

Education Otherwise Newsletter

Issue 86 June 1992

The National Conference - Counting the Costs

Chemistry for All at Home

News from Abroad Views Reviews

Education Otherwise Newsletter: no 86

June 1992

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Notes for contributors

Contributions for the next issue should be sent to the appropriate editor by 1 JULY. This date is not long after you receive this newsletter, but please note that submissions which arrive late and are not used are sent on to the next editor. So, no excuses, get writing!

All material for publication should be clearly marked as such, and you should include your name and address, and if possible, a telephone number.

Please write or type clearly and indicate if you do not want any changes made. Otherwise the editor will retype and make minor corrections to spelling, punctuation, etc, as well as making minor changes to fit it onto the page! Material that is too faint will have to be retyped anyway.

If you refer to a previous article or letter, please indicate the reference by Newsletter number and date.

Contributors should note that any published item may be reprinted in other Home Educating magazines at home and abroad. Please include a note with your submission if you do not want yours reproduced.

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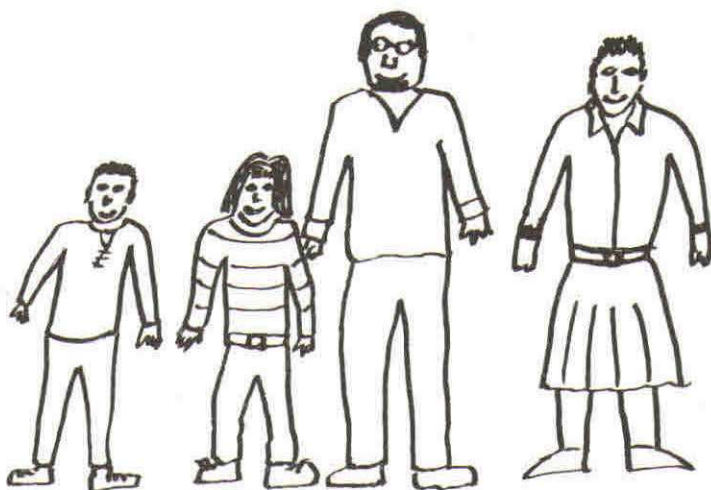
The DEADLINE for the next issue for all of the above is 1 JULY.

Advertisements are accepted, when space permits, from members if they are of interest to EO in general, at 10p per word. Make cheques payable to "Education Otherwise".

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

This newsletter is mostly verbal rather than pictorial. Most of the submitted contributions have been included, but there is little to break up the pages of print. We are grateful to Maggie Swatridge, whose variations on the letters EO are scattered throughout, and the Grant family, whose 'logo' marks their letter. The other drawings are ours. Perhaps the success of the Children's Pages has diverted all the artistic effort to Editor Hannah Bush, but don't forget the needs of the newsletter! Contributors might like to have another member of the family (it is not necessary to be a child to draw!) do an illustration to be sent with the prose.

Many thanks to all those contributors who sent words of support.



Malcolm

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35 Dovedale Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 6JB

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the editor or of Education Otherwise as a whole. This newsletter is edited by a volunteer member of Education Otherwise and its primary purpose is to provide support and communication between members.

Education Otherwise is a company limited by guarantee and is a charitable trust. Charity No 292029.

DONATIONS WANTED TO HELP KEEP SUBSCRIPTIONS DOWN

Funds are running low at present, and we will need money very soon to meet expected printing costs. We are now asking for an initial membership payment of £15 from everyone who can afford it, but we would like to keep the ongoing subscription at £12.50 for as long as possible. If you feel you can personally afford more than this, please help now by making a donation. Send cheques, made out to 'Education Otherwise Association Ltd' to

Mike Cook, 34 Beacon Road, HERNE BAY, Kent CT6 6DJ

CONTACT LIST

By the time this appears, a new contact list should be available. This year we are economising by not sending it out to existing members automatically. If you would like one, please send a stamped addressed envelope to:

Bruce & Christine Wallace
25 Diabaig
ACHNASHEEN
Ross-shire IV22 2HE

Please make sure the envelope is large enough, the contact list is the same size as a newsletter.

To save explanation, mark the envelope 'CONTACT LIST'.

Remember to add stamps to the value of 34p.

On behalf of the meeting at Featherstone:

THE BATTLE IS NOT OVER

The Labour Party's plans for the National Curriculum may not seem to be a threat any more, but another general election is only four or five years away. Now is the time we should be working to persuade Labour to change this policy. Please don't leave it to someone else to act. We urge you to write those letters to Labour and Liberal MPs now.

To receive a list of all Labour MPs, send an S.A.E to 23 Whitley Road, London N17 6RJ. If you need help drafting a letter, see p31 of the Feb/March newsletter. If you want a letter typed (not necessary) send your handwritten draft with the S.A.E.

AUTUMN GATHERING

10 - 17 September, 1992

High Close Youth Hostel

near Ambleside, Lake District

As we will be charged for all beds every night we can only take bookings for the whole week. Payment in advance.

Send S.A.E. for details to:

EO Autumn Gathering
Church Lane Cottages
Newton Harcourt
Leicestershire LE8 0FT

A NATIONAL GATHERING - COUNTING THE COST

We booked Cliff College for the January 92 gathering a whole year in advance. We advertised places at the same rates as last year since the cost of booking the residential centre was the same and this year we hoped to fill all the 118 beds.

The hire of the two youth centres and the sports hall cost £1152 + VAT. We made a rough estimate that a basic £5 per person per night should cover this and give a bit over for other expenses.

For people wanting group catering we fixed a scale which penalised adults (£10 a day) but subsidised young children (£5) giving an advantage to large families and those with only one parent.

We were worried that there would not be as much space or as many interesting things to do on site as there are at other venues. So we booked Cliff College's sports equipment for the three days. We also booked the lounge which gave us another meeting room and access to a pool table. Separately we arranged to hire a bouncy castle and Quadro building system. Finally we took up the suggestion of a Folk group and caller to help the Friday night ceilidh go with a swing.

We knew that these extras might mean that we could not cover costs

completely but remained optimistic because bookings were coming in fast and everyone was encouraging.

In the end the weekend did go well but we made a loss of over £300 which EO paid.

This is how we miscalculated:

1. Not everyone could pay the advertised rate. Several families came at a concessionary rate. The charge for the other families did not take this into account. (Should it have?)
2. Not everyone who booked came. There are lots of reasons for last minute cancellations and we only charged for people actually there.
3. Although the basic hire charge was unchanged, all Cliff College's other facilities had substantially risen in price since last year. The sports equipment cost £25 a day. The lounge cost £3.30 an hour for 19 hours.
4. We also had to pay for every item lost or damaged during our stay - 9 spoons, 3 glasses, a plate, a bowl and a mirror - £40 in all.
5. On top of this Cliff College had introduced a charge for day visitors of £2.50 per person. We had not believed this applied to us. We trusted day visitors to make a contribution to their food and the other expenses but did not take a register or make a strict charge. In the end we paid Cliff College £25 for a notional 10 visitors.

I should know that every venture always works out costing more than is anticipated and bringing in less than hoped. But I was pretty disappointed at the scale of the miscalculation, especially as EO is not well off as an organisation at present.

I hope that this account does not put people off organising events but gives everyone a better

understanding of the difficulties.

Finally, I personally would prefer not to use Cliff College again especially as their charges for next year will be much higher. Can anyone come up with any other suitable venues?

Stephanie Futcher, 50 Springfield Avenue, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S40 1HL

CHEMISTRY FOR ALL AT HOME

I was a Science teacher, but now I'm EOing with boys of 5 and 7. These are my opinions and ideas about Chemistry. I hope they are useful.

Chemistry, on its own or as part of combined science, does not consist of mixing mysterious coloured liquids to produce horrible pongs. It isn't a difficult subject: everyone can learn at least some chemistry as it involves a lot of doing, not too much memorising (at least not until A level). It relates to maths, physics, biology, geography and occasionally history allowing cross-curricular topics, like Water Supply or Rusting or The Air, for young pupils.

I am suspicious of Chemistry Sets, which I think are dangerous, unnecessary for young children and of very limited or even negative educational value. Exotic coloured crystals undergoing poorly explained chemical reactions could easily lead to misunderstanding and the

impression that Chemistry is magic, dangerous and spectacular. There is the question of safe, eco-conscious disposal of chemicals too.

A chemistry syllabus may start with Processes. Children practise dissolving substances, filtering, evaporating, distilling and chromatography. These can safely be done at home; some demonstrated by a parent, others by the child. For instance, a coffee filter or even a tea strainer allows solid/liquid separation. Separate aluminium cans from steel ones with a magnet. Shake up oil and vinegar, then let it stand. Where does the sugar go when Grandpa stirs his tea? What if he didn't stir? Is there a limit to how much salt you can dissolve in half a cup of water? What if you warm the water? Can you get the salt crystals back by leaving the solution for a week? When the kettle boils, do you get drops of condensation on the wall near the spout? Could you prove

they were pure water? What happens when you dip a piece of paper, marked with a felt-pen spot, into water and let it seep up past the dot?

You may go on with States of Matter, and then Physical and Chemical Changes. At home you can look at ice/water/steam. What shape is a liquid? Do the changes between states always happen at the same temperatures? Be VERY careful with thermometers. Put a drop of food colouring into a glass bowl full of still water and watch the colour diffuse. How long does it take for the smell of an open tin of polish to spread across the room (sit still)?

Look at and feel raw pasta. Boil a bit and try again. Leave it on a saucer and see if it returns to the previous shape and size and texture. Try this with egg; poach it and think about reversing the process! Cooking provides plenty of scope for chemistry skills and comprehension to be developed.

Maybe next you do Acids and Alkalis. Make an indicator from fresh red cabbage. The juice (or water it was cooked in) is red in acid conditions, bluish purple in alkalis. Test (using saucers or small glasses instead of test tubes) vinegar, bicarbonate of soda, bath salts, fresh milk, stale milk, toothpaste, a crushed sweet. Discuss all you see; write what you find out in a chart or table of results. Accurate recording of observations is an important skill.

If you light the gas-stove (small flame) and throw a pinch of salt in the flame, what colour do you see? Why does it remind me of certain street lamps? Try holding a rusty nail in the flame for a moment (mind your fingers!) or a bit of copper wire. You should get used to tying long hair back, and maybe you could buy protective goggles from a DIY shop.

Chemical reactions are not magic. They follow patterns. If you like, I can write another article about some of them, and even introduce a few symbols (like Na for sodium) and equations.

Prof John Durant, Assistant Director of the Science Museum, and Imperial College's Professor in the Public Understanding of Science has worked for the past three years on why there is such a gulf between the so-called boffins and other people. He is quoted in the Observer as saying that school-leavers aren't scientifically literate, possessing the basic tools of understanding. Almost a third of Britons believe antibiotics can kill viruses. 35% think radioactive milk can be made safe by boiling. He wants science put into a human and social context. "There are two easy ways of reacting to science", he says. "There's awe and admiration, and fear and alienation - and they are equally inappropriate." Rita de Selincourt, 14 Beechwood Avenue, St. Albans, Herts, AL1 4YA

HOME AND AWAY

Most people seem to wait until they have been home educating for a year before writing to the newsletter to say how it's going. I hope it is OK to write after just a few months, as some interesting things have happened since last September, when our younger son did not start school, but continued learning at home.

Matthew, as some of you know, had hearing problems, delayed speech and is generally a little 'slow'. Rather than having him 'Statemented' and abandoning him to a system I had considerable doubts about, we chose to teach him at home. On the day his peers started school I intended to launch into home education.

However, on returning home from school he found a ladybird on a teasle plant, and enjoyed getting it to crawl on his hand, and watched it fly away, then found another one. Part of me wanted to rush him off to 'work', but my better part reasoned that the ladybirds would soon be gone, and let him enjoy the moments. He made rapid progress with learning letter sounds and is enjoying a Montessori-type approach to reading. The days are mostly quite relaxed and the 'health professionals' dealing with him all seem pleased with his progress. His speech has improved, partly as a result of a phonic approach to reading, which has made him more aware of the sounds within words. A speech therapist said I must have worked

very hard with him - I just smiled!

At February half-term we removed Samuel from school, at his request. He decided if Matthew could do school at home, so could he! We have written to the LEA but have yet to hear back from them. Leeds are not a home education-friendly authority, so we are in no rush to hear from them. It is too early to comment on how things are going with Samuel, except to pass on an interesting quote, "What has Matthew done for education today?".

* * * * *

February half-term saw me going AWAY. I helped to drive a car over to Romania to leave for my best friend Irene, who is working over there at a children's home run by Caring For Life International (about whom I wrote an article in issue 76 of the newsletter). It was quite an experience to be one of 3 drivers driving a Peugeot 505 across Europe - even more so when the car had a battery problem, and showed a marked reluctance to start every time the engine had been switched off, even if just to fill up with petrol!! I discovered a new definition of 'cold' at 3.30am in an Austrian lay-by, after trying to have a sleep sitting up in the car. But pushing said car up and down said lay-by warms you up in no time - even if it didn't start the car! None of us spoke German, which made dealing with the German and Austrian AA men difficult, so I think

I will have to try and learn German soon. We did make it to the Romanian border after having a new battery fitted in Austria, only to be made to wait for an hour or so because we had some expensive equipment in the car. (The guards either wanted the equipment, or hoped for a bribe to speed up our crossing; we just had to sit it out and pray.)

It was wonderful to see Irene again and to meet the children she is looking after. They all seem very happy at the big house in Paulis, near Arad. They are still not used to having toys, but are learning to play with them. They are encouraged to help with the washing up and other things to prepare them for when they leave. Their school day is quite long and the teaching very traditional, with emphasis on rote learning, but Irene has read John Holt and some

Montessori, and hopes to help them widen their education when they are not bogged down with homework.

May I thank those of you who gave items to CFLI. The children really do appreciate them and are benefitting from them. I would love to be able to pass on their hugs and smiles too! I was very privileged to be able to go over there and meet the children and the Romanian staff, I hope I have learned from the experience - maybe the LEA advisor will be slightly less intimidating after the Romanian border guard! My husband Rod, had his own learning experience while looking after both boys while I was away, helped in part by his mum! He tells people that it was easy, but he was very glad to have me home again!

Kim Wark, 21 Drummond Avenue,
Leeds, LS16 5JZ

Save Money on Notepads!

Is there a shortage of old envelopes in your house? Are you unable to write shopping lists, reminders, plan building works, etc? Don't panic! Volunteer to edit an EO newsletter or supplement and a large number of envelopes will be sent to you from all over the UK and other countries. All you have to do is remove the contents, assemble the newsletter, and you can keep the envelopes! Send your name to Lynne Greenhough, 18 Park Street, Alfreton, Derbyshire, DE5 7JE, tel 0773 836662,

From the Guardian:

The Northern Examining Association, responsible for about 180,000 candidates, says that TV soap operas such as NEIGHBOURS and BROOKSIDE should be included in the English GCSE syllabus. "This puts at risk the whole credibility of the English literature exam. Schools should induct people into high culture. It is not their job to teach popular culture" said Sir Rhodes Boyson, a former education minister.

SINCE YOU ASKED . . .

We reproduce below, with minor editing, a copy of the letter sent by Helen Aldridge to her LEA in response to their queries.

Dear -----,

I am afraid I am unable to fill in the time table you requested due to the very nature of Home Education itself. I find it quite out of the question to pinpoint our educational day as it can vary enormously from day to day. However, I would like to reassure you that I have my daughter's very best interests in mind (she is MY daughter, after all!) and that we are covering ALL the specified topics you have listed plus quite a few you have not! Therefore I can confidently say that my daughters's education is most definitely broad based, and I would add that I believe the School curriculum to be narrower and not the other way round.

My daughter is learning from the moment she wakes to the moment she closes her eyes and I would thus bring it to your attention that she is no longer being restricted in her learning capacity to the regulation four hours a day, 190 days a year that Schools are required to fulfil. Of course, my daughter has recreational periods throughout the day, but, as we all know, children learn through play too!

I have found, so far, that in the areas where my daughter had previously low interest, she now has renewed vigour for the subject. Surely then, the School is at fault for making these topics of little or no interest to her, and I deserve credit for bringing them back into her focus.

My daughter is receiving plenty of opportunity to socialise with people from all walks of life and of all differing age groups, which I find extremely hard to believe a School can honestly say it provides. I most certainly do not believe for one minute that by choosing to educate her from home she is less likely to develop social skills, in fact I would wholeheartedly argue that the exact opposite is true. Which is more natural, a home environment or a school? Which is most likely to integrate her fully into society, a normal, loving, caring family environment of which she is an integral member or an 'alien' environment consisting of a classroom with up to 30 other children and just one adult?

Just because my daughter is being educated away from school does not infer that she has no peer group as is stated on your form. It just means she does not have to spend 7 hours a day confined in a relatively small place with the same children everyday, and, as my daughter very maturely pointed out to me on more

than one occasion, she always felt that being in such close proximity to that many children all at once restricted her learning due to the amount of noise and the fact that they only had one teacher to cope with that size class. So I in no way feel that I am limiting her education at all, moreover, I believe I am enriching it.

I would also like to point out that where you have stated that 'resources for study may not be as fully provided as those in school' I could also say that there are many many areas of Home Education that could not possibly be met in schools. How often do primary children get the opportunity to use full kitchen facilities or easy access to umpteen different painting techniques, or individual usage of technical meccano to name just a few areas (the list could go on). I might even venture to say that our days now are so full of possibilities (never endingly so) that we can look back and see just

how restrictive school actually was. Just as a footnote, when comparing an identical 1989 form with the one you sent me, I noticed where you listed the nine main areas of the curriculum you say I must meet, in the 1989 version you have listed 'Aesthetic and creative' and in the 1992 version it states 'Athletic and creative'. May I ask if this was purely a typing error and, if so, which do you place most importance on? . . .

Since undertaking the responsibility of educating my daughter myself, already you can see the difference. She no longer feels she is failing as the 'competing' element has been removed, thus allowing her to work at her own pace. Therefore her work is improving greatly and her confidence growing daily, something she did not have in herself when at school.

Yours sincerely, Helen Aldridge,
43 St. John's Street, Hayle, Cornwall.

THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

(Fortress House, 23 Savile Row, London W1X 1AB) will be holding its annual conference at Southampton from 23 to 29 August. There is a special family programme of science activities. Children can also attend the adult lectures if they are interested.

It's usually an excellent week and gives children a chance to see what a university campus is like, and also a chance to go on various outings of interest in the locality, enter competitions, see science theatre, go to hands-on exhibitions etc. Costs for non-members are adult £80 per week (£20 per day), under 18s £20 per week (£5 per day) with 20% off for a group of at least one adult and one child over 7. Outings extra. (Submitted by Sue Petszaft.)

MONTESSORI SCHOOL IN CALDERDALE

We opened the school 5½ years ago, as an alternative to playgroups and state nurseries with the intention to educate children up to the age of 7½. The school has become part of our family life and is running in the ground floor of our large country house surrounded by its own grounds and gardens. The children have a large sheltered grass playground and bushes providing stimulating play areas. Within the grounds the school is developing its own organic garden, where children are directly involved with all the stages of land preparation and vegetable growing. We also have a pond nearby for nature observations. Our aim is to cultivate the children's own natural desire to learn, by offering them a stimulating environment and guidance for all areas of development.

The nursery part has been running well with a group of 16 children, even so parents' support wasn't always as we wished. At first parents were reluctant to accept us as an alternative to state school, but appreciated that we gave the child a good start in life and for state schooling. So we only had a few children staying on and our son Robin, who is now 8, still enjoys being educated at home, but also having the company of the Montessori children. As they are all younger, they admire and imitate

him and he has become very caring and likes to help.

With the National Curriculum and testing many parents started to become concerned about state education and there is a growing interest in an alternative. This is why we have decided to offer flexible hours and let children of different ages live and learn together, taking small groups out for projects for some of the time.

From August extended daycare will be available from 8.15am to 5.30pm. The school core hours will be 9am to 3pm but part time children (half days or a few days a week) are also welcome. In this way we can cater for children of working parents, for the ones who come a long way and the families who wish to home educate, but want their child to socialise and learn with other children for some of the time. We are hoping to eventually extend up to the age of 11 years.

Anyone wanting to find out more can ring Margret Scaife on 0422-884682

Recipe for a Tasty Snack

1 banana mashed
cheddar cheese grated
Mix in equal amounts. Add either salt or sugar to taste. Spread on bread and toast lightly under grill.
Submitted by P. Green, Bristol

IN A CLASS OF THEIR OWN?

I am really pleased to report a conversation which took place at Beamish museum. Thirty five EOers had gone from Featherstone Castle. I was with another adult and five children when we got into conversation with the cheese maker.

He asked if we were with the Education Otherwise group.

Intrigued, we asked how he could tell and he told us that, whilst it was not always good, he had noticed eight year olds behaving like fifteen year olds. I understood him to be referring to their questions and lack of fear of adults.

He went on to say that he and other staff members had noticed that EO children were interested in the museum and really wanted to know more about it and how things worked. He compared them to school parties and commented that the school groups really made him anti-kids. We explained that the children had all been given the option of visiting the museum, some specifically requesting to do so.

We spent about 45 minutes talking to him and listening to his explanations of the cheese making process. During this time the children with us, aged between five and eleven, listened and asked questions. A good example of the attitudes he and the other staff had noticed.

Jill Gillings, Isle of Man

Special Offer

The book LEARNING FROM HOME-BASED EDUCATION reviewed on page 26 of the last Newsletter (number 85) is available direct from:

Education Now,
113 Arundel Drive
Bramcote Hills
Nottingham NG9 3FQ

The writers who have made contributions to the book, by the way, are Bernard and Katherine Trafford, Sue Pattullo, Roger and Tina Rich-Smith, Pip Rupik, Julie Webb, Bruce Cox, Collette Bradley, Wendy Downing, Patrick Pringle, Dorrie Wheldall, Janet Meighan and Roland Meighan.

EO have been offered a generous discount for an order of fifty or more books, which appears to be still under discussion. In the meantime, Education Now is prepared to offer to EO members only, 25% discount on single copies, for a period of one month from the day this letter appears in the Newsletter. Send a cheque for £3.75 payable to Education Now to the address quoted above.

Roland Meighan, 113 Arundel Drive,
Bramcote Hills, Nottingham
NG9 3FQ



DIYeO

LETTERS FROM TRAVELLERS

(Written from Winter quarters in Slovenia and dated 31 January)

Dear EO

Issue 83 caught up with us yesterday and as always is being perused with interest, delight, even relish. EO's arrival is always a treat!

However two items prompted this swift letter. First and most sinister is the mention on page three (Aims and Objectives of EO) of "reports of rumours" that the EC might be considering making home education illegal throughout Europe. The second is the appalling closed mind of the Labour Party's Education Policy Officer as encountered by EO's delegation.

The Chairperson asks whether EO should take on the additional role of campaigning for our rights to home educate (and I should add to that, without imposition of such things as the National Curriculum) or remain solely an organisation to support home-educating families. There really is only one possible answer to this. We MUST campaign for our rights. If we do not, there will quite shortly be no home education families to support anyway.

The only alternative to EO doing this is to form another organisation to do it. This would take time, require duplication of facilities and waste

precious human resources which we are not overburdened with as it is. If only people in authority could live and let live. . . . would not the world be a better place? It would certainly allow us all a lot more time for things which are a lot more useful and interesting than fighting for what are often simply basic rights. Utopia Now! but sadly it is not going to happen. Thus this family, while regretting the necessity, supports the need to campaign.

We shall be moving off again in a month or so, to continue our journey. After 10 very happy months in what is now independent Slovenia (apart from being caught up in part of the ten day war here in June last year), it will be quite a wrench to leave. Our three children, having been attending the local Osnovna (Primary) School, are fairly fluent in the language - which was one of the main reasons they have been at school again. Slovene is similar in many ways to Russian, so will be useful when we get that far. Meantime, it will be back to the caravan classroom and first stop Hungary.

I expect post to be excessively delayed from the time we leave here,



but hope we shall get our EO issues now and then.

With best wishes, David Kate Torcuil
Eilidh & Fionn Grant
UK Contact address: c/o MacDonald,
Thorpe Hall, Rudston, Drifffield, E.
Yorks YO25 0JE

PS. During a brief visit to friends in Switzerland, we learned that it is legal to home educate there but that the normal school curriculum has to be followed.

Dear Fatcher Family,

We've been in India over two weeks now and both Nik and I wanted to share our experiences with you and other EOers. Perhaps you could forward this letter to whoever is doing the next magazine.

Well, our first impressions of India were on landing in Bombay: hot, dirty, crowded. The streets are full of tiny, open-fronted shops selling tea, fried spicy foods, bananas, coconuts, cigarettes and anything else you may or may not need. There are thousands of poor people living on the streets or in shacks built of old bits of plastic, rice sacks, coconut palm leaves or any old rubbish. People deformed by leprosy or the results of congenital complaints, illness, lack of adequate food and care beg along with tiny children carrying even tinier ones. It's not so bad in the country but the enormous

divisions of wealth between these people and the fat, rich Indians in western style clothing or bright, silk and gold threaded saris, bedecked with glittering earrings, bangles and anklet chains is obvious and disgusting to me. I'm also having battles with my conscience about my role as a 'rich' westerner taking advantage of this country's economic state.

(Nik, aged 12, takes over the narrative.)

We landed in Bombay which has a population of 12 million (London = 10 million) then got a 17 hour bus to Goa, it was 376 miles. We stayed there for just under a week and got acclimatised then we went to Jog falls in Karnataka, the highest water falls in India, in a massive beautiful valley with huge rock faces. The falls were 900ft/250m. After that we went on a train to Mysore, the seats were solid wood, for 17½ hours (it was 150 miles but it stopped at stations for hours on end). There was nowhere else to sleep so I slept on the luggage rack. All the Indians didn't do anything except stare intensely at us while we passed the time by writing, playing games, and sleeping. At Mysore there is a Maharaja's palace which is spectacularly lit with millions of light bulbs on Saturday (when we were there) there is also a silk factory that makes very expensive saris and a sandal wood factory which was closed due to a conflict between the workers and the state (basically they were on strike).

Since then we have been to various villages in Karnataka and seen amazing temples and buildings and landscapes. We are now in Tamil Nadu. Here there are lots of strange animals. We have seen lizards which crawl up the wall while you are on one of India's squat loos. Monkeys which I suspect were the perpetrators of our missing lunch (could have been crows, there are millions of these). We have also seen chipmunks. The main meals and drinks here are Tali - a metal plate with rice and chapatis and various sauces and currys which mix all together (everything is eaten by hands, usually your right one). Everybody drinks chai (tea) which is ½ water ½ milk boiled with tea and lots of sugar. Hope you are not too cold in England.

Judy Juno and Nik Shelton, Ooty, Karnataka, S. India. (Forwarded by the Fatcher family, 50 Springfield Avenue, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S40 1HL.)

GENERAL LETTERS

Dear EO,

I would like to hear from anyone who is home educating an above average/gifted child at home, because I am in dire need of helpful feedback. Mike is 5, and currently in school, bored and unstimulated and generally wasting much of his time. I am in consultation with educational psychologists and a speech therapist

(who claims that he has a disorder called semantic pragmatism but without offering much convincing proof), because this seems to be the only way to get along with the LEA. Hampshire CC admits that it has no policy for the provision of gifted children, they are excluded from SEN, and apparently don't exist in this area. Please, people, write to me and tell me how you do it! Mike can read like an 8 year old, but is pretty uninterested in 'subjects', projects, etc, and I really don't know how best to get him going. Jackie Percival, 54 Park Road, Gosport, Hants, PO12 2HH.

Dear EO,

I hate school. I liked the pink custard and quiche. But I hated the disgraceful noise. The maths was far too easy, I had to count BUCKETS! Another boy bullied me all the time. He made me close my eyes and then he'd punch me in the face. He told lies. He was jealous of me because I could do the work and he couldn't. I was 4 and he was 6½.

In EO there are no bullies, just friends. The work is 10 times harder at home which is much nicer for me. When I was at school I used to scream my head off, now I laugh.

Matthew Crippen, age 5½, 20 The Bounce, Hemel Hempstead, Herts

Dear EO,

As rather old members of EO (daughter now aged 24, concertmeister of an orchestra in Finland, and soloist), we are professional musicians and teachers, and feel we would just like to add a small contribution.

WITHOUT MUSIC LIFE WOULD BE A MISTAKE - Friedrich Nietzsche

The most valuable gift a parent can give their child regarding music, is simply for them to hear as much music as possible. It is possible to give children a great musical education by exposing them to as much listening as possible easy to put on a tape or record when doing all the other things that are being done in the day. Music is a language, just as a child will develop talking skills by the continuous sound of the talking and communication around them, so they will develop their 'ear' by the continuous sound of music. It may be hard at first for some parents to acclimatise themselves to listening to classical music if they themselves only like rock music or vice versa, so this may require a bit of experimentation in the buying of 'some new music' ! It is only by exposing ourselves to 'all music' that we can say we prefer one piece to another. Then the important thing . . . repetition. . . children love repetition, it is only us adults who have been conditioned not to repeat!

Just as our language is constantly repeated, so should music be, so play the favourite tape a thousand times if it is liked!!! Bet you will all be able to sing it then!!! Who will say you are not musical then?!!!!

SO MANY times have we been told 'I played the piano when I was young but wasn't any good' WHO SAYS SO???? One does NOT have to play an instrument to enjoy music or be labeled 'musical'.

Music can lift the spirit and enrich one's life, it's there for the listening. Just a few thoughts because we feel so strongly about exposing children to 'listening to music' and hope it is helpful.

Susan and David Thompson, 62
Crescent Road, Reading, RG1 5SP



APOLOGIES to the 25 *Growing Without Schooling* subscribers from 1991 who still haven't received their last issue (no 84). It was apparently sent out in two parcels from the States but only one arrived. Be assured that I'm chasing it up. Meanwhile Issue 85 is already here so send £12 (cheques to EO) to Barbara Sheppard, 18 Queen Katherine Street, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 7OG, for one year's subscription.

Dear EO,

After reading about June Standing's stain glass workshops in the EO newsletter (Oct/Nov 91, No 82 I think), our club of seven home schooled children invited her to do one with us. She came with an assistant over three club days and it was a great success. Each child had a beautiful finished piece to take home and enjoyed the activity very much. We hope to repeat it next year. I recommend her to others. Her phone number is 081 4358029. Leslie Barson, The Croxley Club, 1 Croxley Road, London W9 3HH.

Dear EO,

We are Sammy, Nick, Arran and Willow. Last year we moved from central London to South Devon and we think here is a wonderful place to live.

Now a long while ago a group of non-schoolers moved to South Devon to live near each other. Not communally necessarily, but in villages and towns within meeting distance. The young people from these families are older now, some went to the Steiner school etc and others are still EO. And so we're writing to encourage other families to come and live around and about South Devon, loosely grouped around Totnes perhaps. The countryside can sometimes be very backward and balk at the unusual and extraordinary, but Totnes is very alternative in many ways and its

influence spreads outwards.

We thought it would be good to have a thriving EO community here. Lots of non-schooling families and lots of young people out of school. All sorts of people doing EO. We welcome everybody and for ourselves, we especially wanted to ask families whose EO philosophies encompassed doing nothing much formal. Akin to non-teaching and self-regulation a la A. S. Neill.

So if you've ever thought of moving, come and join us here. And here is very beautiful, rural, and green, peaceful and the sea. Please write or telephone:

Sammy and Nick Vidal-Hall,
Homecroft, Brownston Street,
Modbury, S. Devon, PL21 0RQ, tel
0548 830716

Dear EO,

After three years of official home education I began to feel the need to get out more with my children. We have spent most of the time up until now at home "doing lessons" and I felt we needed more fun, getting out and about and doing things. But it can be expensive going out so I thought people might be interested in some of the activities I have found in my area which are free or only cost a pound or two.

Many museums and art galleries arrange free activities for children. For example, we went to a

demonstration of how puppets work during an exhibition on puppetry at the Brighton Museum.

Whenever I go to museums I pick up leaflets and have often discovered free activities this way. Some of the things I have managed to book up over coming months are:

A chance to meet someone from a local wildlife sanctuary and some of the animals,

Workshops with a local author who will explain how books and stories are made,

A performance of an ecological fairy tale using pantomime/puppetry/song etc on board a theatre ship,

A tableau of fire and water, ending in a fireworks display in Brighton marina,

Lunchtime concerts in a local arts centre.

All of these are free.

I have also started to read the What's On column in our local newspaper and these are some of the things I have found:

A guided walk through a wood in which traditional crafts such as coppicing were demonstrated,

Open days at local police and fire stations,

A day of hands-on activities in a small local museum that I didn't even know existed.

Our local wildlife group arranges guided walks and anyone can go - you don't have to be a member.

Perhaps I'm a bit slow, and everyone has been doing this sort of thing for

years. However, I thought it was worth pointing out that if we keep our eyes open we can find lots of things to do that don't cost the earth, or indeed, anything at all!

Louise English, 41 Queen's Road, Horley, Surrey, RH6 7AH

Dear EO,

We edited the newsletter last year and at the time we were hoping to escape the rat race and move to a tiny island called Inishfree off the coast of County Donegal, Republic of Ireland. Well, it eventually happened; in April 1991 we moved with Jack, then 4, Ben, then 2½, and Horcer who was just 10 weeks old.

We have no electricity or mains water - no TV, no Hoover, no washing machine, no flush toilet! Some days seem to disappear in a flurry of washing, bread making, sweeping the house, collecting turf from the bog for fuel....and the children have to entertain themselves. Other days are spent walking, playing, learning and being with the children. It's a wonderful place to grow up, so much space and freedom.

Home education here is enshrined in the constitution, being the first in the list of options rather than relegated to 'otherwise'.

At present there is one other family living here permanently whose 5 children range in age from 6 to 13, but hopefully that will change as

there is now a house for sale. The owners have moved back to Britain and have asked us to sell it for them (for £25,000 ono). If anyone is interested then please write to us for further details.

Sometimes we wonder if we've done the right thing, when we're storm-bound for days in a tiny house, when the boys fight all day, or when we don't want to see another filthy, muddy drainage channel; but seeing the shining happiness of our children and their ever increasing confidence makes it all worthwhile.

Michelle and John Cocker, Ravens Cottage, Inishfree, Burtonport, nr Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, Republic of Ireland.

Dear EO,

I do not wish to make my letter too long, for fear that it will not be read! I won't, therefore, go into why I originally joined EO or how my husband & I came to be contemplating our next move - to a boat!

I have two questions, for which I am desperately seeking answers.

1) Does anyone have experience of living on a boat? We'd value your advice, ie wideberth appears more comfortable but a narrowboat would make many places much more accessible.

2) My husband isn't convinced that we can successfully educate our children without being harrassed by the authorities and says we would have to stay in one mooring till they had finished their schooling.

I'm sure other people "travel" the waterways and other English by-ways and again would welcome any advice.

Yours faithfully, L. Thomas (Mrs.), 20 Kingston Deverill, Wiltshire, BA12 7HE

Co-ordinators Needed

East London
Cleveland
Gwynedd
North Manchester
Many parts of Scotland

Anyone interested please contact Stephanie Futchter, 50 Springfield Avenue, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S40 1HL.

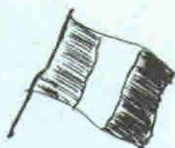
Typewriter Wanted

Has anyone got a typewriter they would be willing to donate to EO for use by the General Secretary please. Contact Pam Stevenson, 25 Wyndham Road, Dover, Kent, CT17 0BH, tel 0304 210997.

It appears that the Rust family who have offered EO membership cards in past issues are no longer members and are not replying to letters/SAEs.

LA BELLE FRANCE

EDUCATION IN FRANCE-IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL



Many people have written to me asking questions about education in France. Here is an article hopefully answering some of these questions.

Although most French people do not know it, home-education in France is perfectly legal. The law states that all children between the ages of 6 and 16 are obliged to have a school education. Instruction can be given in primary and secondary establishments, private or public- or in the family, either by the father or by any person he chooses.

It is obligatory to inform the Académie of your area (the equivalent of the LEA), and also the mayor of your village/town.

At age 8, 10 and 12, the child is subjected to an enquiry, and the inspector can, if necessary, request the Authority to take any necessary measures concerning illiteracy and innumeracy. Child allowance is granted if the child is at school or, in the case of home-schooled children, on the presentation of a certificate from the Inspector of the Académie.

So what you have to do is:

- 1) write a letter to your Academie that you are home-schooling your child/ren;
- 2) send the letter you receive from them to the Family Allowance people;
- 3) wait to be contacted by the Academie for a visit.

As far as we are concerned, we informed the Académie that our children were home-schooling. We received a visit from the Inspector, who who tested the children's knowledge in Maths and in French. Her main comment was that although they seemed quite bright(!), they had little sense of logic (eg. they had the answer right but didn't know how!). My reply was that the Cartesian logic of "I think therefore I am" is maybe inversed in some people, "I am, therefore I think"! She also thought it strange to deprive the children of the opportunities and the socialisation that school offers...

Having now met quite a few home-schooling families, I see that, on the whole, the authorities have a certain tolerance towards home-schooling families, as long as the children are learning the basics (the 3Rs). If, however, they seem to be being kept at home for other reasons, and that they are not learning the 3Rs among other things, it appears that the authorities start wielding their powers to try to alter the situation (mainly by withholding family allowances, but also using legal procedures if they think it necessary). Most of the families I have met have no trouble with the inspectors, preferring to keep a working relationship with people who are doing their job.

Home-schooling is a comparatively new movement in France, and far fewer families practice it in France than in the U.K. The French, although very individualistic, find it difficult to swim against the tide on certain issues; school is one of them. Because home-schooling is a new movement, many of the home-schooling children are young, under 11. France is the largest country in Europe, so home-schooling families tend to live far apart, which makes contact between them difficult. In the Paris area, there are 5 or 6 families who meet every 4 to 6 weeks, otherwise the children are obliged to stay with one another for a certain length of time. This can work very well, if everyone gets on. We have had several exchanges; sometimes the kids really hit it off and have a wonderful time (and so do I!), but it has happened the other way around, and we all breathed a sigh of relief when they went home! I must say that these exchanges are most educational, both for the children and for the parents!

So that home-schooling children keep in touch with other children, many of them have one or more activities, often locally, where they meet others.

There are two associations concerned with home schooling; Les Enfants d'Abord, started up in 1989 and Apprendre Autrement, started up in 1991. The existence of two associations reveals the extent of individualistic attitudes regarding the organisation of the associations; I am no longer a member of either association, for various reasons.

I hope that these articles are of interest and of use. What they reveal to me is how much we are all interested in the same thing, whatever nationality or culture, the possibility of home education as opposed to obligatory schooling.

Andrée Roberts Keen.

I liked going to school half-time before, but I prefer being at home. I have more time to play with my two dogs and my brothers and sister.

I hate doing conjugations and I love games of logic. I am learning a little English and I'm starting to learn sign language as I have a little cousin who is deaf.

Noémie Cellot

We are a family living in Morancé, a small village in the Beaujolais, 20 km north of Lyon. We have four children. They're Timothé, who is 5, Rémi, aged 12, is adopted and, as he is handicapped, goes to a special centre for handicapped children, and Maya and Noémie, aged 7½ and 9½ respectively, who are home schooling. Noémie went to primary school part time for three years.

At home she studied the subjects that she didn't do at school (she did this for about an hour a day) so that she could go back to school full time if ever she wanted or if the teacher of the class she should go into refused to have her on a half time basis. Actually, part time schooling in France is neither illegal nor legal - it just isn't thought about and in practice is non-existent. Where we were concerned, every year we had to ask the permission of a future teacher and also of the head teacher. Maya, on being offered the same opportunity (of going to school parttime) decided to do her first year at primary school full time.

This year, however, Maya and Noémie have chosen home schooling and have no desire to return to school. They work every morning with me (their mother) for an hour (Maths and French). They have several activities: music, gym, theatre, tales and artistic activities. Twice a week they get together with Andrée Roberts Keen's children (aged 9, 12 and 13); once a week with Andrée and once a week with me, for various activities (cooking, handicrafts, model making, experiments, documentary research, outings, exhibitions, plays, films, visits to craftsmen and working people, walks etc. We are very lucky to be two home schooling families living in the same village. It is also very unusual as most other French families are very isolated and must travel many miles if they want their children to meet other home schooling children.

Our children help in the household duties. Rémi, who is handicapped, and Timothé, who is still young, have easy jobs. But the girls do at least half an hour's housework a day. They choose what they do according to their wishes and also to what needs to be done - hanging the washing, hoovering or washing the floor, looking after the indoor plants, washing the windows, cooking, washing clothes etc. That there is a contribution to household chores seems important to us. For one thing, my time is not never-ending and I need the children to help in the house. It also helps to give me some free time which I can then spend with them. For another thing, this housework demands a certain "physical education". It complements other activities such as manual activities, handicrafts, do-it-yourself, sport and dance, which are also forms of physical education. In France, physical education is limited in schools. For example, primary school children have five hours physical education a week, but their recreation is included in these five hours.

Finally, work, (not just housework) seems to me to be a fundamental part of education. To exclude children from the world of work is a bit like excluding them from the community; in any case it reduces them to being people that are protected, educated, assisted and amused. Of course, it doesn't mean that we should turn the clocks back a century and put the children to work in the fields or the mines twelve hours a day! The time

of child slavery is gone, thank goodness!

I shan't go into any more detail about children and work but I would be interested to know your reactions and your thoughts and experiences on this subject.

Our choice of part time schooling, and now of home schooling, was made primarily with reference to the negative aspects of the French school system; all the children learn the same thing at the same time; methods of teaching and programmes are not adapted to the children; a very heavy timetable (six hours a day in primary school and homework in the evening, although homework is in fact forbidden by law!); big classes, competitiveness and no co-operation in class etc. But now we are discovering the wealth that home schooling offers us (as a family) - a better relationship with our children, a greater mutual respect of our rhythm and our individual personalities a more natural and more permanent link between various aspects of learning and daily life, a wider outlook on the outside world, more time to play or ... to dream. Nevertheless, we can also see the demands and the limits of home schooling. For us, home-schooling is not a panacea. Indeed, we are not anti-school, only against the traditional system of school. Let us say that for the moment home schooling is a solution which suits both our children and us.

I am finishing this article, conscious that certain things I have said could be discussed in greater detail.

Marie Cellot Beaudoin.

P.S. Noemie and Maya and I send a big hello to the three families who welcomed us so kindly during our stay in England last summer. We'd also like to say hello to the families who invited us but whom we didn't get to see.

Marie and Yves Cellot Beaudoin.

I like not going to school because I have a lot of activities and I like them. And I have a lot of time to play at home.

I learn Geography: Mummy has done me a big map of France and on it I can draw the mountains, the rivers and the seas. I find doing conjugations fun because Mummy tells me stories to explain them to me.

Every fortnight, I go and work with Paul. He is a baker. I help him make the bread. He makes wholemeal and semi-wholemeal bread with a leaven: bread with onions, olives, sesame, sultanas, hazelnuts. He cooks the bread in a wood-fired oven.

I'm making dolls and owls in material. It takes a lot of time and courage! When I have made several, I'll sell them at the market.

Maya Cellot

In reply to a recent article about "Arthur, the gifted child", I'd like to talk about our experience - 18 years old, the age of our eldest son.

Martial went to school for three years. He spent one year in "maternelle" (nursery school) and $2\frac{1}{4}$ years in primary school. We then took him and his younger brother out of school. In other words, their schooling stopped in the second and first year of primary school. The reason we made this decision was because ... well, for all the reasons you already know: a teaching that was too academic, too theoretical, with no thought of the pace of the child, or simply the pace of life etc... etc...

Nevertheless, we were at this time concerned with them having a school education so that they could (if necessary) take exams the same as other children. We registered them for correspondence courses. This meant that either their father or I spent a part of each morning working with them. We did this for nine years. After the first three or four years, however, we only helped if the children asked for it, as they had learned to work on their own on the whole. During these years, our children did other things outside of their school work. They travelled, met and received other children, worked in other areas so that they now have an autonomy and a practical experience which gives them the ability to cope in several areas.

At the moment, they have chosen to go to the lycee (6th form school) and to take their Baccalaureat (A levels). Before this, they had chosen to stop studying, one in the third year, the other in the fourth year. Martial went straight into the 6th form after working three or four months at the "greta" (catching up classes for people who have left school at 16). These classes are free but you have to be over 16). The first term was hard but Martial has an average level with encouraging comments from all his teachers, without exception. They all treat him as an adult but he is nevertheless disgusted by the dulling teaching and the methods used, also by the silly, non-adult behaviour of some of the teachers. But that is not what I want to talk about here.

His brother, Ludovic, went straight into 5th form last year - he didn't do the fourth year - and he's in the first year of 6th form this year. Things are going quite well for him, except he makes the same remarks as his brother.

These years of life and school at home have sometimes been difficult for everybody; the isolation, lethargy, discouragement, a lot of energy to invent, to search, to move, to give the maximum most efficiently and with pleasure. It has been both a positive and negative experience, but when I see what they are going through at college (lycee), I am really glad that they remained outside of this system all these years, at least now they have the necessary detachment to be able to judge the system and not be overwhelmed by it; they have other values in their lives than marks and A levels and grades which other kids go on about all day-Help!

Our experience is continuing with Martial and Ludovic's brother and sister, Ismaël and Aurore, who are $13\frac{1}{2}$. They are not following a correspondence course, and we give them the schooling we think necessary, more at our pace and theirs. What we try to do is to keep them at roughly the same school level as others of their age (especially in Maths and French, and also in languages), so that, if they wish, they can go into the school system and/or prepare exams. These are realities which are part and parcel of our social system, and we try to fit in without being dominated by it.

Maybe that tomorrow we abandon completely this idea of keeping up school levels? Meanwhile, we are carrying on with it and, to allow ourselves a bit of time and less involvement, we chose this year for Aurore and Ismael to have private lessons, and once a week they work with a student. This seemed a good idea and not too expensive as long as the lessons were of good quality which, unfortunately not being the case, we have stopped until we find someone more competent.

To finish, I'd like to give my personal opinion of the so called social recognition of diplomas. It is true that if we talk about the usual system, the people "without qualifications", the "school dropouts", the "qualified unemployed", the "fed up with studying" ... are really having difficulties not recognised by the employed, and spend a large part of their lives having a hard time. But these young people have nothing else in their lives, they have been taught no other values than those of marks and qualifications. What a shame, to think that you're nothing, worth nothing if you haven't got the right number of grades and bits of paper.

Whether our children get qualifications or not, I have no worries that they won't be acknowledged, or that they'll have a hard time if they haven't any diplomas. I believe in them, in their own value and these essential values that we have tried throughout our lives together to give them will help them to manage to do what they like with or without qualifications. If necessary they will discover unusual, unconventional methods to get what they want. The proof is that they already have: the two eldest have got into 6th form (after an interview with the head), without an entrance exam or by doing a year or two preparation in the school, unthinkable and even illegal in the conventional system.

For every given situation there is a suitable solution. It is pointless to be anxious, or to get stuck for years into a system, saying that's the system, we've got to follow it.

Story to be continued.

Bonne route to all.

Annie Duran.

Extract from an article by Léna Chonville

About a year ago, in the No. 1 issue of "La Lettre" I wrote an article giving my reasons for choosing not to send my children to school. They are now 6½, 5 and 2 and many things have happened since. I feel that I have changed enormously with their not going to school and I have found new reasons to strengthen me in my choice. Whereas before my reasons for not sending them were rather negative and concerned with the bad aspects of school, now they are positive and, based on the positive results of my choice, I'd like to share them with you.

The joy of seeing how much pleasure the children get in learning; they ask to read and write with as much excitement and sparkle in their eyes as when they ask to play cards and hide and seek. That's something new for me as I can remember our sighs of boredom and resignation in class when the teacher gave the reading and writing exercises.

The joy of seeing them understand - it's wonderful for me to live with my child at the precise moment he discovers and understands something and to share with him his joy and pride. I also feel that it brings us together, like friends who have lived close times together. We miss all or nearly all that if we give others the responsibility of teaching our children.

The progress they make after periods of rest from mental activity: There are times when children, having been really interested in an activity or in learning something, suddenly switch off and become disinterested for a while. It's often because they've discovered something else and want to go into it in depth. I respect totally these periods of less activity, and simply suggest from time to time taking up an activity they've left off, without insisting. I have noticed that, when they take up something they've dropped, they have matured and have progressed mentally in their attitude and approach towards it. For example, my oldest child, who loved reading, suddenly stopped for over a month. All day he'd draw Ninja turtles or play with his neighbours. And then, as suddenly, he agreed to take it up again and, from his first "lesson", I was struck by his progress - in comprehension; speed, deciphering ... and he took up reading again with pleasure, adding pages of writing too.

Children stimulate and learn from one another, without aggressive competitiveness: a younger child can emulate an older one and is not limited to learning something because of his age. This would be impossible in school where they are usually all the same age. If children copy and learn from one another without competition, it's because there are no pressures put upon them, and any sense of competition there is is a stimulant without being a pressure.

Children teach us parents: learning about and appreciating with pleasure subjects which school had put us off. I am also learning to develop and improve my system of organisation in running the home and my own activities with three young children all the time. Organisation is essential to save time, for one's children, for one's partner and for oneself.

I do feel it's important to put aside a bit of time for oneself to be

able to recharge one's batteries, to think about things, to be more available when it's necessary.

On this subject, one reader of *Apprendre Autrement* magazine has written that everything in the garden isn't always lovely where home schooling is concerned and over the past year I have discovered its more difficult aspects. It seems to me useful and honest to talk about them.

Home schooling means that one has to be enormously available. The bigger the children are, the more attention they need. One needs to be available twelve hours a day and if we don't take a bit of time for ourselves, it can become too much. It is also important to help and support one another and for both parents to participate so that they can take over from each other and let the other go off and do his or her own thing.

One of the main requests from our children is to be able to meet other children, which means a lot of travelling around to one another's homes. There are also all the excursions, exhibitions, library trips etc. We don't mind doing all this but it does mean careful planning and budgeting.

To finish, I'd like to know how other people feel about things, or to have comments and opinions on what I have said. Please don't hesitate to write to me; even if every family is different, I think all of us have a lot to gain from our exchanges, and it will be our children who will be the first to benefit.....

Thank you and a bientôt.

Léna Chonville, 6, Impasse Dorigny, 77 240 VERT SAINT DENIS.

I went to an alternative school until I was just nine and then I stopped for a year. Then, a year later, we learnt that the school we had been to (my sister, my brother and I) only had eighteen pupils left! We talked to the teacher who said we could go part time. We went on Mondays and Tuesdays for a year but then the school - which by then only had thirteen pupils - had to close so we went back to home schooling.

This is the fourth year I have been home schooling since I was nine. I really enjoy it. I work one to three hours in the morning and in the afternoon I do (almost!) what I want. I have several activities outside the home where I can meet other people of my age. I go to the theatre, swimming classes, riding and I also have piano lessons. Once a week we go to the village for an activity with another home schooling family but the children are much younger than I (the girls are nine and seven!) so I don't really enjoy it except when we do something interesting like going to an exhibition or something like that.

I prefer home schooling because I can choose the things I want to work on (maths, languages etc) and have more freedom to do what I want to do. I am not organised all day long by teachers and I think it's much better to organise yourself - even if I'm not very organised!

When I say that I don't go to school, people often ask me: "How do you learn?" It makes me laugh because I quite often find that I write better than people who go to school and are the same age or older than I! Sometimes, I also find that I understand better than they do some things. I think it's a real pity that so many people think that school is compulsory.

Tasmin Roberts

THE CHILDREN'S ACT: THE STORY CONTINUES

Following my letter in the October issue (No. 82) about trouble with Richmond LEA and Social Services, the current position is:

We withdrew Graham, now aged 15, from school . . . having arranged his withdrawal in the proper manner. We were visited three times by an Education Inspector and EWO, who demanded timetables, curricula, finished projects etc. and expressed disapproval because they thought Graham wasn't getting enough opportunity to socialise. In March 1991 they stopped calling, after informing us that they and "other officers of the authority" had decided to refer the matter of Graham's education to Social Services.

Through spring and early summer of 1991 we were pestered, as previously described, by a social worker. We only actually admitted him to the house twice. On the first of these occasions he brought a police officer. He said that LEA staff and staff of all three schools Graham had attended had expressed "concerns" about Graham's "social and emotional development". But these visits had nothing to do with the name they were given - a "child protection investigation". They were actually a muck-raking exercise against Graham. . . .

In July 1991 Graham was put on the

child protection register, by a conference mainly of LEA and social services staff, under the heading of "substantiated and on going grave concern about emotional abuse". No evidence has ever been produced. The conference came up with a 'plan of protection' which was virtually a back door education supervision order. Its purpose, we could see, was to force Graham into a special school. It also seemed they were looking on a case of properly arranged home education as truancy or school phobia.

I would stress that the LEA never took us to court under the '44 Act or expressed any intention of doing so. I wrote an angry letter to the Director of Social Services. At that point the worst harassment stopped. We never saw the social worker again. No attempt was made to put the back door education supervision order into effect.

A social services manager who deals with complaints (and obviously specialises in cover ups!) admitted quite frankly that the whole thing was organised by an officer of the LEA because she "thought Graham had special educational needs which weren't being met"! I would emphasise that Graham was never assessed for special educational needs. This manager also admitted that we were being used as guinea

pigs to test the "vaguely worded" 1989 Children Act. Both he and another social worker have admitted they haven't the faintest idea what "social and emotional development" are!

We referred the matter to the ombudsman who said he was satisfied that the social services had followed their guidelines and procedures, and that was all that concerned him. The LEA's part in the matter, the educational aspects, were ignored. The ombudsman's staff also seemed to think it quite OK for the LEA and Social Services to work together as one department, which they are obviously doing, muddling their respective business and their respective law.

The social services are now proposing to go to court under Section 43 of the 1989 Act for a child

assessment order which includes educational needs! It seems they are trying to use this section and Section 47 of the Act as a substitute for the 1944 and 1981 Education Acts! Why? What is wrong with the proper procedures?

Janice & Bob Bridden, 61 Manor Grove, Richmond, Surrey

P.S. The involvement of a police officer in this matter would seem to have been irregular, as physical abuse was never mentioned and the social services manager did appear worried when we told him.

P.P.S. One thing I forgot to mention is that we have written to the head teacher of Graham's secondary school, asking him to explain the school's position in the matter, and received no reply. We don't know whether Graham was de-registered.

WHY SCHOOLS DON'T EDUCATE

The following are extracts from the acceptance speech of John Taylor Gatto, New York Teacher of the Year, 1991.

I accept this award on behalf of all the fine teachers I have known over the years who have struggled to make their transactions with children honourable ones: men and women who are never complacent, always questioning, always wrestling to define and redefine endlessly what

the word "education" should mean.

...I have noticed a fascinating phenomenon in my twenty-five years of teaching - that schools and schooling are increasingly irrelevant to the enterprises of the planet. No one believes any more that scientists are trained in science classes, or poets in English classes. The truth is that schools don't really teach anything except how to obey orders.

...Although teachers do care and do work very, very hard, the institution is psychopathic; it has no conscience. It rings a bell, and the young man in the middle of writing a poem must close his notebook and move to a different cell, where he learns that man and monkeys derive from a common ancestor.

Our form of compulsory schooling is an invention of the State of Massachusetts around 1850. It was resisted - sometimes with guns - by an estimated eighty percent of the Massachusetts population, the last outpost in Barnstable on Cape Cod not surrendering its children until the 1880s when the area was seized by the militia and children marched to school under guard.

Now here is a curious idea to ponder. Senator Ted Kennedy's office released a paper not so long ago claiming that prior to compulsory education the state literacy rate was ninety-eight percent, and after that the figure never again reached above ninety-one percent, where it stands in 1990. I hope that interests you.

There is another curiosity to think about. The home schooling movement has quietly grown to a size where one and a half million young people are being educated entirely by their parents. Last year the education press reported the amazing news that children schooled at home seem to be five or even ten

years ahead of their formally trained peers in their ability to think.

I don't think we'll get rid of the schools any time soon, certainly not in my lifetime, but if we are to change what's rapidly becoming a disaster of ignorance, we need to realise that the school institution 'schools' very well, but it does not 'educate' - that's inherent in the design of the thing.

...The children I teach are indifferent to the adult world. This defies the experience of thousands of years. A close study of what big people were up to was always the most exciting occupation of youth, but nobody wants to grow up these days and who can blame them? Toys are us.

...The children I teach have almost no curiosity, and what little they do have is transitory; they cannot concentrate for very long, even on things they choose to do. Can you see a connection between the bells ringing again and again to change classes and this phenomenon of evanescent attention.

What can be done?

First we need a ferocious national debate that doesn't quit, day after day, year after year, the kind of continuous emphasis that journalism finds boring. We need to scream and argue about this school thing until it is fixed or broken beyond repair, one

or the other. If we can fix it, fine; if we cannot, then the success of home-schooling shows a different road that has great promise.

...This is an emergency. It requires drastic action to correct. Our children are dying like flies in our schools. Good schooling or bad schooling, it's all the same - irrelevant.

Contributed by Sarah Taylor, London.

John Taylor Gatto has written **Dumbing Us Down: the Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling**. It can be obtained from Holt Associates for \$9.95 plus 50% for airmail postage or 20% for surface. It is also available direct from the author (autographed) for \$12 including postage. His address is 235 West 76th Street, New York, N.Y. 10023, U.S.A.

For Sale: Number Balance (Equaliser). Cost £11 about 10 years ago. Will accept £3 plus postage. Vicki Willow, 85 Arlingham Way, Patchway, Bristol, BS12 5NG

Does anyone have any unwanted pieces of Kiddicraft Helta Skelta? Please send to Adam Holdway, 12 Rochdale Way, Deptford, London, SE8 4LY. Cost of postage will be returned.

PENPALS

Hello, my name is Malcolm Harvey, I am 13. I would like a penpal preferably my own age, boys only, and with the same interests. At the moment, I have no true hobbies, but I like collecting stamps, and have already started my own collection. As well as that, I like listening to classical music, and some pop too. I have no pets. I will try to answer all letters. 8 Barningham Road, Newsham, Richmond, N. Yorks, DL11 7QT

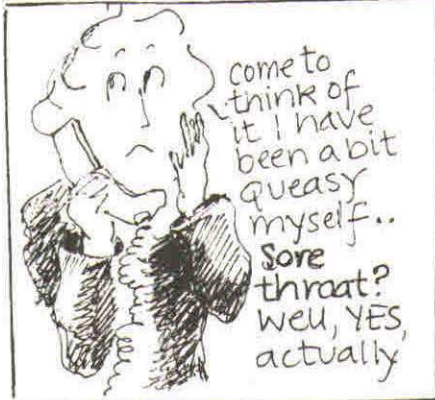


My name is Ji-hyang Lee. I'm a girl 14 years old and would like a pen friend aged between 14 and 15 who is interested in history, classical music, reading, writing and horses. Please write to me at 5 Gateside Place, Kilbarchan, Renfrewshire, PA10 2LY

Hi! My name is Jenny. I am 6. I am looking for a penpal who is 5-99 years old. I love ballet, Mum, Dad, theatre, reading, and swimming and my dolls.
Jenny Brown, 130 Greenock Road, Bishopton, Renfrewshire, PA7 5AS

If you want a penpal but would prefer us not to print your full name and address, please mention this in your letter to the magazine editor(s). The Publications Co-ordinator, Lynne Greenhough, will be happy to receive and forward letters for you.

Educating ARCHIE • June Bugs •



OBITUARY

Raymond Laifeartaigh has died. He was a very special father to Gretta, Oonagh and Oscar. While his wife Kim studied for her MSc and started her career with the London Waste Authority Raymond stayed at home with the children. Oscar who is now four years old was Raymond's baby right from the start.

Other men have had babies I'm sure, but Raymond was the only one I'd met. Oscar grew up on Raymond's lap where he was showered in kisses and wrapped snugly in communication. 'You want Gretta to cuddle you...you want to eat...to look out the window...watch the football on television..' Oscar was Raymond's subject and he tried to know everything about him.

Gretta and Oonagh were encouraged to help and felt very involved with the baby. They were being educated at home and when Kim came home from university there was such a wonderful atmosphere of learning and growth.

Remember Isobel and Robert Bogucki's very funny letters about flatsurfacitis? The Laifeartaighs admitted suffering from flatsurfacitis and replied in Newsletter No 64 advising the Boguckis to 'Think vertical...Train children to write standing up. Write on doors.'

Certainly I spent many an hour parked on their rug staring up at the cliff face arrangement of books and materials which climbed the walls of their flat. Of course I didn't ever actually see the walls and often wondered if they were really there. Sometimes I thought that if I dared pull out a book I would see outer space in all its black glory stitched with the tiny lights of our Milky Way. Raymond was interested in everything but I very much associate him with the cosmos and he had the gift of making knowledge exciting and present.

His children were so deeply cherished and he was an inspiring pioneer of role reversal and gender bending but it has ended sadly with Raymond taking his own life. He cared so much for others but in the end he couldn't care for himself. That's a difficult thing to do and none of us knows when a personal crisis might challenge our whole being in such a way that we really can't cope, can't find a way through.

As a pioneer Raymond felt that he was out on his own. He got lost and now we have lost him...this feeling man with a big heart. The world isn't a safe place for such men. Surely there is something we can do to change it.

Liz Rodgers, West London



BOOK REVIEWS



Dovetails Mathematics, Christopher Gilmore, Dovetail Educational Services, Ormond House, 13 Bull Pitch, Dunsley, Glos GL11 4NG.

At last a truly lateral, holistic, cross-curricular approach to Maths. Reminiscent of Richard Gregory's 'Plores' at the Bristol Hands-on Science Exploratory, Gilmore's 'mini-sagas' plore the virgin cerebellum with the ease of a tickling stick on a wet bank holiday! Anxious parents/teachers be comforted: notes correlating each 'saga' to individual subjects are included and enhanced by detailed description/assessment of subjects covered (Religious Education .. encouraging a keener appreciation of kids' own inner experiences). Don't feel obliged to begin at the beginning, a dip-in approach seems to work well or you could begin by deciphering the code on page 94. NB Spotlight on hidden curriculum of the overused 'find the cost of eight bars of choc at 3p each', ably balanced out by hints of Gilmore's angry-young-man bias towards hidden agenda of pro astrology, anti church, pro anti sexism, anti authority, pro anti consumerism gets a bit over the hill with pro anti agism. (Golden Oldies - is the cost of dying rising?) Is reference to 'nig-nogs' on page 2 pro or anti or

both? More fun 'sagas' include Magic Squares, Marathon Dance (calculate kilometres covered), Hopping Mad (estimate number of fleas in world) and A Piece of String (how long is Cornwall?).

All this hyper brain gym is interspliced with outlandish statistics, facts and Lee Chapman's cartoons.

It takes a while to disentangle the hieroglyphics of Gilmore's language but once hooked by his high speed brain 'enjoyment of the journey is here considered more important than one predictable route to any suggested destination'. Will keep bright 11ish to 16ish year olds busy and smiling. Bon Voyage!

Also available, Dovetails Integrated Science and Dovetails Technology For All, both at £9.95; sample view packs £1.00 each, Ann of Green Fables (76 mini-sagas on ecological themes) £5.75, Snow Ghosts (a winter's tale full of chills and spills) £2.99 (tape £2.99, book and tape £5.75)
Review by P. Green, 15 Bellevue, Clifton, Bristol, BS8 1DB

REVIEWS

cont.....

Home School: Taking the First Step.

by Borg Hendrickson, \$16.95 including postage, from Mountain Meadow Press, P.O. Box 1170, Wrangell, AK 99929, USA. (They take VISA and Mastercard.) A large proportion of this book is entirely irrelevant to British home educators, but it does contain some very interesting information and excellent answers to the usual questions. Good sections on U.S. resources, what constitutes effective teaching, and the various approaches or methods which might be used.

The Interactive Parent, by Linwood

Laughy, \$13.95 incl. Mountain Meadow Press as above. Empowers parents to affect positively their children's experience of school. If your child is in school, it will give you the information you need to help your child survive and succeed. The author provides an insider's damning analysis of the school system, with many shocking statistics. If you want to convince a friend or relative that home education is a worthy option, or if you have your own doubts, this book is highly recommended. Both reviews by Sarah Taylor.

The Three Rs At Home, by Howard & Susan Richman, ISBN 0929446-00-3

(copies available through Sarah Taylor, London, 081 808 3200). This book written, very confidently, by two home schooling parents, describes the processes they have used to encourage their children in the three Rs.

There is a mix between following the interests of the children, encouraging real activities and using reading schemes, phonic work books and maths schemes. They have an established structure to their days which they freely admit would not necessarily suit other families.

The book offers lots of anecdotes about how one family has helped their children in these subject areas. I hope to review *Writing From Home* by the same authors in the next newsletter.

Review by Jill Gillings, Isle of Man.

We have recently discovered Usbourne Cut Out Models £4.95 inc VAT, from bookshops). They include Roman Forts, Roman Villas, Viking Settlements, Haunted Houses, and a spectacular Egyptian Temple. They are excellent in all ways, from cutting and sticking skills to generating discussion about history, geography, architecture, food, clothes, etc, and they look very impressive when they're completed. Highly recommended! Jackie Percival, 54 Park Road, Gosport, Hants



Activeo

HOUSESWARE? 2 weeks end of July, 3 of us (Mike is 5), usual TV etc. Close to beach/tidal creek and lake. We'd like Abergavenny area, to find homeschoolers and establish contact. Phone Jackie, Gosport 529159.

BOGNOR REGIS.

Comfortable 4-Berth caravan. Ideal for family holidays. Heated pool, paddling pool, children's play area, restaurant, laundrette etc. Easy reach of Arundel Castle, Cathedral, Bird Sanctuary, Chichester Cathedral, museums, Fishbourne Roman Palace. Gina Howell, tel 0243 530612.

COMFORTABLE, well-equipped 6-berth caravan on organic small holding in beautiful County Clare. Fresh farm produce, fishing, birdwatching, or just relaxing in peaceful countryside. Alan & Terri, Faha, Caher, Co. Clare, Ireland. 010 353 619 25319.

ADVERTISEMENTS

TO LET 3-bed cottage in beautiful Staffs/Shrops countryside in exchange for help with aged gentleman. EO family nearby. 0785 851150.

3 BEDROOM HOUSE on edge of Bristol, available for rent from June - September (or part thereof). Access to active EO group (seed circle). More details - please WRITE to Vicki & David Willow, 85 Arlingham Way, Patchway, Bristol, BS12 5NG

CHILDREN'S AUDIO-CASSETTES
Multiplication Tables; The Alphabet; Counting; Primary French; Musical Sounds of the Orchestra; Nursery Rhymes/Songs; The Calendar; Party Games/Songs; Adventures of Gumdrop. £2.95 each (post, 60p, subsequent tapes 30p). Refund if dissatisfied. Send SAE for list of other interesting products. Martin Evans, 16, Thistle House, Dee Street, London, E14 0PD

Self-catering holiday flat in Rye, which itself has a fascinating history, and is near Battle, for those interested in 1066 country. The flat is owned by an EO family who are willing to give a £20 per week reduction, and friendship, to EO families. Sleeps 2/4. For more details ring Mike and Suzy Griffith 0797 227164.

AVAILABLE! Excellent USA produced 'Superworkbook' Series, Primary to Grade 6. Each book covers whole year's work, **all subjects**: cost £12. Also, Jumbo Math Yearbook, Grades 1 - 8, fun, interesting & thorough. Each £6. Phone 0793 845167 for details, usage, samples. Zarine Gillingham.

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SITUATIONS VACANT

Enquiries Secretaries - London
Region

Two people are needed to deal with enquiries in the London area. The job involves:

- * having your telephone number on the EO Helpline answer machine thus receiving telephone enquiries.
- * receiving batches of postal enquiries, periodically from the Central Address.
- * sending out membership forms, leaflets, and information to the enquirers.
- * keeping a list of postage etc with dates, costs etc, and claiming expenses regularly from the Treasurer.

Most enquiries are routine, but some are urgent or more involved, and backup and support is always available.



Cooperateo

Assistant Secretary
Temporary or semi-permanent.

Would someone be willing to take the minutes at the next and/or any future meetings? I would be willing to get them typed up and sent out, if someone could help out at the meetings.

Anyone interested in the above posts please contact Pam Stevenson, General Secretary, 25 Wyndham Road, Dover, Kent, CT17 0BH, tel 0304 210997. Please note that anyone doing a job in EO can claim their travelling expenses to attend meetings.

Day Out

Would anyone like a day in the country? East Sussex., 25 June, 23 July, 20 August, 24 September. I am having open days at my house particularly for 10-14 year olds. We will play communication, trust, and co-operative games, trampolining, build dens, and have fires, play rounders at the local recreation ground, go for walks in the woods, etc. People are welcome to come and camp as we have a large secluded garden. Ring Sue Petsaft on 0892 661319. 2 Leyland Manor, Tubwell Lane, Crowborough, E. Sussex TN6 3RH

REGIONAL DIARY AND NEWS

Scotland

Central

The Barbour's (newly taken over as co-ordinators for the Central Region) are holding an Open House from 2pm onwards on Sunday, **28 June** for all members within reach of Dunblane. (It's only an hour's drive from either Glasgow or Edinburgh.) Please phone 0786 824210 to give us an idea of the likely numbers and to get directions. Our address is Ochloch Cottage, Glen Road, Dunblane, Perthshire, FK15 0DS.

North

Greater Manchester

We have just completed our two Easter Workshops at Parrs Wood Rural Studies Centre. For the first week we made instant fossils with plaster of paris and junk dinosaurs and in the afternoon Jo Fraser took us out to hunt for minibests and for a pond dip during which we found two Great Crested Newts (very rare!). The following week we went out to find out about trees (height, age, bark rubbings etc) with Anne Nesbit and in the afternoon we made Native American Medicine Shields. The sessions cost £1 per child over 3 per day, made up of 50p each for the hire of Parrs Wood and 50p for materials and drinks. We just about broke even. Many thanks to the older children for their help with the little ones.

We will be doing further sessions during the summer holidays BUT we need YOUR help. It is too much of a strain for the same people to run the sessions time after time. I've had several offers from people wishing to run workshops but could do with some more. So if you have a good idea for something to do PLEASE phone or write. I have a vast stock of materials (paints, glue, junk etc) so don't feel you have to provide everything. Also someone to organise the drinks would be appreciated. Please get in touch if you want to attend the sessions as

places are limited. I CANNOT afford to contact individuals so please contact me!!! Also there is still an open house at my house every Tuesday from 10am to about 3pm. PLEASE PHONE FIRST to check it's still on or if something else has been organised. Also if evening meetings are needed we will arrange them. Gill Wilson, 061 442 8723.

West Yorkshire

24 June, Wednesday: Team Games and paddling at Sue Hart's, 284 Halifax Old Road, Huddersfield. 3.20 - 8.00pm. Bring food to share for a buffet. Join us after work if you can't come earlier. If WET, or for directions, phone Sue 0404 537865.

2 July, Thursday: Columbus Day at Celia's, 423 Killinghall Road, Bradford. Make a boat from recycled materials, and a compass from a needle and a greasy nose!! Also games and worksheets . . . Bring food and enthusiasm to share. Please note change of date from that chosen at Sue's Easter Workshop. Phone Celia for further details and to give her an idea of numbers. It is an EARLY Columbus Day in the hope of better weather than in October! 10.30 - 3.00pm.

6 July, Monday: Parents' meeting at Pauline's, 65 Milan Road, Leeds 8. 8pm, with early finish. Phone Kim for directions, 0532 757473.

15 July, Wednesday: Outing to Temple Newsam, near Leeds. Meet at the Cafe at 11am. Wear a home-made EO badge in case the buses let us down, as they did last summer. My apologies to anyone who went last year and didn't find me - I was an hour late!!! Small prize for the best/funniest badge. Farm, big house, great playground, lots of open space. I would still appreciate ideas for activities for the summer/autumn. Activities at people's homes seem to work well. Please phone with ideas, Kim Wark, 0532 757473.

REGIONAL DIARY AND NEWS

Wales

5 July, Sunday: Meeting at Parc Howard, Llanelli. Very informal get together for anyone within travelling distance or visiting the area. Feel free to bring packed lunch, games, ideas and children! Take this opportunity to feed the ducks and (hopefully) enjoy the sunshine - but I'm having first go on the slide! For more details and directions phone Fred and Donna Coleman 0554 759090.

Midlands

Nottinghamshire

Several people have suggested Wednesday is a more convenient day for swimming and I have suggested some days below to avoid school holidays. Place: Water Meadows, Mansfield, all day from 10am.

10 June, Wednesday: Swimming as above

10 July, Friday: Picnic at Bestwood County Park, near the hotel. 12noon.

15 July, Wednesday: Swimming as above.

As some of you know, we are hoping to move to Ireland in a few months, so if anyone would like to be the new Notts co-ordinator, perhaps they would ring me, Paul Sains, 0623 655050.

16 June, Tuesday: Meeting at Stonebridge City Farm, 11.00. Bring lunch.

29 June, Monday: Picnic at Wollaton Park. Meet at playground at 12noon.

For details/directions contact Anne 673477.

West Midlands

The next two meetings are Saturday, 20 June and Saturday 11 July, both at 2.00pm at Cannon Hill Nature Centre. For further information contact Carol Willis on 021 455 9742. If any one has any other places they would like to go to or would like to run an EO meeting then please contact me on the above phone number.

Warwickshire

For details of June/July meetings, please phone Alison Cox, 0926 613619.

East

Cambridgeshire

19 June, Friday: Talk on New Zealand. Meet 1.30 - 4.30 at my house.

3 July, Friday: Illustrated talk on Jamaica. Meet 1.30 - 4.30 at my house.

15 July, Wednesday: Meet Alan from the Upware Field Centre. Meet 9.45 - 2.30. Please phone me if you intend coming because the venue is in doubt.

15 September, Tuesday: Visit to Upware Field Centre. Meet 9.45 for fossiling, pond dipping etc.

For further information on any meetings, please phone me, Rosie Alderson, 0223 210384.

Home Counties

Berkshire

10 June, Wednesday: Picnic at Burnham Beeches, meet at The Dell Cafe near Henry's Night Club at 11.30.

17 June, Wednesday: Mosaics and Cardboard box sculpture at Friends' Meeting House, 74 Ragstone Road, Slough, 10.00 - 4.00. Bring lunch, cardboard boxes and paper. Cost £1 per family.

24 June, Wednesday: Swimming at Windsor Leisure Pool. Meet in the pool at 12.00. cost £1.80 for adults, £1.50 3 - 16 yrs. For more details phone Diana Keegan, 0753 529689.



EOying / EOyang

REGIONAL DIARY AND NEWS

Hertfordshire

We are meeting regularly - approximately once a week - in various parts of the county and even North London. Our activities include pottery, gym sessions, a visit to Wimpole Hall, a treasure hunt, a picnic, swimming sessions, visits to the Roman Museum in St. Albans and to a children's farm, a bread-baking day and walks in the countryside. For further details of our activities, please phone Christine Bassan on 0442 866640. New members and families from other areas are welcome.

Buckinghamshire

After a very successful meeting in February we have come up with the following dates, although I have unfortunately drawn a blank with several of the ideas suggested - I will however keep trying! As well as the meetings below, there will be ice-skating, swimming, etc. Please telephone Val and James Gomon 0908 511247 for further details.

26 July, Sunday: Picnic at Salcey Forest near Northampton

August: Picnic at Willen Lake, possible cycle or boat hire - date to be arranged.

21 September, Monday: Swimming - Bletchley Leisure Centre.

London

Summer is here, and there are all sorts of things to do in the capital! Here are just some of the ideas EOers have come up with. The aim is to provide interesting educational or social opportunities, combined with a mutually supportive atmosphere in which problems as well as joys can be shared. Everyone is welcome, and if you do not feel confident about meeting a load of strangers somewhere, several EOers are happy to meet you beforehand or otherwise make it easier for you. For full details of these and other get-togethers arranged, either telephone one

of the EOers listed, or send an S.A.E. to 23 Whitley Road, London N17 6RJ

10 June, Wednesday: Meet in Postman's Park, Little Britain, EC1 (look for the EO sign!) from noon, for a picnic lunch. We shall move on to the exciting Museum of London at 1.00pm.

14 June, Sunday: Budding orators, get out your soap boxes! Whether you wish to speak or not, you are sure to be entertained at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park. Look for the EO sign, between 11.00 and 1.00pm. After that we shall retreat for a peaceful picnic elsewhere in the park.

18 June, Thursday: Holland Park, meet at Adventure Playground for 5 years and upwards, 11.00 to 1.00pm. Playground for under 5s nearby and exciting sandpit.

24 June, Wednesday: Stepping Stones Farm, Stepney Way, E1.

30 June, Tuesday: Meet at Christine McNiff's house (081 340 3271) from 11.00 - 1.00pm, going on to adventure playground in Stationer's Park at 1.00pm. Finsbury Park Tube and W3 bus.

3 July, Friday: Meet 11.00 to 1.00pm at Albert Memorial, Kensington Gardens (opposite Albert Hall), moving on to the Natural History Museum which features a dinosaur exhibition.

7 July, Tuesday: Bread baking day (Ring Sarah).

8 July, Wednesday: We may go to watch the Vintners' company Road Sweeping Procession (Upper Thames Street, EC4).

14 July, Tuesday: Meet at Railway Fields Nature Park, Green Lane, London W4, at 10.30 - 11.00am. Manor House Tube and 29 bus. 40 minute guided tour, in 2½ acre nature reserve, with pond, meadow, woodland. Picnic lunch. Fee = £1 per family.

REGIONAL DIARY AND NEWS

London, continued

23 July, Thursday: Meet on the south side of the lake in St. James's Park, near the footbridge, for a picnic lunch, 11.00 - 1.00pm. From there we shall take a leisurely stroll to the National Portrait Gallery, looking out for pelicans and ducks on the way.

2 August, Sunday: Riding Horse Parade, Rotten Row, Hyde Park.

5 August, Wednesday: Hampstead Heath. Meet on grass outside Kenwood, near cafe, at 11.00 - 1.00pm. Picnic lunch. 210 bus, Hampstead Tube Station.

Some other ideas families have had include visits to suitable concerts, musical afternoons, City of London Festival, and a historic (but lazy!) walk or two. EOers are looking for suitable meeting places, particularly in East London and Central London. We intend to hold a planning meeting for all interested EOers. Please come along to express your views and share ideas. Phone for details.

Jeffrey Benge 081 8837906

Christine Clarke 081 5589467

Judith Harrison 081 5561706

Veronica Griffin 081 4524909

Eleanor Stapleton 081 8841368

Sarah Taylor 081 8083200

West London

We would welcome other families to join the group which usually meets at noon on Wednesdays, often at a park or leisure centre. Please ring for details, 081 9958954 or 081 9928549, M. Edwards.



Flexibleo

North/Inner London

We meet the first Sunday of every month, these meetings are especially for new members and people thinking about deschooling. We usually arrange a craft activity. NB NEW VENUE.

Place: Burghley Road Centre, 23½ Burghley Road, N8, off Turnpike Lane, nearest Tube: Turnpike Lane (Piccadilly Line).

Time: 2.00 - 4.00pm

Bring: Food and drink, Coffee & Tea provided.

Cost: We ask for a contribution, if affordable, suggested £1.50 per family.

Welcome: Everyone interested in EO is very welcome. Wheelchair access is limited - phone for details.

Dates: **7 June, 5 July, 2 August**, and probably **6 September** etc (phone to check this as this is a new venue).

Contact: telephone numbers as below for details, please phone if coming for the first time.

Monday Outings.

We generally meet every Monday at about 12pm, usually at a museum or park. Bring a picnic, sometimes there's a cafe nearby. Please phone Jo and Roy 081 8838052; Helen and David 071 2842124, Belinda and Alan 081 3431061 or Audrey and David 081 8065393 for details of Monday outings, they are often only arranged the week before. Everyone is welcome.

Some EO families go the Family Craft Workshops at the Fleet Community Centre, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3.30 - 5.30pm term time. The Centre is on Agincourt Road NW3, tel 071 4859988, phone for charges.

REGIONAL DIARY AND NEWS

South West

Cornwall

My daughter will be very shortly celebrating her 10th birthday, and my son will be celebrating his second about two weeks after this, so I am planning a birthday disco for them both! The idea is to have a mixed ages disco (we all know how the little ones love the bigger ones, and vice versa mostly!) with a handful of my daughter's old school friends who she still keeps in touch with. Also invited are some of my sons' friends from the nearby toddler group that we occasionally frequent. But the BULK of the guests, I am hoping, will be EO-ers. We want all age groups including little ones and older ones, however old that might be! Boys AND girls of course.

My local co-ordinator says that this may be a first EO disco for the south west region! It will be held in the church hall next to the supermarket called 'Daniels' at 4.00pm and will go on until 7.00 (with possibly another hour or two to unwind afterwards!). It will be taking place on Saturday, **27 June**. Anybody who thinks they would be interested (parents welcome as well for a chat and for supervision of little ones! I'm pregnant and tired!!) (and I hope this will be well attended to make it worthwhile....I am restricted in numbers to 80 or so I am told) please would you ring me to confirm and to get directions and advice on parking. My number is (0736) 756950. There is no need to bring presents, but please bring some food and something to drink to help share the costs!

Look forward to seeing you.

Helen Aldridge, Hayle, Cornwall

Devon

We are Sammy, Nick, Arran and Willow and we are the new co-ordinators for Devon. We wanted to say hello. We live in S. Devon and as Devon is so

massive, we thought it would be more appropriate for us to be co-ordinators for South Devon and another family to co-ordinate North Devon. We could liaise. Please write or telephone if you're interested or for more information.

We must say a special thank you to Alvena Hillier who has been Devon co-ordinator for 8 years before us. We telephoned Alvena out of the blue when we wanted to move from London to Devon and she found us the house we're living in now, renting from another EO family. So Alvena really did co-ordinate for us.

Please write or telephone and let us know about any meetings, events, outings that you arrange or know of so we can tell other families who contact us for information. And write or telephone if you want to know what's going on or just to say hello. Vidal-Hall family, Homecroft, Brownston Street, Modbury, S. Devon PL21 0RQ. 0548 830716.

Meetings

PLYMOUTH We are meeting at Efford Community Centre every month.

Everybody welcome. The next meeting is being arranged for **12 May**, Tuesday, but please telephone to confirm and for details. Angie and Simon 0752 794819, Sammy and Nick 0548 830716.

TOTNES We are hoping to meet near Totnes every month. Everybody welcome. Telephone for details. Sammy and Nick 0548 830716.

CREDITON Eight families met at Beech Hill, Morchard Bishop, near Crediton and will be meeting again. Everybody welcome. **3 June**, Wednesday, 12.30 - 4.00. Bring food and drink to share. £2 per family. Please join us. Telephone for directions. Sammy and Nick 0548 830716.

REGIONAL DIARY AND NEWS

South

Avon

BATH Information re Small School project and Workshops, Carole Hayes 0225 339419. Open Learning group, Zilla 0225 427759. BRISTOL Education Resource Centre, Hussien Lucas 0272 738433. Seed Circle Workshops and meetings, Julia Hammond 0272 636082.

Wiltshire

9 July, Thursday: 11.00am, meet at cathedral close for tour of Salisbury Cathedral roof and workshop (stained glass, lead work, and woodcarving), followed by tour of spire in the afternoon, by hoist. The scaffolding will not be up for much longer so this is a unique opportunity to enjoy a spectacular view. £2 per person for hoist. £1 per person for roof tour. Bring picnic. Shelter available in cloisters and cafe if weather poor. Museum nearby. Details may change so please ring Sue Hansford if interested, 0722 411621.

28 August, Friday: 7.30pm "Going Batty" - a bat-watch with the park ranger at Lydiard Park, Swindon, 7.30pm - 10.30pm. The event includes a slide show and hot soup! £3 adults £1.50 children and concessions. Please contact Karen if intending to go, 0793 486035.

Autumn 92: The walk across the Marlborough Downs has been postponed from the May Day Bank Holiday due to poor response and last minute cancellations. If you are interested in joining us on a modified walk, please keep your maps and details sent with our recent mailing and look out for details in the August issue.

If you want any information about future events for EO members in Wiltshire or if you have any ideas for local gatherings please ring Kate, 0380 860470.

Hampshire

24 June, Wednesday: Meet at 11 a.m. Eling Tide Mill. Bring packed lunch.

22 July, Wednesday: Meet at 11 a.m. at Moors Valley park near Ringwood. Bring packed lunch.

For details contact Ann Hasler: 6, Sanross Close, Hill Head, 0329 661238.

South East

Kent

4 June, Thursday: Cobtree Museum of Rural Life, Sandling. Displays on hop farming, bygone rural life, agricultural tools and machinery, farmyard animals etc. Lots of space to explore. Bring packed lunch. Meet in basement room from 12.30. Craft demonstration at 2.30. Entrance fee 60p/30p, tell desk you are with EO group. Just off M20 Jcn 6, or cruise on the river Medway from Maidstone (0622 753740 for timetable).

8 June Monday: Friends' Meeting House, Union Street, Maidstone. 12 - 4 pm. Bring lunch, drinks available. £2 per family. Various activities, phone for details.

15 June, Monday: Friends' Meeting House, Maidstone, as above.

18 June to 22 June: Kent EO Gathering, Gloversbridge Farm, Grigg Lane, Headcorn. See separate advertisement for details.

29 June, Monday: Friends' Meeting House, Maidstone, as above.

2 July, Thursday: Cobtree Museum of Rural Life, Sandling, as above.

13 July, Monday: Friends' Meeting House, Maidstone, as above.

20 July, Monday: Friends' Meeting House, Maidstone, as above.

27 July, Monday: Friends' Meeting House, Maidstone, as above.

For further details of any of the above, or of additional activities, please phone Joy Lyon, 0795 530499, or Sue and Keith Burchett, 0732 870344

REGIONAL DIARY AND NEWS

Kent, continued

Dover Castle. I am organizing a FREE educational visit to Dover Castle in July. There is lots to see and plenty of space for children to run around. Bring a picnic lunch. Meet outside the keep at 11.00 am. Tell gatekeeper you are with the EO group. Everyone welcome - please come. The date has yet to be confirmed, so please ring Pam Stevenson on 0304 210997 towards the end of June. About 40 of us had a great time at the castle last year - let's make this visit even better!

Second Kent EO Gathering 18 - 22 June

Secluded site in the Kent countryside. Gloversbridge Farm, Grigg Lane, Headcorn. Evening camp fires and activities (further offers welcome). Village and BR station 2½ miles. For further details ring Keith and Sue Burchett, 0732 870344.

East Sussex

We have Parents' Evenings once a month, and several activities for families every week. However, details are not usually finalised in time to include in the national magazine. We publish a local newsletter every month which gives full details (subscription £8 a year, cheque payable to E.S.E.O. to Lyndon Pugh, 37 Nevill Road, Rottingdean, Brighton, BN2 7HH). You might prefer to telephone Ian Lawes on 0273 55 92 75 or Anne Rix (local co-ordinator) 0435 862794. As well as visits to museums, historic buildings etc, we meet for swimming, ice skating, CB orienteering, survival techniques, craft and games activities, wheelies, bonfires . . . you name it! Look forward to seeing you.

Isobel Hewitt from Bedfordshire has now taken over from me in the South East and I would like to thank Isobel and also the other members who came forward to offer to take on this work. Valerie Gommon.

ADVANCE NOTICE - REGIONAL MEETING

South East England
October 1992
A Weekend Gathering

We are planning WORKSHOPS, SPEAKERS, SOCIAL EVENTS, MUSIC, CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES etc. Come for one day or for the whole weekend. Basically self-catering (but with some simple food available). Accommodation can be arranged if you need it.

Look for more details in the next newsletter!

Ideas and comments welcome - and enquiries:

Sarah Taylor 081 808 3200
Jane Lowe 0707 390070
Sandie Cottee 0268 733259

WHERE TO GET WHAT

The following publications are available from: Bruce and Christine Wallace, 25 Diabaig, Achnasheen IV22 2NE. Prices include p&p to UK. Please make cheques or postal orders payable to "Education Otherwise".

- * **School is not Compulsory** (new edition due soon) £2.50
A guide to your rights
- * **Early Years** (edition no 5) £2.50
Learning suggestions for the under-twelves
- * **Later Years** £2.50
Learning for older children, plus GCSE
- * **Teach Your Own**, by John Holt £3.85
Philosophy of Home Education
- * **Learning All the Time**, by John Holt £4.50
A practical guide covering reading, writing, numbers, science and music, as well as the wider issues of the nature of learning and parental involvement.
- * **School's Out**, by Jean Bendel £5.95
A good how and why book by an EO member and long-term Home Educator
- * **EO Newsletters: Back copies from 1989-1990.** each £1.00
- * **EO Newsletters: Bargain Basement** - our selection of any four copies from 1987-1988 £1.50
- * **Newsletter Digest:** £1.50
A ninety-page selection of the best from 1982-1986

Plus, from other addresses:

- * **Growing Without Schooling** - the newsletter of EO's parallel organisation in the USA. Six issues per year, starting March. From Barbara Sheppard, 18 Queen Katherine Street, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 7OG £12.00
- * **EO Stationery:** note paper, re-use labels, forms, leaflets and handbills.
Lucy Charlton, 2 Wistow Lane, Newton Harcourt, Leicestershire LE8 0FT.

LEARNING LINK is a non-profit making EO family run resource which can enable you to purchase Educational Computer hardware at discount prices available to schools. The latest catalogue includes computers from Acorn, Apple, Atari, Cambridge, Commodore, IBM, and Research Machines, modems from Pace, electronic musical instruments from Casio, Yamaha and Roland, and other items. Catalogues at £1.50 from: Learning Link, 83 Manor Park, London SE13 5RA.

Education Otherwise Officers

- General Enquiries:** 36 Kinross Road, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 7EF
HELPLINE: 0926 886828
- Chairperson:** Keith Charlton, 2 Wistow Lane, Newton Harcourt, Leics. LE8 0FT
Tel: 0533 592118
- General Secretary:** Pam Stevenson, 25 Wyndham Road, Dover, Kent CT17 0BH
Tel: 0304 210997
- Treasurer:** Michael Cook, 34 Beacon Road, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 6DJ
Tel: 02273 67059
- Publications Director:** Lucy Charlton, 2 Wistow Lane, Newton Harcourt, Leics. LE8 0FT
Tel: 0533 592118
- One-Parent Family Contact:** Jenny Blower, 15A Athelstan Road, Hastings, East Sussex TN35 5JB
Tel: 0424 722720
- Special Needs:** Sylvia Jeffs, 16 St. Bernard's Road, Solihull, W. Midlands B92 7BB
Tel: 021 7066460
- Publications Co-Ordinator:** Lynne Greenhough, 18 Park Street, Alfreton, Derbyshire DE5 7JE
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- Publicity Officer:** Jane Lowe, 5 Elm Gardens, Welwyn Garden City, Herts. AL8 6RX
Tel: 0707 390070
- Co-Ordinators' Secretary:** Stephanie Futcher, 50 Springfield Avenue, Chesterfield, S40 1HL
Tel: 0246 239048
- Address Changes Membership Lists Subscription Renewals:** Bob Emmet, 148 Gunton Lane, Norwich, Norfolk NR5 0AQ
Tel 0603 747865

School Phobia Support: enquiries to Pam Stevenson, General Secretary, at address above.

Regional Enquiries Secretaries:

- East Anglia: Sandi Cottey 0268 733259
Midlands: Gillian Brown 0922 414286
North: Mick & Jennie White 0969 23544
Scotland: Brenda Holliday 0786 832042
Wales: Miryam Bush 0269 861069
London: Genevieve Bridgeman 081 3429269
S. East & S. West: Sarah Taylor 081 8083200

Regional Membership Secretaries:

- Scotland & North: Meryl Cumins 0698 887977
South East: Isobel Hewitt, 66 Goldington Avenue, Bedford MK60 3DA
South West: Maggie Swatridge 0503 72087
Wales & Midlands: Gillian Murely 0785 48753
London & Home Counties: David Bettie 0843 583260

Childline: 0800 1111

HELPLINES

Kidscape: 071 4880488

education otherwise

Education Otherwise is a membership organization 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;
- ◆ reaffirm that parents have the primary responsibility for their children's education and that they have the right to exercise this responsibility by educating them out of school;
- ◆ establish the primary right of children to have full consideration given to their wishes and feelings about their education.

For further information send an A5 s.a.e. to:

Education Otherwise
36 Kinross Road,
Leamington Spa,
Warwickshire,
CV32 7EF

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