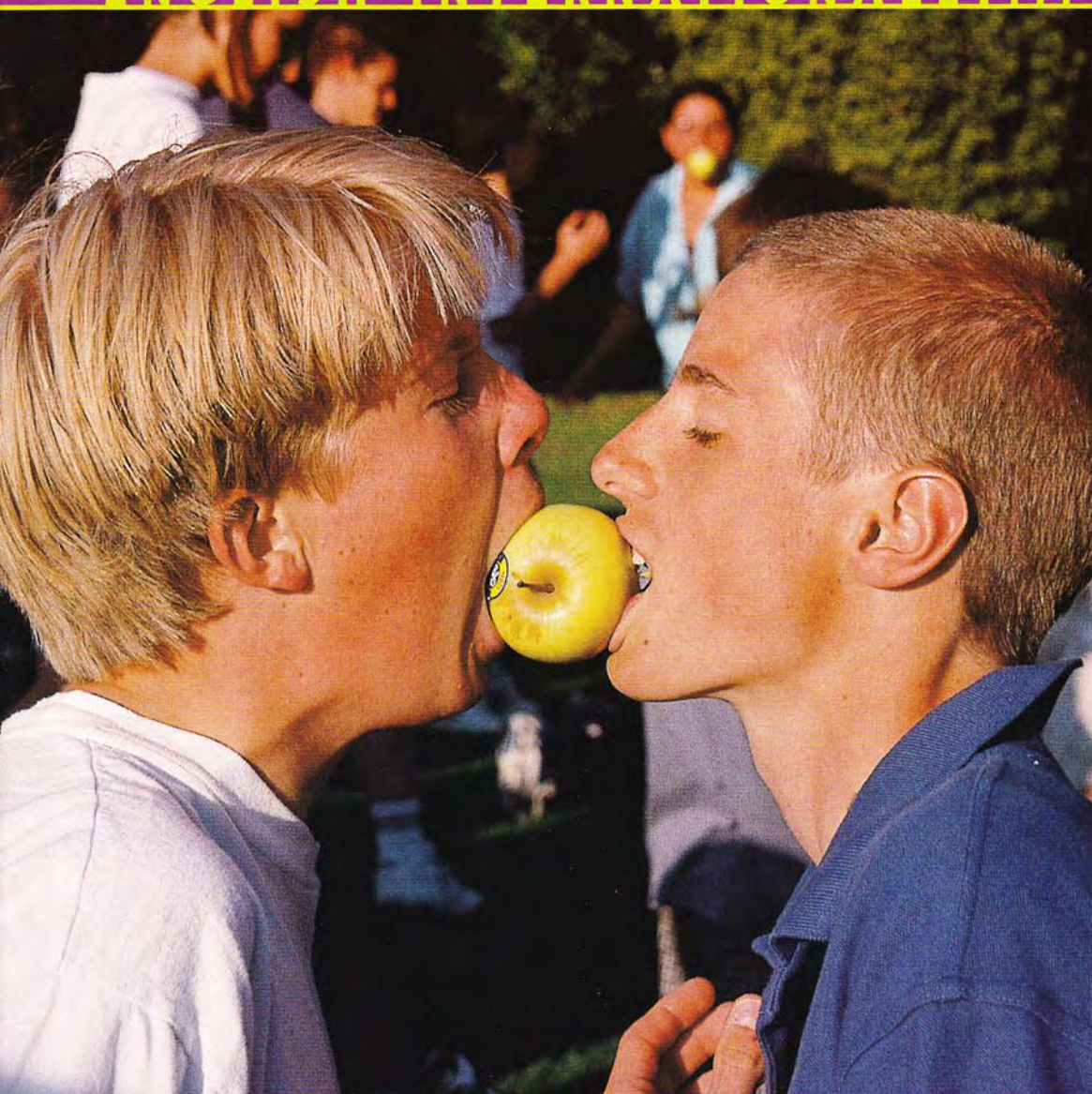
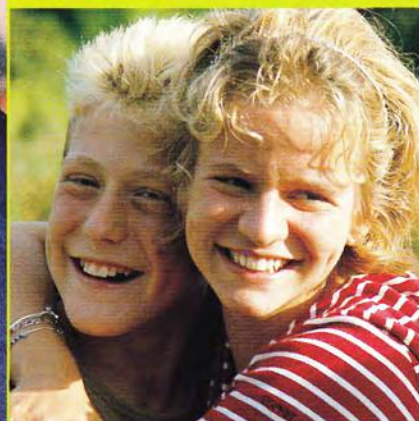


ENGLISH INTERNATIONALLY...



“I have grown older by moments. Vacation Studies has contributed a great proportion of these moments, providing me with unique experiences, opportunities and memories which will never leave me.”



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Vacational
Studies®

Summer
2000

**RESIDENTIAL
ENGLISH
LANGUAGE
COURSES**

11-17 YEARS



ABOUT THIS BROCHURE

This is an Information Book. The first section gives you a factual overview of the work we do, so you can decide if we are right for your child. The second part ('News 1999-2000') is written in a different style so you have an idea of my personality which necessarily influences the atmosphere on the Courses. It gives a more detailed rationale of the 2000 Courses and what has shaped them, so



fully informed and can prepare for the experience. If your application is accepted, both sections are essential reading. 'Unrealisable Expectations' in the second section deals with fundamental issues.

THE COURSES



RESIDENCE

The Courses are all fully residential. Students eat, sleep and receive classes in the Schools.

THE STUDENTS

We accept boys and girls – near-beginners, intermediate and more advanced students – aged 11 to 17. As they cannot participate in an international community, complete beginners are not accepted.

The Courses are sports-orientated and encourage good social development in a community situation.

STUDENTS WHO WILL BENEFIT

Please make sure that our Course is suitable for your child and that he/she wants to come. Those who will benefit and we enjoy having with us will be internationally-minded, interested in English, outgoing, gregarious and able to function independently. They will also be willing to accept the constraints of community living. We consider it so important that our standards and expectations are understood and accepted that we ask parents to confirm that they and their children have read the rules and that they agree to abide by them. A slip sent with the rules is provided for this purpose.

HOW THEY WILL BENEFIT

We hope that our students will learn a great deal of English, make good friendships and develop a positive international feeling. As well as formal study, we concentrate on the holiday aspect of the Course. While we try to involve students in all activities, we naturally respect the wishes of those who like to read quietly or be with friends. Over the years, we have built up an excellent reputation with parents and young people all over the world. Many boys and girls spend several summers with us renewing old friendships and making new ones. Most students come to us on personal recommendation. The numbers on the Courses are deliberately kept quite small so that the staff can get to know everybody and treat each child as an individual.

CHOICE OF COURSE

The Courses all have the same format. The only differences are location and dates. 2000 dates are:-

ELSTREE

11 July – 8 August 2000
(4 weeks)

CHEAM

13 July – 10 August 2000
(4 weeks)

MARY HARE

15 July – 12 August 2000
(4 weeks)

DOUAI

(OR AT MARY HARE)

15 July – 12 August 2000
(4 weeks)*

(*Likely dates. Exact dates and location to be confirmed by 1 March 2000. For information about the Course at Douai, see the 'Course Fees' information sheet.)



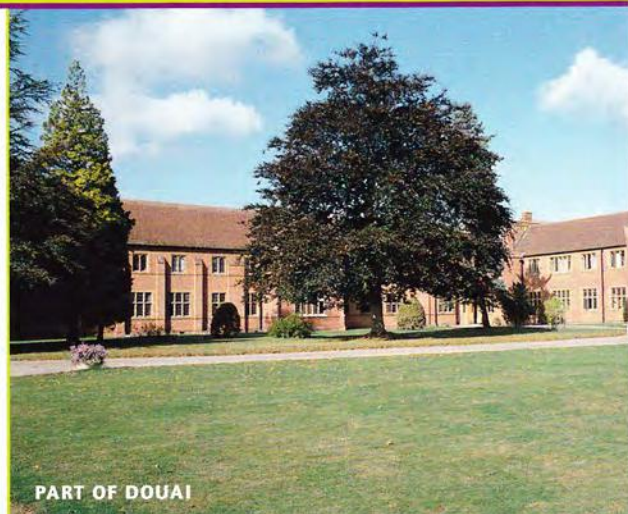
THE SCHOOLS

THE SCHOOLS AND SURROUNDINGS

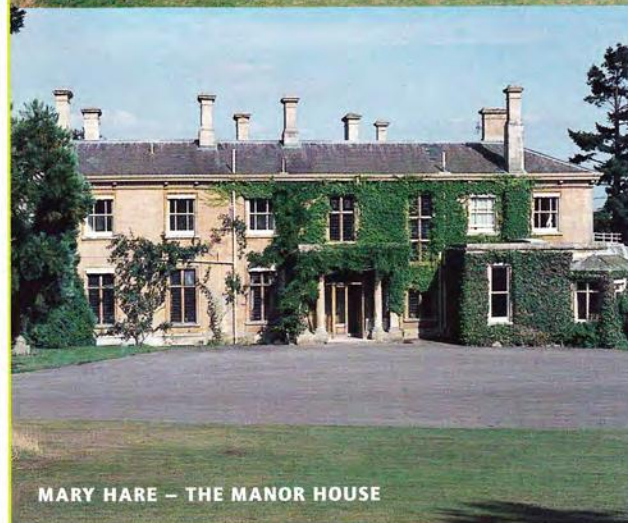
For 2000 we have Courses at Schools near Newbury – The Mary Hare School, Cheam School and Elstree School and, optionally, Douai School. Newbury is a small country town in a pleasant part of southern England in the hills of the Berkshire Downs. It is 70km west of London and 45km south of Oxford. The Schools we use are among the best in the area.

DOUAI SCHOOL

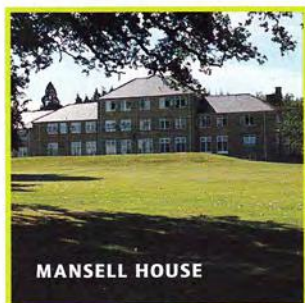
Douai School dates from the mid-nineteenth century with many later additions. It is set next to Douai Abbey in 80 acres of its own grounds and woodlands. It has extensive playing fields which adjoin Elstree School and a range of tennis courts. It has a large indoor swimming pool, a gymnasium and a 'multi-gym'. Some dormitories were rebuilt in 1996.



PART OF DOUAI



MARY HARE – THE MANOR HOUSE



MANSELL HOUSE

THE MARY HARE SCHOOL

The Mary Hare School is a campus comprising several buildings. Since 1982, we have used The Manor House. Recently we have used Howard House and may also use Mansell House. Various architectural styles are represented. There are formal gardens and woodland and extensive grounds which

include several playing fields, a range of tennis courts, a gymnasium and a large indoor swimming pool.

CHEAM SCHOOL

Cheam School is a late nineteenth century mansion. A particular feature is the sunken formal garden. The School's large grounds with playing fields, lawns and woods, back onto Watership Down. There is a recently built sports hall/gymnasium and a range of tennis courts. It has an open-air swimming pool.

ELSTREE SCHOOL

Elstree School is a large eighteenth century country house set in 40 acres of grounds with playing fields, gardens and woods which adjoin Douai Abbey. It has a modern gymnasium and the dining room, kitchens and some dormitories were rebuilt in 1991. There is an open-air swimming pool and a range of tennis courts.

All the Schools have swimming pools, tennis, basketball and volleyball courts, football fields, sports hall, recreation rooms and colour

TV/video



CHEAM



THE PROGRAMME



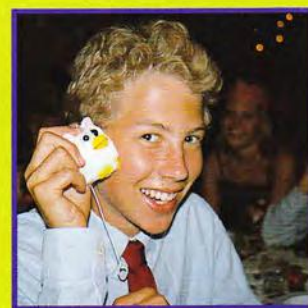
THE TEACHING

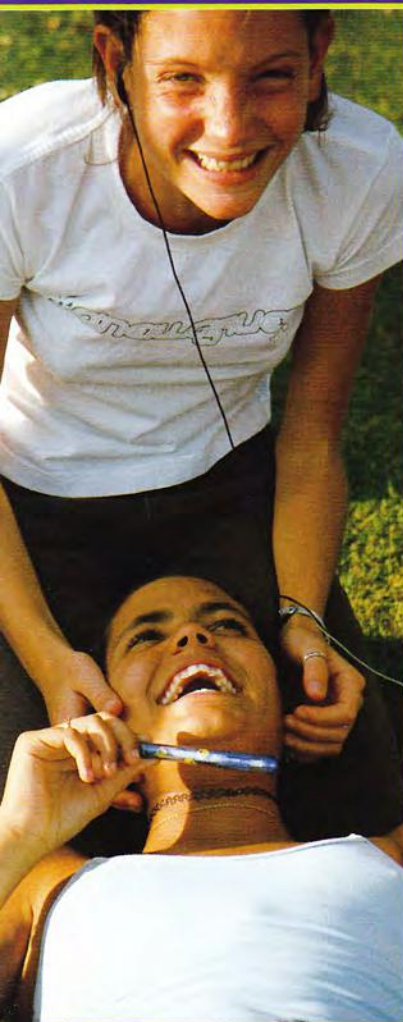
A staff of qualified, professional teachers, experienced in the teaching of English, give 4 lessons, each of 45 minutes, every day except Sunday and excursion days. In addition, there is a 30 minute 'supervised study' period each afternoon. Classes are graded according to age and ability in English. Students are placed first in an 'assessment group' and complete a range of oral and written tasks, including a formal multiple-choice placement test. The combined results of these tasks together with the teacher's opinion eventually determine placement in a class. Class placements are constantly reviewed and students may be moved to more or less advanced classes, according to their performance. The teacher:student ratio is approximately 1:13. Maximum class size is 16. We provide all books and teaching materials. Coursebooks include 'Over to You', 'Reward Intermediate', 'Cutting Edge' and 'Cutting Edge Upper Intermediate' and 'Panorama 2'. Our teachers are encouraged to work with a wide range of lesson materials and to utilise newspaper and magazine articles, selected

The emphasis in lessons is to help develop the students' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills through a topic and task-based approach. This involves working with students on a variety of activities centred on a particular topic and helping them with the language needed to complete the activities. They will be expected to complete certain tasks. In this way, we aim to develop our students' confidence in using English to communicate what is important to them and to stimulate their interest in English as the world's common language. We try to give students materials and activities that are different from those in their own countries. Oral and written English are taught and there is an emphasis on conversation practice. A prize is awarded on each Course for academic excellence.

A Certificate of Attendance is sent at the end of the Course. This Certificate is accepted in some countries as justification for a state bursary. In Italy, the Ministry of Education has decreed that a Certificate issued by a British Council Accredited School counts towards the Italian School Leaving Certificate.

“Ever since she arrived back home, she has been in constant touch with her new friends from all over the world”





SPORTS

Sport is an important part of the Course. Our Sports/Social Organiser arranges a regular programme including football, basketball, volleyball, baseball, tennis, table-tennis, swimming, etc. Competitions run throughout the Course. There is also 'Sports Day' when all the Schools meet for friendly competitions in the major sports.

We take all practicable safety precautions – for example, students using the swimming pool are always supervised by a teacher.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

We try to create a relaxed and friendly 'family' atmosphere in which young people will feel 'at home' quickly and make good social contacts. There is a variety of activities on the programme – discotheques, films, barbecues, folk-singing, concerts, games, optional theatre visits, etc. The programme is a full one. There is always something to do and students are encouraged to participate.

EXCURSIONS

There are four days out. One is a visit to the Millennium Experience at the world-famous Millennium Dome at Greenwich, open for just the year 2000; another is a sightseeing tour of London, followed by shopping; the destination for the third excursion will be Oxford, Southampton, Winchester, Bath or a similar city of historical importance; the fourth excursion is to 'Sports Day'. Travel and staff supervision on these excursions are included in the Course Fee.



THE PROGRAMME

SHOPPING AFTERNOONS (OPTIONAL EXTRA)

In addition to the organised excursions above (which are included in the Course Fee), there are two optional shopping afternoons which are not included in the Course Fee. These are in Newbury or another town near the School. We think it safe for young people to shop in these towns unaccompanied by staff, if parents have indicated their agreement to this on the Application Form. This helps them achieve a measure of independence. Younger students can be accompanied by staff if parents or we so wish. There will be several staff in the town while our students are shopping. Travel is by private coach from the School with accompanying staff. The cost of transport (payable by students if they wish to go) is in the range from £1.50 to £3.00.

THEATRE VISITS (OPTIONAL EXTRA)

'Phantom of the Opera', 'Saturday Night Fever' and 'Les Misérables' – all these smash-hit West End musicals are booked out months in advance. Tickets for various shows have been requested and we will be allocated a limited number. We shall allocate tickets to students so that they can see at least one show of their choice, up to a maximum of three shows. How many shows will be possible depends on the availability of tickets. The cost of each (show + travel to the theatre) will be in the range £30-40. Parents are asked to indicate the number of shows requested and inform the child of this. £35 or so for each show requested should be added to pocket money. If it is not possible to provide the number of shows requested, the money will be returned with the student at the end of the Course.



INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTS SHORT COURSES EXAMINATION (OPTIONAL EXTRA)

The Institute of Linguists has been recognised by the British Government as examiners since 1910. Specially for us, they have devised an Examination in Spoken English which will be externally marked by their examiners. This examination will be on 4 levels, according to the ability of the student. Level 1 is 'Near-Beginner'; Level 4 is 'Advanced'. At each level, the procedure will be:- (1) a general conversation with the examiner during which the student is giving information and (2) a structured task in which the student is requesting information. Including preparation time, the examination will last about 20 minutes. It will be held in each school at the end of the Course. The Certificate in English as a Spoken Language for Short Courses is an officially validated qualification awarded in each level at one of three grades – Pass, Merit, Distinction. The cost is £30.00.

TENNIS LESSONS (OPTIONAL EXTRA)

Tennis may be played at any time, but we can arrange professional lessons, if required. These are available for beginners or near-beginners only. Six one-hour lessons are given in groups of no more than four students. These must be requested in advance on the Application Form. If tennis lessons are taken, a tennis racquet must be brought.

As these lessons are prearranged, it is not possible to refund the cost of lessons booked, but not taken. Parents are asked to make sure that lessons are really wanted before booking them. If tennis lessons are requested, the cost (£32) should be added to pocket money.

FOOD SAFETY

Vacational Studies policy is not to serve any food that is banned in any country or about which there is any concern for any reason. We serve only what we believe parents would feel safe to serve

A TYPICAL DAY

08.15	Breakfast
09.00	First class
09.45	Break
09.55	Second class
10.40	Break
11.10	Third class
11.55	Break
12.05	Fourth class
12.50	Break
13.00	Lunch
13.45	Supervised Study
14.15	Break
14.45	Organised sports and games
18.00	Evening meal
19.00	Games, films, etc.
21.00	Hot chocolate and biscuits
21.30	'Club'
22.30	Bedtime (or 22.45)

Pocket money and stamps are obtainable from the Office every day from 13.20 – 13.45 and 14.15 – 14.45.





HERE IS A TYPICAL MENU FOR GUIDANCE:-

BREAKFAST

Choice of cereal
Choice of various breads, meats, cheese
Jam, marmalade, other spreads
Tea, coffee, milk, fresh orange juice

LUNCH

Choice of one cold or three hot dishes
Buffet-style salad bar
Choice of desserts
Fresh fruit

DINNER

Choice of one cold or three hot dishes
Buffet-style salad bar
Choice of desserts
Fresh fruit

BEFORE BEDTIME

MEALS

Food is an important part of the Course. Meals are prepared by professional caterers to a high standard. Our specification for lunch and dinner is a choice of hot dishes (including one vegetarian) or a cold dish, a salad bar comprising about ten different items, a choice of desserts and fresh fruit. Students can have the first choice they want and can return for another choice as 'seconds'. If they cannot find anything they like, they can ask us to ask the caterer to prepare something special.

There is always a vegetarian option. Other special diets can be catered for. Cold orange juice or other drinks are available at no charge. There is a small 'sweet shop'.

At times throughout the Course, the menu will be varied to include, for example, barbecues (spare rib, sausage roll, jacket potatoes, coleslaw dip, crisps, ice-cream, etc.) There will be a traditional British 'Christmas Dinner' (roast turkey with stuffing, roast potatoes, Brussels sprouts, cranberry jelly). There may also be 'national meals'. If they

wish, students from various countries can advise the kitchen staff on how to prepare and serve a meal consisting of dishes from their own country.

There is a students' Food Committee which meets the Caterer regularly to discuss all aspects of the catering.

HOW WE ENCOURAGE THE USE OF ENGLISH

On each Course there are students from many different countries. We try to ensure a mixture of nationalities in classes and dormitories. We aim to stimulate the speaking of English socially in various ways. Members of staff constantly encourage English-speaking around the School. Our British students do so, too.

Another 'encouragement' to speak English is the 'English Only Prize' with a Vacation Studies watch for the winner. Points are awarded each week to students who have spoken English much more than their own language. Throughout the Course, there are also 'English Only' bonus days.

THE PROGRAMME

caught more than once using any language other than English on that day, an extra point is awarded – a 'bonus'. At the end of the Course the points are totalled and a name is recommended to the Director for consideration for the 'English Only Prize'. The more points, the greater the chance of winning the prize. We hope that the prize will be a positive inducement for students to use English.

HEALTH

Minor illnesses are treated by our own staff. There is a Matron in each School. We also use the services of doctors in the locality. The St John's Ambulance Service provides training for all our staff at the start of each Course in the latest methods of basic first aid and resuscitation. We ask parents to give us full health information on the Application Form. We request that children with food allergies come with a 1ml. Adrenalin (Epinephrine) 1:1000 injection pen – an 'EpiPen'. Children of European (including Russian) nationality should bring an E128 form available from their health service, entitling them as temporary residents to the same free treatment under the British National Health Service as British citizens for all, including pre-existing, conditions.

RELIGION

The Courses are interdenominational. If parents so wish, we shall arrange for students to attend an appropriate service. Please indicate this on the Application Form. Transportation to and from the church is payable by students.

RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION

At all Schools, students sleep in dormitories. Girls are in one part of the house, boys are in another.

INSURANCE

Every student is covered by a special Insurance Policy while they are with us. Details are on the enclosed information sheet. Briefly, the Insurance includes refund of full Course Fees if certified serious illness or accident to the student or parent during the month before the Course prevents attendance on the Course; private emergency medical treatment to the value of £10,000; personal possessions and luggage cover to the value of £500; personal money cover to the value of £200; return air fare or repatriation to the value of £10,000 if an APEX reservation is lost because of delayed or advanced departure through illness or accident while the student is with us.

There is no extra charge for this Insurance. Every student is automatically covered (subject to the stated conditions) when the application is accepted.

HOW WE LOOK AFTER STUDENTS

We understand the concern felt by parents when their sons and daughters are away from home. They are under constant supervision, as far as is practicable, both in the School and on excursions. Our total staff:student ratio of about 1:8 ensures that our students are well looked-after.

In addition to the staff, on each Course there are two older ex-students, 'Staff Helpers', to assist with the sports and entertainments programme. There is also at least one native English-speaking student.

During the Course, progress reports are sent to all parents describing performance in class and also social behaviour. At the end of the Course, all parents are sent a final report and leaving certificate together with a report from the Director on the student's general progress and behaviour.

IF THERE IS A PROBLEM

We shall contact you. Parents must ensure that we have a telephone number through which they can always be reached. If it is an emergency and we cannot reach you, we shall contact the person named in section 8 (our 'emergency contact') on the Application Form. If we cannot contact either of you, we shall assume your authority to act 'in loco parentis' and in a medical emergency, for example, give consent to appropriate medical treatment. We send students a list of rules and standards of behaviour expected before the Course begins. These are straightforward. Basically, we expect students to respect the buildings, equipment and the feelings of other people and to show good manners. Students must read and know the rules before they come.

If a student is correctly motivated (see section on 'Students who will benefit'), there should be no discipline problems. If any should arise, we reserve the right to contact parents and, if we consider it necessary, require that the child be taken home at the parents' expense without refund of Fees.

“It was great for me to come back and experience the magic of Vacational Studies again”

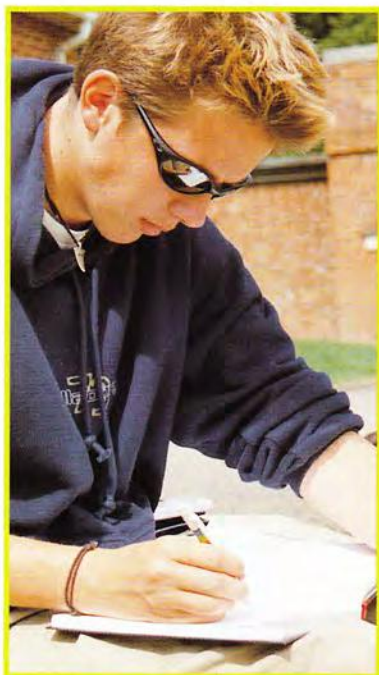




*"the most enjoyable
four weeks of my life"*



HOW TO APPLY



HOW TO APPLY

Answer all the questions on the Application Form and return it to us with (if this is a first application) a letter of recommendation from the school on behaviour and attitude to study. Retain your copy for reference. We shall tell you immediately if the application is acceptable and for which Course. A 'waiting list' operates when the Courses are full.

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

To ensure that all our students are well-motivated and keen to participate, we ask that a brief letter of recommendation from the school accompanies all applications from new students. This should mention behaviour and attitude to study. No such letter is needed for students we already know or when this might cause conflict with educational authorities.

WHEN THE APPLICATION IS ACCEPTED

We shall write to inform you of this and include our Invoice for the Course Fees. The Invoice can be settled in full immediately, or 50% can be paid immediately and the balance by the date shown on the Invoice. The place is confirmed when the full Course Fees have been received by us. We shall also request travel details.

HOW TO PAY

Please see the 'Course Fees 2000' slip.

POCKET MONEY

Pocket money can either be brought by students (as a £ Eurocheque under £700 in value, or as a £ cheque drawn on a British bank, payable to 'Vacational Studies Pocket Money A/C') or sent in advance to the National Westminster Bank, 30 Market Place, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5AJ for Vacational Studies Pocket Money A/C 65400100. We also have a Girobank account for personal money. The number is 255 7444. Students will tend to bring about £250. Optional tennis coaching fees and the cost of theatre visit(s) should be added (if applicable). Do not send more money during the Course.

CLOTHES AND POSSESSIONS

Notes and advice on what to bring and other information will be sent to parents and students in advance.



THE COURSE FEE INCLUDES:-

- residence at the School
- travel Heathrow-School/School-Heathrow¹
- all meals²
- tuition
- the sports programme
- the use of facilities
- excursions³
- insurance⁴
- the laundering of clothes⁵

¹ At specified times and terminals – see 'Travel'

² Except lunch on excursions, but including lunch on Sports Day

³ Travel and supervision, not entrance fees

⁴ As described in the 'Insurance' slip

⁵ If not sensitive to bulk washing/drying and at your own risk

There are NO EXTRA CHARGES except for optional church, theatre or shopping visits and professional tennis lessons. A small (£3) deduction is made from pocket money to provide indoor board games and records, tapes and CDs for the 'Club'. £20 'caution money' will be retained in the student's pocket money account until the last day when it will be returned less deductions for damages (if any).

THE COURSE FEE DOES NOT INCLUDE

- pocket money
- optional church/theatre/shopping visits
- travel to and from England





TRAVEL

It is quite usual for our students to fly alone. 90% of our students arrive and depart in this way. There are many cut-price air ticket offers – for early booking, for young people, or for travel on particular flights. We operate a collection and return transport service between Heathrow Airport and the Schools on arrival and departure at no charge, subject to the conditions on our ‘Travel Details’ form. Our staff can meet students arriving at Heathrow Terminals 1 and 2 (only) and check-in students on outgoing flights from Heathrow Terminals 1 and 2 (only) on the stated dates. Our staff are at Heathrow from 12.00–16.00 on arrival days and from 09.30–13.00 on departure days. If flights arrive earlier than 12.00, students wait for our staff near the Information Desk. If flights leave after 13.00, we explain the procedure and take students to wait in the correct area.

For young children (under 12), airlines operate an ‘Unaccompanied Young Persons (UYP)’ or ‘Unaccompanied Minors (UM)’ service on request and look after them. As airlines insist on a named person meeting and returning a child and that the person remains until the flight has departed, parents should note that if they request UYP or UM service, all UYP or UM arrivals and departures must be by taxi at cost. The driver is known to us and has been working with us for many years. He will meet students and check them in personally. It is normally unnecessary for students to be booked to fly UYP or UM. Airlines (especially British Airways) are very helpful with young passengers at any age.

Our free standard service cannot be used when arrival is later or departure is earlier than our

stated dates or times, or if the flight is via Gatwick Airport, or if a student is booked UYP or UM, or is on a flight which arrives at or departs from Terminal 3 or 4, or is outside our requested times. We can make special taxi or minibus arrangements on your behalf. We do not charge for making these arrangements, but the cost of the taxi or minibus is payable by the student. (As a guide, a one-way taxi for one person to Heathrow is about £60 and to Gatwick about £80. For two people, the cost is shared). Special requirements should be indicated on the Application Form and details sent separately.

AT THE AIRPORT

Before travelling, we send an identity badge and luggage tags to ensure quick recognition. Our representatives will carry blue ‘Vacational Studies’ folders and will meet students at the entrance to the Arrivals Hall after leaving the Customs Hall.

If you do not take our standard collection/return service, but we make other arrangements for you, the same procedure applies.

VISITS TO THE SCHOOLS

Visits to the Schools outside the Course dates may be made only by appointment through our Newbury Office.



TRAVEL



IF YOU COME BY CAR

Road directions are given after the Schools' addresses. Parents bringing students are asked to arrive at between 12.30 and 14.30. Parents collecting students on the last day are asked to arrive before 11.00.

ON ARRIVAL AT THE SCHOOL

All money is handed in at the Office for safe keeping. Students can withdraw money every day. We keep passports and tickets safely. We cannot accept responsibility for pocket money or valuables not handed to us.

ON THE FIRST DAY

On request, students will be allocated to a returning student who will act as a guide, explaining the layout of the building, the way the Course runs and answering any questions.

SCHOOLS' ADDRESSES AND DIRECTIONS

DOUAI SCHOOL

From London, follow M4 to Exit 12 (Theale). Leave M4 and follow signs 'A4 Newbury' for 9km to Woolhampton. In Woolhampton, turn right after Falmouth Arms at the 'Upper Woolhampton/Douai School' signpost. (Elstree School is 1km along this road on the right). Continue for 'km. Turn right at 'Main Entrance' sign and then immediately left.

Address for students' letters:
Douai School
Woolhampton Reading RG7 5TH.
Telephone (to contact Course Manager):
National: (0118) 971 5207
International: +44 118 9 71 5207

THE MARY HARE SCHOOL

From London, follow M4 to Exit 13 (Newbury). Leave M4 and follow signs 'A34 Newbury'. After

'Curridge/Winterbourne/Donnington', then left signposted 'Mary Hare'. The Mary Hare School is first on the right.

Address for students' letters:
The Mary Hare School
Newbury Berkshire RG16 9BQ.
Telephone (to contact Course Manager):
National: (01635) 244231
International: +44 1635 244231

CHEAM SCHOOL

From Newbury, take the A339 road (signposted 'Basingstoke') for 10km. Cheam School (Front Entrance) is signposted on the right.

Address for students' letters:
Cheam School
Headley Newbury Berkshire RG19 8LD.
Telephone (to contact Course Manager):
National: (01635) 268803
International: +44 1635 268803

ELSTREE SCHOOL

See directions to Douai.
Address for students' letters:
Elstree School
Woolhampton Reading RG7 5TD.
Telephone (to contact Course Manager):
National: (0118) 971 2725
International: +44 118 9 71 2725

The telephone numbers and addresses given above are only for use during the Courses and only the Course Manager can be obtained on them. During the rest of the year, please use our Newbury Office address and telephone numbers below.

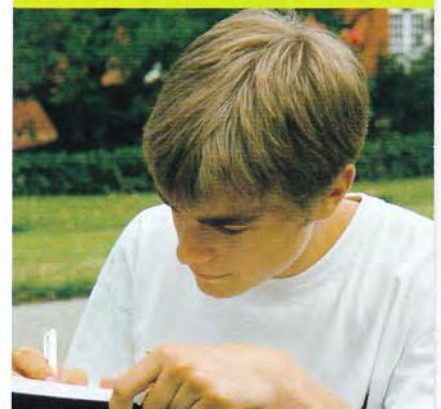
DIRECTIONS BY RAIL

By train from London, leave from Paddington Station. For Mary Hare and Cheam, arrive at Newbury Station. For Douai and Elstree arrive at Reading Station or Midgham Station. There are normally taxis at Newbury Station. If not, there are taxi numbers in the phone box near the Station. There are always taxis at Reading Station. There are no taxis at Midgham Station. Walk to A4 road, then follow road directions.

FINALLY....

We have tried to describe the Courses fully and frankly. Please also see the section 'Unrealisable Expectations' in the News Section. The News Section following contains more detailed information on various aspects of the Course. It is essential reading for the parents of 2000 Course participants and is not only a résumé of the previous summer. We hope this brochure contains all the information you need to make your choice. Any further details you may require can be obtained from the parents of our past students and past students themselves (the addresses of some of these are on the enclosed list) and the Director. We suggest you contact our 'parental references' as they may offer useful advice.

Our Courses are designed with the benefit of years of experience and we are confident that we can combine the learning of good written and spoken English with an unforgettable and enjoyable holiday.





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MCMXCIX

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All photographs by IGM except:
Four School Group photographs
by David Hatfull

Millennium Dome photograph
courtesy of QA Photos/NMEC

Designed by Lillington Green

Written by IGM

Vacational Studies®

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Ian Mucklejohn – who, as the Director, co-ordinates the Schools – was born in London. He is a graduate of the University of London with an Honours Degree in English Language and Literature, is an Associate of the College of Preceptors and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He has had many years experience in teaching. He is the founder of Vacational Studies.

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NEWS

1999 – 2000



'Somebody once said: 'We grow older by moments, not by years.' I feel that, over the last two years I have done exactly that – I have grown older by moments.

Vacational Studies has contributed a great proportion of these moments, providing me with unique experiences, opportunities and memories which will never leave me. Perhaps, greater still, I now have friends all over Europe – something that I would

never have dreamed of having before I learnt of Vacation Studies. How many other people my age have this multitude of contacts in other countries?' (an English student). 'They are already preparing their luggage to come back to England again. They cannot stop talking about all the fun they had' (a Turkish parent). 'I just can't understand it, one month has passed and I didn't even realise it. I miss you all so much' (a Spanish student writing in the Forum on our internet site.) 'I can honestly say that these were the most enjoyable four weeks of my life. I must congratulate you and the staff for striking a perfect balance. The evening social activities were first rate with an uncanny knowledge of how far to go for maximum enjoyment' (another English student). 'Ever since she arrived back home, she has been in constant touch with her new friends from all over the world, receiving and writing many letters and e-mail messages' (a Dutch parent). 'It was great for me to come back and experience the magic of Vacation Studies again' (a Norwegian Staff Helper). 'Elle nous a dit "avoir passé les meilleures vacances de sa vie"' (a Monegasque parent). 'I must congratulate you on the excellent organisation of the Course and the positive feedback from students. I must say I enjoyed being part of it all' (a teacher). 'The four weeks are not enough' (two students separately – one from Iceland; one from Mozambique).

We do our best! The 'Forum' on our internet site is also full of emotional reactions from students similar to the above. If anyone (young person or parent) is undecided about making the decision to come, just the briefest glance at these messages will be enough. What we do is give young people a fundamental life-experience. This is not something I claim in the brochure. I state it as a fact. They may be sent to learn English. They may come to have fun. What will happen is that they will form relationships that are as close as can be; they will have experiences they will not forget; they will not be quite the same when they leave as when they arrived. They will have taken a giant's step in their growing-up process.

The above comments are just a few of many. As always, modesty prevents my quoting any more. So what was special about VacStuds '99? Read on.

In the last few years, summer happened just before the Courses began, paused and then continued just after they had finished. This year, our glorious summer with clear skies, brilliant sun and sub-tropical weather began with the start of Douai and finished just a few days before the last students from Elstree flew home. For once, there was no need for a 'plan B' for Sports Day

With a staffroom full of returning teachers, Francis McIvor, now in his fourteenth year with us, was in charge, but needed to spend little time introducing them to the delights of Douai. They all knew how to get on with the job. As last year, third-timer Jonathan Blackburn was the ACM, rising to the occasion in the absence of the Course Manager. Back again for a third time were inexhaustible Sasha Marie, stalwart Pierre Gerrard and first-class Dave McGill. After a summer under Francis McIvor at Mary Hare some years ago, Sara Monday tried Douai this time. Back from previous years at Elstree and Douai was Judith Yazicilar. Charles Dussé, as Course Tutor, was in the unenviable position of being the new boy in charge of the old hands. Versatile Catherine Olsen was the only returning member of the Sports Crew. In charge was the innovative and hard-working Scott Curwood. He did a superb job as brand new Sports/Social

Organiser, ably assisted by Paul Stevenson, another first-timer. The effervescent Christelle Harkema returned from the Netherlands for a second bite of the cherry as Staff Helper. Antonio Serrano from Spain (he who said 'no' on last year's video) said 'yes' to the offer to be the male Staff Helper and fully justified our decision. Sunny Ann Brittain was Matron, quite unfazed by whatever came her way. A play has become a feature of the Douai Course. This year it was a pantomime based on the story of Robin Hood, written by Francis McIvor and directed by Sasha Marie. Once again the play showed what a great vehicle drama is for linguistic practice. Generally, it is the Folies and the workings of its committee that give our students the chance to use English in a working context. This time I was there to



film it, but was left wondering if the committee had said a word to each other. Again in true Douai style, whenever a plate was dropped or the slightest faux pas made, cries of 'Derek!' erupted and the hapless victim was put into a flowered frock of the '60s for the day. It became a regular sight to see a boy nonchalantly walking across the road to the sportsfield in his 'Derek' dress. Mellow in the summer sun, the buildings of Douai and the grounds in the shadow of the Abbey have never looked lovelier. But Douai School closed just before our Course began. After nearly a century, the School ran out of money in 1998 and although its friends, including ourselves, managed to buy it some more time, in May 1999 it had to admit defeat. At the time of going to press, the lease to the buildings is for sale and their use is uncertain. At least for the immediate future, after ten wonderful summers there, our Course at Douai may be at an end. We invited members of Douai's monastic Community to our final dinner. The Community has been very supportive of our work and would love us to return. Before the meal, Father Peter, Father Godric and Father Oliver taught our students the Douai Song that has been sung at Douai for ages. It is in Latin – the other universal language. Our students are fast learners. At the end of the meal, preserved for ever on video, the refectory resounded to our young people from all over the world singing for what may be the last time the Douai Song in Douai School.

It is a different situation entirely at the other schools we use. For them, numbers are increasing and each is expanding its facilities. The void, if there is one, left by Douai's demise will partly be filled by their increased capacity. We have only used the Manor House at Mary Hare, but its campus contains more buildings than this. I mention developments at Mary Hare later. This summer, our Course there was as it has been each year since 1982. Six years after joining us as a teacher, Vince Purdue, reached the top as Course Manager. Because of his vast and lengthy experience in EFL teaching, he doubled as Course Tutor. Just as Douai was unusual in having almost all returning teachers, Mary Hare was unusual in having almost all completely new teachers. It was not

an advantage. Kerry Davies, a former colleague of Vince's in 'real life' was his trusty ACM. Jane Allard was a welcome newcomer from teaching in Spain; James O'Hagen brought his rich, rolling accent from Glasgow in Scotland; Angela Hamilton brought hers from the other side near Edinburgh; newly-qualified Catherine Tucker came from three years on Cheam's Sports staff; Nick Arnell joined in with the activities when not laid low by illness or accident; Fiona Kearns dropped in from Spain. Neil Johnson, our new and superb Sports/Social Organiser, took on one of the hardest jobs on any of the Courses. He did not disappoint. He showed enormous reserves of stamina in his ubiquitous role. His two years as a student and as an Assistant at Cheam had been excellent preparation. Terpsichorean Jenny Tayler was his able new Assistant. Easy-going Toby Campbell was another. Angela Linés of the winsome smile was our Staff Helper from Spain and Tamas Kozma of the colloquial expressions was from Hungary. Capable Matron, Dot Brierley, returned for another summer with us. This was a year when the students in general understood the spirit of Mary Hare more than the staff. Some proved to be quick learners; others will not be seen again. After several years in the doldrums, the Folies (of which more later) revived its former glory. A strong group of older students took the lead and created an original and clever setting, unmatched even by Elstree. The students entered into the spirit of the Course well. By the third week, all of them were into the ribaldry of 'Man O Man'. Few of the boys escaped a soaking. Advice to a first-time student on one of the assessment forms suggested 'don't bring the best from your wardrobe'. Very sensible in view of some incredibly shrinking clothes. One or two students started the Course with the idea that we were providing a service and that all they had to do was to receive it in order to benefit. It was gratifying to see them act on the realisation that the Course depends on the interaction between the students and that our function is to facilitate this. I like Mary Hare. In fact, I like it so much, there is likely to be more of it in 2000.

I also like Cheam. Of all the schools we currently use, it is the one we have been at

longest. 25 years to be precise. Now in his eleventh year with us, Richard Wijeratne ran his customarily tight ship. Uniquely, the staff room is his office. It does not have to be, but he chooses to have it this way. The result is a team that works together so closely, that communicates all its ideas to each other so effectively, that it seems to function as one organism. The four teachers who were new to Cheam were absorbed into it – rumbustious Neil Jervis, booming Jonathan Doering and sensitive Carolyn Godfrey. Course Tutor, Katie Scott, was new to Cheam, but not to VacStuds, having done two years at Douai. She ran the teaching side with such efficiency that whatever was due to happen, simply happened. The ever-dependable Liz Morris was back as ACM for her sixth year with us, as was Megan Roberts for her second. Mike Penney arrived with half his own school's drama department's wardrobe for his second year. The costumes appeared everywhere – in class photo stories, in the Folies, the Slave Auction – but then being at Cheam was like being in a drama with most of the events tightly organised by the Sports Crew. The indefatigable and irrepressible David Wijeratne was in charge. His was the brilliant 'Man O Man' idea which then did the rounds at the other schools, being constantly developed. His lieutenants were Camilla Woolsey-Brown and Patrick Begley, both new to us, but now like old friends. The two Staff Helpers were new, too – thoroughly dependable Severin Berker from Germany and Thea Misvør from Norway who told me she had such a wonderful time she could not possibly come again. Thankfully this is not a commonly held view. I rely on students and staff having such a wonderful time that they all want to come again – and they do. One drama was not choreographed by us. It highlighted the reason for our rule of not going onto the roof and gave me the most heart-stopping moment of all my years running the Courses. For this, but mainly for the sheer intensity of its emotions, Cheam '99 will be as etched on my memory as it is on the students'.

Elstree, this year the largest Course and the most international, was run yet again by David Johnson, now in his sixth year as Course Manager, with Dominic Higgins, in his fifth year with us, as both Course Tutor and ACM. Almost everyone in the staff room was experienced with us:– Peter Blood and Sara Evans were in their fourth year, Anna Eames, Joanne Fox-Mills and Simon Crane were in their second. Simon's wife, Marianne,



was the newcomer, but as she is an experienced primary school teacher, she was in her element with the tots. And quite a few tots there were. Tots or near-adults, our new Sports and Social Organiser, Rob Milne, took them all in his stride. He had a clear idea of how he wanted to build on the success of previous years. He did just that. With innovation and by developing ideas tried elsewhere, he put his own stamp on Elstree's events. His two able and popular Assistants, Chloë Dunnett and Michael Taylor, both returning from last year, together with returning Staff Helper Ramon (a.k.a. Hot Dog) de la Torre from Spain and debutante Nina Schrader-Nielsen from Norway, with occasional contributions from Oscar when he could escape from the kitchens, completed the Sports Crew. We had two Matrons this time. Carole Browne needed to leave early. Her place was taken by Douai's Assistant, Catherine Olsen. It took her no time at all to get to grips with those areas of the Course that others overlook. From the Talent Show, through Man O Man, via the Casino, to the Folies Bergères, there was a special Elstree touch to everything. Various arcane delights punctuated the more established activities. Staff would spontaneously go into 'Dwarves, Wizards and Giants' mode; girls would take time out from relaxing on a banana and clamour for the Clive Song which the boys would perform to squeals of delight. Somehow it did not quite have the ring of 'I've got an Elstree dream (if you know what I mean)' and, sadly, it had to be cut from the video. 'Characters' abounded among both staff and students. Banana love was in the air. And an eclipse was in the sky. We all shared near-totality; the experience of a lifetime under the merest sliver of a crescent sun.

The remarkable group passions that every VacStuds Course engenders are here and now and at no other place at no other time. They are created anew each year – as good, as

strong, as magnetic – but always different. For those at the four schools who were caught up in the magic, the long hot summer of '99 will live in the memory.

There are some of us who are privileged to see it all – from every perspective at every school. Our support teacher, Ian Nelson, from Liverpool taught at each Course. His company was enjoyed by all the staff and his lessons by every student. He merrily zipped from school to school, his movements captured not by me on video, but by one particular speed camera. Also peripatetic was Fred Gooch, our dependable Director of Studies of the last eleven years. He can be credited with the introduction of a topic/task-based approach to the teaching on our Courses. His idea was to create a learning situation which would not simply replicate what was happening in the student's own classroom at school. In this aim, I think he was successful, although some teachers proved more educable than others. He tells me this year was his swansong. And there was my right hand, my PA, Jonathan Riggall. Having proved himself with the Sierra-banger last year, he was treated to the air-conditioned 24 valve luxury of a black Mondeo, also equipped with a radar detector, just in case. He fetched, he carried, he took down and put away, he parried unreasonable requests and never, not once in three years, has he uttered a single word of protest.

Tennis lessons, again, were by LTA professional, Liz Fidler, and discos by Mark Thatcher. I cannot imagine what I would do without these two stalwarts. Retirement would surely beckon.

And there was me – once again combining the roles of cameraman, one-man film crew, telephone operator and ultimate deterrent – all from a moving A8. And from now on, it will not be just me. I shall have an Assistant Course Director. Read on.

SPORTS DAY 1999

It made a change not to have to think about making a change. The weather before during and after Sports Day was dry, hot and sunny. As ever, passions ran high. 'We are from Mary, Mary, Mary Hare-air!' 'Douai is the be-est of all the four schoo-ols. We shall impress you because we're better than fo-ools!' 'Go Che-eam,! Go, Che-eam!' 'We're gonna score one more than you-oooh! Elstree!' To someone who has not seen it before, the guttural chants as the coaches bearing the various schools arrive may sound vaguely threatening. For me, filming in the middle of the melee, the emotions are tribal, territorial and elemental. Mascots are grabbed – some rescued, others torn limb from limb. The head of Mary Hare's blue alien made an appearance in Elstree's Folies, pulled from the magician's top hat. The exploded Douai alligator was seen in another school's photostory being flung from a dormitory window. These are trophies. This is the thin veneer of civilisation being pulled away for just a few minutes. The sports begin and the people disperse, some to volleyball, some to football, some to softball. For an hour or so in the middle, they retreat to the cool order of the dining room and its mouth-watering buffet spread on tables each with the name of a school. Then back into the fray for the finals of each sport, followed by the tug o' war and then – the Spectaculars. Days of practice, the whole school judged by the other schools, the one time in the month when everyone joins in. And what Spectaculars they were! Douai produced a synchronised Star Wars with clever intertwining of movement. Mary Hare's students started with a celebration of '70s 'Saturday Night Fever', continued with Mary Hare songs, contorted themselves into the shape of 1999 and then re-contorted themselves into 2000 and ended with – fireworks! Elstree's 'Wild Wild West' show was a choreography of Cowboys and Indians culminating in the appearance of their Course Manager riding a large and very real horse! The Spectacular of all Spectaculars was Cheam's. They chose the theme of the circus. The show was compered by a ringmaster who introduced all the acts. Jugglers, clowns, acrobats and more paraded in front of the other schools. It was an inspired bravura performance, quite unforgettable. I thought I knew what was happening on my Courses, but the climax of the Spectaculars came as a complete surprise. Whatever next? Although all the Sports Organisers work together in





arranging Sports Day, much of the burden falls on the host school. Mary Hare's Sports Organiser, Neil Johnson, subtly distinguishable by his chimney-pot hat and raincoat covered with the flags of the nations, seemed to be everywhere making sure the jigsaw of events fitted together to make it a day to remember.

CATERING

Everyone sampled the delights of Mrs Jean Monger's catering at Mary Hare on Sports Day. At Cheam and Elstree, meals were provided by Gardner Merchant with Roger Hammett in charge. At Douai, their caterer was Ray Chapman. I realised decades ago that it is difficult to cater for children and practically impossible to cater for children from so many different countries. We do our best, helped this year by the lifting of the ban on British beef. This was back on the menu, duly labelled as such for those few who still have qualms. In view of the many allergies that are a feature of modern times, all dishes containing nuts are labelled, too. My own feeling is that our catering is, by and large, as good as we can reasonably be expected to get it. When I see a teenager walk past and ignore a variety of fresh salads, fresh fruit, three different hot main courses and three desserts and sit down to pick at a single bread roll, I know that there is nothing more we can do. Once again I asked the students to complete a 'Food Questionnaire' and have tabulated the results. As one respondent said 'It's hard to please everyone, especially when we all want different things. I don't think there's much to change'. The overall average satisfaction rates (combining 19 different questions on quality, quantity and variety of the various meals) are as follows:- Douai 61%; Mary Hare 69%; Cheam 65%; Elstree 69%. Results are similar to last year's with Cheam a little down and Elstree a little up. I request marks on a scale from 1 (bad) to 10 (good) and indicate that a 1 by 'choice' = there was no choice at all; that a 1 by 'quality' = that the food was inedible and that a 1 by 'quantity' indicates that there was no food at all. I discounted responses from those who answered that there was no food at all - and there were a few. As ever, many responses were highly subjective and some were bizarre (there was good choice, but no food at all, although this non-existent food was of good

quality). The caterers have been given the forms and a breakdown of the results applying to the various aspects of the catering from breakfast to barbecues. They have been asked to take note of the comments. I felt that I had eaten well this summer - and I ate only at the schools.

WORKING FOR THE CATERERS

Former students who would like to earn money by working for Gardner Merchant at Cheam or Elstree should contact me. I shall send them Roger Hammett's address. Three have already done so. The work is hard, but all had a great time.

THE FUN OF VACSTUDS

Preparation for the Spectaculars dominates the Courses before Sports Day. The routines help the students come together as a School. By the time Sports Day arrives, they are acting as a team. Although I can claim credit for this idea, I cannot do the same for the 'Folies Bergères'. It was Maurijn Cosijn, Dutch student then Staff Helper, whose brainwave this was at Mary Hare in the mid-'80s. For the students to work together on producing an evening of entertainment was simply inspired. The Folies Committee was completely multinational and did all its planning in English. Any student who had a talent could participate and those who were leaders came naturally to the fore. It had such an impact on the Mary Hare Course that I recommended it be adopted everywhere. Eventually it was. Over the last few years, the Folies at Elstree has been definitive. The students there regularly came up with a novel theme for the evening and put together a varied programme using all the many talents to be found among their number. I know from parents who have seen their offspring on the video that even they had not realised some of these skills existed. This is a very practical way in which young people coming

to us are encouraged to develop. This year, having heard so much about the one I missed filming last year, the Folies at Douai was videotaped. Like the curate's egg, it was good in parts. The Cheam Folies was held outdoors in fabulous weather in magnificent grounds. Students acted as waiters providing a finger buffet to the audience seated at tables and enjoying a varied programme of magic, dancing, sketches and badinage. At Elstree, bales of straw created a barn dance atmosphere and acts, some that had already made their debut in the clever 'Talent Show' and several new routines, were performed around the tables. This and the 'Revue' evening ended in the now traditional community singing. Everyone joined in with the traditional Elstree songs, including one borrowed from Mary Hare, and the ubiquitous John Denver's 'Leaving on a Jet Plane', the merest two notes from which can reduce any of our students to tears in the last week. But it was at Mary Hare that the Folies Committee came up with the cleverest theme. It was of a jumbo jet. The seating was in the configuration of a 747. The audience were the passengers and the Committee was the crew. The acts took place in the aisles or were brought to the passengers' seats. Card tricks via the flight attendant. Dancing led by the stewards and stewardesses. Anyone smoking on board would be flown to another destination. A nice touch was their phoning my mobile number so I could be told to turn it off. At that time, I was being kept informed by phone of a potentially serious medical problem at another school, so the ingenuity of their stratagem was rather lost on me. I must not underestimate our students.

THE 'STUDIES' PART OF VACSTUDS

Just as we saw talents in the extra-curricular programme, so we saw some remarkable linguistic skills. Now more than ever, English is the world language. Anyone who merely



ELSTREE 1999

dips into the World Wide Web can see this. English is everywhere. Our students use it everyday in our Forum and there are ICQ meetings regularly – all using non-stop English. Our Director of Studies, Fred Gooch, devised a teaching programme that our students will not encounter in their own classrooms. It is task/topic-based. The teachers are introduced to this first in a handbook we print and distribute before they arrive. Then there is an induction session the day before the students come. Each School has its own Course Tutor (a senior teacher) and regular visits from the Director of Studies, to ensure that standards are maintained and that an in-service teacher-development programme is in place. As one of the Course Tutors wrote in the final memo to me: 'This has been a marvellous year – one which the teachers and I have thoroughly enjoyed'.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

The prizes for Academic Excellence were:- Almudena Arnaldos (Douai); Janice Tam (Mary Hare); Pedro Rebelo (Cheam); Ece Akáay (Elstree).

ESSAY WRITING

The Staff Helpers at two of the schools organised an essay-writing competition on the subject of the 'magic of VacStuds' and 'why VacStuds is special'. I have kept all the entries. They were so magical and special. Winners were:- Art Henderson (Douai) and Risa Takemura (Elstree).

'ENGLISH-ONLY PRIZE'

The prize for the 'English-Only' Raffle is now the splendid new VacStuds watch for the Millennium – too special a gift for its award to be left to chance. Although there will be 'English-Only' Days as before, this will be a chance for students to impress the staff and to show them how much advantage they are taking of the chance to mix and use English. The staff will put forward to me the names of those who have impressed them with the linguistic use they have made of the international environment and I shall award the 'English-Only Prize' accordingly. Winners in 1999 were:- Sotiris Karkaniyas (Douai); Nicolas Panteleimonitis (Mary Hare); Paola Martella (Cheam); Dainius Podolinskis (Elstree).

IOL EXAMINATION

The Institute of Linguists Certificate in Spoken English for Short Courses gained a 'Level 4' in 1999 to cater for those of our students who have a near-fluent command of

English. Several were awarded a Distinction (the highest grade) at this level. So impressed was the Head of the examination team that she telephoned me to comment on the excellence of all our students at their various stages of competence. They recommended that one of our students should be awarded a special prize for the quality of his spoken English. I was happy to award this to Martin Eiserfey at Mary Hare. We remain unique in offering this examination. It is a real qualification from Government-approved examiners. It will be offered again in 2000.

VACSTUDS CERTIFICATES

The examination certificate is not the only valuable piece of paper our students have at the end of our Course. The final report and leaving certificate from a British Council Accredited School is now accepted by the Italian Education Ministry as counting towards the student's matriculation. This year, I wrote to all Italian parents to say:- 'A partire dall'anno scolastico 1998-1999, nel voto finale della maturità, potrà essere inclusa una 'rilevante esperienza al di fuori della normale attività scolastica'. Il British Council in Italia ha concordato con il Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, che gli attestati di partecipazione a corsi di Lingua in Inghilterra presso scuole riconosciute dal British Council, potranno essere considerati ai fini del voto finale della maturità a partire dal 1999.

Vacational Studies è, naturalmente, riconosciuta dal British Council, perciò i nostri attestati finali saranno riconosciuti come 'rilevante esperienza...'. Maybe where Italy has started, other countries will follow. In Monaco, a certificate issued by us will count towards a state bursary. There may be other grants that I am not aware of in other countries.

THE VALUE OF THE COURSE

I know that this is a big investment for our students and their parents – not just of money,

but also of time. I am convinced – and I am sure our students and parents are, too – that at this stage in their lives, this is the best investment a parent can make. I realise the responsibility this places on me to make sure that a young person's experience with us is thoroughly positive. I shall always do the best I can to justify the confidence placed in me. There are, however, two aspects to the Course that I have become aware of in the last 27 years. I pass on my thoughts to you....

ITS VALUE LIES IN YOUR INPUT

Our students of the '90s expect and get far more than their predecessors. Indeed, we now have a book compiled by past Sports/Social Organisers of 'activities that work and how they work; activities that don't work, why not and how they might work'. We had two children of children who were with us in the '70s – Alex, son of Ivo von Kursell, student in 1972 and the first-ever Staff Helper, and Birna, daughter of Nina Svavarsdottir, student in 1975 and also a Staff Helper. The parents had two or three special events a week and danced, as Ivo put it, to six or seven records on a gramophone. But they had a fantastic time and the camaraderie that developed and the tears that were shed at the end were no less than they are today. Now there is at least one major event a day and a far greater variety of activities. The Casino, the Folies, the Slave Auction, Christmas Dinner – and such 'old favourites' – had simply not been devised in the '70s. Several of the events our students take for granted now were thought up by the students and staff of nearly 30 years ago. And so the Course took shape. In today's society, we are used to getting a level of service like never before. If we want it, we expect it – now! 'Which language do you want to speak in four weeks?' the advertisements say, as though one has only to buy the language course on cassette and the knowledge just follows. It





does not happen like this. Our Course does not either.

We do not just provide a service whereby all our students have to do is receive it. It is the students who make the Course. It is the students who, by their interaction, create the best summer of their lives. We do our best to facilitate this. Students who think all they have to do is take the service we provide and that the benefit will follow without effort on their part, are in for a disappointment. There are a few who arrive as if they are merely visiting. They analyse the food, the teaching, the laundry, the medical services, the programme – as services provided. They quantify the value these services represent and expect a similar value in benefit – without input on their part. Eventually, almost all are carried along by the sheer enthusiasm of the others. They realise that the Course is what they make it. They get out what they put in. Fortunately, in most cases, this is a great deal.

'Please make sure he does not communicate with his friend' appeared on a letter this year. The only way to ensure this is to place the two at different schools. We cannot force friends from home apart. It is not realistic. Neither is it possible to stop children speaking their own language with each other if they really want to. All we can do is our best. I have included the following in this section for the last few years. It is essential for those sending their children for the first time to read the following:-

UNREALISABLE EXPECTATIONS

We do what we can to encourage students to learn and use the Course to advantage. We do our best to look after them. We make no other claims. We cannot force a child to integrate. While we provide encouragement, they must help themselves. They will find others who speak their language and they may be tempted to take the easy way. They may come with friends from home. We cannot keep friends apart when they are at the same School. They must decide to broaden their international horizons, mix and use English. Parents may make requests, but we reserve the right to place students in what we consider to be appropriate classes and dormitories. The Course is a communal experience. Individual freedom is restricted. Our school buildings are boarding schools – not hotels. Accommodation, washrooms, etc. are shared. Bedrooms are boarding school dormitories and these may be sparsely furnished. Our schools become co-educational only in the summer, so

bathrooms may be away from dormitories and boy/girl rotas for their use are sometimes needed. Clothes storage space may be limited. All sorts of compromises have to be made, but for most young people this is part of the fun. We also ask parents to accept that telephone contact with their children, especially in the first few days, is not a good idea. We are not being difficult, just putting into practice what we know from experience works. In effect, what we are requesting is a partnership between us based on our expertise and parents' trust in us. What we provide and the parameters of what we permit are in our literature. We act on the assumption that parents and students read it all.

ENGLISH LAW

I state on the Application Form that this applies. There is nothing sinister about the inclusion of these words. We are de facto in loco parentis in the summer. We accept responsibility for looking after 300+ other people's children. Parents trust us to make wise decisions. Sometimes, however, they make requests which we consider unwise. For example, we are asked to let children be unaccompanied by staff when we consider they are not responsible enough to be unaccompanied. Children feel that, if they ask their parents to request something from us, we must comply with a parental request. We are the ones closest to what is happening. We know what a prudent parent would do and would not do in certain circumstances. Legally, we are expected to fulfil the role of a prudent parent – no more, no less. Sometimes we do not agree with what a parent is asking us to do. We shall use our discretion in all matters. Under English Law a parent may not sign away a child's rights. This includes the child's right to be protected by adults. We shall do what we think is right for the child. This is why I state that English Law applies.

MOBILE PHONES

These are frequently brought. They are generally a nuisance and do not help with integration. We ask that they are not brought. If they are, they must be noted on the 'Valuable Possessions' form and deposited in the Office for safe-keeping.

TRIPS

For 2000, there will be two visits to London. One will be the usual London trip – sightseeing and shopping. The second trip will be to the Millennium Experience at the Millennium Dome at Greenwich. This is open only during 2000 and is a once-in-a-

lifetime opportunity. The fourth trip will be to another town or place of interest decided by staff and students. The fourth trip will be Sports Day. There will be two additional shopping afternoons locally. We shall try to accommodate individual preferences rather than expect our young people to conform to our (or their parents') expectation of what they will like. There is no point in expecting every student to be interested in the same things. We shall arrange for students to be informed about what is possible at each of the venues and they can decide what they would like to do. What we shall include is transport and supervision. We shall obtain group booking rates where possible, but entrances will be payable from pocket money. If students wish to go somewhere else, or do something special, we shall try to make the arrangements. The trip to Chessington World of Adventure, for example, has become tradition. Most schools now arrange a bowling trip, a visit to a water world and to a new release at the cinema. One last summer organised a hugely successful outing to an organisation specialising in 'paint-balling'. If a large enough group wishes to go somewhere, we shall make the arrangements and send accompanying staff.

Whether or not we allow children on excursions to be unaccompanied is subject to our discretion as well as the parents'. A student (and sometimes a parent) may have a view on supervision which is more relaxed than ours. Our view must, of course, prevail as we have to take the responsibility, as mentioned previously.

THEATRE VISITS

These proved as popular as ever. The choice system adopted in 1996 was used again. Students are asked to choose which shows they wish to see in the order of preference on a form which shows the Invoice number. I try to give each student the chance to go once, if possible to the first choice, if not to the second choice and so on. For those who wish to go to a second show, I look at the forms again in Invoice number order. Those who book early and have low Invoice numbers stand most chance of a second or even third visit. There are always more students wishing to go to the theatre than there are tickets available. Parents are asked to specify how many theatre visits they wish their children to have. Whether or not that wish is possible depends on the Invoice number. 2000 Invoice numbers start at 11016. For 2000, I am replacing some of the

old favourites with new choices. A 'Theatre Visits' choice list will be sent out in March.

PROPERTY

Once again, we ask that items over £40 in value be listed on the 'Valuable Possessions' form. At the end of the Courses we send back every item of property left behind that was named. Un-named items are also returned if we have a good idea to whom they belong. Property not given to us for safe-keeping and lost other than when in the student's possession on a trip is not covered by the Insurance policy we include as part of the Course Fee.

HEALTH

Students are entitled to free emergency treatment under the Medical Insurance policy included in the Course Fee for illnesses or accidents that happen in Britain. No one is entitled to free treatment for a pre-existing condition unless they have an E128 form for temporary residents. All students in the EEA (EC, most other European countries and Russia) must come with an E128 form. This is obtainable from your own doctor and will entitle the bearer to free treatment under the British National Health Service for any health-related condition, pre-existing or otherwise, exactly like a British resident.

VACSTUDS VIDEO

This has been edited and sent to those requesting it. Each school has its own E-180 'VacStuds '99 All Over Again'. For those students wishing to relive the summer and for those parents trying to find what made it 'the best summer of my life', here is instant nostalgia, tangible atmosphere, the magic weaving its spell. Parents of 2000 students who would like a preview can request a copy. It is absolutely not a promotional video. It is

a collection of the events I saw as I went from school to school over the summer.

BEFORE AND DURING THE COURSE

Parents are welcome to contact me on any matter. In July and August I tend to be at my desk from 08.00 (English time) until 10.00 and then I travel around the schools. For practical reasons, therefore, it is best to make contact with me during the Courses via the Course Manager. Just before the Course, I send each parent 'last minute' information with my GSM phone number. This mobile phone never leaves me, so I can almost always be reached - sometimes in surprising places. If there is a problem, I can take immediate action - as long as I know about it. Mobile phone reception in Woolhampton is awful, so if there is no response, please assume I am at Douai or Elstree and try later. During the period before the Courses, letters are replied to immediately. I shall probably not be able to reply to letters received during July and August until after the Courses, however. If parents could telephone children only on the two specific Telephone Days mentioned in the 'Notes for Parents', this would be appreciated.

STAFF HELPERS

Traditionally, we have two former students on each Course as unpaid helpers, providing a link between staff and students. They tend to be 18-21 and to have left a gap of one summer after being a student. SHs are chosen at the end of the year. Potential SHs should contact me in November. If we use the expression 'leadership potential' or similar, in the report, this is the clue that an application may be fruitful. Occasionally SHs may graduate to Assistant status and more, but this is not generally the case as we look for native English-speaking staff.

AFTER THE COURSE

Please feel you can contact me about anything connected with Britain. For example, parents ask for my advice on continuing their children's education in Britain. I am happy to help. No charge! I see this as a natural extension of my work with young people. Students ask for information, sometimes ten or twenty years later. No problem!

There are two other extensions to my work - The Jörg Weise Association and Giotto.

THE JÖRG WEISE ASSOCIATION

Briefly, the history of the JWA is that in 1979 one of our first students, Jörg Weise, who was with us in 1971, died at the age of 21 in a motorcycle accident. It was particularly sad as he had shown promise as an actor and was already involved in international work. His father was on the Board of Directors of Bayer AG in Leverkusen, Germany. In the name of his son, I invited Prof. Dr. Weise to nominate a young person for a place on one of our Courses. He agreed, but went further. He asked that he be permitted to nominate and pay for a place in his son's name in perpetuity. He also agreed to the sculpting of a trophy that would be awarded annually in his son's name to a student or students making an outstanding contribution to the international aims of our Courses. The recipients of the Trophy were invited to a gathering each year and, in time, the group grew to a sizeable number. Such a collection of talented young people from many different countries needed more of a reason for being than just an annual get-together, I felt, and in 1985 I put to them the idea that they could form themselves into an Association that would work towards giving other, less privileged young people the opportunity to cross frontiers. The Jörg Weise Association (JWA) was born. It is now a charitable Foundation, registered in Germany, for the advancement of international understanding. It meets annually and has a well-organised social programme. For those who would like to know more, the Chairman is Ed Bergsma (Krabbendijk 14, 7591 AX Denekamp, Netherlands. Tel: +31 541 355780; Fax: +31 541 351929.) The next JWA Meeting will be in Berlin at Easter 2000.

The Jörg Weise Trophy is no longer awarded annually as it tended to promote too competitive a spirit, but has been awarded occasionally for 'an outstanding contribution to the international ideals of the Course'.





THE JÖRG WEISE SCHOLARSHIP

We continue to be associated with the Jörg Weise Memorial Scholarship. The Scholarship is a place on any of our Courses, return air ticket from anywhere in the world, pocket money, theatre tickets and tennis lessons. The recipient of the Scholarship will be the sort of student outlined above who will benefit from attending the Course, but who is unable to apply for a place in the normal way for financial reasons. The Scholarship Committee will take steps to verify the financial situation of candidates. We welcome nominations for the Scholarship in 2000 which should be sent in confidence, and without informing the projected recipient, to Vacational Studies. I shall forward nominations to the Scholarship Committee of the JWA.

GIOTTO - ITS HISTORY

Giotto was started in 1986, the year of Halley's Comet. It seemed to me a pity that the strong international contacts made by our students in their teens should disappear with the passage of time. It is not that they did not wish to keep up the contacts, it is just not easy to continue correspondence after the shared experience of the Course has faded from the memory. Nevertheless, I felt that these contacts, good in one's teens, could be even more beneficial later on. I decided to contact all our past students to see how they felt. It was my biggest-ever mailshot and the response was huge. I named this organisation Giotto after the collaborative European space-probe, Giotto, which was sent up in February 1986 to observe Halley's Comet. No one knew at that time if it would succeed or fail. In fact, it succeeded. The probe Giotto was so named because Halley's Comet features in a work by the Florentine painter, Giotto. When I decided in 1986 to collate the names of our students from 1972 to date and create this international organisation, I did not know if it would succeed or fail. From 1986 to 1997, there was an increasingly heavy 'Giotto Book', posted worldwide. In 1998, there was a 'Giotto CD', light to post, but complicated to install and use. From 1999, Giotto has

existed only in cyberspace. This is an ideal medium for it.

GIOTTO PAGES

The 2000 'Giotto Site' is in its 14th year and contains over 2300 names. This suggests to me that the concept is succeeding. Listing in Giotto is provided at no charge. Name, birthdate, e-mail address and brief profile only are included. It is totally financed by Vacational Studies as an adjunct to our work in helping make the world a smaller place. Some now in Giotto are rather young, but time will put this right.

In a few years, the Giotto Pages will include many more interesting and useful people in various fields who are willing to be contacted. There is already an 'International Work Experience' section. I know that various contacts have been made via Giotto. For reasons of security, full addresses are not provided.

INTERNET SITE

This has now become our 'shop window' and the main source of information about us. The entire brochure and also this 'news section' are on our web site. Application for places on our Courses can be made electronically. My research indicates that the vast majority of students have access to a computer and the majority of these have access to the Internet. For those who do not, I can only apologise that a great deal of the information we put out will not be available to them. Nevertheless, the Internet is now firmly established, widely used and understood, and we must assume that parents and students have moved with the times.

INTERACTIVE FORUM

This has been a huge success since it was launched at the beginning of 1998. People connected with Vacational Studies use it all the time to communicate with each other. If you have not yet used it, please visit it on our Internet pages.

ASSISTANT COURSE DIRECTOR

I have appointed Richard Wijeratne to be my full-time Assistant. Richard was Deputy Head of The Downs School, Wrexham and has had 12 years' experience of VacStuds as Teacher, Sports Organiser and Course Manager. He is as totally committed to Vacational Studies as I am.

AND FINALLY

Let me quote from a letter written to me in February by Ana Filipa Pinto Portugal from Angola:- *'The Course ended one more time and although it was my fifth year there, the time to say goodbye was as hard as all the other years I've spent.*

But after all these years I still have the same opinion; those were the best holidays I've ever had. Those were unique, incredible and unforgettable holidays that you've provided for us.

Throughout five years, you gave me the opportunity to meet new people from all over the world, the opportunity to learn more about other cultures and above all improve my English.

There I spent some of the best moments of my life. I found my second very best family. And the feeling created between that family is so strong, so beautiful, so unbreakable, that it makes me feel a lucky girl for having had these fantastic and terrific experiences.

I would like to tell you that these five years spent there will be kept carefully in my heart's most special section.

Finally, I want to thank you for providing those terrific Courses, each of them better than the other; each of them with a special touch.

Although the Course has ended, its memory will never end in my mind.'

Ian G. Mucklejohn - Autumn 1999



Mrs S.I. Mucklejohn

*Friends will be saddened to know that
Renée Mucklejohn - my mother,
co-director and best friend - died on
28 September 1999.*