

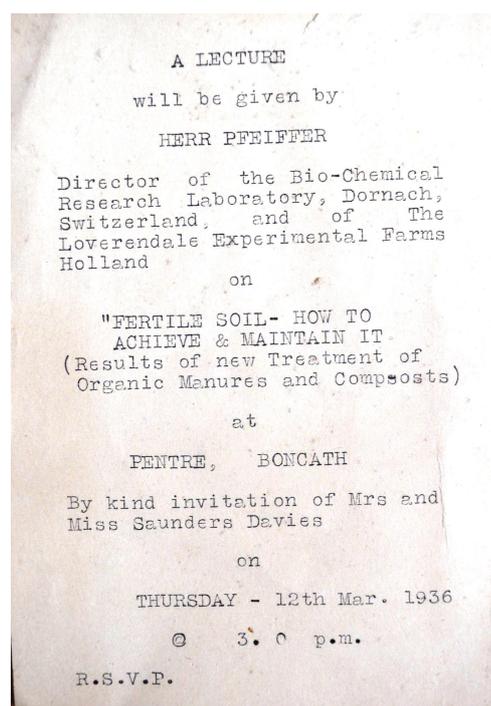
Barbara Saunders Davies was born at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century and died in 2004. I first got to know her in the late 1980s when she lived at Llwynpiod in Mynachlogddu Pembrokeshire where she regularly held anthroposophical study groups and later Class lessons. She bought Llwynpiod and a large plot of land which she donated to Plasdwbl which had been established as a centre to teach biodynamics by Mary Swatton, Catherine Casterlitz, Mary Hayden and Nim de Bruyne. Each of these ladies had so-called retired very actively to run this project and each deserves research. They set up the Living Earth Trust which continued to operate albeit after their passing, unsuccessfully up until it was gifted to Ruskin Mill.

Barbara was an extraordinary individual from a very privileged background whose family home- Pentre Mansion was in nearby Boncath. Barbara's mother was an American with a keen interest in the occult. She held various groups at Pentre that were grounded in Theosophy.

Barbara studied music at the Ecole Normale de Musique de Paris in the 1920s under Nadia Boulanger and Alfred Cortot (I have many letters between them as well as a wealth of photographs from this period.) alongside individuals such as Pablo Cassals, Aaron Copeland, Wanda Landowska and others, She even recalled working with Stravinsky on a performance he had written for three choirs. Barbara was fluent in both French and German

After she graduated in Paris, for many years Barbara was, as she recalled, obligated to stay at home and be her mother's companion, which she found very dreary but I believe it was during this period that she discovered the work of Rudolph Steiner and joined the Anthroposophical Society. It was here that she came across Ehrenfried Pfeiffer, who was leading research into biodynamic agricultural methods in Dornach as well as in Holland.

Barbara worked with Pfeiffer in Holland and Dornach and in 1936 she, along with her mother, invited him to speak to farmers at Pentre along with Aberystwyth University researchers on matters of the soil.



Pfeiffer then visited West Wales with Barbara on two occasions spending time exploring the neolithic and medieval landscapes. Their close connection came to an abrupt end with the outbreak of World War Two and Barbara bought a farm near Aberystwyth where she bred Welsh Cob horses in which she excelled, winning many firsts at the Royal Welsh Show. During the war she set up the Dorian Trio which toured Wales, giving concerts to 'boost morale'.

Pfeiffer moved to the USA after the war and Barbara spoke quite openly of how his career was hi-jacked and sabotaged by others while he was there. Barbara never saw him again but he asked her to translate his works into English which she did. I have letters he wrote to her asking her as such.

At this time, Barbara had moved to London where she became the librarian of the Anthroposophical Society near the British Museum. It was here that she immersed herself into the works of Steiner.

Ehrenfried Pfeiffer died in New York state in 1961. Shortly after this, Barbara wrote the account below of her time with Pfeiffer. Following on from this there are transcripts of various correspondence where Pfeiffer talks about experiments that he carried out on grains of wheat that he obtained from an Indian tomb that were 5000 years old that he managed to germinate. He called this strain 'Theodora'.

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Dr Ehrenfried Pfeiffer by Barbara Saunders- Davies

This appreciation of Dr Pfeiffer will necessarily be very incomplete as my association with him was only for a few years before 1939. The war put an end to visits to Dornach and after the war my own absorption in full-time farming and Pfeiffer's residence in the USA prevented any further personal contact. Of his work over there others must speak. As there are few people left in England who knew him well, these personal references may be of interest.

It was in 1935 that Mr Heywood-Smith brought some fine ears of wheat back from a visit to Dornach. He told us that these had been developed by Dr Pfeiffer from a small, primitive, almost wild wheat by breeding and biodynamic methods. This was my first introduction to any practical applications of Dr Steiner's ideas and it impressed me.

As Dr Pfeiffer was coming over shortly to lecture on Bio-dynamic agricultural methods it was possible to arrange a meeting, down in Pembrokeshire at my home (Pentre Mansion). In this way he came to stay with us in Wales and lecture to about 70 farmers including agricultural experts from the University and Plant breeding station in Aberystwyth.

That Autumn he invited me to come and see the work in Holland at Loverendale and study B D methods, soil structure, crop rotation and plant breeding. The estate that he ran comprised of 300 acres of mixed farming and market gardening. There I met Dr Pfeiffer and his invaluable helpers Dr Beinze (?) and Fraulein Klazel. The farm walks with other visitors were most interesting and if the proof of the pudding is in the eating, we had it in the unforgettable flavour of the great variety of home-produced breads baked in the wood-fired brick oven that Dr Pfeiffer had

constructed and from which he supplied custom in the principal towns in Holland with BD bread. On the plant breeding side there were four strains of wheat, a six-rowed Abyssinian barley, some rye and two strains of wild oat-grass being grown. The practice in seed collection was to take only the grains from the middle of the best ears of the best plants and then select only the most symmetrical individual grains for sowing. Dr Steiner had given warning that there was a danger that the existing strains of wheat, and other cereals, would lose vitality in the future, so Pfeiffer had collected various wild and primitive unimproved strains whose vitality was unimpaired and was experimenting as to how these could be developed and transformed under intensive BD methods. The yield under these ideal garden conditions was phenomenal – up to 40 ears from one wheat seed and between 2000 to 4000 from each plant. They were veritable wheat bushes.

From there I went to Dornach to work further with his staunch colleague Erika Riese, selecting seed and sowing winter wheat in the experimental plots. She laughingly commented that when Pfeiffer sowed, it looked like the hens had been at it, but it always grew well. One evening he was unavoidably late finishing an important sowing. Three ghostly figures in laboratory white overalls proceeded to and fro by the light of the nearly full moon. Well might a stranger passing by be puzzled and wonder at this strange sight. In simple fact the seed was being reverently laid in the ground with the thought that the wisdom from on high might meet the love from the earth.

Every morning there was a laboratory meeting with Pfeiffer in the Glashaus. He used to study the previous day's sensitive crystallisation plates with all his collaborators and around him and dictate his diagnosis and reports. Dr Steiner had suggested to him that a possible way of studying esoteric formative forces might be by means of a sensitive process of crystallization. The young Pfeiffer had found by experiment that a solution of copper chloride to which a few drops of diluted liquid organic substances were added, crystallized on a flat plate in varying and significant patterns. In the case of human blood forms appeared from which the general constitution and many human diseases could be diagnosed and even the affected organs determined. It was amazing to watch him read these plates and give reports and diagnosis. Much was fairly clear if you had studied his crystallization method, but one always felt that in studying the forms, his thinking reached a higher level which revealed more to him than any of his colleagues could achieve. (He later asked me to translate his first two books on the subject into English.)

Working in Dornach in the quiet time of the year was very pleasant. There were evenings with the family – Christoph and Wiltraat were about 2 and 5 respectively. The Bessenichs were close friends. Frau Dr Bessenich later took over the laboratory when Pfeiffer settled in the USA. There was music making with the Becksteins (?), and Pfeiffer introduced me to the score of Bruckner's string quintet, the slow movement of which was a particular favourite of his.

In the early spring came the Agricultural conference at which he was the one of the principal speakers. Dornach was then invaded by farmers and there were often seven hours of lectures a day. Black coffee was much in demand. On another occasion Pfeiffer undertook a course of lectures on 'The Practical Training Of Thought'. He had some trepidation venturing into the philosophical field with so many learned 'Herr Doktors' of Dornach about, but the course was a great success.

Always researching for further means of demonstration the working of the etheric world in physical substance, he asked me once to investigate at the British Museum a little booklet on sound forms written by a certain singing teacher in the late half of the 19th century. Basically the experiments consisted of singing a note into a tube with a wide mouth over which was stretched a thin diaphragm lightly covered with lycopodium dust. Many an evening in Dornach Frau Erika Sabarth and I slipped down to the laboratory and tried out similar experiments. The forms produced were fascinating and Pfeiffer would have liked to develop this further and see where it might lead. He hoped by using the human voice, forms could be produced through which some indication of the quality of etheric formative forces in the human body could be made visible. (It is interesting to know that in Herr Schiller's laboratory work on these lines, following a suggestion by Rudolph Steiner, is actually being done.)

Besides much travelling in Europe and the USA he now came over to England every year to lecture, foster and advise the BD work in this country. Lady MacKinnon, Mr Hoskins, Nr Binnie, Miss Sergeant and Miss Cross were active workers in the Home Counties. He also had contacts with the Soil Association, Lord Lymington, Lord Northbourne and many others who were concerned about the health of the soil. To see him demonstrating the correct fermentation in compost heaps and fondling handfuls of earthworms one would never have guessed he had to overcome a particular repugnance for worms. The organic unity of a farm or a landscape was of great importance to him. Trees and their forms were significant in judging the etheric landscape and he was actively associated with forest nursery work in Germany. He was in close contact with what was being done in other countries. Great was his delight one year when his most promising wheat had suddenly burst out with a number of spontaneous mutations, simultaneously in Holland, Germany and Switzerland. Among the variations was one with the looseness of husk necessary to thresh well which was a quality he particularly needed. He christened the strain 'Theodora' (Experimental work is still continuing to fix some of these strains.)

Pfeiffer's interests were by no means confined to his diverse scientific, medical and agricultural work. Besides being well versed in precious stones, minerals and geology, he had a considerable knowledge of Alchemy and other occult teachings. The symbolism of medieval cathedrals was another subject that interested him and he was equally at home among the Assyrian and Egyptian antiquaries in the British museum or Berlin.

After learning from him about Externsteine and Carnac, I took him to see some of the neolithic monuments which abound in my home county of Pembrokeshire – known to the ancients as the 'Land beyond the Veil' where priests and princes sought to be buried looking westward towards the lost 'Isles of the Blessed.'

He seemed to feel at home among the grey crystalline boulders of Pentre Ifan with its great cromlech whose mighty capstone is so finely tapered and delicately poised that it appears to float in space. He noted the large rather symmetrical stone behind which the sun could be obscured at Winter Solstice and the semi circle of stones facing south. This he concluded was probably a site where they celebrated the dying Sun God on the day before the Solstice.

At St Davids Head the cromlech faces South-East and was probably used to celebrate the day after mid-winter – the resurrection of the new-born Sun spirit. At this great mystery centre the past seemed to live before him, and as we explored further, we discovered a cave which suggested further evidence of the death and resurrection theme. It appears more than natural and is somewhat tom-like, with a low entrance, but with height enough inside for a man to stand up in. How well it would serve for the Temple Sleep after which the neophyte could mount up the slope through six stone circles to the brow of the head. There all the streams of the Atlantic seem to flow together and rise up to Heaven and that day it was encircled by a crown of white cloud.

On another occasion, returning from an expedition near Strumble Head, above Fishguard, he suddenly said for no apparent reason, 'Stop there is something over there.' There was nothing to distinguish this particular piece of rough, rock strewn moorland from the surrounding country but we stopped and climbed over a stone wall. At first there seemed nothing of interest but careful observation revealed several alignments of small stones about two feet high intersecting each other and forming a star. These alignments pointed to sunrise and sunset at summer and winter solstices and the equinoxes. In fact here was a sort of astronomical clock of some 20 paces in diameter. It was the evening of the 22nd March and we watched the orange sun set behind the stones.

There are some very fine Celtic crosses in West Wales. Pfeiffer was particularly impressed by the one at Llanbadarn Church, near Aberystwyth. On the shaft is portrayed a human torso with a large spiral in the region of the heart from which one stream descends while the other rises toward the head which is surrounded by the aureole of rays. Some of the simpler crosses he noted, combine in a remarkable way the essential form of the human body with that of the cross.

Moving on to the remains of another spiritual stream we visited the ruins of Strata Florida Abbey set in one of the most undisturbed and radiantly peaceful spots on earth. Tradition has it that before Glastonbury was destroyed, the monks sent a precious olive-wood cup to the brethren of Strata Florida for safe keeping. However, Strata Florida itself was burned and the monks took refuge with the Powells of Nanteos near Aberystwyth and left the cup with the family. We called at Nanteos to see it. There are many old letters and testimonials to its healing values from those who have drunk out of it. Only a fragment remains, for people began to break pieces off it as talismans. As we drove up the drive Pfeiffer seemed to sense some rare spiritual quality pervading this lovely valley. After looking intently at the cup, he smelt it. It had a strange bitter-sweet odour which he remarked was the smell of an 'alkahest', a word used to by the alchemists to denote a substance that was the bearer of special spiritual forces. It still had this smell in 196) but alas now in 1961 it has gone. The family of Nanteos have sadly commercialised the cup. It is now widely known and is used nearly every day in summer and bottles of water in which it has been immersed are sold to any casual visitor.

Pfeiffer admitted that this contact with the Celtic stream from early Druidic times to the legends of the Holy Grail had moved him profoundly and had greatly deepened his feeling and aided his approach to the Mystery of Christ. So much did he value it that he brought his wife and

family down one year. He wanted his children to be given this geographical connection with all that he felt it represented spiritually.

My closing memory of him is returning to Dornach in 1939 after some agricultural visit. We passed through Colmar. Casually, without arousing any anticipation, he stopped at the museum and we entered. As a fitting climax the glory of the Grunewald alterpiece blazed forth.....

We can indeed join the USA and the Anthroposophical Society in mourning the loss of a rich , many-sided personality, a vigorous and creative worker who sought to bring spiritual knowledge into the many realms of practical life. His was a very sensitive and understanding nature possessed of indomitable courage to face the struggles and and difficulties that always surrounded him. He had remarkable politicalinsight too and foresaw much of what has happened in Central Europe and the East. He has joined the many leading personalities who have recently crossed the threshold. We may well envy their reunion with our leader, but it is left for us to carry on their work and press forward to new endeavours. They are still with us.