

RSA

South West Region

Spring 2009



New season, new energy!

Where do I start?

It's been a few months since the last newsletter, but the grass has not been allowed to grow - no slacking here in the RSA South West Region.

We have news of the lively local events group in Exeter, organised by Kevin Cahill and updates on the projects reported in the Autumn newsletter

We are in the process of developing a strategy for enhancing the Fellowship engagement experience and we would welcome your views via our online survey we will be publishing in April on proposals for the future direction of the RSA South West's activities.

However, and it is a big however, one of our key strategic objectives of being able to develop RSA networking in the more remote areas of our region (i.e. Cornwall and North Devon) has been confounded by the very geographical barriers we want to overcome. This objective has to be the focus of effort over the next year.

Please read on, and remember, I am always grateful for constructive feedback on how we can engage more Fellows in our work.

*Ian Hosker, Chair RSA South West
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Exeter Local Events Group

Dates for Fellows diaries. Details of these events will be sent to you in due course.

April 23rd. Fellows Social Evening evening at the Devon and Exeter Institution, Cathedral Close, Exeter

May 23rd. Fellows annual Vice Presidential guest lunch and visit to the Devon County Show at Westpoint.

June. Details to follow

July 25th. Jurassic Coast Cruise with the Royal Geographical Society stopping off to visit our project at Beer Quarry Caves.

Kevin Cahill FRSA
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Who's who in the RSA South West

Chair:

Ian Hosker FRSA
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'Skills Challenge' bursary appeal

This appeal launched last Autumn to raise at least £5000 to support the 'Skills Challenge' being developed by Connexions Cornwall and Devon (now renamed is well on its way towards this target. You will recall that the 'Skills Challenge' aims to support a number of young people in Devon and Cornwall to plan and execute a significant personal challenge. The RSA's Opening Minds (OM) competences will be used to underpin the new Skills Challenge initiative, and will explore the use of the OM competences in a range of learning and development activities that go beyond the National Curriculum at Stages 3 and 4. We believe the competences have a much broader utility than their original purpose and may be applied to many areas of personal development learning: the workplace, volunteering and community development.

We are seeking personal and corporate sponsorship, and if the total sponsorship funding exceeds £5000, the additional funding will be used to create more bursaries to support more young people. Connexions Cornwall and Devon will provide matched funding to manage and administer the initiative, so all the funding raised through this appeal will generate bursaries.

Please help us by supporting the bursary scheme - any size of donation will be very welcome. From the RSA South West's perspective, the 'Skills Challenge' provides the opportunity to:

- (a) Pilot the use of the Opening Mind competences in community based learning especially where this benefits disadvantaged young people;
- (b) Promote and present positive images of young people and celebrate their capabilities and to counter the often negative image of 'youth' we see reported widely in the media;
- (c) Demonstrate partnership working with organisations whose values reflect those of the RSA;
- (d) Engage with leading RSA Fellows in the region through their organisations.

You can send your donation to Ian Hosker, Chair RSA South West, marking the reverse of your cheque with 'Skills Challenge'.

In the meantime, to those Fellows who have already shown generous support for this initiative, please accept our thanks. I will be in touch later in the year to tell you how the money is being used by young people to change their lives, and possibly those of others.

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Beer Quarry Caves.

Beer Quarry Caves is one of the oldest industrial archaeological sites in Britain. The white limestone there has been mined since Roman times, almost 2000 years ago. About 73 acres of underground caverns are now open to the public, and work is continuing to unseal more of the hidden and secret caverns and to open more of the 18 closed entrances for visitors to view. See Beerquarrycaves.com and beerquarrycaves.fsnet.

Two years ago an RSA SW tour visited the caves and they were made a regional project by RSA SW. The caves are closed over the winter because of a population of hibernating bats and this period was used to begin work on the business plan for the caves. This is being shared with local heritage bodies and with the landowner, the Clinton Devon Estates. The object of the business plan is to examine what development is possible at the caves, and the cost of that development. For many years the caves have existed on a shoestring and the dedicated work of the curator, John Scott FRSA. Last year members of the RSA made a rough cut documentary of the caves and this is now with major broadcasters, including the BBC and National Geographic in the United States, where some of the limestone from the caves ended up in St Paul's Cathedral in Missouri. In February we hosted Kevin Maguire the chair and Tanya Racz the deputy chair of the US National Business Travel Association to lunch in the House of Lords. They will be looking at ways to encourage business visitor to come to the West Country and take time off to see places like the caves.

And there is one good outcome of the credit crunch. Local hoteliers and guest houses are recording a significant increase in advance bookings for Easter and Summer holidays, something that has also been picked up by the County Show staff. We hope this will lead to a big increase in visitors to the Jurassic coast and of course the caves.

Plans for a dinner to raise funds for the caves, to be held at the House of Lords are underway

Kevin Cahill FRSA
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Health and Social Care Network - developing a partnership with Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry (PCMD)

On 27th January, James Lynch FRSA, Geri Parlbly FRSA and Ian Hosker FRSA met with senior members of the Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry to explore the possibilities of collaboration. The following are the minutes of the meeting that both parties agreed to circulate.

Attendees

Ian Hosker, Chair RSA South West

Prof. Stuart Logan, Director, Institute of Health Service Research, PCMD

James Lynch, RSA South West Health and Social Care Network

Prof. Nicky Britten, Professor of Applied Healthcare Research, PCMD

Geri Parlbly, RSA Health and Social Care Network

Dr Katrina Wyatt, Senior Research Fellow, founder member of the Health Complexity Group and grant-holder for Folk.us

Helen Papworth, Operational and Finance Manager, Peninsula CLAHRC

Introduction

Ian Hosker provided an introduction to the activities of the RSA, the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, which for over 250 years has been challenging the status quo and encouraging social progress through practical action. The RSA is supported by an international network of over 27,000 Fellows who work as leaders and influencers across all disciplines. In the South West, there are some 750 Fellows working on a number of projects including prevention of youth re-offending and establishment of an independent youth council.

Stuart Logan provide an introduction to the Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry, a partnership with the University of Exeter, University of Plymouth and the NHS in Devon and Cornwall providing undergraduate medical and dental education and postgraduate programmes for healthcare professionals. The College's research activity included recent significant investment in health service research through the Peninsula CLAHRC which was a needs-led approach to addressing the priorities of the local health economy.

Health and Social Care

The RSA South West was establishing a Health and Social Care forum to assist in developing genuine civic engagement within local communities and was interested in organisations within the sector who were active in this area. Public participation initiatives in health and social care had tended to be imposed top-down but with accountability directed upwards, with the onus being placed on the community as the consulted. There was also a risk with representation being restricted to small groups of increasingly "professionalised" lay persons, isolating the rest of the community.

Many initiatives within PCMD had resonances with the concerns of RSA South West, including Folk.Us' training of individuals involved in medical research, the work of Connecting Communities (Cs) with the Eden Project to create conditions to develop local leaders, and the Peninsula CLAHRC's Engagement by Design© model.

PCMD and RSA South West

It was agreed that some form of link between PenCLAHRC and RSA South West would be mutually beneficial in terms of developing public participation strategies in health and social care:

Katrina Wyatt invited RSA members to Connecting Communities (C2) event on February 13th 2009 and would coordinate a separate meeting between the Health Complexity Group and RSA.

Stuart Logan agreed to contact Professor John Bligh, Vice Dean (Education), to ascertain the College's current approach to public and patient involvement in the undergraduate medical programme.

It was also suggested that PCMD could help at a later stage to facilitate dialogue with NHS and Department of Health organisations in the region, for example, the Peninsula CLRN (Comprehensive Local Research Network, <http://www.ukcrn.org.uk/index/networks.html>).

Finally, it was agreed that the notes from this meeting would be made available to RSA Fellows, across the College and through PenCLAHRC.

We will keep you posted on how this relationship develops and report on the work that flows from it.

Looking forward to the AGM 2009

We have begun planning this year's AGM which is likely to take place on September 5th or 12th, probably in West Cornwall. Details will follow in late April/early May.