



## PROFILE: CAER

by Jo May: Founder-Director

*Jo May is Founder-Director of CAER where he runs a wide range of training and personal growth workshops. Formerly an actor and research psychologist, he has 18 years experience of groups.*

CAER has been offering residential workshops in Personal Development and Training year-round since 1978. The name "CAER" was inspired by its location - the site of an Iron Age Fort. ("Caer" is Celtic for "fort") The centre itself consists of an old Cornish manor house, a cottage and several smaller buildings set in seven acres of woods, streams and gardens. The whole estate lies just beyond Penzance in the Lands End Peninsula, one mile from the sea in a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

### **Connections with the past**

Within the grounds is a two thousand year old underground passage and chamber - the fogou - built entirely of granite blocks and massive granite lintels - an Iron Age Celtic sanctuary for initiation and healing. One of the largest blocks has an inscribed figure of a God of Healing - which is incorporated in CAER's logo. The site is situated in the heart of a network of stone circles, holy wells, and standing stones - a magical landscape surrounded on three sides by the sea.

The Celts abandoned the fort some time after the departure of the Romans and the site remained untouched until the beginning of this century. There are many local accounts of witchcraft of a darker kind being practised around the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1910 the present house was built and the remains of the fort were demolished and incorporated into the building. From that time until twelve years ago when CAER was established the local feeling was that the place was possibly one of the most haunted in West Cornwall. Researches revealed several written references to earlier dubious ritual practises, and more recent inexplicable opening doors, disembodied voices, footsteps, and cold draughts that had nothing to do with poor insulation. Examination of the deeds revealed that all previous male owners had met untimely deaths.

### **Place of Power**

At an AHP conference in the early '70's, one of the speakers made a plea for recognition and reawakening of our power centres. This resonated with me. Soon after

I moved in I was visited by Wendy Love, (a founder of Quaesitor). She remarked on the place's power, suggested it was in need of cleansing, and performed an exorcism. A year later I separated from my then wife and soon after experienced a series of psychic events which I don't think were simply escape mechanisms for coping with a marriage breakdown. Rather it was as if the pain of separation enabled sufficient loosening of my built-in programs for something else to occur - adequate "awakening", for want of a better word, in order to assume the role of a "custodian". Since then, over the years, a succession of visitors more in tune with such dimensions than myself, including respected psychics and shamans, have performed ceremonies to facilitate the place's healing and opening.

### **People at CAER**

Similar experiences have been shared by David Rose and Judy Rose who played a major part in steering CAER on its road to recognition. We shared common experience as participants on Cornwall's first IDHP Diploma, and subsequently ran one ourselves. We also shared a vision of being brought together for a purpose - perhaps as Keepers or Nurturers of this particular piece of land so that it might return to its possible original function as a place of knowledge and awakening. It was this vision that motivated us throughout the difficult early years. Obviously we were quite crazy - we would, for example, run a five day residential group ourselves and do all the cooking, cleaning and admin at the same time! Support has also come from Roz Grigg, my partner and a working colleague, virtually since CAER's beginning. Of the original three founder members, David Rose and myself remain and there are six of us now closely involved with the day-to-day running, with an "outer ring" of Associates who regularly run workshops here.

Many visiting group leaders find that there is something at CAER which enhances their groups. Some have worked with it more consciously than others - John Heron and Dreamweavers in particular. On other workshops, no reference whatsoever is made to this "presence" - yet invariably some people discover it. I can think of many occasions on Training workshops - the majority of the participants having had little previous experience of groupwork - where someone discovers "something" in the fogou and feels moved to go down there at night to meditate. Frequently, experiences like this provide the impetus for a change of direction for people.

### **Workshops and courses**

The range of courses offered at CAER has evolved organically. In the early years the predominant focus was on personal growth using Bodywork, Gestalt, Encounter and Transpersonal Psychology. Visiting leaders include many familiar and respected names in the UK growth movement. More recently there has been a shift in emphasis towards training. Many people now come wanting "counselling skills" - frequently sponsored by employers or via the Devon and Cornwall Accredited Staff Training Centre. Familiarisation with our working methods - which draw

strongly from Humanistic Psychology - encourages them to go further. What we are seeing is a new group of people being drawn to growth work via a preliminary interest in counselling and related skills. This seems to be a general trend confirmed, in CAER's case by Market Research.



For this reason, in conjunction with personal development, CAER also offers a skills based program. The following gives an idea of the range of courses on offer: **Skills:** Introduction to Counselling, Assertiveness Training, Stress Management; Effective Intervention Training Parts 1 and 2, Training the Trainers; Royal Society of Arts Certificate in Counselling (6 months), RSA Certificate in Groupwork Skills (9 months);

**Personal Development Courses** include: Introduction to Personal Development; A range of workshops covering areas such as: Gestalt, Bodywork, Transpersonal, Shamanic, Women's and Men's workshops, and Creative approaches; a 6 month Diploma Foundation Course; a Two Year Diploma sponsored by the Institute for the Development of Human Potential.

Apart from the workshops CAER mounts - either run by ourselves or by invited facilitators, the centre is also hired on a regular basis by workshop leaders who bring their own groups, some from outside the UK.

What makes CAER unique is that: the mix is eclectic; all courses are offered under one roof residentially and only one course occupies the premises at a time. The combination of these factors means that every course has the chance to develop a level of intimacy and hence safety and depth rarely possible elsewhere. Coupled to

the atmosphere described above, this makes for a very special mix. So much so, that people return again and again, - many facilitators recognizing CAER's ability to act as a magical catalyst for transformative work.

## AWAKENING

by Jo May

Next time you watch TV, notice how many people's left side of the face is sadder or more closed than the right. Organisation of the facial muscles is under the control of the opposite brain hemisphere. For so many people the emotional, creative, holistically perceiving side is shut down.

There is an urgent need for humankind to become awake. People who live close to Mother Earth, like the American Indians, say that she is currently deciding whether she has had enough of us. From the perspective that we are cells in the planetary nervous system, it is obvious we are creating synaptic overload.

The methods developed by the Human Potential Movement in the 60's and 70's have now disseminated to a lot of people many of whom probably do not even know about their origins. The time has come, however, when ways are also needed to help move people from personal to planetary awareness - a move towards expansion of consciousness as it relates not just to ourselves, but to those with whom with whom we share the planet - human and non-human.

### **Earth is in Decision Time**

Evolution entails transcending the boundaries of the self - at least, the self in its current version. For this to happen it is not enough to "get it out", or to bash Mum or Dad on a cushion. That may be appropriate to gain some release. But it's only a first step.

If it is true that the Earth is in "decision time", it is possible that she may also be trying to communicate with us. Part of this communication takes the familiar form of "look at what a mess you're making". The medium for this communication is energy in the form of economic, social, political and ecological stasis. These are manifestations of energy easily recognized because they are material.

Another part of the communication might be "things in yourselves that need attending to". The energy here is harder for most people to perceive because it is psychological and spiritual. Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychologies have begun to show us how to attend to ourselves in these ways. By freeing ourselves from fear, and gaining clarity, we have been able to empower ourselves to make changes in the areas that seemed important. What has "seemed important", however, has been limited by our perception.