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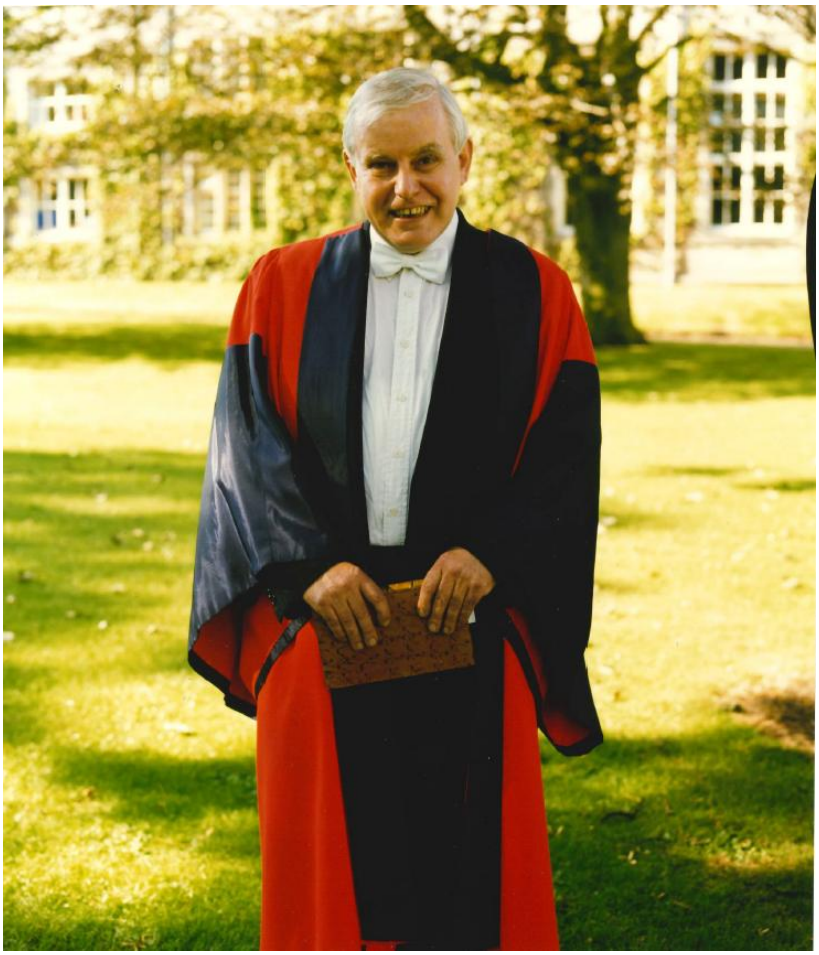
Adrian Stuart Gratwick (1943–2025)

by Roger Rees



Following the announcement of the death of Adrian Gratwick, Emeritus Professor at St Andrews, tributes came into the School of Classics from all over the world. It was noted by one that Adrian had followed the same path from Balliol College, Oxford to St Andrews as two other giants of classical Latin scholarship, Wallace Lindsay and Gordon Williams; and that his career had been similarly starry. More locally, those who were lucky enough to be colleagues or students of 'Gratty' remember him fondly as a man of immense learning and kindness in equal measure.

ISSN 2977-8980

Born on 31st March 1943 to an Irish mother and Australian father, Adrian was always close to his younger brother Eugene. The family soon moved from Middlesex to Glasgow where Adrian went to St Aloysius Primary School; in a second major move, the family relocated to Bristol where Adrian attended St. Brendan's College, an Irish Christian Brothers School. He was never much interested in sports but developed a passion for building and flying rubber-powered model planes; this fascination with the detail of how things work would characterise lots of his later scholarly interests and hobbies. Adrian's mother died when he was only 17, just before he won a Scholarship to read Classics at St John's College, Cambridge. (Decades later Adrian would write with compassion and experience to a colleague themselves suffering the trauma of close personal loss – 'a beautiful long letter which was full of warmth, genuine solace and real understanding. All memories of Adrian to cherish. He was a lovely man').

At St John's Adrian worked under the careful guidance of Guy Lee whose scholarship he would long admire. On graduating, he moved to Balliol to begin his DPhil, to be titled 'The *Poenulus* of Plautus and its Attic original'. Early in his time at Oxford he sat and passed the entrance exams for the Treasury, but so too he had his first submissions accepted for publication in scholarly journals, and in the end an academic career won out over the Civil Service. In 1966, Adrian was appointed Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Humanity (the Scottish term for Latin) at St Andrews. Story has it that on that same train from Oxford to St Andrews, Adrian met a fellow interviewee, Peter Woodward, from Corpus Christi, Oxford. As it turned out, Gordon Williams the Chair of Humanity appointed both of them, and Adrian and Peter would be close colleagues for the rest of the 20th century and beyond. In 1968 Adrian completed his DPhil and his career went from strength to strength. Although he had never intended to stay very long at St Andrews and despite receiving invitations to take up posts elsewhere, he spent his entire career in what would become the School of Classics; he was promoted to Lecturer in 1970, to Reader in 1983, and to Professor in 1997.

Adrian chose as his latter title, Professor of Classical Philology, as he felt it best encapsulated his interests in both Latin and Greek literature and language. This is easily exemplified in his DPhil research in New Comedy, but throughout his career he

ISSN 2977-8980

worked and published in the literary and intellectual cultures of both languages: in addition to philology (broadly understood), he had an unusual command of very technical disciplines from antiquity, such as astronomy, natural science, calendrical systems, and dramatic metre. His expertise in earlier Latin literature is well-known from his four chapters in the 1982 *Cambridge History of Classical Literature: Latin Literature*: 'Ennius' *Annales*', 'Drama', 'Prose literature' and 'The satires of Ennius and Lucilius'. The high quality of his commentaries on Terence's *Brothers* (Warminster 1987) and Plautus' *Menaechmi* (Cambridge 1993) was recognised in reviews on publication, and both have been standard references for decades; Adrian also wrote a milestone account of insular Latin philology ('*Latinitas Britannica*: was British Latin archaic?' 1982). Like his spoken word, Adrian's analytical prose was always sharp and lucid. To hilarious effect, he showed no deference to any canon – after hearing a seminar paper on Vergil, he once memorably pronounced that it confirmed his opinion that 'the *Aeneid* has some good bits in it'. On the other hand, he was keen that the *Carmina Burana* was securely on the undergraduate Latin curriculum. His range was vast. He regularly reviewed the work of others and always sought to emphasise the good in what he found.

Adrian was a dedicated teacher and wrote his own in-house *ab initio* Latin course in the 1970s; he was an accomplished and engaging lecturer as well as a careful and encouraging supervisor to many PhDs. He had a sound instinct for when to ask a searching question and when to let it be. In his office in Swallowgate, to sit on one side of the enormous desk that he had bought at auction for £10 and to see him on the other side, over the piles of his papers and books, the shelves behind him strewn with the theatrical masks and sundials that he had made as teaching aids, was to savour his enthusiasm and brilliance. Administrative responsibility was not his passion, but he discharged his duties as Admissions Officer and Convenor of Latin with professionalism and care over many years. Just as conspicuous was his concern for colleagues: respect for their talents and ambitions, encouraging words over a cup of tea or a shared picnic lunch on a train to a conference, hand-written notes and cards (in Latin, of course) to record thanks or congratulations or sympathy, were all characteristic of him. When Adrian retired in 2007, along with his friend and colleague Professor Harry Hine, the School held a symposium in recognition of their combined

ISSN 2977-8980

service to Latin at St Andrews, totalling well over 60 years.

In 1969 Adrian married Jenny whom he had met in the course of her degree in Greek and Moral Philosophy. They initially set up home in St Andrews but later moved to the Nethergate in the coastal village of Crail, overlooking the Firth of Forth, where they raised their children Edward, Henry, and Catherine. Adrian was essentially a private person, a completely devoted – and proud – husband, father, and grandfather. His homelife included bee-keeping, fruit and veg growing, wine making, and carpentry – on retirement, colleagues presented Adrian with a Black and Decker workbench, which saw many years' service on his various projects in a basement workshop that sounds entirely of a kind with his office in Swallowgate.

Adrian practised his faith at the Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Crail. In later years, he faced many health challenges and died aged 82 in Kirkcaldy Hospital on 23rd October 2025. He is survived by Jenny, their children Edward, Henry, and Catherine, grandchildren James and Sophie, and Adrian's brother Eugene.