



RANSACKERS

**WELCOME TO THE RANSACKERS
ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**

Autumn 2014

Ransackers On Tour!



My Polish Adventure - Dziękuję Akademia Pięćdziesiąt Więcej

Barbara Clarke



Learning for me is a lifelong adventure, whether formal or informal, so I made the most of my four week stay in Białystok, Poland, with members of Akademia Fifty Plus, funded by the EU lifelong learning partnership programme: The capable and creative ladies were the perfect hosts.

We helped with English classes, helping with pronunciation, we had lots of fun with words. Young people contributed to the cooking events, made sure there was cooking kit and facilities available; there was great interest on the Caribbean and African menus that we prepared for the evenings. Learning from us will help the Polish groups to grow within integrated global networks, which enriches us all.

The media in Poland promoted Akademia Fifty Plus, and they were awarded Best Practice in their area three years running.

Our Polish partners stayed in London, and we tried with our Polish language, but we need more workbooks and help to master Polish!

We focussed on maintaining healthy eating habits in our lives and had fun while doing this. We worked with the knowledge that by doing, and not sitting, we thrive, not merely survive. We hope to leave a legacy for our young people so they can be, like us, innovative, creative trail blazers.

Older women in Sweden, Italy, and London

Hilary Farnworth

OWLE50+ was an EU Grundvig Lifelong Learning project with women over 50 in Bari, S Italy, Norrkoping Sweden, and London. Themes included starting businesses as older entrepreneurs, positive ageing, health and better European citizenship. OWLE stands for Older Women Learning and Enterprise.

We learned about cultural and economic differences which affected the women. The major challenges facing them were:

Italy:

Older middle aged children still living at home

Expectation that women would cook and do all the housework.

An opposition to women becoming older entrepreneurs

Sweden :

Pensioners living in upstairs flats with no lifts, in centre of town, few local shops as main shops had moved out of town and were inaccessible without a car

But they were in receipt of better welfare payments and training for unemployed 50+, as Swedes pay 50% tax for social welfare.

UK

Most of the women were single or divorced and living on their own, with no-one else to share bills with.

Many women's top priority was to get paid work or to earn their living as self employed

Low income: They could attend the course only because it paid their bus and tube fares to Central London

Outcomes

30% got jobs or started small businesses

All said the course and the project had improved their confidence

A sub group of Swedish and Italian women managed to pay their fares and hotels to come to London, where new friendships were made. But the London women said they could not afford to pay air fares, so were unable to travel.



Great connections were made by email and Skype, and all had a better idea of the benefits of being in the EU for cultural exchanges.

The Evolve Rome: visit in March 2014 - Wise Owls and Atdal40+ Teresa Lefort

I was one of six volunteers from the UK who spent March 2014 living in Rome. We were taking part in the Evolve project (European Volunteering Venture), a partnership between UK-based Wise Owls and Italy-based Atdal 40+.

Both organisations help older workers return to work, or access learning, funded by the EU Grundtvig Life Long Learning Programme. The main topic was *Working and Learning in Later Life*.



Another part of the project was to check accessibility issues in major tourist areas in Rome: We made observations about uneven pavements, pushing wheelchairs over cobbles (very hard). In stations lack of staff meant lifts for disabled couldn't be used - though there were some escalators.

One of the tourist attractions we went to was "City of Water"; when I needed to use the lift it was a strange contraption, just a normal chair on a platform, I had to keep my finger on the button to operate it - very scary! It wouldn't have passed UK Health and Safety.

Recycling and huge rubbish bins were very noticeable, they use the large industrial ones in the streets, and daily rubbish collections were extremely noisy and disruptive for other street users. In London we get the rubbish collected less often, but its not so disruptive. We learnt about the innovative recycling schemes run by cooperatives who are part of IL SOL.CO. (Consorzio Sociale Onlus): they collect recycling and have a warehouse, people can go and look for things, can get their company items recycled. It seemed easier than the way we deal with types of recycling, where you often have to take it to the council tip yourself.

Some thinking points about Italian education included meeting Mariele, an archaeologist and is currently having to work as a tourist guide. This made think the way the job market is driving training and education away from choice. But back in UK commercial colleges are taking over local education facilities and big business is going to crowd out many good educational ventures.

My views about older people doing such exchanges raise questions: Do they enable us to see the bigger picture? Or be involved in some of the solutions? Or do they tend to pack too much into the programme to get funding?

The month was exhausting, but I left with so many different impressions from a stimulating programme. But I'd recommend anyone to go on these exchanges given the opportunity.

EVOLVE website: www.wiseage.org.uk/?title=evolve

Ransackers Abroad : Si Señor project, Spain

By June Kathchild

During May and June of this year I participated in a volunteer exchange programme for over 50s between Birmingham in the UK and Logrono in Northern Spain.

Although this was not directly related to the Ransackers Association it was reported back on at the workshop held at Fircroft College at Whitsun.

Three seniors from the UK and three seniors from Spain travelled in each direction and took part in interesting intergenerational work in each other's cities for a period of three weeks. Activities included workshops with young people learning English, with role plays and drawings. There is 55% youth unemployment and many are looking to work in other countries. However we told the Spanish young people the realities of working in UK, e.g zero hours contracts, minimum wages, benefit restrictions for EU incomers to UK.

As well as increasing cultural understanding and sharing experience of workshop techniques, very useful contacts were made between NGOs from both countries. Hopefully the Ransackers Association can become involved directly in further opportunities for adult educational exchanges funded through the Erasmus 2 programme.



Peter Convery our non-resident poet (Peter has recently temporarily vacated his flat for renovations) reminisces on our European theme, followed by his latest project

Un Scrittore – Molto Famoso*

Dead tired and “resting as an actor” I was taken to the station by a girl-friend, Mary and a young actor friend – Tom Conti, a fellow Scot from my home town of Paisley.

After a complicated train journey I arrived in Tuscany – befriended by the Chief Conductor. Allowed to join the driver up front, I was introduced to his friend, the Station Master – had a glass of wine – held up the train to drain the dregs – it was like a comedy film.

No taxis – it was a little villagey Halt – so a porter was deputised to walk me to the Palazzo. He carried my portable typewriter. We were joined by some children, a dog and more children and became a procession. The porter waving my typewriter informed people hanging from windows that I was a famous writer*.

Eventually Tom came out to visit. He plays fantastic flamenco guitar and we taught our Italian friends Scottish Dancing in the elevated garden.

I learned some Italian from my first teacher Rita. She was only three years old and used her storybook to teach me. La Bicchiere e roto – the Glass is Broken (it was a fragile notice on my typewriter of a broken wine glass).



INTERGEN

During a Bingo session in the sheltered complex where I live, a visitor mentioned that a local Academy was looking for a volunteer to aid teachers with teenagers who were having difficulties reading aloud.

As an actor I was keen to make use of my skills. Had an interview and was accepted. So – this September I shall be involved – picked up by taxi both ways. Nice to feel needed at eighty eight.

Peter Convery

Ransackers Association Annual Report – 2013-2014

The past year has been defined by the Awards for All Grant and the ambitious programme the committee set itself to run courses at all the colleges involved in the Ransackers Project and to continually engage with other groups to look for new opportunities. The grant enabled us to develop courses that would join Ransackers and prospective students in a new learning process. This extensive programme was made all the more pertinent by the death of the Ransackers founder, Vi Hughes in October 2013 and the 10th anniversary of the project in 2014.

The first weekend course at Northern College involved the making of a promotional film of Ransackers describing what the project had meant to them. The film is on our website and we were able to have copies made for members to show when giving talks to other groups. Thanks to Nick Foxell our film maker.

Our next venture was a one-day seminar at Hillcroft College to discuss PR and funding as well as the first showing of the film. We invited many people who were new to Ransackers, but who were all involved in community groups. This enabled them to spread the word about the project and take away particular skills they had learned from the course tutors, Ryan Curtis and Kathleen Egan, to enhance their own groups.

Ruskin College was the setting for the 2nd weekend course when a large group of Ransackers met newcomers to discuss inequality and how to deal with it, how to research and what to do with the results. Our tutors, June, David Bliss, Hilary and Katherine Hughes, were excellent and most of us wanted to join a study course instantly. We invited Vi's daughters to share a tribute to Vi, with poems and readings.

Fircroft College was the 3rd weekend venue. A mixed group of new and seasoned students discussed research techniques, how to get funding, different ways of running the Ransackers Project, tapping into European projects for seniors, possible intergenerational work. Again thanks to our seasoned tutors, and Helene Pursey who spoke about the projects of previous Fircroft Ransackers.

The last day seminar was held in the Open University London building with the title 'Ransackers Past, Present and Future'. We had RA history, we showed the film and received lively feedback. Further suggestions that all the Ransackers Projects should be available for view and discussion about how we might accomplish this. A celebration moment came with the presentation of certificates of achievement to Teresa Lefort and Ann Petersen for the NIACE Adult Learners Award, congratulations to you both. The last session was discussing future partnerships and funding. Could we change the model, could Ransackers be run in the community setting?

How could we get funding to run our own Ransackers courses? These and many more suggestions have been documented and will be part of the next phase of where Ransackers go.

A surprise and last minute opportunity was raised by Hillcroft College who offered us a hands-on film making weekend, which enabled members to record and edit a short film and gain experience with the equipment.

This year has represented an amazing learning curve for the committee. It has been more like running a small business than the predominantly friendship group we started out as. Using a grant under strict terms, on time and in budget was no mean feat and I cannot emphasize how hard the active members of the committee have worked, especially as four of them were actually taking part in European exchanges and teaching practices at the same time. Teresa, Monica, Barbara, June, Peter, Robin, Mark and Hilary are all due a massive thank you, as is Caroline Holland, Gillian Ingram and Vanda Carter for their continued support. Members of the committee have also attended many conferences and study days on behalf of the group, as well as fun concerts in the Tower and Hampton Court.

There have been some negatives over the year. Our funding partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University did not materialise but we have representation on the related England Centre for Practice Development Board which will enable us to be ready should funding become available and be a valuable consumer voice on the board. We have also just been informed that Ruskin will not be able to host the Ransackers Project in the next academic year due to national funding changes. We hope this will be a temporary measure and have agreed to work closely with Ruskin to find a way to make all the Ransackers research projects available on line and have the information to contact former students.

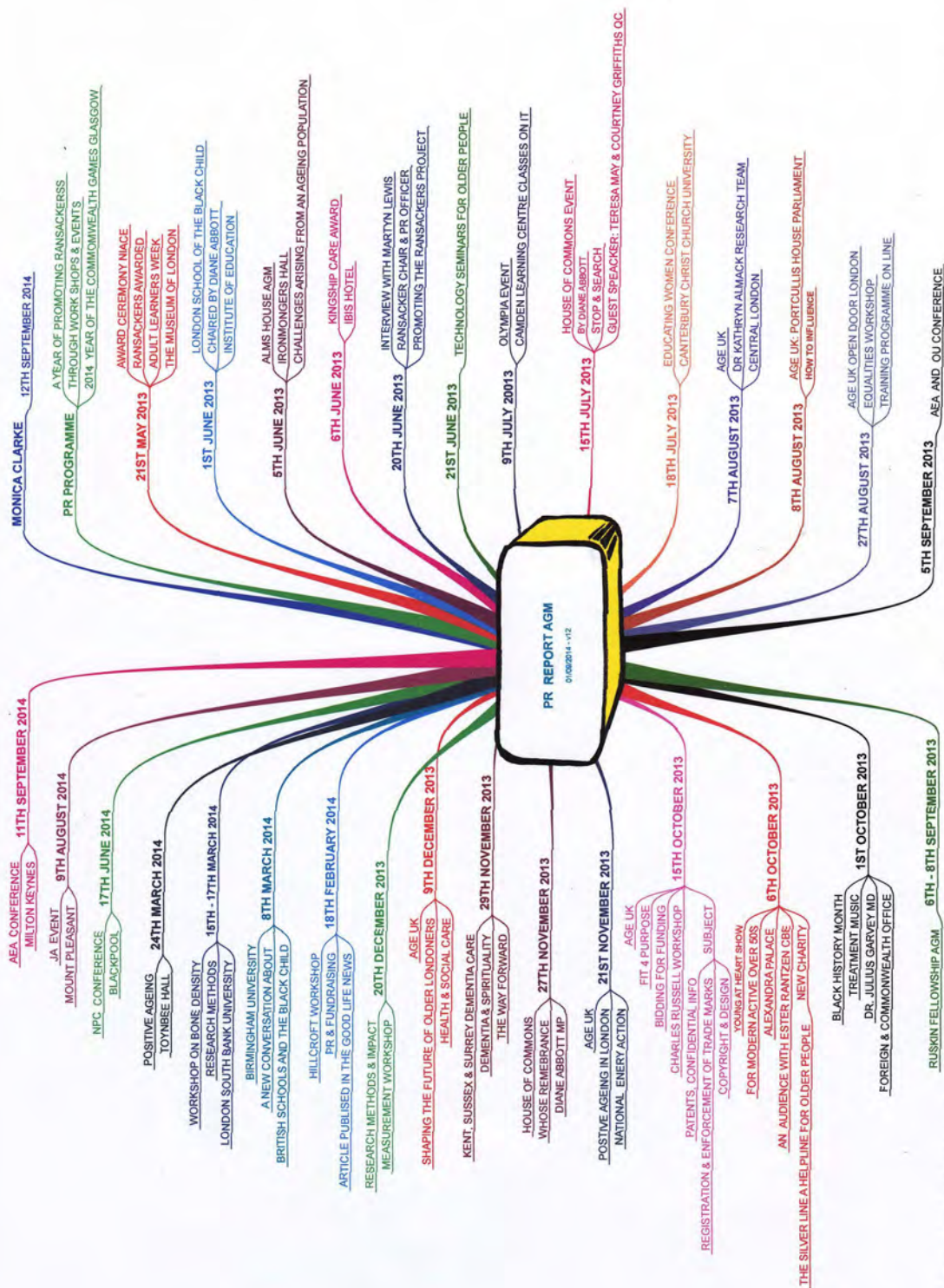
The whirl of courses has enabled us to meet so many new people who share the Ransackers ideal and the inclusion of Ransackers Friends as well as Ransackers Members has increased subscription numbers and support. Our thanks to new friends who have given their time and expertise to the group.

As we go forward we are currently liaising with Spanish partners on a funding bid for exchange learning. We have a twitter account - **@ransackers.uk** - thanks to Ruth Harper. We are also actively working with other prospective funding partners to enable us to keep the Ransackers ideal alive. It may be a different version but it will definitely recognise the creative and life-long learning abilities of seniors, as Vi Hughes envisaged.

Jenny New, Ransackers Association

Ransakers Activities and PR

Monica Clarke



PR REPORT AGM REVISED 1 01-09-2014.mmp - 01/09/2014

Can Ransackers Association be a Chameleon?

Hilary Farnworth

A chameleon changes colour to fit in with its surroundings. It's a very successful animal, but it gets into a bit of difficulty if it has to sit on a tartan rug.

The funding situation for our traditional 10 week courses has been getting harder; we've had to adapt and learn a lot fast, but I don't believe we have reached the tartan rug stage yet.

This last 12 months, summer 2013 to summer 2014, we have run a Lottery Funded Awards for All project for £10,000, which involved over 100 Ransackers and Friends, run 3 residential workshops and 2 seminars, made a film (available on the website) and done a lot of brainstorming and raising ideas about how we can take the essence of the Ransackers concept forward in a tough funding situation. We've listed all the ideas and are going through them for viability.

The unique selling point, or essence of Ransackers Association, is self-chosen learning projects at HE colleges for older people who never had higher Education. We'll be planning over the autumn, working with established partners like the Open University, to bid for more funding, more projects. These projects may not be quite the same shape as previous ones, they may happen in different parts of England. If you weren't able to come to any of the funded events in 2013-14, we'd still welcome your views.

But like the chameleon, we are adapting to the changing environment. The need for Ransackers' educational adventures has possibly never been stronger, with so many baby boomer generation people arriving at the stage in life labelled "older person". Government policy makers and indeed the EU have policies that uphold lifelong learning and creativity in later life. We can tap into the criteria that funders like the Lottery set for community organisations. It will be hard work, but – look what we've already achieved this year with all the organisers and committee being volunteers. If we can manage to get a paid Development Worker funded we could go forward into 2015-16 by leaps and bounds.

News from Hastings – Ron Bennett Liaison member from the OAK Project

Brighton university is no longer running the Open Access to Knowledge Project, affiliated to Ransackers, but I now chair the resident-led partnership for Big Local North East Hasting. www.biglocalnortheasthastings.org.uk

We are commencing a 10-year programme during which we will be investing a significant amount of money in learning and skills: improving health and wellbeing: bolstering community relationships and helping to improve the economic outlook of our area. Our programmes span all age groups.

Our aim is to develop a north east Hastings area curriculum containing basic literacy, language and numeracy skills, together with courses that will help residents understand and make use of digital, civic, financial and health services, as well as courses that will help residents into work and pursue learning for the love of it. A key element will be accessible information, advice and guidance. At some stage I hope that we will be able to resurrect research opportunities for older people who have not had the benefit of higher education. It is an ambitious programme for an area like ours and the progress that Ransackers is making gives us hope that we will be successful.

How We Put Together The Newsletter and Website

Here are a few words on looking after our Ransackers website. The purpose of the website is of course to tell anyone who is interested what we have been doing, what we are planning for the future, **and how to get in touch**. We are extremely fortunate to have the assistance of a computer professional, Gillian Ingram who very kindly set our website up, and has provided constant advice and practical help over the years. She manages to fit this in while running the Camden City Learning Centre which teaches computer skills to schoolchildren, and provides specialist computer courses for adults. Our Chair and our Membership Secretary organise periodical Newsletter Meetings at the Camden City Learning Centre, open to all members - where the actual content is decided and laid out with the help of Gillian, who also implements any necessary changes to the website: **and brings it up to date!**

Ransackers film on DVD

There is now a DVD available to use with community organisations; this was funded by the Awards for All Lottery fund. It shows Ransackers talking about their projects and how important study is to them. Contact us to obtain a copy. The film is also on the Ransacker website: www.ransackersassociation.org.uk

In Memory of Vi Hughes - Trees for Life



I am very happy to report that the donations you sent in memory of Vi, Ransackers Founder, have enabled us to 'plant' eight groves of trees to help restore the Caledonian Forest in the Highlands of Scotland.

The trees will be planted in the Spring 2015 planting season and will be a mixture of native species grown from locally collected seed such as Scots pine, birch, willow and rowan and each planting will be dedicated to Vi. You can view Vi's 'groves' and dedication by visiting www.treesforlife.org.uk/groves/grovepage.php?id=8993. Thanks to everyone for your support. I think Vi would be delighted.



Photo Gallery

Ruskin Short course



Open University seminar



Short course at Fircroft





The Ransackers Association

Subscription Invitation 2014 – 2015

Calling all Ransackers and Friends – we invite you to renew your subscription or become a new member of the Ransackers Association. The annual subscription remains at £10 so please join up - your support is vital. If the sum is a problem send what is appropriate to you. We keep costs to the minimum and will email where possible. Please complete the slip below and send it with your cheque, made out to The Ransackers Association Limited to:

Secretary, c/o 22 Woodcote Road, London E11 2QA

Please be assured that your details will be kept by the Association for administrative purposes only and will never be passed to a third party without your agreement.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Name.....

Address.....

.....Post Code.....

Telephone..... Email.....

Project title..... College..... year.....

Or your interest in Ransackers.....

I enclose my cheque in the sum of £.....

If you are a UK income or capital gains taxpayer the Association can reclaim the tax you have paid on your subscription. If appropriate please sign and date the statement below.

I would like the Ransackers Association Limited to reclaim tax under the Gift Aid Scheme on all monies I have given since 2006.

Signed..... Date.....

Website:- ransackersassociation.org.uk



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