



EDUCATIONAL CENTRES ASSOCIATION

*Partners in
Lifelong Learning*

ECA News

Spring 2006

From the ECA President

I admit the comparison is a bit over-the-top, but seeing Bill Rammell's picture with the note opposite reminds me of Margaret Thatcher when she said of Mikhail Gorbachev: 'He is a man we can do business with'. It matters a great deal that the ECA is soon to have a second opportunity to meet him. Rammell is certainly a man we can do business with.

I've just received 'BBK' the Birkbeck College magazine. The minister is featured there as well. Before his time, the Government made a financial settlement for higher education which ignored part-time students and hence the needs of Birkbeck, the Open University and many new universities - despite its own 'widening participation' agenda. Mr Rammell's arrival made a difference, but we must listen carefully to how he puts it: 'We worked long and hard to come up with a package that has been welcomed by Birkbeck, the Open University and the Coalition of Modern Universities ... this is a positive example of the part-time sector identifying a problem, and the Government genuinely coming along and saying OK, we want to work up a constructive solution'.

Right, Minister, it won't be a push-over, but now it's the turn of this part-time sector. We'll be supported no doubt by the ODPM, Home Office, the Department of Health and DEFRA, to name but four, all of which are pressing for the benefits of learning in adult and later life to be realised. As this and the next newsletters show, the ECA is active in all of these increasingly joined-up sectors.

Brian Groombridge

Minister meets the ECA again

We are delighted that Mr Bill Rammell MP, (*pictured below*) the Minister of State for Higher, Further and Adult Education, will be with us for the "**Welcoming New Learners**" Conference of the ECA South and East Region.



Social Inclusion and Adult Learning is the subject and it takes place on Saturday 8th April 2006 10.30 at North & West Essex Adult Community College, Rivermill, Harlow. Fee £30 for non-members (discount for members) includes coffee on arrival, buffet lunch and tea. For information, please contact ECA National office on 0870 161 0302 or email conferences@e-c-a.ac.uk

We will also be welcoming Annie Merton, Senior Development Officer for Community Learning, from NIACE, Chris Minter from Brighton & Hove and John Dickinson-Lilley (who is compiling the Disability Discrimination Act 'Compliance Toolkit' for the region's community/voluntary sector).

New Centre – New ECA Member

The new Adult and Community Learning Centre, John Kyrle High School, Ross-on-Wye is open.



New ECA Member *continued*

Officially opened on the 14th November 2005 by Sir Peter de la Billiere, the centre forms part of a refurbished Sixth Form Centre and will be used for much needed training facilities and courses for adults, including ICT suites, meeting rooms and a large common room with dining facilities, doubling up as a conference suite.

Paul Mason, Centre Manager, said "We will be working very closely with various partners to ensure that the whole community has the opportunity to benefit. I will be looking to improve links with local business and develop provision within the skills for life sector." Paul will be coming to the Thursday 30th March meeting of the ECA W.Midlands regional Group.

Old Friend in Trouble?

Following the shock closure of Wansfell College, (left) in 2004, Essex County Council are now looking at another old friend of the ECA – Grey Friars, the adult college in Colchester.



Alerted by the cancellation of a lift installation last year, the Members' Association and community supporters have so far failed to get anything out of the LEA other than 'it is safe for the near future'. Grey Friars remains on a list of ECC properties for possible disposal.

Meanwhile, the college has just published a celebration of its history and achievements as a place of learning for 100 years and an adult college for over a third of that time (see p8).



Grey Friars – prime site, assurances sought from the LEA

KEEP ECA INFORMED – Good news or not – let us know on eca@e-c-a.ac.uk 0870 161 0302

Items from the ECA AGM 2005

Motion 4:

Evidence to the House of Lords European Union Committee.

This meeting notes with satisfaction the House of Lords' endorsement of the evidence presented by the NEC to the EU Committee's enquiry into European funding for lifelong learning initiatives. It calls on the EU Commission to ensure that funding rules for trans-national programmes should recognise the full cash value of voluntary effort as a contribution-in-kind, as positive endorsement of its strategy for European Active Citizenship.

Proposed: Alan Skinner; Seconded: Chris Minter
Approved, nem con

Motion 5:

The State of Adult Education in England

Coming as it does on the occasion of a European conference to inspire improvements in the quality of teaching citizenship as an adult educational responsibility of major European significance, this meeting:

- Expresses strong support for the Executive Committee (NEC) for the constructive approaches it has made so far to the Minister for Lifelong Learning, Mr Bill Rammell and appreciation to the Minister himself for his ready willingness to meet our representatives.
- Approves the expressions of solidarity made by the NEC with the many agencies of adult and further education whose work is being compromised and who share our concern at the contradiction between declared Government policies (through several Departments) and the funding priorities of the Learning and Skills Council.
- Urges all ECA members to work together to maintain their efforts, both to minimise the effects of this contradiction and to get the contradiction resolved on the basis of principle and in practice, as a matter of urgency.

Proposed: Brian Groombridge; Seconded: Alan Skinner
Approved, nem con.

Birkbeck Hospitality

Thanks to Professor John Annette of Birkbeck College, regarding hospitality given for ECA's 2005 AGM at the central London university.

John holds the University's Chair of Citizenship and Lifelong learning and we meet him through the Home Office sponsored "Active Learning for Active Citizenship" development group which he chairs.



A new partnership between adult education and the MOD

Bassingbourn Village College and their local Army Training Regiment have got together in an initiative to provide non-vocational classes for recruits aged 16 yrs plus.

Since August 2004, they have been coming along on a regular basis to do Art, Mixed Media, Sculpture and Cookery. The MOD recognised the need for them to participate in other wider activities while they are training to become soldiers. The College has been able to provide accreditation for most participants.

Room for the activities is at a premium at this small but successful secondary school on the Cambridgeshire/Hertfordshire border, so some of the Art activities also take place at Wysing Arts at Bourn, as a third partner.

Everyone who participates, including tutors, assistants, recruits and their officers enjoys the whole experience. The officers roll up their sleeves and join in with the activities so that they are getting a new learning experience too!

The Sculpture class has been exploring the theme of Masks in War and Chivalry and always try to use natural and re-cycled materials for their sculptures. As a team, they constructed external sculptures to make a feature of a plain, grassed area at the Barracks.

Cookery classes enjoy making different dishes from vegetable soup to burgers with hand-made bread rolls, melting moments, muffins and lasagne. Everyone sits down to chat while eating what they cooked. Recruits also have workbooks with food hygiene, health & safety and other facts to complete at each session.

Art classes are very popular and they produce wonderful watercolours and drawings. A sketchbook to keep with them facilitates sketching in their free time. The tutor has found that most recruits who thought they were no good at art can now produce a really good

portfolio of work in weeks – some of them are surprised at their ability.

The team at Wysing Arts help the recruits to develop their skills in a variety of ways including Watercolour, 3-D Art, Environmental Sculpture and Textile work. Digital Art is planned for the near future. Choice from several media works very well, especially with some recruits who are not sure what kind of art they want to do.

The work produced by the young people has been viewed by the Secretary of State for Defence and the Adult Learning inspectors and was found to be of an excellent standard.



This is a success story, the partnerships are strong and with very positive outcomes and the feeling from us all is that we hope these very important young people will be able to take with them some new skills that will enhance their lives wherever they may be.

Barbara Isherwood

Election of Officers: 2005 AGM

President	Prof Brian Groombridge
Vice-President	Prof Brian Johnson
Chair	Bernard Godding
Vice Chair	Alan Skinner MBE
Treasurer	Naomi Godding
Hon. Secretary	vacancy

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Dame Mabel Tylecote – A Tribute

We are grateful to Colin Harding, former Head of Adult Studies, Rochdale College of FE, for this news of a publication in preparation.

The idea for a tribute publication to ECA stalwart Mabel Tylecote arose originally from someone who knew her well, Ronald Wilson (former Principal of Manchester College of Adult Education). He felt that there should be an acknowledgement of the reason the building formerly housing his college was given her name after it had passed into the possession of Manchester Metropolitan University in 1991.

As a life member (and former President) of the ECA, he wished the publication to be one of the ECA's own occasional papers, for which the residual money from the College of Adult Education's Students Association might be used.



This tribute to Dame Mabel would be along the same lines as that compiled for Ray Lamb (for many years Secretary of the E.C.A.) after his death in 1999.*

The project is now at pre-publication stage and will also feature on the ECA website at a later date.



*A small number of copies of the book *“Ray Lamb – a life in adult education”* are available from ECA national office, contact details page 3.

“Adult Learning: Aiming Further, Higher and Wider”

University of Nottingham, 2005 ECA Conference

This one-day conference, held at the Jubilee Campus, considered ways in which we, as learners and as supporters of learners, can facilitate effective participation in education.

The conference opened with a welcome by Dr. Peter Boshier of the ECA and an introductory address by Dr. Carol Hall – the Dean of Faculty and Head of the School of Education at the University of Nottingham. Carol's talk was highly engaging and within it she offered a selection of characteristics of successful learners, such as: being goal-oriented; 'greedy for growth', and possessing a high tolerance for risk. We were then able to observe these qualities in learners themselves as the first part of the programme comprised of an inspiring series of presentations from six adult learners who gave us their unique 'learning stories'.

Each speaker gave an account of their own ongoing journeys through formal and informal education, and what emerged from these narratives was the sense that learning is not just the phase one experiences within the compulsory and post-compulsory phases of education, it is an ongoing process which responds to our extrinsic and intrinsic needs.

The second presentation came from Ann Ruthven from NIACE, who is also the Development Officer for the Guidance Council. She outlined the work of the Council and led us through the purpose and provision of advice and guidance on adult learning; a key point here being the differentiation between information, advice and guidance (IAG) and the foundational role they can have in supporting adult students through successful learning.

After lunch, Dr. John Wallis from the Centre for Continuing Education presented a talk outlining contemporary perspectives on adult learning. He challenged many of the assumptions behind topics such as Lifelong Learning, individualized learning, social capital and globalisation, and argued for a return to the aims of the 'Radical Tradition' as the basis for educational endeavour.

Later, there was a brief book launch for *‘Learning Solutions for the 21st Century’* ** by Dr. John Payne, followed by a thought-provoking workshop which considered the ways in which improved advice and guidance prior to,

and at the end of a planned learning activity, might contribute to greater learner satisfaction.

The conference was a great success and was well-attended – attracting delegates from a wide range of backgrounds and professional perspectives. The day had been organized carefully with a high standard of catering and satisfactory facilities, and it was good to see the School of Education hosting an event such as this.

Lindsay Davies

** Copies of this ECA publication are available from National Office (contact details p3)



Maurice Beresford

We have learned of the death, just before Christmas, of Maurice, who was our President's predecessor's predecessor as warden of the Percival Guildhouse in Rugby in 1945. He maintained his interest in adult education during his career as an economic historian, later becoming Reader and Professor at Leeds. An obituary in the Guardian noted:

"In 1945, the young warden of an adult education centre in Rugby was making a plan of the visible traces of medieval fields at Bittesby, in Leicestershire. He came to an area of irregular grass-covered mounds and hollows and, after initial puzzlement, realised he was looking at the remains of streets and houses from the village of Bittesby, abandoned for 450 years.

This discovery, followed by the recognition of hundreds of other deserted villages, began the academic career of Maurice Beresford, who has died at the age of 85."

Maurice Warwick Beresford, economic historian, born February 6 1920; died December 15 2005

Date for your diary:

Themes on staff development for non-formal adult learning

An ECA conference is being prepared for 10th June 2006 in London's Victoria and Albert Museum. Details www.e-c-a.ac.uk or email conferences@e-c-a.ac.uk

New Award

The Angela Vivian Award is a joint project of the RSA and Community Action Network. It is sponsored by EDS, the global IT services company.



Angela (pictured left) was for a short time, up until her death, a very active and supportive member. An enthusiastic correspondent, she involved the ECA in a number of networks with which she was connected.

Angela joined the ECA after attending a conference representing 'IT for the Terrified'.

Paul Monks is the first winner of the £10,000 Award for social entrepreneurs. He was presented with the Award at a reception at the RSA on 31st January 2006.

Paul is founder and Creative Director of Core Arts, a centre for adults with severe and enduring mental ill health in Hackney, east London. From early beginnings in 1992, Core Arts today occupies a former church building and offers over 40 creative workshops for 320 members drawn from across London.

The success of Paul's work at Core Arts shows that he has fulfilled the key criteria for the Angela Vivian Award. Core Arts has broken through the 'sticky treacle' of bureaucracy to build a project which meets the pressing needs of their community. Core Arts is delivering sustainable benefits for its rolling membership of sufferers of mental ill health.

The judges of the Angela Vivian Award were Martyn Lewis CBE, broadcaster and author; Sylvie Pierce, Managing Director, Capital and Provident Regeneration and Tom Bloxham, Chairman, Urban Splash. The judges commended 12 entries, from which they chose the winner.



Views and information appearing in this newsletter are entirely those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect ECA policies and strategies.

ECA NEWS SPECIAL FEATURE: *Telling Our Own Stories*

In recent meetings and communications with members it has become clear that there is a call for people to tell their learning stories.

Whether it is a reaction to the perceived threat to personal choice in lifelong learning, as more and more emphasis is placed on skills by the funding bodies – or whether it is natural for people to want to enthuse others – is still open to debate.

What cannot be ignored, however, is the emergence of a greater willingness to share experiences by learners from all sectors.

We start with a plea from ECA NEC member, Judith Robinson, writing as a practitioner.

Remember the 'Domains'

One way to define types of learning is to divide into three categories: cognitive (knowledge), psychomotor (skills) and the affective domain (changing attitudes).

At the conference on 8th November we discussed the need to be better at informing the Government/funders/bosses etc about our success stories. We all agreed to keep our MPs MEPs, LSCs, LSDAs etc. updated with little anecdotes and successes achieved, to remind them of the importance of adult learning in changing society for the better.

We are usually asked to fill out numbers in boxes dealing with those who have achieved in cognitive and psychomotor types of learning. For example, how many GCSEs, how many NVQs in plumbing, etc were achieved?

We still have a lot of work to do, trying to describe success in the most difficult domain to work in – changing attitudes (affective). For tutors, this is the most exciting challenge, with the most lasting results. Triumph and celebrations abound when there is true achievement here. At the conference, when describing success, those in the affective domain warmed the heart the most. A woman who had never left the country, but after a field trip to Brussels took her family on holiday abroad. A teenager who planned to leave school at age 16, but when she saw her mother studying, she decided to stay on for A levels.

Let's collect stories. And let's ask students to focus on the affective domain when describing their learning experiences.

Adult Learning, languages, citizenship and me!

ECA individual member Hazel Dunn writes as a student: I am just one of thousands and thousands who have learned so much about the ways of other countries through studying a language and developing friendships, and thought it might be of some interest to stand up and be counted.



I started to learn German at a local LEA evening class as an adult while working for a German lawyer. In 1986 the adult education centres in the town were asked by their twin city in Germany if they could host representatives

in order to set up exchange visits. We sent two representatives from each centre, one professional and one student, and I was lucky enough to be the student from my college.

Even that exploratory three-day visit taught us a lot about the German centres, as we visited classes and discussed problems. But I didn't think then that the couple who hosted me would become such good friends that we still write, telephone and visit each other twenty years later, although the group exchange visits have long since stopped.

And citizenship? We always discuss current events, local taxes, issues, etc. When I get home I write up an account of our holiday in a large book. I take the book with me for my following visit, and read it aloud to remind us of our holiday. Looking back through that book I see remarks such as 'I asked about car costs, found insurance and road tax almost the same as England. ... I discussed adult education, and found that they also have some financial difficulties with cuts, etc. But they seem to have more group outings, often cultural, for the elderly than we do, with special prices.' ...

'Had a chat with Berthold and Stephen mostly about pensions, social service costs, and income tax. At present (from 1995 diary) the German pension seems much better than ours

– almost 80% of final salary (taxable), but no health insurance for some people, although higher pension earners still contribute'. All small stuff, but gives a picture of the system.

My friends had come from East Germany, near Chemnitz, to the West in the fifties, and so I learned quite a bit about the two sides. Still do - for last year, in 2005, our tutor asked my German class to write about the tensions between 'Ossis' and 'Wessies', East and West Germans, and I asked Berthold. He produced a very interesting account of the differences – he had himself lost money trying to help an East German factory to get going.

Time is not all spent in serious discussion, but also in laughter, chat and outings. I am very fond of them, and I think they of me. We both have three children and grandchildren too. I can't think of a better way to learn about citizens of other lands. And they about us!

As my niece is married to a Spaniard and has a family in Madrid, I am now learning Spanish. I will probably never be really fluent, but as Belinda's mother-in-law speaks no English, it is nice to be able to have discussions, even in my halting Spanish. And I have a sister now living in Alsace and practise my French there. To me it is very clear that learning another language and not being self-conscious about trying to speak it is the best way of learning about other countries' citizens! Fellow students agree.

Readers interested in the topic of Citizenship will be pleased to note that a special edition of ECA News dedicated to this topic is in preparation. Please contact ECA national office (details p3) if you would like to contribute to this issue.

People with learning difficulties: Self-advocacy & communication

ECA's connections with many organisations result in shared newsletters and when national chairman Bernard Godding saw one example from 'People First' he realized that it shared three of our criteria of special interest: Social inclusion; People moving from benefits into work; Active citizenship. It also tells learners' stories. In addition it addresses social policy issues, informal learning and partnership working. Moreover, the format & content is also adapted to the known audience, with carefully chosen vocabulary and large clear print on clearly-spaced A4 size pages.

Book Review

Rosie Garner, *Poetry on the buses: portrait of a city - Nottingham*. Nottingham, Basford Press, 2005 (distributed by Five Leaves Publications) 72pp £6.50

Rebecca O'Rourke, *Creative writing: education, culture and community*. Leicester, NIACE, 2005, £18.95

Members who attended the ECA event in Nottingham, March 2005 will remember Rosie Garner. We were at the Jubilee Campus of the University of Nottingham, the 'intelligent' building that tries to second guess the heating and lighting requirements of its users. Rosie read her No 29 bus poem, about this building. It begins: 'Sometimes it feels as though this building / rejects the people one by one, / designed out, or never in, / like new kidneys when the drugs go wrong.'

She described her struggle with education, her resistance to studying 'something useful' when all she had ever wanted to be was a writer. She told us about the project, now brought to a triumphal conclusion with the publication of *Poetry on the Buses*, nearly 60 poems, each linked to a city bus route. A poetry of face-to-face encounters, a public space in which people meet and interact age, ethnicity and class.

Readers who want to reflect on creative writing as an adult education activity might link Rosie's book with that by Rebecca O'Rourke, the first full-length study of the subject. It includes a substantial case-study of creative writing activities in and around Middlesbrough, in educational and other settings.

John Payne

Welcome to new members



Among the new members joining since the last edition of ECA News is the Open University, which has some of the most spectacular learning stories connected with its alumni.

Our current president, Brian Groombridge, was a very significant figure in its development, and the OU ranks among the best student-centred higher education institutions in the country.

Also, as well as the University itself, we are delighted to welcome Jonathan Hughes, of the Centre for Widening Participation, who joins us in a personal capacity as an Individual Member.

New Book – special offer

A book celebrating learners' stories, and much more besides, has just been published, with the help of the ECA, by a member centre's charity.



"Grey Friars – opening the door to adult education" is published by Access Books, the publishing division of the local adult education access charity, 'CALCAG', started at the college.

In recognition of ECA's support, if you order this well-presented and lavishly illustrated book by mentioning ECA News in an email to the publishers at access.books@btinternet.com you will also receive a **free copy** of another new Access book, a delightful fictional autobiography of family life in the 1920s-40s "Ginny Saunderson" by Joan Gray, a former student of the college. Send no payment with your order – you will be invoiced for £9 which includes post. Happy reading!

ECA and The Forum Trust ask What's Your Learning Journey?

The ECA and The Forum Trust are together developing a project revealing the role, impact and experiences of adult learners and adult education in local communities from the 1920s.

Money is being sought from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the "Lifewide Learning Journeys" project. This will draw on written documentation, photos and personal reminiscences to tell the story of adult education to future generations.

It will introduce present adult learners to a range of new archive, recording and interviewing skills and experiences. Initially focussing on Norfolk, the project will also relate to wider contexts for and national impacts of adult education.

Further information:

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Postscript

As this newsletter was being prepared for distribution, the LSC published its internal information paper **"Policy Requirements for Planning: Managing the Balance and Mix of Provision (2006/7)"**.

This 34-page document is aimed at regional and local LSC personnel who are discussing with providers issues of planning provision and allocating funds.

It therefore should be read carefully by anyone who wishes to understand where they stand in the overall post-16 national strategy.

Adult education fares badly. The "key messages" for this year are: withdrawal of funding for "certain categories" of adult FE will save £103,000,000 in 2006-7, rising to £212,000,000 in 2007-8. This will be achieved by "re-balancing the profile of providers' mix of provision". Less funding, therefore, will be available for "provision of a lower order priority" and no funding at all will be available for "some categories of provision" in adult FE.

The section of the paper which spells out the meaning of these administrative phrases gives a stark view of the utilitarian system:

"... we will STOP funding" very short learning aims below 9 guided learning hours (except Ufl and "safeguarded" provision) plus college-devised higher level provision at "notional" levels 4 and 5; provision previously allowed under 'schedule 2' of the FHE Act 1992 "as this provision is likely to be out-of-date"; literacy, numeracy and ESOL not based on the national curriculum/standards; and learning aims in health & safety, first aid and food not accredited by QCA.

The paper states that "a significant proportion of provision funded by the LSC in past years has not contributed directly to targets or priorities. We need to continue to prioritise our funding to support those who need it most".

The "safeguard" for "appropriate learning opportunities for personal and community development learning" is outlined in a further document **"Planning and Funding for the Safeguard – Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL), Family Programmes and Neighbourhood learning in Deprived Communities"**. As we were unable to track down this document before going to press, it remains to be seen whether this will be sufficient to slow down the current rate of withdrawal of non-vocational, non-accredited courses by colleges and LEAs, presumably in anticipation of further cuts.

The ECA will continue to strive to unravel this and would be pleased to hear from members on how this is interpreted in local communities.