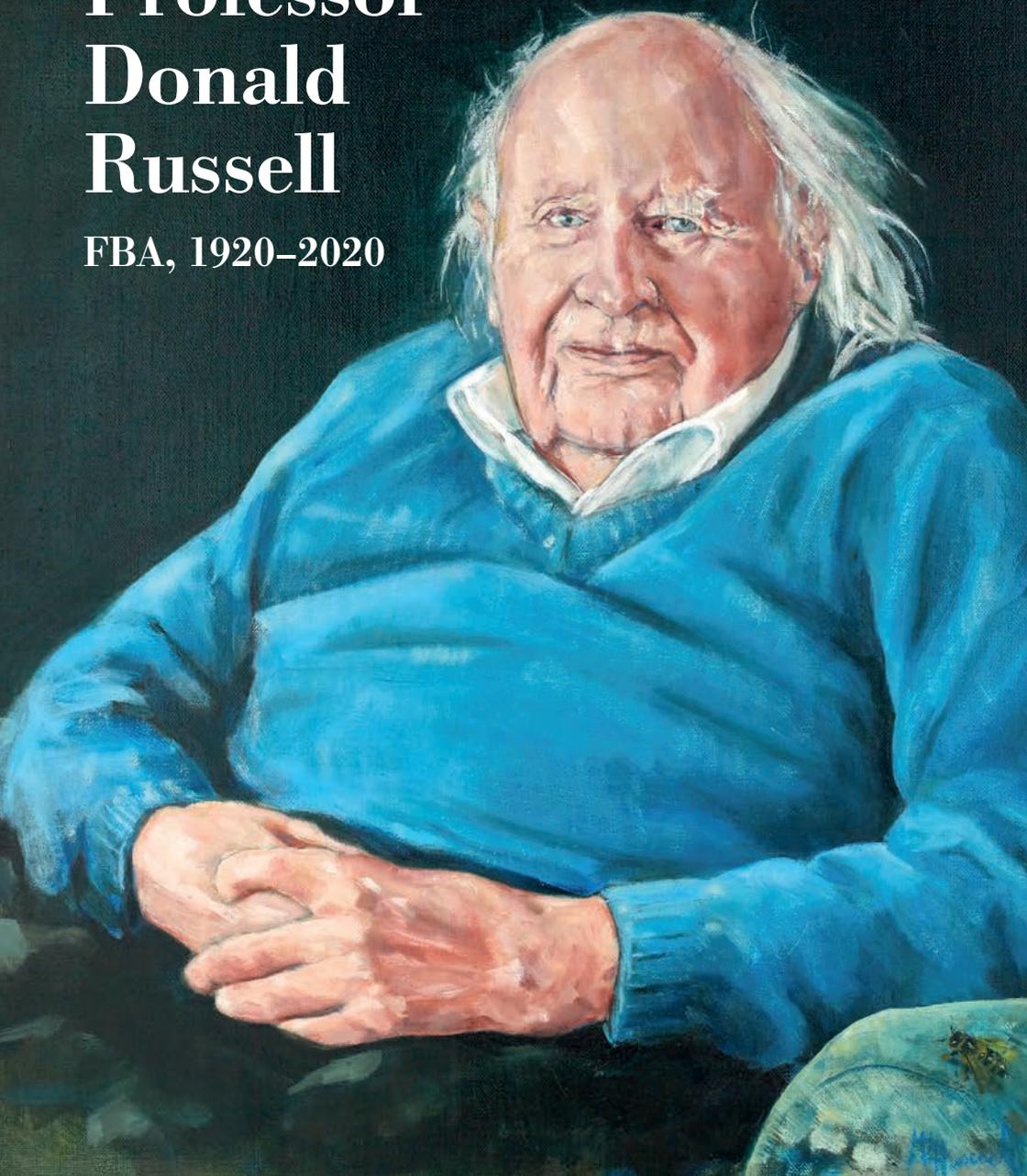


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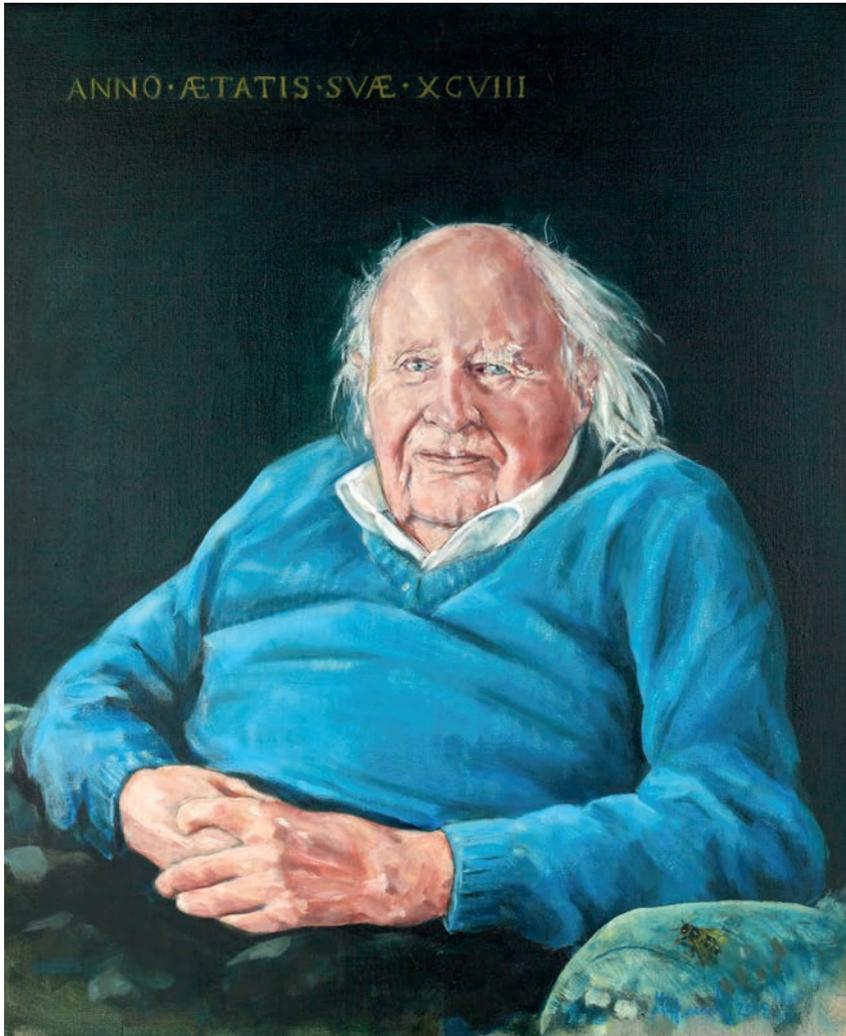
Memories of

Professor
Donald
Russell

FBA, 1920–2020



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In Donald Russell's seventy-two years at St John's, the longest tenure of any Tutorial Fellow in College's history, and in his even longer association with Oxford Classics, since coming up to Balliol to read for Classics Mods in 1939, he was a mentor, a friend, an inspiration, indeed a defining influence for many generations of people passing through this place or coming into contact with him elsewhere in the world. The combination of gentleness and exacting standards, profound modesty and delighted mischief at doing so many things much better than the rest of us, genuine interest in people he knew and perennial enjoyment of the subject matter of Classics proved irresistible to those who got to know him in the last months of his life as much as to those who got to know him when he just got back to Oxford from Bletchley.

When Donald died just before the Covid-19 pandemic hit Britain, his funeral was the last public event to which most people who attended it could go. As the pandemic continued, the memorial, originally planned for the autumn of 2020, was being delayed indefinitely, it seemed at the time, and the next best thing was to set up a web page in Donald's memory and invite those who have known him to contribute their memories, to be put online and later published on paper when it would become possible to hold a memorial service. The response was immense and immediate, with contributions by a distinctly vast range of people whom Donald had inspired: from former students of 1949 to 2015 matriculation years, from his academic collaborators, from people whose life he had influenced as different as our former Domestic Administrator and a Jesuit expert on Plutarch's religion.

The portrait of Donald Russell reproduced on the front cover was painted by Mark Hancock (1963–2021) in 2018. It was commissioned by more than 120 of Donald Russell's colleagues, friends and pupils, and donated to St John's College. It is on display in the Ioannou Centre for Classical and Byzantine Studies on permanent loan to the Faculty of Classics.

The booklet that you hold mostly consists of the collection of the contributions sent in the spring of 2020 in the immediate aftermath of Donald's passing, with some minimal later editing. A few contributions were added later by people who had missed the original call. It complements the more formal eulogies, such as Nicholas Purcell's moving funeral address, the magnificent British Academy memoir by Chris Pelling and Michael Winterbottom, and the tributes at the memorial. It is a sombre necessity to note that some of the contributors have themselves now joined that conversation with 'Orpheus and Musaeus and Hesiod and Homer' of which Socrates speaks in Plato's *Apology*: Donald's great friend John Robson, David Faulkner, Frederick Brenk. We remember them as we remember Donald.

In his British Academy memoir of his own Balliol tutor Donald Allan, Donald Russell wrote: 'Donald would very properly be shocked to have the last words of Plato's *Phaedo* applied to him. But they are not inappropriate. He is held by his friends in very great affection and respect; and he knew a great deal about what ἀγαθός and φρόνιμος and δίκαιος mean, in life as well as in the dictionary'. As Donald Russell's friends and disciples know, these words can be applied to himself without changing anything. The memories collected here provide ample illustration of that.

Georgy Kantor

Sir Michael Scholar (President, 2001–12, and Honorary Fellow)

I first met Donald when he invited Angela and me to dinner in his flat, shortly after I became President. He was already an eighty-year old and we were most impressed by the meal he produced and himself served to us and two other guests. I was surprised to learn from him how many of my erstwhile colleagues in Whitehall, some of them highly distinguished, had been taught by him. As the years went by, he and I became good friends. I loved talking to him about literature, Latin, Greek, French and English. So did Angela, to whom he gave a number of his late wife's French books. We also talked about the University, the College, people we had both known, politics, education, government, and also about our lives. It was always uplifting to be with him: I learned a great deal from him, and I enjoyed his sharp mind, the range of his knowledge, his benevolent yet critical attitude towards people, and his wry humour. I much admired his courage as age began to take its toll on him. I miss him very much.

Emma Greensmith (Official Fellow in Classical Literature)

I first met Donald in the last year of his life, as I prepared to join St John's to take up the post that he had made his own for over forty years. Shortly after accepting the position, a letter from him arrived in my pigeonhole at my then college in Cambridge (itself a wonderful thing – in our world of emails, there are not enough handwritten missives any more). In it, he congratulated me on the job, spoke warmly and candidly about his time at the College, and offered to help me settle in, in any way he could. Such characteristics were to become staples of the Donald I got to know well over the coming months.

Our first meeting was then in April 2019. After a day filled with inductions, introductions and a deluge of new information, Georgy Kantor brought me to have tea at Donald's flat. My head was spinning after such a long day, but after a few minutes in Donald's company I felt at ease. Conversation flowed, and was far from your usual small talk. Donald had unearthed a number of intriguing connections between the two of us. Beyond our shared interests in imperial Greek literature (more of that soon), his father, a former headteacher, had known my secondary school well; and – this was always my favourite fact – Donald and I almost shared a birthday: we were born on virtually the same day in October, seventy years apart.

After that first meeting, I saw or spoke to Donald almost every week. He was true to his word in his letter, and offered so many tips about teaching, Lit. Hum. at Oxford, and college life. Donald's range and depth of knowledge never ceased to amaze me (he often knew of niche new publications on my – very esoteric – current texts of interest before I did), and we agreed wholeheartedly on many aspects of ancient Greek literature. We both thought that witty second sophistic authors like Philostratus and Lucian would work well on the syllabus (perhaps a wish that will now be fulfilled...); that the Greek novels hog the spotlight in terms of celebrated texts from their era (!), and that all students would do well to spend some time reading Aristotle's *Poetics*, not just reading about it (my current students will feel this particular legacy of Donald's keenly).

Perhaps the most tangible sign of Donald's generosity was the gifting of a huge number of books from his library: 'just a few standard editions and commentaries which a literature tutor might find helpful', which turned out in fact (unsurprisingly to anyone who knew Donald's penchant for the modest understatement) to comprise a treasure trove of works on authors from Homer to Heliodorus and far beyond.

Our final meeting, in January of 2020, stands out in my mind the most vividly. It was a horrible cold evening, and I was weary from a frustrating day. Donald also confessed to feeling grumpy (though his grumpiness was always far more affable than mine!), and so we wisely upgraded from a cup of tea to a glass of wine. After a few hours of conversation, I left in the fullest of spirits. Donald had that effect: without any bombast or bravado, he made people feel happy.

Georgy Kantor (Official Fellow in Ancient History)

I first met Donald Russell late in his life. When I was joining St John's, Nicholas Purcell kindly arranged a lunch at his place for us to meet. I had of course used Donald's books many times before, but before that day, he remained a mythical figure to me. Little did I know what an important stage of my Oxford education was about to begin. By the end of that lunch, I could not be in any doubt about Donald's wisdom, immense knowledge, kindness – or of his role in holding the St John's Classics community together. Over the next eight years, I would see Donald regularly, in company and on my own, sometimes every week. At first, while he was still coming to the SCR –

moving with incredible speed with his mobility help across the North Quad, often getting to the gate ahead of me and Katharine Earnshaw – that was mostly over lunch in College. As the years went by, increasingly it became an afternoon tea in Belsyre Court 35, and then in his last flat, Belsyre Court 6. The fascination of that first meeting never left, however. Even as I was visiting him in hospital on the last day of his life, after he lost consciousness, his face remained so expressive that I was half-expecting him to resume the conversation at any moment.

Scholarship, and enjoyment of thinking anew about ancient texts, of course, continued till the end. Donald used to preface with 'I have not been doing anything much lately' an announcement of yet another publication, or a story of what he figured out in pseudo-Quintilian's *Declamations* or of manifold work he was doing for Richard Sorabji's *Ancient Commentators on Aristotle* project. He was perhaps particularly proud of figuring out the original Greek of Priscian's *Answers to King Chosroes of Persia* from an unintelligible Latin translation – a task Ingram Bywater had given up as hopeless a century earlier. However, his intellectual curiosity remained much broader than what he was working on, an example to many of us at a much younger age. On the day of my visit, he could be reading Athenaeus (Donald had an idea on the dating of the epitome in which a part of his work survives, and hoped younger colleagues will develop it), or Rilke (memories of his colleague J.B. Leishman would follow), or getting through something completely new. Whatever the conversation turned to, there was something to learn from Donald. It could be German plans of invading Russia in 1941: Donald deciphered the reports of the Japanese military attaché in Romania as his final task at Bletchley after the war ended, and was wondering how Stalin could ignore it all, if he knew half of that. Or Hungarian political philosophy: a friend from Bletchley later translated Eötvös, of whom I had not even heard. Or admissions: Donald clearly had quite an effect on how some of the schools that used to send candidates to St John's taught Classics, his strictures leading to the appointment of much better teachers. Or, back in the ancient world, an emendation in Philostratus: it took him all of a minute to create an elegant solution to a problem with which I was struggling. Or it could simply be a delightful story: the unforgettable American tourists at Sherwin-White's Front Quad window ('Look, look, a professor here, professing!'), a presidential election derailed over the return of a lawnmower, or Donald and the then Head Porter rescuing Robert Graves from a trouser-fly mishap as he was about to deliver the Creweian Oration... Graves was trying to resist

their efforts by claiming that this was how you get recognized as a poet in Majorca, and it was only later that Donald learnt that they were successful where President Mabbott had failed.

What was in a way even more striking was Donald's vivid interest in, and ability to think afresh about, the world today. One could be forgiven in his nineties for wanting to shut it out. Not so Donald, and whether it was politics, syllabus changes, or study habits of students, his eye remained as sharp as ever. Whatever was happening in this College, Donald would know it (often before I did), and offer the fairest and the most perceptive commentary. He was by no means uncritical, either of individuals or of institutions, but in everything he said and did he also gave the crucial lesson of kind and unostentatious care about colleagues and students, pride and interest in their achievements, and loyalty to the community to which you belong. I remember the joy with which he told me that one of our recent Gaudy orators needed fewer corrections in her speech than in what the Public Orator brought him for the Encaenia (by no means a negative comment on the Public Orator), or related how a student enjoyed a tutorial with my new colleague. He wanted to see all Woodhouse JRFs and Classics lecturers, and would always tell them to call 'if he could be helpful in any way'. For years Donald would say that he would teach again next term 'if he was still around', and it seemed this would go on forever, but even after he stopped teaching in 2017, students continued to come to his door: to get the new verses he was sending to the Russell Society, to get advice on a Gaudy oration, or simply to have tea with him. Just a few days before he went to hospital, he was telling me to send the next orator to see him, and it seems somehow fitting that, as soon as Donald's advice was not available, the pandemic cancelled the Gaudies.

When I came to see Donald on Boxing Day 2019, the last long conversation we had, he repeated something about his service at Bletchley he told me before, and perhaps wanted to emphasize: 'It taught me three important lessons. To do my work quickly and on time. To work in a team. And to not expect credit for what I have done.' Lessons to remember always, but the lesson Donald gave us was larger than that: it was one of humanity, of loyalty and care, and of joy in learning, and in passing that learning to others. *Semper memoria eius nobis cara manebit.*

Anthony Phillips (The Revd Canon Dr) (College Chaplain and Tutor in Theology, 1975–1986)

In January 1975 I took up my appointment as Chaplain and Tutor in Theology at St John's. We were housed next to Donald and Joy Russell in Woodstock Road. Within a month our daughter was born joining two brothers. 'A lot of running up and down stairs last night' commented Donald at lunch that day. Over the next ten years the Russells could not have been more tolerant of three boisterous children. Occasionally I inherited one of Donald's pupils transferring to Theology after Mods. There was no doubting their affection for him. Our families became close friends and it was a real pleasure to welcome Donald and Joy to Canterbury after I became Head of The King's School. Five years before his death we returned to Oxford. Joy had already died and Donald was living in Belsyre Court where my wife and I regularly visited him. While his body weakened, to the end his mind remained as vigorous as ever. While my study of classics ended with A Level Latin, we found plenty to talk about not least in reminiscing about St John's both during and before my time, discussion always spiced by Donald's wit. He was a shrewd judge of character. Renovations at Belsyre Court did not make his last years as easy as they might have been, though happily he stayed in what was intended as temporary accommodation. He was rarely without visitors which he hugely appreciated and was enabled to stay in his flat thanks to the superb care he received from Jenny Barney with whom we could exchange memories of her mother, Mrs. B. On religion, Donald kept an open mind but was insistent that he should have a traditional Anglican funeral service in College Chapel which he asked me to conduct. I doubt that he really wanted to celebrate his rooth birthday as he would have hated any fuss. The commissioning of his portrait was what really pleased him. If I were to sum Donald up, I would use what I suspect today is no longer a fashionable term: he was in every way a good College man.

Laetitia Edwards (Parker) (College Lecturer, 1968–1971; Emeritus Fellow, St Hugh's College)

It is a pleasure to think of Donald Russell, but not, I find, easy to write about him. His smallish, roundish person, his slight speech-defect, his dry humour were highly distinctive and would have been recognized by most

British classicists and many from overseas. But he was, as I remember him, remarkably free of eccentricity such as makes good anecdotes.

We first met in Newcastle in 1967, where I was a lecturer and he had come to read a paper. I was told to look after him. We discovered that we were both about to get married, which for me meant moving to Oxford. Did it occur to him that that might come in useful? He and his fiancée, pretty, plump, blue-eyed Joy, had postponed marriage for several years so as to look after aged parents. Joy's surviving parent had by then died, while Donald's father lived on for a few more years.

Joy was Fellow Librarian and a Tutor in Modern History at St Hugh's College (where I joined her as a colleague a couple of years later). She was without any trace of malice or unkindness and she and Donald were evidently very happy together. It was tragic that she died in her sixties, leaving him with long years of solitude, where his connection with his college was of vital importance. He continued to teach prose composition for St John's for many years, something that many classicists were coming to regard as a chore, but which he believed in and enjoyed teaching.

At the time I moved to Oxford, Literature was about to become the third option in Greats, shifting the balance of teaching in colleges away from historians and philosophers and towards 'Mods' tutors. Donald needed help with teaching in languages and literature and secured my appointment as a college lecturer at St John's from Michaelmas 1968. I had already worked for Wadham for two terms, where, after a struggle, as I was told, it had been decided that a Lecturer must have the full rights of the job, including dining and membership of Common Room. Donald told me apologetically that St John's would not give way on that, but no doubt it would come. During the three years that I worked for the College it did not come, although he took me in to dinner a number of times. My special interests were useful to him, since he disliked the study of Attic drama because 'such a lot of nonsense is written about it'. He was quite right. He had another helper at that time, a Junior Research Fellow of the College. Donald told me how much he liked working as part of a team, a new experience for an Oxford tutor.

Donald's first teaching post had been as a College Lecturer at Wadham. As it happened, my retirement dinner nearly thirty years later was held there. In my speech I told the story of my first meeting with Maurice Bowra, who had begun the conversation with 'Rumblerumblerumble haircut'. After the meal, Donald came up to me and said, with an almost passionate emphasis quite startling from him, 'Bowra was a *bully*'.

Not long after my time at St John's, a far-eastern gentleman appeared at one of my lectures and asked if he might attend the course. He was a professor of Greek from Japan who had bravely come to Oxford for a year without any connection here. Donald took a share with me in entertaining him and helping him to feel less isolated. Donald had been among the classical scholars from established academics to young people just awarded scholarships at Oxford or Cambridge who were swept off by the government to Bletchley Park to learn Japanese. Now it seems widely assumed that Bletchley Park was full of computers, with no account of the many linguists, ancient and modern, who made a vital contribution to the work there. At any rate, Donald remembered something of his Japanese.

The hot topic at Oxford in the early 1970s was mixing. I never liked to ask Donald what he thought about it. In St Hugh's, it was observed by some that Joy was the only Fellow who seemed able to separate emotion from intellect on the subject. Her feelings seemed against it, but she voted for it because she thought it best for the college. Donald's attitude could well have been similar. Anyway, whatever he thought about the question in general, he did his best to get me well treated by St John's and even to secure for me a lasting connection with the college. Shortly after I ceased to teach for them, I received a form asking me such questions as what was my wife's maiden name and whether I had ever boxed or played rugby for the college. I took it for a mistake, only to receive a personal letter from the President asking me to fill it in as best I could. So I became an old member of St John's several years before the college went mixed. How on earth Donald contrived this I have no idea, but it is evidence of his powers of persuasion and of his *auctoritas* in the college.

Ewen Bowie (Woodhouse Junior Research Fellow in Classics 1963–1965; Emeritus Fellow in Classics, Corpus Christi College, Oxford)

Many of my numerous memories of Donald are of an affable and vivacious host, whether he and Joy were, as often, entertaining foreign visitors at their Woodstock Road home, or Donald unaided produced remarkable meals in his Belsyre Court apartment. The vivacity involved a wry humour that I recall from other contexts too. The earliest must be occasions in St John's in 1964–5 when, during after-dinner dessert, Donald deftly parried attempts to tease him made by the shortly-to-retire Law Fellow, whose chief (and

boring) mode of Common Room conversation was teasing. I remember too (likewise from the 1960s) Donald himself teasing me, when in a group of people leaving a lecture by a visitor I asked if anyone knew the identity of a young woman who seemed a recent arrival and who was now a regular user of the Ashmolean Library (it was Christiane Sourvinou): somewhat unfairly, I felt, Donald immediately quipped, smiling, 'Ah! Ewen has his eye on a girl'. That smile, together with a twinkle in his eye, was less evident in Donald's lecturing, but I do remember it punctuating his witty sketch of 'Sophistopolis' during his Gray lectures in Cambridge (which of course I drove cross-country to attend), the lectures which became *Greek Declamation* (CUP, 1983). It was there too, in a very different context, when he invited me to Belsyre Court to discuss his obituary of his contemporary Kenneth Dover: 'a very strange person,' he said, with that impish smile, and a very expressive look in his eyes that I shall never forget, any more than I can forget the many ways he stimulated and aided me in my academic career.

Gregory Hutchinson (Regius Professor of Greek, University of Oxford)

My memories of Donald stretch over many years. They include being interviewed by him forty-odd years ago for my position at Exeter College, and his last hours, watched over by his family and his wonderful helper Jenny Barney. In some ways, he was always the same, kind yet acute; but he grew even gentler with time.

In his later years, I would visit him in his flat. Sometimes this was to share in the time-honoured partnership between Donald and successive Regius Professors in setting and marking Greek compositions for the Gaisford Prize. Donald loved writing Greek, and would always produce his own renderings of the pieces afterwards. He was remarkably indulgent in contemplating the offerings of the young, and remarkably ready to accept suggestions from me on the English passages we should set. (His knowledge of English literature was much more extensive than mine.)

It seemed like a calamity when he was temporarily moved into a new flat during repairs to the building; but in fact the new one proved particularly attractive – despite the reduced space for books – and he stayed in it. I remember washing up the tea things, the chat still running on, and looking through the kitchen window at the spacious view. Before that, we would sit at the large table and talk, tea things on the table, the summer wind blowing

in. Donald's hearing was not terribly good, but it didn't seem to matter. He enjoyed thinking back to a remote age of forgotten and slightly indolent dons; he savoured their eccentricities and turns of phrase. Sometimes we spoke of his beloved Joy, and of how his work on the spectacular Loeb of Quintilian had helped him to master his terrible grief. His love for her still seemed the foundation of his thoughts.

He was always thinking of what would be nice for other people, and what his present guest could do to help them. He was not in the least wrapped up in himself. Friends, books, politics: he had much to think of, and he enjoyed tasks set him by those who drew gratefully on his learning and acumen. A gentle melancholy overlay his utterances. Existence must have been daunting in those last years; but unostentatious resolution sustained him, and quiet humour. His fortitude and mildness were so admirable; as a person and a scholar, he was not so much a model to imitate as a marvel beyond the reach of aspiration.

Nicholas Richardson (Emeritus Fellow, Merton; formerly Warden of Greyfriars, 2004–2007)

In 1966–7, when I was a graduate student, Donald asked me to take his first-year pupils for Virgil classes, and this helped me to get to know him and experience his kindness to young scholars. Much later, I found his work on ancient literary criticism invaluable for my research and teaching, especially his Longinus, and the wonderful anthology of texts in translation which he edited with Michael Winterbottom. His wife and mine were also good friends at St Hugh's, and we much enjoyed seeing them together, at events there and on other social occasions.

David Konstan (John Rowe Workman Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Classics and Professor Emeritus of Comparative Literature, Brown University)

It still strikes me as remarkable that the very first English translation of Heraclitus' allegorical commentary on Homer appeared in the year 2005. The translation, at once elegant and remarkably faithful to the tone and wording of the original, is by Donald Russell. The title page of the volume

reads: 'Edited and Translated by Donald A. Russell and David Konstan.' Let it be known that my humble self is elevated to the status of co-author at the strict insistence of Donald, who would not allow it to be published otherwise.

I cannot overstate how proud I am to have collaborated with Donald. How that came about is indicated in a prefatory note to the book. In a few words, the idea of translating Heraclitus' work was initially proposed by some members of the Society of Biblical Literature (no accident that interest in the work originated there). It soon became known that Donald had in his desk drawer a complete translation, along with selected notes – in a handwritten manuscript. I agreed to transcribe the text, and at Donald's request, to provide an introduction. Here and there, I offered a suggestion on a reading or a rendering, though who can improve on Donald's style? I still remember worrying about the expression, *καὶ τὸ πικρότατον...*, and delighting in Donald's rendering, 'And the irony is...'

As we communicated back and forth – by regular post, to be sure, since Donald did not use email or, indeed, a computer – Donald finally suggested that I come over to Oxford so that we could hash out the final version. And here began a friendship that for me was also a discipleship. As we worked, we dined at Donald's place. He liked to cook, and he had a way of bustling in his small kitchen. We talked for three days, and even more impressive than his immense knowledge of ancient Greek was the quickness of his mind. If I had an inchoate doubt or question, he promptly reformulated it in a crisp and precise way that got straight to the heart of the problem. He was equally astute as an observer of humanity. He had a good word for everyone, but he noticed little quirks and idiosyncrasies and, though he described them shrewdly, the only hint of amusement was the slightest of smiles.

I rang Donald often – he retained the old habit of identifying himself by his telephone number, from the days when pay phones so often reached the wrong party – and I visited him several times. Once my wife accompanied me, and he entertained us both for dinner. Like me, she immediately warmed to him. He was unaffected, generous, and considerate – how could she not? These are the memories I cherish of Donald, a model of what it is to be a scholar.

Graham Anderson (Professor Emeritus of Classics, University of Kent)

I was I think among the first three research students to benefit from Donald's distinctive blend of kindness and wisdom. He taught me to express myself clearly and charitably, qualities not always in evidence among those who work on cruel satirists like Lucian. He himself was a master of brevity, and for once I feel able to throw prolixity to the winds and follow his example.

Frederick E. Brenk (Downing College and St Edmund's College, Cambridge, 1965–1970; Pontifical Biblical Institute)

I had met Donald, who was quite young at the time, through my doctoral dissertation director, Harry Sandbach, at Trinity College, Cambridge. Until my last visit to Oxford about three years ago, I always visited Donald, at first at St John's, and later in his apartment. He was always most gracious and frequently other distinguished visitors came to his apartment while I was there. He was always most active intellectually but also willing to give any assistance he could in spite of his incredible scholarly activity stretching into a very old age. It was clear that he was something of a pillar of the Oxford community and that many sought out his friendship, especially in a time of trouble, such as the death of a husband or wife. His outstanding intellectual life was matched with an equally outstanding humane one.

Juan Antonio López Férez (Professor Emeritus of Greek Philology, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia)

In 1974–75, we (my wife, María Teresa Gallego Pérez and I, both of us then teachers of Greek in a high school) met Professor Russell in Barcelona. We were invited to a lecture given by him at the Autonomous University. Later on, we talked with him (in French, because we knew almost nothing of English back then) at the reception held by British Cultural Attaché in Barcelona.

Later on, during the years 1983–94, we spent several summers in Oxford with our children, where we worked at the Bodleian and, at the same time, improved our English. From the first moment Donald took care of us with great kindness. In 1984 (for three months, July–September), he was

responsible for my stay, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Universities, and we were already lucky enough to visit him several times. Both he and Joy, his wife, treated us with great affection, which we still remember. They not only invited us to their home and College every summer, but there they introduced us to several colleagues from Oxford, with whom we began a long friendship.

In 1987 I organized a Colloquium on Greek texts at my University (National University of Distance Education, Madrid). Among other participants, I invited two foreigners, Russell and Nigel Wilson. Those were the days of great conviviality and cordiality. Later I organized a visit of the Russell couple to the University of Granada, where he gave another conference and they stayed for a few days. They were delighted to come back to Madrid. I did so that both Oxford professors could give a lecture at the Complutense University of Madrid.

During the succeeding summers (between 1984 and 1994) we always visited them in Oxford, and on some occasions they came to our Oxonian home in town or our residence at Wolfson College for dinner. Another reason for friendly chat and exchange of knowledge, and above all tokens of friendship. When Joy died, we called him and offered our deep condolences from Madrid. When the tribute for Donald was organized, I was informed by Ewen Bowie, and we participated in everything from the first moment.

All are good memories, of friendship, gratitude and recognition of his enormous knowledge and great human tenderness.

Emma Richards (2015)

The last time I saw Donald was just after Greats when Anna [Stojanovic] and I had tea with him (one of the most special traditions I participated in while at Oxford). He was sprightly and lightly teasing about our exams, and volunteered some advice for the decisions we would inevitably make in the next chapters of our lives. He repeated the wisdom that (I think) the Master of his college had shared with him when a young Donald was deciding between two academic posts that had been offered to him, one, I think in Edinburgh, the other in Oxford; the Master had said that the only thing they could say with any certainty was that 'You will never know if you made the right choice' – advice Donald thought might serve us in good stead, too. This, to me, was typical of my interactions with Donald, in which he was always

sage, often borderline prophetic and sometimes even slightly off-beat – but always with a lightness of touch and empathy that I know Anna and I both really valued. What I will really cherish is how this moment, and indeed, all the time we were lucky enough to spend with him, made us young students feel connected to something much, much bigger and infinitely older than our own studies. When speaking to Donald, or hearing him speak with such wit and characteristic humility at his portrait unveiling or previous Russell Society dinners, we were always reminded how lucky we were to study the classics, and to be ourselves a very, very small part of this tradition. Being taught by Donald, and having the chance to spend some time with him over the last years, remains perhaps the greatest privilege of my time at Oxford.

James Alster (2014)

As a first- and second-year undergraduate I was lucky enough to have Greek language tuition from Donald, where every week was filled with his infectious enthusiasm. I will always remember how, one week, he had set me a really rather tricky passage of Demosthenes (from his textbook). He opened it on the table and invited me to translate. I did my best, but he was so keen that as soon as I so much as hesitated over a word, he would immediately take up the translation and rush to the end of the sentence, before turning to me with a smile and an expectant look. It was a real lesson on how much at ease you could and should be with those classical texts.

Edward Evans (2014)

It is such a privilege to have been taught by Donald. Kind, patient, and magnificently erudite, he had an extraordinary capacity both to inspire and to set at ease. It was always a joy to experience his fierce intellect and nuanced thought, which shone through in his late nineties when I first met him. The humility with which he approached his incredible life and achievements always touched me too, in his matter-of-fact recollections of Bletchley Park and, perhaps most humorously, the revelation of the new and painstaking work *Answers to King Chosroes of Persia*, presented as the modest outcome of time spent doing 'very little at all'. He was a critical teacher, and his criticism was directed to improve and broaden the mind. He was always viewed with

affectionate awe by my peers, and his place at the heart of Classics at St John's was undisputed – whether it was helping to enliven the Gaudy Oration (I vividly remember a long discussion of how 'football coppers' might be translated into Latin with the greatest panache), addressing Russell Society events, or inviting undergraduates to tea and sherry. I will always remember with fondness and gratitude the time we spent together, and the lessons he taught me in character as well as in Classics.

Gabriel Naughton (2013)

In Michaelmas of my first year Donald invited three of us to see him for Latin prose composition classes. I remember him as a patient and gracious teacher, annotating our often dismal submissions – one attempt at a passage of Gibbon stands out in my mind – with thoughtful and thorough notes. From time to time as we sat around his dining-room table during those lessons, he would mention that he was uncertain whether he intended to teach another cohort: he was moving less easily and the sessions took more out of him. Of course, as it turned out, when I graduated in 2017 he was still taking on new students.

I also visited Donald separately in Trinity of that same year, as I was translating Lucretius *De Rerum Natura* IV for my Mods philosophy option. As the term came to a close, we hadn't yet finished the book and so, since I lived only thirty minutes from the city outside of term time, he offered me extra reading classes over the vacation. I have the fondest memories of those visits and Donald beckoning me in from a sunny seat on his balcony. I'm grateful for his infectious enthusiasm in those lessons. If I managed to ask a thought-provoking question or hit upon some textual difficulty, he would be out of his chair and down the hallway, seeking reinforcements from his vast personal library.

In these visits particularly I was struck by Donald's modesty. He recalled how he used to be 'something of a philosopher', talking as though he were describing another life and downplaying the fact that he had published a translation and commentary on Aeneas of Gaza with the then tutor in Ancient Philosophy, Sebastian Gertz, only the previous year. Indeed, though he was always an excellent host, Donald never held court. He was self-effacing when he told us stories of fearsome-sounding entrance examinations at Balliol or anecdotes from Bletchley Park days. Though only ten minutes' walk from

college, Belsyre Court always seemed to exist outside of the hubbub and the regular rhythm of the Oxford term. Donald would often invite us to visit him when things were most stressful, in particular around exam season, and with these stories of different eras of Oxford he put us at ease and helped us view our own stresses from this broader perspective.

Ben Cartlidge (Trinity College, 2004; Lecturer in Classical Languages, 2014–2017; Lecturer in Greek Culture and Classical Receptions, University of Liverpool)

Soon after my arrival at Oxford, I approached my tutor, the late Peter Brown, about the possibility of learning verse composition. In due course he told me that he had arranged classes with Donald Russell. With some trepidation we climbed the stairs in Belsyre Court; I still remember a pair of bright blue eyes twinkling through the open door. I learned a huge amount of Greek in those classes (2005–6), almost as much about English literature, and perhaps still more about humanity and life in general. Donald occasionally praised my verses, but also told me off for rushing; as often, advice for life as much as for academic matters.

When I moved to Cologne to study for an MA ('You'll like it there', said Donald, mischievously, 'the climate is like Oxford's – only worse'), his name opened doors; I found generations of scholars who had been taught by Donald, as well as a near contemporary in Prof. Rudolf Kassel (who died in the same month as Donald in 2020). I would pass greetings and short messages between the two in letters to Kassel over a number of years (he called the portrait of Donald 'äußerst gelungen').

From 2014 to 2017, I found myself in the post of Lecturer at St John's – in a sense, Donald's colleague, but in another truer sense still his eager and awe-struck pupil. He introduced me to distinguished colleagues, loaned and bequeathed various books, celebrated successes and commiserated failures – always with a kind and wise word or two ('Have you thought of reading Apuleius?' was excellent consolation advice!) In 2019, Donald assisted me with the publication of some lecture notes by E. R. Dodds, one of the last contacts I had with him before his death (among other assistance, Donald confirmed the identity of the handwriting). Naturally he encouraged my burgeoning interest in post-classical Greek, both enriching and testing my knowledge. I am deeply grateful to have known Donald when I did and for as long as I did.

Matthew Nicholls (1996; Senior Tutor)

When I was a Classics undergraduate at St John's, Donald was long retired from his Tutorial Fellowship, though he still had much to do with the life of Classics in the College and often saw students (indeed, we all used his prose anthologies for Mods). He was clearly universally beloved, and respected; indeed, he was rather a legendary presence. So when I was invited up to Belsyre Court for Donald to look over my attempt at an Oration, a Latin speech about the recent life of College to be delivered at a Gaudy, I was excited and perhaps a bit daunted to meet him. And of course, as so many others have recalled here, I was welcomed with great warmth and kindness, a cup of tea, and a deft and tactful amendment of my Latin into a passable speech. I did two Gaudy orations as an undergraduate, and went up to see Donald a few times. I remember the care he took to offer hospitality and respect to even a very junior visitor, and the interest he took in how the students were doing; a photograph of Joy on his shelves; and his generosity in discussing not just my sophomoreic efforts at prose comp but much wider vistas of literature, some of it by people he had known. I particularly recall him reading me the whole of *The Vicar of Bray*, with jovial and learned asides, and telling me his very good story about Robert Graves's trousers. It felt at the time like the privilege it was.

I was glad, years later, to hear Donald's fine and moving speech at the unveiling of his portrait – a very happy initiative – in the Long Gallery at St John's, and later again to take tea with him and Georgy Kantor back at Belsyre Court when I returned to the College as Senior Tutor. By then he had been a Fellow of the College for more than 15 per cent of its existence, and had much to say about the history and character of the institution as he had known and loved it, and perceptive advice about my role. He was part of the place for such a long time, and I feel lucky to have known him here.

Michael Willis (1990)

Although never formally taught by Professor Russell, I had the immense privilege of delivering a Gaudy Speech under his tutelage. As we talked through the items for inclusion in the speech, and as we considered how to convey them in the best rhetorical Latin prose, his manner was gentle, considerate and tactful towards me, a mere scholar. I felt that although

his was the inspiration and the force behind the speech, it was still mine to deliver and for which I received the accolade. Such was his character: respectful of others and humble, belying his immense scholarship and intellectual prowess.

Eleanor Dickey (Balliol, 1989)

In the early 1990s, after the sad loss of his wife, Donald mentioned that he would like to return to teaching, perhaps offering a few tutorials in Greek verse composition. I happened to overhear this remark and promptly exclaimed, 'Oh please start by teaching me!', so he did. His unrivalled skill in Greek verse composition and superb teaching ability will no doubt be better described by his other former students, who were more equipped to make good use of it. They will no doubt comment eloquently on the ease with which Donald could compose Greek verses on the spot, his extraordinary grasp of how Greek poets thought and what sorts of things they said, his flawless understanding of meters, and his immense knowledge of the vowel quantities in obscure words.

Yet although all these skills were certainly impressive, even more striking was Donald's unfailing patience and kindness – for despite all my enthusiasm I turned out to be hopeless at verse composition, utterly incapable of composing even a single decent line. This incapacity disappointed, hurt and baffled me, and Donald gently administered comfort and encouragement. He could tell exactly how much work I had put in on each week's failed attempt, and kindly but firmly pointed out how the failures on which more time had been invested were not as bad as the results of more cursory efforts. Then, after a term of fruitless effort, Donald suggested that I might get further with Latin verse composition, so we tried that. His skills as a teacher of Latin verse were just as impressive as with Greek verse, but alas, I turned out to be even worse at Latin.

In the end, of course, despite all Donald's comfort and encouragement, it became clear to us both that the only option was for me to give up and go away, so I slunk off in abject defeat. I did not then appreciate how useful those verse composition tutorials would later prove, for they taught me what it feels like to be a bad student. Only because Donald was such a superb teacher, so obviously free of any blame for my failure to learn, did I accept that the whole thing was my own fault and thus have the experience of feeling

the way many of my own students frequently feel about all their studies. And his flawless patience, encouragement, and tact provided a superb model for how to cope when students feel this way, even if I cannot fully replicate that model. At the time, however, I was simply ashamed of the whole episode and wanted to consign it to oblivion. The silver lining, I figured, was that the teacher before whom I had so disgraced myself was retired, unlikely to scupper my future career by deploying the dim view he had no doubt conceived of my intellectual capacity.

So imagine my horror when I discovered that the Classics Monographs Committee was giving Donald the task of deciding whether or not my dissertation was suitable for publication. The sensible thing for him to do would clearly have been to answer in the negative without even reading it; after all I had clearly demonstrated that I had the brains of a carrot. But Donald was nothing if not open-minded: instead of being sensible, he opted to help me revise that dissertation for publication. In this role Donald was just as superb as when teaching verse composition. His immense knowledge of Greek literature enabled him to identify at a glance what I had missed, and his flawless control of the language made him unerring in spotting mistakes and misjudgements in the analyses. Once again, his patience, kindness, and encouragement shone forth as he coaxed me through a long and difficult task. And once again he provided a model to emulate. Of course, Donald's models could only be the object of aspiration, never of successful imitation; no one could possibly be like him. And yet by inspiring people to try he still makes the world a better place.

Stephen Nelson (1981)

First prose composition tutorial, Michaelmas Term 1981. The setting – Donald's rooms in Dolphin Quad – is comforting but does little to still my nerves. This is it – my initiation in 'Latin comp' with the master, and I'm terribly keen to impress.

On entering, I expect to find the great man working at his desk, perhaps glancing up from his desk only to see who was interrupting this time. What I did not anticipate was my tutor perching unsteadily on what looked like a somewhat battered fender. And as Donald moves to welcome me, the grand man of classical letters stumbles, pitches, and almost falls into my arms. 'Come in, Stephen. You ok?' he mumbles.

And then we sit to review my limp piece of... well, that I cannot recall. Alas, my effort proves, well, banausic at best – the adjective I had recently quarried from a lexicon and crowbarred into an earlier essay. And as we start to unpick the mistakes and infelicities, I shan't forget the moment when Donald sights his first nominativus pendens with what sounded like a whoop of joy. This is going to be mortifying.

But then something rather wonderful happens. Peering over my shoulder, Donald starts to amend the solecisms with limpid and perfectly voiced 'alternatives', all the while muttering 'Let's say this shall we? So, by the end, and to my barely undergraduate eye, what stands before me are gobbets of Cicero.

Almost forty years on, what I carry from that session, as from all subsequent tutorials with Donald, is the sensation of his unforced kindness and scholarly good measure. When I reminisce with old tutorial buddies about 'Donald's tutes' we often find ourselves howling with laughter – for the man, quite intentionally, could be hilarious. 'Don't tell me you young people don't know what fellatio is?' And of course there were those thrilling moments when we were invited to glimpse the vast hinterland of his erudition. Yet it is the memory of the careful teacher, the *παιδαγωγός*, that will linger the longest. For it was Donald who gently encouraged us to strive for something that might be, by whatever small measure, closer in sympathy with all that he took to be of value and beauty and truth. And thus he enriched our lives.

Geoff Hine (1977)

I first met Donald when I became an undergraduate in 1977 – but it was not until 2013, at the dinner commemorating his 65th year as a Fellow of St John's, that I learnt of his wartime career decoding Japanese communications at Bletchley Park. I learnt more from Donald about his wartime career in the summer of 2019 – the last time that I met him. I happened to mention in conversation that it was the 75th anniversary of the D-Day landings – and to my surprise he told me that in the build-up to D-Day he had been involved in decoding messages giving details of the Nazi defence system known as the Atlantic Wall. It seems that the Nazi high command had allowed Japanese diplomats based in Europe to inspect the Atlantic Wall – presumably in order to convince their Japanese allies that the anticipated Allied invasion of Western Europe was destined to fail – and these Japanese diplomats had sent

coded reports on the Nazi coastal defences to their government in Tokyo. These reports were intercepted by the British, decoded by Donald and his colleagues in his section at Bletchley Park, and then passed on to the Allied planners preparing the coming assault on the Atlantic Wall. I asked Donald if he had been told to prioritize particular sections of the Atlantic Wall. 'No', he replied, 'we weren't given any instructions of that sort – we just decoded everything that was given to us'.

In one way Donald's wartime work is a perfect example of the futility of war. The Nazi high command had devoted vast resources to constructing the defences which they thought would ensure their survival, only to undermine their efforts by inadvertently putting detailed reports on those defences in the hands of the Allied planners who were working to end their regime. However, in another way, Donald's wartime career is a perfect example of the benefits of trust and co-operation between nations. The code which WWII Japanese diplomats used to communicate with their home government – referred to by the Allies as 'Code Purple' – was first broken by American cryptographers. Donald and his colleagues at Bletchley Park were able to do the work they did in decoding Japanese diplomatic messages because the British and American governments agreed to an exchange of intelligence – all the American intelligence on Code Purple in return for all of the British intelligence on the Enigma code. Some studies of WWII have suggested that the combined effect of the Allied code-breaking achievements shortened the war by perhaps a couple of years and saved many thousands of lives – and Donald's part in those efforts is something we should remember when we look back on his life.

Mark Mazower (1977; Ira D. Wallach Professor of History, Columbia University)

Donald Russell was an immense influence on me. I remember him as a benign yet formidably learned presence. What I took to be his shyness was evident from the moment I knocked on his door. I remember there would often be no response, and I would have to guess when to enter. And indeed when it was time to leave, the signal for which was Donald retreating to his fireplace and hovering there. Mine was, I think, the first year of Mods B when we were sent off to Jesus College to learn ancient Greek from scratch from the University Orator. I found the atmosphere competitive and intimidating and

soon stopped going. At the end of the first term, I was called in by Donald. 'It is most odd', he said, in his high voice, 'that we seem to have received a bill from Jesus for Mr. H. but none for you.' I explained I had realized I preferred to learn by myself. 'Very good, very good', was his response. I took away from this exchange that school was over and henceforth I was to be treated as an adult. Now I wish I had known about his astonishing wartime service, but at the time it didn't occur to me to ask. Indeed even if I had known, I would not have dared to. How extraordinarily lucky we were to have been taught by such a man.

Stephen James (1976)

Professor Russell interviewed me in 1976 as a prospective undergraduate. I had never been to Oxford before. I attended a state school in Gateshead as the only student of Greek A Level and one of two people taking Latin. At the interview he asked about my reading of Plato. I said that I had read the *Symposium* and he asked which edition. 'Bury', I said, rhyming the name with 'ferry'. 'Actually it is Bury', he said, rhyming with 'fury'. Now, from some people, this could have sounded patronising or belittling. From Prof. Russell it was as if he were saying 'Hmm, I can see you have been struggling with this stuff mainly on your own – perhaps you could come here and get help from like-minded people.' He was very kind and warm. On another occasion he told me that, aside from National Service, he had never experienced life outside school or university. He said this in modesty, to suggest that perhaps his experience was limited in some way. I had emotional difficulties as an undergraduate and Prof. Russell invited my parents to stay for a couple of nights to see how he could help. I probably did not appreciate him enough when I was at St John's but I remember him very fondly.

Andrew Armitage (1975)

I remember Donald Russell as softly-spoken and unfailingly good-natured – however badly one had prepared for a tutorial (often, in my case). He never appeared annoyed or impatient.

I also remember how he used a pencil for writing. Even though the pencil seemed to be blunt, he always managed to write very neatly.

Giles Dawson (1972)

Donald remembered everybody, even those students (like myself) at the lower end of the academic scale. I'll always remember the quiet horror he shared with me one morning, about an applicant proposing to read English – ‘... and he hadn't read a single play by Shakespeare!’ It was so nice to be invited to visit him at Belsyre Court on the morning after a Gaudy. I did this at least twice. At a recent Gaudy, it was wonderful to watch and listen to a former pupil of mine giving the Latin oration at dinner. He had clearly benefitted from his own visits to Donald's apartment, as a member of a Latin Prose class.

Stephen Williams (1970)

I first met Donald Russell at the age of two when my family moved to Oxford. I became aware of whom I was meeting a couple of years later when Donald gave me books or accessories for my clockwork railway as Christmas presents. At this I got to know Donald as a most kind and generous colleague of my father. In 1962 we left Oxford and I next made acquaintance with Donald when I came up to Oxford to study Classics at St John's in 1970. There I experienced him as the dedicated academic scholar that he was. His characteristic stutter was never embarrassing, but rather a signal of his careful choice of words to deliver his message. I remember one particular lecture which Donald delivered as he leant against the wall at the front of the room. Suddenly the electric blinds started to go up and down until Donald discovered that he was leaning against the relevant electric switch. I looked forward to tutorials with Donald and found them stimulating and thought-provoking. I also looked forward to his regular sherry parties which he hosted at his home on Woodstock Road together with Joy, who with her vivacious character complemented Donald so well. For me Donald was the perfect representation of an academic scholar, amiable and at the same time very discerning. Another characteristic of Donald was his phenomenal memory which continued throughout his life. When I last saw him at Belsyre Court in 2018, he could recite the names of all my fellow classics pupils and could report what they had gone on to do with their life, while I myself had difficulty to recall all the names. And Donald could do this for every year of students whom he had tutored. Following the death of my father Donald

became the person whom I had known for the longest period of time and that is a privilege which I will not forget.

Anne Sheppard (St Anne's; Professor Emerita of Ancient Philosophy, Royal Holloway)

I first encountered Donald Russell when, as an undergraduate at St Anne's, I was sent to him for Greek prose composition. He also taught me for some of the Literature papers in Greats, when St John's, St Anne's, Corpus and Pembroke had a consortium arrangement for this teaching in the early 1970s. However, I really got to know him when he supervised my DPhil thesis on the response of the Neoplatonic philosopher Proclus to Plato's criticisms of Homer in the *Republic*. Donald was a wonderful DPhil supervisor, always ready to share his own extensive knowledge of ancient Greek literature and thought while supporting me in developing my own ideas. We kept in touch thereafter and I continued to benefit from his advice and support throughout my academic career. I last saw Donald in December 2019 when I called in to see him on the afternoon before the launch of the book *Rediscovering E. R. Dodds* to which we had both contributed. His mind was as lively as ever. When I talked to him about the research projects I am working on, having recently retired, he said 'Ah yes, that's what it's like in the early years of retirement', making me feel once again like a beginner, following a wise and kindly guide holding out a generous hand to help me along a road on which he is much further ahead.

Nicholas King (1966; formerly Tutor and Fellow in New Testament Studies, Campion Hall)

It is entirely to my discredit that I had not realized what a great scholar Donald was when he taught us for Mods, 1966–68 (we did not in those days think of our tutors in precisely those terms, I suspect). He was, however, a very good teacher, and I was green with envy at his skill in writing Latin and Greek; he was also a very kind man, and I remember well his concern when I summoned up the nerve to go and see him about a contemporary who was struggling a bit; his handling of the matter was exemplary. In those days we called our tutors 'Sir', except for Gordon Baker who taught us Aristotle and

Moral and Political, and insisted on being addressed by his first name; but he was American, and we used in any case to play squash with him. But, all unconsciously, the use of 'Sir' created a certain distance, for which we were more to blame than Donald. It was only much later that I suddenly started to notice the number of citations of him that appeared in learned writings, and came to appreciate what a great scholar he was.

In 2001 I returned to Oxford from teaching in South Africa, and made a point of visiting him quite often (though not so often as I should have done), and always thoroughly enjoyed the experience, admiring his skill in negotiating the trolley-cum-mobile-seat on which he brought the tea-tray. It was only at that stage that I came to realize how lonely he could be, although I was delighted to notice how many of the Fellows at St John's were faithful in visiting him. He retained a clear grip of his former pupils, and always had something illuminating to share about whatever he was at that time working upon. He missed his beloved Joy ('Gaudium Meum') very much indeed; and since he could not bring himself to believe in an after-life, he did not think that he would ever see her again. My prayer is that they are now happily reunited.

I am immensely grateful to have known him, and to have been taught by him; it was a privilege that I did not then recognize, but have since come to appreciate. And I shall never forget the experience of turning up for a tutorial (I think) and finding myself being introduced to the spectacular figure of Robert Graves; I had not realized that they were friends. A further memory is that of being asked to give the Oration at the 1970 Gaudy. I was very slow in getting down to it, I recall, whether through laziness or a nervousness about expressing myself in Latin, two years after Mods, or the fact that it was the Schools term. At all events, Donald asked me what I wanted to say and sat down and wrote on my behalf a wonderful piece of Latin oratory. There are many reasons for gratitude to him and I am glad to have known him. It was also a privilege to be present at the unveiling of that spectacular portrait of him, a year or two ago, and to hear him talk in public for the last time. May he rest in peace.

David Hunt (1965; Senior Lecturer Emeritus, Durham University)

Donald was colleague and friend for many years, but herewith two memories from my undergraduate days. Those of us lucky enough to be his pupils in 1967 were privileged to share in the surprise (at least to us) and excitement

of his marriage: the transformation of our tutor from the rather morose and silent character we had been used to into a smiling picture of happiness was a wonder to behold, and we were blessed as the first generation to enjoy his and Joy's generous hospitality at their home in Woodstock Road. After Schools in 1969 it fell to me to deliver the Latin oration at the Gaudy. I hadn't written anything in Latin since Mods, let alone a speech for such a formal occasion. Donald came to the rescue, with patient good humour remoulding my pedestrian efforts into an elegant and witty oration (for some reason I remember the phrase 'papyraceus tigris' came into it!), and of course letting me take all the credit: I wonder how many Gaudy orations he has 'ghost-written' over the years!

Sally Van Noorden (St Anne's, 1964)

I valued Donald for his friendship. From the time I studied 'Longinus' under him in 1965 and wrote on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in 1970, followed by a forty-year Civil Service career during which time I lived in Oxford and was a neighbour of Donald's, he remembered everything relevant about me and was interested in me as a person, as he evidently was in so many others. His conversation was never trivial. He showed a thoughtful awareness of what mattered to me and tailored his remarks accordingly. A fine example of civilized discourse.

Richard Carden (1962)

Donald was my tutor for Mods in the early 1960s. He made a strong impact on me then and he continued to be an influence on my life thereafter. In a memoir, *Quite Close to Europe*, which I published in 2019, I included a chapter looking back at Oxford in the 1960s, and here is how I described Donald as he was then, and the impression he made on me.

'The Oxford tutorial system was flourishing, and was perhaps at a high point in the 1960s. By comparison with Oxford of the 1840s, or even the 1920s, Tutors were taking their work seriously. Yet by comparison with now, we had ample time to play. Gone were the days when dons pleased themselves as to whether they paid any attention to their teaching duties. Tutors in the 1960s seemed attentive to their obligations towards their pupils. For our

first five terms studying for Mods we had a single College Tutor, Donald Russell. He made a lasting impression on all his pupils. He certainly did on me. He was wholly devoted to his classical learning. Then in his forties, he seemed to us to have accumulated a vast amount of knowledge. Now (2018) aged 97, he is still practising his craft, although he retired from teaching at the age of 96.

He did not exactly wear his learning lightly. You were well aware of how much there was, but he was mild-mannered, unpretentious, and he did not push his accomplishments at you. You soon enough discovered them by engaging with him. He had a kindly character but you could not relax in conversation with him or treat him lightly. His mind was razor-sharp and any light-hearted remarks or sloppy conversation met with a precise response; not a hostile response but one which left you in no doubt about the inadequacy or inaccuracy of what you had just said. No banter here. (In his late nineties he is still an exacting conversationalist.) Donald had, by the time he took us on, been teaching at St John's for about fifteen years. He had taught one of the young men who had taught us for our last year or two at Merchant Taylors'. He seemed to have given most of those early years of his career to attentive and devoted tutoring. Unlike the next generation of scholars, he had not pushed himself to do a doctorate (those were still quite a rarity for his generation). He had not been put under pressure to publish any immature work (as I did) nor to churn out endless articles on the minutiae of his field of scholarship, as young academics are now. He produced his first (and maybe best) book only in the 1960s, while we were his pupils.

His chosen area of specialism was prose writing, Latin and Greek, the craft of prose style and rhetoric. This was typical of the man. It was an aspect of writing not particularly in favour with twentieth-century readers, but was an aspect of writing which the ancients themselves paid close attention to. Using words in prose writing and speeches to best effect, for maximum impact, artful persuasion and attractive style. This was Donald the scholar and Donald the tutor."

Andrew Edwards (1958)

How difficult it is to say anything adequate about one who was himself a supreme exponent of the art of writing appreciations of departed friends and colleagues.

He was such a kind, friendly and modest man. I well remember how he went out of his way to make students fresh from school, like myself, feel at home, not least by inviting us to share healthy lunches with him in the wonderful bay window of his room overlooking the College garden. He later delivered his responsibilities as College Dean with humanity and understanding. His familiar stammer was strangely reassuring.

On one occasion, as I recall, his kindness led to an unusual error of judgment. He thought that one of our student colleagues was hard-working but sadly not very clever, when in fact he was brilliant but supremely idle (at the time, not later!).

As a Tutor, he was brilliant and sympathetic. I remember how he would gently suggest several alternatives, all superb, to some pedestrian passages in the Greek and Latin prose and verses which we had struggled to write, while noting that in life generally well-chosen words were really quite useful. He was similarly unstinting in the help he gave over so many years to University and College Orators in composing their Latin addresses, and likewise to Robert Graves as Professor of Poetry.

Others will have talked about his key role in reforming the Greats syllabus and his remarkable scholarship over so many years. Much as I admired his pathbreaking work on obscure authors, I do rather agree with those who wish he might also have produced a few classic editions of important works such as the *Metamorphoses*.

Also remarkable are his English addresses. In these we can still relish his wonderful sense of humour. Two fine examples are his final addresses in the President's Lodgings. At his 90th birthday celebration (I think it was), he famously urged scholars not to be like peacocks, all show and otherwise noisy and a nuisance, but to be modest, quiet and constructive. Equally fine was the speech in May 2018 at the unveiling of his portrait at age 97 by Mark Hancock. He looked forward then to being remembered as 'the subject of an early Hancock'. Commenting on the initiative which five of us had taken in promoting and organizing the portrait project, he commented that 'seldom can such an array of academic and administrative talent have been engaged for such an inconsiderable end' before noting that in practice such disparities between talents around the table and the agenda under consideration were not that uncommon.

Allied to Donald's humour was his keen sense of fun. At the lovely lunch and tea parties which he and Joy gave, he especially liked to tell stories about eccentric Dons in earlier times. I remember one about a Don who used to sit

under his table, concealed by the tablecloth, when students attended to read out their essays. On one occasion, the Don remained silent for even longer than usual after the essay was finished. So the student asked: 'Would you like me to read it again?' To which the Don, now spurred to life, responded: 'Good God, NO!'

Donald was an immensely special person, and it is such a pity that his lovely wife Joy died so long before her time and that they had no children.

Roger Barnes (1957)

A story that he told against himself. In 1957/58 Donald had rooms in college in the Laud Quad. In those days visiting was more relaxed and one morning Donald was in the middle of shaving (froth all over his face) but sputtered when two American ladies came into his rooms. 'Gee how cute,' one of them said, 'but don't mind us'.

Eric Coates (1957)

I recall two incidents involving pistols in the late 50s when Donald, as well as being my moral tutor, was I believe Junior Dean.

The first was merely embarrassing for me: in my second term I had bought a Webley air pistol, and proceeded to practice shooting with it in my sitting room, which did no good to the panelling. Tom, my scout, dutifully reported this (I did not yet know about tipping one's scout) and Donald duly had me up to be fined, and told me to take the weapon down.

More revealing was the second occasion, after a bump supper, which was recounted to me later, since I was out of the room at the time (possibly on top of the College tower): in those unreformed days, during bumping races, the coach cycling along the bank would signal his crew as to whether they were distant half a length, a canvas, or overlapping the crew in front, by firing one, two, or three blank shots, respectively, from an ex-service pistol. At a late stage in these celebrations, then, Donald came across a noisy little group, one of whom was waving around a Webley .45 revolver, clearly purloined from a coach, and pointing it at various people in turn, all of course in the best of humour. Confronted with this, Donald simply said 'P-put that thing way, H*****'. And that was the end of the matter.

Stephanie West (née Pickard) (Somerville, 1956; Honorary Fellow, Hertford College)

My memories of D.A.R. go back to TT1957, when Somerville's Mods Tutor (the term for the Classics Tutor in those days before Literature had a place in Greats) went on leave. It was a relief to learn that he took teaching verse composition in his stride; having been launched on preparation for this paper all four of us felt definitely out of our depths. We rapidly got an impression of steady, systematic scholarship, and a quiet determination to reveal the fascination of authors whose appeal we might easily have underestimated. As I was leaving at the end of our second encounter, he asked me where I'd been at school. 'Nottingham Girls' High School'. I didn't expect this to mean anything to him, but he recognized it as one of the twenty-three (in those days) schools of what is now the Girls' Day School Trust. He revealed that he had started his schooldays in the kindergarten of one of the Trust's London schools (Wimbledon?). I thought it very friendly of him to reveal this detail. Many of us have appealed to him for help in composing passages of rather formal Latin for College and University occasions. Confident that I would not ask in vain, I turned to him in the last stages of dealing with my late husband's Teubner edition of the *Odyssey* (2017), when I needed to add a paragraph to his praefatio. Having done my best, I submitted it to Donald's scrutiny. His comment: 'Yes, that's all right – but you might like to consider this' – and I was very happy to prefer his version.

Sir Richard Sorabji (Pembroke, 1955; Professor of Philosophy Emeritus, King's College London)

I claimed to be Donald's oldest pupil, since I was eighty when he taught me the art of retroversion in order to reconstruct, from the misunderstandings of a Latin translation perhaps of the 9th century CE, the original Greek of Priscian's 6th century *Answers to King Khushru of Persia*. The reconstruction had been undertaken by several hands, but Donald re-translated the best part of five chapters, leaving to me as general editor only half a chapter, with the tutorial words, 'This is the easy bit, Richard, you can do it yourself'. On his desk during my many visits, I found I was not the only senior pupil, since scholars of the highest eminence had left their Latin compositions

for Donald to supply the finishing touches. He accepted as my only return cucumber sandwiches for our many happy teas.

David Faulkner (1953)

I knew Donald during two stages in my life – as an undergraduate, and then after I had retired from the Civil Service and was for a time a Supernumerary Fellow of the College. My own area by then was criminal justice rather than classics, but I saw Donald in College and went to some of his lectures. Memories which stand out for me – as well as tutorials, classes and collections – are Donald’s sympathetic understanding of what life is or can be like for young people, especially when they encounter difficult circumstances, and his penetrating insights and distinctively humorous (and sometimes acerbic) reflections on events and personalities in the University and public life. Among the lessons that he taught me was that character is different from academic excellence and character is more important, but each can contribute to the other. In later years, through Donald’s introduction, I became treasurer of the Gilbert Murray Trust which administers a fund to support the study of the classics and international relations – Murray’s two main interests. Through the Trust I came to many of the country’s leading classical scholars, nearly all of whom had been taught and inspired by Donald at one time or another. I am proud to share the universal admiration and respect in which he is held.

David Cotton (1951)

My main memories of Donald as a Tutor are of his kindness and enthusiasm for Classics – and his generosity with his sherry at the end of term. This generosity continued whenever I came up to the College for a Gaudy with strawberry and cream teas in the garden at his house in Woodstock Road. In 1971 I returned to Oxford as Head of Classics at Oxford School. When, very sadly, Donald’s wife died, my wife and I often invited Donald to dinner or on Saturdays out for a pub lunch and a drive in the country, which he loved. At one of these lunches I asked him how he was getting on with the translation of Quintilian which he was doing for the Loeb Classical Library. ‘Oh, fine,’ replied Donald. ‘And I am learning an awful lot of Latin.’ This from the man

who had just retired from the top Classics post in the world! He sometimes invited my wife and myself to dinner, either in Hall or in his apartment, of which he was very proud. He was also very proud of his cooking, especially his marinated chicken. He was generous too with his time – he came and taught my Sixth Formers to read Latin aloud, to which he attached great importance. My memories of Donald are of a great scholar, an enthusiastic teacher, and of a most pleasant and generous friend. I have missed him very much in coming to Canada to join my daughters.

W. John H. Robson (1951)

My memory is of over sixty years of association. Highlights:

- How it started: on brief contact (three terms, Latin only), Donald decided I would make a congenial companion. He took me for walks and after a few years we were off together to S. France.
- This could not be repeated because I married. There came years of intermittent meetings e.g. with his father with him. The all-seeing Russell eye was not hidden by glasses. He sat upright. Donald said he had been a formal figure: dark suit, starched collars. Tea came in ‘FIG ROLLS!’ ‘And cake. Have a piece of cake, Dad.’ This gentle teasing continued after Donald’s marriage: ‘I don’t think we should bother God with little details.’ ‘Don’t tell me he hasn’t the time.’
- Joy’s death: SHATTERING. I knew how hyper-acutely Donald felt things. I thought a visit to us in Ludlow might help. It did. A series of yearly meetings began, and soon extended to short trips, e.g. to Wales.
- Then I lost Ruth. Our last trip together was nostalgic for Donald, to where he and Joy had had a holiday flat [Bournemouth]: ‘If we share a room, it won’t be for the first time.’
- Our last meeting. I said, ‘As I am giving up driving, this is almost certainly the last time’. Donald would have none of that, but it was.

Michael Moriarty (1950)

I was one of Donald's early pupils, arriving at St John's (after National Service) in October 1950, one of a group of six. My memories of those distant days are now faint. Donald shared the Mods tutoring with Colin Roberts, Donald taking the Latin. Colin, a decade older, of longer standing in the College and the more outgoing personality, may have appeared to some extent to overshadow Donald, who came across as somewhat shy and retiring, with a stutter which though slight was more noticeable than in later years. Like others I found him a Tutor of high quality, meticulous but friendly and caring.

Donald lived in College, at that time in rooms in the Holmes Building (promotion to the Canterbury Quad was to come later). There he dispensed simple hospitality to his pupils and others. In fact this practice of hospitality, over a long period, is what I, and I believe many others, especially associate with Donald.

A few years after I left Oxford and was still unmarried, Donald invited me to join him on a short continental holiday. Itinerary and arrangements were planned and carried out by him. Travel was by train, or occasionally by bus or boat. It was a general tour, without any special academic or other slant. I think we started (off the overnight train) in Colmar, crossing the Rhine and reaching Freiburg, our first short stay. After that we moved on to Lake Constance and thence into Austria, getting as far as Salzburg before returning to one of the Channel ports. It was an agreeable trip – my first into Germany/Austria. Donald was an easy and undemanding travel companion. He had good German, which I certainly lacked.

Contact with Donald continued in the years that followed. Donald would invite former pupils to 'look in' in the afternoon, or on the following morning, after a College event. His hospitality went beyond former pupils. It extended to spouses, including my wife Rachel, who recalls attending his lectures as a St Hugh's classicist. It could also extend into the next generation, including our daughter Joanna (who would have been Donald's pupil had not the place offered to her by St John's been 'trumped' by a Wadham scholarship).

After Donald's enriching marriage to Joy the social gatherings increased in both size and liveliness. My wife and I (she having known Joy from St Hugh's days) have happy recollections of evenings in the garden, or in the spacious first-floor sitting room, of their charming house in Woodstock Road close to the Observatory.

In most years over the decade after Joy's sad and untimely death Donald paid us a short visit in the early autumn. We had by then moved from London to Chichester. Donald came by cross-country trains from Oxford, usually bringing with him a suitable bottle and other visitor-gifts. These were agreeable visits. Donald was an easy and accommodating visitor, fitting in to the domestic pattern and knowing when to tuck himself away in a corner with a book.

He was touchingly fond of Chichester, appreciating (he would say) its calm and quiet after Oxford, and its Georgian character. Short local walks were always part of the programme, as were visits to places of interest and beauty a little farther afield. He also loved the sea, and we would fit in a visit to one or more of the nearby favoured coastal villages. We also aimed to invite to a meal during his stay former pupils living within easy distance, or other local friends sharing some of Donald's interests – in particular one who like Rachel had taught Classics for many years in good girls' schools. Family members also came, including my brother Denis (St John's 1956–9; not a pupil but well known to Donald). Donald for his part was generous in offering hospitality to us in local restaurants.

The visits petered out in Donald's eighties. I think by then decreasing mobility made the visits more burdensome to him, as perhaps also did some of the stairs and steps of our old house and its garden. We continued to see Donald on our occasional visits to Oxford, and to keep in touch by telephone (not always easy, as his hearing got worse). My final memories are of cups of tea in the spacious Belsyre Court sitting room, enjoying the pot plants on the balcony, the wide views of Oxford, and Donald's always stimulating conversation.

Allan C. Benn (1949)

- His lifelong love of the classics; no retirement from his chosen work;
- His devotion to teaching the classical languages; men, women, beginners and scholars;
- His wartime contribution to the Enigma project;
- His 'missionary' visits with Joy to the USA;
- His long-lasting friendships;
- His patience with his own physical frailty;
- His gratitude towards his carers;

- His down-to-earth sly humour;
- His modesty about his own achievements through a long life.

Jackie Couling (former Domestic Administrator)

I have fond memories of Professor Russell since meeting him in 1977 and my retirement thirty-seven years later, as a caring, charming man who would always stop for a word, whether in the office, quad, or on St Giles, in his later years coming in for lunch. Our words were usually about the weather, what was happening in College or how we were feeling; he was always glad to be mobile in the later years, coming into lunch using his walker. In short, he always had time for a chat and once a year we said 'Happy Birthday' to each other as we shared the date.

Denise Cripps (St Hugh's 1980; Executive Officer to the President/Head of Communications, St John's, 2013–)

As an undergraduate reading Classics at St Hugh's in the early 1980s I wasn't aware of the links of my Tutor, Laetitia Edwards, to St John's, though we were all close to the newly-appointed College Librarian, Debbie Quare, also a Classicist and the successor to Joy Russell in that role. Joy was often spoken of. During our four years I had a couple of tutorials with the great Donald Russell along with my fellow St Hugh's students. We were understandably nervous about these, and I suspect Donald thought of us as something of a curiosity. Fortunately, I could shield myself behind my fellow undergraduates, notably Pippa Smith, who went on to study for a doctorate on Cicero and who I'm sure Donald regarded (rightly) as a more serious scholar than the rest of us. But Donald never let slip any exasperation with us: he was an engaged and committed tutor, with an awe-inspiring fluency in spoken Latin and Greek. When I ended up working at St John's after a career in educational publishing, I plucked up the courage to visit Donald a few times. He was entirely unchanged: unfailingly kind, interested in the St John's of today, and the exemplar of a world of Classics and Oxford scholarship.

The photos of Donald Russell on the back cover are from 1985 (on the left) and from 2013 (on the right), both taken for the College.

