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Newsletter 55 – January 2015

Dear Supporter,

In Mid-January last year I sent a very upbeat email to the PLP committee: book sales were encouraging and I anticipated that we would be able to celebrate 150,000 copies sold in 2015; the new publication- *Minimus in Practice*- had been printed just before Christmas and was already attracting considerable interest; I was receiving a number of invitations from State Primary schools to train their staff in advance of compulsory language teaching in September 2014; in addition several people who train teachers on the PGCE courses had also expressed an interest in their students hearing about *Minimus*. I ended the email "What a week! What a month! In fact what a year this is turning out to be."

2014 has indeed turned out to be an extraordinary and exciting year. I have been so grateful for the interest shown in *Minimus* from so many parts of the UK and beyond and I have been glad to have the time and good health to travel extensively. It is very gratifying hearing non-specialist teachers, who have never had the chance to learn Latin, say "This is SO important and so enjoyable! I only wish I had learnt it as a child. Never mind - I can enjoy it now as I learn with the children." Others, who had a negative experience of Latin at school, have said "This is so different from the way I learnt Latin at school. This is such fun! I can't wait to get going with the children. "

September - Visit to Thameside Primary School in Kent. It was a great pleasure to devote the staff INSET day to *Minimus* training. This school has embraced *Minimus* wholeheartedly. All the rooms of the school are named in Latin! Even the foundation stage teachers attended the INSET day and hope to introduce a little Latin in the summer term before their 5 & 6 year olds move into the junior school. The Head, Christina Pumfrey, sees Latin as a key element in improving the children's literacy skills.

October - I visited Mayville Primary School in Leytonstone in London. Many of the children have English as a second language and struggle with grasping the grammar and again the Head, Ms Russell, has chosen Latin as the schools' designated language to help them understand English grammar.

I also visited **Dale Primary School in Derby** to train the staff. Even those who had been sceptical about Latin initially, based on their own negative experience, were eager to start by the end of the day.

Speaking to students has been another pleasing development recently, and they are not all Classics students. In October I visited **York and spoke to PGCE students** who are training to teach modern languages. Suzie Bewel, who invited me, wanted me to train her students so that they can offer Latin as another string to their bow.

In October I was invited by Lorna Robinson of the **Iris Project** to join her and many other enthusiasts in Oxford. At the East Oxford Classics event, there were numerous stalls throughout the school where pupils could work interactively with what was on offer. We displayed the various *Minimus* products that are available and had some important conversations with people who came to have a look. There was a real buzz around the school with many pupils and students dressed in Roman costume, eating Roman and Greek food, and listening to Greek and Roman music, watching Greek dance and queuing up for signed copies of work by Caroline Lawrence and Lindsay Davies.

November - We had a small but very enjoyable Training Day at **James Allen's Girls' School in Dulwich**. The Head, Marion Gibbs, has been a great supporter of *Minimus* over the years. Not only does she let us use her school and provide excellent food all day for us, but she is always there early on a Saturday morning to help us set up the day and provide any practical help that is needed. Marion will be retiring from JAGS in July 2015 and this is a good moment to thank her for all her help and to wish her a long and happy retirement.

At JAGS I met Hazel Rixon, who has come to Latin relatively recently in her retirement and is now thoroughly enjoying teaching Latin herself to many pupils. Hazel sends her own report:

“It is very important when you retire to learn something new and keep your brain active” the speaker said. I was about to retire as a primary teacher and that sounded good advice. I decided I would learn Latin.....A visit to the bookshop followed and there I found *Minimus*; a book for 7-10 year olds seemed a sensible place to begin. I bought *Minimus*, became a Latin devotee overnight, and moved on to the Cambridge Latin Course. Later I was asked to teach Latin to a group of home-schooled children. I used *Minimus* of course. Seven years on I have 26 pupils in six groups and it all started with *Minimus*.”

Also in November it was a pleasure to return to the **Classics Department at Reading** to speak about *Minimus* to Classics and Archeology students with some of the PGCE tutors (MFL). Reading already has a partnership where students visit local primary schools to teach *Minimus* and this looks set to expand.

December - I did a second day's training with the schools in the Solihull group who are using *Minimus* and further training is planned in the summer. Anna sends her own report:

SOLIHULL PROJECT REPORT: The North Solihull Latin Project is going full steam ahead; a successful launch in September, some further *Minimus* training from Barbara for the staff across participating schools and an exciting trip to Cirencester for 120 students and colleagues, means that the children and staff in our schools are all 'fired up' to deliver Latin through using *Minimus*!

Anna Donnelly

Also in December I was invited by a former colleague- Helen Aberdeen (PGCE tutor in French) and her colleague Lorna Smith (PGCE English tutor) to speak to their students about the importance of Latin and *Minimus* on the last day of term! In the summer funding has been agreed for me to run a short module to train any students who opt to teach *Minimus*. Although final numbers are not yet in the response is very encouraging. It is always good to work with teachers of the future; at a time when we have a chronic lack of Classics teachers, this is an exciting and important development and it is to be hoped that other PGCE courses might follow the Bristol initiative.

As well as all these various training events, I still visit schools to work with children and I have happy memories of music and drama session in Our Lady of Victory's School in May and a brilliantly sunny day at St. Alfege's School in Greenwich –followed by a boat trip up the Thames to the London Eye. What a marvellous year I have had and Nick has been able to accompany me on some of these visits –as he says “as the bag-carrier...”

New Publications - In August I met Helen Forte for 3 days in Bury St. Edmunds where we worked intensively on a **third set of Minibooks**. These extra readers, which do not advance the grammar, are great fun to write and to use. They were published in early December by Whitehall Printers in Bristol and are already creating a lot of interest. They are slightly more demanding than the 2 earlier sets, with more sentences per page. They advance the characters of *Minimus Secundus*- so we meet Flavia's twins learning to walk and talk and hear more of the adventures of Trifosa! Please note they are only available directly from our business, *Minimus et cetera*. Order forms are sent with this newsletter.

My account of the whole *Minimus* story – *Minimus becoming Maximus* – was published on 21st December - a lovely Christmas present! It hardly seems possible but it is 20 years since I first had the idea of writing *Minimus* and 15 years since publication. The finished product looks attractive with Helen's illustrations and lots of photographs and I think you will enjoy the extraordinary story. Again, this is only available directly from *Minimus et Cetera*.

The rest of the PLP committee have also been very busy. My thanks to Jane Maguire for keeping us posted on developments in Norfolk:

NORFOLK REPORT, DECEMBER 2014: At the start there were 13 Primary Schools and 3 High Schools involved in the projects funded by Classics for All. It has been interesting to review progress and to see what barriers can arise.

The current position is that all 3 High Schools are continuing with varying degrees of success. Barriers have been identified as the amount of training non-specialist teachers need to go beyond KS3, conflicting pressures on students'

time where Latin is offered as an after-school option and finding a slot acceptable to all where it is being delivered as part of the curriculum. The encouraging thing is the enthusiasm of the teachers who have been trained and the general willingness of the Head teachers to make it work.

Of the 13 primaries, 5 are currently teaching it, 4 have clear plans to restart and 4 are uncertain about the future. In most of these latter cases pressures resulting from poor Ofsted reports have led to schools having to review their priorities (one school refers to it as a “brutal cull of the curriculum”). On the plus side, 2 schools who originally declined involvement in the project have now decided to teach Latin after all, making the total of those delivering it (or with firm plans to do so in future) 11.

The lessons from this would seem to be the necessity of realistic action plans in the first instance along with continuing monitoring and support. Talking to Ofsted about the benefits of Latin might not be a bad idea either!

Jane Maguire

Thanks to Wendy Hunt who has sent her report on Grants. This has been a particularly hectic period and I'm most grateful to her and the committee for keeping up with all the grant applications:

GRANT FUND REPORT, DECEMBER 2014: From the beginning of April 2014 to the end of November 2014, 56 establishments have received a grant to teach '*Minimus*' - there are 49 state schools, 6 independent schools and 1 U3A. These numbers have exceeded all the other reports I have written since 2000! After the Government's recent policy on languages for primary schools, which began in September 2014, many schools have chosen to teach Latin in their curriculum. We have given £150 to £200 to schools who teach over 100 pupils and even more to those schools who teach larger numbers. The applications are:

BEDFORDSHIRE: Sandy Upper School, SANDY; BERKSHIRE: St Mary and All Saints C. of E. Primary School, READING; St Edmund Campion Catholic Primary School, MAIDENHEAD; CAMBRIDGESHIRE: John Clare Primary School, HELPSTON, PETERBOROUGH; Great Wilbraham Primary School, GREAT WILBRAHAM; CHESHIRE: St Mary's R.C. Primary School, CONGLETON; All Saints Upton C. E. Primary School, WIDNES; DERBYSHIRE: Derby High School, DERBY; Dale Community Primary School, DERBY; DEVON: St Leonard's C. of E. Primary School, EXETER; St, Sidwell's Primary School, EXETER; DORSET: Bournemouth U3A, BOURNEMOUTH; DURHAM: Laurel Avenue Community Primary School, The Woodlands, DURHAM; GREATER MANCHESTER: Rushcroft Primary School, SHAW, OLDHAM; HERTFORDSHIRE: High Beeches Primary School, HARPENDEN; KENT: River Primary School, DOVER; Bromstone Primary School, BROADSTAIRS; St Margaret's-at-Cliffe Primary School, DOVER; St Fidelis Primary School,(240 pupils) ERITH; Stella Maris Catholic Primary School, FOLKSTONE; Fleetdown Primary School, DARTFORD; Oakfield Community Primary School, DARTFORD (297 pupils) and Temple Hill Community Primary School (317 pupil), DARTFORD, making 614 pupils in all (Galaxy); LINCOLNSHIRE: Westmere Primary School, SUTTON BRIDGE; LONDON: Radnor House School, TWICKENHAM ; New King's Primary School, LONDON SW6 4LY; Gallions Primary School, NEWHAM; St Helen's College, HILLINGDON; Barnes Primary School, BARNES; Mayville Primary School, (300 pupils) E11 4PZ; MIDDLESEX: The Rosary Catholic Primary School, HESTON; Hillside Junior School, NORTHWOOD; Alperton Junior School, WEMBLEY; Bush Hill Park Primary School, ENFIELD; Ridgeway Primary School, SOUTH CROYDON; NORFOLK: Mendham Primary School, MENDHAM HARLESTON; NOTTINGHAMSHIRE; Arnold Mill Primary School, ARNOLD; Hevingham Primary School, HEVINGHAM; RUTLAND: Exton and Greetham C. E. Primary School, EXTON; SCOTLAND: George Heriot's Independent School, EDINBURGH; SHROPSHIRE: Coleham Primary School, SHREWSBURY; SOMERSET: Fairfield Independent Primary School, BACKWELL; West Pennard C. of E. Primary School, GLASTONBURY; Winscombe Primary School, WINSCOMBE; SUFFOLK: Martlesham Beacon Hill Primary School, MARTLESHAM); SURREY: St Peter's Catholic Primary School, LEATHERHEAD; St James the Great R.C. Primary School, THORNTON HEATH; WEST MIDLANDS: Lozell's Primary School, LOZELLS, BIRMINGHAM ; Jubilee Academy, WALSALL; Marston Green Junior School, MARSTON GREEN; Edgbaston High School, BIRMINGHAM; Yorkswood Primary School, BIRMINGHAM; Fairway Primary Academy, KING'S NORTON; YORKSHIRE: Mount Pleasant C. of E. Junior School, MARKET WEIGHTON; Meadstead Primary School, ROYSTON, BARNESLEY; Greenfields Primary School, STOURBRIDGE

Very many thanks to the Classical Association and the Classics for All for their extremely generous funds to help with all these applications, to Diana and Bob who give me constant support and very speedy replies, to Rachael who is always reliable in writing out the cheques quickly and to Jerry who keeps an eye on how the funds are going – and, last

but not least, to *Minimus*, the little mouse who is visiting so many children in so many places!

Wendy Hunt

Pam Macklin has sent a report on the Mythology Competition. My thanks to her and her 2 judges - Wendy Hunt and Kate Macklin. We are again indebted to the Jowett Trustees in Oxford for providing sponsorship for the Book Token prizes:

MYTHOLOGY COMPETITION REPORT 2015 - Mythology Competition for academic year 2014-15. The topics are:-

1. *Minimus* 1 = Echo and Narcissus
2. *Minimus* 2 = Romulus and Remus

Please see website for full details and the competition rules. Otherwise contact the organiser on pam@nethaus.co.uk

Winning entries from the last competition are on the website www.minimus-etc.co.uk

Pam Macklin

'IT' report: I am especially pleased that the first *Minimus* book is now available to use in classrooms on ipads and I hope to develop this side of our work in the future. In addition, the number of people tweeting about *Minimus* is increasing daily!

Helen Forte

TWITTER REPORT: News from the home of *Minimus* – Catherine Jarvis and Sue Balmer on the northern frontier.

Sue Balmer is proud to be a new *Minimus* Advocate. She has joined Catherine to help in the promotion of *Minimus* Latin in North East England.

Catherine continues to tweet for @Minimus_Latin with the very able help of Dr Helen Forte. @Minimus_Latin has twice now featured in top ten lists of classical tweeters! Catherine is in regular touch with Vindolanda and The Vindolanda Trust. Justin Blake, Deputy Director of Excavations, has recently departed for pastures new (a complete change of profession!) and PLP was delighted to give Justin a leaving present for all his help with *Minimus* since its inception. Catherine keeps in touch with local primary schools on Hadrian's Wall to teach and promote *Minimus* Latin. She is working on producing some flash cards with Pam Macklin (another PLP committee member) to enable the teaching of *Minimus* Latin via English and Modern Foreign Language derivations.

Introducing Sue Balmer:

As a teacher, adviser and trainer for MFL (with a passion for Latin) for many years, I have been trying to promote the teaching of *Minimus* through the networks of the Association for Language Learning www.alllanguages.org.uk As foreign languages are now statutory at KS2 and the Government has decreed that teaching may be of any modern or ancient foreign language it seems essential to make more primary schools aware of the excellent resources and support available through *Minimus*. Latin fits so well into the primary curriculum. At Language World 2014, the annual conference of ALL, I gave a presentation to raise the profile of Latin among the MFL fraternity. Google "Latin: a logical option" and you can access the pdf for the talk. Language World 2015 will take place in Newcastle University on 20th - 21st March. With advice from Dr Peter Jones and Adrian Spooner, I am hoping to keep the standard flying for Latin with another session. Along with an article published in the Association's termly magazine: "Languages Today" we know that *Minimus* is becoming more widely known. From the number of advertisements for teachers of Latin in our region, it is obvious that the study of Classics is flourishing. Euge!

Catherine Jarvis &

Sue Balmer

ADVOCATES REPORT: A 2nd *Minimus* Advocates Day is scheduled for Saturday 14th March 2015 in Bristol. This will be an opportunity for Advocates to meet, share good practice and to report on anything interesting that is happening in their local area/schools. Advocates will also be hearing how *Minimus* is being used in the teaching of English literacy and MFL.

We now have 26 Advocates. Would you like to be an Advocate? If you are interested in promoting *Minimus* and the Primary Latin Project in your local area and are willing to offer support to other *Minimus* teachers, particularly those who are new to *Minimus* teaching please do let Barbara or me know m.anderson@beechwoodpark.herts.sch.uk

Michele Anderson

Sales Figures

At the time of writing sales of the first *Minimus* book have almost reached 149,000,000 copies sold worldwide. We certainly plan to celebrate when the sales hit 150,000,000.

Future Events - 2015

January - I have just paid my first visit to **Clacton-on-Sea** to train the staff of **Ravens' Academy**. It was a most enjoyable day.

February - I am looking forward to visiting **Temple Hill and Oakfield Community Primary Schools in Dartford**, which work in a partnership scheme to train the whole staff from both schools - approximately 70 teachers!

More students: In February I will also be speaking to students at **Birmingham and Nottingham Universities**.

March 14th - Advocates' Day

Summer term - Bristol PGCE: Latin module

May - PLP committee visit Vindolanda.

Saturday 6th June - *Minimus* training day at James Allen's Girls' School in Dulwich. If you would like to attend you can download an application form from the website (www.minimus.com) or if you e-mail me I can send you an application form by return.

June 12th - Further training for the Solihull group. It is good to see this project beginning to expand.

Increasingly it is proving more cost-effective for schools to invite me to train the whole staff rather than sending them all on an official *Minimus* Training Day. If your school would be interested in a visit, either to work with staff or pupils, please contact me by e-mail. Please note that I cannot take on any school visits until after the February half term.

July - We hope to meet some of our American teacher friends from the ACL conference who are visiting the UK including a weekend in Bath.

NB - Sue Laflin has made a generous offer of some free copies of *Minimus* – please contact her direct on: sue.laflin@gmail.com

With my thanks, as always, for your interest and support.

Barbara Bell