

An interesting event

John Rowan

On Saturday 9 February 2008, at the Friends Meeting House in Euston, there was held a meeting to inaugurate the United Kingdom Association of Gestalt Practitioners. Something like 100 people turned up, some quite long in the tooth. The meeting kicked off with Gaie Houston leading a group event, which led to a multitude of flip chart pages being put up along the walls. So far so idealistic.

But as the day went on, it became clearer and clearer that the real purpose of the meeting was to formalise the union of Metanoia, the GPTI, the Gestalt Centre and other Gestalt trainings, into an organization which could stand up for Gestalt against any threats which might come from the Health Professions Council.

We heard from Lynda Osborne that the HPC were considering putting Gestalt therapy into one of two categories – humanistic or integrative. Some felt that Gestalt was definitely humanistic, others that Gestalt was definitely integrative. So this was not resolved on the day.

The second keynote address was from Malcolm Parlett of the GPTI, who had come out of retirement to give an impassioned plea for unity and strength. Then we had a panel discussion from Ken Evans, who made it clear that the whole of Europe was undergoing similar discussions as to how to make sure that Gestalt did not get ignored or trampled over. Other speakers were Peter Schulthess from Switzerland, Ester Neumanova from Prague, Katia Hatzilakou from Athens and Faye Page from the UK.

There were many familiar faces from the past, and the turnout was really quite impressive, although it has to be said that the number of young faces, and black faces, was rather small.

Some people wondered why I was there, since I have never trained as a Gestalt therapist, but I reminded them that I had taken an interest in Gestalt since my first experience of it in 1970, and had contributed to the International Gestalt Journal.

I found the whole thing quite fascinating, and it rammed home the message that we are all under threat from the Health Professions Council, which does not have a single therapist or psychologist on its strength, and yet is being charged by the Government with the responsibility of organising all of us. Perhaps this year.