

Editorial

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This is my last editorial. My first was Autumn 2012 with Number 26. I now hand over to Professor Susan Deacy, who will, I am sure, be a highly effective custodian of the journal.

The cover of my first issue shows boys from a local Cambridge comprehensive school lined up against portrait busts in the Cast Gallery of the Faculty of Classics in Cambridge (Fig 1). I took the photo myself. The cover image of three boys looking at the life size cast of the Medusa from the Temple of Artemis at Corcyra, which forms the head picture of the online journal today, was taken by me shortly after, for Number 28 (Fig 2). Those boys must be in their late twenties now!

JCT evolved from the Classics teacher's journal *Didaskalos* (1963-1977) (Fig 3), thence *Hesperiam* (1977-1983) (Fig 4), set up by John Sharwood Smith as the joint journal of the Joint Association of Classical Teachers (JACT) and the Association for the Reform of Latin Teaching (ARLT). Editing standards have always been high, with Sharwood Smith being its first and perhaps best commissioning editor (1963-81) for encouraging contributions from across the field of Classics Education. Here started JCT's reputation for a strong focus on classroom pedagogy, across school and university sectors, and in state-maintained and independent schools.

There have been many editors since, often pressed for time as they were nearly always full-time teachers as well. A series of guest editors found different ways of keeping the journal relevant and interesting with themed issues and a healthy mix of articles, viewpoints, news and reviews. Until 2015, JCT was issued as a hard copy delivered to JACT subscribers by post. Access was fairly limited. When I took over in 2012 the process of compiling each issue in hard copy, especially the typesetting and copy-editing phases which took place partly over the telephone with the publisher at that time, was exceptionally long-winded, and had been for some time.

It was clear also that editors were beginning to find it hard to attract writers for a relatively small market and the costs were becoming very high compared to the income received. I had once been persuaded to write a review of a school event by the then editor Russell Shone with instructions to be 'honest and truthful'. My (first ever) review was perhaps too honest and truthful about some of the presentation and Russell later showed me a letter written by an upset reader that 'if I ever meet Mr Hunt, I should refuse to shake his hand.' At the time I was horrified that I should exert so strong a reaction by something I had written in someone I had never met. I thought I had been

quite circumspect in my review. But in time I came to the realisation that if the journal should do anything at all, it should exhibit a progressive outlook, stand up for and make the case for Classics, be happy to be provocative and capture the voices and viewpoints of teachers actively involved in teaching – not those standing at the side merely advising what should be taught and how it should take place. I wanted it to be the go-to journal for Classics Education.

As newly-established subject lecturer for the PGCE in 2008 I had access to a ready supply of articles about practical teaching from the research which my own PGCE students would undertake. I could also count on a much wider field of potential contributors through the events in which my job required me to participate. Book reviews, in my view, remain an important component – engagement with author communities and maintaining a sense of activity via Facebook. Frequent posts drive engagement, publicity and draw in contributors. In the early days events were listed calendar-like in the journal. With Facebook JCT events and news can be posted on the spot. Indeed, Facebook JCT has some 1,500 members.

Sharwood Smith had founded *Didaskalos* in 1963 in frustration at the lack of engagement at that time of the Classical Association (CA) with school teaching. When JACT returned under the authority of the newly-formed Classical Association Teaching Board in 2013, the CA decided to pay the publication costs of Cambridge University Press (CUP) and make it freely available online. This would be the first CA journal to go online. It immediately brought the benefits of providing a much wider readership and recognition. Today, readers and contributors come from across the world and in increasing numbers.

The visual appearance of the online version of JCT originally matched that of the hard copy. But I soon had taken the opportunity to update the journal with a stronger image: the chapter headings were illustrated (images taken by myself), while fonts and text boxes made the pages more varied and appealing. It looked more like a magazine than a journal, to be honest – and this was deliberate, so as to attract a readership composed mostly of school teachers. Replicating that online was not impossible, but for reasons of streamlining the production process, a more standardised look which matched other CUP publications gradually evolved. This has enabled better cross referencing between journals and has extended the reach of the journal internationally, but I feel it has lost something of its original lively visual appeal.

Two innovations more recently have been FirstView and ScholarOne. FirstView enables articles and book reviews to be quickly processed and put online without waiting to be included in a volume. Twice a year, in Spring and Autumn, a number of articles

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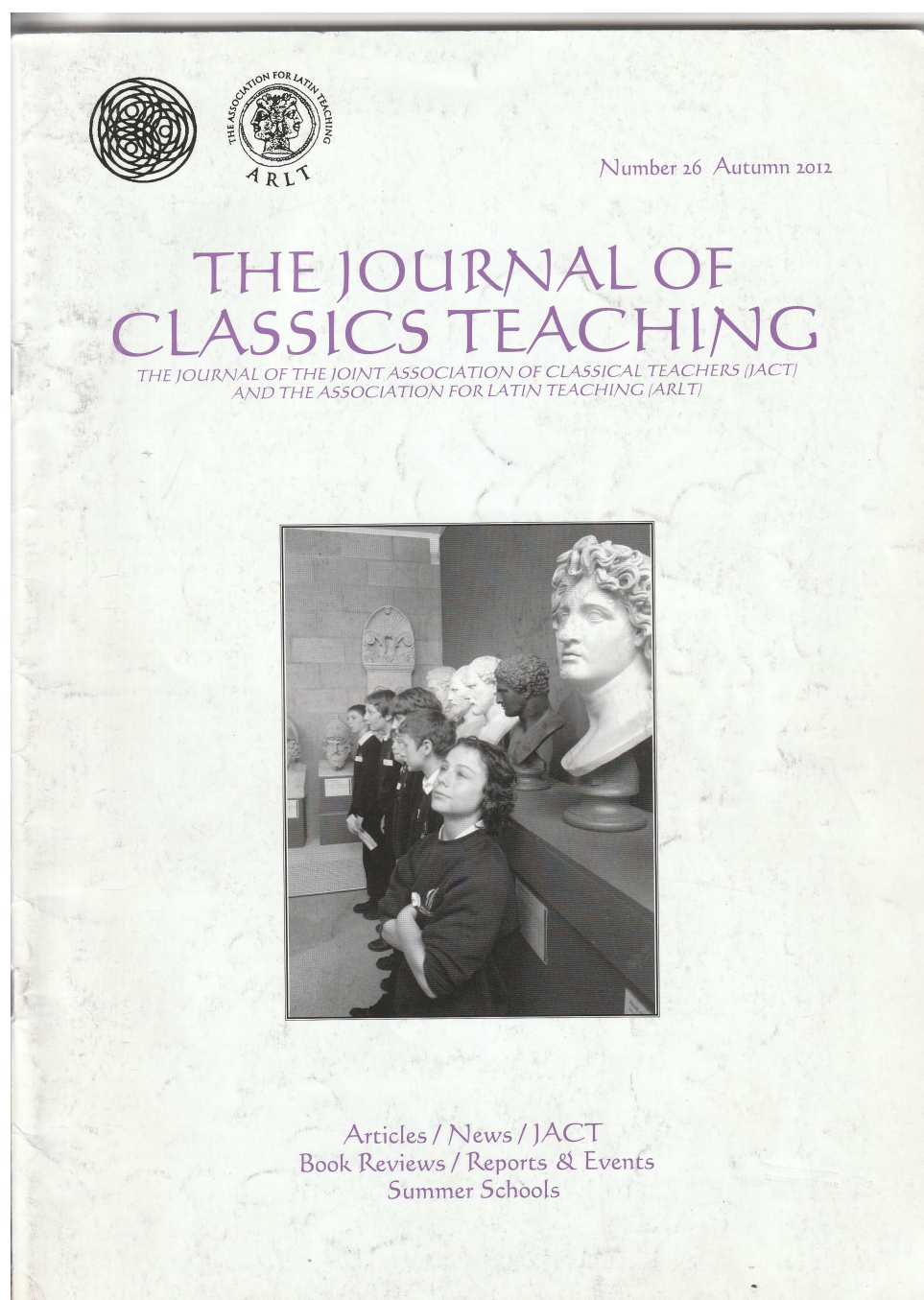


Fig. 1. Journal of Classics Teaching, Volume 26, 2012.

are collated and published as a full volume. ScholarOne enables CUP to capture the author details in standardised form and submission to peer review.

JCT maintains a mixture of commissioned and submitted pieces, distinctly pedagogical in tone and focused mainly on the classroom experience – primarily at the school level, but also at the higher education level. I'm reassured that colleagues in Higher Education read JCT not just for interest about what is going on in schools, but also as a resource for ideas about teaching in their own sector. I have always kept an eye out for contributions from people who have made presentations at conferences such as the CA (and further afield, like the ACL and Euroclassica) or who have made some comment about teaching on social media, which have caught my eye. JCT has become, I think, truly international and a leader in

thought-provoking articles in the anglophone sphere about Classics Education. My PGCE students and I have found the articles to be an excellent source of information, resources, practical pedagogy and theoretical underpinning for many aspects of my own course. I know from conversations with many others that it has benefitted them too. As an author and avid consumer of research articles about Classics Education, I am always delighted to see references to articles in JCT cited by other writers. *Vivat JCT!*

This editorial comes at a time of distress for the Classics Education community in the UK. With the Department for Education now under a Labour government the warmth of Spring that seemed to be developing under the last government towards Classics in schools seems to be turning back into the icy blasts of Winter. Over Christmas 2024 Bridget Phillipson, the new Secretary

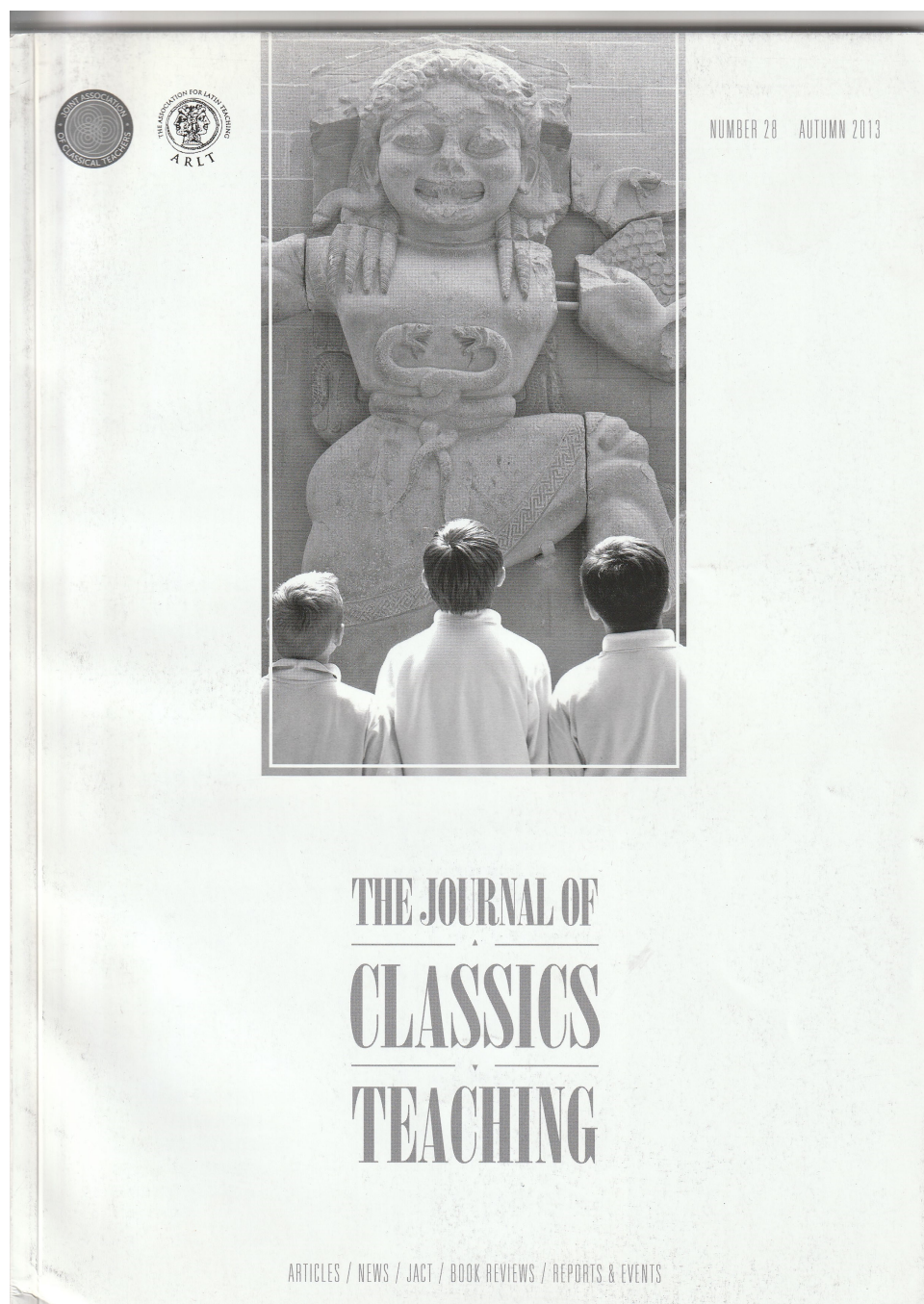


Fig. 2. Journal of Classics Teaching, Volume 28, 2013.

of State for Education, abruptly cancelled the Latin Excellence Programme, casting adrift numerous students who were being taught by the Centre for Latin Excellence as the funding for their teaching ceased (Chantler-Hicks, 2024). Some of these were in their GCSE year. While the programme may not have been perfect, it had supported around 40 state-maintained schools in teaching Latin, many of which were in areas which had not previously tended to be hotspots of Latin teaching (ImpactEd, 2024). A number of academics pointed this out in a letter to the Guardian newspaper (The Guardian, 2025).

Many reporters noted that Phillipson's act served to emphasise the suspicion that Labour was anti-Classics (conservative &

reformer Post, 2024; Murekett, 2024) and the media scrum which followed reproduced many of the old arguments that always arise when Classics hits the headlines: from observations that few state schools did Latin (Ivers, 2024) to (the old canard) that Latin was pointless and hateful anyway (Sitwell, 2025). Latin as a symbol of a certain type of pedagogy – and the politicisation of that view – began to take over. Various journalists, academics and even Michael Gove bemoaned the situation (Gove, 2025). Cancelling the Programme apparently indicated the 'politics of envy' (Antigone Journal, 2024). The shadow Secretary of State for Education, Laura Trott, contrasted Labour recent largesse towards the train drivers' wage packets to settle a strike with the withdrawal of the funds for

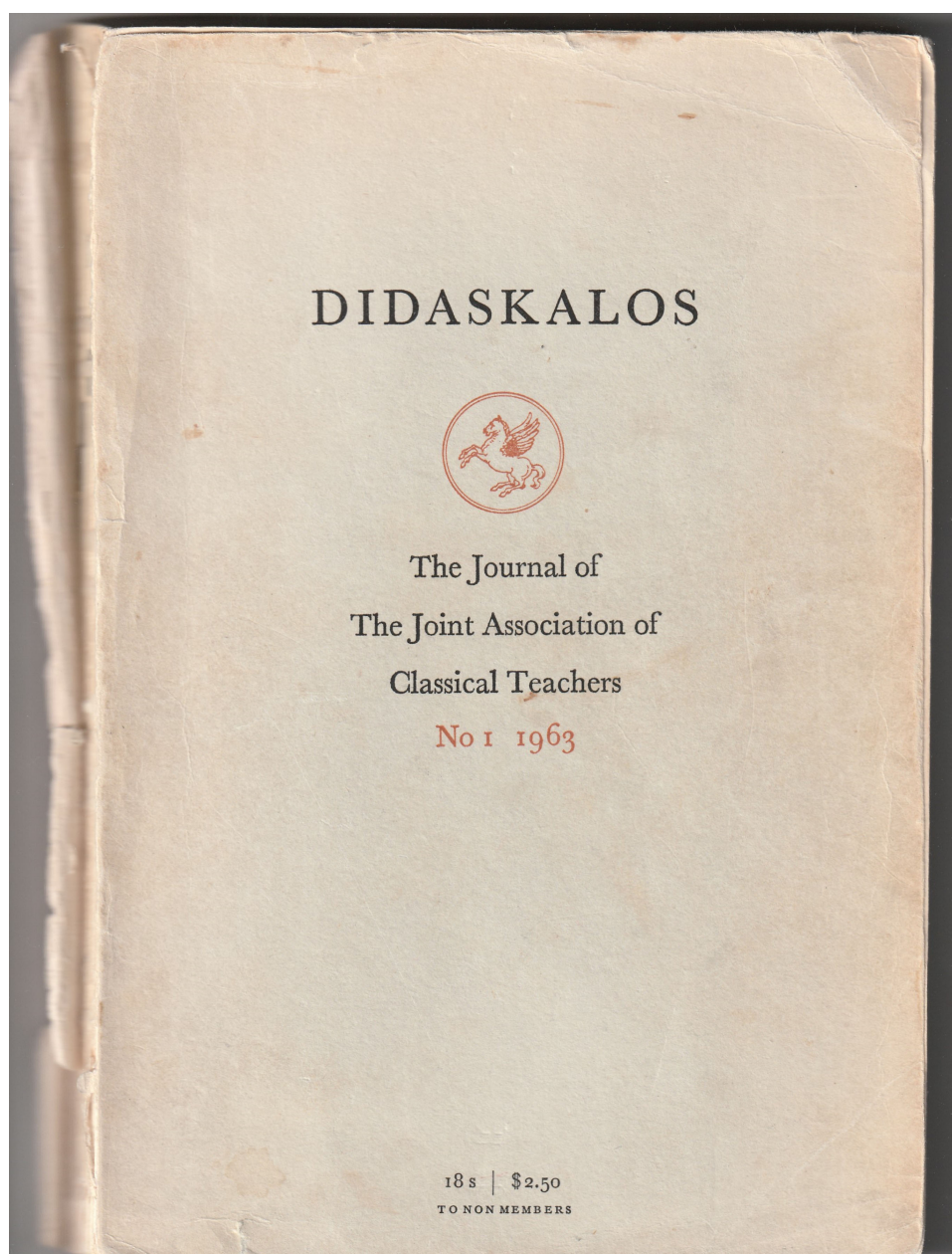


Fig. 3. Didaskalos, Volume 1, 1963.

Latin in state schools – an odd and possibly unique argument suggesting that money was not being wisely spent (Trott, 2024). Her official Commons question to Phillipson was answered in a written reply:

The current contract for the Latin Excellence Programme, put in place by the previous government, is due to end on 28 February 2025. The Latin Excellence Programme has cost £2,071,000 to date since 2022. All schools on the programme will continue to have access to the programme's curriculum resources and all students will sit their planned exams this summer (McKinnell, 2025).

Less officially, it was said that money had to be found to plug the 'black hole' in the public finances. Indeed, the Latin Excellence Programme was not the only programme to suffer cuts: computing, mathematics and modern languages hubs had funding

cut (Dyson, 2025a; Chantler-Hicks, 2025), along with the Behaviour Hub programme run by Tom Bennet (Norden, 2025a). In a heated exchange reported by officials in the Department for Education between Phillipson and Katharine Birbalsingh (the headteacher of the high-attaining Michaela state school and known as 'Britain's' strictest headteacher') in which the subject of Latin arose, the Secretary of State retorted that she had studied Latin herself at school and remained supportive of those who wished to do so (Whittaker, 2025). But, priorities... The Telegraph newspaper drew on Prime Minister Keir Starmer's official biography that he had been taught Latin at Reigate Grammar School, did not like it, but admired his Classics teacher for taking him on school trips to see plays (Wood, 2025). From this glimpse we should deduce that he is denying others the same experience. Much of the outcry was led by the usual Conservative-leaning media, but not all: even the traditionally left-leaning Guardian questioned the withdrawal of funding (Adams, 2025).

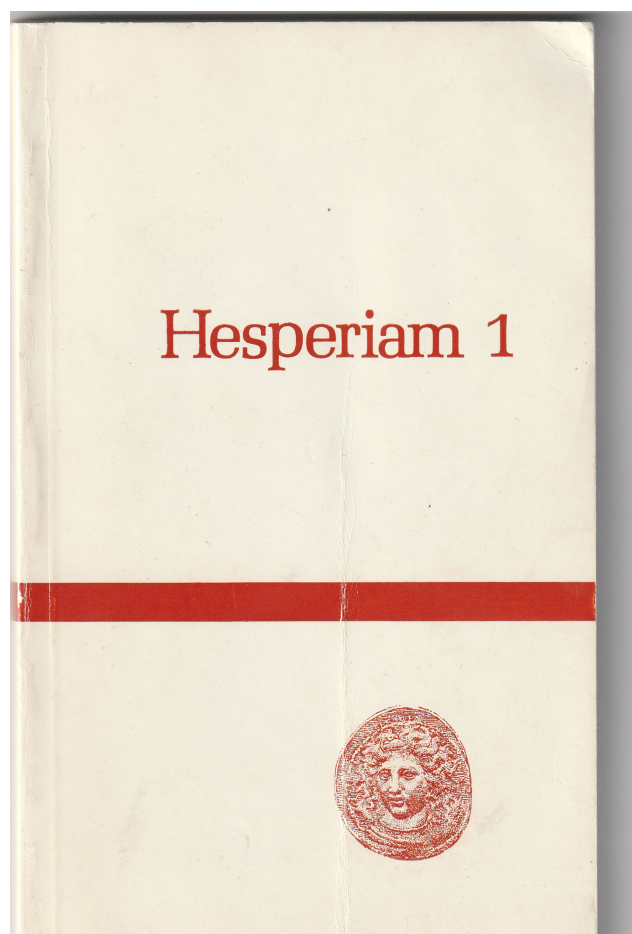


Fig. 4. Hesperiam, Volume 1, 1977.

Perhaps in answer to all of this, the Department for Education let it be known that it continued to support Latin and Classics Education more widely in schools, publishing a blog on their website which suggested that schools which had been impacted by the withdrawal of funding would be supported by organisations such as the charity Classics for All (Department for Education, 2025). Indeed, that charity, which has been supporting several hundreds of schools, working with the Classical Association, has already been in touch with many of the former Latin Excellence Programme teachers to see how to support the teaching of those students due to take their GCSEs this summer, as a priority. Hands-Up Education, which publishes the Latin course book *Suburani*, has also started the Latin in Schools Initiative, a training programme for teachers of its own. But once again, we are back to the situation of a few years ago, in which Latin and Classics are supported by the kindness of others, outsourced by the Government – wanted, maybe, but not *that* much.

Further financial squeezing has happened to both private and state-maintained sectors, which has started to affect the provision of Classics in schools. The imposition of VAT on private school fees seems to have led to belt-tightening in some schools, in which the financial viability of the small size of some Classics departments at GCSE or A level has come into question. At the time of writing, the author knows of at least six schools which have cut Classics staff or subjects this year. The state sector has not been immune to the squeeze. Here the financial pressure has come from pay increases – and national insurance contributions – which have

not been fully compensated in this year's funding settlement. Several schools, to my knowledge, have frozen recruitment or closed departments of Classics. In the university sector, as evidenced by the closure of Ancient History at Cardiff University (Shipton, 2025), as well as cuts and freezes elsewhere, staff are fearful for their jobs.

Meanwhile, a curriculum review is for imminent release. What this will mean for the National Curriculum, programmes of study and assessment is anyone's guess. So far, we know that the Government does not want to scrap the entire system (Booth, 2024). That is something to be grateful for. It feels that examinations have an important role, but that the 'journey' through Key Stage 1 to 5 contains barriers to education which need to be broken down. References to a knowledge-rich curriculum and raising standards sound familiar to the policies of the last government (which one, though, has ever suggested that 'lowering standards' would be a good idea?). However, the EBacc is already being described as a barrier to pupil choices and the measure is widely expected to be cancelled (Dyson, 2025b). What effect this will have on Latin, Greek and Ancient History at GCSE is impossible to judge now, but the EBacc has hitherto acted as a kind of protective aegis for these subjects. There may be an emphasis on a broader curriculum and creative subjects (Norden, 2025b). It is unclear at this stage how Classics Education fits into this vision, but, while we are likely to remain a subject forever on the sidelines, I do think that the subject organisations are much better-prepared with ideas and suggestions than they were when the last curriculum and assessment review was held under Michael Gove back in 2010. Let us hope that Primary Latin is not slated for removal in the review: with the help of the work undertaken by Classics for All some three per cent of primary schools are choosing to teach it (Collen & Duff, 2024). It would be a shame to lose what has clearly been something of a success.

In terms of teacher supply and retention, Classics suffers similar difficulties to other subject areas. The national shortage seems to be getting worse and there seem to be few answers from government (NFER, 2024). In the face of this, the Labour manifesto commitment to the recruitment of 6,500 extra teachers looks almost impossible to achieve (Clarke, 2025). While bursaries for teacher training are the highest for Classics than they have ever been, recruitment remains sluggish. The loss of the Classics PGCE at the University of Sussex from 2025 is a blow; the revival of the Classics PGCE at Liverpool Hope University and the possibility that the University of Durham might be allowed to run a PGCE again are signs of hope. With around 230 Classics teaching vacancies advertised each year (according to my own statistics), we need as many training placements *across* the UK as possible to provide the teachers to teach.

More cheerful news. The Classical Association Teaching Board (CATB) is very active and currently occupied with consultations on assessments at GCSE and A level in all four classical subjects. This is the first time in my memory that there has ever been progress on this. CATB is also putting on regular professional development courses through the year in different locations in the UK: a language one in Liverpool and an ancient world one in Leicester are already in place. The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Classics was re-established in November 2024, providing a forum for parliamentarians to discuss, with others, issues of strategic national importance affecting the teaching and learning of Classics in schools, universities, museums and communities. The Classical Association acts as the Secretariat for the Group. Its first meeting was in March. This must become an important lever for

improvements, not merely a talking shop. Several new Latin course book materials are out, with Cambridge Latin's UK 5th edition nearing completion, Suburani Book 3 now available, and De Romanis Book 3 finished.

Finally, I should like to pay my respects to Alan Clague, who sadly passed away on 2nd February 2025. Ashely Carter has written an obituary which is included in this volume. Alan was a well-known and highly-respected member of the Classics community, as a teacher and later an examiner and subject lead. He wrote reviews for JCT, especially of crossword puzzle books. He was experienced, authoritative and kindly. In 2007 he wrote a letter to the Guardian newspaper about how Latin examinations could be altered to make them more accessible to more students at school – ideas that would be worth considering during today's CATB assessments consultations. It's worth quoting in full:

Mary Beard [...] is right to claim that Latin is a difficult subject to study at school level. However, to assert that only the most able can cope at GCSE level is not going to help the majority of Latin teachers, who struggle each year to attract enough students for a viable GCSE set. A revision of the GCSE specification is due soon. The assessment of literature in the original Latin (including its social context) should remain an essential element, but can be tested in more imaginative ways. Understanding and evaluation (high-level skills) can loom larger than memory with the help of open-book access, translation assistance, controlled classroom assignments etc. This will hardly lead to a dumbing-down of a subject that is among the hardest of all GCSEs, and might even attract more students for whom a grade F or G would be a triumph. The subject might be *difficilis* but its examination does not need to be *difficilior* (Clague, 2007).

Alan was also the subject of a fond memoir by the then children's laureate Lauren Child (author of the Charlie and Lola series) (Frankel, 2019). He will be very much missed by his family, his friends and colleagues. *Requiescat in pace*.

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- Peddar, D.** Utilising Generative AI in the Classics classroom.
- Cavaleri, D., Hersch, M., and Kolde, A.** Write like Cicero: integrating an AI-based classifier in ancient language teaching for idiom acquisition.
- Malik, I.** A critical analysis of pupils' use of the CLC digital explorer tool at Key Stage 3.
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- Stephenson, D.** 44th JACT Latin summer school – 2024 director's report.

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Carter, A. Obituary: Alan Clague.

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- Tarran (R.)** Texts, Editors, and Readers. Methods and Problems in Latin Textual Criticism. Jerome Moran.
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