

David Parsons

1937-2009

For all that has been, thanks; for all that will be, yes.



David was diagnosed with advanced cancer in January 2009. He was told that the condition was incurable but not untreatable; however he chose not to have treatment and so his end came swiftly, but he was able to be looked after at home by his children and grandchildren. In typical fashion, he used the internet to chart his dying and was prolific until his last days. Readers who did not know David can get to know him from his [blog](#) and from his [autobiography](#)

David was a key member of ARLT and his loss to the association is incalculable. He first attended Summer School in 1984, where his huge talents were immediately recognised. In 1988 he directed his first Summer School in Exeter. He was President of the Association from 1994-1997, presiding among other things over the traumatic changing of the name from ARLT to ... ARLT (in fact we changed from being the Association for the Reform of Latin Teaching to the Association for Latin Teaching, keeping the vestigial 'r' because 'ARLT' seemed to have an identity that we did not want to lose. David found this dithering solution rather annoying, but as a true democrat bore with it.)

After his retirement he took on the task of developing the Association's website, which he built up into a labyrinthine construction including a great deal of archival material, as well as Bulletin board, calendar, teaching resources and in due course the blog which he added to daily.

David was hugely generous with his time and with his talents. The website demanded many hours of work, which he gave unstintingly. At summer schools his extraordinary musical skills were constantly in demand: rehearsing and conducting the scratch choir, playing for singing on the final evening, often in very unpromising venues, and at his earlier summer schools, writing and performing songs of his own composition which summarised the events of the course with wit and humour. A true academic, he had a broad and deep knowledge of Classics; one of his projects in his later years was a [translation of Ausonius' poem on the Mosel river](#). He was a wise counsellor on Committee, approaching problems with penetrating judgement and a generous, creative viewpoint.

David was fascinated by the process of learning and embraced new methods of teaching and new technologies with tremendous enthusiasm. The benefits of music and drama in the classroom seemed self-evident to him, and he rapidly explored all the emerging possibilities of IT, constantly appearing with a camera to photograph or video material for the website and the blog. His fine speaking voice made him an extremely valuable member of the ARLT team which comes together to record GCSE and A level set books; his commanding vocal presence made him the perfect Jupiter or Anchises, and he will be very difficult to replace. David was always very keen to publicise Classics and reach out to those who did not have the chance to study Latin and Greek in conventional ways; the presence of Latin at the Language Show in the autumn was in great part due to him encouraging different Classical groups to work together for this. Until the

onset of illness, he was possessed of an energy which belied his years; there seemed to be so much more still to be done.

Most of all, however, we will miss David for his warm, loving personality. He was genuinely interested in everyone and was particularly generous in giving to support to young teachers and welcoming new faces to our courses. A month before he died, his sons brought him from Somerset to Cambridge for the March Refresher course to say goodbye. He was already very weak, using a wheelchair, but he seemed surrounded by an aura of peace, and joy in the company of his friends. His powerful Christian faith enabled him to move forward without fear or bitterness; he remained inspirational to the last.

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We who live in England use roads the Romans made.
Pots and coins may surface beneath our garden spade.
Excavate a car-park and find a Roman town;
What they left remains here, not many inches down.
But the hopes, ambitions, loves and hates and fears,
Are they lost for ever, down the fading years?
Where we lesser mortals find them past our reach,
Poets have imagined, given those spirits speech.

David Parsons, May 2004