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Newsletter 59 – April 2016

Dear Supporter,

I begin with sad news. By now I'm sure most of you will have heard of the death of Sir Jeremy Morse, a great supporter of *Minimus*. I was especially pleased that he and his wife Belinda were able to attend our celebratory *Minimus* party in Oxford in September. Although he was clearly far from well, he was determined to be there and we have some lovely photographs of both of them with various members of the *Minimus* team.

I first met Sir Jeremy in 1996. He had heard about my proposed Latin course for young children through his membership of Friends of Classics and he wanted to find out more and to see if it was a project worth supporting. We met at the University restaurant, Browns in Bristol, and I confess that I felt extremely nervous as the hour approached; after all he was a formidable Classicist with a razor-sharp mind whom I knew had had a highly successful career in the banking world; he was then chancellor of Bristol University; Colin Dexter had named his famous detective, Inspector Morse, after him; he was truly one of the Great and the Good. I need not have worried. We sat outside in the sunshine and settled to a long and most enjoyable tea. He listened with great interest to my tentative plans for the book and made several pertinent and helpful suggestions. This was the first of many meetings and the book would never have happened without his generous financial support.

Jeremy and Belinda became friends and made several visits to see *Minimus* in action and to see my other Latin and Greek classes at Clifton High School in Bristol. He even sponsored 2 girls to enable them to learn Classical

Greek. Whenever we met he would listen with interest to sales figures, but was always particularly keen to learn of the sales of the Teachers' book "This is the way to see how the book is really spreading, Barbara." Jeremy was very pleased to hear that the book had been translated into other languages (Italian, Slovenian and Portuguese) and hoped that there would be a Spanish version. Despite a lot of interest in Spain in the early years, this has not happened - yet.

So *Minimus* has lost a great champion, advocate and supporter. His unfailing encouragement whenever we met, and that of Belinda, have meant a very great deal to me personally. Fittingly there will be three tributes to celebrate his life, in London, Oxford and Winchester College and the last two will particularly focus on his success as a Classicist. I shall be pleased to attend to represent the Primary Latin Project.

More Sad News - I know that a number of you who booked for the British Museum Day will be sad to hear that we have reluctantly decided to cancel the planned day on Saturday 18th June as the numbers who booked were insufficient to make the day financially viable. The PLP Committee, and especially Pam Macklin, are very disappointed since our other two days there were splendid. We must conclude that teachers are more reluctant these days to take coach trips with the various regulations and coach travel is often prohibitively expensive.

RECENT EVENTS

The Spring term has, in one sense, been a very quiet one for me,. I decided to take a sabbatical from *Minimus* events because I have been heavily involved in the organisation of our daughter's Easter wedding in Coventry. Nevertheless, I did carry out two longstanding engagements: on 6th February I attended Evelien Bracke's Classics Conference at Swansea University. Evelien had put together a full programme with different speakers from both Schools and Universities, showcasing unusual teaching methods and exciting developments at both Secondary and Primary level. *Minimus* was well represented on the programme. I spoke but also Jayne Treasure outlined the work she has been doing at Crickhowell, sponsored by Classics for All and Anna Donnelly spoke about the *Minimus* Solihull Project.

In March I had a very enjoyable day visiting the Classics students at Birmingham

University who are considering a career in teaching; this was at the kind invitation of Elena Theodorakopoulos, a staunch supporter of *Minimus*. It has felt a little strange to take a step back, however, I am extremely grateful to my group of *Minimus* Trainers, who have picked up the baton and accepted training and speaking invitations on my behalf.

ALL Conference – Sue Balmer, a modern languages teacher from Newcastle with a passion for Latin, spoke about Latin and *Minimus* at the recent ALL Conference in Rugby. Thanks to generous and on-going support from Classics for All, my Trainers have been able to accept invitations to train very small numbers of teachers from any one school.

Do You Need Training To Teach *Minimus* ? - Please note that we no longer run regular annual training events at James Allen's Girls' School in London, nor in Bristol. The new system is that schools or individuals who need training to teach *Minimus* should approach me or my PA Rachael Jones (rachael-darren@hotmail.com) requesting training for your school or area; we will then arrange for one of the *Minimus* Trainers to spend half or a whole day with you to train your staff. Currently we have 11 trainers, apart from myself, all experienced teachers of *Minimus* with a good geographical spread around the country.

The Trainers:

Michele Anderson - Hertfordshire

Sue Balmer - Newcastle

Barbara Bell - Bristol

Kate Eaton – London (SE)

Jo Hartley - Southampton

Cathy Hudspith - Surrey/Berkshire

Catherine Jarvis - Cumbria

Jane Maguire - Norfolk

Caroline Ostler - London (SW)

Shona Shahryar - Hertfordshire

Linda Soames - Oxford

Jayne Treasure - Wales

This group has been particularly active since our first meeting in September.

Here are the reports of some of their recent activity:

NORFOLK REPORT JANUARY - MARCH 2016 - Jane Maguire

It is encouraging to see a rise in interest from PGCE courses around the country. As we know, Barbara has been working with Bristol and, since Christmas, I have run sessions for groups of students at the universities of Cambridge and Sussex, with UEA currently in discussion about dates. In Cambridge, with Steve Hunt's group, it was to talk to 16 members of the secondary Classics course about primary Latin and *Minimus*. At the University of Sussex, Rowlie Darby had a secondary group of 11 History and Classical Civilisation students who were about to go on placements in primary schools and teach some *Minimus*. In both groups there was a genuine interest and desire to spread the word about the benefits of Latin and to examine the different strategies needed to teach KS2 children. Their willingness to join in activities more often associated with teaching younger children (e.g. playing card games, then jumping up and down in a farmyard wearing animal masks, singing Senex MacDonald or enthusiastically acting out *Palla Rubra* in costume) was amazing. This is a great opportunity, as students such as these will be gaining experience in several different schools and in a good position to be advocates for *Minimus*. As a result of the Sussex day, one of the schools taking a student on placement has asked for staff training.

Last autumn a new academy in Norwich (part of the large Inspiration Trust) took part in a Roman/Latin day at Norwich Castle to support the Latin they are already teaching. This led to an invitation to train 7 teachers from 5 of their feeder primary schools in Norwich and Great Yarmouth. Norwich Castle continues to offer excellent support and will run another day for primary schools in the summer. Experiences in Norfolk suggest that contacts with groups of schools, increasingly members of multi-academy trusts, and with local museums can be very fruitful.

ALL CONFERENCE - Language World 2016 from Sue Balmer

The annual conference of the Association of Language Learning took place on 11th -12th March 2016 at Dunchurch Park, Rugby. This year's conference was entitled "Curriculum Innovation". Over 300 delegates attended, representing primary and secondary language teachers, FE and trainers.

Sue Balmer liaised with Jane Maguire to prepare a session: “carpe diem”. Delegates were invited to: “Seize the opportunity to enhance your curriculum with Latin. Build vocabulary and improve literacy for learners of all ages and abilities. Latin provides solid grounding in grammar and develops translation skills whilst forging links across the curriculum. Funding is available for proven primary and secondary resources alongside training for non-specialists.” Sue delivered the 45 minute session, which included a clip from Jane’s Classics for All videos. A pdf of the session can be viewed on the ALL website. A simple way of accessing it is to google: Language World 2016 Presentations.

Delegates who attended the session included Catherine Cheater, renowned teacher, trainer and author of resources for primary languages and Elaine Taylor, a recent Ofsted chief inspector for languages. Catherine is keen to access some training so that she can teach Latin with *Minimus* to her primary pupils and Elaine was most interested in the content and progression of the courses.

In the session and in informal discussions with delegates throughout the conference, MFL teachers suggested that it would be useful for them to be able to attend Latin classes in their areas. They were impressed by the *Minimus* resources. Some secondary teachers were interested in hearing more about any support they could get from regional hubs for Classics. Many of the teachers at the conference are members of closed Facebook groups, on which they share ideas and resources for languages. These are vibrant and growing daily. For secondary teachers, there is Secondary Language Matters with 3,300 members, plus 80 waiting to join. For primary teachers, there is Languages in Primary Schools or LIPS, with 2,873 members. Occasionally, Latin and Greek appear in discussions and the groups could be used to disseminate information about Classics.

Training Report from Shona Shahryar

On 9th February I was pleased to do some training for Westbourne Primary School, Sutton. The Deputy Head had introduced *Minimus* as an after school club for Years 5 and 6 and wished to expand it to Years 3 and 4, under a new member of staff. In particular, they both wanted ideas for club activities; games, songs, outings, DVD's, books etc, as well as an introduction to *Minimus Secundus* for

future use. I was able to give them lots of suggestions and practical help. Felix Preston from Classics for All also attended to gain an insight into this kind of training.

Training Report from Linda Soames

In January, I spent a very enjoyable day in Devon working with the Duncan Rae, Deputy Head and Year 5 & 6 class teacher at Shute Primary School. Children at this popular small village primary already learn French and German but Duncan is keen to introduce Latin which he studied at school for a year and believes will help improve literacy at the school. I've heard since that the children started *Minimus* just after half term and it's going well. I also spoke at a workshop on Primary School Latin at the Association for Latin Teaching's annual Refresher Day in March and took the opportunity to publicise the work *Minimus* Trainers are doing with Classics for All. The group was very interested and supportive of all that is going on to give more and more children the opportunity to experience Latin for themselves, and especially through the highly enjoyable medium of *Minimus*!

Training Report from Sue Balmer and Catherine Jarvis

In the first twilight session in October we went to Pollington-Balne C of E Primary School which is located between Selby and Goole. (There were two sessions at the school on 7th October and 4th January.) The teachers were starting to teach *Minimus* from January 2016. They want to introduce it to all KS2 and basic words to KS1. They will teach Latin from reception class to Year 6.

The Pollington-Balne Primary School is a small school and in that first session we worked with 6 members of staff, including the Head Teacher. In the second session we worked with 5 teachers.

They had already decided to offer Latin as their KS2 language and have already been "dipping into" *Minimus*. Although they have the teachers' resource book and CD, we got the impression that they were not using these in the best way they could. They had purchased many copies of the *Minimus* workbook. We encouraged the HT to apply for more copies of the *Minimus* book and if they wanted to use the *Minimus* IBook version (which they seemed keen to use) then they would have to purchase one copy per pupil.

The school had been granted £1000 for resources from Classics for All. We showed them what was available in terms of resources from the website to all the *Minimus* books and merchandise. We also showed them the historical links with Vindolanda. This was done in both sessions.

We concentrated on many things as regards teaching *Minimus* (Sue created comprehensive handouts that we gave to the teachers). They wanted help with pronunciation and we showed them how to access the CDs and IBook. We emphasized the need for acting...how using *Minimus* helps with literacy, MFLs and so forth. Overall they were impressed and they told us that they felt more confident teaching *Minimus* by the end of the second INSET session.

The main comment from the teachers' feedback form was: "Very positive approach and guidance to Latin. Thank you."

GRANT FUND REPORT from WENDY HUNT

From the beginning of January to the beginning of March 2016, there were four applications; three state schools and one private. These are:

BEDFORD: St Gregory's Catholic Middle School, Biddenham; CAMBRIDGE: Somersham Primary School, Huntingdon; ESSEX: Raven's Academy, Clacton-on-Sea; LANCASHIRE: Bury Grammar School For Girls, Bury.

Since this covers four months and there were none at the end of March up to mid - April, as most of this was over Easter and the school holidays, we had only four applications. This is the 'idle' term anyway, as most schools apply in the autumn term to start Latin early in the present academic year or in the summer term for the next academic year.

Thank you so much to the CA for their generous contribution, as well as Jeremy, Diana, Bob, Rachael – and Minimus and his family and friends!

FUTURE EVENTS

Mythology Competition!

A final reminder that there's just time to enter our annual Mythology

Competition. Pupils can make a painting, drawing, collage, piece of craftwork, write a poem or a play or record a DVD on the topic of either *Perseus and Medusa* or *Pegasus*. All the information you need about the rules and how to submit your entries is on the Teachers' section of the website www.minimus.com or email the organiser, Linda Soames, at lindasoames@home.3b.co.uk for further details. The closing date is **MONDAY 2ND MAY**.

On **6th April** – I am looking forward to meeting the *Minimus* Trainers at Birmingham University and hearing about their experiences, this will be invaluable feedback for the rest of the group and we can all learn from each other.

On **18th May** – I am looking forward to returning to school to train Primary Teachers in Chew Valley School near Bristol.

On **29th June** – I will be visiting the Solihull Project where I will be training Fordbridge School at the invitation of Anna Donnelly.

Also this term I will be running Training and Teaching *Minimus* for PGCE students at Bristol University. As last year these are not Classicists but are studying English or Modern Foreign Languages. The take up has again been very pleasing (42 students have signed up) but this year they will be divided not according to subject disciplines but according to their experience or otherwise of Latin.

Reminder about ordering *Minimus-et-Cetera* products

It would be a big help if you could order any small items that you want for end of year gifts as soon as possible to ensure that you receive them in time for the end of term.

Minimus Workbooks

The new pupils' workbook that was published last summer is proving extremely popular with both pupils and teachers. It is a useful resource for the children to practice their grammar and has exercises on each grammatical topic in *Minimus*. At only **£1** + postage and packaging, it is a bargain! If you wish to order supplies for September we strongly urge you to order them before the end of the summer term or certainly by the middle of August – last year we had a huge rush of orders in late August/early September with the result that we ran out of supplies, had to reorder, and there was inevitably a delay before schools received their stocks. To ensure that we have these workbooks available in time for early September do

order them as soon as you can, many thanks.

At the time of writing *Minimus* has sold 156,000 copies worldwide.

Observation of *Minimus* lessons

From time to time teachers and Heads ask to observe *Minimus* in action before deciding whether it is appropriate material for their schools.

Would you be prepared to be visited when you teach *Minimus*? Providing that your Head agrees, please send your details to Sue Balmer, one of our *Minimus* training group, who has kindly agreed to co-ordinate responses. Her email is:

sue.balmer@yahoo.co.uk: