

## *July Newsletter 2008*

*Dear parents and friends of Cowgate,*

*As I write the children are running bare footed in the garden, how wonderful this is.*

### *Congratulations*

*Morag, Andrew and Robert (Salle de Jeux) have had a baby girl. Everyone is doing well ☺*

### *Thank you*

*As we say goodbye to our children who leave us to go on to school I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your kindness. Your very thoughtful tokens of appreciation mean so very much to the staff.*

### *More thanks*

*Thank you to Michael's 'Nano' who presented us with a very healthy box of plants, both for indoors and outdoors. They were received with pleasure...thank you so very much.*

*Thank you to all our parents who agreed to be filmed in the Cowgate film. We have been invited to participate in next years early years conference event the film will be shown then and hopefully it will be on our website too. Thank you again.*

*Thank you to everyone who participated in our Celebratory event. What a lovely get together...the idea came from Stuart (Celeste's daddy) who provided us with several bottles of champagne to get*

*the party started. What a lovely time we all had...let us have another event soon 😊 On that note...*

### *Sub-committee on Standards for Children & Families*

*We were invited to attend the sub-committee on Standards for Children and Families to discuss our HMIE report. The sub-committee considers all reports on establishments as they arise, after the formal publication of each report. This is part of an open process of accountability, but is also intended to be supportive and to acknowledge the strengths that are included in all reports.*

*Needless to say, this committee was an absolute pleasure to attend. Sam and Stuart (Ruby's mummy and Celeste's daddy), Jane and I attended. We were literally applauded by the committee. Well done again everyone 😊*

### *Philosophies that impact on our practice*

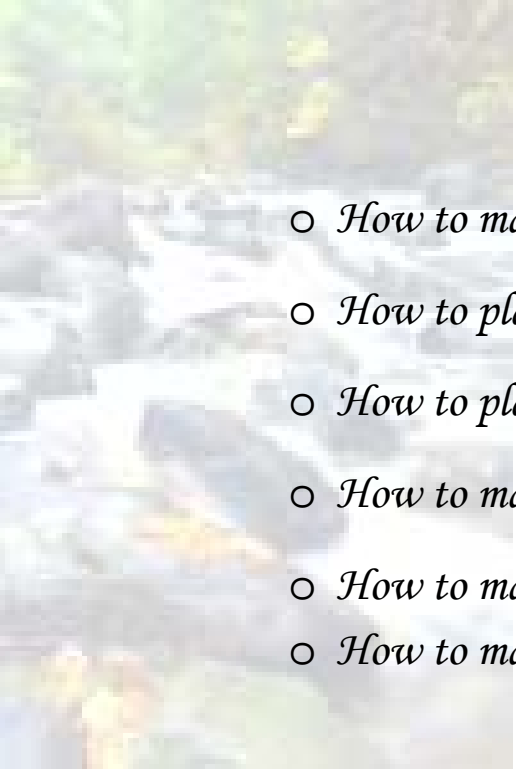
*Thank you for your kind comments regarding last month's newsletter. This month I have included the work of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi for your reference at the end of this newsletter.*

### *Sequence books*

*A variety of sequence books are available for sale for £2.50.*

*So far we have...*

- *Chocolate krispie*
- *Birthday cakes*
- *How to make scones*

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- *How to make banana bread*
  - *How to plant seeds*
  - *How to plant bulbs*
  - *How to make paper*
  - *How to make hot cross buns and of course...*
  - *How to make bread*

*Liam (Sala Infantil) is going to bring in his recipe book from home so that we can make even more child friendly recipe books.*

*If you would like to buy a sequence book please let me know and we will prepare one for you.*

### *Grounds for Awareness*

*We enjoyed a visit from Philippa MacDonald from Grounds for Awareness on Friday. She praised children and staff for their development work of the woodland area behind Willow Cottage. Philippa delighted in watching the children play in the garden. She exclaimed how free they were. Consequently, Philippa has invited Jane and I to present at an in-service training course in August 'Taking Learning Outdoors.'*

### *Questionnaire*

*Does anyone have a completed questionnaire they have not handed back yet? Please do hand it in as soon as possible. Results will be published in the August newsletter. Thank you.*



## Get Pickin'

*Are you remembering our berry picking day, August 2<sup>nd</sup> @ 10am at Craigie farm.*

*Craigie farm has a little café, so you could make a day of it. The ingredients used in the café are fresh. The café offers food at breakfast and lunch with lots of snacks between. If it is a lovely day you have the choice of eating indoors or outdoors.*

*Supporting small farm shops and markets is good for the small businesses and specialised producers dedicated to keeping local food production and traditions healthy (see honey information below).*

*For directions on how to get there pick up a leaflet from the eco-table.*

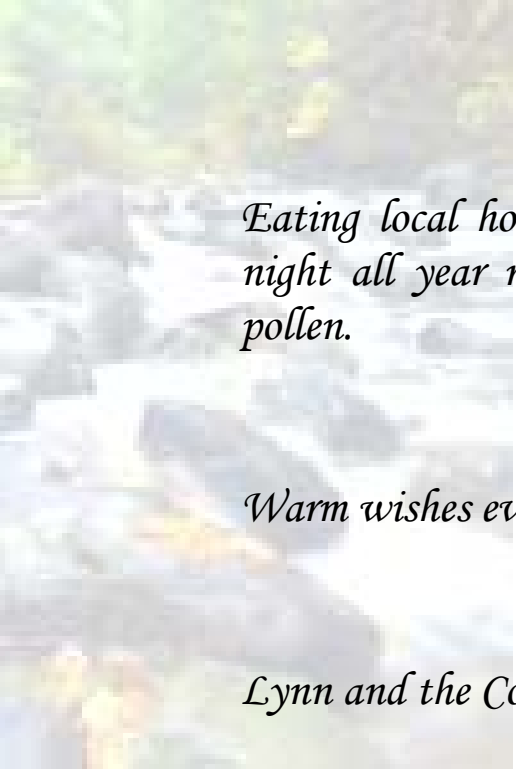
*Hope to see you there...around 10 o'clock?*

## Pure, Natural and Delicious Honey

*Did you know?*

*Honey doesn't just taste good – it has been used to fuel athletes, beautify women and sooth scars, colds and coughs for many centuries. Found in the tombs of Ancient Egyptian royalty, used by the Romans to pay taxes and offered up as a placation to the Greek Gods. This wonderful, delicious sustenance is one of the few to satisfy mind, body and spirit.*

*Packed full of natural goodness, honey offers slow releasing carbohydrates and vitamins, minerals and antioxidants galore!*



*Eating local honey can help prevent hay fever. A spoonful a night all year round can build up a resistance to the summer pollen.*

*Warm wishes everyone until next month*

*Lynn and the Cowgate team.*

## Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi

1746 – 1827



*Imagine a school where children attend 10-hour-long classes, six days a week. Where students teach each other and there are no marks or exams. Children work with saws, hammers, and planes. They operate lathes, a printing press and a bookbindery. Weekends are for hiking (children must have memorized the maps and collected the equipment in advance), swimming, and ice-skating. Core subjects include Chemistry, Physics, Zoology, and Botany.*

*This school was the brainchild of the Swiss educational reformer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827). Pestalozzi believed in providing public education for poor children. He insisted that every child is innately educable and deserves to be raised as a contributing member of society. And he had actions to match: Pestalozzi took poor children into his own home, and eventually created the Yverdon School.*

*The only remains of this dream school is a small museum in a castle in Yverdon, Switzerland, but Pestalozzi's life work still influences our understanding of children today.*

*An unlikely misfit in society, homely and unassuming, Pestalozzi was a man of the heart more than the intellect. He took the ideas of Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) fresh from his pen and put them to the test, expanding and refining them through trial and error. Despite perpetually tottering on the verge of poverty, he conducted a lifetime of ventures in education with contagious enthusiasm and vision.*

*The boy Pestalozzi got off to a rough start in life. Seven children were born in his parents' first eight years of marriage; four of them died during the same period. His father, too, died when Pestalozzi was five, and the remaining three siblings were raised by their mother and a devoted maid. Their love kindled a flame that Pestalozzi was to pass on in later years as a housefather and teacher, a love which was as important to his success with children as his methods themselves. At the same time, his worried guardians so strictly sheltered and limited the boy that he was slow to acquire the skills of other children his age, and he was teased for his awkwardness. When as an adult he pondered the ideal recipe for educating children, he came to conclude that his own childhood had lacked some vital ingredients: freedom to explore one's interests, and to observe and learn from the natural world.*

*“For children are your riches; and upon their turning out well or ill depends the whole order of their father's house.”*

*Plato*

*The economic straits of Pestalozzi's family from early on made him painfully aware of the ills of society and its need for remedy. He studied theology at the University in Zurich, then went into law. But his studies were interrupted. The city was astir with the ferment of the times that seeded the French Revolution, and the status quo began to show cracks. Zurich in the mid-1700s was governed by a few elitist families; ordinary citizens lacked basic*

rights. Pestalozzi joined a patriotic group of socially-minded university students who met privately to study ancient and modern philosophers under the leadership of a favourite instructor, Jakob Bodmer. Defying censorship, the group published a magazine airing their reformist views. Pestalozzi himself agitated vigourously for a fairer legal system for the unschooled local inhabitants, who suffered consistent repression under the high-handed ruling class. But his outspokenness came at a price: his political activism unnerved the city council, and cost him its support for his future work.

In an idealistic zeal for a life close to nature inspired by his studies of Rousseau, Pestalozzi broke off school and started up his own farm at the Neuhof, an estate in the village of Birr not far from Zurich. Progressive thought of the day proposed that improved agricultural practice would further a sound economy. As Pestalozzi knew nothing of farming, he undertook an agricultural apprenticeship for several months and became acquainted with the latest methods of cultivation. At the age of twenty-three, the university drop-out married the wealthy and beautiful Anna Schulthess, much against the wishes of her upper-class parents. Anna joined her new husband on his farm, where he was to spend nearly thirty years, first experimenting in agriculture, then pursuing social reform through education. Pestalozzi eagerly absorbed Rousseau's newly published *Emile*, a book that radically challenged contemporary ideas on raising children (so much so, in fact, that the French parliament ordered it burned, and its author narrowly escaped arrest).

Not that the ideas put forth in *Emile* were all new—they had been fermenting quietly for centuries. Already in the fourth century B.C. the Greeks developed lofty ideals of educating for citizenship, but these had sunk into near oblivion. Plato, for instance, already advocated compulsory universal education and saw play as essential to a child's development. He also held that

education is useless if it does not impart virtue. The teacher's task was not to put knowledge into empty vessels, but to help pupils go from 'becoming' to 'being'; in Plato's words, 'the power and capacity of learning exist in the soul already.' Rousseau expressed a similar viewpoint when he termed man a 'noble savage,' meaning, man is born good, but is easily corrupted by society. Therefore children ought not be taught in schools or classrooms, but tutored in a moral environment close to nature (books must not be introduced before the age of twelve). Parental involvement should be strong as well. Rote memorisation and teacher punishments deter learning; the student's natural curiosity should be the force arousing to discovery. Rousseau—followed by Pestalozzi, Froebel, and Montessori—recognized what western civilization had largely forgotten since Plato's time, that a child is not an adult. Childhood is a necessary phase of healthy human development and must be nurtured. As he read *Emile*, Pestalozzi found himself resonating with Rousseau's concepts.

Before long, the Pestalozzis had a son of their own, and little Jaqueli helped prove—or disprove—many of his young father's germinating ideas. But his son was not the only material to hand for his investigations. Taking destitute children into what became a house for the poor at Neuhof and caring for them, Pestalozzi fine-tuned Rousseau's hypotheses into workable methods that could be applied in the classroom. Pestalozzi wanted schooling to become relevant to the working class by preparing children for real life. Heart, hand, and head—all three must be educated as of equal value—not just the intellect. Therefore at Neuhof he trained children in manual labour—spinning, weaving, and farming—alongside their studies. Rousseau postulated that the child is like a flower that should grow spontaneously and naturally in the wild. Pestalozzi sought to reconcile Rousseau's emphasis on individual freedom with his own significant

recognition that, for best results, the flowers need not only sun and rain, but pruning and weeding.

*Despite the opposition and setbacks Pestalozzi faced throughout his life, (partly due to his own lack of organizational skills) visitors to his schools gave favourable and even astounded reports of the work he accomplished with his pupils. Through application of his theory of Anschauung (sensory experience of concrete objects before learning through words) Pestalozzi's students progressed in art, maths, reading, and writing far more rapidly than their counterparts in state schools. But due to ongoing economic shortfall that kept him near bankruptcy, his institution at Neuhof was closed down in 1779.*

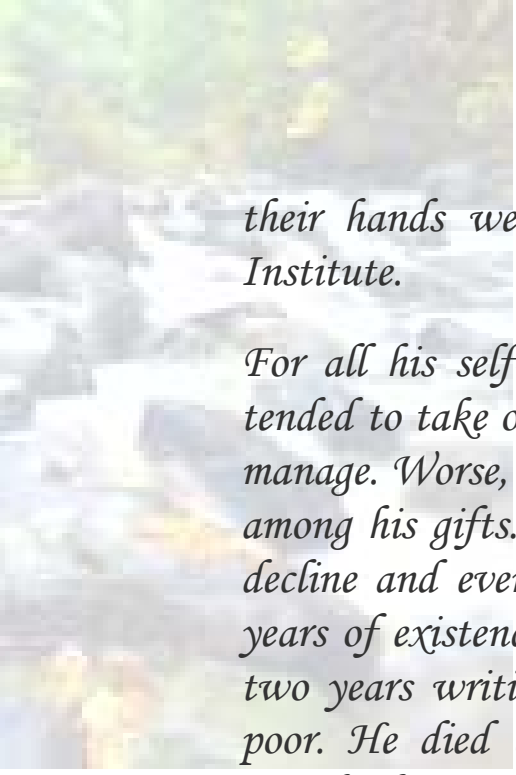
*Although it never brought him much money, Pestalozzi remained at Neuhof writing, producing among other works his first masterpiece, Leonard and Gertrude (1780). The novel tells of the reformation of a whole village through the way one mother educates her children. The book shortly made him famous throughout Europe.*

*Then Switzerland became the battlefield of Napoleon's Revolutionary Wars. When the French invaded Switzerland in 1798 and set fire to the village of Stans, Pestalozzi received permission to open an institution there, and for six months cared for over eighty war-scarred and orphaned children. The house existed in direst poverty, but he presided over it in a spirit of fatherly self-sacrifice that began within a short time to transform the near-ruined youngsters. For Pestalozzi, the opportunity represented a chance to fulfil his highest dream—to research in a caring setting how children should best be educated. But before long, the government intervened. As a supporter of the ideals of the French revolutionaries (though not their extreme tactics), Pestalozzi was mistrusted by the town's Catholic populace, and his institute was abruptly ousted in favour of a military hospital.*

*Deeply disappointed, and with his health compromised by the intense strain of caring for the orphans, Pestalozzi was forced to recuperate in the Gurnigelbad in the Bernese Alps.*

*Pestalozzi was then allowed to take up a position at the Burgdorf school (1799-1804), but from the start the suspicious town authorities restricted his scope for experiment. Given just a few pupils, he nonetheless set to with zeal, putting all books away and letting the children learn from their surroundings. Within months his success with these children gained him a new respect, and he was promoted to teaching a higher class. Europeans already were acquainted with Pestalozzi the author, through his earlier publication of *Leonhard & Gertrude*. Now, the publication in 1801 of *'How Gertrude Teaches her Children,'* put Burgdorf on the map as travellers flocked to observe Pestalozzi the innovative educator.*

*Political change in Bern led to evacuation of his institute from the Burgdorf Castle, and in 1804 it relocated to a castle at Yverdon. Here the work of educational experimentation flourished for many years as the aging but still-vigorous Pestalozzi mentored his staff, wrote voluminously, and welcomed international visitors and trainees (visitors over the years included Fichte, Ramsauer, Herbart, Froebel, Ritter, and Dr. Mayo). Hence his ideas were blown like seeds across Europe. The life at Yverdon in its heyday was wonderfully distinctive, with students and staff living as a community within the village. Students who could not afford to pay were admitted regardless; parents were kept in touch via frequent updates from teachers. Older pupils regularly tutored younger ones; report cards were nonexistent (Pestalozzi felt students should not be compared, but evaluated as individuals); and children had opportunity to interact with local trades. The natural environment, too, figured hugely in the curriculum: longmountain hikes, swimming, skating, gardening, raising animals, and learning to work with*



*their hands were all part of the normal bill of fare at the Institute.*

*For all his self-sacrifice in the cause of his ideals, Pestalozzi tended to take on more ambitious projects than he could actually manage. Worse, directing financial and staffing matters were not among his gifts. Vicious infighting between teachers caused the decline and eventual closing of Yverdon in 1825, after twenty years of existence. Retiring to Neuhof, Pestalozzi spent his last two years writing and even started to rebuild a house for the poor. He died before its completion, exhausted by continuing attacks from certain former staff members, who remained bitter enemies to the end.*

*As with most pioneers, Pestalozzi never saw a complete realization of his dreams. But the seeds had been planted. The world had been awakened to the need for children to be allowed a childhood, and to be educated in such a way as to prepare them for real life. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries would see others follow in the great teacher's steps, reforming education according to continually expanding perceptions of its purpose. Should Pestalozzi visit our schools nowadays, no doubt he would favour many of the changes brought about through the intervening years; others, perhaps, would surprise him. What would he say of a world where the outdoors has largely vanished beyond children's reach, where children are put at desks earlier to study for longer hours, and where exams and report cards are the measure of a child's success? With these things in mind, perhaps we could profit from taking time to reevaluate the goldmine of Pestalozzi's legacy.*