



Newsletter

Summer 2021

As we reflect on the year, thoughts of the pandemic and how it has impacted on every aspect of daily living soon creep in. However, when we observe how our students have ploughed on (sometimes literally at Eyam), we would be allowed to be very proud of their achievements. Items made in craft sessions that represent our humanity, to name but a few, included Nigerian percussion from clay, a boot scraper from the forge, beautifully woven fabric in wool craft (also reflecting the naturally dyed wools), shrink pots and totems through green wood work, and very artistically designed characters and staging from stories. These and all the other remarkable work show how our students can and do control their peace of mind, re-imagining their world and themselves within it, in spite of a pandemic. We remain mindful of this when saying goodbye to our leavers.

On behalf of all the staff at the school, I wish everyone a restful, well-deserved summer.

Eric Knutsen

Head Teacher, Brantwood Specialist School

Festivals throughout the year

Rhythm is a non-negotiable element of life for humanity. We have no say over whether the sun rises or sets, the tides ebb or flow, or whether we grow in age. The only choice we have is to embrace time and cycles of the world.

At Brantwood, we do this through the year using a number of festivals to both help us plan a meaningful curriculum and to celebrate times throughout the year. These range from saying goodbye to a memory or event that doesn't help us to observing new life springing up all around us. These observances have been 'processed' in the outside world, often into commercial affairs. We bring the students back to the land and back to the core reasons for the festival, often with a human developmental focus.

Our first of the year will be Michaelmas, observed on Wednesday, 29th September. The last day for picking blackberries, referencing the story of the ousting of Lucifer from the heavens by the Archangel Michael, allows us also to celebrate the bounty provided throughout the summer.

During the past summer term, our festivals have included May Day (Beltane) and St John's (Litha). Below is a snapshot of how we observed these in school.

May Day (Beltane)



We made a Worm Charming Potion from foraged, wild garlic. This was boiled to make the potion. The challenge was to charm as many worms from the ground as possible within 5 minutes. To tempt the worms, we used music, vibration, beats on the ground, and sounds. However, the secret tactic was to use a potion, which we pour into the ground. Their repulsion drives them out. No worms were harmed in these activities. The student (pictured on the left) won the competition over all other staff and students.

We decorated trees with blossom colours, pinks, celebrating the beginning of summer. We decided to celebrate by festooning trees with braids. These were made

(demonstrated right) by passing the material back and forth. This is incredibly rhythmic and known for its need for co-ordination with a partner, using the hand and eye in synchronicity. Both young and older students (and staff) were entirely immersed and mesmerised.



St John's (Litha)



Staff and students gather to celebrate and the theme of the wheel. We made circular hoops and crowns (student modelling one to the right) out of willow. The hoops were used in a communal of hoopla.

We made a sun dial from a staff planted in the ground, with the students working out where the numbers should go from the shadows cast. This was intense.



Saying goodbye to the year and our leavers

Another facet of our worldly rhythm is the leaving of one place and starting a new life in another. In the cases of our students, we are very proud of Charlotte, Jimmi, Jago, Lucian, Fynn, and Wilf. Each of them



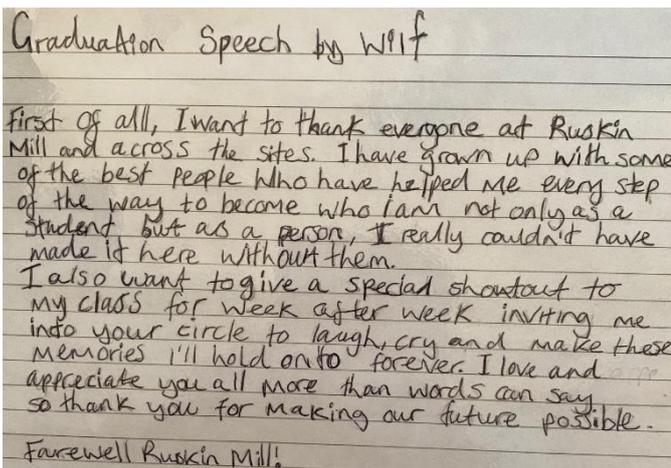
makes us proud to call them Brantwood students, having taken full advantage of the craft and land and academic curricula.

We welcomed parents of those leaving us to help us say goodbye, listen to presentations (see Wilf's speech below) and very capable performances by Charlotte singing and Fynn (picture right) introducing his 'Piece for Brantwood'.

All six students move onto post-16 studies in different colleges and they are ready for their next challenge. Well done and good luck for the future!



Our gathering for celebration at Tintagel



For all our students, we held a celebration of the year, handing out photo books (and COVID tests), had presentations of items they had created, gathering together at the main site and Tintagel in groups. The atmosphere was buoyant and filled with energy.



Ken presenting his students' totems.