

Report by the Director on the JSST Classical Civilisation and Ancient History Summer School 2017

Held at Repton School from the 8th to the 13th July

At the end of my second year as director, I am delighted to report on another enjoyable, successful and somewhat changed Classical Civilisation and Ancient History Summer School.

This year we were pleased to welcome 60 students, a little lower than we might have liked but we will be responding to this with an increased effort to enhance our presence on social media and greater advertising in schools. We had 45 students who had just finished Year 12, with 7 students from Year 11 and 8 students from Year 13. There were also 7 returning students who had come to the summer school last year. 67% of our students were female but this is a significant step towards a more even ratio and consistent with last year's percentage. We do not have comprehensive data on our students' backgrounds but 23 of our students came from independent schools, 10 from state comprehensives, 4 from state grammar schools and 9 from 6th form colleges within the UK, as well as three foreign students. Of the students that attended 28 had just finished studying Classical Civilisation at AS-level, with 12 students studying Latin, 3 doing Ancient History and 4 doing Greek.

This year we had 10 full-time tutors and no Director's assistant, a role that we will be replacing next year with an intern, hopefully one of several interested candidates who studied at Repton but are now too old to return and would like to stay involved in the summer school. A wide range of topics were taught, under broad subject areas (see website for full details) but notable this year were the new courses that were introduced on the basis on several years' student feedback forms, including Barbarians, Epic Writing, Gender in the Ancient World, Julio-Claudian emperors, Finest years of the Roman Republic, Athens birthplace of democracy and new in-depth tragedy and comedy courses. We also offered a number of optional sessions on Classics and Shakespeare, Hieroglyphics, Archaeology, Greek Religion, Advanced Greek and Classics at university. We will be continuing these new sessions next year, with the 'languages at lunch' and 'facts at five' sessions, as well as a revamping of the session 6 myth classes into new debating, presentation, classical pub quiz and myth-retelling sessions. Students are expected to take classes for five out of the six sessions, but in fact some took six, whereas next year we will offer students 5 sessions, of which they can take 4 or 5, and have the new myth session as compulsory for session 6.

Following a restructuring of the timetable to allow for later wake-up, sign-in and lights-out timings, all students were able to take advantage of the excellent swimming and tennis facilities at Repton, as well as the opportunity to buy Classics-related books, following the one day visit of the Hellenic Book Service on the 11th-12th. Evenings were spent preparing our drama productions for the final evening; all students were involved in some capacity - acting, singing, dancing, directing, costumes and props allowing our students to utilise and develop a wide variety of skills.

On the final night of the summer school, we watched performances of Aeschylus' Suppliant Women (directed by Dr Stephe Harrop) and Aristophanes' Birds (directed by Rob Taylor), took photos, videos and

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then were given a lecture with our students on the next morning by Dr Scott Scullion, Senior Tutor at Worcester College, Oxford. Once again, our students really did shine in our productions. It was clear from the quality of the performances that everybody involved had worked with dedication and commitment and remarkable to see how much talent we had in our midst. In particular the props team should be commended for creating, from scratch in the space of just two days, 56 bird wings for the comedy.

As per usual, the feedback responses from our students were very positive and contained some useful comments. All commented on how much they had enjoyed the individual teaching sessions as well as taking part in the preparation of our performances. Many students remarked on how they found the summer school the perfect place to meet people with similar interests and further their love of classics. The vast majority of our students again said that the Summer School had influenced them towards studying classical subjects at university or confirmed their decision to do so.

We are grateful as always to the bodies who assisted us with our bursaries and other expenses, without whose donations we would not be able to continue. We look forward to even greater financial backing in the coming year, as well be discussing possibilities with CSCP and the new ACE Classics project, both of whom will hopefully be able to enhance the summer school in some way.

The Summer School is very grateful to Elaine Shaw's replacement, Caroline Proctor, at Repton Enterprises, who was a joy to work with, offering us great freedom, access, facilities and miscellaneous extras even at short notice. We look forward very much to resuming working with her next year for an even better experience. My sincerest thanks go to Kate Baylis who has worked so hard in the role of Summer School Secretary, answering and sending more emails than ever before and ably surmounting any obstacle in her way. She has proven herself yet again as a superb administrator, with boundless energy and a great talent for balancing the many duties she had.

Written by Daniel Paul

Course Director

August 2017

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