



Newsletter

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Get yourself on the web!

Ruskin has signed up with an organisation called WebAlumnus to get all our past students onto an on-line database. If you would like to:

- check whether your name is listed
- update your details
- have the chance to find other Ruskin people
- choose whether to be contactable yourself, by those who knew you at Ruskin, then please click on the link on the front of the Ruskin website at www.ruskin.ac.uk

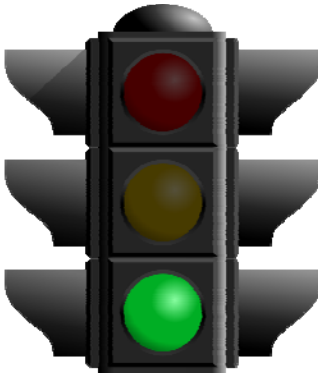


Ruskin gets the Greenlight!

At its July meeting, The Ruskin Governing Executive took the formal decision to move ahead with the capital project— that is the plan to redevelop the College on the Headington site and to move the headquarters there from 2012. Centerpiece of the project will be a large new academic building adjacent to the Rookery, on the site of the current Tawney Hall, incorporating a state-of-the-art new library, a cafeteria, classrooms, offices and social interaction space. All the residential blocks will be refurbished, with 28 en suite rooms in the Webb Building for short courses and trade union groups.

Grand plan of redevelopment

Although problems with Learning and Skills Council funding nationally have meant that the project has had to be streamlined, it still represents a £19.8 million spend on bringing all the College buildings into the twenty-first century and also includes renewing all the infrastructure across the site and bringing the grounds into greater use. In order to keep borrowing to a minimum and avoid the College being saddled with debt, fund raising efforts are building up. These include events organised by staff (a cycle ride and Christmas raffle to date, with more to follow), approaches to Trusts and Foundations for grant aid (£110,000 so far from this source), contact with potential major donors (already resulting in \$150,000 from a Texan Millionaire) and links with neighbours in Old Headington who may particularly want to support the transformation of the walled garden and the Ruskin grounds. Former students of Ruskin can of course, help with any part of the project that particularly interests them but it is hoped they will take a special interest in the upgrading of residential accommodation which, frankly, has been in a sorry state lately and is now top of the list for renovation. A donation form, as usual, appears at the end of this newsletter, and can be used to contribute whatever you can afford, no matter how much or how little, to making life better for Ruskin students in improved, more energy efficient residences and a renewed College. Gift Aid will increase the value of every gift by 28p in the pound, making a gift of £10 worth £12.80 and a gift of £100 worth £128. Please do think about making a donation. We have until the end of March to decide exactly how big a loan we need to take and any money raised before that will keep interest payments to a minimum. If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact the Principal at amullender@ruskin.ac.uk for an individual discussion.



Principal's Page

Introduction

We are well into another academic year, with a hard-working new cohort of students thoroughly enjoying their time at Ruskin.

Finance

Our public funding is starting to feel the pinch. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC), our largest funding source is already making cuts and The Higher Education Funding Council for England, our second biggest funder, is talking about cut-backs nationally next year, though no detail is yet available. We are operating a deficit budget but can only afford to do so for one more year and really ought not to do so at all since that last remaining cushion of reserve cash may well be more sorely needed when times get hard in the public sector in the relatively near future. Hence we will be looking for savings that can be made without damaging our core business and that will tide us over until the move onto one site in 2012.



Curriculum and Quality

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) returned on 20th and 21st January 2010 for the second 'Developmental Engagement' in a three-year Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQR). This time we were able to choose our own lines of enquiry and we picked student support, with emphasis on learning support, differentiation in the classroom (i.e. responding to individual learning needs) and progression into and through learning opportunities at Ruskin. This resulted in seven commendations and five recommendations that will be followed up in the resulting months.

On the further education side, inspections these days can happen at two or three weeks' notice so several of us have been on courses to discover how the new Common Inspection Framework will operate. We have also enjoyed a visit from a college Principal who has been through a pilot inspection under the new system. We learnt more from her in one afternoon than on all the courses put together.

We continue with successful validations, this time of the new CertHE in Combined Studies, to be followed soon by the revalidation of the MA in International Labour and Trade Union Studies under a new Co-ordinator, Ian Manborde.

Talks with the TUC have come to fruition and we were delighted officially to launch the arrival of the TUC Organising Academy at Ruskin on 4th December 2009.

Property Strategy

All our submissions for planning permission were successful in July, with the exception of the car parking scheme which we are taking to appeal. We will have to go back with minor changes to most of the plans, however, owing to the overall streamlining of what can be afforded. This should go through smoothly as the planners are keen to assist us get the project under way.

Conclusion

We remain in good heart, despite a sense of difficult days ahead politically and financially.

Resources are high on our agenda, as on everyone else's, and we are particularly open to ideas we can pursue for fund-raising. My thanks to College staff who have made a good start with a sponsored cycle ride (in the rain) and a Christmas raffle.

Professor Audrey Mullender
Principal



Legacies & Futures Conference Report

Saturday September 19th saw Ruskin College host more than 80 delegates from across the UK and beyond for the Legacies and Futures conference. In a day of lively discussion and debate, the conference sought to explore the more recent legacies of the History Workshop movement and radical education, and to explore future directions in these fields. While many speakers tipped their hats to past achievements in both areas, interestingly almost all of twenty-five presentations were focused clearly on the future – taking the current status of public history and radical education as a springboard to argue where the fields could, or indeed needed to be moving. In the tradition of the History Workshop, a 'bottom-up' perspective was central to most papers, as were issues and opportunities around new technologies and new media in facilitating greater community participation and activism in the process of history making and publication.

The relative commonality of interest, despite people working in widely varying areas of interest, was highlighted in a number of papers, as was the scale of advances made in the breaking down of historical boundaries between disciplines, and the argument that 'public history' was no longer being led by the history discipline alone. The growth in recent years of initiatives in archaeology that encourage and seek public participation were particularly noteworthy here. Yet as the radical education threads of the conference also made clear, this same period has been one of growing complexity in the social and political mobilization of histories in Europe and the UK. The net result is that many of the questions about the directions that public history and radical education need to consider, their prospects in the current climate, and the most appropriate courses to encouraging great collaboration, are only now being raised, and are very far from even open-ended resolutions.

The conference packed a significant number of papers into a particularly full day, and provided an excellent showcase of questions around the legacies and futures of the History Workshop and radical education as it currently stands. There was some regret that there was not more time available for discussion, but we certainly anticipate further discussions as a consequence of the meeting. Thanks go to all who participated and contributed to the success of the day – particularly the many speakers, session chairs, and volunteers who contributed to its smooth running, and of course Ruskin College for sponsoring the event.

Kynan Gentry
Political Research Fellow

Greetings from a former Ruskin Lecturer

I was moved to get back in touch with Ruskin simply on the strength of having heard the Principal, Professor Audrey Mullender, on the Today Programme on Radio 4 in August. I was the College's Lecturer in Social and Political Theory from 1949 to 1963, having been appointed by Lionel Elvin and serving thereafter under Billy Hughes. Although I went on to a productive (even if I say so myself!) academic career as Director of the Leeds University Centre for Television Research, winding up as an Emeritus Professor of Public Communication there, I still look back on my Ruskin period as a particularly rewarding and fulfilling one. I enjoyed the students, some of whom I still relate to. John Prescott was after my time of course, but Norman Willis, some-time General Secretary of the TUC, was during it. I ran singing groups (folk songs, spirituals, labour and trade union songs mostly), always called Jay and His Rooks (having started at the Rookery), that performed at College socials and made records of their best songs for fellow-students to take away as mementoes (a selection of these was played at the College's centenary celebration in Oxford Town Hall in 1999). I even based my Oxford succeed and therefore part of the aim DPhil on interviews and questionnaires with ex-students as well as with two years of entering and leaving students, entitled it The Effects of Long-term Residential Adult Education in Post-war Britain. Chelly Halsey was an external examiner. I still have some Oxford connections, including interaction over matters in my field with people at the Oxford Internet Institute and The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. I also have friends in Old Headington and Headington Quarry (where I lived with my family), and when I visited them in August a year ago, I paid a nostalgic strolling visit to the Rookery grounds. I sense - and hope - that things are looking up at Ruskin.

Would any readers hailing from my time there like to contribute a follow-up to the above? Most of my fellow tutors - a great bunch, both dedicated and likeable - are no longer with us, including Alan Fox (who became an Industrial Sociologist at Barnett House and Nuffield College), Eddie Cooney (who went on to the University of York so I continued to see him from time to time) and Ted Ellis (a brilliant tutor of Political History who went on to the University of Wales, Aberystwyth and died last year). Of course, John and Vi Hughes are still around.

Jay Blumler



My story - from backward reader to published author

I was born in 1953 at Hastings and into a Labour movement family. I was classified as a backward reader and late developer at primary school and failed the eleven plus. However, I started to blossom at secondary school and achieved a few CSEs. Despite my poor showing in English and especially Maths, I remarkably obtained employment as a bank clerk.

In banking I soon became more interested in the trade union and was active at branch, area and national level. I worked for the union for over two years on a secondment before attending Ruskin. Here, I soon took to student life, completed the Labour Studies Diploma and was also RSU secretary for a year. I went on to the University of Kent where I studied Industrial Relations and Politics. I wanted to continue my studies at Kent and started a research degree looking at change in trade unions but was unable to get funding. After some years of working to support my studies, eventually I settled for an MPhil.

Whilst in Kent I worked in further education and, in time, became the college union convener, leading the branch through the bitter contract dispute of the 1990's. When the opportunity arose, I took redundancy and moved to Brighton. I didn't work for eight months after the move but then started with two hours a week at the University of Brighton. Work at other colleges followed and, for a number of years, I became a peripatetic lecturer. Eventually I got a permanent contract at Brighton in 2003 and also became a Senior Lecturer. I now teach organisational behaviour, human resource management and employment relations, and supervise placement projects and dissertations.

From the outset at the University of Brighton I was involved in helping to deliver a skills programme to first level students and, from 2000, have run this for the School with my colleague, Julie Fowlie. From taking over the module leadership in 2000, we developed standard issue workshop handouts that were given to the whole team. In 2008 we commenced work on bringing all the hand-out materials together into a work book. This includes all the materials the student will need to complete the module successfully. The workbook is supplied in a ring binder and is designed to be interactive, with spaces for student completion. It has been well received by students and staff alike.

In 2004 we were approached by Sage Publications to turn our taught programme into a textbook, but felt that we were too busy at that time. However, Sage were persistent and we agreed to write a proposal, which we submitted with a draft first chapter. This resulted in our being awarded a contract and we started writing the rest of the book. The next two years were something of an unfolding mystery for us as we went through the stages of submitting completed draft, reading academic reviews on our text, and then checking the output of copy editing, typesetting and indexing. Finally, in 2009, publication, one of the most exciting days of my life.

We decided at the outset how we would work and how we would divide the royalties. Although we both contributed ideas and content, I was lead writer Julie is the contributor, reviewer, editor and, most important, motivator! We have worked together for ten years in a high trust relationship based upon mutual respect. The book is designed to be, holistic, in that it covers academic, job search and personal skills; it is friendly in tone rather than didactic or prescriptive, thought provoking as it asks lots of questions of the reader, interactive with plenty of activities, attractively laid out, well indexed and properly source referenced. In other words, user friendly. The ethos of the book is based upon our belief that everyone has a skill set and that this can be upgraded with the right help and encouragement. We recognise that there are rules of academic life which must be learnt in order to succeed and therefore part of the aim of this book is demystification of the processes of higher education.

The taught skills programme, workbook and textbook reflect a lot of what I have learned on my journey through life and contain much of what I would have wanted to know when I started at Ruskin. For me, Ruskin was a turning point in my life, but the journey goes on and, in my mid-fifties I have started a second research degree, this time at the University of Portsmouth, again on trade unions and this time with the intention of achieving a PhD before I retire!

Bob Smale

Former Ruskin Student (1984—86)



The Battle of Walton Street

The Battle of Walton Street would seem to be over and it has now been agreed that the building will be sold to Exeter College. Despite the difficulties caused by the recession and the folding of the LSC, the development of the Headington site is still going ahead, albeit in a 'slimmed down' version.

Although some of us may regret the sale, the Fellowship will continue to preserve the heritage and ethos of the college wherever it may be located. Much as we may regret the loss of a building which has so much history, the college's heart should be in the body of the students and not in the bricks and mortar. In that respect, we should be aware that, as well as a commitment to the college, the Fellowship also has a commitment to the students. I hope that we can strengthen our relationship with the students' union and its members in order to form a cohesive and vibrant network of Ruskin supporters.

As the college moves into a new stage of its development so too is the Fellowship. We are currently revising our constitution which I hope will lead to the Fellowship becoming a more inclusive and vibrant organisation with which to get involved.

With that in mind, we are also looking to establish more local groups of Fellowship members. With the new former students' database, which is about to be launched, communication should be much easier. The Fellowship will be discussing with the principal how the database will benefit the Fellowship in communicating with its members. Access to the database will be via the college's website www.ruskin.ac.uk.

So far as activities in Oxford are concerned, during this term we held a film and discussion night which was open to both Fellowship members and the current students. The film was shown by the local CND group and was about the transportation of nuclear warheads on our roads and the dangers posed by such traffic. Although frightening it was also very interesting and promoted lots of debate. It was as well an eye opener as to the dangers such activities present to the general public. We are intending to hold other meetings, although I would hope that some of them will have a fun element to them as well! Please do get in touch if you would like to set up a local group in your area or let us know of any ideas you may have that may entertain or educate.

Education of course being an important issue for all of us, the Fellowship is also becoming more involved in CALL (The Campaigning Alliance for Lifelong Learning). With so many cuts already made and the threat of more, it is important that we unite to maintain access to education for everyone.

As the holiday period approaches I am sure that I speak for all members of the Fellowship Executive Committee in wishing you all a Happy Christmas and a Good New Year.

In Solidarity

Jan Smith
Fellowship President

Former Ruskin Student Obtains Ph D

Former Ruskin student Owen Murphy has recently (July 2009) been awarded a PhD degree in international trade by Bradford University, with the accolade of an Examiners' recommendation that the thesis be published in whole or part in the academic literature. It reports on his investigation into the determinants of UK exporting success in one industrial sector.

After studying at Ruskin College from 1963-1965, Owen left with the Diploma in Economics and Political Science, after which he took an Honours degree in PPE. Before and after Oxford he served, worldwide, for a total of 10 years as an officer in the British Merchant Navy and on oil rigs. Ashore since late 1973, he worked first with the Commission On Industrial Relations and then made his career as an industrial economist with the National Economic Development Office. A Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute, he is now a part-time business consultant and lives in Chelsea.

While President of the Ruskin Fellowship (1990-92), Dr Murphy founded the Fellowship magazine The Ruskin Record. Up until its penultimate issue, he continued to write, produce and distribute the magazine. He maintains his long-standing involvement with Fellowship affairs and retains a keen interest in the well-being of Ruskin College.

Ruskin Tutor receives MA

Penny Halliday attended the Ruskin Summer School Naughty Girls short course seven years ago and has not looked back. She has progressed to becoming a tutor here and has just passed her MA in Women's Studies, also at Ruskin College.

Right:
Penny receiving her certificate from General Secretary Chris Wilkes



Win a Free Degree Place at Ruskin competition

In November, Ruskin held a competition for one lucky person to win a place on a degree course by having all tuition fees paid for. This means that the competition winner, Seyram Afenyo, will have all of her £9,000 fees for a BA (Hons) in Social Work course paid for by the college.

Here is how Seyram felt about winning the prize:

“My initial reaction on being told that I had won the scholarship was to scream and break down into tears! Tears of joy rolled down my cheeks and, up til now, it feels like I am in a dream. I, more often than not, pinch myself to see if it’s all true. After interacting with the judges and some of the staff at the college, I went home with a big smile on my face, beaming at everyone.

Winning the competition has been a dream come true. I set out to finance myself on the Social Work degree – not that I had already gotten the money. It was going to be a challenge so I initially called the College to see if they would allow me to pay my fees in instalments to which they agreed. I then set about looking for the first payment before the 28th of September when registrations were due to commence. I told myself that, no matter the challenges, I was going to pursue this degree programme. I had previously tried on more than one occasion to acquire a higher education but I had always been unsuccessful due to one thing or the other.

The 11th of September 2009 will forever be a day I will never forget. It was the beginning of a change. Not only has winning the competition taken off the burden of College fees off my shoulders but it has given me the confidence to pursue a career with the knowledge that, on completion, I will be able contribute to making a difference in people’s life and in the community. The scholarship has also given me the peace of mind to focus on my studies and finish successfully. I also see myself losing the 'housewife' tag and being a role model to other mothers and women as well as my children.

Winning the competition has given me a voice – a voice for good; a voice to express a God-given ability to help people.

My family and friends have been particularly happy for me. My husband is so proud of me and my children could not contain their excitement when they saw me being interviewed on TV during the BBC TV Oxford news segment after the competition. On receiving the news, my family all over the world, especially in Ghana, popped bottles of champagne in celebration. In the church that I go to here (Word Fountain Christian Ministry), there were shouts of hallelujah in celebration of my success. My friends have all now expressed interest in looking at Ruskin too, to pursue their academic goals. Not just because of the scholarship but to take advantage of the opportunities being offered by the College to people like me.

Through Ruskin College and by winning this competition, I have been given the audacity to hope for a better future. A future that I am looking forward to with all excitement.”

As part of the follow up to Seyram's win, she appeared in an article in the Oxford Mail on 17th September and was also interviewed on BBC Oxford news and on BBC Radio Oxford.



Left:
Seyram with
Radio Oxford
presenter
Malcolm
Boyden



Right:
Seyram with
Radio Oxford
presenter Jo
Thoenes

Former student gives kind donation

Former Economics and Politics student Terry Lunn (student 1964 - 66) sadly passed away recently, and as a very kind gesture has left £1000 to Ruskin.

Terry's wife, Mrs V Lunn contacted Ruskin's Librarian Valerie Moyses, to advise of the donation. Valerie said she was thrilled with the kindness of Mr Lunn and will use the money for a series of international Trade Union books for the College library.

It is hoped that a special book-plate will be created for these purchases in memory of Mr Lunn.

Congratulations to our students on the Essex Employment based BA Social Work programme

Brief extracts from Social Work Tutor Dr Hilary Walker's speech at their awards ceremony.

Ruskin is very proud of the achievements of our Essex students. We know they will use their knowledge and skills in important areas of social work practice in the future and we wish them every success in their careers.

Well done Essex County Council for continuing to have the vision and values to offer opportunities to people who have been disadvantaged educationally, for whatever reasons, and for recognising what they have to offer to people who need to use services.

But, above all, well done to our students.



Essex graduates at their awards ceremony.

And a few words from some of the graduating students

Xavier Benedetti

Eleven years ago I found myself standing by Gants Hill roundabout in Ilford, with my suitcases, my pregnant wife and mixed feelings. I watched my father's car disappearing in the traffic and then I moved on with my new life. As I had been working in my parents' business soon after leaving school, I had no academic baggage with me. So I had promptly found a job in an area where I had some experience, and I worked in various residential homes. Soon I realised that social work was to be my new vocation and I aimed at finding a job in the public sector.

This would enable me to go on social work training while retaining my employment. I had made two attempts to go on courses privately, but they hadn't worked out.

So I started working in a day centre in Brentwood and, soon, I was seconded to go on the Ruskin Programme. Little did I know that the motto of Tony Blair (the man I had voted for) 'Education, Education, Education' was to haunt me for the next three and a half years. I embarked on a journey where I like to think I related each part of the training to my own life. Social Policy made me a more responsible voter.

Psychology was particularly challenging. I remember asking so many questions about my childhood and upbringing to my parents that once my father looked at me in the eyes and queried: "You're not going to do anything stupid, are you?" I enjoyed how Sociology, looking at social structures, brought me to look at our own group, all so different in our characters and backgrounds, thrown together in a room for several years.

This has been more than a degree course. It has been a shaping experience. And I'm glad I'm standing.

Alison Clark

Eleven years ago, I was fortunate to gain a position as a part time clerical assistant within the Physical Impairments Team, based in Clacton. At that time I had no idea that I would go onto become a qualified social worker, as it hadn't even crossed my mind as a career path then! Fortunately, at that time I had a very supportive manager who perhaps saw something in me that I hadn't! It was she who encouraged me to try my hand as a social work assistant (in 2002), and to go on to pursue a career in social work. I will always be very grateful to her and she remains an inspiration to me.

Within the first couple of years, I feel I gained some valuable experience in the physical impairments team, the social model pilot project team and the sensory team, all of which fuelled a passion in me, and a determination to go on and do my training.



I was well aware of the Essex/Ruskin Employment-Based Programme and chose to apply for that route only, based on its excellent reputation, and the supportive approach it had offered on its first programme.

In the beginning it was a daunting time for me, as I lacked courage in my own abilities. However, with the continued support I received both on a personal and academic level, particularly from my personal and academic tutors, my skills and confidence began to grow.

I have also been fortunate to study with a great peer group and feel lucky to have gained some firm friendships along the way. I'd like to thank them all for their support.

The programme has really broadened my horizons and it gave me the opportunity to gain knowledge and experience in other fields of social work, which I truly valued. We also had some remarkable lecturers along the way, who were able to bring their subjects to life. Their knowledge and expertise was amazing.

The last four years have been an incredible journey in which we've all experienced highs and lows; for instance we had losses, marriages and no less than three Ruskin babies, although only Lesley's baby, Oscar, got to listen to the lectures, and I understand he is already showing an aptitude towards Sociology!

Anyway, I truly believe that the supportive approach offered us all, both professionally and personally, was second to none, and I feel so proud to be able to say that I completed my training on the Essex/Ruskin Programme.

Sarah Chapman

To speak to you all tonight is both an honour and a privilege, but not as much of an honour and privilege as it is to stand before you as a qualified social worker, now that I have the honour and privilege with the rest of us to say that, not only am I a qualified and registered social worker, but I gained that title through a college that believes, as should all social workers, that everyone has the right to another chance and the right to change.

The career path we have all chosen is not an easy one; it is not a light choice or one made on a whim. Goodness knows the press, to say the least, have vilified us enough, and yet we still follow our calling, a calling that Ruskin and Essex Social Care has 100 percent supported and allowed us all to follow.

A very great man once said `You must be the change you wish to see in the world`. For me, these words spoken by Ghandi are the reason we have chosen the path they call social work. To bring about the change we believe in and believe others deserve, whoever and whatever life has handed them, by using the tools and skills our training has given us.

On a personal note, my path would not have been as positive without having the pride of working for Essex Social Care for the past 20 years, the opportunity given to me by Ruskin College and the support and friendships I have gained from not only fellow students, but also the staff.

Here today, enriched by what has happened in these last few years.

There were times of hardship, gaining momentum and climaxing into a dissertation-induced illness that literally brought me down on my knees one day, when I was all alone at home with my books and my own self. The pain was excruciating and the thought clearly came to me that "I'm not ready! It can't happen now! I can't die". Eventually, there was no pulling out of life and the dissertation. With the support of the staff team, I just had to finish it, and that was it.

Many thanks to the Ruskin programme and to Essex County Council who have been good to me and my family. I am thankful to have been given the opportunity in this country to obtain an education and a job that I really do enjoy.



Judes less obscure

Not everyone taking a degree in the city of Oxford has A*s or even A Levels (“Let’s relax about fairness”, 30 July). Ruskin College has spent 110 years helping Judes be less obscure.

We still don’t ask for formal entry qualifications, but we interview rigorously, diagnose effectively (up to a third of our students have dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties), support intensively and see success – from a factory worker becoming a partner in a law firm to a merchant seaman becoming Deputy Prime Minister.

Those whom Alan Ryan calls “under-privileged and under-resourced” can still apply for this September. We’re offering one free place to the eligible applicant who can best use social networking and multimedia to promote our offering.

Audrey Mullender

(Reprinted from the Times Higher Education, Summer 2009)

Politics for people

“Politics for people” is how co-operators describe their political party. The Co-operative Party came about in 1916 when conscription was unfairly directed towards staff of its retail societies. The first Co-operative Member of Parliament was elected in 1918 and immediately took the Labour whip. Since that time, co-operators are more likely to be labelled as Labour, but they have their own ethos and follow policies supplementary to those of their political big brother.

My involvement at the Co-operative Party conference centred on two motions which passed through the Midcounties Society to form part of the conference agenda; Fair Trade and Seafarers was the heart of the first of my motions to be heard and the declining adequacy of funeral payments was the second.

Fair Trade is an excellent means of shoring up the incomes and conditions for workers overseas; it guarantees an improved price for the commodity and it generates a premium payable to the workers involved in production of that commodity. The Co-op is the leading retailer of Fair Trade goods in the United Kingdom, with one out of every five Fair Trade products sold through a Co-op store. And the Co-op pays double the standard premium,

to be shared by the overseas workers.

However, in my view, there is at least one missing ingredient to Fair Trade. In many instances the commodities are shipped by vessels where a flag of convenience provides for low pay and conditions of employment for seafarers; the maritime workers are left out of the equation and face considerable exploitation without protection of national law. For example, even here in the United Kingdom, our minimum wage fails to reach the workers at sea who operate vessels travelling from one part of our nation to another; from The UK to a European Union port or to a port in the Global South. Flag of convenience fleets pay wages so low that seafarers get US\$4 a day and less for hard and skilled work; and some fail to get any pay at all. My motion to conference called for the Co-operative party to work with Fair Trade, Seafarers’ Unions and associated actors to gain UK ratification of the International Maritime Organisation’s charter of rights for seafarers.

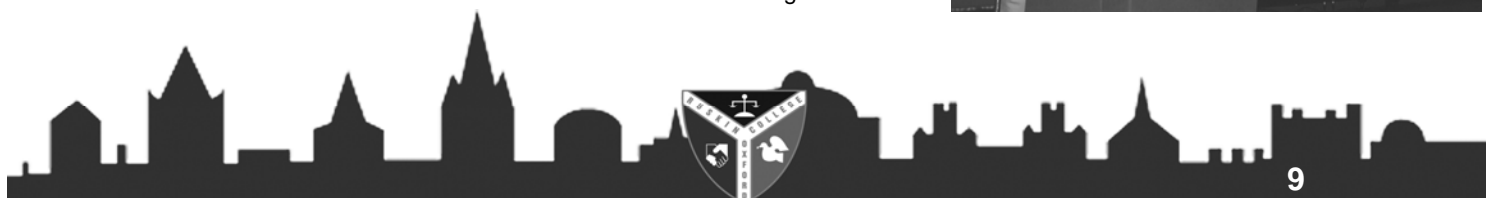
Some time ago I worked as a social security officer. At times I visited a client who had experienced the loss of a partner, parent or child. I was able to provide financial assistance to ensure a respectful funeral could be provided. The slow erosion of entitlements for funeral payments, which are recoverable from estates if funds are sufficient, is a matter of concern; if the value of help given in 1997 is rated at 100, the value had declined to 62 by 2008. Almost two out of every five pounds has been removed. It now means where the survivor of a loved one is on a low income, and even though the survivor has no relation able to help, the best that can be provided from our welfare state is a contribution towards the cost of a respectful funeral. Forty thousand funeral payments were made in the fiscal year ending April 2008, averaging £1,162. In September 2008, the average cost of a standard funeral in England was £2,459.

Both motions were passed and the Co-operative party continues to work hard with partners towards achieving progress in addressing inequalities at home, overseas and on the high seas.

Van Coulter is the Labour and Co-operative Candidate for the City of Oxford, Barton and Sandhills Ward. This ward contains the highest levels of deprivation in Oxfordshire, including two areas ranked as within the bottom one percent of educational attainment in England.

Van Coulter
Third year BA
(Hons) ILTUS
student

Right:
Van at the
Co-operative
conference in
Edinburgh



Ruskin's Go Green sponsored cycle event

Our exciting cycle ride of Oxford began at 10.15am on Sunday 22nd November. Despite the weather forecast being wrong, Nigel Williams, Sally Courtney, Chris Ashley and I braved the harsh freezing rain and set off.

Our 10 mile route took us on to Marston Road and down into town. After doing a loop of town, passing Oxford Castle on our way, we headed onto the Abingdon Road. By this time the rain had still not let up, and we were all very cold and wet and looking forward to our halfway stop off. Once we reached Cowley Road we headed for The Asian Community Centre on Manziel Way. We successfully secured our bikes and were met with open arms by two of the committee members from the centre. We were offered a warm beverage and snacks and had a nice discussion about the courses that the Community Centre offers as well as how they cater for parties and weddings for the wider community.

On leaving we thanked the Community Centre for their kind hospitality and headed back on our journey. By this time the rain had cleared, and we were all in high spirits and eager to get to the finishing line! From the Community Centre we cycled from Cowley Road, up Holloway Road which led us onto The Slade and Windmill Lane— the last stretch of our journey! Once we reached Headington we headed back to Ruskin Hall and completed our very wet but fun 10 mile circuit of Oxford!

Despite the rain, we all thoroughly enjoyed the day and were very proud that we could all be involved in an event to help promote a greener Oxford, as well as being able to give something back to the College.

So far we have raised £184.76, and the sponsors are still coming in! This is a great start in helping to achieve our £1000 target to build a new fire pit area for barbeques at the Headington campus for all staff and students to enjoy.

I would like to thank all of the volunteers for participating in the event and to everyone who sponsored us!



Left:
Raring to go!
TUC Centre
Co-ordinator Nigel
Williams.

Right:
On the move
Supporter - Chris
Ashley and Nigel
Williams en route.



A job well done
From left to right: Short course secretary (and organiser of this event) - Nicola Stokes, Nigel Williams, Tutor in Youth and Community Work, - Muhammad Kahn, Chris Ashley and Finance Director - Sally Courtney.

Ruskin 'At Home'



Left:
Humanities and Social Sciences Academic Group
Administrator Liz Bird, received a wonderful farewell upon
her retirement on 28th
January 2010 after almost 20 years at the College.

Liz will be sorely missed but we all wish her luck in her new
life in sunny Spain.

Right:
Diane Abbott MP addressing the annual Ruskin
Fellowship Reunion in Raphael Samuel Hall (formerly known as
Buxton Hall), Walton Street, in September 2009



Ruskin 'Out and About'

TUC Conference 2010:

Ruskin had a stall at TUC Conference which was held in Liverpool this year. Nigel Williams said " We felt that it is really important for us to have presence at as many trade union conferences as possible. We were bowled over by the positive response we received. So many people came over to say hello and wanted to let us know that they were ex students and to find out how the College was getting on. They were keen to take literature back to their workplaces to publicise our courses and encourage the next generation of learners. We also had lots of enquiries from prospective students who were keen to find out more. All in all, a very successful week and a sterling job done by Liz Mathews who organised it all."



Above:
Nigel Williams and Liz Mathews at the Ruskin stand

Below:
Liz Mathews at the Ruskin stand



Obituaries

Mike Convery

We are sorry to report the death on 1st December 2009 of Mike Convery. Mike was a student at Ruskin from 1994-1995 and was President of Ruskin Fellowship during the centenary celebrations in 1999.

As an honorary Life Vice-President, Mike was often present at meetings of the Fellowship Executive Committee. He will be sadly missed.

Mike had been diagnosed with a brain tumour in June 2008 and was unable to carry out his duties as Branch Secretary of the Amicus Civil Air Transport 0443 Branch. Although he spent a lot of time in and out of hospital with other illnesses compounding his constant suffering, he never lost his sense of humour and he was driven on with the thought that he would one day return to full health to continue his work for the trade union and labour movement.



Above:
Mike Convery

Mike's funeral took place on 18th December at Hanworth Crematorium, Middlesex, in the Jameson Chapel.

Dennis Henry White

Some of you will know that Dennis White passed away in October 2008.

Ruskin College and the opportunities he had there were very dear to him and he talked so much about the different courses he took. However, it was only when I went through his personal effects that I realised the great variety of courses he had undertaken, ranging from Digital Photography and IT to Family History.

Dennis was born on 24th July 1921 and spent his early life in Wembley and Nottingham. He left school at 14, before taking exams, because his father had found him a job on the railways at a time when jobs were very scarce. During WW2 Dennis served in both India and Burma, becoming trapped for a while behind enemy lines and receiving rations from the air. He told the story that, whilst out in India, his platoon adopted an orphaned baby elephant as their mascot. Sadly, however, it drank some gasoline instead of water and met a hasty end.

Dennis had an incredibly enquiring mind and enjoyed a lot of foreign holidays with our family in Greece, Italy and France. No matter where we were, he would always astound us with his knowledge of history, geology, geography and politics. He just never stopped learning, attending his Italian class in Eynsham just three days before he died.

I would like to say a huge "thank you" to Ruskin College for providing my father with such stimulating courses which matched his thirst for knowledge. I also know that he valued greatly the friendships he formed with students and staff. Thank you for the wonderful opportunities that Ruskin College offered. Thank you for the difference you have made.

Alison Laithwaite
(daughter of Dennis White)



Contacts

The Fellowship has a number of local contacts and we hope to develop more. If you live near one of the areas below and would like to make contact and find out what goes on, email or phone for more information.

North East England

Nigel Todd (67-69)

Former student and Regional Secretary, WEA

Phone: 0191 4618100 or email: ntodd@wea.rg.uk

London

Carol Bonner (98-99)

Membership Secretary

Email: c.bonner-alumni@lse.ac.uk

Oxford

Jan Smith

Phone: 01869 369095 or

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Other Fellowship contacts to note are:

George Scott

Fellowship President

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