



Auckland Classical Association

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Newsletter 1: April 2010

1. SUBSCRIPTION

Subscriptions for **2010** are now due. Please forward \$20 subscription or inform the Secretary if you wish mail-outs to continue. Please make cheques in favour of the Auckland Classical Association.

Please remember to notify the Secretary of any change in residential or email address.

2. PROGRAMME

Important ACA dates for 2010:

Tuesday, 20 April 2010, 4.00pm, Arts 209

Departmental seminar. Associate Professor Anne Mackay: "*Peisistratos and the Wine-Dark Sea*" subtitled "Was a trend in Athenian vase-painting of the latter half of the 6th century BC a response to Peisistratos' maritime ventures?" The seminar will examine a series of Athenian black-figure vases with representations of ships in the light of what we know about historical events in or involving Athens in the sixth century BC.

Tuesday, 27 April 2010, 4.00pm, Arts 209

Departmental seminar. Richard Carpenter: "*The Military Hierarchy of Plato's Republic*"
Caleb Hamilton: "*Legal Administration in the Old Kingdom*"

Tuesday, 27 April 2010, 7.30pm, Clocktower room 204 (Old Arts Building)

Mr Gregory Thwaite: "*A Ramble Around Less Visited Parts of the Ancient Mediterranean, With Intermittent Commentary*"

Over the last 30 years, the President has visited various parts of all four quadrants of the Mediterranean world. The interest has been to see the ground in reality, and to link it with the fruits of academic study. His visits have spread from Cologne in the north to Carthage in the south, and from Sertorius Square in the west of Portugal to the hippodrome of Constantinople in the east.

The President studied Classics and law at Auckland University, and law at Harvard Law School. By profession an international lawyer, he has worked in Auckland, California, Germany, and England.

Tuesday, 4 May 2010, 4.00pm, Arts 209

Departmental seminar. Dr Marcus Wilson: to be announced.

Tuesday, 11 May 2010, 4.00pm, Arts 209

Departmental seminar. Heather Wilson: "*Temple Foundation Deposits in Egypt and Nubia*"

Tuesday, 18 May 2010, 4.00pm, Arts 209

Departmental seminar. Professor Anthony Spalinger: "*The Date of the Choiak Feast in Plutarch and the Month of the Isia*"

Tuesday, 25 May 2010, 4.00pm, Arts 209

Departmental seminar. Marcia Leenan: "*Polybius and the Outbreak of the Archaean War*"

Tuesday, 25 May 2010, 7.30pm, Clocktower room 018 (Old Arts Building)

Mr Martin McCarthy: "*Mechanical Engineering in Classical Times*"

Mr McCarthy is a senior tutor at the Auckland School of Engineering, and will describe the development of some of the ancient machines used for irrigation, transportation and warfare.

Tuesday, 1 June 2010, 4.00pm, Arts 209

Departmental seminar. Jennifer Hellum: To be announced.

Tuesday, 15 June 2010, 7.30pm, Clocktower room 018 (Old Arts Building)

Dr Calum and Mrs Raewyn Gilmour: "*A Sicilian Experience: Aeneas, Greeks, Normans and the Mafia*"

Dr and Mrs Gilmour have been involved with the department and the association since the 1970s and currently work in their publishing company, Polygraphia Ltd.

Tuesday, 22 June 2010, 7.30pm, Clocktower room 029 (Old Arts Building)

Junior Latin Reading competition

Tuesday, 29 June 2010, 7.30pm, Clocktower room 029 (Old Arts Building)

Senior Latin Reading competition

Wednesday, 25 August 2010, 7.30pm, Clocktower room 039 (Old Arts Building)

Classics Quiz for schools

3. NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF CLASSICS

News articles will no longer be reproduced in this newsletter in order to not breach any copyright of the authors, however we will still provide suggestions for web searches if our readers are interested in following these.

Please send news articles of possible interest to the Association to the Secretary. Thank you again to the editing team for the time and effort expended on our behalf, especially Professor Gray.

Readers might like to read on the web about:

- I the recent report of the discovery of what is thought to be the headwaters of Aqua Traiana, the aqueduct bringing water from Lake Bracciano to the Janiculum Hill in Rome. The underground chamber at the spring site, three metres deep, is a nymphaeum, decorated and painted with 'Egyptian blue'.
- II the continuing investigations of the famous Blue Grotto of the Roman Emperor Tiberius on the island of Capri, resulting from an underwater survey. In focus is a statue of Triton, the sea god, mentioned by Pliny the Elder.
- III the gold-plated Roman horse head found recently in Germany at the Waldgirmes excavation site and now on display in the German Archaeological Institute in Frankfurt. It was part of a horse and rider set that has been described as one of best pieces of its era. Other parts of the life-size set had already been found earlier in the excavation.
- IV the refurbishment of the antiquities galleries of in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. Among the interesting artefacts on display in the new galleries is the famous silver and iron 'Roman Army Knife', which incorporates a spoon, fork, spike spatula and toothpick. The galleries of course display items of interest beyond this one.
- V how the phenomenon of multiculturalism has put a new lustre on the identity of the 'Ivory Bangle Lady' found buried in a wealthy grave in Eboracum (Yorkshire) in 1901, which was founded by the Romans in AD 71. Scientific analysis now claims to have identified her as North African, suggesting that the populations of Britain in Roman times were just as multicultural as today's.

Those of our members who receive Ingenio magazine will have read in the Spring 2009 issue the article about Dr Will Richardson's achievement, with Professor Carman of the Medical School, in translating the medical text *De fabrica* from Latin to English. Sadly Dr Richardson, who retired from the Auckland Classics Department some years ago, died before the project was finished, but the translations were complete, and Professor Carman was able to publish the last two final volumes of the work. Ingenio has kindly given permission for us to reproduce the article in this newsletter for those of our members who have not already seen it.

Opus magnum complete

Two former University academics have completed one of the most important translations in the history of medicine.

Tess Redgrave finds out more.

Of "all the constituents of the human body, bone is the hardest, the driest, the earthiest, and the oldest; and excepting only the teeth, it is devoid of sensation...for in the fabric of the human body, bones perform the same function as do walls and beams in houses, poles in tents, and keels and ribs in boats ..."

So wrote Andreas Vesalius in the first chapter of his ground-breaking book *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem* (On the fabric of the human body) published in 1543.

Considered one of the most important books in the history of medicine, *De fabrica* revolutionised the science of anatomy and the way it was taught. Incorporating seven books – sections as we would now call them – and illustrated with hundreds of anatomical drawings from artists at the school of Italian Renaissance painter, Titian, *De fabrica* led to the eventual overturn of the Galenic system that had dominated medical science for 14 centuries.

Yet most of us would not be able to understand a word of Vesalius's Latin prose, nor appreciate his literary and "often moving" writing if it wasn't for two former University of Auckland academics.

In 1989, alumnus and Senior Lecturer in Classics, Will Richardson (BA 1960, MA 1961, PhD 1977) and the School of Medicine's founding Professor of Anatomy (now Emeritus Professor), John Carman began working in tandem to create the first English translation of Vesalius's book (the only other translation had been into Russian in 1954-56). Now 20 years later, their fifth and final volume has been published by Norman Publishing in San Francisco.

But the pair's work has already received international accolades. "Until now, Vesalius has not been well served by translators," said a review in the prestigious *Nature* magazine in 1998. "Some lacked linguistic competence, others anatomical expertise. But, in what must rank as one of the publishing and scientific and literary achievements of the decade, classicist William Richardson, in collaboration with anatomist John Carman, have produced a quite stunning translation of the first book of *De fabrica*: *The Bones and Cartilages*."

In 2003, after publication of Volume 3 on the vessels and nerves, the Auckland academics' work was hailed in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* for presenting Vesalius "beautifully and harmoniously".

For John Carman serendipity has played a big part in the success of the project.

Not all University libraries will have Vesalius's original tome, he points out. "But Harry Erlam [the then School of Medicine's librarian] bought a facsimile of the original *De fabrica* in 1967. I then came here as the founding professor in 1968 while Will had joined the Classics Department in 1963.

In the 1970s Will began studying the origin of anatomical terms in Latin and Greek for his PhD and consulted closely with John. Subsequently, medical researchers delving into Vesalius's book asked Will to translate short sections of *de Fabrica* relevant to their own studies. Realising there was no translation into an accessible modern language Will decided to embark on a translation into English and asked John to join him.

"It was remarkable that a classicist who specialised in scientific Renaissance Latin and an anatomist who had known about Vesalius since I was a student and was very keen on anatomical description

should come together in the same university,” says John. “We brought a range of interests and skills to the project and we got tremendous personal pleasure from doing this.”

The two scholars followed a careful process: Will translated “about a page a day” from the original tome – a huge book weighing 5.5kg which he placed on a customised, slanted stand – and then John checked the anatomical terminology and descriptions.

“Will’s translation was so accurate that I could follow Vesalius’s line of thought and if it wandered off I would question if there was something wrong with the translation or not,” explains John. “We’d then look at it together. Our version had to first be consistent with good Latin and then with good anatomy.” Moreover, their aim throughout was to let Vesalius speak for himself, uninterrupted by explanation, interpretation or inclusion of modern terms.

Translator’s notes at the end of each chapter, and after illustrations, provided lists matching Vesalius’s usages to modern terminology and gave details of his numerous, though often brief, references to the ancient literature. For John, preparing the lists of modern names for the vessels and nerves was “the hardest thing I have ever had to do”.

By 2004 the pair had published three volumes of *De fabrica* and Will had completed the translations for the last two volumes. However, in October 2004, Will died very suddenly.

“That was a big blow,” says John. “In antique road shows they often ask if an item is one of a matching pair and say how much more valuable the two together would be. We were a matching pair and I miss my colleague greatly.”

John completed the editing of the last two volumes with help from Classics Senior Lecturer, Bill Barnes. Today he sees the completed translation not only as of great value in the field of anatomy and its history but also, as Will appreciated, as an important resource for researchers in social history and the history of medicine.

“The section on bones is virtually identical with what’s in modern textbooks,” says John. “The account of the abdominal organs would be suitable as an introduction for students; the accounts of the thorax and the brain are good; that of the muscles is excellent, but the lack of modern terminology here, and in the case of the vessels and nerves, would make these sections very difficult to use today.”

As John and Will worked on *De fabrica* they realised how gifted Vesalius was. “Will found him a superb Latinist and he was undoubtedly a superb anatomist,” says John.

Born in Brussels in 1514, Andreas Vesalius studied medicine at the University of Leuven and then the University of Paris. After receiving his doctorate at the University of Padua, he took up that university’s chair of surgery and anatomy. He soon revolutionised the study of anatomy by performing “hands on” human dissections rather than the usual practice of reading aloud from ancient texts while a demonstrator did the dissection. In 1539, a Padua judge interested in Vesalius’s work made bodies of executed criminals available for public dissections.

“Extraordinarily there is a diary of one of Vesalius’s students, a German, which turned up in Sweden 50 years ago,” says John. “He writes of how on one occasion Vesalius said: ‘I’d like to show you this but this body’s really got too dry. We’ll have another one this afternoon.’ The students looked out the window and there was the body on the scaffolding.”

“I’ve counted 14 different dissections Vesalius refers to in the book (section) on the abdomen and pelvis,” says John. “It seems likely that he dissected as many as 30 or 40 bodies, perhaps more.”

After the publication of *De fabrica*, Vesalius became the imperial physician to the court of Emperor Charles V and then to his son Philip II who rewarded him with a life pension. In 1564 Vesalius died in a shipwreck off the coast of Greece but his “hands on” approach had already changed the course of anatomy.

“Vesalius was the first anatomist who insisted that you must view the anatomy of a body yourself and not take the word of the ancients,” says John Carman.

“It has been seen as a pivotal step in modern science and certainly in anatomy and modern medicine.”

4. SUBSCRIPTION FOR 2010

The subscription for 2010 is \$20. This may be paid at a meeting or by mailing a cheque with this form to the Secretary at 52 Kohekohe Street, New Lynn, Waitakere 0600.

Membership is free for students and for graduates of less than one year's standing, however the return of the form would be appreciated in order to maintain the database of members.

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