

# Penmaenmawr: In the Footsteps of Rudolf Steiner

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## ABSTRACT

Penmaenmawr (1923) was ‘peak Rudolf Steiner’ (1861–1925). Steiner delivered his most extensive account of Anthroposophy in Britain (13 lectures) at the first ‘International Summer School’ in the seaside Welsh village of Penmaenmawr (18 August–1 September). There were about 100 delegates (c.80% women); they ranged from seasoned Anthropop devotees to ‘newbies’ and they travelled from UK, Switzerland, USA, and Australia. Yes, there would be a second International Summer School (11 lectures, Torquay, 1924), but Steiner was, by that time, a physically greatly diminished figure and not long for this world. At Penmaenmawr, Steiner lectured in German (as always), and 20 minute grabs of his lectures were serially rendered into English by the remarkable linguist and Anthropop, George Kaufmann (later known as George Adams). In this ninth (and penultimate) visit to Britain, Rudolf Steiner travelled from London to Ilkley (West Yorkshire, in the industrial north of England), where he delivered 13 lectures on Waldorf education, then to Penmaenmawr and the Summer School, and finally to London and the founding there of the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain (on 2 September, 1923). Penmaenmawr was the farthest west that Steiner ever ventured to lecture. While there, he made several excursions on foot to the ‘Druid’s Circle’ (known locally as ‘Meini Hirion’, ‘long stones’), a hike of about three and a half hours return. The Penmaenmawr Summer School was the initiative of Daniel Dunlop (1868–1935) with organisation by Eleanor (Nelly) Merry (1873–1956). The Grand Hotel, where Steiner (and many attendees) stayed, and the Drill Hall, where he lectured, are now both demolished. The former ‘seaside resort’ of Penmaenmawr, with its previously splendid beach-side promenade, is now neither quite ‘seaside’ nor ‘resort;’ the village has been decoupled from its beach by a four lane concrete expressway with non-stop non-local traffic, with the beach accessible via a dismal pedestrian underpass.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Dr. Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), the New Age guru of the early twentieth century, introduced novel ideas in fields including education, agriculture, art, architecture, dance, and medicine. Steiner spent a decade (1902–1913) within the Theosophical Society before establishing his own ‘Spiritual Science’ movement which he called ‘Anthroposophy’ (Paull, 2022b).

Steiner was a master of German, and that was the language of all his lectures, wherever they were presented, and that included Britain. By the time of his first International Summer School in August 1923, the headquarters of the Anthroposophical movement was well established in the village of Dornach (near Basel) in Switzerland (since 1912). Steiner’s Anglo lectures were translated by George Kaufmann (Paull, 2024a).

Penmaenmawr (pron: ‘pen-men-more’) was Steiner’s ninth visit to Britain, but it was his first opportunity to deliver an extended course of lectures devoted to Anthroposophy per se, rather than



its daughter movements, such as his prior extended lecture series at Oxford (1922) and Ilkley (1923), which were both devoted to Waldorf education (Paull, 2010; 2011; 2021).

## 2. METHODS

A site visit was conducted to Penmaenmawr and environs by the author. The Penmaenmawr Summer School was a century ago, and hence, there is no living memory of the events. There were approximately 100 participants in the Penmaenmawr Summer School. The first-hand testimony and recollections of attendees are quoted and cited where possible. Those who left recollections of the event included: Rudolf Steiner (who wrote four letters to Edith Maryon from Penmaenmawr and wrote an account for the journal 'Anthroposophy'); his wife Marie Steiner; Guenther Wachsmuth (personal assistant to Steiner, head of the Natural Science Section at the Goetheanum, Dornach, and author of the first Rudolf Steiner biography); Dr. Ita Wegman (head of the Medical Section at Dornach); Eleanor 'Nelly' Merry (the chief organiser of the Summer School); Reuben Farrow (a then- non-Anthroposophist sponsored to attend by Cadbury); Gladys Hahn (an American Eurythmist); and Ruth Ainsworth (an Australian Anthroposophist). 'Anthropop' is used as an abbreviation of 'Anthroposophist' or 'Anthroposophical' depending on context. Within quotations, the original capitalisation (or not), spelling, and punctuation are conserved. To translate German texts, Google Translate ([translate.google.com](https://translate.google.com)), Google Lens ([lens.google](https://lens.google)), and DeepL ([deepl.org](https://deepl.org)) were used. For distances and travel times, Google Maps ([maps.google.com](https://maps.google.com)) was used.

## 3. RESULTS

The Penmaenmawr International Summer School was an opportunity for Rudolf Steiner to present his Anthroposophy to an Anglo audience via an extended suite of lectures. It was the opportunity for his Anglo audience to see and hear Rudolf Steiner at the peak of his powers of oratory and charisma. The following year, Steiner returned to Britain to present the second Summer School, at Torquay (Paull, 2018). However, by that time, Steiner was mortally ill; he 'soldiered on' bravely, but he was physically greatly diminished in 1924 and that second Summer School at Torquay would be his final visit to Britain. Just weeks later he retreated to his sick bed (on 28 September) (Steiner, 1967a), and he died on 30 March, 1925 (Collison, 1925).

### 3.1. Prospectus

The first Anthroposophical Summer School was advertised as follows: "Summer School at Penmaenmawr. An International Summer School, promoted by the Anthroposophical Society, will be held at Penmaenmawr, North Wales, from August 18th to September 1st. Dr. Rudolf Steiner will give a special course of lectures entitled: 'Spiritual and Physical Evolution of the World and Humanity, past, present, and future from the point of view of Anthroposophy'. Other lectures and subjects will be announced later. Demonstrations of Eurhythm [sic] will be given, under the direction of Mme. Marie Steiner, by students trained at Dornach" (Anthroposophy, 1923a, p.83).

### 3.2. Daniel Dunlop

The International Summer School was the initiative of Daniel Dunlop (1868–1935) (Fig. 1). Eleanor Merry ('Nelly' to her family) (1873–1956) was the honorary secretary of the Summer School: "That year [1923] I was occupied in organising with one or two others the first summer school that the Society in England had ever held, and it was pretty hard work" (Merry, 1987, p.22).

George Kaufmann described Dunlop as: "one who did not often appear in the limelight, but to whose initiative many important developments were primarily due . . . Deep in his being was the quality of initiative" (in Meyer, 1992, p.407). Dunlop described himself as: "a person of great experience in business, social, psychic and political associations" (in Villeneuve, 2004b, p.900).

Eleanor Merry wrote to Rudolf Steiner on 3 February, 1923: "Dear Herr Doktor, I am writing to you in the name of Mr Dunlop about the Summer School he is hoping to arrange with your approval. He makes the following proposal: that the title of the 'Summer School' should be 'Humanity - past, present, and future: in the light of Spiritual Science, Philosophy and Art . . . He is searching for a suitable place, and when one is found will let you know at once". She signed off with the title "Honorary Secretary, Summer School" (Villeneuve, 2004b, pp.841–842).

Daniel Dunlop came to Anthroposophy via Theosophy (as did Rudolf Steiner). Dunlop became disenchanted with the Theosophical Society (Meyer, 1992; Paull, 2022b). He wrote that: "The manifest absurdities and trivialities filling Theosophical literature, above all from 1907 onwards, gave rise to a natural caution when Rudolf Steiner's works first came into my hands. They were utterly different in



Fig. 1. Daniel Dunlop, initiator of the Penmaenmawr Summer School (Image: Rudolf Steiner House).

tone and content” (in Meyer, 1992, p.399). Dunlop described meeting Rudolf Steiner as: “the most significant turning-point of life” (Meyer, 1992, p.397).

Dunlop went on to produce other Summer Schools: the second in Torquay in 1924; the third in Gareloch, Scotland, in 1927; and the World Conference in London in 1928 (Meyer, 1992).

At the Penmaenmawr closing address, 31 August, 1923, Rudolf Steiner expressed his appreciation: “the warmest gratitude for the efforts of Mr. Dunlop, Mrs. Merry, and the others have made, so that this Summer School at Penmaenmawr can become an event which will make its mark in the anthroposophical movement” (Steiner, 1998, p.226).

Daniel Dunlop joined the Anthroposophical Society on 14 December, 1920 (Meyer, 1992; Villeneuve, 2004b). For some time he was a member of both the Theosophists and the Anthroposophists. He resigned from the Theosophical Society in 1922, the year he met Rudolf Steiner. Dunlop was expelled from the General Anthroposophical Society, along with the whole of the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain, in 1935, a victim of the Great Purge of the Dornach Gang of Three (Guenther Wachsmuth, Albert Steffen, and Marie Steiner); just weeks later he died.

### 3.3. Penmaenmawr

Steiner had ventured two lectures at Stratford-on-Avon in 1922 (rsarchive.org). It was a proof-of-concept that, despite the Germanic genesis and catastrophe of the Great War (WWI), a Germanic speaker lecturing in German (and lacking English) could still receive at least a polite and non-hostile reception in post-war Britain (Paull, 2013).

The Welsh village of Penmaenmawr was the location for the first Summer School in Britain in 1923 (Figs. 2 and 3). This project was ambitious. Rudolf Steiner wrote that: “To have chosen Penmaenmawr was a delightful idea on the part of Mr Dunlop who for many years has been a student of spiritual knowledge and is now a member of the Anthroposophical Society. It lies on the west coast of England ... Here one lives wholly in the super-sensible atmosphere which emanates from what the ruins of pre-historic Druid sanctuaries can convey to us to-day” (Steiner, 1923, p.125).



Fig. 2. Penmaenmawr railway station (image: J Paull).

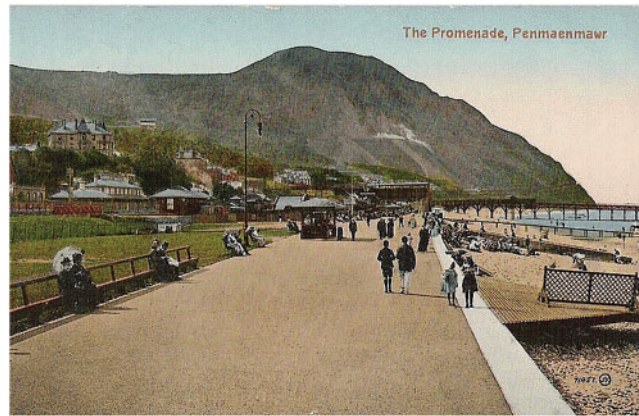


Fig. 3. Penmaenmawr promenade c.1910 (with the Grand Hotel to the left) (image: vintage postcard).

A visit to Britain would be incomplete without some comment on the weather. Steiner wrote: “During the visit to Penmaenmawr, one was made aware of the activity which arises from the earth as the workings of Nature, what lives in the air, what streams and rays down from the sun. Exquisite sunlight effects often changed within the hour to cloud-bursts and rain-storms” (Steiner, 1923, pp.126–127).

Steiner wrote assuringly from Penmaenmawr to Edith Maryon in Dornach: “Please don’t think about all sorts of things that have to do with the cold or the like because everything is as orderly as it can be . . . my lectures are always at 10:30 [am]” (Steiner & Maryon, 1990, p.141). He wrote: “I miss nothing here, except dear Dornach [Switzerland]. I would always like to be there” (Steiner & Maryon, 1990, p.154).

Penmaenmawr was the first Anthroposophical Summer School (in 1923), and Torquay was the second Summer School (in 1924) (and the final with Rudolf Steiner) (Merry, 1924; Paull, 2018). Of Steiner’s ten visits to Britain, these Summer Schools were his ninth and tenth visits, respectively (Villeneuve, 2004a, 2004b).

The “Summer School idea” is attributed to Daniel Dunlop (Meyer, 1992, p.90). Dunlop had originally planned a Theosophy summer school in 1911 at Penmaenmawr before an alternative was settled on. So it seems that Penmaenmawr was in the sights of Dunlop for more than a decade, and the Penmaenmawr Summer School was a reification of his prior plans and ambitions (Meyer, 1992).

On the opening night at Penmaenmawr, Rudolf Steiner told his audience: “we must come together today during our summer holidays, at a time when we have so-to-speak nothing else to do. We must travel during summer - time to these special occasions and use our summer holidays for cultivating Anthroposophy” (Villeneuve, 2004b, p.891).

### 3.4. Anthroposophy

Rudolf Steiner wrote to Edith Maryon from Penmaenmawr: “things are going well here . . . I can speak purely anthroposophically in these lectures; in Ilkley the system was more to use pedagogy to tell people something that wouldn’t irritate them much from the start, in order to teach them anthroposophy in this roundabout way . . . I’m actually glad when the events have a character like the one here in Penmaenmawr. Dunlop has gone to great lengths to bring about this character” (Steiner & Maryon, 1990, p.143).

Steiner interpreted the Summer School title and his task as to present: “what Anthroposophy has to say in relation to the present day, and perhaps the immediate future too” (in Villeneuve, 2004b, p.891).

The Anglo journal ‘Anthroposophy’ related the mood prevailing: “A different atmosphere pervaded the Penmaenmawr Conference, for it was entirely ‘Anthroposophical’ . . . Dr Steiner gave a cycle of lectures which will perhaps rank as the most complete exposition of the subject as he wishes to be taken up to-day” (Anthroposophy, 1923b, p.124).

Members and non-members attended: “The strangers who came to listen to the lectures upon the Evolution of Humanity were mostly readers of Dr. Steiner’s published works, glad of this opportunity for gaining firsthand knowledge of Anthroposophy . . . Starting with the human being as a spiritual entity upon Earth, he followed man’s destiny in its union with all that is universal” (Anthroposophy, 1923b, p.124).

Rudolf Steiner explained that “the difference between the Anthroposophical Movement and other movements lies in its comprehensiveness, impartiality, lack of prejudice, and freedom from dogma. It only wants to be an experimental method” (Villeneuve, 2004b, p.897).



Fig. 4. Grand Hotel at Penmaenmawr with Summer School attendees 1923 (Image: Rudolf Steiner House).

Steiner spoke of “dispensing with dogmatism” (in Villeneuve, 2004b, p.897). He set his movement a big task: “the Anthroposophical Movement before which we stand today has to solve civilisational tasks” (Villeneuve, 2004b, p.899).

### 3.5. Programme

For scholars seeking the programme for the Penmaenmawr Summer School, Steiner resolves that quest: “there is no printed programme” (Steiner & Maryon, 1990, p.144).

Australian Anthropop, Ruth Ainsworth, recalled: “The program for the day was very full. Each morning, there was a lecture by Rudolf Steiner . . . Then there were study groups” (in Villeneuve, 2004b, p.909). Some evenings there were Eurythmy demonstrations. Some evenings Steiner lectured on topics other than the theme of the Summer School, including on medicine and Eurythmy (e.g. Steiner, 1926b).

Steiner wrote approvingly to Edith Maryon that: “Lectures are always followed attentively. Yesterday evening, I gave an extra lecture on eurythmy. Tomorrow evening there will be another on medicine” (Steiner & Maryon, 1990, p.149).

### 3.6. Attendees

Summer School attendees were photographed in front of the Grand Hotel (Fig. 4). The photograph reveals 95 attendees, comprising 75 women and 20 men. This suggests that there were about 100 attendees (allowing for a few who missed the photo shoot), of which about 80% were women.

The Penmaenmawr Summer School was not a ‘members only’ event. Attendees ranged from long-time Anthropops through to newbies. Guenther Wachsmuth reported that lectures were “attended by numerous persons unacquainted with Anthroposophy” (Wachsmuth, 1989, p.508).

Ruth Ainsworth observed that: “One could not help wondering what destiny brought together such a group of people in far-off Wales. There were some who later became well-known leaders in the Anthroposophical Society, some who were there just out of curiosity, and some who look back on it as the high point in their lives” (1987, in Villeneuve, 2004b, p.925).

One newbie, Reuben Farrow, described his serendipitous attendance and his spiritual epiphany as follows: “Working for Cadbury’s, their educational department announced a number of summer lecture-schools. Interested employees could apply for considerable subsidies towards the cost of attending. One of these lecture-schools was on ‘Spiritual Science (Anthroposophy)’ by Dr. Rudolf Steiner at Penmaenmawr, in North Wales. I had not the remotest idea what ‘anthroposophy’ meant, nor who Rudolf Steiner was . . . The fortnight I spent there was the most epoch-making in my Career! My attitude to life and religion underwent a revolutionary change. Meeting with Rudolf Steiner’s Anthroposophy answered all the awkward questions the Methodists had failed to answer . . . although he spoke in German, he held my attention . . . My mind was flooded with new ideas. I had a feeling that this man had investigated the spiritual world as thoroughly as modern scientists had investigated the material world” (Villeneuve, 2004b, p.936).

### 3.7. Grand Hotel

Guenther Wachsmuth described the Grand Hotel as a “somewhat stiffly correct English hotel” (Wachsmuth, 1989, p.510). Rudolf Steiner, along with many Summer School attendees, stayed at the Grand Hotel (Villeneuve, 2004b) (Fig. 4). The Grand Hotel of Penmaenmawr was built to capture a



Fig. 5. View of the hills that Rudolf Steiner described from his room at the Grand Hotel (image: J Paull).

commanding view of the ocean to the front, and of the hills to the rear. Steiner's room looked to the hills; for Edith Maryon, he sketched the hills view from his room (Steiner & Maryon, 1990, p.146) (Fig. 5).

The Grand Hotel must have been the pride of Penmaenmawr in days gone by. But, judging by the accounts of Summer School attendees, perhaps its heydays were already past by the time of Steiner's visit.

Eleanor Merry, 'Honorary Secretary' of the Summer School, commented: "The Summer School was held in Penmaenmawr in North Wales; it was somewhat primitive in the way of accommodation in those days, but we managed well enough. As I had a good deal to do with arrangements, I saw Dr. Steiner every day" (Merry, 1987, p.22).

Rudolf Steiner wrote from Penmaenmawr to Edith Maryon: "the fact is that the hotel is not exactly comfortable (but it is the 'best' here). It has its counterpoint in the fact that the spiritual monuments of ancient Druidism stare out at you everywhere, this creates a completely esoteric atmosphere" (Steiner & Maryon, 1990, p.144).

A few days later, Steiner wrote that: "little by little we have achieved some comforts in the hotel, only of course people can't suddenly introduce electric light for example. And other things like that ... I would like to be back in Dornach" (in Steiner & Maryon, 1990, p.148).

The population of Penmaenmawr was 3,867 (in 1921). The population appears to have been in decline ever since. A century later, the population was 2,762 (in 2021). There are better beaches than Penmaenmawr, and better weather. Grand hotels need patrons, and it seems likely that no seaside resort could successfully swap its pretty seaside promenade for an ugly concrete seaside motorway (Fig. 12) and remain a tourist destination. The Grand Hotel was demolished some decades ago (variously stated as in the 1960s and the 1990s) and not replaced.

### 3.8. Old Drill Hall

All events of the Summer School programme were presented in the 'Old Drill Hall' at Penmaenmawr. It was a short walk of 500 metres, less than 10 minutes. Rudolf Steiner's daily lectures were in the morning; and the "evening lectures by Steiner and others, and Eurythmy performances were presented. There was only a small and crudely constructed hall for lectures ... and one does not easily forget how, during a lecture or a program in Eurythmy, the storms from the sea came through all the crevices, even wetting some of those present with rain leaking from the roof" (Wachsmuth, 1989, p.507).

Steiner reported that: "the town hall here also has holes in the roof, I was not all that surprised ... when the rain came through the other day" (Steiner, 1998, p.227). Marie Steiner wrote of: "the windswept hut at Penmaenmawr" (Villeneuve, 2004b, p.927).

American Eurythmist, Gladys Hahn, described walking "from my lodgings towards the Hall, on a quiet side-street away from the sea ... by the time I myself reached the Hall, Dr Steiner had taken off his overcoat and was greeting Harry Collison, who was bundled up in a tremendous winter coat ... I too kept my coat on" (in Villeneuve, 2004b, p.894).

Hahn recalled: "The audience filled the hall. Each day, the lecture was divided into three parts, with George Adams's translation coming at once after each part. ... Dr. Steiner seems not to take the slightest notice of the way George Adams was translating his lecture ... Day after day, he was observing the audience, closely ... never once did he look up at George Adams" (in Villeneuve, 2004b, p.901). (During Steiner's lifetime, and until 1940, 'George Adams' was 'George Kaufmann').

There were five Eurythmy performances which proceeded: "in spite of the inadequacy of the stage and its equipment" (Harwood in Steiner, 1967b, p.6).



Fig. 6. New Drill Hall (image: J Paull).



Fig. 7. Looking down over Penmaenmawr from a path to the Druid's Circle (image: J Paull).

The Old Drill Hall on Bangor Road (opposite St David's church) was demolished (circa 1995), and replaced with a new Drill Hall of red brick and is used by Army cadets (Fig. 6).

### 3.9. *Druid's Circle*

The 'Druid's Circle' lies on the hilltop overlooking Penmaenmawr (Figs. 7 and 8). It was an attraction for visitors, for Steiner, and perhaps it was a substantial and compelling motivator for Daniel Dunlop choosing Penmaenmawr as the venue for the first Summer School. A popular afternoon excursion for attendees was to visit the 'Druid's Circle', a circle of 35 metres in diameter (Evans, 2022) of irregularly shaped and variously sized rocks on the hill behind Penmaenmawr. It was an excursion on foot of about a 3½ hours return (Countryside Service, c. 2020). Rudolf Steiner made the excursion on several occasions.

Guenther Wachsmuth related that: "Rudolf Steiner requested me one day to go alone with him to the lofty plateau, resting on the cliffs above Penmaenmawr, in order to visit one of the Druid circles. In spite of his sixty-two years he climbed stoutly and rapidly" (Wachsmuth, 1989, p.508).

Wachsmuth continued: "When we had reached the cliff high above Penmaenmawr, there now lay before us the lonesome circle of the plateau surrounded by rocky peaks, in the midst of which stood the mighty stone symbols of the Druid circle . . . Rudolf Steiner now in the loneliness of this lofty plateau entered into the midst of the Druid circle" (Wachsmuth, 1989, p. 508).

Wachsmuth recalled the busy days of Penmaenmawr: "during days filled with lectures, artistic programs, discussions, and trips into the surrounding country, he [Steiner] showed a freshness and vigour in which only a few of the younger persons could equal him" (Wachsmuth, 1989, p. 509).

Eleanor Merry related another visit to the Druid's Circle: "with a few others, I went with him [Steiner] when we had an excursion to visit the Druid circle in the mountains above the little town of Penmaenmawr. What he had to say about the Stones and the Druid culture was the most illuminating.



Fig. 8. Druid's Circle (Meini Hirion) of Penmaenmawr (image: J Paull).

One realised what immense wisdom was theirs before the period of decadence set in" (Merry, 1987, p.22).

Steiner wrote to Edith Maryon of the Druid's Circle excursion: "Cars cannot go there. It is wonderful solitude there, with ruined Druid circles. Standing at the Druid sanctuaries, where so many years ago, people took care of spiritual matters, was very significant to me. The way up (about 1 1/4 hours) was very beautiful, full of the most beautiful views of the surroundings" (in Steiner & Maryon, 1990, p.154).

Steiner told his Summer School attendees: "The Druids ordered their lives through entering into relation with the Spirit of Nature. It is of this search for Spirit which the stones lying there speak. They tell in a most impressive way of this search for Spirit so that it may be brought into the life on earth. It was therefore a source of deep satisfaction to me to be allowed to speak for once in the atmosphere of memories such as these, about the search for the Spiritual and how this search must be carried on in the present time" (Steiner, 1923, p.127).

Marie Steiner was apparently present for part of the Summer School. By that time, she could not walk unaided, and she reached the Druid circles on a farmer's cart. She recalled: "There a primeval past really speaks to us ... there are to be found Druid stones, dolmens and engraved signs, that inward language by which the culture of the time was united in spirit ... all this can be experienced ... in Wales, the legendary land of Merlin ... in Nature's wild beauty ... Tremendous wounds have been struck into the backs of the mountains - the quarries ... and yet behind the hills the past stands there alive ... Nature is here too stark for any pleasant lingering. The struggle with the wind becomes more of an effort ... You have to brace yourself not to be blown down ... The Druids did not make it easy for their pilgrims" (Steiner, 1993, pp.42-44).

Guenther Wachsmuth related: "After these forenoon lectures, trips were made in larger or smaller groups or alone to the lofty dolmen of the ancient Druid centres, the history of whose origin and decay had been brought much nearer to us out of the lectures" (1989, p.508). "During these delightful days in Wales, we made also interesting excursions to the other ancient Druid places in that region, including the island of Anglesey, Carnarvon, and other centres" (Wachsmuth, 1989, p.510).

What is popularly called the 'Druid's Circle' is known locally in Welsh as 'Meini Hirion.' A Penmaenmawr Museum publication states that: "in the late 18th century ... People began associating stone circles like Stonehenge and Avebury with what they believed were Druidic practices to be. Meini Hirion was one of the stone circles caught up in those stories. By the late 1800s, the 'Druid's Circle' and the myths about the stones being used by the Druids for rituals had entered the popular imagination, despite Meini Hirion predating the Druids by more than 1000 years. Enterprising local businesses and publishing companies started producing postcards with images of Meini Hirion labelled as 'Druid's Circle'. The imagery of the stone circle in the landscape ... marketed the monument and the myth to tourists ... we use the monument's original name Meini Hirion" (Evans, 2022, p.8).

According to a local account, Meini Hirion and other local rock circles and rock clusters in the region are "dated to the Bronze age between 1450-1400 B.C. This is a thousand years before the Druids came to the area" (Countryside Service, c.2020, p.11). As for Meini Hirion, "the monument could be much older" (Evans, 2022, p.1). "It is considered to be one of the finest examples of a stone circle in Britain" (Evans, 2022, p.1). To this day, Penmaenmawr is famed for its rocky outcrops known to some as 'Druid circles' and, for some, a reason to visit.

### 3.10. *Success*

By all accounts, the Penmaenmawr Summer School was a success and was remembered fondly. Rudolf Steiner looked back at: “these wonderful days in Penmaenmawr” (Steiner, 1998, p.227). Yes, the hotel was less grand than its name promised, the Drill Hall offered only rudimentary amenity, and the weather was ‘British,’ but these matters were not the fixations of Steiner nor of the devotees.

Guenther Wachsmuth wrote of: “these delightful days in Wales” (Wachsmuth, 1989, p.510). Rudolf Steiner wrote: “journey and surroundings here wonderfully beautiful” (in Steiner & Maryon, 1990, p.141).

Reflecting on Penmaenmawr, Steiner wrote: “It was ... a source of deep gratification to me ... to speak ... about the search for the Spiritual and how this search must be carried out in the present time” (Steiner, 1923, p.127).

Steiner stated: “the past days in Penmaenmawr I can say that they have been a time of deepest satisfaction for me. This Summer School has been a wonderful opportunity to present anthroposophy here in Britain in a more extended way over a longer period of time. It is this above all else that fills me with such great satisfaction” (Steiner, 1998, p. 218).

Dr Ita Wegman recalled: “The ‘Summer Schools at Penmaenmawr and Torquay sprang ... out of Mr Dunlop’s initiative, and as everyone knows who took part in them, they were crowned with great success. Rudolf Steiner delivered the most wonderful lectures there ... Primeval wisdom, primeval traditions hovered in the whole environment. It was as though (and many friends who were there could experience it) this ancient wisdom was awakened out of deep sleep by the words of Rudolf Steiner. ... in Penmaenmawr - on the Western coast of England, opposite Ireland, the Druidic Mysteries had flowered” (Wegman, 1927, pp.205–207).

### 3.11. *Anthropop Society*

The significant proximate sequel to the Penmaenmawr Summer School was the founding of the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain (ASGB). In a letter to Edith Maryon, Steiner wrote, on Sunday 2nd September, from London: “Sunday morning was the meeting of the branch for the founding of the English Society, like the Swiss and Norwegian and so on, which are then to merge next Christmas in Dornach to form the International Anthroposophical Society” (in Steiner & Maryon, 1990, p.155).

The ASGB has survived to the present day. The ‘International Anthroposophical Society’ that Steiner mentioned was founded as the ‘General Anthroposophical Society’ (GAS) at the Christmas Conference of 1923 in Dornach (Steiner, 1923/1924). The excommunication of the ASGB by Dornach in the Great Purge of 1935 (14 April) was a blow but not a fatal one for the British Society. Eventually, the ASGB was welcomed back into the fold of the GAS; but that was far too late for Daniel Dunlop, who died on 30 May 1935, just six weeks after his excommunication.

### 3.12. *Book of the Summer School*

There were two hardcopy ‘deliverables’ from the Summer School. First was the book of the lectures published as ‘The Evolution of the World and of Humanity’ (Fig. 9), and second was a booklet of the Eurythmy lectures (Steiner, 1926a; 1926b).

The first edition of the Penmaenmawr lectures stated that: “These lectures are published in book form because it was one of Doctor Steiner’s last wishes that his lectures - hitherto restricted to members of the Society - should become public property. It should be borne in mind, however, that they have been translated from a very difficult form of German, and a translation necessarily lacks the inspiration of extempore speech. Moreover, the author was unable to correct his lectures” (Collison in Steiner, 1926a).

The book of the Penmaenmawr lectures was published posthumously in 1926 (Rudolf Steiner died in 1925). While Harry Collison states that “the author was unable to correct his lectures,” this was in fact standard practice for Rudolf Steiner lectures, viz. to be published with variations of a disclaimer such as ‘not checked by the author’. Villeneuve states that the first edition of the Penmaenmawr lectures was published in 1927 with a Foreword (Villeneuve, 2004b) but that is mistaken; the first edition was published in 1926 without a Foreword (Fig. 9).

Since the original publication in English, Steiner’s lectures of the Penmaenmawr Summer School have appeared in German (Steiner, 1960), Italian (Steiner, 1985), and French (Steiner, 1997). Another English edition has appeared as ‘The Evolution of Consciousness as revealed through Initiation-Knowledge’ with new translators (Steiner, 1966). A lecture of Steiner’s on Eurythmy has also been published in various editions (e.g. Steiner, 1926b).

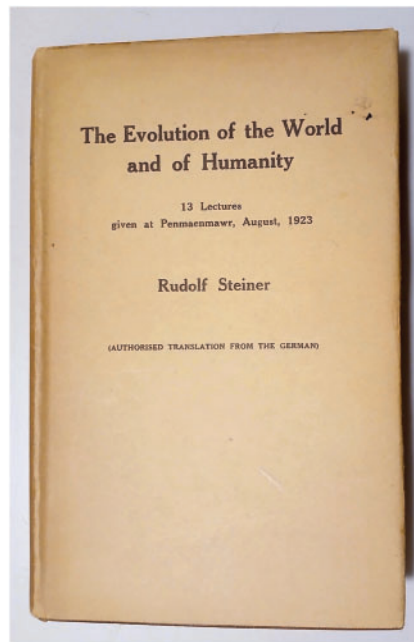


Fig. 9. Book of the Penmaenmawr Summer School lectures (first edition, 1926) (image: J. Paull).



Fig. 10. Grand Hotel at nearby Llandudno (image: J Paull).

### 3.13. Two Seaside Towns

The two Welsh seaside towns of Penmaenmawr and Llandudno are just 10.4 miles (16.7 km) apart. One is bustling with visitors, while the other is a candidate for an award of ‘the town that time forgot.’ A century ago, they were both ‘popular seaside resorts.’ Since then, the population of Llandudno has grown by 86% (10,617 in 1921 to 19,700 in 2021), while that of Penmaenmawr has shrunk by 29% (3867 in 1921 to 2762 in 2021) ([ons.gov.uk](https://ons.gov.uk)).

Llandudno is vibrant and busy. Visitors have multiple choices of beachfront hotels, which offer a long length of beach promenade and beach sand just steps away. There is a wide variety of restaurants and shops, a long pier busy with visitors, amusement rides, ice cream, fish and chips, tea and coffee, and a bar. And the Grand Hotel at Llandudno, perched in a striking water’s edge position, offers a marvellous panoramic view of the pier, the beach, and the esplanade ([Britannia Hotels, c.2024](#)) (Fig. 10).

Penmaenmawr offers a remarkable contrast to its near neighbour, Llandudno. Penmaenmawr was once a popular seaside destination (Fig. 11), but that history is long past. The town had the twin assets of seaside to the fore and lush green hills to the rear. Penmaenmawr’s Grand Hotel enjoying waterfront views and beach access, which in its heyday must have vied with Llandudno’s Grand Hotel (with its 170 rooms and a ballroom seating 250), is long gone, demolished, and not replaced. What happened? The North Wales Expressway (A55) happened (Fig. 12).

It is axiomatic that the greatest asset of a ‘seaside town’ is the seaside. In a monumental travesty of town planning, the A55 four-lane raised concrete roadway skirts the full length of the Penmaenmawr beachfront. The A55 cuts off the beach from the town, severing both visual and actual access. The



Fig. 11. Beach groynes at Penmaenmawr (image: J Paull).



Fig. 12. Brutalist-style pedestrian underpass at Penmaenmawr from beach to town (image: J Paull).

Penmaenmawr beach, such as it is, is now mostly a series of groynes with rock rubble infill (Fig. 11). Access from the town is via a dreary pedestrian underpass, along with the concomitant gloom, ugliness, and odours (Fig. 12). What were they thinking? This blight belongs in the annals of ‘Town Planning Disasters.’

Since Rudolf Steiner’s visit, Penmaenmawr has acquired the access-excluding North Wales Expressway (A55) effectively decoupling the town from its seaside attractions and vista; and its most prominent architectural jewel, the Grand Hotel, has been demolished and replaced by bland.

#### 4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Rudolf Steiner was at the zenith of his powers, charisma, and eloquence at the Penmaenmawr Summer School. The Waldorf School at Stuttgart was by then a tangible fruit of his Anthroposophy (Paull & Hennig, 2020). There was a thriving Anthropop community established at Dornach, Switzerland (Kugler *et al.*, 2011). Steiner had suffered the blow of his ‘pride and joy’, the timber Goetheanum I, burning to the ground on 1 January, 1923; but plans were in train to ‘build back better’ and the reinforced concrete Goetheanum II is a remarkable building of international interest and significance (Paull, 2020a; 2022a; Pearson, 2001).

At the conclusion of Penmaenmawr, Steiner travelled back to London, and the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain was founded (on 2 September, 1923). Four months later at the 1923 Christmas Conference (24 December, 1923 - 1 January, 1924), at Dornach, Switzerland, Steiner founded, the ‘General Anthroposophical Society’ to be based in Dornach (Steiner, 1923/1924). In 1924, Rudolf Steiner maintained a hectic schedule of lecturing and travelling, notably including the ‘Agriculture Course’ at Koberwitz (Paull, 2020b; Steiner, 1924a), and the Second International Summer School at Torquay (Paull, 2018; Steiner, 1924b, 1924c). However, the health and vigour of Rudolf Steiner of 1923 were gone by 1924, and the deterioration of his health was evident for all to see. Steiner retired from

public life on 28 September, 1924; he spent the following six months confined to his sick bed; he died on 30 March, 1925.

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#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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