

Adventures of a Buddy Beater



Adventures of a Buddy Beater 23rd February- 24th February 2009

Two weeks ago Buddy Beat attempted to travel to Leeds for a Recovery of Ordinary Lives Study Day. An overnight stay at The Hilton was promised and Lynne, Anne Dowie and I licked our lips in anticipation.

The great British weather had other things in mind for the UK that day and heavy snowfalls saw London grind to a halt and after 130 miles on the road, our drivers Karen and Jeanette got the calls to say that the event was cancelled. So there we were with the rug pulled from under us, and we reluctantly headed back home.

The Study Day was quickly rescheduled and this time, Jack Frost was nowhere to be seen and we thought we surely had an easy trip ahead of us. How wrong can you be!

Jeanette “Penelope Pitstop” Allan motored away ahead with Karen, Anne and Lynne in her car. As for me, I was Miss Jane’s travel companion and co-pilot.

As Jane drove we chatted idly about this that and everything under the sun and we had only just crossed the line into England when Jane’s little blue van gave us cause for concern. All the controls basically died and the car began to suddenly slow down. Jane pulled onto the hard shoulder and she turned the power off for a few moments. We tried again but within a hundred yards the van did the same thing again, so we pulled over once more. As I began to wonder if some higher being had a plan that I was fated never to see Leeds, Jane called the nice people at the AA.

While she was on the phone, the excitement increased when a traffic cop car pulled up behind us.



You can just see Jane’s reflection in the mirror here, and it wasn’t long before Jane had charmed the nice policeman and they let us be, satisfied that we were not major drug dealers or serial killers with a van full of cadavers.

When Jane got back into the van, she informed me that those nice people at the AA told her she would be rescued within an hour. But then Jane’s tummy started to rumble and I could see the distress on her face. She obviously had a flashed image of two sets of skeletal remains being found on the hard shoulder, but I pulled a master stroke and had the foresight to prepare sandwiches (but the actual truth of it

was that I didn’t want to remortgage my house to buy lunch at a motorway services).

So we sat and munched my goodies and chatted and after 30 minutes the lovely man from the AA pulled up. It didn’t take Jane long to charm her rescuer and he poked and prodded around before announcing that he thought that perhaps Jane had filled her tank with petrol instead of diesel!



*Jane- "Tom, that AA van is awfully close isn't it?"
Tom- "That's because he is towing us, dear."*

So there we were being towed back to Scotland after our brief but memorable sojourn into England. If you have never been towed, it is quite a tense experience but after about 20 minutes we pulled into a garage in Gretna Green. The nice man from the AA left us in the capable hands of a nice motor mechanic. It didn't take long for Jane to work her charms and we left the van with him for an hour after he had informed us that he would have to flush out the tank.



A fretful Jane about to hand her beloved Berlingo Van over to the mechanics.

Luckily Gretna has a retail outlet village so Jane and I wandered around there and did some shopping before retiring to a local pub while we waited. Our time was eventually up and we strode back to the garage only to see the mechanic give the universal shake of the head and scratch of the chin. He had removed the fuel and put diesel in but Jane's little van still spluttered and died after just two minutes of idle running. An older more worldly-wise mechanic came over to add his tuppence worth and after a great deal of humming and hawing, it was decided that the immobiliser was faulty. I had no idea what an immobiliser was and I soon learned, so it seemed that the day was not a complete washout, but we were told that an electrical mechanic would have to be called in. It was by now 4.15 and they asked us to come back in an hour and a half.

So back to the retail village we went and we shopped some more and then took refuge in a Costa Coffee shop. At 5.30 with darkness descending we went back to the garage and within 5 minutes, the job was done and we were ready to hit the road once more!

Hooray!

So, almost 7 hours after leaving Glasgow, we took to the road. Oh how we laughed when we realised that in the space of one day we had left Scotland and come into England before leaving England and coming back to Scotland and here we were once again leaving Scotland and venturing into England.

Meanwhile Jeanette kept motoring on and had reached Leeds. Karen was a tad worried about us and her phone must have been red-hot as we kept in touch regularly.

So while Jeanette, Karen, Anne and Lynne booked into The Hilton and pampered themselves in their luxurious bedrooms, Jane and I soldiered on, with only two Double Decker chocolate bars to keep us going.

As we finally approached Leeds, Karen's latest text told us that they had joined up with a several other ladies who were there for the Study Day too and that they were going to a pizza restaurant. That thought saw Jane and me dripping saliva and it spurred us on. We hit Leeds about 8.20 but drove around in circles for an ice-age, vainly trying to find the restaurant.

Finally, at 9 pm, after 10 fun-filled and thrilling hours on the road, Jane and Major Tom had made it and crossed the magic line. Jeanette's relief at seeing us was clearly on show and she welcomed us with open arms! Jane and I also had to suffer a few jokes about getting married in Gretna!

After dining with 11 women (life's is such a chore!) we made our way to The Hilton. Everyone went to look at the conference room and then Jane and I went to our rooms. I quickly unpacked and feeling energised I went back down to the reception area in the hope of a comfy chair and a blether but everyone had gone to bed! I trudged back to my room and had some quiet time reading my book.



The following morning we all met for breakfast and filled our bellies before making our way to the conference room. Anne had a big day ahead of her as she was going to be one of the speakers and we were all there to support her.



Here is Jane wearing her magical coat. It gives her “special powers” and she can tell things that are going to happen in the fuchsia.

The Study Day began at 10am and after a short opening from organiser Genevieve Smyth, the day’s first speaker was Angela Grivas, an Advanced Occupation Therapist from Wales. Angela then introduced us to Tracey Bevan, a service user and Tracey bravely took the floor in front of 70 people and told everyone her inspirational story.

After Tracey, it was Northern Ireland’s turn and first up was Jane Speed, an Occupation Therapist from Ards Hospital. Jane has been an O/T for almost 30 years and gave a very engaging talk before introducing another service user, Brenda Crean. Brenda also gave an inspirational talk about her story and there was certainly more than one person dabbing at their eyes.

It was England’s turn next but O/T Julie Barnhouse from South Staffordshire was unable to make the rescheduled date, and instead

organiser Genevieve Smyth ran through her presentation on her behalf.

Then it was tea-break time and we joined the general stampede!



“One lump or two?”

After wetting our whistles, it was back to the action and now it was Braveheart time! This was Jeanette's and Anne's big moment and we waited with baited breath.



This is organiser Genevieve Smyth about to introduce “The Jeanette and Anne Show.”

Jeanette took centre stage at 11.45 and she began to talk about The Buddy Beat and her terrific slideshow took us from the very beginning to where we are now. Jeanette was certainly the most engaging of all the O/T speakers and what was clear to me was how proud Jeanette is of what the Buddy Beat has become and how far we have travelled in a relatively short period of time.



Our First Lady, Mrs Jeanette Allan.

And then Jeanette showed Anne Ross' poem on the big screen and Karen took to the floor and read it beautifully.



Suddenly it was now our Anne's turn and she stood up in front of everyone and bravely gave her story. This was not just a big deal. It was more than that. It took tremendous courage for Anne to stand up and do that. She made us all proud and tearful and in true Anne style, also had the conference room laughing and when she had finished she received rapturous applause.



After that, the organiser held a twenty minute question and answer session before announcing the magical word “lunch” and it was charge of the light brigade time. Jeanette and Anne’s presentation had gone down well and had created a buzz of excitement. Two O/T’s sat across from me during lunch and they were really excited about what was coming next.

Everyone reconvened at 1.15 and it was now Buddy Beat Time! We had placed a Boomwhacker on every chair for audience participation. Jane started us off with echoes and sudden stops and this of course got everyone’s attention and their appreciation was thrilling. Jane then had them eating out of the palms of her hands and at one point got everyone to play very quietly and of course, Anne came in at the end and blasted her big note, scaring half the room out of their wits! What was nice was when she asked questions of the audience, the O/T’s were up for it and fired statements back at her.

After a twenty minute session, Jane invited comments from the audience and perhaps the best was from a lady who said that “we had made everyone smile”. What more can we ask?





Our willing O/T participants and service users



The Intrepid Travellers

And after we packed the drums and Boomwhackers away, Jeanette and Karen went back into the conference room. Jane, Lynne, Anne and I retired to the comfy chairs in the reception area, where we took some light refreshment and had a relaxing hour before taking to the road once again.

It was an excellent two days with more than its share of adventure, laughter and tears. The hotel was excellent and the Study Day itself was inspiring. Anne did us all proud and she will remember this for the rest of her days, as will all of us. We received a lot of very positive feed-back and certainly gave some of the O/T's food for thought.

We stopped half way home at Penrith and had a wonderful meal at a truckstop of all places!



Tom, Jane, Lynne, Karen, Ann and Jeanette.