



A. S. Neill
17.10.1883 –
23.09.1973

Summerhill was founded in 1921 by A.S. Neill, a Scottish, writer and rebel. He created a community in which children could be free from adult authority. The school and his ideas became world-famous through Neill's writings and lectures, his books are still published worldwide. In the late 60s Neill's success at Summerhill was finally recognised and he was awarded honorary degrees from the universities of Newcastle, Exeter and Essex. He was also recognised amongst the top 12 men and women who have influenced British schooling during the last millennium by the Times Educational Supplement. (31.12.1999)

In the current educational climate in which pupils have little or no control over the running of their schools and certainly no control over what they learn, the public good can only profit from exposure to alternative philosophies. Neill's has stood the test of time far longer than any other educational philosophy or initiative, whether radical or mainstream. *Dr Alan Thomas Visiting Fellow University of London Institute of Education.*

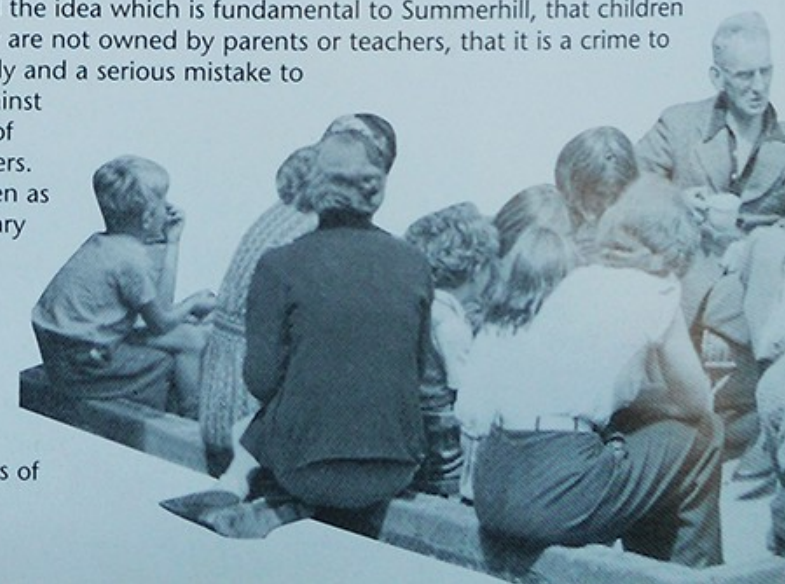
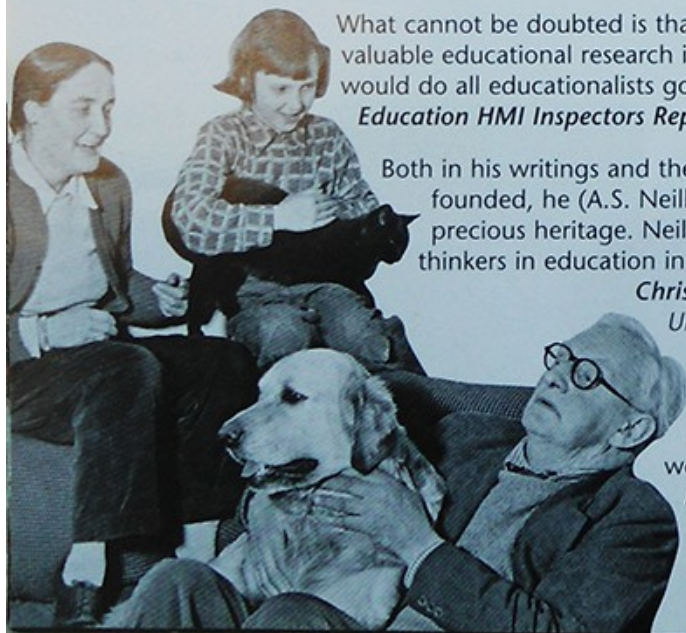
What cannot be doubted is that a piece of fascinating and valuable educational research is going on here which it would do all educationalists good to see. *Ministry of Education HMI Inspectors Report June 1949.*

Both in his writings and the remarkable school which he founded, he (A.S. Neill) has left us an extremely precious heritage. Neill was one of the great original thinkers in education in the 20th century. *Sir Christopher Ball Chancellor, University of Derby.*

Neill's educational philosophy has had a major and significant impact on a worldwide scale. *John MacBeath OBE, Professor of Educational Leadership at the University of Cambridge.*

One of the main tenets of Neill's work has to do with the academic and cultural worth of incorporating non-partisan democratic values within the educational curriculum and process itself. Indeed, his philosophy (including this tenet) has to some extent been adopted by mainstream educational practice world-wide. *Herbert Blumberg Senior Lecturer in Psychology, Goldsmiths College, University of London.*

His (Neill's) system has had a profound effect on human rights law as it affects children. It pioneered the idea which is fundamental to Summerhill, that children have rights, that they are not owned by parents or teachers, that it is a crime to assault them physically and a serious mistake to force them to act against their will except out of consideration for others. These tenets were seen as absolutely revolutionary in the 1920s. They were described as anarchic. They are now to be found in the 1989 convention on the rights of the child, ratified by 189 nations of the world. *Geoffrey Robertson QC*





Summerhill has stood by its principles for nearly eighty years whilst the state system has veered in one direction or another according to the particular predilections of the government of the day. Even those who do not fully agree with the philosophy enshrined in Summerhill practice have often acknowledged a profound debt to an alternative opinion and example which provokes a re-evaluation of one's own deepest assumptions about children and their education. It has also set a shining example of genuine democracy in education from well before this was taken at all seriously in the state system. *Stuart Ainsworth Senior Lecturer in Educational Studies Co-director of the Equality and Discrimination Centre, Strathclyde University*

A.S. Neill 1883—1973 Scottish born and educated, Neill founded Summerhill school in Suffolk where his iconoclastic views on education were given free rein. Although pupil numbers were small, Neill's numerous publications and lectures made him the best known British progressive educationist of the twentieth century. *On Giants Shoulders; Millennium Edition, Times Educational Supplement (31.12.1999)*

I was asked as an independent outside expert to report on the school for the purpose of its dispute with the then department for Education and Employment in 2000, which ended successfully for the school. It is interesting to note that as part of those proceedings before the Independent Schools Tribunal, A.S. Neill's educational philosophy was explicitly accepted by



the Department as an established strand of modern educational theory. *Ian Cunningham, Visiting professor in the School of Lifelong Learning and Education at Middlesex University.*

In December 1999 I was asked to act as an 'expert witness' for Summerhill School in their challenge to the 1999 HMI evaluation of the school.

My judgements were based on considerable fieldwork in the school itself, interviewing pupils and teachers; examination of extensive 'independent evaluation' launched by another group of experts; and an examination of the validity of the HMI inspection of the school in March 1999. My evaluation of the school included work done by Professors Barry MacDonald, Saville Kushner, Harry Torrance, and Julie Allen. The research was supported by the Nuffield Foundation.

I found clear evidence that the school was meeting and exceeding its aims, that parents were universally very satisfied with the education of their children and that the inspection process had been deeply flawed.

Ian Stronach, Education Research Professor, Manchester Metropolitan University

