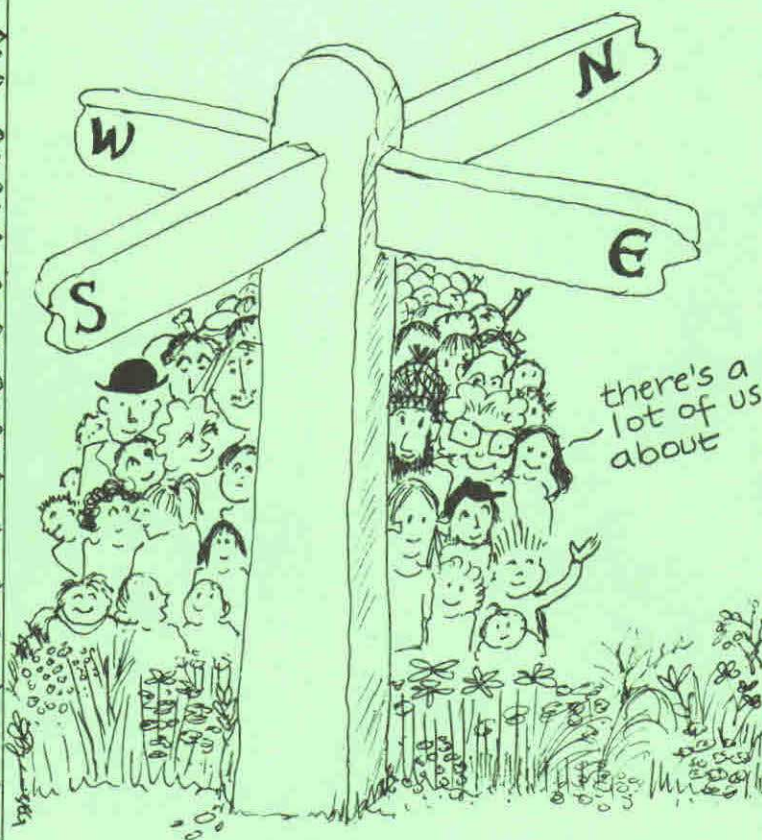


EDUCATION OTHERWISE



Newsletter 52 April 1987

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(June 1987)

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Contributions for the next edition should be sent to the editors by the deadline date, and all material intended as such, should be clearly marked 'For Publication'. Contributors are asked to ensure they include their name and address.

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The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors not necessarily those of the editor, or of Education Otherwise Limited as a whole.

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editorial

This editorial may well go down in the annals of EO history as the shortest one so far recorded. Is it the time of year (written in February), when all life seems at a low ebb, that makes me feel as though I have not much to contribute and so I may as well get on with the job in hand? Or could it be that I have been lying too long in a bye-path meadow, and have become stale and dull? If it is the first, then I should bide my time and wait for spring and new strength, if the second then I should stir myself and seek stimulus.

It is difficult to get the balance right. Having rejected a very large aspect of conventional society, how many of us realise that we are going to have to make more decisions than we have perhaps been asked to make before in our lives? And how many of us are overwhelmed by the realisation that de-schooling means more than ensuring that our children are receiving an education in accordance with their age, aptitude and ability. It sounds so simple, but to some of us it is not. Do you feel the frustration of Thomas Adolphus Trollope when he fails to "force the rules and principles of syntax into unwilling brains . ." Do you think that learning only takes place if the pupil wants to learn, either from pleasure or need, or do you give acknowledgement, (even if it is reluctantly) to the belief that sometimes a big effort has to be made?

I can remember being led with sinking heart to meet someone who I was "sure to have much in common with" because his/her father was in the Air Force too. Long past adolescence, a surge of rebellion would make ordinary politeness difficult as my new acquaintance and I would grope around in our brains for a common denominator.

It is perfectly obvious to anyone who has been reading the newsletter for any length of time, that there exists within EO as wide a spectrum of personalities and philosophies as in the world at large. And therein can lie our strength; if any aspect of this organisation jars with anyone, let that person have the courage to say so, and let the rest of us have the grace to receive criticism and deal with it constructively. The EO newsletter is a forum for the expression of the views of its members, but being members of the same organisation does not mean that our views should coincide.

I hope that this newsletter will be a source of stimulation, provocation, comfort and camaraderie to all who read it.

Yours sincerely,

Brenda Holliday, "Lorraine", Chalton Road, Bridge of Allan, Stirling



My thanks to Sarah Guthrie for designing the cover, to C. Johnston for sending the designs which I have liberally sprinkled throughout the newsletter, and to my husband, John, for proof reading.

Notices

The Mathematical Association produce all sorts of interesting things. Posters, puzzlegards, and magazines for children of most ages. If children are keen on numbers, or not and need some encouragement, it's worth dropping the Association a line for details. The address is -

The Mathematical Association
259 London Road
Leicester LE2 3BE
Tel: (0533) 703 877

Thanks to L. Bournell, 30 Windmill Road, Hampton Hill, Middlesex for this information.

Mayhem at Monkton Wylde Court May 17th - 22nd

These five days will be for young people aged 11 - 16, who are being educated out of mainstream schooling. The aim is to provide opportunities for joining in the life of the community, which runs a large house + walled vegetable garden + small farm close to the Devon/Dorset border.

You can explore the countryside, the fossil beaches of Charmouth and Lyme Regis, make friends and be creative. We have a pottery, art room, woodwork space, dark room and large rooms for dancing, games, lying around in etc.

We look forward to seeing you!
To book send a £10 deposit (total cost is £35).

For more information write to:
Monkton Wylde Court
Charmouth, Bridport
Dorset DT6 6DQ

Or telephone (0297) 60342

HOT, SWEATY, DRUNKEN ITALIAN SUMMER?

Would you like to spend some time this year in Italy?

We are an "open farm" in the hills and we need help to finish building a wooden house after an earthquake damaged the old farmhouse. It means rough accommodation, plenty of sun and wine - and probably lots of company - also work! No need to be skilled (but if you are a builder or carpenter we could offer free food if you can give us due warning and come for at least a month). We also have a vegetable garden to tend, sheep to milk, donkeys and hens and rabbits to see to, and lots

of kids. Bring sleeping bag. Food bills about £16 a week (not for children, they're free). Just turn up or write to:

Pratale
Vallingegno
Scritto
Gubbio (PG)
Italy

From the same source (the Addey family):

"Is there an EO family who would like to go self-sufficient in Italy? In our valley, a local farmer wants to sell 30 acres with a farmhouse (electricity and water) for about 60 million lire (£30,000 - about the average sort of price here). Beautiful hill country near Gubbio with a good climate and fertile land. If anyone is interested, do write to us. We'd be very pleased to have EO neighbours" (Same address as previous notice)

FOR US, BY US Small Scale Educational Enterprise Directory

Please send all relevant information to be included in a comprehensive directory of small schools, free schools, parents co-ops, part-time ventures, and family workshops and resource centres etc. in UK. On-going activities, however embryonic, are of great help and interest. Press date May 31st 1987. Please contact:

Poppy Green
42 St. Marks Road
London W10 6NR
01-960-5797

EO members may be interested to know that I have nearly completed a little book on handwriting which will be available shortly. Although it was originally intended for adults it should also be suitable for children from age 10 or 11. As far as I know, there is very little detail published on mastering the techniques of handwriting (there is plenty of elaborate calligraphy) so this book could fill a need. Parents may wish to learn so that they can teach their children. If the book is used conscientiously it can constitute a daily programme for about four weeks. Also I can offer tuition by post for children or adults wanting to learn Theor

come to the Wallaces!
Boating - Campfires - Fishing
and Exploring.
13th to 20th June

25 DIABAIG
ACHNASHEEN
ROSS-SHIRE
SCOTLAND
IV22 2HE



LIKE BOATS? WE'LL COME
TO Diabaig!

Notices >>>

of Music.

Michael Haigh, 1 The Chevrils, Priory
Road, Forest Row, Sussex RH18
5HR

LOST >>> 'Transformer' car at
Wick Court belonging to G. Gommon,
19 New Road, Castlethorpe, Milton
Keynes.

NEW UPDATED "School is Not
Compulsory" and "Early Years" are
now available from

Bruce and Christine Wallace
25 Diabaig
Achnasheen

Ross-shire IV22 2NE

Send a newsletter sized s.a.e. Stamp
24p for one or 37p for two. Also
"Teach Your Own" for £3.85p to
members inc. postage.

A Featherstone Castle Reminder

11th to 18th September. A.G.M.
plus a holiday. See February NL
for details and booking form. For
camping there is a National Trust
Campsite one mile along the road
at Parkburn Foot.

CO-ORDINATORS

The Surrey Co-ordinators are now:

Christopher and Alexandra Wilson
25 Fitzjohn Close
Merrow Park
Guildford GU4 7HB
Tel: (0483) 505173

Co-ordinator needed for Gloucester-
shire. Volunteer please contact
Andy Anderson, 95 Derrington Avenue,
Crewe, Cheshire CW2 7JA

35p NEW BRAIN 35p

NEW BRAIN IS A GREAT NEW MAGAZINE THAT HAS LOTS OF COMPETITIONS AND JOKEs AND FACTs AND A LOT, LOT MORE IN IT! IT ONLY COSTS 35p AND THAT INCLUDES P+P! SEND OFF NOW AND YOU WILL RECEIVE A FREE BIC BIRD AS WELL AS THE MAGAZINE ITSELF! REMEMBER! - IF YOU HAVEN'T GOT ONE - YOU NEED ONE!

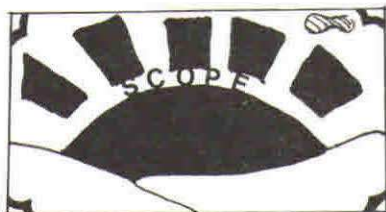
NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

53/REMEMBER TO ENCLOSE 35P.

From

Martin Bristow
 Editor
 NEW BRAIN
 35 Habgood Road
 Loughton
 Essex IG10 1HE



FOR KIDS WITH A MIND OF THEIR OWN.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

I enclose 3 2nd class stamps for no.4

I enclose 1 book of 2nd class stamps for a pack of 4
 please tick appropriate box.

I started this journal because I didn't think that other 'childrens' publications had enough 'Scope' and that they all assume that childrens interests are very limited (ie.pop,fashion,boy/girl friends). They are also usually edited by adults and not the children themselves. 'Scope' tries to take notice of everyone's points of view and ideas. It is full of articles, puzzles, ideas and interesting things.

Send off for the latest issue (no.4) or a pack (1,2,3+4). simply fill in the coupon and send it to this address:

42 Southend Rd.
 East Ham,
 London E6. 2AA.



See page 44

Ben's shape
 (Sorry we couldn't reproduce the lovely silver colour)

HOME-BASED EDUCATION - FROM BIRTH TO ADULTHOOD

An account by Mrs. Joy Baker of her struggle to educate her six children at home.

This account of home education is reassuring as well as being fascinating and remarkable, for Mrs. Joy Baker is in the rare position of being able to look back over the process of home education in its entirety and completeness and assess its value now that her children are all adults. Mrs. Baker fought with great energy and determination to maintain her right to educate at home, before Education Otherwise existed to offer support. It is in part as a result of her precedent that it is now so rare for EO families to experience the legal harrassment that her family had to endure.

Bruce Cox

I made up my mind to educate my children at home when I was six years old, and had just started going to school. Nothing that happened during the following eight years of my schooldays did anything to change my mind; they were the unhappiest days of my life. But I did not know then that by the time I had children of my own, refusing to send them to school would be a criminal offence. I fought the education authorities for nearly fifteen years, in almost every court in the land, in order to achieve my purpose; none of my seven children ever went to school.

By the time my eldest son reached school age, I had also come to the conclusion, looking back on my own wasted schooldays, that not only attendance at school, but by far the greater part of school education, was futile, often harmful, and of very little use in adult life. (In fact all I learned at school was to be frightened of people, and often to dislike them; not a very helpful approach to entering the adult world). It appeared to me that normal home life, growing up as part of a family, provided far more education, in the real meaning of the word, than being condemned to an institutional life during the most formative years. Basic education, I felt, should take place as the child developed and asked questions; any subjects requiring more concentrated study should be undertaken by personal choice, at whatever age they were needed or required.

After a good deal of correspondence with the education authorities, and finally an examination of my children - David aged nine, Robin aged eight, Felicity aged seven, and Wendy aged six - by two schools inspectors, I was summoned to appear before the magistrates in 1955. I was found guilty of failing to provide my children with a proper education; but I won my subsequent appeal to Quarter Sessions - which I conducted myself, two months later - on a point of law. The education authority's case at this time was that although my children were "bright, intelligent, happy, healthy, charming and delightful", they were below the standard for their ages in reading, writing and arithmetic; the Appeals Committee, after hearing my arguments, said that they would not express an opinion on my children's education, but thought I should consider sending David to school.

After that the education authorities left me alone for the next two years. At the end of that time they again started enquiring about the education I was giving my children, and I told them I was continuing on the lines I had described to the court. I refused to have the children subjected to another examination by the schools inspectors, on the grounds that they were not qualified to examine children who were receiving an entirely different kind of education; I did not claim that my children would necessarily be at the standards they required of school children, but that at the end of their education they would be better educated, in the true sense of the word, than children who had attended schools. The education authority then summoned me again to appear in the magistrates' court.

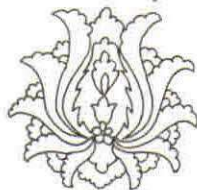
I conducted my own case, and explained that I was not trying to give my children a school-type education at home, but educating them as part of their upbringing, in the only way which could be suitable to their different ages,

abilities, and aptitudes; that I placed less importance on the "three R's" - reading, writing and arithmetic - than on what I might call the "three C's" - courtesy, cleanliness, and consideration for others. The magistrates said that they would like to give my children a private "examination" themselves before reaching a decision; and a week later I took my eldest son and daughter, David and Felicity, to the court.

By this time my fifth and sixth children, Hugh and Martin, had been born, and I was pregnant with April. I had told the magistrates that Felicity and Wendy were receiving practical lessons in child care, and Felicity was capable of dressing and changing, and feeding ten month old Martin single-handed; so we took him to court so that she could give a practical demonstration of her ability to the magistrates. David's main interests then were farming and photography; he had also been studying natural history, and taking a great interest in the Antarctic expedition then in progress. The magistrates, however, were not interested in what the children were learning; only in what they thought they should learn. After being escorted to a private room behind the court by uniformed police, a very frightened nine year old Felicity was not allowed even to hold Martin, and was in tears when they started asking her some very childish questions - including "What day is it?" and the names of animals in a picture book - all of which she answered correctly; and she left with a very low opinion of the intelligence of the magistrates.

David went alone to his "examination", and was also disappointed because they showed no interest in his photographs, or the Antarctic, but asked him a lot of questions about sport; they did ask him what the camel had in its hump, and he told them "fat", but they said no, it was water - so he got them to look it up in the book, and they found he was right. After which they decided that my children were not receiving a proper education; and I gave notice of appeal.

By the time the appeal was heard my youngest child, April, had been born; I was granted legal aid, and David gave evidence in the witness box, where he read a passage from Halsbury's *Laws of England* and was cross-examined by Counsel for the education authority. The Chairman of the Appeals Committee dismissed the appeal, saying that David was "an extremely nice little boy, with very nice manners - an intelligent, sincere, clean and truthful boy. His mother won't live for ever. What is the position going to be when he is grown up?" (Well, we know that know - I am still very much alive, David is forty, and he has been independent for the last twenty-four years).



Six months later I was again summoned to appear before the magistrates' court, and found guilty as before; three months after that I again conducted my own appeal to Quarter Sessions. By then David had won first prize in an adult photographic competition, and Felicity was writing fairy stories; I asked the Appeals Committee to look at some of David's photographs, but they said they were "quite irrelevant"; and they refused to look at Felicity's stories - which took the place of the essays she would have had to write at school - saying they "would not prove whether or not she was receiving efficient education". My appeal was dismissed; and I then gave notice of appeal to the Divisional Court.

David had by then decided that he would like to get a job on a dairy farm when he was fifteen, and he started working regularly for a neighbouring farmer, as an unpaid student, in order to gain twelve months experience first; but the education authorities stopped this by warning the farmer that it constituted

an offence under the County Council's bye-laws, and threatening him with heavy penalties.

I lost my appeal to the Lord Chief Justice, which I conducted myself, in the Divisional Court; but David was then within a few months of school leaving age, and the judges did agree that it would be wrong if he was now, at fourteen and a half, required to go to school. The education authorities then took proceedings applying for Robin, Felicity and Wendy to be made wards of the Chancery Court.

By the time this case was heard, David had started work on a local dairy farm; Robin, after helping with repairs to our house, had decided he wanted to train as a plasterer, and Felicity was having ballet lessons at a dancing school in Norwich. The education authority's application was rejected by the judge, on the grounds that the Chancery Court had no jurisdiction in a matter provided for under the terms of the Education Act; but he made one revealing comment: "No doubt the Education Act was passed in what Parliament conceived to be the interests of children generally, but Parliament legislates for the community as a whole, and I do not think there is anything in the Act or in general law which entitles the court to assume that its provisions are necessarily for the benefit of every particular child between the ages of five and fifteen".

The education authority appealed against this decision to the London Court of Appeal, their counsel claiming that not only were my children being denied "a respectable and decent education", but they were "growing up like little hermits, isolated from the rest of the community". To my counsel's contention that it would be wrong to make children start school life at the ages of thirteen and fourteen - Robin being then within six months of school leaving age - the education authority replied that as wards of court, they could be kept at school for as long as the court thought necessary, and "special arrangements" would be made for them if they did not "fit in" - which meant they would be placed in classes for the mentally defective. The appeal was rejected; but only on the grounds that the education authority's proper course was to take me back to the magistrates court, where I could be sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

Meanwhile David had left home altogether, to take a job on a 3,000 acre farm in Cambridgeshire with a herd of seventy dairy cows; Robin reached his fifteenth birthday and started work as an apprentice with a local builder; and Felicity had passed her first three ballet examinations with Honours, and had also taken up photography.

I appeared again before the magistrates, who made an order for Felicity and Wendy to be brought to the juvenile court, and sentenced me to two months imprisonment.

I appealed against this decision, was granted legal aid, and insisted, against my counsel's advice, on appealing not only against the sentence, but against my conviction. The chairman of the Appeals committee was Mr. Roger North - the only judge, throughout all the years, who actually showed an interest in what I said about my children's education. (I only found out why many years later, after his death - when he was described in his obituary as a "self-taught mathematician"). He allowed my appeal, stating that what I had described did constitute proper education within the meaning of the Education Act. The education authority appealed against this decision, but it was upheld by the Lord Chief Justice in the Divisional Court.

By this time Felicity had completed the first stages of her ballet training, and had passed her first professional examination - she was now an Associate member of the National Association of Teachers of Dancing. To complete her full training she needed to attend a full-time ballet school, but I could not afford the fees. I applied for a grant, with strong recommendations from her teachers and the backing of two major ballet schools; but this was refused by the education authority. They then started proceedings against me in respect of Hugh, who was by then five years old.

At this point we moved out of Norfolk, and finally settled in the area

covered by the East Suffolk education authority; and they, stating that they did not accept the decision of the Lord Chief Justice, started proceedings against me in respect of Hugh, Martin, and April, who were then ten, nine and eight years old. But here the matter was resolved by the intervention of a very gallant gentleman, an ex-naval commander, who was a Justice of the Peace and a member of the Education Committee. He retired from the Bench in order to give evidence in support of my case, and he did all he could to influence the other members of the Committee on my behalf. And finally he was successful; after I had appeared three times in the magistrates court, and appealed three times to Quarter Sessions, the proceedings against me were dropped, and the fines remaining unpaid were remitted by the court.

When we returned again to Norfolk in 1970, although Hugh, Martin and April were still under school leaving age, no further action was taken against me by the Norfolk education authority.

My children grew up, married - I now have ten grandchildren - and were successful in their chosen careers; and they found that their greatest difficulties arose, not through any lack of ability on their part, but from the mere fact of their not having been to school. Most employers demand details of schooling; people regard it as a stigma - they think you are some kind of freak - if you say you have never been to school. So my children often had to invent educational details - and even change their names - in order to be accepted as the kind of people that they were anyway.

David worked on the dairy farm for four years, and then left to get a wider experience of work and people. He had developed an interest in journalism and broadcasting when we were all being continually interviewed for the press, radio and television; finally he went to America and got a job on the editorial staff of a weekly newspaper, while working part-time for a radio station; he is now a feature writer and full-time broadcaster in New York. Robin qualified as a plasterer, and continued in the same trade; he now has his own firm. Felicity went to London and worked as an advertising executive; she is now married with two small children, and works as a free-lance photographer, specialising in portraits of children at home.

Three of my younger children had problems with dyslexia; and at the time that they would have been attending school, this was still unrecognised as such, so they would have been treated as mentally backward. Wendy married young and went to America with her husband; separated later, she got a job as assistant in a general store, and two years later became manageress. She is now living in England with her eighteen year old daughter, and is employed as a shop manageress.

Hugh was almost totally dyslexic; he was also the most talented of my children in every other way, a skilled craftsman and mechanic before he was fifteen. He and Martin started work on a farm together, tractor driving and tending stock. Hugh was killed when he was coming home from work one evening in November - walking on the pavement, when the engine of his moped failed, wheeling it home to repair. Something had struck him a blow on the head, and he was found lying dead on the grass verge - two months before his seventeenth birthday. Martin worked on the farm for another four years; then he took a Y.T.S. course in agricultural engineering, got a job with an engineering firm, and has worked there ever since.

April got a job as petrol pump attendant when she was eighteen, became assistant manager of the garage, and then manager; she now runs her own Esso service station and is managing director.

I have never ceased to be astonished at the amount of time, energy, and money that the education authority expended in fighting me - money that could have been used to further my children's education at home, whereas all they did achieve was to bring a great deal of strain and disruption into our lives. From first to last, they appeared to be animated only by an obsessive determination that every single child, whatever the circumstances, must somehow be got into school.

ELITIST? WEALTHY? ANTI-SOCIALIST OR JUST DISSATISFIED? . . .

I would like to lay an irritating ghost to rest. The ghost is the political myth that because I want to take the responsibility for my children's education I am therefore elitist, wealthy, anti-socialist and a Tory.

A couple of times a week I get a letter or phone call from someone new interested in EO. This newsletter goes to well over 500 families, and circulation grows with every issue. Dissatisfaction with the schools is growing, and the Education Otherwise movement is growing too.

But alongside this growth there are many people who challenge our ideas on a political basis. I have a good friend who is firmly committed to compulsory, state 'schooling', and to the banning by law of all other options. Another friend would not go so far as to forbid parents to educate their own children, but believes that home educators are guilty of abandoning those less fortunate than themselves. "Schools will never get better if you simply opt out of the system", says my friend. Yet another critic has said, "It's alright for you; you can afford to educate your children. Most people have to rely on schools". Some of our critics believe that our wish to educate our children ourselves is an attack on the whole principle of the welfare state.

I reject all of these criticisms wholeheartedly, particularly the last, and I think it is worth explaining why.

First, consider the notion that all children should be 'compulsorily' sent to school. The principle behind this might be good socialism: that there is absolute equality of educational opportunity. The effect, however, comes closer to fascism, with all rights of choice by parents or children removed. The idea that the state should have such powers of compulsion is a horrifying one.

I am not interested in public schools particularly. I don't believe they provide a better education than the state comprehensive system; and in most cases they are more of a status symbol than anything else. I accept that it is therefore right to make such schools illegal. Besides which I have no doubt that the moneyed classes would find some other system of favouring their kind even if the comprehensive system were com-

pulsory for all children.

The fact is in any case that most EO members do not see education as a status symbol, nor do they believe they are giving their children a passport to a better career. They simply want to do what they think best for their own children's happiness and sound development within the means available to them, and by methods which are presently unconventional.

There is an analogy to this in the debate about private medicine. I agree with those who find it despicable that hospital waiting lists are so long that there is the incentive and potential for people to buy their way to the top. I agree that far more funds should be given to the NHS. But I would not as a consequence want to make it illegal for people to try alternative medical treatment (homeopathy, osteopathy, acupuncture etc) which they may well have to pay for.

The second argument is that which says schools will never change for the better if dissenting parents opt out of the system. Supporters of this argument believe change can only come from within. I agree that pressure from within is vitally important and I do not have any criticism of people who stay in the system. But internal pressure is much more powerful if another path is being made available outside as well. There are important roles for both groups - the dissatisfied parents within schools and the home educators without.

A growing movement outside schools can apply pressure for change (say for schools to act as resource centres, or for children to be allowed to attend just those lessons which interest them), while those in the system can apply pressure for more flexibility or more equipment, or better staffing. There is nothing to be gained by the two groups criticising each other. Because I have chosen to educate my children at home it does not follow that I am unconcerned about the state system and its cynical destruction by the present government.

The last major attack on the politics of EO is the 'you must be wealthy to be able to do that' argument. I can only say in response to this that we aren't wealthy. In our local group there are at least two unwaged single parents. I am a student nurse and

(Continued on page 14)

L.E.T.T.E.R.S

Dear EO,

When I wrote about my experience of home schooling in the last Newsletter, i.e. that I found it tiring and hard going, I was hardly prepared for the great number of letters I have received in response to it.

There are many of you who feel similarly and I found it very encouraging to hear from you.

Let me summarise a few points people have mentioned which could make life easier:

- 1) If possible get together with other EO families to exchange ideas, keep up morale etc.
- 2) Children, especially as they get older, may benefit from time away from the home environment, attending clubs, music sessions, workshops etc.
- 3) For us as parents it may help to arrange for a day away from them on a regular basis to carry on or rediscover our own interests.

Thank you all for writing and sharing your ideas with me. I shall certainly reappraise my own approach and carry on home schooling with renewed vigour.

My special thanks to a family in Lancashire who has similarly aged children to ours. Unfortunately their letter was mislaid and I cannot therefore answer it personally. Your situation seems so much more acute than ours. I was hoping that perhaps the girls could write to each other. But you will have to make the first move. My sincere apologies for that debacle.

Maria Parnell, 50 St. Julian's Farm Road, London SE27 ORS

Are we to have censorship in the EO magazine? I refer to the letter from Jean in February's issue.

I find letters in the style of Dyana Hart (December 86) and Candida Fawcett (October 86), to whom Dyana refers, rather long and laborious to follow as it seems that the writer is exploring a lot of ideas at great length. Surely, however, a good editor will select a variety of styles reflecting the broad spectrum of people who support EO.

The word which upsets Jean so

much is, I believe, of ancient origin and means faeces, an unpleasant substance (unless used to help our plants grow), but a part of life. Dyana Hart uses the word symbolically to signify the negativity that many of us store up and find difficulty letting go of. Rather like being constipated with body waste.

The so called 'four letter words' are said to be of Anglo Saxon origin. Since Anglo Saxon Britain was conquered by the Normans, Anglo Saxon came to be considered inferior and their terms for bodily functions fell into disrepute.

As I said in my letter in December 86, I want to protect my children from many of the negative aspects of society. What is often exaggerated in children in a school situation are attitudes of shame and disgust of natural functions. Especially offensive to me are attitudes that are oppressive to women.

Perhaps we could do a study on 'unacceptable' words and their origins. How about a workshop at Featherstone? I prefer to discuss such words openly with children, examining why and in what context we find them offensive.

My boys are 12 and 13, deschooled six years. Please feel free to write to me, Jean, if you'd like any further exchange of ideas.

Jill Hodge, 10 Granby Road, Firth Park, Sheffield S5 6WD

One of the strangest things I ever saw was brought to my mind by the article on school phobia by Pat Knox (Feb 87 issue, p 28), where she reported her proper distress at the bizarre, unscientific standards of psychiatrists who work from the premise that 'there must be something wrong with the child if it's unhappy in school'.

This actually happened, but I would not have believed it unless I'd seen it.

Fourteen years ago my son Mark was seven and attending school. The school wrote to us saying that they were unhappy about his standard of work. He was backward in reading and writing apparently, and this conflicted with IQ tests which

demonstrated, to them, that Mark was of above average intelligence. They thought there must be something wrong and the school psychiatrist requested an interview at our home. And so it was arranged.

When the psychiatrist arrived he seemed embarrassed in our company. People made him nervous. He sat down on the sofa and looked about at the hundreds of books on our shelves. He couldn't help seeing that many were childrens' books and many more were about human behaviour, psychology etc. He also saw all the signs of childrens' creativity, paintings and drawings, pinned up proudly. He could not relax, however, and, driven by preconceptions, he continued to play the self-appointed role of the 'professional' whose job it was to expertly put us at ease. His professional assumptions blinded him, as what happened next clearly shows.

We made him a cup of tea. As the tea was being poured our black and white cat, Minstrel, jumped up and, to our amazement, sat on the psychiatrist's head. I immediately leapt forward to whisk it off - as any good host would do in such circumstances. But

. . . psychiatric professionalism came to the fore. (The 'clients' - that's us - must be put at ease at all costs. And if cats sat on heads in this household no self respecting psychiatrist should be phased by it). So, with the confidence of ignorance, he made an imperious gesture to prevent me from removing the animal, protesting that he didn't mind a bit.

Oblivious to the disconcerting effect his humourless attitude had on his attentive audience he compounded the absurdity by adopting an expression intended to convey that this was a perfectly normal situation. It was an exquisite moment. The cat settled down comfortably - and purred!

The uneasy psychiatrist did not, could not, smile. He sat stiffly, rigid for fear of upsetting us by disturbing our cheeky cat. Then, drinking his tea with great difficulty

(you try swallowing tea with a tail twitching at random in front of your eyes) and ignoring our barely suppressed amusement, he began to question us - with the cat still sitting on his head! Our two children were riveted. The interview was thus enhanced to perfection.

I've never seen a cat do this before or since and it was an experience for which I will always be grateful. And the whole family learned from it too. As someone once said; "Learning is an activity. Learning through words alone is a minor activity".

**Ivan Tyrrell, 1 Lovers Meadow,
Chalvington, Hailsham, East Sussex**

Please help - with direct reference to the principal aims of EO as printed on the back cover of the magazine - how does this affect people who are known to be members of EO who also are known to be inflicting corporal punishment on their children whilst educating their children outside of the schools system, particularly in a county which has already abandoned this obscene practice?

Answers, comments, feedback very much welcomed.

**Teresa Bains, 167 Kimble Drive,
Bedford MK41 9SN**

In EO 51, reviewing the NCCLS rather unsatisfactory book "First Rights", Joseph O'Connor says that in EO cases it is "legally disputable" whether "it is up to the parents to convince the LEA that the education they are providing is satisfactory, or whether it is for the LEA to convince the court that the education provided by the parents is not good enough".

We were alarmed to see doubt expressed over this important legal point, which is in fact perfectly clear: The right to educate "otherwise" does not depend on parents convincing the LEA that their children are being educated. In the event of a dispute, it is for a court, acting by the commonsense criteria of a "reasonable man", to decide this. The court is in no way bound by

the LEA's opinion, nor is it permitted to give prima facie preference to the LEA's opinion over that of the parents or other witnesses.

This is not just "a very good approach for the parent to take". It is the law. True, a great many people including LEAs and some lawyers, still operate under a number of misconceptions about the powers and duties of parents and LEAs with respect to home education. But we had hoped that the pages of Education Otherwise at least would be one place where these misconceptions would not be propagated.

We have been concerned for some time that the growth of home education is being seriously impeded by this and other misconceptions. People seem unaware, or at least unaware how unequivocally it is established in law, that, for example, parents are not obliged to inform their LEA, or anyone else, that they are educating their child at home; that LEAs are not entitled to insist, as a matter of policy, that home-educating families be visited by Education Inspectors, or on any other particular method of determining whether the child is being educated; and that LEAs are not entitled to set curricula or syllabuses for home education.

These things are not "legally disputable"; it is just that the law is often simply not followed in practice, to a large extent because of ignorance on the part of parents, LEAs, and lawyers. This includes not only ignorance of the law but, just as important, of the proper legal procedures that are laid down by statute and binding precedents. As a result, as some EO members know to their cost, LEAs are sometimes able to deny families their legal right to educate "otherwise". They resort to all sorts of outrageous persecution and intimidation, setting unreasonable conditions, claiming powers and discretion they do not have, making orders they are not entitled to make,

and threatening or attempting to have the children taken into care if the parents do not comply (even though legally, non-attendance at school is not normally a sufficient ground for a care order).

The EO booklet "School is Not Compulsory" does contain some of the relevant facts, and gives valuable practical advice, but it understates the rights and remedies that families have against a hostile LEA, and its general tone is one of appeasement and compromise. This is fine for some families, who can arrive at a tolerable arrangement with the LEA. But for other families, especially those who have decided for philosophical reasons that home education is better than school, their whole purpose in educating "otherwise" would be defeated if they agreed to import conventional school-based standards, methods, aims, curricula and tests into their homes. It seems to us that many such parents are actually compromising their children's education by giving in to unreasonable demands from LEAs - acting in effect as the LEA's agents in inflicting on their children a form of education that they know is harmful. Many others "go underground" to escape harassment for the perfectly legal way they have chosen to educate their children. And many more are frightened off the prospect altogether because they do not know their legal rights. We should like to see more parents standing up to LEAs and insisting on their rights. We feel that if a few more did this, the situation for all would be improved.

We have therefore done some careful research, and have prepared a report entitled "Home Education and the Law". The points mentioned above are some of the conclusions that we explain in detail in our report. We believe that it is a definitive statement of the relevant law and procedures, and shows that these are in fact very favourable to home education. Since we are not legal professionals, we have had its accuracy verified by a solicitor, and by Counsel's Opinion. We are willing to supply copies of

it to anyone who sends us £2.
David Deutsch and Kolya Wolf, 123
Harefields, N. Oxford, OX2 8NR

"Terribly hard work" wrote Maria Parnell in the last EO newsletter. I agree but must admit that most of that takes place in my head where there is quite a conflict between:

- 1) Doing it our way and yet having to produce something for the advisor/inspector that agrees with their way. His possible visit hangs over me.
- 2) Believing that the growing human being knows best what it needs for development and survival but wanting visible signs that this is going on. They don't want to write things down.
- 3) Feeling that the world outside school is rich with all the experience a child needs but in fact finding it hard to ask interesting, busy people to give up their time for my children. What can we give in return?
- 4) Keeping up those important social and sporting activities that tie up the week so neatly, yet wanting to use our freedom to take off when we feel like it. Monday: Gym, Tuesday: Judo, Wednesday: Guides...
- 5) Hearing the children say "its better when you give us a list of things to do" or "I think you should push me more" and remembering that we took them out of school for them to find their own direction and motivation.

Why am I doing this? They're paid to do it at the school just down the road...

Sue Stephenson, 1 College Road,
Barrow-on-Humber, S. Humberside

I had intended to begin with a general introduction to our family (Hamish 6 $\frac{1}{2}$, Gavin 4) but I realised with horror that the editorial deadline was fast approaching, so the generalities will have to wait for another issue as I am very keen to write on the subject of religious education which was raised in the last issue.

We are members of the Scottish Episcopal Church (part of the Anglican Community) by choice, not birth, having been brought up in other

Christian denominations. I have long believed that the most valuable Christian lessons come from the home, and that the church and schools have only a secondary role in Christian education. We can teach our children facts, but if we don't put into practice at home the implications of the facts, we are wasting our time.

This is why I don't want my children to be taught "School RE" as just another subject, devoid of any personal content or application, and I'm glad that when they ask questions about religious and moral issues, I will be the person to give the answers I believe in. I want them to have a good Christian foundation on which they feel secure, before they learn about other religions. I don't object to their learning about Hinduism, Buddhism, etc. in due course, in fact I feel they ought to, but I can never do more than recommend them as partial glimpses of the truth, as I believe that the whole truth is embodied only in Jesus.

So much for the theory. In practice we all attend church and Sunday School regularly. The Sunday School is very valuable to the children as it enables them to mix with other children of their ages, but they also enjoy attending the church service for variety on occasions. We have two very good children's bibles (one by Lion Publishers, and the other, "The Illustrated Children's Bible", by Octopus Books). We have already read through the first one together and have now almost finished the second, much longer one. I'm afraid I still get terribly mixed up when it comes to sorting out the Canaanites, the Midianites and the Philistines, and when I'm asked searching questions like: "Who was the prophet in Israel when Joash was king?" I turn pale and tremble. I just have to admit my ignorance and say I'll have to look it up. The stories have been very well retold and linked up and the children find them absorbing: "Just one more chapter and that will be it. . .", then another and another.

Our church services are probably

higher than most C of E, and the children find the ritual and ceremonial very interesting. We always have to sit near the front so that they can see what is going on. Hamish sometimes organises services at home. I have to sing while he and Gavin have a little procession round the room, Gavin Holding a candlestick, and Hamish a palm cross attached to a bamboo cane. Hamish then reads from one of his small bible story books (very well produced by Scripture Union and Lion Publishers) and a little book of prayers for children. All this is totally spontaneous. It is coming alive for them in a way which I find very stimulating myself.

As a Christian, I value this opportunity for the children's religious awareness to grow naturally as one of the most important of the many advantages of home education. I don't want their views and questions to be trivialised or ignored or laughed at by teachers or other children.

Heather Farquharson, Namma, PO Box 2010, BFPO 105

Alex and Nick were removed from the local County Primary in July 85. It took us over a year to reach the decision to go it alone. At first it was hard, particularly to be passive and let them find their own motivation; many times during the early months I wondered if it was the right thing for us. I have only to look at them now to know that, in Alexander's case especially, it most certainly was, and our only regret was that we didn't do it earlier, but at the time it seemed such a big step to take. Despite the fact that we had drawn up a list of points for and against school (and there were 15 points against and 1 in favour), the real deciding factor was that I couldn't live the rest of my life wondering if I should have. I'd say to anyone contemplating de-schooling to go ahead and do it - if it doesn't work, or isn't the right thing for you and your children (something I'd think very unlikely) then they can return to

school with no harm done and at least you'll know you tried all the alternatives.

Jan Smith, 63 Station Road, Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex CM0 8HF

(Continued from page 9)

my wife is unwaged. Other families have a wide variety of occupations and presumably a wide range of income levels. Educating at home has nothing to do with money. There are many resources which we would like but can't afford, such as computers, craft tools and electronic equipment. But for this very reason we are raising funds to found a resources library for all members in the area. This is not a selfish, elitist move, but an outgoing, co-operative, socialist project.

I am not suggesting that all people are able to educate their own children, or even that they should. For all kinds of very valid reasons many parents would find it difficult or impossible. For their children, and for mine, I remain a supporter of many of the functions of schools. I would love to be able to send my child to school part-time for lessons which need specialist knowledge, for group activities and simply for a break from our sole responsibility. But the system doesn't allow such flexibility. It's an all or nothing choice. The choice you make is a personal one, and neither is right or wrong.

I firmly believe that the state should provide a good, comprehensive, non-selective education, free to all children. But it is vital that children and parents are free to reject that option if they wish. The time will come when rejection is unnecessary and we will be free to choose just those parts of the system which we need and want.

Until that time I hope that those who do not choose the EO path will be understanding of those of us who do. I would also like to make a plea to EOers not to criticise those who do send their children to school, and to be more supportive of increased educational provision of whatever sort.

Simon Middleton, 23 Plumstead Road, Norwich NR1 4HF



EDUCATION THROUGH THE PRESS

NEWS

In response to the recommendation of the Hargreaves Report 'Improving Secondary Schools' to involve pupils in decision making affecting their schools' lives, the Inner London Education Authority has proposed to establish an inner London Pupils' Parliament. Pupils shall select their own representatives, decide which issues to include on the agenda and determine the consultative structures they want to see introduced for the future. This conference shall take place during Easter 1987 . . . (Ace Bulletin Jan/Feb 87).

The education of an entire generation of children is being "irretrievably damaged" because of the GCSE, according to the National Association of Schoolmasters/ Union of Women Teachers. A survey carried out by the union has shown that about 90% of the schools which participated in the questionnaire have not organised extra teachers to meet the "horrendous workload" brought by the GCSE, so that pupils are being inadequately prepared for the examination, while the whole venture is under financed, with fewer than one in ten education authorities having allocated enough money to ensure the smooth initiation of the GCSE. One teacher told the union: "The whole transition has been ill - conceived and ill-prepared". . . . (Daily Telegraph 3/1/87).

At the recent North of England conference, Education Secretary Kenneth Baker called the entire education system eccentric, maverick and so muddled that it defied description. To remedy the situation, Baker proposes to introduce a national curriculum if his party is re-elected, after "wide consultation", notably with the "customers" (i.e. parents and employers) of the system . . . (Daily Telegraph 10/1/87).

Meanwhile, speaking at a Fabian Society weekend school at Oxford, Mr. Giles Radice, Opposition spokesperson on education, outlined the Labour Party's plans for the amelioration of the education system. Within two years of taking office, Labour would introduce educational maintenance allowances to persuade more 16 year olds to stay on in full-time education, and require local authorities to draw up plans to meet parental demand for nursery education while taking steps to abolish government assisted places at independent schools and end the tax concessions and charitable status enjoyed by many private schools . . . (Daily Telegraph 12/1/87).

The teaching unions, however, remain largely unimpressed with the politicians' efforts. Mr. Fred Jarvis, speaking for the National Union of Teachers, said: "Education is about helping individual children achieve their maximum potential, not satisfying the particular whims of whoever happens to be in charge at the Department of Education and Science . . . there could be changes every time there was a new government or even a change of minister". The National Association of Head Teachers' secretary, David Hart, said "Governments must stop being hypocritical on the subject of resources, and parents must be more interested in and more supportive of the work done by schools in the education of their children". (Daily Telegraph 10/1/87).

A recent Daily Telegraph Gallup Poll has shown that only 42% of 900 respondents believed that their children were getting a better education than their generation had, and a majority of parents would favour the return of the old tripartite system of education. Columnist Mergot Norman also approved the suggestion of the introduction of a national curriculum, saying: "British head teachers have enjoyed wider powers to dictate what is taught in their schools than any others in the world . . . religious and physical education are the only subjects the law specifically calls upon schools to teach". (22/12/86). . . . Average competence at sixteen is represented by a miserable CSE grade four, and that at any one time 100,000 native English speaking British adults, most of whom have been through eleven years of compulsory schooling and still can't read, are taking basic literacy and numeracy courses . . . (Daily Telegraph 14/1/87).

. . . Gaelic football and the Irish harp may be introduced in Manchester schools after pressure from groups of the city's 40,000 Irish born residents. Other instruments parents wish to have taught include the tin whistle, fiddle and

accordion. Besides Gaelic football, they are calling for the introduction of hurling, hand ball and comogie, a form of hockey. The city council is considering the proposals - plus the employment of an Irish liaison officer and a ban on Irish jokes . . . (Daily Telegraph 15/12/86).

. . . The steady rise in the number of children sent to boarding school from broken homes has forced a major public school to advertise for a clinical psychologist. The successful applicant will have to devote up to ten hours a week to the problems of the pupils of Marlborough College, Wiltshire. Headmaster David Cope said: "It may be true that many divorced parents who can afford it, regard boarding school as a solution to the problems of a broken home, so that we get more divorced families than day schools do . . ." (Daily Telegraph 5/1/87).



REPORTS

Sue Lees, a psychologist, writes on one type of sexism in schools - verbal sexual abuse and its serious effect on girls' behaviour: "In talking to girls I became aware of the pressure of sexual reputation on them in the day to day life of the classroom. Sexual abuse was rampant. Girls were the butt of a range of abusive words, mainly relating to sexual promiscuity, such as "slag" (which appears to be a convenient insult to hurl at any female, nun or prostitute). The situation was quite different for boys. They were not subject to such abuse. On the contrary, they boasted about their sexual exploits and terms like "stud" enhanced their status. Nor is this abuse mainly verbal; it can involve hitting, manhandling or "touching up" girls . . . The language of sexual abuse enables boys to define the school and its resources as part of their public sphere to the exclusion of girls. At one school, for example, they had a table tennis craze and the boys wanted to push the girls off the tables. The girls who refused to be pushed around were called show-offs and were regarded as sexually forward because they stood up to boys. Girls' participation in the classroom is equally unwelcome and they are at best ignored, at worst ridiculed . . . It is high time that education was introduced into schools to challenge the language of sexual abuse and encourage boys and girls to treat each other with respect". (Guardian 15/12/86).

. . . Speaking to teachers at the North of England conference, Kenneth Baker said that a lack of the "basic skill of reading" was holding back black children, who had a greater commitment to education than many white children, according to research in schools in London. "Once again the system is failing those children. They deserve better; they must get better". (Guardian 10/1/87).

. . . To combat this type of discrimination in the Tyneside area, Gateshead Technical College has drawn up its own multi-cultural and anti-racist policy. The policy, according to college governors, is 'uncompromisingly' anti-racist and specifically focuses on young adults using the college. More radical than Gateshead council's own anti-racist policy, the college policy has received the council's backing and is now in operation with equal opportunities being offered to potential learners or employees regardless of race, sex or disability. (Gateshead Post 9/10/86).

According to a formal investigation report released by the Commission for Racial Equality, Asian pupils attending special language units in Calderdale, West Yorkshire, are being discriminated against. Since the mid-sixties, the local education authority has required all children (whether born in the UK or not) whose home language is not English, to undergo language screening. This determines whether or not they should proceed to mainstream schooling or be placed in a special English Language Unit. The units can either be self-contained centres or language classes in a school building. Children leave the language units when

they are assessed as ready for mainstream schooling. Parents of children in language units do not have as many rights as those whose children attend state schools. The units are situated outside areas where the Asian community live, and therefore are not easily accessible, the curriculum in language units is often narrower than in mainstream schooling. In the Commission's view, Calderdale's separate English language arrangements cannot be justified on educational grounds and they amount to indirect racial discrimination. The report has been submitted to the Secretary of State for Education. (Ace Bulletin Jan/Feb 87).

The positive and well supported campaign, Violence Free Science, to end the abuse of animals in science education is gradually persuading teachers and examination boards to end animal exploitation in educational establishments. On the whole, examination boards have responded positively to recent pressure to remove dissection from the syllabus and practical examination at GCSE and 'A' level. What does come up repeatedly is the fact that although dissection is no longer a requirement in the actual GCSE exam, many teachers will use dissection as a teaching 'aid'. ("Violence Free Science" - a report by NAVS 1986).

. . . When Cindy Milburn of the RSPCA attended a discussion on the use of animals in education held by the Association for Science Education, she was surprised by the number of teachers who had "not even thought through the justifications for dissection . . . nor did they know of the alternatives available, let alone understand the ethical objections to it". (T.E.S. 27/1/84).

Although progress is being made in changing attitudes towards dissection, the National Anti-Vivisection Society still receive harrowing letters from children 'forced' to use the scalpel. A twelve year old from Brentwood, Essex wrote: "I wanted to leave the classroom while the teacher cut up a rat, but I thought that my friends would laugh at me . . . he also got a male and female mouse out of tiny cages to show us how they mate. I found this most disturbing because they both seemed very frightened by thirty pupils leaning over them". Also, this classroom pressure caused a young girl to suffer a nervous breakdown after dissecting a mouse she found to be carrying several babies. ("VFS" - NAVS 1986).



THE FINAL COMMENTS

Complaining about children's behaviour in the Daily Telegraph, columnist Jeanette Kupfermann asks: "Is there anything you can do to protect yourself from the species (i.e. children) - short of educating your children at home . . . or forming your own commune, where parents reinstate such things as family prayers at dawn?" (Daily Telegraph 13/1/87).

In the same newspaper, parents also come in for criticism - restraining some over-zealous parents is a very hard task according to an article on independent schools: "It's the parents who are a pain in the neck", said Tony Verity, ex-head of Leeds Grammar, now at Dulwich. "I'd like to educate some of them!" (Daily Telegraph 29/12/86).

. . . "Much will be said in 1987 about the lack of discipline and chaotic conditions in many classrooms. Teachers are blamed for doing little while students in class, sometimes high on drugs, throw spitballs and other objects, make noise, play their portable stereos, even chase each other round the room. How can reading and writing be taught in circumstances like that? And maybe some teachers do not try hard enough. However, outnumbered thirty or more to one, often physically outsized and subject to threats of reprisals by gangs of bullies, hands tied by laws that forbid some of the most effective means of maintaining order, having to deal with the fruits of permissive juvenile justice

self-perpetuating and well entrenched among the professionals with the power. Once you think this way, the most appalling treatment can be legitimised as therapy, and all the family's perceptions and explanations can be dismissed as rationalisations.

Certainly children who go through the courts and clinics without settling back into school do often have problems later. Their job prospects are poor as their record is against them and they have probably done badly educationally. If they are out of work and angry at the way society has treated them, they may become delinquent. If their tendency is rather to blame themselves and feel they have failed, they may remain depressed and anxious perhaps with more specific symptoms such as agoraphobia or psychosomatic illnesses.

I would contend that there is a continuum between the child who is totally hostile to school (though this may be expressed variously as refusal, truancy or disruption) and the child who is acutely school-phobic. Along this continuum there are children with specific problems, who may find school life bearable if they are helped to resolve them, and children who can be manipulated back into the system by coercion and outmanoeuvring - these are the successes of conventional treatment. The latter group may remain deeply unhappy, but may decide that the penalty for expressing their needs is worse than the original misery. The damage that is done to these children is revealed by the figures from the Leeds research quoted by Patricia in the last newsletter: two thirds have measurable psychiatric disturbance after three years.

The real horror stories usually concern the phobic children - when some authority figure decides that a firm line is the only answer, they do not respond and the situation rapidly escalates. They cannot weigh up their fear of school against the threats and indignities, and decide rationally on a sensible course of action, because they are not functioning in a rational mode. They are unlikely to know why they are frightened. There is a real danger of self-injury and suicide attempts which may be successful.

The history of the disturbance may be like that of the train driver who ran over a suicide. He pulled himself together and agreed that it wasn't his fault and he should forget all about it. He went on driving normally until a few months later when he ran over a cardboard carton on the same stretch of track. He then went completely to pieces and was unable to drive again. In the same way some children cope bravely with more stress than they can really manage, until something trivial produces an overload.

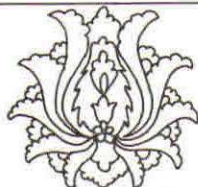
There are disturbed families with symbiotic relationships, but they are relatively rare. The family is designed for the protection of the child, and except in extremes it is only a matter of opinion when this becomes overprotection. Anyway, it is easier to break free from this than to compensate for neglect.

For me, one of the most exciting things about being in EO is the repeated success stories of other parents. Typically the first thing I hear is a distressing account of what the family has gone through. But if I continue to get periodic reports, the news is always good: "It was like magic"; "He improved immediately"; "We didn't realise how bad it had got till the pressure lifted"; "She gets up at seven o'clock for work and hasn't a care in the world"; "He's a different child"; "I should have taken her out years ago"; "He's going to the poly and loving it"; "It took a long time but he's gradually coming out of it"; "She's going to the tech and says they treat you like human beings there - not like school"; "It was very healing to meet people who didn't think he was a failure, and thought his reactions quite reasonable" . . .

EO families are of course self-selected and no doubt relatively highly motivated. In this respect they may not be strictly comparable with other families with "school phobic" children. Nevertheless the contrasting outcomes of the different types of treatment - to coerce them to conform or to trust them to know what they need and allow them some space in which to work

it out - are so dramatic that everyone should have access to them. This information should reach the wider public, and the way to attract the press is to provide some nice clear statistics. So please, if yours is one of these families, let Patricia have your story - even if the three years are not up yet, an interim report would be useful.

Anne Wade, 19 Perkin Close, Wembley, Middlesex HA0 2LY



R.E. - HOW TO

As a Christian I had to respond to Caroline Walker's musings about Religious Instruction. She remarked that EO Newsletters did not contain any information about teaching religious ideas at home. I suspect she would not agree with me that this is a good thing, but for my part I am glad that we have not devoted any space to R.E.

I do not want anyone to think that religion is not important to me. Indeed, I believe it to be at the centre of all that I am trying to do in Education. That is why I prefer not to see it marginalised, cramped and chartered into a lesson or a resource-pack of materials. To deal with the deepest levels of human experience as if they were mere cultural oddities, part of an encyclopaedic ragbag of memorabilia which includes multiplication tables and the dates of kings, is like trying to build a wheel with the hub outside the rim. What we need is not religious lessons but a religious way of life, a motivation which brings out of us naturally the goodness which religion exists to create.

As you might expect, as far as I am concerned good impulses, those which enable us successfully to educate our children and give them the happy environment in which their minds can grow strong and vigorous come from belief in Jesus. That means, in simple terms, reading the Bible to find out what Jesus taught, and following it as closely as possible. Anyone who does that can look after his child's religious education unaided.

True religious education begins with the character of the educator. If he is a giver, he will be equipped to explain to his children the importance of giving, and they are more likely to heed him because they have received from him what they have asked for. A person who hopes to teach his children to pray must be a pray-er himself, and show them by his own conduct that praying is a worthwhile thing to do. By the same token, you cannot possibly expect your kid to love his neighbour as himself if your own benevolence does not reach out to all mankind, or if you don't feel that children have the same right to love as adults do. If, like many Christians, you think that love sometimes has to be cruel, and your relationship with your child is based on the "Flogger's Gospel" (two or three verses in the Book of Proverbs about sparing the rod and spoiling the child), he will not listen to the rest of your teaching, recognising it for the pious claptrap it truly is.

Children draw their ideas about religion not from systematic instruction but from what makes them feel good. They need, and deserve, to feel that you are a good person to be with, and that your goodness grew from the rich soil of your religion. Then, and only then, will they go on to take your beliefs for their own.

Forget about R.E. You can't "teach" it any more than you can "teach" breathing. True Religious Education isn't a matter of doctrines and Bible stories

- though you can teach those if you are so minded, and good 'cess to you - but rather, a certain solemn awakening to the pulse that beats within the soul of our human race and echoes the heart-beat of God. It is found every time a person values another's humanity by giving that other person space and safety to be himself. It flourishes when we who have the power to do so receive our children, in every phase of their life, with kindness, gentleness and approval.

If you do these things you may well find that your children will come to Jesus naturally, because they recognise in Him the same attractive, vibrant humanity as you have shown.

Children do not go for religion because of what they know about it. They follow it just as long as it gives them a sense of their own worth and a feeling of warmth and mutual love.

Christopher Shute, 7 Kiln Way, Polesworth, Near Tamworth, B78 1JF



LEGAL REPORT

Since our last report there has been a further development with the Forsyths. Enfield were granted leave to appeal, but lost on the ground that you can't be prosecuted twice for not complying with the same attendance order. The LEA are now seeking leave to appeal to the House of Lords. Costs have not been settled yet, and the losers of the next round will have to pay heavily for several hearings. The basic issue at stake has been the need to provide qualified tuition. Gill and Tom feel that even if EO was unable to back them, there should have been more support from the membership on an issue like this. They received £25 as a result of Janet Everdell's newsletter article.

Julie Homer lost a case under s.37 because the magistrates refused to hear evidence of educational provision. However, she won on appeal, and has heard nothing more from her LEA.

Julie Lyons is in conflict with Barnsley LEA, who have denied Toby access to all their schools because she objects to corporal punishment and compulsory uniform. They are actually very happy home educating, but take exception to the way the LEA is trying to regain control of the situation by implying that EO is compulsory! Their story appears elsewhere in this newsletter.

There have been several enquiries about the date on which compulsory education finishes. The Easter and May school leaving dates only apply if you have been a registered pupil between your 15th and 16th birthdays; otherwise education is compulsory until your 16th birthday. We argued this successfully for one girl who had a job to go to but had been told by the LEA that she could not take it. However, one boy was 16 in September, but found a job in the previous July and was encouraged by the inspector to start immediately.

We have had several cases of bullying and misinformation by LEAs. One member checked carefully with us and took advantage of the change from primary to secondary school in order to start home education while her daughter was deregistered. She was bullied and lied to, and was scared into sending the girl to secondary school soon afterwards. Before this, we would have been able to support her if asked, but it is much more difficult now. Another family wanted to keep their small daughter out for a term while she received treatment for physical and sexual abuse, but the educational welfare officer

told them they had to have a room set aside for education and used for nothing else. It did not occur to them that an official would tell a downright lie, and they did not check back with us but sent her to school. The integrity of LEA personnel varies considerably: in another area an EWO threatened court quite gratuitously; the member told us immediately; we rang the Director's personal assistant, she apologised, and the EWO was reprimanded. In one area the LEA was being obstructive with one family after another. Several families had been helped to deal with them, but this time we put in a formal general complaint as well as defending the family in question, and it seems to have been successful. Another LEA which has always been reasonable is changing because of one new appointment - the education officer responsible for EO. She told one mother that it is a form of child abuse to keep children at home. She is insisting that the inspectors must make more demands on the less academic children and visit more often; if she is not satisfied she calls the parents in to give an account of themselves. So far we have only heard of this after the event, but we would always try to get someone to attend with the parents in such a case, if we were asked.

We are gradually building up a team of co-ordinators who are gaining experience in helping families who are being harassed. One family has been supported while removing their son from a psychiatric ward, and he is happily learning at home. Another co-ordinator worked non-stop for a fortnight and managed to stop a girl being taken into care. She involved the MP and a councillor, got private psychiatric reports to counteract innuendoes being made by social services, a consultant's report to back up the girl's medical reasons for erratic attendance, and lots more. When she was refused permission to attend a case conference, she circularised all the members with the facts as she saw them, and went to see the one person she knew was sympathetic before the meeting. Several attendance orders or notices of attendance orders have been withdrawn when families have been helped to show that they are fulfilling the legal requirements, even though the education provided is not to the liking of a particular inspector. One family complained to the local imbudsmen, and the LEA immediately found they were satisfied.

We have about a dozen more situations like these at the moment, in which we are either awaiting meetings with the LEA or corresponding with them, and expect to resolve things satisfactorily. Unfortunately we also have a few very unhappy stories, where the families have come to us too late. Once a child is in care or involved in court proceedings we are less likely to be able to help.

One nice story in conclusion: a girl was getting the usual treatment for school phobia - being called naughty and spoilt, and threatened with court, a care order, and being dragged to school. The mother saw red, said she would teach her at home, and sent the EWO packing. She had had no intention of saying this, but it suddenly came to her that she'd read an article about EO in the local paper. The library helped her find us, and the girl is doing fine.

Anne Wade, 19 Perkin Close, Wembley, Middlesex HA0 2LY

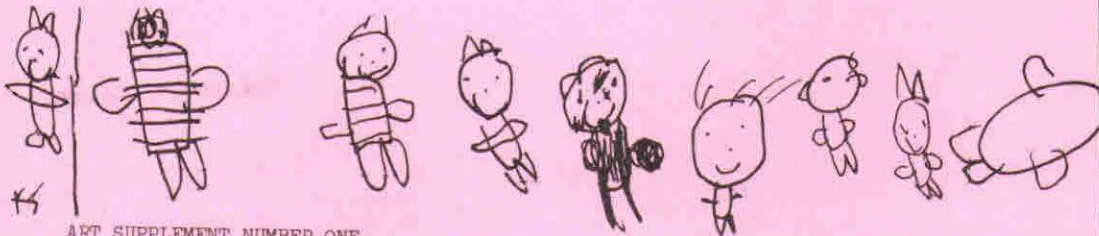
Access to Personal Files Bill

(See last Newsletter)

The Bill had its Second Reading on February 20th when it received the full support of the MPs present.

The Amended Schedule of Records reads '2(b) Records maintained by any local education authority relating to any individual who is being educated, or has been educated, otherwise than by regular attendance at school or whose parent has expressed an interest in providing such education'.

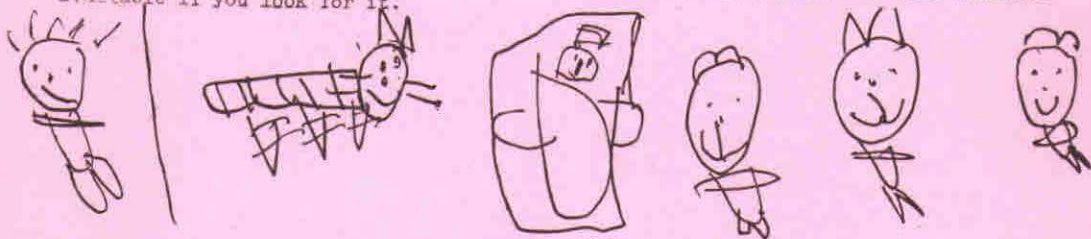
Julie Lyons

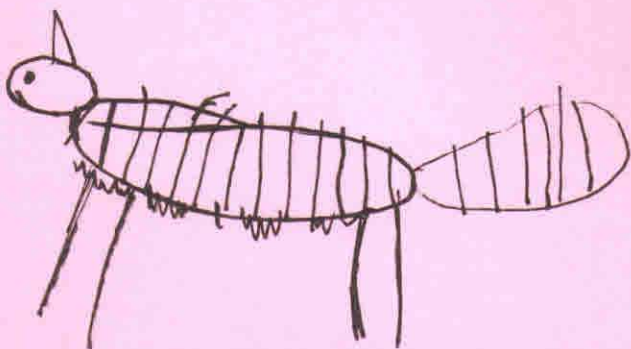


ART SUPPLEMENT NUMBER ONE.

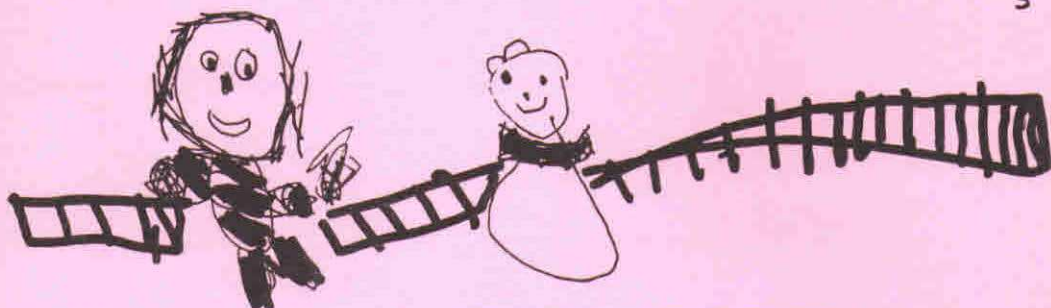
What Art is not -Something to keep the children quiet, colouring in endless Romans and work books, copying something that has already been done, only for people who are good at drawing.

It is a creative and imaginative subject in its own right-used to foster creative and imaginative thinking in everyone. Drawing and painting and making are a normal, vital aspect of the child's development. In the early years everything is exciting to the child, the work they produce is messy but bright and often a visual delight. These are also the vital years for development and we must understand this development and encourage confidence in the strength and validity of their work. We must take care to let the child develop at his own pace, use his own natural marks (not adult symbols) in order not to miss out on the conceptual thinking and process concerned with art. The first marks are disordered scribble (the equivalent of babbling in speech!) and slowly the child gains control until he acquires the power to repeat shapes and marks. He then names and gives a running account of his 'drawing' although no human feature is recognisable. Eventually he discovers the relationship between drawing, thinking and the real world. This is the stage where the human figure evolves. At this stage it is 'the doing' which is important, the result is of little consequence to the child, and therefore to us. Children require materials that mark and mould easily, large crayons and sheets of paper, chalks, thick poster paint or Feadymix, both clay and play-dough, good safety scissors that really cut, and glue. Staplers and elastic bands will often do the job better, children should be taught to use tools safely as soon as they show willingness to learn. Collect junk ie, buttons lollysticks, old clothes, materials offcuts of wood, polystyrene, large nails -plus the usual sand and water. At this stage the material is often the subject matter, clay to poke, pull, pinch, roll, chop up, mould. Card boxes to build with, Big brushes and paint to decorate. Storage a problem? Have an exiting bonfire at the end of the project (take care not to annoy the neighbours..) Paint-give children the opportunity to work big-try chalk or painting with water on asphalt (washes off in a jiffy), finger painting on a formica table..wipes clean for lunch. Use junk-scrap objects, shoes, bottles etc, to paint and decorate-you can prime them first to give a better result. Combine junk to make new forms, shapes creatures. Collect old hats and coats for decorating with fabric, paper and found objects. Building and water play-not just play group stuff..What else can we do? Building-wooden bricks are fine but supplement with other materials. Try building towers with anything other than bricks (we have just had a cat food tins and carrot sculpture taking over the kitchen for the last few days.) Collect offcuts of wood, bits of sawn drainpipes (all shapes and dimensions), graded pebbles from the beach or builders merchants, ropes twines etc. Beg borrow or scrounge, there is a wealth of free material available if you look for it.

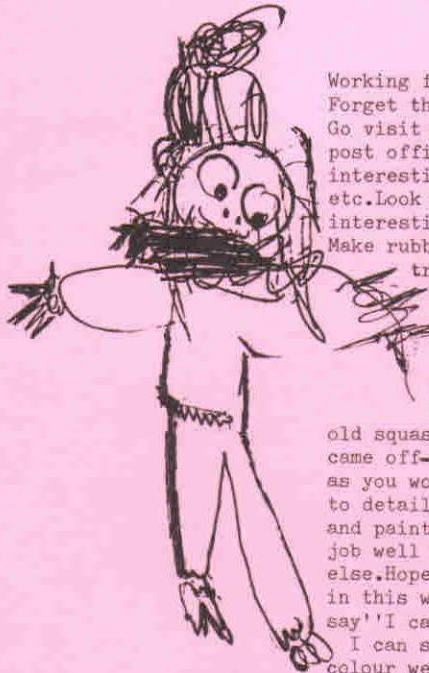




Try water syphoning, bubbling, pouring, measuring, dripping, floating and sinking. Collect plastic bottles to fill with water and food colouring. Water can be frozen in different types of containers... ice splits non flexible plastic. Try freezing water in rubber gloves. Make your own gigantic puddles with plastic sheet for rafts, stepping stones and bridges. All these activities provide stimuli for additional number work, language and creative writing. Around five, children make their first representational attempts - they discover a relationship between drawing and outside experience. Objects float in space, sky is blue strip, scale and western perspective do not exist. Try not to pressure them to draw in an adult way. The child will draw according to feel, exciting things will be exciting colours, important things are depicted large. Relate art work to the real, events they have experience of. Encourage them to work in both 2D materials and 3D materials. IDEAS... Set up a bonfire of old boxes, leaves etc, look at ants, snails on glass, plants, old clocks. Collect and draw old tin cans or stones or bark. Go and watch the cows being milked or a hole being dug or a road being laid. Visit your local church, peep into cracks in tombs, climb the tower, go watch the bell ringing. Drawing is not always to do with accurate representational.... just as there are several ways of approaching number so too with drawing. Offer varied ways of seeing and recording to find which way suits best. Drawing is about seeing and making marks - try pencil, crayons, chalk, pen, paint, a feather dipped in ink or a stick, charcoal or torn paper... Try and choose the right tool for the job. Drawing as recording... Look at a real object (i.e. the cat) and record. Look at the shape of it's eyes, colouring and markings, the tear in it's ear, the number of whiskers, the spot on it's nose. This avoids the stereotyped image and is good close observational drawing. Drawing as analysis... Look for texture, colour, pattern and shape. Use magnifying glasses or window holes cut in paper if it helps. Look at rusty tins, shapes in a cabbage, plants, etc. This type of drawing can be the base for craft work i.e. string blocks, tile decoration with clay or fabric collage. Drawing as expression... Feelings... Work to music and dance. Try stroking the cat and drawing what it feels like? Or painting when you are very angry. Drawing as communication... Drawing for information, maps - from the front gate to the kitchen in picture form, DeBono type machines, comic strip without words, how to get dressed etc. Around 7ish children discover the schema for space. They now have a base line - figures stand on the ground, individual schema for the human figure appear and this is repeated time and time again. This will differ with the individual child - with some it is rich and complex and for others it is fairly meagre - the child who has been brought up on a diet of vital and interesting art activity will be more likely to evolve something exciting. Humans will have eyes, nose, mouth arms and fingers all in the right position and recognisably formed. MATERIALS... Choose varied pencils, charcoal, pastels (fix with hair laquer), biro's (excellent for scratchy drawing) felt pens, crayons, cold dyes and inks. Choose the right one for the job. Avoid ridiculously expensive ART materials - offer a sound basic range of good quality paper (buy some with a friend to cut down on expense) Try opening up cartons like cereal boxes etc, great for drawing on the shape often dictates extension to the drawing i.e. long towers going up into the flaps.



Paint needs good paper. Tissues and foils are expensive, salvage as much recycled material as possible. Envelopes can be opened out, tin foil from filter coffee is super, wrapping paper, some wallpapers are also use full and magazines and catalogues are all good sources of coloured paper. Lots of paper is thrown away daily ask your friends and neighbours to save you theirs. Buy good quality P.V.A. glue, it can be watered down for sticking paper--some of the washable type is useful for messy children and saves nagging. Art is a messy subject and correct preparation with newspapers, plastic pinny's and the floor covered with an old mat or a sheet of heavy duty polythene gets rid of some of the tensions and allows children to get on with the job without worry. Staplers and elastic bands save waiting for things to dry and often are a better solution. Good sharp scissors are essential (ones that really cut) Also a craft knife (often best wielded by an adult) Ready mix paint and lots of spare containers for mixing other colours, bun tins will do as pallettes or an old white chinaplate. Card can be obtained from the supermarket in the form of old boxes. Remember art is about the real world. Encourage projects from the real to enrich and develop their art making. Children at this stage still tend to draw their feelings i.e. huge scratchy claws for a bird that is standing on their arm--this is not wrong as they are emphasising the bit of the drawing that was most important to them..the feel of the bird standing on the arm. This is what makes childrens drawings individual and exiting. Lots of three dimensional work is essential.....the child who does not enjoy drawing his home might be happier painting a box to represent his home, or making an environment for action men or dolls. Drawing and making are not two different things--one aids and gives strength to the other. Try making houses out of old wellies painted white, plant pots or cake tins, use found junk to make the details as well as paint. LACK OF SPACE?..Work out of doors, build grottos using natural materials, combine with milk bottle tops, matchsticks, fragments of old china and this and that. Use boxes to make vehicles, boats planes for teddies, borrow some other kids and have races--time them, make graphs and badges and trophies for the contestants. Gold spray transforms anything. Make trees and plants from twigs and junk (look at real ones to see how the details go). Use a jar or tin for the pot, paint it white and decorate this with collage or paint or fake willow pattern. Read the willow pattern story and decorate paper plates with your own adventures...look at the way the plate is painted, borders pattern etc. Use paper plates as a base for junk meals for Witches, creatures etc. Out of doors super pools can be made with sand, bricks pebbles. Lay a loose course of bricks or a ring of sand, spread polythene sheet into the recess, hold down with more bricks and fill with water...Great for floating projects. Make rafts from polystyrene egg boxes and junk, or boats from scraps of wood. Make islands for lego people, try growing real seeds on the islands or create miniature gardens. Take the end off a fizzy drink plastic bottle to put ships, environments or gardens inside..re-seal with polythene tape.



Working from the environment..
 Forget the Tower of London and expensive days out.
 Go visit your local crispy fry or go look at the
 post office and general store-help your child to see
 interesting details,deccorative chimneys ,hoardings
 etc.Look at front gardens-find the best, worst most
 interesting.Draw the contents of the rubbish bin.
 Make rubbings of texture,tree bark,gratings,shoe
 treads etc. Cut these up to use as collage.
 Make patterns and images,dragons,creatures
 leaves can be used for giant trees or
 beanstalks.Pick up lost things and make
 collections over a given time.Make a display,
 posters and labels for the objects.Some
 ideas.....Lost single gloves,cats whiskers,
 old squashed tins,feathers.Invent the creature they
 came off-or belonged to.Look for as good a standard
 as you would in any other subject,close observation,
 to detail,subtleties of colour,excellence in making
 and painting the more jokey items.Commitment for a
 job well done is as important in art as in anything
 else.Hopefully by now the child who is used to working
 in this way will have confidence in his work.He will
 say 'I can tear paper and make a collage of this.
 I can see shapes and use them in clay.I can mix
 colour well and match it to the object.' Instead

of..Oh I'm no good at art ...I can't draw!..ART GALLERYS. Make use of your local
 gallery,Talk about the paintings and sculpture.Ask questions of the educational
 staff ,find if they offer workshops..if not why not? Look at methods and ideas
 collect postcards for reference.Learn why artists do what they do,as well as
 how.

Provide use ful tools such as sewing machines.A hand model is best and still can
 be found cheaply.Don't be tempted to use it just for making objects and simple
 toys.It is a great way of joining materials together.It will sew paper and other
 materials as well as cloth.Small pillow shapes can be sewn and stuffed then joined
 on the machine to form three dimensional figures and creatures.Loose weave fabrics
 such as vegetable bags can be woven into,rug canvas makes a good background for
 stichery with thick threads and wools.If sewing onto thin fabric use an embroidery
 ring to hold the fabric taut .Fabric collage can be nailed onto bits of wood or
 held down on soft board with thumb tacks...the wood and the bits can be recycled
 for the next piece of work.Puppets can be made from two sheets strong paper
 decorated with collage and paint then cut out and blanket sewn around the edges
 EXPERIMENT with all the materials available. Have confidence in your self.

The next supplement will hopefully cover the eleven upwards age range.Please
 send any contributions(ONE-LAST TIME!) to Milly Stevens,Pegasus Castle road,
 Ventnor I.O.W.P038, 1LG, as soon as possibl;e .Sorry about any typing errors,
 and hope you enjoy spotting the spelling mistakes.I would especially like drawings
 to illustrate the next part.Black felt pen on half A4 would be fine.I have used
 ones kindly lent me by my daughter Alexis (5) for this one.Hope you enjoy them
 as much as we do!

CORE GROUP MEETING OF EDUCATION OTHERWISE ASSOCIATION LTD

Wick Court, Bristol

Sunday 25 January 1987

Present: Joan Joara, Janet & Nigel Everdell, Miryam Bush, Julie Lyons, Jennie White, Rob & Anne Wade, Patricia Knox, Joseph O'Connor, Bruce Wallace, Mick White, George & Mary George, June Grant, Candida Fawsitt, Kay Bebb, Frances Howard, Val Common, John Lundsten, Felix Polkowski, Stephanie Fletcher, Meg Robertson, Bruce Cox, Jill O'Connor.

1. Apologies were received from Christine Wallace, Alvena Hillier, Pauline Thomasson, Andy Anderson.

2. The minutes of the last Core Group Meeting were approved and signed.

3. REPORTS OF OFFICERS AND GROUPS

a) Membership Secretary - Bruce Wallace

Current membership stands at 1,686, an increase of 400. Over 1986 there was a total increase of 636 in membership. A large proportion of the children were not out of school; out of approximately 1300 primary age children, 600 were estimated to be out of school. Publication stocks were good. Bob Emmett was coping with the membership lists, but he needs a new and bigger disc drive and/or printer, which cost approximately £250 each. We agreed that he can have what he needs; if he needs anything else before the next meeting he can ask the Steering Committee.

b) Enquiries Secretary - Janet Everdell

In the last 3 months of 1986 enquiries have doubled and Janet finds her workload too heavy. We agreed that her phone number should be left off the back of the NL. More work could be done by the regional enquiries secretaries whose names and addresses are already on the answering machine. We agreed that the names, addresses and phone number of these regional enquiries secretaries should appear in the NL, along with those of specialists such as special needs and legal. Janet will ask their permission for this.

The total enquiries for 1986 were 2310. More membership forms and introductory literature have been printed. The Binatone answering machine broke down again and Janet bought an Elgem Invincible for £86 as a stand-in. The old machine has been repaired.

Sarah Guthrie had passed on to her details of a conference at the Oxford Poly on 4/5/6 September to be held by the Human Scale Education Movement. Janet had requested more application forms for our members and had said to them that we should have a speaker as the biggest single organisation in alternative education. Joseph O'Connor had also had details of this conference and Roland Meighton had been approached as a possible speaker, but he did not know what had been the outcome of this.

The publishers David & Charles have approached

Janet about writing a handbook on alternative education. We agreed she should do this.

c) Co-ordinators - Andy had sent apologies

There are still no co-ordinators for Cornwall, Guent, Dumfries & Galloway. Farid Laniado wishes to continue as co-ordinator for Norfolk. Diane Anderson said she would contact Lesley about this item.

d) Steering Committee - Joane Hoare, Janet Everdell, Alison Mafham

Joan had been investigating public liability insurance as our current insurance with the Prudential was unsatisfactory. She had taken out a new public liability policy with Cornhill Insurance PLC, through the brokers Alexander Stenhouse UK Ltd. It costs £19.57 to cover us until May 1987, when we will need to take out another year's worth. The public liability cover is £1,000,000 and the personal accident cover to any committee member or registered voluntary helper (we are naming regions rather than specific people) is £2,000 for death, for loss of limbs and permanent total disablement £20 per week. This means we are covered for an unlimited number of meetings, activities, holidays etc., either national or local.

She had also asked for a quotation for Professional Indemnity Insurance to cover us should anyone sue us for what they considered to be bad or incomplete advice.

e) Press Secretary - Joseph O'Connor

The following articles and TV programmes have appeared on EO:

- 30/9/86 Article by Janet Everdell in Education Guardian.
- 23/9/86 Article in 'Today' about 5 families in Sutton Coldfield who had set up school in their front room. This prompted many media enquiries about groups from the Observer, Telegraph, BBC News and ITN News. All were interested in groups of parents setting up alternatives.
- 28/9/86 Article in Observer on Horne Small School, ED and Gill Forsythe.
- 7/10/86 Article in Evening Standard on Horne Small School and ED.
- 5/10/86 Wrote qualifying letter to Observer that EO does not advise on or support financially the setting up of small independent schools.
- Oct 86 Meg Robertson on Bristol Local Radio and in Bristol local paper.
- Nov 86 Family Circle magazine article on school phobia by Sue Newman and Pat Knox.
- 26/10/86 Article on EO in Young Observer on Alex Jones and the Beale twins.
- 22/11/86 BBC2 documentary on home education with the Mutter and Gilbert families.

- 12/12/86 Feature in South London News on South London Group (Margaret Gilbert).
 2/1/87 TES article by Roland Meighan on home education.
 26/11/86 Telegraph Sunday Magazine article on home education by Lynette Cameron and Deborah Beavis.
 Dec/Jan Welsh Internationalist - Educating Rhian.
 26/1/87 Issue 17 magazine with Alice Robertson. BBC newsbeat programme on EO, daytime ITV programme on education, Anglia TV home education programme.

Joe said he could always get publicity for groups of parents setting up alternative 'schools' of one sort or another as there was a lot of media interest in this at the moment.

f) Publications Secretary - Lesley Kilbride

It was reported that there were no problems and that publications were up to date.

g) Research Group - Anne Wade

See article on page 21.

i) Treasurer - Alison Mafham

Alison reported that we have plenty of money. We have two accounts for receiving standing orders, one at Barclays and the other at the Royal Bank of Scotland, which also holds our main account. The RBS is not efficient in handling our accounts and there is some confusion over standing orders. Alison will discuss this with Bob Emmett. We decided that we didn't want to revert back entirely to Barclays, even though they are no longer involved in South Africa.

4. ROLLING FUND - Bruce Wallace

A bank account has been opened. £400 has been paid to the Norwich Group for the setting up of a local resource centre. There have been no further applications for funds.

5. LATER YEARS - Bruce Cox

Bruce will finish this and send to Felix Polkowski for re-typing.

6. EARLY YEARS - Bruce Wallace

The new edition updated by Sarah Guthrie is now in circulation at £1.50 each. 3000 are in stock. It can be obtained by members on receipt of an SAE, from Bruce.

7. DIGESTS OF PAST NLS - Jennie White

Jennie and Jean Lovius have done a digest of NLS from 1979. It should be printed by September 1987. 2000 is a reasonable print run.

8. COVENANTS - Alison Mafham

Jane Grant took over research on covenants from Alison, as she has been unable to find the time to do it.

9. UPDATE OF CONTACT LIST

It was suggested that the regional enquiries secretaries should ask the local co-ordinators

in their area to check on their members' addresses and phone numbers. There was then some discussion on the role of regional enquiries secretaries. The people currently named on Janet's answering machine are:

- Meg Robertson - South West England
- Mick & Jennie White - North England
- Brenda Holliday - Scotland
- Sandie Cottee - East England
- Genevieve Bridgeman - London
- Andy Anderson & Hazel Clawley - Midlands
- Jude Ashley Walker - South England & Isle of Wight
- Miryam Bush - Wales
- Clare Weber - Ireland

We agreed that the role of possible regional secretaries should be discussed at the next CG meeting.

10. SILK SCREENING OF T-SHIRTS - Felix Polkowski

Felix has a silk screener at work and Jean has the silk screen. Nothing further has been organised. We would like T-shirts to be silk-screened at meetings if possible.

11. BOUNDARIES BETWEEN EO ASSOCIATION LTD. AND THE INDEPENDENT ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION (OTHERWISE) RESOURCE CENTRE - Peter Edwards

Bruce Wallace reported that the group asked to look into this had not met.

Jane Grant had obtained a list of Leila Berg's books from the Andersons. Bruce Wallace has been in touch with Leila Berg, who said that she had envisaged the books being divided between co-ordinators from whom they could be borrowed by local EO members. Jennie White offered to pick up the books from the Andersons. Jane said that the books would need to be catalogued and a record kept of borrowers. Rob Wade offered to catalogue the books if Jennie needed help in this. We agreed that the books should be at Unstone Grange and catalogued ready for that meeting. Mick White offered to organise a rubber stamp for stamping the books with.

12. POSSIBLE LETTER TO LEAs - Anne Wade

It is not clear how we could make a blanket approach as LEAs varied so much. We agreed that an approach could only be made to individual LEAs. Julie Lyons' proposed draft letter could be used as a source of suggestions. Anne agreed to look at Janet Everdell's suggestion that the Chairman of the Education Committee might be a better recipient of a letter.

13. GCSE - Bruce Cox

There will be something on this in Later Years.

14. CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN AND THEIR RIGHTS - Anne Wade

This conference which was organised by the Children's Legal Centre was a great disappointment to our representative, Anne Wade, Pat Knox and Lynette Cameron. The conference was not interested in school phobia, asserting that it was a minority

problem. However, a few sympathetic people were approached individually. It was agreed that we should give the Samaritans information about EO. Pat Knox agreed to do this and send them a copy of SINC.

15. POSSIBLE PUBLIC MEETING ON SCHOOL PHOBIA
- Pat Knox

We encouraged Pat to organise such a meeting, possibly in September or October 1987 in Bristol. Its purpose would be to show a need to change the law so that families are informed of their educational rights before they are threatened with drugs, care, etc. A private member's bill would be needed to change the statute law. Ivan Geffen and Roland Meighan were suggested as possible speakers. The media and interested MPs would need to be contacted.

16. CHILD BENEFIT FOR OVER 16s EDUCATED AT HOME
- Lynette Cameron

There are currently 5 appeals before the DHSS Commission. If this fails, then the appeals can be taken to the Ombudsman and/or Judicial Review. The point in dispute is whether a home can be recognised as comparable to an educational establishment by the DHSS. The DES claims it has no responsibility for over 16s. Lynette said she regarded her fight for child benefit for over 16s educated at home as part of the campaign for the recognition of EO and education at home.

17. ACCESS TO PERSONAL FILES BILL - Legal Group

The second reading of this private member's bill is on February 20th. Archie Kirkwood is the MP concerned. EO has asked that the files on home educated children and their families should also be open to inspection, as well as those on children educated at recognised educational institutions. This has been included in the Bill.

18. VOLUNTEERS FOR CHILDRENS' ACTIVITIES AT THE INTERNATIONAL POTTERS CAMP, ABERYSTWYTH
- Joan Hoare for Adrian Childs

No-one volunteered, but Misha Woolf was suggested as a useful contact.

19. FUTURE VENUES

Unstone Grange has been booked for May 22-25, the late spring bank holiday. June Grant offered Ian Grant as a possible volunteer to take the bookings. Alison Mafham offered to do the childrens' activities for this weekend.

Featherstone Castle - Bruce Wallace. Featherstone has 20 acres of ground and can accommodate 90 people and one ghost. It has been booked from 11-18 September, the first weekend, 11-13 Sept for 90 people and for the further week for an unspecified number. The charges would be £5 (children) and £6 (adult), including both overnight charge (£3 & £3.50 respectively) and food. Christine Wallace has volunteered to do the

bookings. We will need volunteers to do activities and catering over the week. Betty Ball volunteered to do some simulation games and a calculator workshop.

Anne Clarke had said that there was a place in Norwich suitable for winter meetings. She will get details for the next meeting at Unstone.

Stephanie Fatcher suggested a camping weekend in the Peak District and offered to look into it.

20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Minutes - we agreed that Joan Hoare should only post out copies of the minutes to CG members, whether present or absent, and only occasionally to others if they had good reason to need them.

WES - we have purchased cheaply some text books from the World Education Service. Felix Polkowski agreed to catalogue, ready for Unstone Grange.

Independent Alternative Education (Otherwise) Resource Centre. It was agreed that the Leila Berg books belonged to EO Association Ltd., which has never been in dispute. The rest of the books and other educational materials belong to Diane and Andy Anderson.

21.

We gave a sincere vote of thanks to Meg Robertson for organising the weekend, both bookings and catering. Also to Elizabeth Hemphill for the beautiful soup.

Core Group Meeting, Unstone Grange, Sheffield
9.30 am - Sunday 24 May 1987

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the last meeting
3. Reports of officers and groups
 - a) Membership Secs (Bruce & Christine Wallace)
 - b) Enquiries Sec (Janet Everdell)
 - c) Co-ordinators' Sec (Andy Anderson)
 - d) Steering Committee (Joan Hoare, Janet Everdell, Alison Mafham)
 - e) Press Secretary (Joseph O'Connor)
 - f) Publications Sec (Lesley Kilbride)
 - g) Research Group (Anne Wade)
 - h) Legal Group (Anne Wade)
 - i) Treasurer (Alison Mafham)
4. Role of regional secretaries
5. Development of local resource centres
6. Later Years (Bruce Cox)
7. Digest of past N.L.s (Jennie White & Jean Lovius)
8. Update of contact list
9. Silk screening of T-shirts (Jean Lovius & Felix Polkowski)
10. Organising use of WES books
11. Public meeting on school phobia (Pat Knox)
12. Child Benefit (Lynette Cameron)
13. AGM - rotation of officers
14. Future Venues
15. AOB
16. Votes of thanks

Please send reviews direct to the editor of the next newsletter. If you wish to review a newly, or shortly to be published book, please write to Helen Holland giving the title, author and name and address of the publisher. Helen will ask the publisher to send you the book, but PLEASE WRITE A REVIEW PROMPTLY if your request is granted.
Helen Holland



Understand Mathematics

by C J Cox and D Bell
Published by John Murray

This book is typical of the "new maths" texts which have the country's parents running to tutors like me for help. In fact, the only new thing about new maths is the order in which material is presented. Formerly, you wouldn't have come across matrices, set theory or mapping (nothing to do with Ordnance Survey!) until university, if you read maths. Now all this has been brought forward - in fact, sets are now taught to first year infants. Of course, these very abstract subjects have to be greatly simplified to be presented at this level.

This is my biggest criticism of this book: it presents a vast array of topics, all so briefly and in such a simplified form that it's difficult to see what they are for or how they relate to one another. Certainly my 12-year old student has no idea what most of the work is all about. I have the teachers' manual as well, which is a great help, though where it says "discuss" some notes would be useful. In the chapter about mapping, for example, there is no mention of its use in computer graphics, or in anything else. No one had mentioned this to my student. The course set out in this book demands excellent teaching and also takes for granted children who are well prepared in fundamental arithmetic. Since my student's arithmetic is weak, I have spent time coaching him in basics like what division means and how to do it, and what fractions are and how they relate to division. This makes a strange contrast to inequalities, co-ordinates and so forth. The book makes frequent references to computers, which of course would appeal to many people. My student's teacher skips these pages.

On the positive side, the book is well set out, visually exciting and does a heroic job of catering to widely ranging abilities. (It also tells what Pi is to 126 decimal places!) I would recommend this book to anyone looking for a whirl-wind tour of modern maths, for it does introduce the reader to a great variety of topics. The actual calculations are easy. The mystifying bit lies in the meaning of it all.

Peggy Thomas, 131 Mayow Road,
London SE26 4HZ

In her covering note to the editor Peggy says "Perhaps I should have mentioned that my student hates the book, because if you don't get the explanation from the teacher, you'll never get it from the book".

"Bright Ideas"

A series
Published by Scholastic

These books, although obviously written for teachers, are really good. They are full of "bright ideas" and although designed for school, they could easily be adapted for use at home.

The series includes Bright Ideas for . . . 'Christmas Art & Craft', 'Language Development', 'Reading Activities', 'Maths Activities', 'Science', 'Seasonal Activities', 'P.E.', and several new titles coming out shortly.

These books are clear and concise with good illustrations, although expensive at £4.95 each.

Creative Play

by Dorothy Eison

Is a child-centred 'ideas' book for parents. It is fairly comprehensive with some interesting sections on physical activities and early science/nature discovery.

Although the book is written for

0 - 10 year olds, it concentrates on the earlier years, and starts with very simple ideas such as mobiles. The 6 - 10 year section mainly comprises games including traditional pavement games such as hopscotch, through to ideas for computing a story.

An interesting and comprehensive book although basic in its approach.

Valerie Common, 19 New Road
Castlethorpe, North Bucks

The Young Child

by Daniel Udo de Haes

Published by Floris Books

This book costs £5.95 and is only 90 pages long so I had to think carefully before recommending that anyone should buy it. (Though of course it can be ordered through the library). At a first reading the content seemed rather obvious - something which needed saying but did not necessarily require a whole book.

However, on a second reading I found that I experienced it on a deeper level and that not only did I understand my own children better, but also my own childhood.

At its simplest level the theme is this: although the fairy stories collected by the Brothers Grimm are important to the young child's development, they should not be told to them until the right time, nor should they be read other stories until they are around the age of 4 or 5.

The reasons behind this caution are not that the younger child is unable to grasp a story thread or that the stories are too complicated (though this can be true), but because by listening to someone else's words and images the child will be cut off from his pre-earthly origins.

Perhaps it is necessary to read the book to understand exactly what is meant by this. Daniel Udo de Haes was a Steiner teacher and arrived at his insights from his own experience as father, grandfather and teacher. He explains the child's inability to rise above everyday life and material things as stemming from his capacity to retain a sense of the heavenly origin of such things. It is the

ordinary things and events of the world "which in their own earthly appearance can speak to him in the language of their heavenly origin". The child needs to go through the stage of relating to the things of this earth in a direct and uncomplicated way in order to gain strength for the future.

The subtitle of the book is **Creative Living With Two to Four Year Olds** and in the course of it we come to realize how important to his whole development is the child's first experience of language.

"Artificial word learning . . . has a wearisome and trivializing effect; for in this way the child's sense of language, which should be allowed slowly to grow in a healthy manner, is awakened in an abstract, intellectual way, and with it his whole way of looking at the world. In consequence much of the heavenly radiance which the child might have brought from his spiritual home is lost, it becomes 'crippled' or remains undeveloped, resulting in a large part of the soul's more intimate potential being nullified".

For the toddler he recommends looking at pictures in a book without connecting them together. "The picture book for the toddler should depict the simplest things and the most ordinary actions".

The pictures should be carefully chosen -

"A toddler cannot laugh objectively at an absurd drawing . . . if he is forced to laugh at an absurd representation of what he has recognised on so deep a level, this leads him to the desecration and denial of what is most precious in his soul . . . These false impressions live unconsciously and can later surface for instance in a desire to mock every serious quest for spiritual values".

Even better than well-chosen pictures is a book drawn for the child. If we draw for the toddler, however badly, but in the right spirit, we can awaken memories of the world from which he came and "the feeling that the nature of the child's quest for the earthly world is understood by the adult". Likewise in looking

at a picture book with an adult the child feels welcomed and understood. We all know how important it is that we keep to the same form of words -

"This merry but deeply serious entry by way of picture and sound into a world which for these toddlers is endlessly new and also intimately familiar can give one the feeling of going together with the child through something very special: the child takes another silent step into earthly life, bearing all the wealth that he has brought with him".

Nursery rhymes are important too because they satisfy this desire to enter more into earthly things while "protecting the child from too early an external understanding of words, preserving the mystery of sounds".

The author laments the whole process of acceleration that now goes on "with prematurely logical inartistic methods of teaching young school-children, and with ever more technical toys, there is a general drive to accelerate external development and a tendency to disregard the unfolding of inner gifts, which are harmed or even destroyed through acceleration".

Jackie Fearnley, Howe House, Egton, Whitby

>>> MAKING CONTACT <<<

Dear EO,

I would like a penfriend. Would anyone like to be my penfriend. I am six and a half. I live in the country. My favourite things are playing technic and playing outside, and I love swimming.

From

Josie Stewart, 1 Styche Hall, Market Drayton, Shrops, TF9 3RB

(I have never heard of 'technic'. I hope I have read it correctly. Ed.)

Dear Editor,

I want a pen friend who is eight years old. I like writing and read.

From

Sarah Shubinsky, 26 Hut Hill Lane, Great Wyrley, Wallsall, West Midlands WS6 6PB

Dear Reader,

My name is Loukas. I am 9 and a half and I would like a pen pal. I am interested in collecting stamps and bookmarks and sew on badges. I have been learning at home for 4 years.

Love,

Loukas Christodoulou

107 Bells Hill, Barnet, Herts
EN5 2ST

New Friends Wanted

By the time you have read this plea we should be settled in our new home in Gnosall, Stafford. "We" are Diane, Brian and two daughters, Gaenor aged 12 and Nicky aged 10.

The girls have been educated at home now for around 14 months and we are all very happy. If there is anyone in the Stafford area who would like to contact us with a view to visits etc., we would be very pleased. As many of you know, moving house is always a bit traumatic, so any help in settling in would be most welcome.

We have moved up from Aylesbury, and in saying this I would sincerely like to thank Julie Webb, the South Bucks co-ordinator, for her friendship and support over the past 12 months. We have had several visits and a smashing Christmas party, and I would like to thank everyone in that area, and hope that our involvement in our new area will be just as happy.

Yours sincerely,

Diane, Brian, Gaenor and Nicky Dobby
15 The Flashes, Gnosall, Stafford
Tel: Stafford 822034

Dear Editor,

I am a single parent with two daughters (aged 4 and 9 months). I am a new member. My eldest daughter attends nursery at present and should attend primary school from September, but has not been registered yet. After reading **School Is Not Compulsory** about communal living, I wonder if any members know of a commune, preferably in the south-west, willing to accept a hard-working, environmentalist, health food freak with two bright adorable daughters. If so, please contact me. >>>

Annette Chetri, 35 Giants Grave Road,
Briton Ferry, Neath, South Wales

Dear EO People,

Taliesin is two and a half and I have intended to home-educate him since before he was born. I am a recent incomer to Lewis and feeling the need for contact with other home-educators to boost my morale somewhat. I should particularly like to hear from single parents, especially women, and from people in Scotland, as I feel unsure of the Scottish education authorities (being English myself). I should love to visit anybody who has time to chat to us.

Hoping to hear from somebody.

Yours

Jill Smith, Tigh-a-Ghlinne, Gravir,
Isle of Lewis PA86 9QX.
Tel: 0851-88-206

Dear EO,

I am interested in writing to other EOers of my own age (15). I came out of school when I was fourteen and am finding getting down to serious work difficult. I am studying for two 'O' levels which I will hopefully take in June. Please write if you want to exchange ideas or just gain friends. My interests range from meditation to horse riding and snooker. Liz McKay, 73 Forest View Road, Tuffley, Gloucester GL4 0BY

Penfriend Wanted

I am eleven and a half. At the moment I enjoy art and craft, beach combing and Asterix books. I live on a boat.

Matthew Peak, 'Aries the Ram'
Southdown Quay, Millbrook, Cornwall
PL10 1EZ

Dear Sir,

Would you please give my letter to a child who would be interested in being my pen pal? I would like to learn more about England. I will write to a boy or girl who is about my age.

My name is Suzanne Hillman. I am a nine year old girl with short, blonde, curly hair, green eyes and wire-rimmed glasses. I have two sisters, one older, one younger; and three brothers, two older and one younger. We live with my mother and father in Laconia,

New Hampshire (NH).

Laconia is a town of 15,000 in central New Hampshire just south of the White Mountains. It is called the Lakes region. We are on a plateau in New England in the north east corner of the USA. We have cold winters, much snow for ski-ing, and short cool summers. There are many lakes in the city. The biggest is Winnepesaukee, others are called Squam, Little Squam, and Winnesquam. These are Indian names.

I am home schooled part of the time. I play oboe in the school band and study fifth grade history and English in school. I do sixth grade subjects at home. I am in the Girl Scouts, and am learning to ski. I would like to exchange stamps and photos with my pen pal. If you know many children who would like pen pals I can find some for them.

Sincerely,

Suzanne M. Hillman, 66 Lincoln Street
Laconia, NH 03246, USA

Dear People,

We are a home schooling family in Australia (Barry, Meryl, and children Sandra, Andrew and Michelle). We don't subscribe to Education Otherwise, but Sandra and Andrew would like to find homeschooling pen pals in the U.K. If you have a pen pal listing in Education Otherwise we would be grateful if you could print some details about Sandra and Andrew, as follows:

Sandra

Birth date: 11/4/77

Interests: Gymnastics; ballet and modern dance; square dancing

Andrew

Birth date: 25/7/79

Interests: Lego; gymnastics; ballet and modern dance; square dancing; cricket

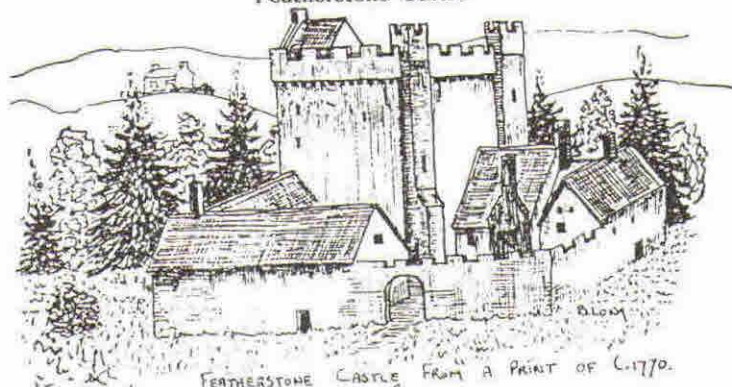
Yours faithfully

Barry Elphinston, PO Box 217,
Nambour Qld. 4560, Australia

Breath of gentle giants
Fill the morning air
To know not of defiance
Accept that all is fair.

(2nd verse and clue to what I am on p.34)

Featherstone Castle



Featherstone Castle has been justly described as one of the loveliest strongholds in Northumberland. It lies in seclusion beside the South Tyne about three miles to the south-west of Haltwhistle; and whether its turrets and battlements are seen in the distance or through its neighbouring trees or across its park the result is always a charming picture.

Several periods are represented in the architecture but so well are they blended that you would hardly guess the latest to belong to the last century. The Featherstonehaughs were seated here early in the thirteenth century, and their name may have come from the Feuder Stones, two monoliths on a nearby hill where in feudal times the tenants of the manor used to assemble. The men of the family took a prominent part in Border affairs. In 1327 Thomas de Featherstonehaugh and his son were conservateurs of the uneasy truce between England and Scotland and had the duty of selecting men for military service in Hexham, Tynedale and Wark. These forces were for defensive and offensive purposes against the Scots.

Featherstone has its ghostly visitation, not by a solitary wraith but by a whole party - a bridal party. The lady (legend relates) had been wedded against her will, being really in love with a Ridley, an enemy of her house. After the ceremony in the castle chapel a gay hunting party, which included the newly married couple, set out for a day's sport in the woods. The wedding feast was to be held in the castle hall on their return. During the chase, however, they were ambushed by the disappointed lover and his friends and all were slain, even the lovely bride herself in trying to intervene between her husband, and her lover. Crazy with grief, the latter slew himself and his blood ran into a hollow stone, from which the corbies drank it with ghastly relish. Meanwhile the baron and his lady wife awaited their guests in the banqueting hall; but it was not till the stroke of midnight that the door swung open to admit the hunting party, their faces ashen, their clothes slashed and stained with blood. Realising this was no earthly company, the horrified baron crossed himself, and as he did so a cold blast swept the ghostly crowd away. Every year at the same hour, they say, the hapless bridal party may be seen riding in at the castle gateway.

Sent by Max Lovius who says more next issue

(Map of area on next page)

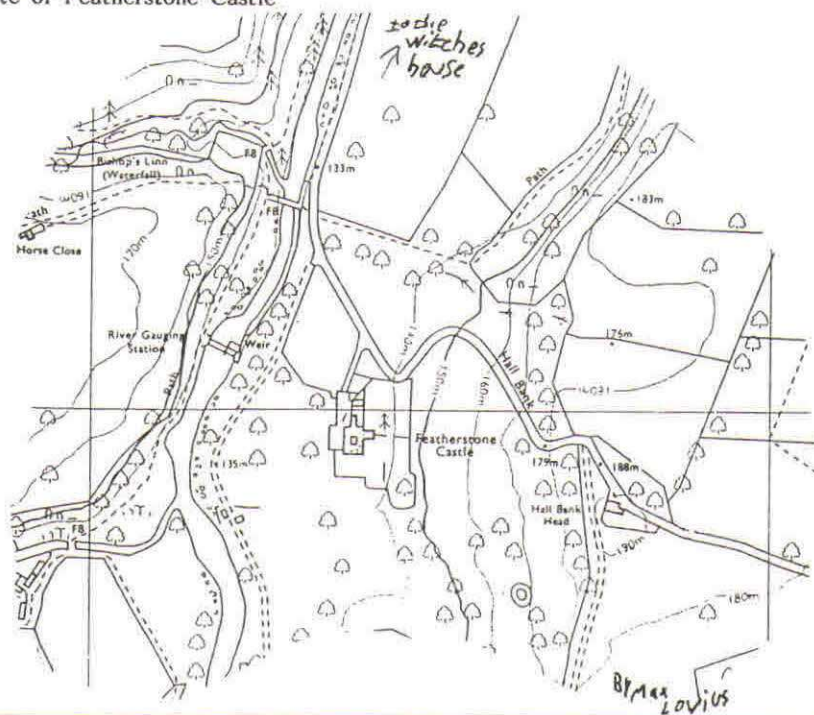


Echoing tread underfoot,
Jingling tackle, wrapped round muscled girth
Harvest is past, now show the dead root
Masters command to scar God's earth

(L. Holliday, January 87)



Site of Featherstone Castle



TO EVERYBODY WHO CARES ABOUT CHILDREN

When I first came to this country I was seventeen and wanted to learn English. I met my husband, married and had two boys. They went through the school system because I did not know there was a choice. People told me how marvellous English education was (the best in the world, as a schoolteacher-neighbour put it!) and I believed them and if gradually I became disenchanted and disagreed with some practices at school or found my boys difficult and unhappy I thought it was my fault.

Seven years after my second boy I had a third child, Martin, who is now twelve years old.

I enjoyed his early years very much and when he started school I was very proud of him and confident that I had done my very best!

At first he liked it (he was promised a fair amount) but the novelty soon wore off and, although he had a very good teacher in his third year I noticed a decline generally. Year by year he seemed to lose his early enthusiasm and 'joie de vivre'.

He was very unhappy at the end of his second junior year.

My eldest boy had sucked his thumb, my middle one had had a dummy for comfort, but Martin never needed anything (very pleasing to me) but suddenly, here he was sitting in front of the television, biting his fingernails. I was upset - and this time I did not blame myself, but the system - school!

I also noticed that his writing, which used to be bold and self-confident, became very small and screwed-up. We were both unhappy.

That summer I read about EO in a magazine. I wrote off and when I had read John Holt's *Teach Your Own* and a few others in the same line (isn't Jean Liedhoff's *'The Continuum Concept'* a fantastic book!?) I made up my mind to give Martin the choice of going to school or not.

>>>

The autumn term he went back, knowing that he could come out if he wanted to. By Christmas he had decided.

That was over two years ago and I am glad, oh so glad, that he does not have to face that jungle, called school, ever again, if he doesn't want to.

Now that I have all this off my chest maybe I could tell you a little about the German school system. Did you know that in Germany children do not go to school before they are six years old - and then only a couple of hours in the morning (at first - more later - 8 am to 1 pm is the longest). They never have lunch at school, or wear uniform (which does not seem to create any problems - most English mums seem very keen on uniform). I personally don't mind uniform as long as it is not compulsory. I very much resent the time and effort wasted in chastising children about what colour socks they wear etc. More time should be spent in spreading good will and caring, rather than creating ill-will and resentment at school.

German children keep their teachers longer, which gives a sense of continuity, I think. (Hopefully, if a child really does not get on with one particular teacher, he or she can be moved). Also, they do not move classrooms as often as here (secondary schooling) and on the whole schools are mixed. Very rarely are children sent to boarding school.

This sounds as if I think everything German is best - not so - they have a diabolical system, called "sitzen-bleiben" where, if a child does not work hard enough, he or she has to repeat that year in the company of younger children. How terrible! Germans are also very bureaucratic. If you move house you have to tell the authorities where you are going. (I am sure you British would not put up with that).

Back to education, I try to be objective but I favour the German school system mainly because there is less peer pressure (because of shorter hours) and I personally think that peer pressure is the very worst thing about school.

Teachers, I am sure, would favour the 'mornings only' school, but - so I am told - the British public (mainly mothers, I believe) would not stand for it.

Sad, isn't it!?

This is what is basically wrong with our society - that the majority of parents cannot stand to have their children around them for more than a few hours - and unless we change, our social ills will get worse, not better!!

Rosmarie Bristow, 35 Habgood Road, Loughton, Essex

>>> UNSTONE GRANGE <<<
Crow Lane, Unstone, Sheffield S18 5AL

Once again it is time for our summer get together at Unstone Grange. There is plenty of space both inside and outside the house and we have sole use of the camping facilities this year. There will be the usual business meetings on the Saturday and Sunday, and childrens' activities are being planned. (If you have any bright ideas or equipment, I am sure Betty Ball will be pleased to hear from you - 1 Fenton Road, Warboys, Huntingdon, Cambridge). We have a collective responsibility for the safety of all those present and to ensure that no damage is done to the property or grounds.

All accommodation is self catering and cooking is in rather large pans unless you bring your own. Please

supply all your own feed; there are some shops in Dronfield.

Would those in vans or tents please supply their own cooking facilities as the kitchen gets very crowded. There is a cooker and sink in one of the outhouses.

Day visitors are welcome; please bring picnic meals with you.

Please send booking form (on next page), s.a.e. and cheque/postal order made out to Education Otherwise Limited to:

Ian Grant, 25 Chipperfield Road
The Manor, Hemel Hempstead
Herts HP3 0AH



EDUCATING ARCHIE

by SEG
- an inspector calls : episode 4,923:



April 1987

TOBY

Three years ago when leafing through a tome of legal words, I discovered that every subject has the right to petition the Queen. Since I had been trying for the previous two years to secure from the LEA or DES, a guarantee that my son, Toby, would be educated in accordance with my wishes, petitioning the Queen seemed like a smart move. So I bought some de-luxe quality typing paper, looked up the correct form of address (Your Majesty, not Dear Liz), and set out my petition, explaining my views against corporal punishment and compulsory school uniforms and quoting all the relevant bits of the Campbell and Cosans Human Rights Judgement and the '44 Education Act. A fat lot of good it all did. The petition was passed on to the DES who, after due consideration, ignored it.

> Toby was at Junior School at the time and due to transfer to the comprehensive in September 1985 where I anticipated difficulties over school uniform. The school officially restricts all clothing to shades of brown, black, white and cream, with grey, navy and murky green being tolerated - anything goes so long as it's drab in fact. I have never been able to see the point of school uniform, still less these restricted colours and I believe that a child's individuality should be encouraged in school and not repressed. Not that I want to prevent anyone wearing a school uniform if this is what they choose. Its having the choice that matters.

> When Toby transferred to the Comp. he was admitted for one day before I was given notice that unless I changed my views within one week, Toby would be excluded. I didn't realise the significance of Toby's being admitted then excluded, instead of simply being refused admission. If I had known that by attending the school for one day his attendance became enforceable under Section 39 EA '44, I wouldn't have sent him to the school at all without the guarantee I wanted. In the event, Toby continued to attend the school and was eventually suspended after five weeks for refusing to accept the exclusion. He stood up to the Headteacher extremely well, arguing his case and insisting on his right to stay with his class. To the education authority this shows an abnormal and dangerous attitude since, according to the authority, all normal eleven year olds respect and defer to all teachers.

> We joined EO as soon as notice of exclusion was given and when Toby was suspended I withdrew him from the school. The school removed his name from the register immediately, no doubt glad to get rid of him. I am sure the authority has since regretted this, Section 39 could have given them a useful weapon. As it was, I was able to seek Toby's re-admission to the school on the same basis as any other unregistered pupil and take the school's refusal to admit him to a local appeals tribunal. That tribunal's decision, that Toby would prejudice the provision of efficient education because of my anti-authority views, has been used as the grounds for every other school to refuse admission. The colour of Toby's clothes is no longer seen as the problem, its my insubordinate attitude to such exalted persons as school governors which upsets the LEA. I am required to accept that schools have the right to impose uniforms and other restrictions before Toby can be admitted to any school in the authority. I don't accept this and never can.

> After sixteen months nothing has been resolved. Toby is still being educated at home and under these circumstances home education is in effect compulsory. The fact that he has benefited in many ways from being out of school and probably wouldn't choose to return to school immediately, is completely irrelevant. He must have the right to choose. He should never have been excluded from school and he must have the right to challenge the exclusion.

> I used to think that I could secure Toby's rights by quoting the European Convention of Human Rights - all that high-minded stuff about philosophical and religious convictions. By explaining how my views fulfilled the Campbell and Cosans criteria ('. . . worthy of respect in a democratic society . . . not incompatible with human dignity . . . not conflict with the fundamental right of the child to education . . .') I thought I couldn't fail to convince the

relevant people. I now have four thick files of correspondence to show the hopeless naivete of that view. My optimistic petition to the Queen was probably joke of the month at the DES.

> I realise now that the education system operates on the exercise of power rather than the exercise of judgement. The LEA has the power to refuse Toby access to school and to refuse him any alternative provision. It does not, however, have the power to compel a parent to provide privately for a child's education and the LEA's recent instruction to me to provide a curriculum up to July 1987 therefore has no legal standing. The LEA's duty to satisfy itself that Toby is being educated must be balanced against my right to refuse the LEA's advisor access to my home. The LEA can't fulfil its duty unless it provides facilities for Toby's education or unless I co-operate by supplying a curriculum and allowing the advisor to visit. I have recently been threatened with prosecution and care proceedings unless I co-operate, but it's all wind. I've discovered that a parent's duty under Section 36 EA '44 does not apply in cases where it is not possible for a child to be registered at school because of illness or other exceptional circumstances. Since every school within reasonable travelling distance has refused to admit Toby and appeal tribunals have upheld every refusal, it is clearly not possible for Toby to be registered at school. Prosecution and care proceedings can only be instituted if the authority has reason to believe that a child is not being educated. Lack of information does not entitle an authority to assume that a child is not being educated. In addition, nothing can be done without a school attendance order and the authority cannot order a child to attend a school it has refused him admission to.

> I've offered to supply the authority with a report on Toby's work over the last year together with examples of his work, since I'm claiming reimbursement of the costs involved. I've asked for an assurance that Toby's work will be returned and that I receive a copy of any report made. The response has been silence.

> There has been sufficient administrative bungling to justify a complaint to the Ombudsman and I'm trying to get legal aid for a judicial review. I've written to my MP and complained to the DES. I can't think of anything else to do, but am open to ideas.

Julie Lyons, 56 Newton Avenue, Royston, Barnsley S71 4HB



>>> NEWS FROM THE REGIONS <<<

Bedfordshire

Several families have recently been meeting for swimming, playing in the park, visiting a local fire station. On 13th February we featured on a local radio programme.

A visit to Tring museum, followed by lunch on Dunstable Downs, is being organised for early April.

Any local EOers who would like to join in our activities please telephone for details, as we have not as yet got dates enough in advance to put in the newsletter. >>>

Teresa Bains, 167 Kimble Drive,
Bedford MK41 9SN.
Tel: (0234) 327839

North Bucks

There will be a get-together at 19 New Road, Castlethorpe on Sunday 12th April at 2.30 pm. Please bring tea to share.

Valerie and James Gommon
(0908 511247)

More regional news >>>

Berkshire

By the time this appears, we shall have had an Open Afternoon in Reading with EOers crammed in at the Cameron house. Our main purpose is to get to know each other as we have lots of new families and Berkshire is a wide county. In addition, we propose to hold monthly get togethers from now on: next one on Saturday 22nd April at Dinton Country Park.

Like other counties, we have a wide age range among EOers but recent new members are mostly refugees from secondary schools. Visits from education advisors have shown that we know more about GCSE than they do!

A Traveller family has joined EO after hassles with the LEA. Any information from other areas about Travellers and the provision made for them by LEAs would be welcomed.

Congratulations to Candida Thompson who has a solo date with the Vienna Philharmonic in Vienna soon. Her studies at the Guildhall are going well following her First Year Concerto prize.

Berkshire EOers would like to thank Julie Lyons for her hard work over Access to Personal Files Bill.

We look forward to the day when Education Advisors are responsible to us for the reports they make on our children to the LEA.

Lynnete Cameron, 79 Whiteknights Road, Reading

Cambridgeshire

Janet Everdell has managed to shed some of her workload; Sharon Blaukopf is now co-ordinator. Many big thanks to Janet for all her work in the past.

The following activities are envisaged for the warmer weather:

- Guided tour around the Fitzwilliam Museum (no pushchairs allowed) weather permitting combined with visit to nearby free outdoor swimming pool
- Tour of some of the history packed colleges
- Picnic at Wandlebury
- Trip to one of the London museums, preferably one that has a film

show or talk during term time
If you've got any ideas for events, talks, visits, outings, please let me know. I think it is nice to advertise any trip, simply because it is more pleasant to go with company.

Sharon Blaukopf, 28 Harvey Goodwin Avenue, Cambridge CB4 3EV
Tel: (0223) 352145

Devon

Family get-together on Thursday June 18th from 11 am to 5 pm at Burnhayes, Silverton (between Tiverton and Exeter) Devon for Katinka (aged 13 $\frac{1}{2}$), Tamsin (11 $\frac{1}{2}$), Larissa (9 $\frac{1}{2}$), Liz (9 $\frac{1}{2}$), Amy (7). A day for parents and children out of school ages nine upwards (younger brothers and sisters welcome).

Trampolining, swimming, tennis.
Please bring a dish for lunch.
Please could you let me know before June 10th.

Joanna Prentis, Burnhayes, Silverton, Devon EX5 4BU

Essex

Our first meeting of the year got off to a bad start, with members unable to travel because of the heavy snowfalls. Fortunately, the meeting was to be at a members home so it did not cause too much inconvenience, and perhaps we'll try again later, Teresa!

Winter meetings always pose more of a problem - trying to find interesting and varied places to meet, taking into account the possible weather conditions and the long journeys some members will encounter. The "Pitman Room" is a good standby, and we have met there for a Book Day. Forthcoming meetings there will include a Maths Workshop (unfortunately, Melanie Nield is in Australia so she won't be there to inspire us), followed by a Natural History day. Rosemarie Bristow has also invited us to her home in Loughton, and we also have two meetings in London to look forward to. The first is to the Science Museum (I'd like to have gone when Candy Fawsitt organised the Launch Pad

visit but may still have time to arrange this). The other is to the Guinness Book of Records. I don't know if any other regions have included this in their programme, but it's well worth a visit.

And so, onto our forthcoming meetings. We are always pleased to hear from, and meet members from other areas who can come along to our meetings. Just give me a call if you would like more details.

Wednesday April 29th

> Natural History theme at the Pitman Room (near Danbury) between 1 0 6 pm. Bring a packed lunch to eat on arrival, and any games or ideas that you have to share.

Wednesday May 30th

> Blake Hall, Bobbingworth, Near Ongar. Meet 11 am and bring a packed lunch.

You'll find Blake Hall on the A414 about 1½ miles from Chipping Ongar (towards Harlow). Admission £1.50 adults, 75p children. Something for everyone here . . . children's play area, nice gardens and garden centre, small animal corner, butterfly /tropical house, RAF Museum and more.

Wednesday June 10th

> Kew Gardens, meet 11.30 am by the entrance.

Wednesday July 1st

> Mole Hall Wildlife Park, Widdington between Thaxted and Newport, off A11. There is an admission charge. Meet by the entrance 11 am.

Wednesday July 22nd

> Tilbury Fort, Tilbury (near the Tilbury-Gravesend ferry). Meet by the entrance 11 am. 50p adults, 25p children.

Sandie Cottee, 17 South View Road, Rettendon Common, Chelmsford CM3 5DX. Tel: (0268) 733259

Lincolnshire

Our meeting on 15th February was attended by all the "regulars" and we agreed the following programme of activities:

APRIL

Sunday 26th. Belton House near Grantham. Adventure Playground etc. Meet outside cafe at 12 noon.

MAY

Sunday 24th. Alford Craft Market

and folk dancing displays, craft demonstrations etc. Date may change so check with us first. Meet in the garden at the side of the Manor House Museum at 1 pm.

JUNE

Saturday 4th. Lincoln Castle - jousting, falconry, Medieval Fayre. Meet just inside castle gate at 12.30 pm.

Sunday 14th. Newark Castle and boat trip. Meet at castle entrance at 11.30 am.

JULY

Sunday 5th. Mablethorpe - Animal Gardens and beach. Meet in north end car park (right by Animal Gardens) at 11 am.

AUGUST

Sunday 16th. Sherwood Forest Visitors Centre - Robin Hood stuff, nature trails in park etc. Near Edwinstowe, 12 miles N.W. of Newark. Meet outside Robin Hood's Larder at 11 am.

SEPTEMBER

Sunday 6th. Sundown Pets' Garden - near Rampton. Meet outside cafe at 11 am.

There are tentative proposals for other activities, including a pantomime visit, later in the year.

The other item much discussed at the meeting was the LEA's current flurry of activity with its "blue forms" and Love-ly letters. Does anybody know of non-EO members, educating out of school, who have received similar recorded delivery missives? We'd be interested to hear from you, as we feel that perhaps this ought to be followed up with the LEA.

Please get in touch if you want to discuss any of the above, or if you have any queries about meeting places etc.

Steve and Linda Tooby, Kimber, Newbridge Lane, Covenham St. Mary, Loath LN11 0PQ

South London

This group came together because some of us felt the need to make friends with other families with pre-school-age children who probably won't go to school.

Ringing round the contact list uncovered a lot of interest in the

idea, and we had our first meeting on 22nd February. 13 adults and 11 children came along, the children ranging in age from 7 months up to 7 years 10 months.

We tried to have a fairly formal structure on this occasion so that everyone got a chance to speak about their circumstances and their ideas about EO. Quite a few of those present found others near them or with similar aged children that they wanted to meet again.

The next meeting will be more of an informal social occasion with activities for the children, and lunch. If you're interested, please come along:

from 12.30

Sunday 17th May 1987

Helen Donoghue and Michael Thompson
6 Parkdale Road, Plumstead SE18
01 854 6278

(Nearest station is Plumstead with trains from London Bridge/Charing Cross).

Please bring:

some food and drink for lunch
any of your children's favourite toys or activities which other children could share.

Rachel Sanger, 32 Doddington Grove
London SE17. Tel: 582 3949

Northumberland

Tyne and Wear and Durham

Over the last year we have been quietly flourishing. Recent appearances on television, in the local press and radio have led to many enquiries and new members. Initial scepticism about such appearances was unfounded and the overall attitude of the media was one of sympathetic interest and accurate information.

As a group we meet regularly at each others houses for daytime gatherings and in Newcastle we have begun a regular softplay and swimming day. Some of us are having first encounters with our LEAs. Responses have varied, some being unpredictable whilst our own experience in Newcastle has been good.

Considering the enormous area that we cover we always have a good turnout of people and welcome anyone locally or from neighbouring counties. For info. contact >>>

Andy and Sue Jackson
Durham 730772

Rosie Walton, 30 Cavendish Place,
Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne
Tel: 091 281 2833

REGIONAL ENQUIRIES SECRETARIES

South West	022 122 3266
(Meg Robertson)	
East Anglia	0268 733259
(Sandie Cottee)	
Midlands	0270 664060
(Andy Anderson)	
The North	0969 23544
(Mick and Jennie White)	
Scotland	0786 832042
(Brenda Holliday)	
Wales	0269 861069
(Miryam Bush)	
Ireland	(Clare Weber) Furness Newport Co. Mayo

A late entry for NOTICES column:

I would like to draw your attention to an excellent magazine for pre-school children called "Play and Learn" published by Grinsted Publications. It is both great fun and educational and is based on the concept that "children are never too young to learn any subject, if presented to them on a level they can understand". It costs 95p and the March issue covered animals in the tropical forest treetops, thermometers, growing tea, doctors and district nurses as well as many puzzles and things to make.

Elaine Bowyer, 9 Bramcote Drive,
Beeston, Nottingham NG9 1AT



A GOOD EO DAY : DESCRIPTION

People often ask in the NL for descriptions of actual, working EO days, so here's one of a good day! I don't want to describe a bad day - it would depress me, and everyone in EO knows the scene - misery, temper, feelings of having done nothing that was any good (I liked Jackie Fearnley's comment "we no longer have many illusions about either school or home"!) A good day for us is one during which we all feel we did the necessary farm work, learnt something and had fun - and were nice to each other.

> We are five people - Martin and I and Melissa (10), Ben (5), and Camilla (3). There are usually people staying too. We live on a 25 acre farm in Italy (milk sheep, donkeys for carrying, hens, ducks, rabbits, vegetable garden, olives, fruit, wood and pasture). It's hard work, rough living but an easy place to learn. Ben and Melissa go to a local dance class - Ben's the only boy with 70 girls: he hasn't realised why everyone in the school is amazed that he's joined.

> We do about an hour a day, in the winter, of the 3 Rs, but apart from that we try to fit learning around what goes on work-wise.

> So:

> I go down and feed the animals, with Ben and Camilla falling all over the place in the mud. They help. I mill some wheat for bread. Melissa feeds her rabbits.

> While I make chapattis for breakfast, Ben takes some of the dough and tries to make a Sardinian speciality he ate once on a trip - "carta da musica" - bread so wafer-thin it's like sheet music. It cooks in 2 minutes but I burn his first attempt pitch black and Martin and Melissa smell it right up in the front where they are cutting poles for fences. They think the house is on fire but Ben and I managed to clear the smoke and make a successful sheet of bread before they reach home for breakfast. The chickens eat the black bread, silly things.

> After breakfast, Melissa looks up rabbit references in several books. None of them tell her what she wants to know, which is how far ahead of giving birth does the female make a nest? She has a new couple of rabbits and today the female is going berserk, rushing about the hutch with huge mouthfuls of straw, pulling fur out of her tum, while the male cowers in a corner terrified. We know we have to remove him before the event but we don't know when it's liable to happen. The books tell us everything but that. Melissa writes down the date today so she'll know for next time. We take the male out anyway.

> We do some maths - Melissa working through a mental arithmetic practice book, Ben doing number recognition and trying to make his 2s different from his 5s. Melissa does a page of copy-writing, just for spelling and handwriting and Ben traces a page of writing - today it's a letter to F. Christmas and he tries to get Camilla (who's colouring a wild picture) to tell him what she wants, so we can include her in his missive. She matches up plastic letters with my writing "Christmas" and then gets down all the plastic letters to write long interesting nonsense words. Ben joins in, but he sometimes also writes "fox", "lorry", "Ben" and so on. These are words from his reading scheme - which we go through slowly, reading one little book or another each day.

> Melissa goes on to do a "study skills" exercise about using a dictionary. Ben at this point suddenly discovers a talent for cutting out amazingly intricate shapes: they look like Nepalese temples and multi-winged butterflies. He uses up an appalling amount of paper but we stick the shapes on red crepe paper, on the wall, and they look beautiful and extraordinary!

> Melissa disappears to get some peace. She comes back an hour later and announces proudly that she's training the (new) lady donkey to walk quietly and not to chase the sheep. She flops onto the sofa and reads Katherine Mansfield, getting furious at the horrible, adult, inconclusive endings. (Back to "The Little Princess" !)

> I read some nursery rhymes to Camilla. We've discovered they're the only

thing she'll allow us to read her; any story she interrupts with lengthy stories of her own, so that it's literally impossible to get past page one. I feel bad about this - obviously she hasn't had enough reading and telling of stories to get the hang of listening. Or maybe she's one of the world's story-tellers?

> Meanwhile Ben helps a friend (spastic but very capable) to saw wood for the wood-stove. I'm amazed how he can understand stuttering in Italian and how the whole situation is so unembarrassing for him: he makes it ok - they both do.

> The children go and help Martin pick olives - Ben climbs up the tree and Camilla picks up fallen olives, until they get bored and go off to play. Sheep and hens take over the job!

> I go and dig the garden and prune back trees. Ben insists on helping, so it's pleasant but slow. Eventually he goes off to the pile of sand.

> Later, Melissa and I make our version of Christmas cake, substituting the official ingredients with what we have here (cherries, walnuts, figures but no candied fruit). We have to turn pounds and ounces into grams because our scales are metric. Ben and Camilla come in halfway through - crack (and eat) the walnuts. We try to keep everyone's attention away from the outrageously extravagant cooking time - six hours! It warms the house wonderfully and smells like heaven. And we all kept our tempers.

> Ben suddenly learns to write "bum" and "poo" with the plastic letters - with amazing ease and speed . . . unlike "and" and "the" which, being emotionally unappealing, seem absolutely unmemorable.

> Martin comes back to make supper and go through Melissa's maths. He announces the French phrase for today - Ben and Melissa are learning orally and pick it up quite easily because it's so like Italian. Let's hope some French people turn up so they can try it out.

> Well - there's a typical day when things flow. I think that's about two days out of three.

Etain Addey, Pratate, Vallingegno, Scritto, Gubbio, PG, Italy

(There's a farmhouse nearby for sale if anyone's interested - see NOTICES section. Ed.)

>>> HOME SCHOOLING WITH PNEU/WES <<<

1987 sees the centenary of the PNEU, a hundred years spent in helping parents to educate their own children. Nowadays, operating largely through its World-wide Education Service (WES), the Parents National Education Union (PNEU), has families literally all over the world using the Home School service. Many follow a complete curriculum, but an increasing number use the Service for single subjects, especially English and Maths. Two years ago, WES launched a new nursery course, "Learning to Learn" which provides a flexible basis for educating 3 to 5 year olds. The main home school course is designed for use with children between the ages of 5 and 13.

What are the advantages of using a WES course in Britain? First, it is recognised by the DES, which means that so long as it is being used conscientiously parents rarely have trouble from LEAs. Indeed because WES has good contacts with many LEAs, it is usually possible to overcome any misunderstandings there may be. Secondly, the programmes are designed to combine flexibility and structure in a way that is likely to be attractive to EO members. For those who are beginning to teach their own children it provides the guidance which they need in order to gain confidence: for those who are more experienced it gives the scope to enable them to follow their children's own interests in the most constructive way possible. Thirdly, as every family has their own tutor, they are assured of close personal attention. Families are encouraged to visit the WES office in London before they start on a course and have access to unlimited advice and support once the course has been started.

When families meet their tutor they are shown the programme, books and materials which are available and a course can be designed to meet the needs

of the particular family. A great deal of time and effort is spent in searching for and choosing the best materials currently available in Britain today. In particular we look for materials which encourage learning through practical experience and which are likely to be enjoyed both by children and parents. In our experience, one of the most exciting aspects of home-schooling is that the whole family feels that they gain benefit from it. The fact that in many cases children make spectacular progress is an added bonus.

WES runs its own bookshop so that when families visit the office in London they can not only see all the books that are available, they can actually buy them which in the case of some text books is a very real advantage; they are not normally available in High Street bookshops.

Once the family has started on a WES Home School course they are encouraged to correspond with or contact their tutor as often as they wish. We like to hear from them soon after they have started to see whether there are any initial problems. Thereafter we expect to have samples of the children's work at least at the end of every term, but as I have already indicated there is no limit on the extent to which we can be approached for advice and, of course, in Britain it is often possible to pick up a phone and speak to your tutor direct. We have several families sailing round various parts of the world and it is difficult enough contacting them in the right port of call let alone on a telephone!

The cost of our course varies considerably, but ranges from £105 for a single subject English course to about £600 for a complete course for a 12 year old student covering the complete range of the curriculum and including sciences, maths, history, geography, French, art, music as well as English. There are ideas for physical education and on religious education for those who want it. If you are at all interested do come and see us or at least write to us at:

WES/PNEU
Strode House
44-50 Osnaburgh Street
London NW1 3NN
Tel: 01 387 9228

We should be delighted to hear from you and will do all we can to help.

H. J. Boulter, Director of WES/PNEU

(PNEU/WES is a non-profit making educational charity: all fees go towards the cost of current services and developing new programmes).

OUR FIRST SIX MONTHS OF EDUCATION OTHERWISE

We have just completed our first six months of educating our children ourselves. They are 10 and 11, so we are late starters.

Ten years ago when I first heard of EO I was fresh from reading A.S. Neill and John Holt, and knew that this concept was right for us. However, in the chaos of five moves in five years, the excitement of living in Germany for three years (at every available opportunity we were off in our beat-up camping van, exploring Europe) and the general confusion of rearing young children, I lost touch with such ideas, and even stopped reading books on alternative education.

It seems ironical that I read voraciously before I had children, but not when it was really relevant (though that earlier reading must have affected my entire approach to child-rearing. But I'm sure I'm not the only parent who, on the whole, has had so much to do with children during the day, that a book about them is the last thing he or she would choose for bedtime reading. I refer of course to when they were little. Since then I have rediscovered that earlier interest.

>>>

Our oldest child, Matthew, started school at four and a half, at an R.A.F. school which almost finished off his school career there and then. If I'd known then what he told me later, that the headmaster had hit him so hard that he'd knocked him to his knees, in front of an assembly, I would have understood why he didn't want to go to school and withdrawn him without more ado. There was also bullying at that school. Matthew came home one day with a burn on his hand which he said had been caused by a child, in the playground, with a cigarette lighter, which rather raised questions about the degree of supervision.

However, in any fight over Matthew's attendance at that school, my husband and his job would have come into it, as Forces families are expected not to rock the boat.

In any case, he didn't see as much of that school as he might have. I thought that at four and a half he wasn't ready for school anyway - in fact I don't think he was ready until he was seven. So I scheduled all John's longer-than-normal leave for term time, and we went off to exotic places like Berlin, the South of France and Sweden. I also took the children away on my own - during school time, of course - as much as I could.

Subsequently, he had dreadful trouble learning to read, at his next school. When I took him to an educational psychologist at age seven, he was diagnosed as being slightly dyslexic. I've sometimes wondered if this might have been aggravated by those early grim experiences.

Once the dyslexia was diagnosed, help was given by the school he was then attending (although dyslexia doesn't officially exist in Oxfordshire schools). Matthew settled down happily into his Junior School, aided by two consecutive teachers who had a talent for their jobs. By the time he left last summer, he was on the crest of a wave, self-confident and happy - though delighted by the thought of not having to go to school again.

Emily had an altogether opposite experience. She started at school with great enthusiasm, which carried her through her first year or so. She was unlucky with teachers, who did their best, but were just not right for her. She never had to be dragged off screaming, which had virtually been the case with Matthew when he was tiny, but was reluctant to get up in the mornings, and dawdled. Also, as time passed, she became visibly and increasingly blank-eyed, withdrawn, apathetic and bored.

The main reason I didn't take her out of school earlier was because I was running a children's bookshop at that stage. This was a job which left me no spare time at all. My husband also had a demanding job.

A change of school was one alternative I considered. But as there was no guarantee that this would be any better, I was reluctant to mess her around too much, especially as by then we were in any case planning a total change of lifestyle.

When we told friends we were planning to set off around the world in a boat, the most common remark was, "What about the children and their education?" I thought this was a slightly odd question, as I can't think of anything more educational, in the widest sense, than a chance to visit a variety of other countries and be a participating crew member on a boat.

For our deschooling experience, I considered enrolling the children with the World Education Service, but at a cost of something like £1,200 for both children per year, this was beyond our means. Then I discovered that as I had grown up in Australia, my children would be eligible for enrolment with most Australian state education systems, virtually for nothing. (I told them we were planning to settle in Australia and wanted our children to be educationally in line with the system they would need to slot into). However, from what I saw of these systems, I thought Matthew and Emily would find the work irrelevant, if not boring. I figured we ourselves could do better in that we would know exactly what the children needed at any particular time.

It was nice to know EO was there to support such a decision, and I

immediately joined.

I told our kids' last school what we were intending to do, and with their approval, totally deregistered.

Our first few weeks of home education were tense and anxious. The children expected to be told what to do, I felt I had to "teach" them, producing the same sort of neat folders of "work" and "projects" that schools spew out for parents' benefit.

But I am not a formal person, indeed I thrive on disorganisation. So although I am qualified to teach (though not trained as a teacher), I discovered my children to be even better qualified at knowing what they need to learn, and getting on with it.

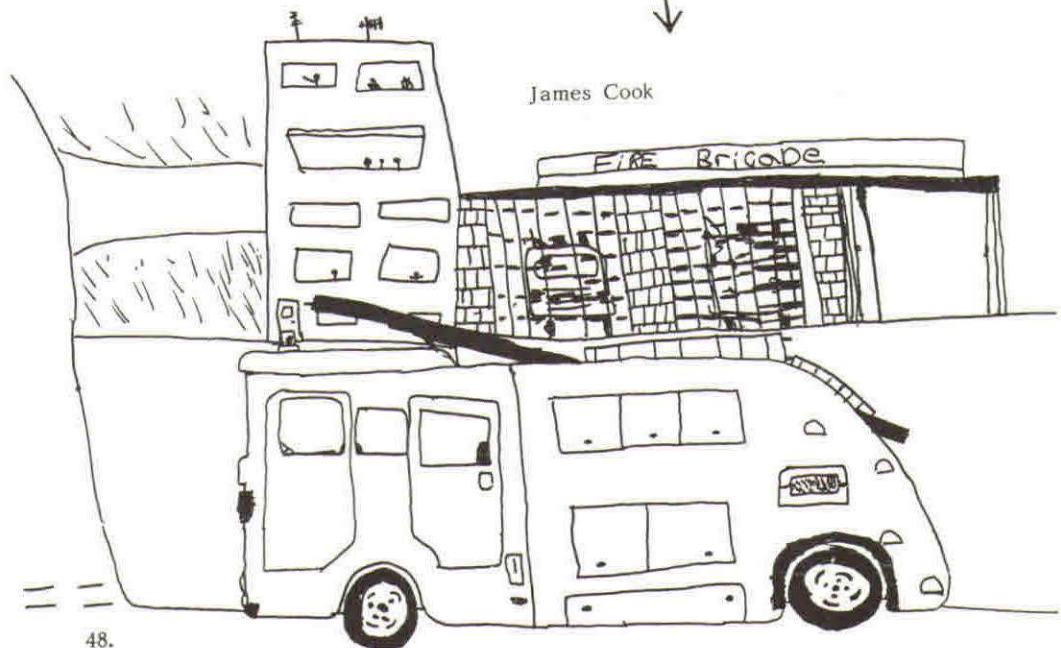
To appease my anxiety, I started to write a weekly resume of what they have been doing, and I am amazed at how much they are learning.

My role has devolved into one of guidance, supplying materials, stimulation and outings as I think these are needed, but otherwise letting them find their own feet. I read to them - novels, non-fiction, newspaper and magazine articles and the Bible (this seems relevant as we are planning to go to countries where people will have other forms of worship and it seems that the best basis for understanding these will be aknowledge of the religion of one's own culture), and we discuss a wide range of subjects. John spends less time with the children, but his skills are totally different to mine and he helps the children to make model boats, understand engines or learn the rudiments of navigation, in his spare time.

I would very much like to hear from any other EOers who have sailed off on long voyages with children on board, or who are just about to.

Tricia Peak, "Aries the Ram", Southdown Quay, Millbrook, Cornwall PL10 1EZ

The End
(except for)



EO OFFICERS

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WHERE TO GET WHAT

Current and Old Newsletters, SINC, Early Years, Teach Your Own	} Membership Secretaries
Stationery, Introductory Lit., Envelope re-use labels (£1.50 per 100), Membership forms, Posters, Handbills	} Co-ordinators Secretary
Growing Without Schooling	Jill Gillings, Seacrest, Clayhead Baldrine, Isle of Man

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

Our principal aims are as follows:

- To: Encourage the provision of alternative learning situations outside the school system.
 - To: Re-affirm 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:

25 Common Lane
Hemingford Abbots
Cambridgeshire
PE18 9AN