



Welcome to our Autumn 2017 newsletter.

New faces at the SWSF

We are pleased to welcome two new members to the executive group.



Kate Andrews joins the team working with Jane Avison in the Stourbridge office every Monday. Kate was first a parent the Hereford Waldorf School before joining the staff there in 2004. She worked alongside Niki Nakamura for many years before becoming the Administration Manager for the Hereford Steiner Academy in 2012. She will be providing support with the SWAN network and newsletters and is very much looking forward to the challenge.



Sam Greshoff is working with Janni Nicol one day a week helping to support Steiner Waldorf Early Years Settings. She studied Renaissance History at Warwick University between 1985 - 1988 and then went on to a career in the organisation of Medical Conferences working for the Royal Society of Medicine and Royal College of Physicians. Shortly after the birth of her first child she became involved in a small, local Steiner Parent and Child group that developed into Greenwich Steiner School. During this time she trained as a Kindergarten teacher and began organising Steiner Parent and Child groups. She moved to Canterbury in 2003 and also took on the role of Parent and Child Group Representative for the Steiner Waldorf Early Years Group (SWEYG). In 2006 she started working for Canterbury Steiner School as a Parent and Child Group Leader and then took over a Kindergarten in 2011.

TIME FOR ACTS -

October 23rd-25th at Michael Hall

Educating for a Creative Future

This was an excellent conference with a substantial attendance. Delegates represented a variety of different schools and organisations from the UK and

a number of other countries. This allowed for many different perspectives and demonstrated once again the wide ranging impact of the ACTS project, and its potential to inspire people, be they teacher, parent or student. The programme of activities was rich and varied with speakers representing contrasting traditions within and beyond Steiner education. A wide choice of workshops led by experienced professionals complemented the speakers, allowing opportunities for practical work, discussion and clarification of what exactly ACTS is...and might be. I was delighted to participate in this conference and I very much hope there will be others like it.

Alistair Pugh



Erasmus+

Inspiration, creativity and connection at ACTS

Progressive ACTS will bring Steiner education out of the dark ages and into the next century.

If you missed it, quite simply you missed out. The ACTS conference was a brilliantly curated conference for a cosy European and transatlantic crowd, with key talks and workshops from a broad range of presenters across a wide range of subjects. Topics included the future workplace, dialogic learning, working with troubled teenagers and the use of symbol in creative thinking amongst many others.

For those of you with your head buried in other matters – Acknowledging Creative Thinking Skills (or ACTS as it is more commonly known), is a rigorous, benchmarked way of accrediting what teachers have known anecdotally for nearly a century: Steiner education works.

For some of you, the topic of accreditation might seem dry. However, what was clear from the conference was that whilst a true delivery of Steiner education remains a dynamic exchange between teacher and pupil and is indeed an art, its output can nonetheless be scientifically measured. Conversation in the breaks and at mealtimes was equally enlivening at the conference – the quality of

reflection and expertise in the room was really quite remarkable.

After nearly a century of Steiner education being hidden away in the background, quite simply, ACTS needs you. We find ourselves in an increasingly regulatory and rules based climate that will continue to make increasing demands on our schools. Steiner himself said that we must educate children for the world we are living in today. If Steiner education is to not just survive but thrive into the next century, offering children hope for their education continuing long into the future, you need ACTS too.

Priya Mahtani

Beechtree Steiner Initiative

Here at Beechtree Steiner Initiative in Leeds we spent the summer undergoing a complete transformation- not only did we move into new premises but we also we started our first Class One and in doing so became a school, fulfilling one of our longest held aims.



The new premises are on the site of one of the biggest Sikh temples in Leeds and it feels very special to have become part of this community. When we first met together to discuss the lease, it was apparent that there was some important crossovers in both of our ethos' which formed the basis for our working together. Arriving each day to work next door to a temple reminds us of this shared ethos of respect for all, and of the five virtues of Sikhism: humility, love, contentment, compassion and truth. There is a Sikh image of a lotus flower whose leaves are open and pure as we all aim to be but which also floats in the water and reminds us that it is important to part of bigger communities without losing ourselves and our identities. It really does feel like not only a good place to co-exist but also place where we can thrive.

The move itself demanded a lot from the parents and staff who worked in the holidays tirelessly to ensure that the buildings and grounds were ready. This was no small ask, the outdoor area for example was initially just paving slabs, but the end result is space that is beautiful inside and outside and a solid

sense of shared purpose and community experienced by all who volunteered.

We have a reputation at Beechtree for being a strong team and some of this is because we have always shared our space innovatively between the kindergartens and the Parent and Child groups. Now we have more space and a Class One we plan to carry on working in this way in the new premises. It helps our etheric stay strong and gives the children a strong and clear example of working together and sharing to imitate. Our togetherness is re-enforced in the loveliest of ways by the acoustics of the indoor space which are such that as we each do our work we can hear the hum of each other and every now and again a song will float past.

We have planned our Opening Ceremony for the 20th October which is the last day of our first half term together. It feels apt to wait a while and then to breathe out and know that after six weeks, we really are truly open. We will plant a beech tree as part of this ceremony; this is the first time that there hasn't been a beech tree already waiting for us somewhere on our premises; yet being able to plant our own tree reflects our ability to shape our identity as a school as we want it to be and to really embed those roots for the future.

Cath Thurlow, Principal Manager.
www.leeds-steiner.org.uk

Steiner Academy Hereford

On 14th September staff members Maggie Setterfield and Stuart Askew and ex-pupil Charlie Braid were presented with the High Sheriff's Award at the West Mercia Police Commendation award ceremony at the Town Hall Hereford. The award was presented by the High Sheriff of Herefordshire the Rev Lady Jane Lisvane for outstanding service to the community.



An account was given of the events of 27th April when one of the pupils collapsed with a cardiac arrest during a games lesson. The students and staff were magnificent in running for help, calling the ambulance, carrying out CPR, collecting the

defibrillator, directing the ambulance onto the field and making space for the helicopter. Thankfully the pupil has made a full recovery after receiving a double coronary heart bypass and was actually back at school 2 weeks later! It was amazing that we had only just received the defibrillator the week before and the pupil was actually Stuart's son, Ethan

Stuart had received first aid training many times and most recently about a year ago. There is no doubt that this training, together with the help of trained colleagues saved a life that day. They were the only civilians in Herefordshire to receive an award and a copy of their certificates will shortly be hanging in Reception. Well done and thank you to them all.

Royal horticultural society honour green-fingered kindergarten

Laurel Farm Steiner Kindergarten, in Carlingcott, has been awarded the Level 3 School Gardening Award by the prestigious Royal Horticultural Society. The kindergarten, for children aged 3-7, is set across seven acres featuring fields and woodland for the children to explore.

As part of its award, Laurel Farm will receive the seeds for seasonal fruit and vegetables to plant, delivered to the kindergarten three times a year.

The kindergarten was recognised by the Royal Horticultural Society (RSH) for its ongoing investment in gardening equipment and providing habitats for wildlife in the secure garden, which started thanks to a £300 grant.



Laurel Farm hopes the award will reinforce its ambition to provide a unique gardening experience and opportunities for outdoor learning for pupils and their parents throughout the next year.

Alison Findlay, Community Outreach Adviser at the RHS, said: "Having received Laurel Farm's application to evidence its incredible work on the garden, we were delighted to award them with the Level 3 certificate. The pupils can now continue to build on

their practical skills and prepare areas ready for the planting of fruits, vegetables and flowers".



Dominika Baran, a teacher at the kindergarten, added: "We like to encourage all of our pupils and their parents to truly experience the garden as it not only helps to teach the children about the seasons, but also provides organic food that can be cooked and eaten throughout the year. Our small, rural setting means that we can provide a lot of one-to-one opportunities for natural play in the great outdoors, which is something that our children find hugely advantageous.

"We wish to extend our gratitude to the Royal Horticulture Society for recognising both our efforts, and our teaching methodology as a Steiner Waldorf school in granting Laurel Farm with the award."

[for more information](#) Laurel Farm, and [RSH website](#)

WOW-Day 2017 begins



The time frame for Waldorf One World Day, WOW-Day for short, started on the 29th of September 2017. Waldorf schools from 15 countries have already registered for the worldwide campaign. Is your school already in? If not, please [click here](#) for online registration. Up until 29th November 2017 we invite all Waldorf Schools to become part of the worldwide campaign by organizing your own fundraising campaign. The proceeds will allow children to attend school. 100% of the proceeds are forwarded to Waldorf and social initiatives. For more information please go to: www.waldorf-one-world.org

For over twenty years now, the WOW-Day has been connecting people from all over the world. Students from 37 countries have whole-heartedly committed themselves to an education that opens up new perspectives. With your campaigns, you have given

considerable support to over 150 Waldorf- and social initiatives. In many places, children grow up in a harsh social reality with few opportunities and no one around to encourage them. At a Waldorf school they experience appreciation and learn to believe in themselves. *“Be the change you wish to see in the world.”* (Mahatma Gandhi).

Erika Grantham 1939 – 2017



Erika Fuchs was born in South Germany on the eve of the war in 1939. In these first seven years life was hard and death was a reality. The search for warmth and light featured

strongly for the rest of her life.

Leaving school at sixteen, she studied Hotel Management before coming to Ashurst Wood in East Sussex as an au-pair where she met John Grantham who worked in the blacksmith's forge. After au-pairing in Paris, she worked as an assistant manager at the Great Eastern Hotel in London.

Erika and John married in 1962 and had two boys and two girls. They all went to Michael Hall School, and when her youngest started in class 1 in 1978, she was offered a job as a playgroup leader. She also attended Margret Meyerkort's training course at Wynstone's school before becoming the course leader for the new training at Michael Hall. Nine years later, she and Sally Jenkinson designed the training course at Emerson College which ran for nine years. During this time, and until fairly recently, Erika taught on the London training course with Lynne Oldfield and Stella Jarman. She also taught on the Plymouth University Foundation Degree course and the North of England training with Andy Dyer, Jill Taplin, Janet Klaar, Sally Jenkinson, Janni Nicol and Winny Mossman.

Erika also continued her work with parent and child groups and as a kindergarten advisor in the U.K. and throughout the world, particularly in South Korea. For seven years, Erika was the UK representative for the International Kindergarten Association (now IASWECE), and she and John organised the international conference for them at Michael Hall. Her 'professional family' provided her with intellectual stimulation and soul food and engaged her fully. She was committed to her work and was always striving to deepen her understanding.

Erika enjoyed sharing her knowledge and was enthused by the passion and desire to learn of those she taught. She has always been dedicated to providing the best for the children she met and was a devoted grandmother. Family gatherings, birthdays and festivals were of utmost importance to Erika. There was always a lovely birthday table with flowers and candle awaiting the birthday person and the rituals of the festivals are now shared by her grandchildren.

I met Erika during her Michael Hall days. When she came to visit one of her students who was doing her teaching practice in my kindergarten in Cambridge, she weaved her magic, and my kindergarten sparkled, the children played like angels, the garden bloomed as did the children. And I received much warmly given advice, in a way which left you feeling positive and rejuvenated - what a gift!

I remember Erika for her wisdom, her attention to detail, for beauty, imagination and intuition, for her joy in being present and her love for her family, as well as her pioneering work. She always had her roots in her family life, and felt so supported by John as she ventured into pastures new. In my role of SWSF early childhood representative working for the early years movement in the UK, I had the benefit of her advice constantly, and she had the ability to 'wake me up' to issues in a way which left me free.

I know she will continue to guide those of us working in early childhood to respect the dignity of childhood, and enable us to support the children surrounded by light, joy, beauty and goodness in these difficult times.

Janni Nicol

Simon Bennet

We are saddened by the news that Simon Bennet (who was SIS Chief Inspector) died suddenly in September.

Simon was a unique personality in so many ways: both radical and conservative, avuncular and incisive; a gentlemanly, genial, presence but with a critical sensibility that quickly got to the heart of a question. His enthusiasms were varied and often surprising. He took great joy in travelling by train to our office in Stourbridge, as he knew the region well and he liked using the "Parry People Mover", the one-carriage shuttle train that plies between the Junction and Town stations. Rare and second-hand books, old prints, glassware and architectural features attracted his appreciative eye. While the cellars of Nichols and Perks afforded other delights that he would gleefully describe. There was also, of course, his garden, which he was so pleased to be

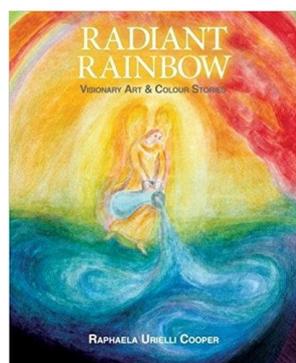
able to open to children of the Meadow Steiner School while it was running in Bruton.

Simon was no less appreciative of the foibles and eccentricities of people, as he was of their better qualities. He was generous about the latter, but could also be unexpectedly humorous, remarking, once, that a former treasurer of one of our schools, a Mr Smelley, "clearly has a good nose for figures". In my experience, Simon often made a memorable impression on people who met him for the first time. After a meal together at a local restaurant, the server asked me, more than a week later, about the "nice gentleman" with whom Jane and I had last visited. That is only one instance of a number I could mention. Although I had, initially, some doubt as to whether SWSF trustees at the time would support an application to the Department for SWSF member schools to be inspected by SIS, that concern was swiftly dispelled once Simon had attended a meeting and spoken about inspection work. As you might imagine, there was no hard-sell or even obvious persuasion in what he said, but colleagues immediately felt reassured that our schools would be getting thorough and fair inspection carried out with integrity and by inspectors who understood the distinctive qualities of Steiner Waldorf education, as he put it, "I'm not a Steiner person, but I do value the good work I see in the schools".

Perhaps the use of email and the intricacies of filing and information retrieval were not Simon's strongest abilities, but he kept a firm grasp of the essential purpose of inspection and SIS's approach to it. In particular, he was a defender of the principle of independence, a principle he so positively epitomised in the way he led SIS. The phrase, "British values", so abstract, and so glib, becomes real to me when I call to mind the numerous ways in which Simon embodied the best aspects of Britishness.

Kevin Avison

Book Reviews



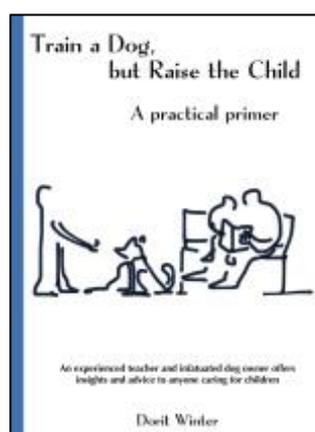
Radiant Rainbow: Visionary Art and Colour Stories by Raphaela Urielli Cooper, published by Book of Kin 2017

It would be hard for anyone wishing to do so to categorise *Radiant Rainbow*. It is a book of visual designs, paintings and stories that fit together without need for any other explanation. The colour stories, illustrations

and poems speak from an immersion in the life of twelve colours: violet, turquoise, yellow, blue, emerald, indigo, light green, orange, peach blossom, purple, red and rose (pink).

The twelve stories, each with illustration, are allegorical in nature. They range across Europe and the Middle East, but with their centre in these islands, especially the "Celtic fringe". The allegories have a fairy tale quality, but a number of them touch upon contemporary situations. A central figure in the final tale, for example, Tariq, starts as a fighter involved in the conflict around Aleppo, while other stories involve a couple buying a farm in Italy, a women helping children affected by the 1986 Chernobyl disaster and a professor of education at Bucharest University. Nonetheless, these are magical stories, drawing from esoteric traditions, and including spiritual science, without some knowledge of which a reader might be hard-pressed to follow their logic. Each story develops within that implicit framework.

Waldorf teachers will find *Radiant Rainbow* helpful in their own search for the qualities of colour essential for effective teaching of painting, especially wet-on-wet. The stories can serve as a springboard for that. They also offer inspiration for a teacher to develop her/his own colour stories, and for characterising the colour world generally. More than anything else this book evinces a profound and thoroughly practiced colour-wisdom, a book created with love and beautifully produced: a joyfully radiant read.



Train a Dog, but Raise the Child: A Practical Primer by Dorit Winter, Dandelion Publications 2017

The value of years of Waldorf teaching and the opportunities of retirement are well-advertised in this practical primer. It is an

original and imaginative book which takes an imaginative approach to its subject. While there are many books with advice on how to raise a child, the training of dogs seems even better provided for. A single Google search under the entry, "training of dogs", resulted in over one hundred million results. Practical guidance on both of these? A two for one deal!

Of course, the true focus of *Train a Dog, but Raise the Child* is the development of children, including maintaining good behaviour in the classroom. However, the device Dorit Winter uses, drawing parallels and contrasts between the training of her dog, Scamp, and stages in child development can, on occasion prove confusing. Furthermore, for those less enamoured of dogs than the author evidently is, the device might seem irritating. However, it does serve to remind us that, while human children have much greater potential, we all also have an animal nature within us and we ignore it at our peril. In truth, the congruence's and contrasts between dog and child are both insightful and entertaining. Could it be, as Winter suggests at the end of this book, that our collective vulnerability to the addictive allure of technology and consequent misuse of it, is as much a result of ineffective training as it is a societal mood of avoidance of inwardness and impatience of process?

For this reader, it is in the final chapters, with Scamp more in the background, that Winter's message gains strength as it acquires a powerful urgency. She does not pull her punches in discussing the politics of distraction inherent in so much of our technology. The link from attention and "mindfulness" to morality is then deftly outlined. She offers no pat solutions, however, allowing the reader to consider the evidence she presents while offering a reminder of the role discipline and social forms play in laying foundations for respectful relationships, compassion and the ability pay attention, to take the world to heart.

Dorit Winter may have retired from teaching after a long career, but this does not read like a "retirement book". It is a book that retains immediacy and engagement with the present. It's a book of learning, a book of commitment to improvement, in which you feel the writer is working things out livingly through the writing, rather than sharing the fruits of long-held disquisition. It inspires the reader to think through the issues for her/him-self. The lively sketches that accompany the text have the same quality, a few simple lines that provide witty hints and nudges for the readers imagination. Even if you find all the doggy stuff annoying, this short, vigorous book is well-worth reading (and the Scamp-related information is also fascinating).



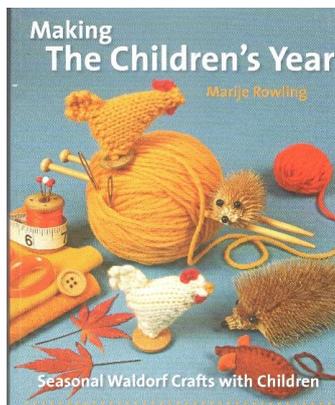
Alternative Approaches to Education: A guide for teachers and parents by Fiona Carnie, Routledge 2017 (Second Edition)

Fiona Carnie has a long association with human scale and progressive education, both as parent, educator, advocate and researcher. I must declare an interest insofar as I was one of those consulted for the chapter on Steiner Waldorf education. But the content and presentation is entirely that of the author, content drawn from her personal experience and attested by study and research.

The book opens by asking about the purpose of education and what contemporary research has to say about it. While much of the material included here should be familiar to Steiner Waldorf colleagues, this is a useful summary written from a progressive point-of-view, one that takes as its tenets three principle features: education as a human process, taking place in a community in which people feel they are recognised and can belong; responsive relationships between adults and younger learners in which the curriculum is relevant to each child; active education which is experiential and participative. Steiner Waldorf education can thus take its place alongside "fellow travellers", whose approach and philosophy may be, nonetheless, markedly different. Carnie provides a clearly reasoned rationale as why such schools are needed and their contribution to educational thought and practice.

The book goes on to provide a cogent overview of small alternative, Montessori, democratic and "free" schools as well as Steiner Waldorf. Carnie's measure discussion includes innovative practice in State controlled schools, home-based education and flexi-schooling. There is also helpful general advice for anyone looking to set up a small school or learning centre. In all a book that should be read by anyone with children and one any educator should keep for reference.

Kevin Avison



MAKING THE CHILDREN'S YEAR: Seasonal Waldorf Crafts with Children.
Marije Rowling.
Hawthorn Press

I am always excited to look at a book by Marije Rowling as her illustrations are a delight, and her projects always work to perfection! This is an updated, full colour and beautifully published second edition of The Children's Year. It includes all sorts of crafts, ideas and activities, such as making nature and seasonal tables, lanterns, moving picture cards, sewing and knitting, dolls, building dens and paper-crafting. Each seasonal craft has simple, clear and beautifully illustrated instructions. Mostly, the crafts are suitable for adults to make for children, however many can be made by children of different ages – not to the same perfect standards, but wonderful to do it together with adults, learning by imitation or with adult help. The crafts are organised by season, and the nature table ideas and ideas for play equipment are very useful and practical. The winter section includes many ideas for Advent and Christmas.

There are three books (published by Hawthorn Press), which I have always included in every booklist for anyone working in early childhood to include in their own, and their parent library, they are All Year Round; Festivals, Family and Food, All Year Round and now this revised version of The Children's Year. Making the Children's Year includes crafts and illustrations by Marie Rowling.



My only gripe with this book is the difficulty of making it lie flat - thank goodness I have a recipe book stand to put it in! I do hope that the spine does not split more than it has over the very, very many years it will be used!

Janni Nicol

Dates for your Diary

Fri Nov 3 rd	SWSF Trustees Meeting
Sat Nov 4 th	SWSF Association Meeting
Mon November 13 th	SWAN Meeting (Bristol)
Mon January 22 nd	SWAN Meeting (Iona)
Sat Feb 24 th	Trustees Governors Meeting Hereford
10th March 2018	SWSF EARLY YEARS & CLASS TEACHERS CONFERENCE with Susan Perrow on Healing Stories for Challenging Behaviour