

23.09.2010 Paths for All Conference
Perth Concert Hall



Anne and Noreen- two of the main attractions

“Paths for All” is a national charity promoting walking for health and the development of multi-use path networks and their strategic priorities are to reduce the proportion of the population who are inactive, through the delivery of a national walking programme; and to increase the number, quality, accessibility and multi-use of paths. www.pathsforall.org.uk

Jane was recently sought out by the organisers of Paths for All to provide a musical start to the day and a workshop as part of their 8th Walking for Health Networking Event held at Perth Concert Hall with a theme of “Celebrating Diversity”. Jane was asked to open the conference with an energising session at 10.30 to the 280 attendees.

The Buddy Beat were:-

Jane Bentley, Tom Chalmers, Anne Dowie and Noreen Young



Anne and Jane



Noreen and Tom

Jane set off early but was bogged down by traffic, but it was an even more stressful journey for Tom, Anne and Noreen for horrendous traffic around Glasgow meant that their travel time was extended by almost 90 minutes. With the clock ticking until the start of the event, the three weary travellers finally arrived much to the delight of Jane. There was just time for a quick comfort break and a chance to put their coats and bags backstage and suddenly they were announced. The MC, Paths for All Chair George Lawrie asked the delegates to kindly welcome on stage Jane Bentley and her friends from The Buddy Beat!



Perth Concert Hall- worth the hassle getting there!



Not too shabby a place to perform in!

The Fab 4 strode onstage to a round of applause. Two couches had been placed on the centre of the stage, with a table and flowers just in front of it, looking very much like a scene from Oprah. Jane stood while the others took a seat and then Jane introduced herself and the gang. Jane had us rumble for a few seconds to start things off and then she spoke to the audience, who watched expectantly. Jane had earlier set a percussion instrument or Boomwhacker under as many seats as possible to save time. In the goodie bags handed out at reception, everyone also had a yoyo and a pen. So, improvising skills honed, Jane suddenly had a new percussion element, Boomwhackers a-plenty and several yoyo/pens. Starting with the Boomwhackers Jane quickly showed them their rhythms' particular to each colour and then a brief shaker demo before lastly demonstrating how effective a beat could be obtained from tapping a pen against a plastic yoyo (it really works!).

Then we were off and Tom, Anne and Noreen smiled at one another as the concert hall tingled to the sound of all the instruments and it was truly hypnotic. Jane played with the crowd, inviting them to stop and start on count of four, letting the percussion be heard by quietening the Boomwhackers and the audience's delight was clear to see. Bringing Buddy beat in with a background beat, Jane quickly had the room bristling with rhythm, increasing the volume before splitting the hall into two with each playing for ever decreasing intervals and then instructing everyone to freestyle for a moment and built it all to a mighty end, and the applause showed how thrilled the delegates were. Jane asked the audience to kindly pass the instruments along the aisles and we jammed for a few moments to fill the space while this was accomplished and we again received a lovely round of applause. We took our bows and walked offstage, while hearing George Lawrie stating he was sure Jane and The Buddy Beat would soon be on Britain's Got Talent!



"There's magic in the air!"

The conference continued for the remainder of the morning and was hosted by The Networking Event Chair, former TV newsreader, journalist and media personality Louise Batchelor. This session included talks on Paths for All's last 12 months, a speaker from Dundee Healthy Living Initiative and sofa sessions lead by Louise on topics such as walking groups for people with early onset dementia.

We took seat in the main foyer area, chatting about what had happened and what was to come later. At the same time a lady pianist sat at a grand piano and filled the area with melodic tunes, and it was very relaxing. And as noon approached the caterers brought out lunch, causing us to lick our lips as our tummy's' began to grumble, and not even in time! Jane approached the caterers and explained that as "artistes" who only had a short lunch-time window, would it be possible to get first dibs on the nosh? That was quickly agreed and we took our pick and sat and were almost finished by the time the hall doors and the delegates poured out.



Buddy's together

We returned to the main stage for our workshop which was due to commence at 12.45. We weren't the only workshops on offer- there were Led Walks, Embracing Diversity, a Diary Room and lastly Disability Awareness. Chairs were provided and we set out a large circle with about 25 drums in the centre. A few people arrived early, eager to get their hands on a djembe.

One of the organisers approached us and after selecting a drum she ventured back into the foyer area to drum up volunteers. Jane had the small number soon jamming and this helped raise awareness that we had started and soon volunteers started to come in and before soon we had a very healthy fifteen participants. A quick ABC of djembe from Jane and we were soon jamming and these workshoppers showed flair, style and rhythm. After five minutes or more we stopped for a breather and Jane spoke more about how to listen and find your place in the beat. Back to it and we jammed for ten more minutes, altering the volume and splitting into two. Jane then played Rhythm Tennis to give everyone a chance to shine on their own, and one thing for sure was that this circle was really up for it. They all seemed to know one another, geeing one another along and having great fun with it. Jane waited an eternity for the rhythm to be passed back to her or else the game might still be playing! Jane then dropped the bombshell by telling everyone that the organisers had tried to book a samba band but that had fallen through and the idea was that this workshop had two options. The first would be to form a conga line and march through the foyer, holding our drums and playing at the same time. The sharp intake of breath from some of the workshoppers was clearly audible and Jane quickly ran out option two- perform as a band while the delegates filed back into the auditorium, and this was not surprisingly adopted by a majority vote. You can't say that Jane is never democratic!



The workshoppers planning their imminent gig

Jane then used the remainder of the time to instruct on neat starts and stops, copy cat rhythms and rumbles amid much hilarity. As the auditorium began to fill once more for the afternoon session, Jane and The Workshoppers broke up the circle, fanning the chairs into a crescent moon shape. Eighteen of us took our seats while Jane stood with a drum strapped to her.

We began with a loud rumble and then went straight into a jam. The smiles on the Workshoppers was a delight to see for none of them would have imagined when they climbed out of bed that day that they would be performing on the main stage at Perth Concert Hall! We suddenly became aware that a large section of the audience were clapping but not in the normal appreciative sense but in time to the beat! That kind of stunned us all but only helped increase the feeling of community and real sense of enjoyment and the anticipation that something special could perhaps be in the air.

Jane then took us through a lengthened Copy Cat stint and while we were half way through this we could hear that the delegates were copying too! Taking this great opportunity by the horns, Jane brilliantly turned to the audience and worked beats out with them. It was so impressive to see such a large gathering clapping out rhythms, and it wasn't just a cross section- it was everyone! With The Band still playing, Jane worked for a few minutes, teasing and playing with the audience and then turned to the drummers instructing us to stop. The auditorium resonated to the sound of hand clapping and it was truly magical. Bringing the drums back in once more, Jane then alternated between the drummers and the happy clappers, cutting the switching time shorter on each turn and everyone in the hall just went for it and Jane brought it all to an almighty finale, and the sound of appreciation from everyone was electric. The Paths for All Workshoppers Drumming Group then showed their appreciation for the audience before Jane got us all to stand up and take a bow, smiles as wide as the River Tay!

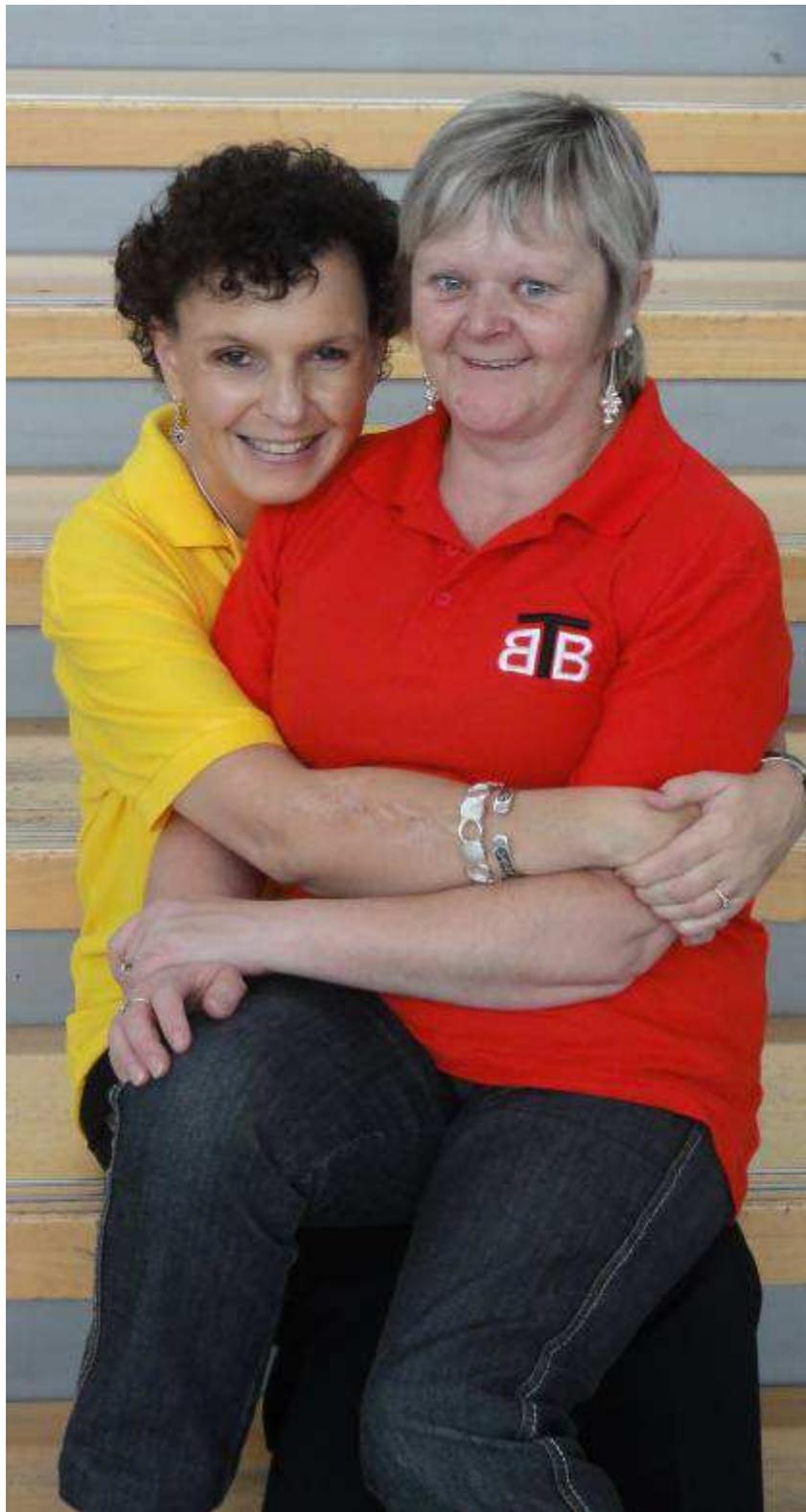
As we filed offstage, Louise Batchelor returned to the podium to give thanks once more to Jane Bentley and The Buddy Beat saying that we had made many new Beat Buddies today! She also remarked at how wonderful that performance had been and marvelled at how such a large group could be led and instructed with very little verbal communication.

Jane was on such a high after the event, as were all of us. Taking part in events like this similar to baking a good cake- you have to get the right mix of ingredients to get the required results and this conference had a charged atmosphere with everyone happy to get involved. The opening energiser in the morning

was beautiful and hypnotic, the lunch-time workshop rocked from start to finish and the finale with the workshoppers and audience just sizzled!

It was a real pleasure and thrill for all of us to be involved and Noreen said it had been wonderful, while Anne thought it had been brilliant. Tom enjoyed himself so much and later reflected that this event was the best one he had ever performed at!

Perfection!



The inseparable Anne and Noreen

Words and pictures (with a bit of help from Noreen and Jane) by Tom Chalmers