



Action for Botton

Autumn Newsletter 2016

Edited by Dr Brendan Quayle
(Chair, Action for Botton)

The Vicarage

Danby

Whitby

action@actionforbotton.org

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Dear Supporters,

Introduction

As we enter the littoral of the year, that funny space between Michaelmas and Advent, with the leaves going from green to Giotto gold then back to the brown of the earth, we find ourselves stuck in transition-land with not a lot of real news to colour the empty spaces. I shall endeavour however to keep you up to date with what I can/am allowed to share - and make a few observations between.

I have presented the newsletter in this format so that you can skip stuff you are already familiar with and, just as the leaves fall around us, you will have to use your (no doubt fertile) imaginations to fill the gaps.

The pictures from the World Wide Weave etc. will hopefully add some Autumn colour and cheer.



New Chair

I was elected, in true Dad's Army fashion, as Chairperson while I was on holiday and unable to vote but, despite this, still feel honoured to have been 'asked' in absentia. There is of course no prospect of my being able to fill the incredibly tireless Neil Davidson's shoes or of ultimately escaping to Armenia, but I will do the best I can in the months (or years) ahead. I see my primary purpose whilst campaigning is suspended, apart from chairing the very lively and well-attended AfB meetings, as having a watchful brief on the legal proceedings and encouraging progress on the mediation front.

As I am not known to all our remarkable sponsors and donors, I should explain that my association with Camphill started in Aigues-Vertes in Geneva in the Autumn of 1973 where I met Nicole, my life partner. I have been visiting Botton ever since coming to Durham in 1974 for postgraduate work and then staying here in the North East to forge a career in rural development, environmental consultancy, television documentary making, book writing and journalism then latterly Large Format Film before finally retiring to the garden, the joys of grand-parentage, and writing for fun.

When my own work-life was at its most stressful, I could be found at times over the years helping in the Inner Garden and trying to merge with the plants as best I could — staying well out of village politics and associated other stresses. Some of my dearest friends are Camphillers and Botton folk including of course some that are sadly no longer with us. I did however (with Vivian Griffiths) assist the wonderful Peter Roth in the early stages of Larchfield in a professional capacity and still count my Camphill encounter as a major inspiration in my life. Two of my children were christened in Botton and every year we would attend cultural and seasonal events as best we could from our Durham base.

The photo above is of the Kate and Peter Roth with Anke and Thomas Weihs in 1955, the year Botton was established. This was a group of friends with a vision of establishing a community on the threefold principle of work, culture and spirit that involved living with persons with learning difficulties on a life-sharing basis. Since those heady days, Botton under CVT (effectively the legal entity that 'owns' the freehold) has moved well away from this vision quite substantially as you will all know and, for this reason, with the help of your generosity





and sympathy, a group of claimants took them to the High Court in order to enforce a return to the values and impulses that inspired its foundation and the world-wide community of adult centres that it engendered.

From my friends in the movement, I have asked the question 'What would the Camphill pioneers say about this? And what would they do in the current situation?' I have had various answers (all polite I should add) which it would take too long to relay but the gist largely amounts to "The establishment and continuation of AfB is exactly the right thing. We should continue to support the co-workers until they have largely achieved their goals of ensuring that within the village community of Botton a 'Whole Life' situation remains where there is still:

1. Shared Living (rather than the care by non resident, non-Camphill shift workers)
2. Shared Working in meaningful situations, and ideally within Workshops, Farms and Gardens run on proven healthy Bio-Dynamic principles
3. Shared Camphill Philosophy based on relationships (not on "pay for care" top-down control"

It would not be campaigning against anything or anyone to say that I find the recent changes in the management of Botton to be profoundly worrying — the loss of Biodynamics and of key, committed co-workers in particular — and I do wonder what is coming next.

The Mediation and AfB

I can report that the latest confidential and without prejudice mediation meeting between representatives of the Claimants and CVT took place in mid-July. As the mediation is confidential we are not privy to the discussions, but we understand that the focus as far as Botton was concerned related to the co-worker claimants (as the surviving torch-bearers for the original Camphill impulse) becoming 'Shared Lives Carers' under the proposed Avalon scheme. Avalon, an independent charitable agency, would then become the responsible body for the delivery of social care in selected co-worker managed houses in the village, in place of CVT. This of



course would be entirely subject to appropriate consultation, assessment and the wishes of individual residents.

A recent development is that at the beginning of October Avalon confirmed that sufficient progress has been made so that the necessary assessments of co-workers (Shared Lives Carers in Avalon's terms) can now begin. This is extremely encouraging.

Currently the parties are working through the terms of the tenancies, which CVT are proposing for the co-workers. One of the fundamental issues for the scheme will be affordability, and this will depend on the funds that North Yorkshire County Council will make available to the Shared Lives Scheme. There is no certainty around this as yet. Avalon are working with the Council on this, and there is to be a meeting of CVT (as current Provider), Avalon (as proposed Provider in the co-worker part of the community) and NYCC.

At that meeting it is expected that the Council will be providing a list of their current concerns in advance, but it has not come through yet. The preliminary viability costings have been done thus far based on historic Shared Lives funding but, as with so much in Social Care, that is to change. This is where the uncertainty starts, coupled with the planned re-assessments of the beneficiaries. (Separately, if the mediation is satisfactorily resolved, the eventual outcome of the High Court case will include new family member trustees joining the CVT board and the formation of local participation groups at Botton and The Grange much like the Family Reference Group at Delrow.)

As you will know, as part of the mediation process, AfB have been obliged not to campaign against CVT or to engage in direct lobbying or negotiation activities.

Our reservations about CVT and its own direction of travel set to one side, we must confirm that CVT appear just as keen as the claimants to press ahead with these meetings regularly and to work quickly towards the best currently available solution to the difficulties posed of retaining the working philosophy of Camphill in Botton. We welcome this and take it as an encouraging sign.

Avalon appear to be entirely focused on ensuring that the Scheme being negotiated would work for the benefit of the "Customers" (their word for the Villagers). This would be not



just at the outset, but in the longer term too, with a particular eye on the financial viability of life for the “Carers” (Avalon’s word for the co-workers). Avalon’s assessment of potential Carers has begun but the level of their commitment to the scheme will depend on the assessments, and also on the discussions with NYCC.

AfB have, thanks to your help, been part-funding (with CVT) the costs involved for Avalon as a separate charity to progress the scheme.

One thing is for certain until all is said and done and, no matter how many civilisations rise or fall in the meantime, we will, like the proverbial Art School Dance that goes on forever, carry on until we ensure that - through the current proposed solution (or other if it fails) mediation reaches an effective and satisfactory conclusion.

You and all the remarkable Botton Buddies have all been very generous with your financial support, moral support and time for our cause and the campaign to Save Botton could not have been as successful as it has been without it. We are however still helping to meet the inevitable ongoing legal and mediation costs and your support is still needed if we are to get to the end of the road with the desired conclusions in place.

We are almost there - but not quite - and still need as much help as we can.

AfB Action for Botton

CVT Camphill Village Trust

BVFG Botton Village Family Group

CfWR Centre for Welfare Reform

C&LG Communities and Local Government

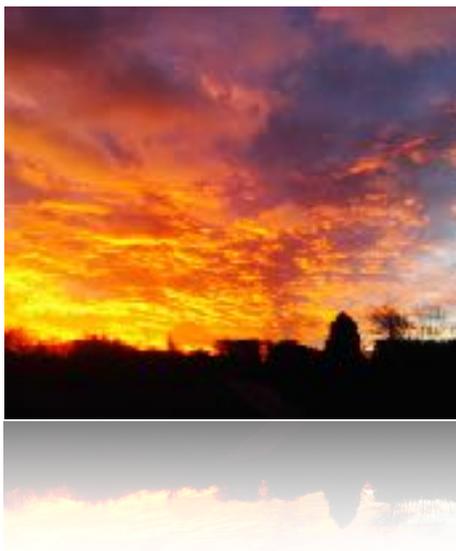
CFF Camphill Families and Friends

AfC Alliance for Camphill

AoCC Association of Camphill Communities

House of Commons Select Committee

Independently of AfB, a group of parents of learning disabled persons from Botton Village (the Botton Village Family Group BVFG) supported by parents from other CVT communities and independent Camphill communities, in 2015 joined with a group being set up by the Centre for Welfare Reform (CfWF), called ‘Rethinking Care’. This is a broad coalition of many organisations and individuals with interests (or rather serious concerns) in the area of Social Care. Although they come from diverse sections of the sector and have differing viewpoints all of them agreed on one thing - a desperate need for the government to review all aspects the present Social Care



system, and in the case of the BVFG, advance the valuable place that the traditional Camphill Model can play within it.

The CfWR is headed up by Dr Simon Duffy, a leading innovator in the care sector. A proposal for an inquiry by the House of Commons Select Committee of Communities and Local Government (C&LG Committee) was agreed within the 'Rethinking Care' group during the autumn of 2015. The Botton Village Family Group (BVFG)'s proposal was submitted and they tirelessly lobbied MPs and peers to support the initiative. Subsequently it was arranged that Dr Duffy meet with the committee Chair to discuss the initiative.

The C&LG Committee subsequently formally announced their intention to undertake an inquiry in June and submissions were called for with a deadline in mid-September. The Chair particularly requested personal experiences and stories from families and parents (otherwise it was felt that the materials would be very dry and long-winded!).

The BVFG worked tirelessly helping a range of submissions from the families while putting together one from the collectivity. Using Botton Village as an example, their aim was to demonstrate how the loving and caring support system, operating strictly within the original Camphill philosophy and paradigm, is much more effective on every level, including cost, than the standard 'off the shelf models' in vogue within the sector 'managed' by local authorities and contracted providers. Group members and others then worked on the CfWR's 'Rethinking Care' submission. After it was submitted, this was eventually supported by both Camphill Families and Friends (CFF) and the newly-established Alliance for Camphill (AfC see below). We asked only for support, not endorsement.

Both CFF and AfC decided to send separate submissions of their own to the C&LG Committee while the Association of Camphill Communities (AoCC) decided not to do a proposal. Ultimately therefore several Camphill submissions are before the Committee. There has also been one from CVT who submitted a proposal that deals entirely with the way that the spending cuts are perceived to affect the changed (away from the traditional Camphill model) systems they have chosen to operate.

The C&LG Committee is now in the process of evaluating evidence and calling witnesses. When and if called, witnesses

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will give evidence in front of the 11-plus committee members and their evidence is filmed and placed online on parliament's website.



It should be noted that, for the reasons given above, AfB could not (under their specific function as a campaigning organisation against the CVT model) provide a separate submission to the committee. They were thus not enabled to give permission for AfB funded, authored statements or materials to be included in any submissions by the group or any third parties.

AfB directors remain open to any request by the committee (should they be asked) to give spoken evidence on their belief on the value of the traditional Camphill model of care. We envisage this task would perhaps be more appropriately carried out by the Alliance for Camphill or the Association of Camphill Communities who represent the wider organisation and its members. These include Scotland, Northern Ireland and elsewhere where communities subsist under the traditional model and, not only are fully compliant with UK legislation, but thrive economically.

A link is provided below to the BVFG submission. The statements of individual family members and all other submissions are publicly available on the parliamentary website should AfB members and supporters wish to see more detail.

House of Commons Select Committee BVFG statement

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/communities-and-local-government-committee/social-care/written/36088.html>

Other Statements

Centre for Welfare Reform

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/communities-and-local-government-committee/social-care/written/35928.html>

CFF



<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/communities-and-local-government-committee/social-care/written/35774.html>

Alliance for Camphill

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/communities-and-local-government-committee/social-care/written/35864.html>

The list of all published submissions (including CVT), is continually updated can be viewed here - and you need to click " A-Z" to see them all.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/communities-and-local-government-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/adult-social-care-16-17/publications/>

Note about the Alliance for Camphill

The Alliance for Camphill involves representatives from various Camphill Communities, parents and supporters and was inaugurated in August 2015.

Now fully established, its Mission and Purpose, as set out in the most recent draft strategy, is as follows:

- ◆ To promote the core principles of the worldwide Camphill movement as an important contribution to society and to the dignity and freedom of human beings with all types of ability and disability
- ◆ To campaign, lobby, represent and where appropriate negotiate in defending, preserving and further developing communities based on these principles
- ◆ To provide positive practical and financial support to individuals and groups working to uphold the core principles, and to request, collect and distribute funds freely given to support these aims
- ◆ To collaborate with other groups and organisations whose aims and approach are compatible with those of the Alliance

If you would like to join or find out more please contact the Membership Secretary : emmelinekj@hotmail.com

Emmeline King-Evans; tel 01904 492 822 07966 97 99 22.

Other Matters

Next AfB Meeting

This will be held at the Vicarage on November 17th 2016.
Members business at 13.00 hrs.

The CVT AGM will be held on Wednesday 23rd November 2016 at The Priory Street Centre, York at 14.00. CVT members are encouraged to attend and let their opinions be known!

The Botton Village Steiner School Fair is on Sunday 4th December 11-4pm. Please come along and support the school.

Brendan

