

In some way this is infinitely more difficult to propound and to find a clear and definite stance, and it is also infinitely more frightening and confusing for any pro-accreditation adherents or anti-accreditation acclaimers.

What any of this might actually look like in real practice is very difficult to say, though think the Norwich Collective itself try.

## **An Ordinary Punter's View of the AHP Conference, September 1992**

**by James Mackenzie**

Time to set off. It was three o'clock and I really had no excuse not to get moving, get on my way, but hung about reluctant to start. Do I really need to go? Haven't I got enough to do here, jobs unfinished, start of a new term? And what am I going for?

Well I know already what it will be like, and I really value the conference as fun, as a strengthener, as something for me, before I start the year of teaching ahead, with its stresses and commitments to give and give again. But do I really need to go this time, don't I feel strong enough, cheerful, enough, whole enough, do I really want to look into my self and how I relate to others, just now? Well I said I would so I suppose I'd better set off.

Found eventually there were no meetings at work or any body demanding my presence on Friday but still some urgent personal and work jobs to be done so finally left on the 16.30 train. Gratified to find it was non-stop to Stoke, both in theory and practice. Arrived smoothly at Stoke — and came upon John Button and others and so jumped into a taxi with them. First problem solved, how to get there, the driver even knew the way to Lindsay. No particular notices to point us where to go when we arrived but we soon found the Hexagon and thence the Lindsay Cafe Bar, headquarters for the weekend.

Apprehensive and excited. I had looked at the list of workshops; decided they would all be great to go to, choice is a problem. But not really till we settled down much later to listen to Anne Dickson's talk did I really notice the theme 'On the Edge of Change' as important, as a theme to be there for, rather than as just another way of expressing the purpose of humanistic therapy. Now with what she was saying I got to connect, we are/we are not on the edge of change, how do we respond to change, why should we change, how should we change? Also the power of the women's perspective. There can be no more positive point of change than half of humanity asserting itself. So great to have Anne, to have Shona and Ruth's workshop for women. Of course I am still on the edge of change so I wasn't alert enough to ask how this workshop went, or to look out for its impact on the conference. And John's 'Getting

Closer' workshop, drawing from his book on intimacy between the sexes.

That set me thinking that the whole conference 'modelled', in NLP speak, being on the edge of change. It was certainly very different from last year. Then we were in the rurality of Gaunt's House, now we were lodged at Keele, itself no longer an academic ivory tower but an education factory. External reality was audible too in the distant roar of the M6. There was a more attenuated attendance than we hoped for in our closing visions last year, when we hoped to bring more Americans and Russians into our gathering. So, a new venue, north of Watford Gap, no Whirl-y-Gig this time to be our musical evening haven, recession as challenge and change. Some familiar faces absent and regretted and new faces welcomed. A good mixture of people.

Close attendance on Lindsay's and my room for the weekend, with an occasional glimpse of autumnal mists and mellow fruitfulness over the fields to the M6 in the distance. Others ventured out, octogenarians went for long walks before breakfast. We were comfortable and we ate well, Keele is a-modern campus set in a park of green trees and open spaces.

Met Ruth at doorway to the Lindsay's Cafe Bar. Remarkably cheerful and unharassed for an conference organiser, and Marolyn too, with dented arm and story of a bicycle ride that came unstuck. It was nice to meet and talk but I felt the dinner dragged on, and meanwhile Anne was champing at the bit to deliver her talk. Then Leo became Master of Ceremonies/Master of Mysteries and whirled us all about before turning us into little groups, our home groups, the place to touch base in when things got hot, or share our discoveries, and taste through the group what other workshops had explored.

In the morning the workshops. I had already decided, and didn't change as I realised the theme of change, what kind of workshop was for me. Dance, voice, creativity, these drew me. So first to Melinda's 'Your Voice, the Mirror of Change'. Greatly relaxed but still not sure I actually want to make a noise, or have any noise to offer the world. Well as a motif I offered up "I always get tensed up and unable to make a noise or even an acceptable sound when asked to sing. As a lecturer my speech is my trade". I got other people saying something similar, or different. I was really interested in breathing out, singing from the pelvis, upper thighs, but I couldn't feel the spine and left that for another time. There was so much going on I felt I was about four lessons behind by the end of the session, but still hanging in there. Also breathing out, drawing the breath through the toes, up and out through the outstretched arms and fingertips and the top of the head. I don't know where I'm going but I certainly am going.

Afternoon. Jo's 'Talking without words/power of myth'. Another creation and strengthening of the bonds of confidence between us, before we suspend our adult selves and playfully create with bells, and gongs, and drums, and all kinds of music and movement, the legend of the Giant Pangu, who pushes heaven and earth apart, and, dying exhausted from the effort, becomes the mountains and the rivers, and the soil, and, the dew — what playfulness, what creativity was released, collective and individual, and a little mischief. All human life was

there. This was one of the high spots of the conference for me. Expression, expression, not bounded by interpretations. Something to ponder on afterward, and a resource of creative power; to take away.

Evening. Another meal, and waiting for the disco. Time passed in chat, little coteries, serious and not so serious. A bubble of laughter floats by. Boom! Boom! The disco arrives and makes up for lost time with such high energy and volume that it exhausts us all, and sends us to bed well before midnight.

Wake up, pour coffee inside me. Then to Catherine's 'Moving our boundaries, edging towards change'. I felt there was a kind of sleepiness, inertia, playful mischievousness in the group this morning. Catherine skilfully accommodated every whim, kept the atmosphere of play, and kept us moving towards being ready to investigate our personal boundaries, the boundaries we create. Draw up your boundary she commanded at last. I drew mine tight like a cocoon, and was immediately dissatisfied with its tightness and stasis, so I enlarged it boldly to include all the room, the country, the world, the universe, And felt suddenly exposed, unprotected, and unable to communicate with all these people inside my boundary. Then she said, try another different boundary. My new boundary was tighter, more protective, but also communicating, aware of the boundaries of others, respecting those boundaries and ready to reach across them. In discussion, I think others also felt the importance of their own boundaries and an experience of how they might be. An illuminating experience.

Leo's closing ceremony completed the circle of the weekend by first bringing us back to consider, as did Anna, some deeply held personal ideas, and then enabling us to greet and part with each of the other conference participants. To me one great value of this and every AHP conference is how all of us and each of us are essential to the experience of the weekend's introspection and play around the conference theme. There are tremendous resources of skill, knowledge, and awareness among both workshop leaders and participants, and underlying the whole conference was the palpable sense of commitment and sharing as we practised being on the edge of change.

