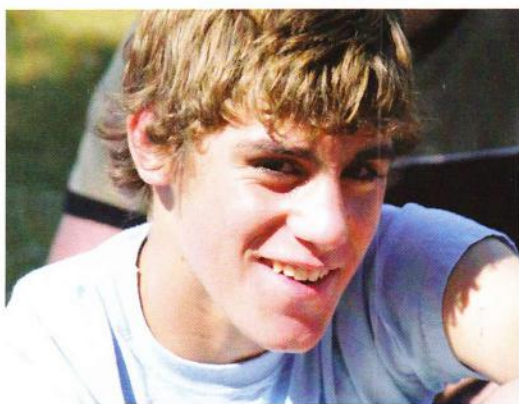




*Vacational
Studies®*

Residential English
Language Courses
11-17 Years

Summer 2006

“The best
four weeks
of my life”





RESIDENTIAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSES

Vacational Studies Courses have been running for 33 years. We have tried in this time to develop an enjoyable balance between 'vacation' and 'study'. Here is our programme for Summer 2006.

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. Our students 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 by The British Council 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 2005-2006') 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 2006 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.

CHOICE OF COURSE

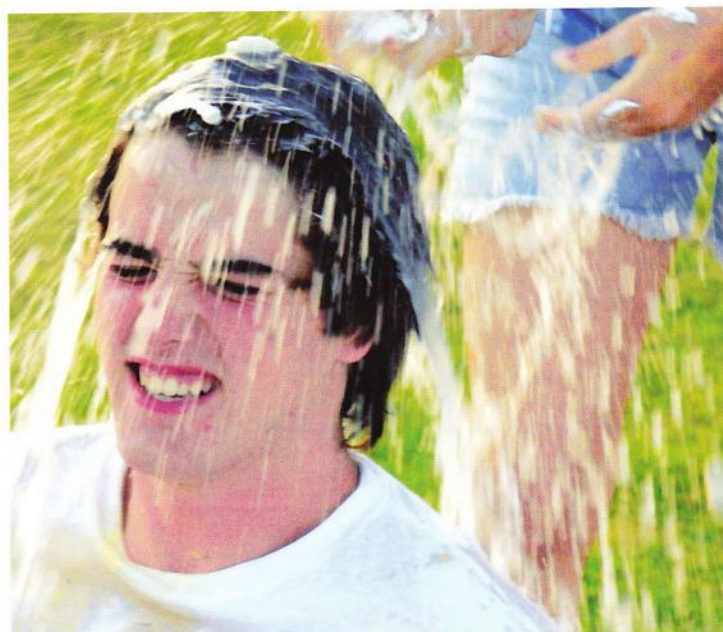
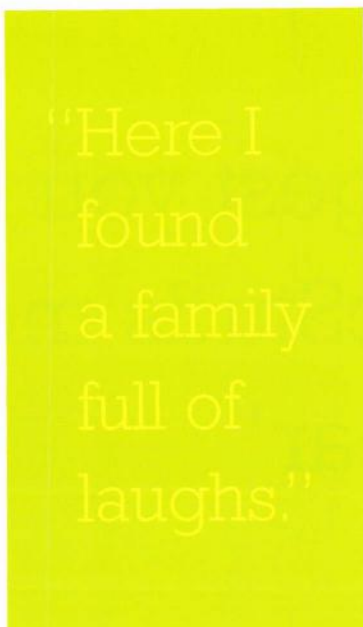
The Courses have the same format.

The only differences are location and dates. 2006 dates are:-

Mary Hare 11 July - 8 August 2006 (4 weeks)

Cheam 15 July - 12 August 2006 (4 weeks)





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.

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

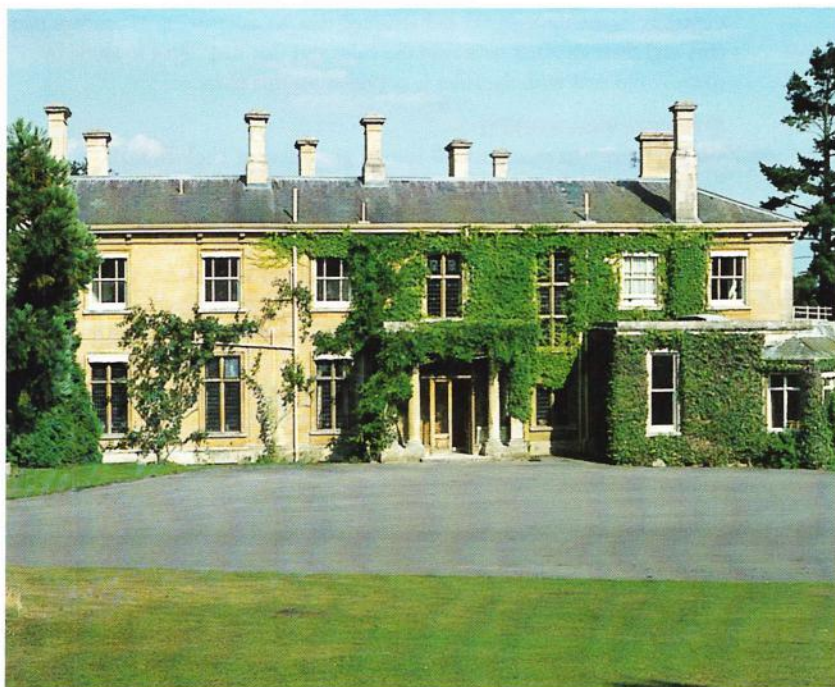
expectations are understood and accepted that we ask parents to confirm that they and their children have read the rules and that they agree to abide by them. A slip sent with the rules is provided for this purpose.

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.



“What I can suggest you is
TO REPEAT VacStuds more
than just one year.”



The Schools



THE SCHOOLS AND SURROUNDINGS

For 2006 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.



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 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. For example, the Italian 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 days out. We intend one to be to London for sightseeing; another to a designer outlet or town for shopping; 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.

The Programme



A TYPICAL DAY

- 08.00 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



SHOPPING AFTERNOONS (Optional Extra)

In addition to the organised excursions above (which are included in the Course Fee), there are one or 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 about £7.

THEATRE VISITS (Optional Extra)

Tickets for smash-hit West End musicals that are booked out 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 Chartered Institute of Linguists has been recognised by the British Government as examiners since 1910. Through its subsidiary, IoL Language Services Ltd, they have devised a Certification in Spoken English especially for us, which will be externally marked by their examiners. Certification will be on 5 levels, according to the ability of the student. Level 1 is 'Near-Beginner'; Level 2 is 'Intermediate', Level 3 is 'Upper Intermediate', Level 4 is 'Advanced' and Level 5 is 'Proficiency'. 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.



"I'll never forget the wonderful month I had"

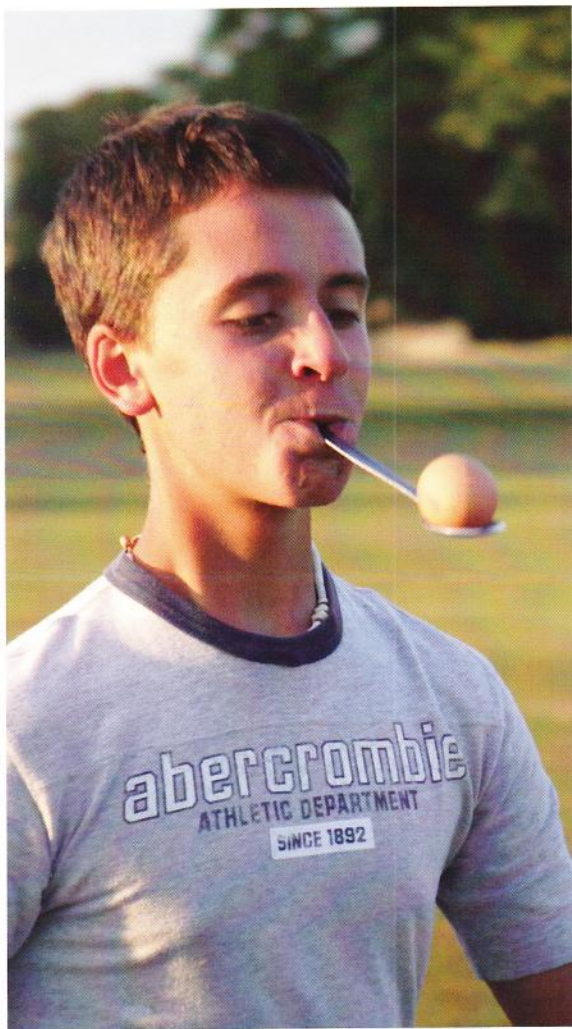
CERTIFICATION IN WRITTEN AND SPOKEN + WRITTEN ENGLISH BY THE INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTS (Optional Extra)

As an addition to the oral assessments, IoL Language Services Ltd also offers Certification at Level 1+, Level 2+, Level 3+, Level 4+ and 5+ in written English. The cost is £48.00 for Written English and is £70 for Written + Spoken English.

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 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, Brussels sprouts, cranberry jelly) and an 'English High Tea' (sandwiches, scones, jam and cream). 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.

Any student can join the Food Committee which meets the Caterer regularly to discuss all aspects of the catering.

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:

Hot chocolate and biscuits

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).

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

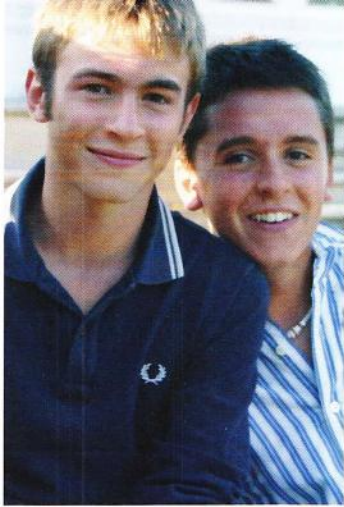
⁵ If washable at 40°+, indelibly named, not sensitive to bulk washing/drying and at your own risk

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 student does so, too.

We institute a 'House' system at the start of the Course. In each House will be students mixed by nationality, gender and age. Team games are played as House Competitions for House Points. Additionally, House Points are awarded for individual excellence – such as using English socially. House Points can also be deducted. The House with the most Points is awarded a Treat. A Treat can be given at any stage in the Course and another Treat will be given at the end. We intend that the House Points and the Treats that are awarded from these will be positive inducements for participating and an encouragement 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 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 or other students to attend an appropriate service. Please indicate this on the Application Form. Transportation to and from the church is payable by students.

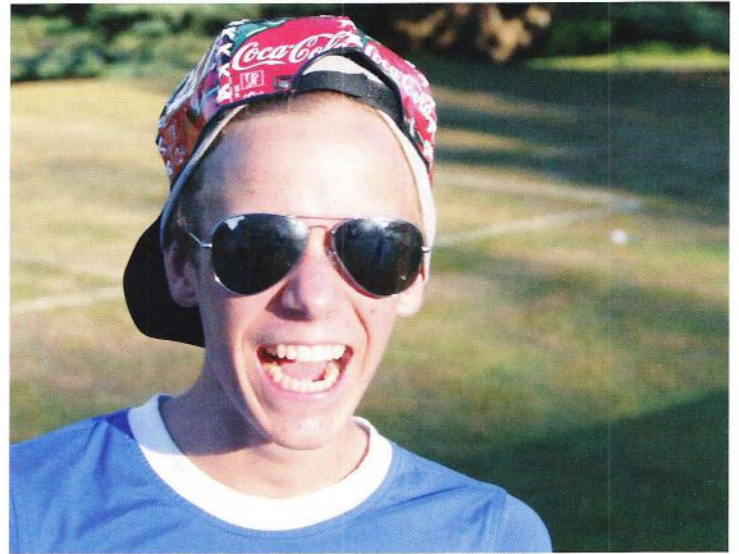
RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION

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 special Insurance 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. We aim to have 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

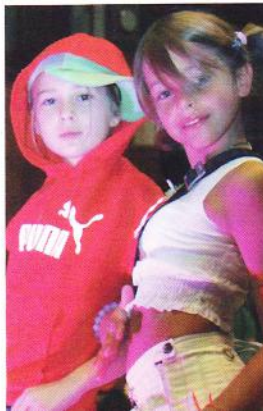
Pocket money can either be brought by students (as cash or a £ cheque drawn on a British bank, payable to 'Vacational Studies Pocket Money A/C') or sent in advance to the National Westminster Bank, 30 Market Place, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5AJ in £ Sterling to Vacational Studies Pocket Money A/C 65400100 (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. We do not recommend an amount, but students will tend to bring about £300. 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.



"I'm missing the classes. Thanks for this wonderful summer."





Travel

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. 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 £90 and to Gatwick about £110. For two or more 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 immediately follow signs to 'Donnington'. Continue for 2 kms. The Mary Hare School is signposted 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 below.

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.

"I miss you guys
so much already.
I can't do
anything but cry."

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.

News

SUMMER 2005

'Each day, hour, minute and second is so special' (a Russian student); 'This month was wonderful' (a Spanish student); 'Thanks, thanks, and thanks again for everything' (an Italian student); 'Still a big part of my life! (another Italian student with us from 1997-2001); 'Once again, she came home delighted with the summer at Vacational Studies. She enhanced last year's friendships and she had the opportunity of making new good friends. Her knowledge of the English language improved quite considerably and I am absolutely sure that this will help her very much during forthcoming studies. The overall spirit of the School and the fact that all the teens carry on chatting in the internet makes me wonder if there is life after the Course!' (a Portuguese parent); 'Thank you very much for the extraordinary weeks which he spent! For him these four weeks were a fantastic experience and he enjoyed it a lot. He would like to come once again to Newbury. We were very happy and satisfied' (a German parent);

'It was wonderful to be in such a busy and social environment. I've got lots of great memories' (a teacher); 'I'm missing the classes. Thanks for this wonderful summer' (a Portuguese student); 'I miss you guys so much already. I can't do anything but cry. I had to go on a holiday the day I came back and I didn't enjoy it at all... I had no internet so I couldn't even read your messages and I missed you so much (still do)... I have been crying all over the place for hours and hours... My parents really didn't know what to do with me' (a Dutch student); 'Truly the last month was the best four weeks of my life' (a Spanish student); 'My life is just grey and empty when I'm not with you! I miss my dorm. I can't sleep without you guys. My room is too quiet and boring. But you will all stay in my heart, and I'll never forget the wonderful month I had' (a Norwegian student); 'These 4 weeks were very special for me because here I found a family full of laughs. These moments in the best place in the world always are going to be in my heart. The first thing that I said to my mom when I returned to Venezuela were: 'Mom the next year I want return.' In this place we sing, laugh, cry, and of course, dance. This was the best month of my life' (a Venezuelan student).

Among the voices from the past, Andrea Casile (with us from 1989 - 1992) put the following on the Messages Forum: 'It is wonderful to read the comments of teenagers enthusiastic about the month recently spent in England. It makes my mind and my heart go back to the early '90s, when I was feeling exactly the same sensations they are feeling now. These are memories that will never abandon you guys and girls, even when you will be (almost) 30 like me. Keep those images in your hearts. They will be some of the strongest feelings you will ever live. What I can suggest you is TO REPEAT VacStuds more than just one year. I have done 4 and I regret the 5th that I decided not to do. I still remember the 'crisis' I lived just back from England to Sicily at the end of August of every summer between 1989 and 1992. I was just feeling awful and already looking forward to organising the next VacStuds adventure. The only difference between my times and yours is that the Internet was not available then and letters were written by me and my peers and they arrived home every 2/3 weeks. What emotions! Especially the letters from the 'significant others' of the epoch. When romantic letters arrived it was like being in heaven. Dear IGM a big hug for you, who make all this available for all of us.'

How can I follow this? I consider myself hugged. The Messages Forum on our website is the perfect outlet for these outpourings of emotion. Suffice it to say that, once again, we have given our students the time of their life.

skies. And what happened in this small corner of England? Please read on...

After five summers teaching with us, former Assistant Course Manager, Chris Spencer became Course Manager. With such a strong and supportive staff, little could go wrong. Casper Jones was back teaching for the third time - now also as Assistant Course Manager and film-maker extraordinaire. His directing talents took on a life of their own and brought task-based learning to a new height. Back for a fourth summer, this time as Sports/Social Organiser, was the extremely talented Jonathan Hooper. It was during a conversation in the early stages of the Course that he, Chris and I decided on the 'House' system as a way to encourage international mixing. The Course was divided into internationally-mixed Houses for team games. As we know that our students love competition, they competed for House Points in sports and also in social events. Points were also given for various tasks that involved using English such as discovering information from other students and for answering the daily 'Course Manager's Question'. Students sat in Houses for one meal in the day. The House that achieved most points was in line for a 'Treat'. A Treat could be awarded at any point in the Course, not only at the end. After the first two weeks, there were very few national groups remaining. More English was spoken and more international friendships flourished than in any year I can remember. Mary Hare 2005 showed that, carefully administered, the House system can really work as an incentive. This is one of the most important developments to Vacational Studies for years. Also on the Sports and Social team was Sharon Foster whose artistic innovations enhanced the Course hugely. She enabled our youngsters to develop their creative skills. The Masked Ball was a triumph of ingenuity and artistry; her model-making a great success. My small sons loved using the materials and were thrilled to wear the crowns she helped them make. Trumpeting Tom Siddiqui, Sarah Jocelyn and Rob Hedge

together with style and panache to create a fantastic programme and a great atmosphere. Newcomer Emma Greenhalgh took to the role of Course Tutor as though she had done it for years. She and the teachers worked well as a team. Back for their second summers with us were Amy Mole and Neil Davies - excellent both. Patrick Maguire and Marta Calvo were great first-timers. Also with us for the first time were Melanie Anderson and Liz McQuillan. They found their niche. Alfredo Garcia was Staff Helper. He had a lovely time. Matron, Bettina Watson, again a fount of information and efficient in the extreme, returned for the fourth time. With the exception of one tiny national group that remained grimly superglued together in spite of all our efforts, the students mixed, mingled, joined in and had a great time. Several were hugely talented. Their Folies Bergères included some cameos worthy of broadcast TV. It was a vintage Mary Hare.

With a large number of returning students, all with great expectations, the Course at Cheam was bound to be exciting. After several years of excellent returning Sports/Social Organisers, newcomer Claire Edgerley was determined that this tradition would be continued. So engaging was the programme she created that it was hard to imagine that she had not secretly been at Cheam for years. The old favourite activities returned, often with a new twist. She was ably assisted by the proximity of the Tesco superstore as well as by the splendid crew of George Cockburn - back for another season and glowering less; Andy Kelly, British student at Cheam in 2001, and debutantes Peter Jacob and Jenny McLoughlin. Lara Santos was the enormously popular Staff Helper. Undertaking the additional responsibility of being Course Tutor was Sarah Robinson, returning for a third year. The teachers were new. Only rarely do we have one from the United States. Joe Littenberg was a worthy addition to the VacStuds family. Basketballer-in-Chief, he also became Assistant Course Manager. Also a great first-timer was Emma Christopherson who





teaches in Italy. Brian Hogan came to us from Spain via Eire; Jeremy La Barbera from Italy via Australia. Catherine Troughton and Karen Stenner came from teaching in Spain. New and efficient Matron, Sue Munday, thoroughly enjoyed the ambience of a co-educational school. The House system was implemented less comprehensively at Cheam and will be re-jigged for 2006. Nevertheless, the students integrated well with several potential Staff Helpers among the many strong characters. The Cheam Folies was exceptional in some of the talents it showcased. In appointing Tom Leighton as a new Course Manager with experience in other organisations than ours, I presented him with a learning curve so steep as to be almost vertical.

Appearing at both schools were our new Director of Studies, Alison Curtis, and Support Teacher, Liz Stokes. For the twenty fifth summer, tennis coaching was given by Liz Fidler. She must have been a mere child when she started. As for the last twenty or so years, Mark Thatcher's 'MAT 1' discos provided the weekly bop. My 4½ year-old sons, Piers, Lars and Ian, came at the weekends. They were used occasionally as a teaching resource. In one class, the students were looking at work sheets with pictures of kitchen equipment. 'What's that?' asked the teacher, pointing at one of the pictures. No one knew the word in English. She turned to my children. 'What's that, Lars?' He knew very well what he had to empty every morning. 'It's a laundry basket!' It was a new experience for the class to learn from a toddler. And then there was me. I visited each school several times a day praising, admonishing, checking, filming and photographing, dispensing justice like a deus ex Mercedes – and A8 – and loving every moment, of course.

PREPARING FOR 2006

Editing the 'Vacational Studies All Over Again' DVDs gives me the opportunity to recollect in tranquillity all the moments that have shaped our students' experiences. Summers with us are, I know, developmental experiences for everyone who comes. They need to be positive in every way. From the students' perspective, I am confident that they were. As the leader in the field of residential junior courses (as they are termed in the industry), I need to be proactive and see the future in the instant. From an organisational point-of-view, there will be major changes to the teaching and managerial aspects of both Courses for 2006 based on feedback from students and my own observations. These changes will include re-establishing continuity by employing staff with several years of VacStuds' experience and by revising the entire teaching programme. Work on both started even before the 2005 Courses ended.

SPORTS DAY

It was the bolt of lightning over Newbury on the TV weather forecast in the morning of 1 August that tipped the balance. A spell of glorious weather was likely to end in patchy thunderstorms and I did not want to take the chance that Mary Hare would be singled out to receive one. In the event, not a drop of rain fell and the skies remained blue – as they did on 2 August. Sports Day was held in perfect Sports Day weather. The blood-curdling chants were back – as was the competitive spirit that the crew at both schools encourage in order to achieve victory. While I never announce winners or losers and urge that the games be played in a spirit of friendly rivalry, the competition this year was intense and a few tempers were frayed. Changing days meant that we lost the services of the independent adjudicator I had arranged (my designer, Stephen Green, is a qualified football referee) and maybe the fact that the referee on the day was wearing a Mary Hare shirt was a bit of a distraction. For whatever

have started to wonder if we are encouraging the right values. It may be that we should include some of the co-operative games that are part of each school's programme and also encourage events like the superb gymnastic display from Lisa Reichenberger at Mary Hare and the choreographed Cheam and Mary Hare dances with, perhaps, an evening talent show.

CATERING

Catering at Mary Hare was by their Catering Manager, Moira Atkinson. She and her staff did everything to make each meal an event. They decorated the room and tables for all the special dinners. I thought the quality and variety of the salad bar was splendid. I loved the hot dishes, too. Sodexo catered at Cheam again with Nick Dann in charge. He was always obliging and did his best to accede to students' requests. 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 BRITISH STUDENTS

I think Vacational Studies is the only summer EFL organisation to include British students. Indeed, I do not see how a Course can be truly international without Britain being represented. In the past our UK students have come from Norwich School. This time, we approached Reading School, too. They were delighted to recommend their best students to us. Duncan Cook and Alex Otterburn were at Mary Hare and were excellent in every way – as was George Sargent at Cheam. All of them joined in everything and were superb ambassadors for our country. The Course Tutors organised their time so that they were put to good use by the teachers as learning resources.

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 almost 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 a child have a

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.

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. The schools we use are country houses adapted for use as boarding schools. Bathrooms may be away from dormitories and 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

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 recommendation' has been written about them by their school. To remove this feeling of anonymity and to encourage students to take responsibility 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 or may not comply with the request.

MOBILE PHONES

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



"Each day,
hour, minute
and second
is so special."

telephone contact with their children, especially in the first few days, is not a good idea. We ask that mobile phones are not brought. 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 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

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.

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 allow group rates where possible and just pass on the charges with no mark-up. In these days of security alerts, we shall take all precautions and, if necessary, change our programme depending on circumstances.

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. 2006 Invoice numbers start at 12677. A 'Theatre Visits' choice list will be sent out in March or later.

PROPERTY

We ask that valuable items (including expensive clothes) are not brought. All 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 2005 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 out what made it 'the best summer of my life', here is an instant walk down Memory Lane. Parents of 2006 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 early in the new year. Potential SHs should contact me before Christmas. If 'leadership potential' or an equivalent phrase 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

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 TRADE MARK

For some years, our clever logo has been registered as a trade mark. Now, after over three decades, we have been allowed to register the actual words Vacation Studies as a trade mark.

VACATIONAL STUDIES FOUNDATION

The Vacation 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, who was Company Secretary from the founding of Vacation Studies until his death in 2003, 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.

MY THANKS

...to all those who entrusted me with their children this summer. I am aware that the summer months with us are very important steps in a young person's development. The parents of students now with us who were students themselves in the '70s and '80s tell me they recognise how life-changing their time with us was and how they want their own children to benefit in the same way. Until they have come to us, no one believes it, but I think it really is true to say 'Come to Vacation Studies and change your life.'



AU PAIR POSSIBILITY...

My three sons will be five years-old in 2006. I may look for an au-pair (female or male) to help me with them and give them an international perspective. This could be a rather special opportunity for someone to live and work in the UK with all the linguistic benefits that would accrue.

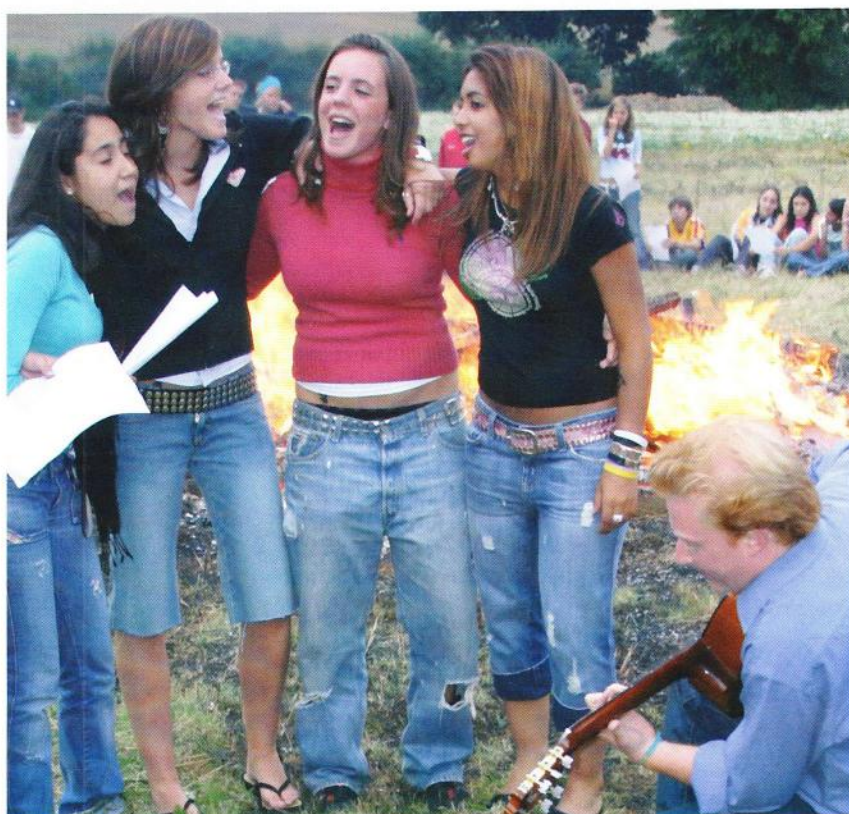
AND FINALLY...

For those who are interested, my first book about my adventures ('And Then There Were Three' (ISBN 1903933552)) was published in April 2005 and is available inter alia via www.amazon.com.



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. His first book, 'And Then There Were Three', was published in April 2005. He is the founder of Vacational Studies and has three five year-old sons of his own.



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