

ROUTLEDGE FOCUS



CLASSICS AND PUBLIC POLICY

Perspectives from the United Kingdom

Edited by
Arlene Holmes-Henderson



Classics and Public Policy

This book is the first to connect Classics with Public Policy, opening up discussion of the study and application of Classics in, and for, policy communities across the United Kingdom.

It confronts and dismantles existing dominant narratives that classicists do not 'do' policy and shows that, like any other skill, policy engagement can be taught. It provides examples from UK research and policy contexts and makes suggestions for how subject associations, learned societies and universities can embed the pedagogy of policy engagement into their courses. Contributions range from academic classicists to a Former Secretary of State to a current junior civil servant, and each reflects on their routes into policy and recommends ways for colleagues to begin, or extend, their policy influence. At a time when the Arts and Humanities are under increasing financial pressures, this book provides much-needed case studies of personal and professional experiences which highlight the 'value' of classicists' research, evidence for informing policy priorities and the 'relevance' of Classics for employability and career success in UK government, parliament and beyond.

This volume is of interest to anyone studying or working in the fields of Classics and public policy, particularly in the UK.

Arlene Holmes-Henderson MBE is a Professor of Classics Education and Public Policy at Durham University and founder-director of the Durham Centre for Classics Education Research and EngagementS (CERES). In 2026, she was awarded the Classical Association Prize in recognition of her outstanding contributions to the promotion of Classics in the UK, including her pioneering work to better connect Classics and Public Policy.



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**This book is dedicated to the people who taught me
everything I know about policy;
Will Pryor, Jill Rutter and Katie Thorpe.**



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Erin Young, an undergraduate Classics student at Durham University, worked with me on this publication in Summer 2025 as a Laidlaw Scholar. She liaised with the contributors, interviewed academics, formatted chapters and suggested ways to collate digital assets. Without her, this book would have taken much longer to produce. Her future looks very bright indeed.

Introduction

This book does two things:

- i) it showcases recent, successful examples of Classics and Ancient History research influencing public policy and
- ii) it highlights how a background in Ancient World Studies prepares civil servants and politicians to make and implement policy.

It is a collection of personal reflections and does not capture all policy-to-research or research-to-policy activity for Classics in the United Kingdom.

The policy-engaged researchers showcased in Part I describe the challenges and triumphs of finding a balance between the demands of academia (teaching, research and administrative duties) and providing expert advice to policymakers. The first five chapters have been contributed by female academics, all of whom are now at professorial level. Their policy engagement journeys, however, started much earlier.

The University of Exeter is well-represented in this volume, indicating that the environment in that institution recognises the importance of this work and provides effective support. I hope in the next decade further clusters of policy-engaged activity will emerge from Classics departments in a range of UK university types and locations. As can be seen throughout Part I, the policy appetite for high quality Classics research is strong.

The contributors to Part II answered an open call which was distributed via the Civil Service Classics Network. A range of government departments, career stages, devolved administrations and role types are represented. The educational background of these civil servants is somewhat homogenous and often privileged.

The Civil Service Classics Network and the Policy Profession are collaborating to recruit a workforce which ‘truly reflects the country’. The government announced in 2025 that a ‘Summer Internship Programme would be launched to boost social mobility in the Civil Service for students from working class backgrounds’.¹ It gives 200 undergraduates the opportunity to

work in a civil service department for two months getting experience planning events, writing briefings for ministers, shadowing senior civil servants and carrying out research for policy development. They are also allocated a mentor who can answer questions regarding the civil service graduate training programme the Fast Stream. As a subject community, it is in our interest to promote this opportunity and to support working class Classics students to participate in this paid programme.

This is the first book of its kind, and I hope that its contents generate further research into the relationship between Classics and public policy in, and beyond, the UK.

Contributors

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Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles KCMG LVO spent over 30 years in the British Diplomatic Service, which he joined straight from obtaining a first-class degree in Classics at Oxford. He served in Cairo, Washington and Paris. He was also Private Secretary to the Head of the Diplomatic Service, and later Principal Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary, the late Robin Cook. He was Head of the Foreign Office Hong Kong Department from 1994 up to the handover to China in 1997. His final diplomatic jobs were as Ambassador to Israel (2001–3), Ambassador to Saudi Arabia (2003–7), Ambassador to Afghanistan (2007–9), and the UK Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (2009–10). Sherard is the author of two books about his diplomatic experiences: *Cables from Kabul* and *Ever the Diplomat*. He speaks French and Arabic and some Hebrew.

Professor Katharine Earnshaw is Professor of Classics at the University of Exeter. Her research centres around ancient poetry, environmental ethics and humanities, creative methodologies, history of thought, cognitive humanities and how we learn about the world with and through texts. She has collaborated with several artists and art collectives and is currently a co-investigator (Co-I) and research lead in the UKRI Centre for

Net Positive Health and Climate Solutions (partnered with the UK Health Security Agency, Forest Research, the National Trust), and Co-I within the Land Use for Net Zero (LUNZ) Hub, which is co-funded by UKRI, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and the Scottish Government.

Sir Michael Fallon KCB was educated at Epsom College and St Andrews University where he graduated MA Honours in Classics with Ancient History. After spells at the Conservative Research Department and in business, he was elected MP for Darlington from 1983 until 1992. He served as Assistant Government Whip and Lord Commissioner of the Treasury before being appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary for Schools in the governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major. Sir Michael returned to Parliament as MP for Sevenoaks in 1997 and served 13 years on the Treasury Select Committee. He was appointed deputy chairman of the Conservative Party in 2010. In 2012 he joined David Cameron's government as Minister of State at the Department of Business and was later Minister of State for Energy, before being promoted to the Cabinet as Secretary of State for Defence in 2014 and reappointed by Theresa May in 2016. Sir Michael retired from Parliament in 2019 and now chairs several companies as well as serving on the advisory boards of the Centre for Policy Studies and the Council on Geostrategy.

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Julius Graack learned Latin, Ancient Greek and Ancient Hebrew in secondary school in Germany. He holds a bachelor's degree in Economics and Philosophy from the Georg August University of Göttingen, Germany, where he focused on Ancient Greek philosophy. Turning to politics in 2020, he started working in Brussels (Belgium) as an intern for a member of the European Parliament and soon became part of their permanent team, culminating in his position as policy advisor for budgetary affairs. In

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Dr Kirsty Harrod (she/they) completed their PhD at Coventry University in 2025, writing on the language and politics of sexual violence in ancient Greek tragedy with a thesis titled “*‘And how, moving among young men, shall she remain untouched?’ Narratives of Sexual Violence in Greek Tragedy*”. They are motivated by questions of how one can reconstruct cultural ideals from antiquity by using an explicitly socio-political, structural lens. Their previous work in the charity sector, politics, and queer, feminist, and socialist activism inform their work in ancient Greek studies. Previous to their PhD, Kirsty graduated with Distinction in MA Classics and Ancient History at the University of Exeter (2016), after completing BA (Hons) Classics at the same university.

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Professor Arlene Holmes-Henderson MBE is Professor of Classics Education and Public Policy at Durham University and Founder-Director of the Durham Centre for Classics Education Research and EngagementS (CERES). After studying Classics at Oxford, Harvard and Cambridge, Arlene qualified as a schoolteacher and taught in high schools for more than a decade before returning to academia. Arlene has conducted international comparative research in the USA as a Fulbright scholar, in Australia as a Churchill Fellow and in New Zealand as an Erskine Fellow. She is Vice-Chair of the Universities Policy Engagement Network with national responsibility for Arts and Humanities and is an expert advisor to three All-Party Parliamentary Groups and seven government departments. She was awarded an MBE for Services for Education by King Charles III in 2023 and was elected a member of the Academia Europaea in 2024. Her contribution to the scholarly fields of Classics Education and Public Policy include seven books and more than 50 peer reviewed articles/chapters. She is the first Humanities scholar to be seconded into the Government Office for Science/Department for Science, Innovation and Technology as an Expert Fellow.

Professor Elena Isayev is a historian and archaeologist whose recent work focuses on historical and current migration, hospitality, displacement and citizenship. These are the critical themes of her book *Migration Mobility and Place in Ancient Italy* (Cambridge 2017), and other publications including for the Red Cross (2017), *Bodies out of Place* (Princeton forthcoming) and co-edited volumes *Displacement and the Humanities* with Evan Jewell (2023), and *Mobility in Antiquity* (Routledge, forthcoming). The convergence of these interests and partnerships beyond academia resulted in work with the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)/ International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) and leading an international team of Imagining Futures through Un/Archived Pasts (AHRC, UKRI-GCRF funded four-year project). She teaches on themes in Ancient History, material culture and mobilities at the University of Exeter, as Professor of Ancient History and Place.

Sir John Jenkins KCMG LVO attended grammar schools in Birmingham and Nottingham and read Classics at Jesus College, Cambridge (BA, Double First Class Honours 1977; PhD 1980). He joined the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1980, serving in Abu Dhabi (1983–86), Malaysia (1989–92) and Kuwait (1995–98) before being appointed HM Ambassador

to Burma (1999–2002). He was subsequently HM Consul-General, Jerusalem (2003–06), Ambassador to Syria (2006–07), FCO Director for the Middle East and North Africa (2007–09), Ambassador to Iraq (2009–11), Special Representative to the National Transitional Council and subsequently Ambassador to Libya (2011) and Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (2012–15). Between 2015 and 2018 he was the Bahrain-based Middle East Executive Director for The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and a senior fellow at Yale University's Jackson Institute for Global Affairs. He is currently an associate fellow of Chatham House, a strand leader for the Middle East and North Africa at Cambridge University's Centre for Geopolitics, a senior fellow at Policy Exchange, the London-based thinktank, and an advisor to the Conservative Middle East Council.

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Charlotte Leslie studied Classics at Balliol College, Oxford, from where she graduated in 2001. She is currently the Director of the Conservative Middle East Council, a role to which she was appointed in July 2017. In 2010, Leslie was elected as the Member of Parliament for the Bristol North West constituency. In 2011, she re-formed the All-Party Parliamentary

Group for Boxing and was its chair for six years. During her time as an MP, she also sat on the Education Select Committee from 2010 to 2013 and the Health Select Committee from 2013 to 2015. In 2013 she led a successful campaign supporting patient and clinician whistleblowers in the NHS. As a result of this campaign she won The Spectator's 'Backbencher of the Year 2013' award. She has also worked in television (including for the BBC), in research for think-tanks (including Policy Exchange, where she co-authored the 'More Good School Places' report) and as an advisor to David Willetts, then Shadow Secretary of State for Education and Skills.

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Andrew McCully CB OBE read Classics at Worcester College, Oxford, where he was awarded the Michael Fredrickson scholarship. Graduating in 1986 with First Class Honours, he began a 37 year career in the civil service, in the last 12 of which he served as the Director General for Schools in the Department for Education. His wide range of policy roles during the Labour governments 1997–2010 included the establishment of a cross-Whitehall unit for children and young people's outcomes, responsibility for school standards, the teacher workforce agreement and cross-Whitehall delivery programmes in support of vulnerable young people. His leadership roles under the Coalition and Conservative governments 2010–23 included the academies and free school programmes, school funding reform, safeguarding in schools, the teaching workforce and the school curriculum and qualifications. He received an OBE in 2001 for public service and was made a Companion of the Order of the Bath in 2019.

John Raine CMG OBE joined the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1984, where he served for 33 years. His overseas postings included Kuwait, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Baghdad and Islamabad. In addition to bilateral and multilateral diplomatic work, he worked extensively with UK Armed Forces on deployed operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and, in the UK, on strategy and future capabilities. As a senior member of the national security community he contributed to the design and implementation of UK defence and security strategy, and managed relationships with a wide range of international security partners.

Dr Peter Swallow MP is the Labour MP for the Bracknell constituency in the UK, elected in July 2024. Before entering politics, he was a classicist and

academic, earning a PhD from King's College London (on Aristophanes). Thereafter he worked with Edith Hall and Arlene Holmes-Henderson on the Leverhulme-funded *Aristotle Beyond the Academy* project; his expertise was Aristotle's scientific works. He is the Chair of three All-Party Parliamentary groups; Schools, Learning and Assessment, Social Mobility and Classics.

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Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
AoLE	Area of Learning Experience (Curriculum for Wales)
AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
APPG	All-Party Parliamentary Group
CERES	(Durham Centre for) Classics Education Research and EngagementS
CMEC	Conservative Middle East Council
Co-I	Co-Investigator
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSA	Chief Scientific Advisor
CSCN	Civil Service Classics Network
CSLN	Civil Service Languages Network
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DDoS	Distributed Denial of Service
DfE	Department for Education
DHSC	Department of Health and Social Care
EBacc	English Baccalaureate
EC	European Commission
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
EU	European Union
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FoF	Follow-on Funding (an AHRC funding scheme)
GCHQ	Government Communications Headquarters
HMRC	His Majesty's Revenue and Customs
HMT	His Majesty's Treasury
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
IF	Imagining Futures
IfG	Institute for Government
IISS	International Institute for Strategic Studies
LD	Landscape Decisions

LGBT+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual +
LLM	Large Language Model
MEMBRA	Memory of UK Treescapes for Better Resilience and Adaptation
MENA	Middles East and North Africa
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NCSC	National Cyber Security Centre
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NI	Northern Ireland
NPIF	National Productivity Investment Fund
PPE	Politics, Philosophy and Economics
PPS	Parliamentary Private Secretary
RISCS	Research Institute for Sociotechnical Cyber Security
RN	Research Networking (an AHRC funding scheme)
RSE	Relationships and Sex/Sexuality Education
SPF	Strategic Priorities Fund
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TES	Times Educational Supplement
UNDRR	UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UK	United Kingdom
UKRI	United Kingdom Research and Innovation
UPEN	Universities Policy Engagement Network

Foreword

Dr. Peter Swallow MP

Policy and Classics are often perceived as existing in totally separate worlds. How, some might ask, could studying a culture or learning a language from 2,000 years ago possibly have any relevance to the political and policy challenges of a democratic state in the twenty-first century?

Being one in a long line of classicists turned politicians, I am an embodiment of the fact that these two fields are more interconnected than most people know. There is simply no better discipline for exploring societal challenges, the consequences of political choices or the deleterious effects of inequality. How can you read *Medea* and not think, at least passingly, about the effects of societal gender norms on the functioning of the wider community? How can you study the founding of the Roman Empire and not contemplate the inherent fragility of democratic systems?

I can confidently say that my experience as a classicist shapes not only the way that I interact and interpret evidence, and the way I set out my arguments in Parliament, but more fundamentally, my entire political outlook. Which is to say, I am a Labour politician who believes fundamentally in progressive values – and I am so because I am a classicist, and not in spite of it.² I am sure others would say that their classical training has guided them just as strongly towards a different political philosophy – but this makes the point no less true.

Countless MPs have cited ancient thinkers in order to sway the Commons either in favour of, or against, specific policies.³ Members who have studied ancient literature sometimes use the rhetorical techniques of Greek and Roman orators during such parliamentary debates.

Away from the public aspects of policy formulation, namely in the work of civil servants, the pertinence of a classical education is displayed again and again. This is not least because the number of classicists within the Service remains consistently high⁴ but also because the skills that they have cultivated during their degree, particularly proficiency in micro- and macro- analysis, interdisciplinarity and linguistics, transfer brilliantly to their work in policy roles.⁵

Some members of the Classics research community have built strong relationships with policymakers in recent years. Professor Arlene

Holmes-Henderson showcased various examples of how research shared by Arts and Humanities academics had positively informed UK report published by UPEN in 2024.⁶

The value of Humanities research to policymaking is undeniable. As Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Schools, I have been running an inquiry on Votes at 16, and how we can empower students with the tools needed to use their democratic voice effectively. Almost every piece of evidence we received was underpinned by Humanities research, be it on education policy, media literacy, sociology, or anything else.

Following the trend set by Michael Gove's introduction of the English Baccalaureate in 2010, Humanities have been in the shadow of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. The study of Modern Languages has nose-dived and subjects such as Religious Studies, Music, Drama and Citizenship have fared badly in both schools and universities.

But I would argue that having a solid education in Humanities is as crucial as STEM subjects in this increasingly digitised world, the era of AI. There is no doubt that STEM subjects teach the vitally important 'what' and 'how' of such technology; they offer an understanding of processes such as coding, machine learning and data science. But it is vital that these skills are supplemented with the ethical considerations, the 'why', that an education in Humanities subjects provides.

And in the online world of misinformation and political echo-chambers which seeks to polarise people, the crucial skills of critical thinking and balanced judgement which are provided by a Humanities education are more important than ever.

An AI-powered future will make the Humanities more relevant than ever.

Putting this back into a policy context, it becomes evident that Humanities are hugely important for policy (in terms of research from the field positively informing policy) but also that public policymaking is of tantamount value to Humanities (as the former can boost or reduce the all-important funding of the latter).

The objective of this book is to galvanise this positive feedback loop, focussing on Classics in particular, by encouraging willingness from the two communities involved.⁷ Firstly, it showcases for civil servants and elected politicians the value of Humanities research so that, in future, it will (a) be funded, (b) sought out and (c) engaged with as much as STEM research. Yet it also intends to embolden Humanities researchers, particularly Classics academics, to engage policymakers in conversation.

I have mentioned previously that this volume's editor, Professor Holmes-Henderson, has pioneered better communication between the Classics community and policy actors. In 2024, I had the pleasure of working with her and with Gráinne Cassidy, the Education Co-ordinator for the Classical Association, to re-establish the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Classics, of which I am the current chair.⁸ It was our hope and intention that establishing

a national strategic forum dedicated to promoting the interests of the entire Classics community in the UK would give authority and legitimacy to the concerns surrounding the field's future within secondary and tertiary educational institutions. You can read more about the successes to date in Chapter 6.

This book, comprised of contributions from MPs (current and former), ambassadors, senior civil servants and academics charts new territory in connecting Classics to public policy. It ought to persuade any who were ever in doubt, that these two fields are mutually beneficial and inextricably linked.

Notes

- 1 Internship Scheme To Get More Working Class Students Into Civil Service – GOV.UK.
- 2 I always tell people I was inspired into running for office by another great classicist-turned-politician, a man who rose to lead his party and his country and led it through the most challenging of times, including COVID – Mark Drakeford, the former First Minister of Wales.
- 3 See, for instance, Sir John Hayes, Conservative MP for South Holland and the Deepings, cite Aristotle during a debate on income tax at Hansard, HC Deb 4 November 2024, vol 756, col 90.
- 4 The fundamental issue with the over-representation of Classics graduates in the Civil Service is not that Classics isn't the perfect subject for civil servants to study in order to develop their skills. It's that university Classics departments are still so unrepresentative, and not enough students from diverse backgrounds are completing Classics degrees. I am proud to have worked for many years, with many of the contributors to this present volume, on expanding access to Classics so that the benefits of a classical education can be shared across society.
- 5 See particularly Part Two.
- 6 Holmes-Henderson, A., and Sewell, L. (2024). *How Does Arts and Humanities Research Influence Public Policymaking?* London: UPEN. <https://upen.ac.uk/resources/how-does-arts-and-humanities-research-influence-public-policy-making/>.
- 7 See particularly Part One.
- 8 See Chapter Six.



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Part One



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1 Classics and Cyber Security

How Homer and Hesiod Can Teach Us More About Cyber Security Than You Might Have Thought

Professor Genevieve Liveley

My unlikely jump from Classics into the world of cyber security was originally prompted by an email from a researcher in the Sociotechnical Security Group at the National Cyber Security Centre (part of GCHQ), sent in December 2018, inviting me for a chat about a recent article I'd published on the narrative dynamics of 'anticipation'.¹ The paper had argued that the tools and heuristics of narratology (from Plato, Aristotle and Horace to the latest cognitive, computational and cyber narratologies) better enable us both to parse and to tell stories about the future. It had suggested that a more nuanced appreciation of the way that narrative modes, forms and devices nudge readers to negotiate anticipation and to process the hatching of potential futures in fiction might help us to become better readers of future 'possible' worlds in actuality – in particular, to identify and assess their potential snares and risks.² Examining the theory and praxis of anticipation across a broad temporal range of fictional and actual world models and narratives (from antiquity to post-modernity), it had additionally described some of the pitfalls and possibilities opened up when we (as individuals, as organisations, or as policymakers) approach future risks and opportunities as somehow 'storied' – as contributing towards a telos or epilogue (or simply the next chapter) continuing or completing a larger narrative arc.

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) was interested in this research as potentially affording new insights into their own work on futures thinking and risk. Formed in 2016, the NCSC is the UK's National Technical Authority for cyber security and leads the UK's defence 'against the most advanced cyber threats, including those from nation-states, hackers, and cyber criminals'.³ As such, the NCSC's mission involves safeguarding national critical infrastructure, systems and online services; designing and delivering guidelines and tools; and providing expert support in response to cyber-attacks and incidents. To achieve this, the NCSC 'works closely with international allies, law enforcement and the UK's intelligence and security agencies' and they

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‘also harness talent across schools, universities, and the tech community, driving research into emerging technologies to explore new ways to reduce harm at scale’.⁴ Commissioning research from university academics, not only from computer scientists but social scientists, was something with which the NCSC was already familiar, but this would be the first occasion that the organisation had worked in such a way with a classicist; this despite the long history linking Classics and the cryptography community – and notwithstanding our putative shared interest in ‘Trojan Horses’.⁵

Part of the rationale for initiating this new work with a researcher from the Humanities was the recognition within the NCSC’s sociotechnical research group that a non-technical field might offer useful insights into the ‘human factors’ of cyber security and risk. In the highly technical domain of cyber security, the maxim that ‘humans are the weakest link’ is a common refrain, and the sociotechnical research group was keen to explore fresh approaches to help strengthen the role of people as a critical line of defence in cyber security. As part of a drive towards understanding the ‘humans in the loop’, they were interested in developing an evidence base to support the better recognition and promotion of cyber secure behaviours by individuals and cyber secure cultures among organisations, rather than focusing exclusively on hardware and software security designs to protect systems from people (and people from themselves).⁶ This interest in extending the NCSC’s existing concerns with the ‘humans in the loop’ thus brought in the prospect of simultaneously exploring the ‘Humanities in the loop’. This developed into a portfolio of intersecting research projects – each infused, both overtly and in less obvious ways, with influences and insights from the world of Classics. Here, I set out a high-level overview of the unexpected ways in which classical myths proved to offer heuristic value in ‘explainable security’ and helped to highlight key elements of human-centric or socio-technical cyber security.

As part of my collaborative research work with the NCSC, I conducted a piece of work examining the potential for stories and storytelling to inform and support more effective communication of cyber security good practice and policy. The first phase of the project mapped what the story world of the NCSC’s narrative ecosystem currently looked like – aiming to identify problem areas where narrative dynamics were weak and failing to engage key stakeholders (including cyber security professionals, the public sector, and industry, as well as members of the public). It adopted a systems thinking approach to the narrative analysis of a portfolio of stakeholder interviews to identify the narrators and focalisers, audiences and affects, and common figures and tropes, metaphors and metonymies, etc, that interact in communications – formal and informal – across the national cyber security community. Employing literary critical and narratological methods familiar to most Classics students and scholars, it set out to analyse the narrative dynamics of varied interactions and communications in this space.⁷

The second phase of the project translated a deeper narratological analysis of these findings into practical recommendations for using and integrating salient narrative strategies to support stronger cyber security communications – including by fostering strategies for greater ‘explainable security’. Combining narrative analysis of selected NCSC public communications (including Annual Reviews and NCSC blog posts) with stakeholder interviews and media coverage of cyber security stories in professional tech and trade publications, this part of the project evaluated the uses (and the perceived usefulness) of different plot patterns, character types, and plot archetypes, as well as the dominant metaphors and tropes in use by the NCSC and the wider cyber security community.

Among the project’s findings and recommendations, it found that one of the most effective narrative framings for cyber security is that of collective endeavour – in narrative terms, a ‘quest’. The quest narrative typically involves a fundamentally optimistic, future-focused, and heroic plot centring around strong and collaborative leadership, individual and collective heroism, teamwork, and innovation – although quests can also involve leadership contests, and internal rivalries. The project found that the NCSC’s public-facing communications consistently positioned its overall mission and its team activities as part of a narrative ‘quest’. The project found that across all such communications, the NCSC frequently self-characterised as a collective entity focused upon tackling ‘challenge(s)’; ‘team’ working; engaging in various strategic ‘partnerships’ (international and domestic); forging ‘collaborations’; and fostering dynamic working ‘relationships’ (particularly with Law Enforcement and the Armed Forces, including the Ministry of Defence).

In a dedicated report, and in follow-up workshops and in briefings to help socialise the project findings with policymakers, examples from Classics helped to contextualise this work and to illustrate the notion of the ‘quest’ as an enduring archetypal plot (a type found in Homer’s *Odyssey*, Apollonius’ *Argonautica*, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, and numerous other ancient myths and epics – the quest is also familiar from modern crime novels, adventure stories and heist movies).⁸ Archetypal plots and narratives like the quest follow familiar and traditional patterns, typically involving the core cast of stereotypical characters and functions famously categorised by Propp.⁹ Indeed, these plot archetypes commonly shape not only film and TV scripts of all genres but media and news reports and the stories people share on social media; they are also widely used in marketing and advertising and in the strategic narratives deployed to represent large corporations and businesses, as well as government departments and agencies such as the NCSC itself.¹⁰ Indeed, ‘script’, ‘schema’ and ‘frame’ theories in cognitive psychology and narratology (informed by the latest insights into AI and machine learning) suggest that certain narrative archetypes and story plot patterns may have become ‘hard-wired’ into human cognition as heuristics for communication – including communications involving complex sociotechnical subjects such as cyber security.¹¹

Book clubs and reading groups with different stakeholders from across the cyber security community (including representatives of NCSC; the (then) Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS); Ministry of Defence (MoD); and Microsoft) helped to validate the project's findings, as well as to highlight the prevalence of storytelling as a communication vehicle already being widely deployed across that community. For example, as cyber security scholar Luca Vigano has since persuasively demonstrated, myths, fairy tales and folktales deal with a range of complex cyber security concepts and therefore have the potential to contribute to 'explainable security' – that is, helping cyber security professionals and policymakers explain technically sophisticated systems and security measures to non-technical users in accessible ways.¹² As Vigano himself nicely explains, the story of *Cinderella* offers a clear and readily comprehensible example of the value of multifactor authentication (MFA) in that:¹³

the Prince is able to authenticate the girl that he has fallen in love with by the fact that she is the only one whose foot fits into the glass slipper, or fur slipper, sandal or shoe, depending on the tale's version . . . Cinderella authenticates herself not only by something that she is (her foot is the only one in the realm that fits) but also by something that she has: she completes the multifactor confirmation of her identity by pulling out of her pocket the second slipper.

Other folktales and fairy stories similarly contain (and help to explain) cyber security fundamentals such as 'passwords', 'access control', 'denial of service', 'encryption' and 'identity theft'.¹⁴ The project with NCSC found that classical myths held a privileged status in this context, however, and that popular versions of ancient Greek and Roman myths (typically mediated via modern film and television adaptations) were in active and wide circulation among cyber security professionals and policymakers. As one cyber security magazine put it:¹⁵

Despite living in a time of modern technology, cyber security professionals often act like warriors from a Greek mythology action movie. We spend years preparing for battle against the unknown creatures that plot our demise. They'll come, we know they will – and when they do, we'll be ready, covered in armor and armed with the tried-and-tested strategies of those who came before. Just like our favorite heroes from *Troy*, *Hercules*, or (insert your favorite Greek action movie here. Is it *Clash of the Titans*? We won't judge). As we approach the fight, we study our enemies, think like our enemies, learn our enemies' motives. DDoS [Distributed Denial of Service] attacks? They're the mythical creature Hydra, using its heads to attack organizations from every direction. Phishing emails? Those are beautiful Sirens, with voices that can lure even the smartest user to an early financial grave.

Indeed, the Hydra (Hesiod *Theogony* 313; Pseudo-Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2.77–80) and the Sirens (Homer *Odyssey* 12. 39–54, 158–200; Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* 4. 892–921), as well as the Harpies (Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* 2. 179–434; Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 4. 425–529; Virgil *Aeneid* 3. 209–70), Scylla and Charybdis (Homer *Odyssey* 12. 54–111, 12. 210–59; Virgil *Aeneid* 3. 420–52), and the Nemean Lion (Pseudo-Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 74–76; Theocritus *Idylls* 25; Diodorus Siculus *Library of History* 4. 11. 3) all featured in conversations with stakeholders about explainable cyber security.¹⁶ The myth of Pandora (Hesiod *Works & Days* 54–113) proved popular among this community too, although the stakeholders involved in the NCSC project were somewhat more cautious in ascribing heuristic value to the myth than a recent tech journalist, for whom:¹⁷

every cybersecurity disaster in the last 20 years could have been prevented if someone had just read Greek mythology in college . . . The story of Pandora's Box isn't just some ancient fairy tale, it's literally a step-by-step guide to every major security breach that's ever happened.

The piece (wrongly) suggests that it was an employee clicking on a 'phishing' email which infamously resulted in a massive data breach at the credit reporting agency Equifax in 2017, resulting in the theft of private data of several million Americans, Canadians, and British citizens.¹⁸ In fact, the breach itself resulted from a known system vulnerability which the company had failed to patch (more suggestive of Achilles' heel than Pandora's jar). However, the initial breach did result in a major surge in 'phishing' attacks on millions of affected individuals who were defrauded after unwittingly clicking on malicious links in emails purporting to offer support and guidance. Yet the journalistic hyperbole of the overarching claim in this item disguises some salient observations:¹⁹

The reason this 3,000-year-old story perfectly describes modern security breaches isn't because ancient Greeks were tech geniuses. It's because humans haven't changed. We're still curious. We still click on things we shouldn't. We still make mistakes. We still ignore warnings when something looks interesting enough. The only difference is that now our 'boxes' contain customer data, financial records, and infrastructure access instead of mythological evil. Pandora wasn't evil. She wasn't malicious. She was just . . . human.

More prosaically, perhaps, the project sought to use these existing connections between classical (and other) myths and cyber security as the springboard to a deeper analysis and understanding of how and why narrative exempla function in the context of explainable cyber security and in security communications more broadly. Thus, alongside discovering that cyber security professionals and policymakers are more familiar with ancient myths than

might be expected, the project found that narrative-based exercises and communications (such as storytelling with myths, scenarios and counterfactuals) are highly effective not only as part of explainable security communications, but also in training contexts, and to promote the sharing of learnings from mistakes and near-misses in cyber security breaches and incidents. The cliché that classical myths and monsters are ‘good to think with’ remains true in cyber security, as in so many other domains, it seems.

The activities outlined previously represent just a fraction of the collaborative work undertaken with the NCSC since 2019. In recognition of the transformative potential of this research for the wider cyber security ecosystem (including academics, policymakers and industry), in April 2020 NCSC’s Research Institute for Sociotechnical Cyber Security (RISCS, then based at University College London) configured a new research fellowship in ‘Anticipation and Futures Literacy’ – a theme which I led until August 2022, and which included a prestigious invitation to present on ‘Cyber Security Futures’ at the UNESCO ‘High Level Futures Literacy Summit’.²⁰ In the autumn of 2022, the NCSC awarded the contract for its national Research Institute in Sociotechnical Cyber Security (RISCS) to the University of Bristol, and I took on the (ongoing) leadership of the Institute as its new Director from February 2023. In the autumn and winter of 23/24, in my role as RISCS director, I was contracted by the NCSC to oversee three major projects for the Cabinet Office: (1) A Futures Roadmap for the Government Cyber Security Strategy; (2) Cyber Security Risk Quantification; and (3) Universal Barriers to Secure Behaviours. I’ve also produced a number of (confidential) internal reports and toolkits for the NCSC, including (since 2020):

1. ‘Futures Roadmap for Government Cyber Security: Report Findings & Recommendations’, March 2024
2. ‘Universal Barriers’ toolkit, March 2024
3. ‘Stories of Cyber Security: Using Cyber Security Narratives’, December 2021
4. ‘Stories of Cyber Security: Mapping the Cyber Security Ecosystem’, November 2021
5. ‘Anticipatory Governance and Cyber Security’, November 2020
6. ‘Futures Literacy in Cyber-Risk Management: The Principle of Minimal Departure’, February 2020

My research collaboration with NCSC continues, and it has been a particular pleasure to be able to introduce other researchers from the Humanities – including classicists – into this dynamic and critical area of work developing policy and best practice in sociotechnical – human centred – cyber security.

Notes

- 1 See Liveley, G. (2017). Anticipation and Narratology. In *Handbook of Anticipation: Theoretical and Applied Aspects of the Use of Future in Decision Making*. Cham: Springer International Publishing AG, 1–20.
- 2 See also Liveley, G. (2019). *Narratology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 3 National Cyber Security Centre – NCSC.GOV.UK. <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/>.
- 4 National Cyber Security Centre – NCSC.GOV.UK. <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/>.
- 5 See Richmond, J. (2002). Classics and Intelligence: Part II. *Classics Ireland*, 9, 46–61. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25549954>; Richmond, J. (2001). Classics and Intelligence: Part I. *Classics Ireland*, 8, 84–101. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25528378>.
- 6 See, for example, McMahon, C. (2020). In Defence of the Human Factor. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, n.p.
- 7 For example, see De Jong, I.J. (2014). *Narratology and Classics: A Practical Guide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 8 Booker's popular thesis (heavily indebted to both Propp and Aristotle) claims that there are seven basic plot archetypes, such as 'Overcoming the Monster', 'Quest', 'Transformation', or 'Voyage and Return'. See Booker, C. (2004). *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories*. A&C Black.
- 9 Propp, V. ([1958] 2015). *Morphology of the Folktale*, edited with an introduction by Svatava Pirkova-Jakobson, translated by Laurence Scott. University of Texas Press. See also Lowe, N.J. (2000). *The Classical Plot and the Invention of Western Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 10 See Singh, M. (2021). The Sympathetic Plot, Its Psychological Origins, and Implications for the Evolution of Fiction. *Emotion Review*, 13(3), 183–198.
- 11 Research into archetypal and generic narratives in scientific understanding has been conducted by the Royal Society (<https://royalsociety.org/-/media/policy/projects/ai-narratives/AI-narratives-workshop-findings.pdf>) and British Academy/ ESCR (<https://www.narrative-science.org/events-narrative-science-project-workshops-environment.html>).
- 12 Viganò, L. (2024). The Cybersecurity of Fairy Tales. *Journal of Cybersecurity*, 10(1), n.p. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cybsec/tyae005>.
- 13 Viganò, L. (2024). The Cybersecurity of Fairy Tales. *Journal of Cybersecurity*, 10(1), n.p. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cybsec/tyae005>.
- 14 These cyber security terms (and their corresponding stories) are tabulated in Viganò, L. (2024). The Cybersecurity of Fairy Tales. *Journal of Cybersecurity*, 10(1), n.p. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cybsec/tyae005>.
- 15 *Cyber Defense Magazine*, 8 September 2017. <https://www.cyberdefensemagazine.com/myth-busters-debunking-common-cybersecurity-beliefs/>.
- 16 Significantly, the most common mythological exempla adduced by cyber security professionals characterise bad actors as monstrous female figures (s.v.v. Felton, D. (ed.). (2024). *The Oxford Handbook of Monsters in Classical Myth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press). The Nemean Lion proved an exception, offered as an example of a creature's – or system's – supposed invulnerability to attack or hack, where the application of

brute force by an attacker rendered that perceived invulnerability a risk in itself. In focus and reading groups carried out as part of the project, we also discussed the trope of invulnerability in other myths – including Achilles’ heel (Statius *Achilleid* 1.269; Hyginus *Fabulae* 107) and Talos (Pseudo-Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 140; Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* 4) – and compared these stories with analogous cyber security phenomena.

- 17 Ivanigova, P. (2025). This Ancient Greek Myth Perfectly Explains Every Security Breach You’ve Ever Heard of. *Medium*, 25 March.
- 18 On the Equifax breach see especially https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/files/ncsc_nca_report.pdf.
- 19 Ivanigova, P. (2025). This Ancient Greek Myth Perfectly Explains Every Security Breach You’ve Ever Heard of. *Medium*, 25 March, n.p.
- 20 <https://events.unesco.org/event?id=255234025&lang=1033>.

2 Classics and Educational Policy

Professor Arlene Holmes-Henderson MBE

The Career Pivot

My policy engagement journey began immediately following my completion of a three-day residential training course offered by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in partnership with the Institute for Government in 2018. ‘Engaging with Government’, as it was called, left me with a clear action plan of how I could share my research on Classics Education with the policy community. This book is dedicated to the people who led this course because their teaching transformed the trajectory of my career.

Following the course, and with help from the Oxford Policy Engagement Network (I was employed at the University of Oxford at the time), I set up a 12-month (internally funded) research and public policy partnership with the curriculum policy team (Languages and Humanities) at the Department for Education in Whitehall. I worked closely with colleagues in the Languages Curriculum Policy team, exploring the potential for ancient languages to contribute to the government’s EBacc (English Baccalaureate) ambition. I should mention that I qualified as a high school teacher around a decade earlier and have taught in a range of schools. This gave me added authenticity and credibility with policy colleagues; I had been implementing national education policy at the ‘chalkface’ and was now moving into a policy advisory role.

Finding the Hook

The starting point for this conversation was not ‘Latin is great’ (though I think it is, and my research demonstrates its literacy benefits). Rather, the starting point was ‘What are current policy priorities for the department concerning languages? How can academic research inform policy thinking?’ Two policy priorities seemed to ‘fit’ my research agenda, improving the progression/attainment of ‘disadvantaged’ students and increasing the uptake of languages in the EBacc programme.

My longitudinal research showed that Latin was particularly beneficial in unlocking literacy progress for students with special educational needs and

disabilities, those who spoke English as an additional language and those who qualified for free school meals (subsequently published as Holmes-Henderson 2023).¹ The potential for ancient languages to feed into the department's existing priorities for supporting 'disadvantaged' learners, as well as the EBacc ambition, was of immediate interest to policy officials, and conversations progressed rapidly. We held regular meetings online during which I shared unpublished research findings into the impact of learning Latin and Greek on young people's English literacy skills as well as data I had collected regarding geographical access to ancient languages in state-maintained schools (Hunt and Holmes-Henderson 2021).²

I helped policy officials discuss proposals with a wide range of stakeholders across the Classics Education community, introducing them to more than 20 organisations and individuals to sense-check recommendations. I also hosted a bespoke event at Christ Church, Oxford, to bring languages researchers (broadly defined, all career stages including PhD students and professional services staff) into conversation with Department for Education curriculum policy officials, analysts and social researchers.³

The 'Jazz Hands' Outcome

I supported policy colleagues in the preparation of a business case for a major strategic government investment in Classics Education. On the final day of my research and public policy partnership, the Secretary of State for Education announced a £4m investment by HM Treasury in the Latin Excellence Programme, to widen access to the study of Latin and Classics in schools outside London and the South East (in areas of 'Classics poverty', as identified in my 2021 research). This was the first national-level funding for Classics for more than a decade. I was then commissioned to write a report on the provision of ancient languages in primary schools: when published (Holmes-Henderson and Kelly 2022), this was the first DfE publication on Classics in 34 years!⁴ Between 2022 and 2025, I was chair of the Latin Expert Panel, holding to account the programme delivery team and supporting ministerial priorities.

The 'Snowball Effect' of Policy Advice

As my policy communication and advisory skills have developed, I have subsequently provided advice to Ofsted, Ofqual, the Department for Business and Trade, the Ministry of Justice, the Department for Culture Media and Sport, the Department for Health and Social Care, GCHQ and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. In many cases, I act as a critical friend, a sounding board for policy proposals or recommendations before they are presented to relevant ministers. Often, my expertise is far removed from the area I am being asked to comment on; this is, I have learned, an important skill in the policy engagement toolkit. Being able to identify strengths and weaknesses in policy advice relies on research experience and astute critical

skills, not necessarily disciplinary expertise. I also provide research evaluation advice to devolved administrations (Scottish Government and Welsh Government) and feed into rapid reviews of research for the European Commission in Brussels via the Scientific Advice Mechanism.

All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs)

Closer to home, I act as expert advisor to three APPGs: Oracy, Political and Media Literacy and Classics. These cross-party groups are national fora in which to discuss the challenges and triumphs concerning discrete themes or topics in education. With representation from the House of Lords as well as the House of Commons, they allow researchers, teachers and charity representatives to raise issues which can then be debated or discussed in both chambers.

My role on the Oracy APPG dates back to 2018. I was invited to share my research in schools focused on teaching ancient rhetoric. After submitting written evidence to the ‘Speak for Change’ enquiry, I was invited to give oral evidence as an expert witness by Emma Hardy MP (then Chair of the Oracy APPG). These went well, and I was delighted to be asked to conduct enquiry-specific research (to fill gaps in the evidence base) and to co-author the enquiry’s final report. This work was supported financially by the Oxford Policy Engagement Network and involved building capacity for policy engagement with Oxford PhD researchers (who were funded to work as research assistants) as well as forging new connections between the university, thinktanks, local schools and national charities.

Since 2020, I have been a member of the academic advisory group to the APPG for Political and Media Literacy. I helped to secure funding for a research report on citizenship education in English schools,⁵ and I continue to work collaboratively with this APPG to identify ways that research evidence can support recommendations for policy evolution. The announcement in July 2025 that 16-year-olds would be entitled to vote following electoral reforms was welcome news for all of us on the APPG’s academic advisory group.⁶

Most recently, I helped to re-establish the Classics APPG after a 17-year hiatus. You can read more about this in Chapter 6. I felt able to take forward this ambitious endeavour only because I had previous experience of working with APPGs. Colleagues (parliamentary and civic) were generous with their time and knowledge; this was an excellent example of capacity building across the policy-academic divide.

National Roles

Between 2020 and 2025, I was vice-chair of the Universities Policy Engagement Network (UPEN) with national remit for championing policy engagement with Arts and Humanities research. Since its foundation in 2018 by

a handful of UK universities seeking to increase collaboration with policy organisations, the network has grown to more than 120 members across all UK nations. In recognition of the key role it plays in connecting academics and policymakers, UPEN was awarded £5.9m by Research England and the Economic and Social Sciences Research Council in 2025.⁷

In 2024, myself and Laidlaw Scholar Luke Sewell published a UPEN report which comprised case studies from Arts and Humanities researchers in diverse institutions (type, geographical location), and at different career stages, on their experiences of working with policy professionals in Parliament, national government, devolved administrations, local authorities and policy adjacent organisations. We hoped that this publication would encourage more members of the Arts and Humanities academic community to share their research with policymakers, and that policymakers would see the benefit in speaking to non-STEM academics. We were overwhelmed by the positive reception that the publication received, including kudos from the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and the British Academy.

I continue in my role as member of the GCHQ Cross-Government Languages academic sub-group. With senior sponsors from every government department, we consider how the UK can achieve economic growth and maintain national security through targeted language education policy and programmes. I regularly represent ancient languages at events such as the Policy Profession Festival, the Analysis in Government Festival and during bespoke workshops in Whitehall, convened in collaboration with colleagues from modern and home, heritage and community languages. One example of Classics having a ‘seat at the table’ is the fact that the GCHQ National Languages Competition (for 12–13-year-olds across the UK), usually has at least one question requiring familiarity with Latin or Greek. This is a public engagement ‘win’ which started as policy engagement.

Bumps in the Road

While it may seem that my policy success came easily, I took my first steps in policy engagement as an early career researcher on successive fixed-term, part-time contracts. I was not aware of any role models in the Classics community whom I could ask for advice. I made lots of mistakes (one policy briefing I wrote was described by a senior civil servant as ‘eloquent yet too wordy: the opposite of what the Minister needs’). No one had given me a template for a ‘good’ policy briefing.

At all times, policy colleagues have been courteous, professional and helpful. They have taught me a huge amount about how policymaking works, and I am grateful for their patience and clear communication. But it’s certainly the case that the world of policy moves at a faster pace than academia. I am often asked for advice at short notice, with a response required in minutes or hours. I may be about to teach, examine a doctoral viva, or attend a university

committee meeting which has been in the diary for six months or more. This presents problems: can I do it to the best of my ability, can I balance it alongside my other commitments, can/should I say no?

A major challenge I experienced as my policy impact became significant was the mental struggle regarding how I 'should' be spending my time. Not all universities recognise and reward policy engagement as part of progression and promotion structures.⁸ I felt conflicted on whether I should concentrate on teaching and research, albeit that my policy-facing work was both fulfilling and positive for the discipline of Classics at large. I also found myself working on policy advice during parental leave. I felt I 'had' to take the opportunity to do so, as it may make me more 'employable' down the line. Looking back, I had my priorities wrong; hindsight is a wonderful thing.

As my career has progressed, I now find myself at a university where my policy engagement success has been rewarded with a joint chair in Classics Education and Public Policy, and where policy advisory work is a major part of my permanent role. Policy-engaged academics shouldn't feel the need to mould their professional practice to archaic promotion structures which devalue and discourage real-world impact. I prioritised my particular strengths in communicating Humanities research in compelling and influential ways and am much happier for doing so.

Navigating a Hostile Landscape: Policy Engagement for Arts and Humanities Academics

Several colleagues in Classics (and across the Arts and Humanities) start from the assumption that their research evidence is less relevant and useful than evidence generated by STEM researchers. The Government Office for Science (GO-Science) could take steps to help dispel these unhelpful perceptions. Definitions of 'Science' could be extended beyond Social Sciences, Life Sciences and Physical Sciences/Engineering to include evidence from Arts and Humanities. For example, at present the academic engagement team within GO-Science has a lead for Social Sciences but not for Arts and Humanities. The channels for evidence flow, therefore, are simply not equal across SHAPE disciplines. More concerning, in my view, is that members of the government's network of Chief Scientific Advisors (CSAs) must be recruited from Social Sciences, Life Sciences, Physical Sciences and Engineering: 'the right candidate will be nationally and internationally recognised in their Field of Science or Engineering and will need to be an exemplary science communicator' (Markson 2025).⁹ These roles explicitly prohibit a Humanities researcher from applying, since the essential criteria include a background in 'Science'. I broached this subject with the government's chief scientific advisor (CSA) in June 2025 via a public question at the annual UPEN conference, 'Could you imagine a time when a member of the UK's CSA network came from a discipline outside those required in

current job descriptions?’ I explained that the European Commission appoints seven chief scientific advisors of whom one is always a Humanities scholar. In the EU, ‘science’ is interpreted as ‘knowledge’ in its widest sense, where all disciplinary perspectives are valued equally. The answer? ‘Thank you for explaining how things operate in Europe’. The resounding yet silent ‘no’ was loud for all to hear. It is my hope that the chapters which constitute Part 1 of this book will refute these (in my view, unfounded) concerns and will promote a more enlightened and inclusive approach to recruiting CSAs in future.

Seconded into Government

In 2025–26, I was seconded into the Government Office for Science, Innovation and Technology as an Expert Fellow, advising on a cross-government foresight project focussing on the ‘Future of Childhood and Adolescence’. The Expert Fellowship scheme is now in its third year (20 fellows per year), yet I am the first Humanities academic to be appointed to the role. All previous fellows have come from STEM or Social Sciences. I hope that my time as an Expert Fellow will set a new trend within government, stimulating policy colleagues to seek advice from a more diverse evidence base. In addition to writing evidence summaries, I work closely with senior civil servants across government, researchers, funders and young people via the Children’s Commissioner’s Office.

Advice to other Arts and Humanities Academics

Firstly, stop apologising for being a classicist/historian/musician (or other non-STEM specialist)! Conversations with policy colleagues will progress faster and more productively if you begin from the mutual understanding that researchers in the Arts and Humanities produce interesting knowledge which can inform policy thinking.

Also, don’t assume that policy colleagues prefer to consult mid-career researchers or senior/tenured academics. On the contrary, I have been told many times that policy officials simply want the person who knows about the subject they’re investigating. They would rather have a good researcher who is an excellent communicator than an excellent researcher who is a good communicator. Accessibility in written and oral evidence is essential. Academic title and institutional affiliation simply do not matter.

Next, I would encourage colleagues to consider why they want to share research with the policy community. If it is motivated in any small part by hopes for career development, check with colleagues in your institution/field to explore whether promotion/progression are likely outcomes. Listen when/if they say that you would be better writing a book/article or securing top teaching evaluation scores. There are tensions here which I myself have not yet fully resolved, but understanding the motivation behind ‘doing’ policy engagement should help align it with ‘workload allocation’.

Then, speak up! Policymakers are unlikely to come and find you – they’re busy and their priorities change quickly. Develop your digital profile by writing short comment pieces (blogs are ideal), and if you have given media interviews about your research, make these easily accessible. I have found that it’s the clear and concise communication of key messages from your research which is vital for success in the policy arena. If you work for a university, enquire about internal support for policy engagement (e.g. funding/training). Many UK universities are members of the Universities Policy Engagement Network (UPEN), which brings additional opportunities.¹⁰

Finally, once you’re in contact with policymakers or a policy organisation, set clear expectations with policy colleagues about your availability. For example, you can say that you are unavailable at weekends, or that you can spend three hours a week on the policy-facing project. These boundaries can be useful for both sides (this is not an instruction; do what feels right for you).

Conclusion

Sharing Classics Education methods and research findings with policy colleagues brings me joy. I feel that my decades of studying are now contributing towards societal improvement in practical and measurable ways. Communication skills are vital, and it is for this reason that I have introduced two new modules at Durham University: ‘Communicating the Ancient World’ for undergraduates and ‘Engaging Policymakers with Arts and Humanities Research’ for postgraduates.¹¹ It is my hope that effective communication and policy engagement expertise will form key strands of ‘graduate attributes’, helping young people leave a Classics degree knowing (a) that their degree is useful in the contemporary world and (b) that they can drive forward this important work with confidence.

Notes

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- 2 Hunt, S., and Holmes-Henderson, A. (2021). A Level Classics Poverty: Classical Subjects in Schools in England: Access, Attainment and Progression. *CUCD Bulletin*, 50, 1–26. <https://cucd.blogs.sas.ac.uk/files/2021/02/Holmes-Henderson-and-Hunt-Classics-Poverty.docx.pdf>.
- 3 This event was supported by the Christ Church Research Fund and the Oxford Policy Engagement Network, for which the author remains grateful. See <https://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/news/christ-church-hosts-whitehall-policy-workshop-languages-research>.
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- 5 With tremendous support from Dr Tom F Wright at the University of Sussex.
- 6 The government announced that 16-year-olds would be given right to vote following ‘seismic changes to modernise democracy’. For more information, see the press release. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/16-year-olds-to-be-given-right-to-vote-through-seismic-government-election-reforms>.
- 7 For more information, see the Durham University Press Release. <https://www.durham.ac.uk/news-events/latest-news/2025/06/upen-funding-announcement/>.
- 8 Holmes-Henderson, A., and Lewin, P. (2025). *How and where is policy engagement recognised and rewarded in Higher Education?* UPEN, <https://upen.ac.uk/resources/new-report-highlights-need-for-improved-reward-and-recognition-for-academics/>.
- 9 Markson, T. (2025). *DfE Seeks Chief Scientific Adviser*. <https://www.civilserviceworld.com/professions/article/dfе-seeks-new-chief-scientific-adviser>.
- 10 <https://upen.ac.uk/members/>.
- 11 At the time of writing, this module has been shortlisted by the Graduate Futures Institute for an innovation in academic employability award. See <https://www.graduatefutures.org/academic-employability-awards-2026-explore>.

3 Classics and Relationships and Sexuality Education

Sex & History in Wales

Professor Kate Fisher and Professor Rebecca Langlands¹

The Welsh Assembly Expert Panel

In March 2017, Kirsty Williams, who was then Minister for Education in the Welsh government and has been at the forefront of curriculum reform in Wales in recent years, commissioned a Welsh Assembly Expert Panel to conduct a consultation and produce a report to inform the development of the future RSE curriculum in Wales.² This was part of a broader review of the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning Experience (AoLE), and the Panel collected evidence between March and September, submitting a final report, ‘Informing the Future of the Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales’, in December 2017.³

It was prompted by the long-standing and widespread concerns about the inadequacy of current RSE provision in Wales (and the UK). For decades, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) has been deemed to be unhelpfully negative, focused almost entirely on prevention of disease or pregnancy, with an over-emphasis on basic biological information. It was recognised that new resources and approaches were required. Research showed that young people and teachers were often uncomfortable talking to one another about important contextual issues such as consent, body image, power, sexuality and pornography, and the 2013 Ofsted Report concluded that current provision leaves young people ‘vulnerable to inappropriate sexual behaviours and sexual exploitation’.⁴ Two Welsh Estyn reports outline similarly patchy and inadequate provision. In both 2007 and 2017⁵ Estyn reported ‘wide variation’ in the delivery of sex and relationships education, with the 2017 report important in provoking the Welsh curriculum reform. The Expert Panel was tasked with providing recommendations to the Welsh Cabinet Secretary for Education on how current RSE practice might be improved before 2022 when the new curriculum was to be introduced, and on the future of Sex and Relationships Education in Wales as part of Health and Wellbeing AoLE. They identified a number of critical problems affecting the provision of RSE in Welsh schools, and addressing these became core to the conduct of the Panel’s work. Specifically, the panel surveyed ‘international qualitative evidence on

children and young people's experiences of SRE' that suggests that there is a tension between what young people want to learn and what schools and teachers think they need to learn.⁶ They highlighted a gap between the issues and concerns facing children and young people, the challenges faced in their lived experiences and the RSE they received at school: 'Evidence suggests that schools often struggle to accept that young people are sexual beings who may be sexually active'.⁷ Within this framework, many young people found RSE classes to be 'awkward, embarrassing and uncomfortable'. Provision was frequently 'out of touch with the realities of young people's lives' with content 'irrelevant or patronising', focused exclusively on biological details, with insufficient focus on 'rights, equity, emotions and relationships'.⁸ In surveys, young people described the subjects that were of importance to them – a range of concerns about equalities, emotions, inclusive relationships and the school environment. These were usually not covered in school sex education classes.

On the basis of this review, the Expert Panel sought contributions that could help develop a curriculum that would incorporate pupil-led approaches to the content of RSE so that it would be responsive to the changing, locally specific needs of young people. Guided by the core principles set out in the statutory guidance – that stated that RSE must cover rights and equity, empowerment, LGBT+ inclusivity, protection, creativity, and co-production and be holistic, developmentally appropriate and relevant to children's lived experience – it sought exemplars of resources and methods that would acknowledge the contextual factors that affect young people's sexuality.⁹ Informed by the World Health Organisation's 2006 definition of 'sexuality', they sought to develop a curriculum and an approach which acknowledged sexuality, sex and relationships as a rich and vital aspect of human experience, which includes not only reproduction but also 'gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy', and is shaped by 'the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors'.¹⁰ It was on the basis of this that we were invited to join the consultation in June 2017, representing our University of Exeter *Sex & History* project.¹¹

Over the previous ten years we had developed an award-winning methodology that had been welcomed by sex education practitioners as an effective means of facilitating discussion of challenging subjects in sex and relationships education and was widely recognised across the UK as an example of good practice in RSE.¹² The Panel's recommendations were accepted in full in May 2019, and the report's exploration of excellent practice in RSE, including the rich range of case studies, became the basis of a comprehensive overhaul of Wales' RSE curriculum. The new *Curriculum for Wales – Relationships and Sexuality Education Code* was published and implemented in 2022.¹³

Our Research and the Development of Sex & History

Our own research into the history of sexuality provided historical depth to this inclusive and contextualised understanding of sexuality which underpins the

WHO definition. Kate Fisher's research on the history of sex advice, contraceptive use and personal identities in the twentieth century drew attention to the limitations of sex education focused on basic biological information, the dangers of negative messaging focused on disease and pregnancy limitation and highlighted the importance of cultural values in shaping identities and behaviours.¹⁴ Rebecca Langlands' research on ancient Roman sexual morality demonstrated how sexual identities and choices in ancient Rome were shaped by the engagement of individuals with shared cultural products such as literature, law and education, and that sexual ethics was not a separate sphere of operation but was embedded in wider structures of power and status. Her research also articulated the benefits for modern awareness of human diversity of learning about cultures with different ways of thinking about sex and ethics and with different preoccupations, revealing the culturally contingent nature of some of our current dominant controversies around sex.¹⁵ Building on the synergies between our different research expertise, in 2008 we had begun to collaborate on the Wellcome-funded *Sexual Knowledge, Sexual History* project. Together we focused on elucidating the power of the past in the construction of ideas about sex and on investigating how claims about the past have been crucial in articulating sexual morals, in driving political, legal, and social change, in shaping individual identities, and in constructing and grounding knowledge about sex.¹⁶ In particular, we focused on the nineteenth and twentieth century reception of sexual cultures in antiquity, exploring the rich engagement with ancient Greece and Rome in modern debates about sex.¹⁷ In 2015 we founded the *Sexual Knowledge Unit* at the University of Exeter, exploring how classical and historical material has been instrumental in developing the categories and frameworks through which we understand sex and sexuality today and how such material can be also used to interrogate the sexological categories which emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which have subsequently dominated both scientific and popular understanding.¹⁸

Alongside this research we were developing a method of using historical objects (mostly found in museum collections) to kickstart conversations with young people about sex. In early pilot sessions, we took Devonian teenagers to rummage in the storerooms of the Wellcome collection in London, and discuss the artefacts held there – Peruvian ceramics depicting oral sex, Roman lamps with scenes of sexual intercourse, Japanese prints, nineteenth-century condoms. Sixth-formers in Truro took objects from the Royal Cornwall Museum – Greek vases, masks – as the basis for creative projects exploring identity and relationships. We found that this was an astonishingly effective way of enabling young people to air and discuss the issues that were preoccupying them – from the aesthetics of pubic hair to coercive relationships. Both ourselves, and the teachers and youth workers we were working with, were taken by surprise by the power of objects from past cultures to stimulate open and nuanced discussion. Pastoral tutors in our local sixth form college said they had never found a better way to deliver sex education.

Building on the realisation that visual material is a particularly effective medium for engagement with the past we continued to develop what became the Sex & History project and methodology, based on using the examination and open-ended discussion of historical objects to stimulate important conversations about sexual health and wellbeing. We worked with young people to choose objects from the Wellcome Collection and curate them into what became the *Intimate Worlds* exhibition at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter.¹⁹ The exhibition's organising frame was less about explaining the objects' original purpose or meaning and instead focused on the responses to historical objects by collectors and audiences (including ourselves). By asking our young curators how materials from the past can speak to us, we developed new insights into the ways discussing and sharing interpretations of objects enabled young people to explore a range of issues, such as feelings and emotions, family relationships, power and control, expertise and knowledge, body image, consent, and gender and sexual identities.

We developed the methodology over several years, working with our former doctoral student Jen Grove, in collaboration with two professional sex educators, Alice Hoyle and later Ester McGeeney, embedding it in a series of RSE resources for Key Stages 4 and 5 which has been freely available since 2014 via the Times Educational Supplement (TES) website. A dedicated set of LGBT+ resources was also produced in 2017 in collaboration with Schools Out, which included the British Museum's Ain Sakhri figure and the statuette of Athena from the Freud Museum.²⁰ Each resource contains high quality photographs of historical objects with structured class plans designed to facilitate discussion. Teachers were able to download and use the resources individually; in addition, well-known external agencies who are contracted by schools and colleges (such as Brook, School of Sexuality Education and the Sex Education Forum) were using the resources in both teaching and teacher-training and widely disseminating them across the UK.

What Sex & History Contributed to the Consultation

The Sex & History methodology provides a template for managing diverse discussions about relationships and sexuality that meets many of the key principles identified by the Welsh Assembly Expert Panel as conducive to high quality RSE. We were therefore invited to contribute to the research that informed a report on the current and future status and development of the Welsh Curriculum. Our evidence, presented to the expert panel in June 2017 shaped a series of recommendations to the Cabinet Secretary for Education (2017). Next we outline the specific underlying principles or features of the Sex & History methodology and its resources that are reflected in this report and its recommendations.

First, the Sex & History project embeds co-curation into the structure of the resources, a theme subsequently developed by the Welsh government report

which championed approaches to RSE that are student-led or responsive to the changing (locally sensitive) needs of particular communities of young people. The Sex & History methodology is able to bring this focus on co-curation into a single lesson. Inviting students to shape the direction of class discussion means teaching is attentive to, and reflective of, young people's concerns, in ways that are sensitive also to particular regional, socio-economic or cultural contexts. Rather than predetermining the precise content of a lesson, historical objects are open to multiple interpretations and speak to a variety of themes and issues. Before telling students what an object is or revealing what interpretations of its meaning and significance have been developed by archaeologists, historians or anthropologists, we encourage young people to observe and ask their own questions of objects. This means that students can raise the issues that matter most to them. For example, we have found that a chastity belt provokes debate about a wide range of topics: from power and control in various relationships, to fake images in social media. The flexibility provided by this focus on objects is enhanced by historical uncertainties about their purpose, meaning or significance. Encouraging young people to explore the variety of potential interpretations and meanings of an object encourages independent thinking, hypothesis testing and an empowering awareness that thinking about sex and relationships is of perennial importance and relevance. The Sex & History methodology capitalises on the flexibility inherent in the multiple readings offered by historical objects to move away from a focus on RSE as a didactic process of imparting information to a flexible pedagogy of discussion and reflection.

Second, the Sex & History methodology includes a variety of delivery modes, all of which seek to harness students' creativity in responding to, and thinking critically about, historical objects or material. The focus on 'creative pedagogies' which emerged as a core methodological strand in the recommended approaches to RSE developed by the Welsh government review, champions the use of expressive arts (such as drama, visual art or poetry) to 'facilitate interactive, agentic and ethical spaces' where people can explore sensitive or difficult personal issues. It focused also on the transformative potential of such modes of engagement which often deploy distancing mechanisms which separate individual experiences and personal perspectives from creative expression, debate and play.²¹ Sex & History represented an example of this kind of creative pedagogy, where the critical distance of objects or material from the past enables teachers and young people to explore objects without exposing personal attitudes, opinions, choices or experiences.²² The depersonalising framework allows for new channels of communication to develop between young people, teachers and other adults, including parents, sidestepping many of the elements that make the discussion of sex and sexuality embarrassing or exposing. The fact that the objects are intriguing, often striking or beautiful, and offer thought-provoking insights into cultures that are sometimes very different from those we inhabit, makes them ideal starting points for a

creative or arts-based engagement activity. Exploring cultures with a different way of thinking about sex and ethics and with different preoccupations, reveals the culturally contingent nature of some of our current dominant controversies around sex. Critical thinking, curiosity and imaginative learning is provoked by objects that confront young people with alternative worlds that invite us to question contemporary cultures or see alternative ways of thinking as possible.

Third, since the Sex & History methodology delivers relationships and sexuality education through a range of disciplinary lenses (Classics, History, Anthropology, Human Geography) and can be used outside of RSE lessons, thereby embedding critical debate about relationships and sexuality into a variety of subject-specific, pastoral or extra curricula school activities, it is ideally suited to providing schools with tools to develop a whole-school approach to RSE. As the Welsh government report subsequently made central to its recommendations, integrating discussion of healthy relationships throughout the ethos of a school not only avoids sequestering RSE into issue-based lessons but also enables students to integrate sexuality and relationships education with wider world issues, such as economic, biological, cultural, digital, environmental and political concerns, and appreciate their connection to wider structures of power, gender, race, class and so on.²³ The transdisciplinary focus also equips Sex & History to meet the needs of young people in the later stages of secondary education. The Sex Education Forum uses Sex & History as part of the training they offer to teachers. They report that it is unusual in stretching young people intellectually at Key Stages 4 and 5, extending learning and making it, as one practitioner put it, more ‘than just a pastoral intervention, but actually an intellectual and interesting part of the curriculum’.²⁴ This is supported by teachers’ and pupils’ experience of using them: ‘It is fascinating to see historical objects used to discuss modern-day issues with clear links for students to follow. This will allow students to develop critical thinking and analysis skills’. The wide ranging discussions on relationships, sexuality, gender emotions and social roles engendered by the Sex & History project, and enhanced by creative activities (games, drama exercises, photographic assignments, choreographic tasks, artistic reinterpretations) provide an expansivity, variety and depth of engagement that is particularly applicable to specialist educational settings. It has proved effective with Pupil Referral Units in Exeter, young fathers in Cornwall, and young people living with forms of addiction in Plymouth, becoming the basis for longer-term, nurturing projects that developed young people’s skills, wellbeing, identities, and confidence, including their life prospects, access to paid employment and enhanced educational achievements.²⁵

The Panel’s recommendations were accepted in full in May 2019, and the report’s exploration of excellent practice in RSE, including the rich range of case studies, became the basis of a comprehensive overhaul of Wales’ RSE curriculum. The new *Curriculum for Wales – Relationships and Sexuality*

Education Code was published and implemented in 2022. The resulting policy document also cites *Sex & History* as a case study of innovative and inclusive RSE.²⁶

Conclusions

Of course, summarising this process in hindsight obscures all the obstacles and dead-ends we encountered during our journey. One crucial factor in our success in policy engagement is the relationships with individuals we have built along the way, many of which began by chance. It was Kate's neighbour, during a casual chat in 2013, who first put us in touch with Alice Hoyle, who was then running the RSE hub in Bristol – an organisation aiming to co-ordinate sex education across the South West region to tackle the problem of its patchy coverage. Alice became our key partner in developing the Sex & History project and introduced us to the world of sex education expertise in the UK, where she is widely admired as an expert in relationship and sexuality education, including as a teacher and youth worker. We met our second key partner, Dr Ester McGeeney, at an event in Bristol that Alice co-organised on *Healthy Sexual Development* in 2015, and our relationship was cemented by a chat on the train home across Devon. Ester is now a leading scholar-practitioner in the field of RSE who co-authored *The Future of the Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales* with the chair EJ Renold, hence our involvement.

As we developed our resources between 2013 and 2017, we used small amounts of funding where and when we could find them to contract Alice and Ester to work with us, but the process of finding money and time was often frustrating and there were long periods where we could make no progress. Over the years, exciting plans and partnerships have very often come to nothing; grant applications have been unsuccessful.

A second vital factor in the ultimate success of the Sex & History project has been our persistence and energy, arising from the sense that we were developing something worthwhile. It has been this that has enabled us to persevere in the face of hindrances, inspired also by the enthusiasm from our expert partners, and the teachers, museums and young people we worked with. We were delighted when our steadfast commitment to the potential of Sex & History began to bear fruit on a larger scale, informing policy and practice across the UK. In addition to the curriculum in Wales, in 2018 the Sex & History method was highlighted by Public Health England as a creative approach to health education that addressed inequalities, and it is one of the featured resources on the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) Association website. Our lesson plans are highlighted in the Department for Education-recommended handbook *Great Relationships and Sex Education*.²⁷

While not easy, our policy engagement journey has been fulfilling and we have learned lots along the way.

Notes

- 1 Both authors are jointly and equally responsible for the writing of this chapter.
- 2 The report recommended replacing the terminology of *sex education* with *sexuality education* and deployed the acronym ‘SRE’ (Sexuality and Relationship Education) to signal the importance of talking about emotional social and physical elements of relationships alongside biological basics of sex. The curriculum in Wales uses ‘RSE’ (Relationships and Sex/Sexuality Education), to position the emphasis on relationships. See, Key Terms and Definitions: From Sex to Sexuality. In Renold, E., and McGeeney, E. (eds.) (2017) *Informing the Future of the Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales*. Cardiff University, 13–16. https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/1030606/informing-the-future-of-the-sex-and-relationships-education-curriculum-in-wales-web.pdf. In this paper, we use RSE for simplicity unless quoting directly.
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- 9 Renold, E., and McGeeney, E. (2017). *Informing the Future of the Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales*. Cardiff University,

118. https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/1030606/informing-the-future-of-the-sex-and-relationships-education-curriculum-in-wales-web.pdf.
- 10 Cited in Renold, E., and McGeeney, E. (2017). *Informing the Future of the Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales*. Cardiff University, 130. For more on WHO frameworks for understanding sexual health and sexual rights, see http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/sexual_health/sh_definitions/en/.
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- 12 Renold, E., and McGeeney, E. (2017). *Informing the Future of the Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales*. Cardiff University, 77. See also, Fisher, K., Grove, J., and Langlands, R. (2017). 'Sex and History': Talking Sex with Objects from the Past. In L. Allen and M.L. Rasmussen (eds.) *The Palgrave Sexuality Education Handbook*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
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- 21 Renold, E., and McGeeney, E. (2017). *Informing the Future of the Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales*. Cardiff University, 53–54, 75–77.
- 22 See also, Blake, S. (2013). *Sex and Relationships Education: A Step-by-Step Guide for Teachers*. First edition. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 38, 85.
- 23 Renold, E., and McGeeney, E. (2017). *Informing the Future of the Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales*. Cardiff University, 72–75.
- 24 Polly Haste, personal communication.
- 25 For a longer critical reflection on the features and benefits of Sex & History methodology see, Fisher, K., Grove, J., and Langlands, R. (2017). ‘Sex and History’: Talking Sex with Objects from the Past. In L. Allen and M.L. Rasmussen (eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Sexuality Education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 29–51.
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4 Classic Collaboration Across Interdisciplinary Fields and Policy Landscapes

Professor Katharine Earnshaw

Policy-scapes and Landscapes

In 2019 I was lucky enough to be awarded two grants within the Strategic Priorities Fund ‘Landscape decisions: towards a new framework for using UK land assets’ programme. The Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF) emerged from Sir Paul Nurse’s review of the UK Research Councils, funded through the government’s National Productivity Investment Fund as the first stage in implementing Nurse’s vision for a research landscape that encouraged interdisciplinary collaboration across institutions with a particular focus on governmental strategic need. It was therefore designed to do three main things: (i) to ‘increase high-quality multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research and innovation’, (ii) to ‘ensure that UKRI’s investment links up effectively with government research and innovation priorities’, and (iii) to ‘respond to strategic priorities and opportunities’.¹ The £830 million investment covered eight themes, of which ‘environment’ was one, and it was under this theme that the Landscape Decisions programme was housed.

I begin with this important context because the SPF Landscape Decisions (LD) programme, and my experience within it, represents an excellent example for thinking about two issues relevant to this volume. Firstly, it offers a case study for considering how policy represents a constantly evolving and sometimes rapidly changing set of priorities, especially when there is a change in government leadership and when it comes to urgent issues such as environment, biodiversity, agriculture, net zero, and urban planning – all areas that fell within the remit of Landscape Decisions. A brief and select background: the programme was first conceived in 2017, the year after Brexit, a general election year during which Theresa May retained her leadership; the call for the LD programme team and the first wave of funding (in Maths and Sciences) was put out in 2018, also a year in which post-Brexit environmental governance and a replacement for the EU Common Agricultural Policy was considered, in, for example, the Draft Environment (Principles and Governance) Bill 2018, the 25-year Environment Plan, and the Agriculture Bill 2017–19 (HC Bill 266).² The call for the Arts and Humanities

Research Council (AHRC) suite of funded projects within the LD programme was released and granted in 2019, the year that Net Zero targets were legislated, and Boris Johnson became prime minister; in 2020 the first and second lockdowns of COVID began, and the Agricultural Act 2020 came into force. The Environment Act 2021 marked a significant moment in environmental policy, as did the Net Zero Strategy, and COP26 at Glasgow in late 2021 helped amplify concerns about climate change; in 2022 the Net Zero Strategy was ruled unlawful, and Liz Truss and then Rishi Sunak took over leadership; in 2023 the Environment Improvement Plan came into effect, and the Net Zero Strategy was replaced by the Carbon Budget Delivery Plan (later found unlawful in 2025). When my grants finally finished – after extensions due to COVID – in January 2024, Rishi Sunak would be in power for only five more months before the Labour defeat in July that year. Since then, we have seen a significant reversal in relation to Net Zero and environmental policies, as well as reform through the controversial changes to agricultural and business property reliefs for inheritance tax.³ Alongside all this, the policy situation in, for example, Scotland, Wales, NI and the EU have been evolving and shifting, and the global responses to environmental regulation have been fluctuating. And I have barely scratched the policy surface.

All this is to say that policy-facing research always represents a shifting, often exciting, sometimes frustrating space in which to work, as different governments alter strategic priorities and opportunities with each shuffle – often significantly, and sometimes before the policy ink is dry. The political volatility of those post-Brexit years meant that environmental and agricultural policy was continually changing. Of course, I have mentioned here only a glimpse of the top-level policy changes: local and institutional policy was also dramatically affected, not only by Brexit, but by COVID, with many conversations and decisions around access to green spaces, to take one example, affected by the lived experiences of the pandemic lockdowns.⁴ A key issue always to consider, then, becomes what we expect any contribution to policy work to achieve, and for how long.

Secondly, the work I undertook within the LD programme offers an insight into how disciplinary expertise, in my case Classics, can find a place within large, policy-facing, multi- and interdisciplinary research programmes. As any researcher understands, one's disciplinary expertise is crucial, but exerting disciplinary ego or inflexibility is fatal in interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary contexts.

One question then becomes how to retain your expertise whilst also learning in useful ways from the new settings. In several multidisciplinary situations I have found that the Arts (and Visual Arts in particular) have been better represented than the Humanities,⁵ which can sometimes mean that one ends up advocating for Humanities more broadly alongside specific subject detail. There are also enormous advantages to working in these contexts, not least being forced to consider questions, ideas, concepts outside one's usual garden

of thought, and then to find ways of answering them from a disciplinary perspective. In other words, directed interdisciplinary working of a policy-facing sort has helped me to reconsider the texts, the language, the philosophies that have formed the foundation of my academic training, so the benefit is in both directions.

Field\work and Field || guides

The Landscape Decisions programme co-ordination team was based at the University of Leicester; they had overall sight of the 70+ individually funded grants, and had the challenge of linking up commonalities in research across the projects, to stimulate new activities in response to the emerging themes and policy priorities, and to ‘develop the interdisciplinary capability of the programme (across the Natural, Social, Mathematical and Biological Sciences, and the Arts and Humanities) and stakeholder engagement to address the challenges’.⁶ Written into the nature of the programme was a requirement to ensure that the research, as it unfolded, was responsive to ongoing policy decisions in relation to the environment, and to UK landscape ‘assets’ in particular. I have focussed here so far on government and national policy situations because that was the primary focus of the programme, but it is worth stating that, of course, much policy work occurs at local, regional, and institutional level, and the LD remit included different sorts of policy foci.

I was principal investigator on two grants within the LD programme. The first grant was part of the (now defunct) AHRC Research Networking (RN) scheme, and was – as the name suggests – primarily aimed at building and establishing a research network around a particular area of concern. In our case, the ‘Field\work’ network aimed to explore and build narratives of agri-culture (*ager* = field), by focussing on the ‘field’ as a landscape feature. As my co-investigator was the cultural geographer John Wylie, we wanted to consider collectively how our different research methodologies might combine to help us better interrogate understandings of narrative, time and ethics as aspects of the cultural value of fields; in particular, we were concerned with the ways that classical, text-based approaches might interact with phenomenologically engaged research-in-practice.⁷ We designed the RN with the policy-facing context in mind, and so referred to the European Landscape Convention, for example, and drew attention to the known difficulty of quantifying value for ‘cultural ecosystems services’ within the UK National Ecosystem Assessment in 2009 (this latter was not a piece of policy in itself as such, but a policy-informing and influencing programme of assessment that emerged from the House of Commons Environmental Audit 2007).⁸ We hoped to deepen the understanding of what ‘cultural ecosystems services’ might mean in relation to concepts such as memory and heritage through our approach.

There were a number of reasons why I thought that classical thinking might have a useful place within this sort of policy-facing programme. Before the grant I had been undertaking research on the reception of Virgil's *Georgics*, especially in the long eighteenth century, and was particularly intrigued by the poem's appearance in agricultural material; during this research I had come across an article by the sociologist Laurence Busch, who suggested that Virgil's *Georgics* provides a paradigm for discussion of modern agrifood ethics.⁹ Concurrently, I was teaching a research-led course on Greek and Latin didactic poetry; during classes I kept catching sight of the Devonian fields in the distance and could not shake the idea that teaching, for example, Hesiod and Virgil, solely in a classroom was missing out on some of what the texts had to offer. I received funding from the University of Exeter Annual Fund to take students to a local farm run by the Quicke family, where I met the farmer Mary Quicke.¹⁰ Soon after I came across the work of the artist Laura Hopes, and we began collaborating; it was not long before I introduced Laura and Mary and the three of us undertook a project on soil together.¹¹ As these several strands converged, Field\work started to take form. It struck me that whilst the *Georgics* had obviously been formative in the history of British agriculture (especially perhaps in the eighteenth century), there had not been much work on how a classical framework of agricultural ethics has informed, and could yet inform, contemporary understandings of UK land stewardship. John and I thought that the relative unfamiliarity of the text in UK debate would be a benefit for this network, and would disrupt the usual focus of discussion with non-academic stakeholders. As we phrased it in the RN application: 'The *Georgics* thus becomes a starting-point: a model to refine – but not define – ethical approaches to the field'. We oriented our thinking around two key Latin words associated with fields and farming: *labor* and *virtus*.

The second grant was an Impact and Engagement Follow-on Funding (FoF) grant – now also a defunct scheme – and was called Field || guides. It is unusual to have held an FoF grant before the research was completed on an initial UKRI grant, but due to the time constraints of the programme, the two were allowed to run concurrently, with Field || guides there to extend the impact and reach of Field\work, especially, but not only, into policy-related settings. For this project we focussed on learning through arts and creative methodologies and wanted to amplify two constituencies whose voices are often muted: children and tourists. I built in an educational programme with Beaford Arts (based in North Devon) to work with primary schools and artists, and we had several interventions planned for tourists and with the local council.

However, both grants began in February 2020, and a month later we entered the first COVID pandemic lockdown, the first of three that would affect and elongate the grants over their duration (initially due to run for two years each concurrently, they ended up running for four). Some of the stakeholders we had named in the grants lost their jobs during lockdown, and

some of the public-facing activities became hugely difficult (and in a couple of cases impossible) with the health guidelines around how many people could meet, where, and in what contexts. Some work we had hoped to undertake with the National Trust was affected, and many of us suddenly found ourselves homeschooling. The shape of the work had to alter fundamentally; thankfully, the programme team and the funders were incredibly supportive. More than this, the context sharpened our focus on particular aspects of landscape decision-making, as public access to landscape and green space, as well as the corresponding wellbeing benefits suddenly became topics of great concern, along with increased attention on biodiversity and greater publicity for agricultural approaches such as rewilding.

Ethics on the road to Net Zero

The LD team took the online opportunities presented by our new COVID reality to convene more regular and focussed discussions with contributions from across the different grants. One of the outputs that the team was keen to produce was a report for policymakers on Net Zero that took account of the interdisciplinary expertise within the programme. A team of researchers, whose work ranged from Remote Sensing to Fine Arts, Quantitative Ecology to Classic, began this work together. We met many times online to try to work out the shape of the piece and how we could include points that would last beyond the latest governmental policy change, and that could be useful within the government departments connected to the programme. The final version, ‘Making Landscape Decisions to Meet Net Zero Carbon: Pathways that consider ethics, socio-ecological diversity and landscape functions’ ended up with ideas from Arts and Humanities clearly embedded, which felt true to the programme but relatively unusual in those settings at the time.¹² It would be untrue to say that the process was always easy: as anyone who has undertaken any kind of interdisciplinary work will confirm, it can often take longer to produce outputs than when writing from the perspective of one discipline, and this was no different. I was very lucky to be working with a group of researchers who really wanted to be there, and who all seemed to feel that our collective knowledge might be something that could contribute to the active policy debates. That the report was completed is down in no small part to Beth Cole, a postdoctoral researcher with the programme team, who kept the momentum going throughout.

I had the task of drafting a section that became ‘Part A: Thinking about change’ in the final version. By that time, I had been part of many conversations and meetings within the programme, and *Fieldwork* and *Field || guides* had both been progressing with their focus on ethics, narrative and time. The sections in Part A represent some of those concerns; it begins with an initial section titled ‘Engaging with decisions means engaging with ethics’, and then has four examples for discussion: ‘Future-facing moralities’, ‘Narratives and

storytelling', 'Landscape aesthetics and appearance', and 'Wellbeing'. Other researchers added and expanded to the ideas, just as I did to other sections. The discussion around 'Part C: How do we make the change?' stands out in my memory as being particularly tricky. It was one thing to suggest higher level concepts for consideration, but this section forced me to have an opinion on what changes we might recommend in practice. This experience would again alter the way that I thought and wrote subsequently.

There are certainly references to some classical material in the report, but they (hopefully) do not overwhelm. Of more importance, I believe, is what my training as a classicist equips me particularly well to do: be attentive to language, metaphor, form, style, allusions to other philosophies and policies, and, perhaps especially, an awareness of one example of cultural history of thought that is still discernible in environmental and agricultural thinking, and to bring those skills to bear within policy-facing settings. That is not to promote a classical approach; indeed, I hope that one thing we can offer as classicists are examples of the beartraps and failures that will occur should one understanding of the past be prioritised above others. It cannot be the case in our current climate catastrophe that Classics would offer all that is required. For those interested in research that meets the world, interdisciplinary working can temper any urge to foreground the discipline above the environmental crisis.

The report has, as of today when I write this, had over 9k views and well over 1k downloads. But the report itself does not mark the end point of its policy influence: its legacy has been the opportunity to work with some of the co-writers on other projects, and I have witnessed there and elsewhere the way that the report's ideas have fed into other policy-facing conversations, artworks, documents, workshops. I am hugely proud that some of what we outlined has still found relevance beyond and despite the many changes the country has experienced since it was published at the start of 2022.

Policy as process

I have offered a narrative approach as a deliberate method to explain this case study so as to draw attention to several points. Firstly, I hope to show that pursuing research interests and ideas – and not policy as such – should always be the starting point. In my own experience, an interest in policy has felt like something that emerged organically and genuinely from research (of a wide variety) and teaching. Secondly, I would also emphasise that this kind of work can be hugely intellectually stimulating; for example, I now engage with and understand ancient didactic material very differently. Thirdly, I hope to have shown that having an interest in policy requires a commitment to reading and digesting a body of material in the same way that any research venture does. It is hugely important to know the context into which you step. Fourthly, I am aware that my own experience was formed within a well-funded and

well-organised research programme, and this impacted on the form that the policy took and the opportunities for dissemination.

I was lucky: though a good amount of the work we had initially proposed in the grant applications had to be reworked due to the COVID restrictions, the process of redirection offered new and unforeseen opportunities. The engagement we had planned with tourists became a collaborative, process-led artwork between myself and Laura Hopes titled ‘Not a (Field)Guide to the Future’, which explored how we might engage with landscape through the ethics of friendship rather than residency (so inclusive of tourists). This was included within the ‘Dartmoor: A Radical Landscape’ exhibition at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in 2024–5, a show that was itself responsive towards the potential policy changes in relation to public access to land and right to roam.¹³ The focus on narrative, time and ethics underpinned collaborative work I undertook with the artist Lauren Gault and Atlas Arts on the Isle of Skye as part of the ‘Samhla’ project, which was informed by the conversations we had with crofters and young people, and set in the policy context of the Climate Change (Scotland) Acts of 2019 and 2024. This also provided the opportunity to have a section of the *Georgics* translated into Gaelic.¹⁴ It is certainly the case that the experience of working within the Landscape Decisions programme strengthened my confidence in thinking of policy-influence as something that need not always look like a PDF document, and need not always be national in focus. All the work has fed forward into other policy-facing grants and projects of which I have since been a part, such as the ‘MEMBRA’ project within the Future of UK Treescaping SPF programme, the Land Use for Net Zero Hub and the Net Positive Centre for Health and Climate Solutions.¹⁵ It is certainly the case, therefore, that not every aspect of policy-facing work is ephemeral, and my experiences within Field\work and Field || guides have offered me the opportunity to think more attentively and articulately about Classics across many new settings.

Notes

- 1 Accessed at <https://www.ukri.org/what-we-do/strategic-priorities-fund/> on 9 September 2025.
- 2 See the Research Briefing for the Agriculture Bill. Accessed at <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8405/> on 9 September 2025.
- 3 See Masala, F., Keep, M., and Seely, A. (2025). *Changes to Agricultural and Business Property Reliefs for Inheritance Tax*. House of Commons Library. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-10181/CBP-10181.pdf>.
- 4 See e.g. Bristowe, A., and Heckert, M. (2023). How the COVID-19 Pandemic Changed Patterns of Green Infrastructure Use: A Scoping Review. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 81. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2023.127848>.

- 5 Landscape Decisions was better represented than most in relation to Humanities researchers, and of course, the inclusion of Arts does not always mean work that takes artists as researchers seriously, so I am certainly not advocating for a separation of the two.
- 6 See the legacy information from UKRI describing the programme. Accessed at <https://www.ukri.org/what-we-do/browse-our-areas-of-investment-and-support/landscape-decisions-towards-a-new-framework-for-using-land-assets/> on 9 September 2025.
- 7 For one of the outcomes of this experiment in combined methodologies, see Earnshaw, K.M. (2023). Know Your Place: Field Notes on Disciplining the *Georgics*. *Helios*, 50(2), 149–169. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/hel.2023.a948555>.
- 8 See <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/Resources/tabid/82/Default.aspx> and the government legacy site at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ecosystems-services>; however, note that, as the page indicates, the Ecosystems Services guidance was replaced in 2020 by the ‘Enabling Natural Capital Approach’ (ENCA).
- 9 Busch, L. (2003). Virgil, Vigilance, and Voice: Agrifood Ethics in an Age of Globalization. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 16, 459–477.
- 10 See the blog post I wrote on this here. <https://www.quickes.co.uk/blogs/news/katherine-earnshaw-the-georgics?srsId=AfmBOooUZUsgNsL8MNP0SjlcgSD6dWurQFkggJqDD1XgMSZj8AjrBm9F>.
- 11 The ‘Ingenious Soil’ project led to the research film ‘Marginalia’, which can be found here along with discussion: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cr_FxMPyG3I. The film was initially shown as part of the Being Human Festival 2018, during which we also ran a series of workshops.
- 12 Cole, B., Saratsi, E., Earnshaw, K., Willcock, S., Gardner, E., Bradley, A., Fremantle, C., Bezant, J., Finan, J., Ziv, G., and Balzter, H. (2022). *Making Landscape Decisions to Meet Net Zero Carbon: Pathways That Consider Ethics, Socio-Ecological Diversity, and Landscape Functions*. Report. University of Leicester. <https://doi.org/10.25392/leicester.data.19011629.v2>.
- 13 See <https://rammuseum.org.uk/whats-on/dartmoor-a-radical-landscape/>, and a discussion of the artwork and the review in Resurgence & Ecologist here: <https://www.resurgence.org/magazine/article6433-celebrating-dartmoor.html>.
- 14 See <https://atlasarts.org.uk/programme/samhla-about-the-project> and <https://www.laurengault.co.uk/project/samhla-atlas-arts-isle-of-skye-3-3/>, which includes screenshots of the Gaelic, translated by Alasdair Campbell.
- 15 For the Understanding Memory of UK Treescapes for Better Resilience and Adaptation (MEMBRA) project, see <https://membra.info>; for LUNZ-hub see <https://lunzhub.com>; for the Net Positive Centre for Health and Climate Solutions see <https://netpositivecentre.com>.

5 Ancient History for Today's International Policy, Culture and Heritage

Professor Elena Isayev

As an ancient historian teaching and researching from a base at Exeter University's Classics and Ancient History Department, I have been fortunate that my early mentors and current colleagues have supported my delving into ways that our ancient historical findings can speak to contemporary issues. My research revolves around exploring how mobility, displacement, migration, and spaces – public, private and contested – intersect and shape human histories and societies. Over the years, I have come to realise that the ancient world offers invaluable insights into contemporary concerns that often seem distant but are deeply interconnected. The core message that emerges from the evidence – and what I strive to communicate – is that understanding the past, especially in terms of mobility and place-making, is crucial for situating where we are today, and thus for shaping a more inclusive, empathetic and just future.

My engagement with policy began somewhat indirectly – initially through an invitation to contribute to a volume of the *International Review of the Red Cross*, which aligned with the themes of my research even if it focused on twenty-first-century urgencies.¹ I sought to position issues of migration, displacement and exclusion within a broad historical context, to aid understanding of how outsiders and migrants are perceived across time, and how policies are shaped by narratives of land, sovereignty, and power. Such a perspective, I believe, is essential in confronting current debates concerning migration and borders. My work aims to reveal how displacement has always been part of human history, and to challenge simplistic notions of territory and belonging, of the kind rooted in modern nation-states. The initiatives that have arisen from these ambitions – engaging schools and community groups, often with art practitioners and local organisations, alongside international activities – have been tremendously energising. They have fuelled further development of ideas within my own ancient research and importantly helped to demonstrate the potential that our research in the Humanities has for challenging assumptions, promoting reflection and transforming perceptions of the current world we live in. More specifically, ancient world studies research, providing a deeper understanding of our connection to the past, helps to

position contemporary concerns within a broader discourse, and thus exposes the transience of current socio-cultural conventions. For the purposes of meeting UK Higher Education priorities, this research formed the basis of impact narratives for several REF cycles, including in 2020. Alongside publishing academic articles and books, I have contributed impact case studies for my department, emphasising the potential of ancient historical inquiry to inform contemporary policy dialogues.

My research directions are varied but interrelated, converging on persistent themes that underpin the various forms of engagement described next. A fundamental concern is 'place as an intersection of mobilities'.² Instead of viewing sites as static, fixed points in history, I approach them as dynamic matrices of movement – people, ideas, objects and stories. By emphasising mobility as a starting point of analysis, we begin to see how places are not merely background settings but active, fluid spaces where interactions happen and lives unfold. This method allows us to challenge conventional narratives that often privilege land, borders, or territoriality. Instead, it encourages an understanding of how movement itself shapes identities, rights and belonging, not as something exceptional to the norm of rootedness, but as part of the very fabric of societal vitality and culture.

Another fundamental aspect of my work concerns hospitality, asylum and stewardship.³ I examine how hospitality functions not only as a practical necessity but as a site of discourse and perception – how societies view their responsibility to guests, strangers, displaced persons or outsiders more broadly. This may include issues of trust and fear, but also welcome – and a projection into the future of reciprocity – a recognition of interdependence that will allow for protection when arriving on foreign shores, whether in dealing with natural elements or being taken into networks of guest-friends who live abroad. From ancient examples to modern debates, I analyse how hospitality is implicated in power dynamics and cultural perceptions. Ancient Greek *poleis* rivals such as Athens and Sparta, to show strength and autonomy, vied to be seen as the most hospitable towards strangers in the eyes of the gods and among their compatriots. Each accused the other of inhospitality – a barbarous trait that also suggested an inability to provide protection. In the current twenty-first-century world regime of nation-states, to be seen as hospitable has become associated with weakness, an inability for a state to be firm or to protect its national borders. Ancient attitudes reveal how it can be conceived otherwise, and that, as then, today people who are displaced and in need of refuge become instrumentalised for political ends.

Turning from the state to those who have been forced to leave their homes – the potency of displaced and refugee agency is another area in which Ancient History research has the potential to inform policy thinking. I draw on my findings to counter the disregard of diversity, knowledge and strength of individuals whose lives lie beyond the state, and who despite being marginalised can exert agency and can influence their circumstances,

even when they face violence of systemic power structures. This approach exposes the often-overlooked contexts of power, where action occurs far from state institutions, revealing nuanced stories of overcoming, resistance, and self-determination. Closely tied to this are my studies which highlight the interdependence between people who are out of place – whether through exile, displacement, or social marginalisation – and those who are integrated or included.⁴ Recognising this interconnectivity is essential for policy discourse concerning incomers, which I strive to put across in conversations with policymakers and at wider stakeholder gatherings. Investigations of rights, protection and belonging reveal a complex web of intersections – how communities negotiate inclusion and exclusion, what it means to be protected or vulnerable, and how space and identity are co-constructed. My aim is not to show that somehow the ancient world was a better model of society – but to expose the shifting nature of exclusionary practices that are constructed in a given moment to fit the interests of authorities and any dominant group, which would allow it to control and hold power most effectively. These themes of boundary making are especially relevant today, as debates around migration and borders dominate international political discourse.

Overall, my interaction with policymakers and NGOs (non-governmental organisations) has been driven largely by dialogue and shared interest, often stemming from my research. I did not set out with a vision to influence policy but became involved through conversations and collaborations – working with the UN, NGOs in camps, heritage organisations, and international bodies. For example, my engagement with the Red Cross pushed me to think critically about restrictions on hospitable environments – how these restrictions are historically rooted and how they continue to affect displaced persons today. From my research findings I was keen to highlight that while rates of human mobility are not unique to the current age, camps designed to cope with forced migration have few parallels in the past and are a recent political compromise that limits the rights and freedoms of refugees. The opportunity to work with colleagues and partners in contemporary refugee contexts allowed for the exploration of possibilities for agency. I contributed to international discourse about those who have been displaced, exposing the extent to which their political practices defy their condition of rightlessness. Our joint inquiries, especially during work with Decolonizing Architecture (DAAR),⁵ and through collaborative publications, such as *Displacement and the Humanities*,⁶ addressed the extent to which the ‘right to have rights’ as articulated by Hannah Arendt’s work,⁷ is still relevant within the confines of a state-centric international law, despite advances in the institutionalisation of human rights norms.

As part of these collaborations and building on the partnerships developed, for example, through work with Campus in Camps,⁸ in 2017 several of us founded Almaisha.⁹ This initiative critically explores hospitality, collective learning and politics beyond the nation-state, bringing together the

practice-based experience of my colleagues, as for example architects, urban planners, heritage professionals, with my research on ancient and contemporary perspectives on these issues. One of the ways we contributed to critical discourse was through an advisory workshop to develop new forms of pedagogy that promote collective learning, by invitation from the Bauhaus Museum Dessau, Germany in 2018, as part of their *Parliament of Schools*.¹⁰ That same year we collaborated with the Office of Displaced Designers (ODD) in Lesbos,¹¹ using collective practice that drew more explicitly on my ancient-world findings on hospitality, agency and belonging. This resulted in transformational experiences for us and for the participants, leading to an exhibition in situ, and the co-authorship of the volume *Inhabiting* (2018).¹² This became part of the Collective Dictionary, a series of volumes containing definitions of concepts created in the processes of collective practice and learning, which is a form of archiving an alternative perspective from within displacement.¹³

The initiatives I have been involved in highlight the importance of culture, especially in times of crisis. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, this was a core theme for a meeting of an advisory group concerning cultural institutions, through the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). I was asked to contribute my expertise in helping DCMS shape UK policy concerning heritage and UN sustainable development goals. This came about due to my role as principal investigator of one of the AHRC-GCRF funded Network + initiatives, *Imagining Futures through Un/Archived Pasts* (IF),¹⁴ and its resulting IF Repository.¹⁵ One of the stated goals of the IF project was to highlight the position of culture as a human need. Some of my previous research had already been included in policy reports as speaking to that issue, especially in challenging stereotypes, particularly of people who are displaced.¹⁶ My engagement with these issues deepened, extending to work with international policymakers, leading to an invitation by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) to join a UN Expert Panel, in collaboration with the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), to develop a *Words into Action Guide: Using Traditional and Indigenous Knowledges for Disaster Risk Reduction*.¹⁷ The guide provides advice to countries and practitioners on policies, programmes and innovative projects for mitigating, preparing and responding to various disaster risks. This assists in the implementation of critical aspects of the *Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*.¹⁸ The invitation to contribute to this and other UN/ICCROM initiatives were predicated on my research concerning migration, displacement, place and reading archives against the grain.¹⁹ This same convergence of research themes is what led to my contribution to heritage projects, both on site – as in Mosul, Iraq with student architects and engineers – and online training courses for those working in conflict zones. Our discussions on architecture and concerns around public versus private space, as well as relational understanding of space in refugee

camps – often dismissed as ‘non-places’, were rooted in a methodology of ‘rhythm and place’ that I have been developing, which stemmed from my research of ancient sites and cultures.

‘Rhythm and place’ focuses attention not only on the destruction of built environment or the monumental structures following disaster, but on the life-rhythms that were sustained at those sites – whether the everyday work journey, or weekly markets, or annual festivals – all aspects that make a location into a lived place. Developing this method is what led me to being involved in diverse UN heritage projects at post-conflict sites and virtually, contributing to efforts that seek to broaden definitions of heritage that value intangible and less visible practices, recognising the importance of their restitution as much (if not more so) than that of more internationally renowned monuments.

The networks that built up from this work were crucial in developing stronger partnerships, not least those that formed as a result of the *Imagining Futures* project, involving an international group of key researchers and practitioners.²⁰ The team from Lebanon led by the Beirut Urban Lab at the American University of Beirut,²¹ requested my sponsorship and official endorsement for them to be considered as a Civil Society Organization for the Consultative Group that was to help frame the reconstruction of the area of Beirut destroyed during the 2020 explosion near the port. Their success in being chosen then led me to being on a team of assessors for the EU-UN World Bank, 3RF – Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework, which contributed funds towards the post-disaster reconstruction efforts. The approach and invitation as endorser and assessor resulted, in part, from my work in relation to heritage and the method of ‘rhythm and place’.

In terms of how I have been perceived by the policy community, I can say that it has been utterly professional, with respect and careful listening on both sides. As I did not seek out interaction with policymakers, I was treated as a guest who had been invited to share expertise – through participation at events, advisory panels, writing papers, testing methods in practice or conducting training. I was always approached because an individual or organisation had taken an interest in something I had already written or talked about as part of my own research or as part of collaborative work. For example, I was invited by the Office of Contemporary Art in Norway to do a paper on migration and displacement for an exhibition they were running on the theme of refuge. This was followed by an invitation in 2016 to a gathering of experts for *Thinking at the Edge of the World*, in Svalbard,²² which sought to find diverse approaches to the multiple challenges across the globe and the forces shaping the North and its relationship to the world – stretching from the climate crisis to that of displacement. The organisers felt my work was relevant for the way it problematised the ancient world to present complexities and the historical context behind modern debates on nationhood and citizenship.

A recurring theme motivating the interest policymakers have taken in my work is their view that academics of the ancient world, like myself, can

provide an 'out of the box' perspective on urgent and difficult matters without being restricted by fear of political pigeon-holing, for instance on the issue of migration. It allows for alternative imaginaries in a safe place. Current world issues can be placed in the context of the ancient world in a way that is not a taboo subject for discussion but can still offer highly constructive views from a refreshing and candid perspective.

As an ancient historian who is involved in policy discourse, I feel a tremendous responsibility not to misrepresent Classics or the ancient world. I am therefore careful to make sure I include diverse views on any subject and incorporate various possible interpretations of the ancient evidence. I also make clear that my aim is not to position the practices and perceptions of the ancient world in any kind of downward trajectory to the current day, but to situate current concerns within the socio-cultural transformations of the longue durée. This also helps to abate any criticism that, at times comes from academics within my own field, who question whether this work 'counts' as part of academic research and what academia is for. Rather, I see these engagements as unique opportunities for broadening the conversation and providing a protected space for what are often highly charged and difficult subjects. I feel fortunate to be given room to discuss unconventional perspectives, especially those which are not data-based but more theoretical or philosophical. Indeed, it is very rare that these considerations are belittled or devalued by the policy community.

Based on my own experiences, I would encourage other classicists and Humanities scholars who might like to work with the policy community to have faith in all of the specialist skills that our discipline entails, including being able to combine different evidence sources to formulate a convincing argument, be simultaneously discriminating and open-minded when assessing 'facts' or theories, constantly questioning and imagining realities that we can share with people to reframe modern debates. The last of which, I would argue, is the most important regarding policy engagement.

Notes

- 1 Isayev, E. (2017). Between Hospitality and Asylum: A Historical Perspective on Agency. *International Review of the Red Cross, Migration and Displacement*, 99(904), 1–24.
- 2 The main publication where I began exploring these themes, and from which all the others listed here stem, is: Isayev, E. (2017). *Migration, Mobility and Place in Ancient Italy*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316440612>.
- 3 Isayev, E. (2018). Hospitality: A Timeless Measure of Who We Are? In M. Berg and E. Fiddian Qasmiyeh (eds.) *Hospitality and Hostility Towards Migrants: Global Perspectives*. Special Inaugural Issue of *Migration and Society: Advances in Research*, 1, 7–21; Isayev, E. (2023). Hosts and Higher Powers: Asylum Requests and Sovereignty. In C. Smith (ed.)

- Sovereignty: A Global Perspective*. Proceedings of the British Academy, 253. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 282–306.
- 4 Isayev, E. (forthcoming 2026). Who Can Stay? Wrongful Presence, Inutility and Expulsion of Citizens in the Roman Empire. In S. Ferruh Adalı, B. Gray, E. Isayev, E. Jewell, T. Kaçar, L.A. Mazurek, and J. Mokrišová (eds.) *Mobility in Antiquity: Rethinking the Ancient World Through Movement*. London and New York: Routledge. The culmination of this work will be published in the monograph: Isayev, E. (forthcoming 2027). *Bodies Out of Place*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
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- 6 Isayev, E., and Jewell, E. (eds.). (2023). *Displacement and the Humanities: Manifestos from the Ancient to the Present*. Special Issue of the *Humanities Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/books978-3-0365-8787-5>.
- 7 Arendt, H. ([1951] 1968). *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New Edition with Added Prefaces. San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt, Brace and World, Chapter 9.
- 8 Campus in Camps. Accessed at <https://www.campusincamps.ps/projects/place-heritage-and-belonging-livy-and-cicero/> on 9 October 2025.
- 9 With co-founders architect Diego Segatto (Italy) and critical pedagogue Isshaq AlBarbary (Palestine). Accessed at www.viewalmaisha.org on 9 October 2025.
- 10 Almaisha was invited to collaborate on Bauhaus's *Parliament of Schools*, 17 July 2018, so as to shape the manifesto for future pedagogic practice. Accessed at <https://viewalmaisha.org/parliament-of-schools/> on 9 October 2025.
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- 12 Almaisha with Office of Displaced Designers. (2018). *Inhabiting*. Collective Dictionary Series. Accessed at <http://viewalmaisha.org/collective-dictionary-inhabiting/> on 9 October 2025.
- 13 Collective Dictionary series also includes: *Xenia* published with University of Exeter students. (2017). Accessed at <http://www.campusincamps.ps/projects/xenia/> on 9 October 2025.
- 14 Accessed at <https://imaginingfutures.world/> on 9 October 2025.
- 15 Accessed at <https://ifrepo.world/> on 9 October 2025.
- 16 Phipps, A. (2017). *Research for CULT Committee-Why Cultural Work with Refugees: In Depth Analysis*. European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, 10.
- 17 Boccardi, G., Chmutina, K., Gaillard, J.C., Gencer, E.A., Isayev, E., Jigyasu, R., Lamber, S., Manzano, R., Nishikawa, E., Scott, J., Sen, S., Shelton, T.H., Trogrlic, R.S., Rawal, V. (Co-authors). (2022). *Words into Action Guide: Using Traditional and Indigenous Knowledges for Disaster Risk Reduction*, edited by R. Jigyasu, S. Sen, and D. Zervaas. Geneva and Rome: UNDRR, ICCROM. Accessed at <https://www.undrr.org/words-into-action/traditional-and-indigenous-knowledges-drr> on 9 October 2025.

- 18 *Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*. Accessed at <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030> on 9 October 2025.
- 19 This I was able to develop through bringing my research on hospitality into the project on *Knowledge in Transit*, initiated with Staffan Müller-Wille and learning from Sámi knowledge-holders in Sapmi (Scandinavia). Accessed at <https://linnaeus-in-lapland.net/> on 9 October 2025; Isayev, E., and Müller-Wille, S. (2022). Hospitality and Knowledge: Linnaeus's Hosts on His Laplandic Journey (1732). In A. Mack and T. Kitlinski (eds.) *Hospitality*. Special Issue of *Social Research*, 89(1), 199–230.
- 20 The following international academic partners, along with various organisations, formed part of the core group as co-investigators shaping the project: Howayda Al-Harithy (American University of Beirut, Lebanon); Kodzo Gavua (University of Ghana); Nancy Rushohora and Valence Silayo (University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania).
- 21 Beirut Urban Lab, American University of Beirut, Lebanon. Accessed at <https://beiruturbanlab.com/> on 9 October 2025, which is led by Professors: Howayda Al-Harithy, Mona Fawaz and Mona Harb.
- 22 Accessed at <https://oca.no/programme/thinking-at-the-edge-of-the-world-perspectives-from-the-north>; <https://oca.no/publications/thinking-at-the-edge-of-the-world> on 9 October 2025.

6 The Classics All-Party Parliamentary Group

A Story of Rebirth

*Gráinne Cassidy, Professor Arlene
Holmes-Henderson MBE and Yuki Tsujino*

Historical Precedent

All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) in the UK are informal, cross-party groups of members of Parliament (MPs) and members of the House of Lords who share a common interest in a particular area, topic, or region. They are not official parliamentary bodies, but they act as a national discussion forum, bringing to the attention of parliamentarians insights and evidence from a diversity of situated perspectives.

The Classics APPG had been active in the early 2000s when Sir Michael Fallon was its chair (see Chapter 15). Together with Boris Johnson, Andrew Adonis and Baroness Walmsley, he galvanised the APPG to protest against OCR's threat to cancel Ancient History as a standalone qualification at A Level. This concerted action inside and outside Westminster (including local school pupils dressing the Classics APPG members in togas and wreaths in front of the press, see Figure 6.1) was the group's greatest achievement in the last 50 years. Holmes-Henderson and Hall (2025) provide further details about the APPG and its role in the 'crisis' of 2007.

By 2008, the group was dormant; it lacked a sufficient number of officers to be re-registered. Seventeen years later, in July 2024, Dr Peter Swallow was elected MP for Bracknell. An academic classicist (and schoolteacher) with research specialisms in Aristophanic comedy and Aristotelian science, Peter signalled his willingness to re-establish the Classics APPG as its chair. As a new member of Parliament, he spent the first two months learning how to do the essential components of his new job. Chairing an APPG is an optional extra, so a team of people outside Parliament rallied to make this possibility a reality.

Swift Action

Arlene Holmes-Henderson, a co-author of this chapter, had worked closely with two All-Party Parliamentary Groups since 2018. A specialist in both Classics and public policy, she had been appointed an expert advisor to both



Figure 6.1 Schoolgirls dress Boris Johnson and Michael Fallon in togas and wreaths. Photographer David Sandison.

the Oracy APPG (effective spoken communication and active listening) and the Political Literacy APPG. Using her knowledge of rhetorical education in both APPGs, she provided oral testimony as an expert witness to parliamentary enquiries and supported the publication of enquiry reports (Oracy APPG 2021; Weinberg for the Political Literacy APPG 2021 [see Chapter 2]). This

provided valuable experience in understanding how APPGs ran events, how they were funded and the administrative responsibilities involved. Arlene's network of parliamentary and academic contacts became a valuable resource when the new government assumed power.

All APPGs are administered by a secretariat. The role of the secretariat is to support the APPG Chair and Officers by handling tasks like designing and arranging meetings, producing reports and co-ordinating with external stakeholders. Arlene had been impressed by how Voice 21, the national oracy charity, had supported the Oracy APPG and also how Shout Out UK had grown the Political Literacy APPG effectively over a short period of time. She approached the Classical Association (she was the CA's Partnerships Officer at the time) and explored whether they may be able to help. Chair Professor Judith Mossman and Education Co-ordinator Gráinne Cassidy were enthusiastic and supportive. The CA agreed to act as secretariat on a pro bono basis as long as other organisations and individuals provided input when required. The Classical Association had recently appointed an education co-ordinator (Gráinne Cassidy) and an engagement co-ordinator (Katrina Kelly) so there was capacity within the organisation to serve the APPG. The Classical Association's Teaching Board was already undertaking a qualifications review, led by subject advisory teams (practising teachers and academics working together). The Classical Association was keen to establish connections between policymakers, politicians and the subject community at large: the APPG provided this opportunity.

Gráinne comments, 'Personally, having come out of classroom teaching and moving into a role where I have more of a "bird's eye view" of the Classics community, I knew that taking this on would equip me with the knowledge and skills to work with greater confidence when making decisions on behalf of the Classical Association Teaching Board. It gives me a much greater understanding of all the cogs that are turning in the wider education landscape'.

Aware of the rules which limit how many APPGs MPs can join as an office bearer, as well as the need for all APPGs to have at least 20 parliamentary members, including one member of the government and one member of the opposition (neither of whom can be ministers or shadow ministers), before official registration could be pursued, Arlene understood the urgency to sign up MPs and Lords during Summer 2024. Once MPs had reached their limit of six APPG posts, there would be little chance of registering an APPG until there was a change of government.

Under this time pressure, Arlene asked for help from Yuki Tsujino, chair of the Civil Service Classics Network (CSCN, see Chapter 19), the British Academy's (BA) Policy and Public Affairs teams (with whom she worked closely during her Innovation Fellowship) and Prof Tim Whitmarsh, the Lead Fellow for Classics at the BA. Arlene reckoned that the disciplinary background of potential APPG members would be important 'intel' for the recruitment

process; if their background involved Classics or other Languages/Humanities subjects, direct approaches by email were more likely to be successful. How, though, do you find out what every new MP studied at university, where, and when? Colleagues in the BA's Public Affairs team provided a huge amount of help with this, saving Arlene and Tim weeks of work.

The Summer of Emails

As Lead Fellow for Classics at the BA, Tim contacted existing fellows of the British Academy in the Lords, inviting them to join the Classics APPG. As Regius Professor of Greek at the University of Cambridge, he also contacted MPs and Lords who had studied at Cambridge, encouraging them to lend their support. Tim took the lead on communication with approximately ten prospective members.

Arlene contacted the other 70+ 'targets'. She knew the importance of making the mission of the Classics APPG relevant to them so she personalised every email with details of access to Classics education in their constituency (informed by Hunt and Holmes-Henderson's 2021 *Classics Poverty* research). She researched classical collections in their local museums and referred to schools in their constituency which had engaged with the *Advocating Classics Education* project (Holmes-Henderson and Hall 2025).

An example email is the following:

Dear Mr Wilkinson,

I am excited to invite you to join a **new Classics APPG**, which will include Ancient/Modern History and Politics in its remit. As far as I know, there hasn't been a Classics APPG for at least 15 years so, with newly elected Dr Peter Swallow MP as Chair, we seek to re-establish the group. I'm working with Professor Tim Whitmarsh, Head of the Classics section at the British Academy, as an academic expert advisor in this set-up phase.

This is a watershed moment for Classics in schools and universities. Latin and Greek are in decline, while Classical Civilisation and Ancient History are enjoying record success. We'd like the APPG to discuss issues of strategic national importance affecting the learning and teaching of Classics in schools, museums and communities. We would particularly value your input to these discussions since your constituency of Cheltenham experiences Classics poverty in the state-maintained sector. With the Curriculum and Assessment review looming, we know that these conversations are now urgent.

The first meeting will be in the **Jubilee Room (Palace of Westminster) 1.30–2.30pm on Monday 21st October**. Please let me know whether you're able to join us.

Best wishes,
Arlene

Arlene received no reply from Mr Wilkinson, despite sending three emails. Members who indicated their willingness to attend the first meeting were*:

Dame Harriett Baldwin MP
Kevin Bonavia MP
Charlotte Cane MP
Louise Jones MP
Katie Lam MP
Rachael Maskell MP
Andy McNae MP
Joani Reid MP
David Smith MP
Peter Swallow MP

Lord Aberdare
Professor Baroness Black of Strome
Lord Boswell of Aynho
Baroness Coussins
Lord Effingham
Lord Evans of Weardale
Lord Hope of Craighead
Lord King of Bridgwater
Baroness Nicholson
Professor Lord Parekh FBA
Lord Thomas of Gresford
Lord True
Baroness Young of Old Scone

*Lord Oxford and Lord Watson of Wyre Forest expressed interest to attend *after* the inaugural meeting

Registration Process

The Classical Association set up a webpage and an email address for the APPG. As Tim and Arlene received replies to their emails (both positive and negative), they copied into the conversations the new Classics APPG email account, to provide continuity for future communications.

The rules and regulations concerning APPG registration are copious. Yuki Tsujino provided essential support in helping Gráinne and Arlene navigate the minutiae of these. For example, an APPG cannot be registered until a meeting of the group has been held in person in Westminster. At this inaugural meeting, there need to be at least five parliamentarians present, including representatives from the government and opposition. If this magic number is not

achieved, an entirely new meeting needs to be held. An attendance list has to be taken in order to complete the registration documents. Arlene took advice from Beccy Earnshaw (Oracy APPG secretariat) and Jilly Rollnick (Political Literacy APPG); they advised sending reminder emails seven days before, three days before and 24 hours before (including contacting MP's offices by telephone if necessary) the meeting to optimise the possibility of it being quorate. Gráinne did this and worked closely with Olga Popinska, Peter Swallow's (then) parliamentary assistant, to ensure that the meeting was included in the parliamentary gazette a week in advance, another essential stage of the process, but also an effective way of raising the profile of the meeting. The first meeting of the reformed Classics APPG took place on 21st October 2024. Its objectives were to confirm the name and purpose of the APPG, elect the officers, and confirm the Classical Association as secretariat for the group. This meeting also provided members with the opportunity to suggest topics of potential interest that could become the basis for future APPG meetings. The minimum eligibility criteria were, fortunately, met. Peter Swallow MP (Lab) was appointed as chair and formal point of contact. Katie Lam MP (Con) was appointed as co-chair. Charlotte Cane MP (Lib Dem) and Baroness Young of Old Scone were appointed as officers. The APPG's purpose was agreed:

‘To provide a forum for parliamentarians to discuss, with others, issues of strategic national importance affecting the teaching and learning of Classics in schools, colleges, universities, museums and communities’.

Following the inaugural meeting, Gráinne and Peter completed the required registration paperwork, and on 20 November 2024, the Classics APPG was included in the official register of All-Party Parliamentary Groups.



Figure 6.2 Photo of inaugural Classics APPG meeting.

Photographer: Olga Popinska, reproduced with her permission.

Being Proactive: Convening Stakeholders and Seizing Opportunities

In response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review, commissioned by the government in July 2024, the APPG convened its second meeting – a roundtable on 10 March 2025 to present key recommendations from extensive stakeholder engagement across the Classics community to ensure that children and young people could continue to access classical subjects. This meeting brought together all facets of the Classics community including policymakers, the British Academy, the Chartered College of Teaching, allied organisations in Classics, English and Modern Languages and practising teachers from across the country. This collaborative and constructive discussion enabled Dr Peter Swallow MP as chair of the APPG and Professor Judith Mossman as Chair of the Classical Association to write an open letter to the Curriculum and Assessment Review panel responding to the release of the review's interim report. They welcomed the letter and committed to take into account the recommendations made alongside the other evidence under review.

Whilst this roundtable discussed how all classical subjects could be better supported, a further meeting of the APPG was arranged for 16 June 2025 to discuss and confront the more immediate challenges facing the teaching and learning of Classical Greek, and to collaborate to find solutions for its survival and growth. This topic, already one of acute concern to individuals and organisations working in the field of Classics Education, was specifically raised by a member of the APPG. As a result of this meeting, Dr Peter Swallow MP convened a meeting with the Executive Team at Cambridge OCR (the awarding body for Classical Greek at GCSE and A Level) to share the concerns raised during the meeting and to explore whether there was opportunity for immediate action. This meeting enabled the Classical Association to present the work already undertaken by the Subject Advisory Team for languages as part of their Qualifications Review, demonstrating to Cambridge OCR the sorts of amendments that could be made to the current GCSE specification ahead of reform that would have a significant positive impact on those undertaking the qualification. The meeting was constructive, with Cambridge OCR responding very positively to the suggestions and committing to explore opportunities for immediate change, despite the ongoing Curriculum and Assessment Review. It was reassuring for all involved to see the sole awarding body for Classical Greek listen carefully to, and act upon, the feedback generated by the subject community. In this way, the APPG accelerated a process of change that was well overdue and has signalled to the Executive Team at Cambridge OCR that the Classical Association, as the Subject Association for the community, is an important and able partner in qualification reform.

As per the intention of its re-establishment the Classics APPG has reintroduced the preservation of Classics education as a matter of interest in Westminster. The recognition of this being important to MPs had the result

of raising the profile of Classics in the sphere of policy. Representatives from the Department for Education and Cambridge OCR examination board – a governmental and a non-governmental organisation, have attended meetings. In this way, the APPG supports the work of the Classical Association Teaching Board (CATB) offering a forum for robust solutions to be sought through collaborative, forward-facing discussions at the core of which are practising classroom teachers and academics.

To further raise the profile of Classics in the policy arena, a celebratory event was organised in Parliament for 8 September 2025 (see Figures 6.3 and 6.4). This event was the culmination of the Classical Association's #CelebratingClassics campaign, which showcased why Classics is important to so many people, celebrated the brilliant work being done across the sector to increase access to the study of the ancient world, and to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of Classical Civilisation as an examined subject in England as detailed in Holmes-Henderson and Hall (2025).

The final meeting of the APPG's inaugural year was its Annual General Meeting, held once a full year has elapsed from registration. Much like the registration process, there are strict rules for APPG AGMs. As the group was receiving benefits in kind over the value of £1,500 (courtesy of the Classical Association providing the secretariat), the AGM needed to be held in person, on a day when both Houses were sitting, required the appointment of an



Figure 6.3 Invitation to the 'Celebrating Classics' event held in Parliament on 8 September 2025.

external Chair, and the presence of at least eight parliamentarians in order for the meeting to be quorate.

The Classics APPG made the decision to join forces with the Schools, Learning & Assessment APPG, for which Peter is also the Chair, to support one another in meeting the strict requirements. Unfortunately, the first attempt at holding the AGM on 26th January 2026 was unsuccessful – it is incredibly difficult to know for certain whether parliamentarians will be able to attend, when their diaries are packed and they are required in the House for debate.

However, it was second time lucky on 10th February 2026, with both the Classics and Schools, Learning & Assessment AGMs presided over by Sir Desmond Swayne MP as the external Chair. The required business included the election of Officers and the approval of the income, expenditure and due diligence statements for publication. Following the AGM, Gráinne and Peter completed the necessary paperwork to formally register the result of the meeting.

Future Priorities for the Re-Born Classics APPG

The CSCN and Classics APPG have significant potential for continued collaboration. The CSCN serves as a valuable conduit for building bridges between ancient and modern language initiatives, connecting the Classics APPG with its counterpart for Modern Languages and facilitating dialogue with the wider Civil Service Languages Network. Drawing on the network's diverse membership spanning multiple government departments, the CSCN can provide the APPG with access to expertise and experience from a wide range of policy roles. The CSCN also hopes to support the drafting of briefings for MPs. The network is particularly well-positioned to advise on communications with devolved administrations, helping the APPG navigate the complexities of educational policy across the four nations of the UK.

The APPG's ambition is to continue to act as a vehicle for addressing issues of strategic national importance, providing the Classics community with the opportunity to bring these to the attention of governmental and non-governmental bodies with a united voice. The APPG can act as a facilitator to ensure that classical subjects, and the opinions of their teachers and students, are given due consideration throughout the curriculum and assessment reform process. Anyone can suggest an agenda item via the secretariat's website. Ensuring an open and inclusive participation culture is at the heart of the APPG's work.

Gráinne has already begun to explore how the Classics APPG can work collaboratively with other APPGs, including Modern Languages, Arts and Heritage, and Schools, Learning and Assessment. This will be a key area for development as the APPG moves into its second year.

The Classical Association launched an internship scheme in 2025, the first round of which received over 400 applications. There is potential in future for



Figure 6.4 Photo of attendees at ‘Celebrating Classics’ event in Westminster, September 2025.

Photo credit: Jasmine Klein.

interns to support the work of the APPG, providing valuable parliamentary experience for those interested in education policy/academic research.

Arlene has launched a new postgraduate course at Durham University, ‘Engaging policymakers with Arts and Humanities research’. A vital component of this course is input from policymakers and parliamentarians to the teaching and learning process. All students enrolled on this course have the opportunity to speak to the Civil Service Classics Network and the Classics APPG secretariat. The aim of the course is to (a) improve postgraduate students’ policy literacy, (b) equip them with employability skills, (c) allow them to discuss their own research with policy actors and (d) build capacity for policy engagement within the arts and humanities academic community.

The Classics APPG has become the nexus of policy-engaged communication for the Classics community. May it continue to flourish!

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7 From Classics to Campaigns

How a Historical Degree Opened my Eyes to Modern Politics

Dr Kirsty Harrod

When I graduated from my Masters in Classics and Ancient History in 2016, I had no idea what career I wanted to embark on. For years I had been told that the pursuit of knowledge was a noble cause in itself, whether or not it led to an obvious career. I was told that my ‘soft skills’ would make me a desirable candidate for a range of jobs, that research, writing, thinking and presenting were highly sought after. And yet, with the looming deadline of unemployment beckoning, I looked with jealousy at my friends who had studied Engineering or Education, envying how their courses provided demonstrably transferrable skills.

But something *had* become clear during my university years: I was passionate about feminist politics, queer activism and the history of our social structures. When the opportunity presented itself to take a module on ‘Gender and Sexuality in the Ancient World’, I leapt at the chance. The module, led by Dr Sebastian Matzner, opened my eyes to the real-life applicability of the study of the ancient world. By thinking about the changing position of women from the archaic era through classical Greece to the Roman Empire, I was able to consider how politics affected individuals. The personal, as they say, is political. I began to skew every essay towards a political angle: considering the sexuality (or asexuality) of Hippolytus, the socio-political purpose of rituals and whether Plato was a feminist.

And so, after graduating, I entered the third sector as a fresh-faced 21-year-old and a few years later specialised in communications and campaigns. I started as an administrator at a small charity supporting out-of-work actors, before using this experience to move to a role in the campaign for a second referendum on Brexit. This organisation used increasing public and media demand for a final vote on the Brexit deal to move the dial on Brexit policies within government. I supported local activists around the country, particularly working with the healthcare arm of the campaign, to lobby their local MPs and increase pressure on both the Conservative government and the Labour party to support another referendum. I wrote policy documents on how the NHS would be affected by cutting ties with the EU and how human rights

were at risk by withdrawing from already established legal frameworks. Ultimately, the campaign came incredibly close to securing a second referendum.

From this role, I moved to a large international development charity, working as Global Campaigns Officer within the Policy and Campaigns team. We worked on a range of global campaigns, drawing attention to, for example, the anniversary of the start of the Yemen conflict; but in March 2020, the oncoming tide of the pandemic changed all our workstreams, shifting from planned to reactive campaigning. My proudest moment was when I turned a policy document on how much money lower-income countries owed to the World Bank into social media graphics demonstrating how much more money they could spend on their COVID response if they were not paying back their debt. These graphics were then shared on social media and in a meeting between NGOs and the World Bank; ultimately, this meeting led to lower-income countries having their debt suspended during the pandemic.

The theoretical debates and socio-political history I grappled with in my Classics degrees directly led to the work I did every day in these jobs. In the political campaign around Brexit, I questioned why people tend to believe populist politicians with slogans on buses rather than cold, hard facts. The contributors to Riedwig et al.'s recent *Demokratie und Populismus in der griechischen Antike und heute* trace populism back to Cleon and other ancient leaders.¹ In the international development charity, I questioned why borders even exist, why countries colonise others, and why land, money and power go hand in hand. The topic of ancient colonialism has been well-covered, from Graham's 1964 work *Colony and Mother City in Ancient Greece* to Foster's 2024 monograph *The Seer and the City: Religion, Politics, and Colonial Ideology in Ancient Greece*. I tackled all these questions with the benefit of historical insight; my study of Classics allowed me to see that power is not always earned. I saw that, across history and modernity, societal structures tend to support certain types of people to gain and maintain power while forcing others to struggle at their expense.

It was not only the content of courses that contributed to my political awakening, but also the context of Classics itself. Around 30% of students at Exeter had attended private schools.² This percentage was presumably even higher in the Classics department due to the ever-decreasing opportunities for studying the ancient languages in UK state schools.³ I was incredibly lucky – and systemically privileged – to have attended a state grammar school which offered Latin and Greek to A Level, but I became aware that this opportunity was generally only available to people who lived in London and the South East whose parents had the funds to send them to a tutor for the 11+ exams.⁴ It also became clear to me that 'Classics' was a deeply flawed field, led by white men who perpetuated their own ideals.⁵ Greece and Rome were continuously prioritised over other areas of the ancient world, and there was little to no consideration of race. Whilst some of these debates had been going on since at least the 1980s with Martin Bernal's work on Afrocentricism, they were often conspicuously absent from the syllabus.⁶

Classics itself makes one contend with politics. What is the point of education? Is it 'worth' studying a dead language? Do we value Classics simply because of its elitist history, or because of some inherent worth of the subject matter? Who gets to study Classics, and who should? Why did some students have the opportunity to study the ancient languages – a sure-fire way to land a university place within a Classics department – and others didn't? I remember clearly my friend who attended a state school in Wales, where few students in the country have opportunities to study Classics,⁷ telling me that students were each handed a paper booklet in one of five different colours. Blue meant that the student had the pick of elite subjects such as Latin and French for GCSE. The students who were given green, yellow, or orange could pick from a decreasingly 'academic' list of GCSEs or BTECs. At the other end of the spectrum, the pupils who were given a red booklet had essentially no choice, with only one or two options per column: hairdressing, construction, etc. Students could not select their own colour; teachers allocated colours to each pupil. This friend believes that the school quickly scrapped this way of allocating GCSE options, yet this experience is illustrative of how the study of antiquity is perceived and how its elitist status is perpetuated. It is no coincidence that Latin was the example par excellence of the blue booklets.

Because of this elitism, many of those holding the most powerful positions in the country had a classical education, and the continuing study of the field from different angles by a wider range of people can shed light on the current political decisions of those leaders. One need only think of Boris Johnson's leaving speech, in which the departing Prime Minister likened himself to Cincinnatus 'returning to his plough',⁸ or search 'Sophocles' in Hansard to see the enduring impact that Classics has on current politics.⁹ As a working-class or lower middle-class student, to understand Latin is to gain a little insight into the world above yours, to begin to understand the Etonians who created the UK political landscape we live in.

Ultimately, the politics around Classics and the socio-political modules on offer – amongst other university experiences (*how*, I cried from my 12-person, grey cinderblock halls, could my fellow students afford flats with an en-suite and a view over the Devon hills?!) – radicalised me. It is clear to me now that innovative, socio-politically focussed modules in Classics degrees help undergraduates to consider a career in policymaking and the third sector, as it forces them to consider the impact of history on today, to understand the patterns that are evident in social structures from antiquity to modernity such as patriarchy and the value placed on citizenship. But it is also important for Classics lecturers to break down the politics of their own field, urging students to consider its historical and enduring elitism and what this means for them and others. Indeed, Classics is part of the world. It is relevant to policymaking. Nothing a student studies in a Classics degree can be divorced from the socio-political context in which it emerged: numismatics, art, literature and more. The study of Classics does have impact, and I do not know whether I would have had my career in the charity sector if I had not studied the subject.

During the pandemic, I started to look back on my days as a classicist and found that I did not quite feel finished with the subject. I made the leap from the charity sector back to academia, recently completing my PhD on sexual violence in Greek tragedy. As I reached the final days of my doctorate, I considered many career prospects, including staying in academia or making another leap to the private sector. But as I prepared research proposals and job applications, I found myself being inevitably drawn back to charities, campaigning and advocacy. Through my research degree, I discovered not only that my interest in politics runs deep and impacts everything I write, but also that I am genuinely passionate about taking complex information and distilling it into persuasive arguments. I now hope to take these research and writing skills back to a policy role as a changemaker.

When I first made the step into the charity sector years ago, I feared being found out as an imposter, imagining myself as the sole Humanities graduate amongst Political Science experts. In fact, a huge number of my colleagues in the charity sector came from similar academic backgrounds to myself.¹⁰ While many of my colleagues had undertaken related degrees such as International Relations or Law, others had studied Geography, History, or even Musicology. It turns out that those people who told me that my degree gave me desirable ‘soft skills’ were correct. Although I did not often translate Greek tragedy in my career nor write essays on ritual and magic, the writing, research and analysis skills that Classics gave me, along with historical and sociological perspectives on modern politics, were invaluable.

Notes

- 1 (Riedwig et al. 2024).
- 2 2024 data from The Times Good University Guide 2025.
- 3 As of 2016, four years after I completed my A Levels, Ancient Greek was ‘no longer part of national secondary school curricula in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales . . . Around 1,300 students sit GCSE Ancient Greek. The number drops significantly at AS and A2 level, where approximately 250 learners per year choose to continue with Ancient Greek. These students are, however, almost all from independent schools, with only around ten state schools in the UK still teaching the Ancient Greek language’ (Mitropoulos and Holmes-Henderson 2016, p. 55). By 2019, that number had declined even further: only eight state-maintained schools in the whole of England entered students for Greek A level in that year (Holmes-Henderson and Hunt 2021, p. 8).
- 4 This school unfortunately no longer offers the subject at A Level.
- 5 I use the term ‘Classics’ in this chapter simply because this was the title of my degree. However, I recognise the issues surrounding this phrase and the recent turn towards a more inclusive term for the subject such as Ancient World Studies and Ancient Mediterranean Studies (see, for

- example, the University of Reading blog 2020, or Rhodes College's course description for Ancient Mediterranean Studies [n.d.]).
- 6 (Bernall 1987). This work has most recently been continued by the excellent scholars leading CAWS, Critical Ancient World Studies. See (Umachandran and Ward 2023).
 - 7 According to the Classics for All Welsh Hwb report 2023, 11 schools (at primary, secondary and FE level) are currently teaching Classics in Wales (Pucknell 2024).
 - 8 (Grierson 2022).
 - 9 For example, in the second reading of the EU Withdrawal Arrangements bill on 6 December 2024, Peter Dowd MP spoke to the importance of avoiding pride, apparently urging his colleagues to admit their mistakes and renegotiate the Bill rather than accept something less than perfect. To illustrate his point, he quoted Sophocles *Antigone* 1022–4: 'All men make mistakes, but a good man yields when he knows his course is wrong, and repairs the evil. The only crime is pride' (Hansard 2024).
 - 10 This is not the place to discuss how much of the charity sector is taken up by university-educated, middle-class people, although it is. See the admirable campaign Non-Graduates Welcome for the increasing pressure on the charity sector to stop requiring job applicants to have been to university (<http://nongraduateswelcome.co.uk/faqs>).

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Part Two



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8 Classics in the European Union

A Wake-up Call

Julius Graack

The date 14 November 1979 is memorable for Classics in modern European Politics. On that day, Mario Capanna, a far-left Member of the European Parliament from Italy, rose from his seat and delivered a speech in the plenary session – in Latin. After initial confusion in the audience and in the interpreting booths, Capanna's speech received a response from the German conservative Otto von Habsburg, also in Latin. A rare exchange between two very different Members, united by their knowledge of the former 'lingua franca'. Since then, Latin has not been added to the official languages spoken in the European Parliament, which today includes 24 official languages. But where are the vestiges of the classical world in European policymaking?

From a Children's CD With Greek Myths to the European Parliament

The classical world has always excited me, ever since I started listening to the retellings of Greek myths on CD or when I was playing with my Roman *Playmobil* figurines. Dubbed *Gymnasium* in Germany, some secondary schools focus on preparing their students for Higher Education, and a smaller portion of these *Gymnasien* include classical-humanist education in their curriculum. I chose my school, the *Evangelisches Gymnasium zum Grauen Kloster*, because it offered classical subjects. When asked why I wanted to learn Latin and Ancient Greek, I earnestly shared my plans to one day open an ancient Roman-inspired theme park, thereby naturally being required to know the languages. I learned Latin, Ancient Greek and some Ancient Hebrew in secondary school. I cannot deny that Latin lessons quickly sobered up my enthusiasm. I did however select Ancient Greek as one of my main courses in the German equivalent for A Levels, the *Abitur*.

I participated in the debating competition *Jugend debattiert*, inspired by classical rhetoric to a great extent. I also joined the youth wing of the liberal party in Germany. And finally, I chose Political Science as my other main course for the *Abitur*. For me, Classics and Politics were never separate but

always connected. One of my final year projects was a presentation on state interventions in burial rites with Sophocles' *Antigone* at the core. I wanted to use the classical past to inspire decision-making today. In my undergraduate studies in Economics and Philosophy, I chose mostly modules of classical philosophy, offering me a deep dive into Plato and Aristotle. Even though my main study focus had shifted more towards the economic integration of the European Union, I maintained my interest in the classical world.

After an internship with a Member of the European Parliament (MEP), I got an offer to join his team permanently. This is how I became a policy advisor on budgetary issues, putting my economic experience to use. As a policy advisor, my job was to prepare the political work of the MEP in the committee on budgetary issues, liaising with the offices of other MEPs. I negotiated compromises to ensure majorities. I had to consider alliances in the political group of my MEP, in the national delegations and other interests based on his political affiliations. Beyond the European Parliament, the work included discussions with the other European institutions, mainly the European Commission, as well as the member states in the Council. The European legislative procedure takes time and effort, as public policy for over 450 million Europeans naturally dictates.

Relevance and Irrelevance of Classics in European Policymaking

At first glance, there does not seem to be much space for classical inspiration in highly technical discussions. Of course, there are classical perspectives with enormous impact on the European Union, the name being inspired by the Phoenician princess Europa, to mention the most obvious. Democratic principles and traditions found in the European law-making process are derived from their ancient predecessors. Even certain federalist aspects resemble early developments of multilevel government structures in the classical world, such as the *koina*. Classics will always offer opportunities for historical comparisons for the European Union, but these are less important for the day-to-day job of a policy advisor in the European Parliament.

The few times when my basic classical knowledge made a difference were communicative situations with anecdotal value. When making new connections in the policymaking world, which heavily relies on these networks, a short exchange about Classics can be helpful if the other person can match that interest, although this could also be true for other, far less niche interests. Much of what can be called a European culture finds its origins in Classics. Having a general foundation of this knowledge allows you to see past nationality, political ideology and different opinions. It gives the opportunity to find unity through a shared feeling of belonging. Hence, what can be a small anecdote can go a long way in this multilingual, international policymaking arena.

Skills vs Knowledge

What matters more in the end is not necessarily the knowledge but the skills which can be acquired through studying Classics. Learning classical languages and classical philosophy gave me linguistic awareness and critical thinking skills. Both were incredibly helpful in my position as political advisor. I remember a rather technical trilogue between the three institutions on the revision of budgetary rules. The negotiations had been blocked by the member states for much of the evening, mostly because of seemingly unimportant wordings. The negotiating team of the Parliament felt like the blockade was on purpose. This can happen during negotiations. But it is exactly these moments when linguistic adaptability and creativity combine with critical thinking for classicists: how can we change the wording without changing the meaning in such a way that it is acceptable for everybody?

Words matter in public policy. They most certainly matter in laws which are translated into 24 languages for their multilingual audience. The European Union is often blamed for being too technical and too detail-oriented. There were moments in negotiations when I struggled to perceive how newly proposed wording differed from a previous version. These frustrations felt familiar; I had encountered a similar experience in school in Latin or Ancient Greek lessons when working on translations. But being confronted with the nuances of vocabulary choice as a classicist has helped me become a better policy advisor. It is not only about the policy we propose, it is also about how we find a compromise through formulation.

Stop Reacting, Start Interacting!

These skills are not obvious to everyone working in the European policy communities. There is no special treatment for classicists, and I would argue that they often have it harder than other people with a background in Politics, Law, Economics or International Relations. The problem? Policymakers in a highly detailed field often look for people with detailed knowledge, though normally not about ancient Athens or the Roman Republic. I am convinced that a classical training can be helpful for creating public policy, but classicists need to sell themselves and their skills more effectively.

After the last European elections, I decided to go back to studying a master's programme in rhetoric with the Classics department at Royal Holloway, University of London. As an interdisciplinary course with a classical foundation, it allows and invites students to use Classics to interact with today's world. Having seen the impact of rhetoric in the European Union first hand, I am now able to reflect on these political experiences with a fuller understanding of the classical origin of the discipline. For example, I have looked at how MEPs share their plenary speeches on social media and what rhetorical implications this could have if analysed through a classical rhetorical lens.

My hope is to find classical principles that can make European lawmaking even better, and modern inspirations which can create new perspectives on classical rhetoric. Making Classics matter is not a one-way street; it is about interaction.

Classical-humanist education, such as the one from which I benefited, is often praised for its holistic intellectual approach. It is time for classicists to prove the value of their training and go on the offensive. Not by speaking Latin in the European Parliament! Instead, they must conduct and share more research on the skills cultivated through classical studies, based on data-driven evidence. They must make their research relevant not only in their field but in today's decision-making processes. And they must actively interact with policymakers through initiatives like this book. Classicists do have a lot to offer, including for policymaking. But they will only be able to share their skills and knowledge if they can credibly show how Classics and policy can interact meaningfully. This book makes an excellent start.

9 Classics in the Scottish Government

Yuki Tsujino

My journey into Classics came later than most. After studying Law and Computing and working in technology, I found myself drawn to the ancient world through an undergraduate programme at the University of Cambridge during the COVID pandemic. Soon after, I joined the Scottish Government, working first with medical evidence at Social Security Scotland before moving to my current role as a communications and project support officer for the Bairns' Hoose programme, Scotland's adaptation of the Scandinavian Barnahus model for child victims and witnesses.

This unusual career path has given me a distinctive perspective on how a background in Classics enhances modern governance work. The analytical frameworks and communication principles I encountered in Latin and Greek texts have proven surprisingly applicable to the complex, multi-agency policy work I now undertake. This chapter explores these connections through personal reflections on critical moments where classical approaches have informed my contribution to my work within the Scottish Government.

One core feature that studying Classics has in common with formulating and implementing government policy is the evidence-based approach. As classicists, we are fortunate to have a range of ancient literature with which to engage. This corpus of primary sources is enhanced by the rich secondary research produced over the centuries by writers from a diverse range of cultures. There are few fields outside of Classics that have commanded such widespread intellectual engagement across both spatial and temporal boundaries.

Yet those who have studied Classics will also recognise the challenges such a vast corpus presents. One challenge all students of Classics will have faced is navigating this sea of information, whether that be locating a specific line of text or extracting the date of an event. As students of Classics, we also know how to be critical of our sources and, in particular, secondary sources. Many of us will have encountered or have heard misquotations or mistranslations of Latin and Greek texts. Moreover, secondary sources present additional challenges; they often say more about the period in which they were written than they do about the classical world.

These challenges mirror those that government officials face in developing public policy, where we also must navigate vast information sources and evaluate evidence critically. As an organisation that operates on an evidence-based approach, research is fundamental to the formation and implementation of government policy. The Scottish Government gathers research from a wide range of sources, from internal analysts to contracted researchers. Additionally, we have access to UK Government data sharing platforms, and we also monitor research being produced by local government, academic institutions and third sector organisations. Based on this vast body of data, we produce recommendations to government ministers and draft policy according to ministerial decisions.

The skills required to navigate this vast sea of information, to draw from it relevant information and to then refine it for the consumption of ministers are no different from those required to produce research on Classics. The key skill is not to comprehensively process all this information but rather to separate relevant data from irrelevant data.

It is skills such as these that have proven indispensable to me in my work supporting the development of policy for the Bairns' Hoose programme. Barnahus, the model on which Bairns' Hoose is based, has a long history spanning four decades. The Barnahus model, inspired by the United States' Child Advocacy Center Model set up in 1985, was first established in Iceland by the director of the Government Child Protection Agency in 1998 and has since been adopted across Europe. When the Scottish Government began to develop policy to implement Barnahus in Scotland in 2019, there already existed an international corpus of knowledge built on decades of research.

A second dimension of complexity is added when one accounts for the fact that Bairns' Hoose, like all policy, exists in a much wider policy environment, with a multitude of targeted policies with specific goals like Bairns' Hoose, contributing to an overarching policy of giving all children in Scotland the best possible start in life and reducing poverty in Scotland. Bairns' Hoose contributes to two such overarching policies: The Promise and Getting It Right For Every Child.

When I joined the Bairns' Hoose programme in 2024, not only did I have to familiarise myself with the policy in the context of Scottish Government but also this vast body of international research. There is doubtless a perception that publications associated with the government are lengthy, and this perception is not mistaken. Upon joining the programme, I was presented with numerous policy documents ranging from several dozen pages to hundreds of pages. These documents were a mixture of (i) policy directly relating to Bairns' Hoose, (ii) the wider Scottish Government policies of which Bairns' Hoose was part, (iii) wider reading and research on the Barnahus model, and (iv) history publications that had been produced over the life of the programme. Recalling my study of Classics, during which we had weekly reading lists of a dozen books, I was able to utilise the skills I had developed

as a student to calmly and pragmatically process my reading to identify information directly relevant to the current policy agenda, separating that from superfluous information.

A Generalist Approach

A more subtle benefit of studying Classics and working in public policy is familiarity with the extensive range of disciplines covered by classical writers, from Medicine and Natural Sciences to Agriculture and Architecture. This exposure to a wide range of subjects provides a firm foundation for students wishing to pursue a career in the Civil Service.

Public policy, much like Classics, covers a vast range of topics. Some policy areas are widely known and discussed in public discourse, such as crime prevention and education; many areas, however, may not necessarily come to mind when one mentions public policy because they target very specific issues. One example which may delight enthusiasts of the Georgics of Vergil, is a job posting I once saw for a policy officer for honey bees.

The study of Classics prepares a civil servant for the policy environment not only through familiarity with a vast range of fields but also by equipping them with the confidence to confront unfamiliar fields. Many students will have produced reports on the writings of ancient authors covering a very specific genre or time period and, through passion for Classics, will have expanded their research outside of Classics and into the foundational knowledge of the field on which the author is writing. It is this mentality which is vital for a civil servant working in policy.

Rhetoric

One area in which a Classics education has proven to be invaluable in my policy role is oratory and rhetoric. It may be a surprise to many that the study of classical oratory and rhetoric would be useful for a civil servant in the twenty-first century, a role that is often considered to work behind the scenes.

Within public policy, ministerial and stakeholder engagement are two of the most challenging areas of work. Ministerial engagements generally take two forms: the development of ministerial briefs which serve to inform government ministers, and the writing of ministerial speaking notes which provide structure and accuracy to ministerial addresses. It is the latter of these two tasks wherein civil servants new to policy struggle most as speechwriting is a skill that is generally acquired through practical experience.

Students of Classics will have a strong awareness of the importance that oratory and rhetoric held in both ancient Greece and in ancient Rome. The Civil Service is one of the few professions wherein these studies may be

practically applied, and the works of Aristotle and Cicero, supplemented by further writings of scholars on their works, provides a strong foundation for both inexperienced and experienced civil servants working within policy.

In my work for Bairns' Hoose, I have produced numerous speaking notes, and my studies on ancient oratory and rhetoric have been indispensable. For instance, my studies in oratory have provided me with the tools to identify the purpose of a speech and to nuance aspects of performance to most appropriately interact with the audience. Rhetoric, meanwhile, has provided me with the skills to systematically structure an address to effectively achieve the speech's purpose. It is, however, important to highlight that writers such as Aristotle and Cicero wrote for a society very different from modern society and, whilst much of their writings remain relevant, it is necessary to adapt their methods to be appropriate for a modern audience. Furthermore, whilst civil servants often prepare speaking notes, we rarely deliver them, and so there are many aspects of oratory that are outside of our control.

Stakeholder engagement is a broad term used within policy to describe our interactions with key stakeholders of a policy area and these vary widely from policy to policy. Whilst stakeholder engagement is often a rewarding and socially beneficial aspect of the role, there will often be specific policy points that elicit strong and opposing opinions. As public policy officials, it is our role to mediate these opposing views and work towards a consensus, taking into account the government's desired outcomes and the practical restraints.

It is perhaps rhetoric and its application to stakeholder engagement that has proven the most useful skill I have taken from my studies. As rhetoric has supported me in speechwriting, it has enabled me to systematically structure both written and verbal engagement with stakeholders logically as well as building in ethical credibility and emotional resonance. This has proven especially helpful in facilitating conversations on topics where stakeholders have opposing and strongly held views. It is, however, important to state that, as civil servants, we have a requirement to act impartially and objectively. It is, therefore, important that the use of rhetoric be appropriate and within the scope of the Civil Service code.¹

Whilst I explore the Civil Service Classics Network in detail in a later chapter, I would like to highlight how this work has complemented my policy career. Leading this network has provided development opportunities rarely available elsewhere in the civil service. Without my background in Classics, I would not have had the chance to build a community of hundreds of civil servants across departments, developing leadership skills that enhance my effectiveness in policy work.

In summary, students undertaking Classics develop numerous transferable skills that provide a strong foundation for a career in public policy. It is one of the few academic fields that encourages familiarity with a broad range of disciplines and has such a rich corpus of resources built up over centuries, which mirrors the wide and information-rich landscape of public

policy. The Scottish Government welcomes employees from all disciplinary backgrounds. My own experience demonstrates how useful the study of Classics can be for policy-oriented work.

Note

1 (Cabinet Office n.d.).

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10 From Fieldwork to Foreign Policy

Why Diplomacy Needs Archaeologists

Rachel Heatherly

‘It’s like international relations of the ancient world’. That was how I pitched the relevance of my classical education during my interview for the Civil Service Fast Stream. Corny, perhaps, but true. I had studied for a BA in Classical Archaeology and Ancient History followed by an MSt in Classical Archaeology, both at Oxford University. During that time, I spent every summer digging with a field school in Pompeii, and that time spent working with archaeologists and students from many different countries fuelled my enthusiasm for working internationally.

On entering the Civil Service, I didn’t go straight into the Foreign Office – that came later. I did a couple of jobs (or ‘tours’ as we call them in the FCDO) in HMRC and HM Treasury, working on organised crime policy and in a minister’s private office respectively. Through these roles I learned how government works, and I was surprised by how many fellow archaeologists I found in the corridors of Whitehall. I remember very clearly my first director, having asked about my academic background, huffing and tossing me a dismissive, ‘you’re not unique’. He was unique – the grumpiest leader I’ve encountered in the workplace, but he had a point – something about the UK civil service does attract people with a classical background.

Unlike more traditional Classics courses, many of which have a strong focus on Latin and Greek language skills, my course aimed to equip students to look beyond the written word – so controlled, as it was, by elites – to understand the real people of the ancient world. Although, yes, we did study the international relations of the ancient world – the ambitions, decisions and battles that drove empires and civilisations, and how these were influenced – we learned so much more than that. We learned how to blend together evidence from literature, the built environment, and the detritus of ordinary life to construct compelling arguments about social change. We learned how to read behind soaring rhetoric, comparing political claims with archaeological evidence. We learned to play detective, uncovering tiny details to illuminate the whole. These skills have been really helpful to me in my career.

I’ve been a Civil Servant for about 15 years now. In that time I have held a range of roles – from writing policy advice, tackling corporate and operational

issues, and representing the UK in multilateral negotiations. Each of these roles has required good research skills and the ability to interpret incomplete data to arrive at sound conclusions. Assessing the likely financial, health and social impacts of raising the level of duty on alcohol is not, when it comes down to it, all that different in terms of process and skill set from teasing out the functional significance of Egyptian art, interpreting why Attalos III willed his kingdom to Rome, or understanding how domestic architecture in the Roman world reflected social status. With the ancient world as with society today, we need to triangulate between different data sources, draw conclusions and take decisions based on incomplete evidence.

I moved across into the Foreign Office as soon as I possibly could. I took a diplomatic posting to Brussels, back when Brexit was just a threat, and where I had the opportunity to practice oratory and develop my own brand of rhetoric on a set of unsuspecting Europeans. Sat in the Customs Committee, my speeches did not rival those of Cicero (neither in hyperbole nor in length), but I learned the importance of having one eye on the big picture and the other eye on the detail. As diplomats we must also keep our focus on what impact a policy or negotiated outcome may have on both the country as a whole and on individual citizens. As an undergraduate I wrestled with the question of what Constantine the Great's spiritual conversion to Christianity meant for the Roman Empire itself and for the diverse people living under his *imperium*. These days I am more concerned with ways in which we can improve our soft power overseas, and how to do so in a way that grows our national influence on the world stage while also bringing economic benefits to businesses and people across the UK.

For most of my career I have worked in the Foreign Office, thinking about the ambitions, decisions and battles that drive today's world and how to influence them. In February 2022 I found myself studying maps and troop movements – not entirely unlike revising the Peloponnesian War for my finals, but with much higher stakes. I was one of a large number of staff drawn from across the Foreign Office to form a new crisis hub in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. We drew on a wide range of patchy evidence – western and military intelligence, open source media, Russian propaganda and diplomatic reporting – to form as clear a picture as possible of what was really happening 1,600 miles away. We advised ministers on which foreign counterparts to engage (and influence), how and in what order. And we supported our teams on the ground in Kyiv with policy advice, while others made sure they and their families were as safe as possible. It was the swiftest, most intense diplomatic effort that I have been involved in, and it drew on all those skills I had honed (theoretically) in my studies of the ancient world and (practically) in my career to that point.

In most cases, diplomacy is much slower than in the Russia/Ukraine example; much more in the background, beyond the gaze of the watching world. Multilateral negotiations are a case in point. As head of UNESCO policy

I was part of the UK delegation for negotiations across a range of policy areas, including – to my delight – many relating to culture and world heritage. This time, my background in archaeology lent me additional credibility in discussions with foreign interlocutors and UK government colleagues alike – particularly when dealing with thorny issues like the return or restitution of cultural property. As a lover of ancient Greece, it was challenging to be in the UK delegation, refuting modern Greece's claims on the Parthenon Sculptures – but defending UK government policy is the essence of the job, and it isn't always easy.

Often, when preparing for UNESCO negotiations, I would be reminded of my undergraduate degree. The discipline that comes from tackling long, often quite technical, reading lists certainly helped when faced with several hundreds of pages of reports and recommendations, presented at short notice for discussion or adoption. Close reading and critical analysis enabled me to hone in on the issues presenting particular risks or opportunities for the UK, and the habit of reading around my subject meant I could bring new evidence and perspectives into our negotiating position. An eye on the big picture helped me craft my interventions to safeguard UK interests while promoting our reputation within the wider world of UNESCO.

I feel very lucky to have found a career which lets me practise the skills I developed through my studies, and in particular one in which I have been able to merge my academic and professional interests. I no longer work on UNESCO policy and, following a brief stint working on cultural diplomacy in DCMS, I am back at the Foreign Office, presently helping set up a new unit focusing on the UK's geopolitical impact. Time to dust off my copies of Herodotus and Tacitus, perhaps.

11 A Classicist Abroad

Antiquity and Diplomacy

Sir John Jenkins KCMG LVO

Centre for Geopolitics, Cambridge University

In the 1942 introduction to his masterpiece of late imperial swagger, *Orientations*,¹ the remarkable Sir Ronald Storrs had no compunction in quoting Homer in Greek – to be precise, Iliad 1, 209: ἄμφω ὁμῶς θυμῷ φιλέουσά τε κηδομένη τε. The reference is, of course, to Hera not wishing to take sides between Achilles and Agamemnon in their dispute over Briseis. Storrs had been oriental secretary in Cairo under Lord Cromer and then Lord Kitchener, a key member of the fabled Arab Bureau during World War I and then military governor of Jerusalem after its capture in 1917 by General Allenby.² His purpose in quoting Homer was to explain why he avoided taking sides between Jews and Arabs in the conflict over Mandate Palestine. He perhaps also had at the back of his mind another intractable conflict with ethnic characteristics which had led to the destruction of his gubernatorial residence – with its library and many of his personal papers – in Cyprus by Greek nationalists in 1931.

Forty-two years later, in his valedictory dispatch from Riyadh, at the end of perhaps the most distinguished career of any British diplomatic Arabist, Sir James Craig quoted Horace, Odes 3,26,3f: *Nunc arma defunctumque bello/barbiton hic paries habebit*. With the poem's artful allusions to its Greek models and its application by Craig to the inevitable disappointments of diplomacy in the modern age, the poem resonates across the centuries: *aere perennius* – Horace would doubtless have been delighted. The dispatch was notoriously leaked. It wasn't the Latin, of course, or Horace's allusiveness that provoked consternation: it was Sir James' characteristically robust observations upon his experiences not just in Saudi Arabia but in the Arab world as a whole.³

It is hard to imagine a British official, however senior, quoting Latin or Classical Greek in any context today. Indeed, the deployment of phrases in any foreign language has been seen as bad form for at least two decades now. That would have been particularly hard on Storrs, who was fond of illustrating his always interesting remarks with a line or two of Dante, Corneille or

Goethe as well as Homer and Theocritus, and showing off his command of both classical and colloquial Arabic. But both Storrs and Craig (who started his diplomatic career in the year Storrs died) also seem to have believed – unfashionably against both Foucault and Bourdieu – that an admittedly elitist form of cultural shorthand had its virtues. The disappearance of this shared frame of reference can perhaps be taken to mark a watershed in the way diplomats have understood the world and indeed the nature of their audience more generally.⁴

Both Storrs and Craig were classically trained, in a pedagogical tradition dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, as Oxford and Cambridge sought to emulate the intellectual, textual and linguistic rigour of the great German research universities. The approaches of the two differed in certain respects, of course.⁵ But they both reflected the positivist and meliorist spirit of the age. That spirit informed government service as well: it centred upon a belief that incremental improvements – either in the study of antiquity and other historical periods or in matters such as social welfare, economic planning or the understanding of the wider modern world – could be achieved by rigorously directed, rational thought.

That was certainly the tradition in which I was brought up at Cambridge in the 1970s.⁶ I had originally thought of pursuing an academic career. But I changed my mind and joined the FCO (as it then was) in 1980. My first job was on the Greek Desk in Southern European Department,⁷ perhaps on the assumption that a familiarity with Pericles' Funeral Oration would help me come to terms with the complexity of Greek politics after the fall of the military junta in 1974 and the rise of PASOK.⁸ It did at least help me read the *καθαρένουςα* text of the Montreux Convention.⁹

I was then sent off – to SOAS, private tutors, Damascus and Amman – to learn Arabic. And that in turn led to my own diplomatic career of 35 years, mostly in the Middle East and North Africa, with two fascinating diversions to Southeast Asia, where I also learned Malay and Burmese. It is largely Arabic and the region in which it is spoken that have continued to engage my professional attention since I left the FCO in 2015. Malaysia and Burma were helpful in providing contrasting experiences – and in the case of Burma an abiding love and sadness. But it was my formation as an undergraduate and then graduate student of the classical world, as we understood it in those days, that determined my professional as well as my intellectual journey.

This is not to claim that the study of Latin, Greek and the ancient world in particular gave me a special advantage over those who studied other subjects with equal rigour. Contrary to what many like to believe, the FCO was not full of Old Etonians, Harrovians or Wykehamists exchanging Latin tags even in 1980, still less so now. The Office in those days was certainly very male, very white and very Oxbridge. It could also be unforgiving. But from the start of my career, I worked with a wide variety of colleagues with backgrounds in the Natural and Social Sciences, Engineering, History, International

Relations, Geography and modern, classical, European and non-European languages – from every part of the United Kingdom.

And the distinguishing feature they shared was that they knew a lot both from study and direct experience about the more difficult as well as the easier parts of the world – their languages, their cultures, their politics, their peoples. Underpinning this was the intellectual formation they had received and the way in which this helped them both to understand the purpose of the job they did and welcome debate about how it might best be achieved. This was no ἀνεξέταστος βίος: for them, the Socratic method prevailed. And at its heart was an intense focus on areas of expertise, an often-brutal intellectual clarity, a profound curiosity about the world, an understanding of the sheer contingency of events, a realism about the possibility of change and a determination to act in the national interest as it was generally understood. They all brought particular skills to bear, of course, depending on their particular interests and aptitudes. Some were better with numbers, some with languages, some with people, some with ideas, some with management, some with politics.

So what did I bring to the party? That was a product of contingency – the *Parcae* – too. As it turned out, the Middle East suited me very well. The structure of Arabic – with its duals, optatives, verb forms that resemble the Middle Voice, dialects and diglossia – seemed familiar to me from Greek in a way that Burmese (for example) with its agglutinative and tonal character and its ambiguity about word form and paratactic sentence structure did not. More importantly, the great classical historians, in particular Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius, Tacitus and Ammianus Marcellinus, provided a model for thinking about the world in terms of power and interests rather than aspirational morality: Herodotus' understanding of the centrality of Persia, the debate of the Peloponnesian League in Thucydides' first book, the account of the rise of Rome in Polybius, the savage scepticism of Tacitus and Ammianus' cool account of the Emperor Julian's hubristic campaigns have all resonated with me as I struggled over the last four decades to make sense of the often brutal and usually disruptive politics of the Middle East and the role of external actors. More recently, the great historians of late antiquity, early Islam and early modern Europe have helped me understand how something you thought would last forever could turn suddenly into something else entirely. A tract for the times indeed.

I have also increasingly come to value Aristotle, particularly the Politics, for its account of civic virtue and the emergence and maintenance of political order. The mystery of how such orders arise, endure and adapt without rupture remains at the heart of the analytical conundrum of the region. The modern Middle Eastern state system emerged after WWI, the 1921 Cairo Conference and the award of mandates to Britain and France. Local actors also had substantial agency in shaping borders and events. Yet the region remains politically unstable and economically fragile – at least outside the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Why do we so often see – to adapt Gramsci – the old failing to

die, the new to be born and progress towards political accountability, responsiveness and resilience aborted? This in essence is the question I am trying to help answer in my current work on the Westphalia programme at Cambridge University's Centre for Geopolitics. It is one that the great Arab historian, Ibn Khaldun, posed 700 years ago. It informs the work of the influential Abbasid jurist, Al Mawardi. It lurks behind all the failed ideologies – from Islamism to Arabism to Ba'athism to Imamism – that have claimed to have the answer but did – and do – not.

It is also, of course, central to Plato's Republic and Laws – and to his letters, vividly illustrating the practical difficulties he encountered in Syracuse. Thomas Hobbes, who translated Thucydides, is perhaps the greatest theorist of the problem in English. But there is a long tradition in other European languages, going back to the early Italian city states and from thence into France, the German-speaking lands, Spain and so forth.

Does it make a difference that I studied Classics? Yes and no. Yes, in the sense that political thought in early modern Europe arose out of a conversation with the ancient world, first with the reclamation of Cicero as a political thinker in thirteenth-century Italy, then two centuries later with the Renaissance's rediscovery of the great Greek philosophers and historians. In that regard, the more familiar you are with the tradition, the more clearly you will probably think about the matter. But no, in the sense that the tradition is available to everyone in translation.¹⁰

My own view is that even simply to scratch the surface of this tradition is endlessly educative. You need, of course, to be able to argue back. And in doing so, you can't beat the originals. The best place to start is probably still with Plato, the first in a long line of idealists who thought you could argue tyrants out of tyranny – but also a man who valued debate. If we wish to explain the occurrence and then the apparent failure of the Arab Spring, the shipwreck of doubtless well-intentioned but naïve Western efforts to promote democracy in the Middle East (and indeed other parts of the world) or the failure of domestically generated political reform in the region over the last 50 years, we need to examine our own assumptions – as the greatest ancient thinkers and their heirs all did. That – at its best – is what the study of the classical world encourages. To combine Horace, the Royal Society and Kant in two spare Latin phrases – *nullius in verba: sapere aude*.

The world in which we live – or at least the way in which we understand and therefore hope to change it – is as much shaped by ideas as it is by actions. And that in the end is the real legacy of my classical education. I could have got something similar, I suppose, from spending six years reading something else. But I genuinely believe (I would, wouldn't I?) that there is no better grounding for thinking about the western tradition and the way it engages or does not engage with its rivals – the Orthodox, Islamic, Persianate, Hindu, Confucian or Russian, for example – than to start with Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. This isn't meant to be the sort of 'Glory of Greece' reductionism

that contemporary critics claim (in my view wrongly) compromised the study of the ancient world in the nineteenth century. Rather, it gives the lie to those who claim, often from within the tradition, that Classics is too white, too western, too self-regarding.¹¹ In reality, it can be a door through which we pass to broader pastures. If Herodotus doesn't persuade you that interest in other cultures doesn't need to be stigmatised as Orientalist; if Thucydides doesn't make you want to ask militarists everywhere if they have really thought matters through; if Euripides doesn't make you think there may be something nasty in the wood shed of human nature; if Xenophon doesn't make you wonder whether the Kurds have always been as peaceable as they claim (as I used to remark to the then Iraqi Foreign Minister and former Peshmerga, Hoshiyar Zebari); if Thucydides, Lysias, Plato and Demosthenes don't make you think that political order is harder to construct than to destroy – but is worth fighting for when you have it; if Tacitus, Sallust or Procopius – demonic possession aside – don't make you wonder about the exact nature of ruling elites; or for that matter if Gibbon – and his great interpreter JGA Pocock¹² – don't make you reflect on the evanescence of empire and the contingency of every political fashion – then perhaps diplomacy is really not for you.

Notes

- 1 Storrs, R. (1945). *Orientalisms*. London: Nicholson and Watson.
- 2 In Lawrence, T.E. (1935). *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. Doubleday, 30. T.E. Lawrence described him as, 'the most brilliant Englishman in the Near East, and subtly efficient, despite his diversion of energy in love of music and letters, of sculpture, painting, of whatever was beautiful in the world's fruit . . . Storrs was always first, and the great man among us'. A new biography by Professor Brad Faught of Tyndale University in Canada is forthcoming. <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/ronald-storrs-9780755653423/>.
- 3 The redacted text is available at https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/last_despatch_made_to_the_fo_by/response/808627/attach/3/0041%2016%20releasable%20material.pdf?cookie_passthrough=1. For more on this story see Parris, M. and Bryson, A. (eds.) (2010). *Parting Shots*. New York: Viking.
- 4 I did so in my *Muslim Brotherhood Review* of 2014. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/muslim-brotherhood-review-main-findings>, quoting Thucydides' remarks (Book 1,18) upon the relative stability of Sparta in contrast to other Greek city states and Aristotle's discussion of constitutions in the *Politics*: But that was anomalous then and more so now.
- 5 The spirit of Housman still lingers in corners of Cambridge, I suspect, as that of Jowett does in Oxford.
- 6 After studying, as a working class boy in 1960s Birmingham and 1970s Nottingham, both Latin and Greek. The age cohorts that attended grammar schools and universities were much smaller then, as you might expect in a still highly industrial economy, but there was no 'privileged monopoly on

- impractical learning' (https://www.varsity.co.uk/comment/29222?utm_campaign=alumni&utm_medium=email&utm_source=2026857_M31034%20Classics%20Newsletter%20July%202025&dm_i=6DCG,17FXL,2LM980,5NUQ8,1#google_vignette) – any more than there had been when Richard Porson became Professor of Greek at Cambridge or the great Joseph Wright rose from the Yorkshire cotton mills to become Max Müller's successor – and the mentor of my fellow Brummie and Oratorian, JRR Tolkien – at Oxford.
- 7 Under a fiercely intelligent Turkish-speaking head of department, one of whose middle names was Achilles.
 - 8 The Panhellenic Socialist Movement; left-wing Greek political party founded in 1974.
 - 9 The Greek text referred to is not available online but did exist in printed form. The English text can be found in *Treaties and International Engagements Registered with the Secretariat of the League of Nations*, CLXX-III(4015). <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/LON/Volume%20173/v173.pdf>.
 - 10 In any case to access it fully you also need to be familiar *inter alia* with the Codex Justinianus and other late Roman Digests, Augustine, the Dante of De Monarchia, Marsiglio di Padua, Aquinas, John of Salisbury, Ptolemy of Lucca, Machiavelli, Coke, Bodin, Lipsius, Hooker, Hobbes, Spinoza, Sidney, Grotius, Locke, Shaftesbury, Berkeley, Vico, Hume, Smith, Kant, Rousseau, Paine, Burke, Herder, Fichte, Le Maistre, Hegel, Lord Mansfield, Blackstone, Bentham, Tocqueville, the Mills, Marx, Weber, Schmitt, Gramsci, Croce, Figgis, Hayek, Oakeshott, Popper, Rawls, Bobbit, the Carolingian Reformation, the Gregorian Reform Programme of the C11th, Magna Carta, the Conciliar Movement, the Putney Debates, the Bill of Rights, Habeas Corpus, the Encyclopédistes, the Federalist Papers, the key figures of the Frankfurt School and the US Constitution (n.b. Skinner, Q. (1978 and 1998). *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*. 2 Vols. Cambridge University Press, offers a magisterial survey of large parts of this tradition).
 - 11 J.G Bernal's *Black Athena* (originally published in three volumes between 1987 and 2006 by Rutgers University Press) was a harbinger. Most recently see Stewart, E. (2025). Should We Make Classics History? *The Critic*, 28 June. <https://thecritic.co.uk/should-we-make-classics-history/>. Such academic στράσις is increasingly common.
 - 12 In his multivolume commentaries on Gibbon and his age, starting with, Pocock, J.G.A. (1999). *Barbarism and Religion: Volume 1: The Enlightenment of Edward Gibbon, 1737–1764*. Cambridge University Press.

12 Classics and Western Diplomacy

Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles KCMG LVO

For so many reasons, there has always been, and will always be, an intimate connection between the ancient civilisations of Greece and Rome, their languages, literature, history and political geography, and in the more modern world, the conduct of relations between states, otherwise known as diplomacy.

An important part of this has been the weight given to classical education among the Western élites responsible for designing and delivering policies covering diplomatic engagement between governments and other significant actors in inter-state relations. Had those élites been more familiar with the much older, and perhaps more sophisticated, civilisation of China, they might have looked further east for models of statecraft to follow, and to avoid. But Greco-Roman civilisation was, and remains, the central foundation of Western liberal consciousness.

The most prominent of those sources of wisdom, and understanding, are of course the philosophers and historians of Greece and Rome. The poets too played their part in informing how Western – perhaps particularly British – diplomats went about their public business.

When I was lucky enough to join the class of 20 or so new entrants to the fast stream of Her Majesty's Diplomatic Service in the autumn of 1977, I was surprised to discover that four of those new entrants had read *Mods and Greats* at Oxford, while a fifth, masquerading as a diplomat, joined the Secret Intelligence Service. A year later, as I embarked on two years' full-time Arabic language training, I was pleased to discover that my closest companion, and chief rival, on the course was a distinguished Cambridge classicist.

And so it went on. The first Embassy to which I was posted, as Third Secretary in Chancery in the summer of 1980, was led by a remarkable Balliol classicist, Sir Michael Weir, of proud Scottish descent. The Foreign Secretary at the time I joined, Dr David Owen, had proscribed the use of classical tags in Foreign Office telegrams, and minutes. But by the time Michael Weir came, in late 1981, to send a formal diplomatic despatch to the new foreign secretary, Lord Carrington, on the assassination of President Sadat by Islamic militants, he felt bold enough to end his report with Lucretius' immortal verdict on the

evils of extreme religion, related specifically to the sacrifice of Iphigenia, but of universal application: *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum*.

Sir Michael's contemporary, colleague and competitor was the Ambassador at Riyadh, Sir James Craig, another Oxford classicist who had later gone on to lecture in Arabic at Durham University. James Craig also broke David Owen's injunction, when he ended his valedictory despatch, before his retirement, with these lines from Odes III xxvi:

*Nunc arma defunctum bello
barbiton hic paries habebit.*

It was, I think, Gibbon who wrote that 'On every march, in every journey, Horace was always in my pocket and often in my hand'.¹ Perhaps even more remarkably, in one of his famous letters to his son, that greatest of diplomats, Lord Chesterfield, recalled the Roman poet put to dual-use:

I know a gentleman who was so good a manager of his time that he would not even lose that small portion of it which the calls of nature obliged to pass in the necessary house. He bought a common edition of Horace, of which he tore off gradually a couple of pages, carried them with him to that necessary place, read them first and then sent them down as a sacrifice to Cloacina.²

More seriously than any of that, however, are the lessons which the great historians of Greece and Rome have had for generations of statesmen and diplomats. Of these, perhaps the greatest is Thucydides's magnificent history of the war between the Athenians and their allies, and the Spartans and theirs. In the preface to his *Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides writes that the purpose of his book is to record the mistakes that both sides had made, over many years, in the hope that men would in future read his work, learn from that record of folly, and avoid such horrors in future. His book is thus to be a *ktēma es aei*, a possession for all time. But then, he adds disarmingly, human nature doesn't change. Men will read his book, nod wisely and go on to make the same mistakes again and again.

One of the reasons why in 1978 I chose to learn Arabic, rather than the other options I was offered, of Chinese and Japanese, was that I felt, as a classicist, that I had a more than passing acquaintance with the world of the Eastern Mediterranean, and thought it would give me some background for a career spent in the region. As things turned out, I had only three postings in the Middle East – in Egypt in the 1980s, and in Israel and then Saudi Arabia in the early 2000s.

Arriving by ferry from Athens at the great port of Alexandria in the spring of 1980, my hopes that my classical education would add to my enjoyment of the time I spent in Alexandria, and then Cairo, were confirmed. I still recall

with pleasure the wonders of the city's Museum of Greco-Roman antiquities, and the delights of the amphitheatre and the catacombs, exploring them all in the company of another classicist, also learning Arabic. The Pyramids of Giza, the oases of the Western Desert, were all reminders that Egypt had been home to a civilisation even older than that of Greece and Rome.

From Cairo, I travelled to Israel for the first time, by bus, across Sinai and then through what then felt like the shady groves of the Gaza strip. I saw for the first time the great classical sites of historic Palestine, sites I was later, as Ambassador, to explore in the company of Israel's extraordinary archaeologists and classicists.

All of which only added to my sadness at the failure, in Jerusalem and, even more important, in Washington, to act on the conclusion, reached first by Lord Peel when in 1937 he inquired into the causes of the Arab Revolt, and repeated many times since; that the only civilised solution to the Israel-Palestine question has to be what was then called Partition and is now known as Two States. As Tacitus would have observed, creating a desert and calling it peace is an approach unworthy of any decent human being.

I want to end on a more cheerful note. At school, at Tonbridge in Kent, the chaplain, who had learned Hebrew as part of the Theology Tripos at Cambridge, maintained that the way the Headmaster, Michael McCrum, a distinguished classicist, initialled documents was an exact replica of the Hebrew for *Jaweh*, the ineffable name of God. The man who went to be headmaster of Eton, master of Corpus Christi, Cambridge, and then vice chancellor of the university, died before I was ever able to discover if he knew what he was doing!

Notes

- 1 Gibbon, E. (1796). *Memoirs of My Life and Writings*. In L. Sheffield (ed.) *Miscellaneous Works of Edward Gibbon, Esq.* London: Cadell and Davies.
- 2 Stanhope, P.D. (1774). *Letters Written by the Late Right Honourable Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield to His Son, Philip Stanhope, Esq.* London: J. Dodsley.

13 Greek, Public Service and Diplomacy

Beyond ‘Thucydides’ Trap’

Dr John Kittmer

During the time I was serving as British ambassador to Greece, a flurry of local excitement arose when Graham Allison, the then director of Harvard’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, published an article in *The Atlantic* considering whether aspects of Thucydides’ analysis of the causes of the Peloponnesian War might, as Chinese President Xi Jinping had intimated, hold some lessons for understanding the possible trajectory of US-China relations today.¹ The article, subsequently a book,² represented a joining of two worlds that I knew well: the world of classical antiquity and that of modern geopolitical relations. It stimulated discussions and papers, both about the utility of drawing on Ancient History to penetrate contemporary political phenomena and about the sufficiency of the author’s reading of the causes of the Peloponnesian War.³ Whatever the merits of his analysis, Allison’s recourse to Thucydides was an arresting, though not unique, interpretive strategy among the community of scholars studying international relations.⁴ As such, it offers useful food for thought about the utility of knowledge about ancient Greece (and indeed Classics more generally) for an understanding of modern geopolitical realities and diplomatic policies towards them.

Humanities and Public Policy

We live at a time of anxiety about the value of Classics within and outside the university. In recent years, with changes to the funding of UK universities, this anxiety has been generalised to cover the full spectrum of the Humanities. We can see this reflected in a slew of defensive studies in the Humanities field,⁵ including practical guides for researchers.⁶ A utilitarian calculus is often brought to bear on public debates about education, and this tends to be internalised by Humanities scholars seeking to safeguard the position of their disciplines. This is not the place to mount a different sort of defence of Humanities or Classics learning, but even in utilitarian terms, there is, I think, no reason for despair – merely for careful setting forth of arguments and positions.

My career as a public servant lasted 24 years, divided almost evenly between the home civil service and the diplomatic service. As with many such careers, the expectation placed on me was that I would gain the widest possible range of experience, through frequent moves and appointments, particularly in the early years. Foreign postings aside, I was rarely in the same position (or even the same department or ministry) for longer than two years. Each new post required me to become quickly credible and reasonably expert in the subjects with which we were dealing so that I could contribute effectively to policy formation and its implementation. Sometimes this meant learning new skills, but most often it entailed absorbing a new body of relevant knowledge. For this I turned not only to the civil service's increasingly precarious (because increasingly digitised) filing systems but also to the world of scholarship. Every new posting would see me drawing up a pertinent bibliography: books, articles and thought pieces from university research centres and thinktanks, drawn broadly from Economics, Socio-political Sciences and the Humanities.

My library and archive show that I read widely in macroeconomics, especially labour-market economics, labour law and equalities law, the processes of European integration and enlargement, international peacekeeping and peacebuilding. As ambassador in Athens, I regularly read the Hellenic Observatory's authoritative discussion papers drawn from the disciplines of social science, as the international community struggled to comprehend the causes of the Greek financial and political crises and to articulate appropriate policy responses.⁷ But the Humanities – particularly historical writing – also offered essential guidance. When, as manager of the Animal Welfare Bill 2005, I had to write a debate speech for the secretary of state,⁸ it was to Mike Radford's authoritative historico-legal analysis that I turned.⁹ Shortly before I took up post as director of overseas territories in 2016, Charles Cawley's history of the territories¹⁰ had appeared: essential reading for someone grappling with a contested, fragile and scattered imperial legacy. Across my career, Social Sciences and Humanities scholarship trained me, taught me and nurtured my understanding.

Classics and Diplomacy

The art of diplomacy has its own history and every diplomat should know its outlines.¹¹ While I was an undergraduate, my own thoughts about a diplomatic career grew through studying the winding paths of diplomacy between the crisis-torn city states of ancient Greece in the fourth century BCE, as powers jostled with each other and dealt unavailingly with the looming threat of Macedon. Adcock and Mosley's account of the diplomatic manoeuvrings of the time¹² is also a classic statement of the foundational nature of Greek experience in the formation of western diplomatic statecraft.

It is impossible to be an effective British diplomat without a lively knowledge of our country's global history and entanglements. Britannia's wide spatio-temporal reach and its imperial and post-imperial history matter. But diplomats must also possess a deep understanding of the countries in which they serve; they must have, in the words of a former Foreign Secretary, 'an unrivalled knowledge . . . of the history, culture, geography and politics of the countries they are posted to, and to speak the local languages'.¹³ Diplomats acquire such knowledge variously: sometimes through undergraduate study or specialist postgraduate courses; sometimes through pre-post training; sometimes through postings early in their career. But the key point is that these knowledge requirements are met through Humanities disciplines. In this, Classics has a role to play, above all for postings across the Mediterranean.

Contemporary political and economic circumstances can rarely be satisfactorily understood without a knowledge of their historical underpinnings, and the diplomat who doesn't know the history of his own country's engagement with his host country is at a disadvantage. The character of long-standing bilateral relations substantially determines the way in which current challenges must be viewed and handled. This point can be exemplified through the efforts made by the British Ministry of Information to win public support for the British alliance with Greece in the opening phases of the Second World War. As part of the government's public diplomacy, books were published¹⁴ to show the depth and quality of British-Greek relations over time – from classical antiquity to the 1940s.¹⁵

My own appointment as ambassador to Greece must have owed something to my career experience and skills, and something to my long-standing engagement with the culture and language of Greece. I had read Classics as an undergraduate, always prioritising the Greeks, and had pursued postgraduate studies in classical Greek drama. Several years into my professional career, I switched my academic priorities to modern Greek, partly to position myself for potential diplomatic postings in Greece. While undertaking postgraduate studies in modern Greek, I was deepening my Greek language skills and my reading in the contemporary Greek scene. Despite the modernisation of diplomatic career structures and efforts to broaden and diversify access to diplomatic careers, my experience is not unusual in the British diplomatic service: of the last eight British ambassadors to Greece, half read Classics at university, and all were capable modern Greek speakers.

Some centuries have passed since the ideal qualities of the perfect ambassador could be summed up as 'trained theologian, familiar with Greek philosophers, expert in Mathematical Sciences, competent in Law, Music and Poetry, proficient in Greek, Latin, French, German, Spanish and Turkish'.¹⁶ Modern diplomats' accomplishments may be less humanistic than this. But mastery of language does remain at the heart of diplomacy as a 'key element in the formation of relationships, mutual cultural understanding, trust and networks that facilitate interaction and cooperation'.¹⁷ Behind diplomatic treaties, deals, communiqués, summits and conferences stand the interpreter and translator: specialists often frustratingly written out of

history, despite their indispensability.¹⁸ Every foreign service has its specialist cadre of linguistic experts.¹⁹ But diplomats themselves also need high levels of linguistic competence – even at a time of accelerating AI technology. Over a decade ago, the British Academy systematically examined diplomatic and security language requirements, and recommended improvements to the government's career support for language acquisition and retention, and for language-learning in schools and universities.²⁰

Globally speaking, Greek is a minority language and lacks the obvious strategic priority to the FCDO of, say, Mandarin, Russian and Arabic. But its importance to British diplomats carrying out operations in Greece is beyond question; it gave me access to politicians, entrepreneurs, journalists and intellectuals in Greece, and to the Greek public, to an extent inconceivable for a monoglot Anglophone ambassador. Although learning Greek will always be a minority pursuit, it is a core requirement of diplomatic service in Greece. One can learn from scratch, of course, without a knowledge of Ancient Greek, and perhaps no one would now learn the classical language as a step to mastering modern Greek (any more than one would undertake Latin for Italian). But if taught as a medium of two-way communication (learning not only to read but also to write it), Ancient Greek is a good building block for acquiring the modern tongue. It helps the learner with much that is otherwise puzzling or difficult.²¹ The thin stream of classicists who move on to modern Greek remains important – both for the crepuscular presence of modern Greek in British universities and for the diplomatic profession.

Language is also, of course, a medium of broader culture. Several decades ago, Britain pioneered what is now called 'soft power', not least through the work of the British Council.²² The Council's post-war work was particularly important in Greece, where Rex Leeper, the propulsive force for the Council's creation, returned with the Greek army-in-exile as British ambassador from 1943–46.²³ The golden years of cultural work in Greece, until the eruption of the Cyprus crisis in the 1950s, have been well studied in recent years.²⁴ To this day, the British Council, along with the formidably influential British School at Athens, maintains an active presence in Greece.

During my ambassadorship, I was able to draw on my own academic interests in Greek culture, to bring people together. In November 2015, we commemorated the 25th anniversary of the death of Yannis Ritsos (1909–90), the most famous poet of the Greek Left and the subject of my doctorate. (Ritsos himself exploited the literary heritage of ancient Greek drama and myth brilliantly in his work.)²⁵ I wanted to build bridges to the contemporary Greek Left, which had achieved power earlier that year under the SYRIZA coalition government, headed by Alexis Tsipras. The poet David Harsent, who has published versions of Ritsos' work in English,²⁶ joined forces at the British Residence in Athens with the composer, the late Thanos Mikroutsikos, whose setting to music of Ritsos' *Moonlight Sonata* is exemplary, to offer an evening of music, poetry and reflection – in two languages. It was intended to be

thought-provoking and enjoyable and to open doors. And it did open doors for my mission and the work of the embassy. One small sign among many that in modern diplomacy the Humanities – in their many manifestations, virtues and voices – undoubtedly have impact.

Notes

- 1 Allison, G. (2015). The Thucydides Trap: Are the US and China Headed for War? *The Atlantic*, 24 September. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/united-states-china-war-thucydides-trap/406756/>.
- 2 Allison, G. (2017). *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* Melbourne and London: Scribe.
- 3 For example: Nye, J.S. (2017). The Kindleberger Trap. *Project Syndicate*. <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/trump-china-kindleberger-trap-by-joseph-s-nye-2017-01>; Roberts, A., and Hansen, V.D. (2022). *Secrets of Statecraft: What the Greeks and Romans Can Teach Us*. Podcast + Transcript, Hoover Institution. <https://www.hoover.org/research/secrets-statecraft-what-greeks-and-romans-can-teach-us>.
- 4 Among Anglophone scholars using Thucydides and other ancient Greek writers for thinking about today's international relations, see Clark (1993); Lang (2004); Leung (2021); Litsas (2018); Sims (2021). Among scholars writing in Greek, see Kouskouvelis (2015); Litsas (2014); Platias (2010). I am grateful to Prof. Spyridon Litsas for help in compiling this endnote.
- 5 For example: Bartel, A.S. (2015). Why the Humanities Are Necessary to Public Policy, and How. *Maine Policy Review*, 24(1), 117–122. <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mpr/vol24/iss1/33>; British Academy. (2008). *Punching Our Weight: The Humanities and Social Sciences in Public-Policy Making*. London: British Academy; Holm, P., Jarrick, A., and Scott, D. (2015). *Humanities World Report 2015*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Holmes-Henderson, A., and Sewell, L. (2024). *How Does Arts and Humanities Research Influence Public Policymaking?* Durham: Durham University, UPEN, Laidlaw. <https://upen.ac.uk/resources/how-does-arts-and-humanities-research-influence-public-policymaking/>.
- 6 For example: Fooks, L. (2019). *Humanities and Policy Engagement: An Introduction for Researchers*. Oxford: TORCH. https://torch.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/torch/documents/media/humanities_and_policy_engagement.pdf; Institute for Government. (2020). *How to Engage with Policy Makers: A Guide for Academics in the Arts and Humanities*. London: Institute for Government.
- 7 The Hellenic Observatory is a research centre of the London School of Economics (LSE). Its GreeSE series of academic papers can be sourced at <https://www.lse.ac.uk/Hellenic-Observatory/Publications/GreeSE-Papers>.
- 8 The Second Reading of the Animal Welfare Bill 2005 took place in the Commons on 10 January 2006. The speech I drafted was given by Margaret Beckett, then Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and is in Hansard. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/vo060110/debtext/60110-06.htm>.

- 9 Radford, M. (2001). *Animal Welfare Law in Britain: Regulation and Responsibility*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 10 Cawley, C. (2015). *Colonies in Conflict: The History of the British Overseas Territories*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- 11 See Nicolson, H. (1954). *The Evolution of Diplomatic Method*. London: Constable & Co. Ltd.; Black, J. (2010). *A History of Diplomacy*. London: Reaktion Books.
- 12 Adcock, F., and Mosley, D. (1975). *Diplomacy in Ancient Greece*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- 13 William Hague in 2013, quoted in Chen and Breivik (2013, p. 22).
- 14 Powell, D. (1941). *Remember Greece*. London: Hodder & Stoughton; Casson, S. (1943). *Greece and Britain*. London: Collins.
- 15 Dilys Powell's *Remember Greece* reflects the knowledge and experience she gained in Greece before the war, as the wife of the archaeologist Humfry Payne, who was director of the British School at Athens 1929–1936. Stanley Casson was assistant director of the British School in 1919–1922; his *Greece and Britain* draws on his knowledge of Greece as a classical archaeologist and his experience as an officer serving in Greece during both world wars. Each book shows familiarity with contemporary relations and with ancient history.
- 16 The humanist Ottaviano Maggi, writing in 1566, quoted in Fletcher (2016, p. 91f).
- 17 Chen, S., and Breivik, A. (2013, p. 20). *Lost for Words: The Need for Languages in UK Diplomacy and Security*. London: British Academy.
- 18 The best summary I have found about the role of interpreters in diplomatic history is Roland (1999). See also Delisle and Woodsworth (1995) on translation history.
- 19 See the relevant pages of FCDO Services, which provides interpretation and translation services across the UK Government. <https://www.fcdo-services.gov.uk/what-we-offer/translation-and-interpreting/>.
- 20 Chen, S., and Breivik, A. (2013). *Lost for Words: The Need for Languages in UK Diplomacy and Security*. London: British Academy.
- 21 Prior knowledge of ancient Greek in Erasmian pronunciation, for example, salves the pain of learning how to spell the modern language.
- 22 For a lively discussion of soft power, see Fletcher (2016, Chapter 9).
- 23 Leeper, R. (1950). *When Greek Meets Greek*. London: Chatto and Windus, Chapter 5.
- 24 Mackridge, P., and Ricks, D. (eds.). (2018). *The British Council and Anglo-Greek Literary Interactions, 1945–1955*. London: Routledge; Koutsopanagou, G. (2022). *British Information and Cultural Policy in Greece, 1943–1950: Exercising Public Diplomacy in the Formative Early Cold War Years*. Lausanne: Peter Lang.
- 25 See, e.g., Ritsos (1993).
- 26 Harsent, D. (2012). *In Secret: Versions of Yannis Ritsos*. London: Enitharmon; Harsent, D. (2023). *A Broken Man in Flower: Versions of Yannis Ritsos*, introduced by J. Kittmer. Hexham: Bloodaxe.

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14 Parsing the World

Classics and Foreign Service

John Raine CMG OBE

I learned Latin from the age of 11 and Greek from the age of 13. My school timetabled the latter, imaginatively, against Woodwork. It seemed an odd pairing, and I still wonder whether the world has been denied a carpenter.

Thanks to my extraordinary Classics masters my early enthusiasm for the subject was skilfully developed to the level of competence that I was able to win a place at Jesus College Cambridge to read Classics in 1981. I was sustained by a fascination with the subject as much as any natural aptitude. From the moment I met Caecilius in his garden at 11 on my first school day, to the moment I put my pen down in my final examination at Cambridge almost a decade later, I simply wanted to know more about the classical world. I still do.

My father had, wisely, insisted that whatever subject I studied I did for its own sake, not for finding a job. It therefore never occurred to me at university that it would equip me for a career, but looking back four decades, while Classics did not qualify me professionally for anything other than more Classics, as an intellectual formation for a career in international affairs it was almost ideal.

The linguistic skills and intellectual discipline fostered by the Tripos were great, immediate help in the civil service exams, assessment centre and interviews through which I navigated my way into the Foreign Office in 1984. Classical texts are deep wells on which classicists draw unthinkingly. With hindsight, Plato taught me how to make an argument, although not how to hold an audience; Cicero how to persuade, although he's also a cautionary study in the vanity of politicians; and Thucydides how to think about states and conflict, although his bleak realism requires a careful dosage. I can't claim all classical texts were the perfect primers. Strabo, sadly, didn't do much for my geography.

On entry to the Foreign Service, I took a language aptitude test in which the candidate was exposed to a language they don't know (in my case Tibetan), in order to see how well, and quickly, they learn. The test was largely aural, giving the modern linguists a clear edge, but few disciplines can be better preparation for analysing a language in the abstract than a decade of translation,

composition, grammar and parsing. I learned Latin in the early 1970s through the then fashionable Nuffield Programme, but my masters abandoned it as insufficiently rigorous, and Greek I learned the same way Victorian school-boys did, less the cane. With all this dry technical knowledge of syntax I could spot a gerund, sense a transitive verb conjugating and was unintimidated by the endlessness of vocab lists. This time-honoured skill set kept me going in the long haul of learning written and spoken Arabic and other, less demanding languages often acquired under pressure of time and events.

Arabic, the key to a world, took me to countries in the Middle East which had their own roots in classical civilisation. Syria contains the Eastern *limes* of the Roman Empire, Britain the Northern *limes* and Hadrian's Wall, on which Syrian auxiliaries served. That connection was a reminder, valuable in the Middle East, that history unites the countries of the region with Europe as well as divides them.

Classics was also a professionally useful hobby in that visiting the classical remains of Syria took me to places I might never have visited and gave me serendipitous insights into the people and geography. Conversations with Bedouin at deserted Greek temples felt like a scene from a canvas by David Roberts, and they linger as vividly as his images. Beyond Arabia it was a thrill to find the Greco-Scythian temples at Taxila in Pakistan, a site where Buddhism touched the classical world.

I made friends in several European diplomatic services whose professional formation had been impressively long and tailored for their profession. With my single degree in Classics I was a mere 'Corinthian' compared to them. A Turkish colleague was genuinely astonished to learn I had been allowed to leave London without a degree in international law. And even my classical education was made to feel slight by an Austrian soldier serving in the peace-keeping force on the Golan who, after a long chat over cold beers, recited from memory his favourite speech from Antigone. He was unimpressed by my quotes from Horace.

But what I had lacked in professional knowledge was compensated for by the structured curiosity which Classics had fostered. Learning remained a career-long activity and pleasure. It is also, perhaps, the natural state of the classicist. I rarely faced a new brief on which I did not have some grounding, however abstract. History, Warfare, Law, Economics were all in their principles at least familiar. That was, I confess, less true for the crude oil markets and nuclear technology, but curiosity is a powerful tutor whatever the subject, and somewhere in my educational depths were the examples of Aristotle and Pliny, for whom the cantonisation of subjects into Arts and Sciences would have been baffling.

Classicists have always been well if not over-represented in the Foreign Office. The subject was taught at the most competitive schools and universities whose students were most likely to succeed in public examinations. The Northcote Trevelyan reforms of the 1850s introduced examinations for entry

into the Public Service in order to attract the best talent and do away with patronage. But in the impressive list of subjects on which candidates should be examined, Classics, the report simply assumed, would be included as a 'staple'.¹ Interestingly, the other staple was Mathematics.

This favoured public schools and universities and ensured the ambient level of classical education in the civil service stayed high. But despite the widening of access to the civil service which subsequent reforms in the selection process brought about, and the displacement of Classics from school curricula, classicists were, and still are, drawn to the profession. This suggests there may be persistent affinities between the two which go beyond institutions and tradition.

Classics is the study of two ancient societies in which public life was central. The concepts of the *Polis* and *Res Publica* are the tap-roots of modern government and public life. It is no accident that the signature buildings of Rome and Athens, so widely emulated in Europe and the US, are their public ones. Even the inspirational poetry of Homer, Horace, Virgil and the tragedians, whilst studied by subsequent generations of classicists in hushed libraries, played a vigorous role in the public life of their time. Classics is an immersion in both the institutions which support an open society and the management of relations between political entities. The immersion is more complete for the failings of those societies, candidly depicted in the literature, as well as the spectacular successes memorialised assertively in architecture and engineering. For all the majesty of Rome and Athens there are also bountiful, well documented examples of incompetence, civil war, corruption, state-level violence and political collapse, the staples of the politician and the diplomat. Theories of the state, and political science, start with Aristotle. Thucydides is still supreme on the course and causes of state-level conflict.

Moreover, the wider classical canon offers the student an unmediated exposure to human failings. No action of an individual, statesmen, group, politician or legislature is so perverse as to lack a precedent in antiquity. There has been a fashionable resurgence in Stoicism,² but for many classicists that is the natural response to the events of public life and international affairs, however sensational or disruptive they seem in the moment. It was the conduct of Rome's endless wars with its neighbours as much as his experience of his fellow humans which evoked from Marcus Aurelius his timeless 'Meditations'. For diplomats, Stoicism's sibling, pragmatism is their most reached-for and often most effective weapon, their equivalent of the Roman 'gladius'. Pragmatism need not preclude ethical engagement on injustices, but diplomats accept a muting of their zeal in serving, first and last, their country. They also accept their share of disruption and stress which flow from the global rule of *Fortuna*. Stoicism helps there too.

Although they may not be identified as such in the classroom, the Roman and Athenian empires are extended case studies in foreign and defence policy. Their leaders and electorates managed the conflicts between restraint and

force, cultural supremacy and inclusion, defence and public finance, between sanction and negotiations and between isolationism and a wider responsibility to allies and what they would then have recognised as the order of the day, the *Pax Romana*. The speeches which Thucydides ascribes to his diplomats, envoys and statesmen in the Peloponnesian War are immediately and hauntingly recognisable to modern-day practitioners.

Whilst serving in Iraq in 2004 I was on a flight from Kuwait to London with a senior US official who had been summoned to DC. A distant bell rang from my reading decades earlier of the Athenian Assembly summoning their general Alcibiades back from the Sicilian Expedition. Somewhere deep in my studies I had been imbued with the idea that public life at home or overseas is a continuum. Unlike Alcibiades the US official didn't flee into the arms of the enemy.

For those whose business is both the promotion and defence of their own country and the understanding of that of other countries, Classics remains intellectually ideal. In a recent work the American author Robert Kaplan described international relations as essentially tragic.³ Human failings condemn most states to the cycle of hubris, peripeteia and nemesis. Classics both condemns and blesses its scholars, as it did famously Edward Gibbon, to the long and knowing view. In an age when the sensationalism of the event appears to be everything, that is another reason why classicists may continue to be useful in diplomacy, and to relish it.

Notes

- 1 Northcote, S., and Trevelyan, C. (1854). *Report on the Organisation of the Permanent Civil Service*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office. https://www.civilservant.org.uk/library/1854_Northcote_Trevelyan_Report.pdf.
- 2 See, for example Gill, C. (2024). Why Stoicism Today? *Ad Familiares, Classics for All*. <https://classicsforall.org.uk/reading-room/ad-familiares/why-stoicism-today>; Hemlock, J. (2020). *Stoicism: How to Use Stoic Philosophy to Find Inner Peace and Happiness*. Independently Published. See also, <https://engelsbergideas.com/notebook/the-queen-stoicism-and-the-defence-of-the-faith/>.
- 3 Kaplan, R. (2023). *The Tragic Mind: Fear, Fate, and the Burden of Power*. New Haven: Yale University Press. See also, <https://engelsbergideas.com/reviews/the-case-for-a-geopolitics-of-tragedy/>.

15 A Classicist in Office

Antiquity and Politics

Sir Michael Fallon KCB

Parliament has a long tradition of classical heritage. Latin was used as late as this century for dating official minutes. It was common for the great eighteenth- and nineteenth-century orators to decorate their speeches with classical allusions and quotations, though these were not quite as numerous as was subsequently believed (see my ‘Classics and Parliament’ *Journal of Classics Teaching*, August 2006).¹ Gladstone, whiling away his time on the front bench by translating hymns into Latin, was the exception rather than the rule.

Since Gladstone we have had four further classicist prime ministers: Campbell-Bannerman, Asquith, Macmillan and Johnson. Baldwin took time out as Prime Minister to deliver a Presidential Address to the Classical Association. Senior classicists in my time included Quintin Hailsham, Denis Healey, William Waldegrave, Peter Brooke, Michael Meacher and, of course, Enoch Powell.

Latin and the Curriculum

It was Enoch Powell in fact who was the first to respond when Classics came under attack from Kenneth Baker’s reforms of the mid-1980s. Under the Education Reform Act 1988 both curriculum and examinations, hitherto the proper responsibility of teachers in schools and universities, were in effect ‘nationalised’ for the first time. Few who heard it will have forgotten Powell’s lecture at Newcastle University in which he condemned the ‘Prussian’ constriction of teaching into just ten official subjects.

Latin was clearly vulnerable. Classicists lobbied hard, and I initiated a debate in Parliament (2 November 1987) which attracted substantial media interest. Ministers replied that the so-called ‘foundation subjects’ needed only to take 80% of the school week, leaving enough time for minority subjects such as Latin and Greek. But this wasn’t how the schools saw it: the foundation subjects were key to the new ‘attainment targets’ and therefore to the school league tables that followed. Overcrowded timetables and staff resources focussed on the National Curriculum, and the effect was immediate:

the number of GCSE entries in Latin dropped by a third, and the number continued to shrink in state schools.

Three years later Margaret Thatcher appointed me Schools Minister, and we tried to loosen the curriculum straitjacket that we ourselves had imposed. Both George Walden, my colleague responsible for Higher Education, and I continued to champion the case for Classics and to protect the vital PGCE places. Outside Parliament there was strong support from the Cambridge School Classics Project and later the important contribution of Classics for All in funding teachers in state schools. But the pressure on Classics continued to increase.

We therefore established the original All-Party Classics Group in 2005 as a bridge between Parliament and the wider Classics community. I initiated further debates on the future of Latin and Greek exams (12 July 2004) and the sudden proposal to scrap Ancient History A Level (25 April 2007). In the latter case, with a parade of togas, centurions and Boris Johnson to the fore (Figure 15.1), we succeeded in forcing a rethink; former A Level students still remind me today how they appreciated that campaign to 'save' Ancient History.

The Value of Ancient History

Who could have foreseen then that seven years later I would be thrust back into the epicentre of the ancient world? The bulk of my period as Defence Secretary (2014–17) was taken up with the coalition campaign against the Daesh in Iraq and Syria. For a classicist the scale and breadth of this responsibility was extraordinary: I was approving air strikes and operations right across Mesopotamia, time and again treading the ancient battlegrounds familiar to students of Alexander the Great and of the later interminable wars on Imperial Rome's eastern frontier.

I had only a little knowledge of modern Mesopotamia when I took office. My grandfather had sailed there from Bombay with the Indian Army's Force 'D' in late 1914; as assistant field officer to the 6th Poona Division, he was trapped in the siege of Kut-al-Amara (1915–16) and imprisoned in eastern Turkey for the rest of the war. His diaries, with many other memoirs, charted that first British campaign up the Tigris from Basra to General Townshend's defeat at Ctesiphon and his subsequent retreat down to Kut.

The two great rivers, Tigris and Euphrates, were central to our coalition operations against the Daesh in 2014–17. Both had been the focus of the earlier US-led intervention in 2003 and the subsequent allied occupation. In 2014 our task was very different: we decided not to put Western troops on the ground again to fight but to help reconstitute the battered Iraqi army which had been driven back by the Daesh almost to the gates of Baghdad. We had



Figure 15.1 Schoolgirls dress Boris Johnson and Michael Fallon in togas and wreaths.
Photographer David Sandison.

to rearm it, retrain it and then support it with air strikes as their troops pushed their way northwards up the Tigris and westwards along the Euphrates.

Huge Coalition training bases were set up, north, south and west of Baghdad, and the Iraqi and Peshmerga forces trained to tackle challenges many of which would have been familiar both to Alexander and those later Roman

generals: how to construct and fortify camps, to bridge the rivers and to advance against a deadly enemy. Air strikes were called in constantly in support of ground operations, again and again in locations with modern Iraqi names overlaying familiar classical sites.

None of this could be done without some collateral damage. The missiles and bombs that our aircraft deployed had become much more precise than the operations of 20 years earlier, reducing civilian casualties and unnecessary damage. But just as ancient Babylon had been partially damaged by being used as a helipad in 2003, so more complex operations such as the liberation of Mosul in 2017 inevitably involved the destruction of some historic buildings.

But I could never forget how the Daesh themselves were destroyers of culture, blowing up temples and monuments, often with their curators. The destruction of the tetrapylon and damage to the theatre of Palmyra, a UNESCO World Heritage site, served to remind us that we were fighting to help preserve both Syria's past and its future. There was another side to this: we learned early on that one of the principal sources of Daesh finance was the sale of looted works of art and antiquities on the black market. Through international collaboration we worked to restrict their access to the major art markets and later to help restore artefacts to their proper homes. One happier by-product of that intense and difficult campaign was a much greater awareness of the importance of protecting cultural heritage from the worst of war.

Today Iraq remains a fledgling democracy, and Syria is recovering from its long dictatorship and civil war. But some of the lessons that the West learned in the Middle East this century are not that different from those learned by the Romans in their endless campaigns to hold fast the Eastern frontier 2,000 years earlier. Technical superiority in numbers, equipment and training matter, of course, but in the end to achieve lasting control you have to have local troops with local commanders reclaiming and then holding their own territory.

Conclusion

A Classics degree does not dictate a particular career choice, though it was well said that it can help you to do without the money that it makes you unable to acquire. But it does offer a lasting carapace: my undergraduate texts still line my library, and 50 years on I regularly review books for *Classics for All*. Throughout my career the freshness and immediacy of the ancient world has never failed to surprise: after crossing the Rubicon, Caesar, like Putin today, was careful to label his progress a military operation, not a war.

In the Whips Office, when the House used to sit long into the night, Tacitus and Plutarch prepared me for the extraordinary plots swirling around the dying days of the Thatcher government. Climbing our own *cursus honorum* from PPS to Whip to Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Minister of State and

finally Cabinet Minister, Cicero offered plenty of reflection on political reputation and one's changing stock price. In charge of defence, sending men, ships and planes off on operations, Thucydides reminded me all over again of the politics of power and the nature of war.

So how did Classics help me navigate British politics?

First, it provided a solid sense of proportion and perspective. Few of even the most modern political problems are new: in the Athenian *agora* and the Roman *forum* politicians had to find ways of leveraging public consent for the decisions and power they exercised. Democrats and dictators alike cannot entirely escape the might of the majority. In his wonderful paper *The Confusion of Language in Political Thought* Hayek inveighed (as Aristotle had before him) against the word *demokratos* (the force of the mob): he preferred 'demarchy' – rule through established institutions.² We live today with the same debate on the proper constraints that apply, or should apply, to the democratic process.

Second, Classics counsels against a belief in what appear to be perfect solutions. Kenneth Dover taught me the virtue of deep humility in textual scholarship. Likewise, very few political dilemmas admit of an easy answer; the essayist H. L. Mencken famously warned of solutions to complex problems that turn out to be clear, simple – and wrong. How often, after a difficult Cabinet, I was reminded of Symmachus pleading with the emperor for the restoration of the (non-Christian) Altar of Victory to the Senate House: *uno itinere non potest pervenire at tam grande secretum*.

Third, though it is rather unfashionable now to sanctify the centre as common ground, the great poets also caution us against travelling through life as either victim or fanatic. Horace advises Licinius to avoid both the rocky shore and the uncertain deep further out (*Odes* 2.10). Rab Butler, Deputy Prime Minister, was proud to title his memoirs *The Art of the Possible*. Politics is, of course, a profession of almost permanent compromise: compromise with procedure and constraints, with your colleagues, with your conscience and certainly with your ambition.

Finally, of course, Classics is fun. When I served as Defence Secretary alongside Boris Johnson as Foreign Secretary, many a plane trip or official round table was enlivened by our exchanges of Latin texts. One of us could usually find the apposite quotation. Boris is a Horatian: when finally pressed to support his leadership bid I could only respond *omne capax movet urna nomen*.

Notes

- 1 Fallon, M. (2006). Classics and Parliament. *Journal of Classics Teaching*, 9, 7–8.
- 2 Hayek, F.A. (1968). *The Confusion of Language in Political Thought*. London: Institute of Economic Affairs.

16 Classics at the Department for Education

Andrew McCully CBE

A Minority Subject

It always felt special to study Classics. Both at school and university I was always conscious that I was in a tiny minority of students in the country who had the opportunity to keep open a window into the languages, people and culture that had formed the basis of so much of modern Western experience. My school, Birkenhead School in Merseyside, was a ‘direct grant’ school in that network of northern selective grammar schools. I was in the very last intake to benefit from the state-funded, direct grant status before it was abolished in 1976. The school cared passionately about its academic status and traditions and designed its curriculum and teaching to maximise the success of those with ambitions for Higher Education. Latin was a core curriculum subject for all, but expert teachers guaranteed an option of learning Greek to O Level, and despite the tiny numbers, the school protected the option of A Level teaching in Latin, Greek and Ancient History. And they were tiny numbers: I was one of only two students at Greek A Level, effectively experiencing personal tuition. The school discounted the poor economics of such numbers against the importance of maintaining that academic expertise. Classics was special.

The experience of Oxford University was one of even greater academic privilege. *Literae Humaniores* was the most senior subject in the traditional hierarchy at the university. There was no question that it was an important academic discipline with direct routes back to centuries of scholarship. But while the concentration of students with similar knowledge skills was much greater – and how exciting it was, after being used to the limited experience of learning in a class of two people, to discuss and share ideas with many more like-minded students – it was still a minority experience.

Image of Classics in the Civil Service

In bringing the knowledge and skills I had learned into my working life I have always been conscious that I am in a tiny minority with that education. A part of me has always relished that status of being special, exceptional, even odd

and a bit of a relic of a different age. There remains a myth that the civil service remains a bastion of classically educated generalists. Giving credence to that myth has sometimes helped give impetus to necessary and welcome reforms to diversify the intake of the civil service.¹ But in 37 years of the civil service, I never encountered any Latin-quoting embodiment of that myth beyond of course the exception of a Prime Minister who enjoyed the party piece of quoting from memory the opening pages of Homer's *Iliad*.

By being in that tiny minority I have been regularly challenged to justify how such an education could possibly have prepared me for a career of policy delivery in the civil service. As the scope of responsibilities and demands on civil service expertise has grown significantly in the twenty-first century, reforms in recruitment and development have focused on expanding professional routes such as financial, data, analysis, digital, commercial, operational delivery and human resource specialisms. That has been a necessary reform even though in the career path which I pursued, with senior responsibilities for policy development and delivery, I always felt extremely well equipped with skills developed through my academic education. Over time the training and CPD in the civil service and experience of leadership roles have of course counted for more; skills for the workplace are always best developed in the workplace. But I benefited right from the very earliest days of my career from my university Classics discipline. What was it about the Classics degree which was so powerful?

Fundamental Skills

Firstly, the degree was truly interdisciplinary: the study of language, literature, history and philosophy, requiring all the different critical skills of those different disciplines and all covered in depth over four years, rather than termly modules. Looking back, I find it hard to believe that I read all of Homer, Thucydides, Herodotus, a quarter of the main Greek tragedies and comedies, all of Virgil, most of Tacitus, Sallust, half of Cicero's letters as well as the key works of the Latin lyrical poets and much more. That is a breadth of reading in the original languages which few (if any) Classics courses can now command when most language is taught from scratch at university. In the current debate about the value of individual Humanities subjects at university I hear the advocates of English Literature, claiming that literature study develops the skills of interpretation, reasoning, persuasion, style and craft; of History, emphasising its framework for understanding how our world came to be and the skills to understand, interpret and critique evidence; of Philosophy, claiming the value of skills of logical thinking and flexibility of thought. And I agree with all those advocates, while recognising that my Classics degree tested and developed those skills, which I was then able to bring to my policy delivery roles in the civil service.

Second, it was a constant exercise in the marshalling of evidence, the development of an argument and the precise and clear expression of a case. All Humanities subjects require and develop those skills; all language degrees make the student acutely sensitive to the power and importance of the spoken and written word. But because we study Latin and Greek as past languages, not living ones, we bring to them an exceptional analysis of grammar, syntax, style and meaning. I understand how language works more through my classical disciplines than through the learning of English and modern foreign languages. So much of the work in offering the very best advice to ministers, and representing and communicating the work of the government, is about a fluency and precision in language and argument. The guidance that the department prepares for schools, the legislation presented to Parliament, which rules for how public money is spent and the communications to the public to publicise services are all central features of the tasks undertaken by civil servants. If the content, accuracy or clarity is inadequate, then the work of government suffers and the public gets a poor service. It is one of the most fundamental skills for work in government and the public space. Confucius understood:

If language is not correct, then what is said is not what is meant; if what is said is not what is meant, then what must be done remains undone; if this remains undone, morals and art will deteriorate; if justice goes astray, the people will stand about in helpless confusion. Hence there must be no arbitrariness in what is said. This matters above everything.²

Confucius may not be explicitly included in the Civil Service Code³ (perhaps he should be!), but those very same sentiments ran across all my careful study of ancient texts.

Third, was the intensity of the experience of study and examination. The discipline of my termly study involved two essays every week for four years, quite apart from the wider experience of lectures and classes. I confess it took some time to come to terms with this level of expectation. In my first year I probably failed in that schedule as much as succeeded, and the quality of output was of course variable. But developing my research and presentational skills across the four years meant that by the end of the course I could routinely research and bring the analysis of two new subjects every week into two essays each of some 3,000–5,000 words. Perhaps that experience is not unique to my Classics course, but my degree of comfort in producing advice and support to ministers in the fast pace of the political sphere was based on those secure learning skills. I could absorb information, understand and reproduce it in intense conditions. Sam Freedman, former education advisor to Michael Gove, says in his 2024 book *Failed State: Why Nothing Works and How We Fix It* that ‘the relentless, high speed nature of government communication in the social media age is destructive of effective policy making’. Perhaps more policy development in the civil service might be better if it were not created

under ‘essay crisis’ conditions, but I see no lessening of those expectations in the modern era of politics and 24-hour communications.

Are these skills that I brought to my civil service roles specific to classical learning? I would argue that all study of Humanities subjects offers similar benefits. However, those skills are not taught as generic subjects but are rather derived from the layers of knowledge that build the skills competence. Most leaders of education are now familiar with the strong theoretical model that explains why knowledge is at the heart of cognition, and we have strong empirical evidence about the success of curricular approaches that teach knowledge.⁴ My own particular knowledge route to the attribution of these skills was through classical subjects, and if I had my time in education again, I would want to follow exactly the same route.

Joy of Learning

Because ultimately what underpinned my choices was the pleasure in the subject. I loved reaching back into the minds and experience of our classical predecessors. The Romans and the Greeks continue to influence how we live, how we think, how our society is structured, and it was, and is, a constant excitement to understand that through detailed study. No artificial calculation in the future value of a particular subject should outweigh a decision of studying what perpetuates a love of learning, or at least that is what I tell pupils whenever I am in schools. The readiness to learn underpins all skills development.

Notes

- 1 An important and well-researched report by the Social Mobility Commission [Navigating the labyrinth: Socio-economic background and career progression within the civil service, May 2021] made valuable recommendations for improving recruitment and progression in the civil service. But what made the headlines on publication was a casual anecdote from an interviewee for the report, without any evidence or substantiation, that she found ‘everyone speaks Latin in the civil service’.
- 2 Waley, A. (2000). *The Analects of Confucius*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 161.
- 3 Cabinet Office. (n.d.). *The Civil Service Code*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-code/the-civil-service-code>.
- 4 My favourite account of the argument and the demolition of the myths that still influence some education models is by Christodoulou, D. (2014). *Seven Myths About Education*. London: Routledge.

17 A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Whitehall

Classics and the Road to Becoming a Policy Official

Rushabh Haria

*Almost all government policy is wrong . . . but frightfully well carried out!*¹

Fictional portrayals of government from ‘Yes Minister’ to ‘The Thick of It’ show accomplished classicists flawlessly leaping from the depths of scholarship to the heights of public service and politics, where they (sometimes) excel as public servants and political leaders.² My own journey, by contrast, has so far seen me stumbling from an education in Classics, to graduate studies in Classical Reception and Classical Archaeology, punctuated by jobs in technology start-ups and infrastructure project management, before landing in policy roles in the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and HM Treasury (HMT).

This chapter will demonstrate how my classical education has had a net positive impact on my career as a policy official. I will first analyse the alignment of Classics and policy skills before looking at how one particular part of my classical studies, experimental archaeology, has enhanced this skill set. To provide a balance, I also consider some of the limitations of this classically-informed approach to policy work.

What Do Policy Officials Do?

Reflecting on my role as a policy official, I consider my purpose to be three-fold. Firstly, it is to help a democratically elected government achieve a set of outcomes that they have promised to the electorate. Secondly, it is to help that government decide on a course of action (or policy recommendation) to achieve those outcomes over competing policy options, by providing government ministers with considered, high quality and impartial advice. Thirdly, it is to implement and manage the chosen policy recommendation, until it achieves the promised outcomes (or unless it fails to do so).³

Policy officials are often trained in core policy skills, which are concentrated around the UK government’s ‘Policy Profession Standards’.⁴ Some

acquire equivalent skills as part of university courses which focus on Public Policy and/or Politics. Policy skills are important, and the training I have received has helped me to fulfil my main purpose as a policy official. My ability to think about, deliver, and communicate policy has been enhanced beyond this set of taught skills.⁵ This has been through consciously and sub-consciously linking the knowledge, abstract concepts and tools that I learned and applied to the study of classical texts, philosophical arguments and material culture, and bringing them into the policy process.

The Relevance of Humanities to Basic Policy Skills

In a graduate job interview, a panel once quizzed me as to what possible relevance a Classics degree could have on working in local government. After listing what I thought were some mildly transferable skills from my degrees, I added that their boss, the council's chief executive, had found success whilst having studied Pure Mathematics. I was put on a reserve list for the job.

Even if I had not communicated the benefits of my classical background succinctly enough, I do believe that my background in Classics enabled me to reach the interview stage. With little to no policy training at the time, my experiences of writing essays on classical literature, philosophy and archaeology helped me succeed in preliminary assessments, where I had to sort through a mixture of qualitative and quantitative evidence and make a clear recommendation on a way forward under time pressure.

When I finally landed my first role in the Civil Service, there are three ways in which my classical training gave me an edge. Firstly, it made me comfortable with making arguments in the face of ambiguity and gaps in evidence. In my study of the ancient world, I regularly encountered this when writing essays about Archaic Greece or the Hellenistic Near East, where primary written evidence was very limited. I was able to transfer the skill of making confident arguments in the face of ambiguity to writing reports at DHSC about emerging parliamentary health policy interests, some of which were technical and unfamiliar. I drew on a range of data including transcripts of parliamentary speeches, MPs' tweets and snapshot NHS statistics.

Secondly, having read Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* and the historiographic analysis of it, I was familiar with this investigative approach to history, in search of the *aitia* or causes of political events. At HM Treasury, for example, I adopted a similar approach to two historical deep dives. In the first, I created a database of historical government efficiency drive initiatives from the mid-twentieth-century onwards, using official publications, historic spending reviews and contemporary audit data to judge the effectiveness of prior efficiency drives and productivity targets across central government. This research was used to inform policy decisions around the setting of productivity targets across central government. In the second,

I examined the role of the Treasury in Britain's economic and political relationship with the European Union (EU) between 1992 and 2007. The output of this research is now available to any Treasury official, especially those with a role in managing future UK-EU relations.⁶

Thirdly, I benefited greatly from studying (ancient and modern) philosophy modules. Learning, understanding and applying formal logic was game-changing for me, as it simultaneously trained me to deconstruct, analyse and provide counter-arguments, be it the arguments of ancient philosophers, modern interpretations of their work or contemporary philosophical questions. Of particular help was the process of attempting to identify the logic of arguments written in other languages (such as Lucretius in Latin and Plato in Greek), which has transferred across to quickly identifying the logic of academic and technical papers. It also provided me with the structure necessary to argue my own positions, which has proven to be invaluable in workplace contexts beyond philosophy and outside academia.

These skills and experiences are not directly 'teachable' but they do tangibly enhance some of the 'core' skills required to be a policy professional. While it could be argued that other Humanities disciplines, such as Modern Languages, English Literature or History could provide a similar transfer of skills into policy-making, they would not, in my view, have provided the same combination of skills and experience.

But the core skills necessary to work in policy are now evolving, and policy officials now need to account for, and work with, a wider variety of professions and disciplines. They also need to harness emerging technology in their day-to-day work. My forays into experimental archaeology, while less obviously connected to policy, have helped me to engage with this new landscape.

Classical Archaeology as Tool for Confronting the New

At another interview for a local government job, I was once asked how I had 'innovatively made use of technology to solve a problem'. I decided to describe my use of a 3D printed replica to explain the making of a third-millennium BCE cycladic *askos* (duck vase), as part of a postgraduate module on Ancient Greek and Roman Craft Production.⁷ This was, at the time, a relatively new approach in Classical Archaeology and was itself the subject of scholarly study.⁸ This time I received a straight rejection from the job. The interview panel might have appreciated my enthusiasm for using modern technology to study antiquated objects, but understandably they did not see how this particular application of technology could transfer to delivering local services.

My comfort around using technologies such as 3D printing and digital scanning in otherwise traditional subjects almost certainly transferred across to my policy roles, where I have eagerly yet cautiously used AI LLMs (artificial intelligence large-language models) for generating ideas and used coding tools to

automate data collection. But beyond this general comfort with the new, my studies in experimental archaeology have helped me in two related but distinct ways: firstly, in helping structure my own thinking and communication in novel policy areas and, secondly, in providing me with a general understanding of breaking down products and processes in order to conceptualise and manage delivery.

As a graduate student, I undertook research on the emergence of elaborate, natural-looking marble folds on the Parthenon sculptures, which I attributed not to new and unexplained technologies,⁹ but to individual ‘problem-solving’ by artists driven by incentives to meet the market demand of changing tastes. Building on the work of sociologists and anthropologists Richard Sennett,¹⁰ Michael Polanyi¹¹ and Tim Ingold,¹² and the experiential accounts of contemporary craft practitioners,¹³ I argued that, when confronted with the ‘new’, practitioners followed a process of

- setting out the problem
- reorganising their existing knowledge
- ransacking their memory for similar practical problems encountered previously
- accordingly adjusting their approach
- incorporating these insights into their practice going forward.

How, then, is this relevant to policy? Firstly, thinking about a novel policy area can be unsettling because of the average official’s initial lack of technical and subject-specific knowledge, their unfamiliarity with the wider policy contexts and stakeholders and the pressure on them to compile and submit authoritative advice in a short space of time. But like the Greek craft practitioner, I found myself pragmatically breaking the policy area (in this case, AI adoption in the public sector) into constituent strands of technology, finance and workforce response. I then drew upon my existing knowledge, including my limited technical understanding of AI, and my management of previous encounters with other emerging technologies (such as blockchain technology and 3D printing). I then used this to plan my engagements with stakeholders and structure my policy advice. This was not so much a formulaic process as a way of structuring individual knowledge and experience, to produce something new in the face of challenge and uncertainty, much like the ancient craft practitioner.

So far, my examples have focussed on how studying Classics has had an impact on my practice in dealing with the strategic and democratic elements of policy. Policies would never come to fruition, however, if it were not for delivery, a competency that has now begun to receive more attention as a competency for policy officials. Prior to working in policy, I worked as a project manager, where I was introduced to the process of breaking individual projects and their end-products into ‘work-packages’ and identifying ‘dependencies’ between them and identifying a project’s ‘critical path’. But

there is a difference in breaking down physical infrastructure products (such as a bridge) into its component parts and reducing a policy objective into a set of policy outcomes, and then into a series of individual human processes and actions.

In order to bridge this gap, one of the concepts that proved especially useful in thinking about policy delivery was 'Chaîne Opératoire'.¹⁴ Originally used in anthropology to analyse the different stages of an object's production, and the tools involved in it, it was another approach that was introduced to me as part of my postgraduate module on ancient craft production. I applied this approach to hypothesise how craft products such as Roman glass bottles and, of course, ceramics like the *askos* (duck vase) might have been created, mapping this out in a flowchart. Likewise, I found this very systematic method instructive in helping me to break down and visualise the technical delivery of a child poverty alleviation policy initiative and a digital transformation strategy I was working on as part of my policy training modules.

The delivery of these policy and strategy initiatives could, of course, have been visualised in any number of other ways, I believe that using this approach in particular helped me to detach myself from the technical details of the policy areas (similarly to how I detached myself from the art-historical provenance and aesthetic pleasure of objects when applying Chaîne Opératoire) and focus on the human agency of both the policy process, as well as those making their way through the process I had designed. I was able to actively think through the different stages that would lead to the policy's products, the human and financial resources required to deliver the policy, the obstacles that might alleviate them, the various specialists and stakeholders to contact in advance and, finally, beyond the policy's actual implementation into a product, how a user might navigate it. There are, of course, professionals with specialist disciplines, such as accountants, economists, communications strategists and user researchers, whose entire job is to deal with these specific stages of the policy process. However, identifying these individuals in advance and planning when to contact them enables efficient policy delivery and implementation, especially when navigating complexity, large organisations and tight legislative deadlines. Accountability for doing so often lies with a policy lead or manager.

Conclusion

This account is neither intended to be a post-hoc justification of the importance of classical studies in my work as a policy official, nor is it an account that looks at the role of Classics in isolation. It does, however, show some ways in which skills transferred from Classics and Classical Archaeology could supplement the core requirements of a policy official, help them to structure their thinking around policy delivery and even prepare them to confront new, unfamiliar and innovative policy topics. In my own case, none of the skills that I deployed were exclusively related to classical study, be it the study of

logic, the application of problem solving, or the use of *Chaine Operatoire*, and it is perfectly plausible that non classicists could have used these approaches. But it is precisely the capacity classical scholars have to bring together these different approaches, and apply them to the study of the ancient world, that makes classical studies, to me, stand out as a testing yet informative training ground for policy professionals.

It is sometimes claimed that policy officials should study Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) in order to prepare them optimally for life as a civil servant. Having worked in HM Treasury, it is certainly the case that familiarity with Economics and Finance is an advantage. But those skills in isolation, even in departments concerned primarily with finance, cannot put together the well-considered policy advice that is required to address some of the most challenging problems in government.

Looking to the future, classicists should feel optimistic about their chances of professional success and personal fulfilment in a policy career. Many of the skills cultivated in a Classics degree are directly relevant to policymaking. And those for which Classics is not good preparation? Economic modelling, just like Greek verbs, can be learned, and every good policy official is constantly learning.

Notes

- 1 Said by Sir Humphrey Appleby in *Yes Minister* (1982) BBC Two Television, 16 December 1982.
- 2 Examples include Boris Johnson and Denis Healey in the world of Politics, and among officials; former Cabinet Secretary Sir Robin Butler and former GCHQ Director Robert Hannigan. I am also fortunate to have been taught Classics by former officials, and to have worked both for and alongside accomplished classicists across all of my roles to date.
- 3 See Dye, T.R. (1972). *Understanding Public Policy*. Prentice-Hall, for a basic definition of public policy flowing from the assertion that it is ‘anything a government chooses to do or not to do’.
- 4 Policy Profession Standards. Accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/policy-profession-standards> on 18 September 2025.
- 5 I find it useful to think about core policy skills as what Protagoras calls ‘ἡ πολιτικὴ τέχνη’ (he), translated as ‘political skill’ or ‘art’ in Plato *Protagoras* 319a.
- 6 See Beck, P.J. (2006). *Using History, Making British Policy: The Treasury and the Foreign Office, 1950–76*. Palgrave Macmillan, for how HM Treasury and the Foreign Office previously had their own history departments and used historical research to inform policy.
- 7 The object in question was ‘British Museum 1865,1214.39’. See https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1865-1214-39.
- 8 See Wootton, W. (2021). On the Value of Making and Learning. In H. Hochscheid and B. Russell (eds.) *The Value of Making: Theory and Practice in Ancient Craft Production*. Brepolis, 235–247.

- 9 Stewart, A. (1990). *Greek Sculpture: An Exploration*. London: Yale University Press, 39. The hypothetical technique in question that I challenged the existence of was the 'running drill'.
- 10 See Sennett, R. (2008) *The Craftsman*. London. 279 on the use of intuition.
- 11 Polanyi, M. (1957). Problem Solving. *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 8(30), 90.
- 12 See Ingold, T. (2013) *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*. London. 110 on the concept of "tacit knowing" in craft.
- 13 Gates, D. (2017). From 'In Our Houses' to the 'Tool at Hand': Breaching Normal Procedural Conditions in Studio Furniture Making. In T.H.J. Marchand (ed.) *Craftwork as Problem Solving: Ethnographic Studies of Design and Making*. Routledge, 115–132.
- 14 Sellet, F. (1993). Chaîne Opératoire: The Concept and Its Applications. *Lithic Technology*, 18(1), 106–112.

18 Classics

An Anchor for Life in Politics

Charlotte Leslie

Introduction

I was the Conservative MP for Bristol North West from 2010 to 2017. During that time, I sat on the Education Select Committee (2010–13), the Health Select Committee (2013–15) and was Chair of both the All-Party Parliamentary Groups for Boxing (2011–17) and Saudi Arabia from 2015 to 2017. (Back then, boxing and Saudi Arabia was not an intuitive combination of interests.)

Today, I run The Conservative Middle East Council (CMEC) – an organisation of more than 40 years standing. CMEC aims to rise above the soap-operas of democratic politics to help Conservative parliamentarians and others understand the MENA region better, building relationships that last decades, not days – a timescale that aligns better with that of the Middle East region (and perhaps also echoes the time-perspectives of a classicist).

First Love

My first interaction with Classics came when I started learning Latin, under the patient eye of Mrs Hutton at Badminton School, as a naughty 10-year-old with insurrectionist instincts. From the very first lesson, I was determined to hate it. I was convinced Latin was going to be everything I hated: claustrophobic and reeking of establishment expectation. So imagine my horror as I found not only was I very good at it but actually enjoyed it. It wasn't until I was reading Catullus 64 in Millfield School Library for A Levels under the tutelage of the wonderful Mrs Hopkins that I had the physical sensation of falling in love with Latin. There was only one thing for it, to indulge this newfound passion with a full-on four-year undergraduate degree at Oxford. I was lucky to be accepted into Balliol College, learning Ancient Greek on arrival (after a couple of summers of Bryanston Greek Summer school, where my academic credentials wavered and I spent the time wishing I was in Cornwall, surfing).

Latin Literature had ensnared me first, and I was soon in love with Greek, thanks to my first forays into the *Iliad*. Just as learning Modern Languages

gives an insight into an entire culture, history and way of thinking, reading an ancient author in the original gives intimacy with a person long-dead, from an era long-buried, across the melted years. I continue to find the time-travel of reading ancient authors, in the original, a source of awe and wonder.

Out of Eden

This luxurious four-year romance of study was always doomed to end. I did not sail off into the upper echelons of the world ‘in the tranquil consciousness of effortless superiority’, the college motto. It was rather the confused flappings and undignified descent of a fledged bird.

As my time at Balliol drew to a close in the summer of 2001, the intimidating question of ‘The Future’ became less easy to evade. I had no idea what I wanted to do. I knew I did not want to be a lawyer, or a banker, or a management consultant (whatever that was). I knew I got angry about ‘Things’ and wanted to ‘Change Them’. But there was no job description for that, and I had stayed very clear of what then seemed to me the awfulness of student politics and the Oxford Union.

So decisively, I postponed the decision. I was to do a masters at Balliol, starting in the autumn of 2001.

In the interim, I had been awarded a college scholarship to travel around the United States, before starting my masters. The scholarship was for students who had never been to the USA before, and I was to write a thesis on the grand-sounding subject of ‘The Transmission of Classical Democracy to Today’s Great Empire’. It never quite got completed.

I was unsettled by the America I found, in a way I still struggle to articulate. On my birthday on 11 August 2001, I stood at the top of the twin towers with a friend and we peered over the big rail at the tiny ribbons of road below. Exactly a month later, I was in Chicago, watching a human tragedy unfold. I was very distant from 9/11, but, as for so many others, it changed my life.

I had a visceral fear that the USA would lash out in pain and do something terrible, and I suddenly knew that I could not justify indulging myself in an ivory tower of academia. I made three calls that day. One to my family to say I was okay, one to my airline to get me home and one to Balliol to say I would not be starting that masters.

I knew what I wasn’t going to do. But I had no idea what I *was* going to do: I saw Media and Politics as the two ways through which I could make a difference. Politics seemed full of barking men and silly rules. Media seemed better. Like many women of my generation, I decided to become Kate Adie and do (in my mind slightly ill-defined) Important International Things. I made it to the BBC, but I did not become Kate Adie. In 2003, as the UK joined the USA in sending troops into Iraq, I was working in entertainment TV, putting contestants into the studio gameshow *The Weakest Link*.

So when a political leaflet dropped through my door that summer, I didn't immediately throw it away. I went along to a political meeting.

Things moved fast after that. In 2005 I became a researcher in the thinktank Policy Exchange and in 2006 was asked to work for then shadow Education Secretary David Willetts MP and, later that same year, somewhat to my surprise, was selected to contest a winnable seat (the first I applied for) – Bristol North West. After four years of exhausting campaigning, I was elected in May 2010, aged 31.

My journey from Classics to Politics, via Media, may have been fast, but it was not smooth. I took an unglamorous route through small production companies in industrial estates, tea-making and catastrophic attempts at providing secretarial support. To my bewilderment and dismay, it turned out that being good at translating Latin elegy is not always a tremendous help in managing the soul-crushingly mundane administrative requirements of junior office roles.

At that point, loving Classics felt like a disability at work. And I felt a failure. And that in itself is an experience that has been invaluable, especially in politics, where so much of one's work is helping those with a similar sense of hopelessness to that which I felt then.

Classics was an emotional support, a friend in hard times, but it was not until I was elected that I felt my Classics study become actually useful.

Classics in Public Policy

One of the most satisfying roles of an MP is to sit on a select committee. Party-tribalism gets put aside, leaving us free to focus on the issues, rather than the usual shrill point-scoring that constitutes much of what goes on in the chamber. I concentrated on working with NHS whistle-blowers. I was angry at the number and scale of cover-ups in the NHS, the fatalities this inevitably caused and the brutal treatment of whistle-blowers who dared speak out.

Select Committees function on questioning witnesses – often very senior figures. Questioning witnesses forensically and effectively was important. I would not claim that I demonstrated any particular skill in this, but I was conscious that my few years studying Plato helped structure my questions: encouraging witnesses to clarify what they meant, picking up inconsistencies.

But Classics gives far more than just skills. It provides an outlook on life, beyond the pixilated moment, which is perhaps more valuable now than ever. Classical history gives us a guide to civilisations, empires and their fall.

Classical literature gives a guide to the human condition and its flaws, articulated so searingly in the great tragedies.

Our ancient friends lend us perspective: few things are new; history and people move in cycles; there has been no age that has not thought of itself as

‘modern and progressive’ and convinced it will not repeat the mistakes of the past – and very few that do not repeat the mistakes of the past.

Classics is an antidote to the strobe-light headlines, and dopamine-fuelled social media scrolling, that comprises our news consumption and drives behaviour. My campaigning and elected period spanned from 2006 (the beginnings of Facebook) to 2017 and a changed social media landscape. I saw this exponential, digital world change my constituents – and undoubtedly, me. Attention spans became shorter. Opinions became identities, and so adrenaline fight-or-flight reaction to argument replaced calm, intellectually curious discussion.

The rigours of Greek dialectic, the piercing self-knowledge of the tragedians and the deep, sad wisdom of Homer’s *Iliad* provide an anchor, helping promote calmer, better-considered decisions in a frenzied digital world.

Tenebrae

I know I am not alone in acknowledging that Classics has turned me into a slight pedant. Translation and prose composition demand disciplined clarity. Grammar and meaning matter. Having spent most of my life indulging in great literature, I found policy pamphlets hard to read. Just like this essay, the standard of prose fell short of literary genius. I found myself repeatedly muttering to the pamphlet in my hands ‘What do you mean by this?’ and making energetic annotations to drive home the point.

But there is another advantage that having studied Classics bestows in the public policy world, which we must face. An advantage of which I myself have been a beneficiary – and one that absolutely should not exist.

There are superb campaigns to ‘Take the “class” out of Classics’ for a reason. State schools generally do not offer Classics. Private schools, which cost more money, often do. Therefore, studying Latin and Greek at school, and being encouraged to study Classics at university, has become synonymous with a certain privilege and background. And in certain circles, that means immediate entry to the unspoken ‘club’. If someone wants to ensure that everyone around them knows they are very posh, very clever indeed and definitely superior to you, they will often use excessive and gratuitous Latin to make the point.

I cannot list the times when the response to where I went to university and what I studied caused surprise and favourably changed perceptions of who I am, sometimes dramatically. In many ways, this is natural. Fellow classicists find a mutual interest, and shared experiences always contribute to social bonding. This would not be an issue if access to studying Classics were open to all. But it is not. But then perhaps it is that very unjustifiable exclusivity of this wonderful subject that has led it to be a passport into a certain kind of setting, including some circles in politics.

A Classicist's Future in Public Policy

But being on the right side of snobbery is no reason to study a subject. It is unlikely to make you happy. Studying something you have a *need* to do because it is your passion is what makes fulfilling, successful careers, and that authentic passion marks candidates out from the crowd, in a competitive field.

And then if you are in the field of public policy, you will want to make a difference. Listen to the classical wisdom of the Delphic Oracle: know yourself. Know who you are, your strengths, and to which area they are best suited. Policy analysts, the 'wonks' and civil service experts, with a relentless eye for detail and little desire to be famous, generally do not have the same skill sets and personality types (appetite for risk, being centre stage, communicating) as elected politicians.

Know yourself. But don't overthink things. Once you have worked out where you can add value, trust the abilities you've honed through studying Classics. You can't see them in physical form, but they are there.

But if you come from a purely analytical background, be prepared for the grubbier world of elected politics. You may have grand plans for your immaculately footnoted paper. But in the by-design popularity-seeking world of elected politics (we can debate the classical stems '*demos*' and '*kratos*' another time), narrative often informs research, not vice versa. That is not to say research is futile. It is necessary but not sufficient.

My observation of politics is that ultimately it is only, ever, *all* about people. So if you want to influence anything, find the right person to work with you, be your advocate for change, someone who understands and is passionate about why your research matters. And when you pitch your research, remember that ultimately this is about people and their lives. Colour-in your theory, make it live. The success of even the best-researched policy rests on personal relationships, shared aims and building the team to make it happen. If you can show what your research will mean to real people, in real life, you will have a better chance of having a significant impact.

Thank you – Past and Future

Finally, I would like to thank my teachers, Mrs Hutton, Mrs Evans, Mrs Hopkins, Prof Oliver Lyne, Prof Jasper Griffin and Kinch Hoekstra, for the joy of studying Classics, and my parents for giving me that opportunity in the first place. I am conscious, almost daily, of all the potential classicists out there, more brilliant than I ever was, who, right now, are not having the opportunity a 10-year-old me was given. I am conscious of more I could have done as an MP to change that, and I am also conscious of all the brilliant classicists out there who are working so hard to bring the opportunity to study Latin and Greek to everyone, regardless of background.

We truly need great public policymakers to achieve this – and perhaps that is you, reading this book, right now.

19 The Civil Service Classics Network

What Next for Classics and Public Policy?

Yuki Tsujino

When I first joined the civil service in late 2022, I became involved with the Civil Service Languages Network (CSLN) through its Japanese language group, reflecting my background and fluency in Japanese. At that time, I learned that CSLN's Central Committee was hoping to establish a Classics network alongside their modern language groups. Previous attempts had stalled due to the fundamental differences between classical and modern languages, leaving Classics enthusiasts across government departments without a dedicated community.

In May 2023, I volunteered along with four other like-minded civil servants to form a committee that would establish the Civil Service Classics Network (Classics Network) as a distinctive component within CSLN's framework. Unlike other language networks focused on contemporary communication and cultural exchange, our mission required us to articulate how ancient languages and civilisations could contribute meaningfully to modern governance and the professional development of civil servants. This chapter charts our journey from those early committee meetings to our current position as an active, growing group which connects over 400 civil servants across different government departments, facilitates knowledge exchange between government and academia, and advocates for the enduring relevance of Classics in contemporary government. Through this narrative of building a community that bridges ancient wisdom and modern governance, I hope to illustrate the ongoing value of classical studies in public service. This chapter will first explore the network's inception, then discuss our key activities and achievements and end with our plans for the future.

From Foundation to Future: Building and Evolving the Civil Service Classics Network

The founding members of the Classics Network Committee came from a wide range of educational and professional disciplines. Whilst there were members of the committee who had studied Classics at university, we had members

such as myself who had originally come from other educational backgrounds such as Computing and Renaissance Studies. There was also a diverse range of job roles represented within the committee, from policy and portfolio management to cyber security, from departments ranging from Cabinet Office to Scottish Government. The membership of the committee demonstrates the wide appeal of Classics and Ancient History and the versatility of these subjects within government.

As an incipient network, our initial meetings focused on two fundamental challenges: to develop processes for the running of the committee and to establish a programme of activities that meets the unique circumstances of classical languages. I was able to draw upon my experience as a brand manager in the private sector to propose a quasi-agile system which drew upon agile practices whilst also respecting the limited time committee members could contribute on top of their day jobs. We agreed on the regularity and structure of meetings and how we would manage tasks.

Once we had set in place the core mechanisms of the committee, we turned our attention to the details of the Classics Network. We were confronted with the same obstacle previous attempts of establishing a Classics Network had faced: overcoming the fundamental differences between ancient languages and modern languages, and developing a sustainable and engaging programme for members. The principal goal of studying a modern language is usually to nurture fluency in both written and verbal communications. This is in contrast to studying an ancient language, wherein the primary goal is to develop a sufficient level of familiarity to read ancient texts. Whilst textbooks on Latin and Greek broadly cover pronunciation, it is rare for a course to place much importance on spoken communication and rarer still for a course to include practising conversation.

We were able to draw upon certain activities of other networks for inspiration such as producing a monthly newsletter, and whilst it was still too early to do so at the time of establishing the network, in-person social events were also inspired by the activities of other networks. The biggest challenge, however, was developing a routine monthly activity which would serve as the main activity to facilitate engagement with and between members of the network. The main activity of many other language networks was hosting monthly language conversations, wherein members of the network gather to speak the language, with these conversations often being divided into groups ranging from beginner to advanced learners. With spoken communication not being a primary focus of classical language learning, we agreed that it was necessary for us to explore alternative approaches for regular engagement that would foster community and facilitate learning. An additional consideration that we had identified was that many of our network members had not had the opportunity to learn a classical language and those that had may have not used their knowledge in many years (for most, since university). This reality prompted us to scope activities that

would accommodate various levels of familiarity with classical languages whilst still providing intellectual engagement for everyone, regardless of their prior exposure to Latin or Greek.

We eventually agreed on five main activities: a monthly newsletter, a monthly cultural and historical forum, a quarterly guest speaker, a quarterly book club and periodic in-person social events. The cultural and historical forum was our answer to the monthly language conversations of other networks. Rather than focus on classical languages, we opted for a format wherein a member of the committee would give a brief presentation about a specific topic, for instance Graeco-Roman mythology, which was then followed by a group discussion. We decided on this format as we believed it would make our main activity accessible to all members of the network, regardless of their familiarity with the topic, as the presentation served to provide the foundational knowledge whilst the discussion encouraged active engagement. Moreover, as we are a network that covers the whole of the UK Civil Service, we agreed to make our activities predominantly online, with the in-person social events as the exception.

Once the committee had decided on the network's main activities, we hosted a launch event in May 2023 to outline our intentions for the Classics Network, to provide our membership with an opportunity to feed back on our plans, and to increase awareness that there was now a fully functional Classics Network. This event was well attended, received positive feedback and marked a formal start to the Classics Network.

Today, the programme of activities we had initially developed at the outset remains the backbone of our network. Our membership has more than doubled to over 400 and attendance at our events has also seen an increase of over fivefold. We have made refinements in our programme, with in-person social events now being held twice a year. Moreover, we have been given incredible support from the Classics community, and this has enabled us to hold guest speaker talks every month as opposed to quarterly, a testament to the passion and collaborative spirit that exists within the Classics community. This has enabled us to feature guest speaker talks as our main activity whilst the cultural and historical forums now serve as a secondary event that we host during the months we are not hosting a guest speaker. We have had the pleasure of hosting numerous renowned speakers from across the world on topics such as democracy, Classics in education and ancient diplomacy, topics which hold great relevance to the work of the Civil Service.

The Classics Network Committee also remains a highly committed and passionate group of five members, three of whom founded the network and two who joined following the network's launch. The committee continues to host members with a diverse range of educational and professional backgrounds, reflecting the diversity of the committee which first launched the network.

One achievement of which we are particularly proud as a network was our contribution to supporting the establishment of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Classics. We had the pleasure of informing the initial scoping and preparations by providing advice on parliamentary guidelines and requirements surrounding APPGs, and we have had the great honour of being represented at meetings of the APPG through a member of the committee.

The Classics Network Committee has also had the pleasure of taking part in events relating to Classics. We attended an event on the preservation and cataloguing of classical collections held at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, which had been facilitated by the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies and Classical Collections Network. We were also invited to the launch of the Durham Centre for Classics Education Research and EngagementS (CERES) at the University of Durham, an interdisciplinary centre facilitating important research on the learning and teaching of classical languages and ancient civilisations.

We hope to continue these activities as the Classics Network evolves into the future, and now that we have a successful operational framework in place, we have started to explore avenues for how we can become more involved in the wider Classics community.

In the spring of 2025, we had the privilege of holding a civil service careers talk at the University of Cambridge's Faculty for Classics. This talk, which was attended by undergraduates studying either Classics or other Humanities subjects, provided us with the opportunity to not only inform students about the Civil Service but also invite serving civil servants to discuss how the skills they had acquired studying Classics have been applied to their work as a civil servant. In the Spring of 2026 we delivered training for students at Durham. We hope to expand this engagement with academic institutions to host at least two career talks a year at various universities across the UK.

We are also planning to host beginner language courses to our members, which will be led by a member of the committee. We intend to run our first language course for Ancient Greek in late 2025 and a second language course for Latin in early 2026. These courses will be open to serving civil servants and free to attend. We hope to incorporate these courses into our programme of activities, and depending on uptake, we may consider expanding these courses to intermediate level and beyond.

In addition to our planned activities, the Classics Network Committee has also been considering other avenues of engagement. One suggestion we have had is providing support for aspiring civil servants studying Classics, whether that be through the Fast Stream programme or by applying directly for a position. We also hope to support the Classics community in the conducting of relevant research, and we hope our contribution to this incredibly important work on public policy marks the first of many. The Classics Network Committee is always looking for new opportunities to become further involved in Classics, and these are just a few of our aspirations for the future.

We are thankful for the support we have received from both our own members and the wider Classics community, to whom we owe the success of our network. The passion, dedication and openness of the Classics community is evident in the community's willingness to support each other. It is our hope that, as the wider Classics community has supported us, we are able to give back by better connecting Classics, Education and Public Policy.

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