



<http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/about-us.html>

---

# AEA DIGEST

Issue no 43  
Spring 2015

---



**Farewell and many thanks from the Executive Committee  
to AEA Secretary Sasha Anderson.**

**From left to right: Professor Keith Percy, Dr Alex Withnall, Sasha Anderson, Jo Walker, Carol Allen, Dr Jonathan Hughes, Carlie Newman, Dr Anne Jamieson**

## **IN YOUR SPRING DIGEST:**

<b>Page 3</b>	<b>Notes from the Chair – Jonathan Hughes</b>
<b>Page 5</b>	<b>Positive Living – The Beth Johnson Foundation</b>
<b>Page 7</b>	<b>Forthcoming events – NOT TO BE MISSED!</b>
<b>Page 9</b>	<b>Older people and sexual wellbeing – seminar report</b>
<b>Page 11</b>	<b>AEA in Europe - ForAge for Later-life Learning and Wellbeing in Later Life</b>
<b>Page 14</b>	<b>Foresight Project – The Future of Ageing</b>
<b>Page 15</b>	<b>Spring Online 2015</b>

## **Arts and Culture Section**

### **Books**

<b>Page 16</b>	<b>The Invisibility of Women Who Gave History to a Family</b>
<b>Page 16</b>	<b>Variety is the Spice of Life - The Worlds of Eric Midwinter</b>
<b>Page 17</b>	<b>Elizabeth is Missing</b>

### **Theatre**

<b>Page 18</b>	<b>Old Vic New Voices community project on Ages</b>
<b>Page 20</b>	<b>The Glorious Georges at Kensington Palace</b>
<b>Page 21</b>	<b>Theatre reviews</b>

### **Cinema**

<b>Page 23</b>	<b>Film reviews for the awards season</b>
----------------	-------------------------------------------

### **Information**

<b>Page 26</b>	<b>AEA Contacts</b>
----------------	---------------------

## **FROM THE CHAIR.....**

*Jonathan Hughes*

I thought that before I provided some *Notes from the chair* for the AEA Spring Digest that I ought to check back to the Autumn 2014 issue. This was written shortly after the Annual AEA Conference and AGM which was held at the Open University in Milton Keynes on 11 September 2014. I'm writing this on the 12 February 2015, five months (and a day) on from that event.

I noted that the 2014 AGM was the last one Sasha Anderson would be attending as secretary. Sasha has done a terrific job not just as secretary but also in working with Keith Percy to ensure that the ForAge website was restored following a number of 'assaults' on it from a former project partner. As if that were not enough, Sasha has also worked with Carol Allen on the AEA website.

In January, many of the AEA executive Committee met with Sasha at the Parcel Yard at King's Cross for lunch and to wish her bon voyage before she moves to Bergen, Norway.

AEA is still looking for someone to replace Sasha as secretary, so if you feel tempted (or know someone who might be) please do get in touch with me. Details of the post are on page 6.

In my Autumn 2014 notes I touched on the challenges facing AEA in the coming months, if it is to survive as a viable organisation able to fully celebrate its 30 years of existence this year. There are two basic aspects to these challenges. The first is that the three European Projects we have been involved in (ForAge, WELL (Wellbeing in Later Life) and Memory in Later Life) have all

either come to an end or will shortly be ending. The Forage project has been extended to the end of March 2015 to enable AEA to have time to take over and maintain the ForAge data base and website.

To provide a future focus of activity for AEA, which will ensure that its high profile is maintained, AEA needs to be involved in successful funding bids. However, the European funding landscape has changed to focus on pressing issues of unemployment and it is harder for an organisation like ours to find a place in this landscape. It may well be that we need to develop partnerships that enable us to bid for other funds. If you have any expertise or ideas about possible sources of project funding, again, please do get in touch with me.

The other, perhaps more predictable and secure, way of securing AEA's future into its fourth decade is by increasing the number and the involvement, of members. The Executive Committee has been seeking to address this by reviewing the benefits of membership. This digest is clearly one of these benefits as is the connection to networks with a shared interest in learning in later life, for example via Carol Allen's regular emails about events and issues of interest.

Another key element in the 'offer' is the opportunity to attend a range of seminars and conferences addressing a wide range of topics linked to later life learning. On 6th February 2015 AEA jointly put on a seminar with the Manchester Institute of Collaborative Research on Ageing (MICRA) and Manchester Metropolitan University. My particular thanks go to

AEA member (and Director of MICRA) Chris Philipson and to AEA Executive Committee member Josie Tetley who helped organise the event and who presented her findings from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) in relation to sexual health. I had been planning to attend until work commitments got in the way, so I will be reading Professor Keith Percy's report on page 9 with great interest.

Forthcoming events include a seminar, Learning about Learning in Later Life on 17th June 2015 at the OU London (Hawley Crescent, Camden) – see page 7. The keynote speakers will be Paul Nash from Swansea University and Bernhardt Schmidt-Hertha from Tübingen University (Germany). Paul will focus on what is taught about later life learning while Bernhardt will consider what aspects of learning are seen as important by older learners themselves. It is hoped that these perspectives will shed light on how older people are positioned – often as burdens or as recipients of health services. This seminar is the outcome of a successful bid for a small grant from the British Society of Gerontology and it is hoped that the seminar will lead on to the

creation of a special interest group within BSG, which will focus on the importance of learning in later life.

The other dates for your diary are the 23rd and 24th September 2015 when we will be marking the 30th anniversary of AEA with a two day international conference at the Open University in Milton Keynes, *Learning in Later Life: Research, Theory, Policy and Practice*.

The conference is still in the planning stage but there will be papers on the three themes of research and theory, policy and practice as well as three keynote addresses on these, plus workshops and poster sessions and an optional conference dinner. The event will also include reports on the progress of the ForAge project, the Frank Glendenning Memorial Lecture, the AEA Annual General Meeting and a session celebrating 30 years of the AEA. Altogether not to be missed.

I look forward to meeting you at one or more of these events in the coming months and hope that you will encourage people in your networks to join AEA and help raise the profile of the importance of later life learning.

## **Are you subscribing to International Journal of Education and Ageing?**

**The journal that brings together the best of international research, scholarship and practice on education, learning and ageing in a critical and accessible manner.  
Special preferential rates for AEA Members**

**Subscribe via our website:**

<http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/international-journal-of-education-and-ageing.html>

*News of the Beth Johnson Foundation's work in the area of Positive Ageing. The foundation's previous work in this area has led to a new pilot project, named **Positive Living**. Michelle Brown of BJB explains.*

This project trains volunteers and employees, who work with older people in Stoke-on-Trent to raise awareness of self-management of health and long term health conditions.

The Positive Living training package was developed following consultation with service users, who were previously trained by the organisation in our 'Active in Age' programme. The training was designed to be centred round positive thinking and coaching skills, whilst also including some core health units such as cancer awareness, eating for health, and dementia awareness. Following successful completion of the course each trainee gains an OCNWMR accredited Level 1 qualification and becomes a Positive Living Coach, making it their mission to spread positive messages amongst their friends, families, colleagues and peer groups.



As this piece of work is devised around asset based and peer model approaches,

it draws on Stoke-on-Trent's most valuable resources – the experience and passion of individuals within its community. Whilst delivering the first round of training, which took place throughout November and December 2014, a total of 18 Positive Living Coaches were trained. During this time it became apparent how passionate the people of Stoke-on-Trent are about looking after one another. Whether participants were volunteers, employees or service users, there was one commodity which was most prominent in each – their caring and giving nature.



If funding for the project continues, this will enable us to not only extend the term for which we deliver the training, but also continue with the projects development. This will encompass development of both the training element with the possibility of creating new units/topics and the peer coaching element, which sees the further possibility of health awareness clinics/drop-ins run by our Positive Living Coaches.

The benefits of the project so far have not only been highlighted through the raised awareness in our Positive living coaches and those they reach with health information but also in the new networks and relationships, which have been nurtured in a positive, friendly and fully supported environment. When delivering

training to any age group, it is important that we do as much as we can to break down any barriers to learning that an individual may be facing. This should be approached on a one to one basis, as a one size fits all approach very rarely reaps positive outcomes. Our Positive Living trainer has a desire to encourage all who have an interest in learning more about health and also aims to make the

course as accessible as possible to those who live, work or volunteer with people aged 50+ in Stoke-on-Trent.

If you would like to know more about the Positive Living training package or wish to apply for a place, please get in touch with Michelle Brown on 07467 915903 or [michelle.brown@bjf.org.uk](mailto:michelle.brown@bjf.org.uk)

### **WANTED - Part-time Administrator Association for Education and Ageing (AEA)**

Wanted as soon as possible for this developing and lively organisation which works internationally and aims to promote, research, improve and develop educational opportunities and learning provision for older people

Main activities of the administrator will be providing secretarial support for AEA's Executive Committee meetings (quarterly, conference call) and AGM meetings; contributing to the organisation of AEA events; providing some administrative support to the International Journal of Education and Ageing; processing AEA membership payments and IJEA subscriptions; contributing to the updating and maintenance of AEA websites.

There is an annual honorarium associated with the post of £1,000 and travel and agreed expenses will be reimbursed. Hours are not fixed and the work is home-based.

Closing date for applications is **March 31 2015**.

Contact Dr Jonathan Hughes, AEA Chairperson, for further details (email: [j.e.hughes@open.ac.uk](mailto:j.e.hughes@open.ac.uk) )

Website: <http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/>

*In 2015 – AEA's 30th anniversary year - an international conference is being held in the autumn in cooperation with the ForAge Project. AEA also runs one or two seminars, workshops or specialist conferences each year in different locations in the UK, often in partnership with other organisations (see next page for news of latest events)*

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS



### **Seminar: Lifelong Learning and Social Gerontology: an essential partnership?**

**Date: Wednesday 17 June, 2015, 1100–1600 hrs**

**Venue: Open University in London,  
1-11 Hawley Crescent, Camden Town, London, NW1 8NP**

In the last thirty years there have been significant demographic changes that have resulted in more people enjoying active later life, increased numbers of older adults staying in the workplace and a greater proportion living into old age with complex health care needs. Despite the contribution that later life learning can play in these scenarios, it remains largely absent from policy and practice and there are comparatively few researchers who identify later life learning as their prime interest. This is reflected in the curricula of courses about later life and ageing.

This seminar will address what could be done to develop this area of study and research as a better-recognised aspect of social gerontology, addressing two distinct but related aspects: Learning in later life and learning about later life

Two key speakers will focus on these twin issues:

**Professor Bernhardt Schmidt-Hertha**, Professor for Educational Research at the University of Tübingen, will consider the importance of learning in later life to older learners themselves.

**Dr Paul Nash**, Post Graduate Programme Director for Gerontology & Ageing Studies in the Centre for Innovative Ageing at Swansea University, will consider how the current gerontological curriculum constructs older people.

The seminar will:

- debate the role of social gerontology in promoting older people's access to lifelong learning opportunities, particularly in the current economic context
- share good practice and exemplars in lifelong learning
- discuss theories and practices of lifelong learning to promote the development of theory in this area;
- examine the case for a new interest group, which will bring together strengths of AEA and BSG.

**Attendance is free**, but places limited. Priority given to members of AEA and BSG..

**Enquiries and bookings** to Jonathan Hughes ([jonathan.hughes@open.ac.uk](mailto:jonathan.hughes@open.ac.uk))



**AEA/ ForAge Annual International Conference  
Learning in Later Life: The next ten years**

**Date: Wednesday 23-Thursday 24 September 2015,**

**Venue: Open University, Milton Keynes, UK**

A two-day international conference organised by ForAge and AEA will be held on 23-24th September 2015, at the Open University in Milton Keynes.

The three conference themes will be Research and Theory; Policy; Practice. A keynote presentation will be associated with each of these themes.

The AEA annual Frank Glendenning lecture and the AEA AGM will take place on **24th September**.

Further details and booking information will be posted on AEA website

---



**The LCDA (Life Course Development Association)  
2015 Conference and AGM**

**Date: Saturday the 28th of March from 10:30 to 4:30, with lunch included.**

**Venue: Birkbeck College,  
University of London, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HX**

In the morning, Professor John Field of Stirling University, and Visiting Professor at Birkbeck will give a lecture on *Generational groups in 21st century Britain: evidence and stereotypes*.

The afternoon session will involve interactive groups, focussing on inter-generational ideas and themes.

**Fee for non-members, including lunch: £10-00**

For further information and registration form, contact

Martin Goffe: [martingoffe@gmail.com](mailto:martingoffe@gmail.com) or Anne Jamieson: [anneej18@gmail.com](mailto:anneej18@gmail.com)

*The subject of sexuality and older people is something with which many people even in this day and age are uncomfortable. The hit television drama series “Last Tango in Halifax” with its storyline about an elderly couple, who find late life romance in their seventies, brought the subject into the popular arena.*



**Anne Reid as Celia and Derek Jacobi as Alan  
Photo by Rachel Joseph**

***Older people and sexual wellbeing: research, practice and educational issues*** was the subject of a very successful seminar in February this year, which was sponsored by AEA, MICRA (Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research on Ageing) and Age UK. The seminar was chaired by ***Professor Keith Percy*** of AEA.

Over 60 people attended: a mixture of academics, health and care practitioners, researchers, students and older people. There were three speakers: Dr Dave Lee (Manchester University); Dr Sharron Hinchliff (Sheffield University) and Professor Josie Tetley (Manchester Metropolitan University).

Two of the speakers drew on evidence from ELSA (the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing). ELSA began in 2002 and is a longitudinal survey of ageing

and quality of life among a representative sample of older people (50+) which has been conducted in different waves. It allows for the examination of the dynamic relationships between health and functioning, social networks and participation, and economic circumstances as people plan for, move into and progress beyond retirement.

The two speakers had been examining the quantitative and qualitative data from 7,070 older people in wave 6 who had completed a “Sexual Relations and Activities” questionnaire.

Dave Lee used analysis of the quantitative data available from the “tick-box” responses to the questionnaire. His headline question was “healthy ageing – what has sex got to do with it?” The data suggested the proportion of older people, who believe that being sexually active is physically and psychologically beneficial, is 70% for men and women between the ages of 50 and 65 years but it declines with age. However, by age 75 years and over, over 50% men and just under 50% women still believe it. The proportions of both genders who agree that “sexual changes that occur with age are not important to older people” increases from about 20% to 50% for both men and women when age groups 50-65 and 75+ are compared. Using a very broad definition of “sexual activity” almost all 50 - 65 year old men and women report themselves as “active”; in the age group 75 and over the proportion is about 60% men and 40% women; in the age group 90+ 20% men and under 20% women. There is a correlation between better health and greater sexual activity among older

people. There is also a correlation between sexual activity and subjective quality of life and wellbeing measures, particularly for men. Data on over 2000 married or cohabiting older couples suggest that sexuality in couples may differ but that their “sexual trajectories” (relationship between ageing and their sexual activity and attitudes) interact. Sexual health of a couple can be regarded as a “jointly” produced outcome. Overall, the data from ELSA suggests that sexuality is perceived by a majority of older people as an important and beneficial part of later life; sexual health is associated with better general health and subjective wellbeing; and poorer health among men negatively affects the sexual health of both partners

Using qualitative data – open comments which respondents had written into their ELSA questionnaires – Josie Tetley spoke about older people’s observations on their sexual relationships. These reflected that sexual relationships and activities of older people are affected by a complex range of factors relating to age: internalisation of sexual stereotypes (“sex is not for older people”); biological ageing (ill health and ageing bodies); the responses of health services (an unwillingness to recognise that older people can have concerns about sex); personal reminiscence and reflections on how sex had been in the past and regrets and comparisons with the present (“the mind is still 20 even when you get old”); concerns and expectations (“should it all be about penetrative sex?”); and sexual satisfaction (“what can we expect?”). These older people wrote about the attitudes, beliefs and perceptions which framed their sexual behaviour and relationships. These were, for example, religious beliefs (“sex outside marriage

is wrong”); perceptions of age (“I’m too old for this sort of thing”); attitudes and beliefs about relationships (the place or importance of sexual activities in a relationship; same sex relationships); media, culture and pornography (“there’s too much pressure about sex”, “it’s for young people”). Both men and women wrote of their sexual relationships and activities, and their satisfaction with them, being affected by the contexts in which they found themselves. These included: widowhood; being a carer; having children at home; divorce and remarriage; number of sexual partners; and relationships conducted at a distance.

Sharron Hinchliff spoke about a body of research evidence which shows that older people who have sexual difficulties have not sought help from health professionals, including doctors. The fault lies partly in western culture which regards association of older people with sex to be taboo.



When asked why they had not raised a sexual difficulty with a GP or other health professional, older people responded that they were embarrassed; they thought the health professional would be shocked and think sex inappropriate for their age (“I didn’t want him to think I was a sex maniac!”);

they suspected that sexual difficulty was “just a part of getting old” and that sexual problems were not part of the health professional’s role. Studies of health professionals showed that they were unlikely to raise sexual difficulties with an older person because of their own lack of knowledge, embarrassment, opposite gender, fear of causing offence and/or difficulty of bringing the subject up.

Sharron said this research showed a classic example of miscommunication between older people and their health professionals: health professionals want older people to raise the topic of sexual difficulties, if they have them; older people want the health professional to ask. The immediate solution may lay in training for health professionals (including how to give signals that raising sexual difficulties is permissible); availability of help sheets which could be offered to older people; availability of specialist referrals; use of the social media; and creation of sexual health networks for older people.

Questions and discussion in the seminar led to range of conclusions. We should counter stereotypes about late-life sexuality and offer older people reference points to which they may relate their own experiences. However, we should avoid proposing ‘arbitrary norms’ of sexual health and function and impose these on older people. The sexual health needs of older people should not be ignored by health professionals, who should be proactive and engage openly with older people. Older peoples’ sexual health should be managed, not just in the context of their age, gender and general health, but also

within their existing sexual relationship, whatever it might be.

*PowerPoint presentations of the three speakers at this seminar are now available here:*

<http://www.micra.manchester.ac.uk/events/archive/2015/older-people-and-sexual-wellbeing/>

*As reported in previous issues of this digest, **Keith Percy** has also been spearheading AEA’s involvement in two important international projects – **ForAge for Later-life Learning: building on European experience and Wellbeing in Later Life**. Here he outlines what has been achieved.*



ForAge has been an EU Grundtvig-funded project since January 2012. Its main goals have been i) to develop a European multi-lateral network concerned with learning in later-life; ii) to be an archive and access point for information and to promote informed discussion between practitioners, researchers, policy-makers and older people; iii) to promote the development of learning in later-life, the exchange of good practice and the raising of standards throughout Europe.

ForAge has been a large and complex international enterprise with initially 17 partners in 15 countries. The lead partner has been the University of Leicester. Like other such projects, there have been ups and downs. Some partners have left the Project for different reasons; others have made smaller contributions than

expected. AEA began the Project expecting to play a relatively minor role but over the years has taken on increased responsibilities. As it did so, it made sure that the additional work would potentially have a long-term benefit for AEA.

One example is the ForAge Later-life learning: Lexicon of terms. AEA picked up the baton on this in the third year of the Project and saw it through to completion. It did so partly because it believed that the language of later-life learning (at least, in English) can be ill-defined and inexact and its usage is sometimes unclear and confusing. The Lexicon contains 110 definitions of terms used in discussions of later-life learning and in many cases comments on their usage. It went through several drafts, each time growing in size. Each AEA draft was subject to comment by Project partners from 14 countries and also by members of AEA.

The Lexicon is now published and can be accessed from the homepage of the ForAge website (<http://www.foragenetwork.eu/en/>). As the language of later-life learning develops, so the Lexicon should develop and expand. Although the ForAge project will have ended, the AEA intends to publish revisions at intervals

A second, and more substantial, example of AEA's contribution to the ForAge Project is the ForAge database, embedded in the Project website (for which AEA also has a responsibility). The database is an important part of the core concept of the Project – which is that over the past 25 years a significant amount of research, project work, innovation and good practice in later-life

learning has taken place throughout Europe but it is fragmented, disparate and not easily accessible. The ForAge database has been developed to remedy this deficiency and to make our current stock of knowledge on later-life learning in Europe available and usable.



**ForAge partners in conference**

The database has grown steadily throughout the Project life. Where has the material come from? The key idea was that the material would be submitted /suggested by the ForAge partners in the 14 countries. This has happened, but not consistently. Not all of the partners had the same degree of experience, background or familiarity with the sorts of material that could feed into the database. So there has been a significant dependence on AEA personnel to maintain the flow of material.

The criteria for inclusion of material in the database have been “relevance, quality and usefulness” to the field of later-life learning. An early decision was that the material should go through a process of quality control, necessarily one dependent upon human judgement. As the patterns of responsibility evolved, this came to mean that all material was scrutinised by one of the AEA personnel who sought to apply the standards of “relevance, quality and usefulness” fairly, logically and consistently, drawing upon their own knowledge of the field. It seems to have worked.

At an early point in the Project, an interesting and important issue of principle was decided. Although English is the language used in the ForAge project, and hence in the website and database, non-English language material would be included in the database. There were no resources to translate such material into English but at least a reference and a link to the material could be made available and if possible the original material uploaded to the database. An abstract in both the original language and in English would be included. Thereafter, readers could pursue the material in whatever way they wished. The entire database can be accessed [here](http://www.foragenetwork.eu/en/).  
<http://www.foragenetwork.eu/en/>

The EU funding for ForAge ceases at the end of March 2015. In the hands of AEA an important part of the work will continue, although much of the apparatus of the Project will be decoupled and may develop in other directions. From April 1 2015, AEA will take separate ongoing responsibility for the website and for the continuing development of the associated database. Of course it will continue to rely on the cooperation of others, especially the former ForAge partners.

The database, the Lexicon and the other functions of the ForAge project which devolve to AEA will significantly increase the range of AEA's possible future international involvements and interests. An early indicator will be AEA's annual autumn conference this year (see page 7). It will be international, two day, residential and have a number of papers from former ForAge project partners.



***Wellbeing in Later Life: education, creativity and physical activity*** is an EU-funded Grundtvig learning partnership in which AEA is a partner with organisations in Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Spain and Turkey. It began in August 2013 and is now entering its final stages. The Partnership has been investigating the learning of older people in educational, creative and physical activities and whether and how this learning increases feelings of well-being, positive self-identity and meaningfulness. It has also been investigating the teaching of older people and whether interactive, rather than didactic teaching, is more effective in promoting wellbeing among older learners.



**Drama learner 92 year old Ray Shaw having fun as Oliver Twist (photo Michael Spry)**

Apart from looking at international aspects, the partners have been interested

in comparing the three areas of classroom learning, creative activities (such as dance, drama and crafts) and physical activities. Each of the partner organisations had a special expertise in one or more of these areas. The project has had a structure over two years of six international meetings in the six partner countries at which the main business has been i) to discuss the provision for older learners of the host partner and ii) to review the “local activity” which each partner has undertaken for the project since the last international meeting. These “local activities” have been the backbone of the Project and have included a survey of older learners, a survey of teachers of older learners, an intuitive statement from each partner on the factors which will connect older people’s learning in their country with wellbeing and an experiment/innovation/ “happening” in learning and wellbeing for older people introduced by each partner into the Project.

Before the Project is completed at the end of July 2015, there will be two more international meetings and one more local activity (which will be about identifying the key outcomes of the Project). The main output of the Project will be an illustrated portfolio of ideas, experiences, innovations and evaluations concerned with older people’s learning and wellbeing. AEA will edit this portfolio and it should be available on the AEA website in October 2015.

---

*News - Government initiated Foresight Project on **The Future of Ageing***

Since the number of older people in the UK is projected to increase significantly in coming decades, bringing both

challenges and opportunities for central and local government and with impacts on a range of public services, the Government Office for Science has initiated a Foresight project which aims to analyse the nature of these changes and opportunities in an ageing society. The project will provide an evidence base to help identify options that will:

- improve quality of life for older people
- enable older people to participate more fully in society
- ensure everyone can access the tools and facilities to help them live a long and healthy life

The project is being guided by a lead expert group chaired by Professor Sarah Harper from Oxford University to provide oversight of the project and to ensure that relevant evidence and research is used.

The project has already commissioned a number of local essays and held a series of seminars with academics, practitioners working in the field of ageing, professionals and members of the public in different venues around the UK. AEA member Alex Withnall is currently involved in the project and is providing one of a series of specially commissioned evidence papers which are being reviewed by a panel of independent academics. Taken together, these different sources of evidence will provide an in-depth analysis of some of the issues that an ageing society will face in coming decades.

Further information at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collecti- ons/future-of-ageing>

***Help someone get online this spring***

*Can you show someone how to use a computer keyboard, browse a tablet or smartphone and send an email? Then get involved with **Spring Online 2015**, have some fun and hold a free internet taster event for local people!*



*“I came to this event today scared of a laptop even though I owned one, As I leave today I can turn it on, surf the net and even send an email to my dear friend abroad.”*

Spring Online is Digital Unite’s award-winning initiative that makes it possible for thousands of people, often older citizens, to try out using computers, tablets and the internet, many for the first time.

Currently around 6.4 million people have never used the internet and 5.6 million of those are aged over 55 years. Many more can’t do basic online tasks

like sending emails or searching the web.

During one week (20 – 26 April 2015) thousands of free taster events and sessions are held by volunteers and organisations across the UK to help and inspire local people achieve a lasting use of the internet.

Digital Unite will support you all the way with downloadable posters, leaflets and certificates, activity ideas to do with your learners and friendly advice and guidance.

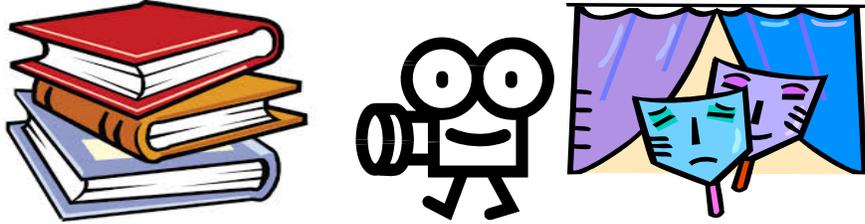
So whether you have access to one computer or tablet or a whole room full of them, Spring Online is a fantastic opportunity to help others in your area to get online.

As one previous Spring Online event holder said: “I treasure the squeaks of delight and excitement and the giggles from learners and volunteers. The fear barrier had been broken.”

Visit [www.digitalunite.com/spring-online](http://www.digitalunite.com/spring-online) for more information on how to get involved.

See also:

<http://digitalunite.com/help-others-get-online/digital-inclusion-housing-and-communities/digital-champions-network-housing>



## AEA DIGEST CULTURE SECTION

### BOOKS

*News first from Alex Withnall of an interesting new book, written by a long term friend of AEA, which points up through the history of the author's own family the changing lives of women over the years.*

***The Invisibility of Women Who Gave History to a Family*** (2014) is written by retired academic **Celia Bevan**, who has had an exciting career which took her from the UK to Papua New Guinea and then to Australia, where she became a Senior Lecturer in Gerontology at Charles Sturt University. She also served as the NSW President of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) as well as raising a family with her husband, fellow academic John Saw.



**Celia Bevan**

In retirement, Celia has explored the hitherto hidden lives of some of the women in her family and produced a moving account using letters, records of conversations, poems, quotations and anecdotes to make these lives visible and

to acknowledge how these remarkable women used their individual skills and talents for survival in difficult times and to help others in the community. Beautifully illustrated with fascinating family photographs, the book demonstrates clearly how better educational opportunities and the coming of the welfare state has enabled subsequent generations to enjoy more satisfying and productive lives; but in helping us to understand the resilience and strength of the 'invisible' women in her family, Celia reminds us of the debt many of us owe to those brave women, who went before and whose lives were often very different from our own.

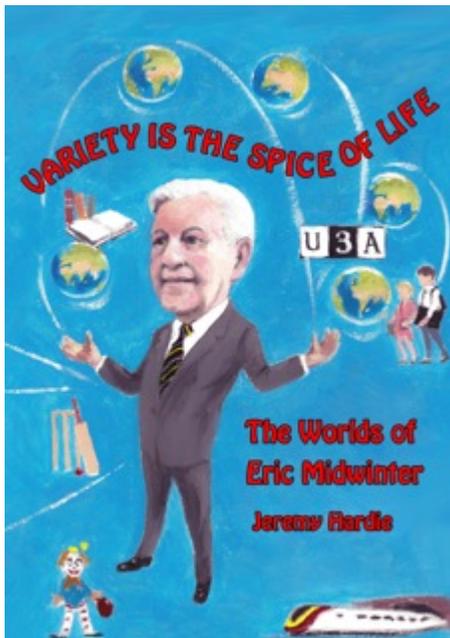
*The Invisibility of Women Who Gave History to a Family* is a limited publication. Further details from [alexwithnall@btinternet.com](mailto:alexwithnall@btinternet.com)

*Eric Midwinter is another long term friend of AEA and a significant figure in the field of lifelong learning. This spring sees the publication of a new book about his life and achievements. Dianne Norton writes here about **Variety is the Spice of Life - The Worlds of Eric Midwinter** by Jeremy Hardie.*

Eric Midwinter is a man of many parts whose activities have encompassed a

variety of fields of endeavour during his long and highly productive career.

Born into a working class family in Sale, near Manchester, in the 1930s, he proceeded, via scholarships to grammar school and Cambridge University, to become a successful social historian, teacher, educationalist, social policy analyst, consumer champion, campaigner for older people, founder of the U3A, lecturer and prolific author.



In more than 60 books, Midwinter has written extensively on many subjects, including sport (especially cricket) and the world of comedy and entertainers. He is also the author of several books on community education and the history of education and a writer and broadcaster on educational topics. He has been a life-long supporter of Lancashire County Cricket Club and Manchester United Football Club, and is a member of both the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) and the Savage Club in London, the latter providing a congenial hub for many of his social activities. A man of

great erudition and wit, as well as being a passionate egalitarian, he is much in demand as a speaker and after-dinner entertainer, and for his written articles and reviews.

Drawing on Midwinter's published works, together with testimonies from many of his friends and colleagues, author Jeremy Hardie has put together an affectionate portrait of the different worlds of this accomplished polymath. Along the way this story also demonstrates how one caring individual can make significant contributions to the well being of his fellow citizens in a number of different fields, including education, consumer affairs, transport, social welfare and gerontology.

*Variety is the Spice of Life* is published in paperback by Third Age Press (ISBN 978-1-898576-45-7) and is available online at: [www.thirdagepress.co.uk](http://www.thirdagepress.co.uk)

or by post

price £14.50 + £2.50 postage

Cheques (UK sterling) to

Third Age Press.

6 Parkside Gardens

London SW19 5EY

Also available on order through bookshops.

*Alex Withnall* has been reading a new novel *Elizabeth is Missing* by *Emma Healey*, whose theme is something which is of concern to an increasing number of people today.

In recent years there has been a considerable increase in concern about dementia at both societal and individual level as people become more aware of the terrible toll it exacts not just on the sufferer but on carers and the wider

family. Films such as Richard Eyre's 2001 portrait of Iris Murdoch and her husband, *Iris*, and the more recent *Still Alice* for which Julianne Moore won a Best Actress Award at the BAFTAs and Oscars have continued to draw attention to its impact. Now Emma Healey, surprisingly still in her twenties, has picked up a Costa First Novel Award for this astonishing debut, a dark psychological tale in which the narrator is Maud, an octogenarian whose mind is already damaged by dementia to the extent that she sometimes doesn't recognise her own daughter and granddaughter and who has to keep reminder notes in her pockets to try to hang on to some semblance of normality and initially retain the ability to live independently. All she is sure of is that her elderly friend Elizabeth is missing and no-one seems to care.

Without going into the complexities of the plot, this is a gripping if slow moving detective story involving ageing, memory and the impact of loss as well as the unspoken beliefs that sometimes surround family relationships. It moves backwards and forwards in time as Maud confuses the missing Elizabeth with the unsolved disappearance of her older sister just after the war. Of course, her

memories of her early life are perfectly clear and recalled in minute detail even as in the present day she pays yet another visit to the police station to report Elizabeth's disappearance or makes the fifth cup of tea that she forgets to drink. We also glimpse the pressures on relatives who care for an elderly person with dementia – there's a sympathetic portrait of Maud's daughter on whom the realities of caring tend to fall.

I began reading this book quite late one evening and was still going strong at two in the morning – I simply couldn't put it down. The structure and language makes it easy to read so that almost unwittingly we find ourselves dragged further and further into Maud's delusional mind. Whilst some readers may not find the ending totally satisfactory, I understand that the television rights to the book have already been snapped up. It will be interesting to see how the book translates for the small screen; but this has surely got to be another award winning role for Dame Judi Dench!

*Elizabeth is Missing* by Emma Healey is published by Penguin Books at £7.99. Also available from Kindle.

## THEATRE

Last year Old Vic New Voices, which is the theatre's Education, Community and Emerging Talent arm, created an intergenerational community theatre project on the theme of the housing crisis in London. This year their subject is *Ages*. **Carol Allen** reports.

Based on the testimonies of over 200 Londoners, *Housed* was a response to the mounting housing crisis and asked what it means to find some space in a city that's squeezing you out. With a cast of all ages drawn from the local community, the show played to packed houses in five performances at The Old

Vic itself and the Hotel Elephant in Newington Causeway in July 2014.

This year the New Voices ambition is even higher. *Ages* is a specially commissioned play from writer Alexandra Wood featuring music, movement and drama, which explores what it means to grow up and grow old in the city. As well as a company of 50 actors, again drawn from the London community, New Voices is also working in collaboration with Bazil Meade and the London Community Gospel Choir. The show will be on for ten performances in late April and early May.

Like *Housed*, *Ages* is based on the testimonies of ordinary Londoners. The process started back in October when invitations were sent out to Londoners of all ages to attend a series of research workshops to explore the subject of youth and ageing in the capital. I attended one with my New Horizons older learners drama group, where we were invited to explore attitudes to ages through various drama exercises and the discussion of provocative statements such as “Old age begins at 50” and “A person makes no contribution to society until the age of 25”. You can imagine what sort of response these got from the group, which ranged in age from around 15 to 80! The writer Alexandra was on hand busily making notes. This was the material on which she would be drawing when she wrote her play.

The next stage came in January, when invitations went out for open auditions for the company itself at the New Voices theatre space in Bermondsey. The auditions were actually stimulating drama workshops, with the object of

discovering actors, some with considerable experience, others who had never acted before, but who would work well as part of a team, a company. No script as yet, but as well as exercises in movement and relating to our fellow actors, we were broken up into small groups to work under the supervision of a number of young assistant directors on improvisations, which I later discovered were based on themes from Alexandra’s script. At this stage New Voices auditioned some 1400 people – an indication of the high level of interest in the project.

From that 200 people were invited back for a second audition – actually another stimulating workshop - where we did group exercises based on extracts from the script and again were broken into small groups to work on scenes from the actual play, again with the support of the team of young assistant directors.



**Photo: Richard Lakos**

From this session I learned that the play will be set in Bermondsey and two of the main characters will be a couple called Olive and Paul, who marry just after the Second World War, in which Paul has lost his beloved brothers. Over the years Olive has to cope with the fact that her husband drinks too much. And as an elderly woman of 90, she forms a friendship with a young neighbour (this

was the scene I was working on – as I was on crutches at the time, that helped with the ageing process!) and I suspect it may be through that relationship that the story will be told. Around the same time people were being auditioned for places in the choir.



**Photo: Richard Lakos**

As I write one of my students has been recruited to work on the wardrobe side of the show and another has won a place in the choir. Casting of the actors is still in progress but whether any more of us will be actually taking part or not, the process has been an enjoyable learning experience so far, where we've had a fun experience of working with some delightful young people, and we are all looking forward to the show.

*Meanwhile back at New Horizons learning centre we have been working on a project which combines two learning areas – history as well as drama.*

Our project ***The Glorious Georges at Kensington Palace*** started when Open Age and New Horizons tutors were invited last year by the Learning and Engagement team at the palace to a seminar in connection with the Glorious Georges project they were running at the time promoting the historic rooms in the palace created during the reigns of the

first Hanoverian kings, George I and George II. The object was to encourage us to do our own projects with our students at the palace – perhaps art, perhaps writing and in my case drama. This struck me as a great opportunity for the drama group to mount our first “site specific” show – telling a story where it actually happened.

The next stage was taking my group on a research trip to the palace, where I showed them round the King's Apartments and told them the story of the rooms and the people who once lived there – which involved a bit of mugging up on history on my part! It's a good tale though.



**Learner Audrey Joseph tries out an C18th costume for size at Kensington Palace**

How Kensington Palace became a royal residence – it was William and Mary who developed what was a country house in Kensington into a royal residence as a refuge from the summer heat of Whitehall. How England came to invite German George to take the throne – it was all to do with the historic conflict between Protestants and Catholics and the fact that George I was the first in line Protestant available to take the throne. And then there are the characters, who lived and visited the palace in the time of the first two

Georges. Mehemet for example, a former slave, who became George I's closest confidant. The composer Handel, who was a great favourite at court and was music tutor to George II and Queen Caroline's children. And Peter the Wild Boy, found living feral in the forests of Hanover and adopted by George I as a "pet" in the English court.



**Peter the Wild Boy.**  
From the painting on the King's Staircase at Kensington Palace

I have now written a script dramatising all these stories in a style which presents my students with some interesting new challenges. They will be working in a thrust form of staging for the first time, which means they will be surrounded by the audience and therefore have to be constantly on the move, keeping the action fluid and inclusive. They will be called on to bring history to life in many cases through very short scenes and to interact this time not only with their fellow actors but with the audience too.

We are currently rehearsing the play in class and will be presenting it at the palace on Tuesday afternoon 16<sup>th</sup> June.

*Recommendations now of good shows currently in the West End from **Carlie Newman**.*

First seen at the National Theatre, then Apollo and now at the Gielgud Theatre, ***The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*** (booking until 22

October 2015.) remains an exciting production. It's a fair leap from the first person narrated novel by Mark Haddon to a stage play, but it is successfully managed by having Christopher's story, which he has written himself, being read out by his teacher Siobhan (Sarah Woodward) as the incidents are acted out by the cast most of whom play multiple roles.

Having been told by his father that his mother died two years ago, Christopher is amazed to discover a different scenario and wants to discover the truth, as well as solve the mystery which gives the play its title. An exceptionally agile Graham Butler plays 15 year-old Christopher, who, while suffering from a form of autism, is nevertheless a brilliant mathematician. He is obsessed with facts and organised data but finds it hard to relate to people in a social context and dislikes being touched, even by his parents. When the neighbour's dog is found dead, Christopher undertakes his own forensic enquiry into the incident, which leads him out into the wider world.



**Photo by Brinkhoff Moegenburg**

Director Marianne Elliott uses choreography, lighting and sound effects

to depict the movement and characters of the people and objects Christopher comes across. At one point he climbs the wall; at another there is a tiny moving train which is lit up as are the houses that are all over the floor of the stage. Later a live dog makes some of us emit an "Ah!" Fluorescent numbers glide across the back and sides of the stage.

This adaptation of Haddon's book by Simon Stephens has been undertaken with extreme sensitivity, so that we not only get a real feeling for the boy's limitations but also an awareness of the special qualities which make him the hero of his own tale.

The actors present not only characters but also the objects encountered by Christopher, largely through the use of mime. The whole cast is good with sensitive portrayals of Christopher's father and his teacher by Nicolas Tennant and Sarah Woodward. Gay Soper is particularly good as an elderly neighbour. She later told some of us that each of the actors playing Christopher (there are two actors who alternate the role) is completely different in the part and certainly Butler does not give the same performance as Luke Treadaway, whom I saw at the Apollo Theatre in 2013. Butler is remarkable in his depiction of this young boy, who is frightened of any physical contact or conversation with strangers and yet so gifted intellectually (he gets an A\* in Maths A level). I like the way he is able to draw perfect circles on the wall at the back and on the floor. His ability to move around the stage in an awkward but at the same time fluent manner is amazing to watch.

Inevitably the much anticipated *Woman on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown: The musical* (Playhouse Theatre,

London until 9 May 2015 Box office 0844 871 7631) wasn't going to live up to Pedro Almodovar's most amusing film of the same name, which was a hit in 1988.

The show based on the film keeps to the same story – women who have been mistreated by their menfolk. Tamsin Greig plays Pepa, a voiceover star who has been dumped by her faithless lover Ivan (Jerome Pradon). In Madrid, we also meet his abandoned wife, played by the leggy Hadyn Gwynne, as a woman suffering delusions and carrying a gun. She has spent a large part of the 20 years apart from her husband in a mental hospital. There is too Candela (Anna Skellern), a lovely-looking model who has fallen for an Islamic terrorist, who hops from her bed leaving a cache of guns under it. And then we meet Ivan's son (Hadyn Oakley), who becomes sexually attracted to Candela, and his virginal fiancée (Seline Hizli), who manages an orgasm after consuming gazpacho laced with valium - one needs to forget Antonio Banderas who was the son in the film.



Tamsin Greig and the cast of *Woman on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* at the Playhouse Theatre Photo: Alastair Muir

The wife's lawyer is yet another woman (Willemijn Verkaik) but the men also make an impact particularly Ricardo

Afonso as the taxi driver, in whom Pepa confides. The actors are lively and play their parts well. But it is Greig who keeps the show alive and moving forward. She has a pleasant but not fantastic voice but in all her body movement and acting she is superb. Her amazement, when she discovers that at 42 she is pregnant, is both moving and funny at the same time.

One questions why a musical? Yes, there are few good songs – Gwynne singing ‘Invisible’ and Greig’s ‘The

view from here’ - but on the whole they don’t add a lot to the story or the production.

Costumes and sets effectively evoke the late 1980s and it is a most attractive show to watch. Director Bartlett Sher keeps the whole piece moving and the pace, particularly in the second half, buzzes along. It’s really good to see women in the lead roles and they seem to relish the opportunity. Do see it to enjoy the star performance by Greig.

## CINEMA

*The film awards season is now over; winners of the Oscars, the BAFTAs et al have trodden the red carpet and made their thank you speeches. So are the winning films worth paying your money for at the box office? **On Screen** news from **Carol Allen**.*

As far as best film went, the Brits (London Critics Circle and BAFTA) went for Richard Linklater’s *Boyhood*, while the Oscar winner was *Birdman*. Both in their different ways are worthy of your attention.



*Boyhood* is a groundbreaker in that it in order to capture the story of an ordinary

boy’s life from childhood to young manhood, rather than using a succession of actors of various ages to play the young people growing up, Linklater made the film over a period of 12 years using the same cast, so you see Mason (Ellar Coltrane) and his sister (played by Linklater’s daughter Lorelei) grow up for real before your eyes. Patricia Arquette as their mother won deserved supporting actress awards, though Ethan Hawk, particularly sympathetic as the father trying to keep close to his kids despite his separation from them, got nominations but no prize. The film is nearly three hours long, there are no drugs, no murders, no violence, no sex, nothing ostensibly dramatic – just an emotionally engaging human story of ordinary people, demonstrating that no life is actually ordinary, which moves far more quickly than many 90 minute films.

In *Birdman* Michael Keaton plays Riggan, a former comic book superhero film star trying to revive his career by putting on and starring in a Broadway play. But his movie persona of the title won’t let him go and engages in a

constant taunting dialogue with his creator. It's all interestingly surreal and also fascinating if you like being taken backstage in the theatre. Keaton gets a chance to spread his thespian wings and Edward Norton is particularly good as an egotistical and insecure fellow actor, who only feels real when he is acting.

Eddie Redmayne was hotly tipped for BAFTA and Oscar best actor gongs for his performance as Stephen Hawking in *The Theory of Everything* and his two wins are well deserved. Based on a memoir by Hawking's first wife Jane, the film concentrates on the relationship between the two of them without losing sight of the fact that the story is also about Hawking's relationship to his work and his triumph over the diagnosis of motor neuron disease made when he was only 21 and was told that he would only have two more years to live. Redmayne's depiction of Stephen's physical deterioration is remarkable - the distortion of his body, loss of physical abilities, even eventually speech itself, leaving the actor with only his face and a machine to express his character. It is a totally convincing and very moving performance, which is both an impressive technical achievement and an emotionally draining experience.



**Eddie Redmayne as Stephen Hawking**  
Photo: Liam Daniel Focus Features

Julianne Moore was voted best actress by BAFTA, Critics' Circle and the American Academy for her role in *Still Alice*, in which she plays the title role of a woman in her fifties suffering from early onset Alzheimer's and it's another well deserved acknowledgement. Alice's comparative youth and high academic achievement make her deterioration particularly painful and poignant, as for example in a scene where we see her now fragmented self watching with total lack of comprehension the "exit plan" video she made earlier in her illness. Some good supporting work too from Alec Baldwin as her husband and Kristen Stewart as her daughter.



**Julianne Moore – Still Alice**

**Pic: Handout**

Although Benedict Cumberbatch as Alan Turing in *The Imitation Game* and the film itself didn't go home with any major gongs, apart from a screenplay Oscar that is, the film is very much worth catching. Cumberbatch plays Turing as a socially withdrawn, largely unsmiling, blinkered and arrogant figure, who initially alienates his fellow workers but then wins them round with the help of the only woman on the team (Keira Knightley). The screenplay fictionalises the facts in terms of creating conflicts, such as that between Turing and his co-worker, chess genius Hugh Alexander (Matthew Goode) and at

times leans over backwards to reconcile the story with our contemporary attitudes to homosexuality and sexism. But it works well as a piece of story telling and Cumberbatch's very effective performance is well supported by a strong cast.



**David Oyelowo as Martin Luther King**  
Pic: Atshushi Nishijima

Finally two films which were virtually overlooked by the awards. The most significant omission was British actor David Oyelowo's performance as Martin Luther King in *Selma*. This is not a biopic but concentrates on a single important issue in King's fight for civil rights in the sixties – the right of every American citizen to vote - and the march through the small, Alabama town of Selma in the spring of 1965, which ultimately won this battle for the country's black citizens. Oyelowo is terrific, embodying not only the authority, power and oratory of the man perfectly but also his humanity. Good supporting work too from fellow Brits Tom Wilkinson as Lyndon B. Johnson

and Tim Roth as the racist Governor George Wallace.

*Testament of Youth* based on Vera Brittain's First World War memoir of the same name and skilfully adapted for the screen by Juliette Towhidi tells the story of Vera's experiences as a nurse in the war and most poignantly, the deaths in the conflict of the three young men she loved – her fiancé Roland Leighton, her younger brother Edward and their friend Victor Richardson.. Alicia Vikander as Vera is always at the centre; a strong, determined, intelligent young woman, forced to deal with the pain of losing the three men she loves and eventually move on and continue with her life. Kit Harrington as Roland brings a melancholy intensity and fire to the role and there are strong performances from Taran Egerton as Edward, whom she nurses back to health in a field hospital when he is badly wounded, only to see him sent back into the furnace to his death and Colin Morgan as Victor, whose love for Vera is unrequited and who ends up in her hospital blind from his wounds but still cheerful, only to then too die. There are no battle scenes in the film and few shots of the trenches. What we see are the results of war and its effect on those who have to live on with the loss of their loved ones



**Kit Harrington and Alicia Vikander as Roland Leighton, and Vera Brittain.**

## ***The Association for Education and Ageing***

**Patrons:** Baroness Sally Greengross, Professor Arthur Stock, Professor Brian Groombridge

**Chair:** Dr Jonathan Hughes, [jonathan.hughes@open.ac.uk](mailto:jonathan.hughes@open.ac.uk)

**Hon Secretary:** Sasha Anderson, The Flat, 45 Bull Street, Hold, Norfolk NR25 6HP  
[Sasha.anderson75@gmail.com](mailto:Sasha.anderson75@gmail.com) Tel: 01263 711 592

**Information coordinator/Digest and website editor:** Carol Allen  
[infoaea.allen1@gmail.com](mailto:infoaea.allen1@gmail.com) Tel: 020 7385 464

**Treasurer:** Diane Sawyer [dsawyer@phonecoop.coop](mailto:dsawyer@phonecoop.coop)

**Elected members:** Dr Brian Findsen, Dr Marvin Formosa, Caroline Holland, Dr Anne Jamieson, Carlie Newman, Professor Keith Percy, Josie Tetley, Lynn Weallens, Janet Whitehouse, Jo Walker, Jane Watts, Dr Alex Withnall

<http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/about-us.html>