



Marna Pease (1866-1947): Founder of Biodynamics for the English-Speaking World

John Paull

University of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

Joan Harvey

Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

Marna Pease (1866-1947) was the founder of Biodynamic farming in Britain. The 'Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation' (AAF) was inaugurated at the 'World Conference on Spiritual Science and its Practical Applications' (WCSS), London, July 1928, with Marna as the Honorary Secretary. Under the auspices of the AAF, Marna shepherded the fledgling Anglo Biodynamic (BD) movement through the turbulent times of the Great Depression (1929-1939), the Great Anthroposophy Purge (1935), and World War II (1939-1945). Marna stepped down in 1946. By that time there were reportedly over 400 members of the AAF. With Dr Carl Alexander Mirbt, she produced the first BD preparations in Britain at her home, Otterburn Tower, Northumberland. She took up the role of Honorary Secretary of both the AAF and the 'Experimental Circle of Anthroposophical Farmers and Gardeners'. The AAF initially operated out of Otterburn (315 miles north of London, 74 miles south of Edinburgh). Marna was a member of the Executive Council of the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain. She relocated to the Old Mill House at Bray-on-Thames (30 miles west of London) in 1930. Marna typed, bound, and despatched copies around the world, of the English translation of Rudolf Steiner's 'Agriculture Course', to those who joined the Experimental Circle. She edited the first Biodynamics journal in English: 'Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation Notes and Correspondence'. Marna provided members with the BD preparations and she published BD pamphlets. She established a showcase Biodynamic Garden and apiary at Bray-on-Thames. She recruited members, hosted visitors, and maintained an international correspondence with enquirers and members. Marna hosted Carl Mirbt (aka Mier) and his family, first at Otterburn and then at Bray. She hosted Dr Eugen Kolisko, Lilly Kolisko, and their daughter at Bray. Lilly's 'Biologisches Institut am Goetheanum' (Biological Institute at the Goetheanum) relocated from Stuttgart to Bray in 1935. Marna was fluent in German and she translated Steiner's 'Nine Lectures on Bees' (published 1933) and Lilly's 'The Moon and the Growth of Plants' (published 1938). Marna's legacy continues with the Biodynamic Agricultural Association (BDAA) in Britain, and with BD agriculture in the Anglo-sphere presently accounting for 30% of global BD agriculture.

Keywords: Rudolf Steiner, Biodynamic agriculture, Biodynamic farming, Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation (AAF), Experimental Circle of Anthroposophical Farmers and Gardeners, Agriculture Course, Biodynamic Association (BDA), Biodynamic Agricultural Association (BDAA), Anthroposophy, George Kauffmann

(George Adams), Eleanor Merry, Lilly Kolisko, Eugen Kolisko, Carl Mirbt (Carl Mier), Otterburn, Bray.

“There was ... no part of Anthroposophy, and no new venture, that she was not willing to and eager to support, either with money or deeds of kindness” [1, p.2].

INTRODUCTION

Marna Pease (1866-1947) was the founder of Biodynamics in Britain. As the Anglo-guardian of Rudolf Steiner’s ‘Agriculture Course’, she typed and bound and despatched copies of the ‘Agriculture Course’ throughout Britain and the Anglo-world. She maintained an extensive correspondence with devotees and interested parties around the world. This is her story.

Biodynamic farming was the precursor of organic agriculture. Biodynamics is a niche variety of organic agriculture. Organic agriculture produces food without synthetic inputs. There are six exclusions: synthetic fertilisers, synthetic pesticides, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), ionising radiation, prophylactic antibiotics, and engineered nanotechnology [2]. Additionally, Biodynamic producers apply specific ‘preparations’ of various herbs and minerals to their compost heaps and fields [3].

The charismatic New Age philosopher, Dr Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) presented, in eight lectures, his ideas for an agriculture differentiated from chemical agriculture, in June 1924, at the Estate of Carl Keyserlingk, at Koberwitz, Germany (now Kobierzyce, Poland) [4-6]. At his Agriculture Course, Rudolf Steiner founded the ‘Experimental Circle of Anthroposophical Farmers and Gardeners’. The Experimental Circle was tasked by Steiner with testing his “hints” [7] and subsequently publishing procedures that were proven effective. The Experimental Circle was a distributed research entity comprising members around the world (although initially only in Continental Europe). This included the Anglo-world once the Agriculture Course was published in German and in English translation.

Two months after Koberwitz, Rudolf Steiner presented an Anthroposophy Summer School at Torquay, a sea-side resort-town in southern England (August, 1924) [8, 9]. At the time, Rudolf Steiner was mortally ill, and the Torquay visit was his final trip to Britain, or anywhere. The following month, back home in Dornach, Switzerland, he retired to his sick bed (on 28 September, 1924); it was the end of his public life, and, without rallying, he passed away on 30 March 1925 [10].

A young acolyte of Steiner’s, Ehrenfried Pfeiffer (1899-1961), based at Dornach, Switzerland, was the co-ordinator of the Experimental Circle. Pfeiffer published his book ‘Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening’ in five languages in 1938 [11]. The following year, Pfeiffer presented a Summer School of Biodynamics at Lord Northbourne’s farm in Kent, England, in July 1939, explaining Rudolf Steiner’s vision of regarding the farm as an organism [12]. Northbourne took these ideas and stripped out the mysticism of Anthroposophy and the prolixity of Steiner, he coined the term ‘organic farming’, and he published ‘Look to the Land’ in 1940, a manifesto of organic agriculture [13]. Biodynamics was thereby the predecessor and progenitor of organic agriculture [14].

Rudolf Steiner was keen that his views were projected into the Anglo-sphere [15]. He stated: "As a result of the part which is allotted to them since the terrible War, the English-speaking peoples of the Earth have, above all, a great responsibility ... to take it upon themselves to spread the spiritual life" [16, p.422].

It was one woman, Marna Pease, more than any other, who took on the task of disseminating the message of Steiner's 'Agriculture Course' into the Anglo-sphere, especially so in the gestational period (from Koberwitz through to World War II) during which time it evolved from 'Anthroposophical agriculture' to 'Biodynamic farming'.

Marna Pease has been largely a forgotten and unsung hero in the Anglo history of Biodynamics and organic agriculture and the present paper goes some way to correct that historical oversight. Previously only a single photograph of Marna Pease has appeared in the literature, and that as an elderly woman [in 17].

METHODS

The present account draws on primary sources held in public and private archives and collections. We are indebted to the Goetheanum Library & Archive (Dornach, Switzerland), the Secretariat of the General Anthroposophical Society at the Goetheanum (Dornach), the Rudolf Steiner Archiv (Dornach), Rudolf Steiner House Library and Archive (London), Friends House (London), The British Newspaper Archive (British Library, London), worldcat.org, abebooks.com, records and publications of the Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation (AAF), The Soil Association Archives (Bristol), items held in private and family collections, other records contemporary to the period, and recent research on Biodynamics in the UK shared by Mark Moodie and Vivian Griffiths (considera.org). The personal papers of Marna appear to have not survived the passage of time.

For the sake of clarity and simplicity we generally refer to a particular protégé and close associate of Marna Pease as 'Carl Mier' (1902-1975) throughout, despite that he arrived in Britain in 1928 as 'Carl Alexander Mirbt', he was British-naturalised in 1938 as 'Carl Alexander Mirbt', he changed the family name to 'Mier' by Deed Poll during WWII, and he was frequently known as 'Carl Alexander' rather than just 'Carl' by contemporary colleagues. So our use of the name 'Carl Mier' prior to WWII is convenient for the purposes of the present account, but anachronistic.

For the sake of clarity and simplicity we refer to 'Biodynamic farming', 'Biodynamic agriculture', 'Biodynamics' and 'BD' throughout (and interchangeably), despite that these terms were not in public currency before 1938, when Ehrenfried Pfeiffer published his book 'Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening' [18]. The term 'biodynamics' and variations thereof were entirely unfamiliar to Rudolf Steiner. He intended his proposed agriculture to be differentiated from chemical farming, but he did not venture a name for this proposed agriculture. The terminology of 'Biodynamics' and the variations thereof evolved entirely after Rudolf Steiner's death, and arrived via intermediary terms including 'biologisch-dynamisch', and 'biological-dynamic methods' [19, 20]. So our use of the terms 'Biodynamic farming', 'Biodynamic agriculture', 'Biodynamics' and 'BD' prior to 1938 is convenient for the purposes of the present account, but anachronistic.

Marna Pease (born Snow, née Kynaston) (1866-1947) and Howard Pease (1863-1928) were married in 1887 [21], and both have a role in the present account. For the sake of clarity and simplicity, and for differentiation, the present account generally refers to Marna Pease simply as ‘Marna’, and her husband as ‘Howard’.

Marna’s sister, Eleanor Charlotte Merry (née Kynaston) (1873-1956) was generally known as ‘Nellie’ within her family, in publications she generally signed herself as ‘Eleanor C. Merry’ [e.g. 22], in the present account we refer to her as “Eleanor” or ‘Eleanor Merry’.

Where there are variant spelling of names by different authors (e.g. ‘Keyserlingk’ and ‘Keyserlink’) the spelling within a quotation is retained as the name appears in the source, while the spelling outside of a quotation is that deemed best by the present authors.

The Pease family home at Otterburn is described as “Otterburn Tower” in contemporary accounts [23, 24], and in the National Heritage List, which describes ‘Otterburn Tower’ as a Heritage Listed Building, Grade II [25]. To Marna and Howard it was always “Otterburn Tower” [e.g. 26]. Some recent accounts characterise it as “Otterburn Castle”(e.g. otterburncastle.com where it is described as a “luxury hotel”). The terms are used interchangeably in the present account.

‘Bray’ is referred to as “Bray-on-Thames” by the Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation authors, including Marna Pease, and Carl Mier, in the decades under consideration; for example by Mier in 1929 [27, p.1] and two decades later by C. Baker in 1948 [28, p.2] (Fig.8). ‘Bray’ and ‘Bray-on-Thames’ (the nomenclature of the period) are used interchangeably in the present account.

The photos presented are used with the permission of their owners; the images of Marna (Figs, 1, 2, & 3) are previously unpublished, are from the family collection of Marna’s descendants, and are identified by the family as of Marna; the image of Friends House (Fig.4) is supplied by Friends House, London. Other images are attributed in the caption.

RESULTS

Marna Pease’s life falls into two quite distinct periods, viz. before and after 1928. It was the year she was widowed and the year she was introduced to Biodynamic agriculture. From that point on, Biodynamic agriculture became her consuming passion and *raison d’être* (although she knew it as ‘Anthroposophical agriculture’).

Margaret Snow to Marna Kynaston to Marna Pease

Marna Pease was born ‘Margaret Snow’ at Eton, England on 19 September 1866. It seems that throughout her life she was always known as ‘Marna’. Her father Herbert Snow changed his name in 1875 to ‘Herbert Kynaston’ [29] to preserve the lineage of his mother’s maiden name, viz. ‘Kynaston’. Marna, and all her siblings and half siblings, followed suit in adopting ‘Kynaston’ as the family name (Figs.1, 2).

Marna’s father was “a schoolmaster and clergyman and a brilliant classical scholar” [30, p.1]. He was a teacher (‘master’) at Eton, later Principal at Cheltenham College, and later again, a professor of Greek at Durham University [31, 32]. During Marna’s childhood, the family enjoyed

regular trips to the Continent, particularly Germany, Austria and Switzerland during school vacations. Herbert often accepted posts as a visiting chaplain on these occasions. On one occasion, Marna and her younger sister Eleanor spent seven months in Stuttgart attending music lessons and German language lessons. Both girls became fluent in German, which served them well later when they attended lectures by Rudolf Steiner (whose lectures were always in German).

For Marna, there were four younger siblings (Edith, Herbert, Phillip, and Eleanor). Marna's sister Eleanor ('Nellie') Charlotte Kynaston ('Charlotte' after her mother Charlotte Cordeaux) was 'Eleanor Merry' after marrying Dr William Joseph Collings-Merry in 1896 [33]. Marna had 3 older siblings (William, Robert, and Mary) from Herbert's first marriage; his first wife (Mary Louisa Ann Bros) died shortly after the birth of their third child (Mary).

Marna was a child of the Victorian era. It appears that the family aspirations were for the sons to get an education and attend Eton and then Oxford (not always achieved), and for the girls to 'marry well' (which all three surviving daughters, Mary, Marna and Eleanor, did). It was only in 1920 that women students could enrol at Oxford University [34]. Nevertheless, it appears that Marna was likely tutored at home. Her father was variously a school teacher, vicar and a Professor of Greek [31, 32]. He earned extra funds by accepting postings in Europe. Marna's education was predominantly classical and informal; she was well read, well travelled, she spoke fluent German, and she was an accomplished musician.

Marna married Howard Pease on 27 October [21] 1887. She was aged 21, and Howard was 24. Howard was a banker [35] from a wealthy Quaker family of bankers associated with Lloyds Bank [36]. Marna's parents-in-law gave her a diamond bracelet and a grand piano as wedding gifts [21]. Marna and Howard had four children Margaret Valentine, JohnWilliam (Jack), Cuthbert, and Evelyn Audrey, in the space of five years.

Howard purchased Otterburn Tower ('tower' is local usage for a fortified structure in the English/Scottish border region), about 30 miles (50 km) NW of Newcastle, in 1904 for £27,500 (£2.7m in 2023) [37, 38]. It is a grand old residence, dating from 1869, with "five Reception Rooms and fifteen Bedrooms" [39] along with 1320 acres (534 hectares) of Northumberland [40]. Howard was described as "the Lord of the Manor of Otterburn" [24, p.12]. Marna and Howard lived at Otterburn for the rest of their married life. Their second son, Cuthbert, died on the Western Front at the battle of the Somme in 1916 [41].

Howard authored a series of novels, non-fiction books, and newspaper-syndicated short stories [e.g. 42]; several of the novels were written in the local vernacular, which is evidence, along with limited print runs on some books, that Howard intended many to be for local consumption rather than profit [e.g. 43, 44]. Marna was a keen gardener at Otterburn [45] (Fig.3).

During their Otterburn Tower years, it appears that Marna and Howard spent approximately half the year in residence, and half the year in London. The London winters would be a more attractive and practical proposition to the couple than the more severe winters of Northumberland (close to the Scottish border). An advertisement for the sale of chattels at Otterburn (in 1904) warned that the sale would be postponed in the event of a "severe snowstorm" [39]. London could also offer opportunities for social and cultural pursuits.



Fig 1. Marna Pease (aged c.33 years; age estimate by facialage.com) (image source: private collection).

Howard stated, in an historical novel that he authored, that: “he has been separated from his library during the period of writing” [43, p.295], suggesting that he devoted some of his London sojourn time for writing in this genre. Howard acquired a substantial library (by inheritance and purchase) housed at Otterburn, he was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, “his work will naturally appeal to those who love the past and like to connect romance with historical scenes, places, and actions” [advertisement in 43, p.303].

Howard died on 25 January 1928 [24]. Otterburn Castle was sold by Howard’s trustees in 1931. Subsequently, it operated as Otterburn Hotel for some decades. It was left empty from 2003 and fell into a state of dilapidation over more than a decade. After a restoration it presently operates as: “Otterburn Castle Country House, luxury hotel” (otterburncastle.com). At the time of writing Otterburn is for sale at £3,000,000 [46].

New Age Philosophy - Christian Science

Marna was raised as an Anglican and her father was a vicar of the Church of England (which had renounced the Pope in 1534). Howard was a Quaker, i.e., a member of the Religious Society of Friends, and so a Protestant (nonconformist) Christian (viz. not conforming to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England). Marna explored various religious philosophies - including the Christian Science of Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910) [47].

Marna wrote to a friend (in 1913): "I wish you were a Christian Scientist - do you know anything about them? I have seen it change people so wonderfully - not only physically but mentally. I have been a great student of it for the last 3 or 4 years. It is pure Christianity - and not the Church-made imitation" [47, pp.3-4].

Howard was profoundly deaf, reportedly from a childhood sporting injury (trauma to the ear or head is a known cause of deafness). Perhaps this led Marna to explore Christian Science. Mary Baker Eddy in 'Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures' (a book that first appeared in Boston, USA, in 1875) promised a cure of deafness. The book offered a smorgasbord of bold, or preposterous, propositions: "Heal the sick, Raise the dead, Cleanse the lepers, Cast out demons" [48, p.1].

One testimonial in Eddy's book declared: "Ten years ago I was healed of hereditary deafness ... simply through reading the book, Science and Health. For years previous I had consulted and taken treatment from some of the best specialists ... both in England and America, but grew worse all the time. I was urged by a lady who had been healed through Christian Science to buy the book and study it. I did so very reluctantly, but had not read fifty pages ... from that time I have never had a return of the ailment" [Mrs M G, Winnipeg in 48, pp.635-36].

Another testimonial declared: "I had been deaf since childhood ... I met a friend who had been cured in Christian Science ... I got a copy of Science and Health and in three weeks I was entirely cured" [A B, Plittsburgh in 48, pp.652-53].

Another Christian Science author relates the story of a woman telling one of the "First Members" of the Christian Science Church that "You can heal me for I am totally deaf in one ear'. The Member exclaimed, 'In all the realm of the real, there is no such thing as deafness'. The woman immediately ran upstairs ... declaring, 'I am healed, I am healed!'. She said there was a report like a pistol shot in her ear, and her healing was instantaneous" [49, p.10].

For whatever reason, perhaps in pursuit of a cure to Howard's deafness, Marna pursued her interest in Christian Science [50]. There is no record that Howard's deafness was ever cured. It appears that Marna's interest in Christian Science was subsequently eclipsed by her growing interest in Anthroposophy.



Fig 2. Marna Pease, undated, profile portrait (image source: private collection).

New Age Philosophy - Anthroposophy

Carl Mier stated that “For years she had been associated with occult studies and especially with Anthroposophy” [45]. Marna was introduced to Anthroposophy by “the late Mrs Drury Lavin” and she joined the Anthroposophical Society in c.1920 [1, p.1]. Ada Drury-Lavin (1858-1931) was a member of the ‘Council in England’ of ‘The Anthroposophical Society’ in Great Britain [51] and a long-time devotee of Steiner since 1912 [15].

Eleanor Merry wrote of the time of Marna’s introduction: “in those days even the old headquarters 46 Gloucester Place did not yet exist. So during her membership she saw the development of the Society in England from being a small ‘homeless’ group, which had as yet held no public lectures, up to its present stage. At that time, too, there were no schools or other institutions in this country” [1, p.1].

Rudolf Steiner’s doctrines of karma and reincarnation offered adherents some succour for the times. So many families were grieving for lost sons after WW1. Marna was one such grieving mother for the loss of her son, Captain Cuthbert Pease, who died in the Battle of the Somme, 1916, aged 24 years [41].

Eleanor states that: Marna’s “first meeting with Dr Steiner was at the Penmaenmawr Summer School in 1923” (in Wales) [1, p.1]. Eleanor was the ‘Honorary Secretary’ of the International Summer School of Spiritual Science at Penmaenmawr (18 August to 1 September). The promotional flyer declared that: “The School will be invited to study the Evolution of humanity,

past, present, and future in the light of Anthroposophy” [in 51, p.846]. “The International Summer School affords an unique opportunity for combining a holiday amidst beautiful Scenery, with stimulation of thought” [promotional flyer in 51, p.847]. It was Rudolf Steiner’s ninth, and penultimate, visit to Britain.

Only after the death of her husband (on 25 January 1928) did Marna take on a public role in the Anthroposophical Society. She was appointed to a Special Committee (on 3 March 1928) reporting to the Executive Council [52]. Later that year she was elected to the Executive Council of the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain (at an Extraordinary General meeting on 20 & 21 October 1928) [53]. She was reappointed subsequently [54] and she presented readings of Steiner lectures at members meetings of the Society [e.g. 55].



Fig 3. Marna Pease with trug and gardening trowel, she was a keen gardener at Otterburn and Bray (image source: private collection).

Christmas Conference, Dornach, Switzerland, 24 December 1923 - 1 January 1924

Marna and Eleanor attended the ‘Christmas Foundation Meeting’ (December 1923) at Dornach. This meeting was a milestone in the history of the Anthroposophical Society which had been founded in Cologne, France, in December 1912 [56]. At the ‘Christmas Conference for the Foundation of the General Anthroposophical Society’ of 1923, Rudolf Steiner re-founded the Society as the ‘General Anthroposophical Society’ (GAS) [57].

Rudolf Steiner was taken seriously ill on the final day of the Conference. Steiner's health declined in the course of 1924, to the point where on 28 September he retreated from public life to his sick bed. He never recovered, and six months later, on 30 March 1925, he died [10].

Memberships of the General Anthroposophical Society date from January 1924. The memberships of both Marna and Eleanor date from January 1924, and they are thereby foundational members of the GAS [58].

The Christmas Conference was an event for Anthroposophists, so we know that Marna and Eleanor were members prior to January 1924 (and prior to joining the GAS), however the start date of their prior membership (taken to be of the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain), and whether they were members of the Theosophy Society prior to that, both remain undetermined.

Both Marna and Eleanor were admitted as members of the First Class in August 1924 [59]. The Class was an exclusive course for the 'inner sanctum' of Anthroposophists. Rudolf Steiner presented the First Class at Dornach, from 15 February to 20 September 1924, for selected members of the Society (prospective members of the First Class each wrote a personal letter to Rudolf Steiner requesting admission) [59].

Koberwitz, June 1924

The course that was to set Marna's life in a whole new direction, and consume the final two decades of her life, was a course that she did not attend; nor did any other Anglo devotees attend Rudolf Steiner's 'Agriculture Course' [6].

Rudolf Steiner delivered his 'Agriculture Course' of eight lectures at the village of Koberwitz near Breslau, Germany (since 1945, Kobierzyce near Wrocław, Poland) on 7-16 June 1924 [7]. The Course was hosted by Count and Countess Keyserlingk, and conducted at their fine manor house ('pałac' in Polish). This trip was Steiner's final trip to (what was then) Germany. It was the only course he delivered on agriculture.

Steiner stated that the 'Agriculture Course' was what Anthroposophy had to say on the topic of farming [60]. There were 111 attendees, the 'Koberwitzers', all were from Continental countries (including Germany, Poland, Switzerland, Austria and Sweden), all were Anthroposophists, about half were farmers, about a third were women [6]. The 'Agriculture Course' was presented in German, there were no Anglo attendees, and the Course was not translated for attendees.

During the Koberwitz Course, Rudolf Steiner founded the 'Experimental Circle of Anthroposophical Farmers and Gardeners' whose task it was to put Rudolf Steiner's "hints" to the test and, in the fulness of time, to publish the results [7, 60]. Despite his faltering health Rudolf Steiner was 'burning the candle at both ends', presenting the 'Agriculture Course' at the village of Koberwitz in the day, and a lecture series on 'Karmic Relationships' at the nearby city of Breslau in the evenings. Rudolf Steiner remarked after the Agriculture Course: "Now we have accomplished also this important work" [61, p.552].

Torquay & Tintagel, August 1924

In August 1924 Rudolf Steiner was in the southern seaside resort town of Torquay, England to deliver what would be his final Summer School in Britain. His topic was: "True and False Paths in Spiritual Investigation" [8]. In parallel with this series of lectures, Steiner presented another series, "The Kingdom of Childhood", with the view to encourage the founding of a Waldorf School in Britain [62]. At Torquay, there were no Agriculture lectures and no references to the Koberwitz Course. Eleanor Merry was the organising Secretary for the Torquay Summer School.

Penmaenmawr in North Wales in 1923) [63-65]. Steiner was the 'star attraction' of these events. He delivered his lectures in German (generally in three 20 minute brackets) interlaced by renderings into English by George Kaufmann (1894-1963) (in three corresponding 20 minute brackets) (during WW2 George Kaufmann changed his name to 'George Adams', adopting his mother's maiden name, and forgoing his Australian father's Germanic name).

The Torquay Summer School came on the heels of the Koberwitz Course. Marna was a member of the small party which accompanied Rudolf Steiner on a day-trip to Tintagel (from Torquay on the south coast to Tintagel on the west coast). The travelling party were: Rudolf Steiner, Elisabeth Vreede (1879-1943) and Guenther Wachsmuth (1893-1963) (both of whom had attended at Koberwitz), Ita Wegman (1876-1943), Daniel Dunlop (1868-1935), and sisters, Eleanor Merry and Marna Pease [51, 66].

This was Rudolf Steiner's final visit beyond his adopted home of Dornach, Switzerland. It was an opportunity for an Anthroposophical agriculture seed to be planted, and perhaps it was on that Tintagel trip? That remains undetermined.

Widowed, 25 January 1928

At 61 years of age, Marna was a widow. Her husband, Howard Pease, died on 25 January 1928, aged 64 years. Howard left an estate of £240,000 (£12.2 million today) [38]. For Marna, Howard left "my Otterburn Tower Estate ... to the use of my said wife during her lifetime" [26, ¶14, p.4]. Howard left a will of eight pages comprising 28 paragraphs [26]. Howard appointed "my brother John William Beaumont Pease Chairman of Lloyds Bank Limited" and "Charles H Dent ... a Director of Barclays Bank Limited" as executors and trustees [26, ¶1, p.1]

Marna was left £1000: "I bequeath to my dear wife Marna Pease the sum of one thousand pounds to be paid to her as soon as may be after my death" [26, ¶11, p.3]. The trustees were directed that of "residuary trust moneys and the investments" they were "to pay the income thereof to my wife during her life" [26, ¶16, p.5].

The Gazette states that: "A life interest trust enables the person making a will (testator) to preserve the value of their estate for future generations" [67]. According to one account: "It was ... common practice ... for testators to put conditions on their bequests to female relatives and use other legal tactics to try to protect their inheritances, such as appointing trustees and establishing separate estates. This means that the different treatment meted out to women and men in wills reflects their differing status under the law, rather than the desire to restrict women's access to property per se ... controlling what happened to one's property after death was a universal urge and duty" [68, p.77].

Howard left Otterburn Tower and farms to be managed by the trustees for his children and descendants, specifying that Marna had usage rights “during her life without impeachment of waste” [26, ¶14, p.4]. From the provisions in Howard’s will, Marna was later able to employ domestic staff, variously, gardeners, a housekeeper, and a parlourmaid, when she moved to Bray-on-Thames in 1930 [e.g. 69].

Otterburn Tower was homely for Marna, Howard and family visiting every summer. It is rambling, capacious, and has a history that dates back centuries. However, Otterburn was not a practical home for the widowed Marna, especially in winter, so despite the biodynamic agricultural work she had begun there in 1928 and her love of the place [1], “By Direction of Mrs Howard Pease”, the trustees offered Otterburn Tower and the farms for sale in 1931 [70, p.4].

An advertisement for the sale of “Otterburn Tower Estate including Otterburn Tower” offered: “A Stone-Built Castellated Residence of Convenient Size ... 6 Reception Rooms, 12 Principal Bed and Dressing Rooms ... Four Servant’s rooms, complete Domestic Offices ... Beautiful Old Gardens ... Three Capital Sheep and Stock-Bearing Farms ... Grouse Moor of 774 Acres Excellent Shooting, 3 Miles of Trout and Salmon fishing ... The whole extending to about 1258 Acres” [70].

World Conference on Spiritual Science (WCSS), 26 July - 1 August 1928

1928 was a milestone year for Marna, the year she was widowed, the year the direction of her life changed, the year she found her *raison d’être*, and the beginning of what Carl Mier called “her life’s work” and to which she devoted the next two decades of her life [45, p.4].

Milestone events for Anthroposophists in 1928 were (a) the ‘World Conference on Spiritual Science and its Practical Applications’ (WCSS), 20 July - 1 August and (b) the opening of the new Goetheanum building, Anthroposophy headquarters, at Dornach, Switzerland, on 29 September) [71].

The World Conference on Spiritual Science came in the wake of the ‘World Power Conference’, also founded by Daniel Dunlop (that 1924 event hosted 1,700 delegates from 40 countries); it was later renamed the ‘World Energy Conference’ (in 1968) [72].

The World Conference on Spiritual Science (WCSS) was a vision of Daniel Dunlop 1868-1935), a Theosophist since the 1890s, turned Anthroposophist in 1920 [73]. Dunlop was the Chairman of the World Conference, Eleanor Merry was the Honorary Organising Secretary [74], and Marna funded the project [George Adams, 1958, in 75, p.222]. The World Conference was held at the then newly opened Friends House, London (Fig.4). Ita Wegman reported that there were 600 attendees [Mitteilungsblatt, #34, 1928, in 75, p.221].

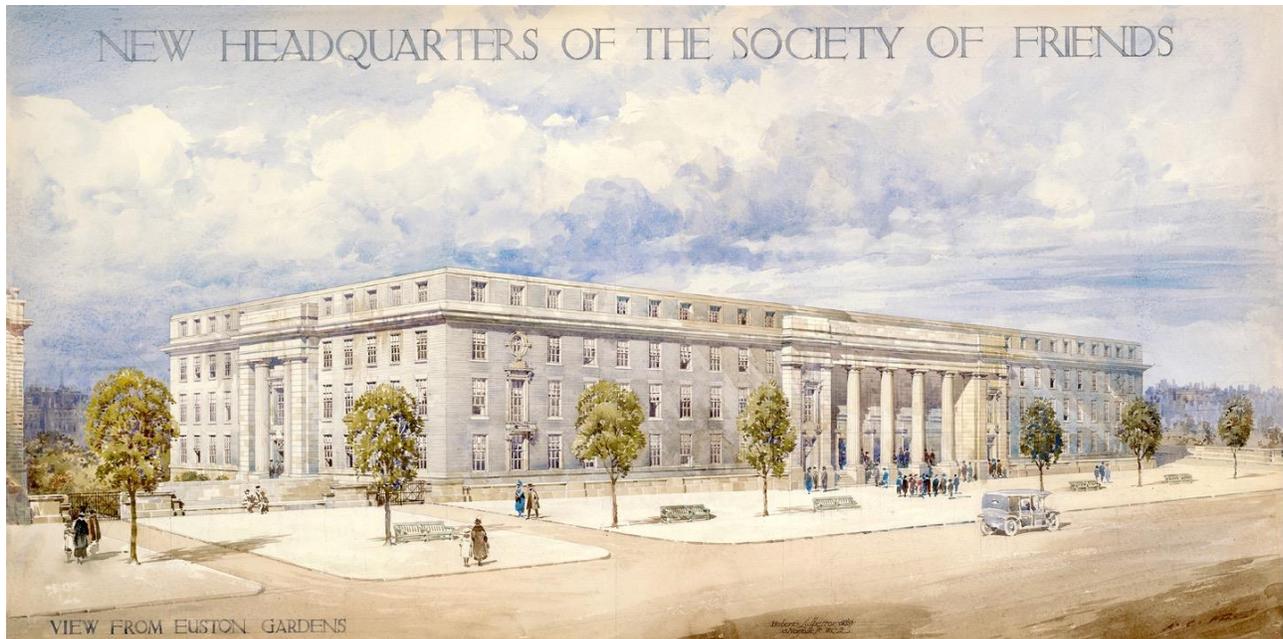


Fig 4. The World Conference on Spiritual Science, held at Friends House in 1928, was the crucible for Biodynamics in the English-speaking world (image source: Friends House, London).

Dunlop invited Count Carl Keyserlingk and Countess Johanna Keyserlingk of Koberwitz, as guests at the World Conference. Johanna Keyserlingk attended, however: “Count Keyserlingk was to have been with us at the World-Conference in London in July, but was prevented by illness” [76, p.419] In his stead, Keyserlingk sent his personal secretary, 26 year old Dr Carl Alexander Mirbt (later Mier), to deliver a lecture: “Agricultural Depression - its causes and means for its relief” [75, p.220].

As Carl Mier related: “In 1928, Marna Pease stood at a kind of turning point in her life. For years she had been closely associated with occult studies and especially with Anthroposophy. Her husband, Howard Pease, had died not long before and now she was able to devote her full energy to anthroposophical work, and at the time of the World Conference she was not yet aware how important a part she was to play in the development of the anthroposophical agricultural work” [77, p.1].

Biodynamics took root in Britain at the WCSS: “During the World Conference a small group of friends banded together to see to the implementation of the plan of developing bio-dynamic work in this country. Mrs Pease, from the very beginning, took upon herself a most generous share of the financial obligations” [77, p.1].

There was some logic in Marna taking on Biodynamics as a particular focus of her Anthroposophy. She “had always been a very keen gardener and was well known in gardening circles for her erudition as much as for her success e.g. in raising certain types of Lilies from seed. With quiet authority she could speak on these matters” [77, p.1] (Fig.3).

The Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation (AAF), 1928

The Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation (AAF) was founded in July 1928 in London at the ‘World Conference on Spiritual Science and its Practical Applications’ [78]. Marna was the

Honorary Secretary, and Carl Mier was the Agricultural Adviser. Mier stated: “By calling ourselves ‘Anthroposophical’ we say clearly the starting point of our endeavours” [79, p.50]. The term ‘Biodynamic’ to describe this differentiated agriculture slowly emerged over the ensuing decade [80].

Eleanor Merry recalled that at the time of the Conference: “Mrs Pease was then living at her husband’s beautiful estate in Northumberland, and even before the actual inauguration of the group had begun to make some use of the biological-dynamic methods there” [1, p.1].

Carl Mier recalled: “When in 1928, during the ‘World Conference on Spiritual Science and its Practical Applications’ some friends considered what could be done to establish anthroposophical agriculture in this country, they collected ‘funds’ which they thought necessary to carry on for a few months. There was no definite membership of the ‘Foundation’. In December 1931 it was realised that a more secure basis was needed and a definite membership with an annual subscription was introduced. In the following years the income of the Foundation has depended increasingly on these subscriptions” [79, p.51].

The AAF published “Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation Notes and Correspondence’ regularly, from 1929 through to 1951. The earliest issue that we have identified is dated July 1929. Carl Mirbt was the editor of this ostensible first issue and it is issued from Bray [27]. The final ‘Notes and Correspondence [jointly] published by the Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation and the Bio-dynamic Association’ appeared in 1951 and stated that: “we would like to draw attention to the first appearance on our cover of the names of our reunited groups. As the new name of the joint organisation is still under discussion, we have to adopt this compromise temporarily” [81, p.1]. They settled on the new name: ‘Bio-Dynamic Agricultural Association’ (BDAA).

By Dec 1932 there were 75 members of the AAF, who were included in the 180 subscribers to the AAF ‘Notes and Correspondence’. Marna reported that: “on five or six farms biological-dynamic methods are being applied ... in addition to thirty or forty gardens” [82, p.214]. By the following year there were “well over 130 members” [83, p.23].

As well as the ‘Notes and Correspondence’ periodical, the AAF offered lectures, (“the lectures are usually illustrated by lantern slides from the laboratories of the Goetheanum” [84, p.149]), conferences, pamphlets [e.g. 85], a lending library, advisory visits, Marna’s showcase BD garden and apiary at Bray, the opportunity to purchase the BD preparations, and seeds grown biodynamically.

Doris Davy reported that in 1939 there were 276 members, and a map of the world in the AAF office with pins indicating the locations of members: “The line of pins now reaches from New Zealand to the west coast of Canada”. She reported 76 visitors to Bray during the year “including some chemists and scientists who were particularly interested in the garden’s freedom from plant diseases, and in the method of growing and drying herbs. In the dried herbs they actually found an increase in the essential oils” [86, p.31]. There were 205 enquiries by letter during the year. This issue of ‘Notes and Correspondence’ was jointly edited by Marna Pease and Carl Mirbt.

Marna was keen that the AAF was not just farmers and gardeners (and Anthroposophists) but also consumers: “the work of the Foundation has found a growing interest ... among the consumers, for the consumer is today becoming more and more aware of the fact that the food offered him is no longer of the same wholesome quality as even a few years ago” [84, p.149].

Marna reported: “This growing interest of the consumer affects the work of the Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation in two ways. In the first place, it calls for careful and conscientious study of the consumer’s requirements, and where the need arises some general indication of the right principles of nutrition and of better methods of preparation of food ... In the second place, the demands of the consumer must result in more attention being given by the farmer and market gardener to the methods which can fully satisfy these requirements. It is the aim of the Foundation to establish this co-operation on a real and firm basis of united work” [84, p.150].

Marna declared: “the Foundation wishes it to be clearly understood that membership is by no means limited to those who have the facilities, and wish to work practically with these methods on farm or garden, for everyone interested and willing to help in the critical problems of agriculture and nutrition, on the basis of a true knowledge of Man, will be welcomed” [84, p.150].

The List of AAF Members, dated October 1946, has 339 entries, mostly in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, but also included were members in: Australia, British Malaya, Ceylon, France, Guernsey, Ireland (Eire), Italy, Jamaica, Jersey, New Zealand, Nigeria, Nyasaland, South Africa, and USA [87].

In her obituary of Marna, Eleanor Merry reported of the AAF, that “By 1946... it had over four hundred members” [1].

The First Biodynamic Preparations, Otterburn 1928

Marna invited Carl Mier (then Mirbt) to visit Otterburn after the WCSS. Together they gathered the prescribed herbs et alia for the BD preparations as described by Rudolf Steiner in the ‘Agriculture Course’.

Mier recalled: “Otterburn Towers breathed warmth and hospitality, but also culture and industry ... it was here that she made an active start with putting into practice the agricultural teachings of Rudolf Steiner. A new world opened for me: the days were filled with drives around the country, with the gathering of herbs and collecting of materials for making the preparations. It must not have been easy for Mrs Pease who was at home in the world of art and literature, of music and Eastern learning, to be present at the slaughter house so that she could gain firsthand knowledge of the organs we use, then to handle these organs, fill them with herbs etc etc” [45, p.2].

Both Marna and Carl Mier were naive in this pursuit, neither had made the preparations, and so they proceeded ‘by the book’. It appears that theirs were the first BD preparations made in Britain, the first put to practical application, and that Otterburn was ground zero for Biodynamics in Britain (Fig.5).

As David Clements recalled: “The leading person of that group was Mrs Marna Pease, the wife of one of the Pease bankers in Otterburn in Northumberland. Carl went up there straight away to see her. He confessed to her that he had never made the Preparations before and had never seen them made! So they started from Steiner’s description in the Agricultural Course and they have been made every year since then” [Clements, 2004, quoted in 75, p.196].

This was the beginning of a partnership that lasted until Marna’s death. Marna invited Mier to stay in Britain and help in the founding of this fledgling new agriculture. Mier accepted the invitation, and brought his wife and children to stay at Otterburn. At the time, Germany was in a state of social and financial upheaval, and Adolf Hitler and the Nazis were on the rise and exploiting the post-WWI societal unrest [88]. Added to that, Mier’s patron, Carl Keyserlingk, died on 29 December 1928 [89]. So, Marna’s offer was attractive.

Cynthia Chance recalled: “I met the works of Rudolf Steiner through Mrs Pease. Here at last was what I was looking for” [90, Ch.16, p.1]. “Marna Pease had most generously accommodated Dr Mirbt, and his family up at Otterburn. So it was to him I applied for instructions on how I should set to work. He came down to Casing and we got busy at once making a compost heap” [90, Ch.15, p.1].

“One of my main memories of those pre-war days is Carl’s enthusiasm and his capacity to make human contacts. Already when he first came he and Mama Pease had made the first preparations together at her home at Otterburn, Northumberland” [Clements, 2002, quoted in 75, p.684].



Fig 5. Otterburn was the testbed for Biodynamics in Britain with Marna Pease and Dr Carl Mirbt making the first BD preparations in 1928 (image source: the authors, 2023).

Experimental Circle

Rudolf Steiner’s Experimental Circle was always intended as a distributed research group - with farmers and gardeners working and experimenting on their own ‘patch’ and somehow collating the results. There were no Anglo disciples at Koberwitz and it was the publication of the ‘Agriculture Course’ in German and the subsequent translation by George Kaufmann into

English that facilitated the diffusion of the Experimental Circle into the Anglo-sphere. Interested Anthroposophists applied in writing to join the Circle, declared where they intended to do their experiments, and were issued a numbered copy of the 'Agriculture Course', the contents of which they were bound to keep confidential.

David Clements recalled: "When Carl Alexander Mirbt (later changed to Meir) brought the Bio-Dynamic impulse to this country ... at D.N. Dunlop's initiative, the organisation was straight way formed called the Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation (the name Bio-Dynamic had not yet been thought of) and at the same time the 'Experimental Circle of Anthroposophical Farmers and Gardeners' was formed. The latter was composed of those members of the Foundation who were Anthroposophists" [Clements in 75, p.222].

Carl Mier recalled, of Marna: "One of her first practical contributions was the typing of further copies of the Koberwitz Agriculture Course, which had just been translated by Mr George Adams [he was then George Kaufmann]. She spent hours and hours at her typewriter, making copies which later she would bind so very neatly and carefully" [77, p.1].

Copies of the Kaufmann translation were typed, bound, and despatched by Marna throughout the Anglo-world for the next decade, to Britain [17], and also, for example, to USA [91], Australia [92] and New Zealand [93]. The 'Agriculture Course' in German was a printed book, but the Course in English was hand-typed, bound, and despatched by Marna. So, Marna's role was crucial in the growth and development of the Experimental Circle.

Marna was the Honorary Secretary of the Experimental Circle as well as of the AAF [94]. The Circle was a subset of the AAF members. Members of the AAF who were Anthroposophists were eligible to join the Circle. In 1929 there were 14 members of the Experimental Circle [95]. At a Circle meeting in 1934, held at Maurice Woods farm in Huby, Clements recalls the attendance of "6 or 8", including Marna, Dr Eugen Kolisko (1893-1939), and George Kaufmann [94, p.1].

"As a direct result of the enthusiasm emerging from Carl Mirbt's lecture at the World Conference on Spiritual Science the Experimental Circle in the UK was formed for those who were Anthroposophists in the AAF. 'The Experimental Circle of Anthroposophical Farmers and Gardeners in Great Britain and other English-speaking Countries', to give it its full name, was run by Daniel Dunlop, George Adams, Maurice Wood and Carl Mirbt. They hold monthly meetings for years" [75, p.222].

While joining the AAF was simply a matter of paying the annual dues, joining the Experimental Circle involved a written application to join, a signed confidentiality agreement, a declaration of where experiments were to be conducted, and then receiving a personalised and numbered copy of the 'Agriculture Course', the contents of which were not to be shared. The book was to be returned should the applicant cease to be a member of the Anthroposophical Society or on their death.

Mier reported that in November 1929 "the members of the Experimental Circle met at Bray, where they held fruitful discussions full of hope for the future" [96].

The Annual General Meeting of the AAF held at Rudolf Steiner House in 1933 “was preceded by an important Conference of the ‘Experimental Circle of Anthroposophical Farmers and Gardeners in Great Britain, and other English-speaking countries’ which according to our Constitution, ‘shall provide an informative background for the practical application of the biological-dynamic methods’” [83, p.27].

Ehrenfried Pfeiffer published his book ‘Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening’ in 1938 which arguably satisfied Steiner’s injunction to test his “hints” of Koberwitz and to publish the results of what works. At this point Biodynamics entered the public domain and implicitly this released Experimental Circle members from the bounds of their confidentiality agreement.

Old Mill House at Bray

The Old Mill House at Bray was purchased by sisters Marna Pease and Eleanor Merry in “the winter of 1928-29” [1, p.1] (Fig.6). By then both women were widowed (Eleanor in 1922; Marna in 1928).

Bray was initially launched as “The Anthroposophical Country Centre”, on 23 March 1929: “At 6.30 all met together in the charming lecture room which is situated over the rushing mill-stream. Mr Dunlop first gave a short welcoming address, which was followed by a few words from Mrs Pease. Mrs Merry then spoke on the spiritual currents ... and of ... the revelations given by Dr Steiner concerning the etheric forces of the Earth, and the agricultural revival that springs from this knowledge, and which will have a centre of activity at Bray” [97, p.111].

A contemporary account explained: “What is this Centre intended for? As a country home for the study and practice of Anthroposophy, as a ‘school’ no less than a place of recuperation. It is for non-members as well as members. A study-class is held every Saturday, and a lecture or lectures given over the week-end. The first activity to be commenced there is agricultural. Dr Carl Alexandre Mirbt (formerly Secretary to Count Keyserlink) and his wife and child are in permanent residence there, and other members, or non-members, come and go for shorter periods” [97, p.111]. “The keynote of Bray - to establish an orientation towards the Future” [97, p.111].



Fig 6. The Old Mill House at Bray was home for Marna Pease and headquarters for the Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation from 1930 (image source: contemporary postcard, private collection).

It appears that initially Bray was primarily Eleanor's, project, as a venue to run Anthroposophy courses and retreats. However Eleanor was no businesswoman, she was more socially-dependent and less persistent than her sister Marna, she was dividing her time between Bray and her flat in London, and it appears that this Anthropop venture was not a success. Eleanor states that after "Two years ... circumstances forced me to leave Bray and return to London" [1, p.1]. At this point Marna was still living at Otterburn and the AAF was still based at Otterburn, although the Mirbt family had moved to Bray.

Dr Guenther Wachsmuth and Ehrenfried Pfeiffer of the Natural Sciences Section at the Goetheanum visited Bray in June 1929 conferring with members of the Experimental Circle and meeting members and friends of the Society [98]. By July 1929, "The Old Mill House Bray" was being described as the "Anthroposophical Country Centre and Headquarters in England of Anthroposophical Agriculture" with Eleanor Merry and Carl Mirbt then in residence [99, p.243]. Then, according to Eleanor, Daniel Dunlop (1868-1935), Chairman of the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain [73], "with his gentle and persuasive wisdom, prevailed on Mrs Pease to transfer her activities from Northumberland and to live at the Old Mill House. Actually this was a very great sacrifice for Mrs Pease. She greatly loved her north country home with its wonderful gardens and farms. But her husband had died and it was lonely to be so far from other Anthroposophists. This urged her to accept Mr Dunlop's suggestion" [1, pp.1-2].

The repurposing of the Old Mill House in 1930 from the 'Anthroposophical Country Centre' of 1929 [100] was explained by Marna and Eleanor: "After an experimental year of combined guest-house and Anthroposophical agricultural work, we have considered it advisable to devote the Mill House and Garden in future to the work of the Agricultural Foundation in England. For this purpose it will, from November [1930], be the residence of Mrs Pease, Hon.Secretary to the Foundation, which is established under the Natural Science Section of the

Goetheanum ... Dr Mirbt will continue to reside at the Mill House as Agricultural correspondent and adviser" [101, p.307].

The work of the AAF at Bray was to include: "the making of the many biological-dynamic preparations for those who do not belong to the Experimental Circle ... also ... keeping in touch with and advising all the working members of the Experimental Circle in the English-speaking world ... In addition to the practical work there will be weekly meetings for the Mill House residents for the study of the Agricultural Course; and other lectures of Dr Steiner's will be read on Sunday afternoons, when friends will be welcome" [101, p.307].

Bray is 30 miles (48km) west of London; there is a train to Maidenhead, and the last two miles is a five minute bus ride (for example). This contrasts with Otterburn, which is 310 miles (500 km) north of London and more than a five hour drive. And with its milder climate, there was little prospect of being 'snowed in' at Bray.

Marna made The Old Mill House at Bray her new home and the office of the AAF. She lived the rest of her life at Bray, and as Eleanor stated: "To this work [of the AAF] Mrs Pease devoted the rest of her life" [1, p.2].

Bray became a magnet for Anthroposophists and Biodynamic enthusiasts that Otterburn could never have matched, due to distance and accessibility. Eleanor recalled: "There must be very many members of the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain who can recall her lively enthusiasm in conversations on Anthroposophy and Dr Steiner" [1, p.2].

Marna "used to drive or travel to many neighbouring members of the Agricultural Foundation, and invite them to the Mill House. Many will have their remembrances of her in the old Mill Room, showing visitors the big honey extractors. the many samples of herbs, drying, or packed into their glistening glass pots; or in the autumn, the whole floor space covered with rows and rows of many hundreds of apples; while her talking was accompanied by the rushing sound of the mill stream that flowed under the floor" [1, p.2] (Fig.6).

In the hands of Marna, Bray became the Anglo showcase for Biodynamics (Fig.7). Visitors to Bray "will see her proudly showing and explaining the well-made compost heaps; or the bees crowding on the specially chosen 'bee plants' in the herb garden, and drinking from the fountain ... Her knowledge of their mysterious ways was immense" [1, p.2].

Eleanor reported that there were also visitors from the Continent: "One may remember, too, her delight in the occasional visits of Dr [Elisabeth] Vreede - 'little Vreede' as she called her - and they would look at the 'Bray stars', often so very brilliant above the wide, flat landscape" [1, p.2]

Another Continental visitor: "She was very devoted to Dr [Ita] Wegman, for whom in 1930, she arranged, and accompanied, an English tour. Mrs Pease did everything possible towards helping on the medical work in this country, inaugurated by Dr Wegman; and was able to gather together all the medical lectures (in English) into a small special library for the doctors. I shall always remember the meticulous care she expended on the binding of the copies and arranging

them in their own bookcase. This neatness, care and love was typical of every single thing she did" [1, p.1].

Carry on through the Great Depression, the Great Anthroposophy Purge, and WWII

Marna negotiated the AAF through the great headwinds of the times, the Great Depression (1929-1939) [102], the 'Great Anthroposophy Purge' (1935), and World War II (1939-1945). These were turbulent and challenging times for a fledgling organisation to survive and even flourish.



Fig 7. Marna Pease in her Biodynamic garden at the Old Mill House, Bray (image source: private collection).

In the Great Anthroposophy Purge of 1935, the Anthroposophy Society in Great Britain was excommunicated by the Dornach 'Gang of Three' at the Goetheanum (Marie Steiner, Albert Steffen and Dr Guenther Wachsmuth). This isolated leading British Anthroposophists of the day, including Marna, Eleanor Merry, Daniel Dunlop, and George Kaufmann, from Dornach. Colleagues of Marna's, and prominent Anthroposophists of their day, Dr Ita Wegman (appointed by Rudolf Steiner to lead the Medical Section of the School of Spiritual Science at the Goetheanum), and Elisabeth Vreede (appointed by Steiner to lead the Mathematical and the Astronomical Section) were also among the individuals and groups expelled in the purge. The latter two expulsions reduced the Vorstand (executive board) at the Goetheanum from five to three members. The GAS "had driven out and lost a great number of its best spirits by the absurd exclusions of 1935 ... Would it even be able to recover?" [103].

Under Marna's stewardship, the AAF and the Anglo Experimental Circle carried on despite this excommunication from Anthroposophy headquarters. Both Ita Wegman and Elisabeth Vreede maintained their association with Marna and the AAF.

One unfortunate consequence of the excommunication was that Marna and the AAF were unaware of the lectures by Ehrenfried Pfeiffer in July 1939 at the 'Betteshanger Summer School and Conference on Biodynamic Farming' held at Lord Northbourne's farm in Kent [12, 94]. The event is described as "the missing link between biodynamic agriculture and organic farming" [12, p.13]. Within a year of the Betteshanger Conference at which Pfeiffer explained the Steinerian view that 'the farm is an organism', Northbourne coined the term 'organic farming' and published his manifesto of organic farming, 'Look to the Land' [13, 14, 104].

Lilly & Eugen Kolisko

Lilly Kolisko (1889-1976) and Dr Eugen Kolisko (1893-1939) were also expelled in the Great Purge of 1935, and with their daughter, Eugena, they fled to Britain. Marna accommodated them at Bray. Lilly transplanted her 'Biologisches Institut am Goetheanum' (Biological Institute at the Goetheanum) from Stuttgart to Bray (in 1935).

Lilly was an indefatigable researcher with an *idée fixe* (viz. the moon and planets influence plant growth) that she pursued for the rest of her life. She was a prodigious author on this topic [e.g. 105, 106, 107]. Those behind the Great Purge of 1935 included Ehrenfried Pfeiffer and Dr Guenther Wachsmuth (of the Natural Sciences Section at the Goetheanum), so Lilly's work was ignored by Dornach. When Pfeiffer published his book 'Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening' in 1938, thereby lifting the veil of secrecy from biodynamics, Lilly's work received no mention.

Lilly led an abstemious life in Britain in impecunious circumstances. Her husband Eugen was a medical doctor (from Vienna University) but he did not have the right to practice medicine in Britain (and he didn't). Eugen was a founding Waldorf teacher at Stuttgart (personally invited by Steiner), but he did not take up such a career in Britain. His Anthropop ventures in Britain failed to prosper, and he dropped dead, among strangers, at Paddington Station in 1939. Neither Lilly nor Eugen were of independent means, so together they had struggled financially, and Lilly more so after Eugen's premature death.

Lilly's 1936 book 'The Moon and the Growth of Plants' was translated by Marna [106]. Lilly's book 'Agriculture of Tomorrow' appeared in 1946 (only in English) claiming Eugen as the lead author [108] although he was by then seven years in the grave. It was an authorial conceit that honoured her husband and perhaps added a measure of 'social proof' to the work since Eugen was a medical doctor and Lilly lacked qualifications other than on-the-job training as a WW1 nurse in Austria.

Passing the Baton

For Marna, 1946 was the year of 'passing the baton'. Her 'right hand man' throughout the years from the World Conference of 1928 had been Carl Alexander Mier.

By the Annual General Meeting of the AAF in 1946, Marna was aged eighty years, she stepped down as Secretary and Carl Mier took over the role. Under his leadership, the AAF would operate from Longbridge House, Warminster, Wiltshire. In recognition of her great service, Marna was appointed to the role of President of the AAF. She died the following year, on Sunday, 31st August 1947, a week after a stroke [1]. She was 81 years old.

Carl Mier declared that: “Rudolf Steiner’s Agricultural impulse has had in Mrs Pease a good and strong guardian, and it is up to us to continue the work with the same enthusiasm and devotion” [109, p.1].

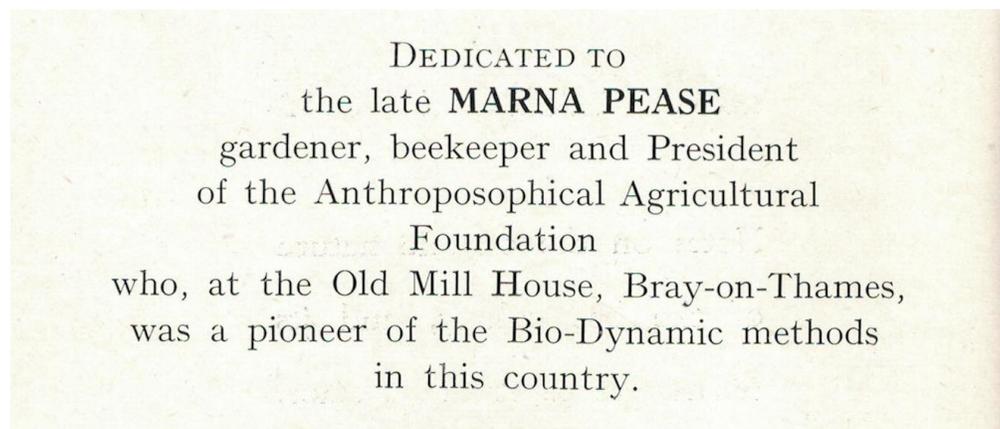


Figure 8. Dedication to Marna Pease in ‘Understanding the Honey Bee’, 1948, by a member of the Experimental Circle of Anthroposophical Farmers and Gardeners [110].

LEGACY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Marna Pease lived to witness the seed that Rudolf Steiner planted at his Agriculture Course at Koberwitz in 1924, germinate and grow on Anglo soil. Steiner called for an agriculture differentiated from the chemical agriculture of the times. In Marna’s lifetime, the terminology of this differentiated agriculture evolved from ‘Anthroposophical’ agriculture, through ‘Biologisch-Dynamisch’ agriculture, to settle as ‘Biodynamic’ agriculture.

In Marna’s time the early tentative steps of ‘organic agriculture’, as an offshoot of Biodynamic farming, were taken. She may have been aware of the founding of the world’s first organic agriculture association, the ‘Australian Organic Farming and Gardening Society’ in Sydney, Australia, in 1944 [111]. She would have been aware of the founding of Britain’s ‘Soil Association’ in London in 1946 [112].

Table 1. Biodynamic hectares in English-speaking countries [data source: 113].

COUNTRY	BD HECTARES
Australia	49,797
India	9,303
USA	9,001
UK	3,886
Sri Lanka	1,479
New Zealand	928
South Africa	245
Ireland	93
TOTAL	74,732

Marna’s personal efforts saw biodynamics taken up across the Anglo-sphere. She had personally typed, bound, and despatched copies of the English-language translation of the Agriculture Course throughout the Anglophone world, she kept advocates informed with

regular newsletters, and she maintained an international correspondence answering questions and sharing information.

Marna persisted in her endeavours through the societal turbulence of the Great Depression (1929-1939), through the shock of the expulsion of the Anthroposophy Society in Great Britain from Anthropop headquarters in Dornach, Switzerland (in 1935), and through the lean and catastrophic times of World War II (1939-1945) when help and resources were scarce, and the championing of Germanic ideas was an unmentionable.

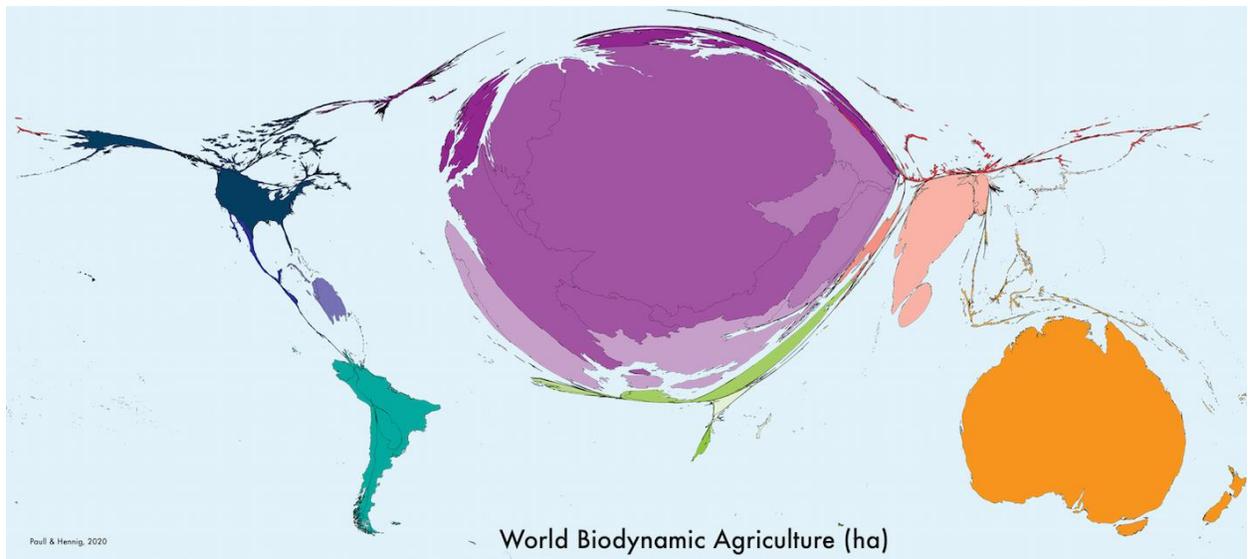


Figure 9. World map of Biodynamic Agriculture (equal-area cartogram) 2020; Anglophone countries account for 30%; Germany and Australia account for 34% and 20%, respectively, of global BD hectares [source: 113].

The Great Purge of 1935 sundered the Anthroposophists in Britain, and that included splitting the British enthusiasts for Biodynamics. The eventual reunification of the British advocates of Biodynamics is beyond the scope of the present paper and will be examined in a future paper.

References

1. Merry, E., In Memoriam - Marna Pease. *Weekly News Sheet For Members of the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain*, 1947. XXIV(10, October): p. 1-2.
2. Paull, J., The Global Growth and Evolution of Organic Agriculture, in *Research Advancements in Organic Farming*, J.N. Bhakta and S. Rana, Editors. 2023, Nova Science Publishers: New York. p. 1-17.
3. Pfeiffer, E., *Practical Guide to the Use of the Bio-Dynamic Preparations*. Revised Edition ed. 1938, London: Rudolf Steiner Publishing Co.
4. Steiner, R., *Landwirtschaftlicher Kursus gehalten zu Koberwitz 7. bis 16. Juni 1924*. 1924, (First issued: 1926). Dornach: Herausgegeben von der Naturwissenschaftlichen Sektion am Goetheanum.
5. Paull, J., Attending the first organic agriculture course: Rudolf Steiner's Agriculture Course at Koberwitz, 1924. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 2011. 21(1): p. 64-70.

6. Paull, J., The Koberwitzers: Those who attended Rudolf Steiner's Agriculture Course at Koberwitz in 1924, *World's foundational organic agriculture course. International Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 2020. 6(2): p. 47-54.
7. Steiner, R., *To All Members: The Meetings at Koberwitz and Breslau. Anthroposophical Movement*, 1924. 1: p. 9-11.
8. Steiner, R., *True and False Paths in Spiritual Investigation: 11 Lectures given at Torquay, August, 1924. 1924, (Issued 1927). London: Anthroposophical Publishing Co.*
9. Paull, J., *Torquay: In the Footsteps of Rudolf Steiner. Journal of Biodynamics Tasmania*, 2018. 125(March): p. 26-31.
10. Collison, H., *Rudolf Steiner. X a.m. 30th March, 1925, R.I.P. Anthroposophical Movement*, 1925. 2(13): p. 101.
11. Paull, J., *Biodynamic Agriculture: The journey from Koberwitz to the World, 1924-1938. Journal of Organic Systems*, 2011. 6(1): p. 27-41.
12. Paull, J., *The Betteshanger Summer School: Missing link between biodynamic agriculture and organic farming. Journal of Organic Systems*, 2011. 6(2): p. 13-26.
13. Northbourne, Lord, *Look to the Land. Oxford Bodleian Library copy date stamped 27 May 1940 ed. 1940, London: Dent.*
14. Paull, J., *Lord Northbourne, the man who invented organic farming, a biography. Journal of Organic Systems*, 2014. 9(1): p. 31-53.
15. Villeneuve, C., *Rudolf Steiner in Britain: A Documentation of his Ten Visits, Volume I, 1902-1921. 2004, Forest Row, UK: Temple Lodge.*
16. Steiner, R., *Communication to the English Groups (London, 19th November, 1922). Anthroposophical Movement*, 1927. IV(52): p. 421-422.
17. Paull, J., *The pioneers of biodynamics in Great Britain: From Anthroposophic Farming to Organic Agriculture (1924-1940). Journal of Environment Protection and Sustainable Development*, 2019. 5(4): p. 138-145.
18. Pfeiffer, E., *Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening: Soil Fertility Renewal and Preservation. 1938, New York: Anthroposophic Press.*
19. Pfeiffer, E., *Short Practical Instructions in the Use of the Biological-Dynamic Methods of Agriculture. 1935, London: Rudolf Steiner Publishing Co.*
20. Paull, J., *The secrets of Koberwitz: The diffusion of Rudolf Steiner's Agriculture Course and the founding of Biodynamic Agriculture. Journal of Social Research & Policy*, 2011. 2(1): p. 19-29.
21. *Cheltenham Examiner, Marriage of Miss Margaret Kynaston. Cheltenham Examiner*, 1887. 2 November: p. 8.
22. Merry, E.C., *Easter - The Legends and the Fact, ed. T.M.M.s. Library. 1938, London: King, Littlewood & King.*
23. *Ainwick Mercury, Otterburn Shooting Competition. Ainwick Mercury*, 1912. 7 September: p. 5.
24. *Leeds Mercury, Mr Howard Pease Dead. Leeds Mercury*, 1928. 27 January: p. 12.

25. Lumley, D., National Heritage List for England. 2002, (List Entry Number: 1156191). London: Historic England, historicengland.org.uk.
26. Pease, H., The Will of me HOWARD PEASE of Otterburn Tower in the county of Northumberland Esquire. 1926, 10 May. Proved 10 March 1928: 8 pp.
27. Mirbt, C.A., ed. *Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation Notes and Correspondence on Anthroposophical Agricultural Methods*. 1929, July: The Old Mill House, Bray-on-Thames, Berks.
28. Baker, C.T.G., *Understanding the Honey Bee*. 1948, Clent, Worcester: Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation.
29. Cheltenham Examiner, The Rev. Herbert Snow, M.A., Principal of Cheltenham College hereby gives notice. *Cheltenham Examiner*, 1875. 13 Jan.: p. 4.
30. Merry, E.C., *Life Story: An Autobiographical Experience of Destiny*. 1987, London: Mercury Arts Publications.
31. Stone, E.D., *Herbert Kynaston: A Short Memoir with Selections from his Occasional Writings*. 1912, London: Macmillan & Co.
32. Kynaston, H., *Fifty-Five Years of my Life*. [1890]: self published.
33. *Northern Echo*, Fashionable Marriage in Durham Cathedral. *Northern Echo*, 1896(24 July): p. 5.
34. Dyhouse, C., *No Distinction Of Sex?: Women In British Universities, 1870-1939*. 1995, London: UCL Press.
35. St Luke's Church, Marriage solemnized at Cheltenham in the Parish of S Luke in the County of Gloucester. 1887, 27 October: Entry of Marriage, #227, p.114.
36. Winton, J.R., *Lloyds Bank 1918-1969*. 1982, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
37. NRO, Accounts: NRO/2626/1. 1904, Woodhorn: Northumberland Record Office (NRO), Northumberland Archives.
38. Bank of England, Inflation calculator. 2023, (£240,000 in 1928 = £12,161,455.04 in March 2023). London: <http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>.
39. *Morpeth Herald*, Thomas Clark, Auctioneer. On Thursday & Friday, January 14th and 15th, 1904. Otterburn Tower. *Morpeth Herald*, 1904. 2 January: p. 4.
40. *Newcastle Journal*, Otterburn, Northumberland - For Sale, by Private Treaty. *Newcastle Journal*, 1902. 31 May: p. 2.
41. *Newcastle Journal*, The Late Capt. Cuthbert Pease. *Newcastle Journal*, 1916. 3 October: p. 10.
42. Pease, H., The Fair Maid of Seahouses. *The Advertiser*, 1912. 27 June: p. 12.
43. Pease, H., *Of Mistress Eve: A Tale of the Southern Border*. 1906, London: Archibald Constable and Company.
44. Pease, H., *The Lord Wardens of the Marches of England and Scotland: Being a brief history of the marches, the laws of march, and the marchmen together with some account of the ancient feud between England and Scotland*. 1913, (Limited Edition of 500 copies). London: Constable and Company.

45. Mier, C.A., Marna Pease 1868-1947. Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation, Supplement to Secretary's Letter No. 11, 1947: p. 1-4.
46. Keel, T., A magnificent castle dating back to William the Conqueror comes on the market. *Country Life*, 2023. 17 April.
47. Pease, M., "Dear Miss Gretler ...", 4 pp. manuscript letter, dated 14 February 1913. 1913, (private collection). Otterburn Tower.
48. Eddy, M.B., *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. 1875, (1934 edn). Boston, MA: Trustees under the Will of Mary Baker G Eddy.
49. Knapp, B., *The Destiny of the Mother Church*. 1947, (1991 edn). Boston, MA: The Christian Science Publishing Society.
50. Pease, M., "Dear Miss Gretler ...", manuscript letter, dated 14 February 1913. 1913, (private collection). Otterburn Tower.
51. Villeneuve, C., *Rudolf Steiner in Britain: A Documentation of his Ten Visits, Volume II, 1922-1925*. 2004, Forest Row, UK: Temple Lodge.
52. Executive Council, *Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain: Notices to Members from the London Centre*. *Anthroposophical Movement*, 1928. V(10): p. 83.
53. Executive Council, *Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain: Notices to Members from the London Centre*. *Anthroposophical Movement*, 1928. V(43): p. 344.
54. Dunlop, D.N., *Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain*. *Anthroposophical Movement*, 1930. VII(47): p. 369-370.
55. London Headquarters, *Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain: Notices to Members*. *Anthroposophical Movement*, 1930. VII(13): p. 102-103.
56. Paull, J., *Rudolf Steiner: From Theosophy to Anthroposophy (1902-1913)*. *European Journal of Theology and Philosophy*, 2022. 1(5): p. 8-17.
57. Steiner, R., *The Christmas Conference for the Foundation of the General Anthroposophical Society 1923/1924*. 1923/1924, (This edition published 1990, trans. Michael Wilson). New York: Anthroposophic Press.
58. Sekretariat, *Personal communication*, August. 2022, Dornach, CH: Mitglieder Sekretariat am Goetheanum.
59. Kiersch, J., *A History of the School of Spiritual Science: The First Class*. 2006, Forest Row: Temple Lodge Publishing.
60. Steiner, R., *Agriculture Course*. 1924, (1929, first English language edition; trans George Kaufmann). Dornach, Switzerland: Goetheanum.
61. Wachsmuth, G., *The Life and Work of Rudolf Steiner*. 1989, Blauvert, NY: Spiritual Science Library.
62. Steiner, R., *The Kingdom of Childhood: Seven lectures and answers to questions given in Torquay, 12th - 20th August, 1924*. 1924, (First English edition 1964). London: Rudolf Steiner Press.
63. Steiner, R., *The Evolution of the World and of Humanity, 13 Lectures given at Penmaenmawr, August, 1923*. 1926, London: Anthroposophical Publishing Co.

64. Steiner, R., *The New Art of Education: Thirteen Lectures given at Ilkley (August, 1923)*. 1928, London: Anthroposophical Publishing Company.
65. Paull, J., *Ilkley: In the Footsteps of Rudolf Steiner*. *Journal of Biodynamics Tasmania*, 2021(137): p. 14-19.
66. Paull, J., *Tintagel: In the footsteps of Rudolf Steiner*. *Journal of Bio-Dynamics Tasmania*, 2012. 107((Spring)): p. 12-16.
67. Young, S., *How to protect your property after death with a life interest trust*. *The Gazette*, 2020. 27 February <thegazette.co.uk>.
68. Barker, H., *Family and Business During the Industrial Revolution*. 2016, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
69. *Maidenhead Advertiser, Strong Lad Wanted (14-16)*. *Maidenhead Advertiser*, 1943. 7 July.
70. *The Scotsman, By Direction of Mrs Howard Pease, Nothumberland, adjoining the village of Otterburn ... The Freehold, Residential, Manorial, Agricultural, and Sporting Property known as the Otterburn Tower Estate*. *The Scotsman*, 1931. 19 September: p. 4.
71. Paull, J., *Goetheanum II: Masterpiece of Organic Architecture by Rudolf Steiner*. *European Journal of Architecture and Urban Planning*, 2022. 1(4): p. 1-14.
72. Wright, R., H. Shin, and F. Trentmann, *From World Power Conference to World Energy Council*. 2013, London: World Energy Council.
73. Meyer, T.H., *D N Dunlop: A Man of our Time*. 1992, London: Temple Lodge.
74. Dunlop, D.N. and E.C. Merry, *World Conference*. *Anthroposophical Movement*, 1928. V(18): p. 144.
75. Moodie, M. and V. Griffiths, *Genius Personae Report, Biodynamic Agriculture in the UK*. 2021: unpublished.
76. Kaufmann, G., *Obituary*. *Anthroposophical Movement*, 1928. V(51): p. 419.
77. Mier, C.A., *Marna Pease 1868-1947*. 1947, *Supplement to Secretary's Letter Nr.11*, 4 pp, 25 October. Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation.
78. Pease, M., et al., *Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain*. *Anthroposophical Movement*, 1930. VII(48): p. 377-378.
79. Mier, C.A., *What is the Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation?* *Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation Notes and Correspondence*, 1946. VII(5): p. 50-52.
80. Paull, J., *Biodynamic Agriculture: The Journey from Koberwitz, 1924-1938*. *Journal of Organic Systems*, in press.
81. Davy, D., *Editorial. Notes and Correspondence published by the Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation and the Bio-dynamic Association*, 1951. *New Series(Spring)*: p. 1.
82. Pease, M., *Fourth Annual Meeting of the Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation [3 December, 1932]*. *Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation Notes and Correspondence*, 1933. III(8): p. 212-214.
83. Pease, M. and C.A. Mirbt, *Fifth Annual Meeting of the Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation [25 & 26 November, 1933]*. *Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation Notes and Correspondence*, 1934. IV(1): p. 23-27.

84. Pease, M., Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation. Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation Notes and Correspondence, 1932. III(5&6): p. 149-150.
85. Pease, M., A New Farming and Gardening: For Enquirers. Leaflet No. 2, 2nd Series ed. 1937, Bray-on-Thames, Berkshire: Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation.
86. Davy, D., Report of the Tenth Annual General Meeting of the Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation. Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation Notes and Correspondence, 1939. V(4): p. 131-134.
87. AAF, List of Members October 1946. 1946, Longbridge House, Warminster, Wilts: Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation [AAF].
88. Hitler, A., Mein Kampf. 1925, 2016 edition. Munich, DE: Institut für Zeitgeschichte (The Institute of Contemporary History).
89. Seebohm, R., Count Karl von Keyserlingk. Anthroposophical Movement, 1929. VI(2): p. 11.
90. Chance, C., The Progonion: My Life as a Student of Anthroposophy. c.1994: 1cha.co.uk/cynthia-chance.
91. Paull, J., The pioneers of biodynamics in USA: The early milestones of organic agriculture in the United States. American Journal of Environment and Sustainable Development, 2019. 6(2): p. 89-94.
92. Paull, J., A history of the organic agriculture movement in Australia, in Organics in the Global Food Chain, B. Mascitelli and A. Lobo, Editors. 2013, Connor Court Publishing: Ballarat. p. 37-60.
93. Paull, J., The pioneers of biodynamics in New Zealand. Harvests, 2018. 70(3): p. 38-40.
94. Clements, D., Memories of the Early Bio-Dynamic Impulse. 2002: in considera.org 5.
95. London Headquarters, Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain: Notices to Members. Anthroposophical Movement, 1929. VI(14): p. 126-128.
96. Mirbt, C.A., Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation. Anthroposophical Movement, 1929. VI(44, 45 & 46): p. 390.
97. Freeman, A., et al., Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain: Notices to Members from Headquarters. Anthroposophical Movement, 1929. VI(12): p. 109-112.
98. Headquarters, Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain: Notices to Members. Anthroposophical Movement, 1929. VI(19): p. 167-168.
99. Headquarters, Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain: Notices. Anthroposophical Movement, 1929. VI(28): p. 243-244.
100. London Headquarters, The Anthroposophical Country Centre at Bray. Anthroposophical Movement, 1929. VI(9): p. 78.
101. Merry, E.C. and M. Pease, The Old Mill House at Bray. Anthroposophical Movement, 1930. VII(39): p. 307-308.
102. Romer, C.D. and R.H. Pells, Great Depression, in Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2023, Encyclopaedia Britannica, britannica.com: Chicago, IL.
103. Meyer, T.H., Ludwig Polzer-Hoditz: A European. 2014, Forest Row, UK: Temple Lodge.

104. Paull, J., The farm as organism: the foundational idea of organic agriculture. *Journal of Bio-Dynamics Tasmania*, 2006. (80): p. 14-18.
105. Kolisko, L., *Sternenwirken in Erdenstoffen: Der Jupiter und das Zinn*. 1932, Stuttgart, DE: Mathematisch-Astronomischen Sektion am Goetheanum.
106. Kolisko, L.N., *The Moon and the Growth of Plants*. 1936, London: Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation.
107. Kolisko, L., *Sternenwirken in Erdenstoffen: Saturn and Blei*. 1952, Heidenheim, DE: J M Voith (printer).
108. Kolisko, E. and L. Kolisko, *Agriculture of Tomorrow*. 1946, Edge, Gloucestershire: Kolisko Archive.
109. Mier, C.A., *Dear Members*. 1946, Secretary's Letter, Nr.5, 5 pp, November. Longbridge House, Warminster, Wilts.: Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation.
110. Baker, C.T.G., *Understandig the Honey Bee*. 1948, Clent, Worcestershire, UK: Anthroposophical Agricultural Foundation (AAF).
111. Paull, J., The lost history of organic farming in Australia. *Journal of Organic Systems*, 2008. 3(2): p. 2-17.
112. Paull, J., *The Soil Association and Australia: From Mother Earth to Eve Balfour*. *Mother Earth*, 2011. 4(Spring): p. 13-17.
113. Paull, J. and B. Hennig, *A World Map of Biodynamic Agriculture*. *Agricultural and Biological Sciences Journal*, 2020. 6(2): p. 114-119.