

East Oxford Community Classics Centre News

by Lorna Robinson

It has been another very busy year so far at the East Oxford Community Classics Centre at Cheney School. In September, two exciting new courses started: a brand new community A Level Latin course and a Classics enrichment course for Year 9s at Cheney School. We have also been running a range of projects and events. This report details some of what we have been up to, and some of the exciting things we have planned for the future.

Events, projects and courses

The new Classics enrichment course has been developed from scratch to introduce students to a broad range of classical topics, eras and authors. So far, students have learned about the Minoans and Mycenaean and tried their hand at some Linear B decipherment; they have also studied Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. They have learned about ancient Greek theatre through Aristophanes' *Frogs* and Euripides' *Bacchae*, and explored philosophy and the development of rational thought from the Pre-Socratics to Plato. This term, they are looking at the Persian Wars and Herodotus and making their own hoplite shields. They have also been taking part in a project to develop their own board games themed on ancient Greece. The course has been a great success so far and created a lot of buzz and excitement within the school.

Alongside this, we celebrated our first full year of being open with a large community festival on 3rd October, the Festival of Ancient Tales. The event involved a very wide range of activities, stalls and performances. Visitors and Cheney School members took part in Roman mosaicing, Greek jug-making, Roman games, mask-decorating, artefact-handling and labyrinth-designing amongst many other things on offer. There were exhibitions from the *Story Museum* and the *Metamorphosis Project*, and a large number of educational stalls, including Roman herbs and poisons, a stall imagining Homer's *Odyssey* in modern day Oxford, and the 'Not Just Dormice' team who set up a stall all about the ancient Roman diet. We also had a team of Cheney School face-painters who turned visitors into mythical creatures, and wide range of Roman-inspired dishes to sample at *Grumio's Tavern*. We were delighted to have a stellar cast of performers and authors delivering talks and events throughout the afternoon. These included Anna Neale playing live music all afternoon, the *Avid for Ovid* team with their vivid dance and music shows, and the *Oxford Greek Play* cast performing exciting excerpts from *The Furies*. Our author talks featured Caroline Lawrence, Adele Geras, Lindsey Davis and Tom Holland, who all delivered rousing talks about Classics and their lives. The evening was rounded off by a beautifully delivered musical performance by Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy, with the musician John Sampson.

We have recently put on a themed day exploring ancient astronomy. The event involved a range of workshops, talks, activities and stalls for both Cheney students and the wider community. The British Sundial Society came to run a series of workshops for Design & Technology and History groups where students learned about how the Greeks and Romans told the time, before constructing their own card sundials. Alongside this, Professor Mike Edmunds from the University of Cardiff visited for the day to talk to groups about the fascinating Antikythera Mechanism.

At lunch time and after school, a wide range of classicists and astrophysicists came to put on stalls and activities. These included making comets out of dry ice, constructing paper orreries, learning about the constellations, and a tour of the universe. The *Museum of the History of Science* brought a beautiful armillary sphere and astrolabe which students and visitors were able to handle, and astrophysics students brought a telescope. There was also astronomy-themed face-painting, Roman dishes (some of which were made by students involved in last term's Roman cookery project), a lucky dip of stars, and many more activities to enjoy.

We have run an ancient Greek and Roman cookery project where students have learned all about the ancient diet, and cooked a range of ancient dishes; they also visited Jamie's Italian restaurant to have a workshop and prepare a Roman



Figure 1. | Professor Mike Edmunds talks about the Antikythera Mechanism.

dish. We are now running an ancient Art project.

Forthcoming courses and events

The presence of the Classics centre has enthused students, staff and community

members and this has created an energy and drive to put on more courses for local students and people. From September 2015, the community A Level will be funded by Cheney School; Cheney School will also be offering Classical Civilisation AS level for the very first time, and we are expecting a very strong take-up for its first year!

We are working closely with local primary and secondary schools to develop the EOCCC at Cheney School as a hub where students from other local state schools as well as home-schooled students can come and take examination courses in various classical subjects. We are planning a summer school, a stone sundial project, two days of Roman Re-enactment shows, a day themed on Ancient Trade, and another Community Festival. If you would like to find out more or get involved in any way, please visit our website at www.eoccc.org.uk or contact me on lorna@irisproject.org.uk.

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