

## THE BEGINNINGS OF SUNFIELD.

A short account of our work  
by Michael Wilson.

Exactly nine years ago, Friedrich Geuter and I began house-hunting all round the south side of Birmingham. Our work at another place had come to an end and we were now left to our own resources. Our centre was my parents' house in Selly Oak and our objective - a house which would be suitable for a home for backward children. After inspecting many houses - some far afield - we turned our attention as a last hope to an unlikely-looking house within a hundred yards of my own home - and found our needs admirably suited at what turned out to be a very moderate cost. A Bank Loan was arranged, and for £1500 the leasehold was purchased and the house modernised, decorated and equipped for about 15 children.

A name now had to be found for the Home - a name which should be derived from the central home in Switzerland - the "Sonnenhof" - on the one hand, and from my parents' house "Elmfield" on the other. Thus the name "Sunfield" came into being, and it was on November 16th 1930 that the Sunfield Home first opened its doors to four children. We numbered six resident workers, including Mrs. Geuter who had come over from Germany to join us, and we also had a gardener and a domestic helper from outside. We all shared the household work between us as well as the work of nursing and teaching. We agreed among ourselves to take no regular salary or wages, but that our personal needs should be met as they arose, from a common fund. We were few in number and our needs were small, but it was nevertheless a real exercise to put our mutual confidence and tolerance into practice in this way. Our whole life was of course centred round the children, and it soon became evident that any kind of disharmony among the grown-ups was immediately reflected in the behaviour and even in the health of the children. The life demanded a certain sacrifice, but this was more than repaid by the happiness and improvement of the children, and by the interest which others began to take in our work.

The year 1931 was one of steady growth. In February a "Foundation Stone" was laid into the walls of our house by Dr. Ita Wegman, who was Rudolf Steiner's first co-operator in the medical work. During the Spring a weekly study group was formed, with a number of art students from Birmingham, and this soon developed into a consistent study of Rudolf Steiner's book "The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity". This group played a very important part in our life at that time, and was the channel through which a number of our

permanent workers found their way into our work.

Although we were all occupied in one way or another with the children, we had to find time to entertain the many visitors who came to see us. It became the usual practice for these visitors to help us with the work of washing up etc., and then to join in the lessons, games, music or discussion groups. Our life at this time was very full and varied, and the problems of living together in such a work and at such close quarters became very evident.

We were quite clear however, that these problems had got to be faced if our attempts at forming a real human community were to be anything more than superficial. We had virtually no rules or regulations, and the only thing that we tried to insist upon was that everyone should make a special practice of trying to understand and tolerate his neighbour. This we found demanded a real technique of living which had very little to do with the usual ideas of peace and harmony. We began to develop our own games, our own plays and with the advent of two more musicians, our own music. Dr. Hilma Walter joined us early in the summer, and was able to take over the regular medical treatment of the children.

The children were in many respects our teachers and showed us almost from day to day how our special tasks had to be formed. To teach according to any kind of preconceived formula was a sheer impossibility, and to transform every situation into an act of healing demanded continual ingenuity and artistry. It was always the creative artists who had the greatest authority with the children. The trained teachers and nurses on the other hand often had the greatest difficulties. The primary qualifications for this work were clearly Love, Unlimited Patience and Humour.

During the autumn Dr. & Mrs. Mirbt had expressed a desire to join our community and so we agreed that they should move into our neighbourhood although we had nothing to offer them. The day after this decision was made I received the utterly unexpected gift of a small house on the other side of Birmingham together with the money necessary to put it in order. So Dr. Mirbt and his family came to live at Stechford.

In October we had a visit from Mahatma Gandhi to whom the children gave a spontaneous and affectionate welcome.

Our numbers had now grown to 15 children and about 20 staff, and we had to rent a small house in the neighbourhood by way of extra accommodation. The necessity for a larger house had already made itself felt, and so on November 16th, one year after our opening, we went to look at a house in the country called Clent Grove, which some friends of ours wished to dispose of, but which seemed in the present circumstances far beyond our reach. The loss on the first year's

orking was about £400. Most of us slept in the rooms with the children and tended them by night as well as by day. Our personal expenses averaged out at about £5 per head for the year. But even then it was obviously not possible to maintain 50% more staff than children without charging exorbitant fees, unless we were prepared to work at a loss, in the sense of a charity. The Bank overdraft was increasing and seemed likely to continue to do so, and to think of undertaking the liability of larger premises under these conditions seemed from one point of view to be sheer folly; and yet the inner certainty of the work gave us strength to go forward with the idea.

In January 1932 we were joined by David Clement, and within a month he had begun to work out plans for a youth conference to be held at Glastonbury during the summer. In addition to our own regular study group we had a number of informal meetings at Oxford which brought us many acquaintances. About this time we were joined by Eileen Hutchins, who undertook the education of Mr. & Mrs. Geuter's three children who had come over from Germany the previous year. His small class was held in a room in my parents' house "Elmfield", and was the beginning of what is now Elmfield School.

In May we decided to take the plunge, and I signed a contract to purchase Clent Grove for the sum of £6,000. By arranging for a substantial mortgage and by staking my own possessions to the last penny, it was just possible to raise this sum, with a little over for alterations and repairs.

Thus at Midsummer we took possession of Clent Grove estate, and celebrated the event with a Midsummer Festival and a bonfire in the grounds. My financial liabilities at this point amounted to about 10,000 rather inadequately secured. Towards the end of July we divided our forces and organised the conference at Glastonbury, at the same time carrying on the work of the Children's Home. This again brought us more acquaintances and more helpers so that in August we were a party of six men who first went to live in one of the cottages at Clent Grove while we helped the local builder with the alterations and especially the decorations of the main house. These were days of adventure for all of us. I think we all learned how to clean up old ricks so that they could be used again, and one or two of us learned to do some brick-laying, but this of course is quite a special art. Scraping, paper-hanging, and painting were our chief occupations, including our own special method of using transparent colours on the walls, a tricky and laborious process. Electric light came from a re-historic generating plant driven by producer gas, and our weekly efforts at coaxing this thing into life were dramas we shall never forget.

To make the necessary alterations, with heating and sanitation, to connect up the house to the public services, to decorate and equip, were going to cost about £3,000, of which we had only about £500 available. Financially the future looked like a big black hole; humanly, spiritually, it seemed full of promise. But it is difficult

to talk to a bank-manager in terms of human destinies, and I had by now raised the last possible penny and had no further prospects of meeting our liabilities. One morning I received the news that a relation of mine who had passed away some months previously had left a substantial sum to every member of the family. Through the generosity of one or two others who had likewise benefited, I became unexpectedly the recipient of about £3,000, which made it possible not only to pay for putting our new house into order, but also to live in it for at least a few months.

Our move took place early in December and was celebrated by the visit of "St. Nicholas" who could be seen coming from a distance across the fields carrying his lantern and sack of presents for the children. On the same day the electric mains, new to this district, were connected up, and so the gas, dynamo and batteries became things of the past. Our first Christmas in the big house was a great festival, but from now onwards we had to face a new problem in that our work was spread over two houses, for we had kept our original house "Sunfield" as a department for the older boys who now needed separate accommodation from the other children. Although this separation seemed to be an obvious and necessary one, it was never a happy arrangement and presents a problem for which we are still trying to find a really satisfactory solution.

During 1932 several children had left and a number more had come, making our total now 17. Our staff had greatly increased, both owing to the two houses and to the size of the new house with its gardens and land, so that we were now nearly 30 people working on our original kind of voluntary basis, as well as several more paid workers who came in from the neighbourhood. We never advertised for our staff - they came of their own accord. After we had once opened our home we practically never asked a new person to join our work (except of course in the case of the few paid workers); the request invariably came from the person concerned. On the other hand we never refused to give a newcomer a trial on the grounds that we were unable to take on any more staff. We occasionally had to refuse on the grounds of obvious unsuitability, but even that was a rare occurrence. This meant that we often had people with us who literally gave more trouble than help. Looking at this from the ordinary point of view I estimate that in these eight years such trials have cost us several thousand pounds. But we were convinced that our way of dealing was a right one, and so we still try to maintain it.

During our second year our staff personal expenses (in place of salary) worked out at about £12 per head; during the third year, at about £20, and finally settled down at about £25 per head per annum, a figure which still holds good today. Apart from this, the total cost of living has usually worked out at about £90 per head per annum, making a total of about £115 per head per annum. This figure includes in addition to board and lodging, all expenses of travelling holidays, festivals, hospitality and medical attention. It is a fact

that in the first five years we never once refused a request from any of our co-workers, nor was an unreasonable request ever made. This system has come in for much criticism during recent years, but it has provided the solution to one great problem. It has provided for the varying needs and circumstances of different people without giving the opportunity for comparisons of salaries or allowances. I think it is true to say that within our brotherhood of workers, the so-called "class differences" have been simply non-existent. We have been just human beings with varying functions and varying degrees of responsibility. I mention all this at some length because it has played such a vital part in our life together, and is still essentially the basis on which most of us work.

During the summer of 1933, after the death of his mother through a motor accident, David Clement found himself the heir to a large and unexpected legacy. This he decided to use for the purpose of consolidating and building up our work, so that once again we were saved from disaster at the last moment, although a good many months elapsed before these new funds became available.

In a conversation with Dr. Ita Wegman and Mr. D. N. Dunlop at the Summer School at Bangor, it became evident that one of the great needs of the moment was a farm where the agricultural methods given by Rudolf Steiner could be carried out on a fairly large scale and where it would be possible to produce the kind of food needed for instance by children such as ours. Within a few days we had made enquiries and found that a very suitable farm within two miles of Clent Grove was to be sold. We also found that no artificial fertilisers had been used on it for many years, and so by the end of 1933 we were able to make arrangements to purchase it for just under £8,000.

The purchase of Broome Farm however, was not strictly speaking the beginning of our farming activities, for in April of the same year a neighbour of ours with a real love for farming, had offered to get our small home farm into working order, and we had purchased our first cow, an entirely new kind of venture for me - and had begun to provide our children with home-produced milk.

In spite of our larger house (which had had its formal opening at Whitsuntide), the problem of accommodation soon made itself felt once more. Our staff had grown during the year, as well as the number of children, and there was practically no sleeping accommodation apart from the nurseries, all the bedrooms in the new house being large rooms. At first most of us had slept in the nurseries each with a group of children, but this could obviously be only a temporary arrangement, since we now needed many workers in addition to nurses and teachers, and separate sleeping accommodation for these had become an urgent necessity. In September 1933 we had taken over another house in the neighbourhood, Clent Cottage, and had begun to use this partly as sleeping quarters and partly as a place for study.

The problem of students was always a difficult one. It is fundamentally impossible to learn to be a curative teacher without working consistently with children, and having them in one's care. On the other hand the actual work and care of the children is apt to absorb one's time and energy so completely that nothing is left for reading and study. We provided facilities for study in this second house, but were not able to form a real training centre in the way we had wished. In spite of this, new children and new workers continued to be admitted, especially workers and visitors from other countries, who had heard of the work we were doing and were anxious to participate in it.

We were often criticised for apparent lack of organisation, and for a somewhat irregular kind of time-table, but it was always our experience that the richest moments in the life, and the occasions where the children seemed to respond most, were just those times when a new idea or a new impulse was suddenly born out of the life itself, and acted upon before it could get cold. In this way, a child would often find itself the central figure of an impromptu drama concerning such things as excessive love of food, untidiness, laziness or lack of courage etc., and the lesson learned would be of more value than many hours of teaching, or of admonition. Such occasions formed an essential part of the curative treatment, and there is always the danger that an efficient time-table allows no place for such joyful happenings.

The year 1934 was to be a year of outward expansion and consolidation. Broome Farm needed repairs to buildings, and the installation of public services. We had taken over the two chief men from the previous owner, and so the work on the land could continue without interruption. Dr. and Mrs. Mirbt now moved with their family from the house at Stechford, and took up residence at the farm and we began the patient work of changing the farm over to the Bio-Dynamic methods.

The work with our older boy patients was continued in our original house at Selly Oak, and we had been able to rent the neighbouring house as school premises for our growing classes of normal children. At the same time we kept up some regular study groups at these houses, and started a series of weekly public lectures given by Friedrich Geuter.

Our patients now numbered 25, and our resident staff more than 40. Our hostel and study-house Clent Cottage was soon full up, and we had to consider the question of putting up new buildings.

We now had to face an important decision on a matter of principle. For obvious financial reasons we wished to take many more children into the Home, but we were clear that this would mean asking greater and continued sacrifices from our workers in the existing circumstances. We saw clearly that our children made most progress when they were in the continual motherly care of the same helper, but this meant that the helpers would become tied to their children just as a mother would, and this was sometimes more than could reasonably be asked. Since we all

worked on our voluntary basis, we never counted the hours which we worked and we were accustomed to putting our entire strength into the work. At the same time we had seen the danger of counting too much on youthful enthusiasm, because just this source of energy can become exhausted, with serious consequences for the rest of life.

Should we now plan more and better accommodation for children, or should we concentrate on greater space and comfort for the staff? In the end our experiences of the past pointed us to the latter decision although we knew that this would mean running our concern at a still greater loss. We decided to build an assembly hall, with stage, workshops, offices and about thirty single staff rooms around it. We had a preliminary sketch plan prepared by an architect, but the initial estimate made the scheme look prohibitive, and so we reluctantly gave it up, and began to plan again on a more humble scale.

Meanwhile we put up a wooden hostel in our grounds, to the architect's design. This provided single rooms for 18 people, and one common room, and was built by our good friend Mr. W. S. Waldron, a builder who lived just at our entrance gates, and had worked at Clent Grove many years ago as a small boy. Then came the decision to make our next plans ourselves, with the help of Mr. Waldron. So without an architect we planned a simple assembly hall, with a stage at one end, and a block of small rooms for office and residential use at the other. Excavation was begun at the end of October, long before the plans were completed. To take the entire planning, drawing and supervision into our hands was a momentous decision, and I am bound to say that our architect friend accepted this rather sudden gesture with more understanding than we had a right to expect.

Our plans grew in scope as we progressed (as plans usually do) and we were able to make use of all available space at a moderate cost. This whole piece of work was a tremendous education for me, and occupied most of my time for the next six months.

This year of outward expansion - 1934 - brought us problems of a new kind. We had been able to put up new buildings and to pay off debts and mortgages and to make better accommodation for our staff, but we were consciously adding to our overhead expenses in a way which could not be sufficiently compensated by the increasing number of children. But we felt that real property is better than invested property and that it was right to build and expand while we had the opportunity. Hitherto our entire undertaking had been my own personal venture and all property owned by me except Broome Farm which David Clement had bought in his own name. He had begun to share the business responsibility with me, and so in order to simplify the financial administration, we formed between us in August 1934 a private company known as "Sunfield Children's Homes" which from that time onwards owned all the property.

Another problem which made itself strongly felt during 1934 was that of the paid workers. We had from time to time found it very



difficult to manage the entire domestic work of the Home among ourselves as voluntary workers, and had been more or less compelled to engage outside helpers on the usual wage basis. Although this plan allowed us more time for study and for preparing our work, it was always in danger of bringing into the house an element which did not really understand the basis of our work and could not be otherwise than disturbing. In the spring of 1934 I had the ungrateful task of dismissing about 10 domestic workers at once without being really dissatisfied with any of them. On such occasions as this we would then take over the entire work of cleaning, polishing, washing-up, and also laundry. Leisure time and artistic pursuits would have to take a back place for a time but a new unity and harmony would pervade the whole work.

The same year was also notable for the increase in the number of foreign workers, some of whom had come as visitors, and had been so much attracted to the work that they had stayed on for a long time nominally in the capacity of visitors or students. The Home Office authorities began to object to this, and only after a lengthy personal interview with one of their officials, were we allowed to keep our foreign helpers with us. We put ourselves under a strict agreement with the Home Office, to give them special and regular information about our workers, both British and Alien, and in return for these extra obligations, which remain in force to this day, we have always received very considerate treatment at their hands.

Our way of living and working had attracted helpers from many different walks of life, but particularly from the artistic occupations. It now began to be noticeable that the teaching work was largely carried by the poets and painters, and the cooking by the musicians. This characteristic still continues and is something more than mere coincidence. Some of those who wished to join us were not suited to the work of curative education as a whole-time profession, but had a great wish to develop their own particular gifts within the life of our community.

This impulse had already given birth to our agricultural activities and to a good deal of music, painting and modelling, and now we had workers who wished in particular to develop woodwork and cabinet-making in addition to carving. We had already fitted up a garage as a workshop and had made some primitive but very strong bedsteads for our children, and now the time came to design and build a woodworking shop on a large scale. The building of these workshops went on at the same time as the building of the Hall during the very wet winter of 1934-1935.

At Christmas our house was filled to overflowing and we looked forward to the time when our Festival Plays could be performed in the new Hall. These plays had formed an essential part of our life since our first year. Our first play in the autumn of 1931 was the result of an impulse of Mr. & Mrs. Geuter's young son to present Dr. Wegman with a play about "Parsifal", on the occasion of her visit. In this work he



was helped by several members of the staff, and soon the verses, action and the music began to take shape. (Incidentally our first attempt at four-part chorus singing dates from this occasion when I composed "In the Quest of the Holy Grail" to be sung between each scene.) We had no piano in those early days and the music was made for lyres and violin. Many of the chief characters in the plays were taken by the children and the daily rehearsing of the various scenes formed a most important part of the school life. The play was performed in our largest room at Sunfield, measuring 15 by 20 feet. There were about 20 performers and 40 spectators in this room and another dozen or so listening from the stairs outside.

Our Christmas play was taken from Fiona McLeod's "St. Bride of the Isles" and performed on the same sort of scale, with speech choruses as well as singing choruses. Year by year we performed these plays again at the appropriate time, and each time some new feature had grown into the play - a new scene, a new verse or a new song - so that the growth of the plays corresponded to the growth of our whole work.

The idea of having a real stage of our own had been for very many years a dream of both Mr. Geuter's and mine, quite independently of one another, and now a very gracious destiny had brought this dream within our reach. In February, just as the roof of the new building was being put on, I was confined to bed for some weeks with a severe illness which although it prevented me from supervising the details of building, gave me several weeks' absolute quiet in which I was able to plan out every detail of the stage construction. I was afterwards very grateful to this illness.

Towards the end of March 1935 we moved our offices and administrative quarters into the new building, and in the following month we were able to use our new hall and stage for the first time, in celebrating the Easter Festival. The details of the building were by no means finished, but we played our Parsifal play on the stage, with the very small beginnings of an orchestra which had come to birth in the meantime. During the next year or so we had to remodel our plays to fit their new surroundings. Our regular Festival plays, performed by the staff, assumed more the character of stage performances, and at the same time many new children's plays were made, which were performed not on the stage, but in a simple way in the Hall itself. We found it a great mistake to mix up the simple, even primitive directness of the children acting with the more sophisticated machinery of stage production.

The difficulties of accommodation were not at an end. Since the nurses now no longer slept in the nurseries with the children, we had to provide separate accommodation for them and also to have regular night nurses on duty. The one need was met by building a second staff hostel, but the difficulty of finding trained nurses who could fit in with our way of working was one that lasted a long time.

The character of the Children's Home underwent a certain change.

We had many more patients (36 at the beginning of 1935) and a number of these were really hospital cases. The house had to be kept quiet in the evenings with the result that many people retired to their own rooms. On the one hand the new accommodation was a great comfort and relief to us all, but it soon became very perceptible that the main house lost a great deal of the warm community life which had so characterised it in the earlier days.

Our year's building programme had provided us with separate sleeping accommodation for 40 to 45 people, a library, common room, six offices and studies, Hall to hold 250 people, fully equipped stage with scenery store, large studio, sewing room, carpenter's shop, machine shop, timber-store and garden workroom, for a total cost of rather less than £11,000.

Another set of changes also took place during the summer of the year 1935. Our group of older boy patients at our original house at Selly Oak was not easy to maintain. It was too much separated from the main life of the Home and we could not find the staff to carry it through as a separate household. The proximity of this group to the normal school seemed moreover to have a prejudicial effect upon the latter. We equipped the small cottage at the foot of Clent Grove estate, for patients, and moved the group of boys out from Selly Oak. The house was small, but the boys could now take some part in the general life of the Home.

At the same time my parents wished to give up their house "Elmfield" at Selly Oak, and to move out to Clent. Our new building enabled us to empty our second house "Clent Cottage" and to offer it to them as a private residence, and they offered us "Elmfield" as a permanent home for the normal school. In the autumn "Elmfield School" was formally opened, with our original house "Sunfield" as a hostel for its boarders.

The period following on this outward expansion was one of probation for many of us, during which we had a very great deal to learn. The dividing up of our concern into different working groups brought with it the necessity for a good deal more organisation than when we were only one household, where everyone met everyone else every day. It often happened that friends who visited us told us that they could help us to "organise" our work so that it would run more efficiently. Sometimes we allowed them to try - but it soon became evident that the kind of organisation which is so easy and tempting to impose on a work, produced a kind of inner paralysis, which was much more wasteful and destructive than the lack of organisation.

We have been through many difficult situations in the last few years, but we have repeatedly had to learn the lesson that to allow our general policy to be guided by the so-called "accepted" or "safe" principles of business, was the greatest mistake we could make and meant a direct denial of any spiritual reality behind our work. We

sometimes made deliberate attempts to "rationalise" our work, we tried inter-departmental book-keeping and records, we engaged trained nurses for all the ill children, so as to be "on the safe side", we advertised our work in the newspapers, to get more widely known. But none of these measures was any direct help.

The more complicated book-keeping either prevented the different departments from dealing with one another, or else simply broke down; the trained nurses prevented the real work of "curative education" from being done, and they often became dissatisfied. The advertising cost money and brought nothing in return. We had to realise that we were tackling the problem from the wrong end.

The beginnings of our work were founded upon inner convictions rather than outer security, and to allow these convictions to be superseded by any kind of "safety first" policy, was invariably a disastrous compromise.

We had to learn that proper consideration for the work of others would make "rationalisation" unnecessary; that to overcome the fear of illness is the best way to prevent it, and that to be inwardly creative in one's work is the surest way to make it known and to bring others into it, and finally that the need for the imposing of external organisation is only a measure of the lack of organisation within our own selves.

Those who felt that our work no longer "had its old spirit" were just the ones who put most difficulties in the way of others. We found that to transform the relationships between individuals into similar relationships between groups of people is a very difficult thing, but is the only way in which a community can grow without losing its character. We sometimes made the mistake of giving people nominal responsibility, but in practice keeping the ultimate decisions in our own hands. To give confidence to others even to the extent of accepting their mistakes is not an easy thing to do when it really comes to the point, but it is the only way in which individual responsibility can be developed.

There were of course many changes among our workers during these years. Some left us because they felt unfree to live their life as they would wish to do, others went away because they considered they were left too much alone in their work and did not learn enough. On the other hand some new workers came who really understood what we were striving for, and by degrees it has been possible to achieve again on a larger scale something of the spirit of freedom and tolerance which characterised our earlier days. I think it is of importance to mention that the study of Rudolf Steiner's "Philosophy of Spiritual Activity" which was begun during our first year, has been continued in various forms and has been the ethical basis of our work right up to the present time.

To return to the outer aspects of events - the autumn of 1935 marked the beginning of a regular series of public lectures in the centre

of Birmingham, given by Mr. Geuter on various aspects of Rudolf Steiner's teaching, and a series of classes in London under his direction, also for the study of the "Philosophy of Spiritual Activity"

By 1936 the number of patients had risen to over 40 with a big increase in staff, and this had necessitated a second kitchen and dining room for those workers not immediately connected with the children. For this purpose stables, garage and potting shed had been converted into a staff canteen. Our visitors were numerous, amounting to about a thousand every year, not counting attendances at plays and lectures etc.

During the autumn of this year we made a second attempt to establish a Training Centre for the teaching of all subjects connected with curative education. This took place at the neighbouring house to "Sunfield" at Selly Oak, and began with five whole-time students, who wished eventually to enter our work altogether. After one term they all decided to take up Agriculture in one form or another, and the activities of the training centre were in effect transferred to the region of the farms.

At the same time David Clement and I decided to build an extension to our hall and office building, which should take the form of a private house for Mr. and Mrs. Geuter and their three children. Within four months the plans were made and the house built, including a reception room, which since then has often provided a homely fireside for members of the staff.

The year 1937 was characterised by the development of the Agricultural side of our work. Mr. and Mrs. Duffy, who had joined our Training Centre the previous year and had for some time in the past wanted to develop something on the lines of the Kingsley Fairbridge Farm Schools, now came at our request to live at Broome Farm and to develop a farming community there, with Dr. Mirbt as technical adviser. During the year we were able, by means of another mortgage, to rescue the neighbouring farm from the hands of a speculative builder, and thereby to add another 50 acres to our land under cultivation. We were able to take a number of farm pupils, and were joined by one or two other farmers of experience. In this way the Sunfield Agricultural Centre gradually came into existence, and is now a community of over thirty people in itself.

The preparation of our meals had always received special attention at the hands of Mrs. Geuter, who had done all the cooking herself in the first years, and had subsequently trained a number of others and had formed the beginning of a cookery school. We had now been growing and milling our own wheat and rye for several years and our bakery was producing many new things under her direction. It was largely due to her initiative that we decided to build a small shop close to our entrance gates, for the sale of our own produce and the products of our workshop and pottery which had been making great progress. "The

"Sunfield Shop" was opened in June 1937 and has well justified its own existence until war conditions made it necessary for us to close down this part of our work.

During the last two years we have laid greater stress on the more educational side of our curative work. Dr. Hilma Walter left us in the spring of 1938 after seven years work, and we no longer felt it right to accept children needing more medical than educational treatment. The medical responsibility remains in the hands of the local practitioner Dr. Charles Hicks, who has supervised our work since 1933.

A new school building close to the main house, which came into being through the initiative of the teachers themselves, made it possible for the teaching work to develop with rapid strides, and an enlargement of this building has recently been carried out.

At the time of writing we have just over 40 patients, and about the same number of pupils at Elmfield School since its evacuation. There are about ten regular farm pupils. Our total staff personnel, including families and dependents numbers about 130 in all. Of these, 20 are refugees from Germany and Austria for whom we have provided work and maintenance during the last year.

The children's home by itself needs a staff of about 60, and a simple calculation will show that the fees which we charge can never meet the cost of maintenance of so many people, and that so far from being a paying concern, our work is bound to run at a heavy loss. On the other hand we know that our work has helped many others besides our patients and pupils, and we are sure that if such work can be of service to humanity, it may still be allowed to exist, even in such difficult times as the present.