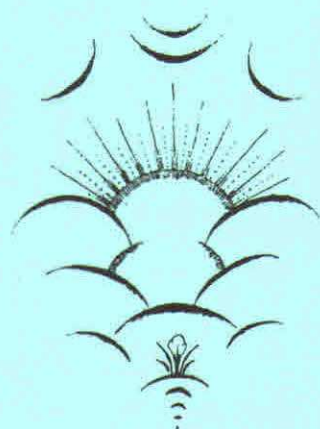


education otherwise



NEWSLETTER 53 JUNE 1987

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N E X T E D I T O R S
(August 1987)

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+ DEADLINE 1st July +

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

+ + + + +
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A nightingale is singing its heart out in the trees outside. It's two o'clock in the morning, a warm night, and I think we've nearly cracked the Newsletter. Last weekend (May 3rd) we had enough material to fill about five pages. It's amazing how it all came in... late. Old hands are probably used to this but we were wondering how on earth we were going to fill nearly fifty pages and wrote some material ourselves stimulated by the vision of a painfully thin Newsletter. We make no apologies but we'll know next time.

In the end there was too much and we will have to pass on some interesting material to the next editor.

Two of the many fascinating themes in this issue, religious education and corporal punishment, come together for me in the following incident;

My first school was Mortlake Infants. I was six years old and my class was told the bible story about Jesus walking on water. The story was enjoyable enough but the way it was told left the distinct impression that we were meant to believe it to be literally true.

Later in the playground I was speaking about this with my friend as earnestly and sincerely as six year old boys do. My opinion was that the story could not really be true because people couldn't walk on water. Unfortunately our private discussion was overheard by the religious instruction teacher who whisked me off to the headmistress where I was harangued by the two Christian ladies as an ungodly child. Then, for my unintentional blasphemy, I was caned... three wacks on each hand. My indignation gave me strength not to cry. I had no conception of what wrong I had done and, of course, all that had happened was that I innocently exhibited normal human behaviour; being curious, asking questions, thinking things over, not necessarily taking things at face value etc.

Personal details: We live in quiet seclusion in the country with our two children, Eleanor and Kimberley. (Kimberley is five weeks old.) We run a design business in Brighton and are members of the College of Storytellers and The Institute of Cultural Research. When we decided to have children we also decided to educate them out of school, hence our interest in EO which we joined soon after Eleanor was born.

Schools, we feel, whether state run or independent, suppress the desire to learn. They are, by and large, conditioning and training systems ill equipped to educate - tending to destroy human potential rather than develop perceptions. And... what goes into a salt-mine becomes salt.

We have to try and do better for our children.

We share the sentiments of Alexandra Walker that education starts long before 'school age' (Feb. issue, page 4 and her article in this issue), agree that it never stops and enjoy looking for ways to develop all forms of perception.

'Learn how to behave from those who cannot.'

Proverb

Linda and Ivan Tyrrell,

1, Lovers Meadow, Chalvington, Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 3TE.

Don't Believe Everything You Read

Can LEAs be trusted to tell the truth? You might like to look at the letter opposite. What would you think if it was addressed to you? Consider it point by point.

1. You *don't* need your LEA's agreement before you opt not to admit your child to school. You don't even have to tell them, although it might be prudent to make a statement if they ask.

2. Section 39 of the Education Act 1944 says no such thing. It's about the parent's duty to make sure a registered pupil goes to school. As the child referred to in the letter is not a registered pupil, this section is irrelevant. The supposed quotation is not from s.39 of the 1944 Act, nor, for that matter, from anywhere else in the Act. Either it is a complete fabrication or else, presumably, it originates from some internal LEA guidelines.

3. Wherever it came from, this stipulation is illegal. You don't have to admit your child to school in the first place. You don't have to meet any arbitrary standard set by the LEA, in fact your education doesn't necessarily have to conform in any way with that provided by any school (*Bevan v Shears*, 1911, 2 KB 936). All you have to do is provide a "suitable", etc, education, and the final arbiter of how suitable it is... is a court of law.

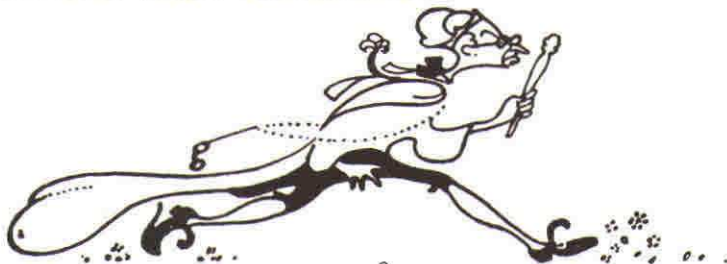
4. Furthermore, you don't at any time have to submit a curriculum, or a timetable, or indeed any other document specified by the LEA, unless you want to. If you wish to submit evidence of suitable education, it can take any form you choose.

The moral is clear then. Some LEAs can be quite reasonable and helpful at times; others, like Humberside evidently, will stoop to all kinds of deceit and intimidation to get your child into school. Not many of their letters are as blatant or as clumsy as this one - it's the subtly disguised ones you have to be on your guard against. Indeed, a shrewd LEA will avoid putting anything into writing if it can help it, but that won't necessarily stop its officers (or some of them) from using the same sort of tactics by word of mouth. You know what the law says. Keep calm, think clearly, and don't let them persuade you it says something else.

Humberside have dishonestly misled these parents with respect to their legal rights and duties. They have exceeded their authority by making demands which they were not legally entitled to make. We have written to point this out to them, and have asked for a retraction, an apology, and a promise to treat these parents correctly in future.

At the time of writing we await their reply with interest.

Anne and Rob Wade, as legal group members
19 Perkin Close, Wembley, Middlesex HA0 2LY





Humberside County Council

Education Department - East Riding Division

Director of Education
J. Bower, C.B.E., M.A.

Enquiries may be directed to Mr. Hugill ext: 258 who is dealing with this matter

Written communications are to be
addressed to the Director of Education.

Divisional Education Office,
Manor Road,
Beverley,
North Humberside,
HU17 7BH.

Tel: 0482 - 861251

2nd April, 1987

your ref.

our ref. ERD/MAN/F

Dear Parents,

Michael [redacted] (aged 4½)

Thank you for your letter dated 30th March, 1987 advising me of your intention to be responsible for your son, Michael's education other than through attendance at school.

I note that Michael has not yet reached compulsory school age. Whilst one respects your wish to educate your son at home I must warn you that to not admit Michael to school after the beginning of the term following his fifth birthday without the agreement of the Local Education Authority is contrary to Section 39 of the Education Act, 1944, which lays a duty upon you, as parents, to ensure that your child attends school until such time as:-

you provide a detailed curriculum which compares favourably with the curriculum provided by the Local Education Authority and is, therefore, satisfactory to the Authority.

If you are firm in your resolve to educate your son at home you must, before Michael reaches statutory school age, submit to this office a proposed detailed curriculum together with a timetable for your child at home. On receipt at this office of a detailed curriculum from you, a member of my Advisory staff will arrange to meet you to discuss this matter.

I should be pleased if you could furnish me with Michael's date of birth.

Yours sincerely,

Director of Education

EDUCATING YOUNG CHILDREN

The reponse to my letter in the February Newsletter shows that there are many E.O. parents interested in the 'education' (in its broadest sense) of very young children, and it has been suggested that I share some of my thoughts on this topic. Hopefully it will spur on others to do the same - but I do want to emphasise that these are only my conclusions, based on my experience with my children - I don't wish to convey the idea that my way is the right one or that there are particular activities that E.O. members should be doing with their small children. As parents we are all experts - but on our own children, not anyone else's!

There are hundreds of good books on the market nowadays which give many more ideas of things to do than I could list here, so I shall not attempt it, and have instead tried to list six general ideas which I've found to be important.

Education First

An important part of the whole business is one of continuing education - not the children's, but mine! If I love learning my enthusiasm may rub off, and hopefully the children will realise that learning is a continuous process, not one that goes on only in schools for those of the 5 - 16 age group. As I have little time at the moment to take up new hobbies or go to evening classes my present education consists of reading ... anything to do with child development, educational ideas, John Holt and so on. Reading about people who've done it before is a great morale-booster, and books full of ideas of things to do with children can be full of inspiration and suggest specific areas of real interest.

My reading has, in turn, forced me to think out some direction for our future E.O. plans - it's no good having some rosy picture of home education as diligent children working quietly at their own tasks while I gaze on dreamily - it strikes me that the reality is not like that. Already I must question why I want to do it; what is it all for anyway? Where are we heading as a family? What do I hope to achieve? Sometimes reading a book I disagree with can really help here if I ask; Why can't I agree with this idea? Why don't I think it is appropriate for what I want to do?

Provide the Environment

We're constantly being told that a child learns from his environment, from the moment he is born. Stimulating environments are all the rage these days, being particularly popular with toy manufacturers trying to convince us that their goods will provide all the answers. I too think the environment is of great importance, but it doesn't merely consist of the toys a child has or just the things that money can buy. To me the environment that shapes a child is everything including your own lifestyle, the moral views you hold, the places you visit and the people you choose as friends. It includes the way your home is decorated, the clothes you choose to buy, the books you read, the things you do together, and yes, the toys you are able to provide too. Everything that surrounds your child is the world, *his* world and he will do a good deal of learning from it. Even on a limited budget it is possible to shape up your home life - as an example, we personally worry about the effects of television and thus we do not possess one. We choose story books very carefully and try to ensure the toys we provide are aesthetically pleasing and not 'gimmicky'. These aren't meant to be rules for anyone else, just some examples of putting our thoughts into practice.

Time and Love

Small children need time; our time mostly. They need time to be themselves, time to carry our tasks, time to do 'nothing', time to talk, to play, to think. They need time when they suddenly express a wish to dress themselves, or to do up their own shoes, or to stop during a walk to watch a tractor at work. Children also need one-to-one interaction, "special times" when each child has

our undivided attention, all to themselves (perhaps when the baby is asleep, or an older child at playgroup, or just before bed when the others are already tucked up.) They need "special times" with each parent ideally, though this is not always possible if you work long hours or if you are a one-parent family. Doing things together is another way of sharing our time; sharing a hobby, doing the gardening, washing the car and so on. And I think that it is important that our young ones have some time *on their own* each day; if possible, in their room or part of the house where they must think up their own activities for a short spell. Marvellous for encouraging resourcefulness and self-direction.

Along with time comes love. I've never yet met a parent who didn't love their child but I've met many who find it difficult to express - I'm sure that loving isn't just about providing for the material needs with a few hugs and cuddles thrown in. Giving up your time is a way of showing your love; so is answering awkward questions in the middle of Sainsbury's; taking time to explain something when really you're tired out; finding an odd moment to give a word of praise or say how helpful they've been or how proud you are of them. Love means respecting your little ones, introducing them to your adult friends, discussing your plans with them, giving them choices, however small. Love means being honest with them - plenty of eye contact even when you're annoyed. And sometimes it even means that when they're being Real Pests and you're ready to land them one ... giving them a hug instead.

Discipline

Now I realise that this is a emotive word for all these liberal-minded EOers whose children are free to explore without unnecessary restraints - however, I'm not talking about the six-thrasings-a-day sort of discipline but more about instilling a respect for people and property, a sense of morality, an awareness of those less fortunate, a sense of justice. Such big philosophies are started young when a child tests the limits of his small world and learns what is tolerated through training and correction. (And I use the word 'correction' rather than 'punishment'.) However we feel about the topic, it is important to remember that children don't grow into mature, caring and responsible adults by our casually mentioning the subject one day.

Keep Calm!

This applies to me in particular. I find it very difficult when my baby screams all night and my toddler has tantrums all day, and I'm disorganised, disillusioned and tired - mostly I feel like screaming back and frequently do. We do have really good days but the awful ones are what stick in my mind and I often feel I don't achieve the standards I've already set myself. However, I'm equally sure that children need calm mothers, ones that can calmly ignore tantrums, turn a blind eye to paint on the wallpaper and can cope with screaming babies. Children need someone to lean on, stability in the home and some sort of daily routine they can depend on.

A daily routine doesn't have to be a rigid, inflexible, timetable-like structure that prevents freedom to learn... it can be very loose indeed. Our own daily structure is probably more organised than many people would want but it works well with us - it includes times for getting up and going to bed, a special time for the older one in the morning while the baby has her nap, a walk in the fresh air each day, three meals which we try to make into family affairs together, rests after lunch and a special time for the baby while the toddler has a longer sleep. We reserve the morning for cleaning up, gardening, constructive play and tasks that need more concentration whilst the afternoons are more likely to see us visiting, or doing water play or playdough or painting and drawing etc. This would seem too structured for some, but the point is the daily pattern of things, not a rigid timetable as such. In fact, I have a theory that structures, when working properly can provide what I call a "natural rhythm" to the day which, when in operation, actually frees a child

to learn. To me the "natural rhythm" idea is incredibly important for small children and has great implications for the way our little ones live and learn and interact with the world around them - but of course, this is my personal view only.

How do I assist their learning?

Small children are desperate to learn all the time. It's easy to see this when they want to help in the kitchen or spend hours practising a new skill like cutting with scissors. But I find it more difficult when their explorations lead to water all over the bathroom carpet or a smashed vase. Very young children don't need to be shown how to learn, but as they get older it is increasingly important to 'feed' their enthusiasm and gently channel them towards new activities and experiences. The so-called 'pre-school' years are immensely important to a child, and I fully believe that their experiences, and the learning done in these years are the foundations from which their future potential is developed. This means that these years are all about experience - to provide as broad a base as possible in every area of life. A few general thoughts:

Babies need things to see, to feel, to hear - they need plenty of cuddles, to be able to watch family life around them, to be outdoors and so on. Provide them with lots of mobiles and plenty of things to focus their eyes upon around the cot; carry them with you when you go about the house and give them a running commentary about what you are doing.

Older babies also want a variety of (safe) objects to handle, mouth, bang and drop.

Crawling babies need to be free to explore in a carefully 'baby-proofed' home rather than imprisoned in a playpen.

Babies can start looking at picture books with you from 6 months; they can begin to experiment with 'making things happen' (try building towers of beakers, or any objects, which, when pushed, crash down nicely) and they love mirrors.

By the time a baby is one year old he's really quite a different person and can do all sorts of things, if you are willing to spend the time. Let him "help" - drop laundry in the linen basket, tip out the contents of the waste bin or put a cushion back on a chair. Let him explore the contents of cupboards, fill and empty boxes, tins, cartons; let him watch you cooking, washing up and so on; sit with him and do 'lift-out' puzzles, build towers of bricks, nest beakers etc.

By 15-18 months words will be coming along well and this can be encouraged by conversing with him and giving simple instructions and explanations. Try playing with a toy telephone, copying games, listening to music and singing songs; introduce crayons and paper, shape sorters, toy vehicles and dolls.

At 2 years the toddler has become a complicated person who now needs simple choices, who can hold little conversations and who is suddenly desperate to exert some influence in the home. Two year olds seem to me to be notable for their rapid advances in speaking and their desire to do everything themselves. Useful toys have included sit-and-ride toys, jigsaws, turning and screwing toys, musical instruments, hammering toys and construction kits, and large building bricks. 'Make-believe' play can be encouraged with toy farms or skittles, sand and water play, painting/crayoning, playdough etc. They want to participate more in the home and will happily push the Hoover along, wield a duster or dig about in the garden with a trowel.

With 3 - 4 year olds, learning really takes off and the idea is to get a balance of activities. Books continue to be important and they may express a desire to read. You can start playing all sorts of word games as well as pointing out words all around us - street signs, notices etc. Continue to discuss things; continue to give choices but now ask them what their reasons were for that choice. Get out and about, visit the seaside, old buildings, woods and lakes. Do activities together outside the home such as swimming; sing songs, dress up and act out situations; listen to music; do cooking. Have regular creative sessions, every day if possible - paint, colour, draw; do collage or make things out of cardboard boxes. The list is endless.

Finally a few book titles which I have found to be useful, either in helping me to understand my children's learning or as resources for ideas or activities:

"Babies First Year of Life" M. Carter (Oxford Illustrated Press) - has an early learning supplement up to 3 years

Ladybird Under Five Series "Learning With Mother" - 5 books

Ladybird Play Books - 4 activity books

"Play Together, Learn Together" Melanie Rice (Kingfisher)

"Entertaining and Educating Babies & Toddlers"

"Entertaining and Educating Young Children" - both Usborne Parent's Guides

"Reading Through Play" Carol Baker (Macdonald)

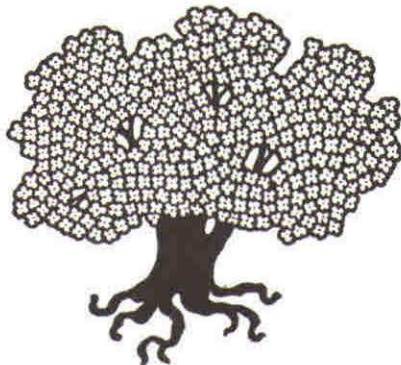
"Teaching Montessori In The Home" - The Pre-School Years E. Hianstock (Plume Books)

Alexandra Wilson

25 Fitzjohn Close, Merrow Park, Guildford, Surrey GU2 7HB

(Alexandra has compiled a list of names and addresses of other E.O. members with very young children who are interested in contact and exchange of ideas. Please get in touch with her direct if you're interested. Ed.)

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WHY THE 'QUALITY OF ATTENTION' IS SO IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN

There is, I believe, one outstanding reason why so many people are of such poor quality. Everyone can verify the truth of it and the whole family can take part in exploring the implications. The reason is that *the importance of the quality of attention* directed at children by parents and educators is not properly considered and understood. People, therefore, when they direct attention, do so more often than not destructively. This is the principal cause of why so many of us grow up to be lazy, greedy, obtuse, selfish and so easy to manipulate. Giving the right quality of attention at appropriate moments is, I'm sure, the basis of civilisation.

From babyhood we seek attention and the need to give and receive it, is a kind of nutrition, essential for survival. Attention is as important as food and drink and many people crave it. We all know people who need it badly, and not only children. If you meet an excited person who keeps on and on about something or other and give him genuine attention you'll find his views become less extreme. He will calm down and may even learn to give you attention too.

It is because we don't have to be at the mercy of what attention we can or can't get, that we can be more than animal. But, unfortunately, the need for attention becomes a conditioning system. It's important to bear this in mind because the way in which children get attention, and the way they are taught to deal with it, determines future behaviour. Though we're rarely conscious of it, the attention factor is a key element in all transactions - at work, in personal relations, religion, politics, entertainment and, of course, education.

(People often seek out careers that, because of the nature of the work, automatically provide them with a form of ritualised, 'frozen' attention. Clergymen in the pulpit, actors and actresses on stage, anyone in uniform and, of course, teachers and lecturers. They are often people not weaned off their addiction for an excessive amount of attention though they usually have no idea what has motivated them towards their 'chosen' career.)

To be more precise; if, for example, a child attracts more attention to itself by being naughty than it does by being good, he or she will be encouraged to be naughty because experience is teaching it that this is a more successful means of attracting attention.

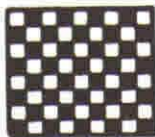
Children should receive spontaneous, genuine, attention for positive activities and achievement, and stern, disapproving but less animated and exciting attention for antisocial behaviour. The amount and seriousness of the attention given a child in response to 'good' behaviour should always be more interesting, animated and rewarding than the attention he gets for being 'naughty'.

It is not possible in schools to give this quality and subtlety of teaching. (It's hard enough at home!)

There are, of course, many other reasons why schools are undesirable places but this one alone is enough to make them dangerous.

Ivan Tyrrell,

1 Lovers Meadow, Chalvington, East Sussex.



A NATURAL EDUCATION

These thoughts, ideas and commentaries about what constitutes a natural education are based on our experiences of education both within the home and as teachers within schools and universities. Our views were shaped by dissatisfaction with the latter, and increasing understanding of the value and possibility of the former. They are given in the form of statements with commentaries because that is how they arose, from dialogues between us. They are offered from a hope for something better for children's lives.

We gratefully acknowledge Leo's influence
in the formation of these ideas.

At a spiritual level each child is complete. It became apparent that there is a spirit present and at play in the lives of all young children, except at the hands of adults. A fundamental change is needed in the attitudes of adults towards children; the respect and humility that goes with the recognition of dealing with lives which are more intact and simply lack experience.

Children need opportunities for learning, not teaching. Children have a thirst for learning which is mostly stifled by schools and the idea that they need to be taught. What usually goes with the idea of teaching, albeit unconsciously, is an attitude of superiority and dominance which children can well do without. Doing one's best to provide opportunities is more likely to assist a child develop individuality rather than to live out adults' plans and ambitions.

Education is part of life, and not a separate and artificial practise for an economic/materially oriented world. Learning goes on best when both adults and children are engaged in things that they care about and in which they freely choose to associate. Setting out to teach a lesson usually leads to formality, sterility and boredom for all. Far better to love what you are doing, love where you are and love who you are with.

The right kinds of respects can only develop when there is an attitude that all are of equal value and have an important part to play. The basis for conduct then become family standards which are agreed to by all. It excludes pulling rank on the grounds of "I know best".

A useful attitude is 'giving without counting the cost'. Looking to gain personally was found not to be useful, whereas looking first to the family's benefit was found to be healthy. It leads to valuable things like patience, consideration and care. "Think not what your child can do for you but rather, what you can do for your child", to adapt a saying by John F. Kennedy.

The main job of parents is exclusion. Children are free spirits and not the possessions of parents. After all, parents don't make children; they simply provide the means whereby children arrive in the world. If parents can somehow exclude possessiveness, dominance, weakness and so on, from their dealings, then children have a chance to grow up stable, confident, independent, able to take charge of their own lives. Our generation has not succeeded in making the world a better place so we would hardly want to pass on our worst habits and prevent the next generation from making progress either.

There is much more that could be said and more detail that could be included; about the benefits of holding family conferences at the beginning and end of each day for example, but we wanted to do our best to look at the bigger picture. We hope it helps - children certainly deserve better.

Penny and Peter Forster - 13 Trinity Close, Haslingfield, Cambridge CB3 7LS

Home Education Through the Primary Years - Looking Back

Edward is nearly 13 and Vicki is 11. Until last September neither attended any type of school.

Looking back through the primary years, I do not regret having kept the children at home and I have written this article in the hope that our experiences may give confidence to anyone else considering embarking on home education.

I am not a teacher, nor is any one else in our immediate family, and I do not have an academic background. The qualifications I have been forced to acquire during the past years are a tremendous amount of patience and endless energy and motivation.

I did not make the decision to keep Edward out of school until the very last minute, as he turned 5. I did not want to be different, I would have preferred to conform with everyone else, but I had this 'gut' feeling that to send him into the state system was not the right thing to do and so, with fingers crossed we posted a letter off to the Education Authorities. At that stage, nearly 8 years ago, had I experienced any opposition, I do not think I could have coped with it and my children would probably be in the state system now. However, I didn't. In fact I received encouragement and understanding, which, incidentally, is the attitude I've experienced with Education Authorities in both Essex and Norfolk right the way through. I am now, of course, more confident in myself and in the way we have chosen to spend these years of our lives.

In the early years, the nearest family to us that were educating children of a similar age at home, lived a two hour car journey away. My need for support from someone who was like-minded, and also the fact that her two boys immediately became friends with my two children, meant that for the next four years, until we moved from Essex to Norfolk, we met with the other family in either our home or theirs, almost every week throughout the school term. (The 'school term' was not planned but just happened as a result of the many friends we wanted to keep contact with who were at school).

During these four years we worked periodically on projects with the other family. We experimented with many types of art work together, we went on long walks with them, shared music sessions, and of course, the children played. In fact our day with them was always very busy.

When we were at home we worked on writing and reading but never at set times and never to a timetable. If the weather was good we went out, if the day was wet we tended to stay in. We took advantage of any learning situations that came our way and investigated all types of things.

When the children reached about seven, we started on a maths scheme which at that time had just come on the market (Peak Maths). On looking back through the books (Edward is now on the last of the scheme) we have discovered that, without planning it, both children have completed one workbook a year. This seems to have brought them to a good standard of maths at the right time.

We have always made weekly trips to the swimming pool and we have regularly cycled, but neither child has been particularly interested in ball games. Edward is now becoming a competent canoeist and Vicki rides a horse well.



Since moving to Norfolk we have made a habit of going to a local museum every week during the school term and joining in with one of the visiting schools for a lecture. We always receive VIP treatment from the museum teacher and have built up a good relationship with him.

Over the years we have made many friends with EO families, and there are a far greater number of sympathetic people around today than there were when we began. Most have children a lot younger than Edward and Vicki however, and even now, eight years on, we still have to travel between twenty and fifty miles to visit the homes of EO friends with children of a similar age.

I have noticed the need for more external interests as the children have grown older. The many activities available around us, just by being at home and free, have been experienced before and there has been a need for more. We started going along to a workshop which had been set up for unemployed people, and there we did some woodwork and art work. But still I felt there was a need for more.

Recently a Rudolf Steiner school opened five miles away from us. I asked the children if they would like to try attending the school for a term for the experience of attending school in itself. Also because there they can experience singing as a group, act plays and find out what it is like working with a small group of people, outside the family, on a regular basis.

They both attended for the term up to Christmas and have enjoyed the experience. In fact, they have both chosen to stay longer. The school covers very little academic work and so we are still doing a little work at home together - that has become a way of life and a habit we could not break.

I have always made it a rule to know our options for the future but never make the decisions until we get there. That way we can choose the route which suits us the best. I do not know how long the children will stay at the Steiner School, it is really up to them, but at present the school only plans to take children to the age of 14, which suits us very well as at that stage we shall, I suppose, be looking at examinations and the various ways of obtaining them! If they do not stay at the school that long, I am confident we shall find other avenues to explore - we always do.

Home Education Through the Secondary Years - Looking Forward

(The above article was written twelve months ago but I didn't get around to sending it.)

Both Vicki and Edward completed the school year at the Steiner School and there is no doubt that it gave them an insight into a different way of life to home education.

During the summer term Edward became restless and felt that whilst he was at the school he was not getting enough time to spend on the things he enjoyed doing most. He completed the term and thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the end of term play that the class put on.

When the September term began Vicki returned to the school but Edward resumed his education at home.

We thus entered another phase of home education, and are not as casual as we were in the primary years. We found that it was necessary to draw up a daily schedule to make sure that subjects we felt were necessary to Edward's future were regularly covered. Edward does want to take GCSEs when he is at the age

that his peers will be taking them, and he hopes to be able to enter a local college to obtain 'A' levels when he is 16.

We have found that working on correspondence courses for English, Maths and Geography is nothing like as bad as we had feared it might be, and by starting gently now we have allowed ourselves plenty of time. The Peak Maths scheme that we originally followed gave us a very good foundation for the 'O' level course that we are now studying.

We are fortunate that a local education centre has allowed Edward to join some of its Adult Education classes. He is attending French and Woodcarving classes but not with the intention of taking exams.

For several years Edward has been very friendly with another home educated boy of his age whose mother helps both of them to study Micro-Electronics and Computer Studies on a regular basis.

We are using a text book to work on Physics and although it is not the easiest subject to cover at home, we have, so far, managed to gain access to equipment when it has been required. Another ED friend (a nurse) is working with Edward on Human Biology.

In a way the secondary years of home education are easier than the primary, for although (in our case) there is more need for a structured week the teenager is old enough, with support, to take responsibility for his/her own learning (and cleaning up the mess after completion of a project).

As in the primary years, more opportunities are there for us to take advantage of than we have time for!

Gerry Lockington-Ward
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INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTRE

Tel: 0270 664060

Andy and Diane Anderson,
95 Derrington Avenue, Crewe, Cheshire CW2 7JA

An information/order form list is available. The list contains used and recommended books and materials and can be used as a guide to assist those seeking suitable educational material for children of all ages.

Members are offered the use of the Resource Centre - If anyone has any queries or problems with regard to what educational material etc. is available please do not hesitate to contact us at any time, either by phone, letter or a visit. What we don't know we will try to find out. Please feel free to use us.

As we get no funding from any source would you please ALWAYS include SAE for reply.

When recommending anything please give as much information as possible and when recommending a book etc., please give title, author, publisher and price if known and a rough idea of the age group it would be useful for.

MATHEMATICAL SKILLS

As a non-member, and having read only the two most recent issues of the E.O. Newsletter so far, I wonder if I may comment on one of your newsletter items concerning the press report "Schools need no longer teach basic maths skills" part of which was reproduced in E.O.'s February Newsletter (page 37).

It seems to me that the Government committee members making their recommendations, may themselves never have discovered the revealing mathematical messages an ordinary clock face can convey, especially to the pre-school child. What the committee suggests any child could ... in terms of mathematical understanding ... get out of a digital watch, with its mere rotation of the visible symbols of Number, is beyond me.

But then, I am not a mathematician; I merely helped my 1 to 3 year olds to understand the basic abstract concepts of number and its manipulations, of fractions, plane geometry, three dimensional space ... all of which are everywhere around us in our daily lives, all part of advanced modern thinking and understanding and language (or, at least, they ought to be and could be, for everyone).

My 3 year olds had understood the basics of maths from, yes, the old-fashioned clock face (its fractions rather than its decimals), from their babyhood building blocks, the apple, the orange, the empty squeeze bottle in the bath and countless other everyday objects. They had understood as only an educated infant can: far better than their parent who had been school-taught in accordance with the topsy turvy philosophy that, by doing sums (arithmetic, algebra, geometry and the rest), one ought to grasp the underlying abstract concepts of which the sums and the calculations are only the written, symbolic expression. Which is the wrong way round.

My youngsters had thoroughly grasped the concepts before ever they did sums on paper, before the school instructed them in the mechanics of arithmetic. Whereupon, in no time, they outdid the statistical scholastic requirements for much older children ... to such an extent that one of them, at age 4, was pronounced to be a "brilliant future mathematician" (which he was by no means), whilst the other (a mathematician who considered maths alone too limited an intellectual exercise) was reading A-level maths all by himself when, at 10, the school kept nagging him about his Junior sums.

Any educated toddler could understand maths in its various forms if he were introduced to them early and in the correct way. Any child ... boy or girl ... desperately needs that insight so that he may better understand what his world is about, and, in the case of the girls in particular, so that they can help their future offspring to understand in their turn.

It is a pity, if not irresponsible, that a Government committee can thus decide about the intellectual fate of the next generation. Do they not consider that the "new technology of calculation" is a mere tool ... like the abacus once was; that it cannot replace human understanding but, on the contrary, will require much more advanced and much more widespread mathematical understanding by the following generation, in order that it can use these tools to its further advantage and advancement? Or, are they perhaps relying on the statistical 20-25% of so-called academic children (who get their advance from their homes and not from school) to keep future educational achievements and statistics static ... as nearly a century of past educationists have professed that to be the natural state of affairs, whilst deluding three-quarters of the population into believing that it cannot learn?

By denying the formally educated masses the benefit of understanding maths, by stunting still further children's timely intellectual development, we shall

produce a still less intellectually adept generation, one that may not even aspire to the calibre of some of the competitors who (unable to see a simple pattern, unable to calculate their most basic chances) now regale us on television's "The Price Is Right" as they blunder along with a noughtless version of "Noughts and Crosses". Watch them, and be embarrassed. They, still, were educated before the "skills of basic maths" were banned from the nation's education.

Mrs J. Whitt

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THOUGHTS ON A. S. NEILL

...prompted by a broadcast about him

A.S. Neill is said to have called himself a socialist. Yet Summerhill is unmistakably a product of the capitalist system and could exist under no other. It is remarkable how many people call themselves socialists, yet everything they say and do proclaims the opposite. Brian Clough springs to mind. The classic product of socialism is the comprehensive school - huge, dehumanising and inefficient, just what Neill was fighting against.

Summerhill itself, in fact, cannot be regarded as very efficient. Its staffing ratio is about 1 - 6. And if, as we are told, the children spend their first five or six years more or less playing, then it might be thought that they would be just as well at home. Home has the advantage of being a natural, and not an artificial, community. Also, it doesn't cost £1,800 a year. And if the answer to that is that home in many cases is hell on earth, then that amounts to saying that Summerhill's function is that of a substitute home.

As such it can certainly claim to have made a point. It has shown that there are children who benefit from a no-pressure education. The movement towards "child-centred learning" clearly owes a great deal to Neill. But that doesn't mean that Neill was right all along the line and everybody else was wrong. There are children who thrive in an ordered, structured environment. The present "child-centred" orthodoxy could well prove short-lived. Results have been somewhat short of spectacular.

The whole process of education is extremely unnatural and selfish. From the age of 5 to 16 or even 20 a child is supposed to devote the whole of its purposeful endeavours towards improving its own individual capabilities. It is not expected in the whole of that time to contribute in any way to the common weal or even, in most cases, to its own support.

Yet I believe that what gives people the most satisfaction in life is the ability to make themselves useful. It is noticeable that the desire to be useful is one of the most conspicuous characteristics of very young children. Toddlers love above all to bring you your shoes or your glasses. They send you up the wall by insisting on trying to dig the garden or clean out the grate. This dimension is absent in our education philosophy. It was also apparently absent in A.S. Neill's - strange in such an acute observer.

In less developed societies children can and do make themselves useful, and their desire to do so is preserved - some might say exploited - right through to adulthood. They seem happy.

In developed societies this is more difficult. Children are simply not part of the action. No wonder they feel alienated. Schools make things worse. We need to find a better formula.

Stewart Deuchar

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Religious Education at Home. Is it possible?

I have followed the correspondence on 'RE at home' with interest and found myself unable to resist joining in with a point of view I've not yet seen adequately represented.

What worries me is that, asking the question, "what should one do about religious education at home?" pre-supposes that teaching 'religion', as opposed to teaching 'about religion', is a 'good' thing.

Surely Christianity is now seen, as far as spiritual evolution is concerned, as a dead thing, a husk - quite unsuitable, even harmful, to young children. Its traditional stories and myths have worn out and it is not operated by people who know how it might be made useful. While it is true that, on occasion, it acts as a therapy, keeping people occupied and supplying comfort and welfare - all very usefull, but nothing that is not done equally well outside the offices of a religion or cult - it is also destructive and suppresses the human spirit.

Much Christian belief and behaviour is odious to non-Christians. But most of us are too polite to mention this or do anything about it - perhaps because of the feeling that 'one shouldn't kick a dog when he's down'. However... there is said to be a Christian revival. Perhaps the rest of us should stand up for a more enlightened view.

An example of what non-Christians can find a little offensive is; as when Christians claim that some apparent 'good' behaviour is, "a Christian act", or, when, as they frequently do, they exort one another and everyone else to "mend our ways, stop killing and live in peace", without knowing how this trick is done. (These, and other similar preachings, are always easy to say, guaranteed to be applauded by the ignorant and thoughtless, and unashamedly, almost wickedly, hypocritical. It is hypocritical because these Christians have no knowledge with which they can help people to change. All they know how to do is raise emotions - a dangerous activity, with young and old alike, and one that makes conditioning people easy - something religions have become expert at over the centuries- and the exact opposite of developing the spiritual life!)

The story of Christianity is mostly a history of evil and hypocrisy. It has probably done more than any other religion towards creating the present difficulties of Mankind. Christianity plunged Europe into the Dark Ages, destroyed the great libraries of antiquity and suppressed the desire to learn as much as it could, right up until the 20th century. Worst of all, perhaps, it has given the very idea of interest in the 'spiritual' life a bad name by conditioning us that spirituality is the same as emotionality.

All the major religions were formed because the groups surrounding the person introducing the various new teachings into the world, turned into cults on the death of the teacher. Jesus certainly didn't want a church founded, yet Catholics revere Peter, whom their own gospels show Jesus calling 'Satan', as founder of the Church! Buddha, who tried to discourage idol worship, has more statues of him in the world, including the largest representations of the human figure, than any other individual. And Mohammed said; "No monkery..." (Tell that to the Ayatollahs!).

Religions are not at all what they seem to be, or what they tell us they are. For thousands of years we have been brought up to think that they are, in some way, 'spiritual' operations. Even a little study, however, shows that they clearly are not, though they were probably begun by people who knew something about what Mankind needed in order to develop. Our children should surely be shown this.

If you examine Christianity, you find it is a training system for low level, uncivilised people endlessly declaring that we should not rush around killing, raping and stealing (the Ten Commandments etc.). At the appropriate time of course, there is nothing wrong in this. You cannot have civilisation without getting organised, stopping selfish, brutish behaviour and establishing a commonly agreed level of good behaviour that will benefit the community. Fair enough. But has no one noticed that killing, raping and stealing is not the everyday story for most of us?

So, perhaps in the past the purpose of organised religion was to knock primitive people into shape, rather as the drill sergeant knocks raw recruits into shape. People were bullied and frightened into obedience and then conditioned and entertained to stop them regressing in the hope was that eventually more civilised behaviour would 'take'. But, once organised and behaving, most of the time, in a 'civilised' way, people have to move to the next stage. We must learn to think for ourselves and gain volition. If we don't we will die out. At this point religion, if it persists, is a hinderence to the civilising process and, like a husk, has to be shed. The reason religions tend to persist long after they serve any useful function is that, as with all organisations, they become power structures that have forgotten their original function. To outsiders religion at this stage seems either pathetic, like a blind simpleton (Church of England), dangerous, like a blind angry beast (Fundamentalists of any persuasion), or a mixture of the two (the Catholic Church).

Of course it's old hat for non-Christians to say this, and Christian 'true believers' cannot help but ignore them when they do, but that doesn't mean the subject is not worth pursuing. I do believe it should be considered when thinking about home education. (A big EO advantage for us is that our children are less likely to come under the pernicious influence of Christian teachers or people propagating some other political/religious 'ism' equally harmful to developing minds.)

So, what can be taught of religion at home?

The history and anthropology of religion, including how it automatically degenerates, is an important topic for older children and can lead to deeper insights and study of the lives and writings of the wise (yes they did and do exist) from all cultures. But there is an extra ingredient.

"The folk-tale is the primer of the picture-language of the soul."

Joseph Campbell

Children learn best not by being indoctrinated (which isn't learning) but by absorption - and the best way to help children understand the hidden patterns that are at work in the world is to feed them a rich diet of folktales and teaching stories. Stories seep into the mind, improve thinking capacities and tell us more about the way things are than any doctrine could hope to. Many of them contain blueprints for the mind as it were, and enrich our own and our childrens understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of the world, the way mankind behaves and our destiny. They put people on the path to Truth in a way no dogma or emotional and pious behaviour can.



"As soon as you entered the world of form,
an escape ladder was put out for you."

Rumi

Ivan Tyrrell.

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JUMP IN WITH BOTH FEET!

I wrote a brief letter in the last Newsletter because, as usual I'd put it off until the last minute and then hastily scribbled a note at the eleventh hour. Now, I hope I can expand a little and hopefully, our trouble-free experience may encourage others who are teetering on the brink to jump in with both feet.

We're a pretty ordinary family, or we were then, back when it all started. Alex and I both experienced the state system and although neither of us could say our schooldays were joyful, we were not particularly unhappy either. We both qualified as teachers and I absolutely adored my job. We were eager to have children of our own and that led to the arrival of Alexandra in 1978, rapidly followed by Nicholas in 1979. I enjoyed their early years immensely and it gave me much more insight into the way small children learn. Useful I thought for when I returned to work. Ha!

Alexandra started school in January 1982 aged 4½ and it was clear after the first week that she really wasn't that impressed, but I thought that may be it was a case of waiting for her to 'settle in'. In September she moved into the middle infants class and took an instant and violent dislike to her teacher, a woman whom I had always liked myself. Alexandra's reason for her dislike was "Mrs B. wants to be my mummy, and one mummy is quite enough, thank you." The year deteriorated until, by her 6th birthday she was anything but the cheerful, happy, outgoing, little girl she used to be, also having nightmares, and turning the 3 minute walk to school into a regular via dolorosa. Alex and I arranged to see her teacher, and I expressed my concern at her unhappiness and lack of achievement. (If I'd had an average middle infant who had achieved so little I'd have hung my head in shame.) Her reply took me aback somewhat: "I don't think you realise what a problem she is Mrs Smith." "Well, Mrs B." I replied, "Suppose you tell me?" She went on to say that she was almost impossible to motivate and it was impossible to find a way of interesting her in anything. (Again, as a professional, I'd have hung my head in shame.) She also criticised me for not hearing the reading books she sent home. I replied that (a) if I could hear 30 children read every day, then so could she, and (b) Alexandra was so wound up and miserable after 6 hours in her classroom that I had no intention of prolonging her misery. As my fury increased I said, quite suddenly, "If that's the best you can offer me, I'll do it myself!" although at the time I had no idea if we legally could. We explored all the alternatives. A.C.E. were very helpful and that year we joined E.O. At this time I was very much the enthusiastic party as Alex rather thought it was just another bee in my bonnet, but being the loyal person he is, he offered quiet support. We discussed the idea with the children and, as Nicholas was looking forward to starting school in September 1984, Alexandra agreed to give her new teacher a try for half a term. She stayed for the whole of that educational year, and it was a good one, for her, but at the end of it I was eager to have them at home, having had my eyes opened to all the faults in the system, and as they were reluctant to return in September '85, I didn't send them.

We wrote the appropriate letter to the area education office as advised in SINC and were sent a form asking the qualifications of the children's tutor, schemes of work, areas set aside for each child to work undisturbed, etc. I telephoned Essex's co-ordinator, Sandie Cottee, who said, "We've all had that form, we just ignored it; they're trying to frighten you." So we ignored it too. Almost 2 years on we haven't heard a single thing, which is so typical of Essex's attitude - 'if they're not costing us money then we'll leave them alone'

I can't honestly say that being at home has made a lot of difference to Nick, who is the sort of child who will learn anywhere. He may well return to school at some point as he is very much a pack animal. However, I could go on and on ad nauseum about the change in Alexandra. When she came out of school her reading age was 6:4 - less than when she'd started school and a full year less

than her actual age. If I asked her to read anything, no matter how simple, it resulted in tears, as would a request to write even her name. In those first few months it was so hard to be passive but I read to her a lot, trying to make books once again something to be enjoyed, not dreaded. Gradually I found she would write shopping lists for me or jot down "things to remember" on the kitchen board.

We'd decided that as I wouldn't be working for a few years, through having the children at home, we would have a much longed for third child. I was in hospital for 5 weeks preceding her birth and Alexandra kept a diary, wrote me letters and made cards for me and our baby while I was away. We did wonder if any difficulties would arise from our addition, but she has brought nothing but joy to all of us. Alexandra's self confidence has rocketed as she is very competent with Naomi. She writes endless stories which she then types out and illustrates; her reading age is easily within the range of what is appropriate for her age. She has been able, too, to explore the avenues of mathematics which had been closed to her at school; geometry, magic number squares and binary. Nick is a prolific and effortless reader and like his sister had a vivid imagination but hates writing. Many of his ideas are captured in beautiful, detailed drawings which I'm sure he wouldn't have bothered with at school. He reads anything and everything (including graffiti, usually aloud) and unsuitable reading material (e.g. horror stories) had to move to the top shelf.

In those first few months at home I must have had the same conversation a hundred times if we dared show our faces outside during the day:

"No school today?/Kids not well?/Having a day off today?"

"No, they don't go to school/No, I stopped sending them/ No, I teach them myself."

"Oh, can you do that?/You can do that, you're a teacher/You can't do that."

Then, depending on how well disposed I was feeling, or how well I knew the inquisitor, I would expand. Or not. Now, most of the town are used to seeing us about, it isn't a problem. I was prepared to be on the defensive at first but people have shown nothing but interest. It has been pointed out to me that there are things they can only learn at school, and yes, this is true. School was the only place my children learned to be deceitful and smutty and to tell lies, because they certainly didn't learn them in my house.

One of our biggest supporters has been an old and much valued friend who was then head of Special Needs at the local comprehensive. He had observed our children before, during and after "The System" and if I ever wonder if we did the right thing, he reassures me that we most certainly did.

On the other hand: "Call yourself a fighter?" said one neighbour, "you're just opting out, bit selfish isn't it?" Well, yes, I suppose it is, but where my children's welfare and happiness are concerned I am prepared to be ruthlessly selfish. I spent 2 years beating my fists against the system and it won't change fast enough for my children to benefit NOW. I want the best deal I can get for them and I can't afford to wait until it's too late.

It never ceases to amaze me how many and varied things they are interested in, how full each day is, and how happy my children are now. It wasn't plain sailing at first - everything seemed so messy and unstructured - but have faith! There IS order after disorder, and if you really want that cake then break the eggs and make a mess - it is worth it, I promise.

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EO Newsletters are full of items from 'True Believers': - Socialists, New Agers, Steinerites and people from Christian and other cults espousing a wide range of views - all, in their enthusiasm, betraying a fascinating variety of prejudice. (This edition is no exception.) Prejudiced people, however, tend only to see what fits their prejudices. This rather limits the possibilities. Fortunately it is often pointed out by other contributors that pre-packaged beliefs do not help the human condition, are primitive, and only thrive in some circles because of conditioning and ignorance. I agree with this latter group, the Truth *always* exists outside belief systems.

There are no 'bureaucratic', 'political', 'religious' or other fanciful solutions to the problems of the world, however much our culture conditions us to think there are. And education should wean children off the human tendency to want such pre-packaged, comforting belief systems.

You can find clues as to why packaged solutions are not realistic when thinking about the nature of perception.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SHARED PERCEPTIONS (Getting back to basics.)

Perception is the act our brains perform in understanding the world - by whatever of the senses we use. In other words, it is what brains do with the information selected by the senses.

Consciousness discriminates, excludes or accepts information through a filtering process. What survives this process becomes our 'model of reality' - based on selected input. This discrimination process, as we know too well, is easily influenced by emotion and conditioning. We hear what we want to hear and see what we want to see.

Sensitivity, discrimination and perception are the three essential characteristics of all living creatures reacting to their environment. All creatures are sensitive to basic things like heat and cold, light and dark, hard and soft etc. - from single celled animals like amoeba to ourselves. For their very survival all living creatures require 'sensitivity'. Without it they cannot discriminate. And this is true for each individual human child, adult and all groups and cultures.

A civilisation can only exist when enough people share in similar perceptions about the nature of the world and their place in it. The more refined the level of generally shared perceptions within a culture, the more civilised it is.

Civilisation is a process of refinement of perception ... true education. And, whenever this process is halted or reversed, the civilisation becomes frozen at best or, at worst, degenerates and collapses. By examining the 'levels of perception' of a particular group or culture, and the powers of discrimination of its members, it's possible to assess the level of civilisation it has reached and compare it with others.

To increase understanding of the rise and fall of past civilisations, the frictions between cultures today, the predicaments of being human and the possibilities of human development, we should examine closely, with historical, anthropological and psychological perspectives, the nature of perception and the powers of discrimination. These are studies that can be undertaken within families and in other informal groups. (It is quite possible that, unless enough people do this soon, there may be no further possibilities for continuing the civilising process this time round.)

Many solutions to Mankind's problems don't work because we usually tend to institutionalise when we want to try and achieve something. (This is the way of the intellect.) And when we do this we believe that we already possess the answers. Institutionalising stops the process of refining perceptions (which essentially draws on the 'holistic' mode). Consequently institutions are not able to see the reality of a situation or detect solutions to problems that appear from unexpected directions.

The moment that striving for Truth and understanding through higher perception, in any field of activity, ceases to be the main driving force in that activity, it goes bad. A power structure immediately forms and, however exciting it is for the participants, the activity fossilizes or regresses to become evil. This is true of marriages, families, businesses, power groups, legal systems, governments, religions, cults and educational systems.

EDUCATION & EVOLUTION

How far you have come!

Originally you were clay. From being mineral, you became vegetable. From vegetable you became animal, and from animal, man. During these periods man did not know where he was going, but he was being taken on a long journey nonetheless. And you have to go through a hundred different worlds yet.

Jalaludin Rumi, (died 1273 AD)

Evolution is a continuing process and progress depends on learning more about what we really are. Major changes might take generations but a start has to be made - and, in fact, has been made. For example; we have more information about human behaviour, the what and the why of it, than all previous ages. The puzzle is; why don't we learn from and use that information?

The answer seems to me to be that we forget, in the welter of political, economical, religious and media excitation, that we behave as we do simply because of the way our brains have evolved. No attempt to improve things will work if it doesn't start with what is known about behaviour and psychology. Information and self knowledge are the first steps.

Having evolved over millions of years to suit living in an under populated world of small tribes our brains, bodies and our biological and mental assumptions, are adapted to a life of hunting and gathering. Only very recently, in evolutionary terms, was agriculture developed. The modern age, with all its attendant problems and dangers, might as well be just a brief hour in the billions of years that life has evolved. Historical time has been too short for evolution to work in favour of adapting us to the way we live now.

So, the problem is that there is simply not enough time to let evolution bring about the biological adaptations that would enable us to cope better with the modern world. It would take thousands of years ... the need, however, is immediate if we are not to destroy ourselves and damage this planet irreparably. For all practical purposes biological evolution is at an end. We are changing our planet too quickly for nature to have enough time to adapt us physically to accommodate the changes. That leaves only time for one adaptation. We must change our minds. In other words, unless we are prepared to face extinction, we should concern ourselves with "conscious evolution".

GRIMMER GRAMER UND GUD INGLISH

"An outline of the principles for awarding marks, produced by the Associated Examining Board, says that in answering questions pupils do not have to use correct English spelling, or even write sentences."

9.2.87 Telegraph

"Few English teachers were considered genuine poetry enthusiasts, while some seemed afraid of the subject ... The report said that some schools saw poetry teaching as a matter of guiding children over various technical obstacles such as metaphor, assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia and oxymoron, singling out one department where these terms were learnt for tests without reference to a complete poem."

17.3.87 Telegraph

"Errors of grammar by averagely abler, older teenagers studied in an education project were so serious that almost a third of what they wrote was rated "unsatisfactory" said a report yesterday. The written work was examined only for grammatical errors, but the researcher points out that many contained a profusion of spelling mistakes where students misused such words as 'their' and 'there'."

21.2.87 Telegraph

"Colleges generally find that one in five first year undergraduates require some form of remedial English - a situation attributed ... to sloppy English instruction through 12 years ... of school. Texas has begun "re-educating" a few thousand teachers who failed a competency test last year, and the teachers-who-can't write story diverts the New York papers at regular intervals."

2.2.87 Telegraph

"As many as seven million Britons may be unable to read and write ... 26% of children are "not HOPELESSLY illiterate, perhaps, but so abysmally poor at reading and writing after 11 years of compulsory schooling that I do not think they can function in our society."

9.2.87 Telegraph

HOMEWORK

"Most parents do not help with their childrens homework because they think they haven't got the brains, a Gallup survey has revealed. The finding follow hard on the heels of a publication from H.M. Inspectors which came down in favour of homework but said its potential for helping children's education was not being exploited to the full.

The education secretary ... commented ... 'Too often parents ignore their responsibilities, allow TV to take over homework, and fail to make the contribution they might be raising standards in schools.'"

6.4.87 Telegraph

"It is a poignant sound, the laughter of my daughter and her friends walking up the street at 4pm ... Now they are beginning to relax: they think school is over for the evening.

But it isn't. My daughter has to do her homework. And the interrogation begins as soon as she has taken her coat off.

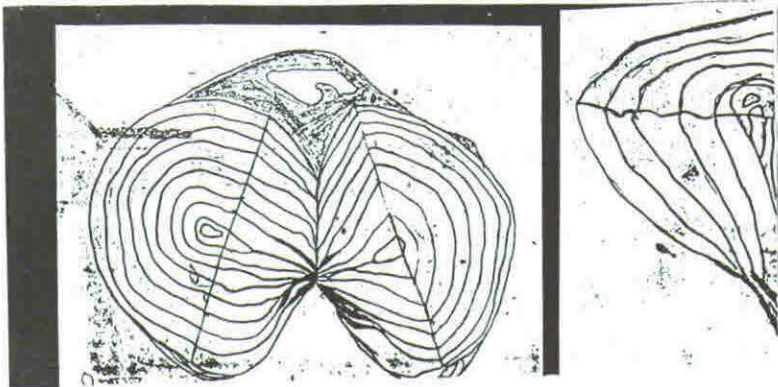
What subjects have you got? Have you any textbooks to help? Do you understand the questions? Have you covered this ground in lessons? Do you have calculator, geometry equipment, Prittstick or soldering iron in working order? I am not an overzealous mother. It is just that I have learned that if we do not sort out information and equipment problems as soon as my tired daughter aims for the easy chair, we will not have time to chase round libraries, stationery shops, other friends houses and get what we need."

20.4.87 Guardian

ART Supplement (..second part.)

This is a continuation of the supplement in the last news letter. It is aimed mainly at the older age group but is also relevant to all our children. Imaginative work does not only belong to the earlier years.....it is important to keep the creative drive that is evident in the earlier years as well as encouraging observation and skills. How should work of this age group differ from the work of the under tens? As an example I'll give you a group of sevens making clocks. They are using found objects and they are concentrating mainly on methods, materials and fantasy/imagination i.e. a clock for a giant or a clock for your best friend. A group of eleven year olds could work on the same project (...ideal for mixed age groups working together at home!....) but we would expect a great deal more accuracy, observation and thinking. Really looking at details, historical examples, correct terminology etc. ANYTHING WILL NOT DO.... We must help our children by encouragement, pointing out details etc. By this age we need to offer more help and an opportunity of exercising his imaginative and creative thinking. Take care that art is not just relegated to illustration with crayons and felt pens. Try to encourage sensitivity towards the world around them and to materials. Development of feeling, imagination and creative response. The forming of hypothesis and the testing of them out..... THINKING..... Children need to be sensitive to materials.... what mixes with what, what can you paint over wax? which type of glue for what job, will staples work better? How long does it take to make something, paint to dry, glue to a adhere..... thus being able to plan work properly and sensibly. They need to be able to persevere throughout it's various stages especially when things go wrong. Getting stuck and not knowing how is something that happens to any artist, writer or poet and battling through is necessary to learn. Try and avoid thinking of art as just a list of things to do, good ideas and techniques.... art is a learning situation just as important as reading or maths.... Try and structure activities so that the child can develop on what he knows, building on his previous experience. Think about what tools and materials we can introduce to extend this experience. Keep up close OBSERVATION. Try and provide a wide range of stimuli to handle, observe and work from. Some ideas....

Natural objects.... Look for pattern and structure, texture in burnt rubbish, a rusty tin, a dead fish, texture on tree bark, shape of sail shell and the patterns it contains. Colours in the landscape, colours in the sky. Look at objects through a microscope or a magnifying glass. The wealth of drawing and painting material around us is limitless..... Imaginative work of depth needs this kind of vocabulary, resources are all around us. Children need to become aware of the world around them to help form extensive language concepts that have more accuracy. It also makes them more aware of shape and pattern in everything. It hopefully will make them less willing to make judgements on first impressions, and to be more able to extend their findings into exciting and relevant work.



What materials do we need to provide?.

Well, anything you can think of may be useful-but in addition we need:
Water based inks...Try Brusho, a cheap and ready mix powder..very versatile.
(obtainable from Colour craft. 11. Harewoodway Sheffield S11 9QR)

good scissors and sharp craft knives.

small sharp saw and a surform with various blades.(Not essential but jolly useful.)

Strong stapler and staples and P.V.A. glue.

Threads and wools.

A good magnifying glass.

A variety of brushes..fine ones to housepainters.

Sponges for applying paint.

fixative for chalk and charcoal...cheap hair laquer will do if you can stand the smell.

Wood offcuts, fabric scraps(Jumble sales again!) junk, found objects and some clay.

Some ideas for projects...

Stamps..design your own..look at real stamps base the work on observation, look at shapes, subjects-make yours for a real place you know -can be as grand as the local beauty spot or as unusual as the corner of the garden where all the rubbish is stored.Cut out the stamps and present them on an enlarged page. Paint a meal on a large plate...could be your favourite food or food for your hero .Look at paintings by real artists before you begin...Matisse or Cezzane. talk about the way they have painted the same subject.Look at th e colours and the methods used.

My Home.. Talk about your home discuss it's features then draw it from memory. Then go outside and spend time drawing it from observation.Go and look at a terrace of houses(Or boats or caravans if thats your home!) make notes,diagrams and words on how they differ.Make a sectional drawing of your house to show how the rooms are used.Invent mythical houses(Why not use a poem).make an accurate plan of your house...Use the front door as a standard measurement to relate other measurements to.This type of drawing and information collecting helps the child to see that drawing is not a magical skill for the favoured few but a tool we can all use to help us think visually.

Similar things. Take two objects that are similar i.e. pebbles,your fingers and make comparissions,at first verbal and then visual.Look at subtleties of form,colour and surface.

Time lapse...Try drawing an apple or a sandwich-then take a bite and re-draw and another and so on.Or a fruit left over a period of days to decompose. View finders-use different shaped view finders to look and draw-part of a room,a landscape,a group of people.Try using natural view finders-the window frame or window panes,a mirror reflections in a bottle,space between two trees. Magnifying glasses change things into a new and exiting context or try drawing things through reeded glass.

Work from natural objects.Choose an interesting object,look carefully at it ...is it heavy,smooth,textured ...What colour is it.Write a brief description. Use a magnifying glass-look for variations in shape texture and colour.Record this on paper.

Draw around the shape of the object-cut it out and stick it on black paper ...is it symmetrical or asymetrical,use the shape to make repeat patterns-try overlapping the shapes etc.

Pattern ,Tone ,Texture.

Make studies of fine pattern inleaves or shells.Take rubbings of natural and man made textureie.,bark ,car tyres,ironwork.Try working from these using newsprint print to make tonal collage.

Self portraits.

Try pulling strange faces in a photo booth and draw from these.Use mirrors to draw from,reflections from spoons,straight forward photos...Write descriptions of yourself looking carefully and recording all the tiniest details you can observe.

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Bedfordshire

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Highland

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WALES

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Gwent *** New Co-ordinators: Clive & Ruth Davies ***

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O V E R S E A S

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ROBERTS Andree & Andrew; ** TAM SIN ** 07/78; ** JO-LIND ** 08/79; ** THEO ** 02/83;

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SHERRIFF Muslim Ebrahim; Sakina 01/81; Talib 01/83; Ateka 04/84;

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Co

Looking at works of art.

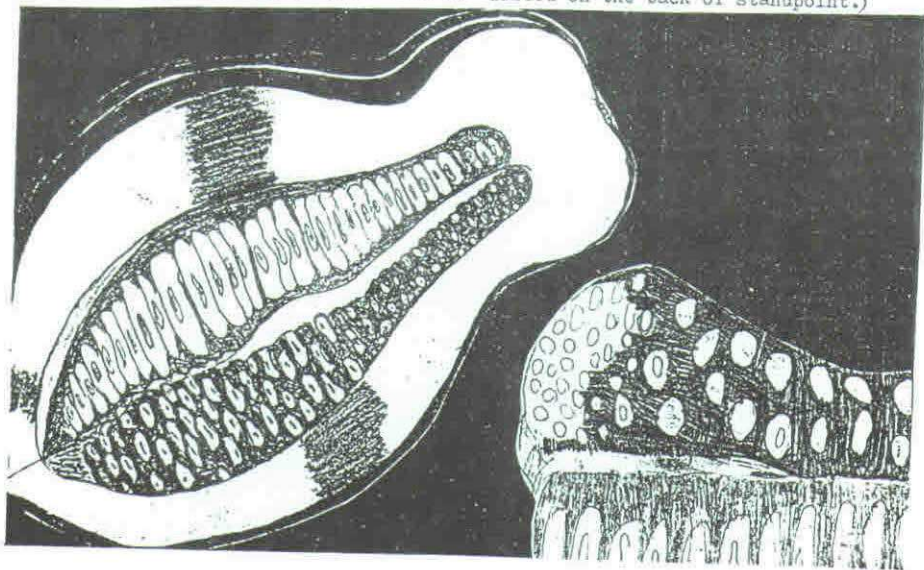
Collect post cards and reproductions. Choose two or three works to compare of the same subject ie landscapes or portraits. Do a written evaluation -which do you like best? Why. Try and spend some time over this. Work directly from the one you choose as the best. Use a variety of media, paint pen, collage etc. Devide the postcard up into sections and enlarge a section -if working in a groupeach person can work on a section and the card can be re-assembled later. Try setting up a scene similar to a well known painting-for example the yellow chair by Van Gough or a Matisse still life-spend several days working from this in lots of media. Look at a Monet Garden painting and then paint your own in a similar way -or use a Paul Klee to influence your town scape. All these projects will help give a good understanding of 'Modern' art and lead to closer observation when looking at objects, people, landscape and paintings.

-look for workshops etc in your local arts centre. Find out about artists in your area...see if they have studios you can visit (lots of artists take part in educational programs these days. Make friends with your local art teacher or art group tutor, see if you can join in with visits of this kind. Join an art group to learn specialised techniques, to swap ideas and observations. What! None locally? Form your own group-advertise down the library. Give your selves a grand sounding title i.e. The Pegasus Workshops...sounds good but is only the name on my house!

Remember... ART IS NOT ONE METHOD OR TECHNIQUE BUT AN OPEN MIND AND CONSTANT OBSERVATION AND RECORDING. thought for the week to be repeated twice on waking!

I hope to write about several ^{*}tile crafts, some ideas for printing, clay and threedimensions in the new year...if you have any ideas thoughts or what! please send to me by november at the following address..Milly Stevens, Pegasus, Castle rd. Ventnor. I.O.W. PO38 1IG thanks.

Books worth reading..K. Jameson .INFANT ART. JUNIOR ART. Betty chicken DRAWING ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE BRAIN. And well worth reading STANDPOINT .Peter Dixon. wich is obtainable from him at 30 Cherriton Road. Winchester Hants. This is full of ideas, thoughts Philosophy on education as it should be. Send £4 incl. PandP (Peter is a poet and an art educator who really cares about our childrens education he has written many other usefull books listed on the back of standpoint.)



Many thanks to Sandie Cottee for the following ideas....

Printing from a photocopy.

You need: Tee shirt, fabric or other absorbant material. Jar filled with 1 part white spirit to two parts water.(you need an egg cup of white spirit ;depending on how many prints you are doing.)Add a few drops of washing up liquid to mix the solution.Small brush and a roller(Lino or wallpaper will do). Photocopy of your choice.This could be a drawing/Artwork of your own design, photocopy of a photograph.....let your imagination run riot!You will also need a baking tray,heated with an iron or in the oven.Now for what to do with this stuff.

Firstly,lay the heated tray under the fabric to be printed,position the fabric and smooth.With the photocopy face down,brush the solution over the print you wish to take.Carefully turn the paper over and repeat,taking care not to smudge the ink.When you have done this,carefully lay the photocopy -print side down-onto the fabric and then applying as much pressure as you reasonably can roll the print until it is transferred onto the fabric.....
Now you can print your own E.O. tee shirt.

Putting together your own comic or newsletter.

A friend of ours is presently confined to bed for eight months ,following a major operation.Since he must lie flat on his back throughout this time,we wondered what we could do to cheer him up and amuse him. We decided on a personal -ised comic book.Several sheets of paper(SUGAR) ,sewn together to make a book, gives a good base to start from.We then searched magazines,news papers catalogues and any thing else we thought might have good pictures to use.We tried to make it as amusing as possible....adding captions of our own ,cutting up the pictures and stiking different bits together(people dressd in a wierd assortment of clothes,human heads on animal bodies and vice versa.)We also made collages completely covering the paper with with the cut out pictures-it does not matter too much about perspective as it can create more interest and amusement by mixing the pictures up in a casual way. Supplements and magazines offer lots of pictures to choose from,and even the more uninteresting picture can be brought to life with a carefully thought out caption.

We also cut out any suitable cross words ,puzzles and poses as well as making many of our own. Word searches are very easy to do and more fun if you personalise them.Add lots of cartoons and comic strips,interesting pictures and drawings done by all the family and you will have as much fun writing it as reading it.We plan to send a comic every week.We shall include bits of news postcards and leaflets of places we visit as well as any features and ideas we find in old magazines.You can experiment with different print styles,colours and layout....in fact the list is endless.You never know ,you might enjoy it so much that you'll volunteer to edit an E.O.Newsletter.

And also details of a new craft she she is enthusiastic about.....

Quilling(Paper filigree).

Quilling consists of basic materials,gives an exiting effect and has endless possibilities..You need a small tool similar to a screwdriver,with a slit in the end,into witch you fit the strip of paper bought specially The paper is sold in lots of colours and the idea is to curl the paper around the tool forming a spiral.This is the glued into position ,onto a background and by combining various colours,tightness of curls and patterns an endless variety of pictures can be built up.

the spirals can be gently formed into curls and crescents and make good gift tags,cards etc.,quite strong enough to send through the post.Te basic materials are inexpensive and provide hours of pleasure,quite simple to do and gives good results first time.In case of difficulties or /and for futher details contact Sandie Cottee at 17 South view rd. Rettendon Common.Chelmsford.essex CM3 8DX. (telephone ;0268 733259).

SPORT AND HEALTH

"... Paediatricians are beginning to report early signs of such heart-disease risks in young children as lack of exercise, high blood cholesterol levels, overweight and smoking.

... Dr Sharp thinks that, in total, two hours of activity each day is appropriate for younger children and early teenagers. This would include walking to and from school, playing in parks and gardens, cycling and so on, as well as school activities - and would amount to less than the average hours spent in front of the television."

9.3.87 Guardian

"The head teachers are in no doubt that the situation is reaching crisis point. 'Extra curricular activities, competitive games and the provision of a full physical educational programme are now seriously at risk', they said. Local authorities, some of whom are opposed to competitive sports and others who sell off playing fields for development, come in for criticism."

3.3.87 Telegraph

"The (Physical Education) Association is launching a campaign next month to promote skipping as a 'cheap and simple' way of increasing activity levels outside the classrooms."

10.2.87 Telegraph

"I don't like the idea of putting tiny ones under the water. They aren't fish and they haven't got gills", he says. "I've got a nine month daughter and she won't be going swimming until she's over a year. I'm not worried about her getting water on the brain - just don't see why she should be made to get cold." Dr Sibert.

4.3.87 Telegraph

BATTERING AND BATTERED

"Teachers who throw chalk at unruly pupils could soon find themselves liable to civil actions for battery, according to draft guidelines published by the Department of Education yesterday. The document defines corporal punishment as 'any intentional application for force as punishment, including use of the cane or tawse, but also other forms of physical chastisement including slapping, throwing missiles such as chalk, and rough handling."

14.3.87 Telegraph

"A man who was suspended from school six years ago after refusing to be caned has been awarded £3,200 compensation by the European Human Rights Commission."

6.2.87 Telegraph

CHILDREN HAVE PROBLEMS?

"Margot Norman says we neglect the educational needs of pre-school children. Only about one third of under-fives in Britain attend nursery schools or playgroups."

20.4.87 Telegraph

"American teaching techniques including doodling are being tried at two nursery school centres in Britain. Advocates say children are more emotionally stable and have less delinquency problems in later school life."

21.4.87 Telegraph

"The Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association called for more liaison in dealing with abuse and for in-service training for teachers to help child victims."

16.4.87 Times, Independent, Guardian

" NOTICES "



DYSLEXIA

A lecturer from Nene College, Northampton contacted me to offer herself as help to any family. Elizabeth Padley said she can help to diagnose dyslexia and also help with learning programmes. Sue can be contacted on 0908-616937.

Valerie Common, 19 New Road, Castlethorpe, Milton Keynes.

TUPPENNY RICE CLUB

I thought some E.O. families might be interested to know of the 'Tuppenny Rice Club'. They send a really good package of activities (personalised to your child's needs) including books, puzzles, games etc. It costs £3.75 a month. For further information send a s.a.e. to:

Tuppenny Rice Club, Fairfield Cottage, Casterton, Carnforth, Lancs.

Valerie Common, 19 New Road, Castlethorpe, Milton Keynes.

STAINED GLASS WORKSHOP

June Standing, a member of E.O. for several years, is a stained glass craftsperson and teacher who often arranges junior workshops for children aged 8 years and upwards. She is willing to travel to different counties and arrange similar workshops if anyone is interested. Please contact her at:

19 Belsize Park, Hampstead, London NW3 4DU.
Tel. 01-435 8029.

SUBSCRIPTION BANKERS ORDERS

Would those members in receipt of a Bankers Order Form from Bob Emmett please complete and return it as soon as possible (address on inside back cover).

WHERE TO GET WHAT

Current & Old Newsletters, SINC, Early Years and Teach Your Own - All from Membership Secretaries.

Stationery, Introductory Literature, envelope re-use labels (£1.50 per 100), Membership Forms, Posters and Handbills - From Co-ordinators Secretary.

Growing Without Schooling - Jill Gillings, Seacrest, Clayhead Baldrine, Isle of Man.

'SPECIAL NEEDS'

Supplement No. 3 - August 1987

I know you are busy/tired/fed-up with trying to write anything while the kids are posting your finished pages/the cat/the dinner down the loo.... but I need your contribution!

Sylvia Jeffs
16 St. Bernards Road, Solihull, West Midlands B92 7BB



!!!!!!
A special greeting to the Northumberland co-ordinators

*
Congratulations to Rosie and Rik on the birth of their bonny bairn, Joseph, a brother for Cassie. Lots of love and best wishes from all at Tyneside and Durham EO.

BIRTH OTHERWISE!

Carole, Colin, Keri and Gareth are delighted to announce that Dominic William Purves arrived safely on 29th April weighing 8lbs 1oz. (delivered, at home, by his Daddy!)



NEWS : FROM
THE : REGIONS

SOUTH YORKSHIRE:

There will be a meeting of the South Yorkshire Group on Saturday 27th June at 2pm with a view to starting a South Yorkshire Resource Centre.

Venue: St Peters White Church, Warmsworth Road, Warmsworth, Doncaster.

Directions: Just off Warmsworth turn off on the A1M. The white dome is visible from the motorway.

Public Transport: Sheffield & Rotherham bus travellers should ask for the bus stop after the A1M roundabout at Warmsworth - outside the Winning Post pub.

Please bring things to keep your children amused during the meeting. Also, please contact us if you are coming.

John and Pip Rupik.
Tel: Doncaster 85670

WEST YORKSHIRE:

Our next grown-ups meeting is at Sue Lyon's home: Rainbow Chalet, 6 Parkcliffe Road, Bradford 2, at 8.00pm on Monday 22nd June. We hope to have plenty of scrap material available including paper, card, fabric and leather.

One small room is now ready for use at our Learning Centre in Pudsey and is proving just right for workshop sessions of about eight or nine boys and girls; the room is also a good base for learning expeditions.

Peter Williams.
Tel: Pudsey (0532) 568940

BEDFORDSHIRE:

Our visit to Tring museum on April 7th was much enjoyed by sixteen local EOers even though rain diverted lunch to a local family's house instead of the Downs, as hoped for.

Lunch followed by a 'Victorian' afternoon with a magic lantern show is to be given by friends of local EOers at the end of April.

Please note, for all future contact - we have now moved to: 59 The Crescent, Amphill, Bedfordshire, MK45 2QS.
Tel: (0525) 405979.

Teresa Baines

LONDON OUTINGS:

Sunday 14th June
Syon Park, Brentford, Middlesex.
Meet Butterfly House 2.00.

Tuesday 14th July
Tour round Glasshouse at
65 Long Acre, W.C.2.
Meet 11.15 outside.
Please ring beforehand as I have to know numbers.

Thursday 24th July
Doggetts Coat and Badge Race (!)
on the Thames. London Bridge to
Chelsea Bridge. Starts 11.15am.

Monday 27th July
Museums. Meet at Natural History
Museum at 11.15.
Nearest Tube is South Kensington.
Free entry for EO group.

Tuesday 11th August
Trip up River to Greenwich. Meet 11.00
at Westminster Pier. Trips every 45
minutes. £2.90 adults, £1.40 children.
In Greenwich see Observatory, Park and
Cutty Sark.

Monday 24th August
Museums. As above.

Sunday 6th September
Kew Bridge Steam Museum,
Kew Bridge Road, Green Dragon Lane.
Meet here at 2.00.

Monday 21st September
Museums. As above.

Tuesday 13th October
Farriday Museum, Royal
Institution, 21 Albemarle Street, W.1.
Green Park Tube.
Meet in foyer at 11.15.

Monday 26th October
Museums. As above

Tuesday 10th November
All Hallows Church - Crypt/Museum, brass
rubbing, Saxon arch, Roman pavement.
See Tower Bridge. Tower Hill
Underground - meet in church at 11.15.

Please contact Sue Petzaft on
Lamberhurst 890624 in case of any
changes or queries.

ISLE OF WIGHT:

Notice of 2 Gatherings

1) Saturday 27th June -
at 11.00 am to 4.00pm to
celebrate Danny's 5th birthday and,
hopefully, Matty's discharge from
hospital.

2) Sunday 9th August, -
at 11.00am to 4.00 pm to
celebrate Leila's 9th birthday.

Both events are at our house and
garden. We hope to have painting etc.
in the garden (possibly building a
papier mâché cave too!). Members can
see what resources we have on offer
(books, games etc. for loan at a
minimal cost of 10p per month!). Food
will be available, again, at very low
cost (vegetarian). If anyone would
like to come from the mainland, we'd
love to meet them and can probably
arrange accommodation (couches, floors,
sleeping bags etc. - cots available)
for the weekends, if they ring me
first, so I know how many we need to
accommodate.

We'd love to see as many EOers as
possible, so do give me a ring and come
along to one or both events.

Look forward to meeting some of you.

Love, Jude, Matty, Leila and
Dan Ashley-Walker
1 The Firs, Dodpits, Ringwood, Isle of
Wight PO41 0TL
Tel: (0983) 78680

.....
WANTED!

Has anyone any prisms or lenses for
sale - or knows where they can be
obtained relatively cheaply? Also ...
if anyone who lives within reasonable
travelling distance would like to meet
up for visits to places of interest now
the weather is a lot brighter (Gavin is
nearly 13 and has been out of school
for the last couple of years and we
both enjoy getting out and about when
we can) please give us a ring on:
Halifax 205249.

Susan Dent,
7 Windmill Crescent,
Northoram, Halifax HX3 7DG

KENT:

Meet at 11.30am at the following
places:

- 12th June - Lympne Castle,
near Hythe
- 19th June - Aylesford Priory
- 3rd July - Whitbread Hop Farm,
near Paddockwood
- 10th July - Allington Castle
- 17th July - Bodiam Castle
- 31st July - Hollenden farm,
Hildenbrough.
- 7th Aug. - Trosley Country Park,
near Sevenoaks
- 14th Aug. - Romney, Hythe &
Dymchurch Railway,
Hythe.
- 21st Aug. - Shire Horses,
Haremere.
- 4th Sept. - Penshurst Place
- 25th Sept. - Canterbury Cathedral

Please contact Sue Petzaft on
Lamberhurst 890624 in case of any
queries.



BERKSHIRE:

It was very pleasant to meet so many
old and new EOers in Reading on the
28th March. Sixty four of us crammed
into one house! We had families
visiting from Gloucestershire and
Hampshire and we all talked and ate
until the sun went down. The middle of
April saw the first edition of the
"Berkshire Bulletin" giving information
about local activities, for which we
are grateful to Rivka Videan.
Send £3.00 for 12 monthly issues.

On 22nd April, our second meeting was
at Dinton Pastures. EOers of all sizes
went pond dipping and returned looking
very dipped themselves. Chris Pape
wore a fetching camouflage of green and
was almost lost under nets and dishes.
Again, eating and talking were our main
occupations and we were lucky in having
a warm and sunny day. Our next meeting
is a picnic at Russells Water Common
beyond Henley on 29th May.

Lynette Cameron
79 Whiteknights Road, Reading
RG6 2BB

ESSEX:

Wednesday 1st July -
Mole Hall Wildlife Park,
Widdington (between Thaxted & Newport)
off A11. There is an admission charge.
Meet near the entrance 11am. I shall
be enquiring if we might be able to get
a reduced rate for a group, although
this obviously depends on how many
people turn up.

Wednesday 22nd July -
Tilbury Fort, Tilbury (near the
Tilbury/Gravesend ferry). Meet by the
entrance at 11am. Unless the entrance
has since gone up, it costs 50p for
adults, 25p for children. Any families
in the Gravesend/Kent area who might
fancy coming across on the ferry are
very welcome to join us!

Wednesday 12th August -
to be arranged. Please contact me for
details.

As much as we "regulars" enjoy each
others company, it would be nice to see
some new faces at these meetings. If
you would like to find out more about
what goes on, or more details about our
planned meetings, please give me a
call. Incidentally, we are always open
to suggestions for meeting places, so
if you've any ideas or offers, do let
me know.

Sandie Cottee
17 South View Road, Rettendon
Common, Chelmsford, Essex.
Tel: Wickford (0268) 733259

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

I'm very grateful to Fiona and Paul
Handley for having us at their
delightful home in Little Gidding.

June 16th
Visit to the Zoological Museum,
Downing Site, Cambridge. Either meet
at the museum at 2.15, or at my house,
between 1-1.30, to walk there.

July 22nd
Janet Everdell's house/garden,
2-4pm. Bring your own tea. Hope to
see you there!

Sharon Blaukopf, 28 Harvey Goodwin Ave.
Cambridge, CB4 3EV

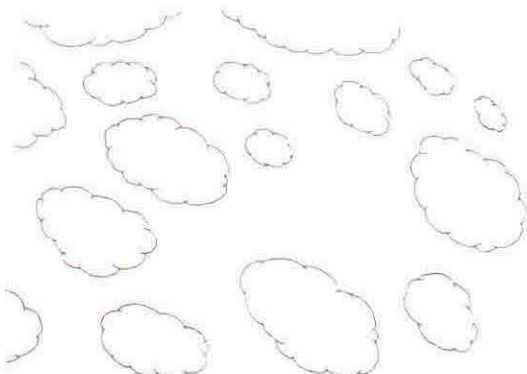
WORTH BUCKS:

We have had two very successful events
recently, on April 12th about ten
families met at our house for what
turned out to be a lovely (if somewhat
chaotic) tea. We also visited Stewart
Deuchar's smallholding to see the
lambs, and were made most welcome with
homemade biscuits!

We look forward to a long summer packed
with fun and activities - we are hoping
to get together to do woodwork and clay
and hopefully lots of picnics.

Please phone us for details -
and if you've any ideas of places to
visit/things to do we'd be
glad to hear of them

Valerie and James Common
19 New Road, Castlethorpe, Milton
Keynes MK19 7EH
Tel: (0908) 511247



"That's a cloud, too. They're all clouds."

LETTERS SECTION:

Dear E.O.

Please may I, through the Newsletter, thank all those kind people who wrote to me with their ideas about R.E. and their suggestions for reading. I'm sorry I can't reply to each one personally. If a future supplement on R.E. were planned, I'd be happy to pass on the reading lists. I do hope a useful debate on the topic will take place through the medium of the Newsletter.

Some of my correspondents asked about our life here. We have been in India since 1979. For the first six years we were working on a large village uplift programme, living, by village standards, in comparative comfort (i.e. with running water, cement floor and bathroom); now for the last six months we have been sharing a farmer's mud and thatch compound in an isolated village in the hills about 100 miles from the great temple city of Madurai. Here we are helping to set up a community health education project with a couple of Tamil colleagues.

Both our daughters (now 2 and 5) were born in India and are completely at home in the village. Many people ask: "What about their education?" - I can only point out of the door.

An Indian village child's life can be a happy and carefree one. Some take the goats or cows out to graze all day, and while the animals feed, the kids join the others at the river to swim, wash their clothes or, when the water is low, catch fish and cook them on a fire of sticks. Sometimes they climb a tree to get wild honey, or look for wild fruits in the fields or forest. There is a spiny cactus that gives an egg-sized fruit just like a raspberry sorbet; a tree that has twisty green pods whose pale green pith is almost sweet; and the ubiquitous lantana bush gives something like a blackberry with a figgy taste.

They know how to make toys with dried pods and sticks, and play games with stones and seeds. Sometimes they tie a thread to a captured butterfly and let

it flutter like a miniature kite (we tend to frown on this one). They make real kites out of old paper and coconut leaf-ribs in the windy season, and wrestle with logs floating down the river after a flash-flood. They know the birds - the slow flap of the white egret, the blue flash of the kingfisher, the chilling scream of the kite - and the insects: incredible huge metallic green beetles with gold spots, the leaf-like mantis, and a big hairy spider called the tree-tiger because of its striped legs.

At home in the village, there is always a young sibling to tote round on the hip (boys as well as girls take care of little ones), and plenty of jobs to do: feeding chickens, fetching grass for the animals, chopping firewood, running errands. At dusk they play hide and seek, tag, or singing games. Quite often, because religious rituals are such an integral part of village life, they play at worship, decorating a stone with flowers and coloured powders. This community is noted for its lawless ways, so we also have "cops and robbers", "woodcutters versus forest guards", and also, I'm afraid, "illicit liquor distillers versus police"! Sometimes they even play at funerals; - little girls sitting round keening in a good imitation of their elders. The village child is no stranger to death.

They high rides on bullock carts; run shrieking after the rare lorry, jeep or tractor that comes; and stand back in awe as the elephants go past on their way to work. (Our 5 year old, by virtue of her blond hair, sometimes gets a ride if they're going our way.)

So, although we have plenty of books and toys, how can I keep them in with all this going on outside the door? And how can the village schoolmaster expect these lively and resourceful kids to sit all day in his tiny, stuffy schoolroom (equipped with a damaged blackboard, a broken table and chair and a piece of chalk) and chant the alphabet? Education here is still equated with rote learning and parroting of facts



If you have read "A High Wind in Jamaica" by Richard Hughes, you will remember the opening pages describing the children's idyllic life out in the sun. After a particularly terrifying hurricane however, the parents decide they must send them all to school in England. The father's despairing outburst struck a chord in me, as it may in other readers, and I'd like to end with it:

"I wish schools had never been invented" he suddenly burst out: "they wouldn't then be so indispensable!" There was a short pause ... he went on: "I know what'll happen: they'll come away... mugs! Just ordinary little mugs, like any one else's brats! I'm dashed if I don't think a hundred hurricanes would be better than that."

Amen.

Caroline Walker
Valiparai, Thummakundu,
P.O., Narasinghapuram,
(via), Madurai Dist 626 579, S. India.

Dear E.O.,
I would like to correct an unfortunate 'Guardian' style typesetting error that appeared in the April Newsletter.

In my article "Elitist? Wealthy? Anti-Socialist or just dissatisfied?..." in which I criticised public schools (among other things), I was quoted as follows:

"I accept that it is therefore right to make such schools illegal."

This was not correct. What I had actually written was:

"I accept that a public school background can be a passport to privilege but I cannot accept that it is therefore right to make such schools illegal."

Someone mixed up the 'accepts'.

S. Middleton, 23 Plumstead Rd
Norwich NR1 4HF

Dear E.O.

I have just received my copy of the "updated" SINC and if I had received this publication when I was considering deschooling I would have been far too terrified to take the step!

The bottom of the first page states that this booklet "...offers only general guidelines and should not be used as a substitute for professional advice". To me as a new and green EDer that would have implied I need professional advice before such a step.

The section on deregistration is particularly and unnecessarily complicated and daunting. Most EO families have experienced no problems with deregistration at all and yet the whole section is written presupposing there will be. I do not like the quote either "if your child is not registered at a state school you are under no legal obligation to obtain permission from the LEA..." That to me implies that if your children are registered you need permission, and the words "permission" and "assent" appear several times in this context. EO is a RIGHT not an honour bestowed by the LEA.

Under the heading "Do I need qualifications to teach my children at home" SINC says "Qualifications may give confidence ... but they are not legally (or practically) necessary." As a potential new EDer I would much prefer to be encouraged by the fact that almost all EO parents are not qualified teachers. Was it also necessary to state "...there may be problems over qualifications if your child has not been deregistered."? How often is this really a problem in practice? Almost never I should guess!

There are a few lines of facilities available to EO families and virtually no advice on how to help the LEA fulfill its duty, i.e. keeping a diary, a record of books, TV and radio programmes etc.

I would also like to know why the first section on view to hopefully new members is a section slagging off

schools. They need real practical and supportive advice, something this publication is desperately lacking.

My comment to a fellow EOer on the telephone last night was that this publication had been written by someone not actually involved in home educating their own children. I was told someone not practising EO had been paid five hundred pounds for writing it!

So I am officially asking:

1. The author's name?
2. Is he/she a practising EOer?
3. Was a fee paid to the author?
4. If so, how much?
5. If a fee was paid, is this incompetent piece of work really what my subscription has been spent on?

I have asked the committee for answers in this newsletter before and received nothing. I think this time every member should know why such a publication was accepted as one suitable of attracting new membership, and who has the right to dispose of our funds so recklessly, if this is indeed the case.

This time I look forward to an answer.

Pip Rupik
17 Westmorland Street, Balby,
Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN4 9AQ

Dear E.O.
Further to my request in the February Newsletter, for information about existing embrionic educational projects for the forthcoming directory, thank you very much for contacting me with ideas and questions about what's going on all over the country. Please contact me with any further information and particularly let me know if you have been able to set up a community resource centre or are able to use local schools part-time or work within an existing family workshop or community project.

With many thanks.

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



P:E:N P:R:I:E:N:D:S

Dear E.O.,
Are there any E.O. teenagers with interests in the countryside, drawing and painting, travelling and walking that would be interested in meeting an enthusiastic teenager, if so please contact James Goodman at the address below or telephone 0480-890347.

Ann Goodman, Primrose Cottage,
High Street, Alconbury Weston,
Huntington, Cambs.

Dear E.O.
I am a 13 year old girl wanting a penfriend overseas of similar age. My hobbies include swimming, dancing, walking, cycling, music, drama, spinning, weaving and most other crafts. I love reading Agatha Christie books and adore animals. I'll answer all letters.

Kate Stobbs
Rhyd-y-Santwn, Moyle Grove, Cardigan,
Dyfed SA43 3BL

Dear E.O.
I am 17 years old and would like to write to a boy or girl in France or Italy. At college I study French, Italian, art and American history. My interests are most sports, languages, camping and photography. I'd like to give them the chance to visit England and for me to visit their country as one day I wish to work in these countries. I would also like to hear from other people in the U.K. who would like to visit these countries too.

Julie A. Yaxley
44 Queens Road, Great Yarmouth,
Norfolk NR30 3JR

May I contribute to the discussion on religious education in the newsletter? I think there are different ways of approaching this task, and of course the first way for a Christian would be, as Christopher Shute says, reading the Bible and following what Jesus taught. Even a parent who was not committed to a particular religion could do that. But if you are non-committal and take a wider view, how do you convey this to your children? That, I think, was Caroline Walker's question.

I would say that young children don't have the capacity to study comparative religion. If you teach them that one set of people thinks this, but another set of people thinks that, it confuses and worries them. They want to be told simple truths. Really, they need a firm foundation in one religion, from which they may later begin to look around and compare the different beliefs. It's only in adolescence, when they question everyone's authority and every dogma, that you can begin to have theological discussions with them, and then it helps if they have a firm platform from which, or against which, to argue. Thus, the parent who sits on the fence is somewhat limited as to what he or she can give to the child.

Rudolf Steiner brought a new approach to religion. If you look at it from his point of view, you see that of course all religions are interconnected and somewhere behind them is one truth. But different religions are appropriate for different cultures. I would say, go towards the religion that seems most suited to your feelings and circumstances, and use that as a starting-point with your children. This will not prevent them from taking a wider view later on. I find the study of Steiner's anthroposophical teaching very helpful for myself, as a remedy against the rather fixed approach of the established church we attend. Anthroposophy is full of surprises and seems to bring everything coherently together - Christ, Buddha, reincarnation, astrology, evolution, anything mystical you care to mention.

I would like to recommend the reading of folk-tales to the young. This might not seem relevant to religious education, but for the child to sit quietly and listen to the words of an old, much-loved story from the mouth of someone loved and respected, is one of the most spiritual experiences a parent can provide. The folk-tale works on many levels. Superficially it may appear sexist, racist, violent and brutal, or whatever, but this is not what speaks to the child. It is the adult who criticises: the child absorbs the symbolism. The oft-repeated theme of prince rescuing princess, for example, is not really about how marvellous men are and how helpless women are. The symbolism comes to us down the ages and something deep within us responds to it. If we tried to up-date the story and make the princess rescue the prince, we might well produce a clever story which would appeal to the adult intellect, but we would have destroyed the story for the child. Just watch how the child responds to the well-chosen folk-tale: drinking it all in, sighing with satisfaction at the end, and asking for the same story over and over again. Steiner said these stories provide nourishment for the soul. A child who has grown spiritually strong on such stories is best equipped as an adult to find a way through the jungle of materialism and dogma to the castle of truth.

For anyone who is interested to know what possible spiritual significance there may be in grim old Grimm's, I recommend "The interpretation of fairy tales" by Roy Wilkinson, obtainable from the author at Forester's Cottage, Highgate, Forest Row, East Sussex. RH18 5BA

Julia Galvin
11, Firtoft Close, Burgess Hill,
West Sussex RH15 8EE.



Dear E.O.

I am writing in reply to Teresa Baines letter in the last issue on the "obscene practice" of "inflicting corporal punishment" on children at home. There seems to me to be some false assumptions about home education couched in the language of her letter which needs to be examined.

By describing the act of smacking a child at home as "inflicting corporal punishment" she has redefined something which occurs in the home in terms of something which occurs in schools, and is thus, in effect, defining home education as simply a version of school education (would Teresa describe a home-educating mother as a "Head Mistress"?). Nothing, for most home educators, could be further from reality. Children growing up and learning in a loving family may sometimes be smacked or physically disciplined in other ways: the principles upon which such discipline is administered will perhaps vary from family to family but will have no possible relevance to the delegated bureaucratic violence inflicted in schools.

Some counties (and some countries) have abandoned the practice of corporal punishment. We should be aware, though, that this policy is not the result of any conviction that physical discipline of children is wrong *intrinsically* (would any government dare legislate in that direction?). It comes about rather from the (enlightened) belief that the exercising of such powers belongs firmly in the hands of the parent. The up-shot of this is to recognise that Teresa Baines "obscene practice" can be obscene only in her own mind: while she is perfectly welcome to hold that view with regard to her own children, I believe that such a view is wrong, and that any attempt to regulate the behaviour of other parents by it would be misguided.

The responsibility enjoined upon us of considering our children's wishes (in the 'Aims' on the back cover) are regulated by the phrase "with due allowance for their age and understanding". A child may dislike a smack as he dislikes vaccinations; but

both, if administered wisely, may do that child good and render further medication unnecessary.

Simon Alderson,
2 Moor Barns Farm Cottages,
Madingley Road, Coton, Cambridge
CB3 7PG.

Dear E.O.

It always seems that E.O. parents are exceptionally kind to children, so I was dismayed to read Teresa Baines' letter about corporal punishment. It used to be the norm that children's spirits should be broken by spanking, but most people no longer believe in "original sin". They like and trust their children, and are ashamed of the quick slap in a moment of stress and exhaustion.

The sexuality of spanking may not be clear to parents who are unthinkingly bringing up their children as they were brought up, but it emerges very plainly in psychotherapy. Here it can be seen that suffering such experiences as a child can merge with inflicting them on one's own children to produce a murky tangle of (often subconscious) sexual fantasies. Apparently there is even a magazine for parents who believe in spanking - they share all the fine detail of how long they make children wait after they send them to their rooms, and all the ways they humiliate them by making them participate in their punishment, such as by fetching the instrument and removing clothing, and so on and on.

If a child behaves so badly that a parent needs to spank as a desperate means of regaining temporary control, then E.O. parents in particular should realise that there is something wrong with the whole situation, and something in their way of life needs radically rethinking. Is the family too rushed and pressured? Do the parents want their own way too much - are they so insecure that they can't tolerate imperfections in their children which may reflect on themselves? Is there something worrying the child, with which (s)he isn't getting help? Is somebody allergic to something? Worst of all perhaps, are children not being

seen as people in their own right, but as possessions which the parents are moulding to their liking? We all find ourselves in this situation to varying extents, and with this problem as with others there is scope for a greater degree of mutual support among E.O. families.

The law talks about "reasonable" discipline, which means in effect that the legal position changes as society changes. Social institutions such as the N.S.P.C.C., social service departments, and ultimately the courts, will rightly interpret the law in the light of the prevailing ethos. Punishment which reflects the thinking of a generation ago may no longer be judged so appropriate by the standards of today.

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

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Dear EO,
I was greatly annoyed by Heather Farquharsons letter about religious education (April Newsletter p.13) - peddling the myth that Christianity has a monopoly on the truth - "...I believe the whole truth is embodied only in Jesus". This blinkered view of spirituality has led to the three major religions of the world, Christian, Jewish and Muslim, being three of the most oppressive organisations in history. I only hope she teaches her children about the persecution of the witches, the Spanish Inquisition, the 'missionaries' treatment of the natives of Africa, North and South America and all the other atrocities carried out in the name of Christianity.

It is interesting that the spiritual teachings of native peoples throughout the world make no such claim to have monopolies on the Truth. They are far more concerned about people fulfilling their whole potential in life. I would suggest that anybody looking for a suitable set of spiritual teachings compatible to the beliefs of EO should try looking at native teachings, the most accessible probably being those of the American Indian.

Chris Coates, 58 Clarence St., Burnley.

Dear EO,
We are a French family living in Paris. Our son Jesselin, born in January 1979, would like to live with a British family - with a son of the same age - during several months to learn English and share another way of life.

Then, your son would come home and live with us during the same period.

We are both teachers and devote our time to our children (we have a second boy, Ulysse, born in December 1984).

Martine & Jacque Pujo
27 Rue Saint Blaise, 75020, Paris.



Child Benefit

Inefficiency and procrastination bedevil the Child Benefit Appeals now before the Commissioners. Pages omitted, questions unanswered, arrogant assumptions made without legislative right - this is the picture of a battle against the DHSS. How empty life will be when we have won!

Our battle continues for the 16 year olds who want to begin to be educated at home or who have never been approved in their home education by the LEA. Up to now, the DHSS has ignored all educational evidence and turned down such claimants on DHSS law alone. Since an Act of Lords' finding last June, this may no longer be possible. We may have to go to Judicial Review, however, to win this point.

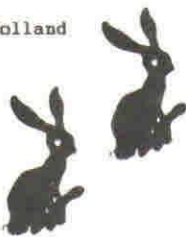
EOers now approaching 15+ may expect enquiries about the continuation of their education. As long as the answer "home education as approved by the LEA will continue before and after the 16th birthday" is given, Child Benefit should now continue up to 19 years while in full-time education wherever received.

Lynette Cameron
79 Whiteknights Road,
Reading RG6 2BB.

BOOK REVIEWS

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. Please enclose a stamped envelope (A4) for each publisher you wish approached.

Helen Holland



HELP YOUR CHILD - SCIENCE EXPERIMENTS books 1 - 4

by various authors
Published by Hodder and
Stoughton, price 95p

We discovered these excellent books about six months ago and have found them invaluable. The experiments are fun to do and require easily obtainable household items. Each book covers a different scientific concept and is set out with amusing line drawings which make learning science fun. 'Machines' is about skills and concepts involved in mechanics. 'Electricity and Magnetism' is the most interesting of the set as it involves the use of magnets which are quite easily obtained in good toy shops. All of the experiments in this book are safe because in the electricity section of it only a 4.5 volt battery is used. All in all a very useful set of books. Highly recommended.

The four books are:
Biology
Machines
Physics and Chemistry
Electricity and Magnetism.

Jennifer Linsel
5 Haven Walk, Hartlepool,
Cleveland TS24 0HL

The following were all reviewed
by Helen Holland:

WILL YOU READ ME A STORY

by Tony Bradman
Published by Thorsons
(paperback £2.50)

This is described as the parents guide to childrens books and the author does indeed discuss why books are important, which books are right for your child, how to choose and use childrens books. There is also a list of childrens bookshops around the U.K.

THE PUFFIN BOOK OF BRAINTRASERS

by Eric Emmett (paperback £1.95)

A really satisfactory collection of tantalising puzzles that need logical reasoning and ingenuity if not mathematical skill. There are some good general suggestions as well as individual hints and the puzzles are graded into three categories.

HOW TO CATCH TIDDLERS

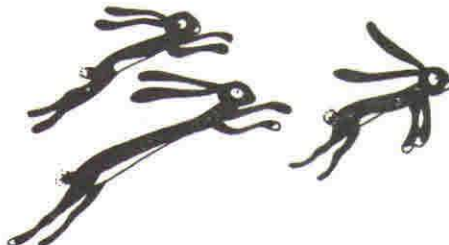
by Ian Russell
Published by Puffin (£1.50)

A really interesting and useful book full of information about how to catch these fascinating creatures either in the sea or from the banks of a river or pond. You can also learn a lot about the lives of many different kinds of tiddlers and how to treat them carefully.

KINGS & QUEENS

by Eleanor & Herbert Farjeon
Published by Puffin (£1.50)

A collection of poems to remind us of every English monarch since William I. There are amusing line drawings by Robin Jacques and this minor classic will entertain historians of any age.



TU PARLES! and TU PARLES ENCORE?

by Vee Harris and Liz Roselman
ABGENACHT!
by Sue Scullard
published by Arnold Wheaton

These books actually come in pairs and are designed to be used by two people practising dialogue in French and German. Having acquired a basic knowledge of either language you and your partner can practise such situations as shopping for food, explaining how a car accident happened, arranging a meeting. Useful vocabulary and expressions are given and there is a cassette to accompany the German book.

**PETER IN BLUEBERRY LAND
& CHILDREN OF THE FOREST**

by Elsa Beskow
Published by Floris Books
(hardback £5.95 each)

These are two enchanting old fashioned picture books published for the first time over a century ago in Scandinavia. They are totally whimsical and many of today's children may be far too sophisticated to enjoy them, but others may love the bright clear pictures of forest scenes and identify with the "wee folk" who sail in nutshell boats and feed the squirrels, ride on cobweb swings and collect cranberries.



HOME EDUCATION AND THE LAW

by David Deutsch and Kolya Wolf,
A4, 13 pages, price £2.00 (now available in a laser printed version which replaces the original dot matrix printout)

We were delighted to read this paper by David Deutsch and Kolya Wolf (see April Newsletter, pages 11-12). It is a closely argued, well written and authoritative account of the legal rights and duties of parents with non-registered children. It will increase the confidence of home educating parents and help them to stand up to

officials who try to intimidate them. We hope that it will enable a lot more co-ordinators and experienced members openly to support families who are being harassed. It is also a very appropriate document to send to both LEAs and solicitors.

Our only reservation is that a very uncompromising parent might interpret "no legal duty" to do various things as "no need" to do any of them. It is important to be confident, but it is also important to be "reasonable" and not unduly obstructive. (One family who won an appeal had to pay heavy costs because of this.) If you refuse to do something, explain why courteously in writing, and offer to do what you are prepared to do. Conflict is not always the LEAs fault - we have seen some rude and arrogant letters to them from members.

One of the points made by the authors, then, is that evidence of education may be submitted in a variety of forms, at the choice of the parent. In particular, LEA inspectors have no automatic right to enter the home or to have access to the child. The majority of EOers have always argued that it is easier to co-operate to the extent of letting inspectors visit by appointment; but we are concerned at the number who feel pressured by this to force the children into conventional exercise-production. *The Tweedie Case* (Deutsch and Wolf, p.6) clearly shows our right to refuse visits, but we should only do so if we are able to provide evidence in an alternative form. We ourselves have not explicitly refused visits, but our own LEA appears so far to have been satisfied with a detailed report, in which we translate our free-flowing activities into categories with which they may be more comfortable. One solution to the debate on access to the children might be to ask a friend who is a health worker to confirm that the children are physically and emotionally well cared for. (This is not strictly relevant to the 1944 Act, but in practice it should resolve any doubts about the child's general welfare and pre-empt any consideration of care proceedings.) Other friends or EO contacts may provide expert witness to the quality of certain aspects of educational

provision. All this may or may not be more trouble than a home visit, depending on your particular adviser. A suggestion from Julie Lyons is that one could bargain over a home visit, laying down conditions such as receiving a copy of the actual report the inspector makes. Personally, we would never allow testing.

We are also concerned about members who have been harassed, who've been helped to stand up to the LEA, but who still feel threatened and keep a low profile. The family has taken back control over a major part of its life, and should delight in the freedom this creates - not feel as some do that they daren't let the kids out during school hours. The feeling of autonomy spreads into other areas of life, so it's easier to cope in general - but this cannot happen if parents are anxious about a knock on the door. We hope this paper will give them the confidence to enjoy their home educating.

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

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INTO GEOGRAPHY

Books 1 and 2
by Patricia & Steve Harrison
and Mike Pearson.
Published by Arnold Wheaton

Subtitled "The Geography of the Environment" these two books are from a series of four, aimed at primary and middle schools. Accompanying teachers books are available. I consider them well-suited to home learning.

In this home, geography starts from our own community - how local geology, history, resources have influenced our surroundings. Book 1 carried on from there, describing the environments observed by four British children (two of Indian origin) and their pen pals in the USA and India. Thus subjects such as weather, direction, farming and transport are dealt with in ways that many children can identify with personally. It introduces the use of pie diagrams, pictograms, record keeping, bar graphs, charts, symbols

and diaries, as well as the obligatory maps.

There are question and answer assignments in each two-page section, some of the "what if..." type which actually involve intellectual effort rather than regurgitation. There are also "one step further" assignments which include ideas suitable for projects lasting minutes or weeks (e.g. recording the weather). This might be useful for siblings of different ages learning together.

The first page of Book 1 annoyed me by implying that all animals have a fixed home - a wild inaccuracy for many human animals (nomads? tramps?) let alone the four-legged kind. Once I'd got over that, I thought this colourfully illustrated, lively book was smashing.

Book 2 reaches out further, to communities beyond our experience, and introduces more sophisticated ideas - energy conservation, scale drawing, water services. I award it top marks for actively attacking stereotypes of foreigners (as well as sexual and racial stereotypes) and for facing such awkward facts as Third World child mortality and homelessness in Britain. In fact, the section on homelessness was so powerful, it worried me. Having shown how a child and her mother become homeless, it leaves the situation unresolved. This needs sensitive and well-informed follow-up to avoid creating anxieties and arm the reader to cope with such situations.

Each book shares the same varied and interesting format. Each contains a spread sheet at the back, showing which skills have been exercised on which themes. These would be useful models to use for other subjects: have we used questioning skills, furthered open-mindedness and world-citizenship, conveyed the concepts of self-sufficiency, cause and effect or conservation? I shall learn more than geography from these books.

Ken, aged 8, whose attention was so riveted by Book 1 that he continued reading it in bed, comments: "These books are good. They go up in stages, getting harder and harder. If you read the first one and like it, you can go

on to the other three. They are about proper life: a dairy farm, choosing a house to buy, a superstore, using water. Book 2 has got more plans than Book 1, e.g. the floor plan of a leisure centre. They cover a wider range of subjects and countries than the geography book I used to have at school. Book 2 tells how they put a pump in at an Indian village which didn't have clean water and how they still needed a man to service it afterwards and check that the water was clean."

Jan Shimmis
5 Southview, Ditchling, Hassocks,
Sussex BN6 8TQ

CREATIVE FORM DRAWING - workbook 1
by Rudolf Kutzli, translated by
Roswitha Spence
Hawthorn Press (£9.95 softback)

'Form drawing is an artistic activity using the art of line'. It was used in the Middle Ages in manuscript illuminations as well as wood and stone carvings and is also found in tribal cultures for body ornamentation, clothes and architecture.

The book consists of a series of exercises to develop drawing skills by showing how the art of form drawing can be used. 'Through following the exercises we can become aware of capacities within us, such as self-confidence and equilibrium. The activity of form drawing may become a path of self discovery.'

It's a fascinating book to read and work through, yet not so easy to do justice to by way of review. I have worked through three sections of exercises. (The book is divided into four such sections.) It takes time, however, to master various exercises and it's not possible to rush through these and do justice to them and gain satisfaction with the results. There are clear instructions and directions and guidance on 'the path of self discovery'. Some of the exercises appear fairly easy, but as I came to explore further I began to want to experiment with various line forms



rather than rushing on to the next. It therefore takes over all your concentration as you progress and this is very stimulating and challenging.

The four sections of the book are well introduced and the background information on the history of form drawing is fascinating to read.

My review copy appeared to have a printing error on page 93 where a section of the text describing exercises 56-61 was omitted and was printed out of sequence on page 95. Presumably this has been corrected by the publishers already.

Form Drawing is a fascinating art form and this is a clear introduction to it. People of all ages and abilities would find it interesting and stimulating - provided they work at their own pace and in their own manner.

Hilary Forster
3 Hendrick Drive, Chepstow, Gwent.



I LIKE THIS STORY
chosen by Kaye Webb
Published by Puffin (£2.95)

A collection of excerpts that give an excellent taste of the best of modern children's literature. This is the 2,000th Puffin to be published. Kaye Webb, who was editor of Puffin Books for eighteen years, explains briefly what she likes about each author and why she has chosen each extract. A dip into these pages will promptly encourage visits to library or bookshop in pursuit of the originals.

Helen Holland

ACCESS TO PERSONAL FILES BILL

Letter from Archy Kirkwood M.P.

The following is an extract from the latest letter from Archy Kirkwood concerning the Access to Personal Files Bill. The shortened, revised Bill he refers to is not his own amended draft which included access to records on home educated children and which was approved in its Second Reading in February.

"As you know, the government had made it clear that the Bill would only be allowed to proceed in a much restricted form, possibly covering housing, social work and education records.

Following more discussions with ministers I agreed to introduce a shortened revised Bill, based on a draft prepared by the Home Office. The Bill was considered by the Committee, and approved by it on April 1st. It is due to have its Report stage in the Commons on April 24th.

The new Bill is an "enabling Bill". It replaces a general duty on authorities to give access to records in accordance with regulations which are to be made under it. The regulations will specify the exemptions that are to apply, and the procedures for obtaining access or correcting records.

The government has given a commitment to introduce the necessary regulations and to make every effort to do so by the end of 1988.

The regulations will cover three areas: housing, social work and school records. Because powers to make regulations on access to school records already exist under the 1980 Education Act, the regulations will be made under this Act rather than under the Bill....."

I am probably being very unfair to Archy Kirkwood in saying that this looks a bit feeble but nonetheless, it looks a bit feeble. It was inevitable that medical records would be dropped because of strong opposition from the BMA, but now employment records, immigration records, bank and building society records, benefit records and education records, other than those relating to school pupils, have all been dropped too.

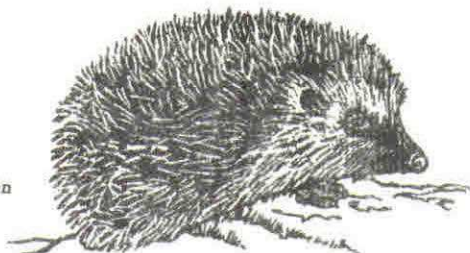
However, we do not have to accept this and forget about having access to the records affecting us. We have a strong bargaining position in that we have no legal duty to allow the likes of education advisors into our homes or to give any particular facility to education authorities. Our relationship with LEA's is based on co-operation and there is no reason why that co-operation should be one-sided. Families who want to see advisors' reports can ask the LEA for access, and perhaps, consider making the right to access a condition of allowing future visits. It may be more effective if a number of families in an authority make a joint request. It would certainly be difficult for an LEA to justify refusing access to such records in the face of a determined joint approach. Anyway, I would be interested to know what happens if anyone decides to request advisors' reports or other records. (Incidentally, Barnsley LEA have agreed to supply copies of advisors' reports and if Barnsley can be persuaded any LEA can)

Julie Lyons
56 Newtown Avenue, Royston, Barnsley. S70 4HB

E.O. Camp at Thornham Field Centre

17th to 21st August

We are again arranging a camp for children between the ages of 9 and 14 who are educated out of school.



THE CENTRE: Thornham Field Centre is set among fields, woods and parkland in central East Anglia just south of Diss. It is equipped for the study of the plants and animals of the locality. The Centre is surrounded by nature trails and is part of a complex of buildings which include a sawmill, craft workshops, a tennis court and a small swimming pool.

TIME: The camp will run from mid-day on Monday 17th to the afternoon of Friday 21st August.

ACCOMMODATION: Will be in tents on a camp site near the centre. Tents may be hired or brought.

AGE: Activities are designed for 9 to 14 year olds who are fairly confident about being away from home. Eight year olds may be considered in special circumstances. The camp is for children who do not go to school but again others may be considered.

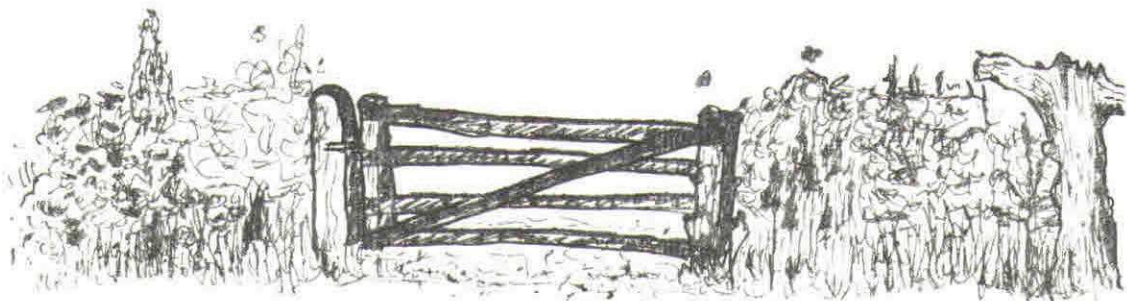
ORGANISATION AND SUPERVISION: The camp is organised by Bruce Cox, Grey Row, St. Margaret S. Elmham, Horleston, Norfolk IP20 0PL (tel: St. Cross - 098682 - 315). Groups will be supervised by the staff of the Centre and by E.O. members. There will be a variety of organised activities at the camp, though there will be some free time each day. Detailed activities are not yet planned but we hope to include conservation, woodcraft, orienteering, drama and the making of a magazine. The camp is designed to give experience of learning and working as a group and is not simply a camping holiday.

FOOD: This will be mainly wholefood vegetarian but we will try to ensure that other foods are available. Dietary supplements may be obtained from the local shop!

FEES: Basic cost is £27.00 per head, £32.00 if a tent is hired.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS: Sometimes shared travel arrangements may be possible. Children can be collected from Diss Station.

BOOKINGS: Should be sent to Eleanor Cox (see address above). Cheques should be made payable to Education Otherwise, either the full cost or a deposit of £5.00 per child. Full payment should be made before the end of July. Enquiries should be made by telephone if possible. When booking please give age of children and some idea of their interests.



Launch Pad at the London Science Museum

Launch Pad is a large new permanent exhibition at the London Science Museum in South Kensington, on the theme of technology, where all the exhibits are 'hands on' experiments for visitors to do themselves.

At any one time about seventy separate items are included, which are replaced at the rate of one every six weeks. Ideas from the public, especially children, are welcome. Any suggestion is seriously considered, and if possible, put through experimental stages in adjoining workshops.

Exhibits at present include:

Beamed Voices:

Send a message to your friend at the other end of the gallery by bouncing the sound waves between two parabolic reflectors.

Energy Store:

Co-operate with other visitors to pump water up into the storage tank. Then see it pour down and drive the Pelton wheel to produce electricity.

Grain Pit:

Use hand operated conveyor belt, bucket chain, augurs and other equipment to move real grain around the exhibit.

Look Here:

Explore the possibilities of prisms and other optical items by looking through these giant monacles.

River Bridge:

How wide a bridge can you build from seven blocks? The boat must fit under it.

Teach a Turtle:

A turtle shaped robot moves around its pen controlled from a computer with an infra-red link. Program a simple set of instructions into the computer to make the turtle do what you want.

... to name but a few.

Demonstrations of more messy or dangerous procedures or experiments are performed each day by trained staff.

Michael Williams, the director of Launch Pad, is very sympathetic to visits from E.O. families, and would welcome ideas for future exhibits.

We are meeting in Launch Pad every fourth Monday in each month.

Next meeting is on 29th June at 11.00 am. Entrance free.

Please ring Anne Wade on 01-904 7155 to confirm.



NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Since admission charges were introduced on 1st April Rob Wade has applied for individual free entrance for E.O. families. Results of his efforts hopefully by August Newsletter, red tape pending. Meanwhile, a group entrance is being booked for the fourth Monday each month. Please ring Anne Wade on 01-904 7155 to confirm.

As 'teachers' we can gain free admission at any time to research our forthcoming 'school' visit - but children must pay (ages 5 to 15 at £1) if we take them with us! Entrance for adults and children as part of a 'school' booking is free. (Contributed by Poppy Green, with special thanks to Jo.)

IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO OFFICERS AND CO-ORDINATORS

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For the audited accounts to be an accurate statement of EO's financial position they must mention amongst the debts all expenses which officers and co-ordinators have incurred, but for which they have not been reimbursed on the day of reckoning.

EO's day of reckoning is June 30th, and I would be very grateful if all officers and co-ordinators could complete the form below and return it to me by the end of the first week in July even if their expenses to June 30th are nil. Only in this way will the auditors be able to be certain that all debts will have been counted.

I apologise for the formality which is so much at variance to the traditional manner of conducting affairs within EO but which is, I'm afraid, one of the prices that has to be paid for the benefits of being a limited company.

The completing and despatching of this form should only constitute "extra" work for those whose total expenses to June 30th are nil. For all others the completed form will be treated as an expenses claim and so will forestall the necessity of claiming expenses at a later date. - Alison Mafham -

STATEMENT OF EXPENSES INCURRED BEFORE BUT NOT SETTLED BY
JULY 1st, 1987 BY:

NAME:

ADDRESS:

.....

OFFICE HELD WITHIN E.O.

Date (approx) on which last claim for expenses was submitted:

.....

Expenses incurred since that date but before July 1st, 1987 for:

Postage

Printing/Photocopying etc.:

Phone calls:

Other (please specify):

TOTAL:

Signature:

Date:.....

When completed please return this form to:

Alison Mafham, 3 Park Road West, Curzon Park, Chester CH4 8BQ

EDUCATING ARCHIE: Flaming June

ah, June at LAST

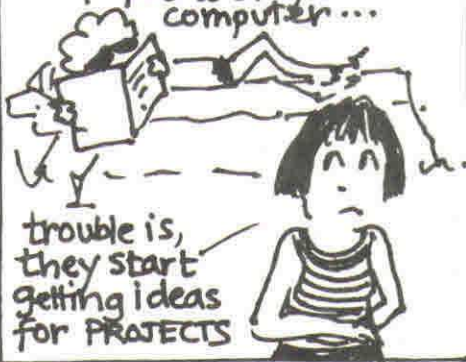


it's so much easier when they're able to go outside



- I find they get so cross cooped up indoors all winter watching the news

Why not make a list of all the plants & then put it on your computer...



trouble is, they start getting ideas for PROJECTS



or do a nice drawing of the POND

it's OK MUM I'm going to do some maths AND biology..



.. seeing how MUCH icecream I can eat without being sick

LB01/DES 7
BY SEG/1997

BO OFFICERS

General Secretary	Joan Hoare 25 Moor Oak Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire. Tel: 0742 666605
Membership Secretaries	Bruce and Christine Wallace 25 Diabaig, Achnasheen, Ross-shire IV22 2HE Tel: 044581 225
Enquiries Secretary	Janet Everdell 25 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots, Cambs PE18 9AN Telephone Help Line: 0480 63130
Co-ordinators Secretary	Andy Anderson 95 Derrington Avenue, Crewe Cheshire CW2 7JA Tel: 0270 664060
Public Relations Officer	Joseph O'Conner 4 Coombe Gardens, New Malden, Surrey KT3 4AA Tel: 01 942 0286
Publishing Secretary	Lesley Kilbride Fearnmore, By Sheildaig Strathcarron, Wester Ross, IV54 8XX Tel: 052 05 278
Treasurer	Alison Mafham 3 Park Road West, Curzon Park, Chester Tel: 0244 677452
Subscription Renewals and Membership List	Bob Emmett 12 Taylor Avenue, Dolgarrog, Conway, Gwynedd, LL32 8JN Tel: 049269 355
Reviews Editor	Helen Holland Inholm Farm, Plumpton Green, Near Lewes, Sussex. Tel: 0273 890405

REGIONAL ENQUIRIES SECRETARIES

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

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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.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Send a 9" x 4" s.a.e. to:
25, COMMON LANE,
Hemingford Abotts,
Cambridgeshire,
PE18 9AN

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