

NEWSLETTER 41 – SEPTEMBER 2009

Dear Supporter, As far as the Mouse is concerned, 2009 has certainly been an *annus mirabilis*. Our trip to the States was as exciting and productive as we had hoped. Thanks to the generosity of Cambridge University Press, we spent four lovely days in New York. As well as meeting the CUP sales team in their marvellous offices overlooking the Hudson River, I also delivered a 'webinar' presentation. I spoke about the history of *Minimus* and why I believe it is important for young children to enjoy and benefit from Latin. My talk could be heard by teachers all over America; when I finished, they had the opportunity to ask me questions and both their questions and my answers could also be heard by everyone participating. I marvel at the technology! I am grateful to Jim Harmon of CUP for inviting us and setting up these events. We then moved to Baltimore. Ruth Ann Besse, a member of the CUP committee, had organised several *Minimus* events. We began with a training day at Pallotti High School in Laurel, near Baltimore. Some of the delegates were practising teachers and some not, some were homeschooling parents, some were experienced Classics teachers and some had no Latin at all. They were all united in wanting to find out more about how best to deliver the book. One delegate brought her eight month old baby girl who happily crawled around during the proceedings! The following day we held a Latin event at a local community centre where people were invited to drop in to watch a Roman Army re-enactment group, to hear stories from mythology and to experience *Minimus* taster lessons. Over one hundred people attended the event. My classes varied from twenty-five adults and children, who acted out the first story in *Minimus*, to three very bright boys who were nearly at the end of *Minimus Secundus* and were keen to learn the Greek alphabet. My third class involved three little girls, one of whom aged five, had only recently begun to read. She enjoyed playing the mouse and was chased around the room by the cat- her Mum. The following day we held a similar event at Laurel Library. This again attracted over 100. Families loved seeing the Roman Army Group and listening to Ruth Ann telling myths and I had a steady stream of punters to learn Latin. Finally we moved to Pittsburgh, where we spent four nights with another member of our Committee, Zee Ann Poerio. Again we enjoyed a series of different events. The first was a tour of a local historic farm house followed by an English tea party and lunch. The house was fascinating, the food delicious and all served with a rather Jane Austen-like gentility and finesse. Large picture hats were provided for us all to wear and after we had finished eating, I talked to the delegates (mostly teachers) about *Minimus*. We attracted a full page spread in the local paper, complete with a photograph of Zee Ann and I in our hats! It was a unique event for *Minimus*. The following day we were in the impressive Carnegie Museum where I was one of several presenters. This was more of a practical *Minimus* training session for teachers. That evening I ran a *Minimus* taster lesson for children at Zee Ann Poerio's school. About twenty children, aged six to fourteen, came for a taster lesson accompanied by their parents. After we had studied the birthday invitation, this led neatly into the fact that *Minimus* celebrated his 10th birthday one month later. Zee Ann had organised a birthday cake, balloons etc and the children all enjoyed singing happy birthday to *Minimus* in Latin. I confess I found it very moving to think of the last ten years. Who would have thought when I had the original idea for the book that ten years later I would be enjoying a birthday party for the mouse in Pittsburgh?! On the following day, we had a session at the local Barnes & Noble bookstore, where I spoke about *Minimus* as a cross-curricular course and signed books.

We are so grateful to CUP, Ruth Ann and Zee Ann for setting up an unforgettable fortnight. Our thanks are also due to Sir Jeremy Morse who paid for our travel. His ongoing support of the PLP is deeply appreciated.

USA teachers to tour Hadrian's Wall –Summer 2010? Several of the teachers we met expressed an interest in visiting Hadrian's Wall next summer, and in particular Vindolanda, home of *Minimus*. If you would like to register your interest in this idea, please e-mail me and we will keep you posted as we make plans.

Other Recent Events

We have had two very enjoyable training days. Linda Soames invited us to St Hugh's Farringdon, where Jane Maguire and Shona Shahryar were the speakers; I know delegates found their talks very helpful. At our final training day at James Allen's Girls School in Dulwich the speakers were Oliver Makower and Michelle Anderson. I am so grateful to them for giving up their time and for providing such practical help for all of us.

Training days continue to be an essential part of the Project's work. Four have been arranged for the next academic year, 2 in London, Manchester and Bristol. See the enclosed form to book.

Recent School Visits

June : St Hugh's Farringdon. I enjoyed working with several classes and hearing them perform short dialogues; they showed me their entries for the *Minimus* Mythology Competition and the *Minimus* club joined me for lunch. In the afternoon, we took over the main hall and the children performed plays that they had entered for the competition in previous years and recited poems they had written about Greek Mythology. It was all work of a very high standard and I enjoyed hearing the children and commenting on their work.

June : Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Primary School in Bristol. I taught groups from Years 4 & 5 and watched an excellent production of 'Palla Rubra' (Little Red Riding Hood) performed in front of the whole school. They had gone to town on costumes and props and it was a great success. I am grateful to their teacher Judith O'Neill for agreeing to share her experiences in teaching *Minimus* in a state primary at the Bristol training day in January.

June: Bredon Hill Middle School, near Evesham where I taught several taster lessons for years 4-6 and talked about the benefits of learning Latin.

July: Yately Manor Prep School in Hampshire .I worked with several classes and advised teachers, especially on pronunciation. This is an obvious area of concern, especially for non-specialists; remember that there is pronunciation help given in the Teachers' Resource Book and the CDs are an invaluable help. I personally use the CD in just about every *Minimus* lesson that I teach.

July : I ran a *Minimus* inset event for Peterborough LEA. Twenty Gifted and Talented children from several local primary schools met at Heritage Park School where I taught a taster *Minimus* lesson, watched by teachers, G&T co-ordinators etc. Several of the schools have decided to adopt *Minimus*. It is a great privilege working with such able children who seem quite unperturbed by performing in front of teachers and parents!

Mythology Competition

I am very grateful to Pam Macklin for her continuing work with this aspect of the Project. Here is her report "The 2009 Mythology competition was organized again by Pam Macklin and sponsored by the Jowett Trustees. Once again the competition produced a superb range of entries, including some from the United States. Many thanks to all teachers who encouraged their pupils to take part then found the time to digitally photograph those entries for e-mail to the organiser. Diana and Brian Sparkes, having retired from the Management Committee, were delighted to maintain their links with the project by judging this year's entries. There were thirty individual prizes, some of which were designated "Special". School's prizes for the best set of entries were awarded to Clifton High, Bristol and St Hugh's, Farringdon, Oxon. The competition topics for 2010 are *Minimus* – 'The Trojan Horse' and *Minimus Secundus* – 'Romulus and Remus'. Further details, rules and closing date will be available in the autumn. Watch the website, or e-mail the organiser pam@nethaus.co.uk after the October half term. Please remember that entries should be the children's own work, therefore teachers do not need to allow lesson time for this project. This year's winning images are on the website www.minimus.com

Other Recent Events

April : I attended a meeting of the Round Table Classics Group at the City Hall at the invitation of **Boris Johnson**. Boris is keen to spread Latin through London state schools and a large number of us met to brainstorm ideas on the best way of doing this. Subsequently, just six of us met again in May to formalise our plans. At the end of the Spring Term we will be inviting Head Teachers, Gifted and Talented co-ordinators, curriculum planners etc to a special reception hosted by Boris at which several of us will have the opportunity to talk briefly about our material and the importance of Classics. On the same day, **Caroline Lawrence** invited me to celebrate sales of 100,000 copies with lunch in the British Museum. Caroline is the highly successful author of the Roman Mystery Series, which is targeted at primary school children. I am thrilled that Caroline has agreed to join the PLP Committee; we are all looking forward to working with her in the future.

June: I was invited to give the after-lunch Speech at the Annual Luncheon of the **Queen's English Society**. I last spoke to them in 2001 so it was amazing to reflect how **Minimus** and the Project have developed in the intervening eight years.

How can the PLP support you?

It is important for all those interested in *Minimus* to be on our mailing list. I am very grateful to the many of you who have contacted us in the last few months giving permission to receive the newsletter by email. There are 4025 people on the mailing list of whom approximately 1000 now receive the newsletter by email. PLEASE MAKE IT A PRIORITY TO GIVE PERMISSION TO RECEIVE THE NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL IF YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY DONE SO. IF WE CAN BRING IT ABOUT THAT THE MAJORITY RECEIVE IT ELECTRONICALLY, CUP HAVE SAID THAT THEY WILL AGREE TO SEND OUT THE NEWSLETTER **THREE** TIMES A YEAR.

MEC Products :We have now restocked and we have the following products for sale : Postcards (20p) – (a new design showing Minimus dressed as a Roman Soldier!), Pencils (50p each), Post-its (£1.50 or 3 for £4), Badges (50p), Erasers (50p), Notelets (5 for 50p), Keyrings (50p), Rulers (75p), Fridge Magnets (£1), Pens (£1), Sheets of Stickers (£1 for 24 stickers). We also have good supplies of both sets of mini books; a set of 10 costs £18. They provide valuable extra reading material in the classroom, can be used in play competitions or can be given as prizes.* Please note that all our products are available overseas. You can pay in your own currency through a Pay-Pal account. Order in good time for Christmas, especially from overseas.

Audio Cassettes :There is a supply of audio cassettes (one for each Minimus book) for only £5 each.

Book of Latin Plays :“Play-time”, a book of fourteen Latin plays for younger pupils should be available by the time this newsletter reaches you. To order, contact Mrs. Diana Sparkes at 16 Leigh Road, Southampton SO17 1EF, or by email basp@soton.ac.uk

Grants :Wendy Hunt and her Committee continue to do a fine job in assessing and despatching grants to schools very promptly. Wendy reports that **between the beginning of April 2009 and the end of August 2009, 20** schools received grants - **3 independent schools, 1 home school and 16 maintained schools** .Other schools who would like to run Latin Clubs, please send your application forms to: **Mrs Wendy Hunt, (PLP Applications) 3, Wren Close, FROME, Somerset, BA11 2UZ Tel: 01373 300554: email: wendyelainehunt@gmail.com**

At the time of writing, I am just off to Sorrento where I will celebrate the 10th Anniversary of *Minimus*' publication. On behalf of the PLP Committee I would like to say a special thank you to Jacqui Howard-Brown who has been the Project Administrator for the last six years. During that time she has worked with energy, commitment and imagination, always looking for ways to make the project more efficient. She has been a great help to me personally and I will miss her enormously. I know that many of you who have met and worked with Jacqui will echo my sentiments. The PLP committee will be saying a proper goodbye to her at our meeting on October 17th. Meanwhile, I am delighted to introduce Nicola Prince as our new Project Administrator. Nicola is based in Bristol; she is young, creative and energetic and the future of the PLP is in good hands. Please address all queries and correspondence to Nicola Prince on nicolaprince99@hotmail.com or via mail to the Project Office.

As the Italians would say, 'ciliegina sulla torta' - the little cherry on the cake - is that in the Queen's Birthday Honours List on June 13th, it was announced that I am to receive the MBE for "services to local and national education." " I feel so delighted and amazed to have been honoured in this way and I am looking forward to going to Windsor Castle on November 10th with my family for the Investiture. Do look at Helen Forte's wonderful website www.minimus.com and see "Barbara's news page" for pictures of the USA trip and other recent events. See her delightful picture of *Minimus* at Windsor Castle!

An 'annus mirabilis' indeed! My thanks as always for your interest and support. Barbara Bell



82 Swiss Drive, Ashton, Bristol. BS3 2RW Tel/Fax 0117 953 1819 bmbellmini@aol.com

Training Days - for all those wishing to teach Minimus

*The following training days have been arranged for 2009/2010

* **Each day will cost £50**; Certificates of attendance will be provided. **Please note that no refunds will be available once the venues and meals have been booked.** This is unlikely to be less than 14 days before the date of the training day.

* At each course, Barbara Bell, the author of *Minimus* and Director of the Primary Latin Project will give introductory talks. These will include an overview of the content & principles of both books and an update on the current issues facing the Primary Latin Project. In addition, teachers will share their experience of teaching *Minimus & Minimus Secundus*, both on and off the curriculum.

If you are interested in attending one of these courses, please fill in the form below and return it to:

Mrs. Barbara Bell, 82, Swiss Drive, Ashton, Bristol. BS3 2RW

* NB Early booking is advised - previous training days have filled up very quickly.

Dates and venues:

Table with 2 columns: Date and Venue. Rows include: Sat. Nov. 7th 2009 (London - James Allen's Girls' school, Dulwich), Sat. Jan. 16th 2010 (Bristol - Clifton High School), Sat. March 6th 2010 (Manchester - Withington Girls' School), Sat. June 12th 2010 (London - James Allen's Girls' School, Dulwich).

IMPORTANT NOTE - PLEASE include a Stamped Addressed Envelope and cheque with your application form.

MINIMUS TRAINING DAY APPLICATION
(Please write in **BLOCK CAPITALS**)

FULL NAME & TITLE:

HOME ADDRESS :
.....
.....

Home Tel. No
.....

SCHOOL ADDRESS (If applicable). Please state whether the school is State Primary or Independent and give the FULL ADDRESS, including postcode.

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.....
.....

School Tel. No.

E-Mail (if applicable):

I should like to attend the training day at : (Please state venue and date) :-

I understand that a programme and travel directions will be sent nearer the time.

I enclose a cheque for £50, payable to the Primary Latin Project **plus an s.a.e.**

I am / am not a vegetarian.

Signed :