



October 2015

Dear Friends

On Tuesday 29th September I had the privilege to be invited to join Botton Village for the Michaelmas Festival. This has taken place for the 60 years that Botton has been there so why did this seem so very special to me?

I wrote a rather dark poem in March about the Community, expressing the fear that the 2015 Easter Festival might be the last. In fact, just hours before CVT's notice of termination of their support for the Co-workers on 1st April took effect (leading to the inevitable evictions), the High Court hearing led to CVT's agreeing protective undertakings that have been operating ever since.

I am sure many know the theme of Michaelmas. There is a war in Heaven culminating with the dragon being cast out of heaven by St Michael who is armed with a very large sword. I draw no parallels but the mere fact that six months later Michaelmas Festival was being celebrated seemed to me indeed quite wonderful. Two birthdays of very long term Co-workers coincided and to listen to those who came forward to speak (irrespective of whether they might, outside Botton, be judged as givers or receivers of support), was hugely moving.

So is Botton now safe? Well, there are real signs that CVT is prepared to look seriously for agreed solutions. Now is not the time to query why it has taken probably not far short of half a million pounds to get where common sense said the process should have started. Let's continue to work from where we are to ensure Botton is indeed safe.

The reality, as of now, is that there has been a real change in the field of care and Botton and Camphill, far from being caught in the past and "not fit for purpose", as some have suggested, provides exactly the sort of care now at the cutting edge of the new approach. For an example of the way these changes are moving to appreciate the human element of support and some of the science behind it, we need go no further than the remarkable presentation to Parliament at Westminster by the Alliance for Camphill together with L'Arche, which is summarised at <http://careindustrynews.co.uk/2015/09/shared-living-community-village-under-threat-as-benefits-far-outweigh-other-choices-for-learning-disabled/>. The full reports and videos of the talks can be found at www.camphillresearch.com/choice-for-intentional-community/.

Going out and outdated are the large, employee based, one size fits all, care institutions. In comes Shared Lives¹ - families welcoming those who need support into their homes not as employers but as life sharers. Does that not sound familiar?

¹ For those unfamiliar with the term it may be helpful to view the Shared Lives Plus website at www.sharedlivesplus.org.uk. The correlations with the Camphill Model are startling.

Amazingly the Shared Lives Model deals with all CVT's expressed concerns. The whole point is that carers are not employees so there are no taxation or Minimum Wage or indeed Working Hours Directive worries. Shared Lives (just like Botton) has provably fewer safeguarding issues than employee based care, so no worries there either. The model is also fully accepted by the CQC and even the Conservative Government and Local Authorities like it, if for no other reason than because it is substantially cheaper.

We now find Botton and the Camphill movement again taking the lead with the care world just catching up. What is now clear is that the one size fits all care institution is outdated and of the past, with the meeting of individual wishes and needs, a feature of Botton for the last 60 years, the future. Allowing those with support needs real choice as to how their personal budgets are spent is crucial and can be a reality within the flexibility of intentional communities. Indeed the Shared Lives Model when allied with intentional community and the principles of Camphill is a potential world changer.

What now is clear from the most recent discussions (as per agreed statements below) is that CVT are saying that they are prepared to look realistically at Shared Lives. Now at last, rather than fighting endlessly we are looking at the possibility of collaboration.

Worry not, we at Action for Botton have not gone soft and we remain alert and cautious. There are major issues still to address. The farm land is deteriorating, the workshops are being run by employees with Co-workers effectively excluded and we are nowhere near ensuring that the Botton Co-workers and Villagers have the security of tenure, autonomy and independence needed. There have been actions on the ground which are difficult to reconcile with CVT's commitment to the mediation process.

We, in the meantime, have totally honoured the request to avoid negative publicity and, whilst CVT continue to follow through on the Mediation Agreement and whilst progress is being made, we will maintain this. As I said in an early letter to CVT it is time to "give peace a chance" and we certainly will go the extra mile to avoid the "mutually assured destruction" that a High Court Battle to the very bitter end would bring.

There is no doubt that we have also got where we are only because we were prepared to fight and we were only able to do so because of the great generosity of our many donors. However, our need for funds remains. We are employing the very best available lawyers to help us through mediation and of course to fight on in the Courts if it turns out that CVT's apparent change is another mirage. But, even if we find a collaborative solution, so much damage has been done that the Co-workers will need our support in getting re-established and to re-build, so all or any further help will be greatly appreciated.

So far so good then. Given the history, we will remain vigilant and look at actions rather than words, remaining ready to continue the legal process if the current hopes fail. This letter was drafted but delayed so that the outcome of the continuing mediation discussions could be included and I send with this newsletter a copy of the agreed press release relating to the latest round of talks as attached. The talks have clearly been challenging and there is a long way to go but progress is still being made.

Before signing off, I would like to add a wholehearted appreciation of the Botton Co-workers. Without their total commitment to the Villagers which has maintained the ethos of Camphill (as indeed I saw at Michaelmas) we would have nothing now to foster and protect.

Neil Davidson, Chair Action for Botton

We continue to need your financial support so we can protect shared living at Botton. You can make a donation, large or small, in various ways:

- Send a **Cheque** to: Action for Botton, The Vicarage, Danby, Whitby, YO21 2NQ
- Pay into our **Account**: Sort code: 53-50-15, Account number: 50702254, IBAN: GB86NWBK53501550702254, SWIFT/BIC: NWBKGB2L
- Or donate **Online** - simply click the yellow donate button on www.actionforbotton.org

Press Release from the Mediation Talks on 22 October 2015:

“The Camphill Village Trust and claimants from the Botton, Delrow and The Grange communities came together in London to review the mediation agreement reached between them in July 2015.

Participants are pleased to say that solid progress has been made towards achieving shared aims of the Settlement Agreement developed in July.

The talks at the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution were open and constructive and achieved a deeper level of understanding around the issues and agreement for further steps to help to rebuild trust.

Significant progress has already been made around the possible development of a Shared lives scheme at Botton. Caroline Tomlinson, a well-respected care sector advisor who enjoys the confidence of all parties is to lead the project. A plan to work through the next stages by the end of December 2015 was agreed.

It was agreed that the formation of the Delrow Family Reference Group should be speeded up so the body can meet as soon as is practical.

Those present confirmed their shared commitment to Guest Volunteers and agreed to further discussions around their role in communities.

There was consensus that all parties should strive to improve communication between all relevant stakeholders. Participants talked through how day to day operational tensions could be better resolved within communities without legal involvement. Further meetings will take place both at Botton and Delrow shortly to take this forward. It was stressed that the establishment of stronger trust and confidence takes time.

The mediation group will come back together on January 21st 2016 to review overall progress. The parties agreed that it is likely that more time may be needed to complete the work underway. This would be agreed by the end of the year.

Both sides are grateful for the support that people have shown during this important process and appeal for their continued cooperation and understanding.”