

## And The Beat Goes On... and on....



### October 7<sup>th</sup> 2009- Asberger Teenage Social Club

It was perhaps a few months ago that during one of our regular weekly meetings we were joined by two lady visitors. They were representatives of a local organisation called Flexi-Care.

Flexi-Care provides a service for adults and children with learning disabilities or who have an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). They have established a network of trained volunteers who offer support to people with a learning disability or ASD to participate in social, recreational and educational opportunities in the local community.

The two ladies from Flexi-Care, Bernie and Elaine, had hunted us down after hearing about Buddy Beat and they initially wanted to see if what we do would suit them. They had a great time with us and wasted no time at all in pinning down a booking for a workshop. Of their many groups that they run, they wanted Jane and a small number of us to run a workshop at St Catherine's School in Paisley's Gallowhill for the Teenage Social Club which runs for boys with Asbergers Syndrome aged 16-19. The time for the event was 7.30-9pm.

The Buddy Beaters were:-

- ✓ Jane Bentley
- ✓ Tom Chalmers
- ✓ Anne Dowie
- ✓ Eric McCay
- ✓ Eileen McGrory



*Watch out Eileen's about!*

Taxi Tom picked Anne D up in Barrhead and then stopped in Paisley to collect Eric while Eileen “Jackie Stewart” McGrory beetled over to Gallowhill in her motorised scooter. The police had been pre-warned and had wisely cleared the streets. Jane met them at the school and quickly unpacked the gear.

Inside were 6 boys and 4 of their volunteers/ support workers. We set up a drum circle on the stage in the school hall and were soon up and running. Can't quite recall all the names of the boys but most memorable were Peter the Conductor (to be explained later), Harry Potter wannabe and Port Vale fan Nicholas, Queen fan Ewan and Mr Cool/ kit drum player Stephen.

Jane began with a few words to the Club and we then went around the circle, hitting short rhythms and stating first our names and then naming something we liked. Then we showed the gathering what we do and played just for a minute with some echo and response and startling rumbles, showing that even though we were small in number, we could still pack a punch! That broke the ice and after a brief instruction, Jane set us off on five minute jam and the Club quickly slipped into it. You could see how pleased many of the boys looked to be making music in this way. We then passed a single pulse around the circle before challenging everyone to see how fast it could flow. This then progressed into our Turnaround game and it didn't take the boys long to work out how trap one of their 4 support workers between two of them, which seemed to amuse everyone no-end! Then the youngest of the boys announced that he wanted to play his own game which he had just created. Basically, if he tapped the left of his drum 3 times, then the person three to his left of him took control and had to decide whether to tap his or her drum on the right or left side and also how many taps were needed. We played this for a few moments and we were impressed by the ingenuity of it! Then we showed the group how to have conversions between drums and we spoke in pairs, working around the circle until we got around to Nicholas and Stephen and they had a marvellous musical ding-dong between them! Next up Jane tried the Echo and Response exercise with everyone following her lead. The boys took that in their stride and Jane then moved this game around the circle, and many of the boys seemed to like their brief two second solo spots! Jane then ended the first half with a big jam before tea-break was declared. Bernie kindly shared the boys' crisps, snacks and cans of pop and most of the Buddy Beat gang lapped up this offer.

After twenty minutes, it was time to get back into the swing of it. Jane had selected some of her percussion instruments and demonstrated how each one was used, each time receiving suitable “Woo!” noises and shouts of “I'm having that one!” Some of the boys swapped their drums for percussion and before starting Jane whipped out the Stick of Power and exclaimed “Expelliarmus!” which brought a gasp from Harry Potter fan Nicholas, and we could see he was itching to get control. Jane kindly passed the Stick of Power to Tom first and he quickly instructed them on loud and soft rumbling and decreased the time between each volume until it all went a little wild. The boys were now eager to get involved,

perhaps more so than their support workers and after the Stick had travelled the circle, many of the boys wanted a 2<sup>nd</sup> go. Now that's what we call a success! It was during this that young Peter showed his obvious skills at instruction and conducting.

For the last five minutes or so, Jane produced the Hapi Drum and after a brief demo, it passed around the group while everyone else jammed on the drums and percussion and it all ended with a big crescendo and round of applause.

It was a hugely enjoyable evening for Buddy Beat and the way the boys took to the drumming was a delight. It was very entertaining to see them gently ribbing one another and at how they bounced off each other. Bernie came up to us at the end beaming with delight and she said that it is the hardest thing to get the boys to do anything collectively and that she was amazed that they all keyed into it and stayed with it throughout. Another good job done!



*Jane, Tom, Anne D and Eileen*

The End

Words and pictures by Tom Chalmers