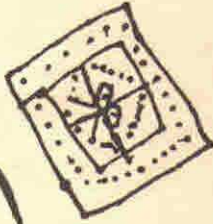


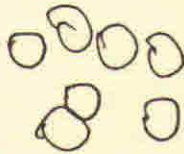
Education



otherwise

Newsletter 125

December 1998



THE NEXT ISSUE

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The Deadline for Contributions is:
1st January 1999

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

The Performing Arts
February '99, deadline 1st January

Experiences of Children's Self Directed Learning
April '99, deadline 1st March

Please share your experiences and expertise with other members and send your contributions as soon as possible to:

Michael Allen
71 Belgrave Rd, Loughor, Swansea
West Glamorgan SA4 6RF

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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
JUNE '99 ISSUE ONWARDS.

Messages from The Editors

Hello. I am Barbara Kay, one of the editors. I have had the fun of talking to many different contributors, and opening the post, not to mention the interest (?) of laying out the magazine, while Anne and Mark have been slogging away with the typing and files. Our family comprises Kicki, Steve and myself. We believe in unschooling, love John Holt, try our best to be non-coercive towards everyone, and hope that we are giving Kicki the best pos-

sible start in life we can. However, you will see later in this magazine that our lives are in turmoil just now. We follow the path trusting where it will lead. A special thank you to Bill for late night duty. Enjoy the articles, and ... Merry Christmas one and all!

Barbara Kay, 41 Dundas Gardens,
East Molesey, Surrey KT8 1RX
barbara@bmail.demon.co.uk

We are Tristan, Anne and Mark Bedish. We have been committed to home(un)schooling since Tristan was five months old when we met some homeschoolers via La Leche League and were captivated by their way of life and ideas about education and children: their children seemed to be really enjoying their lives and learning as compared to other children, and it seemed to be as much due to their unschooling as to their child-centered parenting skills. Over nine years later

we are still captivated.

Tristan does, as John Holt says, learn all the time. So do we! He loves reading, in particular amusing stories, playing computer games of all kinds, writing small computer programs, improvising on the piano, playing with friends of all ages and thinking a lot; he knows dozens of obscure and interesting facts about animals, birds, fungi, clouds and many more things than we can ever remember. He does not attend any

continued overleaf

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Cover design by Tristan Bedish and Kicki Spencer-Kay

Messages from the Editors

clubs, classes or groups, he doesn't want to. We visit museums, the

Discovery Zone and the new Earth Lab at the Natural History Museum are favourites at the moment and Tristan likes to engage the staff there in long conversations. We listen to music, visit art galleries, watch television together, especially nature programmes, some schools programmes and Star Trek, play with games, toys, kits and various paraphernalia, go to the Zoo and Kew Gardens, visit historic places, see plays and talk and talk and talk.

It sounds idyllic. It is. No difficulties? Yes. Sometimes, we worry, when we're feeling negative, and mostly about whether Tristan will be able to earn a living in a way that he can enjoy when he's grownup (Tristan, currently over my

Continued from overleaf

shoulder, tells me that he is going to write the best computer action game in the world!). We then remember all the things that Tristan has done so far; more importantly, we reflect on how happy and content he is doing just what he is doing with his life and we renew our faith in him to do what is right for himself which, we believe, will build a strong foundation for his adulthood.

It has been very interesting being involved with the production of this newsletter; I hope you all enjoy reading it and have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Anne Bedish 6 Tonbridge Road, West Molesey, Surrey, KT8 2EL

email: anne@bedish.demon.co.uk

The Annual General Meeting
of
Education Otherwise Association Ltd
will be held at
Kingfisher Barn, Abingdon, Oxon
on
Saturday 6 February 1999, at 2.30 p.m.

The business of the AGM is to consider the accounts, to receive reports from the officers, to elect members to the Council of Management, and to appoint auditors.

The number of Council members is set at between 14 and 19. As at November 1998 there are 16 members in post (see inside back cover).

At the forthcoming AGM, six Council members must retire, but may seek re-election. The Council may recommend other candidates for election. Registered members (i.e. guarantors) of EO may also propose candidates. In this case, written notice from the proposer and signed consent from the candidate (who must also be a registered member) must both reach the **general secretary** no earlier than January 8th and no later than February 1st. In the event of a vote at the AGM, registered members personally present are entitled to take part provided they have paid their subscription.

If you wish to become a registered member (guarantor) of EO please write to the **general secretary** as soon as possible, enclosing an SAE or return address label with stamp.

In addition to the AGM, an **open Council meeting** will start at 10.00a.m. and will continue after the AGM if necessary. If you have an item for the agenda, please let me know as soon as possible.

All EO members are welcome to attend both meetings.

Lucy Charlton, *General Secretary*

2 Wistow Road, Newton Harcourt, Leics. LE8 9FT (0116 2592118)

Special Needs Section

Understanding the World

I work in a special school with deaf/blind children. To help these children make sense of the world a number of methods are used, one of them being 'objects of reference'.

These are everyday objects that are assigned a special meaning. These objects can be used to represent people, activities, places or times. For example, a particular person can be identified by a particular badge, necklace or bracelet. As long as these objects are worn consistently the child knows when she sees/feels this object she is dealing with the same person.

The same can be done with activities, e.g. a cup to represent a drink. Once a child has a grasp of various activities the objects of reference can be arranged in sequence to create a timetable for the morning, day, week, etc. And consequently the child can make choices about activities, places, etc.

This is a very brief outline of this method of communication. A more detailed outline can be found in 'Objects of Reference' by Adam Ockleford, published by RNIB.

As I have mentioned I use this system with children who have, or are being assessed for, hearing and visual impairment. However, there is a much wider group who have difficulties in 'understanding the world' and communicating choice who I feel objects of reference could be useful for.

Gavin Smith, Halesowen

No Other Choice

I am the mother of a 'globally allergic' child. Alan is 13 years old and attends the Royal Homeopathic Hospital in Great Ormond Street every 8-12 weeks. He was educated in an ordinary primary set up but all hell broke loose when he entered secondary school. Even though the school (of our choice) was informed at great length about his condition it soon became apparent that the whole environment was detrimental to his health.

So we withdrew Alan from school and started to educate him at home. His health, both physical and mental, immediately improved. We battled with the LEA to gain recognition for his condition and they eventually allocated him Special Needs Level 2 - nowhere near good enough for his needs. In my opinion a school is a glorified babysitting service and after much deliberation we decided to home educate all our children.

Amongst other things, Alan is allergic to: Stemitil, Aspirin, Ibuprofen, Penicillin, In-tal, Ventolin, citrus fruits, dairy products, gluten, caramel, all "E" numbers, furniture polish, gloss paint, hair spray, white board marker - the list is exhausting. He is also violently allergic to that friendly soul the house dust mite. My career is on hold so I can be Alan's specialist. I would love to hear from anyone who has similar problems.

For me the terms Education Otherwise, alternative, radical, autonomy and liberty are actually normality. There is no alternative for us and Alan is happy at home. A simple equation -

Special Needs Section *continued from overleaf*

a happy child equals a happy parent.
Marion Johnson, 6 Otway Street, Gillingham, ME7 1EU
01634 300872

Special Needs, - Patience, Tolerance and Understanding

Sometimes a child's special needs are limited to a need for a special understanding and tolerance of their personal limitations, something which - in my experience- is sadly lacking in the majority of mainstream schools today.

When my son started school at four years old, his deafness was not generally apparent as he had become quite an accomplished lip reader. Indeed, it did not become obvious until he was physically assaulted by a teacher because of his 'defiance' to respond to the whistle which marked the end of playtime.

His lack of co-ordination and dexterity was not recognised as mild dyspraxia, which requires little more than help and encouragement to improve, but merely as clumsiness and stupidity.

It takes only a little extra patience and understanding to improve considerably the quality of life for a special needs child, something that many people would be well advised to remember.

Pam Simone, Stevenage

One of the family

I am the mother of six children, aged between fourteen years and 21 months. Antonio, aged 8 years, is my special needs child. He is very profoundly disabled. He is blind, partially

deaf, has to be fed by nasal tube - he does not understand anything and gets very upset and frightened. He also suffers daily epileptic fits.

He was born normal and started having fits after his first routine vaccinations at the age of three and a half months. He had up to 60 fits every day. He did not receive the appropriate medication and suffered severe brain damage. He has never been to school. I do get tired but I see no reason for respite care. Antonio is one of the family and deserves to be with us just like any other of our children.

Social services were very difficult over us not sending Antonio to school. It does not make any difference. Antonio has a short life and I intend to make the best of it - he goes donkey riding and has my constant love and attention. I do not see how he could be better off in school. I have been to special schools where they tie their arms to the wheelchairs. It is unbelievable.

If anyone would like to write to me they are most welcome.

Denise Harris, 92 South Road, Birmingham, B23 6EJ
0121 384 6935

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome - Misunderstood Special Need

We are:

Amy (17), scientific, artistic, carer of mum

John (48), computer consultant, boffin, reference point, earner

Pennie (mind your own), trained teacher, basic skills tutor

David (14) mechanical, dyspraxic, dyslexic, a real charmer

Special Needs Section *continued*

We all have chronic fatigue syndrome. I, Pennie, in addition, have spinal cord compression in my neck causing partial paralysis and am therefore disabled now.

Having CFS means:

- being too tired to hold a pen, lift a cup to your lips, walk
- always catching every infection going, sore throats etc
- that the effort of getting up in the morning and getting ready to go out is all that can be managed without a rest

- every expenditure of energy, mental, emotional or physical must be paid for five times over. For example, a day out and about on Monday means that the rest of the week is wiped out

- aches, pains, burning, stinging, jumping muscles. Just when you need to sleep you can't

- not being believed - not by teachers or doctors

- being sent to a child psychologist who threatens to take you back to school herself

- accusations of laziness, school phobia, bullying, excuses for under-achievement and the rest

- a young person robbed of their childhood, an adult denied a normal life

- the loss of friends through fear, lack of understanding and compassion, laziness, forgetfulness

How can a child be expected to carry on going to school under these conditions? Amy managed to cut her GCSEs in half and got those. She is now studying for three more, and A Level Maths via the Open Learning Centre while looking after me. David was placed in a special needs class when he was able to attend and was accused of making a mess of the school's league tables. He is now studying at home, mostly trying to overcome his control and organisational difficulties and improve his basic skills. John is only able to work part-time and I am on incapacity benefit. Life is hard; money is short. We have had no help or advice from any quarter, friends, family or official, apart from the EO newsletter. We are, however, better off than before we discovered home education as help and advice usually carries conditions and outside pressures we can well do without. We'd form a support group but we haven't the time!

Pennie Pickard, Rochdale

Frances Howard

For a number of years Frances was co-ordinator for Hertfordshire. She did much work in arranging meetings and support for local families, and gave a lot of her time and energy to EO. Sadly, Frances died in August and I received the news too late to include in the last newsletter. A condolence card was sent to Frances' family on behalf of EO members.

Sandie Cottee (Co-ordinator for Essex)

“The children aren’t in school today ... ?”

Those who are new to home education often worry about how to respond to doctors, health visitors, shop assistants and others who think it is their business to ask why the children are not in school. It depends, of course, on whether the parent wants to give answers which will finish the conversation quickly or engage in a long discussion about the benefits of school vs. home education.

In situations in which I do not feel inclined to engage in a prolonged conversation, my approach is to give the most boring and reassuring (but true) answers I can think of, rather than to hit the questioner with mind-boggling ideas that might make them think that my children should be taken into care right away! Here are some examples of such answers, all delivered in a matter-of-fact way with a reassuring, confident and friendly smile:

“The children aren’t in school today?”

“No, they are home educated.”

“That must be a lot of work for you!” **“Yes, it is not for everyone; it requires a lot of commitment.”** It does require commitment to one’s children’s education, whether one follows the school approach or not. It would give entirely the wrong impression to answer that it is not a lot of work at all, because the questioner will take that to mean that you are merely condoning truancy, and that you don’t care about your children’s education, which is not true, is it?

“Are there many others who do this?” “Oh yes, there are tens of thousands nationwide, and there are many families in this area, which is nice for the children.” The purpose of this answer is to reassure them that your children are not isolated from society, otherwise they might jump to the mistaken conclusion that you are a crank or a child abuser.

“And what lessons are they having today?” **“Oh, you know - all the usual things. And now we really must get back to it.”** If you don’t want to spend the next three hours correcting the misconception that will result from replying “We don’t do lessons,” interpret the question as “What educational things will you be doing with them today?”

It might be worth translating what you are doing into school subjects. The more boring it sounds the better. This is not lying, any more than stating that the children are learning autonomously would be. For that would be interpreted as “These children are not being educated at all” which is not the case, is it? On the contrary, home educators care very much about their children’s education, or they would leave it all to schools as others do. So consider what meaning the questioner will attach to the various possible answers you could give, and give the one that will give the least inaccurate impression.

“But what about socialisation?”

“Oh, they have many friends and get on well with people of all

"The Children aren't in School Today...?" *Continued*

ages."

This is a more reassuring and non-confrontational than the one about socialisation being a good reason not to send children to school, school society teaching children to bully and humiliate others.

"But how will you tackle the sciences?"

"Well, we have a variety of catalogues of scientific instruments, science education suppliers, and we can buy chemicals through an Organisation we belong to. Many home educators do science examinations through correspondence courses or colleges. It isn't a Problem at all. And, being on the internet, we have access to an enormous amount of exper-

tise in this and other areas."

"Don't you get sick of them?"

"No, I'm used to it and we get on very well."

"Well young man, can you tell me what change your mummy should get from this five pound note?"

"Er, testing is not allowed!"

Some children enjoy turning to their parents and asking

"Why is she talking to me in that patronising tone? I'm not a performing seal you know, I'm an auto didact!"

The younger the child the more stunned the questioner (who probably has no idea what 'autodidact' is anyway) will be.

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Taking Education Seriously

One characteristic that the TCS approach shares with conventional educational theory is that both take education seriously. Education takes priority. This is good. Indeed, there is only one thing wrong with the conventional view: it classifies as 'education' things that are largely irrelevant to, and often tragically destructive of, the genuine growth of knowledge and creativity in the minds of the young. But while rejecting those efforts, alternative styles of education (such as noncoercive ones) must continue to assign education that same overriding priority if they are to be effective.

For example, parents who are following the idea that instead of going to school every day, children should 'pursue their own interests' must make every effort to facilitate this interest-following all day and every day, because if the children are not given the means and the freedom to follow their own interests, then what exactly is going to be the driving force of their education?

Unfortunately, many such parents are simply not taking their children's education seriously enough. Some of them are simply neglectful - leaving their children to their own devices

Taking Education Seriously *continued from overleaf*

without offering them enough attention, ideas, resources, encouragement, and so on. But a much more frequent mistake in 'alternative' forms of education is for parents to draw an artificial line between activities which constitute Education and those which (they think) don't. If the children are going to run into a wall of parental intransigence every time their interests take them over the artificial 'Education' line, their learning will be curtailed and their intellectual development sabotaged at every turn.

Consider the following example, from an article on learning to read, by Mamie Ko:

[Parents] need to be willing to let go of all the ideas they have about how children should learn to read and just let them read because it's enjoyable. Above all, when the children finally do want to read, they need to let them be to read.

The dishes and chores can wait!

But how committed is Mamie Ko really to her idea that 'children should learn to read ... because it's enjoyable' and 'Above all ... let them be to read'?

For if the dishes and chores can wait for however long it takes for the children to complete the sacred activity of reading, but chores are nevertheless compulsory, it follows that chores cannot wait for anything that the children would prefer to do instead; only reading (or other Education) gives them that privilege. But then it also follows that children who are currently reading are faced with a coercive choice: if they

continue to read, they will be spared chores, but if they go to play with Lego, say, they will be forced to do them. Similarly, if chores are imminent, the children can avoid them by starting to read, but not by saying that they want to do some Lego. Presumably if they read until well past bedtime, they will be spared the chores until tomorrow. Thus, since they can escape bedtime, chores and other unpleasant things by reading, they are being pressurised to read. Contrary to the parents' intentions, the children are now under coercion in the sphere of reading.

The point here is not merely that such parents are inconsistent or hypocritical. It is that they are switching off the very engine that they are relying on to power their children's education, namely the children's intrinsic motivations. A 'child-led' system of education that suppresses intrinsic motivations can no more produce results than could a conventional 'curriculum-led' system that abandoned the extrinsic motivations of reward and punishment.

It follows that freedom in the matter of academic study is inseparable from freedom in the matter of chores, bedtime and everything else. If parents want their children to be free to follow their interests, this can only be achieved by adopting an approach in which the children's interests are given encouragement, priority, and a genuinely free rein.

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I believe that home-schooling is a wonderful thing that comes into all parts of life, including toys, books and computer games. Homeschooling is a part of everything! Tristan Bedish

Discussions with my daughter -

Part One

Have you been out of school for so long now you've forgotten what it was about it you didn't like? Is it even starting to look appealing once more?

Lisa is nearly 17 and has been learning at home now for two years. We took her out originally for bullying. Bullying is a major concern, resting on the surface of school life, but if you skim that away, is there anything else that should concern us? Recently we've been talking a lot here about the really deep things of school. This conversation took place yesterday.

Me: So what happens to you when you first start senior school?

Lisa: First and foremost, you find out that you're poor.

Me: Oh yes, I remember that. Did you know that school uniform was invented to make all school children look the same?

Lisa: Well it didn't work, did it? You feel really miserable all the time because your parents haven't bought you Adidas trousers and Nike trainers. It makes you hate your parents.

Me: Yes, and some people get away with wearing jewellery and make-up and some don't. Some take a sports bag for their books and some have a hand bag and some have a carrier bag. It's awful.

Lisa: Yes and you just get laughed at.

Me: But what is all this 'having to dress a certain way' for?

Lisa: So the boys will fancy you. -After you find out you're poor, you get trained for sex.

Me: Explain.

Lisa: Well when you have sex educa-

tion, the teacher asks if anyone has any questions. If you ask a question, everyone laughs at you for not knowing. If you don't ask a question, everyone calls you a tart for not needing to ask. You can't win. We had a lady who came into school to talk to us about condoms. I was sent to fetch her from reception and I had to walk up to this total stranger and say, "Are you the condom lady?" It was so embarrassing. And she started her talk by saying, "You'll all be in sexual relationships by now, so you'd better know all about these," waving a condom in the air. We were fourteen.

Me: Good God. How do you cope with that?

Lisa: Well you just act like you understand, so you don't get shown up.

Me: Does anything help you?

Lisa: Yes, television.

Me: How?

Lisa: Well you go to school all day, and then you watch TV at night, and it's like your homework. It tells you more about adults and sex and then you go back to school next day to put it into practise. Even a shampoo advert tells you you're not sexy unless you have long glossy hair. It must work because all the girls in school have long hair. You wouldn't dare have it short. Even Eastenders is all about sex and it's only on at 7.30. You feel really left out if you don't watch it, and you hate your parents for not letting you stay up and watch the X Files and stuff, so you act like you watched it.

Me: You make school sound like a sex factory.

Discussions With My Daughter *continued from overleaf*

Lisa: Well it is, because you always feel like death because you haven't got a boyfriend and everyone else has.

Me: Do you have to have a boyfriend all the time?

Lisa: No, but if you haven't, it feels like there's something wrong with you.

Me: And why do these relationships end up sexual?

Lisa: Because that's what adults do.

(I pause here to absorb the implications of what Lisa is saying)

Me: What else do adults do?

Lisa: They drink and smoke and go out whenever they want and they're always having a good time. They're allowed to have fun.

Me: How do you learn to be an adult?

Lisa: From your friends.

Me: Pardon?

Lisa: I don't understand.

Me: Well, Lisa, if you wanted to learn Karate, would you ask other children in the class, or would you learn from the instructor?

Lisa: From the instructor.

Me: Would you rather learn German from a book or from spending six months in Germany?

Lisa: From going to Germany, why?

Me: Because it strikes me as odd that you want to learn about adulthood, but you get your information from children who have no more idea than you do.

Lisa: But at school that's all there is. You can't talk to the teachers. And you guys don't tell me anything.

Me: What do you mean?

Lisa: Well, I don't know anything about Dad's job, and I don't know about the bills, and I don't cook a lot,

but you expect me to be an adult. I ask things and you say it's none of my business. I want to look grown up in front of you, but if I ask your advice I don't look grown up any more. It's really hard.

Me: Oh.

Several things about this really made me think. I've heard other people say what a false environment school is, but I don't think I really believed it before this. All school does is make children stay as children, and then flicks them out into the adult world, just like fish out of water. Also, what a terrible indictment it is, that children perceive adults as mysterious beings who drink and smoke and have sex. We don't allow children to be people, real citizens.

Secondly, I'm appalled at the power of television. I just thought it sapped their imaginations, but it seems the very opposite is true.

Also, as home educators we get tired of people asking us how on earth our children manage to socialize, as if something dreadful will happen to them if they don't spend hours in the company of children every day. Again, it seems to me, the very opposite is true. All children learn from other children is how to boast in order not to feel inferior. We've all heard it - "I've got twenty marbles," says the first child. In order not to be outdone, his friend says, "I've got fifty." Nobody asks him to prove it and nobody dares contradict him, so the boast stands, for a while at least, until the third friend arrives and announces that he has a hundred marbles! It just goes on and on.

By the time you're fifteen, you say you're allowed to stay up until nine

Discussions With My Daughter *continued*

o'clock and everyone laughs. A week later you say you stayed out 'till 11 and your credibility rises and you feel secure once more. Then you go home and ask your parents why you're not actually allowed to stay out 'til 11, because everybody else does, and a row ensues. So you hate your parents. And so on and so on. It's very subtle, and sadly, very character forming.

Yes, it may be good for children to have friends of their own age to talk to and confide in, but do you really want another ten year old, who knows nothing of the world, to influence your child's sense of wonder, humour, thirst for knowledge, table manners, morals and ethics? I'm not convinced.

Finally, slapped wrist for us as parents. Aren't we as bad as school if we don't let Lisa join our conversations and listen to and share in our worries and concerns, if we don't show her

how to write a cheque, pay the gas bill, feed the cat, make the dinner, or encourage her to read the newspapers?

Is it the school's responsibility to talk about her first real date, tell her what the IRA is, or Greenpeace or BSE or Princess Diana? If she wants to be a vegetarian or save whales or do a sponsored walk for the people of Sudan, should school be arranging it? No, of course not. All our children need to express their opinions, learn their social skills, experiment and explore within the safe boundaries of their families, not, absolutely not, in the playground.

Here's to making much more of the real value of home education.

Jane Orson, 22 Anston Avenue,
Workshop, Notts S81 7HT

EO National Gathering

February 5th-7th 1999 in Oxfordshire

Decadent Weekend in historic Abingdon, in converted barn surrounded by water meadows. En-suite bedrooms, CHIPS & ICECREAM. EOers never had it **SO GOOD** (in the winter).

For details send SAE, photo and inside leg to:
Pam Bellinger, 19 Fortescue Drive, Chesterton, BICESTER,
OX6 8UT (Photo optional)

Autonomous or Structured?

Autonomous or Structured? ... Well! EO HAS moved on: ...

Some twenty years ago, in response to repeated media-requests as to 'What sort of people belong to EO?', the Core Group (as the Council was then called) designed a Questionnaire asking Members which of ... I think it was five ... descriptions they felt best fitted their approach, or reason for belonging to EO. At that time, of the two largest groups, we were definitely in the 'Alternative Lifestyle' rather than 'Can achieve better than school' category, which two groups seem to broadly equate to the 'Autonomous' (word not so widely used then!) and 'Structured' of today. (Although I notice that the Newsletter was entitled, rather, 'MORE' structured, - suggesting its relativity to the previous 'Autonomous' issue, as opposed to 'strictly' structured.) Now, however, I would have to say we were in the 'More Structured' camp.

Although my children are now 'adults', I don't feel I'm re-writing history! Rather - having read both sides - that there has been a definite shift in attitudes; that what was once seen as fairly 'extreme' (the 'Alternative') has in fact become acceptable (dare I say 'respectable'); in that most of the structured accounts - with their lack of timetables and readiness to change plans - could easily, I feel, have been accounts of the 'Alternatives' of yesteryear - and much more akin to the origins of autonomy/self-regulation ... call it what you will!

So although I had recently been thinking that, after twenty years, the same old questions were being asked and debated, I am delighted to have

reached the conclusion - from the last two Newsletters - that EO 'has moved on': that there is proof that advances have been made towards a wider acceptance amongst Eoers:

.. that 'education' is a lifelong process for all of us - from birth to death (not just from 5 - 16/18/21...);

.. of acknowledging that children have not lost their survival instincts, but have an INNATE desire to learn what they experience as important to their lives;

.. of recognising that children need freedom to learn under a caring eye and a guiding hand.

What has come out of my writing the above is that the major difference between the two camps seems to raise the question:

Autonomy for the FAMILY - or - autonomy for the INDIVIDUAL?

Obviously, reading the last two Newsletters has caused me to reflect considerably on 'how we did it', so for those members interested in such histories...

Basically, I have always felt, since observing my first child as a baby, that 'education' takes place through two main routes:

IMITATION and CONVERSATION
neither of which can take place beneficially within a school. We did it by listening, responding and sharing involvement. We simply LIVED - as most people do at weekends and in school holidays.

A Primary School Adviser, when our first child was 5, said she could not understand why more parents did not question the action of sending their children off to school. Then when

Autonomous or Structured? *continued*

Eleanor was 8, Madeleine 5 and Tom 3, we moved to another county and felt NO obligation to notify anyone of our rights. As far as we were concerned our children were being educated 'privately'!

We occasionally felt a little nervous lest we should be called upon to justify to someone (who had never given a thought to anything other than 'schooling') what we knew, from our children's discursive abilities, to be fulfilling their needs to live happy and fruitful lives. We were nervous especially when Tom showed little desire to read by 8, so encouraged him with a reading scheme. (about Pirates, I think). Such is his fund of knowledge now, from later reading, that his sisters refer to him as a walking-encyclopedia.

We had always thought that if the children didn't go to school at some future date then they could do GCEs easily as external candidates. But the dawning of GCSEs put the mockers on that! Eleanor, anyway, wanted more peer-contact by 14. She went to school for the two GCSE years and got seven at C and above, never having had a formal academic lesson in her life. Madeleine followed with the same result but, at Eleanor's suggestion, had gone to school a year earlier to 'learn the ropes' - a decision Madeleine has always regretted, having found three institutionalised years far too long. Tom did English Lang., Lit. and Maths at evening classes between 12 and 16, then went into the 6th form to do 3 'A' levels.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW? At 16 Eleanor went to Dance School (she'd started ballet at 12) and at 26 is still dancing around the world for a living, with a large bank balance! She

may go to university when she finishes. Madeleine has done a variety of things: BTEC in General Art and Design; au pair in Germany; travelled the USA; waitressing in London; most of an Access Course at Norwich City College with the intention of going to university. The latter never got finished because her father suggested she register with a model-agency 'to earn some pocket money'; that led to Japan, Vogue, a Boots cosmetics promotion and many international magazines. Thus she also is now travelling the world and occasionally earning considerable sums. Tom, just 21, is still bumming around the southern hemisphere, having an equally lovely life, whilst he works out his next steps. For me, as I chat to them all regularly on the phone - day here, night there - planet Earth has suddenly become a VERY small place in the Universe.

REFLECTIONS: I'm delighted for them all. I have only one misgiving about their younger years: those familiar and recurring questions of 'sporting activities' and socialisation! It was our main worry for causes of accusation by an LEA in the earlier years. By the time we 'knew better' it was too late. We had introduced the girls to various sporting activities which, because of their naturally enthusiastic pursuance of anything they enjoyed, rather took over our lives (in time and travel costs around the UK). True, the girls thrived on it but family life would have been calmer, and they would no doubt have thrived on something else, without it. So, that I would not repeat! Physical activities are (were?) a necessary part of the school curriculum to counter the inactivity of the classroom; not so for

Autonomous or Structured? *continued from overleaf*

EOers. And for 'socialisation' they had each other, and other EO children frequently enough to be adequate - often visiting EO friends in various parts of the country (excellent geography, history etc) whom they had met at national gatherings.

So, that's how we did it. I perhaps should add that we've always lived rurally and isolated, which is possibly why we succeeded in never being approached by the LEA. I also suspected, though, that the LEA probably didn't WANT to know about us, as it would be just one more task for an already overloaded workforce. I don't know!

Another important reflection, having now passed the age of 50, is the SPEED of it all! And visits with my children around the world having recently encouraged much research into ancient historical places and civilized peoples up to 9,000 years

ago, I have become much more aware of what a small BLIP our life on earth is; we have insufficient TIME to WASTE ANY of it. Our first priority should be to simply enjoy the life we have, with whatever that may entail for each of us.

I hope this account of our children's diverse and somewhat unusual but happy paths might be reassuring for those still nearer the beginning of life's track, and that you enjoy your wanderings with your children as freely as we did: autonomous but always thoughtful, caring and guiding where necessary, as we felt it our duty, as parents, to be; believing that young children innately learn only by example - and what sort of EXAMPLE, for LIVING, can a schoolroom possibly BE?

Di Cox, Suffolk, October 1998

Houseswaps for E.O. members:

A big thank you to all of you who have joined the new holiday houseswap register. I had quite a few inquiries and I was able to get together enough people to start the register. I hope that there will be a good few house swaps arranged for this year.

Holiday Houseswaps are run on mutual respect and honesty. The register contains names and addresses etc. of families who are willing to swap their house for a week/weekend or even a month or two! All you have to do is find someone on the register who wants a mutual swap.

I myself have been on a national charity houseswap register for several

years and I can honestly say I have never had any problem with the house swaps and I swap at least three times a year.

To make this register successful we need to have as many families on it as possible. There will be a small fee to join and all profits will go to E.O.

If you are interested in joining or just want further information please ring or write to me, I will be happy to hear from you.

Best wishes and here's to a happy house swapping experience!
Barbara Thring, 15 Hazeldon Road,
Crofton Park, London SE4 2DD, 0181
694 0769

A Home-schooling Experience

Now EO has been going some time, we are hearing parents' past experiences in almost every newsletter. Well, I was homeschooled for eight years, and here's my experience.

I was first "deregistered" at age eight, and taught at home from then on. Not that I actually did much work for ages: something I regret when looking back on the experience. I don't, however, regret much else about those eight years.

My first "project" after leaving school was on conservation: something which really had an influence as I have been involved in environmental campaigns ever since learning the facts. Not much else grabbed my attention like that did, but that wasn't a bad thing. From trying to be generally "green", I moved into animal rights campaigning: this encouraged attention to detail (looking at labels to check for animal testing or by-products) and literacy (letter-writing), and also made me more articulate as I had to explain my beliefs to others. I was fairly politically aware as a result of being at home for the lunchtime news, being so desperate for reading material that I'd look at the Times for something to do, and generally being encouraged to ask questions more than someone the same age would have done at school. (Reading the EO newsletter also helped!)

As my family has always had a computer of some sort since I was a toddler, I learned how to use one for various things fairly early on. I remember that "Logo" (a graphics program) was very useful for maths, and much more fun than working from a book. I used to make up games on it

involving shooting arrows through hoops, which I don't think would have been allowed at school. I also enjoyed "newspaper" type programs, and anything which had background music.

I was never interested in science out of a textbook, unless it was biology (I still have my collection of dissected leaves and flowers to this day), but I loved visiting the Science Museum. We also went on a tour of Sizewell (a nuclear power station on the Suffolk coast: apparently the water around there is nice and warm for swimming. The boy who told me that was positively glowing!). Although I am still not sure I agree with nuclear power, it was still good to hear both sides of the argument. Because of my interest in the environment, my favourite place to visit was the Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales: I've been there several times, and have always found something interesting despite being a little older each time.

I did most of the work for GCSEs in two terms, which was a lot of work for a small amount of time. I took seven GCSEs in the end, and went to evening classes for English Language and Literature. I had never taken a proper exam in my life before that time, and the first few were quite scary. What was worst was having to get up at 6am some days to get to the Cambridge Open Centre in time for a morning paper. But the thing about homeschooling is that no two days are the same anyway, and there is little routine beyond getting up in the morning (although I did try a schedule in the last few months before the exams), and this made it easy to adapt. When the results came through, they were mostly Bs and Cs,

A Home-schooling Experience *continued from overleaf*

which is better than anyone had expected.

I am now at a sixth-form college in Cambridge, taking Sociology, English and Psychology A-levels. My usual grade at the moment is B, but I have done both better and worse over the past year. Having worked alone for so long makes it easier to organise doing homework. The timetable took a bit of getting used to, but it's easy to memorise and work around when scheduling other things.

I am a member of the Animal Rights group in Cambridge, and editor of the monthly newsletter. I volunteer at a Development Education centre once a week, again writing for their newsletter. I am involved in campaigning against McDonalds, and leaflet the local store when I find time (brill way to make friends, as people often stop and chat). I have just joined Genetix Snowball, although I haven't been on any

actions yet. I spend a lot of time writing various things: essays, articles, letters, songs, stories and whatever can be put into words. I hate prejudice of all types. I am an anarchist: this merely means a belief in autonomy, not in terrorism or any other unpleasant associations the word may have. I try to be a good advertisement for anything I become involved in, which is one reason for working hard. I love music and dancing, and may soon be joining a samba band. I will take my A-levels in June, and then have a year out. I hope to study English at university, and then have a career in journalism (as if you couldn't guess!).

One of my aims now is to show people that home education works. If I have children, that is how I will raise them given the chance.

Eloise Harding (17), Tremarg House,
Church Row, Mellis, EYE, Suffolk IP23

A Local Website for Every EO Region

Many people who have had first hand experience of the internet appreciate the potential benefits that it can bring to an association like E.O. The internet can enhance the aspects of support, shared information, sharing resources, breaking isolation, spreading the word, communication, and having a social impact. The issue of providing a possible web presence for every regional E.O. group that wishes one, should be discussed.

At the present time there is one national site, and one regional initiative based in Suffolk. In principle, one such site can be shared out between any number of groups at no extra cost. The way it could work is as follows.

There would be a new web page called, for example, E.O. Local, which would have a site editor. The people of any given regional group, let's say E.O. Wesfolk, would send their contributions by email to the site

A Local Website for Every EO Region *continued*

editor. The site editor would paste E.O. Wesfolk's contribution into the section of the site delegated to them. A link on the home page of E.O. Local would refer to their (sub) page.

E.O. Regions that join could contribute locally valuable information, and make a national impact by offering any expertise in any subject that their members might have. Somebody that knows about beekeeping, or maths, or making models, could have those talents, or that knowledge, tapped into by any home educating person in the country.

E.O. Suffolk can be found at- <http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/~vanderzwan/>

Another point; it is especially desirable that British home-educators have a strong link to the internet. There are other countries that are otherwise socially advanced but have a total ban on home education, such as Holland and Germany. People in countries like these, would gain an insight into the British home education movement, which is after all a nationwide and increasingly successful experiment in child nurture.

Pete Frolic. Suffolk.

Kicki Goes To School

As you already know, if you've read this magazine from front to back, our family comprises Kicki aged seven and a half, Steve aged thirty-nine, and myself, Barbara, aged forty-five. We also have two cats, many sea monkeys and an indeterminate number of triops.

Kicki has been home-schooled from birth, although we didn't make the conscious decision until she was two. We have always unschooled, except in moments of great panic, and used John Holt and Alice Miller as two of our mentors. We tried to ensure that no-one behaved in a coercive way, excepting our house ban on smacking, smoking, labeling, blaming, meat-eating and sibling excluding. These rules were mainly for the benefit of visitors although the occasional label could fall from our lips.

In May this year we realised that

our financial situation had become such that I needed to earn some money. Initially I could only find jobs that covered school hours, but eventually came across work that I could do alongside Kicki, which would pay quite well. She received a percentage of the profits, which meant she could work out 3% of most amounts in her head. Not bad for seven, and there, that's maths done!

However, in July, Steve decided he had to leave us. This put us in a more serious financial situation, as his one salary now had to support two homes. There seemed no answer (at least to me; I am sure other people may have behaved differently!) but that Kicki should go to school and I work full time at my job. I needed to earn at least £1000 per month to cover the mortgage and utilities, never mind food

Kicki Goes To School *continued from overleaf*

etc. We could have moved to somewhere cheaper, but Kicki had had enough. I had had major surgery at the end of last year, and she had thought I would die. This year her daddy had left home. She wanted some stability. Two lots of home schooling friends had offered to have Kicki to stay for a regular day each week and it was a wonderful suggestion, but Kicki didn't feel happy with the idea. So anyway, the only answer was for her to go to the free government child-minding facility.

She chose a school where none of her friends went, so that she could be known as Katy (and have a school persona, I assume.)

She was actually excited. I was very disappointed. I had written that famous tome, *I Want To Go To School*, which some of you may have seen in the *EO* magazine a couple of years ago. It was a book aimed for four year olds (well, Kicki) which explained why home-schooling was better than doing what most of your friends were going to do. I really wanted her to stay home-schooling. She wanted to wear her school uniform every day in August, and re-named that month 'the summer holidays'.

I was about to find out what many home-schooling parents wonder - how would my child match up to school children? I know comparison is invidious, but you can't help it, can you? Especially when you secretly know that school cannot begin to compete with home.

On the first day of school, Kicki received a proposal from the boy she sat next to. In our experience, home-schooling children are not interested

in boyfriends and marriage at seven. They play happily with children of either sex and of a wide age range. But why am I bothering to tell you this? You already know. Anyway, contrary to those myths, socially she was fine, not scared to make friends or approach new people. However, she was not ready for the best friend/ split up/ best friend behaviour of the girls. She now knows that, at school, she cannot really be friends with a boy she likes, as they will be teased mercilessly about him being her boyfriend.

Academically, she appears to know almost everything they deal with in class, generally much more thoroughly, due to our field trips, her interest in learning, having enough time to concentrate. As you know.

The maths seems to be extremely simple, and even though we hardly ever did any formal writing-down maths she seems to be up near the top. Her handwriting has 'held her back a bit'. In our home schooling life, I had not intended that she should worry about written work as she did not yet appear ready to go with it. However, of course, school does not wait. So Kicki has been having to write more in the last few weeks than she had previously written in the whole of her life, by a factor of four! Not surprisingly, her writing has improved. That, as you know, is not the point. The point is that it would have improved anyway, given time, and without grief. Luckily, her reading had already whizzed ahead earlier this year, from almost nothing to full speed, thanks to her continuous perusal of *Beano* annuals. Again, she could have been doing it all at five, but not happily. So writing and spelling have been

Kicki Goes to School *continued*

the major areas of note, which is exactly what I would have expected. I don't consider them problem areas as I know she will get there in the end. To be fair, her teacher, Ms Hawker, knows this too. The only problem will be how stressed she gets, having to work on things when she doesn't want to, and also, having to stop work she is enjoying, in order to start doing something else. This is probably the most irritating of all to her, not being in control of her own life. We all have to do things we don't want to from time to time, but we set our timetable. We don't have it totally imposed. Moving into such a coercive environment has been a challenge for Kicki, but one she has dealt with admirably. Her teacher has described, with amusement, how she has been outspoken in class about how the children behave in one way when the teacher is there and differently when she is not. Kicki finds it bewildering that they don't control themselves, but look to someone else to control them. All stuff you know, and possibly, as I did, find it gratifying that it's true.

One outcome of school has pleased Kicki greatly. They went on a field trip to Bignor Roman Villa last week. She was delighted as, apparently, she had always envied schoolchildren their clipboards when she had been looking from the other side. If only I had known! I always saw clipboards as a symbol of coercive education, all those boring worksheets etc. She thought they looked good.

Kicki has a major advantage over the other children in that she knows that school is not compulsory. We have agreed that she sticks it for one year, in order for us to get straight financially. (Steve was since made re-

dundant, adding to the pressure. What a lot has gone on this year! Never mind the broken toe, and cat dying...) Sometimes she wants to stay until she's sixteen, sometimes until the end of junior school, and sometimes not at all. I miss her a great deal, and am relieved that she has managed to avoid becoming 'schooly' so far. We talk at great length about education, the behaviour of the children and teachers, people who treat children as second class citizens, and most of all, her feelings. I hope that we will come through this period relatively unscathed. I know the emotional strength and security Kicki has gained from seven years of home-schooling, and I am supporting this 'home-schooling girl who goes to school' to the best of my ability. My opinion of school hasn't changed, but the temporary free government child-minding facility is helping us deal with this tricky moment in our lives.

Barbara Kay, East Molesey, Surrey



Kicki and Dorothy from I Want to Go To School

Highlands and Islands: a Tale from the Frozen North

Highlands and Islands is an area of around 12,000 square miles, in which there are about 18 E.O. families spread over the whole region, with a slight concentration around Inverness. Clearly, when it comes to meeting other E.O. families, distance is a big factor.

We took over the co-ordinatorship last year, after a 2 year vacancy. We have been thinking of possible ways of getting together as a region, to supplement those local get-togethers which already take place. First of all we need to know if people are interested. We also would welcome suggestions as to how a regional meeting could best happen: whether it should be for a day or, given the distances, whether a weekend would be better; and whether there are any ideal venues that people already know about. We had wondered about renting somewhere relatively central (round Inverness, perhaps) for a

weekend at Easter or in the Summer, and making the weekend open to other Home Educators from elsewhere in Scotland.

Highlands and Islands, as well as being huge, is also divided between 5 Local Authorities. The largest of these, Highland Council, is split into 6 districts, each with their own Primary adviser and Education Manager. Consequently there is a wide variation throughout the region in approaches to Home Education, from good practice to very bad practice. As coordinators, we would appreciate any feedback from members on their experiences with the authorities in their own areas, even if these date from several years ago. This would help us get a better overview of how the different authorities approach Home Education in practice.

Pauline & Donald Mackay, Braevale,
Bower, Caithness KW1 4TP. 01955
641252

The Performing Arts

The next 'special supplement' is all about the performing arts so send your letters in now - before you get too involved in Christmas celebrations! It doesn't matter how long or short articles are we need them all. Write about your experiences of amateur dramatics, choral recitals, or even how your family are doing with music lessons. Your contributions are needed to keep the 'special supplement' lively and interesting, so send them now to:

Mike Allen, 71, Belgrave Road, Loughor, Swansea, SA4 6RF.

Merry Christmas!



HOW TO IMPRESS THE NEIGHBOURS

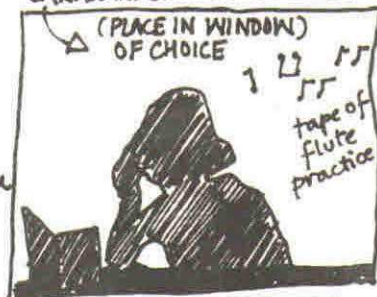
this Christmastide

BY SEB 1998

Come out Archie,
leave that philosophy
essay, I know you
want to finish your
model of St Paul's
Cathedral before your
Flamenco lesson
and live from the
LITMUS
paper
so you
can
complete
that
experiment



CARDBOARD CUT-OUT OF ARCHIE

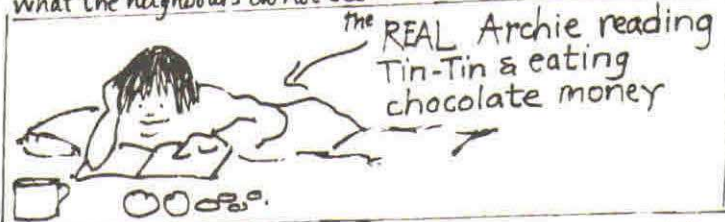


VIEW OF CUT-OUT FROM REAR



blutak

what the neighbours do not see~



the REAL Archie reading
Tin-Tin & eating
chocolate money

READERS! this is an example of A DESIRABLE
LEARNING OUTCOME (see Education Newspeak 1998 onward)
HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL OUR FANS

Truancy Watch

Re The Removal of Truants to Designated Premises

Regarding the Truancy Information Cards issued by 'Choice in Education', I sent for one of these out of curiosity. When it arrived today I was incensed!

Firstly, the wording: The card states, "If I am stopped by anyone questioning why I am not in school, I have been told to hand over this card and to ask to be allowed to carry on with what I am lawfully doing without any further unlawful detention." At the bottom of the card it says 'PLEASE NOW RETURN MY CARD AND LET ME GO.'

Doesn't this wording imply that a child's personal freedom is automatically relinquished once 'anyone', police officer or not, begins to question the child about not being in school? Is this not giving our children the impression that adults have the right to detain them or take them away? And wouldn't it give the same impression to any adult reading it? This card is dangerous!

Secondly, the principle: The card issuers insist that this card is not any identity card as it has no space for a name. Well, it is as good as one if a home-educated child fears (yes, FEARS) leaving his/her own home without carrying it. You do not need to carry your driving licence whilst out in your car, so why should a child carry a 'licence to be out', whether 'out' means at the shops, the library, the park, a friend's house, the swimming pool, even the beach?! In this country we

have, until now, enjoyed personal liberty, and have never been required to carry identification cards. As I see it, this card is the start of a slippery slope towards us ALL carrying cards. I would urge all parents of home-educated children not to give in to fear and to reject these cards now before they become a legal requirement.

Regarding the change in the law itself, I wonder whether the policy makers have really thought out its effect on child safety; or is this another quick attempt by the present government at making it look as though they are taking control of education matters? Surely, we all impress on our children never to go off with strangers. Why should police officers, LEA officials, EWOs or other persons in 'authority' be the exception? How can a child or young person be sure that someone's identity is genuine and even if genuine that they can be trusted to be alone with a child?

I would therefore urge all parents to write to the various government bodies to complain about this change in the law. Any ruling which empowers adults, police or otherwise, to detain or remove children like stray dogs is not in the interests of children's personal safety, whether home- or school-educated, as it will undoubtedly encourage paedophiles or other undesirable to approach children.

On the same subject, in the October EO Newsletter, Isobel Bogucki (page 37) suggests that EO coordinators bring 'the presence of EO children to the attention of the Area organiser of the Truancy Watch' and that copies of the memo 'could be circulated to all

Truancy Watch *continued*

participating police officers and EWOs.'

Is she really suggesting that our home-educated children's names be held on file by police and others so that their education status can be checked? Forgive me if I am wrong, but I was under the impression that registration for home-education was not compulsory. Should we really be encouraging this and in so doing hastening the relinquishing of our legal rights? I consider myself fortunate in that my local coordinators would never dream of giving my child's name to the police, LEA, or any other 'authority' - I don't even have to ask.

I also note that Christine Adey (page 27) suggests we provide unaccompanied children or teenagers with a 'written statement' giving 'confirmation' of the child's status. Would someone please tell me the difference between this and 'Truancy Information Cards'?

Not only this, but both Christine and Isobel (pages 28 and 37 respectively) suggest we inform ourselves of dates and locations of Truancy Watch Patrols. However well-intentioned this advice, and I am sure that both Christine and Isobel are only trying to be helpful, should we not be looking at the wider implications here? Are they seriously suggesting that we organise outings with our children to avoid these 'blitzes', that we deliberately curtail our legal personal freedom as British citizens/residents to go where and when we choose? Has Britain become a 'Police State'? Or has EO gone soft?

Suzan Howitt, 1 Hillside Cottages, Underhill, Lympstone, Exmouth, EX8 5HQ

Truancy Watch and New Police Powers

The new police power to remove truants from specified public places during specified times is now in force (Section 16 of the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act). You may live in an area where truancy is not a big problem and there will be no truancy watch patrols or use made of the new police power. However, it is worth remembering its existence if you visit a large town at any time.

The guidance for police and LEAs that accompanies the new law will now be finalised. At the time of writing, there are concerns in the draft guidance that would affect us. Objections about the concerns have been made to the DFEE and Home Office and these may have been addressed. The main concern was that the guidance suggested that LEAs provided home-educated children with a "letter of confirmation" to be carried in a public place and shown to a police constable. Very strong objections have been made about this and it is hoped that any such reference has been removed from the final guidance. Whether or not it has, LEAs have *no statutory authority to insist that you or your child carry any form of local government-authorised identification*. Please do not do it. To do so would be to provide LEAs with an opportunity to argue for and attempt to enforce formal registration of home-educated children to undermine the authority and responsibility of parents and place that authority with LEAs to condone any suggestion that

Truancy Watch *continued from overleaf*

the word of home-educated children and their parents is not to be believed if they indicate that they are educated at home.

Even if the suggestion has been removed from the final version of the guidance, some LEAs may try to initiate such a scheme anyway. You are not answerable to your LEA for your family's freedom of movement. You can retain your own authority by providing your child with your own letter of explanation or a small card, such as the one being offered by Choices in Education, which was advertised in the last newsletter. EO cards are also being produced by some local groups and may be available to members nationally.

If you are questioned by a police constable as a parent accompanying a school-age child, and at the time of writing, this is a possibility, your verbal explanation should be sufficient. If it is not, then I suggest you look him in the eye, say you are sorry that he doesn't believe you, and walk away

indignantly. You or another local member could follow this up later with a telephone complaint. I think it is important that we insist on being treated as honest, decent citizens and do not allow our freedoms to be eroded in the interest of rounding up truants.

I had been told by the DFEE that parents could ask to be informed about the times and places that the police power would be used. There was no encouragement in the draft guidance for LEAs or the police to do this, but the final guidance may be clearer. Do bear this in mind if you contact either body for information, but don't let it stop you trying!

With any luck, we shouldn't be too badly affected by the new power. If you are, do something about it, let someone know, for example a council member, and between us, we can keep an eye on things.

Christine Adey (Dorset)

Home Schooling

I think home schooling is better than going to school because I used to be a home schooler, now I go to school. Home schooling is better because you don't have to just sit there. At school they make you sit there all day. You shouldn't have to do it because children need more time outside playing or inside doing games - doing what they just want to do. They don't give us

enough playtime. It feels like two minutes. I always used to wonder what's it like going to school, and now I wish I hadn't wondered. I suggest, if you're wondering what school's like, don't go. I'd have to do my mum's business so it's 50% I will, 50% I won't stay on at school at present.

Kicki Spencer-Kay

FIVE DAYS ON THALATTA

These are excerpts from my diary that I kept while I was on a five day trip on Thalatta. Thalatta is an old Thames sailing barge which has been done up to take assorted parties on trips. I went with a group of EO'ers from various counties; Sandie Cottee, Heather and Jamie McDonald, and Miriam, Naomi and Natty Alcaraz-Stapleton to name but a few. We sailed in rivers and along the coast from Maldon Town Quay in Essex to Queenborough in Kent. I also want to say a big hi to everyone who went on Thalatta this year; we had a great time and I hope I'll see some of you next time there's a Thalatta trip.

Monday 31st August

We set sail at about 6.00pm leaving our parents on the quay-side. Just before we left we saw a seal swimming in the water. It went past the boat, up the shore and some people took photos of it.

We were divided up into two teams, Port and Starboard. Girls (and Jamie) in Starboard, and the boys in Port. I was a bit apprehensive because I'd never been on Thalatta before and I didn't know anybody. I'm writing this in my hammock - I thought isobel was joking when she told me you had to sleep in hammocks!

Tuesday 1st September

It's 9.55am and the Port team are washing up the breakfast stuff. The Starboard team had to wash up last night - yuck! We also had to cook the food this morning which isn't as bad as

washing up afterwards, I suppose! We had Linda McCartney sausages for breakfast (which everyone joked were made from 98% prime Linda). I slept quite well in my hammock; no-one fell out of their hammock in the night. I was a bit disappointed because that would have been quite funny (maybe not for them though!).

After breakfast we all helped to wind up the anchor. It was hard work. We're supposed to be sailing to Queenborough in Kent; we'll probably get lost, but as long as we have a good time, I don't care! We're anchoring at Brightlingsea today and we might go ashore either there or East Mersea.

LATER: It's now 4.45pm and we've just got back from our little expedition ashore. We went to this island in John and Jane (Thalatta's two small dingys) and played this wide game. We divided up into two teams and you had to capture the other team's flag. It was fun, but I cut my hand on a stone. Heather's and my jeans got really muddy, sandy and grass-stained where we were crawling around. I hate to think what our mums are going to say when we get home!

Afterwards we went for a walk and we helped this man rescue three cygnets that had got stranded. The man told us "I only came to go fishing!" I got some wonderful pictures of a disgruntled looking Ben and a very scared looking Joe carrying a cygnet each. When we got back to the boat we had sandwiches, crisps, tomatoes, fruit and cake for lunch. We ate up on deck whilst we were sailing - it was really cool.

Five Days on Thalatta *continued from overleaf*

Wednesday 2nd September

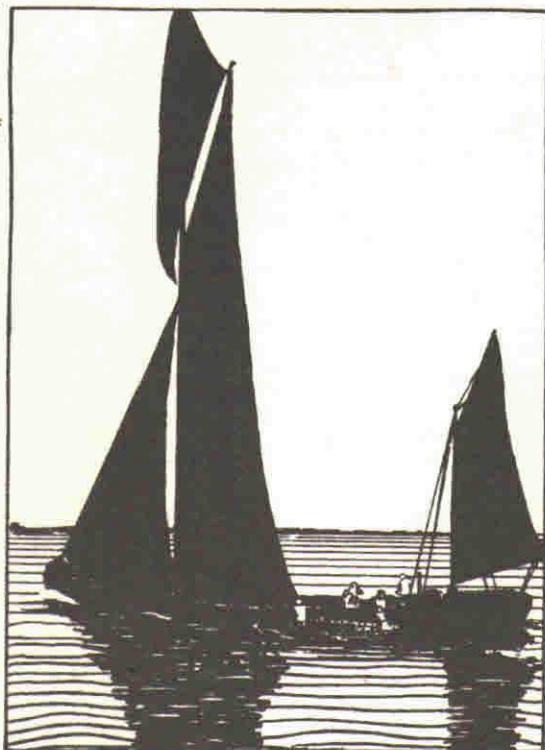
Only three days left - but I don't want to go home! Everyone's allowed to have a go at steering Thalatta today. Natty's steering at the moment - I hope we don't crash! We're all going in number order. I'm number 5 - Natty's number 5. We sailed really close to this old wreck. You could see three masts sticking up out of the water. The ship was called the 'Richard Montgomery' and it was used to carry explosives during W.W.II. Gary (the skipper) told us that there was still explosives on board which sparked off (what an awful pun!) a load of questions from the boys who wanted to know how close to the wreck we would have to sail for the explosives to go off I said that they couldn't, because everything would be all soggy, The boys informed me that that was a minor technical hitch.

I sat upon deck most of the day reading, writing and playing hangman with Miriam, who I've got quite friendly with, I also watched for marker buoys and wrote down each one we passed. I was interested to see which ones we passed because the crew used the buoys rather like street signs on the road. I also had my go at steering the barge - I was awful!

Thursday 3rd September

We moored at Rochester last night. It also pelted it down yesterday evening, but we had lovely weather today, so it's not all bad. We went ashore to Rochester today. Everybody took the opportunity to buy presents, choco-

late, post letters and postcards, and phone home. Heather, Miriam, Bobby, Naomi and me each put some money towards buying a little thank you present for the crew (my idea). In the end we bought a little windchime with a cat on it. We got the cat one because we felt Thalatta needed a ships cat. We also went to this free museum; it told you all about the history of Rochester. We all gathered outside the museum to take photos of everybody standing by an old monumental water pump. Five minutes later a museum official came out to tell us off We went up to Rochester castle and everybody took lots of photos and did acrobatics on the grass. Later on on the boat we had



Five Days on Thalatta *continued*

the sails up. It was lovely and peaceful - especially as Joe and I had a competition to see who could keep quiet the longest. I managed 2hrs 1min 30secs, but that was only because someone spoke to me! Joe managed 2hrs 2mins.

When we anchored at Queenborough that evening we crabbed off the side of the boat I can't remember how many crabs we all caught in the end - about 20, I think. We gave the crew the windchime at the table at dinner after everyone had finished eating. They really liked it and decided to call the cat Tinklebell.

Friday 4th September

Last day! And you can't even call it a day when we're meeting our parents at 1100am on Queenborough jetty. After breakfast this morning we toasted marshmallows over candles on the table. We were going to do them on the beach over a campfire when we landed at Brightlingsea, but Sandie forgot the marshmallows!!! Everyone had a really good time on Thalatta and I'm definitely going to go next year!

Katie Morley, Golf Cottage, Cozens Lane West, Broxbourne, Herts, EN10 6QL. Age 1.4

(I was 13 when I went, but I'm 14 now)

HES Fes '99

The Home Educators' Seaside Festival
Monkton Wylde, Dorset

Thursday 13th to Tuesday 18th May

Camping in 15 acre site with stunning views, woodland walks and beach 3 miles away. Lots of activities, music, games, marquees, dancing, sand castle building and loads of free workshops. Free hot showers, childrens' play equipment and disabled facilities. Cheap vegan meals available throughout the week. 3 miles from mainline station and half mile from A35. Cost £30 per family. Caravans available for hire. For programme booklet and booking form please send A5 stamped SAE **HES Fes '99 PO Box 5 Belvedere DA17 5ZU** Contact Andy 0171-813 5907 <aannd@mcmail.com>

Reviews

Educating Children at Home by Alan Thomas (Cassell, 1998)

At the end of a three-hour car journey, my husband sarcastically commented that it was nice to have a conversation with me. He went on to say that it would've been pleasant if I'd pulled my nose out of Alan Thomas' book just once during the trip. What could I say - I just can't put a good book down.

Educating Children at Home is the result of a study of 100 home educating families in Australia and Britain.

Alan Thomas presents his findings in a readable format that avoids the trap that many "experts" fall into, i.e. "talking down" to the reader - here's a book that didn't make me feel that I had to go running for the dictionary to look up the meaning of every other word.

Various issues are discussed, including some of the weaknesses of classroom teaching, reasons for home educating, how parents go about teaching their children, literacy, maths and ... (wait for it) ... socialisation.

Thomas provides detailed accounts of both formal and informal learning. He gives examples of methods employed by parents, and reasons for people becoming less formal in their approach to home education.

One section particularly focuses on the more informal aspects of home education based on excerpts from an in-depth study of one child and arrives at some (reassuringly) positive conclusions.

Lots of quotes from the families in the study are used. This gives real

meaning to the book - as if these people are somehow speaking directly to the reader.

If you are struggling to explain your hows and whys of home education to friends and relatives, this should be the book you give them to read.

Alan Thomas has generously offered this book to EO members at a discounted price. If you would like a copy please send a cheque (made payable to Education Otherwise) for £12.99 to: 85 Coleridge Road, London, N8 5EG

Beverley Young, Lancashire

Physical Fun

If you have never come across the Uncle Albert books by Russell Stannard, you are missing a mind bending experience. I cannot believe that my then six year old and I grasped Einstein's special theory of relativity through a story book. Although some of the details flew across the top of our heads, the basics are in there, explained so entertainingly, that we shall reread these books again and again. Uncle Albert sends his niece Gedanken to explore the smallest particles in Uncle Albert and the Quantum Quest, where Gedanken meets characters from Alice in Wonderland in a sub-atomic world. She rushes off in a spaceship at nearly the speed of light, but still makes it to lunch, in the Time and Space of Uncle Albert. There are other books in the series available as well, including Black Holes and Uncle Albert.

Reviews *continued*

'They are good because they are half story and half real.' Kicki Spencer-Kay.

Uncle Albert and the Quantum Quest, by Russell Stannard, published by Faber and Faber ISBN 0-571-17344-6 Easily available in bookshops.

Reviewed by Barbara Kay

Some thoughts about software I like:

I love Science (Dorling Kindersley Family Library): This program is about science in three rather static worlds, named Al's Kitchen, Mo's Workshop and Rosie's Treehouse. I enjoyed Al's kitchen the most because it is about all the things I like such as chemistry, baking and mixing different particles together. When you have collected so many stars after you have completed each activity you can print a certificate and instructions for an experiment. I also enjoyed Mo's Workshop because I like things such as heat and energy.

Marathon, Marathon II and

Marathon Infinity (Bungie): Marathon is one of the best arcade games around. In it you have to fight and progress against hordes of aliens in a maze of corridors. With Marathon Infinity you also get to design your own mazes! It doesn't have a "15" rating (age recommendation) but it does have a lot of gore and blood.

Creatures (Cyberlife): This is one of my favourite programs. In Creatures you get to create your own artificial life forms called Norns on the computer! They are just like real humans and can die so you have to look

after them well or they will die of starvation or a terrible disease or be killed by the Grendels. I call every Grendel I see Greg because they look so sweet and I look after them too! I have also tried to make the Grendels and Norns friends instead of enemies but I have never succeeded. Norns will breed with each other sometimes but you cannot tell when.

The Logical Journey of the Zoombinis (Broderbund): Zoombinis are little creatures from another World. They have to journey across lots of dangerous places and you must use logic to help them to safety, for example there are Tree Trolls that eat pizza and need different toppings each time you go there and you have to work out which ones. I think they are one of the funniest but least difficult creatures you confront.

HyperStudio (Roger Wagner: TAG Developments): In HyperStudio you get to create a program called a "stack". Although you may believe this is a stack of programs it is actually just one. You create the program by using tools, such as painting and drawing tools, buttons that you create, and scripting in HyperLogo, a programming language. You can import photos, clip art and sounds. We used some of our own photos to make an interactive program about France and our holiday there. I also did some animation with HyperStudio. It is relatively easy to use and certainly easier than some other programming languages such as C++ or Chipmunk Basic.

Mighty Maths Number Heroes (Edmark): In this program there are four activities including fractions, probability, arithmetic and geometry. They are all done in fun ways like setting off

Reviews *continued from overleaf*

fireworks in different colours in fractions, for example $1/3$ red and $2/3$ green. The arithmetic is presented in the way of a quiz against another player from the computer or the home audience such as my mother! In the probability section there is a character called Handsome Chance and you use his probability machine to make lots of action figures, from 10 to 100,000, of him in different outfits. In the geometry section there is a geoboard on screen and you can create your own geometric designs or answer questions about angles and shapes.

Magic School Bus Series

(Explores the Human Body, Explores the Ocean, Explores the Solar System, Explores the Age of the Dinosaurs, Explores Inside the Earth and Explores the Rainforest) (Microsoft): These are brilliant programs where you get to explore various places, play games, do experiments and find out things with Miss Frizzle and her class. I like the Magic School Bus books and the television series as well.

Hollywood (Theatrix): In this program you create plays. You type in what you want the characters to say and how you want them to move and you can give them little animations to do too. I typed in some of Romeo and Juliet and I typed in some nonsense and the characters said exactly what I had written.

3D Movie Maker (Microsoft): In this program you can create "films" instead of plays and you can make very realistic things happen such as spaceships firing laser guns and people fighting and also all sorts of other creative stuff.

My Amazing Human Body

(Dorling Kindersley): This is presented by a skeleton (with insides showing) called Seemore Skinless. Seemore Skinless is very funny and he does all the kinds of things we do such as taking a bath, swimming, eating, cooking, reading, sleeping and drinking. You can learn all about the body by looking at his skeleton and his insides, by prodding them, scanning them and sometimes doing things with them such as filling his lungs with air or drilling his teeth.

Reviewed by Tristan Bedish, 6 Tonbridge Road, West Molesey, Surrey, KT8 2EL
email: tristan@bedish.demon.co.uk

Thinking about Ageism

If you are interested in children's rights, then John Holt's *Escape from Childhood*, is well worth obtaining. Possibly his most radical work, it questions all the assumptions we have about children and what they can do. The following extracts, from Chapter 17 *The Right to Vote*, gives a small sample of his ideas. Love it or hate it, this is a challenging book.

'Though we will most probably lower the voting age a year or two at a time, ultimately, I want the right to vote for people of any age. No one should be left out.'

'Most people assume that if young people voted they would vote foolishly, ignorantly, for trivial reasons. I don't think their reasons for voting would be any worse than those of many people who now vote, and often might be better. But even if it were certain that young people would vote more unwisely than most or all adults,

Reviews *continued*

this would not be a sufficient reason to deny them the vote.

There is much evidence that enormous numbers of people who now vote do so out of deep ignorance and for the most frivolous and foolish of reasons.'

Escape From Childhood, John Holt, published by Holt Associates, 1995. ISBN 0-913677-04

Obtainable from Holt Associates, 2269 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02140, USA

Phone 001 617 864 3100 fax 001 617 864 9235 email HoltGWS@aol.com

Reviewed by Barbara Kay

'The End of Education'

Neil Postman is a professor at New York University. He has written several books including 'Amusing ourselves to death' which is an excellent commentary on television's effect on society, 'The disappearance of childhood', 'Teaching as a subversive activity' and 'The end of education' which I have recently finished reading and heartily recommend for the following reasons. He reveals the faults in the school system that many of us are aware of and adds to our resolve to teach otherwise. Most schools have difficulty in simply providing students with nutritious lunches, he says. "Does school create a public imbued with confidence, a sense of purpose, a respect for learning and tolerance" asks Postman and goes on to answer a clear "No". There is very little tolerance for error in the classroom. That is one of the reasons

why many students are reluctant to speak, are nervous, cheat. In varying degrees being wrong is a disgrace.

He writes that there must be a reason for learning. There's no surer way to bring an end to schooling than for it to have no reason. The purpose of school today is to prepare children for competent entry into the economic life of a community. There was a time when educators became famous for providing reasons for learning; now they become famous for inventing a method. The idea is to teach the young how to make a living not how to make a life. In doing this the emphasis is on. He develops how school is notorious for neglecting to mention, let alone study, some of the more important events in human history or some of the important things we take for granted. For example the use of language: his teacher taught that the important thing about language is to know the difference between "he don't" and "he doesn't" and to spell correctly. But in changing our speech, we would be changing our politics, our taste, our passions, our sense of beauty, even our loyalties. Would such changes alienate us from our parents, relatives and friends? Is there something wrong with being from the "working class"? What new prejudices will become comfortable and what old ones despicable! In seeing the world through the prism of new ways of speaking, would we be better or worse. These are matters that should be at the heart of education.

On the subject of testing he says: In schools tests are given to determine how smart someone IS or, more precisely, how much smartness someone HAS. If on an IQ test one

Reviews *continued from overleaf*

child scores a 138 and another a 106, the first is thought to HAVE more smartness than the other. But this seems to be a strange conception - every bit as strange as "doing" arthritis or "having" criminality. I do not know anyone who HAS smartness. The people I know sometimes 'do' smart things and sometimes 'do' dumb things - depending on what circumstances they are in, how much they know about a situation and how interested they are. Smartness, so it seems to me, is a

specific performance done in a particular set of circumstances. It is not something you ARE or HAVE in measurable quantities.

I hope you enjoyed this small sample of Postman's writings and will go on to read more.

The End of Education, Neil Postman

Reviewed by Helen Donaldson, Domus, Crossheads, Colwich, Staffs ST18 0UG

Contacts

Off to Devon

We will be moving to the Devon area early next year ('99) and will be finally taking the plunge with home educating my daughter Rachael (12)

We are seeking other home educating families in the Devon area who are sensitive, spiritually aware, soul-centered and into self empowerment, for friendship, fun and support.

Karen Mann, Rachael Mann and Paul Walsh, 2 School Court, East Street, Dovercourt, Harwich, Essex CO12 3AS

North Yorkshire... or Anywhere!

We have recently joined EO and have a 2 year old son who will be "Educated Otherwise" ! We have just moved to Whitby and I would love to hear from anyone with children of a similar age preferably from the North Yorkshire area - although I'll write to anyone from

anywhere. So please drop me a line.

Leanne Osgerby, 28 Bracken Close, Eskdale Park, Whitby, N. Yorkshire, YO22 4HP

Desperately Seeking Somewhere (Soon)

Help - We (Sue, Katie, Dexter the dog, Crumb and Thumper the ducks) need somewhere to rent. If anyone has, or knows of, a house/cottage available long term at a reasonable price please would they contact us. We ideally need room for studying and studio/workshop space and a large garden ! Also, if anyone feels like sending us local papers with accommodation ads, we'd be happy to refund their expenses.

Sue and Katie Hallah, 78 Lowndes Way, Winslow, Bucks. MK18 3EL Tel. No. 01296 714949

Letters

Dear E.O.

In July this year (1998), we withdrew our twelve year old son from school. Having heard how some L.E.A.'s respond to home education, we were a little worried at what we might have to face ourselves. In fairness, our local L.E.A.'s attitude was positive and helpful. In their initial letter of confirmation of our home education, they offered us access to the School's Library Service. We can now borrow six items at a time, on a monthly loan; or pop in daily and change them if we want to; at no cost what so ever. We were also given E.O. details as well as another home education service.

Recently, I asked my local library if we could extend our book allowance of 12 for adults, and eight for children, as we were a home educating family. I was given a special ticket which allows us to borrow up to 20 books at a time on a three month loan, with no fines for late return. I would not have been aware of this service if I hadn't inquired.

Would any home educators like to keep in touch with me as pen friends? Having always enjoyed this sort of correspondence, it would be a nice way to extend support as I home educate my son in his first term away from school.

Keep up the good work with

E.O.

Linda Robertson, 33 Gorse Avenue,
South Shields, Tyne and Wear, NE34
7PP

Dear EO Members,

After reading Sarah Eastol's letter in the October newsletter, I realised that I am not the only person feeling in a bit of a dilemma at the moment. I have two children, a 3 year old boy and a 17 month girl. It has always been my intention to home educate them, but I have now reached a stage where my little boy is starting to feel lonely, as all his friends are now in nursery school or playgroup. He is now the oldest person in the mother toddler group and is slowly running out of company in his own age group. I find that I am concerned that he is going to start feeling 'different' soon, when he becomes more aware that he is not attending playgroup and nursery when his friends are.

I was wondering if there are any other EO members with similar age children, who would be interested in meeting up in London, on a regular basis, to participate in activities suitable for 'preschoolers' (for want of a better phrase). I regularly take my children up to the science museum, as they love the hands on sections and all the buttons to push! Also, we go up to Regent's park and occasionally the London Aquarium.

Would anybody out there be interested in meeting up with us? Or are there any people out there who already meet up with under 5's. If so, please feel free to get in touch.
Yours sincerely,

Linda Hutchby, 24 Steven's Close,
Epsom, Surrey. KT17 4RG Tel. No.
01372-748454
Email yev09@dial.pipex.com

Letters *continued from overleaf*

Dear E.O.,

I think Chris Satonis (EO Newsletter Oct 98 p 44) has missed the point about the 5th concept of the Libertarian Family Network (EO Newsletter Aug 98 p 49) it is not 'sexist' to state that "sexism.....is conveyed more strongly by fathers". Sexism is a situation of prejudice and discrimination against one sex class, women, by another, men. The fact is, we live in a male-dominated society - women live under male supremacy. However 'anti-sexist' a man might be, he is still a member of the powerful class.

In two parent (heterosexual) families, women are already committed to parenting. What needs to change is for men to be more committed or committed at all.

If each family arose spontaneously and complete out of primordial chaos, with no history, either for individuals, or for human society, then maybe Chris Satonis' objections would be valid. However, LFN appears to be looking at ways of changing the here and now, which has deep roots in male supremacy. "Parents.....will be exploring ways to challenge the inherent sexism.....within society." Sexism doesn't just come from parents but it is one source which we, as parents, are in a position to change radically.

Yours sincerely,

Donald A. Purves, 52 Hill Top Mount,
Leeds, LS8 4EW Tel No. 0113 249
1711

Dear Education Otherwise,

I am a 13 year old girl who, until

last year, went to school. I still want to continue with IGCSEs and have a tutor who is wonderful, but has never taught anyone IGCSEs before. I was wondering if anybody who has been through IGCSEs as a pupil or teacher could give me any advice. I'd also like to consider taking Maths, History, English Lit and English Language early. Any advice would be extremely helpful, and you can also ring me on :01491 572244 or fax me on: 01491 413178.

Yours sincerely,

Sophie Green, Benhams, Fairley,
Oxon, RG9 6JG

Dear Friends,

I am a former member of E.O. While I have chosen, after all, to educate my children in school, I remain supportive of the aims of your organisation.

I have followed, with interest, the recent debate about whether there should be homework for primary school children. For me, the argument should not be about whether school children need home-based learning, but about how learning at home can be effective.

Home-based learning need not be a carbon copy of school-based learning; indeed, a school methodology does not work at all well at home (if indeed it works at all). School teachers are not experts in home-based learning, and I feel resentful when they seek to prescribe how my time at home with my children should be spent; especially since my children are all achieving very well.

I would like schools to see that

Letters *continued*

a different kind of learning at home can successfully complement the school environment. My own philosophy has been to follow my children's own motivation and initiative in their learning, engaging with them in their chosen activities. This has resulted in children who are confident of their own ability to learn.

Education Otherwise has a wealth of experience and expertise in home-based learning which can inform the rest of society at this point, and I wondered whether you have seen the

opportunities in the recent debate to further your own campaign. I feel concerned that if school has proved ineffective as a means of educating our children, the only solution the government can find is to produce more of the same! Let's not have our homes turned into schools as well!

All power to your elbow!
Best wishes

Christine Hyde, 116 Woodbridge Road East, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP4 5QJ Tel. No. 01473 728764

Co-Ordinator's Update

Resignations

W. Yorkshire Diane Green
Wirral Carol Murphy
W. Midlands Dee Westbury
Cheshire Bernard Smith

interested please contact the co-ordinators secretary.

Areas needing a co-ordinator

Cheshire, Glos. South, Grampian, Gwynedd, Hertfordshire, Humberside, Isle of Man, Strathclyde, Tayside, W. Midlands, W. Yorkshire.

New Acting Co-ordinators

Cambridgeshire Debbie & Andrew Owen 01733 239384 (not as in contact list.)

Why not find out more about the role from
Isobel Bogucki 01403 261178

Eva O'Rorke is considering the W. York vacancy. If anyone else is also

Hush, hush, It's the literacy hour

Two teachers sitting in the kitchen gulped when they heard their seven year old tell their four year old who has just started school: "I'm the teacher, you're the child - you can't speak to me because it's the literacy hour."

from TES 16 October 1998, page 17 - Letters Page, submitted by Beverley Young.

REGIONAL DIARY

EVENTS ORGANISERS PLEASE REMEMBER, WHEN GIVING FULL DETAILS OF ACTIVITIES, THAT THE NEWSLETTER CAN BE READ BY PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT MEMBERS OF EO.

All regular meetings listed below will now be automatically included in every issue. Please notify the Newsletter Co-ordinator of any changes.

BATH

Hedgehogs meet for a wide variety of outings and events.

Contact: Jo Ball & Andy Hannen,
25 Larkhall Place BA1 6SF
Ros 01225 471253

BERKSHIRE

Wednesdays - Ice skating at John Nike Leisure Centre, Bracknell, 2pm - 4pm £1.50 including lesson & skate hire. Show EO card at reception.

Fridays - Indoor and outdoor activities at Woodford Park, 1.30pm - 4pm,
Contact: Pat Connor 0118 9662123
2, Whitegates Lane, Reading
RG6 1ED

Home Learners Group every Monday for visits, walks, picnics etc & alternate Thursdays at Legoland
Contact: Liz 01344 420235

BRISTOL

Alternate Mondays - Ice skating
Alternate Tuesdays - Swimming at Bishopsworth Pool, 1.30 - 2.30
Fridays, Totterdown YMCA, 10.45 - 2.00, term time only.
Contact: Kathy Nott 0117 966 8265

BUCKS (SOUTH)

Fortnightly meetings in a church hall, crafts and other activities, £2 per session.
Contact: Trish 01494 783 398

CAMBRIDGE

Regular monthly meetings at St Matthews Church Hall, nr Grafton Centre.

Fridays 5-8 yrs, French group (Alliance Francaise £3.50), shared lunch, music group (£2.50)
Contact: Penny 01223 322703
Monthly at Alconbury, activities run by Christian group. All welcome
Contact: Audrey Hill 01480 219881

CLEVELAND & DURHAM

Last Wednesday of the month
Contact: Pauline 01642 55 628

CORNWALL

Contact: Anna Wheeler 01209 890378

DERBYSHIRE

Wednesdays - 11am-3pm.
1st Wed Watermeadows, Mansfield (swimming), 2nd Wed, Atlow nr Ashbourne, 3rd Wed, Matlock area, 4th Wed Long Eaton area.
Contact: Trevor Denyer 01629 56609

DEVON

Contact: Sammy & Nick Vidal-Hall
01548 830716
Linda & Paul Hitchman
01392 660216

DEVON PLYMOUTH

Alternate Wednesdays/Thursdays.
Swimming & ice skating, 12 noon
£1.50/person/child (under 5s free)
Contact: Sandra 01752 408362
Kim 01752 223906
Debbie 01752 480901

DEVON EAST/DORSET WEST

Fortnightly meetings at Monkton Wyld Court. Activities + grounds to play in.
Contact: Habiba 01297 561070
Lisa 01297 445685
for activities list

DORSET (BOURNEMOUTH)

Weekly meetings and visits.
Contact: David Dowl 01202 763688
88 Westcliff Rd Westbourne
Bournemouth BH4 8BG (SAE)

ESSEX

Essex Epicycle gives details of all events. £2.50 for 4 issues.

Contact: Sandie Coffee 01268 73325
17 south View Rd, Rettendon,
Chelmsford CM3 8DX

FIFE

Outings & get togethers

Contact: Karen Spy 01337 830976

HEREFORD AND WORCESTER

Second Wednesday of each month
at Yvonne Rowse's house, near
Kidderminster.

Last Wednesday, Jane Charles and
Chris Harper's house near Malvern.
Contact: Yvonne Rowse 01209 400750

HERTFORDSHIRE

Fortnightly Thursdays in Hatfield
Contact: Jeffrey Benge 0181 442 7528

ISLE OF WIGHT

2nd Saturday, gathering/workshop
Weekly activities at Newport Youth
Club 10am - 1pm
Contact: Rachel 01983 872997
Alison 01983 563862

KENT

Regular meetings & activities:

Canterbury -
Contact: Janet 01227 454309

Bishopscourne -
Contact: Sarah 01304 812859

Barming -
Contact: Jean 01622 820206

Dartford -
Contact: Angie 0181 3007238

Kington "Young Explorers" parent led
lessons, activities

Contact: Teresa 01843 850389
Events list available.

Contact: Send sae to Amanda Mackenzie
16, Brambletree Cott, Borstal
Rochester, ME1 3TN,

LANCASHIRE

Monthly in Bolton, St Johns Hall,
Darwen.
Contact: Angelika Walter 01254 603 497
108 Tockholes Rd, Darwen
BB3 1LL (SAE please)

LEICESTERSHIRE

Monthly meetings at Friends Meeting
House, Leicester plus meetings at
homes, visits, newsletter etc.
Contact: Lucy Charlton 0116 2592118

LONDON

CHOICE- newsletter covering events,
info, views in London & SE £4.50pa
Contact: PO Box 5, Belvedere DA17 52U
Angie 0181 300 7236
Andy 0181 306 0168
<http://choice.memail.com>
<ecochoice@memail.com>

Mondays (alternate) Hubert House,
Dartford. Playing, projects, garden,
Contact: Angie 0181 300 7236
Andy 0181 306 9999

Tuesdays - 11am Chissold Park
playground.

Contact: Charlotte 0171 254 0419
Wednesdays - Honor Oak playground.
Contact: Keith Hertog 0181 776 859

Fridays - 11 - 2, Dartford Hall.
Garden, art room, dining room.
Contact: Mary or Andy 0181 306 0168

MANCHESTER

Bi-weekly at Peel Moat Sports
Centre, Stockport. Sports, games, soft
play, gym (over 16's). £1.10 per child.
Monthly Art Classes at Stockport Art
Gallery and meeting at Friends
Meeting House for older children.
Contact: Gil Wills 0161 442 8723
Computing Skills, 1st & 2nd Sats at
Moore family's home. Limited places.
Contact: Karen 01204 573136

NORFOLK

NEON gives details of all events. £1
plus four large saes.
Contact: Ali Willer 28 Cozens-Hardy Rd
Sprowston, Norwich. NR7 8QF

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Tuesdays & Fridays weekly activities
and visits including Kingsthorpe
Community Centre, Museums, Parks,
Wacky Warehouse, factories etc
Contact: sae to Mr & Mrs F Benham
4 Pilgrim Way, Wellingborough,
Northants NN8 2A

OXFORD

Weekly meetings - 267 Marston Rd.

Classes in Art, (all ages) Philosophy
(over 8's) German, (all ages).
Fortnightly, Science Theory &
Speakers Corner.
Monthly, parents meetings
Contact: Wendy Plested 01865 514973

SUFFOLK

Meetings every 3 weeks with grant-
aided professional workshops.
Contact: Sarah Guthrie 01379 783678

SURREY

Fridays - Ice skating at the Spectrum
1.30-2.30, £2.35 (+65p for group
lesson).
Tuesdays- fortnightly visits, walks etc
around Guildford. (SAE please)
Contact: Penny Meader, 11 Thompsons Cl,
Pirbright, Woking GU24 0JG

SUSSEX

There is something happening nearly
every day,
Contact: Isobel Bogucki 01403 261178
Anne Rix 01435 862794

Tuesday Club at Lindfield

Contact: Liz Evans 01444 414058

Monthly Newsletter/ Events List -
£8pa or £4 for 6 months, cheques to
ESEO please.

Contact: Lyndon Pugh, The Barn,
Mongers Farm, Barcombe,
Lewes BN8 5BQ

TAYSIDE

Lots of different activities each month.
Contact: Catriona Morrison 01382 864930

TYNESIDE

Monthly meetings, visits, activities etc
Contact: Linda Robertson 01911 4567007

WALES

Mondays - Cardigan area, meetings &
outings nr Newport
Contact: Anne Pope 01239 710905
Monthly meetings in Llanelli/
Swansea area.
Contact: Sue Haggerty 01269 861902
Weekly meetings in NE Wales /
Borders area.

Contact: Genny Bove 01978 757489
49 Westminster Rd, Moss
Valley, Wrexham LL11 6DH
£2 for a year's listing

WEST MIDLANDS

• Birmingham

Alternate Mondays - 10am - 4pm,
St Paul's Venture, Malvern St (A-Z,
p90, 2B). Grassed playground,
urban farm, football pitch, indoor
space. £1 per family plus 50p per
child. Drinks (tea, coffee, squash)
provided, bring packed lunch.

Contact: Rod Drury 01384 349064

Dee westbury 01527 452329

Last Wednesday of each month
10.30 -12.30, Centre for the Child,
Central Library. Three multimedia
computers.

Contact: Rod Drury 01384 349064

• Dudley - Wolverhampton

Third Friday of each month, 10.30
- 3.30, Cotwall End Nature Centre,
Dudley, 20 acre site with walks, play
areas, ponds. Wildlife, heated
room. £1 per family + 50p per child.
Contact: Rod Drury 01384 349 064

• Walsall

First Thursday, 1.30 - 3.30.
Contact: Penny Clarke 01922 745465

YORKSHIRE, NORTH & EAST

Regular meetings & visits etc
Contact: Merayah Allwood 01904 448643
jemergram @ zetnet.co.uk

YORKSHIRE - WEST

Outings & activities.
Contact: Diane 01484 846946

First & third Wednesdays 10.30 -
1.00, Ground Floor Centre, Hebden
Bridge. Other activities arranged.
Contact: Katherine 01422 844459

Last Thursday of each month 11.00 -
1.30 at the Civic Centre, Huddersfield.
Contact: Diane 01484 846946
Clare 0113 2690061

Second Friday of the month, 1.00 -
4.00at Moortown Baptist Church, King
Lane, Leeds. £2 per family.
Contact: Judith 0113 2265515
Clare 0113 2690061

Notices

Membership Cards

All members who have received this newsletter from the normal mailing run (printed sticky label on brown envelope) will have received a membership card for 1999 in the envelope. **Please note that the expiry date of your card no longer reflects the expiry date of your membership so it's important to look out for your renewal letter in the normal way when it is due or make a note of your standing order payment date.**

Please start to use this new card immediately as this will establish continuity at the places we all visit regularly. If you lose your card or have discarded the envelope please send a stamped addressed envelope to :

58 Brindley Close, Wembley, HA0 1BS
Janet Wilkinson Database Secretary

Credit Cards

A reminder that our credit card facilities are up and running and you can buy books, join or renew by credit card if you wish.

Volunteers Needed

1. Someone who is good at keeping accurate records to deal with our banker's orders. This is a small job with about 8 bankers' orders a month which need to be sent off to the banks promptly. It would be useful if this person, once familiar with the job, could also take on the covenants where accurate record keeping is particularly important.

2. Someone to hold a copy of the Directory of Grant Making Trusts to study it for possible sources of income (e.g. national phone line, resources centres) then, with my help, make applications to selected Trusts. This is an ongoing job.

3. Someone to do research into the best type of phone line for our enquiry line and write some recommendations for the Council meeting on 6th Feb. The 0891 code has changed to 0900 1 and I have had a number of suggestions but no time to follow them up.

Please contact Priscilla Park Weir (Treasurer) for more information on any of the above.

Resource Guide

The Resource Guide answers such questions as - what have you really enjoyed or found useful? Although it sat still for a year it is now growing again.

For a copy, please send £6 which also covers postage and packing to:

Barbara Edwards, 12 Oxford Road,
Guildford, Surrey, GU1 3RP

Tele-discussions

I am going to run two kinds of tele-discussions, one for philosophy and values, and the other to cover the nuts and bolts of home education. My own input is free, so the cost is your own telephone bill plus about £2 per session to cover the hire of the bridge (which allows 10 or 20 people to be on

Notices *continued from overleaf*

the phone at one time.) You do not need a computer, just an ordinary, old fashioned telephone (not cordless or

mobile). For further details, please contact Barbara Edwards, 01483 832250 or becoach@compuserve.com

**G.C.S.E.'s THROUGH
CORRESPONDENCE**

I have compiled a database of establishments offering G.C.S.E.'s via correspondence. If anyone wishes to have a copy, I would be very pleased to fax or e-mail it to you. (Alternatively, please send an S.A.S.E. to the address below) I am very keen that this database is kept up-to-date, so if after reading it you know of any more places offering G.C.S.E.'s in this way, please let me know!

WARNING! Database format c. 16 pages, list format c. 11.
Ann Charles,
6 Bridewell Street, Wymondham, Norfolk, NR18 0AR
e-mail:

**Doing It Their Way.
The Theory and Practice of
Autonomous Education.**

I am currently doing some research for a book which will be published by Educational Heretics Press. If you home educate in an autonomous style and would be interested in helping by answering some questions please contact me by snail or electronic mail.

Any material that is used will not compromise the privacy of children or families who have contributed.

Thanks in advance
Jan Fortune-Wood
St Barnabas Vicarage, Overgreen Drive, Kingshurst, Birmingham B37 6EY
Email: Jan.FW@btinternet.com



Design and Win a New EO T-shirt

The Winner is

Ashok Baruah, from Mansfield, Notts

Thanks to everyone who entered, the standard of all the entries was amazing. Details of the new T-shirts will be available soon.

Angie Pullin.

Notices and Advertisements

Family Weeks at Monkton Wyld Court (Dorset)

February 14th – 19th 1999

February 21st – 26th 1999

£140 Adults

£80 Children 5 – 15 years old

£45 Children 2 – 4 years old

(some concessions available)

Five days for all ages, with time to enjoy the peace of the countryside.

You will also be very welcome to initiate some activities for yourself.

Each family week will have a flavour of its own with unique activities led by different leaders.

For further details 01297 560342.

Ex teacher, science graduate, experienced in teaching chemistry to A level, maths and sciences to GCSE, offers tutoring services involved in EO. Direct tutoring available in the Chelmsford area, also postal/internet services.
Tel 017371 820824 e-mail Richard.J.Frost@btinternet.



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splendid... produced to very high standards

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very carefully planned... effective

a lovely understanding of and approach to children's learning

my daughter (5) loved the book and would get it out each night, eager to carry on

...a wonderful mixture of scholarship, wit and fun...

Enquiries to

Non-stop Books, 26 Lanbury Road, Oxford, OX2 7AU

Tel 01865 554953 Fax 01865 553443

e-mail 100532.1550@compuserve.com

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, EO is run entirely by volunteers and has no income except members' subscriptions. Advertisements should be limited to 50 words or less and sent (with any donation) to the editor of the next issue. Advertisers who wish to discuss larger ads should contact the newsletter co-ordinator.

Advertisements

WISE OWL EDUCATIONAL SOFTWARE

PO Box 334 Abingdon OX14 2YB
Telephone 01235 - 529808
email wiseowls@aol.com

The only UK children's shareware library, established 1991. Specialising in educational programs and games (DOS, Windows 3.1 & 95) for all PCs (XTs to Pentiums): 800 titles for 2-16+ years. 3½" & 5¼" media. Free newsletter & advice.

★ Atoms Symbols & Equations £3 ★ Holiday Fun - 10 Educational Winter Games for ages 3-12 £9 ★ Early Learning £9 ★ Xmas Clip Art £3 ★ Family Fun £3 ★ Special packs for 286, 386, 486s. UK Home Educator's Mail Order Resource List can now be viewed on our Web Site.

<http://members.aol.com/wiseowls/index.html>

HOME STUDY EDUCATION BOOKS

We supply the largest choice of childrens education and study books in the U.K. All major publishers and specialist books, for pre-school, primary and secondary education. Home study materials for home educated children. Friendly advice on choosing the best study books for your childs needs. Please call us for more details on **01434 322372**

.....REGIONAL DIARY
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Wednesdays for new support
activities group
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Tuition offered in Maths up to GCSE, English and German up to lower secondary, basic literacy and numeracy, music (incl. recorder and piano) up to lower secondary. Extensive teaching experience in Steiner-Waldorf schools. Please phone 01273 685 644

Services and products on these pages have not been endorsed by Education Otherwise

NEWSLETTER FOR JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES WHO HOME EDUCATE THEIR CHILDREN

For a sample copy, please send four 20p stamps and your address to:

Louise English
41 Queens Road
Horley
Surrey RH6 7AH

Advertisements *continued*

Truancy Information Cards.

These cards (5cm x 9cm) have been produced by our Legal team for children to carry when out on their own. They state that the child is home educated and police and LEA officials have no power to detain him/her. Education Act is quoted on other side. They are not ID cards, there is no space for a name.

If you would like one send a stamped SAE AND 2 x 2nd class stamps (to cover cost of laminating) to:
Choice in Education, 192 Old Farm Avenue, Sidcup, Kent, DA15 8AL

Services and products advertised in these pages have not been endorsed by Education Otherwise.

FULL TIME MOTHERS National Voice for Mothers at Home.

Send SAE marked "Leaflet Please" to:
Full Time Mothers
P.O. Box 186
LONDON SW3 5RF
or phone - Now! - 01747.811313

PLEASE SUPPORT THIS HARD-WORKING GROUP

EDUCATING CHILDREN AT HOME by Allen Thomas

Offered to EO members at a special price of £12.99 from;
85, Coleridge Rd, London N8SEG
cheques made payable to Education Otherwise.
see page 28

CHOICE IN EDUCATION

The independent monthly publication for home educators.
Years subscription £5.00 make cheques or PO payable to
A Pullin. For sample copy send stamped SAE to:
CinE PO Box 5 Belvedere DA17 5ZU
<choice he@mcm.com> www.choice mcm.com
Phone Angie 0181-300 7236 or Andy 0171-813 5907



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A Wonderful Christmas Present

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**'A Compilation of Selections to Help
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Better Quality printing and new
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The Otherwise Club is a Company Limited by Guarantee

Taking Children Seriously

Do your children yearn for genuine freedom – in their lives, not just in ‘education’? Are you looking for practical ways of improving your relationships with them? TCS is a radical educational philosophy that goes far beyond the idea that children learn best when following their own interests. It represents a profound criticism of prevailing theories of education, and provides a positive alternative.

To subscribe, send a cheque (payable to TCS) for £8 for 4 issues or £15 for 8 issues to TCS, Ref E, 46 Latimer Grange, Latimer Road, Oxford OX3 7PH. For other rates, phone (0)1865 761817 (UK) or 416 947-6351 (USA) or email sales@TCS.ac. www.TCS.ac

MODERN TIMES
documentary director
(BBCTV) would like to
speak to home-based
educating parents.
For further details
contact Beverley
Young on 01772
492245.

And finally a quote from a brilliant book. If you can find it, buy it!

When I first attended the Boston Conservatory of Music, the clarinetist Attilio Poto was one of my teachers. The first lesson he assigned me was a bit more difficult than I was technically ready for. After a week of diligent practice I still couldn't play it very well. When I went for my second lesson, I expected that Mr Poto would have me spend at least another week practising the same exercise. Instead, he assigned me the next exercise in the book, which was even more difficult than the one with which I had struggled for the past week.

I spent the week attempting to play the new exercise, and when the time came for my lesson I could not play it very well. I suggested to Mr Poto that it was time to perfect my technique by focusing on that exercise. Mr Poto only smiled as he turned the page to the next, and more difficult, exercise in the book.

For three more weeks, I was assigned progressively more difficult

exercises to play, each of which I was unable to play well after a week of practice.

At the sixth lesson, Mr Poto turned back to the very first exercise he had assigned me - my exercise for the first week - and asked me to play it. Although I had not even looked at that exercise for the past five weeks, I was able to play it well. He then tuned to the second week's exercise and, again, I was able to play it well.

Had I spent six weeks attempting to perfect those first two exercises, I would not have been able to play them as well as I did that day.

Mr Poto knew something about assimilation that I was only beginning to learn: one way to assimilate your present step is by moving on to your next step, even if you feel inadequately prepared for that next step. When you move to your next step, you are somehow able to incorporate more than you now know about your present step.
The Path of Least Resistance, Robert Fritz, 1984, Stillpoint Publishing, ISBN 0-913299-34-0

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212 Gordon Avenue, Camberley, Surrey,
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*(subscription renewals, address changes,
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Tel: 01865 514973

College Contact: vacant

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Pam Bellinger: 19 Fortescue Drive,
Chesterton, Bicester Oxon OX6 8UT
Tel. 01869 252701 (252701)

EO Stalls: Lucy Charlton, Church Lane
Cottages, Newton Harcourt, Leics
LE8 0FT Tel 0116 2592118

Stationery: Pam Bellinger *EO stationery, re-
use labels (£2.50 per 100) leaflets, posters,
membership forms, car stickers and are
available from; 19 Fortescue Drive, Chesterton,
Bicester Oxon OX6 8UT Tel. 01869 252701
(252701)*
(Donations towards postage & printing welcomed)

Publications: Chris Harper
For details of EO publications, information
leaflets and back issues of newsletters, send a
SAE to; Badgers Holt, Birchwood, Storridge,
Malvern, Worcs. WR13 5HA (01886 884740)
*If you have had your publications list for a
while, ring Chris to check on the availability of
the items you want before ordering.*

Council Members

*If you have a problem, contact your nearest
council member;*

Christine Adey (Dorset)
Andy Archer (Leics)
Jude Ashley-Walker (Isle of Wight)
Pam Bellinger (Oxon)
Isobel Bogucki (Sussex West)
Lucy Charlton (Leics)
Jill Fisher (Leics)
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IF YOUR NEWSLETTER DOES NOT
ARRIVE, PLEASE CONTACT THE
DATABASE SECRETARY TO CHECK IF
YOU ARE ON THE DATABASE

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 50p per minute at all times. Recorded message, average call length; 1- 2 minutes)

<http://www.netlink.co.uk/users/e_o/>
<e_o@netlink.co.uk>

