

... you can play all day if you want to ...

To allow children to be completely free to play as much as they like. *Creative and imaginative play is an essential part of childhood and development. Spontaneous, natural play should not be undermined or redirected by adults into learning experiences. Play belongs to the child. Summerhill policy statement*

Because I was bored I spent a lot of time thinking – at a normal school everything is organised so you have no time to think. *Catherine pupil*

To be a free soul, happy in work, happy in friendship, and happy in love or to be a miserable bundle of conflicts, hating one's self and hating humanity – one or the other is the legacy that parents and teachers give to every child. *A.S. Neill*

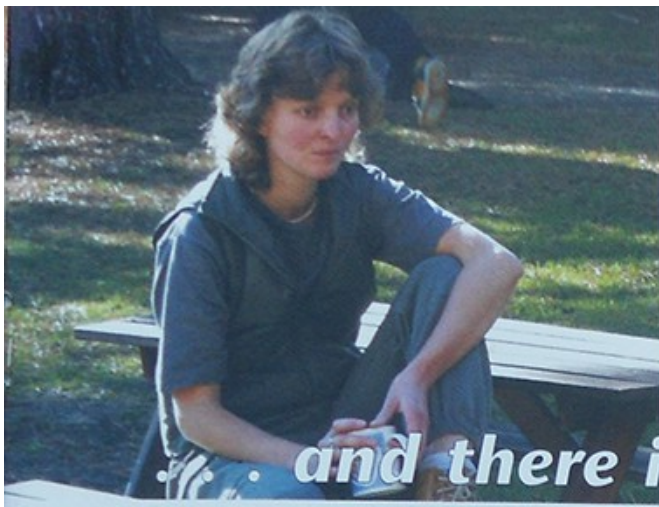
Don't you wish you had been there? And, curiously, don't you see how closely it resembles the childhood paradise represented by the Arthur Ransome books? 'These adults... mostly minded their own business, and we minded ours.' Playing games out of doors by moonlight, building swings out of junk, sleeping out at night, watching lizards, constructing ice slides, exploring. . . They are all just what the Swallows and Amazons did, or might have done. What was different about Summerhill was that it was richer; at Summerhill there were also parties and plays and music and boy-friends and organised self-government. And lessons, which the Swallows and Amazons had too, but for them they happened in a horribly different world called school. *David Gribble Real Education – Varieties of Freedom. Lib Ed '98*



I think that non-compulsory lessons, coupled with a more informal classroom atmosphere helped me to enjoy my chosen subjects a lot more (although I will probably never really learn to love solving quadratic equations, or long division.) For example, I like Shakespeare.

I enjoyed reading his works, and enjoy watching them performed even more. Had I been forced to study the Bard against my will, I would probably hate Shakespeare, and would never go to an RSC production again after I finished my English GCSE. *Misha pupil*





*... and there is time and space to sit and dream ...*

I feel confident with myself and at ease speaking with people of different ages and occupations. Being able to move gracefully in different circles has opened up opportunities for me. The Summerhill environment helped me to learn how to speak up for myself and be comfortable with all sorts of people. *Jasmine ex-pupil*

I have become a lot more confident, I was really shy when I came . . . I feel equal to anyone. I won't be afraid to ask for what I want, and I won't feel that I can't do some things because they are only for important people to do. *Martine pupil*



This certainty of who and what I am comes from having been at Summerhill, a place where children are given the chance to find out who they are without there being pressure applied. Summerhill lets everyone unfold in their own time and with much guidance from the community. *Andy ex-pupil*

Summerhill taught me how to think for myself, stand up for myself, and to always question my environment *Martha ex-pupil*



*I was talking to my mum yesterday and she said something like, 'I didn't do a very good job with you when you were little,' so I told her she did the very best job she ever could have done by sending us to Summerhill – all my childhood memories are like some fantasy adventure – for years after I left Summerhill I kept dreaming about Summerhill and not being able to figure out whether it was real or not!*

*Mim ex-pupil*

