



Classics

2003/4



SEVENOAKS OLYMPIC CHALLENGE

Vinehall entered two teams of six for this event which was arranged as a precursor to the 2004 Olympic Games to be held in Athens in August.

In the morning of 21st June the pupils attended study sessions where they learnt about the Ancient Olympics and other aspects of Greece ancient and modern. After lunch there were thirty questions to be answered to test the teams' knowledge, followed by seven athletic events in track and field. As far as possible the events were similar to those of the Ancient Olympics.

Our two teams were named Vineshoots, and Vineleaves. For the Vineshoots Bertie James won the Standing Long Jump, Christopher Goldsack won the 800 metres, Felix Keeling won the Javelin, Matthew Pexton came second in the Race in Armour and the team came second in the Relay. At the end when the two Vinehall scores were combined we were announced as silver medal winners and the six Vineshoots received medals since they contributed more points to the overall total than the Vineleaves. The hosts won the gold medals.

The Vineshoots comprised the four named above plus Imran Iqbal who threw the discus and William Dunn who ran the Stade (200m). Congratulations to the Vineleaves too, who were Frances Mavor, Sophie Wakeham, Andrew Rose, Gabriel Harriman, Felix Canetty Clarke, and Nicholas Lawson, without whose efforts we would not have won the silver medal.

A Charioteer's Curse

Evil demon of the deep
Kill them all in mid sleep
All who support the Reds
Make them suffer in their beds
Make the pain so great they weep
May they the wrath of Pluto reap!
Imogen Bassett 5I



A Day at the Races

Marcus Aurelius walked into the big, open, sandy space of the Circus Maximus. Wow! How he'd always begged his parents to come here, how Tullus and his twin had boasted about coming here every day to watch their father (in the White stable) race and how their father had always won and now he was finally here, he couldn't believe it. He gazed up at the giant turning posts and the big statues and just thought what it would feel like to be one of the racers, knowing that you would be risking your life by doing this but also knowing that if you won, gold you wouldn't even dream about having would be falling upon you. And that was the moment he knew - when he grew up he would be a famous charioteer, Marcus Aurelius. People would be cheering for him, yelling out his name, hoping with all of their might that he would win and they would win the bets that they had made and all of those other people, from the moment they had lost, would for evermore cheer him and bet on him.

His mother then came and told him to get a move on or they would never get any seats. His mother was a very brave and daring lady. She had bet all of the money she had earned by stitching and sewing (and that was most of the money the Aurelius family had) on the white horse and the odd fact was that everyone in this 5000 seated stadium knew that the slowest horse was the white one but his mother had insisted on this charioteer.

"Mother?"

"Yes my darling?"

"How do you know that the slowest horse of all is going to win this race?"

"I thought you'd ask me that. The truth is my dear, I've written a curse on both of those... those..."

She looked ready to burst, but then she let out a great hiss of air and smiled.
"Those people."

"Can I see this curse please?"

Maria Aurelius passed her son a tablet. It read thus:

"I beg you, demon, whoever you are, from this hour, from this day, from this moment, torture the horses of the Greens, Blues and Reds. Kill them! Make sure that the charioteers Clarus, Felix and Epimeles crash! Leave no breath in them! And then, let the White team win."

Marcus sighed and smiled, thinking of how evil his mother could be when she wanted to be. Then a trumpet sounded.

"Quick, Marcus the races are starting!"

Maria pulled her son out of the big sandy area and led him through a corridor into a big spectators' area. It took quite a long time to squeeze and push through to the front of the area but in the end they managed to and by that time the Emperor was about to drop the white handkerchief. Then... then... IT DROPPED! The chariots were released and suddenly Marcus was too filled full of tension to watch any more. He buried his face into his mum's toga. It took quite some time for him to calm down and be able to look up again and when he did a very pleasing sight met his eyes. A man in white was beaming all over. The curse had worked. The Whites had won. He then thought about growing up and decided that he would be in the White stable, the lucky stable. Then he saw the sand and was filled with horror. There were blood and bodies everywhere. The blood and bodies of other racers. Perhaps when he grew up he wouldn't be a racer after all!

Isobel Wingrad, 51



Some Death at the Races

"Good afternoon, everyone! And what a wonderful afternoon it is here at the Circus Maximus. I'm Marcus Mina and I'm going to be entertaining all of you from the commentary box. Normally I would be joined by Gaius Niona but he was crucified last week for marrying an Egyptian woman. As we wait for the race to begin I will introduce the brave charioteers....

Recently returned from a thigh injury and pulling his weight for the Reds is Maximus Stieri! Next is the man trying to defend the Greens' record of being on the top spot for six months: Gutta Calpurnianus! For the Blues, a man who was run over by chariot just a year ago and is hoping to reach great heights, despite his name, is Minimus Tristianus! And last but not, definitely not least, a man who has won with all the other stables before, joining the Whites, Lucifus Andremus! Now let's settle down and watch the race itself.....

The white cloth is dropped and the race commences! Lucifus Andremus is having a great start pulling the Greens into first place! Behind him Maximus Stieri and Gutta Calpurnianus are in the heats for second place and behind him it seems that Minimus Tristianus' horses won't budge! Oh! Now they are and he's speeding up behind the others. As the competitors reach the end of the first of its six laps, it seems that Gutta and Stieri really are fighting it out for second place! They both have swords drawn and are hacking at each other! Gutta catches Stieri on the leg and Stieri trips and falls forward onto his horses. He steadies himself though but in that time Gutta has taken second place!

I don't believe it! Stieri is standing on the backs of his horses and is slashing out at Gutta! He gets him on the back of the neck and the great man slumps to the ground trailing blood. As he falls his elbow catches his left wheel and the whole chariot falls apart. His own horses are trampling on him. Ooh! Not nice! That's got to be the end of the race for him!

The stretcher-bearers are running onto the bloodstained sand to take his body off but they won't be doing that as everyone else except them realises that Minimus Tristianus is coming up from behind! His horses are going so fast he can't stop! Ouch! He runs over one of the men, probably killing him instantly but the other man's tunic is caught by the horses' hooves and he is dragged underneath for a fair few metres.

The racers that are still alive are reaching the end of the second lap and the beginning of the third lap. Stieri is almost catching up with Lucifus who is beginning to get his horses tired. Trying to keep to the inner side of the track he blocks Stieri and puts on a spurt of speed, allowing himself a breathing space. Stieri moves to the outer spaces but fails to complete his overtake. But Lucifus is having trouble turning around to finish lap three. His wheels are caught on the side of the spina and fall away. He falls to the ground and gets up to his feet as his horses race away chariotless into the distance. Knowing his race is run, Lucifus tries to stand up but is knocked down again by Minimus Tristianus! This time he lies still.

There are only two competitors left and they are both racing on. They're starting the 5th lap and Tristianus is catching up with Stieri. Then Tristianus overtakes him and Stieri draws his sword and starts lashing out. But suddenly he falls to the ground as Tristianus nudges him over. Stieri's chariot races around the turning-point and crashes into the wall. Ow! Blood spurts up the wall as if it was put there by a brush. Tristianus races ahead and completes the race!

The crowd are going nuts! We have a winner, the most unlikely one I must say! Tristianus takes the trophy and holds it up to the crowd! Then a man inscribes on the side: "AD 58: Blues."



CANTERBURY

Year 6 Classics Trip

Last October's Year 6 Classics trip to Canterbury was blessed with warm, dry weather. We began our day at the Roman Museum to study some of the Roman Invasion topics on the Latin CE syllabus. The Museum is located underground at the same level as the original Roman town. It features excavated real objects and the preserved remains of a Roman town house with its famous mosaics. Authentic reconstructions include a Roman market place with a fruit and vegetable stall, shoe maker and fabric seller. At the end of the museum was the impressive "touch the past" area where we were able to handle real Roman artefacts and learn more about the skills of an archaeologist.

After a pleasant lunch beside the River Stour we set off on the next stage of our trip, to Richborough Castle. This is where the Romans are thought to have landed during their second invasion attempt in 43AD and parts of the fort date back to this period. However, some experts now believe that the landing was further along the coast either at Deal or Chichester. This emphasised how our knowledge of history is never static as more evidence is always being uncovered. Richborough saw trade from all over the Roman world, initially as a military supply base and later as a thriving town and port.

We tried to picture where the sea would have been at that time and examined the mysterious area of vast foundations at the site. This was the subject of a recent "Timewatch" programme which we had looked at in class. We discussed the latest theory, that they are the foundations for a massive triumphal arch, (over 25 metres high) visible for miles and even out to sea. It was the only one built in this country and marked the start of Watling Street.

It was a very interesting visit made all the more fascinating by the uncertainties of the Roman Invasion which remain even today. Our thanks to Mr Hooper and Mr Fancourt for driving the minibuses.





LULLINGSTONE

Year 4 trip to Lullingstone Roman Villa

On Monday 15th March, Mr Hooper, Mr Fancourt and Mrs Cooper took members of Year 4 to Lullingstone Roman Villa, just outside Eynsford in Kent. Lullingstone was a large country house which was occupied for much of the Roman period from around AD 80. It began life as a modest, timber framed house but eventually became transformed into a much more luxurious dwelling with a tiled roof, bath suite and some beautiful mosaics in the dining room. We were able to see many of the mosaic remains, featuring some elaborate patterns and depicting the stories of Bellerophon and the Chimaera and Jupiter and Europa. Pupils drew some of the many patterns which they could see in the mosaics and then they were able to have a go at making their own with some artistic results!

The pupils had plenty of investigations to make including examining the bath house, analysing the materials used to build the villa and studying some rather grisly skeletons which had been buried at the villa to bring good luck from the gods. They even paced out the length and width of the villa so that when we returned to school we were able to work out its approximate size.

When the pupils arrived at the villa they were asked to give their first thoughts of the site and for their final opinions as they were leaving. It was very interesting to see how these changed over the course of the visit; some were not impressed when they first saw the villa remains but thought much more of it when they had studied it in greater depth. However, I am sure that other memories will linger just as long. Who could forget the heroic actions of Mr Fancourt rescuing Charlotte Thompson's clipboard from the villa remains (saving the confusion of future archaeologists) or the coach driving through a (worryingly!) deep ford on the approach to Eynsford, ducks scattering in its wake! It was a fascinating trip which looks set to become a regular fixture in the Classics Department calendar.



