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Anthroposophy in the Antipodes
A Lived Spirituality in New Zealand 1902-1960s

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Abstract

Anthroposophy is the spiritual philosophy and pathway (the “spirituality”) taught by the Austrian philosopher and seer Rudolf Steiner, from 1902 until his death in 1925. Since then it has become established as a worldwide movement, with particular strength in German speaking countries, and it has developed a small but significant following in New Zealand. This began in 1902, after New Zealand’s first Anthroposophist heard Steiner lecture during a trip to Leipzig, and in 1933 led to the establishment of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, linked to the parent body the General Anthroposophical Society in Dornach, Switzerland.

This is the first substantial academic study of Anthroposophy in New Zealand and traces its growth from 1902 until the 1960s. It examines the development of the core of the movement, the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, and also of the daughter movements, Steiner childhood education, biodynamic gardening and farming, and anthroposophical medicine. Together these comprise the broad anthroposophical movement in this country.

Many of the early New Zealand Anthroposophists came from an Anglican background. Most were middle-class and well-educated, farmers, business people, artisans or professionals. Although relatively small in number, the anthroposophical movement has had a significant influence in the arts, education, horticulture and agriculture, and the practice of complementary medicine in New Zealand. The presence of Anthroposophy, and the influence exerted by the broad anthroposophical movement, adds weight to the argument that European New Zealand society was not exclusively as materialist and secular as was alleged in much historiography of the second half of the twentieth century.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Anthroposophy: Beliefs and Practices.....	2
Previous Research.....	6
The Present Study.....	7
Materials and Methods for Research.....	10
Conclusions.....	12
Chapter One: Settlers and Suffragists.....	16
Ada Wells.....	16
Emma Richmond.....	23
The Two Pioneers: an Overview.....	29
Chapter Two: Havelock North the Spiritual Centre (1912-1939).....	33
Anthroposophy comes to Havelock North.....	33
The Havelock Work, Robert Felkin, the Golden Dawn and Stella Matutina.....	34
Early Anthroposophy, the Havelock Work and Stella Matutina.....	39
Emma Richmond’s Immediate Successors.....	41
“Taruna”, Ruth Nelson and Edwina Burbury.....	47
Overview of the Period 1912-1939.....	50
Chapter Three: Havelock North the Spiritual Centre (1944-1963) and the Wellington Connection.....	52
The Post-War Reawakening.....	52
Study Materials, Libraries and Publications.....	54
The Wellington Connection.....	56
York Bay, Hal Atkinson and Mollie Miller Atkinson.....	57
The Beginnings of Steiner Education in New Zealand.....	61

Society Affairs.....	63
Brian Butler and Changing of the Guard.....	65
Overview of the Period 1944-1963.....	67
Chapter Four: Scholars and Refugees: the German Influence.....	69
Alfred Meebold.....	69
Ernst and Elisabeth Reizenstein.....	74
The German Influence: an Overview.....	81
Chapter Five: Soil and Health: the Emergence of Daughter Movements in New Zealand.....	84
Biodynamics.....	84
Biodynamics in New Zealand.....	85
Anthroposophical Medicine.....	92
Anthroposophical Medicine in New Zealand.....	93
The Daughter Movements: an Overview.....	97
Chapter Six: Conclusion.....	99
Bibliography.....	103

Introduction

As Stenhouse points out, '[h]istorians writing during the second half of the twentieth century often depicted New Zealand as an exceptionally secular society in which religion had little social, cultural or political significance'. He characterizes this viewpoint as 'popular nationalist mythistory', an account of the past 'shaped and coloured by contemporary world views (secular as well as religious)'.¹ Stenhouse challenges such accounts with detail of the numerous ways in which religion impacted on the thinking and lives of New Zealanders, from the earliest days of European settlement.²

This thesis further demonstrates that the prevailing religion of twentieth century New Zealanders was not exclusively the 'simple materialism' alleged by Sinclair, and adds support to the argument that the spiritual beliefs of European settlers played an important part in shaping the social fabric of this country.³ It is an account of aspects of the previously unstudied history of Anthroposophy in New Zealand, from its earliest days at the beginning of the twentieth century until the 1960s.

Anthroposophy, or the wisdom of humankind, is the term adopted by the Austrian philosopher, educator and visionary spiritual leader Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) to describe the system of spiritual philosophy and action which he developed over his lifetime and taught widely from 1902 until his death in 1925. His work was published in a number of books and recorded in the transcribed notes of over 6000 of his lectures, many of which are still regularly reissued by anthroposophical publishing houses. Those who follow the spiritual pathway "indicated" (the term preferred to describe the way in which his insights and suggestions for action were imparted) by Steiner are known as Anthroposophists.

¹ John Stenhouse, 'Religion and Society', *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, Giselle Byrnes (ed.), Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 330-2.

² Stenhouse, pp. 323-356. James Beattie and John Stenhouse, 'Empire, Environment and Religion: God and the Natural World in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', *Environment and History*, 13 (2007), pp. 413-46.

³ Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand (revised ed.)*, Auckland: Pelican, 1969, p.288.

The Anthroposophical Society was first established in Germany in 1913 by Rudolf Steiner, after he resigned as Secretary-General of the German branch of the Theosophical Society, a post he had held since 1902. In response to internal conflicts, it was re-founded by Steiner in Switzerland as the General Anthroposophical Society in 1923. The central organization is based in Dornach, near Basel, and is led by an Executive Council (Vorstand). The Society headquarters were designed by Steiner and named the Goetheanum, in recognition of the seminal contribution to anthroposophical thought of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832). The movement remains particularly strong in Germany and Switzerland, but national societies, all linked to Dornach, exist throughout the world, the largest in Holland, the USA and England.

Anthroposophy first came to New Zealand in the early twentieth century, within a few years of Steiner starting his lecture cycles. Initially it was studied and discussed in small groups in Christchurch, Wellington and Havelock North. A national organization, the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, incorporating the various existing groups around the country and officially sanctioned by Dornach, was established in Havelock North in 1933. It has grown since to its present size of around 550 active members with branches and groups throughout New Zealand.⁴

Anthroposophy is a spiritual pathway and philosophy which affects profoundly the lives of its followers, and often those with whom they come in contact. It is a lived spirituality which manifests most clearly, to those outside the movement, in the lives and activities of those who follow its teachings. The early history of Anthroposophy in New Zealand is told here through the stories of a number of key individuals, included both for the significance of their contribution to the anthroposophical movement and because they illustrate a particular line of argument. The chapters are placed in loose chronological order, each developing a particular set of themes.

Anthroposophy: Beliefs and Practices

Anthroposophy is based on belief of the fundamental importance of a spiritual cosmos, a domain which pervades and ultimately transcends material existence. It draws from

⁴ Sue Simpson, personal communication, Auckland, August 2009.

Theosophy, but also from German folk culture and philosophy, Rosicrucianism and the European esoteric tradition, from Steiner's understanding of Christianity, and most crucially, his personal experience of the spiritual world.

The cosmos is held to be directed by spiritual forces and by a hierarchy of spiritual beings. The most important for humans in the present era are Christ, the largely negative principles Lucifer (representing pride and passion) and Ahriman (representing materialism and cold intellectualism), and the Archangel Michael, who is inspirational in resisting the undue influence of Ahriman in contemporary life. Material life on earth is influenced not only by cosmic spiritual forces but also by a multitude of local spirits. The cosmos is considered to be in a process of evolution, with a parallel evolution of human consciousness, through a series of epochs, each with specific characteristics. Human souls have a spark of the divine spirit and have been present in previous lives. They are reincarnated according to their previous actions, following the laws of Karma. Knowledge of these things, designated esoteric knowledge in contrast to worldly, material or exoteric knowledge, is thought to have been held through the ages by seers with supersensible powers of perception (masters, initiates or adepts) and to have been passed to others by initiation and by special training. Steiner is considered to have been amongst the most recent in this succession.

Rudolf Steiner believed unshakably in the validity of introspection and the disciplined examination of mental experience as a method for establishing the spiritual truths expressed in Anthroposophy, which is largely based in his personal discoveries. Steiner then "indicated" to others the spiritual and practical pathways which his insights suggested they might follow.⁵ He taught that any person who diligently followed his methods could also, by intuition, become aware of spiritual truths and higher worlds. Steiner called his method Spiritual Science, and established the School of Spiritual Science at the Goetheanum to further its study. Rudolf Steiner was passionately committed to the principle of individual freedom in spiritual matters, and to an essentially open and democratic model for the conduct of anthroposophical affairs. In this respect, the General Anthroposophical Society may be clearly contrasted with other groups practising Western esotericism, in which it commonly is held that the sacred

⁵ The terms "indicated" and "indications" will henceforth be used without quotation marks.

nature of spiritual knowledge demands that it be revealed only to those considered by group leaders to be competent and spiritually worthy, leading to the development of closed and secret societies.⁶

Anthroposophy is practised primarily in small study groups, but also by individual example and in practical activity. While Steiner indicated that each individual should examine anthroposophical materials with a view to choosing freely which spiritual pathway to follow, he also consistently suggested that Anthroposophy be studied and discussed in organized groups, in which he said spirituality might best be enhanced and the cause of Anthroposophy advanced. Study groups might be expected to coalesce into larger local and regional groupings for administrative purposes, and for regular larger scale meetings. These usually are scheduled to coincide with traditional Christian festivals (Easter, Michaelmas, Christmas), times considered to have particular spiritual significance.

Spirituality may be enhanced at study group or larger meetings by readings from the writings of Rudolf Steiner, or by the performance and appreciation of works of art (poetry, music, painting, sculpture), especially eurythmy, the dance form developed by Steiner and his second wife Marie von Sievers (1867-1948). Those who wish to further their spiritual understanding and commitment to Anthroposophy may apply to join a more intensive study and meditation group called the First Class, sponsored by The School of Spiritual Science. By so doing, the individual commits to taking responsibility for the Anthroposophical Society, and by working actively within the First Class, for the spiritual advancement and future of the cosmos. Dornach, and the Goetheanum, remain the epicentre of anthroposophical activity and spirituality for most Anthroposophists, many of whom aspire to visit the Goetheanum at some stage in their lives.

By and large, Anthroposophy is a spiritual pathway which is pursued quietly and unobtrusively by its adherents, who follow the indications given by Rudolf Steiner in the belief that, by so doing, they not only develop their personal spiritual lives but also

⁶ Robert A. Gilbert, 'Western Esotericism', in *New Religions: A Guide. New Religious Movements, Sects and Alternative Spiritualities*, Christopher Partridge (ed.), New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 304-8.

enhance the general level of spirituality, for the betterment of society as a whole. However, Anthroposophists are by no means detached from direct social involvement. Anthroposophy is not only a spiritual philosophy and pathway, but also an intensely practical activity.

This social involvement and its practical consequences can clearly be seen in the lives of the individuals whose histories are described in this thesis. In contemporary New Zealand it is evidenced by the vigorous proliferation of Steiner (Waldorf) kindergartens and schools, and by a continuing interest in the application of anthroposophical principles to medicine and nursing. The Webpage of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand currently lists ten Steiner schools and fifteen kindergartens, ten anthroposophical medical practices and therapy centres, and three centres for curative education, run by the Hohepa Trust, distributed throughout New Zealand.⁷ The Auckland University of Technology now teaches Steiner education at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.⁸ Taruna College, a centre dedicated to anthroposophical training in Havelock North, teaches Steiner education and also offers certificates in holistic health care and anthroposophic nursing.⁹ The Steiner-inspired biodynamic approach to agriculture, also taught at Taruna College, has been influential in the burgeoning organic farming and horticulture industry, where Anthroposophists were instrumental in introducing the widely used Demeter certification system for farms and their produce.¹⁰ The Bio Dynamic Farming and Gardening Association in New Zealand currently has about 800 members, and there are 30 Demeter registered farms throughout the country.¹¹ The managing director of Ceres, New Zealand's largest supplier of organic produce, is an Anthroposophist.¹² Napier based Prometheus Finance Ltd, established in 1983 on the model of social finance organizations in Europe, provides "ethical finance", typically for ecologically concerned and organic projects.¹³ The webpage of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand states:

⁷ Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, 'Homepage', www.anthroposophy.org.nz/~anthropo/homepage.htm, accessed 4 September 2012.

⁸ Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, 'Education', <http://siteground247.com/~anthropo/education.htm>, accessed 12 January 2011.

⁹ Taruna College, 'Courses', <http://taruna.ac.nz/courses/>, accessed 12 January 2011.

¹⁰ The Bio Dynamic Farming and Gardening Assoc. in N.Z Inc., <http://www.biodynamic.org.nz/demeter.html>, accessed 12 January 2011.

¹¹ Homepage, The Bio Dynamic Farming and Gardening Assoc. in N.Z Inc., www.biodynamic.org.nz/, accessed 6 September 2012. David Wright, personal communication, Wellington, September 2012.

¹² Noel Josephson, personal communication, Auckland, July 2009.

¹³ Homepage, Prometheus Finance Ltd, www.prometheus.co.nz, accessed 17 January 2013.

In fact, Anthroposophy has a practical application in all areas of modern life and this work is supported and researched within the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, thus providing an anthroposophical path of spiritual striving for the individual.¹⁴

Those whose beliefs and activities are influenced by anthroposophical principles far outnumber those who choose formally to belong to the Anthroposophical Society. This extended community constitutes the broader anthroposophical movement. The Anthroposophical Society does not attempt to proselytize or to foist its beliefs on other people, although individual Anthroposophists may well introduce their ideas to others in the course of their everyday activities. They believe that the “spiritualization” of daily life is a good and appropriate thing, and they are quietly satisfied to see how many of their ideas are taking root and spreading.

Previous Research

Anthroposophy, and the associated anthroposophical movement, represents just one example of the many alternative spiritualities pursued in New Zealand today. However, as will be demonstrated in this thesis, it is one which has a clearly defined identity and a longer history than many others. Despite this, it is not well known or understood by the wider public, and its presence in this country has not been studied in any depth from an academic perspective. Ellwood’s *Islands of the Dawn*, a ground-breaking history written in the early 1990s, focuses most attention on Spiritualism, Theosophy, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and its Havelock North successor the Stella Matutina Lodge, all movements which were active in New Zealand before the Anthroposophical Society was established, but whose influence now has faded. It is not a comprehensive account of other spiritualities and makes only brief reference to Anthroposophy.¹⁵ Apart from studies of Steiner education, there is no other research on Anthroposophy in New Zealand to be found in mainstream academic publications.¹⁶

¹⁴ Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, Home, <http://www.anthroposophy.org.nz/~anthropo/node/83>, accessed 3 July 2009.

¹⁵ Robert S. Ellwood, *Islands of the Dawn. The Story of Alternative Spirituality in New Zealand*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993.

¹⁶ Recent examples include Gaylene Denford-Wood, ‘Becoming and being an effective Steiner teacher’, MEd thesis in Education, Victoria University of Wellington, 2005, and Jane Bone, ‘Everyday Spirituality: supporting the spiritual experience of young children in three early childhood educational settings’, PhD thesis in Education, Massey University, 2007.

Furthermore, although both Hill and Ellwood assert that New Zealand may be a particularly congenial place for alternative spiritualities, there has not been much research to assess that proposition either.¹⁷ Atkinson's BA (Hons.) thesis provided an account of the earliest days of Theosophy in Dunedin, and the surrounding controversy.¹⁸ Of subsequent works in the field, *Beliefs and Practices in New Zealand*, from Massey University, is a useful directory of the range of religions and spiritualities then practised, but now is over three decades old.¹⁹ It was updated in some aspects by Elsmore's work *ReligioNZ*, but Anthroposophy was given only a brief entry.²⁰ Michael Hill's 1987 paper 'The Cult of Humanity and the Secret Religion of the Educated Classes' provided some evidence of the prevalence and influence of alternative spiritual belief systems in New Zealand, but the author has not followed this with further research in the area. There has been some research on women's spirituality, while a recent study examined New Age beliefs in this country.²¹

The Present Study

This study goes some way to fill the gap. It follows aspects of the history and development of Anthroposophy in New Zealand from its earliest presence in the early 1900s, starting only shortly after Rudolf Steiner began lecturing in Europe in 1902, through the founding of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand in 1933, to the 1960s and the emergence of a wider anthroposophical movement with growing influence in education, farming and gardening, pharmacy and medicine.

The first appearance of Anthroposophy in New Zealand is examined in chapter one through the lives and work of two early pioneer women, Ada Wells (1863-1933) and Emma Richmond (1845-1921). Ellwood suggests that, unlike the friendly societies,

¹⁷ Michael Hill, 'The Cult of Humanity and the Secret Religion of the Educated Classes', *New Zealand Sociology*, 2:2 (1987), pp. 112-127. Ellwood, pp. 185-9.

¹⁸ A.Y. Atkinson, 'The Dunedin Theosophical Society 1892-1900', BA (Hons.) thesis in History, University of Otago, 1978.

¹⁹ Peter Donovan (ed.), *Beliefs and Practices in New Zealand. A Directory*, 2nd ed., Palmerston North: Massey University, 1985.

²⁰ Bronwyn Elsmore, *ReligioNZ*, Auckland: Reed Publishing, 2005.

²¹ Yolanda L.A. Wisewitch, 'Women's rites: a study of 15 Christchurch women's thoughts and feelings about their involvement in women's spirituality', MA thesis in Religious Studies, University of Canterbury, 1987. Linda Edith Hampton, 'A Community of Mystics: New Zealand New Agers' Identity, Relationship with the Community and Connection with the Divine', MA thesis in Religious Studies, University of Canterbury, 2008.

mainstream churches, and Victorian politics in general, alternative spiritualities such as Spiritualism and Theosophy, which emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, became popular in part because they provided a readily available and attractive forum for women to express themselves, show leadership, and become involved in social action.²² However, while the initial leadership in New Zealand Anthroposophy as it emerged in the early twentieth century came from women, both Emma Richmond and Ada Wells demonstrated social activism and leadership well before becoming Anthroposophists. In each case, this was from a background of Christianity, initially sectarian (Unitarian, Plymouth Brethren), then Anglican, and later Theosophy. In fact, both these women kept the fact of their commitment to Anthroposophy in maturity largely confined to their immediate group, although undoubtedly their public actions were shaped and influenced by their anthroposophical beliefs. While probably there were personal and political reasons for this reticence in disclosing their most deeply held spiritual beliefs, it also was consistent with the indication given by Steiner, who said:

Anthroposophy is herself an invisible person, going about amongst visible people, and to whom, so long as they are only a little number, they owe the very greatest responsibility – something, that must really be treated as an invisible person, actually living amongst us, who must be consulted in every single action of life, as to what she says to it.²³

Ellwood argues that New Zealand's early receptiveness to alternative spiritualities may have been a general feature of late Victorian British settler societies.²⁴ Certainly, the Hawke's Bay area around Havelock North was home to a succession of vigorous spiritual movements in the early twentieth century, around the time that Emma Richmond arrived there with the anthroposophical impulse in 1912. These developments are described in chapters two and three. The growth of Anthroposophy in Havelock North was centred about Emma Richmond, her daughter Rachel Crompton-Smith (1876-1967), son-in-law Bernard Crompton-Smith (1874-1958), and two redoubtable women who were to provide leadership for the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand for over 40 years, Ruth Nelson (1894-1977) and Edwina (Edna) Burbury (1890-1978). The work of these Anthroposophists contributed to the formal establishment of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand in 1933, and to the

²² Ellwood, p.7, p. 193.

²³ Rudolf Steiner: June 1923, quoted in *The New Zealand News Sheet*, 1:2, (July 1935), p.1.

²⁴ Ellwood, pp. 185-199.

emergence of Steiner Education in New Zealand at Queenswood School in Hastings in 1950. While early Anthroposophy was centred on Havelock North, chapter three also describes vigorous development in Wellington, where a group at York Bay led by Hal Atkinson (1895-1975) was closely involved with a variety of artistic and creative activities.

Chapter four examines the contribution of two German scholars and Anthroposophists. Alfred Meebold (1863-1952) was a botanist and a wandering seeker after spiritual truth who visited New Zealand several times in the 1920s and 30s. He then settled in Havelock North after World War II, making a major impact on the intellectual content and philosophical underpinnings of New Zealand Anthroposophy. Ernst Reizenstein (1902-1970), a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany, came to Auckland in 1939. He contributed not only to the development of Anthroposophy there, but also to the artistic and cultural life of the city, and to its eating habits as the founder, with his wife Elisabeth, of New Zealand's first commercial whole grain bakery.

Chapter five describes the emergence of two further "daughter movements", biodynamics, and anthroposophical pharmacy and medicine (early Steiner education is described in chapter three), in the work of men who pioneered these movements in New Zealand, after making the trip to Europe to gain experience and expertise in their respective fields. The term "daughter movements", although not now so widely employed, was used then to describe the practical application of Steiner's ideas, through a number of separate streams in a broad anthroposophical movement which came to include many who would not otherwise have regarded themselves as Anthroposophists. The rise of interest in anthroposophically inspired biodynamic farming and gardening is examined through the lives of George Winkfield (1873-1957) and George Bacchus (1902-1966), and the practical men they influenced, the entrepreneur Charles Alma Baker (1857-1941) and the politician Ben Roberts (1880-1952), who was Minister of Agriculture from 1943 to 1946. The early impact of Anthroposophy on pharmacy and medicine in this country is seen in the careers of the pharmacist Colin Mahon (1919-2001), who brought Weleda pharmaceuticals to New Zealand in 1954, and the general practitioner Dr. Ken Friedlander (1925-2006), who practised anthroposophical medicine in Auckland from 1957, and then in the Hohepa Homes for curative education in Hawke's Bay.

It is argued that in each of these practical fields of social activity, childhood education, spiritual philosophy and the arts, farming and gardening, pharmacy and medicine, Anthroposophy had a significant, if largely unrecognized, influence, and one which continues to expand in contemporary New Zealand.

Materials and Methods for Research

The two main primary sources for this study were the periodicals and publications of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, and equally important, a series of interviews, informal discussions and correspondence with individual Anthroposophists or their family members in Auckland, Havelock North, and in other parts of New Zealand.

The official publication of the General Anthroposophical Society in Dornach, the *Anthroposophic News Sheet*, became available in English translation in 1934. Copies are held at Rudolf Steiner house in Auckland.

The Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand has issued regular publications since 1935. These were accessed in the libraries of Rudolf Steiner House in Auckland and the Rudolf Steiner Centre in Hastings. The *New Zealand News Sheet*, which appeared about quarterly from 1935 to 1978, with a break during World War II, was particularly useful in researching the period under study. The *New Zealand News Sheet* was replaced in 1978 by *Anthroposophy in New Zealand* (quasi annual 1978-1994), then *Anthroposophy at Work* (annual 1994-1998), and in 2000 by *Sphere*. The *Newsletter of the Bio-Dynamic Association in New Zealand* was first issued in 1939. A new series was started in November 1946. The name was changed to the *Newsletter of the Bio Dynamic Farming and Gardening Association (in NZ) Inc.* in the 1950s.

The White Ribbon was accessed on microfilm through the Massey University library. Volumes of *The Forerunner* are housed at the Victoria University of Wellington library and are also available in the Havelock North Public Library. *Theosophy in New Zealand* was accessed in the library of the Theosophical Society in Auckland. Other primary sources included unpublished papers and documents held in Rudolf Steiner House and

the Alexander Turnbull library, various newspaper and internet sources, electoral rolls, and marriage and death certificates.

Prior to the onset of the study I exchanged letters and met with the General Secretary and Chairman of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, and also with the editor of the quarterly publication *Sphere*, each of whom gave support to the project. In anticipation of interviews with other Anthroposophists, I prepared a semi-structured interview schedule, which was used as a loose guide to discussion rather than a formal questionnaire. A Low Risk Notification was sent to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

Secondary sources included a number of brief, unpublished histories of episodes or eras of the anthroposophical movement in New Zealand and collections of obituaries, held in anthroposophical libraries in Auckland, Hastings and Wellington. Additional details of the lives of the Anthroposophists studied were gleaned from various local, family and institutional histories. *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* and *Te Ara Encyclopaedia of New Zealand* were useful for some biographical details, although in most cases they made little or no comment about their subject's religious or spiritual persuasion, a lacuna this thesis seeks to remedy.

Most published commentary on Steiner and his work has come from anthroposophical publishing houses and committed Anthroposophists.²⁵ Of the small body of independent scholarly work examining Anthroposophy and the worldwide anthroposophical movement, the section contributed by Tingay in *New Religions*, Lachman's *Rudolph Steiner*, Ahern's *Sun at Midnight* and McDermott's *The Essential Steiner* were most helpful.²⁶ Rudolf Steiner's autobiography gives an essential insight into his spiritual experiences and the development of his ideas.²⁷

²⁵ Two helpful examples are Gilbert Childs, *Rudolf Steiner: his Life and Work*, Hudson NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1996, and Andrew Welburn, *Rudolf Steiner's Philosophy and the Crisis of Contemporary Thought*, Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2004.

²⁶ Kevin Tingay, 'The Anthroposophical Movement' in *New Religions. A Guide*, Christopher Partridge (ed.), New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 325-6. Gary Lachman, *Rudolf Steiner. An Introduction to His Life and Work*, New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2007. Geoffrey Ahern, *Sun at Midnight. The Rudolf Steiner Movement and Gnosis in the West*, 2nd ed., Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2009. Robert A. McDermott, *The Essential Steiner*, Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books, 2007.

²⁷ Rudolf Steiner, *Autobiography. Chapters in the Course of my Life 1861-1907*, Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 2006.

Conclusions

Anthroposophy came to New Zealand at the beginning of the twentieth century, towards the end of a period of spiritual ferment in the Western world which had seen the emergence of Spiritualism, Theosophy and a resurgence of interest in Western esotericism.²⁸ It also had been an era of uncertainty and self-examination in the mainstream Christian churches, which were struggling to come to terms with scientific materialism and the challenge to traditional theology posed by Darwin's theory of evolution.²⁹ Steiner's new understanding of spirituality, and his direct confrontation of the materialistic vision which many saw to be implicit in modern science, appear to have had particular appeal to spiritual seekers looking for an open minded but structured and intellectually disciplined complement to the established faiths, one based firmly on Western traditions, and with indications for social reform and practical activity.

The early New Zealand Anthroposophists were mostly middle-class, relatively affluent, Protestant and Anglican, in the earliest cases coming to Anthroposophy after a background in Theosophy. While some were born here and others were immigrants, for the most part they saw themselves as New Zealanders. However, they retained close cultural and personal links with the United Kingdom and Europe, and often made extended trips across the world to enhance the connection. They were well educated, often to a tertiary level, and deeply committed to their own spiritual and intellectual advancement, as well as to the education of others. While the first dedicated Steiner School was not established for nearly 50 years after Anthroposophy came to New Zealand, Anthroposophists were active in the provision of progressive educational alternatives from the earliest years of the movement. At the same time, a nexus between Anthroposophy and a wide range of artistic endeavours was also evident, with painting, poetry, arts and crafts, music and dance well represented amongst the activities of the early Anthroposophists.

Although committed to Steiner's vision of an evolving spirituality and the eventual transcendence of the material world by a spiritual cosmos, they were far from rejecting

²⁸ Ellwood, pp. 19-26.

²⁹ Ernest Wallwork, 'Charles Darwin and Darwinism', in *Critical Issues in Modern Religion*, 2nd ed., Roger A. Johnson, Ernest Wallwork, Clifford Green and others, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1990, pp. 53-93.

orthodox or exoteric material knowledge root and branch. A significant number of the early anthroposophical leaders had training in disciplines based in mainstream science, such as engineering, pharmacy and medicine. For them, it would appear that Anthroposophy provided a welcome spiritual dimension which was not incompatible with their orthodox scientific practices, but rather was a complementary or alternative perspective that could readily be incorporated in practical activity. Indeed, a striking example of this incorporation of alternative and complementary approaches to practical medicine was seen in the work of New Zealand's first Anthroposophist Ada Wells, albeit that her attitudes and practices were well-established before she first came to Anthroposophy. However, the systematic training of pharmacists and medical practitioners in anthroposophical medicine was not seen in this country until the 1950s. Anthroposophical approaches in agriculture and horticulture were first seen in the early 1930s, when the engineer George Winkfield returned from a trip to the Goetheanum and began making biodynamic preparations in Auckland. Biodynamics made a significant impact in New Zealand during the years of World War II, when a shortage of phosphates led to the search for alternative fertilizers, and experienced resurgence during the 1960s as environmental concern grew amongst the general public.

It is argued in this thesis that, in the lives and work of the early New Zealand Anthroposophists which are described, a clear pattern of commitment can be seen, not only to a well-defined alternative approach to spirituality, but to practical activity in the arts, education, agriculture and medicine, and to concern for the natural environment. This not only enacted the anthroposophical principles indicated by Steiner, but also led to the emergence of the "daughter movements", Steiner education, biodynamic agriculture and horticulture, and anthroposophical pharmacy, medicine and nursing, by which much of the practical influence of Anthroposophy has been perpetuated and propagated in contemporary New Zealand.

It is evident that the earliest New Zealand Anthroposophists were circumspect in making their spiritual commitment public. It seems likely that for both Ada Wells and Emma Richmond a combination of their life circumstances and the political climate in the years of the early 1900s may have been a major reason for this reticence, although during the same period the advocates of other alternative spiritualities, such as Spiritualism and Theosophy, each with a longer history than Anthroposophy, were more

open in expressing their opinions. Later in the 1920s and beyond, even after the re-founding of the General Anthroposophical Society in 1923, a degree of misunderstanding of the nature of Anthroposophy still persisted in the public mind, both in Europe and in New Zealand. It also is relevant that, for the first decades of its existence, the anthroposophical group in Havelock North were a minority in the same social milieu as the then popular but clearly secretive Stella Matutina lodge. Given all these circumstances, it appears that the early New Zealand Anthroposophists felt the need to be protective of the integrity of Steiner's message, and saw this as requiring discretion. While membership of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand was, from its beginning in 1933, open to any interested applicant, the decision was taken that the first issues of the *New Zealand News Sheet* should be restricted in circulation to members only. However, after weathering the years before and during World War II, Anthroposophy became increasingly more relaxed and open in its public face. Now, the webpage of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, and the contents of its flagship publication *Sphere*, are readily accessible on the Internet.

It can be argued that Anthroposophy represented one stream within the emergence of "mysticism" or the "secret religion of the educated classes" which Ernst Troeltsch first described in 1911.³⁰ To Troeltsch this emerging "religion" was secret, not in the sense of being a closed or secret society, but in that it was represented by the private spiritual pursuit of individuals, rather than by a public, institutional religion or a sect in the traditional sense. He saw this as a type of religious behaviour which appealed to liberal, educated Protestants, because its values were more resonant with those of a modern, secular, scientific culture.³¹

Certainly Anthroposophy may be seen in broad terms to meet some of these criteria. As demonstrated in the early history of Anthroposophy in New Zealand, the movement appealed to educated, liberal Protestants. It developed here in relative privacy, and in this sense was "secret" through its earliest years, although for reasons which had more to do with the personal circumstances of the individuals concerned and the cultural and political outlook of the times rather than any inherent features of Anthroposophy. To the

³⁰ Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, Vols. 1 and 2, Olive Wyon (trans.), London: Allen & Unwin, 1931, pp. 791-5.

³¹ Hill, p. 117.

contrary, Rudolf Steiner believed that this should be a democratically organized movement, free from the doctrine and hierarchy of established churches, and open to all interested people who accepted a basic belief in the importance of Anthroposophy for humankind. These beliefs were clearly embodied in the statutes of the General Anthroposophical Society, formulated in 1923 and republished in the *New Zealand News Sheet* in 1945. Statute four states:

The Anthroposophical Society is an entirely public organisation, and in no sense a secret society. Without distinction of nationality, social standing, religion, scientific or artistic conviction, any person feeling the existence of such an institution as the School of Spiritual Science – the Goetheanum in Dornach – to be justified, can become a member of the society. The Anthroposophical Society is averse to any kind of sectarian tendency. Politics it does not consider to be amongst its tasks.³²

A striking feature of the history of Anthroposophy in New Zealand was the predominance of women amongst its early adherents and leaders, with in addition the transmission of these leadership roles from mother to daughter in the case of both pioneer founders, Ada Wells and Emma Richmond. While the numbers involved initially were small, it is argued, in support of Ellwood's suggestion, that Anthroposophy may well have given these women opportunities for spiritual expression and leadership which were not readily available in venues such as Freemasonry or the mainstream churches of the early twentieth century.³³ By contrast, the later history of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand showed a much more equal gender balance amongst its prominent members and leaders. It can also be seen that amongst the early members of the Society there was a significant and enduring contribution from prominent settler and establishment families, especially the Richmonds and Atkinsons, suggesting that kindred networks played a powerful role in the initial spread of the movement in this country.

³² *New Zealand News Sheet*, 17, November 1945, p. 25.

³³ Ellwood, p.7, p. 193.

Chapter 1

Settlers and Suffragists

Ada Wells

It appears likely that the first New Zealand Anthroposophist was the noted Christchurch suffragist and social campaigner Ada Wells (1863-1933). She was from an English immigrant family with a strict Plymouth Brethren father, but as an adult attended an Anglican church then was drawn to Theosophy. After hearing Rudolf Steiner lecture during a trip to Leipzig in 1902 she became a dedicated and life-long follower of his teachings.¹

She was born Ada Pike and emigrated from Henley-on-Thames with her parents and five younger siblings in 1873, settling in Christchurch. Her father William was from a Plymouth Brethren family of coachbuilders which had fallen on hard times. He was in poor health and found it difficult to provide for his family after arrival in New Zealand. When he died of tuberculosis in 1877, leaving his wife Maria pregnant with their ninth child, she was forced to support the family by providing therapeutic massage and healing remedies. This was to become a family tradition with two sons and two daughters, including Ada, also becoming massage therapists.²

Ada Pike attended secondary school in Christchurch and was awarded a University Junior Scholarship to attend Canterbury College in 1881, partially completing a B.A. degree in 1882, then working as a teacher at Christchurch Girls' High School, before marriage in 1884. Her husband Harry Wells, a musician and church organist, was erratically employed, and given to regular drinking and temper outbursts. Ada Wells, like her mother, found it necessary to take teaching positions and to practise as a massage therapist and healer in order to support the family. The Wells had four

¹ Geoffrey Townsend, *Outline of the History of the Anthroposophical Society/Movement in New Zealand*, Havelock North: Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, 2001, p.3.

² Robyn Nuthall, 'Ada Wells—A New Zealand Suffragist', http://robynnuthall.com/family/ada_wells.htm, accessed 24 July 2010.

children, the two older daughters Christabel (Chris) (1885-1968) and Alma (Cos) (1886-1967) following their mother into Anthroposophy.

Ada Wells was active with Kate Sheppard in the radical campaigns for women's suffrage through the late 1880s and the 1890s. She was involved with A.W. Bickerton, professor of chemistry at Canterbury College and also a campaigner for women's suffrage and other radical social causes, in the foundation of the Canterbury Women's Institute in 1892, and remained in active leadership positions with that organization until it ceased to exist in 1921. When the National Council of the Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) was established in 1896, Kate Sheppard was elected president and Ada Wells secretary. They remained in these posts for much of the next decade.

The establishment of the NCWNZ followed the recognition that, despite having achieved the right to vote in the parliamentary elections in 1893, women were still denied many other rights, and were excluded from most male institutions. The NCWNZ sought both equal rights and the moral reform of society. Many of its founding members had close links with evangelically based moral reform movements, in particular the New Zealand Women's Christian Temperance Union (NZWCTU). They were exclusively female, mostly middle-class, and generally well read and articulate.³

Ada Wells was no exception to this description, although she was one of the few early NCWNZ members who was also working for a living and supporting a young family. Her early papers, delivered at annual conferences of the NCWNZ, were on topics such as society's duty to the unfit, local government and prison reform, and were clear expositions of the practical themes and high minded aspirations of the movement. However, her later contributions began to reveal a more philosophical and spiritual side to her personality, probably reflecting contact with the ideas of Theosophy, and foreshadowing her commitment to Anthroposophy and to Steiner as a teacher and guide.

³ Roberta Nicholls, *The Women's Parliament. The National Council of the Women of New Zealand 1896-1920*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1996, pp.11-17.

Her paper 'Influence of Literature on the Education of the Race' was delivered in May 1901 to the sixth conference of the NCWNZ in Wanganui.⁴ Here Ada speaks of the 'eternal unrest' among all peoples,

... a continually recurring dissatisfaction with things as they seem to be. From the great deep has man come; to the great deep he must return, and it frets him till he understands the world, which seems to him to stand midway between his source and destiny. This restlessness has made him cast about for help that may perchance be found here, and for this reason he puts his questions to any whom he deems stronger or wiser than himself, and as a result of the answers he receives, from time to time gains strength and comfort.

She points to a succession of great teachers who, throughout history, have brought profound and salvational messages for their times:

Thus does each nation receive its own message, and having used it, rightly or wrongly, falls on sleep, to be superseded by another age, or by other nations, each of which has its own particular message; that is, the hour and the man appear simultaneously, and are respectively explanatory of each of the other. The great teacher is no sporadic growth, but comes in the fulfilment of time to proclaim the truth which is harboured in tens of thousands of incoherent breasts, and thereby shapes ends to new destinies.

Great teachers may not be recognized at their first appearance, and the freshness of their message may be lost with time.

So at first the teacher has but few avowed followers; gradually as these are willing to testify with their lives to the truths which they profess, more adherents are gained, and at last, when no persecution will serve as a barrier to its onward progress, it is adopted as another tenet of the already accepted faith, and in time becomes lost in the oasis of constitutionalism and sacerdotalism [sic]. Then has the world again need of a voice, and again in the wilderness it is heard echoing the dumb beliefs of the thousands who are looking for a new light. Again by the multitudes is the new prophet crucified, and afterwards glorified. Once more his presentment of truth becomes the orthodox faith and dogmatic creed, and then, deprived of the invigorating spirit, becomes food for the swine to eat.

Ada's selection of such great teachers demonstrates a wide knowledge of literature, from which she freely draws, and proceeds from the Old Testament prophets, Plato and Christ, to Emerson and the New England transcendentalists, Wordsworth and Tennyson. She quotes Emerson in describing their works as "the Bibles of the world", displaying both her iconoclastic approach to established religion and her liberal eclecticism in spiritual and doctrinal matters.

⁴ National Council of Women – Minutes and reports, Lovell-Smith Papers 1886-1973, MS-Papers-1376-04, Alexander Turnbull Library.

It is of interest that at the same 1901 conference, a Mrs. Bendeley of Christchurch gave a paper in support of the establishment of free kindergartens, teaching according to the methods of Froebel, a cause which was dear to Ada Wells and also was followed by New Zealand's other founding Anthroposophist Emma Richmond, and her daughter Rachel. It is known that Emma Richmond shifted to Christchurch sometime after the death of her husband in 1890. The electoral roll confirms her residence there in 1893 and again in 1896. It is said that she was president of the Theosophical Society in Christchurch for some years until 1900, when she shifted to Wellington.⁵ Given the close alignment of their interests, it is easy to imagine that she and Ada Wells were associated in Christchurch, but no record of such a meeting has been found.

In another paper, 'Culture', delivered in May 1902 to the seventh NCWNZ conference in Napier, Ada Wells touched again on themes which appear to reflect knowledge of Theosophy, and which clearly would resonate with the teachings of Steiner, whom she shortly was to hear lecture in Leipzig.⁶ Speaking of humanity's 'progress to moral and spiritual power' she says:

Such change of consciousness means ascension of state which seems to be the plan and intention of evolution that knows no stay but acts in obedience to an internal impulse to move forward. Nor is the way at any point dark or fearsome, for there is always light ahead to brighten our often halting steps. To-day we cannot place too great emphasis on the eternal truths of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. In the light of their guidance there can be no possibility of discriminating between sacred and secular, for it will be clear that all things are sacred and the eternal "now" a point in infinity.

It is not clear how Ada first came in contact with the Theosophical Society, although given her industrious and eclectic reading habits, she may well have come independently upon theosophical literature, which was becoming freely available through the 1880s. The first organized Theosophical Lodge in New Zealand was established in Wellington in 1888, with another active group beginning in Dunedin in 1893.⁷ Ada could well have met with members of both these groups in the course of her activities with the NCWNZ. Early records of organized theosophical activity in Christchurch are not available, but anecdotes recorded by the Anthroposophical Society

⁵ Gert Christeller, 'The Beginnings. Emma Jane Richmond (1845-1921)', *Anthroposophy in New Zealand*, 112 (1992), pp. 29-31.

⁶ National Council of Women – Minutes and reports, Lovell-Smith Papers 1886-1973, MS-Papers-1376-04, Alexander Turnbull Library.

⁷ Robert S. Ellwood, *Islands of the Dawn. The Story of Alternative Spirituality in New Zealand*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993, pp.101-8.

in New Zealand suggest that Ada was involved with a theosophical group there before she heard Steiner, at that time leader of the German branch of the Theosophical Society, in Leipzig in 1902.⁸

The New Zealand Women's Christian Temperance Union (NZWCTU) launched the monthly journal *The White Ribbon* in Christchurch in May 1895, with a front page banner dedication "For God and Home and Humanity", and with Kate Sheppard as editor. Ada Wells was a member of the management committee and contributed a substantial series of articles to the home section between 1895 and 1904, with advice on the treatment of a wide range of conditions, from wakeful babies to diphtheria and smallpox.⁹

The treatments she advocated prominently featured the use of baths and the application of hot and cold moist packs, along with massage and diet, and were largely drawn from a series of 'Papers on Health' by a Professor John Kirk of Edinburgh. She also quoted admiringly from the works of the German naturopath Louis Kuhne, and from another Edinburgh medical practitioner, C. S. Keith, who foreswore the use of drugs and advocated a simple lifestyle with the use of bed rest, diet and water treatments for disease. She was passionately opposed to compulsory vaccination for smallpox as being contrary to God's will, characterized most of the therapeutic drugs then in popular use as evil, and suggested that many surgical procedures were unnecessary, claiming that the natural treatments she used were in most instances more appropriate. However, although Ada had strong alternative views on a number of controversial medical topics, like her mother before her she continued to receive referrals from local medical practitioners.

While Ada's writings in the columns of *The White Ribbon* were absolutely forthright as to her opinion on health matters, and frequently expressed conventional Christian sentiments, they did not make the less orthodox aspects of her spiritual position explicit. Unlike the content of her later speeches to the NCWNZ, there was no mention of beliefs which might have seemed unacceptable or alarming to the NZWCTU or to her

⁸ Townsend, p. 3.

⁹ A.W., 'Wakeful babies', *The White Ribbon*, 2:13 (1896), p.10, 'Diphtheria', 1:3 (1895), 1:3, p. 7, 'Smallpox', 2:16 (1896), p.11.

conventional Christian readers. The majority of these articles were written before 1902, when it is presumed she had contact with Theosophy, but before the trip to Germany during which she first became aware of Rudolf Steiner's work. Her contributions stopped after 1904, and the publication of *The White Ribbon* shifted from Christchurch to Napier in 1908.¹⁰

Ada Wells' two older daughters were both gifted musicians. Ada was determined that they should have the best education and opportunity to develop their talents, and took the oldest daughter Chris to Germany in 1902, to enroll in violin studies at the Leipzig School of Music. It was on this trip that she attended lectures by Rudolf Steiner, who had recently been appointed the General Secretary of the German section of the Theosophical Society.¹¹ This was apparently a fortuitous coincidence (Anthroposophists would say fore-destined), but one which changed the direction of her spiritual pathway from that time forward. Ada returned to Leipzig again with her second daughter Cos, a pianist, in 1904.

Ada's involvement in social causes and local political issues continued unabated through the early decades of the nineteenth century. She was instrumental in initiating an enquiry into practices at the Waltham orphanage, and was strongly committed to the cause of peace and opposed to conscription in the years leading up to World War I, an unpopular activity which gained her a degree of notoriety, and exposure to public 'contumely and ridicule'.¹² Nonetheless, in 1917 she was elected, as a Labour candidate, the first woman on the Christchurch City Council.

While Ada Wells was passionately involved throughout her adult life with high profile public activity, her equally passionate commitment to Anthroposophy appears to have attracted little comment outside of her immediate circle. It was not mentioned in the obituary which her daughters wrote for *The Press* 23 March 1933, and does not appear in the biographical notes of either *New Zealand History Online* or the *Te Ara Encyclopaedia of New Zealand* (indeed, they make no reference to any religious or

¹⁰ Caroline Brooks and Gay Simpkin, 'A Bibliography of Articles published in *The White Ribbon*, the official organ of the N.Z. Women's Christian Temperance Union 1895-1919', Wellington: National Library of New Zealand, 1975, p. iii.

¹¹ Helen Snowden, 'Appendix 2 – Three Personalities' in Townsend, p. 39.

¹² 'Pioneer Women. The First Secretary of the National Council', *Woman To-Day*, (June 1937), p. 50.

spiritual commitment) yet given the strength of her spiritual convictions, it must be assumed that they played a major role in shaping her social and political outlook.

The reasons for Ada's apparent reticence about her commitment to Anthroposophy can only be speculated upon. During the 1890s she would certainly have observed the furore in Christchurch over Arthur Worthington's alternative religious faith "The Temple of Truth", and she would have been well aware of the theological controversies which raged around the Theosophical Society in Dunedin.¹³ In the early 1900s, after spending time in Leipzig, she and her daughters were familiar with the German language and customs. It is likely that initially they studied Steiner's works in the original German, at a time before World War I when the open reading and speaking of German would have been liable to create suspicion and distrust, especially of someone with publically declared pacifist views. While Ada was no stranger to controversy, and rarely backed away from a battle, she may simply have deemed it wiser to keep her deepest spiritual beliefs to herself. And, perhaps most importantly, she followed Steiner's teachings and accepted that Anthroposophy should be treated as 'an invisible person' to whom she owed 'the very greatest responsibility'.¹⁴ However, her deeply held spiritual beliefs remained a fundamental source of support and comfort. In her daughters' view, when faced with opposition 'she never flinched, believing the spiritual forces in which she trusted implicitly were infinitely greater'.¹⁵

After her mother's death in 1905, Ada inherited the large family home in Office Road, Merivale, and lived there for some years, continuing in her many public activities and practising massage therapy. She and her daughters also continued their study of Anthroposophy, using those of Steiner's lectures and books which were available to them. In 1927, her oldest daughter Christabel (Chris) was appointed the representative of the Anthroposophical Society in Christchurch and the South Island, by Rachel and Bernard Crompton-Smith of Havelock North. The Crompton-Smiths, who had recently returned from a trip to England and Europe, had themselves been formally confirmed as

¹³ Richard S. Hill, 'Worthington, Arthur Bently – Biography', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara – the Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, updated 1-Sep-10, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/biographies/2w32/1> accessed 3 June 2011.

A.Y. Atkinson, 'The Dunedin Theosophical Society 1892 - 1900', B.A. Hons. thesis in History, University of Otago, 1978.

¹⁴ Rudolf Steiner: June 1923, quoted in the *New Zealand News Sheet*, 1:2, (July 1935), p.1.

¹⁵ 'Pioneer Women', p. 50.

leaders of a New Zealand “branch” of the Anthroposophical Society by the Vorstand in Dornach.¹⁶

Ada Wells died in 1933 with a spreading cancer which in the latter stages robbed her of speech. Her daughters maintained that amongst the final written messages to them was the passionate instruction to continue the study and practice of Anthroposophy in Christchurch.¹⁷ Chris, who was married to Christchurch lawyer Roy Twyneham, continued to lead a small Anthroposophy study group. This was active with about 10 members through the 1950s and 60s, with a weekly meeting in the Merivale cottage where Chris lived after separation from her husband. Ada’s second daughter Alma (Cos), who was married to Kaiapoi Woollen Mills manager Reyn Carey, was also active in the group, opening her large Cashmere Hills home for their meetings once a month. The perseverance of this small group, led by Chris and Cos, has been credited by later Anthroposophists with laying the spiritual ground work for the opening of a second centre for curative education, Hohepa South, in the mid-1960s, and for the subsequent expansion of Anthroposophy in Christchurch.¹⁸

Emma Richmond

Although Emma Richmond (1845-1921) probably was several years later than Ada Wells in discovering Anthroposophy, she was instrumental in introducing translations of Steiner’s early works to a wider audience in New Zealand, and was the focal point of the study groups in Wellington and Havelock North which eventually led to the establishment of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand. Thus, she is acknowledged as the Society’s founder.¹⁹

She was born Emma Jane Parris in New Plymouth, the youngest daughter of Robert Reid Parris (1816?-1904), an immigrant farmer from Somerset, England, who was appointed the district land purchase commissioner for Taranaki in 1857 and was

¹⁶ Townsend, p. 9.

¹⁷ Doris Prentice, ‘Christobel Mary Twyneham’, *New Zealand News Sheet*, 64, (July 1968), pp. 2-3.

¹⁸ Helen Snowdon, ‘Appendix 2 – Three Personalities’, in Townsend, pp. 39-40

¹⁹ Townsend, p. 3. Gert Christeller, ‘The Beginnings. Emma Jane Richmond (1845-1921)’, *Anthroposophy in New Zealand*, 112 (June 1992), pp. 29-31.

centrally involved in the purchase and surveying of the Waitara block.²⁰ Emma's adolescence was spent during the Taranaki land wars, when her father's reputation and sometimes his life were both under threat. Robert Parris was a trustee of St Mary's Church in New Plymouth and Emma was brought up in what Jane Maria Atkinson described as 'a Broad Church Anglican faith', neither Tractarian "high church" nor Evangelical "low church", but inclined to seeking truth and to the liberal interpretation of doctrine. As a young woman, she was involved in musical activities and was said to be well read in English literature, with a calm, steady, softly spoken demeanour.²¹

She married Henry Robert Richmond (1829-1890) at St Mary's Church in 1868. He was a widower of four years (his first wife was his cousin Mary Blanche Hursthouse who died in 1864) with two surviving children, the youngest of three Richmond brothers, Taranaki settlers from England and part of the large interrelated Richmond-Atkinson family, many of whom were prominent in local and national politics. Richmond family members were Unitarian, followers of that open-minded and individualistic religion which encouraged a strong moral consciousness and social activism. Emma was well regarded by her influential sister-in-law Jane Maria Atkinson who wrote in 1870:

Emma I like very much...She is very quiet and undemonstrative but I can see a devoted wife to Hy, and a kind judicious mother. She is quite a lady in feelings, manners and language, tho' Taranaki born and bred. She plays well and likes good music. I fancy her religious views have become much the same as Henry's.²²

Henry and Emma shifted to "Beach Cottage", a Richmond family home originally occupied by his older brother William and his mother, in 1872. They had three children, Beatrice Jane (1873), Rachel Mary (1876) and Howard Parris (1878). The family grew up under Henry's Unitarian influence but Rachel, as a young woman and then teaching at an Anglican girls' school, publicly renounced Unitarianism, because of its

²⁰ Ian Church, 'Parris, Robert Reid -Biography', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara – the Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, updated 1-Sep-10, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/1p8/1> accessed 17 February 2011.

²¹ Frances Porter, *Born to New Zealand. A Biography of Jane Maria Atkinson*, 2nd ed., Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1995, pp. 280-1.

²² Letter Jane Maria Atkinson to Margaret Taylor, Nelson, 31 December 1870, in *The Richmond-Atkinson Papers, Vol II*, Guy H. Scholefield (ed.), Wellington: R.E.Owen, Government Printer, 1960, p. 313.

misunderstanding of the true [spiritual] nature of Christ, and declared she was an Anglican.²³

It is uncertain how or when Emma first came in contact with Theosophy. Her experience of Unitarianism, through her association with the Richmonds and Atkinsons, would have continued to inform her already liberal, open-minded approach to religious matters. It is known that Sir Harry Atkinson (1831-1892), who continued to spend time at his family home “Hurworth”, just outside of New Plymouth, throughout a political career which included four terms as Premier of New Zealand between 1876 and 1891, became a member of the first New Zealand Theosophical Lodge in 1889, along with his wife Anne Elizabeth Atkinson née Richmond and their son E. Tudor Atkinson.²⁴ This foundational lodge, the second in Australasia, was established by Edward Toronto Sturdy (1868-1957) in 1888 and counted amongst its 16 members the politician Edward Tregear and his wife Bessie, the Jewish rabbi Herman van Staveren and his wife Miriam, and a Maori tohunga Henry Matthew Stowell.²⁵ Sturdy also states that Judge [William] Richmond, Henry’s oldest brother, was sympathetic to the early discussions of the group, although he is not recorded as a member of the Society.²⁶ It is likely that Emma was first exposed to theosophical ideas during the numerous family discussions which were central to the lives of the close-knit Richmond and Atkinson families.

Henry, the most reserved and least successful of the Richmond brothers in public life, had been a farmer, militia man and newspaper editor, and was serving his final year as Superintendent of the Taranaki Province when he entered his second marriage, to Emma Parris, in 1868. He was always a reluctant politician and businessman, and his abiding interests were in experimental chemistry and electricity. From 1873 he ran a school at their home in “Beach Cottage”, no doubt assisted by Emma, for his children and those of other settlers. In 1875 the family shifted to Nelson, where Henry studied law. He qualified in 1877 and the family returned to New Plymouth, where Henry established a legal practice. Emma was the first woman to be elected to the Taranaki Education Board

²³ Hal Atkinson, ‘Rachel Crompton-Smith’, *New Zealand News Sheet*, 63 (February 1968), pp. 2-4.

²⁴ Judith Bassett, *Sir Harry Atkinson*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1975. Ellwood, *Islands of the Dawn*, pp.101-2.

²⁵ Emma Hunt, ‘Theosophy in a Young Dominion’, *Theosophy in New Zealand*, 7:2 (April-June 1946), pp. 54-5.

²⁶ E.T. Sturdy, ‘Letter dated 24 October 1939’, *Theosophy in New Zealand*, 1 (New Series):3 (April-May 1940), p.17.

in 1886, where she fought for the prohibition of corporal punishment for girls.²⁷ She also was the first woman elected to the Taranaki Hospital Board, and became an honorary gaol visitor, beginning a lifelong commitment to visiting women in prisons.²⁸

Henry died in 1890 while travelling to Dunedin to consult Dr. Truby King, who had been one of his school pupils in New Plymouth. He was said to have left ‘few worldly goods’, although Emma’s later lifestyle in Wellington and Havelock North suggest she was comfortably well off in widowhood.²⁹ Following Henry’s death, Emma returned with the children to her parents’ home, and it is said she ‘chose to distance herself’ from Richmond-Atkinson family connections in Taranaki.³⁰

By 1893 Emma Richmond had shifted to Christchurch, where the electoral roll lists her address as The Temple of Truth in Madras Street and occupation as universal service. The Temple of Truth was the headquarters of The Students of Truth, a new religious movement with origins in a dissident offshoot of Christian Science, led by the American confidence trickster Arthur Bently Worthington (1847-1917) and his partner Mary Plunkett, which had a brief period of spectacular success in Christchurch in the early 1890s.³¹ It seems that Emma’s connection with The Temple of Truth, which by 1895 was collapsing in scandal and theological dispute, was short lived. In 1894 she and her younger daughter Rachel were listed as members of the Theosophical Society at the headquarters in Adyar, and the 1896 electoral roll records a change of Christchurch address with her occupation as domestic duties.³² It is said that she became president of the Theosophical Society in Christchurch about this time.³³

Emma Richmond shifted to Wellington around 1900, and became President of the Wellington Branch of the Theosophical Society. At the sixth annual convention of the

²⁷ Porter, *Born to New Zealand*, note 93, p.397.

²⁸ Gert Christeller, ‘The Beginnings. Emma Jane Richmond (1845-1921)’, p. 29. Guy H. Scholefield, *The Richmond-Atkinson Papers, Vol I*, Guy H. Scholefield (ed.), Wellington: R.E.Owen, Government Printer, 1960, p. 838.

²⁹ Porter, p. 347.

³⁰ Porter, p. 325.

³¹ Richard S. Hill, ‘Worthington, Arthur Bently – Biography’, Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara – the Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, updated 1-Sep-10, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2w32/1>, accessed 3 June 2011.

³² Emma Hunt, ‘Theosophy in a Young Dominion’, *Theosophy in New Zealand*, 7:2 (April-June 1946), pp.54-5.

³³ Christeller, p. 29.

New Zealand Section of the Theosophical Society, held in Wellington in December 1901, she was elected President of the Convention. In a public address she acknowledged that ‘notwithstanding all their efforts, a great deal of misconception still existed in the minds of many with regards to theosophy and the aims of the society’, pointing out that ‘theosophy was not antagonistic to any system of religion [but was] the fundamental truth underlying all religion and philosophy’.³⁴ She served as President of the Society in Wellington for three years, during which time she gave over 60 lectures on a wide variety of subjects, from the practical to the esoteric, with topics such as ‘From my neighbour’s point of view’, ‘How our ideals become facts’, ‘Law rules in the universe, what is the need of Saviours?’, ‘Sound: its power for Good and Evil’, ‘A commonsense view of life in its duties’, ‘Our relation to children’, ‘How best to help others’, and ‘Taking our evolution into our own hands’.³⁵

Emma Richmond’s first contact with Anthroposophy occurred during a trip to England with her older daughter Beatrice early in 1904.³⁶ Here, presumably amongst her Theosophical Society contacts, she learned of the work of Rudolf Steiner, who was at that time the General Secretary of the German section of the Theosophical Society. In fact, Steiner had been on a brief trip to London himself in May 1904, to attend the White Lotus day celebrations of the Theosophical Society and to make arrangements for the establishment of an esoteric school in Germany and Austria, but it does not appear that his visit coincided with that of Emma Richmond.³⁷

Emma may have met the Englishman Harry Collison, subsequently an active Anthroposophist with important New Zealand connections, on this trip (other records suggest they were introduced by correspondence at a later date), although he was not a Theosophist and was not actively involved with Anthroposophy at this time.³⁸ Records of the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain state that sustained interest in Steiner’s

³⁴ *Evening Post*, 30 December 1901, p.5.

³⁵ Christeller, p. 31.

³⁶ Townsend, p. 4.

³⁷ Crispian Villeneuve, *Rudolf Steiner in Britain. A Documentation of His Ten Visits Volume I, 1902-1921*, London: Temple Lodge, 2004, pp. 71-3.

³⁸ Townsend, p. 4.

work, and the translation of his lecture cycles, did not begin there until 1908, and that the first regular study group in London was not established until 1911.³⁹

However, it is clear that Emma was sufficiently impressed by what she learned during her trip to London in 1904 to arrange for summaries of Steiner's early lectures, translated in Germany by one of his earliest pupils Fräulein Scholl, to be sent to New Zealand through an English friend.⁴⁰ Following her return to Wellington, Emma Richmond resumed activities with the Theosophical Society, while continuing to develop her interest in Anthroposophy, and to foster it in others. She was responsible for making available translated copies of Steiner's current lectures and some of his earlier books, which included *Theosophy: An Introduction to the Spiritual Processes in Human Life and the Cosmos* (1904), *Knowledge of Higher Worlds and its Attainment* (1904), and *Occult Science: An Outline* (1906).

In 1908 Emma Richmond commissioned a house from James Walter Chapman-Taylor (1878-1958), also active in the Wellington Theosophical Society and beginning a career which would establish him as one of New Zealand's leading domestic architects and practitioners of the Arts and Crafts movement in this country.⁴¹ The house, on Central Terrace in Kelburn, was situated next door to the home of her sister Mary, who was married to Robert Chisenhall Hamerton (?1838-1913), a prominent lawyer, Anglican vestryman and Freemason, and developer of the sites. It was a large and expensive residence which combined modern conveniences with the distinctive features of Chapman-Taylor's work, and was his largest commission to date.⁴²

Emma lived here with her older daughter Beatrice who had been teaching in Wellington, specializing in music, since the late 1890s, first at Mrs. Swainson's private school, an Anglican denominational and fee paying institution on Fitzherbert Terrace, then, between 1899 and 1906, with Miss Esther Mary Baber at their own private school which they had built on Pipitea Street. During this time, there was close contact with the

³⁹ Anthroposophical Society Administrative/Biographical History, http://www.aim25.ac.uk/cgi-bin/vcdf/detail?coll_id=7215&inst_id=92&nv1=search&nv2=, accessed 14 October 2011.

⁴⁰ Townsend, p. 4.

⁴¹ David Kernohan, 'Preface', in Judy Siers, *The Life and Times of James Walter Chapman-Taylor*, Napier: Millwood Heritage Productions, 2007, pp. ix-xi.

⁴² Judy Siers, *The Life and Times of James Walter Chapman-Taylor*, Napier: Millwood Heritage Productions, 2007, pp.60-61.

nearby Froebel inspired kindergarten, run by her cousin Miss Mary Richmond, a pioneer of the kindergarten movement in New Zealand. Beatrice went back to the Fitzherbert Terrace School when this was acquired by Miss Baber in 1906 and took charge of the music department, continuing in this post until her death in 1913.⁴³

Emma Richmond's younger daughter Rachel returned to Wellington in 1907, after time teaching in England and training at the Froebel Educational Institute in London. She became a junior partner at Fitzherbert Terrace with Miss Baber in 1908 and took charge of the kindergarten and junior school, where she reorganized the curriculum along Froebelian lines.⁴⁴ She also taught nature studies, drawing, and art history to the older girls. Rachel Richmond had rooms at the school, where she lived until her marriage to Bernard Crompton-Smith in Easter 1912. Miss Baber's Fitzherbert Terrace School was acquired by the Anglican General Synod and renamed the Samuel Marsden Collegiate School in 1920.

Shortly after their marriage, the Crompton-Smiths shifted to Havelock North, where Bernard established an orchard. They purchased "Duart", a colonial style grand mansion built in 1882 for one of Hawke's Bay's early run holders, and ran St. George's, a small private preparatory school, there from 1915 to 1921.⁴⁵ Emma Richmond joined the Crompton-Smiths in Havelock North around 1912 and lived with them until her death in 1921, by which time she had established herself as the link with Anthroposophists in England, the main source of anthroposophical literature in New Zealand, and the leader of the movement in this country.⁴⁶

The Two Pioneers: an overview

The parallels between the lives of Emma Richmond and Ada Wells, both in their public social commitment and the more private paths by which they came to Anthroposophy, are striking. In both respects they embodied and enacted core principles of the

⁴³ Tosti Murray, *Marsden. The History of a New Zealand School for Girls*, Christchurch: Caxton Press, 1967, pp. 208-9.

⁴⁴ Murray, *Marsden*, pp. 85-6.

⁴⁵ Matthew Wright, *Havelock North. The History of a Village*, Havelock North: Hastings District Council, 1996, pp. 81-2. *Rudolf Steiner School 50th Anniversary Publication*, Hastings: Rudolf Steiner School, 2000, p.11.

⁴⁶ Townsend, pp. 3-4. Christeller, pp. 29-31.

anthroposophical movement, with its emphasis on practical activity in the world, arising from a philosophical basis firmly grounded in spirituality. The surprising thing is that, despite holding so much in common and having lived for several years during the 1890s in the same city, there is no direct evidence that they ever worked together.

This may relate to the circumstances by which their paths crossed. Christchurch is a city where newcomers of a different establishment do not always find it easy to gain acceptance. While Ada had no hesitation in voicing criticism of the established order when she saw the need, she was nonetheless embedded in Christchurch society, to which Emma came as a stranger. It also can be speculated that Emma's initial connection with the Temple of Truth may have created suspicion and a degree of separation from the Christchurch mainstream. Further, given Ada's independent cast of mind, she may well have pursued theosophical studies by herself, rather than as a formal member of the Theosophical Society to which Emma belonged. Conversely, Emma's commitment to women's causes was made at a personal level rather than through an organized group such as the NCWNZ.

What is clear is that Emma Richmond and Ada Wells both were prominent first wave feminists and social activists, in the era of emerging suffragism, as well as pioneer Anthroposophists. They were middle-class (although in Emma's case with strong settler establishment connections) as were most politically active women of the time, and had a dedicated commitment to education as a means of personal development and as an instrument of social change. Both had sought personal education within the limits of their circumstances and were personally involved with school teaching at certain times of their lives. Both went to great lengths to ensure that their daughters received the best possible educational experience.

Bethell has argued, using the example of kindergarten pioneer Mary Richmond, daughter of Henry Richmond's older brother William and Emma Richmond's niece by marriage, that such reformist activity by women in colonial New Zealand over the later nineteenth century should 'be understood not only through the lens of female collective action but also more specifically through a particular reforming outlook that sought to use education as a means to bring about broader social change'. She also pointed to the

role of kindred networks in the diffusion of these ideals into practice.⁴⁷ These arguments are well supported by the example of these two earliest New Zealand Anthroposophists, in whom social activism and the commitment to education were inextricably entwined. In the next generation, Emma's daughters Beatrice and Rachel both taught in private Anglican schools. Before the establishment of Steiner education, Rachel trained and taught along the same Froebelian lines as her older cousin Mary Richmond, recognized as one of the founders of the kindergarten movement in New Zealand, giving a further clear example of the influence of the extended Richmond-Atkinson family network on the diffusion of ideals and practices.

It is notable that both women felt strong cultural links with England and Europe, and a need to make the journey back to these roots, to reinforce the connection. Although the seeds of their inclination were already germinating in New Zealand, it was the trip to Europe and the more direct exposure to Steiner's ideas which crystallized their commitment to Anthroposophy.

It cannot be argued that either Emma Richmond or Ada Wells originally was inspired in her life's work by Anthroposophy, although this clearly was a major influence in the latter part of their careers. They were committed on a path to educational advancement and social activism well before learning of Steiner's work. However, it is likely that for each their religious and philosophical background was an important early motivator: in Emma's case this was Liberal Anglicanism and Unitarianism, in Ada's a Plymouth Brethren upbringing and later the Christchurch Anglican Church. As with many Anthroposophists, they were spiritual seekers who experimented with a variety of spiritualities, including Theosophy, before coming to Anthroposophy as mature adults. However, well before this time each had demonstrated a lived world view which was readily compatible with Steiner's principles, making it likely, if not inevitable, that his work, once discovered, would strike a chord and lead to a lifelong commitment. A similar pattern of seeking and discovery is seen in many present day Anthroposophists.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Kerry Bethell, 'To Bring into Play: Miss Mary Richmond's Utilisation of Kindred Networks in the Diffusion of Kindergarten Ideals into Practice', *History of Education*, 35:2 (2006), pp. 225-244.

⁴⁸ Sue Simpson and Vee Noble, personal communications, Auckland, August 2009.

Emma Richmond and Ada Wells each had daughters who continued as leaders of Anthroposophy in New Zealand after their mother's death. Such cases of the matrilineal transmission of leadership roles were not subsequently typical of the movement, which had many later instances of male leaders. It was nonetheless the case that for two generations women provided the main impulse and leadership for Anthroposophy in this country, adding support to Ellwood's suggestion that leadership roles in alternative spiritual movements provided a particular outlet to women of this era which may have been denied them in other venues.

Chapter 2

Havelock North the Spiritual Centre (1912-1939)

Anthroposophy first came to New Zealand on the personal initiative of its earliest followers in this country, Ada Wells and Emma Richmond, in the first decade of the nineteenth century. This chapter traces the gradual expansion of Anthroposophy in the next three decades as Emma Richmond, the founder of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, shifted from Wellington to Havelock North, where two vigorous spiritual movements, the Havelock Work and the Stella Matutina Lodge, were already active. It describes the encounter of Anthroposophy with these movements and its subsequent expansion in the period up until World War II.

Anthroposophy comes to Havelock North

When Emma Richmond shifted from Wellington to Havelock North around 1912, she brought with her the anthroposophical impulse and leadership skills which were to establish Anthroposophy over the following decades as a vital spiritual presence in New Zealand. Emma had been a follower of Rudolf Steiner since 1904, after learning of his work during a visit London. By 1912 she was corresponding regularly with Anthroposophists in London and was receiving translations of Steiner's works for distribution in New Zealand. One contact who was to become of particular importance to New Zealand Anthroposophy was the lawyer and artist Harry Collison (1868-1945). After meeting Steiner in 1910, Collison was establishing himself as one of his main links to English Anthroposophy. He was able to supply Emma Richmond with up to date mimeographed copies of translations of the current lectures, totaling around 30-40 cycles in all. These were recopied for distribution to New Zealand students, initially in Wellington and Havelock North, and returned to London.¹

¹ Geoffrey Townsend, *Outline of the History of the Anthroposophical Society/Movement in New Zealand*, Havelock North: Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, 2001, pp. 3-5, p.13.

Emma Richmond came to Havelock North to live with her recently married younger daughter Rachel Mary (1876-1967) and Rachel's husband Bernard Crompton-Smith (1870-1958). Bernard, who had been in legal practice in Auckland, decided on an open-air life for health reasons, and purchased land in Havelock North which he intended to develop as an orchard. The couple also purchased "Duart", an established colonial mansion with extensive grounds built in 1882 for the run holder Allan (Tuki) McLean, in which they were to establish St George's Preparatory School.² Bernard Crompton-Smith, although latterly from Auckland, was born in New Plymouth from an old settler family with close connections to the Richmonds and Atkinsons. His grandfather John Stephenson Smith was married to Hannah, sister of John Hursthouse, a Unitarian who in 1842 was one of the earliest immigrants to Taranaki.³ Hursthouse had been instrumental in persuading Smith to come to New Zealand. He and his younger brother Charles had also convinced the extended Richmond family to come to this country. John Hursthouse's daughter Mary Blanche Hursthouse (1840-1864) was Henry Richmond's first wife, before his marriage to Emma Richmond. Bernard Crompton-Smith's father, Stevenson Percy Smith (1840-1922) was the Surveyor-General of New Zealand, Secretary of Land and Mines, and an authority on Maori language and customs.⁴ His mother was Mary Crompton: Crompton was added to the family name in Bernard's generation.⁵

The Havelock Work, Robert Felkin, the Golden Dawn and Stella Matutina

Although Anthroposophy was new to Havelock North with Emma Richmond's arrival, the village in 1912 was by no means unfamiliar with adventurous and alternative approaches to spirituality. To the contrary it was then, and was to remain, the site of some of the most vigorous and imaginative cultural and spiritual activity that New Zealand has seen. The population, which had been steady for many years at around 350,

² Hal Atkinson, 'Rachel Crompton-Smith', *New Zealand News Sheet*, 63 (February 1968), pp. 2-4. Matthew Wright, *Havelock North. The History of a Village*, Hastings: Hastings District Council, 1996, p. 121.

³ Guy H. Scholefield (ed.), *The Richmond-Atkinson Papers Vol. I*, Wellington: R.E.Owen, Government Printer, 1960, pp. 839-40.

⁴ Giselle M. Byrnes, 'Smith, Stephenson Percy – Biography', from the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara – the Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, updated 1-Sep-10, URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2s33/1>, accessed 19 January 2012.

⁵ Christopher Crompton-Smith, personal communication, Havelock North, November 2011.

had risen by 1911 to 501 as a result of recent government policies supporting the breakup of large pastoral estates. This had led to a ‘veritable rush of subdivision’ and a ‘determined effort to promote Havelock as a desirable place to live’. ‘Havelock became “our village” for the first time - a town proudly independent of Hastings, an identity of its own within Hawke’s Bay’.⁶ The name Havelock North was only gradually assumed after 1910, to draw the distinction from another Havelock township in Marlborough.

As Ross observes, a high proportion of the local European population were ‘financially secure, well-travelled and relatively well-educated’, ‘strongly Anglocentric or Eurocentric’ in their culture, and despite their provincial setting, ‘far from being merely “provincial”’.⁷ A central feature in the emergence of Havelock’s self-confident identity was the activity of a unique cultural movement which became known as the Havelock Work. While initially a small informal group for discussion of literature and the arts, it was based from the outset in a liberal Anglican religious world view, and soon expanded to reveal a more ambitious spiritual purpose.⁸

The Havelock Work is said to have begun with the return to New Zealand in 1907 of one of its founders, and its inspirational leader, Thomas Henry Reginald Gardiner (1872-1959).⁹ Gardiner was born in New South Wales, the son of an Anglican minister, and had lived in New Zealand and Canada as a younger man. His Canadian wife Ruth and his brother the Reverend Allen F. Gardiner, vicar of St Luke’s Anglican Church in Havelock North, were also prominent amongst the founders and leaders of the movement. Reginald Gardiner himself is said to have attributed much of the early organization of the Work to an Englishman Harold Large, an old friend who had recently resigned from the Theosophical Society and been confirmed in the Anglican Church, who lived two years in Havelock before returning to the United Kingdom. The first formal meeting of the Havelock Work was in 1908 at Frimley, near Hastings and originally the estate of James Nelson Williams (1837-1915), the maternal grandfather of Ruth Nelson who was later to become a leading Anthroposophist. The meeting was

⁶ Wright, p. 97.

⁷ John C. Ross, ‘The Forerunner: An Intriguing New Zealand Little Magazine 1907-1914’, *Bulletin of the Bibliographical Society of Australia & New Zealand*, 28:4 (2004), p. 72.

⁸ Wright, p. 107.

⁹ J.H. von Dadelszen, ‘The Havelock Work 1909-1939’, typescript HNLA/44/1983, Havelock North Library, p.3.

Robert S. Ellwood, *Islands of the Dawn. The Story of Alternative Spirituality in New Zealand*, Honolulu:University of Hawaii Press, 1993, p.168.

attended by around 100 people and established the Havelock Work, with the Reverend Allen F. Gardiner as President and T. Mason Chambers, from one of Havelock's leading pastoralist families, as chairman of the executive committee.¹⁰

The activities of the Work quickly broadened to include a wide variety of literary, artistic and craft pursuits, prayer and meditation meetings at St Luke's Church, and the publication of a magazine *The Forerunner*. Funds were raised to construct a village hall, designed especially to stage Havelock Work events, and a fête in 1911, followed by a large scale Shakespearean Pageant in 1912, were said to have involved almost everybody in the village.¹¹ *The Forerunner*, initially published in a small number of handwritten or typed monthly 'numbers', was printed for wider circulation from 1909 and ran until 1914.¹² According to Wright,

The Forerunner played a key role in spreading the message of the Havelock Work. Through its pages, the people of Havelock North and the surrounding district were given common ground. In successive issues they read reviews of village entertainments, enjoined ferocious debates on intellectual, spiritual and literary matters; and were presented with short stories and poems penned by their fellow townsfolk. At the same time, the magazine opened the minds of its readers to the independent religious themes that so appealed to Gardiner and his inner circle of friends, paving the way for the surprising spread of independent thought in the years after the First World War.¹³

While the more public face of the Havelock Work was manifest in community and cultural activities, the inner circle of the group remained firmly focused on the spiritual purpose of the Work. This purpose was expressed by Reginald Gardiner in an introduction to the first issue of *The Forerunner*:

We all seek expression for the ideals that well from time to time from the deeps of our eternal self. So we produce this first attempt – a Magazine – which may draw nearer together those who live for the same great ideal. As we keep true to the invisible within us we shall steadily grow to express our local conditions, our local environment, in terms of truth and beauty, and joy and harmony.¹⁴

A further indication of the thinking of the founders of the Work is given in von Dadelszen's account of the reasons for which Harold Large abandoned Theosophy:

¹⁰ Wright, p. 107.

¹¹ Wright, pp. 109-112.

¹² Ross, pp. 71-83.

¹³ Wright, p. 109.

¹⁴ Reginald Gardiner, 'Introduction', *The Forerunner*, 1(May 1909), p. 3.

...he considered the eastern methods of training were unsuitable for western people. Furthermore he was convinced that some form of esoteric training must also exist in the West, and he was determined to find it, for it was inconceivable that Christianity, of all the great world religions, should be the only one lacking in this respect.¹⁵

These were very similar to the concerns held by Rudolf Steiner, which led to his separation from the Theosophical Society and the founding of the Anthroposophical Society in 1913, although there is no evidence either man influenced the other.

Wright suggests that the name Havelock Work was chosen to link its activities with the esoteric tradition of the alchemists and their “Great Work”.¹⁶ In Ellwood’s view, the Havelock inner circle ‘were all dedicated Christians and churchmen’ but ‘were convinced the Church had somehow lost esoteric teachings that Jesus had bequeathed his disciples’ and ‘were determined to make themselves worthy of the secrets promised the Christian elite’.¹⁷ Reginald Gardiner made notes in 1951 which, according to von Dadelszen, made it quite clear that he regarded the Havelock Work as an outward expression of a deeper spiritual quest, referring to it as a cultural society ‘built around this silent power station’.¹⁸

Members of the inner circle found the means to further their spiritual quest in 1910 when The Community of the Resurrection, an Anglican religious community for men based at Mirfield, West Yorkshire, known also as the Mirfield fathers, sent a mission to preach and conduct retreats in various parishes in New Zealand. Amongst the visitors was a Father Fitzgerald, who Miss Mary M. Maclean, sister of Mrs. Mason Chambers and an active inner circle member, had met previously in the United Kingdom. Father Fitzgerald was also a member of the esoteric, London-based Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. He met with members of the inner circle at Bishopscourt in Napier and was impressed with their spiritual work, but indicated that they needed outside help if they were to progress further in their esoteric quest.¹⁹ He suggested that they approach Dr. Robert William Felkin (1853-1926), an Edinburgh trained medical practitioner who was a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and founder, around 1902, of

¹⁵ von Dadelszen, p. 10.

¹⁶ Wright, p. 108.

¹⁷ Ellwood, pp. 171-2.

¹⁸ von Dadelszen, p. 11.

¹⁹ Von Dadelszen, p. 11.

the breakaway lodge Stella Matutina.²⁰ This was done, and with the offer of £300 supplied by John and Mason Chambers for his passage, Dr. Felkin arranged to come to New Zealand in 1912.²¹

Felkin, with his wife and daughter, stayed for three months in New Zealand, during which time he tutored members of the inner circle of the Havelock Work in the ceremonial practices of Stella Matutina. A New Zealand Lodge, Smaragdum Thalasses (Emerald Seas), was established and about a dozen members were admitted to the order. The architect James Walter Chapman-Taylor, a well-known Wellington Theosophist and a leading Arts and Crafts practitioner who became a member, designed a house with an underground temple. Constructed on the Havelock hills on land donated by the Mason Chambers, it was named “Whare Ra” and consecrated as the headquarters of the order in New Zealand.

Felkin and his family returned from the United Kingdom to permanent residence in Havelock North in 1916. They lived at “Whare Ra” and presided over a rapid increase in membership of the Stella Matutina Order in New Zealand. At the same time, Robert Felkin established a medical practice, working from an extension which he added to “Whare Ra”, and supplementing his orthodox methods with colour therapies, said to be derived from the work of Rudolf Steiner. He remained a staunch Anglican churchgoer.

Following the Felkin’s death in 1926 his wife Harriot assumed leadership of the order and continued the work of Stella Matutina in Havelock North. In 1930, the membership was estimated at around 300, with 100 members admitted to the advanced grades of the Inner Order, at a time when the village population was around one thousand.²² By its nature, and as with many esoteric orders in the Western tradition, it was a secret society about which much remains unknown, but these numbers suggest that a large proportion of the Havelock North population, including many of its leading citizens, were at some stage involved. The order lost momentum and membership after World War II and

²⁰ Ellwood, p. 161.

²¹ Ellwood, pp. 172-3.

²² Wright, p. 156.

declined further following the deaths of Harold Gardiner and Harriot Felkin in 1959. The temple closed in 1979.²³

Harriot Felkin, described by Ellwood as ‘more ecumenical...in her spiritual sympathies’ than her husband, included organic gardening amongst her wide interests, sharing ideas with an Australian Anthroposophist Charles McDowell.²⁴ In October 1938 she, with John von Dadelszen, Reginald Gardiner and her step-daughter Ethelwyn as trustees, purchased land in Taupo, the beginnings of the Tauhara trust. This continues today, although at a different site above Acacia Bay, as the Tauhara Retreat and Conference Centre, specializing in organic vegetarian cuisine and the pursuit of a wide variety of spiritual activities, including anthroposophical retreats.²⁵

Early Anthroposophy, the Havelock Work and Stella Matutina

Thus, Emma Richmond and the Crompton-Smiths arrived in Havelock North, about the time of Felkin’s first visit in 1912, to a milieu of spiritual and cultural ferment, and of heightened community excitement and participation. It was perhaps the high watermark of the public aspect of the Havelock Work, of which doubtless they felt a part. Certainly they shared much in common with the originators of this movement, in cultural and spiritual aspirations, and in their Anglican background. Mother and daughter both contributed to *The Forerunner*, as did Bernard Crompton-Smith’s father Stevenson Percy Smith, who wrote about his ideas on Polynesian migration to New Zealand. Emma Richmond’s article, appearing in the penultimate issue in 1914, was entitled ‘Our Prisons and the Women Who Inhabit Them’ and is a humane but realistic account of prison life, with some recommendations for rehabilitation which might seem draconian by today’s standards. Rachel Crompton-Smith wrote ‘Child Study’ for the last issue of *The Forerunner*, which appeared late in 1914 (or perhaps early 1915).²⁶ She made a plea for better facilities for the study of child development in New Zealand, citing the works of established overseas authorities including Froebel, Montessori and William James. Both articles demonstrated a clear and pragmatic focus on social issues, with no

²³ Wright, pp. 165-6.

²⁴ Ellwood, p. 181-2.

²⁵ Ellwood, pp. 182-3. Tauhara – Retreat and Conference Centre, <http://www.tauharacentre.org.nz/index.html>, accessed 2 February 2012.

²⁶ Ross, p. 80.

overt spiritual perspective: neither makes mention Rudolf Steiner's work or of its author's attachment to Anthroposophy.

At the time that Anthroposophy came to Havelock North, members of the inner circle of the Havelock Work were becoming less public in their spiritual activities and, following Felkin's visit in 1912, increasingly focused on the private work of the Stella Matutina Order. Although Emma Richmond and the Crompton-Smiths would undoubtedly have mixed socially with the individuals concerned, and might well have been expected to join the inner circle, there is no evidence they did so. It is believed that Ruth Nelson, Edna Burbury and Henry Malden, all later prominent in the founding of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, did for a time participate in activities of the Stella Matutina order.²⁷ However, an appreciation of the spiritual position of these early Anthroposophists would suggest that, at least in most cases, they did not continue for long with Felkin's group once their commitment to Steiner's teachings was made.

Rudolf Steiner placed the greatest importance on thinking and reasoning, as he argued in his foundational book *The Philosophy of Freedom* (1894), and demonstrated in 1923 by the establishment of the School of Spiritual Science. As his vision for Anthroposophy matured, he gave relatively little emphasis to the type of secret ritual and magical practices which characterized both the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and its successor Stella Matutina. Furthermore, although Steiner was strongly influenced by the Western esoteric tradition and Rosicrucianism, as were the leaders of the Golden Dawn, there is reason to believe that Steiner viewed this group, and perhaps Felkin in particular, with some misgiving. Felkin, on a mission to Germany in 1910 to discover the secret Rosicrucian Masters he thought had originated the Golden Dawn, and apparently believing Rudolf Steiner to be one of them, had made approaches to Steiner, and met with him. There is dispute about the outcome of this meeting. King suggests Felkin may then have been admitted to a Rosicrucian Lodge headed at that time by Steiner, Howe that he left without achieving his aims.²⁸

²⁷ Brian Butler, personal communication, Havelock North, November 2011.

²⁸ Francis X. King, *Rudolf Steiner and Holistic Medicine*, York Beach, Maine: Nicholas-Hay, Inc., 1987, pp. 194-9. Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn. A Documentary History of a Magical Order 1887-1923*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972, pp. 262-6, p. 280.

Further, the English lawyer and artist Harry Collison, previously a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in London, became a committed Anthroposophist in 1910 after hearing Steiner speak in Rome. He became one of Steiner's regular contacts and Dornach's main link to England, with the responsibility of translating and publishing anthroposophical works in English.²⁹ Ellic Howe states that Steiner suggested to Collison that he join the Stella Matutina Order with a 'watching brief', to keep an eye on Felkin.³⁰ Although according to Villeneuve others have refuted this, there seems little doubt that both Steiner and Collison harboured doubts about Felkin.³¹

Harry Collison made a number of world trips to further the cause of Anthroposophy, visiting America and Australia, coming to New Zealand in 1911, and again shortly after the end of the 1914-18 war. The Crompton-Smiths became members of Collison's London-based Myrdhin (Merlin) group in 1914. He kept regular contact with the Anthroposophists he met on his travels, and came to be regarded as 'the "father" of Anthroposophy in New Zealand'.³² It is likely that Rudolf Steiner's misgivings about Felkin and Stella Matutina were imparted to New Zealand Anthroposophists, during Collison's visits here or in correspondence, and were reason for them to distance themselves from Felkin's activities in Havelock North.

Emma Richmond's Immediate Successors

At the time St George's opened at "Duart" in 1915, there were three private boarding schools established in Havelock: Heretaunga School for boys (1882), later renamed Hereworth, Woodford House Anglican School for girls (1894), and Iona Presbyterian College for girls (1914). Wright attributes the fact that Havelock, alone in the Hawke's Bay, attracted so many private schools to the patronage of its wealthy pastoralist neighbours.³³ St George's ran from 1915 until 1921 and was a private coeducational preparatory school for younger children.³⁴ Bernard, whose study was in the turret room

²⁹ Townsend, p. 4.

³⁰ Howe, p. 265.

³¹ Crispian Villeneuve, *Rudolf Steiner in Britain. A Documentation of His Ten Visits*, Vol. II, London: Temple Lodge Publishing, 2004, p.672.

³² Bernard Crompton-Smith and Harold Neal, 'Mr Collison', *New Zealand News Sheet*, 18 (March 1946), pp. 1-2.

³³ Wright, p. 115.

³⁴ Rudolf Steiner School 50th Anniversary Publication, Hastings: Rudolf Steiner School, 2000, p.11.

of “Duart”, was responsible for maintenance and administration at the school, while also working on the orchard nearby. He was a member of the Anglican Synod during his time at the school, but later resigned when he found its members views incompatible with his own, remarking “what they need is more Anthroposophy!”.³⁵ Rachel was headmistress and taught along the lines of Miss Baber’s establishment in Wellington, influenced by her experiences at the Froebel Educational Institute (FEI) in London.

The FEI had arisen out of mid-nineteenth-century liberal British interest in educational reform. It taught that the most important part of schooling was in the preschool period, and emphasized a total educational process focused on the child’s individuality, a philosophy which was readily compatible with that later developed by Rudolf Steiner.³⁶ While St George’s was not a Steiner School (the first Waldorf School did not open until 1919 in Stuttgart), Hal Atkinson suggests that Rachel Crompton-Smith’s teaching practices at St George’s were influenced by her growing knowledge of Anthroposophy.³⁷ The Crompton-Smiths may well have read *The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy* which was first published in 1909. However, Bernard made it clear in his historical notes that the couple did not learn formally about the detail of Steiner’s educational methods until their first visit to London in 1926.³⁸

Over the period 1912-1921 Emma Richmond continued to lead a small anthroposophical study group, which included the Crompton-Smiths (who also joined Harry Collison’s London group as corresponding members in 1914) and met at their house. Early members of the group were Miss Mabel Hodge, the Headmistress of Woodford House, and Mrs. Mary Jane Elder Bauchop, who had shifted to Havelock North in 1920 with her daughter Elizabeth. She was from a prominent Waikanae farming family and widow of Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Bauchop, who died of wounds at Gallipoli.³⁹ In 1917 Miss Jean Stuart-Menteath was teaching at St George’s and may have become a group member. She later went on to Marsden College in Wellington,

³⁵ Henry Malden and Jean Stuart-Menteath, ‘Bernard Crompton-Smith’, *New Zealand News Sheet*, 41 (June 1958), pp. 2-3.

³⁶ Kerry Bethell, ‘To Bring into Play: Miss Mary Richmond’s Utilisation of Kindred Networks in the Diffusion of Kindergarten Ideals into Practice’, *History of Education*, 35:2 (2006), p. 227.

³⁷ Hal Atkinson, ‘Rachel Crompton-Smith’, *New Zealand News Sheet*, 63 (Feb. 1968), pp. 2-4.

³⁸ Bernard Crompton-Smith, ‘Some Notes on the Origin of The Anthroposophical Society in N.Z. And Its Connection with the General Anthroposophical Society in Dornach’, *New Zealand News Sheet*, 37 (May 1955), pp. 2-5.

³⁹ Townsend, p. 5.

before becoming the founding Headmistress of Queenswood in Hastings, when this became the first Steiner School in New Zealand in 1950. By the time of Emma's death in 1921 the number of members had risen to 15, some corresponding from outside Havelock North.⁴⁰

Rachel and Bernard Crompton-Smith sold St George's in 1921. Wright suggests that economic conditions following World War I, and a reduction in the patronage of the pastoralists who had been the main support of private schools, may have contributed to this decision.⁴¹ However, it also is clear that by this time the Crompton-Smiths, already active in correspondence with London, were becoming increasingly dedicated to the cause of New Zealand Anthroposophy, and that this may have absorbed much of their energy. In 1921, after Emma Richmond's death, they were encouraged by Collison to carry on Emma's leadership role in New Zealand, including the receipt and distribution of anthroposophical literature and news from England. By 1926 they were corresponding with Dornach and were receiving some lectures and literature directly from Switzerland.

In that year, the Crompton-Smiths, accompanied by Miss Mabel Hodge, visited London. They attended the opening of the New School (later Michael Hall) and had their first direct experience of Steiner education. They also were present at the opening of the Rudolf Steiner Hall in London, a ceremony attended by the whole of the Dornach Vorstand (Executive Council) and the Eurythmy group. After being introduced personally to members of the Vorstand, they were confirmed as the official representatives of Anthroposophy in New Zealand. The Havelock North group, seen as embracing all New Zealand members, was given an agreed upon name, the Marama Group of The General Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand. This now was linked directly to Dornach, rather than through Harry Collison's English group, and to the momentous historical developments of the 1923 Christmas meeting, which had founded the General Anthroposophical Society.⁴²

⁴⁰ Gert Christeller, 'The Beginnings. Emma Jane Richmond (1845-1921)', *Anthroposophy in New Zealand*, 112 (June 1992), p. 31.

⁴¹ Wright, p. 121.

⁴² Bernard Crompton-Smith, p.4.

After London, the Crompton-Smiths visited Stuttgart and the original Waldorf School, then went to Dornach and the Goetheanum. At one point, they were accompanied by Mrs. Mary Bauchop, whose daughter Elizabeth was enrolled as a pupil at the Waldorf School in Stuttgart. Bernard furthered his study of the German language and the couple met a leading German Anthroposophist, Herr Alfred Meebold, who later came to New Zealand at their invitation and became a major influence on the development of Anthroposophy in this country.⁴³ Following their return to Havelock North in 1927, they visited regional centres in Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch, appointing as group leaders there, respectively, Henry Malden, James Coe, and Ada Wells' daughter Chris Twyneham (for the whole South Island).⁴⁴ The Marama Group, whose members previously met at the Crompton-Smiths' home, shifted to a more central location at the house of Mary Bauchop during the 1920s.

Alfred Meebold made his first visit to New Zealand in 1928, basing himself with the Crompton-Smiths in Havelock North, but visiting the small groups and isolated Anthroposophists scattered throughout the country, while also pursuing his interest as a botanical collector. He made further visits in 1932-3 and 1935-6, then came back to settle in New Zealand after World War II (see chapter four, Scholars and Refugees). Townsend credits his visits with stimulating interest in Anthroposophy, and awakening students to the recognition that they belonged to a vital world-wide movement, leading to a steady increase in society membership throughout the 1930s.⁴⁵

In 1930 Rachel and Bernard Crompton-Smith, as authorized representatives of the Central Executive in Dornach, called an inaugural general meeting of society members resident in New Zealand, to begin the process of establishing a constitution for the group, in accordance with the statutes of the General Anthroposophical Society. This took place in Havelock North on April 12 and was attended by 11 members. At a further meeting in October 1930 in Wellington, with 16 members present, an "executive committee" of five was appointed, comprising James Coe (Auckland), Henry Malden (Wellington), Mr. Gurnsey (Christchurch), with Mary Bauchop and Edwina Burbury

⁴³ Henry Malden and Jean Stuart-Menteath, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁴ Townsend, p. 8.

⁴⁵ Townsend, p. 10.

from Havelock North.⁴⁶ Although confident steps were now being taken to reorganize the group and establish a national network, the membership at this point remained small, but it was to increase significantly over the next decade. By way of comparison, the Stella Matutina Order, whose numbers may have peaked about this time, was said in 1930 to have about 300 members in Havelock North.⁴⁷

The next significant general meeting was held in January 1933 at “Taruna” in Havelock North, with 37 members and also Alfred Meebold present. It was decided to drop the name Marama Group for the collective New Zealand membership. At a further meeting in Havelock North in October 1933, attended by 37 members from a New Zealand total of 95, the suggestion from Dornach that the group be renamed The Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand was adopted. After lengthy discussion, it was concluded that the Secretariat should be based in Havelock North, this to consist of Rachel Crompton-Smith, Ruth Nelson and Norman Avery, with Mary Bauchop as the link to Dornach. This decision may have contributed to a period of estrangement from the Auckland group, who despite their leader Edith Coe having been personally acquainted with Rudolf Steiner, had chosen to maintain close contact with the main stream of English Anthroposophy rather than directly with Dornach (see chapter four, Refugees and Scholars). At this meeting, the establishment of a New Zealand news sheet, with Henry Malden as editor, assisted by Bernard Crompton-Smith, was proposed, but this was deferred until 1935 after the Dornach *Anthroposophic News Sheet* in English translation had become available in 1934.⁴⁸

The next annual meeting (now with the preferred name of conference), in Havelock North at Easter 1935, began the tradition of Easter Conferences which continued for some decades. It was attended by 28 members from a total New Zealand membership of 107 (Havelock North 39, Wellington 40, Auckland 21, various South Island 7).⁴⁹ A number of issues of fundamental importance to the growing society were addressed. In response to discomfort felt by some members at the use of the term executive to designate the guiding committee, with its overtones of an authoritarian hierarchy, and with advice from Alfred Meebold, it was resolved to appoint instead an “Initiative

⁴⁶ Henry Malden, ‘A Little History’, *The New Zealand News Sheet*, 6 (May 1936), p. 9.

⁴⁷ Wright, p. 165.

⁴⁸ Malden, ‘A Little History’, p. 10.

⁴⁹ *The New Zealand News Sheet*, 1:1(May 1935), p. 6.

Group” to assist in organizational matters, but importantly also to promote a sense of autonomy in regional centres. It was recognized that members in Havelock North had until that time borne the brunt of the administrative responsibility, and some of the financial burden, for all New Zealand. The *New Zealand News Sheet* was inaugurated with Henry Malden, at that time based in Wellington, as editor, this being seen as a step in the redistribution of the workload.⁵⁰

The Easter conference of 1936 was held in Wellington with over 50 members from a total of 119 present. The organizational resolutions of the 1935 conference were carried by consensus and the meeting endorsed the appointment of Henry Malden (Wellington) as Secretary, Ruth Nelson (Havelock North) taking over from Mary Bauchop as the link with Dornach, with the “Initiative Group”, comprising Ruth Nelson, Harold Neal (Wellington) and Mollie Stuckey (Dunedin) in an advisory role. Following this reorganization, Henry Malden wrote that Havelock North was still seen as the home of Anthroposophy in New Zealand, and ‘our “centre” in a certain sense, but not in the sense it was before, while Dornach is of course our real spiritual centre’. He summed up the state of the Society in New Zealand in May 1936 thus:

Anthroposophy has been in New Zealand now for approximately 21 years; it has reached its majority, and, having grown up, has reached the age of discretion. The Easter Conference of 1936, one may perhaps say, marks the starting of a definite epoch in the life of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand. It is now standing firmly on its own feet. Our ideas and concepts about organisation and such matters have been gradually oriented in a new direction, and, with the proper spirit engendered throughout the Society in New Zealand, there is no reason why the future should not be faced with optimism. With elasticity and mobility in organisation, with as little organisation as possible, and with no thought of autocratic “authorities,” Anthroposophy in New Zealand should continue to grow and prosper and be able to meet the changing conditions as they arise.⁵¹

The Easter conference of 1937, which was to have been held in Christchurch, was cancelled. However, in this year an increase in New Zealand membership to 124 was recorded (Havelock North 35, Auckland 27, Wellington 43 and the South Island 14, with the majority in Christchurch, where a number of new members had joined the group led by Chris Twyneham and Cos Carey).⁵² The 1938 Easter conference was held in Wellington and was attended by around 40 members, the majority local, but with a contingent from Havelock North. It was noted that Miss Nancy Hartmann was now

⁵⁰ Malden, p. 10.

⁵¹ Malden, p. 11.

⁵² *New Zealand News Sheet*, 9 (April 1937), p. 3.

training as a eurythmist in Stuttgart and Dornach, with the support of £15 annually, paid by donation from New Zealand members and from parents of children she had taught. Monday of the Easter weekend was spent at York Bay enjoying the hospitality of Hal Atkinson, beginning what was to become a tradition for Wellington meetings.⁵³ The last pre-World War II Easter conference was also in Wellington in 1939, when the total New Zealand membership was noted as between 130 and 140.⁵⁴ No further conferences were held until Christmas 1944-5, and the *New Zealand News Sheet* went into recess over the war years.

“Taruna”, Ruth Nelson and Edwina Burbury

For almost 40 years, from the early 1930s until the late 1970s, Alice Ruth Nelson (1894-1977) and Ethel Edwina (Edna) Burbury (1890-1978), widely known as “the ladies”, played a leading role in the affairs of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand. Their home “Taruna”, on the Havelock Hills below Te Mata Peak, became the unofficial headquarters of the Society, and the place of many memorable meetings and activities. In 1960 it was officially recognized as the centre of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand.⁵⁵ After their deaths, “Taruna” was acquired by a trust, and is now Taruna College, the main teaching centre for Anthroposophy in New Zealand.

Ruth Nelson was from the Hawke’s Bay settler establishment. Her maternal grandfather James Nelson Williams (1837-1915) was given the name Nelson after his mother, Jane Nelson. He was the third son of the Bay of Islands missionary William Williams, who later was consecrated as the first Bishop of Waiapu. James Nelson Williams was a prominent Hawke’s Bay run holder and businessman, initially at “Kereru”, and later at “Frimley” near Hastings, where he was instrumental in establishing commercial fruit growing in the Hawke’s Bay.⁵⁶ His daughter Winifred Beathem Williams married Francis (Frank) Ernest Nelson, a Hastings businessman from another established

⁵³ *New Zealand News Sheet*, 12 (June 1938), pp. 3-5.

⁵⁴ *New Zealand News Sheet*, 13 (April 1939), pp. 3-6.

⁵⁵ Townsend, p. 25.

⁵⁶ Mary Boyd, ‘Williams, James Nelson – Biography’, from the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara – The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, updated 1-Sep-10, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2w22/1>, accessed 24 November 2011.

Hawke's Bay family, related several generations previously to the Williams through Jane Nelson.

Ruth was born to Winifred and Frank Nelson in 1894 in Hastings, but the family shifted in 1907 to live closer to Havelock North at "Rouncil". Here they participated in activities of the Havelock Work, Ruth drawing 'fascinated attention' during the 1912 Shakespearean pageant, when the hobbyhorse she was riding stopped to drink from a water trough in the centre of the town.⁵⁷ She attended Woodford House Anglican girls' school, whose principal Miss Edith Hodges became an Anthroposophist sometime after 1912 and the arrival of Emma Richmond. Following her schooling, Ruth studied at the Christchurch School of Art and became an accomplished artist, specializing in woodcarving. Examples of her work may be seen in the Woodford Chapel reredos and the carved door at "Taruna". In 1922 she travelled with her mother and younger sister Gwen on an art tour to Italy. Ruth had previously become interested in Rudolf Steiner's work, doubtless through contact with Emma Richmond's group, and decided to pay him a visit, travelling from Florence and sitting on the steps at Dornach with her rucksack until he granted her an interview. From the time of that meeting she was a committed Anthroposophist.⁵⁸

Edwina (Edna) Burbury was born in Oamaru. Her father Edward Pargeter Burbury, originally from Bewdley in Worcestershire, was the Oamaru manager of The New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company.⁵⁹ Her mother was the daughter of a local surgeon. Edna attended St. Hilda's Anglican school for girls, then run by The Sisters of the Church of England, in Dunedin. It is said they were so impressed by her that they prevailed upon her parents to allow her to stay for an extra year at school.⁶⁰ When her father retired, the family shifted to Christchurch, where he became an agricultural adviser to the National Efficiency Boards Commissioner for Canterbury, Nelson and Marlborough during World War I.⁶¹ Edna also did war work and took a course in massage. Given that Ada Wells' Pike family siblings, as well as Ada herself, were active massage therapists in Christchurch at this time, it is intriguing to speculate

⁵⁷ Wright, p. 111.

⁵⁸ Jean Menteth, 'Ruth Nelson', *The New Zealand News Sheet*, 90 (December 1977), pp. 2-3.

⁵⁹ *Otago Witness*, 18 March 1908, p. 37.

⁶⁰ Nancy Hartmann, 'Ethel Edwina Burbury', *Anthroposophy in New Zealand, News Letter 2*, (March 1979), pp. 2-3.

⁶¹ *Colonist*, 3 November, 1917, p. 7.

that Edna may have met with them during her training, although no record of this can be found. Presumably Edna first met with Ruth Nelson, then studying at the Christchurch School of Art, during this period of her life.

Sometime after 1918 the Burburys shifted to Hawke's Bay, to a house on the Havelock Hills they named "Bewdley". Edna was unable to accompany Ruth Nelson to Europe in 1922 because of her father's indisposition. By this time she too had developed a strong interest in Anthroposophy, and she deeply regretted missing the opportunity of meeting with Rudolf Steiner. She continued to nurse her father through his final illness, until his death in 1924. After Ruth Nelson's return from Europe, she and Edna were members of the Crompton-Smiths' group. Later in the 1920s, they decided to live together, acquiring land on the Havelock Hills adjacent to the Burbury family home "Bewdley". There they built "Taruna", a large brick house, only to watch its destruction in the 1931 earthquake shortly after it was completed. However, it was quickly rebuilt in wood, an equally substantial two storey building with a large downstairs meeting room, stables and ample surrounding land for horses and other animals.⁶²

"Taruna" was soon established as the centre for anthroposophical activities in Havelock North. Meetings of the infant Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand were held there in 1933 and 1935, then alternated between Havelock North and Wellington until the hiatus over the years of World War II. Ruth Nelson initially was nominated as a member of the Secretariat, then the link to Dornach: Edna Burbury assumed the role of group leader in Havelock North and later was on the Secretariat as well. Ruth Nelson and Edna Burbury were also appointed as the original class readers for the School of Spiritual Science in New Zealand, responsible for organizing lessons of the First Class and for introducing prospective new members to the leadership in Dornach.⁶³ Ruth and Edna travelled together to Europe and Dornach in 1935-6. They met with Dr. and Mrs. Baravalle and were invited to visit the Stuttgart Waldorf School. Herman von Baravalle had been one of Steiner's original Waldorf teachers. He later was involved with the spread of Waldorf schools in the United States, and for significant parts of the Waldorf curriculum. The meeting greatly stimulated their interest in Waldorf education and led to their resolve to found a Steiner school in New Zealand. Ruth and Edna visited the Goetheanum and made contact with members of the Vorstand there. Following their

⁶² Hartmann, 'Ethel Edwina Burbury', p. 2-3

⁶³ Brian Butler, in Townsend, p. 35.

return to New Zealand, they resumed their central role in the affairs of the Society, the crucial Easter Conference of 1936 in Wellington, and the subsequent prewar meetings.

Overview of the Period 1912-1939

This period saw an expansion of Anthroposophy in New Zealand from a small, isolated project with fewer than ten independent students of Rudolf Steiner's teachings to an organization with over 130 members. Although its centre was still firmly based in Havelock North, there were active groups in Wellington, Christchurch and Auckland, with scattered members elsewhere. The Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand had now established its principles and procedures, and a clear, direct link to the leadership of Anthroposophy in Dornach. Despite the economic depression of the 1930s and the looming of World War II it looked forward to the future with some optimism.

In the earliest years, the Havelock North Anthroposophists drew support and encouragement from participation in the Havelock Work, whose broad spiritual philosophies and aspirations were close to their own. The nature of their relationship with Felkin's group was more ambiguous. Certainly there were areas of mutual interest, and possibly there may have been some overlapping of membership in the early years.⁶⁴ However, it is clear that the two groups soon went their separate ways, each pursuing their own spiritual path.

Until the 1930s, the Anthroposophists of Havelock North were a small minority in a mass of Felkin followers. On this account they may have felt isolated, and a need to be protective of their belief system. This probably was the more so in the years after World War I, when Rudolf Steiner became a controversial figure in Germany for his publicly expressed political views and his advocacy of the threefold social order, 'three independently structured, autonomous "states" within the state, representing the economic, the political and the cultural spheres'.⁶⁵ Following the destruction of the first Goetheanum by fire on New Year's Eve 1922, with a suspicion of arson, the internal problems which led to the re-founding of the General Anthroposophical Society at the 1923 Christmas meeting, the growth of National Socialism, which led to the closure of

⁶⁴ Brian Butler, personal communication, Havelock North, November 2011.

⁶⁵ Gilbert Childs, *Rudolf Steiner: his Life and Work*, Hudson NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1996, pp. 53-7.

the Anthroposophical Society in Germany in 1935 and the eventual shutting down of the Waldorf schools, and the internal dissension which led in 1935 to the exclusion of a number of members by the Vorstand and estrangement from Dornach of the Dutch and English Societies, there was a period when Anthroposophy became more inward looking and a need was seen to protect the essential truths of its teaching against public misunderstanding.⁶⁶ In Leonard's opinion New Zealand Anthroposophy, which with the exception of the Auckland "English" group (see chapter four, Scholars and Refugees) remained committed in loyalty to the Dornach Vorstand, was only affected to a minor extent. However, these events no doubt were reflected by attitudes within the Havelock North group, demonstrated by the fact that from its inception in 1933 until 1939 the *New Zealand News Sheet* was marked "For Members Only", following a lead from the Dornach publication the *Anthroposphic News Sheet*, which was similarly marked.

The early New Zealand Anthroposophists in Havelock North were, for the most part, relatively affluent and middle-class, many from, or associated with, well established settler and pastoralist families. It is striking that the majority had strong connections to the Anglican Church, as indeed did most prominent figures in the Havelock Work. Ellwood points to '[a] vogue for an Evelyn Underhill style of interest in mysticism' amongst liberal Anglicans in the first, optimistic decade of the early twentieth century, before World War I.⁶⁷ This combination, of a religious background which inclined them towards an expansive and speculative style of spirituality and a social position which gave them the time, education and wherewithal to pursue such an interest, provided a particularly supportive environment for the growth of Anthroposophy in Havelock North. It also was fortunate for the Society that the early members were able personally to fund many of its early developments through the Depression years. These included financial support of the Secretariat and of the key early meetings, in part of the *New Zealand News Sheet*, the continuation of substantial monetary contributions to Dornach, and later the acquisition of Queenswood School and the setting up of the Taruna trust (see chapter three, Havelock North the Spiritual Centre (1944-63) and the Wellington Connection), all of which allowed the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand to establish a firm base for future expansion.

⁶⁶ John Leonard, 'Storm Clouds over Dornach' in Geoffrey Townsend, *Outline of the History of the Anthroposophical Society/Movement in New Zealand*, Havelock North: The Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, 2001, pp.18-19.

⁶⁷ Ellwood, p. 167.

Chapter 3

Havelock North the Spiritual Centre (1944-1963) and the Wellington Connection

During World War II there was a hiatus, in which much of the national activity of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand stopped. This chapter describes the post-war reawakening and the expansion of the Society over the next two decades. It contrasts the ways in which Anthroposophy was manifest in Havelock North and York Bay, on the eastern shores of Wellington Harbour, and describes the shift in organization of the Society which occurred in the early 1960s, from its origin in the establishment of Havelock North towards a broader, more representative National Council. The period also saw the beginnings of Steiner childhood education in New Zealand. This, along with a continuation of anthroposophical involvement in biodynamic farming and gardening, and the beginning of a contribution to health care (both to be described in chapter five, Soil and Health), were all signs of the emergence of a broader anthroposophical movement in New Zealand.

The Post-War Reawakening

Possibly the most significant festival ever held at “Taruna” took place over ten days of the Christmas period 1944-5. Perhaps sensing that the war in Europe was approaching an end, but more importantly to coincide with the 21st anniversary of the re-founding of The General Anthroposophical Society and the laying of the Foundation Stone at the Goetheanum in 1923, Ruth Nelson and Edna Burbury called for all New Zealand members of The Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand to gather for the first large-scale meeting in over five years. A marquee was erected on the back lawn and the village hall (opened in 1910 for the Havelock Work) was rented for daily eurhythmy classes and performances. These were run by Miss Nancy Hartmann who had trained

from 1937 in Stuttgart and Dornach, with financial support from the Society, to become New Zealand's first fully qualified eurhythmist.¹

Henry Malden's March 1945 editorial in the *New Zealand News Sheet* records this Christmas conference as a huge success. It was the largest gathering of Anthroposophists ever to take place in New Zealand, attended by 90 of whom over 60 were Society members, nearly half the total membership at the time. One of Rudolf Steiner's Christmas lectures and his "Inaugural Lecture" were both read, followed by a wide variety of contributions from many different members. Malden wrote that the conference marked a rebirth in the spiritual life of the Society, and in feelings of fellowship and solidarity amongst its members.² In the words of Ernst Reizenstein (see chapter four, Scholars and Refugees), who had been feeling a degree of spiritual isolation since his arrival in Auckland 1939,

...[the] central impulse of Anthroposophy suddenly awoke. The room faded away. There were women and men united in pure thinking, forgetting themselves but listening openly to the words of Rudolf Steiner inspired by the Christ-impulse through [the Archangel] Michael. The words entered into us, they reached the hearts and united them. I find I can only express this in saying: Michael was near. Indeed Anthroposophy is living anew.³

"Taruna" clearly had become, as its name suggested, a meeting place of friends. The tradition of Christmas conferences, along with that of Easter conferences and Michaelmas meetings, was established. This meeting also marked the post-war emergence of the *New Zealand News Sheet*, which resumed publication in March 1945. Regular subscriptions from New Zealand to Dornach were re-started and the war arrears paid. A major conference of the Bio-Dynamic Association in New Zealand was held at Te Aroha in April of the same year.⁴

Ruth Nelson and Edna Burbury remained at "Taruna" until Ruth's death there in 1977. Edna, four years her senior, died one year later, in a Hastings nursing home. Over these years, the couple established a small working farm with horses, poultry, and a stud flock of Dorset Horn sheep. Ruth was of a gentle and practical nature.⁵ She did much of the

¹ E.E.Burbury, 'Training a Eurhythmist', *New Zealand News Sheet*, 3:11 (March 1938), pp. 3-4.

² *New Zealand News Sheet*, 14 (March 1945), pp. 2-5.

³ *New Zealand News Sheet*, 14 (March 1945), p. 8.

⁴ *New Zealand News Sheet*, 15, (June 1945), p. 13.

⁵ Jean Menteth, 'Ruth Nelson (1894-1977)', *New Zealand News Sheet*, 90 (December 1977), pp. 2-3.

farm and household work, and also from 1932 acted as librarian, ordering books for Society members and caring for the extensive library at “Taruna”. Edna was a more forthright and at times authoritarian person, whose administrative bent led to the position she held for many years, as group leader in Havelock North, and to her enduring influence throughout her lifetime in the affairs of the Society in New Zealand.⁶ Ruth Nelson and Edna Burbury were the original and only class readers for The School of Spiritual Science in New Zealand until 1971, when Brian Butler was appointed as an additional reader.⁷ They were guided and strongly influenced by Alfred Meebold (see chapter four, Scholars and Refugees) who used “Taruna” as his base from the time of his 1932 visit, and lived there continuously from 1946 until his death in 1952.⁸

Study Materials, Libraries and Publications

The spiritual life of a dedicated Anthroposophist was based around group work and the study of anthroposophical texts. One of the earliest and most important tasks for the leaders of Anthroposophy in New Zealand was to provide for this unceasing need for reading and study materials, particularly for the works of Rudolf Steiner in English translation. Emma Richmond filled this role until her death, and left a bequest to continue the purchase and distribution of books and lectures, for sale and distribution to members, and to form the nucleus of group libraries in centres about the country. Bernard and Rachel Crompton-Smith continued this work from 1922 until 1932, after which they handed over to Ruth Nelson, who also became librarian at “Taruna”.⁹ The “Taruna” collection, built on the nucleus of books from Emma Richmond, remained the most significant in New Zealand until 1939, when Ernst Reizenstein arrived with his large library from Germany. He later donated it to the Auckland group. In later years, the “Taruna” library was transferred to the Rudolf Steiner Centre in Hastings and the Auckland collection to Rudolf Steiner House in Ellerslie, when each of these properties

⁶ Nancy Hartmann, ‘Edwina Ethel Burbury (1890-1978), *Anthroposophy in New Zealand, Newsletter 2*, (March 1979), pp. 2-3.

Brian Butler, personal communication, Havelock North, November 2011.

⁷ Brian Butler in Geoffrey Townsend, *Outline of the History of the Anthroposophical Society/Movement in New Zealand*, Havelock North: Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, 2001, p. 35.

⁸ E.E.Burbury, ‘Alfred Meebold Biography’, *New Zealand News Sheet*, 31 (March 1952), pp. 3-6.

⁹ Geoffrey Townsend, *Outline of the History of the Anthroposophical Society/Movement in New Zealand*, Havelock North: Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, 2001, p.13.

was acquired through bequest and fund raising by members. Separate libraries were gradually built up in other regional centres.

The *New Zealand News Sheet*, which carried news of the General Anthroposophical Society in Dornach as well as local affairs, was a lively venue for opinion pieces and poetry, contributed by members. It first appeared in May 1935 with Henry Malden as the founding editor, an influential post he held until his death in 1963. For much of this time he was also a Council member and General Secretary of the Society, and for a short period in 1946, after a new series of the *Newsletter of the Bio-Dynamic Association in New Zealand* was started, he also assisted as its editor.

Henry William Malden (1885-1963) was from an Anglican family in Guildford, Surrey, and came to New Zealand in 1912.¹⁰ He worked as a secondary school teacher at King's College in Auckland, Heretaunga Boys' School (later Hereworth) in Havelock North, then as a journalist in Wellington. Following the death of his first wife, he married Ruth Nelson's younger sister Gwen, an accomplished watercolour artist, in 1945, and shifted back to Havelock North to live with her at "Bewdley", the old Burbury family home, next to "Taruna". Henry Malden had an extensive knowledge of the astronomical implications of Rudolf Steiner's work and an eclectic interest in magic which, in its lighter moments, gave rise to much appreciated performances at anthroposophical Christmas parties.¹¹ He maintained a book depot at "Bewdley", carrying the capital costs of books and other publications himself, and selling them to members at cost price.¹² Considerable stocks were held for sale, and Henry also handled overseas orders for members, from England, Germany and America. The *New Zealand News Sheet* of June 1946 listed around 150 publications available, with topics grouped as general literature, esoteric studies, education, the arts, social and economic questions, agriculture and medicine, and prices ranging from nine pence to 22 shillings.

Henry Malden's health deteriorated in the early 1960s. He submitted his resignation as editor the *New Zealand News Sheet* in April 1963 and died a month later. The bookshop was taken over by Yves Muller and continued on a non-profit basis from his home in

¹⁰ Anon., 'Henry William Malden', *New Zealand News Sheet*, 48 (June 1963), p. 4.

¹¹ Brian Butler, personal communication, Havelock North, November 2011.

¹² Townsend, p. 24.

Hastings. Editorship of the *New Zealand News Sheet* was temporarily assumed by Brian Butler, then was taken over by Geoff Townsend and John Leonard (who later became publications editor for the Society).¹³

The Wellington Connection

The founding impulse for the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand shifted to Havelock North with Emma Richmond around 1912, but her influence continued in Wellington, where by the early 1920s a strong anthroposophical group had developed. One of the earliest members Hal Atkinson (another of the extended Richmond-Atkinson family) was in London in 1921, after service in WWI, and met with his cousin John L. Moore, who was there studying art. At the time both Annie Besant and Rudolf Steiner were lecturing in London. To his great regret later, Hal chose to hear Annie Besant while his cousin went to Steiner's lecture.¹⁴ Both became committed Anthroposophists and returned to New Zealand to live at York Bay on Wellington Harbour, where John Moore worked as a watercolour and woodcut artist.

Other foundation members of the Wellington group in the 1920s were Henry Malden, then a sub-editor at *The Evening Post* and living in Lower Hutt after spells teaching in Auckland and Havelock North, Bert Cartwright, Ted Ball, Mary and Marjorie Ellis and their mother. The group was joined in 1926 by new arrivals to New Zealand, Molly Parry and her husband Evan, and Harold Neal, an Englishman who had met Rudolf Steiner as a teenager. Harold Neal became a prominent Wellington businessman and city councillor, and married Ada Lillian ("Girlie") Huggins, whose father Herbert was one of the earliest students of Anthroposophy in New Zealand.¹⁵ Henry Malden was leader of the group, and in 1936 at the Easter conference held that year in Wellington, also became General Secretary of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand and editor of the *New Zealand New Sheet*. Fräü Hedwig Weiss, Swiss born and trained in Steiner's teaching methods, came to New Zealand in the 1930s and taught at Chilton St James, an Anglican girls' school in Lower Hutt. Later she ran a private kindergarten

¹³ Brian Butler, in Townsend, p.29.

¹⁴ Mollie Parry, 'A History of the Wellington Group', unpublished typescript, (February 1985), Rudolf Steiner House, Auckland.

¹⁵ J.Murray, 'Ada Lillian ("Girlie") Neal', *Anthroposophy in New Zealand, Newsletter 48* (June 1992), p. 10.

there before shifting to teach at Hohepa in the Hawke's Bay.¹⁶ In 1938, Frida Eichelbaum emigrated from Berlin to New Zealand with her Jewish husband Walter and son Thomas, to escape Nazi persecution. She became a group member after meeting with Mrs. Henry Malden.¹⁷ Otago graduate and medical practitioner Marie Payne Büchler joined the group in the 1950s, after meeting with John Moore.¹⁸ Group leaders after Henry Malden were Jessie Townsend, Harold Neal, for around 21 years, and then Molly Parry (until 1977). As well as the central, registered Wellington Group, there were active study circles at York Bay, Lower Hutt, the West Coast and Greytown. Many members attended several or all of the study circles each week.¹⁹

York Bay, Hal Atkinson and Mollie Miller Atkinson

Harry (Hal) Merton Waldo Atkinson (1895-1975) was born in Wellington, the second son of second cousins Ann Elizabeth (Alla) Richmond and Edmund Tudor Atkinson (1858-1927). Both his grandfather, the Premier Sir Harry Atkinson, and father were amongst the first members of the Theosophical Society in New Zealand. His mother was a daughter of the politician and watercolour artist James Crowe Richmond, of the original Taranaki settler family, whose younger brother Henry was husband of the pioneer Anthroposophist Emma Richmond. Alla Richmond had travelled widely as a young woman in England and Europe with her sister Dolla (the artist Dorothy Kate Richmond). Hal wrote later, with some pride, that the pair had 'returned to New Zealand as "Aesthetics," or converts to "Pre-Raphaelitism" – to the horror of conventional folk'.²⁰

Hal Atkinson lived as a small boy on the coast near Otaki, where his father, Tudor Atkinson, a failed businessman who founded, amongst other less successful ventures, the Taupo Totara Timber Company, practised as a lawyer. The family shifted to York Bay, on the eastern shores of Wellington Harbour, in 1912. Hal's older brother Esmond, a watercolour painter who worked as an artist in the Biological Section of the

¹⁶ Ann Paterson, *Stories of York Bay. A Community Effort*, Wellington: Bookprint Consultants, p.77.

¹⁷ Mollie Parry, 'Frida Eichelbaum', *Anthroposophy in New Zealand, Newsletter 104* (December 1985), pp. 62-3.

¹⁸ Marie Darby, 'Marie Payne Büchler', *Anthroposophy in New Zealand*, 99 (July 1983), pp. 52-5.

¹⁹ Mollie Parry, 1985.

²⁰ H.M.W. Atkinson, 'Artist and Botanist' in *Artist and Botanist. The Life and Work of Esmond Atkinson*, John L. Moore (ed.), Wellington: A.H and A.W. Reed, 1946, p.9.

Department of Agriculture and later the National Museum, purchased a tract of bush above the bay which later he gifted to the nation. Hal's description of his father's professional philosophy, written in a book about Esmond's life and art, gives a good indication of the values and example that Tudor Atkinson brought to his family, and later to York Bay:

...Tudor Atkinson, was a virile, idealistic and magnetic man, known more for his splendid failures as company promoter than for his success as a lawyer. He was among the few – incredible as it now sounds – who, half a century ago, saw that the New Zealand timber forests were of immense value, deserving of a radically more frugal and methodical development. In a country too small for such ventures he launched a series of big schemes, most of which came to grief on the rocks of capitalistic greed, of which he himself, as even his enemies admitted, was strikingly free.²¹

As Ann Paterson observed in her book of local and family memoirs, the Hursthouse, Richmond and Atkinson families seemed to enjoy living together, initially as settlers in Taranaki, then in Nelson after they were scattered by the land wars, later in Kelburn in Wellington (where Emma Richmond built her Chapman-Taylor house) and, beginning in 1911, in York Bay. By 1918 members of this remarkable extended family group, including three of Sir Harry Atkinson's sons, Dunstan, Tudor and Alfred, were living there in appreciable numbers.²²

Hal Atkinson spent his teenage years in York Bay, working with his father in the bush, developing his skills as a boat-builder, and sailing across the harbour to school in Wellington. He joined the British Navy as a volunteer during World War I, rising to the rank of lieutenant, and spent some time in England after the war before purchasing land in York Bay in 1921. He built a cabin where he lived until after his marriage to Mollie Miller in 1936. In 1937 he built a second house, with the help of younger Atkinson nephews. It was named "Rangiuru" after his father's house in Otaki, and was destined to become a spiritual centre for Anthroposophy which in many ways paralleled "Taruna" to the north. "Rangiuru" embodied many of Steiner's architectural principles, with flowing lines, curved corners and a vaulted ceiling, and was constructed with the meticulous craftsmanship which was Hal's trademark. In good, pragmatic New Zealand do-it-yourself manner, it was lined with timber from Ford packing cases. His workshop, in which he built boats, toys and spinning wheels, was at the front of the house.

²¹ H.M.W. Atkinson, p. 9.

²² Paterson, p. 81.

Hal Atkinson supported himself and his wife by boatbuilding, often with his nephew Nicholas, and sometimes from fishing in Cook Strait, but his life was focused on activities in York Bay and his commitment to Anthroposophy.²³ He became a central figure in the York Bay community, widely respected for his skills as a craftsman and sailor, and loved for his humour, enthusiasm, generosity and respect for the freedom of others. He was a father figure to the younger Atkinsons and a charismatic leader who drew people to him. With his wife Mollie, he established a regular Anthroposophy study group of 15 to 20 students at “Rangiuru”, which became an open house to visitors. Following Mollie’s death in 1950, he organized an annual Christmas festival there, lasting for the whole of the week and attracting Anthroposophists from throughout the country.²⁴

Mollie Ord Bews Miller Atkinson (1909-1950) was an artist in the Arts and Crafts style, specializing in metalwork. She was born in Invercargill, where her father Thomas Miller was an engineer and surveyor and her mother Edith was one of New Zealand’s earliest Anthroposophists. After studying a broad arts curriculum at Southland Technical College she went to Wellington for further training before setting up a studio in Molesworth Street. Calhoun describes her as an exemplar of the new female studio artists of the period, and ‘a woman whose training allowed her to establish and sell from her own workshop, and to adopt the spiritual values allied to the “simple life” sought by many Arts and Crafts adherents from the 1920s’.²⁵ She had followed her mother into Anthroposophy in 1931, and met Hal Atkinson through anthroposophical contacts after shifting to Wellington.²⁶

Mollie Miller was in Napier, staying with the family of her mentor Freddie Lipscomb, at the time of the 1931 Napier earthquake which devastated the original “Taruna”. In 1932 her widowed mother came to Wellington and together they were invited to stay at “Arisaig”, the York Bay home of Hal Atkinson’s aunt Dorothy Kate (Dolla) Richmond (1861-1935). Dolla Richmond was a well-known artist and painter who had shared a

²³ Mollie Parry and Bronwyn Mooney, ‘Hal Atkinson’, *New Zealand News Sheet*, 84 (December 1975), pp. 2-4.

²⁴ Paterson, pp. 83-5.

²⁵ Parry, 1985.

Townsend, p. 22.

²⁵ Ann Calhoun, *The Arts & Crafts Movement in New Zealand 1870-1940. Women make their Mark*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2000, pp. 164-5.

²⁶ John L. Moore, ‘Mollie Atkinson’, *New Zealand News Sheet*, 29 (November 1950), pp. 6-7.

Wellington studio with Francis Hodgkins, and had taught for many years at Miss Baber's school.²⁷ After Dolla's death, "Arisaig" passed to another Richmond cousin and artist, John L. Moore. Around this time Mollie Miller developed pulmonary tuberculosis, and in 1936 she was admitted to the sanatorium in Otaki. Mollie Miller and Hal Atkinson were married that year and in 1937 the couple shifted to the recently constructed "Rangiuru" with Mollie's mother. Hal set up a silver-smithing workshop for his wife, but because of her debilitating illness she was unable to continue this work, and spent much of her time on a couch on the veranda, watching, drawing and painting the numerous birds in the surrounding bush.²⁸

Mollie Atkinson was widely loved in the York Bay community for her warmth and intelligence. Despite her illness, she was untiringly enthusiastic and acutely aware in the numerous anthroposophical discussions which took place at "Rangiuru".²⁹ She and Hal both learnt German in order to translate and better understand Rudolf Steiner's works. Her art work over this time included many paintings and drawings of the birds and the bush which she observed from her veranda, a number of murals for the Matamata hospital, and two illustrated children's books, *Richard Bird in the Bush* (1944) and *Richard Bird at Sea* (1947). These originally were written for Richard Mulgan, son of novelist John Mulgan, and grandson of the writer and journalist Alan Mulgan who was also a York Bay resident.³⁰ A third small volume *Bird Watching* (1946) is an acutely observed and perceptively written account of her studies, reflecting her ecological awareness and concern for preservation of the natural world. When Mollie Atkinson died in 1950 Alan Mulgan wrote in the *Listener*:

The death of Mollie Miller Atkinson in her prime is a tragic loss to New Zealand art applied to natural history. It comes at a time when the public is increasingly responsive to such stimulus towards appreciation of our trees and birds.³¹

After "Rangiuru", Hal's most iconic construction was his boat "St Michael", a 31 foot (10 metre) ketch rigged auxiliary cruiser with a design inspired by the Scottish herring drifter which he skippered during World War I. "St Michael", named for the Archangel

²⁷ Janet Paul, 'Richmond, Dorothy Kate – Biography', The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara – the Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, updated 1 Sept 2010, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3r18/1>, accessed 22 May 2012.

²⁸ Paterson, pp. 85-6.

²⁹ Moore, p. 6.

³⁰ Paterson, p. 85.

³¹ A.M., 'Artist and Bird Lover', *New Zealand Listener*, 10 March 1950, p. 9.

so central to Rudolf Steiner's cosmogony and to Hal Atkinson's life, was slow in the building, primarily because of Hal's patient and perfectionist nature. She became a landmark outside his home for over 20 years, until her launching in April 1955, when she proved ideally seaworthy and became widely employed for transport, fishing and pleasure, in the harbour and along the adjacent coastline, often skippered by younger family members. In 1961, "St Michael" carried A.H. Reed from York Bay to Golden Bay during his epic trek from North Cape to Bluff. In 1972-73 she was sailed by Tudor and Nicholas Atkinson (sons of Esmond) to the Auckland Islands in support of the scientific expedition.³²

After Hal Atkinson's death in 1975, "Rangiuru" passed to another well-known anthroposophical couple, Gert and Flora Christeller. Gert had come to New Zealand as a young man in 1939 with his mother and younger sister (see chapter four, Scholars and Refugees). He became an Anthroposophist in 1946, and established a career as an academic in the German Department at Victoria University, and as a singer of lieder and folk on YC radio. The Christellers continued the tradition of craftwork (in their case, pottery and woodcarving) and hospitality established by Hal and Mollie Atkinson at York Bay.³³

The Beginnings of Steiner Education in New Zealand

From the time of Ada Wells and Emma Richmond there was a clear linkage between the impulse to Anthroposophy and a commitment to progressive education, with a developing interest in Rudolf Steiner's educational methods. However, the first direct contact with Steiner education was not until 1926, when Rachel and Bernard Crompton-Smith, Mabel Hodge (Headmistress of Woodford House) and Mary Bauchop visited the Waldorf school in Stuttgart, where Mary's daughter Elizabeth became a pupil. The resolve to establish a Steiner school in New Zealand was made in 1936 when Ruth Nelson and Edna Burbury, accompanied by Jean Stuart-Menteath, also visited Stuttgart. It came to fruition in 1950.

³² Tudor E. Atkinson in Paterson, pp. 40-43.

³³ Gaylene Denford-Wood, 'Gert Christeller (1918-2001)', *Sphere*, 3:1(March 2002), pp. 25-6.

In that year Edna Burbury, Ruth Nelson and Hugh Chambers (a long-standing member of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand who was continuing the tradition of involvement by prominent pastoralist families in the affairs of private schools in Havelock North), along with a number of other benefactors, formed a trust and acquired Queenswood School in Hastings.³⁴ This had been a small private preparatory school for girls, with about 30 boarders and an equal number of local day pupils. Edna Burbury was aware that there would be apprehension about the introduction of Steiner education, and that changes in the school would have to proceed gradually.³⁵ Indeed, there was some initial alarm amongst parents as the curriculum was progressively altered, but Alice Crowther writes that in due course their confidence was won.³⁶ The first headmistress in 1950 was Jean Stuart-Menteath, who had been teaching junior classes at Marsden College in Wellington.³⁷ She was joined in 1951 by Kathleen Weston, who had trained at Emerson College in England, and there was a gradual acquisition of further trained Steiner teachers through the 1950s. Boys were slowly introduced to the school, beginning with entrance at the kindergarten level.

During these early years, Rachel Crompton-Smith came regularly to the school on Thursday evenings to study Steiner's educational lectures with staff and discuss curriculum development. Amongst the texts used was a translation of Steiner's 1912 lecture cycle "The Roots of Education" made by Bernard Crompton-Smith (who often was assisted in this work by Alfred Meebold).³⁸ By 1962 there were six teachers and a trained eurythmist. In that year, the school was visited for two months by Mr. Karl Ege, one of Steiner's original teachers at Stuttgart. He gave a public seminar and suggested that the school name be changed to Queenswood Rudolf Steiner School, and that a course for teacher training be established. Both suggestions were adopted and Waldorf education was established on a firm basis at Hastings by the mid-1960s.³⁹ However, Queenswood Rudolf Steiner School was to stand alone in New Zealand until 1975,

³⁴ Townsend, p. 22. *50th Anniversary Publication*, Hastings: Rudolf Steiner School Hastings, 2000, p. 10.

³⁵ *New Zealand News Sheet*, 28, (February 1950), p. 3.

³⁶ Alice Crowther, *50th Anniversary Publication*, Hastings: Rudolf Steiner School Hastings, 2000, p. 10.

³⁷ Barbara Jackson, 'Jean Stuart-Menteath', *Anthroposophy in New Zealand*, 99 (July 1983), pp. 57-9.

³⁸ Lesley Waite, personal communication, Havelock North, November 2011.

³⁹ *50th Anniversary Publication*, Hastings: Rudolf Steiner School Hastings, 2000, pp. 9-13.

when a Christchurch school was opened, followed by a kindergarten in Auckland in 1978.⁴⁰

Society Affairs

The impulse arising from the landmark 1944 Christmas conference at “Taruna” carried the Society forward for much of the next decade. There was a steady increase in membership in the 1950s, attributed by Townsend to an increased attendance at the Christmas and Easter conferences, with enhanced personal contact between members living throughout New Zealand, and a consciousness of national unity.⁴¹ In 1959 there were 225 members registered with the Society, although 25 of these were largely resident outside the country.⁴² Information from membership lists and from subsequently published obituaries suggests that these newer members were, like their predecessors, middle-class and reasonably affluent, some professional and business people but also with significant numbers of artisans, farmers and horticulturalists.

Three key events during this decade that helped local members feel part of a vital international movement were visits by distinguished European Anthroposophists. Maria Metzener-Day, of the Dornach Secretariat, stayed for seven months during 1953, during which time she assisted with arrangements for holding regular First Class lessons.⁴³ Maria von Nagy, one of the earliest Steiner pedagogues with whom Alfred Meebold had worked in Hungary, visited in 1954. She spent time with teachers at the recently purchased Queenswood School in Hastings, lectured at “Taruna” and visited groups in the North Island.⁴⁴ Paul-Eugen Schiller, a physicist who worked for many years at the Goetheanum investigating Steiner’s indications in relation to a number of natural phenomena, came to New Zealand by invitation in 1959. He visited groups through the country and gave public lectures, demonstrating to local members that anthroposophical ideas could directly and fruitfully be introduced to a wider audience.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Ruth Kerr, *Waters of Double Reflection – The Story of Michael Park School*, Auckland: Rudolf Steiner Schools Trust, 2006, pp. 27-8.

⁴¹ Townsend, p. 29.

⁴² *New Zealand News Sheet*, 42 (February 1960), p. 4.

⁴³ *New Zealand News Sheet*, 34 (October 1953), pp. 2-3.

⁴⁴ *New Zealand News Sheet*, 36 (November 1954), p. 3.

⁴⁵ Townsend, p.21

There was also an increase in the number of study groups over this period, with new developments in Rotorua, centred on Jesse and Harry Townsend, Keri Keri, organized by Irene Wilkes, and Tauranga, initiated by Roy Tabuteau. However, by 1959 the afterglow of the 1944 “Taruna” Christmas conference had faded, and the groups were seen by an outside observer, Paul-Eugen Schiller, again to have become somewhat isolated and disunited.⁴⁶ None the less, in 1963 there were officially recognized study groups in Auckland, Rotorua, Havelock North, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin (Keri Keri and Tauranga, along with groups in Lower Hutt, Central Hawke’s Bay and Hastings, were officially recognized later), with a number of smaller groups, of variable membership in other places.⁴⁷ For official recognition and registration with Dornach, a group required a minimum of seven members and the commitment to continue working together, thus suggesting that in 1963 there were at least around 50 Society members regularly devoted to the core spiritual work of Anthroposophy in this country.

Brian Butler, commenting in 2001 on the fluctuating fortunes of some of these groups, emphasized the significance and importance of this aspect of anthroposophical work, both in continuing the impulse of Anthroposophy and in influencing the destiny of the world. He stated ‘the essential life of the society can be seen in the regular work of groups’, and quoted Rudolf Steiner’s words of June 1915:

Anthroposophical study is a reality in the spiritual worlds. It enters into the spiritual worlds, into the life of the Higher Hierarchies. Through right anthroposophical work, much of the evil which happens in this world can be counteracted for the spiritual worlds, which are increasingly influencing everything.⁴⁸

As the Society grew through the 1950s, it seemed to its leaders that it should be placed on a more formal legal foundation. At a general meeting at “Taruna” in December 1959 there was unanimous agreement that it should be incorporated as a charitable trust, with the recommendation for a complete revision of the rules and a review of membership fees. At this meeting, Henry Malden pointed out the long-standing difficulties which the executive had faced in managing the Society’s financial affairs, which included a commitment of substantial membership dues to Dornach and the cost of issuing of the

⁴⁶ Brian Butler, personal communication, Havelock North, November 2011.

⁴⁷ Townsend, p. 22.

⁴⁸ Brian Butler, in Townsend, p. 28.

New Zealand News Sheet. He disclosed that a significant shortfall had regularly been made up by members of the Havelock North group.⁴⁹

The proposed new rules, ten in number, drafted by a Society member and lawyer Clive Wily, were discussed and passed by separate resolution by around 60 members at the AGM at “Taruna” in April 1960.⁵⁰ In accord with the rules, the meeting recognized “Taruna” as the centre of the Society in New Zealand and the present council, comprising Henry Malden as Secretary, Ruth Nelson again as the link with Dornach, and Edna Burbury, were reappointed. Subsequently, the new rules were endorsed by the Vorstand as being in accord with the principles of the General Anthroposophical Society, and the name the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand was reconfirmed.⁵¹ The Society was incorporated on 23 November 1963 under the Charitable Trusts Act 1957.

However, a major issue yet to be fully resolved was the role of the General Secretary. It was recognized that in most National Societies this person also was the link to Dornach. However, in New Zealand the important role of Dornach link had been held, for historical reasons and because of their strong personal relationship with the Vorstand, first by Rachel and Bernard Crompton-Smith, for a short time by Mary Bauchop, then by Ruth Nelson, with Henry Malden performing the duties of Secretary (as well as of Council member and editor of the *New Zealand News Sheet*). During 1962 it was clear that Henry’s health was declining and that decisions needed to be made about a successor and the future role of the General Secretary in New Zealand.

Brian Butler and Changing of the Guard

The issues were addressed at the AGM held in April 1963 at “Taruna”, when Henry Malden’s letter of resignation was received with regret. Although there was some disagreement, Edna Burbury favouring the appointment of Tom Wilkes, son of the Kerikeri group leader Irene Wilkes, Brian Butler emerged as the person most widely acceptable to step into a central leadership role, in part because of his demonstrated

⁴⁹ *New Zealand News Sheet*, 42 (February 1960), p. 4.

⁵⁰ *New Zealand News Sheet*, 43 (June 1960), pp. 3-5.

⁵¹ *New Zealand News Sheet*, 44 (September 1960), p. 2.

ability to communicate with groups throughout the country and draw them back to the common cause of the Society.⁵² As the sole nominee, he accepted appointment as General Secretary, conditional on the full support of all regional groups, which subsequently was forthcoming, and of his travelling to Dornach to meet the Vorstand. It was agreed that the new General Secretary would not only perform secretarial functions. He would be recognized and supported, both as a channel of communication between New Zealand members and the link to Dornach. Two additional council members, Geoff Townsend and Gait Wiersma, were also appointed.

Brian Butler, the man for the hour, was born in 1919 in Dunedin, where he attended Otago Boys' High School and was a chorister at St Paul's Anglican Cathedral. His early interest was in music and playing the cello. He first made contact with Anthroposophy through the mother of a violin playing school friend, Mrs. Mary Stuckey, who encouraged the boys to play with her in a trio. She was one of the South Island's earliest Anthroposophists and a talented pianist who had been awarded the Gold Medal at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.⁵³ Brian first became aware of Alfred Meebold as a teenager, when this eminent Anthroposophist twice stayed in Dunedin with the Stuckey family during botanical collecting trips, although did not meet him in person until many years later.

Brian Butler initially joined a Dunedin radio station as a trainee programmer and announcer, and later trained as an arts and crafts teacher. He married Olive Lovelock (sister of the famed middle-distance runner Jack Lovelock) and became an Anthroposophist in 1941, having become disillusioned with the militarist attitudes he encountered in the Dean of the Anglican Church when he sought advice over his misgivings about war. An old knee injury prevented service in World War II, during which time he travelled about New Zealand as an organizer for the YMCA. He was able to establish contact with anthroposophical groups throughout the country, including the Auckland "English" group which then was estranged from Havelock North, and was present at the 1944-5 Christmas conference at "Taruna" which revitalized the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand at the end of the war. Brian Butler taught for

⁵² Marie Buchler, 'Interview with Tom Wilkes', Kerikeri, October 2004. Brian Butler, personal communication, Havelock North, November 2011.

⁵³ N.B., 'Mary Morrison Stuckey', *New Zealand News Sheet*, 48 (June 1963), p. 5.

some time in the public system before being appointed to the Queenswood Rudolf Steiner School in Havelock North in the 1960s. He became the General Secretary of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, with a broad and newly defined role, in 1963, and continued in this position until he retired in 1992.

Overview of the Period 1944-1963

This period marked a further significant expansion of Anthroposophy in New Zealand, with an increase both in membership of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand to over 200 members, and in the number of functioning study groups throughout the country. The Society codified its rules (later to be modified and further expanded as the by-laws) and was incorporated as a Charitable Trust. There was a recognition that the dependence on a nucleus of Havelock North members for leadership and financial support, however necessary this may have been in the early years, could not continue if the Society was to become a truly national organization. A process of change was initiated by the appointment of a more broadly representative council and of Brian Butler as General Secretary in 1963. This was seen in retrospect as a true watershed in the affairs of the Society, and of particular significance in coming 33 years from the date of its founding, Rudolf Steiner having pointed to the importance of 33 year cycles in the life of organizations.⁵⁴

The appointment of Brian Butler was significant for a number of reasons. Although to become a long-term resident there, he was not from Havelock North or from the affluent establishment which previously had led the society. In that sense, he brought a fresh outsider's perspective. Further, because of his previous work experience, shifting around the country and participating in a number of different regional groups, he was well placed to begin the work of communicator, and of drawing the disparate groups together again.

It was during the 1945-63 period that significant developments occurred in those anthroposophical activities which were to lead to an expansion of the influence of Anthroposophy well beyond the immediate membership of the Society. The

⁵⁴ Butler, in Townsend, p. 28, p. 36.

establishment of Queenswood Rudolf Steiner School at Hastings in 1950 provided the example and training base for the whole subsequent development of Steiner education in New Zealand. Interest in biodynamic farming and gardening (beginning in the 1930s) continued and anthroposophical involvement in health care emerged over this period (see chapter five, Soil and Health). Together, these developments marked the beginning of the broader anthroposophical movement in New Zealand, initiatives which were stimulated and often led by Society members, and were thoroughly informed by Anthroposophy, but which involved a widening group of people who did not necessarily regard themselves as Anthroposophists. During this period too, the nexus between Anthroposophy and artistic creativity was clearly demonstrated, in the regular performance of eurhythmy, the anthroposophical dance form, by Nancy Hartmann and Janet Lodder, in the carving and painting of Ruth and Gwen Nelson, the musicianship of Mary Stuckey and Ernst Reizenstein, and the broad flourishing of artistic activity at York Bay.

York Bay was notable not only for the presence of Hal and Mollie Miller Atkinson, but for its close-knit community, in which a wide variety of arts and crafts burgeoned. While committed Anthroposophists were a minority in the community, there is no doubt that their presence, with the values and attitudes which they brought, played a significant role in shaping York Bay through the first part of the twentieth century. Prominent amongst these values were an ecological awareness and a concern for conservation, both echoing Steiner's holistic approach to nature, and anticipating beliefs and attitudes which were to become much more widespread amongst the general public of New Zealand as the century passed on. Although many York Bay residents had mainstream occupations and conventional pursuits, there was also a strong element of the unconventional and alternative lifestyle, which contrasted with the more staid and socially conventional milieu of Havelock North. There was no tension between the two, and indeed many Society members took part in the activities and festivals of both "centres", but it is clear that Hal Atkinson's group at "Rangiuru" offered a different, more informal, and perhaps more accepting ambience than that of "Taruna". And once again, the colony at York Bay was a living demonstration of the enduring contribution of the extended Richmond-Atkinson family to the life of Anthroposophy, and beyond this to the wider public, in New Zealand.

Chapter 4

Scholars and Refugees: The German Influence

The first New Zealand Anthroposophists were mostly of British origin, some first generation immigrants, most New Zealand born. While they maintained their European connections, and in many cases made the journey back to England or Europe to be closer to the anthroposophical movement and to visit the Goetheanum, the early initiative towards Anthroposophy came mainly from individuals living in New Zealand and committed to this country. It was largely home-grown.

However, this situation was to change in 1928 with the first visit of Alfred Meebold, a well-known German Anthroposophist who later settled in New Zealand, and further in the late 1930s with the arrival of a number of German refugees, amongst whom were two dedicated Anthroposophists, Ernst and Elisabeth Reizenstein. These newcomers brought to New Zealand a direct infusion of first-hand knowledge and experience from the heartland of Anthroposophy. Their arrival also led in some significant part to exposure of the wider society of mid-twentieth century New Zealand to Central European and German culture, an encounter which was stimulating and challenging on both sides.¹

Alfred Meebold

Alfred Karl Meebold (1863-1952) was born at Heidenheim an der Brenz in southern Germany. As a young man he worked in his father's company manufacturing cotton goods. He published in German a number of short stories, novels and poems, and gained distinction as a botanical collector, but his life was largely that of a peripatetic seeker after spiritual truth.² In the course of his wanderings, which often doubled as an

¹ Ann Beaglehole, 'Refugees from Nazi Germany and Austria 1933-45', in *Out of the Shadow of War. The German Connection with New Zealand in the Twentieth Century*, James N. Bade (ed.) with James Braund, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 25-36.

² Council of Heads of Australasian Herbaria, Alfred Karl Meebold, botanical collector, <http://www.anbg.gov.au/biography/meebold-alfred-karl.html>, accessed 27 August 2010.

opportunity for botanical work, he travelled widely in Europe, and visited America for the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.³ He may have been present at meetings of the first World's Parliament of Religions, which was held in association with the Fair. He was in India on several occasions in the early 1900s, when Theosophy was well established at Adyar and reaching the height of its international influence, visited the Himalayas, Burma and Malaya, and later came to New Zealand and Australia.

Meebold discovered Anthroposophy, or as he put it "came to the doctor", in 1905 at the age of forty-two.⁴ At that time Rudolf Steiner was still heading the German branch of the Theosophical Society, but already was starting to differentiate his own independent spiritual pathway. Meebold's interest was aroused by 'a small booklet of Dr. Steiner which dealt with the Education of the Child'.⁵ Steiner's description of the stages of human development immediately resonated with his own self-analysis and conclusions. However, it was not until his fiftieth year that Meebold found the truth of this teaching borne out completely within his own experience, and became convinced in his deepest being. Following this, Meebold felt able to argue with conviction for the method of spiritual science, and for the validity of its conclusions, drawn from intuition but based in disciplined thinking.⁶ By this time, he had become one of Rudolf Steiner's close associates. He had been by no means uncritical of Steiner's ideas, but once convinced, was a dedicated Anthroposophist. He spent the rest of his life teaching and spreading Anthroposophy throughout the world, for much of his last twenty years in New Zealand.

Alfred Meebold first had intimations that his destiny lay in New Zealand in a spiritual experience he received in 1926, when he saw two emerald islands at some unknown destination in the southern hemisphere and was reminded of two similar islands he had seen in a church mosaic in Provence. It is suggested by Maria von Nagy, in her partly allegorical 'cultural biographical sketch' of Meebold's life *Dialogue of the Hemispheres*, that he had been associated with this church in a previous life during the

³ Alfred Meebold, *The Way to The Spirit*, 2nd ed., A.M.Cristy (trans.), Honolulu, 1938, p. 2.

⁴ E.E.Burbury, 'Alfred Meebold Biography', *New Zealand News Sheet*, 31 (March 1952), pp. 3-6.

⁵ Alfred Meebold, *The Way to The Spirit*, pp. 19. Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy*, London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1965. This essay, originally published in 1909, had been given previously as a lecture in several places in Germany.

⁶ Alfred Meebold, *The Way to The Spirit*, pp. 19-22.

Middle Ages.⁷ Meebold's call to New Zealand was confirmed when he met with Rachel and Bernard Crompton-Smith in 1927 during their visit to Europe and the Goetheanum. They invited him to bring his anthroposophical teachings to New Zealand, which he did for the first time in 1928. As his ship crossed the equator on his sixty-fifth birthday he experienced a new birth and the forming of a new karma.⁸ He remained in New Zealand until 1929, basing himself in Havelock North and travelling about the country, visiting groups and individuals, and expanding his botanical collections. Alfred Meebold made further trips to New Zealand in 1932-3 and 1935-6, travelling widely elsewhere in the world between times. Between 1928 and 1938 he spent time in Budapest, where he attended the world's first non-German language Waldorf school, founded by Maria von Nagy. Von Nagy came herself to New Zealand in 1954, and later was inspired to write *Dialogue of the Hemispheres*.

Alfred Meebold's sojourn in Havelock North during 1933 was described by Mary Bauchop as 'an epoch-making time... [which] will stand for all time in the history of our Society'. He repeated his *Introductory Course to Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy*, a series of six lectures first given in Vienna in October 1931, helped to establish nationwide "initiative groups" along the lines of those working in Germany, and provided a wealth of personal advice and inspiration to members in Havelock North and throughout the country. He concluded that at this point Anthroposophy was firmly established in New Zealand.⁹

Meebold's fundamental position as the most important presenter and teacher of Anthroposophy in New Zealand to that date was now established. He outlined the basis of his beliefs in a talk given during one of his visits in the early 1930s.¹⁰ Here he emphasized the important influence of the Germanic Folk-Spirit (German folk soul), and of the intellectual and spiritual summit he saw as having been reached in Germany at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the works of Schelling, Hegel, Fichte, Schiller and Goethe. In Meebold's view, 'All five gave an impulse to German intellectual life which ought to have been the base for Anthroposophy today'. However,

⁷ Maria von Nagy, *Dialogue of the Hemispheres. A Cultural Biographical Sketch*, Heidenheim: Theilacker, 1963.

⁸ E.E.Burbury, p. 3.

⁹ Mary Bauchop, *Anthroposophic News Sheet*, 8 (March 1934), p. 43.

¹⁰ Alfred Meebold, 'Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy', *New Zealand New Sheet*, 3 (September 1935), pp. 9-11.

much of their influence had been undermined by the cautious scepticism of Kant, and the embracing by Haekel of Darwinism, leading to the emergence of materialism, ‘a one-sided accentuation of the world of sense perception’, as the dominant contemporary philosophy in Germany and the rest of the world. Meebold saw the new spiritual movements of Spiritism (he preferred this name to “Spiritualism”, on the grounds that this movement had ‘nothing to do with spirituality’), New Thought and Theosophy as having emerged in an understandable reaction to the dominance of materialism, but as an incomplete response. In his view, Rudolf Steiner’s insights and Spiritual Science, which drew from the historical sources of German mysticism and the German folk soul, embodied a central Christian element and represented the essential path of spiritual evolution for the West. Nonetheless, he cautioned against the blind acceptance of Steiner as an authority. Summarizing the historical emergence of Anthroposophy, Meebold said that:

Theosophy was a blend of the Wisdom of the East with Western materialism, but Anthroposophy definitely had the Mystery of Golgotha as its central point. Thinking power was not eliminated as in mediumistic clairvoyance, but Karma, Reincarnation, and the so-called Masters were considered by Anthroposophy only as accessories towards the understanding of Christianity. From whatever point one starts and studies, Anthroposophy will lead finally to the mystery of Golgotha, from which comes light. Steiner gave everything new... reunited in his individuality. On his authority one gets nowhere; one must work it out oneself, for Anthroposophy is not a teaching but a method.¹¹

Meebold was uncompromising in his belief that the German folk soul was a fundamental source of the anthroposophical impulse. He was acutely aware of the accusations of egotism and nationalism, and of the misunderstandings that his stance might bring, but defended himself against these charges, suggesting this exceptionalism had not been sought. It simply had been Germany’s historical fate to have evolved such a soul state. He now saw the historical task as bringing the fruits of the German folk soul to the rest of the world.¹²

Meebold was intrigued by the geography and botany of New Zealand, the culture and spirituality of the Maori, and the effects of Europeans on the land. Of the pioneers, whom he described exclusively as “English”, he wrote:

¹¹ Alfred Meebold, *New Zealand New Sheet*, 3 (September 1935), p. 11.

¹² Alfred Meebold, *The Way to The Spirit*, pp. VI-IX.

These first colonisers had no feeling for the country and for the life on these islands. They brought with them their utilitarian principles and carried them into effect... They began to hew it [the forest] down, and in the space of sixty years, not a tree was left. They tore down the woods on the mountain slopes, in order to convert them into sheep runs, and afterwards they found that in many places the ground was not suitable for pasture. It remained as it was – bare. It has been devastated. When a New Zealander becomes an anthroposophist, he must see these things. For he must work against them. They cannot be amended, but it is possible to work against them by living in New Zealand as a resident who tries to gain a real connection with the ground on which he is standing, and from there, also with the [Maori] inhabitants. As this connection does not exist by nature it must be established through [anthroposophical] understanding. This is the New Zealand task.¹³

Despite this stinging criticism of the behaviour of the early “English” colonizers, which he saw as arising from their excessively materialistic culture, Meebold was hopeful that a connection with the land might be re-established in New Zealand. He was less optimistic about Australia, which he visited as the next step on this world tour, observing in many places the lack of water and the salinization of the soil. He found little feeling for Anthroposophy in the eastern States, apart from Sydney, but thought Western Australia to be more compatible.¹⁴

At the end of his next visit in 1935-6, which followed a pattern similar to the first two, Meebold had reached the decision to seek naturalization as a New Zealand resident, but was short of the required time and had to return to Europe. He was on his way back to New Zealand through Hawaii in 1938, but was still in Honolulu at the outbreak of World War II and as a German national was unable to travel on, spending the war years at a hotel occupied mainly by American servicemen. Over this time, he became closely associated with the anthroposophical group in Honolulu, and with one prominent member Judge Albert M. Christy, who was to work with him on the translation of his “soul biography” *Der Weg Zum Geist (The Way to the Spirit)*.¹⁵ Meebold finally returned to New Zealand in 1946 at the age of 83. It is anthroposophical lore that, when asked by the entry officials if he was coming to New Zealand to live, he replied “No, I’m coming here to die”.¹⁶

¹³ Alfred Meebold, *Anthroposophic News Sheet*, 8 (March 1934), p. 29.

¹⁴ Alfred Meebold, *Anthroposophic News Sheet*, 8 (March 1934), p. 30.

¹⁵ Alfred Meebold, *Der Weg Zum Geist*, Munich: Piper, 1917.

¹⁶ Brian Butler, personal communication, Havelock North, November 2011.

Alfred Meebold stayed from 1946 until his death in 1952 in the converted stables (later becoming the library) at “Taruna”, maintaining his correspondence, documenting his botanical collections, and working on translations of Steiner’s works, and his own, with Bernard Crompton-Smith. The high temperature at which he maintained his room, his heavy smoking and coffee drinking, and his love of detective novels and cats became well known. He was a stern taskmaster, at times apparently impatient with those who did not meet his exacting standards for knowledge and clarity of thought, but at others warm and encouraging.¹⁷ Until the end he remained the *éminence grise* of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, deeply influencing the thinking of the Crompton-Smiths, Ruth Nelson and Edna Burbury, and thus of the core of the movement, and inspirational to younger members.

Ernst and Elisabeth Reizenstein

Maximilian Ernst Reizenstein (1902-1970) was born in Nuremberg in southern Germany, into a wealthy, professional family of assimilated, non-practising Jews. His father was a medical doctor. The whole family was musically inclined, Ernst becoming an excellent violinist while a younger brother Franz, who was considered as a child to be a musical prodigy, left Germany in 1934 for England and established a successful career as a pianist, composer and conductor.

Ernst Reizenstein was a scholar with a wide variety of interests in literature, philosophy, philology, and particularly in music. Writing for the *New Zealand News Sheet* many years later he described how as a teenager he first recognized the fundamental importance of music in his spirituality:

The writer of this little essay was allowed to hear the Passion according to St Matthew in his fourteenth year. Not educated in accordance with the Christian creed, the youthful soul was stirred to the very depths of its being, not so much by the actual text of the Passion, but through the might of the music itself. ... After having had the opportunity of hearing more often both Passions – that of St Matthew and St John, which is so much more of the spirit in that it conveys the Logos in tone pictures – an experience came to him which prepared the way for his later understanding of the Christ Being in Anthroposophy. He knows that

¹⁷ Brian Butler, personal communication, Havelock North, November 2011.

without Bach's Passions that could never have happened, and that in this music lives the secret spiritual force which bears the Christ impulse.¹⁸

It is unclear how Ernst Reizenstein actually came to Anthroposophy, which was not followed in his family. However, his home city of Nuremberg was a centre of anthroposophical activity when he was a young man. Given the nature of his interests, contact with other Anthroposophists probably was inevitable. Reizenstein married Elisabeth Peter (1901-1970), who was not Jewish but from a well-established middle-class German family. She became an Anthroposophist after meeting her husband. Reizenstein worked as a librarian in Leipzig, but lost his job after the Nazis came to power in 1933. He then shifted to Basle in Switzerland, to be closer to Dornach and the centre of Anthroposophy, and worked for some time as a librarian in the Goetheanum.

However, as a German citizen Reizenstein had only a limited visa for Switzerland, so he and his wife shifted to Lörrach, a small town on the other side of the border. He was in Germany after *die Kristallnacht* (the Night of Broken Glass) in 1938, was arrested and incarcerated in the Dachau concentration camp for five months. Elisabeth Reizenstein was of high social standing and considered by the Nazi authorities to be "pure Aryan". She managed to obtain a New Zealand entry visa for the family and successfully petitioned for her husband's release, although Ernst later told friends in New Zealand that his cause had been most helped by the mistakes of "bungling officialdom".¹⁹ The Reizensteins came to New Zealand in 1939 with their stepdaughter Christl, son Michael, and a good selection of their art works and possessions, including Ernst's violin and his extensive library. They first settled in rented accommodation, shared with other Jewish families, in Herne Bay in Auckland.

When the Reizensteins arrived in 1939 there was a well-established anthroposophical study group in Auckland which had started in the mid-1920s, and included two engineers, George Winkfield and Walter Lang, and a respected Auckland businessman James Coe. By the 1930s the group was led by James and Edith Coe.²⁰ James' role was

¹⁸ Ernst Reizenstein, 'The Spiritual Greatness of Johan Sebastian Bach', *New Zealand News Sheet*, 29, (November 1950), pp. 8-18.

¹⁹ Grace Kealy and Kes Hos, 'Ernst Reizenstein Biography', *New Zealand News Sheet*, 70 (December 1970), pp. 2-4.

²⁰ John Leonard, 'The Auckland Branch – A Brief History', *Auckland Branch Newsletter*, 11 (February 2005), p. 5.

to read from Steiner's lectures at each meeting, but the driving force was Edith, his English born second wife. She was by all accounts a woman of powerful personality who was described both as 'a guide philosopher and friend' and as 'the eyes and ears' of the group.²¹ Early members of the Auckland group also included Nora Shepherd, Olive Friedlander, Rene Phillips, and later Roy Tabuteau and Colin and June Mahon.

Edith Coe had made a number of visits to Dornach, had heard Steiner lecture and met with him personally, and thus she assumed some authority in interpreting his works. However in 1926 Rachel and Bernard Crompton-Smith from Havelock North also visited the Goetheanum, and were appointed by the Central Executive of the General Anthroposophical Society (the Vorstand) as the "official" New Zealand link with Dornach, with Havelock North representing the whole New Zealand branch.²² Perhaps for this reason, there was tension between the Auckland group and those in Havelock North. A further source of tension arose from the schism which occurred in the Vorstand in 1935 when Dutch and English members parted company with Dornach, a split which was to last until the early 1960s.²³ The Auckland study group, led by Edith Coe and later by Nora Shepherd, aligned with the breakaways, and thus colloquially became known as the "English" group, while the Havelock North group continued its close link to Dornach. For several decades there was limited contact between the two groups.

The Reizensteins, who had a strong personal attachment to Dornach, soon recognized these tensions in New Zealand Anthroposophy. Further, although they never personally experienced discrimination in New Zealand, they were aware of the general antipathy towards things German which had developed in the years during and between the two World Wars.²⁴ Thus, rather than joining with the "English" group, they started their own weekly anthroposophical study group, and soon were joined by others. By the early 1940s the group included Carl Hoffmann, Roy Tabuteau, Margaret Leonard who brought her son John, Amy Hunter, Dorothy Dawson, Clive and Sheila Wylie, Grace Kealy, Charles Bond-Smith, and later on occasions Colin and June Mahon, and Ken

²¹ Nora H.E. Shepherd, 'Edith Coe Biography', *New Zealand News Sheet*, 25, (August 1948), p. 3.

²² Townsend, p. 20.

²³ John Leonard, 'Storm Clouds over Dornach' in Geoffrey Townsend, *Outline of the History of the Anthroposophical Society/Movement in New Zealand*, Havelock North: The Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, 2001, pp.18-19.

²⁴ Carl and Christl Hoffmann, personal communication, Auckland, September 2010.

Friedlander. They were named the Novalis group, after the 18th century German Romantic poet Georg Friedrich Philipp Von Hardenberg (“Novalis”), whose work was highly valued in anthroposophical circles. The Novalis group continued in parallel to the established “English” group until the late 1950s, when the two were reunited under the leadership of a committee of five, with Una Craig as secretary.²⁵ Over the period of their separation however, a significant number of members, who appreciated the unique qualities of each group, attended both.

Like many of the newly arrived European refugees, the Reizensteins enjoyed the security and environment of the new country, but sorely missed the food and culture of the old. Elisabeth particularly disliked the local bread, at the time simply a choice between white and “wholemeal”, equally bland but coloured brown with caramel. Although she had no previous experience of bakery, she began experimenting with the materials available, eventually coming up with a whole grain loaf which quickly became popular in the refugee community. Demand soon exceeded the capacity of her kitchen stove and when an established bakery became available at 126 Ponsonby Road, around 1941, the family shifted there, to live above the shop.²⁶

The original Reizenstein bread was described as ‘a loaf [baked from] dough almost like porridge with natural fermentation, and a combination of [wheat], barley, oats and rye. It was natural, very tasty and always left you longing for a second slice’.²⁷ Grain was sourced from the South Island and Australia. Honey, which was sometimes used for fermentation of the dough, came from the Hillary farm in South Auckland. The Hillary family, who had a strong interest in lifestyle and health, had a passing association with Anthroposophy through the Reizensteins, but were more clearly linked with Herbert Sutcliffe’s School of Radiant Living School.²⁸ From the outset, there was an emphasis on wholesome, unprocessed ingredients, which clearly reflected the Reizensteins’ anthroposophical principles. This whole grain bread certainly was new to Auckland, and may well have been New Zealand’s first commercially produced health food. Frida

²⁵ Leonard, ‘The Auckland Branch’, p.5. Una Craig, *New Zealand News Sheet*, 44 (September 1960), pp.5-6.

²⁶ Lisa J.Truttmann, *Heritage*, 6 October 2006, <http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/Council/services/heritage/pc217ponsonby.asp> accessed 19 March 2010.

²⁷ Johan Klisser, ‘Vogels makes a natural hit’, *New Zealand Herald*, 31 December 2003.

²⁸ ‘Edmund Hillary and Radiant Living’, <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/photo/edmund-hillary-and-radiant-living>, accessed 28 December 2010.

Eichelbaum, another German refugee who became an Anthroposophist after arriving in New Zealand in 1938, also made rye bread on a small scale in Wellington for other members of the immigrant community, but this did not expand to commercial production.²⁹

While the inspiration and recipe for the bread came from Elisabeth, much of the physical work in the bakery was done by the Reizensteins' prospective son-in-law Carl Hoffmann. He also was from a refugee family, Austrian and part Jewish, but a practising Catholic. His first attraction was to their stepdaughter Christl, but, as he came to know the Reizensteins, he became committed to Anthroposophy, joining with their regular Saturday evening study group. Ernst Reizenstein also worked in the bakery, as well as being the delivery man, first by bicycle, and later by Morris 8 van. He is said to have distracted himself from the boredom of this job by conducting imagined music while he was driving, sometimes to the hazard of other road users. Later, as production increased, Reizenstein bread became available at outlets in Queen's Arcade and Newmarket, and home delivery stopped. Ernst was able to concentrate again on scholarly, artistic and spiritual activities.³⁰

The upstairs apartment above the Ponsonby bakery was richly decorated with works of art and Persian rugs brought from Europe. The Reizensteins were also quick to obtain local artworks, including Maori carvings and Polynesian tapa cloth for the walls.³¹ Their home became a magnet for intellectuals and artists, some locals who were drawn to the European sophistication of the group, and many refugees from Nazi persecution, most of whom also were Jewish. Amongst these were Georg Tintner, a composer and pianist who regularly practised and played with Reizenstein, and was involved in establishing the Auckland Regional Orchestra (forerunner of the present Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra), before leaving New Zealand to become a prominent conductor and Bruckner specialist in Australia and Canada, Gerhard Rosenberg who later taught architecture and urban planning at Auckland University, and the eminent German poet and philosopher Karl Wolfskehl, who named the Reizenstein apartment *die Bäckburg*,

²⁹ Mollie Parry, 'Frida Eichelbaum', *Anthroposophy in New Zealand*, 104 (December 1985), pp. 62-3.

³⁰ Carl and Christl Hoffmann, personal communication, Auckland, September 2010.

³¹ Graham Turbott, personal communication, Auckland, October 2010.

the “Bakery Castle”.³² As Wolfskehl was partially blind, Carl Hoffmann’s elder brother Paul, who later was Professor of German at Victoria University, and sometimes Carl himself, were often called upon to read to him. Wolfskehl became associated with New Zealand writers A.R.D. Fairburn, Frank Sargeson, R.A.K Mason, and on visits to Christchurch, Allen Curnow and Denis Glover.³³

While it is not clear how great a part Anthroposophy played in the discussions and activities of this group of artists and intellectuals, it is certain that they rubbed shoulders with members of the Novalis group, and likely that a sharing of world views occurred. There is no doubt that the Reizensteins were central in most activities at the “Bakery Castle”, both cultural and spiritual, and that they acted as a link between their many visitors. Their generosity of spirit and inspiration, always guided by a strong commitment to the beliefs and principles of Anthroposophy, clearly made a significant contribution to the cultural life of Auckland in the years after World War II. While the bakery continued production in Ponsonby, the family shifted in 1943 to a suburban home in Epsom, where Ernst had space for his extensive library. Music, culture and the Novalis group flourished in this setting, in which Anthroposophy and art were mutually enhanced. Here, the Reizensteins continued to lead their study group, which was described by one member as cultivating ‘a refreshingly penetrating and artistic approach to Anthroposophy’³⁴.

During the years of World War II anthroposophical activity in New Zealand continued in small groups throughout the country, but larger scale meetings ceased. A post-war “rebirth” was signalled at Christmas 1944, with a national conference at “Taruna” in Havelock North. The Reizensteins were enthusiastic participants at this and subsequent “Taruna” conferences. In the immediate post-war years they were inspired to contribute a series of essays to the newly republished *New Zealand News Sheet*. These included Ernst’s ‘Art and Its Substitutes’, in which he explained the spiritual values inherent in the classical arts and his dislike of what he saw as the intrusion of modern technology,

³² William Dart, ‘On Track: Opening the pages to a dark chapter in history’, *The New Zealand Herald*, November 22, 2007.

Tanya Buchdahl Tintner, *Out of Time. The Vexed Life of Georg Tintner*, Crawley, Western Australia: UWA Press, 2011, pp. 56-111. Carl and Christl Hoffmann, personal communication, Auckland, September 2010.

³³ Friedrich Voit, ‘Karl Wolfskehl’, in *Out of the Shadow of War*, pp. 106-112.

³⁴ Leonard, ‘The Auckland Branch’, p. 5.

his deeply felt essay ‘The Spiritual Greatness of Johann Sebastian Bach’, and ‘Modern Man between Past and Future’, in which Reizenstein finds support for his anthroposophical views in the works of Mircea Eliade and Carl Gustav Jung.³⁵ Elisabeth contributed a scholarly discussion of the works of Goethe and their foundational significance for Anthroposophy.³⁶ While these essays may not have circulated widely outside anthroposophical circles, they give a clear indication of the Reizensteins’ depth of learning, and of the impulse to share with others which they brought to the cultural scene of New Zealand in the 1940s and 50s. Over this time, the Reizensteins also were active in organising collections of money, clothing and food for the struggling Steiner schools in post-war Germany.

Ernst Reizenstein also followed a wide variety of other intellectual interests, including a lifetime fascination with philology. He was frequently seen at the Auckland War Memorial Museum library where he studied Maori, in pursuit of his goal of establishing a common basis for all languages. He was in the habit of carrying his study materials around with him in a small suitcase. Unfortunately, this was lost on a railway platform in Nuremburg some years later after his return to Europe, and his work was never published.³⁷

The Reizensteins sold their bakery to Johan (Han) Klisser, of Dutch Jewish origin and also a refugee from Nazi Germany, who had arrived in New Zealand around 1950 after serving with the Dutch army in Indonesia. He learned the trade from Carl Hoffmann at the Reizensteins’ bakery, before buying them out in the mid-1950s. Klisser continued to produce Reizenstein bread for some time before developing his own brand. Later, he also acquired the franchise to produce Vogel’s bread in New Zealand.³⁸

Carl Hoffmann left the bakery to study at Auckland Teachers’ Training College. After two years country service at Te Rerenga School on the Coromandel, he and Christl, who now were married, returned to Germany and were introduced to Steiner education. They

³⁵ Ernst Reizenstein, ‘Art and its Substitutes’, *New Zealand News Sheet*, 25, (August 1948), pp. 5-16. , ‘The Spiritual Greatness of Johan Sebastian Bach’, *New Zealand News Sheet*, 29, (November 1950), pp.8-18., ‘Modern Man Between Past and Future’, *New Zealand News Sheet*, 40, (June 1957), pp. 2-11.

³⁶ Elisabeth Reizenstein, ‘Goethe’, *New Zealand News Sheet*, 27, (August 1949), pp. 15-27.

³⁷ Carl and Christl Hoffmann, personal communication, Auckland, September 2010.

³⁸ Susan M.Butterworth, *Quality Bakers New Zealand. The First 25 Years. A New Zealand Commercial Adventure*, Auckland: Quality Bakers New Zealand Ltd, 1997, pp. 180-1.

briefly returned to New Zealand to complete Carl's country service, but then left for a distinguished career teaching in Steiner schools in England and Washington D. C. Hoffmann came back again in 1982, to inaugurate Steiner teacher training at Taruna College in Havelock North. He ran this course until he and Christl retired in 1991.³⁹

Ernst and Elisabeth Reizenstein returned to Europe in 1965 after gifting their library and funds to the recently reunited Auckland group.⁴⁰ Elisabeth had developed cancer and was not happy to accept the extensive surgery which was advocated for her condition in New Zealand. They went to Switzerland to be close to Dornach and to the Lukas Clinic in Arlesheim, where she received anthroposophical treatment. Ernst died in July 1970 and Elisabeth six months later in December 1970.

The German Influence: an Overview

Alfred Meebold and Ernst Reizenstein each made significant, often complementary, contributions to the development of Anthroposophy in New Zealand, and to the wider society. Each was dedicated to the German culture and spirit, in Reizenstein's case despite persecution by the Nazi authorities, and each represented it to a New Zealand audience in a sustained and sophisticated manner during times of conflict and mistrust between the two countries. However, while thoroughly German, each in his own way was distinctly internationalist in outlook. Both acknowledged the importance of Maori culture and saw affinities between Anthroposophy and Maori spirituality.

Meebold was the more didactic and austere of the two, bringing to New Zealand Anthroposophy a depth of learning and experience, along with the example of discipline in thought and meditation, which helped shape the movement through the critical years of the 1930s and 40s, when the Society was evolving towards its present form and constitution. His main contribution was directly to the Society and its members. His botanical work also left a legacy in this country, although less so than in Australia and other parts of the world, where several species were named in his honour. His forthright attitudes towards conservation and protection of native forests were resonant with those

³⁹ Carl and Christl Hoffmann, personal communication, Auckland, September 2010.

⁴⁰ Townsend, p. 21.

held by Anthroposophists in other parts of the country, and with the emerging biodynamic movement (see chapter five, Soil and Health).

Reizenstein presented a more sympathetic and human aspect to the world and, perhaps as a consequence, had a wider impact on New Zealand society as a whole. The intellectual and artistic scene in Auckland was undoubtedly the richer for his presence in the years during and after World War II, and the legacy of the Reizensteins' trail-blazing bakery and health food enterprise still remains. The Novalis group set a benchmark in Auckland Anthroposophy during the 1940s for its breadth of cultural and artistic activities, and the cause of Steiner education in post-war Germany was well served by the Reizensteins' fund raising efforts in this country.

Meebold was well known to find aspects of the English folk soul problematic, taking the philosophers and scientists of that country (and also of France) to task for many of the sceptical and materialistic attitudes which he saw as corroding the German folk soul, and causing the spiritual malaise of Western civilization.⁴¹ Although he respected many English people as individuals, his attitude to what he saw as the pragmatic materialism of their culture, and the likely reflection of this attitude amongst leaders of the Society in Havelock North, probably contributed to the estrangement which developed from the "English" group of Auckland. Reizenstein, on the other hand, with his generous and conciliatory temperament, was more of a healing figure, whose presence facilitated the process of reconciliation within the Society during the 1950s.

The contribution of German refugee immigrants to Anthroposophy, and to the wider New Zealand community, was by no means confined to the individuals described in detail in this chapter. Others included Frida Eichelbaum, who became an active Anthroposophist in Wellington after arriving with her Jewish, lawyer husband Walter and son Thomas in 1938.⁴² Thomas Eichelbaum was to become a prominent jurist, and in 1989 Chief Justice of the New Zealand High Court.⁴³ Grete Christeller, from a family of assimilated, non-practising Jews, arrived in New Zealand in 1939 with her two

⁴¹ Alfred Meebold, *The Way to The Spirit*, pp. 18-19.

⁴² Mollie Parry, 'Frida Eichelbaum', *Anthroposophy in New Zealand*, 104 (December 1985), pp. 62-3.

⁴³ Bill Sewell, 'Sir Thomas Eichelbaum', in *Out of the Shadow of War. The German Connection with New Zealand in the Twentieth Century*, James N. Bade (ed.) with James Braund, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 229-34.

children, Gert and Eva.⁴⁴ She had been widowed in 1926 when her husband, a distinguished Berlin pathologist, died prematurely of a heart attack, and had subsequently shifted the family to Switzerland where she studied analytical psychology with Carl Gustav Jung in Zürich. Grete Christeller practised as a Jungian psychotherapist in Wellington, and became an Anthroposophist in 1948, following the lead of her two children. This apparently was not without a struggle, and she appears to have been one of the few to attempt this reconciliation between the spiritual teachings of Jung and Steiner. Although the two men lived in close proximity and were contemporaries for many years, they did not directly exchange ideas. Despite some broad similarities in their work, there is no evidence that either significantly influenced the other.⁴⁵ Commenting on Grete Christeller's difficulties in reconciling Jungian psychology and Anthroposophy, Hal Atkinson wrote:

The truth is that knowledge gained by the intellect, be it ever so subtle and majestic, cannot unite with knowledge gained by "exact clairvoyance" – with Anthroposophy, that is to say – until , so to speak, its polarity has been reversed; a change, a re-orientation, that must to some extent share in the shattering nature of Paul's experience at Damascus.⁴⁶

Gert Christeller became a secondary school teacher at Taita College then, after completing a doctoral thesis on Schubert's understanding of poetry, based on the text of his lieder, a senior lecturer in the German department at Victoria University. He joined the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand in 1946 and the School of Spiritual Science in 1983. For several years before his retirement he was a Steiner school teacher at Rafael House in Lower Hutt.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Gaylene Denford-Wood, 'Gert Christeller (1918-2001)', *Sphere*, 3:1 (March 2002), pp. 25-6.

⁴⁵ Gerhard Wehr, *Jung and Steiner. The Birth of a New Psychology*, Magdalene Jaeckel (trans.), Great Barrington MA:Steiner Books, 2003, p.38.

⁴⁶ Hal Atkinson, 'Grete Christeller', *New Zealand News Sheet*, 50 (June 1964), p. 4.

⁴⁷ Denford-Wood, 'Gert Christeller (1918-2001)', pp. 25-6.

Chapter 5

Soil and Health: the Emergence of Daughter Movements in New Zealand

The Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, like the parent body in Dornach, was established primarily to explore and pursue the spiritual pathway which Steiner had indicated. The core activities of its members were study, thought and meditation. However, they also firmly believed in the application of Steiner's insights to the material world. As these practical pursuits became more focused, groups with specialised interests and purposes emerged within the broad anthroposophical stream. Historically these were known as the "daughter movements", although this term is used less by contemporary Anthroposophists, some of whom would prefer to see the various areas and activities simply as different manifestations of the one broad anthroposophical movement.¹ One such movement of importance that arose from the central stream of Anthroposophy was Steiner education for children, whose early New Zealand development has been described in chapter three (Havelock North the Spiritual Centre (1945-63) and the Wellington Connection). This chapter examines the emergence of two further daughter movements which had impact in this country, the biodynamic movement in gardening and farming, and a somewhat later development, that of anthroposophical pharmacy and medicine.

Biodynamics

Rudolf Steiner spent his childhood and early adolescence in rural communities, where he was a close observer of nature and the farming activities around him. His perceptions of nature, and his concern with the effects of human intervention on the natural environment, later were strongly influenced by his reading of Goethe, whose scientific work he studied as a young man for his contribution to the *Deutsche National-Literatur* (German National Literature) series in 1883.² He found Goethe's insistence on a spiritual perspective in the description of natural phenomena an affirmation of his own

¹ Vee Noble, personal communication, Auckland, July 2009.

² Gilbert Childs, *Rudolf Steiner: his Life and Work*, Hudson NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1995, p. 12.

intuitive beliefs, and a welcome vindication of his rejection of the pervasive materialism of the scientific philosophy of his time. Steiner embraced Goethe's understanding of the subjective, symbolic and cosmic properties of light, and his belief that living organisms developed under the influence of cosmic and spiritual forces from a basic form which could be intuited by the sensitive observer. These ideas were to become central in Steiner's anthroposophical writings. They underpinned the practical advice on agriculture he was later to deliver, advice that was to come to full fruition in the famous agriculture course of eight lectures which Steiner gave in Koberwitz in June 1924.³

This course was given in response to requests from a number of farmers, animal breeders and gardeners who were concerned by their observation of a decline in the vigour of their breeding stock and the fertility of their lands. Steiner considered that these problems were the consequence of a deviation from natural processes in modern agriculture, brought about by contemporary scientific farming methods which ignored the interdependence of living organisms and their environment, particularly the soil, and the spiritual influences necessary for development and growth. Rudolf Steiner's response was to give a series of suggestions and indications for the maintenance of soil health, involving changing methods of cultivation, the use of compost and special preparations, crop and livestock rotation, and the treatment of each farm as a unique, self-dependent functional unit. These lectures gave birth to the biodynamic method, which incorporated both biological and dynamic (spiritual) approaches to agriculture. Steiner himself did not use the term "biodynamic" which was applied later by his followers.

Biodynamics in New Zealand

It is not clear exactly when biodynamic methods first came to New Zealand. Bernard Crompton-Smith established his orchard in Havelock North around 1913, and was certainly conducting his life by anthroposophical principles at that time; no doubt this also included his approach to horticulture. There are anecdotes suggesting that he was the earliest in New Zealand to adopt Steiner's suggestions for the use of special preparations on the soil, presumably after receiving copies of lectures from the

³ Rudolf Steiner, *Agriculture Course. The Birth of the Biodynamic Method* (trans. George Adams), Forest Road, London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2004.

agriculture course at some time after 1924.⁴ However, it is clearly established that in 1931 another of New Zealand's pioneer Anthroposophists, George Winkfield, began the production of biodynamic preparations for use in composting, gardening and farming in Auckland, thus marking the first systematic use of Steiner's agricultural methods in this country.⁵

George Boland Winkfield (1873-1957) was born in Manchester, the son of a successful marine artist, and was educated in London. He demonstrated his academic prowess by finishing secondary school at the age of thirteen and was apprenticed as an engineer with Siemens Brothers before completing a degree in electrical engineering at London University. He joined the Cable Service in England in 1900 and transferred to the Pacific Cable Board in 1905 as a cable officer on HMCS *Iris*, later to be famous as the ship which recaptured Count von Luckner after his escape from Motuihe during World War I. George Winkfield became a Theosophist and a friend of Daniel Nicol Dunlop (1868-1935).⁶ Dunlop had been involved, with W. B. Yeats, in the Irish Theosophical Society, and was to become a prominent Anthroposophist, active in the British electrical industry and in the establishment of the World Power Conference in 1924.⁷ Winkfield followed Dunlop into Anthroposophy in 1926 and, as a cable officer with only intermittent duties while at sea, had ample time to study the works of Rudolf Steiner.⁸

George Winkfield, then based in Auckland as a cable consultant at the Central Post Office, went to the Goetheanum with his wife and 10-year-old daughter Joyce in 1930, accompanied by another early Auckland Anthroposophist, the businessman James Coe and his first wife. He met with many prominent Anthroposophists during the course of this trip, and received instruction on making biodynamic preparations. After attending the first conference of the Biodynamic Association in Great Britain at Bray on Thames, he returned to Auckland in 1931. He replanted his extensive garden in Clonbern Road with the necessary herbs and plants, and began making biodynamic preparations on a

⁴ Robin Bacchus, personal communication, Havelock North, September 2011.

⁵ Joyce Whelan, 'Recollections of G. B. Winkfield', *Bio Dynamic Farming & Gardening Association Newsletter*, 47:2 (1994), pp. 23-4.

⁶ Joyce Whelan, pp. 23-4. W.R.Lang, 'George Boland Winkfield' in Geoffrey Townsend, *Outline of the History of the Anthroposophical Society/Movement in New Zealand*, Havelock North: Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, 2001, pp. 37-8.

⁷ T.H.Meyer, *D.N.Dunlop. A Man of Our Times*, London: Temple Lodge, 1992.

⁸ Whelan, p. 23.

large scale. From his retirement as a cable consultant in 1933, he devoted his time to Anthroposophy and to the biodynamic movement.⁹

George Winkfield maintained a large correspondence with Anthroposophists throughout the world, including the leading figures Dr. Ehrenfried Pfeiffer and Dr. Guenther Wachsmuth, and had an extensive library which he made freely available to all interested parties. He became widely known as a supplier of biodynamic preparations, and an authority and consultant on biodynamics. Amongst those who consulted with him were the “Imperial Patriotic” and entrepreneur Charles Alma Baker, who sought advice about soil preparation and composting on his rubber estates in Malaya and farming enterprise at “Limestone Downs”, south of Port Waikato, and Ben Roberts, Minister of Agriculture 1943-1946 in the wartime Nash government, who was looking for alternatives to phosphate fertilizers which were in short supply at that time.¹⁰ Alma Baker was active in promulgating his own ideas, some derived from Steiner’s work, about maintenance of the soil, the drawbacks of artificial fertilizers and the benefits of compost. His 1939 booklet *Peace with the Soil* was distributed to all members of the Bio-Dynamic Association in New Zealand in 1940, and a subsequent book, *The Labouring Earth*, was described by a 1941 *News Letter* reviewer as ‘a rational plea for the urgent application of organic thinking in the realm of agriculture’¹¹. Ben Roberts was a convert to composting and an interested visitor to the Winkfield garden in Clonbern Road, assisting with the supply of the animal products used for some biodynamic preparations.¹² Winkfield was assisted by the Papatoetoe orchardist Marsden Dunningham, who devised a series of totara-staved tanks with mechanical stirrers for making the preparations, offering these for sale.¹³

George Winkfield was amongst the founders of the Rudolf Steiner Biological Dynamic Association for Soil and Crop Improvement in 1939 (the name was soon changed to the Bio-Dynamic Association in New Zealand, and in 1950 to the Bio Dynamic Farming

⁹ Joy Whelan, personal communication, Auckland, June 2010. A.R.T., ‘G.B.Winkfield’, *New Zealand News Letter*, 41 (June 1958), p. 4.

¹⁰ Barrie Macdonald, *Imperial Patriot. Charles Alma Baker and the history of Limestone Downs*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1993, p. 112-7. Enid Roberts, *Remembered. The Life and Works of Ben Roberts, M.P.*, Masterton: Masterton Printing, 1965, pp.157-8.

¹¹ *News Letter of the Bio-Dynamic Association in New Zealand* (January 1940), un-numbered. *News Letter of the Bio-Dynamic Association in New Zealand* (July 1941), un-numbered.

¹² Joy Whelan, personal communication, Auckland, June 2010.

¹³ *News Letter of the Bio-Dynamic Association in New Zealand (New Series)*, 1 (November 1946), p. 2.

and Gardening Association in New Zealand). At the first AGM, held in the Auckland Domain restaurant, he was elected president of the council.¹⁴ Other members were James Coe and the broadcaster L. Courtenay Hall, all from the Auckland region. The *News Letter of the Bio-Dynamic Association in New Zealand* of January 1940 reported a membership of fifty. Courtenay Hall represented the Association with an address on Agriculture to the Dominion Reconstruction Conference in Auckland in November 1941.¹⁵

Another group with similar aims and a number of shared members was launched two years after the Bio-Dynamic Association, in Auckland in 1941, by the dentist Guy Chapman, who was concerned with the prevalence of dental decay, which he attributed to poor nutrition. He founded the Humic Compost Club (now the Soil & Health Association of New Zealand and publisher of the influential journal *Organic NZ*). This attracted the attention of the MP Ben Roberts, who was a vice-patron of the club, and in 1943 became Minister of Agriculture.¹⁶ During 1944, Courtenay Hall, who had been running a small orchard in Keri Keri since 1939 using biodynamic methods, launched an appeal through the Bio-Dynamic Association in New Zealand to fund the purchase of a larger property and to establish a biodynamic research and testing station there, with the hope of later starting an agricultural school.¹⁷ He was a trustee of the fund, along with George Winkfield and Captain F.H. Billington. The latter was also an active member of the Humic Compost Club.

The Rudolf Steiner Biological Dynamic Association for Soil and Crop Improvement, now renamed The Bio-Dynamic Association in New Zealand, met in May 1945 for a major conference in Te Aroha, organised by local members, many of whom were share milkers. They were headed by the secretary Mr. D. Brimblecombe of the Cooperative Dairy Company and treasurer Mr. N. Gibbs.¹⁸ This meeting was attended by around 80 people, including George Winkfield and prominent Auckland members Marsden Dunningham and Captain Billingham (the Association had around 200 members at that

¹⁴ Joy Whelan, personal communication, Auckland, June 2010.

¹⁵ *Auckland Star*, 1 December 1941, p.2.

¹⁶ Enid Roberts, p. 156. *Organic NZ*, 'History', www.organicnz/about/history, accessed 13 July 2012.

¹⁷ L.C.Hall, 'An Appeal', *News Letter of the Bio-Dynamic Association in New Zealand (Supplement)*, 20 (June 1944).

¹⁸ *New Zealand News Sheet*, 15 (1945), p. 13. *News Letter of the Bio-Dynamic Association in New Zealand (New Series)*, 1 (November 1946), p. 2.

time, a number already in excess of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand which then had about 120 members, although a significant number belonged to both). There were five days of discussions, farm visits and demonstrations of biodynamic methods, and an opening address by the Minister of Agriculture, Ben Roberts, who asked his audience:

I wonder would you be interested to know why I have such faith in this bio-dynamic philosophy? Of course, as Minister of Agriculture I am directly interested in permanent fertility of the soil, and in a system of agriculture which will promote healthy livestock and diminish disease, but the bio-dynamic connection with agriculture appeals to me because Dr Steiner revealed to us the spiritual approach to farming and agriculture.... It has been said, 'That the moral code of a nation may be judged by its treatment of its women and children', but I would also say, 'That the moral code of a nation may be judged by its treatment of its soil'. The soil is man's heritage. It is what men live for, and what men die for – the mother of us all.... To exploit the land is to rob generations unborn. We have some mighty problems today, but it is questionable whether the crowning infamy isn't the 'Rape of the Earth'.¹⁹

A decision was made to seek incorporation of the Association, with George Winkfield continuing as its first President and Ben Roberts as Vice President. There was further discussion of the proposal for the purchase of a property in Keri Keri. This had run into controversy, because of a perception by some that Courtenay Hall's methods were too high-handed, and the appeal had failed to raise sufficient money. Hall subsequently resigned from the Association and took no further part in its proceedings.²⁰ George Winkfield was deeply upset by the affair and wrote a brief article of explanation in the *Newsletter of the Bio-Dynamic Association in New Zealand*, crediting Courtenay Hall's lecture tours and other activities over the years of WWII with greatly increasing public interest in biodynamics.²¹ With the abandonment of the Keri Keri project, it was decided that the Association would instead give financial support to the establishment of an experimental glasshouse, with equipment for scientific testing, on the property of Raynor Jones at Wainuiomata.²²

Another notable New Zealand pioneer of biodynamic methods was George Bacchus (1902-1966). Bacchus grew up on his parents' farm at Otaki, attended Wanganui

¹⁹ Enid Roberts, p. 158.

²⁰ *News Letter of the Bio-Dynamic Association in New Zealand (New Series)*, 1 (November 1946), pp. 2-3.

²¹ *News Letter of the Bio-Dynamic Association in New Zealand (New Series)*, 2 (March 1947), pp. 1-2.

²² *New Zealand News Sheet*, 24 (March 1948), p. 6.

Collegiate School and Canterbury University, and graduated with a degree in electrical engineering. During the 1920s he worked on the Parnassus-Blenheim railway and the early Waitaki hydroelectricity projects. He developed his interest in Anthroposophy independently over this time, showing a particular bent towards meditative practice, and receiving study materials from “the ladies” in Havelock North, Ruth Nelson and Edna Burbury.²³ It is said that he safely received correspondence from them, directed simply to “Bacchus, Parnassus”, a testimony to the persistence of the mail sorters of the 1920s, and perhaps also to their knowledge of the classics.²⁴

Influenced by the teachings of Rudolf Steiner and concerns about the unrestrained effects of development on the natural environment which he saw in his work, George Bacchus came to the decision to abandon his career as an engineer and to devote his life to Anthroposophy, and the study of Steiner’s approach to agriculture. In 1934, having learned some German, he went to Europe to visit the Goetheanum and to work as a labourer and student on biodynamic farms and gardens in Germany and England. He returned to New Zealand in 1935 and contributed a summary of his findings to the *New Zealand News Sheet* in 1936, with an article demonstrating the mixture of spiritual philosophy and practical advice, based on field trials and experiment, which is characteristic of the biodynamic movement.²⁵ In order to gain local experience, he worked on various farms about the country, where the owners were interested in applying biodynamic methods.

One of these was the Jackson farm “Durslade”, near Woodville, to which George Bacchus came in 1936 on the initiative of Mrs. Dorothy Jackson. On this 400 acre property with a large vegetable garden and orchard, he demonstrated the use of biodynamic preparations and composting methods.²⁶ Here also he met Nancy Crompton-Smith, who was working as a nanny for the Jackson children.²⁷ She was the daughter of Bernard-Crompton Smith’s younger brother Sydney, and had become an Anthroposophist along with her uncle and father. George and Nancy were married in

²³ Hal Atkinson, ‘George Bacchus’, *New Zealand News Sheet*, 62, (September 1967), pp. 2-3.

²⁴ Robin Bacchus, personal communication, Havelock North, September 2011.

²⁵ G. Bacchus, ‘The New Farming. Biological Dynamic Methods’, *New Zealand News Sheet*, 7, (February 1936), pp. 8-11.

²⁶ Michael Jackson, ‘Recollections’, *Bio Dynamic Farming & Gardening Association Newsletter*, 47, 2 (Winter 1994), p. 26.

²⁷ Robin Bacchus, personal communication, Havelock North, September 2011.

1936, and in 1937 returned to the United Kingdom for a further seven years. George was an adviser to the British Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association and, during the years of World War II, an itinerant worker on a variety of biodynamic farms throughout Britain. The family came back to New Zealand with four children in 1947, settling on a dairy farm at Wharepoa on the Hauraki Plains. During the 1950s, George Bacchus served as President of the Association, now known as the Bio Dynamic Farming and Gardening Association in New Zealand, with Colin Mahon as secretary. The Bacchus family farm, where George lived until his death in 1966, was one of the first in New Zealand in which biodynamic methods were systematically applied to a whole productive unit.²⁸

After World War II, phosphate fertilizers became widely available again. While interest in natural methods of agriculture and in biodynamics persisted amongst share milkers and smallholders, who had been well represented in the Association from the earliest years, the owners of larger farms lost interest in alternative methods of agriculture, and resumed the use of commercial fertilizers in the interests of increased production. During the 1950s the Association was reduced to around 50 or 60 members.²⁹ From its inception in 1939, the Association, and biodynamic activity in New Zealand, had been centred on Auckland and the upper North Island. However, interest in biodynamics had been building up in the Hawke's Bay, close to the heartland of New Zealand Anthroposophy. In 1958 George Winkfield passed the task of making the preparations to Michael Jackson, who had been in Europe studying biodynamics but now was based in Havelock North, and in the same year it was decided to bring the executive of the Association to Hawke's Bay. Gait Wiersma, who owned a small farm and orchard near Hastings, became President.³⁰

This move bought a reinvigoration to the Association. Gait Wiersma began making visits to biodynamicists throughout the country, giving lectures and stimulating interest. Although relatively few large-scale farmers were involved, membership began to increase again through the 1960s, coincident with an increased interest amongst the

²⁸ Hal Atkinson, 'George Bacchus', *New Zealand News Sheet*, 62, (September 1967), pp. 2-3.

²⁹ Colin Mahon, 'Recollections', *Bio Dynamic Farming & Gardening Association Newsletter*, 47:2 (Winter 1994), p. 21.

³⁰ Ineke van Florenstein Mulder, *Bio Dynamic Farming & Gardening Association Newsletter*, 47:2 (Winter 1994), p. 22.

general public in natural methods of gardening and agriculture, and concerns about the use of chemical pesticides, raised by the American biologist and conservationist Rachel Carson in her widely read book *Silent Spring* (1962).³¹ As a sign of the growing strength of the movement, in 1964 members proposed registration in New Zealand of the international Demeter trademark for certified biodynamic produce, although this did not actually occur until 1986.³²

Anthroposophical Medicine

Rudolf Steiner was first directly involved in therapeutic activity in his post as tutor to the four sons of the Specht family in Vienna, which he held for six years from 1884. The youngest son Otto was intellectually retarded, and was said to have suffered from a “hydrocephalic condition”. Steiner focused on the child’s spiritual development as much as his formal education, and saw a marked improvement in his function, to the point where he later attended university and graduated in medicine. This experience foreshadowed Steiner’s later development of general and curative educational methods.³³ Around the turn of the century, Steiner demonstrated both his intellectual debt and his interest in medicine with an article entitled *Goethe and Medicine*, and over the next two decades gave medical advice on an ad hoc basis.³⁴ King believes that he may have been involved in devising medicines and the use of colour therapies over this time.³⁵ However, it was not until 1920 that he first lectured to a specifically medical audience of doctors and nurses, giving a systematic description of physical and spiritual bodily systems, pathology, diagnosis and treatment. This was followed by further lecture courses, and in 1924 the publication of *Fundamentals of Therapy* with the Dutch medical practitioner, Dr. Ita Wegman.

Anthroposophical medicine, based on these sources and other indications given by Steiner, is a holistic approach which treats not just the physical body but also its spiritual aspects, using therapies appropriate to both, designed to restore the proper

³¹ Jeanette Fitzsimons, ‘Introduction’, *Biodynamics. A New Direction for Farming and Gardening in New Zealand*, Auckland: Random House, 1989, pp. 9-11.

³² *Bio Dynamic Farming & Gardening Association Newsletter*, 47:2 (Winter 1994), p. 22.

³³ Childs, pp. 13-15.

³⁴ Childs, p. 66.

³⁵ Francis X. King, *Rudolf Steiner and Holistic Medicine*, York Beach, Maine: Nicolas-Hays, 1987, pp. 191-2.

balance and harmony within the affected person. Steiner and Wegman made clear their respect for the benefits of orthodox scientific medicine: they presented anthroposophical medicine as a necessary complement.³⁶ Around 1924 a clinic for anthroposophical medicine was established at Arlesheim, near Dornach and the Goetheanum, with an adjacent laboratory for preparation of pharmaceutical products, later marketed under the brand name Weleda.

Anthroposophical Medicine in New Zealand

Ada Wells, in her practice of therapeutic massage in Christchurch in the last decades of the nineteenth century (see chapter one, Settlers and Suffragists) used some methods consistent with anthroposophical principles, but as she did not learn of Rudolf Steiner's work until her trip to Leipzig in 1902, cannot strictly be said to have practised anthroposophical medicine, at least in the earlier part of her career.³⁷ It seems likely that the first medical practitioner in New Zealand to use selected anthroposophical methods was the Edinburgh-trained physician Dr. Robert Felkin, in Havelock North. Despite the separation which occurred between his Stella Matutina Lodge and the emerging Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, Felkin remained an admirer of Rudolf Steiner. He used various intuitive diagnostic techniques and colour therapies in his practice at "Whare Ra" between 1912 and his death in 1926.³⁸

An article by Dr. Richard Schubert entitled 'Process of Nature, Organic Function, Healing Medicaments', taken from *Weleda Nachrichten* and translated, probably by Bernard Crompton-Smith, 'in the hope that readers may in this way become more practically interested in this important anthroposophical work', appeared in the *New Zealand New Sheet* of April 1937.³⁹ Walter Ruthven Lang, whose father Walter had been closely associated with George Winkfield in the first Auckland Anthroposophy group, graduated from Otago Medical School in 1940 and after gaining an Edinburgh

³⁶ Rudolf Steiner and Ita Wegman, *Fundamentals of Therapy. An Extension of the Art of Healing through Spiritual Knowledge*, Trans. George Adams, 3rd ed. (revised), London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1967, pp. 9-10.

³⁷ Geoffrey Townsend, *Outline of the History of the Anthroposophical Society/Movement in New Zealand*, Havelock North: Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, 2001, p.3.

³⁸ Robert S. Ellwood, *Islands of the Dawn*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993, p.177. Matthew Wright, *Havelock North*, Hastings: Hastings District Council, 1996, pp. 158-9.

³⁹ *New Zealand News Sheet*, 9 (April 1937), pp. 6-15.

Fellowship in medicine practised as an infectious diseases specialist in Auckland. He was an active member of the Anthroposophical Society, but was not known to use anthroposophical methods in his practice.⁴⁰ Geoffrey Townsend, whose parents were amongst New Zealand's earliest Anthroposophists (they hosted Alfred Meebold in Gisborne during his 1928 visit), graduated from Otago Medical School in 1941, and established a general practice in Rotorua in 1947.⁴¹ He and his wife Diana were amongst foundation members of the group in Rotorua, and Geoff became a Council member of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, a position which he held for many years. Townsend was a dedicated Anthroposophist with a love of nature and the environment. He was highly respected as a doctor in the Rotorua community for 40 years, and his practice no doubt was strongly influenced by his anthroposophical principles. However, the full practice of anthroposophical medicine, by those formally trained in methods, was not seen in this country until the careers of the pharmacist Colin Mahon and medical practitioner Ken Friedlander.

Colin George Mahon (1919-2001) excelled in science, topped his Auckland Grammar School class in matriculation, and was registered as a pharmacist in 1940. His wife June records that their first contact with the works of Rudolf Steiner was in 1945, through Roy Tabuteau, a young medical representative who called at their pharmacy.⁴² Tabuteau, who played a central role in the spread of Anthroposophy in Auckland and the central North Island, had himself been introduced to Steiner's work through contact with George Winkfield.⁴³ Colin and June Mahon joined Tabuteau as active members in the Anthroposophical Society in Auckland, participating in both the "English" group of Edith Coe and Reizenstein's "Novalis" group. In 1952, they shifted with their family to London, then to Arlesheim, where Colin trained until 1954 in the Weleda laboratory, and June in the Zuccoli Eurythmy School at the Goetheanum.

Colin Mahon returned to New Zealand in 1954 to a pharmacy in Otahuhu, and set up Weleda (NZ) Ltd on a three acre property in Weymouth, close to his home. Later, he shifted the pharmacy to lower Symonds Street in Auckland City, running his business

⁴⁰ Selwyn Lang, personal communication, Auckland, October 2012.

⁴¹ John Leonard, 'Geoffrey Townsend (1916-2000)', *Sphere*, 2:1 (March 2001), p. 29. Geoffrey Townsend, *Outline of the History of the Anthroposophical Society/Movement in New Zealand*, Havelock North: Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, 2001, p.10.

⁴² June Mahon, 'Colin George Mahon', *Sphere*, 2:3 (Sept/Oct 2001), p. 21.

⁴³ June Mahon, 'Arthur Roy Tabuteau', *Anthroposophy in New Zealand*, 100 (December 1983), p. 52-5.

by day and making Weleda preparations at night. After 1957, he worked in close cooperation with Dr. Ken Friedlander, who was in general practice in Birkenhead. In 1958 he was joined by Sylvia Waters, a pharmacist who had managed Weleda in Britain. Sylvia Waters shifted the business of Weleda pharmaceuticals from Auckland to Havelock North in 1959, to a site on the hillside across Te Mata Peak road from “Taruna”, with two and a half acres of land for herb production and a Lockwood building provided by Gwen Malden (née Nelson) and Ruth Nelson.⁴⁴

Kenneth Hugo Friedlander (1925-2006) was born in Auckland. His father, Arthur Jonas Friedlander, was from a family of Polish Jews who migrated to New Zealand in the nineteenth century and set up a grain milling business near Ashburton. He had studied medicine, but was unable to continue practice because of ill health after involvement in the Gallipoli landings, and became a businessman. Ken’s mother Olive, of Dunedin Scottish origins, was an early Anthroposophist who came from a background in Theosophy. She was active in the early Auckland study groups of Edith Coe and Ernst Reizenstein.⁴⁵

Ken Friedlander was educated at King’s College and, influenced by his mother, began reading Anthroposophy at the age of sixteen. He decided on a career in medicine as a way of extending his spiritual interests. After graduating from Otago Medical School he went to England in 1950, then in 1951 to the Klinisches Therapeutisches Institut (later the Ita Wegman Clinic) in Arlesheim, where he studied anthroposophical medicine until 1955. While there he met and married his Finnish wife Agneta, a nurse whose father practised anthroposophical medicine and whose mother taught in a Steiner school. He also spent some time at another anthroposophical clinic, the Casa Andrea Christophoro, in Ascona. He was associated with the pharmacist Colin Mahon during the latter’s period of training at Weleda.⁴⁶

Ken Friedlander returned to Auckland in 1957 and set up a solo general practice in Birkenhead. He practised mainstream medicine and obstetrics, complemented by

⁴⁴ Roger Leitch, ‘Anthroposophical Medicine in New Zealand – a historical perspective’, *Anthroposophy in New Zealand*, 112 (June 1992), p. 23.

⁴⁵ Kristina Friedlander and Solveig Burns, personal communication, Hastings, October 2012. Brian Butler, *Sphere*, 8:1 (March 2007), p. 28.

⁴⁶ René de Monchy, ‘Ken Friedlander – A Medical Mentor’, *Sphere*, 8:2 (June 2007), pp. 34-5. Leitch, pp. 23-4.

anthroposophical medicine, in close collaboration with Colin Mahon, using both imported and locally produced anthroposophic medications. He quickly gained a reputation as the only trained anthroposophical medical practitioner in New Zealand (possibly in Australasia), and was widely sought for consultation. He and Agneta also ran an evening study group which included Frank and Natasha Knowles, and Ernest and Phyllis Satchell.⁴⁷

During his time in Dornach Ken Friedlander met Marjorie Allen, a New Zealand teacher who had been head of music at Woodford House in Havelock North, but had gone to Europe and England to work with intellectually handicapped children and to train in Steiner's methods of curative education. She returned to New Zealand in 1956 to raise interest in curative education in the branches of the Intellectually Handicapped Children's Parents Association throughout New Zealand. As a result of this work, and that of Marjorie's sister Mary Stronach, the first Hohepa home school was opened at Wharerangi in Hawke's Bay, run by a trust with land and substantial funding donated by the local philanthropist Lewis Harris, who later was knighted for his work.⁴⁸ An early medical consultant to Hohepa was Dr. Maria Glas from England, but from the outset Ken Friedlander also was closely involved, making visits from Auckland twice each term.

Ken Friedlander left his Auckland practice in 1974 to work full-time at Hohepa, which now comprised a farm school and a number of houses for boys and girls of different ages. He continued there until his retirement in 1992, and was very much loved and respected at Hohepa as a 'doctor and healer, mentor, teacher and confessor'.⁴⁹ He also taught courses at Taruna College, inspiring teachers and other local doctors and nurses, for whom he established a regular group to study anthroposophical medicine. This came to include doctors Roger Leitch and René de Monchy who, with David Ritchie from Christchurch, were amongst the founders of the New Zealand Association of Anthroposophical Doctors in 1990. By 1992 the Association had 16 members.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Kristina Friedlander and Solveig Burns, personal communication, Hastings, October 2012.

⁴⁸ Maryan Moss, *Learning to Live. A History of Hohepa Homes*, Clive, Hawke's Bay: Hohepa Trust Board, 1996, pp. 1-4.

⁴⁹ Susan Jenkins, 'Retirement: Dr Kenneth Friedlander, *Anthroposophy in New Zealand, Newsletter*, 51 (March 1993), p.11.

⁵⁰ Leitch, p. 25.

The Daughter Movements: an Overview

This chapter has described the origins and growth until the 1960s of biodynamic agriculture and anthroposophical medicine in New Zealand. Another major daughter movement, Steiner childhood education, was covered in chapter three. Each of these movements grew from the impulse provided by dedicated individuals from professional backgrounds who studied the works of Rudolf Steiner in this country, and then made the trip to Europe to learn the necessary techniques and gain practical experience. These key figures were also dedicated Anthroposophists. They took part equally in the core activities of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand and in those of their chosen daughter movement.

However, it is clear that many others who participated, to a greater or lesser extent, in these movements were not members of the Society. From its earliest days in this country in the 1930s biodynamics attracted orchardists, farmers and gardeners of all persuasions, who saw it as a practical and sustainable way to improve soil fertility and productivity, and to minimise the use of artificial fertilizers. Similarly, while the parents of the Waldorf school children clearly were sympathetic to Steiner's approach to education, and patients receiving anthroposophical medicine may have appreciated the principles behind the practice and have actively sought complementary healing methods, they were not necessarily Anthroposophists. In each case, the growing strength of these daughter movements, whose numbers soon exceeded the parent Society, illustrated the diffusion of the influence and some of the ideas of Anthroposophy, well beyond the core membership of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand. The Society remained the solid spiritual core from which the more populist daughter movements could expand. Data have been provided to demonstrate the further expansion of these daughter movements beyond the 1960s until the present time (see chapter one, Introduction), but it is beyond the scope of this study to document this in detail.

Strikingly, George Winkfield and George Bacchus, two key pioneers of the biodynamic movement in New Zealand, both were trained as engineers, as also was Winkfield's close friend and fellow Auckland Anthroposophist Walter S. Lang. Coincidence or not

(Anthroposophists would point to the likelihood of karma and other spiritual forces at work), the fact that such individuals, with a background in orthodox materialist science, could find their life's calling in the practical application of spiritual science, speaks strongly to the appeal which many of the early Anthroposophists found in Anthroposophy, as a complement to orthodox science and materialism. The same can be said of the early medical Anthroposophists, who came from a background of scientific training but integrated Anthroposophy as a complement to their orthodox practice of pharmacy and medicine. However, despite their commitment to its practical application in the material world, it is clear that the spiritual message of Anthroposophy, and of anthroposophical practice, continued to provide the driving impulse for each of the pioneers of the daughter movements in New Zealand.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Anthroposophy is the spiritual philosophy and pathway indicated (the term preferred by Anthroposophists) by the early twentieth century Austrian philosopher and seer Rudolf Steiner. Despite having an international following, it has not attracted much mainstream academic study worldwide, and little of significance in New Zealand. This study, which goes some way to fill the gap, has traced the establishment and growth of Anthroposophy in this country, and of its official organization the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, from a small initial number of isolated individuals at the beginning of the twentieth century to a well-established and increasingly confident national body with over 200 members in the 1960s. It has demonstrated the development of the daughter movements of Anthroposophy (Steiner childhood education, biodynamic gardening and farming, anthroposophical medicine) over the same period, and the diffusion of anthroposophical ideas into the wider community, with the emergence of a broad anthroposophical movement whose numbers quickly exceeded those of the parent Society. The significant influence of this movement supports Stenhouse's challenge to the assertion that New Zealand was an exceptionally secular Society, which commonly is made in historiography of the second half of the twentieth century.¹

Anthroposophy is a lived spiritual philosophy. Thus, this history is focused primarily on the lives of key figures in the movement, as well as on the affairs of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand and of the daughter movements. A picture has emerged of a Society of individuals with serious spiritual intent who often came to Anthroposophy as mature adults after a variety of other religious commitments. Most were well educated and middle-class, professionals, business people, artisans, orchardists, farmers or run holders. A majority were from an Anglican background. Once they made the choice, these early Anthroposophists usually remained dedicated to

¹ John Stenhouse, 'Religion and Society', *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, Giselle Byrnes (ed.), Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 330-2.

their chosen pathway, and to close links with the parent body the General Anthroposophical Society in Dornach, although some also maintained their previous religious connections, particularly to the Anglican Church. Their core spiritual activity was the study of Steiner's works in small groups, but they were committed to practical social activities and to the spiritual welfare of the broader society. They also were involved in a wide variety of cultural pursuits, particularly music, dance, arts and crafts, as well as continuing in their occupational and professional roles. Some demonstrated ecological awareness and environmental concern well before these became popular issues.

The Anthroposophical Society avowedly is an open and democratic movement, not a closed or secret society. However, it has been argued here that in some ways (but not all) Anthroposophy fits the criteria for a 'secret religion of the educated classes' which Troeltsch described in 1911.² Troeltsch predicted the emergence of a private and individualistic type of religion, characterized by tolerance and a tendency to syncretism, with appeal to educated Protestants in a scientific age, but with a return to the romanticism of earlier times. Anthroposophy certainly meets the latter of these criteria. However, while it values personal choice and individual freedom, it also has a degree of intellectual and organizational structure, based firmly on Steiner's principles, and a demonstrated consistency over time that sets it apart from the broad stream of alternative spiritualities which emerged during the twentieth century to fulfil Troeltsch's predictions.³

Initially the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand was somewhat circumspect in displaying its public face. It has been argued in this thesis that this reticence was maintained for a number of reasons, most importantly a respect for the integrity of Steiner's message, the wish to avoid misunderstanding and misjudgement, and the recognition that German ideas were unlikely to be well received by the wider public during and between the two world wars. After the end of World War II the Society was increasingly open in its public face. The daughter movements, biodynamic farming and

² Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, Vols 1 and 2*, Olive Wyon (trans), Allen & Unwin: London, 1931, pp. 791-5.

³ Michael Hill, 'The Cult of Humanity and the Secret Religion of the Educated Classes', *New Zealand Sociology*, 2:2 (November 1987), pp. 116-18.

gardening, Steiner childhood education, and anthroposophical medicine expanded, and gained a significant following amongst the general public, perhaps reflecting a New Zealand society more open to new ideas, although Anthroposophy itself remained relatively unknown.

The earliest New Zealand Anthroposophists were mostly well off, with English origins and connections to established settler and pastoral families. They were well educated, often to a tertiary level. There was a predominance of women amongst the early leadership and a strong input from one extended pioneer family group, the Richmonds and Atkinsons, who were Unitarians. The Hawke's Bay area in the early twentieth century, and especially Havelock North, was a particularly fertile area for spiritual developments, not only for Anthroposophy but also for a number of other related movements. However, anthroposophical groups also developed early in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland, with a scattering of members in other places throughout the country. While the first impulse towards Anthroposophy came from within New Zealand, the early Anthroposophists were in close contact with the organization in England and Europe, and many travelled to Dornach and the centre of Anthroposophy at the Goetheanum. In the years before World War II there was an infusion of first-hand anthroposophical knowledge and experience with the arrival of a number of German refugees.

From the earliest members, Anthroposophists were committed to progressive teaching methods and amongst the daughter movements, Steiner childhood education may have been the first to be studied in this country. However, in practical terms it was biodynamic farming which made the greatest initial impact, in the years before and during World War II, when phosphate fertilizers were in low supply and alternatives were sought. Interest initially was from orchardists, small farmers and share milkers, and to this day biodynamics remains, figuratively and literally, a "grassroots" movement, with most support from individuals and small operations rather than larger agribusinesses. There was political support for biodynamics in the late 1930s and during World War II, from Ben Roberts the Minister of Agriculture, which was to be repeated in the latter part of the century, when biodynamics received endorsement and support

from Jeanette Fitzsimons, later to be a Green Party co-leader.⁴ Anthroposophical pharmacy and medicine were relative latecomers to New Zealand, becoming established in the 1950s.

The anthroposophical movement in New Zealand has been demonstrated to display consistency of purpose and longevity. It survived and prospered over the period of the study (and beyond) through times when other alternative spiritual movements such as Spiritualism and Theosophy, which preceded Anthroposophy and had been of higher profile and greater popularity, lost much of their impact. Although the core of the anthroposophical movement, the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand, had a relatively small membership through the period of study, it grew steadily, and has continued to do so to the present. The Society has been the secure spiritual centre from which the daughter movements have been inspired and have grown. It has allowed them to maintain direction and integrity in a highly competitive spiritual marketplace, amongst the many other alternative and complementary educational, health care and environmental groups which have emerged since the 1960s.⁵

⁴ Jeanette Fitzsimons, 'Introduction', *Biodynamics. A New Direction for Farming and Gardening in New Zealand*, Auckland: Random House, 1989, pp. 9-11.

⁵ Hill, pp. 112-127.

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Solveig Burns

Brian Butler

Beverly Firn

Kristina Friedlander

Carl and Christl Hoffmann

Noel Josephson

Frank Knowles

Vee Noble

Sue Simpson

Lesley Waite

Joy Whelan

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