

Arts & LIFE

Retired professor keeps busy translating ancient works

By Dianne Cornish
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Translating classic literature from Greek and Latin into English has been a passion and a pastime for John C. Yardley for the past three decades.

The Milton resident, formerly a classics professor at the University of Ottawa and, before that, the University of Calgary, has no plans to discontinue his work now that he's six years into retirement.

He's in the midst of preparing seven volumes from the works of Roman historian, Livy (64 or 59 B.C.-A.D. 17), and recently launched a book about Emperor Nero (37 A.D.-68 A.D.), co-authored with two other Canadian classicists, Anthony Barrett of the University of British Columbia and the late Elaine Fantham of Princeton University.

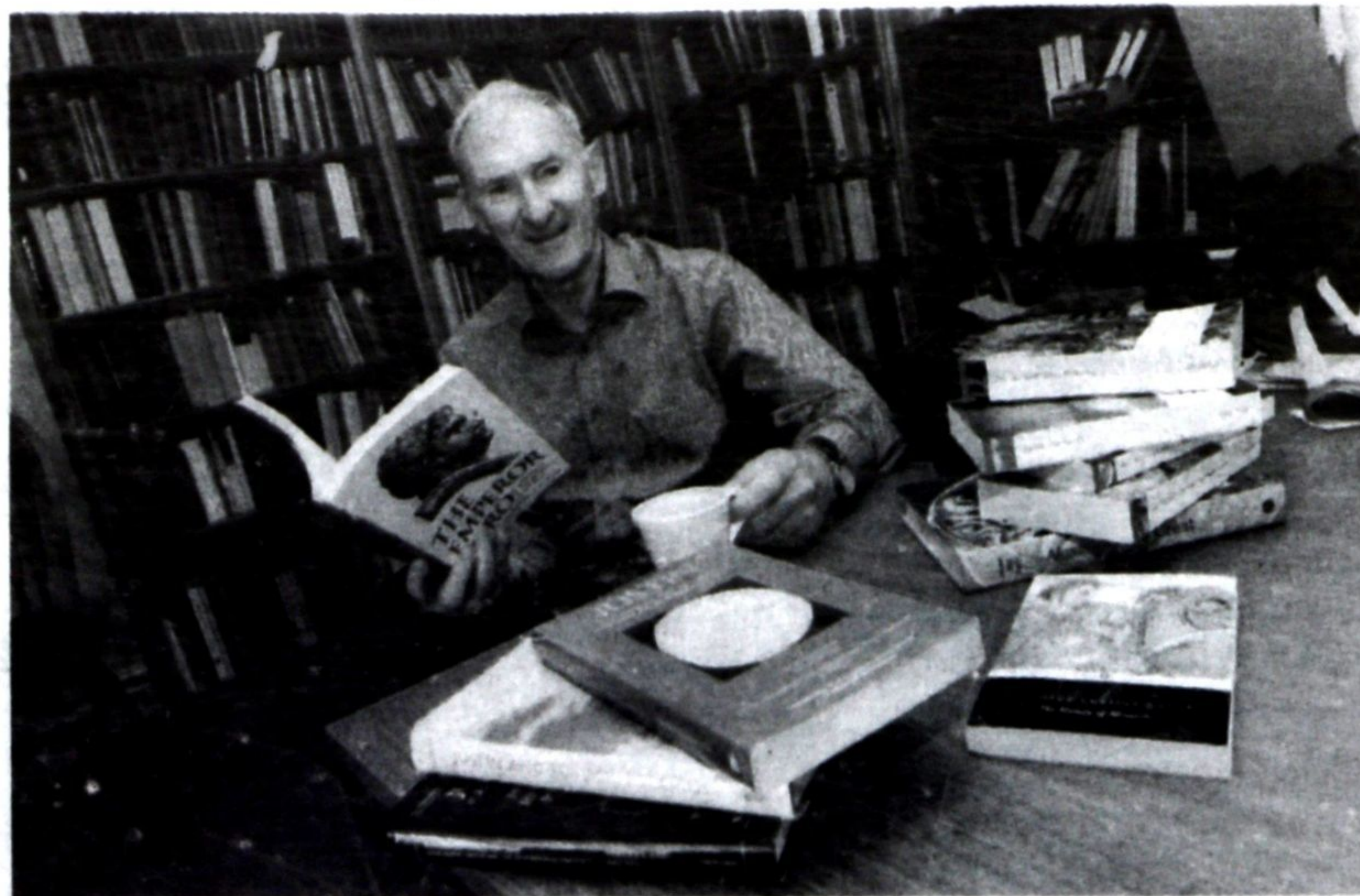
"I love doing this work," Yardley said, alluding to the great sense of satisfaction he attains from studying the works of earlier writers and preserving their words and thoughts for today's lovers of the classics.

At 74, Yardley says he's unsure how much longer he can continue doing the translations, but it's something he intends to do as long as possible.

He started out more than 30 years ago working on Roman love poetry, but eventually turned to researching and writing about the classics.

In 1986, he released his first book about Alexander the Great (356 B.C.-323 B.C.), simply entitled *Alexander*. It was published by Penguin Books.

Yardley has since written about 15 other



Milton author John Yardley has been keeping busy translating classic literature from Greek and Latin into English. The retired classics university professor is currently working on the works of Roman historian Livy. *Graham Paine / Metroland West Media Group*

books, most of which have been purchased by university students or historians. His books are generally used in university courses, but they have also found an audience in the general population amongst lovers of the classics, he said.

The book on Nero, entitled *The Emperor Nero: A Guide to the Ancients Sources*, is a 299-page paperback, launched a couple of months ago after four years of collaboration amongst the three

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classicists. It sells for about \$35 and can be purchased online on Amazon. Six years ago, Yardley was commissioned by the Loeb Classical Library of Harvard University Press to prepare the seven volumes of Livy. He has completed three of the volumes and expects to have the remainder finished sometime in 2018. Living in the time of emperor Augustus, Livy wrote a history of Rome from its beginnings

down to his own day. His history was published in 142 scrolls, each containing what to day would fill about 50 Penguin book pages. Only 35 of his scrolls survived and Yardley is preparing an annotated edition with translation and textual notes (notes on the manuscript) of 20 of them, namely Books 21 through 40, in seven volumes.

The first four volumes give the best known account of Hannibal's journey over the Alps (218 B.C.) with his army and elephants, and his subsequent battles in Italy. The last three deal with Rome's wars in Greece and the Middle East.

The first volume is available on the Amazon sites (under J.C. Yardley) and two others are complete and in press. The volumes are hardback and sell for about \$35.

Six years ago, Yardley completed four volumes on Livy for Oxford University Press. His work, then, also included accounts of Hannibal's war.

Born in Wales, Yardley grew up in England during the Second World War. He holds a Bachelor of Letters (B. Litt.) from the University of Oxford, and a Master of Arts and PhD from St. Andrews University. His Greek instructor at St. Andrews was Professor Sir Kenneth Dover, who years later taught two of Britain's best-known public figures, Prince William and Kate Middleton, also graduate of the Scottish university.

After emigrating to Canada, Yardley worked as a classics professor at the University of Calgary from 1969 to 1988 and at the University of Ottawa from 1988 to 2010.

He has resided in Milton for the past 15 years and is married to local realtor Barbara Crowe

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