

the regular COLUMN

Christine Bell

Chapter six ... Wisdom through words?

Recently I was part of a panel debate at the AHP(B) and Self & Society AGM. The focus was *War, Words and Wisdom*. Thinking it through beforehand, *wisdom* seemed almost impossible. What is it, exactly? I'm not sure, although I've recognised it sometimes in the wise words of others that have enabled or deepened my understanding in some way.

The *war* and *words* part of the title was easier to focus on. It was not difficult to come up with words to describe my feelings at the way people everywhere are misled by the language used to allow, and indeed encourage, killing other people.

I have a great love for words. I respect and sometimes fear the power they carry, for both good and ill; for the way they can inspire and uplift, or degrade and humiliate. It is painful for me when words are used to mislead and dis-inform rather than clearly communicate.

The word *war* itself has now been subverted into something global and apparently endless, justifying almost anything done in the name of the so-called 'war on terror'.

Imagine being inside the heads of those who create the obscene language that turns the maiming and death of people, who have been blown up by other people, into 'collateral damage'. Hearing prisoners in Iraq described by their guards as 'it' rather than he or she seems a natural outcome of that kind of thinking.

With these and many other thoughts going through my head before the AGM, I decided *not* to prepare anything formally beforehand. To just follow my passion on the day, and see what happens – hear what comes out.

This, in a way, is how I've been writing the *regular column* over the past year. Sitting down every couple of months and seeing where my words and my passion or curiosity leads me.

With this final 'chapter' I've now completed my time. It's been an interesting process and a privilege to be allowed to write a few hundred words about (more or less) whatever I chose.

As a strong perfectionist, I've had lots of thoughts and feelings about whether it was 'good enough' or even vaguely of interest to anyone other than me. The total lack of response from readers (if there are any) is a bit disconcerting.

But what did I expect or hope for? To be heard, of course – which is why anybody writes anything.

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