

Obituary

David Sydney Clement: 22nd March 1911 – 20th May 2007

David Clement will be remembered as a gentleman, and a man very much ahead of his time. He was a passionate advocate of organic farming for many decades before it became an accepted part of modern agriculture. This was inspired by the teachings of Rudolf Steiner. For most of his life, David was also an active supporter of both Waldorf and curative education. Without his generous support, both financial and moral, many organizations such as: the Soil Association, the Bio Dynamic Agricultural Association, Sunfield Children's Homes, Park Attwood Clinic, Emerson College, and Elmfield School would have been the poorer. David was respected by every one who met him. He had an extraordinary interest in everyone he met, and was exceptionally broad-minded, even by today's standards. He would discuss any subject with anyone, even if the subject under discussion didn't interest him. He had the knack of making every person he met feel that they and their views were important. This interest in people, both old friends and new acquaintances continued right up to his death.

David Clement was born on 22nd March 1911 in Staines, Surrey. The younger of two boys, he was educated at Clifton College, Braidlea and Kings School Bruton. It was while he was at Bruton that David discovered Anthroposophy. The **spirit** of Anthroposophical teaching was the guiding principle by which David lived his life.

In 1930, David went to Pembroke College, Oxford to read History. While he was there, his interest in Anthroposophy increased, at times to the detriment of his studies. At this time, David got to know a number of eminent Anthroposophists including three who would become very important in his life: Doctor Ita Wegman, who had worked closely with Rudolf Steiner, as well as Fried Geuter and Michael Wilson. Geuter and Wilson had recently set up Sunfield, a home for children with special needs based in Selly Oak, Birmingham.

The following year, David's brother Eric died. He too was interested in the works of Steiner, and his death heightened David's own interest in all things Anthroposophical. He was no longer happy at Oxford, so in early 1932, at the suggestion of Doctor Wegman, he abandoned his studies, and headed for Sunfield.

David's arrival was far from being conventional. As soon as he had walked through the door, he was accosted by one of the children. "You want to go to the lavatory," the child said. "You know you do. You know you do." The new arrival, however, did not need to use the facilities. "But you do!" came the insistent response. It was not until David had been dragged to the lavatory that he realized that it was the child who was in need. It was an invaluable lesson in communication, as well as providing David with an amusing anecdote with which he delighted many people over the years.

Sunfield moved from Birmingham to the small village of Clent in Worcestershire in 1933. A distinct advantage of the new premises was that there was a small farm included. This meant that they could put into practice some of Steiner's ideas on Bio Dynamic agriculture. However, David thought that it would be useful to have more land. He had heard that Broome Farm in the neighbouring village of Broome was for sale. So he bought it on behalf of Sunfield. He became very interested in farming and spent all the free time he could in Broome. Shortly afterwards, Cottage Farm, whose land adjoined that of Broome Farm came up for sale. David, along with his colleagues, thought that it would be sensible to buy it.

In 1934, Michael Wilson made Sunfield into a limited company with himself and David as directors. After the war Sunfield achieved charitable status. David remained a trustee until his death. His initial responsibility was to run the business side of Sunfield. However, that was not all he did. If anyone needed taking to or fetching from the station, it was David who acted as chauffeur. This may seem a small task, but if one considers the number of people going to and fro – members of the staff going either to give lectures or on holiday, students who came to spend time at Sunfield and visitors – it became quite an important job, especially as David had to find the time to make sure that the business was running efficiently as well.

As time went by, David became more and more interested in having a farm. It was suggested to him that he should take over Broome Farm (which included Cottage Farm). This meant that he had to buy the land from Sunfield. So in 1940, he and his new wife Hilla – the eldest daughter of Fried Geuter – moved into Broome Farm.

David's day-to-day involvement with Sunfield did not end with his move to the farm. Because of the war, Michael Wilson – an accomplished violinist – was away serving his king and country by entertaining the troops. This meant that David had to spend his mornings at Sunfield. He would go and deliver their milk, and stay for the morning to run the office.

David joined the National Farmers' Union, and was elected chairman of his local branch three times: twice during the war, and once afterwards. He also joined and became chairman of the West Midlands Short-Horn Cattle Breeders' Association. He wanted to mix with other farmers ; even those who had no interest in farming the way he wanted to.

After the war had ended, David reduced his involvement with Sunfield, and concentrated on farming and raising his growing family. He continued farming for the next forty-two years, until he sold Broome farm in September 1987.

During this time, he was secretary and chairman of the Bio Dynamic Agricultural Association, and assisted in the founding of British Organic Farmers, which later merged with the Soil Association. Hilla and David hosted many meetings and conferences at Broome Farm. David also led the Clent and Stourbridge Anthroposophical group,

Elmfield school in Stourbridge, was established shortly after the foundation of Sunfield for the children of the staff, and those of local anthroposophists. David was a trustee for many years, and sent all four of his children there to receive their education.

David Clement, a truly gentle man, died peacefully in his own home at the age of ninety-six on the afternoon of 20th May 2007 with his family present. He is survived by his four children, eleven grandchildren, and four great grandchildren.

Basil Clement May 31, 2007