

EDUCATION



OTHERWISE

NEWSLETTER NO. 28
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The drawing on the front cover is the work
of Rick Baker.

EDITORIAL

Your editors for this newsletter are Midge and John Whitelegg of Lancaster and not Julie Duff as stated in the February newsletter. E.O. is alive and well in the north of England and we are pleased that we have been able to offer our services and temporarily shift the centre of gravity to the northern fastness of Lancashire! Are there any budding Yorkshire editors out there to take up the challenge?

Your editors for this newsletter have four children aged between five and ten years and all deschooled since the end of the 1981/82 school year (the youngest one has never been to school). Our practical experience of home education, therefore, is relatively limited but is recent and has involved all the emotions associated with decisions of this kind and the post decision euphorias and despairs. Living with strong emotions and real experiences is an amazingly enriching experience and our observations on home education are that this applies in equal measure to parents and children alike. This simple truth, once recognised, can sustain nature's professional worriers and open the way for further personal development which will amply reward the initial risks.

Can the same be said for organisations? The answer as usual is both yes and no. Previous newsletters, and to some extent this one, display some of the variety of thought and differences of opinion that will be manifest in an organisation of independent and innovative individuals. Organisations are not as good, or as bad, as the people they represent, an excuse much in vogue these days; they can be considerably better or much worse, depending on a host of factors including chance. Recognition of simple truths linked to human happiness and the will to work towards the enhancement of individual and collective happiness are other important factors. E.O. has this potential but like all organisations undergoing rapid evolution it occasionally loses sight of its central purpose and the joy which stems from this to become preoccupied with routine, dull mechanisms, personalities and discussions which take procedures as their central concern rather than the sharing of mutually rewarding experiences. Put very simply, it is imperative that those who give freely of their valuable time should occasionally stand back and recall why they are doing what they are doing; this will be personally refreshing and organisationally invigorating.

What of the future? E.O. will flourish, of that we have no doubt. There will be problems but these will be surmountable as long as we can recognise simple truths and the joys which naturally result from our home education experience. So, inwardly reflect, enjoy the newsletter and infect someone with your happiness.

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The next issue (June) is to be edited by Jean Shepherd, 21 Ashdowne Court, Lansdowne Road, Tottenham, N6. The deadline is May 1st. All material intended as such should be clearly marked 'for Publication'.

#####

DO IT YOURSELF BIOLOGY

Janet Everdell

The inevitable question that arises whenever home education gets discussed is, 'but how do they manage with sciences?' And when I deschooled my son at the age of twelve, this was a problem to be faced. The L.E.A. insisted that Nick's ability was such that he must take 'O' levels. I signed him up with Wolsey Hall for seven subjects which included the three sciences. He passed them with top grades, proving to my satisfaction that the emphasis for the need of sophisticated equipment is as misleading as it is unimaginative. Now, with the benefit of hindsight, I feel that the expensive and often too detailed correspondence lessons can be dispensed with, unless the child intends to follow a subject to 'A' level.

As the moral issue of biology lessons in schools has been raised in our ranks, let us take that subject as an example. Also biology is a good subject for fulfilling the science element in the good spread of disciplines required at 'O' level, and in my opinion is a gift of a subject for a home educated child.

The book most universally praised, and a textbook best-seller is 'INTRODUCTION TO BIOLOGY' by D.G. Mackean (John Murray, London). It is written for 'O' level standard and contains the biological knowledge common to syllabuses of the major G.C.E. boards of the U.K. It is a very visual book, full of splendid diagrams and photographs, the kind of book that you pick up casually and then spend half an hour or more happily absorbed adding to your own knowledge. The kind of book that schools are now saying they cannot afford, and if they do the pupils must not take them home!! It also has a very useful final list of questions taken from the long answer section of past 'O' level papers.

If you intend your child to take the exam, you will also need the Regulations and Syllabuses from the examining board for your area or the Associated Examining Board which has centres for external students throughout the U.K. They will also supply past exam papers, should you feel the need. In both cases write initially for their publications price list. They do not supply model answers.

Finally I would suggest a good purchase to be one of the many study aids which simplify the rather complex language of the syllabus subject matter. Bookshops do a roaring trade in these as many 'O' level candidate school children prefer to work from them. The MADE SIMPLE series (W.H. Allen, London) is one we found very useful.

So, having armed ourselves with the necessary literature, how do we set about the problem or the practical aspects? Well, as I said, biology is a gift because there are so many simple but nevertheless interesting experiments to be done, many of which are described in the textbook. Of course, some of them use the dreaded sophisticated equipment but many need only simple improvisations to get the same results. Wine-making equipment fulfils many of the requirements and for others just simple jam jars; blotting paper; funnels; cotton wool; iodine; glucose; vinegar; chalk; plants; potatoes; seeds; leaves; dead flies; live pets; goldfish; hamsters.....need I go on? With these you can test for starch, fat, protein, complex and simple sugars, show that

roots take up water, demonstrate osmosis, respiration, geotropism, phototropism and hydrotropism. If you're not squeamish, or morally opposed, butchers can supply offal such as brains, ox eyes and kidneys for dissection. A good way to obtain bones for study is to have a rabbit stew. Keep all the bones, rinse them, then fit them together again! Owl pellets supply smaller vertebrates bones. And these examples are only a fraction of the practicals to be enjoyed. If your child objects to any one of the experiments, never mind, because there is no practical paper to the exam.

Chemists will supply adults with things like caustic soda and copper sulphate if your child really feels the need to do all the experiments possible in the home. Another useful item is a strong hand lens, a microscope is fun but not essential.

We still have a rather handsome three year old lemon tree plant and an oak bonsai as a result of 'O' level biology. By growing plants in the confined space of a flower pot a child soon learns what is required to keep it healthy and alive. Parents should resist the urge to interfere and water a neglected plant, its durability or demise is also a biology lesson.

Last - but it should be first if you have the space, I recommend a garden pond. We inherited a very good one when we moved here and it is to this I attribute all three of my children's interest in nature and biology. Yours needn't be an elaborate affair, just a big hole lined with a good strong liner in the shade of a tree to stop the sun-loving algae creating pea soup. Do not put fish in your pond but beg a few water plants and you will soon have your own mini nature reserve. Newts, water beetles, frogs and many aquatic creatures of all kinds will soon take up residence. If there aren't frogs in your area you will need to import some. Also, many other grateful creatures will be observed drinking at your pond: pigeons; hedgehogs; birds; wasps; dragonflies etc. One never-to-be-forgotten day we enjoyed the agile beauty of a grass snake taking a swim and grazing our fringe of flannel weed (*Spirogyra*, to give it its' correct biological term!!).

The best biology practical comes when your frogs spawn and a few tadpoles are brought into the house to be observed as they develop into froglets. When my daughter was in the biology sixth at school, she was astonished to learn many of her peers knew nothing of the life cycle of a frog! Nevertheless they had all passed 'O' level biology to get there - draw your own conclusions about that.

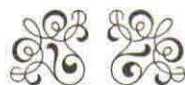
Another book to stimulate interest in living things is 'My Family and Other Animals' by Gerald Durrell, (Penguin). As it is often set for 'O' level Eng. Lit. you may be lucky enough to kill two birds

Biology is the study of life - which in practice means the study of living things. That these things respire, excrete, feed grow, move, reproduce and show irritability can be a constant source of fascination for adult and child alike. Sophisticated equipment in the confining and sometimes distressing environment of a school laboratory could well be a major disadvantage. The freedoms enjoyed by the home-educated child ensure all he needs to embrace and understand this absorbing and fundamental subject.





NEWS FROM THE REGIONS



SUSSEX

Past: We had a very successful meeting in November, run on the lines of 'Any Questions?' About 40 people turned up in Lewes to fire questions at the panel of 'experts' and seemed well satisfied with the answers. We got several new members as a result. We sold coffee and biscuits to cover costs and there was time for informal discussion among the audience as well.

Present: Editor hard at work on the next local newsletter.

Future: April 30th - May 2nd Workshop Weekend at Inholms Farm, Plumpton Green. Come each day or bring a tent and/or sleeping bags (plenty of hay in the barn). Drama, art, maths, music, dancing, singing, story-telling for all ages. Bring your own skills to add to the fun. Members from other counties welcome. Send s.a.e. to Helen Holland at above address for details.

ESSEX

We held an informal meeting on January 31st for Essex E.O. adults and children. Sandie Cottee and Melanie Nield started to come, but simply had to turn back when it snowed.

However Mandy Kuijvenhaven and her children Laura and Esther, Karl Svarc, John and Ann Stringer and their son Marc and his girlfriend Danny managed to come, and Marc and Danny made a snowman, and we all had a lovely time and we hope to arrange another meeting when the weather gets better. (Melanie Willow, age 12).

SOUTH EAST WALES

The Group's second meeting was enlivened by several progress reports. In August last year, Gwent had no families practising E.O. Since the start of the school year, seven families became active and there are a total of ten children out of school in the group. In the two months since the last meeting, the only child in school has asked to be withdrawn. Individual reports suggest that the L.E.A. has been caught unawares by this sudden influx of E.O. cases and is trying to formulate a policy. Families had initially received widely differing responses from the L.E.A. but the treatment of all cases seemed, now, to be approaching a similar pattern. In view of the discussion at the co-ordinators' legal study day at the end of January concerning the ideal of having all L.E.A.'s working to a similar set of guidelines, it was felt that this would be the perfect time to try to influence the policy of our L.E.A. As a result, the Group decided to invite the L.E.A. to send two advisers to a group meeting to discuss the joint responsibilities of L.E.A.'s and parents and how we can co-operate in the education of our children. We all thought that this would be useful for both sides but that it was important that it should not appear that we were 'ganging up against the L.E.A.' Have any other local groups tried this approach? If so, was it successful?

An interesting question was raised concerning children at work. One of the aims of the Education Act was to protect children from exploitation as cheap labour. However, is the child who helps in the parents' business working, learning or being educated? The answer could be fairly obvious where the parents run a pub or a shop but, if the parents are potters, weavers, farmers etc, the position is rather different. Have any other members any experience of this situation?

One of the members invited the Group to spend a day out on his smallholding in the Black Mountains, and another couple suggested a barbeque on their smallholding so it looks like the Group should have an enjoyable time in its first year. If you'd like to join us, we meet in Gwent or Powys, south of the Black Mountains but would welcome members who are within travelling distance or are on holiday in the area. Ring Annie and Ian Wilton-Jones 0873 (Gilwern) 831182.

A DAY OUTING WITH AN E.O. GROUP

The first thing in the outing was that we met up at Julia Hallet's house, we all had a drink and some biscuits then out to the cars and set off to the Hyde Historic Resources Centre, Winchester. A lady curator came to show us around the centre. She first showed us the stones that had made the building, then some roofs and tiles. In the Centre are books and charts, pictures, photographs, these are all in the library.

We went outside and were shown covered tubs full of old pieces of wood and things that needed to be kept wet so they were in water, they all had to be labelled on plastic labels so they could be easily identified. In a shed at the back of the house was a lady who was sorting pottery fragments, bones, Roman, Bronze Age and Iron Age things. In a big store room was old leather and other things that had to be kept quite damp.

In another store room was a machine that made the room very dry. In some of the drawers were things like glass and things that would rust. Then she pulled out a sword, it was beautiful, it was so old that it had lost its gold but there was still a tiny bit of gold at the top.

After that we all split up and had lunch and then did other things like going to the museum, the cathedral and other places. Then we could go back to Julia's house. It was a lovely day and very interesting so Thank you to Julia Hallet.
(Fiona Macaulay, Age 12).

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Just recently there has been an increase in the number of children out of school in Gloucestershire (so many of our members had not deschooled), so it seemed like a golden opportunity to organise some one day workshops for the children - our first is to be held in March. Members showed great enthusiasm to get things rolling so several ideas are to be put into action - we hope to invite members from just over the border in Wales to join us sometimes. Malcolm and I would be grateful for any suggestions of things that have been tried in other areas - trying to avoid 'school' activities but involving Maths, Geography, History etc., as per E01, as I'm sure it is possible for such group activities to be great fun - do let us know. Julie Duff, Hasfield Court, Hasfield, Glos.

Practising EO.—Extracts from Questionnaire

We came to home education as a result of frustration with schools of various kinds (both private and public sector). Philippa, our 10 year old suffered several changes of school, firstly because of house moves, and later because none of them seemed to do anything for her. Though socially well adjusted she consistently maintained that school was boring and made less and less effort to keep up with formal skills. On the one hand the competitive atmosphere of her private school made her tense and undermined her self-respect and on the other, the laissez-faire attitude and lack of individual attention or consolidation of work in her local state school was rapidly turning her into a 'don't care' drop out. Meanwhile in the home environment she showed herself to be a reasonably confident, intelligent and creative child who was willing to have a go at most things. This potential seemed to be completely unrealised at school and the teacher's report suggested that already, before her 10th birthday, they had written her off as 'middle grade secondary modern' (Kent still has 11+ selection). At this point we decided we could do better ourselves, not only in the formal skills but also in the creative arts and in the far more important area of Pippa's development as a human being.

Having de-schooled Pippa before the end of the Summer Term, we started to look closely at Dominic, who had always seemed fairly content with the system. To our horror, we found there were now 39 children of six years old in his class. This is an impossible situation for any teacher - and to be fair, not the school's fault. Government cuts were to blame as usual (when will they learn to invest in the nation's future instead of in weapons of destruction?). He had hardly progressed with his reading and writing throughout the whole year, although keenly interested in books and more than willing to press on faster than his one or two pages a day (if he was lucky). Being underemployed, the livelier boys in the class started getting into mischief, and more than once Dominic's work was scribbled on or thrown round the room while the overworked teacher's back was turned. So Dominic also began to take a slap-happy attitude to what he was doing - and that was hardly stimulating! Maths consisted of working through endless maths 'cards' in which he seemed to do little except count up to ten and colour in pictures. English consisted of queuing up at the teacher's desk for the vocabulary he needed to write his stories. Not surprisingly, writing became his big hate and any creative ideas he might have had stagnated before he could get pen to paper. No attention was given to the actual formation of his letters and we are still struggling with that one, as bad habits are difficult to break. But thanks to his older sister's experience, we recognised the possible danger signs in time and de-schooled him from September.

Schooling two children with a 4 year age gap was bound to present practical problems, particularly since Dominic had had no training at all in how to concentrate, even for short spells, on what he was doing, nor was he able to sit still at the table long enough to wield his pencil accurately (both these things are now much improved, which just goes to show that 6-7 year olds are ready for learning a little self-control). We experimented doggedly with different 'timetables' and 'schemes', all of which ended up in the waste paper bin. We tried alternate days (mornings only) but found that Dominic could not keep occupied on his 'day off' without constantly interrupting what his sister was trying to do. We tried using schools programmes (some of which are very good but too short) but got ourselves in such a muddle trying to incorporate them into our day on a regular basis that Mum nearly had a brain-storm and no-one could go out or finish what they were doing because such and such a programme was about to start. So we abandoned T.V. except for one or two favourites, (mostly afternoon programmes which we watch if and when we have finished our more interesting and challenging things).

So we have ended up doing some formal work each morning, early, on the basis of one hour on and one hour off for each child. In the intervening hour the child who is 'off' works unsupervised on routine consolidation of what has been learned already. New work of course is done with me, plus any problems that have cropped up.

We find that the essence of a workable regime is simplicity. One or two good, colourful textbooks to guide us are enough and the rest seems to develop naturally. We have stopped driving ourselves mad by trying to be too ambitious all at once and come to realise that education is a very long-term and ongoing process and that consolidation is a more important factor at this stage than trendy new methods and ideas (these arise spontaneously in lively household anyway. Though I was a teacher for so many years, I have had to unlearn a lot of cant about 'the' latest methods and 'the' essential resources and am having to learn instead a much deeper level of understanding in my relationship with my 'pupils'. Much of the equipment used in classrooms is a substitute for real-life situations anyway (e.g. playing shops - how much better to go out and do the real thing!) I think that many parents have been blinded by the educationalists' theories and believe that they do not have the necessary ability or resources to cover the ground at home. This is a myth which needs exploding, particularly at primary level.

As for me, - I am having to learn to relax, and I don't find that easy. All my life (being one of those so-called high powered academics) I have been expected to Achieve!. As a teacher I had to achieve results and drove myself accordingly, and my pupils too. Now I find we do the most rewarding things when I am at my most relaxed. Teaching is as much letting things happen as implanting knowledge. It requires intuition, patience with oneself and a large measure of faith to avoid the trap of wanting to push them soullessly on towards 'goals' or pushing them on to any of the treadmills which the world considers respectable or necessary for their survival or prosperity. Time enough to make decisions when they have explored themselves a bit, and only then will I show them how to drive themselves towards formal qualifications, if that is what they need for their happiness. (Short of being able to change the world overnight, this seems inevitable at some stage, but I hope we can make it as short and as relevant to our needs as possible). No mass institution can cater for individuals in this way - only a parent is prepared to care that much.

The advantages and disadvantages of our new life are showing themselves already. Pippa is still struggling and emotional upheavals are still common (and very wearing I must confess) but at least we are beginning to find the skeletons in her cupboard, instead of refusing to admit they are there and hushing them up. Dominic can now add up and subtract in H.T.U. sums (including borrowings etc.) and we have read ten books in our reading scheme. He loves them and is all the keener now that the writing is normal size and there are more than three words on a line!

So much for our obligations. Now for the freedoms. What a relief to be free from school-runs and their mornings of shouting, screaming and panic stations. And it's nice too (and cheaper) to be rid of school uniform, endless runny noses, swear words, tantrums, over-tiredness, bitching and general lack of opportunity to do our own things (except in those two crowded hours between 4 and 6pm, when parents and children alike drive themselves to death trying to fit everything in). We get the swimming baths to ourselves, we can have piano or horseriding lessons during the day, we can go to the dentist or the doctor when it suits us, and we can do all those lovely follow-up field trips which help to bring our lessons alive. We can take a day off when we feel like it or need it instead of having 6-8 long weeks together, when everyone gets sick of doing nothing much, and we can take our family holidays when we like and revel in the peace and quiet and the cheaper rates.

We spend a lot of time making things too and never have any shortage of ideas because anything leads to another. What's more the children can make real things that they can use and enjoy, not just some dog-eared piece of tat that it took them a whole term of painful unaided labour in the classroom to make. Even Christmas shopping inspires them to make some of the toys which we can't afford and helps them to see through some of the commercialism of the modern Xmas. But most of all we can learn to be human beings; people who have time to wonder, and think about each other or the world around them. The children still meet their friends after school and in clubs and societies in the town, so that old chestnut is put firmly where it belongs! In fact de-schooled children get a chance to mix with all age groups, and learn to understand them. Perhaps we wouldn't have a generation gap

if more teenagers had this opportunity.

Time, of course, will tell. We must be flexible there too, and not push our philosophy to the point of being obstructive. If the children develop a genuine passion for something which neither I, nor Correspondence Colleges, nor Evening Classes etc. can provide, then back they will have to go (though there will be much heart searching and a good deal of expense I fancy!)

But we are reasonably optimistic at the moment, bearing in mind that every undertaking and commitment brings days of despair as well as fulfilment. But I do believe it is wise for the teacher/parent to make sure that he/she gets regular time off from the daily routines in order to reorientate as an adult, without feeling guilty about it, because a refreshed adult is more efficient and more fun. Help in the house is marvellous too, even if it does take most of the family allowance, as it does in our case.

We are not convinced yet that the children are missing out on anything indispensable. On the contrary, we think that they are cutting a lot of dead wood out of their lives, and should be able to see the realities of life more clearly as a result.

Veronica Coath.

* * * * *

CONFUSED? DON'T WORRY YOU SOON WILL BE !

ALL MEMBERS PLEASE NOTE

The Position of Treasurer has been taken over by Alison Mafham, whose address is on the inside back cover of the newsletter. All expenses, claims and invoices should be sent directly to her.

John Elenor is now 'General Secretary'.

The Central Address has been changed from that of John Elenor and is now that of Enquiries Secretary, Janet Everdell as printed on the back cover.

AFFILIATIONS

E.O. is currently affiliated to:

NCCL, 21 Tabard Street, London SE1
Future Studies Centre, 15 Kelso Road, Leeds 2.
National Out of School Alliance, Oxford House, Derbyshire St,
London E2.

EO Ltd

Bob Emmett

There are two sides to E.O., the most important to members is the 'people' side which should be as free and autonomous as one could wish. However, like it or not, there exists the financial side which imposes restraints.

It seems clear to me that if E.O. takes any action which renders its members liable to a claim on their finances, then E.O. should exist as a legal entity which limits those claims that can be made upon the individual member.

Many professional bodies are limited by guarantee, no claim greater than £1 can then be made upon each member by creditors. The body remains untainted by commerce, there are no shares to be bought to obtain a controlling interest, just the need to adopt a controlling committee. Aye, there's the rub, for that committee, unlike the Core Group, would have some standing within E.O. Ltd. But their powers could be limited within the constitution of E.O. May I suggest a possible structure?

Given that E.O. has an autonomous regional structure of Mem. Secs. and Legal Advisers providing advice and assistance to coordinators and members, then the committee should consist solely of Regional Mem. Secs. and Legal Advisers. Anyone appointed by the local coordinators as a Mem. Sec or L.A. would automatically have a seat on the committee.

E.O. Ltd. would be responsible solely for the finances and publications of E.O., no further extension of powers would be permitted without a positive YES vote from 2/3 of the membership. (I know only 1/3 ever votes - that's the point).



Any ballot should be preceded by discussions in four consecutive issues of the newsletter, the fourth issue containing a ballot paper. Tedious? Yes, but no constitutional matter is really that important.

As for the argument that the wording of a proposition gives power to the person who phrases it, well amendments are easily tabled, each version could be voted for separately, and the most popular adopted.

The committee will have to fill the following posts: Chairthing and Vice-Chairthing; Secretary; Treasurer. The first three should be filled from within the committee. The posts of Chairthing and Vice-Chairthing are merely for form, and to avoid delusions of grandeur, tenure should be for no more than one year in five.

The Secretary's post involves real work, and consequently tenure is usually (but not necessarily) terminated by death, senility or nervous exhaustion. The most important post is that of Treasurer who would take full responsibility for the income and expenditure of E.O. This post should be filled by someone with experience of (successfully!) running a small business, but preferably not an accountant (who are to business what teachers are to education). Because of the relationship between the Mem. Secs. as spenders and collectors of money, and the Treasurer as controller, the post should not be filled from their ranks. (Something about cheques and balances?) A member should be co-opted to the committee to fill the post if necessary.

I appreciate that the above is not fully democratic, but neither is the existing Core Group which has not yet caused any irreparable damage to E.O. Anyway, it is the nature of things that the committee-philosophes would be the only ones to offer themselves for election as Core Group members, Mem. Secs. or whatever, so the final constitution of any E.O. committee would look much the same no matter how it was selected.



Out of School 12-18 years old?

I need your help. Nearly a year ago I was asked to edit a booklet on suggestions about learning for the 12+ EOers.

Plan Mark 1. I started passing the word around, put an appeal for contributions in the newsletter, formulated some of my own ideas and extracted some promises from parents.

That was the big mistake. I'd asked the wrong people. Hardly anything happened. Right then, it's time to scrap Plan Mark 1 and do...

Plan Mark 2. This booklet is going to be by teenagers for teenagers. Why wasn't I bright enough to work out that this was what was wanted in the first place? No, don't bother to answer that question.

But please NOW in the next week, will every EOer who was born between 1964 and 1970 inclusive, unearth a piece of paper and a writing implement and answer these questions:

1. What is the most worthwhile activity you've undertaken out of school? (Not necessarily what you've enjoyed most or which came out best - but the one which has given you greatest satisfaction).
2. What resources did you use?
 - a) People (Who?)
 - b) Books (Author, Title, Publisher?)
 - c) Places (Where?)
 - d) Other written reference material (What?)
 - e) Anything else (What?)
3. How long did you spend doing it?
4. Did it cost
 - a) Under £5
 - b) £5 - £20
 - c) Over £20

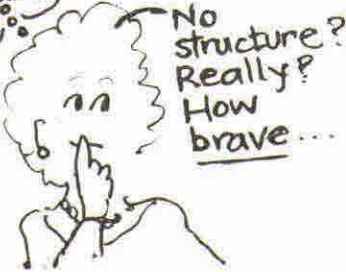
Answers please to Julia Hallett, 82 Hatherley Road, Winchester, Hants SO22 6RR.

P.S. It'll probably be called 'Teenage Years'. Parents contributions welcome if they dare!

EDUCATING ARCHIE

BY SEG

the woman's mad!



No structure?
Really?
How brave...



thank god we got
Miranda
into
Rhodeales



—and you
don't bother
about games?
No - absolutely.



crazed
dangerous
mish-mash



no timetable?
no worry
about exams?
super.



but what do
you do about
textbooks?



oh we let
the school
borrow them
occasionally



WHAT ITS LIKE TAKING OVER, AND BEING A COORDINATOR.

In May of last year I took over as local coordinator for the Essex area. I was already well acquainted with many families, so they knew about the change; but to those members I knew less well, or was unknown, I wrote introducing myself and to tell them about local plans. Of these, about three families replied or contacted me and have since been actively involved in local events.

Initially the role of coordinator was demanding, to the extent in fact that I seemed permanently surrounded by paperwork or talking on the telephone. I had been told the role involved 'very little' and began to think I'd been misled! However, after a few weeks things did quieten down and take some sort of pattern. Sometimes I still find myself trying to do several jobs at once, but basically the role consists of keeping members informed of local meetings, and offering moral support or advice when necessary.

Initial contact is usually in the form of a written enquiry (Essex addresses coming to me) and these vary from a few basic lines, to several pages. Some require just a basic introductory letter on EO., others may have asked specific questions which need answering. Just occasionally the family has already encountered problems with the LEA and then it's a case of trying to find out the necessary facts and to offer some sort of assistance and support where necessary. Some are easily sorted out once the family has the full facts regarding EO., whilst one or two have been a little more long winded and time-consuming. On one or two occasions, when the situation has been urgent (impending visits with the LEA) the written information has run to two or three pages when families have been unsure of their legal rights and the facts involving EO. Happily these are the minority cases, and as a general rule I try to keep information brief and to the point. I always try to give my phone number and extend an invitation to those who join EO, and most phone or visit to discuss EO. in more detail. This is also a good way of meeting new members and informing them of local meetings.

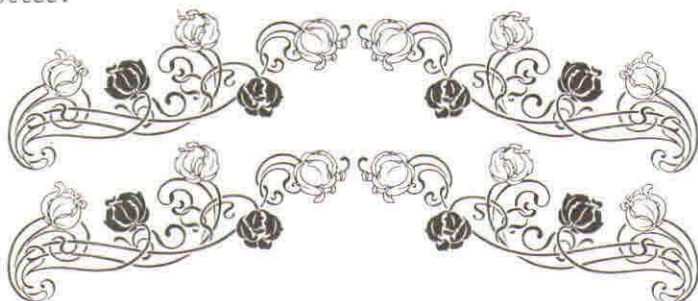
Over the last few years there has been a steady increase in membership in the Essex area and I have always enjoyed meeting other families; so when I took over as coordinator I asked other families for their view and everyone agreed that more frequent meetings would be worthwhile. Initially these were arranged from meeting to meeting, by word of mouth or letter when necessary. This proved to be very time-consuming and inefficient, so meetings are now planned several months in advance and sent to members in the form of a local newsletter. I also hoped that this would help those members who are unable (or uninterested) in coming along to feel more involved and informed on local activities.

The arranging of meeting usually consists of finding a suitable location, then giving details to members via the newsletter. However on several occasions we have visited 'educational resource centres' which are operated via the County Council, and these have proved more involved. It was necessary to make prior arrangements to visit, resulting in lengthy phone calls, written confirmation, and consuming in time and energy. Families also showed an interest in 'teachers' packs' which accompanied one visit, so this involved collecting money, ordering and collecting packs from the County Council and distributing to the members. I hasten to add that these visits were interesting and the necessary arranging worthwhile!

There are numerous other undertakings: trying to keep up to date at a national level with EO. activities; keeping stocks of stationery up to date; communicating with members on day-to-day issues; trying to keep fully informed (to the best of my ability) on the legal situations regarding EO. This might be basically simple, but does not always appear so in some instances, remembering that each case is individual by its' own merit, and are sometimes conflicting.

By and large the role of coordinator can sometimes be time-consuming and demanding - but basically it is very varied and an interesting role... each coordinator probably has their own way of working, but I hope this gives you some idea of what goes on in Essex!

Sandie Cottee.



MONKTON WYLD COURT

For 40 years Monkton Wyld was a progressive boarding school in the tradition of Summerhill and closed as such last summer. Our understanding of education draws from this tradition but we aim to create a venture more broad based than a school one in which learning is a process of sharing and experiment within the daily life and work of a community. We now describe ourselves as a community education centre and wish to cooperate with and offer our resources to people, specifically young ones, who are attempting to create educational and cooperative structures outside of the state system and without adequate support. We can offer all the resources of the school and our group includes experienced teachers as well as people with practical skills.

At present we envisage the following broad options for the use of MWC by families with children out of school. a) EO parents and children coming together at MWC for periods of time. b) Individual families coming to stay for periods of time. c) EO using MWC for more formal purposes. d) Local families using MWC on a day basis, perhaps developing into some regular weekly activities.

Our charges are negotiable according to means but we do have to be realistic about the costs we have to meet. Our guidelines are: at least £7 a day per room (most rooms sleep at least 3 or 4) plus £2.50 a head for food (£1.50 under 10, no charge under 4). This would cover the cost of the use of facilities but materials and tuition would be extra. In the case of day use, our guidelines are: £1.50 a day per adult and £1 per child.

We would like to invite all interested families to come together here to meet us, meet each other, explore the place, have some fun and discuss the possibilities over SATURDAY AND SUNDAY 21st -22nd May. If you enjoy making music please bring your instruments along. Charges would be as above but are negotiable.

If you would like more information or intend to come in May please contact Ruth or David at Monkton Wyld Court, Nr. Charmouth, Bridport, Dorset, or phone: 0297 (Charmouth) 60342.

Which 'R' Should We Worry About Most ?

A.M. Nimmo

In my first article I described the way in which children's errors and areas of unlearning have been transmuted in educational language into 'problems'. Two of these, poor reading and poor spelling, have been combined and inflated to become 'dyslexia'.

Dyslexia is currently very popular. The word has existed on the outskirts of educational literature for a long time, though until about ten years ago the terms 'reading difficulties' or 'difficulties in the teaching of reading' were considered adequate. But in the mid seventies, and for reasons I have not yet identified, (though, I suspect, they are not unconnected with television appearances of actors or actresses who claimed not to be able to read or spell), some spark was lit and the bandwagon began to roll. It has been gathering momentum ever since and is honoured throughout the land, from university departments of education to local parent groups. There now exist a number of dyslexia associations, institutes and centres. Conferences are held, both national and international. Local authorities, where they feel they can afford it, sometimes set up a clinic or two for the detection and treatment of the little victims. And the more they look, the more they find: there is a great deal of dyslexia about and the tide is rising. Nor is any opportunity lost to popularise it: very recently we celebrated National Dyslexia Week, and from your local newsagent you might have got the 'Home and Freezer Digest' for July, 1982, which carried an article entitled 'What to do if your child is dyslexic'.

What is certain is that for some reason, dyslexia is deeply wanted. The literature of the subject, both in Britain and the U.S.A. is daunting in its seriousness and scope. In their search for cause or cure, investigators have considered speech disorders, cross laterality and cerebral dominance; the cybernetic and genetic aspects; the neuropsychological and the psychoneurological; the epidemiological and the merely syntactic; one researcher has postulated a connection with overcrowding in the home; another has considered the appropriate drug therapy. The most resplendent offering to date must surely be that of Helmer R. Myklebust, who published in 'Progress in learning disabilities', 1978, an article entitled 'Toward a science of dyslexiology'.

I have not yet met a practising dyslexiologist, but expect to any day now.

To those of us old enough to remember life before dyslexia, it is all nonsense of course. 'Dyslexia' itself is a perfectly respectable neurological term denoting an impairment associated with certain diseases or injuries involving the nervous system or the brain. If your child has dyslexia, he will have a lot of other things wrong with him too. He will not be a pupil: he will be a patient. If your otherwise healthy child cannot read or spell, that does not mean he has dyslexia. He simply cannot read or spell, and that by itself does not constitute a medical condition.

At this point there is thrown up a refinement of the doctrine, known as 'specific learning disability' or 'minimal cerebral dysfunction', which means that dyslexia is there in a healthy child all right, but that the cause is so minute that you cannot find it. So the doors of argument are slammed shut.

The problem of why children fail to read or spell competently, in spite of sincere good intentions and often immense and dedicated hard work to help them, has to be explained somehow. Efforts to do so provide a supreme example of certain tendencies in late 20th century schooling: the misappropriation of medical models; the drive to mystification; pseudo-professionalism; and a want of intellectual integrity. Right now in East Sussex, there is a two year research programme under way to show that dyslexia is caused by 'glue-ear' in early childhood. Facts are

being fitted to a theory again - surely the only one not yet tried.

Cyril Burt began in just this way.

The Dyslexia Crusade will probably go on and on. People inside the educational system who would challenge it cannot, because their terms of employment prohibit them from engaging in public debate. Nor can they do so privately because the current orthodoxy in education, like any other, does not permit of dissent. Neurologists do not often read the literature of education, nor teachers that of neurology. (G.P.'s should remember this). Dyslexia, a cynic might say, will be around as long as careers, reputations and retirement can be made from it. A kinder mind would regret that so much sincerity, dedication and ingenuity produce so little effect.

Almost never are poor reading or spelling attributed to the teaching which preceded them.

It might be argued that whatever name you give to poor reading and poor spelling does not really matter, that the term 'dyslexia' need not be objectionable in itself. But I believe it matters very much indeed, and for these reasons:

First, to use a medical term inappropriately confuses the issue. 'Poor reading' and 'poor spelling' are direct, appropriate and honest.

Secondly 'dyslexia' is used to denote both condition and cause. Johnny cannot read and so is called dyslexic; Johnny cannot read because he has dyslexia. This is not good thinking.

Thirdly, it is an insidious form of Blame-the-Victim. Johnny cannot read, or spell, because there is something the matter with him and so it is not his fault, nor anyone else's either.

Fourthly 'dyslexic' is socially more acceptable than 'illiterate'. If children were leaving their primary schools illiterate rather than dyslexic, there would be uproar.

If your child's teacher says he is dyslexic, do not worry until a neurologist says the same. Without this confirmation, look on him as one of a very large number of thoroughly normal children who have been badly taught to read and write.

If the teaching of literacy brings failure to so many children, the teaching of primary maths is a national catastrophe. Secondary maths failure begins in the primary school, and for reasons which derive directly from current educational theory, classroom organisation, teaching techniques and teachers' knowledge.

In the first place there may be a lack of information. You would be surprised how many ways there are of adding. To find the sum of 63 and 24 a child might use the caveman technique, whereby he makes 63 tallymarks and then counts from 63 through the 24 to the end. Or he might use the Crosshands method:

$$\begin{array}{r} 63 \\ 24 \\ \hline 510 \end{array}$$

Or the stratified approach:

$$\begin{array}{r} 63 \\ 24 \\ \hline 69 \end{array} \text{ (or 96 if you prefer it)}$$

With larger values you might meet the cumulative technique

$$\begin{array}{r} 398 \\ 753 \\ \hline 101411 \end{array}$$

All these calculations will probably be made on the fingers.

Once a child has learned the fact that $5+3=8$ he will not need to work it out again. He can go on to use this information in several ways, eg $8-5=3$, $8-3=5$. He can generalise further that $15+3=18$, $15+13=28$ and so on. He will never reason in this way if he counts. Repeated counting forth and back will not generate the concepts of addition and subtraction; they will only lead to more counting forth and back. Only by counting, in the end, do children raised by counting feel secure, even into secondary school.

Counting was obsolete hundreds, if not thousands, of years ago. Children who have been taught to rely on fingers rather than memory have been done a great disservice. (Cockcroft would have them use calculations even for simple operations, thus becoming dependent not simply on a little machine but on the battery which runs it. This could be an even worse disservice).

Individualised learning is the thing nowadays. It follows that there is much unsupervised learning and this in turn can mean either no learning at all, with children beavering away at what they know already, or rushing off into thickets of misunderstanding without realising they have done so. Why else does a bright twelve year old think that

$$1/2=3/4=7/8=15/16$$

It looks very mathematical does it not?

Whether children are expected to learn independently or not, they are the victims of a style of teaching which fragments the subject, as it fragments the classroom, so that everything is piecemeal, haphazard, sketchy, disconnected, unsustainable. Teachers' colleges, textbooks, head teachers and other sources of insight will tell you any number of maths topics which children might meet in the course of their primary schooling but there is no-one to see that they do, or do so effectively. The sum of children's mathematical knowledge at secondary transfer is often lamentable and their understanding sabotaged for life. 'I'm hopeless at maths,' they say. Show them a page of figures and they draw in a sharp breath. Numbers frighten them.

In the classroom, when several children are involved with a problem, they tend to construe their objective as a fast answer, like learning to read from flashcards. They ought to be learning that answers are found by reflection, not by instant reaction. Absence of reflection is not confined to maths but it is there that you notice it most. In a classroom there are usually three categories of children: a small number who give a quick correct verbal response, another small number who give a quick incorrect verbal response, and a larger number who give no verbal response at all if they can help it. The first group makes some of the others certain they are failures. The most anxious are the second group. Some of them are desperate. Stimulus-response methods are not appropriate to the teaching of maths.

But the greatest weakness in current maths teaching is the attitude to error. Doing maths has become like playing darts: you take notice of the ticks and forget the crosses. However, it is the crosses which are interesting. They should be cherished because they might reveal a pattern of misunderstanding. Children can work with apparent success and yet leave primary school believing that 0.86 is greater than 0.9 and that 0.90 is greater than both. Some of those jettisoned errors might have shown this up in time, but alas! no-one was looking.

Next time: some of the reasons why, and what's to be done about it all.





THE BIRD AND THE LION

Clare Wilton Jones (5)

Once upon a time there lived a lion who had a car. Then a bird came along and stole the car. Then she drove away with it. She came home and parked the car in the garage and went in. The lion looked in all the houses. The bird did not lock the garage because she had not any key. The lion found his car in the garage. after that the lion came and ran after the bird. Then he caught the bird and ate her!

MY DREAM Philippa Coath (10)

I was making a garden for my Grandpa Eddie, with flowers and trees in it. I planted roses and tulips and big tall trees. The next thing that happened was that I was told that in three weeks time I was going on holiday for two weeks to France. Grandpa said 'I would like you to chop down all the trees and replace them with flowers like roses and daffodils and carnations'. So in the next three weeks I chopped down all the trees and replaced them with flowers. It was hard work but in the end it was well worth it. On the day we left for France the birds sung gaily and as I looked at my garden through the car window I thought how I would miss it. When I woke up we were in France. We were here at last. That day we went to the beach. We did this all that week. Next week we moved on to a different hotel to look at the cobbled streets. We were near the end of our holiday and Grandpa said 'We must get back home to see your garden'. So we set off. The first thing I did when we got back was to see my garden but there were no flowers. Instead there was a modern school built right on top of my garden. I was very upset. All my work was ruined and spoiled.

CHANGE OF CENTRAL ADDRESS

Would all members please note this change of central address (for details see Core Group minutes at end of newsletter). The central Address is now that of Enq. Sec., Janet Everdell: 'Heathermead', 25 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots, Cambs. PE18 9AN Tel 0480 63130.

INSURANCE

I have just taken out a Public Liability Policy in the name of EO with the Prudential, to cover us for claims made at public meetings. The premium was fixed on a basis of ten such meetings per year, in the knowledge that this figure may have to be adjusted at the end of the year. Will coordinators who want their meetings (not in private houses) covered please send me details in advance of date, time, place and expected attendance. John Elenor.

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

We have received an offer of help and guidance from a qualified ed. psych. who is specialising in the 1981 Education Act (dealing with 'special needs'). Members are welcome to get in touch direct with Anne Hollinger, 7 Mostyn Lodge, 96 Aberdean Park, London N5 2BG.

HANDBILLS

A5 size handbills bearing the triangular EO motif overlaid with a brief description of EO aims and objectives are available from Caroline Grant, 3/4 Tanyrallt Cottages, Llanllyfni, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL54 6RS. Drop a wodge off at your local alternative bookshop, community centre, library etc.

WELSH HANDBILLS

There are now Welsh versions of the above handbills available, again from Caroline.

THE HARRISONS VIDEO

If you would like to borrow a copy of a V.H.S. Video Cassette on 'The Harrisons Dont Go to School', please telephone Mike or Chris Freeman on (0273) 594917. The cassette shows a forty minute account of the Harrisons' battle with the courts, and also shows a little about their approach to EO. It makes interesting viewing and would provide plenty to discuss at an EO local group meeting.

MUSE

Muse is a national organisation for coordinating activity amongst those, mainly schools, with an interest in the use of mini and micro computers; their magazine is entitled 'Computers in Schools'. Glancing through the complementary copy we have just been sent, it is obvious that its usefulness is not confined to schools. The fee for full membership is £10 per annum, but any student member of EO is entitled to a reduced fee of £6.50. More details from Muse Information Office, Teaching Centre, Westhill College, Weoley Park Road, Birmingham 29.

PUBLICATIONS

Caroline Grant now holds stocks of all EO publications. Anyone thinking of holding a meeting, running a stall at a fair etc., please write for pack of things to display or sell, to Caroline Grant, 3/4 Tanyrallt Cottages, Llanllyfni, Caernarfon, Gwynedd, LL54 6RS.

HEADED NOTEPAPER

New supplies are now available from Caroline Grant at the above address.

**INTRODUCTORY LITERATURE/
MEMBERSHIP FORMS**

The new versions are now ready, the old versions are out of date and should no longer be used. Each coordinator will automatically be sent a batch, but if anyone else would like a stock apply to Caroline Grant, address as under 'Publications' above.

1979 DIGEST

There are plenty of these left. They are still very relevant, and again very useful to sell at meetings stalls, fairs etc. Available from Caroline Grant, address as under 'publications' above.

GALT

Galt Educational Division has agreed to give the South Wales Group 12% off their non-net items. This is their full discount. Perhaps this could be followed up by other members. Address: Jane Galt & Co. Ltd, Brookfield Road, Cheddle, Cheshire, CB3 2PL. Ref: TOM/GR.

INFORMATION LIBRARY

At present in preparation - annotated lists of materials used by members. Feed-back is required on all educational materials used and ideas no matter how small. Once this information is collated it will be available to any member. These lists are offered purely as a help and a guide as to what is available and will continually be updated as new information becomes available. Information to: The Andersons, 95 Derrington Avenue, Crewe, Cheshire, or 'phone Crewe 664060.

FROM THE TREASURER

My apologies to those whose subscription renewals last December were not registered on my membership list, I don't know what went wrong, but to judge from the number of bemused or irate responses to the second renewal reminder, it was quite drastic. Luckily it will be someone else's responsibility next year.

MONKTON WYLD

It was made obvious at the last Core Group meeting that we all had been labouring under a large misapprehension as to the status and intentions of the Monkton Wyld Community. The minutes of the September meeting were seen to be (unintentionally) insulting, so we take this opportunity to apologise to them, thank them for meeting us at Lower Rocks at the January gathering, and wish us both a fruitful collaboration.

AMERICAN EXCHANGES

Anybody crossing the Atlantic this year? There are several American families willing to host British EO visitors, so please send a s.a.e. to me if you'd like details. Alternatively if you'd like to welcome overseas visitors please let me know what hospitality you can offer and when. Helen Holland, Inholms Farm, Plumpton Green, Sussex. BN7 3DE.

HAMPSHIRE MEETING

Saturday 25th June 1983, at Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Gravel Hill, Herndean. Meet at 12 noon at the Centre Building. Bring sausages etc. to barbecue.

PEN FRIEND'S CORNER

Helen Holland has suggested that we have a regular feature of a 'pen friend's corner' (for adults as well as children) for those who like letter writing and feel isolated.

ITALY

Visitors, especially with EO children, welcome any time at our 'open farmhouse' - share food costs and lenda hand! Write Addey, Pratiale, Vallingengo, Scritto, Gubbio, Perugia, Italy.

W.E.S.

The World-wide Education Service of the PNEU, the charity which helps expatriate families and their employers with the education of children overseas, has moved to new offices at: Strode House, 44/50 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3NN Tel. 01 387 9228.

NEXT CORE MEETING

The next Core Group meeting will be held at Unstone Grange, Crow Lane, Unstone, Sheffield S18 5AL on May 27th-30th. There is still room so book now using the booking form in the February 1983 Newsletter, p.17. Please note the correct costs per person on p.26 of this newsletter, as the booking form is ambiguous. Betty Ball is organising workshops and activities over the weekend. If you are able to help in this please include details with your booking letter.

EO BIKE RIDE

Probable date May 29th-June 5th
Route: N. Wales, Shropshire, Hereford, Gwent. Camping with host families. Some floor space for those without tents. Overnight accommodation available in Manchester or Liverpool on Sat. May 28th for those coming from far afield. Cost £15-£20 per person. For details send S.A.E. to Peter Jones 3 Fairfield Court, Daisybank Rd. Manchester M4 5GL. 061 224 9816. Low daily mileage. Support vehicle. Young children welcome. Some bikes available on loan. For information about sizes etc. ring Peter Jones.

DON'T FORGET THE WALLACES

Open week from May 21st to May 27th at ourcroft, No. 25 Diabaig, Torridon Wester Ross, Scotland. We'll not be very educational, but there will be plenty of otherwise. Seriously though, we have the sea and shore, boats, mountains, moorland, wildlife, birdlife and our own smallholding. What we need from you is some stimulation and interaction. Can you give us some? But don't forget your wellies. We'll see you. Bruce, Christine, Kirsty(8) and Calum(5) Wallace.

The village school had 35 pupils aged 5-15 years, who at break covered the village green - straight out of James Herriot's Yorkshire - with games and sherbert packets. The school room had a huge brown curtain separating the big from the little class - and ink pellets used to fly over it. We didn't go in winter time, lambing time, hay time... and no-one ever passed the 11+. To this day I think of God as 'Our Father Witchart'.

The kindly old teacher left - and the prickly vicar's wife took over. Our days were numbered - Being Quakers, my parents having run an alternative school nearby in the war and still 'strangers' to the dale (you're a foreigner for ten years, then a stranger). My brother and I, persecuted, became so unhappy that we left - to spend three carefree years roaming the fields, valleys and woods of the high dales. We explored potholes, caves and tarns with enchanted cities beneath, lead mines for geology and fossils, hedgerows for birds, plants and flowers, our farm for animals and agriculture.

There was some 'school' - my mother got hold of the P.N.E.U. syllabus as a rough guide, sat my brother and myself at opposite ends of the table to stop us quarrelling - and we did our sums, wrote our stories, filled in our 'Farmers Weekly Country' Spotters Notebook' - the source of many a book token - painted, drew and made things. We had our 'museums' of fossils, our flower books (there were 'rare' flowers in the valley, like Bee Orchids), our birds nest catalogue of where birds nested, and our pictures.

There was always the farm - finding secret hoards of chickens' eggs in the barn, milking the cows, feeding stock, taking sheep to market at Hawes, catching lambs, avoiding the Bull and making hay. This latter activity involved forking hay around old stone barns amid heat and dust. Or sometimes getting hay dry in small rows three times only to be drenched yet again. The seasons and nature were a living being for us, and life hinged on the weather.

Usually we did 'school work' in the morning and did creative things like painting in the afternoon, or occupied ourselves exploring the valley. The seasons brought things to look forward to - the ice-palaces on the waterfalls, the first snowdrops, lambing, cuckoos, shearing time, summer and tickling trout, harvest festivals, autumn all green and golden and the crisp days of Mischief Night. Best was Christmas or birthday parties, when the barns made ideal places for kiss chases or sardines for local friends.

And whilst we wrote and painted, so did my mother, who covered the house with watercolours of the valley. We had to be careful in the local fair's painting competitions in case the judges thought that she had painted our pictures. We were lucky to absorb like blotting paper the arts, crafts and literary tastes of our mother, and practical mechanical farming bent of our father. It was a three years well spent - creative, lively, free - I think a little lonely, though this was anyway true of life in those valleys. A real education otherwise.



LETTERS



Dear Editor,

I have been somewhat dismayed by the lack of discussion in the Newsletter about the issue of whether E.O. should become a charity and/or a company limited by guarantee. I myself am in favour of E.O. seeking charitable status, plus being a company limited by guarantee, because, quite simply, E.O. needs more money to do its work than is provided by subscriptions. If we are a charity, then there are many sources of money we can try to tap, such as the Rowntree Trust. If we become a company limited by guarantee then each member would not be personally liable for money, should E.O. suddenly incur a large debt - at the moment each and every one of us is liable to foot the bill.

I think it is not realised how much work is being done to run E.O. and how often people voluntarily do not claim expenses. However, there is a limit to what people are willing to do out of love, and we are probably fast approaching it. This isn't anyone's fault but just the way things are. E.O. cannot live on air and there is a limit to the subscription that people are willing to pay.

While at the E.O. weekend at Lower Rocks, Somerset I was struck by the loving care which people showed to each other and to their children. This is obviously a humanity towards each other which E.O. does not want to lose and I can understand people's fear that super organisation might steam roller this out of existence. Of course we don't want to create a mini civil service - so I would ask everyone to lend their minds and humanity

to making E.O. both an organisation with a human face for people and also one which can effectively make our views heard - views about home education and the ability of all to learn at all stages in their life which are so important. I agree we are treading a tricky path but we must keep our heads. This is a serious matter and we should not be misled into playing at anarchic revolutions, when we should be trying to wed together humanity and organisation.

JOAN HOARE
25 Moor Oaks Road,
Broomhill,
Sheffield
S10 1BX.

Editor's note: for further information see Joan Hoare's article in the December issue.

Dear Editor,

I should like to draw your attention to a charity providing a service which might be of interest to E.O. members with handicapped children.

'Talking Books for the Handicapped' puts books on to cassette and is particularly concerned with children who have some form of mental handicap and perhaps are unable to hold a book easily. A wide range of cassettes are available including 'Robin Hood', 'Butterfly Ball', 'National Velvet', 'Mary Poppins', and 'Tess of the D'Urbevilles'. The annual subscription covers the loan of a special player and postage of the cassettes. For more information 'The National Listening Library', 12, Lant Street, London, SE1 1QR or telephone 01 407 9417.

LORNA BICICCHI

Dear Editor,

If the logic that Roger Downey follows in 'Biologist Bites Back' is the same as he uses in his research, he must get peculiar results. The abolition of vivisection would not at all amount to the abolition of zoology. It would, or might amount to the abolition of zoology as we know it. So what. We'd have a different sort of zoology. Is he really arguing that all zoological knowledge apart from that gleaned via vivisection is negligible? What about those primary skills of science - observation, interpretation, speculation, deduction?

Yes, opening up animals is interesting. But can't we do it to an animal that has died anyway. You don't have to look far to find a dead bird, mouse, hedge-hog etc. A cat kills to feed itself, as does an owl or an eagle. If we have broken its continuum by providing food it will kill 'unnecessarily' but it is still only exercising a biological instinct.

As to his defence of 'Science' in general, it is indeed a religion, complete with commandments, dogma and priests. Just look at the value-loaded use of words today such as 'unscientific', 'scientific', 'technology', 'high technology'; presumably we will soon have 'high technologists'! If 'Science' really were a 'body of knowledge', it would be happy to embrace any new knowledge from any source at all. If you follow the controversies surrounding, for example, telepathy, clairvoyance and life-energy, you will find that 'Science' is delighted with some facts and extremely disturbed by others, in other words disturbed by 'new knowledge'. As a research worker on the fringes of 'Science', I know from my own experience how 'Science' will willfully ignore

discoveries that contradict any of its cherished dogmas.

And that little grumble brings me to a creative idea for E.O. There must be many E.O. parents and children who are interested in science without any prejudices and who wonder if there is not more to life and the universe than mechanistically minded molecules. Yes there is. Taking shape, slowly, often in isolation, just like E.O. a new science, the science of the life energy. In my own work as a psycho-therapist I work with this energy every day. Would you members, adults and children like to join in a workshop on the basics of life-energy at the North Wales E.O. week? We could start with experiencing our own energy and do some simple experiments. It could be a starting point for E.O. children (or adults) who want to do science in a new way. So little work is being done in this field that it would be quite possible for a young scientist to make a really important discovery.

PETER JONES
3 Fairfield Court,
Daisybank Road, Manchester
M14 5GL

Dear Editor,

Wolsey Hall will accept pupils under 16. Both our boys are enrolled with Wolsey Hall, both are under 16.

We have been very pleased with the standard of Wolsey Hall and feel that they are most reasonably priced. We looked into W.E.S. but felt Wolsey Hall with its personal tutor service was better value for money.

I do feel that only older children would be helped by Wolsey Hall because they are designed for older students. However, after looking at the biology 'O' level we have decided our 13 year old would be able to

cope due to his intense interest in this subject.

Wolsey Hall provides preliminary courses leading up to the 'O' level courses in Book-Keeping, English, German, French, Latin, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Music and Maths which is split into three parts: Arithmetic, Algebra and Geometry.

I hope this information will be helpful to anyone with older children. Wolsey Hall telephone number is Oxford 54231.

ANNE BENSON
68 Farndale Road
Loughborough, LE11 2RQ.

Dear Editor,

For those whose interest in E.O. springs partly or wholly from a concern about the type of sexual and moral teaching children receive in schools, the Responsible Society may be of interest. The Society wishes for parents to have more information about, and say in the sex education schools provide. It also wishes parents to be given the right to withdraw children from sex education in the same way that they have a right to withdraw them from religious education. The Society says (as E.O. says of all education?) that only the parents can judge what material their child is ready for, since young people mature at different rates. Sex education should be purveyed as part of a preparation for life, not just as a biological process.

The Responsible Society produces many leaflets including 'Sex Education - What Every Parent Should Know'. Write to Mrs. Valerie Riches, Wicken, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK19 6BU.

ANNIE WILTON-JONES
Tyddyn y Mynydd
Llanelly Hill
Gwent.

P.S. Rob and Anne Wade (E.O. Newsletter, Dec. '82) mentioned the Woodcraft Folk in their letter to the L.E.A. Can they or anyone else give any more details of this organisation please? ('Phone 0873 831182)

Editor's note: There have been a few requests for information on the Woodcraft Folk - perhaps some details in a future Newsletter?

Dear Editor,

Our daughter Xylia is five years old, she does not go to school, although she went to nursery school last year, during which I discovered that another type of education was possible. We then decided to try it for at least a year; I do not think we are being unsuccessful with it, but I think we are not experienced enough yet, and I was wondering if any of your readers might be able to help us a little bit.

We live in Penicuik, a little town about eight miles south of Edinburgh and feel rather isolated with our problems, we do not have a car, so things are not made any easier for us. I feel Xylia is missing out because she cannot be in contact with other children as much as she would like and this really is starting to create a problem.

If anyone practising E.O. lives in the neighbourhood and would like to get into contact with us, please do so, we would be most grateful. It would be a pity to give up E.O. just because of a social problem. So I hope this letter will bring Xylia some more social contact.

JOELLE & MICHAEL PEAT
35 Eskvale Drive,
Kirkhill, Penicuik,
Midlothian, Scotland.
'Phone Penicuik 75984.



EO in Literature: Arithmetic in 1825



(Extract from G.W.S. 24)

William Cobbett was one of the true characters of English literature, first of all a countryman and farmer, but also a journalist and pamphleteer, and a fearless opponent of corruption and a defender of political liberty in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when liberty was a risky thing to defend. At one point he was jailed for his writings, and while he was in jail, his children, none of them over sixteen or so, ran his large farm very competently, keeping him fully informed about its doings in the letters they sent him along with baskets of food.

Cobbett was a wonderfully opinionated and outspoken man. Two things above all could rouse him to passion. One was potatoes, which were then coming very much into fashion and which he felt were a terrible crop. The other was Shakespeare. People who had an overdose of Shakespeare in their schooling will get much pleasure out of what Cobbett had to say about him.

Here is some of what Cobbett wrote about education in his book 'Rural Rides' (1825). A nice reminder that home and parent education is not a new idea:

...Richard and I have done something else besides ride, and hunt, and course, and stare about us, during this month. He was eleven years old last March, and it was now time for him to begin to know something about letters and figures. He has learned to work in the garden, and having been a good deal in the country, knows a great deal about farming affairs...When he and I went from home, I had business in Reigate. It was a very wet morning and we went off long before daylight in a post-chaise, intending to have our horses brought after us.

...He had learned from mere play to read, being first set to work of his own accord to find out what was said about Thurtell. That had induced us to give him Robinson Crusoe; and that had made him a passable reader. Then he had scrawled down letters and words upon paper, and had written letters to me in the strangest way imaginable. His knowledge of figures he had aquired from the necessity of knowing the several numbers upon the barrels of seed brought from America, and the numbers upon the doors of houses.

...I began with a pretty long lecture on the utility of arithmetic; the absolute necessity of it, in order for us to make out our accounts of the trees and seeds that we should have to sell in the winter, and the utter impossibility of our getting paid for our pains unless we were able to make out our accounts...

Having thus made him understand the utility of the thing, and given him a very strong instance in the case of our nursery affairs, I proceeded to explain to him the meaning of the word arithmetic, the power of figures, according to the place they occupied. I then,

for it was still dark, taught him to add a few figures together, I naming the figures one after another, while he, at the mention of each new figure said the amount, and if incorrectly, he was corrected by me. When we had got a sum of about 24, I said now there is another line of figures on the left of this, and therefore you are to put down the four and carry two. "What is carrying?" said he. I then explained to him the why and the wherefore of this and he perfectly understood me at once. We then did several other little sums; and by the time we got to Sutton, it becoming daylight, I took a pencil and set him a little sum upon paper, which, after making a mistake or two, he did very well.

By the time we got to Reigate he had done several more, and at last a pretty long one, with very few errors. We had business all day, and thought no more of our scholarship until we went to bed, and then we did, in our post-chaise fashion, a great many lines in arithmetic before we went to sleep. Thus we went on mixing our riding and hunting with our arithmetic, until we quitted Godalming, when he did a sum very nicely in multiplication of money, falling a little short of what I had laid out, which was to make him learn the four rules in whole numbers first, and then in money, before I got home.

...Now when there is so much talk about education, let me ask how many pounds it generally costs parents to have a boy taught this much of arithmetic; how much time it costs also; and, which is a far more serious consideration, how much mortification, and very often how much loss of health, it costs the poor scolded broken-hearted child, who becomes dunder-headed and dull for all this life time, merely because that has been imposed upon him as a task which he ought to regard as an object of pleasant pursuit. I never even once desired him to stay a moment from any other thing that he had a mind to go at. I just wrote the sums down upon paper, laid them upon the table, and left him to tackle them when he pleased.

In the case of the multiplication table, the learning of which is something of a job, and which it is necessary to learn perfectly, I advised him to go up into his bedroom and read it twenty times over out loud every morning before he went a hunting, and tentimes over every night after he came back, till it all came as pat upon his lips as the names of persons that he knew. He did this, and at the end of about a week he was ready to set on upon multiplication. It is the irksomeness of the thing which is the great bar to learning of every sort. I took care not to suffer irksomeness to seize his mind for a moment, and the consequence was that which I have described...I look upon my boy as being like other boys in general. Their fathers can teach arithmetic as well as I, and if they have not a mind to pursue my method, they must pursue their own. Let them apply to the side of the head and to the back if they like; let them bargain for thumps and the birch rod; it is their affair and not mine. I never yet saw in my house a child that was afraid; that was ever for a moment under any sort of apprehension, on account of the learning of anything; and I never in my life gave a command, an order, a request, or even advice, to look into any book; and I am quite satisfied that the way to make children dunces, to make them detest books, and justify the detestation, is to tease them and bother them upon the subject.



MAY CORE GROUP WEEKEND

PLEASE NOTE: Unstone Grange Weekend, from 6pm Friday May 27th to 6pm Monday May 30th (Bank Holiday Weekend)

The charges were incorrectly printed in the last newsletter in February. They should be:

Charges for Unstone Grange (children under 3 no charge)		Adults	Children(3-16)
Residential in house per person per night		£3.00	£3.00
Camping (tents)	£1.00	£0.50
Camping (vans)	£1.00	£0.50
Day visitors	£0.50	£0.50
Picnic	-	-

We are very sorry about the misinformation and hope that we have not caused anyone disappointment. Please see February Newsletter for booking form.

* Activities are being planned for the May Core Group weekend for both parents and children. These will include a picnic on the Sunday afternoon, hopefully some art and drama, a computer workshop, orienteering possibly etc. As replies have not been coordinated yet, it is not possible to give details but anyone interested should send a s.a.e. to Betty Ball, 1 Fenton Road, Warboys, Huntingdon, Cambs., and a programme will be forwarded as soon as it exists. Offers of help eagerly accepted.

Members are invited to set up stalls and sideshows for the Sunday afternoon picnic, or to bring contributions for an educational bring and buy stall.

Meetings at Unstone Grange

Saturday 28th, 10.00am: Discussion forum for coordinators. An opportunity for coordinators and others who are interested to discuss what they are doing and what their problems are.

Saturday 28th, 2.00 to 4.00pm: Core Group discussion. A chance for all members to discuss what is and should be going on in E.O.

Sunday 29th, 9.30am to 1.00pm: Core Group business meeting. It is too early to publish a proper agenda but all the usual items will be included. Further items for discussion may be sent to Bruce Cox, Grey Row, St. Margarets, St Elmham, Harleston, Norfolk IP20 0PL or tel. St. Cross 315.



WEEK IN WALES

E.O. WEEK IN WALES Ozanam Centre, Llanllyfni, nr. Caernarfon; June 25th - July 1st. Still a few places available. Cost £70 or less per person. Send £3 deposit per person (cheques payable to E.O.) to E.O.) plus S.A.E. to ; Caroline Grant, 3/4 Tanyralit Cottages, Llanllyfni, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL54 6RS.



EO GRAND DRAW



YOUR SUPPORT NEEDED

Enclosed with this newsletter are 2 books of draw tickets for the exciting prize of a Sinclair ZX Spectrum 16K Computer. Your help is needed in selling these to your friends to raise much needed E.O. funds. The draw will take place on June 26th at the E.O. Week in Wales. Sell as many tickets as you can - you can get more from the addresses below.

Can you help also by donating a small prize? A book, an item of craft work, perhaps. Could your local E.O. group join together to donate a joint prize? This would ensure more of the profits went to funds.

If you are opposed to the idea of a draw, we apologise and would be grateful of your ideas of how to fundraise for E.O. If you feel unable to sell tickets please return them immediately to Betty Ball, address below. If you wish instead to make a donation these will be handled separately and shown as such.

Counterfoils and cheques should be returned to Betty Ball, 1 Fenton Road, Warboys, Huntingdon, Cambs. Cheques made out to Education Otherwise please. Not later than Friday June 17th 1983.



Win a £5 book token by selling the most tickets.

More tickets can be obtained from one of:
(Please write if possible)

Caroline Grant, 3/4 Tanyrallt Cottages, Llanillyfni,
Caernarfon, Gwynedd, LL54 6RS.

Andrea Lowe, 319 Rochdale Road, Bury.

Dianne Cox, Grey Row, St Margaret, S. Elmham
Harleston, Norfolk, IP20 0PL

Lesley Downie, 30 Hillhead St, Glasgow 12.

Lorna Bicchichi, 5, The Walk, Tandridge, Surrey.

Malcolm Duff, Hasfield Court, Hasfield Glos.

YOUNG CHILDREN & COMPUTER PROGRAMMING WITH A SPECTRUM

Betty Ball

Many families now have a home computer and young children keen to get hold of them. Many EO. families are considering how these could be used to help them. Daily there are more packages available testing you on your spelling, tables and so on.

However, computers really become fun when the child writes its own programmes. Young children bring a new challenge as they have a different mathematical vocabulary. I have found that the ZX Spectrum by Sinclair is excellent value for the home and is an excellent tool for young children.

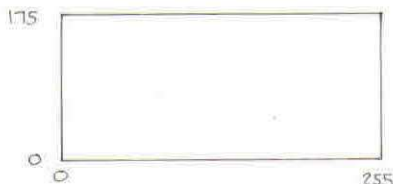
The child needs to be able to get going quickly with only a few instructions and yet to have something dramatic happen which is easy to understand. The Spectrum can be used to draw pictures with only two instructions to learn in order to start. Seven, eight year olds can cope with support.

The following is a guide to how a parent can help a child to get started. Once introduced he will supply the ideas, and drag you in with him.

I suggest that a parent tries out all ideas first so that he can check that the child knows any maths that may occur. In this introduction there are negative numbers and coordinates. A good introduction is to talk about temperatures below freezing and to play battleships if the child has not previously met these ideas.

I suggest that you first write a programme together and input the programme line by line and run it so that you can see immediately if the computer has done what you intended. Let the child enter some mistakes and see what has gone wrong.

The screen is seen as a row of dots from 0 to 255 across, and from 0 to 175 up the screen numbered as



The instruction

```
10 PLOT 127,87
```

will place a dot in the centre of the screen. (Enter and RUN this line).

```
The line 20 DRAW 50,0
```

will draw a line from this dot going 50 units across the screen and 0 units up.

```
The line 30 DRAW -25,40
```

will draw a line 25 units long across backwards (to the left) and 40 units up.

```
The line 40 DRAW -25,-40
```

draws 25 units across backwards and 40 units downwards. Hence the programme does the following



Once you have sorted out these instructions, and the best way is to try it out and see what will happen, then try to draw a picture of a house. Make it simple, a rectangle with a roof on, a door and a window.

Also you can introduce the CIRCLE instruction to add more interest.

200 CIRCLE 68,45,5

might be a doorknob, 68,45 are the coordinates of the centre of the circle on the screen and 5 is the radius. Can you move it so that it fits your house? If it's too big, change the last figure 5 into a 2 and try it again. When you have got this far you can just turn the child loose to draw on his own a boat, a spacerocket, a clowns face or a stickman.

He is learning a real language that he can add to and build on. He is working on his own terms, drawing pictures, sorting out the complexities of the keyboard and gaining confidence much quicker than you did. As a bonus he is doing a lot of painless arithmetic - working out the numbers so that the roof actually fits the walls of the house - which will have a much greater effect on the child than pages of exercises.

Clive Sinclair set out to build a machine to educate children which would be cheap enough to have at home. In the Spectrum I think he got it right and there is even a chance to win one in our draw and help E.O. at the same time.

Note I am trying to write a book about programming with young children from which this article is adapted. If you want to know more perhaps I can send you more details or if you have any experiences you might be interested to share them. Please send a large s.a.e. to Betty Ball, 1 Fenton Road, Warboys, Huntingdon, Cambs.

* * * * *

EAST ANGLIAN RESOURCES WORKSHOP
SUNDAY 15th MAY, NORWICH, 1pm - 6pm.

Want to investigate for yourselves relevance of computers for home education - meet E.O. families involved in working with them?

How far have you explored the range of material and facilities offered by radio, television, museums and libraries, not to mention East Anglian countryside?

Want to discuss possibilities of setting up regional video/computer tape library, - film making - approaching educational publishers and warehouses for discount books, or would just simply like the chance to meet one another, then come to 'Premises' (Norwich Arts Centre), St. Benedict's St., Norwich. Bring a pic-nic.

N.B. Table for children's book swaps available as usual. Anyone who wishes to add or help with this resources day please contact: Cherity Laniado, Hubbards Barn, South Creake, Norfolk. Tel South Creake 470. There will be a charge of £1 per family to cover costs.


```

1380 LET N=X(1)
1390 FOR J=2 TO 5
1400 IF N>X(J) THEN GOTO 1420
1410 LET N=X(J)
1420 NEXT J
1430 PRINT AT 16,0;"THE WINNER IS"
1440 LET T=0
1450 FOR J=1 TO 6
1460 IF X(J)<N THEN GOTO 1520
1470 LET T=T+1
1480 IF T=2 THEN PRINT AT 16,10;
"S ARE"
1490 LET U=17
1500 LET U=6*T-6
1510 GOSUB 200+J*10
1520 NEXT J
1525 COPY
1530 PAUSE 40000
1540 PAUSE 40000
1550 CLS
1560 PRINT "DO YOU WANT ANOTHER GAME"
1570 IF INKEY$<>" " THEN GOTO 1570

1580 IF INKEY$="" THEN GOTO 1580
1590 IF INKEY$"Y" THEN GOTO 1010
1600 LET N=Y(1)
1610 FOR J=2 TO 6
1620 IF N<Y(J) THEN LET N=Y(J)
1630 NEXT J
1640 LET SCALE =INT ((N-.5)/13)+1
1650 CLS
1660 GOSUB 10
1670 FOR J=1 TO 6
1680 FOR K=1 TO 13
1690 IF Y(J)>=K*SCALE THEN PRINT
AT 13-K,J*3+12;"■"
1700 NEXT K
1710 NEXT J
1720 COPY
1730 STOP
2000 SAVE "DICE"
2010 GOTO 1010

```

Author: Brian Sharkey, Lancaster



BOOK REVIEWS



DRAMAKIT

by John Seely, Oxford University Press, Ill.

This excellent loose leaf 'book' is well worth purchasing for a group of children (perhaps for E.O. gatherings?). It gives a detailed 'programme' for both the specialist and inexperienced drama leader. The age group for which it is intended is 10-15 year olds and it is divided into sub-sections: 1) for the teacher, 2) scenemakers 3) predicaments, 4) groupwork, 5) playkits, 6) themes. For any adult who enjoys working with groups of children it is a must, as it is absolutely full of drama ideas and bang up to date in its approach/ If you feel it would be fun to tackle but have no real idea how to go about it - then this ringbinder will supply you with the ideas and the background know-how. It is easy to think of a group of children improvising - but it is less easy to decide what they should improvise! The same can be said for 'situation drama', this book suggests situations but still leaves the children with free reign of their imaginations. A super book, not cheap, but well worth purchase for an area if you are not lucky enough to have a specialist drama tutor to hand! Great fun for adults and children. (Reviewed by Julie Duff).

FESTIVALS, FAMILY AND FOOD

by Diana Carey and Judy Large, published by Hawthorn Press, £5.95. From Hawthorn Press, 1 Berkeley Villas, Lower Street, Stroud, Glos GL5 2HU.

My children and I were in the midst of having an argument about what food to have at a birthday tea when this lovely book arrived. It's theme is something that a friend and I have been musing about for some time, we felt it must or should be in existence. It's a resource book of all the different feasts, festivals and special occasions that occur throughout the year, and how to celebrate them. This is something that EO. families in particular will appreciate. Written and illustrated by four women, FESTIVALS, FAMILY AND FOOD reminds us of the central place that such celebrations held in the olden days and suggests that they are a key to stable and healthy community life. So, as well as all kinds of games, recipes, songs and things to make, there are explanations of the origins of our festivals, some of which have lapsed into obscurity. Well, what I mean is I didn't know about Martinmas (Nov. 11th), and only recently about Candlemas (Feb. 2nd). And there are about another 16 to choose from, all appealingly presented here along with the appropriate food, music and activities. Apart from the seasons, birthdays, rainy days convalescence and so on are covered too. It is really cheering to find a book directed at children which genuinely understands their needs - it recognises the value of imaginative play, of wholesome food, of non-mechanical games and toys - (though I'm not sure about putting brandy in the Easter biscuits, as the authors recommend). If this makes the book sound solemn - it isn't, it's bursting with ideas and entertainment and if it succeeds in making us revive our customs and reconnect with the cycle of life, I'm sure we can only benefit. (Reviewed by Sarah Guthrie).

SCHOOL AT HOME: TEACH YOUR OWN CHILD

by Ingeborg U.V. Kendah, published by Icer Press ISBN 0 914704 03 6. Paperback.

This American book will probably not appeal to parents who have plenty of confidence about their children's home education and it might well put off those who feel daunted by the enormity of the task ahead of them. It suggests a programme that might leave a victorian governess feeling faint! However, it does aim to guide and inspire those who are hovering on the brink and has plenty of practical ideas and suggestions, which could be helpful when first dealing with a demanding LEA. Obviously it is intended for an American reader but the underlying principles are the same. A book to borrow from the library rather than buy. (Reviewed by Helen Holland).

THE MAGIC TREE

Oxford University Press, £4.95.

A super collection of poems about witches, ghosts, fairies and lots of fantasy. Poems from C.S. Lewis, Ted Hughes, J.R. Tolkien, and lots of other well known poets. Lovely for reading with feeling! Some are spooky, some really funny but all are guaranteed to encourage children to listen to poetry. I think they would appeal most to the 8-12 age group, but I have to say that I find them very funny to read too! It would also be a good book to use with a group of children. (Reviewed by Julie Duff).

DINOSAURS

For those seeking an alternative to the ubiquitous but often aesthetically unappealing Ladybirds, Dinosaurs small and inexpensive paperbacks provided interesting information on a variety of subjects. There is an Althea series for younger children - stories, fact books ('Building a House'), and 'what to expect' books ('Going into Hospital'). But I prefer the nature books (which are sometimes published for the National Trust) such as 'Migrating Birds' and 'How the Countryside was Made'. The reading levels vary but the illustrations are always very clear and attractive. There are also books on historical subjects, and topics such as 'The Stock Exchange'. Some of these are available in hardback. Finally there are some excellent drawing books.

(Reviewed by Helen Holland)

SIGNAL: APPROACHES TO CHILDREN'S BOOKS

I've mentioned this magazine before but EO. members might also like to know of two pamphlets published by The Thimble Press, Lockwood, Station Road, South Woodchester, Stroud, Glos. GL5 5EQ. 'Learning to Read with Picture Books', and 'Reaching Out: Stories for Readers' will interest those parents who do not want to follow a reading scheme but would nonetheless like some guidance when helping their children learn to read. Both these are very helpful.

(Reviewed by Helen Holland).

OXFORD JUNIOR ENGLISH BOOKS 1-5, PLUS EXTENSION BOOKS 1-5 approx fl each.

I particularly like this English series as it takes a new approach to the often very boring problem of English Grammar. Each book is aimed in difficulty of work and complexity of the topic, at the junior school age child. But we found them super for home use - as the idea of each book revolving around a subject means that English becomes much more like a project i.e. Book 2 deals with Food and Farms, Book 3 - the Coastline, Book 4 - Homes and Shelters, Book 5 - Our Language. My only minor criticism as with all 'school' books is that I often suspect that books are designed to keep the child occupied, while the teacher attends to the other 35! However, with one to one attention at home, it is possible for many of the questions to be dealt with verbally and these books lend themselves to this approach very well. Sian is really enjoying them a lot.

(Reviewed by Julie Duff).

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES AT NATIONAL TRUST PROPERTIES by Sean Carson, and EDUCATION THROUGH THE ARTS AT NATIONAL TRUST PROPERTIES by John Hodgson.

Two helpful booklets. The latter particularly appealed to me because the author so deplors the neglect of Nature and Beauty in the world offered to today's children and his margins are full of delightful quotations.

MINUTES OF EO CORE GROUP MEETING HELD AT LOWER ROCKES

BUTLEIGH, SOMERSET ON SUNDAY JAN 30th 1983

Present: Mandy Skinner, Dean Smith, Eve Woodbridge, Madelaine Barnes, Julie and Malcolm Duff, Judi Ingham, Julia Hallett, John Elenor, Bruce Cox, Joan Hoare, Stephanie Leland, Janet Everdell, Bruce Wallace, Jim Johnstone, Caroline and Simon Grant, Roland Meighan, Di Hoolley, Helen Holland, Ivan Sokolov, Gina Rannie, Andy Anderson, Peter Jones.

Apologies: Cherity Laniado, Geraldine Lockington, James Fearnley, Iris Harrison.

1) Minutes of the last meeting accepted.

2) Matters arising: 2.1) Dick Kitto attended the legal meeting arranged by Iris Harrison but was not present to report. The meeting looks forward to seeing an account in a coming newsletter.

2.2) SINC although the rewriting of SINC was discussed at the coordinators meeting, nothing was arranged. Dick Kitto has offered to arrange people to take part in a collective effort.

3) Officers Reports

3.1) Enquiries Secretary: Following the request in the newsletter members have been sending in press cuttings on aspects of deschooling. General enquiries continue to come in. There was no response to the pleas for thoughts and accounts re: EWO's or information on the custody of children in divorce cases. It was suggested that the latter might be referred to Ivan Geffen.

3.2) Coordinators: Some changes amongst local coordinators: Veronica Coath is the new c. for Kent; Chris Owen will be taking over in Nottingham; Mandy Skinner has volunteered to take on some work in Somerset; there will be need for a new c. in Avon shortly.

There had been a good turn out for the legal seminar and the Saturday afternoon discussion on regionalisation. There was widespread support for regional organisation. Simon Grant had proposed that regional contacts be sought to take on the role of membership secretaries for their area, several people had volunteered. At this stage regions would be laid out according to who comes forward to coordinate a convenient group of neighbouring areas. One major advantage was seen as promoting contact between local coordinators, thus giving members a wider group from which they could seek help.

3.3) Treasurer:a) John Elenor presented a balance sheet for 1982. He called attention to the serious state of EO's bank balance, and pointed out that the £1,000 overdraft would actually have been over £2,500 but for the use of reserves from previous years.

The expenditure on publications includes a fair amount of stock, the cost of which will be recouped over the coming year. These can be considered as an asset offsetting the loss to some extent, as can the typewriter purchased for the Membership Sec. There are two items of exceptional expense, the £32 loss on the Birmingham conference and the £128 loss on the one in Portsmouth. The former was budgeted for but the latter should have been avoided.

The most dramatic increases occurred in Running Expenses, a total of £2648.16 as against £769.94 for 1981. Part of this could be accounted for by the almost 50% increase in membership. The increase in expenses for

3.3a) cont:

the Memb. Sec. includes £400 for the hire of a photocopier; the Eng. Sec. expenses includes £600 for telephone calls from the Burntlands handling legal problems for members; increase in meetings expenses reflects the increase in attendances; the greatest increase was in local coordinators expenses which was due to the welcome increase in local activities.

3.3b) The Treasurer recommended that local areas should take on responsibility for local and regional expenses. Discussion took place on how this might be achieved with suggestions including a local independent levy, an increase in national subs., charges for local meetings etc. A formal proposal was made and accepted that:

PROPOSAL Local expenses should be met locally to cover events, newsletters etc., whilst administration can be claimed from national funds if essential. Provision can be made for regional subscriptions at the discretion of regional groups.

3.3c) The meeting was informed that a very large proportion of new members are paying the reduced sub. for unwaged families, and that should this trend continue it would greatly add to the financial problems of the organisation. After some discussion a proposal was made and accepted that:

PROPOSAL The current sub. be set at £10 and that a reduced rate be available on application in cases of hardship. Overseas rates are to be charged at £5 above the national rate with a surcharge of £3 for those wishing to receive G.W.S. by airmail.

3.3d) At this point Simon Grant put forward the proposal formulated at the coordinators' meeting on regionalisation that was seen as both increasing local organisation and reducing costs. Proposed and accepted that:

PROPOSAL Groups of coordinators should come together to form a regional area and elect one of their number or such other person as suitable to act as Memb. Sec. for that area. Such regional Memb. Secs. will handle new membership applications and publication stocks, passing on membership forms to central computer records. Regional coordinators groups shall meet prior to Core Group meetings and nominate one of their members to attend the national meeting; expenses will only be paid for the nominated rep., whilst others can attend at their own expense.

3.3e) Fundraising

i) Lottery: An offer was put to the meeting from Betty Ball to run a local council registered lottery in the name of EO. Her plan is to print 25,000 tickets to sell at 10p each, offering a prize of a microcomputer to the winner and a book token to the seller of the most tickets. The total expenses would amount to £250 including registration fee. By her calculations EO. could make a net profit of £1,000 if 50% of the tickets were sold. It is planned that two books of tickets be included with the next newsletter to each member, more to be available from Betty. The draw will take place at the May Core Group meeting. After some discussion the meeting agreed to the plan.

ii) Sale of Goods: The Jobsons have offered to arrange the printing of T-shirts and car stickers for sale. Once again we are stuck without a formally accepted logo design. A plea for ideas to be sent in urgently to Caroline Grant. In the meantime it was agreed that the Jobsons should proceed using the motto 'EO-ers do it out of school'.

3.3f) Appointment of new Treasurer

Alison Mafham, a member in Cheshire, has volunteered to take over the role of Treasurer. Bob Emmet has offered to help, particularly with some computerisation. John Elenor suggested that these two form the basis of a Financial Sub-committee with Alison as treasurer. It was agreed that John and Caroline Grant should meet with Alison to explain the job description and confirm her abilities and willingness to take on the job, subject to which the post of Treasurer will be passed on.

3.3)cont.

3.3g) Change of Central Address

The Treasurer announced his plans to move house. He informed the meeting that Rowntree Trust will allow the free use of their building at 9 Poland Street, London, as an accommodation address. They also would allow free use of two meeting rooms. He suggested this could be used in conjunction with a rota of London members to collect and redirect post. The question was also raised about a central telephone contact for EO. After some discussion the Enquiries Sec. Janet Everdell offered her address and 'phone no. to replace Eynham Road. This offer was gratefully accepted, and the change of address was asked to be given prominence in the next newsletter. It was agreed that when John finally moves, EO. should pay the GPO to redirect post for 12 months.

3.3h) Payments to Memb. Sec.

An honorarium of £50 per month for Andrea Harrison was agreed at the Spring Core Group meeting when finances looked good, to be reviewed at Trent Park. This review did not take place. The question was now raised as to whether EO. can still afford this payment. With the accepted proposal to decentralise the work of Memb. Sec. to the regions, it was agreed that payments should continue during the period of winding down Andrea's national work. Roland Meighan was asked to discuss this issue with Andrea.

3.4) Children with Special Difficulties

Julie Duff reported that the second newsletter had been produced and circulated.

3.5) Membership Secretary

In the absence of Andrea, a written report was put to the meeting via John Elenor. There has been some questioning of the economy of using a printer in Tenbury Wells, and yet an emergency order had to be placed with them for 200 copies of SINC as no other arrangements had been made elsewhere. As stationary stocks are running low these too will shortly have to be replenished from that source. Andrea feels that these printing arrangements should not be left to her, increasing her already heavy workload, especially after doubts have been raised about the competitiveness of the printer available to her. She expressed dissatisfaction with the apparent lack of organisation in this matter. She is also very concerned about the reduced £4 membership rate as she is now receiving 50% new subs. at this level. She has already instigated a policy of refusing bank drafts for this amount, demanding cheques, and recommends that this rate be abandoned altogether. She has run out of 1977 newsletter digests which causes her problems with having to refund monies sent in. She submitted a list of stocks held at the Burntlands and advised that the membership stands at 963, with 52 joining in the first 28 days of the new year.

It was suggested to the meeting that the Memb. Sec. send some other publications in lieu of any ordered that are out of stock, or hold credits against reprinting items. Caroline Grant agreed to discuss these suggestions with Andrea. It was also suggested that when the memb. application form was next reprinted a note should be included about the possibilities of stock shortages and the date included to prevent people subscribing at an out of date rate. The meeting agreed that Andrea be advised not to reprint any more stationary until the new address comes into effect and a design for the logo has been chosen.

4) Steering Committee Report

The Steering Committee had been consulted by John Elenor about the wording of a letter to Rhodes Boyson in response to his suggestion that unemployed teacher mothers be paid to educate their children at home. No other matters had come before the committee until this weekend, when they had met and come up with suggestions already covered in the Treasurer's report on regionalisation.

5) Future of the Newsletter

5.1) It was agreed that the editorship of the newsletter would continue to rotate amongst volunteering members. Caroline Grant had produced and published guidelines for editors and would be available to offer advice. It was agreed that she would also take on the role of coordinating volunteers for the editorship, and to act as coordinator of a Publications Group to be responsible for digests and stocks of all other EO. material.

5.2) Advertising in the Newsletter.

It was suggested that substantial subsidies towards the cost of producing the newsletter could be found through advertising. Betty Ball had suggested perhaps selling 8 pages in each issue at £40 per page. There was a suggestion from the meeting that enclosures could be offered instead of contents in the newsletter. It was agreed that in view of EO.'s financial position the principle of advertising should be accepted subject to careful scrutiny of adverts and advertisers. A proposal was made and accepted that:

PROPOSAL

EO. experiment with advertising through enclosures with one issue of the newsletter to assess the reaction of advertisers. Response from members to be invited, and the subject to be reassessed at the following Core Group meeting. Advertisers should not be lead to automatically expect more than one issue, and the treasurer should not budget for any advertising revenue. Julie Duff agreed to organise this trial run.

6) Future of EO.

No discussion took place on this subject at this meeting, but the decisions of the meeting held on Saturday were ratified, namely that Michael Collier-Bradley from Interaction be invited to address the Core Group meeting on the subject of advantages of EO. becoming a Charitable Association, or setting up a Charitable Trust, and/or becoming a Limited Liability Company. Ivan Sokolov agreed to make the invitation. Any other experts on the subject as can be approached should also be invited. In the meantime EO. should also offer its support to Iris Harrison to proceed with establishing a separate Trust from the Burntlands to fund the continuation of her work in supporting and working with people suffering extreme problems with authorities etc.

7) National Meetings

It was asked that the persons organising national meetings should take on the role of coordinating offers and requests for lifts and other help for people wishing to attend. Simon Grant stated that he does not want to organise another session for coordinators nationally and would appreciate any volunteers to do so in his place.

8) Representation of EO. at April Conference

EO. has been invited to send one representative to a conference on the Challenge of the Future in Education being held jointly by the Gulbenkian Foundation, A.C.E. and the Guardian. The conference will take place from 18th to 22nd April. Ivan Sokolov offered to attend if possible.

9) A.O.B.

9.1) Savings to L.E.A.'s The question of how much EO. families might be saving L.E.A.'S was raised and a volunteer is now sought to investigate this matter.

9.2) Wording of the EO. Aims A proposal was made that the words "who are not benefitting from school" should be omitted from future issues of the newsletter back cover as this suggests that EO. considers school to be the primary place of education. The proposal was accepted.

- 9.3) Lower Roche's Venue A tremendous vote of thanks was extended to Barbara Luthy for hosting this residential weekend meeting. A similar vote of thanks was made to the local families who acted as hosts to visitors, and the other residents of Lower Roche's who vacated their rooms to accommodate people.
- 10) Other business conducted over the weekend but not heard at the Core Group due to lack of time
- 10.1) Monkton Wyld In response to concern expressed at the last Core Group meeting about Monkton Wyld offering their facilities as a centre for EO., two members of that community attended a meeting on the Saturday. They submitted a paper on the possible relationship between their centre and EO. families, and it was agreed to publish it in the next newsletter. Previous concern over this issue was agreed to have been the result of a misunderstanding and some lack of communication.
- 10.2) Redrafting of the Membership Form and Questionnaire At a meeting of those interested it was decided that the memb. form should be rewritten to include basic questions from the questionnaires. New members would thus automatically supply details of their families, schooling history and relations with their L.E.A. etc. This move would allow the more flexible use of questionnaires from time to time to undertake particular aspects of research. Caroline Grant agreed to rewrite the memb. form for use as soon as it is ready.

ACCOUNTS

for the year ended 31st December 1982
(1981 figures given in brackets)

The first thing the discerning eye will notice is that we were over-committed last year to the tune of about £2,500 - i.e. we used up reserves of nearly £1,500 in addition to finishing the year with a £1000 overdraft. Several points need to be made:

- 1) we made a loss on certain 'public appearances' such as the conferences in Birmingham and Portsmouth; I feel this is justifiable expenditure if it brings in new members (there is no way of proving this).
- 2) The same applies to posters and handbills.
- 3) £464 went on digests and sticky labels which will recoup their cost eventually; If some time could be devoted to stock-taking we could produce a balance sheet that did not look so gloomy.
- 4) Nearly £500 was spent by Iris Harrison in dealing with the affairs of families being harassed by their LEA; since Iris has now resigned from EO., she will be obtaining separate funding to allow her to continue this work.
- 5) Now that the membership secretary's job is being gradually devolved to the regions, Andrea Harrison has resigned so no honorarium is payable in the future.
- 6) The last Core Group meeting asked organisers of local events to make them as near to self-supporting as possible; this should considerably reduce the amount spent by local coordinators.
- 7) The last Core Group also agreed that the amount of income generated by subscriptions was too low, and that there should be a standard sub. of £10; this has already come into force for new members, and will apply to renewals from next January (see minutes for details).
- 8) All the above improvements will only keep us 'ticking over' - hence the necessity for occasional fund-raising (such as the draw) to enable us to expand.

ACCOUNTS

FOR YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 1982 (1981 figures-bracketed)

Expenditure

Publications:

Newsletters 20-24, 26	2369.10	(1030.53)	
SINC (?500)	281.78	(159.48)	
Early Years (1000)	502.03	----	
Intro letter (5000)	196.11	(126.50)	
Digest 9-12 (1000)	300.00	----	
Labels (20,000)	164.45	----	
Posters	97.71	(73.90)	
Handbills	135.00	----	
Teach Your Own	501.95	----	(largely recouped- see Income)

4548.13 (1390.41)

Postage etc. on newsletters

882.59 (367.23)

Running expenses:

Treasurer	354.76	(126.83)	
Mem Sec	827.27	(262.60)	
Enq. Sec. & chairman	387.88	(326.21)	
Local coords.	593.18	(54.30)	
Legal matters	<u>471.22</u>	----	breakdown given overleaf

2634.31 (769.94)

Meeting Expenses

524.85 (139.62)

Buying and distributing GWS

393.96 (381.46)

Affiliations to NCCL etc.

42.00 (35.50)

Memsec honorarium (10 months)

500.00 ----

Bank charges

189.94 (listed under 'misc')

Loss on Birmingham conf.

32.36 (see NL 24)

Loss on Portsmouth conf.

128.88 ----

Purchase of electric typewriter (memsec)

248.40 ----

Refunds & misc.

394.54 (128.68)

10519.96 (3212.84)

In hand 31/12/82 (deposit)

193.65

10713.61

Income

In hand 1/1/82 : current deposit	180.41 300.00	
	<hr/>	480.41 (816.79)
Deposit interest	43.65	----
Transfer from Diss	1424.45	----
Subscriptions	6346.76	(2504.87)
Donations	129.00	(23.52)
Sale of publications	629.52	(240.27)
Subs. to GWS	210.00*	(107.80)*
Sale of Teach Your Own	487.50*	----
	<hr/>	
	9751.29	
Overdraft at 31/12/82	952.32	
	<hr/>	
	10713.61	
	<hr/> <hr/>	

* figures incomplete; some absorbed in 'sale of publications'

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breakdown of running expenses (from 'Expenditure')

	postage	phone	stationery	other	total
Treasurer	185.16	128.76	40.84		354.76
Mem. Sec.	670.80	----	101.67	54.80	827.27
Enq. Sec & chairman	80.35	297.26	10.27		387.88
Local coords.	287.13	221.31	87.74		593.18
legal	2.81	588.41			471.22
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	1226.25	1235.74	237.52	54.80	2634.31
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

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Education Otherwise is a membership organisation whose principal aim is to provide a support and information network for families whose children are being educated out of school, for those who are contemplating such a step, and for those who wish to support the freedom of families to take proper responsibility for the education of children.

Our principal aims are as follows:

- * To encourage the provision of alternative learning situations outside the school system.
- * To 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.
- * To establish the primary right of children that full consideration, with due allowance for their age and understanding, shall be given to their wishes and feelings regarding their education.

For further information send a 9" x 4" s.a.e. to the address given above.