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# AEA DIGEST

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**AEA Chair Jonathan Hughes, Professor Peter Lavender, who delivered this year's Frank Glendenning and Professor Josie Tetley our host at Manchester Metropolitan University, Pictured at this year's Annual General Meeting  
Photo: Anne Jamieson**

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

*Jonathan Hughes*

This year's AGM and Frank Glendenning Memorial Lecture took place at the Brooks Building of Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) on 14th September 2016. This year's lecture was given by Professor Peter Lavender who took as his title *Older people's learning: a reflection on some models*. I will return to the lecture later in this digest but first I wanted to report on the AGM itself

To start with I would like to thank MMU for their generosity in hosting the event and for enabling us to have a drinks and canapés networking opportunity after Peter's lecture. The Brooks Building itself is a marvellous building with superb facilities but it was the people based there who helped make this event so memorable. I would like to thank, on behalf of AEA, Professor Alison Chambers who is the Dean of the Faculty of Health, Psychology and Social Care and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for her support of this event. I would also like to thank Victoria Clegg who works in the Centre for Innovation and Knowledge Exchange at MMU for all her efforts in promoting the event and with the practicalities involved in arranging the day. Plus AEA's 'own' Josie Tetley and Emma Koivunen (both of whom are based at MMU) for all their hard work and for arranging gifts for both Peter and for Angela Glendenning, who has to date attended all 14 of the lectures given in memory of her husband.

To return to the AGM; this year's meeting was attended by just a few members in addition to members who



**Angela Glendenning**

are also on the executive committee. Despite this 'select' attendance the AGM is a useful focus for the work of the organisation because it provides an opportunity to reflect on and share with the wider membership what has been achieved over the previous year and what our future plans are. This is shared with the membership through the various reports that are sent out both before and after the meeting. I will not dwell on these but would like to highlight some of the key issues that the AGM considered.

These issues can all be subsumed under the heading of 'the future of AEA'. I have no doubt that the AEA should have a future. Our conference in April this year highlighted that the need to address learning across the life course is increasing as a result of changes, which mean that people live and work longer while at the same time as having to take personal responsibility for negotiating the changes in health and social care provision. AEA really does need to get the message across that later life learning is becoming more and more important. However, to do this it needs to be an active and growing organisation. The reality is that we have a small

membership and that income from three European projects has now come to an end. This income has given AEA a breathing space. One of the key discussions at the AGM was the adoption of a deficit budget for 2016-2017 and the proposal of a breakeven budget for 2017-2018. These budgets seek to avoid AEA finding itself in the sort of financial position in 2 or 3 years' time that would mean that it was no longer a viable organisation.

Within the breathing space that we now have the Executive Committee has approved that recommendations made by the Projects, Funding and Membership sub-group should be taken forward. These recommendations were reported to the AGM. They include the formation of some "Thinking/Ideas" sub groups by the Executive Committee to work out what needs to be done in the short term to enable AEA to both fulfil its mission and return to financial health. The July Executive Committee meeting agreed the proposal. The purpose of the sub-groups is:

- i) to agree and propose what needs to be done from January 2017 onwards
- ii) to agree and propose how it is to be done and by whom.

This is not meant to be a "heavy" proposal but a mechanism for spreading some of the necessary thinking around over the next 3 months. The aim is that all thinking is to be reported and ideas proposed be available to the January 2017 Executive Committee. Ten 'ideas group' have been created:

- Membership: to review AEA's systems and promotional activities for increasing membership and to make proposals.

- Finances: to review AEA's financial systems and to make sure that everything necessary is in place

- Mission priority: to advance knowledge to propose an activity or activities in 2017 which will contribute to this mission priority and who will be responsible for it

- Mission priority: to improve practice to propose an activity or activities in 2017 which will contribute to this mission priority and who will be responsible for it

- Mission priority: to contribute to policy development to propose an activity or activities in 2017 which will contribute to this mission priority and who will be responsible for it

- Building partnerships: to review possible partnerships; to prioritise and to begin the process of exploring them

- Sources of funding: to look in detail at possible sources of funding and make proposals on which AEA should pursue and how

- Journal: to review all aspects of the Journal and to decide on actions

- Website and Social Media: to review what AEA is doing and how it can be improved

- ForAge in AEA: to make proposals on AEA's activities with regard to ForAge in 2017 and who will do what

It is assumed that the sub-groups would mainly communicate with each other by email and other media. But that will be up to the groups, who will also decide if one of its members will take the lead. I hope that this will involve a wide range of members in helping AEA to meet the challenges it faces. Please do get in touch with me if you would like to be involved.

I would like to mention one other specific challenge – the AEA needs a treasurer. The treasurer would need to combine an understanding of the financial management systems appropriate for AEA with an interest in the work of the organisation. If you are that person (or know of someone), again please get in touch with me.

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**The AGM in session**

*A brief reminder here courtesy of Anne Jamieson of changes to your EC.*

The AGM was held on 14th September 2016 at Manchester Metropolitan University. Ten people attended. The meeting approved the appointment of a new member of the Executive Committee, Iram Naz, who is Research Manager at the Workers' Educational Association. Welcome Iram. One member, Carlie Newman, resigned. Carlie has served on the Executive for many years. The meeting recorded their thanks to Carlie. Her contributions have been invaluable and we hope that she will continue some involvement with the work of the Executive Committee.

*Further acknowledgement of Carlie's contribution can be found in Carol's memoir of her relationship with AEA on page 9*

*Returning now to Professor Peter Lavender's Frank Glendenning lecture on the theme of **Older People's***

*Learning: A reflection on some models, here is his summary of his text.*

The lecture covered elements from Frank Glendenning's legacy, particularly from his last book. They included the rising interest in self-help education by older people from the 1970s onwards, caused by the growing ageing population; the potential of increased leisure time; pre-retirement preparation; a 'rights' agenda in which educators addressed what they saw as a deficit; and the gathering national and international agenda around lifelong learning. He argued that there was limited recognition of older people's learning as a focus for policy development. He noted the narrowing of the education agenda to what was instrumental and vocational, intended for the young rather than older people. His key observation was that the form of education for older people had also changed, becoming less participative and more instructional. Finally, he noted that the take-up of adult education by older people was low and we needed to find better ways of organising it, improving its quality, encouraging more participative teaching and learning, and aiming it more at enhancing the consciousness of participants.

Agreeing with Glendenning's observations, Lavender moved on to examine participation data in relation to older people, finding that the majority of those over the age of 65 said they had done no learning since leaving full-time education; those who did participate did so principally in computing, arts and languages; there was a strong social class bias to participation (at any age); the motivation to learn was principally social and to improve health; the benefits from participation were related to using

computers and to ‘getting involved in society’. It may be that this age group may not have had access to computers in the workplace and so there was an element of ‘skills catch up’ here. Lavender concluded by noting that older people were learning in more self-help agencies and in the third sector. He also found that what you learned was not as important as the impact of learning itself, both themes bearing out Glendenning’s observations.

Moving on to two studies of older people learning – one involving those receiving care and the other those attending a day centre computer class – Lavender argued that the findings bore out Glendenning’s early thoughts. Given a free hand older people wanted greater say in what they learned and how they learned it, were happier to ‘learn’ than do ‘activities’ or be ‘befriended’, and that co-learning (particularly with the young) was significant to them. Two unrecognised benefits emerged from the studies: first, the hidden reciprocal benefits to the co-tutors and their lives of their involvement, confirming for us that altruism is a form of reciprocity. Second, the opportunity that learning offers in relation to whistle-blowing and safeguarding. Learning also had benefits in relation to better social care and healthier living. A second study confirmed the benefits of learning to use computers in all their forms. It reinforced the finding that engaging in such learning directly leads to self-efficacy, independence and self-confidence. In addition, seeing motives to learn as instrumental or expressive is a useful way of reviewing the learning that older people do, although such a model fails to do justice to the strong motives for learning that lie in the social

domain. Finally, Lavender concludes that adult learning has a major role to play in the personalisation agenda, particularly in relation to individual care plans.

The last area of Glendenning’s legacy, Lavender argued, is the need for a ‘critical educational gerontology’ which would lead to a more liberating and emancipatory model for third age education. He commended programmes from the third sector that contributed to this direction.



**Professor Peter Lavender**

*The full text of Peter’s lecture is now available on the Annual Lectures page of our website*

<http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/frank-glendenning-memorial-lectures.html>

*Meanwhile here are some further comments from our Chair **Jonathan Hughes** on the lecture.*

Peter called his Memorial Lecture *Older People’s Learning: a reflection on some*

*models*. In some ways this is a deceptively modest title. Peter did clearly reflect on models, particularly those proposed by Frank Glendenning. He clearly demonstrated how useful these models are and in the context of this lecture it was very good to be reminded of the particular usefulness of Frank's ideas. The lecture showed that models are important because they get us to ask critical questions and to be learner-centred. Peter reminded his audience that Frank had emphasized the need to balance the need to focus on the content as well as the processes involved in later life learning. He also drew on Carroll Londoner's notion that learning needs can be seen in terms of being either expressive or instrumental.

Peter also pointed out that Frank had noted the developing policy neglect of such learning; a neglect that has continued and worsened and how, to an extent the shortfall in provision was being met by voluntary activity. However, he also pointed out that such activity was also to an extent brought about by educationalists. Peter cited Glendenning:



**Frank Glendenning**

The educational system had brought this revolt upon itself. It had developed a type of elitism (especially in the university adult education departments) through which it wished to create its own programme of educational and social events in its own way ... It had come to depend on a pedagogic (teacher/taught) relationship ... which in the 1970s and 1980s was increasingly resented by some older adult students ... thus ignoring the advice of those who had been urging ... that the task of education for older adults was to arouse social awareness rather than to provide content and to enhance the consciousness of the elderly in relation to themselves and their social setting (Glendenning: 2005:5).

This is in many ways a key quote as it emphasises the need to ask critical questions about adult learning, questions that can be informed by the wide range of theory which, according to both Frank and to Peter, is too often overlooked. The quote also highlights the tendency for practice attention to the insights offered by theory. The need to be critical extends to avoiding simplistic views about older people's educational interest and capabilities; a point which Peter noted had been made by the late Brian Groombridge.

Being critical depends in part on having good information too. In this respect the value of NIACE surveys on older people's learning carried about by Stephen McNair is that they highlight some key aspects. Most striking among these is the way that as people age they are increasingly unlikely to report that they engage in learning. I've long felt that this is shaped by what is seen as learning, but (as Peter noted) this would

apply to other ages groups. Equally evident is that participation in learning (however defined) is shaped by the intersections of age and class.

These surveys suggest that personal development is an important reason for learning at all ages. However, people aged over 75 are more often express social and health motivations for learning as well as getting involved in society, particularly a society that is increasingly online. McNair (2012) found that online learning amongst older learners is more common than learning in further education, higher education at an adult education centre or with the WEA.

Up to this point the focus of Peter's talk had been to suggest in broad terms that practice in older people's learning needs to take account of theory. His lecture then moved on to show how theory can be applied and tested out by reference to two projects. The first was an evaluation (carried out with Trish Hafford-Letchfield) of Learning in the Fourth Age which Peter described as "an innovative voluntary sector project where older people using care were matched to community based ... learning mentors". In this project shared learning was "used to raise the quality of care in institutionalised settings and for promoting well-being". In this context what became important was sharing learning with younger people, what Trish refers to as "learning as a leveller in unequal relationships". This project also exemplified how some of the concerns expressed by Glendenning could be met. Peter noted that, "Learning mentors were trained to use a reflective model in their approach, which facilitated a more person centred intervention and encouraged the

potential for deeper learning". Peter reported that learning was appreciated by participants because "it helped them to be receptive to new ideas, to maintain a positive outlook, and to give expression to discontents". The second project was carried out by Karen Roscoe and drew on a small scale study of older women learning ICT skills in an Age UK Community Centre in North West England. This project found that there were both instrumental and expressive reasons for learning. Instrumental motives included "the wish to keep up with the times and the need to learn practical ICT skills". However, Roscoe also found expressive motivations including learning being a catalyst for personal growth. In addition a strong theme of 'surviving well' by using learning also emerged.



I was struck by how Peter showed the continuing value of Frank Glendenning's ideas by focusing on projects located in learning in the fourth age. Peter concluded by noting that Glendenning's last book was "a plea to educators to develop the ideas of a 'critical educational gerontology' which would employ critical theory and take seriously theorists like Freire, Gramsci and Bourdieu ... (which) ... he thought would lead to a more liberating and emancipatory model".

Peter's final thoughts were as follows: "I think Frank Glendenning was right. We do need to change the ways in which we see education for older people. We do need more emancipatory, inclusive models of learning which enable learner's voices to have a central place, and encourage a greater investment in co-learning."

Earlier in this digest I commented on the continuing need for AEA. Peter's stimulating lecture reinforces this. But I think it also begins to suggest ways in which AEA can fulfil this role. In particular AEA needs to identify how practice (and policy) relating to later life learning can be informed by theory. The Association also needs to highlight how practice can speak to policy and theory. AEA will seek to do this by building on the suggestions coming from the various ideas groups in terms of how we identify partners with whom we can develop activity that will continue to build on Frank Glendenning's legacy.

*Arising out of Jonathan's remarks about the continuing need for AEA, **Carol Allen** started thinking about both her own relationship over the years with AEA and that between theory and practice in terms of her personal experience of older learning.*

Anne Jamieson referred earlier in this digest to Carlie Newman's invaluable contribution over the years to the work of AEA. It was through Carlie that I first became involved in the area of older learning and then the association itself.

Back in the nineties when Carlie was Director of the Greater London Forum for Pensioners, as I think it was then called, she invited me to create a series

of workshops for older women in assertive communication. The reason being, she explained, that the women members of the forum sometimes found meetings and such were dominated by their male colleagues and the women couldn't get a word in edgeways. The workshops proved so popular that we soon had men wanting to take part as well!



**Carlie Newman**

Carlie then invited me to join a group of older people for an event she had organised at a hotel in Bournemouth on behalf of some organisation called the Association for Education and Ageing – never heard of them! Over the weekend participants took part in a series of workshops led by AEA members, in which we were asked what, as older people, did we want from learning. And it was all free – including meals and accommodation. Carlie, who has a bit of a talent for these matters, had managed to get a grant from the Lottery fund to cover the costs. I somehow doubt that such largesse is still available in austerity Britain. Anyway predictably I forcefully voiced my opinions in the course of the weekend, and as a result

was asked by Jo Walker on behalf of the executive committee if I would be interested in taking on the role of AEA Secretary, which was then vacant.

That role in itself was a learning experience. Gerontology was not up until then a word with which I had intimate acquaintance. I had never before encountered the academic and theoretical aspects of older learning. And the number of acronyms used “in the trade” was bewildering. (I still hate acronyms, which I regard as being lazy writing and excluding to “outsiders”!). I had to further get to grips with all this however when I was also invited to take on editorship of this digest and develop it from a simple newsletter into more of a proper magazine – a task which, as a journalist, I relished. I then had the opportunity to learn more skills when AEA decided we needed a website and I was given responsibility for editing that too – a task with which in recent years I have had some much appreciated assistance from Sasha Anderson and Keith Percy.

AEA has also given me the opportunity to make more friends. As well as those already named, at the first AEA conference I attended I met the delightful Brian Groombridge, now sadly no longer with us. At a later conference a conversation I had with Helen Leech of Open Age led to my being offered the job of drama tutor at the New Horizons centre in Chelsea. You have all heard plenty from me about the group’s activities over the years! Some of you may remember my late student Dorothy Adibi coming with me to the AEA conference in Warwickshire to introduce the film *Miss Threadgold* that I had made with the group. But

what teaching that class has also done for me personally has been to persuade me back into writing and directing drama, not only with the group but also putting on shows and making films with professional actors.



**Dorothy Adibi and Ray Shaw in the film  
“Miss Threadgold”**

So I have a lot to be grateful to AEA for. In the years I have been a member however the older learner scene has seen enormous changes. When I first joined there was government encouragement and even funding to promote lifelong learning for social engagement, health and just sheer enjoyment. Awareness of the ageing demographic expressed itself then through the benefits of keeping the older population active. Now the emphasis with the education mandarins, who control the funding certainly in my neck of the woods, is more on acquiring skills with employability in mind, even for older people in some cases, and achieving goals in order to enable boxes to be ticked and statistics compiled rather than in the educational experience having value for its own sake. “Best practice” trainings I have attended have been about how to best do the recordkeeping to please the system rather than about teaching practice itself. And when I talk to teachers working with children in schools, I learn they

experience all the above but even more so.

One of AEA's achievements in the last few years, for which Keith Percy is owed much thanks, is to increase our involvement and profile on the international older learning stage. But with the looming of Brexit, there is a question mark over the future of our involvement in European projects.

And how do my ramblings above relate to the future of AEA? I am currently involved in one of several action groups looking at that very question. One idea we are looking at is how we can better serve older learners themselves. Perhaps back to the basics of that weekend in Bournemouth - asking older learners what they want and need in today's society? We also need to know more about you, the individual member. What is your particular interest in and connection to older learning and what you want from AEA. We plan to be asking these questions in more detail soon, but meanwhile, if you have any comments do please feel free to send them to [carolofdawes@btinternet.com](mailto:carolofdawes@btinternet.com) and I will pass them on to the executive committee. Perhaps the bottom line question is, where will AEA will be in 10 years time? To a large extent, that depends on you.

*Another development there has been in learning for all ages in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has been the increase in online learning, which you can do from your computer at home or even when travelling around using an iPad or mobile phone. One such learning source is **FutureLearn**.*

The range of courses offered by this website is mind boggling. Subjects range from learning a language to

business management or archaeology or indeed what you will and the level of study ranges from absolute beginner to highly specialised. The courses themselves are created by relevant organisations. For example I did one earlier this year on the basics of film production, which was created by the industry training organisation Skillset and was very useful. Browsing some of the latest courses, I found Spanish for Beginners, created by the Open University; The Power of Social Media by the University of Southampton and the more esoteric sounding Introduction to Japanese Subcultures since the 70s by Keio University.



You also get the opportunity to chat online with other people taking the same course. And if for some reason you're not able to complete the course in one go, you can always go back and complete it later.

The courses themselves are free. The Open University, in addition to providing the organisation with more than 40 years of distance learning experience, provided the initial investment to get the project up and running, though the ultimate goal is for it to be self sustaining through additional

paid-for services. At the moment that is limited to the option at the end of the course, if you require it, to purchase a statement of participation or certificate of achievement.

So if you feel like learning something new without even leaving home, go browse the courses for some ideas at <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses> or use the search option to seek out a subject you'd like to learn more about.

*Leaving home and getting out and about now, an interesting four day event held in London this autumn was **The Age of No Retirement: Age Does Not Matter Festival**, which ran from 28<sup>th</sup> September to 1<sup>st</sup> October at The Bargehouse in Southbank. Among those taking part was **Alex Withnall**.*

This was the third event organised by The Age of No Retirement's founders, Jonathan Collie of *Trading Times* and Georgina Lee of *Commonland*, who are a team of inclusive designers. The aim of the festival was to radically rethink the concept of age and to 'disrupt the narrative around ageing through an inspirational series of co-design labs, talks, installations, photography, stories, sound and film'. The whole ANR initiative has been phenomenally successful in securing funding from a range of sponsors including the Big Lottery Fund, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and Barclay. ANR also works collaboratively with different partners concerned with research, design and knowledge transfer.

I was only able to attend on the second day but participated as one of an invited group of leaders running one of five co-design labs, the aims of which were to

examine what are seen as the biggest age-related barriers, challenges and opportunities facing today's society, and to try to co-create new solutions and prototypes to address them. My lab was concerned with education and learning and involved a very interesting mix of men and women of all ages drawn from across government, public, private and third sectors and facilitated extremely competently. Other co-design labs involved technology, health and well-being, leisure and entertainment and care and caring with five others having taken place the previous day.



Advised by the findings of a large intergenerational research study carried out in conjunction with commercial partners and by ANR's ten guiding principles of intergenerational design, we worked intensively in three separate sessions to come up with a series of prototypes for immediate positive action. In the first session, we discussed our own interests in the topic and identified what we saw as the underlying problems. In the second session, we broke into three small groups to come up with an idea for a product, new service, campaign or community idea which would offer a new prototype. Discussion was fast and intense in my group and I was very impressed with the quality of

debate; it was refreshing to move outside the parameters of academic discourse. At the end of this session, my group presented our idea in the form of a role play which was well received; members of the other groups joined in to help refine and improve our prototype in the final session. This session was also used to test the idea against ANR's intergenerational design principles and to use them to develop the prototype further.

I had almost no time to visit the various exhibitions or listen to the accompanying talks given by experts in their fields but the day proved very stimulating and interesting. However, having attended a previous ANR event in Manchester, I remain somewhat surprised that the organisers still seem oblivious to the amount of existing research and debate around ageing issues and particularly to the growing international work around intergenerational relationships. It will be interesting to see where the Age of No Retirement goes next.

*Another participant in the festival was Sinéad Nolan, Research & Communications Officer with the Three Sisters, who offer care services in their clients' own homes.*

<http://www.threesisterscare.co.uk/>

The words retirement and 'over-65' can summon many images – some positive and some negative. What images come up for you? For me the image of people taking holidays, becoming a grandparent and enjoying life springs to mind, but also I get an image of someone sat at home all day, lonely, frail and no longer feeling of much use to society. Simultaneously, I am aware that my

brain has fallen onto a worn out stereotype. But I am not alone in my unconscious bias it seems. In fact, a survey of more than 1,600 finance sector workers found that ageism is a more widespread problem in the city of London than sex discrimination.

Perhaps this is why we need to reframe how we think of age.



Ageing is often seen as something that happens to other people. While the young live in denial, a world of eternal health and agility, older people are quietly aware of the reality of human limitations. Research on this topic is important to me in my role as Research and Communications officer for Three Sisters Care and CHIRON, so for this reason I attended 'Age Does Not Matter', to radically rethink the concept of age through an inspirational series of co-design labs, talks, installations, photography, stories, sound and film. Attending the festival got me thinking about how the old and young communicate (or don't as the case may be), and how we can keep people

integrating fully in society. For example, how we can make use of the wisdom and skills of older people? How can younger people pass on their perspectives of the world?

As part of the festival, I took part in the Workforce & Employment workshop which involved a day long brainstorm and debate session, where we came up with new ideas for how to improve the workplace and the opportunities available for older people. We looked at issues such as how to encourage older entrepreneurs, and how to create intergenerational dialogue in the workplace - all in all, we ended with some great ideas.

*And if like me you're eager to know just what were the ideas put forward by Alex and Sinead's groups and the others, I'm afraid you're going to have to wait until ANR have tested them out and believe they are ready for publication. So you might want to keep an eye on their website:*

<https://www.ageofnoretirement.org/>

*While previous ideas they have come up with can be found in their "Ideas Lab" here;*

<https://www.ageofnoretirement.org/challenges/previous>

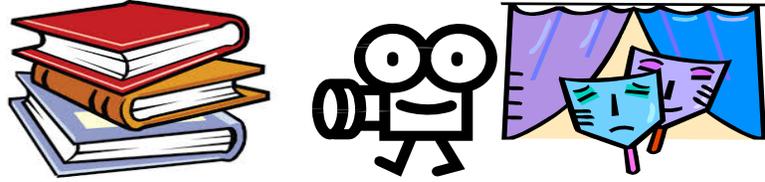
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## ***AEA DIGEST CULTURE SECTION***

*The annual **Live Age Festival** is a celebration of creativity in later life in Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire. It was held over the weekend of Friday 30 September - Sunday 2 October 2016. **Lynne Wealleans** of the **Beth Johnson Foundation** was there and she votes it the biggest and best festival yet.*



**Frontline Dance**

It opened on 30 September with an inspiring performance from members of Frontline Dance, an integrated dance company based in Stoke-on-Trent, which offers a program of performance and education for people of all abilities and ages. This performance entitled *Forget me Knot* was a contemporary and moving piece with an intergenerational aspect.

A symposium followed giving different reflections on ageing, including Leah Thorn a spoken word poet who shared some of her work and spoke on the opportunities and challenges of being an older artist. Her interests are wide ranging and she is open about taking a

feminist perspective; I was especially interested to hear of her *Older Women Rock* poetry project for women in their 60's, exploring the impact of sexism and ageism. Proving that you can be interested in fashion and be a feminist she is also involved in matching poetry and vintage clothes; literally sewing the words on to the clothing. I thought this a brilliant way to engage with people who might be reticent about getting involved in a poetry project. Dr Anna Goulding, a Research Fellow at the University of Manchester, gave a researcher's perspective on engaging older people via the arts and on the value of involving older people as co-researchers and co-evaluators. Phil Cave from Arts Council England, who had provided funding for the event, spoke about the growing body of evidence that shows the health and wellbeing benefits of older people engaging in artistic activities. There are, therefore, moral, artistic and economic grounds for ensuring that there is both a cultural offer to older people and of engaging older people in arts projects.



**Poet Roger McGough**

That was followed by a poetry performance given by Roger Gough, described by Carol Ann Duffy as the patron saint of poetry, which was a show stopper and enjoyed by everyone in the packed audience (how often do you get to see one of Britain's most popular poets for free!). The *As Far as I Know* poems on memory, love, ageing, death and youth were humorous, nostalgic and moving and seemed to resonate with the audience and certainly with myself. They also included some re-visiting of earlier poems and looking at what he wrote then as a younger man from his older perspective. How lovely to have that body of work to look back on.



**Bollywood dancing, sponsored by the Beth Johnson foundation**

The rest of the weekend was filled with participatory workshops on dance, drama, literature, arts in the broadest sense of the word, singing and performances etc.

Beth Johnson Foundation's contribution was also 'bigger' this year. A BJB representative had attended the Live Age steering group so we took part in organising and promoting the event. We curated an exhibition at the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery of paintings by people with dementia living in care homes which was titled *Art has no boundaries*. We had set up the painting workshops earlier in the year as part of our programme of engaging with people

affected by dementia. And we sponsored a Bollywood dancing session; we had run one at our premises earlier in the year which had been really well attended and appreciated by those involved.

*News of a documentary film about sport and older people. Towards the end of summer your editor received news from a young film producer called **Saskia Rusher** about a documentary she was in the process of making about **The Pacemakers** – senior athletes from all over the world, who were due to compete in the World Masters Athletics Championship in Perth, Australia this autumn. You may have seen the post on our AEA Facebook page and on our Twitter account. Seen here, courtesy of the New York Times, is John Gilmour, a 97-year-old from Australia, who was a Japanese prisoner during World War II. He ran the 800 meters as the sole competitor in the men's 95-to-99 age group*



**Photo: David Dare Parker for The New York Times**

*Saskia wrote in September:*

Our film is about an amazing group of seniors from around the world, who at 90+ are competing to be world champion sprinters in this "Olympics for OAPs". I thought the documentary might be of interest to the Association

for Education & Ageing, as it is part of a social movement to transform the way we view the ageing process by creating positive stereotypes and championing a better quality of life for elderly people. Several of the senior athletes in the film are harnessing athleticism to alleviate symptoms associated with chronic health conditions, such as dementia and muscular dystrophy.

The film's director, Selah, was first inspired to make this film after she saw the health of her grandma Jean deteriorate rapidly. She found a film online of 95 year old Charles Eugster, running the 200 metre sprint, and showed it to her grandma. Charles's remarkable determination motivated Jean to start getting active again and she now manages to get out for a walk everyday.



**Selah with her grandmother Jean**

After that Selah felt she had to meet Charles. When he told her about his dream of becoming a world champion sprinter she decided to document the journey, culminating in a short film which has just been shortlisted for the UK's most important documentary award.

Selah is now travelling around the world filming eight senior athletes as they train

for the World Masters Athletic Championships in Australia later this year. They're on a really tight budget but just have enough to get the footage up until the competition.

*At the time of writing Saskia was launching a crowd funding campaign to raise money to fund the crew to get to Australia and film the actual event. Hopefully she succeeded in her aim and she and Selah are now busy putting the film together. Watch this space for any further news!*

*Continuing with the theme of age and physical achievement, **Ageing, Physical Activity, Recreation and Wellbeing**' is a new publication from Buckinghamshire New University, written with the aim of raising awareness of ways to healthy ageing. AEA member **Susan Stuart** is currently pursuing doctoral research at the university into Ageing and Engagements with Physical Activity – a subject on which she contributed a chapter to the book. Sue also works with groups of older adults doing keep fit, tai chi and pilates.*

For the past three years the university has run an Ageing Well conference which has an academic side with lectures and presentations delivered by an international team of academics specialising in health and wellbeing, gerontology, physical activity and leisure and a practical side, which both showcases the local Movers & Shakers project and offers information about ageing well to local people. This book is the product of one of these Ageing Well conferences and is edited by my supervisor Barbara Humberstone, Professor of Sociology of Sport and Outdoor Education and her colleague

Maria Konstantaki, Senior Lecturer in Exercise Physiology and Nutrition.



**Dr Konstantaki and Dr Humberstone with a copy of “Ageing, Physical Activity, Recreation and Wellbeing”.**

*Ageing, Physical Activity, Recreation and Wellbeing* features a collection of studies which focus on the effectiveness of different forms of and approaches to physical activity, exercise and recreation that promote an active lifestyle among communities and older people in general. The overarching theme is the importance of identifying how people can stay healthy and enjoy life as they age.

Dr Humberstone describes the book as "imparting knowledge about recent advances in physical activity, recreation and wellbeing initiatives that will benefit the academic community and the wider public. We also set out to dispel myths around ageing and physical activity showing how many older people enjoy and find pleasure in taking part in

physical exercise and adventurous activities."

The book's chapters draw upon qualitative and quantitative methodologies that have 'active ageing' at the core of their investigations. Examples are drawn from the global and local perspective and include walking initiatives, an inter-generational dance project, Movers & Shakers exercise intervention studies, windsurfing and other case studies.

Movers & Shakers is an award winning local community initiative, where BME groups and others meet regularly to eat together and to take part in a variety of physical activities such as Tai Chi and Zumba Gold. A number of chapters show how this initiative promotes and maintains mental and physical wellbeing amongst the participants. The book is dedicated to the memory of Armintha Walcott, one of the founding members of Movers and Shakers.



**A showcase of Movers & Shakers at the Ageing and Wellbeing Conference at Bucks New University**

As Dr Konstantaki explains: 'Our book links academic perspectives with practical strategies for diverse members of the community, in particular older people, to explore ways to stay fitter and

healthier in older age. We also present different intervention strategies and approaches that aim to improve older peoples' lives and develop an understanding of active and healthy ageing.' Dr Konstantaki has previously also called on authorities to tackle social isolation and provide meaning in older people's lives to tackle the challenges of an ageing population.

*Ageing, Physical Activity, Recreation and Wellbeing* is published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing and is available here price £47.99.

<http://www.cambridgescholars.com/ageing-physical-activity-recreation-and-wellbeing>

## THEATRE AND FILM NEWS

*The British Library informs us that **There Will Be Fun** at the library this autumn and winter. The fun takes the form of an exhibition exploring popular Victorian entertainments which have shaped the theatrical traditions of today, along with some related educational activities.*

The exhibition focuses on five pivotal performers who influenced the course of popular entertainments in the nineteenth century; from mesmerist Annie De Montford and 'Royal Conjuror' Evanion to 'the funniest man on earth' Dan Leno, circus proprietor 'Lord' George Sanger and magician John Nevil Maskelyne of the Egyptian Hall.



One of the revolutions of the late nineteenth century was the commercial exploitation of colour printing and this will be the first time that the wonderfully

decorative posters, handbills, advertisements and tickets – the printed ephemera of the time – will be displayed together since they were produced.

Victorian shows were performed in a variety of venues nationwide, from the backrooms of taverns and fairground tents to the music hall stage, transporting popular entertainment – magic, hypnotism, circus and pantomime – to a mass audience for the first time.

The exhibition will be based on the British Library's Evanion collection, an amazing archive of nineteenth century material collected by conjuror Henry Evans Evanion, which numbers around 6,000 items of printed ephemera relating to entertainment and everyday life in Victorian England. The advertisements for popular entertainments were generally not considered to be of lasting value and were seldom preserved or collected. Therefore today many pieces in the British Library's collection are unique and highly valuable.

Exhibition highlights include:

- Charming and ornate posters, musical scores, programmes and tickets

- Original sound recordings of Dan Leno and other contemporary Music Hall performers
- Memorabilia from ‘England’s Home of Mystery’ Egyptian Hall in London
- Original magical artefacts on loan from The Magic Circle Museum



Helen Peden, British Library curator of the exhibition, says: “This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase the British Library’s glorious Evanion collection and to present a range of its most fascinating, colourful posters and printed entertainment ephemera that has never been seen in public since the end of the nineteenth century.”

Five original performance pieces inspired by the source material have been commissioned, bringing the British Library’s collections to life, and will be featured in the exhibition. In addition, every Saturday until 17 December from 15.00 – 17.00), a company of actors and performers will present archive material from the exhibition through the prism of

contemporary performance, supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

Christopher Green, co-curator of the exhibition says: “It’s ironic that every item in this collection was made to exist for a short time; to promote a performance or a performer, but not to be an object of attention themselves. However, these fragile items remain and give us a redolent whiff of what the live shows must have been like. The There Will Be Fun Repertory Company has reimagined the archive by bringing these long forgotten routines to life and will, I hope, make connections for our visitors between that time and ours.”

The exhibition is accompanied by an events programme. Still to come are appearances by illusionist Derren Brown and comedian and ventriloquist Nina Conti in January. There are also two adult learning courses where attendees will be able to devise their own stage show idea through artist-led workshops, and also explore behind the myth of Music Hall.

*Overpowered! The Science and Showbiz of Hypnosis*, written by Christopher Green following his research as Artist in Residence at the British Library in 2012, explores many of the themes of the exhibition in greater detail and will be available in the British Library shop.

*The exhibition continues until 12<sup>th</sup> March 2017 Details here .*

<https://www.bl.uk/events/victorian-entertainments-there-will-be-fun>

Television quiz host **Sandi Toksvig**, who recently took over from Stephen Fry as the presenter of brain teasing television show “*QI*” is a woman of many talents. She is a prolific writer of fiction and non fiction books both for adults and children and also a playwright. Her latest play is ***Silver Lining***.



In the nineties Sandi wrote a musical, a “Shakespeare deconstruction” and was co-author of a television series. In May 2011 her play *Bully Boy* which focused on post-traumatic stress among British servicemen, premièred at the Nuffield Theatre in Southampton. She’s also done a bit of acting, including in her own work – oh, and is also Chancellor of the University of Portsmouth and a bit of a political activist and feminist to boot!

Sandi, who is 58, has now turned to the subject of later life. *Silver Lining* is a comedy about five elderly women, who are trading stories of their remarkable lives one dark and stormy night in the Silver Lining Retirement Home. With the storm floods rising and no rescue team in sight, the ladies are faced with the sudden realisation that in order to survive they are going to have to do what they have done for their entire lives – do it themselves!

The play premieres in early February at the Rose Theatre in Kingston and is a joint production with the English Touring Company. So after Kingston it will be going on the road to Portsmouth, Oxford, Cambridge, Keswick, York and Salford Keys. So maybe near you? <http://www.ett.org.uk/whats-on/silver-lining/dates-tickets>

*In the world of West End theatre, Carlie Newman reviews a show which is currently one of the big hits on the London stage.*

Hip Hip hooray for Harry Potter! What a wonderful show – all parts gel together in this inspired production of a new story in the Harry Potter saga – ***Harry Potter and the Cursed Child***. The play is written by Jack Thorne, based on an original new story by J.K. Rowling, Thorne and John Tiffany. Directed by Tiffany, it is full of wondrous stage images created by the largest creative and production team that I have seen in a theatre programme in the last few years. It includes Illusions and Magic (Jamie Harrison) and Performer Flying Technician (Paul Gurney) – which will give you a tiny idea of what is happening on stage. But I can’t say much more about the visual aspect as I have a badge which tells me to “Keep the Secrets.”



Following on from JK Rowling's seven Harry Potter books (and the films based on them) the play carries on from the final book, "The Deathly Hallows." It is 19 years later and grown up Harry and his wife Ginny are saying goodbye to their son Albus (Sam Clemmett) as he sets off to start at Hogwarts. Also travelling on the train is Rose (Cherrelle Skeete), daughter of Ron Weasley (Paul Thornley) and Hermione Grainger (Norma Dumezweni) and, most importantly for the subsequent story, Scorpius Malfoy (Anthony Boyle), the son of Draco Malfoy (Alex Price), who was Harry's enemy at Hogwarts.

The play is in two parts and as Part One ends on a cliff-hanger, it is important to see Part Two as well – but you won't want to miss this, even though it will be more than five hours before it is finished. You can see it all on one day (afternoon and evening) or over two days.



The bulk of the play is concerned with Albus and Scorpius: their growing friendship along with issues of father and son relationships, having a famous father and living in the shadow of the past. The two lads work together to try to reverse time, so that they can save Cedric Diggory, who was killed on the command of the evil Voldermort. Throughout Parts One and Two there are flashbacks to when Harry was a boy.

The young Harry Potter was played by Ewan Rutherford on the day I went.

The cast, who have to cope with magical transformations as well as a lot of movement on stage, have been chosen with great care. The adult parents have more than a touch of the actors we have come to know in the films. Perhaps Hermione is not quite the same, played as she is now by black actress Noma Dumezweni, but it is reassuring to see Ron with ginger hair! Paul Thornley manages to convey the humour of Ron and is nicely casual, while Jamie Parker is a studious man who has grown up from the serious boy Potter. Anthony Boyle as Scorpius is suitably contrite as a young lad trying to apologise for his father's sins. The women seem to have less to do in the play but there are some great cameos, including Annabel Baldwin as Moaning Myrtle and Helena Lymbery as both Petunia Dursley and Madam Hooch.

I am not sure if you would fully follow all the plot intricacies and references to the past if you had not read the books or seen the films, but there is enough information given to make sure you can at least understand the story as it unfolds on stage. In addition there is a very helpful programme on sale which gives an outline of each book and even has a glossary of terminology used.

But there is no doubt you will emerge from the theatre still not entirely sure whether all that you saw was real. Was that actual fire that came from the wands? Did that actor really transform into another character while you watched and... The gothic set with its darkness at the back and sides adds to the mysterious quality as do the well-choreographed cast, who move together in synchronised movement that makes one just sit and admire.

Tickets are going fast but new ones are constantly being released. Do go and see this magnificent show.

*Harry Potter and the Cursed Child is on at the Palace Theatre in London – and looks like it is going to run and run.*

*From stage to screen, as Carol Allen points you in the direction of some good films either currently **On Screen** or coming shortly.*

**A United Kingdom** is based on a largely forgotten piece of history, namely the love affair and marriage in the forties of Seretse Khama (David Oyelowo), Prince of Bechuanaland (now Botswana) and English office work Ruth Williams (Rosamund Pike), which caused a political storm at the time.



Photo courtesy of Pathe UK

Their romance is complicated not only by the fact that black people were unusual in London at that time and likely to encounter racist abuse and worse when seen out with a white woman but more importantly because Seretse is the king of his people in his native land. So not only do Ruth's parents oppose the match but so too does Seretse's uncle Tshekedi (Vusi Kunene), who is acting as regent while his nephew prepares for kingship and also most interestingly the

British government does too, as represented by the person of oily diplomat Alistair Canning (Jack Davenport). The reason being that Bechuanaland adjoins South Africa. The British (Labour) government see South Africa's friendship as important to the struggling post war British economy and there is no way that the country, which is in the process of introducing apartheid, is going to tolerate a mixed marriage on its doorstep.

The casting of two such strong actors in the leading roles is a smart move. Oyelowo and Pike make a convincing and charismatic couple, who give the film a strong human impetus. There are other good supporting performances apart from those already mentioned from Nicholas Lyndhurst as Ruth's father; Terry Pheto as Seretse's sister who becomes Ruth's close friend; Jack Lowden as the young Tony Benn, who takes up the cudgels on behalf of the couple against his own government and a neat cameo from Anton Lesser as a fretful Clem Attlee.

The themes of racism and political self interest relate the film effectively to today's world and director Amma Asante and writer Guy Hibbert have approached the story in accordance with contemporary sentiments to make an absorbing and effective love story with a political edge.

Wartime thriller cum love story **Allied** is a good old fashioned tale filmed with contemporary production values from a taut script from British writer Steven Knight (*Peaky Blinders* and *Locke*) and briskly directed by American veteran Robert Zemeckis.

In 1942 at the height of World War II Canadian airman Max Vatan (Brad Pitt) is parachuted into German occupied

Casablanca. His instructions are to link up with French resistance worker Marianne Beauséjour (Marion Cotillard), who will be posing as his wife. Their mission is to assassinate the German ambassador to Morocco. Things become complicated however when the couple fall in love for real.



**Brad Pitt and Marion Cotillard**

Back in England Max manages to get permission to bring Marianne to London, where they are married and Marianne gives birth to their child at the height of the blitz with bombs dropping all around. They settle into a nice little house in Hampstead but then Max is summoned by the head of a top secret government department, where it's chief, played with spooky charisma by Simon McBurney, informs him that they suspect Marianne is a German spy. He is instructed to set her a test and not to otherwise take any action. Naturally he takes no notice whatsoever of the second part of that order but he has just two days in which to prove that his wife is innocent.

This is a strong story well and convincingly acted and directed and with an authentic feel for the period. Cotillard and Pitt generate the appropriate chemistry and the film also gets some fun out of Max's Canadian accented spoken French.

In the last part of the film some of Max's actions seem a little reckless, like hijacking British a plane and leaving it parked in Nazi occupied northern France, while he pursues his mission to save his wife, but the ruthlessness the character shows at this point has already been established in the earlier Casablanca scenes, when he coldly assassinates a German office who might recognise him. And in the last part of the story we are now so caught up in the action that the film can easily get away with a twist or two too far.

There are some very worthwhile films opening early next year, which I'm not allowed to review yet but they will be here and gone by the time the next digest comes out. So let me just tell you to watch out first for *Fences*, Denzel Washington's film of the late American playwright August Wilson's play. It's not a great film as such – shot more like a television version of the play – but the writing is tremendous, as is Washington as Troy Maxson and Viola Davies as his wife.



**Photo courtesy of Paramount**

Wilson has been compared to another great American writer, Arthur Miller, and I would cite the role of Troy as the black actor's equivalent to Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*.

*Lion* is the moving true life story of a five-year-old Indian boy, who gets lost

on the streets of Calcutta, is adopted by an Australian couple and as an adult tracks down his original family. Little Sunny Pawar will break your heart as the child, while Dev Patel is engaging as the adult Saroo.

Natalie Portman gives what could well prove to be an award winning performance as *Jackie* - Kennedy that is - in the days after her husband's assassination. Director Pablo Larraín reproduces those iconic images we remember from the sixties and then

speculates creatively on what was going on behind the scenes in Jackie's mind



Natalie Portman as Jackie  
Photo: William Gray/C20th Fox

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

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***A very merry Christmas from  
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