

The Swansea Story: – How Swansea has XPLOITED European Funding to the full

The beginnings: 1984

Swansea's contribution to the Xploiting of EU resources makes most sense if you take the long view. Starting with the miners' strike of 1984 a story about strong women emerges. These women lived in the valleys communities and after mobilising to run soup kitchens and food co-ops for the miners' families, they wanted to continue making their community a better place to live. <http://www.xploit-eu.com/resources/video3.html>



The XPLOIT project visited two of these long established community centres in the Swansea area, DOVE and Glynneath. One of the stories we want to tell is that of the strong, pragmatic women who made the centres what they are today



Julie Bibby and Lesley Smith, DOVE managers



Janet MacCallum and Pauline Morgan, Glynneath managers

The women wanted to have courses closer to home,, to give *everyone* an opportunity to learn new skills. The colleges and Universities were too far away and too intimidating, so they were asked to deliver some courses in the community.

Background: Since the late 19th century, there had been a history of self education in the coal mining communities. In many parts of the coalfield, there were literary and debating societies, scientific societies and mechanics' institutes

There were also evening classes, such as first aid classes, organised by the local authorities. In the early 20th century, the Workers Educational Association (WEA) and Extra-mural classes at Cardiff and Aberystwyth universities proved to be very popular. Classes to educate men in trade union and political work were important as they produced a new generation of trade union leaders and Members of Parliament such as Aneurin Bevan. At the same time, many villages and towns in the coalfield had Miners' Halls and Institutes with libraries, in which adult classes were held. There were no public libraries in the valleys until the 1920s. By the 1930s, there were over 100 miners' institutes in the South Wales coalfield. Built and maintained by the miners, paid for with weekly deductions from their pay packets.. The DOVE workshop still houses the Miners' Library. The WEA still runs classes in Swansea. <http://www.swales.wea.org.uk/aboutus/history/index.html> <http://www.agor.org.uk/cwm/themes/Life/education/adult.asp> his history of education in the valleys predisposed the University and local College to work with the women.

The catalyst was European funding that became available in 2009

The middle: 1990 onwards

In the University: By 1989, Judith James was working in DACE and was responsible for strategic funding applications to develop the 'Community University of the Valleys Partnership', the 'Connecting Communities Cymru' and linked community development projects. First, in the 90's there were huge **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** bids to provide "state of the art" ICT labs in 8 community centres <http://www.communities.gov.uk/regeneration/regenerationfunding/europeanregionaldevelopment> followed by a series of **European Social Fund (ESF)** project bids for ICT training in those centres, that were renewed over a period of almost 20 years.

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/allsectorpolicies/europeansocialfund/?lang=en>

The projects, initially called Women into Technology, (WIT) were launched in 1989 with the headline "*Housewives tuck into microchips*", and focused on women and people living in socially disadvantaged communities.. Courses were later opened to men and became the Foundation in IT (FIT).

Jean Preece, who benefited from the ICT training offered by DACE, joined the department in 1990 and Judith & Jean through the WIT & FIT projects trained some 3,000 local people in 10 different community centres. Was IT good for you? A follow up piece of research demonstrated that the training was hugely successful in getting participants, especially women returners into well paid, responsible posts.

<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00002548.htm>



Jean Preece & Judith James at the 2004 National Training Awards with Joanna Lumley

The Community courses won, local, national & special training awards in 2004. The development of the course in a total of 12 community locations was managed & presented in a manner that appealed to disadvantaged learners.

In the Community: After the miners' strike it was the women in the ex-mining communities who came to the fore. The same women that the XPLOIT partners met in 2011 were there at the beginning.



Jan and Pauline in the 1980s



- Jan and Pauline now



Julie & Leslie in the 1980s



Julie & Leslie now

The emerging community centres having benefited from the European funding (ERDF) to set up computer labs began to get some regular income from education providers like DACE who with the European funding (ESF) were able to pay the centres room rental and administration fees. This steady income enabled the centres to flourish. The centres also worked with the local authorities like Swansea and Neath. After Welsh Government devolution in 1998, they also began to get support from the Welsh Assembly Government and also wrote lottery bids. They



One of the greenhouses at the DOVE



The Rheola Walled Garden Project

learnt to balance small pots of money from many different sources, and they *developed bid writing skills*. They also developed *entrepreneurial skills*, adding cafes and crèches, and after-school clubs to generate income, employ local people & make the funding of the centres more sustainable. More recent developments are horticultural and garden projects and a second-hand clothes shop. <http://www.cuv.org.uk/history.php>

Nicola James's Story (a typical woman returner's story)

"My journey started when I bought a computer for my children for Christmas, and had absolutely no idea how to work it. I saw an advert for a part time course at my local College Cwmtawe that was entitled "IT for the terrified". I successfully completed this course, and having really enjoyed it, decided to try and go a bit further. I successfully completed the FIT course at College Cwmtawe, the ECDL at Swansea University, an advanced GNVQ at the dove workshop in Banwen, followed by a part time degree at Swansea Metropolitan in Software Engineering. I am delighted to say that I graduated in 2009 gaining a first class honours degree in this subject. I am currently working for Fujitsu Engineering as a software developer/support worker, and am loving every minute of it."



3rd stage: Joined-up, strategic thinking across the region

The next stage of the story is to do with the strategic planning for the Swansea area. It began with all Adult Community Learning providers started to meet together to plan a joint programme as part of the **Swansea Learning Partnership (SLP)** <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=24112>

<http://www.swansea.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=25503>

The Assembly government encouraged this by instituting a joint inspection scheme ESTYN that covered everyone except the University. The Partnership operated at two levels, (1) a practical planning level, where all the learning providers map and plan what courses are needed and (2) a strategic level where all the heads of the institutions decide on broad policy. **As part of the process joint projects evolved using European funding**, out of one of these, the LLIW project, the www.Swansea-arrivals.net developed

In 2007 the partnership developed into the **South Wales Regional Learning Partnership**. Judith James currently represents the University on this committee. You were introduced to some of this group on your visit to Parc y Scarlets in Llanelli and saw also the planning resources they have at their fingertips. <http://www.rlpsww.org.uk/English/Pages/home.aspx>

The partnership is made up of key representatives from local government, higher education, further education, the third sector and private sector / work based learning organisations. Each one has made a commitment to work collaboratively across the areas of education and regeneration in the South West Wales region. Its main aim is to ensure that publicly-funded learning providers and associated organisations work collaboratively, effectively and efficiently to meet the needs of the learners and the regional economy in South West Wales.

The European projects that we undertook in this period were the Parenting Project and The Swansea arrivals web site that offered new arrivals to Swansea innovative, free language learning resources that they could download and use at home. These projects finished in 2010.

Websites like Swansea arrivals.net which offer free downloadable language learning have become more widespread. For example Judith Porch is learning Welsh from a website - www.saysomethinginwelsh.com.

Parenting also has become a national concern and the UK Government has just introduced a scheme that allows parents to attend free classes. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2143516/David-Camerons-100-parenting-class-Boots-vouchers-help-tackle-child-yobbery.html>



New centres, like Graigfelen are still coming on line supported by more strong women. The group at Graigfelen started by asking for craft classes. Judith Porch from lifelong learning negotiated with them and provided some classes in flower arranging and art. Because DACE and CCS are working together Judith invited DACE to join in and they were able to provide Digital Story telling classes.



5 of the group have created their own stories, Leighton decided to create his story around the tragedy of his son who died aged 5. He said it had been therapeutic to be involved. We hope they will pass the skills on to local schoolchildren

Adult Learners Week was planned across the city as usual . Attempts to get Swansea City Football Club (SCFC)involved were unsuccessful , but we hope by starting earlier next year, to have more success. Also SCFC have a new Danish manager, so we are hoping Jan has some influence



<http://www.swansea.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=23407>

<http://www.niacecd.org.uk/campaigns/adult-learners-week>

The third stage of Swansea’s Lifelong Learning journey has been affected by the economic crisis which we are all experiencing. It coincides with Judith James’s job widening in scope from being engaged with just adult learners to engaging with all students including undergraduates. Looking critically at the outcomes of our previous effort, there is a widespread feeling that we are not doing enough in the field of employment and entrepreneurship. Also if we look at the information being disseminated by Norman Longworth and the Pascal network , we see that one of the potentials of a City of Learning that we are not utilising is that of engaging businesses to contribute to the creation of a City of Learning .

The Regional Learning **Partnership is part-funded by the European Social Fund through the Welsh Government** - Funding for the partnership has been secured from the European Social Fund (Priority 4) and other domestic sources. The RLP was awarded Convergence Funding in 2010, along with funding from DfES and match funding secured from all its partners

<http://stateofthenationdebate.eventbrite.co.uk/>



Businesses themselves want to communicate online with their customers, like the event in the poster . Run by the DVLA to encourage older people to cross the digital divide, otherwise they are disadvantaged.