



The Association for
Education & Ageing

AEA DIGEST

Issue no 27
Summer 2009



Jim Soulsby, Jo Walker and Brian Mckechnie at the 2009 Conference (full report page 3)

IN YOUR SUMMER DIGEST

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FROM THE CHAIR.....

Jo Walker

Dear friends,

The Association is moving towards the end of its Esmee Fairbairn Foundation funding period with a great sense of achievement and anticipation for the future. We have improved our capacity both to communicate about the issues that matter to us and to serve our members and stakeholders more effectively. We are grateful to the Foundation for its help and support.

The international conference 'Reaffirming Teaching and Learning in Later Life', held by AEA in association with the Department of Continuing Education, Lancaster University, was deemed a great success. I was pleased to hear it described as 'friendly' by a presenter who was new to our events. We are extremely grateful to Keith Percy and his staff at Lancaster who worked unstintingly to deliver a well-organised and welcoming occasion.

The international attendance and interest in the Conference has resulted, among other things, in the possibilities of conferences next year in Munich and in Dublin. We will also aim to hold a one-day meeting in the UK to include the AGM. The re-launch of our Journal has moved a little closer, with the formation of a partnership with the University of Leicester with whom we are actively seeking some modest funding to underwrite a first year of publication. One donor, who wishes to remain anonymous, has already come forward.

Development Coordinator Jim Soulsby and Executive Committee member Dave Crossan have been working with a variety of partners around the country to organise older learner consultation events. We took advantage of a pre-conference day for older people in Lancaster, organised by Fiona Frank, to consult members of the senior learners group there. The most recent consultation was held in Essex. Jim and Dave will produce an overall report on the meetings and on the data they have gathered through their questionnaire (which you can view or download from our website -

http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/pages/aea_events.html - see heading "Regional consultations with older learners").

Do keep letting us know about your news and views, either via the website (www.associationforeducationandageing.org) or to Carol, Jim or myself (contact details on page 19). If you wish to know more about subscribing or contributing to the new Journal, please be in touch over the summer, so we can send you news of its progress. We aim to receive articles and reviews during the autumn for a January 2010 publication.

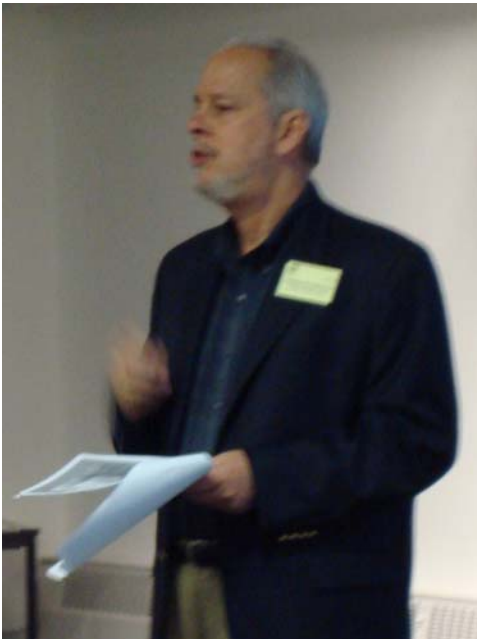


Delegates at the conference – report next page

CONFERENCE REPORT

*This year's conference **Reaffirming Teaching and Learning in Later Life** was held 1-3 April at Lancaster University. This was a joint international conference hosted by AEA and Lancaster's Department for Continuing Education. A full report from **Jo Walker**.*

We were delighted to welcome participants from all parts of the UK and Ireland, as well as from Germany, Greece, Portugal, Slovenia and the USA. In addition to the four plenary contributions, twenty-four papers / workshops were offered in parallel sessions.



Professor Ron Manheimer from North Carolina set the scene with the first keynote address, which provided a helpful review of the variety of models and theoretical frameworks that have characterised later life learning in the US

and for the most part, in Europe too. He also analysed where he thought later life learning was heading next in relation to changing economic and social contexts. The recent developments of Spiritual Ageing and Positive Ageing (for example) have opened up greater possibilities in the ways we view later life and should, he felt, be leading to a situation of 'age-irrelevance' in our post modern societies. The paper was very helpful to newcomers to the field, as well as interesting to those who had worked in gerontology / learning during the periods he mentioned.



Photograph by Rita Gerrard

Dr Elizabeth Mestheneos gave another kind of context for our thinking about later life learning in describing the work of AGE, the Older People's Platform. AGE is a non-profit EU association, working with and for older people throughout the European states through organisations that are partners or members. She outlined the concerns, priorities and policy positions of AGE in relation to lifelong learning (including training) and other needs of older adults in Europe, and the many audiences that the association was seeking to influence.

It was clear that learning should and could not be seen in isolation from other kinds of social and economic policy, either at national or European level.



Photograph by Rita Gerrard

We were fortunate to have an address from **John Gibson** of the UK government Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) in the week following the publication of a white paper on informal adult learning, 'The Learning Revolution'. Many in the audience had already eagerly scanned it before coming to Lancaster and may even have been among the thousands who sent in their responses to the preceding consultation document. John was able to give the policy background to the report, which had announced a positive strategy and additional resources for 'informal learning', and was willing to discuss how these might enable learning in the future. Although referring specifically to England and Wales, the issues raised are common to other countries in the UK and Europe.

Professor Keith Percy was not only our host but also our lecturer this year for the Frank Glendenning Memorial Lecture. We were delighted that Mrs Angela Glendenning could be with us again for

the occasion. In his lecture, Keith discussed the extent to which the curriculum of later life learning can be derived from the twin concepts of wisdom and experience and drew upon research and development at Lancaster University over a thirty-year period. The full text of the lecture will be available shortly on AEA's website, but meanwhile an outline appears on the post-conference site at Lancaster (for link see page 5).



Professor Keith Percy and Angela Glendenning chatting during a break

A further plenary session, Older People's Voice, was provided by a group of senior learners from Lancaster's University of Later Life programme. Led by Fiona Frank of the Continuing Education Department, they had enjoyed a pre-conference day of input and discussion from a range of University staff on diverse topics, which attracted about 100 participants from around the area. A smaller group had continued as delegates to the main conference and reported on their observations and points of special interest.

Other academic members of staff from Lancaster were well represented in the twenty-four free papers, discussing (for example) the impact of technology on older people and EU projects comparing

senior learning in several member states. It is difficult to do justice to all these papers, but to give a flavour, the topics covered included:

- information technology
- participation in higher education
- intergenerational learning,
- literacy
- music
- Tai chi
- older people's participation in the training of care professionals
- lip-reading
- social inclusion,
- life planning
- widening participation
- brain science
- learning styles

If you are interested in following up any of these in particular, check the post-conference site at http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/depts/conted/AEA_conference.htm , where many though not all of the presentations are

available in outline. If one of those you want is not there, do please get in touch and we can forward you a contact email address for the presenter(s).

Many thanks again to colleagues at Lancaster and from AEA, including you own hardworking Secretary and Development Coordinator, for producing an excellent and significant event.



Jean Prior gives delegates a practical taste of the art of Tai Chi

NEWS ITEMS

*It's perhaps not surprising to AEA readers to hear that "older people in London want to go on learning" That was the message from the recent "**Grey Matter Matters**" conference, as reported here by **Gordon Deuchars**, Policy and Campaigns Manager for Age Concern London.*

Age Concern London, Greater London Forum for Older People and Help the Aged brought together over 100 older

people, policy makers and educational providers on 27th March to listen and respond to the issues arising from older people's experiences of learning. Participants were helped by a number of "listeners" from Government and official bodies, educational providers and voluntary organisations. AEA's Jim Soulsby was one of them and spoke in a panel discussion on the changes needed to address the issues that older people were bringing up.

A first round of group discussions looked at both the benefits of lifelong learning for older people and the barriers to participation, both for individuals and for society. A whole range of ways were identified in which older people staying involved in learning both benefit personally and are in a better position to contribute to society as active citizens.

Barriers people had experienced included the increasing cost of courses and the fact that some colleges and providers have withdrawn concessions for older people. Accessibility was a big concern – in terms of the physical accessibility of buildings, the availability of accessible transport and also how courses were organised and delivered – for example their pace and the common focus on qualifications, which are not relevant to many older people, while information about learning provision often does not reach them. A number of people had experienced ageism – especially the assumption that they are too old to learn. Older people from disadvantaged groups including BME (black minority element) communities experienced additional barriers, and there was a general concern that learning is accessed mainly by articulate older people, who have had relatively good learning experiences in earlier life.

Discussions went on to look at the main changes which participants felt were necessary to increase older people's access to lifelong learning and finished by suggesting actions, which local authorities, educational providers and others could take to make this a reality. These were some of the main recommendations the meeting came up with:

- A Freedom Pass for learning should be developed, guaranteeing older people in London access to learning opportunities.
- All local authorities should have a strategic plan for access to learning and leisure services for older people (including for example, the monitoring of participation levels by older learners)
- Better mobility (increased options for travel) are needed.
- Learning must be affordable for all. Age concessions can play a part in this, though a broader approach would be to set charges at a nominal level for all on low incomes.
- Funders and providers need to address the barriers to participation by socially excluded older people.
- Official information to older people, for example from DWP, should include information on learning opportunities.

Next Steps

Age Concern London and partner organisations will be raising these issues with a broad range of stakeholders. Among the outcomes that we would like to see are a strengthening of the commitment to lifelong learning, when London's Local Area Agreements are revised, and greater awareness by a range of educational providers on how they can include older people in their offer.

*Alex Withnall has news of a new intergenerational programme - **Generations Together***



Photo: GETTY

The devolved governments in both Wales and Scotland have made considerable strides in setting up Centres for Intergenerational Practice. Now the English Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has announced its £5.5 million Generations Together programme which is seeking bids from all English local authorities with responsibilities for social/children's services to submit expressions of interest, in partnership with third sector organisations, for funding to develop demonstrator sites of intergenerational practice. The aim is to enable local authorities to consider how they can utilise the talents of both older and younger people for their own benefit and for that of the community. The programme will run in 2009-10 and 2010-11. Further details are available at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/youthmatters/ytf/generationstogether/

*While Gill Adams is delighted to report on the success of **Silver Surfers Day 2009***

The eighth, UK-wide SSD09 was on Friday May 15th, the Friday of Adult Learners' Week. It's the day when organisations of all types - public, private, corporate, individual, SME, third sector, creative, practical, cultural - offer older people in their communities a good, cheerful, relaxed 'first-go' at life online.

At time of writing, Digital Unite, the IT training company that devised, organises and co-ordinates Silver Surfers' Day every year, is still counting as the dust settles after yet another successful event. We know we have about 1,000 events recorded - we know that many go unrecorded. We have delightful memories of Channel Chamber of Commerce delivering a 'taste' of IT to silver surfers in the aisles of Folkestone Sainsbury's; of DWP Minister for 'Ageing Well' Rosie Winterton being welcomed at Greenwich Online's Silver Surfers' Day at Green Lawns UK Online Centre; of photos, taken and submitted by 14 year olds, who also organised the whole event, animatedly inducting their grey-haired visitors into the wonders of the Internet at their school's IT suite in Glan Afan School, Port Talbot.

DU's MD, Emma Solomon says:

'What was really tremendous this year was not just the volume of events - 1000+ is a fabulous number - but the quality and creativity of the partnerships and the sheer energy generated by SSD09 on and offline. We developed some 'live events' for learners and event holders this year so that people could tell us what they were up to and contribute

to proceedings on the day itself. The "Tell us a Joke" feature proved very popular and the jokes are still rolling in. We also used You-tube, twitter, blogging and flickr to take SSD09 "out there" to new and different audiences, and we were successful in creating all sorts of connections in all sorts of communities. The net result was the most collaborative, amusing, inspiring SSD to date. Roll on May 2010!'

DU is thankful for this year's excellent strategic relationship with the BBC English regions - their co-ordinator this year deserves a pat on the back for her patience and logic in teasing out the stories and placing them, as our bits of media tumbled in. We are proud to now be able to claim some celebrities 'on our side' - namely Joan Bakewell, Martyn Lewis, Patricia Routledge and Angela Rippon, all of whom consented to be filmed endorsing SSD (and thanks for some Ofcom funding to support that filming). We got space on Working Lunch, BBC News 24, Sky TV, BBC Northern Ireland, and many regional radio stations. And we love our new Silver Surfers TV YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/silversurfersstv>.

We are extremely impressed and grateful to one particular council, Hampshire, who fielded nearly 100 taster events for Silver Surfers' Day. They are one of the councils (and we know of no others that do it to this extent) who really 'get the message' - that older people (mostly) need simple, practical help to get online and (mostly) respond very positively to a small amount of the right kind of assistance. They understand that this is strategic activity that needs a solid,

sustainable approach - not just a quick effort for one year.

We are extremely proud of Schools for Silver Surfers -our new venture into helping and encouraging schools to become involved - and we have some fine and absolutely delightful examples of young people in schools not only meeting and greeting older people on their arrival but also organising, marketing and reporting. Their enthusiasm and delight in what they're doing is palpable from the pictures. We want to develop this throughout the year and also instigate Councils for Silver Surfers.

But we can't do any of this without good partnerships. We are especially proud of our liaison with UK online centres, whose 'It's Never Too Late' May-long push to engage older people embraced Silver Surfers' Day at the heart of the month. Above all, we are grateful to Wiltshire Farm Foods, a corporate that shines in a bright, but strangely lonely, way in the corporate world - they really do understand that they need to participate in getting older people online and that doing this work truly brings a 'win-win'. Not only does this work potentially train their 'customers' (average age 83) to transact with them - the outcomes aren't so linear - but it shows a degree of corporate social responsibility that acknowledges that a significant percentage of the population is seriously disadvantaged simply through the demographic 'accident' of being born at the 'wrong time', when it comes to learning modern communication methods. McCarthy & Stone, Britain's largest retirement builders, continue to develop their

relationship with DU and 'the task', too. All thanks to them.

All this information is blogged here: <http://dnc.digitalunite.com> and will be fully detailed in a report to appear later in the summer.



The implications of the recent government decision to abolish the DIUS and incorporate it into a new mega Department for Business, Innovation and Skills have not yet become clear. But it's fair to say that the university sector is not best pleased. I have seen nothing as yet as regarding how adult learning specifically will be affected. One of the main points made in the mainstream press so far has been with regard to the amount of money the changeover is going to cost, a mere two years after the DIUS itself was created. I will be keeping an eye on the press coverage and posting links on the News and Views page of our website http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/pages/news_views.html

Meanwhile this link to coverage on the BBC website will give you the main facts so far <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/8086233.stm>

If you spot any useful pieces on this or indeed other subjects of interest to the older learning area, either on line or in print, please let me know giving the date, name of publication and headline if in print or those details with URL if

online, and I can put links on the website for everyone's information. E-mail aeasecretary@googlemail.com

*“Greener & Wiser”, described as “an older people’s environment Taskforce’s manifesto” was launched in London on 11th May, and sheds light on the impressive potential of older people to help build more sustainable communities. The Taskforce was made up of 10 older people aged between 52 and 90 from around the UK, supported by Green Alliance, Natural England and the recently merged Age Concern & Help the Aged. One of the members of the Taskforce and on the panel at the launch was **Stephen Newman**.*

The main aims of the Taskforce were to increase the profile of older people’s views in environmental decision-making; and to address the practical challenges that older people face in making greener choices and the manifesto and recommendations were developed through an innovative process where they debated green issues with experts and with each other.

The recommendations include:

- Training older people as volunteer environmental advisers in their communities
- Consulting older people at the local level to ‘age-proof’ environmental strategies
- Developing intergenerational projects for young and old to explore the environment together
- Appointing a high profile champion for older people and the environment, making it more relevant to older people and their lives

- Reducing waste and promoting reuse
- Supporting older people better in making green energy choices

As one of the Taskforce members said at the launch: “Our lifestyles lend themselves to more ecologically friendly activities, such as public transport use and more economical consumption. If we promote them, it’s a win-win situation for people and the planet”, while another described the project as “innovative and well thought of because older people do want to play a part in saving our planet.”

The Panel, which included Taskforce members, pointed out that: “Green Alliance is keen to mobilise every voice possible in calling for political and public action to address climate change. The environment is often seen as an issue for young people, with older people’s views, experience and ideas in danger of being ignored”.

Both Age Concern and Help the Aged see the report as being in line with their key aim of seeing older people living full and active lives. “Being part of a local community, able to travel to nearby shops and services and to take part in local initiatives are vital parts of this. We strongly welcome the recommendations being put forward by the Greener and Wiser taskforce, with their potential to raise the profile of older people in the green debate and to support them in taking action at an individual level. As the government looks to promote green behaviour change, they would do well to listen to this Taskforce and their views on the approaches that will work for our older population.”

There are 20 million people in the UK aged 50 or over. From the introduction of the Clean Air Act in 1956 to the arrival of issues like climate change, the older generation has lived through decades of environmental issues and politics. This experience has formed the opinions of older people and there is much to be gained by including their views in the environmental debate and using them to help shape environmental policy today. We must provide a platform to hear their advice.

The Panel members called on everyone to support the Taskforce’s desire for older people to have more direct input into decisions that affect them and for them to lead active lives as environmental advocates within their communities.”

I personally started out with very little knowledge or experience on green issues but over the months that we have been meeting I have become a convert. I concluded my contribution to the launch by addressing the (absent) Prime Minister, “You have children, I have children and grandchildren, what kind of world are we leaving them?”



Hilary Benn MP planting a tree at the Every Action Counts event held at the Coin Street Neighbourhood Centre on 6th May

*The Educational Centres Association are also involved in the green issue, being one of the 29 partner organisations and a key player in the DEFRA funded **Every Action Counts** initiative over the past 3 years, set up to encourage voluntary and community groups to become environmentally sustainable. Their chair and CEO **Bernard Godding** gives his view on the manifesto.*

“Age should not be a barrier to being green”, it says the back cover of “Green and Wiser”¹.

Based as it is on the work of a ‘Taskforce’ of ten people from around the UK, who met on three occasions, whether their conclusions can be seen to fairly represent the views of even a fraction of the 20 million over 50s in this country may be in doubt. However we must agree that the environmental views and concerns of older people and their ability to contribute are in danger of being ignored. Thus their recommendations to give older people a greater say on environmental issues, capitalise on their potential to help build more sustainable communities and make greener choices easier must be given serious consideration.

Recommendations include

- Better communication
- Older people as role models
- Involvement in decision making
- Interconnectedness
- Fairness

Certainly Environment Minister Lord Hunt, who was present at the launch, was in no doubt that a failure to take control of CO2 emissions would lead to catastrophic consequences. Describing the Stern Report as providing “the context for the overwhelming challenge

of climate change” he said that “older people in our society can make a huge contribution...using the manifesto to support their actions.”

David Sinclair from ACHA (Age Concern and Help the Aged) pointed out that “education rarely targets older people” yet it seems clear from much that was said on this occasion that adult learning, described in the manifesto as “better communication”, is key to achieving the necessary outcomes. Better communication is described as being critical, “Without it, we lack the information that we need to make green choices and are unable to communicate green messages to our families and wider communities.” To achieve this it is recommended “that training a cadre of retired people to be environmental advisors, who can access local networks, will be a powerful way of overcoming the low impact of any current methods of communication”. There is much else besides; such as proposals to change the transport infrastructure to enable older people to make greener choices, but beyond calls for more consultation there is not much suggestion that some of those 20 million voices might become involved in campaigning around these issues.

However towards the end of the event one of the commissioners did say, “We’ve got to act urgently; it’s got to be done - intergenerationally”. A key question for adult educators must therefore be how we might best respond to this evidence of demand and the global imperatives which lie behind it. The Educational Centres Association as part of *Every Action Counts* would be glad to join in any joint ventures that might be proposed and is keenly aware

that the Government's recently announced Greener Living Fund hasn't explicitly targeted adult education bodies.

¹ Ed. Scott F. & Willis R., 2009, Greener and Wiser, Green Alliance ISBN 978-1-905869-22-0

ECA Contact details are:

Email – info@e-c-a.ac.uk

Tel – 08442 4955945

Website – www.e-c-a.ac.uk

For further information on the manifesto contact Faye Scott Policy Officer at the Green Alliance Tel: 0207 630 4524. Please tell her how you heard about the Manifesto



*How to encourage more older men to take part in learning has been a pressing issue for educators working with older people for some time. While in Australia recently, **Alex Withnall** came across the **Manual Activities Centre**, a new initiative in that area.*

Of course, the Men's Sheds movement launched in Australia has already attracted considerable international attention for its success in reaching males of all ages. But on a recent visit

to Age Concern in Albury Wodonga on the NSW-Victoria border in Australia, I was pleased to find evidence of an innovative new project aimed specifically at older men.

Age Concern there already runs an extensive Open Age Learning Programme and a range of community activities. As part of the latter, the Manual Activities Centre was set up to enable older men, who might not otherwise have considered participating in a class or course, to have access to a community building that incorporates a well-equipped workshop, where they can spend a morning making use of the available facilities to embark on projects of their choice, to share their skills and to learn from others in an informal friendly atmosphere. At present open for two days a week, the Centre has been successful in providing a friendly learning space, where older men, who might otherwise have been in danger of isolation and boredom, can get together with others to build upon and share their knowledge and skills in a productive way.

Since my visit in February, the Centre Manager has negotiated with a local high school teacher for a number of teenage boys at risk of dropping out of school to spend some time learning from the men who attend the Centre and there are plans for other schools to be part of the programme. The police have offered their full support. Meanwhile, the manager of Age Concern has been invited to present a paper at the regional meeting of the Australian Association of Gerontology on the idea of the Centre as best practice and Wodonga Council are setting up a similar programme supported by the Victorian government.

This will be overseen by Age Concern on that side of the border.

Celia Bevan, President of Age Concern and a long-time friend of AEA, commented that ‘it is so rewarding to start reaping all the seeds we have sown and to move Age Concern to new levels of community development’. Certainly, the Manual Activities Centre is just one of the exciting initiatives in which Age Concern is involved – a shining example of how an innovative and forward looking organisation can flourish even in difficult times.



A new publication from U3A has also been exciting a lot of interest. “Time to Learn” defines the U3A model of Shared Learning. Published by the DIUS, it has its origins in the evidence which the U3A submitted to the DIUS consultation on so-called “informal” adult learning in 2008 and in a subsequent request from that department for U3A to produce a “Facilitators’ Handbook”.

A new book by Alex Withnall, “Improving Learning in Later Life” is to be published in July. It offers a critical overview of the development of theoretical and philosophical approaches to later life learning that have developed over the last three decades, drawing on published work from the USA, UK, Australia and other countries, and documents the individual experiences of older people through a variety of methods. The book is published by Routledge at £75 hardback and £21.99 paperback. Full details are available on the news page of our website: http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/pages/news_views.html

This edition is aimed first at U3As around the country. If well received however, it will be made available to all IAL groups in a suitably revised form later this year, when we hope to be reviewing it more fully in the digest. Professor Keith Percy, who has had a sneak preview of the publication, describes it as “a densely packed treasury of U3A experience that reminds one of all that the U3A in the United Kingdom has achieved over a period of less than thirty years”, while another AEA member, Jean Prior, comments, “The excellent title attracts immediate interest, encompassing the ideas that retirement IS a time to learn and a stage in life when we HAVE time to learn.” AEA looks forward to the publication of the revised and more widely available version of “Time to Learn”.

AUTUMN DIGEST

The next edition of the digest will be published in late September. If you would like to contribute – a conference report, feature, a personal view or a news item, please contact Carol on aeasecretary@google.com

Copy please by Monday 7th September

FEATURES

The Greek goddess Athena has long been a symbol of the quality of wisdom.



*Just one of the many good reasons for believing that the notion of wisdom has been with us for many centuries and in all cultures, and that it has been firmly associated with the experience that only mature people can have. **Anita Pincas**, a teacher and researcher at the University of London Institute of Education attempts to answer the question “**What is Wisdom?**”.*

When wisdom is ascribed to a younger person, it is often called the wisdom of the old. But what is it really, and can it be taught?

Ricca Edmondson has written a fascinating paper exploring different perceptions of wisdom from records going back into Hebrew traditions, ideas

and practices derived from Egypt, Babylon, and the Graeco-Roman cultures. She also found that its principles are very often embedded in folklore that provides practical instances of wise behaviour as well as exhortations to behave wisely. There is a general belief that “Older people might develop capacities for insight rarely displayed by those younger, which would endow their personal life courses with additional force and meaning and would supply a special resource for others in society”. A constant feature is that a wise person no longer has unrealistic expectations of life and finds contentment by tolerating uncertainty where necessary.

Numerous writers, especially those studying the ageing process, have tried to define wisdom and have linked a vast range of virtues to it. Some are working on ways of disseminating it, even by developing a field called life based learning to teach it. These are some of the characteristics wise people are said to have: courage, humanity, justice, temperance, creativity, curiosity, tolerance of ambiguity, open-mindedness, love of learning, knowledge and judgement about the meaning and conduct of life, concern with the orchestration of human development towards excellence and with attending to both personal and collective wellbeing.

Baltes is often quoted for the six attributes of wisdom-related knowledge and behaviour that he found in 20th century philosophers’ writings, i.e. that wisdom shows:

- life-orientation and action-guiding knowledge dealing with a good life.
- holistic, integrative, and balanced knowledge regarding mind and human excellence.
- knowledge about limits and uncertainty.
- tolerance of diversity and pluralism
- experiential knowledge.
- justified knowledge that needs to consider multiple sources of knowledge including scientific ones

(adapted from Baltes 2004, pp132–33).

Erikson, in proposing his psychological account of human development, placed three particular abilities at the top of the wisdom scale: being able to see one's life experiences in an integrated way, having confidence in oneself as a unique personality, and being willing to accept death as part of the human condition.

Arising out of the array of approaches to wisdom, we also have very specifically practical examples, such as “organisational wisdom”, now linked to the “knowledge explosion” of the 21st Century. It suggests that there is not only personal but also accumulated organisational wisdom that focuses on the importance of:

- anticipating and pre-empting problems while capitalising on opportunities
- mobilizing and engaging members of the organisation
- becoming more proactive
- remaining sustainable in supporting the community and the environment

(Hays 2005, p2)

In a more complex chart, Henson has explored the links between wisdom and both rationality and spirituality, as shown in practice by self, others and organisations.

Miller & Miller argue, as others have also, that “wisdom is more than the sum of our knowledge, intelligence, experience ...”. I think this is the clue we need, because we can see that more than the sum of its parts implies that wisdom is neither any one particular trait nor simply an aggregation of traits. In fact, it is not a trait, a quality, or a set of skills at all. If we suggested it was a cluster of personality traits, we would still be left with the problem of showing what they all have in common that makes them cluster together; and that would take us back to where we started. This logic can apply very widely, e.g. to a piece of music, a plan, a machine, and so on. But above all it applies to a system.

We can take systems theory as our guide and look at the characteristics said to be evident in systems of all kinds, whether animate or inanimate, and ask whether these are true of wise behaviour.

Systems are said to show, among other features:

- emergent behaviour, i.e. they are influenced by interactions between their parts, again both inanimate or animate;
- variance of behaviour; i.e. the same behaviour is never repeated precisely;
- changeability dependent on and responsive to different contexts;
- changeability dependent on and responsive to feedback;

- self-organisation, i.e. they are best organized from within not by direction from outside;
- adaptation to change;
- exploration of possibilities and alternatives, frequently leading to innovation;
- avoidance of mono-causal explanations of problems;
- ability in times of crisis to initiate radical new perspectives and changes that break the mould of convention and tradition.

To my mind, wisdom denotes systems of thinking. Wise people follow certain systems of thought that are different from those of less experienced people. Looking at the question in this way pushes us in new directions rather different from other attempts to define wisdom.

Writers mentioned

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Anita would welcome comments on this and other later life learning topics on her mailing list forum. Anyone can join at:

www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?AO=MATURE-LEARNING



*News now of another recent conference. In April **Malcolm Ball** took part in **Adult Learning: the UCU Vision** (UCU being the Universities and Colleges Union), which was a consultative conference held at Birkbeck College, London. It was a vision which produced some very interesting ideas with regard to the way forward.*

This was a significant conference, not because it was designed to consider or promote another development of policy in the gradual erosion of critical adult learning but because it was organised by a trade union with a professional interest in the future of adult learning. It is

understandable that the UCU should have concerns about the jobs and conditions of employment of their members. It is also understandable that they should have concerns about the future of adult learning as a critical and unpredictable form of human social activity. The conference was significant because the UCU were opening their internal debates about adult learning to a wider audience. They recognise that adult learning has reached an impasse, which requires the engagement of social groups broader than the UCU. The hegemony of instrumentalism presents a formidable barrier.

The opening presentation was by Bob Fryer. His status is cemented to the two excellent but largely ignored (by policy makers) reports of 1998 and 1999 for NAGCELL (National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning) and his stewardship of The Northern College as its Principal. This was a typical Bob Fryer presentation in its breadth and length well supported by reference to developments over the past fifteen years. He made three big points. Firstly, that the Delores Report (1996) * remains the best starting place for a consideration of the issue. He considered that the 'Delores second pillar' which was 'learning to do, learning to equip individuals to be competent' was in retrospect too narrow and instrumentalist. This may be the consequence of political implementation rather than intellectual vision. He would complement the 'Delores-four pillars' with a fifth pillar, as developed by Peter Jarvis (Globalisation, Lifelong Learning and The Learning Society: Sociological Perspectives, 2007). The fifth pillar would be 'learning to sustain'. It would be learning to enable individuals to

sustain themselves, their communities and their society in the context of rising uncertainty and risk. This led on to the second point, that the best and most eloquent vision of the reasons for adult education has been provided by Raymond Williams - that it should help adults to understand and make sense of the change they live through and experience; help them to become adaptable and to live with it, and equip them and encourage them to play their part in shaping change. Individuals can be the authors or agents of change as opposed to being its passive victims. The third and final point was the question whether neo-liberalism was dead. He noted that national policy was rooted in the significant transformation of the political landscape, which originated in the late 1970's. The growth of the global perspective has covered most human activity and has made the lives of individuals across the globe more directly and indirectly connected. This had been augmented by the integration of national government policies, of different nationalities, but especially the USA and UK, in favour of 'free trade' and 'deregulation'. The global financial crisis of 2007-2009 was rooted in these policies. At a seminar two days earlier Ewart Keep, the respected researcher/writer on employment and learning matters and Co-Director of SKOPE (Skills, Knowledge and Organisation Performance, Cardiff University), had emphasised that the policies of the last thirty years in the area of using learning to bring about social change had not been very successful and that these policies had been built against the backcloth of neo-liberalism, which was now seen to have collapsed. Relating to that, at the end of the presentation I invited Bob Fryer to

speculate on whether policy makers would recognise or acknowledge that neo-liberalism was (like Monty Python's parrot) dead or would they seek to reconstruct it? How is this instrumentalist vision built out of neo-liberalism to be challenged? In reply, he appeared to welcome challenges to the narrow instrumentalism and suspected that policy makers were failing to recognise that the landscape was changing.

The second speaker was Tom Schuller, speaking as Director of IFL (Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning), the independent albeit NIACE sponsored inquiry in to adult learning. He promised to provide the 'prosaic bit after the sparkle of Bob Fryer'. The report of the independent inquiry is due to be published in September 2009. He noted that, after a promising improvement in some participation between 1995-1999, there has been ten years of continuous decline in participation in adult learning in Scotland, among C2's generally and among the over 60's. He speculated about the value of recognising an educational life-course, with four categories (0-25, 26-50, 51-75 and 75 plus). The educational needs in each of these age categories may be expected to be different and they would need to be met by policy. He built on this by arguing for a 'Citizens' Curriculum' which would include four capabilities: (1) Financial, (2) Health, (3) Digital and (4) Civic.

Dan Taubman (National Officer, UCU) introduced the UCU draft policy document and invited participants, including those who were not individual members of UCU, to provide their comments. They would be considered in

the development of the final policy statement.

The ideas offered by Fryer and Schuller and the draft policy paper from UCU were considered in group discussion. The following summary points were made in the group I was a member of.

1) The government policy priority on skills and on the under 35's has seriously damaged the provision and participation in adult learning.

2) Funded adult learning is a poisoned chalice and professionals should seek to build programmes beyond the reach of state funded provision.

3) It is a democratic right to have public financial support for non-instrumental or social learning. The case has to be built and campaigned for.

4) It is understandable that 'good professionals' will try to position their organisations favourably for public funding. The problem is that this has been accompanied by acquiescence in the 'political' argument. The May 2009 issue of Adult Learning carried a range of responses to the Government Statement on Informal Adult Learning. Only one of the responses did not accept the Government rationale for their definitions and their policy. Most of the responses found some small reason for solace.

5) There was disappointment that NIACE had proved that it was not the voice of adult education.

6) The proposal for a Citizen's Curriculum, as outlined by Tom Schuller, appears to be influenced by the instrumentalism of government policy and not to recognise the value of education for itself as a feature of critical discourse or cultural life. It is necessary to challenge the hegemony of instrumentalism. This will not be

achieved by acquiescence with instrumentalist values and assumptions.

7) The CALL (Campaigning Alliance for Lifelong Learning) campaign is the most optimistic development over the last ten years. It should be a priority to build the campaign to the point of some activity in all regions and in many localities. Some argued that the forthcoming general election could be a useful focus. (In the subsequent section of the conference Robin Landman disagreed with this. He argued that politicians cannot be influenced at elections. They are promoting their common policies not listening to elector's needs).

8) Local Learning Partnerships were an excellent idea that was distorted at birth by the National LSC (Learning and Skills Council) and subsequently killed by regional LSC's.

9) The ability to build and deliver programmes of adult learning will be influenced by the age profile of professionals. There are very few new appointments. A younger generation of professionals committed to adult learning is not being developed.

The group discussions were followed by a session in which a panel of representatives from different interests made a presentation and responded to questions which had been developed in

the group discussions. The final speaker was Alan Tuckett the Director of NIACE. His focus was on government policy and the recent publication of *Informal Adult Learning* by the Government. He was anxious to use the opportunities which the policy offered and maximise them (*see Adult Learning, April 2009, vol.20,number 8*).

I was pleased to attend this conference, as it provided a window on a subtle change in the nature of the debate about adult learning. A national trade union recognises for itself a wider role and this is coinciding with dissatisfaction over the consequences of government policy. My own view is that CALL represents the best chance of a wide campaign and that UCU could take initiatives to sustain that campaign across the country. Finally, UCU is best placed to argue for CALL within the TUC nationally and within Regional TUC's. The future of adult learning is central to the future of our democratic society and it is necessary for all the institutions of democratic society, political organisations, trade unions and voluntary organisations, to participate.

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The Association for Education and Ageing

Patrons: Baroness Sally Greengross, Mr Derek Legge, Professor Arthur Stock, Professor Brian Groombridge

President: Professor David James

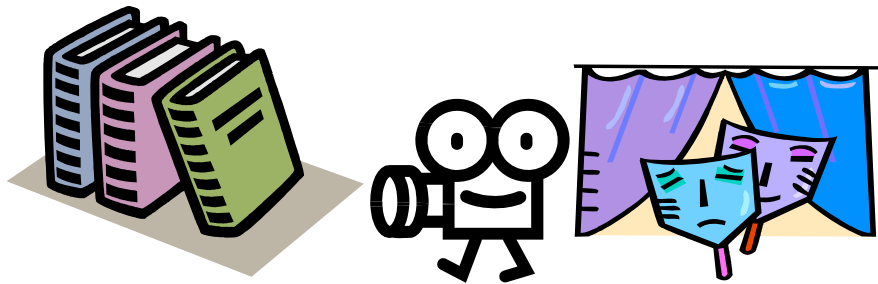
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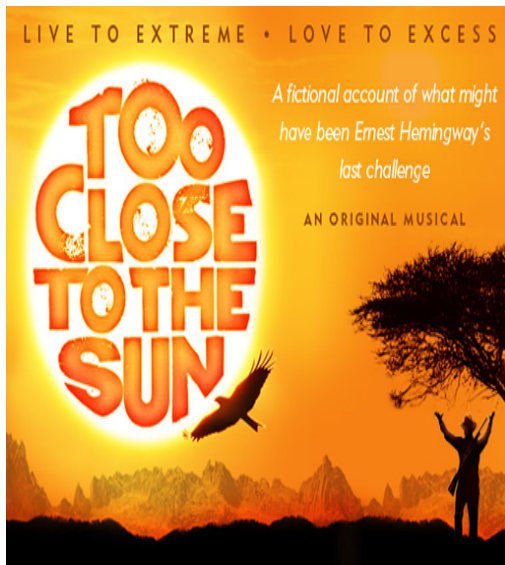
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AEA DIGEST CULTURE SECTION

*Now in his seventies, John Robinson is finally fulfilling his dream of being a full time musician and composer. His new musical “**Too Close to the Sun**”, a fictional account of the last days of Ernest Hemingway, is about to open in London’s West End. This is after spending most of his life as a top scientist in the engineering field. John tells his story to **Carol Allen**.*



As a small boy in a Lancashire mining village in the thirties, John showed an early talent for music. He wanted to study the piano, but his father insisted he learn the piano accordion, the instrument on which he still composes today. At

the age of 13 he was offered places at music college, art college and technical college. His father, an engineer, steered him towards technical college. “It was a practical decision”, says John. “We didn’t have a lot of money and the bus fare was cheaper.”

As it turned out, that was not a bad move. He became Professor John Robinson, one of the leading authorities in his particular field, worked for Boeing and Lockheed in America researching aircraft stress, returned to England to lecture at university and is the author of four scientific books.

He never though abandoned his love of music. At one point he was playing in a jazz band and nearly turned professional, but then Boeing beckoned and he decided to stick with engineering. When he settled in Devon in 1985, he built a 50 seater theatre at his house, where he put on concerts and at the urging of his now late wife, promised that when he retired, which was in 1995, he would pursue his dream of becoming a full time composer. His work includes the music for two ballets, produced in Vienna, song cycles of poetry and other works set to music, including Shakespeare’s “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” and several musicals,

the latest of which is “Too Close to the Sun”. Based on a little known play by one Ron Read, with book and lyrics by Roberto Trippini, the show is a four hander surmising the events leading up to Hemingway’s death (he famously shot himself), as he battles against the rigours of old age and takes solace in the company of his young secretary, who has her eye on becoming the fifth Mrs Hemingway. Meanwhile his wife looks on. The fourth character is Rex, a manipulative Hollywood B-movie producer, who is trying to secure the film rights to the life of the notorious writer.



Ernest Hemingway

John has raised the money for the show from investors through his own production company. Unlike producers such as Cameron Mackintosh, who invest large sums in developing a show and touring it outside London, he is going straight into the Comedy Theatre in London with just four weeks rehearsal to keep costs down – another reason why he prefers a small cast, modestly scaled show. “It’s easier to raise one million pounds than ten”, he says cannily.

There is though a down side to John’s story. Four years ago he took another of his shows, “Behind the Iron Mask”, into the West End and it received the sort of

negative reviews, from which it takes a brave man to recover and stick his toe back again into such shark infested waters. But John is not a man who is easily discouraged. “It would take a lot more than a few critics to knock my confidence”, he says. After the critical failure of “Iron Mask”, he formed a new partnership with Trippini, now the Hammerstein to his Rodgers. They have rewritten that show and showcased it in New York, where he still intends to fulfill another dream of producing a show on Broadway.

Does he though have any regrets that he allowed his father to persuade him to spend most of his life in engineering, rather than music? “Not at all. I got worldwide recognition and financial independence from that, which has enabled me to pursue my music without the pressures I would otherwise have had.” And as for retirement from music, forget it. “I’m still healthy and enjoying my work. It never enters my mind.”

“Too Close to the Sun” is at the Comedy Theatre for an eight week season from 16th July.



*Applications are now being invited for the **2010 Winston Churchill***

Travelling Fellowships. *They are open to any UK citizen to travel overseas to undertake study projects related to their profession, trade or particular interest and to any age. Last year 95 Fellowships were awarded to people between 17 and 79. There are ten categories this year and they include The Arts and Older People, Education and Vocational Training and Treatment and Rehabilitation of Chronic Conditions. Grants average over £5,000, covering all travel and living expenses for an overseas visit of between 4-8 weeks. Full details are on the news page of our website: http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/pages/news_views.html and on the fellowships site www.wcmt.org.uk Applications can be made online or application forms can be obtained from: Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, 15 Queen's Gate Terrace, LONDON SW7 5PR*

*Please enclose S.A.E.
Closing date for applications is
6th October 2009.*

*A very successful and well attended presentation was delivered at our conference in Lancaster based on a drama project developed by older people and social work students to develop learning materials on the oft neglected topic of **Older People's Sexuality.***

*One of the authors of the paper was **Trish Hafford-Letchfield**, currently a lecturer in Social Work at Middlesex University and was project director for RUDE, as this project is known.*

Students following professional training in health and social care need to be equipped with the right knowledge,

skills and attitudes to work with Older People and those involved with them. Any learning and teaching strategies should equip professionals to maximise the potential of older service users and their carers in a way that positively promotes their independence, which is a major thrust within current government policy. The issue of intimacy and sexuality lies at the very centre of a meaningful and fulfilling personal life. However teaching and learning materials in this area tend not to acknowledge older people's needs in this area and these silences can be seen both in policy and in care practice.

In 2008, we established a project between London South Bank University Faculty of Health and Social Care and 1st Framework, 3rd Thought (an older people's drama company) to try and confront and address some of these tricky issues. A subsequent intergenerational initiative produced educational learning materials for professionals working with older people in the area of sexuality and intimacy. Through the use of drama and film making, a small group of social work students worked with older actors and film makers over a period of two days. The outcome was a DVD of 17 short clips that can be used as stimulus material in teaching and learning in health and social care on the theme of intimacy and sexuality in later life.

Drama queens

A body of evidence has been developing in social care that shows that crossing the boundaries between the social sciences and the arts and humanities can help to communicate service user's experiences more powerfully. This provides a mechanism to free those

involved in delivering care from traditional categories and lenses through which they view service users and provides opportunities to involve service users themselves in shaping professional development. Older people however tend to be one of the least involved groups in professional education within care and are more likely to be its 'objects'. Grenier (2007) talks about how setting the terms of an assessment or provision are important aspects of professional power. Social workers for example present with expert knowledge and seek information from their service users in a prescriptive way. The older person is thus objectified or classified in order to become eligible for services or support. Grenier highlights the subjugated knowledge of older people's social and emotional experiences within assessment and provision of services, questioning how the lived experiences of older people are taken into account, particularly social and emotional ones (2007).

Intimacy and sexuality for example are integral to life experiences and the importance of intimacy, love and sexual pleasure for wellbeing in later life is one of the keys to promoting the importance of social relationships and social contacts with family, networks and friends as crucial influences upon older people's overall quality of life. However, the silence surrounding older people's sexuality is overwhelming and can also mirror older people's invisibility in other areas of society. Greater acknowledgement by including these issues within the social work curriculum may also result in professionals looking at older people differently, recognizing that learning with them rather than about them

requires a two way transaction. Engaging with the arts was felt to be a good mechanism to take this concept forward. We found that developing learning materials through a process of experimentation and negotiation led to a variety of learning insights alongside the sharing of power, innovation and active learning for all those involved.



Creating the RUDE DVD

Drama is an alternative method for enhancing communication between intergenerational learners, whose individual and group experiences of life and culture may be very different. We were fortunate to get a small grant from London South Bank's Learning and Teaching Committed. The project was exploratory and improvisatory, where those involved participated on a voluntary basis. Of the eight students involved, only three had any prior experience of working with older people. We used 'stimulus' material (an article, internet material on sex aides and a rude joke book) to get people talking and we established a blog to encourage people to network and share ideas and feedback outside meetings.

Three small teams comprising an arts/film director, 2 older actors and 2 students worked intensely over two days and began filming pretty much

immediately. Here are a few examples of some of the types of outputs:

- Social work students interview two older people and invite them share their innermost thoughts about sexual desire and needs for intimacy in later life. A question is posed about whether public funds should be used to enable people to meet their sexual needs and reveals some of the issues that older people face in making intimate relationships in later life.
- Two older people reflect on what sex and intimacy means to them in the context of their own relationship. This is interspersed with an expression of eroticism through movement and dance.
- Head to head, where two scenarios about sexuality and culture are presented. Firstly the family conflict arising from a relationship between an older white woman and younger Muslim man. Secondly the impact of cross-dressing issues on an older man's life in a sheltered housing scheme.
- Where do our attitudes to sex and sexuality come from? People of different generation's reflect on the sexuality of those close to them and on their own personal awareness. Speakers reveal some of their discomfort and humour around these issues from different cultural viewpoints.
- Joke telling, where humorous responses to sexuality can serve to conceal the true nature of older people's sexual needs and desired.
- A poem which expresses images of identity and life experiences and raises issues about opportunities for expressing personal identity in care settings.
- Asking difficult questions in assessment for care services; a challenging look at whose needs are

being met, when asking questions about sexuality in the assessment process.

- Vox pop - interviews with the everyday public on their attitudes towards older women and to explore myths about sexual attractiveness about women in later life.

More material was generated than we were able to edit resulting in the 17 clips of the DVD . All participants were involved in the directing and writing of material as well as the process of filming, which enabled them to develop a range of skills. They were involved in viewing the 'rushes' and discussing how the material could be used. Written permission was obtained from participants at several stages along the way in line with ethical procedures.

How far did they go?

Apart from the above, our project was enormous fun. Closer encounters between social work students and older people in a more creative setting is much more effective in stimulating thinking about 'issues' associated with later life than what students can achieve in more traditional forms of learning. The intensity of relationships that developed between younger and older participants was striking both from the footage and participants' own reporting as well as in the overall ambience and atmosphere of the project. One older participant said "I enjoyed the idea of sharing emotional feelings together. It was therapy to me because some of these things being bad memories and the sad thing about it is we cannot change the past. If our individual contributions can change other people's lives in a more positive way, then it will be great". Students reported a number of positive changes in their own practice. However, the older

actors felt that the project didn't go far enough and that some taboo topics such as masturbation were not addressed or discussed. The topics were also overwhelmingly heterosexual. Interestingly the older participants felt that they were more progressive in their thinking than the younger ones. Spin offs were the development of new skills in learning using technology, for example through involvement in filming and editing.

This project shows that competency based approaches to professional education can be challenged through the direct leadership of older people's active engagement in collaborative learning resulting in increased participation and empowerment of those involved.

References: Grenier, A. (2007) Constructions of frailty in the English Language, care practices and the lived experience. Ageing and Society, 27, pp 425-45

*The subject of older people's sexuality is also covered in the cinema this month in a new film **Cloud 9** – page 28*



**Ursula Werner and Horst Westphal
in "Cloud 9"**

REVIEWS

*Sebastian Barry's prizewinning novel **The Secret Scripture** is now available in paperback. A review by Alex Withnall.*

It's not very often that we come across a novel in which the main character is a centenarian but in the story of Roseanne McNulty, who is nearing her hundredth birthday, the Irish writer Sebastian Barry has succeeded in producing a beautiful and moving work that was not surprisingly shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2008 and also won the Costa Book of the Year award the same year.

To summarise the plot, Roseanne is a patient of psychiatrist Dr Grene in the Roscommon mental hospital, to which she has been transferred, having been committed to a Sligo institution as a young woman. Approaching retirement himself, Dr Grene is clearing up his case notes prior to the closure of the hospital and becomes increasingly intrigued by Roseanne's background and the story of how she came to be incarcerated. Whilst he investigates and deals with some demons of his own, Roseanne records the tumultuous events of her childhood and marriage in a secret journal, to

which the reader is party almost as a friend and confidante. When Dr Grene delves further into her past, their two lives begin to intertwine in unimaginable ways, until a surprising secret comes to light and the reader is left both moved and disturbed by events.

The novel works on a number of levels. It might be seen purely as an intriguing detective story. But more importantly, Roseanne's testimony - and Dr Grene's own reflections - raise a number of difficult questions about the reliability of memory and differing interpretations of past events as we age. At another level, the book might be seen as a vivid account of twentieth century Irish history and politics and a blistering attack on the Catholic Church in Ireland especially in relation to its treatment of women. There again there are issues relating to identity and how it is shaped by relationships with others and the impact of their actions on the individual. Finally, towards the end of the book, we encounter issues of compassion and forgiveness in the face of what now seems like extraordinary cruelty and neglect.

However you interpret the author's intentions, the book is to be recommended for the sheer beauty of its prose and its wonderful characterisation. Some of the more violent scenes, described in all too realistic detail, contrast well with the gentle flow of moments of sheer happiness in Roseanne's early life. Her own defiant but imaginative character shines through in her writing to contrast well with Dr Grene's more guarded and professional approach. Some of the more minor characters such as the priest, Father Gaunt, whose insidious influence is felt

throughout Roseanne's life, and the mysterious John Kane really spring out from the pages. I'd recommend putting some time aside for this unrivalled novel; I guarantee you won't be able to put it down.

The Secret Scripture is published by Faber and Faber, 312 pp, £7.99 (pb) ISBN 978-0-571-21529-4



Ian McKellan and Patrick Stewart in "Waiting for Godot"

Theatre reviews

Carlie Newman has some recommendations from the West End theatre.

Waiting for Godot (Haymarket, until 2 September) has four actors who provide us with a master class in acting. Of course, we all go to see Sir Ian McKellan and Patrick Stewart in the main roles but we stay to be enchanted by the quality of performance given by Simon Callow as an exaggerated ringmaster Pozzo and Ronald Pickup as his servant, Lucky. Director Sean Mathias has given the production a comic flavour, McKellan as Estragon and Stewart as Vladimir enhance every amusing line and the close relationship between the two tramps works well. I was not keen however on the set which,

although illustrating the possible vaudevillian background of the two tramps, seemed a bit out of place. The requisite tree stands in the middle of a stage with old fallen masonry on the ground and stage boxes on each side.

I was more affected by *Duet for One* (Vaudeville, until 1 August), probably as the first time I saw it was in 1986 around the time of the death of my own father from multiple sclerosis. MS is, of course, what the violinist is suffering from as she visits a psychiatrist for help with her depression. Juliet Stephenson gives a most intelligent reading of Stephanie, the musician (who is based on Jacqueline Du Pre), for whom playing and performing has been her whole life. All the emotions felt by Stephanie flick across Stephenson's face so that even when she professes to being absolutely fine, we know that the opposite is true.



Juliet Stephenson as Stephanie

Henry Goodman in the more subdued role of the analyst shows that he is more than capable of dealing with a serious role – some of you may remember his lively Tevye in “Fiddler on the Roof”. Writer Tom Kempinski manages to insert some humour into his play and director Matthew Lloyd has put movement into what is essentially two people talking.

On Screen - Carol Allen



Emma Thompson and Dustin Hoffman

Last Chance Harvey is a charming, sweet, funny and sometimes sad tale of a later life love affair with two cracking central performances from Emma Thompson and Dustin Hoffman. He plays the title role of a somewhat over the hill jingle writer in London for his estranged daughter's wedding. It all goes wrong for him, he finds himself almost literally a spare part and not very honoured guest at his own child's wedding and he misses his plane home. But then in the airport bar he falls into conversation with Kate (Thompson), a forty something spinster who lives with her widowed mum, and they embark on

the tentative early stages of a bristly and bumpy relationship. The awkward chemistry between them rings true and director Joel Hopkins uses the London settings against which their romance is conducted to good effect. The film occasionally veers towards Hollywood artifice and sentimentality but when it does Thompson with her wonderful dry and humorous delivery pulls it right back on track.

All praise to Andreas Dresen, writer and director of the German film *Cloud 9* for tackling the subject of sexual passion and older people. Inge (Ursula Werner) is a married grandmother in her sixties, who finds herself unexpectedly caught up in a passionate affair with 76 year old Karl (Horst Westphal). But when she is overcome by guilt and tells her husband (Horst Rehlberg), disaster strikes. The film doesn't however really succeed, not because of its startlingly explicit love scenes, which even so rather gloss over the realities of later life sex, but because it never really gets to the heart of Inge's motivation. And while the director claims he wanted to show that late life passion is as unstoppable as young love, the film is actually rather downbeat, particularly in its conclusion, which tends to negate the joy the lovers find earlier in each others company.

Telstar is the story of Joe Meek, who produced that and other hit records such as "Have I the Right", "Just Like Eddie" and "Johnny, Remember Me" from a grubby flat over his landlady's handbag shop in the Holloway Road on a cobbled together, improvised set up, doing all sorts of eccentric experiments to get the particular idiosyncratic sound he was after. The film gives O'Neill, who created the role on stage, an opportunity

to expand and deepen his award winning characterisation of this volatile, self destructive and often cruel creative genius. Much of it is very funny and it captures the shabbiness and naïve trendiness of London in the early sixties, making lavish use of the music of the period both in archive footage of people like Adam Faith and Cliff Richard and in its portrayals of stars like John Leyton, Billy Fury and other real life characters strutting their stuff. Good performances from JJ Field as Meek's lover, the less than talented Heinz, Pam Ferris his landlady and Kevin Spacey as his military man business partner but as the tone darkens and Meek's life disintegrates into depression and tragedy, the film too loses its way a bit.



Jean Simmons and James Wilby

Jean Simmons returns to the screen in *Shadows in the Sun*, a gentle and engaging story of family relationships, set on the Norfolk coast. James Wilby is her son, trying to do his best for his mother, even though they both fail to understand the other's point of view. Toby Marlow and Olivia Lovibond as her grandchildren and Jamie Dornan, the drifter she befriends, are the young people she relates to easily. When not called on to look ill and frail, Simmons' face lights up with the mischievous smile she had as a young woman, showing her as still beautiful, just older.