

October to December 2008: Issue 19

Membership goes live

After a six month campaign of consultation, development and recruitment the WEA's new membership scheme is now live.

The scheme aims to help the WEA communicate more effectively with supporters, volunteers and staff and to expand the Association's volunteer base. Sixteen thousand people have already joined, with more joining every day.

WEA President Colin Barnes says: "The new membership scheme will improve our communications with people who enjoy and benefit from our courses, those who volunteer for the WEA to make those courses happen, and those who simply support us because they believe in the importance of what we do." The WEA has a long and proud tradition of voluntary and democratic practice and the principle of membership is one of the key elements of this - a point on which most WEA branches agree, according to a survey carried out last year.

The scheme is free to join and anyone who supports the WEA's aims and values is welcome. Access to a new members' area on the website, a chance to tell other members about news and events in their area and a member newsletter are among the benefits that members receive.



See page five for more about this Liverpool fashion show with a WEA twist

Ways to join the WEA

- tick the box at enrolment of a WEA class (where a two-sided leaflet about the scheme should be available);
- through the WEA website (click membership on the left-hand menu);
- on a printed application form (you can request these from your region or the address on page 12).

Support the WEA while you shop

Pay the usual prices at over 600 online retailers - the retailer will make a donation to the WEA with every purchase.



- Visit www.easyfundraising.org.uk/wea/
See page four for more on fundraising



Standing up for adult learners

See page eleven



One Hundred Years On

WEA General Secretary **Richard Bolsin** on how the WEA has responded to a question from the Secretary of State - who asked how we thought our founders would have established the WEA were they doing so in 2008 rather than 1903

A year ago John Denham, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, provocatively asked the Specialist Designated Institutions, including the WEA, how we thought our founders might have invented us if they were doing so now rather than one hundred or more years ago.

A valid question, whether or not he had anticipated the scale or pace of the events which have brought the world's economy to the brink of collapse, posed serious question marks about free market capitalism, new labour and the legacy of Thatcherism, and seen the United States elect its first black President.

Would the WEA be different if Mansbridge and Tawney were starting now? They would be building from some strength on the back of fine recent inspection reports in both England and Scotland, and the Association's increasingly consistent and solid performance against budget and contracts. It's perhaps no coincidence, then, that we have spent much time over the last year considering the future shape and direction of the WEA.

A year ago Trustees took the decision to approve a process of 'reshaping' the WEA. This was in order to:

- build greater capacity to revitalise WEA membership and branches
- give more focus and support to diversifying our income, including through fundraising
- improve the WEA's profile and reputation
- create a single finance function
- ensure that governance and management arrangements correspond more closely and effectively
- sustain the WEA over the next five years.

Reshaping started with the management team and over the next eighteen months will embrace all aspects of the WEA's work. Since August this year all WEA Directors have been working to new job descriptions. WEA Corporate Services ceased to exist at the same time. Instead, there are three new Directors (one fewer than before) for Education and Strategy; Communications and Development, and Finance and Resources. From the same date, Regional Directors adopted a new job description placing more emphasis on developing strategic partnerships and securing new contracts. Line management for many staff in the finance function also changed at that time to report through the Finance and Resources Directorate. I was delighted to receive written confirmation over the weekend (7/8 December) from the LSC that having assessed the WEA's financial plan for 2008 to 2011, which is available from the publications area of our website, it has judged us to be "outstanding" on all categories against which we were assessed.

To date there have been no redundancies as a result of reshaping. Our work and our staff are far more at risk from failure either to meet contract and budget targets, or

achieve the quality standards expected of a good organisation which is seeking to improve further and knows it can. Reshaping will help us to do just that, provided that everyone in the WEA - staff, tutors, members and volunteers alike - understand that also means that we can't assume that the jobs or roles we currently have will remain the same for the foreseeable future. By providing appropriate support and training to people we can help everyone develop their skills and experience and so help the WEA to build its capacity over the next two years.

A good example has been the renewal of the WEA membership scheme. Since we reopened WEA membership in the summer, over 16,000 people have submitted applications for WEA membership at a rate of around 1000 per week during the autumn. This fact impressed the Secretary of State when he met WEA representatives in November, a year after issuing that challenge. He was equally impressed by (and I was very proud of) the response of WEA members to the consultation on Informal Adult Learning earlier this year. That produced a record response to such a consultation, over 5,500 separate replies, with a significant proportion of them from WEA people. That has been amply acknowledged in the initial response published by the Government, and the WEA is very closely and constructively engaged with government officials in the preparation of the command paper to follow early in 2009. Although it's too early to be able to promise anything, I am confident that what emerges next year is likely to ensure a place for the WEA to continue to make its particular and distinctive contribution to lifelong learning both nationally and locally. One thing is certain, though. I have no doubt that we will need to work in different ways to achieve that, including with a new funding agency from 2010.

In that recent meeting with John Denham we did repeat our concerns about the loss of 1.4m adults to lifelong learning over the last two years as a result of changes in government policy. We explained why that had contributed to our becoming one of the founder members of the Campaigning Alliance for Lifelong Learning (CALL). The WEA will continue to maintain its proactive role in that campaign, and I would encourage all of you to do the same, not least by encouraging those who have not yet put their names to it to do so.

I think that our founders would be encouraged to find the WEA in this position over a century on, delivering courses to 80,000 people per year, attracting new members, still campaigning, still influencing and challenging government, still delivering in many of the same places, but to a very different and more cosmopolitan student body and still continuing to reshape, adapt and evolve to the new and shifting circumstances facing society and communities.

Thank you for your support during the year, and for your part in ensuring that the WEA has been able to re-exert its influence so effectively over the last 12 months. I wish you all the season's greetings and a happy, peaceful and successful new year.

New learning centre for Portsmouth

The WEA opened its large new learning centre in Somerstown, Portsmouth with a launch evening on 14 October. The Omega Centre will set standards as a great place for students to learn new skills in Arts, Media and IT on a wide range of courses provided in a partnership with Portsmouth City Council.



The centre has been funded by The Jeffery-Machin Foundation, a legacy left by Reverend Canon Dr Ivor Jeffery-Machin and his wife Brenda who were great supporters of the WEA and believers in lifelong learning - both had previously been WEA tutors. They left the majority of their estate to the WEA so that other individuals and communities in Hampshire could benefit from adult learning.

The centre boasts the latest technology with IT suites, multimedia facilities and state of the art whiteboards, enabling students to refer back to work done on the board on their computers. In contrast are the building's many original features including beams, ceiling paintings, wooden floors and statues. Some art students will be using an original Victorian print press (pictured) to create their designs. The Omega Centre has been part of Portsmouth's arts and education landscape for many years and is already the hub of a thriving network of artists and community arts groups.

The Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, Councillor Richard Jensen, cut the ribbon at the event and described how important the partnership was: "The Omega Centre represents the collaboration of Portsmouth City Council and the WEA and gives life to this building," he said, adding that the new technology will play an integral part in the learning of the students. Steve Glennon, Head of Learning for Portsmouth City Council said: "The Omega Centre will help to bring people back to learning" and WEA Deputy President Lynne Smith added: "This is so exciting - the WEA is over one hundred years old and this is what we are about, bringing fun and learning to the community."



Also present at the event were tutors, students and volunteers from all over Hampshire. Joan Lewis, a volunteer and student for many years, explained that the centre will give people who missed out a chance to learn: "The centre is a great idea, it is a place of finding fresh friends and learning new skills." She also emphasised the WEA's reputation for great teaching: "The tutors are very helpful, they put themselves out to accommodate and help the students, and the tutors give us a lot of confidence."

For more information on The Jeffery-Machin Foundation, visit its website www.jmfoundation.org.uk/

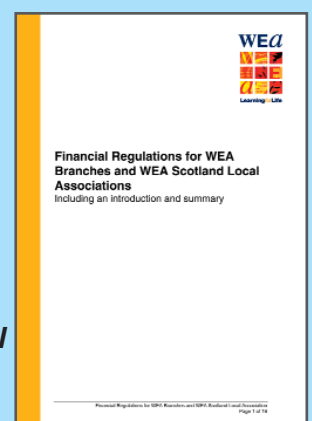
Small print requirement

In an update to the guidance given in WEA News issue 14, charity lawyers Bates, Wells & Braithwaite have advised that the following wording must appear on all WEA business letters and emails, order forms, advertisements, official publications, cheques, invoices, receipts and websites. The only exception we know of is that job adverts do not require this wording - although the fact the WEA is a charity must still be stated.

The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) is a charity registered in England and Wales (number 1112775) and in Scotland (number SC039239) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (number 2806910). Registered address: 3rd Floor, 70 Clifton Street, London, EC2A 4HB.

Branch Financial Regulations

All WEA branches should have received a copy of the newly produced *Financial Regulations for WEA Branches*.



Any branch who has not received their copy should request one from the email or postal addresses on page 12.

FUNDRAISING...we just need to ask



WEA Director of Communications and Development **John Nixon** on plans to raise funds to help the WEA continue to deliver, and campaign for, affordable lifelong learning - and the benefits for individuals, communities and society that it brings

When I joined the WEA a few years ago, I assumed that working for a charity would be dominated by a constant need to raise funds. I expected to be signed up for sponsored walks, coerced into buying raffle tickets at coffee mornings and forced to wear a WEA t-shirt.

In reality, our grant from the LSC and income from other contracts and bids has enabled our staff and volunteers to focus their time on our educational provision, rather than raising or giving money. Whilst we sometimes curse the conditions that come with our current funding, the scale of that support sustains our prime work and resources. Most charities that rely on direct fundraising would envy that position.

However, our current income struggles to keep pace with inflation, restricts our growth potential, and only provides modest budgets in every aspect of our operations. Our cause today is as relevant as at any time in our history, but if we really want to increase and widen our influence to meet our educational mission, we will require new sources of finance. The fight for affordable lifelong learning, and the individual wellbeing, social impact and community benefits that it brings, comes at a cost that we will have to find ways to meet.

So, fundraising is going to become a key word in the WEA dictionary, and a new fundraising culture and function will need to be created. Already you may have seen the promotion of www.easyfundraising.org.uk and, through your local region, the availability this year of charity

Christmas cards in aid of the WEA. The new membership scheme will soon include opportunities for supporters to buy merchandise or make donations. We are also registered for Gift Aid, so we can claim the tax back from the government on donations from taxpayers.

It is becoming clear that there are many people from all walks of life who support us, often having benefited from the WEA in one way or another. They may not be able to give us their time, but might be willing to make a small or regular donation or include a legacy in their will - we just need to ask them.

There are also individuals who are potential 'major donors', as well as charitable trusts which support educational causes. These philanthropic sources represent opportunities to attract significant sums, but require specialist research, nurturing and ongoing engagement.

To identify how we can benefit from fundraising, define the resources needed and develop a fundraising plan, we have engaged external specialists Iain More Associates. We will be competing with hundreds of other charities, but the long term benefits available are significant as long as we set about that task in a professional way.

In fundraising every little helps to build a better future. Your support, ideas and passion for the WEA will help us on the journey ahead.

jnixon@wea.org.uk

WEA Enterprises Ltd

The trading company, WEA Enterprises, which was formed last year to develop WEA business opportunities has so far introduced a number of small initiatives across the WEA, and provided advice to Regions on commercial matters. Commercial Services Director Bob Tarbuck, who left the WEA in August, researched several major schemes during the year, but in a difficult economic climate, none were fully realised. Previously, a review of WEA Enterprises activity decided to transfer focus from trading to fundraising, although Bob's departure has forced a more fundamental assessment of our future plans in this area.

As a result of these changes WEA Enterprises Ltd, as an entity, will no longer have dedicated resources or seek new business projects. The website that was set up under the web address www.weaenterprises.co.uk is no longer operational, and visitors to the site will be re-directed to the WEA's national website. The fundraising web links set up with Amazon.co.uk and some other online retailers, are now running through a single online link to easyfundraising.org.uk, which features on the WEA's homepage.

However, WEA Enterprises remains a VAT registered company to facilitate any approved educational trading or consultancy that Regions may wish to manage through it.

Learners light up the catwalk

Over 250 people turned out to see a WEA fashion show with a twist on 28 October. The event in Liverpool's Met Quarter saw women aged from 50 to 77 sparkle in the spotlight as they walked down the catwalk modelling their clothing creations. It was only the first of a series of community arts events in the Liverpool area which will run through a WEA project called Culture of Arts.

The women, from sheltered housing schemes across Liverpool and St Helens, attended a WEA Culture of Fashion course in Newton Le Willows. They designed and created outfits from clothes they had bought in a second-hand shop - before showing them off at the show.



One participant said: "Projects like this definitely make you feel younger and give you a new lease of life." The WEA's Culture of Arts Project Manager Alex Whittle added: "Through the project the group members have improved their self-development, built confidence, increased self esteem and learnt practical skills in an enjoyable way." After showing off their own designs, they also modeled a selection of autumn fashions from Marks and Spencer.

Liverpool actress Ethne Brown compered the show, praising all the participants and emphasising how wonderful the project was. The models spent the day getting preparing with complimentary support from sponsors including hairdressers Herbert of Liverpool, MAC cosmetics and Cafe Rouge, who provided lunch and refreshments. Switch and GM Print also generously sponsored the show.

The course and event were organised by the WEA North West Region in partnership with Merseytravel, the Capital of Culture Company, Radio Merseyside and Marks and Spencer.

The Culture of Arts project will be running more arts events exploring the cultural diversity of Liverpool's communities. For more information visit its website: <http://www.cultureofarts.co.uk/>

Award-winning author teaches for WEA



Prize winning Tees Valley author Marion Husband (pictured) has just finished teaching a new creative writing course at the WEA Stockton Branch.

The course was aimed at women who wanted to try their hand at creative writing. It was run in partnership with New Writing North, the unique writing development agency for the North East of England.

Students had the chance to learn the techniques of creative writing and learn to guide the development of story telling, novels and other literary forms. The course was linked with the New Writing North's Andrea Badenoch Fiction Awards. Andrea was an emerging North East Novelist and a WEA tutor before she died, and the prize was established in her name to encourage other women to write.

Marion Husband, herself a past winner of the award, said: "I loved writing stories and poems as a child and teenager but stopped when I was about eighteen. Then, in about 1992, I began to write furtively in front of the TV when my children had gone to bed. I dared myself to attend an evening class called Writing For Pleasure & Profit and 'came out' as a writer, even giving family and friends stuff to read."

In 2005 Marion published her first novel *The Boy I Love*; she has written three subsequent novels and is currently working on her fifth.

Promoting healthy living



WEA West Midlands Region held a seminar in November to present research on the benefit of courses run through its Tandrusti project. Tandrusti, which has been running since 2000, uses a community education approach to encourage physical activity among black and minority ethnic (BME) groups in the Dudley area. It is based on a successful partnership between the WEA, the Primary Care Trust (PCT), and the Local Authority.

Over the past three years Tandrusti has conducted research supported by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The research included a thorough health needs assessment of Tandrusti service users across Dudley. This will be used to develop the work of the project to better meet their needs, and also to highlight the broader health and health service use issues identified in the research to health practitioners and policy makers. The project has recruited a number of multi-cultural community health volunteers from the courses, who are trained to support the health improvement efforts of the project. Following the seminar Tandrusti will be drawing up an action plan with key partners, to improve BME engagement in health and education services in the borough - making them more accessible and relevant.

The research showed that many people in the area where Tandrusti works had inadequate knowledge on how to live healthily and got little exercise in their day to day lives. A lack of awareness of facilities in the community, little awareness of food nutrition, lack of confidence to go to gyms and health centres, language and cultural barriers were some of the obstacles affecting people's health.

Tandrusti has broken down these barriers by raising awareness of the importance of nutrition and physical activity. Educating people in basic health care and providing exercise classes in a comfortable environment has given participants more confidence and improved their fitness. One participant said: "After a fall I was walking with two sticks, and now I have the confidence to walk without any help." In

addition to these benefits, by attending the classes people felt part of a group and have gained a sense of belonging, as another learner said: "When you exercise as a group it is more interesting, the company makes you enjoy it more."

Director of Education and Strategy Peter Templeton told the seminar that the WEA "has a commitment to use education to change lives" and emphasised how proud the WEA was to be involved with the Tandrusti work, which had paved the way for a new type of tailored physical education. A project inspired by Tandrusti but adapted to meet the needs of the local population is now running in Stoke, accompanied by a new WEA office in the city. Like Tandrusti, it runs courses that are culturally competent, local, informal and supportive. The Stoke work has received funding from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and more recently the Big Lottery Fund, and the WEA in Stoke is also now working with the Beth Johnson Foundation, a national organisation that challenges age discrimination through pioneering initiatives bringing together research, policy and best practice.

You can download the research report *Our Health Our Action* from:
<http://tinyurl.com/tandrep>

or a twelve page summary from:
<http://tinyurl.com/tandsum>



The West Midlands Region has begun producing a quarterly **Projects' Newsletter** to showcase their projects and keep those interested informed on progress with achievements and bids. The first issue includes news of £196,619 funding from the Big Lottery Fund for the Stoke work mentioned above, a project in Birmingham supported by the Department for International Development (DfID) and much else besides. The first issue can be downloaded from: <http://tinyurl.com/weawmn1>

Tawney Celebration

The WEA celebrated the centenary of the first WEA tutorial class with a seminar on 7 November recognising the life and work of R H Tawney, who taught the class in Longton, Stoke-on-Trent.

Tawney was an eminent social thinker and economic historian, and was deeply involved with WEA from its early beginnings. His tutorials occupy an iconic place in the history of the development of adult education. He was sent by Oxford University and the WEA to run the first-ever tutorial class, teaching economic history at university standards to adult students in Longton.

The experiment was a great success and became a distinctive method of teaching through which thousands of working-class adults were introduced to higher education over the following decades. By 1914 there were 145 tutorial classes around the country introducing 3,300 students to higher education. Two-thirds of the classes were in social history, economics or politics.

Tawney saw first-hand how the lives of the working class students were transformed by this learning experience, and while teaching at the London School of Economics (LSE) and Glasgow University, he continued to teach tutorials at the WEA in both Longton and Rochdale, where classes began soon after the Longton ones. Remarkably for 1908, he travelled weekly from Oxford to Longton to deliver the Friday class, before delivering a class on



Saturday in Rochdale on his way to Glasgow.

The early tutors on other Longton tutorial classes came from Tawney's first class - which they still attended themselves while teaching another group. An early tutor was Lord Longford, who changed political allegiance from Tory to Labour as a result of his experiences teaching tutorial classes in Stoke.

The WEA is still running courses for ordinary people in both Longton and Rochdale one hundred years after Tawney did. Indeed, a minibus-load of WEA learners from Rochdale attended the seminar and the similarities and differences between the WEA's work in the two locations, both today and one hundred years ago, were discussed.

The seminar was held at The Potteries Museum, and featured presentations by Dr Lawrence Goldman, Fellow in Modern History at St Peter's College, Oxford and Dr Stephen Roberts, Editor for the History of Parliament Trust and Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

Louise Williams, WEA Programme Area Manager for Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire was also on hand to explain the WEA's current work in Stoke, where a new office has recently been opened and the WEA is running a community health project with funding from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and more recently the Big Lottery Fund. This is in addition to ongoing work in the area including courses helping people gain literacy and numeracy qualifications and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses - many learners of which go on to become actively involved in education within their communities - plus computing classes to help people in the city overcome the digital divide. The WEA is also one of only two providers of liberal adult education left in the Stoke area.

- Read more about Tawney at the Encyclopaedia of Informal Education: www.infed.org/thinkers/tawney.htm

From stories to stage

Locals in Penicuik, Midlothian, were treated to a performance of a play produced through a WEA class in September. *The Penicuik Play*, which provides an insight into the community life and working industries of the area during the war, proved a great success. Eight more performances of the play are due to be staged in the next six months.

The project began with residents of the Pentland House care home learning to improve their reading, writing and literacy skills, through the interests they had in their past and their own life stories. Writer Cecilia Rose worked with some of the residents to turn their stories into sketches for the play.

The play linked several types of work the WEA is used to doing in Midlothian, as Area Tutor Organiser Elizabeth Bryan says: "We are very involved with literacy work around the country and we are very involved in oral history, reminiscent history and social history projects. But this was the first time we put them together. Oral history is a great way of bringing history to life. It was also about people continuing to use a mix of communication skills."

A large part of the total cost of the project was generously funded by financial services firm JP Morgan. The project was a partnership between the WEA Scotland, Midlothian Council's 'MALANI' (the Midlothian and Adult Literacy and Numeracy Initiative) and Pentland House.

Black History Month

The WEA marked Black History Month with successful events at both ends of the country. WEA North East and London regions held interesting and entertaining events attended by WEA staff, volunteers and members of the public, both of which led to lively discussion and debate.



WEA London Region's first Black History Month event included high profile speakers and a fashion show, and was held at renowned Hoxton jazz club Charlie Wright's International. As well as giving a platform for issues and stories to be heard from black history past and present, the motivation behind the event was for the speakers' and participants' stories to impact on future course planning by highlighting relevant and thought-provoking ideas.

Race equality advisor Natasha Sivanandan critically challenged the reasons why we celebrate Black history; political activist Clara Osagiede talked about the recent strike by cleaners of the London Underground which she led; WEA tutor Gerald Mensah-Coker gave a talk on the biography of Olaudah Equiano, an enslaved man who

became a writer and antislavery campaigner and a prominent figure in Black history; WEA staff member Esther Morris presented a fashion show from the Windrush to contemporary days; Peter Vacher, a jazz critic and WEA tutor, discussed and analysed a series of important historical jazz pieces, and artist Mbuyisa Maphalala discussed his own work and a WEA collective art project with a Black Elders' Group he had tutored for.

The WEA North East region invited Yve Ngoo, leader of the BBC's ROOTS Project, to speak at their event. The ROOTS project explored the culture of people with African roots living in the North East of England. Yve's talk gave attendees an insight into the history of the black and minority ethnic population in Tyneside, and he also spoke about American anti-slavery campaigner William Wells Brown (pictured), who described Newcastle in the 1850s as a headquarters of anti-slavery. Visitors also had the opportunity to learn about how they could rediscover their own family and community history.



Celebrating fifteen years of Highlands success

A report on fifteen years of the Enterprising Women Programme in the Highlands has been released, and a conference held by WEA Scotland to celebrate its continuing success.

The programme was designed to meet the needs of the local economy by giving adults the confidence and skills to return to further learning and play a more active role in the workplace. It won a NIACE Good Practice Award in 1995 and has been an inspiration to hundreds of people in the Highlands. The conference heard from a number of past students on the positive direction their lives had taken since leaving the course.

A key ingredient in the success was the role played by the core tutors; they were committed to the programme and offered ongoing support to the students. Year after year, follow up surveys show that almost half the students that completed their courses are in employment. These data show how important informal adult learning was to this community, prompting discussion at the conference that similar programmes should be introduced elsewhere.

The report, *15 Years On: Listening to our Learners*, is available as a PDF file from <http://tinyurl.com/6eyy5c> or you can request one from the postal address on page 12.

"The Opening Doors course gave me the confidence to get a job I 'wanted' to do and I am now training to qualify as a nurse."

"It gave me some confidence when I was at a low point in my life."

Quotes from learners on the programme.

"One of the most rewarding aspects of being involved in these courses is watching students grow in confidence and make positive changes to their lives."

Quote from Mary Applegate, one of the core tutors.

Leicester: One Hundred Years of Learning

The WEA Leicester Branch has celebrated its centenary with an evening event on 14 November where a book about its history was launched. *Still Learning* was researched and written by students of the Branch's Hands on History course, and gives readers a unique insight into the first one hundred years of the WEA in Leicestershire.

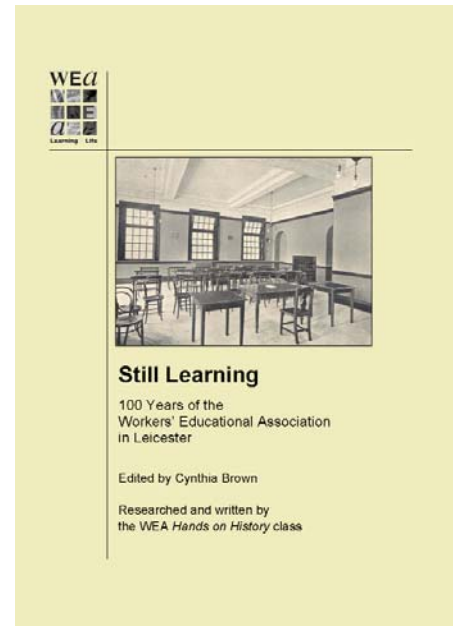
WEA tutor organiser Cherry Heinrich and tutor and historian Cynthia Brown first decided that using all the archive information stored in the cellar of Vaughn College, Leicester (where the local WEA office is situated) and turning it into a publication would be a great idea. The suggestion was then made to incorporate courses in how to carry out historical research with the cataloguing and organising of the archive information. This would give students a chance to learn researching skills, while adding to understanding about the history of their local branch. The class also received a grant from Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society to enable them to travel to London Metropolitan University, where the national WEA archive is kept.

The 60 page book explores in depth the history of the Leicester Branch from its opening on 4 September 1908 to the present day. The WEA was popular from the outset, with provision soon attracting hundreds of people. Leicester had a strong tradition of working class education, and was one of the first towns in England to take up the opportunities offered by the Cambridge University Extension Syndicate.

A landmark in the WEA's history in Leicester was the opening of the 101 Hinckley Road building in 1979. The building was the first in the area to provide a crèche to enable parents with young children to attend courses, and was described by one learner as "very welcoming and friendly - a good place to make friends," while another added: "There was never any worry about childcare as we just took them along."

The branch was not just a place to improve academic knowledge; it also brought communities together. The book covers the many social activities associated with the branch over the years, including the Vaughn Players theatre company, the Folk Dancing Society and a rambling club.

Still Learning: 100 Years of the Workers' Educational Association in Leicester is available to buy for £3. Order your copy by sending a cheque made payable to WEA Leicester Branch to: Still Learning Publications, WEA office, Vaughn College, St Nicholas Circle, Leicester, LE1 4LB.



Walsall TU Branch Anniversary

Another branch marking an anniversary is the WEA Walsall Trade Union Branch, which has been running for thirty years. It originated from the Trade Union Studies elements of the 10-day Stewards and Health & Safety Reps courses which followed the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act.

After several such courses had been arranged by the WEA, it was suggested that a local branch be set up, and invitations were sent out to students on courses. In 1978, the steering group of the Walsall Trades Council with the support of the main trades unions of the time agreed to form the Branch, which produced its first newsletter in November 1978. The branch continues to produce a bulletin, which it currently sends to over 350 contacts each month.

Branch Secretary George Mason says: "We would like to express our sincere thanks to all Trade Union Members and their branches and to Walsall Trades Union Council and its delegates who, over the last thirty years of our existence have given magnificent support, both financially and with their personal efforts - these have enabled us to continue our WEA/TUC work."

Opera

The Royal Opera House is bringing high definition opera and ballet performances to over fifty cinemas around the country.

Recorded performances to see on the big screen will include Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*, Bizet's *Carmen*, and Ashton's *Tales of Beatrix Potter*. A total of sixteen opera, ballet and choral concert performances will be available by summer 2009.

To find out what's on near you visit www.roh.org.uk/cinemas or call the Royal Opera House switchboard on 020 7240 1200.

Bottom-Up Learning: A Review of *Learning Power*

John Hayes MP reviews a report which makes recommendations on how adult education can be used to strengthen democracy and participation in decision-making by the poorest and most disenfranchised groups in society

As our nation faces a difficult time it is important, now more than ever, that we recognise the importance of skills. They provide the key to unlocking of the nation's potential for renewed economic growth. Skills improve productivity and thus our competitiveness, but they matter for individuals and communities as well.

Titus Alexander's paper, *Learning Power*, is a timely reminder of the importance of learning in reinvigorating communities, building citizenship and restoring social cohesion. It is also a forceful case for the significance of community learning as a driver of the skills agenda. Alexander has developed an inclusive model of community development and a concept of political education that localises and humanises the machinery of public services. It is a model that has much in common with Conservative policies for innovative, deregulated community based education.

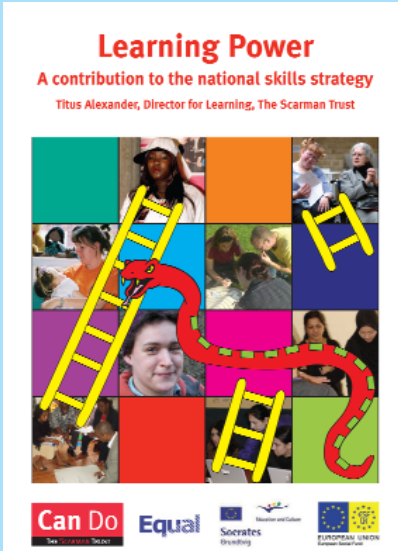
Alexander's case for the importance of community learning is undeniable. It is only by providing easy and attractive points into learning that we will unleash the untapped talent to be found in disengaged and disenfranchised communities. Yet the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) has estimated that 1.5 million adult education places have been lost in the last three years, most of which are in courses that relate directly to the work skills such as IT. The first rungs on the ladder back into education and

training have been broken as a result of an increasingly prescriptive approach to the delivery of adult education

Reversing the decline in adult learning will be a priority of the next Conservative Government. In 1943, Rab Butler's White Paper on Educational Reconstruction - which led to the landmark 1944 Education Act - stressed the role that education plays in building cohesive democratic citizenship. Butler recognised that engagement in adult education leads to greater civic engagement - improving the health of both individuals and communities. Because I believe that we should be no less ambitious now than we were then we intend to establish a new adult and community learning fund, with an investment of £100 million every year. Surely our generation too can aspire to more than dull utility.

Our aim to put education back at the heart of civic life is inspired through faith in the intrinsic value of learning; how it builds better lives and stronger communities. For too long political debate on education has been stifled by a limited view about what each of us should aim for, what all of us could attain. Now it is the time to champion a new paradigm which elevates the significance of teaching and learning in achieving social mobility, social cohesion and social justice.

John Hayes is the Conservative MP for South Holland the Deepings, and has been a Shadow Minister for Innovation, Universities and Skills since July 2007.



Learning Power was written by Titus Alexander of the Novas Scarman Group. It makes the case for practical political education as a key skill for releasing potential, increasing opportunities, tackling poverty and ending social exclusion. It draws on a two-year ESF capacity building programme run by the Scarman Trust with grassroots Community Champions across England.

It is available free as a PDF file from the following address: <http://static.novas.org/files/learning-power-262.pdf> or you can order a copy by sending a cheque for £5 (payable to Novas Scarman Group) to Titus Alexander, Novas Scarman Group, 68 Parkway, Camden Town, London NW1 7AH.

Learning Power has been welcomed across the political spectrum and was launched by David Lammy MP, Minister for Skills, in the House of Commons.

A CALL to action

The WEA is one of the five founding organisations of a campaign for the right of everyone to access to learning irrespective of class, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, asylum status or employment.

The Campaigning Alliance for Lifelong Learning (CALL) has had a huge impact on the adult education sector, with over one hundred organisations declaring their support since its launch at the end of September.

The launch event saw two hundred people from various parts of the sector voicing their opinions and frustrations over recent student fee increases and the prospect of cuts in funding. Ann Walker, Director of the WEA Yorkshire and Humber Region, spoke on behalf of the WEA, saying that: "We need not just a trained workforce, but an educated one. People need to be able to adapt to today's society. Education - as opposed to narrow vocational training related to a particular job - can help them to do so by increasing their confidence and through helping them learn to learn".

Many other speeches from the podium and the floor echoed these views and showed why the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) need to take into account the thousands of adult learners who rely on education to improve their lives.

Secretary of State John Denham responded to CALL in an address to the Association of Colleges conference by saying that: "We have recently produced a report on our Informal Adult Learning findings and I'm hugely excited about work going on

with CALL and with other stakeholders to work up proposals to be published in the New Year." He has also arranged to meet with each of the founding organisations of CALL, including the WEA - a meeting that has already taken place (see page two).



The CALL website at www.callcampaign.org.uk is updated regularly with news and regular bulletins on the progress of the campaign. It is also where you can join CALL - either as an individual or an organisation.

To show your support and receive up to date information on the campaign you can also join the facebook group by typing in the link below. <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=33744571532>

An **online survey** has been set up by CALL to gather real life experiences and focus on the impact of lifelong learning on individuals and communities. The deadline to fill in the survey is the 9th January 2009. To fill it in just visit this website: <http://tinyurl.com/callsv>

WEA learner Vicki Annetts from Barnsley filled in the survey: "I started my learning journey as an adult on the WEA Helping in Schools course...I now work full time in the community encouraging other adults to do as I have done...If I had not had this free initial learning opportunity that got me on the learning ladder I would not be where I am today."

2009 WEA Diaries

WEA pocket diaries for 2009 are available to order now. The burgundy Senator diaries feature a week-to-view layout, world and UK maps and four pages of WEA information including regional contact details. The diaries have proved popular with students and voluntary members in recent years.

Diaries are priced at £4.95 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 Clifton Street, London EC2A 4HB.

Please send me ____ 2009 WEA Diary(ies).

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____ Telephone _____

I enclose a cheque payable to Workers' Educational Association for £_____





Arrivals, departures and exchanges

Communications and Development

A warm welcome to **Antonella Pozzuto**, a Marketing and Business student at London Metropolitan University who is spending a year with the WEA as a work placement and has already proved a great asset to the department.

Mel Hook left the WEA with our best wishes in October at the end of a three month contract during which she managed the implementation of the members' web area. Mel has moved on to a post as website manager for the Royal College of Surgeons.

Commercial Services Director **Bob Tarbuck** left the WEA in August. See page four for future WEA fundraising plans.

London Region

Welcome to **Eileen Moore**, who joined the region as Finance Officer at the beginning of November.

Eastern Region

The region has welcomed **Beckie Cox**, who joined the Administrative Team on 10 November.

East Midlands Region

Two members of staff have retired from the region with our best wishes: **Frances Pollard**, who made a major contribution to the WEA's work in Leicester through her involvement with 101 Hinckley Road Branch from its earliest days, more recently playing a key role in developing learner support and Matrix services in the Region, and **Judy Rigby**, who made major contributions to the growth of the region's programme in Nottinghamshire.

Welcome to **Carol Chambers**, who has joined the WEA to take up the post of Organiser for Lincoln and mid-Lincolnshire, and to **Joanna Hinton**, who will be joining the region at the beginning of December as administrator for Lincoln and mid-Lincolnshire.

Southern Region

David Heley, who was a Tutor Organiser in Sussex, left the WEA in November to take up a position with the Open University. He had worked for the WEA for 10 years. Welcome to **Francesca Byrne**, who has been recruited to replace David.

Welcome also to three new members of staff who have been recruited to the East Surrey Project: **Nicola Candy** is the Volunteer Development Worker, **Samantha Johnson** is a consolidated

Maude Warwick

Sad news of the death of Maude Warwick, a former WEA student, volunteer and staff member. Maude became Tutor Organiser for Cleveland in 1970 but already been long associated with the WEA, having joined her first class in York in 1951. She became a member of the York branch holding the offices of Treasurer and Secretary and it was for her participation and voluntary work that she was awarded the Robert Addy Hopkinson Scholarship to Hillcroft College in 1954/55. At this time, Maude worked for British Rail in York and was also the TSSA representative at the District Council meetings of Yorkshire North.

In 1966 she was awarded a Local Authority grant to study History and Sociology at the University of York and graduated in 1969 with an Honours Degree. In addition to attending District Summer Schools, both at home and abroad, she represented her union at WETUC weekend schools. Maude's knowledge of the WEA and the union proved extremely valuable when she was appointed as Tutor Organiser and it was through her initiative that day-release courses with the Steel Industry in Middlesbrough were started. In 1971 she also took a party of workers to Germany to see something of the steel industry in the Ruhr. Maude gave tremendous support to the branches and part-time tutors in her area for twenty years before her retirement in 1990, at which time a presentation to her was made at the district AGM.

At Maude's funeral in November, donations to the WEA were requested instead of flowers - a touching gesture for which we are most grateful.

Tutor and **Anna Brunton** a Community Dance Tutor. All took up their positions in November.

Emma Leavey will be going on maternity leave from the beginning of December and **Sarah Nichols** will be taking over the role of Sussex ESOL Organiser for the duration of the maternity cover. **Sara Guiel** will take over the role of Consolidated ESOL Tutor to cover for Sarah Nichols.

South West Region

Congratulations to **Claire Hawker**, Admin Assistant in Exeter, and her partner, Kevin, on the birth of their son Charlie (8lbs, 6.5ozs) on 11 November. Five year old sister Molly is delighted and is being very helpful!

Welcome to:

Carol Jones, who started on 20 October as the new full time Admin Assistant in Bristol. As well as a number of admin and secretarial roles, Carol formerly taught French and German.

Melanie Evans, who has joined as a 0.6 FTE Consolidated Skills for Life (Numeracy/ESOL) Tutor based in Bristol. Melanie has previously taught for the WEA and has a wealth of experience.

Julia Donnell, who has joined the Plymouth office as a 0.4 FTE Family Development Worker (Big Lottery Fund Project). This post involves reaching and recruiting families and organising activities in the Plymouth area. Julia previously worked with the Princes Trust.

Yorkshire and Humber Region

Many happy returns to Administration Manager **Deb Collins** on her 50th birthday on 27 August. Colleagues arranged a surprise presentation and lunch which involved Deb being given 50 presents and a cake!

Warm congratulations also go to Accreditation Officer **Adam Roe** on his marriage, which also took place in late August.

About WEA News

If you have an item for inclusion or would like to comment on the newsletter please get in touch.

It is not always possible to include all items submitted.

Correspondence should be addressed to:

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or emailed to news@wea.org.uk

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the WEA. The WEA is non-party in politics.

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We are the largest voluntary sector provider of adult education in Britain and provide learning opportunities for over 80,000 people each year.