

Education Otherwise



October 2001

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

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(none this issue - returns in December)

SPECIAL SECTION:

Autonomous Education - what is it?

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Please include your name, address, phone number and email if you have it.

Please mark 'material for publication'

Contributions are more likely to be included if they are concise.

DEADLINE FOR THE DECEMBER ISSUE IS 1ST NOVEMBER 2001

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Thanks to Rebecca for cover

From the Editor

Or should that be: from the Co-ordinator? Somehow, I don't feel very co-ordinated this time. The August issue seemed to fall into place easily - October has been uphill all the way. Things have disappeared in the post, needed last-minute alterations, or taken a lot of discussion over exactly how an idea should be phrased, and there were so many EO issues I wanted to comment on that I didn't know where to begin - so I left this column to the last.

In the midst of all this, came events in America which many people are saying will change the world, and which may touch all our lives in some way. My nephew works for a company whose head office was in the World Trade Centre. As chance would have it, he was working in the London office this week, but 700 of his colleagues are "unaccounted for". It is hard to keep focus on everyday minutiae and simultaneously to deal with the shock of what might have been, and it seemed appropriate to acknowledge the far-reaching impact of these terrible events. To anyone who has been touched by the tragedy - my thoughts are with you.

And what of the changes which may follow? There is currently much speculation in the media, widely diverse messages from politicians, philosophers, the military - and even from the service in St Paul's Cathedral. What action will America take? How will this affect us? What influence do we have over the direction of events? Suddenly, it is brought home to us that much global power is of an illusory nature, and the future seems to hold a degree of uncertainty which is uncomfortable to accept.

For a long time, it's been clear to anyone who thinks about the role of education in preparing young people for the challenges of life, that the only thing we can be certain of is that there will be changes. EO is in the forefront of those changes, as we all have to justify the choices we make for our children against an established system which is resistant to change (unless dictated by government and enforced by funding regulations!). Many dedicated volunteers - on EO's Council, in working groups, as local contacts, in administrative roles and many other ways - give generously of their time, abilities and energy to maintain the service which EO offers to every member, and to influence government thinking on education.

Although I have been a member of EO for some 15 years, it is only since taking on the job of Co-ord for the NL that I have really begun to appreciate the efforts of those who not only keep EO going but, at the same time, press for further recognition of home-based education as the way forward. To all these people - you know who you are - I want to say: Thank You!

I would like also to acknowledge the value that I place on the diversity of talents, interests and viewpoints of EO members. On the telephone enquiries line I was often asked by parents just embarking on home education: "What should I do?". My stock answer was that there are as many ways of home educating as there are families doing it, they are ALL right, we respect and support them all - that I regard as our strength, and that I hope to reflect in the newsletter.

Pre-16s and college courses

A report from EO's DfES Team

The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) became The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) following the last election. This is the Government body based in London that is responsible for establishing and overseeing the legislative framework for education. Members of EO's DfES team - Anne Wade, Jill Fisher, Ann Samuel Till and Gwen Baldock, continue to communicate with the department. Another issue of particular concern for our membership, and something we have raised with the DfES, is the difficulty that home educated pre-16s can have in gaining access to college courses. I have been working with our College Contact, Kathy Chilton, on documenting the situation and we would like to thank all those who have provided information that will help with the campaign to secure access to, and funding for, college courses for this age group. The response to the request for feedback, good and bad, as well as the flow of ideas has been tremendous. It is this willingness to share in a collective effort in order to help others that makes EO what it is! Working together we **can** make a difference although as they say 'there is still much to do'. *By the way could those I didn't respond to personally please accept my apologies - I just ran out of time.*

In addition to using the contributions, with personal details erased, as evidence of the need for greater flexibility in study opportunities for pre-16s as we work with the DfES, LEAs, colleges, and the new Learning and Skills Council and other UK funding bodies, we wish to pass on to members a summary of what we have learned so far in order to lend weight to those currently trying to get onto courses. Please note that 'college' in this context refers to Further & Higher Education Colleges (FE Colleges), the former technical colleges, which are designed to offer varied learning opportunities for post 16 members of the community. This is rather than the 6th Form colleges that may be part of schools, are independent or are joining with FE Colleges.

Summary from contributions

ACCESS to college courses: This varies enormously between colleges as they are now autonomous units, independent of Local Education Authorities (LEAs), and so are entitled to take their own line. Some welcome young students, even below 14 years, as long as they are up to the course content plus the social aspect. Some colleges are actually putting on special electronics and science courses for home-educated students, especially where it is obvious that school is not an option for them. Others have an absolute ban on home-educated pre-16s. This might even be the case where college is working with local schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) to offer 14-16 year olds, who are recognised as needing a different approach, single vocational study days. LEAs have funds to pay colleges for this group as they receive the per capita allowance from the Council, since the students are still registered at schools.

When contacting a college to make enquiries about access and funding you might need to get past the receptionist who may not be aware that the college can take pre-16s. In fact

some LEA Advisors and senior college staff still believe it is illegal or maybe wrong in some way to take younger students, so again, be armed with the facts - and your PR skills. We all need to be diplomatic or we can spoil it for others. Parents and students need to keep asking, in fact ASK, ASK, ASK! Families reported that several colleges turned them down before they found one that was happy to take the student.

Try to speak to as many people at college as possible such as the Youth or School Liaison person, and arrange to go for an informal interview. Take someone, possibly an EO 'colleague', with you and carry multiple copies of all relevant information including EO leaflets (ask your Local Contact for copies). Add information about what other colleges are doing in support of pre-16 college access elsewhere and ask them to contact the relevant funding body (see below) as they *can* (but see below again) make exceptions and fund pre-16s if this is the problem. The prospective student could take along a portfolio of life and learning experiences; this might include evidence of any voluntary work in the field of interest. This, coupled with an obvious enthusiasm for the subject, can prove to be powerful entry qualifications. Try anything that shows you are all serious and this is a 'big thing' for them to resist. If all else fails, then seek advice from your MP, the DFES, the local councillors who sit on the Education Committee, the Leader of the Council and Youth workers.

An interesting way of sorting out pre-16 college attendance is where local colleges work together in an area. Many are worried about taking younger students in case they are accused of poaching from schools, but they will take pre-16s from each other's area. Also, some colleges might take students onto less popular courses that may be in danger of being axed if the numbers fall too low; and, these might be courses where college feels they are not competing with local schools as they may be with some of the core school subjects. It can be easier to get access to 'non-school time' classes during evenings, weekends and holidays but remember, as referred to above, that as a few colleges are now providing specifically for home edders so it may be possible to use this as a model. This could be a particularly useful way of covering the practical aspects of GCSE courses. The picture is varied but that means there's hope.

FEES and FUNDING:

Funding bodies. One result of FE Colleges becoming independent of LEAs some time ago is that we now have a clear and unhelpful demarcation with funding between pre and post 16 education. Whilst LEAs continue to fund pre 16 education, mainly by providing schools, FE Colleges receive funding for their post 16 courses from a separate funding body - in fact bodies as there are different ones for different parts of the UK; the contact details will be listed at the end of this report. The Further Education Funding Council has now been replaced by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in England and as with the other bodies also incorporates the former Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). Enquiries so far to the LSC etc have confirmed that they are still only prepared to pay for pre-16s to use college courses in exceptional circumstances. *At this time* (☺) home education may not fit into that category, even where school attendance clearly is not an option because of bullying, inappropriate learning environment, stress and so on.

However, there may be movement on this fairly rigid attitude and there seem to be differences emerging between different bodies, so PLEASE continue sending letters outlining your experiences as this helps us to show the need for flexibility.

Funding by LEAs. Regarding the situation with LEAs, local councils receive income from the Government based essentially on population figures, plus other factors that might relate to the area. The share of this that goes to the LEA in each area is mainly based on numbers on local school registers, although again other factors come into play. As home educators do not therefore attract funds to the LEA, in fact most are not even known to them, in a sense LEAs are right when they say they don't receive money for this group to pass on. However, some authorities do seem able to claim extra money from the total council budget, or they decide to take some out of their own pot, in order to subsidise some pre-16s to go to college. The former appears to be possible by establishing a contingency fund so there is money to pay for college courses for a number of school-aged pupils who move into an area during their last school year and who might not be able to get a place at school at such short notice. Some of these funds are being used to pay for college courses for home-educated pre-16s! It can be done so ask your LEA - and take heart, one LEA said it would not fund *under 14s*. This might not seem helpful for the younger ones but maybe we have to take this a step at a time.

Funding from colleges. So, sometimes some LEA funding might be available, or a further education funding body *might* assist. Occasionally a college will not charge pre-16s, or fees will be subsidised. Often parents do not know who is subsidising courses, whether it is the LEA or the college that is offering a concessionary rate. It would be very useful to know these details if possible so we can show other colleges what they might do. Some colleges taking quite young children will let a child go along for free or half price as long as a full fee paying guardian accompanies them. Another option is where parents enrol on a distance course and let the child do the work. This provides a learning experience although it wouldn't be certificated. Another idea that came up was the possibility of sharing course materials if using college work packs, and just paying for each person's own tutor time. This was certainly fine with one college. Some colleges have been fantastically helpful; one suggesting that if the student could put together a package of courses (already very cheap) that amounted to full-time study they may be able to offer it for free. I got the impression they felt the Learning and Skills Council might fund this, and it is *possible* - check out the difference though between full and part-time courses.

Even in cases where LEAs, or a **local charitable Trust**, will pay the general tuition fees, be prepared to pay something towards the additional costs such as books and equipment. Also be prepared to find that an LEA may contribute towards fees at a college in their borough, but not one outside - it may be that the only college to offer a place is not local.

Where parents have to pay. GCSEs, especially those available at night class, may be considerably cheaper than finding the money for full-time college courses such as GNVQs. This might be exacerbated by the fact that full time students may be required to take a Key Skills course as well, which might be charged for separately, and they do not

come cheap. This needs to be balanced though with regard to student preference; for example a dyslexic student might be much better doing a GNVQ where assignments can be done on a computer and assessment is based on continuous assessment instead of taking exams. Finally, remember to weigh up all these costs with what would be involved in going down the open learning/correspondence learning route. See the College and Courses leaflet from the EO Information Series for details of the different approaches students might take in working towards formal qualifications. The leaflet also has contact details of Exam Boards, correspondence colleges such as the ever popular NEC, and information about Open Learning packs available through FE colleges. All details can be checked with the 'Education Year Book' available to use in a public reference library.

PROOF OF STATUS: some colleges accept a letter from the parent or guardian in lieu of the letter they would normally receive from a headteacher which states that the pre-16 student is free to attend college i.e., that they're not supposed to be in school. Other colleges only accept a letter from the LEA even when parents explain that the education office is not responsible for the family and indeed may not even know them (and parents may worry that a hostile LEA could try to block the college place if they hear about it and do not agree with this approach). One family was informed that they needed a letter from the local Social Services as well! When these things happen it is as well to remember that some of this behaviour is based on a lack of knowledge and understanding. Therefore, and remembering that we are all front line ambassadors for home education, it is reasonable and probably worthwhile to try to help them to understand, at least in the first instance.

INSURANCE: some colleges cite lack of cover for pre 16s as being a major obstacle in being able to accept them into college. If this is the case families might ask college to enquire if there would actually be a charge in adding this category to their policy. This should be less of an issue as an increasing number of colleges are taking other pre 16s, such as those disaffected with school. Others suggested a way around it was to have the (not always very) young students accompanied by a parent. However one of our detective-like members discovered informally with the Insurers of her local college that this wasn't an issue they had put forward themselves, hmm... I can see that colleges might have different insurance policies, as they are independent, but it would seem quite likely that these things would be pretty uniform. If this does prove to be causing genuine difficulties though, a suggestion by another member was that we investigate whether we could incorporate this into EO insurance.

ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS: There is surprising variation on what is needed in order to be accepted onto college courses. Some students are asked for the usual entry requirements, others for some evidence of formal studying, others walk into college following an interview with the main course tutor. This is where the ability to relate to people of all ages comes in, as does the fact that home edders are more likely to be going for attendance on a course *because they are interested and want to study more*, which of course shines through at interview and gets tutors very interested. These informal qualifications could be supported, in the absence of the usual certificates, by a portfolio that shows things that represent what the young person has been doing and is interested in.

It is not unusual for home edders to find that GCSEs or GNVQs are not needed for the particular path they have chosen, although some may wish to do them anyway of course. Even 'A' levels may not be necessary, even for access into university, as students may take a year's Access course by way of preparation or again, gain entry following an interview. Or, students may study through the Open University with no prior qualifications. Don't forget that more universities are now becoming aware of the value of home education as a preparation for higher education.

Students wishing to get onto one of the Modern Apprenticeships however, which can be an excellent route into all sorts of work, would need certain set qualifications. Perhaps the best advice is to explore all avenues of interest, talk to prospective employers to see what they would be looking for, and take the most appropriate path.

COLLEGE FACILITIES: a useful tip from one parent is that students enrolled at college, even part-time (but check), can get access to college facilities, facilities that may help other areas of their studies. Resources might include the use of computers and the library etc. Also, it may be that the young person chooses to join in with some of the social scene such as student union activities or field trips.

SPECIAL NEEDS: children with special needs, or a different style of learning such as dyslexia, can receive a great deal more support from a college than they might have had if they went to school, so do be encouraged by this. One parent did make the comment though that the extra help colleges and universities offer, such as personal use of a computer and the necessary software, is all well and good but how can we get more help for these children to get to that stage in the first place?

CITY AND GUILDS: Some EO families persuaded their local college to put on a City & Guilds in Electronics especially for children who were home educated because they had been bullied while in school; a child with Asperger's was included because he too was effectively being denied access to school education. Even though other home edders are not able to participate, it may be that this is a good introduction to home edders, and the needs of our children. I believe there are many teachers out there who'd like to help.

WEST SUFFOLK COLLEGE, Bury St Edmunds, runs one of the few college based Home Study programmes to accept under-16s. They offer email-based distance learning GCSEs with tutor support and termly tutorials to talk things over. For further information telephone 01284 716333 or email: info@westsuffolk.ac.uk

OPEN LEARNING CENTRE INTERNATIONAL in Camarthen pops up as being very helpful to home educated students. Unfortunately the costs have gone up by 33% recently to those living outside Wales as the funding they receive for these students has been reduced by that amount.

EO NEWSLETTER: keep in touch with courses and supported distance learning opportunities being presented in the newsletter quite cheaply by other members. EO does not sanction any of these adverts but members are mentioning consistent help from certain people.

OPEN UNIVERSITY: the OU claims that it is non-discriminatory in that they offer access to educational opportunities regardless of age, background and ethnic origins etc. Although the fact that not all children go to school was probably not taken into account when this was written, some home edders are finding the OU *will* accept a variety of ages. They always have taken children in 'exceptional circumstances' but we hope to help them open up even further. Enquirers may be told there is a post 18 rule, so ask again.

LIBRARIES: check to see if your library has free Open Learning packs to borrow, as these can provide a wealth of information on diverse subjects/areas of interest. They can also be useful by providing an opportunity to study course material that is set out in a formal way. Check the position with GCSE and 'A' level courses with libraries as well.

BENEFITS: EOers in receipt of Benefits should check whether help for materials and travelling is available associated with college attendance. Also, check how Benefits for children might be affected if they are going to do more than 12 hours of formal education.

POST 16 note. One family said that they were worried about losing Child Benefit etc while their youngster was receiving training allowances through the new Connexions Service. However this wasn't the case as they were told it counted as holiday income. The Connexions Service, in part, replaces the former Careers Service and students can have a Training Officer and Personal Advisor and combine work experience and training of 16 hours a week to get the £40 weekly payment. These allowances were established to encourage young people to stay on in further education by offering some money in place of what they would earn if they went to work. We need to explore the Education Maintenance Allowance and the situation with post 16s more fully to assist members with older students as well as seeing what might be made relevant to pre 16s. **Members' experience with this very welcome.**

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING ACCOUNTS: are available to anyone over 18 years of age so they could be of interest to our older students; perhaps we can encourage the politicians to reassess the bottom age limit over time (and after a careful exploration of any adverse ramifications such as the call for compulsory registration we may be getting through the Connexions Service where they refer to getting details of 13 to 16 year olds - Jill Fisher is preparing a report on this). With ILAs a personal financial contribution invites a much more substantial input from the Government. The grants are mainly aimed at vocational courses, but this is being defined quite broadly. For example the British School of Yoga works with the learning accounts and accepts the grants to pay for a range of courses including Aromatherapy, Business Management and Counselling. Information about ILA is on www.dfes.gov.uk/ila/

CONFIDENCE: Most of the above is about the practical steps that families might take, but of huge importance to many of our members is the emotional position. Members continue to report that those young people who previously experienced severe school attendance anxieties find they can happily attend college later on as the atmosphere, size of groups, relationship with teaching staff etc. can be completely different. It can be a good idea in these situations to start with a short course in a subject of particular interest so the student can test the water. Even where such an experiment shows they are not yet ready to branch out in this way, don't be discouraged as more time, and success in other ways, may be all that is needed. There is a difficult balance between encouraging a young person to do things and pushing them before they are ready - the main thing is that they understand that they will feel able to do what they want *when the time is right for them*.

Another aspect of only committing to a taster course in the first instance is that colleges receive funding in three stages: at enrolment, mid-term and end of term. Losing people before completion costs the college dearly and is one reason why they would like to know the likelihood that students will finish courses they have enrolled on. Therefore having already done a small course is evidence of stickability as well as ability, and can make a difference in being accepted into full-time studying without the usual qualifications.

Human Rights Act

An issue that Anne Wade and I are looking into, with our current investigations re the Human Rights Act, relates to the disparity in treatment between people. For example, it cannot be fair or defensible that *where* a family lives in the country, affects their access to impartial information about home education. Likewise, LEAs who only pass information on to *selected* families in their area might be shown to be acting improperly. Perhaps the same argument could apply to the fact that some young people are being offered assistance with college courses whereas others are not. This can be particularly upsetting for those families who, because their child's needs are not being met in the system, find they have to cast about for alternatives. To then be told that there is no help from an authority, who may even have directed them to Education Otherwise in the first place, is not at all reasonable.

One family reported how they battled for ages, and lost, in trying to find help for a youngster who was being temporarily excluded from school but was saying he would study in college. If the family had allowed him to be permanently expelled, something that would be on the child's records, then the LEA would have had a duty to offer the lad an alternative - such as college placement! Even the FEFC, as it was at the time, rejected that this was a case of 'exceptional circumstances'. These are issues we wish to raise with those who make policy about the allocation of funding between LEAs and the FE funding bodies such as the Learning and Skills Council. Meanwhile continue to keep us informed about creative, or straightforward, ways that you, or colleges and LEAs, find for meeting children's needs - and for funding this.

Thank you for all the feedback so far, and keep it coming! Kathy will be collating further input so please contact her with ideas and information. I will concentrate on trying to improve access.

As a footnote I feel it's important that we constantly ensure, as we press for resource support, that we do not in any way undermine our present freedoms to offer personalised learning opportunities for our children. In many respects we lead the world in this, a position that has not come about by accident. EO is frequently contacted by home edders who have 'escaped' here from other countries.

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Gwen Baldock. 6 Villa Grove, York YO31 7TB. Email: gwen.baldock@cwcom.net

THE FE FUNDING BODIES FOR THE UK.

Learning and Skills Council (for England)

101 Lockhurst Lane, Foles Hill, Coventry CV6 5ST. Tel: 02476 703241

The National Council for Education and Training for Wales

Linden Court, The Orchards, Ilex Close, Llanishen, Cardiff CF14 5D7

Tel: 02920 761861

Scottish Further Education Unit

Argyll Court, Castle Business Park, Stirling FK9 4TY. Tel: 01786 892000

Department for Education and Employment

Further Education Branch, Room 407, Adelaide House, 39-49 Adelaide Street,

Belfast BT2 8FD. Tel: 02890 257777

December Special Section:

Autonomous Education – What is it?

Autonomy ~ dictionary definition: ~ *Self led ~ freedom to determine one's own actions, behaviour, etc. ~ the doctrine that the individual human will is governed only by its own principles and laws ...*

Autonomous Education ~ no dictionary definition.

My LEA take Autonomous Education to mean *educated out of school*

What exactly is Autonomous Education, how do you perceive it?

This is not a debate between Autonomous and Structured Education, often the two go hand in hand. I would like to know how other people see/practise/understand Autonomous Education.

Please write to me at :- Jo Borthen, 57 Florida Drive, Exeter, EX4 5EX, Devon

or email me at :- jo4eo@aol.com

BOOK REVIEWS AND RESOURCES

Escape From The Rat Race by *Nicholas Corder*

This is a book for encouraging people to look at their lifestyles and find ways of being more in control of their affairs. The book is all about "downshifting", which is to do with determining what you actually want from life and ensuring that you achieve it. Mainly it's about getting your own personal/work balance the way you want it. I'm sure that most home educators know all about downshifting and being in control of their own lives, nevertheless I found this book both useful and reassuring. Reassuring in that I am and always have been a downshifter and useful in having a very interesting appendix which mentions EO amongst other groups, such as environmental and ethical financial organisations. I know a few people who would benefit from the financial advice in this book, which is sound, practical and achievable if you want to rid yourself of unnecessary debt. But it all comes down to direct action and no book can do that for you. It can only give you the incentive and the rest is up to you. Well worth a read.

Eileen Steenman-Clark

£8.99 ISBN 0-7160-3003-9 *Elliot Right Way Books*

25 Years of Home-based Education

Research, Reviews & Case Material

edited by Roland Meighan

This A4 book is a special edition to mark 14 years since Philip Toogood founded *Education Now*. I think it would be pretty inspiring and reassuring for anybody starting out with home education or having the occasional "are we doing the right thing?" concern. It is made up of articles first published in *Education Now's News and Review*, so anybody who's been an *Education Now* member for a while will have seen this all before. I'm not a member (yet) so I found the potpourri of articles an interesting introduction; the book starts with Paula Rothermel's nationwide study of home education, continues with two other research reports and finishes with *messages from the home front* (quotations) and details of publications and contacts. In between there's the Ashton family's declaration of education (leaflet to be handed out to interrogators), Chris Shute's detailed examination of HE as a valid and valuable alternative to school, several book reviews, advice for GCSEs and other snippets. Not the sort of book to read from cover to cover (though that won't take too long) and some items are now out of date (a meeting on 7th May 2000) but good for dipping in to occasionally or keeping for reference. Worth it (in my opinion) just for this quote: "Even old Joe Stalin

wasn't as prescriptive as this" - Nigel de Gruchy (General Secretary NASUWT) on the publication of pre-school targets for three-to-five-year-olds.

Sue Onions

£3.95 ISBN 1-871526-50-7 *Education Now*

Where is Little Harry? by *Graham Philpot*

This book cleverly allows you to join in with a family of humanized pigs, playing hide and seek on their very charming farm. It has many flaps that blend in with the illustrations, creating a challenge for little fingers. The pictures are very detailed and exciting. Leo certainly enjoys the book, however I find it of little educational value. The farm is completely divorced from reality, the pigs live in the farmhouse and the other animals, who wear clothes too, are obviously not being farmed as if that is where they naturally live. I would not recommend it for children who do not understand real farming, otherwise it is great fun.

Caroline Farquhar with Leo (1)

£7.99 ISBN 0 7445 7525 7 *Walker Books*

Katje the Windmill Cat by *Gretchen Woelfle*

Katje lives happily with her master Nico the miller, content in chasing after mice, until her world is turned upside down with the arrival of Lena, Nico's new bride. Feeling shut out of their world, she finds happiness with the arrival of her new playmate - baby Anneke. Even this closeness worries the over protective Lena and a disillusioned Katje leaves the house to move into the windmill, occasionally making secret visits to rock Anneke's cradle in the night. One day a terrible storm breaks the dike that keeps the sea out, and Anneke is washed away in the flood. Anneke's parents are distraught, but incredibly it is Katje who has stopped Anneke from drowning. This book, set in the Netherlands, is based on a true story. Beautifully illustrated, this was an instant hit with Hamzah.

Aalyah Naqvi with Hamzah (1)

£10.99 ISBN 0 7445 8016 1 *Walker Books*

Rattletrap Car by *Phyllis Root*

This is a fun book that we all enjoyed. It is about a family outing to a lake and the things that happen on the way to their car, and the family's inventive ways of overcoming the difficulties. Sophie says "I want to keep this book". A good story for younger children.

Anne Pope with Sophie (5) and Rupert (3)

£9.99 ISBN 0 7445 7302 5 *Walker Books*

Blitz Boys by Linda Newbery

This story is set in the East End of London during the Second World War. Ronnie, a 12 year old boy, befriends "Dusty" whose Dad is an RAF pilot. Together they share many adventures in the blitzed out houses in the area. I think the book is aimed at boys aged between 8 and 10. I didn't enjoy it because there doesn't seem to be any particular plot and it goes on a bit.

Louise Cutler (12)

£4.99 ISBN 0 7136 54244 A & C Black

The Impossible Parents Go Green

by Brian Patten

This book is about Ben and Mary Norm's parents who want to care for the environment but are not very good at it. They wanted to eat nothing but yak's milk and muesli and wear nothing but sacks. Ben and Mary wanted them to stop and be normal. They bought some green ink and a green sponge to make their parents turn green and said that their skin would have to be peeled off to make them normal again. I liked this book because it was funny and easy to read. The pictures were funny as well.

Freyja Steenman-Clark (8)

£3.99 Walker Books ISBN 0 7445 7881 7

Lady Lollipop by Dick King-Smith

This is a story about a princess, a pig and a boy. Lady Lollipop is a special pig who flutters her eyelashes at people. She is trained by the princess and the boy to do what they want. This is a short story which I enjoyed.

Lucie Pope (8)

£3.99 ISBN: 0 7445 7872 8 Walker Books

Elmer and Grandpa Eldo by David McKee

Another in the Elmer the elephant series much enjoyed in our house. This is about Elmer going to visit his Grandpa Eldo and recounting his memories of experiences with his Grandpa when he was a child. Sophie said it is a very nice story, and it does have a warm cosy sort of feel to it. Rupert (3) is also rather drawn to these stories.

Anne Pope with Sophie (5)

£9.99 Andersen Press ISBN: 1-84270-014-6

Spook Summer by Mary Hooper

This book is about a girl called Amy who tries to scare the other girls into thinking that a cardboard cut out is real. She loves ghosts and is always trying to scare people. I thought this book was silly in some places and exciting in others. It didn't take long to read as the writing was big.

Kit Freisleben (8)

£3.99 0 7445 5968 5 Walker Books

Toddler-Gran by Linda Pitt

Tom has to tell somebody this story but has promised

not to since it's so unbelievable. He wants to go to America with his parents but instead goes on holiday to Seacliffe Caravan Park with his gran. He says early on that she's not like any other granny he knows, teetering round on spiky heels and painting her nails deep purple. She gets even less like other grannies after trying some Time Defeating Anti-Wrinkle cream and turning into Toddler-gran: yes, a grandmother trapped in the body of a toddler. Eventually everything is put right, but first Toddler-gran wins a *Toddler of the week* competition, foils a bank robbery, ruins a playgroup and helps Tom give a snooty make-up lady her come-uppance. We all liked this book even if the title gives away the basic plot and the story's pretty straightforward. Thomas and Tricia thought it was funny and liked Toddler-gran's antics and I found some meaningful observations of how adults treat children, especially differences between dealing with cute, compliant toddlers and those who have tantrums! Would adults put up with the way small children are often treated? It seems not, and the result is a fun read. Sue Onions with Thomas (almost 6) and Tricia (9)

£4.95 ISBN 1 84270 027 8 Andersen Press

The Very Kind Rich Lady and Her One Hundred Dogs by Chinlun Lee

This book is about a lady and she has loads of dogs – a hundred of them. It starts with Papa, who had a beard. There are more and more of them and it ends with Bingo. The woman is very kind to them and she calls to them by shouting their names. They always came and Bingo is always late, he has red cheeks.

I liked the pictures, they were cuddly. I liked counting and especially when they went to bed. I liked all this story.

Eoghan Steenman-Clark (4)

£10.99 ISBN 0 7445 7543 5 Walker Books

I Capture The Castle by Dodie Smith

Yes, I know this book is by the author who wrote 101 dalmations but this was her first ever book and is aimed at young adults. It is about Cassandra who lives in a crumbling castle with her eccentric family. Her father has a severe case of writer's block and seems to become more crazy everyday, her stepmother is a nudist for famous artists and her favourite thing to do is to run around naked with nature and her beautiful sister is desperate to get married to anyone who is rich. Although this book was written in the forties it could easily be mistaken for a modern classic. It shows a young girl growing up and discovering her true self and feelings. I would recommend this

to children aged 12+.
£4.99 Definitions

Laura (13)

Christina's Face by Penny Kendal

This was quite a good book, and very serious. Rachel, was all set to go to Wales on holiday with her school friend. At the last minute her dad whisks her away with her step mum that she hates, to Rhodes! Not a great start to the holidays! Mysterious things start happening, a bunch of foreign men, walk up to her, chanting Christina, and try and carry Rachel away! There is a strange likeness between Rachel and a girl that went missing years ago, whose name was Christina! Elini, (Christina's sister) hooks onto Rachel and together they track down the mystery of Christina's disappearance! This story was better than I had expected and it had a slight twist at the end! I recommend this tale to boys and girls that are ten or over, who like a descriptive read.

Megan Whiteman (11)

£4.99 ISBN 0 86264 757 6 Andersen Press

Lucas Whitaker by Cynthia Defelice

Lucas Whitaker is a boy who has to endure the loss of his entire family who, one by one, succumb to the dreaded disease, consumption. Knowing neither the reason for his family's sickness nor how to cure them, when his mother dies Lucas sets out on his own. He starts work as an apprentice to a rural doctor and we discover that he stands on the threshold of modern medicine. We enjoyed this book and its description of the utter helplessness felt by people in the face of inexplicable diseases such as tuberculosis. Their consequent acceptance of superstitious cures, no matter how gory and bizarre, is well explained but we did not feel we ever really got to know the various characters involved. We felt it was a good story but it could have been expanded and improved with more detail and depth.

Ruth O'Donnell with Daniel (14)

£4.99 0 86264 338 4 Floris Books

The Surya Trilogy by Jamila Gavin

The three books (*The Track of the Wind*, *The Eye of the Horse* and *The Wheel of the Surya*) that make up this amazing trilogy follows the lives of a brother and sister as they struggle to survive through the upheaval of India from the time of the 2nd world war. After being separated from their mother, they travel to England seeking their father, who they believe to be a great scholar and warrior. The 2nd book is set largely in England and the 3rd is another journey. The trilogy touches on many aspects of justice and prejudice and is punctuated with Sikh mythology. It teaches the reader a lot about Sikhism,

Indian culture and England during the last century, spanning 30 years. I would recommend it to older readers aged about 12+.
Harriet Smith (14)

A-Z Maths Games by Karen M Breitbart

As you'd expect from the title, this book contains maths games (52, not 26) cunningly titled in alphabetical order. Each game has its objective stated so you know what your child should be learning (and handy for using in reports for any LEA!), a list of materials needed, how to make it (usually involves duplicating, colouring, laminating and cutting), instructions to play it and a book link. The drawings are simple and clear and pages which can be legally photocopied are clearly marked as such. Objectives range from "Children will make number sets from 1 to 5" to "Children will practise pairing matching numbers" (words and figures), but there's a lot of maths ground covered in this book including simple graphs, telling the time, reading 3-digit numbers (give us another year or so!) and simple addition and subtraction. It's one of those books that you think "I could have made that" - but Karen Breitbart has done it for you (and I'm grateful because I can't draw). You need access to a photocopier or scanner to use the games (some require one page to be copied more than once) but then this book is really aimed at school teachers with that facility. We've dipped into *A-Z Maths* a few times now and used it our own way - Thomas liked colouring the pictures we were going to use and it saved the teacher (me) some work! "Rabbits and carrots" (simple addition) and "Spaceships and stars" (subtraction) were both a big hit, matching the number on the carrots or stars to the addition or subtraction problem. Once a child has played one of these games I think he'll remember the pairings without necessarily knowing the maths, so I'm going to trace the shapes and add a few more sums (10 rabbits and 9 rockets do not cover all the number bonds to 10!).

A good book, lots of fun games to choose from but use it in your own way (we will).

Sue Onions with Thomas (age 5½) doing the work!
ISBN 1 897675 79 8 Brilliant Publications

The Adventures of Pinky Pig and Friends

by Maureen Brown

Gem says "I like this book because they have silly names. It is quite silly in some places and it's quite good. I think it's funny when the cat dangles from the bridge." This book seemed rather like Enid Blyton's babyish animal stories, perhaps aimed at 3 year olds? Jem enjoyed reading it as it was mildly

silly/funny and non-threatening, and he is now a fluent reader and trying out everything. I didn't like the animals-as-people premise and couldn't bring myself to read them out loud to Celeste who is 3. The stories are tame and rather sentimental. Sorry I cannot recommend it. Kirsten Freisleben with Gem (6) £6.96 1 85776 5982 2 *The Book Guild*

Second Star to the Right by Deborah Hautzig

Liz says "The book is about a girl (Leslie). On the face she is a normal healthy 14 year old. She has a good friend and a mother who loves her to bits. She should be happy, but she's not. If only she was thinner, then she'd be happy. But how thin does she have to be to find happiness? This is an excellent book about a girl with anorexia nervosa. While she has anorexia nervosa she still tries to be herself, and she makes new friends who have anorexia nervosa. I would recommend it for teenagers. I don't think that it is suitable for anyone younger." Sue says "Having read this book I feel the subject matter is very challenging for anyone who has not matured sufficiently to understand the feelings that Leslie is going through. Her journey through the illness of anorexia nervosa is graphically discussed, despite this being a fictional story. A postscript at the end of the book enlightens the reader to the fact that this story is based on the author's own battle with the illness. An excellent book for the right reader."

Sue White and Liz White (13)

£4.99 ISBN 0 7445 8266 0 *Walker Books*

Look-Alikes by Joan Steiner

Look-Alikes is a book of eleven scenes made out of ordinary objects. The first scene is of a steam engine made up of 132 look-alike objects such as a coffeepot, overall's buckle, bingo call number, battery, pencil, big safety pin, etc! The rhyme for each picture gives the book a loose story line and encourages the reader to look for the look-alikes. At the end of the book there are lists of all the look-alikes from each scene. The eleven scenes are "Train, Train Station, Look-Alike City, General Store, Park and Zoo, Amusement Park, Hotel, Neighbourhood, Sweet Shop, Circus and Harbour". The scenes were originally created in the USA so that some scenes are very typically American such as the General Store and there is US money and stamps used in the pictures. This is an enjoyable book and Natasha and Anthea like to pick it up at odd moments. The detail is incredible and we are surprised how many new things we notice each time we open the book. It is a strange book because at first glance one really just notices the general scene, for instance, the boats are in the harbour, there are

buildings in the background and a bridge and then as you look in more detail someone notices the CDs, the chess piece, the pencil... So you can make yourself see the bigger picture or look in detail to see what objects you recognise.

Clare Crane with Natasha (6) and Anthea (4)

£10.99 ISBN 0 7445 8199 0 *Walker Books*

Reader Rabbit 'Thinking' PC/Mac

This is a nice piece of educational software. The animals are getting ready for a party and the child must help the characters to prepare everything. The activities are fun such as the mouse dance where the mice are practising a dance sequence but need help finding the next step in the pattern. In the donkey game the child practices giving directions using arrows that point in the right direction. This practices planning ahead, problem solving and so on. The characters are friendly and the graphics and sound are good. The age range for this computer CD is 4-6 which I think is accurate. There are many small irritations that I have with this software, however. I feel that each activity is well explained but the overall picture is more complicated. For instance, when helping to wrap gifts in Papa Bear's Store, it seemed easy enough to understand how to copy the shape of box, the style of wrapping paper, the type of bow, etc, but I was not sure how many presents were needed to be wrapped. As each present was stacked up there was no feedback as to how many more were required. Moreover, when a present was completed, the package was put onto the ready pile and in the process the wrapping that the child had carefully matched was changed for no reason! Only when the right number of gifts, toys, dances are ready are they put into the party room. When all the items are there then the party will begin. This is meant to be an incentive. However, I have not yet worked out whether items put into the room can be kept once the child leaves the programme. Since I prefer computer sessions to last no more than about a half-hour at this age, there is no hope of ever seeing the party unless I discover a way of saving items! Natasha and Anthea enjoy using this package. They have not used computers a great deal but this software is accessible enough for Natasha to use it with very little help. Anthea has needed more guidance but I imagine that it would not take long for her to use it unaided.

Clare Crane with Natasha (6) and Anthea (4)

£19.99 *The Learning Company*

Freewheelers to the Rescue by Eric Johns

I read 40 pages to Hazel, then she didn't want to

listen any more so I read the remaining 130. It's about the 'Freewheelers' who have several mishaps and adventures while trying to earn bike money. I found it reminiscent of Enid Blyton's Famous Five stories, with the five replaced by three girls plus Peterkin, the unfortunate toddler sibling who they begrudgingly drag around with them. Although it appears to be set in the present day, it has a very dated feeling, it doesn't ring true that they don't have bikes when they appear to come from averagely affluent families, even though one of their fathers is nicknamed 'Scrooge'. The vocabulary and style would make this easy reading for anyone who wants to tackle this length and style of book. Kim says he liked the parts of it that he heard (before falling asleep). Sally Jarvis with Hazel (9) and Kim (5)
£4.99 ISBN 0 7445 5963 4 Walker Books

Step-by-Step Paperfolding by Clive Stevens

If you don't already know how to fold and cut paper to make hats, windmills, paper planes and animal masks you may be delighted with this book. Otherwise there is not much more in it to make it worth the price. It's one of a series which includes clay modelling, papermaking, mosaics and printing. There seems to be so many like this with step-by-step photos and easy-to-follow instructions and nothing makes this one stand out from the crowd. Sally Jarvis with Hazel (9) and Kim (5)
£4.95 ISBN 085532908 4 Search Press.

Sophie's Adventures by Dick King Smith

When Gwenan looked at this book she said she liked it because she could read it herself and disappeared upstairs with it to read in bed. She has also enjoyed having the stories read to her. It is a collection of quite funny, short stories that are fun to read. Sophie is a determined young 5 year old who loves animals and we would recommend it for new readers to read for their first 'proper' book. Sue Bain with Gwenan (7)
£5.99 0 7445 78736 Walker Books

Boy by Roald Dahl

The most exciting thing that happened to Roald was he got the job he had wanted for a long time. It was called 'the Shell Company'. He was one of 7 out of 107 to get a place. The nicest person in the book is Roald's mother. She seemed a really nice person and was very angry when Roald came home with a purple bruise across his bottom. This was caused by a cane. She rushed down to the school and told off the headmaster and put Roald into another school. The ancient half sister's boyfriend was engaged to her and sort of thought he was the man of the

family. Therefore Roald decides to get his own back. I think that when his family go to England it's a bit like 'James' going to England with the 'Bugs' in *James and the Giant Peach*. When Roald was small he tasted chocolate inventions for Mr Cadbury and I think that's where he got the idea for *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Then when he went to Repton School there was a teacher called Captain Hardcastle and I think that's where he got the idea for Miss Trunchball. I don't know why it's a good book, it just is. Michelle O'Connor (13)

Crispin and the Blighter Jones by Peter Edwards

A cautionary tale told in verse about the 'Blighter' Farmer Jones waging war against any creatures on his land. So determined is he to destroy all living things, he brings forth his great machine of destruction, the Land Grabber Mastadon. It was at this point that Ceri joined us to listen, saying he thought the machine was great. It is fun to read in parts - lots of detail in the line drawings and heroes in Turbo Dragonfly and the Squadrons of bees which drive Farmer Jones to find somewhere to hide, but as Gwenan pointed out - he hasn't got anywhere to hide as he has destroyed all the hedges. Gwenan thought it was good because it had a happy ending and a bad start. I thought it was a touch over-long but quite fun and Ceri wanted more machines.

Susan Bain with Gwenan (7) and Ceri (3)
£10.95 ISBN 185776 592 3 The Book Guild

I'm Small and Other Verses by Lilian Moore

A book of short verses for young children. Sophie says "I think they're funny verses and it's a very nice book". I thought one or two verses a bit odd, but mostly they are succinct and capture the essence of the subject. The book is colourfully illustrated and covers subjects such as waiting, feet, umbrellas and snow. Anne Pope with Sophie (5)
£9.99 ISBN 0 7445 7384 X Walker Books

Tom Rabbit by Martin Waddell

This is the story of Sammy's toy rabbit who gets left out on the garden wall alone. He encounters real rabbits who are inquisitive about him. All is well in the end when Sammy retrieves him. A story that Sophie enjoys. She likes Tom Rabbit, and is not worried by him being left alone. To me the real rabbits are a little menacing, and the name Tom Rabbit crops up a few too many times, but basically it is a nice little story for young children. Anne Pope with Sophie (5)
£9.99 Walker Books ISBN: 0-7445-6771-8

Peter's Place by Sally Grindley and Michael Foreman

A poignant tale, well illustrated about Peter's Place, a beautiful stretch of coastline where seabirds and animals thrive, that is until an oil tanker comes aground and everything is choked with thick, black oil. The local people and Peter, all help to clean up and rescue as many birds and animals as they can and although it ends on a happier note Peter's Place will never be the same. I felt quite emotional reading it, very thought provoking, prompting the children to ask lots of questions about oil and environmental issues and ending with a trip to the library when I couldn't answer them all. Gwenan says 'Why can't we cycle everywhere?'

Sue Bain with Gwenan (7)

£4.99 ISBN 1 84270 037 5 Andersen Press

Gaia's Garden

Gaia Distribution is currently introducing into the UK a brand new series of ecological and nature related games. Each are fundamentally co-operative by design and help those taking part to encounter and learn about the diverse checks and balances manifest in nature. This is a board game for the 'young and old' developed by a couple who home educated their children and who wanted a game which was enjoyable, natural and non competitive. The theme is 'companion planting' and there is a good definition of what this means. We were both particularly pleased to see that great care has been taken to ensure all the contents are as sustainably produced as possible. There is a colourful, sturdy board, pop out cardboard counters (vegetables), 4 small wooden 'gardeners' two large wooden dice and the predator and pest insects are of green and orange glass nuggets. The aim of the game is for everyone to work together to plant vegetables in the organic garden, taking into account companion planting principles for pest control. It is a very different game and was enjoyed immensely by Keith who has returned to it again and again as he can play the game on his own or with companions (up to 6 can play). The rules are flexible and you can let your imagination run wild. I found it a bit repetitive after a while but then I'm not much of a gardener!

Keith Hall with Keith (7)

£13.99 Gaia Distribution, Educational Games

Grammar Gamecards

These cards have been designed to help children develop basic language skills. The first four packs in the series are 'Homonyms', 'Collective Nouns', 'Proverbs' and 'Antonyms/Synonyms'. Each pack consists of 52 cards all of which have to be paired up correctly. The game can be played individually or with up to four others. The games are fun to play and are useful in developing the various skills. Jake has enjoyed playing each one and often asks to play again with me or he will play happily with them on his own. I think the price may put some people off

but the idea of using card games to learn is fun and innovative. Kathy Noaz with Jake (7)
£4.99 each pack or £17.99 for the set of four packs
plus p&posters@tc-direct.co.uk.

Lizzie Zipmouth

I really enjoy listening to this tape and I've listened to it lots of times already. I can listen to tapes when my mum is too busy to read me stories and I don't feel like reading myself. This tape I'd give 10 out of 10. It is about a girl that moves in with her new step dad and she doesn't want to like him at first so she stops speaking to everyone - even her mum and her new brothers call her Lizzie Zipmouth. But her new grandma manages to make her talk and she turns out to be more stubborn than Lizzie is and she has a big collection of dolls which she lets Lizzie play with because Lizzie likes dolls a lot. Then Lizzie's grandma has a stroke and she helps her talk again.

Keith Hall (7)

Cavalcade Story Cassettes by Chivers Press

Please note that most prices quoted are the publishers' recommended prices. Many titles will be found at cheaper prices from discount book shops and mail order book clubs. Many of the books will also be found in your local library.

Publishers Details

A & C Black 020 7758 0200

Andersen Press 020 7840 8701

www.andersenpress.co.uk

Book Guild, 01825 723398 www.bookguild.co.uk

Brilliant Publications 01525 222844

www.brilliantpublications.co.uk

Cavalcade Story Cassettes

www.cavalcadecassettes.co.uk

Education Now, 113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote

Hills, Nottingham, NG9 3FQ

Elliot Right of Way 01737 830311

www.right-way.co.uk

Floris Books 0131 229 6800

Gaia Distribution, Educational Games

01273 843 503 www.livingearthgames.com

Learning Company (Mattel Interactive) 01293 651

710 www.mattelinteractive.co.uk

Search Press 01892 510850

www.searchpress.com

Walker Books 020 7793 0909

LEAVING FORMAL EDUCATION BEHIND

I question the need for any kind of formal education. Also the need for; unflattering polyester school uniforms, freezing knees playing outdoor 'winter sports', plastic *Pokémon*, *Batman*, or *Buffy*-splattered lunch-boxes, itchy name tags, huge nylon rucksacks adorned with fabric paint or *Tippex*, the degrading act of having to ask permission to go to the loo, endless hours of 'boringness' and not forgetting the 'hidden curriculum' (aka social control) – keeping our young people homogenous, compliant and unquestioning. From the age of 5-16 a child spends 15,000 hours in school. Ouch! I question the need for any kind of formal education. It crushes the enthusiasm and curiosity out of spirited, enquiring children.

We have been part of Education Otherwise for nearly 13 years - as co-ordinator for Devon, editor of the EO Newsletter and at present I am press/media officer for the South West. Our sons Gus (nearly 15 yrs) and Barnaby (10 yrs) have never been to school. Over the years I have heard some hugely distressing stories of young people having to cope within an environment of choiceless testing, bullying (from children and teachers), hours and hours of homework and also fabulous tricks children have learnt to placate teachers, get off sports, hand in homework late, etc....

The future of education is in the home and starts from within the family, not an outdated institutionalised schooling system. Away from the restrictions and non-individuality that school imposes, home-educated children are free to develop their skills and knowledge at a pace and style determined by themselves. They can concentrate on doing all those fabulous things that are out there in the world - stuff that children are really interested in - they do not have to follow the national curriculum, to have a fixed time-table or observe school hours.

We don't need to be 'teacher'. What we *do* need to be, is supportive of our young people to become 'learner'. Does that happen in schools? An 'educator' eager to interest and inspire thirty wildly-disparate young people - an impossible task. What motivates young people to learn in school? What motivates them to want to know the date the *Magna Carta* was signed, logarithms, past participles, Latin declensions – on the same day, at the same age, for a pre-determined length of time, decided by the powers that be? What true alternatives do they have?

Research has shown that children retain only 10 minutes out of every hour in the classroom. We have all assimilated so many facts because we had to, then forgotten them weeks or even days later. What a huge waste of our, and our children's, lives! A friend of our family who goes to the local large secondary school, sitting around our kitchen table he tells us about his art classes – which he hates with a vengeance. He has to – yes, *has* to, trace the journey of a young Aborigine using hieroglyphics painted meticulously onto a *Pringle crisp* tube! He

finds this boring, unfulfilling and a complete waste of time and energy – it will be binned at the earliest opportunity. He would rather be taking an extra class in German, which he loves – but school does not allow for deviation from the prescriptive 40 minute segmented time-table. When I hear stories like this it reaffirms my beliefs that the Government and their education 'experts' have seriously lost the plot! But the reality of our friend's school-life, (as with thousands of other children) the questioning of this blind obedience which he *has* to tolerate, would never occur in his everyday home-life. Sadly, in neither place is it welcomed or encouraged.

Learn what you want, if you don't want to, don't bother. Let's leave the school mentality behind – endless tests and projects and targets. The antithesis of schooling and coercive teaching is autonomous life-learning. The definition of the word autonomy – *the power or right of self-government, the doctrine that the human will carry its guiding principle within itself.* This seems clear to me. So let's support our young people in discovering their own guiding principle. If children want to learn about Katmandu, how to swim, names of all *The Simpsons* characters, lyrics to Eminem's songs, anatomical structure of an elephant, Spanish, where all the volcanoes are in the world, C minor scale on the saxophone, what birds look like in breeding plumage, how to set up a web page, aeroplanes used by the British in World War II... *cabbages and kings, or whether the sea is boiling hot or whether pigs have wings* - well, to hell with it – let them. I have known children who have learnt all of the above and a darn sight more – because they wanted to, because it was important to their lives!

We live in a time where information is coming at us in all directions – information-rich we call it. But we cannot know everything. Tried and tested systems, thoughts, writing, dogmas and pedagogues have turned-out to be inaccurate. Once upon a time we all believed the world was flat. We believed that the sun circled the earth. We all believed! Let your children think their own thoughts, imaginings, creations – however irrational they may seem. We need to encourage freedom of thought, expression and individuality, in presentation and internally.

Getting an 'education'. What criteria do we use to decide what an education is? What gets us a 'good job'? Qualifications? Servility and good manners? General knowledge? Remembering useless trivia? Being able to 'get what you want'? It's different for every one of us. Our lives do not have to be run by a pre-ordained agenda. School is supposed to prepare you for the big wide world. Where do I mix with 35 people of my age for 6 hours every day, having very little choice in not only what I do, but when I start and stop. Why wait so long to live in the big wide world? Deferring, putting one's life on hold for so many years is an awful waste.

'Schools have not necessarily much to do with education...they are mainly institutions of control where certain basic habits must be inculcated in the young. Education is quite different and has little place in school'. – Winston Churchill 1944

We should have no expectations of what or who our children want to be. Don't expect your children to be beaver away acquiring this thirst for knowledge 24 hours a day (sometimes they're taking little sips or great big gulps) but, if they're allowed to, mostly they're just thinking their own valuable thoughts – sorting the world out in a way which they understand, and the best way for our children to learn about the world is to live it, to experience how it works first hand. If we interfere with their learning process by trying to cajole or pressurise them to know, tell them what to do, to be – well the less true learning takes place.

I don't need to see written 'work'. I don't need to see something tangible to know my children are 'learning'. If my children want to chat over issues that are important to them, thrash out ideas, sing me the song from *West Side Story*, show me their design for power-armour, invite me to watch them play *Star Trek: Elite Force* (computer game), show me their new conversion of a *Warhammer* figure, tell me about being part of the lighting crew at Plymouth's Theatre Royal, show me their dance which they performed at the London Palladium, tell me about the creature they've just made out of liquorice string – it is an honour.

Yes, it is an honour.

I'm glad they want to share their lives with me as I want to share my life with them. To be perfectly honest, it's none of my business what my children learn. They don't test me on what I do and don't know, they don't make me learn things. I try to treat my children with the same respect that they afford me. Children who are given the support in their lives to follow their own dreams, desires, loves and joys will learn all they need to know during the process of living. Each person is unique. So each person's need for knowledge is unique.

Parents routinely decide for children whether or not the children are being anti-social, wasteful, lazy, dangerous, expensive, un-focussed etc... Is there something inherently unreasonable about children? Do we suddenly at 18 know all the answers? I think not.

"Leave the children alone. Leave the children's letters, paintings, stories, jottings, poems, sketches, cardboard things with glue, games, plans, discussions, their thinking, feeling, creativity, laughing, playing, growing, their doing-nothing-muchness, all this and so much more which parents construe as 'work' and keep in folders to prove 'education', leave this, a person's private property, alone. It is dangerous when everything a child is becomes a commodity, a form of

merchandise which they exchange for love. It damages a person's dignity to be put in a folder." – Sammy Vidal-hall (my sister) Education Otherwise newsletter No 123. Autonomous Education Support and Advice.

'Work' of any sort does not have to be presented to the Local Education Authorities. Our children do not have to be tested or questioned or graded or inspected. There is no legal requirement regarding how much writing, reading, doing sports, learning languages, eating, sleeping, watching TV a human being - big or small - shall do in an average day. Parents respecting our children's autonomy do not ignore them, leave them 'lonely', uncared for, unsafe or unloved – not that, never that. We need to be engaged. Living with our children, being part of their lives, being truly involved we pick up the signs when they need support. Helping them find the information they are seeking. Picking up the cues. Offering our advice when asked for. Let's be on the children's side.

I was told once that my life seemed a touch unreal – no stresses or tensions involved, no clash of interests, no losing my temper. Alan and I choose this way of life because it suits us and we think it is the right way to be with our children. We think it is a free way, a good way and positive way. And yes, I am only human and some days I am a shitty mother and I apologise to them. I do this in my world, quietly getting on with the everyday demands, the everyday challenges that life presents to us.

And so I come to the end of my disjointed and lengthy diatribe!

Let's not comply with society's antiquated and invalid expectations and repression of our children's rights and spirit. Let's become political! For a while the issues of the Education Otherwise Newsletter have become decidedly humdrum and slightly prosaic in its presentation of EO. It rarely shows any of the heart that is compulsory if any EO endeavour is to work. It continues to inform and be useful for up-to-date council members' addresses and the regional activities, but the magic of story-telling and random philosophising about the underpinnings of the passionate and life-fullness of our children's home-ed existence are much missed!

Be brave! Put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard.
Viva la revolution!

Big hug to you all.
Devon

© 2001 - **Belinda Harris-Reid**,

Re-inventing Rituals II

There is plenty to celebrate at this time of year, not least the harvest of wild fruit, passing of summer/onset of winter, and traditional Hallowe'en themes (ghosts) with feasts and Autumn fires. All through September we will have been picking, eating and preserving blackberries, wild raspberries, apples and plums, watching the combine harvesters at work, learning about crops, comparing bales (to see them wrapped by machine is amazing) and stooks (so much better for the environment). This year the children have had their own small plot and grown salads, tomatoes, onions, beans and potatoes. Other things to do as part of an Autumn celebration could be:

- join a local Wildlife Trust on a Fungi Foray (or do your own with a good guidebook, though don't touch or eat unless with an expert!)
- go out into parks/lanes/woods and gather fallen tree seeds such as acorns, beech, hazels and conkers. Plant them shallowly in peat-free compost in pots and leave moist, not too wet, in a shed, to grow the next generation of trees. Even if your garden is too small for trees, they make excellent gifts or for a local fete, Millennium Green etc. We had horsechestnuts in 12" pots for 8 years - indoors - it is wonderful to watch them growing.
- Make a hibernation home for hedgehogs (see library or wildlife trust)
- Have your own Harvest Festival (non-religious?) with a feast from seasonal, local or homegrown produce in candlelight.
- Make your own jam.
- What about writing and telling your own ghost stories around a fire or candles, indoors or out.
- Or a walk in the dark, appreciating (and identifying?) the stars.
- Make your own galaxy on a bedroom ceiling (you can buy glow in the dark sticker stars, or with silver paper); invent your own names/star chart.
- A day in the past without electricity (no computer, or television), only candles - how will you cook/what will you eat/do all evening/how hard is it? or is it better?

Make your own Autumn display with printed/preserved leaves, collected objects (pine cones, conkers etc.) and paper fungi.

Kirsten Freiesleben, Little Witheridge, West Worlington, Credition, Devon, EX17 4UA

Note: I understand that this article should have had a further page containing sketches. It seems this has been lost in the post, and I have been unable to contact Kirsten for a replacement in the time available. Sorry, Kirsten - may we have some sketches for next time? And black-white drawings from members (adults or children) are also welcome as cover designs or fillers for small space - Anne.

EDUCATING ARCHIE

SEPT 1991

Today - gambling, sums and the art of reason, all to a tune by Nirvana



2001: A Peak Camp Odyssey

Over the years Peak Camp has gained a certain reputation. This reputation was best expressed last year by the young man who said 'It makes Bog-Snorkelling look like a walk in the park'. Admittedly there have been times when this epithet has been richly deserved. There are those of us who still remember the year of '97 which saw gale force winds and torrential rain forcing the camp to be abandoned by Thursday and ended any pretence that I was a vegetarian. I clearly remember collapsing, sobbing pitifully on the most understanding human being available and begging for either coffee, fags or a bacon butty, knowing full well that, for medical reasons, only the latter would not render me effectively unconscious afterwards.

But this year – 2001 – this was different. This year was exceptional. The normal filthy dishrags of clouds, which had wrung out their contents on us Friday evening, parted. The sun shone, the wind dropped and the temperature rose high enough for us to remove our Damart Long-Johns and don our summer finery to emerge, blinking in the unaccustomed brightness, like newly hatched butterflies (OK, I know butterflies don't blink).

To be honest, because of Foot and Mouth Disease, we didn't know if the camp was going to happen at all this year until we actually got there. Thankfully (and I'm sure we all hope this continues), the area had not been affected as far as walking and camping were concerned, and only a few precautionary restrictions were in place. However, we were aware that the uncertainty would probably have made it quite difficult for some people to arrange time off work and so on, so we did not expect a particularly big turnout. How wrong we were. Following a fairly slow trickle of arrivals at first, families just kept coming and coming. Not only the regular die-hards, but so many other families new to EO and EO camps came and stayed not just for a couple of days, but for the whole week. I don't think I've ever seen so many people at Peak Camp. There were so many small children hanging from it, that the climbable Hawthorn in the hedge only needed a little tinsel to look like a highly animated Christmas tree.

It was even warm enough this year for a trip to Panniers Pool at Three Shires Head to be organised. The water was a little too chilly to swim in, but the people who made it there came back looking somewhat fresher than the hot, wilting specimens left at the camp.

A touch of the exotic was also featured, not just because the sun and the delicious dishes given to the shared suppers, but also by Mrs Ashad from West Yorkshire (many thanks to you for this) who brought henna dye for tattoos, and Saris for us to try on. Their jewel-like colours: ruby, emerald, ivory and gold, were set off beautifully by darkening skins and the fiery glow of the setting sun.

There was much to celebrate this year. Excellent degree results (don't blush now) from Beverley Young and Claire Brown; birthdays, and people we have known since they were young children, blossoming into young adults (Emily, aged 5, 'Mummy, K****'s got a boyfriend.' 'Yes love, and when you're older, if you come home with a boy like that, I'll be very happy.' Pause, 'YEUCH!').

Next year we need a longer piece of rope for Skipping Games, another and very popular introduction to this year's camp. It was a real pleasure to watch youngsters from 4 to 4?* playing these games which sadly seem almost forgotten. There was also kite flying when the wind got up and the usual thunderous rounds of British Bulldog, Shropshire v. All Comers test matches and water battles that could have drowned grown men. How many children still have their fingers tied together from attempting Ian's String Games? One of the great things about Peak Camp is that adults have the opportunity to play for themselves as well as the children, something it's very easy to forget to do under everyday pressures.

Because of a painful joint problem, I can't run, skip or ride an ordinary bike any more (any takers for Parsley Hay to Ashbourne on the Tissington Trail next year?), but by Wednesday, I was so full of joy (OK and anything else I could lay my hands on – medicinal only of course ☺), that I couldn't sleep and got up in the early hours of Thursday morning to see the Morning Star rising over the misty hills in front of the site. Who needs a planetarium?!

Well, I've sobered up now (there are those who'll be glad to hear that) and although I can feel the pain in my joints again, I carry an afterglow of wonderful memories. These can still keep me awake at night and have me giggling for no apparent reason (windbag assisted cycling ☺ is one). They look set to keep me warm all winter. I hope some of that goes for everyone else who came and that you will return next year. Perhaps others who haven't been before will decide to risk it. We can't guarantee the weather, but I can say that laughter and relaxation are encouraged – if not compulsory.

Sian Podmore, S. Yorks.

GCSEs THROUGH THE NATIONAL EXTENSION COLLEGE

I thought that people might be interested to hear of our experiences of doing GCSEs through the National Extension College. We originally heard of the NEC through the EO newsletter, and have found this a very straightforward way of sitting exams for those who are outside the mainstream system.

We had originally planned that the children would take International GCSEs, which are offered by the Cambridge board, and obtained syllabuses for several subjects so that we had something on which to base our studies. However, we soon realised that to prepare for these without any outside assistance would be a tall order, and felt we would all benefit from some sort of tutorial support. With NEC courses, each student is allocated to a personal tutor who will mark all the assignments, validate coursework, and generally help in any other way, for example by marking past exam papers. Another advantage is that the NEC course materials are usually geared to the syllabus offered by a particular exam board, so all you need to do is contact the exam board and ask for a list of centres in your area where you can take the exam (we received quite a long list of centres near us, many of which were very happy to accommodate an external candidate). The NEC provides all the learning materials and tutorial support, the candidate is responsible for finding a centre which will take an external candidate.

The cost of NEC courses is something like £225 per GCSE subject, or £200 for each additional subject on the same enrolment form, and there is a 10% discount if you have studied with them before. This sounds like quite a lot, but you can pay by instalments, and when we thought about what the cost might be of getting a private tutor to mark work, answer queries and, not least, validate coursework (which needs to be done by someone who knows the candidate's work), we realised that it is pretty good value. You can enrol by post, fax, phone or e-mail at any time of year, and there is no lower or upper age limit. You will then receive a huge file of material which covers your syllabus comprehensively, plus details of your tutor. You post assignments to your tutor, who marks them and gives plenty of feedback. GCSE courses are structured to include 15 marked assignments, which between them will cover the entire syllabus. Most tutors are happy to be phoned or e-mailed, which makes it easy to sort out any problems which crop up. Another huge advantage of the NEC is that when it comes to exam preparation, the tutors 'know the system', which we found invaluable, as we had found it almost impossible to interpret the specific requirements of exam boards for what is needed to get a particular grade.

When our oldest daughter, Rachel, reached 14, we thought it was time she got on with GCSE preparation, and decided to start with English and English Literature. We thought these would be the 'easiest' subjects to start with, but in fact, we found them quite demanding and very time-consuming, even though the set books were common to both courses. Early on in the courses

we were told by Rachel's tutor that to get a good grade it was important to 'get under the skin' of the texts studied, and so she should therefore ignore suggestions as to how much to write for each assignment, and simply write as much as she could for each question. This left it very open-ended, and she spent a vast amount of time on some of the assignments (64 typed pages of A4 on the character of Heathcliff from *Wuthering Heights*, for example, which took days to complete). We had originally intended to spend just the mornings on the English courses and to carry on with other subjects in the afternoons, but this plan soon went by the board as the English became all-consuming - there simply wasn't time for anything else if we were to do the English in as much depth as we could. Admittedly she had only started the course in late September, to be taking the exams in the following June, which meant that both courses, plus all the coursework, had to be done in about eight or nine months, but we had still expected to have some time to do other things.

Another problem was that all the coursework had to be finished and submitted to her tutor for validation and forwarding to the exam board by the end of February - only five months after starting the courses. Since the coursework could only be started after a certain amount of the courses had been completed, it was rather a rush to finish the coursework to the standard we hoped for in the time available. It always seemed that something could be phrased that little bit better, and masses of drafting and redrafting went on as we looked at the poetry, drama and prose in ever greater detail. There were five pieces of coursework to produce for the English course, and three for the Literature, though two of the pieces could be used for both - still leaving seven substantial pieces of writing to complete. Inevitably the temptation was to make a huge effort on the coursework, as this was something which was more under our control than the exam, (even though it only counted for 20% of the final grade for English, and 30% for Literature), but this left only March, April and May to do all the exam preparation assignments, revision and practice on past papers.

Another requirement for the English course was oral work. Normally in schools the 'speaking and listening' aspect of the syllabus is continually assessed and is not included in the exam, but for an external candidate an oral exam is arranged, which though it only takes 10-15 minutes, counts for a whole 20% of the final grade. Candidates are required to prepare 5-minute talks on any two subjects which would give sufficient scope for a discussion with the examiner; equal weight is given by the examiner to both the talk and the conversation following it. Again, we spent a lot of time on the talks, though it was quite difficult to know how best to prepare and practise for the oral exam. Taping the talks and listening to them helped a little, and Rachel gradually became a bit more confident. We felt a bit under pressure, because with 20% of the marks resting on such a short exam, it was important to get it right on the day, which I'm sure made her more tense. However, the oral exam was arranged at a local private school for mid-May, and the examiner

made a big effort to make her feel at ease. She came out of it feeling that it had gone quite well, and that she needn't really have worried about it.

The Literature course was a bit more straightforward, though there was always the feeling that whatever you did, you could always have done more; plus the subjective element of studying the texts, with their different interpretations, and the feeling that a lot of experience of life is needed to be able to appreciate some aspects of them. It did strike me that 14-15 is a very young age to be studying some of the set texts, and with hindsight, I don't think I'd enrol someone so young on this course in future.

Anyway - we managed to finish both courses by the beginning of May, leaving a month for revision and practising past papers. The entries for the exams had to be made early in the year, by the end of January if I remember rightly. There was a fee of £17 per subject, plus a small administration fee (something like £3) for an external candidate. We were very lucky to find a centre near us (a local school) with an extremely friendly and efficient exams officer, who really went out of her way to make things easy for external candidates (they had had NEC students before), and this took all the stress out of the process of arranging the exams. When the time came to take the exams, Rachel had done at least a couple of practice papers for both subjects, under exam conditions, so she knew what it felt like to write continuously for 2 hours. This was very important, because all the papers (three in all) consisted of three questions, to be answered in 40 minutes each, which strikes me as not long to structure an essay and write it reasonably fluently!

As soon as the exams were over we more or less forgot about work for quite a while, as we were moving house and enjoying settling into our new environment. All the children had several weeks off to help with the chores. However, as the date for receiving Rachel's results loomed, I began to feel more and more nervous. This, after all, was our first real test. We had done no SATs, no end of year exams, and even with NEC support had little idea of the yardsticks which would be used to judge candidates' achievement. Loads of our friends and acquaintances, many of whom do not really approve of home education, knew she had taken the exams! And of course, it felt like just as much of a test of us than of her. Had we, who were solely responsible for her education, done the best for her?

We drove to the exam centre to collect the results on the morning of August 23rd with butterflies in our stomachs. We arrived to find the hall where she had taken the exams open, filled with a long line of tables covered in white envelopes. We were told to wait in the foyer until 10.00, when people could start collecting their envelopes. This was a really tense time. Then the exams officer appeared and greeted us in her usual cheerful way, giving nothing away (did she know something we didn't, and was she being cheerful to try to soften the blow?) Her next words were 'I'll go and get yours for you'. I asked her whether she already knew what grades Rachel had got. 'Yes I do' was the

totally non-committal reply. We then had an incredibly nervous two or three minutes while she disappeared to get Rachel's envelope.

She finally reappeared, holding the envelope. On one side of it was Rachel's name, and on the other, in bright colours, was written URGENT, TOP CANDIDATE, OPEN AT ONCE. We were in such a state by then we hardly took in what it said. Rachel was dithering around telling me to open the envelope, I was insisting that she opened it herself. By this time, both the exams officer and the deputy head of the school had sat down beside us. Finally she opened it, and found the results sheet indicating that she had got an A and an A*. There was also a letter from the exam board to say that in the English exam, she had scored one of the top five marks out of 1290 candidates who had taken the English Mature syllabus for external candidates.

One of the nicest things about the whole experience was the genuine warmth shown to both Rachel and me by the staff at this school. Rachel was congratulated really warmly by all the staff of the school who had gathered around us, they were completed unreserved, even though they all knew that she was not a pupil at their school, and that she had been home-educated. I was introduced to the school staff by the exams officer, one of the nicest moments I can remember.

Looking back, the English courses were very hard work. At times we doubted the value of the work she was doing, particularly when we felt that the quality of writing and texts that she was supposed to be studying or comparing was not very high. On the other hand, some of the persuasive and analytical writing required was quite demanding, and definitely tested the candidate's ability to think quickly and clearly as well as to write well. At the end of the day we felt that having a GCSE in English is a must for most jobs, and that we must persevere and give it our best shot. Rachel is now doing Maths, Physics and Geography, and is due to take the exams next summer. We hope that in these courses we will find that there is one right answer and much less scope for 'interpretation', and so far she is finding that this is the case.

The whole thing has given me a lot of respect for pupils in schools who take 9 or 10 subjects in a year, without necessarily having any special individual attention. They must have a huge workload. We got stressed enough with just doing two courses! I would certainly recommend taking two years over the English rather than doing it in a few months as we did.

I would be very happy to be contacted if anyone would like to talk about GCSEs or NEC courses in general.

Heather McCombie, The Warren, 15 Haygrove Close, Warminster, BA12 8SL
Tel/fax 01985 217600 E-mail: Heather.McCombie@btinternet.com

Note: More about GCSEs on letters pages – Anne.

From The Archives

Compiled by Sarah Guthrie

EARLY RUMBLINGS IN THE REGIONS

Suffolk: Anyone who organises a gathering of EO members has reason for apprehension. Any positive arrangements, nature trails, seminars, public readings from EO newsletters, are sure to offend those for whom informality is next to godliness, whereas a total absence of 'arrangements' can leave those new to the EO scene wondering what they came for ... Getting on for 20 families came, circulated ... People came wanting to talk and found plenty to talk about. Friendships were renewed and new friends made - but perhaps there still exists the need for residential gatherings that can take these relationships further.
(Bruce Cox September 1981)

North Devon: We decided one day to contact other EO members in N Devon about forming a local group. The motive was to recruit future liberated playmates for our one year old daughter ... the other EO members totalled a massive four. We phoned each of them and all decided to meet to decide whether to meet again! (At the next - publicised - meeting) 24 or so people came plus lots of kids. Chris talked about EO and oe in general and then Robina (Pye) got down to the nub of what it's about ... discussion followed, then tea, then splinter groups; then trying to repossess all the children's toys before departure (has someone still got our Lego taxi?) (Chris Stokes Sept 79) (NB from SG: daughter Jesse will be now 23, did she ever get the taxi back??)

Surrey: You may be interested to know we have now established what may be called a 'group'. It happened unexpectedly and gradually - my advice to others is 'don't try too hard'. From our own and other members' experience it seems that if a few like-minded people happen to meet.... a group will evolve without undesirable or unnecessary forcing. (Lorna Trevelyan-Biccichi, June 1979)

Notts: I have had great difficulty with the EO group here ... I attended 2 crafts markets in Nottingham and set up my EO stall with a legal information board, leaflets and books on display but the occasions were only of limited success, I feel we need more publicity. I put my little EO cards everywhere but without results. However I am also organising a jumble stall for EO as money is a big problem as you will know! (*Helen Fletcher March 1979*)

N Herts: We began by sharing experiences about the attitude of LEAs, which ranged from helpful encouragement to naked threats of making life hell ... we shared thoughts on the deep-rooted assumption that schools have a monopoly as places where children learn, find friends, develop social awareness, prepare for real life and 'have their edges knocked off'. Some were nervous about swimming against this mighty tide ... we hope our linking function will gradually grow. (*Elizabeth and Trevor Sturges Dec 1978*)

Somerset: Egg hunt? Ramble? Picnic? Anything you like ... bring the babies, the grandparents and the wellies ... (*Jacqui and Martin(5) Best, April 1985*)

Leeds: A network of people willing to exchange teaching skills is being set up. Contacts are being made with parents dissatisfied with schooling alternative ways of education within the community are suggested. We hope that by the time Ben reaches school age a lively, innovative method of education will be established in our area ... (*Peter Williams, June 1980*)

N London EO: In recent months there have been a number of shock/horror reports in local newspapers regarding the state of education in Haringey, however, EO members can rest assured that whatever the situation inside schools the prospects for out of school education remain excellent. (*Genevieve Bridgeman October 84*)

LOCAL NEWS

A Successful year in E.O.

August 2000 saw me talking to as many people in the Contact List who would answer their phone to me. The reason being that I hoped to get local people to meet on a regular basis. In September last year we had a very successful first meeting, followed by several more meetings, at the Double Locks, an alternative Pub on the outskirts of Exeter which has a large garden; the only drawback to this venue is that it is situated next to the canal and small children need to be supervised. By Christmas we were having meetings in Crediton and had found a suitable place to hold meetings in Exeter.

I always said that the meetings were not mine but belonged to everyone who came to them, a lot of people put in a lot of hard work to get things started; they are still working hard to make our group a success. The children coming to the meetings are of different ages and may have very different lifestyles, amazingly they all get on and the most unusual friendships form. Personal differences aside, we are all home educating our children and we are all there to support each other. There are now fortnightly meetings in Exeter and Crediton as well as craft workshops which have been running through the summer and hopefully workshops to include Drama and other interests starting in September 2001.

So, to anyone who thinks there is nothing happening in their area, pick up the phone, there may be other home educators around who need the company as much as you do. Starting meetings is not an easy thing to do but I am so glad I made the effort and that other people were willing to put in both the time and the energy to make things work. First of all I put an advert in the newsletter and received one reply; at least there was another person, that was such a relief. Kate, Elsie, Amie and I sat together at the first meeting wondering if anyone else would show up. Thankfully people came in droves and I never got a chance to eat my lunch! I would say to anyone who is thinking of doing the same thing: have a go and - to quote a famous spider-loving man - if at first you don't succeed, try, try and try again!

When I took over as local contact it was on a temporary basis as I was going through a long and painful divorce and knew that I still had the financial side of things to sort out. Now that everything has been sorted I must try to put my house in order before selling it and buying my dream house - an impossible dream maybe but my dream all the same. So I am taking a chance to step down as local contact; fortunately there are other people in E.O. willing to take over. I will still be around answering the many and varied phone calls coming through the E.O. help-line and from

anyone else who would like to phone for a chat or to discuss a problem, be it to do with a troublesome ex-husband or a bothersome LEA - I have had experience of both! Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has worked hard to make our meetings a continuing success. Apart from setting up the first meeting and being around, I have done very little and other people have worked very hard. I am sure they will continue to do so.

Jo Borthen Tel: 01392 679499 email: jo4eo@aol.com

P.S. Does anyone want to have a reunion meeting at the Double Locks this year? It could be a Christmas get-together or just a chance for everyone to meet up in a beautiful place. Alternatively, Amie and I are always happy to meet people at the Double Locks, so if either of these ideas sounds good to you, contact me by phone or email.

Weekly EO Meetings and Outings

I just wanted to share with the many EO members our enjoyment of meeting together with our local EO group.

Martin and I decided to educate our son, Joseph, at home when he was about 3 years old and so we were given EO's address and shortly after we became members. Joseph had a few friends in the neighbourhood to play with as he was growing up but when he was about 6 we moved house and area. I found that he was wanting to play with other children more and more but the new neighbourhood lacked many children. So I decided to get in contact with our local group here in Peterborough to see if there were like-minded people willing to spend some time together and I haven't looked back.

Our local contact gave me a schedule of meeting times and we turned up in April to check it out. There were children everywhere, playing, running around, making things etc. It was great and just what we were looking for. Now Joseph not only had other children to play with but he also had more in common with them because he was home-educated. The mums were all very friendly and welcoming and we felt relaxed in their company.

Since April we have made lots of new friends and have done many interesting activities like visiting country houses and dressing up in traditional costumes, moth collecting late at night, orienteering through forests, fossil collecting near cliffs, visiting a war museum, scavenger hunting through fields ... the list is endless. But all these activities have been so enjoyable because they were shared with children and adults who enjoy learning and playing.

We also have an allotment now for EO families and we have grown lots of vegetables with a lot of hard work but it has been great fun and the children seem to enjoy carrying the equipment and hiding in the long grass that we have kept to encourage wildlife etc. Last week we all made an excellent scarecrow to frighten off the birds. It turned out to be very unconventional. It was decided that we would create a lady scarecrow and she looked as if she had just come out of an old-fashioned music hall! She was quite glamorous in the end and the children loved dressing her up and painting her face on and decorating her with jewellery. We carried her down to the allotment and she now stands there very elegantly guarding our plot of land from winged intruders!

Anyway Joseph and I are so pleased to have met up with such a nice group of people and we wanted to let other EO families know the benefits of making the effort to do things together as a group. Thanks should go to Education Otherwise who put us in touch with other like-minded families in our area and we have benefited from their support, association and fun too.

Penny Wood, 197 Broadway, Peterborough, PE1 4DS

Cambridge Learning Centre

A learning centre is being set up in Cambridge with the help of a small grant from Human Scale Education. The aim of the centre in the short-term is to provide information to parents on alternatives in education in Cambridgeshire. It is hoped that this will gradually generate enough interest in home-education in particular that the Learning Centre can fulfil its longer term ambition of providing a space for workshops and shared learning resources for those who choose the home-education route.

It would be enormously helpful if members of EO could recommend (or donate) any sources of information about alternatives in education to the Learning Centre which can form the basis of a library for parents seeking to find out more about the options available. It would also be helpful to receive contact details of anyone who might wish to be kept informed about the Learning Centre as it develops. Please contact Charlotte Rennie on 01223-561101 or Penny (01223-526441).

If you produce a local newsletter and would like to send specific articles for wider circulation or the whole newsletter for articles to be selected please send to
Sue White (address on inside front cover)

LETTERS PAGES

New Local Contact Dumfries and Galloway

I thought I'd better introduce myself as I have recently become the new local contact for this area.

I am married with four sons - Paul (15), Kevin (12), Elliot (10) and Mark (7). I have been home-schooling for two years. I am so glad that I made the decision and haven't looked back. I had thought about it for a number of years but felt quite inadequate for the job. However, being a Christian, I knew that it was the way forward for us.

I discovered ACE curriculum (Accelerated Christian Education) and was happy with the material.

I feel that it is a privilege and a joy to home-educate by whatever means or system used. Although it is not without its trials and tribulations, the main part is to raise happy and confident children who will be able to contribute to society in a positive and helpful way as they grow into adulthood.

Knowing that there are others out there doing the same thing brings comfort and hope. My vision and prayer is that others will catch the vision and decide to home-educate. I feel that we are a growing body with a voice to be heard, particularly for our children's sake.

*Marie Steenson, Castledykes Cottage,
Kingholm Road, Dumfries DG1 4SR*

Contact Wanted

We have recently moved to Gloucester and would like to make contact with other families in the area. We have an 8 year old son.

*Dawn and Mike, 01452 540019
email dawnandmike@cablenet.co.uk*

Move to France

We are planning to move to France shortly to the Toulouse area. Olly, our 10 year old son, has been happily home-educated for two years now and we plan for this to continue. Has anyone had experience of home education in France? We would love to hear from people, whatever nationality, who are home-schooling at present in France and if they happen to have a child the same age as Olly and are in the south, even better! Thank you.

*Harriet Angell, Peony Cottage, Affpuddle,
Dorchester, Dorset DT2 7HH, email
harriet.angell@virgin.net*

Resources

We went to the Natural History Museum in London last week and the tunnel from the Tube was blocked due to flooding so we had to walk to the museum along the road. We are so glad we did because we found a shop that we want to tell you all about.

It is called Book Ends and is at 1-5 Exhibition Road but is moving to 17 Exhibition Road at the end of October - either way it's on the way to the V&A, Science and Natural History museums by foot overground. They had an overwhelming number of books on Origami, umpteen books on making paper airplane models, Dr Seuss books which we couldn't even order from the Internet, loads of Klutz books, numerous Dover educational colouring books, model-making books, solar-powered models and magnets so much cheaper than the Science Museum. In short, it was an Aladdin's Cave of just about

every educational book you could think of with a strong bias on craft subjects and a kid-centred craft department downstairs. Give them a visit next time you're in the city.

Helen Donaldson, Domus, Crossheads, Colwich, Staffs.

HESFES 2001

Thank you for printing my letter about HESFES 2001 and also to the readers who have contacted me since to share their experiences about cliques at home-schooling events. I am, however, somewhat bemused that you edited out a short paragraph which described what happened when I got home. I repeat the gist:

"After the festival there was an email asking for feedback from people who had been there so I thought I'd be helpful and send ours, knowing it would not be typical. To add insult to injury, what happened next was a series of emails from the organiser, using language which I found abusive and do not wish to repeat. It seemed clear to me that he didn't want feedback that in any way disagreed with him!"

It's a shame when organisers of events refuse to take criticism on board and accept help when it is so obviously needed. The HESFES organiser is clearly trying to do too much on his own and therefore what could become a really enjoyable event for everyone falls short. Lots of us are keen to help put on events for home-schoolers but in this case our help is obviously not wanted.

Julie Frew, Headington, Oxford.

HESFES 2001

It was very interesting to read the letter from Julie Frew in the August issue. We also visited an EO camp a couple of years ago and also vowed never to return. We found it to be like gate-crashing on someone else's party. The people who had been lots of times before had obviously carved out a niche for themselves that formed a very effective barrier. I would echo Julie's advice of not going unless already part of a group. I always have in the back of my mind the fear that some people are put off home education by the contact they have with other home educators and that's a real shame.

David Hawkrige, 23 Churchfield Lane, Rothwell, Leeds LS26 0NA

Note:

HESFES is not organised by EO, although many EO members attend.

With regard to the issue raised by Julie's original letter and echoed in David's letter above, many new members of EO do feel that there is an element of "cliquiness" at events, including some of those organised by EO. If anyone has any comments, or suggestions as to how we could help new members to feel more welcome, I would be interested to publish your views in the NL. Contact me direct, by letter, 'phone or email. I will need to know your name and address, but this can be withheld from publication if you wish (totally anonymous comments cannot be considered).

This is an issue which affects meetings at local as well as national level, and there may be examples of good practice in "Making EO Welcoming" around the country, on which others could build - let's hear them!

Anne Rix (NL Co-ord)

LETTERS – Continued

GCSE Success Story

Hi. My name's Ellie and I have just finished taking my GCSEs at home. I just wanted to write and say that I managed to pass all my eleven GCSEs with three As, seven Bs and one C.

I was so worried about them so I wanted to show other Home Ed. kids that it's definitely possible to take the exams all by yourself. Also I wanted to thank Education Otherwise for making me and my mum aware of the possibility of education at home because it has been such a great experience.

If anyone would like some info on what to do if you want to take GCSEs at home, feel free to write to me.

A note from Ellie's Mum:

If anyone wants to speak to me about our experience, I'd also be very happy to talk to them. It has been the most extraordinary and rewarding experience supporting Ellie in her GCSE studies. We are naturally very proud of her and delighted that it's possible to achieve what she has with virtually no tuition. Doesn't say much for the education system, does it? It has been inspiring to have had access to Education Otherwise.

Liz and Ellie Bond, 17 Barkers Road, Nether Edge, Sheffield, S7 1SD. 0114 258 7762

Another GCSE Story

My son, aged 15, has just taken English, Maths and General Studies GCSEs from home. We used a series of excellent and very reasonably-priced 'revision' guides from Co-ordination Group Publications, Kirby-in-Furness, Cumbria LA17 7WZ Tel. 0870 750 1242/1262, email orders at cgpbooks.co.uk, website www.cgpbooks.co.uk.

Having expected the search for an exam centre to be really difficult, I discovered that AQA (combination of AEB, SEG and NEAB boards) have an exam centre based in London every year (in fact, a series of hired hotel rooms!). They have a helpful Private Candidates section and several syllabuses especially designed for lone candidates, some without course work. Contact: AQA on 01483 477887 or 0161 953 1170. Fees are reasonable.

Now we are eagerly awaiting the results on 24th August like all the others. My son will start a GNVQ Foundation in Film and Video at a local college in September as long as he gets two of his three subjects. The Learning Skills Council have agreed to pay his college fees a year early, although the LEA politely declined!

Hilary Rimington, 179 Ivydale Road, London SE15 3DX

Advance Notice : Doula Course in London, January 2002

Calling all women who have given birth naturally. Dr Michel Odent will be giving a Doula Course in London on 25-27 January, 2002.

"In the time surrounding birth, women need to feel secure," explains Dr Odent. "They need the sort of protection that is provided by the presence of a mother. But for many reasons special to our time, many women cannot rely on their own mother, and the father of the baby cannot also be a mother figure". A doula, by Dr Odent's definition, has herself had positive experience of giving birth and of post-birth baby nurture and is at ease with the potential of natural childbirth.

Do you feel drawn to consider being available to help other women when they give birth?

For details, contact Ruth on 020 8675 4388, sae to 11 Veronica Road, London SW17 8QL email paramanadoulas@hotmail.com

ADVERTISEMENTS

Willow House Education

At Willow House we offer children (5 to 11) an alternative to school. Here they have the opportunity to learn in a small flexible environment. They work in small groups (max. 8) and receive a good deal of one-to-one tuition. Their individual needs and personalities will be respected. Contact: Rozie 020 8643 7277

rvm@zoom.co.uk

Willow House, 19 Downs side, Sutton, SM2 7EH

Little Arthur Independent School

Home-educator packs in KS 3 Maths, English and Science (NC based). International GCSE packs in Maths, English, Accounting, History, Natural Economy (Ecology), Core Physics and core Biology. From £60

Send SAE for details:

Little Arthur Independent School, St Martin's, Isles of Scilly, Cornwall TR25 0QL

Lower Shaw Farm

Weekend courses and activity holidays for adults and children. Friendly atmosphere, wholesome food, organic gardens, and animals. Crafts, singing, music, circus skills, wildlife, children's events, seasonal celebrations and more.

Write or phone:

Lower Shaw Farm, Shaw, Nr Swindon, Wilts SN5 5PJ Tel/fax 01793 771080

enquiries@lsfarm.globalnet.co.uk

Human Scale Education

One day introductory workshops in setting up a small school or learning centre.

3rd Nov 2001 – London

23rd Feb 2002 – Bristol

23rd March 2002 – Sheffield

10am – 5.30pm

Cost £50 (£40 HSE members)

HSE, 96 Carlingcott, Bath BA2 8AW

01275 332516 hse@clara.net

www.hse.org.uk

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

Teaching Support

I am a private tutor with no formal qualifications but several years teaching experience. I offer Citizenship at KS 3 and 4, Maths up to foundation level GCSE and English with focus on vocabulary, spelling punctuation, comprehension and grammar. No Shakespeare. Minimum age 10.

North West London, other areas considered.

Mornings and afternoons.

£10 upwards per lesson.

Phone Michal 0208 200 9825

Help with Home-Ed!

Cambridge.

One-to-one supported learning.

No Charge.

Please call Charlotte Rennie 01223 561101

Detached farmhouse for sale in Lincolnshire

Ideal for home educating families.

3/4 bedroom character farmhouse with open fires in 2 living rooms, 2 shower rooms, pine kitchen and open beams. Over 1/3 acre of garden. Beautifully located at end of private road with views of fields and trees. Lincs LEA very amenable to HEers. £79,950. No chain. Freehold.

01507 472758

The Leas Beach Park

Small EO family run caravan site with touring pitches right next to a beautiful sandy beach.

Local shops, restaurants and pubs within easy walking distance. 20% discount to home educators

£5 donation to EO

Tony and Jos Underhill, The Leas Beach Park, Mill lane, Bacton Norwich NR12 0HS
01692 652115

www.theleasbeachpark.co.uk

ADVERTISEMENTS

The Non-Stop Reader

- A fully phonics reading scheme
- guides the parent at every stage
 - leads the child one step at a time
 - is enjoyed by everyone
 - has witty text and illustrations
 - is a complete course in one volume

By mail order: £18.50

Non-Stop Books, 26 Lathbury Rd, Oxford

OX2 7AU

01865 554 953

nonstopbooks@compuserve.com

www.nonstopbooks.co.uk

Wise Owl Educational Shareware

PO Box 334 Abingdon OX14 2YB

01235 529808 wiseowls@aol.com

UK's only children's shareware library, specializing in educational programmes and games. Ages 2-16+. 900+ titles (DOS, Windows 3.1, 95 and 98) 3½ and 5½ media. £3 per disk.

Free catalogue and advice

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

One-to-One

A Practical Guide to Learning at Home,

Age 0-11, by Martin Williams -

The highly-praised guide to learning to read, learning to write, arithmetic, art, cooking, gardening, crafts and so much more ...

322 pages.

£9.95 plus £1 p&p from Nezert Books,

Le Nezert, 22160 Duault, France

and from www.nezertbooks.com

Educational Heretics Press Announcement

If you have sent for a copy of 'Learning Unlimited' using the insert in the August Education Otherwise Newsletter in the period leading up to August 8th and have not received it, it is because some post was stolen from the Post Office. Cheques should be safe but you might check your bank statement just in case.

Please contact Educational Heretics Press at 113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote Hills, Nottingham or telephone 0115 925 7261

The Louise Verran Fund

Invites applications for consideration in November 2001 from home-educated young people for help towards the cost of specific projects.

For further information and application form please send SAE to:

The Secretary, The Louise Verran Fund, Kelda Cottage, The Reddings, Lydbrook, Glocs GL17 9SX

To make a donation to the fund please contact the same address.

Thank you.

To place an advert ... *Advertising in the newsletter is free, but if you are running a business or hoping to make a profit from your advert please send an appropriate donation. Cheques should be made payable to "Education Otherwise". Please remember that EO is run entirely by volunteers and has no income except members subscriptions. Adverts should be limited to 1/8 page or 50 words and send (with any donation) to the advertising editor.*

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

Regional Diary

Events organizers please remember when giving full details of events 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 included automatically in every issue. Please notify any changes or meetings no longer taking place to:

Martine Archer, 43 Cecil St, Harrogate HG1 4NP
01423 858916

BATH

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

Contact: Louise Jensen 01225 840735

BERKSHIRE

Woolinks Leisure Centre Burghfield Mondays 1pm.

Tuesdays – swimming at Windsor Leisure Centre noon onwards. £2.80

Wednesdays – ice-skating at John Nike Leisure Centre, Bracknell 2-4pm £1.50 show EO card at reception.

Contact: Pat Connor 0118 9662123

Heros Club Holyport Maidenhead. Mondays 10-3 Regular sports, dancing, pottery crafts and cooking.

£25 month or £10 family/day

Contact: Dawn 01628 783107

Also for local newsletter

www.zednetdemo.co.uk/2eddin

Newbury group on Fridays for younger children.

Contact: Gillian 01491 671328

BIRMINGHAM

Last Wednesday of the month, Central Library 10.30-1.30

Free monthly newsletter (send SAE)

Contact: Jackie or Alan Harley 0121 243 8242

22, Danzey Grove, Kings Heath, Birmingham B14 6JY

BRISTOL

Tuesdays, trampolining with coach am followed by workshops at Totterdown YMCA

Friday ice-skating am

Contact: Kathy Nott 0117 966 8265

Thursdays meeting at St Pauls Adventure Playground 1-3pm

(all above term time only)

Contact: Carla 9354389

BUCKS

Newsletter for Bucks/Northants

Contact: Dawn 01908 569380

Dawnwaddington@hotmail.com

South Bucks: fortnightly meetings for craft, activities, play, speakers, drama, trips etc.

Contact: Jackie 01753 886924

Dorothy 01494 782864

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Cambridge – regular meetings and outings.

Contact: Penny 01223 526441

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

Contact: Audrey Hill 01480 219881

Peterborough – weekly visits and outings

Contact: Janet 01733 554436

CHESHIRE

Contact Gill Wilson 0161 443 8723 for North Cheshire/Stockport

Meeting 1st Wednesday of the month for crafts games and activities

Contact: Carrie 01270 875 633

Sue 01270 883 978 (for S. Cheshire)

CLEVELAND AND DURHAM

Contact: Pauline Butterworth 01642 899247

CORNWALL

Twice weekly events all round the county.

CHEERS newsletter

Contact: Anna Wheeler, Cambrose Farm, Redruth, TR16 4HT
01209 890378

anna@wheeler19.fsnet.co.uk

CUMBRIA

Informal gatherings for socializing, support and activities.

Kendal – alternate Wednesdays Castle St Youth Centre 12.30-3.30

Penrith – alternate Tuesdays Castledown Community Centre 1.30-3.30

Contact: Sarah Cook 01768 896019

DERBYSHIRE

Chesterfield – new group meets every Wednesday morning.

Contact: Karen 01246 865532

Kaz 01246 205463 Yvonne 01246 555645

DEVON

Contact: Sammy and Nick 01548 830716

South Devon – meetings every Wednesday

Contact: Jessica 01548 561276

Penny 01626 360640

Bridget 01803 862158

Exeter – fortnightly meetings at Belmont Park Community

Hut restarts 5th Sept 2-4pm

Contact Annie 01392 434167

Crediton – fortnightly meetings 12-3.30 at Q.E.

Community Centre starting 12th September

Contact: Emma 01837 82365

Brixham – regular meetings

Contact: Sally 01803 856 862

DEVON EAST/DORSET WEST

Fortnightly meetings at Monkton Wyld Court. Activities and grounds to play in.

Events list

Contact: Habiba 01297 561070

Lisa 01297 445865

DORSET

Regular meetings, keep in touch

Contact: Christine 01258 880355

Rosemary 01747 853 593

Bournemouth/Pool/Christchurch

Contact: Wendy 01202 438254

ESSEX

Colchester – fortnightly meetings, Wednesdays

£2.50 per family

Contact: Sue 01206 520284

35 Lethes Grove, Clochester, Essex CO2 8RG

Monthly in Chelmsford and weekly in Southend.

Essex Epicycle newsletter gives full details.

Contact: Corinne 07802 630693

epicycle@wavy.org

New group East London/Essex area

Contact: Gill 020 8595 2760

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

1st Tuesday of the month at Twynning

Every Thursday swimming and trampolining.

Other outings every month.

Contact: Rob and Fiona 01684 290087

HAMPSHIRE

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

Contact: Julie 023 92 640242

ACTIVEO meet 3 times a week within 25 miles of
Petersfield. All welcome.

Contact: 01428 712394

Christian group – Fareham, Gosport area

Contact: Gayle 023 92553842

gaylie@btinternet.com

Basingstoke/Winchester area, new group starting.

Contact: Michelle or Mark 07966 159017

Michelle virgo@il2.com

HANTS/WEST SUSSEX

Activities and support, Solent area EO at St. Faith's
Church Hall, the Pallant, Havant, alternate Mondays
1-5pm

Contact: Bernadette 01243 264837

Julie 023 92 640242

Val 01243 641221

HEREFORDSHIRE

1st Monday of the month for meetings various venues.

Contact: Kath and Malcolm 01432 830883

homed@appcs.co.uk

HERTFORDSHIRE

Drumming, all ages, Tuesdays.

Numeracy, literacy and parenting health sessions. Literacy
home study programme 3-10 years. Bentley Heath Barnet.

Cuffley Outdoor Centre, group every Friday afternoon

Contact: Priscilla 01438 840674

alsandpjs@aol.com

ISLE OF WIGHT

Isle of Wight Learning Zone workshops, social events
and newsletter.

Contact: Shara 01983 562313

Alison 01983 810862

KENT

Regular meetings and activities

Canterbury

Contact: Irene 01227 709570

Medway towns

Contact: Bridget 01634 234938

Tunbridge Wells

Contact: Kim 01892 863941

French for beginners through songs and games. Yoga for
children. Other classes possible if there is demand.

Contact: Katherine 01892 863958

For events listings send SAE: Amanda Mackenzie, 16

Brambletree Cotts, Borstal, Rochester ME1 3TN

Bromley

Contact: Claire 0181 460 7347

Claire@wadefamily99.freereserve.co.uk

GCSE Science for HEers starting at West Kent College,

Tonbridge for 13+. Also practical electronics. For details

Contact: Kate 01732 458804

Katemorgan2000@yahoo.co.uk

LANCASHIRE

Regular meetings

Contact: Angelica 01254 603 497

Outings and get-togethers

Contact: Brenda or Diana 01254 389673

Fortnightly play sessions at Botany Bay, Chorley,

Junction 8 M61

Contact: Jacqueline 01204 361072

LEICESTERSHIRE

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

Contact: Lise 0116 242 5802

LINCOLNSHIRE

Every Monday 1pm onwards church hall in Cleethorpes

Contact: Caroline 01472 690738

Boston area group. Regular meetings/outings.

Contact: Gill 01205 871399

Ross 01205 870679

LONDON

Tuesdays – Clissold Park. All welcome.

Contact: Charlotte 0207 254 0419

Wednesdays – Honor Oak playground.

Contact: Steve 8680 2933

Thursdays – Lee 11-1

Contact: Clare 020 8480 0740

Thursdays – once monthly during term time,
rollerblading Kidbrooke

Contact: Fiona 020 8852 9756

bettleslake@clara.net

Fridays – fortnightly at Sydenham 11.30-2.30

Contact: Chrystia and Keith 8776 8597

Fridays - alternate fortnight, Forest Hill Nature Reserve
11.30

Contact: Dave 8692 4080

Bromley

Contact: Claire 8460 7347

NW London Otherwise Club

Contact: Leslie 0181 969 0893

Harrow every other Friday plus swimming Thursdays
and other stuff.

Contact: Sue 0771 802 2677

Vivienne TIMSHARKEY@aol.com

W. London HE group - every Tuesday in

Ealing/Richmond for fun and activities.

Contact: Naomi and Stephen 0208 567 7589

Lewisham EO group Thursdays weekly.

Contact: Clare 8333 9455

MANCHESTER

Monthly formal art lessons at Stockport Art Gallery £1.50

Monthly meeting at Stockport library

E-mail young writers group - Ed Wilson

wilson-net@lineone.net

MADCOW newsheet, send SAEs: Gill Wilson,

20 Brook Rd, Heaton chapel, Stockport SK4 5BZ

ComputingSkills 1st and 2nd Saturdays at Moores family
home, limited places

Contact: Karen 01204 573136

Manley Park Group monthly Wednesdays.

Contact: Julie 0161 860 7589

NORFOLK

NEON gives details of all events £1.50 plus 4 large
SAEs

Contact: Steve Williams, North Cottage, Crostwick, Norwich
NR12 7BD

Workshops/social meetings 1st and 3rd Thursday

Contact: Sue 01603 738494

NORFOLK/SUFFOLK BORDER

Diss area

Contact: Judith 01379 890622

Lowestoft area

Contact: Lin 01502 741097

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Tuesdays and Fridays weekly activities.

Contact: Mr and Mrs F. benham, 4 Pilgrim Way,
Wellingborough, NN8 2A (send sae)

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Weekly meeting, for full list

Contact: Wendy 0115 9114312

Louise 01773 780634

East Midlands Christian Home Educators 1st Tuesday of
the month 10-2 Stapleford Baptist church, Stapleford

Contact: Jo 0115 8770281

Julia 0115 8494083

OXFORDSHIRE

Classes in science, psychology and creative writing.

Monthly Parents meeting, monthly Drop-In, also

regular museum trips and outings. Local newsletter.

Contact: Wendy 01865 513912

SCOTLAND

Fife; outings and get-togethers

Contact: Karen 01334 655361

k.spy@btinternet.com

Irvine - weekly drama Fridays for 5-9 and 9+

Contact: Rhona 01294 273644

Monthly activities T Eglinton Country Park, Wednesday
afternoons under 10s

Contact: Shirley 01563 540063

Other visits coming up

Contact: Vivien 01563 537428

Highlands meetings

Contact: Rebecca 01667 404676

SHROPSHIRE

Activities and outings

Contact: Val 01952 502225

SOMERSET

Frome and beyond (FAB) home educators support group.

Contact: Sally 01749 841554

Helena 01225 774522

STAFFORDSHIRE/SOUTH CHESHIRE/NORTH

SALOP

Fortnightly meetings

Contact: Patricia 01785 851150

Stafford every 2nd and 4th Wednesday in village hall for
games craft etc. 12-3.30

Contact: Nicola 01785 612410

Alsager - 1st Wednesday of the month at YPCC for craft,
music, games, chat.

Contact: Caroline 01270 875 633

Sue 01270 883978 Suedavies@tesco.net

SUFFOLK

Regular meetings every 3rd Friday 10.30-2.30

£2.50 for family, shared lunch.

Contact: Sarah 01379 783678

SURREY

Friday - ice-skating at Guildford Spectrum 1.30-4

£2.35 (+75p for group lesson)

Tuesday/Thursday - weekly meetings in and around
Guildford

Contact: Lynne Sowden, 25 Tychbourne Drive, Guildford
GU4 7DH (£1.50 for events listing)

1st and 3rd Thursdays - board games for all ages in

Dorking

Contact: Lindsay 01306 501229

SUSSEX

Monthly newsletter £8pa or £4 for 6 months, cheques to ESEO to Sarah Raine, 6 The Diggers, Golf Drive, Brighton BN1 7BL

Contact: Bo 01580 201681 (East Sussex)

Isobel 01403 261178 (West Sussex)

Friday EO club at Lindfield

Contact: Liz 01444 414058

Home Educators Hastings Area, regular arts, craft, gym, outings and meetings.

Contact: Ali 01424 814175

Eastbourne Home Educators Club, alternate Fridays 9.30-11.30 Shinewater Community Centre 75p per child.

Contact: Angelique 01323 509702

Worthing: we are setting up a learning centre for children of all ages in September, meeting once/twice weekly. Advice and ideas welcome.

Contact: Sam Kruger 01903 233799

TYNESIDE

Monthly meetings, visits etc.

Contact: Linda 0191 4567007

Regular outings and monthly get-togethers

Contact: Lillian 01912809150

WALES

Cardigan area social meetings/outings on Mondays

Contact: Yvette 0845 458 2951

Swansea monthly meetings in Llanelli area

Contact: Sue 01269 861902

NE Wales/Borders - weekly gym/trampolining in Wrexham (thurs) various meetings in Oswestry, W. Cheshire/ NE Wales. Also sports and ice-skating at Deeside Leisure Centre.

Contact: Genny 01978 757489

49 Westminster rd, Moss Valley, Wrexham LL11 6DH

£2 for a year's listing.

eo@7times7.freemove.co.uk

South Wales - regular group activities and newsletter £3 pa. Weekly ice-skating.

Contact: Dawn 01452 540019

dawnandmike@cablenet.co.uk

Beverley 02920797628

Bev1.French@btinternet.com

Cathy 02920 460203

Gwynedd - Mondays swimming at Bangor

Contact: Louisa 01248 361254

Friday swimming at Porth Madog Weekly meetings at Tremadog Thursdays.

Contact: Jo 01766 512330

Pembrokeshire EO swim and sauna: every last Saturday of the month at noon, Haverfordwest pool. Family ticket (2+2) £4.95

Oakwood Leisure Park Tuesday 11th September 10.30 in the car park.

Contact: Yvette 0845 458 9251

WARWICKSHIRE

Coventry and Warwick usually meet 2 Thursdays a month. At Binley woods and other outings.

Contact: Sue 024 7654 3801

suecardus@aol.com

WEST MIDLANDS

Fortnightly meetings at Coseley. Monthly science club, resource centre and time for socializing. All welcome.

Contact: Penny 01922 745465

pennyclarke@homeschool.freemove.co.uk

Joy 0121 585 6450

JoyBeasley@b-bunch.freemove.co.uk

Helm Regular meeting Halesowen library 2nd

Thursday meet in the coffee lounge 11-3

Contact: Joy 0121 585 6450

WILTS/DORSET/HAMPS

Mid/north Wilts '5216' meet regularly for activities, support, socializing and outings.

Contact: Janet 01249 818672 (for outings)

Heather 01249 822630 (for meetings)

Outings and visits every 1st Tuesday pm lower Street Hall, off Netherhampton Rd, Salisbury 2-5.

Contact: Vicky - 1722 324863

Sam 01794 342041

WORCESTERSHIRE

Regular activity meetings and outings in N. Worcs area.

Contact: Gail 01562 822034

gail@tqmi.co.uk

Worcester

Contact: Rachel 01527 596198

YORKSHIRE NORTH

Regular meetings and visits. Send two 2nd class stamps for quarterly newsheet.

Contact: Sarah 01904 750324

sarah@wollny.org.uk

YORKSHIRE EAST

Regular meetings and visits. Send two 2nd class stamps for quarterly newsheet

Contact: Alison 01405 769902

YORKSHIRE SOUTH

Tuesdays 12-3 term time at Highfield Adventure Playground. Free entry, small contribution for craft materials. Off London rd/Abbeydale rd

Contact: Annette 0114 2583502

Fiona 0114 22751142

Thursday - weekly informal social meetings. All welcome

Contact: Angie 0114 2817466

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

Contact: Ian 0114 2817466

YORKSHIRE WEST

Outings and activities

Contact: Eva 01535 274520

Last Thursday of the month 11-1.30 at Civic Centre
Huddersfield.

Contact: Tracey 01484 317176

2nd Friday of the month 1-4 at Moortown Baptist
church £2.50 per family

Contact: Eva 01535 274520

Susan 0113 268 1137

Swimming (term time) Tuesdays Bradford

Contact: Eva 01535 274520

Huddersfield sports Centre

Contact: Tracey 01484 317176

Skating Fridays (except the week of the Leeds
Meeting)

Contact: Francis 01274 884750

Education Otherwise Adverts

Steve: A Story of Home Education

Available from the author.

£4.50 (+£1 p&p) Details from Mrs Margaret Stevens
01844 343 928

To order send cheque payable to Education Otherwise
to: **High Beech, Lower Rd, Looseley Row, Princes
Risborough, Bucks HP27 0NU**

Educating Children at home by Alan Thomas

(Cassell 1998) This book covers research into 100
home educating families in a delightfully readable
format. There are accounts of different methods and
lots of quotes from families. Special price to members
£9.50 from: **85 Coleridge Rd, London N8 5EG**
(cheques payable to Alan Thomas)

EO Car Stickers

Help spread the word. Please send 50p and a
reasonable large SAE to: **Ali Willer, 28 Cozens
Hardy Rd, Sprowston, Norwich NR7 8QF**

Resources Booklet

50 page booklet giving information on different
curriculum materials aimed at 5-11 year olds available
to home educators who are interested in a more
structured approach. Send £1 coin with your address
to:

**H. Turnbull, Hadlow House, 2, Hadlow Rd,
Sidcup, Kent DA14 4AF**

Or get a free RTF copy by e-mail

henrietta.turnbull@ntlworld.com

EO T-shirts

Good quality white cotton t-shirts printed with EO
logo (red triangle kicked open by running children):

£5 adult (M, L, XL)

£3.50 (3/4, 5/6, 7/8, 9/11, 12/13)

p&p up to 6 shirts £2, 7+ £4

**Pat Connor, 2 Whitegates Lane, Reading, Berks
RG6 1ED**

Resources for older children

Information on curriculum materials for later years.
For a copy please send 60p to cover printing and
postage with your address to:

G. Dove, 392 Lodge Ave, Dagenham RM9 4QU

Free e-mail copy from:

gillchris@willrich.fsnet.co.uk

LOCAL CONTACT UPDATE

Resignations

Cambridgeshire Janet Wilkinson

New Acting Local Contacts

Devon (East + South)

Becca Bradley-Carter 01404 549479

Essex

Corinne Whitby

London West

Clare Evans 02089 434491

Isle of Wight

Reb Alexander

Dumfries & Galloway

Marie Steenson

Warwickshire

Helen Hall

Dorset

Paetra Withnall

Areas needing a Local Contact

A new area - **North Kent/Outer SE London**

Bedfordshire, Brighton & Hove, Cambridgeshire

Carmarthenshire, Grampian, Isle of Man,

Lancashire, Lincolnshire, London East,

Merseyside, Northumberland

Strathclyde, Tayside

I am looking for someone to take over part of the role of the Local Contact Co-ordinator. It is extremely interesting to be in contact with families all around the country.

If you enjoy talking to new people and feel that you might enjoy the role please ring and find out more.

Isobel Bogucki 01403 261178

E-mail isobelb@cheerful.com

EDUCATION OTHERWISE BUSINESS

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

1. Active committed people needed as new **Council Members** from January. Contact any Council Member to find out more about the job.
2. **New GCSE Contact** needed, someone with some experience of taking GCSEs, mainly telephone enquiries. **Contact Jill Fisher** 0116 212 8120 many.fishers@ntlworld.com
3. **Enquiries Secretary for Scotland.** **Contact Ann Samuel Till** ann.samueltil@btinternet.com
4. **More Enquiries Secretaries** are needed for EO's national helpline for **England** and for **Wales**. Also a **Postal Enquiries Secretary**. Please ring **Edwina Theunissen** 01978 661882 or e-mail theunissen@mcmail.com
5. **Membership Secretaries.** New people are needed to deal with membership in both **Wales** and the **North West**. To volunteer or for more details about the job, contact **Pam Bellinger** 0116 282 7929
6. **Local Contact Co-ordinator.** I am looking for someone to take over part of the role of the Local Contact Co-ordinator. It is extremely interesting to be in contact with families all around the country.

If you enjoy talking to new people and feel that you might enjoy the role please ring and find out more.

Isobel Bogucki 01403 261178

E-mail isobelb@cheerful.com

***** NEWSLETTER SPECIAL SECTIONS

Do you have a special interest in a particular subject or area relevant to home-based education?

Want to know what others think, or hear what they have experienced?

Are you willing to put together a special section, either by compiling a report or collating a number of individual responses?

Then please contact NL Co-ord to volunteer - your help is needed!

Anne

HELP AND IDEAS NEEDED

1. Input and suggestions for the content of the proposed '**EO handbook**'. What do you think needs to be in it, what information would make your life easier? Please send your thoughts ASAP to Penny Clarke 01922 745465 pennyclarke@blueyonder.co.uk
2. Ideas from people who have used **correspondence colleges, exam boards and distance learning** for the updating of the 'Courses and Qualifications' leaflet. Again contact Penny Clarke as above.
3. **Creative children** with a particular interest or hobby needed for a Channel 4 programme. For details contact Beverley Young 01772 734314 beverley.young@btinternet.com
4. Ideas and suggestions for **pro-active publicity**. Contact Beverley Young as above or Celia on 02920 454227
5. **Help spread the word to teacher training**
We are already sending out leaflets and letters to encourage libraries to buy copies of **School Is Not Compulsory** and our video entitled **Education Otherwise** as a joint package. We are now looking for someone to tackle the job of posting this information out to Colleges of education and University Libraries. We will help you discover where to obtain addresses - please volunteer to take on this small but important job.
Contact Diane Green 01484 846946

***** 2001 CONTACT LIST

A new contact list is being prepared for distribution early in 2002. If you want your entry to be correct and there've been any changes since last year (e.g. you've moved, changed phone number or email, had any babies, or your children have started or stopped home educating) can you let me know by the end of 2001.

Lynda Hitchman

31 Audley St., Reading, Berks. RG30 1BP

Tel: 0118 961 4466

database@education-otherwise.org

Back Page Part Two

Get involved and join a small group:

Finance: Garry Humphreys, Lynda Hitchman, Celia McDonagh, Ann Samuel Till, Ken Grindlay

Enquiries: Gary Podmore, Pam Bellinger, Janet Wilkinson, Edwina Theunissen

Publications: Jill Fisher, Gary Podmore, Lucy Charlton, Chris Harper, Ali Willer

Media: Liz Alderdice, Beverley Young, Eva O'Rourke, Fiona Brookes, Celia McDonagh, Janet Wilkinson, Belinda Harris-Reid

Business Practice Group: Jill Fisher, Priscilla Park-Weir, Pam Bellinger, Martine Archer

DfEE Team: Anne Wade, Jill Fisher, Gwen Baldock, Ann Samuel Till

Membership support: Isobel Bogucki

LEAP (Local Education Authority Positive): Isobel Bogucki, Jude Ashley-Walker, Jill Fisher, Beverley Young, Anne Wade

Communications: Janet Wilkinson, Jill Fisher, Priscilla Park-Weir, Richard Eaton, Penny Clarke

Scottish Group: Ann Samuel Till, Liz Alderdice, Lucy McAuley, Anne Wade, Jill Fisher, Gwen Baldock

Information for other organizations: Penny Clarke, Jill Fisher, Martina Macklin

New volunteers for any of the groups most welcome, with expertise or just an interest. For more information contact any of the council members listed (in bold).

Media Contacts

Please contact one of the following people if you would like to volunteer to be interviewed or are contacted by the media and would like help/advice/support on giving an interview:

Scotland: Liz Alderdice 01464 841489
ejid@alders99.freeserve.co.uk

North West: Beverley Young 01772 734314
Beverley.young@btinternet.com

North East: Eva O'Rourke 01535 274520
evaandmary@aol.com

Midlands: Fiona Brookes 01684 290087
brookes@openhorizons.screaming.net

Wales: Celia McDonagh 02920 454227

East Anglia: Janet Wilkinson 01733 554436

South West: Belinda Harris-Reid 01364 643343
bline@compuserve.com

South East: Vacant (Volunteers needed)

London(1): Vacant "

London(2): Vacant "

Ireland: Vacant "

Complaints (acting)

Celia McDonagh, 15, Kirkby Court, Craiglee Drive, Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff, CF10 4BS
02920 454227

Beverley Young 01772 734314
beverley.young@btinternet.com

Probably too late, but just as a reminder:

☺☺☺ **National EO Gathering** ☺☺☺

Thursday 4th to Sunday 7th October 2001 Stokes Barn, Wenlock Edge, Shropshire
(full details in August NL, No. 141)

An Open Council Meeting will be held on the Saturday during the gathering
Members can receive copies of the reports and the agenda by sending an SAE to the General Secretary.
(Janet Wilkinson - see inside back cover)

E.O. Kids

A new website has been created by and for E.O. Kids.

The site will be managed by Robert Malley who has created it and all E.O. Kids are welcome to chat/post there. You will be asked for your name and area on joining so that we can confirm you are an E.O. member before allowing access.

Website ad - www.geocities.com/iwannamynname - see you there!

*If you have any queries please contact Dawn Waddington, who will be monitoring the site, on:
dawnwaddington@hotmail.com.*

Council Members

If you have a problem contact your nearest council member.

Geraldine Adams (N. London) 0207 2634922
Pam Bellinger (Leicester) 0116 282 7929
Isobel Bogucki (W. Sussex) 01403 261178
Penny Clarke (W. Midlands) 01922 745465
Lynda Hitchman (Berks) 0118 961 4466
Jill Fisher (leics) 0116 2128120
Garry Humphreys (Lincs) 01205 871399
Gary Podmore (Yorks) 0114 2585702
Eleanor Stapleton (N. London) 0208 8841368
Jenny Stevens (W. Sussex) 01243 783469
Anne Wade (Middx) 0208 9047155
Dawn Waddington (Bucks) 01908 569380
Janet Wilkinson (Cambs) 01733 554436
Beverley Young (Lancs) 01772 734314
Ann Samuel Till (Scotland) 0131 5566271

Membership

Membership and newsletter subscription enquiries, membership cards and address changes.

Lynda Hitchman, 31, Audley St., Reading, Berks RG30 1BP Tel: 0118 9614466
database@education-otherwise.org

Stationery

Leaflets, posters, membership forms, car stickers:

Ali Willer, 28, cozens Hardy Rd., Sprowston, Norwich NR7 8QF (donations towards postage welcome, reuse labels 2.50 per 100, free for EO business use)

Publications

Books, information leaflets and back issues of newsletters. For a full list send SAE to:

Hazel Hutton, 39 Millfield Gardens, Keswick, Cumbria CA12 4PD
Tel: 017687 72546 hhutton422@aol.com
(please ring to check availability of items before ordering)

Contact with LEA

If you need help in dealing with your LEA ring your Local contact or any council member.

Small Jobs

Martina Macklin, 16 Victoria St, Wall Heath, Kingswinford, West midlands DY6 0JJ
Tel: 01384 833 883

Useful contacts

Single Parents Family Contact: Sarah Martin, Lammas, 34 Cowslip Drive, Little Thetford, Ely, Cambs CB6 3JD 01353 648716

Special Needs: Christine Waterman, 85, Elfrida Rd, Watford, Herts. WD1 8AT
Tel: 01923 464773

School Phobia: Geraldine Adams
Tel: 0207 263 4922

Autonomous Education Support and advice: Sammy and Nick Vidal-Hall
Home Croft, Brownston St, Modbury, Devon PL21 0QR Tel: 01548 830716

GCSE Contact: (Vacant)

College Contact: Kathy Chilton
Tel: 01969 623707

Teenage Support: Geraldine Adams
Tel: 0207 263 4922

EO Stalls: Lucy Charlton, 2, Wistow Rd, Newton Harcourt, Leics. LE8 0FT
Tel: 0116 2592118

Research Contact (acting) Pam Vickers
25, Boxley Rd, Walderslade, Chatham, Kent
Home: 01634 671507 Work: 01227 712206

General Secretary: Janet Wilkinson
31 Framlingham rd, Peterborough PE2 8UG
Tel: 01733 554436

Treasurer (acting): Garry Humphreys
Three Stacks, Wicken lane, Old Leake, Boston, Lincs PE22 9QE 01205 871 399

Newsletter Coordinator: Anne Rix, The Orchard, Hembury, Frithelstock, Torrington, Devon, EX38 8JT. Tel: 01237 451535
Email: anne@annerix.demon.co.uk

Local Contact Coordinator: Isobel Bogucki, 20 Rusper Rd, Horsham, W. Sussex RH12 4BD Tel: 01403 261178

Enquiries Secretaries Coordinator: Edwina Theunissen Tel: 01978 661 882

Membership Secretaries Coordinator: Pam Bellinger, 56 Beech Drive, Braunstone, Leicester LE3 3DA Tel: 0116 282 7929

Chair: Jill Fisher, 54 Ratcliffe Rd, Leicester LE2 3TD Tel: 0116 212 8120

education otherwise

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

Our principal aims are to:

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

For further information send an A5 s.a.e. to:
P.O. BOX 7420
LONDON N9 9SG

HELPLINE 0870 7300074

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

Education Otherwise Association Ltd, Registered Charity No. 1055120

