

Summerhill News

A.S. Neill's Summerhill School; a co-educational boarding school in Suffolk, England, is the original alternative 'free' school. Founded in 1921, it continues to be an influential model for progressive, democratic education around the world.



BBC Come to Town

As I write this a seventy strong BBC crew have finally arrived at Summerhill and have started filming 'Summerhill', a children's drama based around the court case.

Forty kids stayed behind at the end of term. Some have speaking parts but the vast majority are extras. "It's a great experience for the kids", said Zoe. "They're getting up at 6.30am and going to bed at 10pm. The cast and crew are really struck with how great the kids are. One of the crew said to me, "they look you right in the eye when you talk to them, it's like they're looking into your soul".

Annette Badlands (Doctor Who and Charlie and the Chocolate Factory) plays Myrtle, an OFSTED inspector who falls in love with Summerhill, changes her allegiance and takes up a teaching position at school.

Ron Cook (Doctor Who, Hot Fuzz and Parker in Thunderbirds) plays Mr Wharton, a senior OFSTED inspector who maintains a hard line approach to his work. He believes in structured education and Summerhill threatens his beliefs.



Annette and Ron taking a break in between scenes. Both felt that Summerhill challenged their perceptions about schooling.

(Picture opposite, the children descend the ladder after hearing the fire alarm which has been triggered by the wood work workshop catching fire)



Mary Southgate, originally from Ipswich and 'make up artist to the stars' puts the finishing touches to Rosie's hair in the mobile caravan.



Geraldine McNulty plays Zoë. "The Summerhill kids have been great", said Geraldine, "They're professional and enjoyable to work with and we've had some great conversations".

Summerhill has worked its magic on the cast and crew who will be very sad to leave before moving on to London to film the court scenes.



Connor McIntyre plays Len, a teacher at school. "Summerhill makes so much sense", said Connor, "treating kids with respect and giving them freedom to choose for themselves, it's marvelous".



Half term Campover



Despite the summer showers, half-term campover was once again a huge success with parents coming from all over Europe and as far away as

Japan! The weekend kicked off on Friday night with a walk to Sizewell beach followed by a dip and some grub. A lie in was enjoyed on Saturday morning and then an outdoor sale and auction which included hand made machine guns, clothes, art and plants. Big Will did a great job as auctioneer and overall £544 was raised in aid of the Community funds which pays for things like repairing the Gram, swimming pool, games and whatever else the meeting votes on. Parents joined Zoë and Tony for drinks and a chat in the early part of the evening which was followed by half-term party. That night, the San kids relocated to our tent which meant Pascal could have a night off and join the parents for a drink. (picture, Will auctioning off a lovely cactus plant).



Sunday morning was a slow start with lots of slobbering. A full one and a half hour football match took place on Sunday afternoon consisting of kids and parents including Mike, Morgan and myself. Forgetting that I was 43

and not 13, I found myself recovering in goal for the second half during which we fought our way back, from two five to five all. Mike and Morgan were shining examples of youthful vigour as they raced up and down the pitch but most impressive were the kids themselves who showed great skill and team spirit. (picture, Sunday morning in our very blue tent). We all went home on Monday and normal life resumed at Summerhill. Thank you to staff and kids for sharing your home with us and for putting to much effort into making it a great weekend.

Changes on the cards

The constraints under which English schools have found themselves over the last decade or more would appear to be loosening. There is a growing consensus that we need to change the target-driven, assessment-led culture of our schools in order to enable all our children and young people to thrive. The organisation and structure of schools and the curriculum are in need of radical restructuring. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, a Government body, is reportedly advocating a theme based approach to the curriculum in secondary schools in the place of discrete National Curriculum subjects and there is talk of encouraging creativity and the imagination. These are hopeful signs for the future. Source, Mary Tasker, Human Scale Education news.

Sign the Petition

Please spare a moment to sign the online petition on the Prime Ministers website regarding OFSTED failing to amend or remove the 1999 inspection report.

<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/Summerhill/>

SO I BECAME

I remember first
the day long drive in the high trap
to buy a calf in a village dizzy with windmills.
Numbness of fingers
dividing apples and cake
and my fathers voice:
'Travellers must share and share.'

The word endured
was overlaid with notions of other kinds
making one's way and privilege of class
with self esteem and rights
but endured

The word grew strong and mated with other words.
Justice fair dealing
grew tall in innocence
over the world's wall.

The mills spun sunlight
out of a fleecy sky
I dreamed no other.

Till I awoke. And a cold dry wind
and a smoke black world
filled with bent backs
and upright chimneys a world
where words meant nothing
and justice did not run
outside four walls.

Words failed to serve
save to curse in Hamlet's word
or Job's day.

Talk of justice in a new tongue
caught the low flame.
A traveller's justice.
Justice dividing.
True warfaring talk. My father's voice
dividing the whole world like the last apple
on the Dalham road.

So I became
What ever I now am.

Written by Leslie Morton

Leslie was a teacher at Summerhill and author of 'A People's History of England', the first history book to study the lives of ordinary working men and women rather than the machinations of kings, queens and bishops. He died in 1987.



Images of Summerhill

End of Term



Despite the summer term being taken up with a lot of preparation for filming, The music event (Summerhill Wave 2007) was no disappointment. The venue was the new theatre where kids, staff and parents stood shoulder to shoulder, eager to catch a glimpse of this years Summerhill rock stars. The event kicked off with 'Greetings' a track written by Henry and Thijs which was performed by Toshi, Orlando and Oscar and will feature in the BBC drama. This was followed by a series of covers including Nothing Else Matters by Metallica, Torn by Natalie Imbruglia and a great version of Pink Floyd's Time, sung by the very handsome Will Hotopf. The final track was a lovely melody called 'Here we Stand' which was inspired by the court case, beautifully sung by Anna and written and performed by the Bamboo Bambos.

Unshin

Megumi Miyoshi (Unshin) left Summerhill last year and has since been studying music in London. She's teamed up with Henry Readhead and Thijs Hendricks to record their debut album 'Waltz for Broken Dolls' which includes a mix of genres including jazz, Rock, traditional Japanese music and drum and bass. It is a concept album that tells the story of a young girl growing up in Japan, struggling to establish her own identity whilst living under the pressures of Japanese society.

For their forthcoming UK mini Tour, Meg, Thijs and Henry have joined up with Jesse Barrett, Beth Ramm and Sing Yeh (all ex-Summerhillians) to perform the Waltz For Broken Dolls Album live at the Norwich Playhouse (8th September) and The Cut, Halesworth (2nd October) and will be booking more gigs later this year. To read more or to listen to some of Unshin's tracks visit www.unshin.co.uk

Tremors Returns

A short video has been posted on YouTube, made by John Ferrer (age 10) at Summerhill. It's called 'Tremors Returns'.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElxO2UzDrDI

Essences of Summerhill



Robina Hearle is offering three Bach Flower Summerhill essences for sale. 'Summerhill', 'Now' for when we desperately need to slow down and for expanded awareness and consciousness, and 'Tranquility'. They cost £5.50 of which £3.00 goes to the Summerhill Trust. For further info' contact Robina Hearle 01473738905, or visit her website www.rosecottagefloweressences.co.uk.

The A.S. Neill Summerhill Trust

Briefly, the A.S. Neill Summerhill Trust was created for two purposes. The first is to raise funds for assisted places so that a wider range of pupils can benefit from being at Summerhill. Over the years the school has unofficially managed to help a number of children, but this has been at the expense of other important things.

The second aim of the Trust is to promote the extensive writings and work of A. S. Neill and the present day practices of Summerhill School. There is an on-going need to promote Summerhill's international and historical importance on the world education stage. We are currently looking at offering trainings at Summerhill for teachers and others to learn from the 'Summerhill experience'.

During the last three months we have been busy planning how we will deliver the teacher training days which we hope to roll out in 2008. I have sent an application to the Garfield Weston Foundation in the hope that they will give us £15,000 to support new pupils who have barriers to learning and participation.

“During the last 3 months we've raised £1,106”

During the last 3 months we have received £1,106 in donations. Thank you to those who gave so generously.

We are considering organising a Sponsored Bike Ride for 2008. Current and ex pupils, parents and friends of Summerhill will be invited to take part. If you would like to be part of the planning group please do give me a call.
