



WEA Lothian Local Association

Annual Report 2013-2014



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Founded in 1903 to open up education for working people the Workers' Educational Association is a leading national, voluntary sector provider of adult education in the workplace and in the community.



Contents

Chair's Report	3
WEA Theatre Study Groups	4
The WEA Lothian Women's Forum	5
Exploring Books	8
Book Talk.....	9
The Diggers' Writers Group.....	9
Education Development Manager's Report	10



Chair's Report

In this report you'll find out about all our activities over the past year. It makes for interesting reading. I'm always astounded by the amount and variety of classes, groups, projects and causes that WEA students get involved in; Chronicling World War I experiences through drama to visiting Wordsworth's Dove Cottage and delivering community learning and workplace literacies. It's all in the report and much more besides, including a weed spraying course! And our student groups continue to thrive with the Women's Forum, in particular, busy on many fronts.

It's been a time of change with our Tutor Organiser, Elizabeth Bryan, moving on to work with AGE Scotland. We wish her well. She leaves behind lots of good memories. Tim Green is now in post and is developing lots of new work with great enthusiasm.

There will be more changes ahead, with a move from Riddle's Court on the cards. Wherever we set up home we will continue to offer educational opportunities to a wide range of people and work closely with other like-minded agencies.

I'd like to conclude by thanking everyone who contributes to the work of the WEA; the staff, volunteers and students.

John McCaughie
Chair, WEA Lothian Association Committee

WEA Theatre Study Groups

Over three terms, twenty-four weeks, we discussed, attended and then reviewed twenty-one plays. Eight visits were made to the Traverse where we enjoyed productions, mainly new plays, performed by a multi-talented group of young actors beginning to make their way in the acting profession. This was followed by the Lyceum where we saw all six plays in their season. Most of the productions were of a very high standard. The groups particularly enjoyed David Haig's *Pressure* about how a meteorologist's weather predictions influenced the timing of the D Day landings. Both groups also enjoyed revivals of *Crime & Punishment*; and *Long Day's Journey into Night*. We were less impressed by the Glasgow Citizens' *Miss Julie* or by the Traverse's *Confessions of Gordon Brown*. The Brunton's *Trials of Oscar Wilde* and *Entertaining Mr Sloane* went down well with both groups.

Both classes continue to attract high student enrolments – twenty-six students in each class for the autumn & winter terms and only a slight reduction for our six week summer term. Many of our students have attended for a number of years but we are gradually trying to offer places to new students and, if necessary, we will operate a waiting list in the next class year in the hope that we might be able to accommodate them should numbers adjust.

Given the high number of enrolments between the two classes we have been able to peg enrolment fees at £42 & £20 for the second year running. We are mindful that students also need to pay for their theatre tickets. They seem to become more expensive year on year. Nevertheless, we are well able to pay tutor fees & expenses and for the room hire at the Eric Liddell Centre and at Riddle's Court for the last summer term and possibly the autumn '14 term.

We are aware that the Tuesday class will need to move out of Riddle's Court at the end of this year. We do hope that WEA Scotland will be able to secure accommodation that is reasonably central so that students, coming from all over Edinburgh and beyond, can still attend classes without too many bus changes.

In June many of us joined students from the Book Groups on a holiday to the Lake District, courtesy of James Ellison & Liz Hare. Among the visits were to Wordsworth's Dove Cottage & John Ruskin's Brantwood House. Great time had by all.

Finally, thanks once more to Liz Hare for running such an enjoyable and stimulating course.

Selby Wands
Chair of Theatre Study Groups Committee

The WEA Lothian Women's Forum

Edinburgh Women's Trail

Research has been ongoing since the 2012 - 2013 session for our proposed Edinburgh Women's Trail, initially with a view to making a series of postcards to follow on from our calendar

(<http://www.latebloomers.co.uk/wforum/weacalendar/index.html>); also discussions about the format the trail may take, including a digital version.

- This has involved gathering information from online sources such as the Famous Briton Site, Wikipedia list of Famous People from Edinburgh, women already represented on the *Memorials to Women* site run by the Glasgow Women's Library, and the *Women's Suffrage Biographies* from the Museum of Edinburgh..
- The group took advantage of the many talks and exhibitions which have been taking place this year, to gain insight into the lives and achievements of women in various contexts:
 1. Talks and discussions included those organised by the Edinburgh Central Library e.g. their Edinburgh Read's Extraordinary Women Series including *Petticoats to Professionals: Edinburgh School of Gardening for Women*; *Leith Stories – Strong women who achieve the impossible*; *Women are not hidden from history: how to find them*; Also Vision 2020's *Women in Warfare* discussion hosted by the Scottish Parliament.
 2. Exhibitions and conferences included the DRB Scottish Women's History Group's exhibition *Women on the Platform* at the Museum of Edinburgh, celebrating four 19th century Quaker women (Elizabeth Pease Nichol, Priscilla Bright McLaren, Jane Smeal and Eliza Wigham) who campaigned for the emancipation of slaves and the fight for votes for women; the *Women of Science* exhibition at the National Library of Scotland; the **Words and Deeds: Women, Warfare and Caregiving** exhibition at the Surgeon's Hall Museum (featuring women from the Crimean War until the Second World War); the *Dangerous Women* Conference at the Pearce Institute in Glasgow, remembering the brave women who campaigned against the First World War and for gender and social justice (Chrystal Macmillan, Mary Balfour, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Women's Cooperative Guild...); the Glasgow Women's Library / Gallery of Modern Art exhibition at the Central Library with items from their *Illuminated Letters* project...
- The group has also looked at other existing trails such as the Edinburgh University Heritage Trail, the *Edinburgh Women's Achievement Trail*; the

Dundee Women's Trail and the Glasgow Women's Library West End Women's Heritage Trail...

- A list of useful places to search for information both on and off-line, as well as lists of women with links to Edinburgh, have been compiled to give a starting point for research.
- To this end we also organised members' workshops. These included workshops from Margaret Ferguson Burns on Using, Editing and Creating Wikipedia entries and Using and Contributing to Memorials to Women, the site run by the Glasgow Women's Library; also from Tiana Sidey on Using the our Discussion Forum and Contributing to our own temporary webpages where we record our research materials and findings: <http://www.latebloomers.co.uk/WEALothians/index.php>

Frances Jane Pringle, Mrs Albert Mansbridge

The research generally led one of us to compile a new Wikipedia entry for Frances Jane Pringle, Mrs Albert Mansbridge, and an amended entry for Albert Mansbridge to include Frances's role in the formation of the WEA. Albert came to Edinburgh for a meeting, at the Free Gardener's Hall in Picardy Place, which led to the formation of the Edinburgh and Leith Branch of the WEA. Unfortunately so far there is no evidence that Frances was ever in Edinburgh. Even if she was unable to be included in an Edinburgh Women's Trail, which would only include women with associations to Edinburgh, it would seem appropriate at a time when women's roles in all areas of life are being explored, discovered and commemorated, that Frances be more widely celebrated.

Breaking the Mould project

Before departing to her new job at the beginning of the year, Elizabeth Bryan, Area Tutor Organiser based at Riddle's Court, made a successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the new WEA *Breaking the Mould* project. The application was endorsed by the Gude Cause Project, acknowledging the link between the WEA's involvement in Gude Cause, with its numerous courses and workshops and the Breaking the Mould project in continuing to develop interest in and recognition of the contribution and achievements of women across all aspects of life.

Since then we have been planning our engagement in this project. The Edinburgh theme is *Community and Political Awakening* focussing on women who were active during the century from the First World War. As one of two Edinburgh groups, our particular group will look at Edinburgh women from all walks of life, some of whom may be included in our Edinburgh Women's Trail at a later date. Planning has included the content, setting up venues, publicity, identifying and approaching target groups and partners, possible dates and times, speakers, workshops, the appointment of a tutor and setting

up a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/WEABreakingthemould>). There will also be a Writers' Workshop to develop a booklet about the women, based on our research.

With thanks

With special thanks and best wishes in her new job to Elizabeth Bryan who was very supportive of the Lothian Women's Forum. Special thanks also to Janette Bond for her support of the forum and within the organisation generally – and welcome to Tim Green who started on 1st April as Education Development Manager.

Margaret Ferguson Burns
Forum Member



Exploring Books

The year started with a theatre trip to with members of Book Talk and Theatre Studies to Stratford – Upon-Avon. The two excellent productions we saw were As You Like It and Titus Andronicus. The latter still very enjoyable despite the gore fest! The year ended with a literary holiday to the Lake District both ably led and organised by Dr James Ellison and our Tutor Liz Hare. Between these two trips Exploring Books had three terms of expertly facilitated discussion on a wide range of books with Liz Hare. In the spring term Exploring Books and Book Talk had previously decided to focus on the literature of America and Canada, the books read were 'The Bell Jar', Sylvia Plath, 'Fugitive Pieces', Anne Michaels, 'The Bridge of San Luis Rey', Thornton Wilder and 'Stoner' by John Williams. For some of us it meant reading books that we had always meant to read or revisiting those that we had previously read. In voting for the books for the spring term we had so many that almost made in onto list that we used the next four on the list for our summer term's reading. Between us we managed to choose an interesting selection of books for all three terms.

The quality of the discussion of the books could not have happened without the detailed research that Liz Hare undertakes before each session and her expertise in leading our class for which we are all very grateful.

We have met mainly in the Central Library, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, carrying on with the bookings that Elizabeth Bryan had organised in 2012 – 2013. The free use of the Library rooms has meant that we have been able to underwrite some of the costs of 'Book Talk' who continue to meet in the Eric Liddell Centre. Fortunately due to an increase in numbers 'Book Talk' are no longer in need of our financial support.

When the library has been unavailable due to parts of it being refurbished we have been able to book rooms in the Quaker Meeting House or the Augustine Centre, both of which are very close to what we consider to be our main base, Riddle's Court. Autumn Term 2014 we will be meeting in the Conference Room, Central Library.

At the last meeting of the summer term the committee was unanimously re-elected, Anne Scott, Chair, Barbara Badger, Treasurer and Christine Gear, Secretary. After which we went out for our annual end of year meal.

Anne Scott, Chair Exploring Books

Book Talk

Book Talk had enjoyable autumn and winter terms with membership of 14-15, including one or two new faces. We were generally happy with book choices democratically chosen but have looked at ways of including "near miss" choices and otherwise improving our system of choice. Though a summer term is not viable for us in financial terms, to avoid too long a break over the summer, we kept the group going over May and June on an informal basis, for those able to attend. This was very enjoyable on a short term basis, those whose books we read hosting the relevant sessions. We hope to repeat it next year.

Rosemary Macleod, Secretary.

The Diggers' Writers Group

The Diggers' Writers is a group of poetry and prose writers who meet weekly to discuss our writing and to offer constructive criticism. There are around ten of us, with six who attend on a regular basis. However the group's highlight of last year had nothing to do with writing; we appeared on BBC2 flagship quiz programme *Eggheads* and although we didn't win we had a great time. Looking back over the past 12 months we've all been busy writing, performing and getting published. Louise performed a poetry set at the Festival Fringe in August and Jim had commissions for plays, one of which was performed at the Leith Festival. Nancy's poems have been published in National Collective's Zine and Red Squirrel Press will publish volume 2 of Mike's fantasy saga, *Mangel Eve* later this year.

23 Mackays is a collection of stories by John which has just been published. It's been a great year for Jo whose autobiography was published recently, the launch for which was hosted by Richard Holloway. She's giving readings around the country as part of the promotion for the book; *Skydiving for Beginners*.

In addition Nancy, Mike and Louise have given readings at various venues in Edinburgh; Blind Poetics, Shore Poets, TenRed and the Art Cave. Susan has received a Special Merit for one of her poems in the National Galleries of Scotland competition. And finally, Kath won a short story competition run by the Scottish Association of Writers.

Sadly, Paul passed away suddenly last July aged just 54; a fine man and a talented writer. We miss him very much. His book of short stories, *Carousel* is available on Amazon.

Mike Dillon

Chairperson, Diggers' Writers Group

Education Development Manager's Report

This has been another year of change for the WEA in Edinburgh and the Lothians. Elizabeth Bryan moved on to join Age Scotland after seventeen years' service. Elizabeth's dynamism and effectiveness in championing adult education and adult learners is greatly missed by members, learners, staff and partners. Elizabeth is a tough act to follow and this report celebrates Elizabeth's achievements in 2013/2014. We delivered 100 courses and 1179 people took part in our Open, Community and Workplace Learning programmes; one off talks; special events; and exhibitions.

The **Open Programme** has continued to attract high enrolments. Classes included: Art Workshop; Playwrights Workshop; Exploring Edinburgh; History on the Hoof; Getting the Most Out Of Your Computer; Scottish Literature; Embroidery; the History of Scottish Pottery; Walking the Line of the Flodden Wall; Cannae Ban Polaris When It's Raining; Researching the WEA Scotland Archives; and Women in Portraiture Study Day. The Talk Scotland course explored politics in Scotland and its impact on our everyday lives. The group discussed their hopes for the future of Scotland examining whether Independence or the Union will help us to achieve our goals.

The ever popular book and theatre studies student groups continue to go from strength to strength attracting new members on the way.

We delivered three well-attended **Preparation for Retirement courses** for older workers planning for this important new life stage. As well as group discussions each course included inputs on finance, good mental health, learning and volunteering opportunities and study visits to Central, Library National Museums Scotland and National Galleries Scotland to explore future interests and opportunities.

We are very grateful to our colleagues in the City of Edinburgh Council Community Learning and Development (CLD) and Edinburgh City Libraries for continuing to help us access good central meeting spaces for the Open Programme and Student Group classes both in Riddle's Court and the in Central Library. By way of a thank you and to acknowledge the WEA's great affection for Riddle's Court, a building we've been holding classes in since 1918, the Stitching Together Six Centuries of Riddle's Court History Group finally saw their vibrant wall hanging in situ over the fireplace in the main hall of the new Patrick Geddes Centre for Learning and Conservation. The wall hanging was designed by one of the group's tutors, artist Rebecca Mackay. Each of the 17 hand stitched panels depicts a different chapter in the life of this remarkable building. The top panel is shown as an open book with blank

pages still to be written by the people of Edinburgh as the building begins a new life. The wall hanging was framed by the Greyfriars Recycling of Wood project which provides work, training and enhanced life opportunities for people who have experience long term social exclusion.

We delivered a number of **Community Learning** courses and projects in partnership with voluntary and community organisations in the City of Edinburgh. Courses included: Adult Learners' Political Education; Jewellery Making Workshop for Care for Carers Day; Care For Carers; Another Right Guid Laugh; Care for Carers - Scottish Comedy Writers; Care for Carers Women's History Reminiscence Workshop; Children's Development and Learning: An Introduction; Children's Development and Learning: An Introduction - Babes from birth to 1 year; Power to the People and Write Round the Referendum in North Edinburgh; Dumbiedykes: A Community Worth Preserving; The Big Vote Referendum on Scottish Independence; Writers Come Forth!; and Reminiscence Programme, Livingston 50 discussion group.

Now in its thirteenth successive year, our Workplace Literacies Edinburgh Project, funded by the City of Edinburgh Council, has continued to provide a range of learning opportunities for workers returning to learning to improve their communication skills and perhaps work towards a qualification. This year, 36 ESOL and 84 literacies learners took part in our **Workplace Literacies and Workplace ESOL** (English for Speakers of Other Languages) programmes in Edinburgh and the Lothians. With employers' support, most courses have been held in the workplace and in work time.

Council Weedspraying

We delivered another course for the City of Edinburgh Council staff who are going on to do the 3-day course, leading to the weedspraying qualification. 9 staff attended, and revised their school arithmetic, including units of measurement (metres, litres, grams), calculating area, calculating volume of water to pesticide. This was a practical session, where staff calculated the area of various rooms, measured quantities of liquid into jugs, and much more. The tutor was also on hand during the final morning of the course, when staff were preparing for the practical test.

Before this introduction to the course was included, the pass rate for the qualification was fairly low. It is now 90% or more.

City of Edinburgh Council Health and Social Care

For Health and Social Care of City of Edinburgh Council, four types of course were provided. The first was Starting Points, which provides a qualification in Communication at SCQF Level 4. The second was a more advanced qualification, at SCQF Level 6: participants had received literacy support in past years with WEA, then gone on to do Starting Points, and progressed to do the level 6 course.

A group of Health and Social Care staff, whose second language is English, received tuition to improve their English (ESOL) for working in the care sector. The 8-week course was divided into two sections, to allow for work commitments.

With Jackie Sloan, Learning and Development Advisor, City of Edinburgh Council, WEA ran joint sessions for care staff around writing Life Stories for care home residents. As a result of this partnership, we were able to provide literacies courses around this theme for staff in 3 care homes. Staff said: "Have an enthusiasm for life stories and am more confident in doing life stories..." "It has made me think more about individual clients and their past history..." "Enabled me to get to know people better."

ESOL for hotel staff

We delivered English language classes in 4 hotels and 1 restaurant, for a variety of staff. These included dining room and bar staff, housekeeping staff and kitchen staff. Staff in one hotel were awarded the Adult Learners' Award for Working Life, at a presentation in the City Chambers in May this year.



Workers at the King's Manor Hotel, Edinburgh, were presented with certificates by Councillor Vicki Redpath, after winning the Edinburgh Adult Education Award for Working Life. The presentation was made at an award ceremony, where Marco Biagi, MSP, made the keynote address, in Edinburgh City Chambers on 21st May 2014.

NHS

Our partnership with The NHS Healthy Working Lives Team and Unison has continued to thrive. A wide range of courses were delivered at various NHS Lothian sites, including basic computer skills, English for non-native speakers, support for dyslexic employees. Some members of staff got a SQA qualification in Communication, and received their certificates at a presentation in the Royal Edinburgh Hospital.

To help overcome the difficulty of access to IT equipment and internet, Unison very generously provided us with a £1000 grant to purchase IT equipment including tablets, 2 wireless dongles and Wi-Fi credit.

Saheliya

Work continued with black and ethnic minority women, some of whom received support for their literacy and English, related to a childcare course they were following.

Thank you to WEA South East Edinburgh staff: Janette Bond, Lorraine Borwick and Jessie Harrington; and all our tutors, learners, members, partners, and funders, for the many things they have contributed to another successful year of WEA adult and worker education in Edinburgh and the Lothians. Our work is ably assisted by our volunteers, Gordon Crandles, Evelyn Muir and Stephen Horton.

Tim Green, 22nd September 2014





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◆ EDINBURGH ◆

THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

Thanks to the City of Edinburgh Council, supporters of the WEA in Edinburgh since 1912.

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