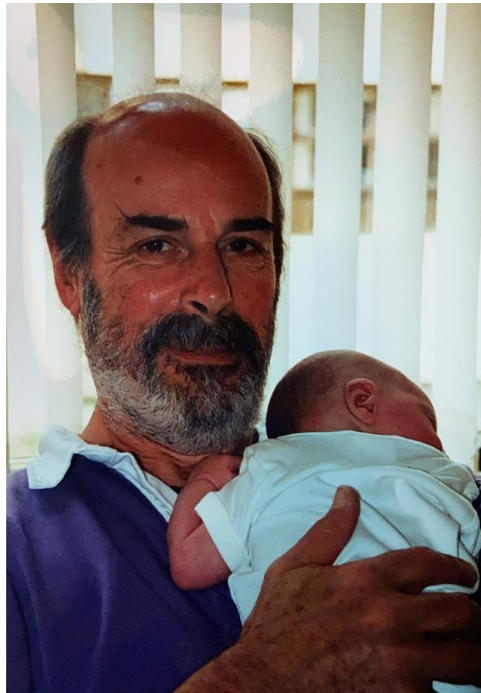


Andrew Barker

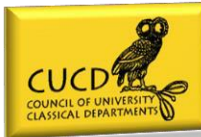
1943-2021

by William Mack



Professor Andrew Dennison Barker, Professor Emeritus of the University of Birmingham and Fellow of the British Academy, died in Warwick Hospital on Thursday, 22 July 2021, at the age of 78.

Andrew Barker was the foremost student of ancient music of his generation. He liked to remark that when he discovered the study of ancient music for himself in the 1970s it would have been difficult to fill a shelf with relevant publications whereas, by his retirement, there was enough to stock a small library. Although in Andrew's account this transformation was a collective effort, no-one made a larger contribution than Andrew himself. Andrew's remarkable legacy to his chosen field consists of eight books and more than eighty articles, as well as an international society for the study of ancient music (MOISA) of which he was the founding president and a journal (*Greek and Roman Musical Studies*) of which he was the founding editor. For his family and his friends in academia, choral music, and cricket, what remains are warm memories of his kindness and encouragement and of his sense of humour, which he maintained to the end of his long illness.

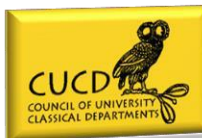


Andrew Barker was born on 24th April, 1943, in the village of Egginton, South Derbyshire to Edwin and Nancy Barker (née Daldy). As a result of his father's position in the Church Civil Service, Andrew, along with his elder brother George (known as Aldus in the family), and two younger sisters, Frances and Judith, grew up in Terwick Rectory, Hampshire. From here, Aldus and Andrew had the freedom to explore the countryside and were encouraged by their father in their early, shared love of natural history. Aldus went on to study zoology and have a distinguished career in conservation (notably in the development of urban ecology) and perhaps Andrew's own decision to choose Classics as his field, despite this shared interest, was partly shaped by the desire to distinguish himself from his brother.

As a result of his mother's alertness to educational opportunities for her sons, Andrew was put forward for a scholarship at Christ's Hospital aged 9, which he secured. Andrew excelled at Christ's as a student, sportsman, and chorister, and was invited by the Headmaster to remain there as Head Boy for an extra year studying Italian, before going up to Oxford to read Literae Humaniores in 1962. He followed Aldus to Queen's College, renewing a family connection (the eminent papyrologist, Arthur Hunt, who had been a fellow of Queen's, was their mother's uncle). Alan Bowman, Andrew's friend and contemporary, remembers him as probably the most intellectually gifted of their cohort at Queen's. Andrew shone in particular in the Philosophy tutorials they shared, although Andrew's impression of effortless ease gave rise to unfounded anxieties on the part of his ancient history tutor, Fergus Millar, about whether he had worked hard enough to achieve the first of which he was obviously capable.

After securing his first, Andrew took the unusual step of seeking to broaden his horizons by pursuing doctoral studies overseas through a philosophy scholarship at the Australian National University in Canberra. There he rekindled his enthusiasm for choral singing, which he pursued for the rest of his life. His doctoral thesis topic, 'Evolution and Explanation,' reflected his interests in the natural world, but by the time he completed it in 1970, he was keen to shift his academic focus. Pursuing the philosophy of science further would have entailed a becoming much more of a biologist than he wished to be. Consequently, when Andrew returned to England with Susan (whom he had met and married in Canberra), he was very happy to take up a post as a specialist in ancient philosophy in the newly founded philosophy department at the University of Warwick. Andrew and Susan moved first to Cubbington and then to South Leamington, and were joined first by Jonathan in 1970 and then Nicolas in 1972. In this period Andrew was involved (along with other classicists already employed at Warwick, including Penny Murray and Tom Winnifrith) in the efforts which led to the foundation of the Classics Department in the 1970s.

After the breakdown of his marriage with Susan, Andrew was offered the opportunity of a change of scene and teaching situation in the form of a two-year fellowship in Cambridge. It is a measure of the esteem in which he was held as a scholar and teacher at Warwick that his post there was left open for him while he pursued this opportunity. He therefore moved to Cambridge in 1976 with Jill at the start of their 45-year marriage, along with Jonathan, Nicolas and, in 1977, Michael. Andrew and Jill cut an unconventional profile in the Cambridge of the 1970s, with Andrew's fine beard and their goats, which they fed with

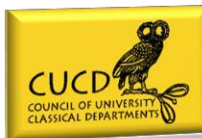


vegetation culled from the verges of local country lanes and housed in Andrew's first (but not last) essay as a bricklayer. At the end of the two years, the family moved back to Leamington Spa and Andrew to Warwick, perhaps in part because Andrew was not made to feel by all that he belonged in Cambridge, but also because maintaining a large and growing family there on a very modest wage proved impractical. Andrew remained grateful, however, to the Cambridge ancient philosophers for the support and encouragement which they gave to him then and subsequently, and above all because it was in Cambridge that he discovered his academic niche. When casting around for a topic for a paper he had agreed to give, Andrew took his cue from the fact that it was to be given on the feast of St. Cecilia, the patron saint of musicians, to tackle the problem of ancient harmonic intervals.

During the next decade at Warwick, which was bookended by the birth first of Kate (1979) and then of Will (1988), Andrew established the foundations of his later work on ancient music by collecting, translating and discussing the ancient sources on Greek music. The two volumes of *Greek Musical Writings* (volume 1, subtitled *The Musician and His Art*, 1984, and volume 2, *Harmonic and Acoustic Theory*, 1989) were hailed by Martin West as 'an impressive achievement' and remain the essential starting point for work in the field. Ancient music was, however, an unconventional topic for a philosopher and by the 1990s Andrew was keen to move to a Classics department.

The opportunity came when Andrew spied an advert for a job in the Classics Department of the University of Otago, New Zealand, while on sabbatical spent as a visiting fellow at the University of Queensland, Brisbane in 1991. The Barkers moved to Otago in 1992 where Andrew was made Professor in 1995, before he effected a return to the Midlands (and Leamington again) in 1996 to take up a post at the University of Birmingham. This was advertised as a senior lectureship but was upgraded immediately for Andrew to a readership and in 1998 to a personal chair. At Birmingham, where he remained until he retired in 2008, he enjoyed teaching a wide range of courses, from Early Greek Philosophy, to Greek Lyric poetry and even more specialised modules in Greek music, and especially supervising a series of successful PhD students. He was a popular teacher because, as his colleague at Birmingham, Ken Dowden, recalls, he did not draw artificial barriers between himself and his students, regardless of their level, and could communicate his enthusiasm for apparently recondite texts. He was also a supportive colleague, playing a constructive role in navigating the difficulties which beset the department in the early 2000s.

I came to know Andrew after he returned with his family from Otago, New Zealand, to Leamington Spa, first as a family friend, enquiring after my classical studies at school and university, and, after my appointment to his former department in Birmingham in 2014, as an informal mentor. Although I sometimes sought his advice when we met over a pint of beer, and he always wanted to hear about what I was working on, in fact we were more likely to speak about gardening or his exploits in DIY over many years, culminating in his (sometimes hair-raising) conversion of a barn in rural France from the early 2000s. I know that I was not the only young scholar to whom he offered uncondescending friendship at the end of his career.



This period of his life was particularly productive and demands only intensified after his retirement. He published monographs on harmonics in 2000 (*Scientific Method in Ptolemy's Harmonics*) and 2007 (*The Science of Harmonics in Classical Greece*) along with two volumes of lectures in Italian in the intervening period. These were followed after his retirement by another volume of lectures in 2014 (*Ancient Greek Writers on Their Musical Past*) and an edition and annotated translation of Porphyry's Commentary on Ptolemy's Harmonics in 2015. From 2004 until 2011 there were also annual week-long seminars on ancient Greek music, which he conducted at the Ionian University on Corfu with Egert Pöhlmann and Eleonora Rocconi and which were later revived at Riva del Garda in Italy. These seminars provided the impetus for a renewal of the *International Society for the Study of Greek and Roman Music and its Cultural Heritage* (MOISA), which he had first founded in 1993, and Andrew presided over its annual conferences from 2006 until 2017. In 2012, however, he stepped back from running the society to become its Founding President. Instead, he put his energies into founding the journal *Greek and Roman Musical Studies*, of which he was editor from its first issue in 2013 until 2017. Eleonora Rocconi and Egert Pöhlmann, Andrew's friends and colleagues from the Corfu seminars and MOISA, have written detailed tributes to Andrew covering this period (and offering expert appreciations of his work) which will appear in *Greek and Roman Musical Studies*. His remarkable achievements were recognised by many invitations, including the invitation to deliver the inaugural Martin West Memorial Lecture in Oxford in 2017. He was elected Fellow of the British Academy in 2005.

Andrew is survived by his sisters, Frances and Judith, as well as Jill, Jonathan, Nicolas, Michael, Kate and Will, also Ben, Amy, Ashlyn, Rio, Holly, Raphael, Sam, Alex and Daniel, to whom he delighted in being a 'Grandrew'. The following poem by Andrew was read at his funeral and, at his request, Michael played Maxwell Davies' Farewell to Stromness at the end, 'to the right time.'

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What you can see

by Andrew Barker

A magnifying glass reveals the secret
geometry of scales on the wings of moths,
and with good binoculars you could map out
the tangle of brambles in the far hedgerow,
or count the breast-feathers of a circling buzzard.

My eyes aren't now the precision instruments
they were when I was younger; things' edges blur.
But there's a new magic, for today in the field I saw
the cows' white salt-lick, sculpted into turrets
by their rasping tongues; and it was just
a small lost pelican sitting in the grass.