Rob Bartlett was born in London on 27 November 1950. He was educated at Battersea Grammar School, and retained a considerable devotion both to South London and to grammar schools. He benefited from inspirational teachers and from a sound grounding not just in History but also in Latin, put to good use in his later work editing and translating texts. From there he went on to Peterhouse, Cambridge, where a diverse range of teachers provided inspiration. Realizing that he was in danger of breaching regulations by taking too much ancient and medieval history, he studied the early modern period with Roy Porter. A rather different historian he thanks for ridding him of ‘a lazy Marxism’ – many now would like to have watched the supervisions in which Maurice Cowling achieved this. And his greatest devotion was to a much less well-known figure, the ancient historian, Robert Tannenbaum. Following graduation he spent a period working nights in the international section of the Post Office telephone exchange – a job enlivened by the possibility of listening in to calls while they were being made. He then decided to pursue a doctorate, and went to St John’s College Oxford to work with Sir Richard Southern on Gerald of Wales. Southern has remained Rob’s lifelong inspiration; he edited a collection of Southern’s papers entitled *History and Historians* (2004) and the range of Rob’s work mirrors that of his mentor. Another lasting attachment, to the U.S., also began during his doctoral work, when he spent a year at Princeton as a Procter Fellow. He received his DPhil in 1978, and his external examiner has described the thesis as the best that he ever read. Gerald’s writings have remained a constant presence in Rob’s teaching, writing, and broadcasting.

In 1979–80 Rob was a Junior Fellow in the University of Michigan Society of Fellows. While in Ann Arbor, at Washtenaw County Courthouse, he married Nora, whom he had met in Oxford. They returned to Britain, but now to Edinburgh where Rob had been appointed to a Lectureship. It was there that *Gerald of Wales*, the Oxford Historical Monograph based on his DPhil thesis, was published in 1982. A natural development from that book was a volume edited with his colleague Angus MacKay, *Medieval Frontier Societies* (1989). Also in a related field was an essay on military technology and political power. Rob has taken considerable pleasure that the fate of this essay, when turned down by *Past and Present*, was publication in the journal to which *Past and Present* often seemed to aspire, *Annales E.S.C.*
Connections with the United States continued whilst in Edinburgh, and he was a member of the Institute for Advanced Studies and a Fellow of the Davis Center at Princeton in 1983–4. An unexpected phone-call then brought a job offer at the University of Chicago, to which he moved in 1986. Also in that year was published his second book, *Trial by Fire and Water: The Medieval Judicial Ordeal*. Chicago differed from Edinburgh in its focus on postgraduates; it was in Chicago that Rob had the first of the doctoral students who have contributed to this volume and it was also there that he developed a taught-postgraduate course that continues to thrive, in evolved form, in north-east Fife. One feature of this course is that it encourages students to count, chart, and map, and such processes were also central to Rob's research at this time, as he examined the expansion of Europe in the High Middle Ages. Geographically, if not thematically, this took him far from the areas where Gerald of Wales sang his own praises, and in particular it took him to the east of Europe; thanks to a von Humboldt Fellowship, Rob — now with Nora, young family, and old car — spent 1988–9 at Göttingen.

The resultant book, *The Making of Europe*, appeared in 1993. By this time, however, Rob was no longer in Chicago, having been appointed to the Chair of Mediaeval History at St Andrews. Continuation of a pattern of a move every six years (Edinburgh 1980–6, Chicago 1986–92), at times threatened, but was resisted. *The Making of Europe* is a bold, book-length essay, its themes summarised in its sub-title: “Conquest, colonization and cultural change 950–1350.” The volume achieved great acclaim. Despite its integrationist themes, fan mail arrived from Eurosceptic Tory MPs. Sir James Holt described it as the most important book since Southern’s *Making of the Middle Ages*. And it was awarded the Wolfson History Prize in 1993, a prize for books that are “readable, scholarly, and accessible to the lay reader.” Very different in approach was the next magnum opus, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075–1225*, a volume of the New Oxford History of England published in 2000. Rather than being an interpretative essay, this was a pointilliste survey, depicting an unparalleled variety of aspects of twelfth-century England, from grain yields to mer-men, from royal itineraries to religious sceptics. It displayed an immense mastery of the sources to produce a welter of unfamiliar example and anecdote. In particular it drew on the *Lives* of saints as sources for all aspects of history. These same sources formed the basis of Rob's most recent book, *Why can the Dead do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (2013). He planned it as a thorough descriptive study, which would provide the secure empirical base that too many earlier analyses had lacked. At the same time it was intended as another work open to