

Birds' eye view of Berne

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NOAH'S ARK TRUST

The Trust is to relieve the disability of autistic or non-communicating persons by providing a centre or centres for the training, care and education, and leisure time occupation of such persons; to enable them to enjoy the benefits of a cultural and social life befitting their capabilities.

It has grown from the need to expand of a small group of children who attend daily the Noah's Ark special centre, because they cannot benefit from existing educational or training facilities. They are often basically intelligent, but, because they do not communicate normally, they cannot express themselves, and their attainments are few.

History and Aims

The Noah's Ark Special Day Centre has been run for sixteen years by a trained qualified teacher, Miss Alice Hoffmann de Visme, and helpers, in her own house, the ground floor and garden being adapted for this use. Miss Hoffmann is one our readers, the daughter of the late Pasteur Hoffmann de Visme. At first, the children came privately, as there were no possibilities of admittance anywhere else; some of these had stayed at home until they were eight or ten years old. As they improved, they moved into larger groups, Training Centres, E.S.N. or Special Schools, according to their specific disabilities. Nevertheless, a few remained solitary, and unable to take their place in more normal communities. D. C. is now twenty years old, D. P. is seventeen years old. They were both excluded from Sheltered Workshops, through abnormal behaviour, and were re-admitted at Noah's Ark. With the help of voluntary teachers and friends, and individual teaching, they are beginning to enjoy life and to take a more lively interest in outside activities.

The Polycentre aims to provide facilities for the special cases, not only young children, but for adolescents and young adults.

Organisation

New premises with fair-sized grounds must be found, converting them to accommodate a maximum of thirty children and young people, divided up into small groups, or even dealt with individually according to age and disability. A high ratio of teaching and training staff is necessary, also staff for various therapies; psychological and psychiatric services are important.

Some evenings will be given to Clubs and games for older adolescents and adults only, enlisting the help, it is hoped, of young people from the neighbourhood.

The Centre will be a composite one in its administration — that is, under the Education Authorities up to the age of sixteen years; and under the Health Authorities for anyone over sixteen.

Admissions

The children attending Noah's Ark at present are mostly paid for by the responsible Local Authorities, after applications from specialists and doctors, hospitals, child guidance clinics, or privately. The placements are either through the Education Committee, or the Mental Health Department, according to the circumstances of the case.

The Centre is at present registered under the Child Minders' Act, and Miss Hoffmann de Visme is recognised as a Home Teacher. This tends to restrict activities and development, and curtail an essential service. The Trust will allow for expansion and application will be made in due course for recognition by the Ministry of Education and Science.

Pupils and young adults will be admitted either as private, if desired, or else as paid for by the Authority concerned, under the appropriate heading.

The need is urgent.

There have already been applications for admission.

Your help would be welcome. Please write to Miss Alice Hoffmann de Visme, 31 Shaftesbury Road., N.19.

EUROPE'S NEWEST PLANETARIUM

Would-be astronomers should make a point of being in Lucerne on 1st July this year. For on that day the Verkehrshaus der Schweiz will celebrate its tenth birthday by inaugurating Europe's most modern planetarium within its precincts. Constructed in Germany, the planetarium is not an observatory but a giant projection instrument creating an artificial night sky with which endless experiments can be carried out. A reproduction of the heavens is projected on to the inner surface of a semi-spherical, 59 ft. diameter dome by means of complex optical equipment. As a result, the planets and stars can be seen shining with an intensity that is only witnessed on a particularly clear winter's night. Not only does the planetarium provide a fascinating picture of the firmament but it also enables the actual movements of the heavenly bodies to be easily discerned thanks to a time-lapse device with a 1:1000 speeding-up ratio. This brand-new planetarium, with its 30,000 components, has taken weeks to assemble. It will provide Switzerland with greatly enhanced instructional facilities in the field of astronomy at a time when space research has captured the imagination of young people all over the world.

* * *

In the meantime, 1st July has been and gone, and the Planetarium is open. It is a technical miracle created by the Longines Works, who donated one million francs. The American astronaut John Glenn, made it operational via the news satellite "Early Bird", at the same

time sending a message of good will and friendship to the Swiss.

The President of the Swiss Confederation was present at the official opening, as well as the Presidents of the two Chambers, and many personalities of Swiss public life attended, not forgetting a number of foreign guests. Wernher von Braun and George Marshall of NASA sent congratulatory telegrams.

(S.N.T.O. and A.T.S.)

BIRDS' EYE VIEW OF BERNE

There are many things that cannot be seen from the ground when sight-seeing in a city. Only he who has once seen from the air the nucleus of Berne on the peninsular of the River Aare can appreciate the brilliant city planning of the founders and builders of Berne. A quarter of an hour's flight above the city aboard a small "Cessna," "Bonanza" or "Musketeer" plane costs no more than about four times the price of a movie ticket. From the airport of Belpmoos, which can easily be reached by an airport transfer service, the passenger may also take longer flights. Sightseeing flights to the lake country at the foot of the Jura Mountains, to the Bernese Oberland, flights up into the Alps as far as the Matterhorn or flights according to individual wishes are on the programme of Alpar, an airline based at Belpmoos airport. Flights combined with landing on a glacier are a particular attraction. On the eternal ice of the mountains above four thousand metres (above 13,000 feet) the sightseeing planes land first of all in such places where they can leave supplies for the mountain huts of the Swiss Alpine Club, for instance in the region of the Jungfrau, the Matterhorn, the Blüemlisalp, the Oberaar Glacier and the Finsteraarhorn. And one more thing: from August to October these small planes will not only land on the Jungfrauoch (Ridge of the Jungfrau), but they will carry out sightseeing flights from this high alpine airfield.

(S.N.T.O.)

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