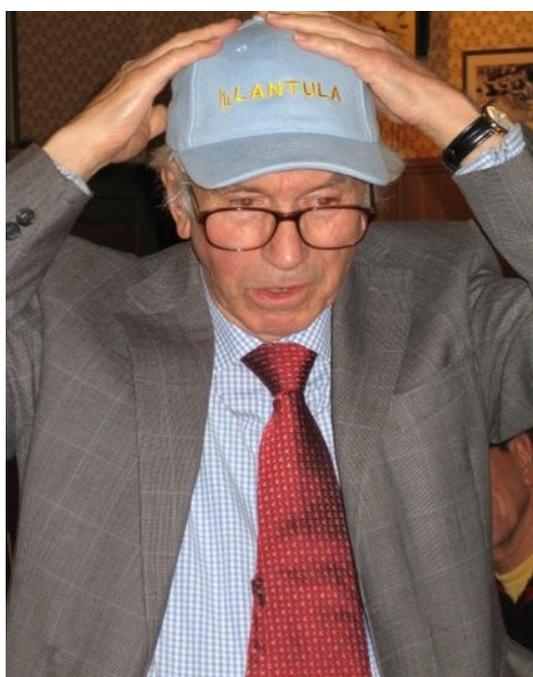




The Association for  
Education & Ageing

# AEA DIGEST

Issue no 25  
Autumn 2008



**Brian Groombridge on his recent intergenerational project in Finland. Is he making like one of the younger generation here? See page 19**

## **IN YOUR AUTUMN DIGEST:**

- Page 2** Notes from the Chair – Jo Walker
- Page 3** News section: Conference 2009; AEA supports CALL; good news on ageing and memory; the Elbourne report; Adult Learners' Week; Photography competition; Silver Surfers' awards
- Page 10** Membership News
- Page 12** Features: research reports from Chris Phillipson (University of Keele) and Anita Pincas (the University of London Institute of Education plus Jim Soulsby on Learning for Living
- Page 18** Culture section: Mental health, social inclusion and the arts; Brian Groombridge in Finland; EAC Over 60s art awards report; book and film reviews

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

*Jo Walker*

Dear Friends,

Consultations and conferences seem always with us, and recent months have been no exception. Our submission to the UK Government's consultation on informal adult learning was one of thousands received. In their first response, published last month, the government acknowledged the great strength of feeling and importance attached to adult learning in the community. Many respondents had a particular concern for older learners as prime users (and providers) of informal learning opportunities. We await with interest a fuller response on the Government's intentions in this area, hoping that the many voices raised have also been heard. American and European friends tell us that the same pressures on adult learning vs the skills agenda are present in their economies.

In September of this year, later life learning was also on the agenda of at least three academic conferences, in Barcelona, Bristol and Montreal, where AEA members gave papers. We aim to keep up and improve the visibility of this subject area, especially in larger educational or gerontological meetings, where later life or learning issues respectively can easily get forgotten. Do please keep us posted of any opportunities to contribute to programmes that you hear about.

Our thoughts and plans now turn to our own programme, especially a series of consultations with older learners. These are being organised over the next six months by Jim Soulsby and Dave Crossan. If you are part of an organisation that might like to host or

be a partner with AEA in such an event, please be in touch.

The other significant event on the horizon is our international conference, to be held 1-3 April 2009 in Lancaster University, in partnership with the Department of Continuing Education there. We have already secured Professor Ron Manheimer of North Carolina as a plenary speaker, on the current and future prospects of later life learning. We hope also to add a European speaker, to be confirmed. Alongside their contributions will be selected presentations on aspects of the conference theme, *Reaffirming Teaching and Learning in Later Life*. If you have work or research you would like to discuss with an audience of like-minded and interested folk, do consider sending an abstract of what you would like to present (details on page 7).

The Lancaster conference will also include the seventh Frank Glendenning Memorial Lecture, at 4pm on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, to be given by Professor Keith Percy, who was also a founding member of AEA and editor of its journal for many years. This is free of charge and open to all, not just conference delegates. The AGM of the Association will be on the previous day, April 1<sup>st</sup> at 4.30pm. If you're reasonably local do consider joining us, if not at the conference already as a day delegate!

**MORE ON  
CONFERENCE 2009**

**SEE NEXT PAGE**

## *Dates for your diary*

# **International Conference 2009**

**AEA in partnership with Lancaster University Department of Continuing Education**

**Theme:** *Reaffirming Teaching and Learning in Later Life*

**Dates:** *April 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> 2009*

**Venue:** *University of Lancaster, UK*

**Event also includes this year's Frank Glendenning Lecture and the AGM. Further details in our news section page 7**

## NEWS ITEMS



**CAMPAIGNING ALLIANCE  
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING**

*Following the loss of 1.5 million learner places in the past two years, a new campaign **The Campaigning Alliance for Lifelong Learning (CALL)** to defend adult education was launched on 30 September. **Anne Jamieson** represented AEA at the launch.*

CALL is founded by five organisations - NIACE, UCU (Universities); UNISON and the WEA. 36 others have joined since its inception including AEA.

The inaugural meeting was extremely well attended with a packed hall full of a wide range of adult learner representatives. The panel of speakers included representatives from the founding organisations and others.

Contributions from the floor were numerous, and some, including me, did not manage to get the word. However others stood up and spoke on behalf of older learners and retired people. The event was predominantly focused on all the shortfalls in funding and provision and in my view not enough attention paid to the campaign strategy, but I am sure that will come.

*The CALL website is packed with news and information about the campaign. <http://www.callcampaign.org.uk/> For a list of member organisations go to [http://www.callcampaign.org.uk/?page\\_id=5](http://www.callcampaign.org.uk/?page_id=5) or click on the members' link. The AEA logo on that page, which is linked to our website <http://www.cpa.org.uk/aea/index.html> is*

*already generating an increase in interest in our activities.*

---

*Here's some reassuring news which I found in an unattributed piece on the American Third Age website about **Memory and Ageing**, and their relationship to learning and which gives further confirmation of the value of later life learning.*

Can you remember the address of the last place you lived? Your second cousin's wife's first name? What's on your shopping list? If not, don't worry. As people age, memory lapses are common but not inevitable. A healthy lifestyle, including plenty of mental stimulation, will help keep your brain in shape. Shakespeare called memory "the warden of the brain". It's the keeper of our past, where we store our most precious clues to who we are: our first kiss, the day we graduated, the birth of our children. Why, then, is it so stubborn when we just need to find our keys?

The mind is a puzzle - one that scientists are still unraveling. But the last decade has seen tremendous strides in our understanding of how memory develops. A growing body of scientific evidence suggests the brain is more pliable than once thought. People's brains don't necessarily have to deteriorate as they get older.

"Our future is not doom and gloom," says neuropsychologist Douglas Mason, author of *The Memory Doctor* (New Harbinger, 2005). "The brain does regenerate, and that's something we've only known the past few years," Mason said. "Memory is something you can do

something about, just like your heart or other parts of your body."

In fact, what's good for your heart is probably good for your brain, too. Clinical studies have demonstrated that a diet rich in antioxidants can stave off memory decline. Getting enough sleep, exercising regularly and avoiding stress can also improve memory.

You also need to exercise your brain. Giving up that stimulating job in favor of vegging out at home really could hasten the brain to mush progression. Researchers have found people who retire early have an earlier onset of dementia. "There are even studies that say that to protect the brain after age 40, we should constantly challenge ourselves to try to learn new things," said Dr. Concetta Forchetti, medical director of the Memory Disorders Center at Alexian Neuroscience Institute in Hoffman Estates. Forchetti advises learning to speak a new language or to play an instrument. Try a new sport. Even joining a club, volunteering or staying active in social relationships reduces your risk of memory loss.

"Psychologists have begun promoting mind exercises and mental boot camps, but studies haven't shown whether any single technique is superior," said Dr. Steven Lekah, a neurologist at Community Neurologic Center in Geneva. So it might not matter whether you prefer crossword puzzles or drama class. "The important thing is to find a new challenge so you strengthen less used neural pathways," according to Donalee Markus, a neurocognitive therapist in Highland Park, Ill., and founder of Designs for Strong Minds. "Novelty is the best vitamin for the

brain," he says. "You have to be taken out of your comfort zone."

Such advice falls into the "use it or lose it" camp of memory preservation. If you think of the brain as a tangle of circuitry, mental stimulation is what prompts the growth of new connections between nerve cells. More connections means stronger memories.

"It's like a highway between two cities," Lekah says. "The more lanes you have on the highway, the better the traffic flows."

---



*Jim Soulsby and David Crossan attended the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Better Government for Older People, which was chaired by Professor Brian Groombridge. Relevant to the raison d'être of BGOP were the interim recommendations of John Elbourne, the independent reviewer appointed by DWP to report on whether older people are currently able to inform Government policy and actions at all levels. As this digest was going to press, Elbourne's final report was published. (Review of Older People's Engagement with Government, 18.11.2008)*

[www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre) It still however leaves Jim with a big question mark regarding the concept of **Much Better Government for Older People??**

It may seem timely that when Government is looking at building on the capacity of local authorities and local older people's organisations and forums

to interpret Opportunity Age and other Government policies, which impact on older people, that it chooses to review how Government engages with older people. The sad irony is that the recommendations of John Elbourne seem to leave out the strengths of BGOP and replace them with processes and structures, which to this observer are not sustainable.

In his summary John found that:

- older people's engagement with government is often very impressive, but is patchy;
- older people's input is often very influential, but could be more so with regular, structured contact direct with government;
- the environment in which engagement take place has changed very significantly in recent years, but some of the opportunities presented have not been taken;
- there is much effective practice to build on; and
- there is strong support for change to take a range of opportunities.

In his final report he further commented that he found "hat the linkages required for handling views and issues resulting from engagement with central, regional and local government are under-developed and mechanisms are needed to ensure that individual and collective views can be better captured."

As a consequence he makes seven recommendations: -

1. **Establish a UK Advisory Forum for Older People** chaired or co-chaired by the lead government Minister for Older People supported by regional advisory groups

2. **Secretariat services for the UK Advisory Forum** be provided by government officials
3. **Enhance the role of Government Offices** in supporting and developing engagement with older people, supported by the UK Advisory Forum secretariat.
4. **To address relevant findings** from the Audit Commission's report "**Don't Stop Me Now**", by Regional Forums supporting their respective local authorities to develop effective strategies, to ensure a true diversity of older people's voices are heard.
5. **Older people's forums** around the UK, including OPAGs (Older People's Advisory Groups), should be supported and built upon.
6. **BGOP** is funded by DWP at current levels until the end of March 2009.
7. **The main funding** for the proposals should come from DWP's current funding for older people's engagement.

The recommendations, one hopes, are not set in stone. Comments on the review should be submitted to DWP by **9 January 2009** to [andrew.jennings@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.jennings@dwp.gsi.gov.uk) or by post to: Andrew Jennings  
Department for Work and Pensions  
1-11 John Adam Street,  
London WC2N 6HT.

### **A personal opinion by Jim Soulsby**

Richard Worsley in the early days of BGOP described BGOP as like the letter "H" turned on its side. One of the sides worked across local government and decision making processes. The opposite side operated similarly across national government. Obviously the key

element, the thread throughout, is the quality of life of older people and their ability and opportunity to influence decisions that impact on their lives now and in the future. John Elbourne's recommendations restate this concept although I have yet to see the influence of Government Offices on older people's policies and consultations. At a time when regionalism is on the political back burner, I doubt if they have the reputation, experience or the "clout" to effectively support local/regional OPAGS, as they endeavour to (rightly in my opinion) seek to build bridges across the plethora of older people's forums, not to deny their autonomy or voice but to help channel their thoughts and feeling more effectively into local/regional decision making processes.

What is missing from the recommendations is the linking element between the two horizontal processes. How would these elements come together and provide mutual support and information? The central office of BGOP does this currently (although the report suggests it does not do it as well as it could) but it seems it has no place in the future. Yet to my mind it is both crucial and the key element to ensure it all works. Where will the information, education and training come from to help build the capacity of those older people seeking to engage in consultative processes? If the base of older people so engaged is to be broadened, then this has to happen systematically and not be reliant on ad hoc regional awareness or otherwise.

In the setting up of a UK advisory forum John suggests in his interim report that: - 'secretariat services could be provided

by government officials supporting the Minister. These could also support UK OPAG and broker older people's engagement with central government policy development and projects'. This does not give the linking process sufficient independence. If government is to trust the processes it wishes to set up it has to fund this element and give it a greater degree of independence than now and not less. The process must provide friendly criticism of government. This may at times engender in Government a feeling of the hand doing the feeding being bitten, but this is the price that must be paid. Being reliant on a Government officer places that person at the whim of so many other potentially conflicting agendas – particularly if resources are an issue.

There needs to be that key officer commissioned to work across government departments and bureaucratic obstacles. They need to work closely with whatever structure is created, but the key strand between the regional/local developments and national government - in all its complexity - has to sit outside Government.

Please think again John

*The report is available to view on DWP's website –*

[http://www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/ind\\_review\\_older\\_peoples\\_eng\\_with\\_govt.asp](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/ind_review_older_peoples_eng_with_govt.asp)

## ***CALL FOR PAPERS***

### **Reaffirming Teaching and Learning in Later Life**

If you are a teacher, mentor, researcher or learner, then please consider offering a short presentation on your work at our **2009 conference at Lancaster University (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> April)**.

We are looking for papers on a variety of topics discussing research, practice / experience or policy as applied to learning in later life (20 minutes plus 10 minutes discussion). Please in the first instance send abstracts to: [j.e.hughes@open.ac.uk](mailto:j.e.hughes@open.ac.uk) by 12 January 2009 in the form of a 200 word statement, giving: Presenter's name and contact information, sponsor if appropriate, aim/purpose of the work, methods or procedures, outcomes and reflection / conclusion.

Further details on this and of the provisional programme can be obtained from Carol on [aeasecratary@googlemail.com](mailto:aeasecratary@googlemail.com) or telephone: 020 7385 4641

Note: Full details of the conference programme were circulated to members by e-mail on 13<sup>th</sup> November headed "Conference 2009)



*Nominations are now being invited for **Adult Learners' Week 2009**, organised by NIACE. If you know someone whose remarkable learning achievements deserve recognition and could inspire others, then NIACE wants to hear them. Tell us about those remarkable stories of how learning has transformed people's lives and nominate for the Adult Learners' Week Awards 2009.*

*The awards are a great way of celebrating the achievements of learners and, in doing so, encouraging others to get involved as well. Winners come from a variety of backgrounds, but all have remarkable learning stories which inspire others to have a go.*

*We have a variety of awards for learners who have learnt as individuals, in a group or as a family, as well as the Opening Doors Awards for projects whose innovative approach motivates and inspires learners.*

*Everyone nominated will receive a Certificate of Achievement, and the winners will be invited to an awards ceremony and receive a learning voucher. Making a nomination is straightforward and easy - and can be done online or by post.*

*Online nomination forms are available on our website at [www.alw.org.uk](http://www.alw.org.uk).*

*You can order printed nomination forms from*

<http://www.niace.org.uk/alw/2008/order-nomination-forms.htm> .

*Tel: 0116 204 4200/1*

*Web: [www.alw.org.uk](http://www.alw.org.uk)*

*Email: [alw@niace.org.uk](mailto:alw@niace.org.uk)*

*Address: Campaigns and Promotions, NIACE, 20 Princess Rd West, Leicester LE1 6TP.*

*Please note the above information refers to Adult Learners' Week England.*

*For Wales please visit*

[www.niacedc.org.uk](http://www.niacedc.org.uk).

© 2008 Niace



*News for the photographers among you. A photography competition, '**Growing Old Disgracefully**' is being mounted by NIACE and Mature Times. The competition is open to anyone in the UK aged 55 and over and encourages older people to illustrate the wide variety of ways and places older people learn.*

*Lois Gladdish, Information Officer for NIACE's Older and Bolder Team, says:*

*"We are looking for creative, positive images of older people learning. This competition is your chance to capture an unusual learning scene and to express yourself through the wonders of photography. Amateur, hobbyist or professional — if you have a digital*

camera and an imagination, you can take inspiring photos that reflect your enthusiasm for learning. We are looking for photographs of older people, taken by older people. This is your chance to prove that you can still enjoy learning and handle the latest technology – age is not a barrier. Whether you belong to a singing, rock climbing or drama group let us see how you are “Growing Old Disgracefully.”

The deadline for entries is **Friday 16th January 2009**. Judging will take place in early February 2009 and

presentations will take place at the NIACE E-Guides Event - 25th or 26th March 2009 - in Nottingham, which looks at the impact of technology in learning. Full details on: [http://www.niace.org.uk/Research/older\\_bolder/Growing-old-Disgracefully-Rules.pdf](http://www.niace.org.uk/Research/older_bolder/Growing-old-Disgracefully-Rules.pdf)

Entry Forms can be requested from Lois Gladdish at NIACE. Please email your name and full address to [lois.gladdish@niace.org.uk](mailto:lois.gladdish@niace.org.uk)

### ***Silver Surfers Seize the Day***



**Silver Surfer of the Year Bernard Featherstone**

*Digital Unite presented the UK's Silver Surfers of the Year awards at Parliament on Thursday October 23<sup>rd</sup>. Digital Unite's Gill Adams writes.*

This event is annual and is sponsored by the Rt Hon Stephen Timms, MP, who currently works at the Treasury. Mr Timms awarded a laptop to the winner, Bernard Featherstone, 60, of Eccles, who, provoked by a serious illness that cost him his job at an early age, has now produced a wonderful website called Hearts of Salford to help others with heart problems.

Mr Howard Phillips, CEO of Britain's largest retirement builder McCarthy & Stone, who also sponsored the Awards, presented £150 Amazon vouchers to four runners-up: Stuart Hill, 59, of Middlesbrough; Judith Taylor, 80, of St Albans; Les Nicholls, 88, of Liverpool; and Simbo Ogunyemi, 66, of SE London.

The Awards were remarkable this year - not only because of what these older citizens have done by learning a new technology and putting it to good purpose - but because the event itself was 'taken over' by these and other older people. About 100 people had two hours in a stunning room in the shadow of Big Ben, at the very seat of government. Some of the MPs of the runners-up were present; McCarthy & Stone were out in force. But, most importantly, the older generation were given the opportunity to talk live into state of the art tiny portable video cameras (like mobile phones only better) and then asked to take the videos and turn them onto the MPs and sponsors, and each other. Suffice it to say, there was no shyness! And learning

how to use these miniature gadgets took all of 30 seconds.

You can read more about this on the Silver Surfer of the Year Awards blog: [www.digitalunite.com](http://www.digitalunite.com) If you're interested in digital literacy for older people, please post your comments.

**Postscript** *If you are involved with helping older people to come to grips with computers, the internet and all that, Digital Unite are holding a one-day Workshop on Friday, January 30th. You will spend a creative day with like-minded others, absorbing information, sharing experience, and brainstorming the issues and challenges so that you can*

*return to your organisation with enthusiasm, ideas, plans and (most important), a sustainable strategy to help you make every ounce of your effort count well into the future.*

*Cost: £75 per head or £120 for two from same organisation.*

*Timings: 10am–5pm*

*Venue: 1 London Bridge (opposite London Bridge station)*

*To book and for further information, send details of name, job title, organisation to:*

*Gill Adams or Brian Eisenberg*

*Email: [gill.adams@digitalunite.net](mailto:gill.adams@digitalunite.net) Tel: 0870 241 5091*

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

### REMINDER

Subscriptions for 2009 become due on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009. The new rates, which were agreed at the AGM, are as follows:

Individual membership,

- Retired or unwaged: £13
- waged: £26

Corporate Membership (to cover a number of members from one organisation): £75.00

So why not renew your membership now in good time for next year and before you get too involved in the Christmas shopping!

Cheques should be sent to AEA Secretary (address page 23).

If you pay by direct debit, please remember to ask you bank to alter your order to the new subscription rate.

If you would like to pay by direct debit in future or if you are a corporate member organisation and would like to pay by BACS, please request our account details from Carol at [aeasecretary@googlemail.com](mailto:aeasecretary@googlemail.com)



Here's wishing you a happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

*Looking back over 2008, we've had the pleasure of welcoming many new members to AEA in the last year. Since the last digest, members Stanley Miller and Nigel Pendleton have joined our ranks, as has corporate member Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership, so welcome to them too.*

*Much of the credit for this expansion in our membership goes to our Development Office **Jim Soulsby**, who here explains the **Membership Drive strategy**, which is now making AEA an even stronger force in the world of later life learning.*

As most of you will know with the support of the Esme Fairbairn money we are trying to increase the number of members and broaden the range of membership. To this end I have been targeting the following groups:

- Individuals and agencies in the United Kingdom who work with older people and have an interest in or are responsible for later life learning.
- older learners interested in sharing their experiences with others
- individuals and research and training bodies to ascertain interest in subscribing to a peer reviewed journal and to submitting material for it.
- non UK based agencies interested in broadening their networks and access to information concerning later life learning
- European networks on later life learning who wish to join a "virtual" network of networks to

maximise dissemination of and access to EU funded projects.

This exercise is mainly by e-mail but we have distributed membership application forms at several conferences recently. Now that the membership fee has been agreed for next year we are about to have some more printed, which will be available for members to circulate themselves, if they wish.

However if any members are aware of agencies or individuals – anywhere in the world – who they think would be interested in joining us, you can help our membership drive by doing one or more of the following please:

- Provide those individuals or agencies with our web page and link from where an application form can be downloaded - [www.cpa.org.uk/aea/index.html](http://www.cpa.org.uk/aea/index.html)
- Download and provide application forms yourselves
- Pass on contact details to the Secretary Carol Allen [aeasecretary@googlemail.com](mailto:aeasecretary@googlemail.com) or to myself Jim Soulsby [jim.soulsby@btinternet.com](mailto:jim.soulsby@btinternet.com)

If large numbers of application forms /membership leaflets are required – perhaps for a local or national event you are involved in - please contact Carol in plenty of time to get them to you or direct to the event organiser for inclusion We would be very interested to hear of any event, where you have been promoting the AEA, what feedback you have received and what follow up you may feel is appropriate for us to undertake

-----  
*The latest report from **FORESIGHT**, a government organisation, whose avowed purpose is to "use the best evidence from science and other areas to provide*

*visions of the future”, was launched on October 22. **Brian Groombridge** was among those present.*

The latest UK government programme on this occasion is about Mental Capital and Mental Wellbeing. There were many scientific specialists in aspects of ageing from childhood and throughout life present, as well as people like myself, Alan Tuckett (NIACE) and Stephen McNair (Older and Bolder). We’re not scientists, but we were there as interested stakeholders (I was

representing the Educational Centres Association). I'm reading the published version now with my AEA hat on, checking the key sections on older adults. The work is to continue and one of the contributors is Professor John Field, the adult education specialist at Stirling University. I'd be pleased to hear from any colleagues who want to know more; and I think there's a case for our showing interest as an organisation. The launched report can be downloaded from the web, but beware: it is massive! Visit [www.foresight.gov.uk](http://www.foresight.gov.uk) .

---

## FEATURE ARTICLES

### *Research reports*

*Professor Chris Phillipson of Keele University writes here about the work he has been doing on **UNIVERSITIES AND ACTIVE AGEING: ENGAGING OLDER LEARNERS***

Population ageing raises a significant challenge for work in education, and higher education in particular. Within the UK, consideration of older learners within the university system is of recent origin. Only a small proportion of people 50 and over are involved in formal educational study. Much of the growth of mature students on part-time undergraduate and postgraduate courses has been taken up by students in their 30s and 40s, with 50 years of age remaining a dividing point, at which educational involvement goes into sharp decline. This remains the case with formal educational activity; in respect of informal activity, however, the picture is more positive, with the growth of different types of voluntary and self-help organisations.

The fall in educational activity among those 50 plus has considerable significance for key areas within social and economic policy. In relation to the former, UK public policy has embraced the concept of ‘active ageing’, defined as: ‘the process of optimising opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life of people as they age’ (World Health Organisation, 2002). Within this policy, life-long learning is identified as a key factor, improving the social environment supporting people as they age. As regards economic policy, a key development has been efforts to promote the employability of older workers, with moves to increase pension ages and remove incentives for early retirement or early exit from the workforce. Attempts to extend working life for women and men in their fifties and sixties, raise a major challenge for improving the quality of work-based training, with issues as well for the role of educational institutions in providing appropriate forms of support.

In the context of education policy, increasing access by older people to education through part-time and related forms of provision has been emphasised in Government policy and in the debate around the Leitch Report (2006). Interest in older learners has also been strengthened given the projected decline in undergraduate student numbers (especially among those aged 18-20) due to take place over the period 2009-2019 (Universities UK, 2008).

Finally, as the cohort of people born immediately after the Second World War approaches retirement, there is increased interest in whether individuals within it will challenge traditional notions of ageing. The possibility of a break with the past arises in several different fields. As pioneers of the expansion in consumer culture during the 1960s, there are expectations that baby boomers will continue to play a key role in shaping patterns of consumption, as they move into old age. Active lifestyles and leisure pursuits may become more widespread and pursued into late old age, with education a significant dimension. Higher rates of divorce and separation after the age of 50 may lead individuals to redefine their social identity with educational involvement an important element in this process. These expectations, and the issue of how the first of the post-1945 birth cohorts are currently engaging in lifestyles different from previous generations, have important consequences for future educational activity among older learners.

The various factors listed above should stimulate an increase in the presence of older learners within higher education. Presently, however, there is a dearth of

thinking about the types of programmes that might be developed within the university sector. In terms of activities with older learners, four pathways might be identified for universities to pursue:

- Educational and personal development programmes: These would build upon existing work in adult and continuing education, but would identify new types of courses and markets among a diverse and segmented post-50s market.
- Health and social care programmes orientated to professionals working with older people: these could run from foundation degrees through to modules for continuing professional development with the theme of maintaining ‘active ageing’ as a key component.
- Employment-related programmes: These might support the policy objective of extending working life, although the extent of employer demand may be fragile in the context of any future rise in unemployment. The development of courses supporting people moving from full-time paid employment to various forms of self-employment may however remain attractive.
- Social inclusion programmes: Substantial numbers of older people – in current as well as succeeding cohorts – remain trapped in a cycle of educational and social disadvantage. HEIs, with partners such as local authorities, Further Education colleges and the major national charities, should focus on a ‘widening participation’ agenda that covers all age groups and not just the young and working adults.

Work at Keele University is currently engaged around developing specific proposals in these areas Higher

education can be a key partner shaping responses to demographic change in two main ways: first by playing a leading role in creating a new type of ageing for the 21st Century, built around extended economic, family and citizenship roles; second, by supporting women and men planning the two decades or more likely to be spent beyond their main work careers.

An article in the next issue of AEA Digest will spell out more detailed proposals on the issue of higher education and older learners.

#### References:

- Leitch Review of Skills (2006)  
Prosperity For All in the Global Economy – World Class Skills: Final Report. London: HM Treasury.  
Universities UK (2008a) The Future Size and Shape of the HE Sector in the UK: demographic projections. London, Universities UK.  
World Health Organisation (WHO) (2002) Active Ageing. Geneva: WHO.

-----  
*Anita Pincas is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Continuing Education at the University of London Institute of Education. Her teaching interests cover various contexts, most recently a new course about older learning. She has been looking into the area of **Mature learners in traditional higher education***

As we now know, older people outnumber children under 16 in the UK [Office of National Statistics, 21 August 2008 )

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?ID=949> ].

It also appears that there is a link between active learning in the later years and health - they reinforce each other,

partly by off-setting depression and loneliness, and also by simply promoting a more satisfying life.

There are also many ways in which societies are acknowledging the value and relevance of older people. In my field, TDA (Teacher Development Agency – the government body responsible for teacher recruitment) has a special initiative to attract older people into the profession.

I discovered that the Institute where I teach has about 10% [roughly 600 ] students aged 50 or more. The majority of these are in their 50s, but many are also in their 60s plus a sprinkling of over 70s. So I persuaded some colleagues to join me in finding out how these learners feel, especially about being just mixed in with younger students. It seems to me that the Institute ought to lead the way in this field, especially in view of my new short course called “Issues in Educating and Training Mature Adults (50+)”, for which I obviously needed to become well-informed about our own older students.

It quickly became clear that these older students can be a very successful learning group. So we are trying to think more closely about how best to support and enhance their learning experience. Some of us believe there is now a case for special provision and teacher training, because older learners are growing into a sector distinct from adult learners of a lower age. However, there has been little recent research into what makes an older person thrive in an educational setting. We sent a short questionnaire to all of our students aged 50 or more. In general, the responses were resoundingly positive. For example, whereas the popular perception

is that older people have trouble acquiring new technical skills, our sample felt they were effective in using such for internet research and many in fact preferred it to the library. Significantly, 55% said they needed no special help with ICT.

We also asked them whether they would have liked extra seminars or a special study group, and there was a fairly firm “no”. They were similarly positive in evaluating their own study skills, such as time management, organisational skills, reading speed, understanding new knowledge, problem solving and working independently. Almost all of them preferred to be left to get on with things, and most felt that independence was the strongest skill they brought back into education.

These older learners preferred flexible ways of learning and were also comfortable with group work especially involving practical activities. Collaborating on the internet did not put them off. Furthermore, they feel that being an older learner is a major advantage and also saw major benefits in being in mixed aged classes with younger students. Happily, the great majority felt that others respect them and their experience and knowledge.

As for their motivation, self-fulfilment was a very strong reason for taking up studying; 95% rated it as important, but 87% also gave professional updating as a strong reason. Interestingly, career change was less common than we had expected, in view of the well-known large numbers of successful older entrepreneurs. We should, however, pay attention to the reasons behind their responses and preferences. For instance,

even though they said they did not want any special treatment, I still wonder whether they might change their minds if they experienced a comparison with learning in special mature groupings. I expect we ought to set up some different age arrangements and trial the results.

Another factor is of course the level of the students we contacted. The sample I’ve described is very special, and we cannot assume that people with less good fortune in their earlier education [and/or their health] would be the same in all respects. The Institute attracts graduates on the whole, even though we do welcome occasional students taking independent courses purely out of interest.

Nevertheless, when you look at the literature on older learning, you do find the general perception that they are likely to have special characteristics related to being older, even though older people are just as diverse as any other age group anywhere. Differences relate closely to social backgrounds, so that individual responses are largely dependent on personal circumstances. The research we did has prompted me to develop our course in a way that would look at what surrounds older learning, not just learning itself. It also influenced me to acknowledge the independent mindedness of older learners by building in a lot of self-generated autonomous activity. As the first course of its kind, I hope it can be seen as an acknowledgement that the older population is thriving in educational settings and will continue to play an important role in society.

[www.ioe.ac.uk/courses/ietma](http://www.ioe.ac.uk/courses/ietma)



**Older learners working on their computer skills (copyright Help the Aged)**

*Earlier this summer Help the Aged published their view of the value of learning and education in the lives of older people. **Jim Soulsby reports on Learning for living: Helping to prevent social exclusion among older people.***

What is so refreshing about this report is how it focuses on the skills older people still need to make decisions about issues that impact on their lives. So often education in later life is expressed simply as a right or as a leisure activity in retirement. What this report does is suggest that learning and access to education are fundamental in achieving any quality of later life. Later life, just like earlier years, is about making decisions concerning relationships, work, fulfilment, health, finance etc. For many older people the accumulation of life experiences can make this decision making process easier, but for some, particularly where access to the information required is difficult, there is a complexity of technology to consider and when the consequences of the chosen directions are unclear, the process becomes difficult and there can be a tendency to defer it. In some instances the inability to decide numerous issues over a period of time can weaken whatever feelings of independence one has. By focusing on

skills – those already acquired, those which need updating and relevant new ones (particularly around new technology) – it makes it so much more obvious that learning in later life is an issue, which touches on every sector of government. It also makes nonsense of the notion that education in later life should be classified as ‘informal’ just because it is not about work skills and contributing -through employment - to the economy.

The report focuses on four skill areas expressed as literacies – financial, health, citizenship and technological – considering that they are all required by older people to prevent them drifting into isolation and exclusion. A series of recommendations are made for each skill area. The overarching recommendations include the following:

- All new legislative change should include an impact assessment and subsequent budget in relation to any need for learning opportunities to ensure the legislation or policy initiative achieves its aims inclusively.
- Better information needs to be available through local authorities, which are often best equipped to signpost people on to the available learning opportunities. Many local authorities fail to have an older people strategy, which, if well delivered, could work towards increasing learning opportunities, and providing better information on them, to older people.
- Linking into social exclusion taskforce work is a good idea as education does much to help prevent social exclusion. However, it should be recognised that PSA 16 is a very narrow view of social exclusion that does not take into account older people who may become socially excluded through for

example poverty, bereavement, impaired mobility, illness and disability.

- There should be officials within government, whose role is to co-ordinate and monitor learning opportunities available through government initiatives and funding. Adult learning champions would also be useful in each department, as would a taskforce set up to co-ordinate funding for learning opportunities. Currently, all government adult learning opportunities need to be mapped and recorded. A Cabinet committee is needed to set up and progress this agenda.

- Older people's forums, day centres, social clubs and lunch clubs should be strongly supported as key community hubs for older people. Currently many of these schemes are closing down due to lack of funding. They could be supported to become more of a social enterprise through initiatives for increased U3A-style learning. This would allow the U3A model to become more inclusive and reach out to a diverse and sometimes isolated older population.

The timing of this report is crucial. Opportunity Age, the Government's older people flagship is being reviewed. The Audit Commission report *Don't stop me now: Preparing for an ageing population* (July 2008) assessed how local authorities have interpreted Opportunity Age and found that only one third of councils are well prepared for an ageing population, though a further third are making progress. They were of the opinion that Opportunity Age – in terms of improving the quality of life of older people - has had limited

impact. The DIUS analysis of the submissions to its informal learning consultation shows the depth of response (and feeling) from older people and their representative organisations about the value of later life learning in their lives (reviewed elsewhere in this digest).

*DWP working paper No 53 Access to information and services for older people – the joined up approach* (K. Ritters & H Davis, Warwick Business School 2008) is the first review of the Link Age plus pilot programme in eight areas of England. This programme is attempting to develop “a comprehensive approach for joined-up services for older people”. Although to this observer there has been a tendency to simply repeat what the Better Government for Older People pilot programme from 10 year ago said, the reviewers are of the opinion the pilot programme has inspired ‘multiple access points to all services’ lending themselves to more holistic approaches and to the ‘importance of outreach activities which aim to ensure that even the most difficult to reach older people are not excluded but are actively encouraged to engage with services available to them’. Adult education is considered valuable but only as a social activity, an opportunity to maintain social networks and keeping active. The opportunity to consider adult education (learning) as the development and effective utilisation of skills to better make key decisions about their quality of life has not been taken. It is to be hoped the programme takes on board the concepts and changed thinking promoted by the Help the Aged report.



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

*While not applicable exclusively to older learners, you editor was interested in the news that a new Government study **“Mental Health, social inclusion and arts: developing the evidence base** has determined that participation in the arts leads to significant improvements in health, boosts self-esteem and reduces feelings of isolation and exclusion.*

The study, commissioned jointly by the Department of Health and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, follows health secretary Alan Johnson’s recent remarks that the therapeutic value of art should not be underestimated. Commenting on the report the minister remarked that “None of this should come as a surprise – the therapeutic value of the arts has long been acknowledged. The Greek theatre of Epidaurus built in 400 BC, was a place for pilgrims to honour the God of medicine: A commentator at the time said: “They came to cleanse their souls with therapeutic waters and with theatre.”

.....”I would like to see the benefits of participation in the arts recognised more widely by health and social care professionals, particularly those involved in commissioning services for people with mental health problems. This is not some kind of eccentric add-on – it should be part of the mainstream in both

health and social care. And through the Arts/Health group that’s been set up in my department, we will be looking at what more we can do to provide guidance, where to go for advice on best practice and sources of funding for clinicians and arts professionals.

It’s not that we think the arts are some kind of catch-all medical panacea – that listening to the Beatles is some kind of cure for illness – but projects up and down the country that involve partnerships between arts and health are demonstrating real benefits – improving patient self esteem, helping people make connections and engendering a sense of community.”



The full text of the Minister’s speech can be found on

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/News/Speeches/DH\\_088160](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/News/Speeches/DH_088160)

For more details and link to the full report:

<http://www.uclan.ac.uk/facs/health/socialwork/research/mental%20health/project/mentalhealthsocialinclusion.htm>



*This autumn **Brian Groombridge** paid another visit to Finland, where he now has many friends he has made through his involvement with **Teddy Bear**, which is an international and intergenerational project.*

This year's visit started with a three-day stay in Vammala, as the guest of Sastamala Opisto (college), meeting again friends that I'd worked with in February 2007 through Teddy Bear. I spent some time with two of the children we'd met then (Enni and her brother Hemmo, now aged 11 and nearly 13), as well as the senior staff of the college. Teddy Bear was planned in this country by the Educational Centres Association. The other countries taking part were Slovenia, Italy and Finland. It has been much praised by the Grundtvig agency that provided the money.

The Sastamala staff are keen to go on working with people in Britain on adult projects or - but of course only where appropriate - intergenerationally. Two themes were of special concern: climate change and sustainability; creativity and the arts. It is my impression that in the UK, intergenerational work involving older people is usually reminiscence in schools by men and women who remember World War 2 for example. I discovered during this last visit that such

work was not an exceptional activity in Finland prompted by Teddy Bear. Teddy was useful for them, because it enabled them to share experiences and learn from people from other countries. They told me about a children's art school project developed with the college, in which children from all parts of Vammala staged the story of the woman, who was tried in the 17th century as the last witch in Finland. (All the costumes were made from recycled materials). Even 3-year olds can be admitted to this adult college for activities, which adults and children can take part in together. I met a young woman college tutor, a musician (piano, guitar, singing traditional jazz), who taught children from 3 months (with their mothers) to 6 years old, in a music-playing kindergarten school (games, nursery rhymes, percussion, folk songs and drama). We agreed that we all had much to learn from one each other, as individuals, through our organisations, or at high policy and administrative levels. They look to me to be an ambassador for this cause.

From Vammala, which is a small town in southwest Finland, it was on to Helsinki. Two meetings with AEA collaborative potential were with Veronica Fellman and Pirkko Karjalainen. Veronica runs an organisation for older Swedish-speaking Finns; Pirkko has a similar role with Finnish-speaking Finns. Veronica also recently took over from Gordon Lishman (Age Concern's DG) as secretary of the European lobby AGE (ERA) based in Brussels. It has six expert groups drawn from its 150 member organisations in 27 EU countries. I thought the groups dealing with social inclusion, age discrimination, health and IT could be relevant to some

of AEA's main interests. Her national organisation is lobbying for older people to have free access to facilities such as swimming pools, sports, arts and cultural facilities.

I told Veronica that I was one of a growing number of people in this country wanting to encourage older people to have opportunities for developing their interest in the arts and their creativity. It could be useful all round if AGE and the EU would also see that the Arts and Creativity important in their own right as well as having economic benefits, and that there might be future opportunities to contribute together on such issues. A lunch meeting with Pirkko Karjalainen covered much of the same ground. She even told me about a Finnish quartet of older people now appearing in a television series, similar to *Young@Heart* in the USA and the *Zimmers* in this country.

My Vammala colleagues and the two friends in Helsinki are all on the lookout for people in the UK who share their interests and concerns. I am happy to act as a link if need be.

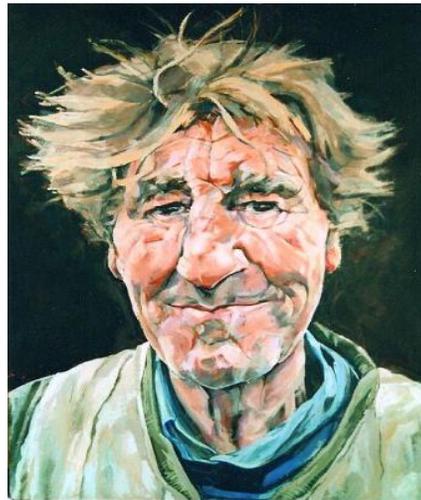
---

**Art  
Awards**

*The 90 finalists in this year's **EAC Over 60s Art Awards** had their work exhibited at the *Bankside Gallery* in London in September. **Carol Allen** went along to the prize giving ceremony there and met some of the artists.*



I nearly ate 83 year old top prizewinner Joan Seabrook's knitted sculpture of a plate of fancy cakes, so lifelike was it! As well as appreciating the paintings and sculptures, I much enjoyed meeting the artists, some of whom had studied art in their youth, while others were self taught. Becky Bailey, one of the youngest at just 60, studied art as a young woman and has now returned to it. The subject of her prizewinning portrait is Dennis is her builder!



Les Bell, aged 72, however is a former retired mechanical engineer, who didn't take up painting seriously until his retirement. Although he didn't win a

prize, I was very struck by the draftsmanship and sense of structure, as in his entry “Sundown at the Texas Embassy” (below) and other paintings he showed me in postcard form.



While not all the work in the exhibition was to my personal taste, it certainly displayed a high level of achievement and a lot of talent. You can browse the finalists’ paintings on the EAC Art Awards website: <http://www.artawards.eac.org.uk/> under the link to “Gallery”. There will be another competition next year, so if you have a penchant for painting or sculpture, keep an eye on that website for details.

---

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

*For her book review in this edition Alex Withnall has been reading the work of two contrasting older woman writers; Julia Neuberger’s “Not Dead Yet. A Manifesto for Old Age London”, HarperCollins Publishers £18.99 and Esther Rantzen’s “If Not Now, When? Living the Baby Boomer Adventure” London, Headline Springboard, £16.99*

Two well known UK writers and broadcasters join the ageing bandwagon this time round with a furious rant and a

semi-autobiographical ramble respectively. Julia Neuberger is now a Life Peer after a distinguished career as a rabbi and later as Chief Executive of the King’s Fund among other activities in the public sphere. Her interests in health care ethics are well known and she has previously written on different aspects of ageing. This manifesto for grey power is largely the product of her growing anger at the way in which so many older people are still mistreated and marginalised in our society in spite of their expanding numbers and undoubted achievements.

The book is very much a personal statement rather than an academic treatise; although she does periodically quote from various research findings, it is without much assessment of their value. However, we would doubtless all agree on the need to end age discrimination wherever it occurs; to end ‘begging’ for entitlements; to ensure older people feel safe on the streets; that there is choice in housing and proper training and rewards for care assistants as well as improvements in the health care system to take account of older people’s needs and views. And we all hope to die well. Where this book excelled for me was in Neuberger’s plea ‘Don’t make me brain dead, let me grow’ and her passionate argument for open access to learning for older people at a reasonable cost. She berates the government for its short-sightedness in concentrating on skills for younger people that are seen as economically valuable, rather than taking a more holistic view of the benefits that opportunities to learn can offer older people especially those who are isolated and lonely. She particularly welcomes the idea of intergenerational activities

but also offers some imaginative ideas on extending the role of neighbourhood watch to help older people get involved in learning and suggests a scheme whereby older volunteers could be recognised and rewarded for their efforts with credits that could be used to access college courses.

This call to arms is a life affirming and thought provoking read that will leave you fired up for action! Sadly, the same cannot be said for Esther Rantzen's tiresome account of her life as a get-up-and-go baby boomer (she isn't one). The book is a compilation of her views on just about everything and everyone from sex to Heather Mills, from popular music to being a grandparent (she isn't one). Written in a slightly breathless, over-excited style, as though she has just discovered things that I imagine most older people have known since they were forty, the book rambles on over a whole range of topics. The occasional interesting point gets lost in a distracting mish-mash of anecdote, name-dropping and personal experience that is somehow just altogether too twee. The book ends with the statement that 'There are two ways ahead. One is to close the book, make a cup of tea and carry on regardless'. The other, it seems, is to ask yourself a number of banal questions, your answers to which will apparently assure that you live later life to the full. 'When did I last take a bath by candlelight, or swim by moonlight?' is one example. 'When did I last stand on my head?' is another. On balance I think I'll have that cup of tea.

*To mark the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of the "Teach Yourself" books, journalist, broadcaster and author Trevor Barnes has written a*

*history of the series, "People with a Purpose" (Teach Yourself Books £7.99). Carol Allen browses through this informative little volume, which Barnes describes as "a nostalgic journey through our British obsession with self-improvement.*

The series was brought into the world in 1938 by one Leonard Cutts, then a junior executive of the Hodder and Stoughton publishing house and later series editor. 1938 was also the year that the frozen pea was introduced to this country and by appropriate coincidence the very first book to be commissioned was "Teach Yourself to Cook". The old fashioned sounding rebuke in author Evelyne White's introduction does however have a somewhat contemporary message at a time when celebrity tv chef Jamie Oliver has been trying to persuade this nation of unfit fatties to dump the junk food and start cooking with healthy fresh ingredients. "Good cooking requires both time and effort" says Evelyne, "and many of our housewives are apparently unable or unwilling to give either to this all important work". And this was a time when there was no sending out for a pizza or Chinese and no frozen meals to just pop in the oven. But while her cupboard of necessities includes such things as grated Parmesan, pearl barley, anchovy essence and French mustard, indicating that her target readership is the better off middle class, she's also very big on thrift, creating dishes out of leftovers and even the use of powdered egg. Just as well really with a war and food rationing on the horizon. Next on the list was Teach Yourself to Fly. Not that those Battle of Britain heroes learned their skills just from a book. The idea was to get a handle on the theory, before going hands

on in the cockpit. During the war itself we were studying not only German Grammar, perhaps in case the worst came to the worst, but also Practical Concreting, Good Farming, Gardening, Ballroom Dancing and Keeping Budgerigars. And just to ensure standards didn't fall Teach Yourself Good Manners. Hallmark of the series as it progressed was to cover both the practical and the esoteric and while some of the subjects are for all seasons, many of them reflect the changing world of the readers. In the fifties Teach Yourself Etiquette and Good Manners was still a concern, but expanding employment opportunities and the beginnings of the consumer society were reflected in Teach Yourself Advertising, Publicity, Commercial Art and Freelance Writing, along with increased leisure interests, such as Wine, Antique collecting, Travelling Abroad and lots more languages to learn ranging from Dutch to Hindustani. Come the Swinging Sixties though the series wasn't always reflecting the times. Teach yourself Speech Training for example in 1960 tells us sternly that "the flat almost toneless Liverpool accent is the result of a failure to open the teeth properly". Can't think how the Beatles ever made it so big.

The seventies were a bit more tuned in to modern times with books on Hi Fi and

Computer programming and from then on there's been an increasing emphasis on career success and high flying - Winning at Job Interviews, Office Practice, Entrepreneurship and so on. Though there are still plenty of titles today to assist you in learning leisure and life expanding subjects, such as foreign languages, creative writing, art appreciation, science, philosophy, history and politics and line dancing!

Particularly interesting is the way the series has reflected our changing attitudes to sex. The Household Doctor in 1938 mentions hens and rabbits but says nothing on human reproduction apart from "we do not talk about these things". Teach Yourself Sex: Its Meaning and Purpose in 1951 is a bit more upfront. though more concerned with morality than nuts and bolts. But today we have Teach Yourself Flirting and once you've mastered that art, Teach Yourself Great Sex, Tantric Sex, the Karma Sutra and then share your expertise via Writing Erotic Fiction. One wonders what Leonard Cutts would have thought of all that.

"People with a Purpose" is a packed little tome, which is an amusing read, an interesting social document and an instructive reminder of how strong the desire for knowledge and self improvement is in us all.

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

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

**President:** Professor David James

**Chair:** Jo Walker, [jo\\_walker26@hotmail.com](mailto:jo_walker26@hotmail.com) Tel: 01483 484909

**Secretary:** Carol Allen, 132 Dawes Rd, London SW6 7EF [aeasecretary@googlemail.com](mailto:aeasecretary@googlemail.com)  
Tel: 020 7385 4641

**Treasurer:** Ron Speight [ronspeight2003@yahoo.com](mailto:ronspeight2003@yahoo.com)

**Development Office:** Jim Soulsby [jim.soulsby@btinternet.com](mailto:jim.soulsby@btinternet.com)

**Elected members:** David Crossan, Mervyn Eastman, Trish Hafford-Letchfield, Jonathan Hughes, Anne Jamieson, Carlie Newman, Glenys Tuersley, Dr Alex Withnall

### ***On Screen - Carol Allen***

Clint Eastwood's name as director has almost become a quality hallmark. *Changeling* just goes to confirm this. It's based on a true life story of single mother Christine Collins (Angelina Jolie). In 1928 her nine year old son Walter disappeared. The then totally corrupt Los Angeles police, desperate to appear to have solved the case, find a boy who they claim is Walter but Christine knows is an imposter. When she refuses to accept him, the police incarcerate her in a mental hospital and she is only released with the help of an activist preacher (John Malkovich). The resolution of the story is complex enough for you to feel you've seen several films in one, the period detail is convincing and Jolie is excellent and very moving. The moment near the beginning when she realises her child has disappeared is heart stopping and the attitude of the police towards any woman challenging them is horrifying. Coming up early in the new year is the equally excellent *Frost/Nixon*, screenplay by Peter Morgan from his hit play of the same name about the historic television encounter between the protagonists in the seventies. Michael Sheen and Frank Langella recreate the title roles they played in the West End and on Broadway. Unlike his Tony Blair in "The Queen", Sheen doesn't look at all like David Frost - he's far softer and less sharp faced - but he captures his mannerisms perfectly and gives a very good performance. Particularly interesting is the contrast with the eminent Sir David of today - the young David's blatant fame and ratings seeking and the fact that at that stage of his career, he was just a light

weight presenter eager for a high profile coup, rather than a real journalist. Langella captures the look and weight of Nixon. In the initial interview sessions, the way he runs rings round Frost is a true example of the "Tricky Dickie" technique. There are some first class supporting performances, including Matthew MacFadyen very amusing as the young John Birt fretting about the budget! It's powerful, thought provoking drama with plenty of dry laughs and totally gripping throughout.

*Dean Spanley* is a quirky, unusual and charming tale somewhat in the style of G.K. Chesterton. Set in London in 1904, Henslowe Fiske (Jeremy Northam) becomes fascinated by Dean Spanley (Sam Neal), who under the influence of his favourite tippie, the rare Imperial Tokay from Hungary, recounts strange tales of his previous life as a dog! Stanley's recollections help Henslowe and his irascible father Horatio (the magnificent Peter O'Toole) to reconcile their uncomfortable relationship and there's also a lively performance from Bryan Brown as the cheerfully brash colonial entrepreneur, who procures the rare wine for those meetings. It's beautifully acted and very funny in a quiet, English gentlemanly way with no malice and ultimately rather moving.

*Defiance* tells the story of a group of 1200 Byelorussian Jews, who survived the Holocaust by hiding in the forest for three years. It's a good story, which defies the image of the Jewish race as passive victims of persecution, though Daniel Craig, Jamie Bell and even Liev Schreiber as the brothers who lead the community are unlikely casting as East European Jews.