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NEWSLETTER 44 – May 2011

Dear Supporter

Newsletter arrangements: This is THE LAST NEWSLETTER THAT CAN BE RECEIVED BY POST. If you would like to continue to receive this newsletter, please send your email address to the PLP Administrator, nicolaprince99@hotmail.com as soon as possible. If you have received this newsletter addressed to 'The Minimus Teacher', please let us know who you are! Thank you.

Minimus Et Cetera arrangements: Please note that we do not send invoices to schools; we must receive a cheque with your order. In the next newsletter we will clarify arrangements for the post-cheque era! Please note that we no longer have a fax machine. If you are ordering Mini books, please make it clear which set you require.

Publicity leaflets: If you can use any Minimus leaflets for publicity purposes, do please get in touch.

News from Vindolanda: The site at Vindolanda has been recently refurbished and it is worth checking on their website for news of the changes. www.vindolanda.com. Several of the writing tablets which were displayed in the British Museum have been returned to Vindolanda.

Recent Events

In November, Nick and I had a splendid 3- day visit to Belfast at the invitation of Isabel Bredin from Belfast High School. We visited six schools, five primary and one secondary. I taught lessons and thoroughly enjoyed meeting the children. I am grateful to Isabel for organising the visit and to her colleague Julian for providing transport.

Minimus the musical in Geneva –November. 28 pupils and 10 staff flew from Bristol to Geneva for an action packed 48 hours. The children stayed with host families and with no time for any rehearsals they performed the musical 3 times at 3 different venues. The International School is set on 3 campuses and I was so proud of the children who arrived at each campus and within 20 minutes of getting off the coach had been dressed and made up by our wonderful back- stage team and were ready to perform! Over 700 children and staff watched the musical and it was very well received. Our cast had an unforgettable experience and have made some lasting friendships with their host families.

School Visits. As I have had less teaching this year, I have been able to visit several schools, mostly in the South West. These included St Mary's CofE Primary School, Stourbridge in September, Hatherop Castle School, Cirencester in November, Charlton Kings Junior School, Cheltenham in January, Fairfield School, Bristol in February and the Unicorn School, London in March. I have very much enjoyed teaching Minimus lessons, doing some drama and music and answering the children's questions about writing a book. One activity which has gone well is teaching the children some of the songs from the musical and they have become the chorus of Batavian Soldiers, marching around their school hall!

Visit to Norfolk .Jane Maguire, a member of the PLP committee, who is the G&T coordinator for 30 schools in Norfolk has done a tremendous job in establishing Minimus throughout 16 of those schools so far. I was delighted to accompany her to the Norwich Castle Museum where she and Colly Mudie had arranged a splendid day for children who are already studying Minimus. I accompanied the children as they explored the Roman Gallery in the museum, enjoyed handling Roman artifacts, and had a presentation on what it was like to be a legionary soldier. Finally I answered their questions on writing Minimus. The children were bright and articulate and asked many questions and I learnt a lot myself during the day about the Roman World. We were delighted that the local radio covered the event. Jane, Colly and I were interviewed during the lunch break with two of the children who spoke convincingly about their enjoyment of the day. On the following day, I visited schools in Great Yarmouth. At the first school, Alderman Swindell Infant School, it was a delight to meet children as young as five who were using Minimus. When they stood in a line and greeted me in Latin and told me their Latin name, I was very moved - such tiny children! At the same school I met some girls from Y8 at Great Yarmouth High School who were the first group that Jane had started with Minimus when they were in Y3 and they returned to their old primary school to see what was happening now. They were enthusiastic supporters of Latin and Minimus and are planning to continue with Modern Languages at GCSE thanks to the grounding in linguistics that they had received through Latin. The school is also hoping to introduce Latin. I then visited two other primary schools, Southtown Infant & Woodlands Primary during the course of the day where I watched a performance of Palla Rubra (Little Red Riding Hood) and again very young children sang to me Three Blind Mice in Latin.

It was gratifying that in each school the Head Teacher made time to visit the Minimus event and I enjoyed talking to them about the issues involved in improving literacy and language awareness in their schools. In each of these six primary schools Minimus is taught as a curriculum subject and not as a club. Several of the schools I visited were in areas of real social deprivation and anyone who believes that Latin is an elitist subject should visit these Great Yarmouth schools and see the splendid work that is being done against all the odds. There was a 2 page spread in the Eastern Daily Press on that Saturday with good photographs of the children and full details of Minimus.

Training Days: I ran a small training day at Haberdashers' Girls' School in Monmouth in January. I am grateful to Jennifer Martin from Somerset who spoke about her experiences in using Minimus in a state primary school. In March we held a very successful day at Sarum College, Salisbury. I am grateful to Pam Macklin for finding such a good venue and helping to organise the day. Again Jennifer Martin was one of the speakers as was Linda Soames who spoke about using Minimus in an independent school. The 14 delegates clearly enjoyed the day and gained many teaching ideas and beautifully produced resources. I was glad that Brian and Diana Sparkes were able to join us on this occasion for part of the day. They too were able to chat informally to the delegates and pass on all that they have learnt about using Minimus and they gave information about applying for grants.

Future Events

Mythology Competition: At the time of writing schools are sending in their entries. I am very grateful to Pam Macklin for organising the competition, to the Jowett Trustees for sponsoring it and to Brian and Diana Sparkes for judging it. This is now an international competition and I am looking forward to seeing some of the entries later this term.

Training Days: There is one remaining day planned for this academic year :Sat 11th June at James Allen's Girls' School, Dulwich, London. At the time of writing, 3 training days have been arranged so far for 2011/12. We are also looking at the possibility of a day in the Midlands in March.

Sat 26th November 2011 -

James Allen's Girls' School, Dulwich, London

Sat 28th January 2012 -

Haberdashers' Girls' School, Monmouth

Sat 9th June 2012 -

James Allen's Girls' School, Dulwich, London

We are hoping to arrange a Minimus event in Norfolk in 2012. Our planning is in the early stages but we hope for some form of training. Please check the website for more details.

Minimus in the North. I always enjoy hearing about Minimus activities throughout the country. Here are 2 recent news items from teachers in the North:

A New Northerly Outpost For Minimus.

The power station may be closed and shops stand empty, but Blyth, a small, rather dreary town on the beautiful Northumbrian coast has recently had a shock! Generations of unemployment means that many young people in Blyth have low expectations of their future. Into this scene last year Bede Academy arrived, majoring in outstanding teaching, academic rigour and the highest expectations of students' behaviour. Having spent 35 years in a private girls' school, flying the flag for Minimus from the start, what a challenge to be invited to teach at Bede Academy and what an opportunity to introduce Minimus in a place where no Latin has been taught for over 30 years. I have a group of enthusiastic year 7 students, who stay on for an hour after school on a Friday afternoon, if you please, to study Minimus and who love it. Euge! Shirley Thomas

Hands-on Latin on Hadrian's Wall

Catherine Jarvis is doing splendid work in Northumberland. Catherine, accredited guide and linguist, is pleased to be starting her Latin and Hands-on-History courses at the "home" of Minimus Mouse, on Hadrian's Wall from mid March 2011. Catherine is also teaching Minimus in 3 local primary schools. She now plans to run additional Minimus and Cambridge Latin Courses combined with tours of the newly-renovated Vindolanda, The Roman Army Museum and the other Roman Forts along the Wall. Catherine's husband, Nigel, who runs their Four Wynds Bed and Breakfast business is happy to arrange accommodation at Four Wynds or any other local accommodation provider for individuals, families and groups. Catherine's courses will comprise the following: Minimus tours around Vindolanda for those who already familiar with the book and Weekend Minimus "taster courses" for those who would love to get to know the delightful Minimus Mouse! Longer residential courses are available to study Minimus, Minimus Secundus or Cambridge Latin Courses whilst visiting the fantastic Roman attractions along the World Heritage Site of Hadrian's Wall. Some of the courses will be taught at Vindolanda using their fabulous new training facilities. Contact Catherine (who writes as Hadriana) to discuss the above further:

016977 47972 Four Wynds, Longbyre, Northumberland CA8 7HN

www.four-wynd-guest-house.co.uk

www.hadrianastreasures.com

Twitter: @hadrianasblog

I am delighted that Catherine has agreed to join the PLP committee.

Is your Minimus Club stopping?

If you are no longer able to continue teaching Minimus, please let us know; we may be able to find a replacement teacher. If you have books that are surplus to requirements please also get in touch; recently we have been able to pass on books to people who are starting up Minimus.

Thanks to Oliver Makower

One teacher who is ending his time with Minimus is Oliver Makower, who has now run a Minimus Club at Peppard Primary School for 11 years. Many of you have benefitted from Oliver's marvellous talks at Training Days. As a non-teacher Oliver has inspired many of you to start up Minimus. I visited him at Peppard and saw how much the children were gaining from his enthusiastic and sensitive teaching of the young. Oliver has been a member of the PLP committee for many years and was also a member of the advisory panel for Minimus Secundus. The whole project has benefitted enormously from his business background and we are very sad indeed that he feels it is time for him to leave the committee. Nevertheless we fully understand that he and his wife Pope have other fish to fry and we are so grateful for their kind hospitality over the years and for all they have done to further the cause. Oliver is keen to find a replacement teacher for his Minimus club. He writes: Peppard C of E Primary is in a charming village 5 miles from Henley-on-Thames. At the moment it has about 80 children. It's very cramped and has great plans, fully supported by the County Council, to rebuild on a green-field site at the edge of the village. I have been running the Minimus Club for 11 years and have enjoyed (almost) every minute of it. At the moment we have a club of six children and are rehearsing like crazy for a chaotic version of Pandora's Box. It would help if the author wasn't also the director and producer and was a bit better at discipline and didn't keep changing the script. The club meets on a Monday from 3.30-4.30. If you can help, please contact me direct: My phone nos are 0118 972 4550 (no voicemail) 07768 734411 (voicemail) Email: olivermakower@btinternet.com

Author Caroline Lawrence also feels it is time to leave our committee. It has been a particular pleasure and privilege for me to work with such a celebrated author and I have learnt much from her focus, determination and drive. Her IT skills are superb and many a committee meeting has benefitted from her knowledge of technology. I thank them both so much for all their generous giving of their time and expertise.

IOTA magazine

Iota is a new Classics magazine produced by educational charity The Iris Project for younger children. It introduces Greek and Roman civilisation and a taste of Latin in a fun, informative and engaging way, and its content is designed and written to fit in with the KS2 material on the ancient Greeks and Romans. There are 3 editions published per year - 1 for each school term - and every issue is themed around a different Classical myth. Through 5 exciting, fact-filled and vibrant sections, children can find clues about the story while learning about how the Romans and Greeks lived, as well as being introduced to the Latin words, all through a wide variety of activities, competitions and games. You can view sample sections, and purchase a copy or subscription online at our website at <http://irismagazine.org/iota.html>. There are significant discounts for bulk orders to schools, so please contact us for details if you are interested.

Dr Lorna Robinson, Director, The Iris Project. Tel: (01865) 308698

Interactive Resources

If you have produced any Minimus whiteboard and interactive resources and would be willing to share them, we could include them on the website. Please send such material directly to Dr Helen Forte - drforte@aol.com

Beacon Schools

Many of you have kindly expressed a willingness to help others in your area to teach Minimus. I should like to set up a network of Beacon schools where a teacher is not only willing to help other Minimus teachers but is willing to work with me in spreading news. If you think that your school might be able to host a Minimus event and/or you are keen to be a key Minimus teacher in your area, please get in touch. It would be good to map out a network of such schools throughout the country. This would replace the old mouseholes who have done good work, but in some cases feel underused. If you have any further thoughts on this, do get in touch.

As I approach a significant birthday this year, I am cutting down my teaching to 2 days a week. This will make it possible for me to visit schools further afield than the South West and to take part in other events to promote Latin and Minimus. If you would like a visit during the next academic year, please do get in touch after the end of June when I should know my weekly pattern for next year.

With my thanks as always for your encouragement and support, Barbara Bell