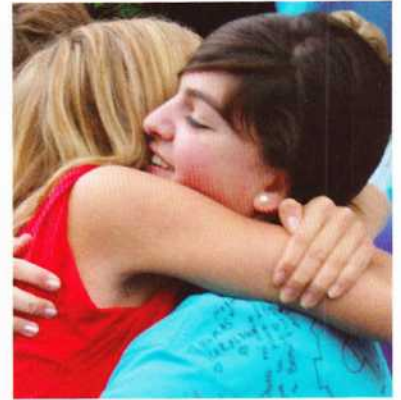


Vacational
Studies®

"The best
four weeks
of my life"



Residential English
Language Courses
11-17 Years

Summer 2005



www.vacstuds.com

Accredited by the
BRITISH

ENGLISH 



The Courses

“You have no idea how
I miss you”

RESIDENTIAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSES

Vacational Studies Courses have been running for 32 years. We have tried in this time to develop an enjoyable balance between ‘vacation’ and ‘study’. Here is our programme for Summer 2005.

WHAT WE TRY TO DO

Vacational Studies tries to create a totally international Course with students from as many different countries as possible. We avoid accepting a large number of students from any particular country. In this way we try to ensure that English is the main medium of communication among the students. By using English not just as a school subject, but as a living language, we hope our students will realise better its importance and value. When young people want to use English to make friends, this element of self-motivation greatly increases their fluency.

The emphasis on the practical use of English is combined with a full sports, entertainment and excursion programme helping young people to learn ‘English internationally...’ But it is more than this....

ACCREDITED BY THE BRITISH COUNCIL

Vacational Studies is ‘Accredited by the British Council’ and is a member of English UK – formerly ARELS (The Association of Recognised English Language Services) – a professional body, membership of which is granted only after thorough inspection and re-inspection every four years. We were last inspected in 2003 and are Accredited until March 2008.

ABOUT THIS BROCHURE

This is an Information Book. The first part (this section) gives you a factual overview of the work we do, so you can decide if we are right for your youngster. The second part (‘News 2004-2005’) 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 2005 Courses and what has shaped them, so you and your son or daughter will be fully informed and can prepare for the experience. If your application is accepted, both sections are essential reading. In particular, ‘Unrealisable Expectations’ in the second section deals with fundamental issues and must be read.





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 young person as an individual.



ow much

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. Complete beginners are not accepted because they cannot participate in an international community.

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

CHOICE OF COURSE

The Courses have the same format.
The only differences are location and dates.
2005 dates are:-

Mary Hare 12 July – 9 August 2005 (4 weeks)



THE SCHOOLS AND SURROUNDINGS

For 2005 we have Courses at Schools near Newbury – The Mary Hare School and Cheam School. Newbury is a small country town in a pleasant part of southern England in 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.

THE MARY HARE SCHOOL

The Mary Hare School is a campus comprising several buildings that we have used since 1982. 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 that we have used since 1975. 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 sports hall/gymnasium and a range of tennis courts. It has an open-air swimming pool.



“It’s strange to be at home
without all the people around.
The time I spent with you will
forever be a special place
in my heart.”

The Programme



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	'Homework'
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

THE TEACHING

A staff of professional teachers with experience of 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 'homework' 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. Course books include 'Cutting Edge', 'Over to You', 'Reward Intermediate', 'Matters' and 'Panorama 2'. Our teachers are encouraged to work with a wide range of lesson materials and to utilise newspaper and magazine articles, selected TV and radio excerpts, short stories, poems, songs and advertisements.

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. In Monaco, a bursary can be applied for.

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 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 non-sporting activities on the programme – games, talent shows, folies bergères, discotheques, barbecues, concerts, 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 three full days out. One is a visit to London for sightseeing; another is a visit to a designer outlet or town for shopping; the destination for the third excursion is to 'Sports Day'. Travel and staff supervision on these excursions are included in the Course Fee. Other excursions can be arranged on request.



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 about £7.

but months in advance have been requested and we will be allocated a limited number. Students who apply early enough will be able to see one of these shows. The cost of each (show + travel to the theatre) will be in the range £30-£50. The cost should be added to pocket money. If it is not possible to provide a ticket, the money will be returned with the student at the end of the Course.

CERTIFICATION IN SPOKEN ENGLISH BY THE INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTS (Optional Extra)

The Institute of Linguists has been recognised by the British Government as examiners since 1910. Specially for us, they have devised a Certification in Spoken English which will be externally marked by their examiners.

“Thanks for everything and for making dreams come true. VacStuds has been one of the best experiences of my life.”



Certification 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 £48.00.

CERTIFICATION IN WRITTEN AND WRITTEN + SPOKEN ENGLISH BY THE INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTS

For Upper Intermediate and Advanced level students, the Institute of Linguists also offers Certification at Levels 3+ and 4+ in written and written + spoken English. The cost is £48.00 (written only); £70.00 (written + spoken combined).

TENNIS LESSONS (Optional Extra)

Tennis may be played at any time. Lessons are not needed. We can arrange professional lessons, if required, 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

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

THE COURSE FEE DOES NOT INCLUDE:

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

There are NO EXTRA CHARGES except for optional church, theatre or shopping visits and professional tennis lessons. A deduction of £8 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.)

¹At specified times and terminals – see 'Travel'

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

³Travel and supervision, not entrance fees

⁴As described in the 'Insurance' slip

⁵If washable at 40°C+, not sensitive to bulk washing/drying and at your own risk



before booking them. If tennis lessons are requested, the cost (£36.00) should be added to pocket money.

FOOD SAFETY

Vacational Studies policy is not to serve any food about which there is any concern for any reason. We serve only what we believe parents would feel safe to serve their own children in their own homes.

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, choice from 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 'tuck shop'. At times throughout the Course, the menu will be varied to include, for example, barbecues (spare rib, hamburger, jacket potatoes, coleslaw dip, crisps, ice-cream, etc.) There will be a traditional British 'Christmas Dinner' (roast turkey with stuffing, roast potatoes, Baked Apple, Yorkshire pudding) and an 'English High

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.

Any student can join the 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 aim to have a British student, too. 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 and the British student constantly encourage English-speaking around the School.

Another 'encouragement' to speak English is the 'English Speaking 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. If a student is noticeably using English and is not 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 Speaking Prize'. The more points, the greater the chance of winning the prize. We hope that the prize will be a

Here is a typical menu for guidance:-

Breakfast

- Choice of cereal
- Choice of various breads, meats, cheese, fruit
- 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



“I can’t believe that those four weeks passed so fast.”

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 those with food allergies come with a 1ml. Adrenalin (Epinephrine) 1:1000 injection pen – an ‘EpiPen’. Children of EU/EEA nationality should bring a EHIC (European Health Insurance Card), 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 Catholic 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 £1,000,000; 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 £1,000,000 if an APEX reservation is lost because of delayed or advanced departure through illness or accident while the student is with us. Personal accident insurance is included.

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.

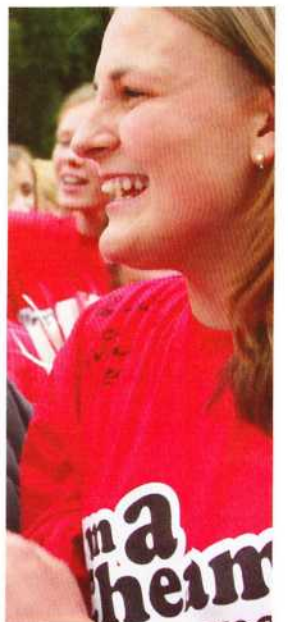
In addition to the staff, on each Course there are one or two older ex-students, ‘Staff Helpers’, to assist with the sports and entertainment programme. There is also at least one native English-speaking student.

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 obey the law, 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 he/she be taken home at the parents’ expense without refund of Fees. We also reserve the right to send the writer of the original ‘letter of recommendation’ a photocopy of any correspondence we enter into.



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. 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, exceptionally, 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' slip.

POCKET MONEY

Pocket money can either be brought by students (as cash or 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 in £ Sterling to Vacational Studies Pocket Money A/C 65400100 (IBAN number GB19 NWBK 6015 0765 4001 00) or in Euros to Vacational Studies Pocket Money A/C 10388494 (IBAN number GB19 NWBK 6072 0610 3884 94). Our BIC number is: NWBK GB 2L. We also have a £ Sterling Girobank account for personal money. The number is 255 7444. Students will tend to bring about £350. Optional tennis coaching fees, the cost of Certification 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.





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. The cheapest tickets are to be found on the airline's web site, NOT by phone and NOT via a travel agent. 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. Oslo flights BA 763/766 are included. 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, Luton or Stansted, 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 £85 and to Gatwick about £105. 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.

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

THE MARY HARE SCHOOL

From London, follow M4 to Exit 13 (Newbury). Leave M4 and follow signs to 'Newbury' and 'Donnington'. The Mary Hare School is 1km past Exit 13 on the right.

Address for students' letters:

The Mary Hare School, Newbury Berkshire RG14 3BQ.

Telephone (to contact Course Manager):

National: (01635) 244221

International: +44 1635 244221

Payphone (for students):

National: (01635) 244261

International: +44 1635 244261

CHEAM SCHOOL

From Newbury, take the A339 road (signposted 'Basingstoke') for 10km into Headley village. 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) 267814 (new number)

International: +44 1635 267814 (new number)

Payphone (for students)

National: (01635) 268225

International: +44 1635 268225

The telephone numbers and addresses given above are only for use during the Courses. During the rest of the year, please use our Newbury Office address and telephone numbers on the back page.

DIRECTIONS BY RAIL

By train from London, leave from Paddington Station. Arrive at Newbury Station. There are normally taxis at Newbury Station. If not, there are taxi numbers in the phone box near the Station.



“This year
it was really
special. So
many things
happened.”

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 (enclosed) contains more detailed information on various aspects of the Course. It is essential reading for the parents of 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.

families we talk to from now on' – (a Norwegian parent); 'We are very glad that he spent such a good time. He enjoyed his stay very much and, when he was home again, he had a lot to tell us. Not only has his English improved, but he has become more self-confident and to be among so many different young people was the best he could get' – (a German parent); 'His first year has been PERFECT. I'm sure he will never ever forget this great month (as you write in your brochure). He loved the social activities and also the excursions, the theatre and the teaching. He told me you did all the best to look after all the students and help them to mix. He'll visit the Giotto page and.... wait for Vacational Studies Courses for Summer 2005!' – (an Italian parent); 'Not only was she utterly delighted about this experience, the teachers, the activities, the encounters and the overall organisation, but she is now even chatting in English through the Internet, which is quite a surprising novelty to us. She is now only talking about going back next year' – (a Spanish parent); 'They both have improved their English language. So thank you very much for the quality of your work and staff' – (a Monegasque parent); 'He says that his stay in your school was the most beautiful holiday he has ever had. The place, friends, staff and you made on him excellent impression' – (a Polish parent); 'I have been 5 times in Vacational Studies and they all have been great, but this one has been very special. I have had the summer of my life' – (a Spanish Staff Helper); 'I had a great summer, but the thing is that I'd definitely change the freedom I had for one more time in Vacstuds' – (a 2003 student now too old for us); 'I had a great time' – (a Norwegian student); 'Thank you IGM for having created such a wonderful and unique camp which we won't ever forget' – (an Italian student); 'I am so happy that I went this summer. I learned a lot. I had a good time. The best' – (another Norwegian student); 'Thank you for this wonderful month you made for us. I had never been in such a wonderful place: the people, the staff and the place... Now that I'm in my house I miss so much all that. I would like that Mary Hare lasted for ever so we could stay all together' – (a Spanish student).

Modesty precludes further such quotes. Spontaneous outpourings of emotion can be found all over the Messages Forum.

News Summer 2004



If we have had a cool, damp summer, the weeks following the end of the Courses tend to be fine and dry. This time they were cooler and wetter. After last year's scorching heat, Britain in July and August lurched from cold to warm, from drizzle to downpour. For the first time in 32 VacStuds summers, I felt cold one evening filming outdoors. Our young visitors were having such a great 'Crazy Games' that they did not notice. Eventually the sun shone from clear blue skies in the last week or two, but not before we had our first wet Sports Day. So, apart from our unpredictable weather, what else happened in the summer of 2004? Read on...

After 19 years, Francis McIvor decided before it started that Mary Hare 2004 would be his last so-journ as Course Manager with us. At the final dinner, he told us that he had been at all the schools over the last two decades and he had decided he liked Mary Hare most of all. That his speech continued no further spoke volumes. Mary Hare 2004 had the strongest teaching staff for many a year. Ian Nelson was Course Tutor, returning to us after five years with the British Council in Madrid, his Liverpudlian twang undiminished. Chris Spencer was back for his fifth summer, also as Francis's ACM and resident basketball coach. The other teachers were new to us: Amy Mole, Martin Peirce, Neil Davies, Sarah Newbury and Andrew Hartshorn. All made a valuable contribution and most loved the experience. Peter Lavery changed, at my suggestion, from being a teacher last year to being Sports/Social Organiser this time. The 'Crew' all knew each other from Norwich School – a splendid recruiting area for us. Tom Siddiqui was back having been one of the British students in 2002. James Ryan and Sarah Naisby were new to us, but had been well-briefed. Bettina Watson returned for a third stint with us as Matron. Her work was as unobtrusively efficient as she was observant. With such well-intentioned staff, Mary Hare 2004 could have been a vintage year. For those who had not been before, it was. On every Course every year, we



look to the older returning students to set the tone and the lead. Sometimes they are charismatic and outgoing; sometimes it is a matter of 'one year too many'. This time, with a few notable exceptions, it was the younger ones who held the banner and cheered. The prize for Academic Excellence was awarded to Ekaterina Egorikova (Hungary). Alexander Koliusis (Germany) won the prize for English Speaking. Now in her eleventh year with us and with a new position of responsibility in 'real life', Liz Morris had to relinquish her role as Course Manager at Cheam 2004 for an entire week. Tom O'Sullivan had been a teacher with us in 2003 and, at my suggestion, became Course Manager during her absence. I could not have wished for a better one, nor, indeed, for a more effective Sports/Social Organiser. The change of role was again my suggestion. Occasionally I come up with a good idea. This time I had two. A larger-than-life omnipresence, Tom put heart and soul into creating a month to remember, ably assisted by Rob Hedge



(one of our British boys in 2002) together with George (I'm not grumpy) Cockburn and Becky Greenfield – both first-timers. In a forthright and swansong performance, Renay Proud was back with us as Matron after an absence of 25 years. Ed Cooper was our first-time Course Tutor. Jonathan Hooper returned as a qualified teacher having been Support Teacher in 2000 and SSO in 2001 at Elstree. He and fellow teacher 'Gav' (Andrew) Gavan were stalwarts on the sportsfield. Phil Sams came back for a fourth summer and Sarah Robinson returned from Cheam 2003. Lynn Davies and Kate Vere-Hodge made their teaching debuts with us. This was as strong a team of teachers as we have ever had and the students responded well. Integration was generally good and, by the last week, even those of the same nationality were quite happily, and sometimes unconsciously, using English with each other. At the final dinner, Liz told the students what a super group they had been. True, but a great deal can happen on the last night – as several discovered. Cheam 2004 was a vintage year in more ways than one. The prize for Academic Excellence was awarded to Maria Yakovleva (Russia). Tadek Bara Slupski (Poland) won the prize for English Speaking. Marta and Carmen Alvarez-Novoa came back to us as Staff Helpers at Mary Hare and Cheam after many years as students. They did a great job to help both Courses go with a swing and to give the students the chance of the same great time that they had at that age.

Looking at my filmed footage, I am aware just how hard-working the staff have been in making every day different, special and memorable. The Course feels like a year compressed into a month, so intense is its pace. The 'VacStuds 2004 All Over Again' DVDs are instant nostalgia. For those parents and friends regaled with events and people they have no knowledge of, they are a real insight into how so many youngsters from all over Europe who left maybe a little unsure and apprehensive have returned home red-eyed and drained, missing the closest of lifelong friends who were completely unknown to them just twenty eight days before.

Working at both Schools was Maeve Herron, our Director of Studies. She came all the way from Belfast new to us and to a job that every one of her predecessors had been promoted into after having been teachers with us. She coped brilliantly with a huge learning curve, quickly working out the storage system for the hundreds of books and mountains of resources that we store away at the end of each year. She worked with an already planned teaching programme, arranged student placement, report-writing and the Institute of Linguists Certification. She liaised with the Course Tutors at Mary Hare and Cheam to oversee the teachers' lessons. She was gentle and charming – and knew what she wanted. The discos were again provided by Mark Thatcher as has been the case since the mid '80s. Liz Fidler gave tennis lessons for the twenty fourth summer. And there was me – filming, photographing and occasionally dispensing justice – like a deus ex A8.

SPORTS DAY

Back at Mary Hare, this year's Sports Day was forecast to be dry. Not so. The persistent drizzle started after the first half hour, but by that time the tribal chanting had set the pulses racing. The rain became irrelevant and fizzled away in time for 'I'll always love Mary – Hare-air' and 'Hey, Cheam Dreamer – ooh! ah!' performed this time with an accompanying dance routine giving a flavour of the 'Spectaculars' of a few years ago. I shall ask SSOs for Spectaculars in 2005 as I think they give each School the chance to make Sports Day a showcase of its talents. As it was, Sports Day 2004 was a generally good-humoured

CATERING

Catering at Mary Hare was by their new Catering Manager, Moira Atkinson. Her salad bars rivalled those at any top hotel with a range of cold collations. I loved the hot dishes, too. Sodexo catered at Cheam again with Nick Dann in charge. The barbecues there were splendid and the 'English High Tea' (sandwiches and scones, jam and cream) that had been suggested by one of the students was such a success that I shall include it in the programme. For the duration of the Courses I ate only at Mary Hare and Cheam. There was something for me to enjoy at every meal. Youngsters are notoriously hard to please, but the Food Committees revealed no major problems and almost all their suggestions were acted on.

THE ENGLISH STUDENTS

I want our Courses to be fully international. This is not possible unless the UK is represented. Our specially chosen English students are instructed to get to know everyone and encourage the use of English socially. They are also used as a teaching resource by the teachers. Josh Blacker and Alasdair Dick were at Mary Hare. Mature, participatory and sensible, the teachers and crew sang their praises. Andy Lister was at Cheam. A sportsman and compere, he became thoroughly involved and popular.

LOOKING AFTER YOUNG PEOPLE

I believe that the relationship between ourselves and the parents of children in our care is a partnership. We want all our young people to get the most out of the experience. For this reason, I have written a 'Parental Control Condition' into the contract we have with parents. In brief, I say 'We do our best to fulfil our 'duty of care' under English law based on good will and the trust established by your and your child's agreement to the 'rules' as evidenced by the signed 'Agreement and Travel Details' form. If we think a problem is likely to arise, we shall try to contact you before it does so it can be prevented. Nevertheless, if your child's attitude or behaviour is such that we find we cannot exercise the control required to fulfil our 'duty of care', we shall pass responsibility for control to the parent either by requesting the parent's presence or by telephone contact with the child. If this fails and we decide the child is beyond control, we shall expel.'

In effect, this means that, if we sense that a student has problems that are likely to result in trouble, we contact the parent before real trouble results. We contacted parents on a few occasions this year, mainly in connection with problems of adjustment. In every case we had 100% support. The parents talked to their children in a rational way in their own language and helped them see the way forward.

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 a large number of other people's children. We take this responsibility seriously. Parents trust us to make wise decisions. Sometimes, however, we receive 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

UNREALISABLE EXPECTATIONS

It is important that all parents read this paragraph. 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 final report we write will be our frank assessment. As the teaching/learning situations are different, it may not be similar to the school report you are accustomed to. 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. If your child is interested in drinking, smoking, going out at night and leading an

for their own actions, we write frank reports to parents. We reserve the right to send the writer of the original 'letter of recommendation' a photocopy of any correspondence we have with parents about children in our care.

PHONING STUDENTS

The students who adjust best are those whose parents phone them only on the two 'Telephone Sundays'. If these parents wish to know how their child is adjusting, they phone the Course Manager and ask.

There are some parents who feel they must speak to their children frequently. We ask parents who must speak to their children outside 'Telephone Sundays' to phone the payphone, not our School Office number. We cannot search for children in a large building and campus. The payphone may ring unanswered. A student may answer it. If so, that student can be asked to search for a student. That student may comply with the request....

Parents do not send their children to us so that they can strengthen their relationships with old friends at home via international mobile phone calls. If a mobile phone is brought, this is what may happen. The rationale behind coming on the Course is to form new relationships and have new experiences via face-to-face use of English. New generation mobile phones give adult technology via the internet to young people who often do not know how to handle it. We assume parents supervise their children's use of mobile phones. We do not have the resources to do this. In line with UK Government Education Department advice on the possible health hazard for young people of microwaves near the brain in an enclosed environment, we do not permit students to use mobile phones inside the school. We ask that a mobile phone is not brought. Any mobile phone brought must be kept in the office and used outdoors. We accept no responsibility for loss of or damage to mobile phones that are brought. Any mobile phone kept other than in the office will be removed.

"You never want to be anywhere else than that wonderful place."

independent life, please choose another organisation less restrictive than ours. We assume that parents will be realistic about their children. We exercise due control, but they have the freedom to do things that are wrong. If they do, there are repercussions outlined in the 'Notes'. We do what we can to prevent rule-breaking, but if it happens, parents must accept that it is occasioned by their child's free will, not lack of control on our part.

I can put it into context. Ours is a new, exciting and active environment. Parental control appears absent. Our students are a long way from home, without the constraints and responsibilities that tend to check behavioural excess. No doubt there is also the desire to impress one's peers. They may call it 'being carried away'. Whatever the causes, some of our students may indulge in behaviour that is simply anti-social. If they get caught, they may feel they have little to lose. Protected by this feeling that no one of importance will ever know, I am aware that some students have broken our rules and even the law. All students come to us after a 'letter of



TRIPS

In addition to the three trips we arrange and which are included in the Fee, we can arrange other trips – such as visits to the cinema, paintballing and bowling – on request. We make the transport and staffing arrangements. We obtain group rates where possible and just pass on the charges with no mark-up.

THEATRE VISITS

Most students request a visit to the theatre. They are asked to choose which show they wish to see in order of preference on a form which shows the Invoice number. The earlier the application, the lower the Invoice number. Tickets are allocated by Invoice number. The lower the Invoice number, the greater the chance of getting one's choice of theatre visit. 2005 Invoice numbers start at 12413. A 'Theatre Visits' choice list will be sent out in March or later.

PROPERTY

We ask that valuable items are not brought. Items with a used re-sale value over £40 must nevertheless be listed on the 'Valuable Possessions' form. At the end of the Courses we send back every named item of property left behind. Un-named items are also returned if we have a good idea to whom they belong. We can keep items in our office on request. While they are safer in our office than elsewhere, we accept responsibility only for items stored in our safe. These items can be given to us on request. They are kept in the safe for the duration of the Course and not removed at any time. Property not in our safe 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. We accept no responsibility for mobile phones.



HEALTH & EHIC

All 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. EU and EEA residents are entitled to free treatment under the National Health Service for illnesses or accidents that happen in Britain. Pre-existing conditions are not covered by our insurance. No one (not even an EU or EEA resident) is entitled to free treatment under the NHS for a pre-existing condition unless they have an EHIC (European Health Insurance Card). EHICs were introduced on 1 June 2004 and are available from Social Security or Health Department offices overseas. If an overseas Social Security or Health Department office states that an EHIC is not needed because free treatment for a pre-existing condition is available for anyone in the EU or EEA on a short stay

that advice is wrong and the office should contact Mr Ineneji at the Department of Health on +44 20 7210 5318 for confirmation. If they have a pre-existing condition and do not have an EHIC, students should have their own medical insurance.

VACSTUDS DVD

'VacStuds 2004 All Over Again' has been edited and sent to those requesting it. 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 an instant walk down Memory Lane. Parents of 2005 students who would like a preview can request a copy.

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. For information, this is +44 7717 007 007.

STAFF HELPERS

Traditionally, we have a male and/or a female former student 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 'leadership potential' is mentioned in my letter accompanying the final report, this suggests that a SH application would be considered favourably.

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!

THE JÖRG WEISE ASSOCIATION

This exists to encourage international understanding. Occasionally its Trophy is awarded for an outstanding contribution to the international aims of the Course. Details are on www.vacstuds.com/JWA.

GIOTTO

This enables our students to keep in touch with friends from when they were students with us and to make new contacts for social or professional purposes. Details are on www.vacstuds.com/GIOTTO.

VACATIONAL STUDIES FOUNDATION

The Vacational Studies Foundation was registered as a Charity under English Law in January 2000 to assist talented young people. Details are on www.vacstuds.com/FOUNDATION.

H.T.W. MUCKLEJOHN

My beloved father, whose name still appears on our letterhead as Company Secretary, died last year. An ex-civil servant, he was a great support to me. I miss him very much. In his memory, the Jörg Weise Association has donated in perpetuity a full Scholarship which I am able to award when I come across a young person who would benefit from our Courses, but cannot apply for financial reasons. If you know one, tell me.

AU PAIR POSSIBILITY...

My three sons will be four years-old in 2005. The time may come when I shall look for an au-pair to help me with them and give them an international perspective. Although au-pairs are traditionally female, I would not object to a male. This is advance notice that there may be an au-pair vacancy with me in a year or so.

MY THANKS

...to all those who entrusted me with their children this summer. We are well and truly into the second generation of Vacational Studies students. Several sons and daughters of those who were with us in the 1970s are coming now and benefiting just as their parents did. All have made the decision because they want their children to have the same international opportunities. I shall do my best to ensure that, second generation or first, every young person who comes to us is enriched as a result.





Pepys' Oak, Tydehams, Newbury,
Berkshire RG14 6JT, England

Telephone

National 01635 523333

International +44 1635 523333

Telephone (mobile)

National 07717 007007

International +44 7717 007007

Fax

National 01635 523999

International +44 1635 523999

E-Mail

vacstuds@vacstuds.com

Web Site

<http://www.vacstuds.com>

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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 and has three young sons of his own.

