

# Scottish Child

June/July 1993

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## THE IMPRISONED FAMILY

"I was convicted but my  
family served a  
sentence too."

**GROWING  
STRONG**  
Kilquhanity  
School - 53  
years young

**WHERE HAVE ALL  
THE PLAYSCHMES  
GONE?**

We investigate

**ZERO TOLERANCE**  
Hitting back at  
domestic violence

**HERE  
COMES  
SUMMER!**

ISSN 0950-4176

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**Airdrie Refuge • Teeth • Babies for Sale**

# IN MANY COUNTRIES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, CHILDREN ARE IMPRISONED, TORTURED AND KILLED



Sue Cunningham

## WE NEED YOUR HELP TO FIGHT FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE INNOCENT

In Brazil alone, 7 million children fend for themselves on the streets. These children are subject to arrest, torture and killing by the police, who are under constant pressure to "clean up the streets", and the ever-present threat of the Death Squads.

Sadly, children throughout the world face arrest, detention and death. Some face reprisals because of the activities of their relatives or friends. Some have been taken from their mothers and forcibly adopted by strangers. Some "disappear" and are never seen again. All need your help.

You can give that help by joining Amnesty International's Working Group for Children. We raise public awareness of the plight of child victims of human rights abuses. We expose those responsible for these abuses and press governments to honour national and international laws protecting children's rights. We help those who cannot help themselves. And you can help us do it.

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Please return this form (plus any cheque made payable to Amnesty International) to Amnesty International, Scottish Office, Edinburgh University Settlement, 5/1 Bristo Square, EH8 9AL



# Scottish Child

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Scottish Child is a non-profit making co-operative involved in publishing, training and event organisation that promotes an understanding of the importance of children and childhood in society

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## Basic Rights Information for Young People in Scotland 1993.

A new edition of this booklet published by The Rights Office in Edinburgh, (last produced in 1988), will be released shortly.

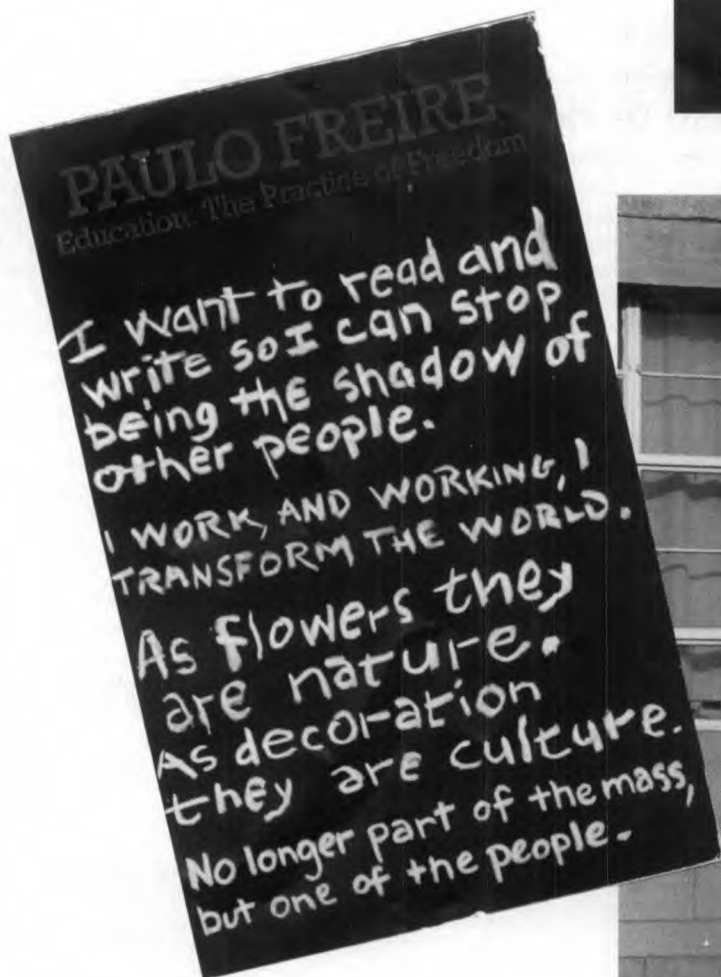
The booklet is an extremely useful source of information and advice for young people and those who work with them. It has been extensively revised, and covers topics such as the new Age of Legal Capacity legislation, the UN Convention on Children's Rights, bullying & abuse, the police, contraception, disability, benefits, HIV & AIDS, drugs, race and discrimination.

Copies of the new edition can be obtained soon by sending £2.00 plus 50p postage and packing, to:

The Legal Services Agency Ltd,  
11th Floor, Fleming House,  
134 Renfrew Street,  
Glasgow G3 6ST.  
Tel: 041 353 3354.



Copies will also be available in bookshops throughout Scotland, price £2.



## Coming Out of the Shadows

There is a book by the Brazilian educationalist, Paulo Freire, published by the Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative in 1973. Its title is *Education: The Practice of Freedom*. The cover design is quite simple: a black background and four sentences written by Brazilian peasants who were learning to read and write.

"I want to read and write so I can stop being the shadow of other people.

I work, and working, I transform the world.

As flowers they are nature. As decoration they are culture. No longer part of the mass but one of the people."

Freire's short book is what academics like to call a 'seminal work'. That's to say it sows the seeds for further thought, it tells you things you possibly already know in a way that makes you feel you are hearing them for the first time.

He writes most usefully about how 'men', (by which he means men and women), achieve their full status as human beings through acting on their world and not being simply towed along in the wake of history. He describes the move from a state of semi-awareness, when people are still submerged in myths, when their ability to argue coherently is 'fragile', to a state of critical consciousness.

As people begin to ally the emotional strength they get from their myths with their reasoning powers they become increasingly able to deal with whatever it is that is holding them back from the full realisation of themselves as human beings. The process of bringing alive the two sides of man's being, the thinking and the feeling, is the true task of education. It is education for freedom.

Until they reach this point, "Men are defeated and dominated, though they do not know it; they fear freedom, though they believe themselves to be free. They follow general formulas and prescriptions as if by their own choice. They are directed;

they do not direct themselves. Their creative power is impaired. They are objects not Subjects." He goes on, "For men to overcome this state, they must be enabled to reflect about it. But since authentic reflection cannot exist apart from action, men must also act to transform their concrete reality."

Perhaps Freire's analysis of education is too abstract for the age we now live in? It certainly has an idealism about it that feels far removed from the education-for-training-for-jobs that governments are so keen to promote and fund. That's hardly surprising, since education conceived of as Freire does is a tool of revolution, not of obedient conformity.

In a modest way every issue of *Scottish Child* is also about education and the practice of freedom. This issue there's a lot about education itself - how people learn, whether they're kids in a classroom at Kilquhanity in the south-west of Scotland, a group of men organising their own courses in a room in Aberdeen or a crowd of excited children planning a holiday in Denmark with their play-scheme leaders. There's education in the findings of the questionnaire in Edinburgh District Council Women's Unit 'Zero Tolerance' campaign against violence against women, the campaign to keep Airdrie refuge open or to improve conditions in high-rise flats.

Perhaps most of all though, the extract from Joe McGrath's speech at our May conference in Govan on *The Imprisoned Family*, epitomises the struggle for self-expression and self-determination of which Freire speaks and which underpins what this magazine attempts to do: to give people the means to understand their reality more clearly, to know that others think in like terms and to begin from there to gain strength to change things for the better.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'R. C. M. G.', is written at the bottom right of the page.

## Mouthwash or Hogwash?

### DENTAL HEALTH

With a particularly bad record of dental decay in Scotland any breakthrough that might reduce the number of children losing their teeth has got to be good news. So if you haven't already heard, here it is - chewing sugar-free gum could be doing a lot of good for healthy teeth!

From a mixture of health education and toothpaste commercials most of us nowadays have gleaned a rough idea of what causes tooth decay and gum disease - It's the acid that is produced when the sticky film of bacteria that builds up on our teeth feeds on the sugar we

knowingly (and sometimes unwittingly) put in our mouths. This process, if unchecked, then dissolves the teeth's protective enamel as well as making our gums inflamed.

Traditional dental health education already teaches us to control our intake of sugar and make the most of brushing to reduce the amount of acid produced. Sensible additional fluoride whether in tablets, toothpaste or water supplies can also help by strengthening the enamel. However, it is only recently that the dental profession has seriously considered ways of stimulating saliva flow to make the most of the natural neutralising effects of the bicarbonate of soda that it contains.

Researchers at **Glasgow**

**University Dental School** have also begun monitoring how this natural protection can be improved in relation to the volume of saliva produced. Although it normally takes up to two hours for saliva to do its work they have found that stimulated saliva can do the job much faster. They have also shown that chewing and flavour are the most effective stimulants for producing saliva. So now most dentists are in agreement that chewing sugar-free gum for 20 minutes after eating meals or snacks could be part of a good dental routine.

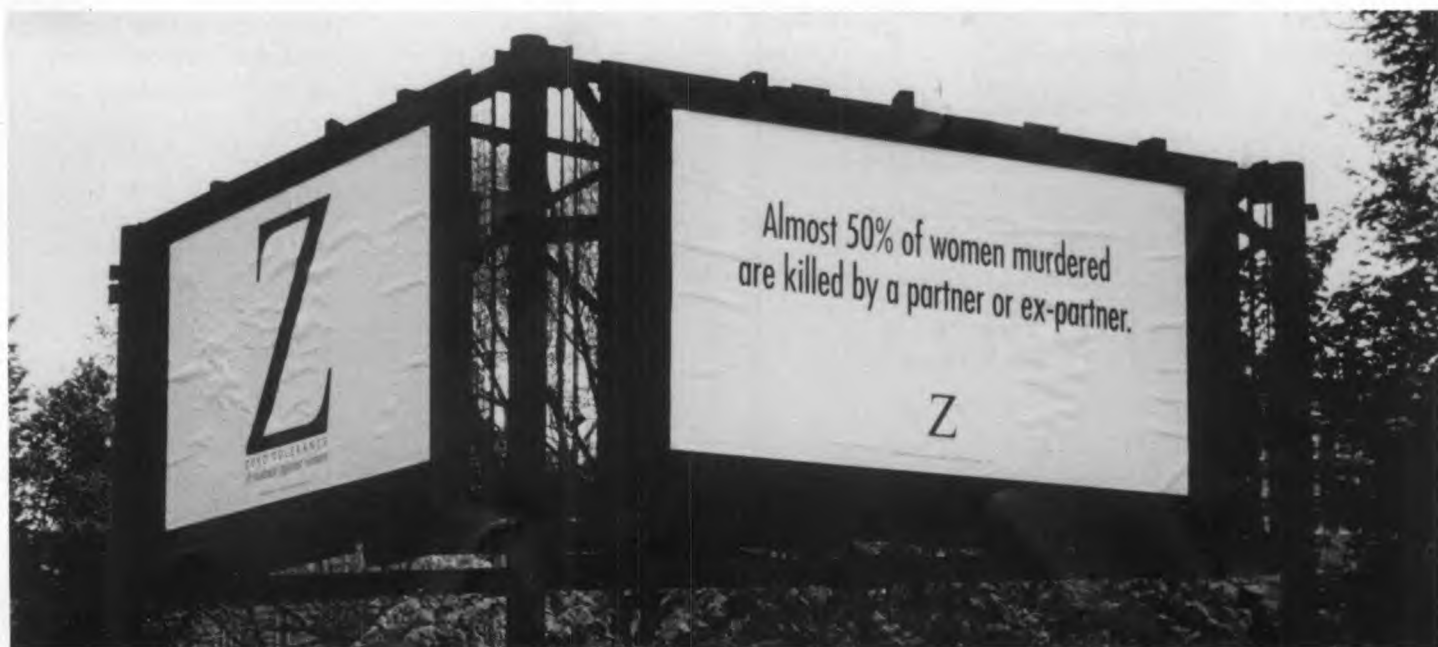
If the thought of all this gum-chewing has you squirming at the prospect of finding little hard lumps on the bedpost overnight (or under the desks in the

morning) perhaps you'd be happier to see Scottish dentists adopt the practise of progressive American colleagues who now routinely measure the saliva production of their patients. Having identified those with poor saliva flow they then invite them to more regular check-ups.

In an effort to assist this groundbreaking scientific research Scottish Child asked a group of children aged between 5 and 14 what they think makes their mouth water the most. Their answers may provide dentists with further food for thought: marshmallows, melon, gateaux, lollies, tablet, oranges, salt and vinegar crisps, chicken nuggets, water and Erica (lucky Erica!)

**Aileen Bruce**





## ZERO TOLERANCE

Is a man ever justified in beating his wife?

This is the kind of question that was asked by a 1992 survey carried out by the **Edinburgh District Council Women's Committee** of students attending three Edinburgh secondary schools. The survey followed a 1989 broad-based consultation of women living in Edinburgh which rated violence against them as the top priority for the Women's Committee to tackle. The school survey's aim was to evaluate the accuracy of young people's knowledge of the use of physical force against women and children and to ask "Where does the violence in our society begin?"

The school students were first asked to rate their own attitude towards violent scenarios against women on a scale of one to five. Encouragingly, blanket acceptance of violence was fairly low. Nonetheless what the scores did indicate is that under certain circumstances and in certain situations children as young as twelve believe that the use of violence is understandable or even acceptable. What also emerges, perhaps not unexpectedly, is that boys generally rate violence towards women more acceptable than girls do.

The young people were then asked "Have you ever hit or punched anybody?" Overall a disturbing 88% reported that they had used violence in at least one

situation and more usually a variety of situations. Looking to the future the majority, both boys and girls, predicted some likelihood of their resorting to violence again in certain situations.

They were also asked how much violence and physical force they themselves had experienced from others "Have you been hit or punched by anybody?" 74% had been on the receiving end of some form of violence or physical force, much of this at the hands of their parent or guardian. Tellingly boys reported a decrease in the use of force against them at home as they became older whereas the use of violence against girls was actually found to increase steadily as they approached womanhood. Indeed it seemed that as they became more independent girls were increasing likely to be put through a brutal "apprenticeship" learning to get used to physical control and domination.

So, most of the participants, male and female, were certainly experiencing violence as individuals, but how much did they know of the bigger picture? They were asked to answer "yes" or "no" to ten statements (all of them true) about domestic violence. e.g "Battered women come from all walks of life. Social class, family and racial background make no difference." The answers which the young people gave to these questions indicate that their general knowledge about domestic violence is poor and their attitudes are based largely on half-knowledge and guesswork.

More encouragingly, the survey also clearly indicated that the

availability of accurate information could be crucial in changing attitudes towards crimes of domestic violence which whilst they are universally acknowledged to be widespread also very often take place behind closed doors.

Susan Hart of the Edinburgh Women's Unit takes up the story. "The survey showed that young people's attitudes were a real cause for concern. It also convinced us that education was needed both for kids growing up and the wider public. What was needed was a crime prevention campaign with a difference, actively targeting men and challenging people's acceptance of violence. We knew that it could be done from the experience of similar campaigns such as the one against drink-driving. Years ago that was something people joked about, nowadays most people take it very seriously. However we also acknowledge that the long term success of the campaign requires more than raised public awareness. We are also calling for better support services for women and children who come forward and for reforms of the legal services available to them. We also advocate adequate treatment for the perpetrators of attacks, because we recognise that just locking them up by itself is not enough."

So the **Zero Tolerance** (of violence against women) campaign was launched and went on to gain the financial backing of Edinburgh District Council and the Scottish Office through the Safer Edinburgh Campaign. It was based, partly, on a similar campaign mounted in the City of Montreal, though typically

for Scotland, with a fraction of the Canadian budget. It has now been running for just over 6 months so regular **Scottish Child** readers will already be familiar with the magazine adverts, and most residents of Edinburgh will have noticed the posters scattered throughout the city centre. The statements and statistics put forward by the campaign (see above) are both shocking and depressing.

These shock tactics have been extremely effective in grabbing headlines but what kind of feedback are the council getting from the public? The Women's Unit reports being flooded by calls of support from women delighted to see their safety being moved to the top of the agenda. There have also been some adverse reactions, however, most of them from men who complain that the campaign is anti-male. Susan Hart takes up this point "The campaign is targeted at men. We believe that there are many thousands of men who abuse women and if our campaign makes them feel uncomfortable we make no apologies for that. They are criminals. If these statistics make men feel uncomfortable, maybe they should be asking themselves why."

The campaign will be continuing on the streets of Edinburgh and on the pages of **Scottish Child** throughout 1993.

*For further information on the Zero Tolerance Campaign or its statistical sources, contact Susan Hart on (031) 529 4504.*

**Alison Bell**

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## CHRISTMAS 1993/94

8th-17th December (Schools performances)  
17th December - 8th January (Public performances)

# CINDERELLA

a new version by Forbes Masson

Everyone knows and loves the story of CINDERELLA, and this hilarious new version has all your favourite characters and adds plenty of music and laughter. A smash hit at the Tron Theatre last year and guaranteed to delight family audiences in Edinburgh this Christmas.

Schools booking opens in June  
Public booking in September  
BOX OFFICE: 031-229 9697

British  
Agencies  
for Adoption  
and Fostering



Two one-day seminars with **Claudia Jewett Jarratt**, a leading American child and family therapist, perhaps best known in this country for the publications *Adopting the Older Child* and *Helping Children cope with Separation and Loss*.

29th June 1993

Crieff Hydro Hotel, Perthshire

## PREDICTABLE BEHAVIOUR

This one-day seminar will explore the various stages of adjustment that families experience when they foster or adopt older children. What may seem permanently volatile behaviour often has predictable patterns that, with preparation and training, can be managed effectively.

1st July 1993

Crieff Hydro Hotel, Perthshire

## CHILD PROTECTION IN THE CONTEXT OF FOSTER CARE

Nearly half the children in public care in Scotland are 'looked after' by foster carers. The aim of this conference is to enable foster carers in Scotland to learn about child protection in the context of fostering practice and policy in the United States.

Further information from: Alice Ednie, BAAF Scottish Centre, 40 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh, EH2 4RT  
Tel: 031-225-9285 / Fax 031-226-3778

# ESSENTIAL COURSES

We are concentrating on key practice skills in specialist work with young people during this programme of courses. 'Working with Loss' is the foundation event, supported by 'Visualisation Work' and 'Life Story Work'.

They offer excellent opportunities for those in community settings to develop skills and insights which will assist young people in coming to terms with their own unique histories – thus equipping them to deal with present and future circumstances in a more resourceful manner. These events will be a particularly powerful learning experience for staff and managers in residential settings. We also offer 'Empowering Work with Young People' – this is an opportunity to examine and re-define our intervention strategies through incorporating a Children's Rights perspective.

## WORKING WITH LOSS

This 3 day course is designed to put you in touch with the issues of 'Separation' and 'Loss'. These issues are important ones for all who work in the caring services, and is only now beginning to gain the recognition it deserves. Often one of today's great taboos, an understanding of our own personal experiences of loss is essential if we are to sensitively assist those who have been traumatised by its effects. A clearer personal and professional understanding of this issue will be of great help to those who work with the various forms of human suffering.

## LIFE STORY WORK

This practical, 2 day course will equip you with the skills you need to use Life Story Book techniques with young people.

Life Story work can be undertaken in a variety of ways but in all cases the aim is to help children bridge their past, present and future. The technique helps children and young people separate fantasy from reality and 'own' their own history.

## VISUALISATION WORK

This 2 day course will be useful for those who are working directly with groups or individuals with an emphasis on encouraging personal or professional change. This includes young people, who readily take to visualisation work. Trainers will find the technique to be valuable in a wide range of adult education settings.

## DATES

July	21/22/23	Experiential Groupwork
	26/27	Relationship Building with Young People
	28/29/30	Training for Trainers Foundation
August	4/5/6	Working with Loss
	9/10	Team-building for Managers
	11/13	Introduction to Counselling Skills
	16/17	Introduction to Management & Supervision
	19/20	Life Story Work
	23/24	Training for Trainers 2
September	2/3	Dealing with Violence & Aggression
	8/9/10	Training for Trainers Foundation
	16/17	Visualisation Work
	20/21	Training for Trainers 3
	23/24	Empowering Work with Young People
	27/28	Advanced Groupwork
October	4/5	Training for Trainers 4

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## Buying a Baby

### HONDURAN ADOPTIONS

Honduras in Central America is a country where rich foreigners can buy a baby. It can take as little as three or four months to complete the formalities there - no time at all compared with the red tape prospective adopters may face in their own country. The 'developed world' has a general shortage of healthy children for adoption. America, which is the main market for Honduran children, imposes strict conditions on those applying to become adoptive parents of American children.

The first indication of how well organised and widespread child trafficking is in Honduras came in late 1985 with the discovery of a network of 'safe' houses - what the Honduran press dubbed 'fattening houses'. These are used like warehouses. Children, removed from their mothers' care are kept there while traffickers look for suitable foreigners wanting to adopt. 'Suitable' means, in this case, people who

are willing and able to pay large sums of money - between \$5,000 and \$36,000 - to adoption agencies and lawyers for the right to 'own' a Honduran child.

The testimony of mothers who have been tricked and cowed into giving up their children makes frightening reading. One such, Maria Dolores, described how she was persuaded to give her son up for adoption while she was pregnant with a second child.

"I gave up Nelson, my son, but I didn't want to give up the new baby. After it was born I was in the hospital for three days. Then a doctor told me that they would have to move the baby to another hospital, as they didn't have the medicines for him... I went home and one of the lawyers, Angela, took me to the hospital every day to feed the baby. After a while she didn't want to take me there any more.

"Eventually I went to the lawyer's office and told him that I wanted my baby. He said the baby was sick and needed medicine. He took me to what they said was a 'children's clinic'

near his office. He told me to wait outside in the corridor. I was there for a long time. After a long while I knocked on his office door and he told me they were going to keep the baby and that I had to leave."

Like many mothers in a similar situation, Maria was afraid to go to the police because she had been warned they would put her in prison. It took the help of the congressional deputy Rosario Godoy de Osejo who has been a persistent campaigner against the traffic in Honduran children, to enable Maria finally to recover both her son and her baby. Her little boy was found in one of the 'safe houses', still waiting to be adopted one year after he had been taken from his family. He survived but baby was not so lucky. Only eight days after being re-united with his mother, he died.

That, for Maria is not the end of the story either. She's pregnant with her third child and the lawyers are back at her door, putting pressure on her to give up the new baby.

Traffickers target women whose poverty makes them

particularly vulnerable to offers, whether genuine or false, of small amounts of financial assistance. Once the women have given up their children, duped by the promise of a 'better life' for the child, they find themselves almost powerless to get them back unless someone sympathetic in a position of influence takes up their case - and such people are not too thick on the ground in Honduras. Despite the evidence and the outcry it has caused within the country, the practice of selling children abroad for profit continues. The Honduran government has expressed its concern but has only tinkered with the adoption laws. If families like that of Maria Dolores are to be protected from this racket, there will have to be a concerted international campaign aimed at bringing pressure both on the Honduran government and giving a clear message of support to those within the country who are trying against extreme odds to stop the sale of Honduran children.

Jo Tuckman

## IN BRIEF

What do you do when years of work comes to an abrupt end? One answer is to publish a record of what you've learnt so that future initiatives can start, as near as possible, where you left off.

**Scottish Home Visiting** have taken this route and the result is the **Home Visiting Starter Pack** - a guide to setting up projects similar to the one run by Save the Children until last summer, but also an extremely useful resource for setting up any kind of community service.

Two years of planning and writing by the team has finally produced an 'open learning guide' of eleven workbooks and a video which takes readers through all the questions they need to ask themselves as they plan a project.

Users of the pack are guided through all the stages of good project design: profiling the community and its needs, researching the services within it, planning the organisation and structure of the scheme, developing referral policies and a code of practice. Also covered are support and supervision, training, funding and budgeting and evaluation.

As Frances Bowman, who worked on the pack says: "Since the project came to an end I keep finding that the principles of careful development and design, hammered out for the Home Visiting Starter Pack are applicable to other schemes. It would be a shame if this pack was looked at only by those interested in home visiting when much of the thinking in it is so eminently transferable. I hope it can be used as a springboard by anyone involved in the development of a new project or service in any community."

Home Visiting - The Starter Pack is available from: Save the Children Fund, Building 1, Unit C1, Templeton Business Centre, Glasgow G40 1DA - price £25 (plus £5 p&p.)

One of the favourite activities of both staff and pupils alike at Ferguslie Primary School, (see **Scottish Child April/May**), is

outdoor education. Primary and Secondary Schools in the Renfrew district have been using **Fornethy Outdoor Centre** in Perthshire for a number of years, but by the end of June it is facing shut down along with three other centres owned by Strathclyde Region.

The Region's looking to make cuts of £21 million to avoid council-tax capping. More than half of that amount will come

from cuts in the education department budget. So is it the end for Fornethy, Faskally, St Columba's Outdoor Centres and Seafield, a teacher-training centre near Ardrossan?

A member of staff at one of the centres told us: "There are three aspects to our work: we cover environmental studies in the curriculum; there's also the social input - the importance for children of sharing time away with people their own age - and finally there is the opportunity to try various activities which children wouldn't get access to otherwise. There will be an attempt to offset the loss, but other resources are not adequate to make it up."

It seems painfully ironic that the Strathclyde centres are facing the axe at the same time as the Scottish Office publishes a report, "Learning for Life", three years in preparation - on the importance of environmental education. "The benefits of extended field work are vital", it claims.

Courses are on offer from Strathclyde's **One Plus** group for lone parents looking to develop and recognise the skills they have, and plan for the future. **New Horizons** aims to help people look at the skills they already have. According to course co-ordinator Heather McNally many of these go unrecognised:

"Often people think they don't have any skills, but particularly if you are on benefit you may have enormous skills in juggling your finances. People may be involved in running playgroups or voluntary organisations but don't recognise that for the useful experience that



Geoffrey Craig

it is. The biggest barrier can be lack of confidence, the idea that "I've been out of the job market for so many years, I couldn't go back now".

The courses aren't just for those who want to return to work, they will encourage people to decide on their own needs. The courses are free. Each lasts for five days but is spread over three weeks. They are scheduled for Pollok, in early June, Ayr and Kilmarnock in September, Possil/Springburn in October and Paisley in December. Also provided free are creche facilities, lunch and travel expenses. For more details contact One Plus on 041-221-7150.

Did you miss the first **Scottish Book Fair of Radical Black and Third World Books** at Glasgow's Woodside Halls in April? If you were lucky enough to be there you'll know it was an excellent event - three days of thought-provoking debate, literature and fun. Perhaps the most outstanding experience for many was hearing the hard-hitting poetry of Joyoti Grech - a young woman to look out for.

But there were others too - and the programme included film and video-showings, discussions, music and poetry. Films covered topics from the history of Reggae music to the racist killing in London of Guldip Singh Sekhon. There were forums on racism in education, fundamentalism and a discussion about the worldwide struggle for self-determination.

The Book Fair ended with a concert of poetry from Tom Leonard, Kamai Kaddourah, Margaret Fulton Cook, Joyoti

Grech and Jim Ferguson - music was supplied by The Blues Poets, Mac Umba and Zulu Syndicate.

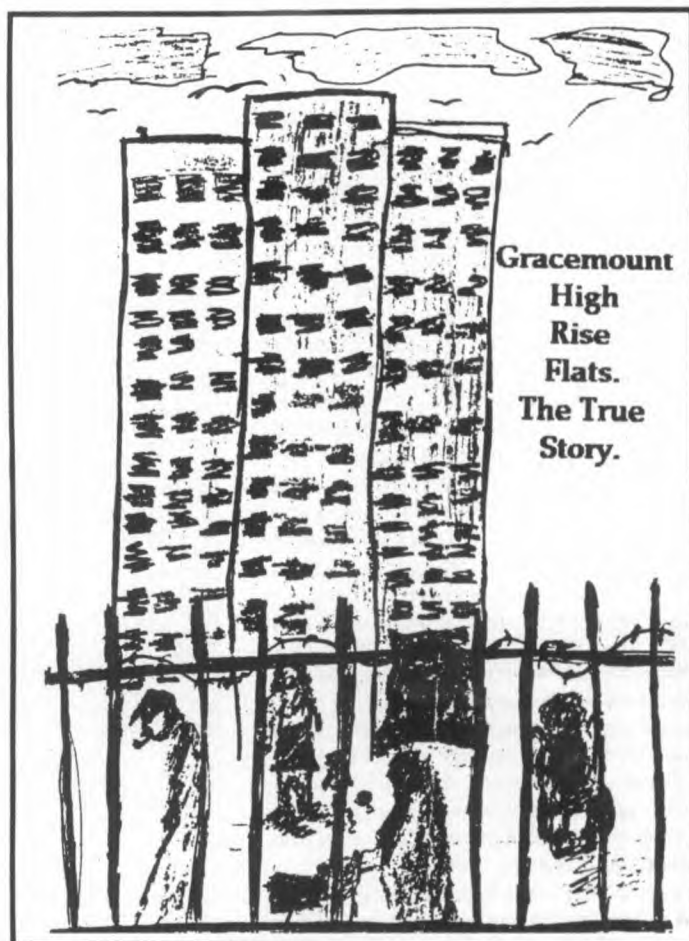
The organisers are already planning a repeat performance in 1995. We'll keep you informed!

There's an encouraging new venture just got underway at Wester Hailes in Edinburgh. It's the **Woods Befriending Scheme**. Based in the Woods Youth Centre, the scheme's already putting youngsters in touch with adults, (that's anyone over the age of 18), who are interested in having regular helpful, friendly contact with a young teenager. The emphasis is on building a friendship which will last and grow as long as both sides are committed to put the effort in.

The organisers originally planned the scheme with the 15 - 17 age group in mind, especially those teenagers who lose out once they leave school. However, there's been a lot of interest in using it for younger teenagers, as social workers see the value of it as a resource which could stop some kids getting into trouble.

It comes as no surprise to learn that it's being run on a shoe-string - but with lots of optimism and goodwill. Volunteers are needed, especially men. You can contact the Befrienders by phoning Jon Hughes on 031-458 5422. The address to write to is Woods Befriending Scheme, c/o Woods Youth Centre, 100 West Burn Gardens, Edinburgh EH14 2PB.

*Do you have information about a new initiative, a campaign for better services, a threatened closure of a useful resource? If so, we'd like to hear about it.*



"People are frightened to open their doors. Women tend either not to come out at all or they come out and stay out all day."

Those are the options available to women who find themselves prisoners in Cell Block EH16. Gracemount Women's Group have made a video, of that name to highlight their experiences living in one of Edinburgh's notorious high-rise schemes.

The 30-minute film lets the residents themselves point out the problems, which are manifold. There is no security system on the entrance to the flats (two of the women had their flats burgled while out making the video). There is no safe play area, just a "triangular lump of concrete, with more lumps of concrete stuck on top of it". Even if there was, parents are anxious about letting kids go out alone. The lifts break down frequently and if it happens at the weekend they stay broken until Monday. Residents feel isolated.

The district council has a policy of not housing families above a certain level, but there are families all the way up the Gracemount high-rises. The government restrictions on new building by councils, makes a nonsense of the local policy.

The response to the video from elected representatives has been disappointing - one hasn't bothered to see it yet and the other left before the end. Nevertheless Linda Ramsay, development worker with the women's group, part of the Greater Liberton Mental Health Project, feels it has been a success on three levels.

"Some of the older people tend to blame all the young people and it has given the younger people a chance to say their piece. I may be naive, but I think it could be used to help people to understand each other more. Soon after the meeting all the blocks were repainted. It may be cosmetic, but it helps folk to think that getting together and making yourself heard achieves something."

"Other blocks in the city have concierge security systems and other facilities. People were getting angry about that at the meeting which is the first step. Now we have to do something with that anger."

# HERE COMES SUMMER!

Julie Collis looks  
at play schemes and holiday care.

"Are they warm?" Three lads were sharing a bag of chips. None could have been older than 8 or 9. It was Easter Tuesday in Glasgow, next to a take-away. They said their nana was looking after them while their mum and dad were out at work. Didn't they go to a play scheme at all? Play scheme? What's that? Good question, I thought, for, while there has been an undoubted growth in the numbers of playgroups and part-time nurseries, working parents continue to have to struggle to find suitable, affordable child care. There are simply not enough playschemes or after school care schemes to go round those who need them.

Local authorities provide very little - most is set up and run by the voluntary sector. Playgroups and nursery classes do not cater well for working parents because the hours do not fit in with working hours. There are very few workplace nurseries and creches. We have policies on equal opportunities, social strategies, anti-poverty strategies, but researchers, care workers and parents all agree that none of those will produce results until quality, affordable child care is available for all those who wish to use it.

The crunch word, 'affordable' crops up again and again. It means different things to different people. A percentage of those who need a child minder, after school or holiday care can afford it - just. Most can not.

All the facts about the differentials between women and men in the job market have been aired so often it's hard to believe anyone could be ignorant of them. Yet the type and amount of low cost child care around suggests that the news is still falling on deaf ears. Let's repeat it one more time therefore - women, in spite of equal opportunities policies, earn less than men



if they work full-time. They tend to be employed in jobs that are perceived as 'women's jobs' - secretarial work, in the low ranks of the service industries and as care workers. The vast majority of part-time and sessional workers are still women. Without childcare provision it is impossible for women to improve their skills by taking up the available training opportunities.

The recent review of services of childminding and daycare services for children under eight required by the Children Act 1989 has provided us with evidence of the vast unsatisfied needs of young families. Demand for full day care, after school and holiday care far exceeds supply. How play schemes are run - where and by whom - illustrates the difficulties working parents are faced with at holiday time.

In Glasgow District there are now about three hundred and thirty play schemes. In Lothian there are about forty. Glasgow has lost about fifty play schemes since last year alone. Most run from 10-12 in the morning and again from 2-4 in the afternoon. As workers point out, this means that children have a two-hour period in the middle of the day when they are probably unsupervised. Children who attend a play scheme often get a packed lunch provided - the food aspect is critical in the holidays, when there are no free school meals.

Glasgow play schemes are predominantly staffed by volunteers, although some do have paid play leaders. Many involve parents and the local community and indeed provide a focus for community action. They get mutual support from the Glasgow Playschemes Association in the form of advice about finance, suitable activities and equipment, how to organise trips out and funding.

The crisis in the play scheme movement - and it's not too strong a word to use - arises for a number of reasons. Premises are a major

headache. Most playschemes use rooms in a local school or church hall. These usually have to be paid for and left in the same condition as they were found. So equipment can't be left standing - all evidence of the activity has to be erased each day. Indeed it's not an exaggeration to say that the continued existence of many groups depends on a friendly janitor. Charges for premises are increasing, as local authorities face cuts in expenditure.

The pay and conditions of the people running play schemes often reflect those of the users: staff are frequently volunteers. There is little money to pay playleaders and even if there is, it is only a token amount. There is almost no money for training. Some schemes in deprived areas find it difficult even to pay volunteers' travel expenses. For many volunteers it is a case of walking and bringing your own sandwiches. That many of them are willing to do this is no answer to the chronic under-funding of the service.

Registration under the Children Act is required for schemes and groups who look after children under eight years old for more than two hours per day. Registration and inspection means more paperwork, and criminal record checks on staff and volunteers who are in charge of the children. As a result, some groups no longer accept children under eight and others have restricted their hours. Registration and its problems could account for the reduction in the number of schemes this year, at a time when there is an increasing demand for the service.

Funding for schemes comes from a variety of sources. Local authority grants, urban aid funding, fundraising and fees paid are the main sources. Local authority grants have been virtually frozen over the past few years. The ability of local communities to raise funds has been reduced by unemployment and the recession.



## Fun, Fights and Football

Michael's quite sure what the main activity is in Craigmillar in the holidays - "What boys do round here is play football a lot of the time." But Kerry's not letting him away with that - "The girls play football too. Sometimes with the boys. Sometimes the lassies compete against the boys." "That's it," he agrees, "fights or football." "People go down to the sea too," adds David, "especially to Portobello - sometimes we go to the shows there." A pause while they think what else they might do and then Stephanie suggests that "Lots of people go swimming in the holidays. We go to Portobello or the Commonwealth. Sometimes even Perth. Mostly though girls play with their friends - go down to their friend's house."

There follows some chat about holidays away - mums and dads taking them to the shows in Glasgow, to Flamingo World or even further afield. It all sounds quite upbeat, although Michael describes a few problems - "I had the police at my door five times in the last holidays. That was because I'd broken two windows in the school. But I didn't get charged because I was forced to do it or I was going to get battered." David joins in - "That's because the boys are in gangs. That's how it starts."

Girls don't get into gangs like boys, Stephanie and Kerry agree but, as Kerry wisely adds, "The lassies are more expensive. Lassies want more things, especially in the holidays."

These children, aged between 9 and 11, are talking to me in the office of the Craigmillar Out of School Project. It's the end of the day - 5.30 - and mums and dads are slowly trickling in to claim kids, to chat to the staff and collect raffle

tickets for the latest fund-raising effort. A large group of the kids who use the project are going to Denmark for a week in July and before that there's the local festival with floats and costumes to make. The project hasn't a lot of space - a number of medium-sized rooms - but it's bursting with colour and activity.

Stuart tells the kids to explain to me some more how they get to the project and Michael, as the oldest and longest user of the group puts me in the picture.

**Rosemary Milne talked  
about the holidays with  
Kerry, Michael, Stephanie  
and David and worker,  
Stuart McCallum at  
Craigmillar Out of School  
Project**

"It's good this place and I'm not just saying that 'cos Stuart's here. All my pals in class want to come but they can't get a place. All the kids who come here, their mums and dads are either working or training. That's why even if my pals want to come they can't - anyway there's a waiting list isn't there, Stuart?" A nod from Stuart confirms that this is indeed the case.

I wonder if it makes a difference when the holidays come round? Does that mean that when school's out and everyone else is free to roam around, the

kids at the project like it less? Almost with one voice I get told, No! Stephanie goes on - "What happens in the holidays is you get bored a lot and here you never get bored, 'cos there's always things to do and there's always staff to play with you."

On top of that there is of course the added excitement of the trip abroad: this year to Denmark, last year to Munich. Munich obviously stands out in everyone's minds - there are photos of it on the wall and they're falling over themselves to tell me all about it - one year on, that's one good experience which feels as though it just happened yesterday.

"Mini-Munich was great," says Kerry, "It was like a whole town for children." "In a kind of football stadium," butts in Michael. "There was everything there just like a normal town."

This year the Danish trip has been set up by the out-of school care area coordinator in Aalborg. Denmark's provision for care for the children of working parents is better beyond anything Scotland could ever imagine - the Danish government has made sure that every child of primary school age can go to a club like the Craigmillar Out of School project. No waiting lists in Denmark!

Not in Scotland though. Here the Kerrys, Davids, Stephanies and Michaels are the lucky minority - lucky because their parents have some kind of job or training which makes them eligible for extra care - not because the children themselves have the right to what Danish families take for granted: year-round quality, local, full-time care with meals and treats provided. ■

In the regional review document, Strathclyde Region acknowledges the quality and quantity of services provided, not only by playschemes, but also after school care, playgroups, family centres, and all the other services provided by the voluntary sector. Given current financial constraints they admit that most expansion in services will have to come from the voluntary sector. They have committed themselves to continued support and encouragement of the voluntary sector.

But the services provided for young children are not just the concern of parents. They should concern us all. Recent research has shown that children who have attended nursery schools and classes and other provision in the early years are less likely to become delinquent, less likely to produce unwanted pregnancies and generally attain more at school. The UK Government has endorsed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This gives every child the right to care and education and places a responsibility on government to assist parents in carrying out their duties.

As with the state of knowledge about women's status in the job market, it should not really be necessary to repeat these facts, they are by now so well-documented, so widely accepted. But the reality is that, in the face of all this accumulated evidence, the government still persists in behaving as if there is no known

connection between early care and opportunities and achievement in later life.

At the most fundamental level, the government persists in ignoring what manifestly other countries have long since taken on board - that the younger generation is the only sure asset any country has for its future well-being

and prosperity and that it therefore makes sound economic sense to invest wisely in its children. ■

*Glasgow Playschemes Association may be contacted at: 140 Wallace Street, Glasgow G5 8EQ, tel 041-429 7577.*



# No Haven for the Refugee

Airdrie Short Stay Refuge was a valued and innovative local resource, so why's it closing down? **Lucy Turnbull** investigates.

**A**irdrie Short Stay Refuge first opened in 1984, offering a revolutionary new approach in flexible child care for an age group whose needs are often overlooked by the policy-makers. There was literally no other place like it in Britain, pioneering the way forward to a different approach towards care and family breakdown. It was originally started to offer temporary relief for teenagers experiencing problems with their parents, at home or at school.

The staff was composed of four full time care workers and one part time. Their remit was to offer long or short term support for teenagers up to the age of sixteen. The teenagers could be given one of the Refuge's four emergency beds for up to two nights at a time, on a regular basis if needed. This 'semi-residential' arrangement gave teenagers a break from the stressful and sometimes volatile situation at home and allowed both sides - teenager and parents some space to cool down and take stock. It gave them time to look at what lay behind the breakdown in their relationships and a chance to sort out their problems and differences so that the situation did not get any worse.

That summary of the Refuge's work is written in the past tense because Strathclyde Social Work Department has ruthlessly decided to cut this project to the bone. Their justification is that it is no longer needed and that furthermore it was very little used. The new-style, much scaled-down, Refuge is now being housed in a couple of rooms in a children's home in Airdrie with only two of the original staff. The rest of the staff group has been split up and sent elsewhere. Local feeling is that the Social Work Department has put the Refuge in a position where it is only a matter of time before it fails completely and the Department will have put an end to this valuable resource and provided no alternative for teenagers and families.

Already families in the Airdrie/Coatbridge area are finding themselves forced to carry on in an escalating situation, with no way of resolving their disputes with their children except by them being taken into care - the alternative being for many that they roam the streets of Airdrie and Monklands turning to drink, drugs or crime.

Frank McDade who is a senior social worker with Airdrie Social Work Department contacted Scottish Child when he heard we were doing an article on the Refuge. He was at pains to point out that, "The Refuge has not been closed down, as some of the misinformed media seem to think, it has only been moved temporarily to



Colin Chalmers

# The position is that, although the Refuge has not been axed, it is being run so differently from before that to all intents and purposes it *has already been axed*

emergency premises until we can rehouse it in suitable accommodation. The problem we have at the moment is that we cannot find this accommodation in the Airdrie or Monklands districts. The building originally housing the Refuge was closed down for health and safety reasons. The refuge was not being used and therefore was not needed in the format it was in."

The position is therefore that, although the Refuge has not been axed, it is now being run in a way so different from before that to all intents and purposes it has already been axed.

Given the fact that Airdrie has set an example which others have been interested to visit and learn from, you have to wonder if the Social Work Department does not fully understand the concept of the Airdrie Short Stay Refuge or has just lost sight of its original goals?

It proved difficult to get a view on this from the redeployed staff, even those who had originally said they were willing to speak out about the 'closure'. I was informed that they could no longer talk to the media because there was a definite chance of facing disciplinary action if they did so. Self-censorship is the best gag of all! Still, their silence does not stop us asking the crucial question - why? Why all of a sudden did Strathclyde Social Work Department decide to drastically cut funding? Why have they prevented the staff, who know most about the need for and use of the Refuge, from talking to the press? And why are they trying to ignore the outraged parents and teenagers who have started to campaign against the closure?

**P**arents in Airdrie contacted Christine Winford at Cormorant Films about the threat of closure. Cormorant made a short documentary for Channel Four on the Refuge.

Just as the film was going out, the news was released of the Social Work Department's proposals. So, Christine, who had been most impressed by the Refuge's work, contacted Scottish Child and we decided to investigate.

Many of the parents are dismayed at the decision. Mr Alex Corner, whose eldest daughter used the refuge from the age of thirteen until she was sixteen, had the following comments to make to us, "When Kerry was thirteen she started running away from home because she felt we were being too strict with her. Things at home bad for Kerry and the rest of the family. As parents we felt very unsure how to deal with the situation - we needed some kind of professional help. Once, when the police brought



Colin Chalmers

Kerry back they suggested we approached the staff at the Refuge to see if they could help. We've never looked back since."

He continued, "Kerry has entirely changed since she started using the Refuge and I feel that without the support and space we all needed she wouldn't be such a success today. I've spoken to a lot of parents and teenagers who have used the Refuge and we all feel very angry and upset that this could happen to such an indispensable resource. There's no doubt that the Refuge is needed - all you have to do is wander the streets of Airdrie or Monklands on a weekend evening and you'll see the numbers of teenagers getting drunk or high. There's not a lot for kids in this area and many feel hopeless about their future life prospects. I've two more daughters and feel pessimistic about the kind of help I'd now receive from the Social Work if we needed it again. I'd hate to think of my daughters going into care for whatever reason."

Since the Refuge has been moved the number of teenagers going into care has gone up. Staff at the Refuge were dealing with three hundred referrals per year. They had around thirty calls a week asking for help and they were involved with up to eleven families at a time.

**S**tatistics show that 50% of homeless young people over the age of sixteen have been in the care of the local authority. Formal, children's home-style care for teenagers clearly fails them in some important ways - possibly because of the gap that grows between the teenager and the family during their time in care. The gap is there at the outset because family breakdown is often the reason for them going into care. But once they leave care again it is often impossible for them to turn back to their families and yet they get no more support or accommodation from the Social Work Department from as soon as they turn sixteen.

Since this Refuge was set up nine years ago, the Region has saved thousands if not millions of pounds, as well as helping teenagers and their parents to find a more effective way of getting on together. All the benefits that have come from the work of the Refuge cannot be dismissed or denied. Somebody, somewhere owes the parents and teenagers of the Airdrie and Monklands districts an explanation for the illogical decision made by the Social Work Department, or is this to be just another example of high-handed bureaucratic unaccountability? ■



# The Imprisoned

What happens to your relationships with those closest to you when you get sent to jail? **Joe McGrath** looks at this and other questions from the prisoner's point of view.

**H**ow can I begin to make the public aware of the pent up frustration, resentment, silent - and not so silent - anger that there is in the jails about the treatment the Prison Service has handed out to us and our families over the years? How can I convey that on behalf of all the men and women at my back who haven't got access to this space?

I'll begin with **The Stiff**, the newsletter I edit for prisoners. It's not been going for long - issue 2 is just out recently - but it is one of the hopeful signs of the possibility of change within

the system. It's hopeful because at least so far the Prison System has tolerated it by allowing it to circulate. In the Prison System that counts as progress. It's funded by donations from well-wishers outside. It's starting to be a way of prisoners telling each other and the public who care to listen what it feels like to be humiliated and degraded in the name of 'secure custody'.

The most important pages in the newsletter are the letters pages from guys in different jails around the country. Not all of the letters are about families and visits but many are and many are very bitter about the treatment they and their

families have received.

So much of what goes on in jail impacts on your family, directly or indirectly. The hardest pain a prisoner suffers is in relation to his family. First of all he or she suffers the pain of separation, renewed every time the door closes on them again. Then we suffer the pain of short, controlled visits, (in some jails only fifteen minutes per visit are allowed) watched by cameras or other human beings all the time. Think of what it feels like to try to share a quiet moment in the bedlam of a busy room. And beyond the visit itself there's the pain of knowing what they



Perth Prison Douglas Robertson

# ed Family

have to contend with outside, the practical problems as well as the subtle and not so subtle sneers and snubs. That's commonplace. It goes on in the jail too - the attitude of some of the staff as family arrive at the gate - the checking, inspection, the mistrust. No wonder that you'll hear some prisoners say they'd rather not have visits at all than put their family through that ordeal.

Does the public know any of that? If the public did know more would they tolerate what is done on their behalf? We are starting from a long way back indeed when we talk about prisoners' contact with their families. There's miles and miles of ground to make up and no easy way of doing it since in this area of their life, as in all others, prisoners have no *rights*, only privileges. Privileges and a rule book they can't consult because it's classified secret.

Remember that when people start enthusing

to you about the amazing developments in prisoner-family contact: the escorted home leaves, the improved visit facilities, the supervised creches that operate in some jails now, the play areas, canteen facilities and the help with travel to and from the jail for families with no transport of their own. These are real improvements and none of us want to knock them - as far as they go - but they rest on a set of false assumptions which need to be tackled if the whole shaky structure isn't to come crashing down round everyone's ears.

In the past few years three documents have been published which examine prison policy from different angles. The first is **Custody and Care**, the second **Opportunity and Responsibility** and the third, the **Survey of Prisoners' Views**. Each in their own way is a response to the tensions and riots of the eighties.

You'll hear quite often about **Opportunity and Responsibility** and not so often about the **Survey**. Of the three it's probably the most important document, since it gives some idea of what prisoners want and need and value out of all that they get - or don't get - at present. The survey tells you that the thing prisoners rate as most important to them is contact with their family - ahead of 'in-cell sanitation' as they like to call it and other comforts. Prisoners have never rioted for toilets in their cells. They protest about inhumane treatment, including lack of family contact and the distance they are from family and the attitude of staff.

If you look at **Opportunity and Responsibility** what you find about family contact is the following statement:

"We recognise that most prisoners and prisoners' families show a great deal of concern for each other during the period of imprisonment. We are committed to encouraging the prisoner to act responsibly towards his family both during his sentence and on release. We accept that to do this he must have greater access to his family."

**T**he first thing you can say about this is how clear it is what the Prison System sees as the reason for letting us have 'more contact' with our families. It's to encourage the development of what's called the 'responsible prisoner'. Now, however desirable you find the idea of the responsible adult, you have to admit that most people don't think in terms of the relationships they have with the people they love solely, or even first and foremost, in terms of responsibility. Prisoners may well want to be responsible towards their families, if given the chance, but the driving force behind wanting to keep in touch with your family is the simple wish not to lose those you love while you can't be with them. And that's true, whether it's your boyfriend, your girlfriend, your wife, husband or your children. Your fear is, especially if you're a long-term prisoner that you will lose them while you're away for so long. And you're right to be worried. Very few long-term prisoners manage to maintain their marriage or a satisfactory relationship with their kids while they're inside.

The prisoner's view of family visits is therefore very different from how the Prison Service sees them. It means that because visits and home leaves are a privilege in the eyes of the Prison Service, irresponsible behaviour, or what they term irresponsible behaviour, can be punished by the curtailment of visits and home leaves. Family contact is used as one control device - in prisoners' eyes the most punitive of all - among a whole range of control devices. It is not seen as a valued end in itself. It is not a right. We have no rights.

Even special compassionate leaves are subject to this use and who gets to go out is a matter for the governor to decide. This leads to extraordinary decisions and disastrous consequences. Take a case I know of where a man was refused permission to visit his father who had suffered a heart attack. Some weeks later when his father died the prisoner failed to return from his home leave. Who made the first mistake? Who will be punished?

When did anyone who works in a jail last hear a prisoner say "I'm homesick"? Not recently I guess, and most likely not ever. Adults aren't

# INSIDE

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## RETHINKING SCOTLAND'S PRISONS

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**Andrew Coyle**

INSIDE: RETHINKING SCOTLAND'S PRISONS looks at the history of imprisonment in Scotland and asks important questions about the way we lock people up. Andrew Coyle, who has worked in the prison system north and south of the Border since 1973, examines the foundations of these troubled institutions and argues that the root of our prisons' instability should be traced not to the prisoners - but to the institutions in which they are held.

INSIDE...

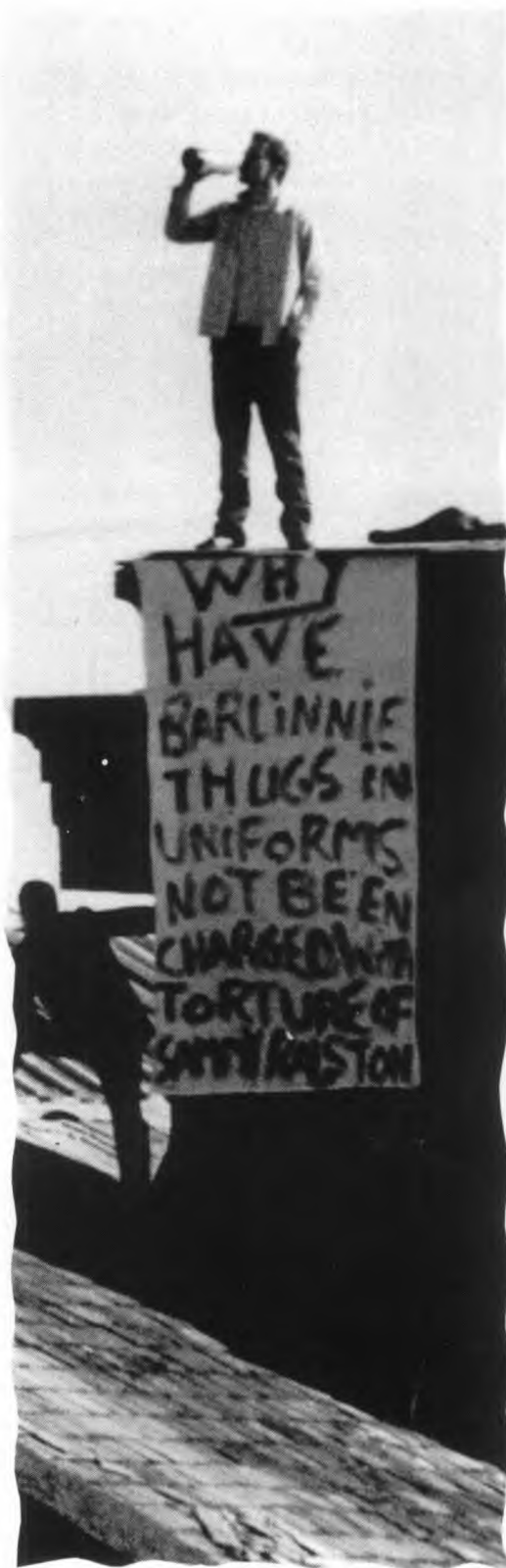
".. is the first general history of the prisons in Scotland by one of the leading figures in the Prison System. This book describes current attempts to restore the progressive pioneering approach with which the service began, but which for so many years was conspicuously lost."

**Professor Rod Morgan**, assessor to the Woolf Committee of Enquiry into Prison Disturbances.

"Andrew Coyle acknowledges the injustice and moral corruption there is in the Prison System. I don't know if he was stunned by what he experienced on taking over at Peterhead, but he realised a new way had to be found. This need for change is the background to Coyle's book."

**Joe McGrath**, former Peterhead prisoner, currently in Noranside Prison.

About the author: **ANDREW COYLE** joined the Scottish Prison Service in 1973. He was governor of Peterhead Prison from 1988 to 1990 when he took over as governor of central Scotland's custom-built long-term prison at Shotts. He is currently governor of Brixton Prison.



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### INSIDE: RETHINKING SCOTLAND'S PRISONS - SPECIAL PUBLISHER'S OFFER

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# Family contact is used as one control device among a whole range of control devices.

supposed to get homesick. Prisoners who do get homesick quickly get categorised as a 'problem' - someone with a mental health problem, at the worst maybe a suicide risk. What is a normal healthy reaction to being cut off from your family? The normal, healthy reaction to loss is one of sadness, depression, anger, loneliness. Well, in jail all those feelings have to be suppressed or hidden. Only ways of expressing the loss which fit with the jail culture are allowable - and that's where the trouble can start.

So, you'd think that for purely pragmatic reasons, leaving aside whether prisoners learn to be responsible, family contact would be safeguarded because a less depressed and angry group of prisoners would mean a pleasanter, less stressful life for the staff.

It's not that simple.

**S**ince prisons were first brought under state control, there has been a debate about the purposes of imprisonment. Is it to deter? They used to think so - a lot of the public still does. In the nineteenth century they decided to make prison so unpleasant that no-one would risk returning and they added a good dose of religion to give it a 'redemptive' gloss. But the numbers going to jail went on rising. Then they introduced the idea of 'rehabilitation'. 'Cut out the worst of the convict labour. Make them useful members of society. Teach them, train them.' That didn't work either. The numbers went on rising. So rehabilitation was wiped out of the vocabulary of the prison managers and the 'ologists who looked into the 'success' of the methods.

For a while it was popular to talk about 'humane containment'. That has a hollow ring for prisoners I can tell you. There's no such thing, regardless of what the tabloids tell you about 'holiday camps with all mod cons'. Whoever heard of a holiday camp where you can't leave the room after nine o' clock and where your visitors are strip-searched for drugs?

The plain fact of the matter is that they haven't yet found a workable justification for locking people up, except to keep them away from the public because they're either a danger or a nuisance. What they are now beginning to wise up to however, is that putting people in prison is itself a *damaging* experience. And that does present them with a problem. How can they justify using vast amounts - millions of pounds per year - of public money to send people back out into society in a worse state than when they came in?

So somehow, if prisons are to survive - and after all more are being built all the time - there has to be a new way of talking about prisoners' 'careers' in the nick. So along comes a whole new set of vocabulary, including the 'responsible prisoner', 'family contact' and 'meaningful

progression'. And that's where we are right now. Once again the prisoner is targeted for change while the institution itself lumbers on pretty much as it always has done. Don't be fooled by the talk of new line management and devolved responsibility to jails. It's not exactly whitewash but it fails to tackle the central question of all imprisonment in Britain - and that is the question of rights. Not privileges, rights.

None of the policy documents of the past few years have dealt at all with this question but it cannot be ignored if the prison authorities expect prisoners to behave responsibly and to use the opportunities the system does afford them constructively.

If responsibility means anything it must mean being treated as a full human being. Being treated as full human being means being consulted about what is planned. It means listening even when the message you hear is not the one you want to hear. It means adapting what you plan to do in the light of the feedback you get. Otherwise it means nothing.

In terms of prisoner contact with families therefore, perhaps what has to be said first is that you need to check out at the least what prisoners want and whether some of the changes you propose or have put into practice are actually what the prisoners think will work. That's not to say that all responsibility for deciding what

changes are made is to be handed over to prisoners. Contrary to what you may believe, prisoners generally don't think they should dictate everything. More representation would not bring the whole structure tumbling down around management's heads. It would actually channel views more effectively and constructively than ever previously.

**B**ut this hasn't happened so far because of the deep-rooted belief - among a lot of prison staff as well as the public - that prisoners should take what they get, because they are inherently undeserving. And because to give prisoners rights would be to give away power, to eliminate the 'governor's discretion' which at the moment is the single most powerful and unaccountable force in the 'jail. So that is where we have to begin and where, for now, I must stop. ■

*This is an edited extract from the speech given by Joe McGrath at the conference, The Imprisoned Family. The full texts of the main speeches and the chairman's closing remarks can be obtained from **Scottish Child** by sending your name, address and a cheque for £5.50 payable to **Scottish Child**.*



Family Area, Perth Prison Douglas Robertson

# The green shoots of growth

Rosemary Milne spoke to John Aitkenhead about his life and the work of Kilquhanity School.



All photographs in this feature by Vivien Jones

1320 is a long time ago but that's where we started, John Aitkenhead and I, on a mild wet day at Kilquhanity School in the south west of Scotland, where he is the headmaster. He was talking about the Declaration of Arbroath and the principles of democratic freedom enshrined in that document. I was having a history lesson, although it didn't feel like any history lesson I'd ever had at school. But certainly I was learning and the subject was history, so it seems only right to describe what I was experiencing as a sort of history lesson.

John Aitkenhead believes passionately in the democratic ideal, in the right of men and women to choose their leaders and call them to account. Not surprisingly therefore, these are some of the principles on which he has constructed this school which he and his wife, Morag and the staff have run for the past fifty three years.

Kilquhanity has been a boarding school for most of the children who've passed through it over the years but now it's changing to be a day school only - from the start of the new school year in September. To know the essence of Kilquhanity it seems to me important to try to know more of this man who, with his wife, has kept it going and growing and changing over so many years. So it was with the man himself I began.

We started therefore with history, with politics, then and now, and straight off, in an atmosphere of enquiry and excitement, as if we were both discovering everything afresh. Perhaps we were, since John Aitkenhead is above all else a teacher and the quality of great teaching is to communicate the newness of the ideas to the learner - in a sense to find the wonder in the learning with each new pupil.

In political terms John Aitkenhead describes himself as a "keen Nationalist" although a pragmatic one -

"In the early days, when I first was able to vote, I thought I would support the Liberals, because they were out for home rule. Both my grandfathers were Liberals - John Aitkenhead from Lesmahagow and my Irish grandfather on my mother's side.



"I was four years old when the First World War broke out and I was a pacifist when the Second World War began. That's why this school started. It was started by a group of pacifists - 'bloody conchies' to many of our neighbours - who were prepared to go to prison for their pacifist principles. We decided it would be international, co-educational and non-violent. Knowing I wouldn't be allowed to continue teaching in state schools because of my pacifism, in 1940 I looked around for accommodation and I cashed in my life insurance and my superannuation - you can't do that now - and took a lump sum and rented this place for five years, with an option to buy. Sometimes I have the feeling I was led here, it's such a perfect setting for a small community school, with everything happening from food-production to the arts.

"I didn't have any special religious affiliation to justify my pacifism. I was a conscientious objector on simple humanitarian grounds. I was old enough to remember when I was five or six and living in Renfrew, the marching that was done by wounded soldiers to make propaganda for the government. I remember the pale blue uniforms, some of these young men without arms. There they were, marching through the streets of Renfrew to help the government recruit more soldiers for the front. I knew from that time that war never solved any problems. Wars only make wars. I think the realisation came to me fully in the thirties that you have to sit down round the table eventually. Another factor was that I'd grown up with the knowledge of the horrific nature of trench warfare - the slaughter of the people that went out - so many boys in their teens"

The carnage in the trenches, the punitive

terms of the Versailles Treaty which sowed the seeds for the next war, the realisation that young men and women in their thousands never experienced love and child-rearing of their own, these were some of the important themes in John Aitkenhead's young adulthood. But I was curious to know more of the years before that and the influences of his childhood and his own parents on him.

"My father was a ship's carpenter. I'm so passionately a Clyde person. It's the creativity of what went on in those yards that makes your heart swell with pride. It's gone now from the manufacturing scene in Scotland but, as George Wylie says, it must be there somewhere still in Scotland. That's what I like to think education at Kilquhanity's about - helping children to discover their powers of creativity in every aspect of life.

"I'm a great sucker for Latin derivations because I did Latin for so many years at school and university. I remember being told that the noun 'education' comes from the Latin verb *educere*, 'to lead out'. We were taught that education is a kind of 'drawing out' or 'forming' of children. But eventually I realised that the word education doesn't come from that verb at all. It comes from the Latin *educare* which means something quite different. It means 'to nourish'. That seems so much more satisfactory because to me, education is the nourishing of the human spirit, not merely the training of the human mind.

"You can't stop kids learning you know. Good and bad schools are different only insofar as they present a rich or poor environment - not an affluent environment but a 'good' one. The same goes for families. Our family was 'good' and yet we were so poor."

John Aitkenhead's recollections of a childhood on the Clyde were of the industry and the productivity of yards which by 1920 had produced half of all the ships in the world - "half the world's ships launched out of that tiny burn!" But by the time he was ten unemployment had already struck the family and they had to move from the upper Clyde to the lower Clyde so that his father could look for a job in Ardrossan. Work there lasted for three years. Then unemployment hit again and this time it was because of one of the first amalgamations of firms when many of the smaller shipyards were closed down. By now there were already four children in the Aitkenhead family.

"And then my mother found she was expecting again. This time she got twins and there was no dole worth speaking of, remember that.

No wonder that my father went off to America, like so many men in his position, to find work and send his wages home. I was thirteen by this time and the family went right down in age to the twins who were just a few months old. I helped to bring up those babes because my father was away for three years. He came back for a short stay in 1926 and went again, intending to take us over with him. By the time we were getting ready to go out and join him, however, America had called a halt to the influx of dependents. You had to wait for your 'quota number' to come up - I so well remember the talk in the playground of quota numbers! The Aitkenhead's quota number came up finally in early '29 and my father had a house ready for us out there. But when we were getting ready to go, my mother - who was the daughter of a Gaelic mother and an Irish father - without any reasoning that you could call reasonable logic, <sup>US</sup>



wrote my father a simple letter. It just said "We're no coming, Angus." I never talked a lot to my father about it but he did say to me once that he'd got that letter and, because he knew my mother had always had the wisdom, he came home. So he came home first of all to more unemployment but as good fortune had it, eventually to the job of harbour carpenter at Ardrossan."

This was family life in the Aitkenhead household, a Presbyterian, church-attending home where great value was placed on learning and pride in a craftsman's job well done, where there was discipline but no violence, no beatings or thrashings, although sometimes parental anger - "I can remember they got angry with me more than once but I can never remember being hit at home. No, the violence I remember was done in school, with the tawse, a wicked thing."

"You know in your innermost being that belting's wrong. But that wasn't the accepted view in Scottish schools when I was a young teacher. I myself bought a tawse. You were told by the older teachers 'you need conditions for teaching. Somebody's going to be the boss if you're not.' When I became a teacher there was nothing but sitting at desks for kids and you would have had to search hard to find a school where belting wasn't the norm. There was one of course, Braehead in Fife, which was run by Bob McKenzie. Bob took what they called all the 'uncertificatable' kids off the streets - the ones no-one thought were ever going to do anything. Years before the idea of outdoor studies and education got a hold in other schools, he had those kids out in the countryside learning about the environment and learning outdoor skills. I'll tell you, there was no corporal punishment in Braehead school. Bob was a great educator, a great friend with an influence on this school. Sadly Bob McKenzie came to

the conclusion that radical experiment is not possible in the State sector."

**A**nother Scot, A S Neill, also had a profound influence on John Aitkenhead's teaching life and he made two visits to A S Neill's school Summerhill, Suffolk, in 1937 and 1938.

"The first thing I saw on my first visit was a boy making a dinghy - a real boat - under the eye of a carpenter. It might be commonplace today, although I still wonder, but certainly not in 1937. Neill was sceptical though about whether Scotland could have a school like Summerhill - "too benighted" were his words about his own compatriots."

If what John and Morag Aitkenhead did in 1940 was 'impossible', in both practical and cultural terms, they are both clear that much of the success that has come over this past half century can be explained by the qualities and skills of the many adults who've been attracted to work in the school. The growth both of the education itself as well as of the buildings has been organic, often makeshift but always inventive.

"The people who've come here to work are another bit of the magic of this school. When I started it I couldn't have dreamed who would want to join us. But in fact people who are experts in their chosen field have come and worked with us. To give you just one example - my deputy, Richard Jones, who's been with us for more than twenty years, is probably one of the best woodworkers in Scotland and he teaches woodwork to the kids. In addition he's something of a world authority on authentic Renaissance musical instrument making. He makes



wonderful cellos and viols and crumhorns. The kids here are working at that level with him. The sky's the limit you know when you're working with kids and there's no conflict between freedom and discipline."

There are so many more examples of this, the list is endless - potters and painters, artists and scientists, builders and boatmakers. One man in 1962, with the kids, made an 18 foot dug-out canoe from an 80 foot pine we had to fell and we sailed this for ten years on Loch Ken and the Solway. He also led the building of a Canadian style log cabin which is still in use after 30 years. This kind of thing of course has always happened at different levels in real villages. We were like a wee village where people were 'given their heads'. Think of the inventive mothers and fathers, teachers without knowing it; adults willing to play with kids. Playing games, playing instruments, making plays and producing plays. All makers, makars, dreamers. This is infectious of course. The kids catch on and are always building. Cooks, campers, climbers have found their way to Kilquhanity, mostly, like Bob McKenzie, thorns in the Establishment flesh.

Heady stuff this has been for half a century. From the very beginning we had a small farm here too - cows, pigs and poultry and the young of these. The farm is almost totally non-viable in the strict farming sense but in the context of the school it's invaluable."

So what's it like in practice this very special school? The week revolves around the Council meeting which takes place on a Thursday afternoon. As John Aitkenhead puts it, "you could set your watch by it." It starts at 2 o'clock on the dot and everyone has to be there or send in their apologies if they can't make it. The Council meeting is chaired by a pupil and the proceedings are democratic, orderly and amazingly efficient. Efficiency is essential,



given the age range of the children who attend - from the Kindergarten day pupils up to those in their mid-teens. The Kindergarten children stay for only a part of the meeting but their problems and questions are dealt with in a proper way and, young as they are, they are already learning to be active members of the larger community. It occurs to me, watching this part of the meeting that here is the evidence of how 13 year-old John Aitkenhead's experience of rearing his baby twin brother and sister has been knitted into the work of Kilquhanity. As the five year-old explains how he's lost his troll with the orange hair there is a ripple of gentle amusement round the room, and then offers to help him look for it from more than one teenager. Similarly for the boy whose den was wrecked by Scottish Power, felling over-hanging branches in the holidays. These feel like genuine, good-natured offers of help from the older children.

When a child has done wrong the matter is put to the whole group as well as to the child and a means of putting right the injury is eventually agreed which the child can accept as fair and reasonable. The child undertakes to do whatever is necessary and the decision is recorded in the book of the Council meeting to be checked on at a subsequent meeting. "Freedom with Responsibility" is how it is described by John Aitkenhead and it seems to have the whole-hearted support of the school.

**T**he question that occurs to an outsider visiting Kilquhanity is why, since it is as successful as it clearly is, in producing well-balanced, happy children, have the insights of this school not been more widely

incorporated into mainstream Scottish schools? After all, John Aitkenhead started out as a teacher in the state sector and retains strong links with teachers who work in state schools now, through his lecturing and public speaking. It's such a common criticism of the small independent school to say that it 'doesn't belong in the real world' or that what it offers to the few children who have the luck to experience such a liberal form of education is not 'reproducible' in large primary and secondary schools. There may be some truth in this but there seems also to be a strong element of evasion by the defenders of the status quo in the state sector who sometimes shout 'privileged minority!' as though it exonerates them from any need to re-examine their own performance.

real privilege the children of Kilquhanity enjoy lies in the atmosphere of creativity that permeates every part of the school and all its activities, from the seasonal festivals to the classroom learning. And their privilege is also possibly in having parents or guardians who are confident enough in themselves and their own view of education to assert that there's more to going to school than getting certificates - the opposite of the 'education is training' message of this government.

Kilquhanity is at a sort of crossroads. Can it make the transition to being a day school? Can it survive a lessening of Morag and John Aitkenhead's seven-day a week parenting? Will its principles of democratic participation and 'freedom with responsibility' hold out against

## The sky's the limit you know when you're working with kids and there's no conflict between freedom and discipline

Children at Kilquhanity are certainly privileged but they do not necessarily leave the school with a set of Standard Grades or Highers to take them straight on to a college or university. The school has worked successfully with children with learning difficulties as well as with children categorised as simply 'difficult'. Recently it has taken children from countries as far away as Japan and America, although these children will no longer be able to attend under the new regime. And since the 1980s children have come through the Conservative government's 'assisted places' scheme. The

stranglehold of current educational thinking? Perhaps when you're eighty-two years old these questions should matter less. Not though, it seems, for John Aitkenhead. What is to be hoped is that Kilquhanity does indeed make this transition successfully and continue to offer both the vision and the practice of an alternative way of educating children. And, if teachers cannot fully reproduce the principles elsewhere, at least they have a home-grown thoroughly Scottish benchmark against which to measure their own efforts to rear useful, happy adults-in-the-making. ■



Paul Raeburn

# JOYLESS JOURNEYS

Scottish Child takes a look at the Scottish Consumer Council's recently published survey on travelling by public transport with small children

If you want evidence of how little real change there's been in the last ten years in institutional attitudes to the needs of children and adults looking after children - Citizens's Charters and campaigns for children's rights notwithstanding - take a look at the **Scottish Consumer Council's** latest publication. Called **Going Places with Children**, it reports on the quality and accessibility of waiting rooms, toilets and other services for people travelling by public transport with children.

The standard of facilities across Scotland is by no means uniformly bad but overall there is still a sizeable gap between what people might expect of public transport services and what they actually get - and that goes for almost all forms of travel, from ferries to aeroplanes, from buses to trains.

Predictably, the form of travel most used by those on a low income - buses - comes out the worst. Travelling by plane may involve a lot of hanging around and a good deal of discomfort on the plane itself but toilets, baby changing areas and cafes at least acknowledge the existence of small children in the basic facilities they provide. The same is broadly true of ferries and the ferry terminals.


But buses? You can forget the child-friendly, low-level toilet or wash basin, in fact in most places you can forget the easy access ramp up to the platform or waiting room too. The standard way of gaining entry to many of our bus stations is by bumping your pram or buggy up the steps and pushing through swing doors, which just - but only just - allow you and your child finally to break through into this so-called 'public' space. You will be carrying your luggage of course, if you've been unwise enough to have brought a bag or case as well as the children. The survey found that only one bus station, East Kilbride, had any luggage trolleys for passengers. Not one of the bus stations visited had any human help at hand for someone managing luggage and small children together.

Since time immemorial babies have been shitting and peeing just like adults, only generally in smaller amounts at a time and more often. Since about the mid-seventies baby equipment manufacturers have been alive to this fact and have been producing such aids to hassle-free nappy-changing as baby changing mats and

foldaway changing tables. This fact seems to have percolated through to the awareness of some of those who manage or own transport services but not, regrettably, to the bus station operators: "Facilities specifically for changing babies' nappies are not provided by any of the companies which own or lease the bus stations covered by the survey." At Anderston Cross Bus Station in Glasgow the District Council does run a baby changing room inside the bus station complex and at Kilmarnock there is a nearby shopping centre with accessible changing space. Even there however, the baby changing areas are located in the female toilets, the assumption being presumably that only women either can or do change nappies. The investigators found this to be a repeated pattern in all different forms of public transport with the exception of a few ferries.

Overall the verdict on bus stations around Scotland is devastating. The researchers found them dirty, dangerous, inhospitable places, as the following sample of comments illustrates:

Ayr: "The station was dirty, cold, uninviting"

Kilmarnock: "The place is so dirty... While struggling with a buggy and luggage there is nothing to prevent your child from running under a bus." 

Edinburgh: "Although the station is at pavement level pushchairs have to brave the traffic between platforms as the underpasses are all stepped."

They found the buses themselves difficult to get into and out of, with insufficient storage space for a buggy and bags. They describe an alarming disregard for the safety of passengers, especially small children, in the way vehicles move off before people have got settled, so that children fall over in the aisles of buses or into the laps of other seated passengers as the driver swings out again into the traffic.

Train stations come out of the survey slightly better, although there is still room for massive improvement. Baby changing facilities are more routinely provided and Inverness in particular comes in for high praise both in terms of the layout and the attitude of the attendant. Some stations still have a lot to learn about the qualities needed for the work of running a clean, pleasant public toilet, judging by the experience of an adult who had the misfortune to pass through what must be one of Scotland's busiest train stations - Central Station in Glasgow - with four children and a buggy:

"I asked to use the disabled toilet because my pram does not fold and because of the difficulty of managing four children, who were then aged two to six. This was the only way I could manage my family and incidentally the only way my husband can take our daughter to the toilet. Permission was refused and all appeals failed although no-one else was queuing. I was told no special allowance could be made for me, nor for the elderly unable to use stairs. There were no staff to assist me and I couldn't see the manager because his office is upstairs. I had to let my son use the gutter in the street."

The disturbing finding was that the majority of adverse comments received were about general toilet areas in the train stations -not specialist services for babies and children at all. It seems hardly credible that in a country which claims the tourist industry as one of its main exports, investigators can still be finding that station toilets are often dirty, dingy, ill-equipped and unsupervised.

**P**ublic transport is still predominantly used by women, many of them in charge of more than one small child, a baby buggy, bags and toys or food for the journey. Small children are no different from adults in that they are often nervous about travel. For a lot of people being nervous makes you feel you want to go to the toilet more often - children are no different from anyone else in that respect. In addition lots of children have real difficulty managing the step up on buses and trains; they get scared about the gap between the train and the platform, which looks and sometimes is a chasm down which they fear they may fall forever; they worry that the train will leave without them or that they'll get on and their mum will be left behind; they want to help pay for the fare, pull the ticket out of the machine; they get excited about finding a seat and when they do they want to see out of the window.

Travel on public transport is potentially an exciting experience for a small child, negotiating high steps successfully and being allowed to join in by paying or taking a ticket or choosing a seat, gives important messages to a child about being 'capable'.



Departure points that have changing mats, bottle warmers, safe play areas give signals that management and staff are aware of the physical needs of tiny babies and think them worthy of the extra trouble. All of these resources can be provided relatively easily in a society which

likes children. So where does that leave us? ■

*The survey **Going Places With Children** is available from the **Scottish Consumer Council**, Royal Exchange House, 100 Queen Street, Glasgow G1 3DN Tel: 041-226 5261.*

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# Going Places

**Liz Campbell** has been talking to some teenagers in the Black Isle about getting from A to B - via Z!

What do you do in the Highlands if you're a teenager and the nearest disco or club is twenty miles away by bus? The answer is you probably don't go. Teenagers will tell you they get used to the lack of public transport - it's an accepted feature of life - but, as many of them will confirm, they still feel pretty cut up, or maybe cut off about it. The last bus from Inverness to Cromarty in the Black Isle is 5.30 pm!

"It's terrible," one teenager summed it up as I was giving him and his friend a lift to a night out in a local village pub in the Black Isle around 7 o'clock one Friday evening. "You can't get anywhere unless someone gives you a lift. Your mum and dad get fed up hanging around to collect you either late at night or in the early hours of the morning."

The plain truth is that if you're too young to drive yourself and unless you live in Inverness itself, getting anywhere by public transport is fraught with all sorts of problems. Taking lifts carries its own set of risks; trains are probably out altogether; buses may fit - but only if you're happy either to wait all day or overnight; taxis, by the very nature of the distance between the 'hot leisure spots', are out of the question due to

Basically what this means is if you are a member of a group you can rustle up the rest of the group, persuade them that they want to go into the town and book a mini-bus to get you there, provided that is, the reason is acceptable to the Council! The disabled have had this one well sussed for some time. They use the services on offer for many reasons, including a Saturday afternoon disco in Inverness for many who live well out of town.

There are some plans afoot in the Council to develop the minibus network and involve more private operators so that the range of community need is met more satisfactorily than at present. But for now, the way the teenagers experience it, their social life can be beset by a daunting range of obstacles. Lysanne, aged 14, one of a number of teenagers at Fortrose Academy pointed out that, "To visit friends we have sometimes to take the bus into Dingwall or Inverness then get another one back to where we want to go. And, even if there was transport to get anywhere, what would we do when we got there? There's really not a lot to do in any of the villages around and places like Dingwall and Inverness are expensive before you get there."

**Even if there was transport to, what would we do when we got there?  
There's really not a lot to do.**

the inordinate expense. It's not an encouraging picture.

If you ask teenagers what they do in the school holidays, the answer is mainly "just hang about." That's a pastime all teenagers can enjoy but one which they all agree is OK only when taken by choice.

There is no choice in the Highlands, only isolation.

Highland Region recognises the limitations for young people. Val McIver, chairwoman of the Education Committee, says: "children from the hinterland wanting to go to the cinema or a disco just can't in most cases, unless their parents are willing to transport them. The public service doesn't serve the people it's supposed to serve and it's not good for kids to be dependent on parents and friends. It means social development suffers - and besides that, it's no adventure to be picked up by parents!"

Highland Regional Council runs a mini-bus service which it rents out to various groups at around 25 pence per mile plus VAT. But the service is subject to availability; people who want to use it have to book in advance and the purpose must be 'ancillary to the Council's own functions', as the official in charge puts it.

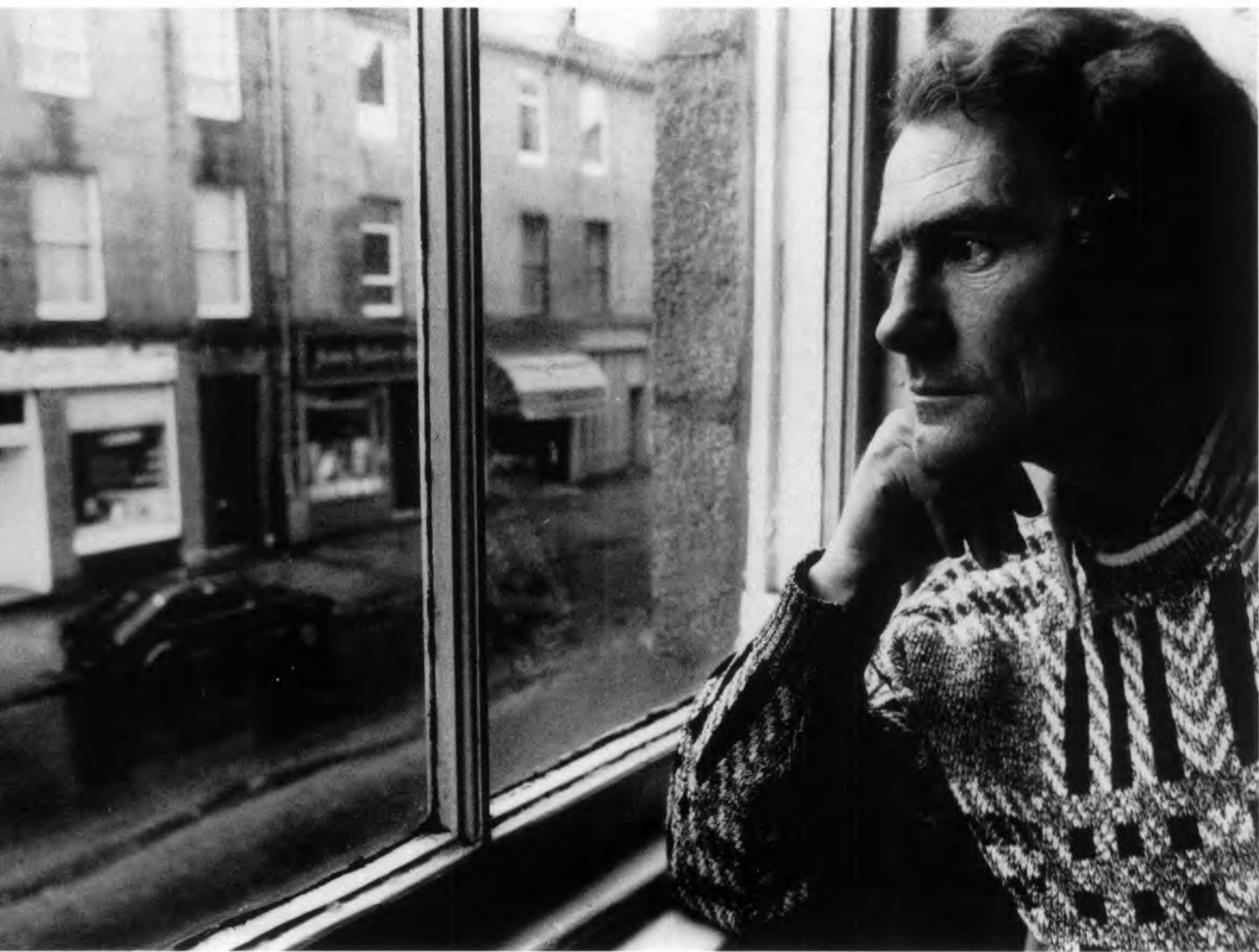
Richard is older at 16 but still dependent on his mum for lifts. She runs him into the local town where he hangs around with friends before being collected and brought back home. He's certain that the answer is a regular minibus service. "If there was a minibus round the Black Isle or any of the other areas which don't have evening transport it would be well used. I know we'd welcome a service around 6 or 7 in the evening which did the reverse journey at about 10 or 11 at night."

But that's a pipe-dream for now and kids continue taking lifts even though there is an increasing fear in both parent and teenagers' minds about the possibility of attacks and people are no longer quite so confident about the safety of the Highland rural roads. Lysanne speaks for the whole group when she says, "It's true, we used to know most people passing and now there are many more strangers. Still a lift's a lift."

Judging from the lack of central leadership, as one Councillor commented, "What's needed is a transport policy and Scottish Office don't seem to have one" - Highland teenagers look like having to use lifts or the family taxi service for some time to come.



# Boom Town or Giro City?



**Jim McEvoy and Jerry Flannigan offer different views of what it's like to be 'on the broo' in Scotland's oil capital.**

**J**im: If you're unemployed, meeting people in a similar situation is important. It's a good way of learning how to play the 'broo game'. The broo game isn't just about claiming all the benefits you're entitled to but the system failed to mention or even avoiding training programmes which are of little value. It's about finding ways of dealing with the patronising view held by so many of the agencies you come into contact with of the 'poor unemployed' whose dignity has been swept away with their last pay packet. As one of the nation's swelling 'army' of the 'elective'

unemployed, I don't think it's undignified to spend my valuable time following my interests and getting skills which could determine my life in the future, rather than furthering the interests of a soulless multi-national.

That's a growing, if still minority, view in Aberdeen which presents an image of itself as a model capitalist city where the wealth filters down from on high into the pockets and purses of the proletariat. The message to the citizens of Aberdeen is that anyone can be part of this great dream provided they possess, or can afford to acquire the specialised skills required by the oil companies who are the city's main employers. Traditional industries in the North-East - like

fishing and textiles - have been squeezed out to make room for the boats, offices and terminals of the oil-eager industrialists. Ironically enough for the local folk, on the whole vacancies in the oil industry are filled by outsiders.

That leaves the businesses servicing the oil industry and a lot of that work is unskilled and offers very low wages. Taking a job in the service industries can mean doing fifty or more hours a week. Hours like that leave no time for family, leisure or doing education or training. Talk about a vicious circle! So, in Aberdeen unemployment by decision, rather than by redundancy, is seen by more than few as a real alternative to the grind of long hours and breadline wages.

Of course there are agencies within the city that work with and for the unemployed. There's the Aberdeen Employment Restart Centre, which

used to offer classes and workshops to give people the chance to try out and develop skills for work. It used to but it doesn't any more since it lost its Urban Aid funding which meant it had to change its structure and become little more than a drop-in centre. There's the WEA Reach Out project too, which some of us use. It gives general advice on education - not, please note, 'training'. It has a good programme of classes and workshops designed by the learners themselves. They're aimed at changing your circumstances through co-operation and self help. There's an obvious advantage to this approach because if you have to decide what to put into your own course, it immediately feels more accessible and relevant and you feel more responsible for what you learn.

## My advice is blow your last fiver on a Safeway's pizza and last year's blockbuster vid from the budget bin.

Life on the dole in Granite City is made slightly easier in one respect: the wastefulness of more affluent Aberdonians. Having no respect for material or craftsmanship, they'll bin the best of furniture, toys and clothes. When they change the wallpaper they buy a new suite to match. The local utility tips make wonderful scavenging grounds. Although it's signposted as a prosecutable offence to remove anything from the skips, I've taken it upon myself to uphold Aberdeen's 'green and clean' policy and have furnished and decorated my humble abode with Nigg's finest 'womblings'.

For sourcing tobacco two days before Giro day, the tabbies prematurely extinguished in the Bon Accord Centre are of premium quality.

'Normal' night-time leisure pursuits are out of the question for the majority of the unemployed or the working poor in Aberdeen. Restaurants are a complete no-go. Much of the theatre tends to be West End productions with corresponding ticket prices. Fringe and rep are still expensive - £4 or more, even with concessions -and there's the babysitter's fee to go on top. The cinema? - well 'nuff said. The alternative is sitting nursing a pint all night or listening to lounge singers strangling Frank

Sinatra's repertoire 'their way'.

So what's the best option? My advice is blow your last fiver on a Safeway's pizza and last year's blockbuster vid from the budget bin.

**J**erry: I've been unemployed for longer than Jim - eight years in fact. I was brought up in Aberdeen and left school at 15 with no qualifications. First I worked in a textile firm for six months but I didn't like factory work and I left. It was the end of the sixties and it was still easy to get work so I wasn't long finding a job as a milkboy with the Co-op. I really liked that because I was out of doors delivering the milk around the countryside and I had all my afternoons free. Then I moved on again - worked for a while as a storeman in Nottingham and, still in my teens, had various labouring jobs in different cities around the country: Glasgow, London, St Albans, Aylesbury. I eventually came back to Aberdeen but I found it hard sticking at one job because I had this feeling that I had more to give than just labouring. The time between one job and the next started to get longer and eventually, as the unemployment figures rose, I found difficulty in getting work.

At first it seemed all right. I had a bit of money and I thought I could get a job any time but that didn't happen as the months went by and I began to realise that it was going to be hard to get back into work. I think the oil boom in Aberdeen has a lot to answer for as it brought in people from different places who were adept at the kind of jobs the oil industry was offering. Those people had an enormous impact on the local economy because prices of everything went up, especially housing and rents. Even when I was working I couldn't afford much money for luxuries because I was in lodgings which kept going up, due to workers coming in who could pay more.

The irony is that now the rigs are paying off workers who were used to great wages. These experienced, qualified men are going for jobs they wouldn't have looked at before - joiners and electricians are going for manual labouring jobs. I don't need to point out where that leaves someone like me who's been unemployed for years.

After a long time trying for work I gave up. It was at this time I was at my lowest. I was fit, intelligent, willing to work but no-one would give me a chance. At first I blamed myself for being unemployed, not having a trade or a

written qualification. Then after about a year trying for work without success I tried to get a grant for clothes - the ones I had were by now no use for interviews and first impressions do count. I was told I'd no chance of a grant unless I was starting a job! Catch 22 as usual.

That is when I realised that some of my friends had stopped calling for me to come out at weekends and other social occasions. I used to stay indoors all day as the pittance I got from the DHSS only covered my board and lodgings.

Now I have a council flat and stay by myself. It's often lonely, especially at weekends and holidays because I can't afford to go out. I enjoy walking but for a decent hike you need proper gear -boots and waterproofs - which I can't

## These people at the DSS every day must surely know the answer by now -there are no jobs!

afford. I can get depressed too when I think of my family. I've missed a wedding because I couldn't afford the fare and I've got nieces and nephews I've not seen for years for the same reason.

Now and again I do visit my sister in Darlington. The people I meet there think it must be great in Aberdeen - good wages, plenty of jobs... When I tell them how long I've been looking for a job either they won't believe me or they think I'm a lazy bastard.

I feel sorry most of all for the young people of Aberdeen who have left school and haven't got a job. I'm used to unemployment now and I can't see myself being employed in the near future. But it's no less hard for that - old friends tend to patronise you, especially if you meet them somewhere like a bar where you need to have money in your pocket. I think this is one of the worst aspects of being unemployed. I don't on the whole get depressed because I feel lucky in the friends who've stuck by me but I do get angry sometimes, most of all when I'm called up for a RESTART interview and someone asks me why I haven't found a job. These people at the DSS every day must surely know the answer by now -there are no jobs!



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## HOME-START

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Booking forms from: **Martha Simpson**, Consultant for Scotland  
**HOME-START Consultancy**, 84 Drymen Road, Bearsden, GLASGOW G61 2RH

# NO SMALL CHANGE

Andy Manders writes about the work of **Reach Out**, in Aberdeen, an educational project used by long-term unemployed men and women

**S**uperficially things look fine in Aberdeen. Protected by oil, the city has escaped the worst of the decline in traditional industry. Unemployment is said to stand at 5%. Wages are the highest in Scotland. Even the football team has made it to the cup final. The picture's not so bright however, if you're one of those on the outside of all this prosperity and social wellbeing. House prices and high rents make housing a major problem. A high cost of living ensures that surviving on benefit is a greater struggle. Low unemployment means provision for people who are unemployed ranks low in the order of priorities. A skilled work force leaves unemployed people to fend for themselves in a vicious circle of long-term unemployment with all its effects on morale and self-esteem. People who are long-term unemployed in Aberdeen represent in a particularly acute way that largely voiceless minority that the government seems to see as a necessary, if slightly unfortunate consequence of individual economic prosperity.

Because of the way we are funded, **Reach Out** has to work with people from only selected areas of the city, the parts the bureaucrats like to call 'designated areas'. We operate under the umbrella of the Workers' Educational Association and our aims are consistent with the philosophy of that organisation: in our case to create an educational experience which first of all confronts the effects of unemployment on the individual and then begins to remove the barriers between those involved in the project and the opportunity of the wider community. The way we do it is by bringing together groups of people who have been unemployed for some time - several months or years - and people with special needs. We encourage them to start thinking about themselves and their skills in terms of their whole human growth rather than just whether who they are and what skills they have make them 'employable'.

At the risk of being accused of writing in clichés, I'd say that **Reach Out** puts the human being in all his or her complexity at the centre of everything that the project does. Everyone

involved is recognised and valued as a person living and acting in the community, socially, physically, politically, economically, spiritually, morally, sexually and creatively. People using the project are usually disadvantaged in a range of ways so in any one week you could find classes in basic numeracy and literacy skills, course in outdoor studies and art or discussions on drink, sexuality and self-employment. **Reach Out**'s strengths come from this approach. It's a way of working which for the most part makes integration a positive force for all concerned and which puts the learner in control of the learning process.

For some people the initial need may be just to get out of the house. For others it's a question of getting *into* a house. In either case it's likely to mean trying to break the circle of lack of motivation, loss of confidence and social isolation. At one end of the spectrum you could find someone who's learning how to feel OK simply speaking to another person and at the other, someone who's got to the point of planning how to go on to university. Needless to say, this amount of diversity, of abilities as well as aims, can sometimes frustrate the progress of a group. But on the whole we welcome it because it's real and in itself brings lessons for everyone. It encourages the self-help aspect of the project too, because people share skills and take an active role in each others' learning.

The metaphor which comes to mind - which fits the image of a seafaring city like Aberdeen - is of **Reach Out** as a kind of ship with a passenger list which is a microcosm of the world, on a voyage through deep, troubled waters. The people who use **Reach Out** feel the constant drag of financial hardship on their aims and motivation. They know all too well - they've been victims of it for too long not to know - the social and economic context in which they have to try to realise their goals: few real jobs, the hardship of full-time education, the poverty trap. So, a lot of the time for some of the unemployed people in the project **Reach Out** is just a means of keeping your head above water. But even then the philosophy of the project is to encourage you to look about yourself,

see how you got there, locate islands and learn to swim!

Perhaps the thing which is both hardest to take and which is never out of the picture is the glaring evidence of the abject failure of the school education system to equip a significant part of the population for living. A good many of the people using **Reach Out** have been abandoned by society early in their lives and that abandonment has largely continued - barring occasional interest from the courts - for a period long enough for a great deal of damage, or at least a terrible neglect of potential, to the person and the community to be done.

**Reach Out**'s educational approach aims to give people the sense that they do have access to power, or to a greater degree of control over their personal, social and political lives than their economic circumstances suggest. It's likely that for a while yet Aberdeen will go on being associated in most people's minds with the oil boom and people making lots of money. In the meantime though, **Reach Out** puts up a different, we think more enlightened and longer-lasting, agenda - a 'people-centred' one: people -

- gaining confidence to make their own choices
- learning to assert their rights
- learning about and taking control over their own health
- growing their own food on their own land
- recognising their own creativity for the first time
- getting housing
- learning to write and speak their thoughts more easily
- developing the confidence to go on to college
- exploring their own sexuality
- making new relationships
- seeing themselves as potential employers
- developing ideas for their own businesses
- exploring themselves and their land in outdoor education
- learning to exercise control over their use of drugs or alcohol

People changing themselves and their community. ■

# Surviving to Find Completion

Five poems by Margaret McQuade McAuslan



## Wei Chi/Before Completion

I will be  
an old fox  
cunning and fly

moving forward  
with caution  
alert and listening

for tell-tale  
cracks in the ice.

No more  
heart on my sleeve

no more  
rushing into the breach  
with careless abandon.

I'm determined  
to reach the other side  
and find completion.

## Siobhon

So this little one  
won't ever  
walk or talk  
win school prizes or  
be the belle of the ball  
in fact this little one  
won't ever amount  
to very much at all.

What a shock  
that must have been  
what a waste, what a pity  
what a shame  
but pointless really this talk of blame when  
it's a chance you know  
we all must take  
if we're vain enough  
to procreate.

Yet this little one  
with the pretty name  
is unique. See her laugh  
and smile as she plays  
her game, hold her close  
within her fragile frame  
know her moods, meet  
her needs and though  
there will be pain  
love her, love her dearly  
for she is quite beautiful.

1984

'84 began ominously enough  
though the early  
record-breaking blizzards  
were as nothing  
compared to later storms.

In midsummer  
while the sun shone  
and crops flourished  
the forces of law and order  
aided and abetted by  
a shameless media and  
Government disinformation  
battered the miners into  
soul-destroying submission  
while the nation looked on with  
passive disregard for the future

In the autumn Stuart died  
and at the year's end  
scarcely a night went by  
when I didn't cry myself to sleep.

## My Mother

She has always tried  
to do her best in the  
face of circumstance  
which, in her case, has  
almost always been dire.

In strength she  
found dignity  
in times of trouble  
a burning desire  
for peace of mind.

Her strength is a fire  
raging  
all-consuming  
but finite  
nonetheless.

Eventually, it too  
will fade and die  
leaving only ashes  
and a pall of dignity  
hanging in the still air.

**new voices,  
new writing**

## Survivors (for Billy)

In the aftermath of the explosion  
as the dust settled on the debris  
of a shattered life  
we picked ourselves up  
and coming slowly  
to our battered senses  
stumbling over  
past and present tenses  
we side-stepped your name  
as we avoided each other's eyes.

Then sifting through the ruins  
of what once had been  
seeking solace in memories  
we found anguish, broken dreams.

We are refugees of happier times  
the shell-shocked survivors  
of the night  
Death blew your mind  
for whom living  
will never be the same.



## CHILDREN'S BOOKS

**The Minpins**

Roald Dahl

Illustrated by Patrick Benson

Puffin £4.99

• **All Pigs Are Beautiful**

Dick King-Smith

Illustrated by Anita Jeram

Walker £6.99

• **Holly and the Skyboard**

Ian Whybrow

Illustrated by Tony Kenyon

Walker £4.99

• **Black Woolly Pony**

White Chalk Horse

Jane Gardam

Illustrated by Janet Rawlins

Walker £2.99

• **Homebird**

Terence Blacker

Pan Piper £3.50

• **We All Fall Down**

Robert Cormier

Lions Tracks (Harper Collins) £3.50

• **Dear Nobody**

Berlie Doherty

Lions Tracks £3.50

• **Scotland For Kids**

Anne Shade

Mainstream £5.99

• **Edinburgh For the Under 5's**  
(4th Edition)

National Childbirth Trust £4.50

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**John Pelan**

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With the school summer holidays bearing down upon us, the problem remains how to keep the children amused once the initial euphoria of liberation has subsided. Tell a child to read a book and, like as not, they tell you to get stuffed.

## Armchair Adventures

After seemingly endless months of reading and revising and exams and homework, all most kids want to do is have fun. But what happens when the Gameboy breaks or a best friend disappears off on holiday and stifling boredom sets in? A visit to your local friendly bookshop or library might just be the answer. After all kids, even the sophisticates of today, do a lot of sitting around during the holidays just wishing that something exciting would happen. In books it often does. Here's a selection of books just published in which lots of things definitely happen and not always for the best.

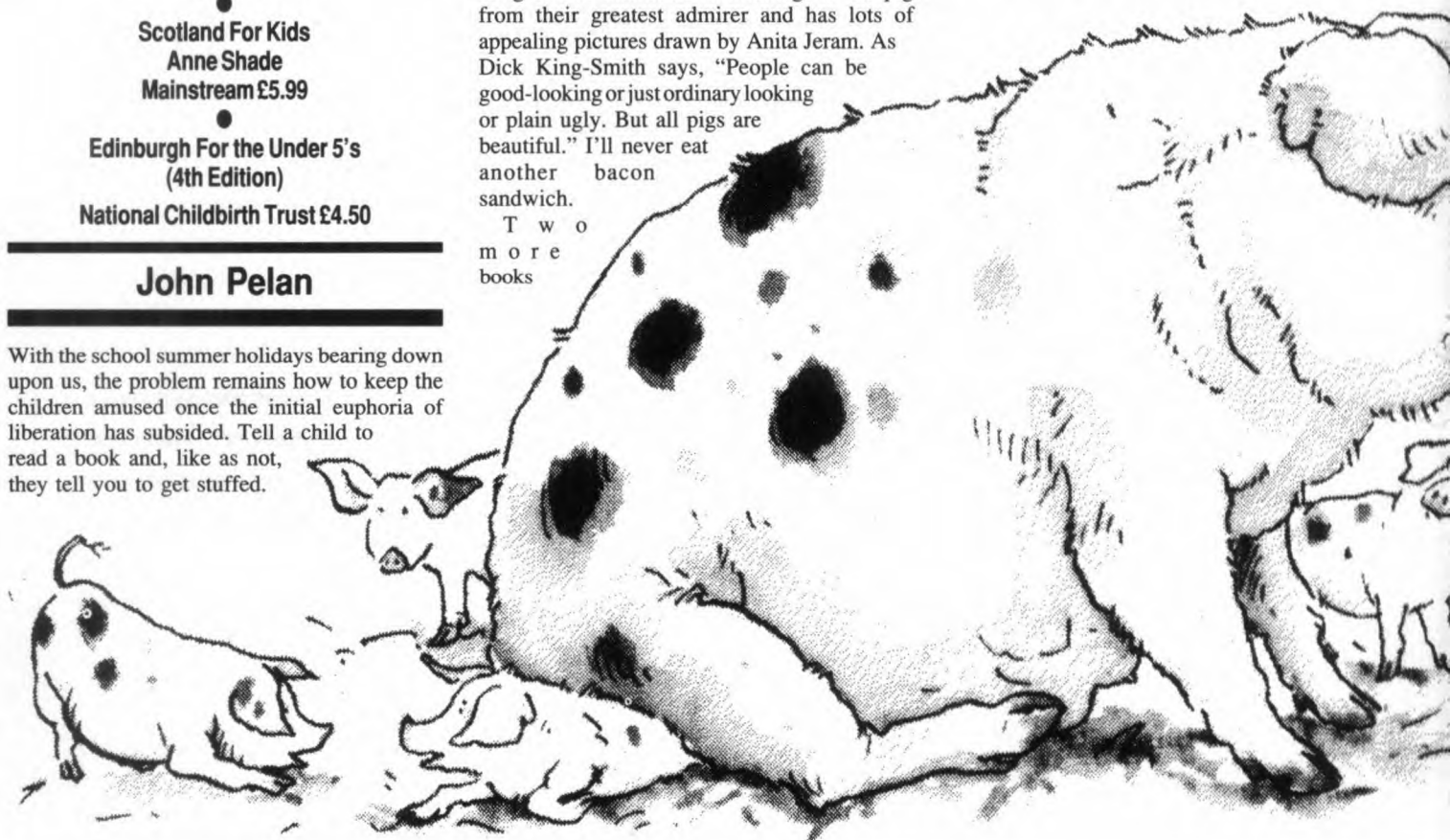
Roald Dahl's last book, **The Minpins**, written shortly before his death two years ago, has now been published in paperback by Puffin. It tells the tale of Little Billy who disobeys his mother and ventures into the Forest of Sin, despite warnings of Hornswogglers and Vermicious Knids. The forest is populated with thousand of tiny people, The Minpins, who befriend Little Billy and who he eventually saves from the fearsome Smoke-Belching Gruncher. Dahl returned to form with his last book, displaying again his immense talent at appealing to the childish imagination. Patrick Benson's illustrations are brilliantly detailed and add much to the book's somewhat mystical feel.

Walker Books have just published a series of non-fiction picture books for the very young, **Read and Wonder Books**, which are fresh and exciting in their approach and mark the publisher as being one of the most innovative in children's books. They combine a unique blend of information, ideas and emotions and are written in a way which makes them ideal for reading aloud. My personal favourite from the series is **All Pigs Are Beautiful**, by Dick King-Smith. The book is a homage to the pig from their greatest admirer and has lots of appealing pictures drawn by Anita Jeram. As Dick King-Smith says, "People can be good-looking or just ordinary looking or plain ugly. But all pigs are beautiful." I'll never eat another bacon sandwich.

Two  
more  
books

from Walker for the six to nine age group are worth mentioning. Ian Whybrow's **Holly and the Skyboard** is not only a good value hardback at £4.99 but it's a very enjoyable story. Not very well-off Holly gets the better of her spoilt brat cousin, Richard, with her magic 'skyboard' which can do lots of wonderful magic tricks. Described as a 'stirring cautionary tale' on the dust jacket I think the moral, set within the subtext, will be missed on most kids who'll just want to own Holly's magic skateboard. I know I would. Jane Gardam has written two stories for the Walker Doubles series - **Black Woolly Pony** and **White Chalk Horse**. Twice winner of the Whitbread Award, Gardam demonstrates in this book her skill at telling an exciting story in clear and simple language. Both stories are set in the country, the first tells of how Bridget saves the day on her horse, William, and the second story revolves around a girl's efforts to save an ancient landmark, a white chalk horse. Both stories should appeal to a much wider readership than just the My Little Pony Club, with their strong characters who show bravery and determination.

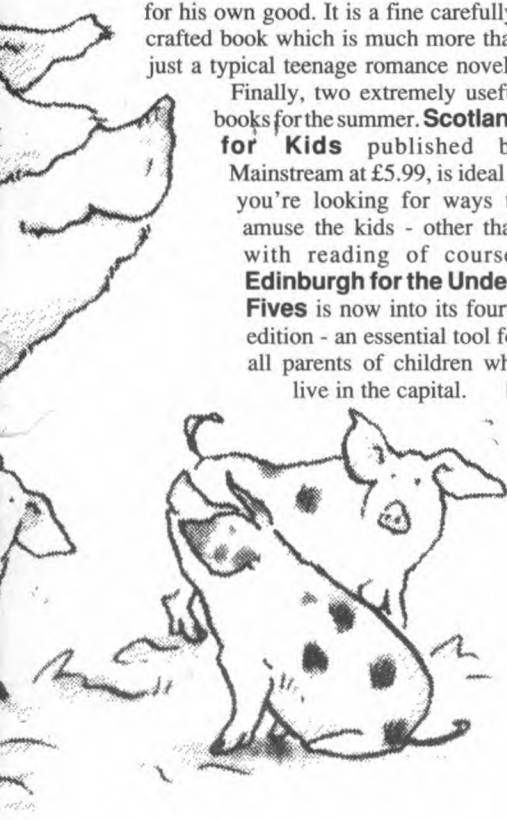
The hero of Terence Blacker's book, **Homebird**, is the problem-beset Nicky Morrison who is in trouble with the law and who is on the run in London. According to Adrian Mole this book is 'dead good' although I found it a little tedious. It would also help if Pan could identify somewhere on the cover what age-group the book is aimed at. Only through actually reading it could I tell it was a teenage novel and many grans looking for a good read for a wee one might be a bit disconcerted to find lines such as "Busy in bed with the bastard who tried to shop me to the police."



Two outstanding and highly acclaimed books from Harper Collins have just been published in their Lion Tracks series, written for teenagers, or young adults, as we call them in the book trade. **We All Fall Down** by Robert Cormier is a brutal and exciting thriller. However, apart from the fact that the hero, known as the Avenger, is only eleven, there's not much else that distinguishes this book from adult fiction. Grans be warned. **We All Fall Down** is a compelling read, though, and reminds us that young people can be excessively cruel and how easy it is for their cold disregard and disdainful indifference of society's rules to spill over into blatant violence.

**Dear Nobody** by Berlie Doherty won the Carnegie Medal in 1992 and is now available in paperback. It is a deserving winner, **Dear Nobody** is essentially a love story, the lovers being Chris and Helen who are soon to leave their respective schools and go on to university and music college. In a moment of passion they make love and Helen becomes pregnant. The book is a fairly accurate and extremely vivid account of the shattering upheaval of teenage pregnancy. Doherty's book is not simply a sex-education lesson for lustful adolescents. In fact, if anything, the book leaves one with a sense of hopefulness in its last line, which is one of the most beautiful I have read for some time. Helen's newborn baby Amy is passed around the family which has been traumatised by events. "It was as though Amy was a fine thread being drawn through a garment, mending tears." And the revealed fact that Helen's mother is herself illegitimate makes it clear that what the two teenagers got up to isn't anything new. I found Helen's character more clearly drawn and much more interesting than Chris's who is too noble for his own good. It is a fine carefully-crafted book which is much more than just a typical teenage romance novel.

Finally, two extremely useful books for the summer. **Scotland for Kids** published by Mainstream at £5.99, is ideal if you're looking for ways to amuse the kids - other than with reading of course! **Edinburgh for the Under-Fives** is now into its fourth edition - an essential tool for all parents of children who live in the capital. ■



## Freedom in the Classroom

### NO MASTER HIGH OR LOW LIBERTARIAN EDUCATION AND SCHOOLING

1890 - 1990

John Shotton

Libertarian Education £7.99

Rosemary Milne

There are broadly two strands to the alternative educational tradition in Britain. There are schools like those run by A S Neill and Bertrand and Dora Russell - usually boarding schools, set in the country and run as independent fee-paying establishments and there are the inner-city experiments in alternative education, especially the Free School movement of the seventies, whose earliest origins can be found in the working-class voluntary schools of the mid-nineteenth century. John Shotton's book gives a useful overview of many of the best known of these pioneering ventures, and some idea of the impetus that drives individuals to experiment with alternatives on the fringes of or right outside the state system.

Since the book is published by Libertarian Education you'd hardly expect it to adopt an unbiased approach to its material. And it doesn't. The thesis is that state education has been, since it took hold in the late nineteenth century, the principal means by which the state has created an obedient workforce - each individual adequately but not overly trained for their allotted position in society. And the evidence is there to support such a claim, as the following extract from a 1984 Department of Education and Science statement makes plain: "We are in a period of considerable social change. There may be social unrest but we can cope with Toxteths. But if we have a highly educated and idle population we may possibly anticipate more serious social conflict. People must be educated once more to know their place."

The author acknowledges in the concluding section of the book, however, that, despite the success of many of the alternative schools for

the *individuals* who had the good fortune to attend them, the movement as a whole has made little impact on state-run British schools. He asks the question as to why this might be. His own book provides part of the answer at least.

Libertarian education is preoccupied with the question of authority, specifically with the authority of the child and the relationship of the child's authority to that of the adult. Shotton is emphatic - and rightly so - about the difference between what he calls 'progressive' schools, those which eschew punishment and overt coercion but nevertheless take the teacher as the guiding force in the child's learning, and the genuinely 'libertarian' initiatives which start from the child and the child's own definition of what he or she needs.

Alternative schools, whether progressive or libertarian, have, as he also points out very frequently been set up and run by charismatic leaders. The ethos of the libertarian school which endows the children with authority depends very heavily on the commitment of the leadership to that way of working with children - ie. power is *given* to the children, rather than *taken* by them. This appears to be true, even in many of the schools which are non-hierarchical in structure.

A libertarian school may aim simply to educate a number of individual children to become happy adults. However, if it has wider goals - to set an example of an alternative way of educating which the state sector might realistically emulate - the school has to have some way of acknowledging openly where power actually lies in our society: with parents, with teachers, with bosses and politicians. Otherwise it cannot begin to integrate into the wider community, for whom those power relations are basic facts of life. Equally the community cannot make sense of what the alternative school has to teach of worth about the autonomy of the child. The result is an absence of communication between the two sides. For which of course the government is devoutly grateful.

These are matters which need further development than the present book has been able to give them. We should hope therefore, that Shotton will not stop here but get deeper into the subject and open up some of the questions which, in these reactionary times, need answers more than ever. ■

#### Among the Contributors in this issue:

**Liz Campbell** is a freelance journalist and broadcaster, living in the Black Isle, Ross-shire; **Julie Collis** is Development Officer of the Strathclyde Early Years Voluntary Sector; **Jerry Flannigan** is a keen hill-walker and a long-standing user of **Reach Out** in Aberdeen; **Yvonne Guthrie** was a student at Broughton High School in Edinburgh and starts at Telford College in August; **Andy Manders** used to be a teacher but now he works in education; **Jim McEvoy** served a traditional apprenticeship as a boat-builder in Ayrshire. Unemployed for a time, he is now doing what he needs to do to do what he wants to do - be an architect and help develop a housing policy which gives people control over their lives; **Joe McGrath** is a long-term prisoner at Noranside Prison, editor of **The Stiff** and a member of **Scottish Child's** editorial group; **Margaret McQuade McAuslan** has been writing poetry since her teens. A feminist and political activist, she's currently working with Glasgow Women's Aid; **John Pelan** runs the children's section in an Edinburgh branch of Waterstone's; **Jo Tuckman** works at the Committee for Human Rights in Honduras; **Lucy Turnbull** is a single parent living in Edinburgh and studying for an Open University degree.



## Picking Up the Pieces

Dear Editor,  
Over the past 14 years we have seen the erosion of many of the services that made life in this country tolerable. Both central and local government have implemented policies that have all but negated the concept of society. The attack continues and soon we will be paying VAT on the most basic necessities: heat and light first, food next. The assault on our standard of living has been merciless and, in most instances, women are having to bear the brunt of it.

Who cares for the children of working mothers? Who cares for elderly relatives? Who cares for the sick and disabled? Who feeds and clothes 16 to 18 year-olds who are denied benefits? Who is coerced into staying with a violent partner through lack of available housing stock? Who works in the lowest

paid, least protected jobs? Who is now denied access to legal advice and representation? **Women.**

Whether they are unemployed, single, married, in work, with or without children, women are the predominant carers and the most exploited members of our society. Whatever gains had been made since the establishment of the welfare state, are either gone or going and we are just expected to get on with it, regardless of the personal costs to ourselves and the effects on our families.

The latest attack on women's freedom to lead an independent life has come in the form of the Child Support Act which, as Joan Cradden pointed out in **Scottish Child April/May**, is clearly aimed at saving the Treasury money.

The mostly male Establishment have targeted their policies at what they think is the weakest section of

society, women and children, in the belief that they will not encounter serious opposition. Yet, historically women have always been among the prime movers in political protests and the fight to save jobs and services. The struggle for equal pay and opportunities; rent strikes; the anti-poll tax campaign; the fight for the right to abortion; the Justice for Women campaign; the anti-racist campaigns; the peace movement; support groups for the miners; the Timex strike - the list is endless.

Women can and do fight to improve the quality of life, not only for themselves but for their children and communities. We are not a powerless or ineffective section of society. We make up more than 50% of the population, we have an honourable record of struggle against oppression, and we are strong.

We are a caring society but we are being hammered by an Establishment that cares more about personal gain and company profit than our quality of life. Throughout the country there are various campaigns and acts of resistance to cuts in jobs and services, as well as opposition to the Child Support Act and the virtual abolition of Legal Aid. Women are at the forefront of all these struggles. We have no choice but to resist the destruction of the services, jobs and policies that constitute the very fabric of society. let it be known that we will not stand by quietly while our communities are being starved of resources and our freedom and rights eroded.

**Margaret Murray,  
31 Leven Street,  
Glasgow**

## Sexual Abuse - Hype or Denial?

Dear Editor,  
I am a GTC registered teacher, and wish to ask you publicly, on behalf of an increasing number of colleagues, to stop feeding and feeding on the current public hysteria on child sexual abuse.

The only universally accepted statistics in this field are those based on convictions for such offences, and these particular

statistics, free from speculation or unproven allegations, show a remarkable and world-wide similarity. They demonstrate that such abuse mainly occurs within the home and by relations of the child; that such offenders rarely have any previous convictions and, even more rarely re-offend; that such offences are comparatively rare; and that such offences show

no signs of increase over the long term.

If one is guided by such statistics, then a child in Britain in 1993 is in fact over a hundred times more likely to be injured in a road accident than sexually abused in his or her own home and more likely to be struck by lightning than abused by a stranger.

The offence remains serious but proven offences of this kind are rare!

For God's sake, stop feeding the false public hysteria on this subject!

Yours faithfully,

**Peter Harrison  
25 St David Street,  
Kirkpatrick Durham,  
Castle Douglas**

## What Price Confidentiality?

Dear Editor,  
Care in the Community has finally arrived and with it a predictable flurry of short-term media interest. Most of this has concentrated on the closure of residential institutions for people with learning disabilities and mental health problems.

However, the change that affects where I work - an emergency hostel for homeless young people - stems from how we are funded. Before April young people claimed directly to the DSS for their rent to be paid. With the advent of Community Care, the responsibility for allocating this money lies with the Social Work Department. The Department must assess each individual to decide, in effect, if they are vulnerable enough to be here.

For us as an organisation the loss of autonomy over such matters is lamentable. Significantly far more reaching however, is the effect these changes will have on confidentiality for our residents.

Until now we have operated on

the basis that anything a young person shares with us remains within the agency unless we are acting on the request or with the express permission of the young person.

This policy has been clearly appreciated and seen as crucial by many young people, who for one reason or another have had less than helpful relations with other agencies. It has given young people the opportunity, often for the first time in their lives, to talk about extremely difficult issues and experiences, secure in the knowledge that the information would be held solely in the minds of the workers and in the notes which they themselves could destroy or take with them when they leave.

This policy has on occasion brought us into conflict with housing agencies, social workers, and the police. We have stuck to our guns time after time because we believe it to be in the best interests of the people we work with, but mainly because we have

seen and felt the difference it can make in how young people are able to trust and relate to us - in a way they often tell us they have never been able to relate to adults before.

Suddenly all this is in jeopardy. The Social Work assessors require written records of almost every conceivable aspect of a young person's life. Boxes are provided to record physical, sexual or emotional abuse. Health needs are categorised. There is even a facility to record HIV/AIDS status. When all of this is recorded it is held on computer at Social Work HQ. Our efforts to find out how long the information is held or what use it might be put to in the future have so far been fruitless.

Ultimately a decision is made as to whether the young person meets the criteria which will allow them to be funded for an eight week stay.

How can an organisation like ours respond to such a sudden and enforced change of policy? Whether or not we try to oppose these changes - and it is not likely

that we will - we face a decision which will lead to considerable loss on the part of our residents. Do we give up their right to confidentiality, or use them as political pawns in a battle against the contemporary doctrine of those who will not recognise the language of our concerns?

**Gordon Fisher,  
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Edinburgh EH9 2AX**

**Scottish Child welcomes readers' letters.**

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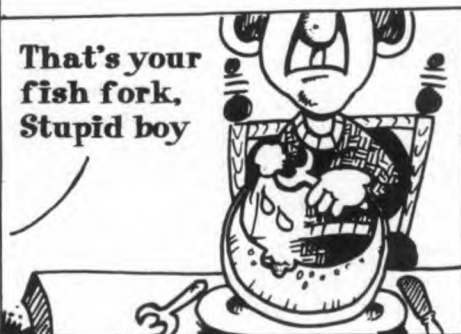
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Scottish Child,  
130 St. Stephen Street,  
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or ring us on  
031-220 6502.

We sometimes have to cut letters for length.

## We Spend All Our Adult Lives Trying To Recreate Our Childhood Coburn & Naughton

I grew up in a cold, loveless family. There was never any touching. Manners were considered the thing.



We did find some affection from our nannies and governesses, but they came and left with alarming regularity



Any chance of developing loving feelings though, were soon dispensed with, at a succession of public schools



Our youngest turned out gay. I often wondered if it was easier that way, guys not wanting so much of the soppy stuff as it were



Of course I was expected to be married, produce an 'Heir and spare' of whom, of course, I am incapable of showing any affection



People always blame the parents, for how the kids turn out



I'm very like my dad but I get on best with my mum. It's her I talk to when I've got a problem. I'm like my dad when I'm angry. He's stricter than my mum and I argue much more with him. Sometimes when I'm talking to my mum and it sounds like I'm being cheeky he butts in and says to her, "You should fucking batter her". I tell him, "Shut up, it's got nothing to do with you." But it has. He's right - he's always right, so he thinks.

I think parents should trust their children, have faith in them, otherwise there's no point having them. I want to go to college after I leave school, but I get no support from my dad at all.

I'm doing exams at the moment, just seven Standard Grades but you do two papers in most of them. One of the Maths papers was pretty hard, I didn't think I was going to get it finished in time, but I did thank God. I like Maths. I used to work in an ice-cream van and we weren't allowed to use a till or a calculator. My whole family worked on it, I was the youngest, the last to work there.

After the exams I've got to organise a three-weeks work experience. I'm trying to set something up with bairns, working in a school nursery or something, but I've had no joy yet. Once I've done the three weeks that's me left school.

I want to be a nanny and look after bairns but I can't get into college to do that until I'm seventeen. I'm fifteen now. I want to leave school as soon as possible so I'm going to college to do clerical and secretarial studies. I don't know how I'll get on in it, I'll just have to wait and see. I've got to make a good impression because I'm the youngest on the course, the woman told me that. I hope I won't get flung out!



## The School Leaver

Yvonne Guthrie talks about her life as she sits her Standard Grades and gets ready to leave school for college.

I'm not going to give up on the nannying though. I've got three brothers and two sisters and I'm the youngest. I'm an auntie three times, soon to be four. I get on with bairns, play with them, talk to them, batter them. Sometimes.

I'd hate to have to stay on at school. I go to Broughton High. It's all right but I was at Ainslie Park before they were merged together and it was the best school, the teachers were great. I had a bit of a hard time at Broughton at first. I just didn't like it. I was cheeky to the teachers and got flung out a couple of times. I got chucked out because I fell out with my Office and Information Studies teacher. I was supposed to go for detention but I didn't and I went home

instead.

My mum wrote a letter saying I had to come straight home but my guidance teacher - it was like he didn't believe she'd written it, and I walked out saying "Bloody hell". He said I swore, and I told him, "Aye, bloody's in the bible," and all the rest of it. Swearing - that's something I get from my dad as well but his attitude is, "It's not my bloody fault you fucking swear all the time."

The first time I went up to the school they wouldn't let me back in because I wouldn't answer their questions. The second time it was the deputy head, Mr McGinlay, I went to see and he just asked me if I wanted back in and I said: "Aye." And he says "Right", so I got in.

He's nice Mr McGinlay.

That's when I got my social worker and my community worker. They're nice. We talk about school, how things are going at home, and I just tell them the truth. Then we sit and talk it over. It's good, I go away happy at the end of the night.

I see the community worker at the Pilton Youth Programme sometimes. That's one of the places I like to go and to the Adventure Playground near my house. We play pool, football, listen to music, sit around and talk to each other fight with each other, just the lassies fighting the laddies, it's a laugh.

I like music - rave music and Dolly Parton! When my dad used to take us away at the weekend he used to play it in his car. I just started getting her CD's and her tapes and listening to them. I like her, she's a good singer. She's got a strong voice. But that's it - rave music and Dolly Parton.

I like going to clubs, youth clubs. I used to go to a few raves but I stopped it because my dad wasn't keen on it. He used to imagine things would happen to me, or something, because I'm the youngest.

I used to roam about the streets, standing outside the shops for hours getting frozen. Not any more, it's too cold, and if the polis saw you standing there in the street they'd stop you and ask you what you were doing and if you give them any cheek they just lift you. It wasn't worth it.

They harass people my age because a lot of the kids are into drugs. They're into speed, jellies, stuff like that. I've never taken it myself, I'm too scared and I'm too young.

That's it really. I've not got a very big life - not many stories to tell. ■

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