We shared stories of success, growth and increased governmental support.

One such story was how the Norwegian Parents Association has been a major influence in affecting a change of educational law. As we listened to the story, it became apparent that one of the main reasons for their success was due to the Teachers Association having cultivated an ongoing relationship with politicians, enabling and cultivating a climate of trust, to such an extent that the teachers have been asked to consult on several issues.

I believe this is something we all must take to heart if we wish to strengthen the Steiner Waldorf presence in our respective countries. Politicians make the laws and the more they know and understand Steiner Waldorf pedagogy the more supportive they will be. Another lesson the Norwegians shared was the fact that the politicians respect parents’ point of view more so than the teachers. It makes sense when you think about it and clarifies once more how important parents are for the continuing successful existence and growth of the Steiner Waldorf schools.

Sadly, there were also stories from some countries of the financial crisis threatening the Steiner Waldorf schools, non-supportive governments as well as lack of cooperation between schools.

Örjan Reistro, our representative from the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education (ECSEW), suggested that parents should make a contribution to the creation of a formal European Waldorf Steiner Parents Association. In discussing this idea, we decided for now to remain an open forum for networking, however maybe take it up again at next year’s meeting. Perhaps, as one participant pointed out, when the need is really there, the parents of all countries will rise in strength together.

One of the most important things we learned from each other was that perhaps not the same model would be appropriate or even applicable in all situations. Differences between Steiner Waldorf schools ignite a creative dynamic that none of us wish to see compromised by a rush towards uniformity. The same model would be appropriate or even applicable in all situations. Differences between Steiner Waldorf schools ignite a creative dynamic that none of us wish to see compromised by a rush towards uniformity.

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New school planned for West Yorkshire

The town of Healden Bridge, and the Calder Valley in which it nestles, has for many years been home to a Steiner Kindergarten, as well as parent and child groups for 0-3s. Following our recent move and now purchase of larger premises, we will at last be able to grow from a kindergarten into a school. Our new home is an old Sunday School in the nearby village of Cragg Vale, set within the grounds of the local parish church, St. John in the Wilderness, and surrounded by spectacularly beautiful countryside. We currently have two kindergartens flourishing alongside our parent and child work. During the coming year we will be undertaking further renovation and refurbishment work to the building before welcoming our first Class I in September 2011. From there we shall continue the process of creating a lower school.

CALDER VALLEY STEINER EDUCATION
www.healdensteiner.com

BOTTON SCHOOL CELEBRATES 50 YEARS – Facing a Paradox?

As we move with our children through the richness of autumn into the reflective spirit of winter, we at Cambridge Steiner School are creating a lower school. There we shall continue the process of our first Class I in September 2011. From this we have moved into the area, specifically by the school. In 1960, the eight original original pupils were educated in the sitting room of one of the Village houses. Then for a time the school was housed in wooden huts where teachers had to begin the day by lighting wood-burning stoves. The present splendid buildings date from 1990 and were further added to in 2005. Pupil numbers reached a peak of about a hundred in the early nineties. When Martyn Rawson and Andrew Dyer were employed to pioneer an upper school project, which also involved the York School. Despite a bold curriculum vision the project was sustained for only one year. Since then pupil numbers have gently settled back, with a higher proportion of pupils now living outside the Camphill Village.

Visiting other areas, I am sometimes aware of waiting lists, families struggling to afford Waldorf education, schools seeking buildings that might more adequately contain pupil numbers. Then I return to fifty-year-old Botton School – beautiful rural setting, ‘good’ inspection rating, support from Camphill, well staffed, a very affordable contributions system, excellent buildings – relatively few pupils.

BOTTON VILLAGE SCHOOL

CHANGE AND CONSOLIDATION – at Cambridge Steiner School

As we move with our children through the richness of autumn into the reflective spirit of winter, we at Cambridge Steiner School are gradually feeling a sense of strength and consolidation settling through the school after a busy period of change.

The hard work of teachers, parents, trustees and our new administrative staff have seen our school turn around. New (full) sister and child groups and the Buttercups Little Kindergarten are opening their welcoming arms to the youngest of our children and another kindergarten is planned. New workshops and singing groups have also sprung from our energised community as well as new ideas.

One of these initiatives was the Woodland Kindergarten project. Last September, Elderflower Kindergarten began spending two days each week in our local Nature Reserve. As teacher Beate Guertler-Green says, "The magic of the woodlands and meadows really inspires the children’s imaginative and creative play. We see growing confidence and a stronger sense of cooperative community spirit."

Cooking soup over fire, making earth candles, exploring and being absorbed by nature has helped children and teachers develop a sustained fascination for the world which changes around us. This year more of our kindergartens are sharing in this natural experience. The last twelve months has also seen our school welcome new teachers from abroad, including Holland, Australia and the United States, who bring their knowledge of Waldorf education from around the world to benefit our school. The international feel of our teaching faculty reflects the diversity of our community of families in and around Cambridge.

The support our school has found over the past twelve months has been amazing and we would like to thank everyone who has been involved. May all our new initiatives take root and flourish!

HELEN EAST
CAMBRIDGE STEINER SCHOOL

Picture (left): Kindergarten children at creative play

CYCLING AT SOUTH DEVON STEINER SCHOOL

Cycling is becoming a more consistent part of our school curriculum and is slowly seeping by osmosis into the school community. Much of this is down to Andrew Holdstock’s work over the years. Natasha and I have also qualified as coaches and this article is an attempt to contextualise what we have developed so far and to see how it fits into the Waldorf movement curriculum.

We start in Class 5. This is the classic time of the so-called ‘cycling proficiency’, which many of us did in our own school days. For those who wish to deepen their skill as well as including cycling to the gym regularly. Class 9 will do extra sessions to prepare to cycle 100 km to their fire and earth main lesson in Brittany. Class 10 also cycle to their surveying main lesson.

Around Class 8 and above the students begin adolescence proper and with the journey into puberty comes a new relation to gravity. This means becoming longer limbed and heavier and taking hold of one’s own weight is an important theme in the movement curriculum. This is exemplified by doing somersaults in Class 8 gymnastics. To grasp one’s own body at this age is necessary and taking a journey on a bicycle for a useful purpose is a worthwhile way of practising this. With this also comes a greater degree of independent decision making. Having trained the students thus far we give them opportunities to make sensible and safe decisions on the road.

Our hope is that our work will help the students to develop life skills, which they can use in the future. Our thanks go out to everyone who has supported cycling at our school!!!

KEN POWER
WYNSTONES SCHOOL

LANDS END TO JOHN O’GROATS – Bike ride in aid of Wystones’ New Hall and Macmillan Cancer Care

Huge congratulations to the Lands End to John O’Groats cyclists and their support team who, through sheer grit and determination, completed their epic 1000 mile route in just 2 weeks.

They went through months of specialist training to take part in a ride of this nature and the school community congratulates them on this extreme test of physical and mental ability to raise money for the New Hall and Macmillan.

Special mention must go to Kris McIowan for his dedication and resolve in organising this ride, and a big thank you to those people from outside the school who gave their time to provide support.

Well done!

KEN POWER
WYNSTONES SCHOOL

If you have any questions please contact us at the school (01803-897377, enquiries@steiner-schoolsouthdevon.org)