



# Cobnuts Newsletter

Newsletter of the Maidstone Steiner Kindergarten Initiative  
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## Introduction

We wish a very happy new year to all our friends and supporters. We are hoping that 2007 will be a year of continuing growth for Cobnuts. This term we welcome Tansy Watts as our new full time kindergarten assistant who is working alongside Sue Mortimer, our teacher, 5 mornings a week. A very big thank you to Shon who helped out as assistant at very short notice for the whole of the Autumn/Winter term, and who is still willing to come in and help if needed.

During the Christmas holidays a weatherproof roof has been built over the front door of the kindergarten, so now children will be able to take off their wet boots before they go into the kindergarten, and parents waiting to collect their children can also keep dry if it is raining. A big thank you to Mick Summers for doing this work, and to Maidstone Borough Council for giving us the grant to pay for it. We also have some lovely new shelves, coatpegs and a bench inside the kindergarten, thanks to Andrew Mortimer and Mick.

This term we have seven children enrolled in the kindergarten, all of whom attend either 3 or 4 mornings a week. We are still hoping to attract more children, and will be running a new leafletting campaign soon. If you know of anyone with a child aged 3-6 who might be interested in Cobnuts, please let them know about us.

## Teacher's report by Sue

It has been a pleasure to be leading the kindergarten group through the last two terms, and through the Autumn, and into Advent there was much to celebrate with the children - Michaelmas, a Pumpkin festival (Halloween) and Martinmas. We have also enjoyed the changing of the seasons, whilst working and playing in the garden, and, since the beginning of September, have had a daily visit from a beautiful and friendly neighbourhood cat, who the children can stroke.

The Blackthorn Medical Centre kindly allowed us to use their space for the Advent Spiral, which was a beautiful start to the festive season, and very well attended by families and friends of Cobnuts. The parents put in a lot of work to organise the event, and together with the beautiful music from the musicians, a wonderful atmosphere was created.

We enjoyed lots of craft activities, baking, and play in the kindergarten leading up to the Christmas break, and also had an end of term party, to which all parents and children were invited. This was to be the last term for three of our children, and so we said goodbye to John-Martin, Ailish, and Rafferty. We will miss them at Cobnuts, but feel sure they will settle well in their new schools.

I am very please that Tansy is now in post as the kindergarten assistant, and look forward to working with her in

growing the kindergarten. Many thanks to those who gave support during the kindergarten mornings, - Shon, Zoe, Eileen, Ilwa, Ellen and Tansy, and to all the parents, who were encouraging and enthusiastic.

We are now planning work in the garden for Spring, and have already started to dig a mud-pit for the children to use. We will also be having help with our first wood-work project which is to make a hanging bird-table. Steve, a kindergarten parent, will come and help us, and it will be great for the children to see carpentry work taking place.

## Parent and Toddler Group by Zoe

The Parent and Toddler Groups meet on Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. There are a growing number of regular families attending the groups, many of whom will be progressing on to the Kindergarten when old enough. The children really seem to enjoy the sessions and look forward to seeing each other, as do the parents.

As the children are becoming older they are also more familiar with the routine. They are all very eager to set the table for snack-time, and share with the carrying of plates and cups to the table.

Circle-time is very special and the children really love to join in with the songs and actions. 'Sleeping Bunnies' is a firm favourite and is sung at least two or three times!

Young children love rhythm and repetition and usually the songs in circle-time are repeated for three to four weeks. The same welcoming song and good-bye song are always used and the older children in particular can sing along to these now.

Over the past months there have been many enquiries about the toddler group. Some parents, especially those with very small children find the afternoon session a difficult time to manage. Often children have an afternoon nap or older siblings need to be collected from school.

The possibility of holding a morning session has been discussed but obviously this will not be able to be held at the Cobnuts premises because the Kindergarten is running then. The solution therefore would be to hold it at a parent's home. This should be available after February half-term. Days and times are still to be decided.

### Parent Craft Group

A Parent Craft Group has been set up to enable parents to meet, chat and learn new craft skills.

The first Parent Craft Group was held on Friday 26th January and was a very enjoyable evening. Led by Sue Mortimer, the group made some very beautiful felt balls for the Kindergarten supplies.

The Craft Group will meet fortnightly on a Friday at Cobnuts Kindergarten from 8pm onwards. The next gathering will be on Friday 11th February. Please come and join us for this very warm and sharing time.

For further information please contact Zoe Watson on 01622 725391.

### Martinmas Festival by Tansy

To me, the Martinmas festival provides a lovely opportunity for people to join together, and welcome in the dark winter months. Preparations around the kindergarten were made over the preceding week. The children painted beautiful lanterns, and parents were invited to practice together the traditional Martinmas songs, and bake snacks to share.

We arrived at the kindergarten as the light was just beginning to fade on the 12th November, with spiced warm drinks to greet us. The children then gathered around Sue (the kindergarten teacher) as she told a Martinmas story to them. The darkness seemed to arrive very quickly, and everyone then collected their lit lanterns and we set off on a short procession. Efforts were made this year to follow a route that was accessible and comfortable for young families, with pushchairs and 'little legs'. Plenty of stops along the way were made to provide opportunities to re-group, sing and allow for catching up. The older children were very keen to lead the group through the darkness, and for the younger ones, holding onto their

lanterns as they walked was an important and real endeavour. We all returned to the kindergarten together, and there were plenty of bread rolls and biscuits to satisfy the taste buds. Time for a chat, and then we gathered to sing, before dispersing into the winter evening.

Over the next couple of weeks, the children sang the lantern song during their circle time in the kindergarten. It became a very sought after position to hold a lantern and lead the rest of the children around the kindergarten, and many verses were sung as each child enjoyed their turn in this important role!

### Puppet Show

Stardust Puppet Theatre presents: 'Briar Rose' on Sunday 11th March at 3pm, at Cobnuts Kindergarten, 9 Gatland Lane, followed by a small puppet-making workshop. Contribution of £5 per family requested. Suitable for children up to 7 years old.



### Bodo's talk by Christopher

*The Child with Many Questions* was the intriguing title of Dr Bodo Gottschalk's second talk held on 19th January at Cobnuts. About 15 people attended, mostly parents. In his talk Bodo made a plea to parents to listen to the young child's feelings, and to understand that it is more important to respond to these rather than the precise words of their questions.

Otherwise you are in danger of missing the point of what the child is really asking. The presentation was very entertaining as well as informative, with everyone staying on to talk and take refreshments.

### Blackthorn Easter Fair

Cobnuts Kindergarten will be running children's craft activities at the Blackthorn Easter Fair. This will be on Saturday, 24th March, 10am - 1pm, at the Blackthorn Medical Centre. Do come.

### Cobnuts Library

In addition to our collection of books about various aspects of early years child development and the Steiner approach, we now have a DVD and a Video on Steiner education that interested parents are welcome to borrow. The DVD is called 'What is a Steiner School?' It is produced by the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship and is 20 minutes long. The Video is called 'Time to Learn'. It is a 110 minute documentary film that was made by Jonathan Steddall in 1992. Both are very good. Please ask Sue if you would like to borrow something from the library.

### Kindergarten Committee

Tijno stood down as chairman of Cobnuts Kindergarten at our AGM in November, as he was moving back to Holland with Bons. He was warmly thanked for all he had done for Cobnuts in the last 3 years (from lazuring the walls to securing KCC funding

for us!) and given an album of photos as a momento. Two other committee members, Julia Batt and Catherine Landsley, had stood down during the year. We welcomed 2 new people onto the committee: Carol Bridges, who has supported us for some time and who has recently been coming to our meetings, and Christopher Turner, who has been on the committee in the past, and who has been elected as the new chairperson. The other 4 committee members are Maureen Bortolozzo (secretary), John Adams (treasurer), Hans Reichert and Zoe Watson.

### Sponsors

We would like to thank the many businesses and organisations that have agreed to help with our publicity by displaying or distributing our leaflets.

**Health Matters** Star Arcade, Maidstone

**Holland and Barret** Chequers Centre, Maidstone

**Kent Cloth Nappy Network**

**Luddesdown Organic Farm**

Tel: 01474 815044 (box scheme)

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Tel: 01233 720506 (organic box scheme)

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**Mole End Farms** Hartleylands Farm,

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Tel: 861113 (Farm shop and organic box scheme)

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**Micha Kennard** Homoeopath,

Tel: 01622 730526

**Christine Tsavellas** Homoeopath in

Rochester, Tel: 01634 842583

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Tel: 890803

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Rochester Tel: 01634 814700

**Mollycoddles** 44 High St,

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