

EDUCATION

OTHERWISE

newsletter 55



OCTOBER 1987

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NEXT EDITOR
(December 1987)

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Contributions for the next edition should be sent to the editor 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.

SUPPLEMENT EDITOR: CHILDREN'S PULL OUT CHRISTMAS SUPPLEMENT
(Contributions please from all ages). "Christmas Crankers Celebrate Again"

CRANKERS seeks E.O. prankers, giggly gamesters, riddle writers, graffiti artistes, humorous humourists, and NUGGETS of seasonal wisdom for the old and young in the next Christmas issue. Send your tickly contributions to: CRANKERS + Family, Wayside Farm, Etchilhampton, Devizes, Wilts SN10 3JT

DEADLINE:- 1st NOVEMBER

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EDITORIAL



Benedict, 2½, changes the nappies on his two imaginary babies with scrupulous care, using embarrassingly familiar phrases as he talks to them. Theone, just one year old, folds her hands angelically for family prayers. The good times with children are very good indeed - far too good to miss out on.

In many respects, our lifestyle is fairly traditional - Alexandra (housewife par excellence) looks after the home and children whilst I pursue my career as the director of a software consultancy. But already we are viewed by some as eccentric. No TV frees us all to pass the time constructively and to form our own opinions - some people find this threatening. The importance we place upon the family unit (we enjoy being together, learning together, living together) and upon the environment in which we live (we are fortunate in being able to provide both the time and the materials to encourage our children's development) is regarded by some as insular and self-centred. We are unpopular with the hospital because (as they now accept) we decide whether overnight admission is necessary when Benedict receives treatment for a knock or a bleed (he has Haemophilia). Similarly, we joined E.O. four years ago because we intend to oversee our children's education. Not that they belong to us - but because we know them best, we love them most and we believe in all sincerity that the ultimate responsibility for their upbringing lies with us.

* * * *

Now that bit's over and done with, let me pose a question. Why are you reading this newsletter? The one answer which, I think, would be true for the greatest number of people is - because of some interest in home education.

The reasons behind such interest are many - perhaps as many as there are readers. You are involved with - or are contemplating - home education. Or you support the home education movement for professional or academic reasons. At a deeper level, maybe the interest is motivated by religious or philosophical convictions - or experiences from your own childhood - or a desire to reaffirm your unique role as a parent. I could go on (and without a few more contributions for the newsletter articles, I may have to!)

I am fascinated by the diversity of life and lifestyle expressed through the newsletter and through correspondence and meetings with other E.O. members. I am encouraged by the determination of so many who have opened our eyes to the challenges and the struggles, as well as the rewards, of giving their best to their children. I have, on reflection, learned a lot from people whose views are diametrically opposed to my own (though I still disagree with them!)

E.O. needs such diversity. It may be difficult at times to cope with the views of others, and I think perhaps more established E.O.ers must have an independent streak within them which makes the task no easier. But we live in a diverse society, we are obliged to deal with all sorts of people as we go through life, and our children are growing up into that same diversity. What are they learning from our example? Are they learning to value other people whether they agree with them or not? Are they learning to glean things of truth even from those whom they dislike? Or are they learning to be intolerant, impatient, prejudiced? If we, united behind the cause of home education, are constantly arguing amongst ourselves, it's not doing us any good and it doesn't bode well for our children. Surely it would be far better to accept that viewpoints are bound to differ from one member to another - there's plenty of room for all and who knows, the article which makes me boil may give a

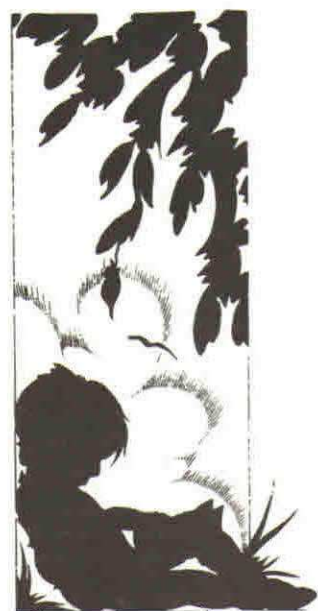


vital something to someone else. Conversely, the supercilious criticism may be the final blow to someone's confidence. Constructive criticism, fine, but let's concentrate on making the newsletter a positive and informative vehicle for ideas and experiences, questions and suggestions, news and information. (And we're grateful for the many letters subsequently received which have said these very same things).

We've tried to work towards making the newsletter 'positive and informative' in this issue - not an easy task given a million letters on religious views and the faint promise of supplement, cartoon and book reviews! (I write before the end of August.) Some of the correspondence has been condensed - I hope we've been fair to those who have written. We were most grateful for Janet Everdell's article, 'E.O. - such a good idea' where, writing from her own experience, she feels that E.O. is too good an idea to throw away amidst petty arguments. After all, love and concern for our own children - and other people's - is the common thread running through E.O. In all other respects, membership is diverse. I for one am very grateful to the 'key' people within E.O. who have persevered to hold the organisation together - we need your experience of the opportunities, pitfalls, rewards and setbacks in home education.

Happy reading!

Christopher Wilson.



YOUR LETTERS...

Dear E.O.,

My son is now three and I've been an E.O.er at heart for the past 15 years, really ever since I trained as a teacher and became excited with the alternative works of writers such as Illich, Rheimer, Holt, Steiner (to a degree), etc., to name-drop just a few.

However, we live in a town where my son sees children constantly to-ing and fro-ing from school and he admires the 'big children'. I tell him that some children go to school and some don't but all his cousins and older friends do go. As I don't intend to have other children, the social aspect of E.O. worries me, although Rachel from N. Yorkshire was an inspiration.

Next 'term' I shall be running a small informal playgroup on two mornings a week and wonder if this will compromise my E.O. principles.

I would be interested to hear other people's views on, and experiences with, playgroups generally. Also, how do other E.O.ers cope with their children's interest in schools and has anyone been firmly told by their five year old that he/she intends to go to school?

Collette Bradley
4 Rosemary's Parlour, North Street, Midhurst, W. Sussex, GU29 9DR

Dear EO,

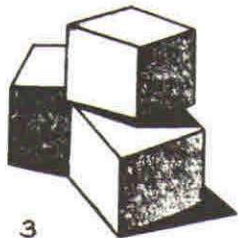
We found Newsletter 54 a good read and echo the last sentences of the editorial; learning is fun, life is short. Let us all get on with it.

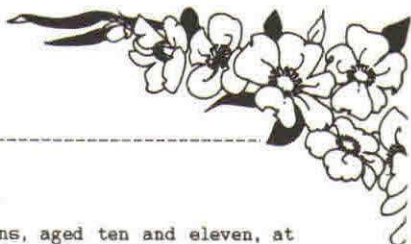
We're all entitled to opinions and reactions. However, we welcomed those contributions written in a constructive and mutually beneficial manner, from Margaret Gilbert, Jackie Fearnley, Frances Howard and Jenni White, on subjects of special education, approaching religion and individual learning experiences.

Let's have more information in the Newsletter. We have been members of EO for nearly a year and discovered from Newsletter 54 that an EO library exists. What a good idea! Where is it?

Come on EO - when new members join, let us have some information about what you have to offer. Those of us unfortunate enough to miss meetings rely on the Newsletter for news and information.

Chris and Christine Park
Salt Pye, Hillside, Thurlstone, Sheffield, S30 6QJ





Dear E.O.,

After much thought, I have decided to educate my two sons, aged ten and eleven, at home. I must thank you for your extremely helpful booklet, 'School is not Compulsory', which told me all that I needed to know when informing the 'powers-that-be' of my decision. I have also decided to renew my subscription to E.O. for another year, also after much thought. Perhaps I am wrong, but the newsletter always seems to include letters which make learning a dirty word and a structured day something to be avoided at all costs. Am I alone, in hoping to impart to my children a joy of learning in a fairly structured framework, culminating in examinations which, after all, are the passport to many jobs? If children are not disciplined, in the nicest sense of the word, how are they to be equipped for the disciplines of adult life? Perhaps, therefore, the newsletter could include "good, factual and useful articles: hints and tips on the everyday task of learning" as Pip Rupik suggests. As it is, I think the newsletter imparts such a one-sided view that you are in danger of losing many of your members, who are perhaps frightened into silence.

Anthea Franklin
Bridle House, Brent Pelham, Buntingford, Herts, SG9 OHE

Dear E.O.,

The "Rights Guide to Non-means-tested Social Security Benefits" published by the Child Poverty Action Group has just issued its tenth edition, for 1987/8.

It is an excellent book, full of information which I am sure will be of interest to many of our members, covering just about every benefit I've ever heard of - and then more!

Section 5 - Benefits for Children, mentions a point very much in debate recently, stating:-

"The Social Security Act 1986 s70 has further amended the definition of 'child' so that it now includes those children receiving education otherwise than at school (e.g. at home) up to the age of 19, providing that the Secretary of State is satisfied with the education being provided for the child. Child benefit becomes payable again if a person under 19 returns to education after a period of work or unemployment."

The last sentence here might be interesting to children who have been refused Child Benefit whilst doing an apprenticeship or similar short-term training - I doubt that they were actually *told* they could re-apply once the project was finished!

On the whole, a good book for every home, I think; written clearly and concisely by Jan Luba and Mark Rowland. Price £4.50

Jackie Wilson
Mount Pleasant, Abercych, Boncath, Dyfed, SA37 OHJ





LETTERS - CONTINUED

Dear E.O.

Peter Williams suggests that people leave E.O. because there is 'too much squabbling in the newsletter'. Constructive exchange - the considered rather than the gut reaction - usually occurs in an atmosphere of tolerance. Could the problem lie in these areas?

Peter surely contributes to the difficulties with his well-intentioned but over-zealous rider to the piece in Education Through The Press (August 87 'Low IQ not adventure kills on roads').

There is no illogicality in the part of the statement he criticises: children may be subjected to the same situations but their perceptions of them are bound to differ; indeed, individual differences between children are often well understood by E.O.ers.

None of us is a passive receiver of impressions. The perception of identical situations will differ because it is affected by numerous factors including temperament, sex, age, culture, environment, immediate situation and previous experience. Meaning will be affected accordingly. The only common factor is that we all have the same human perceptual equipment, though group similarities may give rise to broadly similar 'understanding' - agreements being the apparent basis of cultures and sub-cultures.

What one might take exception to in the press statement is the assumption that there is a causal connection between lower IQ and accidents (they could be coincidental), and the leap from IQ to maturity and environment.

On the other hand, the road safety spokesman's observation about pre-adolescent boys having, on average, a slightly lower IQ than girls is quite sound. While one might have justifiable reservations about the notion of IQ and its partially social definition, it is worth bearing in mind that in the days of the 11+ girls were positively discriminated against to achieve equal numbers in the grammar school classroom. There's a levelling out at puberty.

Sheila Tyler
Ffestiniog Pottery, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Gwenedd, N. Wales

Dear E.O.,

As we know the examination system is to change, with G.C.E and C.S.E being replaced by G.C.S.E. There are a couple of items that may affect those who teach their offspring at home, a couple I am none too sure about. I wonder if other E.O.ers have enlightening solutions?

Examining Mathematics which obviously all will be following:

There is a school based syllabus which includes a Centre Board Assessment that will not affect E.O.ers as there is also an external syllabus in which the written papers are longer, having no centre-based assessment. No problem.

However, the examination is really in three parts, there being three levels of entry. Level 3 cover grades A - D, Level 2 grades C - F and Level 1 grades E - G. Pupils can only enter at one level, no double entries being allowed. No doubt parents

a x g

LETTERS - CONTINUED

would aim for Level 3. However, if the pupil fails to get a grade D he/she will be ungraded, worse off than a Level 1 pupil who gains an E. (Previously, pupils at school could double enter G.C.E and C.S.E. Those going for G.C.E also had the complete range of grades to aim at).

Furthermore, whilst there is an internal examination for Arithmetic, there is no external one. Even here there is, to my mind, an anomaly as pupils cannot enter both Arithmetic and Maths. It seems strange to me that different rules apply for E.O. and non-E.O. pupils and that some subjects are denied external entries.

Personally, being old and experienced, (the two go together!) I would favour Arithmetic as a first choice if only one choice were allowed. Having been taught this subject very well along with 'old fashioned' maths., I have never found any difficulty in solving the problems placed before me. I have not seen much use for a lot of the 'modern' (?) maths in the syllabus of today.

Please tell me where number bases are used except base 2 in computer design. (I feel any arithmetician well based in base 10 should easily comprehend any other base as it is met, if ever).

Matrices - where? - Transformation Geometry - where? - F.O.G replacing $fy/5x$ (though I'm pleased to see this disappearing, the latter being much easier to understand). As for 'reading the clock' being '0' level - what are children doing up to the age of 5?

I do see the standards going down mainly because a lot of the 'modern' stuff has no apparent use to the majority (most of us are afraid of what we do not understand) but how can we put it right?

I've probably rambled on after starting about the affect of G.C.S.E on E.O.ers, but maybe some debate will enlighten me.

Tom Marshall
5 Caindow Way, Swindon, SN2 6TQ

ANYONE ELSE INTERESTED?

Two people with young child are looking for a rural venture living and/or working co-operatively with other people. Our skills and interests include animal husbandry (keeping goats at the moment), organic gardening, joinery, building, art, crafts, alternative education/deschooling. We would be interested in joining an existing project or meeting people to start something new.

Open to ideas and suggestions (approximately £15,000.00 capital).

Please contact:

Ruth & David Clark
22 Miry Lane
Thongsbridge
Holmfirth, West Yorks
Telephone: 0484 685055



Our experience ...

Our son Mark, has managed with some difficulty, to get through this academic year, and we now feel that we were wrong to leave him in school. As usual, hindsight is a good teacher.

He has always been a difficult child to handle in school, but until this year he had received sympathetic teaching by a number of people to whom we are grateful for their tolerance and sensitivity. We thought it better for him to receive the social benefits that school could offer him, rather than concern ourselves too much with his output at school. Like other members we have always regarded home as the place where the major part of education occurs.

Mark spent his 2nd and 3rd years as a junior with a person whom he liked and respected and for whom he produced some inspired work when the mood suited him. Mark is quite bright, and has in fact been externally assessed, and was deemed to be gifted. The behaviour outlined to date, we were led to understand, is typical of that type of child.

Last September he went into a class where he had two part-time teachers and occasional lessons from the Headmaster. His work appears to have plummeted, particularly for the teacher who had him for the first part of the week. We tried to help her to handle Mark, in a way which would enable her to get him to produce more (quantity rather than quality appearing to be the requirement) but our advice at the parent's evening did not seem to be particularly welcome. We also asked then - and at a subsequent interview with the Headmaster - that we should be kept informed of his progress - or lack of it. We received no reports from the teacher and though we became aware ourselves that all was not well, we decided to leave him be, as he appeared to be happy for the latter part of the week within his group of friends.

Shortly before the end of the summer term, we had our second interview with the person in question, who again complained about Mark's work, and said that she had no knowledge of our proposed intention to de-register him if his efforts proved to be unsatisfactory. This move had been suggested six months earlier in discussion with the Headmaster.

We attempted to explain that Mark had been pronounced gifted, but this statement was met with sceptical derision. Her reply led us to understand that her way of spotting a bright or gifted child appeared to be in their ability to pass the 11+, which we still have in Essex. (There is, incidentally, very limited preparation time allocated in state schools within this County for that exam). She stated that this was her opinion as a professional person (challenge that if you dare). This professionalism was not apparent, we thought, when, some months earlier, she had accused Mark of "carrying home lies" in front of the whole class. This accusation was totally unjustified, but as yet an apology has not been forthcoming. It was only the intervention of the deputy Headmaster which prevented us from reporting the teacher at that time, but subsequent events - and her provocative attitude at the meeting - have led us to believe that we should have followed our original intentions.

The Comprehensive which Mark is due to attend in September is well-known to us, as our three older children were pupils there and were allowed to underachieve. All three were social beings and we felt that there was no alternative, bearing in mind that we were unaware of the existence of E.O. at that time, and the fact that we have no other choice of school in our area.

On previous occasions we have found this school wanting in many areas, particularly in the staff's attitude towards homework and marking. In one case our younger daughter did not have her French homework or classwork marked in two years with

the same teacher. At a parent's evening it became obvious that our elder daughter's teacher did not know who she was. Protest proved fruitless. We could go on.

The question now is, do we allow Mark to start, or do we say "Enough"? Although basically a loner, the friends he has will go there, and again we are torn. Do we ask him to sacrifice his talent on the altar of comprehensive education, or do we strike off on, what to us is, a new path? We wonder how many other parents are today asking themselves the same questions, and are in need of help, as we ourselves are.

Margaret & Buddy Lawrence
6 Michaelstow Close, Ramsey, Harwich, Essex, CO12 5ES



The Religion Debate

The letters have poured in on the topic of 'religion', so much so that we have seriously wondered whether to stop the debate and ignore them, or perhaps to do an article based on the stuff received, quoting interesting points from the various letters. Some people do seem to be getting tired of the subject, and some have quite rightly said that we are not now debating HOW to educate (religiously) but rather just having a heated discussion about religious beliefs per se, which, to my mind, is outside the scope of the Newsletter.

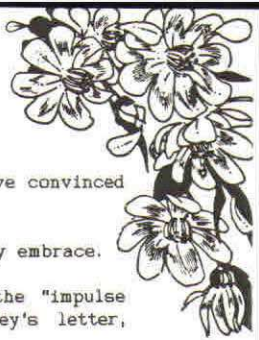
However, thinking about it, I decided that as editor, it isn't my job to decide who is 'allowed' to air their opinions and who isn't, and since we have received letters from people with some very different outlooks, most of the points are very valid ones. And anyway, presumably those who write in wish to read the sort of things they themselves write - it strikes me that, if others wish to read about different topics, more of us should write in and start the ball rolling! Therefore, I make no apologies for the fact that the following pages contain letters which mention the subject of religion - if you're not keen on it, skip it! That said, the debate has to stop somewhere, so I think these should be the last words and the subject ought to close.

Before we start, though, I would like to say that, writing as a Christian myself, I was interested to see the letter from Rachel Sanger - an Atheist, but someone who has read her Bible and who can quote it correctly. I can assure you that I, for one, have certainly gained something from the 'religious debate' after all.

Dear E.O.,

As far as I can ascertain, E.O. includes Christians, Moslems, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Sufis, Theists, Deists, Agnostics, Atheists, Pagans, et cetera. As a Jew by heritage and a Taoist by conviction, I find the ethnocentric dichotomy between the clean-shaven Christian-believing good guys in the white hats and the five o' clock shadowed black hatted infidel baddies, thoughtless and superficial at best; highly offensive, indeed racist, at worst.

Jacob Bush
68 Maesglas, Llanelli, Dyfed, Wales, SA15 5SH



Dear E.O.,

I have met many people who call themselves Christians, but none who have convinced me that they live by Jesus' teaching in their daily lives.

I am frequently astounded by their ignorance of the faith they supposedly embrace.

The commandment to love thy neighbour as thyself is certainly not the "impulse which distinguished the Old from the New Testament" (Jackie Fearnley's letter, August Newsletter).

It is a well-established Jewish commandment which can be found in Leviticus chapter 19 verse 18.

Jesus mentions it, as a law obviously familiar to everyone, when he is asked which are the greatest commandments, and how to have eternal life (see, for example, Matthew 22, 36 - 40 and Luke 10, 25 - 27).

Perhaps Jackie is confusing it with Jesus' new teaching: "resist not evil ... love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you ..." (Matthew 5, 39 - 44).

As an atheist I intend to teach my daughter the truth about the world as I see it. It doesn't shock me that religious parents intend to do the same.

What is very distressing is the prospect of children being brought up on a mish-mash of popular misconceptions and half-remembered Sunday school lessons.

PLEASE, if you think you're a Christian, *read the Bible* and find out what you're supposed to believe in.

Rachel Sanger
32 Doddington Grove, London, SE17

Dear E.O.,

Being a mother of two "challenging" children I took the plunge to Home Educate them and joined Education Otherwise. All the information I could gather indicated that this was the organisation for me. So, armed with paper and pen and £10.00 I sent off my membership form.

What happened then? Not a lot, I'm afraid. I got some very nice booklets, contact list and magazine. I read both the booklets, (SINC & Early Years) four or five times and I read and re-read the magazine but they, neither of them told me anything I didn't already know. "Hang on" I thought, "perhaps *other* magazines will be better". Unfortunately this has not been the case. While not doing me or my family any harm, Education Otherwise has not done any of us any positive good either!

I am 'out here' at the grass roots, here where the 'action' takes place. The 'action' that Education Otherwise has as its reason for existence, namely, the Home Education of our children. I'm grateful for the hard work of the office holders and all the people involved in the organisation of Education Otherwise but may I echo the question of Pip Rupik by asking whether we are *really* getting what we want?

I'm really a simple sort of person, and if people wish to worship anything they are pleased to worship from Jesus to electric light bulbs, I am only too happy for them, and if they themselves wish to follow as their philosophy of life anything from Scientology to "the growing of alfalfa roots as a religious art form" then I support their right to do so. What I *don't* support is the use of these pages to put forward these things as being the only relevance to our situation today. This newsletter is for people who wish to educate their children at home, I feel it is *not* a platform for the philosophical ideosyncrasies of Education Otherwise members. For example, I am a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, otherwise known as the 'Mormons'; this is of great significance to me and the way I educate my children, yet I don't bend the ears of members declaiming the religious and/or philosophical implications of why I choose not to drink tea, coffee and alcohol, or any other of the religious and/or philosophical practices particular to my religious beliefs.

By all means let us have letters and articles from members about their educational experiences both as parent and child and in-school and out of it, but PLEASE let us keep these to a minimum. Let us have more of the "Well, this worked for me....." type of article and suggestions and tips on how to make/teach/do various 'things' with our children; and no, not in the same way as "101 things to do with a dead cat"!

Ivan Tyrell has a right to hold the views he does. I may not agree with him but he has the right. Pip Rupik has a right to her opinions, as does any other member of Education Otherwise - now that that has been agreed, may we now, for the sake of the children we have to teach/direct/support/guide to young manhood and young womanhood (no, I'm not sexist!) stop squabbling and get on with our job? Thank you!

I shall now fade back into "the murky and dismal mass" of the grass roots membership from whence I came!

Robbie Bonser
55 Chatsworth Crescent, Scawthorpe, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN5 9JU

Dear E.O.,

All E.O. Christians will be shocked by the promotion of paganism and aligned religions.

One of the reasons for withdrawing my child from school is teachers' ignorance of The Bible.

Christianity is based on the promises of Jesus Christ, faith and the empty tomb. The distinguishing mark of a True Christian is love as defined in Corinthians 13, and embodied in the person of Christ. Christ claimed to be God ("He who sees me sees the Father"). Had He been merely human, His claim to be God incarnate would be preposterous arrogance, and He could not even be regarded as a 'good teacher' as some religions say he was. If His claim is true (and the evidence is overwhelming) then all religions who do not have Christ at their centre are false, superstitious and dangerous.

Promoting these as in the last Newsletter issue is seriously irresponsible and ignorant.

Lisa Griffiss
Beech House, Mark Way, Godalming, Surrey.

Dear E.O.,

It is now nearly two years since the first of our children was removed from school. We have not regretted that decision and followed it by bringing the two older ones out last year. All this time E.O. has, in the form of its regular Newsletter, been very supportive and informative. However, on receipt of the June 1987 issue of the Newsletter I found myself being drawn into the debate on 'R.E. at home'.

Prejudice is defined in The Collins Concise dictionary as "an opinion formed beforehand, especially an unfavourable one, based on inadequate facts". In his letter entitled 'Religious Education at Home - Is it possible?' Ivan Tyrrell displays a surprisingly large amount of prejudice. I can only assume that he has spent considerable time and energy discovering facts about people who have committed atrocities in the name of Christianity while ignoring the countless volumes and records of those Christians who have been at the forefront of creating the best attributes of our civilisation.

Contrary to his assertion, the "ism" responsible for the persecution and execution of the largest number of his fellow human beings is Evolutionism. The Doctrine of Spiritual Evolution, which he believes in, has given birth to unparalleled evil. The European Fascism of the first half of the 20th Century and Communism both have their roots in the belief that their adherents were or are spiritually more advanced than other religions, and that other religions were "a hindrance to the civilising process and, like a husk, to be shed." The shedding continues.

The distortion of Christianity as observed by Mr Tyrrell in the recorded and advertised history of the religion confirms that people of all generations have been expert at appearing to be spiritually superior and at using the power thus gained to force others into their own mould.

How can Mr Tyrrell know with such certainty the Jesus did not intend founding a church? Had he lived with Jesus as did the authors of parts of the New Testament, he would have learned what the church was intended to be, how it was supposed to operate, why it was created and why so much effort has been spent by people trying to either destroy it from without or to make it into a political organisation from within.

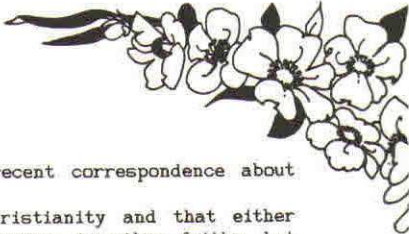
It may be that in Hailsham, East Sussex, "killing, raping and stealing" are not every day events, but even in that privileged corner of this brutal and uncivilised world Mr Tyrrell cannot have failed to discern from both fictional and non-fictional media presentation, that there is no natural trend toward a reduction in "selfish, brutish behaviour".

True Christianity can and does help people to change, because real Christians are able to introduce others to its founder, Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus, unlike "Religious" leaders of the past, is alive and is not limited to propaganda or indoctrination to prove that He is the Truth.

The choice by many to reject the Truth for their own self-selected model of reality and then help children absorb this same home-made truth, has the appearance of being scientifically based and superior, but will in the final analysis prove to be another in a long line of illusions.

Christianity needs no defense, but those who prevent children from learning who Jesus is, whether they are 'religious' or otherwise, will need an advocate of super human ability when their bodies cease to function and they come face to face with the God who they think is not there.

Peter C Lambert
15 Burnham Avenue, Bognor Regis, West Sussex, PO21 2LB



Dear E.O.,

I have been slightly annoyed by the content of the recent correspondence about religion in the newsletter.

It always seems to be assumed that religion means Christianity and that either you're for or against. Admittedly there have been references to other faiths, but only fleeting.

We are Pagans, following the Old Religion of the Great Goddess, Mother Earth. For us, religious "education" is irrelevant - we strive to make our faith our way of life, to live our beliefs. Not very easy these days, and we don't always succeed! But we observe the eight seasonal festivals that mark the changing cycles of the year, and try to live in such a way as to occasion the least harm to Mother Earth by our presence upon Her. This involves avoiding the use of pesticides, buying biodegradable detergents etc. and recycling as much as we can, including making use of the local tin and bottle bank.

For us, the spiritual is interwoven within the material; there is no 'heaven' in the sky; our Mother provided it here on Earth for us to cherish and use wisely. The belief in reincarnation is central to our faith, for we are born of the Mother, live by her fruits, return to Her at death to be born again into a new life of learning. We involve our son Wayland (aged 3) in our seasonal celebrations and he has as much understanding of our ways as a three year old can. One of our many reasons for intending to home educate our son is because we abhor the Christian doctrine present in schools.

We publish a magazine called "Pipes of P.A.N." which includes a section, 'Pagan Parenting Network', aimed at providing a forum for discussion for parents bringing up children with a spiritual awareness of Earth, Her creatures and our relationship to them, not as exploiters but as kinsfolk and guardians.

If anyone would like to write to us, we are:

Nicola Beechsquirrel
Blaenberem, Mynydcerrig,
Mr. Llanelli, DYFED, Cymru.

Dear E.O.,

Having read the contents of the June Newsletter before the editorial, I was most annoyed to read Mr Tyrrell's unfounded attack on the Christian faith. Having now read the editorial, I can only conclude that Mr Tyrrell can not tell the difference between "Christians" and "Christianity".

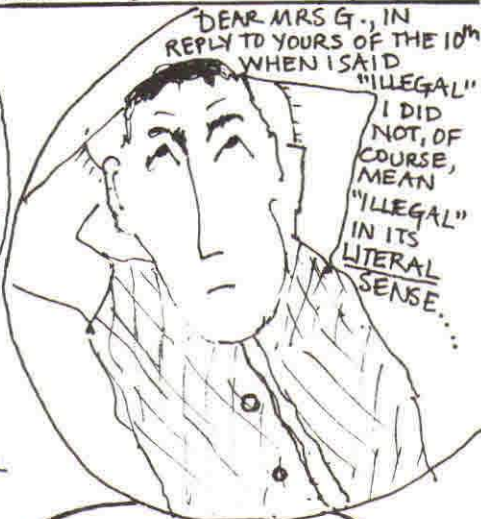
I agree with Mr Tyrrell that Church History is littered with man's evil intent and hypocrisy. But this is *man's* evil, not Christ's. You don't throw the baby out because his bath water is no longer clean nor should you dismiss Christ because of faults in those who profess to be his followers.

As a Christian, I am ashamed of his two teachers. Had they been my first introduction to Christ, I would have probably felt the same way as Mr Tyrrell does. As a Christian parent I would.....go so far as to say that anyone so insensitive to a child's feelings has no business teaching at all.

To my mind the Christian faith is as constructive and liberating as it is destructive and suppressive to Mr Tyrrell. It is the angle from which you view faith that determines what you see. I hope that Mr Tyrrell will one day take a fresh look at the faith and perhaps see some of what I see

Mrs C. E. Anderson, 11 West Street, Bargoed, Mid. Glam., Wales.

EDUCATING ARCHIE by SEG An inspector clarifies:



Through the press

Edited by Sarah Guthrie, with contributions from Janice Owen. (Volunteers needed for future issues, please contact Sarah).

NEWSNEWS***NEWS***NEWS***

Standardised study: The Government plans to introduce a national curriculum to schools. It will lay down what must be taught to every child in Maths., English and Science, as well as seven other proposed subjects (a language, technology, art, history, geography, music and P.E.). Assessment tests at 7, 11, 14, and 16 will determine how much pupils have taken in at each stage. (EDUCATION GUARDIAN, 28 June 1987). Content of the curriculum will be determined by working groups of professional educators and others, who will each have a year to come to a decision. The maths and science curriculum and testing is expected to start in 1989. This legislation will not apply to private schools, though applications for new private schools to open may be turned down unless they comply with the new system. Handicapped pupils may also be exempted.

THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM 5 - 16 is available free from the Department of Education and Science, Publications, Canons Park, Honey Pot Lane, Stanmore, Middx.

*** EDUCATION OTHERWISE ***** EDUCATION OTHERWISE ***

Home Education and the Law David Deutsch's report was featured in the Advisory Centre for Education's bulletin ACE (July 1987). In the same issue, Patricia Knox wrote an article about school phobia, describing some of the cases that had prompted her to write a book on the subject. School phobics presently number between 7,000 and 140,000 in England and Wales.

Educational provision in 32 local education authority areas was judged less than satisfactory "in a majority of aspects" at the end of last year by HMI (TELEGRAPH 22.7.87).....

*****WHO SAID WHAT THIS SUMMER*****

"If one has the misfortune to be caned, one expects to be hit hard - that is the point of it."

(Judge Christopher Hordern, QC, directing the jury to return a verdict of not guilty on a Headmaster up for assault after caning his pupil for not doing well enough in an exam).
(TELEGRAPH 21.7.87)

"My idea of discipline is to give them My Look. I've never dreamed of using corporal punishment...the worst I've ever had to do is to keep somebody in at playtime."

(Mrs Hummel, head of Bredger Primary School, Kent. MAIL, 8.5.87)

"I see no reason why parents should get away scot free with taking very little interest in their children's education."

(Dr. Chester E. Finn, Jr., assistant secretary in the US Dept. of Education, proposing a grading system for parents help).
(TELEGRAPH, 9.6.87)

"Learning against a background of no experience means that there is no way of assessing the importance or the relevance of what is being taught."
(PRINCE PHILIP, quoted in the TELEGRAPH 10.7.87)

"I look back sometimes to my childhood abroad when my mother arranged for me to have lessons by correspondence course. The course used to come by runner and took ten days to reach us, and the books and papers often arrived damp if the runner had fallen in the river on the way. I can still clearly remember the excitement of opening the packages, particularly those about history and literature."

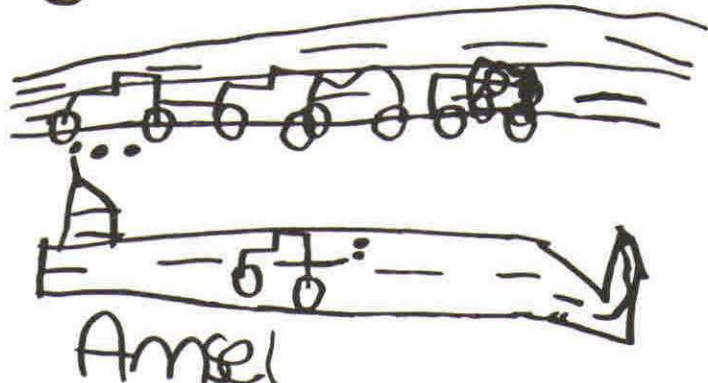
Daphne Park,
Principal of Somerville College, Oxford,
Chairman of the Legal Aid Advisory Committee to the Lord Chancellor,
Governor of the BBC.

"Too many people leave school knowing how to write an essay about the causes of World War One but unable to complain about a faulty pair of jeans".
(Michael Montague, chairman of the National Consumer Council)
(TELEGRAPH, 14.7.87)



.....

cars on The. A1.



Becky Torrance of Stanington, Northumberland, sent us this picture of cars which her son, Amsel Lazarus, drew after sitting in the car for 6 hours on the motorway. Amsel is 4½ years old.

E.O. - such a good idea!

It has been in my mind for some time that as Enquiries Secretary I ought to write up for the Newsletter a kind of overall view of E.O. and how things have changed over the years since I first became a member and then later Enquiries Sec. Because of the recent upsetting accusations in the Newsletter I now feel it really is time to sit down and relate some of the positive side of things. The problem is, where do I begin? Perhaps I should start with my own family's reason for joining E.O. for the benefit of members who don't know us.

We joined E.O. when it was first formed during the time when our youngest son was so miserable and bullied at school. Twelve months later Nick deschooled himself at the age of twelve years ten months. Our dilemma was how to set about teaching him. I wasn't a teacher and the only member in E.O. with deschooled teenagers at that time was a teacher and taught them herself. We decided to pioneer, Nick would have to teach himself from correspondence courses. At that time he was the youngest person to study with Wolsey Hall. He gained seven 'O' levels at A grade with an emphasis on sciences. I suggested that he was, perhaps, academic enough for Cambridge University. He got into King's College to do Natural Sciences after getting three 'A' levels at A grade at a Tech where he taught himself. He only went there for the resources and the company.

When it got into a national newspaper that a self-taught boy had made it to King's, E.O. received some positive publicity for a change. Until then, nearly all home education publicity had been about court cases especially the Harrison family. The only exception being the Cox family who appeared in a T.V. programme and a couple of newspaper articles. Membership doubled in the next year as more people lost their fear of cutting their kids off from academic chances.

I was now so convinced that freedom for children was the only way they truly learn and mature that I took on more and more work to help keep E.O. going through a crisis period. At one time I was lumbered with Enquiries Sec., Membership Sec., legal adviser, central address and Co-ords. Sec. Luckily much of the work was soon hived off and for several years we have enjoyed relatively smooth waters with the running of E.O. Now, with the forthcoming resignations of several key officers, I think we could be in for a bit of a hiatus so what I'm really trying to say is, E.O. is such a fine idea that it really is worth maximum effort to see that it continues.

As most of you will have realised by now, there is no need for anyone to write and sour the newsletter regarding the running of E.O. If anyone feels they have cause for complaint all they have to do is write or ring any officer or member of the steering committee (who is usually an officer). If satisfaction isn't achieved then the problem can be put to the next core-group meeting which any member is entitled to attend and vote at. No officer or signed-up member of the core-group considers themselves part of an E.O. elite although this accusation is often made. I feel we are just the chumps who do the work!!

Over the years I have noticed a great change in the attitude of Education Authorities and other professional bodies. They used to be positively anti or just ignore us. Nowadays, hardly a day goes by without the post contains some enquiry from an authority or professional body. Nearly every week a library wants our booklet 'School is not Compulsory'...I must admit to great mirth when one Authority, Norfolk, asked for our booklet 'School is NOW Compulsory'. I wondered if they would still want it when I sent the other end of the stick but we duly received the cheque.

However, it's not all laughs at central address and I had to give up the telephone side of the enquiries when I was being emotionally drained hour upon hour by apologetic but nevertheless desperate parents. We now have a help-line recorded message system with nine splendid regional enquiries secs. sharing this stressful load. (Pity the recording machines aren't as splendid.)

It is quite usual now for officers to receive letters or be told at meetings that in the opinion of the parent E.O.'s existence saved the life of their child. What better reward could we have as an organisation? Despite all our different attitudes and opinions about how this or that should be done or happen and despite all the problems of running such a large thinly spread group - E.O. still exists and has over the years gained a large amount of respect amongst professionals dealing with school children. It is no longer unusual to be told 'my L.E.A. recommended E.O.' 'the Welfare Officer told me to contact you' 'my doctor thinks E.O. will be best for my child'. Every time this happens I feel joyful. I realise we are slowly but surely gaining more children's freedom and at the same time more freedom for all children and this is what I want to share with you.

In future I hope to have more time and be able to write more in this vein for the newsletter. Unfortunately Nick hurt his back during his work experience year before University. He struggled through the first year with severe pain, immobility and on pain killers. He managed a poor third in the tripos exams, and then had to give up and come home to try and get a diagnosis and cure. Two years later he's almost better and in the meantime he's studied the first year 1a Engineering course in order to change his course and get back into King's for second year engineering. I think the College believed it couldn't be done, they thought they'd given him an almost impossible mountain to climb without the benefit of tutorials, lectures and practicals. But he duly sat the 1a exams, and gained a good 2:1 pass despite the fact that they moved the exam. goalposts three weeks before the exam. He must be the first person to get into Cambridge twice - but then, E.O. is used to firsts by now isn't it? The pity of it all is that he hates the place as do all his pals - it's just a means to an end for them all. But more about that another time.

Anyway, once Nick is back at King's and no longer needs a personal chauffeur and a social sec. (E.O. kids are very sociable) I do hope to write more central address good news for the newsletter. I realise it is such an important life-line for those members who cannot attend the very enjoyable and encouraging E.O. gatherings.

Janet Everdell
25 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots, Cambs

'SPREAD THE WORD ROUND IN YOUR AREA!'

Valerie Common writes:

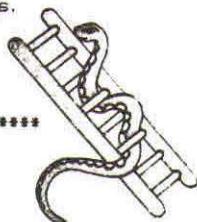
I've just returned from giving an informal talk to the local branch of the National Childbirth Trust about Education Otherwise.

When I was first approached, I said "Oh, I don't know..." but after thinking about it for a while I agreed. I was very nervous. I'm not at all used to public speaking but after a slow start I think everyone in the room became sympathetic to what we are doing - they asked a lot of questions, which helped me to explain more fully, and when it was all over they gave me a bottle of wine for my trouble!

Another thing which we've done is to be interviewed by the local paper and the local radio station. I was apprehensive about talking to the paper as you never know what they will write but the article was quite favourable and worthwhile as we had several enquiries and four people actually joined locally.

Something a little less daring might be to organise a picnic/E.O. day locally. You don't have to wait for your Co-ordinators to do it. You do it. You may be surprised at the response, and more importantly you might spread the E.O. word to someone in need!

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





Notices



HELP WANTED PLEASE

The Essex group are again organising a stand as part of a large 'alternative' exhibition in Chelmsford town centre, on Saturday 24th October. As well as having an EO stand, we shall also be organising activities (nothing too elaborate - last year we just had drawing materials, dough, books, a few board games etc.) for our own children and any visiting, who wished to drop in. The exhibition is open to the public from 10am to 8pm, and we are therefore looking for helpers to lend a hand. We do not ask you to stay throughout the day - if we could get sufficient helpers we could organise a rota. The exhibition itself is well worth a visit and there are various displays and talks going on throughout the day. All that is involved is being on hand to answer any questions that visitors may have, selling/handing out EO literature, and keeping an eye on the children's corner. Those who helped to organise the stand last year all had a very good day and felt it had been well worth while. So, if you could possibly spare a couple of hours (or more!) of your time we would love to hear from you. Please call Sandie Cottey, on 0268 733259 for further details.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS - Mr Geoff Bulley moved from London to Herts. on 1 September, his new address now being:

138 Westmill Lawns
Westmill Road, Hitchin
Herts. SG5 2SB

HELP

Macmillan have sent "Travel by Road & Rail", Air, etc., directly to me instead of the person who wanted to revue them. Please let me know whoever you are so that I can forward them! Helen Holland.

PENFRIENDS WANTED

My name is Diane Rachel Wilkinson but I prefer to be called Rachel. I am 11 years old and would like a boy or girl penfriend of similar age. My hobbies are gymnastics, swimming, reading and writing. I have three penpals already. Please write soon to:

47 Fulmerton Crescent
Redcar, Cleveland, TS10 4NJ

I am aged 12 and I enjoy swimming, dancing, craftwork and cooking. Penfriends welcomed from anywhere in England or other countries. Please write to:

Aileen Solomon
17 Wembley Road, Hampton
Middlesex, TW12 2QE

GCSE SUPPLEMENT

GCSE: An Introduction

1988 will be the first year of examinations for GCSE. It replaces the two part system of GCE 'O' level and CSE which previously operated for children of different ability levels. Criticism of the two tier system centred about the need to choose which exam to take. GCE was more academic and totally judged on exam results but employers respected it. CSE was more practical, more flexible and considered coursework relying less on examination but employers didn't take it seriously. GCSE was supposed to get rid of this decision by being one exam, but in many subjects levels have been introduced, e.g. Foundation, Intermediate and Higher, and different papers have to be taken deciding in advance a limited range of grades which can be achieved.

In the past pupils frequently double entered both GCE and CSE with ridiculous results. A boy I know this summer got grade C in O level and grade 3 in CSE in Maths and this is not a unique result. Can GCSE solve this? - I personally doubt it in some cases. If you take Intermediate Maths you could get grades C to F, attempting Higher Maths you could get grades A to D. How do you equate a mediocre Higher result with a very good Intermediate result which both score grade C in GCSE. It seems that the problem is still there.

GCE O-level	GCSE	CSE
A	1	1
B	2	
C	3	
D	4	
E	5	
	6	2
	7	3
		4
		5

Coursework constitutes a large part of many syllabuses which is then marked by the school staff and moderated by the examination board. I think coursework is good because of the topics and ideas which can be taught following the interests of the individual. Also the examination is less important. Unfortunately it is this aspect which will create problems for E.O. members as external candidates. For those of you who wish to know more in general terms on GCSE may I suggest the ACE information sheet 'GCSE: a brief guide for parents' available from Advisory Centre for Education, 18 Victoria Park Square, London E2. Telephone: 01-980-4596. It also contains a bibliography which might be useful.

GCSE was aimed at 4th and 5th year school pupils to be studied over a two year period. The provision for external and mature students has been added as an extra to this. With the problems experienced by the exam boards in getting the school situation sorted out it is only beginning to become clear how this might affect E.O. members. All the previous examination boards have been combined into five Regional Groups. These operate separately setting different subjects with different syllabuses and different examination requirements and different interpretations of what requires coursework and ways external candidates should comply. (See the notes on 'How to Apply' for more on this.) All the following information comes as a result of a meeting I had with a member of the Midland Examining Group at Cambridge. Remember the five Regional Groups are all independent and may differ enormously so you must check up on all these facts. It is also still early days and situations are likely to change. However this is the current situation as far as I can interpret it. It should be further noted that if your Regional Group is less convenient in some ways or subject areas you can apply to other Groups but you may have to go further to find a centre to use.

Each syllabus is published in a separate booklet at MEG, there is no combined syllabus for them all. They include the aims and objectives for assessment, full of jargon and a bit daunting at first. Then the scheme of assessment explains the papers and their type (multiple choice, short answer, essay, etc.). coursework requirement, any oral tests, etc. which may be included. The subject content is a definitive list, vital for organising your work and checking which parts of any textbook you may choose to use will be included (textbooks usually cover more than one Groups exam requirement). Then there are notes for school teachers on how work should be assessed in great detail, so you are getting inside information on what they are looking for. It usually states what a grade F, grade C, etc. candidate should know or be able to do to achieve that grade. In addition the specimen paper booklet has copies of an example of all the papers to be set. Usually the answers or key points of answers and marks to be awarded are also included. In future years past papers will also be available. Current 'past papers' exist in some cases but are from experimental joint GCE/CSE courses, however these may be helpful.

At MEG a list of the provision for External Candidates exists. External candidates are those who are not in fulltime attendance at schools or colleges. School pupils will not be allowed to opt out of the coursework elements. The external syllabuses are separated into:

- a) those subjects with a separate exam for external candidates
- b) those subjects where an alternative to coursework, e.g. another exam paper, has been arranged
- c) those subjects where the coursework must be completed.

These are discussed under these separate headings below. The other alternative is the mature syllabus, which strangely has no age limit either - beware of 8 and 9 year olds again! The mature syllabus is intended for students at college, sixthformers, etc. who wish to take a oneyear course so the syllabuses have less coursework involved. I have not considered these in any depth and there are less subjects available at MEG. I read somewhere that there were likely to be more unusual subjects done externally at the Southern Examining Group because of its connections with the AEB board who specialised in these subjects before.

The brief notes below are made after looking at the GCSE syllabus and specimen papers for MEU 1988 papers in a selection of subjects. I have not looked at the GCE or CSE exams recently so I cannot reflect whether changes are due to GCSE or the intervening 25 years since I was involved in these exams as a pupil myself. I suspect this may be the case for many E.O. parents anyway. They are arranged under the coursework provision as above.

a) Separate Syllabus

English
English Literature

The papers for English and English Literature are separate for external candidates and so no changes are necessary. Syllabuses for both combined in one booklet.

English consists of two papers, one on Argumentative and Informative Writing, the other on Responsive and Personal Writing. This will be graded as normal A to G. In addition candidates will be assessed on Oral Communication on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 is the highest), these being put together to give a grade, e.g. B3. In this oral test it will be necessary to Read Aloud a given passage, then to introduce a previously chosen topic to the examiner and take part in a conversation about the topic for about ten minutes.

English Literature consists of two papers. Compulsory paper 3 will require a written response to questions on a previously unseen piece of prose, verse or drama. Also a choice of questions on general reading to demonstrate evidence of a wide reading background. How unlike the old GCE 'O' level papers I remember.

E.G. Write an article for the journal "Teenage Reading" in which you recommend two or three books which deal with the issues of race. The title for your article is "The Black Experience".

There is a choice then between paper 1 where the selected books are taken into the exam room and paper 2 where no books are taken in. The set books are a selection of prose, poetry and drama. (An interesting note for E.O. is that one of the texts on paper 1 is David Leland's video "Flying into the Wind" with transcript. I hope I am right in saying that this was a TV play based on the Harrison's fight to educate their children at home.) Perhaps someone has some advice to give on the relative merits of having the texts in the exam or not and could report this to a later newsletter.

Addresses of Regional Groups

Northern Examining Association, Joint Matriculation Board, Manchester
M15 6EU (coded NEA)

Midland Examining Group, University of Cambridge Local Examinations
Syndicate, Syndicate Buildings, 1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU (MEG)

Southern Examining Group, Southern Regional Examinations Board,
Avondale House, 33 Carlton Crescent, SO9 4YL (SEG)

London and East Anglia Examining Group, University of London School
Examinations Board, Stewart House, 32 Russell Square,
London, WC1B 5DN (LEAG)

Welsh Joint Education Committee, 245 Western Avenue, Cardiff CF5 2YX (WJEC)

b) With Coursework Alternative.

Accounting	German
*Art & Design	Geology
*Biology Syllabus A	Greek Civilisation (JACT)
Biology Syllabus B (Nuffield)	History (British, Social and Economic)
*Biology (Human)	History (British & European)
Business Studies	*History (Modern World)
*CDT: Design and Realisation	Punjabi
*Chemistry	*Physics
Classical Subjects	Religious Studies
Commerce	Roman Civilisation (JACT)
*Computer Studies	*Social Science
Economics	Spanish
English as a Second Language	Urdu
*European Studies	
*French	

Because there are so many subjects here I have only been able to obtain those marked by *. Even from these I will only be able to comment on a selection, apologies for any you feel are serious omissions.

French has no course work element as such, but the examining methods are interesting and complex. If considering this I recommend you look at the syllabus early as it is difficult to do it justice in a few lines here. The candidates will be examined on listening, reading, speaking and writing. In listening to and reading french, the questions and answers will be written in english. Each of these elements has tests at Basic, Higher 1 and Higher 2 levels. For the lower grades (G to E) only basic read/listen/speak need be attempted i.e. no writing in French at all. For each increase in grade level more elements should be taken. For example, for grade C all four basic tests, plus either Higher 1 of two of the sections or Higher 1 and 2 of one of the sections. For grade A you must do all the tests except you may miss out Higher 1 and 2 of one of the read/speak/listen sections. The subject matter is very much about communicating on a practical level, much better than I remember it in the faroff past. I like this way of accumulating building blocks towards an exam result. The listening, reading and writing papers will take place in an exam setting at the centre. External candidates will have their individual speaking tests conducted at a central point organised by the group. Lots of advice in the booklets about the type of questions to be asked. Specimen tapes of the listening tests are available at £1 for Basic and £1 for Higher 1 and 2 together. Also available for each language exam is a 'Defined Content' book at £1 which is a list of required vocabulary under topic headings, and notes on what you might be required to do. Excellent value, as a commercial book you would pay much more.

European Studies is not an alternative to a foreign language for weak students as I suspected but a high power look at how Europe works. Content is split into Political Systems, Economic Systems, Security Systems, Cultural Systems, Nations and Language Systems, Environment Systems. Coursework is 50% and consists of an assignment on each of these six systems. This is a subject that I would expect only the old GCE type candidates to undertake. I don't imagine weak pupils to understand much of it and wonder if candidates might be marked down so as to cover the whole ability range. It is possible.

The Science subjects have similar provision on exams and coursework so I have dealt with them together, they are

Chemistry

Physics

Biology Syllabus A

Biology (Human)

Interestingly these are all separate subjects, Combined Sciences which is to become the in-thing in Schools is not available to external candidates. There are two compulsory papers in each subject. Also compulsory is a school-based assessment of practical work which for external candidates has an alternate practical written test (paper 5). Taking these three elements will give a grade from C to G. An optional paper 3 will be taken by candidates aiming for grades A and B. Specimen papers include paper 5 for external candidates which requires you to read off measurements and briefly discuss problems with apparatus, how you would get round practical problems, etc.

Chemistry notes differ slightly as it states that the school based assessment will be replaced by "either Component 5 (Practical Test) (1 hour) or Component 6 (Written Alternative-to-Practical Paper) (1 hour)." However there is no example or further instructions on this, neither is there a specimen paper 6 included.

History (Modern World) is the only History syllabus I have seen, but there are also syllabuses on British, Social and Economic and also British and European. The Modern World is defined as 1914 to the present day, although specific questions will not be asked on the last five years. This consists of two papers plus coursework. Paper 1 is short answer compulsory questions on a core of 'International Relations since the First World War'. Paper 2 will be longer questions on two chosen topics covering such topics as Russia 1917-41, Achievement of Independence in Africa, Communism in China since 1949, etc. The coursework is one or two pieces of work and earning 30% of the marks and it states:

'External Candidates will not be permitted to enter this exam unless an approved examination centre has agreed to authenticate their coursework (i.e. sign the teacher's declaration on the Candidate's Course Work Summary Form)'

I do not understand how this differs from having to do the course work in part c). The coursework can be a long single piece of work or a series of shorter pieces of different types under a common theme, say, 'The Home Front 1939-45'. The syllabus booklet has clear notes and examples on what the examiners will be looking for and how they will be marking the exams and coursework.

CDT: Design and Realisation is supposed to have a coursework alternative unlike CDT: Design and Communication which doesn't. I didn't really understand the distinction here as D & R has a design paper which has to be realised in a set time and assessed internally. This is in addition to the coursework element which has an alternative of 'minor project(s) set by the Group'. It still occurred to me that you had the assessment problems for the design element as well. Someone with more CDT knowledge would be advised to look at this and clarify it.

SCOTLAND

The situation in Scotland is likely to be different, Lesley Kilbride is looking into this and will report in a newsletter soon.

c) With Essential Coursework Element

*CDT: Design & Communication
 *Environment
 *Geography Syllabus A
 *Geography Syllabus B
 Government, Politics & Law
 Home Economics: Child Development
 Home Economics: Food
 *Home Economics: Home Studies
 Home Economics: Textiles

@*Mathematics
 @ Mathematics (SMP)
 Metalwork
 Music Syllabus A
 Music Syllabus B
 Office Studies &
 Information Processing
 Physical Education
 *Statistics
 Woodwork

@ Note: Coursework in Mathematics is not compulsory until 1991, when it will have a minimum of 20% and also a compulsory oral test will be included then.

Coursework is required for the above subjects and can be from 20% to 60% with 30% to 40% being most common and hence is an important part of the course. Generally the suggestion is that if 40% of the marks are for coursework, 40% of the time in a course should be spent working for this. I presume that this means working on different project type activities and ideas learning from them first and culminating in the ones to be submitted, and not spent on a one-off exercise - perhaps someone can clarify this. The MEG view is that to take coursework we would have to find an exam centre with an approved teacher for the subject and course who would agree in advance to mark our coursework. We would presumably have to pay them and agree a fee - when does this become bribery? We would need to agree this before starting the course and would then get the teacher to advise us before the final marking. Coursework marks and in some cases coursework has to be sent to the Board earlier than the exam, 30th April being the sort of date but check this carefully. This marking could obviously be costly at I think it unlikely that anyone would be taking more than two or three subjects for which this problem applied. It may be that a slightly different syllabus or subject might solve this problem, or trying a different Regional Group. For example there are two CDT subjects which the Group thinks have different requirements.

Mathematics does not have compulsory coursework yet, so the only detail known from the syllabus is that it will be a minimum 20% and an oral interview. For those wishing to look ahead to what this might entail I suggest the 'Countdown to GCSE - Mathematics' by MacMillan Education at £1.95 which is aimed at parents, easy to read and widely available, also available for the main core subjects.

There are currently six papers of which all candidates take two depending on the grade they are aiming at. There is no overlap of papers but there is supposed to be an overlap of questions between papers. The levels are FOUNDATION (grades E,F,G), INTERMEDIATE (grades C,D,E,F) and HIGHER (grades A,B,C,D). Some textbooks have been published in three versions as the levels i.e. you decide the level before you start the course, I personally would avoid such books. Candidates would be required to use a calculator at all levels. The current syllabus has details for the alternative syllabus which includes coursework now so would be worth looking at. Maths investigations have a lot in their favour but space limits what can be said here. Example topic 'Investigate plane figures with their perimeter equal to their area brought in a lot of calculation but also a lot of algebra and a lot of understanding of mensuration not evoked by an exercise in the book.

Environment is an interesting cross-subject exam bringing in the sciences, geography, society, etc. The content is arranged under five headings: Energy Flow; Resources; Interaction between Living Things and the Environment; People in Society and their part in the Ecological System; Society's Responsibility for the Environment. It consists of two papers and a 40% coursework mark. The coursework element has 2x10% teacher guided enquiries and 20% individual enquiry. The teacher guided enquiries within the school situation could be set for the whole class or set individually, so it might be possible that the parent and pupil could set their own. These enquiries seem to be based locally and should include fieldwork not just textbook research. Syllabus notes and suggestions are useful here. As in most coursework guidance it suggests 40% of the work done should be for coursework. One difficulty I envisage is that it might be harder to find centres with pupils taking these more unusual subjects, especially in the future with the corecurriculum adopted.

Retake Provision

I was told that if you wish to retake a course which includes a coursework element that the coursework mark is carried over and not redone. Hence you can only improve on the examination mark. However in the MEG 'General Course Work for GCSE' booklet it says that candidates resitting may produce entirely new coursework or resubmit it. Coursework for standard exams may be resubmitted for Mature, or resubmitted for a different Group subject to it still meeting the syllabus requirements. Amazingly you can submit the same piece of coursework for more than one syllabus.

WHAT NEXT?

I feel that this supplement should be only the start of this GCSE investigate with reference to E.O. I would be prepared to receive your comments and experiences and report the main points for the next newsletter. There is however a limit to how much can go in there and I would welcome your comments on what is needed. I would point out though that I am not an 'E.O. leading light' with time to do an unlimited amount of work, nor does one exist elsewhere, and I am frequently disappointed at the contributions volunteered by members. Accept that there is no expert so if you want to share the knowledge and experience of others you have a duty to contribute the little knowledge and experience you have. Please send your comments on this to Betty Ball, 1 Fenton Rd, Warboys, Huntingdon, Cambs. PE17 2SD. Telephone 0487-822083.

Another Suggestion

Sorry it is a situation which is growing all the time. I am currently having people call me for advice as the expert which I am not. Perhaps we need a 'Coordinator' for each Regional Group who tries to keep up to date on their Group's situation and how it is being interpreted. They could be contacted by people dealing with the Boards and told of how they are being advised sending copies of letters on general points where relevant, and contacted by people who need advice on that particular Group. It might be possible to do some kind of a survey of Groups in this way of subjects offered, coursework requirements etc. (Could this survey constitute coursework for GCSE and who would mark it?)

This person would be a central point as opposed to an expert, there aren't any of those. There would be a possibility of five or six people making contact fairly easily. I would be prepared to do MEG (Betty Ball, Cambs that is), perhaps Sue Stephenson might do NEA, that's Northern although I haven't asked her yet. So we then need someone for London and East Anglian (LEAD), Southern (SEG), Welsh (WJEC). Perhaps also someone for the Scottish and Irish areas. Any volunteers?

CORE CURRICULUM

With discussion about GCSE, I think it would be interesting to also stop and consider how the proposals for Core Curriculum might be interpreted for home education. Will it be a stick to beat us? I don't think it is easy to say how it will be applied but I feel that I would prefer to mull it over and be as much prepared as possible should the event arise or the veiled threat of it be delivered by an educational adviser. Figures used here are from a consultation document by the Dept of Education and Science Welsh Office - the National Curriculum dated July 1987 which I sent off for. This document is to be acted on to become law this autumn and your comments on it were requested by 30th September 1987, so I'm afraid it is already too late and anyone else who might have commented was on holiday in August, so tough luck!

The proposals would come into force in 1990 at all age levels, i.e. would not start with new school entrants and work its way up. This is a summary of the document as I interpret it.

Mathematics, English and Science are the core of the curriculum and top priority throughout all schooling. In addition the foundation subjects should include a modern foreign language, technology, history, geography, art, music and physical education. Religious Education is still a statutory subject as well.

At primary level the foreign language would not be included and the majority of the curriculum time should be devoted to the core subjects, i.e. maths, english and science.

At secondary level all foundation subjects should be studied, although not all foundation subjects have to be taken at GCSE, all core subjects should be taken and it is expected that most pupils will take 7 or 8 of the foundation subjects. Suggestions are that Combined Sciences could lead to a double GCSE award and a single combined course in art/music/drama/design. The core and foundation subjects with RE would take up from 80 to 90% of the curriculum time, which it states will leave adequate time for choice in additional examination subjects! Subjects such as information technology, human biology would almost disappear to be fitted into the relevant foundation subjects.

In the fourth and fifth years the foundation subjects will each take a percentage of the school timetable usually 10%. I have assumed school hours plus school "homework" to be about 30 hours and interpreted the hours per subject as below to give you some idea what is being planned

Foundation Subjects

English	10%	3 hours
Mathematics	10%	3 hours
Combined Science	10-20%	3-6 hours
Technology	10%	3 hours
Modern Foreign Language	10%	3 hours
Hist/Geog or Hist or Geog	10%	3 hours
Art/Music/Drama/Design	10%	3 hours
Physical Education	5%	1½ hours
	<u>75-85%</u>	<u>22½-25½ hours</u>

Additional Subjects

RE will still be compulsory and at least one other 10% subject added which might be another language, more science, the other of History or Geography, Home Economics, Business Studies, etc. to be included.

Are any E.O.ers having this core curriculum used against them and how? What are other members views and how have they envisaged handling the situations. I am sure there is much interest in these issues.

TESTING AT 7, 11, 14

Assessment and testing at ages 7, 11 and 14 (and 16 in non-GCSE examined subjects) are planned for 1990. They are an important part of the corecurriculum argument and currently preparations for these national tests are being made at the same centres producing GCSE. These tests will be administered and marked by the teachers but their marking and overall assessment will be externally moderated.

The ITV programme 'Educating Britain' which has been shown in recent weeks on Sunday lunchtimes has been very interesting introduction to the controversies over the way our Government seems intent on going. (Watch out for it possibly being repeated, most things are.)

Many of the experts are not happy with a national system of testing as they feel it would have to be a written test which will automatically penalise many pupils. No-one seems to be talking about what happens when a sevenyear old does badly, this will label him rather than help. Some experts suggest that if a pupil fails to reach the level expected in view of his 'potential' they can see what to do to help. However, where does this potential measurement come from? Is he tested for potential as he starts school and if so will there be a move, not unknown now among some parents, to push and coach preschool children to improve their potential measure. Many teachers feel that where this testing is being pioneered, education is already being dominated and distorted by this testing. University of London experts feel that more open ended testing where pupils can use their own approach, practical or abstract, to work out problems and explain verbally their reasoning, thereby learning by doing the test also. The example used had children using a given piece of squared paper to make the box with the largest capacity. Some filled their boxes with rice and weighed it to decide on the biggest, others filled them with unit cubes, only a few used the usual exam technique of $\text{Volume} = \text{length} \times \text{breadth} \times \text{height}$. However the latter is easier to test than the others. The experts are recommending that the written tests proposed are self-defeating and have no value. The discussion will clearly be continuing in the press.

The University of London Board is also experimenting with Graded Assessment for Physics 11-16. The aim is that they attempt practical tests at levels throughout secondary education, pupils moving up the levels as and when they pass a level. At each level they gain a certificate of completion giving short term goals and hence improving motivation. At level 9, say, GCSE would be awarded; at level 15 GCSE grade A would be awarded with no exam at the end. The examination board oversees and moderates this process. This seems to me very interesting but I cannot see a way it could be available to E.O. With so many teachers members of E.O. can someone add to this report.

I feel myself confused with so many debates going on in the education world at present. I apologise if I have made this confusing but the above report is on a television programme which I saw only yesterday myself.

* * * * *

PROBLEMS

I have just at the eleventh hour heard that at SEQ, problems of interpretation of external candidates are taking place. This has all been by phone so I am not too clear on details. Someone has been told that they have have to do coursework, mark it themselves, etc. Effectively to become a centre themselves. Seeing that the coursework element is mandatory for school children, I am not entirely surprised but I can see a lot of problems in us examining ourselves. Please more information as needed for the next newsletter. In the meantime, don't panic!

PROFILING

A new type of certification system called PROFILING has been introduced recently. Basically the idea is to list a detailed range of skills that someone has accomplished rather than giving an overall grade. It is intended to introduce a profile system for all school leavers by 1990 and this will include social skills. I have also seen details of a scheme prepared by the R.S.A. Examination Board in communication, numeracy skills which is aimed particularly at Y.T.S. programmes.

Profiling does have the advantage that it is positive, listing a student's skills and achievements rather than merely comparing a person's results with the norm. This has the attraction for E.O.ers that it does mean, in theory, that a student can choose which skills to learn and have those assessed and recorded rather than have a whole range of skills lumped together and judged as a 'package'. Thus examples from a Profile Certificate for Practical Numeracy might say:

The student has demonstrated the ability to:

- 1.1. Estimate/approximate length
- 2.2. Use the metric system for weight
- 3.0. Calculate temperature with negative numbers
- 11.11. Convert between decimals and fractions
- 12.7. Calculate the arithmetic mean
- 13.1. Use calculator keys for the four operations
- 14.6. Draw plans

Only positive statements would be given and in theory a student could return at a future date to add further 'statements' to the Profile.

On the debit side profiling will almost certainly be used to list, assess and record all aspects of a person's student life, partly with the good intention of showing positive qualities in a pupil with poor examination results. It would however make school even more claustrophobic for the student who doesn't fit into the system.

Nevertheless the profile system does have advantages, making it clear to pupils and parents what skills a child is acquiring, recommending it for people who believe in maximum choice and are opposed (like me) to the 'curriculum' approach to life.

CONTACT LIST

Perhaps we could have a special list of people embarking on GCSE out of school because I do think we need a different kind of help and support from each other than the generalised moral support the newsletter provides.

As a result of the above suggestion by Sue Stephenson, Sue has agreed to set up a contact list specifically for GCSE. It will be in two parts: a) members with children working towards GCSE; b) members who can offer specific help on one or more GCSE subjects, in particular if required looking at coursework and giving some idea of the standard it might achieve, etc. To offer help please send name, address, telephone number, subjects involved and sort of help you could offer. Members taking exams should send name, address, telephone number, name and age of child taking exam, Regional Group, exam subjects, date of exam, if coursework is involved. Send a stamped addressed envelope for the contact list, and with any enquiries to reduce cost. I shall be requesting financial help from the Core Group for expenses involved with the list. Write to Sue Stephenson at 1 College Road, Barrow-on-Humber, South Humberside, DN19 7ED.

HOW TO APPLY

The following is a suggestion of what you should do to apply and when. It is not tested but incorporates suggestions from the Board. In general ask early rather than leaving things to the last minute and missing entry dates, etc. They are often a long way in advance. Again check everything locally, it may differ drastically. 'You' in this context implies a communal parent/child combination.

1. Write to your Regional Group in advance of starting work on any course. Ask for a list of subjects and an order form and also a list of your local centres for that Group. You will be allocated to a Board which is part of the Regional Group. Clearly state external candidate.
2. Order a copy of the syllabuses you wish to consider (at MEG cost is 50p per subject, 60p next year but this includes postage). Order a copy of the specimen papers in these subjects if you think these will help you decide (at MEG cost is 20p per paper). Mark clearly that you want external syllabuses or mature where applicable. Get syllabus for the correct year you wish to take the exam, there may be changes e.g. set books each year.
3. Do you have an Open Centre as at MEG where there is someone with responsibility for helping external candidates. MEG also has an Open Centre in London. If you are having trouble finding a centre and coursework is not involved they can arrange exam facilities for you. If you have someone like this, make contact and use them.
4. Spend time deciding on the course you wish to take. Are the assessments acceptable to you? Is coursework involved and how will you need to arrange the marking of this? Does the subject matter interest you? If any of these cause concern, you still have time to contact other Regional Groups for their syllabus in that subject and see if you can get rid of the problem but take account of any difficulties caused by using this 'foreign' centre. Consider also the mature syllabus which might help.
5. Having decided on a subject and syllabus find a centre, the Board should have sent you a list. The centre could be a school, further education centre, evening class centre, etc. Do this at the beginning of your course. If coursework is involved requiring an examiner sort this out before you begin and talk to him re your coursework. Negotiate a marking fee if applicable. Find out when coursework has to be to him.
6. Find out what else is available to help you e.g. French Defined List, listening tapes, etc. Find a textbook and check if it covers the syllabus for your course, also see if you like the layout and style of it. Some libraries have GCSE textbooks in making it easier to make your mind up than in a bookshop. Now you can start.
7. Check when you need to make your final application for the course. It is usually February for a June exam, September for a November exam. Check when coursework needs to be in to assessor allowing marking period before he has to send it in. Work back from that to make sure you start work on the coursework projects in plenty of time. It might be a good idea to make yourself a big timechart and put it up clearly somewhere, it would be a tragedy after all this to miss the application date.
8. The cost of the exam is £6 per subject. There is no initial fee for registration as there was with GCE. The centre may make a charge for external candidates themselves I don't know.
9. Put your name on the EO contact list for GCSE mentioned elsewhere and share your experiences, you are now the GCSE expert of EO. Good luck!

Advice from Sharon Blaukopf, Cambs

The main point is not to worry. I do not think that GCSE is intended, incidentally or otherwise, to push E.O.ers out of the examination market. It is the coursework aspect that is causing brows to furrow. Stop and spare a thought for the hundreds, thousands of people who now take GCE 'O' levels as External students. The new exam boards have to make provision for them which neatly covers E.O. too. For some subjects there will be provision for a moderator to mark coursework; some will have a syllabus for external candidates; other subjects will have part of the exam for external students only.

What this does all mean is that you must look closely at a syllabus, and decide for whom it is intended, before you start it. One cannot follow a 'school' syllabus and just tack on a bit here and there for a particular board. One must be clear at the start what the whole syllabus entails.

I have found it an exc utiating process, trying to get a straight answer from an exam board. I can't help feeling that GCSE is a spurious change. The exam boards seem to have had trouble getting their act together for external students, so much so that the London Board is running GCE 'O' levels in mainstream subjects, until January 1989, for external candidates only.

Advice from Sue Stephenson, Humberside (NEAB Group)

Choosing a syllabus - I think this is the way to go about it. Write to the examining board that deals with your area for a list of the syllabi they have published. Buy copies (NEAB charge 60p a copy) of the subjects you are interested in. If th t syllabus isn't what you were after, doesn't cover the aspects you want, then go to other examining boards for their syllabus in that particular subject. The advan age to settling for your local board's syllabus is that ur child could sit the exams at any one of the local schools instead of perhaps travelling some distance to an exam centre.

As for external candidates, the NEAB, for instance, seems to be going to deal with them on an ad hoc basis at the moment so one has to get in touch with the particular board about the particular subject. An example is Biology which Sam is intending to sit in 1988. The syllabus says: "External candidates and repeating candidates not in full or part-time attendance at a centre will be required to attempt a practical examination based on assessment of skills (listed elsewhere). External candidates should contact their home board as soon as possible after the commencement of the course for further information."

I have written to our Director of Education about the possibility of Sam attending Physics classes at the local school because of the apparent difficulty of replicating the p actical work at home. He hasn't replied yet.

Getting information is a slow sticky business because most people seem to have it fixed in their heads that it has to be done at school and cannot entertain alternatives. Maybe it is just because getting it off the ground at school has been hard enough, the thought of complicating it further is not welcome.

Perhaps we could have a special list of people embarking on GCSE out of school because I do think we need a different kind of help and support from each other than the generalised moral support the newsletter provides.

Supplement Editor: Betty Ball, 1 Fenton Road, Warboys, Huntingdon, Cambs.

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nick and Elizabeth Clarke, Hill Cottage, Thelnatham, Norfolk, are proud to announce the arrival of their new baby, JAMES, on July 27th 1987, weighing 8lbs 11ozs.

Tone and Phil Villacci, 21 Plymouth Ave, Bevendean, Brighton, announce the arrival of IAN, born on 12th August 1987.



MAYOW HOUSE

A very different educational environment for boys and girls 7 - 11

The aim of Mayow House is to create an educational environment whose philosophy is based on the non-punitive child rearing ideals of Neredah McCarthy and Peggy Thomas - who will staff Mayow House - and who are founder members of the Association of Breastfeeding Mothers.

Two features set Mayow House apart from conventional schooling: small working groups (ratio of staff to children is 1:4) and short hours - the day begins at 9.30am and ends at 1.00pm. The short day makes it possible for children to follow up sports and many other activities in their own time.

The two fundamental objectives of the curriculum are mastery of the English language and competence at number work; their goal is that all children should reach common entrance standard at 11 plus. Children's education also includes Religious Education (based on the traditional Judeo-Christian teaching), Music (all children will be taught recorder and music appreciation) and Art, which is incorporated into the day to day work wherever possible.

Each person, child and adult, at Mayow House, is treated as an individual with his own talents and abilities. Each child's programme is entirely individualised, and every child receives the support and attention needed to work at his own pace. Children who have, for any reason, rejected conventional schooling should particularly benefit, as will those requiring the support of very small groups for emotional or educational reasons.

Further details and brochure can be obtained on receipt of an SAE from:

Peggy Thomas
Mayow House
131 Mayow Road, Sydenham,
LONDON SE26 4HZ

NOTICES....CONTINUED.

NEWS FROM LYNNETTE CAMERON ABOUT CHILD BENEFIT

The Secretary of State for Social Services suddenly decided that he wanted to have his say in the five Appeals which were to have gone ahead at an Oral Hearing in October. He should have put in his evidence in October 1986 at the latest, but things being what they are, the Commissioner has allowed his evidence to be entered 'out of time' and we now expect proceedings to be delayed *another* two months.

ANOTHER BIRTH!

Lisa & Alfie Hall Davey, of Judgement Cottage, Leddington, Dymock, Gloucestershire, announce the birth of DAISY MAY, a sister for Ash and Poppy. She was born at home on 18th June 1987.

Lisa and Alfie are also our new Co-ordinators for GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

Do you remember 'the Railway Children', Bobbie, Peter, and Phyllis, those early E.O. pioneers? Well, we are the Railway Children of the eighties; we don't steal coal or wear flannel petticoats but we do have three chimneys and we are all mad about trains.

We live next door to the railway line in a village just outside Milton Keynes and the trains go by all day long. If there are any more train-mad E.O.ers out there perhaps they'd like to come and see the class 31's, 47's, 56's, 58's, 86's and 87's. We'd love to see you. If you don't like trains you could always come and talk to Valerie!

James, Geoffrey, Bradley and Jake Gommon,
19 New Road, Castlethorpes, Milton Keynes.

Has anyone got any old correspondence course books they would lend, or even sell? At the moment I am particularly interested in History, Geography, French and Latin.

Sharon Blaukopf
28 Harvey Goodwin Avenue, Cambridge.
Telephone 0223 352145

DYSLEXIA

Mrs Monica Parsons, 30 Ormond Road, Wokingham, Berkshire, is preparing a Doctorate for Cambridge University on Dyslexia. She would be very glad to hear from other E.O.ers with Dyslexic children (or husbands and wives!).

If anyone would like to come and stay in our motor caravan at any time they are very welcome. It has two double beds, sink, cooker, fridge, and loo. We live in an area of 'outstanding natural beauty' with lots of castles and places of interest around, and we have one six year old boy, so would prefer children of compatible ages (6 - 11 year olds). Contact Sue & Stefan Petszaft, The Old Squash Court, Bayham Abbey, Lamberhurst, Kent.
Tel: (0892) 890624



SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

When we first considered not sending our sons to school we were like many parents conscious that opportunities were needed for them to meet other children and adults both with and without us. We weren't choosing to separate them from other influences - it just so happened that all the other children were enclosed in schools all day. Early opportunities occurred through Watch (Natural History Club) meetings which have been mentioned in this Newsletter many times. I even formed my own local group and ended up looking after quite a few other children in the village on some Saturday afternoons as well. But with that type of activity comes a commitment which reduces freedom, and forces the activity onto your own younger children, which can reduce the pleasure of the activity itself.

When my son became eight years old more activities became available, Scout Cubs being one existing locally already. I had some reservations about the 'military' aspects and Woodcraft Folk on paper looked attractive but it didn't already exist for us. I would have had to take on organising that and he would still have been with me so I decided to compromise. I valued the leader's time more than most, so got involved in the background on the committee fundraising for scouts huts and minibuses. Without backup, leaders would give up and I needed their time more than most. Also I don't want my kids to grow up expecting everything to happen but to see that if something needs to be done, they are the best person to do something about it.

I was also conscious that we could become pretty isolated in the house if we weren't careful - most mums meet and chat outside the school gates and I have never been a person who went out to coffee a lot. So I involved myself in doing things in the village; I edit the village newsheet, make posters, am treasurer of things...and my kids see indirectly how things happen.

The village I live in has a Community Primary School which means that most things are based around there. This caused me a little embarrassment at times but that was my problem, not caused by the school who were always very friendly. (A big advantage this when my second son, aged nearly nine, decided to go to school.)

We are lucky in that my husband is a Community Education Tutor and has organised activities for Gym, Swimming, Judo, French for fun, Computing and Drama classes that our children have been able to take advantage of. St. John's Ambulance also decided to start cadets and our son has not only joined in lots of activities and done duties at many events he wouldn't have otherwise attended, but has also been taught by them first aid, introductory commerce, child care and development and home nursing - pity he can't stand the sight of blood.

I am pleased that my elder son aged 12 can and does go to many events and join in without social problems.

Many of these activities described we have gone out and found, but opportunities often come from unexpected sources by being involved in things even though this can mean running around in circles at times. A centenary celebration in our village that we got involved in (see next pages) had the local radio station broadcasting from the event all afternoon. Because Tom had been around helping quite a lot he was asked to be a steward for the radio team and interviewed on radio. He did the interview confidently, talking about E.O. in the course of it and was busy at his task all afternoon, gaining lots of confidence. Tom will avoid writing at all opportunities, but when taken to a folk festival by another E.O. family, (the Coxes) he volunteered to interview a folk dance group and report it for the local paper, again carrying it through competently.

I now don't worry about social situations. My son is never in in the evenings or weekends and we are just a taxi service. Frequently the problem is trying to do two activities at the same time!

* * * * *

A few days after writing the above about the social situation we decided to look at how core curriculum proposals might affect us. (See the supplement.) There is a worry that it might be something to "beat E.O. with"! We decided to look at how

much of this our son Tom, aged 12½ already covers through activities chosen by him to attend.

In the Art/Music/Drama/Design section he has had a private piano music lesson (¼ hour) since age 6 and practices a little each day (total 1 hour per week). He attends a youth drama class for 1½ hours a week. He is always making presents/objects in craft work at home. Total time, well in excess of 3 hours. In the Physical Education section, he attends a Boy's Gym Club on Saturday mornings (¾ hour) followed by Swimming (¾ hour) and survival swimming (¾ hour). Another evening he plays Badminton (1 hour). Total of three hours per week, double that required.

These are the areas that we are often told that we won't be able to cover in isolation from school. I could continue with the St. John's Cadets contribution to Science but will leave it there. I suggest anyone with older children analyse their children's activities and see what they already do. I emphasise that this is not our attempt to satisfy the core curriculum, merely an analysis of one child's choice of activity in that context.

* * * * *

100 YEARS OF DOMESTIC LIFE

Warboys, where we live, has a clock tower built in 1887 for the Jubilee of Queen Victoria. It needed some restoration and a group in the village got together to organise a celebration and fundraise at the same time. They decided on a display of 100 years of farming life: grain crops from the scythe to the combine harvester and so on through the other local crops. Also proposed was something on changes to domestic life. As a result, I was asked to help and invited to form a group to organise it. I agreed as I thought it sounded like an opportunity for education but cautiously as someone with 70% in History 'O' Level but no concept of historical time at all (did the Vikings come before Queen Victoria or not?)

We decided upon building town settings in a barn for a walk back in time from the present day to 100 years ago. My idea was to build my own Beamish but with a very limited budget and only three weeks' building time, the event only taking place for 5 hours, there had to be a lot of compromises. I was keen to recreate atmospheres, using sound, lighting, authentic wallcoverings and so on. However we did cheat like mad when necessary and we learned so much. Tom was involved in helping with the displays and also prepared a children's guide with illustrations, using a word processor. A local estate agent was persuaded to back the exhibition with £200.00, a panelling manufacturer provided the room "walls" and local carpenters and electricians helped us. The village doctors set up a Victorian surgery and the village Headmaster a schoolroom with children copywriting. A local fireman interested in soldiers set up a superb museum of the home front in the Second World War, ARP station, rationing etc. The rooms we chose were 1980's kitchen, 1963 teenage bedroom, 1940's kitchen, 1920's parlour, 1900's nursery, 1880's two-storey labourer's cottage and pigsty with pig (built on scaffolding provided by a local builder) and a Victorian dairy. It was hard work but we learned a great deal and were put into the position of researching details we wouldn't have noticed normally looking at history books. I am hoping to visit Beamish whilst at Featherstone Castle but I'm sure we shall see it in a new way now that we have seen the other side of the 'museum fence'.

I don't know if you would describe this as home education but it was certainly education by and for the community.

Betty Ball

1 Fenton Road, Warboys, Nr. Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire.



REGIONAL NEWS

SOUTH LONDON Pre-school Group

This group is meeting every 2 or 3 months. It was started by 80 members with children under, or just over, school age that they plan or hope not to send to school. The aim is simply to meet and get to know each other.

At the moment we meet in each other's houses, but we are beginning to run out of suitable houses! Has anyone got any good ideas for an alternative place to meet? If so, or if you would like to come to the next meeting, please contact me:

Rachel Sanger
32 Doddington Grove
SE17 3TT
01 - 582 3949

BEDFORDSHIRE

Over the last couple of months we have enjoyed two joint picnics with the N. Bucks group.

During September we will be starting a series of workshops including Puppet making, dyeing, papermaking, and marbling.

For more up-to-date details please telephone:

Teresa Baines on Ampthill 405979

All welcome.

ESSEX

With many of the Essex members on holiday during July and August, the meetings tend to be quite flexible during these months...mainly suiting the needs and interests of those who were free and wanting to meet. As it happened, there seemed to be more going on than usual, with visits to the beaches, wild life park, fort and members' homes. It was also nice to see Melanie Nield again, back from Australia for a short time.

Here are the details of forthcoming meetings:

- WEDNESDAY 7th OCT - At the home of Karen Ham-Ying
- SATURDAY 24th OCT - Bodymind Exhibition at Chelmsford. Plenty of interest here, and we shall be organising a stand for which we need helpers, please. Full details are given elsewhere in the newsletter.
- WEDNESDAY 28th OCT - We were unable to arrange the meeting at the Maldon Salt Co., and at the time of writing no venue has been arranged. However, Angela Jackson shall be making arrangements for a meeting so would you please call Angela on 0371 850522.
- WEDNESDAY 18th NOV - At the PITMAN ROOM, Bicknacre Village Memorial Hall, Bicknacre, Nr Danbury. We have booked the room as usual, from 1pm to 6pm, and most of us eat lunch on arrival. As always, we are pleased for new members to join us and when we hire the Pitman Room we usually choose a theme around

NEWS FROM THE REGIONS - CONTINUED

which we work. Members are asked to each bring along anything they can which may seem relevant, as we can all learn from each other's ideas and skills. Our theme for this meeting will be the country CHINA and we shall be puppet making, building the Great Wall (scaled down, of course!), making kites - and anything else you can contribute in ideas or materials.

SUNDAY 13th DEC -

Our annual Christmas get-together at the Pitman Room. Numbers attending last year were disappointingly low, so I hope a few more of you will be able to join this time. We shall meet between 2 - 6pm, and please bring along some food and drink to share. (The pop-corn went down well last year, Rosemarie!) No other plans have been made at the time of writing, so please contact me for more details...or with your own suggestions.

After various enquiries, it seems evident that some members do find an Essex Newsletter helpful, so I shall again start sending these out to interested families. The Newsletter will give details of all Essex meetings, other relevant news, and anything that YOU wish to contribute...opinions, ideas, swaps, items for sale or exchange - the choice is yours. To put your name on the mailing list, please send £1.00 to cover post and printing. This will cover Newsletters for one year.

Two or three members have contacted me recently with offers and suggested meeting places. These are always welcomed as it is difficult trying to think of new places to meet, and to anticipate members interests. Remember, if you have transport problems or find it difficult getting to meetings, do let me know. There might be others in your area who are experiencing the same problem and who might also welcome a meeting in your own area. I am happy to work something out if I know there are families who would like to get together. Are there any suggestions for the New Year?

Hoping to hear from you/see you soon!
Sandie Cottee
17 South View Road, Rettendon,
Chelmsford, Essex. CM3 8DX.
Telephone: 0268 733259



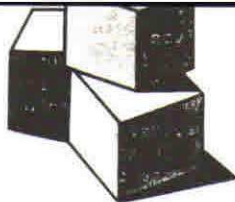
.....
SURREY

There will be an informal meeting for Surrey members (and anyone else interested) to be held on SATURDAY OCTOBER 24TH, from 2pm - 5pm at the home of Christopher and Alexandra Wilson, 25 Fitzjohn Close, Meroo Park, Guildford.

Tea/coffee/squash and cake provided, but if you wish to bring your own tea please do so. We hope initially to be able to get to know more Surrey members, and for people to get to know us! Also, perhaps we will be able to work out what sort of activities (if any) Surrey members would like to see going on in our area. If anyone has any specific views or ideas, please come and share them.

It would be helpful, if possible, if we could have some idea of who might be coming beforehand, especially since our house is small and therefore, if dozens of you turn up, seating/standing room may become interesting! However, please *do* come, everyone is more than welcome.

Alexandra Wilson
Telephone: Guildford 505173



BERKSHIRE

Lynnette Cameron writes: I am so pleased to welcome Chris Pape as 'Co/Co-ordinator for Berkshire.

Our dates for the Open Afternoons this Autumn are October 4th, November 6th and December 9th. All visitors welcome. Bring something for tea. Further information from me (0734-661656) or Chris Pape (0734-789970).

Monthly copies of the "Berkshire Bulletin" can be had for £3.00 p.a. from: Rivka Videan, Blue Bird Cottage, 10, Park Lane, Thatcham, Berkshire, RG13 3PJ.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

We have had a couple of meetings recently, both enjoyed by the few people who came. I particularly enjoyed the meeting at Janet Everdell's house, especially her husband Nigel's interesting explanations of the flora and fauna on our walk to Houghton Mill.

I would like to arrange a guided tour of some of the Colleges in Cambridge. There is a wealth of history in these courtyards. However, to do so, I need a clear idea of how many people will turn up. If you would like to come on such a tour, which will be during October, please let me know.

Cambridge sent a small contingent to the EO camp at Thornham. My sons certainly had a very good time, and there were lots of 'thank you's to Bruce Cox.

Sharon Blaukopf, 28 Harvey Goodwin Ave, Cambridge. (0223 - 352145)

NORTH YORKSHIRE

Perhaps I'm slow but it has taken me 10 years as Co-ordinator to actually get a local meeting organised - take heart all other persons who worry about not getting it together!!!

N. Yorks had a wonderful day out at Dave and Eve Walker's magnificent house near Whitley - thanks to kids, animals, gardens and waterfall. We met and ate and talked and walked and agreed to hold another meeting sometime in October near Whitley. Thank you all who turned up and supported our first, faltering day. All N.Yorks group and anyone in the surrounding areas are invited to the next meeting.

Please contact: Jennie White, Wensley Mill, Wensley, Leyburn, (0969 23544)

CALLING LINCOLNSHIRE AND CAMBRIDGESHIRE -

October 21st - Fun and games in King's Lynne - very near to some of you! We are having a day's drama workshop 10.30 - 2.30pm with the very competent leader of the Lynne Children's and Youth Theatre. The emphasis will be on families working together - adults and children, lots of role play etc. Having sampled this before, I can recommend it as therapeutic and very good fun.

I've long looked at some of the names on the Contact List (eg. Ely and Peterborough) and thought how nice it would be to make new friends, only just over half an hour away. So, how about it? Bring a picnic lunch, or there's a chip shop nearby; come back for a chat with the Outred family afterwards? Directions to Providence Street Youth Centre, ring Jenny: 0553 674473.

Look forward to seeing you, Jenny Outred, 346 Wootton Road, King's Lynne, Norfolk.



NEWS FROM THE REGIONS - CONTINUED

LONDON TRIPS for the coming year:- Please ring Sue Petszaft (Lamberhurst 890624) in case of queries or cancellation. Usually we meet on the 2nd Tuesday of each month for an outing somewhere, and on the 4th Monday of each month to visit the Museums - meeting in the Science Museum foyer at 11.15am. As yet we have not obtained free admission to the Natural History Museum but are still hoping.

- MON 23rd NOV - Meet at Science Museum at 11.15am
Nearest tube South Kensington.
- TUES 8th DEC - Meet at Planetarium - nearest tube Baker Street. Schools talk entitled 'Earth, Sun & Planets'. For 7 - 11 year olds. Starts at 11am so be there for 10.30am! Lasts 50 minutes. Let me know as soon as possible if you're coming and I can send you the notes and worksheets which might be useful to read before coming to the talk.
- MON 28th DEC - Museums. As above.
- TUE 12th JAN - Horniman Museum, 100 London Road, S.E.23. Nearest tube Forest Hill. Meet at 11.15am at the Museum. Exhibition of hive bees amongst other things.
- MON 25th JAN - Museums - as above.
- TUE 19th FEB - St. Katherine's Dock. Historic shops collection. Admission charge. Nearest tube Tower Hill. Meet at Dock at 11.15am.
- MON 22nd FEB - Museums - as above.
- TUES 6th MAR - Cranley St Natural Park, N.W.1. Nearest tube St. Pancras or King's Cross. Wildlife refuge in the city. Pond dipping and looking through the microscopes. Let me know beforehand if you're coming.
- MON 28th MAR - Museums - as above.
- TUE 12th APR - River trip to the Thames Barrier from Westminster Pier. Meet at 11.00 as boat goes at 11.15am. Takes 1 hour & 20 minutes, next boat at 12.30pm. Adults £3.50, children £2.00 but reduction of 10% for a group of over 20, so let me know.
- MON 25th APR - Museums - as above.
- TUE 10th MAY - R.A.F. Museum, Hendon, Grahame Park Way, N.W.9 Nearest tube - Colindale. Meet at 11.30 at entrance to Museum, which is free, but there is a charge for the Battle of Britain Museum and Bomber Command Museum.
- MON 23rd MAY - Museums - as above.
- TUE 14th JUN - Alexandra Palace & Park, Wood Green, N22. Meet at 11.30am at the entrance to Park. Nearest tube Wood Green or Finsbury Park. There are children's paddle boats and an animal enclosure.
- MON 27th JUN - Museums - as above.

See you all there!

Sue Petszaft, The Old Squash Court, Bayham Abbey, Lamberhurst, Kent.
Telephone: Lamberhurst 890624.

NEWS FROM THE REGIONS - CONTINUED

ISLE OF WIGHT GATHERINGS: Contact Jude Ashley-Walker, 1 The Firs, Dodpits, Rigwood, Yarmouth, I.W. Telephone 0983 78680

Saturday 31st October, from 4pm to 8pm, Hallowe'en Party at Sue & Mick Lyons, Egremont, East Hill, Ryde; Tel. 0983 616656

Suitable dress preferred, (witches, wizards, vampires etc....) Please bring turnip/swede to make lanterns - candles supplied.

Sunday 8th November, midday to about 6pm. Bonfire celebration at our house and garden. Food - salads, jacket spuds, sauces, vegi-burgers, soup etc...available at 50p per head. Please bring sparklers, fireworks and/or wood for bonfire (old furniture etc...)

December (date not yet arranged) probably in Newport I.W. Christmas party with prezzies, games and, hopefully, entertainment. I'll have to charge £1.00 per child for presents, so I MUST know who is coming and have money in as soon as possible please. Ring me if you'd like to come, want more information or have any ideas on date, place, entertainment etc. Please come and have fun!

NORTH LONDON

Our next two meetings are at the Burghley Road Under 5's Centre, 23% Burghley Road, N.8 (off Turnpike Lane). The dates are Sunday, 8th November and Sunday, 6th December. Both meetings start at 2pm. Everyone is welcome and there is no age limit for children. The meetings are informal and we would welcome any new members to the group.


If anyone has any questions regarding the group, or any E.O. problems, please contact me:-

Jeffrey Benge, 17 Nelson Mandela Close, Coppetts Road, Muswell Hill, N10 1LA

THE NEW CURRICULUM - BAKER'S BLUDGION OR THE KEY TO THE FUTURE?

The new compulsory curriculum hangs brooding over our schools, and E.O. parents would do well to start investing in some sort of protection against the day when it unloads its burden of irrelevant book-learning and good old-fashioned clap-trap. I suspect, though I have no evidence to support me at this stage, that it will become that most dreadful thing, a documentary definition of the content of a 'valid' education. L.E.A.'s will be tempted to appeal to it in order to establish what a child 'ought' to know at any given age. They will argue that it was all very well in the old days (before Baker's curriculum) to say that one man's idea of education was as good as another's; but now that the management have instituted Quality Control and standardised ingredients there will be no place on the slab for dinky little country sausages made from farm-grown meat...it'll be Baker's Bangers or nowt. For this reason I suggest that we ought to set about drawing up a curriculum at least as complex and detailed as the official one, but robustly progressive and without the compendium of specific scraps of knowledge which the Government values so much. It should be a curriculum which recognises that learning begins not with the teacher but with the learner; it is an adjustment of the child's mind to his surroundings, not a sort of press-gang operation in which Society reads the Articles of War to the youngster and then treats him as if he had understood them and had agreed to serve under them. It should be about children and their discovery of our Universe.

Perhaps we could sum up our curriculum in a single phrase - "Questions before Answers". Traditional teaching supplies answers and then asks questions to find out if the pupils have learned them. This is surely as foolish as building a house before drawing the plans, or treating the patient without a diagnosis. Questions are too precious a tool, and the right way of asking them too necessary a skill, for



us to misuse in this way. We should look for ways to fill our children's lives with investigation, answered questions and thoroughly satisfied curiosity.

How can a child learn to ask questions if his surroundings are not safe? A question is not necessarily a group of words. It can be a touch or a movement. When a baby reaches out and grasps something - a toy or a cat's tail or a Ming vase - he's asking questions about its shape, its texture and what happens if you pull it, throw it or put it in your mouth. The child needs answers to these questions at least as much as a researcher needs to know what happens when he tries some new process, never before seen or tested. If his investigations lead to a rebuke, or worse, a slap, he will stop doing them. He will learn to understand the first element of the school's 'hidden curriculum' - that children are not supposed to establish their own, private understanding of how things work. Rather, God put them here to nibble at the bits of knowledge held out to them by teachers. This insults God, the children and their teachers, because it assumes that they are all involved in a sort of intellectual hamburger bar, with the teachers acting as short-order cooks.

If we make it safe to ask questions we surrender the right to put conditions upon the answers, to give more value to one line of study than to another. We cannot any longer insist on regular, progressive lessons nor can we stand over the pupil until he finishes everything that he starts. We give the world over to the child to make his own, on his own terms, and we have no choice but to smile on what he does with it. This line of thought leads inevitably to a fundamental question. If we are not going to define the curriculum in terms of the information which it will contain or the subjects it will cover, what do we intend to do with it?

For my part I am convinced that our curriculum must be concerned chiefly with attitudes to learning and techniques for doing it successfully.

We shall begin, as I have said, with curiosity. Every child should be continually curious. When we have finished with him he should still be open-minded enough to take up any new idea which passes his way; however unlike his normal pursuits it may be. If he is a devoted follower of pop. music he should be unprejudiced about Beethoven. Even though he lives on junk food he should be willing to try Continental cooking or even exotic dishes like sushi or satay. We can only develop this openness in children by not restricting their learning to our adult idea of what it should be. Equally important, we should avoid like the plague forcing them to finish what they have started. Nobody is interested in every single aspect of life; therefore we should leave our pupils in no doubt that they can drop what they are doing as easily as they took it up. This sounds all wrong, of course, but we have to assert an essential element of our radical curriculum, in opposition to the traditional one, namely that we are not concerned with what exercises and activities the children do during lessons but rather with how much knowledge and enthusiasm they take away from the school or the home when their education is over. No-one learns things which don't interest him. To be forced to complete a task whose educational purpose has been accomplished, simply in order to make it resemble more closely the sort of work adults do, is to drag the chains of slavery in what ought to be a free land.

For this reason, our curriculum will value present experience. We shall not ask pupils what they know, but whether they are happy about what they are doing now, and whether they want to continue with it. We will not judge the tasks they choose to perform, but the extent to which they enjoy doing them. We will not insist on this or that subject, because we have not even the faintest glimmering of an idea about what the youngsters will need to know. Our curriculum will specify that everything in a child's life is potentially educational, and that our attitude towards the events which make up his experience will not distinguish between 'educational' happenings like book-learning and 'non-educational' things such as paddling, playing tag or hearing that someone has died. I want to suggest, against all current thinking, that the compulsory curriculum should be nothing more or less than what is compulsory anyway, life itself. We should be thinking of ways to allow children to explore and profit from every experience, however fleeting and inconsequential it might seem to be.

If we don't start soon we may lose the right to do so for the foreseeable future. Baker's rag-bag may become the *summum bonum*, the highest good, in English Education.

Christopher R Shute

HAPPY 70TH BIRTHDAY

to

DICK KITTO!

Many happy returns from all of us in Education Otherwise!

UP FOR ADOPTION:

Five year old home-educated male welsh terrier - affectionate, endearing and companionable. (This breed retains its puppy playfulness). We are selling up and can no longer offer him the lively family situation that he needs. His name is Herbert Stubbins. He has a good pedigree and comes with his papers but he will go free to a good home. Enquiries to:

Rena Laslett
42 Southend Road East Ham LONDON E6 2AA.
Telephone: 01 - 552 3297

HOME EDUCATION AND OPEN COLLEGE

There are encouraging signs that more and more recognition is being given to the capacity of youths and adults to study in their own time, and where and when it suits them. Open Tech and Open College are becoming familiar terms.

With the start of Open College later this month, with its broadcasts both on radio and television (accompanied by study packs in the form of videos, audio cassettes and workbooks), we are seeing the beginning of a whole new way of learning.

The time may well be right for E.O. to formulate ideas and begin to exert pressure to have such "open" facilities made available for children of all ages. The pages of this newsletter show how parents have to discover books etc. on an *ad hoc* basis, with little help on how a home-based or flexi-school curriculum may best be developed.

It may be that a seminar should be organised - not unlike those on Human Scale Education held at Oxford in recent months - to explore the best way forward to bring the benefits of "open" learning to E.O. homes. How about 'Open Learning: The Way Forward' as a working title?

Finlay MacLeod
Shawbost, Isle of Lewis, Scotland.

WHERE TO GET WHAT:

LATER YEARS is now available from Christine Wallace (membership Secretary) at £1.50 including postage & packing.

Stationery, Introductory Literature, envelope re-use labels (£1.50 per 100), membership forms, posters & handbills - Co-ordinator's secretary.

Current & old newsletters, SINC, Early Years, Teach Your Own - Membership Secretaries

Growing Without Schooling - Jill Gillings, Ballaglanney Farm, Quayle's Orchard, Ranague, Isle of Man



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
Inholmes Farm, Plumpton Green, Plumpton, Sussex, BN7 3DE.

NEWS

Puffin are organising a READATHON - a sponsored read in aid of The Malcolm Sargent Cancer Fund for Children. It will take place at bookshops around the country throughout October. Also, listen out for 'Treasure Island' the new BBC Radio 4 programme about children's books.

SPACEMASTER KIT

This is an interesting set of shapes, made of polythene, which is designed to help in the development of manipulative skills and the concepts of space and structure. The polythene does not absorb water so the models can float and metal rings are supplied so that children can see what effect these have when added to models in water. There are clear instruction cards showing how to make simple models of vehicles but children can also invent their own. The set is intended for 4 - 6 years olds but older children also enjoyed working with it. The kit is available from J.D.MacLennan, Overton House, New Galloway, Castle Douglas, Kirkcubright, DG7 3SD at £9.50 plus £1.20 postage.

MUSIC: "ENCORES" - TRIOS FOR DESCANT, TREBLE & TENOR RECORDER ENSEMBLE
Published by Arnold Wheaton

The first impression one has, is that they are well set out. The print on the staves is large and easy for children to read. As trios, they are quite difficult for younger children to master quickly - you have to spend quite a long time on each part before attempting to try to put it together. More able older children would probably find it relatively easy. I think they are really meant for able recorder players who find sight reading fairly easy. The choice of music is good, because many of the main themes are well-known to the children and popular. If there are no trebles and tenors available, it is quite pleasant to just have the descant part only. It is refreshing to meet some new music arranged for recorder players this way, especially using themes of popular melodies.

Ann Crowhurst.

BOOKS

"Psychosynthesis in Education" by Diana Whitmore, published by Thorsons (paperback £6.99)

This is described as a practical manual for parents and teachers to enable them to address important psychological elements in children and young people, often neglected in formal education. It stresses the need for a sensitive and holistic approach to learning and the development of the will, the intuition, feelings, imagination, creativity and spontaneity. I found it absolutely fascinating and was immediately drawn to discover more about psychosynthesis. My children enjoyed the

suggested games and exercises and we all felt more aware as a result. It is a book to which I shall return often.

"Anno's Three Little Pigs" and "Anno's Hat Tricks" by Mitsumasa Anno & Tuyoosi Mori & Akihiro Nozaki.

Published by Bodley Head (hardback £6.95)

I've mentioned Anno's books before - I think they are the most splendid children's books since those of Beatrix Potter and A.A.Milne (though quite, quite different). In these two books, artist Anno joins with logician Nozaki and mathematician Mori to bring to small children a fascinating introduction to logic (Anno's Hat Tricks) and to the mathematical concept of combinatorial analysis (Anno's Three Little Pigs). I take it on trust when the publisher says that these are the skills needed for computer 'thinking' and therefore doubtless vital for today's children. All I know is that we as a family have had enormous fun working through the books and puzzling over the rationale of such concepts. The drawings are clear and delightful, the text easy to follow.

"I'm a Two Times (three times, four times, five times) Tabler" by Bill Gillham. Published by Magnet (paperback £1.95 each)

Four books demonstrate vividly (amusing pictures by Mark Burgess) with the help of the appropriate numbers of cats, frogs, pigs and rabbits, what happens when you multiply. Small children will enjoy the jokey cartoons and parents will find the suggested activities at the end of each book very helpful.

"The Patchwork Quilt" by Valerie Flournoy, illustrated by Jerry Pinkney.

Published by Picture Puffin (paperback £1.95)

A very special family book, this story of a small girl and her grandmother appeals because of its beautifully soft and colourful illustrations as well as its gentle story. Tanya helps her mother and grandmother create a patchwork quilt to replace an old worn one and a whole year in the life of the family is captured for future generations.

"Coming to Tea" by Sarah Garland, published by Picture Puffin (paperback £1.95)

Just a few words on each page to help tell the story of an everyday event make this an ideal book for the very young.

"The Proverbial Mouse" by Moira Miller and Ian Deucher. Published by Methuen Children's books (hardback £5.95)

Charming pictures and a witty rhythmical text for this story of a small hungry mouse exploring a toyshop. It is not only a neat way of making proverbs come to life but also an endearing book in itself.

"The Word Party" by Richard Edwards with drawings by John Lawrence.

Published by Puffin (paperback £1.50)

Old fashioned rhymes by a modern poet make up this entertaining collection for young readers -

There was a young cloud
Who wanted to rain.
Its cumulus mother said:
What? Not again!

"The Wild Ride" and other Scottish stories chosen by Gordon Jarvie.

Published by Puffin (paperback £1.75)

This is a collection of modern stories rather than folk tales or historical legends so you will find plenty of variety and some good stimulating writing. I think that it will appeal to readers of ten and over from any part of the world although all the stories are Scottish.

"The Magic Orange Tree" & other stories, by Jamilla Gavin. Published by Magnet (paperback £1.75)

A collection of stories for younger readers about children of different cultures living in a big city. Fantasy and magic are the theme but there are echoes of many different legends and backgrounds.

Helen Holland.

"Your Cartoon Time" by Rolf Harris. Published by Knight books, at £1.95 - should be available at most good bookshops.

This is a book for all ages, showing step by step stages of cartoon drawing. Starting with stick figures, Rolf Harris explains how to develop these into your own stylish characters and gives ideas on how you can use your drawings as birthday cards, home movies and so on.

There are also many useful tips about general drawing, too - how to convey facial expressions, age, scale and a whole lot more. Anyone who enjoys doodling will enjoy this book, as will those who already have some artistic talent.

Sandie Cottee

"The Legend Of Odysseus" by Peter Connolly. Published by Oxford University Press (hardback £7.95)

I have mixed feelings about this book. On the one hand, it's a vivid and readable re-telling of the Odysseus legend, based on the Iliad and the Odyssey, rounded out with a wealth of accessibly presented historical information, drawn from current scholarly thinking and the most recent archaeological research. The illustrations are splendid: clear, energetic and striking. But it is here that my reservations about the book begin to be felt. Connolly is an illustrator of great power, but nowhere more so than in the unremittingly realistic presentation of violence and anguish; the warrior's bodies gleam with sweat, and their clothes and armour are splattered copiously with blood.

In his introduction to the book, Michael Wood tells us that Connolly has previously produced "a string of marvelously visualised and detailed reconstructions of ancient life and especially of ancient warfare" (my emphasis). And really, that about sums it up; it also pinpoints for me a certain relish that permeates Connolly's attitude to his material that makes me uneasy. A couple of examples of what I mean: the preamble to the story takes us from Odysseus's boyhood to the return of Paris to Troy with Helen. What does Connolly chose to illustrate from this period? Helen, the most beautiful girl in Greece, perhaps? Or the extraordinary marriage bed fashioned round an olive tree.....? No, instead Connolly opens his book with a most convincing representation of Odysseus as a young man being "savagely gored by a young boar"Again: most authors concentrate mainly on the epic voyage home of Odysseus, after the siege of Troy; the present book devotes well over half of its pages to that initial sorry episode, confining the whole of the not uneventful Odyssey to twelve pages, and giving scant attention, within those pages, to the less pugilistic incidents (the encounter with Circe, for example, is omitted altogether). Connolly does find space, though, for a particularly unpleasant picture of the Cyclops having his eye gouged out - Odysseus appears, rather surprisingly, to be smiling as he performs this deed.

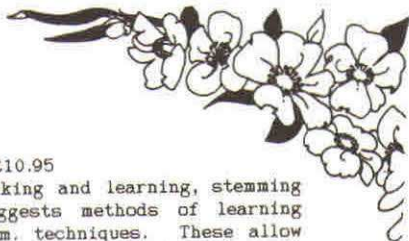
It would, of course, be ludicrous to suggest that one should hide, or gloss over the violent nature of this and many other Greek myths. But there is more to them than that; if there weren't they wouldn't have survived so long. Ultimately it is human nature, in its folly and glory, that holds our interest in a story, not blood no matter how liberally splashed about.

That said, I don't want to put potential readers off completely because it is in

many ways, a valuable book, striking a nice balance between dry pedantry and the "well, Mozart" school of historical biofiction, combining scholarship with accessibility in a way that amply merits the Times Educational Supplement Information Book Award it carries. But you need to be aware of what you are getting: if your child's interest in ancient Greece stops short of their methods of killing one another, you might find the amount of space devoted to that subject disproportionately large, and some other work might be appropriate.

The book is dedicated "To my son Matthew" who presumably is expected to enjoy it thoroughly. I remember at school being dragged protesting through the goriest bits of the Aeneid, passages chosen by the examiners on the assumption, I suppose, that most Latin scholars are boys, and that boys like that kind of thing. I find it a bit sad to see how little has changed.

Andrea Granville,
12a Priory Road, London, NW6 4SG.



Mind Skills: Giving your child a brighter future.

By David Lewis, published by Souvenir Press at £10.95
Child psychologist Lewis identifies four styles of thinking and learning, stemming from neurological differences in individuals. He suggests methods of learning suited to each mind style, ranging from games to exam. techniques. These allow children to learn in the mode to which they are best suited before extending their abilities to the other approaches.

The book includes quizzes to identify juvenile and adult mind styles and shows how opposing styles can cause misunderstanding and conflict in families. Dr. Lewis believes that schools cater for the mind styles of about a quarter of all children and quotes many authors familiar to home educators. He must surely be aware that E.O. families are in the best position to utilise the many ideas, practical and theoretical, he puts forward. In fact, the book might almost have been written for us.

I say 'almost' because I found the goals he sets spurious. The accent is on financial success in the computer age. I think E.O. families have clear visions of what education is meant to achieve, which will not be clouded by this. This book gave me a greater respect for my family's differing approaches to life and taught me many useful techniques. I re-read the chapter on how to listen (and how not to) several times. At £10.95 you may decide to order this book from the library but, I warn you, you may want to refer to it again and again!

Jan Shimmin.

The King's Demon by Graham Staplehurst. Puffin Books at £1.95.

This is a 'game' book based on the Robin of Sherwood television series. In this exciting book you choose your possessions and skills. You decide what you would do in different situations. Sometimes you have to fight and you can't always win. Depending on your choices you turn to different paragraphs, so there are lots of stories.

Raging Robots and Unruly Uncles by Margaret Mahy. Puffin books at £1.50.

Two sets of cousins send each other robots designed to cause disruption. I liked this funny book.

Ken Shimmin (9), E. Sussex.

The Little Wooden Farmer by Alice Dalgleish.

Published by Floris books (hardback) at £3.95.

A simple story book for young children, illustrated with detailed drawings in limited colours. A little wooden farmer and his wife live on a farm by a river but they have no animals for their farm. A friendly captain of a steam boat helps them

to fill their farm with animals that he finds along his travels on the river. The story is full of repetitions which enable children to join in the story line if they want to.

Festivals with Children by Brigitte Barz.

Published by Floris books, (paperback) at £4.95.

A book written for parents wishing to celebrate Christian festivals with their family. It describes the various symbols and customs of each festival and gives practical suggestions for stories and poems, craft projects, pictures and decorations to use at each festival. A useful reference book for discovering the significance of the various symbols used at festivals and for ideas on ways of celebrating the festivals through the year.

Advent for Children by Frya Jaffke.

Published by Floris books (paperback) at £3.95.

A book full of ideas on ways of celebrating the four weeks leading up to Christmas. There are ideas and instructions for making the following:- Advent calendars, lanterns, stars, candles, Christmas cribs, transparencies (tissue paper pictures). The instructions are clear and the book is well illustrated.



FOR YOUR OWN GOOD....

What I want to write about is a book I've just been reading. It's called "For Your Own Good - Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence". It's written by Alice Miller and published by Faber & Faber.

Right at the beginning I'd like to state that I don't want to write a book review. I want to write about how reading a book has affected me and the reasons why I think that it is important that other E.O. members should read it too.

Alice Miller is a psychoanalyst whose work with adults has convinced her that we learn violence as young children from our parents. When she writes 'parents' she doesn't necessarily mean the natural parents but whoever is the prime carer. This author hasn't only found trauma in her patients but also in herself and in her relationship with her own son.

Alice Miller very clearly makes the point that a child in unhappy circumstances is much worse off than an adult in a concentration camp. Children who are unhappy at home cannot really hate the parents for what they are being subjected to. It's easier to accept that what the parents are doing to them is right because they need so badly to be able to believe their parents. Instead they often suffer guilt about any bad feelings towards their parents and eventually bury their feelings or split them off. This is when the most serious damage takes places because at the point when they manage to suppress feelings they are cheated of feelings-development. They learn to distrust themselves and their feelings. Depending on the sensitivity of each child the trauma can disappear until they have children themselves. Furthermore, adults in a concentration camp can verify their suffering with other prisoners. They can know that what is happening to them is wrong and so they don't need to suppress completely their feelings of hurt and outrage. This might explain why solitary confinement is so much worse than being caged with other prisoners.

To quote Alice Miller:- "...the adult in a concentration camp) will never attempt to

convince himself that the cruelty he was subjected to was for his own good or interpret the absurdity of the camp as a necessary pedagogical measure; he will usually not attempt to empathise with the motives of his persecutors." Although peer group pressure at school can damage a child's self-esteem there is the advantage in that school children can together share the pain some teachers cause them. They can acknowledge that a certain teacher beats children or humiliates them or customarily abuses them in other ways. This can prevent the hurt being completely denied existence. Once again isolation is often used as a punishment. Conversely, teachers can, if they choose, acknowledge pain inflicted by the peer group when it is evident and communicate to the victim some empathy.

Alice Miller illustrates in numerous extracts from books about child-rearing that there is a long-standing belief in the Western tradition that it is kind to introduce respect for the parent's authority before the child is of school age. The reason for this is that a child won't remember the hardships he endured but will enjoy the fruits of complete obedience for the rest of his life. One writer puts it very succinctly - he says if an infant's will is broken straight away he will never know he even had one. An important message of the book is that none of us can claim to be free of these tenets called 'child-rearing'. They are pervasive and more importantly, a thorough replacement of these beliefs has by no means been accomplished.

Alice Miller writes "without a doubt, the conscious ideals of young parents of the present generation have changed. Obedience, coercion, severity, and lack of feeling are no longer recognised as absolute values. But the road to the realisation of the new ideals is frequently blocked by the need to repress the suffering of one's own childhood, and this leads to a lack of empathy...those who actually had the privilege of growing up in an empathetic environment (which is extremely rare, for until recently it was not generally known how much a child can suffer), or who later created an inner empathic object, are more likely to be open to the suffering of others, or at least will not deny its existence. This is a necessary precondition if old wounds are to heal instead of merely being covered up with the help of the next generation".

In the world at large Alice Miller recognises 'the relativity of values based upon one's position of power'. It is ludicrous but true that many parents for hundreds of years have deliberately lied to their children in order to teach them honesty. In 'For Your Own Good' case-studies describe instances where parents use cold deception to trick their children into confessing lies. Confessing a lie is a sure way of making a child aware. It's also an invasion of the child's mind. The child knows that you knew already but didn't let on, instead you laid a trap. This is possible for parents because they are in a position of power. It's easy for parents to abuse this power and injure their children repeatedly because they have forgotten how it feels and they wish to idealise their own parents. It also follows that even as adults they take abuse from other adults because their sense of justice is impaired.

Truthfulness is not always easy to operate. Alice Miller notes, "it is not always possible to tell the truth without hurting someone at the same time" as it is not possible "to show gratitude one does not feel without lying".

She goes on to point out that 'Those who were permitted to react appropriately throughout their childhood - i.e. with anger - to the pain, wrongs, and denial inflicted upon them either consciously or unconsciously will retain this ability to react appropriately in later life too. When someone wounds them as adults, they will be able to recognise this and express it verbally'.

When I ask myself whether my child is always permitted to react appropriately I cannot honestly say yes. It's often the case that his displeasure evokes displeasure

in me. I sometimes presume that when he's crying it's because he can't get what he wants. (He can't always get what he wants, can he?) He's just being a drag and deliberately wants to bring everybody else down too. I don't always feel empathy with him over a tin of tomato soup which he missed helping me to open. (There aren't any other tins. That one is already open. It would be a waste to open others even if there were others. Nothing can be done about it. Forget it). It's hard to face but maybe the issue isn't just the tin of soup but about helping and feeling useful or perhaps he hasn't been getting appropriate opportunities to show what he can really do. Alice Miller makes me ask how I might be protecting myself from my own memory of pain while inflicting it on my own child.

It's undoubtedly true that our own childhood pain is still intact and still hurts when it becomes uncovered. Am I prepared to deal with this when this may mean mourning the person I am only now allowing myself to become?

It's important to understand that our children will love us anyway and that faced with hypocrisy and confused values they will deny their own perception rather than think badly of us. We are their only source of love, approval, food, shelter and reliable information. The good thing is that with good quality communication we can be very happy with the little people in our lives.

Other books by Alice Miller include:
Thou shalt not be Aware
The Drama of the Gifted Child and the Search for Truer Self.

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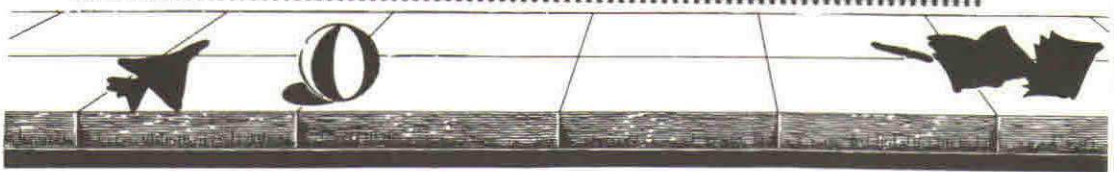
Andy & Diane Anderson, 95 Derrington Avenue, Crewe, Cheshire, CW2 7JA

An information/order form 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 an 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 for which it would be useful.



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

Our principal aims are to:

encourage learning outside the school system

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

establish the primary right of children to have full consideration given to their wishes and feelings about their education

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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