

July to September 2006: Issue 11

More than a learning provider

By General Secretary Richard Bolsin

Over the summer the subject of fees - in particular, fee increases and the rising costs of classes - has been a persistent and understandable theme in my postbag from WEA students and members. Some of you have even questioned, with commendable statistical logic, the extent to which fee rises are now subsidising a bloated WEA bureaucracy.

Let's remember that the fee rises are not of the WEA's choice or making. They follow from the

reduction in the element of funding this year from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) which is called "assumed fees". It requires providers like the WEA to deliver no less provision, but to recover a greater percentage of fee income to balance the shortfall for classes which do not meet the LSC's narrow priorities for learning and skills. I am afraid that trend is set to continue over subsequent years too, affecting students no matter where in England or with which provider they choose to study.

So why choose the WEA?

I would hope that you would agree that for most of us - I am thinking of WEA members, Trustees, volunteers and staff in particular - the WEA is far more than just another cost-effective provider of adult education classes (although there is plenty of very compelling evidence to show that we are just that, too). The WEA is also a voluntary organisation, currently with free membership, the costs of which its 'bureaucracy' also has to bear (I am thinking of the costs of maintaining even our minimal membership scheme, the bi-annual conference etc). As a membership organisation, the WEA becomes a fundamentally different animal in the world of adult education. What other organisation can boast of being run by its students (which is exactly what members of its Regional and Association Committees are, as are the majority of its Trustees)? This gives the WEA much more potential to influence, even if governments and policy makers are not always so willing to respond.

There is more, though. The WEA's mission, essentially unchanged for over one hundred years, is to enable people who have missed out on education first time around to experience success and achievement through learning. That leads the WEA to the heart of some of the most educationally deprived

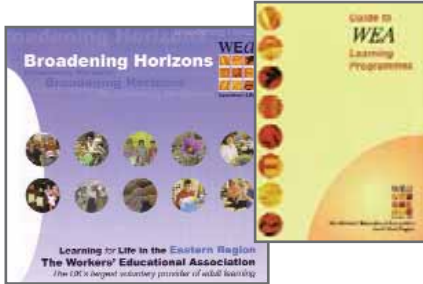
[continued on page 2]



Two WEA Regional Chairs, Pat Kynaston of North West Region and Gill Aldridge from East Midlands, get to grips with plasticine models during the Association Committee's visit to Liverpool on 23 June.

A class of students with learning disabilities from Liverpool's Oakfield Day Centre made a short film using plasticine models they made and stop-motion animation techniques. This was just one of several examples of North West provision demonstrated to the Committee.

The Committee is now rotating its regular meetings around the country, giving its members, each of whom represents the volunteers from a WEA region (and WEA Scotland), a chance to get a feel for the work in that Region. The visit to Liverpool was the second such meeting, after the Southern Region hosted the Committee in April.



WEA Eastern and North West regions have recently produced publicity brochures for this academic year (pictured) in addition to course guides. These aim to raise the WEA's profile and will be sent to tutors, branches and staff for marketing and promotional purposes.

See page seven for more detail on a similar initiative in the West Midlands.



[Richard Bolsin, continued from front page]

communities in the country, where the Association can still invest what spare capacity it has in effective outreach with educationally disadvantaged people. This year's "Year in Review" illustrated some of the best of that work.

I hope we would all agree that the WEA should not give up on that mission. At the same time, there can be no doubt that the funding and finances of the Association will need to be reviewed, and that this will have implications for the relationship with Branches as we move forward. These are complex and serious issues, touching on WEA membership, funding, fee policy and the structure of the Association. We are currently giving serious thought to what that may mean and will be consulting widely with members and Branches later this year and next prior to taking decisions at the next WEA Conference in 2007.

I very much hope that as many of you as possible will be able to contribute to that process at a personal level. In the meantime, if you have thoughts on WEA membership and the development of our work with Branches, we would be interested to continue this debate through the next edition of WEA News.

Trustee appointment



Anne King has been appointed as a WEA Trustee, completing the complement of four 'external' Trustees alongside the eight from the WEA's voluntary movement.

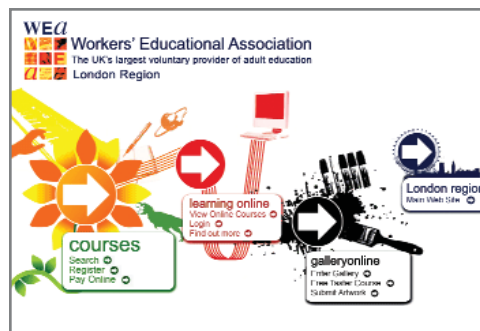
Anne works as Membership and Marketing Director of BSRIA, a global market research business, and also has long experience as a volunteer for schools, community centres and the church.

She holds an economics degree from Cambridge and is a Chartered Marketer. General Secretary Richard Bolsin said, "Anne's commercial nous is a tremendous new asset to the WEA, and will be of great value in the forthcoming establishment of our trading arm."

Online payments in London

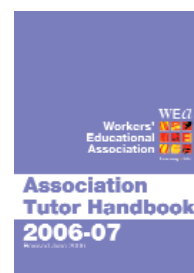
WEA London Region has updated its website with a new look and some substantial changes. As well as an online gallery of artwork and courses available to study online, the region is the first to make registration and payment for its open programme courses available through the web. This facility is being run on a trial basis with a view to extending it to other regions if successful - the first learner to pay for their course electronically was signed up in early September.

The website can be found at www.london.wea.org.uk



Publications

Two annual publications for tutors and educational staff have recently been produced for this academic year.



All Tutors will receive the Tutor Handbook with their first contract for the year - so any tutor who has not received a copy before they begin teaching should contact their region.

The Quality Manual is distributed electronically to educational staff and is available to voluntary members. This is



the second year of the Manual, which draws together the policies, procedures and paperwork that underpin the Quality Improvement Framework to which the WEA is committed. Anyone who requires a copy and has not already received one should email Education Strategy Manager Audrey Stewart at astewart@wea.org.uk



The WEA: its image, profile and meaning

SPEAKERS'
CORNER

By **Bob Groves**, a tutor in the WEA North East region. Bob's current courses concentrate on **History of Ideas, Philosophy and Music Appreciation**

As a WEA tutor I have often had the experience of discussing what makes the WEA 'tick' with adult students on regular occasions. It's interesting to note how misinformed they can be when they first start a course. Without being contradicted by reliable information, it's easy for a new WEA learner to mistakenly believe that 'we' are:

- A government 'quango'
- An arm of the labour party(!?)
- Part of a local Further Education college
- Funded by the local authority

...or many other illusions. Other people are a little surprised to find we are a century old and one of the most revered providers of liberal adult education. It seems our profile is still low, and the core of WEA belief systems is even lower - very few seem aware of our principles of autonomous growth of the individual in a group context, our sense of social responsibility and educational duty, and the concept that no doors are closed to WEA learners. I think there is an urgent need to make our differences plain - especially with the tutoring process - or else we will find our popular support obscured by user ignorance.

More importantly again, when it comes to students fighting back against the juggernaut of the government's 'skill's agenda' and preserving the right to liberal adult learning, often the arguments made in favour of WEA-style study are based on assertions of 'learning for its own sake' and 'learning for pleasure/leisure'. Whilst I can thoroughly understand (and agree with) the motivations for this kind of argument, I fear it is

doomed to failure within the current debate on the purposes and resourcing of adult education provision. In my view, we cannot make arguments that adults have a 'right' to 'leisure learning' - these will be dismissed out of hand with the retort: "if this is leisure, then they can pay for it themselves" (or less brutal words to that effect). In fact the very term 'leisure courses' seems to condemn the user out of their own mouths in this sort of context. My view is that there are no 'leisure courses'. All learning is meaningful, determined and valuable, and has a social context and purpose. Enjoyment will be and **MUST** be a means to this end of purposeful learning, but it should not be the end in itself. At the end of the day (and discussion), unless what we do is educationally meaningful and valid, we cannot justifiably make claims on the public purse - I think that's a duty we should all be able to agree on.

Does that leave WEA learning a slave to the 'skills agenda' rather than with its own *raison d'être* and meaning? I think certainly not. For the adequate development of a prosperous, stable and equitable society (and surely these are all equal components?), adequate attention to non-skills related adult education is a vital issue. Politicians who think this is not the case have, in my view (and I'm sure in the view of most adult learners) 'lost the plot' somewhere in the process of their love affair with the free market. Let's hope that during a period of intense discussion about democracy abroad we have not yet forgotten about adult education's role in the democratisation of life at home.

responses welcome; please send to news@wea.org.uk

2007 Diary Orders

Due to popular demand in response to last year's diaries, the WEA has returned to a previous supplier for blue Senator diaries with a gold-blocked cover, week-to-view layout, world and UK maps and four pages containing WEA regional contact details and other information.

Diaries are priced at £4.75 each (including postage to UK addresses). Please order your diary(ies) by sending a cheque payable to Workers' Educational Association to Diary Orders, WEA, 3rd Floor, 70/72 Clifton Street, London EC2A 4HB.

We expect to receive the diaries in time to mail out during November. Due to financial constraints and the loss made last year, a decision has been taken not to sell WEA Christmas Cards this year.





Andrew Wood is pictured with his certificate of nomination for the NIACE Second Language Learner Adult Learners' Week award earlier this year.

Andrew, who was severely disabled in a car accident as a young man, attended his first WEA class in 1987, and has been a regular student on a range of courses at the Rotherham Learning Centre ever since. In his nominee's statement he said, "Life is one big learning curve! Continuing learning means I can keep my mind active, develop new skills and meet new friends. This is a goal, my incentive in life, and I feel it brings me confidence to defy all obstacles, to embrace my destiny."

Catherine Bell works for the WEA at the Centre and nominated Andrew for the award. She said, "Andrew is a great role model and an inspiration to everyone at the Centre. He makes the journey to class by public transport even in the worst winter weather, and recently travelled all the way to Austria with the German Group. He never complains about his condition or his circumstances."

Andrew did not in the end win the award, but tutors, staff and fellow learners from the Centre did not let this stop them holding a small event to present him with a photo album and certificate (along with a few beers!).

Top marks for WEA

A telephone survey of 100 recent WEA students from all over England found that 38% had been "extremely satisfied" with their learning, while a further 47% were "very satisfied".

Most of the remainder were "fairly satisfied" - with only 4% of those sampled being at all dissatisfied with their learning experience.

The top reason for choosing the WEA as an organisation to learn with was that it was easier to get to than colleges, with personal recommendations and leaflets or brochures being the next most common reasons. No fewer than 79% of respondents intend to go on a WEA course again.

The survey was conducted on a representative sample of recent learners by company MSS Research. A full version of the results is available from regional offices and will appear on the WEA website.

Insurance clarification

In response to a number of enquiries, WEA Director of Finance Linda Acquaye has issued a statement clarifying the position on insurance. Space does not allow the full statement to be reproduced here, but the key points are:

Ordinarily, no **travel** insurance is required for travel within the UK that does not involve an overnight stay. For travel involving an overnight stay or abroad, the WEA's insurance scheme covers staff, volunteers and students when travelling on business or on field trips and similar activities. However, separate cover is required for all individuals over the age of 75 on such trips. This should be arranged by them or on their behalf prior to their trip, which can be done by phoning the WEA's insurance provider on 02380 339662 and quoting reference 23834881 CHC.

WEA insurance only covers **equipment** purchased in the name of the WEA (at any level) - so any equipment owned by individuals but used for WEA business is not covered under this arrangement and would therefore need to be insured separately by the individual. Cash in transit is covered up to a limit of £5000 for both regions and branches.

All students and volunteers participating in **classes** are covered for classroom / business related claims to an indemnity limit of £10 million. Staff (including anyone contracted by the WEA) are insured against injury while working to the same indemnity amount.

Incidences giving rise to a possible claim under the WEA's insurance policy must be reported to the Director of Finance immediately, and all third party correspondence relating to any claim must be passed to the Director of Finance and not answered by anyone else - as relatively minor claims in the past have led to disproportionate rises in the insurance premium to the detriment of the WEA as a whole.

Contact details for insurance issues or to request a copy of the full statement: Linda Acquaye, lacquaye@wea.org.uk, 020 7426 3466, for postal address see the box in the bottom right corner of page eight.

Tutor Qualifications Update

WEA News issue 7 (October 2005) highlighted some of the issues that the WEA and other adult education providers will be facing with the introduction of the government's reform of teaching qualifications in the Lifelong Learning Sector. The WEA's response and plans to address these changes will be available from September. Below, the Association's Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development Co-ordinator **Phil Coward** responds to concerns about the proposals put by tutor **Frank Evans**. Phil says, "I am confident that we in the WEA have some of the most well qualified tutors working in the LSC sector. However when asked we need to be able to prove that this is the case. We also need to use training and development to share experience, skills and knowledge and to help all our tutors become even better at what they do."

FE: Looking at the recent documents for the future training requirements to be imposed on tutors, I feel that it lacks any reference to academic, as opposed to training, matters - not only for tutors but for tutor-organisers too. We must restore the academic standards and reputation that the WEA established in the past when it worked closely with university extra-mural departments and similar organisations. I feel this can only be done if there are specific academic interests actually seen to exist within the organisation itself.

PC: I am sure that the majority of tutors employed by the Association are selected precisely because of their subject specialism. The proposed new teaching qualifications being introduced in 2007 will have 'Subject Specialism and its Pedagogy' as a core element. The Institute for Learning also sees this area as important with Continuing Professional Development (CPD) consisting of two parts: Teaching & Learning and the Subject Specialism. There is a growing requirement for tutors to hold teaching qualifications and the WEA's tutor training strategy focuses on how we can support tutors in gaining these qualifications as our self-assessment process identified this as the highest priority. Sharing of subject specialist knowledge is developing through curriculum management within regions by building tutor networks and making links with other institutions helping to provide subject specialist support. We are building a process that not only acknowledges, evidences and records existing skills and knowledge but also helps tutors to develop these areas or keep them up to date.

FE: It is a pity that discussion of subject specialism, and the existing skills and knowledge that WEA tutors have was not to the fore of this discussion. I do realise that making any special case for the WEA in matters of training would be counter to the LSC's general philosophy, and might well expose us to the

risk that qualifications acquired through the WEA route might not be universally acceptable, but I think there is a real case for arguing that the WEA should retain its special character.

PC: Although the WEA does have a unique character I don't think it is necessarily a good idea to argue that it is a special case. Firstly, there are other providers who provide courses for adults and although it can be argued that they do not do this in the same way they very often target similar learners. Secondly, we need to ensure that any training for tutors not only equips them to teach for the WEA but enables them to develop and take on other opportunities if they so wish. We need to be seen as part of the whole educational system, a vital part of Lifelong Learning, and not as something separate from it. That is why we have developed flexible approaches to teaching qualifications for WEA tutors that fit in with our requirements to maintain the highest possible quality for our learners and at the same time provide a recognised LSC sector qualification.

FE: Far more attention is also needed, I feel, to 'selling' training to tutors. So far, as I have said before, communication vertically down to tutors is very poor and many are suspicious of what they have seen. They want to know the benefits, as opposed to the threat that there may be no job without it.

PC: We do need to communicate these developments to all tutors and staff; however the uncertainty regarding teaching qualifications and requirements for tutors has made this difficult. I am sure that all regions would appreciate constructive input to help promote the training opportunities available, as we need tutors to engage in training to share ideas and to help us develop better ways of delivering learning. In the end what we really need training to do is to ensure that the learning experience of adults on all WEA courses is of the highest possible standard.

Incorporation transfer goes through

The WEA formally incorporated on 2 August, five months later than planned due to the complexities of pension schemes and legal requirements. In his notification to staff, General Secretary Richard Bolsin said, "This is a very significant milestone in both the history and assuring the future of the WEA." The WEA has joined nearly all major UK charities in becoming incorporated - the decision to do so was made democratically at the WEA conference in October 2005, with no votes against.

As mentioned in the previous two issues of WEA News, any WEA material at branch, regional or national level released publicly should now display the information below. The charity number has changed and the Association now has a company number too, since a new legal entity was set up to effect the transfer. Note the new registered address - an office which the WEA began renting in August as a cheaper replacement for nearby Quick House.

Workers' Educational Association

Registered charity number: 1112775.

Company limited by guarantee in England and Wales no: 2806910.

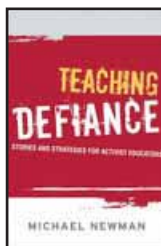
Registered office: 3rd Floor, 70/72 Clifton Street, London EC2A 4HB.

Round-up of recent book releases

A number of books that may be of interest to WEA staff, tutors and students have been published in recent months, so here is a brief round-up of some of these titles.

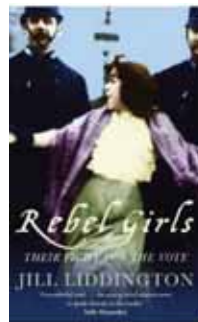
The Hillcrest Writers Group, formed out of a WEA creative writing course in Newhaven, has produced an anthology of fiction, autobiography and poetry called **King Og and the Elastic Women and Other Stories**. Tutor Organiser for East Sussex Chris Sanders said, "The book is a fantastic read, and has sprung to life mainly through all the work tutor Umi Sinha did editing and putting it together." Copies of the anthology, sponsored by East Sussex County Council, are available from Seaford Branch. For details please contact Rita Bailey on 01323 492732.

Teaching Defiance is aimed at activist adult educators who want to help people make up their own minds and take control of their own lives. It is written by award-winning adult education writer Michael Newman, an Australian who spent 12 years working in London as a community education worker and warden of an adult education college before returning home where, amongst other positions, he has served as Director of WEA Sydney. The book is available through www.wiley.com and its ISBN is 0787985562.



A set of three books aimed at adult literacy students have been published by Chambers over the last year, and may be of interest to tutors working on these types of course. They are the **Adult Learners' Dictionary**, the **Adult Learners' Thesaurus** and the **Adult Learners' Writing**

Guide. Their ISBN numbers are 0550101829, 9780550101860 and 9780550101877 respectively.



Jill Liddington's book on the women's suffrage campaign in Yorkshire, **Rebel Girls**, was launched at a WEA organised event at Huddersfield Town Hall in May. It contains extensive information about Lavena Saltonstall, a Hebden Bridge tailoress, early activist in the Halifax WEA Branch and a contributor to

WEA magazine *The Highway* before the First World War. Some information about Lavena and the WEA has previously appeared in Linda Croft's **History of the WEA in Yorkshire**, in Zoe Munby's **Raising Our Voices** and in Jonathan Rose's **The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes**. *Rebel Girls* is published by Virago, ISBN: 1844081680.

Strutting and Fretting is the autobiography of Marjorie Calow, who writes that she has been involved with the WEA in one way or another for most of her life - including working for the Association in the East Midlands region between 1978 and 1991. Copies of the 72 page autobiography are available for £10 plus postage via the WEA: contact news@wea.org.uk or 020 7426 3450.

Joe Harris of the National Pensioners Convention has written **Paupers' Progress**, a people's history of the place of older people in British society since the Thirteenth Century, when the case for some form of publicly funded pension was first made. Its ISBN is 1902245202.

Equality and Diversity Audit results

By **Mary Curran** for the WEA's Equality and Diversity Advisory Group


As a provider of education and as an employer, the WEA aims to ensure that people with disabilities are able to participate fully, and we take positive steps to make this possible. To find out from actual and potential learners, staff, and voluntary activists with disabilities about their experiences with the WEA, the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group commissioned a review in autumn 2005.

Key actions for the WEA identified as a result of the review include training and awareness-raising activity for staff and volunteers who deal with enquiries; improved communications and information about equality and diversity across the WEA; a review of publicity and course materials to promote diversity and inclusion, and improved staff recruitment procedures. These actions will be incorporated in the WEA's Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan.

The audit involved a range of approaches; the main findings from each are outlined below.

Course enquiries from Potential Learners

Enquiries were made to Regional offices and branch representatives by phone and e-mail from two 'potential learners', a wheelchair user and a person with a visual impairment.



In their own words

The experiences of disabled people who come into contact with the WEA

June 2006

Detailed findings from the audit can be found in the report **In Their Own Words**, which is available from Chris Mollan (cmollan@wea.org.uk or 020 7426 3491).

Telephone Responses were mixed, with some Regions providing full information on the course, disability access and learning support. In other Regions, the response was less positive, with staff and volunteers unaware of the ways in which we should be supporting people with disabilities or learning difficulties, and using outdated language.

Of ten e-mail enquiries, there were only three responses. However all three were positive, putting the enquirer in contact with a local tutor who could provide further details.

Experience of learners

535 learners from all regions completed questionnaires sent to them by post.

Of those who responded:

- 79% had received an offer of support either before, at the start, or during their course
- 21% did not receive an offer of support at all

There are detailed comments in the report about the support learners needed and the extent to which they received it. Support received included physical access, adjustments to teaching and learning, support from the tutor and other learners, and provision of specialist equipment. There were many more comments about support provided than about support needs that were not met.

The experience of staff

Of 109 staff surveyed, eight stated that they had a disability or learning difficulty, and ten stated that they had support needs. Adjustments had been made by the WEA to allow for the needs of staff in six cases.

Potential Employees

All WEA Regions and the Scottish Association were e-mailed by a potential tutor who is an electric wheelchair user for information on becoming a tutor and on the support the WEA provided to tutors with disabilities. Eight replies were received, and these all responded positively offering information and application packs, though not all addressed the disability support question immediately.

West Midlands Summer Conference

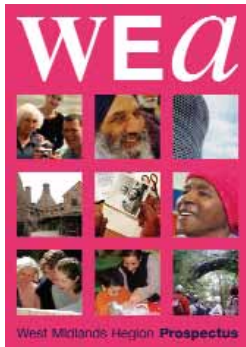
The WEA West Midlands region held a successful summer conference on 1 July. The formal business of a Regional Council meeting was combined with displays of students work, workshops and a plenary address.

The six workshops focussed on Haiku poems, industrial archaeology, using computers to make cards, cinema, brass rubbing and digital photography.



The annual Wendy Fenn award for for volunteering service in the region was presented at the conference to Charles Malin, Brenda Wright, Kath Dexter and Veronica Jubb. The four help with courses in Shropshire by supporting new volunteers and tutors; helping at class venues with enrolments and IT equipment, and distributing publicity. Sheila Brégeon, WEA Programme Area Manager for Shropshire, said, "All four have been volunteers for a number of years and are invaluable to us. They are all a great advert for the WEA and encourage both learners and new volunteers to join us."

The award was instituted in memory of Wendy, who died in 2001. She was one of the first Voluntary Education Advisers in the West Midlands region, and obtained a degree from Warwick University after returning to education on a WEA Return to Learn course for Unison members.



The publication of this colourful new prospectus marks the beginning of a new publicity drive for West Midlands Region.

Inge Riley-Cuperus, Senior Regional Services Officer for West Midlands, worked on the project with Regional Secretary Pete Caldwell and staff and volunteers from the region.

The twelve page publication aims to raise awareness of the WEA and illustrate the diversity and creativity of the region's work. It will be used to promote the WEA to potential funders, partners, students and volunteers. Images, case studies and quotes from learners and staff have been carefully gathered together and presented to portray the WEA at its best. Copies are available from West Midlands Region or from Inge on iriley@wea.org.uk.

From the Archives...

The article at right is taken from a previous incarnation of WEA News - it dates back to November 1961.



With a new membership scheme being planned at the moment, and due for consideration by WEA Conference late next year, the issues raised seem relevant once again.

Further to an initial piece in the previous issue of this newsletter, more information on membership will appear in coming issues of WEA News.

The national WEA Archive is held as part of the TUC Collection at London Metropolitan University. To see the catalogue or for information about visiting the archive visit the following webpage:

<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/services/sas/library-services/tuc/geninfo.cfm#archive>

AN INVITATION

for you if you are new to the W.E.A.

from one of the W.E.A.'s thousand voluntary branch Secretaries

Go to any reasonable sized place in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales this winter and you will find at least one W.E.A. class there. In a fair number of places there will be more than one. In some places there will be many.

Getting all these classes going has meant a lot of work. Keeping them going will cost a lot of money. You might be surprised to learn that much of the work was done quite voluntarily, in their spare time, by men and women who are themselves students in W.E.A. classes. And much of the money will be raised by the same people—not only by paying their student fees but by paying, in addition, a membership subscription to their local W.E.A. branch.

Why are these men and women—your fellow students and mine—as willing as they are to do these things cheerfully and enthusiastically, year after year? The answer is because they are convinced that there must be a W.E.A. to help people to live fuller, more satisfying and therefore happier lives and to fit them for useful community service, because they find that working for the W.E.A. is not only interesting but very relevant to the problems of contemporary society and because they believe that to do its job properly, the W.E.A. must be largely run by its own members.

You will see that the W.E.A.'s success depends on the energy, enthusiasm and financial support of its voluntary helpers. I cordially invite you to become one of them. Ask your class secretary how you can join the W.E.A.



Arrivals, departures and exchanges

Eastern Region

Edith Bull, a member of Leighton Buzzard branch since 1984 and Branch Chair from 1987 to 2003 has died aged 95. Edith was an enthusiastic and dedicated supporter of the WEA and even after relinquishing the Chair kept open house for committee meetings until last year when her failing health precluded this.

Dr Philip Brindle, Bedfordshire Programme Manager and Regional Tutor Training Co-ordinator, left the WEA on 31 August. We wish him well in his new post at the Mark Rutherford School in Bedford.

The region also wishes all its Field Staff well as they take on new roles following restructuring.

London Region

Administrator **Andrew Brattle** left the WEA on 30 July.

North East Region

Dawn Hodgson has joined the region as Regional Learning Manager (job share) for Northumberland and Tyne & Wear.

Dawn, who gained much of her own education through adult learning, recently worked as a consultant on the national DfES Skills for Life Quality Initiative and as an external moderator as well as delivering leadership and management training. Prior to this, she was Head of Department for Skills for Life at Newcastle College when the Dept received a Grade 1 (Outstanding) assessment on inspection for Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL provision.

Southern and London Hub

Phyllis Thompson, Support Centre Administrator, left on 7 July.

Southern Region

Annie Winner left on 31 July, having worked as a Tutor Organiser for the WEA for more than twenty years. Colleagues held a leaving do for Annie in Oxford on 28 July.

Correction: Terry Henson

The last issue of WEA News gave the impression that Terry is now only responsible for the Equal ESOL project. In addition to this, Terry is also still co-ordinating all community learning activity, including Helping in

Schools, in Brighton and Hove. Apologies.

South West Region

Sad news from the South West of the recent death of **Olive Dee**, who was a very active member of the WEA from the 1930s in London right up until 1988 when she left the former Western District, which she had chaired from 1983. A WEA staff member who worked with Olive remembers her as, "A very kind and gentle Chair of the former WEA Western District"

The Region has recently welcomed three new members of staff:

John Young began work as Curriculum Manager on 1 September in the Exeter office; John joins us from Hertford Regional College, where he was a Head of Department.

Alison Thompson started work at Exeter in July as a 0.8 FTE Admin. Assistant, having joined from the Woolwich Building Society.

Sheila McMillan has joined as a 0.6 FTE TO Admin. Assistant based at Exeter. Previously Sheila was with East Devon College in Tiverton.

Yorkshire and Humber Region

It is with sadness that we report the death of **Tom Hay** from the Keelby Branch near Grimsby. Our sympathies are extended to Pam Hay, former NEC Representative for the Yorkshire North District, at this sad time. Pam and Tom both played active roles in the Association for many years, gaining affection and respect from everyone who met them. WEA staff and voluntary members attended his funeral, which was a beautifully personalised celebration of Tom's life and a fitting tribute to a man described by his family as 'an ordinary man with a great heart'.

WEA Scotland

Congratulations to **Peter Quigley**, a long serving member of the Scottish Executive Committee and chair of the Fife Local Association, on his election as President of the Educational Institute of Scotland.

Corporate Services

Ted Hartley, currently the WEA's Director for Development and Special Projects, and until 2004 District Secretary for Yorkshire South, will be

retiring from the Association on 22 September.

Ted started work for the WEA as a part-time tutor in 1970, became the first Tutor Organiser for Rotherham in 1972 then TO for Sheffield in 1978 and District Secretary for Yorkshire South in 1992. He has therefore worked for the WEA for 33 years - almost a third of its existence! Ted is very keen that any money collected for him should go to the Meningitis Research Foundation.

Congratulations to two proud new mums of baby girls: **Claire May** has given birth to Jessica, whilst **Mimi Tesfaye** is celebrating the arrival of Abigail.

Welcome to **Stephen Parnell**, who joined the WEA in late June as Administrative Assistant in the Resources Department.

Gregor Milmine has been appointed as IT Projects and Services Manager - Gregor was already working in the department as a contractor.

Bridget Agyei, HR Officer (Regions) left WEA at the end of August to take up a position with Thomson Scientific.

About WEA News

WEA News is produced for WEA staff, tutors and voluntary members. Many thanks to all who contributed to this edition, including:
Catherine Bell, Jackie Moulsher, June Diegan, Linda Acquaye and Julian Harber.

If you have an item for inclusion or would like to comment on the newsletter please let us know.

It is not always possible to include all items submitted but every effort will be made to do so.

Correspondence should be addressed to:

WEA NEWS,
c/o WEA, Third Floor,
70/72 Clifton Street, London,
EC2A 4HB.

or emailed to news@wea.org.uk

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the WEA.

© Workers' Educational Association,
September 2006.

development and training for WEA staff, tutors and volunteers

developing our people

Autumn term 2006: **Issue 3**

This newsletter is produced by the WEA Development and Training Team to keep you up to date with what's happening regarding development and training, and to share ideas and experiences across the Association.

If you have any ideas or experiences you would like to share, email them to traininginfo@wea.org.uk or call Chris Mollan on 020 7426 3491.

Forthcoming Events for 2006-2007

Dealing with Difficult Situations

8 December 2006 (Tutors) - Priory Street Centre, York

13 June 2007 (Managers) - Austin Court, Birmingham



Earlier this year, Richard Cupidi and David Heley from Southern Region ran a workshop exploring creative and sensitive ways of dealing with difficult situations. In an atmosphere of exploration and participation, difficult issues that can arise in the workplace and how to resolve them will be addressed using forum theatre and story telling.

"WEA could do with more events run with these methods"

WEA Awareness Days

8 November 2006 - NCVO, London

26 April 2007 - Priory Street Centre, York



For those new to the Association or not, who want to gain a better and more in-depth understanding of the WEA. Over the past few years there has been an increasing number of participants in these events run by volunteers, with enthusiastic and positive feedback.

Most useful "To know that you are working for an organisation who has made such an impact on society"

Selection and Recruitment Including Equal Opportunities with a particular focus on Age & Gender

23 November 2006 - NCVO, London

7 March 2007 - Manchester Conference Centre



It is essential that all staff, tutors and voluntary members involved in the selection and recruitment process regularly update themselves on new or amended legislation. This event has a particular focus on the forthcoming new legislation on age and gender.

"Atmosphere was relaxed, trainer was really good welcoming comments and questions from the group as well as informed discussions."

Further information will be provided as soon as possible on the following events:

- Marketing Workshops
- Policy Development Workshops
- Performance Management Workshops
- Finance Seminar
- Equality and Diversity Briefing

Tell Us Your Story

Widening participation in adult learning through storytelling:
NIACE Conference, 29 June 2006, Manchester

By Richard Cupidi

I recognise the fundamental value of storytelling for education. As a storyteller, I'm aware of the power that comes from personal narratives; as a tutor and trainer, I regularly exchange stories in dialogue with my students. Therefore, I was more than eager to attend this conference sponsored by NIACE, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.

The conference agenda

After a transport saga surpassing "Trains, Planes & Automobiles", I arrived in Manchester ever hopeful if somewhat saddle sore. Hosted in the elegant Midland Hotel, the conference presented the undoubtedly successful Tell Us Your Story Project, a BBC-led partnership in the North East region involving the LSC, NIACE, LEAs and VSOs (acronym soup anyone?).

The conference had a fairly standard agenda: keynote speakers, PowerPoints with short Q&As, then afternoon workshops. These were all professionally handled but with little scope for interactivity. In the main, the participants came as delegates from infrastructure organisations and agencies rather than as practitioners - hence the event was a rather well-mannered affair.

As you would expect from such a media-savvy project, the accompanying resource documents, both paper and digital, were slick and attractively produced. However, they could have been delivered through other channels. There were moments when the conference seemed more a product launch for the BBC than an opportunity to network or explore the topic itself.

Three of the four workshops dealt with project development, and the other with learners' perspectives. Half were given over to setting up and marketing your project - helpful in illuminating the competing agendas of funding bodies, educational overseers and commercial (in the Beeb's case, quasi-commercial) organisations.

Storytelling is not creative writing in disguise

Their one attempt at interactivity, a group storytelling exercise, had serious limitations: not enough time, too large a group, and most fundamental of all, it was about creative writing not storytelling. Storytelling is the active creation of narrative, not the recording of it. Whether on paper or as a storyboard or on video or audio, the story develops as a personal dialogue with yourself and others. The outcomes are variable and correspond to people's circumstances and motivations, not publishing prescriptions.

In my experience and that of many of my teaching colleagues, if potential students thought they would have to formally write for publication, most would run a mile. This was reinforced in the learner's workshop, when students were asked about their motivations for attending the Project's storytelling workshops. The consensus was that they were fun, built confidence, and allowed participants to make new friends in a supportive environment. They all agreed that the promise of publication was not a motivation but an afterthought, the "icing on the cake".

Widening participation - some examples

At the simplest level, storytelling encourages participation because we are all storytellers, or as one of the conference students remarked, "we're all full of stories!". Not only do we possess so many stories but, more importantly, they empower us as 'experts' in our own lives.

The forms stories come in are as varied as their hosts. For example, young people might record and exchange stories on mobile phones, or as video blogs, or as music samples. They might storyboard the theme of "One Day In My Life" recorded entirely on surveillance cameras.

For others, photographs of a shared geography (local cityscapes, holiday spots, iconic landscapes) might be the catalyst. For most, just sharing experiences marks the surest way to begin.

WEA and storytelling

There's not enough space here to discuss thoroughly the rich benefits of storytelling. The WEA could easily adopt it as a teaching and learning tool not just for tutors but for volunteers, employees and project teams as well - as a vehicle to improve the WEA learning environment across the board.

WEA Southern Region has already run successful training workshops in storytelling. Now the Development & Training team has taken up the practice. After a successful trial in Sheffield, new story workshops are scheduled in York on 8 December 2006 and in Birmingham on 13 June 2007; other curriculum-based workshops are in

the pipeline. Please look out for them in the WEA Training brochure or contact Chris Mollan, WEA Training Support Officer on 020 7426 3491 or cmollan@wea.org.uk. If you'd like to discuss any aspect of storytelling, please contact me at cupidi@onetel.com.

Back to the conference:

All in all, the conference was a worthwhile event in raising the profile of educational storytelling, for distributing some handsome resource packs, and for suggesting new ways in which media and learning organisations might forge productive partnerships.

Nice trams in Manchester, too.

"Uniting Humanity": Adult Education and World Citizenship

By Graham Birkin and Jol Miskin

"My country is the world, my religion to do good"
Tom Paine, the "Rights of Man" 1791

"Trouble spots threaten perfect storm of global crises": "Number of migrants to UK jumps 24%":
"Climate change a bigger security threat than terrorism"

Recent headlines highlighting the world we're in, the complexity of issues and the lack of effective means to tackle them. We know this time the global crises are real and that unless we change our ways the perfect storm will engulf us.

Fear and loathing is on the rise in the lands of the privileged, fuelled by insecurities about jobs, pensions, the meaning of our lives.

But that's less than half the story. Plenty of people want to understand and change the world. Last year thousands demonstrated for a better deal for the world's poor and 2006 has seen even more fighting for local justice, whether it's against new labour laws in France or for better state schools in Chile.

We are not in a closed world of apathy but an

open world of change and possibility.

This is the context for the "Uniting Humanity" project. Funded by the Grundtvig programme (part of the EU's Socrates) and led by Titus Alexander now of the Scarman Trust, the project aims to develop advocacy skills in world citizenship, working with an international group of adult educators who will go on to spread the word to tutors working in all fields of adult education.

Titus has been in adult education for many years and best described as an influential adult education maverick. He's worked mainstream, but since the mid 90's has been an independent educator concerned with creating critical, concerned citizens, around schools, family life and global issues. He's written "Unravelling Global Apartheid" "Riches Beyond Price" and literature for the Development Education Association and has a vast knowledge of issues and institutions. He's an inspiring educator, always developing new ways of involving people in the learning and new areas of knowledge.

"Uniting Humanity" will last over twelve months with working sessions in Sweden, Bulgaria and Belgium. Between meetings participants will practice what they have learnt, trying out new ways of learning to new groups of learners, and sharing experiences on the "Uniting Humanities" website (Moodle!). By mid 2007 the project will have produced a book on "advocacy in world citizenship": what needs to be done and how, if people are to influence the new global reality.

We were lucky to be part of the group as representatives of the WEA. We met for the first time in May 2006, at Gavle, Sweden. There were 17 of us, from Holland, Finland, Bulgaria, Ireland, Wales and England. Our contingent included participants from Ghana and Bangladesh. The Education Department from Gavle University hosted us and for five days we met at the University working through ideas outlined in a draft facilitator's handbook. We practised techniques for mapping issues, ways of weighting global actors, and how to mobilise effectively. We had inputs from a global AIDS campaigner, and discussed the work of the International Federation of Workers' Educational Associations and the role of international study circles.

At the end of the week we established groups to take the work forward. Already we are involved in putting together an initial one day training programme on citizenship and global issues, focusing on computers and globalisation, for staff, tutors and voluntary members. Other groups are planning activities on human rights, racism, migration and climate change.

Our next meeting is in October on the Black Sea, where we will be hosted by the Bulgarian participants. We'll be reporting progress in our own countries, looking at local environmental issues and discussing human rights in the new EU states.

It's fitting that next year is the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade. In many ways what we face now is less intractable than what campaigners faced in the past. There are lessons to be learnt from that campaign, maybe the first which used all the modern methods of mass meetings, petitions, advocacy, tenacity and single mindedness. It went too with the grain, for without changing economics and slave revolts the later abolition of slavery itself - at least in its chattel form - would never have been achieved. We should take heart from that.

And we should take heart too from the Joe Hill, born in Gavle in 1879. Joe was a union organiser and songwriter for the Industrial Workers of the World. Driven by poverty he went to the United States, that beacon of liberty, and organised the hard to organise: the bums riding the rods getting work where they could in the mines and forests.

Executed in 1915 on a trumped up murder charge by the copper bosses, his last words were: Don't mourn: Organise!

So we can do our little bit too.

For further information about the above contact jmiskin@wea.org.uk



Unravelling Global Apartheid

Paperback: Polity Press 1996-08-01
ISBN 0745613535/0-7456-1353-5

Riches Beyond Price: Making the Most of Family Learning (A NIACE Policy Discussion Paper)

Paperback: NIACE 1995-06-15
ISBN 1872941699/1-872941-69-9



Resources

Venues

Within the Development and Training Zone on First Class you will find a venues spreadsheet (Venues.XLS) containing contact information for some of the better venues we have used around the country. You will find information such as the nearest underground and mainline stations, weblinks, maps and facilities available. Please feel free to access this information as and when you need to - Development and Training Zone / Resources.

We would also really appreciate information on any venues you think are worth including as well as regional or partner organisation facilities, as we are always on the look out for decent quality, reasonably priced conference and residential facilities. Contact Chris Mollan on 020 7426 3491 or cmollan@wea.org.uk.

Fenman Training Placemats

We have a training pack of 21 templates for training-focused, constructive doodling covering the following: Assertiveness; Change; Coaching; Communication Skills; Conflict Management; Creativity and Innovation; Customer Service; Feedback Skills; Interviewing Skills; Leadership; Meeting Skills; Motivation; Negotiation Skills; Performance Management; Presentation Skills; Problem Solving; Report Writing; Stress Management; Team Working; Telephone Skills; Time Management and a blank template. You may also want to consider fashioning a placemat for other activities, such as course evaluations.

Unfortunately we are not allowed to place the pack on First Class, so if you are running any of the above training and would like to see how placemats work and can benefit learners, or you are just interested in the concept, contact Chris Mollan on 020 7426 3491 or cmollan@wea.org.uk, and she will send you a pack.

Press Release: HIV In the Workplace - New Website

A new website has been launched that aims to foster understanding and raise awareness of HIV in the workplace.

Ensuring Positive Futures (EPF) is the force behind the website. EPF is a partnership of HIV charities, business organisations, trades unions and government bodies, lead by national HIV charity the UK Coalition of People Living with HIV and AIDS.

Since December 2005 HIV has been covered by the Disability Discrimination Act. This is legal recognition of the stigma and discrimination that all too often accompanies life with HIV. This new website offers advice and support relating to the DDA.

The web address is:
www.e-pf.org.uk