

## Camphill communities

According to [Wikipedia](#):

Camphill communities are residential communities and schools for adults and children with learning disabilities, mental health problems and other special needs, which provide services and support for work, learning and daily living. There are 119 Camphill communities in 23 countries in Europe, North America, southern Africa and Asia (as of March 2012).

The movement was founded in 1939 at Kirkton House near Aberdeen by Austrian pediatrician Karl Konig. It was Konig's view that every human being possessed a healthy inner personality that was independent of their physical characteristics, including characteristics marking developmental or mental disability and the role of the school was to recognise, nurture and educate this essential self. The communities philosophy, anthroposophy, states that "a perfectly formed spirit and destiny belong to each human being." The underlying principles were derived from the concepts of education outlined by Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). The movement takes its name from the Camphill Estate in the Milltimber area of Aberdeen, Scotland, where the Camphill pioneers moved to with their community for children with special needs in June 1940. Camphill Estate is now a campus of Camphill School Aberdeen. There are six Camphills in the Aberdeen area. The school was noted in the HMI/Care Commission report for 2007 as meeting 'very good' to 'excellent' standards. The school also holds Autism Accreditation from the National Autistic Society. The Botton village\* received the Deputy Prime Minister's Award for Sustainable Communities in 2005; the award cited the community's dedication to the ethos of sustainability and mutual respect, as well as their achievements in these areas.

\* The Botton community, the largest in England and Wales, is situated in North Yorkshire.

[Camphill England and Wales](#) states that there are 23 communities in England and Wales which include independent residential and day schools, specialist colleges of further education and adult communities where each individual's abilities and qualities are recognised and nurtured as the foundation for a fulfilling life. There are communities in both urban and rural settings. "Through the '70s and '80s Camphill came to Finland, the Irish Republic, Wales, Botswana, Austria, France, Brazil, Sweden and Canada. During the 1990s, liberalisation in Eastern Europe allowed Camphill communities to begin work in Poland, Estonia and Russia. The first community in Asia was founded in India in 1999. The new millennium brought Camphill to Latvia...."

### Camphill and anthroposophy

Despite the undoubted dedication and care for the disadvantaged that must be reflected by most of the people running these communities and the external volunteers who help, it should be borne in mind that the foundation for the activities that take place is based on the ideas of Rudolf Steiner and anthroposophy, the religion/movement he founded. Camphill communities could also be regarded as ideal projects for gathering together all of Steiner's irrational ideas into the same locations. Activities are most likely to include biodynamic gardening, eurythmics, Steiner/Waldorf pedagogy and art and craft activities with Steiner spiritual connotations and even what has been called anthroposophical medicine. The basis of these activities is neither rational nor capable of scientific verification. Biodynamic gardening incorporates organic farming methods and hence Steiner's occult biodynamic preparations which I have outlined in the section on biodynamic agriculture, are unlikely to result in negative outcomes. The same could be said for eurythmy. They can perhaps be regarded as just a waste of time or better substituted with more rewarding activities.

However, with regard to medical matters, there are clear dangers involved in substituting proven and scientifically verified medical treatments and procedures with those such as homeopathy and anthroposophical medicine which have no such foundation. Robert Smith Hald's [bitter account](#) of the misdiagnosis of his wheat intolerance (which he did not discover until he was 36) and erroneous treatment by anthroposophical practitioners in several Camphill communities in the USA, caused him considerable suffering over many years. He opens the account of his experience with the comment "Anthroposophy is a religion, and Camphill is a sect, a cult of fanatics pursuing spiritual development and ultimately perfection.

They believe that sickness is the soul incarnating, and also that it has to do with karma. They don't believe in inoculations, so I had all the child diseases going around, some twice. My being sick all the time was obviously not just the mumps and the measles and whooping cough, so they had the anthroposophical doctors in all the time, in between punishing me for being sick (that's why I stayed out of the house for as long as I could). There were three doctors, one in [Beaver Run](#), one in [The Village, Copake](#) and one that practiced in both places."

In case anyone may think that the community might have been self-sufficient in what it produced in the community, Robert points out that large quantities of government surplus were delivered - "Government surplus is just that, surplus agricultural products the government buys up to keep prices up and farmers in business. Non-profit organisations like Camphill can qualify to receive this food free of charge. They sent it in in 18 wheeler trucks. We got everything from raisins, chocolate chips, peanut oil, roasted peanuts, peanut butter, and every kind of cheese imaginable in great big industrial size blocks. During the butter shortage in the 70's we had so much butter we used to make campfires with it. We also got cooking oil (mazola, corn and peanut), liverwurst, frozen orange juice and other juice concentrate, and most important, tons and tons of double, and later triple buffed bleached whole wheat flour. They never put that on the wrappers when they sold their wholesome village baked bread.

He grew up being forced by his mother, with the endorsement of the anthroposophical doctors, to eat the very food that was making him sick. Not only was he forced to eat whole wheat bread, he was prescribed sugar pills called infludo, horsetail tea and chamomile tea. He also gave an account of a child with diabetes being treated with honey bee stings on his temples once a week. This was considered logical because bees liked honey. Arthritis was treated in the same way. "They actively discuss the foolhardiness and downright dangers of modern medicine. I was effectively brainwashed to never question food, and shun traditional medicine.... Anthroposophists also believe that eating potatoes makes you materialistic (which means unspiritual and worldly) and my plea to replace bulgar with potatoes was not only ignored, but also openly ridiculed. Robert is a little materialist!... We moved to Norway when we were teens, and since we hadn't been inoculated, we all got the German measles, and after that meningitis. One sister was hospitalised, comatose and in intensive care for months".

The family returned to the USA and Robert worked as a volunteer in [Camphill Copake](#), where his health deteriorated once again where he underwent the same regime of quackery. Shortly after he spent some time in a Camphill in Scotland for 3 months. He went to the anthroposophical doctor there and was once again prescribed horsetail tea as a cure and was advised to break up with his Scottish girlfriend and return to Copake. They felt that she wasn't right for them, too Ahrimanic, too materialistic, and stealing me away from under their very noses. He went back to Norway where the cause of his illness had been diagnosed and worked in a home for mentally handicapped adults that had been started by disgruntled ex-Camphillers but they had an anthroposophical doctor and guess what he prescribed! His utter contempt of anthroposophical medicine is reflected in his comment "It is not based on science. It is based wholly on the religious beliefs of a crazed madman who believed himself a clairvoyant and called himself a spiritual scientist. It is my experience that his followers want to be just like him, and that is a dangerous thing."

This experience of Robert Smith-Hald will not be reflected in the public image presented by Camphill community web sites and may not be indicative of positive day-to-day social interactions between members of the community.

The Camphill Village in Copake presents itself as follows:

"What We Believe:

Camphill Village was founded on the insights of anthroposophy, the spiritual scientific understanding of the human being given by philosopher, scientist, and educator Rudolf Steiner, Ph.D.(1861-1925).

Anthroposophy embraces a spiritual understanding of the human being, based on knowing rather than faith. Anthroposophy is the wellspring for Waldorf education, biodynamic agriculture, and new frontiers in science, the arts, sociology, medicine, and curative work.

- We believe that everyone at Camphill is interdependent and equal. Our house leaders and service volunteers receive no salary, and as such, everyone exists on an equal plane.
- We believe that it is the right and responsibility of each individual to pursue a personal education so that he or she may contribute to the spiritual progress of the world.
- We believe that every individual is a spiritual being, and that this spirituality is eternal and can never be judged."

However, I have sought to convey through my research that the practical outcomes of Steiner's occult ideas can result in serious abuses of basic human rights and make little contribution to the advancement of humanity and solutions to the many global threats that are now being posed as a result of resource depletion, global warming and environmental destruction. It is sad to reflect that Steiner has piggy-backed, in an intelligent and deceitful way, these ideas onto important rational ideas about sustainability, human rights, ethical finance, health and education which constructively challenge the status quo.

Michael Thomas

Camphill Communities were established on the basis of the ideas of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), a self proclaimed Austrian clairvoyant, who founded a movement which he named anthroposophy in 1913 after he split from the occult Theosophical Society.

ANTHROPOSOPHIC MEDICINE --- BIODYNAMIC AGRICULTURE --- WALDORF-STEINER SCHOOLS