

EDUCATION OTHERWISE

Reflecting on the Past
Envisioning the Future
featuring:
a tribute to Dick Kitto



OCTOBER 1999
NEWSLETTER 130

SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE DECEMBER ISSUE OF THE EDUCATION OTHERWISE NEWSLETTER TO THE FOLLOWING EDITORS:

LETTERS & ARTICLES

CHRISTINE ADEY, DUNBURY COTTAGE,
MILTON ABBAS, DORSET DT11 0DH
01258 880355

CHILDREN'S PAGES

EMMA & MOLLY WHITEHALL
28 COZENS HARDY RD, SPROWSTON
NORWICH NR7 8QF

REGIONAL DIARY, ADVERTS, EO BUSINESS

MARTINE ARCHER, 3 BROOKFIELD,
HAMPSTHWAITE, HARROGATE, W YORK,
HG3 2EF 01423 7703396

ASPERGER'S SYNDROME

CHRISTINE WATERMAN, 85 ELFRIDA
RD, WATFORD, HERTS WD1 8AT
01923 464773

Please include your name, address & phone number & mark material "for publication". Contributions are more likely to be included if they are concise.

Deadline for the December issue, 1st November.

EDITORIAL TEAM:

LETTERS & ARTICLES

Christine Adey 01258 880355

EO BUSINESS & ADVERTISING

Martine Archer 01423 770396

BOOK & SOFTWARE REVIEWS

Sally Hall 01559 370908

HOME EDUCATION NEWS

Ann Kennedy-Smith 01223 356627

LOCAL NEWS - vacant

EO NEWS

Gwen Baldock 01904 421982

PROBLEM PAGE

Sue white 01379 870036

BACK ISSUE SELECTIONS

Sarah Guthrie 01379 783678

ACTING NEWSLETTER CO-ORDINATOR

Christine Adey 01258 880355

DISCLAIMER

The opinions in this publication are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the editors, nor of Education Otherwise as a whole. This newsletter is edited by volunteers and its primary purpose is to provide support and communication between members.

All contributions (including adverts) have been accepted in good faith and have not been in any way endorsed by Education Otherwise which cannot be held responsible for the consequences of responding to any of them.

COPYRIGHT

Any item published in this newsletter may be reprinted in other home education magazines in the UK or abroad or on the internet. If you do not want your contribution reproduced without your consent, please state clearly that you wish to retain the copyright.

Dick Kitto

1917-1999



The death this June of the founder of EO, Dick Kitto, marked the passing of an era. For many, Dick was a significant influence on our lives and a loving friend who is greatly missed. The following tributes are a celebration of Dick, his life, and the way he inspired home educating families.

Dick Kitto

A man of open heart and open mind

(from the obituaries that appeared in the *Guardian* and *Daily Telegraph*)

Dick Kitto, who has died aged 81, was an inspiration to two movements which have grown at an ever increasing rate - organic gardening and home education - and a wise and willing servant to many others. When he began Powling's Compost in the late 60s, compost was still something of a joke. Now there is a national Community Composting Association and organic gardeners galore. In the 70s, when he set up Education Otherwise to support a few dozen families, he can hardly have known that within 20 years the home educators in this country would be counted in tens of thousands.

In the early fifties Dick was appointed secretary to the headmaster at Dartington Hall School. The post was an important one, and Dick became a trusted friend and adviser to the pupils. In 1969 Royston Lambert (then Head of Dartington) set up links with Northcliffe Comprehensive School near Conisbrough in south Yorkshire. Dick and his wife Pat were made wardens of The Terrace, a building that was to serve as a hostel for visiting Dartingtonians, and as a home for the Raising Of the School Leaving Age project. They took on the 15 boys the local school least wanted to see for another year, and ran the group as a democracy. After three terms of daily discussions, caring for the buildings and grounds, practical work to make money, frequent expeditions, drama and help with literacy, the boys became confident, responsible and articulate.

In 1973 the Foundation for Alternatives appointed Dick as the first warden of Lower Shaw Farm near Swindon. He set up courses and conferences on organic farming, co-counselling, energy conservation, CND, alternative medicine - and also alternative education. This brought in families who taught their children at home. When tv coverage of home education attracted a lot more parents, Dick started a newsletter for them. The movement grew under his guidance until the group picked up an impetus of its own and Dick handed it over to the informal democracy under which it flourishes still.

Lower Shaw was one of the first host farms for Willing Workers On Organic Farms, which also held its first meetings there. WWOOF has now grown to an international organisation, and stressed-out city workers can book themselves in for working holidays on organic farms as far away as New Zealand or Ghana. During this time Dick founded the Rural Resettlement Group and the Combined Organic Movement for Education and Training. Dick was closely involved with Tools for Self-Reliance, which collects and refurbishes tools to send to developing countries. Archbishop Desmond Tutu recently spoke in praise of their work.

Dick was a writer throughout his life. His published books were *Composting* (1977 - described by Pauline Pears of the Henry Doubleday Research Association as the first book about compost which made sense), *Planning the Organic Vegetable Garden*

(1986), and, jointly, *The Rural Resettlement Handbook* (1984). He also wrote a regular column in *The Countryman*.

In 1982 Dick set up Lighthouse Publishing, in order to publish *Teach your Own* by the American educationalist, John Holt. Two other Holt books - *Learning all the Time* and *Never too Late* - followed. Lighthouse was the first to bring John Taylor Gatto's *Dumbing Us Down* to the attention of English educators.

Dick, conspicuously shabby in apparently indestructible old tweeds and sweaters, did not believe that he had achieved anything much, but in fact inspired and influenced uncountable lives. "I am an insatiable peerer over hedges and through cracks in fences," he wrote in *Planning the Organic Vegetable Garden*. He saw much in the world that he did not like, but he did not try to change our minds by lecturing us; he simply set an example.

Dick Kitto is survived by Pat and Elspeth, daughter Lucy and three grandchildren.

David Gribble
Brian Guthrie

Jackie Fearnley

My first encounter with Dick was when he was up to his elbows in bread dough looking rather bemused by all these odd families who'd turned up from every part of the country. I think I was a little taken aback by his abrupt manner but soon realized this was a combination of honesty and a wanting to get on with the job in hand, without wasting time on waffle and over-politeness. I came to value the fact that with Dick you always knew where you were.

It was a good feeling to know that through Dick one was connecting with a tradition of liberal, independent thinkers (and doers) - not slavishly trying to be politically correct but having the confidence to feel society could be changed for the better. I suppose it was that feeling of purpose that I carried away from Lower Shaw Farm and that gave me encouragement during the years of home educating our children. Working with Dick on the Open Door programme was an opportunity to experience his sense of humour. If I try to think of an adjective to describe the way he seemed - "bemused" is the one that always springs to mind. Perhaps this detachment is what enabled him to see what was wrong with society but not to be too cast down by human failings. Even as I write I can hear Dick laughing and warning me about getting carried away.

James Fearnley adds Amongst Dick's many talents was an ability to appear to be asleep in meetings but wake up with an apposite comment at just the right time. I am glad the last time we met, at West Wittering, we parted with him wearing my Panama hat. How I would like to have seen him again wearing it. Dear Dick!

Sarah Guthrie

What to say about Dick? Every time I pick up and read something he wrote, I hear him like a taperecording. He wrote so fluently, in absolutely his own voice, that it is a permanent memory of him. His sense of the ironic, of the nonsensical and the eccentric, comes through in so much of his writing. Here, describing the court case against the EO family, the Harrisons, back in 1980:

"...The first prosecution expert, their Chief Educational Psychologist, went into the witness box, short, lean, bearded, matter-of-fact. Outside it had begun to snow. The world went quieter. Expressions like 'learning the basics' and 'structured approach' winged their way gently across the courtroom. There were occasional ebullient outbursts by Ivan Geffen, the Harrison's solicitor. 'What will the world be like in 15 years time, 10 years, 5? How will most of us fare in a nuclear holocaust? in a civil war?' But these arresting words fell upon empty ears. Nuclear holocaust? Civil war? What was that? This was Herefordshire, this green and pleasant land, 1980 - what has nuclear holocaust got to do with us?"

And he wrote about himself just as perceptively as about anything else. He had lovely italic script, and used a black biro ('you can get quite a good effect with it' he told me), and wrote on the backs of old A4 manilla envelopes which, he claimed, were like an endless sea flowing through his letterbox. He was a great recycler of things, from junk mail to tools for the third world. Until relatively recently he built wonderful garden sheds from reclaimed doors and glass panels discarded by a neighbouring window company.

It's impossible to convey just how much Dick did for EO. He spent so much of his life working for freedom of choice in education, and for the rights of the child. He worked hard on behalf of countless parents, wrote letters and articles, talked on the phone, ran meetings and groups. I'll always be grateful for his sound advice. When Lydia (then 8) insisted on trying school, I was really upset and felt that I had failed. Dick said he thought I had succeeded, by giving her the power to make her own decisions. He understood so well what the issues were, at a time when we were so immersed in EO that it was hard to see the wood for the trees.

Dick had tremendous energy, intellectual and physical, and bore his eventual enforced reduction in activity with patience and acceptance. Towards the end of his life, he admitted that he had lost the inclination to respond to educational issues, though he remained concerned about the fate of Summerhill. He described himself as a pessimist, but at the same time believed that it is better to light a candle in the darkness. "Faith. Always have faith" he told me.

Kate Freeman

I can hardly believe it but it was 17 years ago that I met Dick at Lower Shaw Farm. We had just adopted a Lower Shaw Farm collie puppy, still alive to help us count those years, whose name Yeo Yeo keeps us connected to that marvellous network. That meeting was the auspicious start of our home educating lives.

We had been invited to lead discussions in alternatives, EO in my case. Up until then I had never heard of Dick, nor of his instrumental role in releasing the intense interest in home education that had bubbling away. Why on earth wasn't Dick leading my discussion? Yet he participated in my session with such youthful enthusiasm that he gave me the gratifying sensation that our choice to home educate was spot on. I felt valued, encouraged. It gave me such a boost after months of lonely self doubt.

Compounded by the vulnerability of a young family to protect, nurture and educate, parting company with education's conventions together with deep seated cultural mores, is one of the most lonely and isolating roads a parent can follow - certainly in the 70s and 80s. The energy and initiatives that Dick unleashed in so many of us in 'those heady days' as he called them gave rise to a supportive network that is unique and precious that can only be valued by one who've been there. There had been a rush of enthusiasm to embrace alternatives to counter humdrum materialism and bring these into every day life for all communities. And Dick was there to help them see the light of day. But his modesty was such that he talked as if it all had very little to do with him, surprised at the successful turn of events.

I interviewed Dick for an EO newsletter in 1988. I watched him turn his bracken patch into a productive allotment, a credit to his wonderful composting. I followed him into his workshop where he was restoring tools for developing countries. I listened to him telling me about the fun he was having translating Italian books which gave him the excuse to travel to Italy. Here was a man, so sane, so balanced, quietly pursuing his own interests day by day the way I suspect he would like to see all children and adults able to pursue their lives. Unregimented, creative, peaceful.

Now that Dick has gone, I have been sadly wondering who will inspire us to quietly pursue lives that listen to our inner selves? As I write this an answer has suddenly occurred to me. They are right here on our door step - our own home grown children! Thank you Dick.

Anne Wade

The image of Dick that comes first to me is of him helping to set up the legal group in the early eighties: he showed so beautifully how to empower people to learn and do things for themselves. He gave us the basic tools - photocopies of the 1944 Education Act relevant to EO, and advice on where to look if we needed more - but he did not take charge of the process.

Dick wasn't one to suffer fools gladly, but he was often good at bringing them down to earth gently. He could intervene quite forcefully if he felt something was wrong, and would show great passion at times, and humour; but mostly in those meetings he sat quietly, only speaking when we asked him something, or when we floundered hopelessly. I was sorry not to hear more from him, and yet his silent presence was enabling.

There were 14 of us, and he managed to relate to each of us. We felt quite inadequate, and he made us feel that it was all right to start from exactly where we were. He made us feel good enough. He gave us confidence in our ability to learn to use the law, at a time when we found it difficult even to get from the beginning of a legal sentence to the end without losing track of what it meant. He didn't give us answers, but he gave us reassurance that we could find answers as we worked together. He encouraged us to stretch ourselves and be the best we were capable of being, without feeling we had to be perfect, or take on more than we were able to do. It struck me at the time as a good demonstration of how to educate otherwise.

I found him wonderfully warm and immediate, serious and light-hearted, witty and intelligent. I didn't know him that well, but I loved him.

Matt Holland (Lower Shaw Farm)

In the mid 1970s interesting things began to happen at a north Wiltshire dairy farm on the outskirts of Swindon. There were comings and goings of people with rucksacks and corduroy trousers, and the hedges had grown high. What was going on down on the farm?

And so it was, in 1978, that my mother and sister knocked at the door of Lower Shaw Farmhouse. They were invited in, they said, by "a nice man who was friendly but posh". He made "a funny drink" (Barleycup) and talked to them about housing development and communal living.

In 1980, I met Dick myself. On first impression he struck me as a man of mischief as much as a man of ideas and purpose. His eyes twinkled and there was irony in almost everything he said. To me, initially, he was a challenge, so tall, so well-spoken, so confident and so connected. He talked as if to test and to tease, it seemed. It was only gradually that I discovered that, what to me looked like an outer brusqueness, actually masked an inner warmth and a very loving nature. And he had a real knack of turning words into action, finding what was needed and bringing the right people together. Every time I met him, he had another idea, or two, or three, with a wrinkle on his brow and a twinkle in his eye.

The hundreds of supporters of Lower Shaw Farm and its many visitors are thankful for his ideals, his work, his life and his love.

DiCox

I hadn't really realised just quite how much influence Dick's attitudes to life have had upon most of my parenthood. And yet undoubtedly that is why he so frequently enters my mind. At Billesdon (where we lived in Leicestershire), Dick was staying with us to travel to the court trial of the Harrison family in Worcestershire (a victory and precedent for EO and various definitions of education law thanks to Dick, Roland Meighan and others). It was winter 1979: as we bounced westerly across the countryside in the Renault 4 with the three children on the back seat, we laughed because I had to keep stopping to scrape the freezing snow off the windscreen. Dick observed that he felt we (as a family) seemed to have 'struck the right balance' between freedom and chaos where the children were concerned. It was a remark I have always remembered and gratefully cherished.

My earliest memories of Dick, other than many telephone conversations, which costly aspect of EO I remember Dick subsidised out of his own pocket when membership was still below 100, are at Lower Shaw Farm, 1978. We discussed educational philosophies in a cloud of daddy-long-legs which I hated catching in my long hair; now every daddy-long-leg takes me grinning back to the image of Dick in that cloud, totally oblivious. How very different it all is now in EO from the days when Dick was skipper. Whilst giving us freedom to steer, he continued to guide with considerate judgement. Despite its consuming so much of his time and energy, it took a considerable time for him to completely relinquish the helm. Were the steps which have followed ones which Dick envisaged? Whether or no, EO would not be here without the dedication which Dick single-handedly devoted to it. I hope you are proud, Dick, of the course upon which your ship has continued to be steered. I'm delighted to have been a member of that crew, without which the lives of the younger Cox generation would not have been the happy ones that they are.

Sandie Cottee

I first saw Dick on *OpenDoor*, a community programme in which he spoke of EO's conception, and the parents right to home educate. Marc was just a few months old at that time, and I had given no thought to his future education, but at that instance, I knew! I still have the letter Dick sent me, in response to that TV programme, full of encouragement, inspiration and energy. Soon after, Brian and I went to Lower Shaw Farm for one of EO's first 'gatherings'. A wonderful occasion where we met Dick, Sarah Guthrie, the Fearnleys and other encouraging, inspiring people.

For me, Dick was the backbone of Education Otherwise, and if I were to list significant people in my life, Dick Kitto would be placed somewhere near the top. For, unknowingly, he was to influence a major course in my life and I look back at our meeting with great fondness and gratitude. Back in 1977, home education was relatively unheard of (compared with today) and over the pursuing years I *may* have learnt of the right to home educate, and chosen the same path. But I will always be eternally grateful that I met Dick when I did, and for the part he played in forming

Education Otherwise. For he was instrumental in my home educating Marc and Emma over the following 20 years, and for much of my own self-development. Little did I know, all those years ago, how much my life would be enriched by meeting one man. His memory will live with me forever.

Brian Guthrie

I happily leave others to reminisce about Dick's invention of EO. He also helped invent John Holt (the US homeschooling pioneer) as an active protagonist in EO when he published *Teach your Own*. Dick spotted that UK publishers had lost interest in Holt (after Penguin picked up the early books - now shamefully out of print). So he started Lighthouse Books and invested hard-won savings on a printing of *Teach your Own* in 1982, followed by Holt's *Learning all the Time* and *Never too Late*. (He also published and later helped his partner Rahima Spottiswood translate novels by Dacia Maraini - but that's another story.)

Somewhere along the line I took over the distribution, then the whole business of Lighthouse Books. No money changed hands; indeed, money was never a driving force in Dick's life. He valued what it could sometimes do to move things along, but his life was driven by humanity, a balance with nature, decency, intellectual honesty and a great fondness for forthrightness. All this didn't make him an obviously loving man, but he did love and I certainly loved him.

The last word, from Dick himself:

"There is an historical reason for it (EO) starting. In other words, if we hadn't started it, somebody else would have started something. Just as we didn't start the free school movement. And similarly with the A.S. Neill Trust. They started as an expression of how people were feeling then which was part of a much wider movement. A post-hippy movement really. It was a movement against authority, against expertise, against the welfare state; it was against the fact that, from the moment one was born one seemed to be set into tramlines of education, which taught you to conform. And there was a revolt against this all over, and Education Otherwise is an example. EO does not have a particular kind of education to which it is committed. It is committed to a right of families to do what they want to do. It is a human rights organisation. To me, it is not a specific thing where children have to run wild in the country, or have to pay visits to Winchester Cathedral, or anything else. There is this huge variation. I have a fundamental belief in the freedom of choice. We must all be allowed to make our own mistakes. We don't want to be dictated to by a curriculum from central government."

(from an interview in the EO newsletter, 1988)

Looking back at my home education

When approached to write an account of my experiences of home education, I didn't really know where to start. The entire process seemed so natural, and I'm still surprised by the astonished responses of people who discover 'my dark past'. I'm now 21 and a psychology undergraduate with one remaining year at university. Learning and the learning process itself are issues I think about regularly, both in relation to my course and when reflecting on my life at the moment. I have never discussed my home education much with strangers, not because I'm ashamed of my situation, but because I got increasingly bored with answering the same three questions: 1) Is it legal?, 2) Do you miss out socially?, and 3) Is your mum a proper teacher? Now if it comes up in conversation I am happy to answer these questions along with others, but I certainly don't advertise my 'freakish' past.

My home education was mostly due to my hatred of school and everything about it (except the dinners perhaps). Although I spent a few very happy and beneficial years at primary school, I also spent several years taught at home with my mother. I enjoyed studying and learning, and like many 11 year-olds, looked forward to the prospect of secondary school, seeing it as a place where the limitations of a tiny village school were lost and separate sessions of subjects could be exciting and challenging. Within a term at my local comprehensive I realised that I had been grossly deceived as to its function. My visions of classes of adventure and discoveries were replaced with the realities of overcrowding and poor teaching. Unhappy children being herded from one end of a building to another, in classes where petty rules were more important than developing new ideas. I felt like I was there, not to learn, but to be controlled, and I realised that I couldn't face another week of it, let alone 5 years. My parent and I addressed my unhappiness in the only viable way, with a return to home education. My home schooling lacked much structure, a method both of us preferred. Whilst we would sometimes spend concentrated periods of time on a certain project or topic, we might then go months without any formal 'lessons'. For several years we lived on a communal organic farm where my mother and I ran the dairy. Physical work, and learning other skills like tractor driving, sheep-dog training and cooking on a large scale were more prominent than academic concerns.

When I reached 15, I attended the local college to study GCSE English. This was followed by 6 other GCSEs, through evening classes and correspondence courses. With this method I also studied for 3 A Levels, whilst working as a groom during the daytime. By learning this way, I saw my education as a choice, something I was doing for myself. I was never pushed into studying for exams, but felt satisfaction from doing them, and therefore worked hard. This is something which I think formal schooling suppresses, making learning a punishable chore. Applying to study at university was a decision which came quite late, when I realised that the issues coming up in my 'A' level psychology course would be enjoyable on a more concentrated level. Although university is obviously different to formal schooling, some frustrating similarities remain, mostly in relation to poor teaching, overcrowding, or inadequate planning. However, my home schooling experiences have prepared me well for the challenges of self-motivated study, and the decision to try university was definitely a wise one. Rosie Meek

Some Reflections

One of the first home educated children I met on joining EO got married this Summer (congratulations!) which was a bit of a shock--made me realise how long it is since I first joined EO. Another child I've known since...er, well...awhile...has excelled herself gaining excellent grades at GCSE through evening classes. (More congratulations!). Added to that the changes going on around me, with my 11 year old deciding to start school and my 8 year old deciding to stop, I guess it's a good time to pause for a moment and catch my breath.

So what have been the good things?

All the good friends we've made with other home educators. Over gallons of tea we've kept each other going, swapped ideas, resources, where to get what, how to get in places cheaply, ways of getting the kids to read/write/get out of bed/go to bed/do things together/leave us alone....

We've dragged them round castles, museums, nature trails when they wanted to play football....

We've organised sport coaching when they wanted to watch telly....

We've found good educational telly programmes when they wanted to play on the computer...!

Our get-togethers have changed many times over the years as the people changed. At one point we often met in Scarborough, or in Dalby Forest on the moors (remember trying to light that soaking wet barbecue?!). For awhile our get-togethers looked more like a camper van convention. One year we took part in York Viking Festival. The kids dressed up as Vikings and made pots, traded by the river and listened to a saga--all in authentic icy weather! Then there were the dance and drama sessions with the parents fully involved. (Remember the dragon dance?!) Later there were some joint meetings with West Yorkshire at Brimham Rocks, and inspiring meetings with folk from further afield at Airmyn. Now I live as near to West Yorkshire meetings as North Yorkshire and we've joined in some great outings and events, one of the best being a visit to a quarry that used to be a tropical muddy river. Rocks will never be the same again! Neither will cemeteries, associated forever in my mind with circle dancing.

But the main memories are the people. Every one is so different and has their own way of doing things, but the friendship, acceptance and support is simply wonderful. At difficult times, like when I've been negotiating for flexi-schooling or when the inspector is coming or when every shopkeeper has looked ready to call in the truant officer (!) it has made all the difference. When a problem arose at one meeting the attitude of the children was so mature and of other parents so wise. One person said that although we don't see each other very often we are still a community. And that just about sums it all up for me. We may be scattered across the county and have totally different outlooks, beliefs, lifestyles and hairstyles, but we are a community.

Great, innit!

Marit Tam Lit. Calypso Barn, Boroughbridge Rd., Bishop Monkton, Harrogate,
HG3 3QN, 01765 677078

ENVISIONING THE FUTURE OF HOME EDUCATION

a collection of submitted responses

What hopes do you have for the future of home education?

I hope home education will be totally accepted by the majority of people in the future. This may be a 'tall order', but with the significant numbers of people 'joining', more people are realising that they are free to home educate. *Caren Best, 40 Wynard Drive, Morley, Leeds, LS27 9NA.*

The hopes we have are for others to understand the Home Education rights and values. We are not all the same and we shouldn't have to be expected to 'mould'/'fit in' with everything. We hope to educate others about home education and the benefits it has provided for us. *Lori LePage, Templeton House, Moorcock Lane, Harrogate HG3 2QL.*

That it becomes an accepted alternative to the mainstream resulting in children being free to live, learn and play in our communities. *Trish Flynn, 50 Scarborough Road, Shipley, Bradford, BD18 3DR*

How do you think home education will grow in the next century?

SLOWLY . . . because people are so dependent on the present system and fearful of change. *Trish Flynn (above)*

I envisage home education becoming far more common-place as people become more and more disenchanted with the school system. I think 'learning centres' will replace schools as we know them. I think there will be far more choices for the home educators. *Caren Best (above)*

I think it will become equal (1:1 ratio) for those who are home educated to those in institutional schools. Once people realise it is ok to be different and it is a valid option in education, it will grow. *Marty LePage (above)*

How is home education influencing the future?

Building closer families; experiencing real life; connects and commits parents and children together; better socialisation skills with all ages and not just your peers; siblings are friends and help each other. *Lori LePage (above)*

It is causing people to question the present schooling system. *Caren Best (above)*

I believe it acts as a beacon, a voice for sanity in an otherwise crazy system and it will be there for others to follow in the future. *Trish Flynn (above)*

What would you put in a home education time capsule?

All of John Holt's books. *Trish Flynn (above)*

The children! *Eva O'Rorke, 33 Wellington Road, Wilsden, Bradford, BD15 OLP*

Home education newsletters and particularly letters from people who have had difficult experiences from LEAs and other people when trying to take their child out of school. Also, I'd put in photos of happy, home educated children. *Caren Best*

A bible, because God gives me strength and endurance to teach my children. A clock, because time goes by so quickly ('Make the most of your days'). A picture of my three wonderful kids, who work and learn together. A heart of gold, to remind us to love each other and to be devoted to one another. A joke book to remind us to laugh and have fun--not to be too serious! *Lori LePage*

LETTER FROM 2009

Hello, everyone back in 1999,

Thanks for your letter asking for news of Education Otherwise. It's incredible how much has changed in ten years. We are in great upheaval, arguing heatedly about the way forward. The government have at last amended the law to allow flexi-time schooling on demand, so in effect we no longer have a distinction between registered pupils and home educated children. Some people are asking if there is any further need for EO, while others are pointing out that we are the only ones who have the experience to imagine what this new law is going to mean, and to make it work.

Mind you, Londoners as a whole have had a lot of relevant experience over the last few years, having been under siege from the multinationals as they tried to get us consumers back under control. As a result there's been a huge divide between us and the rest of the country. But let me go back to the beginning of the century. The beginning of the millennium. I like saying that.

It all started shortly after the date you wrote to me, when we elected Ken Livingstone as Mayor of London. That focused the unrest about the decreasing quality of life, as the government had feared. Then a major piece of research came out, showing the health damage that pollution was causing in the borough of Islington - not just the rise in asthma, attention deficit and hyper activity disorder, ME-type illnesses and allergies among children and a minority of susceptible adults, but also an alarming increase in male infertility, premature senility and degenerative diseases, with depression and clouding of consciousness in a majority of the population, and a testable decrease in intellectual performance.

That got to us. At last people woke up. I was only in year two at the time, just me and my mother living in a flat in Hackney, but I remember every moment of it. We came out on the streets across the whole of London, and for five days we refused access to traffic, except for food lorries, fire engines and ambulances. We united in simply demanding air fit to breathe. You can imagine the state of the government and the stock exchange, between their personal reactions to the health scare (I mean, it was Islington, their own patch, not even Tower Hamlets) and their loss of control of the population. And at the end of five days without traffic fumes, we felt so good, so much more alert. That was what clinched it.

This people-power gave Livingstone the authority, despite the hostility of the government, to insist on setting up an effective London-wide Authority, and eventually to make the sweeping changes necessary to implement an integrated transport policy for Greater London. We simply demanded that everything else take second place. Once the government were forced to give way on this, everything else snowballed.

That was when the transnational companies parted company with them. Once they took us on openly, any semblance of democracy vanished. It was all spin doctoring, private armies of 'security guards' and a blockade of food and essentials.

Like lots of other children, I became home educated almost incidentally. There were periods of chaos which meant that sometimes the streets beyond our immediate area weren't safe, and the schools opened erratically. If we heard they were open, we went if there was something happening we liked. If not, we could vanish and no-one could say we were truanting - we only had to say we'd been told the school was closed again. But we learned what we needed to know, and what we were interested in. We could usually find someone who knew, and knew how to share it with us; or something on the Internet.

At first I couldn't read though, and I hated writing: it always seemed so difficult in school. Then an older kid I thought was fantastic talked a lot about what I was missing out on, and he offered to teach me. We went at it for about six weeks, and that was it. It suddenly clicked and I could see it. What was all the fuss, making it such a big deal, something that takes years to learn? I patched together something that the government might not have recognised as a curriculum, certainly not a broad and balanced one, and yet I felt as if I were growing visibly, each bit of me getting what it needed, instead of being pulled this way and that as I had been in school, without time to play or think quietly about what I was learning.

Like a lot of people, my mother lost her job when the company she worked for folded, and it made sense for us to get together with our neighbours and help each other in all sorts of ways. We made each community into a traffic-free island, over quite big areas, with motor traffic confined to the main roads around them. We closed off some streets permanently, and now we use them as community spaces. We put up new street signs: 'No motors; wheels give way to feet.' That means bikes and roller blades are OK, but we have to be considerate or they'll be confiscated - we worked out a system of how long you'd lose them for, for what offences. We have local meetings for that sort of thing, very local; and we all go. Well, it's all about how we live together, here and now, isn't it? I don't know why you lot didn't feel that about local government before. Anyone can speak in our meetings, as long as they respect the right ordering of the meeting. We began to feel so powerful. We froze out the bad guys - there was simply nothing amongst us for them to hook into, no market for their drugs, no money for anything much except food. That was a grey area. The sanctions were so unjust, and sometimes I was so hungry - we had to do whatever we could to get enough to eat. I don't like to think about it now.

There were lots of adults around, because so many jobs had gone, and they kept holding classes in this and that, things they wanted to understand themselves. There were wandering lecturers, and some of them were great at sparking off debates, and we got good at managing them, and listening properly to each other. It was a mess, like I said, no continuity or national curriculum or anything, but it was so exciting - we could pick and choose, just go with what was good, vote with our feet if anyone was bossy or sarcastic or boring; and we could take our time, play or dream, do nothing, think about what really mattered to us, get someone we liked to sit down and really talk something through with us.

We had our gangs, but there was no 'Lord of the flies' stuff, partly because there were so many adults around, and partly because we wanted to show that our ideas would work. We made tiny parks all over the place, wherever we could loosen the

tarmac and dig up the concrete and get through to soil. We planted any seeds and cuttings we could get, all mixed up together, fruit and flowers and veg. We all had to pitch in together because there were so many shortages and problems. One time when we were digging we found a patch of pure London clay, and we kept it fenced off and used it for pottery - we all went mad on learning how to handle it, kids and adults together, some people wanting to make useful things - we were really short of mugs at the time, supplies were so erratic - and some getting into the most weird sculpture. One woman knew what she was doing with clay, she'd been the art teacher at the local comprehensive, and it was fantastic how she came to life when she got clay in her hands. She was an amazing teacher. You might say our curriculum was completely lop-sided and out of balance for a while, but it was brilliant. And then we found another community that was into bread baking, and we bartered our mugs for their bread. And then we got friendly, and we went to them to learn baking and they came to us to learn to use the wheel and kiln.

It was needing a wheel and kiln that started the next phase: we took over the local comprehensive because of the pottery room; and then we made the school into a resource centre for the whole community. Of course at the beginning I reckon it would have just been wrecked, but by then we'd got all that out of our systems - we were a bit more self-disciplined and were working together constructively. And I know now that this was what EO had talked about right from the beginning, but early on we weren't making the connections. It's surprising, looking back, to realise how long it took us to see what we were doing as home education. Well, like EO has always said, it's really education in the community - we just have to make the community a wholesome place to be in. It's no solution to community problems to try and drop out of society - we have to reclaim the world.

Gradually we realised that there were lots of EOers around, and we read their books on educational philosophy and home ed, and their old EO newsletters. By now some of these were second generation EOers, and you could see the difference that that freedom had made - they were interesting to talk to, all in different ways - that was it, they all thought differently, and powerfully, always coming out with unexpected things, new ways of seeing a problem. And although they would dig their heels in and be awkward at times, they were good to work with, reliable, and they didn't dump their stuff on the rest of us.

That was our biggest problem until we developed some clear policies on it - damaged people who were still functioning at a self-absorbed infantile level, while dressing it up in adult language. For instance, they would argue quite blatantly about why they should have extra rations, or why they should be excused their turn on street cleaning, or why someone they didn't like should be put under house arrest. There were some who could lie without blinking, which was very difficult to deal with in a community which was working so hard to be open and honest with each other. There was a spate of anonymous poison pen letters that upset everyone until we found the culprits. They could be so destructive - well, you'll know more about that! There were two or three people who were brilliant at putting into words what was happening in this respect, and getting the meetings working effectively. We found that one of them been at Summerhill and had learned it there. Gradually we all got good at naming the power games these people were trying to play, and not guilt-

tripping ourselves, not placating them, not undermining each other. We stood up to their bullying, and stopped them abusing anyone in the meeting who didn't agree with them. We learned to stand together and simply say 'No' to them.

As things stabilised again we all got together with the Greater London Authority and thrashed things out. We got a lot of sensible things put into practice at last without much fuss. In particular, we cooperated pretty well on the unified transport system. These days, pedestrians are separated from motor traffic in the same way that they always were from rail and tube track. Bikes and suchlike are allowed in pedestrian areas - we're still arguing over electric vehicles - we'd like electric buggies and carts, obviously, for those who can't walk freely and for heavy stuff, but we can't afford many yet. Anything faster will probably be restricted to the motor roads, because we're not going to allow anything to have priority over people in our living spaces ever again. Each community is a big motor-free island. The total volume of motor traffic is down massively, so the air is cleaner than it's been for centuries; and the streets are safe for us to play out over a wide area. If we want to visit another area, there are pedestrian bridges over the motor roads; and good public transport between communities. The houses near the roads have mostly become derelict, and we're gradually banking up the roads and planting corridors of trees along them, to counteract the noise and fumes, as well as for the worldwide campaign on reafforestation.

After a bit there was something of a backlash. In particular, the GLA brought in the Greater London Education Authority. GLEA, they called it, 'All clear for GLEA' - they thought we'd be grateful to have a structured education system again. It was the DfEE they were expecting to have to fight, not us. ILEA had been good in its time, but some of these people hadn't moved on since then as we had. We wanted the resources they were offering, sure, but we wanted to pick and choose and stay in control. They tried to tell us we were unreasonable, but we couldn't be conned any longer. I had learned that my education is my responsibility, and I was hardly going to unlearn it at their say-so.

In particular I had learned that writing, after all, is a real turn-on. I went to town with word processing in support of the campaign. They tried to split us into separate camps, us EOers against the 'schoolies' - our friends who signed on for school. They tried to keep us out of our school. They tried to keep our friends in the school when they wanted out. It was quite mad. They kept telling me I was near school-leaving age and it wouldn't matter to me much longer, but that was mad too. It was my school, my resource centre, however old I was; and it was my community, and of course I cared what they were doing to the kids whether I was still one or not. I wrote and wrote, explaining it all to them on one of the posh computers I had to sneak into school to use; and give them their due, it didn't take either the DfEE or GLEA that long to get the point. I reckon actually that there were a lot of moles in there already who were on our side secretly, and when we showed we could make it work, they came out to support us, and we got the legislation through for flexi-time schooling on demand.

Part of the problem has been the isolation of London from the rest of the country. Now that the barriers between us have come down, and so many laws have been

changed because of our demands, we've got to share our experience so that everyone can join us without, hopefully, going through as much chaos as we did.

I'm so excited to be writing to you - there's so much I want to ask. You knew the score - why did it take so long to get it together? Why did you allow the government to play its pathetic games? Why did you let the transnational companies acquire so much power? Why did you allow them to poison the world? Why didn't you set limits on unacceptable behaviour? Why did you allow destructive people such free rein to bully and abuse? Why didn't you take your power and say, 'No!'?

But that's enough for a first letter. And thanks for giving us EO.

Your friend,
Tarinder

story by Anne Wade, 19 Perkin Close, Wembley, HAO 2LY, 0181 904 7155
With acknowledgments to EO and Summerhill, Marge Piercy's *Woman on the edge of time* and Starhawk's *'The fifth sacred thing'*

Looking back at EO excerpts over the years

"Children who are free to learn early in life, who have not had their creativity and imaginations diminished by excessive demands for conformity in their thinking and behaviour, are the kind of learners who are free to develop new perspectives through which human progress and human peace are more likely to be achieved."

UK Committee for UNICEF

Writing about teaching in the late 70s: "What worries me is that it all seems to be getting worse." (From the TES, reprinted in Sept 80 newsletter.)

Dec 78, Mollie Jenkins writes: "In February 1979 a TV programme presented members of an organisation called "Education Otherwise". This programme provoked over a thousand letters from people all over the country - teachers, parents, social workers and people who had no direct dealings with the educational system but who were socially concerned. They came from every stratum of society-intelligentsia to unemployed labourer, hippy to bank manager - but they all expressed concern and dissatisfaction with the school system, and a large number were desperate to know how to pull their children out of it."

Looking back at EO excerpts over the years

from June 1980

extract from the minutes of the core group meeting, (then comprising about 20 people) taken by John Elenor.

" 'The future of EO' was the ominous title of the next item. Making the optimistic assumption that EO had a future, the first thing we did was to plan a Grand National Event ...The Enquires Secretaries suggested that if EO continues to expand, more Enquires Secretaries would be needed; someone also suggested the helpfulness of an index to items in past newsletters--is anyone out there prepared to help?"

REGARDING 'Looking back at EO excerpts over the years'

Many thanks to Sarah Guthrie who poured over past issues to find these interesting excerpts. We look forward to future issues containing such gems from the past!

Some Thoughts on the Future of Home Based Education

While considering the future of home based education in the next ten to twenty years, I happened to come across a tape by Pat Farenga, the publisher of *Growing Without Schooling (GWS)*. It was taped from the 1998 conference, entitled "The Future of Home Education". He began with the rise in acceptance of home based education since 1981 when GWS had to go out in brown unmarked envelopes so the postman wouldn't know the family had anything to do with such a crazy thing! He contrasted it with the fact that today (1998) they had two New York Times journalists call on the same day to do articles on different aspects of home-based education.

He went on to outline some vital points about this acceptance that have plagued me about home based education's future. One is the establishment's vision of it as a place to make money. The second is the realisation that with technology it is more acceptable as it is more controllable. It is more acceptable because it is understood as 'school at home' not as a different type of education. Through technology it has become possible to control.

I think home based education will become more acceptable in the future and therefore more main stream. It is very common for those embarking on home based education to see it as school at home. The process of de-schooling has aspects that are similar for most of us. We begin to have a new relationship with our children, their education and our own education. This is a subtle and time-consuming process. One thing worries me. If we do not have the time to enter into this process in the future (as the authorities are there at the beginning to tell us how to home educate), then home education will not develop for most people into the potentially different and ultimately creative type of education it has the potential to do.

In the long term, I envisaged a day when home based education will be no more. There will only be education for all the time. There will be places where people who are interested in similar topics can go and meet others who may be further down that road than they. They can find out anything they want there and be inspired to carry out their own work. There will be neighbourhood places where all people come and share their skills with the young people of the area who may want to accompany them to their workplace or develop their own work or not. Education will not be seen as something separate to be given by an expert but as the ability, curiosity and creativity inside all humans at all times. These would be encouraged and be a central part of anything society does.

I fear that this type of education will remain as the minority and the underclass, suffering financially and ostracised, even in the future of large numbers of ostensibly home educating families. It may be worse when the number of home educators are larger as the control mechanisms will be strong from the government and the law will be strengthened. Only a revolution, not in schooling, but in our understanding of the nature of children, childhood and how PEOPLE learn will ensure the growth and stability of truly creative home based education. I do not see this in our future as yet. My hope is that the children being home educated now will carry the torch for change to this type of society. It's a lot to ask but after all they've had a great beginning! Leslie Barson, 1 Croxley Rd, Maida Vale, London W9 3HH.

SPACE IS MY THEME

Today is one of those not so brilliant home ed days. I've been compelled by some inner force to clean out the deep fat fryer and remove the layers of grime from just one of the three kitchen shelves, plus make some space on some of the work-surface, you know, remove the collection of small cars, lorries, "beanie babies" and "action men" to a plastic bag which is now somewhere upstairs. Meanwhile, my small sons (Jack aged 4 and Tom aged 5) have now argued, fought, made sensible and silly suggestions about what we should do today and watched yesterday's CITV for the fourth time.

Some woman or other was defending the lack of time spent in schools on art and generally creative activities due to the literacy and numeracy hours (on the radio), but I didn't feel that Tom and Jack were better off upstairs, being left to their own devices.

You know those articles that you read in the EO newsletter that go....."And then Clive, aged two, rushed into the living room saying "mommy, mommy, an anaconda is 30 metres long, that's massive isn't it?" And mommy says "let's get some string and see just how massive (language, maths, natural history.....) This isn't one of them. I'm simply not in that frame of mind today. Today I'm best left to my own devices to potter, scratch my head and stare into space. I don't want to be interested or interesting to anyone else!

And this is very interesting because...(and space is my theme) I'm making space for me to clean things, giving Tom and Jack space to do what ever crosses their minds (and I've got space for me to cut sandwiches for dinner now) My big girls aged 12 and 14 don't have space. They are at school. They read and write and are numerate (though Corinne is already full of self-doubt about maths and English) in the holidays they wander about lost until, eventually they get back in touch with what ever it is, that inner voice that suggests new and interesting leads to follow, things to do, make and talk about. They come home and tell me about school only if I ask, and what I hear always seems so totally petty (detention for not wearing regulation black shorts under your PE skirt.....etc) that I wonder how they bear it and how, when I was at school, I put up with it and, more to the point, what leads to such madness? Corinne and Claire put up with it because they don't believe that there is any alternative.....their father is full of doubt about home ed and school tells them that this is the only way.....GCSEs, uniforms, coercion, etc, etc.

Meanwhile Tom and Jack run around like mad things or loll under collections of blankets and cushions but play and play all of the time. they are now up on the work surface playing boats, the banana skin on the floor is the banana fish, meanwhile they are working out how to get boiled eggs for dinner.....very gently they put the eggs into the saucepan, next how to get water and mommy to cut some bread (I should have bought sliced!)

I'm maintaining space, I'm allowing myself space in which to write. Tom and Jack have space in which to play fishing boats, do their dinner and now they are puzzling out how and why their plastic straws have been deformed by how water. Today is a

bad day. Today I am not an "engaged" parent.....But this space thing is very interesting, very positive, it is the opposite to the literacy/numeracy hour, the opposite to coercion. Even at it's worst, most disengaged, even when we are all pulling in opposite directions, this has to be better than school. I say that because of course I have doubts. On bad days, when every thing has become spacious to a state of total boredom I start thinking just how much richer and enriching school life must be.....all those other children, lots to do, inspiration, empowerment (these are strong words!).....To those of you who find yourselves thinking this way, well of course check it out, sometimes school can be all of these things....but, if you ask me, I think that school is a really sad place.

Perhaps if army life appeals to you, if you like uniforms, don't know what to wear...and if you think that it's better that other people measure you, test you and tell you what to do (for your own good, of course) then, ok school's brilliant. But are you sure that it enables people to see the possibilities of living their own lives..anyway!

Well, we've had dinner and we're off to buy Chewitts (Toms idea). I think that I'd just forgotten all that stuff about space and so forgot how well off I am to be here and how much better off my sons are, to be allowed to decide for themselves that and expedition to Woolies for sweets will be the only structured activity of the day.

Josephine Smith, 76 Cobham Rd, Halesowen, West Midlands, B63 3JX

SOME BOOKS I LIKED

Deschooling Our Lives : not only a collection of highly inspiring essays by the most innovative thinkers on modern education, but a sincere, first-person account of community education by radical editor Matt Hern, whose Love and Rage Community Society has been active for a number of years on the Canadian and North American scene. Brimming with useful addresses, provocative analysis and moving personal stories by various contributors including Zoe Readhead, Ivan Illich and the Lyn-Piluso tribe. Unmissable! ISBN 0-86571-342-1

Education under Siege : this is not a book about the advantages of home education, but a trenchant critique of the education system from the inside. Authors Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux expose the failures of the traditional authoritarian views as well as the shortcomings of some of the attempts to create alternative schools. Rigorous theoretical analysis and historical perspective make this a refreshingly complex read.

ISBN 0-7102-0821-9

Spiritual Midwifery: OK, this is a book about having babies, but its insight, depth and humour are sources of inspiration well after those momentous times. By pioneer midwife Ina May Gaskin who also produces excellent birthing videos.

ISBN -0-913990-63-9

The Soul's Code: bestselling essay on the archetypal origins of personality by maverick psychologist James Hillman. Thought-provoking and not easily bypassed.

ISBN 0-553-50634-X

Love, Cristina Viti, 12 Bertie Road, London NW10 2LH, 0181 830 0821

Looking back at EO excerpts over the years

writing about teaching in the late 70s:

"What worries me is that it all seems to be getting worse."

(From the TES, reprinted in Sept 80 newsletter)

Thank You, EO

1998 ended with a bang for me--just before Christmas I fell and broke my finger. "Oh well, I thought, "at least it's the end of the year--nothing else can go wrong." It didn't. I had to wait until the New Year for that. 1999 began with a broken marriage. My husband and I parted company and I was left to raise and home educate three children whilst struggling to somehow hold down a full-time degree course. This was in addition to my work as publicity contact and Council Member for Education Otherwise.

Somehow I've managed to hold onto my sanity (well, most of the time) whilst dragging myself through my end-of-first-year exams and am currently chewing my fingernails down to the elbows while awaiting results.

I couldn't have managed to hang in there without the help and support of Education Otherwise. Both locally and nationally, EO members have rallied round and offered practical and emotional help.

Childcare has been a huge problem. In addition to time spent on independent research, my course requires me to spend a minimum of 12 hours per week in lectures and seminars. 12 hours of childcare is hard to find. Some members have helped by looking after the children whilst I've been attending lectures and seminars. Knowing that the children were happy and safe with people who understood my educational philosophies helped a lot.

As the emotional pressure of coping on a daily basis has been tremendous, others have given unstinting emotional support and advice. I've never ceased to be amazed at the way people have given so generously of their time. From the family who drove over thirty miles to look after my children, to the person who cared for my children on a regular basis, to the offer to travel hundreds of miles to kip on my settee for a few weeks until my course was finished and the (almost daily) long-distance calls to check if I was coping emotionally and to offer a (much needed and very appreciated) shoulder to cry on--people have been wonderful.

Since my last exam I've had time to reflect on all of the help I've received and it suddenly hit me that when people are considering joining Education Otherwise, they often want to know what they're going to get out of their membership. Usually, I list the newsletter and SINC as significant and I always stress the importance of the contact list.

However, it only recently struck me just how important the EO network really is. Making contact with other people is vital. For me, the comradeship of EO is the biggest reason for staying here. Of course I care that others should have the opportunity to know about home education and should be able to receive the support they need to get started in home-ed and I work hard to make sure that they do. But I could do this if I wasn't a member. I'd be just as passionate about promoting home education and helping people start out on the 'otherwise' route. So why do I stick with EO? I pay my annual £15 for what? Not for the legal advice. I'm dishing it out these days. Do I support EO out of the goodness of my own heart? Nah--I ain't the

altruistic type. There must be something that keeps me here. That 'something' is the friendship of lots of people, some live nearby--the people I see at local gatherings or am able to pick up the phone to invite over for coffee (or maybe invite myself to their place). Others are more geographically distant--these are the people I meet up with at national gatherings such as the recent one in Shropshire. There's something rather lovely about driving 150 miles and walking into a room full of smiling people to be greeted with exclamations of 'how are you' and 'great to see you' coupled with lots of hugs.

For me, Education Otherwise has come to symbolise precisely what camaraderie is and I consider myself fortunate to be part of it. On the whole, we are a really nice bunch of people and I don't think it does any harm to remind ourselves of that occasionally.

Anyway, as usual, I've rattled on long enough and will now return to the initial reason for writing--I'd like to say Thank You so very much to all of those people who have offered/given support to me over the past few months. It's very much appreciated.

Beverley Young, 91 Lyndhurst Drive, Preston, Lancashire PR2 1TB, 01772 492245.

College Contact/Teenage Issues

Thanks to all those who responded to my request for up-to-date information on attempts to gain access to college for under 16s. I have to say that I have not been inundated with success stories which is rather what I anticipated.

However, both my E-mail address and that of my daughter Nikki were wrong by one digit (mine is Kchi123456@aol.com and Nikki's is Nchi12345@aol.com).

So, I really hope to get loads of E-mails from now on telling tales of fee-waiving colleges with a sympathetic and welcoming approach to U-16s, LEAs which have fallen over themselves to fund a college place for an U-16 or successful applications to the Further Education Funding Council where they have agreed that your circumstances are exceptional enough to merit financial assistance. I live in hope!!!!

Kathy Chilton (College Contact) Tel/Fax: (01969) 623707
E-mail Kchi123456@aol.com

P.S. For those who read Nikki's story in the last newsletter - she passed with 3 As and a B.

New EO Publication

THEIR OWN VOICES

Some families' experiences of home education during the later years

The long awaited follow on to "The Later Years" is now available. "Their Own Voices" is a compilation of families responses to Yvonne Muckle's questionnaire concerning home educating and being educated at home during the later years.

Price £2.50 to EO Members and £3.00 to non-members (£1.00 p & p).

Available from EO Publications. (Details inside the back cover of this newsletter).

FORTUNE-WOOD FAMILY DIARY

Autumn will be upon us by the time this is being read and, although I'm writing on a hot August Saturday, my mind is beginning to turn to the autumn, my favourite time of the year. In the film, 'You've got mail' Tom Hanks writes to Meg Ryan about how much he loves the fall in New York and then goes on 'it makes me want to run out and buy school supplies.' He continues by telling her that if he knew her address he would send her 'a bouquet of sharpened pencils'. That urge to run out and buy curriculum materials, and all the other 'back to school' paraphernalia that is advertised so loudly in every shop, almost from the moment the summer holidays begin, is one that came up recently on the UK- Home-ed internet discussion list. We live in a culture that has made deep links between the turning of the leaves, the shortening of the days and the beginning of the new school year. Newly sharpened pencils and shiny new shoes are a seasonally evocative as plies of golden leaves and pumpkins. So if we're not out there buying crisp new white uniform shirts and cute little backpacks are we missing out on something?

Since the Celts first arrived in Britain and began to implant in us a culture based in agriculture, the seasons have assumed major importance in our lives. We may be post-modern, but we've got used to the notion that the seasons have meaning and impact for us. Whether we are celebrating All Souls or Samhain or nothing at all at the end of October we will still be bombarded with Halloween advertising. We are still be aware that the year has a kind of patterning to it that follows the sun. Schools have been with us for a very much shorter time. Yet they too have become culturally normative and part of the pattern so that we can easily feel that we are losing something cultural, evocative and meaningful when we don't take part. We are not!

Making meaning happens in lots of different ways in different families. Some home educators in the internet discussion succumbed and bought school supplies, some destined to sit on shelves unused, but some to be used by those who have adopted their own schooling methods at home. That wouldn't be our choice, but it's one way that some home educators feel like it's really autumn and that, far from missing out on anything, they are getting something better. Those of a more autonomous bent also do not need to be left out. Question everything. Are the seasons meaningful for our family at all? Some of my friends have definitely answered 'no' - you wouldn't be able to tell from their homes or activities or anything else about them what time of the year it is. Others have developed their own patterns to suit the preferences of their own family members, some related and some totally unrelated to the changing of the seasons, some linked with religious festivals and others arising purely from secular or personal considerations.

Our own pattern does have a seasonal tie and also slots in with the liturgical calendar that is part of our year. We don't buy curriculum supplies at any time of the year, but the store cupboard and art cupboards tend to suddenly get some attention at this time of the year. Colder days tend to make us feel like cooking and messing about with paints and dyes and prints indoors. We don't miss out on anything. We make our own meaning within the forms and patterns that make sense to our life

style. What home educators miss is not some deeply valuable cultural experience, but simply homogeneity. That is no loss at all. It is the freedom to make the autumn and every part of the year our own. Jan Fortune-Wood. St. Barnabas Vicarage. jan.mike@fortunewood.force9.co.uk, www.fortunewood.force9.co.uk

Looking for a Curriculum?

I have put together a list of different curricula, sorted by subject, based on all the information I have received. It is mainly for 5 - 11 yr olds but I can expand it as I receive more information. I have also listed some information on courses etc where this seems relevant.

Please send me more suggestions from your own experience.

This information is available via email rtf file for free, or send 20p coin and address for the booklet version. For printing and posting to me, Henrietta Turnbull, at (email julian.turnbull@btinternet.com), Hall Lodge, Biddenden Road, Headcorn, Ashford, Kent TN27 9JD

My hopes for the next millenium in home ed

My first wish would be for education to become non-compulsory, then we could all get on with educating our children, without looking over our shoulders and wondering if an LEA official is going to be "satisfied" with us. Given that I think that is very unlikely, the other hope I have is that home education will become as well-recognised, popular and "normal" as it is in the USA. It would be great to have an environment where instead of the blank looks, disbelief and "you must be crazy" type reactions, home educating could be seen as much a normal option as private schooling, orgoing to grammar school or any school at all.

I would like to see more ordinary people encouraged and empowered to home educate. Home educators now still seem to be dogged by the view that "if you home school you must be really weird. While I know a lot of people who home school because of alternative life/parenting/world-views, there are lots of ordinary, middle income, living in mortgaged semi-detached houses, who do it too. Some of them feel discouraged to start, since they are not "alternative" enough, but it does not have to be that way.

If we can all work together to make home education more recognised and accepted both by government, and by the "man or woman in the street" then something worthwhile will have been achieved.

I am encouraged that this can happen, as I said, home ed in the US is considered a normal educational process, many materials are produced for home educators, colleges have admissions procedures for home educators, and everyone knows someone who was home schooled. Roll on the day here.

Henrietta Turnbull, at (email julian.turnbull@btinternet.com), Hall Lodge, Biddenden Road, Headcorn, Ashford, Kent TN27 9JD

TELESCOPE

TELESCOPE: here civil liberties and human rights are under constant threat and vast proportions of the available financial & human resources are relentlessly invested on destruction, it seems imperative to create and maintain reality zones in which people are free to interact in non-stereotyped ways. In a nutshell, this is what school-system dissidents have done and will continue to do. Working towards a redefinition of the concept of learning means quite simply laying less stress on personal aggrandisement and doing some listening. Home education as you know cannot be seen outside the context of the societies in which it is developing, and so it will both reflect and bring about changes in these societies. As the patriarchal family becomes only one of the many possible families, so the school system will hopefully be seen as only one of the possible options, in the best of hypotheses an increasingly open community resource, with individual schools functioning like neighbourhood agoras, and much less compartmentalised relationships between 'schoolers' and 'home schoolers'. Likewise within the alternative education movement there will be more solidarity and a less judgmental attitude between different persuasions, less fragmentation; paradoxically this will be achieved not by trying at all costs to present an 'organisation' identity which will lay the deschooling movement open to inevitable internal conflict, but by informality, individual initiative and friendship-based creativity.

The 'media' will be made to understand that deschooled families are not a bunch of starlets scrambling for those proverbial fifteen minutes of fame, but busy people with work to do. Accordingly, every (live TV or radio only) appearance will be retributed in cash at a rate of x per adult and $x2$ per child (where x =the adult's ordinary hourly pay), plus negotiable perks (*Channel 4 to sponsor glossy covers for EO zine?*).

Home educators will become clearer on the value of personal taste as a lifestyle-defining factor and, whilst maintaining their analytical rigour, won't follow their institutionalised counterparts in the tedious habit of quoting 'approved' statistical studies to justify their every choice, but will refer instead to the great classics of literature and philosophy, or to their own unpredictable wits. Technologically advanced electronic devices, as we all know, are good slaves but bad masters, so like everyone else home educators will learn to discriminate between what's useful and what's just plain old bloatware. Life in the open will be even more highly valued than it has been in the past, as will be an ability to connect with other meaningful attempts to make life happier on a day-to-day basis. Oh and dancing, laughing and generally having a good time will be, I'm afraid, positively endemic.

Love to all,
Cristina Viti, 12 Bertie Road, London NW10 2LH, 0181 830 0821

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Immy Topsett, Emma Hansford and Charlotte Newton on their A level results and getting their first choice places at university. Have a wonderful time.

Home education works!

HOME EDUCATION SUPPORT DAYS ROADSHOW CORNWALL 1999

Alongside the new local newsletter, CHEERSS (Cornwall Home Education Events, Resources, Support and Services), another way to increase support in Cornwall in 1999 was a Home Education Support Days roadshow, organised by the EO co-ordinator for Cornwall in February 1999, which visited 10 towns throughout Cornwall, so that everyone was within about 15 miles of the roadshow.

Aims

The aims of the roadshow were to offer local support to home educating families, or anyone thinking of educating their child otherwise than in school, by giving them the opportunity to drop in to chat and discuss any problems with experienced home educating parents, who were available throughout the day, to find out more about local social and educational events, resources support and services, available for families who choose to provide full or part-time home based learning for their child, at any age, to meet other home educating families in their area, and to pick up free information which helps them provide educational support for their child.

Format

Organised by the EO Co-ordinator for Cornwall, the format of these days was an information morning at the library, followed by a craft and social session in the afternoon at a hired hall. On two afternoons, the home education event was the meeting point, an ambulance station visit, and a Meet the Reptiles event, which was very popular.

Publicity

Notification of the Home Education Support Days was sent out to all current and past EO members from the previous two years, and all enquirers for the past two years, in the first issue of CHEERSS. The Local Education Authority refused to send notification to all the home educators on their books of the Home Education Support Days roadshow, although they are supposed to work closely with voluntary services.

However, in the course of booking the libraries and public rooms, and then publicising the roadshow, home education was brought to the attention of every library in Cornwall, Town Councils, Community Centres and the Women's Institute. The libraries have newly appointed Community Liaison Officers, who are very keen to support home educating families, and they were very helpful during the roadshow. In the course of advertising and reporting on the roadshow, the radio stations and local newspapers co-operated with broadcasting interviews and publishing reports and what's ons, and posters at every library and town hall or community centre were also seen by many. The local TV company did not mention it, despite a press release, but they had given us air time, with graphics and interviews reporting the increase in interest in home education the west country, particularly Cornwall, in September 1998, and this was also aired on local radio.

Roadshow results

Over the ten days of the roadshow, 58 families and 96 children benefited from support and contact with each other. Awareness has increased across the community, and, with the grapevine effect, should reach even more people. One local radio station interviewed the new chairperson of the Cornwall County Council in response, who then phoned the Education Out of School Manger, who deals with home educated children, (with whom I have meetings to offer suggestions on their policies, procedures and working practice), so there was new awareness even in our county council !

As a result of the increase in home education and the need for contact, events in Cornwall increased to two, three or more a week over the spring and summer months, all over Cornwall.

As a by-product of all the positive results of the roadshow, some home educating families are less isolated and hopefully a little less likely to encounter problems with their LEA.

As parents are not fully informed of their choices in education, all increased awareness of home education as an option should help particularly those children who find that education in school is unsuitable.

Reporting the Roadshow

Unfortunately, despite writing up press releases to report the roadshow, just as the roadshow ended, I went down with the dreaded two week flu, alongside our four children, so nothing was sent off. However, I shall find an opportunity to use it at a later date.

Future Support Days or Roadshows

If anyone would like a chat about doing support days or a roadshow in their area, do give me a ring. I can send copies of the posters and press releases, if that is any help. Contact Anna Wheeler, Cambrose Farm, Redruth, Cornwall TR16 4HT, 01209 890378

Regional Contact needed to join the new NEWSLETTER TEAM

A volunteer is needed to compile a *Round the Regions* page . This would involve subscribing to local eo newsletters and selecting the most interesting articles to be reprinted in the national newsletter. If you would like to know more contact the Newsletter Co-ordinator, Christine Adey, Dunbury Cottage, Milton Abbas, Dorset DT11 0DH 01258 880355

We are a family of four, Mary and myself and two children, Kayleigh (who's 12 in December) and Robyn (who's 7 in October). Both girls have been fully home educated up to now and neither shows the slightest inclination in going to school as yet. They like it too much at home!!

We got into home education initially because I felt that there must be something better than the education that was on offer in the local schools. I have had an interest in Montessori Education for some years before the girls were born and had been fired by her ideas. Since Montessori was not an option when they were younger, I felt that the other option was to teach them at home. It's a decision that I have not regretted since I have seen how the girls have progressed at home, and I have to confess to pang of envy at the fact that I wasn't. My own schooling was far from the happiest time of my life and I would have given anything to have had that choice.

We have always been very busy as a family, attending most of the EO meetings and outings in the area, so it was a natural progression to become more active within EO. Consequently, the last year or so has been very busy for me, especially since our previous local newsletter editor moved away. At the time nobody else volunteered to take it over, so rather than seeing it fold, I offered to take it on.

This proved a mixed blessing, as at the time we had only just acquired our very first computer. At this point I had never even used one, so you can imagine the fun we had. With hindsight it was probably rather ambitious to take on something of that size, but it has given me wonderful experience, probably in a fraction of the time it would otherwise have taken. As the girls were still very excited at the idea of having the computer, my attacks of computer rage have had them very worried over the last year. They would hover protectively over it in case I did it permanent damage.

Following on from the newsletter (which is still going strong) our local EO co-ordinator retired after several years in office, so I ended up volunteering for that too. So, anybody new in West Yorkshire – Hi it'll be nice to meet you. Fortunately, I haven't had masses to do as co-ordinator as yet, possibly because word has not got around yet (perhaps it is just as well!).

I also took on the national newsletter with Judith when she suggested it, not quite realising that it would clash, not only with the local one, but also with me going back to work part time; or that we would have so little time to prepare for it. As a result, I have to give Judith most of the credit for editing the newsletter, my contribution has been very small indeed. I think she has done a wonderful job of it, and her boundless energy is an inspiration to the rest of us. I had hoped that I would be able to contribute some of the material from the local one for the national one, but unfortunately that has not proved to be the case, as none of the articles in it were particularly relevant to the theme we had chosen.

Thanks again to Judith for all her hard work.

Eva O'Rorke.

Providing Evidence to the LEA

Sarah Lawrence

People say that there is nothing wrong with having a home visit... and then use the possibility that an LEA official will find some problem with the education they are providing, to justify coercing their children to jump through various educational hoops and produce the semblance of learning. They can't have it both ways! But actually, neither is justifiable.

Yes, if asked, we should provide evidence that would convince a reasonable person that we are giving our children a proper education. But no, the law does not say that we must provide evidence in any particular form, nor does it give LEAs the power to dictate the content, method or the form of the education provided.

Therefore, one could in principle provide evidence in any of a number of different ways. Why might one way be better than another? Specifically, what could any reasonable parent have against home visits?

Having a home visit (or any kind of face-to-face meeting) with a person standing in judgement over your whole life-style can be destructive of autonomous education, for it would be a very unusual child who did not experience a narrowing of choices, and very unusual parents who could entirely protect their child from anxiety — and therefore from a loss of spontaneous motivation — at the very prospect of such a judgement.

Also, LEA officials are likely to have a less than perfect understanding of what we are trying to do and why, and they may be simply unable to open their minds to ideas about education that strike at the very heart of everything they have been working for. As home educators, we are, in the logic of the thing, implicitly criticising their life's work. It takes a very special LEA official not to find home educators disturbing.

It is in general humiliating for them to find that educating children is so easy and so pleasant and so cheap for a bunch of non-professional parents, whereas qualified teachers, with all the huge financial and other resources poured in by the state, seem so often to fail dismally.

So they can't help but want to 'disprove' our implicit criticism. They can't help but *want* to find that we are not doing a good job.

The purpose of the home visit or whatever is to provide *evidence* which would convince a reasonable person that we are providing a proper education for our children. Given the logic of the situation, as I have described, is it not very unwise, especially for home educators who believe in autonomous education, to opt to have the LEA gather their own evidence?

When you opt to have the LEA gather its own evidence, you give them control over the resulting evidence. Every human being is biased, and as I have tried to show above, there is good reason to think that it would be a tall order to expect a human LEA official *not* to interpret what they see as evidence that the education we are providing is insufficient. Later, that same official, with all his or her human bias and psychological need to find that we don't measure up to professional teachers, could in principle stand up in court and state this as their conclusion. And in that situation they are the Experts and we are just the parents. Their *interpretation* will count as *evidence* against us. We would of course have an opportunity to rebut this 'evidence', but having to disprove an expert's evidence is not the ideal position to be in, in a courtroom.

By the same token, if the LEA never have any opportunity to gather and pre-interpret their own evidence, but the parents have provided ample evidence of their own, then it will always be the LEA who are at the disadvantage.

If you are called upon to provide evidence, I'd advise you to do so. The question is *how*? By giving the LEA access to your home or your children so that they can make their own judgements, with all their human biases? Or by providing evidence that *you* choose.

While a face-to-face meeting with the LEA leaves you vulnerable to their 'expert' interpretation, written evidence from you

does not. You could, for example, get a qualified teacher to write a report on your children's education. Then the evidence in court would be from *your* expert, not someone in the LEA who feels compelled to 'disprove' home education. Quite a few parents simply write their own report, and that can be fine too. If you do this, be sure that you make it as beautifully-presented as possible and check it carefully for spelling and grammatical errors. LEA officials may not be able to string a sentence together, but the judge will be more likely to notice *your* errors!

If you are trying to promote your children's autonomy and thus don't want them tested even informally by a friendly teacher, and also don't want to even think about issues like 'what progress they have made', you might consider getting friends to write sworn or affirmed declarations for you. Your friends would be writing statements giving details of educational things *they have witnessed* you doing with your children, your children doing, or that they have done with your children. They might also be swearing to any *improvement* or *progress* they have noticed in your children's knowledge and skills. Finally (less important) they might be swearing that they hold the opinion that you are conscientious, blah blah blah and a good person to educate your children. Again, be sure that any such statements are true and well-presented before your friends take them to a solicitor or commissioner for oaths and swear or affirm them. The information in those statements should be such as to convince a reasonable person that you are pro-

viding a proper education for your children.

If you have done this, and the LEA people want to make a legal issue of your case, they will then be in the position of either having to show that the stuff in the statements is insufficient (and then they must specify how), *or* of having to argue that your friends and experts are committing perjury.

There are no doubt many other forms of evidence that would be perfectly fine. The only point I am making here is that if you control the evidence, that puts you at a natural advantage over the LEA and (assuming that the evidence you provide *would* convince a reasonable person that you are providing a proper education for your children) makes it highly unlikely that you will ever have to use your evidence in court.

The minuscule possibility that you might come before a judge is, perhaps, one more reason to keep control of the evidence provided and keep all communications with the LEA written (and well-presented, and reasonable!).

Copyright © 1999 Sarah Lawrence

Sarah Lawrence is editor of the non-profit-making journal, *Taking Children Seriously*, which promotes non-coercive education and parenting.

To subscribe (no charge!) to the Taking Children Seriously discussion/support list on the internet, send "subscribe TCS-digest *your-first-name your-last-name*" (without the quotes) to listserv@listserv.aol.com.

Looking back at EO excerpts over the years

From the March 1979 newsletter

Helen Fletcher wrote about the case of Shirley, who at 15, was being beaten up at school and refusing to go.

"Shirley was brought before the juvenile court as being in need of 'care' and 'protection'....her case was adjourned on the condition that she promised to go to school every day and that if she missed only one day at school she would be taken away into care the same day. No explanation was given about the meaning of being 'in care' to her....the threat was repeated again and again.....nobody listened to Shirley. Nobody enquired about her school and the so-called 'full time education' it provided. Not even the solicitor told the family that school is not compulsory. When I told (the family) about the Education Act, they were astonished."

EDUCATING ARCHIE

DEJA VIEW

1949

FOR PROFESSOR G. C.S.E. FETTERLEY AND IN MEMORIAM DICK KID WHO WAS MIDDLEWIFE TO ARCHIE

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO IN THE WAY OF 'EDUCATION' TODAY, ARCHIE?

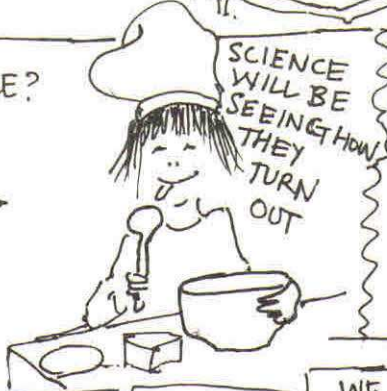


THINK I'LL MAKE SOME MUFFINS MUM



AND THAT WILL BE HOME ECONOMICS YOU SEE?

AND WHAT ABOUT SCIENCE?



SCIENCE WILL BE SEEING HOW THEY TURN OUT

ART WILL BE ARRANGING THEM ALL IN A LOVELY PATTERN



AND P.E.?



TAKING THE DOG OUT



WE HAVEN'T GOT A DOG, THOUGH



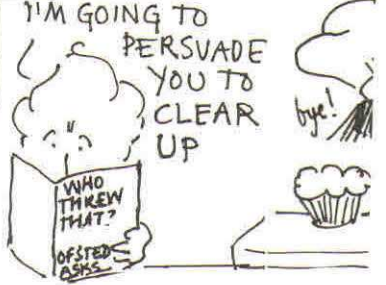
AND NOW - A BIT OF PSYCHOLOGY FOR YOU ARCHIE



LIKE?



I'M GOING TO PERSUADE YOU TO CLEAR UP



HES FES LOST AND FOUND

So far only a couple of items from the HES FES lost and found list have been claimed. The list appeared in 'Choice' and on the web page; here it is again. Call Cristina 0181-8300821, 12 Bertie Road, London, NW10 2LH.

- 1 child's Velcro-strap sandal, blue-green
- 1 pair child's jelly sandals, pink & silver
- 1 child's welly, blue (Sean Renshaw)
- 1 white plastic sword
- 1 black floral printed wrap
- 1 child's jacket hood, green with grey lining
- 1 green plastic cup with white star motifs
- 1 child's windcheater, red
- 1 child's padded anorak, black with horse patch on front
- 1 orange snorkel
- 1 king-size beach spade
- 1 red coffee mug
- 1 toddler's drinking cup, green with blue top
- 1 child's nightgown with 'Pony' motifs
- 1 navy sweater

FUN MATHS

Fun Maths (for ages 9-90) and Fun Maths Jugglers (for ages 7-70) are calendars with a maths puzzle for every day of the year, plus a full page puzzle for each month. Some puzzles are easy (how many vowels in April?), some are tricky (what's the heaviest thing you can eat?) and some start off something like (making magic squares, or finding out about the eclipse). My two enjoy them very much (so do I!) and this is probably our main maths input.

My daughter says: "This month's puzzle is about the blobbies. Blobbies are red or blue. Each year, little red blobbies grow into big blue blobbies and every big blue blobbie produces a little red blobbie. How many blobbies will there be in 5 years time? In 2010? In 2020? This is my favourite puzzle. By Michelle.

Available from QED in York on 0345 402275. John Bibby, who runs it, also produces other material, all designed to make maths fun. (There is a money back guarantee if it's not your cup of tea.)

Marit Tam Lit, Calypso Barn, Boroughbridge Rd, Bishop Monkton,
Harrogate, HG3 3QN, 01765 677 078

The following two pages contain a speech made by David Almond, recipient of this year's Carnegie Award for children's best book. As mentioned in a previous issue, the book *Skellig* contains a character, Mina, who is a home educated child. David has met with home educators from Education Otherwise since his book was nominated and has offered to have a part in a future event in the Leeds area. To be arranged and advertised!

Carnegie Medal Acceptance Speech

David Almond

It's a particular honour that this medal is awarded by librarians. It was a library that was crucial in turning me into a writer. It was a small, square, unspectacular place, a place of exploration and discovery, a place where I could wander in enthralled silence, a place where I could plunder treasure, a place where I could dream and grow. Nobody watched me as I wandered, nobody questioned me, nobody tried to record what was happening inside my head. Outside the libraries, in our schools, there's madness around. I have to say that when I visit schools that I envy many of the children I meet. I wish I'd gone to schools like theirs. We're surrounded by mythmongers, of course: schools are sinks of mediocrity, teachers can't teach, children can't learn, children don't read any more. I'd like to drag these glib prophets of decay into some of the classrooms I've been in recently, places run by hugely talented teachers, populated by keen, cheerful, hardworking children. I'm not sceptical about these people. I'm sceptical about the ludicrous demands that are placed on them.

In Skellig, Mina simply dismisses schools. "We believe that schools inhibit the natural curiosity, creativity and intelligence of children." She's an extremist, part of a tradition that includes her hero, William Blake. To our educational pedants, devoted only to setting targets, recording progress, ticking boxes, Mina's words, and the whole sceptical tradition, are ludicrous. William Blake? Wasn't he the crackpot that pottered naked in his garden and saw angels everywhere? He said schools drive all joy away. Joy? Creativity? Imagination? How can they be reduced to a tickbox, how can progress here be recorded? And if it can't be recorded, how can it exist? And didn't all that crackpot stuff just lead to swivel-eyed 60s progressives, and lunatic deschoolers? Laugh, move on, produce another form, design another pilot project, set a target to shift 27.37% of 9 year olds from level 3 to level 4. In 50 years time, it's these mechanistic obsessions that will be seen as laughable. The concentration on assessment, accreditation, targets, scores, grades, tests, profiles will be seen as a kind of madness. There's an arrogance at work: the arrogance that we know exactly what happens when someone learns something, that we can plan for it, that we can describe it, that we can record it - and that if we can't do these things, then the learning doesn't exist. The arrogance leads us to concentrate on a particular kind of work - noses-to-the-grindstone treadmill kind of work, work that is observable, recordable and well-nigh constant. Get kids into school fast! Get them assessed while they're in nappies! Get them going to literacy clubs, numeracy clubs, lunchtime learning clubs, holiday learning clubs! Holidays? Let's cut them. School day? Let's lengthen it! Homework? One hour? No, let's make it two, eh? Let's see them - children and teachers - work, work, work! And let's get plenty of people watching them and recording them while they're at it.

What would the assessors and recorders have made of Archimedes splashing happily about in his bath before he yelled Eureka! What would they have made of James Watson snoring in his bed as he dreamed the molecular structure of DNA? What would they make of writers as they work, if they'd watched me, say, when I was writing Skellig? Needs to apply himself in a more organised manner. Messy notebooks, often totally illegible. Inconsistent. Some days hard at work, very productive. Some days mutters curses, is disaffected, dreams out of the window. Can be found madly playing computer games when should be on task. Record-keeping negligible. Unwilling to reflect on processes gone through or skills developed. Must do better.

The exhausting chase after what we're told are higher standards has become a national obsession - an established religion. We've consigned the Blakean heretics to the flames. We've cast the demons - the deschoolers of the 60s and 70s - into outer darkness. We've laid waste the heathen temples such as Summerhill. What remains? A monolithic system, with the National Curriculum its Book of Common Prayer. The pedants are triumphant, and go about their task of disintegrating our world. Like medieval philosophers they debate the exact weight to be given to every fragment. 15% on this subject, 12.5% on that, 5%-7% on the other. They demand their tributes: targets, records, evidence.

Despite it all, I'm an optimist. I see teachers and children involved in the passionate quest called education. And I know that the heretics haven't gone away. They live on inside our schools, in a kind of inner exile. Who are they, these gargoyles, these demons? They're energetic, inspirational men and women. They know that the minds of young people do not exist in fragments, that the elements of the world merge and flow and give life to each other. They recognise that learning can be planned but that beyond the planning and recording there is a mysterious zone of imagination, intuition, insight in which the beady gaze of the record-keeper is deadly. They understand that there are moments when children must be left alone, given space and silence and respect. We must also be brave enough to leave these teachers alone, to give them space and silence and respect. As we're into percentages, why not have, say, 10% gap time built into every school term. A time when target-setting can consist of maps of possibilities, when record-keeping can consist of speculations, a time when we can admit that perhaps we haven't really got a clue what's going on inside the children's heads. Let's call it Eureka Time. Maybe we should have a Blakean garden in every school, where children and their teachers can simply wander, explore and dream... But no, this is all crackpot stuff, isn't it? Let's design another form. Let's set another target. Let's get these children working at 93% efficiency 95% of the time. Let's get those noses to the grindstone. .

David Almond

Letters and Contacts

Advice on Epilepsy

My name is Sharon Warren and I am writing about my 4 1/2 year old son who has epilepsy. He and my 2 other children are being home educated. I am using alternative medications to control his epilepsy. I am wondering if there are any other home educators in a similar situation with any advice or experience with controlling the epilepsy. Thank you. Address: Atworthy Chapel House, Bradworthy, Devon, EX22 7RE.

Our Summer and Ideas

My daughter Sophie left her primary school early after doing her SATS with good results. She knew that at the end of term they wouldn't be doing much. The Head tried to tell me it wasn't legal to home educate, but as an avid EOer with my son, I stuck to "as long as I educate her at home, it's fine". She enjoyed an early holiday and off her own back decided to go to a 'numeracy summer school', the first of its kind in our area. She thoroughly enjoyed it; it was free and it helped her with her tables in a fun way.

My son Jonathan is now on 'school' holidays from his home education--no pressure on me or him--it's lovely. It is getting him to relax; he goes off with his mates on their bikes. One boy had a puncture and Jonathan changed the inner tube and they made the bikes into a type of tricycle to get them home. They changed into trunks and played in a lake. Just as well I don't know exactly what he's doing when. As a mature 13-year old, I can trust him. He plays football, on computers his Nintendo and friend's play stations. It just shows with my two children how studious things like the summer maths

were fun for Sophie, yet wouldn't have suited Jon at all.

A good maths game is to make a square board with numbers on. If doing the 5x's table, say to the child 'pick up a card' (out of 12 you made with 1 x 5 up and say it lands on 5 x 5's say 'what's that?' and when they say 25, put a red round card counter on that number. Go through the sum cards and when the first one gets 3 counters in a line, wins! Taking in turns to do a sum each, or make a large card including all the numbers needed for the 12 tables and make it 4 in a row win.

Also, the children can make paper planes and throw them and measure how many metres to where they land. And if fortunate to have a stopwatch, time them and the fastest plane wins. Theresa Mercer, 23 Northgreen, Bullbrook, Bracknell, Berks, RG12 2NY

Dear EO,

Having brought up my four children single handedly for 8 years - I am slightly nervous at the thought of giving up my 'free time' due to the decision to take my 13 year old daughter out of grammar school. I'm still trying to hunt down the best 'curriculum' for her, and have no idea how I am going to start it all!! We are Christians and would like contact with either single parents and/or Christian families who have children similar ages to mine (13, 12, 10 and 8) - or anyone who can reassure me that I am doing the right thing!! Thanks. Clare Mayne, 93 St Mary's Road, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 2NL. (01732 363139).

Request for information on Scheme

My son has been accepted in a youth training scheme (a chaps only thing) aboard a yacht for a week in the Solent area and is currently away. Does anybody know of a girls or mixed scheme? Or could anyone tell me more on the subject of Thalatta/Azimuth? The price was very reasonable, just £50 per person with one chum allowed, space permitting). I thought others might benefit. The contact information is: London Sailing Project (Rona Trust), Southampton, (01489) 885098.

We are relatively new to home educating (some eight months now) with the youngest of four at 7 years and just feeling our way, regaining some semblance of normality after literally years of discontent and disillusionment, hopefully about to meet others in the locality. Yours faithfully, S. Harfield (Mrs.), 10 Suffolk Drive, Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh, Hants, SO53 3HW

Dear EO,

My daughter Jane is nearly 10 and has always been home educated. We live in Central London and would like very much to meet other families for friendship.

I am also interested to know more about Spain (Costa Blanca) and would be very grateful for any information, contacts, etc.

Also, any unwanted text books, work material, etc. would be gratefully received. Thank you very much. Please contact Nataly 0171-229 5034

Welcome to our Island life

We are a home-educating family with children aged 3 1/2 (Zorian) and 4 months (Rusa). We have an eclectic

approach to learning and a strong spiritual practice within our family.

We live in a remote spot on the Hebridean island of Mull. We are minutes away from the beach, the woods, and castle ruins. We are surrounded by amazing wildlife, and our life is influenced very strongly by the cycles of the seasons and the elements.

If anyone would like to visit us and benefit from our incredible environment, either as relaxing space or alternative educating space, we could welcome you. The island has a lot to offer for all aspects of education.

We are vegan, sugar-free, and have a large organic vegetable garden which provides all we need. Call us if you would like to chat! Lesley and Chaski, Isle of Mull, 01680 300620

Looking back at EO excerpts over the years

Sept 79

"I feel very happy about my kids at the moment, they visibly blossom and mature before my eyes. Coming out of school has been a good experience for all of them...I've had to throw away some of my preconceived ideas about how we would actually operate together on a day-to-day basis and begin again with their help. It has done me no harm other than to raise occasional twinges of insecurity in me.... I had all sorts of bright ideas about initiating and encouraging projects...it has not really worked out like that. They spend long periods - weeks - without doing anything that is 'educational' in any sense that our local advisers would accept."

LETTERS

Like minded friends wanted

We are new home educators, we de-registered our children yesterday! We are keen to make contact with others who enjoy a similar way of life, hopefully locally.

Our children are adopted and function academically and socially up to three years below their ages. They missed out on so much in their early years, four years in the 'care' system has taken a heavy toll.

We operate within very firm and consistent boundaries (that makes them feel safe) and believe in teaching them to take responsibility for their own actions. Are there any parents who also want their children to enjoy the adventure of education in the wider sense, not curtailed by rigid timetables or age related expectations; but at the same time believe they should have good manners and consideration for others. We are not religious but believe in Christian values, we are not ethnic bohemian types but are reasonably environmentally aware.

We simply love our children and are committed parents with a vision of creating an enthusiasm for learning while at the same time giving them the nurturing they sadly missed.

We are Woody (35), Dot (43), Tisha (10), Debra (8), Tom (6), Luke (5). We all live at 17 Pincus Gardens, St Thomas, Exeter, Devon EX2 9EF Telephone 01392 662140.



CHRISTIAN HOME EDUCATION

I would like to make myself available to any other Christian families in my area, who are either considering home education or are already doing it.

I homeschool my six year old son using the 'School of Tomorrow' Christian curriculum. This is of a very high standard and re - inforces biblical principles and in particular the main character traits of Jesus.

There are four other families in my area using the same curriculum and we meet regularly for P.E. and occasional outings.

If you would like to make contact, we would be delighted to hear from you
Mrs. Jenny Hill, 18 Scaffell Close, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 4LF.

Home Educating a child with ADHD

We have recently joint EO and have been eagerly reading the August newsletter. We have decided over the summer holidays, not to send our son Jared aged 11, back into school.

We seem to have spent the last 4 years fighting schools and the LEA to get the appropriate help and acceptance of Jared condition ADHD. Many LEAs now accept ADHD as a medical condition, but still little is done educating teachers in correct handling strategies with these children.

Whilst at Primary school Jared became very anxious with many of the formal methods used within school, which these children find difficult. We asked both the school and the LEA to issue an educational statement for Jared, so as he could receive more individual help. This was refused as Jared was not an 'underachiever', at the time he achieved the third highest results in the SATS. We took his case to an educational tribunal. We won the case and the LEA had to issue a statement for Jared. He received 10 hours ancillary support to help with keeping him on task. At the beginning this was very positive, but when he moved on to middle school with 7 different teachers, he began to be more stressed and angry. When we spoke with the head, to establish why some teachers were negative and sometimes abusive to him, we were told that they gave teachers information on ADHD, but cannot enforce the way the strategies are carried out. This also seemed to be the same for his IEP. Most teachers chose to ignore much that was written on it.

Until a friend told me about EO, I thought that unless you were a qualified teacher, you were unable to teach at home. We have now informed the LEA and the school of our decision to HE. We await a reply from the LEA, but feel more confident in our selves in being able to answer their questions.

We are both excited and frightened with our new adventure, one of my biggest concerns is that, as I have read a couple of EO Newsletters, it would appear that most parents favour an 'autonomous' approach. We feel at this stage that this may not work so well with Jared and his condition. He is a very bright child, but gets bored very easily and then his behaviour is not so good. When he is focused and has a routine he is happier. We do have 3 older boys, who are either working or at college. So they will not be at home much in the day.

We would like to contact parents who are HE and have an ADHD child, so as to swap ideas. Also we are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Days Saints. Again, if there are any church members, we would love to hear from them too.

Pat and Ken Parker
94 Shetland Road
Haverhill
Suffolk
CB9 OLR
01440 762444.

Hello from Michigan

Hi! We are the Parrott family: Kevin and Daphne, Lance (7 years) and Justin (5 years). We live in Indian River, Michigan, USA. Indian River is a resort/vacation community, with approximately 1800 year round residents. The population triples during the summer months. We have fairly long, cold, snowy winters and (too short) warm, humid summers.

Our hobbies include: fishing (all year) but especially ice fishing, boating, camping, bicycling, snowmobiling, reading, all sports (soccer, football, golf, hockey, baseball, etc.) and anything involving bugs!

Our main project in the past few months has been the construction of our new home. Doing much of the work ourselves, it is very time consuming and labor intensive.

We are homeschooling in order to instill in our children respect, self-discipline, and a love for Jesus Christ. These things are lacking in public schools here. We are also able to customise a study plan best suited for each boy according to his strengths and weaknesses. We'd be happy for letters from those interested in corresponding.

Daphne Parrott, PO Box 3047, Indian River, Michigan, 49749, USA



Clowning Workshop

Leeds EO Meeting is holding a Clowning Skills Workshop for their First Annual Regional Activity Day. The event is led by a professional clown, conducting two 1-hour sessions with the group's performance following.

The meeting will be held in Moortown, Leeds, West Yorkshire on Friday, November 12, 1999, from 1-4 pm. The cost is £2 per participant. The address is Moortown Baptist Church at Stonegate Roundabout, King Lane, Moortown (off the outer ring road). The building room rental is kindly being sponsored by EO.

Those interested should book now with Judith Shalkowski (0113)226-5515 and arrange pre-payment, as there are limited bookings available. Everyone invited!

LETs Share Skills Day

Leeds meeting had a very memorable activity day this year. It is one event the children are repeatedly asking to repeat, so it seems worth mentioning here. It was modelled after a LETs scheme.

A few meetings prior to the event, participants were asked to consider a low budget skill to teach someone. Ideas such as sewing, playing an instrument, making gifts and craft, baking, knitting and cooking and information of all sorts began to emerge. The options were put into two time slots so everyone could have a go at half the day's activities. Stalls were set up all over the building. Each person had 4 tokens for payment. Those with more than 4 at the end of the day could ask EO for things. Those with fewer were asked to think of a way to give to EO. We ran a bring and buy sale at the event and managed to purchase sports and craft materials with profits!
Judith Shalkowski, 121 Otley Old Road, Lawnswood, Leeds, LS16 6HH.

EO BUSINESS

Volunteers required for EO jobs

There are a number of jobs within EO which require volunteers. Would you like to help? If any of the following jobs appeal to you, please call for a chat and details.

- 1) Families willing to be interviewed for radio/television/newspaper articles.
- 2) Publicity
- 3) Organising three EO gatherings a year.
- 4) Dealing with parents considering home education because their child did not get into the school of their choice.
- 5) Monitor the reaction to the legal information sent to LEAs.
- 6) Hold a directory of Grant Making Trusts and research income sources.
- 7) Research Directories and almanacs for suitable sites for EO entry.
- 8) Research into the use of local groups using EOs name.
- 9) Organise an MP's press conference in London.
- 10) Liase with other children's and alternative organisations to swap advertising, etc.

I look forward to hearing from you! Angela Smith, Small jobs coordinator, Burnt Walls Farm, Coanwood, Haltwhistle, Northumberland, NE49OPS, Tel.: 01434-32237, Email: angela@coanwood.freerve.co.uk

EO National Gathering and AGM

At Manorbier Youth Hostel, near Tenby in South Wales

27-30 January 2000

Be part of the action and share your vision of education in the future in this beautiful setting, the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park with fine views over Caldey Island. For more information, send a sae to: Lucy Charlton, 2 Wistow Road, Newton Harcourt, Leicester, LE8 9FT

Local Contact Update

Resignations

Lynda Hitchman

Devon

Angie Pullin

Kent

New Acting Local Contacts

Debbie Bentley

Lancashire

Sue Robinson

Norfolk

Fiona Brookes

Gloucestershire

Note:

Val Higgins is considering covering Shropshire IF no one else comes forward.

Areas needing a contact

Ceredigion (ex Dyfed), Derbyshire, Devon, Glamorganshire, Gloucestershire South, Hertfordshire, Isle of Man, London East, Shropshire, Strathclyde.

Why not find out more or send your comments to me? (Isobel Bogucki 01403 261178 or isobelb@cheerful.com)

Yet another type of contact person!

For those of you who would like to make use of the Home Education Mailing List, and do not have access to the internet, we are hoping to produce an Internet Contact List. While this is still at the discussion stage, send your questions or comments plus a sae and stamps to cover printing costs to me. I will print out and post the responses to you. (I have only had one request so far!) *Isobel Bogucki, West Sussex*

Summary of the open Council business meeting.

Held at Featherstone Castle on September 11, 1999 – many thanks to Lucy and Keith!!

Featherstone Castle is a beautiful old building with a real castle appearance on the outside, but with nothing too precious on the inside; just a warren of stairs, corridors and rooms - ideal for the children. As usual different members from the region came along and participated in the meeting, and became involved in the work and fun to do with the associated gathering – thanks for that! New members might like to read pages 13 & 14 from the Contact List for a description of EO's structure and meetings arrangements. Below is a summary of some of the items from the Agenda (people referred to are mainly council members whose contact details are in the back of every newsletter):

- * The national lottery which funded the production by EO of the yellow booklet entitled, 'A Summary of the Law Relating to Home Education in England and Wales', and which has been sent to all LEAs, agreed that we need not produce a Scottish legal summary at the present time. Scottish law is currently under review with the new Parliament. Rob Wade has written a paper to facilitate work on amendments to the draft stage of the Bill.
- * We have new membership forms that include details of resource sharing opportunities.
- * Anne Wade is preparing an equal opportunities policy for inclusion in the Contact List.
- * Linda Hitchman is our new database secretary and has been co-opted onto the Council.

- * The work that local contacts do in helping to inform and empower members, plus dealing with ever changing LEA officials, was noted and appreciated. This means fewer families need experience legal problems. The Wades continue to help local contacts to support members and Keith Chariton and Isobel Bogucki are to enhance this by offering, with Anne, to assist members who wish to deal with LEAs (where this is needed). Could members share, with Isobel, their experiences of supporting families with LEA work?

- * A proposal to set up a working party to explore ways of improving communications within the organisation, plus ideas for improving EO generally, was agreed. If you are interested in helping or have ideas to offer then please contact Gwen Baldock, Jill Fisher, Martine Archer (W.Yorks) or Priscilla Park-Weir. A particular interest is to establish more Regional Gatherings with speakers, workshops, discussion groups with council members, activities, resource sharing and legal support etc, to complement our annual conference programme and other local and national events. Ideas for speakers & activities welcome.

- * This will be the last newsletter to be produced under the existing system of a single editor doing a whole N/L. From Dec. a new team of rotating editors, each with a specific section to develop and commission work for, will start work. Thanks for all the work Sue!

- * The national conference for next yr will be held in York during September, details in the next N/L. Contact Gwen, Beverley, Lucy, Martine or Celia McDonagh (Wales) with ideas/offers. Jenny Stevens is hoping to organise a large international conference during 2001.

- * A meeting with the DFEE is to take place in October with Gwen, Anne and Jill. We will be looking at DFEE leaflets, de-registration of children from Special schools, relationships with LEAs, college entry for pre-16s and the establishment of an on-going relationship.

Members can send an s.a.e. to Lucy Charlton, Gen. Sec. for a copy of the minutes.

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.

New members, attending their first meeting, should phone to check it has not been cancelled.

All regular meetings listed below will now be automatically included in every issue. Please notify changes to:
Martine Archer
3 Brookfield, Hampsthwaite,
Harrogate, West Yorkshire HG3 2EF

BATH

Hedgehogs meet for a wide variety of outings and events.

Contact: Jo Ball & Andy Hanner,
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 for crafts, activities, play, speakers, drama, trips to museums, theatre etc.

Contact: Jackie 01753 886924
Dorothy 01494 782864

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

Thursdays - outings and events. Quarterly NL with events, resources, ideas etc, send 4 SAEs for 1999.
Contact: Anna Wheeler

Cambrose Farm, Redruth
TR16 4HT. 01209 890378
AJWheeler_Mineng@
compuserve.com

DEVON

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

South Devon new group now meeting weekly for activities/outings

Contact: Penny Cook 01626 836747
penny.cook@virgin.net
Maddie Lynfield 01364 73854
maddie.connect@virgin.net

DEVON EAST/DORSET WEST

Fortnightly meetings at Monkton Wyld Court. Activities + grounds to play in. For activities list

Contact: *Habiba 01297 561070*

Lisa 01297 445685

Fortnightly meetings at Bridport

Leisure Centre, Fridays 10.30-12.30

£2.50 per family

Contact: *Helen Rothery 01297 631108*

3 Coup Cotts, Lyme Rd, Axminster

DORSET

Regular meetings, keep in touch.

Contact: *Christine Adey 01258 880355*

Rosemary Newton 01747 853593

Bournemouth - weekly meetings

Contact: *Sue North 01202 527350*

ESSEX

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

Contact: *Sandie Cottee 01268 73325*

*17 south View Rd, Rettendon,
Chelmsford CM3 8DX*

FIFE

Outings & get togethers

Contact: *Karen Spy 01334 655361*

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

1st Tuesday or Wednesday in month for social meeting

Contact: *Rob Brookes 01684 290087*

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

Fridays - picnics, BBQs, swimming, photography. All ages welcome.

Contact: *Jude 01983 531680*

Jackie 01983 530378

KENT

Regular meetings & activities:

Canterbury -

Contact: *Janet 01227 454309*

Bishopsbourne -

Contact: *Sarah 01304 812859*

Barming -

Contact: *Jean 01622 820206*

Dartford -

Contact: *Angie 0181 3007238*

Events list available.

Contact: *Send sae to Amanda Mackenzie*

*16, Brambletree Cotts, 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

<eochoice@memail.com>

Bi-weekly for socialising & support.

Ages 1-8 yrs. Tues am swimming

(Brittania Leisure Centre Islington)

Wed am Clissold Park

Contact: *Charlotte 0171 254 0419*

Wednesdays -Honor Oak playground.

Contact: *Keith Hertog 0181 776 859*

2nd & 4th Fridays, Friends Meeting

House, Muswell Hill 12.30 - 3.00

Contact: *Amy 0171 371 6538*

SE London/West Kent, new group

being set up in Orpington, Sidcup,

Bromley area. For workshops, fun

and educational activities,

Contact: *Kate 01732 458804*

NW London Otherwise Club

Contact: *Leslue 0181 969 0893*

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 Wilson 0161 442 8723
Computing Skills, 1st & 2nd Sats at Moore family's home. Limited places.
Contact: Karen 01204 573136

NOTTINGHAM

Weekly meetings for socialising, support and outings. For full list
Contact: Wendy 0115 9114312
Louise 001773 780634

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: see 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

STAFFORDSHIRE/SOUTH CHESHIRE/NORTH SALOP

Fortnightly meetings in rural location for crafts, drama, music etc
Contact: Patricia 01785 851150

SUFFOLK

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

SURREY

Fridays - Ice skating at the Spectrum 1.30-4.00, £2.35 (+65p for group lesson).
Tuesdays/Thursdays - fortnightly visits, walks etc around Guildford. (SAE please)
Contact: Helen Arcoleo, Dolphins, Bracken Close, Wonersh Park Wonersh GU5 0QS (SAE please)

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

Cardigan area(Mondays), meetings & outings nr Newport
Contact: Anne Pope 01239 710905
Swansea monthly meetings in Llanelli/ area.
Contact: Sue Haggerty 01269 861902
NE Wales / Borders - gym/ trampolining in Wrexham(Thurs), meetings in Owstrey area (Tues), W.Cheshire/NE Wales(Mon or Fri)
Contact: Genny Bove 01978 757489
49 Westminster Rd, Moss Valley, Wrexham LL11 6DH
£2 for a year's listing
North West Wales has lots of members. Anyone interested in hosting/organising an event contact Jenny Bove as above

WEST MIDLANDS

Regular meetings throughout the region, something happening most weeks. Full details in our newsletter, HELM, £5.40 per year.

Contact: Penny Clarke 01922 745465
Joy Beasley 01922 863115

YORKSHIRE - SOUTH

Tuesdays 12-3 term time at Highfield Adventure Playground.

Outdoorequipment plus indoor room for crafts, table tennis etc. Free entry, small contribution for materials only.

Off

London Rd/Abbeydale Rd. Turn Up or
Contact: Annette 0114 2583502

Fiona 0114 22751142

YORKSHIRE - NORTH & EAST

Regular meetings & visits etc

Contact: Meraylah Allwood 01904 448643

YORKSHIRE - WEST

SEE CLOWNING WORKSHOP;PAGE 39

Outings & activities.

Contact: Diane 01484 846946

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. £2.50 per family

Contact: Judith 0113 2265515

THE LAST WORD

As anyone who has seen the inside front cover will have noticed, the newsletter is undergoing some changes. This is, in fact, the last issue to be published with a single editor.

I would like to thank Judith and Sarah for making this edition such an excellent one, looking back to the roots of EO and forward to the future seems entirely appropriate for this issue. The next one, will not only be the first in the new format, but also the first for the next century.

Don't panic at the prospect of a **NEW STYLE NEWSLETTER**: there will be no glossy, full-colour magazine packed with adverts. The heart of the newsletter will be, as always, your personal experiences, thoughts, dilemmas - whatever you have sent in between now and the deadline in fact. But in addition there should be a range of other articles; a broader look at aspects of home education; resource reviews; a 'problem page' where you can offer your family's solution to another member's concern; selections from old issues and (if someone applies for the job, see page 27) highlights from the excellent local newsletters produced throughout the country.

After six years as Newsletter Co-ordinator, I am retiring to spend more time with my family ! I'd like to thank all the people who have struggled with the near impossible task of editing the newsletter and wish the new Editorial Team, **GOOD LUCK**. I hope you all enjoy reading the newsletter in the twenty first century.

Sue Hutchin, Oakwood, Bethersden, Kent

Misuse of the term 'Education Otherwise'

THIS is firstly for anyone who has been confused by the DfEE circular 11/99, 'Social inclusion: the LEA role in pupil support,' which in part replaces circular 11/94, 'The education by LEAs of children otherwise than at school.' As was explained in the EO newsletter when that circular came out, these documents have *nothing to do with elective home education*. They are about the provision LEAs must make for registered pupils for whom they remain responsible, but who for various reasons cannot be educated within mainstream schools. This may include pupils in hospital, permanently excluded pupils, those pregnant or caring for babies, those in Pupil Referral Units, those tutored at home by LEA staff, and early admissions to college at the discretion of the LEA. There were half a dozen circulars about such children in 1994, as the DfEE became aware of just how many difficult pupils the schools and LEAs were failing to educate.

So that's all right. Not our problem. Or is it?

It was about 1994 that LEAs started using 'education otherwise than at school' more widely as a way of referring to the provision for these pupils; and then as the name of the LEA departments with this responsibility, who often also had responsibility for education otherwise by parental choice; and then as headings on the leaflets they sent out to home educators. The distinction between the two groups became blurred, and the phrase was all too easily shortened to 'education otherwise.' This similarly invited EWOs to lump both groups together as 'difficult children who cannot cope with school.'

EO worked on this problem with these LEAs, where possible through the local coordinators, pointing out that the phrase 'education otherwise' had only come into

the language because of our organisation, that it was our intellectual property, belonging to us by virtue (at that time) of nearly twenty years' usage, and that it should not be misused to denote this confusingly similar type of provision. Many LEAs accepted this courteously. A few told us, sometimes quite rudely, that the words were in the law and they were entitled to use them.

The DfEE denied the possibility of confusion, saying that each circular makes it clear which type of educational provision it is referring to. This is true, if each circular is read in its entirety. However, experience has repeatedly shown that it is actually not clear to some LEA staff and some families. Some LEA staff appeared to have read only the Executive Summary in the 1994 circular, rather than the whole document; and this section was particularly lax in using 'education otherwise' liberally as a shorthand phrase which was only clarified later in the circular.

However, it may be that the DfEE are now trying to discourage this confusion, as current circulars and regulations tend to avoid putting 'education' immediately before 'otherwise.' Circular 11/99 uses 'education otherwise' inappropriately once, in the third paragraph of the 'Legal background' to the section on 'LEA responsibility for arranging education outside school.' This is clearly wrong; but it may well be a slip, since the main phrases used in this circular are 'education out of school' (fourteen times) and 'education outside school' (five times). 'Otherwise' is used appropriately elsewhere, as in quoting the legislation on a parent's duty to provide education.

FURTHER EXCITING INSTALMENTS TO FOLLOW

Anne & Rob Wade (London - Middlesex)

ADVERTISEMENTS

Parenting for the 21st Century

is a new parenting course which sees you and your children as unique individuals with your own way of doing things. A stand alone course with e-mail or postal backup or use with a group of friends. 60+ pages in a binder. Cost: £25 (10% to Education Otherwise). Contact Barbara Edwards, 01483 832250, becoach@compuserve.com, www.moneycoach.co.uk.

→ HES FES 2000 ←

The Home Educators' Seaside Festival
14th - 21st May
www.choiceineducation.co.uk/events.html
hessfes@choiceineducation.co.uk

Re-grease your home educating elbow with a wonderful Christmas present for all

The Otherwise Club Presents

'A Compilation of Selections to Help Home based Educators'

3rd edition

Lots of new additions, from all over!!!

£4 inc p. and p.

Send cheques payable to 'The Otherwise Club', 1, Croxley Road, London, W9 3HH. (The Otherwise Club is a Company Limited by Guarantee Registration No 3379478, Registered Charity No. 1071831.) Registered Office as above.

Schofield and Sims Ltd

publishers of workbooks, wordbooks, dictionaries and posters.

We specialise in numeracy and literacy resources for children aged 3-12.

To receive a catalogue contact us on 01484 607080 or fax us on 01484 606815.

E-mail

Schofieldandsims@compuserve.com or visit our website: www.schofieldandsims.co.uk

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

Urgent: Mother's help/au pair required to help with 6 yr.-old H-Ed. daughter. Help required while mother is at university lectures. Must be vegetarian and non-smoking. Wage and accommodation negotiable. Contact: Sandie Day, tel.: 01287 660158

USBORNE BOOKS

Interested in buying Usborne books, jigsaws, games or CD Roms? Good range available. Suitable for children of all ages. 10% of sales will go to EO. For a catalogue phone Julie Loughlin on 01283 760800.

The Non-Stop Reader

for teaching your child to read within weeks

Parents say: "an exciting reading program," "a lovely approach to children's learning," "wonderful mixture of scholarship, wit and fun," "my daughter (5) loved it & would get it out each night, eager to carry on."

Enquires: Non-Stop Books, 26 Lathbury Rd, Oxford OX27AU, Tel: 01865-554953. Email: NonStopBooks@compuserve.com

Newsletter for Jehovah's Witnesses who home-educate their children

For a sample copy, please send four second-class stamps with your address to:

Louise English, 41 Queens Road, Horley, Surrey RH6 7AH

Free!!

Stick Insects free to a good home. Personal collection essential! If you can get to Darwen, why not pop in and pick some up. Ring Angelika on (01254) 603 497.

Choice in Education

The independent monthly publication for home educators.

• A year's subscription costs £5.00

Cheques/PO to:

Choice in Education. For sample copy send an A5 stamped SAE enclosing 2 x loose second class stamps to:

PO Box 20284 London NW1 3WY.

Tel/fax 0171-813 5907

Also available:

Truancy information Cards & The Elective Home Education Guidelines (contact above)

www.choiceineducation.co.uk
info@choiceineducation.co.uk

Wise Owl Educational Software

PO Box 334 Abingdon OX14 2YB
(01235 - 529808)

wiseowlsw@aol.com

Only UK children's shareware library, specialising in educational programs and games, ages 2-16+. 900+ titles (DOS, Windows 3.1 & 95/98), 3 1/2" and 5 1/4" media. All titles £3 per disk.

Free catalogue/advice.

No membership fees.

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

Kumon Maths

Kumon boosts the maths skill, confidence and concentration of our 23,000 students. Suitable for all ages and abilities—can be studied at home or at a Kumon Centre. Taught by qualified instructors countrywide. Call 0181 447 9010

Books and Resources for Resale

Cuisenaire equipment: workbook and Rods, textbooks 1 & 2, product wall-chart with playing cards and counters.

Book: 'Now Johnny Can Do Arithmetic,' original cost £57. Asking £25. For either, contact: Kathleen

Marsh, The Croft, Front Street, Haswell Plough, Co. Durham DH6 2EW.

Book for sale

I have a book for sale (bought for £16, sell for £10) 'The Seven Year Itch' by the Grant family, an interesting read and newly released, as new and enjoyed once. Especially for all would be travellers or dreamers of an alternative adventure.

S. Harfield (Mrs.), 10 Suffolk Drive, Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh, Hants, SO53 3HW

Wanted: House to Rent

2/3 bed house/cottage wanted to rent, long term, near Michael House Steiner School, Shipley, Nr. Ilkeston, Derbyshire. Anywhere else to rent near a Steiner School also considered. Condition of property immaterial. Contact: Lavina Feldt, 29 Stella Street, Mansfield, Notts. NG18 2RU, Tel: 01623 660872.

To place an advert. . .

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

Adverts should be limited to 50 words and sent (with any donation) to the editor of the next issue. Advertisers who wish to discuss larger ads should contact Martine Archer, see inside front cover.

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

Chair: Gwen Baldock

6 Villa Grove, Heworth Green, York,
YO31 7TB Tel: 01904 421 982

Vice Chair: Eleanor Stapleton

63 Sweet Briar Grove, Edmonton,
London N99LU Tel: 0181 884 1368

General Secretary: Lucy Charlton,

2 Wistow Rd, Newton Harcourt, Leics LE8 0FT
Tel. 0116 2592118

Treasurer: Priscilla Park-Weir,

212 Gordon Avenue, Camberley, Surrey,
GU15 2NT Tel: 01276 22735

Database Secretary: Lynda Hitchman

36 East Avenue, Exeter, Devon EX1 2DX
Tel: 01392 660216

database@education-otherwise.org
*(subscription renewals, address changes,
newsletter mailing, membership cards etc)*

Publicity Contact: Beverley Young

Tel: 01772 734314

Newsletter Coordinator (acting):

Christine Adey, 1 Dunbury Cottages, Milton
Abbas, Dorset, DT11 0DH Tel: 01258 880355

Local Contact Coordinator:

Isobel Bogucki, 20 Rusper Road, Horsham,
West Sussex, RH12 4BD Tel. 01403 261178.

Single Parent Family Contact: Sarah Martin

Lammas, 34 Cowslip Drive, Little Thetford,
Ely, Camb CB6 3JD

Special Needs (acting): Christine Waterman,

85 Elfrida Rd, Watford, Herts WD1 8AT
Tel: 01923 464773

Research Contact:

Catriona Morrison Nursery Cottage, Brighton,
Ruthven, by Meigle, Perthshire, PH12 8RQ
Tel: 01828 640353

School Phobia: Geraldine Adams

Tel: 0171 263 4922

GCSE Contact: Wendy Pleded

Tel: 01865 514973

College Contact: Kathy Chilton

Tel: 01969 623707

Enquiries Secretaries Coordinator:

Eileen Wilson, 39 Tatenhill Lane, Branston,
Burton-on-Trent, DE14 3EZ

Tel: 01283 532547

Membership Secretaries Coordinator:

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

EO Stalls: Lucy Charlton,

2 Wistow Rd, Newton Harcourt, Leics
LE8 0FT Tel 0116 2592118

Stationery: Ali Willer *EO stationery, re-use*

*labels (£2.50 per 100) leaflets, posters,
membership forms, car stickers available from:
28 Cozens-Hardy Rd, Sprowston, Norwich, NR7
8QF (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, Storrige,
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;*

Geraldine Adams (North London)
Christine Adey (Dorset)
Jude Ashley-Walker (Isle of Wight)
Gwen Baldock (North Yorks)
Pam Belling (Oxon)
Isobel Bogucki (Sussex West)
Lucy Charlton (Leics)
Lynda Hitchman (Devon)
Jill Fisher (Leics)
Sue Hutchin (Kent)
Priscilla Park-Weir (Surrey)
Gary Podmore (Yorks)
Eleanor Stapleton (London-North)
Jenny Stevens (West Sussex)
Anne Wade (London Middx)
Bruce Wallace (Highlands)
Janet Wilkinson (Midsex)
Beverley Young (Lancs)

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 0870 7300074

<<http://www.education-otherwise.org>>

Education Otherwise Association Ltd, Registered Charity No. 1055120

