
Professor Brian Bosworth

A brief biography

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It is a great honour to be asked to write about the life of Professor Bosworth for the Introduction of this special edition of *Karanos* in his honour. Brian always had a great admiration of European culture and scholarship, and he would have deeply appreciated this current compilation.

Albert Brian Bosworth was born in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, on March 21st, 1942, during the height of World War II – he always liked to say that he “came in with the Siege of Leningrad” – which wasn’t quite accurate either in time or location - but nonetheless effective. He won a scholarship to the prestigious Nottingham High School (alma mater of D.H. Lawrence) and later to Oxford University, where he studied at Keble College. After completing his M. Phil, Brian (as he preferred to be known) was appointed as a lecturer in Classics at the University of Western Australia by Professor Mervyn Austin in 1967. He had already been accepted for a position in the public service at Whitehall, but Fate - and perhaps the appeal of a career in Classics and the lure of an exotic location like Australia - led him to leave England for the Southern Hemisphere. He was productive from the outset, and was appointed to a Personal Chair by the time he was 38.

Brian was to spend most of his life in Perth, apart from periods of study leave, University Fellowships and visits to the United States, the United Kingdom and Continental Europe. Interestingly, he never lost his Midlands accent. In his mid sixties and after he had retired from UWA, Brian was offered a Professorial appointment primarily as a researcher at Macquarie University, but sadly the onset of Parkinson’s Disease hindered his productivity there. He died in December 2014 after having been diagnosed with advanced oesophageal cancer.

Brian’s list of publications is considerable; seven books including the third volume of his Commentary on Arrian (which will be published posthumously), nearly ninety articles, book chapters and reviews, and around fifty five entries in the third edition of the Oxford Classical Dictionary (edited by S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth). He also supervised many Research Higher Degree candidates, several of whom have gone on to highly successful academic careers of their own.

Brian was a gentle and quiet man, although not without tenacity, if not a degree of stubbornness. He loved Classical music and could play the piano very well; he hated shopping and shopping malls, loved hiking, cooking and socializing with either a gin and tonic (he gave up whisky at Keble after too many sessions with J.P.V.D. Balsdon – or so he said), or a glass of wine in hand. He had a dry and sharp wit, but above all Brian was always known for his kindness and intellectual generosity – both to

colleagues and students. Right up until his last months he was corresponding with fellow scholars from all around the world (I was his ‘amanuensis’).

I believe it is both as a testament to Brian’s scholarship, as well as the high regard and affection from his colleagues that he should be celebrated again with such a distinguished collection nearly four years after his death.



Brian Bosworth (left) at the University of Canterbury (Photo by Tim Parkin, on the far right).