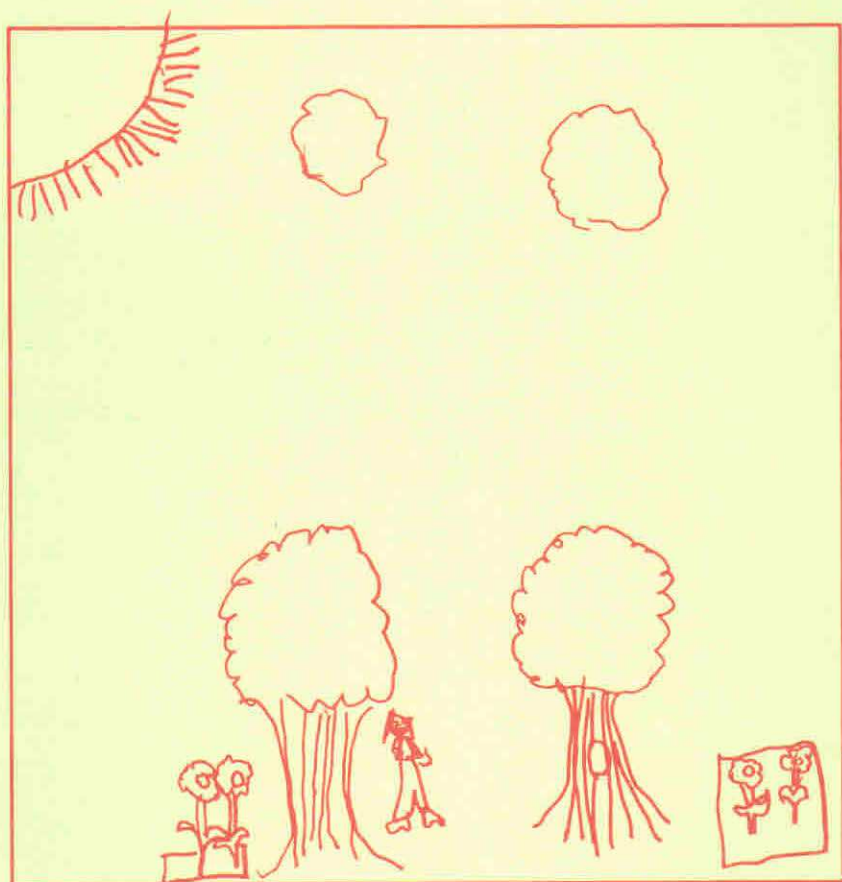


EDUCATION OTHERWISE



JUNE '96

NO 110

The Next Issue

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The Deadline for Contributions is
1st July 1996

Please include your name, address and telephone number and mark material '*For Publication*'. Contributions are more likely to be included if they are concise and it would be helpful if they were typed. Some Editors may be able to accept material on disc.

There will be Special Sections on the following subjects

Special Needs

August '96 Issue. Deadline 10th June '96

Computers

October '96 Issue. Deadline August '96

After EO - What are home educated young people doing now ?

December '96 Issue. Deadline October '96

Please share your experiences and expertise with other members. Send your contributions on any of the above topics, as soon as possible, but no later than the deadline to:

Anne Mills

Waverley, Murton Way, Murton, York,
YO1 3UJ Tel 01904 488088

Disclaimer

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Editing the Newsletter

The Newsletter is edited by volunteers. If you would like to know more, please contact the Newsletter Coordinator. We currently need Editors from the **December '96** issue onwards.

If your newsletter does not arrive, check with Mark Cottey, who maintains the database, that your name is still on the mailing list.

EDITORIAL

Hello to friends old and new, and welcome to the June Newsletter, coming this time from Inverness, capital of the Highlands, and just north of Loch Ness.

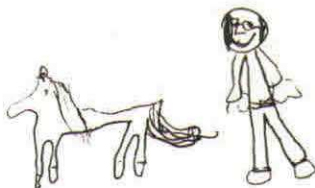
We are the MacGregor family, myself Una, my son Matthew who is editing the Children's Pages, my daughter Mary who did the illustrations for the Newsletter and two lazy cats who have both at some stage padded across the computer keyboard to see what is taking so much of my attention!

I have really enjoyed editing the Newsletter, not least receiving so many interesting letters and phone calls. It's been good to put voices to names and have a chat with other members. Being so far north makes attending gatherings and events too expensive to consider, so it is always interesting to have contact with other EOers and to know that you're not the only one out there.

We are all different, all going our own individual ways, yet we all have a common aim: to do, or try to do, what we feel is right for our children.

Many thanks for everyone who has contributed to this issue. Keep the contributions coming in! Best wishes to all.

Una MacGregor, Matthew and Mary, 38 Scorguie Court, Inverness, IV3 6ST.



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A PLEA

Valerie Gommon received a phone call in April, from a man in the North of England (possibly a new member?), asking about under 16 college admission. Unfortunately Valerie has mislaid your phone number. Could you please contact her again on: (01908) 511247.

'Overcoming Social Isolation'

Thank you for your letters and contributions:

Various letters are in response to Alison Hartley's letter printed in the previous newsletter: some deal with 'socialisation' for pre-school age children, others for 'school-age', and perhaps not surprisingly several reveal far greater concern about 'socialisation' in schools rather than out, whilst the final letter broadens the horizons to socialisation in society generally. Primarily contributions focus on overcoming social isolation for children - hopefully this means all home-educating adults have their own social needs fulfilled by their families, friends, communities and of course EO!! and that by choosing an unconventional option for our children we are not being totally rejected, ostracised and isolated from society!! There's hope for the world yet then

Forthcoming issues will feature "Special Needs" and "Computers" ; contributions may include creative offerings such as poems, stories or art ; and please make suggestions for future themes you would like to see here.

We live in a modern suburb, i.e. lots of cul-de-sacs. Our three boys have been playing with other children out on the street since they could walk, and before, given half a chance ! Until they were four either I, or another mother, was out with them. 14 yr old boys delighted in playing with the toddlers, and as ours become the " Big Boys" of the street I've tried to make sure they are aware of their community responsibility to the "Little Ones". I could not have asked for a better place for them to grow up. They have learnt about bullying , pecking order, group games like tig and Red Rover, being different (called in when others get to play out late), being the only one without a particular game/toy/logo on trainers, being the centre of transient attention when you are the only one with said coveted game/toy etc. And all the time parents on hand to monitor the situation, teach them to sort out arguments with words not fists, discuss group dynamics ("They always make me be "it") and ways to alter the situation or see it differently (The oldest teenager is trying to impress the girlfriend by being "cool" so won't play while she's around.)

I like visitors , so its not difficult to welcome their friends in. I had thought Boys Brigade, gymnastics and such like would be a source of friends, and am really suprised to find this is not so. And this is not just for our children , the other children on the street rarely have friends back to play. So the boys have been socialised by a mixed age, mixed ability, mixed interest, mixed sexes crowd of 15 children, and the other parents of the street. They are secure in the knowledge that if they're unhappy there is help and support at hand, and that if they venture "off the rails" the street is close knit enough that your Mum and Dad will know by tomorrow ! So isolation ? No, I get to the stage where I long for the other children to go back to school so that I can see mine more often!

Claire Young, 3 Wyvis Place, Middleton Park, Irvine, KA11 1NA, Scotland.

I was very surprised that all the contributions we received on this subject were so positive. My children do not want to go to school but do sometimes wish they had more friends. Any comments?
Sue Hutchin, Newsletter Coordinator

Valerie Higgins,
60 Johnston Road,
Dawley,
TELFORD,
Shropshire.
TF4 2DF
Tel. 01952 502225

Dear Education Otherwise,

I am writing in reply to Alison Hartley's letter about social activities for children under five. I am intending to home educate my three year old son Duncan, and in many ways am in a similar situation to Alison. I do not wish Duncan to attend a pre-school or nursery, partly because it seems absurd to send him to school at three and a half when I have no intention of sending him at five, and partly because I have a close friend whose daughter attended nursery and then begged to be allowed to attend school. School may well have been the right choice for that particular child but I can't avoid the feeling that she may have been rather indoctrinated into that view.

Duncan and I have been attending two local Mother and Toddler groups, one of these caters for up to nursery age and this we will probably leave at the end of summer, the other group is an under fives drop in, and we will continue to attend this until Duncan is five.

Apart from this Duncan is a member of Tumble Tots, which is a structured gymnastic programme for children from when they can first walk until they are seven. This is one session a week and costs eighteen pounds for a six week block of sessions plus eleven pounds fifty per year for insurance and a T shirt. Duncan has been doing this for a year and loves it. If you phone Tumble Tots [UK] 0121 585 7003 they would put you in touch with your nearest Tumble Tots leader.

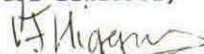
We are lucky enough to live within walking distance of a dancing school so Duncan is currently doing some trial lessons before we decide whether this suits him. So far he loves the actual dancing but is very unsure about letting me leave him alone. We may drop this for a few months and come back to it later.

Have you tried contacting your local council? Our local council [The Wrekin] publishes a booklet giving contact addresses for groups and entertainments catering for under fives. There is a Wrekin Under Fives Forum that meets on a regular basis for a working lunch to discuss issues relating to under fives and put ideas to the council's Community Team. Perhaps your Council does something similar, they should at least have leaflets available about local community groups.

Large local events can also be a good source of information. Here in Telford we have Kids International over the May Day holiday. Every possible group to do with children attends, plus people spinning, giving falconry displays, a livestock show, storytelling, etc. etc. If you don't have anything like this near you, what about carnivals and fun days? If you go round the little stalls many are run by people like Nature Conservancy groups who may have activities that can be shared by young members.

This is all I've come up with so far and I would be glad to find out about any other social activities open to under fives, also preferably activities that don't cut off abruptly at five and can offer some continuity. School is organised for you. If everything stops at five then you have a whole new set of activities to find, this takes time. It would be helpful if there was some overlap.

yours sincerely


VALERIE HIGGINS

Dear EO - "I play with daniel my brother a lot. I've got many friends daniel, Christopher, Lisa lois, James. I go to jim club and history club and craft club and I go swimming. I also go to the open door family centre to play. When I'm six or seven I can go to many other clubs. MICAEL POCHAT"

I have noticed that children who do not go to school have much less time to play than Micael does. On a one-to-one basis more work gets done in much less time so there's more time for playing (I don't call sitting in a group listening to a teacher or writing work social contact!). Children who go to school have to get up early and therefore go to bed early; a typical day comprises of awakening, hurrying to get ready, spending time travelling to school; at school with a few short playbreaks and of course other 'co-operative' exercises; back home at 3.30 or 4pm, having a snack and spending some time with the rest of the family because they haven't seen the child all day. Maybe at 5pm they get the chance to play for an hour with a friend or outside (if they don't have to go off somewhere with the family that is). Then at 6pm it's suppertime and at 7pm they go to bed or watch telly first. That sounds like social isolation to me!

As Micael himself is writing you, he has a brother, several friends, and goes to clubs. As he's only 5 possibilities will increase as he gets older. He has no social or age barriers and communicates with old and young alike. However, Micael is hyperactive and therefore his behaviour is, unfortunately, not always socially acceptable. The ruthlessness of school-going children would leave him very isolated indeed! In the smaller, more controlled group situations he goes to it is easier for him and others to control him and therefore his social contacts are pleasurable. Fortunately he is reacting quite well to a very strict diet and his behaviour is improving/ has improved greatly. Anyway, in short, Micael does not feel lonely and I think that the quality of his social contacts is much better than it would be were he to go to school. Love and light, Olivia Pochat, 51 the Heathers, Okehampton EX20 1TB.

* * *

Dear EO - We are a family always on the move with a 4 and a half year old and a 22 month old (my husband and I are tropical foresters so we live for short periods in places all over the world). Our last posting was in a forest in Belize, very isolated and the nearest children about one hour's drive down a very bad road. Hazel our eldest was very good the whole time we were there, at playing, going for walks, etc., by herself, although she did miss other children. When we arrived in Belize she was quite shy, and not ready to join in with a group of children very quickly. However, now she has come to really appreciate being with other children and grabs the chance whenever it is available. She is a happy, outgoing child who makes friends all over the world without problems. I can honestly say that she doesn't take friends for granted, and has a great ability to get on with things on her own when no-one is around to play with her. There are many positive aspects to children being without contemporaries for periods and it certainly will not damage them in any way. Yours, Justine Dunn, 30 Poplar Road, Botley, Oxford OX2 9LB.

Dear EO - I have two children, Katherine (4) and James (2 in August). I agree with Alison Hartley that education starts before statutory school age; in fact, I am often irritated by being asked when I intend to start home-educating! However, I was also worried about the possible lack of social contact.

Katherine attends at least two sessions with other children every week (during school terms, at least). I help run the Parent and Toddler Group at a local church. I think it would be worth checking out local P&T groups. The drawback, however, is that they are not always well-organised. Sometimes children are allowed to run around aimlessly with little supervision from their attendant adults. Katherine also goes to a Saturday dance class. The dance class is relatively expensive, but it gives Katherine something that she does on her own.

We attend church and Katherine has been in Sunday school since she was two. This gives her an opportunity to interact with other children her age (and without me) for a short period every week. Church attendance has other major advantages for us as well. Katherine is extremely secure and confident in the building as she knows it so well (she is there twice a week, most weeks). Also, most of the adults know her and speak to her, which is good because all our family lives at a distance.

We also have some contact with other EOers. I think that Katherine has a wider age-range of friends than she would have if she were in pre-school: her birthday party invitations have gone to children between 2 - 11 years.

However, I know it will be more difficult in the next year. Most of her friends at P&T Group either go to nursery already, or will soon do so (they start at three in this area). Katherine is very interested in school and keeps saying "When I go to school..." Of course, it does not help that other adults keep asking her about it and assume that she will be at school soon. I have explained that school is not necessary and that I don't think it would help her. I'm just going to play it by ear, as I have done up to now. Yours sincerely, Shena Deuchars, 206 Lavender Avenue, Mitcham, CR4 3HP.

* * *

Dear EO - I thought I'd like to reply to Alison's letter in the EO magazine. I wouldn't say we were experienced, but Stephanie is now four years old and quite a contented, happy, outgoing little girl.

Before we had Stephanie we thought about home-education, and after a lot of discussion, decided that that is what we were going to do. She is an only child and we have no transport either, which does make things harder, but not impossible. She has never been to playgroup or nursery because like yourself I thought that home education begins before school.

She has, however, a large circle of friends, from 18 months to 80 years. (We are Jehovah's Witnesses hence we belong to a large group of friends/community). Stephanie is the only one being taught at home, so she does not see her friends a lot of the time. But I always make sure she sees someone at some point in the week, more than once a week. Pre-

school aged children - we go and visit or they come to us when we invite them. Those of school age - we see in the holidays, again we go and see them and then we invite them back. (We'll be having a garden party in the Summer!) If for some reason there's no children to see, then we'll go and visit some adults and again invite them round for a meal, so that we can all spend time with them. If there is no one to see, which is very rare, then we take her out and about. (It gets her used to different places and people, which is all part of socialising). To parks, museums, places of interest, we often go for a walk, and then to a little cafe for a drink. She's got to know the owner quite well and will go into the kitchen for a chat on her own.

The result is that Stephanie talks to all ages and I think feels comfortable with them too. Not just those of her own age group, as in a classroom situation where she would only really know 20-30 4/5 year olds and one teacher. I don't think that that would be much of a social life for her. She also gets out and about more than most. As I said at the beginning of the letter, a happy and outgoing little girl. I hope you find this letter of some use or encouragement. Yours faithfully, Jane, Philip and Stephanie Wales,
3 Downie Road, Bilbrook, Wolverhampton, WV8 1JE

* * *

Dear EO - As a member for 10 years I would like to contribute just a little to the comments on social isolation. When I read Alison Hartley's letter (April 1996) I couldn't help thinking how we all get into this trap of feeling that we have to let our children 'socialise'. What do we mean by this? For what reason? And what do we think it achieves? Where in their adult life do they spend so much time in such close proximity to so many people, not of their own choosing? I have 4 children ages 20, 19, 11 and 10 so I feel I have a little experience to offer and yes, I used to worry and I put pressure on my 19 year old when he was home-educated to 'socialise' and he still reminds me! On the other hand my 20 year old who was not home-educated and was able to 'socialise' at school was bullied in the classroom and nearly strangled on the way home! Do we have this fear our children will be social outcasts when they grow up if we do not expose them to these traumas? Let's decide whether it isn't a better, safer place to grow up in the home and let's ask ourselves why we want them to socialise.

As a footnote my 19 year old is at University and suffering no ill effects for being home-educated, in fact he has a lovely circle of friends who share the same interests as him, which is not always the case in the classroom. My 20 year old does not see any of the people she knew at school but has a large circle of friends, ones she has been able to choose and have not been chosen for her! I could write so much more but I hope I have given you food for thought and please do not worry about 'socialisation', it's a pat remark made by schools all over the country and is not used in its true definition. Keep up the good work and thank you to Jude Ashley Walker on the Isle of Wight for our success. Yours helpfully! Linda Wildash,
3 St Johns Hill, Ryde, Isle of Wight, PO33 1HN.

Overcoming Isolation - Emma Jackson

I wanted to write something for this issue on overcoming isolation, because my experience of home educating my children and the type of lifestyle that we live comes from my need not to feel isolated in my beliefs and in my life. Isolation is a strange issue in home education, as it is often the first question asked of a home educating family, and yet to me isolation is an issue of our time, not primarily a part of deschooling. Our society (in simple terms) has become an isolating one for large quantities of people. The breakdown of the extended family, people moving often around the country, for economic or personal reasons, high levels of crime, which alienates people from their neighbours and their community, all these and more mean that few families have a wide network of people, adults and children, to share their lives and their experiences. Social interaction has become largely institutionalised, children finding and keeping friends has become synonymous with going to school, friends are often of a similar age, and usually same sex.

So in this context of living in a society that has alienated people from each other and institutionalised a lot of their social interaction, how does the home educating family fare? Well, we probably have suffered a similar fate to most other families, some loss of the extended family, dislocation around the country, friendships both adult and child being broken, little connection with our neighbours, etc. And we don't have the compensations of children in school, mixing with a wide number and variety of children, chatting at the school gate and making friends with other parents. But the pluses of this are also evident, we don't have other children behaving antisocially towards our children, subjecting them to the perils of playground warfare. We don't have the teachers' implicit assumptions about race and class and gender, and the tyranny of the peer group is lessened by interaction with people of all ages. Relationships between home educating families can be very strong and long lasting, creating stable adult-child, adult-adult, and child-child relationships that make up in quality what they may lack in quantity. It is this last point, quality over quantity, that I feel is very important.

Social contact, as an idea in mainstream society, especially in schools, seems to be taken for granted as a 'good thing'. The more social contact between children the better, and this is achieved in a very crude way, merely lumping children together and letting them get on with it. Most teachers see schools as dual purpose for children, 'educating' them, and 'socialising' them. There is great emphasis on group work, especially in primary schools, and children who don't fit into this view are seen as a problem (my eldest daughter was one such child). To me this is coming at the socialisation issue from the wrong direction. For a start, the child has no say in this process. If they don't feel ready to spend time with other children, or they're having an off day, or they've really just had enough of noise and disturbance and interruption, they can't choose to be by themselves. Thus a lot of social interaction in schools is carried out in an atmosphere of stress, which seems to go against what social interaction is all about, creating positive links and experiences for children, allowing them to create their own lives and relationships, exploring those, having time out of the adult world of control and responsibility, something that grows organically out of children spending time together. In my experience, stress or pressure to operate in a group which is not under the control

of the individual (at least to some extent) leads to a very poor social situation. In my daughters case, and as far as I could tell in many other children's cases, this stress was overwhelming. She would come out of school, at the end of the day, totally hyper, would usually wet herself on the way home, would have massive temper tantrums, and regressed in lots of things that she could do before she began school. I spent some time in her classroom as I was interested to find out what actually went on. The main problem appeared to be that the time that the teacher could spend with a group of children was totally minimal, so most groups were left to get on with what ever they were supposed to be doing. This resulted in the most disruptive children in the class not only dominating the teachers time and energy, but also being allowed to totally dominate the other children in the class. Children who were struggling with the task in hand had no help or encouragement, children who coped easily soon finished, and were either drafted in to help the struggling children, or got bored, becoming disruptive, or blanking out. My daughter, as she was able to do most of the work fairly quickly, often ended up 'teaching' the other children, this for her was a very bad social situation, as the other children resented the fact that she could do the work easily. Plus she didn't want to be a teacher, and she got very frustrated by this.

I suppose that this shows to me how facile it is to assume that because a large number of children are put together in one room, they are having a positive social experience. Many of the children in my daughter's class had social problems, there was one girl who spent most of the day standing in a corner crying, upsetting the other children and obviously not getting the attention that she needed. When I took my daughter out of school after a term, this child was still spending most of the day crying in the corner, what sort of social experience is that?

To me it is a nonsense to look at social interaction in terms of quantity. For me as an adult, I want to have friends that I can trust, that we can have fun together, and be some support in times of crisis and upset. I don't want huge amounts of social interaction with people who I don't choose to be with, in an atmosphere of stress, with only a certain age group, in a very superficial way, and I don't feel that this benefits children either. To me growing up as a child is about finding out who you are, who you want to be, what you like doing, what you love and hate, how you want to live, exploring the world in a (fairly) safe way, and being with people you trust and love and who love and trust you. It's so much easier to deal positively with social situations, if you are at home with yourself, at ease with who you are and what you like/don't like. Most children I saw in school appeared to be totally lost, with little positive will of their own, little idea of their own power in the world apart from a destructive one, very low self esteem and confidence. And most of the social interaction was negative, bullying, teasing, showing off, making others feel small, telling nasty jokes, etc.

So what of home education? I feel that this section in the EO newsletter should not be about 'Overcoming Isolation', which assumes that children in schools aren't isolated, but about what sort of social life do we want for ourselves and our children. What do we want to build that creates positive oases in the desert of a society that has become socially alienated? Here are some of the ways forward that I can see might lead to a more socially positive society, and to a more rounded

childhood experience for home educated children.

Flexischooling - one of those things that sounds like a good idea, though I don't know many people who have actually managed it. I guess the idea is that the child gets some of the social interaction that goes on in school, without getting swamped by it, so they can maintain their own perspective on the experience. Perhaps the danger would be that they would get the worst of both worlds, always seen as an outsider in school, yet not firmly fixed in the world of home education either. Traveller children already have the right to attend school half time. We need to campaign to extend this part of the law to cover all children. Schools need to reduce in size anyway, so flexischooling may well be a way of reducing class sizes.

Sharing the home education experience - many families already do quite a lot of this, through local EO groups, swapping childcare with other adults, organising joint activities, spending time with adults/children with specific skills, etc. Some groups have gone some way to institutionalising this, through use of a specific venue, having a programme, etc. This can sometimes be more problematic than it seems, most EO groups that I know contain a wide range of adults and children, with a wide range of standards, personal beliefs, money, attitudes, etc, and some bullying, and other antisocial behaviour can still go on. The beauty of this type of set up is that a child can opt out any time they want, and often families know each other fairly well, so problems can be communicated about.

Co-housing - i.e. creating a living environment where people can choose to live near each other with a sense of community. There have been several proposed projects that have begun with deschooling and a desire to live closer together to reduce the isolation of the children. In as much as community has broken down it would seem a good idea to try and create intentional communities to fill this gap, but putting this into practice seems to be very hard. There are some interesting proposals for 'eco-villages' around the country, which could possibly go some way to filling the gap. Even if some children did go to school, living in a safe and close environment would make it easier for deschooled children to make and maintain friends.

Co-ops/ Shared Houses - A similar enterprise, but usually on a smaller scale, is living communally with other deschoolers, either in a formally constituted housing co-op, or in a shared house. There are several co-ops and communities around the country that do this quite successfully, the co-op I live in is called Brambles, and is in Sheffield. Indeed, many of the seventies communes used to home educate as a matter of course, and this idea is often the most practical way of obtaining support, if you are interested in sharing your life with other people. It is often a very good option for single parents (like me) with little access to money, decent long term housing, and support. If you want more information about living in co-ops, feel free to contact me at Brambles (see end of this).

Community Resource Centres - this is one of those ideas which sounds amazingly appealing, and something that schools will end up turning into when they realise that they aren't working long term. Somewhere that children can go and meet other children, where they could have access to resources, information, as and

when they wanted, where specific events could be held, which adults as well as children could use..... Yes, it sounds like utopia, but that's no reason why we shouldn't start getting together and seeing what is possible.

Other ways - there are many other things that families can do, for example, many use non-school activities as a way of their children socialising, as well as learning new skills in a non-school environment. Everything from Woodcraft Folk to Judo, though this does tend to mean that families with more resources can give their children greater access to activities. Campaigning for the money, that would follow the child to school if they went there, to be given to home educating families, would make a great start to redressing this imbalance. And if this were possible then families could club together to fund a local resource centre.... Anyway it's nice to dream!! A very simple way of increasing positive social situations is by staying in the same area and maintaining friends when they move. At least with home education it is possible for children to spend many weeks staying with friends, however far away they live. Also, be creative about what is social. Once the artificial boundaries of age, race, gender, etc, have gone, it is much easier to find people that children get on with. I remember as a small child telling people that my best friend was my granny, and I meant it, she was a very important friend in my life, and I got alot more from her in terms of conversation and support than I ever got from my peers. I don't think we should get hung up on this idea that children in school are having a wonderful social time, and home educated kids are stuck at home all day going bored and turning into socially inept adults. My experience of home educated children is the exact reverse, one of children with a good sense of their own self worth, and mostly very capable in social situations, whether outgoing or not. A radical approach to home education includes learning from life, in the broadest sense. If we as adults are engaged in activities that we care about, then our children will gain much from being around our lives. Learning skills comes much more easily when there is a concrete reason for learning them. This is self directed unstructured learning, where the child is in control of what they want to learn and when, who to share the experience with and what lessons to learn at the end.

I want just to say a bit about Brambles where I live, as it has been a culmination of my search for the right situation for me and my children to live. Here we have four adults and five, sometimes six children. Four of them are home educated, from 13 down to 3. We live in two houses in inner city Sheffield, and run a Resource Centre from the ground floor of one of the houses. We do various things, mostly around encouraging and supporting people to take more control of their lives, and we tend to operate at the radical end of things, encouraging people to live their beliefs and take control of their housing, work, and education. We are members of a national network of co-ops, Radical Routes. We run an information, advice and support service for deschoolers, or people thinking about home education. We share childcare, which means that each adult takes on one day a week childcare, and Thursdays is normally spent at the local EO group. Most of us who live here have felt isolated, some in terms of home education, but largely in terms of how we view life. I personally have had experiences of living in small towns where I felt like the only person who cared about the environment, dressed in second hand clothes, ate whole foods, didn't drive a car, and wanted passionately to put my beliefs into

practice. For me deschooling is as much about deschooling ourselves, as our children, learning to live in harmony with the earth, to fight for what we believe, and to feel supported enough to have the courage to put that into practice. Living with others who feel similarly has for me reduced my personal sense of isolation, and for my children, has created a home environment that meets their needs too. The co-op is a buffer against the world, somewhere safe to retreat to when things get too tough, somewhere to look at meeting all our needs in a way that doesn't compromise anyone else's needs. And I'm sure that our children, when they are grown to adults will be much better equipped to create their own communities than we ever were, being refugees from the school system.

For more information about Brambles Housing Co-op and Resource Centre, or about Co-ops in general, or about radical deschooling, contact Emma or Jane at 82 Andover St., Burngreave, Sheffield, S3 9EH, 0114 2797164. Please send an SAE as we operate on a shoestring.

SOCIAL LIFE?

My response to the request for thoughts on this topic placed in the last newsletter, is that I frequently feel this family could do with less of it! Some people are naturally more gregarious than others so E.O. should mean that you can live as isolated or actively-involved life as you wish, but since the question has been raised I will try to give my two-pennyworth.

Since being toddlers our children have belonged to a range of groups and this has continued over the years. Unlike school-goers who have to summon a second wind before embarking on evening and weekend activities - or even being prevented from doing so at the homework stage - E.O. children can take their pick from what is in their area at an affordable price. At present our two variously have Guides, bellringing, dancing, swimming, trampolining, chess-club, gymnastics, guitar-playing, Sunday school and 'Watch'. Not all these are children-only activities but all participants are volunteers unlike the school situation. At the end of a day together (Mum and girls) we're glad to go our separate ways (both parents have a range of activities too) whereas if the children had been at school all day we'd hardly see each other: a situation which occurs in too many families.

However I don't think a list of clubs etc., however valuable and enjoyable, is the response to those who criticise, or are afraid of, life without school. The 'essential ingredient' (as well as trips to Sainsburys!) is that E.O. children spend most of their time in a real world peopled by others who are not just a few months away from themselves in age. A not untypical day for my daughters could include having a friend visit with a toddler, making unaccompanied visits to shops, building society or library so communicating with the staff involved and calling on a neighbour in her eighties ie. normal life means relating to people of all ages and in a variety of situations. Of course there are opportunities to socialise with children, both school-goers and E.O.ers. (My favourite part of E.O.ing is to see children from a range of ages playing together by choice at an E.O. event.) BUT being solely with children does not take a disproportionate part of their lives - no adult would spend most days surrounded only by people born within six months of themselves!

Rosemary Charles

6, Bridewell Street, Wymondham, Norfolk.

We lived in comparative isolation with our children from 1979 - 1989, on the Essex - Suffolk border. Our children when we left there were aged 10, 7 and 4. During our time in East Anglia, we resisted getting involved in playgroups or nurseries as I didn't want it taken for granted that they would be progressing into school.

An exception to this was a period of a couple of months in 1985 when our son Jack (then age 6) attended a Montessori school while we were temporarily resident in Glastonbury.

However I did take them to Mother and Toddler groups for a bit of contact - as much for myself as for them.

One thing we always did was encourage EO and other friends from different parts of the country to visit us - in other words we always had an 'open house' (we still do). Personally I think that contact with all sorts and ages of people is valuable, not just contact with children of a similar age.

Also, during summer months, our visits to fairs, festivals and ten-day music and dance camps provided much contact for the children and for ourselves.

Occasionally I would flat- and cat-sit for a friend in London and socialize in the London parks.

Sometimes we'd go to London EO meetings, and also to the Essex ones when we could get a lift there (these were often miles away, but for a year or so we had a family who helped us with transport - hello Angela. remember the Willows?!).

I would say that it was me who suffered more from lack of contact with like minded adults than the children suffered from any lack of social contact. I think children accept life as it is more than we adults do with all our conditioning around social contact.

As our children got older we deliberately moved to the edge of a city (Bristol) so they could develop independence and get to various social activities locally, often on their own, without needing to be ferried around, which we didn't fancy at all. It has been a good base for us now for 6 years and we're now changing lifestyles again and most of us (except Jack now age 17 who's staying in Bristol) are moving to a community in Dorset. When we made the decision to move to this rural-based community, both our daughters decided to start school (to avoid being bored and also to meet new friends in the area). Grace age 14 started in February and Alice will start in September when she'll be 11.

My old misgivings about school remain, but it's their choice and we'll see how it goes.

I've got a bit off the point here, but hope there's a few helpful points. By the way, could you consider a move if necessary?

Hello to all EO friends. We continue to spread the word about EO at events during the summer. Feel free to contact me anytime and visit if you're in Dorset (near the Devon border).

Habiba Willow, Monkton Wyld Court, Charmouth, Bridport, Dorset, DT6 6DQ
01297 560342

Dear friends - The other night I was telling off my 13 year old, giving him a perhaps too stern rebuke. He burst into tears, which was unusual, as we all tell each other off, and accept that this is the way we are as a unit. I insisted he put right the original sin, and when done in about half a minute the two of us sat down to talk.

The problem? Social isolation: this boy is and always has been in school, he has many hobbies and on the surface looks very happy, indeed I hope he is. School is a place where one must be on top or trampled under foot, and anyone not socially conforming in school, or in Britain, can expect to have their supposed eccentricity questioned.

The choice (if there is one, and there must be) is to run with the mass or be isolated. Society is unable to accommodate anything other than the norm that is instilled into most of us from day one. Which is one of the reasons the question is posed so often to us EOers - How does Sam make friends, when not in school?

Where is society today? So many have left the hub and moved out to the isolation of the countryside, or taken to travelling in a private box (car). When did you last meet, speak more than a nod, extend an invitation, or swap addresses with a stranger whom you met, not whom you were introduced to? How many of us have sat on a bus, train, in a seat at a theatre or cinema and never allowed our eyes to meet another's, let alone communicate or say hello. How often do we see the same car going to the town in the morning, as another person waits for a bus - how often does this same car pass the same person waiting in town as it returns at six o'clock?

What are the values of society in 1996? The answer is best judged for oneself, just as long as today's and tomorrow's children don't emulate them.

In schools the opportunities for social interaction are so often limited, "Shut up - I'm screaming at you ---- yes, you!" is as helpful to a child as a chocolate fireguard. School time spent being spoken AT by teachers, or working often in silence, has little to offer in social skills. Time spent at (play) or eating is time spent reinforcing the values of the day and keeping up one's street cred. Or if independently minded time spent in isolation, trying not to pay sucker to how good last night's TV was, or just how sick the video is. I don't have to hand the figures for the amount of smokers who are underage, but my son tells me smoking is not the thing to do - but drinking and drugs are. How many friendships in a school are just to keep in with the crowd? Or to give protection from the bully? Let's not forget their safety is in numbers, but that there is no lonelier place than a crowd. How many of these so-called friendships last into adult life, or put the other way, how many school friends do you have now?

Anyhow, next time some muppet asks, just reply that you have an interactive virtual reality link on the net and little Sam is OK! Peace and friendship to you all - Mr G Halsall, 694 Huddersfield Road, Leeds, Oldham, OL4 3PZ.

OUR EO DAY

The girls are up bright and early again, I must teach them to tell the time! I am not at my best first thing, especially 6 am, know what I mean?

They (E-4, A-2.5) jump into bed with me. Daddy's already gone to work. No chance of an extra half hour sleep. They're singing songs and E is already into her round of questions. Ah well, I'm wide awake now, may as well get up.

As soon as we're downstairs, "I want...." my breakfast, a drink, some bread, to watch a film, etc, etc. I set them at the table to make a birthday card, while I do some exercising.

The cards are looking good. They now want to watch "Magic Pencil".

I nip for a quick shower. On my return, A has "made the carpet sparkly", (she's dropped the sequins on it), and E "I'm a mermaid", (she's stuck some on her body).

By the time we've cleared up and eaten and dressed, it's 9.30. We are now awaiting Granny and Uncle G. We're going out to visit a farm. While I'm making the sarnies, they're playing "mummies and babies" although A is informed she is the daddy. E informs me that she has a baby in her tummy.

Granny finally arrives and off we go. The girls are excited when we get there. First call to the lambs

who are about to be bottle fed. All the children get a go. A's face is a picture, sheer pleasure!

After 3 hours of feeding and cuddling animals, and a lot of oohs and aahs, we return home. They collected an egg each which must be painted (so they've informed me) and we collected some wool (which has now been washed ready for a picture).

We have a progress check on their Busy Lizzie seedlings, only half of them have appeared. E decides to do some writing and A draws on the blackboard singing "Baa Baa Black Sheep" both quite oblivious to my demands for them to have a bath. Finally entice them with the promise that we read "the new Floppy books we've just bought from the shop".

Ready for bed now, seven stories later! E climbs up to her top bunk.

"Sing me a song and stroke my hair." A requests "Baa Baa Black Sheep (her favourite!)"

PEACE AT LAST!!

Julie Gibson, 67 Cope Street,
Leamore, Walsall, W. Midlands,
WS3 2AT.

Perhaps this could become a regular feature??

*Send your contributions to:
Paula Turner, 79 Kingshurst Way,
Kingshurst, Birmingham,
B37 6EB. Tel. (0121) 603 8673*

ANTHOLOGY OF HOME EDUCATION experiences

The beautiful poem by Richard Knight in the previous newsletter, and the consistently brilliant Educating Archie cartoons, spurred me on to start something that has been lurking in the back of my mind for some time - I would like to have published a collection of poems, short stories, cartoons, art work, jokes which reflect the wonders and benefits of home education, the nightmares and horrors of the schooling system, the potential for a wonderful, flexible 21st century education system, and the general varied lifestyles and experiences of home-educating families. I ask families, children and adults, who have home-educated, or who are currently home-educating, or who are considering home-education, and of course teachers who home-educate and see both sides of it all, to please let those creative impulses find expression, write a poem or a story or produce a picture or cartoon and send it to me for possible inclusion in this anthology. Imagine what such a book could do for Education Otherwise and the whole educational system if it could become a bestselling, much talked about book in Dillons, Waterstones, Puffin and Penguin bookstores....! Reviews in the Times Educational Supplement, interviews....! Fame and fortune for EO....

Well, you've got to have a dream!!

SO - let me have it! Long or short, new or old, from any and every age group, tear-jerking, hilarious, moving, inspiring, thought-provoking, thrilling, life-transforming, enlightening, or whatever. I would like to reflect a good balance of the numerous reasons which drive us to home-educate, the diversity of how we do it, and the outrageous success of it all (or otherwise?!). And the sooner the better, let's get this show on the road.

Contributions to: Anne Mills, Murton Way, Murton, York, YO1 3UJ. (01904) 488088

JUST A MOAN!

Why do all (or nearly all) adults assume that all EO children don't get out of bed before midday?! Often when Sophie says she's not in school, people say, "Oh you don't have to get up early then?" Well, perhaps that's the secret - they have to get up early for school or to see their kids off to school.

We choose to get up at 6.30 - 7.00 am because we have ponies to check, feed and cuddle! as well as chickens (we don't cuddle these, they object!), rabbit, dogs and cats to see to. Yes, some wet and dark mornings we do have a lie in till it's light in the winter, but nothing beats being in a sunlit field on the edge of the downs on a bright spring morning to "set the day up" - even if you're picking up dung! Ask Sophie where she'd rather be!!

Debs and Sophie Puttick, 8 Crossgates, Amberley, Arundel, W. Sussex.

GCSEs

Following the articles on GCSEs from home in issue no. 109, I'd just like to add my ha'penny'orth. As a distance learning tutor, I see the "other side" too. For a while, coursework looked like being a real problem for external students. However, the bigger correspondence colleges have produced new course material and negotiated with examining boards to ensure that external students can meet the coursework requirements. As a result, there is no need for EOers to shy away from a course just because it has a coursework component. But when enrolling with a college, as mentioned in the article last time, it is vital to make sure they have been accepted by the examining board either for marking or authentication of coursework.

This year, I'm glad to say, most students seem to have found coursework relatively straightforward. And from their experience, I've put together the following guidelines which I hope will be helpful to other GCSE and A-level students about to embark on coursework of their own. I hope these don't sound too basic, but my experience over the last few years suggests that these are the biggest pitfalls:

- * As soon as you get the course material, read through the coursework information carefully to ensure you know the submission dates, and write these down on the calendar. Don't leave things to the last minute. Many of the problems encountered this year were by students who left it too late to complete or submit coursework.
- * Make contact with your college tutor, if he or she doesn't contact you first, and stay in touch. A good tutor will remind you of any deadlines, and can help make coursework less fraught. (If you don't have a good tutor, then ask to change). One of my students this year contacted me for the first time two days after the final coursework submission date, and there was a small flurry of phone calls the week before from students who suddenly realised that they had left it too late! It's very disappointing for all concerned if the exam pass is needed for entry to a college or training course. Some students prefer to go it alone - that's fine, but where coursework is concerned, it's vital to maintain some sort of contact with your tutor, at least to let him or her know what your plans are.
- * If there is something you don't understand, either about exam enrolment generally, or the coursework, don't muddle on alone worrying - contact the college or your tutor and let them sort it out, after all, that's what you paid for! Exams and course work generate a lot of needless worry, when often the problem can be straightened out by a single phone call!

- * Remember, at the end of the day, completing course work will take a little bit of the pressure off when it comes to exam time - you can go into that exam-room knowing that you already have a few per cent under your belt.

Good luck!

Linda Jackson, 14 Bethel Street, Barnoldswick, Colne, Lancs, BB8 5EH.

CONTACTS

Anybody out there like a mummy for a penpal? I've got two girls ages 4 and 2. Chris (my better half?) works shift work in Bristol, so we don't see him as often as we'd like. We're trying to sell our house and move to that sort of area. But in the meantime, I'd love someone to drop me a line or two. Hope to hear from you soon. TTFN.

Julie Gibson, 67 Cope Street, Leamore, Walsall, West Midlands, WS3 2AT.

Last autumn, I put a note in the newsletter asking EOers in the Burnley/Colne/Skipton area to get in touch if they were interested in meeting up, either as a one-off or regularly. Unfortunately, by the time the newsletter went out I was laid up in hospital, so anyone phoning would have met with a rather overcrowded answering machine (which had collapsed totally by the time I returned home!) Apologies to anyone who did phone then. We would still really like to hear from you. EOers are rather thin on the ground in these parts. We are Linda Jackson, Harry (8), Ben (5) and George. (01282) 812449.

DON'T FORGET 'SPECIAL NEEDS' ISSUE (DEADLINE JUNE AND 'COMPUTERS' ISSUE (DEADLINE AUGUST)

"THE LATER YEARS"

I've taken on the task of re-writing "Later Years." I would like to contact EOers who have experience in Home Education of children aged 11-16 years. Please write to me - just send me your name and address if you're too busy to do more. I want to contact these people:

Parents who kept full-time responsibility for their children's education during ages 11 - 16

or

who had children at part-time school or college during ages 11 - 16

or

who had children who were out of school some of the time during ages 11 - 16

or

who had children at school full-time during ages 11 - 16 who had previously been home-educated some of the time.

Also

children or adults who were home-educated some or all of the time who are now over age 11.

I realise that many people in these categories may no longer be members of EO. Please help if you know anyone and can give me their names and addresses. Thanks.

Yvonne Muckle, 10 Warner Road, Hornsey, London N8 7HD.

ABOUT PRIVATE TUTORS...

With regard to Gwen Baldock's letter in the April issue, I would like to mention that from experience, as far as private tutors are concerned, they can, with the agreement of the given centre (school or college) set coursework and authenticate it as being the work of the pupil.

R. Freeborn, 4 North Fen Road, Helpringham, Sleaford, Lincs, NG34 ORR

CONGRATULATIONS!

Beverley and David Young's little daughter Xanthe was born on 27th April. Lots of love and congratulations to you, and to Cassie and Alexander from all your EO friends!

A NEW REPORT

I recently became aware, through Kirklees Education Authority, of a publication produced by EMIE (Education Management Information Exchange) and NFER (National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales). It is titled 'Education Otherwise': The LEA's role in Home Education' by Richard Bates. It is a 24 page report, dated February 1996, of the results of a questionnaire survey sent to all LEAs in England and Wales, of which 38 (35%) responded. The survey covered areas such as the provision of resources for home educators, guidelines for staff, official policies and responses to queries about home educating, relationships between LEAs and home-ed families and which staff are responsible for this area of the LEA's work. The results and conclusions have been sent to all LEAs, even those that did not respond. This may explain why some of you have been approached by your LEA re formulating a previously non-existent policy.

It may be possible for you to obtain a copy of the report from EMIE or from your own LEA who have been issued with a limited number of copies with permission to photocopy. If you have difficulty, I have a copy which I am willing to photocopy and send to interested EO members for the cost of photocopying and postage (probably £2.50 but it depends on the amount of interest). I have also spoken to the author of the report, EO member and education adviser Richard Bates, and he would be interested to hear your comments or queries about aspects of the report or difficulties you have experienced with your LEA. He can be contacted at: 22 Jackson Edge Road, Disley, Cheshire, SK12 2JL.
EMIE are at: The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 2DQ.

From Clare Murton Tel: (0113) 2690061

URGENT

Can anyone knowing V. Ingrams who was home educating in Bedfordshire or N. Buckinghamshire, please contact Joyce Moore on (01908) 562451 with her new contact details as soon as possible.

"THE LOWDOWN"

BBC TV "The Lowdown" would like to interview a young person who has been excluded from school and is now home educated, for a documentary in the Autumn. Contact Frankie Ingliss: (0181) 924 1243

LETTERS

Dear Education Otherwise,

I would be pleased to hear from anyone either directly or through EO newsletters on the following.

My son is nearly 8 years old. I took him out of school after one year. We have now been visited by the Assistant Education Officer (AEO) on two occasions.

In my correspondence with the LEA I have followed the form suggested by the EO handbook. On his first visit the AEO said he did not "do" a report. This, retrospectively, I now question.

My main problem lies in his insistence on "written evidence" from my son. I have stated that I do not insist on any specific work, as we follow a student led programme.

Whatever I tell him we have done, he sees a way in which I could contrive to obtain written evidence; a visit could be written about, a favourite project, a favourite story, etc, and the written work we have is not enough (to his mind).

In fact, so much time was spent discussing these possibilities in his one and a half hour visit, that I did not have a chance to say all that we had done!

I assume this is not a unique problem. How have other families dealt with this issue?

Ideally I would like to write to him before his next visit in July to avert any conflict before the visit.

With best wishes.

*J. Collins,
82 Cardinal Drive,
Kidderminster,
Worcs DY10 4RY.*

Dear Education Otherwise,

I've just joined EO and I've eagerly read my first newsletter with much interest. I am a single mum. My son Daniel is a knowledge-thirsty book-crazy 20 month old. Before becoming a mum I was a nanny and I'd like to get back into working again.

Does anyone know of a family out there needing a nanny? A family who would have similar interest in our alternative life-style (Home Education).

We are vegetarian and want to be around people who have a healthy respect for nature. Health issues such as healthy eating and the use of alternative medicine are what we're into, also astrology.

I have my NNEB, good references and my own car. I'm looking for a live-out position in North London, or a live-in position further afield. The right family is more important than the location, the right family being warm, fun and easy going - just like us.

All sorts of unusual child-care jobs considered! Many thanks.

**Miss Fiona Morgan,
12 Nighthawk,
Great Field, Grahame Park,
Colindale, London, NW9 5TY.
Tel. (0181 205 0265) after 7.00 pm.**

Dear Education Otherwise,

Having been a member of EO for about 2 years I'm finally taking the plunge with a son who is 4.5 years. The hitch (isn't there always one?) is that 2 months ago my husband joined the army and now here we are in Germany.

Is there anyone out there who can tell me about what I might expect from the forces education people? Military law? Anything I need to be forewarned of? Kindergarten is common but not required up to formal school age of 6 for Germans.

Is there any other way for him, and my 2.5 year old to break out of this very British society and learn

German? All help and advice gratefully received.

**Margaret Nock,
511 Ludwig Beck Strasse,
33104 Paderborn, Germany.
Tel. (0049) 05254 86159.**

Dear Friends,

I and several other parents in and around Cambridge have begun to meet together to discuss the spiritual, practical and educational ideas of Rudolph Steiner and how we can apply what is useful to a homeschooling situation. We have started to celebrate festivals together and (tentatively) plan to work closely together as a group in the future.

Any local EO families interested in this approach are welcome to get in touch and perhaps join in. Also, I'd very much like to hear from any families who have used, or who are using, Steiner's ideas in educating their children at home.

I hope to hear from anyone who has done this. Many thanks.
Yours sincerely,

**Donna Simmons
122 High Street,
Chesterton,
Cambridge, CB4 1NW,
Tel. (01223) 351851**

CHILDREN'S CORNER

I do not think that it is fair that the adult EO newsletter is a whole book and the children's section is only 4 pages. What do other children think? There is not much for me to read and I thought it was for children.

Samuel Bush, 60 Kinver Croft,
Balsall Heath, Birmingham,
BH12 9EH

When my son was editing the Children's Pages, he received the above letter. As there were many more contributions than he had room for, I decided to make some space for a few more in the main Newsletter.

I hope no-one minds. Perhaps making the Children's Pages bigger might be a good idea.??....Ed.

THE EARTH

The earth I pray
Will be OK.
If it is not
Then I will say
That oil
And torture
And even manslaughter
Have been growing every day.

ABERMORE

I like the sea
It's bright and blue,
Whenever I go for a visit.
There are lots of fish,
Seagulls too,
And tons and tons of limpets.

Down on the seashore,
I can hear the waves,
As I hunt for crabs and shells.
I search for fossils,
And maybe a stone,
Which I take back home.

It's never crowded,
And there's plenty of space,
To hear the echo around me.
The cliffs are high,
Almost reaching the sky,
And the clouds drift slowly
Above me.

Both the above poems were by:

Emilie Martin, Norfolk, Age 9.5
years



A BOOK REVIEW

GHOST TRAIN TO NOWHERE.

By Phil Roxbee Cox

Published in 1993 by Usborne as a "Spinechiller"

Ghost train to nowhere is full of exciting adventures as the children explore further. There are clues on each page, if you are clever you can work out what is going to happen. Alf and Chrissy hear cries for help. Can Alf and Chrissy help?

"Ghost Train to Nowhere" is full of excitement. There are clues on page 48. There are clues on each double page. The clues go with the story. The story is about a *ghost train*. Look at the pictures carefully. They might give you some clues. Look at the old documents.

My children ages 6 and 8 years read this book and recommend it to other EO children to read.

S. Felton, Leatside, 3 Rivervale Close, Chagford, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ13 8LA

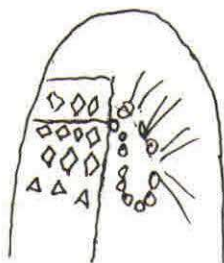
The Treasure Hunt

Once upon a time there was a frog called Leaper, and one day he was at the seaside. He saw a cave and he thought he might go and look for treasure.

So he went in, and he hunted and hunted, and suddenly he felt quite lost.

Then he saw something glitter. IT WAS THE TREASURE!! And when he went home he discovered that he was RICH!!

by Mary MacGregor, Inverness



EDUCATING ARCHIE BY SEU

The peace of a late Monday in Spring is shattered by a screech-



READING
MUM:
I'M READING
A BOOK.



ARCHIE T-SHIRTS FOR SALE (ADS)

UNDER 16 COLLEGE ADMISSION

Many thanks to those of you who responded to my appeal for information in the December newsletter.

The good news is that for many EO children, Further Education Colleges provide a route to GCSE, GNVQ, BTEC or other recognised qualifications, and this appears to be working well in most areas.

The snag in this set-up is the question of funding and at present there is no consistent policy on this matter.

I have found several members willing to pass on their experiences by speaking to families wishing to take the college route. These people are:-

Alison Preuss	Dundee	(01382) 646964
Stephanie Fitcher	Derbyshire	(01246) 239048
Katherine Whitfield	Buckinghamshire	(01296) 28729
Nicky Simmons	Yorkshire	(01924) 469892
Valerie Gommon	Buckinghamshire	(01908) 511247

If your name isn't on this list and you would be willing to share your experiences, please do get in touch so that I can add your name to the list.

Valerie Gommon, 19 New Road, Castlethorpe, Milton Keynes,
MK19 7EH Tel. (01908) 511247

SECOND HOME-EDUCATION WEEKEND AT BRAMBLES RESOURCE CENTRE 14th-15th September

A weekend of workshops, events and discussion around many different aspects of Home-Education

Children's events and activities

Bonfire and social on Saturday evening

For more information, price or to book a place
please contact Jane or Emma at

Brambles Resource Centre,

82 Andover Street,

Burngreave,

Sheffield, S3 9EH

Phone: (0114) 2797164

HAVE FAITH IN PSYCHOLOGISTS ?

In EO's publication "School is not Compulsory" it is mentioned that self-assertion classes might help children who are being bullied.

My 13 year old daughter had been bullied at school by both pupils and teachers, and due to this, coupled with other family problems, refused to go to school. To help try and improve matters, my doctor recommended we seek the help of our local NHS Trust psychologist.

Although I have never had much faith in psychologists or psychiatrists, I was willing to try this course of action to help our family.

Firstly, the psychologist recommended that both my children be physically forced back to school (something we had already tried many times and which soon became physically impossible) and he added that this could perhaps be achieved by:-

1. Turning off the central heating in the house.
2. Refusing to teach them anything at home.
3. Accepting physical help from the Education Welfare Assistant.

He also mentioned that a self-assertion class for teenagers was available at his clinic which might be of benefit to my 13 year old daughter in regaining her confidence. When I enquired as to when she would be able to attend these classes, he said that she would only attend once she had returned to school!

Sue North, 'Quince Cottage', 30 Oswald Road, Moordown, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH9 2TQ. Tel: (01202) 525011.

ADVANCE NOTICE OF SEPTEMBER EO MEETING/GATHERING

**Weekend of Friday 6th - Sunday 8th September
at Caldecotte Centre, Milton Keynes
Sleeping for 30 (beds)
Plenty of camping space
For more info see to:
Valerie Gommon,
19 New Road,
Castlethorpe, MK19 7EH.**

CAMBRIDGESHIRE LOCAL REPORT

As the new Cambridgeshire (Acting, I think) Regional Coordinator, it's amazed me at how many enquiries I've gotten; (this has increased since I sent the local Education Welfare Officer some EO literature and my phone number). I fortunately have the support of some "old timers" in the area as my children are very young and I can offer parents of older children little other than enthusiasm, friendliness, and memorised passages from "School Is Not Compulsory!"

Things seem very lively in Cambridgeshire, with the bulk of families concentrated either in or around Cambridge and Peterborough. If any member in Peterborough reading this would like to be the contact for Peterborough, I'd be grateful if you'd let me know.

Also, if families near Cambridgeshire would like contact with families in Cambridgeshire or come to any events organised in Cambridge, please get in touch. I've organised a local contact list and can see no reason why nearby families in Suffolk, Essex, Herts and Norfolk who would like to be included, shouldn't be.

There are, at present, some coordinated activities taking place amongst groups of HS families in Cambridge. Some of the families do things together as Christians. And the group I am working with uses Rudolf Steiner's educational ideas and practices as a basis for coming together. Anyone interested in the latter group, please get in touch.

Throughout the summer, starting on 7th June, all HS families are invited to picnics on Jesus Green in Cambridge, every Friday from 12.00 to 3.00, weather permitting. No particular group (not even EO!) is hosting these picnics, and all Home Schoolers are very welcome.

Donna Simmons, Tel: (01223) 351851
122 High Street,
Chesterton, Cambridge, CB4 1NW.

ANYONE IN CAITHNESS?

If there are any other EOers in Caithness, then it would be nice to hear from you.

The Mackays, Braevalle, Bower, by Wick, KW1 4TP. (01955) 641252.

Can you help?

- *EO gets up to 200 enquiries a week from people interested in becoming members.*

Could you join our team of enquiries secretaries?

- *We need someone to deal with forms from new members in northwest England.*

Could you join our team of membership secretaries?

- *Are you home educating a child with special educational needs? We need more people to share their experience and solutions.*

Could you join our team of special needs contacts?

- *Has your child obtained a place at college before reaching age 16? Is your child doing, or has (s)he done, GCSEs at home?*

Could you share your experience in either of these areas with other members?

- *EO is constantly being asked for names of home educating families by newspapers, magazines, TV and radio. The more publicity we get, the more people find out about the right to educate 'otherwise'.*

May we add your name to a list of families who are willing to be approached by the media?*

- *We are revising and expanding our list of museums etc. offering free admission or price reductions to EO member families.*

Do you have any local information and/or can you negotiate local concessions?

If you feel you can help in any of these ways, please write to:

**Valerie Gommon, 19 New Road, Castlethorpe,
MILTON KEYNES, Bucks, MK19 7EH**

Education Otherwise has no paid staff. All those who undertake work do it voluntarily. We need more people to spread the load!

Thank you...

to everyone doing a job on behalf of EO!

*Please give brief details of your family and mention any particular experience such as bullying, exclusion or school refusal.

CONTRIBUTING TO EO

Every home-educating family can contribute to furthering EO's effectiveness. In all aspects of EOing it seems that a little really does go further!

'In-house' efforts can range

- from keeping a leaflet/handbill (available from Lucy Charlton, 'Publications', Leics) in each local library, CAB or other information board;
- to arranging a stall at a local fair or green festival;
- from welcoming a newcomer or enquirer person to person;
- to jointly building up local groups with contact/activities/ resources/ concessions/venues and support expertise, together;
- from writing an item for a newsletter (or a game for the children's);
- to offering to collate or edit a newsletter, a supplement or one of the new special interest information leaflets;
- from volunteering time and experience/expertise to respond as contacts, eg for Special Needs or School Phobia;
- to becoming co-workers in the wider organisational structure as Co-ordinators, Enquiries or Membership Secretaries, or in other more 'Specialist' roles;
- from informing and encouraging;
- to offering concrete support in relations with LEAs, colleges and other statutory bodies locally (and liaising nationally).

For 'Outside-house' demands

- Bev Young (Publicity, Lincs) especially would love to hear from clear-headed, media 'aware' families, confident of their EOing base, who can be available 'yesterday'!
- Or contact Frankie Inglis, Essex, tel: 0181 924 1243 who is covering whilst Bev's new baby is so young, (not small I hear!)
- Families are also needed occasionally to be interviewed by researchers, often for GCSE students' coursework or education students' discourses. (Angie Targett, Research Secretary, Sheffield, would welcome you.)

Able and interested?

Please do contact relevant work Co-ordinator/Secretary - listed at the back of newsletters.

It is always useful in a fluid, far-flung, democratic, voluntary organisation to have new people coming up 'knowing the ropes'.

Doing your bit always proves educational, and can even be fun! The more people (who) put in their acorn-ful, the more EO's benefits will develop and spread for everyone.

EO is everyone, and it works!

(This is, of course, written by a soon-to-retire-from-active-service member, who has singularly failed to keep her local library notice in evidence!)

Membership Secretaries process applications to join EO (and enquiries about membership) and supply new members with a welcoming, individually helpful written response with their 'package' of news and information.

They form one of EO's networks which aim to spread the workload of 'organisational' and 'communications' necessities and lead to improved regional liaison.

There is a Membership Secretary vacancy for the North-West of England right now, and it would not come amiss to hear from members in every other area too, (and that includes you folk in London!) who think they might be able to consider helping/taking over in the future when someone needs/wants to step down.

(Illnesses sadly do happen - get better, Maxine, and well done for still managing to get your South-East work covered despite everything, thanks to Anne Rix and Lorraine Piercy).

Waiting to hear from you:

Maggie Swatridge (Membership Secretaries' Co-ordinator)
32 Carey Park, Polperro, Looe, Cornwall, PL13 2JP. Tel (01503) 272087)

Special Needs - urgent

We would be grateful if 'special needs families' would contribute by:-

- i) writing/forwarding information for the new information leaflets as soon as possible, eg re your area of concern or expertise.
We need to cover all our disabilities and illness(es);
- ii) providing items for inclusion in the special needs supplement of the August newsletter (June 30th deadline);
- iii) volunteering to become contacts for different areas of experience, and regions, in our support network.

Please send your contributions/news to:-
Hilary Mason (Special Needs Co-ordinator),
2 Fairless Avenue, Lightcliff, Halifax, W. Yorks, HX3 8XH.
Tel: (01422) 202252)

School Phobia contacts and potential Enquiries Secretaries

Similarly, Eileen Wilson (Enquiries Secretaries' Co-ordinator, Staffs) would appreciate back-up and future 'Enquiries' people to get in touch, and she would like more so called 'school phobia' contacts so that EO has a network to support families more locally. (I believe 80+% of enquiries involves such troubled children so this is a life-saving contribution).

Coordinators' Update

The following regions are looking for a new coordinator:-

Cheshire	Gwynedd	Pembrokshire	Grampian
Dumfries & Galloway	Kent	Surrey	Northumbria
Central Devon	Lincolnshire	Tayside	
Glamorgan	London West/ Middex	Nottinghamshire	

The following areas have new acting coordinators:-

Derbyshire	Trevor Denyer	01629 56609	North Manchester	Karen Moore	01204 573136
Hertfordshire	Judy Jones	01279 757456	South Manchester	Julie Ridley	0161 860758

Vacancies

EO is looking for suitable people to take over as

**DATABASE SECRETARY
GENERAL SECRETARY**

For information on either of these jobs, please contact

**Val Gommon (Acting General Secretary)
19 New Road
Castlethorpe
Milton Keynes
Bucks MK19 7EH**

LOST & FOUND

**AT THE MAY GATHERING IN KENT
LOST**

**red diablo; Ramai wants it back very much
01797 260224**

FOUND

**silver chain bracelet
01233 820385**

**purple and green jacket with 'natures
defence' on the back
01797 260224**

The theme of the October issue of the newsletter will be COMPUTERS

Please write in with **SOFTWARE REVIEWS**, advise on **BUYING A PC**, experiences with the **INTERNET**, views on **COMPUTER GAMES**.

Are computers now an essential part of every child's education or have they taken the place of making and doing? Whatever your experience, share it with other home educators.

Anne Mills, Waverley, Murton Way, Murton, York YO1 3UJ 01904 488088
Deadline August 1st.

REGIONAL DIARY

Berkshire

Ice skating on Wednesdays at 1 pm.
Free lesson at 1.30 pm. £1.50 per
skater including skate hire and
lesson. JOHN NIKE ICE RINK,
BRACKNELL.
Pat Connor (01734) 662123.

Buckinghamshire

We have an active and enthusiastic
local group based in N.Bucks as
well as fortnightly trampolining and
ice skating sessions in Milton
Keynes. We meet for other
social/educational events at least
once a week. For our local
newsletter, send an sae to Joyce
Moore, 31 Hepleswell, Two Mile
Ash, Milton Keynes, MK8 8LU.
For events info call Joyce on
(01908) 562451.
For other EO enquiries call
Georgeanne Scott on
(01908) 662256.

Clwd, W.Cheshire, N.Shropshire, N.Powys

Group meets at least weekly for
socialising, outings and activities.
For current listing send sae (or £3
for full year) to Genny Bove, Rock
Cottage, 49 Westminster Road,
Moss Valley, Wrexham, Clwyd,
LL11 6DH.

Cornwall

Please send an sae to the co-
ordinator, Anna Wheeler,
Cambrose Farm, Redruth,
TR16 4HT or phone for list of
weekly events. (01209) 890378. If
you have any issues you want to
discuss, do contact Anna.

Dorset

DORSET MEMBERS PLEASE NOTE

The Dorset LEA is hoping to
subscribe to the newsletter shortly
as a means to learning about and
keeping in touch with home
education. They will not, of course,
receive a contact list. If you write
an item for the newsletter but do
not want your name and address
printed, ask for it to be withheld.
If you want any more information
about this, or anything else, contact
Christine Adey (01258) 880355.

Kent

All welcome at Friend's Meeting
House, Union Street, Maidstone,
first and third Monday in the month
11.15 to 4 pm for activities, themes
and social contact. Also other
events. Please contact Sue Tully
(01322) 664373 or Amanda
McKenzie (01634) 402154 for
details. For events list contact Jean
Searle (01892) 836436.

London

The Building Experiences Trust will be coming to the Otherwise Club to do a morning and afternoon workshop. The children will be involved in "intense construction activities" based on Ancient Egypt and the making of the pyramids. It is aimed at the 8-13 year olds.

Wednesday 18th September
9.45 am.

Bring a packed lunch.

Carlton Centre, Granville Road,
London NW6.

There are limited spaces available and the final price will depend on numbers taking part, but the most likely price will be £7.

To secure a place, please send £5 to Jo Jenkins, 25 Lincoln Road,
London N2 9DJ or phone for more details on: (0181) 883 8052.

N. Manchester/Lancashire

Please send 2 sae's for details of forthcoming events to:

Jenny Paddon, 63 Doyle Road,
Bolton, BL3 4SA.

N. Yorkshire

For details of events, please phone Anne Mills on (01904) 488088.

Scotland

Campsite available for EO members 24th, 25th, 26th June. Eglinton Country Park, Irvine, Ayrshire. Free. Anyone interested? Day visitors welcome.
Phone Claire Young on (01294) 218562 after 7.30 pm.

South West Wales

Saturday 6th July EO Get-Together at Brithdir Mawr, Newport, Nr Cardigan. Bring food to share, camp overnight. Ring (01239) 820164 Emma and Julian Orbach.

Suffolk

We meet every three weeks. Phone Sarah Guthrie on (01379) 783 678 for details.

Surrey

Guildford get-together group meets fortnightly for walks and educational visits in and around the Guildford area. Please contact Lynn Ryan on (01483) 50397 or Penny Meader on (01483) 481882.

Sussex

Sussex now has a weekly drop-in club as well as many other activities. Ring Isobel Bogucki on (01403) 261178.

Warwickshire

June - Thursday 13th at 10.30 am
Social gathering at Trish Archer's
home. Contact (01203) 422575.

July - Thursday 4th at 10.30 am.
Visit to Brandon Marsh Nature
Reserve. Contact Sue Cardus
(01203) 543801.

August - Saturday 10th at 11 am.
Picnic at Burton Dassett Country
Park. Good for kite flying. Meet at
the car park nearest to the beacon.
Contact Alison Cox (01926)
613619

W.Midland

Monthly meetings in Birmingham
Central Library and Walsall Central
Library. Ongoing programme of
visits.

Local newsletter available for 2 x
first class stamps.

Ring Paula (0121) 603 8673 or
Julie (01922) 442815

West Yorkshire

Monthly parent and child meetings
on the last Thursday of every month
11 am until 1.30 pm at the Child
Guidance Centre, Civic Centre,
Huddersfield. This is where we
organise trips and activities, chat,
swap ideas and make friends.

Please phone: (01484) 846946
Diane or (01132) 690061 Clare.
In addition, some members in the
Bradford area go swimming in
Shipley every Tuesday morning.
Please phone:
(01274) 488657 Julia

DONCASTER MULTICULTURAL SWAP

Thursday 4th July, 11am - 6 pm

EXHIBITION OF NATIONAL AND LOCAL EDUCATIONAL SUPPLIERS

**Multicultural Education Centre,
Prospect Place, Doncaster.
Tel: (01302) 327235**

Keep the contributions coming in!
EO really needs YOUR input for
the Newsletter.
Deadline for the next issue is
July 1st.

ADVERTISEMENTS

WISE OWL SOFTWARE

01235-529808 Free catalogue & advice
32 Charney Ave, Abingdon. OX14 2NY
Disks from £2.00 each or six for £10.00

The only UK children's shareware library, established 1991. Specialising in games and educational titles, ages 2-16. Vast selection (600+ titles) for all types IBM compatibles including: monochrome graphics, no hard disk, low memory, 5¼" or 3½" media, Windows, CD ROM, etc. We can find something to suit your child. Useful applications for parents and teachers also covered. Easy to use disks - ideal for beginners. Prices include post & packing. Telephone enquiries welcome.

NEW THIS MONTH!!

Educational shareware CD Rom v3 200 titles, 2-adult.
£17.50 \$ Who Discovered Australia? maps, pics, info. £3.00 \$ KinderCarton 30 activities, 3-7yr. £3.00 \$ Fractions, Decimals, Percentages ages 9+ £2.00 \$ Substance abuse reference guide £9.00 \$ Total Concepts Solar System £5.00 \$ Plus special prices on Windows disks & clipart. Details in our free catalogue.

ALL ORDERS SENT BY 1ST CLASS POST



NEWSLETTER FOR JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES WHO HOME EDUCATE THEIR CHILDREN

For a free copy please send an A4 SAE (25p stamp) to:

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Surrey RH6 7AH

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Award winning publisher of books and CD ROM, offers ideal part time earning opportunities for home - educating parents. A business you can operate from home, choosing your own hours. For free information pack, phone EO member and home educator, Sharon Emmott on 01227 830630 Or 01727 848836



SERVICES AND PRODUCTS ADVERTISED HERE HAVE NOT BEEN ENDORSED BY EDUCATION OTHERWISE

ADVERTISEMENTS

PROJECT COASTLINE. Innovative learning material available to home educators. Twenty-six weekly newsletters plus over 100 photographs take the learner around the English Coastline with sections on history and geography plus information and follow-up work. Useful for Maths and English. Useable within the national curriculum but provides a far broader knowledge base.

For information: Project Coastline, 148A Clements Road, Ramsgate, Kent, CT12 6UG.

NORMANDY, FRANCE. Family activity breaks. An opportunity for parents and children to experience life on an organic family smallholding, to relax and share creative play together in a tranquil rural setting. Full vegetarian board in cosy accommodation.

Also self-catering cottage to let. From 900FF a week.

Tel Gill on 010 33 31 68 27 20 for brochure.

COTTAGE TO RENT. Unfurnished 2 Bedroom mid-terrace cottage in St Dogmaels, Cardigan, West Wales. Long let available. Village setting, near to beach. Lovely unspoilt area. Phone for details.

Mrs Ellis (01902) 632298.

COMPUTER SOFTWARE. Please has anyone got any software suitable for oldish Einstein computer (on 3 inch disk) inherited from kind friends.

Sophie is 9 years old but it will be used by all the family if we can get some more software for it. Wordprocessor? Any info desperately needed.

(01798) 831588.

Advertising in the newsletter is free, but if you are running a business or hoping to profit from your advert, please send an appropriate donation. (Cheques should be made payable to 'Education Otherwise'). Remember that EO is run entirely by volunteers and has no income except members' subscriptions.

Adverts should be limited to 50 words, and sent (with any donation) to the editor of the next issue. First time advertisers who wish to send artwork should contact the newsletter co-ordinator.

**SERVICES AND PRODUCTS ADVERTISED HERE HAVE NOT
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Tel: 01631 565551

Hilary & David Mason: Yorkshire

Tel: 01422 202252

Elaine Slade: West Country

Tel: 01643 707535

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Stationery

EO stationery, leaflets, posters, membership forms,
car stickers and re-use labels (£2.50 per 100) are
available from Lucy Charlton (see above).

Publications

The following books can be obtained from **Chris
Harper**, Badgers Holt, Birehwood, Storridge,
Malvern, Worcs, WR13 5HA (01886 884740),
The Abuse of Care and Custody Orders

<i>Pat Knox</i>	£3
<i>Troubled Children</i>	Pat Knox £3
<i>Learning from Home-Based Education</i>	Roland Meighan £3
<i>Early Years</i>	£2.50
<i>Newsletter Digest ('82-'86)</i>	£1.50
<i>EO Newsletters (4 back issues)</i>	£1.20
UK postage and packing	£1

education otherwise

Education Otherwise is a membership organisation which provides support and information for families whose children are being educated outside school, and for those who wish to uphold the freedom of families to take proper responsibility for the education of their children.

Our principal aims are to:

- encourage learning outside the school system;
- reaffirm that parents have the primary responsibility for their children's education and that they have the right to exercise this responsibility by educating them out of school;
- establish the primary right of children to have full consideration given to their wishes and feelings about their education.

For further information send an A5 s.a.e. to:

P.O. BOX 7420
LONDON N9 9SG
HELPLINE 0891 518303

(calls charged at 39p minute evenings and weekends, 49p minute all other times.
Average call length, 1-2 minutes)

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