

# YSGOL NANT-Y-CWM

## A RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL

"Our highest endeavour must be to develop free human beings, who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction in their lives"

### Newsletter Issue 2

Spring 2012

## Spring is on its way



**Welcome!** In this second issue of our Newsletter you will find a taste of our work; in the classrooms with the children and in the school grounds with the extended community. We hope this brief glimpse

into the pedagogical approach at the school will give a sense of the balance we seek in all our work; to engage the whole child – head, heart and limbs.

On the back page you will find an opportunity to

support the school in the role of volunteer trustee – a significant commitment balancing both reward and responsibility.

A Happy Easter to all.

**The teachers.**

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the soil and sow or make space through spring cleaning is to harmonise with the newly vital forces of the earth and share some of this strength.

Cleaning, ordering, cultivating all provide a golden opportunity to renew our life forces and once again look forward.



## The Gift of Renewal

Christmas is left behind. Like the three Kings returning to their own countries we each turned back to our own lives and a new term at school.

The journey away from the star of Christmas can feel grey. People often say that after Christmas their energy or forces seem low.

And then the gift. At a point in time, something barely perceptible, subtle, happens; changes in the air, the light, the ground beneath our feet, the first new shoots, something happening in the orchard?

Observing and acknowledging this change, taking the opportunity to garden, prepare



## Handwork – thinking with the fingers



I always look forward to my first lesson with **class one**. First we learn finger knitting. This is made simple with the story of the little bird landing on a branch – a slip knot on the index finger. How lovely it is then, the alighting beside it of another bird – a strand of wool – then the first bird jumping over it. The finger knitted cord is then used for doing up the children's' new handwork bag.

The next thing is the story of "How knitting was discovered" which involves The Wise Old Woman's secret rhyme: In through the front door.....

With the help of this rhyme, everyone has learnt to knit in one or two days using knitting needles they have made themselves.

Knitting carried out by all children is a great way of helping thinking and expanding the intellect by developing the skills of the fingers in a balanced way.

It is also a rhythmical, pleasing activity calling for concentration. Every time the children knit, their skills improve, their brains expand, their fingers become more dextrous, they learn about tension control and

their laterality is strengthened.

At the end they have made something out of natural materials. Their faces beam with joy; they have experienced one of life's greatest gifts: the joy of creation.

In **class two and three** the children advance to crochet. All the skills in knitting are used but it is more complicated as the fingers have to work separately.

They can crochet many things – string bags, doll's hammocks, hats, doll's clothes and slippers, baby mittens and booties.



*"In through the front door  
Running round the back  
Peeping through the window  
Off jumps Jack"*

*Knitting rhyme*

It is in **class two** that the children start making a doll. Often the doll is "The king of Ireland's Son" or Fedelma from the story that they study in Main Lesson.

In **class four** the children begin cross stitch. They create their own designs on squared paper using four-fold symmetry – using some of the skills acquired in the form drawing lessons.

Both the making of the symmetrical design and the crossing of the stitch helps to achieve inner focus.

In the **older classes**, hand work includes activities such as knitting socks and designing and making fabric animals.

In this age of instant gratification, the pressing of a few buttons to achieve some sort of

passive enjoyment, the idea of endeavour and hard work to achieve a result are particularly out of fashion.

Handwork not only promotes holistic manual dexterity but also provides the experience of having to work hard for an extended length of time to achieve something of beauty and value.

**Jane Winters**

*"Let him learn to take a shaving off a plank or draw a fine curve without faltering, or lay a brick true in its mortar, and he has learnt a multitude of things which no lips of man could ever teach him" John Ruskin*



## Science in the middle school

Over the last months, following the curriculum, class 7&8 have explored biology, chemistry and physics. The pupils have thoroughly enjoyed learning about the human body in all its complexity.

We have also studied the subject of heat, temperature and measurement with enthusiasm.

It could be said that science in a Waldorf School begins right at the start of the child's journey: the Kindergarten.

There is an attitude cultivated here, which is core to the curriculum, that sees a sense of wonder and mystery as vital

foundations for what will emerge as discriminating and enquiring minds in later years. A sense of gratitude and care for the physical world and all living things, rich experiences of nature and the active celebration of the rhythms of the season, cultivate faculties which are not usually seen as important to a scientific attitude.

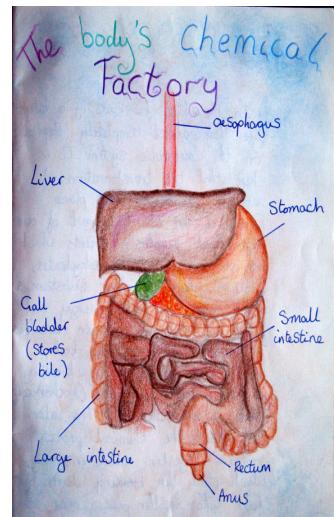
By the middle school years the content and activities in the classroom begin to resemble a more familiar notion of what science is all about. Although the outward appearances are very familiar, the goals and methods are radically different

from conventional science teaching. Explanation is not the primary goal, as this implies a complete understanding of any phenomena.

The essential ingredient is to present phenomena in such a way as to engage all the children's faculties: observation through all their senses, their moral and aesthetic sensibility, their feelings, thoughts and practical common sense.

Any observation can be an experiment if we attend to it with alertness and sensitivity.

**John Davis**



## Class 3 & 4 - How big was Noah's Ark?



This is a question that Class 3, 4 set out to answer in a main lesson on Measurement, against a story theme of Old Testament stories. God tells Noah in Genesis 6.15, "The length of the Ark shall be 300 cubits, the breadth of it 50 cubits and the height of it 30 cubits."

First the class needed to know that a cubit was the length from elbow to the tip of the middle finger. They cut sticks to this length and placed them end to end and could see that they'd need 300 of them to show the length of the Ark. They considered going and cutting more sticks but decided that 300 was an awful lot of sticks!

A pupil suggested moving the sticks along as they measured but another thought they might lose count. So they settled on the idea of using a rope marked off at 10 cubit intervals. They stretched a rope across the classroom and along the corridor and used the sticks to measure 10 cubit lengths, which were marked with pieces of coloured wool. Thus they

had a 30 cubit measuring rope.

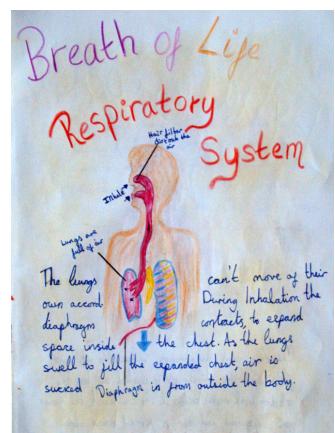
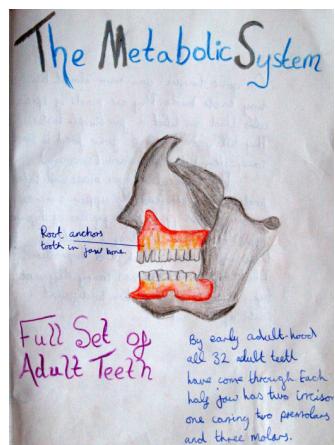
How many times would they have to lay out the rope to show the length of the Ark? ...

They set off across the school field with the rope – 30, 60, 90 cubits and another 10. The field was 100 cubits long. "We'd need three fields to fit the Ark," said a pupil.

How wide was it? "Half the field." They went to where they estimated the middle of the field was.

How tall? It's difficult to get an idea of height from a horizontal measure, so I went upstairs and fed the rope out of the window. I still had a lot of rope left when the end touched the ground, so I pulled it back and folded it in half. I could hold the doubled rope so that it touched the ground. The Ark was twice as tall as that!

That's how we discovered just how vast the Ark was! The children worked together to solve practical and number problems and the next day made a beautiful record of their findings in their main lesson



books.

**Wendy Pattinson**

## The School Orchard – a connection with the land



Nant-y-Cwm is situated in a very special place, in a wooded valley, with south-facing slope behind. On that slope, next to the Community Woodland is our orchard, planted by Simon Harrison soon after the school acquired the land.

When I came to the school nearly 3 years ago, the orchard was overgrown with brambles and the blackthorn thicket was encroaching. The brambles were strimmed to allow the apples to be collected. Sometimes during gardening lessons I have pupils take turns at digging up brambles, a task continued sometimes during work days and Siebe and Ruth, our

visiting Eurythmists, tackled some of the blackthorn. Then I bought an Austrian scythe and taught the children how to use it. All this work has paid off and the trees are now surrounded mainly by grass and wild flowers.

With the orchard now fully accessible, we were able to turn our attention to the trees. So I was delighted when the Fundraising Team suggested hosting an Orchard Management day with Paul Davis. The event took place on 12th November and was fully booked.

Starting in the classroom, Paul

shared his understanding, knowledge and love of all things orchard before taking us out to learn about pruning. He started by showing us the basic framework that we need to look for in a tree and what problems to look out for, before moving on to 'water shoots' and the different ways to prune spur and tip-bearing apple trees.

It was time to put theory into practice! We spread out and started work. I chose to work on a tree that had grown into a large bush. Starting at the bottom we took out some branches that clearly wouldn't be part of the main framework, then worked upwards, opening



*"It is a highly important thing to awaken not only a love for but a practical knowledge of growing things. As a social task there are few better opportunities than gardening affords"* A.C.Harwood

up space around the branches we wanted to keep and removing higher branches that were shading those below, and finished by focussing on the spurs that would bear next years' apples.

Stepping back, the large bush looked like a proper apple tree! This process was repeated across the orchard. Some trees had their own problems, such

as leaning over or had grown very lop-sided and these problems were addressed too.

There's still work to be done, since it was the wrong time of year to prune plums and cherries, and we need to plant new trees but the orchard is now looking good and will, I'm sure, continue to be a very special part of Nant-y-Cwm.

*Thank you to the Fundraising Team, especially Bryan Wasson for organising and hosting the Orchard Management course, to Paul Davis, Simon Harrison and all who work and have worked on our orchard.*

Wendy Pattinson

## Class 1 & 2 - music – living sound, real instruments



The second term for class 1 and 2 began with music lessons. High energy and enthusiasm wove each day into the next as ring-times were extended to enable the development of a strong foundation of rhythmical and recorder work. We will continue to build upon this in the months and years to come.

Our stories and songs were largely based upon ancient creation myths – mainly from

the American Indian traditions.

In just two weeks the class progressed to confidence in playing through a whole recorder piece and even composed songs during music lessons using colours as notes!

Following on from our Christmas main lesson, where we worked on our Musical adaptation of Babushka, the class has gelled into quite a

group of performers!

Jessica Moraity



## The School Shop

Thanks to all the friends and families of Nant-y-Cwm who continue to support the shop at our school. We are really lucky to have such a readily accessible and affordable supply of toys and gifts with a flavour of the Steiner ethos in our little corner of rural Wales!

We continue to have beautiful handmade crafts made by parents, teachers, friends and children – dolls, figures for your nature table, toys, gifts, cards, jewellery and bird houses.

Produce like jams, jellies, chutneys, cakes and occasionally surplus eggs are available.

A selection of craft supplies are in stock such as beads, tissue paper, crayons, fleece, sewing boxes and mini carders to enable us to enjoy the creative process with our children.

We have catalogue-sourced simple and traditional toys, and there are nearly always rakes, spades and brooms which are popular.

There are also books available on topics ranging from Steiner education, crafts and children's story books.

Our shop can be found all year round in the school office, and is often presented as a stall at

our annual events such as the advent and summer fairs. We have also taken the stall to other local events.

If anyone has new ideas, crafts, produce, plants or time to give to the shop - as always these are very welcome and gratefully received!

The stock is ever-changing and seasonally inspired so please keep coming and looking to see what you might find – a gift for a friend, or something yummy for your toast in the morning!

Debbie Wasson



*“...horsey, horsey  
don’t you stop.....”*

## Story telling in the Kindergarten

It has been a busy morning, chopping vegetables, kneading and shaping dough, playing, tidying, singing and moving at ring-time.

Eating our snack, waterproofs on, sawing and drilling wood to make bird tables, splashing in the puddles, tidying, then washing our muddy hands.

We enter the room, sit on the carpet singing finger rhymes until all are gathered. We stand up and quietly enter the story corner. We find a chair and I give everyone a touch of lavender.



der, light the candle and cross my arms, all follow. We sing together “Mother of the Fairy-tale take me by the hand...”

Then I begin, “Once upon a time...” The children relax into the words. Sometimes they are a little restless to begin but soon the calmness of listening comes. This is the seventh time they have heard the story so, the children will correct any change. The story inevitably comes to the right conclusion; good will win out and evil will be overcome. We sing our closing song together, “Like a ship in the harbor... I will hold you a while... whilst angels from heaven sing you to sleep.” The candle is snuffed out and we are ready to say goodbye.

The story unites the community of listeners whilst speaking to them individually, allowing each child to take from it what they need. The words and ideas, coming from the depths of time, gently awaken the child’s imagination whilst nourishing the senses.

Children do not separate their senses but absorb everything with the whole body. Given the space, time and simple play things they will retell stories and their experiences. The language, form and characters therein enrich the children’s lives to provide a solid foundation for reading and writing.

Janet Brackenbury



## Contact Nant-y-Cwm

If you are interested in a Steiner education for your child, would like more information about anything that you have read, or are interested in getting involved, we would love to hear from you!

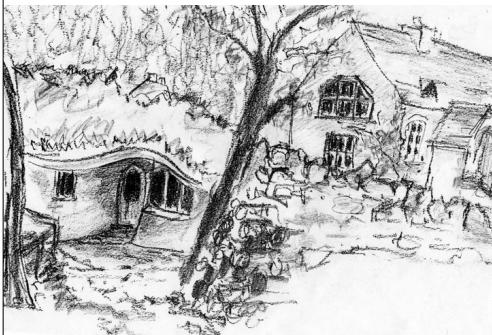
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**Full Member of The Steiner Schools' Fellowship.**

**Registered Charity: 510849. Company No:  
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**Donations: Please make cheques payable to  
Nant-y-Cwm Steiner School Ltd.**



## Parents Diary

### Festival Celebration Information for Parents

**St David's Day Celebrations – Thurs 1st**

March 2012

**End of term festival –  
Fri 30th March 2012**

**Mayday – TBC**

**St John's – Mon 25th  
June 2012**

**End of term festival –  
Friday 13th July 2012**

### Would you like to become a trustee?

We invite applicants for this post with previous experience of governance, educational, administration, business management, human resource management or the voluntary sector. This is a voluntary post with reasonable travel and administration expenses payable. We offer training in the role and responsibilities of a trustee; induction to the school, its ethos and community; a warm and friendly environment where we care about childhood. **To apply or for more information please contact the school office.**

## Noticeboard

### Fundraising Meetings

Fundraising meetings are held monthly. To attend a meeting and get involved with fundraising events please call the school office (01437 563640) to find out the date and location.

**Open Day Sat 5th May 2012**

### Fundraising event Summer Fair – Sat 23rd June 2012

To book a stall or volunteer please contact the office.

### Work Days

The school relies on volunteer help to maintain of the school and grounds. These are fun, community events. Please bring food to share, tools and children. Saturdays, 10am start. For more information, or if you have a particular skill to offer, please contact:

Tom Barrow on 01437 532890

The next work days are: **10th March, 14th April, 12th May, 9th June, 14th July.**

### Volunteering

If you have a particular skill, or simply energy and enthusiasm to offer, please get in touch.

### Bursary Fund

The Godparents Anthroposophical Training Fund (GATF) can accept donations specifically to fund bursaries at Nant-y-Cwm. To donate, please visit <http://gatf.org.uk/>, click 'Children's Fund', 'Donate' and tell GATF that you intend your donation to fund bursaries at Nant-y-Cwm. Alternatively, send a cheque payable to *Godparents Anthroposophical Training Fund* to Nant-y-Cwm.

Supporting the Bursary Fund will help the families which struggle to pay their contributions directly.

### Sponsoring the Newsletter

If you would like to sponsor the printing costs of this newsletter so that we can share our story far and wide please send a cheque for £50.00 made payable to Nant-Y-Cwm Steiner School.

*"The proper content of education is something you carry with you, not something you leave behind."*  
Rudolf Steiner

