**BOOK REVIEW: Creative Play for your Baby**

This lovely book about toy making... for babies of 3 months to 2 years is both child and adult friendly, full of simple and beautiful playthings, which can... make happily. What a gift for the child: something a loved one has formed and shaped by hand. The toys are made to last and satisfy every little one; parents will experience their depth of concentration and contemplation. Pictures are... the child's rights to a healthy childhood. They give helpful thoughts and advice throughout, such as ‘Our years of education and experience can be a barrier that forecloses the simple joys of life that are able to rejuvenate and refresh us.’

The reader is led into the simple, unadorned small world of the little child where play is central. ‘Play is a wholly absorbing activity from which logic, social skills, memory, fulfillment and values are derived. It is a... by the simple joys of life that are able to rejuvenate and refresh us.’

A further series is planned for this year, starting Sunday 15 March with the German baroque consort Pantaguel at 3pm (The New’s first afternoon concert). The Sunday morning concerts conclude on 20 April with the Sarabande Consort.

For more information, see www.thenave.org or contact TOM HOPE to.m.hope@thenave.org

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**SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT TALKS**

On a cold October evening, in the cathedral-like, vaulted space that is Committee Room 1 of the Scottish Parliament, Christopher Clouder gave a talk to MSPs and researchers from five Scottish political parties about the Steiner Waldorf approach to education and how it might inform education in a modern Scotland. His talk gave a varied and interesting insight into issues such as school starting age, testing, status of teachers and the nearest alternative of educational approaches such as reading and writing, which they acknowledge comes later in Steiner schools. We await a response from the Minister.

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**THE GODERICH SCHOOL**

The Goderich School now has close contacts in many Sierra Leonean government departments through the integrity and effectiveness of its work.

Shannon has been asked as a consultant to draw up the national guidelines for child abuse (in association with the British Council). His close association with the head of the civil service is also opening many doors. He also has the means now to accredit a Waldorf training course for West Africa. Dr Freunde and friends in Britain and America are funding a permanent site on which to house it, along with the new school and a small farm to help feed the children.

During my recent visit, the wife of the Deputy President of Liberia phoned to ask Shanoe’s advice about setting up a Waldorf School in Liberia. She had already funded a state-of-the-art school for war-affected children, but it had failed. She is now looking towards Waldorf Education to heal hearts in a way that the grandest buildings cannot.

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**STEINER WALDORF EARLY CHILDHOOD AND THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS)**

Rebuttions continue between the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) regarding the incompatibility of some of the learning and development (EYFS) requirements with the Steiner approach. These requirements are part of the EYFS, which becomes law in September this year for ALL early childhood centres (Birth – 5 years). As you may know, some parents of Wynstones Steiner School have taken the initiative to write to the DCSF which has helped to bring more focus to the issues. As a result of their letter to the DCSF which has helped to bring requirements for all Steiner settings in a Steiner School have taken the initiative to

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**T H E G O D E R I C H S C H O O L, S I E R R A L E O N E**

A t the SWSF AGM last autumn, the Steiner educational relationship with the Goderich Waldorf School in Freetown, Sierra Leone, as our first international affiliate. Since 2001, a close working relationship has developed between the Ringwood Waldorf School and this indomitable little School in Freetown, which now cares for over 200 war-affected and ex-combatant children who are among the poorest in the World. The relationship began in 2001 when I first met Mr Shannoh Kandoh (a social worker, lecturer at Freetown University and Director of the Scheme) at the London Waldorf Teacher Training Seminar, on which I teach. He felt that Steiner Education was the best hope to ‘heal hearts’ in Sierra Leone. I was very impressed with the outstanding work that he and his colleagues were doing to help their community.

I arranged for Shannoh to visit the Ringwood Waldorf School and it was an instant success. RWS staff then arranged and funded a second social worker/teacher to visit for a year, and Alliance for Childhood sponsored him to attend the Kolioka Conference in S’Africa, which focused on teaching in post-conflict environments. Hence he was able to contribute his valuable experience. I visited the Goderich School in May ’06, and the British Council Reciprocal Visit Scheme has funded two more, highly successful visits. My last visit was in November ’07. It was dambushed at the scale of the task undertaken by the teachers of this brave little school.

Creating a proposal for the full British Council Global Partnership grant has allowed us to progress into a working relationship within curriculum subjects, developed out of a common understanding of the principles of Waldorf Education, the principles underpinning the British Council Global Schools Partnership, and the particular needs and aspirations of each school. From this starting point we identified areas of the curriculum that could include projects that are meaningful and useful to the children concerned, and could be sustained into future years as part of the ‘tradition’ of particular year groups within the schools. The Goderich School now has close contacts in many Sierra Leonean government departments through the integrity and effectiveness of its work.

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**SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT TALKS**

Wenn & What of early childhood make... more beautifully illuminated. The chapters: ‘Introduction’, ‘Care’, ‘Awareness’, ‘Action’ and ‘Wonder’ lead the reader through subjects such as imitation, sensory development, environment, family life, discovery and rhythmic play as the book moves from one playing to another. Respect, caring and nurturing, the joys and worth of parenting and the importance of building relationships early in life are given worthy space. ‘Caring, respect, caring and contentedness. Pictures in colour of children and adults are instantly recognisable and easy-to-follow instructions.’

This book is verily a basket of treasures in itself—such as ‘Our years of education and experience can be a barrier that forecloses the simple joys of life that are able to rejuvenate and refresh us.’

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SWSF Easter Conference

As you will be aware from the Autumn newsletter the Ringwood Waldorf School has been very busy preparing for the SWSF Easter Conference which will take place from the 8th April 2008. The subject will be 'The Twelve Senses and the Modern Child'.

There promises to be a very special event. We hope to see as many of you there as possible. Programmes available from the SWSF office (info@swsf.org.uk).

ELAINE HOLT - RINGWOOD WALDORF SCHOOL

SWSF Job Vacancy

The Steiner Waldorf Schools’ Fellowship is looking for someone with vision, enthusiasm and initiative to join us in supporting the Development of Steiner Waldorf education in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

The successful candidate will have a good understanding of Steiner Waldorf education and PR experience. She/he will have a firm grasp of contemporary educational issues and a track record that demonstrates an ability to work within and underpin the ethos and principles of Waldorf education. She/he will be self-motivated and able to work autonomously on an existing budget. Verbal and written communication skills will be essential and the post assumes a competent level of computer literacy and data management efficiency. The job is initially part-time and will be based in London.

If you would like to discuss this opportunity further, please email clls@yescomputers.co.uk

For an application pack email j.avison@yescomputers.co.uk

TREVOR MEMPAM - SWSF

STEPPE OUT - STEINER CONFERENCES IN SWITZERLAND

In a very recent letter from the Minister, he says: ‘My officials have had some time in discussing this proposal with the generators and the bilington local authority, about the proposal that St Paul’s Steiner School might be allowed to move into the current site. I am now writing to you let know the decision we have taken on this matter in the light of the position previously outlined by the Government.

The Government believes it is right in principle to consider proposals for independent schools to join the maintained sector, but that this could not be a route to fund the installation of the diversity of that sector and to enhance the choice available to parents. However, in the case of St Paul’s I understand that a number of serious issues have emerged which throw into question the viability of the proposal. These include the premises of the existing school, which would need substantial improvement. The indications are that this would make it very expensive for public agencies to take over the site. It is clear that the proposal simply represents a move to avoid the cost of adapting the site for independent school education.

I have therefore decided that it is not good news for our city Steiner schools. 2006 have not overcome this barrier after all - of it at least, it would seem that all the reforms and the Education and Inspection Act 2006 have not overcome this barrier after all - not good news for our city Steiner schools.

To find out more about our school, make a donation or offer help, please contact us on info@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk or visit our website: www.cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk

SONIA TRICKLEY - PARSON, CAMBRIDGE STEINER SCHOOL

Inadequate premises prevent St Paul’s becoming state funded...

THE WYNSTONES HALL RISES

A med with hammers and saws, a host of volunteers from the school community and Europe converged on Wystone during last summer. For three weeks those parents, teachers, pupils and friends, labouring through blazing sunshine and some torrential downpours, managed to construct the wooden structure of the new hall. For the first week the entire upper school were on site hammering and sawing away. Children’s learning workshops, helped to cut out the timber supports and nail together the vast belt framework. There were pupil representatives from Waldorf schools across Europe and the language differences did not seem to hinder the shared enthusiasm and smooth co-operation. The structure was then erected using heavy equipment, to complete the first phase of what must be one of the biggest self build projects ever attempted by a Steiner school in the UK.

This unique event was the culmination of a five year period of fundraising, involving almost everyone connected to the school. To date £277,000 has been raised directly via the school community though donations, a borrowing community and a variety of fundraising events, including two sponsored bike rides to Paris and a musical extravaganza in which all Berthouven’s symphonies were played one after another by a professional orchestra.

Wynstones is well known, as are many Steiner Schools, for high standards achieved in the performing arts. This new hall is needed urgently to provide a place where the entire school can meet, where indoor sports can be played and music, Eurythmy and plays can be performed. The structure of the hall is complete and the roof is on and the building is secured against the weather, but much still remains to be done. To continue the building we need to raise another £131,000, so after a short period of celebration no one at Wystone will be resting on their laurels.

GUY PINNINGTON - NEW HALL MANDATE, WYNSTONES SCHOOL

The Windmill School is an old special needs school in a small village just outside Cambridge. It is a light, contemporary building with enough room for the school to grow up to class 8 and beyond. There is a hall, kitchens and a large courtyard in the centre of the school which children can busily converting into a kitchen garden. The on-site hydrotherapy pool will be run by Mencap and we are currently negotiating a convenient time for the children to swim. Each classroom is generous in size and each has access to a small piece of private outside space. The Kindergartens and classes 1 and 2 overlook the beautiful garden, which, in turn, overlooks fields. We have particularly fortunate to inherit a wooden crocodile which was within an existing school and serving as an incentive to arrive early at school (spaces are limited on the roundabout).

There is, of course, much work still to be done on the building. November, December and the Christmas holidays brought us all together to sand, clean and paint the new classrooms and do the many tasks required to make the building habitable. There are still a mountain of tasks that need to be undertaken but we feel confident that the next few years will see the school swell in numbers and the buildings and gardens grow in beauty! At this time of great fortune for us, our hearts and thoughts go out to everyone who has helped us to achieve this situation for our children.

WINDMILL SCHOOL - CAMBRIDGE STEINER SCHOOL – FINALLY THERE!

The first day of the New Year was particularly joyful at the Cambridge Steiner School as we were finally able to open the doors to our first permanent site. Children, parents and teachers came together in a simple ceremony in the hall, to mark this poignant moment in our history. As I looked around at the faces in the room, it was not hard to feel a great swelling of emotion as I thought about how all of these people, and a great many more besides had come together to bring about this very moment.

The new class, the new one teacher, who has been involved with the project since its inception, likened our journey to this site to that of the three kings following a star.

Anyone who has been involved in the early stages of setting up a Steiner School will know what a hard journey this can be. It brings together an eccentric diversity of visionsaries and pragmatists, optimists and critics, stalwart supporters and spontaneous benefactors, all united by the single desire to bring a Steiner School into their community. In a world where we often feel overwhelmed and dis-empowered in our lives by huge global forces, how extraordinary it is to be part of a project where you can see the dreams and generosity and impact of individuals.

After years spent in nomadic situations in church halls, corners of a shops and a disused nursery it is with joy and gratitude in our hearts that we watch our children climbing and running in a large enclosed garden and then settling down to their schoolwork in the warmth and comfort of a spacious classroom.

For those of you who are currently engaged in looking for a school site, it might be encouraging for you to hear how quickly we changed our situation changed from crisis to hope. This time last year, things felt particularly bleak. We had just been out on the site that we now inhabit, there was a great feeling of desperation and exhaustion. It was years in a cramped, cold, damp and dreary church hall, faith in the project was ebbing. Perhaps it was when we met a choleric butcher who was very busy converting into a kitchen garden. The on-site hydrotherapy pool will be run by Mencap and we are currently negotiating a convenient time for the children to swim. Each classroom is generous in size and each has access to a small piece of private outside space. The Kindergartens and classes 1 and 2 overlook the beautiful garden, which, in turn, overlooks fields. We have particularly fortunate to inherit a wooden crocodile which was within an existing school and serving as an incentive to arrive early at school (spaces are limited on the roundabout).

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