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### Newsletter 50 – May 2013

Dear Supporter,

This is the 50<sup>th</sup> newsletter and I had grand plans to produce something special in terms of layout, colour photos etc. Unfortunately two part-time teaching jobs, 16 private pupils for Latin and Greek and various Minimus projects have forced me to adopt a more realistic approach! Nonetheless with retirement fast approaching it seems an appropriate time to reflect on the extraordinary development of the PLP and to share with you some of the highlights during the last 20 years.

### The Minimus Story

**1994-98** – While working as Executive Secretary for JACT (Joint Association of Classical Teachers) I become convinced of the need for *Minimus*. Teachers and parents write to me asking for a simple guide to Latin for young children; the Government is concerned about our poor record at learning Modern Foreign Languages (some things come full circle) and Nick Tate (Head of the Curriculum) is quoted on the front page of the TES suggesting that primary language learning is a good idea, but why should it necessarily be French- why not Latin ? While teaching bright 11 year olds at Bristol Grammar School, I am alarmed when few of them know what a verb is. This worries me: how can children go to secondary school and learn modern foreign languages when they don't know how their own language works?

**1995** – With the support and encouragement of my fellow JACT officers I establish an advisory panel; after all, this book will be quite a challenge for someone who has spent her whole life teaching secondary children. Six of us meet regularly to discuss the setting and content of the book - I owe an enormous debt to Jean Cross, Helen Forte, Wendy Hunt, Tim Wheeler and the late Martin Forest. Both books are much more accurate, more appropriate and simply work because of their expertise and constructive criticism. It was an especially great day when I spoke at a SATIPS conference about my plans for *Minimus* and Helen Forte offered to help with pictures 'because I love drawing'. I had no idea I was in the hands of such an expert. What a good decision to invite her to join the team!

**1996** – I raise the money to take a sabbatical term from school.

**1997** – I am off school from the end of March until September. We decide to set the book in Vindolanda; we hope by using a site in Roman Britain that schools may be able to incorporate *Minimus* into work on the Romans in history lessons. It soon becomes clear that this very special site is the right choice. My target is to do the first draft of a twelve chapter book. I return to school in September 1997 after completing eleven and a half chapters. With full time teaching, it takes two terms to complete the final half chapter!

**1998** – The first *Minimus* training day in London attracts 100 delegates. Thrilling, exciting and totally exhausting!

**1999** – August '*Minimus – Starting out in Latin*' is published by Cambridge University Press (CUP). One of the great supporters of *Minimus*, Frank Sharratt, has the book flown out to me on holiday in Italy; a biker collects it from Naples airport and brings it to the best hotel in Italy, Hotel Del Mare in Marina Grande, Sorrento where I am on holiday with my family. He finds me and hands over my book. Flowers arrive from the hotel and we enjoy a celebration meal. What a day! CUP have done a great job in making the book look so attractive. The first print run is 7,000 copies, the anticipated sales in one year. In fact the books sells 14,000 copies in the first year.

**Christmas 1999** – 5,000 copies have been sold. I am receiving extraordinary stories – Headmaster offers a voluntary Latin club after school and sixty children sign up, so he creates a waiting list to join the

Latin Club. A school runs a 'Latin lottery' and the children who pick the lucky numbers are allowed to learn Latin. I remain concerned for the children who didn't get the lucky numbers.

**Jan.2000** Russell Shone has been running the grants sub- committee to help schools with the initial cost of setting up *Minimus*. He hands this task over to Wendy Hunt who has done this job ever since, assisted by Diana Sparkes and Bob Bass. Teachers apply for help and typically receive money within a month; what a vital job this is.

**February 2000** – by now so many young children want to learn Latin that we don't have enough teachers. A granny at a training day suggests the brilliant idea of using the retired generation to go into schools and teach half an hour's Latin on a voluntary basis.

**2 May 2000** – Peter Jones and I send out a press release launching the 'Granny Latin Scheme'. We appeal for volunteers who are willing to teach Latin in schools for half an hour each week.

**3 May 2000** – *Minimus* makes the front page of the Daily Telegraph. The story is picked up by all the broadsheets for the next five days. In the ensuing six weeks, my feet hardly touch the ground. I receive 1200 letters, 600 phone calls and 500 emails, all from people longing to be involved in this scheme of teaching Latin voluntarily. I hear from Grannies, Grandpas, young Mums at home with children, Undergraduates, Post Graduates, all wanting to be involved. By Autumn 2000, I am completely overwhelmed by the astonishing response to *Minimus*.

**Autumn 2000** – Very fortunately, I am saved by Brian & Diana Sparkes. They suggest the setting up of a committee to share the *Minimus* load. Brian is its Chairman and Diana a member of the committee along with the members of my advisory panel and others recruited in the next year or so. Oliver Makower – a 'granny' is a tremendous addition to the team with his business acumen. Initially I am sceptical "I don't like committees- they slow things down." At the first meeting I marvel at people's skills, given so willingly in the cause of spreading Latin. How did I manage without them?

**2000** - I receive letters from children who want more stories about the family at Vindolanda. I hear from them that Latin is 'soooooo cool'. I hear that 'Latin is the best thing at school' 'Latin is the only reason I go to school'. Extraordinary!

**2001** –We set up a small business- *Minimus et cetera* - to sell stickers, pencils etc for children using *Minimus*.

**2001** - I am awarded an Honorary MA from Bristol University – Wow!

**2002** – I have a sabbatical term from Clifton High School, where I am now Head of Department, to write *Minimus Secundus*.

**2003** – Pam Macklin, who has joined the committee and has been its temporary Secretary since 2000, masterminds a brilliant *Minimus* Day at the British Museum. 300 children converge on the museum for a day of Latin- related activities. It is enormously exciting to see these children rushing around the museum to see the Vindolanda tablets, decoding inscriptions, answering a quiz about the Romans etc

**2003** – We hold our first 'Minidorm' - a weekend sleepover for children enjoying *Minimus*. It is held at Wells Cathedral School on a blissfully sunny weekend. Children enjoy learning Latin songs, doing Roman cookery, a banquet using Roman recipes with the children and staff all in Roman costumes. Most of the *Minimus* Committee are involved and we are tired but delighted with the success of it.

**2003** - Jacqui Howard-Brown is appointed as the PLP Administrator and my P.A. She soon becomes the *sine qua non* of the whole project –a role then taken on by Nicola Prince in 2009!

**2004** – '*Minimus Secundus – Moving on in Latin*' is published by CUP. Teachers with little or no Latin are teaching *Minimus* with enthusiasm but they need help with pronunciation. We record the picture stories in both books on audio tapes at Bristol University. ( subsequently produced as CDs)

**Dec. 2004** – In response to requests from teachers, Helen and I publish the first set of *Minibooks* -10 readers, one about each character in *Minimus*. These do not advance the grammar but are extra readers in the classroom; they can also be used as prizes or as material for drama.

**2005** – Pam organises a great day at York Museum (since *Minimus Secundus* is based in York)

**2005** I am awarded the Classical Association's prize for promoting the Classics to the general public.

**2005 & 2006** – There is considerable interest in an Italian version. This necessitates visits to the Italian publishers Loescher in Turin. Someone has to do it.....

**2006** – Brian Sparkes is succeeded as Chairman of the committee by Jeremy Paterson, who is still the current Chairman.

**2006** -Tim Wheeler, who has joined the committee, organises a second Minidorm at Bilton Grange School - another huge success in glorious weather.

**2006** – Sales of *Minimus* are especially brisk in the United States, so much so that the committee agrees to appoint Zee Ann Poerio from Pittsburgh and Ruth Anne Besse from Maryland to the committee.

**2007** – The Italian version of *Minimus* is published by Loescher.( ISBN 978-88-201-2964-4) I am especially delighted with the front cover which shows *Minimus* in the Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii. Also in 2007, Nick and I visit Copenhagen. We are delighted to meet children whose English is so good that they are learning Latin using an English textbook (*Minimus*).

**2007** – Ruth Anne Besse visits Britain, attends a committee meeting, walks on Hadrian's Wall, is wowed by Vindolanda and returns full of ideas to promote *Minimus*. She and Zee Ann Peorio have been loyal supporters for many years and the spread of *Minimus* in the States is a direct result of their enthusiastic input.

**2007** - Helen and I publish a 2<sup>nd</sup> set of Minibooks. NB these are only available through our business, *Minimus et cetera*.

**2008** – Pam Macklin organises another marvellous day at the British Museum. This time, over 400 children attend. Pam also establishes our annual Mythology Competition. Children win book tokens for their creative writing, poetry and artistic endeavours. The competition is sponsored by the Jowett Trustees of Oxford to whom we owe a great debt of gratitude. They are delighted to see the winning entries and have continued to support this competition ever since. The competition is now international and we are delighted to see entries from the United States and parts of Europe.

**April 2009** – The committee spends the weekend in the North East to celebrate sales of 100,000 copies. We are based at Hexham and enjoy a wonderful visit to Vindolanda where we are joined by a *Minimus* Club from Newcastle. We hold our committee meeting there and in the evening we are joined for dinner by local *Minimus* teachers and supporters. On the Sunday we have a wonderful walk on Hadrian's Wall.

**July 2009**- Nick and I spend two weeks in the United States visiting New York, Maryland and Pittsburgh. It is an action- packed time; I take part in a webinar, book signings, library events and teach various *Minimus* lessons. On our last night in Pittsburgh, Zee Anne has organised a surprise party to celebrate *Minimus*' 10<sup>th</sup> birthday. Did I think when the book came out in August 1999, that I would be singing Happy Birthday to *Minimus* in Latin with a group of enthusiastic children and their teachers in Pittsburgh? I did not!

**October 2009** – While relaxing on the sun terrace at the Hotel Del Mare in Sorrento and gazing out to Vesuvius, I write the words for sixteen songs to fulfil a long- standing ambition to turn *Minimus* into a musical.

**November 2009** – I hand over the lyrics to Bristol composer Christopher Northam. Within ten days he has written the first four of a wonderful collection of songs.

**10 November 2009** – My family and I travel to Windsor castle where I am presented with an MBE by Her Majesty the Queen - a wonderful day for the four of us.

**July 2010** – *Minimus the Musical* is premiered at Clifton High School, Bristol  
November 2010 – the cast and supporting team travel to Geneva, where we perform the musical three times at the International School.

**2011** –The Primary Latin Project is extremely fortunate in obtaining a grant from the newly established 'Classics for All'. Jane Maguire, who has joined the committee and who has done such splendid work with Gifted and Talented children in the Great Yarmouth area is keen to establish *Minimus* in Norfolk but on the school timetable. Seven primary schools commit to doing this for two years. Jane drives the project on, organising teachers, a support network and special days at Norwich Castle Museum for the children. The project is nearing the end but as you will see from elsewhere in this newsletter, we have only just begun. "Classics for All" is keen to set up a further partnership with other schools in Norfolk.

**2012** – I am delighted to be able to direct the musical again, this time with slightly older children at Haberdashers' Monmouth School for Girls and boys from Monmouth School. After several successful performances in July, at the end of the same week the young cast of Year 7 children travel to London to perform at James Allen's Girls' School in Dulwich.

**2012** – *Minimus* is translated into Slovenian. Published by Modrijan. ISBN 978-961-241-617-1

**2012** - The Primary Latin Project is granted Charity Status; thus we can obtain tax relief on all Gift Aided donations.

**October 2012** – I take part in the prestigious Cheltenham Literature Festival, teaching *Minimus* to sixty children.

**February 2013** – Jane Maguire, Pam Macklin, Nick and I travel to Cologne where we promote *Minimus* at 'Didacta', the largest book fair in Europe. There is considerable interest in a German edition – watch this space!

**April 2013** – Another visit to Norfolk to work with Jane Maguire to train teachers (mostly non-Latinists) to teach *Minimus*.

**April 2013** – Thanks to Catherine Jarvis, another member of the PLP committee, for organising *Minimus* events on Hadrian's Wall. I take part in the Hexham Book Festival and visit 3 schools using *Minimus*, just ten minutes from Vindolanda! We lead a group around the site and museum.

The above is a sketchy history of the 'Primary Latin Project'. As I don't keep a diary, there will no doubt be some inaccuracies and important omissions. Straightaway I am reminded that I haven't mentioned our wonderful trips to the United States, seven attendances at the American Classical League conferences as well as one at CAMWS (Classical Association of the Mid West and South) in Atlanta, Georgia. Thank you to all the *Minimus* Teachers, who have made us so welcome and have done such tremendous work in promoting Latin to the young throughout the States.

Each of you reading this is a part of the *Minimus* story by definition, and if I have omitted to mention you by name, my thanks for your encouragement, support and friendship are no less sincere.

### **Mythology Competition**

This year's topics (Pandora's Box and Heracles and the Hydra) have attracted plenty of interest. Some schools regularly enter the competition but every year new schools are tempted to try. We are lucky to have the sponsorship of the Jowett Trustees once again. Without their support it would be impossible to offer the prizes so we thank them sincerely.

Two schools have been much in advance and submitted their work by mid April! Well done for such organization!

**Pam Macklin**

## Grant Fund Report

From the beginning of October 2012 to the end of March 2013, there has been a real mixture of places learning Latin! This has included 20 state schools (including two in partnership and three where a peripatetic teacher travels round teaching the subject), 7 independent schools, 1 state language school, 1 state special school (for emotional and social needs), 1 Home Education group and 1 U3A group. These 31 establishments are:

BEDFORDSHIRE: Sandye Place Academy, Sandy:

BERKSHIRE: St. Gabriel's School, Newtown:

CUMBRIA: Trinity School Language College, Carlisle: Newtown Community School, Carlisle:  
Windermere/Kendal/Steveley Home Education Group:

DORSET: Yarrell's Preparatory School, Poole: Bournemouth U3A Group:

ESSEX: St Margaret's Preparatory School, Halstead: Pear Tree Mead Primary and Nursery School, Harlow:

LONDON: Maple Walk School, Harlesden: Salcombe Preparatory School, Chase Side:

MIDDLESEX: Ashford C. of E. Primary School, Ashford:

NORFOLK: Great Hockham Primary School, Great Hockham: Mendham Primary School, Harleston in partnership with St Edmunds Primary School, Hoxne, in Suffolk: NORWICH: Swanton Abbott County Primary School, Swanton Abbott:

OXFORDSHIRE: Woodeaton Manor School (Special School) Woodeaton, Oxford: Mrs Drusilla Kenney, Home Educator, Didcot:

SUFFOLK: St Margaret's CEVA Primary School, Ipswich: Barningham CEVA Primary School, Bury St. Edmonds: Cavendish Primary School/ Wells Hill Primary School/Long Melford Primary School, Sudbury (all three with peripatetic teacher Abigail Griffiths): Honington CEVC County Primary School, Honington:

SURREY: Weston Green School, Thames Ditton: Claremont Fan Court Preparatory School, Esher:

TYNE AND WEAR: Heaton Manor School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Moorside Primary School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne: WARWICKSHIRE: Stratford-upon-Avon Primary School, Stratford-upon-Avon:

WEST MIDLANDS: Heathlands Primary School, Castle Bromwich, Birmingham: St Mary's the Mount V.A. Primary School, Walsall.

A very big thank you again to the Classical Association who have donated so generously to the Primary Latin Project. This enables *Minimus*, to visit so many places!

**Wendy Hunt**

## Norfolk Report

The two-year North Walsham project, funded by Classics for All, will be coming to an end this summer. In its first year, the High School introduced a voluntary after school GCSE course and seven students are due to sit GCSE Latin shortly. In primary schools, small groups were taught by three project teachers and observed by teachers or teaching assistants in the schools. Seven primary schools and 68 children were involved. This year, most of the teachers/TAs started up their own new groups in addition to those of the project teachers and the numbers of children increased to 134. The good news is that, although the funding ceases, all the schools involved are now committed to continuing Latin.

Norwich Castle Museum has provided splendid support for the project and children have enjoyed specially planned Roman/Latin days there. Activities have included exploring the Roman Gallery, joining the Roman army, artefact handling, performing a short play in Latin, Roman food and hearing about the Romans in Norfolk. All sessions have included references to *Minimus* and have used appropriate Latin vocabulary. The children have loved these days.

Classics for All have been very happy with the success of this first project and are now funding two more Norfolk clusters with a view to creating an example of excellent practice in Norfolk. Barbara and I have just delivered two days of training to 8 new primary schools in the Aylsham and Dereham areas and, at the same time, Steve Hunt delivered CLC training to their two High Schools.

So an even larger Norfolk presence for *Minimus* – in two years he has moved into three new state High Schools and sixteen state primary schools. euge!

**Jane Maguire.**

I was delighted to visit the Norfolk project last week and to spend two days with Jane training potential *Minimus* teachers. What is happening in rural Norfolk could well be a template for how to do it in the future in other parts of the country. The fact that North Walsham High School has set up a GCSE Latin course for enthusiastic pupils who have come up from primary school knowing *Minimus* is the sort of outcome that I could only have dreamt of when *Minimus* was first published.

This newsletter is also an opportunity to thank my PA and administrator of the Primary Latin Project, Nicola Prince, for four years of help and support. Her unfailing cheerfulness and efficiency have transformed the project and the committee and I am deeply grateful to her for all she has done. I am pleased to report that the new PLP administrator from May will be Rachael Jones. Please be patient during the handover period and I know you will enjoy meeting Rachael and getting to know her in the ensuing weeks.

### **Training Day**

A training day has been arranged for Sat. June 8<sup>th</sup> at James Allen's Girls' School in Dulwich, London. Please book as soon as you can.

Numbers at training days have been very small this year, and in a time of a recession, it is probably a better use of everyone's time if I visit a local area and run a training event for teachers at several schools. No further training dates have been planned for the next academic year. I am happy to plan them in response to demand.

### **Minimus Volunteering Opportunities**

1. A small Catholic Primary School in south-east Surrey is seeking a volunteer to run a *Minimus* club one day per week, either after school (3.30 - 4.15 pm) or at lunchtime (12.00 - 12.30pm), starting as soon as possible. *Minimus* has previously been very popular with pupils and parents but is not currently running due to the work commitments of the senior member of staff who introduced Latin to the school. We have the textbooks, CD and other resources. We hope to hear from you! Please contact Barbara for more information.
2. Gillian Hylson-Smith has run a club at Bathwick Primary School, near Bath, for many years. She now feels it is time to stop and wonders if anyone in the Bath area would be willing to take over the club. Please get in touch with her- email : [hylsonsmith@waitrose.com](mailto:hylsonsmith@waitrose.com) or Tel : 01225 463750 for more details.

### **What of the future?**

1. I am hoping that the idea of a German edition will become a reality.
2. I also hope that the musical will be turned into a format that can be used and performed by other schools.
3. Helen Forte is working closely with CUP to produce *Minimus* in a digital form and she is excited at the thought of *Minimus* Apps.
4. Perhaps Helen and I can find time to write another set of Minibooks?
5. In July this year, I will be starting my retirement by taking myself to Sorrento to write another book. This is '*Minimus* in the Classroom' and will combine suggestions for using *Minimus* throughout the primary curriculum with a collection of games, quizzes etc that I have collected over the last twenty years. I will be pleased to have more uninterrupted time to complete it.

My diary for the autumn looks pleasingly and surprisingly empty. I will have a lot more spare time and I am very happy to visit schools and work with children on *Minimus*. Please get in touch if you would like to arrange a visit.

At the time of writing the first *Minimus* book has sold 132,000 copies worldwide!!

With best wishes and thanks as always for your support.

**Barbara Bell**