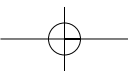
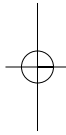
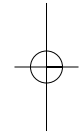
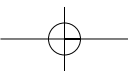
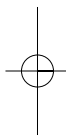
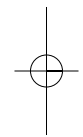
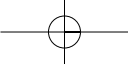
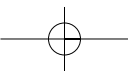
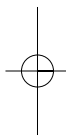
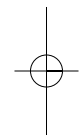
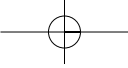


STORIES OF THE CAUX SCHOOL





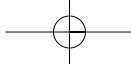




STORIES of the CAUX SCHOOL 1955-65

Mary Lean & Elisabeth Peters

CAUX BOOKS



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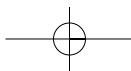
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Introduction

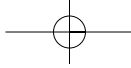
‘The past is another country.’ But we all come from there, and it’s important to re-visit the past on our journey towards the other persons that we are all becoming. It is equally important for movements like Initiatives of Change (IofC) to re-visit this other country, and to attempt to tell their own history honestly, warts and all, trying to understand the context within which individuals lived and thought and acted, without judging them. That is what Mary Lean and Elisabeth Peters have done in this moving little book about the Caux School.

As a Brit who was sent away from home to boarding school at an early age, as an amateur historian of the British Empire and of this spiritual movement, and as a contemporary of some of those who appear in these pages, I have many affinities with this story. I am also responsible for the Caux Expo, the permanent exhibition at Mountain House which presents some of the history of the building and of IofC. On one of my regular visits from Geneva where I live, I opened the visitors’ book to find the words that prompted this project, penned by one of the pupils of the Caux School, back on a visit with her family.

From its start, Initiatives of Change (earlier known as Moral Re-Armament) has held to the belief that individuals can find a certain freedom from feelings of guilt or defeat, through resolute honesty about the past. It has also encouraged communities and nations to conduct honest examinations of their history. It is strange how we all take it for granted that we can and should glory in our country’s victories – be they sporting or on the battlefield – but how resolutely, by and large, we refuse any honest look at the other sides of our nations’ stories.

I do not believe in collective guilt. Today’s young Germans are not guilty of what their grandparents did in the 1940s, for example. But as intelligent citizens of the world, they can choose to study their past, and accept a degree of responsibility. I have undertaken a similar journey of ‘honest conversations’ about the shadows in Britain’s history.

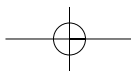
This book focusses on a short chapter in the history of a spiritual movement, but one at the core of the life-experience of those involved.



It raises wider, more universal questions. To what extent can parents lay on their own offspring the cost of their convictions? There are no easy answers.

We can only thank all those who have been interviewed for their honesty. The memories, both painful and joyful, which they generously share with the reader, are universal, challenging and in an amazing way hope-giving. May the book make its own modest contribution in the journey to healing and wholeness, and to the movement's onward path, learning from its mistakes, and celebrating its audacities.

Andrew Stallybrass, May 2009

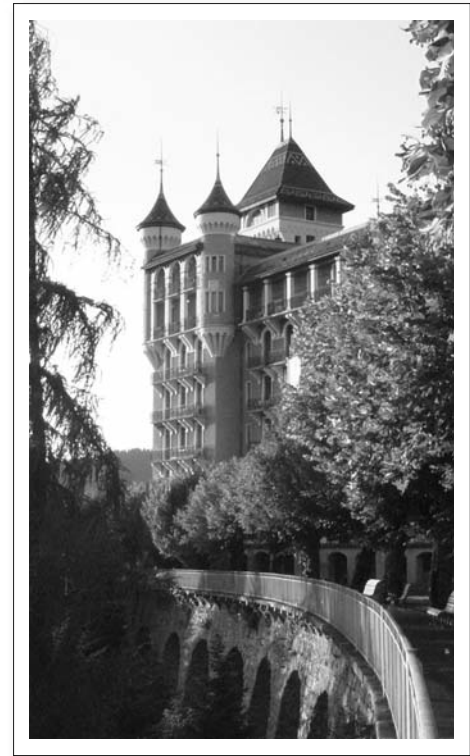


In the northern winter of 2006, Marion Manson Porteous travelled from New Zealand with her husband and three adult daughters for a holiday in Switzerland. While they were there they visited the mountain village in which she had lived from the age of five to nine.

Perched above Lake Geneva, on the lower slopes of the Rochers-de-Naye, the village of Caux has a breathtaking setting, looking out across the Rhone valley to the peaks of the Dents du Midi. Its most striking building, Mountain House, looks like a fairy-tale palace, with towers and turrets which can be seen from the lake shore for miles around. Since 1946, this building, once a luxury hotel, has been a centre for the work for reconciliation and justice of Initiatives of Change (known until 2001 as Moral Re-Armament or MRA), hosting international conferences every summer and, in earlier years, at Christmas and Easter too.

In the late Fifties, when Marion Manson¹ lived in Caux, her parents, Matt and Margie, were travelling the world with MRA. In the years immediately after World War II, the movement had brought Germans together with their former enemies, and these heart-to-heart encounters played a part in the reconciliation which was to lead to the founding of the European Community. MRA played a similar role in moves for reconciliation between Japan and her neighbours in the Pacific. By the 1950s MRA travelling teams were at work all over the world, offering a vision of a 'hate free, fear free, greed free' world based on change in people's attitudes and on faith in a loving God, in whose plans for a better world each person could have a part. These teams often used stage plays to convey their message; the Mansons, who were both gifted actors, took part in several of these. MRA was credited with a role in halting the advance of Communism in the industrial areas of Germany and Brazil, and in easing the path to independence of Morocco, Tunisia, Kenya and Cyprus.²

While her parents were away, Marion was cared for by a series of young women, and attended a small primary school in a chalet, a short walk up the mountain from Mountain House. She was one of some 40



Mountain House, Caux

1. Original names are used throughout, including the maiden names of children, carers and teachers who later married. Married names are given after the maiden name, the first time the person is mentioned.

2. For more detail about the work of MRA in this period, see *Frank Buchman, a life* by Garth Lean, Constable 1985.



Pupils of the Caux School, 1961.

Standing, l-r: **Princess Irina, Marion Manson, Angela Cook, Geoffrey Burns, Elisabeth McLean, Edward Peters, Peter Rundell.**

Centre: **David Morrison, Princess Helen, Delscey Burns, Ifo Amata.**

Front: **Jean Simpson, Peter McCrae, Anne Smith, Ugo Amata.**

overwhelming memory is of loss and pain, but, for others, this was a predominantly rich and sunny period. None of them would be the people they are today without those childhood experiences in what Marion describes as her 'nurturing place'.

* * * * *

The parents of the Caux School children were among the first generation of MRA full-time workers. They had grown up in the shadow of World War I. Most of the fathers had encountered the Oxford Group (MRA's precursor) as students or young workers in Britain in the early 1930s. At a time when young people with a social conscience were struggling to find ways to respond to the suffering caused by the Great Depression, they found that the Oxford Group offered a way of relating the Christian faith of their upbringing (which some had rejected) to the needs of the world. They responded to the idea that they could play a part in changing the world, and that the best place to start was

children of MRA workers who attended this school for longer or shorter periods between 1955 and 1965. Although the setting was idyllic, and the intentions of all concerned were good, the experience for Marion, and some of the others, was one of abandonment. When she visited Mountain House in 2006, she wrote in the visitors' book: 'In spite of the wonderful work of reconciliation, the children suffered. Perhaps our story may be heard one day.'

This book is a response to that desire to be heard. The children, now in their 50s and early 60s, have varied memories of their years at Caux. For some, the

by making changes in their own lives. The Oxford Group offered them two methods of doing this: the use of absolute moral standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love as benchmarks for their lives; and the daily practice of silent prayer³, in a search for God's direction.

Alan Thornhill, whose daughter, Susan, was one of the children in the school at Caux, encountered the Oxford Group when he was a theological student at Oxford in the late 1920s. What gripped him, he wrote, were the 'miracles' that had happened in the lives of the young people he met through the Oxford Group. 'They had come alive,' he writes in his memoirs, *Best of Friends*⁴. 'There was a freedom, a selflessness about them that could not be denied.' When he, in his turn, 'answered the call that men and women had heard all down the ages', he saw it as choosing to be part of a 'revolution', in which God might ask anything of him. 'I knew little of what it might involve. It might mean to stay right on in Oxford...; it might mean going to the ends of the earth.'⁵

The experience of Adam McLean, whose daughter, Elisabeth, attended the school from 1958 to 1961, is an example of what Thornhill meant. He was working as a motor mechanic in Edinburgh in the early 1930s when he was introduced to the ideas of the Oxford Group by his employer, Sam Reid. Reid was known in the motor business as 'honest Sam' and had impressed McLean when he apologised to him for causing a minor accident at work in which McLean had been hurt. Reid suggested McLean join him in a quiet time, which led to McLean volunteering that he had been stealing oil from the garage to keep his motorbike going.

'There were more than a few other things I had to put right on considering those four moral standards, particularly in relation to my family and my workmates,' McLean wrote in his autobiography⁶. His decision 'to let God run my life' led to a new relationship with his mother and enabled him to play a part in bringing healing to his sister's marriage.

McLean joined forces with others who had had similar experiences and were working to replicate them in areas of conflict in Britain's shipyards and industries. 'Since the cost of these conflicts was not only counted in pounds, shillings and pence, but in human lives and human relations, our aim was to introduce to all sides the idea of accepting these four moral standards as absolutes and to seek the wisdom of the

3. Often referred to in Oxford Group or MRA circles as 'guidance' or the 'quiet time'

4. Marshall Pickering, 1986

5. In fact, he became a playwright. One of his plays, *The Forgotten Factor*, was described by US President Truman as 'the most important play to come out of the war' because of its positive effect on labour-management relations in America's war industries. Another, *The Crowning Experience*, played to hundreds of thousands in the Southern States of America, where prominent African-Americans said it contributed significantly to desegregation.

6. *Whatever Next...*, Linden Hall, 1992

Almighty.’ In 1939 this work took him to Canada and the US, where he worked to improve relations between management and the shop floor in the burgeoning aircraft industry and was drafted into the army after Pearl Harbour.

While most of the fathers were British, the mothers came from more varied backgrounds: Alan Thornhill married an American, and Adam McLean married the daughter of a Swiss industrialist. About a third of the couples whose children attended the school were international marriages. During the 1930s the Oxford Group spread out from Britain and the United States, sparking major revivals in Canada and Scandinavia, and several of these couples met through these campaigns, although they did not marry until after World War II. Most by then were in their mid-30s or older.

During the war some, like McLean, served in the armed forces; some undertook other forms of war work; some continued full-time with MRA, building morale. They emerged with a determination to rebuild, strengthened by the fact that they had survived when so many others had not. Douglas Cook, whose daughter, Margaret, was at the school from 1961-5, had lost his twin brother in the war, although he himself had been exempted from the armed forces because he was training for the ministry⁷. ‘He felt he had to give his life for the peace for which his brother died,’ Margaret says.

Another of the future Caux School parents, Signe Lund, was a Norwegian artist. She had spent the war with MRA in the United States and remembers bursting into tears when she saw the devastation which the blitz had caused in London. ‘Later I saw Berlin, where the destruction was even worse,’ she says. ‘For former enemies to forgive and shake hands seemed an impossible aim but without it peace could not be achieved except on paper. We were ready to do anything to help. We felt helpless, but we also felt strengthened with the great arsenal of weapons for peace which had been produced out of miracles of change in our own lives.’

Signe married a British photographer, Arthur Strong, in 1946. For couples like them marriage was a gift from God, and also a calling to his service. This involved a willingness ‘to go anywhere at any time’ in a bid to heal relations between Germany and her European neighbours, a task which the French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, later described as ‘creating a moral climate in which true brotherly unity can flourish,

7. Douglas Cook and another of the fathers, David Peters, worked as coal miners during World War II, to replace miners who had joined the armed forces.

over-arching all that today tears the world apart'.⁸ This availability didn't change when their daughter, Ingrid, was born in the summer of 1947. By the time she was two, the family had lived in 82 different homes. 'How they did it, I have no idea,' says Ingrid.

This lifestyle not only involved instability, but also separations: between husband and wife, between parents and child. 'Until I was 10, my mother, father and I never lived in the same place for more than a few months at a time,' says Catherine Hutchinson, who was at the school from 1961-4, while her parents lived in Geneva. 'You can imagine what it meant to have to face so many separations,' says Signe. 'These families of course had great longings to be together and to create little homes for ourselves.'

With this in mind, Signe wrote to John and Elisabeth Caulfeild, a British-Swiss couple whose daughter, Catherine, was a little younger than Ingrid, suggesting a communal approach to childrearing. 'At Caux and Mackinac⁹, or nearby, we could have adequate setups for our small ones with the parents, say two, three, four families, maybe, in one spot, and know together what is the best way to handle a group of small playmates like that.' She added, 'Because of the unpredictable nature of our work we may face years of separation, whether from our men or children at the time in our marriage when we need to be together as much as possible: though separations when guided [by God] certainly deepen your relationships, both to your man and to God and to others.'

Signe's vision led to the establishment of a small nursery school at Caux, and in 1952 to a primary school for the children of MRA workers in London, run by an English teacher called Dot John. Signe writes of a 'team of parents and helpers who formed a continuous body of caring and security' for the children, even when their parents were called away. 'It was important to have a wide base for the children to feel secure in, so there would always be someone around whom they trusted and loved and who were of a common mind. It was an enormous blessing to have this secure structure around our children.' The parents hoped that the children would develop strong friendships with each other, similar to those that their parents shared and cherished.

While Ingrid was in the London school, her parents accepted an invitation to go to Africa with a group of 80, including two former

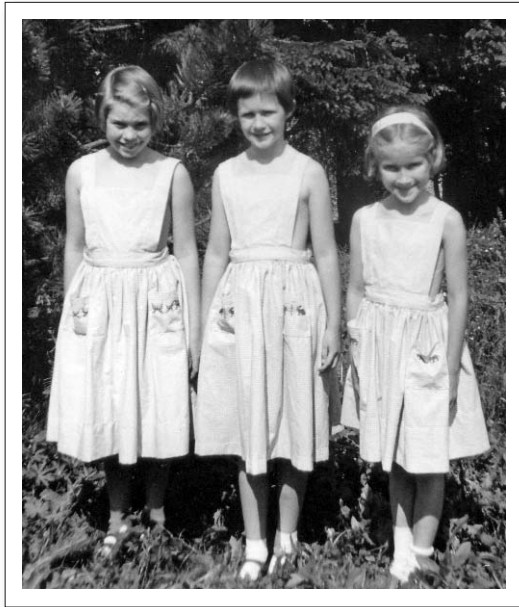


**Signe Strong with baby Ingrid,
born in 1947**

8. Schuman, who was one of the architects of European unity, also described MRA's workers as 'apostles of reconciliation and builders of a new world' (see his foreword to *Refaire le Monde*, 1950).

9. The conference centre on Mackinac Island in the United States was MRA's other major hub in this period. Like Caux, it welcomed thousands in the summer, and had a year-round community of full-time workers.

Communist German miners. 'I was asked to go partly because I could speak German and could translate,' says Signe. 'I collapsed in tears on the way to the airport, but I knew that Dot was there to pick up the pieces if there were any.' She sent Ingrid illustrated letters, which Dot wove into her lessons. At much the same time, John and Elisabeth Caulfeild went to India. Their daughter, Catherine, sent one of her teddy bears with them, and still has the 'wonderful' illustrated letters her father wrote on his behalf.



**Ingrid, Catherine and Susan
in their aprons**

By 1955, most of Dot's pupils had gone on to mainstream education. The remaining three, Ingrid Strong Franzon (aged eight), Catherine Caulfeild Hall (seven) and Susan Thornhill Corcoran (seven), went to Caux with their parents. Dot John followed to continue teaching them. Their mothers and other helpers taught them art and sewing. Catherine remembers making aprons, with embroidered pockets: 'we did everything, and it was absolute murder'. Susan stayed for 18 months, and Ingrid and Catherine until they went on to secondary school.

In 1956 and 1957, the three girls were joined by two younger children, Joanna Sciortino Nowlan and Seumas Mackay, whose parents were working in Italy, and in 1958 by Angela Cook¹⁰ Elliott, Elisabeth McLean Percival and Marion Manson. Angela, the child of a Welsh father and a German mother, was four when she set out by train from Germany to Switzerland with Jill Dunn Loughman, a young Englishwoman who was to look after her for the next four years. 'I only spoke German and she only spoke English. I remember her trying to read to me, and my suggesting that a German lady, who was sitting in the same carriage, should do it instead.' Angela's parents spent most of the next five years in Germany, Asia and the United States. 'Before we parted I remember my father telling me that we would be together when we prayed.'

At the school's height, in 1961, there were as many as 18 children there, although it is hard to be precise as some children came for short periods. The school was outstandingly flexible, with some children pursuing correspondence courses or having one-to-one coaching for secondary school. Peter Rundell (1961-4) went to and fro between the Caux School and Hill House School in London, depending on whether his parents were in Geneva or London at the time.

Most of the school's pupils were only-children – a result, in part, of

10. No relation to Margaret Cook

their parents' late marriages and peripatetic lifestyles – but by 1961, three larger families had arrived, bringing a tang of celebrity and exoticism with them: three Romanian princesses, four Nigerian children, and an American family, whose surgeon father went to Congo with MRA for six weeks and ended up spending 16 years there as chief doctor to the army and personal physician to President Mobutu. Only the youngest of the Americans attended the Caux School.

Princesses Helen, Irina and Sophie were the middle three of King Michael of Romania's five daughters. King Michael had known Frank Buchman, the initiator of MRA, as a child, and had valued the support of the MRA network after he was driven into exile by the Communists in 1947. Helen joined the school in 1960, to prepare for boarding school in Britain, and was followed a couple of months later by Irina. Sophie, who was only three in 1960, started at the school some years later. 'They treated me not as a princess, but as a child,' says Helen, 'and that was right.'

Zack, Ifo, Ugo and Mena Amata were the four children of John and Joy Amata, leading activists with MRA in Nigeria. Early in 1961, John wrote to Frank Buchman saying that he was worried about the behaviour of his children, who had been living at the MRA centre in Lagos, while he travelled in other parts of Africa. Zack, aged 10, was causing particular concern. John was considering giving up his work with MRA, and getting a more settled job, for the sake of his wife and children. There were also pressures from his extended family, who, having paid for John's education, wanted him to support them financially.

By April 1961, after intense personal struggle, John had decided to continue with MRA, and wrote to Buchman from Brazil apologising for his vacillation and asking if the children could join the Caux School: 'They have gone wrong ways.... They will find an answer in Caux.' They arrived at the end of May, in time for a late fall of snow. Mena, aged three, was so delighted that she wanted to pack up a snowball to send home to Nigeria.

* * * * *



l to r: **Zack, Joy, Mena, Ifo and Ugo Amata**

The Amatas were not the only parents who faced a conflict between the needs of their children and their calling to bring change to the world.

Some of the parents, such as Signe Strong and the McLeans, were based at Caux for much of the time that their children attended the school, but this did not always mean that they saw a great deal of their children. 'It was a boarding school,' says Elisabeth McLean. 'The children all ate together. I don't think my parents even lived in the same building as I did.' Others, such as the Rundells, Caulfeilds and Hutchinsons, worked in Geneva and came up regularly at weekends.

Those who were working in other European countries often returned to Caux at conference times, but others were away on the opposite side of the world for years at a time. Margaret Cook O'Kane's parents were in Brazil, while Dick and Chris Channer were in India for the three years (1962-5) their daughter, Alison, spent at the school. Chris only got back once during that period.

What possessed the parents to leave their children for so long? For some of the British, who had been separated from their own parents in their childhood, it was not such an outlandish idea. Dick Channer came from an army family, and had been sent home from India at the age of eight. He had seen his parents every two years, spending his school holidays with uncles and aunts. Chris Channer had gone to boarding school at nine.

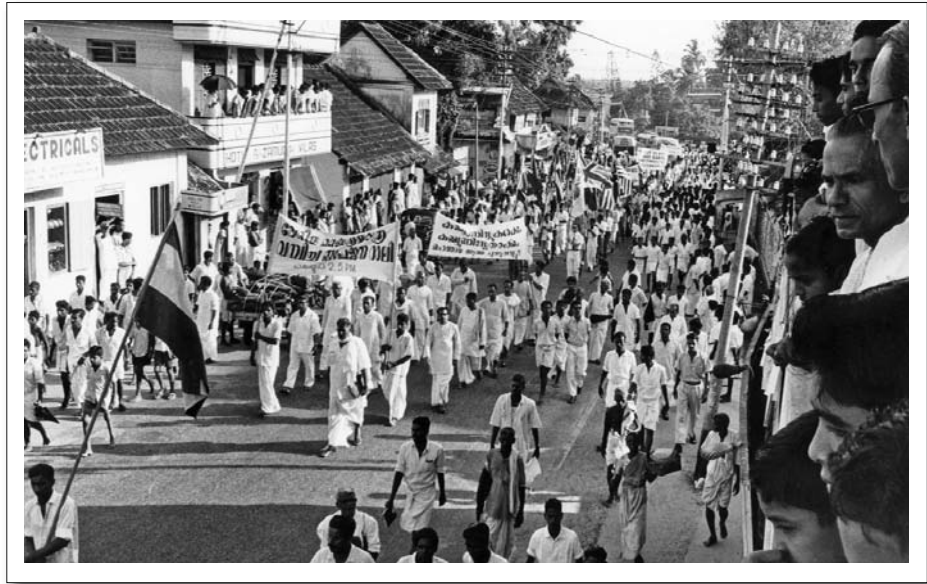
'I felt the absence from Alison very deeply,' says Chris Channer. 'She was our only child. We missed out on those years. But she was as happy as Larry, she had a wonderful time in Caux, she learnt to skate, to ski, learnt really good French – all enormous pluses.'

Their decision to go to India was influenced by the belief, in Dick's words, that there was a 'fight in the world for peace and democracy'. While they were there, Rajmohan Gandhi, grandson of the Mahatma, led a march across the nation to challenge corruption and inter-ethnic conflict. 4,000 young people took part in camps in the following years to learn how to work effectively for a 'clean and united India'. Many of those who attended went on to devote their working lives to the struggle for transparency and reconciliation. The Channers backed up this activity in innumerable ways.

‘My father was an empire orphan,’ says Joanna Sciortino. ‘He had horrendous memories of being fostered because his mother and father spent years in Nigeria working for the colonial government. My mother was sent off to boarding school at an early age because her father was in World War I. And my grandmother was taken away from her alcoholic father at the age of four for fostering and never saw her brothers and sisters again. We have a history of broken families. My parents were repeating a pattern and they didn’t have the inner strength to stand up to the momentum of the movement.’

That momentum was considerable. The 1950s and 1960s were urgent times. Most of the parents could remember two world wars, and there was a real fear of a third. The Cold War was at its height, and both sides had nuclear arms. During the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 it looked as if they were going to use them. Angela Cook’s mother told her years later that she and her husband had made sacrifices in the belief that their work could help to avert a third world war: a potent motivation for someone who had grown up and lived through World War II in Hitler’s Germany.

The times were dangerous, and MRA offered an alternative to the materialist ideologies of capitalism and Communism which were fighting it out – sometimes with violence – around the world. MRA’s leaders thought strategically, sending teams into such hotspots as the industrial areas of Germany and Italy, the ports of Brazil, the emergent nations of Africa and Asia. Sometimes this involved large scale campaigns, like the one in 1955 which took 244 people on an 80,000 mile journey through North America, Asia, Africa and Europe; at other times, small groups focussed their energies in particular countries, getting to know people on all sides of the political and social divides and often bringing delegations to Caux for the summer conferences. There, people from opposing



MRA march through Kerala, India, in 1963



MRA meeting in Kenya in 1955

camps found common ground, the healing of bitter divisions and a new determination to work for justice and change.

MRA's publications of the period give an idea of the scope of the work. In 1960, for instance, an MRA team went to Congo, then in its pre-independence throes, and over 50,000 people in the Swiss canton of St Gallen saw MRA's films and plays over a period of three weeks. Meanwhile a group of young Japanese toured Germany, the US and Latin America with their play, *The Tiger*. In 1962, 100,000 people in Vietnam saw MRA films

and plays; alcoholism plummeted in the Brazilian port of Recife after an MRA campaign; and 400,000 Kenyans saw *Freedom*, a film written and enacted by Africans about the moral dimensions of the independence struggle. That October a new MRA centre in Japan was opened.

Some of the claims may seem extravagant, such as the assertion that Frank Buchman's final speech, in June 1961, reached 1,000 million people, but the issue here is not whether they were accurate, but the confidence from which they stemmed. MRA's full-time workers in the 1950s and 1960s had grounds for believing that their work was making a difference to a dangerous and desperate world. A young British recruit, Anthony Craig, remembers writing home to his parents, announcing his decision to work with MRA rather than taking up a place at university, 'We have six months to save Kenya.'¹¹

Much of MRA's work at the time was peripatetic, and incompatible with schooling and childcare. When Ron and Mary Mann were asked to go to Brazil in 1961 they were 'strongly advised' not to take four-year-old John with them. 'It was thought that others who had taken their children had been limited in what they could do,' says Mary. They left John with Mary's parents in Worcestershire for eight months.

Then Mary returned, leaving Ron in Brazil for another year and a half and, on Dot John's suggestion, moved John to the Caux School.

11. In all, a million Kenyans saw *Freedom*, and *The Reporter* of Nairobi wrote in 1961, 'MRA has done a great deal to stabilise our recent election campaign.'

‘Dot said she needed more children at the school, particularly boys. I tried to consult Ron, but it was hard to get in touch with him because he was travelling around Brazil. It happened quite a lot for us, that Ron was there and I was here.’ Several of the mothers faced similar dilemmas about whether to be with their husband or their child.

Ron wrote in his autobiography¹², ‘It was only later that I realised that I had got so engrossed in the fascinating campaign in Brazil and that this was too long a time to leave a boy between the ages of four and six. I didn’t realise how much a boy needed his father at this point.’

Even where the work was more settled – as for the editorial staff of MRA’s magazine which was published from Geneva – the parents were usually staying as guests in other people’s homes. Few had the resources to set up their own homes: no one who worked for MRA at the time received a salary. Ingrid Strong remembers her mother telling her that she did not have enough money to buy deodorant or toothpaste.¹³

The parents, teachers or carers all gave their services on the basis of ‘faith and prayer’, believing that where God guided, he would provide financially. The teachers’ and carers’ sacrifice meant that the costs of the school were minimal. ‘The parents contributed when and if they could,’ says Kay Hassell, who taught at the school in 1957 and from 1959 to 1961. ‘With that we bought supplies.’ Otherwise, the children’s, teachers’ and carers’ board was covered by ‘Swiss generosity’.

The parents left money with the carers for their children’s personal needs, and, where they could, helped the carers and teachers with their expenses. Kay Hassell remembers some parents giving her money to buy a coat. This generosity was two-sided: three of the teachers gave Alison Channer Dodds a skirt for her birthday just before she left the school in 1965.

Frédéric Chavanne, the son of a French farmer in Morocco, joined the school in 1964 for its last year. ‘My father financed my stay, as he had the means,’ he says. By contrast, Mary Mann has no memory of how John’s time at the school, from 1962-3, was funded. ‘I probably didn’t contribute, I didn’t have anything to contribute with at that point,’ she says. Dick and Chris Channer were in the same position. There was an assumption, says Chris, that if the parents were away doing God’s work, central funds would cover the children’s schooling and accommodation.

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12. *Moving the Mountain*, Aldersgate Productions, 1995

13. Despite this, Ingrid says, she grew up feeling that they were rich – if not always in material things.



Chalet-de-la-Forêt, site of the Caux School

During this period MRA owned not only Mountain House, but the huge Grand Hotel higher up the mountain, and a cluster of smaller hotels and chalets. The school was housed in the Chalet-de-la-Forêt, a music box of a building about 10 minutes' walk above Mountain House. Dot John had taught in an English boys' prep school earlier in her career, and was in her mid-40s when the school began. Other members of the staff, at different times and for different periods, included Meili Gillison Hawthorne, Marjorie Good Stewart, Kay Hassell, Kathleen Johnson Dodds, Hilary Entwistle and, in its final, bi-lingual year, Evelyne Seydoux. All were British, except Marjorie, who was Irish, and

Evelyne, who was French.

Dot John was able to draw on the wider pool of adults based at Caux to supplement her staff. Stephen Foot, a former housemaster from Eastbourne College, taught the boys Maths and Latin, with varying results. Peter Rundell, who went on to become a statistician, traces his enthusiasm for the subject to Foot's classes. David Morrison found them incomprehensible: 'He dived straight into quadratic equations which aged eight was not what I needed.' Ami Zysset taught crafts and needlework to the girls, while Jacques Duckert, whose own children went to the local Swiss school, taught woodwork to the boys. Erica Hallowes Henderson taught games.

When there was a big age-span in the school, Meili Gillison taught the younger children, and Marjorie Good the older ones. Meili also taught music. 'We'd each have an instrument, and she'd have this fantastic chart on the wall with a different symbol and colour for each instrument,' says Margaret Cook. Helen of Romania remembers fierce competition for the drum and cymbals: 'I usually ended up with the triangle.' Catherine Hutchinson never forgot a one-to-one music lesson with Meili. 'She played records of *Die Meistersinger* and told me the story. I felt very special: it was grown-up music rather than *Tubby the Tuba*.'

As well as arithmetic, Marjorie Good taught cooking. 'It was during one

of the cooking classes that we discovered she was afraid of mice,' says Angela Cook. 'From then onwards when we were bored and wanted a distraction we just claimed to have seen a mouse, and class was pleasantly suspended while she reacted. My memory, which may not be accurate, is that she would leap onto a chair.' Marjorie would send Catherine Hutchinson and Margaret Cook ahead of her into the dark baking kitchen in Mountain House. 'A million mice would fly into every corner,' says Catherine. 'I didn't mind them at all.'

A particular delight to the children were the skiing lessons given by Leif Hovelsen, a veteran of the Norwegian resistance whose father was a pioneer of skiing and ski-jumping in the United States. 'For our first lesson, he took us up the mountain and had us roll down through the trees,' remembers Anne Smith Whitear (1959-62). 'It was such fun.' His pupils were left with a lifelong love of skiing. 'It allowed me to experience what is probably as close to flying as one can get when one is not in the air,' says Angela Cook. 'He opened a fresh dimension of freedom to me that no one could take away.' He taught Peter and Michael Rundell to ski-jump on a little ramp in the front garden and took Zack Amata to ski at Davos.

'I looked at my task as an opportunity for them to discover joy and excitement every day through sport,' says Leif. 'At their age they were not able to understand why it was so important for their parents to be so far away. So I wanted to give them the time of their life, discovering something through sport that they would never forget.'

At other times Jean Carrard, Jacques Duckert, Jacques Henri, Betli Hitz Chappuis and Christian Luthi, all Swiss, taught skiing. Frédéric Chavanne remembers Luthi's lessons as 'easier' because they used the ski-lift. 'Jean Carrard trained me in turning, on a steep slope, and we climbed back up. A real man of the mountains.'

Ingrid Strong and Catherine Caulfeild had their first lessons with



Skiing lesson, 1956.

l to r: Ann Brookes, Susan, Princess Helen, Ingrid, Seumas, Joanna, Catherine C, Jacques Henri



Susan and Ingrid waiting for the mountain train at Caux station

Jacques Henri, who was a Swiss army skier. ‘Once we had learnt the basics Jacques would plan a whole day of skiing higher up the mountain, ending by skiing all the way home to the Chalet-de-la-Forêt,’ says Ingrid. Catherine Caulfeild was less keen on skiing. ‘I was growing so fast that I didn’t have enough energy for it. I would fall with my limbs and skis all in a tangle, while Jacques Henri skied past saying, “Sort yourself out and get up!” When he finally realised that I couldn’t, he helped. But by then I was in such a state. I hated it!’

Those parents who were present were also drawn in. Signe Strong taught writing and art, as did Joan Rundell. Barbara Burns, mother of Delscey and Geoffrey, taught cooking. Elisabeth McLean remembers David Morrison’s father, John, being called in to explain the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Dot John herself had a passion for sport, literature and nature. She was a wonderful reader, with a gift for bringing a story to life. Susan Thornhill remembers her reading *Black Beauty* to her and Ingrid Strong, while Catherine Caulfeild, slightly younger and meant to be doing her sums, listened with tears streaming down her face. Dot loved boys’ games, particularly cricket, although rounders and dodge-ball were more often played at Caux. She knew the names of wildflowers, trees and birds and would take the children out on long walks or send them on nature hunts, with lists of 40 things to find.

Evelyne Seydoux, who taught at the school in 1964-5, describes Dot as a ‘born leader’, fun, strict, appreciative, with a twinkle in her eye. ‘She was very much the old spirit of Britain. She helped the children to live in a society of good neighbours. The timetable was strict, and being late was not accepted.’

Kathleen Johnson taught at the school for two terms in 1961, when she was in her early 20s. Her letters to her parents give a vivid picture of the school day during the winter months: ‘The children are very excited at having a new teacher and gave me a warm welcome... . I’m going to take reading, arithmetic, dictation, French songs, other music classes, and some piano lessons. Also we go skating with them and skiing, and Scottish dancing if the weather’s bad (ie thawing!) though that hasn’t happened yet. Only 13 children in the school and three classes!’

‘We trudge up the hill at 8.30 every morning pulling sledges behind us, so in the afternoon we can return by sledge, at great speed down the winding snow-covered track which the children call Twiggly Twog. There

are three little classrooms with green tables and blackboard and pictures round the walls. We start every morning by meeting all in one room when the bell goes, and have a time when anyone can tell any exciting news, or share any thoughts/ideas on their minds. Then we pray with any of the children contributing as they want to, and sing a hymn. Very different from the kind of school prayers where the Head mutters some jargon which means nothing to the kids!

'We have lunch in the chalet, usually 12 kids and five grown-ups round a big table. Yesterday we invited Herbie¹⁴ and Jane Allen, and Herbie's mother, to lunch – made the table festive with a little flag for each country represented, and ate spaghetti (in honour of Italy where Herbie has been so much) and American apple pie.'

During Kathleen's terms at the school, two lunches a week were designated French-speaking. 'At the moment it mainly consists of learning the words for knife, fork etc, but you never know, we may soon aspire to greater heights!' she told her parents. Elisabeth McLean was encouraged to keep up her mother tongue by having meals with other Swiss-German speakers, but was discouraged from joining an Italian-speaking table, even though she had learnt the language at her kindergarten in Florence. 'They thought I might get confused if I had too many languages: that's a definite pedagogical difference from today.'

After lunch each day there was 'rest time', when – as a reprieve for the teachers – the children had to read quietly, and could choose their own books. Catherine Hutchinson saw this as 'time for me'. She worked her way through an ancient *Larousse* and, on a lighter level, a 'wonderful series of books about an elephant called Mumphy', which Susan Thornhill also remembers fondly.

Academically, the school aimed high. Unsurprisingly, given the talents of their parents, the children were bright, and several of them found themselves ahead of their age group when they moved on to mainstream schools at the age of 10 or 11. Others seemed to have slipped through the gap. David Morrison says he was so unprepared



Singing lesson, 1958 or 1959, l to r: Seumas, Joanna, Elisabeth, Catherine C, Anne, Marion, Meili Gillison on piano, Dot John

14. An American musician who was one of the full-time workers based in Caux at the time and a great favourite with the children. People from the conference centre were often invited to join the children for meals.

for the Scottish educational system that he nearly failed his entrance exam: 'apparently they only took me on because I couldn't be as stupid as I seemed'. Catherine Caulfeild, who discovered 40 years later that she was dyslexic, went on to an English-language secondary school near Montreux, where the teachers told her parents she was a 'lost cause'. But Geoffrey Burns writes, 'Dot John got through to me at last, without which I doubt I would have had any academic career at all!'

Mary Mann, whose son John was at the school from the age of five to six, felt the children were well taught, but that John missed out by going to such a small school. Peter Rundell, on the other hand, later recreated the small-scale, all-age approach when he and his wife joined other parents in setting up a 'small school' for their own children.

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Outside school hours, the children were looked after by young women who were working full-time with MRA, and saw 'freeing' the parents as their contribution to the campaigns which were taking place. Maria Driessen Grace, who helped out with the children as an 18-year-old in the autumn of 1960, wrote to her parents describing the set-up in the Repos, a chalet below Mountain House. 'There are six girls of six to eight years old, three girls like me who look after the house and three couples, but they are away a lot. It is a very funny family if you think about it: three fathers and three mothers. At the moment there are two mothers and one father.' Maria introduced the children to *muisjes*¹⁵ and to the Dutch way of celebrating St Nicolas Day, on December 6, with gifts and poems for all.

Some carers, like Jill Dunn, stayed for years, providing a substitute for the parental love the children were missing. 'Being loved by Jill felt so secure,' remembers Angela Cook. 'Once, she was in the infirmary with a deep vein thrombosis and I rushed to see her at the end of the school day, to find she was sewing a new summer dress for me. I knew deeply I was loved.'

Others, such as Jean Simpson Bunton and Marion Manson, experienced less continuity. Jean had six carers while she was at the school. Marion remembers feeling there was something wrong with her because her carers didn't stay and did not feel able to show affection to

15. Aniseed, chocolate and fruit flavoured sprinkles, eaten on bread

her. She remembers ‘fun times’ with Jenny Combe Hinton, a British teenager who made her laugh. ‘I can remember being afraid that I’d get attached and she would go away.’

Many of the carers were still in their late teens, and few had any special training. Rachel Tyndale-Biscoe Reynolds spent two years at Caux from the age of 17, looking after Joanna Sciortino, Elisabeth McLean and Anne Smith. ‘I loved the kids I was with,’ she writes. ‘I felt very sorry for the children who hardly ever saw their parents: sometimes just for Sunday lunch or suppers.’ Although Caux provided a rich environment for the children, with its international flavour, ‘it was very hard on the parents and the children who never knew regular family life. Personally I enjoyed it and had a lot of fun with the kids, but I do feel the kids were shafted. The parents had more pressing things to do than to bring up a child.’

Other carers were older. Kay Hassell, then in her 30s, not only taught at the school but also looked after David Morrison and Edward Peters (1960-1). ‘We tried to give the children as much fun as possible,’ she says. ‘But as most of us were carers as well as teachers we were with them all through the holidays, seven days a week, 24 hours a day, never as much as a day off.’

Kay took on David when his parents were asked to travel to Japan with *Hoffnung*, a play written and performed by German miners about the ideological struggle in the German coalfields¹⁶. Just after his parents had left, David became dangerously ill, and had to be rushed to hospital in Lausanne in the middle of the night. His mother, who had been tying up ends in Edinburgh before following her husband to Japan, came hurrying back to Caux. ‘I stayed with him in hospital until she arrived,’ says Kay. ‘Then when he was convalescing, she went off to Japan.’

Most of the children have warm memories of their carers, though few remember any physical affection. This was partly a product of the times: an era when small British boys expected to shake hands with their fathers rather than embrace them. ‘In our family we didn’t show affection,’ says Mary Pelham Burn Morshead, who looked after Judi Conner Geary (1960-1) and her elder brother, Patrick. ‘There certainly weren’t hugs and kisses: it was more about doing things together.’



Children and carers (Hildi Zeller in centre and Kath Andrew) on an outing in 1962

16. The children of these miners were also looked after at Caux. They attended a separate school in the Alpina Hotel, run by Eugen Zeller, a retired teacher, and following the German curriculum.

There also seems to have been a concern that if the carers were too affectionate, they might usurp the mother's place. Jill Dunn was taken to task for holding Angela's hand. 'She wrote to my parents, saying that if she could not show me physical affection, she would no longer be willing to look after me. Mum wrote right back to her that she should continue to hold my hand – no child was ever spoiled by too much love.'

Most of the children lived in the smaller chalets and houses around Mountain House, and seem to have moved frequently between them. Peter Rundell remembers rooms in three successive buildings, where his parents would join him and his brother Michael at weekends. (Michael, now an architect, has such warm memories of one of these chalets, the Chalet-de-la-Patinoire, that he recently considered buying it.) Judi Conner's diary for the first four months of 1961 suggests three or four moves of building in that period.

The only children with much continuity of accommodation seem to have been the Romanian princesses, who were given VIP rooms in Mountain House, and those who were chosen to share rooms with them. Delscey Burns maintains that she was put with Princess Helen because, as a South African, 'I didn't believe in fairies and I didn't believe in princesses.' They had some epic fights, including one where Delscey shut Helen's hand in a door. But the friendship survived: 45 years on, Helen says, 'Delscey is like a sister to me.'

Several of the children owned pets: Kathleen Johnson wrote home to her parents about her first visit to the school in July 1960, where the children 'took great delight in showing me their rabbits and pet turtle'. Catherine Caulfeild had three kittens called Rikki, Tikki and Tavi after the mongoose in one of Kipling's stories and several of the children had hamsters, which frequently escaped. Jean Simpson remembers hers walking out of one of the lifts at Mountain House after fervent prayers for its reappearance.

To his great joy, Frédéric Chavanne was given a rabbit as a prize for having the tidiest room. 'With it came the responsibilities of feeding and cleaning the hutch. At the end of the winter, it was kindly explained to me that the rabbit had to go back to the farm from which it came and we went to take it back. I had not anticipated that it was not mine to keep for ever.' However, he sees the episode as evidence of the adults' 'great care for children'.

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Both the teachers and carers put considerable imagination into giving the children a good time. In the winter there was sledging, skating and skiing, with the ski-lift causing considerable anxiety to some of the girls, although, says Delscey Burns, the boys thought it was fun. Helen of Romania remembers ending up in a tangle on the ground at the top, unable to get up as new arrivals kept swooshing away over her.

'The skiing route was usually from Hauts-de-Caux, coming down on a perilously narrow track with a steep fall down to the right,' remembers Alison Channer. 'It was a major test of concentration at a young age to keep one's footing and keep your skis straight and pointing ahead, otherwise you were done for!'

'Skating was my love,' says Joanna Sciortino. 'I started off pushing a wooden chair. I remember making a hole in my carer's leg with the spiky bit of my figure skate, by mistake. My idol was a wonderful local girl who did figure skating in a little skating skirt and fluffy hat.'

Seumas Mackay remembers hurtling downhill in a train of sledges, with each child lying on his or her tummy and locking their feet into the sledge behind. 'If you were on the back there was a whiplash effect and you could get thrown off.'

'In the snowy weather we would get everyone dressed up in boots and hats and gloves and scarves at break time,' says Kay Hassell. 'Then we got on the sledges and skimmed down Twiggly Twog, and then climbed up the steep path, went down a second time, climbed up the steep path and then it was time to go back to lessons.' Frédéric Chavanne was sold the idea of joining the school in 1964 on the basis that they would sledge down the hill to lunch at Mountain House every day: 'that never happened, but I never missed it'.



Sledging party

Angela Cook remembers a treasure hunt on skis, where the 'treasure' was a hail of snowballs, as the children rounded a bend in the woods. She writes of sledging down the road, 'the snow hard-packed by car tyres, steering to avoid the sand that had been put down, going fast, just a little spiced with fear; then cold and exhausted, going in for high tea in front of a log fire: toast and peanut butter, marmite and honey and hot chocolate'.

One day she arrived late at school, having dawdled along the way, enjoying the beauty of a new fall of snow. 'I had to miss break as a result, but I remember clear as a bell saying to myself that a fresh snowfall was definitely a reason for dawdling, and that adults who could not understand this were just in some way impoverished. It was a mini revelation for a child who usually strove ardently to please.'

In the spring and summer there were walks and picnics. 'We had lovely times building bonfires, making dampers, filling them with jam, gorgeous,' remembers Catherine Caulfeild. 'Collecting wild strawberries and threading them on a long grass. Walking what seemed miles and miles to me to the spring at Sonchaud, where we'd get water and then find somewhere to have a picnic.' In the spring, the children would pick wild narcissi and box them up to send to their family and friends.

Anne Smith has fond memories of boulder-hopping up the streams and of a 'brilliant' hike along a ridge where they made a campfire, cooked sausages and got horribly sunburnt. Jean Simpson remembers the same occasion, and its consequences: 'We were so badly burnt that we had to lie on our tummies for days in the darkness. We couldn't even have a bath, it was so sore.'

Margaret Cook and Catherine Hutchinson remember a picnic day when it poured with rain. 'We were all put into the minibus at 11.00 am and we drove around the mountain with the windscreen wipers on maximum,' says Catherine. 'Eventually we ended up at the Chalet-de-la-Forêt, having gone a very long way round. And I think it was Meili who had decorated the room in coloured paper. There was a river, and a bridge, and various flowers, and a yellow sun with a smile on it and rays outside. We did organised games, and we all had our own sandwich pack.'

In the summer a group of carers, and sometimes mothers, took the children away on holiday to one or other of a series of houses in the country lent to them by well-wishers. These holidays coincided with the time when the conference centre was at its busiest: the downside was that this meant that the children were away just when their parents were



Picnic expedition, 1957

most likely to be at Caux. The length of the holidays seem to have varied, but in 1960, according to a scrapbook which Lotti Smith compiled for her daughter, Anne, the children were away for all of August and half of September.

A frequent venue was Paulette Burnier's family home, at Praz, on Lake Morat in Fribourg, known to the children as 'Chateau Burnier'. There were china bowls and jugs to wash in and an alarming loo with a wooden plank and a pit. There was swimming and boating, and a cave with bats, which Catherine Hutchinson was disappointed not to be able to find on her second visit. They collected milk from the farmer. Hildi Zeller, one of the carers, remembers Professor Burnier teaching a clergyman to ride a bike in his living room and speaks of the great generosity of the Burniers having them all 'in every corner of the house'.

Angela Cook remembers learning to swim in 'freezing' Lake Morat, and the local midsummer festival, where huge tarts were baked in communal wood ovens in the centre of the village. The farmer next door reared rabbits: Angela was horrified when she realised they were being raised not as pets, but for food. (Elisabeth McLean had the traumatic experience of being given two rabbits as pets, and having them

returned to the farm when she was thought to have become too attached to them.) Another of Angela's memories of Praz is of a midnight feast. 'We were so determined not to have to wash up that we restricted ourselves to whatever we could eat using one shared knife!'

In 1961, the children were split into two groups, with seven girls going with Hildi and others to Praz and another group, mainly boys, going to a farmhouse near Interlaken. Margaret Cook joined the school for the first time during this holiday at Praz. 'It was tipping it down with rain,' she remembers. 'It was an imposing house. The door was open, and ranged down the corridor were all these small kids. The only one I recognised was Jean Simpson, who was standing at the front with her hood up. Praz was a happy place in my memory.'

Meanwhile Peter Rundell was enjoying an 'epic' holiday near Interlaken, made all the better by the fact that his mother was organising it. 'We stayed in the top floor of a two storey farmhouse. Every day we did something special: one day we went to look at cheese-making, another a local festival, another we made hay, or we milked cows, every day there was some educational activity. It was brilliant.'

'We had such a lot of fun with those children,' says Kay Hassell. 'Dot was the sort of person to always think of the most wonderful things to do.' She describes an April Fool's Day when Dot persuaded a young British actress who was at Caux at the time to impersonate a Swiss school inspector. 'We told the children that they had to be on their best behaviour. Dot bowed in the visitor, dressed up in a superb hat and dark glasses so that they wouldn't recognise her. The children were slightly nervous, then very gradually the penny began to drop. After about ten minutes, they all realised it was an April Fool. The actress took off her hat and glasses and there was complete hilarity.'

For Michael Rundell, who was at Caux between the ages of two and six, the walks, games and picnics were 'pure magic'. He remembers 'lovely Christmases' and an Easter when someone, he can't remember who, took him and another small boy to a woodpile and encouraged them to look for a 'secret'. 'I pulled out this chocolate rabbit – gold, with a red and blue jacket. I couldn't believe that someone had given it to me. These memories are what bringing kids up is about: I try to do the same for my children. Someone was good enough to do that for us.'

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The years of the Caux School were heady ones at Caux, with thousands of people passing through the centre every summer, from every part of the world. The sessions ran on into September and October, as the full-time workers continued to welcome VIPs and delegations, rehearsed new plays for touring, made forays into Switzerland, and sorted out who would work where that winter. As they began to disperse, some of the accommodation and dining rooms closed down, but even in the quietest period, after New Year, there were up to 100 people there, with more at weekends.

'It was a three-ring circus,' says Kathleen Johnson. Like many of the other carers and teachers, she also played her part in the conference centre: joining in the shifts which served or cooked the meals for up to 1,000 people, and singing in the chorus, which enlivened the meetings and welcomed special guests.

The children too were encouraged to take part, helping to fold napkins and lay tables and, more excitingly, lining up to welcome dignitaries with a song. David Morrison remembers an occasion when the children were asked to come up onto the platform during a plenary session of a conference. 'The idea was to show how diverse this bunch was. Someone went down the line asking where we each came from.' To the frustration of the adults, most replied 'Scotland': 'a lot of us had a Scottish parent'. Next time, says Angela Cook, the children were urged to display the non-British side of their heritage. 'The young man who introduced us had not been told this and described us as a group largely from Britain. As we proclaimed we were German, French etc, his eyes glazed over!'

Plays and films were one of MRA's main tools of the time, and many were written or premiered at Caux, before being taken on tour. In several cases national or regional groups dramatised the moral issues facing their areas, often drawing on real life experience of resolving



Welcoming guests in national costume in 1957: Ingrid, Seumas, Susan and Catherine C

large and small conflicts. There was *Freedom*, about Africa's independence struggles; *Hoffnung*, offering an answer to class war; *Miracle in the Sun*, about Cyprus's transition to independence; *The Dragon* and *The Tiger*, from China and Japan respectively; *El Condor* from Peru. Several of these plays, including *Freedom* and *The Crowning Experience*, were filmed. *Men of Brazil*, dramatising MRA's work in the docks of Rio de Janeiro, went straight to film.

In *Pickle Hill*, set on an American campus in the 1920s, there were parts for 12 children, and the Caux School children played the youngest ones. Their big moment was a song in which they counted down the line from top to bottom:

*One, two, three, four, five, six, se-ven
Eight, nine, ten and then eleven
We're twelve Pickle kids who want to know
The right way not the wrong to go
But whatever we do, our Dad says No!
So we don't know right from wrong.*

The parts of numbers seven and 11 were particularly sought-after, because they got extra emphasis. Jean Simpson was usually ten or 11, because she was small; Anne Smith, even smaller, was 12. For her the highlight was being allowed to drink Canada Dry in the Green Room. For Marion Manson the excitement of taking part was enhanced by the fact that her father was in the play and so she got to see him. Elisabeth McLean remembers being pulled from the cast at the last moment for some misdemeanour: 'and then they made me watch it'.

The children sometimes appeared in other plays too, as well as staging their own at Christmas. Lotti Smith's scrapbook describes Anne's seventh birthday party in July 1960. 'Just after the cake arrived we were called off to *The Ladder*¹⁷, where we had a part as mother and little daughter.' Catherine Hutchinson and Margaret Cook played street urchins in *El Condor* when it was performed in one of the lakeside towns. Catherine remembers the brown grease paint and the thrill of being allowed to stay up late.

For the children it was an exciting, if sometimes baffling, life. In some ways they were highly protected, but they were also exposed to a world full of bright colours, exotic flavours and huge problems. 'We used to

17. Peter Howard's allegory of a careerist who encounters Christ as he climbs up the ladder of success

have all sorts of food,' says Anne Smith. 'You got a Japanese delegation and we'd be having rice with raw egg cracked into it. And then you'd be standing in the kitchen watching an Indian delegation making chapattis.'

Judi Conner's diary for 1961 is full of striking juxtapositions: 'I went to school and had loveley littriture (sic) and then it was half day so I went for a walk and then scrubbed plates'; 'In the morning I went to school. After lunch we welcomed Uncle Frank¹⁸. Then we celebrated with the Irish blooded people.' 'I went to school and then after lunch the school (teachers too) were filmed.'

'It was a really strange life,' remembers Catherine Caulfeild. 'Suddenly everything would be interrupted because some official was arriving and we all had to be there to look wonderful in our national costumes and receive them. It wasn't until I reached secondary school that I realised that this wasn't everybody's experience.'

Elisabeth McLean loved these occasions, but others found the exposure nerve-wracking. 'We used to sing the national anthem for whichever delegation came in,' remembers Jean Simpson. 'Sometimes they would ask questions and then you had to think of an answer.' Delscey Burns had similar worries: 'Occasionally children said things in meetings. I've always absolutely hated public speaking, even though as a headmistress I did it every day for 11 years.' Joanna Sciortino remembers feeling 'special, not always in a good way. You were sort of on show, brought forward to present things, do things.' According to one observer, Dot John disapproved of the children taking part in meetings: 'she was deeply against children on platforms'.

Hugo Antonio Bethlem (1962-3) came to Caux from Brazil aged four and speaking only Portuguese, with his younger brother, Luis Henrique. He remembers 'very rich moments' meeting 'important people'. 'It was very good when I was a young boy to understand how to live with other cultures.'



Nativity play: Catherine Hutchinson and Peter Rundell as Mary and Joseph

18. Frank Buchman. Most adults were 'Uncle' or 'Aunt', although the carers and teachers were known by their Christian names alone. According to Catherine Hutchinson, it was only in the last year of the school that Dot became 'Miss John' to the children.



Children singing during a conference meeting, with Frank Buchman seated behind them, and Peter Howard (far left)

remember the pride and delight we took in getting the dining rooms right and folding napkins by the tens of thousands. We were small, and able actually to help with what was changing the world. There was a tremendous sense of privilege, excitement.' Both he and Michael still 'rejoice in getting tables exactly right'.

'I really enjoyed the service teams,' says Elisabeth McLean, who sometimes got to serve the VIPs, wearing her Swiss costume. On one occasion she was thrilled to find herself waiting on one of the stars of *Men of Brazil*. 'He was my hero. I was so busy trying to serve him and look at him at the same time, that a slice of pie slid right off the plate I was holding and onto his lap. He was so nice about it.'

Frank Buchman stayed at Caux during the summer of 1960 and for the five months before his death in August 1961. By then he was in his 80s, nearly blind, and mostly bed-ridden. Jean Simpson remembers him being pushed along the long corridors of Mountain House in a wheelchair, surrounded by a group of men. She found them scary, and used to avoid the fourth floor, where Buchman lived.

Princess Helen was less wary, perhaps because of her father's relationship with Buchman. She would meet him when her parents

'The international flavour was really strong,' says Michael Rundell. 'We sat in Caux and the world came: that was a terrific thing to give a kid.' He remembers a Burmese visitor giving him a red seed case, filled with tiny elephants.

Alison Channer loved the comings and goings of different people, and the sense of being part of a big international family: 'The African women in full costume; being taught to sing for welcoming parties; making umpteen bowls of ice-cream; clearing tables; stirring spaghetti for 300. I felt part of it all.'

So did Peter Rundell: 'I vividly

came to Caux and were entertained in his room. ‘He was this figure who sat there with gnarled fingers. When he did speak to us children he was very spontaneous and kind. We had a healthy respect for him.’

In the archives of Buchman’s letters, there are a number of letters to and from the Caux School children. They write to thank him for birthday presents (usually a handkerchief), and to send him pictures and small gifts.

On 24 July 1961 – only two weeks before his death – Jessie Close wrote to him from holiday:

Dear Uncle Frank

Thank you very much for the handkerchief.

There are lots of cows around the chalet where we are.

Two roosters are always calling to each other.

Every day we go for long walks.

In the morning the cowbells and the roosters wake me up. I hope you have gotten more strength because that is wot I have been praying for.

MRA’s campaigns were funded by donation, and there was always some fund-raising drive taking place, in which the children participated. In March 1960, for instance, they held a bazaar which raised over 1,500 Swiss francs for the current campaign in Europe. In 10 February 1961, Judi Conner wrote in her diary: ‘In the morning I went to the meeting to speak and give money to Caux and in the afternoon I played dolls and wrote letters.’

There are several letters in the files related to gifts of money from the children. On 4 June 1961, for instance, Peter Rundell wrote with eight-year-old zeal:

Dear Uncle Frank

I saw the Walking Buffalo¹⁹ film and it changed the tide of my life and made me honest about everything. We must have it in England. The money I send is not enouf to send it to England, but do send it quickly. Love from Peter.

His contribution was received with the seriousness it deserved, and a note came back, three days later, presumably written for Buchman by one of his assistants: ‘I am going to do what I can to get that film to England. I want to send your letter to Chief Walking Buffalo. It will

19. Chief of the Stoney Indians of Canada, who had made Buchman a blood brother in 1932

mean a lot to him because it is not easy for him, 90 years old, to go around the world, and he will be happy that young men like you are taking up his battle.'

The next day, Peter wrote again, thanking Buchman for a picture of Chief Walking Buffalo and a trip to Gruyère in which he had taken part. This was followed, in July, by a letter asking if he could invite some British classmates²⁰ up to Caux and wondering what film would be best to show them. 'I internalised the "saving the world" ethos very strongly,' Peter says.

No doubt there was an element of approval-seeking in some of this correspondence, but the conviction sounds heartfelt. Some, at least, of the children felt part of what was going on at Caux, and wanted to make their contribution. So when Ingrid Strong heard that the conference centre could no longer afford to serve croissants for Sunday breakfast, she fetched her pocket money. Of course, this did little to solve the financial crisis, but the commissariat honoured her gift by keeping croissants on the menu.

Peter Howard, the British journalist and playwright who took over the leadership of MRA after Buchman died, also featured in the children's lives. Delscey recalls him delighting the children by doing 'spring leaps' along the corridors of Mountain House, where they were strictly forbidden to run. Kay Hassell says he was a helpful but disruptive element. 'We would try to keep the children polite. We sometimes ate in the "tunnel"²¹ and they would all be well-behaved and then along would come Peter Howard and there'd be a riot. In the middle of a big conference he would take time out to come and have a picnic with the children.'

Other personalities had a big impact too. Catherine Hutchinson remembers meeting the black American mezzo-soprano, Muriel Smith, and deciding to be an opera singer. 'I used to go and sing at the top of my voice halfway up the back staircase in Mountain House, where there was a tremendous echo because of the stone walls.' In middle age, she went to university to study music, specialising in voice.

20. The school Peter attended in London, Hill House, had an annexe in Glion, just down the mountain from Caux. When his year spent a few weeks in Glion, Peter joined them for 'one never-to-be-forgotten awful part of a term'.

21. A back corridor, behind the dining rooms in Mountain House

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In April 1961, Kathleen Johnson wrote home describing a party thrown by her service shift in honour of seven-year-old Jean Simpson, who had been ‘an enthusiastic and v. helpful member of our service shift all thro’ the holidays’. Jean’s parents and two of her schoolmates were also there. ‘After supper we played musical chairs and the drawing game, before their bedtime, which was rather late much to their delight. We finished with a quiet time²² and sang a hymn together. Jean said her thought was “not to be afraid at school because Jesus is with me”. This went to my heart because I’d never have thought there was much to scare them in this little school. But then I may have forgotten what it’s like to be seven. There are times when both teachers and pupils “fight for each other” as the saying goes, and this can be uncomfortable, putting it mildly.’

‘Fighting for each other’ was a by-product of MRA’s central mission: changing the world through changing people, starting with oneself. MRA’s publications, plays and films told stories of how an apology, a gesture of reconciliation or the repaying of dishonest gains could be a first step in transforming intractable situations. Pretty well everyone involved at Caux had first hand experience of this on some level: an initial decision to ‘give their lives’ to God, followed by steps of restitution for things that had gone wrong in the past, leading to a sense of release and freedom.²³ This was a precious experience, which parents, teachers and carers longed to pass on – not least to the children in their care.

Such change, of course, was not a one-off experience, but something which had to be worked out day by day, amidst the bustle and stresses of life in the conference centre. In his introduction to *Fresh Hope for the World*, a collection of MRA stories published in 1960, the French philosopher Gabriel Marcel wrote of the ‘extraordinary joy which radiates especially from all the young people at Caux’. ‘I know of no other place where you come into such clear touch with the only freedom which is worthwhile, the freedom of the children of God.’ He put this down to ‘the fact that they have once and for all given up the right to themselves’.

22. A time of silent attentiveness to the inner voice of conscience or divine leading

23. Some of these experiences had far-reaching consequences. Frédéric Chavanne’s father had been instrumental in the reconciliation between two Moroccan leaders which preceded Morocco’s independence. The first step for Pierre Chavanne had been a change in his attitude to Moroccans, which led to an unlikely friendship with a leader of the pre-independence underground nationalist movement.

Against the backdrop of the world's needs, people at Caux demanded high standards of themselves and, often, of each other. Alan Thornhill describes an occasion when, 'before a group of hundreds', someone threw out 'a caustic comment on my character which seemed so untrue as to be intolerable'. He left Caux and took refuge in Paris, where, he writes, he had the 'most uncomfortable and perhaps the most stupendous night of my life' wrestling with his bitterness and sense of injustice. 'Lovingly, gently, through a long night, Christ led me, protesting, squirming, back to the *via dolorosa*, and the way of the Cross.... That night fear left me. I was no longer a slave to what other people said or thought.'²⁴ For him the harshness was the door to a spiritual experience.

Such directness could be liberating, as in Thornhill's case, or repressive – depending on personality and circumstances. And there were problems when challenges appropriate to adults were passed on, unfiltered, to the children.

The school day started with prayers, sometimes including a quiet time or, as Kathleen Johnson described in her letter home, a chance to share news and thoughts. For those children who felt that they had to come up with something, this could be stressful. Seumas Mackay remembers the 'distress of having nothing to share'; Jean Simpson the relief of realising that she could always make something up. Judi Conner discovered that a line of a hymn went down well; Catherine Hutchinson that you couldn't go wrong by smiling or by resolving to 'have a good day'; Delscey Burns that it helped if you could think of something for which to say sorry.

Others played it straight. Delscey Burns remembers one of the boys confessing to having imagined one of the teachers with her clothes off: 'It struck me that that was taking honesty a long way!' What the teachers thought is not recorded.

It was standard practice for the cooking and service teams at the conference centre to have quiet times together before sharing out the work, and the children too were encouraged to bring God into their day to day decisions. 'It was kind of normal to ask God about who one should have in one's team at games,' says Catherine Hutchinson. The idea, she thinks, was to encourage the children to include those who didn't speak English, but it could misfire. 'Not being chosen was hard anyway, without the moral imperative of thinking that if I had been

24. *Best of Friends*

more “guided” I might have been chosen.’

The teachers, and parents, were keen to give the children a strong moral foundation for their lives, and also believed that moral issues often lay behind unhappiness or under-achievement. Kay Hassell remembers watching a child miserably struggling with her sums. ‘I asked her what was bothering her and she burst into tears. I think it was something like she’d told a lie the night before. As soon as she’d come out with it, her whole attitude changed, she was able to do her work and the sums came right.’

This approach was reflected in the children’s school reports:

‘Through becoming honest on basic points, her spirit was freed and since she has been peaceful and outgoing and has approached with zest and naturalness all that has come her way;’ ‘We need to help him make basic decisions about greed and impurity which so quickly rule his life.’

Mary Pelham Burn, who looked after Judi Conner, describes Dot John as ‘brilliant’: ‘She was so straight and strict in the right way, yet so warm-hearted.’ Mary remembers Dot talking about a child’s problems being like a logjam: ‘You have to find the crucial log and get that moved and it will release the whole lot.’

It is perhaps not surprising that those who were adults at the time are more inclined to remember the occasions when this approach worked, and those who were children to remember the ones where it did not.

An exception is Delscey Burns, whose adored father had died when she was seven, before she came to the school. She had a difficult relationship with her mother, Barbara, who she thought favoured her younger brother, Geoffrey. At a performance of *Pickle Hill* she disobeyed the director’s instructions and, when asked why, said that she



School photo, 1962

**L to r, back: Marjorie Good, Anne Smith,
Jessie Close, Dot John, Angela Cook,
Jean Simpson, Meili Gillison
Centre: Peter Rundell, Princess Irina,
Marion Manson, Ifo Amata,
Elisabeth McLean
Front: Catherine Hutchinson,
Ugo Amata, Margaret Cook**



Delscey and Geoffrey Burns, in South African and Scottish costumes

hated her brother. When her mother, who was at Caux, was told, she was 'really sensible about it'.

'I said, "I hate Geoffrey because you love him more than you love me." She said, "I don't actually, but I'll think about it." She came back and said, "I don't love him more, but I do find him much easier. If you feel I'm being unfair, just tell me." It meant we got a relationship after that.'

It was presumably this incident that Barbara was thinking of when she wrote to Frank Buchman in April 1961 about the 'miracles' that had taken place in Delscey's life at Caux. 'When we came here first she was so moody and rebellious I did not know what to do. But since we have been here she has found a real cure to her deep hatred and jealousy of her brother.'

A more ambiguous example of the 'logjam' approach involved Marion Manson, who found it difficult to make friends at the school. According to Hildi Zeller, Dot John felt the problem was that Marion clung too much to her mother, Margie, who was in Caux at the time. She advised Margie that the next time Marion tried to get into her bed in the morning she should send her back to her own. She did this, and Marion immediately became more outgoing at school.

Marion's memory is of 'never being mothered'. She remembers having a bad cold one time when her mother was in Caux. 'All I could think was that I wanted to be with her. I went into her room and all she told me was, "Go back to bed."' Later events, which no one could have foreseen, make this story particularly poignant. Margie Manson died when Marion was 13: they had not lived together for more than a couple of months since Marion was five.

Hildi was told not to praise Margaret Cook, because she wanted to be special all the time. Margaret had come to the school aged six, after three years with her parents in Latin America, where she had been the only European child in a large group of adults. 'I had been the centre of attention, and I probably was an obnoxious little brat when I arrived.'

Margaret came away from four years at the school believing that 'I was the little girl who would never be good enough'. As the oldest child during the school's last year, she was held responsible for the others' behaviour. On one occasion the younger children were told not to talk to her for what Margaret remembers as a few days.

During one period when she had been particularly 'naughty', she had one-to-one sessions with Dot every week instead of Scripture. 'My memory of it is that I was having to look at my nature to see where it was going wrong and why I was such a pain. I had a feeling of humiliation and helplessness. There's a certain part of yourself that you can't change. And you're desperately trying to twist, tie yourself into knots to fit into other people's boxes. I felt they were trying to change who I was.'

'It was a common child-rearing belief at the time that a child's will had to be broken,' says Margaret. 'To me it felt like there was an aim to break our spirits too.' Judi Conner, who had a similar experience, remembers 'a relentless quest for what was wrong inside me, which I did not know how to respond to or handle'.

Most adults have memories of injustices from their school days, and the stories of misunderstandings and heavy-handed tellings-off are hardly unique to the Caux School. What was different at Caux was the fact that the children did not go home in the evenings, or even the holidays, to parents who could offer unconditional love and a wider perspective. There was little dividing line between school and 'home': some of the carers taught or helped at the school. Misdemeanours which had occurred out of school hours would resurface for comment the next morning at school.

Seumas Mackay remembers finding the 'absolute moral standards' particularly oppressive. Where adults could understand them as an unachievable aim, which provided a star to aim for and a useful challenge to self-satisfaction or hypocrisy, he took them literally. 'Perhaps others responded more robustly, but my inevitable failure to live up to them left me with ongoing guilt, a loss of self-esteem and an often overpowering perfectionism. They would have been less oppressive if the familial structures had been more containing: if my parents had been more in evidence and able to reassure me and to translate the standards into terms a child could understand. As it was, to put it in Freudian terms, my superego became punitive.'

Apart from one incident, there doesn't seem to have been physical punishment, but the more sensitive children lived in terror of being told off, particularly as this often took place in public.

'The tellings off were very hard to take,' says Jean Simpson, 'and there was no comforting afterwards. I do remember being very unhappy and

many instances of being told off very strictly. Every time it just felt like I wished I was dead. It was just a disaster. If anyone was cruel or critical I would just melt.’ She felt she had no safe place where she could go to with her troubles. ‘There was no one to talk to, you just had to keep up this mask, you couldn’t let anyone see what you were feeling. There was no time you could relax, because if anyone noticed you were wrong in any way, you would have to confess what you were doing.’

Marion Manson remembers going into class on her first day, aged five, and being asked to write some numbers. ‘I coloured in my 9s and 0s. I was told off so sternly, “We *don’t* colour in our numbers.” That’s what I remember as the foundation of my fear of Dot.

‘I seemed to be constantly frightened and always needing to please the adults – terrified of doing the wrong thing and making mistakes because when I was scolded it felt like rejection. I couldn’t build a relationship with anybody. I have an overall memory of mistrust, jealousy, wanting something somebody else had got. If I wasn’t told off, I’d gloat if someone else was. It was normal childhood behaviour, but it was all put on you as a big burden, you had to confess.

‘I always felt inferior. The other children were a lot brighter than I was. I had to fight for recognition, and pleasing the adults was hugely important for me. I don’t remember being praised or affirmed for good behaviour: it wasn’t part of the culture. I never felt accepted, believed, loved for who I was, for just being.’

Anne Smith has a painful memory of a misunderstanding over being asked to share a sledge with a teacher who had had an accident while sledging with another child. ‘As far as I was concerned I was going to get hurt if I shared with her. But I had no words to say that. I just said no.’ She was attacked for not wanting to share, but she stuck to her guns. The painful thing, she says, was being made to feel bad about something which was basically a survival instinct. ‘All the rationalisation and head thing you do with it doesn’t over-ride what happens to your heart.’

‘You were meant to be changing: that was what was coming at you every day. Well what into? What am I meant to be changing? Isn’t it good enough what I am?’ In the last years of Dot’s life, Anne looked after her garden and encountered a ‘different Dot’. But as a child, she says, she ‘really feared her’.

This view of Dot John was not universal, however. Susan Corcoran remembers her as ‘very loving’, while Helen of Romania says, ‘Dot was

wonderful. She was very strict, but if she was headmistress what would you expect? I never had a problem with her.’ Delscey Burns, who kept in touch with her as an adult, says that she could be ‘gruff and abrupt’, but had a good heart.

After her first term at boarding school, Ingrid Strong returned to Caux for Christmas, because her parents had had to stay on in the US unexpectedly. She still has copies of the letters which Dot wrote to her parents every day. ‘What shone through each letter was how much Dot loved us children. She put so much care into planning for a good time, and was also prepared to challenge me if needed. That Christmas stands out as one of my most treasured Christmases. I can also remember teasing her mercilessly at times and her giggles of amusement.’

‘Dot was an exceptional teacher,’ says Elisabeth McLean, now a teacher herself. ‘She had somehow cracked how to get through to children. Some teachers seem to command huge respect – not through fear, though you are afraid of disappointing them – just because they have very strong personalities. I was scared of Dot, but I thought the world of her. I wish I could be a teacher like that.’

She puts many of the difficulties down to the theories of the day, which favoured criticism over affirmation and unselfishness over self-realisation. ‘They were quite tough on us, but I don’t resent it. I think there was a little too much emphasis on everybody needing to change. I’m very much for the idea of putting others before yourself, and I think it’s a mistake today when everyone says you shouldn’t be self-sacrificing. But I came away from the Caux School with the feeling that it was never my turn, that I didn’t matter, that I wasn’t good enough.’ At the same time, her overall memories are positive. ‘It was a huge privilege and a very unusual way of starting your school life.’

Delscey Burns grew up to be the headmistress of a boarding school. She talks about the danger of mixing ‘education and indoctrination’. ‘An adult can think consciously about something which is being put forward and make choices. Whereas if a child is getting exactly the same message at school as they are in the rest of the community, it doesn’t allow them to think for themselves. Caux was a seamless experience. I certainly didn’t think for myself until I went to boarding school in Britain and was suddenly confronted by an alternative world view.’

* * * * *



Dot John with Catherine C, 1957



Anne Smith (centre) with other children and carers **Jill Dunn** (second left) and **Stephanie Murcott** (far right), 1960

Johanna de Boer Jaulmes spent the year that she turned four at the Caux School, where she was part of a kindergarten class which included Anu Vaitheswaran from India and Luis Henrique Bethlem from Brazil²⁵. 'I remember being very bewildered and lost,' she says, 'but playing with others I forgot it, it became normal. We were all in the same situation.' Her parents, who were both Dutch, were working in Germany. She has photos of them visiting her, but no memories.

'When my daughter was that age, she looked a lot like me. I remember my mother looking at her and saying, "How could I have left you?" As a teacher looking back I don't think it was a good idea, but it was of course a different time. The idea was a British idea, not a European one, we don't put kids in boarding schools.'

John Bowlby's pioneering work on the psychological dangers of separating small children from their mothers was only just becoming known at this time, and it seems unlikely that the parents, teachers or carers knew of it. 'I really think our parents thought Caux would be the best place: a good education, a safe place, with our contemporaries,' says Jean Simpson.

Later in life, Joanna Sciortino asked one of her carers about this. 'She said, we honestly thought that as long as children were fed and had somebody looking after them they were fine, they did not actually need their parents. There was a genuine ignorance about the emotional damage that was done to children.'

It seems clear that the parents felt that it was they, not their children, who were making the sacrifice. 'Looking back,' says Mary Mann, 'I am amazed at how we, certainly I, made so many sacrifices of family life

25. Michael Rundell remembers his mother 'tut-tutting' when Luis Henrique was given coffee at the age of three. 'It was explained to her that this was because he was Brazilian. We had "cowboy coffee", with lots of milk: they probably called it that to make us drink it.'

when our children were small without thinking about who was involved in “our” sacrifice. I suppose I decided that if I was dedicated to God’s plan he’d look after everything.’

Hugo Antonio and Luis Henrique Bethlem arrived at the school in 1962, aged four and two: their father, General Hugo Bethlem, was one of the leaders of MRA in Latin America. ‘We left Brazil in 1962 for 28 days,’ says Hugo, ‘and stayed away four years.’ During the year the boys were in Caux, their parents travelled round Italy with the Peruvian play, *El Condor*. Hugo remembers the vending machine on the station where they went to meet their parents off the mountain train and his mother’s distress, on one visit, when Luis Henrique didn’t recognise her.

Michael Rundell remembers sitting on a balcony waiting for his parents to come up from Geneva. ‘I saw the car and leapt up and raced down to see them. I rushed up to my Mum and hugged her, and she pushed me aside. I think my mother regretted it more than I did, though I do remember it. She later said she was worried people would feel she was giving too much love to me. She could never forgive herself.’

‘Kids accept,’ says Elisabeth McLean. It was much harder, she thinks, for her mother, who was at Caux for much of the time she was there. ‘She didn’t have much of a say in what happened to me: I suppose that was only fair, you couldn’t have one person’s mum dictating and everyone else’s not there. But I don’t think she was ever totally convinced that being separated from their parents was the right thing for kids.’

How the children responded to their parents’ absences differed. Michael Rundell and Alison Channer don’t remember missing their parents. While Catherine Caulfeild was being looked after by Erica Hallowes, she ‘felt very secure’. ‘I was happy, I didn’t particularly mind that my parents were not there.’ When Erica moved on to look after Princess Helen, it was ‘the end of the world’.

Continuous care, from a looker-afterer whom the child liked, clearly made a difference. But even Angela Cook, who bonded so well with Jill Dunn that she later found it hard to connect with her mother, recalls waking in tears because she couldn’t remember what her parents looked like. ‘Jill wrote to them and they sent back a photo taken in Japan, where they were at the time. I remember saying to myself: “Wow, my mother is really beautiful.” It is still one of my favourites and I displayed it at the tea after her funeral.’

Seumas Mackay, who grew up to become a psychologist, feels that

the unpredictability of his parents' visits increased the feeling of abandonment. 'My parents constantly appeared and disappeared, leaving me with a succession of nanny figures. I didn't know what was coming next: I could never count on anything. I think I would have been better at boarding school.' He remembers anguished conversations with his carer about no one loving him. 'But I somehow understood that I couldn't complain too much because my parents were away saving the world. My concerns seemed petty, or a necessary sacrifice for the greater good, and were sometimes even declared so.'

For some of the children, Caux was just one of a series of separations which began before they came to Caux, and, in some cases, continued after they left. Jean Simpson's parents first left her when she was nine months old. She had 39 moves of home-base before she was 10. Her first sentence, noted in her baby book, was, 'My daddy gone away'. Catherine Hutchinson had a series of separations from one or both parents between the ages of one and two, and sees the impact of these experiences and her years at Caux as cumulative. 'If you talk about damage and bad lessons – or even good lessons – learnt in life, it's all part of a trajectory.'

When, years later, Jean Simpson tried to discover more details about the first ten years of her life, her father went through his diaries and wrote to her in distress, 'During those years I was living in one constant succession of plays. At Caux conferences there were sometimes ten in one week, and on many occasions three on a Sunday. Then it was London and tours in the provincial circuits, hundreds of performances. Up till now that decade has remained a blur of conferences, rehearsals and stages. I blindly felt that if I did the right thing, you and Mum would not suffer. But I was so in love with my own success, I was unable to judge what was right, and you have had to pay the price. If I had really put you both first I would perhaps have found the right house for us much sooner.'

Jean, who has struggled with feelings of hopelessness and depression throughout her adult life, once showed the drawings she did at the Caux School to a psychiatrist. 'All the faces were just circles, no eyes, no mouth. She said, "This is a child who has totally withdrawn from the world, no connection with the outside world." All my stories there were about people getting killed. The teachers would say, "Well done", and correct the spelling.'

‘We missed out on forming attachments with our parents,’ she continues. ‘If by the time you are three you haven’t got one or two people you are attached to, you’re never likely to trust again. So by the time I got to Caux I was really boxed in.’

Delscey Burns spent her first years in Johannesburg, in a communal house given to MRA by her parents, Charles and Barbara Burns. When she was three and a half and her brother six months, their father went to Britain for medical treatment and their mother went with him. At the same time the person who had been looking after her became her brother’s full-time carer, and she was passed on to someone else. She talks of the ‘complete confusion’ of growing up in a busy MRA house. ‘Everyone is doing things for God, you can’t compete. The people you’d like to be there aren’t there, and the people you don’t want to be there, are. From the age of three I had worked out that I was on my own, that the world was a very unreliable place.’

Then, when she was seven, her father died. ‘I didn’t cry in front of my mother or when I told my teacher at school the next day, but I was beside myself overnight with rage and despair. Then I just closed down. By the time I got to Caux I was in absolute survival mode.’

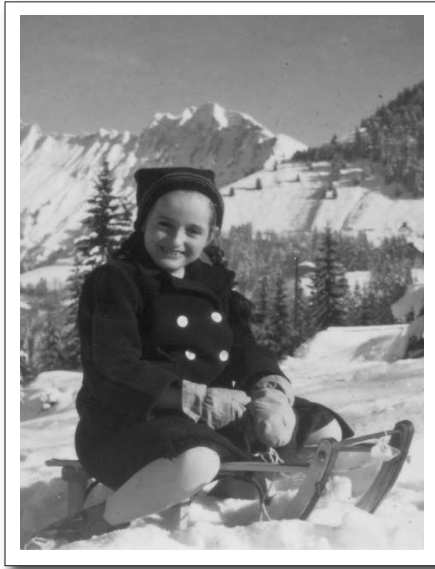
She has very few memories of her time at Caux and talks of herself as a ‘real please people person’. ‘I have to connect with people in such a way that if it comes to the worst, they’ll take me home: even someone at a check-out desk. It’s insane. There’s that sense of what will become of me if there’s nobody there, which I seem to have carried from tiny.’

In her book about the children sent home from India during the centuries of the British Raj²⁶, Vyvyen Brendon quotes a study of children in Nottingham in the 1970s²⁷: ‘The crucial characteristic of the parental role is partiality for the individual child. That is why all the caring agencies we can devise can never be quite as satisfactory as the “good-enough” parent.... A developing personality needs to know that to someone it matters more than other children.’

Judi Conner speaks of a ‘craving to be noticed, to be special’, which is illustrated by Marion Manson’s memories of parents’ visits when the children were on holiday in Praz. ‘Whichever parents came there would be a big celebration, a welcome banner, cakes. If it was not my parents, I would feel hugely jealous. If it was, I had to share them with everybody else. We went on a boat on the lake. Mother had given me a bar of chocolate. “We’ll take that with us and share it,” she said. She

26. *Children of the Raj* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson 2005), p212

27. John and Elizabeth Newsom, *Seven Years Old in the Home Environment*, 1976



Margaret Cook

bought ice creams for everyone. I thought, “Why can’t I have my mother to myself?” You were not special in the community and you were not special to your parents.’

Margaret Cook has one memory of her father from her years at Caux, when he took a break from the summer conference to visit her at Praz. ‘I remember a moment when it was just him and me. It may be that memory is so special because it wasn’t usually just him and me. He turned a garden table upside down and we sat in it and pretended to be in a boat, rowing away.’

If Douglas’s diaries are anything to go by, that was his only visit to Margaret during those four years, a situation which must have caused him considerable pain. He noted, ‘Margaret in good spirits.’ ‘I probably was, because he was there. It wasn’t OK to be sad. I inherently believed that what they were doing was a good thing and that it must be important because it’s what God wants them to do. Therefore I must not be sad. And there was a sort of moral thing that sadness came because you’d strayed from the line, goodness made you happy.’ The fact that their parents were away doing God’s work made it hard for the children to admit to their pain, and some of them got the message that their happiness was less important to God than their parents’ work.

The potential for loneliness was increased by the fact that many of the children at the school were only-children, and because ‘special friendships’ were not encouraged. ‘Dot felt strongly that children should not have relationships which excluded others,’ says Signe Strong. ‘They should all learn to think for all and be part of a whole: no twosomes.’ Marion Manson and Judi Conner, who had been sharing a bedroom, were split up because they giggled too much. ‘It left me with the feeling that it was wrong to have fun and enjoy friendship,’ says Judi.

Some children were either oblivious to the pressure, or managed to buck the system. Jessie Close remembers Marion as her ‘special best friend’. And Catherine Hutchinson and Margaret Cook were like ‘half-siblings’. But when they walked into the conference dining room hand in hand, aged seven, they were told this was ‘impure’.

Delscey Burns remembers standing very close to Meili Gillison, who taught her piano. ‘I used to think that if I stand by someone, maybe they will take my hand. No one ever did. It was such a taboo thing to show any affection.’ Exaggerated though this rigidity was, it had the

side effect of protecting the children in an environment where hundreds of people were coming and going.

For Anne Smith, Marion Manson, Margaret Cook, Johanna de Boer and Catherine Caulfeild, the lack of contact with their parents is particularly poignant because they all lost one (or, in Catherine's case, both) of their parents during the next decade.

Lotti Smith was already suffering from cancer during Anne's last year at the school. In July 1962 the Smiths decided to bring Anne back to London to be with them. 'I wish you could have seen her face as she read your letter this morning at 7 am,' Jill Dunn wrote to them. 'The excitement and joy was a delight from the very beginning at the thought of coming to live with you.' Lotti died that Christmas.

* * * * *

The Caux School closed at the end of the summer term of 1965. By then it had only five children: Margaret Cook, Alison Channer, Princess Sophie of Romania, Michel Nosley and Frédéric Chavanne. Evelyne Seydoux joined the staff to teach Michel and Frédéric, who were both French-speaking.

Chris Channer has kept a letter from Dot, making the final arrangements for Alison's departure. It shines a light on the insecurities in the family's life and on Alison's, and Dot's, response:

'This time of not knowing whether you are coming or not has deepened Alison's character,' writes Dot. 'About six weeks ago she was obviously bothering about it so I asked her about it. Then I told her that I too did not know what the future held and I had no home and no parents, but that we didn't need to know if we trusted God and his guidance and knew he had a plan for our lives. I asked her if she had any guidance about it herself and she had obviously been thinking about it a lot.

'She said, "I have thought that maybe Daddy should come home at the beginning of the holidays. That's only fair as Mummy came last time. Then that Mummy should come at the beginning of the term and they should be with me for my first term and then both go back to India after Christmas!" So her ideas are pretty revolutionary!

‘Then about two weeks later when we were out for a walk she was skipping along and suddenly said to me, “I’m glad you said that to me, Miss John. You know, it’s funny, but I feel as if I don’t even mind if Mummy and Daddy don’t come back.” That meant, I feel, that she was being totally satisfied by God.’

Dot was aware that the Caux School did not suit every child. According to a friend, there were at least three occasions where she urged the parents to return home and put their children in conventional schools. ‘The interest of the child came first.’

Jean Simpson took the issue of leaving the school into her own hands. In August 1962, she and Marion went to London to be bridesmaids for Kath Andrew Moir, one of the carers. Kath remembers travelling with them from Caux in a group with a three-tier wedding cake and two hamsters in cages. By then Jean’s parents were living in London, where the Westminster Theatre was staging a continuous series of MRA plays in a bid to present moral and spiritual values through the West End stage. Her father was acting in many of them.

When Jean got to London, she demanded to be taken away from the Caux School. ‘They didn’t accept it happily because they didn’t have a place to stay,’ she says. After three months in temporary accommodation, they found a home in Bermondsey where the family lived for the next seven years.

Jean found it ‘really peculiar’ going to a tough school in South London after the mountains of Switzerland. ‘I was talking about *Knäckebrot* and *Strümpfies*²⁸. The kids just thought I was off the moon. The school was dreadful. I went into one class and they moved me up the next day. After about two terms the teachers told my parents to send me somewhere else, and I was happy there.’

The transition to the mainstream from the sheltered world of the Caux School was traumatic for most of the children. ‘We lived in a sort of cocoon,’ says David Morrison. ‘In a real school you’ve got to learn to look after yourself. It’s easier if you start aged five rather than 12.’

The children arrived in their new schools knowing nothing about popular culture and a lot about the world. Dot John did her best to prepare them, teaching Angela Cook to ride a bike, and warning the children not to keep talking about foreign countries which their contemporaries would know nothing about. In Catherine Hutchinson’s case, this backfired, as many of her schoolmates at Frances Holland

28. Crispbread and woolly tights

School in London had parents with international careers. 'They'd been to far more places than I had,' she says. 'But I dutifully kept this thing of not talking about it.'

For her, moving schools was 'death'. 'I was totally at a loss with bitchy little ten-year-olds: when we had quarrels at Caux School, we were told to sort it out. In a big girls' school there was no one to say, "You're going to say sorry, whether you like it or not." On the other hand I knew a lot more French, I had read reams and reams of poetry. Emotionally I was very behind, but in terms of what I knew and the 3Rs, I was quite ahead.'

This sense of being an outsider was compounded by the MRA ethos. Joanna Sciortino remembers asking her mother whether the children in her British boarding school would 'have guidance': 'When she said no, I felt fearful but also in some way superior.' Catherine Hutchinson remembers 'feeling I'm meant to be changing these people, but I don't want to'.

Both Marion Manson and Anne Smith coped with the transition to British boarding schools by rebelling. 'I felt like a freak,' says Marion. 'I had a different accent and I had never heard a pop song. I was picked on and teased, and I couldn't control my temper. To win the respect of the girls, I would take dares. I was always the one who ended up ringing the fire alarm. Having been a good girl, pleasing the adults all the time, this was another way of fitting in and belonging.'

'Because of the set up at the Caux School we didn't learn how to cope with ordinary life,' says Anne. 'One minute we were in this huge conference centre, with no relation to normal family life, then all of a sudden we were into day or boarding schools. I found no way of knowing how to be.'

Anne went away to school 18 months after her mother died. 'I was



The final year of the school, 1965.

Adults, l to r: **Dot John, Marjorie Good, Ellen Rasmussen, Dorothee Brun, Meili Gillison;**

Children: **Alison Dodds, Princess Sophie, Michel Nosley, Margaret Cook, Frédéric Chavanne**

totally blitzed. I spent quite a lot of my time getting into trouble: I saw that as the only way people were going to like me and I was just desperate to be liked by somebody.’ Two years later, her school closed down and she moved to a new one, starting the whole process again. ‘My reaction to that was to say, “God is no help, he is not talking to me.” He certainly wasn’t there as far as I was concerned. Those years were just ones of huge pain. I rejected everything. The biggest problem for me was the huge sense of guilt that I had turned my back on MRA: I just couldn’t do MRA, particularly not at boarding school.’

Judi Conner spent only one year at the Caux School before going to boarding school in Devon, aged eight. ‘The way I coped was to build up huge defences to cope with the rough and tumble of life,’ she says. ‘It took me years to realise what I had done and to bring that wall down. I keep looking back at the connection between that feeling of marooned lostness at Caux and then suddenly out of the frying pan into the fire.’



Jean, Don and Connie Simpson, after they set up home in Bermondsey

After three years, Judi’s headteacher wrote to her parents in Brazil, and urged them to come home because ‘this girl needs a home life’. Joanna Sciortino’s headteacher did something similar.

For those like Jean Simpson, Angela Cook and Margaret Cook, who returned to ‘ordinary lives’, living at home with their parents and going to day school, there were other adjustments to make. Angela, whose overall memories of Caux are ‘very happy’, found Cardiff grey, hardly knew her mother, and missed Jill Dunn. ‘The first time Mum washed something, I said, “Are you sure you’re doing that right? Jill does it like this.” Whenever we went to London, I went to see Jill.’

Margaret says her relationship with her mother never recovered, although, like Angela, she looked after her in her old age. Angela describes this experience as ‘extraordinarily healing’. ‘Initially I repeated to myself time and again, “I am doing this for you, Dad.” But in time I came to recognise her beauty, inside and out, so that I came to care for her because I loved her. When she died, I realised she had been with us for almost seven years, just the same amount of time as we had been apart when I

was a child. It was as if God restored to me that time that had been lost: those years were a gift to me.'

For those who came from another culture, the adjustment must have been even greater. Hugo Bethlem and his brother went on from Caux to three years at the MRA conference centre in the United States. When the family returned to Brazil, Hugo, aged eight, had to learn how to speak Portuguese again. Eighteen months after their return, his parents divorced.

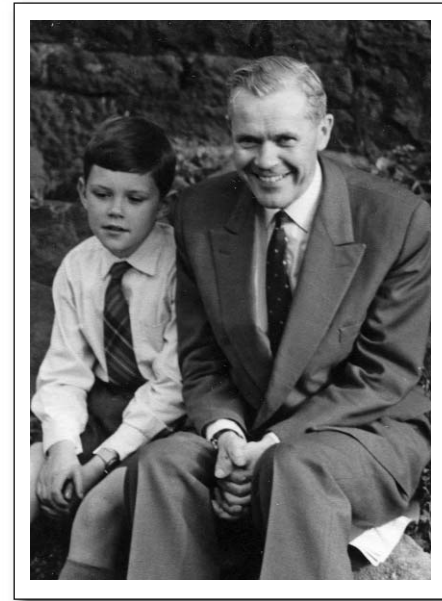
Ingrid Strong, Susan Thornhill, Joanna Sciortino, Edward Peters, Catherine Hutchinson, Marion Manson and Jean Simpson all passed up the chance of university or professional training when they left school, and went straight into full-time work with MRA. Joanna, Jean, Edward, Ingrid and Catherine returned to university as mature students. Jean, whose sense of inferiority had been increased by leaving school at 15, speaks of the effect of receiving her degree: 'It's just so amazing to have a piece of paper which says you have done something.'

Many of the women only began to reflect on their upbringing when they had children of their own. Jean Simpson suffered from severe post natal depression after the birth of her third child. 'I went into a terrible spin. The doctor was saying to me, "Were there any instances in your own childhood where things went wrong?" So I started telling him. That's when the whole unravelling began.'

'When you have your own children, you model the parenting you've learnt,' says Marion Manson. 'I felt I hadn't had the modelling so I didn't know how to be a parent. That's where it hit me.'

Few of the children felt able to talk to their parents about their experiences before they died, although Jean Simpson was an exception. 'I didn't ever talk to my mother about this, because she got Alzheimer's,' she says. 'But when my Dad realised what I had been through, he was very sad. I wonder if I clouded his last years too much by saying what I did. But I felt I had to.'

Anne Smith remembers her father referring to Don's conversations with Jean, and asking if she had anything she wanted to say herself. 'I just could not talk to him about it,' says Anne. 'After my mother died I decided that I would not cry with him because it would upset him too much. What happens then is that it builds a wall between you. I spent the rest of the time trying to protect him.' Anne and her family shared a home with her father and her aunt in their old age, and looked after them.



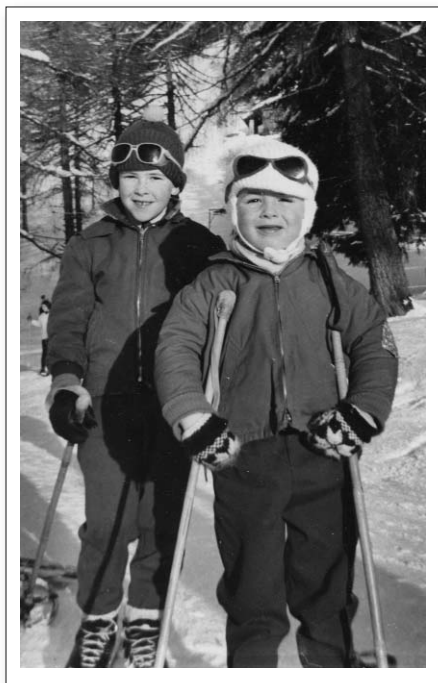
Edward and David Peters, when Edward started school in England

‘What my parents were doing was for the greater good, and who was I to question it?’ says Joanna Sciortino. ‘It took a long time to be disloyal enough to do that, and I was never able to say to my parents how bad it had been.’

Several of the children have sought professional help in dealing with the emotional fall-out of their childhood. Joanna Sciortino underwent a couple of years of therapy in her 30s. ‘Initially I felt I had to connect with the anger at having been left and the anger about MRA and what it had done to the family. Gradually I came to see it more in the context of the times. My own father and mother were repeating things that had been done to them. When there were times when I was tempted to give up the therapy, because it was all too painful, I just thought I’m doing it to break the pattern, for my daughter’s sake.

‘While I can’t look back and say I’m glad they did what they did, I can see value in what MRA has done. I’m glad that the price that the children paid is being acknowledged. I feel I can look back now and be glad for who I am. And what they did is part of who I am. I can never say I think they were right to abandon me, but I can be happy with the person I am. And now that I’m a teacher, I feel like I’m making use of everything, the good, bad and the ugly, the pain and the blessing too.’

* * * * *



Peter & Michael Rundell

Michael Rundell was at the school on and off from the age of two. He remembers his years there as ‘totally positive’, and traces his desire to ‘care for people and get everything perfect’, as well as his passion for grandiose buildings, to those years. Now an architect, he says he is modelling one celebrity’s bathroom on the Edwardian bathrooms in Mountain House.

Michael says he is ‘incredibly suspicious’ of seeking explanations in childhood for problems in later life. In spite of this, he was intrigued when a psychiatrist suggested that his unconventional approach to relationships might be linked to his mother’s absences. ‘He told me, “You were a very promiscuous little boy with your love. You didn’t have one person to dedicate your female love to. And you said you loved them all.” From a very early age I was happy to spread my affection over a wide range of people. I get bored with long-term relationships.’

His elder brother Peter reacted in the opposite way. 'While Mike learnt to make attachments quickly and at low cost in breaking them, I found it difficult to form attachments at all, unless I could be sure they were safe and reliable.' He says, however, that he doesn't have a need to attach to places. 'I emerged fairly strongly from that period with a sense that I belong wherever I am: home is where my suitcase is.' His family has travelled with his work in Britain's Department for International Development.

The Caux School left its pupils with skills and attitudes which they employ in adult life. Of the British children, Joanna Sciortino, Judi Conner, Peter Rundell, Alison Channer, Catherine Hutchinson, Elisabeth McLean and Margaret Cook have all used their languages in their work: Michael Rundell reckons his French won him his first job. Several trace their love of skiing, their passion for music or their skill in sewing to those days. Some, like Michael Rundell, have put the perfectionism they imbibed in the Caux dining room to good use; others, like Anne Smith, have had to unlearn it, because it made entertaining so stressful.

Their exposure to the world left them with an openness to other cultures which has persisted. 'I can relate well to people of other countries, I have an empathy of interest,' says Marion Manson. 'That was one of the good things for me.'

'I learnt so much about being a decent caring human being,' says Helen of Romania. Caux made her 'far more tolerant' of other people, cultures and faiths. 'At a later school I hit a girl over the head for being arrogant about Africans.' Like many of the others she found it hard to adapt to the real world after the protected atmosphere of Caux, but she says that her experience there has helped her to 'keep her faith through thick and thin'.

'I learned values at a young age which I have used for the rest of my life, for instance honesty,' says Hugo Bethlem, now a senior executive in Brazil's largest retail company. 'There was no barrier between races and religions.'

'Many values which I am pleased to have date back to that time,' says Seumas Mackay. 'My choice of profession was influenced by my interest in relationships and people, almost certainly developed in MRA. My parents too were always interested in psychoanalysis, in what was going on inside people's heads. I'm also grateful for the international aspect and the ability to straddle national, cultural and group

boundaries. I was left with an interest in politics, a residual anti-racism, and a colossal suspicion of anything resembling ideology.'

'So much of who I am is formed by the MRA background,' says Delscey Burns, who, after 11 years as a headmistress, now works as a life-coach. 'I have strong reactions to feeling indoctrinated, but I have been left with an absolute belief in the possibility of change. That's a huge advantage in life, particularly if you don't feel you have to bring it about.'

Alongside the values, many of those who attended the school have retained – or returned to – a belief in God, although their concept of God may have changed. Anne Smith, who 'rejected everything' in her teens, says that 'underneath it all I still wanted to know what God was and what place he had in my life'. Like others, she is now actively involved in church life, although she finds it difficult to speak about her faith. 'I don't have the language for a Christianity which is more about God's grace than "fighting" for something,' she says. 'Two of my children passionately love and follow Jesus and they have the language to talk to people very gently.'

Jean Simpson says she has never been able to identify with God as a loving father, because her father was 'never there'. 'I've always believed in God though and even at the worst moments I felt for some reason or another that God was still there. A lot of people have a very trivial idea of God. I believe only God understood my suffering.'

Joanna Sciortino speaks of a 'continuum' between what she learnt as a child and what she believes today. 'I never lost the belief that there was a God, though during my therapy I had to step back from God because the world, God, my parents and MRA were all the same thing. I had to leave the MRA village to find out who I was and put down roots in the world. Then there came a time when I took a step back towards God. My concept of God has had to change. For me, becoming a Catholic was a liberation because it felt like doors opening: not "there is a right and a wrong path for you" but God offers us choices and I'm free to choose how I serve him.'

'It takes quite a bit of maturity to see that God's will isn't always clear cut,' reflects Catherine Hutchinson. 'Similarly it takes maturity to accept that my parents genuinely tried to do God's will and genuinely loved me and may have got it wrong. And that that is all right. Accepting all of these statements at a deep level is what the forgiveness process is all

about. They say that “forgiveness means giving up all hope of a better past” and I think that that is particularly appropriate here.’

Some of the children have kept in touch with each other over the years: others like Jean and Marion, who lived in the same house in their teens, have rediscovered each other more recently. ‘It’s the closest thing to family, really,’ says Jean. ‘No one else can understand however much you explain.’ Ingrid Strong, whose memories of the school are entirely happy, speaks of being an only child who grew up with ten brothers and sisters.

‘When I looked up at Mountain House for the first time in 20 years, a mixture of emotions welled up,’ says Marion Manson. ‘I see Caux as my nurturing place and where I grew up. It wasn’t a concentration camp, it wasn’t a wicked bad boarding house, there were good things about it. It’s a mixture. When I think about Caux, my childhood pain is what I feel first. And then I think of this unique upbringing in an amazing place on the side of a Swiss mountain, skiing and tobogganing and skating. It was not all bad.’

Jean Simpson has spent much of her adult life in Hong Kong and made a career out of writing books and songs to teach Chinese children English. She traces her early musical influences to the songs sung by the Caux chorus and by the Colwell Brothers, an American Country and Western group whose topical songs were a major feature of MRA campaigns in Asia and Africa, and of the conferences in Caux and Mackinac. In 2008, as part of her doctorate, she wrote a children’s musical which was performed in Hong Kong. ‘In the end life has turned out in a very different way than I imagined,’ she says. ‘But I wouldn’t be doing half the exciting things I am now if it had all been plain sailing.’

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The experience of the small group of children who attended the Caux School from 1955-65 was unique, but it had parallels. Other – though not all²⁹ – ‘MRA children’ had similar experiences of parental absences and communal upbringing at MRA centres in the United States, Europe and South Africa. Some children came to the Caux School from one or other of these situations, or went on to one after Caux.



Marion Manson

29. Susan Thornhill accompanied her parents on their travels. ‘They made a supreme effort to create a home wherever we were,’ she says. ‘My mother travelled with a hat box of Christmas ornaments and created Christmas in many different places. I have no memories of feeling abandoned or afraid during my childhood. Other children went with their parents to Japan and other far-off places. Some lived very stable family lives, although that was quite often in MRA homes and centres.’

In the wider world, the nearest parallel was that of missionary children, who have often experienced a similar conflict between their needs and the demands of their parents' calling. But many others, from the British children sent home from the Empire in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries to the children of freedom fighters in Africa, Asia and Latin America, have known the difficulty of competing with a great cause. Judi Conner remembers weeping through a showing of *A World Apart*, Shawn Slovo's film about her childhood as the daughter of the anti-apartheid activists Joe Slovo and Ruth First.

This was a period when separating children from their parents in what was perceived as the greater good was sanctioned by governments and the church. One notorious example is the shipping of children to 'new lives' in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Rhodesia³⁰ to ease overcrowding in British children's homes and to populate the colonies. This continued into the late 1960s, in seeming unawareness of the effects on the children or their parents. This scandal of social engineering cannot be compared to the Caux School: but it does demonstrate the blindness of the times to the needs of small children.

The Caux School parents chose to be parted from their children. They believed they were needed elsewhere, doing work which would create a safer and more peaceful world for their children. They felt that Caux was a safe and nurturing place to leave them. There was no coercion involved in their decisions, though sometimes a degree of group pressure. The teachers, carers and the surrounding community were keen to do their best for the children, and put considerable imagination into giving them a good time and into imparting values which would give them a firm foundation in life, even if some of the means they used were misguided. The physical environment was idyllic, and the cultural environment was vivid and stimulating.

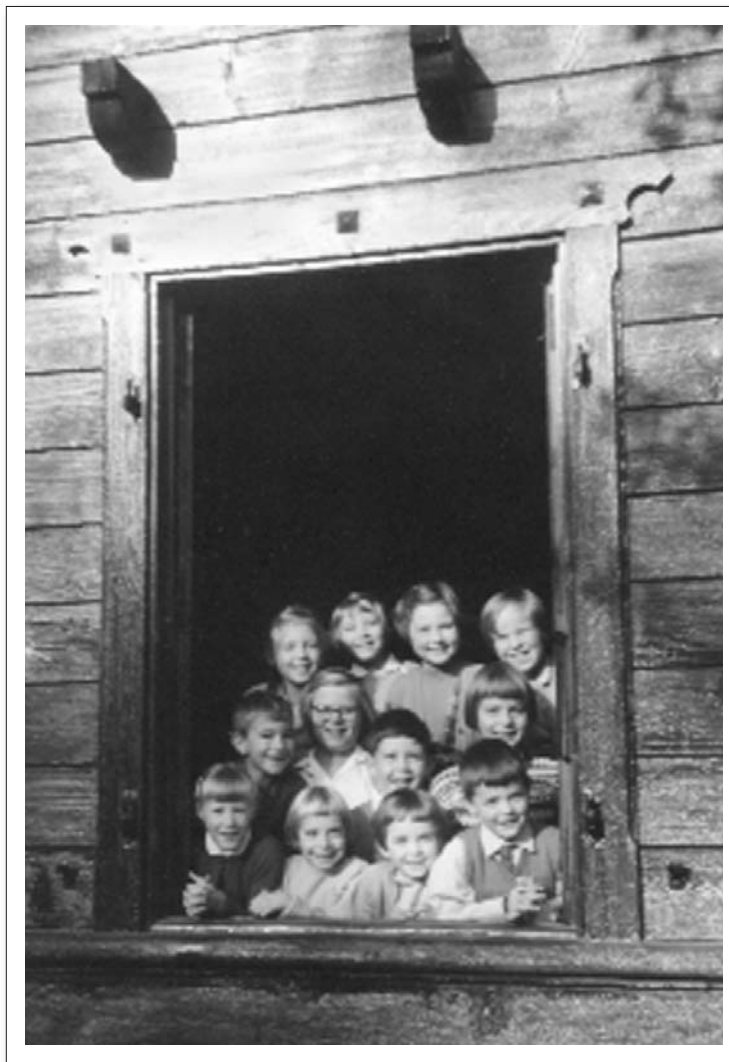
And yet, in spite of the success they have made of their lives, many of the children have carried a heavy burden of pain, caused by those early years of separation from their parents and the unintentional messages given them by their experiences at Caux. The tragedy of this story is that the parents believed that if God called them away from their children to do his work, their children would be all right. They had no conception of the psychological and emotional pain some of the children suffered, or of its possible long-term effects. And, indeed, for some of the children, the over-riding memories of their childhood at Caux are happy.

30. See *Empty Cradles*, by Margaret Humphreys, Doubleday 1994

The purpose of this book is not to produce a neat judgment on the Caux School, still less to apportion blame. The 1950s and 1960s were a period when causes were loud and confident and world conflicts were seen in terms of good and evil, black and white. The MRA community of the day also tended to see the world in terms of black and white, for God or against God, 'changed' or 'unchanged'. But the story of the Caux School cannot be told in black and white. What worked for one child did not work for another. What caused pain to one child left another completely unscathed. What gave joy to one child was no comfort to another. This is a story full of shades of colour, of 'yes buts' and 'if onlys', because it deals with the deepest and most delicate of human relations, those between children and parents.

The dilemmas facing the parents of the Caux School children were special to their times and circumstances, but they raise enduring issues. Where does the balance come between serving, or even saving, the world, and caring for one's own family? How do you discern God's will for your life? When is it right to accept sacrifices which affect the people you love, and when should these people come first? How do you pass values on down the generations? Many of the children interviewed for this book believe that their parents, and the other adults involved, didn't get these balances right; but most of them are proud of their parents, and, like them, are working to make a difference to the world, in their own way.

In the two decades following the end of World War II MRA played an important role in the reconstruction of Europe and the achievement of independence in Africa and Asia. The parents of the children at the Caux School, and their teachers and carers, believed that committing to this movement was the most valuable thing they could do with their

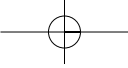


At the Chalet-de-la-Forêt, 1960.

Back, l-r: **Princess Irina, Marion Manson, Judi Conner, Angela Cook**

Centre: **David Morrison, Princess Helen, Edward Peters, Delscey Burns**

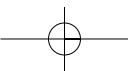
Front: **Jessie Close, Anne Smith, Jean Simpson, Geoffrey Burns**



lives. Their dedication led them to make sacrificial decisions, both for themselves and their children. In some cases the cost of these decisions was extremely high.

This book is a recognition of all those concerned and of their sacrifices, pain, courage and generosity.

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Afterword

Researching and writing this book has taken longer than we expected. We first started thinking about it in early 2006, after we each separately met Marion Manson Porteous and heard about her visit to Caux and her longing that the story of the children who went to school there should be heard. We both independently had a sense that God was calling us to make this happen, and launched the project in December of that year.

Since then, life has intervened. For Elisabeth the past 30 months have been dominated by the death of her mother-in-law, and caring for her elderly father-in-law in Oxford and her mother in Sweden. Meanwhile Mary, to everyone's astonishment, got engaged at the age of 54 – and found herself travelling to Australia three times, getting married and closing down two houses in the space of two years. We often felt stressed about not being able to get on with the job: yet the conflict also seemed appropriate, since one of the themes of this book is the struggle to find the balance between calling and family life.

We have found this journey inspiring, energy-giving, fulfilling and, at times, painful. We have interviewed or corresponded with former pupils, teachers, carers and parents, visiting many of them in their homes. It has been a delight to reconnect, sometimes after decades. We have been charmed by the happy memories, grieved by the unhappy ones, and awed by the strength and generosity of the children, and by the dedication and sacrifice of those who were adults at the time.

We believe deeply in the power of storytelling as a path to growth and healing. This requires that someone listens and absorbs the story, and hears it in the way that it is felt by the teller. It has been a privilege to do this. Of course, we have only heard part of the story. Dot John and her two closest colleagues, as well as most of the parents, had died before we started work on the book. Others were too frail to be interviewed. We are acutely aware of the pitfalls of writing about

people who are no longer able to speak for themselves, and who were doing their best, often in difficult circumstances.

We are grateful to everyone who has shared their story and photos with us, including some who had misgivings about this project. We would also like to thank Andrew Stallybrass and Caux Books for publishing the book, Blair Cummock for designing it, Maria Grace for her work on the photos³¹, and the Oxford Group, lofC's legal body in the UK, for funding the project. Our husbands, Edward Peters and John Bond, have been a huge support, both practically and emotionally, and this book would not have been completed without them.

Part of the pain of this project has been related to the parallels with our own lives. We both grew up in MRA; Elisabeth in Gothenburg, Sweden, and Mary in Oxford. We did not attend the Caux School, although several of our personal friends did, including Elisabeth's husband. Mary's parents worked full-time with MRA and shared some of the conflicts of priority experienced by the parents in this book, although her father's health meant that they had a more settled lifestyle. We have both worked with MRA/lofC full-time for most of our adult lives, believe deeply in what it stands for and have identified fully with it. Although we were small children ourselves during the period this book covers, we feel pain and responsibility for the times where MRA has got things wrong, as well as pride in its achievements.

Our picture of the Caux School is one of many shades and colours, some of which sit uneasily side by side. It cannot be reproduced in black and white, because so many of the experiences and memories conflict. We have resisted the temptation to tidy things up, and have sought to allow the varied experiences to speak for themselves.

MRA's story is full of light, but there are also shadows. Some of these shadows cluster around the experiences of children of full-time workers, particularly in the third quarter of the 20th century. We hope that bringing these stories into the light will help to disperse the shadows, not just for those concerned, but for the community as a whole.

Mary Lean and Elisabeth Peters, April 2009

31. We have not been able to provide photo credits because most of the photos come from personal albums. The photos on p13 and p52 were taken by Arthur Strong, and the photo on p17 by David Channer.



