

The story of our Pancake Evening... from three stones to a feast...

This week we all celebrated our wonderful Pancake Evening, and what a joyful and lively gathering it was. It was a good way to see old friends, meet new ones, dance and of course eat lots of pancakes.

Michael Oak



But let me tell you how it all started, because every tradition has its beginning, and this one is worth remembering.

When I started as Michael Oak's Class 1 teacher in 2000, the dawn of a new millennium, brought both hope and uncertainty. The threat of Y2K loomed over us as we entered the new year – yet we stood at that threshold with excitement, even though we were unsure of what the future held.

As both parent and teacher, I became deeply involved in school life. To offer all the children a beautiful environment, creative education and the quality learning we all wanted, we as parents and teachers had to work hard. Like many schools, Michael Oak constantly needed to fundraise, host events to welcome new and prospective families, and build reserves for improvements. There was a growing sense among parents of always giving, always doing, always organising.

One of my favourite childhood books was *Stone Soup*, by Marcia Brown, the tale of an impoverished community who, through the wit and encouragement of three strangers, created a delicious soup 'fit for a king' just from three stones and a feast the villagers would never forget. Each villager brought what they had - a carrot, an onion, some barley - and together they created abundance from scarcity. I wanted this spirit of community endeavour and abundance for Michael Oak. So in 2002, in a Faculty meeting, I approached my colleagues with a question: *could we host an event where no one had to pay, where each family only contributed something small and yet there would be enough food to share, music to enjoy, and space for children to simply play?*

And in that moment the Pancake Evening was born. We called it the Summer Pancake Feast initially, holding it on warm Wednesday evenings. After a few years, colleague Joan Sleight suggested we align it with Shrove Tuesday and the start of Lent. It has remained there ever since.

The Pancake Evening began as a way to build community, to create abundance through shared giving rather than individual burden, and to offer children an experience they

would carry forward. We know that children thrive not just through what happens in the classroom, but through the quality of community that surrounds them - when they see their parents and teachers working together, when they experience generosity without transaction, when they witness adults creating joy simply for the sake of creating joy together. In those early years, the feast ended with drumming around a bonfire, dancing, and when the school bell rang, tired, happy children headed home to bed.

Over the years the evening has evolved, shaped by the hands and hearts of many. We think back with deep gratitude to our beloved Phil, who for so many years gracefully and beautifully led us into circle dancing. With his passing came a new energy and commitment to celebrating joyously together. Young and old still hold hands in the circle, letting go of fears and inhibitions, learning the steps, twirls and hops in their own way. Sweet and savoury pancakes fill tummies and bring smiles. Past pupils return to relive their fondest memories, whilst the little ones experience the magic for the first time, wide-eyed and wondering.

And so the spirit continues. Those early parents who first stirred the pancake batter, who first laid the fires, who first joined hands in the circle - they built something that you, today's parents, now sustain and renew. Each year, as you contribute your time, your energy, your presence, you add your ingredient to the soup. You become part of the story that future parents will one day tell.

Through these moments of togetherness, of healthy and joyous fun, we build our community. We embody Rudolf Steiner's vision: *"A healthy social life is found when in the mirror of each human soul the whole community finds its reflection, and when in the community the virtue of each one is living."*

From three stones to a feast. From one teacher's dream to a beloved tradition. May it continue for many years to come.

Beulah Reeler

Acting School Coordinator

Michael Oak Summer Evening Pancake Feast

Dear parents and children
You are invited to join us in a wonderful feast of delicious pancakes, circle dancing and time to socialise with old friends and new!!

Wednesday
12th February
6pm - 8pm

No need to bring any money - everything is FREE!

It's a bit like making 'stone soup'...
All you need to do is to provide either some pancakes or fillings as directed by your class links.

Please find out from your class teacher or class links what your contribution needs to be.

Bring a blanket, your own drinks and a willingness to have a good time!

P.s. All drummers. If you want to create your own drum circle after the circle dancing, please feel free to do so.
Bring along your drums and some good rhythms.