

News and Reports

43rd JACT Latin Summer School – 2023 Director’s Report

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Abstract

This is a review of the activities and successes of the 43rd residential JACT Latin Summer School, run in July 2023. Specifically, it covers our typical teaching arrangement, lectures, trips and events and acknowledges the generosity of our sponsors.

Keywords: summer school, Latin, pedagogy

The 43rd Latin summer school, our 3rd biggest ever with 157 students, once again took place at Harrogate Ladies’ College. Though we still have our critical mass of school-age students, we have nonetheless once again had a most encouraging spread of ages (14–64, with 29% of our students over the age of 18) and people from all walks of life wanting to study Latin, even on their birthday! (Figure 1).

As my second consecutive year of Latin Camp is drawing to a close, I reflect upon and consider its vast benefits to my Latin abilities. I am able to improve not just from the in-person, deeper look into the language with guidance from an expert whilst reading through classical texts, but also from the new knowledge gained at the many grammar clinics on offer. These clinics were able to consolidate previously learnt knowledge and build upon said knowledge to grant me an advanced look into what my A level course will entail. The workload is able to push you to strengthen your knowledge and understanding of the text and language whilst still being manageable. The education perks are only enhanced by the pleasant and safe environment of like-minded individuals, who in this short time span have become some of my closest friends. The nightly lectures are both educating and captivating and are able to widen your knowledge across an extensive list of subjects relating to the ancient world. This experience has, for the second time, revitalised and nourished my love for the Latin language and the ancient world. (Melciah Rodney, post-GCSE group, age 16).

Other things which were also very encouraging were both the rise of state school students attending, with 44% of our school-age students joining us from the state sector, and the continued attendance from overseas students, up to 10% now, with people hailing from the USA and several European countries, including our first Ukrainian student.

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Staff and teaching

It was another pretty large team this year. Back in play were: Mish Bancroft, Johnny Boyd, Naomi Bradshaw, Tasha Cook, Lindsey Cullen, Pete Donnelly, Clemmie Faulkner, Rachel Hambly, Dom Jones, Katie Lathan, Laura Snook, Rachel Starling, Laura Warren and Hayley Walker. As usual, they were accompanied by some new faces: Aine McMenamain, Jess Moxom and Peter Swallow.

My tutor’s dedicated, knowledgeable, and enjoyable teaching style deepened my understanding of Latin, making complex concepts accessible and engaging. The small class sizes allowed for personalised attention when needed, and the grammar clinics were perfect for clarifying uncertainties. Though the accelerated format seemed daunting at first, her warm and approachable demeanour made it manageable. The immersive experience resulted in rapid progress that I didn’t think possible. The trip to Hadrian’s Wall was a memorable highlight, thanks to a knowledgeable and enthusiastic guide. Overall, this enriching experience has left me both exhausted and grateful for the opportunity. Thank you to all! (Nicky Brzostowski, beginners’ group, age 47).

James Green came back as my assistant for the second year and once again performed the role with consummate reliability and panache. Naomi Bradshaw and Laura Warren brilliantly performed the assistant director roles (academic and student welfare respectively), dealing with any and all issues arising with individuals to keep me free to focus on the overall running of Camp.

Please look on the website under ‘our courses’ for details on what we offer. Once again, we had a vast array of groups: from complete beginners who tackled the traditional and totally uncompromising *So You Really Want to Learn Latin* course and covered all the essential grammar of current GCSE specifications and sat an actual past language paper at the end; to GCSE students who mainly focused on readers and other selections of the finest extant Roman literature, reading more widely than they would have time for in school; to A Level students reading rather more demanding and ‘left field’ texts (this year including Plautus’



Figure 1. Spending your birthday studying in a Latin Camp class – what could be better?!

Mostellaria and *Amphitryo* or selections from Seneca and Lucretius) which they are highly unlikely to have met before to provide themselves with that edge for high-end university applications.

I am also delighted that Camp keeps supporting people about to embark upon a PGCE or who are indeed already working in a school without much Latin teaching experience, whether through a bespoke group for teachers or an adult class of complete beginners. I also continue to be very grateful to Classics for All for the funding they provide to enable teachers at or about to join state schools to attend.

I have been able to consolidate my knowledge in troublesome areas, particularly grammar, with the help of the professional and knowledgeable tutors. I was also not expecting the opportunity to meet with masterminds behind Suburani, De Romanis, and the CLC and this was a particular highlight for me, having learned the majority of my Latin before camp from these coursebooks, and giving me unique insight into the pedagogy before I start my course. (James Wear, soon-to-be PGCE student, age 28).

The grammar clinics have been expanded yet further so that we actually now have six types:

- Drop-in clinics for beginners to consolidate that day's learning.
- GCSE-level clinics for younger students who have not yet embarked on their A Levels.
- GCE-level clinics for those who have.
- Post-GCE clinics to stretch the most advanced students with the nastier more niche grammatical concepts.
- Afternoon seminars led by tutors with topics of particular interest to them; for example, this year we had sessions on ekphrasis in epic, oral and textual culture in Latin poetry and classical reception.
- 'Teach meet' sessions – though these were primarily intended for the tutors to meet and informally discuss and share good practice,

there was also the opportunity for the older student teachers to draw on their knowledge and expertise.

The considerable commitment of time and preparation required means that of course this would not have been possible if I were not privileged with such a hardworking high-quality group of tutors.

Lectures, trips and events

Our aim with the lectures is to provide a range of both 'mainstream' talks on texts the current students are likely to be studying at school and talks of wider and more general interest. Dr. Anthony Bowen once again opened with his 'Sound of Latin' and Prof. Costas Panayotakis gave a new talk on 'Witches and Dismemberment in Apuleius'.

JACT Latin Camp has given me an opportunity that I wouldn't have been able to find anywhere else – the chance to completely immerse myself in the study of Latin and Classics. Being unable to continue this subject into A-level at school – due to the school not having the resources to allow the study of Latin at A-level – JACT has given me the ability to further develop my skills and, hopefully, in future, be able to make competitive applications to study Classics in further education – without the restraints of a lack of access to the subject which the tutors have supported and guided my interest in. Latin Camp has been an experience like no other, and I couldn't be more grateful for the opportunity. (Alice Sanders, post-GCSE group, age 16).

Dr. Ben Kane once again taught us about the life of a Roman soldier though with specific reference to Hadrian's Wall. Dr. Hannah Cornwell and Dr. Erica Bexley, both new speakers, provided superb talks on 'Building an Empire in the Name of Peace' and 'Clever Slaves in Roman Comedy' respectively. Prof. Llew Morgan returned to speak to us about Vergil's 'Tricky Task of Terminating Turnus' then Prof. Carrie Vout once again closed the programme with 'Roman Sculpture – Plagiarism or Innovation?' (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Professor Carrie Vout on Roman sculptures.

Harrogate is close enough to Hadrian's Wall to enable a day trip on the middle Sunday and (perhaps surprisingly, given the departure time of 6.00am) more than 100 Campers signed up and I am grateful to Naomi for leading this trip with a team of seven tutors. The group began with the 2-hour walk from Steel Rigg to Housesteads, the Roman auxiliary fort; there they were met by our local guides who showed them round before taking the group to the fort at Vindolanda as well as the Roman Army Museum.

On the second Wednesday, the whole of Latin Camp went to York (Eboracum to the Romans) and visited various venues in eight smaller groups. As well as free time to enjoy that beautiful city, we

had pre-booked visits to a combination of Roman and non-Roman venues. Much of the legionary fortress is unviewable, buried under modern York, but we were able to view a military bathhouse as well as various individual features scattered around the city (Figure 3).

The ground floor of the Yorkshire Museum consists almost entirely of Roman exhibits. Most interesting among them are probably the Ivory Bangle Lady (the skeleton of a very high-status woman from Eboracum c. 4th Century AD found with considerable jewellery and other valuables) and there is also a bust of Constantine the Great, declared Emperor in Eboracum itself in 306AD. We were very fortunate to have been able to arrange guided tours for each



Figure 3. Learning about the military bathhouse in Roman York.



Figure 4. At the Yorkshire Museum.

group with the museum staff. In addition, we visited the Jorvik Centre, containing lifelike mannequins and life-size dioramas depicting Viking life in the city through which the viewer is carried in small carriages equipped with speakers (Figure 4).

Other events included a quiz night early into Camp, giving the students another opportunity to break the ice and meet people outside of their teaching groups. We ran various Twitter and Instagram 'best picture' competitions and there were lots of superb selfies in Harrogate and shots of the Roman sites on both trips. I was also delighted to welcome back the Hellenic Bookservice who, as usual, did excellent business! (Figure 5).

And, of course, Latin Camp would not be Latin Camp without the play on the last night. After a nice little warm-up singing *MacDonaldo est fundus* (which after all can only really be appreciated in the original Latin) the students were 'treated' to the staff's version of Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus*, which essentially adapted *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, before launching into our Roman costume party. Winners this year included Hercules, some Russian dancers (don't ask!) and our first ever classical meme artist (Figure 6).

Acknowledgement and thanks

This year I awarded £15,100 in bursaries for 26 free or subsidised places; it is very important to us that we make the summer school as accessible as possible and the sponsorship we are given allows us to provide places to those who would not otherwise be able to come. I would like to thank the Classical Association, the Faculty of Classics at the University of Cambridge, the Craven Committee



Figure 5. The Hellenic Bookservice.



Figure 6. The staff play.

(University of Oxford), the Jowett Copyright Trustees, Trinity College, Cambridge and Classics for All.

I've just completed GCSE Latin, and I came to camp looking for an opportunity to widen not only my understanding of the language but particularly of the literature. Not only have the lessons introduced me to many new authors and works, but the trips provided by the camp have been unforgettable too. The lectures have introduced me to branches of classics that I didn't know existed, and the speakers are always open to questions. All the staff are knowledgeable and approachable, which adds to the fun and inclusive atmosphere throughout every aspect of the camp. I can safely say that I will be wearing my Latin Camp t-shirt with pride! (**Lavinia Martin, advanced group, age 16**).

The 44th JACT Latin Summer School will run from Monday 22nd July to Saturday 3rd August 2024, again at Harrogate Ladies College. The website www.latincamp.co.uk continues to be the key source of information and contains a very simple online application form. If you have any questions at all after reading this, please do get in touch with me on d.stephenson@warwickschool.org.

I will always be eternally grateful for my time at Latin camp this year, having never had the proper experience of learning Latin with others and proper teachers before. Translating the Aeneid from Latin has given me such a new perspective on how a person's individual translation of a text is deeply personal and unique. It has greatly enhanced the joy I take in learning Classics. I will take everything I have learned from the grammar rules to spotting deponent verbs to wherever I next go. The tutors and speakers have all been amazing, and I really hope I can come back again to learn even more. (**Astrid Macaskill, advanced group, age 17**).

Once more, my warmest thanks to all the staff who have served Latin Camp so well this year, and in many cases for many years before. It really would not matter how well or badly I ran it if the quality of staff who give up holiday time were not so consistently high.

Author biographies

Director JACT Latin Summer School.