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Newsletter 56 – April 2015

Dear Supporter,

I have just been re-reading Newsletter 55 in which I began by describing what an exciting year 2014 had been in the history of *Minimus*. With only 4 months gone I can already say that 2015 is proving equally exciting! After a 40 - year career promoting Classics at every opportunity it is especially gratifying to sense a hunger for Latin from many unexpected quarters. I recently sent the committee an e-mail entitled "A Hunger for Latin." In this I referred to many teachers whom I have met over the last year, particularly young teachers who have not had the chance to learn Latin themselves and who are embracing it. These are in schools where I have trained the staff to use *Minimus* and where Headteachers have chosen to make Latin their designated language mainly because it will enhance young children's literacy. Other important factors are that *Minimus* can be taught by non-specialists, grants are available to help with the start -up costs and training is available. As well as enthusiasm at school level I have had a particularly interesting time speaking to many University and PGCE students about *Minimus*.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Classics students want to know about the *Minimus* story, but I have also enjoyed working with English and Modern Foreign Language students who are approaching *Minimus* from different and interesting angles.

Work in Schools

In February I trained staff from 2 primary schools in Dartford - Temple Hill and Oakfield Primary School who work in a partnership. I had 3 hours to train 70 staff so we were extremely busy but their enthusiasm was so gratifying. Only 7 of the staff had ever done any Latin but by the end of the session they were much more confident and ready to go. The Deputy Head, Richard Moore, reports "The Latin is going really well and the children are loving *Minimus*."

Headteacher Christina Pumfrey Reports: Thameside Primary has caught the *Minimus* bug with every child in years 3 to 6 receiving a weekly Latin lesson. There has been interest from neighbouring schools and many parents have expressed their delight in our decision to teach Latin. The children are really enjoying it and one year 5 class even sang "Old MacDonald Had A Farm" in Latin in their sharing assembly, attended by their parents. A real success which has put Thameside Primary on the map.

Work at University Level

This term I have also visited 2 Universities. Eleanor Theodorakopoulos, the Outreach Officer at Birmingham, who has done so much to support Anna Donnelly and the Solihull project, invited me to speak to some of her Classics students who wish to become teachers in the future. I worked with a group of 10 and had a lovely afternoon training them. In February I was also invited to Nottingham University as part of the East Midlands Classics Project. I spent the morning working with a mixed group – some Primary teachers, some Secondary, some Classics teachers, some with no Classics. The unifying factor was their interest in possibly teaching *Minimus* in a variety of situations. I am grateful to Clodadh Cooney and Jo Darley for setting up this event. Later that day Will Griffiths from the Cambridge Latin Course trained them in the next logical stage of Latin.

PGCE

At a time when we have such a national shortage of Classics teachers it has been especially pleasing to work with students who are intending to teach. In my last newsletter I reported the exciting development at Bristol University where my former colleague Helen Aberdeen (MFL tutor) and her colleague Lorna Smith (English tutor) had invited me to deliver *Minimus* training to their students in the summer term. After my initial very enjoyable meeting with these students on 18th December we awaited numbers with eager anticipation. I had hoped that we would get a small group

of 10, which seemed to me viable. This is, after all, an optional module for students who are extremely busy, both with written work and teaching placements. Imagine our joy when a total of 50 students have signed up to follow the *Minimus* course later this term - 18 English student teachers and 32 MFL teachers. We were especially delighted when the University of Bristol agreed to split the class and create 2 smaller classes so that I can run 2 parallel sessions each week. This will of course mean that I can target the training separately towards English and Modern Foreign Languages Groups. I sent an initial questionnaire to all these students and have been thrilled by their responses. They are so enthusiastic to get started. Some quite naturally wish to add Latin to their list of languages that they can offer when they apply for jobs; others gave up Latin too early at school and are delighted to have the chance to re-visit it; others are fascinated by history and are looking forward to finding out about the *Minimus* family and Vindolanda; others have a passion for etymology and can't wait to make the links between Latin and English, and so it goes on. One especially lovely quote from a student, who was asked why she had signed up for this module, said:

"I have a Latin-shaped gap in my life. "

This will be a really stimulating experience for me as the MFL students will share links between Latin and many languages and the students come from all over the world. I am so grateful to Helen and Lorna for having the vision to set up this module and at the time of writing I'm doing my final preparation to begin tomorrow (20th April) I hope that this project will go well and may become a regular part of the Bristol course. Moreover other Universities have already expressed interest in the Bristol PGCE scheme, so who knows what might happen next year? The mouse continues to scuttle!

Advocates Day - 14th March

In addition to all these visits I was delighted to welcome *Minimus* Advocates to our home on Saturday 14th March. As with last year we had a most successful and enjoyable day and I am so grateful to those who found time in a busy term to give up a Saturday and make the journey. Michele Anderson from Beechwood Park School in Hertfordshire, who now runs our Advocates scheme, reports:

Barbara introduced Hilary Hodgson from CfA and Ben Harris from CUP. The programme consisted of the following talks:

1. Update on latest *Minimus* Materials and Projects – Barbara
2. *Minimus* and English – in Solihull - Anna Donnelly
3. Research project into the benefits of Latin – Evelien Bracke, Swansea
4. *Minimus* and Modern Foreign Languages in Bristol – Helen Aberdeen

Advocates shared some of their ideas and practice; topics included:

Organising a *Minimus* play competition and a Roman banquet, Mythology Competition, Using *Minimus Secundus* for Common Entrance, Trips to Roman sites, Using *Minimus* to inspire assemblies, What the Ashmolean Museum has to offer for schools and JACT Inset "Teaching with Ancient Artefacts"

Classics for All

One of those who attended the Advocates day was Hilary Hodgson, the treasurer from Classics for All. The Primary Latin Project is already enormously grateful to Classics for All for their financial support in all sorts of ways: the splendid work that Jane Maguire has done in Norfolk over the last few years has been funded by Classics for All; Anna Donnelly's project in Solihull has also received financial backing from them and a further project in the Midlands should take off later this term in Mossley, near Dudley - see under future events. Hilary came to discover more about our Advocates scheme and how it works and also to share ways in which she envisaged Classics for All funding *Minimus* events. Naturally the delegates found this enormously encouraging and she and I have met to discuss ways in which our 2 organisations can work more closely.

Publications

The third set of Minibooks and *Minimus becoming Maximus* (the *Minimus* story over the last 20 years) are both selling steadily. Please note that these publications, as well as *Minimus in Practice* (the cross-curricular book) are only available through our business *Minimus et Cetera*. Both *Minimus* text books as well as their accompanying Teachers' Resource Books and CDs can be purchased directly through Cambridge University Press. Any local bookshop will order them for you if you give the details including ISBN numbers. The Hellenic Bookshop in London continues to be so helpful in selling and distributing *Minimus* books - contact info@hellenicbookservice.com. Visit their splendid shop including the excellent second hand section in Kentish Town if you are in London.

NB: While mentioning the business *Minimus et Cetera*, please note that we are now selling new erasers. These have been out of stock for some time but the new ones, which feature *Minimus* rather than *Vibrissa*, are available at the same price, 50p each, in the following colours: pink, green, purple and blue.

I am grateful to members of the PLP Committee for the following reports:

GRANT FUND REPORT (OCTOBER 2014 –MID-APRIL 2015)

From the beginning of October 2014 to the middle of April 2015, 25 schools have received a grant, 23 of which are state schools, 1 is independent and 1 is home tutoring. The applications are: BEDFORDSHIRE: Sandy Upper School, SANDY (£600); BRISTOL: Air Balloon Hill Primary School, ST. GEORGE (£120); BUCKS: Naphill and Walters Ash Primary School, WALTERS ASH (£130); CHESHIRE: St. Mary's R.C. Primary School, CONGLETON (£100); DERBYSHIRE: Dale Community Primary School, DERBY (£1,000); DEVON: St Sidwell's Primary School, EXETER (£30); The Beacon C. of E. Primary School, EXMOUTH (£150); DURHAM: Laurel Avenue Community Primary School, THE WOODLANDS (£75); ESSEX: Thameside Primary School, GRAYS (£750); KENT: ST. Margaret's –at-Cliffe Primary School, DOVER (£30); Sedley's C.E. Primary School, SOUTHFLEET (£130); Winscombe Primary School, DOVER (£100); LINCOLNSHIRE: Great Steeping Primary School, NR. SPILSBY (£130); LONDON: Ridgeway Primary School, SOUTH CROYDON (£100); NORFOLK: Kelling C.E. Primary School, HOLT (£100); NOTTINGHAMSHIRE: Seely Primary and Nursery School, SHERWOOD (£125); SHROPSHIRE: Coleham Primary School, SHREWSBURY (£130); SOMERSET: West Pennard C. of E. Primary School, GLASTONBURY (£850); All Hallows Preparatory School, SHEPTON MALLETT (£260); SUFFOLK: St. Edmundsbury C.E.V.A. Primary School, BURY ST. EDMUNDS (£130); Clements Primary School, HAVERHILL (£120); SURREY: Broke Hill Community Primary School, IPSWICH (£120); WEST MIDLANDS: Yorkswood Primary School, BIRMINGHAM (£130); Fairway Primary Academy School, KINGS NORTON (£130); WREXHAM: Mrs Jane Danby (Home Tutor, HOPE (£42)

Very many thanks again to the Classical Association for their generosity, most gratefully received. Even more children now have the chance to learn Latin!

Wendy Hunt

Website and IT Report

I have been adding to my *Minimus* blog (<http://minimusthemouse.blogspot.co.uk>) as and when I have had time – including work by my pupils and the first Latin comic I made, aged 15, and a couple of posts on the various 3D *Minimus* models I have worked on...

I had a request to feature one or more of my posts on <http://post40bloggers.com/>. I'll quote the correspondence:

"Dear Dr. Forte, Last year, a group of bloggers got together to create a community website to showcase the talents of blogging men and women aged 40 and upward. It has several categories for writers and is developing into a pretty vibrant site. Recently we decided the next step is to establish a new category featuring work by professional and amateur cartoonists and illustrators.

I wonder if you would consider letting me include links to posts on your site; I think your idea of using art to help make Latin lessons fun is brilliant and would love to steer our readers to it.

... Re which post of yours to feature - I have been having a careful read of your blog and am so impressed with your work. How I wish I had been taught Latin in such an imaginative way! I haven't quite decided which is the right post for our site to showcase - if I end up going with a different post from the 2 you kindly suggest, both of which are so lively and vibrant, it will be simply because I'm trying to find the best way of presenting your idea of using illustration (in particular) to make learning fun, to our P40B readers."

I added more exercises to the Vocabulary Test page:

(http://www.minimusetc.co.uk/Vocab/Vocab%20tests/Vocab_test_page.htm) words for the baths, including a label-the-picture exercise, and an identify the family exercise, using Latin words (mater etc) rather than name

Twitter: I have been looking after the Twitter feed for a while, and have been posting a lot of pictures. At the time of writing we have 1865 followers. I shall certainly be tweeting all about our Vindolanda meeting – and the model *Minimus* is looking forward to being posed for the camera all over the site!

Pinterest: If any of you use Pinterest, I have a *Minimus* board: (https://www.pinterest.com/helen_forte/minimuslatin/) as well as an Ancient Mice and Cats one. There are some excellent resources there – Caroline Lawrence has some brilliant boards, and often puts *Minimus* things on them. **Helen Forte**

Solihull Report: Latin in Solihull is moving from 'delicate fledgling' to 'beginning to fly' with teachers who are most confident in our 'Hub School' sharing with others. Another day of training from Barbara is due in June to really embed subject knowledge so that teachers are more confident with both delivery and assessment. Primary students are making connections between languages in English sessions as well as at random points in the day when linked words in other parts of the curriculum occur! A Latin language web is slowly being woven by the children - fledgling linguists because of the Primary Latin Project! Our secondary school has started to investigate the Cambridge Latin Project for their Year 7, 8 and 9 students to provide a basis for MFL languages later in Year 8, with a view to running an optional GCSE in Year 10. These teachers will benefit from further training from Barbara so that an understanding of KS2 Latin is established and built upon. **Anna Donnelly**

Ofsted Quotes: Jubilee Academy in Mossley (the Midlands) has recently had an Ofsted inspection. Kelly Vaughan, its Vice-Principal, was delighted that the inspectors visited *Minimus* lessons and reported so positively:

Under Leadership and Management: Leaders introduced the teaching of Latin in response to pupils' difficulties with spelling, punctuation and grammar. There was evidence during the inspection that this is having a very positive impact on pupils' understanding. Pupils showed great enjoyment in this learning.

Under Quality of Teaching: Teachers use the study of Latin to help pupils to understand grammar, punctuation and spelling in English. These lessons are fun and engage all pupils actively.

Future Events

As well as the PGCE courses that I will be running this term I am looking forward to a trip to Vindolanda over the May Bank Holiday weekend accompanied by the PLP Committee. We decided to have our regular committee meeting there to celebrate anticipated sales of 150,000 copies of the first *Minimus* book. At the time of writing we have approximately 60 books to sell! It will be good to meet the staff at Vindolanda and we will be joined by Sue Balmer, our newest *Minimus* Advocate from the North East and Lindsay Allason Jones who has been such a valuable supporter and historical advisor on *Minimus*.

Bath - Exciting things are happening at the Roman Baths in Bath. The famous Bath Curses (defixios) were recognised formally by Unesco last term and this great honour was marked with a splendid dinner to which I was invited. At that dinner I had the opportunity to speak to the Education Officer at Bath who described their plans to create, amongst other things, a new education centre. The plan is that it will include more teaching of Latin and *Minimus* is likely to feature in this. The Baths are visited by thousands of primary school children every year, many of whom are learning some Latin. On 12th May there is a follow up meeting at which I will have the opportunity, along with many others, to make suggestions about the developments; this is a long -term project but it is exciting that *Minimus* is involved from its inception.

On 6th June Dulwich Training Day. We will be holding our last ever *Minimus* Training Day at James Allen's Girls' School in Dulwich where the Head, Marion Gibbs, who has given us such tremendous support, will be retiring. The price is the usual £60 for the day including all refreshments and resources. If you would like to attend this day please complete an application form available from our website and apply as soon as possible.

12th June Solihull Training I will be visiting Solihull for the third day of training for the teachers taking part in the Solihull Project, sponsored by Classics for All. Now that they are experienced in teaching *Minimus* they would like a day focusing on Latin grammar and the various issues that have cropped up during their teaching, as well as a brief look at *Minimus Secundus*. I am looking forward to working with Anna Donnelly again and with this enterprising group.

19th June - Mossley training - There has been an interesting spin-off from the Solihull Project. Kelly Vaughan attended the initial day that I ran in Solihull even though she wasn't part of that particular project. She is a Vice Principal at a school in Mossley and spoke enthusiastically about *Minimus* to other vice principals working in her area. The result is that thanks to generous financial support, again from Classics for All, they have asked for a day's training with a view to implementing *Minimus* in their schools. I am very much looking forward to working with them.

July - I hope very much to meet teachers from the USA who are doing a tour of sites in Roman Britain when they spend the weekend in Bath from 11th - 13th July.

We are sad not to be able to take part in this year's ACL Conference in Connecticut, but thanks to our 2 marvellous US members of the PLP Committee, Ruth Ann Besse and Zee Ann Poerio, I am constantly in touch with developments across the pond. So far I have 8 *Minimus* Advocates in the USA. Anyone reading this, either in the USA or in Britain who would like to work with me to promote *Minimus* and to support local teachers who take it on, should get in touch, we still hope for someone in Scotland and Ireland, both North and South.

July - A new publication - Helen Forte and I plan to meet to work intensively on creating a pupils' workbook. Thank-you so much to many of you who have already given us ideas as to what this should contain. If you know that there are particular chapters where you need more resources or certain aspects of language where the pupils need more practice, please do get in touch and share your ideas; your input will be invaluable. Following our usual pattern over the last 2 years we hope this will be published by Whitehall Printers in Bristol in time for Christmas. Watch this space!

A date for your long-term diary: Please note that our **Minimus Day** at the British Museum in 2016 will take place on **Saturday 18th June**. More details in the next newsletter and on our website. Save the date!

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

Barbara Bell

Stop Press: please see the advert below:

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Queen Street

Kingswinford

West Midlands

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PLEASE CAN YOU HELP! Our Latin teacher is leaving at the end of term and we need another one!

Could you help us please?

Please contact Mrs. Perkins, Headteacher, on 01384 818295 or email lperkins@st-mary-ki.dudley.sch.uk