

Article about Youth Conference in Camphill Newton Dee 2023

Community Building - How can we (re-)imagine our future?

11th -14th May 2023, Newton Dee

Background and Preparation

Youth Conferences have a well-established history in Camphill. Many long-standing co-workers share memories of Youth Conferences in the 70s. This awareness of each other and deep friendships between individuals and communities across the world are things that have taken place in Camphill over generations. And bringing this strength of the network of people surrounding the Camphill Movement to a new generation, was the intention behind rekindling the Youth Conference impulse.

The foundation to that was laid in 2018 (Clanabogan - "How can we carry the Camphill flame into the future?") and 2019 (Esk Valley - "How do we express our Camphill values in the modern world?"). Plans for conferences in 2020 (The Mount - "Living Camphill across Generations"), 2021 & 2022 (Newton Dee - "Community Building - Seeds for Social and Ecological Transformation") had to be cancelled unfortunately. An online Camphill Youth gathering in May 2021 took place instead.

The encouragement to keep going and not lose momentum, was given by three individuals from Newton Dee who one might call "of the older generation". They invited a small group of younger people within the Camphill Movement and the Youth Section to form an organising body. With the right mixture of wisdom sharing, guidance and letting go, these three facilitated a weekend in Newton Dee in November 2022 - passing on the baton and making it clear that they would not be involved in the further organising.

This weekend brainstorming around the questions of "What do we want to achieve?" & "Who do we want to reach?", marked the beginning of the planning phase. We explored common themes and interests of our generation today and recognised that there are a lot of young people in urban areas looking for a different way of life. Many are drawn towards community living but often don't know where to go or who to ask. Another common phenomenon we observed was that people who live in communities want to connect with others who share their values and way of life, to learn from and strengthen a wider awareness of each other and build networks of likeminded people and communities.

It was the start of a beautiful collaboration between individuals from Camphill Communities in Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and the US (Newton Dee, Esk Valley, Glencraig, Clanabogan and Camphill Academy) with a strong link to the Youth Section at the Goetheanum in Switzerland. We parted with a committed group of ten people, a vision of what the conference was going to be about (*Community Building*) and the confirmation that Camphill Newton Dee was willing to host this Youth Conference in May 2023.

The Conference

The program that was built around the theme of "Community Building - How can we (re-)imagine our future", stood on three pillars: (1) Intellectual content - thinking, (2) Newton Dee experience - feeling, and (3) free spaces to connect, share, and create with each other - willing.

The intellectual content was brought in three talks. The first one was called “Why are you here?” presented by Marie Dionie [Em] Palaleo. This talk was about the results of a research conducted to look into the experience of short-term co-workers in Camphill Communities around the world. The said research was led by Dan Mckanan in collaboration with the Camphill Academy and Camphill Foundation, USA. Em used the theme of her talk to open the space for people to reflect on why they were in their respective communities and at the conference. She presented a beautiful insight on experiences young people have when coming to Camphill.

The second talk was about sustainability in intentional communities. This was presented by Martin Sturm and Juan Sebastian Giraldo Armilla. They spoke about what sustainability means on a four-fold approach and their personal experiences with it. These included projects in Newton Dee (Juan) and the Camphill communities in Northern Ireland (Martin). Together they opened up the narrow thinking of sustainability as a purely ecological topic to the social, economic and cultural realm.

The third talk was about personal development and leadership in the light of social three-folding. Jonas Hellbrandt gave a short introduction on Rudolf Steiner's Social Law and how to relate it to personal growth, self-reflection and development of good leadership.

A presentation was given by Katia Popoff and Martin Schwarz about the Discovering Camphill Course which they developed together with a colleague in Camphill Community Glencraig.

Every talk was followed by group activities in which participants had time to reflect on what they heard, while doing something creative or contemplative. The participants remained in the same group to allow a deeper connection with each other. The groups included circus, singing and music, wood carving, meditation, and eurythmy.

Generous lunch breaks and bonfires gave further spaces to connect and form relationships.

Not everyone was from Camphill or an intentional community which gave the conference a great feel of diversity. There was a space called the 'Idea Bazaar' where people shared about exciting projects and new initiatives. Some of the presentations given were from L'Arche, the Youth Section at the Goetheanum and in the UK, Casa De Santa Isabel in Portugal, Freunde Waldorf, the Future Shapers, different Camphill Communities like Camphill Botswana, a project in Banchory, a teaser to 'Born That Way' - an upcoming film about Patrick Lydon and many more from different regional networks and communities around the world.

Newton Dee proved to be a welcoming and generous host. Not only did the 70 participants from all over the world enjoy delicious catering from the Café, but everyone got an invitation to join one of the house communities for a meal. The workshops opened their doors to us for one afternoon and together we celebrated the spirit of community with an inclusive, joyful Ceilidh.

The final morning on Sunday was all about reflection. We created small spaces for inner work, trying to make a start at processing the experiences shared over the long weekend. A group joined Newton Dee's Offering Service before we reconvened in the big circle and said our goodbyes and farewells. Finishing with a powerful Eurythmy “Hallelujah”, led by Munja Missalek.

Testimonies from Participants

"Thank you for creating a space for meeting, for building community and networks, a space for learning and reflecting and for creativity to flow. I am leaving inspired and with my heart filled with love and hope for the future." - Katia Popoff

" 'Empowered', is the whole theme of my conference experience in Newton Dee. As soon as I entered the community on the first day, I immediately felt a strong energy flowing into me. I will carry on with the power that I got from these 4 days and do amazing things, as all the young people that I met do!" - Natalie Gu

"I'm very happy to have had this opportunity to learn more about Anthroposophy and be able to live in your community for a few days. Newton Dee is such a lovely place. Motivation and inspiration are my feelings right now to come back to the normal routine." - Raphael Lima

"I think what I learned and realised was that we as a group of young motivated passionate people have the power to form and develop community, but also that community forms and develops us." - Mirjam Brauchle

"I am grateful to have been part of organising this conference. There was an incredible energy from all participants, the rest of the organising group and everyone supporting this in Newton Dee. It reminded me of being part of something bigger than the village, and I am hopeful for this Movement. We met so many young people committed to carrying these community values in different and innovative ways and I felt that the conference sparked something in the young generation in Newton Dee which I am lucky to be part of." - Juan Sebastian Giraldo Armilla

"From an organiser's perspective this was a learning-by-doing experience. We had to figure out many things as we went along with this project. There was a uniting willingness of all to work towards the same vision and we were lucky to have a supportive network around us, making this conference an incredible success." - Wiebke Lösken-Sturm

"I found the Youth Conference very inspiring. It was bursting with energy and the urge to change something, to make a difference. It was nice to meet so many new people and see that the future of Camphill is in good hands." - Mari Böckenhauer

"It came up in many conversations that we, the youth, are striving to carry the Camphill flame, to live the essence of Camphill in our daily lives. It felt good to connect with people across the world who were making a positive change. It made me realise that, even with our physical limitations, we are managing to put a lot of the Camphill essence into practice here in Esk Valley. The conference motivated me to contribute my part in our community." - Dimitri Vandebroek

"While I was at the conference I made lots of new friends and learnt so much new information which I am planning on feeding back to my community" - Tamsin Kornik

"I left with great energy and much excitement for future opportunities to come." - Marty Henretty

"The collision of inspiring ideas and deeply interesting experiences of the other participants was nothing short of eye-opening and fascinating." - Emilia Lehmann

"Thank you so much to all of you for your unique and beautiful presence at the conference. I feel so blessed to have met each and every one of you, and I do not think I will easily forget the joy in my heart I felt as I learned about all the care and love each of you holds and gives so freely to those around you. I cannot wait to see all of you next year!" - Nick Kellner

Future

There is the strong will among participants and organisers to continue this initiative and make it a yearly event. A new group has already formed. We had our first meeting online and agreed on the hosting community.

We shall see you all in Mourne Grange in May 2024!

Thank you:

Marjan, Astrid, Wolo, Juan, Tillmann, Sebastian, Julia, David, Gabriele, Wiebke, Em, Tom, Nick, Martin, Hussain, Marta, Jonas, Martin, Dimitri, Munja and everyone in Newton Dee who made this conference a wonderful and transformative experience.

The sponsors: Camphill Foundation UK, Association of Camphill Communities UK & Ireland, Camphill Newton Dee

Fotos:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Mof3B2rUEN7_FvabLxxfFg9yQSn95pO6?usp=sharing