



The Association for
Education & Ageing

AEA DIGEST

Issue no 32
Autumn 2010



AEA Chair Jo Walker cutting the 25th Anniversary cake at this year's conference

IN YOUR AUTUMN DIGEST:

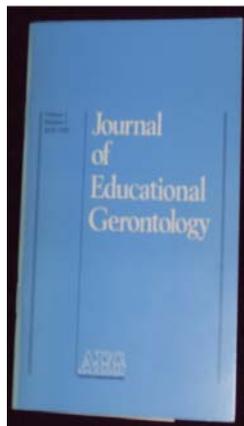
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FROM THE CHAIR.....

Jo Walker

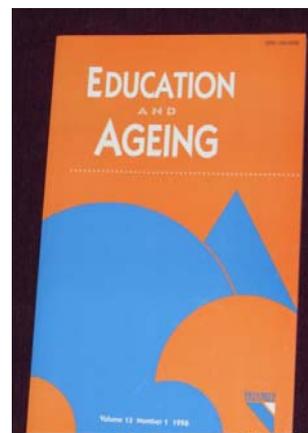
Over the summer, and in particular at our annual conference in London, we celebrated two great achievements - twenty-five years of the Association and the re-launch of our journal as the International Journal of Education and Ageing.

The birth and early days of AEA are associated in my mind with meetings at Keele University, mostly in blustery spring weather. People from university departments had begun to meet with practitioners, who worked with older people (in health, social work, education etc), and with voluntary organizations. Their common concern was with learning for and about 'the elderly' – although the term 'older people' was becoming more the norm. We thrashed out such issues as whether older adults' learning was different from that of any other age group; whether older people's position in society (disadvantaged) meant that different forms of learning were needed. We heard about exciting initiatives, such as the growth of the U3A. And we started a journal, to disseminate new knowledge and practice in this important area.



First issue of *Journal of Educational Gerontology*, published by AEA in 1986

The *Journal of Educational Gerontology* first appeared in April 1986, with Frank Glendenning and Keith Percy as editors and me as reviews editor. It was produced and published from Keele University's Department of Continuing Education, where Frank worked. It changed its name to *Education and Ageing* in the 90s and continued for twelve volumes in its existing format.



***Education and Ageing* as it looked in 1998**

Triangle Publications, a small educational publisher in Oxford took it on (as *Education and Ageing*) from Vol 13 in 1998 and redesigned the look and the colours. This lasted up to Vol 17 in 2002/03, after which they could no longer support it. We tried to form an alliance with the US journal *Education and Ageing*, spent two years exploring other options without success, so now we have taken the bold decision to go it alone, with support from members and Leicester University Institute for Lifelong Learning.

A lot has changed since 1985 but some of the same questions and issues remain for older learners. Whilst the case for the benefit of learning in later life has been greatly advanced, resources for it are lamentably low and the structures

that supported it previously have been largely dismantled. We are in a brave new world with little but the prospect of the 'big society' to provide. How will mutuality and community enable life-long learning to thrive? There is surely a greater need than ever for an association such as AEA to promote the cause of later life learning.



Angela Glendenning accepting a copy of the first issue of AEA's new publication, *International Journal of Education and Ageing*

The new Journal

One of the main goals of my chairmanship, since taking it on in 2005, has been the re-establishment of an academic journal, capable of competing in the field and spreading excellent knowledge and practice, as before. I was therefore delighted to be able to launch the *International Journal of Education and Ageing* this July, and to present a copy of the first issue to Angela Glendenning in memory of Frank, one of our first editors and founders.

Events have contrived to place one of our other first editors, Keith Percy, back in the editorial seat and we are immensely grateful to him for re-embracing the role and allowing us to

benefit from his huge experience. Our other editors, Franz Kolland from Vienna and Jim Soulsby from Leicester, complete a good balance of interests, expertise and contacts. Thanks also go to Leicester University's Institute of Lifelong Learning, for Editorial Board and administrative support.

DO SIGN UP if you have not done so already, to receive the Journal (three issues per year). Subscription rates for members are very reasonable for an academic publication of this quality – only £43 for a personal rate or even cheaper if you are an unwaged and retired member - £39. Please also consider suggesting to your employer or library that they subscribe, so that more readers can have access to the material. Further information and a downloadable flier for the Journal are available on our website if you wish to pass this on to a colleague or contact.

<http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/pages/journal.html>

We very much hope that you, the members, are pleased with the Journal and will play a big part in its development and success. Do let me know what you think of it and any suggestions you have for its promotion.

IJEA subscription rates:

Annual subscription per printed volume (3 editions of 80 pages each volume per annum)

For 2010/2011

Institutional rate	£95	€105	\$157
Personal rate	£48	€54	\$80
Personal rate for paid-up members of AEA	£43	€48	\$72
Personal rate for AEA members, unwaged and retired	£39	€44	\$65

Payment can now be made by credit card.

Details from aeasecretary@googlemail.com

NEWS ITEMS

*The following information about the European Commission proposal to make **2012 EU Year for Active Ageing** comes from CoverAge, newsletter of AGE Platform Europe.*

On 6 September, the Commission released a proposal to designate 2012 as the 'European Year for Active Ageing', which the European Parliament and Council are expected to endorse by the beginning of next year. The proposed EY 2012 for Active Ageing would aim at mobilizing policy makers and stakeholders at European, national, regional and local level in order to increase older people's contribution in society in working longer, acting as volunteers and staying healthy and independent for longer. This would require measures to be taken in a large number of areas such as employment, social protection and inclusion, public health, information society and transport. The EY would be part of a four-year-long programme extending from 2011 to 2014, in which many EU policies would focus on the issue of active ageing and new initiatives and partnerships promoting this issue would be supported.

AGE welcomes the EC proposal, for which we have been campaigning for several years, and which reveals the EU growing concern and awareness that action has to be taken at all levels to adapt the existing regulation and mentality to the quick ageing demography in Europe. However, we hope that the scope of the Year will go beyond the employment aspect to include a broader approach of seniors' participation and inclusion within a

society of all ages. For that reason AGE and a coalition of NGOs campaigning for more solidarity between generations are somewhat disappointed that the title of the Year does not include a reference to intergenerational solidarity, which would highlight the importance of this area in an ageing society and its very close link to active ageing.

Further information on this story and other organizations concerned with active ageing and later life learning can be found via the news pages of our website at http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/pages/news_views.html and on

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=860>

New Hon Sec.

From 1st January 2011 Lois Gladdish will be taking over from Carol as Hon Sec, though Carol will continue as Digest and Website editor. Lois's contact details can be found on page 28. Don't forget, subscriptions are due on 1st January (same rates as this year), so why not make Lois's life easier by writing and sending your subscription cheque at the same time as your Christmas cards or, if you pay by standing order, checking that it's up to date? I'm sure you all join me in wishing Lois all the best in her new post. I am delighted that I am passing the baton into such very capable hands. Many thanks Lois!

*This autumn 2010 the University of Leicester published the **EuBia Guide - Getting Older People Involved in Learning**. This publication is the product of a Learning Partnership called EuBiA – EU Broadening People’s Minds in Ageing (2008 – 2010) - and has been funded with support from the European Commission. It includes contributions from all over the EU, including from several members of AEA.*

Jim Soulsby, who was involved in its compilation, gives us some more information on this useful pan European initiative.

What do you get when you bring nine partners together from seven European countries to discuss networking and good practice in learning in later life? A handbook that's what. The EUBIA Grundtvig Learning Partnership team discussed ways of exchanging know-how, strengthening existing skills and strategies and adopting and adapting good practice through the following methods:

- exchanges of experiences, strategies and know-how from the various countries involved in the project,
- the active participation of older people,
- research of innovative practices in adult education and their transfer to agencies, regions and countries not involved in the original partnership
- the creation of the internet platform www.bia-net.org/eubia to support and spread the work and good practice.

The resultant guide/handbook addresses issues around what makes 'good' practice. The EuBiA Criteria for what constitutes a good project are:

- the project arises from the real and perceived learning needs of older adults
- the project has involved older people in its creation
- the project has been developed by calling on the expertise of a range of people in order to meet the needs of the end users
- there is evidence that the project can be transferred and adapted to meet specific needs (individual, local, regional, national)
- there is evidence that the outcomes of the project can be further developed and sustained in the longer term.

One of the main outcomes of the exercise was a better understanding of networking - how to do it and how to better understand the benefits and even the drawbacks. The EUBIA guide illustrates this with examples from each of the partner countries, - England, Northern Ireland, Italy (Naples and Sicily), Slovakia, Czech Republic, Austria, Poland and Germany.

The EUBIA handbook can be accessed via AEA's news pages
<http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/pages/documents/EuBiaGuide.pdf> and from the EUBIA website www.bia-net.org/eubia

Obituary – Peter Shea

*Many members of AEA were saddened to hear of the death of Peter Shea, who died recently at the age of 90. He was a man who will be remembered with enormous affection and respect by his many colleagues and friends. **Brian Groombridge** has been asking some of them for their memories of Peter and contributes his own recollections.*

Peter Shea was one of the most creative figures in our field. In the 80s he was on the Editorial Board and a regular contributor to the *Journal of Educational Gerontology*, AEA's original journal.

I knew him best as an excellent psychology tutor when I was in charge of London University's Extra Mural Department. His talent for folk dancing also enlivened our residential summer schools. He had the courage to back my interest in the French Université du Troisième Age and discussions about what form it should take in this country. He was formally rebuked by the Tutors' Association for encouraging an organisation, which was potentially competitive to Extra Mural Departments, so Peter and I compared the size of the London population with the number of third age people that we and other organisations such as the WEA were able to recruit. We were convinced there was room for both. (which the late Michael Young, Peter Laslett, Eric Midwinter and others then went on to prove). Peter himself became a specialist in social gerontology.

Anne Jamieson remembers Peter's continued involvement with what was by then the Faculty for Lifelong Learning at Birkbeck.

"Peter was a loyal supporter of Birkbeck for many years, and right up until 2001 contributed both to the Certificate in Gerontology and the MSc in Life Course development. His favourite topics by then were around 'Growth, Creativity and Maturity', 'Emotional and spiritual aspects of later life' and 'Learning, Teaching and the Acquisition of Wisdom'. His teaching was always inspiring, and the students inevitably left

his sessions with a lot to think about and with reverence and deep respect for his insight and thoughtful reflections on later life and its joys and potentials."

John Miles was a Hackney community development worker who became an extra mural student of Peter's - he remembers him as "a formidable teacher". John then qualified as a social gerontologist at King's College and is now based at Keele, but he and Peter kept in touch over the years as personal friends and he knows far more about his Peter's background and history than I do.



**One of John's favourite photographs of Peter.
Photographer Enid Irving**

John summarises Peter's life thus: "A voluntary youth worker in his teens, a primary school-teacher in mid-life, a gerontologist in his third age, and a delighted great-grandparent towards the end of his life, he can be said to have long anticipated contemporary concerns with the life-course and intergenerationality".

"Peter, born 1920, was one of six children of working class parents in west London. He became a pacifist in his

teens, worked on a farm during the Second World War (marrying Joy, a Quaker, in 1942), became the Co-operative Party's national youth worker, and then trained as a teacher. He became a head teacher in Stevenage, where he lived for the rest of his life. His studies in psychology and his commitment to broadening access to education led to his appointment as a lecturer with the University of London Department of Extra-Mural Studies, organising the psychology department which then provided the base for his many contributions to life-long learning in Britain.

Perhaps his greatest impact was on professional education. Working with a number of like-minded colleagues, academically and clinically-based across a range of disciplines, he helped establish a diploma course in *The Processes and Dynamics of Ageing* in 1984, which continued when he was based at Birkbeck College. Its influence on vocational and professional education has benefited hundreds of people, particularly in nursing, in the capital and across the south-east of England. His own main contribution was a year-long module on the psychology of ageing. He regularly updated his course material which in its latter stages was richly underpinned by his sceptical appraisal of

the purported association between wisdom and age.

He was a supportive supervisor of dissertations, including several undertaken as part of the gerontology masters established at King's College, London, and he also contributed to pre-retirement education, despite remaining, as his family would point out, largely unqualified by experience! Alongside his wife, Peter was an important figure in the world of folk dance. He established the Roundabouts Folk Dance Club in Stevenage and was a charismatic caller with a huge repertoire of material from Britain, Ireland and north America, working in clubs and barn-dances at weekends. When the driving and equipment-humping got too much for him, he scaled down his activities, playing live on accordion or piano with friends at local venues, including residential and nursing homes.

This adaptability, and a gift of un sentimental self-acceptance, served him well after the sudden death of his wife in 2003. He could reflect vividly on how the world now reacted to him and on how he reacted within it – 'people treat me like I'm an old man', he would say wryly. A vital figure in his local community to the last, Peter will be widely missed".

CONFERENCE NEWS

*AEA's Annual Conference this year was on the theme of **Storytelling and Identity in Later Life**. It was held in July in the suitably theatrical space of Camden Council Chamber, which was used to full advantage by our invited presenters, as **Jo Walker** reports.*



True Heart Theatre in action at the conference

Eirwen Mallin, the Older and Bolder project officer from NIACE Dysgu Cymru, held the audience spellbound as she demonstrated the art of storytelling. She went on to explain how it can work to build up older people's sense of identity and help them make more sense of a lifetime of experience. Adult educators who are concerned to make learning more accessible to those who might not usually engage with it have also discovered the benefits of storytelling. Eirwen observed: "You need enough self-esteem and self-efficacy to get started and learning can then build further on these."

Open Age, a community learning organization, has also identified the value of storytelling activities with older people. They work in a variety of ways, including by telephone conferencing and

in care settings. Their work has been featured in the recent NIACE report on good practice in Fourth Age learning. Storytelling for adult learning has been demonstrated as a helpful way to move people from 'can't do' to 'would like to' in a number of activities and subject areas.

The third presentation, from True Heart Theatre, provided a yet further perspective on storytelling: that of 'playback theatre', enacting real stories from the community. Four actors demonstrated how this works by eliciting and then improvising around themes given to them by audience members. It was powerful to see how issues that concern people could be explored and expressed, and very little further explanation was needed to show how this could be used in all sorts of ways.

Afternoon delegates then enjoyed a splendid cream tea whilst the stage was reset for the last act of the day – the Frank Glendenning lecture, given this year by Dr Alexandra Withnall. Her subject was 'Exploring the Gender Agenda in Later Life Learning' and we plan to make her text available on the website shortly.



*AEA has agreed to support the **Ageing Population conference** in 2011. As with this year's event, which we also supported, this gives us valuable publicity in terms of promoting our logo and directing traffic to our website. As a supporting organisation we are also offered discounted rates for the conference and a number of free places – details to be arranged.*

This year's event is taking place on **10th May 2011, at the QEII Conference Centre, London** and will focus on the many challenges to Government and society represented by an older population. Ageing Population 2011 will bring together key influential speakers, over 25 suppliers and 400 delegates to discuss the response to this demographic shift.

Among those already confirmed to speak are:
David Behan, Director General of Social Care, Department of Health

Dame Jo Williams, Chair, Care Quality Commission

Cllr David Rodgers, OBE, Chair LGA Community Wellbeing Board

Professor Alistair Burns, National Clinical Director for Dementia, Department of Health

Claire Henry, National Programme Director, National End of Life Care Programme, NHS

Richard Foggie, Assistant Director, Electronics Innovation, Department of Business, Innovation and Skills

Dr. Mark Porter, GP for Gloucestershire, Medical Correspondent for The Times and presenter of BBC Radio 4's flagship medical series 'Case Notes'. (Conference Chair)

AEA has also offered to supply a speaker on the subject of later life learning.

Further information will be circulated to you as and when it becomes available.

ANOTHER DATE FOR YOUR CONFERENCE DIARY

AEA's annual conference, AGM and the Frank Glendenning lecture will be held on 21st July 2011.

The conference will be hosted jointly with the Institute of Ageing and Health (IAH) in Birmingham and held at the Birmingham Medical Institute in Edgbaston, a short taxi ride from the centre of Birmingham. There is ample free parking.

Further details including the theme of the conference are still to be finalised. More information will be circulated when available, but meanwhile put the date in your diary now!

*The European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) has recently revived its special network on later life learning. The new group, entitled **Network on Education and Learning of Older Adults (ELOA)** held its first meeting /conference in Munich, 7-9 October. **Jo Walker** was one of those attending.*



The famous 'Walking Man' sculpture near the Ludwig-Maximilians University.

The event was held in the grand surroundings of the Ludwig-Maximilians University in Munich's city centre, where the network convenor, Dr Bernhard Schmidt-Hertha had arranged a good variety of papers over the three days.

The theme of the conference was demographic change and its implications for older adults' education. Contributions came from Australia, Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia and the UK. A paper was presented by AEA on the need for and development of a new international journal, which was delivered by Jim Soulsby, on behalf of Keith Percy and himself (Journal editors). Anne Jamieson, AEA Executive member, also

presented a paper on the relationship between study and life transitions in mature students at Birkbeck, University of London. Thus, UK interests were well represented and much interest generated in the International Journal of Education and Ageing (IJEA).



Anne Jamieson with Leif Hansen of Roskilde University, Denmark and Barry Golding from Ballarat University, Victoria, Australia.

AEA had been involved in the planning of the event, as part of the paper selection process and Jim also took a share in chairing the sessions. For instance a group of papers on the learning experiences of older people covered formal study in higher education (in Finland), through to community groups (in Greece), where social, health and learning needs were being met together, very locally. A more quantitative study had tracked and compared the differing elements of the learning environment as experienced by older adult learners in Lublijana. These papers then lead naturally to a good debate about contexts for learning.

The even wider contexts, such as citizenship and economic factors (labour market, retirement, pensions etc.) were also addressed. The 'wider benefits of learning' is a well-understood concept for asking about the links between

educational opportunities and their social and economic outcomes. These themes were picked up by a paper from Finland on work and learning for senior employees and one from Portugal, probing the idea of where the benefit lies with 'successful ageing'. The challenges of intergenerational learning were not underestimated by a passionately argued paper from Slovenia, urging the identification of common interests, based on the real experiences of local communities.

The network convenor took the opportunity to discuss with conference participants what they might want from such a network as ELOA. After discussion, it was felt that an annual meeting was a good goal, especially in

locations that were relatively accessible from a range of European countries. Portugal and then Austria were suggested for the next couple of years. Dr Schmidt-Hertha was willing to go on compiling an occasional newsletter, to which members (currently standing at about 45) were encouraged to submit items of news. It was hoped that a website for the Network could be developed; papers and/or Powerpoint presentations could be posted there initially. Paper authors were also encouraged to submit to IJEA or the more general adult education journal of ESREA, as appropriate. AEA members attending this first Network event felt that it had been worthwhile both in terms of the content and the contacts made, especially regarding the Journal.

FEATURES

Learning for learning was a project that involved making evidence based digital stories with older people to promote positive interactions with people with dementia. **Trish Hafford-Letchfield**, Teaching Fellow, Interprofessional Learning, Middlesex University, was one of those working on the project.

This recent pedagogical project was jointly funded by London South Bank and Middlesex Universities working in partnership with 3rdthought, an older people's drama group, which is part of the 1st Framework charity that has won awards for its intergenerational work. In recognition of the gaps in the curriculum of professionals working with older people around dementia care, it aimed to

challenge negative perceptions about dementia and its 'problems'. The quality of dementia care in the UK has attracted a great deal of media attention following allegations of poor levels of service in both people's own homes and care homes. Rising predictions on the future prevalence of dementia with increased levels of care needs requires attention to raising skills and knowledge in the health and social care workforce. Notwithstanding any breakthrough in scientific research, the most effective interventions remain in the development of services to support people with dementia and their carers in a way which reflects the diverse and individual nature of their experience.

It was the communication aspects of these experiences that we chose to focus

on by developing learning materials to promote positive interactions. These were all based on evidence of current policy, research and good practice. Guidelines for positive interaction with people with dementia were highlighted in NICE/SCIE clinical guideline 42 (2006) and the National Dementia Strategy, Objective 13 which called for 'An informed and effective workforce for people with dementia' (DH Feb 2009).

Kitwood (1997) was a pioneer of research that promoted the concept of the 'personhood' of the individual with dementia to counter prevailing medical models. His research centred on the importance of engagement with individuals which can encourage more positive outcomes for their well-being and by identifying 'key elements of a culture of care in which the person comes first'. Others have continued these ideas by developing more of a citizenship approach that encourages a return of the individual into the social world. Killick and Allan (2001), a psychologist and poet for example, have collaborated on projects with staff and people with dementia with severely impaired verbal communication skills in care settings and found that these helped them to connect through sensory channels, drawing on arts-based approaches.

Our project team was guided by this background coming from the disciplines of social work, mental health nursing and occupational therapy. We initially consulted with informal and formal carers for typical case studies about people living with dementia. Based on this research we formulated a number of scenarios to illustrate various dilemmas

and challenges when interacting with individuals with dementia. Nine scenarios were then 'story-boarded' by the director of the 3rdthought theatre group and audio recorded by team members. Older actors were engaged with the stories and acted these out at local indoor and outdoor venues and with different props. The scenes were professionally photographed. Members of the project team all engaged with the acting which was great fun and gave us the opportunity to forge partnerships at different levels during the project. The recordings and photos allowed us to develop high quality digital stories that can be used in learning and teaching with a range of professionals and carers.



Trish engaging with the acting during the Learning for Learning project

We have since presented these at conferences in London, Lancaster and Gothenburg. Reception of these confirms that using arts based approaches can be a powerful means of communicating emotional issues in learning. Involving older people in the process of developing and exploring the nature of communication in dementia has also been a powerful means of facilitating more active engaged learning, which is collaborative and

emphasises participation and intergenerational learning.

The stories will now be used in the coming academic year as 'triggers' for students to consider everyday ethical issues taken for granted about people with dementia in a way that enable them to explore different solutions for the individuals they work with.

References:

Department of Health (2009) *National Dementia Strategy*. London, DH.

Kitwood T (1997) *Dementia Reconsidered: The Person Comes First*

Maidenhead, Open University Press/McGraw Hill Education

Killick J and Allan K (2001) *Communication and the Care of People with Dementia*, Buckingham, Open University Press

As well as Trish, the project team also consisted of Wendy Couchman, Kate Leonard, Tony Leiba, Sandi Woods, London South Bank University and Peter Avery and Maxine Webste of, 1st Framework, 3rd Thought. For more on 1st Framework's work, see page18 of our Culture Section.

Because this issue of the digest has been delayed due to your editor's computer breaking down, the Autumn issue is now dangerously near to real winter and the last one which will be published in 2010. The Winter issue will be published in February 2011.



AEA would therefore like to take this opportunity of wishing you all a very happy Christmas and a prosperous new year.

*The widely held belief that women despair at the thought of growing old and see their only hope as going down the Botox and facelift road has been disproved by a recent study. According to **What's Age Got To Do With It?**, a new survey of midlife women by Age with Attitude and Durham Business School, 7/10 women like themselves more as they get older, wrinkles and all, writes **Jessica Suter**.*

Out of 125 women who participated in the anonymous online survey which explored the attitudes of 40+ women across the UK, 77% said they liked themselves more as they got older and 66% felt they were actually happier now than when they were in their 20s.

Rather than seeing age as a barrier to success, 55% said they were more likely to change their career during midlife, a view which supports the growing trend for 'Cafties' (Careers after Forties) and is at odds with the stereotype often portrayed in the press about women being 'over the hill' once they hit a certain age.

Lindsey Agness, founder of the Age with Attitude programme, who jointly conducted the research with Dr Julie Hodges of Durham Business School, believes the research proves that most women are positive about approaching midlife and don't see it as something to shy away from.

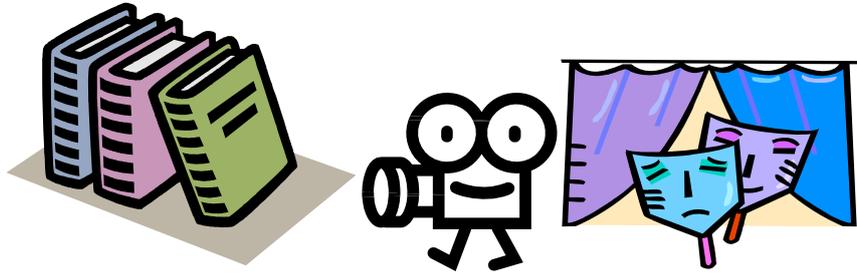
Agness is a mother of two and went through a difficult divorce in her forties after realising that her husband and her

life as it stood was holding her back. She accepts that midlife women do tend to get stuck in a rut, but believes this research illustrates that most women have the motivation and tenacity to get themselves out of that rut and back on the road to success.

"I was in my forties when I started my own business and started writing my first book, which was picked up by a major publishing house. Now at 51, I'm busy planning my fourth book and developing the Age with Attitude programme. I'm living proof that life can begin at 40 and this research proves that not all women feel repressed by the ageing process," says Agness.

*A link to **What's Age Got To Do With It?** will be available shortly on the news pages of our website*
http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/pages/news_views.html





AEA DIGEST CULTURE SECTION

The Arts, Older People and the UK's Economic Crisis

*The news throughout the summer has been dominated by the spending cuts – speculation as to where the axe would fall and then the details, not always clear, of which sectors of public spending will actually suffer and to what degree. One area which has arguably taken more than its share of pain is the arts; something which it is fair to say is a subject of concern to both your editor and to **Brian Groombridge**, particularly with regard to their importance in education for both young and old. And a politician who has been right in the spotlight with regard to education cuts is Secretary of State for BIS and Lib Dem MP Vincent Cable – a man to whom Brian has a local link.*

Richmond upon Thames is an unusual borough - it's the only one on both sides of the Thames, and although there's one local authority, there are two MPs - one in Richmond, the other in Twickenham, where I live. Richmond's MP is the Conservative environmentalist Zac Goldsmith; I'm represented by Vincent (Vince) Cable. So our MP, whom I know quite well, is playing a part, inevitably controversial, in the first

Coalition Government we've had since the Second World War (It's relevant to remember that one too - brilliantly led by Winston Churchill, who was succeeded by Clement Attlee). I reminded Vince about CEMA, the Committee for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, which was set up during WW2 to help maintain morale in what then had to be a Big Society or be defeated. CEMA then continued as the Arts Council.

That was highly relevant to the current crisis and the arts, so I wrote to Vince Cable out of concern for the arts and especially the importance of the arts to older people. I said I wouldn't repeat the arguments already used by the major curators and other significant figures in the arts world, but offer a complementary focus, which I shared with AEA and other adult education bodies. I was sure he was familiar with one of the key arguments in favour of protecting the arts at such dire financial times - the economic case, such as the welcome the income derived from tourist attractions and the export of television programmes and films. I had taken part in a recent meeting in the (architecturally daring!) HQ of London

government, so I referenced Boris Johnson. Such matters have to be high on his agenda since creativity is one of his mayoral responsibilities - not a direct one like say Transport for London, but he has to take the overall view.

I stressed that the arts make a major contribution to people's sense of wellbeing and that affects their sense of belonging. There is increasing evidence from gerontologists and neuroscientists - and masses of personal experience - that the arts and the development of creativity especially in later life have a beneficial effect on health and wellbeing which actually reduces the costs of medical treatment, the need for care homes and so on - though I refrained from quoting that U3A couplet - "Join the U3A - Keep the Doctor away!".

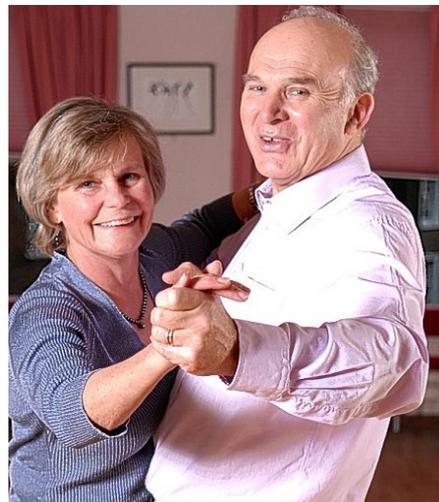
I conceded that a possible complication for him is that this financially significant relationship between the arts and the economy relates to departments other than BIS - the Department of Health, even HM Prisons and HM Forces, and of course Department for Culture Media and Sport. However, in percentage terms, the amount of money needed for the arts - and we're not talking just professional but including amateur practice here as well - is minute compared with the other charges there are on such money as is available, especially when, as I've pointed out, arts spend can save money spent elsewhere. Surely, I thought, that was something worth discussing with other Cabinet colleagues.

This note to Vince Cable was sent before the Comprehensive Spending Review was published. Apart from cuts to institutions such as the Arts Council, the

news about adult learning has been surprisingly positive. It was one of the few areas which have not had to endure cuts and the Coalition has continued the good work financed through the Transformation Fund.

We now have a BIS Minister (John Hayes) who says: "The transformation that's required to build a truly inclusive society is not only economic... I see learning not as something that can be carved up into useful and less useful pieces but as a continuum. That's why we have made it clear that we appreciate adult and community learning".

We must all make sure that though they are exceptionally enlightened, these are not just fine words. It could even be relevant politically that Vince Cable is a skilful ballroom dancer when he's off duty!



Vince Cable, practising with his wife Rachel for his Christmas appearance on BBC's *Strictly Come Dancing*

Just to add to Brian's note of cautious optimism above, speaking at the Association of Colleges Conference, Birmingham in mid November, Mr Cable

made the following remark with regard to adult learning generally:

“Learning and skills development is, however, not just about qualifications. That is why we have protected the budget for informal adult and community learning in the Spending Review. Informal adult and community learning embraces a wide range of provision ranging from arts, culture and health to digital skills, employability skills, family learning, civic engagement and community development.

Adult education is often sneeringly dismissed as basket weaving for middle class ladies. In fact, as you know, recreational courses of that kind are now paid for through fees. What is not always understood is that classes are often a lifeline for adults battling to overcome disadvantage or mental illness or exclusion from the labour force.

During the coming months we will undertake a major piece of work, in close collaboration with partners, to develop a new model of informal adult and community learning which meets real social need. Organisations such as the Workers’ Educational Association have an important role here in delivering both formal and informal adult and community learning.”

*“Informal adult and community learning which meets real social need”. Sounds like something that **1stFramework** does in its theatre projects. We’ve talked about their work before in these pages and indeed the company was involved in the Learning for Learning project with Trish Hafford-Letchfield. So I invited their director **Peter Avery** to*

fill us in on 1st Framework’s history and reason for being.

1st Framework has recently been involved in trying to save an excellent small-scale arts charity similar to itself from extinction. It was very helpful to hear our Chair, James Dillon, explaining so clearly to another group how 1st Framework operates – no permanent paid staff, an ‘empty studio’ policy, each project starting from scratch, low overheads – and what it does – excelling in planning and delivering complex community projects that combine varieties of participants and supporters.

1st Framework sprang out of my work at the Theatre Department of the Central School of Art and Design. Together with Maxine Webster we developed it into a separate fringe theatre company in 1972 doing large-scale productions such as *The Birds*, shown as free dawn performances at Camden Lock. Three key strands – design, experiment and social responsibility were there at the beginning and have remained. 1st Framework received good reviews for a series of interesting works and collaborations. Maxine, having been a star graduate of the London Business School, developed an agency aspect of the company which generated an extraordinary client list as well as the means to fund 1st Framework’s next phase of fringe theatre work. This led to premieres of newly-translated plays by Eric Rohmer and Raymond Queneau. 1st Framework became a registered charity in 1982

Theatre work with over 60s began as a class at the Mary Ward Centre in 1975. This unique community involvement ran parallel to all the other work before

becoming a central factor when productions started going to festivals and receiving awards in Edinburgh, Ireland and Australia.



Some over 60's taking part in a 1st Framework project

After 1982 the community drama work moved into larger and larger productions often supported by key funders. A major collaboration was a national tour with the Green Candle dance company in 1995. 1st Framework's design activity involved itself in ecological projects, largely through Media Natura, climaxing in the centre-piece for the Rio Summit in 1992.

The Mary Ward phase of over 60's theatre work culminated in a massive production of *The Threepenny Opera*, which was cleverly based on Pabst's almost silent but politically more astute film of Brecht's stage play – but with every note of Kurt Weills's score.

This was created with English National Opera's Baylis programme, toured three London boroughs, picking up and coaching supporting casts in each location and concluded triumphantly at Ufabrik in Berlin.

In 2005 the theatre group felt it needed to break away from further education and become an independent fringe company. 3rdthought - a quote from *The*

Tempest found a haven at Oxford House and was able to become an Associate company there thanks to European funding.

Arts Council officers saw the first two productions – David Storey's *Home* and a devised piece called *There We Are*. This led to a generous grant to produce the fairground-tent show *Paradise* in association with Theatre Venture at Stratford Circus. *Paradise* toured five London boroughs, again involving local guest groups, supported as with all key productions by a team of young trainee technicians.

It was presented again at the Capital Age festival on London's South Bank. This resulted in another visit to Ufabrik to take part in Berlin's *Long Night of the Theatre* in association with Theater der Erfahrungen and RBB Kulturradio. *There We Are* was taken to Girona in Spain to join and support 60+, the first Spanish older person's theatre group.

After two years at Toynbee Studios (thanks to City Bridges) 3rdthought is now going into a new phase of shared responsibilities and an 'Associate' structure and is looking forward to an eighteen month programme of challenging work hand in hand with 1st Framework's track record and unique philosophy.

*I've written before in these pages about the **Good Times: Art for Older People** project at Dulwich Picture Gallery – see Digest Summer 2008 http://www.associationforeducationandangeing.org/pages/aea_digest.html*

*The project has now been going for five years and on 17th November a new report on the effects of the programme, **This is Living** by Professor Sarah*

Harper, Director of the Oxford Institute of Ageing, was launched at the Gallery.

“Learning through art can lower blood pressure, lift depression and enrich the solitary experience of old age”, says Professor Harper. After spending two years researching the effects of the *Good Times Programme*, she concludes that the project is of huge benefit to society.



Course participant Terry Harris with actress Prunella Scales and illustrator Quentin Blake at the launch. Photo © Janie Airey

Since June 2007, the Oxford Institute of Ageing has been working with the Gallery’s Education Department to undertake a qualitative evaluation of the project. This has involved extensive in-depth interviews with the art historians, artists, gallery teachers, volunteers and project coordinators, older and younger participants, and participation in the activities themselves.

There are more elderly people than adolescents in the UK. Numbers of elderly people are growing; and many are lonely, forgotten and excluded.

Good Times draws people into the world of art in imaginative, effective programmes that are a fantastic template for enhancing the lives of older people. These are not dry tours; they are exciting immersive classes where creativity, laughter, joy and friendship lead to a new social life. Many older people who

would normally never visit an art gallery, now find that they love paintings and want to be creative themselves.

Good Times includes the innovative programme *Prescription for Art* in conjunction with GP surgeries for frail, isolated or lonely individuals. Most intensive arts programmes designed to enhance health are funded and run by the health service. Dulwich Picture Gallery receives no Government funding of any kind, it is entirely independent, funded by the Bridge House Trust. All *Good Times* programmes are free.

This programme demonstrates that museums and galleries can be powerful agents of social and health benefit for huge numbers in the ageing population.

The Good Times Outreach Programme has been engaging those in care homes, hospices, day care, surgeries and community centres around South London for the last five years.



“I’m no Van Gogh, but you have a convert”,
enthusies another participant in the
programme

Carol can forward you a .pdf of Professor Sarah Harper’s report ***This is Living***, which will be posted shortly on our website. Hard copies on request from Sarah Freeman, Deputy Head of Education on 0208 299 8733 or s.freeman@dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk Limited to two per organisation.

Meanwhile another art project **Ageing Creatively**, designed to specifically help people with dementia engage with art, has been taking place this autumn facilitated by the National Gallery for Alzheimer's Society and funded by Credit Suisse.

The innovative project was part of the National Gallery's outreach programme. It consisted of a series of practical art workshops, which were delivered in the London boroughs of Hounslow and Tower Hamlets, followed by a visit to the National Gallery. The aim was to encourage people with dementia to engage with and respond to the collection by creating their own works of art.



Sassetta Saint Francis and the Poor Knight, and Francis's Vision
(c) National Gallery, London

Al Johnson and Thomas Gosebruch, the freelance artists who lead the Ageing Creatively programme, chose a series of paintings by Sassetta titled The Life of Saint Francis of Assisi, which tells an

engaging and thought-provoking life story from youth to death with simplicity and directness. Participants experimented with a variety of art materials and techniques during two practical workshops and produced a series of images inspired by Sassetta's paintings. The final session for each group comprised a visit to the National Gallery, where participants toured the collection and saw the original paintings by Sassetta that had inspired their own artworks.

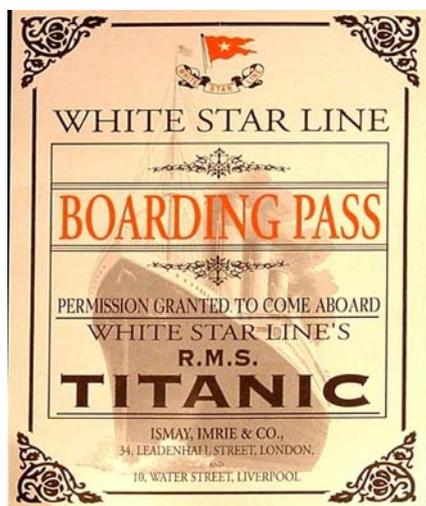


Participants in the project
(c) National Gallery, London

Ruth Sutherland, Interim Chief Executive at Alzheimer's Society, said: "It is fantastic that through Alzheimer's Society's Charity of the Year partnership with Credit Suisse, people with dementia were able to benefit from art sessions with the National Gallery. Being creative is very beneficial for people with dementia. It can boost their self-esteem, provide a sense of focus and well-being, and give an opportunity to socialise and keep the mind active. The workshops also offered a unique opportunity to meet an artist, learn new skills, and engage with art in a new way."

*Are you a fan of the film Titanic? In which case **Carlie Newman** has news of a new exhibition, which will interest you.*

The Titanic: The Artefact Exhibition is at the O2 arena, where it continues until 11th May 2011.



I have my boarding pass and I am now ready to get on the Titanic. It is April 1912 and the maiden voyage of the “practically unsinkable” ship. Well, of course, I am actually at a new exhibition of the authentic artefacts from the great ship. With newly discovered objects and personal items of those on board arranged in recreations of rooms and cabins, this is a poignant reminder of the disaster. On entry to the Exhibition each visitor is given a boarding pass (as shown above), with the name of an actual passenger written on the back. The fate of that person is only discovered at the end of the tour by reading the memorial board which has the names of all passengers who died. I was Dorothy Gibson, a 22-year-old silent screen actress, who was travelling with her mother in first class. When she boarded Titanic, Dorothy’s suitcases were filled with silk kimonos, dozens of pairs of gloves and fine jet beads. She was one of the survivors and later that year she appeared in the quickly made one reeler *Saved From the Titanic*.

On 15th April 1912 the world’s largest ship sank after colliding with an iceberg. More than 1,500 lives were lost including a number of well-known figures. On board was Sir Cosmo Duff Gordon, who, besides being a wealthy landowner, was also a sportsman who had represented Great Britain as a fencer in the 1908 London Olympics. He was accompanied by his fashion house owning wife, lady Duff Gordon. Both survived by boarding Lifeboat 1. Also on board were John Jacob Astor and his wife Madeleine, Benjamin Guggenheim, Lucy, Countess of Rothes, Lord Ashburton and Isidor Strauss.

The exhibition tells many individual stories, illustrated by personal items belonging to the passengers. You learn exactly how the Titanic was built and how it came to sink with the timeline of events. O2 itself is easy to reach by underground (North Greenwich) but there is a longish walk from the entrance up to the Exhibition itself. There are a number of eateries on the way, all indoors, and there are seats inside. Ticket prices are £13.00 Mon-Fri, £17 Sat, Sun with reductions for children. but no mention of seniors – so I suggest you ask if you fall into this category!

*Carol Allen’s older learners’ drama group at the New Horizons Centre in Chelsea was invited during the summer to take part in **Acting Up**, a three week intergenerational community drama project organised by Age Concern, Kensington and Chelsea and Holland Park School in North Kensington. Carol decided to become an older learner herself and join in.*

The project was conducted by Theatre ADAD, a specialist Education & Training company, who have been producing *Acting Up* for a number of years. Many of the other older learners and the young people, who came from the pupil inclusion unit at the school, had taken part in previous years and had already formed intergenerational friendships, demonstrating that one of the aims of the project, to get the generations to see each other as people rather than “them and us”, really works.



The generations working together

The project took place over three weeks in July and August and rehearsals were in four hour chunks virtually every day. It culminated in two daytime public performances at the Electric Cinema in Portobello Road, which is quite an achievement in such a short time.

The first day the generations worked together in couples – one older and one younger – though after that for a lot of the time we were working separately, which was a bit of a disappointment for me, as I was hoping for more intergenerational interaction. There was though a good reason for this, as the influx of extra older people from my class made the company much larger than usual and had we all worked together all the time, it would have proved unwieldy.

Sessions started like any drama class with a voice and body warm up and we then developed various short scenes through improvisation around themes of concern to the actors in their real lives. Subjects for the young people included drugs, knives and peer pressure and the stereotypical way they feel they are perceived by society, while for the older ones the issues ranged from a tongue in cheek look at how society limits our freedoms, in which I got to play a very harassed desk sergeant in a police station, to the pluses and minuses of getting older. Most of the scenes were largely comic sketches but there was one very dramatic one about domestic violence, in which both generations took part, which made a great impression on me. For another scene, again involving young and old, in which the young ‘uns spoke a bit posh like us elders and the elders played the same scene in “street talk”, Holland Park student Mason Haslock directed the older actors and I the younger ones. And the two generations also got together for the finale song – and the party afterwards. On hand to advise us throughout where necessary were the Crime Prevention Officer for North Kensington and the borough's Police Community Support Officer, who was very helpful to me in my role as a copper.



A particularly tricky day at the police station!

Apart from being on the radio and demonstrating to my class, I hadn't acted in public for over thirty years, so it was a relief to find I could still do it! This was also my first experience of community theatre and the most important thing I learned was its value in giving a voice to those who can often feel that their point of view is unheard and ignored in today's society. And it was a lot of fun for all of those involved.

In addition to the above, at the New Horizons summer party the class performed a one act play "Miss Threadgold", written by two of the students. This went down so well with the audience that I have adapted it into a screenplay and shooting of the film is now in progress. This too is an intergenerational project with young volunteers acting as crew. It is hoped that the film will be ready by Easter 2011. I will be writing more about that in the next digest but meanwhile here's a photograph of cast and crew in action.



On the set of *Miss Threadgold* in Chelsea

*Returning to the world of theatre, here are some recommendations from **Carlie Newman***

Clifford Odets' ***Country Girl*** (Apollo booking until 26 February 2010) is a backstage story which relies on a good

central performance. Martin Shaw brings richness and just the right visual characteristics as Frank Elgin, a once famous actor now on a downward slide as the result of drink. When he is offered a lifeline in the form of the leading part in a play that has an out of town preview before being put on at a Broadway theatre, he is worried but hopeful. He is completely reliant on his long suffering wife, Georgie (Jenny Seagrove) to sort out any difficulties that may arise with the producer or director and also to make sure he is dressed correctly and gets to the right place at the right time.



Jenny Seagrove and Martin Shaw

When the bumptious young director, Bernie (Mark Letheren) decides that Georgie is holding Frank back and preventing him from giving his best performance, there is a struggle for the domination of Frank between him and Georgie. Set in New York and Boston, the play is smartly directed by Rufus Norris. Shaw, with his craggy face and dishevelled clothes, looks like an alcoholic even when not actually holding a bottle and when he does begin to drink again, he is a convincing drunk. There are many good touches, such as Frank enthusiastically drinking his cough medicine, which it is 22% alcohol. Seagrove comes across as rather too cold but in some ways this suits the part as the character is afraid to show her

emotions in case she is unable to hold herself together for her husband. Letheren gives a sophisticated rendering of the rather cocky director, who eventually confesses to the loneliness that he knows will come once the play opens and he is no longer needed.



Rory Kinnear as Hamlet

Hurry to the National Theatre to catch Rory Kinnear as an excellent Prince in Nicholas Hytner's intelligent interpretation of Shakespeare's Hamlet (booking until 9 Jan. 2010). His late father Roy would indeed be proud as the unprepossessing Rory takes to the part as though he had been born to play the young man who finds that his well-ordered life has been completely upset when his father dies suddenly and his mother marries his uncle. He is even more devastated and confused when the ghost of his dead father appears and speaks of his uncle being responsible for his murder. Hytner has set the play in modern times with extreme surveillance everywhere. Not only is Ophelia spied on when she meets with Hamlet but it looks as though he too is being overheard even in his soliloquies. Claudius' first speech is filmed with his new wife Gertrude posed beside him, while Horatio's speech over the dead Prince is caught on television cameras. There are spies everywhere, so that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's appearance at court, having been

summoned by Claudius to find out why Hamlet is going mad, does not seem remotely strange. Once again at the NT there is a simple set with walls moving to become new areas, new rooms in which the characters can continue their dialogue without any false breaks. The ghost appears from a doorway and disappears back into blackness. Ruth Negga comes across as a very young Ophelia who finds herself torn between her father's commands and her attraction to Hamlet. When she goes mad she pushes around a shopping cart and hands parcels out. David Calder is just right as the fussy Polonius giving advice to his giggling children, Ophelia and Laertes, and he also brings comedy as the Gravedigger. Although he doesn't have a particularly beautiful voice, Kinnear has a naturalistic style and makes a good, modern, thoughtful Prince. Occasionally he seems to lose the rhythm of the speech and give a few strange deliveries. But overall, Hytner has delivered a good, clear and incisive production.

It was good to hear the audience screaming and then laughing throughout Ira Levin's *Deathtrap* (Noel Coward booking until 22 January). It is really difficult to outline the plot of this comedy thriller without giving away the numerous twists. When once successful and now broke thriller writer Sidney Bruhl (Simon Russell Beale) receives a draft of his former student Clifford Anderson's first play, he is consumed with envy. So when Clifford (Jonathan Groff) arrives on the doorstep with the only copy, Sidney's thoughts turn to drastic methods of obtaining ownership of the play.

Although Russell Beale is the obvious star, Groff is a genuine find, who hits the

West End like a breath of fresh air. His lively characterisation of the talented young writer imbues the play with fire. A less flamboyant performance is given by Claire Skinner as Sidney's nervous wife but there is a certain amount of over-acting by Estelle Parsons (yes, she of *Bonnie and Clyde*) as the Scandinavian psychic who lives next door, and "sees" the future, and the past.



© Tristram Kenton
Simon Russell Beale with Jonathan Groff

The two men are well-contrasted. Russell Beale gives a real tour de force performance as the writer who fears that his student has got the magic touch which he seems to have lost. He is full of energy as he bounds around the stage; and yet his emotions are sensitively shown. He is one of those fine British actors who are able to act from the tips of their fingers right through to their eyes and he delivers lines with just the right frisson of irony to touch the audience's laughter button. "I could get the Gold Medal for falling asleep in any position," Sidney remarks. The set is excellent – Sidney's wooden beamed study in at his house in Connecticut, with an array of ancient and modern weapons on the walls. For a fine example of good writing and acting, hurry along to see this production

The world of books and for this issue Alex Withnall has chose Noah's Compass by Anne Tyler.

At last, a new novel in which the protagonist is an older man! I have commented before on the dearth of ageing males in contemporary fiction so it is particularly interesting that the author of this engaging tale is an older woman. Now nearing seventy, Anne Tyler is a celebrated American author living in Baltimore where her novels are inevitably set. A Pulitzer Prize winning writer, her books are frequently concerned with family relationships and the nature of happiness and love and feature a whole range of sometimes quirky characters. You may recall the 1988 film of her novel *The Accidental Tourist* starring Geena Davies and William Hurt.

Tyler's particular forte is her ear for dialogue, eye for detail and skill in being able to enter into her characters' inner thoughts and fears. Here the main character is Liam Pennywell; widowed through the suicide of his young wife and then divorced, Liam is sixty, a philosopher by training and has recently lost his job as a teacher. He seeks solitude in a new, cheaper apartment where he is burgled and attacked on his very first night. Unable to remember what happened, Liam becomes fixated on the need to recover the memory of the hours he has lost. In his quest he encounters an unusual woman Eunice, with whom he begins a relationship in spite of a large age gap. But Eunice has a secret of her own, which, when finally revealed, must signal the end of the relationship. Yet Liam emerges a stronger and possibly wiser individual, who is finally able to accept that 'this

was the way it would be all the way to the end’.

Liam comes over primarily as a lonely man, who is disengaged from life and possibly still grief-stricken until the frumpy Eunice gives him some purpose to his life. He comes to see that he has always ‘dodged the tough issues, avoided the conflicts, gracefully skirted adventure’. Yet, he is surrounded by women; his ex-wife, his three daughters, one of whom has embraced religion, his sister – all interfere in his life, advising, persuading, failing to understand him. Neither can he quite come to terms with the ways of the young, when his teenage daughter Kitty moves temporarily into his apartment. However, perhaps the most interesting female character is the improbably named Bootsie Twill, revealed as the mother of his assailant who comes to beg for a second chance for her dysfunctional son. Liam wonders whether their conversation is actually some sort of Candid Camera set-up. But she certainly is a striking character who brings some much-needed levity into the book.

It might be said that Liam is very much an older reincarnation of some of Tyler’s earlier male characters who seem to move through life almost uncomprehendingly, often surprised and shocked by the way things happen as they try to navigate a way through life. Like Noah, who was ‘just trying to stay afloat. He was just bobbing up and down so he didn’t need a compass or a rudder or a sextant...’ Liam is trying to recover some sense of identity and peace. Finally, he begins work again in a pre-school and seems to find some kind of contentment in the children’s routines and social structure and in the recognition that Eunice has gone from his life.

This is an intriguing book in which not a lot happens but Liam does get under the reader’s skin and I found myself anxious to see what would happen to him. It is by no means Tyler’s best book to date; but there is a certain engaging subtlety in her writing that makes the book wryly comic. See what you think.

Noah’s Compass by Anne Tyler is published by Vintage Books at £7.99

Carol Allen has news of what’s on offer **On Screen.**



Gérard Depardieu and Gisèle Casadesus

In cinemas now is *My Afternoons with Margueritte*, the sweet and funny tale of Germain (Gérard Depardieu), a middle aged, working class man, who’s been made to believe he’s stupid through his upbringing. Until that is he forms a friendship with Margueritte, an elderly woman he meets in the park, who introduces him to the joys of reading.

Depardieu has adapted well to being a middle aged, and somewhat stout character actor. Germain is a man still dominated by the mother who abused him as a child and to whom he is tied, even though he hates her. He’s a bit of a tactless, loveable old bull in a china shop when dealing with people. The flashbacks to mother and son in his childhood are illuminating and well used. Claire Maurier is impressive in the role and though the character’s a bit of a monster, one can’t help admiring a

woman who chases off an abusive lover with a pitchfork. Gisèle Casadesus as Margueritte (spelt with two “t”s because her father couldn’t spell) is an admirably together old lady with a bright intelligence and a positive, philosophical and pragmatic attitude towards ageing and death. The relationship between her and Germain is delightful. The details of Germain’s life – his much younger girlfriend and the people in the café where he hangs out, particularly the café owner Francine and her young Moroccan lover – are very lively and give context and depth to Germain’s character. The whole film is indeed rich in detail, really bringing all of its characters to life. And charming though it is, it’s often a bit astringent too and never lapses into sentimentality, not even in the uplifting and unexpected ending.



Colin Firth and Helena Bonham Carter

Something to watch out for in the new year is *The King’s Speech*. Some if not all of you will be old enough to remember the Queen’s father George VI, the painfully shy younger brother of Edward VIII, who reluctantly became king when his elder brother abdicated. While these events are dealt with in the film, the meat of it is the relationship between Bertie, as the future king was known in the family and the forthright Australian speech therapist Lionel Logue

(Geoffrey Rush), who helped him overcome if not totally cure the crippling stammer, which made public speaking a nightmare for him. While no lookalike for the late king, Colin Firth convinces in his manner. You feel for him from the very opening sequence, when, paralysed with fear, Bertie undergoes the humiliating experience of attempting and failing to give the closing speech at the Empire Exhibition in Wembley Stadium in 1925. There is a likeable performance from Helena Bonham Carter as his posh speaking but strongly supportive wife Elisabeth but the centre of the film is Bertie and Lionel, whose blunt and informal approach to his pupil is startling in the context of the greater formality of those times. How different from the recent matey headlines about the engagement of Will and Kate.

Another film which may well evoke nostalgia is Rowan Joffe’s remake of Graham Greene’s novel *Brighton Rock*. And I’m not talking just nostalgia for the Boulting Brothers 1947 film. Because rather than set this new version in the same period, Joffe has reimagined it in the “mods and rockers” Brighton of 1964. The period proves an apt setting for Sam Riley as Pinkie, the psychopathic young gangster at the centre of the film and Joffe accurately captures the feel of the seaside resort at that time, particularly in the scenes on Brighton Pier (played in the film by Eastbourne Pier, as Brighton Pier, where 1947’s Pinky, director Richard Attenborough, shot much of *Oh! What a Lovely War* was destroyed by fire in 2003). The film is also beautifully shot by John Mathieson from the opening black and white into sepia sequence of the cold waters of the channel and a nail biting scene, which cuts between the

funfair atmosphere on the pier itself and a murder taking place under it. But the main reason for setting the film in the early sixties as opposed to completely updating it, Joffe explains, is that any later than that and the character of Rose (Andrea Riseborough), the naïve young girl, who witnesses Pinkie's crime and whom he persuades to marry him, so she can't give evidence against him, wouldn't work for a later period. Interestingly despite the fact that Riley and Riseborough are up and coming young actors, in order to get the film off the ground Joffe was told he had to have a bankable star. And who was the star who swung it for him? 65 year old Helen Mirren, who makes the character

of the hard bitten cafe owner Ida totally her own.



Helen Mirren

The Association for Education and Ageing

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

Chair: Jo Walker, jo_walker26@hotmail.com Tel: 01483 484909

Secretary (till Dec 2010)/Digest editor: Carol Allen, 132 Dawes Rd, London SW6 7EF
aeasecretary@googlemail.com Tel: 020 7385 464

Secretary (from Jan 2011): Lois Gladdish, 78 Northampton Road, Market Harborough, Leics., LE16 9HF

lois.gladdish@talktalk.net 01858 464345

Treasurer: Ron Speight ronspeight2003@yahoo.com

Development Office: Jim Soulsby jim.soulsby@btinternet.com

Elected members:, David Crossan, Trish Hafford-Letchfield, Jonathan Hughes, Anne Jamieson, Dr Alex McMinn, Carlie Newman, Keith Percy, Dr Alex Withnall

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