

Talking Trees

The newsletter for Norwich Steiner School

17th July 2014

Dates for your diary

Friday 18th July - Last day of term

*Thursday 31st July - Workday

*Thursday 7th August - Workday

*Thursday 28th August - Workday

*Thursday 4th September - Workday

Monday 8th September - First day of school

* Please let us know you are coming so we can let you know if we need to cancel.

Birch class cycle trip, May 2014

By Birch class pupils

The class met outside Halfords in the morning with their bikes, helmets, high vis jackets and backpacks. We set off on Marriots Way through shady trees and deep earthy smells for around 45 minutes until Miss Scaife's bike decided it would break. We then travelled to glorious Taverham garden centre where 'schmoos' were bought and a new bike was dropped off- thanks Mr Higgins! We set off on the path again and arrived at the first campsite later. When we arrived everyone was relieved, we set up camp, ventured through the woods and swung from a rope swing over a stream. At bed time we rolled in sleeping bags, had hot chocolate and a story and settled down for the night. As some of you may know Jonathan is asthmatic. Unfortunately Ollie didn't consider this when he let off the most deadly posterior parp known to man...this caused a prolonged amount of laughing which resulted in an asthma attack.

By the morning we had all survived the first night. The girls woke up first to brush their teeth and get dressed, and while having a chat Mrs Higgins overheard them and had to tell them that it was 4.30 in the morning. Camping near trees is not a good idea, the birds are VERY loud and a pigeon even perched at the top of the tent and disturbed any chance of sleep.

After breakfast we headed to the next site. No sooner had we started to leave when Max's bike got a puncture. Alfie got the tools out and swiftly and impressively repaired the tyre. This was followed shortly after with Mrs Higgins' wheel buckling (basically bending). Great. After whacking the rim with a rock Ferdie and Alfie ended up undoing the rear brakes, and so we persisted on. The next campsite was very different. The first thing the boys did was check the toilets. The facilities were a lot nicer, but the downside was having to listen to Radio Norfolk on the loo, which was a little off putting. Jonathan liked hearing Pharrel Williams though, and at least the locks actually worked. The second night's sleep was much better than the first.

We had all survived one more night. The last trip was the shortest, and there were no more bicycle problems, but there were some hills. On the way we met some horses and fed them the rest of our apples. One of the horses, we guessed was a male, had a moustache. Unfortunately Athina and Ollie couldn't stay with the horses forever, and so we set off again pursuing the sea! We finally reached Stiffkey shouting for joy and for the pain in our rears. After putting up our tents we jogged off to the beach. The sea was around a mile out so we jumped in a nearby pool that had collected itself on the sand. This was deep and warm and eventually everyone was in the water. After our swim we hobbled back to camp, showered and headed to Wells for fish and chips. That was our last day. By the time everyone's parents arrived the next morning we were all tired and ready to go home. It had been an exhausting but very fun cycling trip.

Capturing Mayday

By Jacqui Armour, parent and kindergarten assistant

I took my camera to the Mayday festival for the first time this year.

After a while it struck me that I was experiencing the festival and the children in an entirely different way to usual- I felt distanced and disconnected, that I was seeing and experiencing only part of what was happening- the part visible on my screen. I did not have the same awareness of my surroundings, the music, the singing, or the atmosphere. I was focused on getting a good shot, and things felt fragmented. So I put the camera away.

Thinking about it afterwards I may have been even more distanced than I had thought. I had been looking, at arm's length, at a digital image, converted from an optical image by a sensor and displayed on a LCD screen, of the children dancing.

I did get some good shots though, and the children's joy was quite evident in these, so I was pleased. I had lots of pictures of smiling children dancing- in front of lots of parents, like me, holding cameras or phones out in front of them, and I realised that many of us had, in a sense, experienced the festival digitally.

Willow class - Part 1

By Miss Scaife-board, Class teacher

Sitting at home with broken foot elevated, I close my eyes and remember all those bright, expectant Willow faces staring back at me. Two weeks seems more like two *hundred* and I'm afraid I might be written into the children's Local History Main Lesson Books already!

Before my unexpected absence, we were delving into the past, hearing stories of Iceni, Roman, Danish and Saxon settlers and how they had very different lives to our own comfortable, modern existences. The city of Norwich was just beginning to take shape.

Many thanks to Andrea who came to the rescue at this point and facilitated the children's historical re-enactments, perfectly punctuated their stories from the past and grammatically challenged their present tenses!

Although painful, tedious and extremely frustrating, having broken my foot has given me the rare commodity of time to reflect on what a truly great place Norwich Steiner School is to be involved in; the positive, joyful 'forces' that power it along are hard to be away from and I feel so relieved to be returning shortly in one piece-nearly! I shall be careful in the future however, to try out any high octane sporting endeavors during the holidays!

Willow class - Part 2

By Mrs Lord, German and supply teacher

I have been asked to share Willow Class' endeavours, whilst I was taking them when Miss Scaife was away busily mending her foot.

We immersed ourselves into Anglo-Saxon life. As a backdrop we read the story of 'The Children of Stowa' by Jean Lloyd. The story is set in the Seventh Century, around the year 620 AD, when Raedwald, king of the East Angles was 'Bretwalda', or over-king of all the provinces of Anglo-Saxon England south of the River Humber. When Raedwald died, he was buried in a ship at Sutton Hoo in Suffolk.

The story, set in the village of Stowa, tells of the lives of ordinary men, women and children against a backdrop of the changing seasons of the year, touching on the necessities to ensure food, warmth

and shelter for all villagers. The story draws on evidence from excavations, as well as other sources, to recreate imaginatively life as it might have been lived in an Anglo-Saxon village at that time.

The children were given the opportunity to explore the narrative through writing, drawing, re-enactment of scenes, exploring the language of runes, making and playing of the ancient game of 'Nine Men's Morris' believed to have its origins with the Anglo-Saxons, and last but not least, the children cooked an Anglo-Saxon broth, in order to experience some of the tastes and smells from this ancient time.

Why don't you try out this tasty recipe over the summer and bring a little Anglo-Saxon magic to your life, a recipe warmly recommended by Willow Class.

Broth:

4.5 oz pearl barley
500 ml ale
4 tbsp veg oil
1 onion diced
0.5 lb trimmed leek
1 clove of garlic
2 carrots diced
4 Oz green beans sliced
2 bay leaves
1.5 pint water
1 handful fresh mint leaves
12 oz frozen peas
1 tsp honey
2.5 oz bulgar wheat
salt to taste

Boil the barley and ale together and simmer for 50 minutes.

In a separate pan gently cook the onions, leeks, garlic and carrots, once softened add the beans and water cook until tender about 10 minutes. Add bay leaves, mint, peas and honey cook for a few minutes, then add the barley and ale, cook for a few minutes then add the bulgar wheat, now leave for two minutes in order for the bulgar wheat to soften.

Serve and enjoy!

Goodbye to Birch

By Mrs Higgins

It is traditional in class 8 in Steiner schools for the children to do projects at the end of the year. These projects are on a subject of choice, something of interest, and the child works independently at school and at home. Birch class have been working on their own projects, at their own pace over the year, and as expected, the chosen subjects and the way they are put together vary considerably. Some of the students have written huge books but are extremely nervous to discuss it. Others work best when they can verbalise their thoughts, and some have supplemented their work with artistic creations and practical exercises. These projects have been a challenge for all of the class because although they are about specific things, they are mostly about the person doing it. Through the subject the students will be revealing who they are, what they enjoy and their character. This is a really hard thing to do, because at their age the students may not always be sure of who they are, and they don't always want people to know either.

The class have also said goodbye to lower school in a fun way. We all went to London last week, and the class went off on their own around a very busy and stuffy British museum. They braved crowds of protesting teachers' unions to ride on a carousel by the Thames, and took a long walk by the river, listening to the chimes of Big Ben and taking in the sights (some of which were unforgettable). In short, for me it was a lovely end to a very rich five years. Teaching such an interesting group of individuals is a wonderful job, and I feel that all of them are ready to go downstairs to Upper school next year with confidence in the skills they have acquired (both social and academic), while I make preparations to climb a new mountain. Thanks Birch class for teaching me a lot too!

Kindergarten overview

By Debora Walker, Orchard Kindergarten teacher

Another year has passed and it seems that suddenly out of nowhere we have a really confident and enthusiastic group of six year olds ready for the new challenges of class one. They are busy (as I write) finishing their projects and sewing their puppets, ready for the puppet show and ring-time that they will present to their parents and the younger children at the end of term. This will mark an important transition for them from kindergarten children to school children which they will carry with them through the summer. They begin to really feel this when they start the summer term with the separate transition afternoon once a week which is just for them. There is an extended focus on project work and learning new skills, giving them a growing confidence in their abilities and a willingness to try out new things. They also now really mesh as a group, encouraging and supporting each other. This gives them a great deal of confidence as they move from the familiar surroundings of kindergarten, where many have been for over 3 years, to the first year of lower school.

We have welcomed many new children and their families to kindergarten over the past year and are looking forward to the autumn when more will be joining us. Kindergarten is quite a fluid environment as children move on and others start. We regularly have children joining us across the age range which makes for a wonderful mix. It really is a very positive learning environment, encouraging inclusion and cooperative play as children constantly make new friends and learn to accept each other. "Everyone is welcome" is a phrase we often use. This past year we have also welcomed visiting children for whom English is not their first language and we really have found that play speaks a universal language.

We were very pleased that we received such positive feedback from our recent school inspection and would like to thank all our parents for their support over the past year which contributed to our outstanding result. We greatly appreciate it. We intend to build upon this and ensure that kindergarten continues to provide a strong and secure foundation for the children in our school.

Sequoia Class

By Mr Higgins, class teacher

'What has 2 eyes and 1 mouth and a tongue that always sticks out that people walk on'?

This term, Sequoia children have been studying riddles. Having looked at several traditional riddles, the class were invited to try their hand at creating and illustrating some of their own, such as the one above.

Here are some more:

'What has lots of arms, is tall and waves happily all day although his feet are stuck in the ground'?

'Everyone has one in their home; it has no legs, cannot move but has one great big mouth which is always talking while the world tumbles out of it. It never eats but people love what it delivers.'

The main thing we learned about riddles was that the simpler the thing to be guessed, the more effective the riddle.

'What has half a head that you put half a head into?'

'What has arms, but no body?'

'What sits on someone that you sit on and is made of someone else who gives you liquid white gold?'

At one point this term, due to our lovely Italian visitors, there were seventeen children in Sequoia class, and it is wonderful to continue to be part of such a growing and vibrant group of children, each of whom is a riddle unto themselves and to their teacher!

Two more:

'This strange beast has a body, 2 tiny hands, swings from side to side all day but has neither legs nor head.'

'What has 4 legs and rude people put their bums on it but it doesn't mind?'

The answers are, respectively; house, tree, television, hat, coat, saddle, door, chair.

Happy summer holidays from Sequoia class!

Thank you to Handwork helpers

By Helena Fraser, handwork teacher

We've had a creative year in Handwork, from Rainbow balls to Pyjama bottoms!

I'd like to give a huge thank you to the lovely parents/grandparents who give up their time to come and join us in Handwork. Your help is so valuable and we may need additional volunteers next year, so please get in touch if you think you may be able to help. You can call me on 01508 498608 or email me at helenafraser2@gmail.com to express interest.

With best wishes for a wonderful summer.

Musings on Mineralogy

By Mr Nowell, Oak Class teacher

Mineralogy, Economics, Physics and Roman History were the main topics that occupied us this term in Oak Class. Of these topics, mineralogy presented the greatest challenge: to make of the study of rock a living, creative experience. But, as a wise man must surely have said, "The greater the challenge, the greater the reward!"

When we understand something of our natural landscape, whether it was formed in the fiery bowels of the earth or built up over thousands of years by the deposited skeletons of tiny sea creatures, we deepen our appreciation of our own place in the world. Mineralogy is less about the study of rock than a study of the human being's relationship to the world and its resources. Children who have a sense of this relationship will, one suspects, go on to have a healthy respect for the environment and its finite resources.

This came forward very strongly in discussions that arose during our work on fossil fuels. The author and ecologist, Satish Kumar, has often alluded to the link between inner and outer ecology, suggesting that it is only once we have attended to our 'inner ecology' that we can become effective ecologists in the broader sense. Or, looked at from another angle, we are the environment - it does not exist outside of, or separate from, ourselves. For me, this reflects one of the greatest strengths of the Steiner approach to teaching: by placing the human being at the centre of everything we do, the child is empowered, in the fullness of time, to take responsibility for both its own life and for the wider world. A more authentic sense of self can then become the furnace in which is forged the needle of our moral compass.

Satish Kumar wrote a book entitled 'No Destination,' in which he describes his inspiring journey from monk to global activist. In a world obsessed with destination and achievement, very little value is placed on the way in which we travel through life, how we orientate ourselves in relation to

our deepest needs as human beings. There is a prevailing belief that, left to our own devices, we will naturally be directed by selfishness and greed. Waldorf education is founded on the belief that, with the right nurturing, our deepest needs will always, in and of themselves, orientate us towards the wellbeing of others. Perhaps then, on reflection, our mineralogy block was essentially a study of human potential. I hope so.

Elder Class goes to Spain

By Sandie Tolhurst, as Upper School guardian

“Elder Class goes to Spain” has been the title on the ‘School Life’ section on the news/events page of our website. Here you can read various accounts, some humorous and some quite moving, where pupils have described some of their experiences of a recent trip to Spain.

Well, it’s finally the turn of one of the ‘middle aged women’ they describe in these blogs, who braved and survived 2-weeks abroad with a dozen teenagers, to give her version of events!

The purpose of the trip was for this group of 14-16 year olds to experience hard physical work, outdoors in the elements, working as a team and experiencing the practical wisdom of tools. Having looked at a number of options, when an opportunity came up to work on a smallholding in the Andalucian mountains in Southern Spain, we decided it would be ideal for the purpose.

After a very early plane ride from Stansted to Malaga, followed by two bus trips, we arrived a bit travel worn around lunchtime in a beautiful, non-touristy Spanish town called Ardales (pronounced Ar-dar-lays). We were relieved of our heavy rucksacks, which travelled in a landrover to where we were staying, whilst we all walked the 2 miles or so up the valley in the hot midday sun to the finca (smallholding).

The first real delight of the trip was being taken to a small orange grove and told we could pick and eat as many oranges as we wanted during our stay. The oranges were truly delicious and we gorged ourselves on them then and every day after that, until by the time we left, the trees were almost bare.

The children had to camp in tents which they had brought with them, but Carol and I were told we could each have a bed in a ‘hut’ and a caravan. The ‘hut’ turned out to be a lovely wooden cabin, with a simple kitchen downstairs where we all ate and where we could make a cup of tea; upstairs was a ‘staff’ compost toilet and a bedroom where Carol slept. I opted for the caravan, which was ridiculously hot in the day but which I liked because it was next to an olive tree and right plumb in the middle of the camping area, so I knew it would be easier to keep an eye on possible night-time traffic between tents!

The whole finca was on a hillside and so flat land was at a prime. Martin (our host) had been working hard to create some small level areas on which tents could be pitched. The tents were literally on the edge of the hillside and had magnificent views, but the downside is that they were on rock, so even with layers of straw underneath the tents, it was hard sleeping, especially as most sleeping mats were thin. Most nights when the children were finally persuaded to crawl into their beds, they’d find that someone had placed lumpy rocks under their tents, so they had to go back outside to remove them before they could sleep.

As is typical in hot countries, the evenings and early mornings were the best times of day. Each day would start with Carol or I touring round the campsite, making sure everyone was awake. Mostly this was at 7am, but a few times and on days when we were going for very long walks we’d get up at 6am, so as to make the most of the cooler part of the day. Work started at 8am each day. We all got better at being ready on time – being dressed properly for the work, wearing sunblock and hats. Then we’d troop off for a 2 hour stint of work clearing ground around the olive trees and then

pruning them; occasionally, people got carried away with pruning particular trees, which ended up rather bare, but mostly, everyone just got really skilled at judging what to do. We were given a lovely image to help us prune the trees, which is that well kept olive trees are open enough for swallows to fly right through them.

After about a half hours rest, we'd set to work for another 2½ hours doing the special projects - building two sets of stone steps, laying a stone wall, digging drains and soakaways, laying underground pipes and making a patio. To start with, we were all pretty slow, but as the days passed, everyone got in their stride and started to get fitter and more used to the work. Meanwhile it got hotter, from about 23 degrees C when we arrived, up to 29 degrees on the hottest day about halfway through!

After lunch, the class mostly went off to swim in the river and pools downhill from the camping area. The water, freshly melted of glaciers, was still icy cold and you could hear the shrieks up and down the valley as the children splashed and swam, with occasional turtles swimming around with them.

For the first couple of days, everyone was just too tired to do even a walk in the evenings, but again, as we all adjusted and got fitter, we'd start going for walks at around 5pm in the afternoon and get back to the hut for tea at about 7pm. All our food, except breakfast and daytime snacks, was prepared by Martin's wife, Diana, along with daily help from 2 pupils (on a rota). Those helping with cooking were excused the second work session on projects each morning. The food was good and healthy; dominated by salads and fruit, with virtually no sugar!

So I suppose it's not a surprise that when towards the end of the trip and on the way to visit some prehistoric caves, when we passed through Ardales, the class disappeared into the local supermarket and came out with rucksacks absolutely packed full of biscuits, sweets, fizzy drinks and chocolate, which they then had to lug up and down hills, melting in the blistering heat that was to follow. Some of them didn't feel that well at the end of that day!

A week after arriving, when we'd worked for 5 days in succession, we got up early on a Sunday morning and climbed Mount Alcaparain, which towered nearly 1000 foot above our campsite. It was a really long walk with amazing views at the top and with a long hot journey back. Everyone was rightly proud of their achievement.....but next morning, it was time to get up and carry on working. They were tired and morale was low and everyone had become quiet. There were murmurings of wanting to go home. Nonetheless there was no real choice other than to carry on working and that day, something happened and things changed.

Suddenly, the class felt as though they had all grown up a little. Thereafter, attitudes changed. There was a willingness to do extra without complaint. Children started volunteering to do the washing up and murmurings about 'isn't it illegal to use children for slave labour' became a thing of the past. We started working evenings as well; some would get on with pruning or the building projects, and others would clean the hut and the toilets, and pick oranges for everyone for the next day.

Although being so intensely together for 2 weeks brought some social tensions to the surface, the class otherwise became even closer than before. Tiny tents became like the magic tents in the Harry Potter books, where when we did our evening tour of the tents for bedtime, a one person tent somehow magically seemed to have space for not two, not three, but four or five other people, all lying like sardines.

There was no wi-fi and until the last 2 or 3 days, when we allowed 'one charge' per child for the journey home, they had no mobile phones, no electronic music or gadgets. So instead they talked a lot and they started to sing together.....on the dark mountainside, with only the moon and a huge

expanse of stars to light the night, it was haunting to hear combined voices singing Ed Sheeran's "I see fire" among many other songs that echoed out into the night.

The last full day was also a special one. We did a very long walk, about 18 miles. On the walk home, various injuries started to show....one pupil with blisters on every possible part of both his feet could no longer walk and was carried miles by his classmates. Another developed knee problems and likewise needed carrying. A passer-by stopped in their car to help us. A garage in Ardales kindly brought us free refreshments. In short, there was great kindness shown all around, towards one another and by others towards us, and there was something about that day in particular that showed that people are inherently kind.

On the way home, it was clear we were traveling with a different, more mature and more confident group of teenagers than we left England with. They had learnt the practical wisdom of tools, worked *hard*, learnt to wash their own socks and underclothes by hand and climbed mountains, both real and the type that live inside us. In so doing, they had grown in every sense of the word. It was an unforgettable experience for us all and a complete privilege to spend two weeks in a beautiful and remote location with such a wonderful group of almost-adults.

Coffee, Books and Eggs!

In addition to amounts raised by the bigger events, such as the summer and Advent fayres, and the jumble sale, we thought you would be interested to know how much money has been raised this year by the coffee mornings & by the sale of eggs & books:

Coffee mornings £295

Eggs & books - £151

Thank you so much to Susen for organizing the coffee mornings and to Brigid for the generous contribution of lovely fresh 'happy' eggs.

Organic Veggie box fundraising idea

Brigid (Alexander's mum) has offered to coordinate a veggie box scheme with Arthurs Organics, starting in the Autumn term. Arthurs have offered to donate £1 to the school for every veggie box ordered from school families. These would be delivered on a particular day to the school and parents would need to collect their box of fruit/veg from the entrance hall fairly promptly so as to keep the entrance clear, otherwise it won't be feasible to run from the school. So if you're interested in participating in this scheme, please let Brigid know at the beginning of next term. More details to follow in due course.