

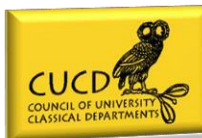
Keith Rutter (1939–2024)

by David Lewis and Calum Maciver



Photo courtesy of Catherine Rutter.

Emeritus Professor N. Keith Rutter, who passed away on 27 October 2024, was born in Manchester in 1939 to Polly Faulkner and George Rutter. Although his early years were spent in a time of war (he was evacuated as a baby in his mother's arms, to relatives in the Lake District), Keith enjoyed a very happy childhood (he met his future wife at Primary School), and had a long, very happy and peaceful life with many friends



at home and abroad. His classical education began with a full scholarship to Manchester Grammar School, and continued with his undergraduate degree at Queens College, Cambridge. He graduated in 1960, with a first and two Latin prizes. A serendipitous after-dinner conversation, in which an ancient Greek coin was produced from a fellow diner's trouser turn-up, sparked Keith's lifelong fascination with ancient Greek coinage. This led to a PhD at the University of London (supervised by John Penrose Barron and Roderick Williams) on the subject of the coinage of Magna Graecia, which was later published as *Campanian Coinages 475–380 BC* (Edinburgh, 1979). After temporary positions in Vancouver (1965–66), Bristol (1968–70), and Liverpool (1970–71), Keith took up a permanent post in the department of Greek at Edinburgh in 1971. He was awarded a Personal Chair in 2002 (Professor of Greek History and Numismatics), before retiring in 2004.

Keith's contribution at Edinburgh was colossal and characteristically understated. Of Keith's teaching, Calum Maciver has more to say below; but in administrative terms, Keith deftly steered Classics through periods of cuts when the discipline was under threat both nationally and locally, laying the foundations for the department's current rude health. Of particular note was his relationship with the A.G. Leventis Foundation, which has generously supported Classics at Edinburgh over recent decades, not least with a biennial visiting professorship and international conference, published in the *Edinburgh Leventis Studies* series by Edinburgh University Press. All of this owes much to Keith's gentle, determined and genial advocacy. As for younger scholars, Keith was an avuncular and supportive presence in the department well past his retirement in 2004; he supervised PhD students and attended reading groups well into his eighties. His concern for mentoring younger scholars and providing high-level instruction can be readily seen in the BSA numismatics course, initiated by Keith in 2012. Here, with his former student Simon Glenn (now curator of ancient coins at the British Museum), Keith instructed students in the rudiments of Greek numismatics over a two-week period. He ran this course four times, and gave guest lectures in 2023. It remains a biennial fixture on the BSA calendar, now led by Claire Rowan and Mairi Gkikaki (Warwick). Keith's dedication to passing on his wealth of knowledge is perhaps best captured by the fact that he learned Portuguese for the express purpose of teaching numismatics in both São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro; and equipped with more

than an intermediate standard in Modern Greek, he also spent a semester teaching at Dikemes (a study abroad programme) in Athens in 2006. His facility and love for languages even led him to enrol in an Urdu course before a trip to Pakistan (his daughter Catherine relates that he managed to bargain for a carpet very successfully!).

Keith also was a stalwart of the Edinburgh cultural scene. He was an active member of the Classical Association and the Edinburgh branch of the Cambridge Society (he was Treasurer for a time), as well as being involved in the Incorporation of Bonnet-makers and Dyers of Edinburgh, of which he was Deacon from 2020-2023. He was president of the Scottish Hellenic Society of Edinburgh from his election in 1994 until his passing. His characteristic care and hard work were, naturally, poured into this role too. Always immaculately dressed, Keith chaired each meeting with fulsome introductions for speakers from near and far, and led the post-lecture dinner party that continued the hospitality into the night.

Keith's main research interests concerned the Western Greeks, and above all their coinage. His first book on Campanian coinages has already been mentioned; this was followed by *A Catalogue of the Ancient Greek Coins in the Collections of the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1979), *Greek Coinage* (Aylesbury, 1983), and *Greek Coinages of Southern Italy and Sicily* (London, 1997). Two further books, *The Archaic and Classical Greek World. Using Coins as Sources* and *Coins in the Achaemenid Empire* were more-or-less complete at Keith's passing, and will be seen through the press by his friends. Keith was also the author of numerous seminal essays, and principal editor of the landmark *Historia Numorum Italy* (London, 2001) and the ongoing *Historia Numorum Sicily*, to be published in the near future following the work of his fellow contributors Suzanne Frey-Kupper and John Morcom. As for 'impact', the *Historia Numorum Italy* remains a key resource for the US Border Control in detecting illegal coin smuggling! And we must not overlook Keith's editorship of the *Numismatic Chronicle* from 1985 to 1992 – so great was the work involved that two editors were appointed to succeed him. Keith's long service to numismatics was recognised with the award of the Royal Numismatic Society's medal in 2020.

Keith married Wendy Millen, a primary school teacher, in 1969. Their honeymoon took

them to a campsite in East Berlin at the height of the Cold War (their money had been spent on a week in Austria and visiting Bayreuth to attend a performance of the Meistersingers). Unfortunately, the clutch of their car broke, but – with the help of three Russian border guards – Wendy managed to push the car through Checkpoint Charlie. Their marriage was a long and happy one, with travels to many countries. The family spent time in both Brisbane and Dunedin when Keith worked there and family holidays began with camping in Europe, then in retirement Keith and Wendy travelled all over the US, as well as visiting Syria, Iran, Mexico and Central America. Keith was an avid hillwalker and mountain climber – he bagged the full set of Munros (Scottish mountains of over 3,000 ft, of which there are 282) in 1987. He and Catherine also did four high-altitude treks to Pakistan, Peru, Tajikistan and India. Always physically active, Keith remained spry to the end of his life. His love of rowing, kindled during his Cambridge days, was continued on Edinburgh’s university gym rowing machines well into his 80s.

David Lewis, Edinburgh

Prof. N. Keith Rutter was a distinguished numismatist, scholar of Ancient Greek history and devoted member of the University of Edinburgh’s Classics department where he served as Head of Department in the final years of a long and fruitful career. The impact Keith had on students (undergraduate and postgraduate), colleagues (some of whom had been taught by him) and the wider Edinburgh and international community of people interested in all things Hellenic was put into epitome in the memorial event held in February of this year (2025). Organised by his wife Wendy and daughter Catherine, the ‘memorial afternoon tea’ at the Balmoral Hotel in Edinburgh saw former students, current and retired departmental colleagues, current and former PhD students and friends and scholars from across the UK and further afield come together to remember the great man. And he was truly a great man: a gentleman, someone so generous with his time, a kind and thoughtful mentor to so many, a scholar whose already substantial contribution to the field of numismatics above all will continue to be ground-breaking for many years to come given his forthcoming books, to be published posthumously (as outlined by David Lewis, above). In this contribution, I

shall focus on Keith the teacher. Keith became a friend and mentor throughout my postgraduate studies and career, but it is as a wonderful teacher during my undergraduate degree (which I began in 2000) that I shall always, first and foremost, remember him.

Back in 2009–10, when the Edinburgh University Classics department was still in the David Hume Tower (as it used to be known), and when I was temporary Teaching Fellow at Edinburgh, I was chairing a group of student dissertation presentations. When it was the turn of one particular student to present, he started rather dramatically by declaring ‘I’ve had the best lecturer *ever* – and I mean *ever* – this year. None of you know what teaching is until you have this guy. It’s this retired dude who teaches the coins course. He’s amazing.’ He was of course referring to Keith, by then retired for five years, but still ever present in the department, either as a PhD supervisor, mentor to new colleagues or as a lecturer – in this case offering his Greek Coins Honours course to fill a gap in our provision. It came as no surprise to me that the student was so effusive about NKR (as he always signed off his emails to students).

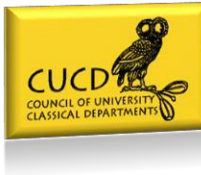
He taught me in my very first class at the University of Edinburgh (an 11am Greek Beginners class, in October in 2000). He at first struck as me as a little austere and a bit of a disciplinarian as he spelt out how demanding the course was going to be (he chastened me for being late for class – I did not protest nor lay the blame at a delayed train from Glasgow Queen Street.). But that impression was entirely wrong. His teaching was always lively, fresh and imaginative and he was always patient and understanding, though he did stress the need for discipline – and quite rightly, too. My most abiding memory of his teaching will be those Greek Beginners’ classes, across the three terms in my first year. Armed with just Abbott and Mansfield’s *Greek Primer* (and later in the year North and Hillard, of course) and his own handouts in that unique handwriting of his, Keith brought Greek to life. It was extremely demanding – I seemed to spend every waking moment immersed in paradigms, but somehow Keith had the rare ability of making all of the classes feel ‘light’. No student entered the class with foreboding, above all because Keith taught in such a kindly and patient manner, always with clarity and structure. The pace was intense: we were already reading Apollodorus and Diodorus Siculus after only seven weeks of Greek, but the reading of

real Greek so soon allowed Keith to use simple Greek to elucidate syntax covered already and to introduce new constructions, as well as to encourage us to get into the habit of what he called ‘the need for instant recognition’ of forms. This desire for precision coupled with discipline was a habit Keith had clearly picked up himself early on as a student in Cambridge. One of Keith’s lifelong friends, who had briefly taught him in his final year as an undergraduate, remembers well the tutorials on verse composition. ‘It was a small group, but did include two bright sparks, Keith and someone who later became Bishop of Birmingham! They were keen learners, and I remember Keith as a model pupil, always enthusiastic who presented his stuff well and didn’t need too much motivating. Undaunted by the minutiae of such phenomena as Porson’s Law of the Final Cretic!’

Keith’s former students all remember his expertise on and love of Thucydides, but in his teaching he was actually very Herodotean. He often peppered his classes with digressions, sometimes drawn from his own days as a Cambridge student or even from his schooldays; and in typically archaic fashion he loved proverbs – sometimes in Latin from Roman authors, sometimes his own creations. I used to amuse him years later by repeating his digressions and NKR-proverbs back to him. To give just one example: sometimes when we were reading a really difficult bit of Greek, such as a speech in Thucydides, he would tell us to start again. ‘At home,’ he would say, ‘when I get round to mowing the lawn, I need to go back over the grass a second time, or third time, with the mower (not one with a powered motor, but the old elbow-grease-powered kind), before it’s properly cut.’

His interest in the department’s teaching continued long after he retired. I used to bump into him on a Thursday at the University gym changing room (he would be there for the rowing machine, I for my weekly football match), and I am sure to the amusement of those around us in the changing room we would discuss the ups and downs of teaching Greek to undergraduates. In fact, the last time I spoke to him, on the phone (in late summer of 2024), he was asking about the Greek Beginners’ class at Edinburgh. He was always keenly interested.

A vital principle Keith imparted to his students was the importance of remembering



that these Greek authors were very like us. He would use our second-year Greek language tutorials to introduce us to authors we were less likely to read in our main classes. On one occasion, we translated together one of his favourite poems, the epigram by Callimachus on the death of his friend Heraclitus (2 Pfeiffer). We could see the emotion on his face as he – presumably – reminisced about close friendship. The final two lines of that poem seem a most appropriate way to end this homage:

αἱ δὲ τεαὶ ζώουσιν ἀηδόνες, ἧσιν ὁ πάντων
ἀρπακτῆς Αἴδης οὐκ ἐπὶ χεῖρα βαλεῖ.

Your nightingales, your songs, still live on; on these Hades, snatcher of all,
will not lay his hands.

Keith's 'nightingales', too, live on; his huge legacy is very much secure. We, his many former students, colleagues and friends, are not only thankful for the way in which he led us to, and shared with us, the worlds of Greek language, literature, history and culture, but for the abiding memory of the life of the *man*, the kind, endearing gentleman who seemed to have hit upon the right life-mixture necessary for *eudaimonia*.

Calum Maciver, Edinburgh