
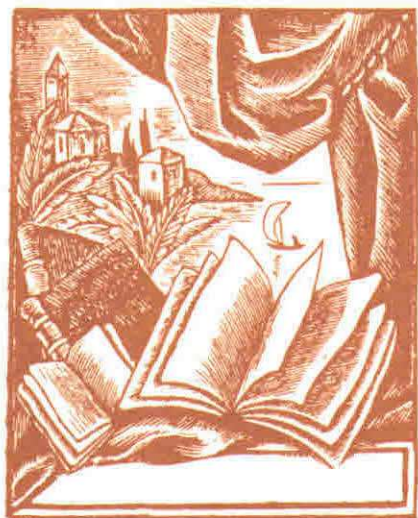


EDUCATION
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NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 1990
ISSUE No. 72



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EACH ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER IS EDITED BY A DIFFERENT, VOLUNTEER MEMBER OF EDUCATION OTHERWISE AND ITS PRIMARY PURPOSE IS TO PROVIDE COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT BETWEEN MEMBERS.

Education Otherwise is a company limited by guarantee and is a Charitable Trust. Charity No: 292029

The Editor for the April Newsletter is:
Jan Taylor, 1 Bodiam Close, Enfield, Middlesex, EN1 3HZ. Tel: 01-367 2109

The supplement in the April Newsletter will be on Special Needs (contributions welcome). Send your contributions to:
Sylvia Jeffs, 16 St Bernards Road, Solihull, B92 7BB. Tel: 021-706 6460

The deadline for submissions is **1st March, 1990**. Please send contributions to the editor marked clearly "**FOR PUBLICATION**", including your full name, address and telephone number on each submission sent.

Further notes for contributors:

1. Please submit before the deadline.
2. Please write or type your material clearly and indicate if you do not wish your contribution to be retyped otherwise the editor will retype and make minor corrections of spelling, punctuation etc.. Material of the wrong size, faint print may well have to be retyped anyway.
3. If you are referring to a previous article or letter, please include reference of newsletter number and date.
4. Feel free to make suggestions about articles you would like to see in the Newsletter, or supplements.

Advertisements are accepted (when space permits) from members if they are of interest to EO in general, at 10p a word.

If you would like to edit the Newsletter, or a Supplement, please write to or telephone **Lesley Kilbride, Publishing Secretary, Fearnmore by Shieldag, Strathcarron, Wester Ross, IV54 8XX, telephone 052 05278.**

Children's pages are edited by **Ken Beagley, "Oranges", St Clements Terrace, Harbeton, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 5SN.** Please send ALL children's contributions to this address.

Editorial Into the 90s

Welcome to the first newsletter of a new decade for Education Otherwise. A time full of new year resolutions, some kept, some broken: perhaps the resolve to follow a more natural path for your children's education, or the decision to stick to a timetable this time.

We all have different approaches:

I am different, you are different, he is different, they are different! But we have at least one thing in common - we all love our children and want to give them the very best we can, whatever own persuasion.

As an organisation we exist to give information, support and encouragement to those who are thinking about home education, and likewise to those who have already made the decision. It is a wide and responsible brief that we must fulfil, and the Newsletter is the only national vehicle that can attempt to satisfy members' needs.

Every issue of the Newsletter then must be as comprehensive as possible. Some things need to be repeated time and again, so that new members are kept up-to-date. New developments in education should be investigated, and reported on, for those who need to be informed. Also, what EO members can best offer each other is to share their experiences - successes and failures - concerning all aspects of a child's life, from first words spoken to the teenage blues.

The whole should then add up to a pot pourri of ideas and initiatives, to interest the very diverse membership that we have. I believe that this Newsletter has such a variety, that could satisfy many of our members' needs, thanks to the contributions I have received.

On a personal level, apart from being exhausted, I feel very privileged to have been given this opportunity to edit the Newsletter. I have made many friends

over the phone and, working into the small hours of the night, I have been able to savour every word that you have written as I keyed it in. My thanks go to all those who have contributed.

The experience has been a good one. I only hope that in reading it you feel the same way.

Jo Rust

Jo Rust, Cambridgeshire.

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EO FAMILY MEMBERSHIP CARDS

There is now an official EO membership card, robust, credit card sized and made out of recycled cardboard. It can be used to gain free entrance to the Natural History and Science Museums in London. Now that we have this card, perhaps it is time for all regions to think about the resources in their area and start negotiating for free or reduced entrance fees on behalf of all EO members. Want one?

Send an SAE marking the top left hand corner "EO CARD" to:

Paul Bentley, 83 Manor Park, London, SE13 5RA.

(Specimen cards can be supplied if required by your resource, if you send an SAE too.)

CHILDRENS' MEMBERSHIP CARDS

Cards which show that you are legitimately being home-educated.



Send an SAE to:

William Rust, 8 Church End, Gamlingay, Beds. SG19 3EP.

GCSE for Home Educators

Information sheet explaining procedures, examining boards, correspondence courses available and listing other EO families who are studying GCSEs.

Send SAE and 20p stamp to:

Paul Bentley, Learning Link, 83 Manor Park, London SE13 5RA.

In Print in America for children and by children

'Home School Exchange' is a new magazine for children world-wide. If you would like to receive copies, or if you would like to submit essays, artwork or advertise for pen pals....

Write to:

*Gloworm Gazette Publishing
Suite 293, Dept. HSE,
9430 E Golf Links Road,
Tucson, Arizona 85730, USA.*

EDUCATION NOW

This is a bi-monthly magazine for parents, teachers and all those concerned with education. It reports on positive initiatives and provides a platform for fresh ideas in education. The May 1990 edition is to be devoted to Home-based Education and the editors have asked for articles, about 2,000 words in length, written in popular, non-jargon style as far as possible.

A particular need is for a contribution from a family with one or more children in school and one or more out, sharing their experience and outlining their point of view.

They would also like to hear from those who have opted back into the system at some stage.

If you are interested, then submissions should be sent to:

Roland Meighan, 113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote Hills, Nottingham NG9 3FQ by April 1st.

If you would like to subscribe to 'Education Now' the cost is £15 for six issues a year, available from:
Education Now, PO Box 186, Ticknall, Derbyshire, DE7 1WF.

The WILLOW family have moved to
85 Arlingham Way, Patchway,
Bristol, BS12 5NG. Tel. 0272 699454



ON THE AIR-WAVES

An article by a member from Glasgow who found herself defending EO on Radio Scotland.

I was sitting quietly hearing my seven year old read when I was phoned up, out of the blue, by a researcher from Radio Scotland asking me to appear the following day on the *Jimmy Mack Show* (Scotland's equivalent to Jimmy Young), to talk about home education. Rather reluctantly I agreed because I felt it was about time I did my bit to help spread the news about EO and enable people to make the same choice as we have.

I have not experienced any problems with school since my children have never been. With three years of experience and three children officially "out" I have grown steadily more confident and sure of what we are doing. We have a friendly relationship with our LEA and our success ensures that we are seldom subject to open criticism. I prefer a quiet life, and over the years have lulled myself into the habit of avoiding criticising teachers and the school system. Instead I explain that home education is a choice which we have decided to take up and emphasize its benefits.

I was therefore not totally prepared for the way in which both the presenter and the other guest, a representative from EIS (Scottish Teachers Union) rounded on me immediately in attacking home education. I hadn't even been asked

to speak or introduced before being told I was utterly wrong. The substance of the attack from the teacher "expert", who had earlier admitted that he had never actually met a home educated child, was as follows:-

Schools perform a vital and irreplaceable role in 'socialising' children, and any child not attending school would become socially inept.

Without a teaching certificate a parent is incapable of teaching its child anything.

Even if a home educated child achieves academic success, it must have been subject to undue pressure from its parents and had its personality damaged by "hot-housing".

It is totally unacceptable for a child to be in any way different from its peers.

Children should not, at any stage, be given any choice about where they receive their education.

This blatant nonsense is enough to make ones blood boil, but sadly there are a lot of teachers out there who actually believe it. The myth of the school's role in socialising children was well addressed in the October Newsletter. Also a seven year old son of a colleague has recently been in hospital with concussion following a particularly nasty, racially motivated playground attack. This is the sort of "socialising" most of us can do without.

Whilst I am still prepared to concede that most teachers do a very difficult job for which they are not adequately rewarded, I am once more staggered by the almost mystical powers they attribute to themselves and their profession. Most of what we use in daily life is learnt out of school, and throughout history the majority of people have got on perfectly well without going to school.

I think I managed to hold my own, in the end. But perhaps I need to start standing up more firmly for what I believe; that the parent's primary responsibility for the education of their children is not only a legal right but also a God given duty, which no-one, teacher, school or state, has the right to usurp. If other parents wish to delegate that duty that is their choice, but in the present climate, and considering the state of our schools, it is something I would be very loathe to do.

Jo Fletcher
17 Glasgow Road, Uddingston,
Glasgow G71 7AU.

EO ARTIST WINS PRIZE

from Guernsey Tourist Board

Six year-old Johara Sykes-Davies from Gwynedd will be seeing her winning painting on the front cover of a quarter of a million brochures attracting tourists to Guernsey this year.

The competition was open to five to 13 year-olds, but her picture of windsurfers bobbing up and down on a blue sea won first prize. She will now be enjoying a trip to Guernsey and a box of oil paints and canvas. Well done, Johara!

DURHAM FAMILY FACE THE CAMERAS

When the Turnbull family agreed to be interviewed and filmed by ITV in the North East, they did not expect what followed.....



I hadn't expected seven of them! There was the director, the producer, the interviewer, camera-man, sound man, lighting man and the girl with the clipboard who sat and took notes all afternoon. But the seven people, cameras, lights, monitor and all the other paraphernalia fitted very unobtrusively into the house, and after three hours filming all we had in the way of upheaval was to turn a table round.

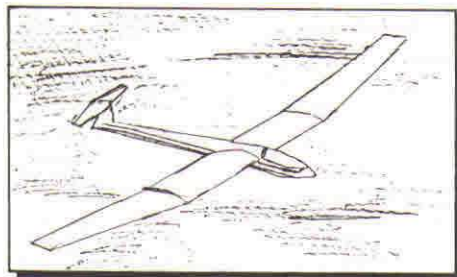
The whole atmosphere throughout the three hour filming session was relaxed - professional media people are well versed in putting us inexperienced amateurs at our ease. They filmed the children baking jam tarts and doing chemical experiments. They then interviewed Julie and me - all this after two preparatory visits, several weeks earlier.

Everyone followed the golden rule, "Don't look straight into the camera", the children had great fun and we certainly enjoyed ourselves. Now we are all looking forward to seeing the finished product on the screen - but what we don't know is how much of us will end up on the cutting room floor!

Stephen Turnbull,
48 Front St., Cockfield, Bishop
Auckland.

THE COMPANY OF WIND

by James Erskine (11), Grantchester.



Here's something new for your vocabulary of hobbies. It is challenging and adventurous, and one hobby that is really fun and satisfying. It is of course, radio controlled model gliding.

There are two types of radio models: slope soarers and thermal soarers. Slope soarers glide on the wind flowing over the face of the hills. Thermal soarers are carried up by rising currents of warm air called thermals.

You can launch thermal soarers either by a tow rope or a bungee. Tow ropes require two people. One person runs along while the other launches the glider. A bungee is a long length of elastic coated with nylon which is fixed to the ground at one end and has a hook for the aeroplane at the other. A bungee launch can be done by one person and can carry the model up to about seven hundred feet.

A thermal is caused by the sun warming up the ground. Some patches warm up faster than others and so they rise. If a wing of your glider rises, you have found a thermal. You enter it by circling, then it carries your glider up to a good height (up to 1,000 ft). Then it is best to fly out of it just before it is too high to see what you are doing!

The radio's range is about half a mile but the model would be out of sight by then anyway.

Slope soaring can take place where the wind meets up with the face of a hill and flows over the top, causing enough rising air to carry a glider. Slope soarers are launched by hand from the top of the hill.

If you want to start radio gliding, you need a glider kit, two servos (which cause the rudder and elevator to move), batteries, a radio receiver, a radio transmitter and some heat-shrink plastic for covering the model with.

It is best to join a club, where you will need to find someone willing to instruct you. A club also covers you for insurance. Then you, too, can play amongst the birds in the company of the wind.

Editorial note:

Do you have an interesting and unusual hobby you would like to tell others about?

INOCULATIONS OR OTHERWISE?

Have your children missed out on medical checks and inoculations normally carried out by the School Health Service? These injections are not normally available through your GP and if children are not registered in a school then you will not necessarily be notified that the job is due. It may be that you will have to make arrangements with your local hospital if you wish your child to be fully covered. Check with your GP at what ages different inoculations are generally given, and then you can decide what to do about it.

Jo Rust, Cambridgeshire.



PEN PALS



Sophie Dent of 7 Featherston Road, Streetly, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B74 3JW is eight years old. She has two gerbils, likes Kylie and Jason, watches Neighbours and Home & Away. She also loves gardening and all kinds of skating. She will try to reply to everyone who writes to her, but can't promise!

My name is **Priscilla Edwards**. I am 15 and have been home educated for seven years. My hobbies and interests include making jewellery, drawing and painting, going for walks, sewing fashion and collecting shells and postcards. I would like a pen-friend of similar age and interests.

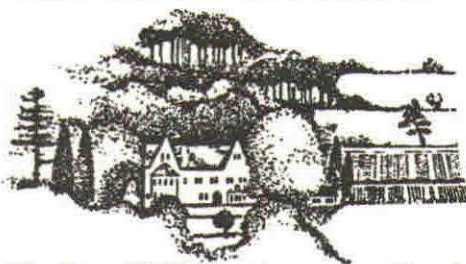
Please write to me at 86 Morecambe Road, Morecambe, Lancs. LA3 3AD.

Stephen Rickett is six years old and learns at home. He likes nature, funny cartoons and junk modelling. He loves animals too. As he would like lots of pen friends why don't you write to him? He lives at 19 Finn VC Estate, Bodmin, Cornwall, PL31 2LU.

Two 13 year old **Swedish** girls and a 13 year old Swedish boy are looking for English pen-friends. Please contact H. Cassel, Culverlands, Farnham, Surrey GU9 8EJ.

My name is **Rose Carey** and I am 12. I would like a pen-friend about my own age. My interests are reading, painting, animals and I also play the recorder. I have never been to school and I hope I never shall. Please write to me at 28A Greevegate, Hunstanton, Norfolk, PE36 6AA.

AN EVENT FOR OLDER CHILDREN



Monkton Wyld Court, an educational community situated on the Dorset/Devon border, three miles from the coast at Lyme Regis.

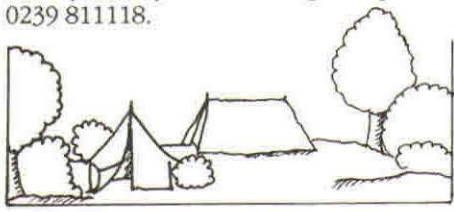
They are running a SPICY THEATRE MIX course for 11-16 year olds from 4 pm April 17th until 4 pm April 20th, at a cost of £35.

This will include non-competitive and theatre games, body and voice stretching, walks in the wild and through the mind. Also painting, improvisation, masks and dance. Bring a cassette of your favourite music.

Phone Kristen on 0297 60342 for booking and further details.

EO CAMPING IN WALES

A weekend camp is planned in Dyfed, hosted by the Orbach Family at Cwm Rhaffau for the end of May Bank Holiday weekend. One and a half miles from the beach with fields and woods all around. Come and join us. Write to Cwm Rhaffau, Sarnau, Llandysul, Dyfed SA44 6QZ or phone 0239 811118.



A FIRST YEAR IN WEST WALES



In September 1988 Julian and Emma Orbach plus three children, several cats and chickens, moved from Wiltshire to Cwm Rhaffau (Valley of the Ropes), a farmhouse a little way back from the loveliest bit of the Ceredigion coast, between Cardigan and New Quay. The farmhouse and buildings lent themselves to providing living space for at least three families, with a fourth space for visitors. The stone buildings surround three sides of a courtyard, the fourth side open to the sea. Four fields lie around the house on the ridge of a small hill while below, on each side, are wooded valleys of two small streams that meet at the lower end of the land on their way to the sea at Pembryn. The valleys are wooded with ash, sycamore, willow and thorn, and are full of secret places.

The plan in coming to west Wales was to gather together a group of families with children out of school and a shared interest in organic gardening, living simply and inter-relatedly, and by using the resources of the group and the place to welcome visitors on every level - from those on holiday to people coming for specific events, courses or celebrations. We hoped to develop a common spiritual focus or identity, without any of us being allied to any specific religion.

In May/June 1989 John and Sally Hargraves and their two children joined us, after two years travelling

the south west of England in a horse drawn caravan. They brought new skills and enthusiasm, a commitment to meditation as a daily cement for a community that risks being otherwise too busy to stop and be together. They also had experience in both communal and self-sufficient living, a puppet theatre, and Cleo, a very good natured horse.

Our invitation to EO members for visitors meant that the summer of 1989 was filled with families from far and wide. Experiences were shared, though sometimes, due to the brilliant weather, sitting down to talk had to take second place to the lure of the sea and the cliffs. The third family here, now trying their fortune in Spain, contributed a craft shop selling wood-turning through the high summer, while other groups used the land for their own events, notably a women's camp for which a cluster of tepees sprouted in one field. The land also began to be taken in hand by a group of visiting WWOOFers*.

In mid September we held a day for EO families in Dyfed, an enormous county that makes contacts between families unusually difficult. We made the barn ready in the nick of time, thanks to the Calonyddaeaf family, the county co-ordinators, who came for the week and swept and shovelled tirelessly, despite Aileni having tricycled 50 miles from Llanelli. A great day was had by all, despite the pouring rain which for the children proved an added excitement as they dammed and channelled the torrents crossing the yard.

We feel that we are developing a place that suits the needs of children

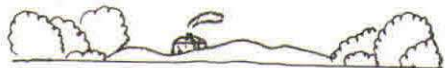
* WWOOF stands for Working Weekends on Organic Farms.

though inevitably there are less positive aspects. One that we have not truly come to terms with is bilingualism. In an area that is Welsh speaking, the primary school immigrant children learn Welsh with ease and lead their slower-brained parents. We have ambitions to learn together but thus far progress has been slow, especially for the children.

So now, in 1990, we are four adults, five children between the ages of two and a half and ten, with a third family here just for the winter. In the Spring we will be looking for another family to come here permanently - to share our commitment to de-schooling (our approach being very much towards more self-directed learning), communal use of the resources, meditation and an open welcome to visitors.

Again we offer a hearty welcome to any EO family that would like to come and stay, and enjoy the sea. Because of the interest last year we have to ask that those who come between April and October make their stay a maximum of one week, otherwise some families may have to be turned down.

*Julian and Emma Orbach
Cwm Rhaffau, Sarnau, Llandysul,
Dyfed SA44 6QZ*



'Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught.'

Oscar Wilde, 1890

ANY ANSWERS?

I am relatively new to EO and have been very encouraged by recent newsletters. My son, Adam, is nearly two and we are expecting another child early next year. I joined EO early so that I could get ideas, meet other home-schoolers, and feel really prepared when the time came **not** to enrol Adam in school. I have a few practical questions I would like to have answered by anyone who has time to write.

1. When educating an older child at home, what do the younger ones do? Do they miss out on toddler groups and visiting/playing with friends their age because I am teaching Adam at home? Or could Adam go to Mother and Toddlers when he is five or six, too?
2. Has anyone had the experience of teaching their child at home until the age of eight and then sending them to school? How did he adjust? Was he considered an outsider by other children? Did he pick up the team games okay? Did he miss being at home?
3. How do you react when people give you their unsolicited opinion about home education? I feel immediately defensive and antagonistic, but this doesn't help. Any suggestions for positive public relations?

I am American, although we expect to live in England permanently, and I would be very happy to hear from people who live near us, particularly American mums.

*Helene Finlayson, 18 Eastwood Rd.,
Woodley, Reading, Berks, RG5 3PY*

FROM NORTH OF THE BORDER



I have received two letters from Scotland, both concerning education and the law.

The Children's Bill

I refer to the letter from the Children's Home-Based Education Association concerning the Children's Bill.

I recently wrote to my MP on this subject, hoping that Scotland would be included in the Act because of a current case in which I am involved, where it seemed that the Sherriff would rely on educational evidence when considering whether or not a Compulsory Supervision Order was properly placed on a child. My argument was that education was not the responsibility of the Social Work Department, and they should not concern themselves with this aspect of Children's lives.

As it turned out, the Sherriff did not pursue this line as had been anticipated by our solicitor, and so my fears were unjustified. However, I feel I ought to write as the Legal Adviser for Scotland, to say that my reply from the Minister of State at the Scottish Office stated quite categorically that the effect of the Children's Bill on Scottish procedures is marginal, and that the provisions in the Bill relating to the imposition of supervision and care orders relate exclusively to England and Wales. As it turns out we are most fortunate. It is extremely serious if Education Authorities in England and Wales will be able to take responsibility for children's education, choose how it should be done, and if indeed they need not educate children in accordance with

their parent's wishes, should an Education Supervision Order be placed on a child.

If my experiences in Scotland are mirrored in England and Wales, there are still many education authorities who are unaware that there are constraints upon them, and attempt to impose their own policies on parents as though they were law. How easy will it be for an Education Supervision Order to be placed, which at one sweep will take away the basic legal rights that we use in EO to defend parents against over-zealous LEAs?

Have I understood the implications correctly? I will be happy to be told "No".

*Brenda Holliday, Stirling.
Legal Adviser for Scotland*

Home visits by whom?

We found out recently that, in Scotland, it is the Courts who decide whether a psychologist should accompany the LEA on a visit to home-educated children.

Our family has had three visits from the LEA, two of which have included a psychologist even though I objected to his presence on the last occasion.

The document the LEA were using as reason for the psychologist's presence was an HMSO Scottish Consumer Council publication called "The Law of the School" which states - "The Education Authority may from time to time arrange for official or specialist advisers to visit." We have since discovered that this publication holds NO statute in law, it is merely a publication of guide-lines. Page ten of that very book states this quite categorically.

Rose Wilson, Motherwell, Strathclyde

REGIONAL NEWS A-D

Avon

The Avon Seed Circle, established in 1983, is a Bristol based group of families meeting twice a week for workshops and outings, and at other times for play and entertainment. Members from Somerset and Gloucestershire always welcome. Further information from: Poppy Green, 0272 735091
Julia Hammond, 0272 636082

Berkshire

Several families with children ranging in age from two to ten meet regularly. New faces always welcome, including those from neighbouring counties. Further details from: Caroline Brett, Reading 755375
Karen Sternhell, Maidenhead 32262

Cornwall

After Cornwall's first ever events-planning meeting we have the following diary for 1990. Make a note of it now.

March

Social event in Truro, each family to bring lunch and toys which can be shared.

Contact: Anne Huggett, 0579 20645

April

Walk in Golitha woods, five miles north of Liskeard.

Contact: Trish Brock-Morgan
0579 43543

May

Visit to the Monkey Sanctuary near Looe.

Contact: Stephen Huggett, 0579 20645

June/July

Guided visit to some Camborne Mines.

Contact: Adam Wheeler, 0209 890378

July/August

Picnic on Bodmin Moor.

Contact: Maureen Witek, 0208 82499

August/September

Beach day.

Contact: Maggie Swatridge,
0503 72087

October

Day at Outdoor Centre at St. Just-in-Roseland.

Contact: Liz Johnson, 0276 87525

November

Visit to Planetarium at Plymouth Polytechnic.

Contact: Stephen Huggett, 0579 20645

December

Christmas Music and Party.

Contact: Anna Wheeler, 0209 890378
or Linda Frohlick, Boscastle 220

For details of the cost (if any), date, time and venue for all these events, please ring the appropriate contact person.

Durham

Our last meeting was fun, but not well attended, so we would like to ask a few more of you to join us next time. Come along to one or more of these - or organise your own.

3rd March

Saturday, 2 pm till 6 pm. Sweetie day.

7th April

Saturday, 2-6 pm. Easter Crafts.

12th May

Saturday, 8 am onwards! Video Day.

We will hire a video camera and see what happens.

Phone for details, offers of help, more ideas etc. to:

Julie Turnbull, 0388 710308

Dyfed

Thanks to Gabrielle and Steve Rann for the post-Christmas get-together.

Tuesday 20th March

Spring Equinox festival at Cwm Rhaffau, Sarnau, with emphasis on music. Phone Aberporth 811118

Late May Bank Holiday

Weekend camp planned. See page 6.

Publicity for all Seasons



Now is the Winter of our discontent

Being Publicity Officer for Education Otherwise has taught me a great deal of self control. Listen, learn and inwardly digest the nature of any enquiry. Be careful how you answer. Pause. Ask more questions of the interrogator, and generally begin to form a picture of who you are dealing with.

Answering 99% of enquiries by phone, you have to have quick answers, all of which may be taken down and used against you! I have subsequently developed a technique for stalling, not unlike many politicians I personally despise, but in truth it is a necessity as you need time to gather your thoughts and ultimately answer for 2,000 families, the members of EO, who you represent.

My stalling technique facilitates finding out exactly who I am dealing with. One day it could be the Family Editor of the Women's Institute Journal (not very aggressive), but five minutes later I am under scrutiny from "The Sun", who have a deadline that expired five minutes ago and what they really want to do is talk to my 13 year-old son to get his views, and haven't I **really** got an anti-establishment chip on my shoulder or would I really be prepared to say that the National Curriculum stinks?

When the phone rings, I answer it. I have to be prepared. It makes no difference whether I'm cooking a Moussaka or having a bath. It's exciting, and its terrifying too! But

above all, I know it's worthwhile and that is why I do it.

At present things are fairly quiet on the media front. Teachers' strikes, the new school year or a change in the Curriculum stir things up. During these times the phone rings four or five times a day. You may not think that's very much, but for each call I get I may then have to make contact with EO members nationally who may wish to be interviewed on a particular subject, and for every **ONE** member who agrees I probably have to ring at least ten.

Don't get me wrong. Journalists and TV crews are okay. It's their editors and directors who screw things up. Two days filming by the BBC may be reduced to two **minutes** screening. Hours of research, by me, for a journalist may be subsequently cut by the editor. **BUT**, unless we do give out information, nothing would be published, nothing would be screened. The disappointment and frustration is mostly mine. Because I expect more for EO, and will go on expecting, and demanding, more.

One classic example of mis-management by the media was shown recently in the case of a BBC **40 MINUTES** programme. I spent hours researching for the programme on School Bullying, begging the time of many EO members willing to help, and I thank them for that. The programme was screened in November and carried no mention of EO. The only phone number given was that of **Childline**. I rang Childline, and couldn't get through until after midnight. Their response was "...*thank goodness you have phoned. We've had so many calls from parents wanting to take their children out of school, and we didn't know how to advise.*" The BBC

had not given Childline any background or follow-up information. Thanks to Jude Ashley-Walker, Isle of Wight, and myself Childline now have EO permanently on their files, together with Pat Knox's address and that of Kidscape.

It's not all so difficult to get the message across. We have many easy triumphs that bring in a great response. I suppose I am telling you all this as a personal release-valve.

In case anyone out there is thinking I just love publicity, **YES I DO**, not for me, but for the sake of those who need help. We owe it to them, and I hope you will continue helping me to find the means to get the message across. Thank you. I may well be ringing you some day!

*Jo Rust, Publicity Officer for EO
Gamlingay, Cambridgeshire.*

" My education was severely disrupted by the outbreak of World War II. It had actually taken place 16 years previously, but I was still very upset about it!"

Barry Cryer at the Cambridge Union.

CONTACTS UPDATE

April sees the publication of the new 1990 contact list. Is the information about your family still correct? Check it now, and if your circumstances have changed, e.g. children out of school instead of in or vice versa, then send amendments quickly to Bob Emmett, 12 Taylor Ave., Dolgarrog, Conway, Gwynedd, LL32 8JN.

Rachel Sanger, London

BOOK REVIEWS

Publishers are taking rather too long to respond to appeals for books, unlike EO members who have offered themselves in droves (well, a small drove) to help. I apologise to all of you. I have a list of names, addresses and subjects just aching to be used, but minimal response from Publishing Houses.

While we wait I am still happy to use reviews of books which I have not solicited, in fact this may prompt the publishers more than my begging letters.

If you have a review, or have enjoyed using a book, or would like to see a new book, please let me know.

*Julie Turnbull, 48 Front Street,
Cockfield, Bishop Auckland, DL13
5DS, telephone 0388 710308*

THE EDUCATION RIGHTS HANDBOOK

Published and available from the **Children's Legal Centre**, 20 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN.

Price £3.50 incl. p & p.

A very useful book for Enquiries Secretaries and Regional Co-ordinators for those difficult phone calls, from parents with children in trouble.

Also from the Children's Legal Centre a monthly bulletin called **CHILDRIGHT** which gives you up-to-date explanations of all proposed and implemented legislation affecting children. Obviously it covers more than education and the law, and it is expensive at £25 subscription per year. Maybe it's just what you need. The Centre also operates an Advice Line. Call 01.359 6251.

SOCIALISATION and HOME-EDUCATION



groups of just two or three children that they get to know each other and share activities, just as it is for adults.

Nick and Leda Skeen wrote in the August 1989 Newsletter, "*Won't your children, being educated at home, miss out on the social aspects of school?*" The simple answer is yes. In my opinion, in many instances, this is a good thing.

It can be argued that when not in school children miss out on the opportunity to learn to socialise, but in practise I think this is far from the case. It is true that not all of the interaction that goes on in the playground, and around the table in the classroom, is of a 'one-upmanship' nature, but a great deal of it is. While this can be very painful at the time, what is far worse is that children are learning negative communication skills which they then carry with them for life.

To suggest that children from a secure home won't come to harm overlooks the fact that such children are usually considerate, and very sensitive. They are all the more vulnerable in the 'rough and tumble' of school. Their kindness tends to be mocked and advantage is taken of their lack of aggression, until they become either withdrawn or come to the conclusion that if you can't beat them you must join them. Very few, if any, survive unscathed from the cattle market behaviour of the playground.

Quite apart from this negative socialisation I am firmly of the opinion that real friendships are not built within the crowd. It is in small

Within the familiar environment of home is surely the best place for this to happen, where they have a readily available adult to appeal to when difficulties do arise. It is there that they have the opportunity to learn how to build a relationship.

The feeling that brothers and sisters, only playing with each other is a cloistered and unhealthy situation is a fair criticism but in practise I don't think this is usually the case. Most EO families tend to seek each other out for companionship and most children play with the neighbourhood youngsters when school is out. However, if we were living in a sheep station in Australia or on a bush farm in Africa, our children would only have each other as playmates. No-one in these situations seems to worry about a lack of friends. In fact I know that such children tend to be self-motivated and resourceful. Perhaps it is those in the West who have a rather warped set of values. Some people are loners by nature, but that does not mean they are unsociable.

My children, now 11 and 12 years old, have been out of state schooling for four and a half years, and out of school altogether for three years. They have two or three close friends to whom they are very loyal. Although by nature my daughter is rather shy, neither of them is withdrawn. They mix with neighbourhood children, those within EO, as well as the children of the church we belong to, Scouts, St. John's and the local youth club.

From the day we are born we have everything to learn, including how to be a friend and how to build a relationship. Schools offer no such education officially. The incidental education that children do receive is largely of a negative nature. In spite of this I am not against schools per se. I am against large schools, where children are herded together with very little adult supervision; where their interaction with other children is not guided; where they are not encouraged to encourage, but left to learn to destroy.

Statistics from recent research have shown that of a child's time in school, 28% of that time is spent in the playground. For infants this is more than the time spent on reading, writing and arithmetic put together. It is in this area therefore that home educators can score the highest, by closely guiding our offspring to be sociable beings and make the world a friendlier place in which to live.

Carol Bennett, Norwich.

SUSUKI GUESTS

from Liverpool



Accommodation wanted in Scotland, August 11th-18th for Jane Woolfe, Oskar and George, attending a Susuki course at St. Andrews University.

We expect to pay the going rate for bed and breakfast. Thank you.

Please reply to:

*13 Western Drive, Liverpool L19
or phone 051 427 3212*

EDUCATION OTHERWISE IN THE COMMUNITY ^{OR} _{NOT?}

Community Education was pioneered by Henry Morris, as the Chief Education Officer for Cambridgeshire from 1922-1954. He saw depressed rural areas with educational facilities under-used by the communities and felt that the resources available could be better used for educating people *'from the cradle to the grave'*.

Described by Professor Harry Ree as the **Educator Extraordinary**, Morris wrote "The Memorandum" to all Cambridgeshire Councils in 1924 outlining his proposals, and by 1939 four or five Village Colleges, providing whole community education programmes, were set up. His ideas were later adopted by other education authorities and the premise for providing education for all was generally accepted as a good one.

Cutbacks recently in education budgets have seen the demise of some of these community establishments, but what is more extraordinary is the attitude some home-educators face when they decide to make use of local Community Education facilities.

David Michael, from North London, wrote about his EO group approaching Fleet Community Education Centre. The North London group has been meeting regularly in Swiss Cottage, but found the Fleet venue a better one in terms of cost. A provisional booking was made last September but the Management Committee subsequently refused to affiliate the EO group. A Labour

councillor was minuted as saying that to encourage EO would be inappropriate. After appealing to Neil Fletcher, leader of the Inner London Education Authority, EO North London were given permission to use the Centre but forbidden to publicise EO on the premises.

Much correspondence followed, but one enlightening sentence from Mr. Fletcher's explanatory letter stated that, ***"While acknowledging that the law provides for parents' wishes with regard to individual education for their children, it would, in my view, be absurd for a Community Education Centre to appear to encourage parents to opt out of the community."***

Two issues become obvious then. Firstly, Community Education is from the cradle to the grave - except when you decide to home-educate. In this case the LEA intends to make your task as difficult as possible. Secondly, all home-educating families have decided to opt out of the **community**.

The first statement appears to have some truth in it, since there are many examples of LEA obstruction. The second statement holds no truth whatsoever for the following reason: The word community is defined as *'people living in one locality'*. Unless you stand alone, on a raft out at sea, you are always a member of some community or other - no matter what your beliefs and convictions may be.

Rob and Anne Wade, in the December EO Newsletter (Legal Group News, page 44) suggest, with a quote from ILEA regarding college enrolments for under 16s, a reason for Local Education Authorities'

paranoid behaviour, when they were asked to explain why this form of flexi-schooling is threatening to them. ***"We'd have no pupils left in some schools if we allowed it."***

Whatever your politics it is a well known fact that if two shops, manufacturers or whatever are vying for custom, they will both try and improve their service to keep their clientele. What LEAs are doing, effectively, is trying to operate a closed shop.

Isn't it rather odd that I, at the age of 37, can go to a local comprehensive as part of their Community Education programme to sit GCSE Chemistry, part-time and in the regular class of school children on a weekday, but my 14 year old son is not allowed?

Isn't it absurd that my son, a regular member of the Community, can be prevented from attending his Community Education pottery classes if an adult member of the community objects to his presence?

For how long must we accept that children are generally regarded as second class citizens in society, when as a part of the community they are second to none? What went wrong, Henry Morris?

Compiled by Jo Rust, Editor, with thanks to research by David Michael of North London, Rob and Anne Wade, London, and Vivien Griffiths of Larchfield Community, Cleveland.

"The quickest way for a parent to get a child's attention is to sit down and look comfortable."
Lane Olinghouse, Wall Street Journal

IT PAYS to ENRICH your WORD POWER

Defuse that explosive situation with your command of education language. Tick the phrase nearest in meaning to the key words.

1. **education** a. A means to an end.
b. It happens in school.
c. A way of life.
2. **teacher** a. an instructor.
b. an underpaid person.
c. person who loves holidays.
3. **children** a. expensive small adults
b. a noisy bunch of vandals
c. precious gifts to nurture
4. **curriculum** a. something every school has
b. Latin in schools
c. a programme of activities
5. **timetable** a. a table with a clock in it
b. a multiplication chart
c. something we are all asked to provide, but seldom works in the home
6. **detention** a. standing upright and stiff
b. a way of describing the tightness of a rope in a CDT lesson
c. a pointless exercise that makes children hate school even more
7. **assembly** a. an uncomfortable place to fall asleep
b. a place where your birthday is announced to hundreds of people once a year
c. a getting together of the school community for communal worship
8. **lesson** a. something that's not as much as something else
b. a big hole in something
c. a reprimand, or punishment, intended to correct
9. **term** a. a bird sometimes found in the arctic
b. a time when your friends can't come to play 'cos they're at school
c. a period of time you have to serve
10. **ecocene** a. a home educated children spotted in the greengrocer's at 10 am on October 1st, or similar, by the Education Welfare Officer
b. a type of modelling clay
c. something formed in the 2nd epoch of the tertiary period
11. **socialisation** a. beating someone up in the playground
b. sending someone to Coventry in the playground
c. Learning how not to answer back to teachers when they argue with you
12. **publicity** a. a girl's name
b. hanging around in a bar
c. trying to get the message across
13. **school report** a. something that could do better
b. something that could do better
c. something that could do better
14. **lexicography** a. a new GCSE subject
b. a construction toy with attainment level 5 in the National Curriculum
c. the profession of compiling dictionaries
15. **mars bar** a. a mathematical notation
b. a really scrummy chocolate
c. an even scrummier chocolate that's now an icecream too
16. **computer** a. a device for sucking up and catching lots of insects, all at once
b. something that is only ever wrong if you make a mistake first
c. an infuriating goodie-goodie
17. **mudskipper** a. a happy EO child on a deserted beach during term-time

- b. a fish you can eat for breakfast, with brown sauce on it
- c. any of various gobies of the genus *Periophthalmus* and related genera that occur in tropical coastal regions of Africa and Asia and can move by means of their strong, pectoral fins (Good grief!)

18. **home and dry** a. being home-educated and not having to go into the playground when it's raining
 b. home-educating and doing alright
 c. definitely safe and successful
19. **likewise** a. other parents who home-educate and who you can talk to freely
 b. other children who are home-educated and are instantly your friends
20. **cohippus** a. a cry of jubilation at the end of an Education Otherwise Core Group Meeting
 b. a prehistoric horse

This is not a test. There are no prizes or scores, but hope you had fun doing it!

A THANK YOU LETTER

Lois Cook, from Kent, passed this letter on to be published for all EO members to read:

Dear EO,

I am writing to express my thanks to you all for the work you must put into Education Otherwise. As an alternative person, as opposed to the mainstream,, I have met with much condemnation and opposition to being myself, and different.

I would like my child to stay at home for her education but various health visitors and nurses have already tried to talk me out if by giving me misinformation.

Please keep up your work. Thank you. Love and peace,

Mrs C A Smith, Birmingham.

STAYING OUT OF SCHOOL

Sarah Guthrie, co-ordinator for Suffolk, wrote in the December 1989 Newsletter about a family she had helped to keep their son out of school. Here are two responses to that article:

The first is from D. Copeland of Carshalton.

Re Sarah Guthrie's article about the 'Blackwell' family, judge not

I would like to make the point that for all the Blackwell's apparent lack of abilities or disadvantages - from yours, and all the authorities, point of view - they have shown initiative in earning a self-employed living.

In this computerised age, gardening and cleaning are still going to be needed and there will still be a niche for people who are not too educated, or able, or who even choose to do these and similar jobs. Also, they have been harassed and treated in a manner that would undermine and cause distress to most families, let alone those with no disposition to fight back.

Education gives one an advantage, but does it say much for it that people are treated like this in the name of it.

Congratulations. You have rushed in and set everything up for them. You deserve your pat on the back. Though what has been done is only another facet of what the authorities were doing; to be 'saved' you must first follow this course. This is your achievement, not theirs. Acceptance comes before achievements. Unfortunately this is probably why John does not respond; withdrawal being a form of self-defence.

Despite all the above, thank you EO just for your existence. *D. Copeland*

STAYING OUT OF SCHOOL continued.....

The second response is from Anne Wade, EO Legal Group, from London.

SUPPORT WHICH ENABLES

Sarah Guthrie's article raises questions which appear more urgent as EO becomes more widely known: what support can EO offer to families who need to home educate their child in a crisis but who would not have done so from choice and are not conventionally well-equipped to do so; and what should be offered to/demanded of a child who has been badly damaged by the system and resists attempts to educate him even in a considerate manner?

We come up against these questions frequently in the legal group, as these are families who are often dismissed by an LEA as obviously incapable of home educating. We have had to talk a lot to each other about what we do, and how, and why; and our touchstone is that we must not "help" anyone, because that would put us in a position above them, and would disable them, however slightly, from finding their own path. We should give information and support, but we should aim to do so entirely in a way which empowers the family to find and develop its own strengths, and to do the job for themselves.

Sometimes we visit such a family, either to prepare for an LEA visit or to help them write a report for the LEA. For a while we may think despairingly that the LEA has a point, and that this family are doing nothing to educate their child. But if the child prefers to be educated at home we are nevertheless on their side. Then, gradually, other kinds of activity

emerge which the family did not volunteer because they are not school subjects. It is often possible to piece these together into an unconventional but legally acceptable curriculum (i.e. appropriate to age, ability, aptitude and any special needs). These things are often largely a matter of presentation, which has little to do with educating your child, and it seems reasonable that EOers who have a typewriter and can play such games with bureaucracy should use these assets to support a less articulate family - I don't feel that this need be undermining, as long as the family is in control of what is eventually sent to the LEA.

Sometimes such a family is educating well in anybody's terms, but the inspector is convinced that, for example, a single parent in a council flat, hard up and without higher education, cannot possibly offer as much as the local comprehensive. These are the problems which are relatively easy to resolve, as long as the family seek support early enough. Unity is strength, and the LEA will back off sooner or later if we can show that they are wrong. But this may take a lot of work, and we do not have enough experienced members prepared to tackle such a job in all parts of the country. We can sometimes try to handle problems of this kind at a distance, but this is harder to do, and it means we get too much work.

Some families have a realistic view of their own strengths and weaknesses, and ask for concrete suggestions on ways of giving the child what they feel he or she needs. They are often bright but ill-educated,

for various reasons, and their enthusiasm makes them a delight to talk with, and very easy to support. But even more than the last group, this support needs to be local - a genuine befriending. Given six months of adequate support, we find that such families are in turn the most supportive of other new members.

What do you do, though, when a family want to save their child from being taken into care, but seem to have no educational resources at their disposal - when the child watches videos and TV incessantly, and plays with Sindy dolls and My Little Pony, or lies on a bed listening to heavy metal all day? Opinions within EO vary on this. I feel the first consideration is that a child who prefers to live at home should be helped to avoid care, and that any compromise is worth making to further that aim. It is a dangerous path to tread, with the risk of becoming a do-gooder, of patronising a family who you are in effect labelling as incapable of meeting their child's needs. It is also enormously demanding to set up the complete educational provision for another child, and I have seen this generate resentment and worse on both sides. The family may become irritated at being beholden, and trapped in gratitude at being rescued from care; the helper may feel angry that insufficient gratitude and appreciation are being expressed. Above all, it risks undermining the family further in standing up to authority.

Sarah's solution, involving the community and giving the parents space to offer their skills in return, shows a sensitivity to these dangers. I'd be interested to hear, perhaps in a

year's time, to what extent she feels it has avoided them satisfactorily. And in the meantime, "John" is at home rather than in care, and is at least not as unhappy.....

But he is not actually prepared to make use of these arrangements, set up with so much care and hard work. This gives rise to the second question: what should be offered to and demanded of a child who has been damaged by school and won't work when he's taken out?

In this situation the LEA, perhaps with the threat of court proceedings, may demand either a sick note (some GPs are sympathetic and cooperative but even so the family may want to avoid a medical record of a year or two's "anxiety") or a conventional quota of work. At the same time, the helpers are likely to feel annoyed that he is failing to make good use of their generosity - another pitfall. It may be vital to produce some work, at least for the first inspection or two, to show that you are serious and not just condoning truancy.

.....continued on next page



FOR SALE

**Three bedroomed detached house
in rural North West Wales
with large garden and small field
with organic vegetable plot
soft fruit trees and trees.
Scenic location
Area supports EO**

**Contact
Coryn Bye, Bryn Hyfryd, Parc Bel,
Cilgwyn, Caernarfon,
Gwynedd
Phone: 0286 880179**

STAYING OUT OF SCHOOL continued.....

And yet often these children need the pressure removing completely. Sometimes when part of the pressure is removed, a child who has been functioning to some extent in school will seize up entirely and be able to do nothing academic. Parents may experience this as "taking advantage" - "give her an inch and she'll take an ell". They may feel disappointed that after they've made all this effort, she can't show her appreciation by cooperating and proving them right instead of putting them in a difficult position with the authorities.

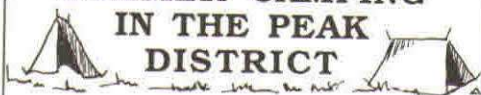
I feel it is important that this need not to do "school work" is accepted as genuine. With a young child it is easy to do everything orally and present things differently (or different things) from what the child did in school. If the parents keep notes and write reports they can defend their provision and show that they are educating the child. With an older child the same method might work to a certain extent, but the inspector would be more reluctant to accept it, and above all a teenager is more likely to restrict his or her activity to a very narrow range. On the other hand, if the need is acknowledged as genuine, an older child might feel able to produce enough (probably worthless) written work to keep the LEA at bay.

Sometimes a short "convalescence" is enough, but more often they will be unable to work until they are sixteen, when the remaining pressure magically lifts. Then they may well go to the local college and work quite happily. Sometimes one feels that

academic work is inappropriate for this child anyway, and can successfully justify to the LEA their absorption in car maintenance. There are many ad hoc stratagems and compromises that may be useful, depending on circumstances and the age of the child, with the aim of protecting them from the law and the LEA. We value education, but forced learning is not education, and adolescents especially may have more urgent things to think through, more important ways of spending their time. I think the most valuable thing that John's helpers can offer is to be accepting and receptive, giving him supportive space to sort out anything he is prepared to share with them, or just stimulating conversation at whatever level and on whatever topic he chooses; to protect him from the authorities; and to make no demands on him.

Anne Wade, West London

SUMMER CAMPING IN THE PEAK DISTRICT



For the last few years we have organised a family camping week following the EO business meeting at Unstone Grange in Derbyshire. Unstone Grange dates are from Friday 22nd June until Monday 25th June. Why not come along to the camp-site for the week afterwards?

It is a lovely site, with good basic facilities and there are lots of places to visit close by: Chatsworth House, Crich Tramway Museum etc.

For advance details phone:

Shirley Kelk on 0332 675535



AZIMUTH Adventure & Education Afloat

Great interest has been shown by EO children and parents in our expeditions. As things seem to be developing we thought we would bring everyone up to date with plans and hopes for the future.

Summer Expedition 1990

We are recruiting for this at the moment. We seem to be well over-subscribed, but any adventurous young people aged 11-14 would be welcome to try for a place. Write soon or there will be no chance!

Future Plans

Interest in our scheme has swamped what we can do as a family with the present boat. We have therefore set up a formal Educational Trust. The aim is to raise enough sponsorship to build or buy a much larger vessel.

This would be a permanent but travelling alternative "school". Children would have the opportunity to spend part of the year away from their families, travelling, learning about the world first hand, learning how to be autonomous and self-reliant individuals, learning how to co-operate with others, learning the traditional skills of seamanship, navigation and much more.

We would be able to offer a very complete education in terms of experience and empowerment. In addition there would be opportunities to gain some vocational

and educational qualifications for those who wish to take them.

The pattern of "attendance" would be very flexible, from a couple of months for younger children up to an "apprenticeship" system spending part of each year sailing and exploring ashore with us for over a four year period.

Costs are to be kept to a minimum by asking a high commitment on the part of the children to work on and maintain the vessel, actively seek income earning projects (journalism would be an example), and by protecting a number of places with bursaries. As a guide we would reckon the cost all found would be about £3,500 per annum (much less than a fee paying school). This amount could be substantially reduced for needy families, down to the cost of keep if necessary.

Our main aim is that children should take part because they really want to, not because of wealth of parents, or any other circumstances.

We really need to know the extent of support we have for these proposals, which seem very suitable for EO children. We also need as much help and support as possible to make these dreams a reality.

Mike and Liz Johnson
6 Bodinnick Heights
Bodinnick-by-Fowey
Cornwall PL23 1LX

REGIONAL NEWS **H-S**

Hereford and Worcestershire

The new co-ordinator is:
Bev Turpin West, 1 Cranwell Drive,
Credenhill. Telephone 0432 760001
Get in touch if you are interested in
social events, group activities etc..

London - East

New co-ordinators are Susan Eldred
and Toni Cushman, 01.555 6593 and
01 534 3320, having taken over from
Pat Longman.

London - North

4th February

Sunday, 11.30 am - 2.30 pm
Parents and children will meet at
Swiss Cottage Community Centre, 19
Winchester Road, NW3.

Phone Andrea Granville 01.328 4138
or Lesley Barson 01.969 0893

4th March

Sunday, 11.30 am - 3 pm
We will meet at Interchange Log
Cabins, 15 Wilkins Street, NW5.
(Kentish Town tube or BR Kentish
Town West.) Phone David Michael
01.284 2124/Lesley Barson 969 0893

1st April

At Interchange Log Cabins, as above.

6th May

At Interchange Log Cabins again.
For all meetings please bring
something for lunch.

N.B. The Interchange Log Cabins are a
new venue for us since the Swiss
Cottage Community Centre has always
had certain disadvantages, not least of
these the high cost. The Log Cabins
however are purpose built with soft
play equipment and plenty of space,
although the cost is still quite high at
£8 per Sunday. We are more
interested in using the Fleet
Community Education Centre - see

article on page 14, 'Education
Otherwise in the Community'.

Shropshire

Most of the following events start at
1.30 pm and in the regular second
Saturday in the month slot, but other
events are included here too.

Please check times and venues before
hand. Phone Mandy, Telford 882780

10th February

Starting at 11 am Puppet Workshop at
Don and Mandy's house. Juliet from
"Brogg's Puppets" will lead us
through the possibilities of turning
junk into fully animated characters.
The last one was hugely successful.

Bring lunch and tea to share and
contribution for Juliet's time.

28th February

Wednesday 2.15 pm.

Visit to the Stuart Crystal Factory in
Stourbridge. Admission free.

Phone Mandy for further details on
Telford 882780

10th March

Japanese games at Stephanie and
Yoshi's house.

7th April

Paul Hand, apiary expert, at John and
Jo's house.

Suffolk

Your diary of events is on page 28.

A Sociable condition?

Is a head-lice infestation for a home-
educated child proof that they are not
socially deprived? One GP expressed
surprise that a child who did not go
to school had actually contracted
head-lice. "I wouldn't have thought it
likely since you don't mix!" The child
promptly put the GP straight.
**Beware, home-educators, head-lice is
not exclusive to those following the
National Curriculum!**

MUSIC AT HOME

I believe that in music lies the heart of humanity - in music, man's soul can reside and feel extremely comfortable. The best music is that which moves a person, stirs the heart, makes the hairs bristle... That experience can be emulated in the playing of music, either alone or with others. It's a time when we can still our tongues and merely feel, express, communicate on a different level. Close down the thought hatches, soar to the sky, meditate or simply struggle. In music we can summon each thread of human emotion. We can also transform our own struggles and adversities without so much as an argument, into beauty and a striving for perfection.

Music in its essence transcends divisions of class, colour, religion or race. It crosses geographical and cultural boundaries and can draw people together in the manner of a utopian ideal. It is inextricably linked with song and with dance. As such, it symbolizes something positive and wholesome, even if its creators or exponents are irreversible melancholics.

A middle-aged man in a tired raincoat plays guitar outside the concert hall. His cap at his knee gathers more raindrops than coins. Smartly dressed concert-goers rush past to their destination. A few slow their paces to listen - fewer still, reach into their pockets or purses. High-heeled shoes, chatter and an insistent bell define the imminent beginning of the concert.

The lights are dimmed, there's a rush of applause, a collective hush and the world famous guitarist steps onto the stage. He moves towards the microphone and begins, "This evening," he says, "as you all began to arrive, a lone guitarist played his music outside this hall. As a few coins trickled into his cap, his thoughts were upon the cost of tickets to this concert. Finally, in disgust, he put his cap on his head and like all those scurrying past him, entered the hall. That guitarist was me. Before I give you renditions of the melodies you heard outside, I'd like to thank you for the 42 pence which you contributed to the busker in the grey mac."

This is a true story. The 'tramp'/guitarist was none other than John Williams. Which are you - the music consumer, the person who stops to listen or maybe the busker?

Music-making is about expression, communication and discipline in order to attain what is beautiful and pleasing to the ear. The means towards achieving goals of expression, communication and renditions of beauty should be through pleasure and fun. And through the setting up of personal goals which imply working towards their attainment.

Inevitably, teaching children at home brings into sharper focus one's own educational experiences, than might otherwise be the case. My own approach to music at home is very much steered by personal experience.

It is my conviction that:

- teaching that is coupled with producing tension and fear in a child is not conducive to producing inspiration and love for anything.
- projecting value judgements upon children suggesting that one form of expression or type of music be superior to another is indicative of a less than open mind, and can cause aversion rather than love for music and music-making.
- eg. the child who is not allowed to listen to music of his/her choice because other music is 'better'.
- eg. the child whose music teacher doesn't allow the learning of a film theme song or popular song.
- eg. the child who is led to believe that he/she is tone-deaf/unmusical or who is hounded to do daily practice.

These kind of experiences can alienate a child from an instrument and from music - for life! Each human being has a reservoir for music which can be developed to his/her potential if conditions are right. This doesn't end with the cessation of childhood. "It's never too late."

The approach to music we seem to have adopted in our home is totally eclectic and pressureless. To love and enjoy music seems more important than to drive our girls (7½ and 6) towards virtuosic proficiency. An understanding prevails that managing to produce very pleasing sounds is synonymous with 'working at it'.

We are fortunate in that we have a large assortment of very varied music on tape, and an unusual array of instruments. We have:- a guitar, 2 Central Asian string instruments (a 2 stringed dotara and a 5 stringed tambur), a Chinese violin, an Indian sarod, Laotian mouthpipes, Peruvian pan-pipes, assorted wooden flutes, tin whistles, ocarina, silver flute, clavichord, harpsichord and latterly an electric piano. The piano also simulates sounds of pipe organ, vibraphone and harpsichord. It has a device which enables it to play itself (!) and it has a repertoire of 45 better-known classical piano pieces.

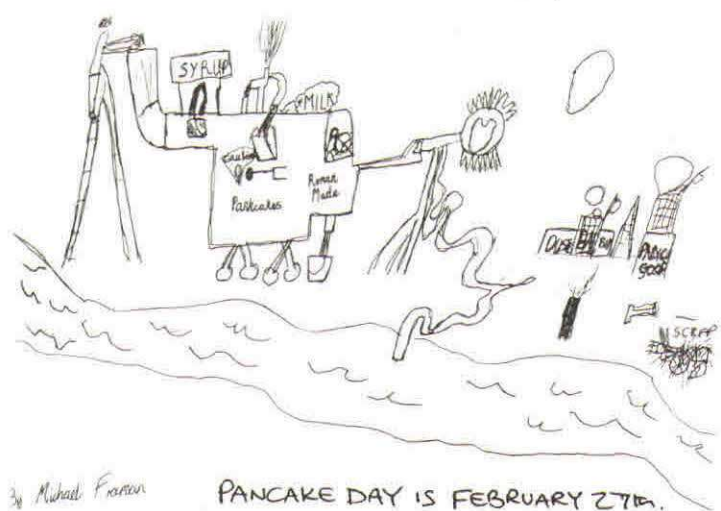
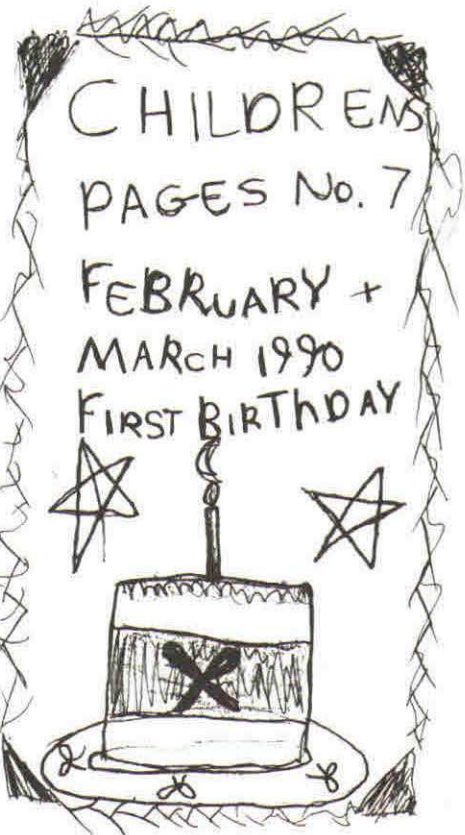
I think our children are lucky to be exposed to the playing of live music in their home. Most frequently they hear guitar or keyboard music. Less frequently they hear sarod or flute. Occasionally they are serenaded by friends - Lap songs with guitar in bed, Northumbrian pipes in the kitchen, Scottish bag-pipes in the garden, Christmas carols on sarangi (Indian stringed instrument) and assorted combinations of instruments.

Living in a very remote place, our musical activity is largely confined to ourselves and to our neighbours who live two miles away. Their children have always heard songs as have ours. There is always some singing in both houses.

When we first came to live here in the Scottish Highlands, I began musical activities for four children collectively, then aged 10,7,5 and 3. (The elder two are our neighbours, the younger two are ours).



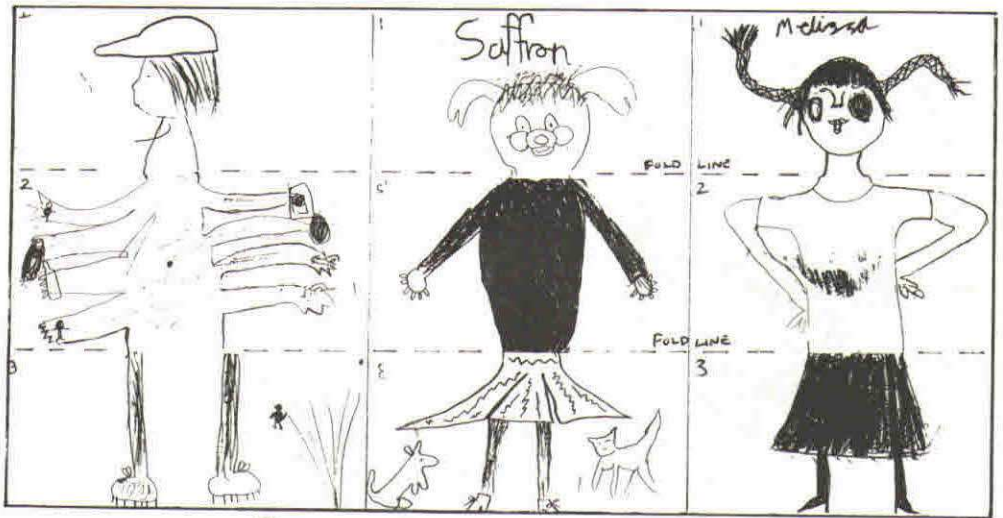
Melissa Beagley (10)
Totnes Devon



By Michael Farnon

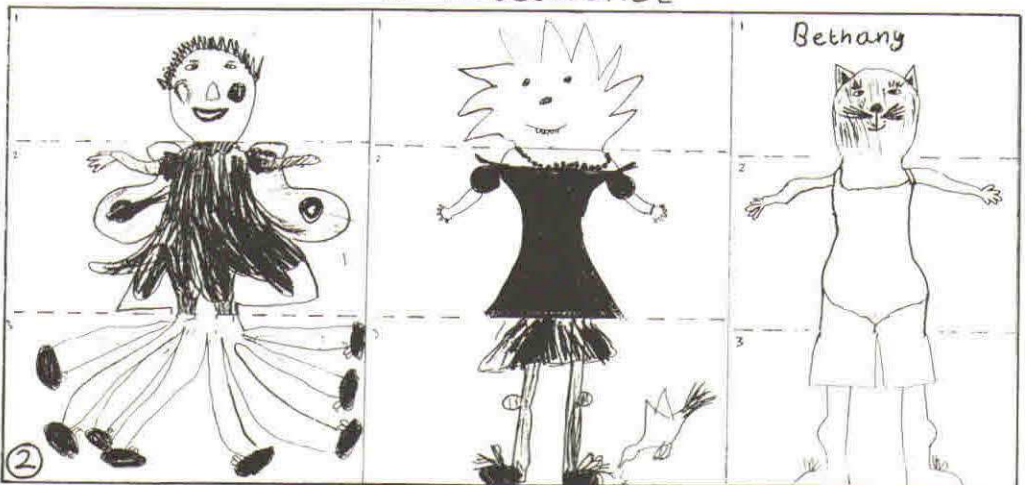
PANCAKE DAY IS FEBRUARY 27th.

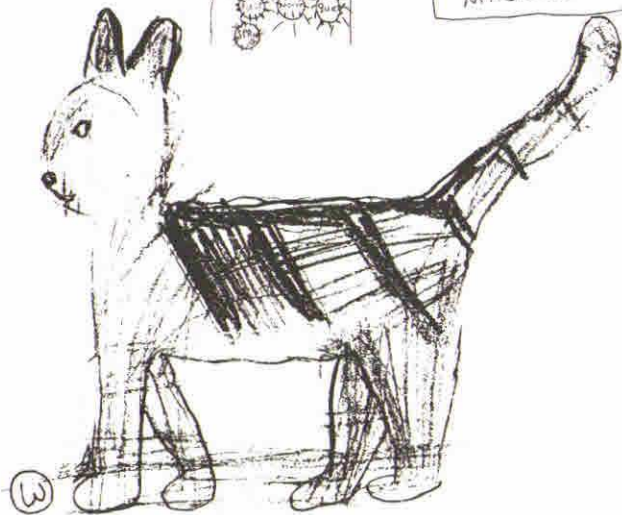
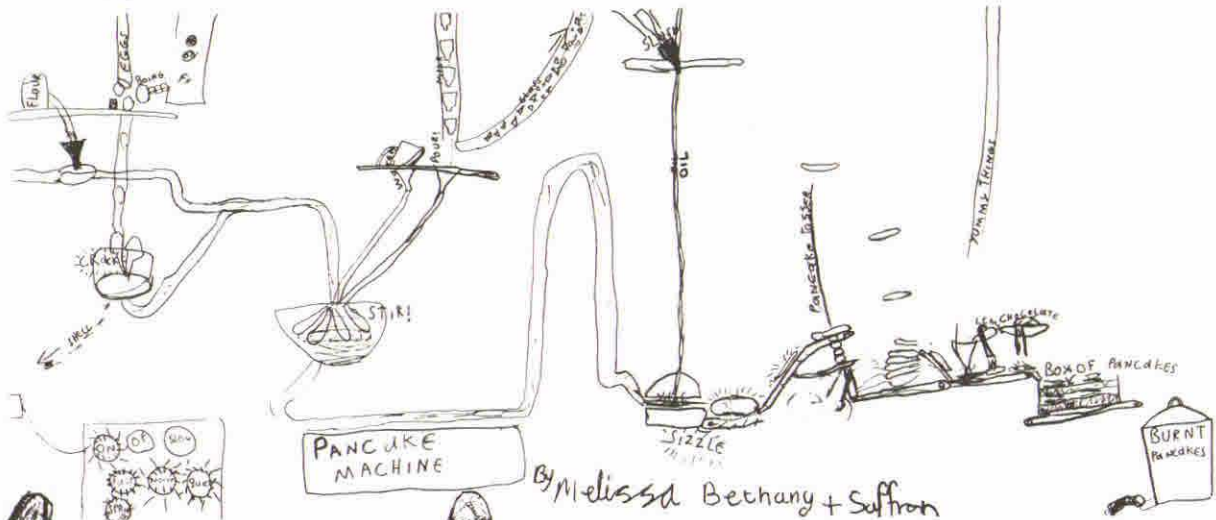




Picture Consequences

Get one piece of paper for each person and fold into three parts. First draw the head then fold it over drawing the neck lines over the fold. Pass it on and next draw the body. Fold it over drawing the hip lines over the fold. Pass it on and draw the legs. Pass it on and open up the picture consequence.

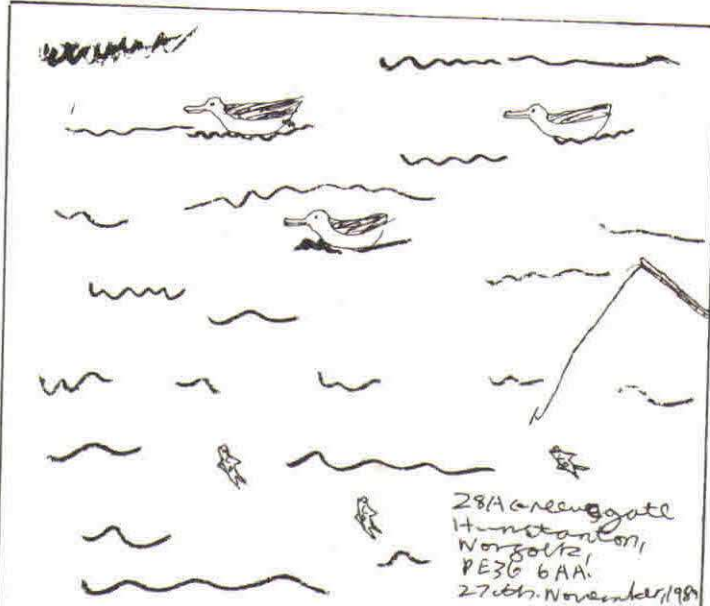




IT'S RAINING

THIS WORDSEARCH
CONTAINS 24
WORDS THAT ALL
HAVE SOMETHING
TO DO WITH RAIN
THE ANSWERS ARE
ON THE BACK PAGE

A	P	U	D	D	L	E	S	D	N	I	W	B
I	S	M	A	B	B	T	S	S	O	N	O	B
K	R	B	I	Y	J	S	K	E	S	O	N	F
L	E	R	E	D	N	U	H	T	T	I	L	O
F	T	E	R	U	O	P	I	S	A	L	D	R
L	T	L	S	O	A	K	T	R	K	S	A	E
O	U	L	E	L	B	A	R	E	S	I	M	C
O	G	A	L	C	O	E	K	S	H	I	P	A
D	R	E	N	C	H	K	M	R	O	T	S	S
G	N	I	N	T	H	G	I	L	W	I	E	T
K	S	I	A	K	S	E	S	R	E	P	I	W
L	A	E	S	E	L	K	N	I	R	P	S	K
R	W	D	R	I	Z	Z	L	E	D	N	O	P



IT'S RAINING
WORDSEARCH
ANSWERS

- BOOTS
- CLOUDY
- DAMP
- DRENCH
- DRIZZLE
- FLOOD
- FORECAST
- GUTTERS
- LIGHTNING
- MISERABLE
- POUR
- PUDDLES
- RAIN
- RAINCOATS
- SHOWER
- SPRINKLES
- SOAK
- STORM
- THUNDER
- UMBRELLA
- WEATHER
- WET
- WINDS
- WIPERS

28A Newgate
Hinton Barton,
Worsoltz,
PE30 6AA.
27th November 1989

Dear Children's Pages,
My name is Rose, I am 12 years old.
I made up this rhyme, he walks with
hands with milked hands, which one
he used to play in hands.
There is also a picture of some
dicks. Mother and father Christmas go
to the shops and buy the presents,
then they put them under the tree.
Rose Conroy.



THE NEXT CHILDREN'S PAGES WILL BE THE
'SPRING EDITION' FOR APRIL + MAY 1990.

GARDENING, BIRNESTS, KITEFLYING
EASTER AND MAYPOLES.

PLEASE SEND YOUR ARTWORK, WRITING AND IDEAS

TO 'CHILDREN'S PAGES', 'ORANGES', ST. CLEMENTS TERRACE,
HARBERTON, TOTNES, DEVON TQ9 5SN TEL. (0803) 867140.

LIFELINE FOR THE SPRING ISSUE IS MARCH 1ST 1990.

DOT TO DOT

PROJECTS
YOUR
CARTOONS
CROSS WORDS

SWOBS

LET
ETC
ETC...

4

DATES TO REMEMBER

PLACES TO VISIT

PETS CORNER

DESIGN FOR FRONT PAGE

We used to do rhythm games with clapping and percussion, general singing, action songs, songs which enacted popular stories, songs involving the choosing of partners involving specific movement. The main aim at the time - enjoyment.

This later was expanded to include the learning of recorder. The elder children had begun lessons some while earlier, before our arrival, so they were continuing. The younger children were beginning. Our lessons were a mixture of learning to read music and playing by ear.

We used Recorder: Playing in Colour by Brian Davey, for reading music, which uses a colour-coded notation. For children there seems to be a magic in the coupling of a note with a colour. The colours are gradually dispensed with until we reach the last pages of the book where the notation is black and white.

We played games on the recorder in order to develop listening skills. Games to recognize higher and lower notes; I would play short tunes which the children tried to repeat, they would play short tunes which I would have to repeat. They would make up their own lengthier melodies, searching for sequences which pleased them and sounded good. For the elder two, I would sometimes compose a melody to harmonize with an existing one so that they could play simple melodies together. Later they would swap parts. This way they could learn to play and hear one another, or even play and be aware of not hearing each other.

I had never played recorder, so for me this was a new learning experience. I was never too diligent and managed to stay just a step ahead of the children. I could also admit to forgetting a particular fingering and to blowing a raspberry. We met once a week, each child would have her recorder lesson and then we'd launch into the usual group songs and games.

About a year ago, our neighbours acquired a piano and I began giving the elder girls (now 12 and 9), piano lessons. My approach is similar to that in the recorder lessons. We combine written music and playing by ear. The girls compose tunes or add a 'left hand' to a melody in the right hand. We try and listen for what sounds good. I try and teach facets of piano technique, experimenting so that nothing should manifest as deadly dull. My own musical development influences our explorations and wanting to inspire children musically, forces me to tackle my own musical limitations in a variety of ways. For example, what does it mean that a piece of music is in a particular key? How does one communicate that?

Our two girls have recently started piano lessons. Lessons with them are almost exclusively by ear and much more games and fun oriented than the lessons for the elder children. Our 7 year old has recently asked to learn guitar, so she has started lessons with her dad.

Recorder playing has been superceded by piano playing in both houses. Our collective singing and games sessions have evolved into preparations for a Secret Concert. The secret element is very important and it continues to pepper the collective working together towards a goal. The programme is comprised largely of songs, some recorder playing, piano playing and a delightful piece of music theatre. Preparations for the concert inspire discussion and planning in areas of movement, make-up, costumes, props, programme design and how five people (the children and I) can stage a music-drama designed for ten.

The Secret Concert is entering last stages of rehearsal before being presented to both families. We've been 'at it' intermittently for a year, breaking off for whatever events in the lives of two families necessitate going away from home, or being too occupied to maintain the regularity of meeting once or more per week. However, the thread has been maintained and we all joke about how long we've been preparing. Somehow, each return to the project marks some kind of expansion which the children themselves generate.

Throughout this period of "Music at Home", I've learned the importance of stressing what each child can do, not what they can't do. I've learned better to pitch activities at a level from which children can feel that they are achieving something. There have been times when I've given something too difficult or made a choice which involved too much work and too little enjoyment. When that occurs, I apologize and we move on to something else guaranteed not to cause frustration.

Through our musical activities, I experience a great richness in human sharing on many levels. To name just one - a child may be creating an accompaniment to a melody. This echoes what I have been doing. So I play something I have been working on and we each contribute a little to each others process.

It brings me great satisfaction that we all meet eagerly and that the notion of practice doesn't arise. Each child is very motivated and we do have fun. Perhaps one or more of these four children will incorporate music-making into their later lives. Whether or no, to express and communicate through music, to know its beauty and to experience enjoyment in its exploration is already a great gift.



By Paula
Bee

by Callina Bee



SHARED EXPERIENCES

An article by a fairly new member who makes an appeal to more experienced home-educators

I joined EO one year ago and the October Newsletter was by far superior to all the previous ones I have received. Although a committed Christian myself, I have to agree with EO members Rajan Naidu, Lyndon Pugh, and others who have written to the Newsletter recently proposing that the Newsletter be used primarily for otherwise education issues. To this end, I would like to encourage people to write in to the newsletter with a view to really helping others in the task of home education. Would anyone like to write (if only a few lines) about some of the following issues?

Television: Do you use the schools' programmes? Why, or why not? Do your children enjoy 'adult' educational programmes?

Radio: Do you use the school broadcasts? Why, or why not?

Housework: Does yours ever get done? Who by?



Shopping: Do you shop in the day-time, night-time or weekends? Are your shopping trips (with EO children

in tow) educational, or a burden? (I had high hopes of educational shopping trips when I first started EO, but now shopping is a chore which just has to be done.)

Meals: Do your EO children eat more frequently throughout the day than their contemporaries who attend school? Have any of you Cordon Bleu experts any tips on feeding EO children for we who specialise in cheese sandwiches?



Relatives: Many of us have parents and in-laws who disapprove of EO. Does anyone have approving, helpful or even contributing parents/grandparents? (My mum lives in Australia and is in favour of what we are doing. She sends all sorts of bits and pieces by sea mail and any cuttings she finds in Australian newspapers about home education down under.)

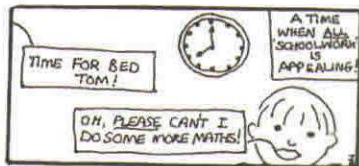
School Holidays: Do you have them as such? Do they coincide with your local schools or do you take them to suit you?

Abroad: Does anyone have information about EO in other countries?



Holidays: Have you been anywhere nice/stimulating/cheap for your holidays. Is it worth recommending to the rest of us?

'Worktime': Do you do 'school work' in the evenings or at weekends? Why, or why not? What do your children think of this?



Relationships: Do your children get on better with each other as a result of EO or has their relationship worsened? Why?

Writing: Do you teach 'joined-up' writing?

Exams: Are your children going to take exams? Which? Why/why not? National Curriculum: What do you think of it?

Disputes: Do you and your partner ever disagree on the education of your children? If so, in which main areas?



In general: How are you getting on with educating otherwise? Have you any tips for others?

Your friends: Have your non-EO friends stopped dropping in for coffee?

The list could be endless, but I hope there is something here that will inspire you to write for subsequent Newsletters.

On a more personal level I would really appreciate letters myself concerning the education of children from the age of 11 onwards. Do you intend to do it? Have you done it? How? Any recommendations for, or against. How do you do it if you are poor, and of poor brain too!

I look forward to hearing from you personally, on the last matter, and hope that my questions in this article provoke interesting replies that will ensure helpful future Newsletters, on a regular basis.

Angela M. Thompson
Elterwater, 16 Kenyon Road,
Wigan, Lancs. WN1 2DQ

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO DEVON MEMBERS

The Small School, in Hartland, Devon, is applying to the Department of Education and Science for Voluntary Aided Status. So far the Devon Education Authority has not supported their application. A campaign to fight for VAS is being launched by a group called "Friends of the Small School". If EO members in Devon would like to support them, or write letters to the County Council on behalf of them, then please get in touch.

Phone Ron Skinner, 0237 441780. Offers of help much appreciated.

*see article on VAS, page 41

Not Angels but House-guests

by Christopher Shute, a retired teacher,
who has been a member of EO
for several years.



To be a libertarian in education is to be in a minority of one most of the time. I've learned not to worry about this: in fact I enjoy lining up my ideas against other people's; it pleases me to imagine that the occasional dropped jaw, or glazed look, betokens an early stage in someone's conversion to my point of view. However, the strain of criticism which people throw at me most often, that I am not a parent and know nothing about how awful it is to have children, was beginning to work its way under my skin. I decided to do something about it.

Fostering has to be one of the most heroic activities a civilian can do. You take in children who are not your own. You offer them love and care, a place in your home and in your heart, and after a time fixed by others they go away, leaving you to master your feelings and prepare to receive someone else. Chances are you'll get no thanks from the child, still less from his parents. You are paid, or at least reimbursed, in inverse proportion to your success in making a difficult child tractable. It sounded just like my sort of quixotic gesture. I applied to social services to be a foster-parent, expecting to be refused because I was not only single, but also dangerously male. I was surprised to find that neither of these facts amounted to a disability. They wouldn't ask me to look after a baby, of course, or a girl, but my

cluttered little country seat would be quite acceptable as a home-from-home for an adolescent male, aged somewhere between William Brown and Holden Caulfield.

I was accepted, and acquired not only an impeccably virgin police record but also a Social Worker. My curiosity about what these people do was partially satisfied, but he left me feeling that he spent more time lifting up Old England's stones and rooting around in the muck beneath than ever he was paid for. He asked me if I was prepared to handle bail placements. This sounded heroic enough for anyone day-dreaming of OBEs and social sainthood, or, as in my case, hoping to prove that his ideas on education added up to something of practical use.

There was, of course, a cock-up. As a result of it I became foster-father not to a succession of young law-breakers, but instead to a 14 year-old lad whose life had just fallen to pieces around him.

The boy came into my house with little more than the clothes he stood up in. However, any inclination I might have to treat him as a poor, helpless waif was banished shortly afterwards when he went confidently to work re-organising his bedroom and decorating it with posters; he was a heavy metal enthusiast, which seemed to entail an interest in snakes, skulls, bloody axes and bondage which my maiden aunt would have thought unhealthy. His taste for earrings disconcerted me. He had them draped like chain-mail over his ears, through holes which he had obviously pierced himself. I avoided asking the questions about his past

life which crowded into my mind, and confined myself to something non-committal like "Those posters look nice", or "You certainly go for ear-rings in a big way". Slowly he settled in, warily testing the fabric of this new world. He said little, but did not seem hostile. Carefully we got on with the business of living together.

I have no real problems with him. He is not a naturally 'polite' boy, but in a guarded, tense way he shows his concern for me. Everything about him expresses suspicion. Words are too dangerous to be used graphically or emotively; at least they may be allowed to give me information about his physical needs. If I wanted him to be a chatty, companionable person I should be very disappointed in him. As it is, I have no ambitions for him except that he should be as happy as circumstances will let him be. I have not found that he 'tests' my 'authority', or behaves badly to see what I will do about it. In fact, I can't think of anything he does which annoys me. Perhaps I am missing a trick somewhere. All my friends think I am lying to protect myself from the "I told you so!" brigade. I'm not, honestly. I simply step back from useles conflict. If I'm going to fight him I intend that it should be over something more important than tidiness or whether he comes in precisely on time.

He hates school; and I hate making him go. If I could take him out of school I would. However, his friends are there, and he wants to go on seeing them, so the silly business has to continue. All I can do is support him when the school deals crossly with him over such minor lunacies as school uniform. I have already had to

fight his corner when he was given a detention for being AWOL (absent without leave) on Friday afternoon. I pointed out that:

a. the school could do nothing which would actually deter him, since he had already been put to extremes of physical abuse; detention would only embitter him,

b. if anyone was to act creatively and flexibly in this situation, surely it was the School, rather than an emotionally mangled 14 year-old, who was best equipped to do so,

c. I had always found that the lad responded to kindness, reason and being treated like an intelligent human being.

I am glad to say that, with reservations, the school accepted my arguments. Perhaps this was only because I was a teacher myself and knew what I was talking about. Would an ordinary parent have the same success?

The lad will probably be with me for a while yet. I hope so. In an unsentimental way I am good for him, and he gives me much joy. I treat him rather as Sheridan Morley remembers being treated by his father, the actor, Robert Morley. In an article recently he said, 'My father treated us children in a way which made us feel that he saw us not as children but as house-guests.' I am quietly confident that my house-guest will turn out well.

*Christopher Shute
Staffordshire*

" Show me the man who has enjoyed his school-days and I will show you a bully and a bore."

Robert Morley, 1966

FOR SALE

Ginn Books

Brand new
(ordered in error)

**Ginn Maths Levels 1 & 2
Teachers Resource Books**

£4 each plus p & p
(originally £5 each)

**Ginn Reading 360 Programme
Levels 1 & 2**

**Language Resource Workbooks
to be used in conjunction**

with Ginn Readers levels 1 & 2
£1 each plus p & p

contact

Collette Bradley

2 Church Lane, Tangmere,

Chichester, PO20 6 EZ

Phone 0243 532 814

A Young Person's Guide and Quiz to Hampton Court Palace in two parts

Written with family visitors in mind
with room by room information,
biographical details of individuals
in portraits.

£2.99 each part/ £5.88 for both.

Skill Builders booklets

for use by parents who wish to foster
children's education
in the home.

Book One is about Newspapers

Book Two is on Conversation

Price £1.99 each

(p & p included in price)

Further details from

Susan Shaw, 13 Sherwood Flats,

Herne Road, Long Ditton, Surrey KT6 5BU

Phone: 01.390 1827

TEACH YOUR BABY MATHS KIT by Glenn Doman

No reasonable offer refused

Phone Vicki Willow

0272 699454

N.B. Any items for sale in this Newsletter are not necessarily recommended by Education Otherwise. If you want to know more about the items, contact the seller or, in the case of books, check them first in your local library or book shop.

CYCLING PROFICIENCY

Like so many things, cycling proficiency courses are mostly carried out within the confines of school. However, it is always possible for your children to join in, whether or not they go to school.

The responsibility for cycling proficiency does not lay with the Education Authority, but with different agencies in different parts of the country. The regular "Cycling Proficiency Test" was devised by RoSPA and locally the testing officers are generally allied to the Department of Transport. However, some Counties have adopted their own "Safe Cycling" courses, but these are also funded by the County Councils' Transportation Department.

In Scotland, however, it is the Police who generally have the responsibility for Road Safety, Strathclyde being one exception.

If your child is nine or over and you would like them to participate in a course, your plan of action could be like this:

1. Call the local school and ask to be notified when the next training course is held there.

2. Failing co-operation on the school's part you could then ring your County Council Transportation Department and ask to speak to the Road Safety Officer, explaining that your child is out of school, or in the case of Scotland, the local police.

3. Still no satisfaction, then contact RoSPA.

Jo Rust, Cambridgeshire

REGIONAL NEWS S-Z

Suffolk

Please contact Charlotte Keith, Westleton 650 or Jocelyn Harding, Framlingham 724392 to confirm timing of event before attending.

6th February

10 am - 2.30 pm

SWT, Foxburrow Farm, Melton, Woodbridge.

Older children - Ecology of the pond,
Young children - Sheep project

Bring packed lunch, warm and waterproof clothes, wellies. £1.75 per child or £1.50 per child in a family group. Adults and children under five, free. Creche for under fives.

23rd February

10.30 am onwards. Resources Day.

At Jan Adams, Lathan House, Mill Lane, Badingham, Framlingham.

Phone Badingham 385. Bring good books, ideas, equipment useful for home-education to show others. Also a demonstration on Pyrography.

Bring packed lunch,

6th March (provisional date)

10 am - 2.30 pm at SWT, Foxburrow Farm, as above. Bring a packed lunch. Cost as for 6th February.

20th March

2 pm until approximately 3.30 pm

Suffolk Constabulary HQ, Martlesham Heath, Ipswich. A guided tour of Suffolk Police HQ including visits to Traffic Patrol, skid pan, mobile cell block etc.. Meet in HQ car park. Phone Charlotte Keith for directions.

3rd April (provisional)

10 am - 2.30 pm at Foxburrow Farm as above.

17th April

To be arranged. Ring Charlotte Keith. Thanks to Sandy Howse for an enjoyable Christmas Craft Day, 1989.

West Midlands - North Birmingham

3rd March

A preliminary get-together at Church House, Coleshill Street, Sutton Coldfield. The Hall is three minutes walk from the station, on the New Street - Lichfield line. Car park at the station. Please come with ideas for future events. Everyone welcome to contribute. Please bring food to share. Phone to say you are coming - Mrs Pauline Healy, 021 355 1545. Next meeting on 7th April, dependent on the response to this one.

Yorkshire, South

8th February

10 am at Weston Park Museum, a session on fossils.

16th February

1 pm. Janet Ford's father will do a photography session, at 108 Marlcliffe Road. For information ring Janet Ford.

1st March

A Welsh day at Mary and Stuart's house.

8th March

10 am at Weston Park Museum a session on rocks and minerals.

16th March

Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet. Tour starts at 11 am, but arrive a bit earlier.

8th April

Caribbean day at Janet and Phil's house. Phone them for details.

Further information from Dineke de Jong, Sheffield, phone 0742 553836.

Yorkshire, West

26th February

At 8 pm a Parent's meeting to discuss and plan future activities. Jackie Reed's house, 73 Salisbury Road, Armley, Leeds. Phone Leeds, 798793.

"Headmasters have powers at their disposal, with which Prime Ministers have never yet been invested."

Winston Churchill, 1930.

Early Learning

Aa Bb Cc Dd Education

Angela Vincent, from Hertfordshire, sent in this article about her daughter's reading and writing development, now she is just over three years old.

Seeing a drawing the other day that Meriel had done some time ago, and noticing the carefully inscribed 'M' and 'H' underneath, it struck Peter and me forcibly just how much more skilful she has become in the area of reading and writing in the last three months. Nowadays she writes all the upper and lower case letters, hesitating on 'u', 's', 'q' and 'w'. It occurred to me that, just as I devour and draw encouragement from other people's experiences with their children through the Newsletter, some of you may well be interested in ours.

I suppose you could say that Meri has always done the "wrong" things when it comes to literacy - that is, her first love was capitals, and she loves spelling out the individual letters of words rather than looking at them as a whole. (As far as interest in capitals is concerned, I guess it's pretty common, as they always go with people's names. What's more have you looked at the labels on most foods?)

She's had a large spoken vocabulary from an early age and took a great interest in letters. At 21 months she said "Look mummy there's an Angela." At the time she had spotted the word Volkswagen on the back of a car. Things went on like this for

some time. She would ask the name of a letter and I would tell her its sound and something it could be used for. For a while I worried that all letters would be permanently labelled by someone's name! We bought some magnetic capital letters, and I fought off friends' helpful comments about '...teaching her the wrong way', reassuring myself that capitals could be right. Anyway, we were just playing with something she was interested in. (Does anyone else get paranoid as easily as I do?)

The next big worry was that she was taking herself along too fast. When she wanted to know about lower-case letters, without having shown that she could recognise all the uppers, I nearly panicked again. How could she possibly handle both? That old teachers' stratagem of "Don't confuse" reared its head. Of course, she just carried on (I couldn't refuse to answer her questions) and demonstrated competence in both in weeks.

This phase, at nearly three, was a great one in which to use the magnetic letters (by this time we had acquired lower case as well) since she could have the satisfaction of using letters without needing to be able to write. I'd cut out lots of food labels and she'd often take them to the fridge after breakfast and copy them, using the magnetic letters, with great concentration. This was when she learned to 'write' from left to right incidentally.

At this time the sounds of individual letters meant little to her, and I'd hear her saying things like "duh" for 'mummy'. I forced myself to relax and the situation resolved itself. I

also made her a letters roll out of a length of wallpaper frieze, with upper and lower case letters in two different colours, each letter the same size as its magnetic counterpart - very important to a little girl who likes fitting things exactly. She'd often get that out and fit her letters onto it..... but that was months ago. Such things are passé now!

Next, she wanted to write. I thought that writing over dotted or pencilled letters might satisfy her. No good! Meriel thought the idea was to cover up each dot or bit of line precisely, so we'd end up with a clump of scribble where she had attempted to go backwards and forwards over the outline (like 'hoovering', she described it). So out went the helpful schemes for "encouraging correct letter formation" and back came the "If you need any help, ask me" routine.

I still feel guilty when Meriel demonstrates that she's vaguely literate in front of my friends, either when I know they cherish such ambitions for their own children, or when they say, "Of course, we haven't pushed our child", as one friend said today. I tend to feel defensive and mutter, "Nor have we sat down to work on these things with her. She just asks questions, I give her an answer and she either remembers it or forgets it." I suppose I feel so touchy about the whole thing, because we've been living with the idea of teaching her at home for the last ten years. We are new to EO only in terms of actually doing it.

Meriel still shows little inclination or ability to actually read and it's

tempting to panic that all this 'letter sounding' she loves will prevent her from reading for meaning, as the books say. My instinct says, "Trust her and let her enjoy what she is doing," so hopefully I won't try to help her too much, but we'll just carry on having stories together and I'll try not to get too embarrassed when she tells people who call her 'Muriel', "No! Meriel. M-E-R-I-E-L." Her progress so far has been haphazard - some leaps forward in understanding, some very long pauses before she demonstrates that she has grasped something and made it hers. Presumably she will continue in the same way, and one day maybe I'll relax about the whole thing. Then I'll really have learned something.

Angela Vincent, Hertfordshire.

Learning Link.



I am pleased to say that all the hard work involved in setting up Learning Link has been well worth the effort, judging by the excellent response we received to our article in the October Newsletter. We have now distributed Issue Two of our list and newsletter, which included free tickets to the BETT Educational Computer Exhibition at the Barbican in London. Also a 0% finance scheme from Research Machines and a whole host of other information. We are now well under way with Issue Three!

If you are using a computer why not send us an SAE and we'll send you details of what Learning Link can offer, and what YOU can offer Learning Link!

**Paul Bentley,
83 Manor Park, London, SE13 5RA**

EO in EUROPE ?

Throughout Europe education legislation differs tremendously. For many countries home-education is not an option for parents at all. Hazel Clawley, of Birmingham, has passed on a letter she received from Renata Leuffen, of the Albert Schweitzer Homeschool in Germany. Part of the letter is printed here, which shows only too clearly the difficulties faced by them,

She writes:

... I have petitions running on home-based education in all German States. Two were already turned down - one in the "Bundestag" (German Parliament) and one in the state of Northrhine, Westfalia.

What all these politicians agree on is that:

1. I have no right whatsoever to educate my own child.
2. Though I founded a private school and made it clear that the education process is taking place "otherwise" in our free school, the politicians agree that my child must attend a public school.
3. The politicians agree further that my child may of course be brought with severe force into a public school, this means by police and with tied hands, etc..
4. The politicians agree so far that my child is a member of society and that as being such, the society has a strong interest that he be educated in a public school.

To us this all sounds like complete nonsense, which it really is. My intensive research has shown that home education is a human and constitutional right in Germany, at least since the Constitution of the German Empire from 1849. There it went under the private school laws.

I am embarrassed to hear that home-education seems to be troublesome for some British parents too.

Well, we should finally bring this matter of home-based education into the European Parliament.

What I agree with completely is your comprehension of the Protocol to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Article 2. However, the German Minister for Education and the Commission for Human Rights in Strasbourg Cedex have both assured me that this article is never being understood in the way that it guarantees the right to home-education. . .

*Renata Leuffen,
Herzogstr. 14, 4000 Düsseldorf 1,
West Germany.*

SWAP SHOP

What do people think about having a 'Swap Shop' page in future newsletters? Advertise what you have to get rid of in the way of tapes, books, toys, equipment etc. and ask for what you need in return.

Angela Thompson, Wigan, Lancs.

LETTERS

Dear EO,

In October the Newsletter printed a letter that I sent in **January**, originally at a time when I was at a very low ebb. I felt better for just putting all my thoughts and feelings on paper, and when the letter didn't appear I thought that maybe my negative vibes were just too subversive!

Anyway, soon after the letter appeared I was surprised and thrilled to get lots of letters from other parents, supporting, encouraging, offering help or just agreeing that sometimes home-education is just too much like hard work. I felt that this is really what EO is all about - joining up of people from all over the country, lessening our isolation and proving that we aren't just solitary freaks, but part of a group who are joined together by our mutual care for our children.

At the time I wrote, we were all under strain as a family; my husband was in a stressful job and had little time to share the problems (or joys) of teaching the boys, and I was trying to do everything else and just overstretching myself. We decided to look for a place and lifestyle where we could share the work of housekeeping and producing our own food, and spend an equal amount of time learning and being with the kids.

We found that place on the island where we now live off the coast of Ireland, with another family with four children who share the same aims. At present there are just the two families here, but there are some houses for sale, and we are hoping to attract other families who are into a life of

simple hard work (we have no mod cons here) in beautiful and peaceful surroundings. There are no roads, but lovely beaches, rockpools and freedom for the children. Our boys have never been so happy. If you would like to know more, please write and I'll send you more details.

Yours,

*Terri Shoosmith, East Cottage,
Innishfree Island, Burtonport, Co.
Donegal, Eire.*

Dear EO,

The question of the general literacy and presentation of the EO Newsletter, reported in the last issue, deserves further discussion.

Although it is perfectly reasonable to argue that the Newsletter is a private forum for EO members, and is put together under difficult circumstances by people unskilled in editorial techniques, the implications of this form of presentation are too important to ignore.

In practise, the Newsletter is bound to be read not only by members but by officials of local authorities and by others who may have a hostile or ambivalent attitude towards the organisation and whose only knowledge of the home-education argument is obtained directly from EO members with whom they are dealing and from Newsletter articles shown to them by those members. This does no service to members in difficulties, who badly need to feel a sense of support and respectability from EO.

MPs and other potential allies form another important secondary readership. If our interests are to be sponsored by those in influential positions it follows that the supporting literature presented to

them should be fluent, articulate and persuasive rather than merely having the folk-charm of a disorganised minority movement.

The solution of having an additional, better presented publication for publicity purposes is a good one, except that the benefits of this would certainly be undermined by the availability of the underlying homespun material,

Since education is the primary concern of EO, it follows that EO's literature should exemplify its aims. It is very difficult to argue the value of home education to outsiders, or to prospective members, when the material produced by the home educators could easily be perceived as revealing a lack of basic education. It has to be admitted that there are a number of state school magazines which show a greater degree of literacy and editorial skill than our own efforts, and even the mildest of critics would be quick to point this out.

Relatively few changes would be needed to produce a big improvement. Some articles lose their impact as a result of a loosely worded sentence, a missing statement or the inclusion of an ambiguity here and there. Large and impenetrable bodies of text could be made more readable by the inclusion of sub-headings. Spelling could be improved if EO were to invest in a cheap word processor for the current editors, with a spelling checker. This would also make the task of laying out and printing the Newsletter a great deal easier.

I know that EO workers are volunteers, working under great difficulties. The question is, would not their efforts be much more worthwhile if standards were raised

sufficiently to present an articulate and persuasive voice to the outside world? Education Otherwise, after all, represents an alternative to school, not an alternative to education.

Yours,
Robert Erskine, Cambridge.

Dear EO,

With reference to Sangita's letter in the December '89 Issue, I heartily endorse what she says about *World Book* and *Childcraft*. They are excellent value for money.

I too became so satisfied with their quality and content, and the chance to have most of the answers ready to hand as it were, that I decided to become a rep. for them.

If anyone north of the border is interested but cannot find a local representative, please contact me and I will try and put them in touch with their nearest one.

Yours,
David Grant,
Sbortie, Evie, Orkney, KW17 2PJ
Telephone: 0856 75363

Ed. note:

A reminder of the cost of these books, given by Sangita in the December Newsletter, is that *Child Craft* costs £199 for 16 volumes and a dictionary, *World Books* cost £474.

"Parents are sometimes a disappointment to their children. They don't fulfil the promise of their early years."

Anthony Powell, *A Buyer's Market*, 1952.

Dear EO,

Some time ago a group of EOers visited Framlingham Castle to see the Hautbois Musicians. Labelled in the programme of events as "Music at the Castle" there was no hint of the outstanding welcome and friendliness once they realised who and what we were!

Everyone, including adults, had the chance to engage in mock battle with practise bows and arrows. Adrian and Philip, my children, really enjoyed it and we were told how to make our own. Unwise? As long as they don't aim them at the Inspector on his next visit . . . ! Later on some of the older boys tried out the real longbows - with practise arrows, I hasten to add.

Being a small group with no school parties and few of the general public to distract us we learnt a great deal about a mediaeval traveller's life, clothing, music etc. We were also treated to a varied display of mediaeval music. My youngest son, Philip was fascinated by this. We have the museum tapes at home, but it delighted him to see and hear the instruments first hand. All the instruments had been handmade by the musicians. We came away with resource contacts for music as well as many new ideas.

If you haven't already gathered it was a very enjoyable afternoon and I would recommend anyone who has the chance to see them. They travel around various English heritage sites throughout the year.

Yours,

Sue White, Debenham, Suffolk.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM FILES

As previously stated in Newsletters, home educators have **no** compulsion to follow the national curriculum. However, if you are interested in what it contains, files can be purchased on English, Maths and Science at the present time. Other subjects are still being compiled. Most good bookshops will order these for you, or you can contact any HMSO office.

Details of the files are as follows:

English in the National Curriculum

ISBN 0 11 270682 7

Price £4.95

Maths in the National Curriculum

ISBN 0 11 270666 5

Price £5.95

Science in the National Curriculum

ISBN 0 11 270067 3

Price £6.95

They make interesting reading, once you have worked out the difference between 'Attainment Targets', 'Key Stages' and the many 'Levels', and may even give you some new ideas.

"DEAD POETS' SOCIETY"

Has anyone seen this film, starring Robin Williams as an unconventional teacher of poetry at an American private school? It is wonderful, and gives you plenty of things to think about the way we "teach" children.
Jo Rust, Cambs.

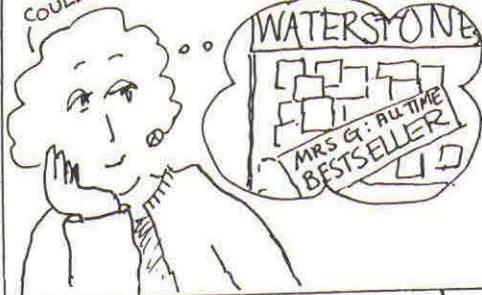
EDUCATING ARCHIE

BY SEG

HOW IS THE NEW DECADE AFFECTING OUR PALS? MRS G. PONDER AND PAUSES...



COULD BE BIG MONEY...



THEN THERE'D BE TV & RADIO COVERAGE!



-TROUBLE IS, IT COULD BE RATHER A BORING STORY. UNLESS I WERE TO WRITE IT IN MY NEW SILVER OUTLINE PEN...



-NO, NO. BETTER TO BE REALISTIC. MAYBE I SHOULD GET MY EYES TESTED FIRST.



WHAT'S FOR TEA MUM?

I'LL BE EATING MY HAT, DEAR



Inspectors find lack of advanced reading skills

by Richard Garner

Teachers often fail to develop pupils' reading skills after the initial stages of primary schooling, according to a report by HM Inspectorate.

The report, *Reading policy and practice at ages 5-14*, says: "Consistency of progression was not found . . . Beyond the early stages, reading was often less effectively taught."

"Pupils in years one and two were sometimes not challenged enough once they had achieved a reasonable degree of fluency; and those in years six and nine often lacked opportunities to reflect on and discuss features of the language they encountered in their reading, such as the effects of imagery."

It adds: "Few of these older pupils were helped to develop more sophisticated skills such as scanning texts for relevant information, or collating material from different sources. In short, advanced reading skills played too small a part in schools' planned provision for reading development."

The report goes on to point out that girls were usually more positive in their attitudes towards reading than boys. "In one school, for example, the library

borrowing rates of girls and boys revealed a sharp imbalance of about four:one in favour of girls."

The inspectors visited 17 schools - seven primary and 10 secondary - last summer to carry out their survey. In particular, they praised one school which had a "paired reading" agreement between parents and children. Both sides signed a contract to read together for at least 10 minutes a day.

Their report also warns that book provision in some schools was inadequate, adding: "Except in one school, books written by female writers or with central female characters were also under-represented. If schools are to meet the requirements of the national curriculum these problems of inadequate and narrow provision will have to be addressed."

It adds that schools with more books per pupil often supplemented their capitation allowance from the local education authority.

Reading policy and practice at ages 5-14 is available from the DES Publications Despatch Centre, Honeypot Lane, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 1AZ.

Appeals tribunal approved

by Ian Nash

Pupils, parents and teachers who are dissatisfied with GCSE and A-level results will be able to appeal to an independent tribunal under plans approved by Mr John MacGregor, the Education Secretary.

The tribunal, which is to have a chairman independent of the examining world, will not be empowered to re-mark candidates' work but will be able to force examining bodies to reconsider courses and publish their findings.

Mr MacGregor agreed to the tribunal in response to demands from the School Examinations and Assessment Council which wants an extra safety net to avoid injustices under the national curriculum and to strengthen

public confidence in the fairness of A and AS-levels.

The only independent mechanism for GCSE appeals at present is a Joint Council for the GCSE subcommittee which is restricted to procedural checks, said Mr Philip Halsey, chairman of the SEAC, when he put his case for a tribunal to Mr MacGregor.

"No independent investigation of any kind is available for A and AS-level examinations and no independent check of professional judgements can be made within the GCSE," he added.

In response, Mr MacGregor approved the tribunal in principle and asked the SEAC to come up with firmer proposals by the end of March.

EARLY TIMES
11.1.90

Minister set to over-ride opposition to fast stream

CHILDREN born in the 1980s are growing up with 'green values' — worrying about whales and seals and concerned about drug abuse and famine, says a new survey.

They are better informed than ever before, find the Prime Minister boring and vote pop stars Kylie Minogue and Jason Donovan as their favourite people.

More than half the youngsters questioned in a national survey by a food group said their major concerns about the future involved environmental issues. The five to 11-year-olds were worried about the unnecessary killing of whales and seals (57%), the effects of drugs on young people (54%), and starvation and famine (58%).

The survey, by the makers of Batchelors Super Noodles, found children of today are better informed than any previous generation. They voted Kylie and Jason (65%) as their most admired personalities, followed by Michael Jackson (46%) and Batman (42%).

More than almost one in three found Mrs Thatcher boring, followed by pop duo Bros and chat

show host Terry Wogan. When they grow up the girls want to be nurses and the boys professional sportsmen. They hate going to bed early and doing housework but nearly two thirds said they liked school.

Dr David Lewis, a clinical psychologist who analysed the survey, said television has made children better informed about the world. "Television is a window on the world bringing images from all parts of the globe and involving our children in issues surrounding our planet," he said.

"Parents should try to channel children's concerns and find practical ways for them to help like raising money for charities," he added.

More than half of the 1,000 children questioned said they did not find healthy food boring but they voted spaghetti, roast dinners and pizza as their favourites.

Plans to create a fast stream in schools which allows bright 15-year-olds to opt out of some national curriculum subjects are due to be announced by Mr John MacGregor, the Education Secretary, later this month.

But his proposal, affecting art, geography, history, music and PE, is understood to have met stiff opposition from the National Curriculum Council on the grounds that it may suggest to parents that the full national curriculum is only for less-able pupils.

Council officials are also said to be concerned that this will quickly lead to a two-tier curriculum in which subjects such as history and geography are seen as less important than science and maths.

Under Mr MacGregor's plans, all pupils aged 5 to 16 would study English, maths, science, a modern language and technology. But those who reach national curriculum attainment level 8 (defined by SEAC as equivalent to a GCSE grade B) in the other subjects by age 14 could opt out of them.

Obviously a means of rationalizing the overcrowded curriculum, his plans are sketchy and he will ask the NCC to do further work. But while this might enable the brightest pupils to study classics, three single subject sciences, or to embark early on A-levels, less able pupils will still have to plod through the overcrowded curriculum.

Such plans would also send out all the wrong signals about GCSEs, say NCC sources. Either bright pupils would have to sit them at 14 or the attainment levels would be seen as an alternative, in which case GCSEs would be seen as being for less able pupils.

Indeed, if the national curriculum attainment levels were seen as a credible alternative, there would be no point continuing with GCSEs. While a differentiated national curriculum would find political favour on the Tory Right, the Government sets great store by the GCSE as the key form of assessment at 16-plus.

How the NCC would respond to a demand to make Mr MacGregor's model workable is unclear. They could recommend that opting-out applies only to pupils who reach level 10 (a tiny minority of 14-year-olds since it is planned to be better than a GCSE grade A) but this would still leave the relationship between GCSE and the attainment levels confused.

Private schools 'will be brought into line'

A LABOUR government will make private schools work to the national curriculum, shadow education secretary Jack Straw has promised.

At the moment only state-run schools are bound by law to work to it. Mr Straw told a conference at St Catherine's College, Oxford: "If a national curriculum is to be national, if it is to raise standards for all children, it must apply to all children."

Mr Straw said a split between

learning in private and state schools would worsen Britain's already serious education and social divide. "So we will legislate to extend the national curriculum to all schools, and ensure that all schools in an area, whether state or private, come within the same system of inspection and performance appraisal.

"We shall seek discussions with the private school organisations this side of the election about all this."

EARLY TIMES
11.1.90

Business partners

TIMES EDUCATION SUPPLEMENT
5.1.90

Last term we carried out a telephone survey of nearly 100 primary head-teachers in a large local authority in the South-west of England. We wanted to know how they viewed the role of parents as the national curriculum and its associated reforms got underway. But we particularly wanted to know how far they saw parents as consumers, how far they were actively marketing their schools, what they were doing to inform parents about the national curriculum and whether they thought parents had a role to play in its implementation and in assessment. We also wanted to find out how they saw their relationship with parents changing over the next few years.

The survey, which was the first stage of a large research project funded by the Leverhulme Trust, focused on the parents of five and six-year-olds who were just starting key stage 1. These children will be among the first to be assessed at seven, and the role of their parents will therefore be crucial. The schools were drawn at random and ranged from large institutions in run-down inner-city areas to small village schools in the depths of the country.

Inevitably, our survey revealed the major pressures that schools have been facing. Head-teachers painted a graphic picture of mounds of documents and other paperwork sitting on their desks, and many told of their concern that the time they could spend with children was decreasing as the amount of administration increased. Not surprisingly, these pressures were felt most acutely by teaching heads in small schools: the few hours a week available for administration hardly gave them time to open their mail, let alone read it. The few who were too busy to take part in the survey came mainly from this category. Other heads pointed to the increased stress and workload amongst their staff, and a few seemed about to go under themselves. Indeed, one head succumbed to stress-related depression within a week of our phone-call, although the two events may not have been related. Yet despite these pressures, we received a positive response to our survey from most heads.

One of our first questions concerned the extent to which they saw parents as consumers, a

fundamental aspect of the new "market" philosophy underlying the 1988 Act. About three-quarters already saw parents to some extent in this role, although many added that they were not altogether in sympathy with this perspective. One head, for example, said: "I don't really like to look at it that way, but they are consumers - we offer a service and they object if it's not the quality they like, so we try to give them that service." Others pointed out that they regarded the children as consumers rather than their parents, or that they saw parents more as partners. As one put it: "If I produced sausages I suppose I would see them as consumers but at the moment I see them as people becoming more aware and more interested."

Despite this increasing perception of parents as consumers, only one in five heads said he or she had introduced a new policy, such as uniform,

Parents will probably end up teaching the classes while the teachers are carrying out the assessments

specifically because parents wanted it - most said that parents exerted little or no pressure of that kind on the school. Indeed, there were more complaints of parental apathy and lack of interest than of undue parental pressure, and one head remarked pointedly that she was "under more pressure from central government than from my parents".

About one-quarter of the heads said they were actively marketing their school, mentioning glossy brochures, notices in estate agents, features in the local press and TV, and the occasional video, while at least two schools had a governor with specific responsibility for public relations. About one-third saw themselves as passively marketing, that is, simply trying to spread the good name of



THE INDY
4.1.90

The bullying continues

NEW RESEARCH has confirmed that nearly 20 per cent of children are bullied at school, but only half tell their parents or teachers.

Peter Smith, of the psychology department at Sheffield University, said bullied children were likely to feel lonely and depressed. "Bullying can be very serious for its victims. These children are likely to feel isolated at school and many spend their break times alone," he said.

Dr Smith described a Norwegian government project which has

reduced bullying by half. "We hope that the Government here can be persuaded to support a similar campaign." In Norway, bullying has been reported to be two or three times above British levels. More than half of the children in the survey suffered in silence. But he said parents were within their rights to take legal action if attacks could be classified as assaults.

Most bullying takes the form of teasing, he found, but in a quarter of cases it was more serious and could involve attacks. Two-thirds of those who said they were bullies also reported that they had never been reprimanded by teachers or parents.

Celia Hall

the school through one means or another. But nearly half did not believe they marketed the school at all. This may have been because they were essentially operating in a sellers' market. Although most reported that their parents had a fair degree of choice, few were concerned about them taking their children elsewhere: "We're full" and "we're over-subscribed already" were common responses. The idea that parents will go elsewhere if standards do not improve – a central assumption of the market approach to education – was clearly not regarded as a major threat by the majority in our survey.

Parents were for the most part seen as knowing little about the national curriculum. Less than one in eight of the heads thought their parents were "well informed", and many blamed the media for "misinforming" parents about the reality of its implementation – "they read the papers and think it's all up and running". Only a minority thought their parents actually wanted to know more – many were seen as either "happy to leave it to the school", "not interested" or "not bothered". Despite this apparent apathy, almost all the heads thought that parents needed to be given more information about the national curriculum ("if only to put right what they've learnt from the *Daily Mail*"). Most schools had already taken active steps to do this – leaflets had been sent home, meetings had been held or were being planned, and displays had been mounted in the school.

Despite – or maybe because of – their limited knowledge about the national curriculum, most heads believed parents were predominantly in favour of it. Several thought that the school had played a leading role in shaping parents' positive opinions through their own positive attitude towards the changes – "we've made sure they approve because we're approving too" – while others thought their positive attitudes came from elsewhere – "they've been told by the media that it's a good thing" and "they approve because they've been told it will get rid of bad teachers". Again, many parents were seen as apathetic or indifferent; "as long as their child is happy and progressing it makes no difference whether it's the national curriculum or not"

EARLY TIMES
11.1.90

BULLYING has long been accepted as a fact of school life despite repeated attempts to stop it happening. It can happen in the school playground, in the toilets, in the classroom or even outside the school in the streets. For some children, bullying is something they have to live with at school and from which there seems to be no escape.

A recent survey, about the growing numbers of British schoolchildren who face bullying at school, discovered that as many as 68% of all school children between the ages of five and 16 had been bullied at some time. That is almost seven out of 10 children.

If you see a cutting that others may be interested in, send it to:
Sarah Guthrie, Field House,
Mellis Road, Thurandoston,
Diss, Norfolk.

VOLUNTARY AIDED STATUS

with regard to schools

The 1944 Education Act set up a category of Voluntary Aided Status (VAS) primarily to bring Church schools into the education system. VAS meant that the school governors would be responsible for capital expenditure, but the government would pay for running costs and teachers' salaries.

Until recently VAS was not given to new schools unless they replaced one that had shut down. But in June 1988 Lord Young of Dartington put the case for small schools (using as an example the Danish model of government support) in the House of Lords debate on the Education Reform Bill (Hansard, 27 June 1988, 1267-69). In reply, Baroness Hooper for the government said

"It is open to any minority group with a need for education of a particular kind, to apply for VAS."

When the Small School in Devon decided to pursue VAS, the headmaster, Colin Hodgetts, went to see Mr Baker (then the Minister for Education) who laid down three conditions which must be met before they could apply.

1. That the school should be financially viable, i.e. it shouldn't cost more to teach a pupil at the Small School than at a local comprehensive.
2. That the school should teach the National Curriculum.
3. That they should not exist where there are severe shortages in the local comprehensives.

The Devon Education Authority would not support the school's application for VAS on the grounds that it was not financially viable. The school argue that if they were given a payment for each pupil, equivalent to a local comprehensive, they would then fund-raise for capital expenditure - in much the same way that many state schools do now under the Local Management of Schools Scheme. The decision whether the school could manage financially should then lay with the school, not the LEA.

The last condition concerning whether or not the school might exist in an area where the local comprehensive already had shortages, was contested by the school on the grounds that if parents were not sending their children to the comprehensive, the reason may well be that the school has a poor reputation - in which case an alternative, with VAS, would be all the more valuable and necessary. Such a situation of choice is surely what the Government has been pushing for.

The Education Authority in Devon is also in receipt of an evaluation report on the school, compiled by Exeter University. The report concludes: "Our view of the Small School's case in the key areas specified by Baroness Hooper (demand, curriculum, staffing, premises and finance) is a favourable one."

However, at a meeting of the Schools Sub-Committee in September 1989, a covering report by Mr Owen, the Chief Education Officer, stated that the school could not teach a child the National Curriculum for the same cost as a local comprehensive. The

Schools Sub-Committee accepted his report and declined their application. Their fight for VAS continues.

The Small School in Devon was established in 1982, originally with nine pupils. The School now has approximately 40 secondary age children on the register, and follows the National Curriculum.

Further information can be obtained from Ron and Mandy Skinner, The Old Barn, Hescott Farm, Hartland, Devon, EX39 6AN.

This article was compiled by the editor from information received from Ron Skinner.

DO YOU FIT THIS BRIEF?

As Publicity Officer I get many requests from Journalists and TV Researchers for families new to EO who have joined primarily because of their dislike of recent changes in the Education System, for example the introduction of the National Curriculum and testing.

If this sounds like your family please write to me, describing your situation, including your address and phone number.

Even if you do not wish to be interviewed it is always useful to me to be kept informed of the opinions of new EO members. This way I stay up-to-date with the current membership and can then adequately respond to journalists on your behalf.

Anything you write to me will **not** be published, so don't worry about that, but I may phone you at some time to ask if you would be willing to be interviewed.

Thanks. Jo Rust, 8 Church End, Gamlingay, Beds. SG19 3EP

NOTICEBOARD

ELEPHANT POEMS

The Natural History Museum is running a competition for children to write poems about elephants.

Entry forms can be found in the January edition of BBC Wildlife, or obtained from NHM, Cromwell Rd., London SW7.

Closing date 26 February, 1990.

"IT'S ALL IN THE STARS"

A Science-based adventure play currently on tour around Britain for 7-11 year olds.

For a list of venues and dates contact Molecule Office, Bloomsbury Theatre, 15 Gordon St., London WC1H 0AH, phone: 01.388 5739

HEDGEHOG SURVEY



If you want to know the results of a recent survey by the Royal Society

for Nature Conservation on Hedgehogs and their habitats, send an SAE for a leaflet to: RSNC, The Green, Nettleham, Lincoln, LN2 2NR.

THIRTEEN PLUS

BBC TICKETS FOR FREE

Ever wondered where TV audiences come from? Are they 'canned' people that make the 'canned' laughter. (Well, that's a matter of opinion), but did you know that anyone can write off for tickets to be part of a studio audience?



AND IT'S FREE! If there's a programme you specially enjoy, or one you think you should be on, then write to the BBC TICKET UNIT, specifying your age and the sort of stuff you're interested in seeing, either locally or in London. Your local BBC station will tell you the address. (I don't know it off-hand!)



ACTIVITY HOLIDAYS

Have you ever been on an Activity Holiday, either doing conservation work, fruit picking in France, learning how to grass-ski (since there's no snow due to global warming perhaps) or mastering your computer wizardry? Why not tell others about it in the Newsletter.

If you fancy such a holiday, but don't know where they exist, the English Tourist Board publish a guide called: "Activity and Hobby Holidays", and you can get it from and Tourist Information Office, costing around £2.50.



PENGUIN "PLUS" BOOKS

These are a series of books for teenagers, and they are all well worth looking at. Covering the areas of FICTION, NON-FICTION and FACTS here are reviews of some of them you may find interesting.



ATTACKS OF OPINION

by Terry Jones (of Monty Python fame) is a compilation of articles on controversial issues, illustrated by Gerald Scarfe.



ON YOUR BIKE

Gives some brilliant ideas for spare time earning - from dog walking to being a film set extra!



WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

Described as "Today's major issues laid bare - listen to the arguments and make up your own mind." Covering subjects from blood-sports, through nuclear weapons to education, there's plenty of material for having a good argument with your parents afterwards (whoops!).

Page 113 is particularly brilliant!

IT'S GOT EO ON IT!



HOW'S YOUR MEMORY? (FORGOTTEN ALREADY?)

Look at the five ten-digit numbers listed here, one after the other, giving not more than about 30 seconds for each one.

3786414937

7263418975

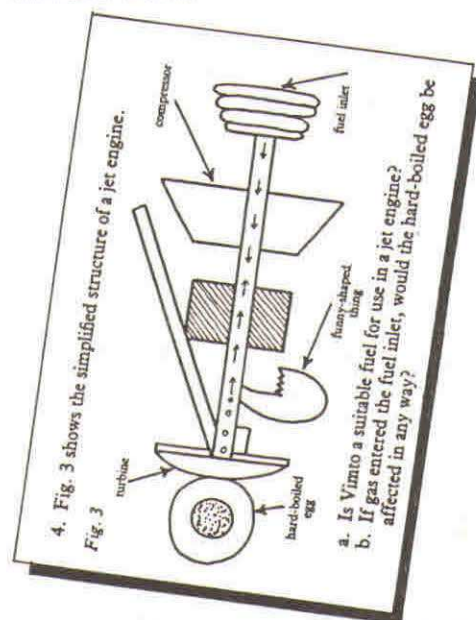
9267891182

5946388421

5832418235

Now cover the numbers and try to write each one down on a piece of paper. Score one point for every digit that you manage to replace in its proper sequence. Score out of 50.

(Really bad score?) Then you might have fun improving your memory skills with a book from Usborne, called (funnily enough) **IMPROVE YOUR MEMORY SKILLS!**



From "Crazy Curriculum by Jonathan Clements, Armada, £1.95.

FILM REVIEW: BACK TO THE FUTURE II

PG

They're back! Back to the future that is. But that's not all, during the short time they're back, they find an advertisement for Jaws 12, which is in fact is an animated hologram which jumps out at Marti (Michael J. Fox) jaws wide open and terrifies the life out of the kid.

There is also a Biff in the future, complete with remarks like "Hey, McFly ya straps ain't done" and "Don be so dumb McFly". And yes, instead of the age-old skateboard is... The Hoverboard!

The cars look like spaceships, the motorway is replaced with the Skyway and the TVs have about 600 channels. But one thing isn't changed, the stupidity of the McFly family and the domination of the Biffs!

However, they also find themselves back in an alternative 1985 in which Biff is a millionaire all because of a sports almanac bought in 2021, which causes them to go back to 1955 when they bump into themselves which means, (pause for deep breath!) that it all muddles into something only Marti McFly can stop! A fantastic adventure and well worth seeing, but only if you saw the first one first!



What do you think of these pages for teenagers? Want to see more? Think it's rubbish? Write to ED and tell them, 'cos you're a member too! (Unless it's your friends book!)

WHERE TO GET WHAT

The following publications are available from the Membership Secretary, Christine Wallace, 25 Diabaig, Achnasheen, Ross-shire, IV22.

School is not Compulsory

(SINC) - a guide to your rights £2.50

Early Years

learning suggestions for under 12s £2.50

Later Years

learning for older children, plus GCSE £2.50

Teach Your Own

by John Holt - philosophy of home education £3.85

Schools Out

by Jean Bendell - a good why and how book by an EO member and long term home educator £5.95

EO Newsletters

back copies for '88 and '89 £1.00

EO Newsletter Bargain basement

any four copies (our selection) from '82 to '87 £1.20

Home Education and the Law

by Woolf and Deutsch - the law in England and Wales with regard to children who are "de-registered" £2.00

EO STATIONERY, RE-USE LABELS, MEMBERSHIP FORMS, EO LEAFLETS and HANDBILLS:

available from Lucy Charlton, 2 Whiston Lane, Newton Harcourt, LE8 0FT. For RE-USE LABELS send £1.50 for 100.

Growing without Schooling

the Newsletter of EOs parallel organisation in the USA (six issues a year, starting in March) send £10.00 to Jill Gillings, Ballaglonny Farm, Quayles Orchard, Ronague, Castletown, Isle of Man.

EDITORIAL POST SCRIPT

(or a dedication of sorts)

Thanks are due to my eldest son, William, who is a master on the Apple Macintosh, and designed the teenage pages.

To my youngest son, Thomas, who answered all phone calls while I was busy editing.

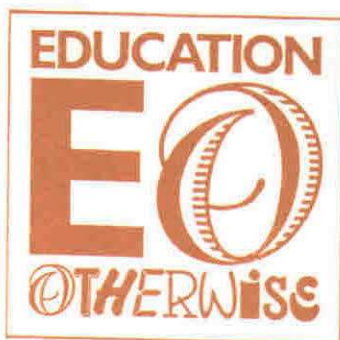
To my husband, Graham, whose patient and tireless tutoring on the word processor deserves a Knighthood, and who bought me the beautiful fountain pen for Christmas that made my writing so pleasurable.

And to my parents, Jim and Daisy Astbury, who have always supported me in my endeavour to home educate their grandchildren.

Thank you all.

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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 regarding their education.

For further information, please send an S.A.E. (9"x4") to:

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