CLASSICS MATTERS

The Classics for All Magazine Spring 2025





CHAMPIONING CLASSICS IN SCHOOLS

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A Word from the Chief Executive

Jo Hobbs talks us through who's who and what's in store for Classics for All this year

As we embrace a new year, we also welcome exciting changes across the north of England. With the departure of Will Mundy from the Manchester and Leeds Network to return to teaching, and Alice Case transitioning from the Liverpool Network to become our new Programme Director, we seized the opportunity to reshape our Networks and boost our capacity.

We are delighted to introduce Dr Joanne McNamara as our North West Coordinator, based at Liverpool College.

With nearly two decades of teaching experience and expertise in training new Classics teachers through the PGCE programme in Latin with Classics at Liverpool Hope University, Joanne brings invaluable skills to our team.



Dr Joanne McNamara, our new North West Network Coordinator



Kate Williams, our new Yorkshire and Humberside Network Coordinator



Jo at the 2024 Impact Awards

Joining us for the new Yorkshire and Humberside Network is Kate Williams. Kate, a former law professional, studied Classics and later pursued a PGCE, teaching Classics for several years.

Alongside Dr Laura Hope in the North East Network and Peter Wright working in Blackpool, we aim to enhance our support for schools across the north of England.

Research conducted by Professor Holmes-Henderson and Professor Hunt in 2021 revealed significant geographical gaps in the UK where students lack access to classical subjects at A Level. Shockingly, only five state-maintained schools in the North West offered Latin A Level, with just one in the North East and none in Yorkshire and Humberside. We are determined to change this.

Despite the recent announcement from the Department for Education cutting funding to the Latin Excellence Programme, we remain committed to overcoming these challenges. We are collaborating with the programme to ensure that students taking their GCSEs this year will not be disadvantaged. Only five statemaintained schools in the North West offered Latin A Level, with just one in the North East and none in Yorkshire and Humberside. We are determined to change this.

Additionally, we are exploring other ways to support schools involved in the programme to sustain their Latin provision.

Our ability to step in and support is thanks to the generosity of our amazing supporters, like you. If you have any suggestions on how we can expand our work in the north of England and help schools across the country maintain their Latin provision, please do let me know. I'm always open to a coffee and a chat – whether in person or virtually!

Jo Hobbs

Chief Executive, Classics for All

Events - What's On in 2025

Classics for All's year ahead at a glance

Classics for All's Gala Dinner

13th May | Lincoln's Inn Great Hall, London

We will be hosting a spectacular Gala Dinner at Lincoln's Inn Great Hall, London.

In this historic and magnificent venue, we will have an evening of celebration, great company, and a fabulous dinner followed by highlights of the Gala Dinner: the live and silent auctions.



Overboard! September | TBC

Four famous characters from the ancient world go head-to-head in a rapidly sinking boat, who will sink and who will swim? This September you decide who will be thrown 'Overboard'!

Join us for the third time at one of our liveliest events, our symposium with a twist, as four top classicists vie for your vote in this engaging and hilarious debate. Each academic will make their case for why their famous individual from antiquity should be thrown Overboard! from our sinking ship.



Impact Awards

27th June | Royal Armouries Museum, Leeds

Our fifth annual teaching awards, the 'Impact Awards', will this year recognise the transformative work of our teachers from across the country at a special ceremony in Leeds' Royal Armouries, the national museum of arms and armour.

Special guests and award winners will be invited to join us in celebration with an exclusive tour of Leeds Armouries' 'Gladiators: Heroes of the Colosseum' exhibition the day before it officially launches.



The Moot Trial 23rd October | The Supreme Court, London

Each year Classics for All's Lawyers Group puts a classical figure on trial in the UK Supreme Court. Last year it was Medea's turn in the stocks, who will it be this year?

Tickets to the in-person event will only be available to our Lawyers Group, but livestream tickets will be available to general public.



To read more about our Lawyers Group online, visit classicsforall.org.uk/get-involved

Thrown Overboard!

Young classicist and Chorus member Denis Morine recounts his first Classics for All event

To say that my first experience of 'Overboard!' did not disappoint is an understatement!

What more could anyone ask for than four titans of the Classics world (effectively) duking it out over the 'intellectual premise' of a shoddy raft, where ruthless debate decides who remains 'onboard' and who takes the plunge.

This annual event had predictably high stakes with distinguished Professor Llewelyn Morgan making a case against the 'profoundly dysfunctional' Muse, who somewhat irresponsibly dishes out inspiration before all-too-quickly taking it away.

The Muse have hard to pronounce names like Terpsichore and Calliope, and, worse still, are responsible for Katy Perry (to be fair, not everyone agreed with Llewelyn's take!).

Llewelyn's comically provocative argument was swiftly followed with Dr Frisbee Sheffield's formidable criticism of the adored, irreverent playboy Alcibiades. Alcibiades, we were told, had a bad track record: his recklessness helped the Athenians lose the war against Sparta, and his antics likely doomed Socrates to death through association.

Alcibiades represents everything we wish to get rid of in Classics today: devil-may-care posh boys living off charm; 'all charisma, no substance'.

Dr Stephen Harrison came out fighting from the get-go, flipping the script and pretty much rejecting the entire premise of the debate with self-professed, yet unwavering 'snowflakish wokery'.

Tirading against Alexander the (apparently not so) Great, Stephen

66 As a young classicist, Overboard! represents everything I love about Classics and why I wish to continue it further.

declared that the genocidal Macedonian king just had to be thrown over, both because of the horrific things we know that he did, and (also) those that we are probably not aware of. Better to just throw him over to be safe ...

Last, but certainly not least, Dr Emily Kneebone arrived with the unexpected and relatively unknown Herodes Atticus. Nobody, myself included, expected to find ourselves suddenly dissuaded from voting off Alexander the Great after Stephen's spirited speech. In the end, however, we were utterly sold!

His foul deeds ranged from cutting out a day of the week, assaulting the emperor, buying and keeping alphabet slaves, plunging nearly all Athenians into crippling debt with ancestral payments, to killing his pregnant wife for no reason whatsoever. Herodes Atticus, it must be said, was not the nicest chap.

After several minutes of tense voting, both in-person and online, Herodes Atticus was (I have to say) gloriously thrown overboard to the delight of almost everyone, myself included!

As a young classicist, 'Overboard!' represents everything I love about Classics and why I wish to continue it further at undergraduate level.

There is so much joy to be had exploring and discussing the colourful cast of characters that crop up from the ancient world – some inspirational, others far less so (many of whom we would care to see dramatically thrown off a metaphorical raft).



Dr Emily Kneebone presenting her winning argument

This annual Classics for All event was a fantastic example of how historical and mythological figures come alive with their ability to provoke interest and debate in our modern world. This unique opportunity to bicker, enjoy, and remember our friends (and foes) of the past has certainly been the highlight of my Classics calendar this year!

You can watch the recording of Overboard! on YouTube at youtube.com/@ClassicsForAll

The Next Generation of Classicists

Catching up with our university bursary students

Thanks to the generous support we received at the 2021 Classics for All Gala Dinner, we raised money for 20 university bursaries for students from low-income backgrounds to subsidise their living costs in their first year studying a classical degree. We caught up with three of those students on their university experiences so far.

Maisie Gilvarry

Maisie is a first year Classics student at the University of Liverpool, who attended a state school which did not offer any classical subjects. After reading modern retellings of Greek myths, she became 'completely obsessed' with the classical world. She was lucky enough to attend our Liverpool Greek Academy during her A Levels and quickly became infatuated with Greek language and literature.



On studying

I have loved every moment of my degree so far. I feel so privileged being able to spend every day exploring the classical world and am especially enjoying learning Latin alongside continuing my study of Ancient Greek.

On barriers to Classics

Coming from a background where I didn't have the opportunity to learn classical subjects in school, my confidence was a barrier when it came to applying for Classics at university. But with the help, encouragement and guidance I received from Classics for All and Liverpool Greek Academy, I felt supported enough to apply.

On her bursary

66 I am extremely grateful for the bursary I received as it alleviated lots of the financial worries I had about university - textbooks and dictionaries are expensive! I am also hoping to be able to use the remaining bursary money towards a course field trip to visit Rome for the first time next year.

Rebekah Butcher

Rebekah is in her second year of studying Classical Literature and Civilisation at the University of Birmingham. As a child, she was always interested in Greek myth – an interest that only grew after reading the Percy Jackson book series.

As she got older, the interest remained, and she began to branch out into more factual books and the ancient texts. But she only realised it could be something she could study properly when she started at Runshaw College in Leyland, at which point she became 'utterly obsessed'. For her, Classics offered a broad range of subjects within it, which could satiate her many different interests.

On employability

Initially, I was worried if Classics at university would ever lead anywhere, as student debt with no immediate job prospects is quite daunting. But now I'm at university I feel so much more comfortable about this – I have been able to get job experience at university whilst doing work alongside.

On her bursary

6 I was able to get access to a good laptop, something which has helped me considerably while studying at university. I also find it much easier to read classical epics in a novel format, as opposed to online, and the help from this bursary meant I could purchase them without having to worry about the cost.

Samuel Forrest

Samuel is in his final year of studying Classics with Asian and Middle Eastern studies at the University of Oxford. After being lucky enough to attend one of the very few state schools in the North West that teach Latin and Greek to A Level – Lancaster Royal Grammar School – he chose to study Sanskrit alongside Latin and Greek at university.

Initially he just had a linguistic interest in Sanskrit but now he has a growing fascination with the historical interactions between the Greeks and the Indians.

On university life

I work on one or two essays a week, one on a classical topic (this term Greek linguistics) and the other on Sanskrit literature or history (this term the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata, two Sanskrit epics). I also have Sanskrit language classes every other day! The topic I was most surprised to enjoy was archaeology, which we did a bit of in first year to whet our appetites, last term I finished a module on Hellenistic archaeology and it's now my best paper.

His favourite bursary purchase

6 I think my favourite purchase, which wouldn't have been possible without the bursary, was a copy of Loeb of Statius' *Achilleid*, a fascinating late-Latin response to the Trojan Epic Cycle.

On barriers to Classics

Classics are increasingly inaccessible to all but the very rich. I am very lucky I was able to study Latin and Greek at school, which was crucial to me accessing and understanding my Oxford degree. My family have never been able to afford tuition outside of school, so I would not have been able to access them if they were not made freely available at school. From speaking to other classicists, despite the higher amount of set texts in the first year, Classics at Oxford is far easier with a background in Latin or Greek – though I would not let this discourage anyone from applying, as it levels out fairly quickly.

66 Thanks to Classics for All, I was able to realise that Classics was what I wanted to study, and then they also made it feasible for me to attend university without financial stress.

Rebekah Butcher

For me Classics for All has provided the most fantastic opportunity and support one could imagine – without their help I would not have been able to even begin, let alone complete my degree.

66 Classics for All is very dear to me. I am hugely passionate about young people from all backgrounds, particularly those attending state education, having access to classical subjects, whether that be in school or in an extra-curricular setting. Classics for All has allowed me the freedom to pursue my adoration for all things classical! Maisie Gilvarry

> Thanks to our donors we have given over 55,000 pupils access to Latin, Ancient Greek, classical civilization and ancient history. To find out more, visit **classicsforall.org.uk/donate**

Samuel Forrest

An Interview with Edward Biddulph

Meet Oxford Archaeology's resident Roman expert

Oxford Archaeology was founded fifty years ago to dig for the past whenever the planning process needed. From single house extensions to large infrastructure, they've been there. For them, the physical remains of the past hold our shared story; just like Classics for All, they believe that everyone should have access to it.

We interviewed Edward Biddulph, Oxford Archaeology's Senior Project Manager, on what it was like working for such a vital organisation.

CfA: I feel like so many of us wouldn't be able to walk past a dig site without wanting to see what's going on and asking what's been found. What was it that first drew you to archaeology and why do you think it's a subject that garners such an excited response from the public?

EB: I've always been fascinated with the past and have many happy memories of visiting castles and Roman ruins as a child. At school, I studied GCSE Classical Civilisation and then A Level Ancient History, and I enjoyed them so much, I wondered how I could continue to use the knowledge in my career. It somehow occurred to me that archaeology was the answer, and following a couple of weeks' work experience with the Canterbury Archaeological Trust, during which time I dug a medieval skeleton, washed some pottery, and prepared some archaeological drawings, I knew I was going to be an archaeologist. I think the public response is based on the same feeling of excitement I get from my work - the thrill of discovery, handling objects unearthed after centuries unseen in the ground, but above all revealing the stories of the people who came before us.



66 I love giving talks to the public or running workshops with community groups. When I show them a glossy cup or bowl with a fingerprint of the Roman potter on the base, I can see from their reactions that they have made an immediate connection with the past.

Oxford Archaeology is on a very similar mission to Classics for All in trying to give everyone the opportunities to access the past, can you tell our audience a bit about how you do this?

Making the past accessible to everyone is central to the work that we do at Oxford Archaeology. We not only engage with the public about our discoveries, but also work with communities and teachers to provide them with the tools and materials they need and value. I contribute to this aim in the post-excavation department, where I manage the analysis and reporting of the findings from our excavations. I help produce books about our discoveries that we make freely available on our digital library, write booklets and leaflets that we distribute to schools and communities, and prepare articles for magazines, news outlets and websites. I love giving talks to the public or running workshops with community groups and often bring



Volunteers and students uncovering the remains of buildings within Maryport Roman fort in Cumbria. The community and research excavation, funded by philanthropist Christian Levet, was led by Oxford Archaeology on behalf of the Hadrian's Wall Trust.

with me finds like Roman pottery for audiences to handle. When I show them a glossy cup or bowl with a fingerprint of the Roman potter on the base, I can see from their reactions that they have made an immediate connection with the past.

What was your first experience engaging with the local community through Oxford Archaeology like? And do you have a favourite memory or comment made about one of your digs from a local?

I had not long joined Oxford Archaeology, back in 2001, before I was engaging with the public. I was for a short time part of the excavation team digging a Roman farmstead on the A120 road between Braintree and Stansted Airport in Essex, which was being upgraded. The developers and Oxford Archaeology held an open day for the public to learn more about the road scheme but also about the amazing discoveries. I was on-hand to talk archaeology, and I remember showing a 3D computer-generated reconstruction of the farmstead that

people could 'walk through'. Today, I expect it would look really clunky, but at the time, I think everyone was impressed. I certainly was!

I don't think I have a single favourite memory. Usually, the best part of talking to the public and community groups is when it's over. Not because I want to go home, but because that's the time when people come up to me and ask me questions – often really insightful ones I can't always answer! – or tell me about their own discoveries in the area or simply say how much they enjoyed hearing about the archaeology. The experience, for me, is incredibly rewarding.

And finally, the question that surely everyone wants to ask an archaeologist, what has been your favourite find?

I could pick so many! My all-time favourite find, though, must be a chicken's egg that was preserved whole in watery mud in a 1,700-yearold pit in the site of a Roman town just outside modern Aylesbury 

The 1,700-year-old Berryfields Roman Egg

in Buckinghamshire. Eggs that survive intact from the Roman period in Britain are almost unheard of, but it's not just its rarity that is fascinating. Rather than being leftover food, the egg was probably placed (with others) as an offering to a local deity, possibly during a funeral. Just this one object gives us so much information and allows us to paint a vivid picture of the past. The egg is now with Discover Bucks Museum who hope one day to put it on display.

The First Ancient World Student Annual Meeting

Experts from across academia get together in this new exploration of classical subjects

Bettany Hughes, Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones and Kathryn Tempest (who has since joined the University of Leicester) are just three of the familiar names who have delivered the annual Buchan Lecture at the School of Archaeology and Ancient History in Leicester, the home of Classics for All's East Midlands Network. This year they were delighted to welcome **Professor Tom Harrison from the** British Museum, and even happier when he agreed to support their newest outreach idea, an Ancient World Students' Annual Meeting (AWSAM).

AWSAM brings together GCSE and A Level students, either studying classical subjects or interested in doing so, to engage with the ancient world curriculum and explore what it could mean to pursue these subjects at university. The meeting featured Professor Tom Harrison's keynote lecture, workshop options on Ancient History and Classical Civilisation curriculum topics, and sessions demonstrating the employability of students of the ancient world.

Our East Midlands Network was proud to welcome two Classics for All schools to the event – Sponne School, Towcester and Thomas Rotherham College, Rotherham.

With the full support and training from Network Coordinator, Jane Ainsworth, Sponne School recently introduced Classical Civilisation at GCSE. Leading the charge was English teacher and Assistant Head of Sixth Form, Owain John, who believed topics on 'Women' and 'War and Warfare' would most inspire his 14 new pupils taking on the challenge with him.

Sponne pupils came away from AWSAM with university-level insights into women's lives in



The people in charge of the sessions were challenging with us and very interactive. They let us have a voice. Student from Thomas Rotherham College.

antiquity from the two GCSE workshops on 'Invention of the Barbarian' and 'Herodotus in Athens'

Workshops were led by Janie Masséglia, and Tom Harrison and his colleague Jan Haywood, who have created the online resource, the 'Herodotus Helpline'. Any school can pose questions on Herodotus to the helpline; at AWSAM these could come right from the source.

The A Level workshop on the same topics allowed Thomas Rotherham College students to broaden their understanding of recent scholarship on Athens for their Ancient History. All the 67 pupils attending AWSAM could then explore employability options offered by digs like the Rutland Villa run by University of Leicester Archaeology Services, who regularly stage an East Midlands Digging for Britain takeover, as well as digital projects on Endangered Archaeology and STEM/ Heritage research links. Bringing Classics for All pupils to campus is a crucial way to demonstrate the value of learning about the ancient and classical world. It breaks down preconceptions about difficulties in accessing and justifying the investment in further study of our subjects. Giving students like those from Sponne and Thomas Rotherham College the chance to experience this at the first AWSAM is vital to keeping our subjects alive.

This year, the Network is planning to expand the programme to include sessions on working with inscriptions, Alexander the Great, and the Late Roman Republic, with guest speaker Professor Naoise MacSweeney discussing 'Founding Mothers? Women as founding heroes in Greek cities.'

Any schools interested in joining AWSAM in 2025 should look out for its launch on social media, and contact Jane Ainsworth at eastmidlands@classicsforall.org.uk

Donor Recognition 2024

Our opportunity to warmly thank our supporters

This is our opportunity to warmly thank our supporters – individuals and trusts and foundations – who gave £1,000 or more in 2024.

In addition to publishing the names of **Praetorians** and above here, we also acknowledge

our Centurion donors (giving £100-999) on our website: classicsforall.org.uk/centurions

Thank you to everyone who supported us in 2024. We are always keen to welcome new supporters to our ranks. If you would like to discuss how you can help Classics for All further, please get in touch with us at contact@classicsforall.org.uk

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