



Raymond Williams Foundation Newsletter - November 2019

This edition provides brief updates on the following:

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1. 2020 Raymond Williams Foundation Residential Weekend at Wortley Hall

Shaping social change today – informal learning for life

At times of great change, Raymond Williams reflected, people turn to learning, to make sense of the change, to adapt to it and to shape it. This weekend will address the increasingly important role that informal learning has to play, in navigating the problems and possibilities of the present and in helping make the world a more inclusive, equal and environmentally just place.

The weekend will feature guest speakers and participatory group discussions, providing attendees with the supportive and informal atmosphere needed to address some of the big issues of our time, including: inequality and austerity; aging and intergenerational exchange; well-being, welfare and mental health; the recommendations of the 2019 Centenary Commission for Adult Education report; ecology and environmental protection; the role of the state, voluntary sector and political parties; artificial intelligence and technology and more. Informal learning means engaging with one another's experiences and perspectives, it means creating situations where people can learn more cooperatively together, it has a role to play in collective action too. Join us at Wortley Hall to explore informal learning for life and the role it can play in shaping social change today.

The weekend will take place 15-17 May 2020 at Wortley Hall, booking details to be announced on the RWF website soon.

2. RWF involvement in Centenary Commission on Adult Education

The Raymond Williams is proud to have supported and played a role in the development of the Centenary Commission for Adult Education report, which was launched on 18 November 2019 and is available to download for free here: <http://www.centenarycommission.org/>

The RWF has been deeply involved in this work throughout 2019, with Sharon Clancy serving as a Commissioner and representative of the RWF and Nick Mahony serving as the Commission's Researcher. With the report published, Sharon and Nick are now exploring possibilities for the RWF to be involved in follow-on events, to support the wider discussion of this report and the issues it has raised concerning adult learning. Do take a look at the report if you're interested in the recommendations, we'd be interested in what you think of it and in any ideas you have for how we could follow it up.

3. Grants from Westham House Fund to support RWF activities

In 2018-2019 the Raymond Williams Foundation were supported by Westham House Fund with a grant of £4,500 to support the following activities:

£1500 for Keywords associated events:

In cooperation with the RWS's sister organisation The Raymond Williams Society, and the RWF Chair and Administrator, Sharon Clancy and Nick Mahony, half of this money was spent on improving accessibility and organising a Keywords session as part of the Raymond Williams Society (RWS) Annual Conference, which took place in Manchester on April 26- 27th 2019.

The RWS Annual Conference was organised on the theme of 'Cultural Production and the Redundancy of Work: Precarity, Automation, Critique' and focused on the looming crisis brought about by the increasing contradiction between the forces and relations of production: "automation will determine a new social order either within capitalism or beyond it" the conference materials announced. The conference focused on configurations and reconceptualizations of the relations between work, leisure and culture. It asked:

- how has culture contributed to the critique of work – or how might it?
- what kinds of future are currently anticipated within cultural production, and to what extent are our political imaginaries influenced by them?
- how is technology reconfiguring cultural forms and relations (e.g. between producers and consumers)?
- does automation necessarily threaten an ecologically catastrophic future based on still greater productivity, and what potential is there for a non-consumerist culture?
- what does cultural production have to tell us about the contemporary state of the work ethic and what norms or moralities might lie beyond it?
- what contributions might subcultural formations make to the larger critique of work-and-leisure?

The RWF allocated £750 of our WHF grant to provide bursaries for students and the low/unwaged to attend the RWS conference and participate in an RWF/RWS organised Keywords session as part of this event. The bursaries were taken up and the jointly organised Keywords session was well attended. The session provided space for a useful set of discussions and exchanges. The process of organising this event also provided a valuable opportunity for the RWF and RWS to build a closer working relationship.

The RWF has a further £750 allocated for a future Keyword related event.

The Westham House fund grant also provided £1500 towards Raymond Williams Foundation 31st Annual Weekend - 100 Years and Beyond: Re-framing Radical Adult Education for the Contemporary World, Friday May 24th to Sunday May 26th 2019 at Wortley Hall. The cost of the RWF weekend was £1617, with £1500 covered by the WHF grant.

£1500 – to support RWF-led Loneliness project (see update about this below from project lead Ria Higham).

In September 2019 Westham House Fund awarded the RWF with a further grant of £1250 for 2019/20 - providing £750 towards our 2020 residential event and £500 towards loneliness project.

4. RWF and WHF supported 'Loneliness Project' – led by Ria Higham

Raymond Williams Foundation/Westham House Fund Loneliness Project – Report from Ria Higham, Co-ordinator

As I had successfully run a discussion group for older people at the Inspire Community Centre in Manchester for 18 months, I was approached by RWF to try to set up a similar project, to show how this “new” form of adult education could help to combat loneliness in older people.

We have run this in conjunction with Age UK, in the hope that at some point it could be rolled out nationally by/for them. As I live in Stockport I initially contacted my local branch of Age UK but they were not interested. I then contacted the Manchester branch, a much larger organisation who were keen and offered a choice of three of their existing venues, and agreed to publicise the group.

I have had support from the manager at the Crossacres centre in Wythenshawe, Manchester. This is a very large former pre-war council estate and is quite a deprived area. We decided that one of the topics the other group most enjoyed, “Childhood then and now”, should be the first topic and have gone from there. I explained that my role as facilitator was to produce the notes (in a form and language suitable to the participants) and to encourage everyone who attends to speak. At first, until the participants become used to debate, I usually ask everyone to speak to their immediate neighbour about the first item in the notes, and this tends to “break the ice”.

As is usual with the sort of activities usually offered to older people, we tend to find that it can be harder to attract men, and we felt that a discussion group could appeal to them. We have therefore run the group every week at 1pm to 2.15 pm on a Thursday. The group and how it is going has been subject to regular review and is working well.

The cost for this project is ongoing and focuses on promotion, dissemination and outreach work and a small facilitation fee.

5. Preparations for Raymond Williams Centenary in 2021

2021 will mark 100 years since the birth of Raymond Williams and Nick Mahony and Sharon Clancy have begun exploring ways the RWF could help support the celebration of this Centenary. So far Nick has met with David Anderson (Director General of National Museums Wales), who is a life-long

Raymond Williams enthusiast, to start to identify possibilities for collaboration and joint fundraising. We will keep you posted about these developments and please do get in touch with any ideas you have for activities the RWF could support to help mark this Centenary.

6. Discussions with Lipman-Milliband Trust

Sharon Clancy and Nick Mahony are continuing a dialogue with the Lipman-Milliband Foundation (LMF) to explore possibilities for closer cooperation between the RWF and LMF, this is with the aim of identifying opportunities for cooperation and allowing us to effectively realise our overlapping missions. Discussions are ongoing and we will report back on outcomes as they emerge.

7. Updated RWF Constitution

The RWF has updated its constitution, to bring it into line with current Charity Commission best practice guidelines. Bob Foster and David Whalley hard work on this is hugely appreciated.

8. New RWF Accessibility Policy

In recent times, the Management Committee have been considering how the *RWF* could enhance its practices to make our events as accessible as reasonably practicable for participants living with a disability and are proud to announce that the RWF now has a new Accessibility Policy. The policy addresses how to support those event participants living with limited hearing, limited vision, limited mobility. We thank David Whalley for all his long-standing commitment to these issues and for all his hard work putting the new policy together for us.

May we take this opportunity to wish you fantastic Christmas holiday and a Happy New Year – we'll look forward to keeping in touch and hopefully seeing many of you in 2020.