

For the curious, or those who like the story behind the story, here is a cut 'n paste collection of wiki entries, blog posts and articles that chronicle the founding, origins, and early evolution of "this thing" called TeachMeet. Collated by Mags Amond, with some editing (mainly a light sprinkling of apostrophes and commas to spare the blushes).

May 2006	Ewan McIntosh	<a href="https://scotedublogs.wikispaces.com/ScotEduBlogMeetup">https://scotedublogs.wikispaces.com/ScotEduBlogMeetup</a> First 'TeachMeet' mentioned as ScotEdublog meetup, as are plans for a second.
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[ScotEduBlogMeetup](#) [Edit 0 33...](#)



What a night! We had a great and productive night and the wifi worked! You can [follow posts and see photos](#) of the whole ScotEduBlog thang of this week. Now time to plan ScotEduBlog Meetup 2.0

**Where?** In Edinburgh, to coincide with the end of [eLive!](#)

First suggestions?:

[The Jolly Judge pub](#) for Guinness and Bordeaux, 5.00pm-7.00pm (free wifi)

[Daniel's Bistro](#), Leith, 7.30pm (no wifi, really good food and wine, about £12-15 a head, sample menu on their site)

TABLE BOOKED FOR 7.30pm/7.45pm under the name of MCINTOSH. Booked for 7-9 people. If you add your name and there are more than 9 people already please phone the restaurant and change the booking to suit. Ta!

**Participants** [Will Richardson](#) [Ewan McIntosh](#) [John Johnston](#) [Andrew Brown](#) (hopefully - need to see how it fits in with Masterclass coordinators events! --Emc! Bring them along! A nice day out in Auld Reekie)

[Ian Stuart](#) (If I can cagg lift from Andrew) [David Muir](#) - My vote would be for the free wi-fi at the Jolly Judge (although I'd prefer free food). Can we eat at the JJ or if we want a meal do we have to go to Daniel's Bistro? If we can't eat at the JJ, I change my vote to the Bistro. :-)

I think we might do both. Drinks then food. [Caroline Cassels](#) I will make it to the Bistro. It will give time to my baby sitter (aka my Husband) to be back home. [robthill](#) (Bob Hill) - I will only manage along to the Jolly Judge as I have a 7.15 train to catch. [Grant Fraser](#) - won't stay too late tho on a school night! Stephen Power, Student Napier University, will knock into the jolly judge

#### Apologies

Ollie Bray - school trip; Annelie; Nick Morgan; [Morag](#) - too far; [Lynne](#) - too far; [Marlyn](#) - supply teacher woes; [Isidora](#) - Heading back to Italy.; [David Noble](#) - Daughter's birthday

June 2006	David Muir et al.	<a href="https://scotedublogs.wikispaces.com/share/view/33778">https://scotedublogs.wikispaces.com/share/view/33778</a> Story of how the name came about; even the name was 'crowdsourced'.
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#### "Name of this thing"

[DavidDMuir](#) Jun 11, 2006 I posted a whole pile of suggestions - mostly for my own amusement rather than as serious suggestions. I like the sound of ScotEduSlam but I think it falls down on the "does what it says on the tin" criteria. The other one I like is TeachMeet. I saw that Ewan called this page "newtechmeet" and remembered that a wise man once said, "It's not the tech, it's the teach!" So I came up with TeachMeet... which almost rhymes.

[DavidDMuir](#) Jun 16, 2006 I deleted this exchange from the page, but thought it was too good to disappear altogether, so here it is in all it's glory. :-) How to stop worrying and love the blog.(GMcK - I Like this title)

(EMcl - too bloggy; we're going to be talking about loads of stuff unrelated to blogs, too. It might also be a turnoff for non-geeks) (jj- too geeky it is planned as an edublog meetup on a wiki!, are blogs too geeky) (btw what stuff unrelated to blogs?) )

[johnjohnston](#) Jun 17, 2006 Hi David, I can't see your stars? (on your favourite titles.)

[johnjohnston](#) Jun 17, 2006 hmm, I can now, sorry for the waste of bandwidth, I'll star my favs

[ewanmcintosh](#) Jun 27, 2006 I like TeachMeet, too, for the reasons you just suggested, although I \*\*ed ScotEduSlam. I'll make a logo for the end of the week based on the most popular vote. Is TeachMeet accepted?

[johnjohnston](#) Jun 27, 2006 hmm, if it is a blog meet up, it might be an idea to have blog in there somewhere? I know you do not want to put folk off by being too techie, but you obviously do not want to go over the basics for newcomers (Technorati). Is the event a gathering of the converted and the already interested or attracting new customers? That could be reflected in the name.

[ewanmcintosh](#) Jun 28, 2006 It has to be for both groups - there's not enough public knowledge yet and a lot of tools which are 'basic' to us won't be at all for some keen ICT literate teachers. Technorati can be shown off, for example, by describing who your kids could have met about the Romans, for example. Is it OK if I make a command decision and propose a couple of names and logos, just to narrow it down?

[johnjohnston](#) Jun 28, 2006 I am now wondering about 2 pronged approach, there are several sessions at SETT talking about blogging. What I really liked about the first meetup was a degree of common knowledge. It was a great recharging of the blogging batteries. Selfishly I'd like to hear about things that are new to me. (somewhat cranky and contrary as the end of term approaches)

[ewanmcintosh](#) Jun 29, 2006 Troublemaker ;-) With five people liking the TeachMeet concept, and four of us liking the bbbs or at least mention of blogs, I've popped up the 'winner'. I hope it suits. At least its intentions are clear, with both teach, tech, blogs and the fun element included. Thanks for your help in getting it honed down.

[DavidDMuir](#) Jun 29, 2006 Rats! Too late. I was just about to vote for the other one. :-)

[ewanmcintosh](#) Jun 30, 2006 Hope everyone's happy with the choice and the nice selection of proposals appearing.

September 2006	Ewan McIntosh	<a href="http://edu.blogs.com/edublogs/2006/06/teachmeet06_is_.html">http://edu.blogs.com/edublogs/2006/06/teachmeet06_is_.html</a> Post outlining Teachmeet SLF 2006, with link to original wiki for that TM.
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### June 29, 2006 IN [TEACHMEET](#) TeachMeet06 is open for business

[TeachMeet06](#) is a short burst of innovation from Scotland and around the globe taking place September 20, 2006, in Glasgow. It will kick off an evening of new technologies during the [SETT Learning Festival](#). Anyone in education is invited from around Scotland or beyond to this free event. If you are abroad and cannot make it in person but would like to join our live Skypecast of the event then there's space for you, too. You won't get any wine, though.

You are invited to contribute by giving a seven-minute talk on any cool or exciting things you have been doing with technology, by suggesting a new collaborative project or just by being there.

To find out more, to suggest a talk in person or via

Skype, or to offer sponsorship please head along to the [TeachMeet06 wiki](#). Don't forget to grab a badge for your site, too.



April 2007	Ewan McIntosh	<a href="http://edu.blogs.com/edublogs/2007/04/teachmeet07_3rd.html">http://edu.blogs.com/edublogs/2007/04/teachmeet07_3rd.html</a> 3rd TeachMeet.
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**April 30, 2007 IN [TEACHMEET](#) TeachMeet07 - 3rd Edition of the ScotEduBlogger unconference [TeachMeet07](#)** Originally uploaded by [Edublogger](#).



John and I had been swapping some emails last week - we must have been getting the nervous shakes again - to see about getting a third edition of the TeachMeet unconference off the ground. This morning, after one Americano too many, I've clicked together a wee logo and made some edits to the ScotEdublogs wiki pages. We're ready to go for the (now) traditional eLive TeachMeet: [TeachMeet07](#).

You can sign up, offer some suggestions of where, how, with what, about what and at what price (i.e. sponsor us!) over at the

[ScotEdublogs.org wiki](#) - just click the small 'edit' button at the top of the page to get going. The only thing that is a cert (kind of) is the date: May 23rd, to coincide with the eLive conference.

December 2007	Ewan McIntosh	<a href="http://edu.blogs.com/edublogs/2007/12/having-a-bash-.html">http://edu.blogs.com/edublogs/2007/12/having-a-bash-.html</a> Post mentions the first Scottish Barcamp.
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**December 29, 2007 IN [2007](#), [NOTES](#), [TEACHMEET](#) 5/5: Having a bash - social media gets social**

It might be of help to you, might not be. Bear with me, and normal service will be resumed...

In 2006 I had started to organise [TeachMeets](#) and various other informal unconferences for teachers and techies to talk about teaching, learning and technology, preferably with large doses of beer, bordeaux and blogs. I eventually got around to learning [some of the things to do, and not to do](#), and the events continue



to provide a safe haven for some of the most inspirational teachers to inspire and be inspired. In 2007 this continued apace: January 7th and March 3rd: The inaugural [BarCampScotland](#), which I helped create, [was announced](#) and [ended up being a resounding success](#), with 150-odd attendees from across the tech and education industry meeting on common social media ground. December 15th, and the [second BarCampScotland](#) is announced for February 2nd 2008. January 19th, and [Edinburgh Coffee Morning began](#), every Friday from that point at 8am in [Centotre](#). Since then, these coffee morning boys (and the occasional woman) have become great friends and allies as we try to get more social media projects undertaken in Scotland. It continues to be a source of inspiration, finds, community-building and trading of work. On February 4th we talked about [Glow](#), life, love, blogging and education in a [Stormhoek-fuelled](#) haze as [Hugh MacLeod paid some Scottish edubloggers a visit in their local](#).

On April 30th I announced [the third edition of TeachMeet](#) to be taking place in Edinburgh on May 23rd: we had [a great time and learned loads](#). By June 23rd we were ready for some more learning and drinky-poops, hence [the inaugural Beer 2.0](#). Such as success it was, we did [Beer 2.0.1 the following week](#).

August 9th marked [the first steps towards TeachMeet07](#), the fourth edition to be held at Glasgow's Science Centre on September 19th, and generously sponsored for the first time, by Channel 4, whose [In The Wild event](#) brought the discussion of young people's media habits to a wider audience still.

Almost simultaneously, we had calls and requests for [England and Wales' first TeachMeet](#), at BETT on January 11th 2008.

This will also be the first job to get through on the return to work this January, and I hope to be able to see you in London on January 11th. I wonder what the main innovations will be in 2008. Maybe I'll try to predict something which eventually becomes true, or gets lost until next year's roundup. That, however, is at least one more year to put down to experience...

November 2007	Ewan McIntosh	<a href="http://edu.blogs.com/edublogs/2007/11/teachmeet08---m.html">http://edu.blogs.com/edublogs/2007/11/teachmeet08---m.html</a> First call to TeachMeet at BETT, Jan 2008.
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**November 02, 2007 IN [TEACHMEET](#) TeachMeet08 - Mark it in your diaries now!**

[TeachMeet08](#) Originally uploaded by [Edublogger](#)

[BETT](#) is the largest education conference in the UK and, for the first time, there will be [TeachMeet08](#) in London, on Friday 11th January, from 5pm-9pm at Olympia, and you're invited. Just [head over to the page and sign up right now](#) before numbers are capped. We've got room for a potential 300 TeachMeeters at what is now widely acclaimed as the [best professional development for teachers](#) since, well, sliced bread, but, depending on what sponsorship we receive this number



might have to be capped. It's going to be a Friday night, so we'll make sure that people enjoy it as much as an Eastenders cliffhanger. But this is as open an event as they come. Thanks to support from these guys we're going to be able to put on some nice treats for those who want to be amused, enthused and learn something new, by teachers, for teachers. Teachers are invited to sign up an idea for a micro-presentation lasting 7 minutes, a nano-presentation lasting 2 minutes or just to lurk. It might even be of interest to those working in the education media interest to see what innovation is actually going on in schools across the country. All you need to do is [head over to the page at www.teachmeet.org.uk](#), and sign up your name. It's not a tech event, either, with the emphasis very much on the Teach. BETT provides a great opportunity to get some new faces interested in new and innovative teaching and learning. Get your friends and colleagues who are at BETT anyway to come along from 5pm and join in the fun. I have tons more to share about the event, some time next week, if you're interested in adding your support to the event before the big sponsors' announcement at the end of November, then send your kind offers to me or through the wiki.

January 2008	Lisa Stevens	<a href="http://lisibo.com/2008/01/teachmeet-08/">http://lisibo.com/2008/01/teachmeet-08/</a> Lisa Stevens live blogging from the BETT 2008 TeachMeet.
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**[¡Vámonos!](#) Teachmeet 08**

After an exhausting day at BETT, I'm currently enjoying a glass of wine at Teachmeet and listening to lots of good ideas for using technology in the classroom. The rules are that you either have 7 minutes or 2 minutes to present your message. Powerpoint is mildly boo-ed, and no sales pitches.

I'll let you know what I learn as and when!



March 2008	John Davitt	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/education/2008/mar/18/link.link22">https://www.theguardian.com/education/2008/mar/18/link.link22</a> The BETT article referred to by Ian Usher in the following link - thereply from eMap to John
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**The Guardian - Are teachers getting a fair deal? - Governmental prescription and corporate sway seem to have squeezed the teachers out of what was the teachers' favourite show - Tuesday 18 March 2008**

[extracts] **Seminar programme** One ex-teacher on a stand for a mobile technology company said their experience of Bett this year was "rather surreal - I stood on the stand for four days and didn't get to talk to a single classroom teacher!" Perhaps it's time to stop talking up Bett as something with mass-classroom appeal and accept it's become more of a business-to-business event - this year's seminar programme really lacked sufficient top-class speakers - national and international. There were, of course, some positives and the Learner Voice section under the auspices of Heppell.net showed what "social learning" might look like and what learners are capable of when the challenge is high and teachers are set free.



May 2008	Richard Millwood	<a href="http://blog.richardmillwood.net/2008/05/22/teachmeet-redbridge-part-2/">http://blog.richardmillwood.net/2008/05/22/teachmeet-redbridge-part-2/</a> Richard describes the online 'Flashmeeting' feature of early TeachMeets.
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### TeachMeet Redbridge (part 2)

My first post about TeachMeet was a hurried blog in case Ewan offered a prize for the first person to Blog the event! More reflection, and waiting until the end, allows a more thoughtful blog which fills in some of the blanks.

Blank 1 – why speak about delight? It was delightful to be able to speak about delight, and to discuss with colleagues in the breaks to 'orient' my thinking about this important

topic. I failed to say that I care to make an analysis of delight for many reasons:

1. I feel the need to put some intellectual effort into a mantra, 'delight is important in learning', which I have been chanting uncritically for over fifteen years.
2. I believe delight is one of the sources of motivation, perseverance and retention which softens the pain of the 'hard yards' in learning.
3. I believe delight (and more generally fulfilment) is an entitlement for learners, as they learn, not when they pass exams.

Blank 2 – what a stonking set of presentations! I failed to mention the wealth of speakers and the high quality of their ideas and practices on parade. Egocentrically, and only after Drew Buddie had pointed it out, I was struck by the chickens coming home to roost from Ultralab's and Apple Teacher Institute work in the early 'noughties', such as movie making and stop-motion animations around social and serious issues. More moving were the confident presentations from folk like Sarah Hackett on using Moodle to teach folk fiddle and Tom Whitehead on animal shape poetry workshops, both researchers from Ultraversity, these along with many others were inspiring.

Blank 3 – FlashMeeting. I had volunteered to be the meeting end of an online video-conference for those who couldn't be arsed couldn't get to Redbridge. Thanks to David Noble, Anthony Evans and Nic Hughes for making it all so easy. It seemed to work well, using FlashMeeting and connecting my Apple MacBook Pro to a Canon digital video camera with a firewire cable and using a directional microphone to get the best quality – I rely on reports from participants as to whether this was effective and I apologise now for the time through the break when I went to get a beer and got cornered in the bar – I came back to find the camera pointing at the ceiling! I only regret not carrying through my original plan to use a second data projector so that the audience in the building could see the participants out there and perhaps respond to their questions and comments. Next time.



Late 2008	BETT 2009	<a href="http://teachmeet.pbworks.com/w/page/19975437/TeachMeet09Bett">http://teachmeet.pbworks.com/w/page/19975437/TeachMeet09Bett</a> In reaction to an attempt to charge folk for the TeachMeet part of BETT.
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### TeachMeet09Bett

Friday 16th January 2009 Apex Room at BETT 6.00 till 9.00 pm. Please be reassured - this event is happening and will operate in a very similar way to previous Teachmeets. Stephen Heppell's office are working very hard to ensure all the housekeeping elements are in place and that everything runs smoothly. If you wish to speak or sponsor then please scroll down and read the rules below - let's make this a Teachmeet to remember! This is a free event - The BETT Show site mistakenly asked customers reserving their place for TeachMeet09 to pay a charge. This should be refunded in December to all those who had paid the charge. [Read here for more details](#). If you have already paid then try and get a refund or switch for another seminar. TeachMeets are free and should WILL remain so.



January 2009	Lisa Stevens	<a href="http://lisibo.com/2009/01/teachmeet09/">http://lisibo.com/2009/01/teachmeet09/</a> Lisa writes of switching from lurker to presenter / organiser
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### **Vámonos! TeachMeet09**

This time next week, TeachMeet09 will be drawing to a close and about 60 people will be descending on PizzaExpress to carry on the networking and discussions. And I can't wait! As Drew Buddie has put it so eloquently on [his blog](#), I'll leave it to him to explain.

The [TeachMeet](#) model is one which encourages anyone with something of interest regarding the use of technology in the classroom to talk about, to speak to a gathered audience of people who (in a nutshell) want to be inspired. It makes for an excellent antidote to the BETT Show which is effectively a showcase for hundreds of companies trying to sell teachers their products. This is because you know that the people talking are genuinely talking about THEIR classroom practice, as opposed to a salesman peddling their latest tool or software package.

Last year I went to BETT for the first time and must say that I got far more out of TeachMeet than I did from BETT. I love the fact that each presentation is short – 2 or 7 minutes – and that everything is based on classroom practice! And because presenters are chosen by random generator from the list of volunteers, you're never sure what's coming next.

Last year, I watched in awe of everyone, rather like a rabbit in headlights. One year on, I'm helping to organise the event and have volunteered to speak – name is down for 7 minutes as I was told by several people that there was no way I would be able to limit myself to 2 minutes!! And that's what I'm going to talk about – how I got from one to the other!

So, if you're coming to BETT next Friday, sign up on the [wiki – it's free!](#)

And if you can't be in London, why not join in virtually? As Drew also points out, there are [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) & [Flickr](#) groups and a [Ustream](#) feed already set up for the event as well as a [Flashmeeting](#) providing a backchannel which will run throughout the event so that attendees all around the world can participate in the event, and there are plans afoot to have all videos hosted on a [TEDTalks](#)-like portal so that the talks can be used to inspire others once the event is over.

March 2009	CESI 2009	<a href="http://www.cesi.ie/conferences/2009-teaching-learning-technology-gaining-vision/">www.cesi.ie/conferences/2009-teaching-learning-technology-gaining-vision/</a>
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### **2009: "Teaching: Learning: Technology - Gaining Vision" [Ireland's first TeachMeet]**

The annual conference of the Computers in Education Society of Ireland took place on February 13th and 14th, 2009, in Coláiste de h-Íde, Tallaght, Dublin; the Friday night CESImeet was in the Maldron Hotel, Tallaght.

[Organisers and Bean & Fear a' Tí were Mags Amond, Conor Galvin; this was also the occasion when John Heffernan introduced the whole tribe to Twitter by showcasing it via a projected backchannel].



August 2009	Simon Lewis	<a href="https://www.anseo.net/cesi-meet-2009">https://www.anseo.net/cesi-meet-2009</a> After Ireland's first TeachMeet, Simon speaks of looking forward to the second.
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**Post one** - CESI will again be hosting a CESI Meet this September. I can't wait! The last one was absolutely brilliant and I came away with zillions of ideas and inspiration. I think I'm giving a short talk at this one but haven't decided what to talk about - perhaps, some of you can give me suggestions? [What to talk about at CESI Meet 2009](#)

**Post two** - The second ever CESI Meet was held in the Digital Hub in Dublin last night. I always love CESI events because I always leave inspired and full of new ideas after them and last night's was no exception. The idea of CESI Meet is to have an informal evening of short talks and group discussions about issues surrounding ICT in education. Within a two hour space, there were over a dozen talks ranging from primary, secondary and third-level. Highlights for me included two talks on virtual worlds in education. Two separate projects are beginning shortly, one from Trinity College and another from Daynuv, both spreading the same message. Tim Savage from Trinity College demonstrated how a virtual world created in OpenSim (similar to Second Life) could be used to help children's exploration skills in order to solve problems - one of the key aims of the curriculum - and something that is very difficult to do without IT. He showed us the virtual world of an African Village where children could interact with different characters and items in order to learn about life in another country. James Corbett from Daynuv gave an interesting glimpse into the future of this type of project where creating our own virtual worlds is relatively easy. Anne McMorrough led a 15 min breakout discussion about how eTwinning and linking up schools can have great consequences for learning. Sadly, I couldn't hear the discussion as I was leading another conversation on the other side of the room, discussing Interactive Whiteboards. I had planned my angle to be how we can use Interactive Whiteboards more effectively in the classroom but quickly realised people wanted to hear what board should they buy, where they should get it from and what the best software was to use it. There was an interesting part of the discussion about whether tablets or slates are just as effective as actual IWBs and we agreed this was probably true at second level. Enda Donlan also introduced us to Xtranormal, a cool way to make 3D movies. All you do is type in a dialogue, drag and drop a few bits and pieces and you've made a 3D movie. It really is that easy! Shame one has to be 13 to use it though. For me, the highlight of the talks was a two minute presentation by Ban Ryan, a retired principal from Tipperary, who goes by the Twitter name of @lissmiss. Ban said that when she looked into her grandchildren's bedroom, she saw technology everywhere - it was basically invisible to the child. Children are using iPods, DS Lites, TVs, DVDs, Laptops, etc. without thinking about them. She then looked at teaching in schools in Ireland and realised we are not teaching our children the way they are now learning. Ban decided to learn how children learn and bought a DS Lite and a Nintendo Wii. She then created a constructivist classroom with all this equipment and now teaches, reading, writing, maths, geography, history, problem solving and everything else using technology. Children love coming to her classroom. She gave the example of a child who was petrified of going to the shops because she didn't know what change she was going to get. A few sessions of Brain Training with virtual change, the child proudly told her, she had gone into a shop to buy a lolly and knew what change she was going to get!

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September 2009	Claire O'Gallagher	<a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/scotlandlearning/2009/09/scottish-learning-festival-and.shtml">http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/scotlandlearning/2009/09/scottish-learning-festival-and.shtml</a> Article about format of Teachmeet, comment from John Connell
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### Scottish Learning Festival and TeachMeet

The [Scottish Learning Festival](#) is taking place on Wednesday and Thursday this week at the SECC. It's a great event, with lots to see and plenty of seminars and discussion areas to take part in.....

.....Here at PQ, we'll be hosting the popular fringe event to the festival, [TeachMeet](#). TeachMeets are informal



gatherings where teachers get to demonstrate some of the good practice they've encountered or delivered over the past year, or discuss a product that they feel has enhanced the classroom experience. Presentations are very short and snappy (seven or two minutes!) and speakers are chosen at random. It's an exciting event to be a part of and we're really looking forward to it. The TESS featured a [piece](#) about TeachMeet in their September 18 issue. Ollie Bray has been the major organiser of the event this year and has [blogged with more details](#). There will be a Twitter backchannel during the event - hashtag #TMSLF09 - and I'm sure it will form the start of fresh debates and discussions. John Connell has already kicked things off by [asking if it's time to move on from TeachMeet and find a new format](#) - who knows, maybe we will come up with one tomorrow night! Some of the suggestions on John's blog have been very thought-provoking; including the oft-asked question about how to get new teachers, or even more experienced teachers who aren't used to these events, through the doors and participating. What format do you think would work? Should we do more online to back up the 'meets'? For those who are coming to BBC Scotland tomorrow night, I look forward to meeting you in person, but I will blog about the evening for those of you who can't join us. Happy SLF, one and all!

28th Sep 2009, [igconnell](#) wrote:

*[The following text is a heavily garbled and mostly illegible version of the original text, appearing to be a corrupted or encoded copy of the paragraph above.]*

September 2009	John Connell	<a href="https://web.archive.org/web/20091002215858/http://www.johnconnell.co.uk/blog/?p=2215">https://web.archive.org/web/20091002215858/http://www.johnconnell.co.uk/blog/?p=2215</a> Thoughtful commentary by John which prompted a rich discussion.
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[original link being broken, thanks to John for rescue the files via The WayBack Machine]

**I Am Learner.** The TeachMeet concept is a wonderful thing. To quote my own words (in the interests of minimizing wheel re-invention): That small group of far-thinking Scottish educationists who came up with the idea of TeachMeet knew what they were doing when they established the basic form and function of the concept: an informal gathering of equals designed to give a platform to everyone who wanted to be heard, a firm foundation in the practices of teaching and learning, an opportunity to teach others and to learn from others in a mutually supportive, non-prescriptive atmosphere. It promoted a recognition that we are all learners all of the time and, critically, a further recognition that no one has any more right to be heard and to be listened to than anyone else. So, TeachMeet has been, and is, a roaring success the list of TMs that have taken place, or are still to take place, in 2009 alone demonstrates this clearly: ASN/SEN, Havering LA, BETT, Borders, Islay's Edu2020, LeadMeet, Student Edition, Midlands, LearnTech Wales, Scottish Learning Festival (and this is not an exhaustive list). The small group of friends and colleagues who created TeachMeet should be proud of what they started. I believe that the time has come, however, to think of an alternative to TeachMeet not, I hasten to add, as a replacement, but to stand alongside TM as another way of getting people thinking, learning, playing and working together to change education, in circumstances where the particular strengths of TeachMeet are not so appropriate. Let's look at the organizing guidelines for running a TeachMeet event:

- Its an unconference, meaning that control is distributed amongst those taking part no central direction of speakers or of specific topics, participant-driven
- Talks last, at most, 7 minutes each
- It is foremost about classroom practice is it happening now in a classroom somewhere?
- Speakers volunteer, usually via a wiki, and are selected to speak as the event happens, in random order (and if there are too many, some may end up not speaking at all)
- No use of Powerpoint / Keynote and the like, except in Pecha Kucha style
- No product-selling, even by sponsors (of whom there should, ideally, be more than one)
- Participants, whether speakers or lurkers, should be able to get online, ideally by wifi

- Extend the scope of the unconference through a backchannel, or a number of backchannels, including video-conferencing, SMS, Twitter, whatever
- Tag everything so that coverage does not disappear into the ether

The simplicity of this set of dos and don'ts has been the bedrock of TeachMeets success. Certain aspects of the simple principles, however, do place certain restrictions on what TeachMeet is able to achieve in the round, and the key restriction, I believe, is the insistence that all presentations should be based firmly in classroom practice. It is a restriction that, by its very nature, will diminish the prospect of topics and themes that question the broader aspects of how our societies establish and maintain the arrangements by which formal education is delivered to their populations. If we restrict ourselves to discussion of what is happening in the classroom, we immediately limit the possibility of questioning whether the classroom itself should even exist in its current form or at all, and whether the school that surrounds that classroom is the best, most humane and most effective way to do education in the changing context of the 21st Century. In other words, by accepting the core guidelines of TeachMeet as the starting point, we hinder our own scope for seeking societal or global alternatives to the status quo in formal educational organization and curricular structures. Piecemeal change becomes the order of the day rather than wholesale transformation. It is also an inescapable fact that not everyone who attends a TeachMeet is a classroom teacher in any case many have been, like me, teachers in the past, but it would be absurd in the extreme for someone in my situation, for example (almost 15 years since I last took a class in any formal sense), to offer hard-working, dedicated classroom teachers any kind of teaching advice that would be at all relevant or appropriate to them. Now, the simple fact is that this particular guideline has been breached in practice during some TeachMeets I certainly heard some great discussion at the Edu2020 meeting on Islay that went way beyond classroom practice, and the imaginative LeadMeet in July, organized by Con Morris, by definition, took discussion beyond the classroom (although, of course, I know that many critical aspects of leadership in the classroom were discussed too). A lesser problem with the TeachMeet concept, although one that matters a lot, is that they do tend to attract people of like mind. Most presentations given at Teachmeets are offered as sermons to the converted differences aired tend to be in the detail rather than in the core ethic or philosophy being espoused. I agree with the short tenet I once heard from Sir Robert Swan, the polar explorer and yachtsman, when he said that *it is better to be a part of the problem than a part of the solution*. It may be comforting and pleasant to find oneself amongst friends and given the attitudes, ranging from indifference to hostility, offered by so many teaching colleagues to those who are trying to change practice in the classroom this is an understandable thing to want to do. For this reason alone, TeachMeet will continue to thrive in its current form and rightly so. If it helps colleagues to charge batteries, to learn innovative classroom practice from others of like mind, and to let them know they are not alone in their classroom endeavours, then that has to be a good thing. But it is a simple fact that real change genuine systemic transformation will only happen in education when a majority of those involved in the whole enterprise of formal education begin to recognize the deep-seated issues and problems with our increasingly desperate attempts to make an 18th / 19th century model work in the 21st century. For that reason, I believe we need to come up with a form of event that takes some of the core democratic and participant-driven principles of TeachMeet, but which permits discussion to range far beyond the bounds of classroom practice and, crucially, which also attracts people of strongly divergent opinions to take part and to engage. I offer no particular framework for doing this, since it would be helpful to hear some debate around the idea first. So:

1. Do we need an occasional alternative to TeachMeet?
2. Does such an alternative already exist, one that is genuinely participant-driven?
3. What might such an alternative look like?

#### F 9GDCBG9G HC TIME FOR A TEACHMEET ALTERNATIVE?

[Jan Stuart](#) August 23rd, 2009 Excellent points. When we were developing the idea of the education 2020 variation of teachmeet its what we wanted to do. Getting different voices is always a challenge and is also challenging. Both need to be done.

[Con Morris](#) August 23rd, 2009 John, Thanks for the post. I like the flattened nature of Teachmeets, no keynote speakers or favoured commenters. Looking back at LeadMeet, I would do more to promote off-Twitter to get a wider mix. Probably the person who got most out of was me, the organiser! 2 other things come to mind to introduce a wee bit of perturbation. Firstly, a good old-fashioned debating format might work TeachMeet style. Secondly, I have no experience of OpenSpace format ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open\\_Space\\_Technology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Space_Technology)) but would be interested in hearing from others who have given it a go. Con

[Stephen Lockyer](#) August 23rd, 2009 A thoughtful response to a key challenge that TeachMeet faces, that of preaching to the converted. Perhaps a published response to the benefits of attending/participating a TeachMeet would help entice those who are more cautious?

[Nick Hood](#) August 23rd, 2009 Excellent post, John. Is Stephen right when he says that teachmeets are preaching to the converted? Sure, there are the regulars but at each teachmeet I have been to, many attendees have not been before: the format remains an invigorating experience. Was it HMIE that said the greatest improvement to teaching occurs when teachers talk to each other? Here is a clue, and Cons brilliant team tasks were grease to the wheels of discussion at #leadmeet. More dialogue: whether current classroom practice or something outside of that constraint, this is what is needed.

[Ewan McIntosh](#) August 23rd, 2009 TeachMeet is certainly designed to do one thing well, which is to take teachers who, by their nature, are doing things in classrooms which are NOT happening everywhere, with a sympathetic audience who will, maybe, go away and help spread their ideas. Its also true that while every TeachMeet has some degree of friends-of-a-friend, there are always new faces, too. I can't quite see what the alternative is is that not what larger organised conferences do? You go along to a preselected seminar that a colleague is given and learn? Or you take up a CPD course and learn by doing? Perhaps what's required additionally to the realists innovations of TeachMeet is that equally essential headspace to think what would happen if? Lets call it DreamMeet. You must talk about things that are not happening in classrooms :) We could have some fun reversing some of the TeachMeet constraints, and it would give me an excuse to put my head back around this particular unconferences door!

[Krysia](#) August 23rd, 2009 John, You talk about genuine systemic transformation. TeachMeets are never going to achieve this, even the big ideas that were floating around at the edu2020 unconference were indeed just that. Although the edu2020 event did not intend to achieve conclusions or action points it gave me (and I imagine a great many others) a greater degree of clarity in my thinking about some of the big issues facing education. TeachMeets don't quite achieve this. I think they offer most people who attend them one or two fantastic ideas that may make a difference in their classroom or school. But you are talking about transformational change. I believe the main thing that this has in common with the TeachMeet model is that it happens when the hierarchies are flattened. But what would this occasional alternative model look like? One that achieves transformational change? A few key factors (in my humble opinion) are: Sharing good or leading edge practice. Working in clusters of educators with a common goal; Cross authority/establishment collaboration where authorities realise their role as true facilitators; focused goals (Going against the teachmeet model which I feel can result in a feeling of innovation overload)! continue to push forward the use of new technologies to create an epidemic of change. Unfortunately I don't believe that transformational change can be achieved through a series of events certainly ones that require educators to give up their own time to participate in. If educators are given the time and resources and appropriate facilitation from ground level leaders, allowing us to work collaboratively towards focused goal within and outwith their Authority then it may be possible. The next best alternative in my opinion is already happening, educators are coming together and seeking out better ways of, for example, assessing. If you are looking at some sort of alternative to teachmeet then it would be to come together with the purpose of tackling a particular area (eg. assessment) and the participants agreeing on what actions they want to take forward with a view to sharing what they achieve not only to those already involved (the insular model that already exists) but with a view to set up subgroups within their different authorities/ schools. Lots and lots of great things are happening out there already and I think the challenge to create real change is to effectively spread this. To do this you need a lot of confident, supported individuals who are willing to challenge the barriers that exist outwith the cosy climate of teachmeet.

[Leon Cych](#) August 23rd, 2009 I think the education strain of Amplified 09 is very much involved in getting cross-fertilisation happening between groups and organisations like the RSA et al have seriously been looking at outreach to communities that aren't plumbed into Web 2.0 either using Open Space techniques or other emergent experimental ways of getting marginalised groups into the debate. I think that effective change can only come in education, as in business and academia, when the silos start to come down and more community access is given at all levels. I feel that if TeachMeets aren't going to just become a self-congratulatory hermetically sealed meetup then parallel activity needs to happen outside of and then interact with other communities. Surely if everyone is into emergent communities then they need to evolve at some point rather than produce new inflexible orthodoxies of protocol. I do think the reality of TMs is slightly different to the purity often portrayed as well the dynamics also vary from Meet to Meet and different formats are, indeed, evolving up and down the country. I think that the initial suspicion of commercial partners is justified having attended stacked so called similar events in the past but some corporates are doing stuff just as radical with Web 2.0 or even virtual Worlds take IBM's Dark Star and Wonderland technologies which, if shown to practitioners might well open up their minds to possibilities in certain areas without having to sell anything other than expertise and newer models closer to 21st Century working than what goes on in many schools still. Also in the fields of Health, Social Services and yes, business there are practitioners who could give insight into the

bigger picture. Otherwise I suspect TeachMeet may well end up stuck in a series of parochial backwaters. The Recent Rebooting Britain conference was interesting people from many different arenas came together to share their insights and experiences and I think that model would be quite interesting to pursue as well in the form similar to TM. Certainly at the Rebooting Britain conference Derek Robertson's and Dawn Hallybone's presentations were a revelation to many there. Similarly if more teachers had the time to attend they might have been surprised by the number of effective models for change happening in other areas. Certainly, LeadMeets are an interesting well needed offshoot but there needs to be more opportunity to flatten down the silos and let some of the good practice that is going on spill out and mix.

[Jaye Richards](#) August 23rd, 2009 I'm still thinking about your substantive points from this thought-provoking post John, but I just have to comment on your modesty with regard to this. "It would be absurd in the extreme for someone in my situation, for example (almost 15 years since I last took a class in any formal sense), to offer hard-working, dedicated classroom teachers any kind of teaching advice that would be at all relevant or appropriate to them. You do yourself a grave injustice". I think you are in an almost unique position to offer advice to educators, having taught, managed, written, presented and observed education in its broadest sense both here and internationally. If the sum of all this isn't rooted in classroom practice than I don't know what is.

[Peter Schneider](#) August 23rd, 2009 Have a look at what Julie Lindsey and Vicki Davis have done with conferences. They held one in Qatar in June <http://flatclassroomconference.wikispaces.com/> and Julie is putting on another one at the 21st Century Learning conference in Hong Kong this Sept. here is the ning <http://21clearninghk.ning.com/> The concept is ridiculously simple, practice what you preach. They take the time to give students a project that must be completed at the conference. There is no reason why that couldn't work for teachers. All the time you get the unconverted at conferences who sit in on the great sessions but the concepts never make it back to the classroom. If you were to dedicate most of the conference/unconference to complete a project that supports C.E., APP, 21st CS or whatever they would have a tangible example to work off of and understand what their students would be going through as well.

[Nick Hood](#) August 23rd, 2009 @Jaye hear, hear. Education is more substantially improved by those who, like John, are prepared to offer and develop informed opinion based upon credible experience. This very thread is witness to this.

[Iain Hallahan](#) August 23rd, 2009 Very interesting post John. Had a Twitter discussion a while ago about TeachMeets and the preaching to the choir issue was the one I felt to be most concerning. Since then, however, there has been noticeable evolution in the format, and both the recent Student Edition and LeadMeet showed how it could be taken outwith its usual audience. Introducing TeachMeet to these new attendees is of vital importance, and the suggestion of a local authority based TeachMeet by some practitioners in Falkirk seems like a good and sustainable way to continue building awareness. It also shows the other evolution that seems to be occurring, the move towards a genuinely crowd-sourced event a very welcome trend that seems to be on the increase. Finally, I'm loving the sound of Ewan's DreamMeet as well, think it sounds like a fantastic idea. I would certainly be signing up.

[Ian Stuart](#) August 23rd, 2009 DreamMeet. Sounds good. Again I suppose its what we were doing with education2020. What should education look like in the year 2020. I think the important thing is not to get too caught up with the rules. At the LeadMeet I noticed that those who were at the main part of the conference were the organisational leaders. The informal Leadmeet format allowed the classroom practitioners and informal leaders to have a voice and influence the formal leaders.

[Gordon Brown](#) August 23rd, 2009 John, An article which encapsulates thoughts I had but didn't know I had. I taught for 26 years, but because of 5 years out of the classroom I also feel uneasy about/unworthy of participating in TM events. Ewan's Dream Meet idea sounds excellent a way of expanding possibilities and parameters. Definitely worth pursuing. Regards, Gordon

[Dan Nstone](#) August 23rd, 2009 I have to say that most of the best teachmeet presentations I have seen have been teachers sharing their practice. Teachers seldom get to see and share what other teachers do, observing someone's lesson is a luxury, and the opportunity to share good practice shouldn't be underestimated. Of course many other great non-teachers also take part. With regard to teachmeet rules, every teachmeet has its own rules and they are often flexible as you say, Havering had keynotes (shortish ones) and Channel 4 & NCSL ones had discussions. With regard to preaching to the converted or creating mass change little things can make a difference too and for those that have never been to a teachmeet before they are always rather inspired the networking aspect also shouldn't be underestimated and even built on. For mass change don't you need a government initiative to do that and we all know how successful they always are:) Actually I love the points Leon makes above on this. The only other thing I would advise to reach out to more people is to advertise better and harder, not just via Twitter and the Teachmeet Wikis.

[Tom Barrett](#) August 23rd, 2009 Thank you John for a timely post, since the offer of 3 events is on the table for BETT 2010. I don't think we need to look for an alternative after all the unconference is already by definition an alternative, a breaking of the mould. I am not sure what the numbers are of people attending TeachMeets over the last few years but

the ongoing success is surely an indication of grassroots change. Real transformational change. Change in the way that teachers perceive CPD, in my opinion that is very important and not to be overlooked. When I first began teaching I taught courses, seminars and CPD were fixed agendas, telling you how long you had to listen for and a pile of paper hand-outs repeating everything you see up on the (all)Power(no)Point. TeachMeets changed all of that. There was another way and these events began to show people what that may look like. It may be crucial to consider the importance of the regional or local TeachMeet. How a shared geography affects how participants interact and connect with each other at the event and what they do after it. A good idea is still a good idea no matter where it has come from, but being able to share that with people in your schools LA or cluster may lead to greater impact. Having attended the larger TeachMeets at SLF/BETT and the smaller regional events too, I consider the smaller events to have the most potential for regional change. The preaching to the choir or clique issue that Iain mentions is an interesting one. I think that this is due to limited awareness of the events. This is especially true for the regional events. Only a limited number of people use Twitter and read blogs (the 2 main places a TM event might be publicised) and then only a limited number are in your region and then only a limited number might attend! For TM Midlands we used sponsor's money to design and send out an email shot to every school in the region. Admittedly I hit on this idea too near the event and the effect was limited but I did meet two primary teachers from Derby who had never attended or heard of anything like TM and went away with a stack of ideas. (And also realised how different CPD could be) I would highly recommend this more traditional way of marketing the event. It would help to get the message to a wider audience beyond the usual networks, outside of the usual circles. I agree that the TeachMeet model needs to evolve. But there are many different ways to unconference an event and perhaps we need to tap into that variety.

[Cassie](#) August 23rd, 2009 I'm very new to the whole TeachMeet idea and I'm definitely one of the friends of friend people who got involved through chance, and to be honest it was the best CPD I participated in all year! I agree with you that TeachMeet is a worthwhile method of learning from others. It has definitely helped me in many different ways, and it has put me in touch with other professionals that I perhaps would not have been fortunate enough to meet otherwise. I would also agree with your point that, at the moment, TeachMeet does attract like minded people. When I presented at TeachMeetSE09 I did notice that there were a couple of main themes that ran throughout all of the presentations, but, in saying that, I still learned a lot. I think that TeachMeet has the potential to evolve, picking up other practitioners as it does so, either through the way I was introduced to it or, through encouraging local authorities to have their own TeachMeets. Hopefully through taking the idea into different local authorities it will encourage more people to get involved. I know that a lot of the staff in my school had never heard of TeachMeet before and I think this is something that should be addressed. Perhaps this natural evolution will result in a change to TeachMeet as we know it?

[Iain Hallahan](#) August 23rd, 2009 Regarding Tom's point about reaching out to new attendees (can we call it marketing?), the e-mail approach that we used to spread the word about TeachMeet Student Edition worked reasonably well and certainly has potential. The response from the local authority probation coordinators was very positive with only one negative reaction to our approach. That, of course, was the response that stuck longest in our minds though. By building relationships with a network of local authority CPD co-ordinators and learning reps and compiling a list of their e-mail addresses, information about future TeachMeets can be e-mailed to them to forward to the teachers in their authority/area, achieving wide distribution at a very low cost. We could also give an e-mail address to respond to for those wishing to attend, taking away the obstacle (for some) of registering on the wiki.

[Nick Hood](#) August 23rd, 2009 Teachmeet organisers need to promote the event carefully to the right audience. I organised teachmeet:Physics earlier this year and the promotion was in the main via Local Authority CPD officers, the Institute of Physics and in particular, their List Server used by a significant number of Physicists. We had Glow (Drew Burrett) and Flashmeeting (Sinclair Mackenzie) experts fix up the virtual attendance. 80% of participants were new to the format almost all said when's the next one?. The unconference format, evolved, loosely adapted and dynamic, is the key: teachmeets are brand shiny new to the majority of teachers and far from being ready to grow up, have some time to run as the awkward brat of CPD. Let's evolve the format: I like Ewan's idea of reversing one or more rules, if for no other reason than it keeps it unstable, and us on our toes. This is the place where the best development takes place IMHO

[John Connell](#) August 24th, 2009 Lots of brilliant comments, thank you all. I want to come back to pick up on many of the points made, but I will do so in a new post in the next day or so. Just one minor comment here, though: DreamMeet is a nice idea, but not a good name; its important to have dreams but a slightly more grounded title would help to indicate the need for real change that turns those dreams into reality.

[Stephen Lockyer](#) August 24th, 2009 As a co-organiser of the TeachMeet Sussex/ Kent this September, I think one of our key objectives has to be to get the message out to a much wider audience. One of the most regular statements I made at the bottom of CPD review sheets was that sharing good practice was the highlight the TeachMeet model

provides this without the paper wasting and clockwatching. To this end, we shall attempt to pay to get the message to all schools in Kent and Sussex, and fingers crossed for the response! ...

[J Arrol](#)

August 30th, 2009. I can't help adding a comment about the 'preaching to the converted' issue. The TeachMeet Student Edition concept was different only in target audience. Many students said they were encouraged by hearing from teachers already out there, people regularly using innovative ICT in the classroom. The number of newcomers at TMSE suggests that as students and digital natives they're far more open to coming along. To many, the evening was an eye-opener – some commented that it was one of the best 'lectures' they'd had all year. They now understand the TeachMeet concept and many are already looking forward to TeachMeetSLF. If we want a new audience, I suggest more TMSEs.'

September 2009	Ollie Bray	<a href="http://olliebray.typepad.com/olliebraycom/2009/09/teachmeet-slf09-update-and-arrangements.html">http://olliebray.typepad.com/olliebraycom/2009/09/teachmeet-slf09-update-and-arrangements.html</a> Ollie was MC for SLF 2009 as mentioned above.
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### September 21, 2009.

Unless you have been hiding under a rock for the past few weeks then you will know that this week is the [Scottish Learning Festival \(SLF\)](#). Over the past few years [TeachMeet](#) has become the most popular fringe event associated with the SLF and this year promises to be another great evening. Importantly, TeachMeet is organized by teachers for Teachers and is about what goes on in the classroom. Although I have always been an active member of the TeachMeet Community this year I've had a bit more of a role in organizing the event and this is quick blog post just to go over some of the last minute arrangements. Please share and reproduce this blog post with your personal learning network.



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1. Teachmeet is Full - we can no longer accept any more people to the Teachmeet Event.
2. Venue - Teachmeet will be taking place at the BBC just over the road from the SECC. We are very grateful to the BBC for sponsoring the venue and also the AV equipment.
3. Security - Security at the BBC is tight – they have the list of names from the Wiki as of 9am on Monday 21st September. If you have added your name after this time then you are to late to attend – if your name is not on the list then you will not be able to get access to Teachmeet.
4. Timing - It's a un-conference so everything is subject to change. But a rough timetable might look something like this: Arrive at BBC and networking 18.00h; Introduction 18.20h – 18.30h; Presentations (part 1) 18.30h – 19.30h; Break / round tables / learning conversations etc... 19.30h – 20.00h; Presentations (part 2); 20.00h – 21.00h Depart BBC for TeachEat
5. Presenters - We have a fine lineup of potential presenters at this years Teachmeet SLF – remember you might not get asked to present. Presenters are picked at random from a giant fruit machine! If you are picked to present then it is up to you how you present to the audience and its also up to audience if they decide to listen or not! You can use Ú[, ^!Ú[ ā dŠ^}[ eŽÚ;^: ā just speak, sing a song or show something that you have made / done. Remember there will be in Internet Connection – but if things are not working on the night be prepared to wing it. If you are using presentation software eg PowerPoint or Keynote if you email me your presentation before Wednesday morning we can make sure it is pre-loaded on the laptop to save setup time. email presentation to olliebray (at) gmail (dot) com
6. Active Participation - If you are attending teachmeet you have to be prepared to contribute. This doesn't mean present BUT you must be prepared to network and engage in conversations. You may also be picked to complete a challenge in a group of five – you will find out more about this on the night.
7. WiFi - We are having some problems with WiFi that the BBC are working hard to get sorted out before the evening. But this might mean that we only have a limited number of network passes. 3G Coverage is good in the BBC so if you have a dongle, iPhone etc... bring it along as this might really help out.

8. Filming - Filming is not allowed inside the BBC. However the evening will be captured by an official BBC camera person and there will be a flashmeeting of the event. We will also capture the audio of each presentation.

9. Hospitality - There will be drinks and nibbles at the BBC that have been sponsored by a wide variety of sponsors – thank you very much! There will also be a TeachEat after the event at The Koh-I-Noor. Taxi's will leave the BBC at 09.10 to take us to the TeachEat Venue. If you have put your name down for TeachEat BUT you will be no longer attending then please take your name off the TeachEat list on the wiki. Hospitality at the BBC has been covered by the Teachmeet Sponsors but you may need to make a donation towards TeachEat.

10. Conference Tags etc - The Teachmeet tag for the Scottish learning Festival is #TMSLF09 – please make sure that you tag all photographs, blog posts and tweets. As well as this helping us capture the event we want to use these crowdsourced comments to produce an online newspaper of Teachmeet shortly after the event. There will be a Twitter Back Channel during the event.

11. Finally - What have I missed? - Please retweet and re-blog this post to get the message out!

May 2010	Iain Hallinan	<a href="http://h-blog.me.uk/archives/161">http://h-blog.me.uk/archives/161</a> May 2010 Iain's H-blog article called A History of Teachmeets to date
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### TeachMeet – The Story So Far.....May 25th, 2010 by H-Blog

I was recently invited to write an article on TeachMeets for the School Leaders Scotland "Scottish Leader" magazine, and it was fascinating to do. I learned so much doing it, and promised to post the article on my blog. The best – and simplest – explanation I have heard of TeachMeet is the one given by Tim and Moby of BrainPop in their movie explaining what TeachMeet is: "It's like Show and Tell for teachers." That is to say, it is a model of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) which involves those attending as participants in delivering the training as well as receiving it. When signing up for the event, those who are willing to do so volunteer to give a short presentation on something they have been doing or finding out about, and at the event talks are selected totally at random. This allows for short, dynamic delivery meaning that a greater number of presentations can be delivered in a short time, as well as reducing the likelihood of spectator disengagement; should a topic not be of interest to them, it is only a matter of minutes till something else is being discussed. Of course, if there is a presentation that doesn't interest you or apply to you, there are loads of things you could do instead – you can always talk to the person next to you, check out the online tool the last presenter was talking about, tweet or blog your thoughts about the event so far or even grab yourself a beer and some nibbles. Perhaps you could even join the virtual participants of the TeachMeet in the FlashMeeting or video conference and say hello? All of these things are actively encouraged at TeachMeets – whilst somewhat less formalised than many other CPD events, TeachMeets aim to be equally effective, if not more so. Whilst Glasgow and Edinburgh were the original venues, TeachMeets have now taken part in (amongst other places) Yorkshire & Humber, Sussex & Kent, Moosejaw in Canada, Dublin, Galashiels, Stockholm, Orlando, Newcastle, London, Nottingham, Cheltenham, Falkirk, Wrexham, Blackpool, East Lothian, Stirling, Perth, Oxford..... the list goes on and on. There have also been TeachMeets run purely online, and also using mobile devices. There is even a virtual TeachMeet planned to run in Second Life.

Looking at the number and range of TeachMeets, it is fair to say that the concept has truly established itself in the world of twenty first century education, and when you examine the feedback from those who have attended TeachMeets, you can see the effect they have on people. Sinclair Mackenzie, a Physics teacher from Thurso, writes "Have attended three TeachMeets in person, and many by FlashMeeting. TeachMeets promote long-range collegiality beyond your local goldfish bowl", whilst Neil Winton of Perth Academy says that Teachmeets are "proof that we always have something new to learn, and something new to teach.....and that not all teachers are cynical!!!" A recently qualified teacher from Falkirk, Cassie Law, states that the first TeachMeet she attended was "the best CPD experience of my probationary year. Great to hear about other people's experiences, and it put my mind at rest", whilst Jim Maloney from Blackpool recounts the effect that their first TeachMeet had on a Head Teacher from his authority, who said "The greatest impact on teaching and learning in my school in the shortest space of time. We are now reaping the rewards and our learners are more engaged in the learning process, and this has impacted on engaging parents too". Jim goes on to say that the HT is now "TeachMeet's biggest advocate in the borough. She raves about it."

So where did TeachMeet come from? The idea originated with three Scottish educators – Ewan McIntosh, David Noble and John Johnston – who knew each other online, but had never met face to face until SETT (the

precursor to the Scottish Learning Festival) in 2005. After their initial meeting, there was a desire to meet up again regularly to catch up on what they had been up to, particularly with regards to how they were using new technologies in education. When the eLive conference was going to be in Edinburgh in May 2006, another meeting was proposed and this time 10 people signed up (with another 8 sending apologies!) and in the Jolly Judge pub in Edinburgh a legend was born – although the name TeachMeet didn't arrive till later.

Identified by many as the driving energy behind TeachMeet, Ewan recalls how the first meeting of these online colleagues led to the desire to come back and discuss what they had been up to since. “What we ended up with was a kind of regular event that we could have where people were sharing stories and trying to share some practice as well, but in a really laid-back, informal environment”. John backs this feeling up, recollecting an optimism among the attendees and a connection that was hard to achieve at the time – “It brought about a very powerful feeling of togetherness, especially as there was little networking about technology, very few Bloggers and no Twitter, so one could feel quite isolated.” David remembers the early TeachMeets being cosy affairs, but that they were still pushing the boundaries even back then “We were having presentations on Skype, and that was four years ago!!!”



Although much of this will sound familiar to TeachMeeteers today, there are many differences as well. As has been discussed, there are now many more TeachMeets and they are spread out nationwide, internationally and even globally. But beyond that, the TeachMeet model is evolving; over the last year or two, educators have begun to put their own stamp on it in a number of ways. Perth hosted the first stand-alone TeachMeet (the others all having been fringe events of something or other) as well as the first subject based TeachMeet (Physics, if you're interested). Since then there have been Student TeachMeets, online TeachMeets, TeachMeets for Mac users, GregMeet and even TreeMeet! “The evolutions of it are essential to continuing to survive, otherwise it becomes irrelevant,” says Ewan, continuing “TeachMeet was never about technology 100%, it was about the Teach first of all, and the tech was instrumental to achieving what we wanted to achieve pedagogically and never the other way around.” Both John and David are also keen advocates of the evolution of TeachMeet. “I think they are already becoming less techy and more about teaching,” says John. “Evolution needs different models to choose survivors from. I think the Islay conference sounded great, while TeachMeet Falkirk and TeachMeet East Lothian brought in a new local audience. I very much enjoyed Con's LeadMeet.” David agrees. “I think anyone who is interested in the evolution of the TeachMeet idea should really go back and look at the LeadMeet which was organised in the middle of last year by Con Morris, around the Scottish International Summer School on School Leadership.”

And so the TeachMeet story continues. But there are challenges. John feels there is a danger that TeachMeet might be in danger of becoming too mainstream, not different enough, or too dependent on sponsorship. “There's also the possibility that it might become too self congratulatory, self-satisfied and less innocent.” Ewan agrees. “When I've been running events it's been as irreverent as possible, in a bid to distance itself from the hierarchies we're used to, and the reason for doing that is to try and generate alternative discussion to what we're used to.” He also feels that the TeachMeet 'brand' may need some protection from commercial exploitation, and is instead investigating ways to use the revenue generating potential of TeachMeet to further the model elsewhere in the world, places where having a TeachMeet would not be so easy, but that the benefits of such an event could be massive.

“I think my main concern is that it needs to diversify beyond the very large, but still very 'niche' group that attend it.” says Ewan. He suggests a Jamie Oliver-esque 'Pass it On' approach, where anyone who has



attended a TeachMeet has to bring three of their non-TeachMeet friends along to the next one. “If we all did that twenty five times over, we would have the whole of Europe having been to a TeachMeet, and that could be a very powerful thing for education.” Of course, if the leaders of schools were to take up the cause and organise school-level, cluster-level or authority level TeachMeets, that target could become a lot easier to achieve, so why not take up the challenge and help shape the future?

[ CHECK OUT the list of links to interviews and videos at the end:

John Johnston’s ‘potted history’ – <http://johnjohnston.info/blog/archive/2009/11/24/teachmeet-falkirk-09-video>

Full audio of Ewan McIntosh interview here <http://edutalk.cc/edutalk365-66-ian-hallahan-speaks-to-ewan-mc>

David Noble reflects on TeachMeet here – <http://audioboo.fm/boos/110917-david-noble-reflects-on-teachmeet>

May 2010	Tom Barrett	<a href="http://edte.ch/blog/2010/05/24/teachmeet-hits-its-fourth-birthday-coming-of-age-tmfuture/">http://edte.ch/blog/2010/05/24/teachmeet-hits-its-fourth-birthday-coming-of-age-tmfuture/</a>
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[This article was cross-posted by several TeachMeet folk; the discussed incorporation didn’t take place].

### **TeachMeet Hits its Fourth Birthday: Coming of Age #tmfuture May 24 Tom Barrett et al.**

TeachMeet is entering its fifth year and the unconference for teachers, by teachers has helped hundreds – maybe thousands, in fact – to try out something new, alter the way they already teach and learn, join a community of innovative educators or completely transform their way of working. The hope was that the model would spread. It has, but as those who have created and helped pull TeachMeet together over the past four years, we want to see it spread further, deeper and with increasing quality of input from practitioners. This post outlines how we think we might manage this.

**What are the goals of TeachMeet?** TeachMeet was originally designed to:

Take thinking away from the formal, often commercialised conference floor, and provide a safe place for anyone to pitch their practice; Provide a forum for more teachers to talk about real learning happening in real places, than one-hour conference seminar slots allow; Showcase emerging practice that we could all aim to undertake; sales pitches not allowed; Be all about the Teach, with only a nod towards tech that paved the way for new practice; Provoke new ways of sharing our stories: PowerPoint was banned. We wanted people to tell stories in ways that challenged them, and the audience; Empower the audience to critique, ask questions and probe, all online, through SMS or, later, Twitter. Over the years, these ‘rules’ have altered, leading to some great innovations, others less so. The answer to “What is a TeachMeet?” has become a myriad of meanings, some pretty far off the original goals. We need to help and support people to organise, run and contribute to events that build on previous ones. We need to make TeachMeet as accessible to newbies as it was in 2005. We need TeachMeet to once more find its focus.

**Supporting the “infectiousness” of TeachMeets** Organising TeachMeets should not be easy. Taking part in them should be. But more support is needed for organisers; Sponsorship is hard if there’s no bank account into which funds can be sent; Without sponsorship, any event over 30 people becomes tricky to organise while also giving people a special night of learning, the time, space and mood that gets people over their self-conscious selves; Paying for refreshments and venues is impossible if there’s no organisation to pay them the precise sum; The best TeachMeets provide social space, social activity, entertaining MCs, good refreshments, good online coverage and some form of online ‘conclusion’ – this needs coordinating by the organiser(s), but it’s not a skill everyone will have the first time around; We’ve got a superb opportunity to curate the best bits from all these TeachMeets that are happening weekly – this needs a degree of oversight.

**A means to make TeachMeet more sustainable, easier to use for sponsors and organisers, and have the ability to do something spectacular:** TeachMeet is owned by the community that shape it – but there needs to be a body to manage sponsorship and sponsors, and provide support for new organisers so that they maintain the TeachMeet goals. We assume that if someone is organising a ‘TeachMeet’ they would like to emulate the success of those popular early TeachMeets, and better-supported national conference ones (e.g. SLF and BETT).

**What would support from the TeachMeet body look like?** Seeking of sponsorship all year round – including ways and means to get your message to as many teachers as possible; Brokerage of sponsorship – i.e. one place sponsors and those seeking sponsorship can come together, in a transparent manner; Recommendation of onsite support (good venues at discounted rates/free, A/V, event organisation [for bigger venues], catering etc); Suggestions for various formats that have worked in the past; Mentoring from previous

TeachMeet leaders including on-the-night help; Featuring of content and promotion of the event in a timely manner on an aggregated, higher profile TeachMeet site; A group calendar so that events can be seen by geography and date; Promotion of TeachMeet through international and national events, using contacts of existing TeachMeeters; In-event publicity (e.g. if you plan an event at a regional ICT day or national event, then we can help broker paper materials for insertion into packs etc). But, above all, TeachMeet is reaching a point of saturation in the UK – things are going really well in terms of enthusing teachers about their own learning. We have a great opportunity to carry over a small proportion of the sponsorship and contributions towards creating a TeachMeet culture in countries where teacher professional development in this way is still blocked by barriers physical, financial or cultural. This is just one idea, harboured for a long time but unable to realise in the current setup.

**This body can take the form of:** A Limited company (with a Director and shareholders); A Charitable Limited Company, with a board of directors and voting rights for fellow ‘shareholders’ (we could work out some way of people being ‘awarded’ shares based on [non-financial] involvement?); A Social Enterprise, perhaps formed as a Limited Company A Charity (this feels like a lot more red tape to pull through and perhaps not entirely necessary). **As we take things forward we invite you to contribute your ideas and thoughts to make things work smoothly. We want you to comment, probe and make your own suggestions before the end of June, using the tag #tmfuture**

September 2011	Ian Stuart	<a href="http://islayian.blogspot.ie/2011/09/teachmeet-at-scottish-learning-festival.html">http://islayian.blogspot.ie/2011/09/teachmeet-at-scottish-learning-festival.html</a> Ian speaks the remote attender’s point of view, and of TeachMeet ethos
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#### **Sunday, 25 September 2011. TeachMeet at Scottish Learning Festival.**

Last week was the Scottish Learning Festival (SLF). I wasn’t able to attend. A major part of SLF is now [TeachMeet](#). I think it one of the largest and highest profile TeachMeets kicking around. A huge congratulations to the individuals who gave lots time and a huge effort to get everything in place..but..As an online observer I had several problems:

- Lack of online participation: Over the last 18 months more and more teachmeets have been using [ustream](#). This is a great broadcast service but is not very good with the back channel. Previously [FlashMeeting](#) was used. This was not as good for the broadcasting as you had limited numbers but the interaction was very good. During breakouts the online session could have one of the topics. During the tmslf11 the broadcast was switched off during the roundtable discussions. I understand that the pressure is for the faces in front of you but please remember upto 100 people are following online. Would it be possible to have the webcam feed both uStream and flashmeeting? Then those who want to just watch can do so and those who want t get more involved can also do so.

- Talk selection: When was it decided to reduce the number of people who want to share down to the number of spaces that are available? This means that those who are confident get their names down first and no one else gets a chance to even take a chance. Yes this does mean that someone doesn’t get selected. I have been the victim of this many times but I think its important that someone who isn’t too sure about speaking can step up and we all get to hear something new.

- Ad breaks: All the way through sponsors were mentioned. This, to me, is against the ethos of classroom practitioners sharing. I think large teachmeets need financial support. This has been talked about at length [previously](#) by lots of people. Its how much positioning this support gets is very important. Personally they should have stuff about and logos online but not mentioned during the event.’

I see a place for lots of teachmeets. Large like the tmslf11 but even more important are small, less structured, ones where topics are discussed over a beer. It’s a full spectrum in between.

**Teachmeets are an ethos not a fixed structure.**

January 2013	Mark Anderson	<a href="http://ictevangelist.com/what-is-a-teachmeet-any-more/">http://ictevangelist.com/what-is-a-teachmeet-any-more/</a> Once more, a critical set of comments follow this blog post.
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#### **What Is A Teachmeet Any More? By Mark Anderson January 12, 2013 47 Comments**

I’ve organised and been involved with many Teachmeet events in recent years and so I have a fair idea of what a Teachmeet should be about and how to make it a good event for those that are attending.





For great examples, just check the TeachMeet wiki and check some of the events that are already up there. A Google Map on there to help people find the location of the event (as well as the postcode for the location) is always VERY helpful too! Once you've created your Wiki page, fill in this form: <https://spreadsheets.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dHBkLXg3cVVnTThnLXIYXJJdVRSRUE6MQ> – thank you to [@OliverQuinlan](#) who does this to help everyone in his own time. Check his blog [here](#).

- 21. I would also recommend getting your TeachMeet event listed in the TES – you can do this either by emailing [resources@tes.co.uk](mailto:resources@tes.co.uk) or tweeting details to [@todayilike](#) on Twitter

In addition to the above, we have moved our Teachmeet model on considerably. Last time we had a keynote speaker of national renown in the form of the brilliant Vic Goddard. We had seminars on offer from some of the best CPD leaders in the country with food prepared by students but led by a top chef and some fantastic Teachmeet style 5 and 2 minute presentations from some brilliant local speakers – evidence of which can be found on the [TMClevedon YouTube channel](#).

This all leads me on to this question really. With all of the developments and progressions with Teachmeet events over the time frame from when they were first born. Are the proposals and elements discussed above still a Teachmeet? Many people I suspect would say no. I also want to ask the question about what you think about asking attendees to these events paying a nominal fee for their attendance. It's been put to me, that putting on events such as Teachmeet Clevedon aren't sustainable any more with some of the finances coming from the school. This would mean that we would have to seek further sponsorship, something which we haven't done in the past. We've only sought sponsorship from two or three sources to keep it to a minimum. Previously, some of the costs of the event were soaked up by sponsorship of the event, primarily by very generous donations both from Crown House Publishing and Clevedon School. The ask from attendees wouldn't be much, but with an event with more than 200 people attending, who also regularly chop and change their decision to attend, because it is seen as an informal event, makes the actual administration and organisation of it quite difficult. In organising our last Teachmeet I was regularly fixing and sorting upwards of 50 different queries related to attendance a week, across a 6 week period in the run up to the event. I feel that if I was to ask people to contribute a nominal amount to book their place for the event and to cover the costs of the food and other costs related to the event the chopping and the changing wouldn't happen. Also, when people 'cancel' their ticket – it isn't just a tweet saying I can't come, they go through the full process of cancelling their ticket properly on the ticketing site to get back their x amount for the ticket, thus actually freeing it up for another attendee. So, to finish off this post, coupling with the advice above I guess I'm asking a few questions....

- Has the Teachmeet moved forward to where this is the model of what a modern Teachmeet is?
- Does an event like I'm describing above still constitute a Teachmeet or does it need a different name?
- Is it fair to ask a teacher to pay somewhere between £5-10 for a quality CPD event, with seminars, speakers and traditional Teachmeet sessions with food and drink or should this be free?
- Would you be prepared to part with a bit of cash for a quality evening of CPD and networking?
- I look forward to your thoughts and comments...

ASK AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE - LOTS OF COMMENTS ENSUED

[Andy Knill](#) says: Mark, I can understand you have a wider experience of TM hosting than many of us. I would be reluctant to charge but whereas you've held many TMs I've only been involved with one and developing a reputation helps to draw others in. The timing factor is crucial having been left and not doing a presentation I had prepared. Wary of volunteering one for #bett13 but luckily I have a key idea I want to reuse and it's only a two minute presentation. I still like the random aspect but respect the idea of breaking up themes.

[Glen Gilchrist \(@mrgpg\)](#) says: Hi, Great list and some good pointers. Your final comment / question: "Is it fair to ask a teacher to pay somewhere between £5-10 for a quality CPD event, with seminars, speakers and traditional Teachmeet sessions with food and drink or should this be free?" is one that I am mid way through a blog about. Education is no longer a cash cow for businesses to sell to and expect some form of return. I am just about at tipping point over the excessive advertising on Twitter hashtags (#ukedchat seems to have been taken over as a vehicle for companies trying to sell me the chance to video my class – for example). Please, keep #UKEDCHAT for discussions / tips on teaching

NOT free PR / Advertising. So, yes, I'd happily pay £5, £10 to contribute to the cost of a Teachmeet – especially if it prevented sponsor sales pitches. Social responsibility and subliminal advertising is great. XYZ Inc brings you TMNewport – I'm all for, but I don't want to watch a sales pitch for anything, by anyone. If Teachmeets did cost £10, we could be creative with TMmiles – where contributors to #UKEDCHAT etc could accrue points to get into a TM for free; we could reward people with a free ticket. If things cost, we increase the perceived value of the event and TM's evolve from a rag tag collection of Teachers, into a professional development network. Great point. Glen

Tom Sherrington (@headguruteacher) says: This is an excellent post mark. Really helpful as we're about to plan TMEssex 2. My TM experience is limited to watching clips of #TMClevedon and following it online; organising #TMEssex at my school and speaking at #TMLondon. What has worked well..Making it free including food; I'd hold on to that for as long as possible; Multiple presenters on a range of themes – some presentations are brilliant; Having good tech back-up and compere (ie you or @ICTMagic); Time limits; I've enjoyed the randomiser! I agree it has down-sides; The twitter buzz before,during and after. What would improve them? More focus on things to do in lessons... eg tech apps -but only if showing actual use in lessons; Better prep in relation to time – I agree on that. Get ready! Having 3 or 4 'headline slots'? Some people are worth a bit longer... and if everyone is there.. why not capitalise? eg Phil Beadle ad Chris Waugh (Edutronic\_Net) just too big for 2 mins or even 5 mins; I'm not sure about 2 min slots? They need to be really punchy and that is tough. I wonder if, instead, TM's could have a first half market-stall; lots of mini stands with teachers talking as people mill about, then a second half of micro-presentations.? Final thing is to plan more of a concrete opportunity making sure there is discussion around what has gone on so people leave with some plan to put it to use. Maybe. I agree about the BETT idea – how odd to prepare a talk if there is a chance you won't give it. Anyway – lots to think about! It's evolving. No harm in that. TS.

Ian Addison says: I hadn't seen the document on TES until you mentioned it, but it makes Teachmeet sound like a huge scary event but it doesn't need to be. We had one last year with 15 people, turned into quite a nice discussion. Teachmeets in Hampshire are still fairly new and we have avoided the TM wiki as we found people couldn't remember (didn't want to learn) how to log-in. So we simply use Google forms to collate a list of people attending. We had 50-60 at the last event and the next step is to make a range of small events across the county rather than a larger one. We have a blog too: <http://www.teachmeethants.co.uk> I totally agree about the live feed though! Always a nightmare, much better to upload videos afterwards. Some interesting points raised here though.

Joe Burkmar says: Hi all. Firstly really helpful post, as I am arranging my first teach meet for Feb 2016. I understand the difficult balancing act with sponsors taking over, and I think that they should never be allowed to present. However I was wondering about stalls at the back that the teachers could approach if they wanted. I am also going to make this free to attend as think that this is key to success of all that I have attended. Ian Addison please feel free to attend as this will be in Dorset, another county new to the teachmeet revolution. Thanks again.

Fearghal says: Great post...I think it's important to continually reflect on the format, and indeed the movement. I've organised three TeachMeets now. The first two followed the format which has become relatively common practice now (TeachMeet East Lothian 2010 & TeachMeet Lothians 2011). The third differed considerably in format in that it was a full day Saturday and consisted entirely of 40 minute workshops...no "presentations" (TeachMeet SLFringe 2012). This change in format is based on my own reflections of TeachMeets and feedback from attendees at previous events. I think the principle of CPD events run by and for teachers which are open to all still stands as a definition. I think the informal nature of the TeachMeet movement is what makes it great and will inevitably result in flexibility and variety. Ultimately, it is the professional responsibility of the organisers of TeachMeets to decide on how they want to run their event, and up to the community/attendees to decide if that approach is effective or not and feed that back. I definitely think there is room for a greater variety of formats and there's no need for one set formula. I always have to walk a bit of a tight rope on sponsorship. I dislike sponsorship, but I like nice venues! I've come to the point now where I try and have enough sponsorship for the event to run in a nice venue, but no more. For SLFringe the participants paid an optional £10 for lunch and refreshments to avoid having to source another £1000 of sponsorship. As TeachMeets have grown out of their smaller, pub-based, origins we've found that other things have come along to refill that gap that was left. These include TeachMeet365, BeerMeets and now PedagooLocal events. Again, I think this is all fine as it's ultimately up to the community to organise what it thinks is needed and this will be judged by whether folk turn up and learn or not.

Helen Rogerson says: Both ASE (West of England) and ChemLabs charge for their half-day CPD events for teachers, £10. The ASE west of England subcommittee we allow members in for free, but charge non-members. The majority that attend our November event are non-members and the money helps to pay for the running of the event and region for the rest of the year. The only thing with money is collecting it and the tax issues around it. I do like your events and with 200 people the event has to be professional feeling. It reflects poorly on your school otherwise. Not everyone coming to the event will know about the nature of teachmeets.

Dave Stacey says: Interesting and thought provoking post Mark. The value of TeachMeets as a concept is that they are

so customisable. The week after I was with you at TMClevedon last I was in a school library with 15 other teachers sharing ideas. Still a Teachmeet, but very different in tone. I guess the question is, when is a Teachmeet not a Teachmeet? What is the point at which you say – This is something else now? Having struggled massively with the financing of them myself, I'm still inclined to say the moment it has a price on it, it isn't a Teachmeet any more. I completely agree with everything you and Glen have said with the problem of sponsorship, and I dread to think the cost both financial and in time it takes you to run TMClevedon, and so on the one hand direct cost almost seems the obvious solution. And yet, something about it just doesn't feel right. I'm not sure about Glen TMMiles idea (sorry Glen!), simply because it implies some kind of central administrative system that seems to be the antithesis of what Teachmeet is, and why it's grown so big so fast. There more 'professional' organisations out there organising events than we can shake a stick out. I don't see the need for another one. I do see the need for a free, flexible, roll-your-own approach to CPD which empowers teachers to do it for themselves. A couple of thoughts. Is TM Clevedon now so big (and so professionally organised) as to have earned itself a new name, and the right to charge (as Nick is doing with #TLAB13)? I can understand some reluctance to leave the name behind, but it IS different to any other TM I've been to! One alternative funding model would be to charge for things like the food. People can sign up for free, but can also opt to pay £10(?) for access to the buffet! I'm sure most people would be willing to chip in, but it preserves the free (and more informal?) nature of the event. Dave

Oliver Quinlan says: Some interesting thoughts Mark. You have run quite a few successful events that people have got a lot out of now. The first thought people have when such things happen is that they have to grow them. Without doing down your brilliant work so far, I would ask why it has to continue to grow when it is already doing such good? With growth comes more overheads and the need for more sponsorship or contributions. Could it not just stay at the stage it is at? I think it is very important to dig deep into the motivations that cause one to want to grow such an event. Peter Yeomans shared an interesting way of framing this on twitter that you could conceptualise growth as your event becoming a hub for other, more local meetings. This may have more impact than simply growing your event which although successful must be quite an unwieldy task to manage. As to whether it is a 'Real TeachMeet', although I am one for defining terms clearly usually... in this case, who cares? Such questions seem to cause an awful lot of navel gazing, of which I have been guilty in the past as well. Thing move on, and TM was always an organic thing. No one owns it, and you can call anything you like a TeachMeet. If calling your event a TeachMeet causes disgruntled mutterings from anyone then it is they who have forgotten the spirit of the thing- striking out and making something worthwhile happen. If it works then it works, doesn't matter what you call it. Your event obviously works, but maybe that's a reason to stick to the blueprint you have so successfully defined rather than having to grow for growth's sake. Just a thought =).

Mr D says: Hi Mark, I really hoped to come to the last event but life and a difficult cross country route meant I missed it. It would have been my first time so I speak with zero experience or knowledge of previous events. Have you considered contacting UWE? I attended their CAS event in the summer and they were keen to develop links with schools. I think Bath Uni are trying to do something similar with CAS computing excellence teachers. You might be able to take advantage of their infrastructure, contacts and gain some sponsorship. Of course they would have their own agenda which you'd need to find agreement with. Rob Williams is the contact at UWE. I think they are running some CAS events this month. Hope that helps. I'd happily pay a nominal amount to help with the cost of food. Regards, Chris.

Peter Yeomans says: Having read the blog and the comments I'm torn, you see I think teachmeet is about winning hearts and minds. It's about encouraging teachers to tell stories. The original idea was that everyone coming to the event should have something to share, the events were about giving and sharing, not taking. They changed teachers because they had to do something to be involved. A paid event reduces that involvement to a paying a fiver to be entertained. I about four years ago, a group of people (me included) discussed the idea of setting up a charity to support and preserve teachmeet. This was rejected by the original organiser and the view was very much as Oliver said. Nobody owns teachmeet, it is growing and organic, it is whatever it becomes. My queries are not about the rights and wrongs of calling the Clevedon events a teachmeet, but rather whether the continued hype and glitz will infect undermine the growth you are actually committed to. My questions: There's no way 200 people should be asked to take their chances on presenting, so maybe break up into rooms of 20 people? Should supporting others in planting their own teachmeets should be part of the mission? Can you function with an agape shared meal? Do you need a keynote? That really is conference stuff. If each person does prepare something to share, is that very act enabling them to grow & think? Anyway, keep the faith – u are doing great

Kevin McLaughlin says: I can't help but feel you're just a couple of steps away from running a teachers conference in Clevedon. That way you can charge a small fee if required and get 'bigger names' in to draw those that like that sort of thing.

Sally Thorne says: There's no doubt that TMClevedon has become a roaring success but I'd argue that what you have on your hands now isn't really a TM anymore – it's not the format that has changed, it's your event! It has outgrown its

original label and evolved into a bigger and different animal. It needs a grander name! As others have said, I've attended lots of different types of TM, the smallest of which was only six of us; all extremely valuable in terms of CPD. I worry sometimes that people who have only been to the huge events like TMClevedon and TMBETT then think that that's how they all should be, and therefore don't have the confidence to organise their own or volunteer to speak, and I think that is a shame. I agree that time to network is vital and I think that is easier to do at the smaller events; but at Clevedon you have been able to get some awesome speakers and run workshops, which wouldn't be possible with a smaller one. So it's give and take, I guess. For myself, having attended as many TMClevedons as I have been able, I would not attend if I was paying – not as an after-school event. I would willingly forego the food, delicious as it is, for a free event. Or I would pay if it was on a Saturday or a day in the holidays, when I can come to it fresh without a day at school behind me, and hang around for hours afterwards in the pub having those meaningful conversations. But that's just me – I'm only one in 200 Best of luck with organising the next one!

Oliver Quinlan says: What are the goals of TeachMeet? TeachMeet was originally designed to: Take thinking away from the formal, often commercialised conference floor, and provide a safe place for anyone to pitch their practice; Provide a forum for more teachers to talk about real learning happening in real places, than one-hour conference seminar slots allow; Showcase emerging practice that we could all aim to undertake; sales pitches not allowed; Be all about the Teach, with only a nod towards tech that paved the way for new practice; Provoke new ways of sharing our stories: PowerPoint was banned. We wanted people to tell stories in ways that challenged them, and the audience; Empower the audience to critique, ask questions and probe, all online, through SMS or, later, Twitter. Over the years, these 'rules' have altered, leading to some great innovations, others less so. The answer to "What is a TeachMeet?" has become a myriad of meanings, some pretty far off the original goals. We need to help and support people to organise, run and contribute to events that build on previous ones. We need to make TeachMeet as accessible to newbies as it was in 2005. We need TeachMeet to once more find its focus.

David Rogers says: An interesting post Mark. For me, the most enjoyable and useful TeachMeets are those that are small scale and informal. I've organised a few, some with a subject specific focus (mainly Geography) that have simply been passing a laptop around and talking. What I like about those is that they aren't about technology. With TMPompey, we are still small scale but working in partnership with Actions Stations, the Navy and the Historic Dockyard. This provides some space, tech back up and a few other bits. Here, the education officers of those places give a talk and I don't think that anyone minds that. In terms of the larger 'TeachMeets', personally the ones I've been to have not really met my needs. As you mention, the most useful part is often the networking and informal chat during / afterwards. I'm not going to TMBett for example as it's quite some effort to put a presentation together to potentially not have the chance to share, and the presentations last year didn't really meet my needs. That's not saying that the event wasn't well run and useful to others. The other thing that I wonder is whether many TeachMeets become a selection of the same people talking to the already converted / aware. There are some who will speak about similar topics where sometimes new faces would be welcome. I've toyed with the idea of giving some sort of priority to those that have never spoken before. I've got no problem in paying for a high quality teacher centered CPD. Northern Grid and Nick Dennis' TLA Conference spring to mind : <http://tla.berkhamstedschool.org/> However for me, a TeachMeet is free, informal and small scale. At the end of the day though, it's CPD that meets the needs of teachers and encouraging more people to share their stories that is more important than what you call the event.

Mat Pullen says: Think a nominal charge would be acceptable due to the level of CPD you receive, an equivalent course would cost over £100. After the last tmclevedon I gained so much, paying to go back is a no brainer.

Tony Parkin says: As a regular attender to Teachmeets, either physically or virtually, since their inception, I have been fascinated to watch their evolution, and the philosophical debates well laid out here and in the comments. It is by its very nature a political animal, maybe even quasi-religious in fervour and opinion, and at the moment I am torn between following The People's Popular Front of Judea, or the Judean Popular People's Front approach, both argued cogently above. What's in a name? Well, quite a lot actually. The point about a Teachmeet is that it is an UNconference. We have always had teachers' conferences, and I love them too, indeed I have helped organise or spoken at many over the years. But the charm and essential nature of a Teachmeet is an UNconference, deliberately evolved north of the border to be a different beast. Organised by and for teachers, with only a random collection teachers allowed to share their real classroom experiences. So by all means have an event with invited speakers, sponsored sessions and mini-exhibitions, and even an admission fee... but just call it a conference, not a Teachmeet? Or come up with another name... the Collaborate4change events were also highly successful, shared many of the characteristics of a Teachmeet, but with a different format that the name change allowed without causing anyone any problems? One final thought from me... if the problems that are getting in the way of any event are simply logistical or financial, the answer could be that it probably isn't really a Teachmeet?

Matt Esterman says: Hi all, Thanks for continuing the discussion Mark. I thought I'd just chip in a few thoughts from down under. This in no way reflects the thoughts of all TeachMeet followers down here, but I know many of us share



some or all of the thoughts I'll outline below. For me, one of the key features that distinguish a TeachMeet from any other kind of professional learning is that it is organised by teachers, for teachers, to share practice in an open and informal (but planned) manner. Since March 2010 we've had TeachMeets as small as a dozen people through to a huge one organised by a whole team of us that had 300 people attend. In the case of the huge teachmeet, we had multiple rooms going so that each one was like a teachmeet in itself, including a 'chat by the bar' and an 'app-swap' room. Regardless of size, all teachmeets (as far as I know, in Sydney at least) have been free except for TeachEat at a local restaurant/pub afterwards. We've also had everything in between. Some have been hosted by schools (the majority), some at pubs, some at other locations such as university campuses. Some have been simple jump-up-and-present and others have been more complex. We've actively encouraged all sectors (government, Catholic and independent schools) all to be involved. We've had subject-specific teachmeets and generic ones. There's a national website (paid for by a few of us) <http://www.teachmeet.net> that anyone can advertise an event on via one of several organisers who have admin rights. There's a wiki for each region e.g. <http://tmsydney.wikispaces.com> for organisers/hosts to easily whip up a web page with a Google doc sign up sheet etc. So far, it's worked well in Sydney in this structure to give hosts the support they need, even if they aren't "techie" but want to join people together in a conversation. For us it's still about building a sense of community and momentum. My main concern is how to let ANY teacher host a teachmeet with the minimum amount of fuss and hassle, but getting the most out of the event. Keeping teachmeets free is important to me, but I do accept that for larger events (that aren't lucky enough to latch on to a venue already paid for as in our huge teachmeet in March last year) a low cost ticket would be useful to lock in attendees and cover running costs. I think any teacher would understand things like this don't happen out of thin air. Something for us to think about. As mentioned by others above, I think teachmeets have, are and will be evolving and changing, fluctuating in popularity and form to suit the hosts and the audience. One of the best aspects of teachmeets is that people are able to vote with their feet – a lot of decisions are made by that measure! If people are made aware of a sponsorship arrangement and don't like it, no one's making them go! Equally, if people aren't discouraged but happy to cop a bit of advertising if it means they get free/low cost (and valuable) PD then they'll still go. We can't be too precious with form or shape of teachmeets so long as they don't go too far down the road of conferences/corporate events. I'd say any teachmeet that asks more cash than is necessary for refreshments or basic costs is no longer a teachmeet. Or an event organised by a provider/group who are using the format for profit (ie not TEACHERS organising for teachers) shouldn't use the name teachmeet. We recently had an issue with this, but the providers were happy to change the name as they support our mission. Having met a great bunch of UK Educators on a recent trip there in June, I can attest to the fact that you guys are providing fantastic PD for teachers. I attended a tiny teachmeet in Cirencester, an impromptu teachmeet at the Learning Festival in Crowthorne, a teachmeet at Education Scotland HQ, a student-led TeachMeet in York (which we replicated with excellent results in North Sydney last year). They all had learning and sharing at the beating heart of the conversation. That's what a teachmeet fosters. Not sitting in rows listening to a guru (for too long anyway), but a series of brief talks that begin conversations. If you walk away from a teachmeet inspired, or with a new colleague, or with a new idea (or with all three!) the event has achieved its goal. Until we reach all teachers, and all of them are sitting bored at the events, we have work to do. Sorry to clog up the message board... but one last thing: Who's up for a rolling teachmeet starting NZ or Pacific and rolling around the time zones via video so we can all feel part of a truly global network of professionals? The local connecting to the global... Keep up the great work! Matt

Fiona Thomas says: I am a relative newbie to Teachmeets, TMClevedon, TMNewport and helping to organise TMCCardiffASE, and have to say that I found TMClevedon amazing and I learned lots, not only at the event, but was inspired to read and look up more after the event. I believe this is the main aim, to inspire and inform and however big you get I hope you don't lose that. I have watched some of Ian Addison's Hampshire TM videos and have learned lots from them (infact only found out about Teachmeets through him). TMNewport was much smaller than Clevedon but informative and uplifting as well. I have attempted to watch a Teachmeet live and found it didn't work. A video to watch later is a much better idea. What I also came away with was a desire to share the idea of Teachmeets. I was the first in my school to discover them and I found myself telling the rest of the staff what a brilliant idea they were. However only 2 came with me to TMNewport. Child care issues or a desire to get home after a long day stopped some of the others. When organising TMCCardiff, I began by advertising it on Twitter, where I quickly got a response from people who had been to a Teachmeet before. However, we began giving leaflets to friends at other schools and quickly discovered that there were still hundreds out there who had no idea what a Teachmeet was. (Good to know I wasn't the last!) I would probably pay to come to Clevedon again but I don't know if I would have the first time. I do think we still need to spread the word and encourage new attendees, but at the same time understand the difficulties with people signing up and not turning up... Perhaps this is why it shouldn't get too big? One thing, which was mentioned at TMCCardiff, was about having just a primary or secondary TM. Has this happened before? Personally where someone was talking about something that was too advanced for my class, I have either found it interesting to know what was happening higher up

the system or had a mind rest! Do all the Teachmeets try to make sure there is something for everyone if they know they have a mixed audience? Or do you find if it is organised by one school or the other there is a natural bias? As for what to call TMClevedon – CPD in the form of a show! Or CPD spectacular!

Audrey Nay says: I love the informality of TeachMeets. I have attended a few via twitter feed etc and 1 live one in our local area! I love the chance that teachers have to share with other INTERESTED teachers. TeachMeets to my way of thinking are MOST similar to the Teacher Librarian network meetings that I have been attending for more than 12 years. Teacher Librarian network meetings were held once per term at a different school library each time for more than 12 years. We had the opportunity to explore and hear about various innovative ideas employed in other school libraries. They were always run on sharing lines. They were very inclusive: HS, Primary, local public librarians and independent, Catholic, Government teachers were all invited and attended when they were able to. NO PRESSURE. Simple organising. Same day, same week each term. When special events such as BookWeek were coming up we would encourage the sharing of ideas, resources including digital, lesson plans etc based around that theme/topic We had an agenda which included who was happy to share and any visitors that were attending. It was sent with the reminder to all the teachers a week or two before by the person who had agreed to host the next meeting. The host provided afternoon tea. We sometimes followed by going out to tea together. There are times we need big gatherings and fancy speakers but I see TeachMeets as more of a local, easy to get to, sharing session for teachers of ALL varieties!! Cheers

Gwyn ap Harri says: KISS – Keep it SMALL, stupid...For me, TeachMeets were getting the small number of like minded teachers together that thought it was important to do so. That number has obviously grown, so don't make the top level bigger. push it down to grass roots where it belongs, and that's within schools themselves. Like you limit the timing of presentations, just limit the size of the meets. And have more of them. Everywhere.

Michael Forshaw says: Interesting discussion. Despite running a commercial business, I agree with Oliver and Tony in that I think Teachmeets should stick to their already successful formula of being an UNconference for teachers. Over the last year alone I have noticed new Teachmeets cropping up all over the place, which, without any funding for marketing, can only be down to positive feedback via word of mouth and Twitter. As it stands, I think the future looks extremely bright for the continued growth of Teachmeets. For particularly large Teachmeets that are already full to bursting and require some sort of commercial input – like your TMClevedon – I would consider hosting them under a different name in order to preserve the Teachmeet name and reputation. As the owner of Innovate My School, I'd love IMS to get more involved in Teachmeets as everything we do is about sharing and promoting innovative proactive in schools. However, I'm conscious not to annoy regularly Teachmeet goers, so it's been tricky to find the best way of going about things. Personally, I'd rather do something more creative than paying a flat sponsorship fee, but I know lots of companies that would happily do this. Here's a couple of ideas off the top of my head that might be worth considering:

- Innovate My School assists Teachmeet organisers in securing sponsorship money from local/national education suppliers per event. We have good relationships with over 1300 education suppliers who we contact regularly – all are looking for innovative ways to reach proactive teachers.

- Secure a year long deal with one particular company (RM, Pearson, etc) who would sponsor all events and cover the costs of catering and venue. Once secured, you will not have the ball ache of having to find new sponsors every time. IMS can also assist with this.

- Allow IMS to run our speed dating event for one hour. We would happily cover all Teachmeet costs if this was possible. To give you a flavour, here's a quick video of the event we ran for Liverpool Association of Headteachers: <http://www.innovatemyschool.com/live.html>.

- Some form of crowdsourced funding per event. For a start, I'd upgrade the current Teachmeet website so that it is easier to find old presentations, etc. Everything seems a bit scatty (sorry!), so it would be good to have some sort of cohesion. With the new site up and running, I'd have a feature that allowed visitors/registrants to donate money. Those who have been before, and therefore know the quality of CPD they will receive, might be more inclined to donate. Those who are going for the first time might donate next time. Innovate My School is built using Joomla – a free open source platform. This could be ideal as there are loads of plugins (all free of charge) that could facilitate the above. Sorry, this is a bit of a brain dump, so please don't lambast me if some of these ideas seem outrageous/too commercial. Great work, Mark – keep it up!

Rob Harrison says: Great (updated) post Mark. I think the charging issue is very difficult, without sponsorship, maybe...! The issue would be those staff that love how TM is free and delivers fantastic CPD, start charging would that interest go away? I think someone mentioned this, but maybe if it was a conference style TM, yes charge away!

Stephen Lockyer says: This has been an interested blog and debate to read this past week, and as someone who has attended, presented and organised a few TeachMeets, feel that I can join in! They have been incredibly influential in my thinking over the past couple of years, and my one wish would be that more teachers attend them, discovering a little

more about their profession and perhaps themselves. I think that we are becoming better at promoting these events now, and they are getting more attention, but wouldn't want them to take the role of a conference – that has a different remit for a very specific reason. To that end, I'm not sure that charging for entry is a particularly good thing, but can see no reason why you can't have a plate cost for refreshments. I also worry that the concept of having a Keynote speaker immediately devalues everyone else's talks to 'and this is what the other little people have done' – Teachmeet should be about all of us tearing down divisions professionally, not building them up. Lastly, I do think we should really examine the professional 'worth' of Teachmeet as CPD. That is not to belittle it at all – I think it can be worth ten times an expensive course, but if we can address the value they give as CPD, we will gradually get more buy-in. I'm speaking as primitively as a Certificate. This may seem a backward step in a technological age, but I think that a Teachmeet CPD Certificate put on the Head's desk will have real value!

Mags Amond says: Arriving late to this party, but something you said caught my eye Stephen. Could/would a Certificate debase the currency of TM, with folk attending just to collect it? The digital badge might catch on though, we tried it recently in Dublin, recipients reactions ranged from bemused through confused to totally delighted. It seem to match the spirit of Teachmeet.

Leon Cych says: I disagree about the streaming – but then I would wouldn't I It usually works for me. But filmmaking distributed and uploaded sounds great but where are the archives and the curation around that – there needs to be a hashtag? I think the creators of content should also create the media wherever possible and locally. But sometimes production values are important and I'd like to see someone do transcription of talks as well so that they could be "searchable" on the web for research. Using storify to create is useful and I have written a blog about how to capture TeachMeets in a more strategic way:<http://www.l4l.co.uk/?p=3236> I used Storify to capture what was going on because I could see the stream of the event going on in real time remotely so I could curate that event. The video stream was extremely useful. Just because something is hard for some people doesn't mean it's impossible or not to be tried – I think there's value in streaming out if it can be done and even if it is only for a handful of viewers. Because no matter how few people it may be for, it may be one more person who gains access to that community and is able to feel less isolated surely? Google Hangouts enables you to do this pretty seamlessly these days (but it would useful if you understood what Mix Minus is with the sound).

May 2016	David Muir	<a href="http://edcompblog.blogspot.ie/2016/05/teachmeet-whats-in-name.html">http://edcompblog.blogspot.ie/2016/05/teachmeet-whats-in-name.html</a> David's reflection, ten years on, back to the 'name of this thing'.
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### Sunday, May 29, 2016 TeachMeet - What's in a name?

Ewan recently marked the tenth birthday of TeachMeet (Ten years on from the very first unconference for educators: TeachMeet is 10) where he shared his memories of that first meeting in the Jolly Judge. Unfortunately, I was unable to join the birthday party... but it did start me thinking about my own memories (some of which I shared on his facebook post). It also started me thinking about the name "TeachMeet", how we came to choose it and the bullet (or bullets) we dodged not choosing a different name. I have not used this blog much in recent years but it seemed right to post about naming TeachMeet in this blog since this is where it all started for me. Ewan has described the



proto-TeachMeet in the Jolly Judge. He claims he always had a "stick it to the man" agenda. That may be true for him. Me? I just thought it would be fun to go to the pub with Will Richardson. Ewan also explains that this meeting was called the "ScotEduBlogger Meetup" and states (as if it was obvious) that this name was limiting and that "TeachMeet was born..." (as if it was a painless birth). I remember the choice of the name

emerging more slowly, I remember online and offline discussion, and I remember choosing just in time to get the word out for SETT (as SLF was then called). The discussion about "What to call this thing" mostly took place on the Scotsedublog wiki. On 8 June 2006, Ewan created a page titled newtechmeet and posed the question: We need a name. Not something too bloggy, not too techy. Suggestions? Later that same day, John Johnston added this as the first suggestion: How to stop worrying and love the blog. I made more suggestions that day (not all of them serious) and eventually posted TeachMeet as a possible name. Credit where credit's due. I explain on the wiki discussion page that I came up with the name after toying with variations on the newtechmeet page name. I commented, "...as a wise man once said, "It's not the tech, it's the teach."" For the record, the "wise man" was Ewan McIntosh. It is something he said while at Jordanhill. I ripped it off and have been using it without accreditation ever since!

Almost immediately after posting the TeachMeet suggestion, I edited it to turn it into "ScotEduBlog TeachMeet". I thought any meetup would be all about blogging. And in my defence, I wasn't the only one



thinking this way. For example, on a number of occasions, John Johnston defended the inclusion of "blog" or "blogging" in the title. In retrospect, it was much better to lose the "blog" since it has allowed TeachMeet to grow and expand beyond its blogging origins. The other mistake I made was to limit it to Scotland. I thought this was something for Scottish educators, hence my addition of the "ScotEdu" bit. I thought it was for my chums and friends of my chums. I was even more wrong about that! Thankfully, smarter people than me were in charge of picking the name! I did have some vision though. I suggested: "Whatever we call it, if we think it might become a regular event, we should stick a "2006" at the end." I thought this was something that had legs and that it would be repeated. OK, I thought it would be annual event, but nobody is perfect. On 29 June, a decision was made and this logo was added to the wikipage. Clearly, the right name was chosen. We ended up

with a name that didn't limit us to our Scottish roots. A name that allowed us to talk about more than blogging. A clear example of the wisdom of crowds! (And, it has to be said, the wisdom of Ewan, whose gentle prompting pushed us in the right direction.) We had a name, we had a venue, all that was needed was to organise and deliver the event. As we made our plans on the wiki, I don't think any of us knew just how successful TeachMeet 06 was going to be. But that is a whole other story...

May 2016	Ewan McIntosh	<a href="http://edu.blogs.com/edublogs/2016/05/teachmeet-is-10.html">http://edu.blogs.com/edublogs/2016/05/teachmeet-is-10.html</a> Ewan's reflection, ten years on.
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**May 21, 2016 - Ten years on from the very first unconference for educators: TeachMeet is 10.**

**This Tuesday, I want you to join me in the pub. It's your homework. There will be a test.**

My old tutor from teacher training college, David Muir, giggles as he types up some gems being shared over a beer between two other men: [John Johnston](#), a primary teacher from Glasgow, and [Will Richardson](#), an international keynoter whose formal talk earlier in the day had left us asking what they did in New Jersey that was, actually, any different from what we did in Scotland. Bob Hill from Dundee and [Andrew Brown](#), a local authority (or school district) geek-in-residence listen in, priming the anecdotes they'll respond with shortly. Behind me, at a different table, are a few others, snuggled around a table listening to the gems coming from an old uni pal who's just started teaching, [Grant Fraser](#).



It doesn't seem like much, but this informal gathering, arranged in fewer than 24 hours, was the first

unconference for teachers, anywhere in the world. As we organised it through IRC, for lack of a Twitter quorate, and blogs, we called it the *Ù&[ òà˘ Ó[[ \*\*^!Ár ^^c ]*, but that very night we decided that this might be a tad limiting, given we talked about more than just blogs. We also realised that if we wanted any women to make it along, we'd have to break free from what was, at that time, the mostly blokeish pastime of blogging.

**TeachMeet** was born. And it was a full four years ahead of its American cousin, **EdCamp**. The parents of TeachMeet were, from the start, against it becoming monied, sponsored or financially supported beyond what was necessary to make it work, commercialised in any way, or becoming too formal by requiring a board, or trustees, or organisers. The lack of politics with a small 'p' was refreshing for teachers who mostly inhabit a world full of it. The lack of cash? Well, we're teachers. That's considered normal. I don't know what I'd do with **\$2m**, but I doubt it'd help make TeachMeet any more popular than it is today. Over the past ten years, it's been a challenge to maintain that attitude in the heads of everyone who's involved, but it's managed to remain a very different beast to its EdCamp cousin as a result. **It's a difference I love.**

More than just a random bunch of teachers heading out for a midweek pint, this was **planned**, intentionally, to be the antidote to the Edinburgh City Technologies Conference, which had left us all a bit deflated. In our classrooms, we were doing more interesting stuff, frankly, than that talked about by the experts and commercial outfits vying for business back at the conference centre.

I remember a discussion on [IRC](#), about whether we should even invite Will along, given he was the keynote speaker that day, and somewhat occupying the podium that we were wanting to rebuke. A few of us knew Will well enough, though, through his blog posts, and thought he'd get into the 'real' goodies over a pint, more readily than in front of a few hundred folk in a beige convention centre.

The evening also had an unwritten rulebook, formed through the conventions of this rather twee little pub on Edinburgh's historic Royal Mile:

1. Don't speak over someone who's speaking;
2. Don't hog the conversation, or someone will speak over you;
3. If you need to leave to get a pint, leave;
4. Don't get too many laptops out: if you can tell your story without one, just do it. We're in an Edinburgh pub, after all;
5. If you do need to show something, for goodness' sake, don't do a PowerPoint (see Point 4, above).

The most unwritten of all the 'rules' is maybe that of the Master of Ceremonies. In the pub setting, there's *æ æ•Áan* MC. Sometimes they're a total pain the neck. The loud chap in the corner, probably in a double-breasted suit, prophesying at his loudest and brashest to anyone who'll listen, berating those who speak during his wife's karaoke attempts, or who disagree with his political persuasion. The more successful MC is almost invisible through their prowess. Any good pub has one. Sat, not stood, in a central position of the bar. He keeps an eye on the action, and subtly moves the pieces around like a chess master. A small utterance now and then turns potential discord between patrons into uniting harmony. His own stories normally get saved to last, until the after-hours lock-in, where a few lucky souls will get the résumé of the evening that no-one else was able to see. From that night, we've written down most the rules, sighed when we've seen them forgotten. We've run some bigger TeachMeets, snagged some amazing venues, spent a lot of businesses' cash on free beer and pizza. We've seen other countries adopt TeachMeet as their own, a few claim credit for starting it. We've seen TeachMeets sizzle when they offer something different for the teachers who come, and we've seen them stumble, stutter and peter out as hosts forget how to really make those segues shine the spotlight on the teacher (and not the MC). We've kept the chaotic [wiki](#) where people organise, sign up and talk about their events. It's got the look, feel and usability of your aged granny's family anecdotes, but it's for that reason that we keep it and love it (it is down as I try to link to it...).

**This Tuesday, 10 years on to the night it all started, I'm going back to the Jolly Judge Pub in Edinburgh.** I'd love you to join me if you can.



In an age of Facebook Live, Twitter, Medium and Instagram, maybe you're expecting to join in virtually. The point is, I'm going to be in an Edinburgh pub. What do you think I'm going to do?

November 2016	Mags Amond	<a href="https://magsamondposts.wordpress.com/2016/10/28/is-it-true-what-they-say-about-that-ill-wind-when-it-comes-to-teachmeet-in-ireland-definitely/">https://magsamondposts.wordpress.com/2016/10/28/is-it-true-what-they-say-about-that-ill-wind-when-it-comes-to-teachmeet-in-ireland-definitely/</a>
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### Is it true what they say about that ill wind?

On the origins of TeachMeet in Ireland. With a forever loop marquee scroll 'thank you' to the three Scottish bloggers – Ewan McIntosh, David Noble, and John Johnson – who sat round the first table and talked to each other about talking to each other.

I remember when I was young being frustrated when I could not divine sayings used by the elders, main example "It's an ill wind that blows no good". I eventually figured it what it meant. It came back to me recently when reflecting about bringing TeachMeet to Ireland. It was a very ill wind – the greed fuelled collapse of the Celtic Tiger – that caused us to import and adopt TeachMeet from the Scots in early 2009.

When the country was awash with paper money, I was dispatched by the Teacher Education Section to the Scottish Learning Festival, along with the rest of my colleagues (our remit at the time was to source, design and deliver formal continuing professional development to Irish schools). At the end of a long day of lectures and workshops, a friend of mine, John Heffernan, reminded me of the TeachMeet being organised for that evening by Ewan McIntosh. I'd signed up online out of idle curiosity; but I was tired and hungry; so, it was to be dinner or TeachMeet? I chose the latter. Good move.



The format was relaxed but not chaotic, attendees were also presenters, there was no hierarchy. The tables were round, like a wedding. The order of presentations was randomly picked by a charming online fruit machine thingie which had been made available online by a then unknown Russel Tarr. Speakers had either 2 mins (nano) or 7 mins (micro), with a jovial but firm heave-ho when time was up, and a pointed no-no to slides full of bullet points. Half way through the evening, we had 15 minute breakouts in which one person led a focused conversation, and attendees could wander about to get a flavour of all, or stay put with whomever we were curious to hear. In the background I was vaguely aware of a screen showing some tweets from far and wide, forming a conversation between those in the room and others who were following online via Twitter. And there was a chance to chatter over a food and beverage break. All these elements – the self-selection of the speakers, the encouragement of tales of practice rather than bullet-ridden slides, the round tables, the random order of calling speakers forward, the inclusion of 'TeachEat', and in particular Twitter backchannel and the 'soap box' conversations (this was a name I gave them for want of a better one) – became, and still remain for many, the hallmarks of a successful TeachMeet. I loved it all, and I knew that I knew many others who would delight in this experience.

That was September 2008. Then back to work I went, and not much happened until January, when I went to another UK TeachMeet (at BETT in London), and had my gut instinct feeling confirmed – this round table ground-up PD was an positive force. At that time I was volunteering on the committee organising the 2009 annual conference for the Computers in Education Society of Ireland (CESI). Up until this time, it had been a two day weekend conference, with permission for schools to release teachers to attend on the Friday. And then – swoosh – down came the Austerity Guillotine and sliced off our Friday. We had one meeting's notice to turn our two day affair into one day. So I suggested we try one of these TeachMeets on the Friday night. CESI Chair, Conor Galvin, and Conference Chair, Tom Kendall, both supported the idea, and that was that. In true TeachMeet fashion, the call went out and those who 'got it' immediately stepped up. 60 of us packed into a small room in the Maldron Hotel in Tallaght – we had to spill into to corridors and foyer for the Soap Box breakouts – and had a memorable evening. (So memorable that if you believed everyone who said they were there, it'd be closer to 600). A quick check on Twitter would show that many folk joined up to said social medium that same night thanks to John Heffernan's *q ~!@^&!* expo of using a Twitter back channel – we were joined online by many from across Ireland and the UK, as we learned the power of a hashtag driven timeline and watched as #cesimeet 'trended'. (In this pre-hipster age, we thought that meant we were trendy. Or cool. Or whatever. But we were smitten and we joined up there and then.)

Myself as Bean a'Tí and Conor Galvin as Fear a'Tí had worked together before at education events, but we

knew this was different. The atmosphere was electric and energising. The people in the room were a cross section of Irish education – all levels and sectors of formal and informal education were represented. Everyone who was there that night has become a ‘frequent flier’, and many have in turn organised TeachMeets in other venues. Current recorded count just topped 80 Teachmeet from over 50 volunteer organisers. And so, when we rant and rave about the ‘Powers That Were’ dropping the country on the floor and smashing it in smithereens way back in the late noughties, let’s be reminded about the ill wind that helped take TeachMeet across the Irish Sea.



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