



ROBIN'S NEST NEWSLETTER

Spring Term 2018

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter of 2018, the first of a new initiative that will be coordinated by our colleague and editor Ianthe Lauwaert. It will be a collaborative effort amongst colleagues, parents and supporters of Robins Nest and will update our local community with our developments and general life at the setting. Please do contact us at ianthe@i-sculpture.org if you would like to contribute to our Summer newsletter. The deadline for contributions is the 13th of May 2018. We hope you will enjoy reading and wish you all a gentle and warm entering into Spring! Hannah Roberts, on behalf of Robin's Nest.



Life at the setting

by Hannah Roberts

We continue to start our day, once backpacks are packed and our animals are fed, cuddled and cared for, with our morning walk to the woods to experience the rich diversity of the winter woodland. Even in its cycle of sleep it still provides rich sensory stimulation for the children. We have met and played with Jack Frost and the children have taken great delight in the crunching of earth and the crystals hanging in the trees. The older children have taken initiative and ventured over the banks to encounter endless learning opportunities. Fallen trees have become trains and airplanes and provided new challenges to climb, crawl along and jump. We've been collecting King Alfred cakes to light our fires while listening to the chattering of birdsong after a period of stillness. Young catkins are now adorning the hazel trees, "keys to the kingdom" the children call out. The bluebells are waking up, there is anticipation in the air as we enter into Spring.

Back in the toasty yurt we experienced the comfort of the wood burner, providing a warm space to celebrate the awakening of Spring with Candlemas. The children prepared the wool that had been gathered last year from the farm, washed and carded it until it was ready for felting. Then all of them gathered around the light of the candles while rubbing and squeezing their felted pictures. Always in imitation I did not need to direct the children in words, only by example. My sun children (oldest children) helped the younger children with the picture forming, the teasing and layering of the wool.

The following week we heated bees wax, nourishing their senses once again with the rich smell. In a gesture of gratitude towards the bees and very slowly, in a rather meditative way, we dipped candles, up and down up and down to the rhythm of our song.

I took a question to sleep that evening: "How would we display these lovely candles the children had worked so hard on? What would give them justice while keeping their simplicity?" The following day my question was answered: one of my star children, one of the youngest became a little distraught with the felling of an old Christmas tree he had witnessed in our garden the week before. We had been using the branches to create shelters for the children as I thought this would bring a healing, a place they could hide and not be seen in. Now the inspiration came to saw the Christmas tree into little pieces, sand them down and drill holes in the centre to make beautiful candleholders. The following day with the woodwork bench placed in the middle of the room and adorned with saws, sanding paper and drills, we set to work. This activity really met our more rambunctious boys where they were able to exercise all their will forces.



Last week we had a lovely parent evening where all were able to experience our Easter circle time in movement, rhyme and song. We explored the pedagogy of the 3 and 4 year olds, the awe and wonder they are still in and the importance of the inner work of the adults taking care of them. Truth, beauty and goodness are the essential qualities that the children should be surrounded by, the substance that will nurture their life forces. If we can really find this quality of gratitude within us, the children will bathe in this gesture and be able to imitate it later on in life.

Also at the parents evening we looked at the importance of free play unhindered by the adult and led through the imagination. Through play, the child is using his hands to change the world in a way devised by his imagination. This is an act of devotion and comes from love. We must create the right conditions for our children to play in: uncluttered, natural and open-ended environments. We spoke about the importance of healthy and consistent boundaries where the children can feel safe and secure. The brain is not yet able to cope with choices and decision-making. Therefore the authority and certainty of the adult are paramount in this phase of development.



Next term we will host a Simplicity Parenting course which will be led by Leigha Hipkin, a Waldorf Kindergarten teacher and trainer with over 20 years of experience working with the early years and parents. Leigha will guide and support us through our parenting journey. My self and Eva will also join this course.

We will now look towards Easter with the blowing of eggs, the dying and spinning of wool and continue to care for the environment and each other with the chopping of wood, preparation of the soil and the nurturing of bulbs that have been planted. I hear we have another frost on the way, so my children will put the bulbs back to bed for a while and cover them with a blanket or two.

A message to the parents: I am available to discuss the children and their development on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and would hope to see you all at least once a term. In doing this, the child really feels held and supported and our parent partner relationship is strengthened in this process.

Robin Wood Sanctuary – Educational Smallholding

by Kira Orsak

It has been a particularly soggy few months on site since our November harvest gathering and celebratory launch of the smallholding. The green manure has grown in abundance, covering the soil in a thick green blanket. Soon we will incorporate it into the soil, forming raised beds for our vegetables. Little (big) jobs have been underway in preparation for Spring. Space has been cleared on the sheltered and shady periphery for the children's play area, compost bays and tool shed, and we've been busy gathering and sourcing materials. Developments are underway at an organic steady pace, as we continue to explore what is possible to achieve collectively with the time and resources at hand.

We're on the lookout for promising grants, and fundraising opportunities for a startup fund to source more urgent things for the growing season. Goals for this season include a focus on growing vegetables for harvest beginning end of summer, planting some fruit trees, and soft fruit asap, and potentially adopting some sheep who would be wonderful lawn mowers and fleece suppliers. Runner ducks are also a possibility. There is much to look forward to!



Below is a list of items we are on the lookout for if anyone knows of anything going spare.

- General compost materials, particularly manure, also old straw or hay, ... etc.
- Potting soil/compost
- Fencing (posts and wire for rabbit proofing growing beds section)
- Seeds
- Seed trays/pots
- Cardboard
- Soft fruit bushes/canes
- Tools, wheelbarrows, watering cans
- Financial donations

We have regular work days Friday's, 9-4, and are extremely fortunate to be joined by BD gardening legend Dorothea Leber in the afternoons. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to confirm closer to the date what's on the agenda for particular work days. It's hard to know particulars in advance at this beginning stage.

Kira Orsak
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07525018147

Straw Bale Kindergarten

by Hayley Burtenshaw

Plans for building a strawbale kindergarten at Emerson are progressing! The site has been agreed and we are now in the process of obtaining planning permission. Sarah Neal is leading this work to put together a planning proposal with the support of Nic Popel. This follows our very positive pre-application meeting with the planning office.

We are planning a design week at the end of May (in the half term week), which will be led by an experienced architect and projective geometrist who is coming specially from South Africa. Amongst many projects including running an international design school he has designed buildings and spaces for several Waldorf schools and has a particular interest in designing spaces that support the developing child. This week will be an opportunity to bring together all the contributions and people interested in the project, we will look at all aspects of the design around the central purpose: *creating a space that supports the incarnating child which is in harmony with its environment and community*. A subsidiary thread to the week will be the question of *how to design as a community with and for truth, beauty and goodness*. At the end of the week we will have a detailed design. More information about participation on this week will be communicated soon!

News from the parenting groups

CHOPPING WOOD

by Eva Gonzalez

It is a chilly morning in the Parent and Child group. We are making bread and talking about the importance of doing real jobs around the children that they can imitate and be involved with. We bake our bread in the stove so what about bringing wood for the fire? At free play a mum and a few boys bring logs inside the yurt and we make the fire roar while we smell our delicious bread.

After snack we gather around for the ring time. We sing songs about chopping wood with an axe (hand gestures) and with a big saw (holding hands with mummy). The excitement of the shared songs and gestures lead to a quiet space where the puppet show unfolds. "Tom" needs wood for the winter cold and with his axe he enters the woods. The wind blows and starts to snow. His dear horse friend comes with the cart and together they bring wood home and have a good supper. Finally all the children get ready and the baked bread awaits them outside the yurt to be taken home and be shared with daddies and siblings. It has been another warm morning with a familiar fragrance of baked bread and chopped wood.

A NURTURING SPACE

by Una Archer

The first year with the baby (regardless of whether it is your first, second, third or fourth...) is the time of enormous transition. Becoming a mother touches and transforms every corner of your being, every aspect of your life. You get to experience the highs of purest joy and the lows of utter exhaustion.

Mum, bump and baby group at Robin's Nest is a nurturing space to check in with yourself, to connect with your baby and your fellow mothers; a space to let yourself be, just how you are that day. It provides a space to take a break from the distractions of the endless doing and to enjoy sharing simple moments with your precious baby.

Raphael Taylor – volunteer at the setting

by Raphael Taylor



After experiencing Steiner education from child through student I returned to it last year, this time with new eyes focusing in on the early years. I believe reconnecting in a new way to my own experiences of that time in my life prompted this desire. I started volunteering at Robin's Nest in the Autumn term for two days per week. This term I am there just on Tuesdays, when the children spend the day outside and go for their walk to Tablehurst farm. I have been touched by the imagination and wonder the children have for the natural world. The robin redbreast is a particular favourite. He never seems to be far away when the snack is prepared - perhaps something to do with the name of the setting!

I have also observed the perseverance and will of the children when, for

example, facing the challenge of climbing over the farm gate. Other moments that have touched me include the care the children show towards each other, for example, when one of them slips over on the path.

Songs are present through out the day, but I particularly enjoy the morning song where children, parents and staff sing together. Goodbye also closes with a song and often a game of I spy something in the colour of ...



Adult Nature Immersion

by Vicky Mew, co-founder of Cultivating Curiosity

We're looking forward to welcoming Hannah, and the rest of our group, in March as we embark on Cultivating Curiosity's first yearlong adult's nature immersion course. In fact, it was a conversation with Hannah that catalysed the course into being despite years of simmering in myself, Anna and Daniel. So much gratitude to Hannah and her inspiration and naming the need she saw for this course to exist, to deepen her practice of all she and her team bring to the children that are enriched at Robin's Nest.

There are still a few spaces if you are enticed to join us on this journey through the core routines of nature connection. Feel embodied and empowered through building connection to yourself, others, and the natural world. On this journey we will explore through games, embodied experience, sensory awareness, story and song, crafting and practical skills, reflection, and journeying. All of this will sit on a foundation of building a culture of connection and personal growth that can be accessibly woven into your daily life through specific, manageable practices and peer support.

Find out more here: <http://www.cultivating-curiosity.co.uk/adult-nature-immersion.html>

Warmth and Health

by Kristine Hunt, writer of the *Anthromama* blog

Springtime is here, and the weather is warming up. However, despite the sunny skies around here, it's still chilly for most of the day. I'm fighting daily battles with SillyBilly, who wants to wear his shorts and t-shirts and sandals, to get him dressed warmly enough. And we are all still snorting and hacking our way out of that nasty cold virus we had last weekend.

Rudolf Steiner and other anthroposophical writers have said a lot about warmth and the human being. Steiner linked warmth and the blood directly to the activity of the human ego, also known as the "I" (this is distinct from the Freudian ego — here we are referring to the immortal spirit of the individual). In the young child, warmth allows the physical body to develop properly, with good structure and function:

"If the ego is to be able to perfect the organs so that they endure in good health throughout life, there must be a well-maintained deep body warmth. For...it is the warmth organization wherein the ego works....[In the adult] the ego is fully incarnated and is able to control the body temperature, whereas [in the child] the ego is in a process of incarnation and is not yet fully in charge."

– Joan Salter, [The Incarnating Child](#)

Steiner also described the 12 senses: the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, and the seven senses of warmth, life, self-movement, balance, word, thought, and the I and Other. We can see that in a baby, the sense of touch and warmth are pre-eminent, in the toddler the sense of self-movement leads to walking and the sense of word leads to talking, while older children work on balance in their see-sawing and tree climbing.

Young children do not have a mature sense of warmth, clearly seen in the child who is blue with cold yet refuses to come out of the swimming pool! Adults must help the child by providing appropriate clothing and environment. On another level, the sense of warmth relates to the emotional and spiritual atmosphere or mood: cold, impersonal and insincere. or caring. loving and genuine.

"As adults we know how uncomfortable it is to feel cold and how it prevents us from working properly either physically or mentally. A baby feels even more uncomfortable and yet he cannot complain....The soul and spirit need sufficient warmth for their work of moulding and remoulding the body."

– Wilhelm zur Linden, [When a Child is Born](#)

In the child, illness that may be brought on by being cold is often resolved via fever. The body brings on an elevated internal temperature in order to kill, or prevent proliferation of, the virus or bacteria. However there are other physical as well as spiritual aspects to fever:

"Thermoregulation and fever also have a soul-spiritual aspect. Heat is more than just a quantitative factor measured with a thermometer. As such, warmth also manifests in the activity of the human soul and spirit. We "feel warm inside" when we meet a good friend or revisit the familiar landscape of our childhood....Conversely, fear, anger, or great sorrow, or even hate, envy, or discontent in our surroundings, makes our blood "run cold."... Fever helps a child's I adapt its inherited body to its own purposes, making it a more suitable vehicle for self-expression....From a purely outer perspective, the rapid regaining of weight lost during a feverish illness is an indication that the body is being organically remodeled. The child has deconstructed some aspect of her inherited body and is rebuilding it under the independent direction of her own warmth organization."

– Michaela Glöckler, Wolfgang Goebel, *A Guide to Child Health*

So, here's what we do. My kids wear thin, soft wool underwear on all but the hottest days, and most nights. They wear long sleeves and pants through three seasons. When they go to daycare, and often at home, they wear slippers or booties to keep their feet warm. They wear hats most of the time outdoors (sunhats in summer of course). Tummy aches bring out the hot water bottle, one of our dearest friends! When the kids get a fever, we do not suppress it with medication — we address any discomfort by sponging down or wrapping their calves with tepid lemon water cloths, and make sure they have extra fluids and rest. We make an effort to make their surroundings beautiful to warm their souls.

News and events in the community

CELEBRATING THE FESTIVALS WITH THE WHOLE FAMILY

By Tom Ravetz, priest at the Christian Community in Forest Row

Along with the nourishment that our children need for their bodies and all the play and learning that feeds their souls, parents may wonder what will feed their child's spiritual side. Following the path of the festivals through the year takes the children on the path of human spiritual development, from birth to the celebration of life that overcomes death at Easter, to the experience of the free human spirit at St John's Tide and Michaelmas. In The Christian Community, we create simple festival celebrations for young children using archetypal forms and stories, which give the children an embodied experience of the festival at hand, which they will remember for years to come. As we approach Easter this year, we will sow the wheat for Easter together on Sunday 11th March at 3pm at the church. On Easter Sunday, there will be a celebration for all the family from noon, also at the church. Children of school age are welcome to join our Sunday Service for Children, which takes place at 9.15 most Sundays. Please enquire at the church for more information and for details of future festivals. <http://thechristiancommunityinforestrow.org>

RELATIONAL ART AND ORGANIC DESIGN - A NEW COURSE AT EMERSON COLLEGE

Relational Arts & Organic Design is an immersive twelve-week course exploring the relational nature of the world in which we live through a rich programme of nature-based crafts, expressive art and observational science. The programme is composed of three four-week blocks built around the themes of Enquiry, Creativity & Purpose. Students can take part on either a full-time or a part-time basis. Open to all, this course is ideal for: People who want to deepen their connection with nature, broaden their creative skills and renew their sense of personal purpose; Artists, Craft Makers and Designers looking to develop a more socially engaged creative practice; Scientist & Academics interested in exploring phenomenological and relational practices within a meaningful creative context; Teachers, Community and Social Entrepreneurs and initiative-takers looking to develop a human-centered, creative practice.

For more information on how to apply please visit www.emerson.org.uk/relationalarts
Or contact Dr Philip Kilner: phikilner@gmail.com

STUDYGROUP

Wednesday evening 7:30-9pm at
Emerson College

Foundations of Human Experience
(formerly called the Study of Man).

This is the series of lectures Rudolf Steiner gave to the teachers of the first Waldorf school, just before it opened. For anyone interested in

Waldorf education and child development. Please let Hayley know if you would like to join:
hayleyburtenshaw@gmail.com /
07835547833

LAMBING SEASON EVENT AT TABLEHURST FARM SATURDAY 24TH AND 31ST MARCH

Come and witness the newborn lambs and let your children be a part of this awe-inspiring event. Robin's Nest will be there hosting some seasonal crafts, taking the opportunity to raise awareness about Waldorf education, its aims and purpose. We will also use it as a platform to raise monies for the Robin Wood Sanctuary – Educational Farm (mini farm in short). Please do come and support us and the mini farm, come along and experience the blowing and decorating of eggs or create a beautiful felted picture. You can also support us by baking a cake to sell on our cake stall or you may want to purchase one of our delicious homemade cakes to take away. We look forward to seeing you there!

Giving Thanks

Robin's Nest continues to be supported by many friends, which makes it into a real community-held setting. We would like to take a moment to thank all those who keep contributing their time, skills, gifts and care. Thank you so much!

All the parents of the setting; Kira Orsak, who is the driving force behind the Robin Wood Sanctuary; Tina Weston, our wonderful kindi keeper and cleaner; Ben Rayner, for yurt maintenance and for generally caring for us at Robins Nest; Alistair, Ben and Kate, Hayley and Kira who erected the shed and give general support to the Robin Wood Sanctuary; Jean-Marc, Pricila and Ilona Albisetti, who are lovingly caring for the animals in the weekends and holidays and generally keep an eye on the yurt and respond to emergencies; Rebecca Debenham, who made the willow structures and does the landscaping of our garden; Alex, who lights the wood burner early in the mornings, Naamah Pinkerfeld, who sings with the parents and children every morning, what a gift to start to day! Stephan Duve, who gives electrical support and helps with maintenance; Dorothea Leber, who volunteers every Friday afternoon on the Robin Wood Sanctuary; Tarik Mecci, who fixed Rufty and Tufty's home during the winter break.

Besides all the skills and supporting deeds, we also received some beautiful gifts: Emerson College donated the piece of land for our new straw bale house. Pericles gave us a boot stand for the children's muddy boots and donated baskets and marionettes. Anna Sandberg gave us beautiful ceramic bowls. Steve and Oscar Briault gave us their rabbits Rufty and Tufty. Nutly Hall donated the chicken coup and windmill stringed instruments. Vija Docherty is making a Madonna painting for the setting and makes the beautiful artwork for our termly calendars. Tablehurst farm donated piles of woodchip, gave a wonderful talk over Christmas about the farm and animals, taught us how to make skep hives and is lending us the land for the mini farm. Johannes Soper donated bundles and bundles of lovely seasoned wood and a garden shed. Katherine Bevan donated a puppet theatre, puppets and puppet-making materials. Emma Goodwin donated seeds and plants.



Tour date

Experience Robin's Nest Early Years Setting with a talk by our founder and Kindergarten teacher Hannah on Friday 9th March at 2.30 – 3.30pm. Booking is essential at robinsnest.org.uk

Needs & Gifts

Can we build a society on the spirit of the gift? - Charles Eisenstein

Our termly newsletter will always include a section where gifts and needs can be exchanged. If you have something that you don't use anymore, or a service you want to offer freely, or if you are in need of something and you want to see if someone in the community can help you out, let us know and we will include it in our newsletter. Contact: ianthe@i-sculpture.org



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