

# Editorial

by Steven Hunt

2014 has seen a welcome growth in courses offered for teaching and learning Classics in UK schools. Classics - especially Latin - is blessed with some fantastic resources to use in the classroom. What has been lacking are sufficient teachers to use them or to use them in the way intended. A great number of training events have taken place all over the UK. ArLT and JACT have continued to offer their INSET days and Summer Schools: London, Durham, Wells, Repton and Bryanston have become regular fixtures in the Classics teaching community's calendar and increasingly see adults as well as youngsters participating. They have now been joined by others, aimed more specifically at the needs of teachers. CSCP in association with the CA has run a whole series of courses all over the UK to improve teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogy; Classics in Communities presented a very successful conference and followed it up with a series of nationwide workshops to raise awareness among teachers of how to start Latin and Greek in primary schools; the Iris project continues to send undergraduates into primaries to give pupils a taste of Latin and undergraduate students a taste of teaching; and the Universities of Birmingham and Liverpool ran programmes on Classics teaching and Ancient History respectively aimed at teachers new to the subject or in the first years of teaching.

Now government has at long last caught up and has started offering something more than just rhetorical support: real money directed at particular projects - ones it favours, to be sure, but money nonetheless. And in some cases quite large sums (for Classics!). This has resulted in a DfE-funded collaboration between Oxford University and CSCP to provide the full programme of training events all over the UK and online which Maria Kilby details later in this Journal, and a London-wide training programme funded by the London Mayor's office



called Capital Classics.

Meanwhile, charities, university Classics departments, examination boards and schools are networking like frenzy to capitalize on the opportunities afforded and the results are starting to look good. What is developing nicely is a community of key people and organisations who regularly meet and share know-how. A sense of common commitment to making the best use of resources is coming about. This is something which needs to outlast government favouritism which may fade as quickly as it unexpectedly appeared. The next steps for the subject community must surely be to look ahead towards and past the next General Election in 2015 to ensure that the present goodwill and relative largesse shown by the DfE continues, regardless of political persuasion.

These courses are all perhaps evidence of the healthy nature of our subject at the moment: high demand suggests high interest. Some 12,000 students took OCR GCSE or WJEC Level 2 in Latin in 2014. That's a real success and a rise of some 3,000 from 2011. More state schools are offering Latin now than ever before, according to the Independent newspaper. There

is a lot to be proud about and many of the courses which have been developed in 2014 will continue to run in the next year. There are two other areas, however, with which the subject community needs to engage in the new academic year. Both of these are subjects which originate with the Government, otherwise such a keen supporter of Classics, and derive ultimately from its kindly-meant but often disjointed policies. Firstly: initial teacher training. While the DfE has awarded money for training non-specialist teachers, we should remember that the shortage of trained specialist teachers which is often mentioned in newspaper articles is a creature of the same DfE. Secondly: examinations. In its zeal to raise standards at GCSE overall the DfE and Ofqual are in danger of making the Latin and Ancient Greek GCSE inaccessible to many students, either because the specification is too large to be accommodated on a typical school timetable or because the inclusion of more elements such as translation of English into Latin sentences or grammar identification exercises (currently in the AS specifications) will make it beyond reach of the students' or even some of the teachers' own capabilities at

this level. A senior DfE source assures us that the answer to questions about the shortage of time most schools have to train students to perform these assessments – let alone the assessments which we already have - lies in the training up or ‘upskilling’ of the non-specialist Latin teachers on the short DfE-funded courses mentioned above. This misses the point entirely. There is no reason to doubt that non-specialists will show as much commitment and determination to meet the demands of the new more-challenging GCSEs - after all, they will be doing much the same in their own subjects. There is the danger, however, that we end up with plenty more teachers drawn from among their ranks but with an examination that lies just beyond their comfort-zone in a subject which will always play ‘second fiddle’ to the one they have previously studied at a high level and in which they have been extensively trained. Not to mention the fact that suitable resources for teaching the new assessments are not available. Latin is a subject which is already perceived (fairly or not) as difficult. Head teachers need to maximise their ‘value-added’ scores in the league tables, and they might need quite a lot of convincing to start up a course which they don’t feel confident enough in delivering, for which they are unable to find sufficient time or sufficiently qualified teachers, and which they fear students will find excessively challenging.

There are more changes to examinations to worry about. The anticipated decoupling of the AS examinations from the full A level may have the effect of discouraging students from embarking upon a full two-year course in Classical subjects in the first place. Schools which may already struggle to offer a Latin course to four or five students who sign up to an AS ‘at least to start’ may find it even more difficult financially to justify offering it to the two or three who will sign up for a full A level. The same may be the case with Greek, Classical Civilization and Ancient History, where – in the case of the last two subjects – the timescale for changes stretches ever distant and ever more blurred. The effects will be felt in the universities in the years to come. So, those students who have met the demands of the new GCSE and are lucky

enough to be able to find a school which can afford to put on Latin at A level may perhaps be better-prepared to understand Latin grammar than many of those who learn Latin at present. But it is likely that there will be far fewer of them for the universities to choose from, and far fewer of them from the non-selective state schools where Latin is currently enjoying the revival mentioned earlier.

For the examination boards’ own information about the changes, please see the News Section in this Journal. Let us hope that the new Classical Association Teaching Board, formed from the Subject Heads of the subcommittees of JACT, will be able to address these issues and others with vigour in the New Year.

In this journal we are pleased to include the following articles, some with a little international flavour: Caroline Lawrence, JACT President, (‘Drinking from a kylix... and other ways of bringing the past alive’) writes about how a few simple classical replica artefacts can have a deep effect on students’ appreciation and understanding of the past; Ronnie Ancona (‘Teaching Sexually-Explicit Catullus’) explores the reasoning behind her decision to publish a separate school text of Catullus’ more sexually explicit verses; Juliana Veysey (‘An Investigation into Teachers’ and Pupils’ Perceptions of the Value of Teaching and Learning Latin Derivations at GCSE’) reports on her surveys carried out with her students and teachers in her secondary school about the value they attached to the assessment of Latin word derivations; Christodoulos Zekas (‘In the Shadow of Diachrony: Ancient Greek Language in the Contemporary Greek Gymnásio’) takes a close look at the Ancient Greek language textbook used in Greece today and reveals some concerns which should affect everyone thinking about textbook design and the practice of teaching (ancient) languages; Clare Harvey (‘Ancient Tales Through a Twenty-First Century Lens’) returns to the theme of the use of ICT in the classroom – and investigates the use of iPads and video-production for revision of the Odyssey with her secondary school students; Bartolo Natoli (‘Flipping the Latin Classroom: Balancing Educational Practice with the Theory of eLearning’) evaluates his own experiences in using the flipped classroom model

– a cautionary tale, perhaps, but with much to be learnt from the experience; Jane Maguire (‘The North Norfolk Latin Cluster Group: two case studies’) updates us with the successes and further challenges of the two projects she has been instrumental in setting up to bring Latin to primary and secondary schools in Norfolk; Anna Karsten (‘Reflections on Mentoring PGCE Trainees’) shares her experiences in training the teachers of tomorrow; Dru Patel (‘Improving Learning Through PowerPoint’) describes how her own thinking about teaching began to take shape while developing teaching materials for her own students; and finally Lorna Robinson (‘East Oxford Community Classics Centre: Our First Year’) recalls the events of the last year in her base in Oxford and her hopes for the year to come. News, reports and book reviews follow.

The Journal of Classics Teaching is about to enter another stage in its development. A successor to the *Didaskalos*, the JACT journal founded by John Sharwood Smith, and *Latin Teaching*, the journal of the Association for the Reform of Latin, via *Hesperiam* and the *JACT Bulletin* and *JACT Review*, JCT has existed in its present form since 2004. Now that JACT itself is about to come under the aegis of the Classical Association, from its next issue in April 2015 JCT will become a freely-available online journal hosted by the CA and accessible through its website, hosted by Cambridge University Press. There are no plans to charge for JCT now or in the future. Members of the CA and others who wish to subscribe to email alerts will receive them when each new issue is published. The news and reports will be displayed separately on the CA website and will be kept more frequently updated. We hope that putting JCT online will enable more people to read it – not just in the UK - and will encourage more people to write for it – especially teachers. Of course, by putting JCT online we will be able to include visual material in colour and we can easily make links to websites or other resources. We think that this move, then, has enormous potential and we hope that you approve. Submission of articles, letters and information will be just the same as before to the editor. Full details of how to do this will be placed in due course on the CA website.