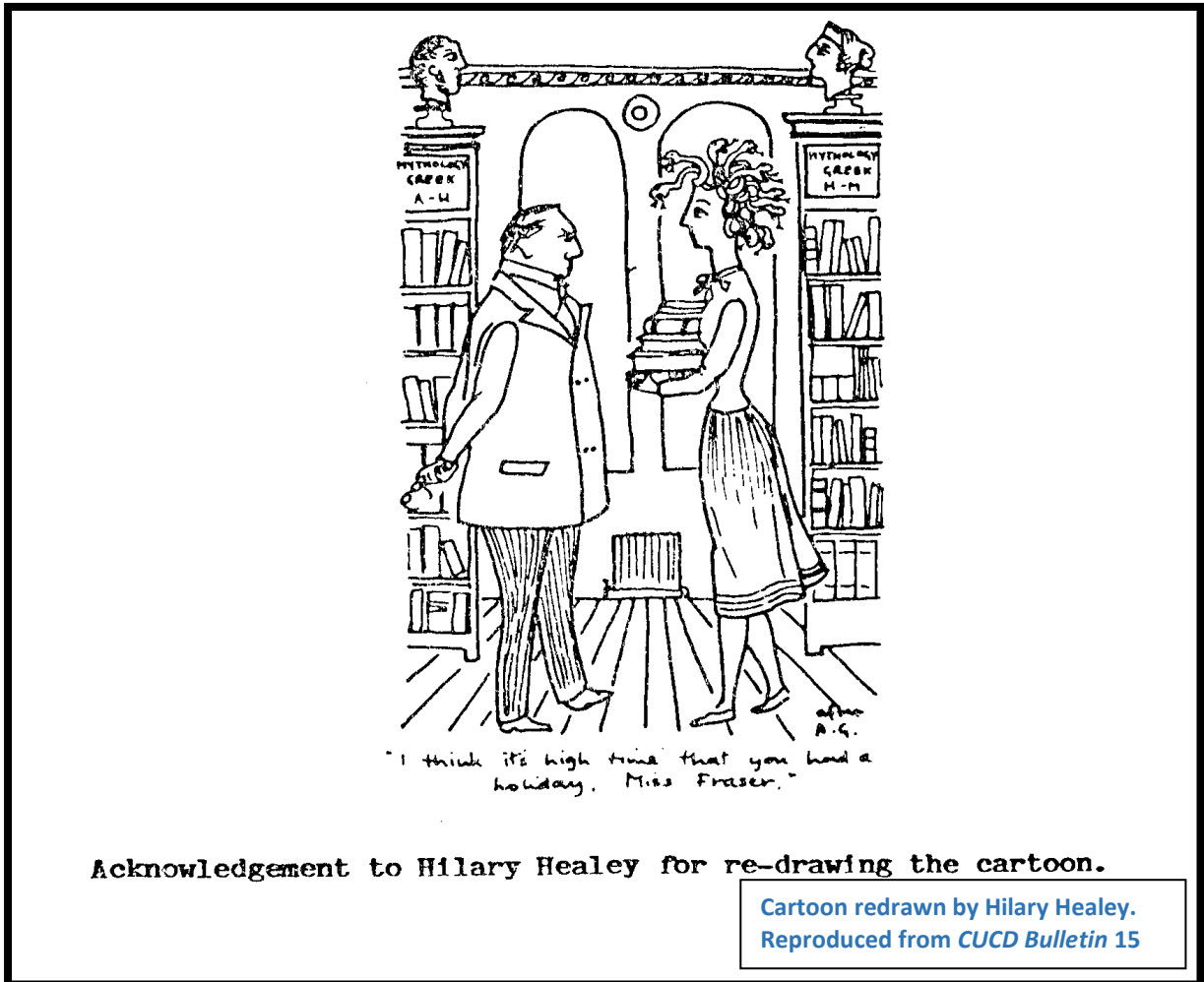
Anastasia (“Ana”) Healey was born in Grantham into an ecclesiastical family, to Marjory (nee Banks) and Kenneth Healey. Ana’s father was ordained in 1932, becoming Suffragan Bishop of Grimsby in 1958, and it was felt that she would receive a suitable education at a Church of England Boarding School. At age eight, therefore, she was sent to Abbot’s Bromley School in Staffordshire, where she was joined by her sister Hilary a few years later. During these years, Ana’s intellectual abilities became clear, as did her love of books and reading on a wide range of subjects. Friends also remember her acting ability and in particular her sensitive playing of the title role in *Androcles and the Lion*. (A small painting in her London flat shows the moment when she extracted the thorn from the lion’s paw.) Ana was also known at school for her sense of humour and fortitude.

After obtaining a Classics degree at the University of London’s Bedford College in 1953, and following this with a year’s experience in the National Library (then in the British Museum), she completed her training with the Librarianship course at UCL before returning to the library in the British Museum until 1958. Subsequently, Ana’s thirty-six year career was spent entirely in the Bloomsbury area of London, at the combined Library of the Institute of Classical Studies and the Hellenic and Roman Societies, one of the world’s finest Classics Libraries.¹ In order to support the then Librarian, Joyce Southan, Ana was appointed as Assistant Librarian on May 1st 1958, two days after the Queen Mother had opened the building at its new premises in Gordon Square.

This post (and the timing) was perfect for Ana: when she joined the team at Gordon Square, the ICS was already building up a reputation as an international centre for Classics, with researchers attracted by the seminars, the Library on the fifth floor and, on the floor above, the well-appointed common room with

¹ The background to the setting up of the Institute formed the basis of a lecture given by Professor John Barron, entitled ‘The Vision Thing: the founding of an Institute’ reprinted in *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 43 (1999): 27-39. A recent article by Professor Brian Sparkes, ‘Classical Associations and Societies in the UK’ includes some background to the history of the Hellenic and Roman Societies. *Hyperboreus* 19 (1-2) (2013): 205-213.

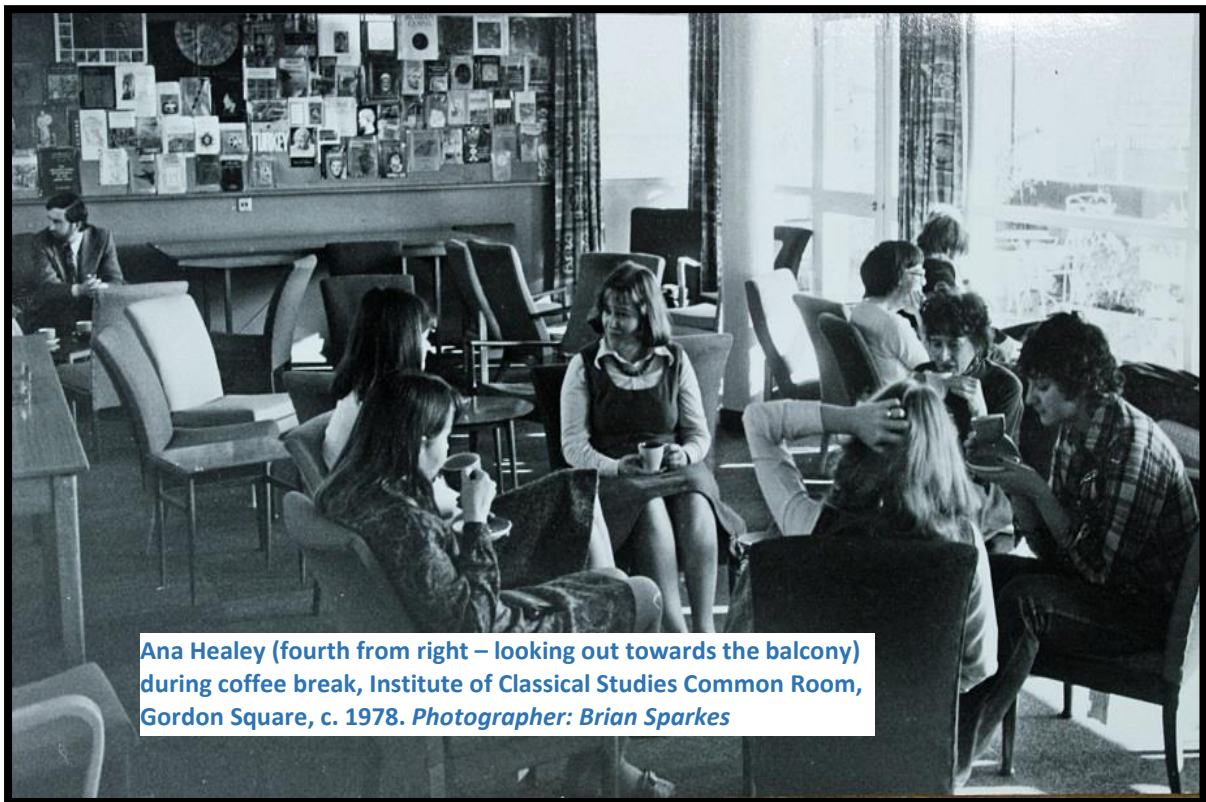
its excellent coffee and fine views from the balcony garden. Although Ana was a very private person, she fitted into the life of the Institute very well and made long lasting friendships with colleagues, administrative staff (in particular Alicia Totolos) and readers. She was highly approachable by all and treated everyone the same from the most eminent academics to the first time user. She was involved with all aspects of library work and was known for her concern for detail and accuracy. She assisted Joyce Southan in a major project which resulted in the publication of *A survey of classical periodicals: Union catalogue of periodicals relevant to classical studies in certain British libraries*.



Most will remember Ana for her remarkable memory of all the readers' names and circumstances, and for her kindness and interest in their lives and well-being. This, together with her knowledge of every book in the collection, was highly conducive to the fostering of the kind of 'club' atmosphere, seldom found in libraries, which persists even today and is largely down to Ana's influence.

Ana was delighted when her god-daughter Jenny chose to study archaeology and so Ana was able to be of some assistance with reading material, by introducing her to classical archaeologists such as Professor Nicholas Coldstream and on one occasion lending her suitable clothes to go on a "dig".

She was a woman of great integrity, and her kindness and goodness of heart shone through; yet she was not afraid to give a ticking off to anyone who committed some library misdemeanour, while at the same time remaining on good terms with them.



Ana Healey (fourth from right – looking out towards the balcony) during coffee break, Institute of Classical Studies Common Room, Gordon Square, c. 1978. Photographer: Brian Sparkes

Following Joyce Southan's unexpected death in 1971, Ana stepped into the breach as Librarian in very demanding circumstances and kept the library on course. Over the years she dealt with problems with space and staff shortages, and the ever present financial pressures. Although not noted for the tidiness of her office, Ana had the kind of organizational mind which made her very adept at marshalling facts and information from her phenomenal knowledge. Testament to this was the wonderful exhibition which she mounted for the Hellenic Society's centenary in 1979, displaying snippets about eminent scholars throughout its history and other interesting memorabilia.

Most of Ana's career was spent in a pre-computerised age so the arrival in 1986 of Dr David Packard's Ibycus computer (the first to be used outside the USA) was a major event. It was placed in the ICS Library and enabled scholars to search Classical, Biblical and Patristic literatures on CD-ROMs. This was the start of a new era for the library and further automation was not far off. Ana was pleased to be able to delegate such matters to her Deputy, Naomi Alvarez.

During and after her working life Ana took an active part in many aspects of London's cultural life such as the theatre, ballet and cinema and eating out with friends. She was a Friend of the British School of Athens, attended lectures whenever possible, and enjoyed several organized trips to Greece. She was also very knowledgeable about London's history, especially in the Marylebone area

where she lived while in the capital, and close to The Hellenic Centre in Paddington Street.

When Ana took early retirement for family reasons in 1989, characteristically she wanted to leave with the minimum of fuss. Fortunately she was given a send-off which she entirely merited at a function held on 12th December when Oxford Professor Peter Parsons delivered the [Ana Healey Lecture](#) entitled, 'Readers are requested ... the Ancient Library and its problems' followed by a reception in the common room. In addition, an [ancient Greek ode](#) in Pindaric style was composed by Stephen Instone in her honour, which praised her dutiful care for the Library collection.² Ana responded to all this with her customary humility and grace, and explained that the generous leaving gift would be spent partly on her garden at her Lincolnshire home, and partly on a first trip to Rome.

I have been greatly assisted in this tribute by Ana's friends, family – in particular Jenny Doole, Brian Sparkes, Anne Wetherley and Elys Varney – and past and present colleagues, Colin Annis, Paul Jackson and Naomi Alvarez.

Sue Willetts, Institute of Classical Studies

² Reproduced with permission from *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 36 (1989) and from Stephen's widow, Mrs Shelley Instone.