
AEA DIGEST

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Jonathan Hughes, our newly elected chair

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FROM THE CHAIR.....

Jonathan Hughes

These are my first set of chair's notes since becoming chair at the AGM in Stoke-on-Trent in September. This means that at the time of writing I have been 'in post' for just under 5 weeks. This has included a week's holiday in Corsica and a ForAge conference and partner's meeting in Cyprus – see page 5 for my report on those.

I was approached some months ago to see if I would consider becoming chair to enable Jo Walker to step down and devote more time to her doctoral studies. I have to say that I was surprised to be asked but pleased to accept. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jo for all the time and effort she has put in to her work as chair of AEA, as a result of which we are in a much better position than we were. We now have our own journal, are involved in two European projects and are reasonably secure financially. In addition we have secured representation on the National Older Learners Group. These achievements under Jo's watch make it a hard act to follow.

In my view, AEA should see itself poised to build on where we are at the moment. In order to do this we need to draw on the expertise and contacts of the membership and of the executive. We will be limited if we can only turn to a few people to represent AEA and to foster links with other individuals and organisations that share our interests. In writing these notes I checked back to the description of ourselves that we supplied to the charity commissioners. It reads as follows:

“AEA encourages the sharing and publication of good practice about learning in later life through a newsletter and journal, through conferences and meetings and by networking. It supports and promotes the interest of older people engaged in learning, the organisations and teachers that supply the learning opportunities and research into later life.”

I think that's a pretty good summary of what we are doing and what we should be doing. However, in my view, it raises a couple of important issues. First, I think we need to take a broad view of what counts as “being engaged in learning” and what later life learning opportunities may include (and who provides them). It is clear that much of the traditional adult learning provision has been decimated by the focus on skills and the economic returns of education. Despite this older adults go on learning; it is just that the contexts are different and the learning opportunities include learning related to retirement, physical and mental health and care needs (to name just a few). If we take on board the idea of a ‘curriculum for later life’ it will need to be broad enough to include all this.

The second issue that I think we need to address is ‘why be a member of AEA?’. There are two aspects to this. First, as a member you need to feel that you benefit from membership. Second, it is your engagement and involvement that will enable AEA to do more of that work as described for the Charity Commissioners above. I hope that by addressing these

issues more people will be encouraged to join and remain members of AEA.

Initially, I think there two ways to achieve this. The first is involvement. I will seek to involve more members in our work. I believe that more involvement leads to a greater sense of belonging on the basis that my involvement with the FORAGE projects has given me a much clearer sense of the value of AEA and has increased my level of commitment. This means that I may well be approaching you to see if you could offer some of your time to support aspects of our work. I hope that you will be able to respond positively to such contact. I would also welcome offers of support to take existing work forward and engage in new activity (my contact details are at the end of these notes).

I also think that we need to plan a sequence of conferences and seminars over the next three years. Some of this is already underway with plans for events in Norwich and Wales. I see having a planned sequence of such events as being a real benefit of membership, not only through offering members a discount on these events but also through the opportunities they will offer you in terms of sharing your research or practice and as networking opportunities.

I am really looking forward to the challenges and the opportunities coming AEA's way and hope that you are too.

jonathan.hughes@open.ac.uk

*The 2012 AEA conference was held on 10th September 2012 in association with the Beth Johnson Foundation. The theme was **Thinking about the Future:***

Older People and Learning and was planned as part of the foundation's 40th Anniversary celebrations. Jo Walker reports on this year's conference.

The event was held at Staffordshire University in modern conference facilities which had probably not existed when BJF was first set up in Stoke-on-Trent.

As then chair of AEA, I welcomed the participants on behalf of the association, noting that the friendship between AEA and BJF goes back many years to the days of Frank Glendenning and Arthur Creber. The Foundation was also a partner in AEA's journal in its earlier incarnations as *Journal of Educational Gerontology* and as *Education and Ageing*. BJF was congratulated on its 40th anniversary and for all the innovative and practical work it has done since 1972 in engaging with older people to make a difference to their lives. The aims remained the same today.



The Beth Johnson vision is "To create a society in which everybody enjoys a great quality of life as they age."

The themes of the day's conference on older adult learning were also around wellbeing, in its most holistic sense. There were contributions on mental health and memory and on projects that promote wellbeing through learning, community development and social capital. I suggested that the earlier custodians of AEA and BJF would have

recognised and applauded these themes. Today, the contexts would be different: lack of public funding in adult education, greater involvement in Europe, and a much larger U3A movement, for example.

Professor Paul Kingston of Staffordshire University gave a fascinating and wide-ranging keynote address on Education and Mental Health. He traced how our understanding of both these ideas had changed with regard to older people, over the last few decades. Notions of stages of life/health/illness have given way to understandings based more on continuities and contexts. One aspect of current government thinking is to maximize mental health and capacity, so as to reduce difficulties later in life. Learning has an obvious key part to play.

Next followed a series of workshops, where participants could choose initially to attend three out of six topics. But these were all available a second time, meaning that all could be sampled with the advantage of being presented in smaller groups.

The first set of topics had a future orientation: we heard how Staffordshire Housing Association is thinking about the wellbeing needs of its clients in the context of demographic change. The Shaftesbury Partnership, a 'social venture' organisation, described its involvement in the 'Next Steps' programme which it is designing for possible roll-out by Government as a national retirement service. The U3A Memory Programme was a great example of a piloted, evaluated development, which was ready for wider application.

The second set of workshops looked at new projects that sought to promote later life long learning and make it more accessible. The 16-partner ForAge Network is being developed as a ground-breaking repository of European projects on later life learning, involving both traditional and new electronic means of sharing good practice. Similar themes were seen in the Open University initiative to involve older people's organisations in European Lifelong learning; the influence of social capital and the role of the U3A was the last offering in this set.

A final informal plenary discussion rounded up on the variety and inspiration of the sessions and the stage was set for AEA's AGM and the Frank Glendenning memorial lecture, delivered this year by Alan Hatton-Yeo.



Alan Hatton-Yeo, Chief Executive of the Beth Johnson Foundation

Alan's lecture, *What has the last forty years taught us about ageing?* traced key themes and events of the Beth Johnson Foundation's forty-year history. Alan acknowledged the influence and legacy of Frank Glendenning on the work of the Foundation, which could still be seen in the people he mentored, the need for rigour and clear thinking that he engendered and the importance of linking policy, practice and evidence in order to make a difference.

The anniversary has prompted reflection on progress but also on our continuing tendency to re-invent or, at least, re-brand wheels. Some elements of public attitudes and general social discourse have moved on substantially – on matters of equality, exclusion and disability, for example. Yet, there is still ageism, poverty and abuse of the vulnerable. We cannot get beyond responding to crises and on to strategies for prevention.

We need to establish a mature conversation about all of our experiences

of growing older, based on an appreciation of change. The greatest challenge is to confront the inequality in our society that makes growing older such a diverse, differentiated and often unequal and unfair experience. The next forty years needs to be grounded in valuing everybody's assets and resources, whatever their age. That way, we are more likely to be able to maximise participation and engagement and a continued sense of agency well into later life.

DATE FOR YOU DIARY

Next year's AEA conference will be held on 5th September at the University of East Anglia, Norwich. Provisional theme for the day is 'Informal Learning and Well-Being in Later Life' Professor. Judith Phillips has agreed to give the Frank Glendenning Memorial Lecture. Further details to follow in due course.

*As reported in previous digests, AEA is a partner in **ForAge**, a European initiative, which aims to build and operate an interactive network via a comprehensive website of good practice in relation to learning in later life. Last month our chair **Jonathan Hughes** attended a conference in Cyprus, which was followed by a meeting of ForAge partners. Here he reports on both events.*

The theme of the conference was *A society for all ages: learning to live and learning for life, Future scenarios and strategies* and as it proceeded, we had plenty of examples of the sorts of work that can be fed into ForAge.

The first day included presentations from Martina Ni Cheallaigh, (European Commission), Katerina Popovic, (European Association for Adult Education) and Jumbo Klercq (Netherlands).

Martina outlined the demographic trends facing Europe, which predict that by 2020, over 30% of the population will be over 65 years of age. This means that there is the potential for problems of isolation, dependency and digital exclusion. But Martina also highlighted that the positives could well outweigh the burdens. Many of these people will be wealthier and more independent than in the past and be in a position to 'give back' to society. Katarina is vice

president of the EAEA, which is an association of 127 members involved in formal and non-formal learning and is committed to active ageing and continuing participation in learning. Jumbo outlined three possible future scenarios for a society of all ages. He pointed out that the focus needs to be on empowerment and learning. It will be interesting to see, over the lifetime of the ForAge project, the extent to which the empowerment of older learners features in projects proposed for the ForAge website.

AEA's Jim Soulsby then introduced the ForAge network and organised the first of three conference workshops. These focused on

- Involving more stakeholders in later-life learning
- Gender issues: learning for men and women
- Giving older people a voice through learning.

These workshops each ran three times so that delegates could attend all of them. The idea for all the workshops was to encourage participants to consider work they were aware of or involved in for inclusion on the ForAge website as well as encouraging them to think about what might count as good practice.

In addition we had three more presentations from Alexis Kokkos, Simoni Symeonidou and Katerina, Popovic. Alexis gave a fascinating presentation about working with older learners in the current economic and social situation in Greece. Despite the lack of government interest and low participation rates, the Hellenic Open University runs four post-graduate adult education programmes and a national programme of adult educator training.

Alexis also outlined the work of the Hellenic Adult Education Association and in particular the transformative possibilities of art.

Simoni showed how it is possible to use the ideas that have informed the study of disability to illuminate the position of older learners, while recognising that there are differences as well as similarities. In particular, the use of concepts like segregation, integration and inclusion can help visualise 'a society of all ages'. Simoni also suggested that the feminist approach is valuable as it helps to focus attention on the experience of older people as the basis for improving services.

I particularly enjoyed Katarina's presentation which focused on the powerful way in which art, in this case photography, was able to demonstrate very different facets of ageing in Serbia. The photos, which came out of a competition and were the basis of a mobile exhibition, highlighted the value of older people while seeking to change perceptions of them. The winning entry was a version of *Thelma and Louise*.



Katerina, Popovic's workshop with the *Thelma and Louise* pic on screen.

The second day included the third workshop sessions as well as presentations from Julie Melville (Beth Johnson Foundation) Jim Soulsby (ForAge), Iveta Orbanova and Natasha Urbanikova (Open Inn and SIGOLD) and Jumbo Klercq. Julie explained how the European Map of Intergenerational Learning Network (EMIL) aims to provide a resource that a variety of people can draw on. Its output includes events and newsletters. The Open Inn project aims to enhance innovative potential and uses ICT to bring together different sectors. There is a website at www.openinn.eu. The SIGOLD project is trying to turn the 'silver challenge into a golden opportunity'. It hopes to do this by realising the economic potential of an ageing population by focusing on possibilities rather than needs. More on their website at www.sigold.net. The theme of economic well being was the topic of Jumbo's presentation. (see www.3cproject.eu).

The final two days were spent discussing progress on the ForAge project. Everything is now in place for this website to start functioning as a means of showcasing best practice as well as providing a forum to improve future practice.

Digital Unite held their Best Event 2012 awards on Thursday 27 September 2012 at the BT Tower, London.

We were delighted to welcome Esther Rantzen CBE as our special guest who gave out the awards and spoke about how helping older people use and enjoy computers and the internet can help to reduce loneliness and social isolation.



Esther Rantzen

Six organisations were shortlisted by our judges from the hundreds which took part, based on their originality, enthusiasm and the scope, reach and impact of their event. The finalists were: Halton Housing Trust - Winner
Home Group - Joint Runner Up
Starting Point, Stockport - Joint Runner Up
Wigan & Leigh Housing - Highly Commended
Wealden Senior Citizens' Partnership - Highly Commended
DVLA Wales - Special Commendation for the Best Event Held by Government

We had a great afternoon with our Spring Online event holders, supporters and friends and would like to thank everyone for their support and enthusiasm for our campaign. See you all next year!

Next year's Spring Online will run from 22nd to 26th April 2013

And talking of awards:

Nominations for Adult Learners Week Awards (18-24 May 2013) are now open until Thursday 13 December so get your vote in today.

The Awards recognise the achievements of outstanding individuals and

innovative learning projects across England and the winners are celebrated during the week itself.

Further information is available on the dedicated website

[Adult Learners' Week 18th-24th May 2013](#)

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The withdrawal by many local authorities of subsidies to adult short residential courses has created a boom in the market for commercial providers. And if you're looking to combine a short break away from routine with learning more about something you love in the company of like minded enthusiasts and perhaps making new friends, short residential courses provide an interesting alternative to the much hyped hotel mini-break.

One such provider is Anglia Leisure Learning (ALL), who recently launched a free guide answering *101 Questions you may have*

<http://www.anglialeisurelearning.co.uk/pdf/ALLCoursesBookletLoRes.pdf> or by post from info@anglialeisurelearning.co.uk.

ALL's courses are held at the Belsey Bridge conference centre on the Suffolk/Norfolk border, but there are similar courses all over the country. The professional association for such courses is ARCA and you can find out from them more information about such courses throughout the United Kingdom.

<http://www.arca.uk.net/> For further suggestions, see AEA member Howard Gilbert's piece on painting with acrylics (page 14)

*If however you're interested in personal self development, AEA member **Shan Rees** has been running her courses on **Living Excellently** for some twenty five years, helping people of all ages to build their self confidence and live life to the full. She has a particular expertise in working with older learners. Shan explains here.*

Why do I do this work?

I believe each person has something special to offer the world. Everyone possesses a unique combination of skills, talents and abilities. And it's such a pity if people lack confidence to express their uniqueness - then, they don't feel fulfilled and the world also loses out!



Shan working with one of her students

What are the benefits?

- you build your self-esteem, so that you approve of yourself and others' opinions matter less

- you identify your needs and how to get them met
- you get in touch with your values – which may change as we get older – and how to live these in your life
- you learn to give yourself positive messages which support you in reaching your goals
- you learn that in order to say yes to yourself, you sometimes need to say no to others
- as you are expressing yourself more, you feel more fulfilled and happier

Where do the courses take place?

Assertion Training and Confidence-Building courses are the bedrock of my business *Living Excellently*. I trained with Anne Dickson at the Redwood Institute and have taught these skills in many settings over the last 25 years – in Adult Education Institutes, companies, councils, smaller organisations; and also to groups of over 50s/60s during my time working with the Greater London Forum for Older People and whilst I ran AgeWell, a project for Healthy Living for over 50s in Hackney. I teach these skills on both a one-to-one basis and in small groups.

I've also published articles and written a book *Assertion Training: How to be who You Really Are* (1991). I love teaching these skills as I enjoy seeing people blossom into who they really are and living their lives more fully.

More information at
www.livingexcellently.co.uk

Not so much a course but more an education project, in Scotland Val Bissland has made two videos commissioned by The Scottish Older People's Assembly.



Val Bissland

One is about quality of care and the views of older adults on the benefits of one-to-one contact, and how it has altered their perceptions or experience of care home life and the other is about the music creation programme Hyperscore in the day-care unit at Woodlands, Inverness. The films were launched this month at the Scottish Older People's Assembly.

Val will be telling us more about the films and their making in the next digest, and perhaps passing on some tips about what she learned herself from the experience, working with her new hi tech, high definition video and editing software. I may well be picking her brains for some practical tips in that area!

INSPIRING STORIES

I love stories about older people achieving the unusual. Here's one I found on the internet about 96 year old Dorothy Caldwell, who took part in the 2012 Trans America Rally.

Dorothy Caldwell was only six years from her 100th birthday when she flew to America and entered the 2012 Trans-America Challenge as a navigator. She successfully navigated the month long trip from New York across America and Canada to Alaska and back – a feat that many women her age would not even consider.

“It all started with my son, Alastair,” she explains. “As former manager of the McLaren racing team and with his vintage Rolls Royce Silver Shadow, he was keen to ride alongside other classic cars in the challenge. He needed a navigator- I was thrilled to be asked!”



Dorothy and her son Alastair in the Arctic

Dorothy began her trip to the US with a visit to her sister, who was celebrating her 100th birthday. With Alastair, she then drove right across the North American continent. At the end of the rally, Dorothy was awarded a special

“Spirit of the Rally” award for her amazing achievement.

In reference to her age, she says, “It certainly wasn’t against me. I’m not one to stay at home; I enjoy being as active as possible. There’s always something new to see and do. How could I turn down such an opportunity?”

The Trans America Challenge is an exciting classic car rally from ocean to ocean (New York to Vancouver) and then up into Anchorage, Alaska. The event was organised by the hugely experienced ERA team with over 65 international events under their belt.

The journey from New York on the east coast of the USA to the furthest flung point of Alaska in the 50th State took the participants through the some of the best and most spectacular scenery and roads that both the United States and Canada has to offer in the company of fellow enthusiasts.

I was also cheered by a news item in the wake of President Obama’s recent election victory. It referred to Hilary Clinton, aged 65, and the continued speculation that she may run for President in four years time. Her popularity with the American electorate, it appears, is at an all time high. What cheered me most as the statement in the piece that at 69 she will not be considered too old to run. So if she were to win and hold office for the full term, we could have the first woman president of the United States running one of the most powerful countries in the world at

the age of 73. If Ms Clinton is up for that, what can the rest of us achieve in our sixties and seventies!



Hilary Clinton on the campaign trail

*I think it fair to say that most of us get fed up with the high handed way that we are often treated by banks and other organisations, who turn a simple phone call into a pageant of daft menus and anodyne music, while we are left hanging on. I came across this tale about a **98 year old woman in the UK**, who wrote this to her bank. The bank manager (there was a bank manager? – I thought they'd been replaced by" line managers" and such) thought it amusing enough to have it published in the Times. Not sure to be honest whether this is factually true or apocryphal – you can't trust everything you read on the web – but if it isn't true, it ought to be.*

Dear Sir,

I am writing to thank you for bouncing my cheque with which I endeavoured to pay my plumber last month. By my calculations, three nanoseconds must have elapsed between his presenting the cheque and the arrival in my account of the funds needed to honour it. I refer, of course, to the automatic monthly deposit of my Pension, an arrangement, which, I admit, has been in place for only thirty eight years. You are to be commended for seizing that brief window of opportunity, and also for debiting my

account £30 by way of penalty for the inconvenience caused to your bank.

My thankfulness springs from the manner in which this incident has caused me to rethink my errant financial ways. I noticed that whereas I personally attend to your telephone calls and letters, when I try to contact you, I am confronted by the impersonal, overcharging, pre-recorded, faceless entity which your bank has become. From now on, I, like you, choose only to deal with a flesh-and-blood person.

My mortgage and loan payments will therefore and hereafter no longer be automatic, but will arrive at your bank by cheque, addressed personally and confidentially to an employee at your bank whom you must nominate.



Be aware that it is an offence under the Postal Act for any other person to open such an envelope. Please find attached an Application Contact Status which I require your chosen employee to complete. I am sorry it runs to eight pages, but in order that I know as much about him or her as your bank knows about me, there is no alternative. Please note that all copies of his or her medical history must be countersigned by a Solicitor, and the mandatory details of his/her financial situation (income,

debts, assets and liabilities) must be accompanied by documented proof.

In due course, I will issue your employee with PIN number which he/she must quote in dealings with me. I regret that it cannot be shorter than 28 digits but, again, I have modelled it on the number of button presses required of me to access my account balance on your phone bank service. As they say, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Let me level the playing field even further.

When you call me, press buttons as follows:

1. To make an appointment to see me.
2. To query a missing payment.
3. To transfer the call to my living room in case I am there.
4. To transfer the call to my bedroom in case I am sleeping.
5. To transfer the call to my toilet in case I am attending to nature.

6. To transfer the call to my mobile phone if I am not at home.

7. To leave a message on my computer (a password to access my computer is required. A password will be communicated to you at a later date to the Authorized Contact.)

8. To return to the main menu and to listen to options 1 through to 8.

9. To make a general complaint or inquiry, the contact will then be put on hold, pending the attention of my automated answering service. While this may, on occasion, involve a lengthy wait, uplifting music will play for the duration of the call.

Regrettably, but again following your example, I must also levy an establishment fee to cover the setting up of this new arrangement.

May I wish you a happy, if ever so slightly less prosperous, New Year.

Your Humble Client.

AEA has now moved into the world of social networking!

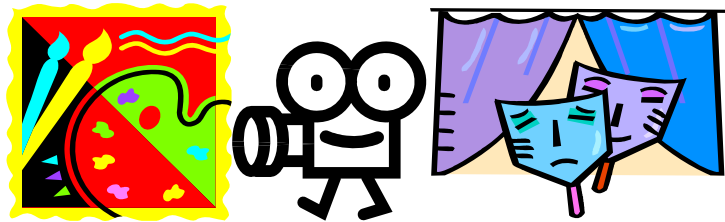
Alex Withnall, who is a very experienced Facebook user – I now know loads about her activities from her Facebook posts – has set us up with both an AEA Facebook page and a Linked in account.

You can join us on Facebook at

<https://www.facebook.com/EducationandAgeing>

Feel free to post your comments, perhaps start a debate on a topic to do with education and ageing and indeed to “Like” us.

If you are not already on LinkedIn, please do join. Alex aims to use this to create a global network for exchange of knowledge and ideas. A number of AEA members are already on this social network and it’s easy to post your comments. To join, just put LinkedIn into the Google search engine, sign up and then put Association for Education and Ageing into the search box.



AEA DIGEST CULTURE SECTION



Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC) is delighted to invite amateur artists over 60 to submit entries for the EAC Over 60s Art Awards 2012.

The EAC Over 60 Art Awards looks to celebrate and reward the creative talents of artists over the age of 60. The 2012 Art Awards sees a number of exciting changes including a reduction in entry fees and an increase in the total number of prizes to be awarded.



Harlequinade. By Colin Finlay Hayes, one of last year's entrants

With the major aim of encouraging more entries this year, EAC is delighted to announce **a reduction in the entry fees to £5 per work**. Artists are invited to

submit up to 5 works for consideration by the distinguished panel of judges, which includes Dr Sally Bulgin and Ingrid Lyons, Editors, The Artist and Leisure Painter Magazines, and a representative from EAC. The deadline for entries, both online and by post is 31st December 2012, by 5pm.

Following a generous grant from the John Ellerman Foundation, another key objective this year is to achieve a significant increase in the number of people who enter the Awards online. In this way we aim to promote the benefits of 'Getting Connected', and hope that the Art Awards will prove an enjoyable – and not too frustrating! – route to using a computer.

All works submitted will be viewable on the online gallery at www.eacartawards.org.uk, where last year's entrants are currently on show.

The prizes, now increased to a total of 34, include a series of awards within two specific artist groups: beginners and more experienced artists. The prize categories include: Landscape, Seascape, Still Life, Craft, Sculpture and

Photography, amongst others. Further prizes include The Angela Farnell Memorial Prize of £500, awarded for the best entries from artists living in sheltered/retirement housing or a care home or who entered through a day centre; and The Art & Wellbeing Prize of £250, awarded to an individual whose artistic activities have had a positive affect on their recovery from illness or a life changing event. We also want to encourage people of all ages to interact with Art Awards online by voting in the People's Choice Award and by commenting on works in the gallery.

Since their inception the Awards have attracted many thousands of entries and have created an informal 'community of artists', with whom EAC communicates through newsletters and websites. We hope to continue to build our community and that those who enter or who visit the online galleries will help us spread the word!



Another of last year's entries – *A Sheepish Grin* by David Blinkhorn

The prize-giving event will be held in February at the House of Lords. Finalists will be invited to a buffet lunch and awards ceremony to celebrate their work, which will be displayed photographically on large screens in this iconic setting.

DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES: 31st DECEMBER 2012, by 5pm
TO ENTER: www.eacartawards.org.uk

For further details regarding EAC Over 60's Art Awards 2012 and how to enter:
 T. 01242 527434
 E. artawardsenquiries@eac.org.uk
 W. www.eacartawards.org.uk

*Someone who should be entering the EAC Over 60's Art Awards is AEA member **Howard Gilbert**, seen here hard at work on one of his paintings.*



*Apart from a short course when he was a young teacher on teaching art in case of staff shortage, plus a bit of scene painting for the school play, Howard had never lifted an artistic brush. Until about four years ago, when he was doing a computer course, spotted a water colour class in session nearby and joined that. He has now moved on to **Working with Acrylics**. Here he explains why.*

Watercolour, I discovered, is delicate but almost perfidious by nature. After persevering for two years I nearly gave up painting. My artist daughter then suggested acrylics. Three years ago I began. Short four or five day courses,

have encouraged me to be adventurous and indeed skilled in producing pictures that I am proud to show friends and neighbours. This summer I completed a commission to do a painting of a friend's garden (*see below*)



So what are the virtues of acrylic? I suspect they offer many of the advantages of oils but without the problems of slow drying and vapour inhalation, but are similarly versatile. The paint is water based and cheaper and hand control and dexterity are less demanding than with watercolour. Errors, mistakes are more easily corrected. For an older person starting or, as I was, without experience for six and a half decades – perhaps for any age – the medium is sympathetic and encouraging.

What have I gained and where has it taken me so far? Firstly it has given me the confidence that, “I can do it”. My early, rudimentary introduction to painting left me in the end with knowledge that might just be adequate for classroom display. My artistic endeavours were very modest when compared with my contemporaries who brushed on paint with wondrous panache and fine results.

Secondly, I have acquired a deeper insight into a world previously glimpsed

rather than seen. A great deal of pleasure, enjoyment and life satisfaction has come through other people's completed works. Meeting and sharing ideas and practice this with others stimulates personal progress. There are always some who are further along the road than me. That is a real bonus. Learning to work boldly and be patient in achieving the sought outcome. Plus I have gained an understanding and a renewal of my mind to impressionism, post impressionism, modernism and the worlds of abstract and post-abstract art.

Thirdly I have learned greater appreciation of some of the simple things in life. To take a break every three to four months from daily routines; to enjoy residence with a comfortable room, good food and congenial company. Then over meals to stretch the mind through conversation about art and the myriad of other art, craft, literary and music activities that make up programme of the College. All of this set in the beautiful landscape of the West Sussex Downs. Taken all together, these experiences add interest and excitement to my life course, as I approach my 90th year.

Howard has been taking his learning breaks in painting at West Dean College close to Chichester (six miles north There are over 700 short courses annually, in painting, pottery, sculpture and various crafts: metal, wood, jewellery, stone carving. Also photography, creative writing, music (including concerts), calligraphy, garden skills, food, and much more. Most take residential and non-residential participants. You must be 18 years and over. Good food, comfortable rooms. fine gardens, woodlands,

Visitor's Centre, rolling Sussex Downs countryside. Nearest station Chichester-Southern Rail and a taxi, although a free minibus services goes on Friday afternoon, returning Sunday, and occasionally mid-week.

For brochure ring: 01243-811301 or
e.mail: short.courses@westdean.org.uk
web-site: www.westdean.org.uk



Another of Howard's paintings, an abstract –
Passing Storm

Arts festivals for older people are a growth industry these days. For example there was the Capital Age festival in London in the summer, the annual Bealtaine Festival in Ireland in early summer and in October the whole of Scotland was in silver festival mode with Luminare – “celebrating creativity as we age”.

The festival was funded by Creative Scotland and the Baring Foundation in partnership with Age Scotland as part of a drive to increase the number of older people enjoying high quality arts activities - whether as artists, performers, participants or consumers. Every day throughout the month and throughout the whole of Scotland events involving older people enjoying arts activities as artists, performers, participants and consumers flourished side by side. Theatre, film, dance,

painting, playreadings, needlecraft, photography, story telling – you name it, Scotland in Luminare was doing it. Over 200 events in all nationwide. Just as an example the Olympia Theatre in Glasgow, originally a music hall, then a cinema, bingo hall, and furniture showroom, marked its redevelopment with an audio visual work using oral testimonies, archive and recent photograph to celebrate the regeneration of the surrounding area by bringing disused buildings back into community use.



The Olympia Theatre, Glasgow

I only found out by chance about Luminare, when a friend in Scotland suggested I offer them my older learners' film – sadly I was too late to get it in – so if you know of any more arts festivals or other forms of arts projects designed for older people, do please let me know, if possible with a contact e-mail or website, and I will be happy to publicise them in these pages.
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There's always something to celebrate in the world of London theatre. Reviews by Carlie Newman.

Rob Brydon is by far the best thing in *A Chorus of Disapproval* (Harold Pinter Theatre booking until 5 January 2013.)

Brydon is Dafydd ap Llewellyn, the director of the amateur dramatic company rehearsing a production of *The Beggar's Opera*. Alan Ayckbourn's play, first performed in 1984, is directed here by Trevor Nunn.



Nigel Harman, Rob Brydon and Ashley Jensen in *A Chorus of Disapproval* – photo Alastair Muir

Ayckbourn cleverly uses the plot and scenes from the play within a play to develop the story of the sexual and business intrigues of the local amateur society. The cast work hard to bring life to the play but it seems rather tame and not as amusing as Ayckbourn's comedies usually are. There are, however, some lovely moments such as Bryden singing *All Through the Night* in Welsh!

NOTE: throughout the run there will be over 100 seats available for £10, many bookable in advance).

When I saw *The Judas Kiss* at Hampstead Theatre in October, I finished the piece I wrote about it at that time with the words, "The play is more than worthy of a West End transfer." Which is now happening. For those of you who didn't manage to catch it then, from 9 January 2013 at the Duke of York's Theatre, one of our greatest writers - this time Irish – is shown in two life-changing episodes from his life.

After virtually walking through his part in the new film, *Hysteria*, Rupert Everett is superb as Oscar Wilde in this revival of David Hare's 1998 play, now directed by Neil Armfield. He is neither camp nor over-flamboyant but genuinely moving

In the first act we see the middle aged Oscar, following the failure of his libel suit against the Marquess of Queensberry, ordering and eating a luxurious meal at the Cadogan hotel in 1895. In his inter-action with his young lover, Lord Alfred Douglas, known as Bosie, (Freddie Fox) Wilde treats his peculiar views as equally important to those of his long-term friend, Robbie Ross (Cal MacAninch), who desperately wants Wilde to leave England for safety in France. "I've always had a low opinion of action," says Oscar, who refuses go into exile to save himself from a prison sentence.



Freddie Fox and Rupert Everett – photo Manuel Harlan

In the second act, a broken Wilde, having served his two years in prison, is back with Bosie, who has invited Oscar to join him in Naples. Bosie has no money to support the now broke Wilde but tries to carry on a gay life-style. Some of the audience seemed very excited at the sight of the handsome naked fisherman (Tom Colley), who is most at ease sitting and talking to Oscar. It is only now that Wilde is able to

comprehend the true nature of his boy lover – his complete selfishness and self-absorption. By staying with Bosie Oscar loses the support of his wife. Everett's Wilde looks older and ill now. Fox as the good-looking and somewhat hysterical Bosie, who is used to having what he wants when he wants it, is effective though a little too screechy at times. The small parts are all played as real people not just caricatures and the set design manages to depict the two different settings admirably. I advise booking now as tickets are already being snaffled up! Highly recommended.

*News and reviews from Carol Allen of what is currently **On Screen**.*

Continuing my ongoing theme about how the cinema is beginning to reflect to some degree what is going on the “real world” in terms of stories featuring older characters, at the recent London Film Festival one of my fellow critics remarked how the problems of old age seemed to be a big theme this year. She had a point. There was *Quartet*, about ageing opera singers in a retirement home for musicians; *Robot and Frank* in which an elderly man is given a bossy robot butler/carer to keep him up to scratch; *Song for Marion* where grumpy pensioner Terence Stamp is persuaded by his ailing wife to join a choir; and *Amour*, the highly praised film from Michael Haneke, reviewed below. Coming soon is a new film with veteran Clint Eastwood, *Trouble with Curve*, about an elderly baseball scout who's losing his sight. Eastwood's taking it easy this time though. Just playing the starring role instead of directing.

Turning to *Amour*, this is a very beautiful film about an elderly couple Georges and Anne. It's a tough film to watch though, as you realise from the opening shot of Anne, found dead in their rambling and elegant Paris apartment. We then flash back to the still happy marriage they are enjoying in retirement, until one day Anne suffers a stroke. She returns from hospital semi paralysed, wheelchair bound and dependent on her husband for her basic needs but still able to speak and reason. The film then follows her gradual deterioration into dementia and total helplessness, as Georges struggles both to care for her and to cope with fact the woman he has loved for some half a century is disappearing before his eyes.



Jean-Louis Trintignant and Emmanuelle Riva

Their story is austere and disturbingly shot, often in long, static takes which spare us none of the harsh realities of the situation and after Anne's illness begins, it never moves out of the apartment, as the outside world begins to lose all meaning. Jean-Louis Trintignant and Emmanuelle Riva, both stars of French cinema from their young days, play the couple impeccably and movingly with occasional appearances from Isabelle Huppert as their daughter. Haneke is now 70 – he made his breakthrough movie *Funny Games* in his mid fifties –

and this film is being hailed with some good reason as his masterpiece.

A Simple Life from Hong Kong director Ann Hui tells the story of Ah Tao, who has spent her entire life as servant to a family, most of whom have emigrated to the US. She still devotedly serves the youngest son Roger, who takes her ministrations for granted. When Ah Tao suffers a stroke however the relationship changes, as Roger takes charge of getting her into the care home she requests, visiting her and caring for her, until the relationship becomes like that of a son caring for his mother. Andy Lau (*House of the Flying Daggers*) plays opposite his real life god mother Deanie Ip. The film also offers an interesting picture of care of the elderly in Hong Kong, in a society which traditionally reveres and cares for older members of the family. It is now available on DVD.



The Sapphires - Deborah Mailman, Miranda Tapsall Jessica Mauboy, Shari Sebbens,

The Sapphires is a delightful film from Australia based on the true story of four Aboriginal young women, who formed a soul sisters group in 1968 and went to Vietnam to entertain the troops. Irish actor Chris Dowd plays the shambling, alcoholic promoter who discovers them. It's a well trodden theme but treated here with refreshing spontaneity and given a tough edge and sense of drama by the

Vietnam war setting and the racism of sixties Australia. One of the group Kay, who can "pass for white" was a victim as a child of the Australian government's policy, which was the subject of another excellent Australian film *Rabbit Proof Fence*, of taking mixed race children away from their families and raising them as white – a situation which brings her into conflict with the other members of the group. The performances from The Sapphires actors, played by actresses who are largely unknown outside Australia, are totally engaging and full of verve and spirit, while the singing is a total joy.

Yet another film of Dickens' *Great Expectations* is about to open, following perhaps a little too hard on the heels of the excellent television version last year. Director Mike Newell's version is a handsome looking and pretty faithful dramatisation of the book - not particularly innovative but worth seeing for its good cast. Ralph Fiennes is Magwitch, Pip's unexpected convict benefactor; Helena Bonham Carter is lively and malicious as Miss Havisham, giving her more than a touch of the role she voiced some years ago in Tim Burton's *Corpse Bride* and Jeremy Irvine handsome and appealing as the hero, Pip.



Helena Bonham Carter as Miss Havisham

The latest issue of the **International Journal of Education and Ageing** (Volume 2 Number 3 2012) is now available.

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