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James at Bryanston, and beyond

I met James when he came to address a classics teachers' jamboree at Leeds Grammar School where I was in my first job. He reminded me a bit of the actor Derek Nimmo in the clerical sit-com *All Gas and Gaiters*. He was talking about sixth-form language teaching and making the point that the words in a Latin sentence sometimes could (contrary to received wisdom) be translated in the order they occur. His example was Marcus Pomponianus in Livy, reporting the Romans' defeat by Hannibal at Trasimene: *pugna magna victi sumus*. I won't try to mimic James's attempt at a Yorkshire accent, but it went: 'There's been a battle - it were a big'un - somebody got beat - it were us'. In the evening there was a jolly dinner, and an invitation to teach at the 1986 JACT Greek summer school soon followed.

I didn't realise what a significant year that was. Started by David Raeburn in London (half a century ago now), the summer school was for many years directed by him at Dean Close School in Cheltenham. When another new home was needed, Carol Handley approached numerous schools, inspected a short list, and found Bryanston. 1986 was the first year there, and James's first (of many) as director. Numbers had dropped a bit with the move, but our Dorset Greek colony soon took root, and still bears the stamp of its oikist.

The summer school is twice the size it was then, with some 350 students doing an intensive fortnight of Greek at any level from beginners to post A-level. After David Raeburn, James more than anyone made it what it is. He directed regularly in the early Bryanston years, started the management committee, and chaired it for many more years after stepping down as director. JACT - the Joint Association of Classical Teachers, over which James presided both nationally and in its London branch - has now been subsumed into the higher (or at least more affluent) unity of the Classical Association, but the Greek Summer School proudly retains its name.

An obvious attraction of Bryanston is the Greek theatre in the grounds, normally used for the production of a tragedy in the original Greek on the last night. On the middle Sunday it has long been the tradition to do an Aristophanes comedy in English, usually indoors, and now mercifully with a student cast. The tutors in earlier years were made of sterner stuff. *Frogs* has always been a favourite. I'm just old enough to remember Oliver Taplin as Dionysus. James relished the role of Euripides. The morning after a particularly rich performance a student went up to him and said: 'That was very good, Mr Morwood - but were you acting, or are you like that in real life?'

The summer school director has always had to act as a disciplinary policeman, and James had a distinctive approach to that role too. A minor offence (a bit much vodka, say) might be committed at 3 o'clock on Saturday afternoon, but to avoid premature alarm James would routinely wait until 3 o'clock in the morning before ringing the offender's parents. Another part of the job is dealing with Bryanston administrative staff: nowadays a highly professional bunch, but in the early days including some stubborn characters accustomed to the pace of life in rural Dorset. James could charm and get

the best out of all sorts and conditions.

Among a large number of excitable adolescents, and some highly-strung adults, occasional moments of tension are inevitable. James was notably good at pouring oil on troubled waters; only occasionally did you go away thinking, 'Yes, but didn't he stir them up in the first place?'

Bryanston tutors sometimes like to escape for the evening. One such jaunt took us to a posh country hotel. The proprietor had a distinctive double-barrelled name and a son who had been expelled from Harrow. James, muddling him with another Harrovian with an equally distinctive but different name, who had been the golden boy of his generation, jauntily enquired about his present fortunes. A curious conversation ensued; James realised his mistake halfway through but batted on as only he could.

In fact batting on was fundamental. Behind the ease and sociability James was amazingly industrious. Obituaries have variously said at least twenty, at least thirty books: joint and edited volumes probably push it to forty. Christopher has talked about the language textbooks James wrote with Maurice Balme at Harrow; in Oxford he collaborated with Chris Collard on Euripides, and Stephen will talk about the work he and James did on Latin poets. I know from experience that James was an admirable and tactful co-author, and when he (needlessly) felt he wasn't pulling his weight, a case of claret arrived.

James was very good at nurturing other people's writing, and proud of the fact that every member of his Harrow department published a book. His own are too many to list, but as well as the *Oxford Latin Course* and the later scholarly editions, we might think of the Euripides translations, the introductory books on that poet and on Sophocles, and the brief life of the emperor Hadrian. At the end of Bryanston we pack up several hundred copies of his Greek grammar, and of the *Pocket Oxford Classical Greek Dictionary*. His books are key to the study, even the survival, of both classical languages.

James was always willing to support events like the one where I first met him. He was a great defender of our subject and of the humane values it embodies. He was also a good man, ποθεινὸς τοῖς φιλοῖς ... πολλοῖς οὔσιν - indeed παροῦσιν: much missed by his friends, of whom so many are gathered here today.