

The Venture: A Case Study of an adventure playground (2007)

ISBN: 978-0-9540130-2-8

This book examines the long-lived success of The Venture, an adventure playground in urban Wrexham. Written by Fraser Brown, Reader at Leeds Metropolitan University, from conversations with Malcolm King (a founder and current manager of The Venture) and Ben Tawil (one of its recent playworkers). £7.50

Children's Games Poster

A high quality A2 sized poster based on the famous Breughal painting 'Kinderspelen' or 'Children's Games'. £4

Play Out in Wales Poster

A high quality A2 sized poster of a typical Welsh community, by cartoonist Les Evans. £4

These posters would be of interest to many children with AD/HD and some children with autism as there is so much going on and they are fun to look at.

For further information contact Play Wales at Baltic House, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5FH or www.playwales.org.uk

IPA – International Play Association: Promoting the Child's Right to Play

The IPA is the only worldwide multidisciplinary organization devoted to the promotion of children's play as a fundamental right under Article 31 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child. It is open to all who are working to improve the quality of children's play. Sugradh is the national correspondent for Ireland on the IPA Council. At the Berlin World Conference in 2005 each member state promised to double its membership. For this we need 10 IPA members in Ireland for us to be the National Representative body for the IPA in Ireland.

The *Playrights Magazine*, published twice a year, provides information for the IPA membership about developments within the IPA itself, but also on play projects from around the world, providing an opportunity for communication between members and discussion of key issues in the world of children's play. The latest edition (2/09) includes a fascinating article on Play and the *Socially Competent Brain* by S.M. Pellis & V.C. Pellis, advocating rough and tumble play being absolutely essential for developing social competency in young boys. Their book, *The Playful Brain* is also reviewed. Play in early childhood is examined with examples from England, China, Nicaragua, the United States and Australia. Engaging young children as designers of play spaces is also discussed. Mobile play provision to bring play to children is described with examples from Hong Kong, Germany, Japan and Australia.

Playrights E-journal provides a scientific base of information on children's play and provides a means for researchers to share their work as well as providing a tool for play advocates in their promotion of the importance of play. The journal can be accessed via the ipa website, www.ipaworld.org.

Book Review

Natural Playspaces: Creating Outdoor Play Environments for the Soul

Rusty Keeler

Reviewed by Ric McConaghy

There are times when you can judge a book by its cover. Twoimps peering out from behind a moss covered tree trunk suggest that *Natural Playspaces*; *Creating Outdoor Play Environments for the Soul* is going to be a joyous and playful journey of discovery. This is a book about planning for play where the primary focus is the child, and the title refers not to the body but to the soul. Bliss.

The tone from the outset is encouraging and positive. The language is personal and intimate. The style unashamedly undertakes the perspective of the child to whom the playscape will be delivered. It is almost taunting you with the idea that if you don't like the approach then save us all some time and go and get an equipment catalogue.

This book has humanity at its heart, imagination in its head and play in its soul. The visuals are rich, diverse and almost make the words redundant. Even the paper feels nice. It is all so sensual I found myself wishing that Rusty had really let himself go and had a few scratch and sniff pages (2nd edition maybe).

We are urged to re-connect with what made our own childhoods special. The senses are explored, the imagination engaged and the view of play and its place in the world collaboratively recalibrated. This is not play to burn off energy between boring maths lessons. This is not play to reduce your bmi (body mass index), increase your gms (gross motor skills) or to stimulate your p&ks (proprioceptive and kinaesthetic sensation). This is play because it is great and it gets you out in nature with your friends, no matter what the weather.

The case studies take you through the journeys of others and the challenges they faced. Not every project team will have a handy Rusty to ride with through the inevitable bumps of design to delivery (more's the pity); so the case studies and workbook resources give you a glimpse, a guide, and a way of going that will assist in many of the pitfalls.

There are simple projects at the back that can be undertaken by groups to bring special elements to any space. Some are seasonal while some are more enduring. So many of the ideas are simple and achievable. This does not mean they lack sophistication, but they certainly lack any unnecessary embellishment, and leave that level of imagining to each new maker.

At times the text can take tangents, but this is the rhythm of Rusty, and this book is clearly his. As such these drift into alternate universes and can be forgiven for their obvious unbridled enthusiasm and inherent interconnectedness. It is much more of a conversation than a dissertation and may I suggest it should be read that way.

No book can be completely comprehensive without being formidably thick. There are technical issues relating to site analysis and design that will require expertise during the process. There are issues that will vary from one country to another and from one region to another where local knowledge will be crucial. But fundamentally at its core this book is about children, about play and about nature - and that is universal.

Free play is one of the few remaining unstructured endeavours left for our over-organised, intensely urbanised children. Nature is nothing if not chaotic and so the synergy with children should be obvious. This book, and its author, celebrate this, encourage this, immerse themselves and the reader in this and so empower communities to deliver this in the spaces they seek to provide for their children to play. I urge you to embrace it.

Ric McConaghy is a designer of children's environments in NSW, Australia

The book is available from www.mindstretchers.co.uk

Forthcoming Events

25th WORLD PLAY CONFERENCE

NEW GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

CHILDREN'S PLAY:

17 - 19 JUNE 2010

International Council for Children's Play

The **25th World Play Conference** will take place at the **Gulbenkian Foundation** in Lisbon, in June **2010**.

THE MAIN AIMS OF THE CONFERENCE ARE

- to contribute to the development of new goals and directions for the future of children's play based upon scientific discussion;
- to share experiences focusing children's play considering the present and the future;
- to stimulate the scientific discussion on the evolution of children's play;
- to offer a forum for researchers to discuss experiences and investigation;
- to consider research methods concerning children's play;
- to prevent the decline of children's play.

For further information contact the International Council for Children's Play at www.iccp-play.org

Play ireland

The newsletter of Súgradh: Ireland's national play forum

Autumn 2009

Welcome to the Autumn issue of Play Ireland.

The aim of the newsletter is to provide a forum for those interested in play in Ireland - parents, play workers, children, teachers, local authorities, everyone.

In this issue we discuss the difficult issue of risk in play and how to balance it with the value of play. Getting pre-school children to spend as much time as possible outdoors is also explored. Play events held this summer are outlined.

The closure of the National Play Resource Centre makes the role of Sugradh even more important, to act as a focus for information on play, to organise play related events and to lobby for better play provision for children in Ireland.



Risk v. Play Value

There have been calls to reduce the risk on playgrounds as much as possible with the use of rubber surfacing, fencing and standardised, engineered play equipment. There are many situations where this approach is suitable, such as with inner city areas. Safety is seen as being paramount and through a belief in management systems requires risks to be eliminated. There is no doubt that this has led to the acceptance of play areas among local authorities in Ireland as it provides a protocol to follow in terms of installation and maintenance. As a result we now have over 850 public access playgrounds throughout the country.

However, an alternative view sees children's development as being paramount. Children need the benefit of free space and to experience real life and risk, or challenge. One of the main purposes of a playground is to enable children to experience challenge in a controlled setting. A more holistic approach is needed, with different types of play areas from the traditional to the more natural to encourage a healthy lifestyle among children - putting the health back into health and safety.

This was the message from David Ball, Professor of Risk Management, at the recent PlayBoard NI annual conference in Armagh. David also pointed out that 80% of playground accidents are caused through behaviour and not by the equipment. David is one of the authors of "Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide" and of "Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces". Both are published by Play England and may be downloaded from www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications. Design for Play has been written to provide guidance on creating more natural play spaces, which is currently the focus for the creation of new play spaces in the UK.

Managing Risk looks at identifying hazards and risks and balancing these against the play value of the activity in a "risk-benefit analysis". Until now, we have been focussing on adherence to European standards, which are not mandatory, rather than looking at risk assessment, which is. Managing risk in a play setting requires an understanding of children's needs and behaviour; how they play, the benefits of play, the risks involved and how these can be controlled so as to still provide the desirable challenge.



Sugradh is an independent charity supported by donations, member's fees and commissioned work. Membership is open to individuals and bodies that support the child's right to play. Current members include play providers, local authorities, children's organisations, community groups and parents. A membership brochure enclosed, please support Sugradh and encourage others to join.

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Bray, co Wicklow
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With our seminars and conferences, Sugradh has been promoting the concept of a more natural play space, with sand, water; woodchip surfaces, grass mounds, logs and boulders. In other words, the kind of places where we played as children. These ideas are gradually filtering into some of the new play spaces being created in Ireland. Such features are not easily assessed under the European standards. This is where the risk assessment comes in. Risk is the likelihood of harm occurring as a result of a hazard and depends on the probability of harm and the numbers who may be affected. Most of these natural features would be low risk and we need to look at play value. RoSPA have a play value checklist in which sand and water have the highest play value. The checklist can be downloaded from www.rosaplaysafety.co.uk. Many equipment suppliers can provide sand and water units for play spaces.

In the UK the Health and Safety Executive consider that risk-benefit analysis is a sensible approach to the health and safety of children's play provision. It is important that one's own play policy recognises the importance of risk to child development and that no play facility can be expected to be risk free or accident free. The consequences of not providing for challenging play, especially for older children, lest children grow up being risk naïve. We await with interest the Play Safety Statement currently being drafted by the Office of the Minister for Children.

New Playground at St. Margaret's Traveller Site, Ballymun, Dublin

In May 2009 a new playground located at St. Margaret's Site was completed. This initiative was developed through meetings between Ballymun Regeneration Ltd. Play Development Section, local residents, St Margaret's project workers, Dublin City Council, and Ballymun RAPID co-ordinator. It was agreed that a permanent play facility was needed in order to address the safety and play needs of the children living on site and also the children from the housing development beside the site. An application for the RAPID Playground Leverage Scheme was applied for and successfully secured. Consultations with children, young people and residents took place. The playground provides a variety of play opportunities for children and young people aged from 2 up to 18 years of age. Thanks to this new facility over 100 children and young people at the site and adjoining housing are benefiting greatly from additional play experiences that would not be available to them otherwise. We would like to take this opportunity to commend the children and residents for their contribution in maintaining the excellent condition of this new play facility.

For further information contact Debby Clarke, BRL Play Development Officer @ 01 2225609 or 086 8150997



The Key Points in the Risk – Benefit Approach

- *Creating benefits is the top aim – play value and challenge*
- *What are the hazards, if any?*
- *What are the risks – low, medium, high?*
- *What control measures may be needed?*
- *Monitor risks and benefits*
- *Adjust to maximise benefits*

Maam Children's Playscheme – Galway

The Maam Summer Play scheme has been running for many years bringing play to children living in an isolated rural area. Jean Parker reports that the play scheme was fantastic this summer with loads of inclusive play, much of it child led. "We had 31 children aged 5 to 13yrs and eleven young adult helpers 14 to 19 years, a bit like running two inter-connecting schemes. There were lots of parents helping too. It was brilliant, however, I literally had no time to do anything else". Jean also organised the play scheme's art mural project in August.

For information on how to set up a summer play scheme contact Jean at playshare@iol.ie

Play 4all: "in the picture" mobile book and resource collections

These were launched in September and will be available for trainers/workshop leaders to borrow from Galway libraries. 45 books, story sacks including games, loads of posters and a resource pack. For information contact playshare@iol.ie

Silloogue Green Ballymun Host Successful Play Day



"Skipping a generation" Silloogue Green Play Day

On Thursday 6th August 09, residents of Silloogue Green in Ballymun, Dublin, who have formed a "Friends of the Park" group hosted a Play Day in their local neighbourhood park. The event helped to encourage local parents to make time to support their children's play and encouraged friends and neighbours to "get out and Play the good old fashioned way". Luckily for everyone involved, the day of the event was a gloriously sunny day at the end of a long spell of bad weather. Children of all ages enjoyed a variety of play opportunities such as play dough, sand, water, dress up and street games. "It's hard to believe that simple ideas which cost very little can capture children's attention and provide so much fun", said one parent from the area. The purpose of holding this type of event is to involve and encourage as many families as possible in a celebration of children's right to play. The "Friends of the Park" hosted this event to promote the positive use of the newly developed parks and playgrounds and encourage children to play in local streets and neighbourhoods in Ballymun. The success of this type of event depends greatly on community involvement that can only happen with the commitment of local residents working together. Support for the event was provided by Ballymun Regeneration Ltd Play Development Officer, Dublin City Council Community Development Team, BRL Safer Ballymun Co-ordinator, BNC and An Garda Síochána.

If you need information on how to organise a Play day in your area, please contact Debby Clarke BRL Play development Officer @ 01 2225609.

So come on, get out and play in your local streets, parks and neighbourhoods!!

RoSPA Play Inspectors Visit Dublin

Last month 15 playground safety inspectors from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) visited Dublin for their twice yearly inspector's meeting. Changes in the European standards for playgrounds were discussed, together with issues arising from different items of play equipment. The morning after experiencing the Dublin Literary Pub Crawl, the inspectors visited three playgrounds in the Dublin area.

Chimney Park in Lazer Lane was built by the Dublin Docklands Development Authority. The landscaped play space is unfenced and has sand as a general surface, grass mounds, boulders and water; palm trees, a wooden climber, swings and climbing bricks forming hand holds around the base of the retained chimney. The significant resources put into community consultation have paid off with no vandalism despite the heavy use of the site.



Chimney park, Dublin

The playground in Markievicz Flats has a 6 m high Matrix open pyramid climber. It caused some consternation with Dublin City Housing Department when first installed but has proven a hit with the children

and the whole play area is well used and in good condition. The final visit was to the new playground at Killiney Hill park in Dalkey. We arrived in time for the opening of the playground by the mayor of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council which was an added bonus.

John Yearley, former head of the RoSPA play inspection service, has said that playgrounds in Ireland are to a higher standard than those in the UK, due to their newness and good design.

Forest Kindergardens

In October the Clare County Childcare Committee organised a one day seminar for their staff and HSE pre-school inspectors on the issue of risk and encouraging children to play more outdoors. Richard Webb of Sugradh and RoSPA talked about safety, play value and how to carry out a risk-benefit analysis. This was followed by a visit to a local childminder's garden where, in spite of the rain, a practical inspection was carried out by the participants.

Niki Buchan, from Mindstretchers in Scotland gave a fascinating presentation on how their forest preschool is run. The idea is common in Scandinavia and has recently taken off in the UK. The children spend nearly all of their time out in the woods in all seasons. This is non-negotiable with parents and the preschool supply all-weather outfits for each child. There is an emphasis on the child's own ability to risk assess a situation, once this has also been done by the staff. Careful instruction and supervision is essential so that the children can use real saws, spades and other tools and also to enjoy cooking on open fires.

As far as we know, there are two forest kindergardens in Ireland, in Donegal and Monaghan and we would love to hear if there are more. For more information see www.mindstretchers.co.uk

In association with the HSE, Sugradh is running a number of workshops on play safety and risk-benefit for the HSE pre-school inspectors over the next couple of months.

Play Wales Books and Posters on Playwork

Play Wales have developed a framework for the training of play workers; staff working with children in a variety of settings to facilitate play. The framework is based on the UK Skills Active Playwork Principles and was outlined by Mike Greenaway of Play Wales at the recent PlayBoard NI conference. The practice of playwork skills can enhance positive outcomes in after school provision, childcare, youth work, teaching, social care and residential care, sports and recreation, fitness and coaching, season play schemes and for park rangers and community wardens. Currently, the only playwork training available in Ireland is from the Belfast College of Further Education.

The First Claim ... a framework for playwork quality assessment, Bob Hughes (2001)

ISBN: 978-0-9540130-0-4

The book allows people working in any space where children play to explore: the nature of what children are doing; the roles and functions of the playworker (or other adult) in facilitating play; and the most appropriate ways of intervening in the play process. £12.50

The First Claim – desirable processes, Bob Hughes (2002)

ISBN: 978-0-9540130-1-1

This book accompanies and extends on The First Claim ... a framework for playwork quality assessment. It contains the Advanced Framework that follows the Basic and Intermediate Frameworks. £12.50