

IN MEMORIAM
DAVID LUSCOMBE
(22.VII.1938–30.VIII.2021)

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David Luscombe who died on 30 August 2021 at the age of 83, was well known to medievalists on the conference circuit both for his dapper appearance as well as his unfailing courtesy, but with a penchant for preciseness. As the Department of History of the University of Sheffield put it, he was « A man of great personal charm, a committed and scrupulous teacher, and a scholar of great distinction, he played a formative role in our work for fifty years ». This statement captures nicely his personal commitment and dedication at all levels of the profession which marked his life as an exceptional university scholar, teacher, and administrator.

I first knew David Luscombe through his book *Medieval Thought* which I used with my undergraduate students in second year Medieval Philosophy at Maynooth. I later met him in person for the first time at the Leeds Medieval Congress where he encouraged my research into Richard FitzRalph's *Lectura on the Sentences* of Peter Lombard for the ABMA. This kindly encouragement of young scholars was typical of him. He was also extremely supportive of our hosting of the SIEPM Colloquium in Maynooth in 2015 where he impressed his listeners with his elegant paper on Toleration and Rights, showing that his interests did not remain confined to the medieval period but also connected with contemporary reflections.

David Luscombe took his B.A. degree with First Class Honours in the Historical Tripos Parts in the University of Cambridge in 1959 where he also gained his PhD in 1964. At this time he sat at the feet of Dom David Knowles whom he would later acknowledge as a teacher and as encouraging his students through his own

example and personality.¹ From his studies would come in 1969 *The School of Peter Abelard: The Influence of Abelard's Thought in the Early Scholastic Period*.

He was a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge in 1962–64 and a Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge in 1964–72. In 1972 he was appointed Professor of Medieval History in the University of Sheffield where from 1995 to 2000 he was Leverhulme Personal Research Professor of Medieval History. He later became Research Professor of Medieval History until the end of September 2003 when he retired. He filled the roles Head of Department (1973–76, 1979–84), Dean of the Faculty of Arts (1985–87), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (1990–94), and Research Director for Arts and Humanities (1994–2003), showing his dedication to the running of the University. His scholarly achievements were recognised when he was conferred with the degree of LittD from the University of Cambridge and of LittD honoris causa from the University of Sheffield.

His commitment to the profession was outstanding as can be seen from the many commitments he took on tirelessly over the years: Elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1986 he filled a number of key roles. From 1990 to 1997 he served as the Publications Secretary of the British Academy. He was also Chairman of the Medieval Texts Editorial Committee of the British Academy which publishes editions in the series *Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi*. From 1992 to 1998 he was a member of the Joint Supervisory Committee of the British Academy and Oxford University Press for the new Oxford Dictionary of National Biography and also an Associate Editor with responsibility for philosophers and theologians 1100–1499. Between 1994 and 2000 he was a member of the Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships Commission of the UK with responsibility for selecting Scholars and Fellows (both coming in and going out of the UK). From 1997 to 2002 he was appointed President of the International Society for the Study of Medieval Philosophy (SIEPM) and in this capacity he presided over the annual colloquia held in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve in 1998, Sofia in 1999, Firenze/Pisa in 2000 and the International Congress held in Porto in 2002.

David Luscombe's main interests lay in the history of medieval thought and religion from late antiquity to the end of the Middle Ages, particularly in the following areas: the writings of Peter Abelard and of other medieval scholars and thinkers; the history of the medieval schools and universities, and the history of medieval (and Dionysian) conceptions of hierarchy.

As already mentioned, David Luscombe's doctoral work was on the school of Peter Abelard, under the Benedictine historian, David Knowles. He obtained major grants, from the Leverhulme Trust and the British Academy to facilitate

¹ DAVID LUSCOMBE, « David Knowles and his pupils », in CHRISTOPHER BROOKE, ROGER LOVATT, DAVID LUSCOMBE, AELRED SILLEM (eds.), *David Knowles Remembered*, Cambridge University Press, New York 1991, p. 123–139.

the publication of new editions of all of Abelard's works. His own edition of *The Letter Collection of Peter Abelard and Heloise* was published in Oxford Medieval Texts in 2013. It was described in the *Times Literary Supplement* as « a veritable Abelardian encyclopedia », and was awarded the British Academy Medal in 2014. In addition to the *Letter Collection*, he edited, along with Lisa Liddy and the late David Hey, the cartulary of Beauchief Abbey, an important Premonstratensian house, now in suburbs of Sheffield. In 2011 a *Festschrift* was published in his honour, *Knowledge, Discipline and Power in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of David Luscombe*, edited by Joseph Canning, Edmund King and Martial Staub (Leiden: Brill). Finally, his collected papers were published in *Peter Abelard and Heloise. Collected Studies* (Routledge 2018).

On a more personal note, the Department of History at Sheffield noted that members of the University community would remember David Luscombe in a wide variety of contexts: as opening batsman of the Staff Cricket Club; as President of the University's branch of the teaching union, UCU; as an active member of the Catholic Chaplaincy; and as a scrupulous attender at University events, including degree conferrings. Again, we saw his active energy in Maynooth, where he walked every morning from the accommodation in Carton House rather than taking the transport provided. He showed a keen interest in Ireland and all things Irish, including pints in the local pub.

His funeral was held at 12.30 p.m. on Friday, 24 September, in St Marie's Catholic Cathedral, Sheffield. He is survived by his wife, Megan, and their four children, Nicholas, Mark, Philip, and Amanda.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.