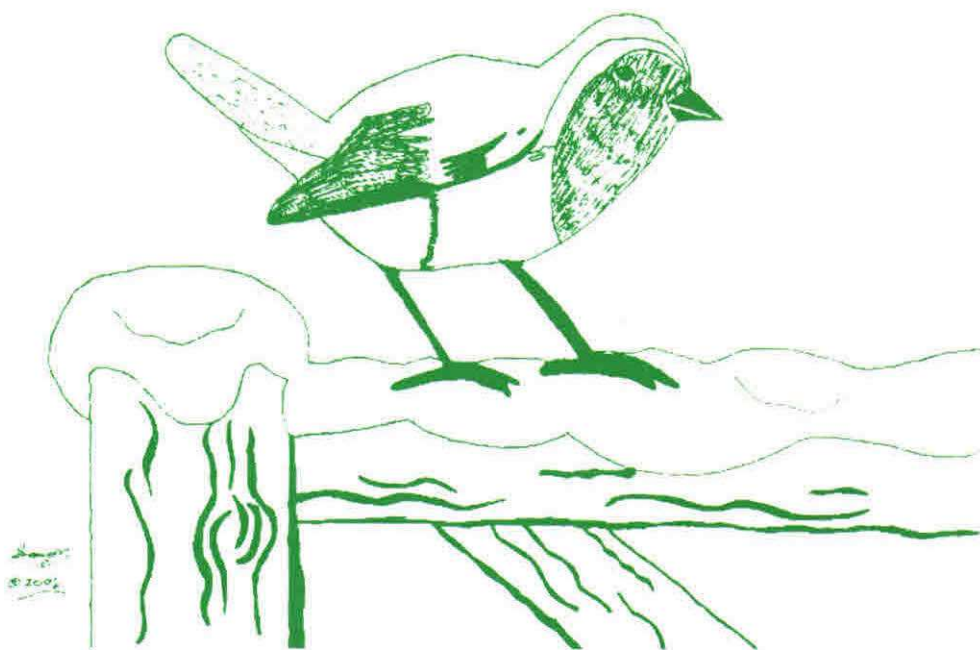


Education Otherwise



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(Please send contributions via the most appropriate section editor above)

Please mark your contribution 'material for publication' and include your name, address, phone number and email if you have it, as we may need to contact you to discuss your contribution. Please also ensure your EO subscription is up-to-date.

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get in touch with your muse over Christmas!*)

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Thanks to Simon for cover picture

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) please can you let me know

by the end of 2001.

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From the NL Co-ordinator

What a Pandora's Box I've found by asking for ideas about welcoming new members - it really seems to have opened some floodgates!

Some of the contributions reveal a depth of disillusionment which is uncomfortable to recognise. But if EO is to grow and develop, I believe we need to take a good look at the issues which cause friction between members; and the newsletter is one place where ideas and feelings can be shared, heard and explored - hopefully in an atmosphere of acceptance and empathy.

There are other arenas, of course. Many members attend EO gatherings all around the country and (for those who can make it to the Lake District in January) the Langdale Youth Hostel will probably provide an opportunity for much informal discussion, as well as the formal AGM and Council Meeting. There's also the internet, with e-mail and chat rooms which provide a more immediate outlet and personal response. Both of these, however, are accessible only to a proportion of members - the newsletter is the only means of communication which gets around to everyone automatically.

There were so many contributions for this issue that I have had to leave a couple aside, so if your piece isn't included here - look out for it in the February issue. I've had to squash things in a bit as it is - so please let me know whether the slightly smaller print is sufficiently readable. There's a delicate balance between getting everything in and going over into the next weight bracket for postal charges.

At the time of writing, the Children's Pages are somewhere between Norfolk and Devon. They were posted on Saturday; it's now Tuesday and they still haven't arrived. I suspect that bulky envelopes coming via the London area are probably running the gauntlet of time-consuming security procedures. If they don't arrive by tomorrow morning ... Well, let's hope for the best.

As people on the editorial team, and those concerned with database, labels, etc. will be only too keenly aware, I've been nagging everyone to tighten up the NL deadlines ever since I took over this job. For years I'd wondered why the NL never arrived until about the middle of the month, but it was only in August that I started to discover just how complex the production and despatch operation is, and how many people are involved. This time, it looks as if we should make it out for the beginning of December - Thank you all very much for your efforts.

Not everything in this December newsletter is an easy read, but there is much that is inspiring, sensitive and practical. I hope and believe you will find it stimulating and thought-provoking.

Anne, 13 November 2001

Autonomous Education..... what is it?

When we start to home educate, whether it is from the birth of our children or because our children have experienced problems at school, most of us look for advice on how to do so. Unfortunately, advice can be hard to find unless someone points us in the right direction.

I am starting this special report with a look at the various views of education with an article sent in by Roland Meighan: this work has been taken from books he has written: 'A Sociology of Educating' and 'Natural Learning and the Natural Curriculum'. Dr Roland Meighan works as a writer and publisher. Previously he was Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of Birmingham and then Special Professor of Education at the University of Nottingham.

The Authoritarian View of Education.. .. 'You will do it our way'

Authoritarian education has, in its various forms, one person, or a small group of people, making and implementing the decisions about what to learn, when to learn, how to learn, how to assess learning, and the learning environment often before the learners are recruited as individuals or meet as a group. As an exclusive method, it is favoured by totalitarian regimes because it produces the conformist, lockstep mentality.

Discipline is ... learning to obey the rules and instructions decided by the management.

Knowledge is ... essentially, information, contained in the traditional subjects.

Learning is .. mostly, listening to subject experts and reading their books.

Teaching is ... usually, formal instruction by trained or approved adults.

Parents are ... expected, for the most part, to be admiring spectators to the experts.

Resources are ... predominately, subject textbooks and subject teachers trained in mass instructional methods.

Location is ... a central place (school) where the experts (teachers) can easily be assembled together cheaply, with large groups of pupils.

Organisation is ... usually in classes formally arranged for whole class instruction.

Assessment is ... mostly, by tests of how well pupils can repeat the subjects.

Aims are ... essentially, to produce mini-academic subject experts, with those who fail in this enterprise, required to be useful in industry/commerce.

Power is ... in the hands of an appointed individual or a small management team who impose decisions on others.

The Autonomous View of Education 'I did it my way'

In autonomous education, the decisions about learning are made by the individual learners. Each one manages and takes responsibility for his or her learning programmes. Individuals may seek advice or look for ideas about what to learn and how to learn it by research or by consulting others. They do not have to re-invent the culture, but interact with it. As an exclusive method it is favoured by liberal or libertarian regimes.

Discipline is ... that form known as self-discipline.

Knowledge is ... essentially, the repertoire of learning and research skills needed to cope with new ideas.

Learning is ... mostly, self-directed activity and personal research to gain experience, information or skills.

Teaching is ... usually, self-teaching; the purpose of other teachers is to teach you how to teach yourself better.

Parents are ... expected to be part of the team supporting the learner's growth in learning skills and confidence.

Resources are ... predominately, first hand experiences as the basis of personal research backed up by any other resources seen to be appropriate.

Location is ... anywhere that useful or interesting learning can take place.

Organisation is ... often in individual learning stations in institutional settings, but remains flexible to match the variety of learner-managed tasks.

Assessment is ... commonly, by self-assessment using any tests, devised by the learner or by others, that are seen to be appropriate to the situation.

Aims are ... essentially, to produce people with the confidence and skills to manage their own learning throughout their entire lives.

Power ... is seen as devolved to individuals who are seen as morally responsible for the exercise of their autonomy.

The Democratic View of Education 'We did it our way'

In democratic education, the learners as a group have the power to make some, most, or even all of the key decisions, since the power is shared and not appropriated in advance by a minority of one or more. Democratic countries might be expected to favour this approach, but such educational practices are rare and often meet with sustained, hostile and irrational opposition.

Aims are ... essentially, to produce people with the confidence and skills to manage their own life-long learning within a democratic culture.

Discipline is ... democratic discipline by working co-operatively to agreed rules and principles.

Knowledge is ... essentially the skills and information needed by the group to maintain and develop its learning.

Learning is ... activity agreed by the group to gain experience, information or particular skills either working together or reporting-back tasks delegated to individuals.

Teaching is ... any activity, including instruction, that the group judges will lead to effective learning.

Parents are ... seen as part of the resources available and potentially partners in the learning group.

Resources are ... anything appropriate to the group's research and learning including people, places and experience.

Location is ... anywhere that the learning group can meet to pursue effective learning.

Organisation is ... commonly in groups where democratic dialogue and co-operative learning can take place.

Assessment is ... by any form of assessment using any tests, devised by the learners or by others, that are seen to be appropriate to the situation. life-long learning within a democratic culture.

Power is ... shared in the group, who are seen as responsible both individually and collectively for its exercise.

The Interactive View of Education 'We did it in a variety of ways'

Here, the authoritarian, democratic and autonomous approaches are used in a variety of patterns. They may be alternated, or revolved or used in some order of ranking. Thus in the last case of ranking, a learning co-operative may work with democratic methods as the major approach, but use autonomous methods when individuals are delegated to prepare learning experiences for the group, or authoritarian methods when the group decides this is appropriate for a particular task.

This classification helps demonstrate a key lesson from the study of learning systems - that HOW you learn is as important, if not more important than WHAT you learn. It is not just what you learn, but also the way you learn it.

An interesting look at the many options available to all learners but what does Autonomous Education mean to you? I have spoken to many people about this and they all have slightly different views of what Autonomous Education really is. Here are my views and the views of some fellow home educators:-

What Autonomous Education is to me.

Most people seem to see Autonomous Education as a more relaxed way of going about the everyday business of education ~ particularly where children are involved.

Some feel wary of the autonomy; maybe they don't believe their children will learn without structure. This is understandable as most of us were brought up in a very structured world.

I believe that autonomous education works. Most of us autonomously educate our children for the first four or five years of their lives anyway. Did you teach your child to talk, to walk, to play, how to build a tower of wooden bricks or did they learn from their own mistakes and by you playing with them?

To me that is what autonomous education is, playing, talking and learning even though you don't appear to be doing so, experiencing the lessons of life rather than writing about them.

As I see it there are many problems with putting a group of children together and expecting them to learn. The main problem being that children learn at different speeds and within a group there will always be one or two children who seem to be learning more slowly than the rest, in one subject or another.

If one of those children is or has been your child, or maybe you were that child, you will know the pain first hand. These children are made to feel stupid by the other children, and often by the teacher, even though they are often more intelligent and usually more sensitive than the others. They are gradually pushed out of the group and left with a very low self-esteem.

None of us want this for our children. As we are home educating we have our children at home, for whatever reason, and we have no need to push our children to compete. My daughter, aged 14, will not take exams because she; (in her own words) does not want to spend her whole life being judged by a piece of paper that bears no relevance to her individuality.

This will not affect the rest of her life as she is already writing children's books and intends to continue doing so. I am sure that if she ever feels the need to take an exam she will do so with confidence but at present she cannot see the point.

I would say to anyone who has a child approaching the school exam age, talk to your young adult, they probably already know what they would like to do with their life in the immediate future. If not, give them guidance as to how to find out which career path they would like to follow, give them the opportunity to make the right choice.

My belief is that all people should be allowed to make their own decisions, they will learn by making mistakes and moreover will learn to not make mistakes as their ability to make decisions grows, if they don't, making mistakes can be a positive part of life: learning from your own mistakes is, in my view, a large part of the learning process.

So, to me, Autonomous Education is about following the learner's own nose, allowing them to make mistakes but being around to give guidance. Having an interesting life yourself, being prepared to try your hand at something new and trusting your learner's own instincts are good basic starting points.

The most necessary tool you can have is the ability to communicate openly and honestly. This I find is the key to opening all doors, autonomous or otherwise!

A word or two from my daughter.. .. .

I think that education can be compared with the gears of a car ... in a manual car some one else is deciding when to change the gear because they think that it is for the best ... in an automatic car the gear box decides to change up or down a gear when it feels the time is right! I would prefer to be an automatic gear box as that to me is similar to autonomous education ... I like to be able to make my own decisions when I feel the time is right! I am an individual and proud of it!!

Amie aged 14

Those are my views and the views of my daughter: fortunately we think alike. I would not dream of asking her to do something she did not want to do. I may try to convince her that it would be a good thing to do, especially if I thought she would benefit from it but I could never force her to do anything. Amie is an individual who knows her own mind and has always done so.

I must admit; at first I found autonomous education to be a daunting prospect. All my family are or have been involved in implementing conventional education for the last two hundred years at least! From somewhere I found a belief in my daughter and myself, a knowledge that we both knew what was right for us. I have never looked back!

In previous newsletters I have thanked both the Harris-Reid and the Vidal-Hall families for their help and support and friendship, I doubt if I would have got this far without them. A big thank-you from both Amie and myself.

Jo Borthen 57 Florida Drive Exeter EX4 5EX Devon Telephone 01392 679499 Email Jo4eo@aol.com

Autonomous Learning

We knew before our son was born that he would not be going to school. We had become disillusioned with 'the system' and wanted something better for our child. When we learnt we could home educate we were delighted and soon found out about and joined Education Otherwise. Autonomous learning came later.

I had always wanted to be a teacher. I had been offered a place at college when I left school but ended up getting married instead. Much later I had this son to 'teach'. We had lots of sceptical relatives to convince so when he was three I began my formal 'teaching sessions', remembering how I was taught at school (perhaps conveniently forgetting how much I hated school). We would sit down together. I would play the role of teacher. He was my pupil and I tried to teach him to read. We both detested the sessions and by four he still could not read and had no desire to do so. I was at my wits' end. Traditional teaching methods were entrenched in my mind - surely they were right but, with my child anyway, they were not working.

Disillusioned, I contacted another home educator whose four children had all taught themselves to read and all at various ages. I also read all the articles in EO about autonomous learning and here were glimmers of hope and what an eye opener! It all sounded too easy and not good for my conscience, which dictated that I should be his 'teacher'. Yet I knew that if my son was really interested in something and discovered things himself he learnt easily and retained knowledge. We decided we had nothing to lose and embarked on the autonomous approach. What a change!

Now my son is in charge of his own learning he has come on in leaps and bounds. He has a fantastic imagination, is very happy and self motivated. He loves all subjects and has an insatiable appetite to learn. Thankfully my early teaching attempts did not put him off his books or being read to. He is now a confident reader and I was so proud when he read to himself his first complete book a few weeks ago. He did not learn to read quickly but I've at last come to my senses and realised that it is not a race to learn, learning is not a competition, learning must be enjoyable at all times to be worthwhile. All children are different but they all love to learn if they can work at their own pace and learn what they want to learn. We supply a lot of support, encouragement and any necessary resources. We do a lot of things together and I am finding that with my son's enthusiasm I am just as keen to learn as he is. Subjects I hated at school have become interesting and worthy of study. There are so many excellent resources these days and learning need not be expensive - most of our resources we make, borrow or buy secondhand. There are also loads of resources from nature that are free and with a little imagination

I must confess that I do find it difficult trying to explain to someone who is not familiar with either home education or autonomous learning how my son learns. It all sounds too easy but I know that for our son (and for us) it works. He is extremely happy, has an insatiable appetite to learn, is never bored and that is all that matters to us.

Young Keith says "I love being home educated and it helps me a lot because I'm allowed to learn things at my own steady pace. I can choose what I learn and when and I don't have to do anything I don't want to do such as writing which I don't like much. I really love books, nature, rocks and minerals, dinosaurs, skeletons, fossils and making things. I like to make things out of recycled materials and I am making a cottage with a garden out of some packaging starchy stuff that came in a parcel."

Sally Hall with Keith aged 7 Nant-y-Gareg Farm Saron Llandysul Carmarthanshire SA44 5EJ

The non-curriculum way...

So what does autonomous home-education mean to us? The nitty-gritty, the philosophy and actuality – living – walking our walk. **Let them be free.** That is it – fundamentally that is it. "What the hell does that mean?" – So let me expand on that statement.

Free to choose. Following no fixed preordained structure — setting one's own self-chosen agenda. Following one's own dynamic (possible constantly changing!) agenda or even choosing to follow a very rigid structure. But the choosing of one's own guiding principle is what is important. Doing what one wants, when and how and with whom and how much and with what and what for and if at all.

This is the antithesis of the tamed approach way. It may get you a 'good' job, it may placate family and friends and it definitely will give you a big red tick and a good parenting badge from the governmental powers that be. But will it give us the thinkers, the artists, the scientists – like Einstein who thought outside the parameters of what was known, the comedians (that make our sides split with laughter), creators, inventors, the planet savers and the entrepreneurs?

The founders of the current 50 most successful private companies, started by someone's dreams of success, have fewer qualifications than the average office worker. Let's stop and look at this a moment. Out of these people – 30% have no qualifications, 70% have qualification up to GCSEs or 'O' level, 40% of those with GCSE/'O' levels have 'A' levels and 20% of those with 'A' levels have degree or higher. But only 12% have degrees in the sciences. So from these facts I would ascertain that the folk who are the most successful and at the same time are the richest in our society (which is what we base success on – don't we?) are in fact the least 'educated' on paper.

It seems obvious to me why these entrepreneurs have been so successful. They've left the hidden curriculum behind. Children who are made to learn, are told it is for their own good, made to be passive in their acceptance and not encouraged to be active in their criticism, are made to recall and regurgitate facts (which is thought of as the highest form of intellectual achievement), who obey the voice of authority, who are taught the theory that orthography (the art of letter formation) and 'rote' reading are more important than thought, who are learning in an environment where dogma is more desirable than doubt, that men are more important than women, that adults are more important than children. These rules and pedagogues will break our little peoples' spirits. These children are the adults of tomorrow – obedient, compliant, unquestioning.

"... In fact I think that *autonomous learning is about nobody at all having any vested interest or investment whatsoever in any of your thinking or doing, because what you think and learn, or don't, or forget, or feel is entirely your own business which affects nobody else except yourself, because it is yours and solely yours* – Sammy Vidal-Hall (Autonomous: Being Free To Do Nothing) Newsletter 123.

Our children's lives are private and illogical and mysterious and messy and sometimes even dull – all of their lives should belong to themselves. We have no automatic right to control their lives because we are bigger, stronger and richer than our children. What we do have is a duty to share our lives with them, to support them in their schemes and dreams, even if we see them as sensible or just plain idiotic.

So what and who are we?

BELINDA: woman, mother, wife. I make pots (the ceramic sort). I run a small gallery (which is part of our house). I sing jazz (in the throes of re-forming my old acapella group called 'Hullabaloo'). I have a strange anomaly in my left inner ear, which makes me feel dizzy, really dizzy and unstable. I love fresh flowers all over the house. I love festivals and parties and watching old BBC dramatisations of Dickens and Brontë and Hardy (we don't have a TV as such – we just use the TV screen for watching videos on). I buy a lot of clothes (most of which I return) and I wear a lot of make-up. I read a lot – science fiction, feminist literature, radical education. I buy luscious organic food. I eat animals (aka meat). I try to be lovely to my children. I'm loud and round and I laugh a lot.

ALAN: man, father, husband. Has his own software company. He is a programmer/ analyst/consultant. He works from home — theoretically he should work 5 hours a day but in reality, due to family/life demands, he does not achieve this. He is treasurer and player with a local badminton club. He plays the drums (not thrash bang, more finesse and rhythm). He watches *The Simpsons* with Gus and Barnaby and laughs a lot. He loves music. He listens to music and talk radio a great deal — always looking for opportunities to email or phone-in to spread the word on HE. He drives us all over Devon for all our dreams and schemes. He is vegan. He loves avocados. **He is slim and fit and wishes he could play badminton a lot.**

GUS: teenager, brother, son. Has never been to school. He plays *Warhammer 40K*, a strategic miniature army game, ostensibly toy soldiers. He has two armies: Dark Eldar and Tau. He also plays *Inquisitor*, a variation on *Warhammer*. He attends a war gaming club called *Beer and Bullets*. He is a green belt in Aikido and attends a class once a week. He goes to a fencing club. He draws the most complex and detailed battle armour and futuristic space vehicles. He has decided to go to a math tutor once a week — he enjoys pure maths. He loves all sorts of films, everything from *Gladiator* and *The Matrix* to BBC dramatisations. He loves old English, flowery language - Shakespearean language. He is passionate about reading and has a pile of books waiting to be read. He plays *Star Wars Trivial Pursuits* with us and wins every time because he knows every answer. He is a great philosopher and entertains and enlightens us, family and friends with his fantastical thoughts on the world and cosmos. He is a very committed vegetarian — hasn't eaten anything with a face for over 4 years. Loves tomatoes — he has a special tomato-knife to cut them with! He and his cousin won a Disney script-writing competition last year — masses of press coverage. He loves walking — particularly by himself — so he can think. He sits around contemplating life and making beautiful hybrid conversions of his *Warhammer* figures. He counts how many red cars he sees when we go on long journeys. **He's just himself a lot.**

BARNABY: boy, brother, son. Has never been to school. He has a flashy *Muddy Fox* twin-suspension bike which he hardly ever uses! He's very groovy — loves wearing trendy gear — bleaches his hair. He is a fabulous dancer and is part of a dance troupe. Earlier this year he performed at the London Palladium. He goes to *Stagecoach* (a Saturday stage school) and *Stage by Stage* (another performance group). He is in the throes of rehearsing for *Treasure Island* — he is Long John Silver. He is part of the *Stagecoach* choir and he is rehearsing for *Carmen* and *Turendot* operas. He plays a lot — den making, plays with his rats and hamster, plays pool. He plays with friends (he has friends both in and out of school), we often have them staying the night with us. He watches films — he likes the TV programmes *Friends*, *The Simpsons* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* — he hires videos from the Library. He and I play *Scrabble* and card games together. He reads Asterix and the Beano and his scripts before he goes to bed. Everything in his room is turquoise — walls, carpet, curtains, bedding, cushions, pool-table, chest-of-drawers... He has loads of cuddly animals. He listens to pop music a lot — he makes up dances all the time. **He's 'cool' and bouncy.**

Someone said to me recently they thought our life sounded like one long holiday. Yes, I think it probably does. And at the same time, no, we have the usual stresses and strains of life — juggling — earning and spending, being sociable and retreating into our family unit, doing and doing nothing, being well and ill, being happy and sad, loving and fighting and hating. The usual... I've rather veered off the topic of autonomous education..... or maybe I haven't...

Big hug to you all — as always.

(And a special big hug to Jo and Amie for editing this autonomous section.)

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Autonomous Education...what is it?

For us education is a holistic experience. It is not just about learning to read and write, knowing the times tables or how to use a computer. It is also about discovering the wonders of nature, about growing as a person, and we think one of the most important aspects of education is developing "emotional literacy".

Our children have the freedom to choose what they do with their time. Mostly they spend it playing all kinds of intricate games, which is after all the most natural way children learn, absorb and make sense of the world. They have the freedom to learn when and where they choose but most importantly, they have the freedom to just be children.

Yassir and Leila's days are interesting and varied but there are also the familiar and routine things to be done everyday, and these bring structure into their lives. Our day begins and ends with a shared family meal and now that Yassir is nine, he is able to cook meals while Leila (age three) usually sets

the table. Both know that household chores need to be shared and will generally carry them out. I have never insisted upon their help but by providing a constant example, observation on their part has slowly turned into simulation. (I find that children generally like to help out anyway.) It has also taught our children self-discipline and independence.

Yassir is an avid reader and shares our love of books. He displays an eclectic taste, for example he finds the Harry Potter books boring (his description) and would rather read books like *The Killer Underpants* by Michael Lawrence. He will also return time and again to re-read *The Narnia Chronicles*. I think this reflects Yassir's confidence in expressing his individuality and his disregard for the latest trends, be they in books, clothes, anything. He sets a wonderfully positive example for his sister.

As regard to Yassir learning maths, history, science etc.; he does not. In school children are taught by subject because this is probably the easiest way to teach *en masse*. We do not home educate to simply replicate school and therefore see no reason to explain anything to Yassir or Leila in terms of subjects. Yassir has learnt to count because he needed to know how much a Captain Scarlet figure cost. He needed to learn simple arithmetic operations to help me calculate how much turf we needed for our garden, and in moving the garden shed the principles of leverage and momentum were practically demonstrated to him. Numbers intrigue Yassir. He loves discovering about their sequences, the logic involved in dealing with them etc., and we might evaluate arithmetic expressions while cooking, driving or walking by the riverside. For us anything and everything can be explored anywhere or at any time.

I have a keen interest in archaeology and have been fortunate enough to be able to take Yassir along to various archaeological digs and meetings. He has had the opportunity to handle artifacts and have his questions answered by experts in their fields. These experiences have helped Yassir gain a deep understanding of the past, of chronology and what it teaches us about how we live our lives today.

As for science and geography: being out there, experiencing the world can teach a child far more than any textbook can. What better way to learn about the life cycle of frogs than to go down to the local pond, net in hand, to collect some frog spawn and watch them develop over the spring into lively little frogs? Far better to fly halfway round the world to realise just how enormous the earth really is and to discover that the southern hemisphere experiences summer when Europe has its winter. Yassir and Leila have seen cheetahs, cuddled hamsters, watched snails and stood in trepidation watching a crocodile. What better way to experience the diversity of life on earth?

They lead and we follow, to answer questions, share the awe and wonder of the world and marvel at it is to be human. This to us is an autonomous education.

Aziza and Andrew Kilmister - Kent (Email: azanyale@netscapeonline.co.uk)

Autonomy, Control & Comfort!

The question of autonomy in our house is probably based on how much 'in control' I want to feel that day - control perhaps being a more realistic opposite to autonomy than structure!

In theory, I believe wholeheartedly that autonomous education, or self-directed learning and development as I understand it to be, is the only way deep rooted and life long education can take place. The only value of structure being when the learners themselves see a need for it, to realise an aim perhaps. And control of a person's learning is within their own hands.

Having said that, like most other parents struggling with the need to feel we are good parents, I occasionally find I am indulging in a 'control outburst'! I catch myself imposing various levels of panic-motivated control over my children, which range from subtle manipulation to outright dictatorship!

I don't believe any of that is really useful. In rational moments I believe an autonomously educated child develops into an autonomously responsible adult and they're the ones we need in our society. But when I see the influence and control the television and media, peers and culture, have over my children

I feel the need to exert a bit of it myself to counteract the effects! Not to mention the pressure put upon one as a parent to be in control of our children's every twitch!

The only reason I can think of to structure and control our children's learning is for our personal comfort and convenience, or panic about 'the future', or to give the impression of being in charge!

Autonomous education is my aim. In reality where we are at is the girls (eleven and seven years) generally having the say about what they do, when and how they do it, mostly with me following their cues rather than the other way round. This with much discussion about the way we develop as people and the care and health of not only our bodies but our minds and spirits as well, hence the value of new experiences, ideas, challenges, stimuli, explorations and experiments. Even if it's as simple as experimenting with climbing a tree or being peaceful in the garden thinking.

Yet, despite my theoretical aim, I have to admit to resorting to the odd binge of 'for-my-own-comfort control' especially when I feel uncomfortable with them watching cartoons all day. After all, I am only human and humans have generations of that ingrained habit of control and lack of trust in kids to break before we manage pure autonomy!

That is, of course, if pure autonomy is possible within the company and influence of others!

Ross Mountney Rose Cottage Sea Lane Old Leake Boston Lincs PE22 9JJ

Autonomous Education – and LEAs

Autonomous education is about the act of handing back the power and control of learning to the learner. In relation to children it is about parents following their children's requests for information, resources, time, etc., and acting to fulfil those requests wherever possible. It does not leave the individual abandoned but rather supported in their own wishes and needs.

In relation to LEAs, autonomous education is about allowing a learner to have their own learning experience which belongs to them. It is neither about producing product for inspection or having it tailored to the woefully narrow limitations of any sort of school curriculum. LEA Inspections are therefore not relevant to the autonomous approach to education. Any LEA which asks to inspect work produced by an autonomous learner has automatically shown their lack of understanding and, more importantly, their incompetence to assess the education provided. This is why I suggest to autonomous 'educators' (if there can be such a thing) that in order to fulfil their obligation to provide evidence of 'suitable' education they put the burden upon themselves rather than on their children. Since an autonomous learner by definition has nothing to prove to an LEA, the parent needs to communicate to the LEA how *they* support the learning process so that it can take place, by supplying resources and support, as mentioned above.

Educating autonomously can bring difficulties with LEAs as it is not simply a modified form of education at home, but an entirely different philosophy of learning and life. LEAs in general are not equipped to understand or support autonomous learning. In this context it is important to realise that LEAs have no authority to impose a particular style of learning. They cannot impose timetables, curriculums, subjects or attainment levels and they certainly cannot exclude an educational philosophy, so long as that philosophy allows the child 'to achieve their full potential'.

More importantly LEAs actually have a duty to *support* efficient education. If they hamper or obstruct efficient autonomous education they are in breach of their duties. Keep this in mind if they behave unreasonably, particularly if your child has already attended school and been failed by it.

When communicating with LEAs it is important to co-operate with regard to your actual duties to *supply evidence* in any way you wish. Beyond this it is my experience that LEAs, on the whole, work within a bullying culture. They make difficulties for those they perceive to be vulnerable. Generally if it becomes clear to an LEA that you know your rights and are prepared to expect them to be upheld, they will drop into a more responsible and reasonable role. Of course if they do not, you have every right to complain and all local authorities will have a department to direct

complaints. No government body has a right to behave in an intimidating manner, the moment they do so they are in the wrong regardless of other issues.

A final word on inspections

As mentioned above, inspections are a totally inappropriate and ineffective method of assessing autonomous education and usually, when inspectors are allowed into autonomous home educators' homes, they attempt to enforce some level of traditional teaching/work production. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to appeal to those in EO who argue for giving up our right not to be inspected to speak only for themselves. I support any person's right to be inspected if they wish it. Likewise I support the right of those who do not wish to be. As it is clear from the above, there is nothing suspicious or anti-social in refusing to have these counter productive and pointless visits. If autonomous education is to come to maturity as an effective style of learning, it is essential to remove the endless pressure on children to *produce* for these often-hostile strangers. As autonomous home educators we need to be prepared to provide evidence of our own commitment and benign support of our children. It is the antithesis of autonomous education to place this burden upon our children.

Nick Vidal-Hall *Autonomous Education Support and Advice* 01548 8309716

One thing that has occurred to me whilst reading this is that autonomous education is as individual as we are. Tailor your child's educational needs to your family's needs - on the other way round - and you can't go far wrong. The big thing that I have learnt from all this is that autonomous education really means the automatic education received whilst living one's life.

A big thank you to those who took the time to contribute and to those who are taking the time to read this. I have thoroughly enjoyed putting this special section together. I also thank Amie, my daughter, who helped keep me sane!

Jo Borthen 57 Florida Drive Exeter EX4 5EX Devon Email Jo4eo@aol.com

SPECIAL SECTION FOR NEXT ISSUE

Structure in Education - what sort of structure do you use?

This is not a debate between structure and autonomy, which are not mutually exclusive (see NL 124 "A More Structured Approach" of October 1998), but an exploration of different kinds of structure. We've explored various autonomous (learner-directed) approaches here - now I would like to hear from those of you who favour a more parent/teacher-directed approach ("Authoritarian" in Roland's terms, or perhaps "Authoritative" is nearer to what happens in practice). Please email or write to me telling me **why you have chosen this method, what it means to you and how you go about it.**

Jo Borthen (addresses above)

(N.B. I will need to receive your contributions by 1st January 2002)

REFLECTORS

The Nationwide Building Society is operating a scheme, currently advertised on TV, to supply all British school children with reflectors to put on their coats to enable them to be **seen in the dark.**

My mother has been able to obtain some for my children as they said they saw no reason why homeschooled children shouldn't have them too.

There are also "**Be safe be seen**" and general **road safety** packs available.

The phone number, should anyone be interested, is 01793 655139. the e-mail: catseyes@nationwide.co.uk.

Becca Bradley-Carter

From the Archives

Home education abroad

Hong Kong Johanna Castro made the decision to home educate her children when she found, on arriving in Hong Kong from Africa, that all the schools were full. "We found out that keeping to school hours was imperative and set aside three hours each morning, solely given over to following academic pursuits. Such pursuits may not always be 'school-like' in the strictest sense but they are destined to instruct and inform with as much variety and entertainment as I can muster. Also important for my sake as much as the children's is a day out. We call it our Adventure Day - when we have time and spare cash we go sightseeing: 'let's take this road and see where it leads us..' We don't even have to get to the place we were going, it's the journey from which we derive as much fun and knowledge. We are able to turn Hong Kong not only into an exciting treasure hunt but also into a gigantic classroom! To think I used to exist in a fuzzy blur where learning was something which happened mostly in school now makes me cringe."

(October 96)

Japan Kyoko Aizawa has been working to change the education law in Japan for many years, as regular readers of the newsletter will know. This update was in the June 97 newsletter: "Thanks to EO pioneer Kyoko Aizawa School is not Compulsory is now available in Japanese: Kyoko is fighting to get home education accepted by the Japanese government - who now plan to send school refusers (at present over 10,000) to 'reformatory'. These children are hiding out at home and in some cases are violently punished by their parents who feel disgraced."

(June 97)

Switzerland Susan Macaulay had been home educating her 2 youngest for 3 years when the family moved to Switzerland in 1984 to work with the Christian Student Fellowship. "They missed their friends most of all. However, soon a whole new life challenged them to grow, adapt, understand and be brave. Learning French is a first priority and each lesson is immediately pressed into service (like asking the time, getting about on buses and trains, making friends). One thing really startles me, after nearly 3 years away from school the children are quietly educating themselves in all sorts of ways that seem even more valuable than the lessons... They were even able to pick grapes for a week and earn about £80 each for ski equipment."

(February 85)

France Andrew and Andree Roberts started home educating their three children while living in the Beaujolais region, near Lyon. "(They) did go to school (to an ecole nouvelle - a system where the school's programme is followed approximately with more consideration for and of the children) but the constraints of even this type of school made us all choose home education. Luckily we have one other family living nearby with whom we can exchange and socialise during the week. ... we are trying to get together to create a French 'EO' or 'Growing without schooling'."

(June 85)

Belize Our ex-treasurer Priscilla Park Weir wrote this from Belize, where she and her family lived for 2 years: "We have a wonderful selection of neighbouring children for our children to play with - Indian, Lebanese and black and white Belizian. No one seems to have minded that our children do not go to school and I have even found two other families, in this capital city of 6000 people, who have children out of school! Gavin is farming tarantulas under conch shells in the garden and Helen is busy picking up Creole (the local dialect). I have joined the local choral group and am trying to learn Spanish. In the garden our lemon tree is covered with fruit and our mango tree is flowering profusely. So all in all it is quite an education just being here."

(February 85)

*Readers - please note: Sarah does not hold and cannot send people back issues.
However, these are obtainable from EO Publications (see inside back cover).*

BOOK REVIEWS AND RESOURCES

One-to-One: A Practical Guide to Learning at Home Age 0-11 by Martin Williams

This is a very useful resource book for parents who have a keen interest in their children's education and who may be contemplating home education. The overview clearly points out the problems that can occur when very young children are sent off to educational establishments away from home for such a long time and the effect that can have on them. Martin Williams gives very sound reasons in favour of home education (his children are also taught at home) but he also offers helpful advice to parents who are opting for the school system. The book is well set out, as you would expect with a resource book, and easy to dip into. However, the typefaces used on some of the headings are not very clear. My children enjoyed the cartoon strips 'Bunnies go to Nursery School' and 'The Alien in My Desk', which were quite funny and produced by the author's children who were also responsible for some of the illustrations. There are lots of ideas that cover the basic subjects of reading, maths and writing along with art, craft, cooking and gardening, which are all covered according to age. The advice on writing suggests that children don't need to be writing before the age of 7 years and that using capitals is fine, which is a big relief for my 5-year-old and I, who have been struggling with this. Art is much more important, so that fine motor skills can develop, and writing will be a natural process from there on. This is a book put together by a home educating family, which has been well thought out, nicely presented and well worth a look at.

Eileen Steenman-Clark

£10.95 (incl p&p) www.nezertbooks.com to order on-line or cheque (sterling) to Nezert Books, Le Nezert, 22160 Dualt, France

Wings to Fly by Patrick Cooper

When I read *Wings to Fly*, my first thought was, I would never buy this book BUT when I got into it and really started to read, I really enjoyed it. The plot is unusual, not something you could easily think up. Of course like any book there were bits in it that you maybe weren't expecting - or wanting. Some of the story is based on real life, states the author, but the characters and the plot were entirely original. I can't think of much more to say apart from the fact that I couldn't have enjoyed this book more if it was a 'Harry Potter'!!!!

Amie Borthen (14)

£4.99 ISBN 1 84270 026 X Andersen Press

Out of the Shadow by Margaret Nash

Set in the Victorian 1800s in Bradford, this book revolves around a boy called Will and the mills of those days. Will's favourite friends are Alice and Mary, and the three of them work at the mill for half a day and then go to school. The foreman at the mill is Mr Dyson; he is always drunk and beating and fining people for very little things. One night Mary dares Will, Alice and herself to sneak into the Dark Lantern pub to see what it is like. Mary and Alice go through, and dare Will to go through and get an empty beer jug. Will goes in and gets trapped under a table and overhears men talking about a plan to strike at Brayshaw's mill where Will works. The children decide to tell Mr Dyson and Mr Brayshaw, but then Mary has an accident. I didn't enjoy this book much because there was not much detail about certain things in the story and the swear words in it were not necessary. This book is more suited for children between 8 and 11.

Simon Hoggarth (13)

£8.99 ISBN 0 7136 6100 3 A&C Black (Victorian Flashback series)

Belle Prater's Boy by Ruth White

Although this book was descriptive (I usually like this style of writing) I found it rather disappointing! There are two mysteries to this book. Set in the 50s, it is all about the disappearance of Woodrow's mother, and the death of Gypsy's father. The story starts off with Woodrow going to live with his grandparents, next door to Gypsy! It carries on, showing the everyday occurrences of their boring lives! Slowly the mystery of Gypsy's father unfolds, but we never get any further on with the mystery Woodrow's mum! This book, instead of reaching a final conclusion, just finishes off like the end of another chapter! It leaves you none the wiser on most of the main subjects. Although I didn't like this book, it was quite a hard read too, so I would say it was suitable for 11 to adults.

Megan Whiteman (11)

£4.99 ISBN 0-86315-355-0 Floris Books

The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer

This book is about a group of Pilgrims who are travelling from London to Canterbury to see the shrine of Saint Thomas à Becket. On the way they stop at a place called the Tabard Inn. The owner announces to the Pilgrims that on the way to Canterbury they each must tell a story; whoever wins will get a free meal at the Tabard Inn on the way back. Unfortunately Geoffrey Chaucer never finished the book so we do not know who wins. Each story is told by a different Pilgrim and some

are funny, some are sad, some are boring and some are better than others. In this version there were seven stories told in Modern English, which I found easy to understand. In the original book there are 24 tales. My favourite stories were *The Clerk's Tale*; *Patient Griselda* and *The Nun Priest's Tale*; *Chauntecleer* and *the Fox*. They are both funny stories. When I went to visit the Canterbury Tales attraction in Canterbury I saw *The Miller's Tale*, and would have liked it in this book. I think this book should have had more stories in it. I enjoyed this book and think it is worth a read for anyone 9+.

Simon Hoggarth (13)

£2.70 ISBN 0 582 42114 4 Penguin Readers Level 3

Animorphs by K A Applegate

The Animorphs are five kids and an alien known as an Andalite. They have the power to change into any animal they touch. They change into a variety of animals such as a tiger, wolf, cockroach and even sometimes other humans. Each Animorph takes a turn in writing a book from their individual perspectives. They are completely different personalities but assume separate roles so that they act together for the benefit of the group. Their enemy is the Yeerks who are a race of alien parasitic slugs who secretly enter the human ear canal, embedding themselves in the brain. They can use the human's memories and completely control their actions, although outwardly the person may look and act the same as they did before. The books imaginatively describe what it is like to change into different animals and to exert human control over the particular animal's instincts. They also deal with the Animorphs' moral dilemmas over what they are doing and how it is affecting them. Lots of adventure and imaginative description. Highly recommended. Mat has read over 40 of these books and has yet to be disappointed by any of them.

Anne Longmuir with Mat (12)

£3.99 - 5.99 each Scholastic

One Day at Wood Green Animal Shelter

by Patricia Casey

The pictures in this book are collages of photos and drawings put together so skilfully that we spent hours poring over the detail, working out how the artist had pieced each page together. The story too is captivating, relating true events from Wood Green Animal Shelter. It is a book full of hope and compassion, about dedicated people who frequently take their work home with them (after all, baby hedgehogs need feeding in the night). This is a beautifully produced book, a must for all animal lovers. Vivienne Hughes with Stephanie (9), Claudia (8) and Lucy (4) £10.00 ISBN 0 7445 61787 Walker

Ollie and the Bogle by Julia Jarman

I liked the sinister tone of this book. I felt that at any point something worse than what actually happened would happen. The subplot of the theft of the falcon's eggs wasn't as absorbing as the menacing plot of the elder bogle, although the plot was much more straightforward than the subplot. The most appealing character was the bogle itself. Excellent. This book is by the same author as the *Time Travelling Cat* series, which I also loved.

Kit Freiesleben (8)

£4.99 ISBN 18427 0039 1 Andersen Press

The Right Moment by David Belbin

The story covers the years of the Second World War and its immediate aftermath, told as a series of flashbacks by Jean, a young teenager living in occupied France. At the start of the book Jean desperately wants to secure his father's freedom from Nazi imprisonment but meanwhile he and his mother struggle with food restrictions in Paris and the threat of a call-up to work for the Germans. Reluctantly Jean agrees to his mother's suggestion that he should go to the comparative safety of the free French in the south to stay with his uncle and two cousins on their farm which is where most of the story is set. It ends with his return to Paris after the Nazi retreat and his joyful reunion with his released father. He experiences the contraband trade and conflicting loyalties between his two cousins, one who joins the Maquis (bandits or romantically brave resistance fighters?) and the other who has an ill-fated romance with a Nazi officer and is punished as a collaborator after the war is over. Jean has to decide where his own values lie and when, where and how he is going to make his stand. The style is simple and avoids stereotypes and sensationalism. It is thoughtfully written and Mat was able to identify with Jean's sensitive perceptions of the world and the decisions he had to make. He thought it was a great book despite it lacking the sort of sensational storyline of his usual science fiction books. Anne Longmuir with Mat (12) £4.99 A & C Black

Dilly-Dally and the Nine Secrets

by Elizabeth MacDonald and Ken Brown

When Dilly-Dally Duck is nowhere to be seen, Heron sends one of her chicks to look for her. Dilly-Dally Duck has been sitting on an island amongst the reeds, and does not want to go swimming as she has one very good reason not to. Each day that passes brings new visitors - all wondering why Dilly-Dally Duck will not leave her nest, but she does not reveal her secrets, which increase in number day by day... This counting

book is beautifully illustrated in watercolour, and is very readable. Hamzah liked it instantly, and was drawn by the illustrations of the riverside animals. A book that children will probably like to have read to them over and over again.

Aalyah Naqvi with Hamzah (3)

£4.99 ISBN 1-84270-005-7 Andersen Press

Webster J Duck by Martin Waddell

This is a simple story of a duckling who hatches out of his egg while his mum is elsewhere and of his search to find her. With lovely, friendly, large illustrations in soft watercolours, this is an appealing book for very young children. It includes some repetitive dialogue, great for children to join in with, and lots of animal noises that are always enjoyed.

A true hit with Leo. Caroline Farquar with Leo (1)

£10.99 ISBN 0 7445 7527 3 Walker Books

Mousemazia - an Amazing Dream House Maze
by Anna Nilsen and Dom Mansell

A fun book of mazes where you are asked to follow Dottie the mouse as her wanderings take her from the inside of a cushion to the roof of her house. There is a different maze on each page, accessed by a mousehole from the previous (or the next) page. Sometimes you are forced back to the previous maze and have to try a different route. There is loads of detail in the pictures to study, including little people called Busy Bodies who are so busy cleaning that they get in your way. The mazes were too intricate and complex for Lucy to follow properly (my opinion, not hers - she thought she was doing fine) but the older two spent quite some time following Dottie, and all of us felt inspired enough to have a go at drawing our own maze.

Vivienne Hughes with Stephanie (9), Claudia (8) and Lucy (4)

£4.99 ISBN 0 7445 8201 6 Walker Books

The Mathemagician's Apprentice by Brian Boyd

A maths adventure book with accompanying CD. It definitely made multiplication great fun for us and there are some really good (and easy tips) for remembering many of the tables eg an especially easy method of learning the nine times table using just fingers. Ozzy, the mathemagician's apprentice, has been set his final test through an enchanted forest but he needs help. This is where you can help him out by solving various problems. We went through the book first as this is the first part of the story and then through the CD to continue the adventure. There are 13 activities and 50 printable worksheets. Both the book and CD kept Keith enthralled for many sessions.

Sally Hall with Keith (7)

£14.99 (we got our copy from *The Book People* for under £4) ISBN 1 902804 04 X Tag Learning

Taking the Cat's Way Home by Jan Mark

Although this story is based around classroom politics, the emotions raised are easily identified with by any child. The girls found the story fantastic, great, and exciting. William sets out to bully Jane, her vulnerability lying in her love for her cat, Furlong. William gets his comeuppance with the help of Furlong on a satisfying, quite believable ending. The book is short and easy to read with atmospheric line drawings on each page, and could well prove cathartic for any young child who has experienced bullying.

Vivienne Hughes with Stephanie (9), Claudia (8) Lucy (4)

£3.99 ISBN 0 7445 8268 7 Walker

Look-Alikes by Joan Steiner

This 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, overalls 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 that 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)

£4.99 ISBN 1 84270 013 8 Andersen Press

Reader Rabbit's Reading CD ROM

This is as well produced as Reader Rabbit's Thinking (reviewed in October issue). The graphics and sound are attractive. There are on-screen books to read (copying the voice) as well as fun reading-based activities (for 4 - 6 year olds). As you move along the path, the reading books get progressively harder. This is a program which needs adult supervision to get started although it

does not take long to realise how the program works and what is expected. It progresses through the reading quite fast so I feel it would be better for someone who had already started the reading process. Both Natasha and Anthea like this CD-ROM. It is hard work but enjoyable for short periods for the beginner reader and a confidence booster for the slightly more able reader.

Clare Crane with Natasha (6) and Anthea (5)
£19.99 *The Learning Company*

Annie and the Aliens by Emily Smith

This book is about secrets. Annie's brothers and a friend keep secrets from Annie. She does not like it and she tries to find out what the secret is. She tries to find out by looking on her brothers' computer and in her brothers' room. Annie gets her brothers' little toy spaceship and makes it look as if it is really flying. The brothers' friend does not like Annie poking about but the brothers are loyal to their sister and let Annie get her own way. I think it is a story for 6-10 year olds to read themselves. I thought it was really good all the way through.

Tabitha Cromie (8)

£7.99 ISBN 086284 695 2 *Andersen Press*

The Barefoot Book of Heroic Children

by Rebecca Hazell.

This is a book of short stories and at the start of each story it says you travel back in time to the time when the story is set. Then you meet the person the story is about, told by the author. Then the person whose story it is tells you in their own voice about something they did or something that happened to them when they were younger. Each story has a different border and at least two pictures. I think this is a very good book. I liked the story called *Captive Princess* about Pocahontas and *A Flight of Cranes* about Sadako Sasaki. She lived in Japan and her story takes place between 1943 and 1955. She had leukaemia because of the bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima in Japan. She was making a thousand origami cranes because in Japan they believe that if a sick person makes a thousand cranes then they will get better. Sadako made 634 cranes and then she died, but her classmates made all the rest of the cranes so that she could be buried with the thousand cranes. Later a statue of her got built of her holding a golden crane. It is in the Peace Park in Hiroshima. People still make and collect cranes for Peace Day. There are stories from West Africa, Tibet, Pakistan and many others. They are from 962 BC up until 1995 and lots in between. The book has lovely illustrations.

Molly Whitehall (8)

£14.99 ISBN 1 902283 22 8 *Barefoot Books*

Remember Me by Irene Watts

This book is the sequel to *Good-bye Marianne* also by Irene Watts. It is a book about a Jewish girl who has escaped from Hitler in Germany on a boat train. In England she does not understand the language or the culture and she misses her mother a lot. She is sent to Mrs Abercrombie-Jones to be looked after. There she is treated like a servant and only the cook is her friend. When war is declared her school is evacuated to Wales and she is sent to Mr and Mrs Roberts who did have a child called Elizabeth but she died. Mrs Roberts tried to turn Marianne into Elizabeth. So at her school she said she didn't like her new billet so Mr Evens (someone at her school) took her to the railway station and her mother was there and they both went to London together and it was happy. I think the book was very good and it was written very well. I am glad I got to find out about what happened to Marianne after the first book.

Molly Whitehall (8)

£4.99 ISBN 0 86315 352 6 *Floris Books (Flyway series)*

Enid Blytons Noddy - The Magic of Toytown on a CD ROM

The Magic of Toytown is an impressive computer package. There is a broad range of activities. In Tessie's studio there is a memory game and also a painting activity, which allows you to colour pictures or to create a picture of your own. 'Storytime' tells a story whilst you can follow the words. 'Cinema' shows films with a control panel for stop/reverse/forward. There are films to create (within a strict framework) and games to play (snap, mazes, etc.). The graphics and sound are very good. The user guide is brief but informative, explaining how each activity works as well as suggestions for supporting your child's learning. One aspect of the package that I found annoying is that you cannot skip the introduction or any of the explanations at the start of each new activity. This did not seem to bother Natasha and Anthea though, and one positive outcome is that the user is certainly helped through the activities and my help has rarely been needed. *The Magic of Toytown* is a firm favourite of Natasha and Anthea's.

Clare Crane with Natasha (6) and Anthea (5)
£9.99 *The Learning Company*

Circle of Doom by Tim Kennemore

Tricia says "Even though *Circle of Doom* is good, I don't think it will be the best book I've read. It was easy to remember what the characters looked like, but I couldn't work out what the location was like, because the book didn't have any pictures. It was quite funny. Lizzie decides to become a witch and

CHRISTMAS PRESENT IDEAS

casts a spell on her nasty neighbours, the Potwards. It works - they go in 24 hours. Then she casts a spell on her teacher, Fish, and that works too. Then her one brother, Dan, asks Lizzie to get rid of their little brother's pretend friends and of course, that works. The funny thing is that she uses dogs urine! I liked this book, it was fun." Sue adds "I thought this was a funny book too. I'm sure parents will recognise some of the family situations. I especially liked Max (the younger brother) trying to cast a spell on the school bully but there are lots of other comic moments in there."

Sue Onions with Tricia Onions (9)

£ 4.99 ISBN 1 84270 044 8 Andersen Press

The Bedside Book for Very Young Guests

by Albine Taylor

I liked this book because it's got nice pictures, poems and short stories. My favourite story was *A Walk in the Woods*. It's about two bears that have a walk in the wood and they meet lots of different animals. The other story I liked was called *The Tortoise and the Snake* and it had some big words with capital letters, which I like. Some of the stories talked about yawning and being sleepy, but that didn't work for me. I think this is a book that other children of my age would really enjoy.

Eoghan Steenman-Clark (5)

£8.95 ISBN 1-85776-528-1 The Book Guild Ltd

Medicine News by Phil Gates

This is a diversion from the history period news books and covers the history of medicine from cavemen to present day. It is set out in easy to read little sections with each page covering a period in history and focusing on the most prevalent illness of that period e.g. black death or smallpox, or things like antiseptics or anaesthetic. It says it supports KS2-3 history and science but I would say the format would interest a younger child.

Diane Cromie

£ 4.99 ISBN 9 780744 578553 Walker Books

Little Monster CD Roms

The final wave of this popular interactive series for 3 - 7 year olds has just been released. Each CD teaches reading, literacy and numeracy in a fun way using the well known, fun characters from the popular story books and TV series. The original titles received favourable reviews and we will be reviewing the new titles in the next issue.

£ 9.99 each Ransom Publishing

Tarquin Pop-up Books

Freyja Steenman-Clark (9) reviewed *The Greeks* by Pam Mara (ISBN 0-906212-33-2)

"I liked this book because it was fun to put together. I cut it out, but it was quite difficult to put together so my mum helped me. You have to be quite organised and follow the instructions carefully or you could easily get mixed up when putting each scene together. It's a fun way of learning about history, especially the Greeks, as a lot of the names are quite difficult to pronounce. It helps you to develop some understanding of early civilisations such as the Minoans as well, and there is a geography element in tracing where all these civilisations were on a map. The pop-up book looks really great when you have finished, but you may need help in making it.

Keith Hall (7) reviewed *London* by Anne Wild

This is a pop-up book which I really like because you make it yourself. I actually knew I would like it because Mum has bought me lots of Tarquin books and I like every one. I want to go to London one day and with this book I could actually make all the places that I would like to go and see when I go to London - like the Tower of London, St Paul's Cathedral, the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, Trafalgar Square and Buckingham Palace. Most of the pages were quite easy to make but one was a bit tricky and my dad had to help me. At the back is a list of all the places you can see in London and you can tick them when you have visited them. When I finished the book it looked just like a real pop up book.

3.50 each - other titles in series are 'Paris', 'Egyptian', 'Romans', 'Maya, Aztecs and Incas'. Tarquin Publications

Usborne Puzzle Books

This is a series of books for different ages and there are lots of different titles available. Emma Whitehall (11) reviewed *Agent Arthurs Arctic Adventure* by Martin Oliver (ISBN 0 7460 4549 2). "On each page there is a short bit of text, pictures and a puzzle question. The pictures are cartoon style and there are often things to spot in them. In each book there are one or two main characters who usually go on a journey to a strange place, such as Rome. There are often some bad characters who are trying to stop the main character from doing what they want to do. There are clues in backwards writing at the end of the book if you are not sure and answers if you really don't know. The main characters are mostly children. The puzzles are

things like a place where there are lots of women who look the same, but are wearing slightly different coats. You have to work out which one is the real Bella Donna (an evil woman). There are also things like deciphering secret codes, spotting things such as Lucy's other sandal, and working out safe routes through a dangerous place. Each book is a different story, but similar puzzles."

The Incredible Dinosaur Adventure was reviewed by Jem Freiesleben (6) (it was Usborne Puzzle books - Puzzle World - that started Jem off reading by himself) and he loved this one. "Puzzle books are probably my favourite kind of book. I like puzzle books because it is a story and it's got puzzles in as well. Some of the puzzles are codes, some are questions, and they are hard which I like." £2.99 each (lots of different titles in series)
Usborne Puzzle Adventure

The Christmas Craft Book by Thomas Berger
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£13.99, including p&p. Hawthorn Press
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Alternative Kidz

A new 32-page magazine, for children aged 7-12, produced by a husband and wife team. A subscription would make an ideal Christmas present. Special offer to EO members: £12 annual subscription for 4 full colour issues. It includes exciting activities, news, views, jokes and a wide range of articles from yoga to cooking, from farming to the zodiac. Not 'schooly' and very educational but in a fun way.
Alphabet Books Ltd, 47 Woodplace Lane, Coulsdon, Surrey CR5 1NF, tel 01737 556768

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An unusual and innovative new card game that uses the player's skill in combining words together to make compounds, a compound being defined as: "two words that when placed together, function as a separate word". A fun game which can be played by children and adults together.
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An inspirational book with over 300 pages absolutely crammed full of information, ideas, recipes, stories, poems, songs and activities to learn about and celebrate the main festivals of the year - from Candlemass to Christmas and Midsummer's day to the Winter Solstice. Black and white sketches accompany many of the craft ideas. A lovely book if you are interested in festivals and celebrations.

£12.99 ISBN 1 869890 47 7 Hawthorn Press
(Scottish Book Source for orders)

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Home education in the news: Time magazine

Make it on to the cover of Time magazine, it is generally thought, and you have arrived, or at least have gained a toehold in the national consciousness. Many home-educating American families will have been gratified but not entirely surprised to see themselves represented on the front of the August edition of Time magazine, with an extensive report inside on this fast-growing phenomenon. For, as the report reveals, home education is already having an effect on educational policy in many US states and has been recognised as a force for good in society as far as the White House. The sheer numbers of American children being educated at home mean that there is increasing flexibility, choice and options for real cooperation opening up between schools and home-educating families, as this article shows. Let's hope that future British educational policy follows suit.

Home Sweet School

The new home schoolers aren't hermits. They are diverse parents who are getting results - and putting the heat on public schools. By John Cloud and Jodie Morse

Earlier this month, J.C. Penney learned the hard way just how powerful the home-schooling movement has become. Penney's had recently started selling a T shirt that wickedly crystallized many people's assumptions about the movement: "home schooled" giggles the shirt, which also depicts a trailer home. The folks at Penney's say they meant no harm - they didn't even design the T, which had become popular in other stores first. But they yanked it from the shelves Aug. 8 after enraged missives poured in from home-schooling families, some of whom threatened a boycott.

Penney's should have known better. Over the past decade, the ranks of families home schooling have grown dramatically. According to a new federal report, at least 850,000 students were learning at home in 1999, the most recent year studied; some experts believe the figure is actually twice that. As recently as 1994, the government estimated the number at just 345,000. True, even the largest estimates still put the home schooled at only 4% of the total K-12 population - but that would mean more kids learn at home than attend all the public schools in Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming combined.

While politicians from Washington on down to your school board have been warring over charter schools and vouchers in recent years, home schooling has quietly outpaced both of those more attention-getting reforms (only half a million kids are in charter schools, and just 65,000 receive vouchers). In many ways, in fact, home schooling has become a threat to the very notion of public education. In some school districts, so many parents are pulling their children out to teach them at home that the districts are bleeding millions of dollars in per-pupil funding. Aside from money, the drain of families is eroding something more precious: public confidence in the schools.

Thomas Jefferson and the other early American crusaders for public education believed the schools would help sustain democracy by bringing everyone together to share values and learn a common history. In the little red brick schoolhouse, we would pursue both "democracy in education and education in democracy," as Stanford historian David Tyack gracefully puts it. Home schooling forsakes all that by defining education not as the pursuit of an entire community but as the work of one family and its chosen circle. Which can be great. Despite some drawbacks, there are signs that home-schooling parents are doing a better job than public schools at teaching their kids. But as the number of kids learning at home grows, we should pause to wonder: Better at teaching them what? Home schooling may turn out better students, but does it create better citizens?

To see how home schooling threatens public schools, look at Maricopa County, Ariz. The county has approximately 7,000 home-schooled students. That's only 1.4% of school-age kids,

but it means \$35 million less for the county in per-pupil funding. The state of Florida has 41,128 children (1.7%) learning at home this year, up from 10,039 in the 1991-92 school year; those kids represent a loss of nearly \$130 million from school budgets in that state. Of course the schools have fewer children to teach, so it makes sense that they wouldn't get as much money, but the districts lose much more than cash. "Home schooling is a social threat to public education," says Chris Lubienski, who teaches at Iowa State University's college of education. "It is taking some of the most affluent and articulate parents out of the system. These are the parents who know how to get things done with administrators."

To be sure, many public schools - and their baleful unions and wretched bureaucrats, their rigid rules and we-know-best manner - have done a lot to hurt themselves. But as the most committed parents leave, the schools may falter more, giving the larger community yet another reason to fret over their condition. "A third of our support for schools comes from property taxes," says Ray Simon, director of the Arkansas department of education. "If a large number of a community's parents do not fully believe in the school system, it gets more difficult to pass those property taxes. And that directly impacts the schools' ability to operate." Says Kellar Noggle, executive director of the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators: "We still have 440,000 kids in public schools, and some 12,000 [in home schooling] is a small number. But those 12,000 have parents and grandparents. Sure, it erodes public support."

The thus far steep growth of home schooling does have limits, as it takes a galactic commitment of time and money and patience for a parent to spend all day, every day, relearning algebra (or getting it for the first time) and then teaching it. It's fair to assume that a majority of parents won't want to give up those delightfully quiet hours when the kids are at school. The softening economy may also begin to thin the ranks of home schoolers, many of whom are middle-class families that can't afford private schools; if stay-at-home teaching parents have to take a job, free public school will start to look very inviting.

But for now, home schooling is still growing at about 11% a year, and it's no longer confined to a conservative fringe that never believed in the idea of public education anyway. "Very different people are entering home schooling than did 20 years back," says Mitchell Stevens, author of *Kingdom of Children*, a history of home schooling to be published next month by Princeton University Press. According to the Federal Government, up to three-quarters of the families that home school today say they do so primarily because, like so many of us, they are worried about the quality of their children's education. A recent report by the state of Florida found that just a quarter of families in that state practice home schooling for religious reasons. The new home schoolers haven't completely given up on public education, at least not the idea of it. "The problem is that schools have abandoned their mission," says Luigi Manca, a communications professor at Benedictine University in Lisle, Ill., who home schools his daughter Nora, 17. "They've forgotten about educating."

William Bennett used to be the U.S. Secretary of Education, but today he travels the nation to preach the home-school gospel. "I'm here to talk about the revolution of common sense," he told a Denver home-schooling conference in June. Working himself up to promote K12, his slick, new, for-profit online school for home schoolers, Bennett even suggested that "maybe we should subcontract all of public education to home schoolers." It was strange to watch a man once responsible for federal aid to public schools urge people to desert them. Imagine if Colin Powell gave a speech saying we should disband the U.S. Army and assemble local militias.

But many are following. They are folks like Tim and Lisa Dean of Columbia, Md., working parents (he manages technical support for the U.S. Senate; she's a part-time attorney) who home school Bitsy, 5, and Teddy, 4. Contrary to the old picture of homeschoolers, Tim doesn't leave all the teaching to his wife, and they helped start a home-school support group two years ago that includes parents who are gay and straight; black, white, Asian American and biracial; Democrat and Republican.

The conservative Christians who worked so hard in the 1980s to make home schooling legal in every state are as committed as ever, but more politically moderate Christians have also joined

the movement. Susie Capraro, who home schools her son and daughter, used to be part of the Broward County Parent Support Group, the largest home-schooling network in Florida and one founded on Judeo-Christian principles. Although she considers herself a Fundamentalist Christian, Capraro didn't like group rules that keep non-Christians from leadership roles or other exclusionary gestures, like the ice skating event that featured only Christian music. "We wanted a place where people could get the support they needed without the religion," says Capraro, who along with 10 families co-founded Home Educators Lending Parents Support. "[Religion is] not the purpose of our group, but rather to get together for the best education." Today the three-year-old organization includes more than 150 families representing Evangelicals as well as Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and others.

For this story, Time reporters interviewed more than 70 home-schooling parents around the U.S. to find the new faces of the movement, including a biology professor at Spelman College; a midwife and artist in Canton, Ga.; an attorney and part-time basketball coach in Houston; an Arkansas state legislator; and Leo Damrosch, a Harvard English professor who began home schooling his sons, 10 and 13, in part because "the two writers I've studied most intensively for many years, William Blake and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, were both geniuses of astounding originality, and neither of them went to school for a single day."

Many of the home-schooling parents we met were religious, but few were home schooling only to instill values. They had come to their decision after a variety of frustrations. Among them: the Fayetteville, Ga., school with 45 kindergartners in one room; the school administrators in Wheaton, Ill., who were so confused over what to do with Sue McCallum's boy that they put him in both remedial and gifted classes; the Glendale, Calif., school where Robert Phillipps' fifth-grader Bill saw too many fistfights.

These parents got fed up in different ways, but what they have in common is a willingness to sacrifice - money, career opportunities, watching soap operas - for their children's education. Sometimes these sacrifices are small, like giving up a dining room to make a classroom. But consider the Carnells of Columbia, Md., who started home schooling Erin, 6, because a shoulder injury required occupational therapy that would have interfered with school hours. The Carnells decided to keep teaching her at home because they feel they can do a better job than local schools. To teach her math and science in the mornings, Fred, a government cartographer, works the office graveyard shift, which means he and his wife Debbie, a claims adjuster, hardly see each other. The family rarely eats dinner together, and the parents are constantly exhausted. Says Debbie: "I have my schedule down to the hour on an Excel work sheet."

Erin will doubtless benefit educationally from her parents' exertions. But imagine what American public education would look like if parents who currently home school flooded their local schools with all that mighty dedication instead. One doesn't diminish a home-schooling parent's sacrifice for his child to note that he may also be abdicating some of his responsibilities to his community. "In a home school, a parent can really insulate a child from the vibrant, pluralistic, democratic world," says Rob Reich, who teaches political science at Stanford. Susanne Allen, 35, a home-schooling mother from Atlanta, claims her children will be "better citizens" because home schooling gives them the opportunity to work together, rather than sitting at individual desks. "They learn to be caring for other people by seeing an older sibling care for them," she says. But will that make them better citizens or just better siblings?

Then again, if a parent lives in, say, California, where 30 kids pack the average third-grade classroom, who can blame her for home schooling? If it's a choice between being good to one's family or good to one's community, it's not much of a choice at all. Many, of course, try to be both, but some parents say the schools are too far gone. Amy Langley, who home schools her son and daughter in Decatur, Ga., believes two-income families don't participate enough to make public schools work. "And too much class time is spent on discipline," she says.

For all that home-schooling parents give up, what are their kids getting? We know the average SAT score for home schoolers in 2000 was 1100, compared with 1019 for the general population. And a large study by University of Maryland education researcher Lawrence

Rudner showed that the average home schooler scored in the 75th percentile on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills; the 50th percentile marked the national average. But not all home schoolers take standardized tests, and one suspects the better students are the ones volunteering to do so. It's also difficult to assess how a child who is home schooled would have done in a traditional school. Because of the paucity of research, no one can say much more than this: home schooling seems to require the same formula for success as parenting, which is to say, it can work when the parents are loving and open-minded and dedicated. As Simon of the Arkansas department of education says, "You've got examples of very well-structured home schools and total disasters, just like you do in the public schools."

Certainly the old suspicion of the academic credentials of home-schooled kids has waned; perhaps three-quarters of universities now have policies for dealing with home-schooled applicants, according to Cafi Cohen, author of *The Homeschoolers' College Admissions Handbook*. Today Harvard admissions officers attend home-schooling conferences looking for applicants, and Rice and Stanford admit home schoolers at rates equal to or higher than those for public schoolers. These schools compete for students like L.J. Decker, 17, from Katy, Texas, who scored 1560 on the SAT and was part of a team of home schoolers who won the Toshiba ExploraVision contest for their idea of a futuristic scuba device that would use artificial hemoglobin to convert the oxygen in water into air. Some colleges, like Kennesaw State University in Georgia, aggressively recruit home schoolers. Justin Tomczak, 22, now a sales associate for Salomon Smith Barney, was one of them. After he arrived at Kennesaw several years ago, he started a group for home-schooled kids, but today home schoolers have become so integrated into campus life that the group has pretty much disbanded. "Back then, [other students] thought we were religious weirdos who couldn't cope," he says. "Now the perception is totally different."

That's partly because the old canard that home schoolers are hermits has largely been disproven. In fact nearly 1 in 5 takes at least one class in a public or private school, according to the Federal Government. Home schoolers participate in extracurricular activities too. Many of the home-schooling parents interviewed by Time were just as busy as any parents scheduling baseball practices and ballet classes. Judi Thomas of Marietta, Ga., says her daughter Juliet, 9, "has tap and ballet on Tuesdays; Wednesdays, there's choir; Thursdays, she has classes with other home schoolers; Fridays, there's usually a play date or a field trip."

Home schooling's successes didn't come easily, though the practice is actually an old tradition. In the early years of this country, most children were educated at home, either by parents or tutors. Public education started in the middle of the 19th century. When, in the 1960s, a leftist education reformer named John Holt began pushing home schooling as an alternative to conformist public schools, his ideas were seen as fringe. Home schooling was illegal in many states until the 1980s and '90s, when well-organized evangelical Christians adopted home schooling as a way to escape what they saw as the creeping disorder of the campus.

Today home schoolers run one of the most effective lobbies in Washington, with connections all the way to the White House, where the President recently hosted a reception for home-schooled students. Bush's Under Secretary for Education Eugene Hickok told Time that "we cannot blame people for exercising their choices and home schooling until we have some real changes out there."

-- With reporting by Steve Barnes/Little Rock, Amy Bonesteel and Leslie Everton Brice/Atlanta, Beau Briese/Cambridge, Deborah Fowler/Houston, Kathie Klarreich/Miami, Jeanne McDowell/Los Angeles, Maggie Sieger/Chicago and Rebecca Winters/New York

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With thanks to Judith Poore for drawing my attention to this, and to Priscilla Park-Weir for continuing contributions and interest. Articles on home education with date and name of publication always needed; please send to me at address inside cover or email akennedysmith@yahoo.co.uk.

Ann Kennedy Smith.

Responses to Belinda

A Big, Big Thank You ...

...to Belinda Harris-Reid for her 'disjointed and lengthy diatribe' (NL 142). I immediately got it photocopied and sent it to a friend. It was absolutely wonderful! So much so that I feel like always having a copy about my person so that, when the inevitable questions are asked, I could hand over the paper. That's why I do it. It says everything and more!

When my son Tim was about 10, I took on the job of single parent helpline, which was really interesting as it put me in touch with lots of single mums and dads. All of us were struggling with little money and resources but had the overriding desire to see our children happy. Tim is, at 21, probably one of my best friends. He is a truly genuine, lovely young man who is happy doing what he is doing, which is all I ever wanted for him. The fact that he is in his 2nd year at Epsom University is the icing on the cake, and still a mystery to me. But then I never had a life plan for him. He's got there through his love of Art, which has been there since he was old enough to hold a pencil. He's always been creative, has managed to take various courses at college which, in some magical way, produces bits of paper equivalent to GCSEs, and then 'A' levels, enabling him to enrol. He sailed through the interview, with a good portfolio, and off he went. He's getting good grades, has a social life, works his socks off behind a bar to earn money to live, student loans, form filling - phew! Gets drunk, vomits, plays loud music and all that. Lovely girlfriend. But of course he's not at home now; he shares a house with three mates, and he invites us to stay. I love him to bits!

And now I'm doing it all again with our little daughter, Robbie aged 6 ½ with partner Jim. Completely different ball game, but that's another story. Watch this space!

Thanks again, Belinda!

Jenny Blower, 77 Vale Road, St Leonards-on-Sea, E. Sussex Tel 01424 434953

Praise for Belinda

As a new member of Education Otherwise, I read Belinda Harris-Reid's article, "Leaving Formal Education Behind" with interest and some amusement. That's not to say that I don't agree with what she said - indeed I do!

I was structurally educated in a grammar school and I hated it. I can understand the plight of her family friend who hates his art class: when choosing 'O' levels, if I wanted to take Music, which I very much did, I had to take Chemistry, which I very much didn't, and subsequently the majority of Chemistry lessons were spent in the girls' loo reading science fiction novels! I also taught music in a secondary school and most of the pupils weren't interested, even though I tried to make things as interesting as possible. Basically, half of them were tone deaf and I must admit that a lot of the things I was required to teach them wouldn't have interested me that much either!

When I first started teaching Luke at home, I wasn't a member of EO and therefore kept strictly to the GCSE curriculum. But when I joined I learned a few things about home education that I wasn't aware of, and backed off a little. Back to the library went "To Kill A Mockingbird" and "Lord of the Flies". Instead I got a loan and bought a computer with Internet access. So much better!

Luke now spends hours on the computer, scanning an encyclopaedia disk, or on a website. He is learning what he wants to learn about. His preference leans towards wildlife and the outdoors in general, although he still studies English, Maths, Science and French.

Belinda, your article was witty, yet so very true. And, Anne, I am so relieved that your nephew was in London in September. I too feel strongly for all those poor innocent victims and their families and friends.

Thanks for EO's continued support.

Heather Email: luke.heather@virgin.net

The Libertarian Family Network/To Be Free: A Radical Alternative

"Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion, because every opinion now accepted as obvious was once eccentric" - Bertrand Russell

Many EO families will know about the existence of the LFN, the group based in South Devon which evolved about five years ago, and To Be Free, the nationwide journal which explores the ideas of being non-schooling and libertarian. Many EO families have contacted us over the years; many, many have phoned and written; many have met with us; hundreds have subscribed to TBF; and a few have moved to South Devon to be part of what we hoped would be a loose kind of community of like-minded families. This article is a form of update.

Firstly, for those people who have had no contact with the ideas of being non-schooling and libertarian, I offer a short and insufficient explanation of the meaning of *libertarian* as I define it: libertarian is the word I use for being free with our children, not just within the sphere of so called education but expanding freedom through their entire lives; it takes the meaning of autonomous and extends this meaning into the political; it recognises the use of parental power and challenges this; it recognises the distress sustained in each parent's own childhood which moulds our present day parenting; it situates children as an oppressed group; it recognises childhood as a primary grooming ground for all oppression; it supports each child's right to be whoever they are and express this in their own unique and individual ways and live their lives however they choose; it asserts the possibility of children being free people and being happy.

The LFN has gone through many changes. At first these changes seemed negative and destructive, but I've come to see them as positive, a part of any entity's living history. The three core families involved in the creation of LFN have come to a place of separation, with regard to LFN, for a variety of reasons, some personal, some deeply political; and these reasons have led to the other founder families disconnecting from LFN and following their own paths. However, for Nick and I, and for Arran and Willow, LFN still exists, and we are committed to the continuation of its existence, although that existence might be less clear for a time. Most especially we are deeply and politically committed to the ideas with the *concepts*, the document which sets out our foundation thinking. To Be Free, the journal we edited for a number of years, is in abeyance at this time, although we do still send out back issues to interested people, as the articles have not become dated with the passing of time. Part of the reason for To Be Free's lull in publication, is because I have been writing a book exploring the many intimate and political issues intrinsic within being non-schooling and libertarian, and based around the original ideas with the *concepts*.

For those families who would like a copy of the *concepts*, a back copy/copies of To Be Free, or who would just like to have a chat about being libertarian or to talk about the ongoing possibilities of LFN, then please contact us: Sammy and Nick on 01548 830716 or write to us at Homecroft, Brownston Street, Modbury, Devon PL21 0RQ.

Our work with LFN does not in any way affect or influence our ongoing work within EO where anybody, however they choose to home educate, is welcome to contact us in relation to our work as local EO contact for South Devon and EO nationwide contact for Autonomous Education Support and Legal Advice.

Lastly, I want to thank the Harris-Reid family and the Lindsey-Turner family for their time with, and input into, the Libertarian Family Network.

Sammy Vidal-Hall

Harriet's Way

ANOTHER SUCCESS FOR HOME EDUCATION

I write to tell you of some exciting and encouraging news. I am in the unusual position of running a home education programme for a ten-year-old girl called Harriet who is diagnosed as having "severe learning difficulties with autistic tendencies". We run a "Son-Rise" programme for her. "Son-Rise" is an attitudinal educational standpoint rather than a curriculum-based programme. The situation is unusual in that I am employed by her parents to run the programme on their behalf (naturally under their guidance and direction). So I am atypical as far as the membership of EO is concerned.

Part of my job has been to try and secure some funding for our home education programme from the LEA. In order to start this process Harriet's Statement had to be updated. This inevitably brought me into contact with the LEA, Surrey LEA in our case. We chased and chased them and eventually they came to see us. Well, initially our contact with the LEA was through their "home education" liaison officer. She was a wonderful woman: broad-minded, open, friendly and accepting. She came to watch the programme in action (we work in a playroom that has the facility for observation for the purposes of training) and was full of praise for what we were doing for Harriet and for how we were doing it. Later we had contact with the LEA's Educational Psychologist who was, shall we say, a little different. He had to assess Harriet's abilities and so he had to administer some "tests". The playroom is "Harriet's domain". As much as possible we try to let her feel that she is in charge of what goes on. She is used to the people who visit the room being "user friendly". Also, because we do a lot of physical as well as mental activity in the room, everyone who enters is asked to remove their footwear. On his first visit, the Educational Psychologist arrived in a double-breasted suit, brogues and carrying a briefcase. He entered the playroom, introduced himself to Harriet (who had never met him before) as Mr X, shook hands with her (?!) and proceeded to open his briefcase, bring out some test materials and try to test Harriet. She climbed under the desk and refused to come out for the entire duration of his stay! I explained to him that the basis of the programme was really about building a rapport with Harriet based on friendship and that I was not surprised that she had behaved as she had. Surely even a TYPICAL child of nine years old would have been suspicious and possibly fearful when placed in the same situation. I have to say that I was absolutely flabbergasted that someone in his position, who must have worked with and assessed hundreds of special needs and typical children, would behave in such an inappropriate and ridiculous manner.

Under my guidance Mr Connor return in casual clothing and brought his tests in a box wrapped up like a present for Harriet to open. This time she did engage but the results, in my opinion, were far from an accurate record of her true abilities, largely because of the "dry", monotone, uninspiring way in which they were presented. Anyway the Ed Psych got his "test score" and off he went. I would like to point out that the "Home Education Officer" and the "Educational Psychologist" employed by the same authority had NEVER PREVIOUSLY MET, despite the fact that they had both worked for the authority for a number of years!

To cut a long story very short, we strongly disagreed with the contents of the Statement which eventually emerged from the offices of the LEA. (After months of visits to hospitals, etc for more tests, poor Harriet was sick of hospitals and tests by the end of the whole process). We drew up our own case with the help of a dear friend with lots of experience at writing statements and disagreeing with LEAs. We insisted that it was more suitable for Harriet to be home educated and that we

were doing a great job of just that and that we deserved to be financially supported in our endeavours. The case went to Tribunal. I have to say that, despite our nerves, the Tribunal was very fair-handed. I think, largely because we were not emotional, we had built a very strong case and we knew that, even if the Tribunal ruled against us, we still had the right to home educate if we didn't get funding. The Tribunal actually adjourned the hearing (neither myself nor anyone else had heard of this happening before: the LEA were clearly furious) and asked that we spend some more time in dialogue with the LEA. We did so but they were still insisting that Harriet attend school. I would like to point out at this point that Harriet's parents had taken her out of school four years previously because of the way her behaviour had deteriorated due to the pressure of being in school. They found out about "Son-Rise", sought training and began straight away. They saw an almost immediate cessation in all her anti-social behaviour.

Our intention was to try to get funding for the programme we run; the LEA's intention was to get Harriet into school. The LEA felt that Harriet was losing out on socialisation opportunities even though she had a rich social life within the village and had begun to make friends at the local primary school. (I had privately approached the Head and asked if Harriet could join a class to do PE and also for lunchtime play). Negotiations began. The LEA hinted that money to support our programme might be forthcoming if we at least tried to integrate Harriet into school. We agreed, with the proviso that if she could not handle a class situation we had the right to withdraw her and still retain our funding. They agreed!

So the current situation is that Harriet attends a local school for children with various levels of educational challenge, three mornings a week. In addition, we transferred her "riding for the disabled" day so that she can now join her new classmates who have just begun to ride. The rest of the week she works one-to-one in the playroom with myself. We are receiving £200 a week to help with the cost of running the programme. We consider this to be a massive victory for a number of reasons: in contrast to her earlier school experiences, Harriet is loving her new school; she has the benefit of maintaining her one-to-one time in the playroom; our proviso still stands so that, if Harriet begins to feel pressurised or school phobic, we have the right to withdraw her whilst keeping our funding. As far as we are aware there are few, if any, other examples of this particular LEA granting funding for a home-based programme.

Our intention in sharing this information with you is that it might offer some comfort and encouragement to other families seeking funding for their home-based programmes especially if their children have special needs. Surrey LEA are notoriously difficult, cagey and thrifty so our case was a real watershed. We consider that this has set a precedent (even though I'm sure the LEA would argue otherwise).

We would like to take this opportunity to thank EO for all the inspiration they have brought to our programme, as well as offering our gratitude to the Riding for the Disabled Association; to Mrs Cauldwell, previously of St Mary's primary school, Chiddingfold; and particularly to Alan Phillips for all his valuable and hard work with us on compiling a case with which to go to Tribunal. For anyone seeking advice on Tribunal issues, special needs home-education programmes, or the statement process, Alan may be contacted via his website at www.autism.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk. Alan's prices are very reasonable and he is second to none in terms of his ability and commitment.

Gavin Burke, c/o "Hadmans", The Green, Chiddingfold, Surrey GU84TT

Agony Column - resurrected

I am throwing all of these things up and putting them out there into the universe, albeit a homeschooling universe, and I hope that you can all take your Homeschooling (with capital letters) hats off, and consider some of my dilemmas, from one parent to another:

1. I have a huge problem with elitism. Sometimes it seems that, rather than objecting to the competitive atmosphere of a school, homeschooling families carry with them this great awareness and consciousness that what they have chosen is Best, that their child and its world is Better, and that other children are pretty much wretched. I want to hear about ways of integrating homeschoolers amongst all the other kids, so that no-one pays much attention. I'm sure this goes on all the time. Did those children have to go to school to make connections and then drop out? I hate to start off on an aggressive note, but it pervades my whole reaction to homeschooling (maybe it's a latent tendency of my own?) - this feeling that homeschooled children are at the most elite, high-status, utterly desirable school all of their own, and it's one that their terribly thoughtful and profound parents have created. And the rest of the children be damned. I get this feeling from all the "How Homeschooled Children Are More Fortunate/ Better Adjusted" letters and articles that drive the entire homeschooling engine. I also realise that maybe this is a necessary impulse, at this stage, in order to drive it at all. Without this tension between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' (and I think we all know which our children are), maybe homeschooling as a movement would be unable to get off the ground? I have to remind myself that it is a movement still in its infancy, but frankly, this attitude is a real barrier to moving on.

2. To carry on from this. In a sort of 'continuum' sense, if we live in a mixed-race area, and even a mixed-class area (and I know this is rare these days), doesn't the local school embrace this aspect of community life as a home-based life cannot? It's OK, this one I can think through and provide a counter-attack to myself. I do wish I wasn't on the attack. I don't know why my hackles are raised towards the homeschooling world. It just seems so privileged and precious: maybe it's because I'm on my own now, but I know there are single parents homeschooling out there. But this mixed-race and class thing - I would have to battle to get my kids to mix with kids of other races and classes if they do not attend the nearest state school. This is a political issue, and for me home-schooling obviously is. Wouldn't such an effort effectively make me a kind of social climber in reverse, a parody of a well-meaning white middle class mother desperately trying to convince the neighbourhood kids that mine isn't a freak for not going to school? Where I live, I would consciously have to make this kind of artificial effort, because there are so many races and levels of wealth and poverty that schools are the only place, for all their flaws, that children actually mix. Maybe they shouldn't mix. Maybe they shouldn't be forced to. I suppose this is a possibility, but my socialist knee-jerk response is that they should.

As I say, I think that kind of mixing can happen outside of school, but it troubles me. Obviously my local EO group is ENTIRELY white, middle-class and defined by a set of clear shared values (non-vaccinating, long-term breastfeeding, no TV) that I happen to share - against my better judgement! It makes me gloomy to think that I live in such a culturally diverse part of the world and I am forced, because of the very young ages of my kids (if it's not EO it's playgroups, which don't work for me, or my most common pastime, which is sincerely independent: sitting in cafes!), to share my social life with people far too similar to myself. After all, isn't this what I'm objecting to about school? The idea that my children should be made to share their value systems with a group of others of the same age? And here I am, doing something as closed and narrow myself. Our peers are all middle-class white homeschoolers

with a clear belief that what they are doing is unequivocally the right thing. I don't share this with them. I would like to hear the views and anecdotes of others in relation to this.

3. Further elitism accusations. I have been involved with a Steiner community and school to some extent, and found that in the same way that the Steiner mob looked down their noses at the 'mainstream' (and would shamelessly talk about the state-educated kids as hard done-by and categorically stupid - a great insult to their families!), I find a similar impulse amongst some homeschooling families towards the 'airy-fairy' nonsense of Steiner. I write this bit as a call to arms (there goes my aggressive turn of phrase again) - can't homeschoolers set a good example? By slagging off any other forms of education we mark ourselves out as elitist, self-satisfied, sanctimonious and stuck-up. I might have a chip on my shoulder lately but I have realised I cannot ignore this gut reaction to some factions of the homeschooling world. I have sent a book review that seems to sum all of this up. My children are obviously geniuses, but aren't everyone's? Listen, it's true: there is a real smugness involved in a lot of the work being done, and it's totally understandable (being held up against the light by everyone we meet and examined without so much as a please or thankyou). But I am already sick and tired, in the past year or so since I first joined EO and received newsletters, of hearing clever remarks to make to people who question our reasons for homeschooling, endless put-downs to have up one's sleeve. I want to hear positive news of how children are seamlessly merging with the communities around them, not quickfire reactions from children themselves to snap back at those horrid, bullying oicks? By the way, I am afraid that the Steiner community for me embraces a greater diversity of families and set-ups, in terms of colour, class, sexual orientation, nuclear or single or extended families... far more than the homeschoolers I happen to live close to. I still have enormous issues with the usual by-products of a school environment that I encountered through Steiner (peer pressure, bullying, the crushing of imagination, etc.), yet the community encompassed by Steiner in my area is far and away more exciting and ACCEPTING.

Can't we think back to the first time we stumbled upon the idea of homeschooling, or something else that is integral to our lives now (eating cottage cheese, using computers, playing the tuba), but once seemed unthinkable? We are surprised, and that surprise can manifest itself as impertinence or tactlessness. People who express their knee-jerk reactions to homeschooling should be encouraged to bring them all out, and although by no means should all homeschooling families have to carry a banner or act as ambassadors for an entire movement, good grace takes supreme effort but speaks volumes more than long speeches. We can make long speeches, with good grace, or we can politely refuse to be drawn into heated debate and acknowledge how we are all different, that's all. Homeschoolers are not, they simply are not, better than people who educate their children otherwise to IT. I would be interested in hearing from those who are *not* taken up with putting down the critics and the noseyparkers, and maybe from those who are not even taken up with educating them either (as it seems rather a contradiction in terms, to 'educate' those within the education system, about how education might work better by letting our children find things out for themselves - can't it work the same way among other families around us?), but from those who just extract themselves with minimum fuss and go on their way remaining on good terms. Maybe even their children play together.

These stories do come up in the newsletters I have read, but I want to hear more. Perhaps these are difficult times: my children are very young and I have had no contact with any authorities so maybe I am naive, but I live in the city and receive a barrage of comment and analysis every time I set foot outdoors with my children, simply by virtue of their always being with me (how do you cope? - etc.), so I have an inkling of this put-upon feeling, but I am doing my best not to see it as such and I am looking for support and encouragement and not finding it. I'm just

hearing endless reworkings of the same conversations between the philistines and the enlightened ones. It doesn't inspire me, it doesn't even interest me. I don't have that understanding of the world, and I don't want to learn it simply because I listen to my kids say they don't ever want to go to school. I don't want to put myself in that kind of superior position, although I realise my attitude in this letter is an aggressive one. Does that mean I'm on my way to becoming a snotty homeschooler? !!!!!???

4. That's the other thing. How DO we cope? The other thing is a kind of unspoken agreement that we can, and we will, and we do. What if we're not? Are homeschoolers terrified of letting the world know what a struggle it is? I do not want to set myself apart from the 'rest of the world'. I want to raise issues of being alone, unsupported (in various senses of the word) and broke. I want to hear from people who work, or who want a break from their children and who have thought about or used school simply as a way of getting a break (I have raised this with people, and so has a friend of mine, and have been met with hostility that suggested we were kind of she-devils, anti-women, divorced from their mothering hormones). EO doesn't exist in a political vacuum as far as I can see, it seems highly political and alert, so why this kind of culture of silence surrounding a mother (or parent)'s need to develop their own interests? A LOT! Call me demanding, but I don't see why mothers cannot have their cake and eat it. Didn't we just have a turn of the century? Aren't these supposed to be enlightened times for women and men, and children? Why can't mothers, and their children, learn in freedom, even if that includes freedom from each other, regularly? So far this suggestion has been met with abject disapproval, yet I know that there are hundreds of you out there who have looked at educating their children outside the school system for feminist reasons as much as anything, and that there are people who regularly get sick of the sight of their kids, and who have advice and something humorous to say to me. EO shouldn't be pious, or dour, or humourless. It puts me off the whole idea, and then I remember that the other people doing it have no bearing on the way I do things, but we all know it still has an effect.

So that's that. Also partnership issues. I would like to hear, as well as from those who are NOT wealthy, who are NOT confident, who are NOT emotionally well-developed and who are in fact quite adolescent or downright infantile themselves and who just feel like saying SHANT to all this effort and THOUGHT, (but somehow they muddle through), from those who have no effortless belief in their own omnipotent force of confidence and privilege that their kids are Better Off Than Others, from those who are lazy, and difficult, and single, and from those who are in a partnership and have found that homeschooling is an issue which comes between them. Did this cause so much tension that one of you backed down and packed them off to school? Or did it cause so much tension that you broke up and homeschooled them alone? Is it still causing tension?

Sounds incredibly impertinent. I am one of those dreadful noseyparkers you encounter and try to suppress with an ineffectual catalogue of your family's marvellous achievements. I don't buy it. Homeschooling opens you up to the world like a raw wound, as well as healing you and making you stronger than ever, but it is undoubtedly very, very intense and I wish it could be more pedestrian, but I suppose it will be another generation or so before that happens. Meantime, there are newcomers like me who want to get all the dirt out first. Please forgive me if I've ranted, this is just where I am right now. I don't want to rant at those well-meaning people who do ask and ask the same questions, so I am ranting at EO to discover ways of not ranting. There must be ways of finding that grace, a means of not seeing it at all as an issue of conflict but of integration with the world.

"Callie Wirll" (name and address supplied)

"Cliquiness/Welcoming"

"I always have in the back of my mind the fear that some people are put off my home education by the contact they have with other home educators and that's a real shame."

(David Hawkrige's letter in NL no. 142)

This comment hit a nerve. I have found that joining our local EO group has been a disappointment and perhaps my point of view may need to be considered by local coordinators. I admire people who voluntarily give up their time and effort to enable these groups to run in the first place, but I wonder what the objective is. Is it to help to 'educate' or do they exist primarily so that like-minded adults and children can get together and make friends?

My daughter had a rough time in school from reception to year five, through bullying. She made one good close friend but when she moved away she had fleeting friendships. These formed when my daughter played when the other child's usual 'best friend' was absent from school, and ended on their return. With bullying, and the school system's inability to deal with it, being the main issue, after enormous effort to help my once confident daughter make friends and feel happy in the playground we admitted defeat and de-registered.

We do not have a problem with education at home. I have always home tutored because of my daughter being classed as an 'able' child (for which she was bullied): she always needed more than the National Curriculum could offer her. She belongs to various organisations, i.e. Karate, Badgers, Dance and Music lessons, and does not require any more 'instruction' - only friendship.

On joining EO we thought that this would be an ideal opportunity to make like-minded friends at last but because of the well-intentioned activities on offer there is little time for her to 'gel' with others. Please consider that if a child cannot roller blade or ice skate like everyone else then she will feel just as isolated in a group of EO children as in the friendless school playground, and will find it difficult to fit in. Sometimes all it takes is for a child to invite another over to play at her house or failing that a simple board game in a village hall to break the ice. We are not looking for an extension to our studies or extra PE lessons - just the hand of friendship. I hope that this will happen in time but I will find myself paying for extra instruction for tennis and ice skating so that my self-conscious daughter can fit in to our local EO meetings.

Please respect my wishes to remain anonymous, as I do not wish to offend and I could be identified by my story but hope that my experience with my local group will help other people joining EO in the future. *(name and address supplied)*

Responsibility for Welcoming

It's not difficult to include new members in your events. Just remind the core group, or whoever is organizing the event, to get in the habit of glancing around the room and making sure no one is isolated. It's the organiser's responsibility to introduce people to each other and include everyone. We used to do this at Association of Breastfeeding Mothers' AGMs and it just became second nature: it was a habit we all acquired. I realise HESFES was very large, but people could be asked on arrival if they know anyone there, and if not, they could be paired with others on their own.

I think some EO people are so isolated, that when they arrive at an event they're so keen to meet their friends that they forget about new people. This could be overcome if designated people made it their job to cater for those who don't have EO friends already.

Peggy Thomas, 10 Sanders Road, Trowbridge, Wilts. BA14 8NN

HESFES

Our family's recommendation for meeting new people is to join the food queue. We've been to HESFES the past two years and were well aware of the tendency for people to stick with people they already know - but the food queue is different. People chat about all sorts of things, carry on debates, etc. The food is delicious, nutritious and unbelievably good value. Best of all, by not cooking yourself, it leaves everyone more time for the beach, the talks, workshops - and enjoying the company. Long live the "Anarchist Teapot" (HESFES caterers).

Gina Purrmann and family, 38 Lammas Green, London SE26 6LT

Relationships, Responsibility and Risk-taking

There have been several letters in past EO magazines (Aug '01 and Oct '01) complaining about cliquiness at Hes Fes and in home educating groups. I am sorry that people have found this to be the case. I don't doubt that it is sometimes true. But I would like to make two points that I feel have to be considered when judging a group's openness.

The first point is that any group may seem cliquey to a newcomer whether it is a swimming club or a dominoes group. Those who attend regularly come to see their friends and after initial friendliness to a newcomer many want to go and spend the rest of their time with those with whom they have built up a long term relationship (and get on with pushing that relationship forward). Also, specifically with home educating groups, when a new family arrive they often need a lot of 'hearing' - and regular families often spend much of their time listening to newcomers. They become a bit jaded and wary of spending too much time listening to newcomers' stories. That is not to say that regulars should not listen sympathetically to newcomers. But newcomers should also be aware that their need to talk may be tiring and difficult for longer-term families who have come to the meeting with their own needs. It should also be pointed out that those running Hes Fes and other groups are not paid or professional organisers. They are just home educating parents with their own strengths and weaknesses, wanting to give something to the home educating community.

The second point is a more difficult one to put into words. The hardest and most important lesson of home education is to take responsibility for yourself, your family and your life. Those newer to home education are least able to take on this exciting but very frightening life challenge. To the new people, the older home educators may seem cold and unfriendly. This is not actually the case. Often they are just getting on with their own life. They are not ignoring the newcomer but assuming that the person will speak up for themselves or their child if they need anything. In fact it is this learning both what to say and having the courage to say it despite the natural doubts and insecurity, that will drive the person and family toward self-knowledge and self-confidence. This process takes time, and there are no short cuts.

I felt and know many others who agree, that Hes Fes was a good place to go to meet new friends. However, there were many people there who did come with groups and met old friends. Hes Fes is a place to deepen old friendships as well as making new ones. I hope those who wrote will try a home educating group and maybe even Hes Fes again. Go up to people. Talk to people. Take a risk and see...

Leslie Safran Barson (address supplied)

West London Local Contact - and Group Dynamics

I am just starting out on my new role as local contact for West London, although as I have been helping put together a termly events list for some time now, I have already found myself talking to and meeting new members.

I have been married to Alasdair for thirteen years and we have two children: Miranda (age 5) and Gwithian (age 2). We first started thinking about home education as a real alternative when Miranda was about eighteen months old, and I was rather disconsolately doing the rounds of local nursery provision. I joined EO and started attending the weekly offering – trips out, activities at someone's house, picnics etc.

As someone in the position of welcoming new members to an existing group, I found the recent correspondence on the subject of HESFES 2001 very interesting. I believe that there is a deep human need in us all to identify with a group of other individuals. In spite of having apparently chosen not to follow the herd by rejecting the path of formal schooling, it seems to me, that most of us still want to belong somewhere, to have our chosen way of life confirmed by seeing it mirrored in others. Maybe when those of us floating in the social ether find or form a group of like-minded souls, there is the danger of creating the impression of exclusivity. I might even dare to suggest that there might be some group members who even crave this exclusivity as providing a safe haven in an often-hostile world. However, on the whole I believe that it is just an impression. Whenever someone new joins one of our weekly events, I feel personally a strong responsibility to ensure they are welcomed. For me this is not a chore, as I used to work in a field where it is compulsory to be extravert. However, I also understand that not everyone is an extravert and that for some people speaking to strangers is an agony and not a pleasure. I remember my first EO event. I turned up at the allotted time to find the place deserted. After an unnerving fifteen minutes or so other families started to appear. No one came over to ask me whether I was there for the EO event. Eventually I plucked up the courage to ask one of the parents if this was the West London EO group. It was nerve-racking, and I consider myself to be a pretty confident individual. Once the ice was broken, I started talking to others and determinedly turned up for other events, gradually building friendships and watching my eldest child do likewise. That special feeling of belonging is not instantly won.

I think what I am groping towards saying is that groups involve a two-way dynamic. The group needs to be aware of the feelings of the isolated, "new" individual who is desperate for a friendly smile and introduction or two. At the same time, the individual wishing to become part of the group needs to understand that the group is comprised of individual personalities, not all of whom are gifted in the PR department. What can be interpreted, in fear, as hostile cliquiness, might be, in reality, insensitivity. Those of us involved in the running of activities have a responsibility to ensure that our security with each other is not misinterpreted. After all, we each of us have been "new" at some time in our lives.

Most of us have chosen home education, at least in part, because it offers the opportunity to encourage our children to develop into fully-rounded, flexible and confident human beings, and we owe it to them to set an example by not retreating into the safe enclave of the group, but reaching out and offering that sense of belonging to all-comers.

So, for anyone out there in West London sitting at home, worried about how they might fit in, we and our children are all eager to welcome additional faces.

Claire Evans <timesteps@altavista.co.uk> West London Local Contact
232 Kingston Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 9JF Tel: 020 8943 4491.

New Faces

Whilst I have never been to an E.O. gathering nor to a home educators camp and therefore cannot comment on what Julie Frew and David Hawkrige have experienced, I do have experience of joining my own local E.O. group, as well as several other groups in different ventures of my life, and I have found that sadly most of us human beings are generally frightened of strangers. This makes us act in an unfriendly manner towards them, sticking closer to those we do know in order to "protect" ourselves. Maybe it has something to do with our society where we are taught, and teach our own children, to be wary of strangers because a very small proportion of these strangers would hurt us.

The way out of this situation, as I see it and have experienced it, is by action ON BOTH SIDES. Those who are new to a group have no right to say "I am new so they MUST come over, introduce themselves and make a fuss of me" because in the most part that won't happen and the bitterness expressed in the recent letters will be repeated. Neither should those who are well established ignore new ones just because they don't know them. Everything we come across in life - every new person we come into contact with - has the potential to enrich our life if we seize that opportunity.

View meeting new people with the expectation that they will know things that you don't know, have had experiences that you can benefit from and could become a dear friend. Take up the challenge of finding out about them. You know nothing until you try. The same has to be said for the new ones. Be pro-active. Introduce yourself to people. Take the initiative and break the ice. Don't complain that everyone else was in a clique until you have tried yourself to join that clique. You will find in most instances that you are welcome to join - you only had to ask. So, new ones, don't take offence at people's unfriendliness - you are a stranger in their midst and they need to know they can trust you, so be friendly and let your personality show.

Finally, you can only change yourself so whichever side of the fence you're on take the initiative and MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO OTHERS' AND YOUR OWN LIVES.

Helen Donaldson, Domus, Crossheads, Colwich, Staffs

Forget the Christmas cards ...

DESIGN NEW T-SHIRTS for EO

Have you got a flair for design? Can you think of an image which expresses EO's rôle?

We need new designs for EO T-shirts:

one to celebrate E.O.'s 25th anniversary in 2002 and another to be sold alongside the existing shirt which uses the E.O. logo in black and red on a white background (originally designed many years ago by Di Cox).

Limiting the number of colours and using white as the background helps to keep down the cost. Two colours on a white background would be ideal but don't let that put you off using more than two colours if you wish.

The design or slogan needs to be eye-catching and send out a clear message about home education.

Put your designs on an A4 sheet of paper and send to: Patricia Connor, 2 Whitegates Lane, Earley, Reading, Berks. RG6 1ED. Tel: 0118 9662 123. E-mail: tjj.connor@virgin.net

EDUCATING ARCHIE at Christmastide

The Naked Chef Truth: Mrs G's Christmas broadcast...



WITH THANKS TO THE PEOPLE AT BRERETON LODGE

LOCAL NEWS

Local contact

As I am the new acting local contact for Devon (East & North), I thought I would introduce myself. I have two children, aged seven and three, and I have been a member of EO since my son was three and a half.

I went to my first EO meeting when I was first agonising about where, and then whether, to send my son to school. I came away thinking that if my son would end up half as pleasant, well adjusted and intelligent as the young people I had just met, I would be a very happy parent indeed.

Over the ensuing years, I have made many home educating friends, and gone through many of the dilemmas and doubts that beset all homeschooling parents. Hence, I can discuss and sympathise with most problems people come up against, and if I can't help, I will probably know someone who can.

As local contact, I hope to be available to all members, not just those who are new or have a problem. This is everyone's organisation, and anyone with a suggestion, a query, even a complaint should feel able to contribute. I would like to take the opportunity to ask that people ring me in the afternoon, as we do more organised "stuff" in the mornings, or after 8p.m, when I can be fairly sure of having finished the latest chapter of whichever book we are reading at the moment.

I would like to thank most wholeheartedly Jo Borthen, the outgoing contact, whose energy and enthusiasm anyone would find difficult to follow. It is mainly thanks to her that there are now local EO meetings for members in Exeter, and beyond. Her talents are still being used on the helpline, so EO won't lose her talents all together.

*Becca Bradley-Carter, 39 Heron Road, Honiton, EX14 2GJ.
Telephone: 01404 549479 e-mail: becca@dbctechnologies.com*

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 inside front cover)

NEW LOCAL CONTACT - LINCOLNSHIRE

Hello Everyone - I'm Janet with two girls, 5 years and 25 weeks. I have really been home educating them since birth. I heard about Education Otherwise in the early 1990s but didn't actually send for any information until my little girl was two.

I was always dismayed by the school education I received and, over the years, having listened to other parents it has shown me that there have been few improvements. I believe quite strongly that children learn in an environment where they feel safe and respected.

I am quite excited about taking on the local contact role. Lincolnshire is a large, sprawling county and sparsely populated but I hope to get the opportunity to meet some of you. I hope you will support me whilst I find out what's what.

Janet Simpson, Email: office@hubblesimpson.co.uk

Contributors please note: Brief details of regular local activities may be forwarded via Martine for inclusion in the Regional Diary. As well as introductions to new Local Contacts this section is intended for interesting articles from local newsletters, which often include more than the local events information. If you produce one in your area, please consider sending a copy each month to Sue White (address above).

LETTERS

The Phone Co-Op

I want to remind all EO members about The Phone Co-op, which provides cut price phone calls and 0845 (local rate) numbers to your home, as well as a percentage donation to Education Otherwise.

It is disappointing to see from the newsletter that very few EO families have taken up this offer, as very few 0845 numbers are mentioned. Maybe information about the scheme could be included in every issue of the newsletter? It is, after all, in the best interests of EO for members to join this scheme.

Call The Phone Co-op on 0845 458 9004 and ask for the "silver tariff" with the donation to go to Education Otherwise Association Ltd.

If you get an 0845 number, you may get to talk to your friends more often!!

*Yvette Hartley (Pembs. Local Contact),
17 Maes Inqli, Newport, Pembs. Tel 0845 458925*

Cruising

My husband and I are set to go cruising for several years around the world with our two sons, aged 5 and 6 months. We are both looking forward to being together as a family and sharing their education.

We would love to hear from anyone who has, is, or will be doing the same and how they tackled education. Our main concern is access to resources whilst away as space is limited, and ensuring we take everything we need. We will have a computer, but no internet access while at sea, and limited time (due to available power). Suggestions and experiences would be very much appreciated.

*Catherine Calver, 47 Heathfield Close,
Chatham, Kent Tel. 01634 668238
Email: williamcalver@compuserve.com*

Give Water for Christmas

Thames Water have set up a website associated with Water Aid and will donate £100,000 (which will provide safe drinking water for Life to 6,000 people in Africa and Asia) if they have 2,000,000 visitors to the site by Christmas. It only takes a few seconds to visit the site and click on the "Click Here" message at: <http://www.givewater.org/> Please take a minute, go there and click today (and tomorrow ...) it's such a little thing to do. Thanks. *Jill Fisher*

Good news for home educators

Over the last three years, my ex-partner has tried very hard to prevent me home educating our children. However, despite strong opposition from the father of my children and some doubts from an army of child welfare experts, I have always got on well with the LEA, and twice now in court, the judge has ruled in my favour regarding the right to home educate. I would like to mention my good news as it might give others in a similar boat some encouragement. Keep up the good work, and God bless you and Education Otherwise.

Sharon Kilby, 16 Belgrave Road, Colwyn Bay, Conwy

Greetings, and Request, thanks!

I am writing to you both with a request for help and an offer! I am a homeschooling dad, the author of *And the Skylark Sings with Me: Adventures in Homeschooling and Community-Based Education*, editor and publisher of John Taylor Gatto's *Dumbing Us Down*, and a regular columnist for Home Education Magazine. We live in Olympia, Washington (USA). My daughter and I have just been invited to England by a group of Quakers (we are Friends) to sing in the world premiere of a new cantata *Woolmans Witness* at the Royal College of Music on April 6th, with rehearsals in Reading April 2-6th.

At any rate, my daughter (who is quite the musician and composer) has never been to London, so I want to be able to show her around. Since we are not well-to-do (not complaining, just stating a fact), we are interested in finding a family in London who might be willing to put up two non-obtrusive houseguests. We expect to be in London March 27-30 (after which we travel to Oxford for several days), and then again on April 7th, departing on the 8th. Help would be deeply appreciated.

I would also be happy to offer some home-schooling talks while we are in London, if anyone is interested in helping to set things up (same dates apply). There is someone already setting one up in Oxford, probably the evening of April 1st. You can learn more about me at my website: www.skylarksings.com

At any rate, help will be much appreciated. I look forward to hearing from you. Thanks!

David Albert [mailto:shantinik@earthlink.net]

RE-INVENTING RITUALS III

Winter Solstice/Christmas/New Year

As there is so little natural light and fresh food available at this time of year, traditional festivals focus on light and feasting as a means of breaking the monotony of the winter, giving thanks, celebrating the passing year and looking forward with hope to the spring. In more recent times, gift-giving has featured heavily at this time of year in most countries, and in an effort to counter the massive consumerism that this seems to encourage, we make many of our own presents. Everyone participates in this and grandparents, uncles and aunts are genuinely thrilled to receive a handmade present made with them expressly in mind. Children as young as three can make beads and necklaces, use papier-mache, felt and card to make presents, and older children can use wire, wood and wax too. Now is the time for glitter! Libraries are a great source of craft books. Children gain a great deal from giving someone an object they have made (and struggled with?) and hear them say "just what I wanted". We hope that through this they learn what a little effort on one person's part can mean to another, how valuable they are as individuals, and how they can really make contact with adults they may see only a couple of times a year.

We spend eight weeks or so making presents so as to have lots of time for other things but a lot can be achieved in a couple of afternoons. We enjoy baking special bread, cakes and biscuits, making our own decorations and entertainments and do our best to extend the festivities over at least a week, trying to move away from the concept of a "modern Christmas", i.e. a huge present opening session, a huge dinner, bad TV and then it's all over till next year!

But however you spend it, have a good Christmas/Solstice, whatever.....

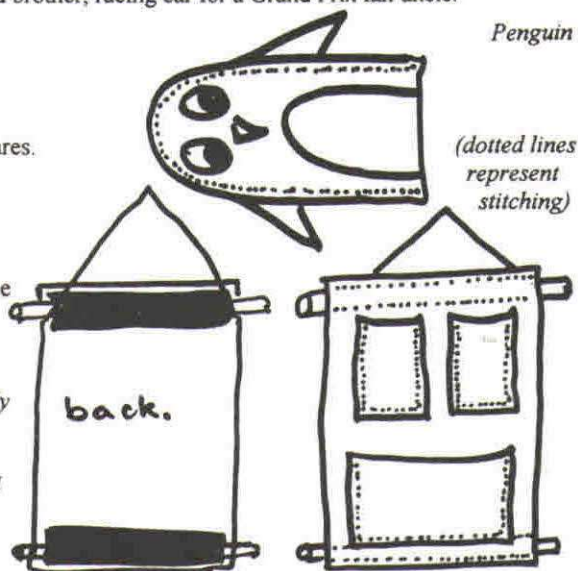
Ideas for presents (made by children)

1. Decorated boxes - holding other presents such as homemade jam, biscuits, necklaces
2. Models from clay, wood, card, papier-mache, relating to the interests of the recipient, e.g. animals for an animal-lover, robot for a brother, racing car for a Grand Prix fan uncle.
3. Finger puppets from felt.

Taking a basic finger-shaped piece stitched together, you can glue on eyes/beak/ears/trunk/wings, etc. to make any number of animals/creatures.

4. Holders of all sorts such as a desk tidy made from pots or tubes taped together, covered in two layers of tissue or newspaper dipped in PVA glue (dilute with water 50%) then painted, or from fabric (see illustration).

The fabric 'hanging pockets' need fairly stiff fabric for backing, contrasting fabric for pockets, 2 dowel rods and string or ribbon. The dowels are held in place by stitching 2 strips of fabric on the back, about 2cm wider than the dowel.



5. Beads and buttons from "fimo", clay, rolled strips of coloured paper. We like to make buttons from thin slices sawn from hazel or beech (*try holly for fine grain - Anne*), about 2 cm across, then drilled (fiddly!) and sanded, or beads (cylindrical) cut with viking lettering with a penknife.
6. Sculptures: found objects/junk/papier-mache, etc.
7. Willow baskets and decorations. We like to weave trees and circular baskets from cut willow.

Ideas for lights

1. Decorate jam jars with glass paints, wind wire around the neck and into a handle, drop in a tea light. Hang on a VERY strong string across the room or down the path.
2. Save walnut shells, melt tea lights (by lighting them?) or candle wax, pour into the shell halves, add the wick, leave to set. (You could add a drop of essential oil for fragrance). These should float.
3. Drill a piece of log with holes and push in candles - birthday cake size upwards - as a table decoration. Decorate with berries etc.
4. Drip wax on to a holly leaf and press on a birthday candle. As they are lit, set them to sail on a dish of water and say a wish or a resolution out loud.



Recipes

JEWEL BREAD

700 g (about 20 oz) strong white flour # 2 tablespoons oil # 1 tablespoon cinnamon
 1 tablespoon dried yeast (stir into 1/2pt tepid water with 1 tsp sugar) # 1 teaspoon salt
 Dried fruits, especially coloured ones such as cherries, glaze pineapple, ginger, orange -
 about 3 handfuls, chopped into cherry size pieces.

While the yeast is frothing, stir the oil and salt into the flour. Add the yeast liquid (and a little warm water if necessary) to form a soft, pliable dough. Knead for 10 minutes. Leave to rise in a warm place until it has doubled in size. Knock back and knead in dried fruits and cinnamon until smooth. Place on a baking tray, leave to double again. Bake at 350F for about 40 minutes. Leave to cool before slicing.

SPICED APPLE PUNCH (non-alcoholic)

1 box concentrated apple juice # 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger # 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
 pinch ground cloves # 8 whole cloves # slices of orange/lemon
 put all ingredients in a pan and heat until steaming. Serve!

VEGAN GINGER CAKE (no eggs or dairy products)

6 oz black treacle # 2 oz dark sugar # 4 oz marge - Melt these three ingredients in pan
 12 oz (wholemeal) self raising flour # 1 level tablespoon ginger # 1 teaspoon cinnamon
 8 fluid oz apple juice.

Combine dry ingredients add to melted marge/sugar. Beat in juice. Pour into tin and bake at 300-325F (a low temperature) for 45-55 mins.

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

ADVERTISEMENTS

Lecardo

Lecardo is an exciting new game that tests players' skill in adding words together to form compounds (e.g. housework, powercut, understand etc.) Suitable for 2-4 players aged from 9 to adult,
 Only £9.99 (incl. p&p)
 Contact: Leo Marshall 020 7278 1269
www.lecardo.com

Choice in Education

The independent monthly publication for home educators. A year's subscription costs £10. Please make cheque payable to 'Choice in Education'. For a sample copy send an A5 SAE plus £1
 PO Box 20284 London NW1 3WY
 Tel/fax 0208 969 0893
 Also available: Truancy Information Cards and the Elective Home Education Legal Guidelines.
www.choiceineducation.co.uk

Out of Reach – Angelina Archer

ISBN: 0-9541027-0-3 Price: £7.99

18-year-old Angelina is a former Education Otherwise member. This moving novel of love and friendship is self-published under Hybiscus Books®.
 To order (cheques only), please write to: **Hybiscus Books, 22 McGregor Road, London W11 1DE**
 Tel: 020 7792 1101 hibiscus@talk21.com

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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.
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stfyon@hotmail.com

Qualified and experienced teacher offers support to all ages. Literacy, numeracy, study skills. Restoring self-esteem and confidence a speciality. Teaching based on affirmation and positive reinforcement. Please call – I can be available during the day or after 'school hours'.

Virginia Woodhouse 0771 465 3474
gw_eyeballs2@hotmail.com

Free Range Education

A book for parents: for those contemplating home education, for those families just starting out and those just plain interested in this fast growing form of education. Full of ideas, experiences and practical suggestions.
 Editor Terri Dowty, foreword by Dr Alan Thomas
 Published by Hawthorn Press
 Order a copy at your library or bookshop.
www.free-range-education.co.uk

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Wanted

Language learning videos – and Science and Maths learning sets wanted.
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stfyon@hotmail.com

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 sent (with any donation) to the advertising editor (see inside front cover).*

Products and services offered on this page have not been endorsed by Education Otherwise.

PEAK CAMP 2001

It was the first time the four of us had been to the Peak Camp.

The camp was on a farm with land set aside for camping and caravanning, and had a small shop, toilet block, small washroom (two sinks and a mangle) and showers. Hot water for washing and showers was 20p (you got loads of hot water).

The field was adjacent to a field full of cattle, and it was lovely to wake up in the morning and hear them mooing. The farmer was collecting up his hay whilst we were there; not pitchforks and hay wagons any more (alas) but neat rows of grass cylinders all over the fields.

Annelise headed straight for the Rope Swing.

There was plenty to do: swimming in an ice-cold pool one day, cycling along leafy cycle routes with a huge cave to explore part way along, the next. The climb up to the cave was very tiring but the view once you were up there was fantastic. We went boulder climbing (a sort of mini rock climbing) which was easier than it looked and very satisfying. There was a shallow river just down the road, where many of the children went to wallow, and some caves a bit further on where we went on the first day. Some of the children thought they saw a badger deep in the bigger cave, and tentatively approached for a better look, but it turned out to be only a rabbit!

Some of the more adventurous went to badger-watch a few evenings, but sadly did not see any badgers despite finding their sett.

One evening we heard some beautiful guitar-playing coming from one of the other tents; even Ben (not really into classical music) said how lovely it was. One family had some very fine recorder players amongst their numbers, too - it was marvellous to hear recorders playing something other than "Go tell Aunt Nancy".

We went to Bakewell, the largest town in the Peak District, and sat by the river with a picnic and real Bakewell tarts. Nice big ones, about 4" in diameter, not like "Mr Kipling's". The Tourist Information Centre had its own little education section at the back of the shop, with a large model of the landscape and local traditional industries.

All in all, we had the best camp ever. It was so full of friendship and activity. We'll definitely be back!

Chris and Matt Green, Ben (12) and Annie (11), Maidstone, Kent

GWERSYLL DEWI SANT ST DAVIDS' CAMP (PEMBROKESHIRE EO CAMP)

Hi to everyone who braved the wind at this year's camp; sorry about that - yet again Liz and I thought that the other was booking the weather! Good news, the camp will return to June/Summer Solstice in 2002. We all missed the light in the evenings, even though we enjoyed seeing baby seals on the beaches.

There is now a "core group" of Pembrokeshire EO members who will organise GDS 2002. We would welcome any feedback and good ideas that will help us plan GDS 2002. Please get in touch, in writing, before March 2002 to: *Yvette, 17 Maes Ingli, Newport, Pems., SA42 0TE, Email: yeh@onetel.net.uk*

It's so comforting to get letters from friends! (We are trying for funding, so ask for anything, we many be able to provide it!). There is a plan for a website for GDS; if you have any photos that you want included, please send, with SAE to return the photos, to *Peter Lock, Ffynnonau Gleision, Rhyd Lewis, Llandysul, Ceredigion, SA44 5SW, Email: studio@designelements.co.uk*

Found items: some lovely things were left at GDS 2001, including an item of silver and two lovely jumpers. Please phone Yvette on 0845 458 9251 to reclaim.

See you all again in June; hopefully, having a "core group" now, someone will book real weather for GDS 2002. Watch out for the advert in April's newsletter and please book early to avoid disappointment (mine!).

Yvette Hartley

EO's Budget

One of my jobs as treasurer of EO is to make sure that our income meets our needs.

The biggest source of revenue is the membership fee that you pay, and a frequently asked question is why £15? Some people feel this figure is too high, some that it is too low. It hasn't in fact increased for many years despite costs going up. This is due to many things: Firstly, there are more members, so there is more money to cover these extra costs. Secondly, many of you view the £15 as a minimum fee, and give donations on top. Thirdly, through gift aid and our affinity scheme with the phone co-op, we are able to recoup revenue without any extra costs to members.

We try to make the membership package good value for money. It is probably worth remembering that EO is run by its members, and those of us doing jobs for EO, or on council, want value for money, just as you do. When you look at the cost of the material new members get, and the newsletter (each one costs £3,500 to produce, with postage on top), you can see how quickly £15 is used up. The ethos of EO is that we are a self-help organisation, and much of our expenses are used in responding to individual members' needs, which are many and varied. Yet there is a wider issue, and EO has to move forward, responding to any possible changes in law, and attitudes to home education. Strength is in numbers, and EO needs to be at the forefront of raising the profile of home education. Keeping ourselves up to date and generating publicity are necessary parts of this.

We do realise, however, that for some £15 is a lot of money, and this is why we have always tried to be flexible about payment options. The £15 can be split into two six-monthly payments of £7.50 for instance. We also have the 'friends of EO' scheme offered to lapsed members, whereby for a reduced fee, a limited membership (a June newsletter, or a card) keeps people in touch, and maintains the membership numbers needed to give us strength.

The bottom line is that we do need each other. Be positive about EO. If you know someone who hasn't been able to renew their membership, but wants to keep in touch, suggest the friends of EO scheme. If you think you could support us further through gift aid or the phone co-op, please fill in the phone co-op form included with this newsletter, or fill in the gift aid section next time you renew your membership.

Finally, a big personal thank you to all those who already support the work of EO not only in financial ways, but in giving their time to help. In some ways this is the most precious commodity of all. You ARE appreciated!

Garry Humphreys, Treasurer.

E.O. IS CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF NOT GOING TO SCHOOL!

We are planning a big event to take place 29th August to 2nd September 2002 at Beaumanor Hall in Leicestershire.

There will be camping, dormitory, and family accommodation as well as a large marquee and use of some classrooms. We hope to have lots of workshops, discussion sessions, and a barn dance on Saturday night.

Please keep that weekend free and join us to celebrate.

If you have any ideas or suggestions or would like to get involved in organizing please contact Penny Clarke,

Jill Fisher, Celia McDonagh or Janet Wilkinson (phone numbers inside the back cover)

Lost Property

Hello to all who attended the recent EO gathering at Stokes Barn in Much Wenlock. It was lovely to see old friends/meet new people/put names to faces :-). As one of the organisers (therefore last to leave) I am left with the 'lovely' task of returning lost property: A green and white hand towel - any takers? One book called **Boiling Frog** - please take it quick - the title is intriguing enough to tempt me :-). Please pass this info onto anyone who you know was there - I may not have their email addy. Best Wishes

Beverley Young beverley.young@btinternet.com

P.S. Rob and Anne had such a lovely time that they decided to stay on for a couple of extra days :-). They found a football that was blowing about in the yard. "We thought we'd better take it, as it looked like a good one (hand sewn!)".

You can contact Rob on rob.wade@tvu.ac.uk

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 Winsor 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/zeddin

Newbury group on Fridays for younger children.

Contact: Gillian 01491 671328

Lambourn. Weekly meeting on a farm for crafts, cooking and nature walks, group based on respect for each other and our world and an unhurried childhood.

Contact: Tracey or Roge 01793 610448

roge.tracey@virgin.net

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 am ice-skating

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 01758 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

South Dartmoor Leisure Centre, Ivybridge - swimming, badminton, basketball, soft play/shapes, £5 per family 11.30 - 1.30 every fortnight/month from 8 November (Café available with hot food until 2pm)

Scrapstore: South Devon Play Resource Centre, The Old Chicken House, Craft Education, Dartington, Totnes (Mon, Tue, Thur 9-3; Sat 10-12) free use on production of EO membership card (for next 12 months), select art/ craft materials, usually £1 carrier bag full

National Trust, Devon - Card held by Nick Vidal-Hall gives free membership/entry to NT sites to all Devon EO members for pre-booked 'educational' visits. Prospective organisers (& for details of all 3 above) *Contact:*

Sammy and Nick Vidal-Hall 01548 830716

(Devon continues next column)

Exeter – fortnightly meetings at Belmont Park
Community Hut restarts 5th Sept 2-4pm
Contact: *Annice 01392 434167*

Exeter EO Group Christmas Party! All HE-ers welcome.
Candlelit storytelling /shadow puppet show by "Rough Magic"
professional storytellers. Parachute Games, Father Christmas.
Sun 16 Dec 3-7pm St. Matthew's Hall, Clifton Road, Exeter.
(Parking in Triangle Car Park). Cost (to cover hall and ents.):
£2.50 adults, £1.50 per child, family ticket £9.00 (concessions
available) phone Jo 01392 679499. Please bring a labelled gift
for each child, worth approx. £1, and a plate of food to share.
Further details/directions:

Becca 01404 549479 or Emma 01837 82365

Crediton – fortnightly meetings 12-3.30 at Q.E.
Community Centre (opposite Parish church) starting 12th
September

Contact: *Emma 01837 82365*

Pottery session, to be arranged.

Contact: *Neil 01392 255912*

Brixham – regular meetings

Contact: *Sally 01803 856 862*

DEVON EAST/DORSET WEST

Lyme Regis, Axminster, Bridport, Chard

Contact: *Henry & Suzanne 01297 444207*

DORSET

Regular meetings, keep in touch

Contact: *Christine 01258 880355*

Rosemary 01747 853 593

ESSEX

Colchester – fortnightly meetings, Wednesdays £2.50 per
family

Contact: *Sue 01206 520284*

35 Leithe Grove, Colchester, 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@i12.com

HANTS/WEST SUSSEX

Activities and support, Solent area EO at St. Faith's
Church Hall, the Pallant, Havant, alt. 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*

olsandpjs@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@walefamily99.freemove.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 of 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/month, 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 fortnightly, 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 TJMSHARKEY@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 newssheet, send SAEs: *Gill Wilson*

20 Brook Rd, Heaton chapel, Stockport SK4 5BZ

Computing Skills 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, Crosswick, 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 (FAD) home educators support group. Social gatherings, outings and newsletter.

Contact: *Sally 01749 841554*

Helen 01373 465260

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@jesco.net

SUFFOLK

Regular meetings every 3rd Friday 10.30-2.30

£2.50 for family, shared lunch.

Contact: *Sarah 01379 783678*

SURREY

Guildford area:

Theatre bookings

Contact: *Tishu 01483 898575*

Skating during term time Friday 1-4

Contact: *Jane 01420 88188*

Under 10s

Contact: *Nicky 01483 232080*

Nicki's Woods fortnightly

Contact: *Nicki 01306 884741/Dorking/Reigate area.*

Advance notice of craft session Feb 4th 2002, also

anyone in this area looking for new activities for 11+.

Contact: *Helen Burnett 01737 243606*

SUSSEX

Monthly newsletter £8pa or £4 six 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

Working: 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 and outings on Mondays

Contact: Yvette 0845 458 2951

Swansea monthly meetings in Llanelli area

Contact: Sue 01269 861902

NE Wales/Borders - weekly gym/trampoline 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@cableinet.co.uk

Beverley 02920797628

Bev.L.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: Haverfordwest pool,

Dew St. 3pm at main reception, now fortnightly. Call to check dates.

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 or Joy 0121 585 6450

pennyclarke@homeschool.freemove.co.uk

Regular meeting Halesowen library, 2nd Thursday, meet in the coffee lounge 11-3

HELM newsletter for full details of regular meetings and events throughout the region, £7.20 pa.

Joy 0121 585 6450 JoyBeasley@b-bunch.freemove.co.uk

WILTSHIRE

Informal meetings in Calne and surrounding area for socializing, activities 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 01722 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/Abbeylee rd

Contact: Annette 0114 2583502

Fiona 0114 22751142

Thursday weekly informal social meetings. All welcome

Contact: Angie 0114 2817466

Swimming fortnightly 2nd Tuesday at Ilkleyborough Leisure Centre 12 noon 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 or 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 BUSINESS

The EO Learning Resource Network

(formerly The Resource Centres group)

Background

Firstly a bit of background information about the way the new small groups/working parties function, of interest perhaps to new members and those who would like to help.

EO is run by its members through an extensive network of volunteers. Administration and development of the charity is primarily directed through three business meetings a year, at which any member is (very!) welcome to attend and participate in the consensus driven decision-making process. Information about this is in the front of the Contact List.

As the membership of EO is growing so fast, and as the areas and issues that we concern ourselves with expand with equal vigour, so too does the need to involve even more members in the process. One solution has been to establish small working parties that aim to offer more efficient support to work a single person may have been dealing with on his or her own. Other small groups are being set up to develop areas of interest that would benefit from more focussed input, such as with the 'Resources' group. Details of these groups are in the back of each newsletter along with the names of those involved: again contact is welcome (you really are needed). The groups are informal and *you do not have to be an expert.*

The EO Learning Resource Network

The Resource Centres group was set up at the May open Council meeting in order to explore possible ways of developing access to resources for home educators. *Firstly though, we need to establish what EO members would actually like to see happen and what approaches might be useful for us all to take to achieve the desired outcomes.* As with all EO matters such consultation is essential and can take place personally by contacting the team, by writing in to the newsletter, or by coming to the open Council meetings. To get the ball rolling and to stimulate initial ideas and feedback a small piece was put in the last newsletter. This report is a fuller explanation of what is being proposed.

Although the group named itself 'Resource Centres group' as a working title at the start, one of the first things we discussed was how appropriate that name is. An alternative name, 'The EO Learning Resource Network', has emerged as a replacement as the former term could have given rise to the impression that EO plans to *create* learning centres, 'plant' them around the country and then oversee the expensive bureaucracy that would ensue. This is not the case as, apart from this possibly soaking up a lot of money that might otherwise go directly into local initiatives, EO is not about dictating what members ought to have access to.

Whatever the name, the point is that we propose setting up a framework whereby EO can help individuals and committed groups of members to develop their own enterprises, as well as encouraging the development and use of all the diverse community resources that already exist, not just those that would fit into a 'centre'. Thus our collective and growing expertise could fuel some really interesting initiatives.

Development Officers

In order to do this we propose applying for funding for two Development Officers and one Development Support Administrator, hopefully for a couple of years at first. The fact that the project concerns a new venture for the charity enhances the chance of obtaining outside monies.

- The brief for the Development Officers is that they would support, on invitation, what groups of EO members would like to do in their areas. In addition the officers would help these groups gain access to funding as appropriate using EO's charitable status.
- The officers, for example, could use their time and quickly developing expertise to help members create a framework of resource opportunities in an area, and an information system to

EDUCATION OTHERWISE BUSINESS

allow people to access what's available, i.e. what a resource centre might offer but utilising, and developing, existing community facilities. Members could expand upon what is available through local people with time or a skill to offer, in libraries, museums/creative learning centres, the natural world, special interest societies, youth theatres, sports centres, French clubs, local bands and orchestras, evening/summer classes, colleges, public lectures and so on.

- If another group wanted to develop an actual learning resource centre or to start a new centre of some kind, that would be possible too - the Development Officer would bring knowledge about funding and grant applications and take time to help with the paperwork. Such centres could be quite small-scale special interest groups where someone is sharing their particular skill or craft, or they could be much wider in scope and content.

Development Support Administrator

This role would be equally important and duties would include:

- The Administrator would provide support to the Development Officers from a central 'office'. As soon as EO opts to work with funding agencies and we put paid workers in place, proper support systems are needed. This central support could also, in time, take on board other needs of the charity and its members.
- The support person would also be responsible for maintaining and updating a web site with lots of information about resources available to home educators. This would seem to be the only realistic way to cope with what could become a huge amount of information, especially as there would be constant changes and additions, plus national and local events that members might appreciate being aware of but that are advertised at short notice. We appreciate that not everyone has, or wants, a computer, but members could retrieve information from ones at their local library. Also, in true EO style, it would be hoped that members would share the information with each other.

The Development Officers and Administrator would work to a brief. This brief would be developed and overseen through EO's current decision-making process, i.e. by Council members and other active members working through the open Council meetings.

Please forward feedback on the proposal to the group's coordinator: **Iris Harrison**, The Burntlands, Upper Rochford, Tenbury Wells, WR15 8SH Tel: 01584 781341. Email: Irisharrison6@aol.com - or contact: **Geraldine Adams**, Gwen Baldock, Lucy Charlton, Jill Fisher, Kevin Holloway, Martina Macklin, Celia McDonagh and Ross Mountney.

NATIONAL GATHERING JANUARY 24TH-27TH 2002

Langdale Youth Hostel in the Lake District.

Rambling Victorian hostel with open fires (and central heating), good food and warm welcoming company. Large garden, wonderful walks and beautiful scenery.

A chance to meet and talk to home educators from across the country.

Cost per night:

Adults - £10 10-16s - £8 2-10s - £6 under 2 - Free

Family rooms available ... book early

**Contact Jill Fisher for more information and booking form send SAE to:
54, Ratcliffe Road, Leicester, LE2 3TD or E-mail jill.fisher@care4free.net**

EDUCATION OTHERWISE BUSINESS

There will be an
Open Council Meeting of Education Otherwise Ltd
on January 26th 2002 at 10 am
at Langdale Youth Hostel, Ambleside, Cumbria.

All E.O. members are welcome to attend.

For copies of the agenda please contact the Chair:
Jill Fisher, 54 Ratcliffe Road, Leicester, LE2 3TD
or E-mail jill.fisher@care4free.net

**The Annual General Meeting of
Education Otherwise Association Ltd**
will be held at Langdale Youth Hostel, Ambleside, Cumbria
on Saturday 26th January 2002 at 2.30 pm

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

The number of Council members is set at between 14 and 19. As at November 2001 there are 15 members in post (see inside back cover), five of whom must retire at the forthcoming AGM but may seek re-election. The Council may recommend other candidates for election. Signed-up members (i.e. guarantors) of EO may also propose candidates. In this case, written notice from the proposer and signed consent from the candidate (who must also be a registered member) must both reach the **general secretary** no earlier than **December 28th** and no later than **January 21st**. In the event of a vote at the AGM, registered members personally present are entitled to take part provided they have paid their subscription.

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

The company secretary is Pam Bellinger (see inside back cover).

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.freemove.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 Wilkison 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 "

LOCAL CONTACT UPDATE

Resignations

Northants - Caroline Benham

Birmingham - Jackie and Alan Harley

New Acting Local Contacts

Manchester North - Helen Robinson

Lincolnshire - Janet Simpson 01427 679896

Cambridgeshire - Sarah Lambert

Lothian/Borders - Jane Bathgate 01835 862118

Areas needing a Local Contact - Volunteers please!

North Kent/Outer SE London, Bedfordshire,

Carmarthenshire, Grampian, Isle of Man,

London East, Merseyside, Northamptonshire,

Northumberland, Strathclyde, Surrey, Tayside,

West Midlands - Birmingham.

Someone to help

with the work of the Local Contact

Co-ordinator is needed. Find out more from :-

Isobel Bogucki 01403 261178

E-mail isobelb@cheerful.com

EDUCATION OTHERWISE BUSINESS

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 (cheques payable to Alan Thomas) from: 85 Coleridge Rd, London N8 5 EG

EO T-shirts

Good quality white cotton t-shirts printed with EO logo (red triangle kicked open by running children) £5 adult (L, SL) £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

New e-mail list for EO business only

This club is for members to discuss the business of the organisation. Members who wish to join should go to the club and then follow the joining instructions at <http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/educationotherwise> Their EO membership will then be checked. It is hoped that this list will provide a forum for more involvement by members in the running of the organization.

Local Contact Support

The LEA/EA contact group recommended to the council meeting that more support be put in place for local contacts. A suggestion was made that experienced members should be found to provide any support needed by a group of local contacts. This would include all aspects of the local contact role including contact with the LEAs. The LEA/EA contact group will be meeting to discuss this further. If you have any thoughts about this, or you might be interested in the role of local contact support person, please contact any member of the LEA/EA contact group (Gwen Baldock, Isobel Bogucki, Jill Fisher, Gary Podmore, Anne Wade, Rob Wade).

DfES Work

Help is needed with the DfES work. Specifically

- Monitoring the Connexions Service.
- Reading through the Education White Paper released in September and to consider any possible impacts on home educators.
- Supporting EO members in their dealings with benefits agencies when home education is an issue.

Please contact Jill Fisher 0116 2128120

More enquiries secretaries are needed for EO's national helpline for *England* and for *Wales*. Also a postal enquiries secretary. Please ring Edwina 01978-661882 or c-mail theunissen@mcmail.com

EO Car Stickers

Help spread the word.

Please send a reasonably 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

Resources for older children

Information on curriculum materials for later years. For a copy please send 60p to cover printing and post with your address to: G. Dove, 392 Lodge Ave, Dagenham RM9 4QU Free e-mail copy from: gillchris@willrich.fsnet.co.uk

Notices & Help Needed

Scottish News We would like to create a regular slot in the newsletter for news from Scotland. It would be great if we could find a volunteer to send me news from north of the border. If you could take on this job please contact Martine Archer 01423 858916 martine@open-education.org.uk

Get involved and join a small group:

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

Enquiries: Pam Bellinger, Geraldine Adams, Edwina Theunissen

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

Media: Eva O'Rourke, Fiona Brookes, Celia McDonagh, Belinda Harris-Reid

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

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

LEA/EA Group: Isobel Bogucki, Jill Fisher, Anne Wade, Rob Wade, Gary Podmore

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

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

Information for other organizations: Penny Clarke, Priscilla Park-Weir, Martina Macklin

Grievances and Complaints: Celia McDonagh 15 Kirkby Court, Craiglee Drive, Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff, CF10 4BS 02920 454227, Jill Fisher 0116 2128120, Isobel Bogucki 01403 261178

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).

Who does What in EO

Council Members

If you have a problem contact your nearest council member:

Geraldine Adams (N. London) 0207 2634922
Martine Archer (N. Yorks) 01423 858916
Jude Ashley-Walker (Isle of Wight) 01983 531680
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
Celia McDonagh (Wales) 029 20454227
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
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 Mackdin, 16 Victoria St, Wall Heath,
Kingswinford, West Midlands DY6 0JJ
Tel: 01384 833 883

Useful contacts

Single Parent 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 01923 464773

School Phobia: Geraldine Adams 0207 263 4922

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

GCSE Contact: (Vacant)

College Contact: Kathy Chilton 01969 623707

Teenage Support: Geraldine Adams 0207 263 4922

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

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

Company Secretary (acting): Pam Bellinger
56 Beech Drive, Braunstone, Leicester LE3 3DA
0116 282 7929

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
01237 451535 anne@annerix.demon.co.uk

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

Enquiries Secretaries Coordinator:
Edwina Theunissen 01978 661 882

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

Chair: Jill Fisher, 54 Ratcliffe Rd, Leicester
LE2 3TD 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

