

## Elaine Matthews and LGPN

### The early years

Elaine Matthews began working for Peter Fraser as a young woman in her late twenties, not on the Lexicon of Greek Personal Names (LGPN), but on the enormous general index to his Ptolemaic Alexandria. That three-decker book was published in 1972, the year in which Fraser's LGPN proposal was accepted by the British Academy, and the year after Fraser had ceased to be Director of the British School at Athens. He was seeking new challenges. Not long after that, Fraser recruited Elaine to the infant Lexicon project, at first in a lowly role as one of four 'computer punchers' (basic computerisation began in 1975 and was not replaced by a proper database until 1984, early in Elaine's assistant editorship). Her salary in 1979/80 was a mere £1181 a year, raised to £1287 in 1980/1. She rapidly made herself invaluable to him in this new capacity: during 1979 Timothy Ashplant, the then computer co-ordinator, recommended that she and another of the punching staff, Mr. J. Keefe, should start 'advanced editorial work on already punched material'.



*Elaine Matthews in Greece*

On May 14th 1980, Fraser put before the advisory committee a written proposal for a new post of assistant editor. This was the turning point in Elaine's LGPN career, though she is not named in this document. He drew attention to his own increasing editorial workload, as the emphasis on the project shifted from research ('slipping') to computerised processing and editing. He had turned sixty in 1978 and had been giving thought to the Lexicon's long-term future. He expressed his concern that 'if an emergency

arose there would be nobody to give his successor (if that was what the emergency entailed) a full picture of the working of the project'. The Committee agreed that there was a case for appointing an 'amanuensis to the Chairman'. The next set of minutes show that in October 1980 two crucial decisions were made.

First, the project should have a central office 'where all files, printouts etc., now scattered in different houses, rooms, libraries, etc., can be stored methodically and consulted'. At one time, shoe-boxes full of handwritten slips (this is how material was collected in the early years) had lived in one of Hawksmoor's eccentric towers above Fraser's residential set of rooms in All Souls. By May 1981 the office location had been fixed as 47 Wellington Square, after long negotiations with the splendidly named 'Decanting Committee' of the university of Oxford. There were several moves thereafter, but the vital principle of an office had been established.

The second decision was that an assistant editor should be appointed, whose duties would be to 'assist the Chairman in the later stages of editing, and also to co-ordinate all the various activities involved in running the project'. The minutes record that the advisory committee regarded Mrs Matthews as 'the most suitable person for this task', and that 'she had expressed her willingness to undertake it', at a salary of £3000 p.a. But because she and her husband John were at the IAS in Princeton until September 1981, she did not start until then, and Dr Ellen Rice continued to fill the gap. By 1983 Elaine's salary had doubled (to £6210). Over the next years her position was financially secured for the longer term, as a series of papers attest.

Fraser had two Lexicon supports before Elaine: first, Susan Sherwin-White and then Ellen Rice, both of them graduate students of his, working on topics of Hellenistic history. Elaine, by contrast, had done an MPhil with Sir Ronald Syme on a Roman topic, and had at the outset no special expertise in the field of Greek onomastics. This makes her gradual rise to the top of the LGPN tree, and her growing academic mastery of the whole exceptionally difficult field of Greek personal names, the more remarkable: the result of hard work, pertinacity and an exceptionally clear and focussed intelligence, combined with administrative skills of a high order. But those skills were well known already and had been displayed since the mid 1970s in the context of the Roman Society. It is the academic side which needs to be stressed. Nobody in 1980, including Elaine herself, could have foreseen that over the next thirty years later she would co-edit and then sole-edit two collections of conference papers (2000 and 2007), and eventually (2010) be the recipient of a Festschrift herself, containing warmly and admiringly prefaced

contributions from dozens of international experts on Greek onomastics. Her contribution to LGPN itself was recognised by her named presence alongside Fraser as co-editor (not just 'assistant editor') of the first (1987) and most of the subsequent volumes of the Lexicon. Fraser, who was (especially one-to-one or in small groups) a patient and superb teacher, did not pass on to her everything he himself knew about Greek names and ethnics - that would have taken a life-time as long as his own - but he taught her a great deal. He had an extremely able and retentive pupil, who became progressively more assured in her handling of the academic aspects to the work, particularly as regards the evidence of epigraphy.

Personal charm and enthusiasm helped too. From the start, Elaine made it clear that she had a new and more human view of the project. A handwritten invitation dated 1982 contains an invitation to a Christmas drinks party for the Lexicon staff. 'I think it can only do good' she concluded in a PS, 'to get staff and committee together'. Other such occasions would follow, most of them less formal and grand than the memorable reception in 1987 at the British Academy's then premises in Cornwall Terrace, to celebrate the publication of vol. 1 of the lexicon, which contained the names from the islands and Cyrenaica.

In June 1984 the initials PMF and EM appear jointly for the first time on LGPN papers. From the early 80s a new and less personal tone is detectable in committee minutes and other LGPN documents. Fraser's sometimes bitter and amusing remarks about slow or actually non-producing foreign collaborators disappear in favour of a brisker and more neutral manner of reporting. As the computer side of the operation became more and more complex (see above for the move to a data-base schema in the mid 80s), so Fraser tended increasingly to depend on Elaine for guidance, and the teacher-pupil relationship was thus reversed, or rather the two of them took it in turns to teach. In committee meetings, Fraser would sometimes fall glumly silent for long periods, only to spring to life again when purely academic matters returned to the forefront of discussion. Nevertheless Charlotte Roueché was right, in her double TLS review of LGPN VA and of Fraser's posthumous Greek Ethnic Terminology (July 15th 2011), to say that Fraser was from the very beginning 'not frightened by the implications for the academy of new media, and was considering the use of computers from the 1970s'.

The first of the crucial 1980 decisions mentioned above, the physical shift away from Fraser's college rooms and other temporary storing-places to a proper office, found its culmination in the eventual annexation of the LGPN project to the university of Oxford

as a one of a number of classics research projects (1996). It was really as part of this process that Elaine herself became a supernumerary fellow of St Hilda's in 1995. But LGPN was always a national and a British Academy project, not only an Oxford one; indeed it was always international in terms of the voluntary academic area-specialists who provided the essential data for the paid Oxford-based team. The advisory committee's membership was never exclusively or even narrowly drawn from Oxford academics, and the close relationship with the British Academy in London was symbolised for many years by the attendance at committee meetings of Peter Brown, secretary of the academy, with whom Elaine developed an excellent working relationship. These Saturday morning meetings, both under Fraser's own chairmanship and then successively those of Nigel Wilson and Robert Parker, ended agreeably with good quality white wine. In the first phase and more austere years of LGPN, these meetings had taken place on weekday afternoons in the Wharton or Hovenden Rooms of All Souls, and it is very likely that Elaine was, behind the scenes, responsible for the new and friendlier format: the shift to Saturday meetings seems to have taken place in October 1982.



*Elaine Matthews entertaining*

The preparation of requests for funding became more and more elaborate and arduous over the years, especially as the role of the Academy diminished and the more elaborately rule-governed AHRB (later AHRC)

became the main financial provider; the importance of Elaine's organisational role in this area can hardly be exaggerated. Greek philanthropic and cultural foundations also helped to keep the project going in some lean times. It was important from this point of view that LGPN should be internationally known, visible and audible. Although Peter Fraser's personal presence was essential for some fund-raising purposes, Elaine started in the late 1980s to make academic visits e.g. to a research institute in Athens, to attend conferences on her own or with Fraser (Delphi, Nimes etc.), and eventually to give papers herself, explaining, with examples, the principles underlying LGPN and the problems it faced. The report of a joint visit by the two editors to Australia in 1994, to mark the publication of LGPN II (Athens and Attica, ed. Michael Osborne and Sean Byrne) shows that the 'editors' (plural) gave seminars about LGPN. Her excellent, long and authoritative entry 'personal names, Greek' in the 3rd edition of the Oxford Classical Dictionary (1996, but the entry was written three or four years earlier) drew on the skill she had thus acquired for generalisation backed up by apt examples.



*The second conference organized by the "Copenhagen Polis Centre" in August 1994: (back row, l-r) Alexander Avram, Martin Dreher, David Whitehead, Elaine Matthews, Walter Burkert, Wolfgang Schuller; (middle row, l-r) Peter Rhodes, Jacques Oulhen, Ted Buttrey, Susan Guettel Cole, Philippe Gauthier, Michel Cottier; (front row, l-r) Paula Perlman, Pernille Flensted-Jensen.*

Fraser's eightieth birthday, and the half-way point of the LGPN project, were celebrated by a reception at the Academy's magnificent new Carlton House Terrace premises in January 2001. The immediate occasion was the simultaneous publication, at the end of 2000, of LGPN vol. IIIB (central Greece) and of Fraser's *Festschrift Greek Personal Names: their Value as Evidence*, the result of a conference in June 1998, also held at the Academy's premises, and largely or-

ganised by Elaine, who then co-edited the resulting book. To this, she herself contributed an elegantly written and fascinating introduction about the history not only of the LGPN project but more generally of the study of Greek onomastics. These pages were enlivened by a drawing of the pioneering figure of J.-A. Letronne, looking like an angry Schubert.

*Simon Hornblower*

#### From 2000-2011

Simon Hornblower has explained the gradual and in some ways paradoxical process by which 'Fraser and Matthews' has become to Greek historians as familiar a pairing as the immortal Liddell and Scott. By the time that I became chair of the LGPN committee in 2000, the day-to-day administration of the project was entirely in the hands of Elaine, though until his death in 2007 Peter Fraser continued to determine its academic direction, worked on particularly difficult files and answered the queries of the younger staff-members. This 'day-to-day administration' had many aspects. Internally, Elaine co-ordinated the work of the team, devised ways of recruiting extra young scholars to work for restricted periods in various roles, worried about their wellbeing and their career development. Externally, she responded to queries, played a central part in maintaining that network of contacts with scholars in many countries which underpins the Lexicon's work, and represented it abroad in the ways Simon Hornblower has described. As he also notes, she brought an invaluable human touch to the whole enterprise. She found accommodation for visitors, and sometimes provided it herself. An ever increasing and worrying burden was the writing of grant applications, an exercise she conducted with great pain and great skill. These activities left her less time for routine editing of names, but her editorial role remained crucial in that she maintained consistency of treatment and presentation; the final stages of preparing volume IV, in particular, for the press saw her often staying late in the office.

Elaine's grace of manner, and charm, were immediately obvious. It took longer to come to appreciate two further qualities. She had considerable determination, and with quiet firmness always stood up for the needs of the Lexicon and its staff against any encroachment that might threaten them. She also always thought strategically and in a long perspective. This strategic vision was seen pre-eminently in relation to IT but also in relation to funding and the whole role and future of the Lexicon. At our planning meetings I was always struck by how far ahead she looked. Excited by Fergus Millar's paper in the Fest-

scription for her, she was speaking with enthusiasm of Phase Two of the project (the phase that would cover regions where there is extensive documentation in languages other than Greek and Latin) very shortly before her death.

This forward thinking was a product, and expression, of her very deep commitment to the wellbeing of the project. Though she formally retired in 2007, she remained heavily involved with the Lexicon; she was particularly occupied with the conversion of the database, finally accomplished this year, to a format (TEI-compatible XML) which allows full online searching and also interoperability with many other classical databases. Just before the last onset of her illness she wrote the crucial Technical Appendix for yet another grant application, the one that if successful will permit the completion of Phase One; the news that the reviewers' reports on that application had been exceptionally positive delighted her during her very last days.

*Robert Parker*

### Elaine, LGPN and IT

The LGPN has been noted throughout its life for experimentation with IT and changing technology to keep up with new ideas, and Elaine was remarkably successful at steering between the Scylla of "I don't understand all this modern technology" and the Charybdis of becoming an over-enthusiastic amateur programmer. She insisted on the highest academic standards, but appreciated and understood suggestions for how technology could help with the work of the Lexicon. I first worked for her in the early 80s, and together we discovered the glory of computerised typesetting - seeing the first version of typeset pages for LGPN I was a revelation.

18 years later, she was equally excited by what the Lexicon might do in the world of the semantic web and open linked data. She had no problem with getting to grips with RDF and XML and was instrumental in adding the glorious onomastic <nym> element to the Text Encoding Initiative. When LGPN joined in with CLAROS, and we started to show Lexicon data plotted on maps, she again added her meticulous scholarship to finding out exactly where some tiny village in Cyrenaica really was.

Elaine was a pleasure to work with, always ready to find time to discuss new ideas, and always able to relate them to a bigger picture. Digital Humanities at Oxford will mourn a great advocate and ambassador.

*Sebastian Rahtz (Head of Information and Support Group, Oxford University Computing Services)*



*Prof. Donna Kurtz and Elaine Matthews at the launch of Onomatologos in St. Hilda's College gardens*

Our last conversations were always about work. Elaine was so keen for news of CLAROS ([www.claros-net.org](http://www.claros-net.org)), especially after she was unable to attend its meetings. When I could tell her at the beginning of June that the Epigraphical Museum had offered 400,000 images to CLAROS she smiled broadly. Three or four years ago I had invited LGPN to join a predominantly archaeology/art group. Elaine was delighted to have epigraphical and archaeological data 'joined up' and 'opened up' to a more diverse community than the paper publication. She had long been deeply concerned about the future of LGPN and welcomed greater accessibility. She often talked about a new project that would enable Greeks to consult LGPN to trace the origins of their names. The two of us brought the digital world to the Faculty of Classics, and it pleased her to recall that LGPN started even before the Beazley Archive, if only by a few months; both were British Academy Research Projects.

*Donna Kurtz*