

RUDOLF STEINER AND THE OXFORD CONFERENCE: THE BIRTH OF WALDORF EDUCATION IN BRITAIN

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Abstract: *The Oxford Conference in the summer of 1922, 15-29 August, introduced Waldorf education to a British audience and laid the foundations for its international diffusion. Rudolf Steiner dominated the Conference proceedings although he was only one of the listed 14 speakers for the 'Spiritual Values in Education & Social Life' event. Contemporary documentation is examined to reveal key aspects and the significance of the Conference at which there were 230 attendees. Steiner presented each of the 12 morning lectures at Manchester College, now Harris Manchester College, University of Oxford. Steiner spoke in German and George Kaufmann translated. Afternoon and evening events were presented at the nearby Keble College. Conference events included, reportedly, the first Eurythmy demonstrations in Britain. Performances were presented by Eurythmists from Dornach as well as by Oxford school children. The Conference received widespread press coverage. An outcome of the Conference was a five paragraph statement issued by the delegates and stating the intention to create a world-wide association to foster the founding of new schools. A Provisional Committee of at least 11 members was elected and charged with this object. The Oxford Conference served as a catalyst for the establishment of Waldorf schools in Britain and the broader English-speaking world, and is a key historical event in the proliferation of Waldorf education.*

Keywords: *Manchester College; Keble College; Waldorf schools; Anthroposophy; Stuttgart; England; Millicent Mackenzie; George Kaufmann.*

INTRODUCTION

In 1922 Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) was at the height of his powers and was an accomplished orator. Steiner's lecturing career dates back at least to 1888 (Stewart, 2010). There are a total of 5105 dated lectures by Steiner spanning a period of 37 years (1888-1924). The final six years of Steiner's public life (1919-1924) account for 2362 lectures, 46.3% of the total. Lectures in Germany (N=2422) and Switzerland (N=1976) dominate the statistics, while lectures in Britain total 116 over the period 1905-1924 (Stewart)

In terms of reach and outcome, the Oxford Conference was arguably the zenith of Steiner's ten visits to Britain. Previously, Steiner had delivered only eight lectures in Britain (Stewart, 2010). There was a single lecture in London in 1905, followed by two in 1913. Almost a decade elapsed, and a World War, before Steiner resumed his visits to Britain in 1922. In April of that year, he delivered three lectures in London and two in Stratford-on-Avon (Stewart, 2010). None of these eight prior presentations attracted widespread press coverage, and, at the time of the Oxford Conference, Steiner was relatively unknown to the British press and public.

Waldorf Education

The original Waldorf School was established in September 1919 in Stuttgart, Germany, by Rudolf Steiner at the invitation of a German industrialist, Emil Molt (Rosenkrantz, 1922). Steiner stated that the Waldorf School sought "to apply the educational principles arising out of Anthroposophy" to children's education (1923a, p.24). The Stuttgart Waldorf School began with an enrollment of 150 students and this had grown to 700 by the time of the Oxford Conference (Rosenkrantz, 1922). Students at Stuttgart were "drawn not only from all classes but from different distant countries - even from America" (Rosenkrantz, 1922, p.79). There was a clear and early understanding that the original school was to serve as a demonstration school: "The Waldorf School is equally a school for teachers as it is a school for children" (Rosenkrantz, 1922, p.79).

In 1921 Millicent Mackenzie, a retired Professor of Education, organised a delegation of teachers to the Goetheanum, Steiner's headquarters of Anthroposophy based at Dornach, Switzerland. Freeman (1922) recorded that there were "Between three and four hundred men and women from all parts of Europe ... to hear a Course of Lectures on Education" and this included "the group of thirty teachers and others who attended the Course from England". Steiner recorded that: "English friends of Anthroposophy were with us at a conference at Christmas" (1923a, p.24). It was that 1921 Christmas Teacher's Course which led to the invitation for Steiner to present the 1922 Oxford Conference organised by Mackenzie.

Mackenzie had met Steiner in Berlin (Bamford, 1995). She was a pioneering educator and is said to be Britain's first woman professor (1904-1915); by way of comparison, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge granted degrees to women beginning in 1920 and 1948 respectively (Beddoe, 2004; Cunningham & Goodwin, 2001; Dyhouse, 1995). Mackenzie was also a pioneer in the political arena. She was an active member of the Cardiff Women's Suffrage Society (Beddoe, 2004). The December 1918 British election was the first in which women could stand for Parliament and Mackenzie was one of the seventeen women candidates; she stood unsuccessfully as a Labour candidate for the University of Wales seat (Beddoe, 2004).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present account relies on the examination of primary source material, the various records held in institutional archives, and contemporaneous reports of the Oxford Conference. The text of Steiner's core presentations at the Oxford Conference have long been available, for example, nine are published in Steiner (1922c) and four appear in the compendium *Rudolf Steiner Speaks to the British* (Steiner, 1998). However, what has not been available is an account of the Conference per se. The present account seeks to redress this and to present an integrated account, relying primarily on contemporary documentation, ephemera, and media reportage.

RESULTS

Oxford

The minutes of the Anthroposophical Society of Great Britain of 2 February 1922 record that: "It was reported that Professor Jacks had promised Manchester College, Oxford for a fortnight in August for the proposed Educational conference" (1922b, p.2).

The following month, the minutes of Manchester College, Oxford, dated 20 March 1922, state that:

"The Council of Spiritual Values in Education and Social Life made application for the use of the College Residence and Arlosh Hall for a Conference to be held in Oxford during the fortnight August 15th to 29th 1922, and offering to contribute at the rate of £3 per head for board and residence. Resolved - That the application be granted and the arrangements left in the hands of the Board of Studies" (MCO, 1922, p.114).

The Oxford Conference coincided with a growing interest at Manchester College in education as a subject in its own right. The College annual report of 1922 identified "the growing tendency among teachers to regard the work of education in close connection with the philosophy of life" and it noted:

"The introduction, during the year under review, of education as a subject of study has been an event of great interest in the history of the College. In respect of recent years it is a new feature, but on a longer survey of the past it may be said to revive the zeal for general education which ... was a marked feature of an earlier period The introduction of this subject has unquestionably brought a quickening element into the general life of the College.... An Educational Library is in process of formation" (Worthington, 1922, p.10).

Oxford was an inspired choice to launch a differentiated form of education. As the home of the oldest university in the English-speaking world, Oxford has been for centuries a magnet for ideas, scholars, and learning. The University of Oxford currently comprises 38 colleges. Three of these colleges, Manchester College, Keble College, and St. Hugh's College had a role in the Oxford Conference, with the two former hosting the Conference events and with the latter restricted to offering board and lodging only.

Manchester College was founded in 1786 in the city of Manchester; it subsequently moved to London, and it settled in Oxford in 1889 (Smith, 1986). Manchester College began as a dissenting academy with a Unitarian non-conformist heritage. It was founded at a time when professions of faith were required at Oxford and Cambridge universities. In contrast, Manchester's 1786 foundational document declared it to be open to: "every religious denomination, for whom no test, or confession of faith will be required" (quoted by Smith, 1986, p xiii). At the time, the Unitarian doctrine of the unity of God and the rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity was, and remained until the Doctrine of the Trinity Act of 1813, an illegal and blasphemous position (Smith, 1986). Carved in stone above the Manchester College entrance is: "To Truth, To Liberty, To Religion", words which were borrowed from the 1786 opening address of Manchester's first Divinity tutor, Thomas Barnes (Smith, 1986). Manchester College is now 'Harris Manchester College', a college of the University of Oxford (Bullen, 2008). Manchester College hosted the Conference reception and all of the morning events.

Keble College is an eight minute walk from Manchester College. It was founded in 1870 and named in memory of John Keble, a Professor of Poetry, who was a founder of the Oxford Movement, also known as Tractarians, and who sought to restore for the Church of England some of the early elements of Christian faith. In terms of student numbers, Keble is one of the largest of Oxford colleges. Keble hosted the afternoon and evening events. These events included the twelve non-Steiner lectures, four evenings of Eurhythmy" demonstrations (16, 19, 23 and 26 August), and two evening "Celebration and Plays" (21 and 22 August) (Mackenzie, 1922c, pp.4-5). (The spelling 'Eurhythmy' was used in the Conference programme; the spelling 'Eurythmy' is now generally used (e.g. Spock, 1980)).

St Hugh's College, located in North Oxford, is a twelve minute walk from Keble. It was established as a women's college in 1886 (Bullen, 2008), and for the Conference its role was limited to offering board and lodging to delegates (Mackenzie, 1922c).

Despite not speaking English himself, Steiner was very keen to reach an English audience. He had introduced English language teaching, along with French, at the Stuttgart Waldorf School. He commented, presciently, that “English is taught because it is a universal world language, and will become so more and more” (Steiner, 1924b, p.139).

At the time of the Oxford Conference the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain had 297 members (Anthroposophical Society, 1922c). The Agenda of a meeting of the Society, a fortnight before the Conference, recorded that: “It is Dr. Steiner’s earnest wish that all members should make a special effort to attend the Oxford Conference” (Anthroposophical Society, 1922a, p.1).

Conference

There were 230 Conference attendees (Schoolmaster, 1922a) and they were described as follows:

“ ... the whole educational hierarchy was represented ... the great majority were teachers, directors of educational method, head masters and mistresses, professors of special subjects, assistants. The secretary herself, Mrs Millicent Mackenzie, who deserves congratulations on her organising powers, was formerly Professor of Education in the University of Wales ... Twenty nations were represented ... the United Kingdom counted as four, and the Colonies added three more” (Schoolmaster, 1922a). (N.b.: The University of Wales Cardiff is known as ‘Cardiff University’ (Cunningham & Goodwin, 2001, p.2)).

Three Manchester College facilities were utilised for the Conference: the Library for the reception (15 August); the Arlosh Hall for the welcoming address (15 August) and Steiner’s twelve lectures (16-29 August) (Table 1); and the Chapel was the venue for a sermon by Steiner on Sunday 27 August.

The Conference reception was held in the Manchester College Library on the evening of Tuesday 15 August. The Oxford Chronicle (1922) reported that this was followed by the official welcome and address in Arlosh Hall by Professor L.P. Jacks, the Principal of Manchester College.

Of Oxford, Steiner commented:

“I feel it an especial honour to be able to give these lectures at this gathering here, in this venerable town. It was here, in this town, that I myself experienced the grandeur of ancient tradition, twenty years ago” (Steiner, 1922c).

Steiner spoke in German requesting of his audience:

“ ... forgiveness that I cannot speak to you in the language of this country ... Any disadvantage this involves will be made good, I trust, in the translation to follow” (Steiner, 1922c, p.7).

Table 1. Rudolf Steiner's 12 lectures scheduled for the Oxford Conference (Mackenzie, 1922c).

#	Rudolf Steiner's Lectures at the Oxford Conference
1	The Spiritual Basis of Education
2	The Spiritual Basis of Psychical and Moral Education
3	The Spiritual Basis of Physical Education
4	The Art of Education for Little Children
5	The Art of Education for Older Boys and Girls
6	The Teacher as Artist in Education
7	The Organisation of the Waldorf School
8	The Boys and Girls of the Waldorf School
9	The Teachers of the Waldorf School
10	The Social Evolution of Mankind
11	Social Impulses of the Present Day
12	Man in the Social Order: the Individual and the Community

The lectures were translated by George Kaufmann, an M.A. in mathematics and chemistry from Cambridge University. The Manchester Guardian (1922c) reported that "George Kaufmann ... delivers his interpretation as interestingly as if it were his own original speech". Kaufmann had travelled to Dornach and met Steiner in 1919. He was in Dornach when the First Goetheanum building was opened in 1920. He was first called upon to translate Steiner's lectures into English at the 1921 Christmas Teacher's Course at the Goetheanum (Whicher, 1977). He was later the original translator into English of Steiner's Agriculture Course (Steiner, 1924a). (From 1940 Kaufmann adopted his mother's maiden name, 'Adams').

Olive Whicher wrote of Kaufmann's skills as a translator:

"... he would stand up, so young a man, at intervals in a lecture divided into three parts, and repeat again in beautiful English and with utmost devotion, almost word for word what Rudolf Steiner had just spoken in German in a lecture of vast spiritual content. He made a few pictorial notes of his own creation and for the rest relied on his prodigious memory and spoke with great

vitality and confidence. In all he interpreted about 110 lectures, besides many conferences and conversations. For him and for those present it was an unforgettable experience, and Rudolf Steiner never failed to express his great gratitude" (1977, p.20).

All of the twelve morning sessions (16-29 August) of the Conference were presented by Steiner in the Arlosh Hall of Manchester College. On the Sunday (27 August) evening before the close of the Conference, Steiner preached in Manchester College's Chapel to an audience that included some of the attendees of the Modern Churchmen's Conference (Manchester Guardian, 1922b), a event which was also being held at Oxford that summer. Steiner's topic was "The Mystery of Golgotha" (Stewart, 2010), a title that he had addressed fifteen years previously in Berlin (Steiner, 1907). An address by Steiner (1922b), 'On Founding an Association for Further Work Along the Lines of These Lectures' (28 August), is not listed in the printed Conference programme and appears to have been delivered at an evening or afternoon session at Keble College.

Press

The Conference was extensively reported in the press with accounts appearing in local, national and specialist newspapers including: the Oxford Times; the Oxford Chronicle; the Daily Telegraph; the Daily News; the New Statesman; the Guardian; the Inquirer; the Times; the Westminster Gazette; the Star; the Cambridge Daily News; the Christian World; the Lancashire Daily Post; the Sheffield Independent; the Nottingham Journal and Express; the Staffordshire Sentinel; the East Anglian Daily News; the Burnley News; the Preston Guardian; the Derby Daily Express; and the Lady's Pictorial. Accounts of the Conference appeared in the educational media including: Education; the Scottish Educational Journal; the Journal of Education; the Sunday School Chronicle; the Music Teacher; and Teacher's World. (News articles were generally published without a byline, and in the absence of a nominated author articles are here cited as (<newspaper>, <date>)).

By the time of the Oxford Conference, Steiner had forged a strong presence on the Continent over several decades and he had attracted a broad following, as well as opposition that has been described as "widespread" with publications that were "defamatory" and "libelous" and opponents that "attempted to silence him by various means" (Whitehead, 2010, p.166). In contrast, Steiner was a novelty in Britain and newspapers reported the Conference as an educational event and not as a political or as a contentious event. Accounts in the British press were descriptive rather than critical.

Four factors intersected to give Steiner a 'good' press for the Conference. Firstly, there was the novelty factor and the general unfamiliarity of the British press and public with Steiner's teachings and writings. Secondly, Steiner did not speak English, and the reportage of his thoughts was generally mediated by the renditions of George Kaufmann. Thirdly, there was the 'social proof' of the Conference structure: the Minister of Education, the Right Honorable H. A. L. Fisher was President of the Conference (Mackenzie, 1922c, p.1); Professor Millicent Mackenzie, University of Wales, Cardiff was the Conference organiser (Steiner, 1922a, p.34); the opening address was given by Professor J. Findlay of Manchester University (Sunday School Chronicle, 1922); and Professor L. P. Jacks of Manchester College Oxford hosted the Conference reception and was elected to the Provisional Committee at the close of the Conference (Education, 1922; Manchester Guardian, 1922b). Fourthly, there was the 'Oxford factor' - a conference at Oxford could be expected to be taken more seriously and reported more widely than events at, for example, the holiday resort towns of Ilkley, Penmaenmawr and Torquay which were the UK venues for Steiner's subsequent lecture series (Steiner, 1923a, 1923b, 1924b).

Media reports variously described Steiner as: an "Austrian Philosopher" (Daily News, 1922); "the Hungarian philosopher and mystic" (Derby Daily Express, 1922); the "author of The Threefold State and founder of the Anthroposophical Society" (Sunday School Chronicle, 1922); "the Head of Dornach School" (Education, 1922); "the authority on the scientific writings of Goethe, and the author of 'The Philosophy of Freedom' and 'The Education of the Child'" (Star, 1922). The Manchester Guardian (1922c) cited Professor of Education, J. Findlay, of the University of Manchester: "Introducing Dr. Steiner, Dr. Findlay spoke of him as a great scholar, a great teacher, a great philosopher, and a great writer".

Impressions

Some attendees listening to Steiner were reportedly “deeply impressed” while others were “frankly perplexed” (Manchester Guardian, 1922c). The Sunday School Chronicle (1922) noted that in his lectures “Dr. Steiner used no notes of any kind”.

The Schoolmaster (1922b) reported that:

“Dr. Steiner’s lectures were delivered in German, with admirable articulation and gesture, without a note, and that complete mastery of the subject which results from long thought and deep conviction. He has pondered the things whereof he spoke for thirty-five years; from theory he proceeded to practice by founding the important school at Waldorf in 1919 ... Dr. Steiner ... besides being a teacher, he is a philosopher, scientist, author, editor, psychologist, sociologist and innovator”.

The Manchester Guardian (1922c) reported that:

“Dr. Steiner lectures in German, but even those who do not know a word of that language have pleasure in listening to his extraordinarily expressive voice and in watching his play of expression and the dramatic force with which he speaks. He puts as much vitality into his exposition of the difference between mind and spirit as a barrister would put into an appeal for justice”.

A Conference attendee declared Steiner to have:

“ ... a fine clear voice, capable of great extension of power ... seeming to have an infinite reserve upon which to draw” and to be “an accomplished, spontaneous and yet disciplined orator” (Hare, 1922, p.219).

William Hare’s first-hand report of Steiner’s presentations in Oxford recorded that:

“When at last he spoke it was clear that he possessed the qualities of expositor and preacher to a matchless degree. Also, being an artist to his finger tips, it was obvious why he spoke in his own tongue, of which he has an absolute mastery ... a large part of an English audience is unable to understand German ... Ordinarily, it would be something of a strain on an audience to listen to three addresses and three translations covering a period of two and a half hours, but ... Dr. Steiner ... soon holds his listeners under the spell of his power ... there is no artifice of irony, no rebuke, no criticism, and what is perhaps more remarkable, no appeal ... Dr. Steiner does not shrink from that thoroughgoing formality which gives to his address ... absolute clarity. Words, phrases and formulae ... and rhythmical cascades of eloquence, which sometimes reach the rapidity and force of a torrent” (Hare, 1922, p.219-21).

A Union

One newspaper observed that the conference “seems to have laid the seed for a development of importance” and that:

“In the end it was decided to form a union to promote the ideas expressed unanimously on the necessity of insisting upon other values than those which a materialistic age has brought into use” (Guardian, 1922).

An immediate outcome of the Oxford Conference was the passing of a five paragraph statement of intent: “to form a world-wide association for the foundation and support of schools ... on the basis that has been indicated. We propose that a Provisional Committee be formed to take the preliminary steps for giving effect to this” (Mackenzie, 1922a) (Table 2). Mackenzie urged the Conference delegates to “Do it now” (Manchester Guardian, 1922b), and the Provisional Committee was duly elected. The names of eleven committee members were reported, and they included: Millicent Mackenzie; George Kaufmann; two school principals; one mayor; and Professor Jacks of Manchester College (Manchester Guardian, 1922b) (Table 3).

Table 2. The statement adopted by the Oxford Conference on Monday 28 August (Mackenzie, 1922a, 1922b).

The Oxford Conference Statement and Resolution
<p>1. At the close of this Conference on Spiritual Values in Education and Social Life we place on record our deep gratitude for all that we have received in the Conference. The whole course of it has borne witness to the existence in our time of a widespread search and striving for the spiritual basis of human life. This striving has been expressed in the Conference by men and women of widely different outlook and experience, and not least by those who with first-hand knowledge of the appalling dangers from class and national conflict in our age are actively working for political and economic understanding. The need for a practical cultivation of the spiritual life has thus been brought home to us the more insistently.</p> <p>2. We are convinced that the mainspring of social life and health lies in the spiritual nature of man. Our complex and difficult civilization requires a fuller and freer inflow of the basic spiritual impulses. Such inflow can only take place through the individual human beings who are born into the world and unfold their faculties within it. Education in the widest sense of the word must open out the way. True education, therefore, whether of the child, the adolescent, or the adult, presupposes the deepest reverence and respect for the freedom of the human spirit in every individual.</p> <p>3. The teachers in every age have in their hands the rising generation, who will accomplish, not what the older generation predetermine for them, but what springs from the fresh impulse of the evolving human spirit. They must be fully in touch with the world, autonomous in their profession, responsible to the conscience of humanity, working out of their own free spirit to pave the way for the unfolding spirit in their pupils.</p> <p>4. Dr. Rudolf Steiner's lectures, for which we express our especial gratitude, have vividly brought home to us the human educational ideal. He has spoken to us of teachers who work freely and co-operatively, unfettered by external restrictions and regulations, evolving their educational method simply and solely from their perceptions of human nature. He has spoken to us of the kind of knowledge which the teacher needs - a knowledge of man and of the world, not only scientific, but intimate, intuitive, artistic.</p> <p>5. We therefore feel that the impulse should go out from this conference, to form a world-wide association for the foundation and support of schools in which the teachers will work freely and co-operatively on the basis that has been indicated. We propose that a Provisional Committee be formed to take the preliminary steps for giving effect to this resolution.</p>

At the close of the Conference the new organisation was described as "this as yet unnamed association" (Manchester Guardian, 1922b) and this status appears to have persisted at least into the early weeks of September (Mackenzie, 1922a, 1922b) but was resolved by the following month. In October, Eleanor Merry (1922) in her capacity as Honorary Secretary of the "Educational Union for the Realisation of Spiritual Values" wrote that "the school at King's Langley ... is being remodelled along the lines of Dr. Steiner's Art of Education". She also announced that:

"A party of some twenty teachers is going out in January next [1923] for a course of lectures and instruction from Dr. Steiner at the Waldorf School, Stuttgart. It may be found to be possible to arrange for another such visit in the spring" (Merry, 1922).

Table 3. Eleven members of the Provisional Committee were reported under the headline “First Plans of International Association” (Manchester Guardian, 1922b) (ordered as published).

Members of the Provisional Committee
Professor L.P Jacks, Principal of Manchester College, Oxford
Millicent Mackenzie, formerly Professor of Education at the University of Wales
Hilda Raw, Principal of Barry College, South Wales
Frances Melland, of Manchester
Mary Wood, Principal of Cambridge Training College
Reuben George, Mayor of Swindon
Eleanor C. Merry (Hon. Secretary)
Miss Cross of the Priory School, King’s Langley
Miss Newcombe
George Kaufmann
Baron Rosenkrantz

The Lectures

Steiner’s Oxford lectures, and others generally, were recorded in shorthand. Steiner (1925, p.386) wrote in his autobiography that: “The courses consist of more or less accurate notes taken at my lectures, which for lack of time I have not been able to correct”.

Of Steiner’s twelve Oxford lectures, numbers one to nine (of Table 1) were published as *Spiritual Ground of Education* in 1947, and numbers ten to twelve are reproduced (along with other lectures from 1922, 1923 and 1924) in *Rudolf Steiner Speaks to the British* published in 1998. The title page of *Spiritual Ground of Education* bears the subtitle “Nine Lectures given at Manchester College” (p.1). This venue claim is corroborated by the Conference programme and multiple contemporary press reports.

The Foreword to *Spiritual Ground of Education* written by “D.H.” states that “This course of nine lectures was given by Doctor Rudolf Steiner at Mansfield College, Oxford” (D.H., 1947, p.3). Bamford (1995, p xv) similarly refers to “the ‘Oxford Holiday Conference’ at Mansfield College”. This Mansfield College claim was carried forward into at least one French edition (Steiner, 1976); it was reiterated in

Bamford (2004, p.vi); and has been repeated in a United Nations database (UNESCO, 2010). These accounts linking Mansfield College to the Oxford Conference appear to be mistaken and to have originated in the Foreword by "D.H." published in 1947 and to have been repeated thereafter. No corroborative contemporary evidence was identified in the Conference programme, in the press coverage, or in the Mansfield College minutes or records to link any of the Conference events with Mansfield. The confusion may have arisen due to Manchester and Mansfield Colleges being neighbours which bear similar names. They are both located on the same short street, Mansfield Road, and in the same block. Steiner and Conference delegates would have walked by Mansfield College, on a daily basis, on their way from the morning lectures held at Manchester College, to the afternoon and evening events at Keble College - but it otherwise appears to have played no role.

Eurythmy

The Eurythmy demonstrations in the hall of Keble College were reported as: "said to be the first demonstration of this kind ever given in England" (Education, 1922). The Manchester Guardian (1922a) reported on a Eurythmy demonstration:

"The display was certainly very beautiful. Girls, dressed in coloured draperies, moved rhythmically, singly or in groups, about a stage hung with green draperies and illuminated with changing lights. The movements, especially of arms and hands, were singularly expressive, though it must be admitted that the unlearned audience could not have interpreted their meaning".

The Schoolmaster (1922a) recorded that the Eurythmy demonstrations were presented by "Ten ladies of various nationalities" and also reported that local school children presented their own Eurythmy demonstration. On the second evening of performances "a class composed of children from The Oxford Central School placed the results of two months training before the Conference. Perhaps the simple piece 'I and You are We' best conveyed the idea of Dr. Steiner" (Schoolmaster, 1922a).

DISCUSSION

The success of the Oxford Conference must be credited in large part to the remarkable presentation skills of Rudolf Steiner and George Kaufmann, as well as to the organising skills of Millicent Mackenzie. In a short time the Conference bore the tangible fruit that had been hoped for.

Steiner returned to Britain the following year for another summer conference and by then he was referring to "the Waldorf School Movement" (Steiner, 1923a, p.226). Steiner had told his Oxford audience that: "A school such as the Waldorf School is an organism" (Steiner, 1922c, p.89). He reiterated this theme on his return visit: "The Waldorf School is an organism complete and whole in itself, and if it is not thought of as such, many of its educational principles may be misunderstood" (Steiner, 1923a, p.201-2). Steiner revisited this 'organism' theme in 1924 when referring to farming: "Truly, the farm is a living organism" (Steiner, 1924a, lecture VIII, p.7).

On his final trip to Britain, Steiner (1924b, p.1) told a gathering at Torquay that: "It gives me the deepest satisfaction to find in England that you are ready to consider founding a school based on anthroposophical ideas". He stated that: "I am deeply gratified ... that you are working with such energy for the establishment of a school here based on anthroposophy" (1924b, p.140). Steiner's visits to Britain in 1923 and 1924 did not attract the widespread press coverage of the 1922 Oxford Conference, but by then 'the ball was rolling' and the diffusion of Waldorf schooling into an Anglo-environment was immanent.

Steiner urged that this first venture should be "a really good school" commenting that:

"You must remember how much depends upon the success of the first attempt. If it does not succeed, a great deal is lost, for all else will be judged by the first attempt. And indeed, very

much depends on how your first project is launched: from it the world must take notice that the initiative is neither steeped in abstract, dilettante plans of school reform, nor anything amateur ... In conclusion I should like to give you my best thoughts on your path - the path that is to lead to the founding of a school here based on Anthroposophy" (1924b, p.140).

Those words of optimism and encouragement to the nascent Waldorf movement in Britain were spoken by Steiner on 20 August 1924 at the conclusion of the summer conference at Torquay. The seven lectures on education that Steiner delivered in Torquay (Steiner, 1924b) appear to be the final lecture series on education that Steiner delivered to the world. Just a month later, on 24 September 1924, Steiner retired abruptly and completely from public life, due to ill health (Whitehead, 2010). He passed away six months later on 30 March, 1925 (Collison, 1925).

Britain's first new Waldorf school, 'The New School' at Streatham Hill, London, opened in January 1925. The name changed to 'Michael Hall' in 1935. A decade later it moved to Kidbrooke Park, Forest Row, Sussex where it remains today and continues to adhere to and promote Steiner-Waldorf educational practices (Bamford, 1995; Michael Hall, 2010).

The "Waldorf school movement" has been described as "the largest independent school movement in the world" (Anthroposophic Press, 1995, p.141). There are now reportedly over 1000 Waldorf schools and 2000 early childhood centres, located in more than 60 countries (SWSF, 2010). In the UK, there are about 70 Waldorf schools and early childhood centres (SWSF, 2010). In North America, there are 160 Waldorf schools, 250 early childhood centres, and 17 teacher training institutes (AWSNA, 2010). In Australia there are about 60 Waldorf schools and early childhood centres (Steiner-Australia.org, 2010).

The Oxford Conference of 1922 played a pivotal role in the global diffusion of Waldorf education. From Stuttgart, to Oxford, to the world, the Waldorf school movement continues to grow, evolve and engage contemporary students, teachers and parents.

Acknowledgements:

Thank you to Dr. Andrew Gosler, Head of Human Sciences, University of Oxford and Fellow of Mansfield College who, based on the claim by 'D.H.' (1947, p.3), invited me to write an account of Rudolf Steiner at Mansfield College for a College publication. Thank you to Sue Killoran, Fellow Librarian, Harris Manchester College for her knowledge of and access to Manchester College records; to Alma Jenner, the Librarian at Mansfield College, University of Oxford; and to Margaret Jonas and Veronica at the Library of Rudolf Steiner House, London for knowledge of and access to material in the Anthroposophical Society Archives.

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