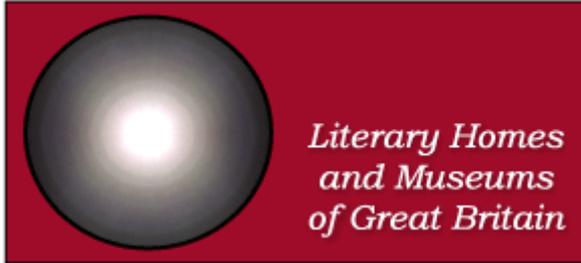


# LitHouses



*in association with*  
The Knebworth House Education & Preservation Trust

## THE LITERARY HOMES AND MUSEUMS GROUP

~ 2004 CONFERENCE ~

### “The Role and Contribution of Literary Homes and Museums in Education”

Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2004  
Knebworth House, Hertfordshire

## NOTES AND TRANSCRIPTIONS

## CONTENTS

<b>Attendees and Email Addresses</b>	<b>p.3</b>	
<b>Welcome to the Home of Edward Bulwer Lytton</b>	<b>p.5</b>	
<b>The History and Objectives of the LitHouses Group</b>	<b>p.6</b>	
<b>LitHouses Group Members ~ Current Education Programs:</b>		
<b>William Shakespeare</b>	<b>Shakespeare Birthplace Trust</b>	<b>p.11</b>
<b>John Bunyan</b>	<b>Bunyan Museum</b>	<b>p.13</b>
<b>Laurence Sterne</b>	<b>Shandy Hall</b>	<b>p.15</b>
<b>William Cowper</b>	<b>Cowper and Newton Museum</b>	<b>p.17</b>
<b>Robert Burns</b>	<b>Burns Heritage Park</b>	<b>p.19</b>
<b>George Byron</b>	<b>Newstead Abbey</b>	<b>p.22</b>
<b>John Keats</b>	<b>Keats House</b>	<b>p.25</b>
<b>Edward Bulwer Lytton</b>	<b>Knebworth House</b>	<b>p.28</b>
<b>The Brontes</b>	<b>Haworth Parsonage</b>	<b>p.30</b>
<b>Elizabeth Gaskell</b>	<b>Tatton Park</b>	<b>p.32</b>
<b>Roald Dahl</b>	<b>Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre</b>	<b>p.35</b>
<b>Issues and Challenges in Improving and Refining Education Programs:</b>		
<b>Paul Munden</b>	<b>National Association of Writers in Education</b>	<b>p.38</b>
<b>Trevor Millum</b>	<b>National Association of Teachers of English</b>	<b>p.41</b>
<b>Comments From the Floor, including:</b>	<b>p.48</b>	
<b>James Pardoe (Chester College History Dept.)</b>	<b>p.50</b>	
<b>Abigail Campbell (Literature officer, Arts Council England)</b>	<b>p.51</b>	
<b>Ruth Simpson (Dept. for Education &amp; Skills, Creativity &amp; Arts Team)</b>	<b>p.52</b>	
<b>Claire Robson (Melbourn &amp; Bassingbourn Colleges, Arts Dev.Co-ordinator)</b>	<b>p.53</b>	
<b>Paul Chirico (Chair, The John Clare Society)</b>	<b>p.54</b>	
<b>Linda Cracknell (Writer in Residence, Hugh MacDiarmid's last home)</b>	<b>p.55</b>	
<b>Nat Edwards (National Library of Scotland)</b>	<b>p.56</b>	
<b>Mike Gogan (Warwick Multimedia Ltd.)</b>	<b>p.57</b>	
<b>Sharon Owen (Kate Roberts Heritage Centre)</b>	<b>p.58</b>	
<b>Closing Comments</b>	<b>p.60</b>	

## LitHouses Conference 2004

### “The Role and Contribution of Literary Homes and Museums in Education”

**Knebworth House, Hertfordshire  
Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2004**

#### **Present:**

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25. Nat Edwards – National Library of Scotland [also National Burns Collection Project, Chair]  
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**Apologies:**

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## Non-Group Members:

35. Leila Brosnan – Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Arts Division  
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36. Elinor Clark - Rozelle House, South Ayrshire Museums [prev. Burns Heritage Park]  
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The meeting began at 10am, in the Banqueting Hall of Knebworth House.

### **Welcome to the home of Edward Bulwer Lytton ~ Henry Cobbold**

Reciting a welcome poem by Edward Bulwer Lytton (that is written around the ceiling of the Banqueting Hall), Henry Lytton Cobbold introduced himself as Edward Bulwer Lytton’s great-great-great-grandson and said it was his great-great-great-pleasure to welcome the LitHouses Group to the author’s home and his “hearth where rooted friendships grow”.

Henry began by saying a few words on Bulwer Lytton’s place in the world today:

1. St Edmund’s Chapel in Westminster Abbey – his physical place in the world today.
2. Biographies – coinciding with his Bicentenary in 2003, a new biography by Oxford University professor Leslie Mitchell; and a collection of papers given at the University of London’s Bulwer Lytton 2000 Conference, “The Subverting Vision of Bulwer Lytton”.
3. Novels – Bulwer Lytton can “plausibly claim to be the father of the English detective novel, science fiction, the fantasy novel, the thriller and the domestic realist novel” (John Sutherland, University College, London). His novels were also the first to feature anti-heroes, notably the highwayman “Paul Clifford” (1830). Despite falling from fashion in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, he has remained consistently in print, specifically in the U.S.A. and in Germany, but frustratingly only barely in his homeland.
4. Plays – of Bulwer Lytton’s string of West End hits in the late 1830s, his comedy “Money” was recently revived by the National Theatre, his 160-year-old jokes still raising laughter.
5. Sayings – barely a week goes by when one of Bulwer Lytton’s sayings is not incorporated into a newspaper headline, specifically “The pen is mightier than the sword”, but also “It was a dark and stormy night” which has spawned a 20-year-old world-wide annual competition, the “Bulwer Lytton Contest”, for the most clichéd opening line to a novel. Being the first to come up with a cliché is, of course, something to be proud of!
6. Politics – Bulwer Lytton’s name is to be found in the street and place names of Queensland in Australia and British Columbia in Canada, two territories that were defined while he was Secretary for the Colonies in Lord Derby’s Government of the late 1850s. Also a lasting legacy is the Committee that Bulwer Lytton chaired in the early 1830s that led to the establishment of dramatic copyright and the breaking of the Drury Lane / Haymarket theatres monopoly, although it didn’t achieve its third objective of ridding the stage of the Lord Chamberlain’s powers of censorship - which had to wait until the 1968 Theatres Act (promoted by the then Lord Chamberlain, Henry’s grandfather, Cameron Cobbold).
7. Notoriety – Bulwer Lytton’s relationship with his estranged wife Rosina, a cause

célebre in his day, remains a hot topic in current evaluations of the history of female emancipation.

8. Music – despite not having an ear for music himself, Bulwer Lytton’s work inspired many musical works, notably, Wagner’s breakthrough opera, “Rienzi”, the first indigenous American opera “Leonora” (based on his play “The Lady of Lyons”), Sousa’s personal favourite suite “The Last Days of Pompeii” and Elgar’s Piano Quintet (based on Bulwer Lytton’s novel “A Strange Story”).
9. Philosophy & the Occult - Bulwer Lytton’s open mind to all things in heaven and earth led to ridicule in his day, but his crystal ball, extraordinary collection of magic books and associations with Rosicrucian philosophies suggest to his descendants that if any spectre currently walks the corridors of Knebworth House it is most likely to be his!...

...which leads finally to what has become Edward Bulwer Lytton most recognised place in the world today:

10. His Home – Knebworth House is perhaps better known world-wide today as Britain’s largest rock concert venue, but it is also remains a lasting and living monument to Edward Bulwer Lytton. The unique gothic exterior is a product of his extraordinary mind and the collections within an invaluable resource to our understanding and appreciation of his work and his world.

The meeting then moved into Edward Bulwer Lytton’s library.

## **Introductions**

Henry Cobbold asked everyone present to introduce themselves.

## **The History and Objectives of the LitHouses Group ~ Henry Cobbold**

Henry Cobbold again warmly welcomed everyone to the first annual LitHouses Conference. He expressed regret that the founder of the LitHouses Group, Terry McCormick, was not present to summarise the group’s history and objectives, but explained that Terry had recently withdrawn as the group’s facilitator for career and personal reasons.

He explained that Knebworth House had been one of many homes and museums to receive a letter from Terry McCormick on the 12<sup>th</sup> August 2002 suggesting a project where those responsible for the country’s literary homes and museums form a group, wherein, together, they would prosper.

Henry’s understanding was that Terry had recently attended a meeting in France of the “Federation des Maisons d’Ecrivain et des Patrimoines Littéraires” and was shamed that the U.K. had so little organisation in this area. Similar groups exist all across the Continent and Terry was convinced it was something that should be explored in the U.K.

Henry covered the history of the LitHouses Group to date as follows:

*There have only been three meetings of the LitHouses Group prior to this one. They've all been small planning meetings. So everyone present is part of a group in its infancy and youth - a wonderful thing, because it means we, here, can make this group what we want it to be, from the ground up.*

*We started on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2003 by visiting the **Shakespeare Birthplace Trust** for an exploratory meeting. Terry suggested that we write down where we saw our homes or museums in 10 years time – and this focused us all on what we were trying to achieve with the heritage that we were representing.*

*Then we met again at **Keats House** on 19<sup>th</sup> January of this year, 2004, and discussed how the Group might work. We settled on a format - that is promising in the way it is developing at the moment – of having two meetings a year: a smaller one in the spring, of core Group members, to discuss progress, and plans... for a second, larger, meeting around November-time. At the larger meeting we would welcome a wider group of people, try to bring in outside ideas, encourage others to join up and to understand what we are trying to do... and also specifically tackle issues that relate to our Group.*

*And thus today we are discussing “Education”, of primary concern to most of us. (And maybe next year we'll discuss “Marketing”, for instance. And maybe the year after that we'll hold a conference to discuss encouraging “Literary Adaptations” - for instance in Film and Television - and how that affects the public perception of our authors... just ideas that have been thrown around, nothing set yet.)*

*It was thought at the time, for reasons that will become clear later, that the best way to operate the Group was with only a very small subscription charge - initially only really to cover Terry's expenses and expenses on the website – but that each home or museum would contribute by hosting a meeting, in rotation; and for the six months leading up to that meeting - until the meeting's Minutes were produced - that home or museum would lead/chair the Group. Hosting a meeting would be each home/museum's contribution to the Group.*

*So far this has worked extremely well. It means there is no great monetary commitment to the Group, apart from knowing that at a certain time it will become your turn to host a meeting like this. And if you're clever you can host one of the smaller meetings in the spring! – But, of course, it's only right that a big old place like Knebworth should host one of the larger November meetings.*

*And for our third meeting we travelled to Alloway, to the **Burns Cottage**, on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2004, to discuss how today's conference would work.*

*So, to repeat, we are a group very much in its infancy and I hope you see that as an opportunity - an opportunity to be a part of creating a forum that is genuinely worthwhile to you.*

Henry covered the objectives of the Group as follows:

*We all have our own ideas of what we would like to achieve from this Group and, as I've just said, we have the luxury of starting with a blank page. So rather than laying out objectives I'd prefer to spend a few minutes explaining why I responded so enthusiastically to the idea of a Literary Homes and Museums Group...*

*I jumped at the opportunity of being a part of this group because Knebworth has a 13-year history of being part of a similar group – which has been enormously valuable to us – the “Historic Houses of England” Group (<http://www.historichousesofengland.com>).*

*I hope it won't be too much of a detour for you, but I thought if I told you a little bit about this group, it might illustrate how a group like LitHouses can work. I say “similar” because the HHOE group is not the same, but it should enable you to draw parallels as to how LitHouses might, or might not, work.*

*The “Historic Houses of England” is a joint support/marketing group set up by the Duke of Richmond in March 1991. The Duke invited to his home, Goodwood House in Sussex, a small group of “stately homes”: Leeds Castle in Kent; Hever Castle in Kent; Hagley Hall in Worcestershire; Weston Park in Staffordshire; Castle Howard in Yorkshire; Ripley Castle in Yorkshire; Castle Ashby in Northamptonshire; and Knebworth House in Hertfordshire. Since 1991 Goodwood (the founders) and Hagley have dropped out – but Eastnor Castle in Herefordshire has joined us. So there are eight houses that are part of this group.*

*Why these houses? Well, specifically because they were the more commercially minded stately homes, all with a well developed conference and banqueting operations. There were more high profile stately homes – Longleat, Blenheim, Chatsworth – but there was also a pre-existing marketing group – as sort of Premier League of stately homes - “The Treasure Houses of England”, to which these houses belonged. Leeds Castle and Castle Howard were part of the Treasure Houses group and brought with them their experiences of this group.*

*Certainly joint marketing was on the Duke's agenda, but I think foremost to this in his mind was the exchange of information and ideas.*

*As commercial operations, aren't we all in competition with each other?*

*Well, you'd think so, but history has told us that in the 13 years of the HHOE's existence there has been a lot of business referred and, so far, no feeling that business has been sacrificed to the “opposition”. This is not a particular concern for the LitHouses Group, but it illustrates that if there's a trust built up in a group like this, it can overcome potential rivalries.*

*The Historic Houses of England Group was set up very much in the way that we've suggested the LitHouses Group be set up. There is no membership fee, but each venue takes it in turns to host a meeting – and effectively leads the group in the six months prior to that meeting.*

*Spending time at each other's venues is key. Here again 13 years have shown us that the balance of give and take works very well. On the one hand the venue is keen to impress its peers, with its facilities, the service it can offer, its new ideas... and on the other hand the visiting venue gets to draw on these ideas, gage benchmarks of quality, service, etc.*

*Again, to date, I don't think any members of the group begrudge ideas stolen or consider services poached. There's obviously an element of "one-up-man-ship", but I would argue that this is healthy, keeps us all on our toes. Certainly at Knebworth we are aware of our limitations and know we are never going to compete with the luxurious lodgings available at Castle Ashby, for instance, but similarly nobody has the natural bowl landscape and motorway access that enable us to cater for 125,000 people at a rock concert. So we all have our different strengths.*

*So what shape do the meetings take?*

*Essentially – I looked back over the Agendas of 13 years of meetings of the HHOE Group – it very quickly settled down into six Agenda items that were, and continue to be, discussed at our twice yearly meetings. The first three of these Agenda items relate to SUPPORT, and the second three relate to MARKETING.*

*Firstly, SUPPORT...*

*ITEM 1: The meetings begin with each of the houses giving a short presentation of any changes to their facilities and an overview of their performance in the preceding period.*

*ITEM 2: This leads on to the sharing of information re prospective clients, in particular what were called "Doubtful Starters", i.e. clients whom venues have had problems with. Again, a very useful advantage of the group – when large sums of money are involved or when one's business relies on key summer weekends, it is invaluable to know in advance the reputations and results of the promoters and agents in whom you are entrusting these assets, these key weekends. Ultimately, it's a small world if you're looking to put on a balloon festival - and you'll find it a whole lot smaller if you leave any of the Historic Houses of England in the lurch...*

*ITEM 3: Thirdly, we discuss terms of business – terms and conditions, changes in licensing and health and safety regulations, which architects, consultants, we use...*

*In the early Nineties in Kent, for instance, there was a charge of 14p per head for a licence for an outdoor concert – based on our experiences in Hertfordshire, we suggested that Leeds seek a judicial review, following which we had been able to negotiate a special licence fee amounting to considerably less. That was a valuable piece of information and it was passed on at one of these meetings.*

*Another example, health and safety – the last few years have seen a enormous shake up of health and safety regulations which, as we all know, has not been easy to keep up with. It has been a fantastic support to see and hear how other venues – with the same problems as ours - have coped with these enforced changes.*

*So there you are, a fabulous support system. The second three items on our Agenda all relate to joint MARKETING...*

*ITEM 4: Branding. Obviously, to have a combined group called the Historic Houses of England creates something for people to respond instantly to. We struggled a bit with this. We had a tough time coming up with a title. We started off with "The Historic Houses*

*Functions Group”, because, as I say, we were all commercially oriented conference and banqueting centres. We didn’t think that sounded to good, so we played around with “Houses of Excellence” ... “English Houses of Excellence” ... “Historic Houses of Excellence” ... “Private Homes of England” ... none of them really were quite right. But it was all brought into focus when - a few years ago - we had to choose our web address. We realised the word “Functions”, on web search engines - particularly associated with the word “Private” – brought the wrong sort of responses! At this point we settled – not entirely satisfactorily, I have to say – with “The Historic Houses of England”. It does rather suggest we are the only “historic” houses of England. But that was the best we could do, and the best we’ve come up with so far.*

*ITEM 5: Secondly, joint marketing materials. As we all know coming up with marketing materials is an expensive business. It’s been a great help with the Historic Houses of England to come up with literature that does for all of us.*

*Again, please don’t assume I am saying these are the right things for the LitHouses Group. I’m just laying down a framework for you of a group that does work.*

*You’ll see here we’ve got brochure called “Historic Houses of England”, into which slips a different leaflet for each house – depending on who wants to be involved and who doesn’t want to be involved in a particular marketing exercise... Which leads to the final item on our agenda,*

*ITEM 6: Exhibitions. These are key to the business of the Historic Houses of England Group. And again we can share resources – there are significant savings to be made in sharing stand space for instance. Some of us can go to exhibitions and represent the whole group. And we can share knowledge - each of us has experience of different exhibitions.*

*So that’s the Historic Houses of England Group. And hopefully from that, you will see why I was so keen to be part of a similar group of Literary Homes and Museums.*

*Obviously our priorities are different - but support and marketing, I would argue, is what it boils down to.*

*From the Group meetings, however, the most important thing we gain from each other’s company is T-R-U-S-T. It’s the trust that these meetings engender that brings with it the confidence to stretch ourselves, to make our operations, and what we do, better all the time; and to do justice the extraordinary heritage of which we are the guardians and the promoters. So I do very much hope that this group, the LitHouses Group, will grow, both in numbers and in commitment, and that there are many more meetings like the one we are having today.*

*So to the business of today...**EDUCATION**.*

Henry invited each house/museum in give a summary of their current education programs:

## **William Shakespeare - Shakespeare Birthplace Trust – Current Education Programs**

### **Anne Donnelly (Head of Museums):**

*Shakespeare Birthplace was the first “LitHouse” to be opened to the public. It was bought in 1847 by public subscription, with help from the Stratford Shakespeare Committee and the London Shakespeare Committee. The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust was formed later in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century by Act of Parliament. Shortly after the birthplace was purchased in 1892, the Trust bought Ann Hathaway’s cottage. Anne Hathaway was Shakespeare’s wife.*

*This was followed shortly by the acquisition of Nash’s House and the site of Shakespeare’s House in the centre of Stratford, called New Place - unfortunately an eccentric gentleman called the Rev Gaskell pulled down New Place in a fit of pique, so all we have is the archaeological remains of the house, which are adjacent to Nash’s House. Nash’s House itself is probably the least known of all our properties – it was Shakespeare’s granddaughter’s first husband’s house.*

*Next is Mary Arden’s House. This has been in the news over the last few years, mainly because the trust, in its honesty, carried out research to see whether the Ardens actually lived in the house. As luck would have it, the trust had bought the real house - but it was next door.*

*Finally, in the 1950s, the Trust purchased Hall’s Croft, which is probably the most beautiful of all our properties. Hall’s Croft was occupied from 1613 to 1616 by Susannah Hall – Shakespeare’s daughter – and her husband John Hall.*

*It is important to stress we (the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust) are not funded by government, either national or local. We rely entirely on income from visitors to the houses - supplemented slightly by rental income on the estate we own. On that income we also support a library of international importance, a records offices – our local Stratford records office, a very dynamic, public information source - and then, of course, the education department.*

*Our starting point is William Shakespeare. Looking at the different ways of learning:*

*With the houses, it’s primarily informal learning - with visitors seeing the collections in their historical context, guided by living history experts or, more normally, by house guides.*

*Then formal learning - university courses, school courses, lifelong learning. We cover all these.*

*And latterly, independent learning. We’ve recently redeveloped our website, where students can go to find out more about Shakespeare’s plays and his life – there’s a very good FAQ section.*

*And then, of course, we do workshops, poetry festival events and entertainment events.*

*As a curator, the most important part of my job is the presentation of the historic interiors. In 2000, we redisplayed Shakespeare's birthplace using, as far as we could, authentic furniture or, when we couldn't find it, specially commissioned replicas.*

*Hands on interactivities are increasingly part of the whole visitor experience – family activity sheets, that can be downloaded from the web; and computer interactives (with the help of Mike Gogan, here, of Warwick Multimedia) which we plan to use for education, but at the moment are primarily used to address disability access issues.*

**Paul Edmondson (Head of Education):**

*As an overview... we try to offer something for all ages.*

*We have a programme for schools, which directly relates to Key Stages 3 & 4, GCSE, and AS & A level.*

*We have a long established program for University courses, which in real terms means international University courses - some of these have been running since 1964 and are still coming to Stratford.*

*We work closely on all of these programs with the Royal Shakespeare Company, because obviously we teach the plays, and the plays are being performed down the road in Stratford. We tend to teach the plays that are in rep at that particular time. The RSC gives input into the courses in terms of the actors themselves coming in to talk about their work.*

*Most of what I do though is with the university courses, which is a series of seminars and lectures talking about Shakespeare's work and plays.*

*There is a big emphasis is on theatre history - wanting a greater understanding of the context that produced a literary work.*

*Our Library has 55,000 volumes - the most significant Shakespeare Library in Europe (the Folger Library in Washington dwarfs our collection as far a rare books are concerned) - and has open access to all. You don't have to be recommended as a reader doing academic research to use it. It also contains, since 1964, the archive of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Every production that has taken place in Stratford since there's been a theatre has left behind it photographs, prompt books, stage manager's reports - and we use these to teach theatre history. We have our own independent bookshop and we have writers on occasion come in and talk about their work and do signings. And workshops take place in the library using archive material.*

*The Public programme that has been mentioned offers general days and short courses for members of the public. Anyone who has an interest can come along and focus more on the plays at the RSC, and learn more about general Shakespearean theme. For example, our last Shakespeare Day was on Shakespeare's sonnets and we're having a Shakespeare Day next week on Shakespeare in the 18th Century.*

**Susan Walker (Museums Heritage Education Officer):**

*I'm the other end of the spectrum from Paul. Where Paul works nationally and internationally, I work only with Stratford's sixteen schools and, therefore, a relatively small group of children.*

*I look at the social context of Tudor life – it has to be related to the National Curriculum – and I use archives and/or artefacts to achieve that. I might start a session by looking at an artefact - like this watering can - and asking you if you know what it is, can you see what it's made from, how do you think it was made, how do you think it was used? We would explore this - and I hope by the end, having started with a physical artefact, achieve an empathy with Tudor times and an understanding of what it was like to live in Stratford in Shakespeare's time.*

*I am at present working on five projects:*

- *Children writing a children's guide book for Shakespeare's Birthplace. This will be illustrated with a living history CD ROM in which Media Studies students from Stratford College will also be involved. The children will have costumes to perform small scenes – like going to bed and getting up, and so on.*
- *Recreating a Tudor Knot Garden – not just history and growing the right sorts of plants but looking at art, design, mathematics and science as well.*
- *A Year in the Life of Robert Arden – at Mary Arden's House – to follow him through his year. We will get to “when icicles hang by the wall” and so Shakespeare does come in, but he is not at the forefront – it's the social context in which Shakespeare lived and worked.*
- *A multi-sensory approach to A Midsummer Nights Dream with special needs children.*
- *Working with the National Trust to compare Anne Hathaway's Cottage with the kind of house that the wolf could blow down, and Charlecote Park, a very grand Tudor mansion, that we think would be quite safe for the three little pigs.*

*Back at school these things can be followed up further. Looking at the watering can – if the Maths people want to follow up by looking at volume and capacity, how long it takes to fill, how long it takes to empty, why a sphere is a good shape... they can do that. The Science people can look at materials, the clay, where did it come from, how was it fired, what's the glaze for, and so on – lots of Design and Technology – so it can be taken to all other areas of the curriculum. That's for the teachers to decide.*

### **John Bunyan - Bunyan Museum – Current Education Programs**

#### **Judith Rea (Publicity Officer):**

*The Bunyan Museum in Bedford is almost unique in that we are actually part of a church (the only other museum I know of like this is Wesley's Chapel in London). John Bunyan was the 5<sup>th</sup> minister of the church that was on our site. We're now in the 3<sup>rd</sup> building that has been here.*

*The church is a very busy town centre church. We have meeting and conference rooms available for the local community, which are well used. There's been a museum at the church since about 1946/47, but in 1998 it moved to a purpose built premises adjacent to*

*the main building. It was a massive building project, undertaken by the church members and local community. It wasn't funded by the borough. We got grants from everywhere – and the church won the “entrepreneur of the year” for Bedford, for its fundraising activities. Something like £600,000 was raised by a relatively small community.*

*The museum is well known, both nationally and internationally, and around 60% of our visitors are from overseas.*

*I want to set the scene for you, because we are very small - and what I say now about what we do, relates to how much we can do on the education work. We're only open March to November, but for groups anytime. We are staffed entirely by volunteers. I am a volunteer – as is Colin, who has joined me here today.*

*We do have a very active “Friends of the John Bunyan Museum” – the great and good of Bedfordshire are involved and do a lot of work for us... we do run very much “with a little help from our friends”.*

*The museum is full of personal possessions of John Bunyan. We have a Library with over 175 language additions of Pilgrims Progress. This is very popular and has a new catalogue. We had the International John Bunyan Society meet here back in September - which made it onto the BBC, which in turn boosted our visitor figures.*

*Moving on to Education - we now have someone working on promoting educational visits and the educational role of the museum. It was always something we knew we ought to do, but amongst the committee we didn't have the expertise. Now, with Colin joining us, we do have that.*

*Currently we have:*

- *A Teachers' resource pack – produced with help from what was then the Bedfordshire Museums Department. It starts with background to the museum. It has activity sheets. It has things for children and teachers to do before and during the visit, and as a follow up as well. All visiting groups are encouraged to use the pack and work with it to get the total experience of the visit. It also contains illustrations of the museum and the church - we tend to sell the whole site. The church also provides all the refreshments as well.*
- *For people who come independently we too have the Family Activity Sheets. These are tremendously popular. I feel we should give a reward for completing the sheet – a sticker or something.*
- *We have guided tours of the church and museum.*
- *Our band of volunteers give talks to groups and societies – this is seen a great form of outreach & getting new business. We almost certainly get a booking following a talk.*

*We have identified that education is something we really want to work on, which is why I was so pleased the subject of this particular conference is Education. I'm delighted to come along.*

*We are looking – I’m not sure how relevant this is – to work with the Museums and Libraries Association’s “Inspiring Learning for All”. We’re going to work through that program and see what we can do.*

*The museum – which as I say is fairly new, 1998 – is absolutely superb as a tourism product. People walk through the life of John Bunyan. They are greeted by his figure, that says “What times I have lived through”. Children love this, often coming back to hear him speak again. Then they go through what would have been a kitchen in that time, a street scene of Bedford, and also a civil war display. Then there’s another figure of John Bunyan in the prison cell talking about his concern for his wife, family and his church and community.*

*Panels around the museum also explain the story, but I think the most successful thing is a time line, which relates the life of Bunyan to what was going on in the country at that time. People are astounded that the Civil War was going on at this time.*

*We had a very successful story telling session with Geraldine McCaughrean – her version of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* won the Blue Peter book of the year. Geraldine also spoke at one of the four or so annual “Friends” events – lectures, concerts, performances – which not only raise funds but also help raise the profile and present educational opportunities. One of these was a Drama programme – a two-man show going through “*The Pilgrim’s Progress*”.*

*So, for a small museum, doing its best, we’re trying very very hard – and I think one of the best things we’ll take away from this conference is wonderful ideas to help us... so thank you very much.*

### **Laurence Sterne - Shandy Hall ~ Current Education Programs**

#### **Patrick Wildgust (Administrator/Curator):**

*I have with me a Loan Box, put together by Yorkshire Museums Libraries and Archives Council, which is a pilot project for museums in North Yorkshire to link with a local primary school for Key Stage 2 to look at aspects of the curriculum – in this particular case it’s Literacy and Skills. They’ve produced quite a handsome thing that is full of both artificial and authentic objects.*

*Thanks to Laurence Monkman, who set up the Laurence Sterne Trust thirty years ago, there’s an enormous library. He bought books by the cellar-full – and indeed many of the outhouses at Shandy Hall still have lots of 18<sup>th</sup> Century books in them – so we can afford to actually put an 18<sup>th</sup> Century book within the context of the Loan Box... which I think is quite important. Many of the other things, including hour-glass timers and callipers, which form references to Sterne’s life at Shandy Hall, are included in this box... it is actually one of the weirdest boxes that the museum had ever seen in terms of what it is trying to embrace.*

*The thing I’ve found most encouraging and interesting about this particular museum...*

*where I also live – I’m not sure how many people actually live the museums that they work in... is that the place is a continuing education as far as I’m concerned. It has a collection. It’s been open to the public for the last 30 years. But its learning process has been largely the fact that children had not been encouraged to come. Visitors had been encouraged to come – especially those who know about the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and who know about Sterne – but children were always seen by the previous Trust Committee and Council as something that wouldn’t quite fit into what a museum is. Which is clearly preposterous.*

*So it has been most encouraging to try and develop the idea of both formal and informal learning taking place within the house. Now that was difficult to begin with. It’s not a large place – you’d get about two thirds of it into your wonderful hall where you talked to us, Henry – but that space is important in which to teach. And we are fortunate in having outbuildings where there is an exhibition space and a gallery space and teaching space, which will accommodate about 40 or 50 people.*

*It hasn’t facilities like sinks, or washing, or “wet” areas (I’ve yet to work out what these are, but I’m told they exist in education) where sandpits and that sort of thing can take place. But nonetheless we can convene, and you can talk, and it’s separate from the house.*

*And one of the first things that I was pleased to be able to do, in conjunction with the Museums people – who again, have been tremendously helpful – was to look at what the essence of Sterne was, with a local book artist... who produced this, which is a non-linear narrative book, which the children made with the bare materials, created so that it can be tied in any direction... and this creates the idea of what a linear narrative is, that can then be dislocated. This is one reason we’re finding that Sterne has a relevance today, because he wrote this book that has no beginning, middle or end – like education.*

*I learnt a lot from Henry’s talk this morning about Bulwer Lytton. I learnt a lot from putting the work “scullion” into Google to find out about this minor character in *Tristram Shandy*, who is mute and who sits by the hearth – and Bulwer Lytton refers to “the scullion in *Tristram Shandy*”, and incorporated that into one of his stories. You discover things wherever you go and the big advantage of these museums is that they are fantastic storehouses for information. And the thing that I want to get from this particular conference is how you manage to manipulated it so that your museum - my museum, all our museums - can be in a position where they can attract people to come, to learn... and also to go out into the community and offer the idea of understanding or further education.*

*Now I’ve got a wide palate, as you have – we’ve got from tiny primary school children, who you have to talk to on your knees and make sure they’ve got somewhere to hang their coat... to the University of the Third Age... via the undergraduates – and we’ve linked up with the University of Teeside and also with All Saints College in Leeds to bring undergraduates, as part of their induction week, to *Shandy Hall*. They’ve put it into their programmes now, for the first time, based on the fact that Sterne’s work is as relevant now as it was in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.*

*That idea of post modernist writing, of Italo Calvino, of people like B S Johnson who*

*created a novel, a story, that sits in a box and can be read in any order that you chose to read it. All the signature pieces are there. We have a very big collection of 20th and 21st Century books that are associated with non-linear narrative. And we're finding that Sterne has got a voice in today's Internet and Hypertext – the idea that you can click on one site and go to another site is very familiar thing to small children – and also to adults – and this idea of not following things in a straightforward and predictable way is great as far as I'm concerned.*

*I used to teach in Secondary schools but not in Primary schools – and I've found that the biggest difficulty has been getting Secondary schools to come to the museum. They can't afford it. They have to bring all of the year groups with them... Is there space for 70 of them? They can't bring them because the science department has already been given some money so they can't come... But Primary schools are far more flexible. They're also smaller groups. They also, in my experience so far, often come with parents and teachers who are there as helpers – so you've got sometimes seven or eight people who can assist with your morning's activity, rather than it being reliant on you and a particular teacher. That's been a good thing as far as I'm concerned.*

*But on the whole I'm here to learn. That box is there for you to look at - for those of you who don't know about the opportunities of sending something out into schools, or outside of your museum, to stimulate interest in it. Thank you.*

**Clare Robson (Melbourn & Bassingbourn Village Colleges, Arts Development Coordinator):** *Can I just say something, very quickly, on the back of that? As an Arts Coordinator representing lots of Primary schools and two Secondary schools – but fixed in one area – something such as that, coming from all of your various museums, would be very useful for me to sell as an idea to the Primary schools where they're saying, oh no we don't have the money to go all the way to York, but we would like to experience something like this from a Historical or a Literary Arts point of view.*

**Henry Cobbold:** *Yes, let's pick up on that later on.*

### **William Cowper – Cowper & Newton Museum – Current Education Programs**

**Tony Seward (Chair of Trustees):**

*Again, like others of you, I'd like to set the scene a little bit. The museum (in Olney, Buckinghamshire) was set up in 1900 on the 200th anniversary of Cowper's death. It is the house in which he lived with his companion Mary Unwin for 18 years in the mid 18th Century. It was gifted to the town of Olney and its purpose was, in the first instance, to commemorate the memory of these two prominent townfolk, William Cowper the poet and John Newton the evangelical preacher, author of Amazing Grace and ex slave trader.*

*Now part of our problem nowadays is that William Cowper is not very much read. He's not on the school syllabuses. He was on the A level syllabus when I did it – he was in fact one of our set authors – but that was a long time ago. John Newton is in many ways a more colourful figure - he's got a very interesting life history and of course, he's the author of Amazing Grace - a lot of Americans know this and we have an inbuilt*

*advantage there in marketing terms. But Cowper is a challenge and what we need to bring out, I think, is the relevance that he has to the 21st Century. He was a very fine, innovative gardener. He was a great comic writer. An excellent letter writer... but all this needs bringing out.*

*He was also famed at the time for his treatment of hares. He nurtured his own three hares from wild young leverets to a good old age and actually has been taken up almost as the patron saint of the British Brown Hare Preservation Society, who are very much involved in the current anti-hunting campaign.*

*There's plenty of relevance in terms of John Newton, too, because slavery is of course a very hot topic at the moment and museums are under pressure to play their part in coming to terms with the British history of slaving.*

*But in addition to our two authors, I should point out that the museum is also a town museum, has a major lace collection, and also much local and social history.*

*So our challenge in educational terms is to bring all these things together. Similar to what Patrick was saying, the museum has not in the past catered much for children. We've done a lot in terms of guided tours for adults, inviting groups of lace makers for talks and demonstrations, and so on... Now this could all come under the heading of lifelong learning, but what we really need to develop is education for school children.*

*We do a certain amount of Key Stage 3 - social history – and groups of schoolchildren visit for that. But where we are really limited is that we don't have any dedicated space where we can assemble. We can only take very small groups. We give children activity sheets, and we have poetry competitions. We do lots of separate things, but it doesn't, at the moment, amount to a very vigorous or integrated education policy.*

*So I'm really here to learn today and pick up as many ideas as possible.*

*But at the same time what we're doing to address this is putting in a huge effort to - we're all volunteers, apart from one part-time curator who'd paid – to put in for an HLF project-planning grant. It seems we have a fairly good chance of getting this and they will give us up to £50,000 to pay consultants to make an audience development plan, an access plan, and all of that. And education will be a very important aspect of that.*

*If successful, we plan to apply for a further grant to enable us to roof in our courtyard and have purpose-built spaces to earn income. At the moment the only regular income we get is from the cottage that we let at the back of the museum. At the same time we are also applying to Milton Keynes Community Foundation for a three-year contract post – at £25,000 pa – for a Development Officer, and one of the responsibilities of this post is to look at the education policy within the whole development strategy.*

*And so, as I say, I can't give you a lot in terms of ideas. I'm here to learn... and I've already learnt a lot. Thank you.*

**Robert Burns – Burns Heritage Park – Current Education Programs.**

**Nat Edwards (National Burns Collection Project, Chair):**

*We could get into a huge debate with our colleagues in Stratford about which was the first Literary destination – because we have the evidence of Keats’ poetry and Wordsworth’s poetry about visiting Burns Cottage – but obviously Burns Cottage is one of the very earliest literary houses in the U.K.*

*Burns, in a way, is kind of different from many writers in that, because he came from a pretty humble background, he didn’t have one particular family home (e.g. an impressive home like Lytton). He had to move about the country - and he worked in various different places - so there’s a whole legacy of houses all around Scotland that claim a connection with Burns, and there’s a distributed collection of material culture generated by Burns, which is his legacy, which is also distributed around. So while Burns Cottage has an education program, of sorts, and does do various living history programs – in fact it’s just recently developed a Loan Box in the shape of Burns Cottage, along the lines of the one done at Shandy Hall – I want to talk very specifically about a project that Burns Cottage has kicked off, but which is a collaborative project with various other institutions which hold Burns material in Scotland.*

*Part of this is unique to Scotland, and the size of Scotland and the political structures within Scotland that gave us an opportunity... but I think potentially – very much as in Henry’s example of the Historic Houses of England – there’s some example of where collaborative working can have some real benefits... especially to smaller institutions which don’t have a lot of resources to produce stuff in house.*

*In 2002, an audit of Scotland’s museums was produced by the Scottish Museum’s Council (which is the regional museum’s agency there) – a major piece of research – and what it highlighted was there’s a large distributed national collection in Scotland that is outside the national institutions. It’s under-funded. It doesn’t really have curatorial support. It doesn’t really have conservational support. And it doesn’t particularly have educational support. And most of these resources are very much concentrated in two or three local authority or national institutions. It highlighted the need for some sort of intervention to do something about it.*

*The Scottish Executive responded by making some money available through something called the ‘Strategic Change Fund’, and the principal behind the “Strategic Change Fund” was that while the Scottish Executive weren’t going to put their hands in their pockets to find the estimated 14 million pounds worth of funding that was needed for the independent, and smaller, local authority sector, they would put some money – about three million pounds, over three years – into projects that identified ways in which people could change to adjust to the need, and projects that could identify priorities for future funding... accepting that it’s a smaller purse, then where should we put our money.*

*Burns Cottage, at that time, really saw the opportunity for flagging up the distributed Burns Collection. Because, if anything, the collection of material and buildings, and manuscripts and so on, that are held by all these various institutions in Scotland, not only emotionally resonate with the people of Scotland in a very very strong way, but arguably are the single biggest distributed collection which is held outside national institutions.*

*So Burns Cottage called a meeting of other organisations – and this ranged from Burns clubs that hold a few manuscripts in their clubroom, to Masonic clubs that have items collected from Burns as a Freemason, to the National Trust, to the big national museums and libraries and local authority museums and libraries in west and southwest Scotland where Burns had a connection –and we were successful in getting a grant of a little over £100,000, which paid for a worker to work on a 15 month project, and for a number of other outputs/projects which are starting to come together now. I won't go too much into the detail – I think it's a very interesting project and I've been chairing it since we've been successful in getting the funding, but a lot of it is quite technical – but I'm happy to answer questions about it in the break...*

*We kicked off by doing an audit of the “Burns Collection” and identified 38 institutions that had some significant Burns material. We asked what the state of the buildings was like, what the level of public access was like, what education resources were there, and also we counted the objects and their significance and created a online database, with the principal material at the University of Strathclyde.*

*What came out of that were a number of things. One, were all the gaps and the holes, in terms of providing information about public access, providing information about education... but we were also able to identify some of the best practice where people, despite very poor resources, were able to do quite creative and interesting things (including some of the things that people have already said). And we decided that what we needed to do was produce a few things that could act both as a tool kit for people to use for the various Burns collections and also would allow us to learn how we would most effectively work together.*

*And so we're in the phase now of producing this “public tool kit” of resources for access. We'll culminate the project in March with a report that goes back to the Scottish Executive and says this is what worked, and this is what didn't, and this is where you really need to give us some money.*

*It's all going very well. We have a big launch next week on St Andrew's Night. But I've already presented to the senior civil servant who's responsible for museum funding in Scotland and he's already given us an informal undertaking to continue to fund the project just on the basis of what we've done so far.*

*The kind of stuff we have done ranges from very simple things... so far -*

- *We've produced a map/chart of Scotland showing all the public places you can go and visit connected with Burns, including basic access details. A lot of the smaller properties, because they are small and operate with volunteers, don't have access to distribution and producing printed material like this. I think we produced about 100,000 of these leaflets, which were distributed around Scotland and up and down the motorway corridors. That was quite a useful first exercise, just in getting the different institutions to work together and share information.*
- *We also developed a kind of corporate identity, if you like, to bring all these organisations together, which is the “National Burns Collection”... and - with a design company - an accompanying logo.*

- *We've created a website, which is launched next week, which has got some very primitive virtual tours of some of the buildings (because we've done them ourselves, learning how to use Quicktime, VR and things, and we're going to have to polish that up), but also up-to-date information, which all the members can dynamically update themselves, of access details, event details, etc.*
- *There's "internal" education as part of the project in that we've managed to get money from the Scottish Museums Council for training in some basic things like conservation for volunteers who work in the sector. And there's an internal education section for people who are actually working within the collections on preservation, audience development and things like that.*
- *But more importantly for this conference, we produced this Teachers resource kit, designed in a way that it gives a set of resources to be used by any of the institutions that are working with Burns Collections. It's structured in a way that it gives a set of resources for a visit by teachers to any of the Burns Collections with suggested activities and preparation and information. It's linked to the website and there's a whole lot of electronic resources in terms of images, virtual tours and so on, which are connected to the activities – which are also available on a CD within the pack – but can all be accessed via the web. The brochure is available as a pdf and can be downloaded for free. There's then a series of Virtual Visits based on Burns Cottage and five other Burns buildings – and these are connected to more structured Virtual visits on the website. And then there's a whole series of post-visit classroom activities – musical activities, make your own Burns box, all the usual things... but because we got it 100% funded, we can do it to a higher quality and we can offer it for free to all of the schools within the local authorities of the 38 institutions, which is great. And because it's available electronically it means that once these run out there's still plenty of capacity for people to download them. And we now have this undertaking - because we've shown it to civil servants, and it's shiny, and they like it - to get some more.*
- *Then more marketing-oriented, we've been able to produce this book, which is a colour 64-page brochure, which really gives a guide to the public buildings in Scotland where you can go to see Burns items - and again is linked to the information on the web-site.*
- *There's competitions that run through the leaflet, the book, the kits...and hopefully target local people that are interested in Burns, and schools...*

*...I could go on for ages about it! A lots of time has been put into this and at no cost to the participants – we're were lucky that Scotland had this fund – but I think we've managed to produce quite impressive resources and a good basis for working together in the future. Any organisation that gets the Masons around the table with the local authorities is going to produce something interesting!*

### **George Byron - Newstead Abbey – Current Education Programs**

#### **Haidee Jackson (Curator):**

*Newstead is a local authority museum, one of eight Nottingham City museums. It's history goes back 800 years to its foundation as an Augustinian Priory. It was acquired by the Byron family in 1540, at the time of the Dissolution. It remained in the Byron*

*family. The poet Byron was the last Byron to live there and he sold it in 1818. He died in 1824, having lived at Newstead, and written at, and about, Newstead. From at least that date, Newstead functioned, throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> Century as a major tourist literary attraction. It was one of the top ten most visited sites in England, along with Chatsworth and Haddon and Hardwick Hall.*

*Newstead was sold by Byron to a man called Thomas Wildman – in fact a friend of Bulwer Lytton, and I know Bulwer Lytton visited Newstead and corresponded with Mrs Wildman on subjects including garden design. Wildman and Mrs Wildman promoted Newstead as a monument to the poet - as did the next private owner, the Webb family who acquired Newstead in 1861, right through to the end of their ownership in 1931. In 1931 a representative of the last member of the Webb family presented most of the house and the gardens and the two lakes as a package to the Nottingham City Council – or the Nottingham Corporation as it was described in the deeds of covenant – together with a major collection of what were described as “Byron relics”. And this wonderful collection, which remains in Newstead today, includes furniture, pictures, items of costume, tooth picks, boxing gloves, duelling pistols, dog collars... all the necessary ingredients of a Byronic bachelorhood! Most magnificently perhaps, his gilt, canopied, four-poster bed, with four gilt carved wood baron’s coronets in the corners.*

*Since 1931 to the present day, Newstead has not ever had an interpretation plan or an education plan, or a site-based education officer. Today it shares the education access team of the Nottingham City Museums. Gill will talk about what they do on site...*

*My post was the first full time, site based, curatorial post ever in Newstead’s local authority history, so we’re pretty thin on the ground. In addition to what the access and education team do - as curator - I’ve had the privilege to work with some schools, specifically on Byron subjects, but interestingly they’ve been restricted to Rudolph Steiner Schools, who have requested the opportunity to work at Newstead with the collections and house. I’ve had only one other request from other schools to work on site and that was for a History, rather than a Literary, project – but of course I welcomed it with open arms. So I’m hoping that will expand – but as Gill will explain, the National Curriculum has been focused in other directions, e.g. the Victorians...*

*In addition I’ve had the opportunity to work with the BBC and the Open University on a number of special Byron programs, which has been good, and has made use of the site, the collections, and of course the story. The American Biography Channel and Dutch television have come to make programs specifically about Byron at Newstead.*

*Over the years we’ve been trying to persuade the University to work more closely with the collections – I mean particularly Nottingham University – and we’ve had some cooperation, mostly in the form of PhD students being sent out, which has been great. But this year, in a couple of weeks, we finally welcome our first students from the Nottingham University English Department to study Byron. The Head of the English Department, the new director of the Centre of Regional Studies and the new “Head of Byron Studies” came out two weeks ago – so we’re just, just, beginning to get underway with them, which is really exciting. We’re also looking for a room for them to occupy at the Abbey, and we’re in the early stages of planning a study centre.*

*This is running along in tandem with a project that I’ve been involved with over the last*

*year and a half, involving what seems like dozens of consultants, to come up with three plans: an education plan, and interpretation plan and a business plan. We're on the verge of waking this sleeping giant of potential that we see at Newstead Abbey. It's an underused resource with tremendous potential, which for the first time in its history as a public collection is threatening to realise its potential.*

**Gillian Crawley (General Manager):**

*I'm been at Newstead Abbey as General Manager for about a year. I'm not a Byron scholar – so when Henry mentioned the subject of Health and Safety, I thought, I'm here, if anyone wants to know about Legionella Logs and what to do with them, I can wax lyrical!*

*As Haidee was saying Newstead Abbey is one of eight museums within the Nottingham museum setup and our Education and Access Team are based at Nottingham Castle and we get our eighth of the time. The reason Haidee and I are here today is that we've slipped away, being on the threshold of welcoming 3000 school children on site between now and the end of the winter term.*

*We have been working with education consultants but would like to take much more charge of our own destiny. I previously worked at Gainsborough Old Hall, which had a major Tudor education program, and received the Sanford Award just before I left.*

*So what are our school children doing at the moment? –*

*There are about 200 school children per day. They are split into groups. The main focus of the day is looking at the set up to a Victorian Christmas. The children come in, they get into character, the education demonstrators are all in role - we suspend the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and go into an 1890ish role. And this very much splits into a very traditional education session – they do the servants' lot, and then they go upstairs. It's a very hands-on session. It's very practical. I have to admit that the house smells fantastic at this time of year because we're all busy making pomanders and sugar mice to hang on the tree (which they're not allowed to eat! - They learn about discipline!).*

*One of the influences that Haidee and I have had on this education program is that when they go upstairs, they get to meet "Mr Webb", and "Mrs Webb", and "Mrs Cooper", who was the housekeeper. Otherwise the session could be in almost any 19<sup>th</sup> Century country house. It is not specific to Newstead. And I think this one of the shortcomings of this program. So we have, sort of, insisted that "Mr Webb", when he welcomes them, does talk about what the house is, who Lord Byron was... and when they're passed to "Mrs Webb" they're rattled through, very quickly, through the library – that's his wedding ring, that's his toothpick, that's Boatswain's dog collar – what they make of that, we're not quite sure.*

*We also run a very similar Summer session, where the children come and do the Victorian servant's lot again. This is much more domestic in arrangement. There's lots of polishing silver, washing etc. – I can tell you what a "wet room" is, whoever it is who wanted to know! – and the curator's worrying about the humidity and the environmental controls!*

*The education team in Nottingham has a very strong outreach focus and we get involved with the things like Open Access days. We do 3 or 4 of these per year, all with a slightly different theme, but the basic format is very similar: make and take, some lectures, talks - story telling seems to be very successful. We're quite keen to push the storytelling, and associate it with Byron and Hobhouse sitting in their Blue Dining Room, spooking each other with their spooky stories, and all that Gothic Romance... and trying to get them to think about that.*

*Newstead had several famous people come to stay - one was the explorer David Livingstone, who was a pal and chum of William Frederick Webb (I think he probably came for the weekend and stayed six months.) One of the projects that Nottingham City Council was involved in this summer was a Black History sense of place project, working with the Afro-Caribbean community in central Nottingham. We were involved in a project called "Words Out". Groups from these communities were brought to Newstead and they wrote poetry, made films. And they were there at the same time that the "Restoration" team were there, so you actually had an amateur film group come into contact with professionals, which was quite exciting.*

*We work with Art Outlook, which is a mental health service project and they bring in people with special educational needs and learning difficulties – and that tends to be very Arts based.*

*Although we're managed by Nottingham City Council, we're actually 14 miles away from Nottingham and geologically and geographically we sit within Sherwood forest. We're developing links with an organisation called the Sherwood Initiative. This is an opportunity for us to look at green, ecological and sustainable issues – because not only is there a country house and two lakes, there is also 300 acres of parkland. We think this is an opportunity to develop green and ecological issues.*

*I think I'm going to wind up now... but one of the things that is coming out of the three plans is that we have a lot of space at Newstead, but our space is all in the wrong place, so logistically it is quite difficult to handle the domestic arrangements for school and educational visits. We don't really want the children eating their sandwiches in Grade One listed buildings and room sets and around the Byron furniture, but that's what happens at the moment. So one of the things we have been addressing is - we have on the estate, and in the formal gardens, 5 or 6 outbuildings that are semi-derelict - we are very much hoping to convert one of these into a state-of-the-art education centre.*

**Henry Cobbold:** *I'm very pleased to hear all this. As you mention, Bulwer Lytton was a fan, of course - but also his grandson married Byron's granddaughter and my current second cousin has, I know, felt that Byron has not in the past been properly feted by Nottingham. Good news to hear that all this is happening then.*

**Heidee Jackson:** *Well, I'll leave you with one thought that intrigued me – I hope I'm not giving too much away... but the consultants who are working on the development plan, which should be completed by June next year, gave us a glimpse of their intentions by telling us that it's their idea to make Newstead Abbey the "bad boy of historic houses". Watch this space!*

**Gillian Crawley:** *We'll continue to be mad, bad and dangerous to know!*

## **John Keats - Keats House – Current Education Programs**

### **Geoff Pick (Head of Public Services):**

*Keats House is a charity. It was saved from demolition in the 1920s by a combination of the residents of Hampstead and the great and the good of the Literary world. It is currently run by the Corporation of London, which also runs the other two parts of our management group, which is London Metropolitan Archives, which is a very large regional archive, and the Corporation's own record office, which has, we believe the finest copy of Magna Carta in the world. It's a small property - like Patrick said, you could fit the whole house in perhaps one of the rooms here at Knebworth. It's Grade 1 listed - because John Keats lived there - and that gives you all the issues you have when children and Grade 1 listed properties are put together.*

*I think Keats House is seen as the cherished but wayward son of our management group. It's always producing novel problems and novel issues to deal with. I'm not going to linger at all on toilets and our neighbours, but we are building a toilet block that has had a very interesting effect on our residents in Hampstead! I'm very happy to talk about EDA practices in the break.*

*Rather like Tony we're in the process of HLF applications. We have got our Project Planning Grant to get consultants in to advise on a number of areas - technical areas including wallpapers and fabrics, but also some areas of audience development.*

*We have limited education resources to work with - that includes Linda working only one day per week on Keats House. On this basis we are really keen on partnerships - either partnerships like, with people who are here today, or with other organisations, e.g. funding organisations. It's really important for us to be able to do that and in many cases to piggyback on national initiatives.*

*We have been very successful in education work, but that has only been active for the last 2 to 3 years at Keats House, when we took the decision to try and appoint a part time Education Officer to get that work going... to link into activities like World Book Day in March and, particularly for us, National Poetry Day in October – with a view to getting extra publicity. I don't like to say this, because it is the one-upmanship that Henry mentioned earlier on! - But when the Poetry Society created their Poetry Landmark site, we were made the Poetry Landmark for the whole of the United Kingdom in 2003, much to our surprise and pleasure, beating Dove Cottage! But the main thing was that we were able to work with the Poetry Society on what we might do this year, and we did get some free publicity through them; we've worked on a couple of projects, and we're working with the schools that they decided would be the Poetry Landmarks for 2004... one of them is in Shetland! - So we've trying to establish some sort of virtual link.*

*We're going to talk about schools education, not our other works, because I think that is the focus of what we are talking about this morning. We do have lots of other people in, we do have other groups using us, we have lots of other events – we have teddy bears picnics, and small family poetry readings and story telling in the garden. We had the 95th Regiment of Foot do a re-enactment at the house recently, which was very*

*successful - they were commissioned at the time Keats was living there, which is our thread. We have academic talks, literary evenings - we've had talks on Clare and Cowper within the last couple of years. We run family days - we ran a family day last Easter Monday on "stuff and nonsense", on nonsense poetry, so we had children and families writing nonsense poetry.*

*On schools education, we've very much focused on primary school level - as one of the earlier speakers said, it's much easier to get primary schoolchildren out than secondary school children, particularly those doing GCSC work.*

*One project I was going to mention, which happened before Linda arrived, was funding we got through the Department of Education, which was given to what was then the London Museums' Agency, to work on a joint project called 'Wonderful Things.' We had created a project called 'Poet for a Day'. We got school groups in doing active work within the house developing poetry and scrapbooks. We got about £3,500 for that, which for us was a lot of money. We were able to buy with that the time of an actress who did research on Keats' fiancée - who lived in the other half of the house - and she was a costumed interpreter and worked with them on her relationship with Keats House. She scared the living daylights out of the children when she first arrived because she was in mourning, dressed in black - and they were enthralled for the rest of the day. It was our first experience of using that kind of external source and it worked very well.*

*We concentrated in that project not only on delivering for Key Stage 2 English and Literacy, but also - and I think this is why we got the money - on music and P.E. John Keats and P.E.? - How do you get that?! - They weren't doing press-ups to "Ode To A Nightingale" - but because it's a Regency house, we had a Regency Ball, not actually in the house (because the conservators were very worried about the paintings) but we used one of the rooms at the local Town Hall, and they learned not only about Regency dances but also how they link with modern dances and how you control movement... and that's where you get into P.E., because obviously it's not just about doing press-ups. That worked very well and we felt we could extend what Keats did into that kind of area. It was very interesting and very entertaining and the schools actually valued it - we sent one of our members of staff in costume into schools to deliver invitations to the ball, which supposedly came from Keats' fiancée's mother, and the children had to reply in the style of a Regency letter writer, and that formed part of the project. I remember one eight year old whizzing through the house - he shouldn't have been whizzing! - and saying "this house is really wicked!" and I thought John Keats would have approved of that.*

*Linda's now going to talk about some of the current work.*

**Linda Carey (Interpretation Officer):**

*I've been working at Keats House for 3 months and, as Geoff said, only one day a week - so there's quite a lot still to be done, in not very much time.*

*We've developed a series of workshops on Keats poetry, and they go on throughout the year, and they're quite serious and academic, for A level. Lower than that in Secondary school, we do nothing. I think we have a lot to offer GCSC groups, year 7 and year 8, but we're not getting them in at the moment. There is this problem of space... and the other*

*problem that someone else identified of where do they eat their sandwiches. This is something that we need to work on and I feel is a gap.*

*What we do do at the moment - with Key Stage 2 especially - there are some very nice and growing activities on poetry. For National Poetry Day we now have what's becoming a regular session, where students come into Keats House, and we're trying to link that with Heath Library, which is right next door to us. We're also very lucky to have links with the book shop down the road and they will have book signings which are linked to us - so we've had a few sessions where Children's authors come in and will sign and talk about their books and we're hoping to link this with poetry writing activities. And also - as Geoff's said, we've got a number of partnerships - we have a partnership with a group called 'Young Cultural Creators', which is linked to regional libraries, where a writer comes in and talks about his poetry, and we've coupled this with a tour of the house. I'll talk about Keats' youth and how he began to write poetry very young, and what poetry meant to him.*

*We have one room, the Chester room, which we are able to use as an education room - they'll come in here and the poet or writer will pick up from what we've been saying on the tour. We've also had, over the autumn, Kathleen Johnson, who is a black writer, come in over Black History Week and do a very nice talk aimed at children called "Invisible 'Till Now", which focused partly on the black presence in Hampstead, but also on the business of writing down your own story. And again the children were able to take that home and do extension work from that. And we've linked that to one of the displays in the house.*

*The Chester room was added to the house after Keats died by Eliza Chester, who then owned the house, and when we do the costumed interpreter work, our current program is not to use the older part of the house, but to focus on the Victorian life of Eliza Chester, actress and musical star. She will talk to the children not just about poetry but also about links between the house and the theatre - there's rather a tenuous link in that Keats was very keen on the theatre, wrote at least one play, and would have liked to have written for Keane. At the moment we're very much linked to the Literacy, but we'd like to move out into History and to Art.*

*One area that we haven't yet developed is that we do have some artefacts - not very many - and we do have some objects that can be handled. They're mostly kitchen artefacts. And downstairs in the house, not really yet developed, we have these two rather lovely kitchens (one on the Keats side of the house, and one on the side of the house that the Brawne family lived in) and in the future it would be nice if we could have handling sessions and talk about a Victorian kitchen, etc.*

*I think that's everything that we're doing so far. Having heard what been said so far, we've got a lot of ideas of where to take this.*

### **Edward Bulwer Lytton - Knebworth House – Current Education Programs**

**Henry Cobbold:** *Well, I've noticed a bit of a pattern... and that is that some homes and museums do well on advanced learning and are keen to do better for children, and others do well on the early Key Stages and are keen to do better for elder students. Well,*

*we're one of the latter - we're well developed with programs for younger children, and Lynn's going to speak about that before I talk a bit about what we do, and hope to do, for elder students.*

**Lynn Forrest (Education Officer):**

*The education programme began here in 1996 with...*

- *...the very popular Tudor Treasure Trail, which is still running. We can take a whole year group, about 200 children. Groups are taken to key rooms in the house, led by our experienced guides in costume. There is a simple activity in each room, for example in the library writing with a quill pen. They then break for lunch and go and visit the Dinosaur Trail, which I'll talk about later. And in the afternoon they investigate the gardens with the aim of putting together the items that would make a Tudor banquet.*
- *We have a similar format for a Victorian Trail, again guides in costume lead groups around the house, this time on a Victorian theme, and again using the garden in the afternoon.*
- *New for this year is the Dinosaur Trail – 72 life size models set in the “wilderness” gardens. They have proved to be very popular with schools and general visitors. My first job was to put together an educational interpretation of this trail. The only National Curriculum links I could find were teething, eating and the food chain - when I first saw the dinosaurs, to my horror, they were practically toothless! So we quickly had some models put together of a herbivore and a carnivore tooth. So far, the Dinosaur Trail has tended to be a lunch hour activity, but there is scope to use it for formal teaching. I have produced worksheets to use with the trail for Key Stage 1 & 2.*
- *We got the Sandford Award here in 2001 - for our Tudor Trail - and we are looking to re-apply for 2006 and so I am looking all the key recommendations - one of which is Outreach. So we're almost complete on a Victorian Workshop to be taken into schools. Using photos of key family members, archive material – servant's records etc. - and handling objects (which I'm having to buy because we have very few "handling" objects here), these will be led by a costumed guide dressed as a parlour maid working at Knebworth during the Victorian period. Hopefully, again, this will attract Key Stage 3 as well – as people have said it is more difficult to attract Key Stage 3 out, so Outreach is a thing they should be more receptive to. And again it's taking the house into schools... by way of four activities which I have centred around four key rooms here - so the guides follow the pattern of what they would do in the house.*
- *Also for Outreach, we too are working on a Loans Box, again using photographs, family records and objects. It can be used by anyone - I feel it doesn't have to be just for schools. I have included a short story that I've written using the memoirs of Bulwer Lytton's grandson, Victor, about being a child growing up at Knebworth in the 1880s.*
- *I've almost completed a "News" leaflet to go out to schools to let them know what we are doing.*
- *For the future, we're looking at evaluation – I've always thought it is really important to get feedback on what you are doing. It's all well and good coming up with these ideas, but you've got to know that they work. So in future all teachers will be given a simple evaluation sheet to complete. We will look at the*

*information, process it, and hopefully work from that to offer teachers and educators what they are looking for.*

**Henry Cobbold (Director):**

*As you can hear, that's very nicely developed - our History teaching for younger students - but why I am so thrilled about this group and some of the ideas that are coming up today, is that I really want to push the Literature angle for the elder students. We are under developed in this area and I am very keen to hear the ideas that are being offered today.*

*I'm going to add two suggestions, two things that have worked well for us:*

*Firstly, anniversaries. Anniversaries are extremely useful and they are very easy to come by. You can find an anniversary in almost any year -*

**Patrick Wildgust:** *Today is Laurence Sterne's 291st birthday.*

**Henry Cobbold:** *- there you go! All of the writers we represent had a book that came out, or something that happened, that produces a nice round number in the next year. I've found it very useful to work with anniversaries - it helps give a fresh direction for your marketing year on year.*

*Secondly, the other wonderful thing I've discovered - having started a newsletter for Bulwer Lytton scholars and enthusiasts around the world - is that in almost every university in almost every corner of the world (and they all wonderfully came out of the woodwork for our birthday Bicentenary last year) there is somebody who adores Bulwer Lytton. And you will all find, in universities around the world, there is sure to be somebody who absolutely adores your writer and his or her work. By creating this little email network, whereby I send out an email every once in a while - just basically any news related to Bulwer Lytton, articles written about him, books planned - it's extraordinary the feedback that comes back.*

*And I want to give you one particular example that I am so very thrilled about. The University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada, has a wonderful theatre professor called Barry Yzereef who is a Bulwer fanatic – and every three years he brings his Drama and Theatre Studies students from Canada to Knebworth to put on a play in the Banqueting Hall, which is what Bulwer Lytton used to do with his mates Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins back in the 1850s. And for these Canadian students, it is a life-changing event for many of them, to come and act in a room that Charles Dickens acted in, and to perform plays of which they can read reviews from when they were performed in the same room on cold winter evenings in 1850. This has been a wonderful program, and we've managed to settle it into a regular 3-yearly event. We're helped by the fact that our preservation charity (The Knebworth House Education and Preservation Trust) has "education" in its title, so it can contribute to staging the event - but I hastened to add that the Canadian students do a year of fund raising prior to the event and they do pay their own way. We give them an evening meal, provide a stage, and publicise the event, but the costs of the play, their travel and lodgings are all paid for by them.*

*So I would encourage you, if you're not doing it already, to reach out to those academics*

*in far-flung universities and see if there isn't a way of coming up with a similar sort of arrangement, a similar sort of a program. The sight of 25 Canadian students all in their stage make-up walking down Old Knebworth Lane to the Roebuck Inn in Stevenage on a summer's evening is something that I absolutely cherish. And it really is an example of how Bulwer Lytton is still today reaching out - almost as far as British Columbia!*

### **The Brontes – The Bronte Parsonage – Current Education Programs.**

#### **Andrew McCarthy (Audience Development Manager):**

*The Bronte Society was established in 1893 and the Bronte Parsonage Museum was opened in 1928, having been the home of the family from 1820 to 1861 and of course where all those great novels were written.*

*Despite the fact that the Bronte Society was established as an educational charity - to promote understanding and awareness of the Brontes, their lives and works - it's only relatively recently that an education programme as such has been established, and only relatively recently that a member of staff dedicated to educational development has been appointed.*

*My role at the museum now is Audience Development Manager. I'm very involved in Education of course - I did actually begin my employment with the Society in 1999 as the Education Officer. So I spent a great deal of time during the first four years or so working on developing the education service, which would of course cater to schools, but which would also look towards pre-school, pre-school age... and of course initiatives as well for older students and adult learners as well.*

*Of course featuring prominently in museums' education always are schools, and so one of my first priorities was to look at a program for activities specifically for schools. First of all to enhance the experience of children visiting the museum and to provide a curriculum resource for teachers, but also really to look towards enhancing the income generating capacity of education as well.*

*The Education Service Leaflet here gives details of the workshops and activities that came out of that process. The cover depicts - a rather too cheerful and healthy-looking - Helen Burns, for those of you who know Jane Eyre, from a drama workshop. It folds out into a poster that gives all the details. Activities include:*

- *Preschool art and crafts workshops*
- *Artefact handling workshops*
- *Drama workshops - that include costume interpretation as well*
- *Creative writing workshops*
- *Art based workshops*
- *Talks and guided walks around Haworth for 6th Form students*
- *And also something called the Bronte Roadshow, which is basically an Outreach service where workshop sessions are taken out into schools that can't actually get to Haworth.*

*So there's quite a variety here in this program. And all these workshops were designed as cross-curricular resources really. They were also designed very much with an eye on not just introducing children to the Brontes, their life and work, but also in trying to get children to respond to the Brontes by being creative themselves. That's a very important part of the Education service that has developed over time, that we are really trying to promote imagination and creativity now.*

*As well as this formal program of workshops and activities, there have also been informal tutorings and workshops as well, which include things that have already been mentioned - story telling sessions, holiday craft workshops, children's trails and that sort of thing.*

*In addition to this day-to-day menu of options, if you like, for school groups, I've also worked in the last few years on a number of special education projects at the Parsonage. I should give, very briefly, a bit of background information by stating that the Bronte Parsonage is located within the Bradford authority and Bradford is a city that has some of the poorest neighbourhoods in the country and also of course it's made up of a number of very culturally diverse communities - and it has to be said, under represented in our visitor profile are children, schools, from socially deprived neighbourhoods and, for example, predominantly non-white catchments. And so a series of these have been devised really to try and encourage those groups into the museum. They are all projects that have been externally funded, from a variety of sources including the DFES, the Yorkshire Museums and Archives Council, and various charitable foundations like the Paul Hamlin Foundation and the Foyle Foundation. And they have included a variety of things, but again very much Arts based, so there would be Artist in Residence programs, there have been craft residencies, theatre and museums projects, and forthcoming, a project working with a group of Bradford schools who will be working with professional actors and musicians to develop an opera based on the Brontes' lives. That will be performed in Haworth and the communities where the schools are.*

*And so those special projects have been audience development initiatives really, as opposed to catering simply for schools that come to the museum anyway.*

*As well as working with very young children and school groups, the Parsonage has also developed Adult learning initiatives of one kind or another – particularly an annual program of courses and special events. The courses that we run have been developed really as collaborative initiatives with other educational institutions, like for example Leeds and Bradford Universities. And they've included, well, obviously Literature-based courses, accredited courses, but also courses focusing on local history, and again on the Arts - so for example we've run creative writing workshops with Bradford University as well as a whole host of day and weekend courses on different aspects of not just creative writing, but the visual arts more generally. And there are also:*

- *Lectures and talks,*
- *PAL (Peer Assisted Learning) discussion type events*
- *Collaborative projects with other museums*
- *Theatrical productions*
- *Bronte related movie screenings – one of the things we are hoping to do next year is screen the 1939 Wuthering Heights on the moors, which is adventurous!*

- Exhibitions and all kinds of other events as well.

*Now all of this activity – the work with schools, the work with the special education projects with under represented groups, the Adult Education initiatives - all of this has proved to be very popular and there has actually been a four-fold increase in the children, students, and adults, using the museum’s education service in the last 5 years. And of course when this service began the main objective was to produce a high quality service which would enhance the visitor experience of visiting the museum, provide a curriculum resource and all those crucial things. But one of the spin offs, if you like, has been that Education has managed to establish itself on a very firm financial footing, not just through workshop fees but by attracting grants and funding of various sorts.*

*The other crucial thing to say, though, is that, as I mentioned, much of the schools activities have had an Arts bias, as too have the Special Education projects and indeed the Adult Education initiatives. And really, since we’re thinking about the role of Education in Literary museums, we at the Parsonage are very committed to the idea that we are not just about exploring the Brontes, their lives and works, although of course that an absolutely very crucial part of what we are doing. Our objective is also to be advocates for imagination and creativity now, and to encourage children, students and adults to respond to the Brontes, the Bronte Parsonage and Museum, in imaginative and creative ways.*

### **Elizabeth Gaskell - Tatton Park – Current Education Programs**

#### **Philip Watts (Heritage Education Worker – and part-time Secondary School Teacher)**

*Tatton Park is a huge flagship National Trust property, 15 miles south of Manchester, in the town of Knutsford. It’s quite unique in the sense that although it is owned by the National Trust, it is financed and administered by Cheshire County Council – there’s huge politics going on there, but – it means that they can fund a very well-developed Education Service. I started working there a day a week in the Living History program, which is targeted to Primary School children.*

*It struck me while I was working there that there’s a huge potential to deliver the Secondary School English curriculum, not least using the Elizabeth Gaskell connection.*

*The three things I can talk about are:*

- *The current educational program, which taps into some of the things you’ve already been hearing about.*
- *The Secondary School education program, which we have developed*
- *And the Elizabeth Gaskell connection, that remains to be developed.*

*I should say a bit about the site. The site is a Palladian Neo-Classical mansion, late 18<sup>th</sup>, early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, with a few quite subtle Victorian additions, set in a Repton landscape. Hidden in the landscape, as a wonderful survival, there’s the mediaeval Old Hall – and that’s been put back to how it was in the 1490s... with other buildings that reflect other periods that the Estate was lived in. So there’s Stuart buildings, Victorian*

*buildings and War-time buildings all on the same site. There's also a fully working Home Farm, which is as it would have been in War-time, with original breeds of animals and so on.*

*Basically Primary School children can come and do one of four Living History programs:*

- *They can be Anglo Saxons,*
- *Medieval or Tudor people at the Old Hall*
- *They can do World War I evacuation and land activities at the farm.*
- *They can be Victorian servants in the mansion.*

*As you've been hearing at the other properties, this involves Staff in role, putting children through daily working practices as it would have been in certain dates. For example, in the mansion we pretend it's 1886, and in 1887 there was a Royal visit when the Prince and Princess of Wales came, for the Golden Jubilee, to open the Great Exhibition in Manchester and they stayed as guests of the Egerton family. We present the household in a great tizzy, needing new servants to come on, and the children have to write letters of application and are given real names from the Tatton Records – so they come being these people, applying for the job. They're put through different paces – and I have a great time being a cross between Gordon Jackson and Anthony Hopkins, as the butler, bossing them around! We try to use Victorian language. I read them the rules (taken from the Cheltenham Museum) of how to be good and industrious servants. And then at the end of the day, they are told what happened to their characters – there's one chap who's still alive, and it's nice to say to the child, actually you're still alive and you're 90.*

*That gave me an idea, as an English teacher – what about the 19<sup>th</sup> Century novel? What about the fact that Pre-1914 fiction is a pre-requisite in Secondary Education? This fantastic house encodes so many of the values of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century novel. It's been used for film versions – it was used for *Brideshead* – but the airport's rather put paid to filming...*

*Then in the Tudor Living History, when we pretend it's the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, it struck me in this remarkable Great Hall, which survives from 1490 – yes, isn't this wonderful for being Tudors in, but wouldn't this be a marvellous place to do the banqueting scene from *Macbeth*? Because, we do all the ritual banqueting and the social order and the hierarchies and so on... and there's a log fire burning, there's a staircase upstairs to a bedroom, which is a state bedchamber with a servant's room next door... and it just suggested the whole dynamic of *Macbeth* to me. And so I went to the Visitor Operations Manager and said to him, what about this? As an English teacher I could run a workshop on the banqueting scene from *Macbeth*, which you could market to schools saying this is an exciting way to do your Key Stage 4 coursework. You come with a class of children and you go away at the end of the day having had a stimulating time with the material for a coursework essay.*

*He said leave it with me... and it just coincided with a political initiative that I think is called NGEP2, which is basically funding for museums and archives to deliver the National Curriculum. So to cut a very long story short, we applied for this and we got the funding. We got the help of remarkable subject officers in English and Drama from*

*Cheshire County Council, and we created “Playing Up”, which you can get a leaflet on. And basically you can come to the Old Hall and you can explore scenes and themes from Macbeth. The children don’t have to have any prior knowledge of the play. They’re told the story around a smoking fire; they are divided up into small groups and they work on constructing scenes from script extracts that are laminated and placed in different rooms around the site. What was very moving and very remarkable to me... and obviously this is political, because it attracts a lot of funding - so you had to show that you could reach EAZs (Educational Action Zones), so children from underprivileged backgrounds and failing schools were brought into the pilot... and they actually proved the most stimulated by it. And what people are saying about the hands-on, tactile nature of the thing – the fact that you can touch Tudor beams, you go home smelling of wood smoke, you’ve handled a dagger, that sort of thing – that’s the important thing about it.*

*The other activity we’ve done is called “People and Spaces”, the social world of the classic novel – this again is the idea of making the social world that’s there in Jane Austen and Dickens and Hardy and Gaskell and the Brontes, real, in a way. And that involves doing various role-play exercises around the different rooms in the mansion.*

*Those programs are basically up and running and the promotional leaflet is there for you to look at.*

*The Gaskell connection – which I suppose in a way is why I’m here – is a huge and interesting one. It’s rather like the Byron news – it’s about to happen and certainly should happen.*

*Elizabeth Gaskell was an orphan. She was brought from London as a baby. She was brought up by her aunt, Mrs Lumb, in the biggest Georgian house in Knutsford. She went to boarding school in Stratford-upon-Avon. She married a Unitarian minister and went to live in Manchester in Plymouth Grove.*

*The Plymouth Grove house has just been bought by the Manchester Historic Buildings Trust, having been owned in various capacities by the University over the years. It has huge, fabulous, yet-to-be-developed potential, because, in the Drawing Room, Charlotte Bronte hid behind the curtains because she was too shy to meet people, Charles Dickens came, Thackeray was a guest - this wonderful woman (Gaskell), who was a pioneer feminist, held court... and something’s got to happen there.*

*Equally something’s got to happen in Knutsford, because Tatton Park is the house that is referred to Wives and Daughters – Hollingford is Tatton, and Cranford is of course Knutsford. There is a very active Gaskell Society. There’s a burgeoning Literary Festival in Knutsford. And Tatton sort of plays host to these, without exploiting it... and I was interested about the Burns thing, because I think we need somehow to get all these things together – Knutsford, Tatton and Manchester need to create some sort of Gaskell umbrella organisation. And, in fact, the biggest Gaskell society in the world is in Japan – and I am currently saying to the business managers at Tatton, look, there are all these students in America and Japan doing pieces on Mrs Gaskell – this is the house she visited; this is the world she inhabited; Manchester, where she also lived, is just down the road. So that’s the way ahead for us.*

**Henry Cobbold:** *That’s fascinating. Thank you... One of the great things about the*

*chronological order here, is that I think we began and we end with probably the two most successful of us. I say that about Roald Dahl for two reasons: One is because the Roald Dahl website – the author’s main website ([www.roalddahl.com](http://www.roalddahl.com)) - is by far the best website I’ve ever seen, and I do encourage you all to look at it at some point. And secondly because, when it comes to Outreach programs, how much better an Outreach program can you get than when a writer’s book arrives at your breakfast table attached to a Shreddies packet?! That’s the ultimate Outreach program! And the day that all our writers’ books arrive with the morning breakfast cereal is the day we will all be very happy.*

### **Roald Dahl – Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre – Current Education Programs**

#### **Sue Davis (Manager/Curator):**

*We are very definitely the upstarts. Roald Dahl died only 14 years ago – yesterday was the anniversary of his death - and we aren’t actually open yet. The Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre is based in Great Missenden in Buckinghamshire. I am the Manager/Curator, so at the moment my job is project managing a capital project to renovate a load of buildings and to open new galleries. My colleague here is Katy Sullivan who is our Education Officer, and she is going to talk a bit more about the work she is doing. Katy is funded by the Heritage Lottery and also the Ernest Cook Trust. And the reason we’ve got her, although the museum has not been opened, is to allow us to develop our audiences and to test out and pilot our education work, which is very important.*

*At the core of our project is the archive. We have the most amazing collection, which is just about everything that Roald Dahl ever wrote. We have the very characteristic... he wrote in pencil on yellow paper, so we have lots of that, first drafts of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, first drafts of Matilda, the BFG, letters to the editors, his ideas book, 500 letters he wrote to his mother during his lifetime... so we’ve got lots of material and lots of good, historic, heart.*

*The Dahl family were very keen that this did not leave the country. So when he died and there were offers from various American universities, they were very keen that it stayed in the country. And they were also very keen to see it being used. So what we have been able to do is to use some of that already – and Katy’s been working on that. She’s going to talk about some of the projects she has done and some of the things we are planning to do.*

*Let me talk you through what we are building. This is a Quentin Blake plan of what we are constructing... so we have a shop and a café...*

*It’s a museum of two halves...*

*There’s the biographical stuff, which uses the archives. It talks about his very interesting life – Norwegian parents, being born in South Wales, growing up during the Second World War, going to Washington, working with Walt Disney, becoming a writer – first becoming established as a writer of short stories for adults.*

*This bit at the end, is the Story Centre, which for me is the most exciting bit. This is much more about creative writing – the bit that goes beyond what Dahl did. We will talk about how Dahl wrote, but we will also talk about how other writers write. We’ve been very lucky that we’ve done some interviews recently with Benjamin Zaphaniah, J.K. Rowling, Philip Pullman and Jacqueline Wilson, and you’ll hear their voices in that Centre, talking about how I do it, how I sit at the kitchen table...*

*Then on this side we’ve got an “Inventing Room”, which is for school groups... and a “Children Eating Room” - we’ll see!*

*We’re due to open on 11<sup>th</sup> June. Before that we have a bit of a preview period. So at the moment we’re very much involved in the building.*

*This is our Mission Statement – I think Katy’s going to talk about how she’s interpreting this for our education work...*

**Katy Sullivan (Education Officer):**

*I’ve been in post since January. And as you can see from our Mission Statement, the heart of the museum is about education. So our mission is to inspire the love of creative writing in everyone using the Roald Dahl Archive, his stories and his life.*

*I’ve not been working in isolation. We’ve had partnerships with lots of experts and professionals, and a group of these is a School Users Group, that Sue actually established before I started. But since coming into the post, I’ve extended it, so we’ve now have regular meetings with 17 local teachers. And using their valuable expertise and advice, we have recently put together six educational sessions, aimed at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 pupils. This will cover the national English curriculum and also the primary national strategies. We cover everything from biographies to word play, written by Dahl’s chickens – so there’s lots of fun to be had there.*

*Our Education Packs are about ready to go to print – they’ll be ready in January. So if you’d like to have a copy let me or Sue know.*

*So a lot of our work is to do with schools, because we anticipate – it’s all guess work at the moment – that about a quarter of our visitor numbers will come from schools. But we also want to appeal to a much wider audience. And we’re really in a lucky position because we can test what we want to do with particular audiences...*

*I’m just going to skip back... to a project with Key Stage 3 schools which I ran in the summer term. It’s called “AWOL”, which stands for “Archives Writing On Line” – and I worked with a class of Year 7 students for six weeks using Roald Dahl’s Archive, but also using performance poets from a great organisation called “Apples & Snakes” based in London. It was fantastic because it was the first time that I was able to use Roald Dahl’s archive in the classroom. It was great. We could show the students, not only the writing process and also how they could use their own experiences in their writing just as Roald Dahl did. So it was really positive, made really good contacts, and the kids really enjoyed it. The teachers were really positive about it. Not only has it given both students and teachers a better appreciation of Dahl’s work and his archive,*

*but one of the best things about it is that the English team at our local Secondary school are now going to plan into their English curriculum a trip to the Roald Dahl Story Centre, which will bring in a whole stream of work - which is fantastic - and hopefully once that's taken off, we can give that idea to other Secondary schools. So that's really positive.*

*Anyway, so schools are a quarter of our visitor population, but we also want to appeal to families. So another project I'm involved in at the moment is "Families Together". This was primarily targeted towards black and minority families, but we've had families from all different backgrounds, all integrating, all having fun together. This project began in April and it will run for a year. We've had loads of fun, again using the Archive as a stimulus, and finding out what families want - so that when they visit the museum, hopefully we'll have something for them. We've had all this fantastic feedback.*

*If you want to find out more of what we found out, we've not got time today, but we will be holding a skill-sharing event at the Museum next year – so you're more than welcome to come to that.*

*Now is a really exciting time for us at the Museum, in Education, because I'm in the midst of planning our Education activities for a whole range of people. For storytelling I've got three files full of freelancers that we're hopefully going to use. The children in this photo were painting theatres – which was great – and one of the kids on the feedback form said painting, or getting messy, was his favourite part, "because Mom doesn't let us do that at home" ... well, come and do it at the Museum, because we're going to have plastic floors, so that you can all come and get messy together.*

*We also want to appeal to 7–13 year olds - who are our target audience - and while they'll visit with schools, it would be great if they came in the holidays... and did drama or puppet-making, anything that will inspire creative writing.*

*Teachers... again, they'll come with their classes, but we also want to be a venue that continually promotes professional development – so we've already booked Neil Griffiths of the Storysacks project for next year... because we've got really good links... one of our Trustees is Liz Attenborough, who's got links with the National Literacy Trust; and also Ted Wragg – so they're really promoting the Museum, which is really good for us.*

*And adults – why should children have all the fun? We want to welcome you, so maybe you'll come along for an evening with our Writer-in-Residence – that's something else we're working on – chat to our Writer-in-Residence and enjoy a glass of wine.*

*And teenagers, as well – we've got funding from another source where we can do master-classes, and this is again a place where we can test ideas, find out what works, what doesn't. So of course we want to target teenagers... so one of the ideas we've got is a master-class with a comedian. Again it's another form of writing. And if any of you know what 13-year-old boys are into nowadays, if you'd like to let me know, that would be great.*

*So we've got loads to tell you, but unfortunately we're short of time – so take a look at our website at [www.roalddahlmuseum.org](http://www.roalddahlmuseum.org), and we look forward to seeing you when we open next year.*

**Henry Cobbold:** *Well, it's been a fascinating morning... and I'm sure you've all got loads of questions – but, of course, rather typically, we don't have time for them! So, what we must do, is save our questions for the afternoon session - and in the meantime, feel free to face each other with that particularly difficult question... over lunch. Thank you.*

After a break for lunch, the Group reassembled. Henry Cobbold introduced Paul Munden:

**Paul Munden – National Association of Writers in Education - Issues and Challenges in Improving and Refining Education Programs**

*Thanks for inviting me to be a part of this discussion. I've been slightly scared that we might get hundreds of our members deciding this was a conference for them. They did contact us with great interest – and I'm sure they will be very keen to hear feedback from the event. But I think they sensed that this was a closer knit thing to start with, that they might not necessarily have a role in - although it is good to see one or two NAWE members amongst us. I'll tell you more about our particular organisation in just a moment.*

*The notional title of this talk of mine says. “Improving and Refining Education Programs” – well, I'm sorry, I'm going to fail on that one because – for a start, I only had the sketchiest knowledge, until this morning, of the fantastic breadth and richness of the various programs that there are around. And I have to say, it's been one of the most stimulating and informative mornings I've had at a conference for some time.*

*So if the gap between this morning and this afternoon had been longer, then yes, maybe I'd be going for the Powerpoint presentation with some very forceful things to say. As it is I'm going to ramble through a few thoughts of my own, and try and pick up on one or two things that I thought emerged as common themes this morning.*

*I'm really excited by the idea of bringing together the two, often seemingly disparate, worlds of literary heritage and contemporary culture. I think both can seem a little “virtual” to some at times. So, fantastic to hear this morning about the very real physical manifestations of literary heritage that we have. And in my perspective, I'm talking about – in terms of contemporary culture – living writers, in particular writers who work in education. And I think, to me, that link between literary heritage and contemporary culture is what writers in schools – which is my particular forte – is all about anyway. We're trying to make a closer connection for schools pupils with literature. So actually having a real writer in front of them, who talks about the fact that narrative, imagery, structure, style, all these things, are actually how they make their living, is a very compelling thing. And I'm really interested to hear how that is already a very important part of what is going on in literary homes and museums.*

*In a sense, similar to the LitHouses network, NAWE came about because a lot of writers found themselves being drawn into this world of Education – almost without meaning to.*

*They found that they were increasingly asked to work in schools and other education settings, and felt that the ground was not always well prepared. And so they felt that by setting up a network, and having a much better dialogue between writers and teachers, then the whole business could be much better planned and much more productive as a result. So the various things that we've got involved with are conferences, bringing writers and teachers together, and indeed other people – and that would include everyone here potentially – who are involved in making connections between the formal education sector and literature. We produce this magazine that goes to all our members – and we have, now, about 700 members throughout the country, primarily writers, but it's open for anyone to join the association.*

*We run training courses and other professional development opportunities, which really takes on board the fact that writers are very often – brilliant writers, obviously but – not necessarily well prepared to engage in this type of work. It's very well suggesting that every literary home, museum, gets a writer in, does creative writing workshops, but it's obviously fundamentally important that any writers that do that kind of work are well prepared. And so that's something that we are very much involved with.*

*I heard quite a lot this morning about the curriculum. And the phrases tended to be “delivering” the curriculum. Now the way I come at this is that it's more a question of “enhancing” the curriculum rather than “delivering” it. Personally speaking, I don't think we can be seen to be saying that schools themselves don't do a brilliant job. I think by bringing other people, people who are not teachers, into the classrooms, and by taking classrooms out to them as well, we're really adding something special that might mesh well with the curriculum, and indeed help the delivery of it in some respects, but really I think we should insist that we are offering something over and above that.*

*In the magazine we've been featuring a series of articles by contemporary writers that work in the classroom looking at “older figures” shall we say. Fred Sedgwick, who's featured here [Writing In Education No.33], has written articles on working with Philip Larkin, his work, and Shakespeare, and in the forthcoming edition there's going to be something on Christina Rossetti. Now, I'll let drop in at this point, a potential problem, I think, in terms of trumpeting the wonders of this network. And that is... certainly our role has been in some part to counter the fact that the English curriculum until relatively recently, dealt mostly with “dead white males”. And I raise this because it was thrown at me as soon as I mentioned to someone this literary house network – and they said, isn't that all to do with dead white males? Well... yes, and I'm going to be one soon enough too! But... thank God for the Brontes. I don't know, it's just something I think we ought to beware of in terms of marketing, perhaps, joint services in a big way. And I do think the breadth of the network is going to be very important. So that it is not exclusively championing the importance of x, y & z only – Dahl, for instance, fantastic, but it would be scary if Dahl was going to get even more special treatment in the marketing world than he does at present. Just a thought. You can shoot me down over any of these potentially contentious ideas.*

*One of the things we are involved with is a partnership, again – I think partnership is key today... so it's not just our own organisation that represents writers – we're working in partnership with the Arts Council, and it's great to see them represented here today. And the National Strategies at Key Stage 3, the DFES itself, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, and indeed other Literary organisations such as the Poetry*

*Society, to advocate the business of working with writers and using imaginative approaches to Literature in the classroom. Also to make sure that teachers are really well prepared to make those types of initiatives truly successful. And when I was asked to talk at some of those conferences, I found myself comparing “the writer’s visit to school” to “the Geography Field Trip” – because it seems to me that that goes without question, that everyone studying Geography has an absolute right to go on a Field Trip and yet, you know, we kind of cringe and crawl over issues of spending £250 to bring one writer into that classroom and actually potentially have a huge impact. Seems to me what we are talking about here though goes back beyond that – because the Field Trip suddenly becomes meaningful in the geographical sense as well. So there’s the potential for promoting the Literary Field Trip, and involving that also with writers working directly with school pupils, whether it’s actually at a venue or in a classroom. I think there are all sorts of creative ways in which we can explore that combination.*

*As part of that partnership – which is called “Writing Together” – we do currently have a small pot of money (it’s possible that the Paul Hamlyn Foundation will see fit to increase that pot of money in the near future) to fund writers residencies directly. Now, listening to people this morning it’s clear that some of you are very well off and would not need our money, but it’s clearly not a level playing field in any sense, and I would urge anyone who is much much more strapped for cash to talk to us about that – because, although I think the approaches have to come directly from the school, it’s entirely possible for that to be set up and planned in association with a Literary House, or indeed a writer, or all three, or beyond.*

*The other thing I’d just like to reinforce really from what I heard this morning, is this idea of creative approaches. I loved the sound of what was going on, for instance, with the Brontes – we were looking at ways in which pupils can get involved with creative endeavour of their own. The Brontes can prompt that. The two things can feed into each other extremely positively. But it did strike me - and this no criticism whatsoever of other sets up - that, from what I heard of other arrangements, focus on creativity wasn’t always at the fore. And I think that perhaps for me that is what is unique about a “Literary” Houses and Museums network, is that Literature - something that, of all our creative arts, is most central to Education and society as a whole - is at the heart of it.*

*I’m also very interested in the idea of making more use of our Universities. I mean, scandalously, some of the Universities in this country, don’t have some of these writers that we’ve heard about this morning on their lists – that includes Laurence Sterne – it’s hard to imagine. So I do think it’s fantastic, that actually we can be taking Primary school children into Laurence Stern territory and showing the way, and maybe pulling back some of these Universities that think they know better. But I suspect what we heard this morning about Universities elsewhere in the world is absolutely right – that they might, ironically, have a sharper interest in some of these figures than some of our own institutions. That’s something that we could certainly explore.*

*Patrick and I, as part of a small group, went to the American Associated Writing Programs Conference last year in Chicago and they have about 4000 delegates at that – not all of them chose to come to our session, but the people who did were hugely enthused by what they heard, that we were hatching up. And we’ve already, as a result, had writers come over and write new hypertexts sitting in Sterne’s study. That’s just a glimpse of what might happen if we plug into these wider networks.*

*I'm going to shut up. Thank you very much indeed.*

**Henry Cobbold:** *Just as an addendum to that - before I ask Trevor to speak – we've talked a lot about how to determine who should be a part of the LitHouses Group. Where we are at the moment - and this is by no means set in stone - is that, if you are a creative writer and there is a home or a museum dedicated to you, then you should be part of this group. That does tend, therefore, to mean people who are dead... but hopefully it won't preclude people who are female and not white! And hopefully we will expand in those directions.*

Henry introduced Trevor Millum:

**Trevor Millum - National Association of Teachers of English - Issues and Challenges in Improving and Refining Education Programs**

*Like Paul, I've got just a series of thoughts. In some way I really don't think you need me because having listened to you all this morning, between you, in the network, you have got all of the answers – not one person has got all of them, but put yourselves together and there just a fantastic range of resources and ideas... lots of which I have written down for my own use. And I think if nothing else comes out of this, just the networking possibilities, certainly for myself... and I have already said I would like to have a list of everybody's names and contact emails and so on, that I can make use of.*

*Now I'm going to be saying an awful lot of what Paul said, I'm afraid, because the emphasis on creativity that he mentioned is something that is underlying much of what I feel.*

*National Association for the Teaching of English... is not there to support the "teachers", it's there to support the "teaching" – and that's an important distinction. Somebody else made the distinction between... what does a subject association like that do that's different from what other groupings and government quangos do? And I suppose it's that we generally don't deal with schools, we deal with teachers. So it's straight through to the individual practitioner, if you like. Whereas most of the systems we have in place – whether it's Key Stage 3 strategy, DFES, QCA – deal with schools, or through LEAs to schools. And that again is a really important distinction.*

*It's a charity – the same as NAWA in that respect – supported by membership and the sale of publications. Basically we support our members in their work. We liaise with government, we support certain government initiatives, we argue with government about other initiatives and we basically try and promote good practice. So within that you can see where my interests in something like this might fit.*

*This morning when you were talking about writers working with children – some them sounded wonderful, and others of you were talking about cramped spaces, not enough room to get 3 or 4 children in, let alone a classroom – I've also, with another hat on, worked with children as a writer in schools and I have worked in some absolutely dreadful venues. And I think, if nothing else, one of the things that literary houses can*

*provide is just an environment for a writer and students to work in... that is a) congenial and b) away from school. I think it's stimulating just to get away.*

*Most of you are pretty well aware of what the score is, out there in the educational world, so I'm not going to tell you a lot of things where you ought to know about this, or you ought to know about this. But I would just underline that it is really key to do your homework if you are marketing to schools. You need to know what is covered in the National Curriculum, you need to know what the Key Stage Strategy is about – not in all its detail but, you know, to get your head around it a bit - to know where the Primary Strategy is going. And if this means reading the odd edition of the Times Literary Supplement, well so be it. Not every week – life's too short – but every now and again, just to get a feel for what the debates are, for there really are some quite crucial ones going on there.*

*I, fingers crossed, feel that the Primary Strategy is beginning to loosen up – I don't know if other people get that feeling who are actually involved in schools, because there has been a period of, I hesitate to use the word “rigidity”, but a lot of making sure you've got the boxes ticked. “We can't do that because we've got to do this”. “We can't let the children do creative writing because we've got to do apostrophes this morning”. That has been a problem and has restricted children, at all ages, and has restricted the teachers in the freedom to go and do interesting things. I think there is now a recognition in the Strategy people and wider – the QCA and so on – that that has actually had some rather bad effects as well as good effects, and it needs to be relaxed a little bit. And that might be a window of opportunity. You need to capitalise upon that, I think, because creativity is emerging from hiding. It's a word you can now use again – whereas, a little while ago, creative writing was “that woolly stuff they did in the 1970s”... don't let the Daily Mail hear about that! You can sneak that in again now. You might need to use a different word that means the same thing. So we need to chip away there.*

*And of course, going up the age range, you need to know what exam boards are asking, what A Level specifications are these days – they're very different to when I did my A Level English, that's for sure!... Other ways you can get into that area, that market – it is a market – because they are not just studying great texts. The whole area of A Level English Language, for instance – that something that everyone's got an impact on here, it doesn't matter which writer's flag you're carrying.*

*It seems to me also that the strength of what you are offering lies beyond delivering a particular writer for a particular examination purpose. You are offering something beyond the curriculum. You're offering opportunities for creativity, for students and pupils to do their own writing. I've been really admiring some of the plans and programs that different houses have already got going and thinking back to the things that influenced me when I was a teacher and influenced me as a writer... and most of the time it wasn't things that happened in the classroom. There were things that happened alongside the classroom, or outside the classroom. I can remember taking pupils on little writing outings, workshops, whatever... we've been to Haworth, because I've taught mainly in the North, and that was enormously stimulating. I myself was able to go – in those days when we were allowed out, as teachers - I was taken as a “creative experience” to a place near Robin Hood's Bay, some of you may know it, a place called Thorpe Hall, a wonderful place. We had a famous writer, who's name I can't remember*

*– nothing to do with the writer, it's to do with age! – He took us down to Boggle Hole, at night, of course, to experience the bones of the frog that suddenly floated upstream. Grown Ups want to have fun too – and we thought that was a great idea and we went back and did some writing. It's those kind of things that affected me.*

*I was very very lucky, I taught for a while in Singapore and I went for a week's writing course in the Philippines, run by something called the East Asia Writing Project. Now many of you will have heard of the Bay Area Writing Project, I suspect, which operated in California and was very influential on lots and lots of teachers in really focusing in on how writing takes place, and writing journals, those kinds of things. That, again, is an area you would do well to find out about. How do we help teachers to improve their own practice - teachers as writers - so that they can then assist their students? That's an area that I'm now really keen to develop in this country – I don't know, the doors may be opening up a bit.*

*But certainly those are things that have helped me – where I've had both stimulus and time to respond to it. Now, it's very hard within a school day to do that. I think you can help with that if you can get pupils out into another environment. You're still under time pressure. But if you think, what is the focus here? Going around Knebworth House and looking at all the various artefacts – that's one focus, that's good, but you've got to do it in a bit of a hurry. If it's another focus, then it might be creativity – you might have a very quick whip round, but you spend most of the time on one room... in the Library, great, big, long table, chairs round it, and blotters and just an opportunity to listen to something stimulating and do some writing and have a writer come round and comment on it... and you know, wow, this is going to be something they are never going to forget.*

*Think of “experiences” rather than “delivering” certain things. You certainly don't need to think about delivering the curriculum – just make it more fun.*

**Philip Watts:** *Can I add a caveat to that - because I look at this from both points of view as a teacher, and somebody who delivers these sorts of things... I completely agree, as a writer, I want pupils to have great experiences – but I know, working in a school, when you're strapped for cash... the danger is... it's all very well if you know your curriculum, to then enhance it, but I'm thinking of people who aren't primarily educators, who don't know the National Curriculum... much as it would be lovely for them to say this is a lovely creative activity, it's competing with things like trips to set plays and history tours...*

**Trevor Millum:** *Sure, sure...*

**Philip Watts:** *It sounds like I'm arguing against what I actually believe in, but people do need to know this dreadful market thing that drives education, still.*

**Trevor Millum:** *Yes, but that's why I'm trying to put these two things together, so that if you do know more about what has to be delivered for Year 9, or 7, or whatever it is, you can actually structure your argument accordingly... because, I think, getting pupils involved in the writing process is actually going to improve your set's results at the end of Year 9. So this isn't just, come along for some woolly writing, this is come along for a purpose, we are actually going to focus on writing activities, writing techniques, how do you make your writing better.*

**Philip Watts:** *Although it has to be said, I, as an English teacher, worry less about being able to teach creative writing than I do about how to make a classic novel accessible.*

**Trevor Millum:** *Yes, but that's surely going to come... I'm thinking here of Key Stage 3 or below... yeah, so, horses for courses. You see most of us here are not representing a house with a classic novel that's actually studied at Key Stage 4 – Shakespeare, well great, you've got no problem there have you? People are going to flood there anyway. How many people are actually studying "North and South"?*

**Philip Watts:** *Well, every single Key Stage 4 candidate has to do pre-1940s fiction and Gaskell is a named author -*

**Trevor Millum:** *Right, so they might be... especially now that there's been a television series. But, you see what I mean, I think you've got to make use of that venue for more than delivering that novel, or that novel –*

**Philip Watts:** *I'm thinking of people trying to market what they've got, and to get people in to buy these things, for it to work –*

**Trevor Millum:** *And I think, if you've got a house which celebrates a writer like Cowper, whatever, then you've got to think outside the box.*

**Philip Watts:** *Yes. Of course.*

**Trevor Millum:** *Otherwise it's just not going to work. You need to think about these other audiences, which people are already doing. I think the exemplary Bronte pamphlet with a list inside that says, this is what we do – we can offer you this, this, this and this – presented in a really accessible format... you can do your study of Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights, that's there... but lower down you can do, something about the Victorians, or you can do some creative activities... do you see what I mean? One does not exclude the other. And sometimes they actually feed into each other.*

**Philip Watts:** *Absolutely.*

**Trevor Millum:** *But you've got to know the right language, you've got to know the right buttons to press. Okay, I must, obviously, press on...*

*I think you can mix in some of these creative things with the great writers. That is, to take an example, I did a workshop at Shakespeare's school in Stratford, which was great fun, round about one of Shakespeare's many anniversaries. And, amongst other things, what we did there was... give me a class – these were, I think, Years 10s – and what we are going to do is we are going to write a sonnet in an hour. Okay? Together. That's our challenge. And we did. (Just about – some of the rhymes were a bit iffy!) But what I wanted to do was to really get them to concentrate on something that they obviously thought was impossible. And then, obviously we need to look at the structure of a sonnet and all the rest of it, so you can draw upon examples and so on... but then to turn it into something that is both Literary and fun... "Let's try and see if we can do this..." we managed to knock it together... "Now kids you can go away and do a better one, can't*

you?"... because it's quite a difficult thing to do as a common, shared, activity.

*Well, these activities are possible. These people are skilled writers. And writers who are – as Paul says – skilled at working with children... not just a writer who you happen to have got in because they are famous. Not all writers are great readers, are they? You know, sometimes you can get a writer in to do a reading and they're dreadful! Why shouldn't they be – because they're writers! And so on. So you not only need to know about the curriculum but you also need to know about the writer – can he or she actually deliver the goods. And the ones that can, of course, are worth their weight... and obviously often charge that weight as well! That's another thing to bear in mind.*

*Okay... here's the nuts and bolts things I was thinking about – and you've reminded me, focus, focus, focus, even though it might be a creative activity, I'm a great one for deliverables. "Right kids, you've got ten minutes during which you are going to do X". There's nothing worse than a group of kids coming in and you get somebody who says, "well, write about what you feel"... "let's look out the window"... I mean, I don't like it, and in my opinion pupils find it very off-putting. Focus. Direction. Get down to it. Just because it's creative writing doesn't mean to say it's about sitting around waiting for the Muse to strike. I think most writers know, unless you're very rich, you can't wait for the Muse to strike, you've got to go and meet your deadline and get on with it.*

*Finding out what teachers want. That really was a good idea, wasn't it? Actually going out – you didn't use the words "focus group" did you about talking to those teachers, but that's what it was, and yeah, why not – and getting a group of teachers and saying, okay, what do you want, let's get together in producing some materials.*

**Katy Sullivan:** *Teachers like chocolate biscuits.*

**Trevor Millum:** *Yes, and plenty of free teas and coffees. And the evaluation sheets after the visit, fine – but as well as that, the informal getting alongside the teachers while they are there and talking to them. Get them to one side during coffee. What would you like to do? Got any other ideas? What's going on at school that we could help with? That's where you get really good feedback because they don't feel, I'm filling in an evaluation form, I'd better say this, this and this. You get those real thought and feedbacks, in my opinion, the good ideas.*

*Being precise. As I said, as on that Bronte example. Because as you know, teachers are under a great deal of time pressure. Knowing who to contact. What it's going to cost. Where they can do it. How they can do it. That's so important.*

*Somebody mentioned the groups of pupils that tended to come and how to access schools in EAZs and other areas where you've got disadvantaged pupils for one reason or another. I think that's really difficult. I think that's a big challenge. Because I suspect a lot of the time the students and pupils that come on the visits tend to be from the more able, the leafy suburbs, and so on... I know that is not true completely, thank goodness, but you know what life's like. And any ways of trying to reach other pupils I think would not only be a good thing anyway, but would actually get you a good profile, get you noticed – "They managed to get that school to come in with those pupils and they had a good time" – and that really will get you recommended, good word of mouth.*

*I haven't got any magic potions for that, but I am used to working, to some extent, with less able pupils. The reason you don't know my name as a writer is that most of things I've written are either silly poems for young children or little stories for reluctant readers, who are turned off books. So I spend a lot of time writing relatively short stories for those - it must be said, mainly, boys - who we are trying to get interested in reading and writing. Now, I think there's an area there which could possibly be tapped, if you can get into that initially difficult area: pupils who will actually still enjoy being turned on by some kind of writing, even if it isn't highly literary, if you know what I mean. And there are other opportunities there in the, sort of, electronic end of things.*

*I have only just thought of this as I've been sitting there – and I don't know how it would fit with what you do, but just as an idea, I've done quite a lot of work with pupils, often less able ones, by being a Writer-not-in-Residence. I've only communicated with them by email. How's that going to help us, you might say. Well, if you had a centre, in perhaps a smallish literary home where you haven't got room for a lot of pupils to come in, but you still wanted to make a little bit of income - because they would have to sign up for whatever they're doing – or you wanted to get your profile known, you could actually set up distance writing projects with schools. The model I've used is of starting off a group of pupils with a starter two or three paragraphs of a story. The teacher shares that with the pupils and they've decided how the story's going to go from then. And then by various means, collaboratively, teacher acting as scribe, whatever, they've then emailed back the next section of the story.*

**Mike Gogan:** *Sort of “It was a dark and stormy night...”*

**Trevor Millum:** *Exactly!... Well, not exactly, really... actually not like that at all!... Kind of thing! And you bat it backwards and forwards for half a term... until you've got, I don't know, eight episodes or something, and it forms a story. It's very motivating. It gets pupils who don't normally write, or get involved, much more interested, because there's a kind of audience and purpose. It might only be an audience of one person, who's a writer sitting in the library somewhere, but nevertheless it is a different audience to the normal one they've got. And also it's still quite exciting the business of sending emails and so on. It's not yet become... boring. It's still got a sort of buzz about it. And I've found that is a good way of dealing with the distance thing. Because the other thing I was thinking as I was sitting there is, you're all in a geographical area, and can only really access people who can get to you by coach or something within an hour – and that's quite restricting, isn't it? So again, you might like to think about how you can push this a bit further using electronic means. And if anyone wants to develop that idea, but actually say, what did you mean, how can I actually do that, I don't quite understand, then when we circulate details, email me by all means and I'll give you some examples.*

*An amusing example or two, where you think the story's going to go the direction you want it to, and you discover the pupils are pushing them in a completely different one. One example that came to me - I was doing a sequel to Carrie's War, which some of you will know, a Nina Bawden story where children are evacuated to Wales. These were kids in Scotland, in the Highlands – that was why they were doing this distance thing – and so I thought we'll do a nice sequel to that, something where they are evacuated from Glasgow to the Highlands, nice glens and rushing mountain waters and all that, great. Well, the first thing they did – as this little Jamie was evacuated to the Highlands – when*

*they got hold of the story... was to put him on a train back to Glasgow. They didn't want anything to do with the Highlands – it's boring there! – Get to the town where things happen!... Another thing that they did was put a dog in the story. Well, I don't do dogs. But they had this dog stowed away in his kitbag... and I thought, oh dogs – I could kill the dog! It's a story. I can kill the dog. And I thought... no... not only are they not going to like this, next time they're going to put three dogs in... because they're writers as well. So I kept the dog in. And it became quite an important character in the end. And I do dogs now. So I learnt as well. But that's the kind of thing that can happen in shared story writing.*

*So, finally... I just thinking now very much with my NATE hat back on. It occurred to me there are all sorts of ways in which we could help each other. There's the area of just developing ideas. You know, we have various committees – age range committees, Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4, and so on – and they're always coming up with ideas and looking for ways of developing them. So, in terms of policy and all of that, there's room for liaison. We have a regional structure. So, for instance, there'll be the conference that happened last Saturday in Cambridge, where they will have had speakers from various places and fifty/sixty English teachers from quite a wide area. I suspect they have no idea what Literary Houses there are within reach. And wouldn't it be good if, either someone went along to talk to those regional meetings, or sometimes if they held the regional meeting here. Fantastic. And why not? It's a kind of obvious thing to do, but it had never occurred to me until this morning. So there are liaison possibilities there, where we could really do some quite interesting things.*

*And I'm thinking now, beyond that, not just NATE meetings, but getting groups of teachers, not just during term time, but for their own good... you know, to develop their own writing on a Saturday. They do come out on Saturdays. These regional meetings are on Saturdays. Finding out more about the work that you do, giving them an opportunity to do something nice and creative themselves. Somebody said they'd been in touch with, I think it was, the University of Nottingham, with the English Department there. So English Departments. But not just English Departments. Try getting in touch with the School of Education to get hold of their PGCE English students and PGCE English tutors. Those are the kind of people that we know. Again they're a great source of energy and enthusiasm that you ought to be tapping into. And if I can help you in doing that, I would be very happy to do so.*

*We have newsletters, we have magazines, we have a website... you tell me what you are doing. I'll do my best to promote it to our members. It's as simple as that. If you're putting on a little conference – I can't guarantee to advertise every workshop that you are going to run in all the houses throughout the year, but if you're putting on something special that teachers would be interested in - we can put that on our website under events. If there's something extra special that happens, I can try and get that into the newsletter. Little things like that, we can do. And hopefully it's a two-way thing. There are probably things you could do for us... in promoting membership of NATE, NATE publications - I don't know, I haven't thought all that through - but there must be places where we can assist each other. We're for instance, running a competition in conjunction with the Times Educational Supplement, which we do each year called "Write Away". And that's based on a piece of autobiographical writing. It's an important place, person or event. And that usually attracts up to 10,000 entries. We judge it. The Times Ed. supports it, promotes it, and provides the admin. And it's one of*

*these really feel-good events. We have the final presentations at the Globe Theatre in London, and so on. It occurred to me that you could tie in certain events to something like that. The possibility of extra promotion if you were doing something that The Times Ed. thought was new and interesting – you know, pupils might come to a Literary House in order to write their piece that they were going to send off to the competition. I don't know. There are all sorts of possibilities like that, which I find quite exciting, that I wouldn't have thought of before I came today.*

*“Enhancing and extending the curriculum” is exactly what I think it is about... adding value, if you like, to what goes on in the classroom. And I think that if, between us, we can't add that little extra spark, then it's a poor show. But, from what I've heard today... I think we can.*

**Henry Cobbold:** *Thank you very much, Trevor. Again, lots of fascinating ideas. As an addendum to that chat, I'd just like to say that I am recording this session today – now that you've all done it! And we'll come up with some form of Minutes or Transcript... and as part of that I will distribute everybody's contact email, unless you specifically tell me not to. So if you don't want to be included, please have a word with me... otherwise I shall take it as given that you do want your email address included in those Transcripts or Minutes.*

Before asking for comments from those who hadn't yet spoken, Henry asked for any questions from the floor specifically addressed to the speakers.

**Geoff Pick (John Keats):** *One point and one question generally. The point was about EAZs and difficult-to-reach schools, which is that, certainly on the archive side, we've found it to be very useful to become friends with the Advisory/Inspection Service. Because often it is not necessarily the school itself that has the resources to link with you – because the reason they are failing is that they have got a lot of issues to deal with. Often it's the Advisory/Inspection Service that knows where the issues are and often puts you in contact with that particular school. And certainly we've found it useful as a start to do that.*

*The other thing... about creativity and sharing with the students who use Keats House is that we are looking at, but haven't done yet – and are interested in case anyone else has done this – is actually loading their creative work on our website... partly so that it's a celebration of what they've done, but also as a way of showing to other people that might use us that this is the kind of work that you can do if you worked in collaboration with Keats House. I didn't know whether anyone else had done that within their houses?*

**Katy Sullivan (Roald Dahl):** *Yeah, we have. The Archive Writing Online is about to do that online.*

**Geoff Pick:** *Right. Because I think the point that was first made this afternoon about, you've got to get away from just the dead white poet, being led by the middle-age white man... so there are lots of stereotypes there! One of the ways is actually being in partnership with the school, particularly the children, so they actually feel they've got part of an ownership of the place that we run... and it not just us giving them out of our*

*bounties, something that they should be grateful for - which I don't believe in at all.*

**Tony Seward (William Cowper):** *Are there copyright problems at all? Do you have to get the kids to sign a waiver?*

**Paul Edmondson (William Shakespeare):** *Yes, and you couldn't just put their names on the website, because of Data Protection – you can go through all the hoops-*

**Geoff Pick:** *I think you go through the hoops, much as if you wanted to put photographs of students enjoying their work.*

**Tony Seward:** *I'm just thinking as a former publisher.*

**Clare Robson (Melbourn & Bassingbourn Village Colleges, Arts Development Coordinator):** *I think the point there probably is that, as part of the projects that you do, it's really important to plan some sort of legacy at the end of the project. That would include jumping through those hoops.*

**Nat Edwards (National Library of Scotland):** *Can I just pull out something that is slightly related - I was recently at a conference in Manchester, which was the first one that the Heritage Lottery Fund organised on their "Youth Roots" program. That's a very very interesting program that I encourage people to look at, because it potentially offers quite a lot of solutions to engaging with the so-called difficult age-range that everybody talks about – 13 year old boys, up to 20 year old girls or whatever. Forgive me if people already know about this, but what's available from the Heritage Lottery Fund is grants of up to about £25,000, which represent up to 90% of project funding, and the other 10% can be in kind. And they are for projects that engage groups of young people – it can be Secondary schools, or it can be Youth Clubs, or any group of young people... with a Heritage site to do creative activities, do things that give it a more contemporary edge. And the examples they had were anything from History Re-enactments to Theatrical Productions to Art Projects... there's a lot of Writing Projects, and so on. The projects have to be applied for by the young people themselves. There has to be evidence that they've actually been involved in the planning. They have to put forward the application. But there's lots of ways to facilitate that. It's a very good source of money for people who haven't, perhaps, got anything apart from time to put in.*

**Paul Edmondson:** *Are they one-off pots of money or is it over five years or something?*

**Nat Edwards:** *They are time limited projects. I think they can run over more than one year. I think they can go up to three years, and then you can reapply. But there's a regional... the other good thing is, I don't know if people have much experience of working with the Heritage Lottery Fund – they can be very hard work – but they've recruited a whole load of really quite interesting young people to run this scheme. I know in Scotland our regional officer is a cracking creative and enthusiastic person – a real breath of fresh air for the HLF. And I think it's something to investigate.*

**Henry Cobbold:** *That makes a lot of sense. Now is probably quite a good time to introduce James, because I am also very interested to hear about the resources that are available in our Universities and Colleges.*

**James Pardoe (Chester College History Dept. Prog. Leader – Heritage**

**Management):** *Yes, I'm from University College, Chester and I was very interested in what Trevor was just saying about thinking outside the box in Higher Education. There is a huge untapped resource in local colleges and universities – not only abroad, but in this country – and you can actually utilise them in two ways. The direct route, which is in English Departments themselves - but, as was said earlier, perhaps they are a bit sniffy about this. But there are also the other Educational ones... we've heard talk about the PGCEs, but B.Eds as well. I come from a History Department, but I'm working very closely with our Education Department at Chester, and there are new modules that have been put forward about using the historic environment for B.Ed. students. But there are also, as well, a whole range now of Heritage Management courses, across the country – there are 30 odd undergraduate ones, 20 odd post-graduate ones. You can actually use those people, as part of their course, to come in, and you can actually use them as free labour. And the type of projects that they do can be very very useful. We had one group, last year, of students with the Military Museum in Chester actually setting up Educational Resource Packs for that museum. Now up until last year, they got about 200 school pupils in, in a year. We put those resources out to them and they were getting, in September and October, 200 school children per week. And so you've got those whole set of resources there if you can tap into the Universities. Think beyond perhaps the strictly academic subjects – of English and Drama and related ones – and start looking at these courses that are directly related to the Historic Environment, Heritage Management... look at the Education courses as well. Because we're always desperate to get projects involved with outside organisations.*

**Henry Cobbold:** *I was very impressed – I was invited up to Cumbria by Terry, who've I've mentioned as having started this group... he was wondering if Cumbrian Tourist Attractions would like to create a similar group to this... and they've been extremely successful in getting financing from Lancaster University for exploring that idea. And I was very encouraged by that and came back immediately thinking, goodness, how can we get the University of Hertfordshire to do something like that down here? So I hope that is right, that there is –*

**James Pardoe:** *Yes, and with the Universities now being pushed into widening relations and widening audiences and such like, I think along a whole range of things you will probably find, maybe people, who in the past would not want to deal with outside organisations so much, are now being pressurised by their own institutions to actually go out into the marketplace and set up partnerships with a whole range of different organisations.*

**Katy Sullivan:** *Can I just add, as well, we went to the University of Reading, because we've got all of these fantastic things that are going to go on in the Story Centre, but we wanted to test them - so we actually tested them with the Teacher Training students in Reading. And as part of the Teacher Training there, they have to – as part of, sort of, ticking boxes – have demonstrated education outside of the classroom. So maybe, the local universities, you can invite them and see... if you had, I don't know, a Year 5 class here, what would you do with them? You'd get ideas from there, but they'd also be able to tick that box on their so-many objectives to achieve. But, yeah, we've dealt with Education outside the classroom as well.*

**Henry Cobbold:** *Great... Well, I'm going to go to the Non-Group Members now, and*

*ask them, two things really - one, is what they feel about what we as a Group are trying to do generally, and two, obviously what they've thought about the particular discussions we've had today. Leila Brosnan (from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Arts Division) unfortunately emailed me late last night saying that she, unfortunately, couldn't come today – she had a department meeting that had been rescheduled for this morning, so she sadly is not with us – but (going by the attendee list)... Abigail, tell us your feelings about today...*

The non-members attending the conference spoke in turn:

**Abigail Campbell (Literature officer, Arts Council England):** *Well, it's been fantastically stimulating – and it's a great opportunity to get out of the office! – But more than that, I think, from the Arts Council's perspective, the infrastructure for Literature has often been underestimated, the capital infrastructure. And we focus very much on public libraries as our main capital asset in terms of how we make literature available to people. And I think we have underestimated this whole sector. And it has been a revelation. I mean, I've visited individual houses, but not by any means all of them. It really has been a revelation to see the extent to which that work is happening.*

*From the Arts Council's perspective, hearing everyone, often it seemed to be the only thing holding people back from delivering a fuller education program, was either a capacity issue or, in some senses, a knowledge – and I certainly think there's room for the Arts Council, in the latter, to distribute better the information that we have about National Poetry Day, about World Book Day, about all the days or weeks of events that we fund and make sure everyone has equal access to them and knows what's out there.*

*In terms of capacity, the former thing, Arts Council funding is obviously mostly project based, unless you are a regularly funded organisation. But within that project funding you can apply for posts, for specialist fees, for a consultant to give you advice about how you could build up your education program, similar to what the HLF is doing. So it's Arts activity, but it's also more than that. We can actually help you deliver what you want to deliver. So there's one program called “Grants for the Arts” – all the details are on the Arts Council's website – I think all of you would be perfectly eligible, so do have a look and think about what you might do with it.*

*The Arts Council is also involved with another network, which is a very embryonic network, called “The Children's Literature Venue Consortium”. Children's Literature is a priority area for the Arts Council, which is why we're interested in this – and the Roald Dahl Museum is represented on that group as well as this, so it's the lynchpin I guess. But we've only had one meeting. It's been initiated partly by the Centre For The Children's Book in Newcastle, and they are keen that all the other museums and galleries who are positive about promoting Children's Literature join together. And the idea behind that network is actually a touring network – it's actually an informal network whereby we can tour writers and resources relating to Children's Literature. And there's an obvious structure for it, rather than individual promoters having to hunt round. And it seemed to me that might offer a parallel to this group. And in terms of applying for funding there no reason why three or four of you shouldn't apply together... and have several writers touring round, giving the Literature Houses network more of an identity maybe, a collective identity.*

*And then finally, the initial Teacher Training discussion that's just started, the Arts Council's funding - in collaboration with the Museums Libraries and Archives Council and the DFES - a program called "Literature Matters", which is about linking up initial Teacher Training providers with the Literature sector. So it's making sure they know about libraries, about Literature organisations like The Poetry Society and NAWA, and also this whole sector. So that's being managed by each individual Museums Libraries and Archives Regional Agency. And once I have all the email addresses I will be able to send more information out about that and how you might access the funding that's related to it and the structures.*

**Ruth Simpson (Dept. for Education & Skills, Creativity & Arts Team):** *Again, I agree with Abigail and Trevor - I was very impressed by the scope of all the work that all the Houses were doing. Like Abigail I can see that there's an issue of capacity in some houses... and also an issue in whether schools are studying the author that your House represents - it's going to be easier for people like the Bronte Museum and the Roald Dahl Museum to get schools in, because teachers will of course have heard of those authors.*

*From the DFES point of view, we're keen to link schools with cultural institutions. We're doing quite a lot of work at the moment to see how we can get children out of schools and into museums, theatres, galleries, the built environment - I'm sure some of you have found it's difficult to get teachers out of the classrooms and doing something with the community. There's been quite a lot of research published on this, this year, that you might be interested in. The Museums and Galleries Education Program, which some of you mentioned, came to some conclusions earlier this year - and the evaluation of that was published in September and is available at TeacherNet at [www.teachernet.gov.uk/mgep2](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/mgep2). There's an executive summary that mentions things like how some museums found it easier to link with schools than others. And one of the interesting findings was that it didn't seem to make a difference, the size of the institution, on how well they could link with schools - they found that small museums found it as easy to link with schools as large museums... which was quite surprising. Also there were other things about marketing to teachers, which you can find from that.*

*Another publication we were involved in earlier this year which might be helpful is "Space For Learning" which was published by the Clore Duffield Foundation, and is also available on TeacherNet on the Museums page. This talks about how museums and heritage sites can make education spaces - small or large - to help encourage schools in. So that might be quite helpful, if you haven't accomplished that already.*

*Another piece of evaluation from last year... we're working quite closely with DCMS and our museum and gallery funding for the next couple of years is being done jointly with the DCMS and channelled through the Regional Agencies of MLA. But last year we funded a project that linked national museums with regional museums - to try and get closer partnership working - and the evaluation of that is available on TeacherNet. So in that there's some interesting examples about barriers to schools, which there are always - things like travel. Some museums found that they'd fund the travel, and schools still wouldn't come - so it's not always the obvious thing.*

**Claire Robson (Melbourn & Bassingbourn Village Colleges, Arts Dev.**

**Co-ordinator):** *Basically I think what has been going on with the organisation, from what I've heard today, is fantastic and I think you're going to grow... in a big way. We've heard a lot about Education delivered in schools or with schools coming to you. That sounds like you've got most of that covered, and where you haven't, you're learning from each other anyway. But there are some other things that have been covered less well. And you were just mentioning "Young Roots", for instance – youth groups, University of the Third Age, local community education, residential homes and people with disabilities. Some of these groups are not as easy to reach as schools – I'm going to try and give you a way to do it. Which is, basically... in your Local Council and in your County Council and in your District Council, they are likely to have an Arts Development Co-ordinator. That person is usually already paid for... except in my case – I'm the only person in the country who isn't!... which means that they will already have been doing projects like this – that are to do with the Arts – for organisations such as yourself, and they will have already contacted those groups, so they will be very easily able to put you in touch with the funding, possibly even be able to do the funding application for you, and give you some advice based on your needs and the way that you want your organisations to go. So that should be a free-ish facility. And when they haven't got one, as the Arts Council was mentioning, you can sometimes apply for somebody for that specific role.*

*It doesn't just have to be about your writer delivered in a medium that is acceptable to Universities and things, there are loads and loads and loads of creative arts responses to the work that there is in those homes that you are talking about. Roald Dahl Foundation being one that is doing sterling work in that area. So don't forget Drama, don't forget Music, don't forget Arts, and the other ways of responding to it - because there's lots of money out there and lots of people to help you deliver it.*

**Paul Chirico (Chair, The John Clare Society):** *Well, obviously, I'll repeat that it's been extraordinarily helpful today hearing all these projects and suggestions and plans. I feel a bit of a cumber and rather needy today – I tried to avoid asking people for half a million pounds at lunch! It's what we need, so if anyone has it, or suggestions of how we could get it...! I suppose specifically we're in the process of changing what has been a quite successful and certainly very stimulating literary society, a membership society, and trying to convert that enthusiasm and those skills into an organisation, a trust, that would have John Clare's cottage as well.*

**Henry Cobbold:** *The situation at the moment is that the John Clare Society, for those who don't know, is trying to find a way to purchase his home, which has just come up for sale.*

**Paul Chirico:** *Yes, that's essentially it. I mean... today is specifically about Education so I really don't want to dwell on that, but clearly it's an issue for us, so I really would appreciate advice on that – and I've had advice from many of you already, so thank you. The funding application... should we secure half a million pounds, we then are busy trying to put together Education Programs. I share something that several people said just before, which is that, personally, I'm certainly most interested in creating from this cottage a centre for creativity, for ongoing creativity, rather than a museum. And it happens to fit what we have in Clare. There aren't a great deal of artefacts. It's not*

*kitted out as a museum. The place is a private home. So rather than trying to turn the clock back, I would like this place to be primarily a Writing and Education Centre – certainly with occasional open public access, but the main public access would be through teaching and writing programs.*

*Maybe I can ask two further questions, or raise two further points for discussion, of two things that I would perhaps like to hear more about... One is Adult Basic Literacy, which was mentioned earlier on, but not in a great deal of detail – I don't know whether people are doing work with that, but it's something I would certainly be interested in investigating more - through Clare, I mean... you're interested obviously in playing on the characteristics and strengths of the particular writer - and Clare, as you know, is a self-taught writer, very much coming from outside a standard educational background in his own time. So there's a real resonance to that, in talking about issues of social exclusion – but very specifically Adult Literacy. So I'd be very interested to hear more about that kind of project.*

*And also, I'm still trying to work out – it's been spoken about a lot – what's the relationship between Writers in Residence and Educational Programs? Does this all depend essentially on the size and shape of your house? Or can you have both going at the same time?... So we're working out whether we can really have these various different programs co-existing.*

*I've been asking irritating questions, so a simple apology, I think, to end my little spiel - which is to apologise to the people who I was asking in intense detail about management structures at lunchtime! I was very interested in finding out how you set up, and how you actually keep one of these places running. But thanks again for all your help. And I hope to be able to join you in the Group soon.*

**Henry Cobbold:** *Yes... and I'm sure I speak on everyone's behalf in wishing you the best of luck. I hope that has the result that you want it to.*

**Paul Chirico:** *Of course I will circulate more details of my own project to an email list - but do contact me.*

**Henry Cobbold:** *Talking of Writers-in-Residence... Linda.*

**Linda Cracknell (Writer in Residence, Hugh MacDiarmid's last home):** *I'm trying to win the competition for coming from the smallest Literary House – because Brownsbank Cottage, in its entirety, would fill about half of this room, I think. It's very very small. Brownsbank Cottage, anyway, was the last home of the poet, Hugh MacDiarmid, who's considered one of Scotland's greatest 20<sup>th</sup> Century poets. And after the death of his wife in 1989, the local museum trust (the Biggar Museum Trust), which already operated several other small museums in the area, raised the money to buy the cottage... and right from the beginning conceived of it not strictly as a museum, more of a living centre for the promotion of creativity. And so they've always attached to it, since it was opened, a Writer in Residence. I'm the fifth... and my residency is three years. I know some people have been quite surprised that a residency can be so long, but that does seem to be quite typical of residencies in Scotland actually. And a lot of what I heard this morning, a lot of the programs were quite familiar – particularly the ones*

*where there was a kind of creative point to the engagement. And my role is kind of twofold really. It's partly promoting the cottage as a resource, but it is... it does have those problems of space, because I can manage about six schoolchildren at a time – so it has its limits. But probably there's more emphasis actually on being involved in Outreach – creative work as an Outreach thing, across quite a large geographical area. But, you know, pointing out that this has come from the focus of the house – and that's why the Writer-in-Residence is attached. But I would encourage people to consider Writing Residencies, because the Biggar Museum Trust is very small and very humble and has, like, one and a half stars... and yet manages as one of its own projects to have a Writer-in-Residence. And it may not cost as much as you think it does, actually, because there may be money to be had for that.*

*The other thing I was just going to mention was Paul's point about "dead white males", because I'm very much representing a house of a dead white male. I think, one of the things I've found interesting is – and it was referred to in the Keats example as well – is the role of the women, that women or partners of writers have played in their lives. And it's often enormous. And in Hugh MacDiarmid's case, I'm quite sure he wouldn't have lived anything like as long as he did, let alone written all the work that he did, if it hadn't been for his second wife... who kept him alive, kept business going – and her part in it needs to be celebrated. And actually I think there is a way of bringing that into creative work and very often if I do have small groups coming in to write actually in the cottage, we'll often use her role, because they had a room each – it was only two rooms, but they had a room each – we'll use her room as a starting point and they'll write from artefacts, handling artefacts, and the atmosphere. And just at the moment I'm actually writing a play about her – because I'm actually the first female Writer-in-Residence who's been based there. It's quite a nice situation for me to be able to celebrate her story. So I think there is a way in to the other side of the story – we don't have to concentrate solely on "dead white males". But I've found it really interesting today. It's been very stimulating hearing about all the work that's going on.*

**Henry Cobbold:** *That reflects what I was saying earlier about Bulwer Lytton's wife, Rosina, who now brings us almost as many literary academics as does Edward. In fact her books are now, at last, being republished. Certainly the wonderful phallic gargoyles that are on the outside of this house wouldn't be there if she'd been present through more of his life! But there are, today, all sorts of advantages and disadvantages of that relationship. And interesting to see a shift there – I'm pleased to see that.*

*Nat, do you want to say anything with your other hat on?*

**Nat Edwards (National Library of Scotland):** *I'll talk very quickly from the National Library's point of view, because... it was great not to be only person from Scotland here! At the same time I think from this morning there's very clearly a lot of potential partnership and synthesis and synergy between the kind of thing that the Literary Houses are doing and other literary collections and resources. And one thing that our Burns Project has shown in Scotland is big anonymous institutions like the National Library can, if you kind of tickle them the right way, be a real resource. And we have been able, for example, to send our conservators to places like Burns Cottage to do various things – in fact we've just negotiated with the Scottish Parliament to display, based on material from Burns Cottage, in the new Scottish Parliament building - and the*

*Library have done the technical work on that.*

*I would put in, I suppose, a plug for institutions like the major research libraries in England... but also the National Library in Scotland, to be a potential broker to help to communicate the kind of work that this group's doing with other organisations in Scotland who can't always get down from Lanarkshire or Ayrshire or even Shetland and, you know, just say that we are very key. But also that the National Library has rooms - we have rooms, we have access to writers, we have budget for events programs, we have exhibitions... there's a lot of stuff there that a little bit of creative partnership can lever out.*

*A good example of that is we've put a major bid in to acquire the John Murray Archive, which is a really really important Literary archive from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and probably has material relating to nearly every one of the writers represented in this room, particularly Byron, particularly Livingstone, there's material connected to the Brontes, all sorts of people. And there will be a whole load of money attached to that for digitisation, for education resources, for projects – and, to be honest, we shouldn't get that money if we don't do it in partnership with organisations like those represented here. So there's a lot of potential.*

**Mike Gogan (Warwick Multimedia Ltd., "The Virtual Experience Company"):**

*While I'm setting up [the projector], two things that occur to me... One is setting up an email discussion list, specifically for LitHouses. It's something that can be set up very very easily. It's free. It just needs somebody to administer it. And even the administration is negligible. I don't know if any of you are on the GEM list, for example?*

**Katy Sullivan:** *Yes, it's really useful.*

**Mike Gogan:** *It's absolutely fantastic. And there are many others.*

*And the other thing is, that I know there's one or two organisations here that do have limits on your budgets –*

**Henry Cobbold:** *Stand up the person who doesn't have any limits on their budget!*

**Mike Gogan:** *And one of the things that was mentioned a lot today was Outreach. Well, what most of you do have are websites. And it's actually very easy to make minor adaptations to your website and to put that onto a CD, to send out, and CDs can be duplicated really easily. So it's a flexible way of producing a good quality Outreach resource.*

*Now, what I'm going to show you is a Virtual Reality model we did of Dove Cottage (William Wordsworth). Now, I'll say at the very outset that Virtual Reality should not be viewed as a substitute for visiting the actual house itself. There will never be a substitute for actually standing in the space itself – in the room where Shakespeare was born, or in the room where Wordsworth wrote. What you can achieve here... and this project was developed to enable people who can't get into the cottage to get in there, in this case specifically people who are disabled, who can't get upstairs – similar to projects we did*

*at Shakespeare's Birthplace and Anne Hathaway's Cottage. So Virtual Reality can be very useful in providing access where physical access isn't possible. Also, if you can't get to Cumbria, it's a way of touring Dove Cottage. And this will, very shortly, be available on CD, and free... and if anybody wants one, let me know and I can send out a copy of what we are going to see here.*

*This is Dove Cottage. Many of you have been there. And the idea here is we've built a 3D model of the house itself, a photo-realistic Virtual Reality model, that you can walk around. And you can go and have a look around the rooms. There's a floor plan to make navigation easy. And here we have a hyperlink to a washstand... and we have a three-dimensional model of the washstand. And this is one of the key areas, because hyperlinks can link to anything else – in fact there's a link down the bottom here to more information... and that, in turn, can lead into National Curriculum exercises... it can lead into information about the manuscripts... it can lead into information about the works... and it can lead into your website. This, in effect, is like a website, and it can lead wherever you want to take it. So it can be a very very flexible tool.*

*What we are doing here is putting information about the writer, about the artefacts... it was actually pure coincidence that when we built the model, daffodils were actually out – and you can click on a daffodil! I have to say, one of the things they did say, the Wordsworth Trust, was, don't mention the bloody daffodils!*

*We can show you his bedroom...*

**Henry Cobbold:** *Is that the alarm system, there?*

**Mike Gogan:** *I thought we'd taken out the alarm system! We did actually take it out... Although the model is built from photographs, we did actually edit the photographs – Photoshop is a wonderful thing – you can take out radiators and things... This is his passport on the wall here...*

*As I say, I've just agreed with the Trust to produce 500 CDs to be distributed free of charge – so if anyone wants one, just let me know.*

**Sharon Owen (Kate Roberts Heritage Centre):** *I'm here with my colleague Claire Robson, who works for South Cambridgeshire [not audible]. And I've been listening to this with perhaps [not audible] of becoming a Writer in Residence. I'm, I suppose, a writer in education, which I started doing when I lived in Cumbria – I was asked to go into schools and run poetry workshops for National Poetry Day... and that went on with various other workshops for English teachers. And I very much agree with everything that Trevor said. Since I've moved here from Cumbria, I've actually become much more involved in being asked to facilitate creative writing workshops within Poetry or Drama, in the context of interpretive writing, so children are often not just doing the English syllabus, they're looking at something like, the history of the Fenland around cotton, or they're looking at DNA – you know, the impact of being able to genetically engineer something – and then how we're going to take their ideas and put those into words or write something about that. So that's really how I've ended up here, because I've always been interested in how writing, or creative things, can happen with young people outside of school. And I also agree with what Trevor was saying that, actually, you do*

*have that place where people can sit, and just have those objects around them - and that is such a gift that you can give to children who may come from inner city schools or failing schools or whatever... and, kind of like, you're there, at the interface of what goes on when writing takes place... and I think that's really important.*

**Pam Weatherley (Knebworth House Guide):** *As a complete outsider, I'm most impressed by all the work that is being done for children visiting houses, the Outreach procedures that are going on, and also the involvement with adults as well. And as a non-teacher myself, I do enjoy being involved in the Tudor Treasure Trails here, and the Victorian Trails... and I personally have learnt a lot - not only from going around Knebworth as a guide - but also from being here today.*

**Colin Larner (John Bunyan Museum Guide):** *Yes, I've only just started really to try to look at the Education in the Museum. We have started on that. And at our next Trustee's meeting we are looking at information I've acquired.*

**James Pardoe (Chester College History Dept. Prog. Leader – Heritage Management):** *I think really what you need to look at, from the Education perspective, is... I mean the bottom line, is relevance. You do have to make what you are doing relevant to the whole range of different educational groups that are coming. Putting it purely in the nasty monetary terms, you've got to press the right buttons on the till to open it up. But I think you also have to be careful as well that you are not trying to make your house or your museum relevant to groups just because they seem to be the easier groups to get hold of, and in larger numbers. I have seen a number of institutions and places that are desperate to get Key Stages 1 and 2, and so they're trying incredibly tenuous links to their organisations, to various aspect of those Key Stages. I think what you need to do is actually look very closely at your house or your museum and then be able to target it in to the right educational groups -*

**Henry Cobbold:** *Be imaginative, but not too imaginative.*

**James Pardoe:** *Yeah. But you see you can get those wider groups -*

**Philip Watts:** *They're not mutually exclusive really.*

**Claire Robson:** *One thing that's often useful is to look at the issues that were facing your writer at the time, or that they wrote about. And if those are relevant today to people within your area... such as unemployment – sometimes to target those groups and it gives a wider knowledge of that writer within groups that might not necessarily have found them relevant before.*

**James Pardoe:** *Be careful of the dictatorship of the National Curriculum.*

**Alan Bentley (The Brontes - Director):** *It's been incredibly informative. It's great to see all the things that are going on. But perhaps the thing I was going to bring up was something about the future of the Group really, and whether the Group was aware that*

*NLA has got a small amount of money to encourage these sort of networks and whether that would be a good thing for this Group to plug in to... and how to take that forward really... and whether anyone had looked into that?*

**Henry Cobbold:** *Well, yes, we need to investigate that. And in fact one of the things I'm about to say is that I'm hoping the core members of the Group will stay on after we've had a cup of tea later and talk about some of the more nitty gritty point about how the Group will progress from here. And that's something that we ought to address. Thank you.*

*Right... we're not too bad, we're only 15 minutes behind schedule! So what I'm going to do now - unless anyone's got specific questions that they really feel are Group issues - is ask you to direct questions during afternoon refreshments later on.*

*I'd like to do two things. One, is I'd like to thank you all for coming all this way to be a part of this. It's been hugely enriching... and I hope you all feel as though you've got as much out of it as I have. And particularly to thank the two visiting speakers too – Trevor and Paul – I really appreciate your input, and you making the trouble [or taking the effort!] to come all the way to talk to us. Thank you very much for that.*

*I'm going to leave you with one quick thought, which I thought was quite appropriate... and that is that next week I've got to write a new guidebook. And one of the things that has really been bothering me is this motto above the fireplace (“Hic Vivunt Vivere Digni”) – “Here they live who are worthy to live” – it's a very dodgy concept! In other words, if you don't live here, you're not worthy to live! Now, that can't be right. So I've had my little Latin dictionary out and I've been trying to come up with a better translation... like “Here they live... to live... with dignity” Sounds better – maybe we'll run with that. That sounds a little bit more P.C... And I'd been wrestling over this problem for some time, until somebody pointed out how foolish I was being... because this motto here, refers to this library – not to this house! And what this motto is actually saying, is... [indicating the books on the surrounding shelves] “Here they live, who are worthy to live”... And it's because of these Museums, these Houses, these Libraries... that these wonderful thoughts from days past, are now living. And we should give thanks to that. Thank you all very much indeed.*

The Group was then given a guided tour of Knebworth House by the Knebworth House Archivist, Clare Fleck.

This was followed by afternoon refreshments in the Banqueting Hall.

The meeting concluded at 4pm.

[www.lithouses.org](http://www.lithouses.org)