

Living Heritage UK - A New Generation of British Homeschooling

Jane Bullivant

One carefree summer evening I asked my 9-year-old what birthday cake he would like if he could choose any in the world. Almost before the question had left my lips, I felt a twinge of realization that I might actually have to come up with his chosen confectionery. Nevertheless, I was pretty certain he'd choose a chocolate cake for his next birthday. After much pondering, Joseph came to me in the kitchen, all wide-eyed like he'd just won Willy Wonka's golden ticket, and said, "I'd like . . . a hamster theme cake, please." Yikes. As his birthday drew closer, I toyed with the rodent cake idea. Maybe I could construct a 3-D icing hamster, complete with plastic teeth. Or if I was feeling slightly less adventurous, I could bake a basic cake and stick a furry hamster model on the top. His birthday was fast approaching, and the thought of an icing sculpture was now leaving me weak at the knees. So, I trotted off to Asda- Walmart with a photo of Dexter the hamster to have printed onto a shop-bought cake. Job done. My cunning plan was to study up on Homestead Blogger and improve my culinary skills to such a degree that sculpting a cake masterpiece next birthday would be a breeze. Fortunately for me, the kids' current fascination is for organic cooking. Maybe Joseph will whip up a rodent-featuring masterpiece of his own for his next birthday.

There's something about homeschooled kids, the world over, that makes them stand out: they don't do things in half measure. They bite the bullet and grab at life, hamsters and all. They have high expectations, and every new day really does herald a fresh start. Sure, this is interwoven with plenty of immaturity and a fair amount to be learnt on the "self-discipline" stakes. Yet, there is something tangibly wholehearted about how our children approach life. Whether it's building a hamster cage or preparing for a spy mission in the garden, they live in the moment. However, in the adult world it is far too easy to trade wholeheartedness for busyness. I can find myself multitasking to such a degree that I'm never quite in the moment, always thinking of the next thing to be done. Just like a hamster on a wheel, my activity lures me into a sense that I'm achieving something great, yet this isn't always the case. I'm now realizing that wholeheartedness is worlds apart from simply working really hard at something. Wholeheartedness is a decision of the heart; it's not simply doing a proper job.

England, my homeland, is the land of rolling hills, quaint tea shops, and gallant history. It is renowned for being the land of wholehearted heroes, with centuries of fine character under our belt. However, in recent years it has been all too easy for this nation to take its eye off the ball and become one that prizes political correctness more than a sound foundation. Many would say that a vague sense of mutual good now passes for our sense of purpose and direction. Sadly, many of our state schools reflect this lack of moral fiber, with plans to educate children without true sense of right and wrong, lest it offend anyone's personal sense of morality (Qualifications Authority 2006). Sadly, many Christian parents now adhere to modern psychology and believe that secular education and peer-led socialization are crucial in raising Christian children. Research shows this clearly isn't the case, and 80% of Christian children who have attended state school abandon their faith by the time they are 21 years old. State-schooled children are now taught in bite-sized chunks, rarely getting the opportunity to learn a subject in context or explore

a topic further. Wholeheartedness becomes dulled, and learning gets swamped by the maelstrom of peer pressure.

In the UK, homeschooling is a do-it-yourself affair. We simply don't have homeschooling curriculum, conventions, magazines, or books. But all of these benefits aren't actually what homeschooling is about. It's about delving into rich literature, philosophy, and science. It's about exploring the world, engaging community, and growing in character. Sure, we are sometimes hounded for choosing to raise our own children. Yet we have a quiet resourcefulness and a strength that runs very deep. For many years homeschooling has steadily moved along, dodging regular onslaughts and producing fine individuals. Thus far, we've done a good job.

Now, something new is on the horizon for British homeschoolers—something that has echoes of the British greats that went before us. I'm not talking moonlit banquets or swashbuckling adventures. Not even gallant victories or ancient poetry. Quite simply, a horn-blowing cry is going out to homeschoolers across the land to be united and wholehearted in educating our kids in excellence, to raise them in fine character, as individual thinkers, unhindered by the sludge of peer pressure. An agreement to stand together against the tide of mediocrity and compromise that threatens to suffocate the next generation. We are inspired by British greats such as C.S. Lewis, John Bunyan, David Livingstone, Florence Nightingale, and Charlotte Mason. Their wholehearted passion and radical devotion against the odds has made their works fascinating to many life-hungry families in the UK. As a result, a number of homeschool parents from across the UK have started a totally new homeschooling organization called Living Heritage. We are thrilled and full of anticipation at the venture set before us. Through a dedicated blog, we are offering a wealth of homeschooling information and inspiration from British history and modern culture. We are looking to work with the very best educational publishers and suppliers to bring our members the latest resources. Our children are very much involved, and are passionate about using their skills to build the homeschooling community. Below is the Living Heritage mission statement, written word by word by British homeschoolers who share a tangible excitement for the future of homeschooling:

Living Heritage is an organization that equips, inspires and resources families in the quest to build a vibrant family life. We are excited about raising grounded children strong in identity, purpose, and passion. Inspired by the timeless wisdom of British greats such as JRR Tolkien, CS Lewis, and Florence Nightingale, we look to build a rich, robust quality of family life in the fast-paced twenty-first century.

We value homeschooling as a viable educational option that vastly enhances a child's social and academic horizons. We support families exploring the wealth of literature, history, science, language, mathematics, and the arts in a stimulating, secure family environment. We believe in the positive socialization that occurs in families, neighborhoods, and local communities that are rich in life experience and expertise. Living Heritage works alongside parents who are raising children to be socially confident, able to hold their own in the world.

We are founded on sound principles, and present a clear, positive case for the option of educating your own. We offer information, networking and events for those just considering homeschooling, and those who have embarked on the journey. We regularly review resources and curriculum sourced from UK and USA. We have access to

experienced UK homeschoolers, and the friendship and expertise of thousands of homeschooling families worldwide. Living Heritage is run by normal families who have set their faces to the wind, set sail on the homeschooling journey, and are now having the voyage of their lives . . . Come on board!

Living Heritage is founded on Christian principles.

Sure, this is radical talk for the girl in the queue at Asda-Walmart clutching a hamster photo. Grassroots homeschooling often seems far from the ideals. Indeed, I am now typing this with one hand, and with the other I'm rolling Play-Doh snakes for my youngest. My laundry pile is sniggering at me, and I have the in-laws arriving any minute. Yet here lies the real strength of Living Heritage: it offers a rich quality of inspiration that is accessible to real-world, twenty-first century families. We are all knee-deep in the slime and sparkle of day-to-day life, juggling kids, hamsters, and numerous responsibilities. We all have hopes and dreams for the future. Yet we also know that the time is now, the window of opportunity for wholehearted living is upon us. Homeschooling is so much more than ticking the boxes and stacking up a list of admirable achievements. It's more than just getting through the day. Wholehearted living means pushing the boat out further, digging deeper, and pulling on the presence of God in day-to-day life. Wholeheartedness is the rocket fuel for life, and it inspires our kids to great things and gives them clear direction. Carpe diem!

Biographical Information

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Jane Bullivant and her husband homeschool their three turbo-charged children in Midlands, England. Jane is the author of Dear Lord, I Feel Like a Whale: Knowing God's Touch During Pregnancy and Beyond (Kregel) and Skydiving for Parents: Raising Amazing Kids Without Going into Freefall (Kregel), commended by Gena Suarez. She is a freelance writer and conference speaker. Come say hi to Jane at www.HomeschoolBlogger.com/skydivingforparents. Find out more at www.HomeschoolBlogger.com/livingheritageuk.