

Thea Sinclair's biography

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Professor Thea Sinclair died tragically and very suddenly on Wednesday, the 27th September 2006, following a riding accident. Kent University wrote: "She was of course a very experienced rider and the manner of her death is thus all the more shocking"¹. Her friend and collaborator at Kent, Roger Vickerman, says that only a few of her colleagues saw Thea's passion for horse-riding. He writes: "It was symbolic of her determination that after a previous bad accident she was back in the saddle as soon as she could. I cannot tell you the shock amongst former colleagues right across the University of Kent at the news of Thea's accident, but suffice it say we all feel we have lost a good friend, one whom we had hoped to see more of again in the years to come, as well as a talented and highly respected academic"².

"Thea came from Reading where she had been working on her PhD following both undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The PhD was an important piece of work which both developed the theory of the Keynesian income multiplier (a workhorse of the approach to regional economics) and had an application to what became her eventual lifetime focus tourism. The tourist element had involved Thea working in Spain for a couple of years as part of study into the economic impact of tourism on the Costa del Sol. This I guess defined Thea's approach to research, it had to be rigorous and it had to have a practical application. Of course it was open to a degree of mocking from economists who rarely left the comfort of their studies that one could do serious economics in Malaga or many of the increasingly exotic places which Thea's later researches led her to, but the fact remained that she did and it was this which eventually led here to be the obvious target for the Chair at Nottingham to which she moved in 1999"³.

Thea joined the Economics Department of Kent University in September 1977 as Lecturer. In Canterbury she spent many years immediately prior to coming to Nottingham. From 1977 for many years, Thea and professor Vickerman jointly taught a course on Urban and Regional Economics where Thea devoted herself to Keynesian multiplier, the subject of her PhD piece of work.

Roger Vickerman⁴, Head of Economics at Kent University, writes: "Teaching with Thea was always challenging, not least when student evaluations came on the scene. I guess I could accept that she would always get better evaluations than me

1 University of Kent, Newsletter Vol. 28 No. 1 October 2006.

2 Vickerman R.W., from the tribute for Thea's memorial event, On Tuesday 4th December 2006, University of Nottingham.

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4 Roger Vickerman and Thea Sinclair joined the Economics Department of Kent University in 1977 within a few months of each other. Roger Vickerman became Professor of Regional and Transport Economics in 1989 and Professor of European Economics in 1998 and he was Head of Economics at Kent University from 1993 – 1999 and again from 2005.

for the usual organisation, lecturing, seminars etc questions, but even the room got a better evaluation when Thea taught in it than I did; well, she certainly had a presence. There is a common myth that lecturers can buy good evaluations by being soft and easy on their students; don't believe it! Thea was extremely strict with students and expected the same sort of commitment from them that she gave both to her own work and to the preparation of teaching. But that commitment was also given to students: Thea was the only person I have known who on noting that a student was missing from the start of an examination went to the student's room and in effect dragged him (I think it was a him) out of bed and to the exam"⁵. "As well as the urban and regional course Thea taught across a range of other courses at Kent over the years, particularly international economics which also fitted well with her increasing commitment to international tourism. She supervised a number of master's theses and four PhD theses (and examined another 3 PhDs) during her time at Kent. Many of these students were also encouraged into their first publications with Thea"⁶. In 1992 she was appointed Senior Lecturer and Reader in 1998. During this time at Kent University, Thea wrote in collaboration with Mike Stabler (who was still at Reading University) her most famous publication "The Economics of Tourism", published in 1997. In 1999 she went to take up a position as Professor of Economics of Tourism in the Christel de Haan Tourism and Travel research Institute (TTRI⁷) at Nottingham University Business School and took over the Directorship of TTRI at the beginning of February 2005. Colleagues at the Institute write: "Thea was not only a highly honourable member of our Scientific Committee, but also a great friend and colleague who was with us since we started this conference series back in 2005"⁸. Professor Vickerman writes: "I know how long and hard Thea agonised about the job at Nottingham, a new challenge which she relished, but also one where she was determined that she should still be recognised as an economist. I seem to remember she negotiated a retiling of the chair to acknowledge this. Looking at what she has achieved in the just under eight years since she left Kent I have no doubts that she made the right decision"⁹. As well as her leadership of the internationally renowned Christel DeHaan Tourism and Travel Research Institute, Professor Sinclair directed studies for many international and national government bodies, and organisations including studies for a wide range of government organisations, the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, and the

5 Vickerman R.W., from the tribute for Thea's memorial event, On Tuesday 4th December 2006, University of Nottingham.

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7 TTRI is one of three international universities that have been involved in the founding of the International Association of Tourism Economics (IATE), which has held its first conference in October 2007 in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. Over 150 delegates from over 30 countries attended the conference, with six TTRI staff and students presenting. This conference was dedicated to the memory of Professor Thea Sinclair, former TTRI Director and one of the driving forces behind the creation of the association.

8 Advances in Tourism Economics web page, "Thea Sinclair: in memoriam", posted on Wednesday 25 October 2006 - 09:14:21.

9 Vickerman R.W., from the tribute for Thea's memorial event, On Tuesday 4th December 2006, University of Nottingham.

British Council". Thea has published extensively in the area of the economics of tourism and her research covered a variety of areas including the economic impact of tourism, tourism demand estimation and forecasting, women's work in tourism, and the international and developmental aspects of tourism¹⁰. Actually, she was deeply committed to the pioneering Women's Studies programme at Kent, teaching a course on Women in the Labour Market in spite of some prejudices of some colleagues¹¹. She conducted international research on studies of the price sensitivity of tourism and its effects on the economies of the Canary Islands, Malta and Cyprus, as well as on tourism development and poverty alleviation in Chile, Indonesia, and Brazil. She published numerous articles and chapters on the economics of tourism, as well as four books¹². "Thea was also instrumental in the development of an Erasmus exchange programme with Spain, which amongst other things allowed her to maintain her fluency in Spanish"¹³. Professor M. Thea Sinclair was not only a highly regarded academic, whose expertise in her field was internationally recognised but also she was particularly devoted to her colleagues and students. She was someone who fought for what she believed in. Professor Roger Vickerman says that she always struck him as appropriate writing on her c.v. as her main interest "swimming with sharks", and again he writes: "Thea and I worked closely together in teaching for many years and she was a very valuable members of the department. Her international career has developed even further since going to Nottingham and she will be sadly missed"¹⁴. One of her student writes: "Professor Thea taught me when I was a student at Nottingham, as well as one of the sources of inspiration for my pursuance in a professorship career. My thoughts remain with her and she will be deeply remembered. Goodbye, Thea"¹⁵.

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10 Windows Live Spaces:

<http://uscouto.spaces.live.com/blog/cns!82DD269F0FDCDE24!244.entry#comment>

11 Vickerman R.W., from the tribute for Thea's memorial event, On Tuesday 4th December 2006, University of Nottingham.

12 Windows Live Spaces:

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13 Vickerman R.W., from the tribute for Thea's memorial event, On Tuesday 4th December 2006, University of Nottingham.

14 University of Kent, Newsletter Vol. 28 No. 1 October 2006.

15 Windows Live Spaces:

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