



Issue 2  
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# The Ruskin Newsletter

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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the second edition. Much has happened since December. Pankaj, our Editor has returned to India and his input will be greatly missed. Orlagh Muldoon has joined us and without her valuable support and hard work this issue would have been late in coming out. Our new Editor should be joining the college in the autumn.

The first issue was well received by those with e-mail addresses so please, if you have not had a copy it is because we do not have your e-mail address. Please send it to one of us at the address above.

Ex-students in Poland, India, Malawi and Canada have responded and welcomed the 'news' from 'home', though no 'letters to Ed'. With all that's going on, we had expected more feed-back from alumni.

As you will see, the Fellowship is becoming more active under Jan Smith and the College under Audrey Mullender. Let's have your ideas where we can do better or is that going to open a floodgate?

I will be moving on, for a number of reasons, but I'll still be around.

**Bob Matthews**



# Principal's Page

## Introduction

Another academic year has come to an end, unbelievably my second full year at Ruskin, and we await the students' results with interest.

## Financial Situation

We continue to live nearer the margin financially than is really comfortable. Only when we rationalise the estate and start fully earning from it, and also generating other income, will we be more cushioned against the vagaries of external funding.

It is the FE funding body once again, just as happened a decade ago, that has moved the goalposts and left next year looking exceedingly shaky. The Residential Colleges Committee is writing a defence document to argue our case for national protection when the new funding methodology is introduced, as we will not fare well when employers and learners increasingly direct where expenditure will go. (We are too small and too specialist.) Our higher education income, on the other hand, is rising and the income from top-up fees will also come on stream this autumn (for new intakes only).

Meanwhile, we have begun the refurbishment of our buildings which will mean that we can start taking more bookings and bringing in income. So do think of Ruskin if you are looking for somewhere for a conference, workshop or away-day. Booking details from Beryl Stewart at [bstewart@ruskin.ac.uk](mailto:bstewart@ruskin.ac.uk)

## Writing at Ruskin

The proposed BA in English Studies: Creative Writing and Critical Practice received a full five year validation on 5th June. We are very excited that students in this field of study will be able to stay and do their whole degree at Ruskin. If you did one or two years of study here in English and/or in Creative Writing and would like to return to finish a degree, or if you know someone who is just starting out and who might be interested in this field of study, contact [enquiries@ruskin.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@ruskin.ac.uk) (tel: 01865 310713).

The creative writing prizes in memory of Alistair Wisker were presented on 22nd May by Alistair's widow, Gina, in the course of a lively evening of readings by present and former students. (So inspiring was this that one visitor signed up straight away to do a course here.) The poetry prize was won by Janice Laidlaw, a Creative Writing student on the Cert HE, and the prose prize by Richard Sumner, a Ransacker. A number of entries with a Ruskin-related theme will be read at the Cert HE and Dip HE awards ceremony on 29th June. Next year, there will be an additional prize, for a poem in traditional sonnet form. This is being endowed for five years by Brian Abbott, last year's poetry winner, who is now studying very successfully at University College Cork.

It is wonderful to see creative writing forging ahead so strongly. The latest development in this sphere is that we have been asked to take over running the annual Headington poetry competition. Watch this space for more information about that.

## Success for the MAs

In March, both our existing MA programmes, in Public History and Women's Studies, were successfully revalidated in part-time mode for a full five years. The comments about the content and delivery of both courses were very positive. Well done to all the staff concerned. If you think you might be interested in studying on either of these courses, or on the new MA in International Labour and Trade Union Studies, then

contact [enquiries@ruskin.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@ruskin.ac.uk) (tel: 01865 310713).

## **Help us recruit**

There are still places available for this September on a number of courses, including the one year Cert HEs that give people a free first year of degree-level study. Subjects with intakes this autumn are: History, English and Creative Writing, Studying Society, Law and Law and Labour Relations. If you know someone who wants to get into higher education but who needs Ruskin-style support, one of these courses could be ideal for them so do put them in touch with [enquiries@ruskin.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@ruskin.ac.uk) (tel: 01865 310713).

We also need more people to come and train here as youth workers and community workers. So, again, if you know anyone who enjoys volunteering or working in their local community, do put them in touch with us via [rhills@ruskin.ac.uk](mailto:rhills@ruskin.ac.uk) or 01865 759650.

## **Summer School**

This year's summer school is bigger and better than ever, with over 60 courses running, on both sites. Topics range from Philosophy to Jimi Hendrix, and from Trade Unionism to Native American Cultures. Courses are free to people on Jobseeker and similar benefits and £30 to others without higher education. Otherwise, full cost places are available at £150 which, for a three-day two-night course, is really very cheap. Enquiries about short courses can be addressed to [sjeyakumar@ruskin.ac.uk](mailto:sjeyakumar@ruskin.ac.uk) or phoned through on 0870 066 0854.

## **Property Strategy**

The property strategy begins to feel real, at long last. The Stoke House refurbishment is proceeding apace and the building will be formally re-opened on 18th October by Rodney Bickerstaff. We are also poised to refurbish the Webb and Biko residential buildings, making the former en suite throughout and converting the latter to family flats. Some internal

work has been taking place in the Rookery to convert other uses to office space. An architect and a planning adviser have been engaged to move us closer to a planning application for the major new buildings we will need at the Headington site and we have been making site visits in Oxford and elsewhere to give us ideas. A conservation architect is advising on repairs to the crinkle crinkle wall and the former walled garden behind the Rookery, for which we will need to fund-raise as it is likely to cost about £100,000 just to mend the walls. The first contribution towards that has come in the shape of a small grant from Oxford Preservation Trust. Discussions are continuing with Worcester College who remain keen on a shared approach to the future of the Walton Street site. If you would like to contribute to the redevelopment, either with ideas or with cash, do let me know at [amullender@ruskin.ac.uk](mailto:amullender@ruskin.ac.uk).

## **ECDL Success**

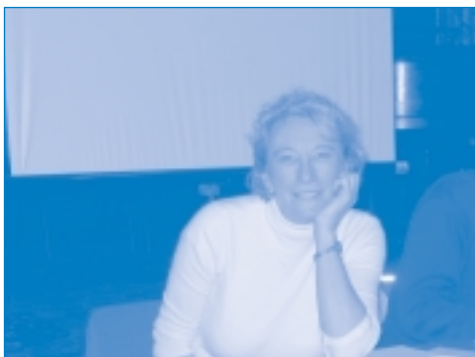
Staff and students at Ruskin can now take the European Computer Driving Licence qualification, an internationally recognised certificate of proficiency in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Congratulations to the first staff member to complete! He is Hugh Pollard, Administrator to the Thames Valley Learning Resource Network (based in the academic grouping that covers Social Work and Youth and Community Work). Several other staff, from all over the College, are working towards the qualification and we are sure that Hugh's success will spur them on.

From the autumn term, most long course students who do not already hold an ICT qualification will be expected to study for the ECDL, which will give an important boost to their CV on leaving Ruskin, as well as to their ability to study effectively while they are here.

## Conclusion-and keeping in touch

As you can see, it is all happening at Ruskin and we enjoy keeping you in touch with what we are doing. We have begun to hold mini-Fellowship reunions in different parts of the country and I am always happy to come along and meet members in their own areas. If you would like to organise such an event near you – for example, by booking a room and some refreshments – we can send out the invitations and make sure that someone comes along from Ruskin to meet you. Let me know at [amullender@ruskin.ac.uk](mailto:amullender@ruskin.ac.uk) if you are interested.

**Audrey Mullender**



## *From the Fellowship President*

Eight months into the role of President I can honestly say that it has been an enjoyable task but one which includes a certain amount of hard work. However, due to the fantastic support I have received from the Secretary, Julie, Membership Secretary, Bob, the Principal and staff at the College, as well as the rest of the members of the Executive Council, we have achieved a good deal since September 05. The arrangements for the re-union in

September 06 have been completed and I hope to see many of you there. The re-union will be held on the weekend of 16th/17th September 06 so please put it in your diary. Along with other speakers, Estelle Morris will be there and the Saturday evening will be jam-packed with fun and entertainment. Book early to ensure your place!

Due to changes in staffing at the College, the telephone fund-raising has been put on hold but the experience of contacting ex-students has been a very worthwhile and interesting undertaking. Having had contact with Ruskin students, both past and present, for the last ten years or so, I have been under the impression that, in general, they are a very nice bunch of people. The telephone calls I made for the College fund-raising have confirmed that theory. By and large, those I rang were quite prepared to talk about their time at the College and every tale related contained words of praise for the excellent education they received as well as gratitude for the fact that they had had the opportunity to undergo the Ruskin experience.

Talking to ex-students has made me realise what a combination of knowledge and experience they hold and what memories, whether comic or otherwise, they must have of their time at the College. As well as sharing these experiences through the Website and the Newsletter, all ex-students, whether Fellowship members or not, can now have the chance of meeting up with other students both past and present. Called the 'Ruskin Rallies' we are intending to meet up at all the major festivals throughout the year. The first 'Rally' is to be held at Burford on 20th May 06 during the celebrations for Levellers Day. The Tolpuddle Festival is next, covering the weekend of 15th/16th July and I hope that those of you who will be attending will come along to the Ruskin display area to meet both myself and the Principal, Dr Audrey Mullender, as well as members of the Fellowship and other ex-students. A get-together is to be arranged and details of this can be obtained from the display stand.

Those of you out there, who think that there would be an opportunity for similar Rallies to be arranged at venues in your area, please do get in touch so that arrangements can be made.

As I write, the weather has not improved, although admittedly the sun has shone occasionally. Nevertheless, I am confident that by the time you read this the summer will have arrived. I wish you all a happy time and look forward to meeting some of you at the Fellowship Re-Union in September.

**Jan Smith**

A few of the MA Public History students 2005, at their Open University graduation day, held at the Barbican in March 2006.



*From left to right:*

Howard Wingfield, Irene Wilson,  
Catherine Bowness and  
Lesley White.

*Photo courtesy of Howard Wingfield*

## **MA PUBLIC HISTORY**

The MA in Public History was recently re-validated in its current form for a further five years. The panel commented positively on both the 'excellent student work' and 'innovative and committed teaching'. This reflects the positive stance of current and past students who had been surveyed for their views of the course. 100% of past students stated their objectives have been achieved 100% of both past & current students said they would recommend the course to others. Since obtaining their degrees, students had researched and published, given talks and undertaken new career directions. Individual comments included:

*'My engagement with Ruskin has had a valuable impact on my life and my work...and it is unusual not to have reason to reflect or use my experience in some way at least each week if not every day.'*

*'The engagement in intensive study at my mature age has given me a broader perspective on life generally as well as stimulating the grey cells'.*

*'I would say that my efforts and new life outlook have themselves become strengthened and are therefore underpinned by the mental toughness and persistence that I developed.'*

*'Studying public history at Ruskin has changed my understanding of the world around me'.*

*'Studying public history at Ruskin has encouraged me to be more receptive to other people's notions of the past – very useful in a museum environment'.*

We are now interviewing prospective students for September 2006. See the public history section of the Ruskin website or ring 01865 310713 for details.

**Dr Hilda Kean**



## **Carole Orgell-Rosen**

Ruskin Student 1978-1980 read Diploma in Labour Studies. Born into a strong trade union family, Great Grandpa was a founder of a miner workers association in the mid 1800's, Grandpa was lodge Chairman of local NUM branch, Grandmother organised women during numerous local pit strikes, and family tradition continued with Carole becoming a shop steward, Branch secretary and Regional Executive member of COHSE.

Prior to Ruskin she trained and became a Registered Nurse specialising in trauma and intensive care. Still a Registered Nurse she continues today whilst managing an integrated Health and Social Care Service for Older People in London.

Post Ruskin, Carole read Law and History obtaining BAs in both, and other academic and professional qualifications over the years, including becoming a grandmother last year.

Carole was Fellowship Secretary for nine years and President for two. When President, she became a member of the Ruskin Governing Council and has retained her place for eight years. Six years ago Carole became the first Fellowship member to be elected to the Governing Executive, Search Committee and Audit Committee. In March 06 Carole was Elected Chair of Audit Committee, another first for the Fellowship.

A member of Liberal Judaism, Carole Serves as Head of Rights and Practices and Council member of her Synagogue, enjoys historical research, reading and a busy social life. (Editors Note: A first for the fellowship, well done Carol)

## **Summer Schools**

Ruskin is running its most ambitious Summer School ever this year. Consisting of 62 courses and taking place on both College sites, it promises to be exciting and lively. It also aims to encourage many students to continue on to take one of the College's higher education courses. The Summer school boasts many new courses this year such as Climate Change, Crime in Society, German for Beginners, Forced Migration, Understanding Political News, alongside and such old favourites as Creative Writing and Beginners' Computing. One course, Creativity for Adults, run by an ex-Ransacker student, will completely revamp the student common room in Walton Street around themes of creativity and sustainability. All this comes with a social programme, which promises lots of fun.

Help us publicize this Summer School as we need a total of 900 students to make it a success. People can take several courses and mix and match very interesting programmes for themselves. Contact Beryl Stewart for programmes and keep an eye on the web site. [www.ruskin.ac.uk](http://www.ruskin.ac.uk)

**Katherine Hughes**

## **Library Gift- Lord Frank Chapple**

In early November 2005, the College Library received the gift of the library of the late Lord Frank Chapple. The donation was made by his sons, Roger and Barry Chapple, and includes a number of books of particular interest to the College's work.

**Valerie Moyses**  
**Librarian**

## My Journey...

At 42 years of age, after twenty-five years in British industry and following an industrial accident in 1999, I was medically retired with irreparable damage to my back. I had a choice: become very well acquainted with day-time television or get on with my life. I chose the latter.

Through the TGWU, I attended several ICT courses at Southampton City College and, while there, learned of Ruskin College and what it had to offer. I enrolled on the Ruskin 'Autobiography' summer programme to learn who I was and, under Tom Sherry's distance learning tutelage, discovered my unfulfilled desire to learn.

I enrolled on the Cert HE course and joined Ruskin College in September 2000. I largely chose Law-based modules, having always harboured the desire to be a barrister and, in July 2001, was awarded my Cert HE. Just prior to completing, I sat and passed the entrance exam at Southampton University to commence a 3rd year LLB Law Degree but, at the very last minute, changed my mind, enrolling instead on the Ruskin Dip HE in anticipation of later joining Oxford Brookes University. The Dip HE broadened further my History, Law and Sociology knowledge and I joined Oxford Brookes University as a 3rd Year Undergraduate in September 2002, gaining my 1st Class BA (Hons) Degree in Combined Studies in 2003. My decision not to join Southampton University opened up a new path for me: social justice. No one was more surprised than me to have journeyed so far.

I decided to plan further for the future and gained my PGCE in Further Education by joining Reading University. My Law-based modules and interest saw me undertake my teaching practice teaching 'AS' Level Law at Reading College VI Form Academy and augmenting this with teaching practice in the LLDD (Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities) department, undertaking the preparation and delivery of Basic English, ICT and Maths courses. I chose the LLDD department to discover for myself the prejudices wider society has against the 'other'. I was not disappointed, being glared at or ignored in the street on our class visits into Reading. My own learning journey continued and I rejoined the School of Social Sciences and Law at Oxford Brookes University to undertake my Master's Degree in Social Identities and Social Change, completing this in 2005.

Throughout, I have always suffered from 'impostor-syndrome'; that is, what am I doing amongst all these clever people? My non-linear expedition into my own capabilities, my own interests and Higher Education per se now finds me at 48 years old at Royal Holloway, University of London researching for my PhD in the Department of History / Centre for Ethnic Minority Studies. Who would have thought it? Certainly not me. My journey continues as, aside from researching, I am making use of my PGCE (FE) as an on-line distance learning tutor for the University, teaching the BA (Hons) module 'Ethnicity, Identity and Citizenship in Modern Britain' within the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) programme. I am not a clever person but I am determined to turn the events of 1999 to my advantage. Self-discipline, belief in self, hard work and interest by me and in me by the many Ruskin, Oxford Brookes, Reading and now Royal Holloway lecturers and tutors have enabled me to journey this far...my journey continues.

**Mel Cox**

## **Ruskin Rallies**

College has a presence at many functions, so come and rally around a publicity and recruitment stand. The Fellowship and College have agreed to expand this so a Fellowship input will also be present. The main events will be Levellers' Day in Burford, Oxford 20th May, Tressell Day, in Hastings 8/9th July, where the organizers are ex-Ruskin Students, and Tolpuddle, in Dorset on 16th July.

There will be adhoc arrangements from a picnic to pub evening depending on the venue. A notice will be posted on the stand with details and, where possible, early notice on the web.

These rallies will be informal and will run in addition to regional informal get togethers. Newcastle had one in March and another is planned for the week of the TUC in Brighton on the 11th September. Again, visit the web for up- to-date details.

## **Fellowship Reunion: 15th September 2006**

The Fellowship reunion in 2006 will take place over the weekend of Friday 15th/ Sunday 17th September. Booking forms go out 24th June 2006. There will be the usual buffet, bar and entertainment on Saturday.

## **Anniversary**

Tom Morris, Richard Andrews, Jock Jeffery and Bob Matthews are Ruskin Fellowship Executive Committee members together and also came up to Ruskin in 1966 together, 40 short years ago. 2006 will be our 40th Anniversary Reunion. We are in touch with Stan Thorne, Fred Smith, Roy Evans, Derek Hill-Willis, Bob Jones, Pete Cook, John Milne, Dave Mansell and Malcolm Ball. Hopefully they will attend. Sadly Larry Giles lives in Canada still and is unlikely to make it here. Can you?

We would welcome any others from the intake of 66/68. The Fellowship has agreed that non-members from that year may attend the special reunion but will need to book via the official form. So if you are from 66/68 and want to come, contact Bob, 01323 892647, or e-mail [matbobshe@aol.com](mailto:matbobshe@aol.com). Let's make it a cracker.

## **LOCAL CONTACTS**

The fellowship has a number of local contacts and we hope to develop more. If you live near one of the areas below and would like to make contact and find out what goes on. E-mail, or phone for more information.

### **North East England**

Nigel Todd, (67-69) former student and Regional Secretary, WEA, North East Region. Phone 0191 4618100 or e-mail: [ntodd@wea.org.uk](mailto:ntodd@wea.org.uk)

## London

Carole Bonner (98-99). Organises informal / irregular get-togethers in London in the evenings. e-mail: c.bonner-alumni@lse.ac.uk

## Brighton

Bob Matthews (66-68). e-mail : matbobshe@aol.com or 01323 892647.

I live just outside Brighton. A reunion is planned in Brighton for 6:30pm on Monday 11th September. Venue to be arranged.

## Manchester/Derbyshire

Julie Batten. (81-83) e-mail Julie.bat@virgin.net ( Julie is Secretary of The Fellowship).

How about an event in Preston, to reach all those in the North West?

## Oxford

Jan Smith. (president. Ruskin Fellowship). jansmith103@hotmail.com 01869 369095.

An event is being considered for Oxford. What would you like to do?

**If you are willing to set up a contact group in your area let Bob (under Brighton Contact number), know and he will give you support and contact others in your area for you.**

**Bob M**

## WELL PLACED

I am a second year Social Work degree student, studying at Ruskin College in Oxford. My first placement was with the Street Services Team (SST) in Oxford. The SST is a homelessness outreach project for twenty-four year olds upwards. My duties included a 7am street outreach where we checked the streets for new arrivals and carried out ongoing work with current clients, including assessing housing need, general health issues and any other support needs, via multi-agency links.

I arrived on day one, nervous, yes, but confident that I was open-minded, a man of the world, and would not be influenced by any hidden prejudices. I was wrong! The level of workload was constant, one client after another needing help right now. Even allowing for much reflective supervision and debriefing, the sheer emotional investment crept up on me without me realising it. It is one thing to muse over the merits of one particular theory or method in the classroom, but another to be faced with clients who are desperate, angry, sad and in need of help right now, when you know there is a chronic lack of beds, both in Oxford and nationally.

At the beginning of the placement I observed my colleagues, took notes and thought about the National Occupational Standards and the Codes of Practice from a safe distance. Then staff holidays and sickness dragged me, kicking and screaming, from my comfort zone. That week I resettled a particularly troubled service user into a hostel in Birmingham, and got a knock back from another who, after I had phoned and begged many hostels, which resulted in him being taken off the streets and offered a place at a Drug Recovery programme, decided he didn't want a mere student working with him any more. Yes, I know all about reliable hate objects, but I am human and the rebuke did sting. In the same week I had my wallet stolen from the office, and I had to hold my hands up and say that I was stupid for leaving it there. The next day a colleague and I took a client to his new hostel, and on the way he was great company, a totally different person from the one I had been working with on the streets. This showed me what a big part environment plays, not only in the eyes of society, but also in the way the client sees himself.

Those five days were important to me and taught me lessons as a person as much as a future social worker. Although it was scary to start with, once I realised it was all right to be human, and yes, to make mistakes, just as long as I learned from them, I was OK. I really enjoyed the placement as clients started to interact to me with more trust as they sensed my enhanced confidence, which prompted them to confide and trust a little more.

There were tests where I had to put my personal views to one side, for example when working with a client who regularly beat up his girlfriend. Also, the many preconceived ideas I had about heroin addicts were quickly dispelled. Every day I was getting to know, and gain the trust of, as varied an assemblage of people as you would find in any walk of life.

That was what was so great about this placement. The learning curve was invaluable, not only for my future learning needs, but also for my own personal growth. The SST were so well thought of, due to much love, courage and dedicated hard work. Without wanting to sound too corny, it was a pleasure and a humbling experience to work with such a diverse and interesting client group. They have to fight every day just to keep their heads above it, and they do so with dignity and humour. They have to fight not only their demons, but also a system that sometimes seems to want street sleepers to be air brushed out of society's conscience for ever. But after the experience of my placement, I for one will shout long and hard and will try not to let this happen.

**Nigel Rosewell**

## A Visitor

It was a beautiful Tuesday in April (I tell everyone that in the summer sun in Oxford is unforgettable !) Debs and myself head down to the Black Boy to talk to the new Landlady about discounts and her plans to turn the pub into a bistro type thing. Out of the blue, Debbie jumped up to receive a telephone call and ran out. I thought nothing of it and continued chatting to the new Russian Landlady, only for Debs to run back and whisper in my ear 'He's here! I had completely forgotten that we were expecting a visitor, not because I am an idiot, but because he was meant to be at Walton Street, sitting in on a Trade Union class. We promptly finished the meeting and whisked ourselves up to the college.

I knew he was an Indian MP representing the Sabarkantha constituency of Gujarat, also Chief Whip for the Congress Party and Chair of the Housing Committee but I didn't know what to expect, as I noticed an Indian family sat in the common room. Debs went in and

I followed shortly after. Two beautiful ladies and the most wonderful child were present: The wife, the daughter and granddaughter of Madhusudan Devram

Mistry. I shook their hands. Mr Mistry came in after and we introduced ourselves. I remember being shocked at first to how wonderfully genuine they came across. I have met politicians in the past that 'ooze' of something sinister, slimy or 'up to no good', but this man was surprisingly humble, even politer than myself and, I have said it before, noticeably genuine.

He had simply arrived for a pleasant nostalgia trip harking back to warm memories of being at Ruskin College in the academic year of 1978-79 to study Development Studies. Yes the year Labour lost and Thatcher gained power, and yes he was allowed to vote and didn't vote for the Tories. It was a very interesting election, and to be at Ruskin at that time brought back fond or not so fond memories of a moment. He recounted his discovery of tea drinking, the English way, in coffee mugs; showed us where he slept in Stoke House, where there is now an open corridor, told me of his love for football and how he got given a Liverpool scarf before he went back to India. I loved hearing the stories of old Ruskin, the college has so much hidden history!

Mr Mistry came to Ruskin after winning a scholarship, which gave money to come to Oxford and study here. He spent his years in India previously building trade unions, and since Oxford has done many jobs, including working as a field officer with Oxfam. He is currently holding his second term in office as an MP. To me, it is excellent to see that for students who have been at Ruskin, it impacted on their lives so much that they make a special arrangement to come back, and that they go out and change the world themselves. It builds confidence, knowing that people have left here to go on and do great things. Maybe all of us one day will come back to the College after doing great things and not recognize the site in nostalgic awe.

**Ruz (Editors note: Ruz is the RSU president)**

# Ruskin College presents Peggy Seeger in Contcert



Appleseed Recordings Artist Peggy Seeger

## Proceeds to Ruskin College

Venue: Roman, Rover (Oxford) Sports and Social Club Horspath Road,  
Cowley, Oxford, OX4 5NL

Event Date: 28th September 2006

Ticket Price: £13/ £11 concessions

To Book: Email: [crogers@ruskin.ac.uk](mailto:crogers@ruskin.ac.uk)

Contact Charlotte Rogers on 01865 517 802

*"You might say Peggy is an artist who needs no introduction...She can make a traditional song sound timeless, yet as current as if written yesterday...This is the way traditional music remains alive."* Rich Warren, *The Midnight Special & Folkstage, WFMT Radio.*

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Disclaimer - The views expressed in the newsletter are the individuals and are not necessarily college views. Any view which may be libelous or abusive, will not be published. The Editors decision is final.