



April to June 2008: Issue 17

WEA's quality affirmed by Ofsted

The results of an Ofsted inspection, published on 7 May 2008, have confirmed that the WEA is a good provider of adult education, with strong capacity in place for further improvement.

The report describes the overall effectiveness of WEA provision as good and identifies provision in the subject area of Health, Public Services and Care as outstanding. Also graded good are achievement and standards; the effectiveness of teaching and learning; the extent to which programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners, and the role of leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners. The guidance and support given to learners is rated as satisfactory.

The report states that the WEA has "maintained all of its key strengths since the previous inspection and rectified most of the weaknesses" and goes on to say that "Strategic leadership and management of change are strong, particularly through the General Secretary and senior managers. They have implemented significant structural and cultural changes successfully over the last four years and led the Association through a period of recovery and development, while retaining its core purpose and values."

General Secretary Richard Bolsin welcomes the report: "Everyone who has been working to support the WEA over the last few years will be delighted by the outcome - even though we entered this inspection with a sense of confidence. From a management and educational standpoint we're very pleased with the result, particularly the fact that it fully supports our own pre-inspection judgements through self-assessment. I am also greatly encouraged that this report also recognises the

contribution of volunteers as a strength of the WEA. This is particularly welcome, given that it is our voluntary movement which makes the WEA unique."

The inspection result in England follows the outstanding grade given to WEA Scotland by HMIE in November last year (see WEA News issue 16).

The full inspection report can be downloaded from the Ofsted website at www.ofsted.gov.uk

Key Strengths

- ★ Strong leadership
- ★ Excellent partnerships
- ★ Good performance management to promote improvement
- ★ Very good responsiveness to community needs
- ★ Good development of learners' skills and knowledge
- ★ The role and contribution of volunteers across the Association

Areas for improvement

- The insufficient participation of men
- The insufficient sharing of good practice
- The arrangements for monitoring and reporting learners' success on non-accredited learning
- The formal monitoring of learners' progression

More detail on inspection with results by type of course: pages 5 - 8

DIUS Consultation: Your chance to shape the future of adult education in the UK : page 2

Have Your Say

Many readers will already have heard about the current government consultation on **Informal Adult Learning: Shaping the Way Ahead**. The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) consultation gives a rare chance to contribute to shaping the future framework for lifelong learning in this country. DIUS has extended the deadline for submissions from 15 May to 12 June.

General Secretary Richard Bolsin says, "I think everyone with an interest in adult learning, whether as an individual, a branch, or as an organisation, should make a response to the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) by the deadline of 12 June. If we neglect or fail in that task, then we shall have only ourselves to blame if we are unhappy with what emerges.

"My own view is that the opportunity to contribute and the scope and breadth of the consultation document, including its positive and celebratory style, are to be welcomed. However, we must not overlook the document's weaknesses and the causes for concern it raises."

In addition to encouraging responses from individual learners, tutors, branches and staff members, the WEA will be writing its own response to the DIUS and will also forward to the Department all the responses it has received from branches and individuals. Some of the key points of the WEA's response will be to emphasise the need for continued clear funding lines, to state the importance of learning being guided by skilled tutors and the value of non-vocational learning, and to argue for the contribution that these make to civil society.

Three WEA events have been held to disseminate information about the consultation and help the WEA understand views of its learners and members in order to inform its own response to government. The first was a **national event held in London** on 4 April, with contributions from Pam Johnson of Unison, Richard Williams of Rathbone and WEA Chair of Trustees Dick Taylor (who is also Director of the Institute of Continuing Education, University of Cambridge).

Yorkshire and Humber Region organised an evening event, co-funded with the University of Leeds, on 25 April. The event was well attended, especially for a wet Friday evening, with attendees including WEA learners, tutors, members and organisers, a former MP and colleagues from further and higher education - as well as representatives of a wide range of other organisations and community groups. Participants discussed the consultation in groups - with a key message from the evening being



Photograph: Anne Staines

for everyone to tell ten people about the consultation and the importance of responding - and to ask those ten people to tell ten more!

North East Region devoted much of their well-attended Spring Conference to the subject on 2 May. The main speaker in the morning was Liz Lawson of the DIUS, who presented the department's position and emphasised (in reply to responses already received) that the intention is not for new technologies to replace face-to-face learning but for them to complement it. She also emphasised that Secretary of State John Denham had been personally involved in the drafting of the consultation document - even on his son's 18th birthday - and that he is passionate about adult learning, the role of volunteers and joining up the adult education work of different government departments. She also explained that Denham would be open to suggestions for a better term than 'Informal Adult Learning' - so any suggestions to news@wea.org.uk are very welcome! In the afternoon, Minister for the North East Nick Brown MP spoke to the conference, and agreed to pass a petition of 1,400 signatures gathered by the Right to Learn Campaign organised by WEA Newcastle Branch to Denham - but only on the condition that he could add his own signature to the petition (he is pictured signing it). "I live here too and I care about this", he said. The other keynote speakers on the day were Alan Tuckett, Director of NIACE, and WEA Regional Director Nigel Todd, who asked delegates the question, "Would the Pitmen Painters be allowed today?"

The full consultation document itself and two response forms - one (recently added) designed specifically for learners, the other longer and perhaps more suited to sector specialists - are available from <http://www.adultlearningconsultation.org.uk/download/>

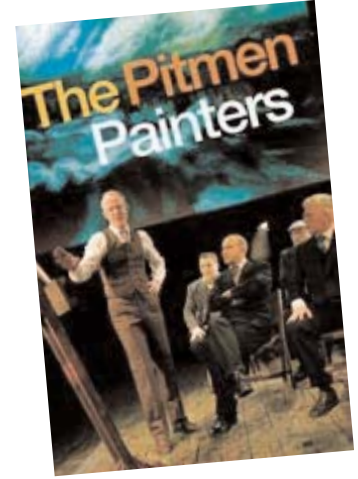
Pitmen Painters go National

The Pitmen Painters, a play about the internationally renowned Ashington Group of working class painters, is moving to the National Theatre in London following a sell-out run at Newcastle's Live Theatre. The Ashington Group began as a WEA art class in the 1930s.

The play will run in the Cottesloe Theatre from 19 May to 25 June, with tickets available at prices ranging from £10 to £29. The run includes eight matinee shows as well as the evening performances, and there will also be two audio-described shows and one captioned show. Tickets are available from the National Theatre (www.nationaltheatre.org.uk or 020 7452 3000).

Before the 4 June performance, Pitmen Painters' playwright Lee Hall and director Max Roberts will be joined by art critic William Feaver (author of 'Pitmen Painters: The Ashington Group 1934 - 1984) in a discussion and reflection on the Group and their achievements. Anyone wishing to attend this talk will need to separately book their place for it from the National Theatre.

A free exhibition of paintings, drawings and sculptures by Ashington Group artists is being held at the National Theatre to coincide with the play, and will also be open from 19 May to 25 June. A collection of works by the Ashington Group is also on longer-term display in the East Gallery of the Woodhorn Colliery museum, Northumberland (<http://www.experiencewoodhorn.com> or 01670 52 80 80).



"An inspiring, important new play...both deliciously comic and grave".

The Observer

"The inspiring story of ordinary people doing extraordinary things."

Metro

"A play about the importance of not just feeding your stomach and your brain, but about feeding your soul. And it does just that."

The Guardian

Not Just the Economy

A new book on the public value of adult learning



Many readers will remember the joint conference held by WEA and NIACE in Coventry last year on the theme of the public value of adult education - to families, communities, government departments and indeed to society. NIACE has subsequently published a book on the subject, edited by Colin Flint and Chris Hughes, with contributions from seventeen professionals in the UK adult education sector.

WEA General Secretary Richard Bolsin contributes a chapter on Learners' Perspectives, while those who attended in Coventry will remember the presentation by Leon Feinstein, who also contributes to the book with a chapter on providing evidence of the value of education to social productivity (co-written with Ricardo Sabates).

The book calls for better understanding of the public value of adult learning. Its contributors believe that education to create and sustain cultural value is as important as education for access to employment and workforce development. They campaign for continued educational opportunity for those who have been failed by our educational systems. The essays are wide-ranging, stimulating, and provocative and make a convincing argument for a well-educated citizenry, empowered through learning. NIACE hopes that the book will help persuade policy-makers that lifelong learning is not windy rhetoric, but a prerequisite to social cohesion.

Not Just the Economy is available from NIACE for £12.95 (www.niace.org.uk or 0116 204 7068/2804).

Today I Sat In Monsal Dale

Today, I sat in Monsal Dale,
And saw the peace and beauty there.
I knew at once, though I might fail,
My God would never cease to care.

And as I watched proud Nature stage
Her own immortal Super-show,
Man's politics were another age
And no part of my complacent glow.

If lemming man must rush unchecked
Towards his own created gloom,
Shall we see such beauty wrecked
In the maniac march of concrete gloom.

But here, by rippling mountain stream
Set amidst lush and verdant glade,
There must be hope for my poor dream
That man's consuming greed be stayed.

By Ron Peck

25 November 1926 - 15 January 2008

See page 12 for Ron's obituary.

A writing group formed from a WEA class in Southern Region have written a book to help nearby ESOL students learn to read English without having to resort to stories designed for children.

Alison Haymonds of WEA Windsor Branch takes up the tale...

The story began in Slough in late 2003 when our then Tutor Organiser June Diegan asked me to plan and teach a WEA course called Write and Tell Your Story. It was June's idea to encourage people to develop their writing skills and learn ways of telling their own stories as fact or fiction. Only three students presented themselves at Slough Library for the first session - but their quality far outweighed their quantity. The following week we had eleven and we were off. We ran a follow-up course and a second course, and then two further follow-up courses called Your Story into a Book, at the end of which we produced a book of stories written by students.

By this time the writing group had become a habit that core members of the courses did not want to break, so we agreed to meet independently. From January 2005 a small group, including two of those three from the very first session, started meeting monthly as the Write Your Story Writing Group. One member has left the area but there are still ten of us and the only difference is that we have moved from Slough Library to the Family Welfare Association in Britwell, who kindly offered us a free home from September 2005.

The idea of writing for Slough learners came when I visited WEA English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners in Chalvey to write a story on their achievements for a local paper. I was very impressed by the dedication of the tutors and the enthusiasm of the learners - who were from twenty different countries. Chatting to one of the tutors, I learned how difficult it was to find suitable reading material for intelligent, mature students who happened not to speak English as their first language. The problem had not changed from the 1970s when I was involved in adult literacy work and found that teaching adults using children's books was not much fun for either of us.

I pricked up my ears because it seemed to me that here was a project for the writing group. I knew the members always liked a challenge so when I suggested we try to produce some stories that would interest adults but were written with simplicity and clarity, they took on the task gracefully but with some trepidation. I had already asked June what she thought of the idea and she was as enthusiastic as ever, and the WEA Course Organiser at Slough, Sara Mines, was also encouraging - so we started writing.

It was a good deal more difficult than we had expected and we all struggled. The hardest thing was to get people to accept the idea that we were not 'dumbing down' but instead writing adult stories in much simpler language, cutting out ambiguities and sub-clauses wherever possible and making sure unusual words could be understood in context. In fact it was good practice for the sort of writing style advocated by George Orwell, that master of the prose. His key rules were sincerity, simplicity and concreteness; and with these in mind, and the guidance of a couple of successful books used by adult learners and advice passed on from a trainee teacher, we kept trying.

We started early in 2007 and it was several months before we felt we were getting anywhere. By August we eventually ended up with twenty-five short pieces, two from each of the members and one from a member who moved away during the year. Some were fiction but more were pieces of non-fiction written from personal experience. I suspect the Slough learners will particularly enjoy the pieces written by those of our members who themselves came to Slough as newcomers many years ago, and the pieces recalling family life half a century ago.

We are fortunate in having Richard Fox as a member of the group, who quite apart from being a talented writer and an enthusiastic and encouraging group member is a printer by trade. He produced the third booklet produced by the group, Doodlebugs and Doozledogs. If you want to understand the title, read the book! Sara liked the book and at her suggestion Richard produced an A4 version so that tutors can choose and grade the story according to the individual learner and learners can work on the pieces themselves. I think this is a brilliant idea - yet another example of new technology being used imaginatively.

I think everyone in the writing group will agree that writing together has changed and enriched our lives, and we hope that what we have experienced will be shared by other members of the community. What better way could there be of realising our and their full potential through learning? Members of the writing group are hoping to meet the Slough learners and find out what they think of our stories. It will be the satisfying culmination of what has been hard work but also great fun. We only hope the learners will get as much pleasure out of the stories as we did.

Inspection results by subject

The Ofsted inspection of the WEA observed and reported on classes in five Sector Subject Areas of provision.

The boxes on pages five to eight show the overall grade, description of the work and some selected quotes for each of these subject areas.

All this information, including the descriptions of what the provision is, have been taken from the inspection report - for

the full picture please see the report itself, which is publicly available at www.ofsted.gov.uk

As well as the detailed findings on subject areas, the inspection report also covers the overall effectiveness of the organisation; its capacity to improve further; its achievement and standards; its quality of provision, and its leadership and management. The WEA was awarded a Good grade in all these aspects of its work.

Health, Public Services and Care

Grade: Outstanding

What is it?

The main focus of this work is the improvement of learners' physical and mental health and the preparation of learners for employment [and volunteering] in schools [the latter provided mostly] through the Helping in Schools programme. Courses take place mainly in settings used for community involvement and health improvement.

There were 8,378 learners in 2006/07. Most of the learners are aged between 25 and 45 years and 85% are women. 18% of the learners have a physical disability and 46% are in receipt of income-related benefits. Most courses take place in the West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside regions.

Selected quotes from the inspection report

"Achievement and standards are outstanding. The development of learners' confidence, health and wellbeing is excellent. Many learners experience considerable measurable improvements in their health and wellbeing, which tutors record in detail on non-accredited courses...Learners understand the health measurements applied to them and the implications for their own, and their families', health. Staff encourage learners to become reflective practitioners. Learners on the 'Helping in Schools' programmes write detailed learning diaries that evaluate their personal learning accurately. The standard of learners' written work is very good."

"The quality of provision is outstanding. Teaching and learning are very good, as identified in self-assessment. Tutors plan detailed schemes of work well and take careful account of learners' individual needs and different levels of physical ability. Staff are very enthusiastic and well motivated. They value and respect all learners highly and create an extremely positive learning environment. Tutors use a wide range of teaching and assessment methods to deliver classes that are well paced, active and interesting. Tutors explain, and refer to, learning outcomes frequently during learning sessions. They take physical measurements to confirm and reinforce learning and to demonstrate the achievement of personal learning outcomes. Staff respond sensitively to learners' individual questions during exercise classes without causing disruption to the remainder of the group. Initial assessment is very good, as is the assessment of learners' health and safety. The recognition and reporting of personal achievements on non-accredited courses are thorough."

"The choice of programmes and activities to meet the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. The range of courses is highly flexible and responsive, as identified in the self-assessment report. The WEA recruits learners with little or no previous experience and raises their aspirations very successfully."

"Support for learners is very good."

"The provision has a clearly identified purpose".

Arts, media and publishing

Grade: Good

What is it?

Most of the provision is non-accredited and includes creative writing, art in the ancient world, calligraphy, life drawing, stained glass and painting for beginners.

There were 22,693 learners in 2006/07. The distribution of the provision varies across the nine regions with five of them delivering almost 80% of the courses. Almost half of learners are aged 65 years or more and 77% are women. Approximately 40% of the learners last year were new to learning.

Selected quotes from the inspection report

"Achievement and standards are good. Learners develop good skills. In stained glass classes, learners who have recently started their course are already accepting commissions for their work. Learners on a creative writing course sell their work for publication. In art appreciation, learners have good observational drawing skills and perception...Learners are highly motivated and many consider classes to be the highlight of their week. Retention rates are high. Group visits to art galleries and museums provide valuable cultural links and enrich learners' lives."

"The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good, as identified through self-assessment. Tutors have extensive specialist knowledge and many are skilled practising professionals. They use their experience very well in the classroom where learners benefit from their knowledge of current methods and levels of expertise. Tutors have high expectations of learners and lessons are vibrant and challenging. They set targets and use well planned activities to stretch more capable learners. Learners are able to identify the progress they make and enjoy the professional and stimulating interactions they have with tutors...The celebration of learners' work and achievements is very good."

"Collaborative work with partners is good...Good partnerships exist with mental health and carer organisations and Asian women's groups. An art course run in collaboration with a residential home for elderly people led to an exhibition at a prestigious local art gallery. Some courses take place in collaboration with social services to help adults back into learning and with local universities to encourage progression to higher education. The targeting of provision in areas of disadvantage and identified need is good. The WEA offers animation courses for learners with learning and/or physical disabilities in one region and staff combine these with local fundraising and arts funding to initiate new learning group partnerships. Learners with physical disabilities improve their keyboard skills through music classes and there are mime and yoga programmes for learners with Alzheimer's disease and other debilitating ailments. Work with learners with mental health conditions uses arts and crafts to develop their confidence...Good partnerships with social services and other external agencies enable learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to participate fully in courses...Managers have implemented successful actions to improve the responsiveness of the provision. They communicate well with staff to inform them of new developments through regular meetings and newsletters. Monitoring of performance data is good."

Literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Grade: Satisfactory

What is it?

The WEA offers courses in preparation for life and work generally from pre-entry level to level 2, including literacy, numeracy, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), study skills, return to learn and life skills. Classes take place in a range of venues, such as schools, community centres and employers' premises.

There were 11,191 learners in 2006/07. 74% of the learners are new [to learning] and many come from particular target groups, including ex-offenders, homeless people and learners recovering from mental health conditions. ESOL courses account for 76% of the skills for life provision.

Selected quotes from the inspection report

"Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Retention rates are high for the large numbers of learners in this curriculum area...The monitoring of attendance is very effective and tutors challenge learners who do not attend or who are not punctual. Success rates are satisfactory and improving."

"Learners develop good skills and use them successfully in the workplace and in the communities where they live. They analyse their own performance and develop skills of self-correction and peer-correction in groups. Learners work hard and are extremely enthusiastic about their learning. Most learners improve their communication skills, which they find particularly useful in situations vital to their economic and social wellbeing...The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, as identified through self-assessment. In the best lessons, tutors plan courses well to meet learners' individual needs and use topics which are relevant to learners' everyday experiences. Classes are lively and challenging tasks enable learners to demonstrate new skills effectively. Tutors encourage learners to practise new skills at home using a range of learning materials."

"The range of programmes and activities to meet learners' needs and interests is good. Partnerships are highly effective, particularly with trade unions, employers, health centres and schools. The good partnership working enables staff to identify new provision, particularly in disadvantaged communities, and to find suitable accommodation and develop progression routes. Many courses promote cultural awareness well and take account of learners' cultural and religious backgrounds. The development of programmes with employers, which have a strong focus on employability, is good. Partners provide crèches and assist in the promotion of programmes. Courses take place at times and venues that suit learners' needs...The strategy for the development of the provision is clear, using local plans that implement national and local strategies effectively. The WEA has developed clear arrangements for the management of literacy, numeracy and ESOL and communication is good...Staff are well qualified and take part in a staff development programme."

Humanities

Grade: Good

What is it?

Courses include local and family history, geography, philosophy, theology and archaeology. Almost 75% of the provision takes place in the week during the daytime, with a small number of programmes at the weekend.

There were 14,061 learners in 2006/07. Half of the provision takes place in the Yorkshire and Humber, Eastern and Southern regions. 70% of the learners are women and 90% are aged over 55. In 2006/07, 23% of the learners were new to learning.

Selected quotes from the inspection report

"Achievement and standards are good. Retention rates are high...Learners develop good skills and knowledge. On many courses, they carry out extensive research to learn much about family histories and local archaeology. Learners have access to a wide range of original source material. In one lesson, learners were able to interpret eighteenth century documents, such as wills, diaries and letters, through careful studies of photocopies of handwritten papers from the period. Many learners develop computing skills that enable them to work on their projects between classes. They work collaboratively and enrich peers' experiences through the good sharing of expertise. Learners use specialist terminology confidently and correctly. In philosophy classes, they develop the ability to analyse the meaning of complex texts critically, using appropriate language in their discussions and written work. Learners on a history course use their knowledge and presentation skills to become volunteer guides at local history sites."

"The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good, as identified through self-assessment. Tutors are enthusiastic and experienced in teaching adult learners. They are well qualified and often renowned locally and/or nationally for their expertise. Most tutors develop a very good relationship with learners and encourage in-depth discussions. They use a good range of well planned learning activities, including worksheets, quizzes and group work. Tutors set challenging tasks for learners and encourage them successfully to reflect on their own experiences. They organise research activities on family history courses particularly well, with visits arranged to relevant museums, archives and public record offices."

"Many courses develop successfully from branch membership initiatives and have a strong focus on the needs of local communities. Enrichment opportunities for learners to develop their understanding further are good. The current provision provides good learning opportunities for older learners at times which suit them to attend learning. There is insufficient focus on targeting some particular groups of learners, including younger adults and people from a minority ethnic background...The WEA has identified this area for improvement through self-assessment and has started to run cultural history courses to target under-represented groups of learners."

"Curriculum area leaders in each region provide good support for part-time tutors. The arrangements to evaluate courses and the quality of teaching and learning are thorough. Managers identify actions to improve the quality of the provision and monitor the outcomes. They use data well to plan the provision...Partnerships are productive with a range of organisations, including museums, public records offices and local history clubs."

"Professional development for tutors is good. Part-time staff take part in an extensive range of training opportunities, including events on course planning, using ILT and improving teaching methods. Training takes place at times to suit tutors and the attendance at all events is good. The sharing of good practice is an important feature of training and tutors are able to identify the benefits of training in the quality and variety of their teaching."

Community Learning

Grade: Good

What is it?

Courses include short and introductory programmes in health and personal development, ICT, crafts, confidence-building, interpreting skills, family history and courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They take place in community venues, such as church halls, community centres, schools and the WEA's own learning centres. The WEA does not identify community learning as a separate area of work, but has introduced the title 'Second Chance to Learn' in 2007/08 as one of its three educational strands to identify courses that meet the needs and interests of learners who are new to learning or who have not taken part in any formal education for a considerable period of time. The WEA manages these courses through its curriculum areas, such as health, public services and care and arts, media and publishing.

There were 8,126 learners in 2006/07.

Selected quotes from the inspection report

"Achievement and standards are good, as are retention rates".

"Learners develop good levels of confidence and practical skills, which have a positive effect on their lives. They acquire good ICT skills. Older learners become less isolated as they use email to keep in touch with their families and friends, or shop and pay bills online. Asian women become confident enough to design and make their own clothes. They enjoy meeting other local women to talk about Asian fashions and culture. Women on confidence-building courses become more assertive in dealing with domestic violence issues. Many learners adopt healthier lifestyles through health and fitness programmes. There are many examples of learners who progress to further training, or to become volunteers or tutors."

"The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. For most learners, their time with the WEA provides them with their first positive experience of learning. Much of the teaching is lively and reflects Learners' diverse individual needs. The range of activities is very stimulating in many classes. Learners participate actively in lessons and learn from each other. Some tutors speak a number of minority languages, which helps many learners to develop their language skills. Tutors reinforce health and safety continually in practical sessions."

"The focus on meeting the needs and interests of learners is particularly strong. The provision is highly flexible and responsive. The WEA targets specific disadvantaged and marginalised priority groups successfully, such as lone parents, travellers, people from a minority ethnic background, women's groups and adults with a disability or mental health condition. It works very effectively with a wide range of partners and agencies to provide an extensive range of courses. Course timings and attendance patterns are very flexible to suit learners' personal lifestyles and many centres offer drop-in facilities."

"Support for individual learners is very good. Learners respond well to the empathy which tutors show. Many of the staff have progressed into their current role from WEA courses and act as inspirational role models to learners. The very good support extends beyond lessons, as staff have excellent contacts with external agencies. In many lessons, tutors make good use of adaptive technology, volunteer helpers, signers and learning support workers to assist learners. Learners receive financial assistance with fees, transport and childcare. The provision of appropriate information and advice before and near to the end of courses helps most learners to make well informed choices about progression."

"Leadership and management are good. Curriculum management is good and courses are organised well through very effective teamwork. Tutors are highly experienced and well qualified in their subject. Part-time tutors take part in a wide range of good staff development activities, which focus on teaching and learning. Communication is good through team meetings and the wide range of information available on the WEA's intranet. The observation of teaching and learning process is well established and reliable. Staff seek learners' views actively and use them to improve the provision."

Shared mission for WEA and OU

The Open University (OU) and the WEA have agreed a joint Statement of Intent to work together to extend the opportunities available to adult learners. Both organisations share a mission to promote social justice through education, and commitments to widening participation in education and enabling people to fulfil their potential through learning.

It is hoped that the partnership will help provide more progression routes for WEA learners, particularly those who have missed out on education earlier in their lives, while also helping to broaden provider access to OU courses and awards. Exchanges of curriculum expertise, joint advocacy and shared learning support, office space and meeting rooms are some of the other potential benefits listed in the Statement.

The Statement was signed in Cintra House, Cambridge, which houses both the OU Regional Centre for the East of England and (following a recent move) the WEA's Eastern Regional Office. Pictured signing the Statement of Intent are Professor David Vincent, the OU's Pro Vice-Chancellor for Strategy, Planning and External Affairs (right) and WEA General Secretary Richard Bolsin (left).



Photograph: Nigel Shearing

Eagleton May Day lecture



Photograph: Alex Whittle

WEA's North West region held a successful May Day lecture on "Developing Cultural Skills in Working Class and Socially Excluded Communities" at the Mechanics Institute in Manchester.

The lecture was delivered by the influential cultural and literary critic Terry Eagleton (pictured at the podium on the night). The main themes of his wide-ranging address were the difference between knowledge and erudition and Eagleton's belief that education and culture should not only be instrumental. He went on to discuss a range of views on the value of art of all kinds to society - including as a critique of society; as an example of labour enjoyed, rather than carried out reluctantly, and as the language that political struggles are expressed in.

Many attendees commented on how rare it is to

get a chance to discuss ideas and politics at all, and found the discussion uplifting. Several people said that it was the most interesting lecture that they had attended for many years, whilst others saw the event as an example of the WEA getting back to its roots.

Regional Director Greg Coyne says, "There were students in the room from some of our most significant projects who had never had the chance to go to a formal lecture of this type before and thoroughly enjoyed the evening. It did lead many of us to recall that years ago the WEA provided education for working class adults who could and did enter higher education and undertook studies where the intellectual challenge provided by the likes of Eagleton could be encountered. It made us wonder whether there was a need to reinvent this type of learning in the WEA given that there did not appear to be any likely route to get to it elsewhere at the moment."

A good night was had by all and WEA North West region hope to be able to distribute an electronic recording of the lecture in due course.

Manchester-based writer and journalist Ally Fogg attended the event and mentions it in a recent Guardian article. He describes Eagleton as, "intellectual, cultural theorist, unreformed Marxist, inveterate squabbler and all-round entertainer."

The piece can be found at:

http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/ally_fogg/2008/05/common_culture.html



Bob Tarbuck, CEO of WEA Enterprises, rounds up recent developments and ways that you can help

Thanks to all those of you who suggested improvements to the

Enterprises website - a new website is now about to go live. We need your help again please: whilst some of the larger scale projects are under development, we also wish to start selling new items through our online shop. This means anyone in the world will soon be able to buy from us, helping us to help WEA learners.

The question is - what to sell? Is there anything you feel we should sell on-line? Think about what you or your friends buy online. It's always better to sell things that we know actually sell, rather than things we think others will buy. As

inspiration, how about some products to sell that have links to the WEA's courses in your region? Or products you find really useful? This is a chance to come up with both conventional ideas and also some unusual ideas - how about selling rare seeds to produce disease-resistant vegetables for allotment holders? All ideas welcome and don't forget that with online retailing it is relatively easy to add new products as and when we think of what to sell.

Conference attendees kindly provided some good ideas including stationery, fridge magnets, clothing, car stickers, air fresheners, mugs, educational toys, consumables for computing, cards and souvenirs. Are these items you buy? Please email me with your ideas: bob.tarbuck@weaenterprises.co.uk



Well done to Minna Ireland of the North East region. Minna's link to the search-engine Everyclick.com has generated over £20 for the WEA so far. I have registered with Everyclick.com and use the search engine myself. Anyone can do it. If you want to know more, visit the Enterprises website and follow the link - you can see immediately how much has been raised and register yourself. I wonder how much we could raise if more of us tried using this search engine?



We now have schemes for ink and toner cartridge recycling, plus mobile phone recycling. So remember - we can raise money for the WEA whilst recycling these items. Only manufacturers' original cartridges can be recycled in this way. Also, it is up to each of us as individuals to do this rather than relying on others to recycle. If you see a scheme that benefits another charity that you like, please let me know so I can look to set it up to benefit the WEA. By helping the WEA we help our learners. Do you need more recycling envelopes? Maybe a box for used toner cartridges? Just let me know. So far £20 has been raised for the WEA through this scheme, plus of course recycling saves resources and landfill. Did you know that one inkjet cartridge requires approximately 90ml of oil when first manufactured, whilst a laser cartridge needs approximately 3.5 litres of oil when first manufactured.

John Lewis

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Affiliate links

Many thanks to all who have used the affiliate links. We have now reached a total of £300 including our recycling incomes and the total is rising. Did you know that affiliate links can be national, like amazon.co.uk, or can be for your local garden centre? If you see any possible affiliate links you feel we should add to the fourteen already available on the website, just let me know. Our affiliate links are all on the temporary trading site at www.weaenterprises.co.uk

What's next for Enterprises?

With the development of our online presence and the development of a variety of projects, I am optimistic about the future. As a leading UK charity, we are starting to establish ourselves as a major partner in a variety of important projects with educational links, outside of the more traditional funding routes. The trading company is here to raise funds for the WEA, so do keep your ideas coming.

Did you know? In a recent survey by Interbrand, when people were asked what would make them feel proud of their company, two-thirds said, "Having a positive impact on people's lives." This is where we are lucky - with the WEA running over 12,000 courses each year, we all contribute to providing learning for more than 80,000 adults - we really do have a positive impact on people's lives. With your ideas and thoughts on ways to raise funds, we can do even more.

Coming soon - a WEA fundraising pack. This will provide hints on how to raise funds at branch level. There is much good practice amongst our 535 local branches. If you have a proven way to raise funds for your branch that you want to share, please let me know.

WEA Enterprises is a company set up to generate funds for the WEA. To contact Bob Tarbuck see the Enterprises website at <http://www.weaenterprises.co.uk/> or phone 0845 2179 007

House of Lords launch for book



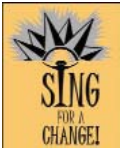
A book researched and written by members of WEA Bellingham Branch will be launched at the House of Lords on 10 July, in an event hosted by the local Liberal Democrat peer Lord Redesdale.

Telling Tales Out of School covers the history of elementary education in the North Tynedale and Redesdale areas of Northumberland between 1870 and 1944. Students from the branch used oral history interviewing techniques and other research skills taught by tutor Dr Ian Roberts to research and write the book.

Branch Secretary Marian Young says, "The research took us two years, but in that time we came across schools I never even knew had existed and chatted to many former pupils. I found the whole thing absolutely fascinating and it was enlightening to learn what a hard life people had and how much they relied on their community."

The branch applied for and was awarded a £4,000 Awards For All grant from the Big Lottery Fund to enable the book to be published. Branch members are currently working on the history of rural shops in the area from 1850 to 1950.

There will also be a local launch of the book in the Bellingham area on 15 July.



Sing for a Change

Sheffield Socialist Choir is celebrating twenty years of singing and activism with a series of activities culminating in a set of workshops and a concert on Sunday 18 May called 'Sing for a Change!'.

The Choir was a WEA class for more than fifteen years, before becoming a separate entity in 2004. Several hundred people have sung with it over the years, and it regularly performs at benefits and political events around Yorkshire.

Some of the most significant political singer-songwriters and poets in the UK have written new songs that will be launched at the 18 May event. They include Peggy Seegar, Lemn Sissay, Pete Moser, Mahdia Daulne, Ali Burns and Leeds-based radical folk band Chumbawamba, who headline the event.

'Sing for a Change!' will be held at the Octagon Centre, Sheffield University. For tickets and further information phone 0777 902 1939.



After fifty-six years, **Chorleywood and Rickmansworth Branch** are to lose their joint programme with London University at the end of this academic year due to changes in funding and policies at the University. The joint programme has been running non-stop since 1952, the year the branch (then known as Chorleywood Branch) was founded. In recent years several students on these courses have been awarded diplomas, and two have won the William Henry Hudson Prize for an outstanding essay. In this, the final year, the branch has run a Literature course, an Art History course and an Industrial Heritage course and Branch members are very sad to be losing this important element of their programme.

But there is one good piece of news to round off the association with the University - Art History tutor Madeline Edmead has been awarded a Distinguished Tutors Award by Birkbeck College. She is seen here (seated) with some of her students this year in Chorleywood.



Arrivals, departures and exchanges

Eastern Region

Eastern Region are pleased to welcome new Regional Finance Officer **Paul Bailey**, who started work at the end of March.

East Midlands Region

Margaret Walton died in early January after sad recent years suffering from dementia. Margaret was a staunch member and Treasurer of Nottingham Branch and was very much valued by all who knew her.

Welcome to **Lynn Van Ristell** who took up a post as a part time administrator in Quest House in January, and to **Ceri Griffiths** and **Alison Barros**, who have joined the region as Development Workers from March to July.

Best wishes to **Joy Mills** following her retirement at the end of March and to Sukhwinder Kaur, who also left in March for pastures new. Thanks also to **Palorine Williams**, who worked as a Development Worker for women's courses from January to March.

North East Region

Les Oliver, who was an active member of the Sunderland WEA and the former Northern District, died recently. The WEA sent condolences to Les's family and was represented at his Humanist funeral in Sunderland.

Congratulations to **Jude McKenzie**, Curriculum Leader in Foundation Studies, on the birth of baby Ellie.

Susan Hylands and **Deborah Dobinson** have been appointed to a job-share Course Organiser post covering Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside and Northumberland following the departure of **Malcolm Craven**, who left to concentrate on his musical interests. Susan and Deborah have both recently achieved the NVQ Level 4 in Management.

Donna Utterson, Course Organiser, Wearside and South of Tyne, has been awarded a Chartered Institute of Management NVQ Level 4, while **Lyn Coulthard**, Regional Learning Manager for Co. Durham and Tees Valley, has been awarded an MA in Post-16 Education from the University of Sunderland.

Diana Mahood has left the WEA to run a hotel in Hereford. **Michelle Scott** has been appointed full-time Course Organiser for Co. Durham (she had previously shared the job with Diana). Welcome also to **Pat Youens**, who has been appointed as a WEAMIS Administrator.

Rebecca Storey, Assistant Administrator, who joined the WEA as a Modern Apprentice, has gained an NVQ Level 2 in Business and Administration, and **Gillian Carr**, South Tyneside WEA Branch voluntary officer, has successfully completed an NVQ Level 2 in Information, Advice and Guidance.

Antony McKay, Project Co-ordinator, Working Together Tyne & Wear VCS Learning Project, has left the WEA to take up a management post at Learndirect.

Ylana First, who has had a long connection with the WEA beginning with the New Opportunities for Women programme, has been awarded an MBE for services to the community and the arts in North Tyneside.

Ron Peck

For anyone who has attended WEA National Conferences, Ron Peck, who died in January, was one of the most recognisable figures, standing at the rostrum in his cream coloured suit and WEA tie. As Chair of the Standing Orders Committee (SOC) until 2005, he steered Conferences skilfully through complex debates on constitutional matters and on all aspects of adult education for over 20 years. His attention to detail, integrity and belief in the WEA's values will be remembered by members throughout the Association.

Michael Crilly, the current Chair of SOC, remembers his wise guidance and helpfulness. Angela Clark, who retired recently as Conference Secretary and Secretary to the General Secretary, remembers how he lightened the mood of an extremely tense election by reading out the number of ballot papers received and declaring one vote for Angela Clark.

Ron's early involvement with the WEA was as a student on the Industrial Day Release course, organised jointly by the WEA and the Department of Extra Mural Studies of the University of Nottingham. He worked at Ericssons (later Plesseys) in Beeston and was an APEX union representative.

As an Affiliated Societies representative on the East Midland District Council, he became a member of the District Committee and also contributed his Trade Union skills to the National Consultative Committee. He served on both of these committees until 1986. Ron was a member of the Beeston Branch, still one of the largest branches in Nottinghamshire, where he was active as a student and committee member and, until shortly before his death, Branch Treasurer.

North West Region

Sad news from North West of the death of **Ann Maybrey** in February. Ann was a stalwart of the Standing Orders Committee and Treasurer of the region.

Beverley Latham left the WEA in February to to pursue other employment opportunities, develop a business interest and do more for the Red Cross, which she has worked with for many years.

Southern and London Hub

Congratulations to the five members of the **Rochester Support Centre Team** who completed a sponsored swimathon. The team, called the WEA Mermaids, swam 5km in 2.5 hours and raised over £500 for Marie Curie Cancer Care. Team members were **Fran Paulding**, **Sharon Kerrison**, **Mandy Williams**, **Gemma Smith** and **Gerry Savill**.

South West Region

Christine Mottram has left the Swindon Women's Branch after six years as Tutor Organiser. She will, however, be keeping in touch as she continues to teach for the Region.

Lin Euden, Admin. Assistant, has left the Truro office after two years service. Her replacement, **Julie Calow**, joined the Region in February and is fitting in well.

West Midlands Region

Paul Wolfe, Associate Tutor for Telford and Wrekin, has left the WEA after fourteen years valuable work, particularly around an active retired programme run in collaboration with the local authority. Paul was one of the forces behind last year's highly successful multi-media Telford Industrial Heritage project and the region's recent major exhibition of students' art and media work, held in Birmingham.

Corporate Services

Jeremy Brocherie, Projects and Programmes Finance Officer, left the WEA in March and has moved with his partner to Japan. Acting Director of Finance David Webber says, "Jeremy will be a great loss to the Association and his efforts on behalf of the WEA over more than eight years are very much appreciated. I have been extremely grateful, at a personal level, for his support during the last few months and will miss his professionalism and friendship."

Anne Casey, Education Strategy Manager for Employer Engagement and Trade Union Partnerships, left the WEA in March to take up a post with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions working on their Learning Centres.

Tracy Burrell of North West Region joined Corporate Services at the start of May as the Big Lottery Fund Project Admin Support Worker.

About WEA News

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:

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Views expressed are not necessarily those of the WEA.

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The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) is the largest voluntary sector provider of adult education in Britain and provides learning opportunities for over 80,000 people each year.