A Message from the Chair of the Fellowship:
As a young lad, I can remember being at a circus and watching in amazement as rows of plates were being kept spinning. Who can spin plates? Who likes to keep as many plates spinning at the same time as possible? There is an element of this happening almost every day by our trusted Executive Group. Janni Nicol, Jane and Kevin Avison. They work tirelessly, with dedication and relentless energy. On behalf of the SWSF, thank you dear Executive Group. The good news is that help is on the way. SWSF trustees are hoping for new faces to be seen within the EG very soon.

I regularly travel by train and on the underground and hear that familiar voice saying - ‘mind the gap’. It is more than a year since there were adverts put out about a conference called ‘Mind the Gap.’ Much of the day was Kevin Avison’s work, his voice reminding schools of their obligations. The SWSF have had to put considerable recourses into helping schools meet the criteria for inspections. This is often a thankless task and often only helps the school meet the grade and not in surpassing them with the aims, objectives and high standards of Steiner Waldorf Education. The Mind the Gap conference was put in place to help schools be prepared for upcoming inspections. What is good about the results of most inspections is that the learning and teaching shines out. Let us keep that in mind at all times. Pupils and teachers can shine.

Another piece of SWSF work that has been in the making is the ACTS project, Acknowledging Creative Thinking Skills. Elaine Holt with the SWSF and many dedicated teachers across Finland, Denmark, Norway and the UK, together with the Crossfields Institute have been writing courses for Steiner Waldorf upper schools or indeed any school to use as a recognised qualification. When this new qualification has been tried and tested it is hoped that it will have a similar value to other more familiar school leaver qualifications but founded on the principles, aims and objectives of Steiner Waldorf Education. Our pupils are known for their emotional and academic intelligence and with this project creative thinking skills will be demonstrable. The ACTS qualification will complement the NZCSE that some schools have adopted.

The buzz word must become Waldorf100. There is so much one could say about the fact that this education has grown, survived and prospered over the last 100 years. We must now look to the next 100 years and find new ways to develop the education with vigour and new-found energy. There are ideas and projects worldwide that are working towards a 2019 celebration. Please do visit the website for useful articles and information. See website here

Our recent Association meeting concentrated on Creativity. Colleagues had lively discussions and ideas around the themes of curriculum, assessment and quality assurance. The fruits of this work will help form our future activity. The association meetings are a way of bringing all the schools together to disseminate and share practice and thoughts. The four academies work closely within the association.

On behalf of the SWSF I wish everyone a wonderful summer break gathering new energy and thoughts for the next session.

Nick Brett

At Michael Hall we are planning to commence our study of "Foundations of Human Experience" next academic year in College, Child studies are on-going in all 3 faculties following some excellent sessions with Christof Weichert, we are developing a Bees curriculum with input from the Waldorf 100 steering group and an American school, the colleagues who work with our Alumni have become very active with Waldorf 100, as have our Upper School Art teachers who are working on an artistic programme involving bees.
It would be wonderful to begin to share ideas and initiatives with our sister schools and plan for a Festival/Festivals together in 2019. Communication is key!

**In July Norwich’s founding class will be leaving...**

Our vision of a school that would provide a Steiner education for all of the compulsory school years was first voiced at a school founding meeting in 2003. Since the school (3 pupils in a room in a church hall) opened in 2005 we have aimed to provide an education that would enable pupils to develop into balanced, well-rounded and mature young adults, able to pursue their own futures and destinies with confidence and self-belief. And that is exactly what we are seeing this year as our founding class, including 2 of the original 3 pupils, leaves us to set off on next stage of their journeys at age 18/19.

As one of the first UK Steiner Schools to offer the then called ‘Steiner School Certificate’ we have been able to teach the Steiner curriculum throughout the whole school, and to provide a level 3 qualification to those pupils choosing to take it.

We have found that this has enabled us to to help our students to meet and work through adolescence in a healthy way, giving them sufficient time to find resonance and direction for their next step in life while providing a balance for the extremes of emotion and ideas that they have experienced and between their inner worlds and the outer world.

The subject specific material in the upper school curriculum has supported and encouraged the students’ emergent intellect and moral faculty so that they have developed the ability to make independent judgements about themselves and the world, and their place in that world. Artistic work, group work, project based and practical activities and subjects have been used to engage the intellect and the social/emotional life of each student, helping them to find insight, inspiration and meaning in themselves and the world in which they live.

The breadth, depth, diversity and richness of a purely Stein upper school curriculum has equipped our students to understand the world that they are moving towards, and they take with them a love of learning nurtured through allowing unpressured time to absorb, reflect on and re-visit knowledge, as well as practical and transferable skills that will help them along their way.

They have studied, played, performed, and grown together, sat NZCSE exams, completed UCAS applications, attended interviews and auditions, revealed themselves to the wider world with trepidation and with confidence. All those who have applied for university courses (in computer science, music, computer graphics, and photography) have received offers of places and other students will be going on to do apprenticeships, foundation courses or further education courses in law, literature, American studies, drama, education studies. It has been a privilege for us to work with these pupils and we are so proud of them all.

**South Devon Steiner School launches ground-breaking college and qualification**

A new education college opens on Saturday 13 May 2017 in Dartington, Devon offering independent schooling for 16-19 year olds, based on the Steiner curriculum and a new University recognised Steiner qualification.

South Devon Steiner College extends Steiner schooling from three to 19 at the South Devon Steiner School and provides an alternative route to University education based on Steiner teaching and the new NZ Certificate of Steiner Education.

Kaycee Fordham, head of admissions, South Devon Steiner School, said: ‘The South Devon Steiner College will carefully balance academic, artistic, and practical activities to stimulate the imagination and prepare students for life. ‘Steiner education seeks to engage the whole student, developing well-rounded individuals with the ability to solve problems creatively and we are delighted that we can extend our offering to 16-19 year olds, alongside a clear route to University.’ The NZ Certificate of Steiner Education was first developed in New Zealand and offers a rigorous alternative to GCSEs or A levels for Steiner students as a Level 3 qualification.

Students benefit from extensive choice across disciplines including Humanities, Arts & Crafts, Sciences and Physical Education and will be assessed from Class 10 (16 years) against the new NZ Certificate of Steiner Education framework; they will be able to apply through UCAS to any UK and many international Universities.

Dr Phil Wright, Geography and Maths teacher, South Devon Steiner College, said: ‘South Devon Steiner College has a range of highly experienced teachers who are all experts in their chosen fields. ‘A key element of our education is learning through practical experience and engagement with nature, which encourages...
students to develop an awareness of ecology and sustainability. If students learn in this way then it is always more meaningful. ‘We are deeply committed to the new Steiner college and look forward to taking students on a journey of academic achievement and self-discovery while stretching their imagination and developing new perspectives.’

The South Devon Steiner College will have 80 places available for students with approximately 32 assisted places and five openings for international students. 13 teachers make up the college faculty, many with extensive Steiner teaching experience from across the world and advanced degrees including PHDs.

Fordham added: ‘Students will learn from experts in their fields who encourage intellectual flexibility, independent judgment and moral courage to develop resilient, creative and responsible human beings who lead lives of purpose and direction. None of us can predict what information our children will need to know twenty years from now, but we do know that to be successful they will need the ability to adapt as creative thinkers and problem-solvers. Our college will encourage young people to develop the highest human capacities and become citizens of the world.

Farewell Botton School

Botton Village School entering a new and uncertain phase of its life. Redundancy notices have been issued to staff, and when the children leave for summer holidays on 14th July the doors will close for the last time on a school that has provided Waldorf education in the North East of England since 1960.

The school developed as a result of the wish of Botton Camphill Community co-workers to provide a Waldorf education for their children and, throughout its 57 year existence, it was generously supported and sustained culturally, socially and financially by those co-workers. In the 1970’s it began accepting pupils from the wider locality and, since then, children from outside the Village typically made up 50-70% of the school’s population. Housed in excellent, purpose-built accommodation in a beautiful rural setting and able to draw upon the rich cultural life of a cosmopolitan community (also home to the Camphill Eurythmy School,) the school attracted new families to settle in the surrounding area. The bedrock of Camphill financial support permitted the development of a needs-based financial contribution system making the school genuinely open to all. Despite its small size the school prided itself on providing the full Waldorf curriculum and 2013 inspectors noted the Camphill connection allowed pupils to develop a good awareness of other people, including those with disabilities.

What went wrong? Basically the recent protracted dispute between CVT and Village co-workers altered the fabric of Village life. Supportive families left and, above all, the school’s main income stream was greatly diminished.

But perhaps not all is lost. The kindergarten is set to continue under a new name and registration, perhaps with an associated Class One. CVT is allowing rent-free use of the present building for one more year. There is an incipient flexi-learning initiative for older children – see below. A new Esk Valley Camphill Community is striving to co-exist with CVT.

Michael Drake

Pioneering at Sixty: Botton School reinvents itself

The basic premise for the future is that children will become ‘Home Educated’. The Eskdale Trust (our charity) will provide ‘flexi-learning’ (under the name Moorland Waldorf Initiative’). This will comprise four mornings and one afternoon a week. Parents will then seek to create home school groups, and perhaps a Waldorf-inspired Forest School to make up a full timetable for our children.

Although this initiative will begin in September on a modest scale, it is our hope that over time it can prove itself, and begin to attract parents looking for exciting new models of learning.

Mask, Making, Using & Performing: Book Review

Michael Chase (Hawthorne Press, 2017)

This is a book that lives up to its title. The author’s experience, as actor, maker and workshop facilitator shines through in a practical and inspiring account of the subject in drama, drama therapy and groupwork. The author’s experience is not solely artistic, although there is no lack of art in these pages. The
book also draws from Michael Chase’s innovative drama therapy in the high security part of our penal system. It is a testament to his enthusiasm and as well as commitment. After a thumb-nail sketch setting out the use of masks in cultural history, the book goes on to a clear explanation of mask-making & the depiction of human types using colour as well as gesture. This is the organising heart of Mask, which takes Rudolf Steiner’s indications on the four temperaments as its point of departure, using these as active ingredient rather than mere notion or theory. As set out here, mask-making and design provides a hands-on encounter with temperamental qualities so that teachers, or anyone wanting to understand or gain a fresh insight into this aspect of personality, will be able to discover the temperaments anew, practically and directly. With mask in place, the author then provides methods of improvisation for working with them. The techniques described by the author are ones that could be readily incorporated into the classroom and I would recommend it to any teacher thinking of using these in their drama work. However, a word of caution is needed: acting with a mask may seem to be the answer for classes that are unusually self-conscious or unwilling to reach out of themselves through drama. This can be a mistake. Unless well-prepared through movement, improvisation and games, a mask can serve as a guise behind which pupils retire. In fact, wearing a mask calls on the wearer to “fill” it and project through it, something that demands a certain confidence & maturity in itself. Mask Making, Using and Performing is an impressive & helpful addition to a teacher’s toolkit. It is highly recommended.

Kevin Avison

Emergency Pedagogy following London Terrorist Attacks

On Thursday March 30th, a conference ‘Emergency Pedagogy and Seminar for Teachers and Parents was held at Steiner House. It was offered by Freunde der Erziehungskunst (Friends of Waldorf Education) in response to the traumatic Westminster terrorist attack, which included the stabbing of PC Palmer. The event was hosted by the SWSF.

The emergency pedagogic team is based in Karlsruhe, Germany and it travels around the world to carry out educational interventions with distraught children and adolescents wherever there is a need. The team has taken trauma pedagogy to many countries. During 2013-2014, in Kurdistan, this experienced team was asked to educate teachers on behalf of UNICEF.

Participants were told that, just as children and adolescents need treatment for physical injury, during a crisis, interventions are also needed to effect recovery of psychological damage. Psychological wounds, often entirely invisible to the eye, are deep, and if not addressed will almost certainly have devastating consequences for an individual’s future. One of the most appalling consequences of not working through a trauma is that victims who have been unable to process what they have witnessed are vulnerable to reproducing similar behaviour themselves later.

During the conference, the need for Trauma Pedagogy was made real by the showing of a series of harrowing drawings created by children in disaster areas and war zones. They bore witness to the devastation, death, and horror, which the young people had witnessed. Many of the images showed landscapes reduced to rubble, in which nothing was alive. Drawings of bodies lay where they had fallen. They indicated that without help, the images would remain active in the interior landscapes of the children and young people who had witnessed these events.

Attendees participated in some of the methods the programme employs. The aim of Waldorf Emergency Pedagogy is to heal the four bodies: physical, etheric, astral and ego. Participants were moved to discover that not only is Waldorf pedagogy effective in the peaceful surroundings of a Waldorf Classroom but also plays its part in times of utter crisis in children’s lives. Exercises, artistic experiences, social games etc. provide emergency healing for the four human bodies and mitigate potential life-long trauma. The physical body needs to become a safe space to inhabit again; the etheric needs to re-establish its regular rhythms as a buffer against shock – a racing heart makes a person feel unsafe – the astral/soul body needs a safe soul space to be (Viktor Frankl was cited here) and the ego needs to find or rediscover meaning and value in life and to restore equilibrium.

The traumatised child/young person bears destructive images, which need to be transformed by healing images, to create new neural networks and patterns. Repetition plays a role here. Bernd Ruff, who gave the lectures, explained that the trauma pedagogue’s task is to, ‘...mend what is broken, restore what is destroyed and
to create a harmonious environment to be mirrored back into the souls of children.’

The *Trauma Pedagogy Guidelines* booklet includes a relevant quotation from Steek-Fisher:

‘In many cases, the traumatic experience results in feelings of helplessness and in a shock to one’s self-perception and understanding of the world. If this is not promptly dealt with, a trauma can have a negative impact upon a person’s further mental development and lead to an acute stress reaction, post-traumatic stress disorder, adjustment disorder, or to the development of neurotic disorders.’ (Streek-Fisher, p.5, 2006)

This work is for the world’s children and adolescents and it needs our support. It was a deeply important conference and were it to be offered again, I hope that Steiner House will be filled to capacity.

Many thanks to Bernd and his team, and to Michael Williams and Gabrielle for their excellent skills in translation.

see emergency pedagogy website here

Streek-Fisher (2006) Trauma Pedagogy, in *Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiner*  

Sally Jenkinson

The following day we heard an intimate description of real events happening in Kindergarten: a little girl nursing a hot water bottle wrapped in a blanket, other children looking on in disbelief and criticising. "What is she doing? That's not a baby!" Few children today have the fortune to have their imaginations fed on the fertile soil of mud, sand and everyday objects; we all know that they are seeped instead with the less life giving images of digital devices. Even children lucky enough to be protected from the devices themselves, drink up images of their parents pouring over them. The imitative effect now established scientifically through the discovery of mirror neurones as explained to us at the conference by Sarah Rees. Our overarching aim in kindergarten is to nurture a child's senses of touch, life, movement and balance and the digital world holds no place in that nurturing. Senses not nurtured in early childhood can lead to a feeling of fragmentation. Kindergarten teachers are adept at recognising and addressing early indications of trauma, but not all children attend kindergarten.

An alarming description of the difficulties faced by children, all in one class 8, was given that evening, mainly children who did not all attend Kindergarten. They give a picture perhaps of what today's young people are dealing with before they become adults. Every generation has its challenges but for those of us involved in education; teachers and parents, it is necessary to know what challenges we are increasingly

National Children’s Day 2017 (14th May)

This wonderful event was celebrated by many of our nurseries and schools throughout England. Some used it to highlight what their school offers by holding open days in the garden and exhibitions in the school, others celebrated by organising arts and crafts in the park, or dancing around the maypole, or in the case of some London schools, having a fayre which included all of the above for the local communities.

The St Michael Steiner School (Photo above) welcomed children and families from the local area to attend its Summer Festival.

The Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship press agency Liquid Media, who support our schools with press statements and contacts for local newspaper coverage proved very helpful to all those who contacted them, and we look forward to the events of 2018!  

Janni Nicol

Land Based Learning at the Easter Conference

The conference was opened by Michaela Göckler (Former head of The Medical Section in the Goetheanum) who also led a workshop on child development. Michaela began the conference by identifying the biggest challenges to education in our age - over administration and digitalisation. These have an impact on how we educate children today and digitalisation, both in my own and colleague’s experiences, can be similar to childhood trauma.
facing today. Children who have come from Kindergarten are, of course, not precluded from experiencing traumatic events but it is hoped that they will have better resources to deal with such difficulties.

We are without doubt educating our share of traumatised children and children with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in Waldorf Schools. We also happen to be on the eve of celebrating 100 years of Waldorf Education, an opportunity for us to celebrate our work but also, as Rudolf Steiner suggested we would need to ask: what next?

Jo Clark developed the land based learning curriculum in The South Devon Steiner School. He went on to teach various groups of children at Embercombe, a community in Devon and he led the land based learning workshop at the conference. His workshop, his speech, my own experiences over the years and conversations I had at the conference, have led me to believe that more contact with nature and meaningful work are a way forward in overcoming trauma in children. Michaela Glockler told us that Eurythmy was becoming harder and harder to teach, a fact confirmed by Eurythmists I have spoken to. She told us the children were not able to open up enough to the truth, beauty and goodness that Eurythmy has to offer. Perhaps they do not feel safe enough within to open themselves up? I spoke with Michaela and she told me the antidote was contact with nature. Children will experience truth, beauty and goodness in nature.

Over the years I have encountered resistance and obstacles to developing an outdoor curriculum and I can see that it is not always easy for some of the following reasons:

- Space: Inner city schools do not always have a green space. The school I work in lives in the middle of an industrial estate and has a yard for the children to play in.
- It is not so easy to "hold" a group of children outdoors; our conventional attitudes to teaching are challenged and in these days of possible legal implications teachers can shy away from taking risks.
- Risk assessments have to be written.
- Accidents happen.
- Accident reports have to be written.

Nevertheless, the benefits are so manifold that I believe we need to think creatively to overcome these difficulties and begin to actively engage with children in more outdoor learning; the antidote to modern life. I very much hope that the Waldorf movement can indeed celebrate its significant achievements so far and at the same time, turn an eye towards the future taking into account the children of our 21st century society and further develop the out-door curriculum to meet the needs of developing children that are different now, even from ten years ago.

Thank you to Steiner Academy Hereford for hosting the conference, there were, of course, many other interesting and worthwhile workshops and conversations that are not reviewed here!

Helen Kinsey

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

Preparing for Class 1 will be held on 21-23rd July 2017 at Michael Hall and will be run by David Smith and Kevin Avison.

National Early Childhood Conference on Sleep with Louise deForest will be held on 30th September 2017 at Kings Langley

Acknowledging Creative Thinking Skills: Education for the Future will be held on 23-26th October 2017 at Michael Hall

Details of our workshops and conferences can be found here