

Response to the request by the DCAL Committee for evidence to support inclusion of the Arts in working Class Communities

Malcolm Murchison

Artist  
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Malcolm Murchison

### 1. Current Post

Local Authority Arts Officer and Arts Centre Manager since 1990 to present  
Flowerfield Arts Centre, Coleraine Borough Council  
(previously worked including teaching in Flowerfield Arts Centre 1982 -1987, lecturing Education  
Dep., University Ulster - Coleraine, Ceramics for Aerospace Industry - Portadown)

### 2. Arts Experience

Arts Graduate: 3D Design 1980  
Chair of Craft Northern Ireland overseeing its establishment and first operational year.  
Chair of Arts Managers Group for eight years  
Workers Educational Association, Management Committee for ten years  
Executive Committee of Forum for Local Government and the Arts for eight years  
Secretary Coleraine Borough Arts Committee, currently and for twenty four years  
Chair of Causeway Coast Arts, currently and for last seven years  
Continues to practice as Artist/Potter

### 3. Personal Statement

I am passionate about the arts in its many forms and believe it is an essential part of our individual humanity, to be creative and to enjoy creative expression. I am privileged to work in a field that I enjoy and provides so much enjoyment to others. This study currently being undertaken by the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Culture Arts and Leisure is enormously important and not only should it produce a succinct set of recommendations and actions but also press for their early and full implementation with management targets and time bound performance indicators to guarantee results.

### 4. The Challenge of Identifying the Target Audience

What are working class communities? I think we all have a fair idea of the intended target of this proposed study, however when it comes to attempting to define working class, it is a little more difficult. I assume we are talking about communities 'more removed from opportunity' and less about communities that broadly speaking are made up of people who work manually for their income or who are on lower paid earnings than those we might have referred to as professional classes. (Doctors, lawyers, teachers, clergyman, etc) Of course these days manual workers can become entrepreneurs and earn significantly more than the so called professionals.

5. It seems to me that at the extremes of poverty or disadvantage, the priorities of life as identified by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, (Appendix 3), will represent some of the challenge to engaging with individuals and communities most removed from opportunity.

6. However this is the challenge we must take on. In fact the arts can impact on every layer of these needs. Starting at the bottom it is providing income and driving a very sizeable portion of the economy. (See Appendix 1 *"and the creative sector employed 1.68m people, 5.6 per cent of all UK jobs. Between 2011 and 2012 the number of people employed in this sector grew by 8.6 per cent, compared with 0.7 per cent in the economy as a whole."*)

7. At hierarchy, layer two, we see public art, whether multi million pound constructions of public art or community murals painted by children and other community engagements make outdoor spaces safer and change the way we feel about the built environment. (Reference work by **MAG** [Ministerial Advisory Group])

8. Hierarchy, layer three, Social needs, Friendship and Family, are regularly supported by shared engagement in all cultural activity; cinema, theatre, live music, participation etc. It is a little over a 100 years ago that our only exposure to music was to hear it played live! Music made at home, in our community, at church remains an under acknowledged resource.

9. I personally get the biggest reward out of seeing and delivering 'hierarchy layer four', the development of self esteem, confidence and achievement. As a Local Authority Officer for decades and manager of participative based arts facility, when I see people of all ages 'Have a Go' and find to their surprise that they can make something, paint something, write a book, write, perform and record a song etc, I feel rewarded.

10. Hierarchy layer five, at the apex of the pyramid is our goal for every citizen and it is important to celebrate the success of individuals and communities. as a personal preference, not through competition and award, for there lies the potential tag of elitism, but rather through telling of success stories and good news.

## **Summary of Recommendations**

### 11. Recommendation 1

Reinvigorate the Unlocking Creativity agenda as developed for the NI Assembly and DCAL by Sir Ken Robinson. This work previously raised hope and expectation across ALL Parties and Departments in the Assembly as well as Education Boards, Universities, FE, sectorial organisations and Local Government. Creative Opportunity became viewed as a necessity rather than a luxury. This may have slipped.

### 12. Recommendation 2

Reinstate the 'Creative Youth Partnership.' This excellent initiative as a partnership between the arts and education organisations, brought creative opportunity to all ages of young people; pre primary, primary, secondary and post secondary education. while not exclusively working through schools, it allowed for quality engagement, across social sector. Learn lessons from previous programme and ensure full buy in. Likelihood to engage in the arts in NI, is most marked by educational achievement, more so than social housing factor. (See Understanding society: Culture Arts and Leisure in the UK regions - final report 2013.)

### 13. Recommendation 3

As Northern Ireland goes through a major public administration review and currently, 'Local Government Reform' (LGR) there exists a unique opportunity to positively influence the shape of community arts delivery in the so called new 'super councils'. Within Local Government the arts often fall to the bottom of the priority list. However with the direction from DoE for Local Government to pursue a 'Community Planning' agenda and the significant benefits as discussed to be achieved this should be seen as a priority 1 challenge. Local Government is the gateway to local resources and communities.

### 14. Recommendation 4

Co-ordinate cross sector interaction. There are many different organisations working to achieve similar outcomes. Some times they collaborate, sometimes they disagree, distance themselves or work competitively. There is much to be gained by working together. Bodies include the ACNI, Arts Managers Association NI (Local Government), Community Arts Partnership, Audiences NI, and more.

## Recommendations

### 15. Reinvalidate the Unlocking Creativity Agenda

Reinvigorate the Unlocking Creativity agenda as developed for the NI Assembly and DCAL by Sir Ken Robinson. This work previously raised hope and expectation across **ALL** Parties and Departments in the Assembly as well as Education Boards, Universities, FE, sectorial organisations and Local Government. Creative Opportunity became viewed as a necessity rather than a luxury. This may have slipped.

16. Those of us fortunate to have enjoyed the company of, or listened to presentations by Sir Ken Robinson, Professor of Education from Warwick University and author of “All Our Futures” a white paper on education, for Westminster and the UK, will have been inspired. His talk on the subject of how schools kill creativity which is available on many websites has been watched on the TED platform 25.3 million times. His thesis that our current model of education was perfect for the 19th and 20th centuries, of mass industrialisation but our current needs require a much more widely educated and creative populace to match our ever faster changing world. He says “60% of our children will end up doing jobs that haven't yet been invented”. I believe that this remains pertinent to DCAL's enquiry, as while the discussion is leading to the work of the Department of Education for NI, education from the very start of our lives to our death is linked to our relationship and engagement with the arts.

17. At this point I should acknowledge DCAL for their reports, initiatives and achievements which I quote, some of them set aside, which have made a significant difference to the way we access the arts in Northern Ireland.

### 18. Reinstate the Creative Youth Partnership (CYP)

Reinstate the ‘Creative Youth Partnership.’ This excellent initiative as a partnership between the arts and education organisations, brought creative opportunity to all ages of young people; pre primary, primary, secondary and post secondary education. While not exclusively working through schools it allowed for across social sector, quality, engagement. Learn lessons from previous programme and ensure full buy in. Likelihood to engage in the arts in NI, is most marked by educational achievement, more so than social housing factor. (See Understanding society: Culture Arts and Leisure in the UK regions - final report 2013.) [http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/understanding\\_society\\_dcal\\_report.pdf](http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/understanding_society_dcal_report.pdf)

It can be very difficult to target people more removed from opportunity. It is expensive and demanding of resources to make much of an impact and it can be that those people or sometime communities, feel less inclined to engage with what they see as an irrelevant sector, having other priorities. Working through schools offers a classless approach without exclusion or stigmatising. Again as Sir Ken Robinson, talking about young children's approach to a creative challenge says, “They're prepared to have a go!” As we get older we seem to feel we can't draw, sing, dance, act or have an opinion about a difficult piece of art, and yes it may well be a piece of rubbish! The CYP was a wonderful scheme and enjoyed highly professional staff. I gather there were problems with aspects of evaluation and full buy in from all partners. This should not dissuade us from relaunching a similar, bigger and better scheme.

19. I experienced Primary School classes arriving to participate in special art workshops at Flowerfield Arts Centre and was quite shocked and concerned to learn that some of these children said they never did any art at school.

20. Drawing is an essential skill and not exclusively an art experience. What has been made has first been drawn. When supporting a recent mural project, in a local primary school I was disappointed to see an almost total reliance on ready made plastic stamps and cutters to generate imagery. These young people were having their creative confidence taken from them. OFSTED made clear comment in their report “**Making a mark** - Not enough pupils develop their creativity through confident drawing” ( <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/surveys-and-good-practice/m/Making%20a%20mark%20-%20art%20craft%20and%20design%20education%202008-11%20-%20leaflet.pdf> )

21. Reaching disadvantaged communities through ‘Life Long Learning’ strategies, starting from pre school, and accessing primary and secondary school children, through our education systems, will support equitable opportunities for all. An approach that in particular develops creative skills and provides remarkable experiences, associated with creative industries will deliver multiple wins for community well-being, the economy and individuals.

## **22. Influence Local Government Reform**

Local Government is the gateway to local resources and communities. As Northern Ireland goes through a major public administration review and currently, ‘Local Government Reform’ (LGR) there exists a unique opportunity to positively influence the shape of community arts delivery in the so called new super councils. Within the traditional challenges Local Government the arts can fall to the bottom of the priority ‘Must Do’ list, however with the direction from DoE for Local Government to pursue a ‘Community Planning’ agenda and the significant benefits as discussed to be achieved this should be seen as a new priority.

23. With the poor state of the overall economy, significant deprivation, ongoing sectarianism and communities with low self esteem, we must increase our effort across the country as a whole. As previously quoted the creative industries are one of the most important potential drivers in the economy and Derry/Londonderry and Belfast have invested heavily to reap the profits available in this sector. Derry/Londonderry seems to have turned a corner and as a regular visitor to the City, over the last thirty years, I believe I see a new hope and confidence in the City while it retains its familiar character. The success of UK City of Culture will undoubtedly have left a legacy and I for one will never forget, the extraordinary experiences of the Lumière show and in particular the fire garden.

24. This sort of visionary approach is seen as the territory of the largest city councils. I regularly hear the term ‘Nice to Do’ in relation to creative industry development. I believe there pervades a notion that because the arts can be fun, they remain frivolous and something that people should pay the full economic cost to access. Richard Florida in his book ‘The Rise of the Creative Classes’, shows how the cities and areas that embrace the creative sector in its widest form are winning the economic battle and leaving the traditional, introverted cities behind. Sometimes the best way to target the poorest communities is to target an all inclusive wider sector as seen in UK City of Culture 2013.

25. Local Authorities across Northern Ireland have achieved a lot in their delivery of arts and culture to our local communities since ACNI recommended the establishment of local

council, voluntary arts committees in the 70s. They started with modest budgets and limited experience but an overwhelming knowledge that the arts were essential to our humanity. From the earliest traces of man and woman we have found art; exquisite cave paintings, unusual embellishment on basic hunting tools, decoration on vessels. I am sure early humans sang, danced and told stories. Somehow we often seem to lose the joy and fail to see the necessity of these essentials. Arts committees, well intentioned, often though not exclusively, focused on high art aspirations of classical music and established painters.

26. We have come a long way since then and in many cases arts committees helped establish professional officer roles or arts facilities across the country. In Coleraine, two extraordinary people, an art teacher Mrs. Jill Craddock and an educationalist Prof Alan Milton (Appendix 2) worked to establish Northern Ireland's first arts centre, Flowerfield Arts Centre in 1980. The Centre is remarkable in that it had a particularly strong focus on participation and education as it does to this day. Alan Milton was named as the defender of University education in Rhodesia during the tyrannical Ian Smith regime. He had a quiet persuasive persistence and a passion for bringing education and the arts to everyone.

27. Flowerfield Arts Centre, over the years has gone from strength to strength, winning awards and building a reputation for quality, accessibility and popularity. Flowerfield retains a unique participative approach with a specialist level of provision in education and creative industry delivery for craft and other areas. It has strengths and weaknesses with much yet to achieve. The issues it faces are probably typical for many arts organisations in the sector. Funding and staff resources have become major challenges and we need to find new solutions to new problems. The opportunities offered as we embrace LGR and engaging as the only four council consortium will be exciting. Interestingly these councils have worked on the arts collaboratively for around forty years, through Causeway Coast Arts.

28. Flowerfield, as a creative hub, offers a range of specialist facilities and attracts highly creative artists, performers and tutors to its resources. Like a swimming pool cannot take its offer to every town and village, so Flowerfield cannot deliver most of its unique offer outside of the physical building. As funding opportunity from ACNI was removed when Local Authorities were contacted and named as "low priority" we found that the funding we used to place artists in communities, schools etc was gone and not replaced. The grant from Local Authority to Arts Committee for community benefit was cut from £8.5K to £7.5K to 6.25K to £0 last year. It is to be reinstated to £5K in the forthcoming year. Similarly Staffing levels have fallen at the centre forcing focus to core activity. This makes actual outreach more difficult to achieve and leaves Flowerfield vulnerable to accusations of elitism, particularly by people disinterested in the arts and unaware of the centre's real achievements and range of arts activities.

29. Currently, Flowerfield offers 80 sessions a year for victims of Stroke, 80 sessions for the University of the 3rd Age, around 1,100 enrolments over three terms of 6 to 12 sessions of creative learning. At our last survey around 40% of these participants enjoyed concession rates and this would largely relate to senior citizens. Financial pressures are forcing us to increase our course fees to cover artist and tutor costs which is uncomfortable, when ideally we would prefer to encourage participation for less well off and people struggling financially. These are of course very difficult financial times and as previously stated the cultural sector is often seen as luxury rather than essential services.

I recognise the pressure Councillors are under to balance budgets and minimise rate increases for the domestic and commercial sector. We have to play a responsible role and face cutbacks in line with all areas of Council.

30. The creative courses at Flowerfield were initiated in partnership with the Workers Educational Organisation (WEA), who were previously funded by DENI. With changes in Government their core funding was moved to DEL and these changes changed the nature of much of their work, some for the good and some, I feel, removed the small subsidy that brought creative opportunity to a much wider audience. We have a debt of gratitude to the WEA for introducing us to negotiated learning, aimed at the working classes. They made education less formal and student centered. I am sure the WEA will have a very useful contribution to make to this debate and I would be delighted to see an outcome that would bring us back into a substantial partnership.

31. However in an effort to deliver outreach to communities in known areas of deprivation we have secured some free favours from artists based in the building, also used some of the dwindling Arts Committee resources to provide unique glass making and ceramic workshops. These have been made available with the advice of CRUN (Coleraine Urban and Rural Network). It has been heartening to see, particularly young people, of around 12 years of age concentrate for hours at a time to develop skills and confidence they didn't expect. The Arts Service/Flowerfield - Action Plan mission is: To provide the Borough of Coleraine's residents and visitors with accessible creative arts and remarkable experiences, to unleash their creative potential and enhance quality of life.

32. Flowerfield substantially grew in 2004 with accommodation for professional craft artists. Subsequently in partnership with Craft NI we have embraced the Making IT scheme which offers 2 year start up opportunities for makers. By focusing on professional makers this scheme has brought in a core of highly talented artists in an area previously having less creative craft practices than any other part of Ireland. The North Coast Tourist infrastructure needs these sorts of businesses to support cultural tourism in the area. Our long term goal is to see these businesses flourish and extend out into the resorts mimicking Counties like Devon, Cornwall and Cork. The artists have put value through professional expertise, numerous specialist courses and free outreach provision to the local area and community. Their inspirational work and teaching has spilled over and encourages scores of individuals to become home workers, making and selling in local markets, craft fairs and popup opportunities. I believe this demonstrates the value of a holistic approach to cultural funding and development.

33. The wider creative industries are also developed through courses in contemporary music making, filmmaking, digital learning and of course professional and emerging music performance. Mixing professional artists, with entry level learning and masterclasses as well as showcase opportunities is a powerful combination to deliver community potential.

34. The issues of being a smaller council, to the opportunities of becoming a so named 'super council' are very interesting. The insular working named as 'silo mentality' of local government is a challenge and opportunity to be faced. In some Councils there is very limited or negligible work between Economic Development, Tourism, Community Development and the Arts Service. I believe the arts as an engine for change is regionally undervalued. Setting the Arts Service under a department of development is essential and unfortunately in some Councils is still sits within Leisure. Departments like environmental health or refuse collection have very clear service requirements, but how should the arts sector in local government look and what are the minimum levels of service or what are

the desired levels of best practice? Setting some basic levels and standards of provision is something that the Arts Managers are currently working on. DCAL I believe, should have a role in helping set standards that will positively impact our communities for the next 20 years.

35. Taking a moment to consider low income communities, ACNI research revealed that the lowest earning paid individuals are often artists. Artists, in my experience are almost always socialist in their outlook. My memory from my study at Belfast College Art in the 70s was that most students were from very modest income backgrounds that could certainly be described as working class. Artists do struggle to earn a living wage with costs of housing being the single biggest challenge. An Irish / American (born in Ireland) recommended to me schemes where artists were provided with free accommodation in social housing, and in particular areas of deprivation. Artists were expected to offer some output to benefit their neighbours in the community as part of the deal. I was slightly sceptical at first but became convinced by her arguments of the success of this approach in a number of different countries. This proposal seems worthy of some further research as it would seem like an ideal way to address the challenge offered from this enquiry.

**36. Co-ordinate cross sector interaction**

Co-ordinate cross sector interaction. There are many different organisations working to achieve similar out-turns. Some times they collaborate, some times they disagree, distance themselves or work competitively. There is much to be gained by working together. Bodies such as the, ACNI, Arts Managers Association NI (Local Government), Community Arts Partnership, Audiences NI, and many more.

37. The Forum for Local Government and the Arts (FLGA) was a well intentioned network of elected members, officers and activists, however for all sorts of reasons including failure of essential support mechanisms it has faltered. Whether it is worth reviving in a similar format for the 11 super councils is questionable, but the need exists for some sort of forum for the sector as a whole. It should not be left to one organisation to deliver a model or have control over its management as individual organisations understandable may seek to promote their own agenda.

Malcolm Murchison 03.03.2014



## Appendix 1

# Creative industries worth £8m per hour to the UK economy

14 January, 2014 in **News** by Jack Torrance.

The UK's creative industries are worth more than **£70bn** to the economy ever year, or £8m an hour, according to official statistics released today.



In 2012 the creative industries grew by almost 10 per cent, outstripping all other sectors. In the same year the creative sector employed 1.68m people, 5.6 per cent of all UK jobs. Between 2011 and 2012 the number of people employed in this sector grew by 8.6 per cent, compared with 0.7 per cent in the economy as a whole.

The secretary of state for culture, media and sport, Maria Miller, said: "These incredible statistics are confirmation that the Creative Industries consistently punch well above their weight, outperforming all the other main industry sectors, and are a powerhouse within the UK economy.

"We are committed to ensuring that the energy, innovation, skills and talent existing in this dynamic sector continues to translate into economic success, and provide a remarkable platform from which, we can showcase Britain to the world."

The value of creative sector exports increased by 16.1 per cent between 2009 and 2011, and was worth £15.5bn in 2011, 8 per cent of total service exports.

Nicola Mendelsohn, chair of the Creative Industries Council, said: "These figures amply demonstrate the huge contribution our sector makes to the economy and it's vital that the right framework is in place to nurture and support the industry.

"We are working with Government on developing a growth strategy for the sector which will identify how all involved can ensure the creative industries continue to go from strength to strength"

## Appendix 2

### Obituary

#### Alan Milton

#### Defender of education during the Ian Smith regime in Rhodesia

Ian Henderson

The Guardian, Wednesday 24 May 2006

In 1966, Alan Milton, who has died aged 95, was professor of education at the what was then University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (UCRN) in Salisbury, and found himself as acting principal when the Rhodesian Front regime of Ian Smith decided to purge the multiracial college of subversive staff and students. Some were jailed and others fled the country.

Liberal opinion in Britain was outraged, and the possibility arose that Britain would cut off support for UCRN, which, at the time, awarded degrees from the University of London. Milton had to deal with a Rhodesian regime for which he had no sympathy, but at the same time he worked to ensure the survival of at least some academic freedom. In the absence of the principal, Walter Adams (soon to be appointed director of LSE), Milton was a tireless and skilled negotiator in Salisbury and London.

He made no secret of his sympathy for the opponents of Smith's regime, and he visited his jailed colleagues in Salisbury prison as well as African students exiled to rural areas. He later made a major contribution to the John Conradie Memorial Fund, which commemorated a history lecturer at UCRN imprisoned for some years. Yet he was able to persuade the Smith regime to allow the college to continue its work - it survived to become the University of Rhodesia in 1970 and the University of Zimbabwe in 1980.

Milton had gone to Rhodesia in 1961, to become professor of education at UCRN and director of its Institute of Education. In that role, he set about upgrading teacher training for all races in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. His inaugural lecture was *Classrooms without Walls*, epitomising his commitment to reach out to the ill-funded African education sector. Despite the rise of the Rhodesian Front, he continued to fight to improve teacher training for all races until his departure in 1967.

Milton then moved to the New University of Ulster at Coleraine as director of the education centre and senior pro-vice-chancellor. Here he would be caught up again in political conflict where education was a key marker. The new university was part of the expansion of UK higher education in the 1960s, and Milton established and expanded teacher training so that when he left in 1975, the centre was able to survive the reorganisation of the 1980s, when the university merged with Ulster Polytechnic to form the University of Ulster. Religious education was a key subject with a potential for division, but Milton retained the confidence of the Catholic hierarchy and Protestant church leaders, and the centre expanded its production of high-quality graduates.

His membership of the board of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) expressed his community sense and his particular passion for music. The Milton violin award is made regularly by the ACNI, whereby a Gagliano violin presented by Milton is loaned to an outstanding young violinist from Northern Ireland wishing to pursue professional training. He retired in 1975.

Alan Milton was one of eight surviving children of a Rhondda miner who became a prosperous Swansea fruit merchant. He went to Dean Close school, Cheltenham, where he excelled as an athlete (he won nine caps for hockey for Wales). He also became a principled Christian in the Anglican tradition.

After Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, he graduated with first-class honours in history in 1932. His first appointment was as a master at Harrison College, Barbados, where he met his wife, Rosemary King. They married in 1938. Moving back to England in 1936, he joined the staff of the new Raynes Park county school, Surrey, where he became a housemaster within two years.

But Milton was not destined to follow an orthodox career. The second world war set the first test of his character. Having spoken publicly against war, he declared himself a conscientious objector and was directed to work in the London Fire Service during the blitz.

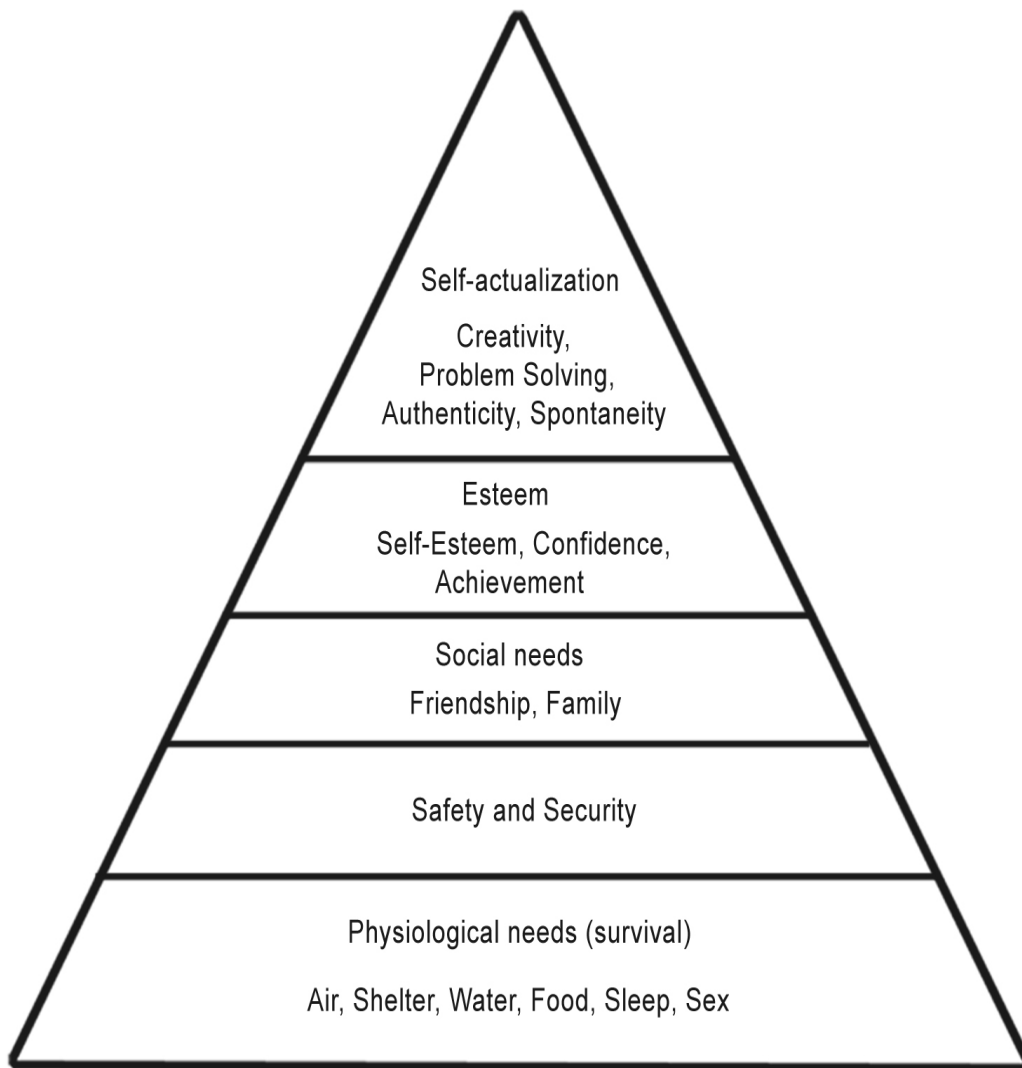
In 1947 Milton moved with his family to be the first director of the adult education centre at Dartington Hall, Devon. He had been spotted by Michael Young, then adviser to the postwar Labour government. This was his first taste of management responsibilities, and from Dartington he moved, in 1951, to Exeter University College to be the director of their newly established institute of education. This post involved more and more contact with overseas students and staff, and in 1961 Milton went to Rhodesia.

For the last 25 years of his life, he made his home in south Wales. In Abergavenny, he was founder member and first chair of the University of the Third Age.

Rosemary died in 1977; he is survived by two daughters.

• Alan Milton, educationist, born July 9 1910; died March 4 2006

Appendix 3



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

