

The Pestalozzi childrens Village

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working together, undertaking major roles, enlarging and strengthening their characters. The village offers training opportunities in agriculture, horticulture, basic mechanical engineering and other disciplines of great importance to the development of the new nations. The youngsters have recently demonstrated their skills in erecting a new house at the village in Sedlescombe.

The area of the Trust property, bought in 1958, is 174 acres of which some 110 are scheduled as agricultural land. In addition to woodland and playing fields (cricket and football, both shared with the village of Sedlescombe) there is a small area of garden, the rest being taken up by the houses for the children, staff accommodation, a library, cultural centre, workshops and training areas for carpentry, metal-work, electronics, weaving, art, ecology, automotive engineering, a biological laboratory and administrative offices.

Help of the Swiss Colony

An assembly hall was built in the early 1960s with the help of the Swiss community in England. A charity ball by the Anglo-Swiss Society was instrumental in erecting the building which bears the name of a former Ambassador to London, Dr. Armin Daeniker. Accommodation is available for ten national groups each being approximately 12 in number but two houses can accommodate up to 20 children. There are farm buildings and pig fattening houses, store buildings with a herd presented by the Nestlé Charitable Trust, one of the Trust's sponsors.

The Trust is highly gratified by the results obtained and considers that the success that has been achieved is outstanding. "There is ample evidence from the contacts with the homelands, other nationals and children's families that the young people remain citizens of their lands and are more than able to fit into their own environment," it says in a prospectus.

The Pestalozzi villages were started at the initiative of Walter Robert Corti, the son of a scientist from Ticino. He had begun a career in medicine when he was stricken with tuberculosis. He was in his early thirties and recovering from the illness when in 1944 he wrote an article for the Swiss magazine *Du* that created a great impact. He said that the Swiss, having escaped the horrors of two world wars, should as a thanks-offering, make provision for some of the European children who had been orphaned in war-devastated countries. Remembering the work of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, Corti suggested that a Pestalozzi village should be created to provide, in an international community, homes and education for groups of children from the various nations. The response was immediate and generous, and in the spring of 1946, building started at Trogen with hundreds of volunteers from seventeen nations contributing their labour.

A new purpose

Children from France, Poland, Germany, Hungary, Austria, Italy, Finland and Greece were amongst the first arrivals and in 1950 thirty-two British children occupied two houses. There are now two hundred and sixty children in the Swiss Village where one British house is still maintained and the groups include children from Korea, Tunisia, Tibet, India and Vietnam.

The Pestalozzi Children's Village Association was formed in 1947 to win support in the U.K. for the Swiss Village at Sedlescombe and maintain a British house at Trogen. This Association was re-formed in 1958 into the Pestalozzi Children's Village Trust.


The Sedlescombe village opened in August, 1959, and its original occupants were children from the displaced persons camps of Europe together with a small group of British children. This policy pertained until 1963 with the arrival of the Tibetan group and the reorientation of the Trust's aims in the way described above.

The Patron of the Trust is H.R.H. Prince Richard of Gloucester. The Vice-Presidents include Benjamin Britten, Sir Julian Huxley, the Lord Bishop of London and Dame Sybil Thorndike.

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746—1827) has given more than his name to the two children's villages. It appears obvious from their activities that they follow to a great extent the ideas of the great Swiss master. He maintained that true education was much more than an educational exercise. Himself a great admirer of Rousseau's "Emile", and inspired all his life with a missionary devotion towards children, he taught that the mind, the activities and emotions ("the head, the hands, the heart") must all be trained so as to lead to the full development of human personality. Education was a right to which all were entitled, and behaviour of any teacher must tend towards an active,

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understanding love for their pupils. He struggled constantly to enrich through education the lives of the oppressed, raising them from poverty and ignorance to the independence and dignity which as human beings they should possess.

The Pestalozzi Children's Village Trust remains attached to these ideals and there are more than enough children in the world who could benefit from them. This costs money. A look at the Trust's accounts show that its expenditure amounted to £147,940 in 1972. Being entirely supported by voluntary contributions, the Trust needs all the support that can be found. Should any reader wish to help, they might be interested to know the following address: Pestalozzi Children's Village Trust, Sedlescombe, Battle, Sussex. (Tel: 042-487 444). The Trust also distributes a *film* on its activities.



Tibetan Housefather with some of his large "Family".