Joyce Reynolds (1918–2022)

Remembered by

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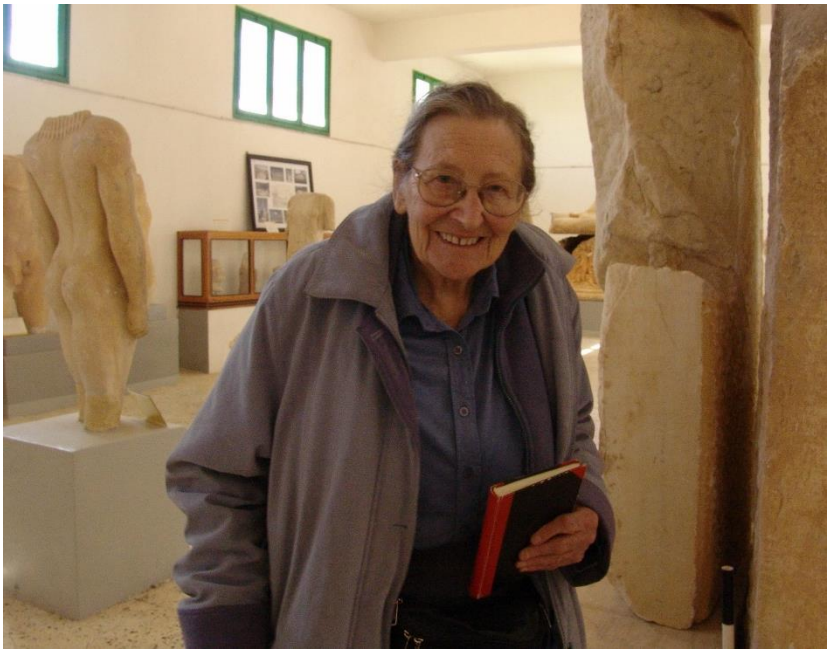

Joyce Reynolds in the Cyrene Museum, 2008. Photograph by Hafed Walda.

Joyce Reynolds died a few days after the queen, when there was much talk of the end of an era. But Joyce's 103 years did not provide a span of measurement, as reigns do. Instead it illustrated a series of achievements against the tide, opening opportunities for others, particularly other women, to follow.

It took energetic encouragement by her parents (especially her mother), and also several scholarships, to ensure that she was able to attend St Paul's Girls' School, and then Somerville, Oxford where she read Greats (Classics). When she graduated,

in wartime, she worked as a civil servant; when war ended she took the opportunity offered by a scholarship to the British School at Rome, and then the further opportunity to work in Libya, recording inscriptions. All these experiences meant that when she became a university teacher – first at Newcastle and then at Newnham College, Cambridge – she was able to direct students to reach out for whatever opportunity was offered, unencumbered by what had been possible in the past. In her scholarship she was not constrained by fashion or expectations, but responded to the texts as they appeared; and when she was offered the chance to publish her work online, she seized that opportunity as well.

The student's view (CR)

I first met Joyce on a December day in 1964, when I went to be interviewed at Newnham. Looking back, I see that she already exhibited one of the characteristics of her teaching: I remember my reactions, yet I only have a very vague memory of how she elicited those reactions from me. She saw the person in front of her; while she never imposed herself, she was a constantly alert presence. She listened entirely unobtrusively to her students, maintaining the illusion of equality: but she was paying scrupulous attention, and would pick up every point. She never fell into the trap of performing, as I often found myself tempted to do as a teacher. My dominant characteristic was fluent sloppiness; Joyce worked steadily, over several years, to correct that tendency, and to build more rigorous habits. It was painstaking work, which she undertook for all her students.

She never allowed her research commitments to displace or compromise her teaching. It was only after I graduated that I started to learn about her research, when she suggested that I might join her in working on the inscriptions being discovered at Aphrodisias. We were to work there together for over 20 years, and I saw the same rigorous attention that she had applied to students' essays applied to each text – seeing what was there, not what we had hoped for or imagined. She continued to take scrupulous care over every word that she published; when we wrote together, we would exchange versions in which all my ambitious certainties were modified by her

meticulous caution. Anyone – young or old – who sent a manuscript to Joyce for comment benefitted from the most careful scrutiny – which could be a shock, but always turned out to be well-founded.

And many people did turn to her – not just those she knew personally, but scholars and students from all over the world, who all received her careful attention. She became well-known in Libya, where she travelled for many decades, as a constant source of help, guidance, and encouragement for all those concerned to understand and to protect the antiquities. When the possibility of online publication arose, she embraced it – not because she had any affection for computers, but because she grasped that this could make her work accessible to so many more people all over the world. The protocols for encoding inscriptions which we developed (EpiDoc) were strongly influenced by her experience and her precision.

On reflection, I see that what she offered her students was indeed "research-led teaching": not a direct involvement in her own research, but a training in the careful scholarly practices which were fundamental to her research work, together with the joy in the subject which is so essential to both research and teaching. All those of us who had her as a teacher received more than we realised at the time, and, in every walk of life, have been drawing on the resources with which she equipped us.

And in Cambridge (DJT)

Until covid lockdown changed our lives, Joyce was an habituée of the Classics Faculty Library on the Sidgwick site of Cambridge University. Here she had her regular desk and was well known to those who used the Library. Her epigraphic expertise was at the disposal of any scholar, whether local or visiting, and here she worked away with concentration. To celebrate Joyce's ninetieth birthday, the Faculty held an Epigraphic Saturday in her honour, following – in a somewhat grander manner – the pattern of numerous smaller-scale Epigraphic Saturdays that she herself had organised. Keen to bring the fascination of inscriptions to wider attention, Joyce would invite a range of scholars, both young and more established, to present their work to any who wished

to attend. In an independent way she would apply her formidable mind to ways in which the excitement of such texts could be more widely appreciated, not just locally but – as later through the British Epigraphic Society – on a national level.

Joyce was a supportive colleague and her professional life melded into her private one. In her later years, with the help of her nephew Bernard who shared her home in a situation of mutual support, she would entertain academic visitors and friends to Sunday lunch. She made marmalade and jams from fruit that was given her; she was known to and appreciated by her neighbours. When she reached 100 (in 2018), the street where she lived held a tea party in the local hall in celebration. This gave her as much pleasure as did the celebratory lunch in Newnham College. We shall miss this very human being.