



The Association for  
Education & Ageing

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

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# AEA DIGEST

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Lesley Hart, MBE, formerly Director of the Centre for Lifelong, University of Strathclyde and founder of the Senior Studies Institute, who will be delivering this year's Frank Glendenning lecture at our AGM (see page 3)

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

*Jo Walker*

We're looking forward to our annual conference and meeting, this time to be held in Birmingham on 21st July. Our partners in the event are the Institute of Ageing and Health, whose membership includes practitioners from the health and welfare related services. Together with our educational interests and resources (that's you – our members!) we have created a fascinating day that will take both audiences into new areas. We are particularly delighted that Lesley Hart has agreed to give the Frank Glendenning memorial lecture this year. Her pioneering work at the Senior Studies Institute has been a model for so many, including the way that it embraced issues related to learning, such as health and wellbeing. See page 3 for further details.

As you will have heard, we have decided to move our international conference in Ireland this October forward into the new year to March 20-22 in 2012. This is in order to take advantage of EU funding to support attendance, offered by the Grundtvig programme. Conference fees and travel expenses are available to participants from the EU, who apply to their national agencies. Further information on how to apply will be available shortly but as an early warning, applications need to be in by September 16th 2011 which we have also made our 'early bird' booking deadline. We have just issued a call for papers and contributions to the conference programme (see page 5) which can also be viewed on the Event's page of AEA's website <http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org>

[geing.org/aea-events.html](http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/aea-events.html) and booking details will be published shortly.

The change of date brings our conference into the EU International Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity 2012. See [www.active-ageing-2012.eu](http://www.active-ageing-2012.eu) for further information on themes and events. Could your activity or programme be part of the year? We are also pleased to be working in partnership with Age Action Ireland and with WEA Northern Ireland to plan and deliver our Irish conference: one of the themes is learning through arts and creativity, which will enable us to showcase local expertise and cross-border initiatives.

Our conference will also be in association with the influential UK research programme: New Dynamics of Ageing, led by Professor Alan Walker. We are hoping for the usual fertile mix of academic and practical sessions.

The International Journal of Education and Ageing, launched last summer at our annual meeting, has just completed its first volume. Issue three is now available and being sent to subscribers and will also be accessible to them online. Subscriptions for Volume two are now open, but it's not too late to purchase Volume 1 as well, if you wish to have a complete collection. Visit the Journal page on our website <http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/international-journal-of-education-and-ageing.html> or contact Lois Gladdish, AEA secretary (see Contacts page 24), who has also recently taken on administrative support for the Journal.

**Association for Education and Ageing  
Institute for Ageing and Health – West  
Midlands**

Joint Conference

***LEARNING, AGEING AND WELL-BEING***

**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> July: 10.00 am – 4.00 pm**

**Birmingham Medical Institute**

**36 Harborne Road, Birmingham B15 3AF**

2012 has been designated the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. One of the dimensions of active ageing is healthy ageing with a focus on independent living. In this first joint conference, we will hear from a range of experienced researchers and practitioners in both health and education and gain an understanding of how learning, ageing and well-being can intersect to improve the lives of older people and the skills of professionals/carers working with them.

The programme includes

- keynote address from Professor Chris Phillipson of Keele University
- a presentation *Older people gaining healthcare information from the internet* by Sue Lillyman, University of Worcester

Plus two movies

- *Funny things happen at the Grange: a Mockumentary introducing comedy activities in day services to older people with dementia*, introduced by Trish Hafford-Letchfield, Middlesex University & George Baddeley, Silver Comedy and
- *Miss Threadgold*, a gripping drama starring the older learners from Carol Allen's drama class.

This year's Frank Glendenning lecture will be delivered by Lesley Hart MBE, formerly Director of the Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Strathclyde and founder of the Senior Studies Institute on the subject of *Working and Learning Together: the value of collaboration*.

Full programme and booking form can be downloaded from our website at <http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/aea-events.html>

AEA looks forward to welcoming you to the conference.



**The Association for Education and Ageing, Age  
Action Ireland &  
Workers' Educational Association N I  
& The New Dynamics of Ageing  
Research Programme UK**



*present an international conference 20-22 March 2012*

***NEW DYNAMICS OF LEARNING AND AGEING:  
RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE***

at the National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM), Dublin

**CALL FOR PAPERS (see next page)**

*Taking place on the historic St Patrick's campus, within easy reach of Dublin, this international residential meeting will seek to highlight new curriculum areas for older learners and innovative ways of reaching and teaching them – including the involvement of arts and creativity, and in the context of an ageing society.*

*An additional pre-conference programme will be available for older learners and anyone with a view on later life learning, organised by the Adult and Community Education Department of NUIM.*

**The conference will aim to:**

- Identify new areas of teaching and learning,

- especially through arts and creativity
- Share good practice about older adults' learning and educational opportunities
  - Include the voice of the older learner
  - Highlight the EU year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity (2012)
  - Showcase the work of the conference partners and other contributors.

**A CALL FOR PAPERS** is open for programme contributions.

These can be in the format of a scientific paper, a presentation on a theme, or a workshop. Thirty-minute slots are available (20 minutes presentation, 10 minutes discussion) and will be scheduled in parallel with others within paper sessions.

Abstracts of not more than 250 words should be sent for consideration to the conference organisers at:

***[j.e.hughes@open.ac.uk](mailto:j.e.hughes@open.ac.uk)***  
**by 30 November 2011.**

Successful presenters will be notified by the end of December 2011 and should

register for conference attendance (if not done so already) to confirm acceptance of their contribution.

**Please include the following information:**

1. Title of proposed contribution
2. Style: paper / presentation / workshop (please state which)
3. Name(s) including title(s) of presenter(s)
4. Contact postal address and telephone number
5. Contact email address
6. Employer or sponsor of work to be presented
7. Description of content of contribution, including
  - a. Aim or purpose of work
  - b. Methods or procedures used
  - c. Outcomes
  - d. Reflections or conclusions
8. Method of presentation
9. Technical requirements.

*The above information is also available on our website at:*  
<http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/aea-events.html>

## ***MORE CONFERENCE NEWS***

*AEA members **Kathleen Lane and Jean Anderson** represented the association at the recent one-day conference, **Ageing Population 2011** in London on 10<sup>th</sup> May. The context was the challenge of the proposed changes to funding for health and social care, especially the restructuring of the NHS. Here's Kathleen's report.*

Although education was not a focus, the event linked closely with AEA's aims to highlight trends that have an impact on the ability of older people to lead active, fulfilled lives.

Speakers from government and other sectors – including Steve Webb, MP (Minister of State for Pensions), Michelle Mitchell, Charity Director, Age UK, and Claire Henry, Director, National End of Life Care Programme, NHS – addressed matters such as pensions, social care, health, housing and the role of the voluntary sector. In addition, participants attended two seminars; this delegate chose one on ophthalmological services in later life and another on living with dementia in a care home. Perhaps AEA members will not be surprised that one refrain among those with whom this delegate spoke during the breaks was that the public has not yet begun to feel the full impact of budget cuts.

My preference would have been for an equal mix of lecture-type addresses and seminars and more opportunity for delegate input, but the event's format did not support this to any great extent.

Nevertheless, Ageing Population 2011 covered issues of importance and generated much discussion among delegates off the formal programme. To this delegate's mind, the following comment from the audience highlights a point likely to resonate with the concerns of AEA and other organisations. Identifying himself as an advocate for older people, the attendee declared (to a round of applause): "Some of our older people are older people now; the reality is we need help and support... and I need solutions for my older people now."

*Jean gives a more personal reflection on the day.*

Facing the overcrowded rush hour train and tube – an experience I consider myself fortunate in not having to do on a regular basis, I set off for the conference. In my experience, such events always start late, but not on this occasion - the chairman Dr Mark Porter writer and broadcaster, GP in Gloucestershire, Medical Correspondent for The Times and presenter of BBC Radio 4's flagship medical series *Case Notes*, got things off to a prompt start.



**Dr Mark Porter**

He said that the content of the conference held a particular appeal for him, being a middle aged man - namely, pensions, dementia and keeping your own teeth! Actually the topics were even more comprehensive, covering in 15 minute presentations and two hour-length seminars, the role of the voluntary sector and local authorities, the implication for health services, technology, housing, sight and hearing deterioration and dementia.

As the latter is of particular interest to me I attended the seminar and presentation on this topic and am left with the question as to whether dementia sufferers are better off being cared for in their own homes or in residential care.

I was heartened by the comments that preventative measures against the condition are physical exercise, mental stimulation, having normal blood pressure and cholesterol levels, paying attention to vascular risk factors and thinking young. And a cutting from the Daily Mail suggested that eating curry may have a positive effect.

Professor Alistair Burns summed up these findings as having “a good night out in Glasgow!”

So, do we worry about or celebrate the increase in life expectancy?

Words such as success, victory, opportunity were used in connection with this phenomenon, but also burden time-bomb, bed blockers....Older people are being engaged in research, but are the most vulnerable being involved and what has happened as a result?

I couldn't help feeling that we are aware of the challenges, but need to concentrate on finding the solutions.

I made my way back to confront the delights of commuting with my head full of information and ideas and a bag containing two notebooks, two pens and a sonic toothbrush.

I would like to thank the Association for Education and Ageing for giving me the opportunity to attend this thought provoking and stimulating event.

## NEWS AND FEATURES

*As mentioned in Notes from the Chair (page 2) 2012, has been declared **EU Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity**. Jim Soulsby has pulled together some answers to what are commonly called on websites FAQ's – frequently asked questions - the first being why are we having EY 2012 in the first place?*

2012 will be the 10th Anniversary of the United Nations Action Plan on Ageing. In response to the demographic

challenge all EU member states are facing the EY2012 will seek to:

- Promote active ageing in employment
- Promote active ageing in the community through volunteering and caring
- Promote healthy ageing and independent living
- Enhance solidarity between generations in order to create a society for all ages

### **What does Active Ageing mean?**

Active Ageing is defined by the World Health Organization as the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age. It allows people to realise their potential for wellbeing throughout their lives and to participate in society according to their needs, desires and capabilities, while providing them with adequate protection, security and care when they need assistance.

It implies optimising opportunities for physical, social and mental health to enable older people to take an active part in society without discrimination and to enjoy an independent and good quality of life. On the other hand, creating an intergenerational society needs awareness of each and every one of us about what she or he can do for the society of all ages, urgent adaptations of family policies and innovative solutions for new working careers which are life-cycle based.

### **What is the objective?**

Our entire society is going to have to adapt itself to the needs of its ageing population, but it will also have to tackle the new challenges faced by other age groups so that all generations will be able to continue supporting each other and living together peacefully.

This means that we will have to collectively review our policies and practices as regards town planning, rural development, public transport, access to health care, family policy, education and training, social protection, employment, civic participation, leisure, etc.

Demographic change should be looked at as an opportunity, which can bring

innovative solutions to many current economic and social challenges, but this will require a new assessment and reworking of several economic and social policies within society.

Empowering older people to age in good health and to contribute more actively to the labour market and to their communities will help us cope with our demographic challenge in a way that is fair and sustainable for all generations. Involving young people at early stages is necessary to get mutual inspiration and to raise awareness of the interdependence of the generations, e.g. in terms of pension systems



### **Why is this Year important for me?**

The proposed European Year is designed to serve as a framework for:

- raising awareness on the contribution that older people make to society and the important part that young people play for a holistic society;
- identifying and disseminating good practice;
- mobilising policymakers and relevant stakeholders at all levels to promote active ageing;
- calling for greater cooperation and solidarity between generations.

A wide range of stakeholders: national, regional and local authorities, employers

and trade unions, the business sector, civil society organisations, researchers, etc. should use this opportunity to propose action to support active ageing in the field of: employment, social protection, family policies, education and training, health and social services, as well as housing, transport, leisure, and public infrastructures. All together they can help bring the necessary changes to achieve a society for all ages and to find innovative solutions that are sustainable and fair for all generations.

Source: Age Platform Europe.

<http://www.age-platform.org>



*In addition Jim writes:*

For AEA members we hope that the year will heartily embrace lifelong learning. If the preliminary launch event in Budapest on 29th April 2011 is anything to go by, it will. This is good news. Many events focussing on active and healthy ageing ignore the role of education in helping older people achieve a desired quality of later life. But speaker after speaker from the 38 we listened to in rapid succession spoke of their understanding of the value of later life learning. For those of us working with the Commission to try to ensure their future adult learning action plan continues to promote work in this area this was really good news as the Commission seeks to find and articulate

the arguments to convince the Parliament and more importantly the Finance Ministers from all the member states who hold and allocate the budget. Hopefully the awareness of demographic change, the emerging evidence of the benefits of later life learning and the welcome number of new advocates from non-education departments and bureaucracies will provide added weight to the arguments.

Plans for the year are in their infancy. There is no significant budget for the year just a hope that across the Commission there will be a willingness to respond positively to applications for funds for activities during 2012 and subsequently. In the education world this meant that applications for Grundtvig activities which had to be submitted by the end of February 2011 needed to be extremely aware of the forthcoming year. (Applications for next year will really be a bit late to celebrate anything once the money is allocated and made available in the second half of 2012.) In England the lead for activities will be in the Department of Work and Pensions with Gwen Wolf the designated lead officer but as yet there have been – to the best of my knowledge – no meetings or discussions.

So if you have some ideas in mind for activities, celebrations, programmes for the future perhaps you may wish to badge them under the year and of course let us know.

The Commission dedicated web site is as follows: [www.active-ageing-2012.eu](http://www.active-ageing-2012.eu)

*Continuing the intergenerational theme and confirming the need for initiatives which bring old and young together, recent research from the charity*

*Abbeyfield, who provide sheltered accommodation for the elderly, showed a huge understanding gap between the generations. So Abbeyfield decided to do something about it with **AGeenda Skills Swaps**.*



**Geoffrey Palmer at the launch of AGeenda Skills Swaps**

Actor Geoffrey Palmer OBE, well known to television viewers for his role with Judi Dench as the mature lovers in *As Time Goes By*, launched a national initiative in May to bring young and older people together. Palmer was championing a generational skills swap initiative week - the AGeenda Skills Swaps – the idea being to raise awareness of the need for greater interaction between the generations and bring them together to – well – share and swap their skills. The week, which took place in Abbeyfield homes and communities throughout the country, was held during the first week of June and was inspired by the organisation’s research into the generation understanding gap.

The research showed that across the UK fifty per cent of over 65 year olds think young people lack family values, morals, a sense of responsibility and community spirit and are obsessed with celebrities and becoming famous.

The views of young people on the older generation are just as bad – many said they have outdated views, attitudes and behaviours and do not respect young people and their views.

Palmer explained: “I’m launching Abbeyfield’s AGeenda Skills Swaps to raise awareness of the need for younger and older people to spend more time with each other. On average the two generations spend only 12 days a year together.

“The skills swaps will demonstrate to the different age groups that their negative ideas are far from the truth. The swaps, which will range from cooking to social networking, will help to build bridges between the generations as they learn from each other.”

The project emerged from the positive side of Abbeyfield’s research, which generated a Top Ten AGeenda Skills Swaps list highlighting what younger and older people are keen to learn from each other, most of which interestingly are skills the younger people would like to learn from their elders. The list:

1. Shadow each other to learn about the other's lifestyle - e.g. spend a day at a school, college or university/spend a day at a retirement home or in a sheltered housing community.
2. Learn to cook from scratch (young people)
3. Learn traditional crafts such as knitting and sewing (young people)
4. Learn to repair and re-use things (young people)
5. Learn gardening skills (young people)
6. Learn how to DIY (young people)

7. Learn how to write a great letter (young people)
8. Learn an extreme sport (older people)
9. Go night clubbing (older people)
10. Learn to play computer games and use social networking sites (older people)

Paul Allen, chief executive of Abbeyfield said: “If the two generations don’t have much contact with each other, it’s understandable why they make assumptions which may not always be correct. This event will enable our residents to have a fun day interacting with young people to swap skills unknown to each other.”

Sounds like an idea which could profitably be taken up by other organisations as indeed part of the EU Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity.

*There are though some young people who are keenly aware of the issues raised by the ageing demographic. 17 year old **Amy Lineham** is a sixth form student at the City of London School for Girls. On her own initiative she is organising a one day conference in October for her peers on the theme of **The Age of Ageing** to address those very issues. She’s been talking to AEA Digest about the project.*

Amy is an enterprising young woman, who has her sights set on an Oxbridge degree in medicine and a future career as a doctor.

“My interest became focussed on the subject of ageing in my role as Information Officer of the Medic Society at school,” she told me. “I was digging out information on current

issues in medicine and realised how important it is for my generation to be aware of the ageing question, both as future carers for the ageing population and, with the advances in medical care, as future members of the ageing population ourselves.”



**Amy Lineham**

The aim of the conference is to raise awareness and understanding of the issues in Amy’s own generation.

“I decided to organise this event after reading a number of news articles discussing ageing and the implications of an ageing population, including the treatment of elderly people and the care they receive. As this year has gone by, ageing and the elderly has featured more and more in the national news and is the most discussed social concern of the moment. The subject will only become more relevant over the coming years as the population continues to age.”

“I aim for the conference to provide enlightenment into this important area, which is one that many students are not fully aware of.”

The target audience is those aged 14-18, but any school student is welcome to attend, as the aim of the day is to provide information to anyone who is interested, and Amy is currently engaged in inviting students from a wide range of schools, both state and private, across the London area.

The speakers she has booked include Lord Alex Carlile, who will be chairing a debate on euthanasia; Professor Julianne Meyer who will be talking about ageism; and Julie McManus, Head of Scientific and Technical-Regulatory Affairs at L'Oreal, who will be speaking on the science of ageing. Other topics covered are the economic implications of an ageing population, society's impression of ageing and research into a cure for Alzheimer's.

Like many such initiatives though, Amy's faces a funding problem. She has budgeted her event at £1,000 (one of her A Level subjects is Maths!) and intends it to be a free conference with lunch provided. She is currently engaged in a vigorous fund raising campaign, which at the time of our conversation in the current economic climate had raised £150 donated by The Worshipful Society of Apothecaries and The Worshipful Company of Barbers. So any offers of help, however small, would be gratefully received to make up that £850 shortfall.

Returning to our intergenerational theme, a point Amy herself may wish to make at the conference was something she came across when visiting the House of Lords as part of her research into ageing, when she sat in on a debate on older and younger entrepreneurs and was interested to hear that, while as separate

groups both are equally productive, the most productive of all is a group comprised of both generations, in that the older ones have the experience, while the younger are more in tune with contemporary popular culture.

Even at the age of 17, Amy is aware that one day she too will be old and how important it is to keep the mind active. Her role model in this is her friend's mother, who has just retired, has enrolled in lots of classes to learn new things and has renewed her interest in tennis. Which is how Amy would like her own retirement to be.



*If you know of anyone who would be interested in helping to fund Amy's "Age of Ageing" conference, she would love to hear from you. And if you know of any school students in the London area, who would like to take part, the event is being held on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2011 at the City of London School for Girls, St Giles' Terrace, Barbican, London EC2Y 8BB.*

*All enquiries and offers of help to [amy.lineham@hotmail.com](mailto:amy.lineham@hotmail.com)*

*A model to us all in terms of active ageing is indefatigable AEA member **Angela Glendenning**. Recently she's been putting her energy into the **Keep Hope Alive** campaign by **Planting Olive Trees in Palestine***



In February I joined an international group of volunteers to plant olive trees for farmers living in the Occupied territory of the West Bank of Palestine. I was shocked by what I experienced but deeply warmed by the constant refrain of “Welcome, welcome” which accompanied us wherever we went. The volunteers were mainly middle aged or elderly and planting olive trees was hard work but we attacked the stony ground with pick axes and mattocks until around 1600 trees had been successfully dug in. Our arrival at a field was invariably followed within minutes by soldiers who harassed the farmers and on one occasion pulled up some newly planted trees before stomping off.

Since the beginning of the Second Intifada in 2000, it is estimated that two million trees and thousands of acres of farmland have been destroyed in the West Bank and Gaza by the Israeli Military Occupation. Palestinians are subjected to daily abuse and harassment,

settlement building, land seizure, checkpoints, road blocks, observation towers, house demolitions and travel is constrained by the need for a permit or the correct ID. Many farmers are separated from their fields by the Wall or by electric fences and military zones and cannot tend or harvest their crops. When the Wall is complete, about 12% of the West Bank will end up on the Israeli side of the barrier.

The Keep Hope Alive Olive Tree Campaign is organised by the Joint Advocacy Initiative of the East Jerusalem YMCA and the YMCA of Palestine. I stayed with a Christian family and we planted trees for Muslim farmers. The fields were carefully chosen, the first because the Wall is planned to be extended right across the farmer's land; the second because a farmer's fields needed to be protected from expropriation because of an illegal by-pass road crossing his land; the third because the farmer's house is on the Jerusalem side of the route of the fence and because the farmer does not have a Jerusalem ID, he and his family will overnight become illegal residents; the fourth because Israeli settlers were fraudulently claiming that the farmer's father had sold them his land. Planting olive trees shows that the land is being cultivated and a plaque with the names of sponsors beside a field that the wider world is aware of what is happening and that the farmers are not alone.

Besides planting olive trees we were taken on visits and met a host of people concerned with monitoring the Occupation and offering services to its victims. Two volunteers from the Israeli Committee against House Demolitions escorted us around East Jerusalem to

learn about life in the Old City off the beaten tourist track. The Palestinians I met were committed to passive resistance and to strengthening the resolve of their communities to withstand oppression through the medium of art, music, poetry and a deepening understanding of Palestinian traditions and culture. All they asked was for their civil and human rights to be respected. I say Amen to that.

It costs £12.50 to sponsor an olive tree and I have launched a North Staffordshire Olive Tree Campaign. All things being equal I will return to pick olives in October 2012. It will be warmer then in February when it was cold indoors as well as out! I'd be glad to hear from anyone who wishes to consider joining me.

*For further information please contact Angela Glendenning at 32 Dartmouth Avenue, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire ST5 3NY or Email [angela.glendenning@googlemail.com](mailto:angela.glendenning@googlemail.com).*

*In the last issue of AEA Digest we carried the first part of a two part article on **Late Life Learning in Malta** by **Marvin Formosa**, lecturer at the European Centre of Gerontology, University of Malta. This second part and the previous one published is a summary of a forthcoming paper titled 'Lifelong education for older adults in Malta' to be published in the *International Review of Education*.*

Whilst it is positive to note the emphasis on the need to provide learning opportunities for older cohorts found in UN and EU policy documents, regrettably these are more driven to espousing the 'human capital' and

'vocational' value of older people than otherwise. It is assumed that older adults find social value only by becoming part of the pool of surplus labour when, in actual fact, there is little evidence supporting the usefulness of a human capital theory for older persons. An 'economistic' rationale dominates so that late-life learning is not promoted for its possible 'empowering' potential. Rather, emphasis is put on the potential of late-life education to render post-industrial societies more competitive in the face of the transitional and multinational corporations' ability to reap the advantages of economies of scale through the expansion of international capital mobility. It is also problematic that the drive to improve the skills of older workers is not concerned with the various abilities needed by the wide range of productive sectors, but focuses specifically on those competencies required by the ICT industry. However, the need to help older people stay in paid work is only one priority amongst others in late-life education. Other priorities include recognising the diversity of older persons, challenging stereotypes of ageing, maximising participation, maintaining personal independence, and retaining a sense of purpose and meaning. Indeed, if older adults are to be educated for new roles and activities, opportunities must surely be strongly based on an acceptance of the limitations of existentiality and taking responsibility for the well-being of future generations. A focus on class, gender and spatial issues raises a number of issues. Although opportunities are open to everybody, learning bodies are exceedingly middleclass. There are few older learners holding lower levels of education, employed in blue-collar occupations or illiterate. The prevalence

of middle-class members should not come as a total surprise considering that liberal-arts curriculum is perceived as alien by working-class elders who tend to experience 'at-risk-poverty' lifestyles. A gender 'lens' finds educational opportunities discriminating against both women and men. On one hand, learning bodies overlook the unique barriers faced by older women such as their low expectations that they can participate successfully in educational pursuits, difficulties reaching learning centres due to inadequate transport amenities, and problems in finding time for educational pursuits when caring is so time-consuming. On the other hand, the low percentage of men signals strongly that for a number of reasons opportunities for late-life education are not attractive to them. Moreover, educational opportunities for older adults are generally located in the Northern and Southern Harbour regions, which surround the nation's capital city, when as much as half for the 60 plus cohort live in what are classified as 'rural' areas. Finally, it is also noteworthy that late-life learning in Malta contains a 'third ageist' bias, as limited effort is made to outreach those persons who due to various physical and mental difficulties are precluded from reaching classroom settings.

Undoubtedly, there is an urgent need for a Maltese national policy on lifelong learning that includes a sound emphasis on later life. Whilst there is no doubt that policy documents and action plans dealing with some aspect of late-life learning may be well-intentioned, ultimately they function as nothing more than empty rhetoric concealing neo-liberal values. For instance, despite the dedication of the International Literacy Year in 1990, and the dedication of the

year 2010 for the combating of social exclusion and poverty, there is very little research, policy or educational practice relating to subaltern older persons.

Of course, the road towards a successful policy and action plan on lifelong and late-life learning is not without obstacles. The hegemonical grip of 'Third Way' politics, which celebrate the human capital model of development and individuated lifestyles, has led to an almost absence of philosophical reflection on the empowering potential of late-life learning. On a more practical level, public resources may be seriously limited, which necessitates collaboration with voluntary and third sector resources and self-organising provision, which may lead to further logistic and organisational difficulties. Such issues are surely not easily resolved but, in the spirit of the critical paradigm, there is real hope if local and global movements collaborate together to engage older adult education in the values of social justice and social equity.



*Marvin Formosa is a lecturer at the European Centre of Gerontology, University of Malta, and can be contacted on email at [marvin.formosa@um.edu.mt](mailto:marvin.formosa@um.edu.mt)*

You are warmly invited to  
an International  
Summer School in  
Social Gerontology  
at Keele University



# **New Challenges for Ageing populations: Insights from Research & Practice**

**Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2011 – Friday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2011**

*for more information see:*

*[http://www.keele-conferencemanagement.com/  
activeageing2011](http://www.keele-conferencemanagement.com/activeageing2011)*

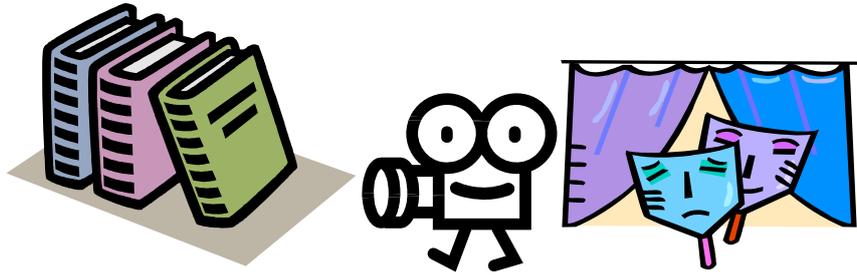


**Life<sup>+</sup>**



Keele University

Centre for Social Gerontology



## ***AEA DIGEST CULTURE SECTION***

*The Bealtaine Festival was the first nationwide celebration of creativity in older age in the world and Ireland's only nationwide arts festival. It originated back in 1996 when Age & Opportunity – Ireland's national organisation promoting the greater participation of older people in society - first had the idea of hosting a series of annual arts activities for older people and it is now an annual celebration held in May. Artistic Director Dominic Campbell and Bealtaine Coordinator Rebecca McLaughlin write about the scope and development of the festival over the years.*

**'A CULTURE THAT LEARNS FROM ITS PAST PREPARES FOR THE FUTURE'**

**(BEALTAINÉ ORGANISER, 1996  
BEALTAINÉ FESTIVAL REPORT)**

Taking its name from the Irish word for May, the festival promotes Renewal, Growth and Creativity at all stages during the ageing process, recognising that older people are not simply one homogenous group but individuals with widely differing needs and talents. From the outset, Bealtaine has had an inclusive ethos and an ambition for equity.

Fifteen years on, the Bealtaine Festival has developed into Ireland's largest collaborative Arts festival with over 500 partners organising 2,500 individual events and 101,000 people taking part across all counties. It's a national festival made up of local activity. A small Bealtaine team based at Age & Opportunity undertake the development of a core programme of events across all art forms. Local organisers are supported by this team to produce thousands of events as part of the annual celebration. Partners include the National Cultural Institutions (e.g. The Abbey Theatre, Irish Museum of Modern Art, National Library, National Concert Hall), local arts centres, care settings, libraries, Active Retirement Groups, schools, artists, and individuals. Events this year included choral singing on waterfronts at dawn and thirty venue film tours, newly commissioned dance works and theatre based on the life stories of older gay men, craft classes in community halls and orchestras of older musicians in the National Concert Hall.

The festival commissions and nurtures participation and creative exploration, success therefore might be the completion of a painting or a global tour of new performance. Bealtaine has achieved both. Year on year the festival

expands in quantity, quality and variety but its core values have remained constant:

- to celebrate creativity in older age through the co-ordination of a national festival 1-31 May
- to empower and engage older people through participation as artists, event organisers, performers and audience
- to create greater access to all art forms through brokering a network of partnerships across all sectors of society

With 15 year's experience and development, the festival is recognised nationally as a major innovator. It presents an invitation to have a celebration just as it did in 1996 but on another level, the festival is radically changing how the arts engage with older people and how older people engage with the arts in Ireland.

The festival has become characterised by its involvement at local level across the country and by its innovative model of brokering and supporting collaborative and creative partnerships across the Arts, Health and Social sectors amongst others. Uniquely, the festival unites radically different organisations and groups together underneath a collaborative umbrella for a common creative purpose.

In 2009 Age & Opportunity published an 'Evaluation of The Bealtaine Festival' in association with the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, NUI Galway. Findings indicate that Bealtaine benefits communities and attracts new older audiences to the arts. It is also evident that the festival brings people together and improves well-being. The report highlights the need to recognise the

importance of creativity in older age as a sustaining and sustainable concept that enriches all of society.

Over time this groundbreaking Festival is asking of participants and partners not only "What kind of "old" would you like to be?" but also "What kind of world would you like to age in?"

[www.bealtaine.com](http://www.bealtaine.com)



Enjoying the Dawn Chorus on Culdaff Beach during the 2009 Bealtaine Festival (photo: Simon Houston)

*For her book choice this summer Alex Withnall has chosen a book with a very long title and a new and for some possibly a controversial viewpoint on the business of ageing - **The Warmth of the Heart Prevents Your Body from Rusting. Ageing without***

*growing old* by French writer Marie de Hennezel.



**Author Marie de Hennezel**

Well, with a title like that, this was one book that was practically begging to be read! The author is ‘an esteemed psychologist and psychotherapist’ and obviously very well known in her native France. Reaching sixty, she describes her own fears about growing old in view of the terrors that old age often holds for those of the baby boomer generation in spite of the promise of a longer life than has hitherto been possible. Dependency, dementia, decline – I guess we’ve all asked ourselves the question “What if it happens to me?” and then quickly moved on to think of more pleasant things. But de Hennezel faces the issues head on; drawing on conversations with a range of remarkable older people, on her own reading, on artistic representations, on philosophical perspectives and lessons from other cultures, she expounds her thesis clearly – struggling to remain active and youthful is a betrayal; we need to grow older but not necessarily be old. Growing old presents us with the

opportunity to accept serenely the bodily changes that ageing brings but to continue to develop emotionally so that we can experience a sense of freedom and happiness and prepare to approach death in a spirit of acceptance. The ‘heart’ is love and belief in the power of joy and human warmth that can transcend the ‘rust’ of the ageing body.

This is powerful stuff that of course, has far reaching implications for how we care for older people (particularly topical in the UK at the moment with sadly all too frequent reports of sometimes cruel and degrading treatment of elderly people both in hospital and in care homes). De Hennezel is not afraid to point out that the ‘expert’ advice so readily given on diet, exercise, adequate sleep and a balanced lifestyle tends to ignore the psychological and spiritual dimensions of ageing. We need to learn to adapt to changing circumstances, to develop resilience, to be confident in our own abilities whilst accepting our limitations, to say no to what we don’t want, to explore our creativity and to embrace solitude (but not loneliness). Old age should be seen as a time for sensuality, especially for older women since sexuality does not disappear with age. If we can maintain this sense of joy and warmth, then we will also learn how to die – not insisting on our ‘right’ to die when and where we choose or through a programme of euthanasia but because we will ‘know’ when the time is right.

When I first read through this book, I found it somewhat pretentious, maybe because the rather clunky translation does not make for easy understanding. Happily, just as I finished, I heard the Shakespearean actor Alexandra Mathie reading an abridged version on BBC

Radio 4's Book of the Week. Maybe it was her gentle intonation but I certainly derived more pleasure from hearing the ideas expressed verbally than from an initial perusal of the book. Returning to the text a few weeks later, I found it much easier to follow de Hennezel's arguments and to understand what she is trying to say. She may not be altogether original in her thinking and this is not an academic text but her humanity and conviction shine through every chapter. Digest readers will not need any persuasion that she is on the right track; it's spreading the word that will be hard.

*The Warmth of the Heart Prevents Your Body from Rusting. Ageing without growing old – Marie de Hennezel, Translated by Sue Dyson. London, Basingstoke and Oxford, Rodale. 274pp. £12.99*

**Theatre Reviews.** Here are some recommendations for the summer months from *Carlie Newman*.

Hooray, summer has arrived! How do I know? Because the Shakespeare Globe has its first play of the season, *All's Well That Ends Well* (in repertory until 21<sup>st</sup> August). While this is an interesting play with a story that needs following carefully, it does not exactly charm. The chief male character, Bertram (Sam Crane) is a snobbish young man who refuses to marry Helena (Ellie Piercy) after she has cured the King and asked for him in marriage as her reward. When he realises that he cannot avoid his bride he tells her that he will only be her husband if she can get the ring from his finger and prove that she is pregnant with his child. How she manages this and is reunited with her husband involves some devious plotting, but all's

well that ends well. Well, only if you believe that the virtuous Helena should accept such a weak, disdainful partner.



Ellie Piercy as Helena and Janie Dee as the Countess of Roussillon  
Photo: Nigel Norrington

Janie Dee gives a forthright portrayal (although the actress is younger than usually played), of the Countess of Roussillon, Bertram's mother, who supports her ward Helena in her pursuit of Bertram. Sam Crane looks too sweet for us to believe in his nastiness. Piercy shows Helena's strength of character and is able to outwit Bertram. As usual the Globe audience treats everything as a joke so that some of the more moving passages lose their impact.

The RSC's new theatres at Stratford-upon-Avon are set in a lovely site beside the river. There are many features from the original theatre and more than a touch of similarity with the temporary Courtyard Theatre, which I thought delightful. The Swan Theatre hosts two excellent productions of rarely seen plays. *Cardenio* (in rep until 6 October) is being presented under the heading of "Shakespeare's lost play re-imagined." It is admitted that it is difficult to know how much of it is by Shakespeare himself, but there are certainly elements of a number of his plays in the text and in the story itself. The language, however, is not the richest

Shakespearean speech and Cardenio himself comes out with some strange metaphors and similes, but the characters are well-defined and the story – certainly as interpreted by the Director, Gregory Doran and cast in this production – is engrossing.



**Guileless: Oliver Rix as Cardenio and Lucy Briggs-Owen as Luscinda in *Cardenio* at the Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon.  
Photograph: Tristram Kenton for the Guardian**

*The City Madam* (in rep until 4 October) is also a little gem to be savoured. Again it is not really the writing by Philip Massinger (1632), as much as the lively production, directed by Dominic Hill and the all-round excellence of the RSC company of actors, which are so satisfying. The characteristics of the seventeenth century society depicted here share much in common with those in the spotlight today. This is highlighted in one scene showing a prostitute in bed reading *Hello!* magazine. The director gives us a most lively production with disguises, puppetry, masks and magic (albeit of a very basic kind).

It's a time of austerity and there is a royal wedding looming. This is the background for *Betty Blue Eyes* (Novello until 22 October). Sounds just like now, doesn't it? Except that we find talk of rationing, Attlee and the recent war. In fact, this musical version of the

lovely film *A Private Function* is set in Yorkshire and deals with a pig being illegally reared by toffs for a wedding banquet in 1947. Keeping to Alan Bennett's satire, the show covers small-town snobbery, the difficulties of feeding a family on post war rations and the greed of local bigwigs for status and gratitude. It is very well performed, particularly by Reece Shearsmith and Sarah Lancashire as the chiropodist and his wife, who steal Betty, the pig (a fantastic animatronic creation complete with fluttering eyelashes) when they are denied an invitation to the banquet. Adrian Scarborough is very funny as the meat inspector who prowls around like Inspector Clouseau. While this is no *Billy Elliot*, the music is tuneful and the choreography inventive.



**Betty Blue Eyes  
Photo: Michael Le Poer Trench**

Having heard that *The Cherry Orchard* (National Theatre in rep until 4 September) was full of anachronistic phrases, I was surprised to find that apart from a few obviously jarring words, such as "40K" and "'I've told you a thousand, bloody, frigging, bloody, frigging times," it is actually just a pedestrian translation by Andrew Upton. *The Cherry Orchard* was first staged in 1904 and is very much of its time with references to landowners and their serfs

and the beginnings of profound social change in Russia.

Ranyevskaya (Zoe Wanamaker) is one of the doomed landowners. After 10 years away, she returns to her once beautiful estate with its central but useless cherry orchard to face bankruptcy. The aristocratic family will not consider wealthy Lopakhin's (Conleth Hill) advice to sell the estate in order for it to be developed as holiday homes. Apart from the lapses in the script, this is a vibrant production in which director Howard Davies keeps what is essentially a play of words moving as characters come to the fore with their own speeches giving their opinions on what can be done to save the estate.



**Zoe Wanamaker and Conleth Hill. Photo by Catherine Ashmore**

There are stand-out performances from Wanamaker, whose beautiful voice is full of variety and whose physical movements mirror her spoken words and Hill, who has to deliver much of the slang, is just right as the newly rich

entrepreneur. He has the sturdy build of a peasant and the mind of a businessman (a kind of John Prescott look-alike). There are also lovely characterisations from Claudie Blakeley, showing the poignancy of Ranyevskaya's adopted daughter, Varya, yearning for a marriage proposal from Lopakhin, which never materializes and from Mark Bonnar's Trotsky-like eternal student Trofimov, who taught Ranyevskaya's son who drowned in the estate's river. The wide set is beautifully designed – a wooden, dilapidated house that we see from the outside as well as the inside.

*Film news of recent and forthcoming releases **On Screen** from Carol Allen.*



**Catherine Deneuve and Gérard Depardieu**

Catherine Deneuve, still beautiful at 67, is Suzanne, the *Potiche* of François Ozon's film – *potiche* being a French word meaning a decorative object of no practical use – or in this case a trophy wife. Suzanne is the wife of Robert Pujol (Fabrice Luchini), director of an umbrella factory in a small provincial town in the seventies. He's an old fashioned MCP, who regards his wife as a decorative chattel. He also has a dinosaur's attitude to industrial relations, as a result of which his workers are about to go out on strike. After he is taken hostage by his angry workers, Suzanne, with the help of the local Communist Mayor and MP, Maurice

Babin (Gérard Depardieu), with whom she had a brief fling in their youth, negotiates Robert's release and steps in to run the factory while he goes off on a recuperative cruise. And a great success she makes of it. But things get complicated when Robert returns and wants to take back the reins of command.

This piece is frothy, fun and very French and a delightful and very funny period take on seventies feminism. Deneuve looks as though she's having a ball, playing the role with a wicked sense of humour and Depardieu is a perfect foil for her with his own solid, down to earth charm. The late life romance that develops between them is heart warming but never sentimental, and in fact very pragmatically Gallic, when Suzanne decides to reveal certain details to him about her past, and the sight of the two of them disco dancing at a nightclub is a bit of a blast. Luchini gives the role of the husband a humanity and vulnerability which makes him less of a monster than he might otherwise be and there's good support from Karin Viard as Robert's secretary cum mistress, who comes over to Susanne's side, Judith Godrèche as Suzanne's somewhat right wing and selfish daughter and Jérémie Renier as her artistically inclined son, who comes up with a cute line in colourful umbrellas that could have come from Cherbourg. The film is in fact visually very colourful in a boiled sweet sort of way, which fits the "Seventies but still in the Sixties" look of the film perfectly.

*Lovely Still* (on DVD) is the late in life love story of Robert (Martin Landau), a lonely old man who meets Mary (Ellen Burstyn) and falls in love for the first time.



Ellen Burstyn and Martin Landau  
Photo by Monterey

There are though intimations that the course of true love isn't going to run smoothly in the bottle of pills she is nursing with a worried look on her face and the strange dreams that he is subject to. There are nice touches like Robert's relationship with his brash young colleague in the grocery store where he still works as a clerk and Landau with his gaunt, haunted face and Burstyn with her still warm and girlish smile are likeable and touching. But while a sweet and often charming romance, the film tends to lay the syrupy poignancy on a bit thickly. The bitter twist to the tale when it comes is though a totally unexpected shock.

Two films now with a later life learning theme. *The First Grader* is a strong story based on the real life of Maruge, a Mau Mau veteran in his eighties, who, when the Kenyan government declared free education for all, was determined to get his chance to learn to read, even if it meant claiming his place in an overcrowded primary school with six year olds. Oliver Litondo, a former newsreader, who plays Maruge, has comparatively little experience of acting but gives a strong and natural performance and has a very powerful and expressive face, which thrives on close ups. My only criticism would be

he looks very young and vigorous for a man of 84!



Naomi Harris is the school's young head teacher, who supports him in his battle for education. The negative reaction of other members of society to Maruge's quest - officialdom and the neighbours - gives a bit of added conflict to the action, while the flashbacks to the time of the Mau Mau war, the murder of Maruge's family and the British torture of prisoners is shocking and probably unknown to younger audiences. Dramatically it gives great strength to the story. It's not just the story of an old man determined to learn to read but also the story of the young man who's part of that old man and has made him what he is.

Korea's leading actress, Yun Jung-hee, came out of retirement to play Mija, a woman in her sixties in *Poetry*. She lives with her sulky teenage grandson Wok, as her daughter, Wok's mother, has disappeared from the scene. Mija makes a meagre living as carer for an elderly man, who is paralysed by a stroke, but she still dresses and tackles life with flair, elegance and eccentricity. She enrolls in a local poetry class in an effort to be able to express her feelings about her life. When she discovers that she is in the early stages of Alzheimers - information which she keeps to herself - and then that her grandson has been involved in the rape of a local schoolgirl, which has led to the girl's suicide, it is her poetry class which gives her the strength to deal with all this and ultimately to write her poem.

There are some strong scenes in the film, including what may for some be a startling sexual encounter between two people well past the first flush of youth. But at 139 minutes the film seems over long and the ending is distinctly enigmatic. What holds it together though is the performance of the beautiful and mesmerising Yun Jung-hee.

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