

Research Article

Forum

44th JACT Latin summer school – 2024 director's report

David Stephenson

Director JACT Latin Summer School, Harrogate Ladies College, Harrogate, UK

Abstract

This is a review of the activities and successes of the 44th residential JACT Latin Summer School, run in July–August 2024. Specifically, it covers our typical teaching arrangement, lectures, trips and events and acknowledges the generosity of our sponsors.

Keywords: Latin, summer school, language clinics, classical play, Hadrian's Wall

Introduction

Being at Latin Camp has been fantastic because it has allowed me to not only get significantly better at the language, but also meet people who share my interests from across the globe; my entire school had all of 7 Latin students, so being able to meet over 100 in one place is wonderful!! Alongside meeting similar people to myself, being at Latin Camp has also given me the opportunity to hear lectures and speakers that I might otherwise never have had the chance to hear; these lectures have also assured me that I wholeheartedly want to continue with Classics in my education and life. (Cass Alabaster, advanced group, age 18).

The 44th Latin summer school, our third-biggest ever with 156 students, took place again for its fourth year now 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 (13–82!) with 23% of our students over the age of 18, and people from all walks of life wanting to study Latin!

We continue to be very encouraged by the excellent representation (certainly relative to Latin public exam entries) of state school students attending, with 41% of our UK school-age students joining us from the state sector (see [Figure 1](#)). Equally pleasing is the continued attendance from overseas students (12% this year), with people joining us from the USA, France, Belgium, Germany, Czech Republic, Italy, Germany, Australia and I think our first ever representations from Sweden and Switzerland.

Staff and teaching

It is evident that the Latin Camp teachers are committed to helping students learn Latin. I was thinking in English when analysing Latin grammar when I arrived but caught myself

Email: d.stephenson@warwickschools.co.uk

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thinking in Latin by the fourth day of the start of the beginners' course. (Dennis Clotworthy, beginners' group, age 61).

Another large tutor team was needed this year to match the consistently healthy number of students. Back in play were:

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| • Mish Bancroft | • Pete Donnelly | • Laura Snook |
| • Johnny Boyd | • James Green | • Ollie Thicknesse |
| • Tasha Crook | • Rachel Hambly | • Laura Warren |
| • Lindsey Cullen | • Aine McMenamin | • Hayley Walker |

As usual, they were accompanied by some new faces:

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|-----------------|------------------|---------------|
| • Dan Draper | • Alex Hall | • Tirzah Ward |
| • Mason Forrest | • Emily McKinnon | |

Pete Donnelly and Laura Warren 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 picture. Clara Johnson – currently studying Lit. Hum. at Oxford – joined the team as my assistant, a role which she fulfilled with great aplomb, not to mention unflappability.

As usual we had an extensive 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 various Suetonius and Seneca as well as lesser-read texts by Ovid and Virgil) which they are highly unlikely to have met before, to provide themselves with that edge for high-end university applications and interviews. We were also able to cater for various 'disparate' groups who did not fit in obviously to any of these categories.



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

I was also delighted to see another big cohort join our now-well-established teachers' courses; these are bespoke courses for people who are about to embark upon a PGCE or are indeed already working in a school without much Latin teaching experience. I am very grateful to *Classics for All* for the funding they provide to help enable teachers at or about to join state schools to attend.

The Latin Camp staff have been nothing but amazing. They're able to make classical texts interesting and engaging, whilst still teaching them. Studying these texts have made me develop a new appreciation for grammatical and stylistic features in Latin, in particular Ovid's Metamorphoses. The daily grammar clinics have been extremely helpful, with the tutors thoroughly explaining the grammar. I finally understand indirect statements! The tutors have been extremely helpful answering any and all questions during these clinics. (Jason Xu, advanced group, age 17).

The grammar clinics were completely overhauled in 2023 and expanded into 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 Oxbridge preparation, Latin verse composition, 'Rome – The Eternal City' and 'Publication and the Poet's Impotence – Depictions of Publications in Augustan Poetry'.
- '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.

This model has proven to work very well.

Lectures, trips and events

I think I enjoyed the evening speakers the most. They covered extremely interesting topics that I would've otherwise never heard about before! Listening to them speak passionately about their topics is extremely inspiring for anyone interested in the classical world. (Richard Jakes, mixed adult group, age 25).

We do our best to offer a lecture programme which appeals to those who are new to Latin and those who have studied it for several years. This year's line-up was:

- Dr. Anthony Bowen, Jesus College, Cambridge – *The Sound of Latin*
- Prof. Costas Panayotakis, Glasgow University – *The Theatre of the Ancient Mime* (see [Figure 2](#))
- Prof. Llew Morgan, Brasenose College, Oxford – *Juvenal and Why Romans Loved Satire*
- Prof. Matthew Leigh, St Anne's College, Oxford – *A Difficult Lie: Cicero's Defence of Caelius*
- Prof. Alison Cooley, University of Warwick – *The Legacy of Augustus*
- Dr. Erica Bexley, Durham University – *History, Tragedy, Nero: The Pseudo-Senecan Octavia*
- Dr. Hannah Cornwell, Birmingham University – *Looking for imperium in Roman Imperialism*

Harrogate is close enough to Hadrian's Wall to enable a day trip on the Sunday and 107 Campers and a team of 8 tutors signed up. They began with the 2-hour walk from Steel Rigg to Housesteads, the Roman auxiliary fort ([Figure 3](#)); there the group was met by our local guides who showed us round there before taking us to the fort at Vindolanda, rotating between that and the Roman Army Museum. Pete Donnelly led the trip for me this year, for which I am immensely grateful.



Figure 2. Prof. Panayotakis on ancient mime.

On the second Wednesday, the entirety of 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.

The ground floor of the Yorkshire Museum consists almost entirely of Roman exhibits. Most interesting among them are probably the Ivory Bangle Lady (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 group with the museum staff (Figure 4). We also 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.

As an icebreaker we ran our usual live quiz night on the first Wednesday so 19 teams of students competed fiercely for *kleos* ... and tuck shop credit! And in week two towards the end of Camp, it was my usual pleasure to welcome Monica and the Hellenic Bookservice (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 a Roman centurion, a handmade historically accurate tunic and a 'Victims of Zeus' support group!



Figure 3. Group photo at Housesteads on Hadrian's Wall.



Figure 4. Trying on the armour in the York museum!

Acknowledgements

Being able to go to the JACT Latin Camp has really progressed my learning of the Latin Language as well as helping me get used to a university style of work. I have met some great people from all over the world and have really enjoyed the collaborative way of working between lessons. My experiences of the lessons were brilliant as I was consistently encouraged to speak and ask questions when I needed to. The grammar clinics were incredibly helpful as they covered subjects that we hadn't had time to go into full detail with in school or I hadn't fully understood. Overall I would say the summer school has been amazingly helpful and I'm so grateful I got the opportunity to go as it has helped me immensely. (Eilidh Huddart, advanced group, age 17).

This year I awarded £9280 in bursaries for 17 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 (University of Oxford), the Jowett Copyright Trustees, Trinity College, Cambridge and Classics for All.

The 45th JACT Latin Summer School will run from Monday 21 July (possibly arriving on Sunday 20th tbc) to Saturday 2 August 2025, 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.



Figure 5. Hellenic Bookservice.



Figure 6. The 2024 staff team.

If you have any questions at all after reading this, please do get in touch with me on d.stephenson@warwickschool.org.

The success of the summer school is largely reliant on the quality of its students and of its staff. As well as one of the biggest, this really was one of the nicest cohorts of students I have ever seen (and I have been coming non-stop since 2002!) The same is true of this year's staff; I am especially grateful to Pete and Laura for their immense support in their management roles, but everyone rolled up their sleeves in typical Camper fashion, working tirelessly to make the experience as good as it can possibly be for the students (Figure 6).

I will always be eternally grateful for my time at Latin Camp, 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).