



## Camphill Village Trust - Botton Village

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**N**estling in the North York Moors is the village of Botton. This is no ordinary village. It is a special village with a special community: part of the Camphill Village Trust.

The dream of such a community began with a group of likeminded, mostly Jewish, Austrian refugees, who fled their homeland in 1939 and arrived in Aberdeen. Their aim was to set up a therapeutic community for children with learning disabilities and they found a sympathetic landowner willing to rent them a suitable property. Unfortunately, at the outbreak of war, the men were interned as enemy aliens for six months, but the women continued with the work. The men returned and the Camphill Movement started in earnest. On June 1st 1940 the 'Camphill Community for Children in Need of Special Care', was opened on the Camphill Estate in Scotland, given to the Camphill Movement by the Macmillan family. A loan of £1000 was also given from the Scottish Council for Refugees.

The natural leader of the Camphill Movement was Dr Karl König, who took his inspiration from the Austrian philosopher, Rudolph Steiner, founder of the anthroposophy movement: this posits that the spiritual world can be accessed by direct experience through inner development.

Dr König studied Medicine at the University of Vienna and graduated in 1927 with a special interest in Embryology. After graduating, he met Ita Wegman, an anthroposophical physician who invited him to work in her institute for people with special needs in Arlesheim, Switzerland. Following his work in Arlesheim, König was appointed paediatrician at the Rudolf Steiner inspired Pilgrimshain Institute in Strzegom, where he worked until 1936, when he returned to Vienna and set up a successful medical practice. In Aberdeen, Dr König was further inspired to help children with learning disabilities, because he felt they were treated as outcasts in their communities, as he and his colleagues had been in Austria.

In the first year, nineteen pupils from the ages of two to nineteen were educated in therapeutic groups. Dr König called the work 'Curative Education'. This was based on the anthroposophical approach, that 'a perfectly formed spirit and destiny belong to each human being'. The success of the venture led to expansion of the community through the 1940s and by 1950, there were 222 pupils at Camphill schools, with another 156 on the waiting list. Official Ministry reports showed that these schools were then the only form of educational provision in the UK available for children with severe learning disabilities. The work expanded to assist children with a

variety of special needs.

In October 1954, the Camphill Village Trust Ltd was set up and in 1955, with an increasing number of requests for communities for adults, the first Camphill Village Trust Community was founded in Botton village, in Danby Dale, North Yorkshire. By 2017 there were nine Camphill Village Trust Communities in the UK, providing homes for around 400 adults with learning disabilities, mental health problems and special needs. Worldwide, the Camphill Movement has established over a hundred therapeutic communities in more than twenty countries.

Botton Village is home to 150 people, 90 of whom have a learning disability and other special needs. The village is spread over 650 acres of land and supports five biodynamic farms and a number of workshops and gardens, providing a variety of working experiences. The accommodation, which is shared with co-workers, comprises thirty houses ranging from farmhouses and barn conversions to purpose-built accommodation and houses for the elderly.

With the emphasis on community, the village also

has a village hall for shows and gatherings, a church, village shop, organic bakery, health centre, post office, and coffee bar where visitors are welcome to join the residents. A gift shop sells items made by the residents in the workshops and from other Camphill communities. There is also a Waldorf Steiner school, educating children from Botton and surrounding areas.

The ethos of the community is for each person to be treated as an individual with their own individual needs, being valued and appreciated. These needs are met through training and work, learning new skills, enjoying social interaction and friendship, together with cultural and spiritual guidance.

Botton village received the Deputy Prime Minister's Award for Sustainable Communities in 2005; the award cited the community's dedication to sustainability and mutual respect and their achievements in these areas. The judges said, "Botton offers both lessons and inspirations to the endeavour to create sustainable communities. The community's culture focuses on tolerance, respect and developing individual strengths."



## Find out more

The Camphill Village Trust and Botton Village,  
<https://www.cvt.org.uk/communities/botton-village>

History of the Camphill Movement,  
<http://www.camphill.org.uk/about/camphill-history>



*Botton Hall, Camphill Village Trust, in the head of Danby Dale*