

## ELIZABETH DONATA RAWSON

1934–1988

In memory of Elizabeth Rawson, who was our Honorary Secretary from 1985 until her death in Beijing on 10 December 1988, we record here the Society's gratitude, respect and affection, as well as its sadness at a loss that came much too early. She had put her very great talents at our service, unobtrusively but without stint, giving, especially to our Council and to her fellow-officers, the support of quick and humane sympathy, intelligent and balanced judgement, an elegance of expression that strengthened positive proposals, a humour that reduced problems to scale.

She cared for the promotion of Roman Studies in part, of course, because she enjoyed them, but also because of their significance in the history of Europe; for she was very much a European, and that well before the existence of the European Community. The intellectual environment in London in which she grew up, together with her own powers and interests, made her, already as a schoolgirl, still more as an undergraduate and graduate student at Oxford, in Italy and in Germany, an enterprising and probing explorer not only of the classical world, but also of the languages, literatures, histories and artistic achievements of post-classical Europe; and from this came a particularly significant aspect of her view of ancient history.

Her first academic appointment was in 1959, as one of the earliest research fellows of the nascent New Hall, Cambridge. New Hall she always held in affection; but the Oxford approach to ancient history was more to her taste than that which prevailed in Cambridge, so that her appointment in 1980 to be a Fellow and Tutor in ancient history at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and a University Lecturer inaugurated what were, surely, the happiest years of her academic career. In the Greats Faculty and her new college she played a valued part as a scholar and a notable teacher; and in the college, where she was the first woman Tutorial Fellow, she helped to mediate the major change in its life from an all-male to a mixed community.

Throughout, and despite frequent ill-health, she was also very active in research and publication. A long series of articles, mainly on the middle and late Roman Republic (its religion, its society, its thought, its tastes, as well as its politics) would in itself amount to a distinguished contribution to knowledge. In addition there were three books, *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought* (1969), *Cicero: a portrait* (1975), *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (1985); they all show, in their different ways, her strong concern with intellectual history, the remarkable range of evidence on which she drew, her European perspective. The quality of her work was publicly recognised in 1988 when she was elected a Fellow of the British Academy.

She loved to travel, and always prepared for it very thoroughly to get the best advantage from her visits to new countries, discovering in advance what was most worth seeing, and coming to it with knowledgeable understanding. In October 1988, after such a preparation, she went to China to teach Classics at Nankai University (Tianjin) and to make as extensive journeys as she could to see monuments with whose elegance she felt a real affinity. Letters to friends show how splendidly she enjoyed what was splendid during this adventure, with what wry sympathy she could describe the less appealing. Her hosts at Nankai, for their part, have written of the interest and pleasure with which her lectures and her presence were received. In Beijing, at the end of a final tour, and just before she was due to leave for home, she was taken suddenly ill and died within a few hours. Elizabeth leaves friends right across the world who do not forget the stimulus of her conversation, the grace of her manner, a warmth and generosity quickly recognisable behind her shyness; and the Society too remembers her not only for her scholarship and for her work as Honorary Secretary but for the style with which she promoted Roman Studies.

J. M. R.