Dr Caroline Williams, longstanding member of the Society for Latin American Studies, committee member from 2007, Vice-President from 2011 and president from 2013-15, died on 9 August 2019, aged 57. Her friends and colleagues at SLAS offer this memorial to her work for the Society and the field, in the voices of some amongst the many SLAS members, committee members and colleagues who will miss her.

Born in 1962 to parents Erik David Hansen and Tricia Hansen, Caroline was brought up in Argentina. She came to the UK at 18 to study Comparative American Studies at the University of Warwick. After a postdoctoral fellowship at University College, London, Caroline joined the Department of Hispanic, Portuguese and Latin American Studies at the University of Bristol, in 1994. During her many years at Bristol, Caroline was known and admired as a committed, warm, thoughtful, capable and invaluable member of the community. She was also recognised as an internationally respected scholar and leading historian of colonial Latin America who keenly felt a responsibility to historical materials and figures; her commitment to the struggle against injustice always shone through. Caroline’s research focused on three areas: the colonization of indigenous peoples in frontier regions of Latin America; commercial and cultural exchange across imperial boundaries in the Atlantic World; and, most recently, innovative studies on climate and the impact of volcanoes and earthquakes on colonial societies bridging the Humanities and natural sciences. As an example of the calibre of her scholarship, Caroline won the 2014 Tibesar prize, awarded by the US-based Conference on Latin American History for the best article (defined by distinguished scholarship, originality and graceful writing style) published in the top-ranked journal *The Americas* (Cambridge University Press).

Caroline brought her collegiate, warm and collaborative style, as well as her scholarly acumen, to the Society for Latin American Studies. As Lucy Taylor (SLAS president 2011-2013), remembers ‘Caroline embodied all that is best in SLAS. She was committed to sharing her knowledge of the area and was endlessly interested in what everyone was studying and thinking, and in every aspect of Latin American politics, society, culture and especially colonial and pre-colonial history. She had immense knowledge which she wore lightly and with generosity and approached everyone in the same supportive yet rigorous way, be they Professor, PhD, or undergrad’.

Caroline’s work on the SLAS committee lasted nearly a decade encompassing roles as committee member, officer and conference organiser. As a committee member and officer, Caroline was a great strategic thinker, but also an excellent listener, profoundly honest and polite, and always eager to ensure everyone was included in deliberations and decision-making. When Caroline attended or chaired a committee meeting, it was sure to be fun because of Caroline’s warmth and sense of humour. Marieke Riethof recalled that one of her first SLAS memories at all was of chatting with Caroline at Marieke’s ‘very first’ SLAS conference.

As lead organiser of the 2010 SLAS Annual Conference in Bristol, Caroline showed a particular commitment to post-graduate students and this commitment to support postgraduates and postdocs, be it at her university or through SLAS and PILAS, followed through during her SLAS presidency. One postdoc, Dr Silvia Espelt Bombim, who defended her doctorate at Newcastle, remembered ‘Caroline was a wonderful person, always extremely kind with me and supportive of my research’. The consistent increase of SLAS bursaries for PGRs and postdocs, like Silvia, was very important to Caroline. She often talked about this.

Caroline was Society president when the SLAS golden jubilee conference took place in London in 2014 and she offered vital support in the organisation of this multi-institutional event with 350 attendees. Her collaboration, with conference organiser Jasmine Gideon at Birkbeck, University of London, also included liaising with the Institute for the Study of the Americas and the newly re-established Institute for Latin American Studies. Additionally, Caroline, along with her predecessor Lucy Taylor, successfully navigated the Society through the challenges to SLAS and BLAR then presented by the Open Access agenda and she showed great leadership in the support of institutions and colleagues who were threatened by restructurings.

Jens Hentschke (SLAS president 2015-2017**)** remembers ‘Her love of the Society, its informality, friendliness and yet also efficiency, and her commitment to it were immense. And so was her conscientiousness. I will always remember the committee meeting at Aberdeen (2015). Caroline had a very serious cold and I had offered to deputise as vice-president, but she would not allow that and wanted to lead in the preparation of the conference. In 2017, when Maxine Molyneux asked me whether SLAS would take on the management of the Standing Conference of Centres of Latin American Studies in the UK, the SLAS committee unanimously accepted this task, and Caroline was one of the strongest sources of support to help shape the Standing Conference to further develop the field in the UK’. Amongst the changes was that the office of Chair would rotate with that of Past President of SLAS, and Caroline became the first incumbent during a transitory period and drafted the new Standing Conference Constitution.

As Jasmine Gideon remembers, ‘I have lots of very good memories of working with Caroline when we were both involved in the SLAS committee and, like others, most of these involved a lot of convivial conversation and a glass or two of wine after a Committee Meeting or at the Conference dinner. Aberdeen is one conference that particularly stands out given the Scottish hospitality and Caroline was able to relax knowing that she had reached the end of her successful tenure as SLAS President and I think she may even have stepped onto the dance floor before the night was over! At the same time, I have plenty of memories of her in a more serious mode, talking about her own work but also the work of others. We had a very fruitful discussion that same year discussing the entries to the Blakemore essay competition. Again this ‘meeting’ was conducted in a very comfortable corner of the hotel bar with a glass of wine! It was always a great pleasure and privilege to work with Caroline and spend time in her company’. When Caroline stepped down from the SLAS committee, after a decade of service, she was terribly missed. Caroline had been such an important presence on the committee that it was hard to imagine the committee without her.

Caroline was much loved by many people and, in the midst of her illness, she said that the one positive thing about it was that she had come to know and feel this love. Very many words of warmth and appreciation have been expressed since her untimely death. They describe her as a wonderful, generous, loyal friend and colleague, an accomplished, insightful and rigorous scholar, a dedicated, supportive and deeply knowledgeable teacher and she was an immensely thoughtful, warm and generous friend. She was respected for her impeccable judgment, empathy with students, and collegiality; her colleagues and students also loved her as a person. They speak of her integrity, her wry, ever-present sense of humour, her shrewd and political mind, her warmth and kindness, her energy, her empathy and ability to really listen, her common sense, modesty, patience and positive thinking, her courage and determination, her invariable commitment to equality, transparency, compromise and resolution.

Sally-Ann Kitts, her colleague at the University of Bristol and dear friend, has crafted a fitting memorial for Caroline, providing more details on her professional life beyond SLAS and her personal life, which you can find [here](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2019/september/caroline-williams.html). There is also an obituary published in the Guardian, available [here](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/oct/14/caroline-williams-obituary). SLAS as an organisation benefitted immensely from Caroline’s leadership and commitment to the society, its members and the field of Latin American Studies. We miss her and are all poorer without her.