

From David Dean OBE

I feel it a privilege to be asked to make a contribution to this proposal for a new and innovative next stage in the life of Raddery House and Woodland. It is now over forty years since Dr Theodore Salvesen (Stubb) visited the second of the two schools to operate from the estate which his father, Major Noel Graham Salvesen of Teaninich, Alness, had gifted to the then Ross and Cromarty County Council.

In 1979, Dr T. Salvesen visited Raddery to dedicate one of its rooms. This we had named the Salvesen Room in honour of the generosity of his late father. The room, in the centre of the House, served as an extremely busy hub for our work in the next twenty years, educating and caring, in all, for some one hundred and fifty emotionally damaged boys and girls whose needs could not, at the time, be met within mainstream schools.

With the first Salvesen, Christian, having arrived in Scotland in the 1870's and, with his brother, set up initially a most successful shipping company, many of the wider family subsequently became known for philanthropic work in Edinburgh, Aberdeen and elsewhere. Noel Salvesen, grandson to Christian, responding to the educational and care needs of a reported number of children with `minimal mental handicap` within Ross and Cromarty County Council's area, gifted Raddery estate on the Black Isle to the Council "for the purpose of educating and caring residentially for children with minimal mental handicap requiring specialist provision". This purpose of this gift was later interpreted more widely by Highland Council to cover young people with physical, emotional, social and educational needs yet remained another visionary example of the Salvesen's family's support to the Scottish community.

During 1978 and '79 while I was conducting negotiations with Highland Council for the lease of this by then run down campus, I heard many times over from the likes of R&CCC former conveners Major Alan Cameron of Allangrange and George (Dodo) Finlayson, John MacLeod, Depute Director of Education, Highland Council and, in later years, Highland Council Convener, Duncan Macpherson of Cromarty, and others, that it was Noel Salvesen's gesture of support for such disadvantaged children which made possible the first residential school to occupy Raddery House, run for twenty years, by the Council itself and later the second residential school of which I was the founder Principal, 1978 – 1995. This second school eventually closed in 2001. Since then there has been further social care and education use of Raddery House by the Highland Council's Black Isle Education Centre, a short term facility which, due to falling numbers, later moved to Killen.

It was to the credit of the much-respected John Macleod that the several anticipated and unanticipated difficulties raised by council departments as well as by our own negotiators were ironed out in record time and in a most civilised and honourable way. The whole process was completed in a year. The proposed school was registered as a company limited by guarantee and with the Scottish Office Education Department. A School Council of relevant professionals was recruited, to whom I made myself responsible, buildings and grounds were renovated, staff and the first children were moved into residence. Some years later we were privileged and thrilled to have the recently retired John MacLeod offer to join the Raddery School Council/Board.

As with my own experience of setting up at Raddery, I imagine this new venture proposed by the largely local, well experienced and dedicated steering group will be needing to persuade the neighbours, local representatives and officials that they have more than just good intentions to bring about success for their project. As for the local residents, a number of whom I can remember listening to my colleagues and me with a patient yet discerning ear, there were many questions asked of us in 1978 as there will be of the new innovators now. Encouragingly, I understand there to be considerable local support for this new proposal.

What I can never forget from my tenure is the moment when John Grigor, farmer of Muiryden, by Raddery put the critical question to the assembled group; would they support this proposal or not? The answer came back as a 'yes'. Thereafter, no group of neighbours could have done more for us. Quite voluntarily, our neglected grass, broken fences and storm damaged trees were taken in hand, and we were further schooled in the management of livestock we chose to introduce for therapeutic purposes with some neighbours' skills in animal husbandry being generously shared.

Critically, when we had a problem with one of our volatile or troublesome children and their behaviour threatened the hard-won good relationship we had striven to establish with our neighbours, openness, candour and yes, occasionally, when we fell on our faces, forgiveness was on offer from those around us. Many good time community events were shared in the old stable block and house; music and the arts brought real talent to the ears of children and adults alike.

This new proposal for 2022, if acknowledged and embraced for its diversity and relative tranquillity, could, once again invite the campus's very special therapeutic qualities which served both schools admirably well to play their part with a new more vulnerable client group. The grounds with their enviable avenue of beech trees and shrubbery, could, once again offer appropriate physical challenge, healing and growth, resilience training and contemplation, conversation and appreciation for the present generation of young people needing help to grow and prosper. Inevitably, there will be those whose lives will be shortened by their condition. The new envisaged Raddery experience will reach out to them too.

It is this new group's spirit of humanitarian and educational inventiveness for Raddery House and all those who may, under their auspices, spend time there which I find so exciting. In these days of heavy financial cutbacks, with more to come and a reduction in even statutory education, social work, and health services it is quite astonishing to me to see such an endeavour being planned. That the need for respite breaks for families with very sick children is blazingly obvious is in no doubt. I have been witness to that through the work of the Malcolm Sargent House project in Ayr which for many years undertook similar work. This proposal for Raddery House and Woodlands though is more extensive and ambitious in the diversity of related projects it is looking to initiate.

I wish every success to those striving to see Raddery House and Woodlands once again throw off the lamentable stains of recent vandalism, serve well the Highlands and honour the Salvesen gift.

David Dean <https://sites.google.com/view/daviddean/home> November, 2022.

## Footnote

The Malcolm Sargent Cancer Care for Children organisation, now amalgamated as CLIC-Sargent and re-named 'Young Lives versus Cancer' set up Malcolm Sargent House in Ayr for very much the same use as is being proposed for one central strand of this current proposal for the future of Raddery House.

For over twenty years since retiring from Raddery I have been a committee member and, for seven of those years, chairman of the Highland Hospitals' Carol Concert Committee. Raising, in those years, over £250,000. for the charity's work in the north of Scotland. These funds also supported children from the Highlands and Islands who, with their carers, benefitted from a stay at Malcolm Sargent House.

A salutary tale can be found in the link below. When an organisation takes its eye off the ball, all the hard work that went into the creating and sustaining of something really special, evaporates other than in the minds and lives of its survivors.

Fortunately, there has arisen, close by, a group of dedicated social entrepreneurs who, undeterred by the calamity of neglect and mismanagement which saw the demise of Malcolm Sargent House, has ensured the phoenix rose again not far away.

David Dean November, 2022

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/ayrshire/malcolm-sargent-house-set-demolition-22428327>