

Learning Together Newsletter



Education as the practice of freedom

Issue 1
November 2017

Welcome to our first newsletter!

Hello! Our community is growing, and thanks to some generous financial donations, our team in Cambridge has grown too. Happily, this means we can now produce this newsletter twice a year as a way of keeping in touch with each other. We hope the newsletter will give you a flavour of some of the ways we are working together as a community, and the exciting things that are happening as a result. We sometimes quote an African proverb that says 'If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together'. This newsletter has been a while in the making. Thank you to everyone who has contributed. From the early beginnings of Learning Together in HMP Grendon in 2014 our community has grown because of the commitment and talents of all involved. We look forward to the future we are crafting together. Please do be in touch with all your news and suggestions for the next edition. We look forward to continuing to learn together with you all.

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A quick catch up and look ahead

Key news for this issue of the newsletter:

GROWTH: What has been going on and what do we have planned as a community?

DEVELOPMENT: Updates on work behind the scenes, such as a new Learning Together app and Open University collaboration for accreditation.

PROGRESS: What have your fellow LT students and alumni been up to? Some well-deserved congratulations and updates about how LTers are making positive changes for themselves and the world around them.

COLLABORATION: We have been collaborating with wonderful colleagues up and down the country and abroad. This issue gives a flavour of some of that work, and where it could lead.

YOU? We include some of the notes and messages we have received. Learning Together is nothing without you – why not drop us a note for the next issue in May 2018? We'd love to include your news and ideas!

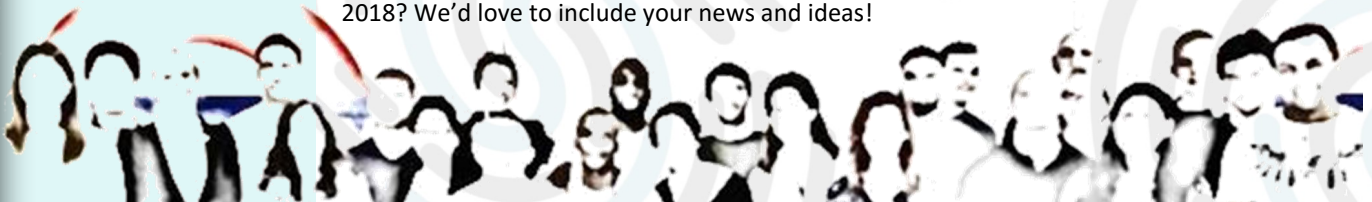
Poetic Justice

There's no justice
There's just us
Just us
Just us so the onus
Is on us
On us
There's no them and us
Them or us
There's us
Just us
Not exclusively
But inclusively
Us at the heart of each of those words
Us is the start of not being scared
Them is impaired
Us is being heard
Them is compared
Us is 'I dared'
'I cared and I trusted'
'I tared my internal scales of justice'
As just is as just does
There's just us
There's just us
Just us.

Written by Tom



The Longford Trust is supporting our OU accreditation pilot this year. See page 3 for details!



Our year ahead

2017-18 is set to be another exciting year.

We'll be returning to **Grendon** for the fourth year of our 'Introduction to criminology' course, with some familiar faces back as facilitators (Max, Tony and Zak) and in class mentors (Wayne, Moses, Chris, Iain and George), and some new and exciting additions to the guest speaker team (Professor Ben Bowling from King's College London and Dr Adam Calverley from the University of Hull). Dr Stacey McDowell is on sabbatical leave this academic year so the literary criticism course isn't running, but many Learning Together literary criticism graduates are contributing to a **new poetry reading and writing group** that has formed, and we are excited to read some of the brilliant work that will result from that. Professor Emma Smith, who co-convened last year's literary criticism course, hopes to join one or two of the poetry group sessions, perhaps with a few students from Oxford, so watch this space...

'The Good Life and the Good Society' course is also returning to **Whitemoor** again this year after its successful pilot last year, led by Drs Beth Phillips and Ryan Williams. Our GLGS students came up with brilliant ideas for improving the course, including weeks for reflection and consolidation between lectures, so this year's course will be structured slightly differently to take account of these suggestions. Many of the excellent guest lecturers from last year will return, including Dr Rowan Williams on empathy and Dr Paul Anderson on civility. Students will be supported in class by a fantastic team of mentors (David, Izak, Lee, Angus and Rachael).

Some of our Whitemoor mentors also came up with the idea for a new creative writing course, called 'Writing Together', which we are delighted to be able to pilot this year at Whitemoor through partnership working with Jesus College, Cambridge. The course is led by **Dr Preti Taneja**, author of the new highly-acclaimed book 'We that are young'. Plans are afoot to build upon this with a short **Shakespeare course and performance** in Autumn 2018.

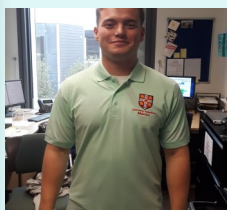
Another new development for this year is our partnership with **HMP Warren Hill**, and the **Butler Law Course**, which is led by **Jack Merritt**. This course came about thanks to the persistent enthusiasm of one of our Learning Together mentors, Muddassir, and a generous private donation which is enabling Jack to design and deliver the new course. The course will equip students with legal research skills, which they will use to produce resources to explain legal issues that are important to people within the criminal justice system. Students will be encouraged to think critically about the law in practice by a series of guest speakers, including David Ormerod, from the Law Commission, Eric Allison, from the Guardian, and David Lammy MP.

'Justice grows out of recognition of ourselves in each other; that my liberty depends on you being free too. The most powerful word in a democracy is 'we'. The word 'we' is owned by no-one and it belongs to everyone.' (Barack Obama)



Driving to Grendon.

Mentoring polo shirts!



Jack Merritt rocking one of the new Whitemoor mentoring polo shirts.



There's an app for that!

One of this year's exciting developments is the creation of a new Learning Together app through which students can access course materials and complete assessment tasks. We hope that the app will give students access to a much wider range of resources, including video and audio content, and make it easier for students to keep track of their Learning Together achievements as they progress between establishments and into many and varied futures!

We're piloting the app for 2017-18 for students on the 'Introduction to criminology' course at Grendon and 'The Good Life and the Good Society' course at Whitemoor, as part of the Ministry of Justice's Digital Prisons programme. If everything goes well, we hope to extend the pilot across all of our Learning Together courses at Cambridge and, beyond, to other partnerships within our Network.

'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has.' (Margaret Mead)

Congratulations!

The Learning Together community is full of people who are working hard to do great things. Here's just a snapshot of what some of you have achieved:

Graduations: Cambridge based 2016-17 criminology students graduated with their MPhil degrees, Zac and Steve also graduated with their OU degrees and Alice has successfully defended her PhD thesis. Hello Dr Alice!



New jobs: Megan starts work soon as a prison officer, Claudia recently started work with Bounce Back and The Exceptionals and Laura is now working at the Home Office. Bob's research project on the experiences of fathers in prison has recently received HMPPS ethics clearance and so he will soon be busy writing his research findings, working alongside staff on his wing.

Awards and funding: Tom's poetry was recognised in this year's Koestler Trust awards, Chris and Tony have received Longford Trust awards to enable their further study, Claudia achieved a distinction for her MPhil dissertation on self-harm in custody and Ben and Elinor were joint proxime accessit (runners up) for the Manuel Lopez-Rey Prize for best performance on the MPhil programme.



Collaborating with the Open University

Another first for this year is our collaboration with the Open University. Recognising that progression in learning is important to all of our students, we have been thinking for some time about how we might support students to have their learning with us accredited in a way that can be built upon flexibly. Working with Ruth McFarlane, Senior Manager, Students in Secure Environments at the OU, and the Longford Trust, we have developed our 'Introduction to Criminology' and 'The Good Life and the Good Society' courses so that students can submit their work for accreditation with the OU (at least 30 degrees at level 1 of an OU Open Degree).

Recent publications

Published On: Fri, Jul 28th, 2017

[Comment | By Harold Mose](#)

A journey through the therapy looking glass

Poetic Justice

I sat in a chair surrounded by literature students from Cambridge University and Grendon residents. This is surreal I thought. My community room has been turned into a classroom! Grendon once again exceeded my expectations as an English professor from the University of Oxford lectured us Learning Together students about the poem 'The Convergence of the Twain' by Thomas Hardy. Yet I was still blind to the profoundly positive impact the six Literary Criticism sessions would have on me and how much they would contribute to my therapy.

Learning Together: Productive Disruption of Ego, Expertise and Ethics

Blog - 2 Aug 2017 - Ruth Armstrong and Amy Lusk

In our competitive world, driven by individualised and quick return measures of success, what happens when we take seriously educationalist Paulo Freire's call to work collaboratively to make education the engine of social change?

Published On: Fri, Jul 28th, 2017

[Information | By Gareth Evans and Dr Serena Wright](#)

Stoking hope



Learning Together - students and prisoners join forces to prove managers wrong and overcome systemic obstacles



What I Learned in Prison

by Barney | May 6, 2017 | Life, Society

Day 1 of Learning Together in Prison Go to day 2 Go to day 3 Go to day 4 "There's a stigma against people like us," said James (not his real name). "People assume we're horrible, rude and unfriendly. But they don't come inside to see what we're

Letters to the Editor



Song writing at Grendon with Prof Fergus McNeil and Vox Liminis.



Driving to Whitemoor.



Catching up with Allie and Sarah in NYC.



Jamie Bennett, Governor of Grendon, speaking at the end of course celebration.



'Starting Learning Together was quite a hard thing for me, due to having dyslexia (try spelling that when you have it). I had no real learning experience apart from level one in English and level two in Maths – both from prison. I got kicked out of school at the age of 15 with no GCSEs and since then, I have always been scared of education. It took me a few years before I built up the courage to try Learning Together... It has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life, meeting some of the most amazing people who want to make a real difference; and this has been humbling. This has given me the [confidence] to go further with education.

So, from someone with no real learning experience to now doing an AS level in Psychology and, depending on funding, go on to do a degree in Psychology and Criminology next year... thank you to everyone.' (George)

'[Being a] Learning Together [student] taught me the human side of our criminal justice system, and the impact it has on our lives and our society. Behind the law, procedure and the sentencing principles, there are real people. Real people on the bench, in the gowns, in the court and in the dock. And all of us are on the same side of justice, equality and human rights. Without my fellow learners and students who so generously shared their experiences with me, I may never have learnt these vital lessons.

When I became a facilitator at Grendon, it was a privilege to teach and learn from my students. I found them to be lateral thinkers with ideas about the criminal justice system that were innovative and visionary. I found students whose subtle self-belief and social conscience guides their academic achievements and aspirations. They have the potential and determination to excel and achieve in the field of their choice. Their strength is inspirational, and their voice is powerful. It is people like them who will make this world a more humane place.

There are certain moments I'll never forget: swaying to 'Where is the love?' with Jamie at the end of course celebration, meeting Zak's family, seeing Eddie dressed up smarter than ever before, or, on the other side, sharing a burger with Gareth for the first time as a free man. It is the seemingly innocuous which becomes unforgettable. Here's to friendships like these outlasting prison sentences, life changes and everything in between.' (Menaal)

Grenbridge

Amazing an absolute blaze,
Learning Together our minds
burning together,
All walks of life, experienced
this endeavour,
Memories of people cher-
ished,
Meetings of wonder, the
brain began to ponder out-
side the limits of something
beyond.
How could this be, it's so
paradoxical to see, it seems
it shouldn't be possible.

Cambridge and Grendon
emerged and became
'Grenbridge', how splendid.
We've even had an Aussie
who became cockney, just
for a day in a poetry sort of
way,

There's been highs, not
many lows,
Just John's sore bum, is as
far as it goes, with tears
flowing down Ruth's nose.

Magnificent is a word to use
for this herd,
We flocked too and will rock
through,
We've had hearts touched,
eyes brought to tears,
There's been courage even
without the beers,
Things have transpired, I
don't know about you but
I've been inspired.

Written by George

The Learning Together Network

Inspired by the long British history of prison and university educational partnership working, and what we see as powerful theoretical coincides between how people grow towards non-offending futures and how people learn well, Learning Together began at the University of Cambridge in 2014, in partnership with HMP Grendon. Since then, recognising that collaboration underpins the articulation and growth of best practice and high quality opportunities for learning progression for our students, a national network of Learning Together partnerships has grown, comprised of over twenty different higher education and criminal justice organisations. We have common Terms of Reference, working towards a common vision of 'Education as the practice of freedom'.

International community building

We are learning all the time and our lessons are taking place all over the world. Thanks to Economic Social Research Council's Impact Acceleration funding, we have started building relationships with prisons and universities in South America, Mexico and the United States. Our international friends are helping us to think in new and exciting ways about what we do and how we do it. Plans are afoot for collaboration across our communities so watch this space...



Learning Together at a prison in Montevideo, Uruguay, September 2017.

Ruth and Amy with Professor Lorana Bartels, who is leading the first international LT partnership in Australia.



Be agents of change!

There are lots of ways to stay connected and contribute to our community. Specific opportunities at the moment include:

- sending us resources to populate the app—materials that relate to 'The Good Life and the Good Society' or 'Introduction to criminology' courses, or general study skills resources such as tips for reading academic articles, creating posters or giving presentations;
- sending us books (academic or otherwise) to donate to James' library for D wing at Grendon or to Whitemoor and Warren Hill libraries; and
- sending us your news for the next issue of the newsletter in May 2018.

Until next time...

Keep working hard and doing great things, and know that you have a community around you striving towards similarly great things and rooting for you all the way. Do keep in touch with us and each other—we love hearing everyone's news. Hope you're as excited as we are about our fantastic year ahead of Learning Together!

'I hear you say 'Why?', always 'Why?'. You see things; and you say 'Why?' But I dream things that never were; and I say 'Why not?'

(George Bernard Shaw)



I Rose

Why walk blind?

Open your eyes,

I'm there for you.

The hidden Truth

Gateway to your ambitions,

Your dreams, aspirations.

Grab hold of me, have faith in yourself.

Some choose to put me in a class of their own
The so-called privileged

Brought into life with a silver spoon.

How far from the truth –

A myth, an illusion. Confusion

By one's misconstrued thoughts.

I don't discriminate, any race, face or age.

But what a sight to behold

When one finds me in the depths of darkness

Cold, alone and in despair.

We find companionship

O how it makes me weep in joy

That I am able to unleash the potential

So they be all they can be.

A rose from the concrete

Bursts, an explosion, liberation.

Freed so many.

Education.

Written by Zak

We love hearing from you...



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Our growing Cambridge team

With recent generous funding support, the Learning Together team has been able to grow. We are now a team of seven working from the Institute of Criminology. Some quick introductions to get everyone acquainted...

Izzie Rowbotham is Amy and Ruth's PA and is the all round office guru for the Learning Together team. *'Hi I'm Izzie! I'm currently Ruth and Amy's PA in Learning Together. I am also studying for a Psychology degree and in my free time I enjoy spending time with friends and family.'*

Lisa Ghiggini joined the team in September 2017 as our brilliant new course administrator. Lisa writes, *'I dropped out of uni at 19 and moved to Italy where I worked summer and winter seasons, eventually saving enough money to go travelling. On my return to England I put a portfolio together, did an art foundation, and got into Art College in London. In London, I worked in the charity sector until I had children and moved to Cambridge and am now really excited to be part of the LT team.'*

Jack Merritt is at the helm of the new Butler Law Course at HMP Warren Hill, as course convenor. *'I am both a Cambridge local and a former MPhil criminology student. After having a taste of Learning Together in Grendon, I wanted to stay involved. Now I'm developing the new law course at Warren Hill, putting my law degree from Manchester to good use!'*

Gareth Evans took up his current role as Alumni and Mentoring Development Coordinator in September. *'Hey! I'm Gareth and I cannot tell you how proud I am to be part of the LT team in Cambridge. I am studying at Anglia Ruskin University alongside my Learning Together role, sometimes not quite believing how unrecognizably positive life is now. As one of the first to take part in Learning Together in Grendon, I absolutely understand the power of building connections and thinking ahead to the future.'*

