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The Origins Of Camphill: The Haughtons of Williamston (2)

In the November/December issue of *Camphill Correspondence*, the reader was introduced to Theodore Haughton, the laird of the Williamston Estate to which Karl König and his colleagues came before the outbreak of the Second World War. This article focuses on Theodore's remarkable wife – Emily – who was born on 30th March 1882. It is important for the reader to gain some understanding of the character of Emily for she was to play a significant role in developments that led to the establishment of the first curative educational institute in Britain.

We are fortunate in having access to insightful descriptions of Emily before she moved north to Williamston, which have been provided by her nephew Edward Lydall in two hilarious autobiographical essays (Lydall, 1949; Lydall, 1975). Emily is described as a person of unflagging energy, who brought up her sister Edith's children while she was living abroad. Emily had decided very early on that no one as vague as her sister Edith could be entrusted with the upbringing of her children, so while her sister 'floated benevolently' in the background, it was Emily who brought up her three nieces at Brightling in Sussex. According to Lydall Emily's authoritarian manner concealed a warm-hearted concern for the welfare of her charges. 'I'll baste you with a broom!' was her perpetual war cry but he cannot remember that this threat was ever in fact carried out. In due course the three nieces went to school to complete the education which had been begun so forcefully with Emily. It was also at this point that she at last felt free to marry. By the time she married in 1921 she was nearly 40, which may explain why the couple were childless. The scene then changes to Williamston, the Aberdeenshire property of her husband Theodore, who was known far and wide, to high and low, related and unrelated alike, as 'Uncle'.

Left alone with Uncle, Emily proceeded to fill Williamston House with strangers. First it was refugees from Hitler's Europe; then it was members of the Canadian Air Force; and finally, when peace returned, it was students from the Commonwealth and abroad without distinction of creed or colour. Lydall writes: "*The French and Dutch would rub shoulders with bearded Sikhs and swarthy Abyssinians and there was always room for more, even if it meant squeezing another bed into the summerhouse. Moreover the*

whole operation served a dual purpose. It gave penurious young persons free holidays in delightful surroundings and it provided Em with a constant stream of people to push around." (Lydall, 1975: 94) One of Emily's favourite guests was Nina Rachmaninoff, a niece of the composer, who it is said that the Haughtons had wished to adopt.

Lydall noted that with advancing years Emily appeared to become more mellow. But this was an illusion. In her vigorous youth she had happily chased everyone but now she found that too exhausting. As a result she would select one of her house-guests to fill the role of lightning conductor or scapegoat. On one of Lydall's holidays at Williamston, he found that post had been filled by a pretty French girl. Rather ungallantly Lydall comments that Emily had no time for pretty girls, not having been one herself!

One interesting feature of life at Williamston noted by Lydall was that there was no generation gap between 'the young things' and those of riper years. One reason for that as far as Emily was concerned was that everyone was still young. Another reason for the absence of the gap: "*was the feeling that we were sharing a unique experience, that we were qualifying, as it were, to become members of the Old Williamstonian Club. We were marked for life and could recognize one another in the outside world without any needs for secret signs.*" (Lydall, 1975: 96)

Emily is recalled by one friend as a most attractive character who was invariably dressed in a kilt-like tartan skirt and tweed jacket with no lapels. She remembers how the gardens at Williamston came increasingly to reflect Emily's interest in anthroposophy. For example, planting was undertaken in harmony with the phases of the moon. This friend's happiest memory of Emily was being taken by her to visit the bees! Emily held to the ancient belief that any major event affecting a family had to be 'told to the bees'. A number of friends and acquaintances claimed that Emily, who came from a West Highland background, was gifted with the powers of clairvoyance or 'second sight'. Such a person in earlier times would have been known as a 'wise woman' or 'seer'. One attribute of being a 'wise woman' was the possession of hidden knowledge which some believed must have been acquired through association with the devil! By virtue of this gift, a 'wise woman' could lift the veil of the future and reveal

hidden secrets. The friend commented that these powers were certainly recognized by her husband not least in the field of local matchmaking!

The one event which was to have a profound effect on the life of Emily was the discovery that she had breast cancer. One clinic that had acquired a high reputation for its pioneering work in the treatment of cancer was the Arlesheim Clinic in Basle, Switzerland - a centre devoted to the study and application of anthroposophical medicine. And it was to the Arlesheim Clinic that Emily came for treatment. It is highly probable that Emily received the Iscador treatment for her breast carcinoma which involved the application of extracts from mistletoe (*Viscum album*). Recent independent research has indicated that this treatment is successful in prolonging survival (Grossarth-Maticcek, Kiene, Baumgartner and Ziegler, 2001). It is clear from correspondence between Dr Ita Wegman, Director of the Clinic, and Emily Haughton that a strong bond of friendship grew between the two. One curious aspect of the correspondence is the fact that Emily addressed Dr Wegman as 'My dear Reverend Mother'.

In a letter dated 3rd May 1937 to Dr Wegman, Emily states: "if you want anyone sent here for a holiday or a rest we would love to have him or her, and please don't hesitate to make use of us if we can be any help to you." It is interesting to note from the Visitors' Book at Williamston House that Dr Ita Wegman, Dr Margarethe Hauschka and Werne Pache stayed there from the 13th to 17th August 1938. Drs Wegman and Hauschka were members of Arlesheim Clinic and Werner Pache was one of the first curative educators, and one of Rudolf Steiner's students. Whilst one can only speculate as to the reason for the visit, it seems unlikely that these busy professional people had come all the way to rural Aberdeenshire for a vacation! A possible clue for the visit may come from a letter by Emily to Dr Wegman on the 1st February 1940. In this letter Emily makes reference to a constitution for a curative educational institute based at Williamston that she and her husband had had drawn up in the Autumn of 1939. We will return later to the matter of the constitution.

The link between Arlesheim and Williamston was strengthened further with the arrival in September 1938 of Lisl Schwalb, who had been a nurse at the Clinic. As Hans Schauder points out in his autobiography, Lisl – his wife-to-be – "*had succeeded in emigrating to Scotland with the help of a Scottish couple with whom she had become*

acquainted during an earlier visit to Arlesheim. Her Scottish host family cared for her enormously well. This well-off, childless couple with an interest in anthroposophy would have loved to have adopted Lisl". (Schauder, 2002: 107)

When Karl König was staying at the Arlesheim Clinic not knowing where to go after his expulsion from Austria, Dr Wegman suggested that he should try Scotland. Dr Wegman indicated that she had a friend near Aberdeen who might be willing to help him start work there and to build up a new future. However Dr König expressed doubts indicating how difficult it would be to obtain an entry permit for the U.K. These concerns were set aside by Dr Wegman who argued that where there was a will then a way would be found. Just two days following this conversation, according to Dr König, a letter was received from the British Consulate in Berne stating that he and his family had been granted permission not only to enter the U.K. but also to settle there permanently. Dr König claimed that he never knew for certain who had made the application to the Home Office on his behalf. [A check of consular records for this particular period, which are held in the National Archives at Kew, has been undertaken but disappointingly nothing of interest found.]

It has been suggested that it was Cecil Harwood – Chair of the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain - that was instrumental in obtaining the entry visas for Dr König and his family (Bock, 2004). In support of this claim is the fact that Cecil Harwood knew the Home Secretary at the time – Sir Samuel Hoare – who was responsible for all matters relating to immigration. Indeed Cecil Harwood was later to make the ambitious claim that he was the person really responsible for starting Camphill. If it is the case that only 48 hours elapsed between the time that the idea of Dr König and his family moving to the U.K. was floated and Dr König receiving notification of his acceptance by the British Consulate in Berne then the Consulate had very little time to discuss the matter with the Home Office. It is perfectly possible that the Consulate arrived at its decision quite independently of the Home Office. That's not to say, that some pressure might not have been exerted from influential contacts in Switzerland! In any event, on the 8th December 1938, Karl König arrived at Victoria Station in London where he was met by colleagues: his wife and children arrived on the 30th December having landed at Harwich.

The Curative Educational Institute

In her letter to Dr Wegman of the 1st February 1940, Emily concedes that she and her husband had made a mistake in drawing up a constitution for the curative educational institute and giving it to Dr König in the autumn of 1939, for this action had finally forced him into deciding not to work with the Haughtons. Dr König pointed out to Emily that he had been negotiating to purchase a house near to the Roths which was larger than Kirkton Manse. It had other important advantages: it was near the Roths and Aberdeen, it had central heating and electric light and was in every respect much more suitable for the purpose of housing a curative educational institute than the Manse. Emily comments in her letter that she listened very politely to what Dr König had to say and then agreed that he was quite right to move if he felt the Manse was unsuitable. Emily reports that Theodore was very surprised at Dr König's decision.

Dr König's own initial assessment of the suitability of Kirkton Manse is somewhat at variance with views he was later to express to the Haughtons: *"The house is not as small as all that; it has three fairly big rooms on the ground floor, some rooms on the first floor and also on the second. Although there is neither electric light nor central heating and only a single ancient bathroom, it seems to me to be thoroughly appropriate – even ideal – for us to make a beginning"*. (Muller-Wiedemann, 1996: 146)

Emily acknowledges in her letter to Dr Wegman the tension that had existed for some time between Dr König and his colleagues and Williamston House. *"When they all first came they did, and still do, things not suitable nor acceptable here – and we had to say, "you really must not..." "you really must..." – but it only made them all angry and they would not listen so we have long given it up, and are just as nice as we can be when we meet – but we do not see them often – we ask them here from time to time, and they come down, but they do not ask us to go up there – only if they want something done, and want us to give them something then we hear from them."*

In her letter Emily reports the content of a conversation with Henny Weiss, someone they all clearly liked and who visited Williamston regularly. When Henny was asked why the Königs and Roths did not want to be friends with the Haughtons, Henny replied

that they could not tolerate criticism, for criticism was considered as being disloyal to Dr König.

Emily writes to Dr Wegman: *“The Manse as you know was done up for the Institute, and is really in very good order, and one must think what to do about the house when they go – it would not be good to leave it empty – I wonder if you have any ideas – we would like it to be of real use to the movement and to the countryside – and we are very sad that the Institute scheme has fallen through. But I do not really think König ever had any idea of cooperation with us – I expect he always really looked upon us as temporary help – I think he could not tolerate any kind of interference from anyone – and wants, and always did want, a completely free hand – we are sure that Dr König is a very able doctor and find him a very interesting man to meet.”*

It is interesting to contrast the interpretations of Emily and Dr König on this matter. Dr König noted that: *“...a few days after war broke out a letter arrived from Mr Haughton on the 7th September in which he placed some pressing demands on us. His requirement was that from now on he would be obliged to take over the running of the financial affairs of our growing enterprise; that he alone would deal with the relevant officials and that his wife would now have an oversight of our educational and curative-educational affairs. If we were not to accept, he would no longer be able to shield us from the authorities. What choice did we have but to accept? At the same time, nevertheless, we resolved to leave Kirkton House as soon as possible and find another place for our work. Having to bow to this supreme authority brought with it the seeds of rebellion”* (Muller-Wiedemann, 1996: 157). It seems probable that the letter to which Dr König makes reference contained a copy of the constitution. Dr König seems to imply that the terms set out in the constitution were reluctantly accepted but that is clearly not what Emily conveyed to Dr Wegman.

The animosity shown towards the Haughtons may have arisen from the fact that Dr König and Emily Haughton were both very strong-willed and authoritarian individuals who were used to getting their own way. Schauder noted that Dr König could act destructively and without any apparent reason, although he acknowledged that Camphill would not have become successful had it not been for the powerful leadership offered by Dr König. Stanley Messenger once asked Dr König how he reconciled his

authoritarian manner with Rudolf Steiner's belief in spiritual freedom. He did not reply directly but looked at Messenger in a kindly way and said simply: "It can happen". Schauder also saw Emily as a complex person who could on occasions express herself rather sharply (Schauder, 2002).

A number of reasons can be suggested that may help to explain the ill feeling detected by Emily: (1) we have a small group of individuals who had been uprooted from one of the most culturally sophisticated and cosmopolitan centres in Europe and then suddenly transplanted to what must have seemed the outer periphery of Western civilisation; (2) there may have been a measure of resentment at having to be beholden to their hosts for the rather primitive conditions of the former manse in which they found themselves; (3) it is possible that the peculiar customs and rituals of English country house life (and Williamston was run as an English country house) were alien to the Austrian exiles' experience; (4) the fact that they were living nearer to the Arctic Circle than Vienna meant that they had to endure the dark, damp and cold of long winters; (5) a number of Dr König's colleagues found the surrounding Aberdeenshire landscape bleak, unappealing and intimidating; (6) they were obliged to speak a language with which many were unfamiliar placing them at a social disadvantage; and (7) they are likely to have felt beleaguered because of the regulations brought in as a result of the war (e.g., restrictions on travel movements; etc). It is tempting to suggest that this collective experience at a formative stage in the development of Camphill may have encouraged those who went on subsequently to establish Camphill to adopt a somewhat defensive, introspective and reactive outlook to the outside world.

It is not at all surprising that Dr König and his colleagues should resent having a constitution imposed upon them. The possibility of Emily Haughton having responsibility for the direction of a group of highly qualified and experienced professionals would have been unappealing. However, one needs to be cautious here, for it has not been possible to obtain a copy of the constitution and establish precisely what powers the Haughtons would have possessed. If the visit to Williamston by Drs Wegman and Hauschka and Werne Pache in the Summer of 1938 had been concerned with discussing – even possibly helping to draft - such a constitution then it seems unlikely that they would have recommended the adoption of any kind of organizational arrangement that would have encroached on the professional freedom of institute staff.

What the correspondence between Emily Haughton and Dr Wegman confirms is that it had been the original intention to establish an institute at Williamston. And up until 30th May 1940, when the move from Kirkton Manse to Camphill House took place, the Williamston estate had been home to the first curative educational institute in Britain! Hans Schauder (2002) also makes clear that Kirkton Manse was “the original component of what was later to become the worldwide Camphill movement”. However, the rapid increase in the number of children being referred to the Institute made a move away to more suitable accommodation inevitable. The clash between Emily and Dr König merely accelerated the timing of the eventual schism. .

It is to be hoped that when the definitive history of the Camphill Movement comes to be written that the crucial role played by Emily Haughton will be fully and generously acknowledged. Emily died on the 1st April 1971 at the age of 89.

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