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education otherwise

Home Education =

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tickling tea
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cheese catfood
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lego
wriggles sleep ...
html mynovel
...giggles etc

Words by
Tal's family

April 2000

No. 133

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

CHILDREN'S PAGES

NAOMI McLEAN, ALVESTON, MANOR
FARM LANE, MITCHELMERSH, Nr
ROMSEY, HAMPSHIRE SO51 0NT

LETTERS AND ARTICLES

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

BOOK AND SOFTWARE REVIEWS

SALLY HALL, NANT-Y-GAREG FARM,
SARON, LLANDYSUL,
CARMARTHENSHIRE SA44 5EJ
01559 370908

EO NEWS

GWEN BALDOCK, 6, VILLA GROVE,
YORK, YO31 7TB 01904 421982

BACK ISSUE SELECTIONS

SARAH GUTHRIE 01379 783678

PROBLEM PAGE

SUE WHITE, 2, PRETORIA VILLAS,
EYE RD, BROME, EYE, SUFFOLK
IP23 8AL 01379 870036

**SPECIAL SECTION: HOW DO YOU
USE YOUR LOCAL OR WIDER
COMMUNITY AS A LEARNING
RESOURCE**

SUE WHITE (address as below)

**ADVERTS, REGIONAL DIARY AND
EO BUSINESS**

MARTINE ARCHER, 3, BROOKFIELD,
HAMPSTHWAITE, HARROGATE,
HG3 2EF 01423 770396

LOCAL NEWS (vacant)

HOME EDUCATION NEWS

ANN KENNEDY-SMITH, 21
KIMBERLEY RD, CAMBRIDGE,
CB4 1HG 01223 356627

ACTING NEWSLETTER

COORDINATOR

CHRISTINE ADEY (as above)

(For information about volunteering for any
of the jobs on the newsletter contact
Christine Adey)

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

DEADLINE FOR THE JUNE ISSUE IS 1ST MAY 2000

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DATABASE SECRETARY TO CHECK IF YOU ARE ON THE DATABASE.**

From the Editors...

Here is the April Newsletter. The front cover has been undergoing trials for a second issue and if you would like to participate, send copies of snaps that reflect home education, that could be used for a future cover, to Christine. Print size can be up to 4 by 5 inches, but please don't send precious originals!

Custodian of the EO Archives, Sarah has researched what children were writing in the Newsletter in the eighties, and says how wonderful it would be to know where these children are now- maybe we could appeal for news of them? "I sighed as I realised that 8 year old James and co. are now in their 30s!! That must make me about 103 and as for Archie - well, as the inspector said, the mind boggles." So contact Sarah if you have any news. The Problem Page is proving popular and Sue looks forward to your solutions for this issue's thorny question. Unfortunately, The Problem Page is unable to deal with individual inquiries - please contact your local contact for advice if necessary.

It's that time of year for planning camps and other adventures and there are lots of gatherings on offer. Don't miss the ads throughout the Newsletter, and book early! A flyer for EO's conference in York is enclosed and could be displayed on a suitable notice board. Rosemary Newton's Special Supplement on outings and holidays is guaranteed to motivate us all to get out and about.

This month's Home Education in the News includes Roland Meighan's hopes for a change in mainstream education and a look at the changes in French law. With the growth of communication via the internet, members are submitting articles and letters to the Newsletter from abroad, making home education as global an activity as internet shopping. Hopefully, this development will inspire us all with different perspectives and new ideas.

Volunteers are needed to edit future Special Supplements and the Children's Pages. These sections are edited for one issue only, so if you would like to have a go, please contact Christine for further information, including a telephone number if you write. Access to a computer is the main qualification.

Finally, thank you to everyone who has submitted material. It has not been possible to include everything in this Newsletter and material will be available for inclusion in the next issue.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
SPECIAL SECTION	2
BOOK REVIEWS AND RESOURCES	10
HOME EDUCATION IN THE NEWS	13
ARTICLES	16
PROBLEM PAGE	27
EO NEWS	28
EDUCATING ARCHIE	29
LETTERS	30
EO BUSINESS	33
REGIONAL DIARY	38
ADVERTISEMENTS	42

JUNE'S SPECIAL SECTION is: How do you use your local or wider community outside the home as a learning resource? For example: Have local or national businesses helped you in any way? Does your child volunteer as a volunteer with any local groups? Your experiences may spark off ideas for others. Please send any contributions to Sue White (see inside front cover) or e-mail me on sue_white@dknet.co.uk

Special Supplement:
Field Trips; Outings and
Holidays: essential ingredients
for home education?

Charlotte our daughter only went to school for 18 months, but I often used to think that she was learning as much during our conversations on the way there as she ever did in school. When she came out we tried formal lessons for a bit but they gradually faded away and our days soon filled up with a very varied collection of activities. As well as seeing friends and craft activities I would scour the local press for open days and guided walks. The local tourist board was another useful source of information. We attended every local open day – from fire station to magistrates court to cottage garden. I picked up leaflets of town walks and nature trails. I resisted the strong temptation to insist the children wrote about every day out, but would punch a hole in the leaflet and file it with the date on....useful when I had a moment of self doubt and suddenly felt sure we were not doing anything, and as evidence for inspectors. The children were given life membership of the National Trust in memory of their grandparents, this has the added advantage that they can take a friend with them on visits as their cards admit two. Of course EO members can enjoy free visits to National Heritage sites if we book!

Our holidays have continued the idea of going out and about to find out for ourselves. Ten years ago we bought a small motor caravan, no bigger than the average loo. Eventually we plucked up

courage to take her abroad. One of our first trips was holiday in the Auvergne. Despite the fact it rained every day for three weeks none of us will forget the cave paintings of Pêche Merle, the ancient worn down volcanoes and the spectacular thunderstorms over St Fleur, and the flood that broke the river bank, it would have swept us away had it not been the opposite bank that burst.

We developed the aim of showing the children every country in Europe, even if only a small snapshot view so that they could carry these pictures in their mind. We have largely succeeded in this. We have explored Heidi Alp, having all just read the book; camped near the Reichenbach Falls, where Sherlock Holmes met his death (or did he?); explored inside the Rhone glacier, climbed over a glacier and white water rafted in Norway; and walked in the High Tatras in Slovakia. We all especially loved Prague which has a great atmosphere. Charlotte stood on Henry the Navigators compass on the tip of Portugal for luck before she started her university course in Marine Navigation.

I have been writing in the past tense as study for GCSE's has temporarily robbed us of much of our day to day freedom. However all the ideas of exploration, adventure and knowledge have been firmly planted. We also found, with both children, that the transition from informal outing based education to formal GCSE education was easily achieved, at 13. I.e. going straight into GCSEs from a standing start. It is great when the children can call on their personal experiences to answer an exam question, as Charlotte did in her

geography O and A levels! Learning from books is much more interesting when you can compare it with what you have seen in real life, and this is where home educated children can really shine.

Some of these ideas do cost a bit and there is no denying that a car will give you greater flexibility and range in your choice of places to visit but there are so many places close to home just waiting to be explored. The Ordnance Survey is at the moment covering the country with their Explorer range, with a scale of 1:25000 or 4cm to 1km they are wonderful guides to footpaths and local natural and historical features. Whilst people in more built up areas will have a greater range of open days to visit.

Best of luck adventuring!

Rosemary, Andy, Charlotte & Bobby Newton,
Shaftesbury, Dorset.

Email: andynewton@cwcom.net

Togetherness in the Great Outdoors.

One of the most commonly held assumptions about home education is that we keep our children cooped up at home away from the "real world". I think it's important to stress that some times it is the best thing in the world to be at home, doing "stuff", just hanging around, keeping cosy and being together. But there comes a time when it hits you that everyone is getting on everyone's nerves and you've definitely been indoors too much and the only thing for it, for our sanity, is to **GET OUT OF THE HOUSE.**

On one such day I dug out the Ordnance Survey map for our local area and in search of somewhere different to go for a walk came across a spot called "Hunter's

Rocks", a tiny outcrop of rocks only about a mile and a half from the road down a path through some woods. The kids were bored with the idea of our usual haunts and being keen to get out agreed to my suggestion. It was quite a nice day so we set off. The first obstacle was a field full of sheep, the sheep ignored us but the field was completely waterlogged and I was pretty fed up by the time I had groped my way down the wall trying to stay out of the worst of it. The kids however stormed ahead and got across a stream at the bottom by stepping stones. The path through the woods was even worse, inches deep in mud, and, with only one of us in welly boots, we kept to the large clumps of course grass that grew by the side. Large expanses of mud and huge pools hindered us at different stages before we finally gained the rocks over an hour later. They weren't anything remarkable, just a bunch of rocks in a clearing in the forest, just a point to aim for I suppose. We sat and ate a most welcome chocolate biscuit, climbed about on the rocks for a while and discussed the possibility of taking a different route back, but looking at the map it would have been much longer and included a none to pleasant walk along the roadside. We did part of the return journey picking our way between the trees, and then it began to rain. We sheltered for a while under the thick pine trees but decided to venture forth when it did not seem to be going off. By this time everyone's shoes were so wet that it didn't seem to matter much, and it was pretty cold too. It probably took us another hour to do the return journey.

Despite what were potentially the most unpleasant of conditions we had the best afternoon for ages, the kids were dying to do the walk another day. They remained cheerful throughout helped each other find paths through the mud, enjoying the challenge of not getting stuck, waited for each other when we were going different speeds, chatted about stuff the whole time, even managing to find it fun having wet feet. I found myself getting caught up in their enjoyment, instead of dwelling on the cold and mud and feeling bad that we were not having a "perfect" time. We did do things like talking about trees, discuss the possible wildlife and all sorts of other things that cropped up along the way, but for me it was about being with my children and enjoying each other's company. When we were finally back in the car getting warm and dry and every one exclaiming what a good time they had had I really felt it had been a wonderful way to spend the afternoon. We've been back since, when it had dried out ,it was pretty good, but not quite the same, though we did find rabbit skeleton, the skull of which now sits on our kitchen window sill as a reminder.

Martine Archer, 3, Brookfield, Hampsthwaite, Harrogate HG3 2EF

FUN DAYS OUT

In our experience any everyday journey can turn into a "visit", when we come across a working thatcher willing to chat, or a cats'- eye layer keen to show the children the intricacies of his job. We also enjoy more formal, pre-arranged

trips as a family, or with our EO group, as part of the informally based education we wish for our three children. Living in Dorset, as we do, means there are plenty of opportunities for getting away from home and exploring the world outside. We are in easy reach of the coast, with the possibility of everything from a simple walk along the shoreline, to an accompanied trail with a County Ranger. Our local EO group has established excellent relations with the Countryside Ranger Service, who readily offer a wide selection of guided walks at very reasonable cost.

The National Trust offers a special Educational membership, which enables local groups to take advantage of their properties and the associated activities. Some of their talks/tours can be rather rigid and National Curriculum-directed for EO-ers, but in our experience we have found individual guides to be flexible and enthusiastic when pre-warned about our wider than normal age-range and interests. In Dorset we have found Kingston Lacey and Corfe Castle to be well-worth visiting.

Local libraries have an abundance of information on local attractions: whether it be Sea-Life parks, Working farms, places of Historical interest, Museums and Galleries or Environmental Study Centres. It is always worth enquiring about an "educational" discount, even for a small family group, as many places are pleased to help.

We, as a family with children 12, 10 & 7, often make use of these facilities because they are FUN and INTERESTING - what we think education should be about. They incidentally provide masses of

“evidence” for any LEA inspector who may be passing!

These Fun Days out obviously also prepare the children for what may be required later, when they embark on formal qualifications, and visits can then be tailored to the requirements of specific GCSE syllabi.

Above all, **HAVE FUN!**

Sue, Rick, Gren, Kit and Oran Elphinstone Davis.

Websites of interest:

www.schooltrips.co.uk

www.iwm.org.uk

www.nmsi.ac.uk

National Trust information on 0181 315 1111

The Dome

Here is an account of our latest “field trip”, which was a trip to the Millennium Dome, dictated by our son Nicholas, aged five and a half:

We went through the bus station, through two doors and round a corner into the Dome. There were shops inside the Dome. I sat down at a table and had tomato soup...When we had finished lunch we got up and went into a space tunnel. We sat down in seats and watched things – cold ice, a hot volcano and a wind.

When we got out, we went through a space tunnel again, looking for the exit...Suddenly we heard the loud noise of a show. When the show was finished

we went up a tunnel. We saw all sorts of things inside. We saw the Starship Enterprise of Star Trek Next Generation and we saw the Star Wars ships too, and a racing car from Formula One.

We saw computers upstairs, and I tried the first computer but it didn't work... I went to a second computer and when I clicked it worked...

Then we went across the Talk Zone Bridge and then under a rainbow thing on another bridge and what did we see? – McDonalds! We went in to have some chips for our tea...Then we came outside the Dome. We went into the bus station and got a small double decker bus back to the hotel.”

His view is a pretty apposite mirror of our views – although the structure itself was impressive, it felt like a large shopping mall or motorway service station. The use of space was not good; either there were expanses of tunnels etc with little or nothing going on, or there was conflicting audio and visual information of different kinds bombarding one at the same time.

The Home Planet Zone, which reflects the power of nature on Planet Earth, was quite enjoyable, as Nicholas showed in his account. I did feel that some of the images were unsuitable for younger children (as was the case for the Blackadder show.)

The main Millennium show was indeed very loud, and seemed to be enjoyed more by the females in our group than

the males. While I thought it was fantastically beautiful and was mesmerised, my husband and Nicholas were more intrigued by the technical aspects, and trying to work out how the machinery and people were got into the right place at the right time.

The Journey Zone had by far and away the most to offer, being full of models of, and information about, different modes of transport. The Talk Zone was interesting as well, although there, as well as in the Learning Zone, the computers didn't always work.

There are many places to eat in the Dome, but McDonalds was by far the most dominant. We had lunch at the Covent Garden Soup Company, which was enjoyable from the point of view of having good food, and friendly service.

The Living Planet Zone (a sop to environmentalism) and the Learning Zone were deemed to be superficial by the members of our group. Around the Zones there are opinion recorders which allow you to vote "Yes" or "No" to a question posed. One question in the Learning Zone was "Do you think most people will be learning from home in the future?" We all registered a "Yes" vote as many times as we could before being moved on! Although we realised they were referring to "school" education from home via the Internet etc., it might still make some people think of alternatives.

In all, we did have an interesting day, though of our seven hours there, half were spent queuing or eating, and only

two could be described as thoroughly enjoyable. Would I recommend it? Well, if someone was going to London anyway, and didn't know whether to see the traditional sights or go to the Dome I would suggest the latter, purely on the basis that it will only be there for one year. I am glad that we went, if only so that we can all say in years to come "Yes, we saw the Dome exhibition in the year 2000."

Rebecca and Nicholas Bradley-Carter,
Salisbury, Wilts.

Trips Out

What would we do without our days out! A great part of being at home is that you can get out and about at anytime, with no restrictions.

So in the past 8 years, we've done a lot of 'tripping'. Although we live in Somerset, we meet with a Dorset group of E/O friends, with additions from Hampshire and Wilts., and have organised days out together. These have worked really well on the whole, only occasionally being poorly supported. Obviously these trips cannot be as spontaneous as our family days out, but we've had some great jollies!

Over the years, we have collected fungi in Thorncombe Wood, near Dorchester, with the expert advice of the local warden. Telling us tales of exploding stinkhorns and numerous horror stories. On another occasion in the wood, in pouring rain I might add, he showed us an ancient Roman road and told us of the ghosts of some Roman soldiers that had been seen walking the now overgrown road. This was before

getting to the badgers setts that we had really come to see. We've done fossil rubbing at Kimmeridge, although that wasn't easy with the double tide! The warden there was also great fun, and helped us to identify seaweed, and told us tales of the grisly dimmock who eat their prey while riding on it's back. On a glorious day last November, we all met at Lulworth Cove and had a very interesting talk in the study centre there. As we have a wide age range of young people in our group, the people giving us talks always manage to keep this in mind. We had a look at the rocks of Lulworth, and then had a wonderful walk along the coastal path to Durdle Door.

Several years ago, we all remember a fantastic day out visiting Salisbury Cathedral. We had a tour around the various workshops, the stone masons, stained glass window workshop, maintenance, and then were taken up to the tower. Not for the faint hearted! We were stood listening to our guide when the inevitable happened, our smallest member wanted the loo. The guide totally unmoved offered the fire bucket! We've had our sandwiches pinched by cheeky peacocks on Brownsea Island. I could go on, but these are just a small selection of some of the trips we've done as a group. As for days out with my daughter, that's another story.

Caroline and Hettie Griffiths
Milborne Port, Somerset

The next article, by Kent Romanoff, first appeared in Latitude 38 Magazine. While not strictly a home-educating family, the theme of breaking free, taking responsibility for one's family is equally strong. Good luck to anyone who follows them.

Don't drink the water: dealing with the pre-cruise blues

Once upon a time, there lived a benevolent king who loved his loyal subjects, and they loved him. All lived happily together until the day a sorcerer crept into the town under cover of darkness. Reaching beneath his cloak, the sorcerer produced a vial, emptied its contents into the town's only well, and vanished into the night. As the concoction took effect, the townspeople descended into madness. The king, whose own water supply remained untainted, was alarmed at the change he observed in his people. Leaving the safety of his castle to investigate, he was stunned to discover his once loyal subjects conspiring openly to overthrow their sovereign who was, they observed, no longer like them. The king, contemplating every possible explanation for the strange affliction, concluded that it emanated from the water.

Soon the fateful day arrived when the people, having decided that their king was deranged and must be deposed, stormed the castle. Slipping out a secret passage, the king dashed to the tainted well. Gazing into its murky depths, he knew what he must do. Lifting the bucket to his lips, he drank deeply. Immediately, the towns- people noticed a difference. "The king's madness has subsided," they observed. With their king once again like them, the people were satisfied and everything returned to normal in the quiet kingdom.

It wasn't until we were in the final stages of planning our summer cruise to Alaska that I questioned whether it was my turn to drink the water. Prior to that, while the trip was still theoretical and likely to fall into the category of most other ambitious trips-to-be – that is, those that never actually occur – nobody was particularly threatened by the idea. But as the event drew closer, and the likelihood of it actually occurring increased, an insidious resentment appeared. But it didn't present itself as mere resentment; that would have been easily dismissed. It came in a subtler and

more pernicious form that had me questioning things I had accepted as irrefutable only a few months before.

People who knew my wife and I since before we were married, and who presumably understood us almost as well as we understood ourselves, began wondering openly whether our marriage would survive three months confined in each other's presence aboard a small boat. It seemed everyone suddenly had friends, or friends of friends, whose marriages had disintegrated under similar circumstances. "Why take such chances?" they reflected, "Marriages are easy enough to destroy. They don't need any help." Then there were the jobs. My wife had worked hard to become a key employee in a successful publishing company. I had toiled 15 years as a management consultant establishing a solid base of loyal clients who counted on me for advice. When my wife quit her job to sail to Alaska, and I contacted my clients with similar news, our friends and family were incredulous. We were accused of irresponsibly jeopardising our children's financial future by interrupting the family revenue stream. "How can you walk away from the money? How will you pay for college?" Then there was the matter of the children. Our two daughters, aged 8 and 5 made our plans an easy target. Over the course of several discussions with family and friends, we discovered how little we knew about how kids 'would react: they would miss their friends, they were too young to appreciate the scenery, they would get bored during long idle hours, they would fight with each other incessantly, they would degrade physically from lack of exercise, they would fall behind in their school work (or more accurately, their preparation the upcoming school year), they would be frightened, they would long for their own rooms, they would sacrifice precious time with grandparents, they would miss the cat, they would lose sense of time and conclude that they were never coming home, they would forget how to relate to children their own age, they would drive a wedge between my wife and I, they would be constantly seasick. And they would be

exposed to unthinkable dangers such as drowning and bear attacks. My wife and I, for our part, had deluded ourselves into a naively romantic version of the same events. We thought spending time together would strengthen the family. We thought the kids might develop a special relationship with each other, forged out of the simple fact that they would only have each other. We thought that mere exposure to unimaginable natural beauty would insinuate itself into their character and make them better people. We thought a summer away from cars, radio, televisions, newspaper, movies, pollution, shopping malls, billboards and junk food would clear our heads, and that a summer's worth of shared experiences might create lasting bonds. We thought living together in close quarters would reveal better ways to get along. And we thought we might encounter others doing similar things who would welcome us into their community.

As departure time neared the objections intensified. I who had been carefully nurturing and protecting the dream of such a journey for years, began wondering if I was imposing a selfish fantasy on a family of reluctant participants. I started asking my wife regularly, "Do you really want to do this or are you just going along with it for my sake?" She assured me that she shared the dream. I thought she was lying. We wondered together long into the night about the morality of dragging two innocent children on a perilous adventure. I asked the kids if they were sure they wanted to go. They looked at me strangely and said, "Yes, Dad, why do you keep asking?" I figured they could no longer think for themselves as a result of my endless brainwashing.

My resolve was unravelling. I found myself looking for a graceful way out. ("Where is that bucket of water? Maybe we should wait a year until the kids are older.") Concerned about the effects of the trip on the children, I sought the opinion of a child psychologist. Sitting on the couch in her office, my wife and I laid out our plans. We held back nothing,

afraid that if we sugar coated the truth and the kids suffered, we would carry the guilt for life. It took only two sessions for her to render her verdict: "Do not go. Doing so will definitely damage the kids." I was shocked, but relieved. Finally, I had my out. But my wife would have none of it. "That woman," she sneered, "is irresponsible and insufferable. We're going anyway." And go we did.

What I failed to appreciate during the months prior to our departure was the extent to which we had rocked the values of those closest to us. Our plan, it seemed, challenged their complacent lifestyle. Like the villagers who drank the water, they could not accept us being different. I believe we all hear a faint voice deep within whispering "find another way." But much conspires against heeding this voice. In truth, the fabric of our society depends on few people answering the call. What is demanded instead is that everyone plods stoically down the same beaten path.

Many of the tentacles that conspired against our leaving, however, were more mundane. It is astonishing how monumental is the effort required to break free for even a short time. There are the bills that need paying, the house that needs renting, the garden that needs tending, the cat that needs feeding, the cars that need starting. Which says nothing of preparing the vessel and planning the journey. In today's world, a crumb of freedom exacts a heavy price.

We are back now, having spent three months traversing 2,000 miles of pristine Alaskan coastline aboard a small boat with a family of four. The lessons we learned are as fresh and clear as Alaska's icy water. The first revelation: there is a "there" out there. It exists, just beyond the castle walls, where whole communities of individuals have abstained from drinking the water. What a relief it was to find others who shared our values. Suddenly, we were no longer alone. Sitting together for hours swapping stories was intoxicating. But, it wasn't the reminiscing

that was so enticing - it was the sense of affirmation that went along with it.

And the kids thrived in ways we could scarcely imagine. Somewhere along the way we realised that for the first time they were actually being raised by their own parents. Prior to that time, we shared the responsibility with baby-sitters, teachers, grandparents and friends. At best we were responsible for a large fraction of what went on, but never close to the majority. Suddenly we controlled all the stimuli that entered their innocent brains. Gone was the flood of inputs generated by scores of school kids and crass TV commercials. Gone were the news flashes and headlines screaming atrocities. Gone were concerns about stranger abduction and random violence. In their place stood a peaceful routine of family meals and splendid scenery, punctuated with quiet walks, kayak rides and fishing trips. The kids responded with new found maturity and confidence.

We also discovered the difference between living together and sharing a common base of operation. On land, we merely shared a house where we reconvened after a day apart. On the boat, we ate together, explored together, laughed together, cried together, read together, fished together, fought together, made up together. Everything, everyday, all day. We had to - there was nowhere else to go. To be sure, it was far from ideal. We experienced awful weather, rough seas, and all the stresses of close living. The kids fought, and so did we. There were times when we even considered quitting and heading home. The decision to press on was made jointly, as a family, with the kids weighing in as co-equals. It was the first important decision we ever made together and the kids will never forget it. Of course, looking back on the experience it seems comical that we considered caving in to the pressure and cancelling our plans. The trip exceeded even our loftiest expectations. To those planning similar or even grander adventures, particularly with children, we say stay the course. Protect your dreams. And never, ever, drink the water.

Book Reviews and Resources

Developing Literacy – Year Six

by Ray Barker & Christine Moorcroft

We tried this out on our 9 year old, Year 5 and he found it fairly easy, though there were areas where he tripped up – which was useful to know. Like many other EO parents we don't want to shadow the National Curriculum but it's always useful to know where, in comparison, our kids are. I found the graphics irritating, but as modern kids have been indoctrinated by the sub-intelligences that run our education system and the media who think that nothing is intelligible without accompanying images and rave music, we must live with it. On balance I found it helpful for reminding me that there is more than one way to look at anything. The price is, I think, a little steep. There are plenty of equally good works in any good bookshop at half the price.

Gerry O'Donnell and Richard (9)

0 7136 4968 2 £14.99 (just one of a range of workbooks from reception to year 6) A&C Black, PO Box 19, Huntingdon PE19 3SF. Tel 01480 212666.

Arithmetic Lotto

A sturdy, colourful and good value board game that helps with addition and subtraction. Several different games can be played using the 72 cards and 6 collecting boards and it is therefore suitable for toddlers and young children. It is easily adapted for different levels of ability. Play the games suggested or make up your own!

£5.99 from Child's Play Ltd, Ashworth Road, Bridgemoor, Swindon SN5 7YD. Tel 01793 616286.

Mental Maths Practice for Ages 10-11 'Let's Learn at Home' Series by Margaret Gronow

This is a maths workbook which has lots of sums that get harder as you go through the book. Usually I enjoy workbooks but I found this one rather dull. It does have some good sums though. On each page there are weird blobby beasts which have speech bubbles with clues. I think it could be improved by adding some colour. It's all grey except for the answers that (of course) I don't see. At the end there is a picture of a planet for each double page which you colour in according to how well you think you've done. Overall I would say it was an average but not too good workbook. (Note from Emma's mum – she thinks

that although Emma is right, the price is fairly reasonable compared to some of the more highly coloured ones. This book is just one of a range for varying age groups.)

Emma Whitehall (9)

0 7460 2331 6 £2.99 (£23.92 for 8 books) Scholastic Ltd, Villiers House, Clarendon Avenue, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 5PR. Tel 01926 887799. www.scholastic.co.uk

Mental Maths Homework for 9 year olds Photocopiable activities by Jill Meyer

This is designed, primarily, as a support to any maths scheme of work (it is one book of a series). There is a reasonable mix of problems including games, puzzles and investigations here. Each page is attractively laid out and I found the 'tasks' interesting to do. I didn't like all of the activities but there was enough there for me to pick and choose what interested me. There were aspects of the activities that we felt were 'time fillers' rather than essential to the task – we just ignored them. We felt the statement on the front – for 9 year olds – could be off-putting. I am 10 and I found some activities were harder than others. If you follow a recognised scheme then this book would offer revision and consolidation through fun activities. If you do not, then you may find that you need to work through the activity with an adult. There were good suggestions for further activities and explanations about the point of each activity. A good ideas book for the adult and fun for the child, if you can ignore the school slant to the text.

Iain White (10)

0 439 01705 X £9.99 each Scholastic Ltd (see last review for contact details)

The Clue Finders' Maths ages 9-12 CD Rom

This is an adventure game where players go on a quest to recover missing treasures. In each location you have to solve mathematical problems based on whole numbers, fractions and decimals, geometry and measurement and charts, graphs and tables, to gain a clue. This clue enables you to eliminate people, locations or objects from a logic cube to find out who stole what and from where. If you are correct then you replace the stolen treasure in the treasure house. According to my brother Iain all the places you could go to were fun but the ice cave was quite difficult on level 3. The rock cave was his favourite location. Graphics were excellent. The

whole adventure would take a long time to finish as you have to collect 24 treasures. This involves going over the same route 24 times doing different puzzles each time. This may get repetitive but your position is saved automatically when you quit the game, so you can spread the game over several weeks or so. The only irritating feature was that you had to complete each quest otherwise the clues you had got disappeared.

A few of the logic cube clues were a bit hard, particularly on level 3. This is a Smart program. As the player masters the maths concepts and skills in an activity, the difficulty level of that activity will automatically increase, leaving the player to continue working on puzzles they find more challenging whilst advancing to higher levels in puzzles mastered.

This program was enjoyed and we would certainly give other programs from this company a second look. Iain (9) and Elizabeth (12) White

Available at £19.99 from any good software retailers. The Learning Company do an excellent range of educational CDs for all ages. Visit their website www.learning.co.uk

Mathematical Curiosities

by Gerald Jenkins and Magdalen Bear

We were interested in finding out what Tarquin books were like and the chance to review one gave us that opportunity. Our first impression was that the card models looked very exciting to make, with interesting shapes and brightly coloured patterns. The instructions are clear and easy to follow. We all had good fun cutting out the models and sticking them together, while finding out about mathematical concepts in a practical way at the same time. Some of the models illustrating the mathematical principles and concepts are quite complicated and are probably more suitable for older children. Help was needed in putting together the different shapes, particularly the more complex ones, but we all enjoyed the finished models in our own way. The card was perhaps slightly thinner than we thought it would be and it helps to make sure that you have the recommended glue type - I'm not sure that we did!

Eileen Haycock, Freyja (7) and Eoghan (3)
1 899618 35X £3.20 Tarquin, (catalogue available),
Stradbroke, Diss, Norfolk IP21 5JP. Tel 01379 384218.
www.tarquin-books.demon.co.uk

Puzzle Train by Susannah Leigh

I like Puzzle Train a lot. I liked it so much I went to the library and got out all the Puzzle books that they had got except two. I like the puzzles in it a lot. On each page you have to spot a certain number of umbrellas etc. There are lots of people going on the train to the seaside and they have to solve puzzles on the way and you have to solve the puzzles as well. The puzzles are just right for me. The pictures are good to look at. Usborne do more difficult puzzle books as well.

Molly Whitehall (6)

0 7460 2331 6 £3.99 each. Usborne Publishing, 83-85
Saffron Hill, London EC1N 8RT. Tel 0171 4302800

Learn to Play Drums by Eileen O'Brien

I always wanted to play drums as a kid. As my family couldn't afford the kit I played, instead, on cardboard boxes and chair seats, as did Jerry Allison of The Crickets. So when I read this book my tongue fell out at the sight of all that skin, brass and chrome. Lovely. The book is simple, easy to read format and I learned a lot during just one skim through. It isn't a complete course but I reckon a few budding drummers could pick up enough to passmuster. Ringo might have benefitted from this book. If your kid wants to be a drummer, and you've got the ear plugs, this is well worth its cover price. Gerry O'Donnell

£6.99 Usborne Publishing, 83-85 Saffron Hill, London
EC1N 8RT. Tel 020 7430 2800 (www.usborne.com)

There's More to a Banana

by Rita Phillips Mitchell

Four stories about a family with 2 daughters in Jamaica. The stories are unremarkable apart from their exoticism. My mum read the book to me. I could have read it myself but might not have been motivated to do so. Very simple stories not for my age group, but it is good to read stories about another country. The pictures are nice. Try it from the library, you might like it more than we did. Erin Hartley, (10)

0 7445 5935 9 £7.99. Walker Books Ltd, 87 Vauxhall
Road, London SE11 5HJ

Sept Situations Differentes

by Lucy Montgomery

This 40 minute CD aims to encourage French speaking in 9-13 year olds. Each of the 7 situations has 5 tracks and there are 2 photocopiable worksheets. The dialogue is first

read straight through by 'Patrick' then by 'Laura and Maya' as a conversation on the second track. Next Patrick reads 12 questions and to round things off the dialogue is repeated as a rap song by 'Francine' and the final track is music only - so it's possible to try speaking French in a fun way when you're feeling confident. The CD benefits are that it gives the chance to hear 3 different speakers repeating the 7 dialogues and, given the fun nature of the rap music, should encourage children (and parents) to have a go themselves. Although it is primarily for practicing French conversation, the chance to read and write it is there with the worksheets.

Sue Onions

£20 *Ecole Alouette, Monkton Road Farm, Birchington, Kent, Birchington, Kent CT7 0J. Tel 01843 843447. A demo CD is available, www.ecolealouette.deomon.co.uk*

Sally Jarvis and her daughter Hazel (nearly 8), sent in details of these two books they have enjoyed.

The Frog Castle by Jostein Gaarder

Hazel loved this story which mixes fantasy and reality very skilfully. Although there's plenty of adventure for Gregory, the main character, there's nothing 'scary' so it could be enjoyed by any child who can read or listen to a medium-length story.

£10 *Published by Ted Smart. ISBN 1 85881 785 4*

The Conjuror's Game by Catherine Fisher

Alick accidentally removes the key piece to an ancient game played by very dangerous characters which lets loose mystical, mystical and chilling forces. Together with Luke, the conjuror, Alick has to return the piece to the board. The resulting adventure is fast moving and enthralling. It reminded me of reading 'The Weirdstone of Brisingamen' when I was 9. Hazel (nearly 8) found some parts too sinister, but nevertheless wanted to know what happened in the end.

0 09 985960 2 £2.50 Red Fox

Duncan Patrick tells us about Envirodoc News

Envirodoc is published 10 times a year. It provides detailed, concise summaries of the latest articles from over 50 different publications, covering a wide range of environmental issues (all referenced). It is a really excellent way of keeping up to date with such issues. It is well laid out, easy to read and packs a considerable punch.

Download some free issues from www.envirodoc.co.uk or write to Envirodoc, 16 Adderley Road, Leicester LE2 1WA. 20% discount to EO members.

Jackie Goldsworthy and Laura (12) recommend

The Eagle of the Ninth by Rosemary Sutcliff

This is the first of a sequence of novels about the Roman occupation of Britain and describes a young man's struggle to overcome his handicap and put right a wrong done to his family and to those he feels he owes his loyalties. He finds unexpected friendships amongst the British Barbarian tribes. A very exciting read. Equally exciting for us was the story of the author (this was her first book). She was born in 1920 and suffered, all her life, with Still's disease, a rare form of arthritis. She spent her early years being read to by her mother at home and didn't learn to read herself until she went to school at 9. She left school at 14 describing herself as 'hopeless in all the subjects that interest me now'. She took herself off to an art college and specialised in miniature painting before turning to writing. Her second book won the Carnegie medal in 1960. She was awarded the OBE in 1975 and died in 1992 aged 72. Not bad for a girl with little or no formal education!!

£4.50 *Puffin Modern Classic*

The Seven-Year-Old Wonder Book

by Isabel Wyatt

First published in 1958, this book is mainly text but this edition contains some lovely black and white illustrations. The book is about Sylvia, a 6 year old who lives with her mother 'in a white cottage at the edge of a dark wood'. Throughout the year her mother tells her beautiful stories, each of which have some significance for that moment of Sylvia's life. There is some particularly important information about what happens in the fairy kingdom when a child reaches the age of 7! I chanced on this book when my son was six and have been asked to read from 'The Sylvia stories' so often that we both know large parts of them off by heart. I love the stories more each time I read them.

Vicki Sivess

£6.99 *Published by Floris Books, 15 Harrison Gardens, Edinburgh*

Keep sending in your favourite titles or let me know if you would like to be a reviewer. Write to me, Sally Hall (Nant-y-Garreg Farm, Saron, Llandysul SA44 5EJ or e-mail buildgreen@aol.com).

Home education in the news

Home news

The Guardian recently predicted that as many as half of all schoolteachers might leave the profession in the next ten years because of the pressures they are under. A few weeks previously, a research study showed that Britain had one highest rates for young people leaving education once schooling was no longer compulsory, equalled only by Mexico and Hungary. The emphasis on academic qualifications in secondary schools results in a lack of motivation and truancy problems for a substantial minority of pupils, who then find it difficult to find jobs once they do drop out of school.

When, earlier this year, the Times Educational Supplement asked several leading educationalists for their views of how education would develop in the new century, some predicted that technology would put learning more into the hands of the pupils themselves, while others saw the classroom teacher as the single irreplaceable part of the educational process. Roland Meighan, the former Special Professor of Education at Nottingham University and longtime champion of home-educating families, offered a refreshingly different perspective on the idea of education in the future. His extensive experience of home-based education has convinced him that this is closest to the way that education in the 21st century should develop for the benefit of society as a whole.

Perhaps if the teachers no longer want to be in school and the pupils are leaving as soon as they can, it really is time to see things in a different light.

Home or away?

Roland Meighan

Roland Meighan believes today's schools will be replaced by open-all-hours institutions offering an escape from intellectual slavery.

At the heart of our school system is a paradox:

The UK Government wants its citizens to become independent. It demands that they take responsibility for their pensions, their portfolios of work, their parenting, and their health.

However, the preparation for this autonomy and the necessary skills of decision-making and researching throughout life, is . . . learning what they say you are to learn, where they decide, when they decide, in the manner they decide.

This is, in effect, a course in practical slavery, not practical autonomy, since rigid systems based on submission, produce rigid submissive minds. This is not the only paradox.

"Democracy is the absence of domination," declared Professor Sibusiso Bengu, Nelson Mandela's choice for minister of education for South Africa. It therefore requires the democratisation of the institutions for learning, including "a learners-driven curriculum", he concluded.

But in the UK the defining characteristic of schools is that they are riddled with domination. What does a personalised education, that is also democratically-sensitive, look like?

We can make a start with a comment from Tony Blair: "The revolution in business . . . will, over time, take place in education, too. We will move away from a system that assumes every child of a particular age moves at the same pace in every subject, and develop a system directed to the particular talents and interests of every pupil" (quoted by Michael Barber in the *Guardian*, January 30, 1996).

Such an approach requires reversing most of the current assumptions about places for learning. For more than 20 years, I have been studying the ways of home-based educators to see what lessons could be learned. I find that they have been quietly trailblazing the principles of the next learning system, by developing practical autonomy.

Learner-managed learning: Home-schoolers take it for granted that learners will manage their own learning, at first in style and soon after that in content. This is often achieved by a process of trial and error, feedback both from themselves and from sympathetic others, and developing a

Home education in the news

self-correcting approach.

A network of learning sites: When I was collecting information from home-based educating families in the late 1970s and 1980s, I found that I had to do most of my visits on Sundays. Whenever I telephoned to fix appointments at other times, I would find that the learners were learning out and about in various libraries, museums, exhibitions, gatherings such as auctions, expeditions, sports centres, and meetings with adults who had offered some useful learning opportunity.

They had already taken on the idea of the community as a source of learning sites. Microsoft has adopted the slogan of "Everywhere and anywhere learning" - an approach already in use by home-educating families.

The catalogue curriculum: Here, the learners, whether in schools full-time, or in flexi-time schooling, or full-time home-based education, are offered a printed or electronically-stored catalogue of learning opportunities. This includes set courses, ideas for making their own courses, instructions on how to set up a learning co-operative, self-instructional packages and available learning resources and opportunities in the local, national and international community.

Personal learning plans: The Royal Society of Arts has been promoting the idea of personal learning plans. Former director Sir Christopher Ball saw the aim of the project as creating a learning culture in Britain. By implication, years of compulsory mass schooling have done no such thing, so something has to be done to reverse the trend.

Home-based educators just get on with the idea of personal learning plans and some even write and publish their own declarations of education in a family-designed brochure.

Direct access to the information-rich society: Seymour Papert in *Mindstorms* forecast how computer technology would change things by modifying the environment outside classrooms, writing:

"I believe that the computer presence will enable us to so modify the learning environment

outside the classroom that much, if not all, the knowledge schools presently try to teach with such pain and expense and such limited success will be learned, as the child learns to walk, painlessly, successfully, and without organised instruction."

This implies that schools, as we know them today, will have no place in the future. The learning institutions to replace them need to be all-year-round, open-all-hours, open-to-all ages, and invitational rather than coercive.

To achieve all this, we may have to close down the Department for Education and Employment, send Employment to Trade and Industry where it belongs, and open a new Department for the Encouragement of Learning, clearly signalling a radical change in outlook.

Teachers as learning agents: In his book *In Place of Schools* John Adcock develops the idea of a new role for teachers. The new teacher would not work in a school but in a centre, or from home, or both, and their concern would be to help devise and service the personal learning plans of a group of clients.

I see them as akin to learning "travel agents". Teachers as learning agents would operate from their "learning travel bureau" helping any learner to "visit" and explore any learning that was chosen, and providing guidance and encouragement as deemed necessary. They would assist the learners to "plan, do and review". They would be "learning coaches" helping people learn how to teach themselves better.

Assessment on request: Philip Gammage observed that "Nobody grew taller by being measured." This would seem to put assessment firmly in its place as a mass schooling fetish.

There are, however, several provisos. Scandinavian countries already manage perfectly well without anything like external examinations such as the UK's GCSEs and A-levels. But they introduce vocational tests post-schooling on the sensible grounds that people who provide services in society need to be appropriately qualified; no one I know wants their teeth attended to by unqualified people.

Home education in the news

In addition, testing can be available on request. The grades for musical instrument proficiency are an example of such tests, and so are the examinations people must take before being allowed to drive large vehicles.

The paradox at the heart of the present learning system is long-standing. It was pointed out by Bertrand Russell in the 1920s: "We are faced with the paradoxical fact that education has become one of the chief obstacles to intelligence and freedom of thought."

A "good" school as seen through official eyes is, therefore, a bad education. No wonder the anthropologist Margaret Mead was moved to write: "My grandmother wanted me to have an education so she kept me out of school."

* EDUCATION OR SCHOOLING?

"My schooling not only failed to teach me what it professed to be teaching, but prevented me from being educated to an extent which infuriates me when I think of all I might have learned at home by myself." **George Bernard Shaw**

"I never allowed schooling to interfere with my education." **Mark Twain**

"When I came back from the morning (of his first day at school), my mother asked what I had learned. I said, 'I really didn't learn anything'. I sat at the back of the class, and there was a little window high up on the wall, through which I could see branches. I hoped that a bird would alight. No bird alighted, but I kept hoping, and that's about all I could report. So my mother promptly said, 'Well, we'll educate you at home.'" **Yehudi Menuhin**

Dr Roland Meighan is author of "The Next Learning System: and why home-schoolers are trailblazers", published by Educational Heretics Press. He was formerly Special Professor of Education at the University of Nottingham. Contact www.gn.apc.org/edheretics
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Foreign News

On December 18th 1998, the French government passed new legislation reinforcing inspections of homeschooling families and certain types of private schools. In the next issue of the newsletter there will be a longer report on the effects that these legal changes are starting to have on home-educating families in France. Meanwhile the then editor of the home-educating journal *Grandir sans Ecole*, Sophie Haesen, counsels home educators not to see the new inspections in a completely negative way and in doing so offers a fascinating glimpse of how the French see us:

Sometimes there is a risk of getting lost in a paralysing negativism, instead of seeing things as they are and simply trying to make the best of them... We can see here a great difference between the English and the French approach to things. On the one hand there's activism, the idea of 'getting stuck in', and 'learning by doing'. On the other hand there is the wish to increase one's theoretical knowledge before starting something, discussing the advantages and disadvantages and seeing all the different facets of something. Both ways of doing things have their strengths and weaknesses; on the one side, the danger of disillusionment, a naivety which is bound to find out that everything is not that simple. On the other side, there are eternal discussions which go round endlessly and prevent any practical action. You have to stop from time to time and ask yourself if you still agree with the goals and objectives you have set yourself, or if you are... Sometimes you need more courage to change than to continue the same way, even (especially?) if you consider yourself a trailblazer (and in my opinion that is what we are, because home education will not be stopped, even in Europe).
(my translation from *Grandir sans Ecole* 8 1999; for subscriptions write to GSE, 4 rue du Lergue, 34800 Brignac, France)

Ann Kennedy Smith

Are high standards dangerous?

A number of people have spotted a new section in the Education Act 1996, Section 13A (which applies to England and Wales) was inserted by section 5 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and came into force in October of that year. It is headed 'Duty to promote high standards in primary and secondary education', and reads as follows:

- (1) A local education authority shall ensure that their functions relating to the provision of education to which this section applies are (so far as they are capable of being so exercised) exercised by the authority with a view to promoting high standards.
- (2) This section applies to education for—
 - (a) persons of compulsory school age (whether at school or otherwise); and
 - (b) persons of any age above or below that age who are registered as pupils at schools maintained by the authority;and in subsection (1) 'functions' means functions of whatever nature.

This section means that when LEAs do things in connection with providing education they must aim to promote high standards whenever they can. 'Education' in this context means education for all pupils at LEA schools regardless of age, plus education for all 'school age' children even if they are receiving education otherwise than at school. The reference to 'otherwise' education has caused alarm in some quarters.

Does this section apply to home educated children?

Yes, it does.

Does it apply specifically to children whose education is being provided by their parents?

It draws no distinction between 'home education by parental preference' and home education provided by LEAs for children who can't go to school for any reason.

Is it an insidious attack on home education?

No, it isn't. I think this section has led to a large amount of totally unjustified paranoia. I don't believe for one moment that Parliament had any particular interest in 'elective' home educators when drawing up the 1998 Act. Anyone who makes aggrieved representations to the Department for Education and Employment about it will succeed only in making us all look very silly.

What's the rest of the School Standards and Framework Act about?

The Act is divided into seven parts as follows:

- Part I: Measures to raise standards of school education
- Part II: New framework for maintained schools
- Part III: School admissions
- Part IV: Other provisions about school education
- Part V: Nursery education
- Part VI: Partnership arrangements in Wales
- Part VII: Miscellaneous and general

It's clear from this that the Act is almost entirely about schools. One of the miscellaneous provisions in Part VII (s 131) abolishes corporal punishment. Section 5 (the section which amends the 1996 Act by imposing this extra duty on LEAs) falls within Part I. This part of the Act begins by limiting infant class sizes and continues by providing for education development plans, education action zones, and intervention in schools causing concern. It seems that it's mainly through the drafting and implementing of education development plans that the new duty to promote high standards is to be discharged.

Then what are the implications of this amendment for home-based education?

LEAs must abide by this section when 'exercising their functions'. In connection with 'elective' home education, they have only one function, namely to invoke the school attendance order procedure 'if it appears ... that a child ... is not receiving suitable education' (1996 Act, s 437). Therefore it seems they must aim to promote high standards when using, or considering the use of, this procedure. (Deregistration, properly speaking, is carried out by schools, not LEAs.)

Wouldn't LEAs be promoting high standards anyway?

Arguably, yes.

Shouldn't home educators be in favour of high standards?

Well, I did suggest initially that we should lobby the DfEE demanding that home education be kept mediocre, but I have to confess that I wasn't being entirely serious. I now withdraw that suggestion.

But couldn't this new section be abused by LEAs?

LEAs, like the rest of us, are good, bad and indifferent. Their relationship with the law is at times much the same as that between motorists and the speed limit. But personally I don't think there's any particular reason to suppose this tiny amendment to the 1996 Act will in itself have any significant effect one way or the other on relations between LEAs and home educators.

Rob Wade

London - Middlesex

FROM THE ARCHIVES...

Some EO children of the early 80s...

Edward has been learning to tell the time. He has a goal! When he asked recently if he could have a watch, I said that when he understood time and related it to a clock, I would buy him one. He has spent a large portion of the past few days ogling a mail order catalogue to decide the type he wants. It has taken him one day to come to terms with the clock and it looks as though next week we shall have to go and buy that watch.

(Geraldine Lockington writing about her 7 year old son, December 1980)

Chris - not long ago - rose at 4 am and went off down the wholesale vegetable market and 'asked' until he got himself a part-time job, which starts at 5 am. He has taken up ice-skating quite seriously, gets out and plays table tennis and swims, joined a cricket team in the summer, is not much of a footballer, is an avid and intelligent reader and articulate in company, and I feel, quite as balanced and able a personality as I would have wished him to be. He still retains his phobia about school and clams up when the LEA inspectors appear, causing them still to say 'he seems introverted, isolated and withdrawn', and they worry for his future when it comes to finding a job and coping in the 'real' world. (Anthea Barnes writing about her 16 year old in March 1980)

New Legislation in France

On December 18th, 1998, the French government passed new legislation reinforcing inspections of homeschooling families and certain types of private schools. The stated intention of the government was to protect children from indoctrination by dangerous religious sects which are said to have increasing influence in France. However, this legislation also concerns the homeschooling families and private schools without a State contract (« écoles privées hors contrat ») which have no connections with these sects.

Prior to this legislation, the law in force dated from 1882. This law, which introduced the principle of compulsory education at the primary school level, also stated that the father of a family could educate his children himself or delegate this responsibility to a person of his choice. The family was required to register with the mayor and the school academy, and had to teach the rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic. The law provided for assessment of the knowledge of the children at 8, 10 and 12 years of age.

Few people chose to home educate their children, but a new movement towards this type of education began to grow from the late nineteen sixties, particularly after the student uprisings in May 1968. At present, French families homeschool for a wide variety of reasons, which may be philosophical or religious, or frequently stem from dissatisfaction with the public school system and a desire to explore other ways of educating children. The number of homeschooling families in France is difficult to determine, but the percentage is much smaller than in England or the United States, where the numbers have increased rapidly in recent years.

Under the old law, families had a great deal of freedom in choice of methods and curriculums or could educate without a curriculum and encourage self-directed learning.

The new legislation requires annual registration with the mayor and the school academy, an investigation every two years by the mayor to

determine the reasons of the family for homeschooling, and to verify the health of the child, and annual assessment of the child's knowledge and skills by the school inspector. The knowledge that the children must have is determined by the decree of March 23, 1999. This decree provides a broad definition of several areas of knowledge, covering the subjects one would normally study in public or private schools with a State contract. Parents are not required to teach the State curriculum as such, but the children must have a comparable level to children in public or private schools under contract when they reach the age of 16, which is the last year of compulsory education. The education given to the child must permit the development of the child's personality and must not hinder his or her socialization.

The law also reinforces sanctions for non compliance, including heavy fines and prison sentences if the family refuses to be inspected or refuses to comply with an order to send its child back to school after assessment showing insufficient results.

Many French homeschoolers feel that freedom in education has been greatly reduced by the new legislation. Much will depend on how the law is applied in practice and on the type of evaluation used by the local inspectors.

The law also affects certain private schools: those which do not have a contract with the State and receive no funding. Whereas inspection before this law was limited to the daily functioning of the school (hygiene, building upkeep, director and teacher qualifications), the law now provides for supervision of the State over the content and efficiency of the education dispensed by the schools. They must cover the same areas of knowledge as homeschooling families, as defined in the decree.

For more information see :

www.multimania.com/possible

Jennifer Fandard, member of « Les Enfants d'Abord »

An EO Family History

The Coleman family consists of me, wife and mum Karen, husband and dad Jim, sons and daughter, Gavin 22, Michelle 21, Jamie 18 and Richard 16. I first discovered information about EO quite by chance in our local library. At the time, our two youngest sons were very unhappy at school and although we had approached their teachers about this, their problems were not acknowledged and things didn't improve. We believed that removing children from school to educate them at home was illegal unless you happened to be a qualified teacher. I was therefore surprised and delighted to learn that not only could we legally home educate, we could actually provide our sons with a better education than they were receiving at school!

We immediately joined EO and 'phoned numerous other home-educating families who gave us lots of sound advice and support. I read several books by John Holt and Roland Meighan, Grace Llewellyn's *The Teenage Liberation Handbook*, James Hemming's *The Betrayal of Youth*, Alice Miller's *For Your Own Good* and AS Neill's *Summerhill*, as well as many others. We discussed home education with the boys and weren't at all surprised to hear that they were as pleased as us at the prospect and couldn't wait to leave school!

So, on a cold, dark day back in January 1996, we summoned all our courage and withdrew Jamie and Richard from school. We personally handed a letter to the head teacher of their school which stated that we were taking back responsibility for our sons' education; we would be educating them at home and we asked him to remove their names from the register. We also wrote to the LEA informing them of our intentions by way of a written statement, which we constructed with the help of Gary Podmore. We haven't looked back since; my only regret is that we didn't do it sooner!

Initially, Jamie and Richard were teased by their friends, but this didn't last long when they realised that we were serious about home education.

During our first tentative months, Jim and I thought it would be a good idea to follow an academic approach similar to how the boys had done at school. However, this only resulted in arguments and resentment. We then decided that our best way forward would be to adopt an autonomous approach, listen to our sons, take them seriously and facilitate their educational needs and aspirations.

This worked out fine for all of us; in fact, it became an absolute pleasure. Watching the boys' confidence, competence and self-reliance increase once they were free to direct their own education was amazing. Books have been read, projects done and topics discussed at all hours of the day and night (not having to get up early for school is great!). We've debated at length diverse topics from military history to art appreciation, we've watched TV and videos, cooked and baked and relaxed and enjoyed each other's company. We've visited some fantastic places such as Brimham Rocks (a marvellous science and nature resource site) where we've seen the effect of weathering on prehistoric rock formations, climbed rocks, observed a wasp's nest and caught and examined a slow worm. Stump Cross Caverns is another great place to visit where there are caves to explore which are full of unusually shaped stalactites and stalagmites. We've enjoyed being free to visit many other interesting places.

Both of the boys have chosen not to study for academic qualifications and we respect their decision. They recognise that academic study provides possibilities for professional advancement, but for many trades they would only be required to pass an aptitude test. They also know that if and when they are ready to study for GCSEs and A levels, the opportunity to do so will remain open to them by way of evening classes and college. The whole of life is a learning experience and academic qualifications can be pursued at any time, or not at all!

Our first LEA visit took place nine months after the boys left school and was very

unpleasant. Since the inspector expected written evidence of work done, we felt pressured into coercing the boys to produce this work, which they hated. This had nothing to do with their education; it was only done in an effort to satisfy the LEA. The inspector was very domineering and tested the boys, even when asked not to, undermining their newly found confidence. He questioned their written work, making statements like, "Well, there is *some* evidence of education". At the end of the hour's inspection, he made a few suggestions and left, saying that he would probably visit again in three to six months. We didn't hear from the LEA for 13 months.

After our first home visit experience, we expected the inspector to ignore our views on education, (we were right!) where we place less emphasis on product and more on process. We also believe that meaningful education is less about achieving academic qualifications and more about how children develop and mature as responsible, competent, confident and caring people. So, yet again I panicked and got the boys to produce written work, even though I knew that this wasn't necessary.

Our second inspection was extremely unpleasant and lasted for just over two hours. The inspector wasn't happy with our account of the boys' activities or anything else that we told him about. He basically "rubbished" the boys' written work in front of them, remarked that they were probably missing out on educational opportunities and actually stated that we were "storing up trouble" for ourselves. He obviously knew very little about autonomous education, so we couldn't imagine how he felt qualified to assess ours! We waited for further contact but all we received was his report.

Slowly, we all managed to recover from this ordeal and our confidence gradually returned. We settled back into our normal, relaxed pattern of life and resumed our natural pursuit of knowledge, intuitively knowing that we were providing the best education for the boys and being constantly reassured by the

invaluable EO newsletters that when there were doubts, we were "doing the right thing".

In the meantime, Richard decided to open a savings account with a local bank. When he had saved enough money, he bought a second-hand, dismantled bicycle, which he repaired, re-sprayed and reassembled without any help. The end result was a nearly new bicycle, which he is very proud of. One of his on-going projects is aeronautics and military history; he hopes to pursue a career in the RAF. He is a RAF Cadet and has passed two written exams resulting in his promotion to Leading Cadet. He was able to experience the principles of flight, which he had learnt about at home, in real terms as he piloted a Bulldog training aircraft with an instructor at RAF Leeming, where he attended summer camp in 1998.

In the same year, Jamie (who's always shown a keen interest in science and technology) turned 16 and completed two weeks' work experience with an electronics company. He was then offered and accepted a training position as a CCTV engineer's assistant, which would normally have required him to have four GCSEs at level C or above, but because he showed an aptitude for the work, this requirement was waived. Unfortunately, the company was taken over and moved to Sheffield and Jamie decided to leave because of the extra travelling time and expenses involved. He's had several jobs since and was enjoying a career with the Territorial Army up until mid-December 1999, when he was badly hurt in a traffic accident. He has had to temporarily leave the TA because of his injuries; however, he is "on the mend". Whilst deep in conversation with several of his friends one day, Jamie was asked, "How come you know so much when you haven't been to school for so long?" It's statements like this that prove to us our home education has been and continues to be successful.

After 16 months, the LEA contacted us again. A new inspector suggested a date for a home visit that was only a few days' away. When I

told her that this would be too soon, she replied that she was a very busy person and couldn't waste her time trying to fit us in! (Apparently there had been no change in the LEA's hostile attitude.)

In view of our previous treatment by the LEA, the intimidating manner of this new inspector, and after discussing this matter with Gary and several other families, we decided to exercise our right to refuse this home visit. I therefore cancelled our appointment by letter and provided evidence of education by way of another lengthy written statement, describing our educational activities, Richard's achievements and our educational philosophy.

The inspector either chose to ignore our letter or didn't receive it because she turned up on the appointed date! We refused to let her in, explaining that we had cancelled the visit and handed her a copy of our statement. She left and we heard nothing for a further five months. I was then 'phoned by the LEA and asked *very politely* if a different inspector could visit and *when would this be convenient?* After talking this over with Gary, we decided to agree to a home visit, although as you can imagine, we were not entirely happy with this decision and asked Gary to be present at the meeting.

This time, the only written work shown was work that Richard had completed without coercion. I wrote another statement as part of our evidence of education, which we handed to the inspector on his arrival. At first, Richard refused to see this inspector, but then agreed to be present but silent during the visit. The meeting, I'm pleased to say, went quite well, although the inspector did try to test Richard even after being informed that he would be unwilling to talk to him because of his two previous traumatic experiences. We received an agreeable report from the LEA, acknowledging that we were providing Richard with an "efficient, full-time education, according to age, aptitude and ability". I hope that our LEA continues to approach home educators with this more positive attitude and concur that there are diverse yet feasible and therefore acceptable methods of education.

Home education for all of us has proven to be a very enjoyable, rewarding experience, which without the knowledge, help, advice and support of EO would have been impossible. We therefore recognise the utmost importance of EO and the need for our continuing support.

Karen Coleman 126 South Street, Highfields, Doncaster

SUCCESS FOR SUMMERHILL

Following a number of Ofsted inspections that criticised Summerhill School heavily and threatened its closure, the Head, Zoe Readhead has taken the Secretary of State for Education and Employment to an Appeals Court. After two days of proceedings, the DfEE entered into discussions with representatives for the school and proposals were made. As a result, all complaints against the school have been annulled by the Tribunal and Summerhill's educational philosophy remains intact.

Part of Summerhill's press release reads:

"This is our charter for freedom. It gives us the space we need to live and breath and learn into the future. After 79 years, this is the first official recognition that A.S. Neill's philosophy of education provides an acceptable alternative to compulsory lessons and the tyranny of compulsory exams. With one bound we are free at last."

FROM THE ARCHIVES...

Some EO children of the early 80s... cont.

At the moment there's a tussle on the lawn. John - my husband - Harry, 10, Michael, 3, and William (8) - all in a bundle of heads, arms and legs. William is taking their roughness without resentment and giving as much back with a whoop and a yippee!! He looks a happy, secure little boy, definitely intelligent - usually able to make a bright quip, defusing an awkward possibly explosive situation by a laugh. Just a term at home and he has found himself again.
(Jane Mansfield, September 1981)

I like to be taught at home because I get more attention....Another thing is that it is more peaceful and quiet at home because even when everyone (in the classroom) is silent there is still a sound which you are only aware of if you have heard real silence."
(10 year old Sophie Howard, writing in the 1978 newsletter)

Noise puts you off when you are thinking or working. You have to write when you don't want to and you can't have a chat or sit how you want to. They say: 'Sit with your legs crossed.' I don't like it. You can't go out to play when you want to - that's mean. You can only play for ten minutes. They don't let you go to the toilet when you want to or catch caterpillars from the school hedge.
(6 year old Claire Cohessy, December 1981)

Once, because I couldn't do any kind of division, and everyone else in the class could, ~I was given something else to do. The same sort of thing happened with my handwriting, one of the teachers told me to do joined-up writing, but another told me to do print. I kept getting mixed up. It was only when mummy told them that I couldn't hold my pen properly and they did not take any notice, that she took me out of school and started to teach me. Now I can do division and hold the pen properly.
(Sara Drake, 9, December 1978)

I didn't get on with any of the teachers, and if you get into a little trouble with one teacher, you get in all the teachers' 'bad books' and they don't give you a second chance, to start again.
(14 year old Elaine Gosling, September 1981)

It's super having your lessons at home because you can see interesting things when they happen. When there was an ant trail across the drive we all saw it. I wouldn't have been able to see it if I'd been at school because the ants wouldn't have said 'we'll wait until half past four when James come home.' (8 year old James Holmes, June 1979)

Being an EO member in Scotland

We are not meant to be alone and generally isolation is contrary to well being for us. OK, a good dose of peace and quiet is a blessing, but not isolation. Home educators are prone to isolation because we are thin on the ground and thinner on some bits of ground than others. Being an EO member counters this tendency towards isolation. In the days when we only knew one home educating family in Edinburgh, with nearly grown-up children, getting the newsletter and eventually going to gatherings was a rich source of support. It gave me information, constantly broadened my view on home education and child rearing, stimulated discussion and has led to many connections over the years.

I like the consensus-type of decision making and the open nature of meetings. I take for granted the assumption of justness and honesty. We have friends in many places now and we do not feel alone as home educators, although we are short of Eoers nearby.

Being an EO member breaks down barriers and works against prejudices. No matter your view on Scottish Devolution, there is no merit in a 'border' between home educators. There is some separateness, however, due to Scottish education law being different (Section 35). This does mean that Scottish members usually have a different experience with respect to withdrawing a child from school from other UK members. Over the years, EO has provided good legal information for Scotland, along with the rest of the UK. (A big thank you to Anne and Rob Wade on this.)

Ultimately it does make sense that Scottish EO members support each other on legal matters,

which is not really any different from EO practice elsewhere, where EO members give support in the same local authority area. Despite these legal differences, we have a lot in common. EO's members' network is as rich a resource to all its members as we each want it to be. The giving and receiving of support ebbs and flows as it must. EO is 'us', Scottish or otherwise, not some mythical 'them'. There are twenty-four years of experience and a lot of past members who are still accessible. Knowing this, and having met quite a few over the years, is a support and strength in itself.

While there is no doubt that local and national gatherings lubricate the whole process, the newsletter is an excellent first line of support and connection that defies distance and borders.

I hope that this provokes Scottish members in particular to think about our EO network, and if you have an ounce of energy (not common among home-educating families) you could channel it into being more active in Scotland. This could be with regard to the new Education Bill, organising a social gathering or workshop, or you could just phone an EO member who lives near you for a chat - for example, me! Especially if you have a boy aged 7-10 years or so, and live within 2 hours' drive of Edinburgh.

*Anne Samuel Till 49 Bellevue Road,
Edinburgh*

Please note: there is a new local Edinburgh group

Nurturing LEA Contact: Building Trust and Goodwill

There have been positive developments with various local authorities recently. Elsewhere in this newsletter, a South Yorkshire family recount their home-educating experiences; to see this particular family's developing self empowerment has been inspirational, as it has been in many other cases. What follows is an account of how positive relationships with LEAs can be facilitated and nurtured. I would acknowledge, at the start, an immense debt to EO and many people within EO who have supported and encouraged me in developing this work.

After becoming Local Contact for South Yorkshire, several attempts were made by me to encourage Sheffield LEA to develop a positive relationship with EO. Also, information was passed to the authority on a regular basis. Several offers were made to the authority, including an offer to facilitate a day-long legal workshop/seminar that would have dealt with issues concerning home-education. Our concerns have always been that the authority's literature concerning home-education should be legally correct and relevant to the practice of home-education, and that the authority should feel able to trust us enough to refer families experiencing difficulties with the school system, for whatever reason, to EO. Sheffield's literature, in particular, has been mostly legally incorrect and irrelevant to the practice of home education, although the authority itself, to my knowledge, has never made life difficult for home-educators.

Along the way, the Coleman family in Doncaster were experiencing difficulties with an unsympathetic and hostile advisor. After one unacceptable home visit, and following conversations with the family, I made a complaint to the LEA. I was able to have a long conversation with a senior advisor, and this conversation also included reference to the literature being sent out to prospective home-educating families by the LEA. As a result I was asked to propose an alternative. My proposals were accepted and incorporated into the subsequent literature exactly as I had

suggested. About a year later, however, a new EO family in Doncaster sent me literature they had received from the authority. Changes had been made once more and the authority seemed to have reverted to the view that home-educators should provide details of subjects, curriculae etc.

Around this time the Coleman family were facing another home visit. After discussions with the family, we made it plain to the authority that the family would not welcome more contact with the previously hostile advisor. Indeed, after two previous home visits, and the fact that the Coleman's son, Richard, was passing his sixteenth birthday, the family and I considered the possibility of refusing a home visit. I had suggested to Doncaster LEA previously there were issues of concern to home-educators that would be best addressed by face-to-face meetings. In the past, my suggestion had been regarded as 'not necessary' by the authority, but having received copies of EO's booklet, 'A Summary of the Law', and being faced with the possibility of a family refusing a home visit, their stance changed. This coincided with a change in personnel. Two officers previously dealing with home-education had moved; a more sympathetic officer had taken over the home education file and the authority brought back the services of a previously retired officer with experience of dealing with alternatives in education. As a result, EO was invited to talk with the authority.

The visit to Doncaster, attended by Gwen Baldock and myself, on behalf of EO, was positive. We were able to reassure the officers on several legal points, and pointed out class issues that seemed to prejudice their judgement. We made the point, strongly, that, quite often, the philosophies informing home-education develop as a result of crisis, and that whatever situation brings a family to home-education should not bring with it a pre-judgement on the part of the authority. Similarly, a family's economic circumstances, or where they live, should not form part of that judgement. These are the reasons why the

Coleman family chose to accept another home visit: they wanted to show what was possible in a particular situation, and share their joy concerning the development of their children with someone in a position of authority. Doncaster LEA invited me to provide written comments concerning their literature, and are happy to have further contact. Karen Coleman has offered to help in this work, and her experiences will be valuable. As the relationship with Doncaster was developing, I was also nurturing contacts in other South Yorkshire authorities in a patient, quiet way.

For example, we have recently been invited to speak with Rotherham LEA. Work that I have done in that area brought me into contact with a individual officer who was asking for dated, marked, written work from a family. Before the first proposed visit, the family and I spoke at length about the issues. They decided to invite the officer to their home, but preferred to handle the situation alone. Unfortunately, the officer made unreasonable demands, asking the family to produce dated, marked work for his next visit in six months. When the adviser telephoned to make an appointment for the next visit, he was apparently surprised that the family had asked for a representative of EO to be present. He asked if that was the family's choice, or my choice, and again was surprised that this was the family's choice. Again, the family thought a home-visit preferable to other forms of providing evidence. At the meeting, the official was a model of respect and courtesy, even offering to drop books at the family's house on occasion. This adviser had, in the meantime, visited the DFEE's website on home-education, and had generally informed himself. The invitation to talk with Rotherham LEA came directly from this meeting.

Very recently, I was asked to intervene on behalf of a Barnsley family whose daughter had suffered during her two years in secondary school. The family had been invited to a meeting with the 'management team' dealing with their daughter. This included an EWO, a dietician, and a medical officer. Unfortunately,

but understandably, the family delayed in dealing with the situation. After much thought and discussion, the family decided that home-education was the way forward. These developments took place a few days before the meeting, and the EWO indicated to me that the meeting would go ahead with or without the family's involvement. Although I had been invited to the meeting, we felt that it would not be in the family's best interests to attend, as the decision to home-educate had already been taken. I did, however, write to the meeting on the family's behalf. The meeting was, apparently, 'distressed' at my intervention.

Finally, in the winter of 1999, we were invited to talk with Sheffield LEA. Again, the meeting was attended by Gwen Baldock and myself, on behalf of EO, and two very senior LEA officers. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the literature aimed at home-educating families. However, the meeting developed into a very broad, deep discussion of a variety of issues relating to the school system and home-education. Our thoughts and ideas were received very positively, and the whole welcome we received was very encouraging.

Regarding the LEA literature, our assertion that the current literature be scrapped, rather than revised, was accepted immediately, without question. Indeed, we have an invitation to have a strong input in terms of what we would like them to write. They are also happy to work on improving the booklet developed by North Yorkshire LEA and EO, and adapt it for their own purposes. The meeting went so well that the authority requested copies of the EO booklet, 'Home Education and the Law', for every school in Sheffield. To this extent, we are supplying the authority with 250 copies; the authority also volunteered to meet EO's costs in this venture.

Both officials were very open minded and responsive to the varied ways the learning process can be facilitated. Several examples were used on both sides to illustrate this, and there was genuine interest on behalf of the authority to investigate alternatives in

education; they were very interested in some of the literature we brought with us. It was also apparent that EO's continuing relationship with the DfEE is having an effect in the way authorities view alternatives in education. The officials were aware that the National Curriculum does not apply to home-educators, and it was understood that the use of formal tests based on age-related assessment criteria was inappropriate with this alternative. There was very open debate around some concerns felt by both parties, and I think both Gwen and I reassured the anxiety felt on several legal points by one official.

As a result, the authority is very happy to enter into a long-term commitment in order to deal with these issues. Monthly meetings are planned, and I would expect the next meeting to focus specifically on drafting the literature. The authority is also enthusiastic about training a team of people to become aware of issues around home-education. This would, I expect include an advisor, and will certainly include EWOs. This is important, as we would like EWOs to inform families experiencing difficulties within the school system, for whatever reason, of the alternatives. EO would expect to have input in this process, which would include consideration of the spectrum of philosophical approaches to home-education.

Also, I was able to deal directly with a very recent problem. This concerned a family that had been threatened with a School Attendance Order, but hadn't been properly informed of the alternatives. The problem was solved immediately. Other issues, including those of special needs, the funding of under 16-college admission and access to resources we hope to discuss along the way.

In all, our ideas were received very well. It is apparent that EO is building a fund of goodwill, and that our experience and understanding of alternatives in education is increasingly valued. It is also apparent, from my experience, that what is valued is our commitment to developing constructive, positive relationships with official bodies.

In conclusion, we might say that class issues are at the centre of many disputes between authorities and families wishing to home-educate. For many working-class families, the decision to home-educate results from a crisis, and can be a profoundly liberating experience. It is heartening to see many families empowering themselves, as the Coleman's did, choosing to take responsibility for their own lives, and becoming aware of the possibilities involved. I feel it is important for authorities to see this process in action; it is a powerful tool of emancipation in our lives. But this movement from dependence to responsibility can only be self-driven; it can seriously be hindered by doing things for families rather than empowering them to do for themselves. This is such an important issue to get across to various authorities, many of whom find it difficult to trust working-class people in taking responsibility for their own lives. The more we demonstrate this process in action, the more change will take place in the behaviour and attitudes of individual officers and individual authorities. Alternatives in education will become less anomalous, although such changes will occur slowly, *de facto* rather than *de jure*.

In my experience, if we, as an organisation, present ourselves in a civil and reasonable way, then our arguments speak for themselves. There may be occasions when the politics of non-cooperation or confrontation may be needed, but I would suggest such tactics need only be used *in extremis*. Others have recognised that the suggestion of such tactics is often enough to induce changes of attitude in recalcitrant authorities or individual officers. Rather, we should remember Dick Kitto, and allow our humility to connect us with our autochthonous origin.

Gary Podmore, 52 Rupert Road, Sheffield
South Yorks Local Contact



Problem page

A PROBLEM ANSWERED:

I find it difficult to be with my children all day, every day. How do others cope with this? Am I abnormal for feeling like this? Please help!

Here is a selection of the answers received:

It is not abnormal to want time for continuous thought or concentration, to desire mental stimulation on your level or demand freedom from constant pestering.

I give my daughter her time and space (so that I can have mine) by setting her up on the computer or providing a pile of books to look through or sending her to her room/garden to play or allowing her to watch television with headphones on so I don't have to hear.

Try and insist on a regular bedtime so that you can recharge your batteries for the next day.

Explain to your children that it is good for them to learn to be alone at times and that although you love them

dearly you also need peace and time to yourself in order to be 'nice' when everyone is together.

Find another home-educator and arrange times where you have their children round to give them a child-free break and they then do the same for you.

Find an outside interest for your child/ren such as Beavers, Young Archaeologists Club, drama group or get in a tutor for a morning a week to teach them something you can't - and take a break!

*Re February's problem:
Roland Meighan has sent me a case-study of a damage limitation plan. Please send me an sae if you would like a copy*

Please send replies to the following problem or any problems you would like to put forward for this page to tackle, to Sue White.

My 6yr old son is not keeping up with the school curriculum and, according to the head, is immature. He is hyperactive and cannot concentrate for long. He has started to mix with a 'wild' crowd. I do not want to home-educate long term but would welcome other suggestions.

EO News

First of all there are some changes to the EO council. Sadly, both Gwen Baldock (Chair) and Lucy Charlton (General Secretary) have resigned from the council and Beverley Young (Publicity) is no longer dealing with media enquiries. Also, Bruce Wallace will soon be standing down due to his emigration to New Zealand. We send him all our best wishes for the move. We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank them for all the hard and invaluable work they have put in during the years (to say nothing of the grey hairs). Blessings are to be heaped upon Janet Wilkinson, who has offered to take over the post of General Secretary. Many thanks to Janet. And so to the rest of the News.

Following years of working to establish contact, Gwen and Gary Podmore are developing very positive relationships with the LEAs of Doncaster, Sheffield and Rotherham. Both Sheffield and Doncaster have invited comment on the literature they send out to new home-educating families and further meetings are planned. A report by Gary appears elsewhere in the newsletter.

So much for a quiet retirement. A representative of Channel 5 News recently contacted Beverley and Gwen agreed to be interviewed by them. The item, shown on the 16th February, mainly concerned the establishment of a small 'home' school in Leeds, officially classed as an independent school and catering for a growing number of young people looking for an alternative to mainstream schooling. The researchers for Channel 5 wanted to incorporate the broader picture of parents taking on the responsibility of educating their own children, so were keen to talk with EO as well. Media interest in home education continues to grow, and this was a great opportunity to get our message onto a national TV news programme! Thank you, Gwen.

Finally, an update on Ann Till's work with EO's submission of amendments to the Draft Scottish Education Bill. Ann writes the following:

The second draft of the new bill "Standards in Scotland' Schools etc. Bill" was introduced in late January 2000. Unfortunately they did not change section 35, requiring permission to deregister which we and other home-educating organisations asked for and so this discriminating section is still in place. The new section 2 goes further in saying what education is:

Duty of education authority in providing school education

Where school education is provided to a child or young person by, or by virtue of arrangements made, or entered into, by an education authority it shall be the duty of the authority to secure that the education is directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential.

In itself, this is not a worry to home educators as we have traditionally chosen to home educate to do just this, and indeed most of us will continue to home educate at least until schools can do the same! However, we have to be careful how they use this section. The fact that it is stated (even though schools don't and can't (?) achieve this) may be used to further deregistration delays and refusals.

The new section 1: 'The Right of the Child to School Education' carries the explicitly stated shift of emphasis from education being the duty of parents and authorities to being primarily the right of the child in an attempt to come into line with human rights. The principle is of course fine, and is primarily to ensure no one is 'excluded'. The worrying aspect is that they prefix 'education' throughout with 'school' i.e. school education. As long as the superseding law remains broadly 'education' and the duty to provide for the 'right' remains with us as parents, our position will be the same. But in these law forming days we need to be careful and pedantic about this. A positive point is that it is the Scottish Executives' policy to talk and consult widely, so our suggestion of a forum with the object of agreeing best practice for local authorities re: home education, is still a possibility. Watch this space... or even better, contact me with views and offers of help or support. (Ann Till 49 Bellevue Road, Edinburgh EH7 4DJ)

EO News page compiled by Sian Podmore 52 Rupert Road, Sheffield, South Yorks S7 1RP

JK
BX

Educating Archie visits the science museum and then they went to the Dome (for a spot of Dome Education)

THIS WAY TO
NUCLEAR PHYSICS
TOILETS



ROCKET LAUNCH

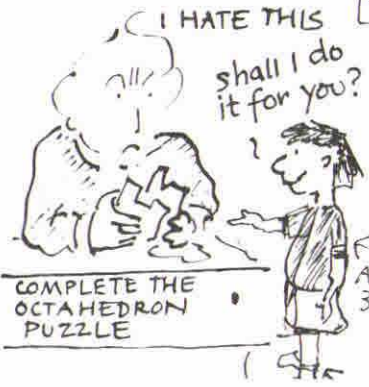
DEMO 2:00



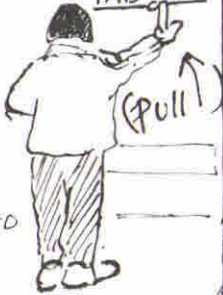
DANGER! You are near the origami type folding area

Special BLANK worksheets for those taught at home

HANDS-ON SCIENCE



DO NOT PULL THIS



IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ASK AN EXPLAINER

What is the meaning of life?

when's the next lecture?

LECTURE THEATRE

you've missed them all

THANK GOODNESS!

Letters

Please include full name and address when writing to newsletter editors. Name and address can be withheld on request. Due to limited space, some editing may occur.

FLEXI-SCHOOLING

Further to Sam Martell's letter in NL 131, I would like to add that my son, who is 6 and also home educated, has started to attend a school in the Shoreditch area of London, on a part-time basis. There is an established Nursery and School up to age 7, and they are able to accommodate flexi-schooling arrangements.

The curriculum for my son is broadly Literacy and Numeracy in the mornings with all other National Curriculum subjects covered in the afternoons, plus French. There are various extra curricula activities available.

I enjoy my son's company and have found home-educating to be very fulfilling for both myself and him. The attendance at school on a part-time basis has given him much needed interaction with other children, the input of another adult and superb lunches (I'm not going to win any prizes for my cooking, so Benjamin says!). He has also benefitted from the subjects we look at at home being dealt with in a different environment. I have chosen days when subjects are studied at school which I find hard to tackle.

I have found that I can spend time with my young baby on a one-to-one basis, as well as tackling some of the household jobs which I can't ignore. As Benjamin is on the go all day long, I have also gained some thinking time for myself! I would recommend anyone who has the opportunity to try flexi-schooling to give it a go. Benjamin and I have both gained from the arrangement and there do not seem to be any losers. If you would like details of the above school, or to chat about the experience, please let me know.

Helen Carter 46 St John's Road, London E17 4JQ (0181 925 3709)

BACK TO SCHOOL

My son has decided, like a bolt out of the blue, that he wants to return to school. As I've always promised whilst home-educating him for the last 3 years, if ever he wanted to return to school, I wouldn't stop him. So the other week he said, "I want to go to Garth, all my mates do!" I opened and closed my mouth, thought, "Ah, freedom!" then "Have I let him down?" I went from happy for him to sad for me and many emotions. Home-educating him has been fun, also hair-pulling and an education for me too. We've got closer and rowed more. He can now make up a bike or scooter, do electrical jobs, fix plumbing in a washing machine, fix a TV or radio. Plus he's confident again! I'm not nervous about his ability, but I am wary because I know he'll find it hard to conform to those excessive and petty rules, 5-30 minute detentions and telling-off. It's taken the school and the education authority weeks to sort out him going back. No promised return phone calls, and my son now saying they can wait for him. If this is how they care, what hope is there for him being cared for in school? He could change his mind about going back and, with both my other children, can home-educate again.

Teresa Mercer 23 North Green, Bullbrook, Bracknell, Berks RG12 2NY

THANK YOU JUNE

June McDonald has decided to retire as Co-ordinator for Bedfordshire after nearly ten years sterling service.

June has been active within EO as both local co-ordinator and formerly as a membership secretary. June has been a great help to many members and has always been very willing to give of her time, whether it be to invite a new member round for a "cuppa and a chat" or producing her detailed and exciting programme of events. (Not to mention mailing it to people from five local counties and then taking other members' children along to the visits!).

Letters

June has become a good friend to me and many others and her efforts will be sadly missed; although we look forward to hearing about events that Femmy Brug will be organising, and hope to see June at some of these. So June, a big THANK YOU from your friends in EO

Valerie Gomon

DK BOOKS

I read with interest the item on Peter Kindersley books (Home Education in the News NL 131). Possibly because he was home educated, his company produces a marvellous selection of learning support materials which tie in to the National Curriculum. I discovered them two years ago, before I began home-educating my son, and subscribers to EO may like to know that for a small registration fee they too can join DK Family Learning and buy these brilliant books, CD ROMS, games and videos at a discount. (If they wish, they can run a part-time, home-based business that fits in really well with educating children at home.)

If anyone would like more information on how to join or on products I have found helpful with my severely dyslexic son, I'd be delighted to help.

*Hazel Hutton 39 Millfield Gardens, Cumbria
CA12 4PD (017687 72546)*

VISITORS FROM USA

I'm a long-time homeschooling parent and education activist from the States. I am director of an organisation called the Alliance for Parental Involvement in Education which is a clearinghouse for information for people interested in alternative educational paths. I also founded a co-operative learning centre for homeschooling families which currently serves about 150 people.

My homeschooled children are now 17, 20 and 30 years of age and at this time only Emily, 17 is still at home with us. I'm writing because I will be in London for a few days during the

last week in May, on holiday with my husband Seth, daughter Emily and friends Pieter and Sharon. From there we are doing some travelling, including a week on a canal boat! I would dearly love to connect with some homeschooling families along our route. We will be in London from May 27-30. From there we will motor to the Cornwall/Devon area and Monmouthshire/Gwent. From June 3 to 10 we will be on a canal boat on and around the Ashby Canal near Coventry. This is the first time I've ever been abroad, and I haven't the words to convey how much I'm looking forward to this trip! And help that you can send will be very much appreciated – and reciprocated, if any of your homeschooling families travel to the States.

*Katharine Houk and family, 29 Kinderhook St,
Chatham, New York 12037-1215 USA
Allpiekjh@aol.com*

HOME EDUCATION IN SPAIN

I would like contact with anyone who can advise me on home education in Lanzarote/Spain, particularly regarding Spanish law. If you have any experience or knowledge you can offer, please contact me. I would be grateful for any information.

*K Roberts Court Cottage, St Kew Highway,
Bodmin PL30 3DP karenannroberts@aol.com*

SEEKING FRENCH CONTACT

Does anyone have any ideas or suggestions about how to find families in France that would be willing to have me or my sister (aged 14) to stay for a short time to improve our French – or has anyone done anything similar?
*Holly Buck 28 Brunswick Street, Swindon,
Wilts SN1 3NB 01793 526980*

WANTED: SPECIAL NEEDS ADVICE

My name is Maryam and I am a Muslim convert. I was very happy to hear about EO; I read about it in an advice page. That was the best advice ever given. My two boys are very happy at home with me and they are doing well. They are only 2 and 3 years old.

Letters

Youseff (3) has special needs as he has a speech delay. It just takes him that little bit longer to say certain words than his peers; he will develop language skills just a little later than other his age. When I talk to him, he understands me and responds clearly. He has no problem with other children and he communicates well with them.

I don't wish him to go to mainstream school but the health care people say he can only get help if he is in mainstream school. Is this so? Have any other members had similar experiences with health visitors and such? My other son, Yasin has no problems and is very attached to me. I don't wish to send either of them to mainstream school. I would love to hear from other mothers in my area whom I can meet with my boys. I have no transport, so can't travel far.

Maryam Boudjellele 21 Barnwell House, St Giles Road, Camberwell, London SE5 7RP

LEARNING THROUGH FUNDRAISING

Through the Contact List some years ago, we became friends with the Robinson family and daughters Vikki (now 16) and Jenny (20 something). I thought you'd be interested to hear that, after being fully home-educated, Vikki and Jenny are now running a large animal sanctuary in Scotland and doing an excellent job. They have over 300 animals, including elderly horses, cows, sheep, goats and numerous cats. Some of the animals have sad or horrific tales to tell, but Vikki and Jenny love them all and have an excellent success record of rehabilitation, although generally all animals are given a home with them for life.

As you can imagine, the feed and vets' bills are enormous and the sanctuary relies on fundraising and donations to operate. My own family has spent the past 6 months helping to fundraise, at car boot sales selling soft toys, and collecting used postage stamps. It's been a marvellous experience and has certainly been an education in itself. My two eldest daughters have learnt a lot, not only about animal welfare, but also human nature (both

good and bad), the retail business and getting up early! It gives a great sense of satisfaction to know we are helping a good cause.

If anyone would like to help, please either contact Willows Animal Sanctuary at Findon Farm, Gardenstown, Banff, Aberdeenshire AB45 3ET or send used postage stamps to us.
Carol Fountain & AR Griffiths Gippyn Cottage, Gippyn, Cardigan SA43 3LT

SEEKING CONTACT

I have been home-educating now since last summer. My son Jamie (8) and we live in West London. I am looking to meet others in London with children the same age as Jamie, who would be into doing daytime babysitting swaps. Something along the lines of one day you arrive at mine in the morning, leave child/children with me; kids play - have fun, I include some kind of "educational" or otherwise focused activity or two; you pick up your child/children later when you've done your stuff - then sometime you do the same for me! I'm also into organising with others outdoor summer parties and celebrating the seasonal festivals with children, and connecting with anyone who wants to make up a "minimum group of 10" required for the talks offered by museums. Also I'd like to hear from anyone anywhere with kids of about the same age.

Hazel Barker 33 Hastings House, Australia Road, London W12 7PY (0181 7433587)

We are the Search family, Beth, Brian, Natalie (15) and Kieran (4½). We have recently moved and would like to make contact with any other home educators in the area. Natalie was removed from school 18 months ago due to bullying and is still rather timid and unsure of herself. Is there anyone out there who would like to make friends and write to share experiences?

Beth & Brian Search, Willow Cottage, 56 East Cob Gate, Moulton, Spalding, Lincs PE12 6QJ 01406 371528

EDUCATION OTHERWISE BUSINESS

Summary of the OPEN COUNCIL MEETING

Manor bier Youth Hostel, Tenby.
6th February 2000

Thanks to all those involved in the organisation and running of this gathering, and to those who attended - especially the new people who can sing as they were ideal additions to the evening relaxation when the EO corkscrew was much in evidence! Many members and families attend the gatherings that are organised around the three business meetings a year, even though they may not want to participate in the Meeting itself. It is still good to meet people and talk informally with Council members and some of the others who are actively involved in the running of EO. Whilst there, members are welcome to come in and out of the meeting room, contributing when they wish (and when/if any babies allow!). Although there is always a lot of work to get through, we try to keep the process informal and open.

We travelled deep into the south of Wales on this occasion, and it was great to meet new people from this part of the world. The agenda for the meeting didn't appear too full this time but, as ever, certain items took more discussion than others in order that we could come to consensus. See the front of the Contact List for an explanation of procedures.

* Janet Wilkinson is now the Website manager and has done a lot of work helping to further the development of EO's site. We want this to be full and informative so ideas welcome. The address (on the back of the newsletter) is www.education-otherwise.org.

* We attracted 1300 new members last year, which brings EO's membership to around 3000. Sadly many people only stay with us for a year or two and a recent questionnaire shows this is often because children go back to school or there is insufficient local support.

It would be good, however, to offer more to help (and keep!) members once they've had the initial assistance to get up and running, as it's vital that the main support organisation can campaign for better conditions with a strong voice. Ideas and offers to help would be very much appreciated, e.g. with regional or local activities/resource sharing events, or why not consider becoming a local contact if your area needs one?

* Following discussions with the DfEE, they have amended the factsheet they issue on home education. Rather than stating that parents *should* inform their LEA about the decision to home educate (of particular relevance to those not known otherwise), they now say that it would be helpful to do this. Similarly, they state that officers have no automatic right of access to the home and that parents may "offer an alternative way of demonstrating that they are providing suitable education". Whilst these more accurate statements do not address the issue of how much involvement there needs to be between officials and families, they do reflect the growing awareness that it is better to work in mutually respectful ways. This is increasingly true of the attitudes of LEAs as well, and there is some very positive work taking place around the country, to the extent that some officers believe we really might be 'trailblazers' after all...see Roland Meighan's, *The Next Learning System*. We can build on these new understandings and use examples of best practice to show ill-informed, or even hostile LEAs, a better way forward.

* Priscilla Park-Weir and Lynda Hitchman are to look again at when to issue membership cards as doing it at the end of the year for everyone is causing some confusion.

* See later for details of the EO Conference 2000 to be held in York on 26/8/00. We shall have speakers, workshops, discussion groups and lots of activities for the children.

EDUCATION OTHERWISE BUSINESS

- * Advertising in the newsletter has thrown up some problems. Naturally, people wish to promote their own events/resources and ask for as much space as possible. The newsletter team are to look at the guidelines on this, however the general feeling from the meeting was that adverts should be kept of equal size, out of fairness to all.
- * Lucy Charlton presented several new designs for our trifold leaflet for consideration; the chosen design will be used to keep the Citizens Advice Bureaux etc. up to date with EO's details. Please help to let local libraries, info. and support groups in your area know of EO.
- * The group that was formed to look into how EO might function more effectively reported back. One consideration was the need to find ways of sharing out the increasing amount of work that needs to be done at national level - we are a rapidly growing charity. On the one hand some members want to be more involved but are wary of taking on too much, yet others feel seriously overworked. The group suggested the establishment of working teams for various functions such as: members & membership, publications, media and enquiries. We already have a new team way of working for the newsletter and Priscilla Park-Weir has organised the same with a finance group. This approach, as well as apportioning work differently, is very much within EO's ethos of empowering as many members as possible to share responsibility. Information will be fed back to the Meeting, as this will continue to be where decisions are taken, plus there will be council members on each team as it is the Council who has the legal responsibility to ensure the organisation is run properly.
- * A difficult item on the agenda concerned local groups, and how different ones relate to each other and to EO at national level. Traditionally, we have helped home educators freely, whether this is with initial enquiries or as welcome members of a variety of local EO groups. Of course people are encouraged to join EO where possible, in order that we can continue to be here for others. Lately though, a few problems have arisen with a number of groups that are taking on a life of their own, an independence which may or may not be in harmony with EO members in the area. How we structure the organisation is an issue that needs careful consideration, especially now that we have groups setting up with their own constitution, utilising EO funds, in order to fund-raise to provide for local activities.
- * Christine Waterman was ratified as the SEN Co-ordinator. The meeting thanked Christine for all her excellent work in this growing area for us, including EO's proposed amendments/additions to the new SEN Code of Practice. The proposals, essentially, question the role of Statements of SEN when a family chooses to home educate.
- * A couple with experience in a libertarian way of life have offered to be contacts for autonomous learners. This generated some interesting discussion around the issue of how we define autonomous learning, and is it the opposite of structured learning as is often portrayed in the debate? The point was made that autonomous simply means self-governing, therefore these learners may choose a structured or unstructured approach. Perhaps the argument is between autonomous and authoritarian, and might be widened further to include the democratic principles of sharing decision making within the family, group or community?
- * A special thank you to Beverley Young who, prior to the establishment of the new Media Contact group, single-handedly fielded the growing number of enquiries from the media. Beverley is staying on as a Council member. For myself and with much regret, I have had to step down from the Council as well as my post as Chair, as I ended up having to take a year out of University to

EDUCATION OTHERWISE BUSINESS

manage. I am continuing to help with specific tasks, as my commitment to EO remains as strong as ever. So many members do so much for the organisation and all the years of collective hard work are really starting to pay off. However, there is still much to do and every member can do a little towards our growth and development. EO needs you.

Please note Due to some family health problems Lucy Charlton has just had to step down from the Council and her role as General Secretary. Lucy has been amazing over the years and her contribution will be sorely missed. Thanks to Janet for stepping in!

For a copy of the minutes send an sae to Janet Wilkinson: Gen Sec. 31 Framlingham Road, Peterborough PE2 8UG.

Best wishes, Gwen Baldock

Educating Children at Home

Anyone who has sent off for this book since the last newsletter will get a small refund as the price is now £9.50 and was wrongly priced in the last newsletter. Our apologies to anyone concerned.

MUSEUMS HELP NEEDED

I have recently taken on the job of updating the museums concessions section of the contact list. So if anybody knows of anywhere on the list that no longer does concessions or any new places that can be added then please let me know. Also let me know if there is anywhere that you would like me to contact. **Diane Heywood 37 Grimshaw St, Great Harwood, Blackburn, Lancs BB6 7AP (01254 886912) colinheywood@x-stream.co.uk**

Attention Cleveland

Pauline Butterworth has changed her phone number.

It is now 01642 899274

Free EO Car Stickers

Help us spread the word, send a stamped SAE for your free sticker to **Ali Willer, 28 Cozens-Hardy Road, Sprowston, Norwich NR7 8QF**. They will only be free during the year 2000.

Special Price offer to EO Members:

"STEVE A Story of Home Education" - (64 pages incl. valuable index) published under the pseudonym Elizabeth James - is now available from the author, Mrs Margaret Stevens @ £4.50 (+ £1 p&p). Details: 01844 343 928 or order (with cheque made payable to Education Otherwise) from: **High Beech, Lower Rd, Looseley Row, Princes Risborough, Bucks HP27 0NU**

GWERSYLL DEWI SANT

Pembrokeshire Summer EO Family Camp

Sat. 17th to Sat. 24th June 2000

(It is possibly to stay till Sat. 1st July)
In the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

Close to St. Davids, West Wales

Campsite with showers and small shop, some caravans available 200m to beach, dramatic coastal scenery, surfing, RSPB reserves, leisure park, castles

Please send SAE (with note if you want caravan info sheet) to:

**Yvette Harley, 17 Maes Ingli,
Newport, Pembrokeshire, SA42
0TE. Tel. 01239 820 968**

SCRAPSTORE IN DEVON

EO has joined the Scrapstore in Dartington, South Devon. It is a fabulous place full of sparkly things, bits & bobs, sticky paper, industrial plastic thingies - all sorts. It will cost EO members £1 to fill a standard-size carrier bag. Are there any EO folk who would like to use this facility? If so please contact me asap so I can add your name to the list I'm compiling for the scrapstore (they will want to see your EO membership card).

**Belinda Harris-Reid The Old House,
Station Rd, Buckfastleigh. 01364 643343**

HELP NEEDED AT HES FES.

Anyone going to HES FES who would be prepared to spend an hour or two behind the EO stall please contact: **Martine Archer** 01423 770396.

REQUEST FOR VOLUNTEERS

All the jobs listed in the December newsletter are still in need of volunteers, so if you would like to take on any of them or want more details then all you need do is contact **Angela Smith** Tel: 01434 322372 e-mail: angela@coanwood.freereserve.co.uk

LOCAL CONTACT UPDATE

Resignations

E. Sussex: Anne Rix

Cheshire: Nicky Forster

Powys: Paula Smith (I have been unable to contact.)

Manchester N.: Karen Moore

Somerset :Ruth Harvey

New Acting Local Contacts

Cambridgeshire: Janet Wilkinson

London East: Liz Swinburne 0171 790 2134

Bedfordshire: Tori Vilmaz 01480 210103

Tyne & Wear: Carol Hamilton 0191 213 2262

Areas needing a co-ordinator: -

Cheshire, Gloucestershire South, Gwynedd,

Hertfordshire, Isle of Man, Manchester

North, Powys, Somerset, Strathclyde, Sussex

East, Tayside, Warwickshire, Wiltshire

Why not find out more or send your comments to me

Isobel Bogucki 01403 261178

E-mail isobelb@cheerful.com

**Open Council Meeting
Saturday 3rd June 2000
Stokes Barn, Shropshire**

All agenda items and reports from post holders and groups must be with the General Secretary no later than the 14th of May, and members can receive copies of the reports and the agenda by sending an SAE to the General Secretary.

PEAK CAMP 2000

30th June - 9th July

Informal relaxed gathering in a beautiful part of the Peak District. Share experiences of home educating. Cycle tracks and riverside walks are close by.

The site is the usual one at Barracks Farm, Beresford Dale, near Hartington (grid ref. 123 586) Two large fields for tents and touring caravans, showers, toilets, wash basins and small shop.

Send sae for more details to:

Gary Podmore, 52 Rupert Rd,

Sheffield, S7 1RP

0114 2585702

Changes to EO Business Practice

At the council meeting in September a group was set up to consider whether the use of sub-committees and regional gatherings could make EO's business practices more effective. Various problems were identified with the current practices including lack of support for members who took on responsibilities within the national organisation, the overloading of a few people, and the perceived lack of connection between the members and the national organisation. The group reported back to the January council meeting with a number of recommendations that were accepted in principal by the meeting.

The first recommendation was that the national organisation should promote and support regional gatherings. These gatherings provide an important opportunity for members to meet others beyond their local group, to meet council members and others involved in the national organisation, and to bring legal questions to knowledgeable council members and others. They also give local contacts within a region an opportunity to meet and form a network of support. If you are interested in knowing more about regional gatherings contact Jill Fisher in Leicester.

EDUCATION OTHERWISE BUSINESS

The second recommendation was that small groups be established to oversee EO's major activities. These groups will provide support for work that is already being done, often by a single person who is struggling to manage and who does not have any official backup. The hope is that this structure will decrease burnout of current workers and provide a framework for members to become involved with the national organisation. It will also provide a structure for handling new items of business.

The following small groups have been set up so far - Finance, Enquiries, Newsletter, Publications and Media. Input and help is always welcome and should be directed to members of the groups, who are listed below. If you are interested in becoming a member of any of these groups, you should offer your help at a council meeting or through the General Secretary if you are unable to attend a council meeting. Members of groups will be appointed at council meetings.

Finally, it was recommended that procedures for reporting back to council meetings should be tightened up, with all major post holders and small groups required to submit written reports three weeks before each council meeting. Also agenda items are to be submitted three weeks before each meeting. This means that copies of the agenda and reports can be distributed before council meetings to all interested parties.

If you are interested in seeing a copy of the full report, please send an SAE to Jill Fisher, 54 Ratcliffe Rd, Leicester, LE2 3TD.

Small Groups

Finance: Priscilla Park-Weir, Ann Samuel Till, Celia McDonagh, Ken Grindlay
Newsletter: Christine Adey, Sally Hall, Sian Podmore, Sarah Guthrie, Martine Archer, Sue White, Ann Kennedy-Smith

Enquiries: Gary Podmore, Bruce Wallace, Priscilla Park-Weir, Pam Bellinger, Janet Wilkinson

Publications: Jill Fisher, Chris Harper, Gary Podmore

Media: Janet Wilkinson, Celia McDonagh, Jude Ashley Walker.



National EO Gathering

31st May -4th June 2000
Stokes Barn, Wenlock Edge,
Shropshire

Lots of outdoor space, good
walking, near Ironbridge
Gorge (lots of good
museums)

Accommodation in
converted barn includes all
meals, also some camping
space with option to self
cater or eat in. Book early
especially campers.

For more info and booking
form send sae to:

Celia McDonagh, 22 Rugby
Rd, Newport, Glamorgan,
NP19 0BS

There will be an Open
Council Meeting at 10.30
on Saturday 3rd June.



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 or any meeting no longer taking place to:

Martine Archer, 3 Brookfield, Hampsthwaite, Harrogate HG3 2EF

BATH

H.E.L.P. group meet regularly for outings and activities.

Contact: Louise Jensen 01225 840735

Louise Verran 01225 859852

Bath Hedgehogs

Contact: Jo Ball & Andy Hannen 01225 427371

BERKSHIRE

Mondays - Swimming at Rivermead, Reading 1.30pm. £1.85

Tuesdays - Swimming at Windsor Leisure Centre, noon onwards £2.80

Wednesdays - Ice skating at John Nike Leisure Centre, Bracknell, 2pm - 4pm £1.50 including lesson & skate hire. Show EO card at reception. *Contact: Pat Connor 0118 9662123*

Local newsletter from Dawn Dingwall 01628 783107

BIRMINGHAM

Last Wednesday of the month, Central Library 10.30-1.30pm, also ice-skating, indoor rock climbing, ecology and lots more.

Contact: Jackie or Alan 0121 243 8242

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

Newsletter for Bucks/Northants,

Contact: Dawn Waddington 01908 569380

e-mail dawnwaddington@hotmail.com

Fortnightly meetings for crafts, activities, play, speakers, drama, trips to museums, theatre etc.

Contact: Jackie 01753 886924 or

Dorothy 01494 782864

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

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

Fridays 5-8 yrs, French group (Alliance Francaise £3.50), music group (£2.50)

Contact: Penny 01223 322703

Monthly at Alconbury, activities run by Christian group. All welcome

Contact: Audrey Hill 01480 219881

Peterborough - Weekly visits and outings
Contact: Janet Wilkinson 01733 554436

CHESHIRE

Cheshire/Stockport Area; Alt. Ed. News, listing all the educational and social events going on. Available by subscription, or for event information,

Contact: Nicky Forster 01625 869719.

CLEVELAND & DURHAM

Anyone interested in helping to set up a new group please

Contact: Pauline Butterworth 01642 899247

CORNWALL

Twice weekly events all round the county. CHEERSS newsletter. To subscribe or for information:

Contact: Anna Wheeler, Cambrose Farm,

Redruth, TR16 4HT 01209 890378

e-mail anna@wheeler19.fsnet.co.uk

CUMBRIA

Informal gatherings for socialising, support and activities. **Kendal** - alternate Wednesdays

Castle St. Youth Centre 12.30-3.30

Penrith - alternate Tuesdays Castletown

Community Centre 1.30-3.30

Contact: Sarah Cook 01768 896019

DEVON

Contact: Sammy & Nick Vidal-Hall 01548 830716

Activities - Rock-climbing, 10-pin bowling,

'Magic' sessions, bonfires, chatting, etc.,

Contact: Belinda Harris-Reid 01364 643343

Email: bline@compuserve.com

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

Ice skating at Plymouth Pavillions
Wednesdays at 12pm.

Contact: Pat Stoolman 01626 854592

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

DORSET

Regular meetings, keep in touch.

Contact: Christine Adey 01258 880355

Rosemary Newton 01747 853593

Bournemouth/Pool/Christchurch, 2nd

Tuesday 12-3 Parkstone Boys and Girls Club,
Recreation Rd, Parkstone, Pool.

Contact: Sandra Innes 01258 450882

Wendy Irving 01202 438254

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

HAMPSHIRE

Portsmouth EO Play, Learn, Enjoy, Warm and welcoming group with kids 5-15 meet Fridays for art, craft, music and chat, also local outings.

Contact: Julie Chappell 01705 640242

Experienced group of home educators meeting for social, play, art, science, dance drama, sport and other activities. Usually 3 events a week within 15 mile radius of Queen Elizabeth Country Park on the A3(M) just south of Petersfield. For intro newsletter send SAE to: ACTIVEO c/o 30 Spring Rd, Sarisbury Green, Hants SO30 7FH (e-mail) daywest@dircon.co.uk

(fax) 01243 778512 (tel) 01243 528508

Fareham, Gosport, Winchester, Southampton area. P.W.C. Home Education Group meet regularly for ten-pin bowling,

swimming, and many other activities. All welcome.

Contact: Gayle Joubert 01705 553842 or Deborah Bull 01705 587868

HANTS/WEST SUSSEX

Teenager Day, every 2nd Tuesday of the month. Activities planned by the group, for any home educators 12+. Meeting in the Chichester area.

Contact: Edward 01243 528508

Activities and support, all welcome Solent Area EO (S.A.E.O.)

Contact: Sally Andrews 01794 368821 or

Bernadette Bury 01243 264837

ISLE OF WIGHT

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

Contact: Jude 01983 531680

Jackie 01983 530378

KENT

Regular meetings & activities:

Canterbury -

Contact: Irene Judd 01227 709570

Medway towns -

Contact: Bridget Becci 01634 234938

Tunbridge Wells -

Contact: Kim Dale 01892 863941

For theatre outings and events listing send sae to: Amanda Mackenzie 16, Brambletree Cotts, Borstal Rochester, ME1 3TN.

LANCASHIRE

Regular meeting, please ring.

Contact: Angelika Walter 01254 603 497

Meetings at Burnley Central Library Children's department, first Monday of the month.

Contact: Lorraine Jessop 01706 879424

LEICESTERSHIRE

Frequent meetings for play, crafts, walks, hanging out, singing, swimming, science, skating and much more.

Contact: Lucy & Keith 0116 259 2118

Jill & Pete 0116 212 8120

LONDON

Bi-weekly for socialising & support. Ages 1-8 yrs. Tues am swimming (Britannia Leisure Centre Islington)

Wed am Clissold Park

Contact: Charlotte 0171 254 0419

Wednesdays -Honor Oak playground.

Contact: Keith Hertog 0181 776 859

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: Leslie 0181 969 0893

Wandsworth HE Group, Tuesdays fortnightly from 26th October. Meeting at 12.15, cost £3.50 per family, for directions
Contact: Shan 0181 673 6307
E-mail: shan@hgonline.co.uk

Middlesex Harrow Leisure Centre 1-2pm probably fortnightly meetings.
Contact: Karen Clarke 0181 907 7797

MANCHESTER

Bi-weekly at Peel Moat Sports Centre, Stockport. Sports, games, all ages welcome £1.40 per child.

Contact: Gil Wilson 0161 442 8723

Monthly formal art classes at Stockport Art Gallery. £1 per child

Contact: Gil Wilson 0161 442 8723

Anyone from 10+ age group wanting to get together for activities please, any suggestions gratefully received!

Contact: Gil Wilson 0161 442 8723

Computing Skills, 1st & 2nd Sats at Moore family's home. Limited places.

Contact: Karen 01204 573136

Firwood Social meeting alternate weeks.

Contact: Pam and Nick on 0161 862 9621

Manley Park Autonomous HE Group, Wednesdays 11-3 Come and play at Manley Park Methodist Church, Cromwell Ave, Whalley Range.

Contact: Sue Flindt 0161 881 4830

MADCOW news-sheet (Manchester and District Communication of What's on).

Free. Send stamped addressed envelopes to *Gill Wilson, 20 Brook Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport SK4 5BZ.*

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. £1.50 plus four large saes.

Contact: Ali Willer 28 Cozens-Hardy Rd Spruston, Norwich. NR7 8QF 01603 401020.

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 Pleased 01865 514973

STAFFORDSHIRE/SOUTH CHESHIRE/NORTH SALOP

Fortnightly meetings in rural location for crafts, drama, music etc

Contact: Patricia 01785 851150

Stafford: Every 2nd Tuesday meeting in village hall for crafts, games etc. 12-3.30pm.

Contact: Nicola 01785 612410 or Suzanna 01785 252518

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.

Contact: Helen Arcoleo, Dolphins, Bracken Close, Wonesh Park Wonesh GU5 0QS (SAE please)

SUSSEX

There is something happening nearly every day. **Monthly Newsletter/Events list** - £8 pa or £4 for 6 months, cheques payable to 'ESEO' please, to *Sarah Raine, 6 The Diggers, Golf Drive, Brighton, BN1 7LB*

Contact: Anne Rix 01435 862794 (East Sussex)

Isobel Bogucki 01403 261178 (West Sussex)

Friday EO Club at Lindfield

Contact: Liz Evans 01444 414058

TYNESIDE

Monthly meetings, visits, activities etc

Contact: Linda Robertson 01911 4567007

WALES

Cardigan area Social meetings and outings on Mondays.

Contact: Yvette Hartley 01239 820 968

Swansea monthly meetings in Llanelli/ area.
Contact: Sue Haggerty 01269 861902

NE Wales / Borders - gym/ trampolining in Wrexham (Thurs), meetings in Oswestry area (Tues), W.Cheshire/NE Wales (Mon or Fri)
Contact: Jenny 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

Glamorganshire - Regular group meetings planned once or twice a month. Suggestions and new families,

Contact: Celia McDonough 01633 669104

Gwent - Regular group activities now being arranged. Suggestions and new families welcome.

Contact: Dawn 01495 303468

WEST MIDLANDS

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

New venue at Coseley. Fortnightly meetings with a resource centre, activities and workshops planned. In the pipeline - science club, drama group, music & swimming lessons. All home educators welcome.

Contact: Penny Clarke 01922 745465

Joy Beasley 01922 641139

WILTS/DORSET/HAMPS

Lowes Street Hall, off Wetherby Rd, Salisbury. 2-5pm 2nd & 4th Tuesdays
Moorsvalley Country Park, nr Ringwood 1st & 3rd Tuesdays.

Contact: Vicky Slater 01722 324863, Wendy Irvine 01202 438254, Becka Bradley Carter 01747 870729.

WORCESTERSHIRE

Regular activity meetings and outings in the north Worcestershire area,

Contact: Gail Tatcher 01562 822034,
email gail@tqmi.co.uk or see the regular page in HELM, West Midlands newsletter.

Weekly meetings Worcestershire area

Contact: Pat 01527 876184

YORKSHIRE - NORTH

Regular meetings & visits etc Please send two second class stamps for quarterly news-sheet, or your e-mail address.

Contact: Meraylah Allwood 01904 448643
e-mail jemergram@zetnet.co.uk

YORKSHIRE - EAST

Regular meetings and visits etc. Please send two second class stamps for quarterly news-sheet

Contact: Alison Houston 01405 769902

Hull, informal meetings every Friday, 2pm Pearson Park (nr Conservatory entrance, or inside if cold)

Contact: Karen 01482 345655

YORKSHIRE - SOUTH

Tuesdays 12-3 term time at Highfield Adventure Playground. Outdoor equipment 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

Thursday - weekly informal social meetings.

All South Yorkshire members

welcome.

Contact: Angie Targett 0114 2817466

Swimming fortnightly, 2nd Tuesday at Hillsborough Leisure Centre 12pm and 4th Wednesday at Barnsley Metrodome 12.30

Contact: Ian Bennett 0114 2817466

YORKSHIRE - WEST

Outings & activities.

Contact: Eva 01535 274520

Last Thursday of each month 11.00 - 1.30 at the Civic Centre, Huddersfield.

Contact: Diane 01484 846946

Second Friday of the month, 1.00 - 4.00at Moortown Baptist Church, King Lane, Leeds.
£2 .50 per family

Contact: Eva 01535 274520

Susan 0113 268 1137

Last Wednesday of the month, 11.45 Baildon Rec Centre, Shipley

Contact: Trish Flynn 01274 590788

Swimming (term time), Tuesdays at Bradford

Contact: Eva or Trish

Wednesdays, 10.30 Huddersfield Sports Centre

Contact: Helen 01484 602100

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HE Resource List: <http://members.aol.com/wiseowlsw/resource.htm>

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Contact: Dr S.M. Hajsadr 0191-5674067.

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RESOURCES BOOKLET

50 page booklet giving information on different curriculum materials available to home educators who are interested in a more structured approach. For a copy please send a £1 coin to cover printing and postage, with your address to: **H. Turnbull, Hall Lodge, Biddenden Rd, Headcorn, Ashford, Kent, TN27 9JD.** Free electronic rtf. copy, e-mail me

at: julian.turnbull@btinternet.com

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Meet at 1 o'clock at Victoria Tower Gardens Abingdon Street For more info contact:

Article 12, Voluntary Action Centre, 7 Mansfield Rd, Nottingham, NG1 3FB Tel: 0115 9348466

HOME ED RESEARCH

Has your child tried school after being taught at home? Or have you thought about it? Your accounts are valuable! I am putting together a research document and would appreciate any input - *please* give me a call on **01772 628585** or email: annie@anniebee.co.uk or write to **Annie Bishopp, C31, Department of Educational Research, Cartmel College, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YW**

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1. The Poetry Bookshelf, Poetry Book Society, Book house, 45 East Hill, London, SW18 2QZ. 020 8870 8403
www.poetrybooks.co.uk

2. 'Reading Link'. Online interactive learning programme to assist those with reading difficulties.
www.reading-link.co.uk

3. The Children's Garden. Group setting up a Steiner kindergarten, sympathetic to flexi-schooling and home education.

Contact: Emma 0181 896 0450

childrensgarden@hotmail.com

4. Maths 2000 Campaign. Free booklet aimed at children 3-11, call 0800 169 1234

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 1/8th page or 50 words and sent (with any donation) to the advertising editor.

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Treasurer: Priscilla Park-Weir

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Database Secretary: Lynda Hitchman

36 East Avenue, Exeter, Devon EX1 2DX
Tel: 07932 776671

database@education-otherwise.org
(subscription renewals, address changes,
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Media Coordinator: (vacant)

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

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Lammas, 34 Cowslip Drive, Little Thetford, Ely,
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School Phobia: Geraldine Adams

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Enquiries Secretaries Coordinator:

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Membership Secretaries Coordinator:

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Autonomous Education Support and Advice

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(For details of EO publications, information
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Small Jobs Coordinator: Angela Smith

01434 322372

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If you have a problem contact your nearest
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Christine Adey (Dorset)

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Gwen Baldock (North Yorks)

Pam Bellinger (Northants)

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

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