

## Ancient Athens Day



On 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> July the East Oxford Community Classics Centre held a double-bill of Ancient Athens-themed days to explore Athenian culture, language and history. The days were organised to coincide with the year 6 Transfer Days, so incoming students could learn all about the Ancient Athenians while attending Cheney School for the first time.

Athenian Re-enactment organisation Comitatus came to camp on site at the school overnight for two nights, bringing with them eight Re-enactors, two beautiful white horses and their grooms, and a dazzling array of armour and equipment.

They held six shows on the Athletics Field across the two days for Cheney students, Transfer Day students and also a community show for local primary school groups and other visitors. Their shows involved displays of their weapons including archery and javelins, live wrestling, bare-back horse riding and much more. Throughout the shows, Catherine Conyard commentated, explaining the use of weapons in battle by the Athenians, and the historical sources used to recreate these items. Once the shows were over, students were able to try the helmets and shields for themselves, as well as meet the horses and Re-enactors.

Alongside the shows were several Greek-themed stalls, including face-painting, parthenon-building, an ancient Greek lucky dip, Greek bracelet-making and mask-making, as well as a display of some of the artefacts the Classics Centre is lucky enough to own.

As well as the shows and stalls, the Oxford University Greek Play team delivered a “Greek Tragedy Circuit” for the year 6s, where they got to take part in a Greek chorus and take part in a debate about the trial of Orestes, as well as making masks of the Furies, the vengeful spirits of Greek myth. Greek speaking workshops were held for older Cheney students, as well as a series of talks on Athens and the origins of Democracy for a range of audiences, delivered by Dr David Carter from the University of Reading.

Cheney Latinists from years 8 to 11 donned classical costumes to take part as helpers on the days, as did Classics Centre and History staff.

A brilliant two days was had by all – we have sent out evaluation forms to schools, and comments so far have been:

“Everything was very well organised, we were welcomed and taken to our places promptly. Thank you!”

“The show was fantastic and the children really enjoyed seeing the horses being used in this way. The commentary was lively and informative.”

“Many thanks for organising such a fantastic event. The children really enjoyed it!”

“The activities were really fun for the children, and the face painting was a big hit!”

Dr Lorna Robinson.

