

September 19th 2009- Perth

Bipolar Fellowship Scotland Conference



For the second time in the space of 3 weeks, The Intrepid Buddy Beat Gang was once again on the road, happy to show the world that we will go anywhere.

After travelling to Edinburgh on September 1st, the destination this time was Perth for The Annual Bipolar Fellowship of Scotland Conference. It was Jeanette who first put the feelers out early in April to see who could attend and slowly but surely the numbers mounted to a healthy number.

The Annual Bipolar Conference organisers wanted Buddy Beat to provide the gathered attendees with a twenty minute energiser session mid-morning and a workshop after lunch.

We had talked about travelling to Perth by train and car, but in the end Anne Ross and her husband Ken came up with the sterling suggestion of hiring a mini-bus. Ken bravely offered his services as driver- did he truly know what he was letting himself in for? It was arranged for us to meet near the train station in Paisley at 8.30am, while Jane drove her beloved Berlingo Van bursting at the seams with all her gear, collecting Frances along the way.

The Buddy Beaters were:-

Jane Bentley, Tom Chalmers, Stephanie Crew-Holmes, Anne Dowie, Lesley King, Jackie McDowall, Eileen McGrory, Frances Nisbet, Christine Robertson, Anne Ross, Noreen Young, Sarah Van Der Molen and Driver Ken.



Stephanie- "I bagsy the back seat!"



Anne R had been creative before she met us as can be seen from her official Buddy Beat sign. Good one. Anne!

We met at the allotted time and piled into the minibus, which was spacious enough to allow some of the crew two seats to themselves. The 90 minute journey was aided by Tom's Sat-Nav and passed pleasantly enough. It was clear that some of the group had obviously been out into the wee small hours night-clubbing, for first Noreen, then Anne Dowie and finally Eileen McGrory all nodded off before the first hour was out. A little known fact here- Noreen sleeps with one eye open, and for someone to witness that so close to Halloween was too spooky for words. Biggest scandal of the journey to Perth was when Tuck-Shop McGrory pulled her bountiful supply of candy from her voluminous handbag and passed it around the back of the bus, while Tom, Ken and Sarah sat upfront non the wiser! And Tour Guide Christine made a brief appearance telling everyone to look right as we passed The Wallace Monument!



The Dewar Centre Perth- the room we performed in is shown by the row of windows at the top right.

We arrived at The Dewar Centre at 10.15 and it was The Charge of The Loo Brigade for the Buddy Beat Bladders and inside we were firstly greeted by Frances who stood half way up the staircase and Jane at the top, who directed traffic in the direction of the lavatories. Once we had spent a penny and got a cuppa, we then set the chairs and drums out to the left of the stage area, and Jane placed buckets of like coloured Boomwhackers at the end of each aisle.



“Ooh, Sarah, its exhausting putting all this gear out!”

The conference people numbered around 60 and filed back into the room and with a few words from Alison Cairns, Chief Executive, we were on! Jane stood up and introduced us, asking the audience to help themselves to the Boomwhackers and we played for a few minutes, during which people began to make their own, unprompted music. When we stopped we got a resounding round of applause and then Jane introduced the people to the Boomwhackers properly, asking them to beat by colour, and then in conversation with other colours across the room before finally we all joined in for a big groove. There was one particular lady in the front row who was dressed in purple, and she was having the best time! So, having gone down well and did what it said on the tin, we left the conference room with everyone suitably energised.



*Noreen- "Who nailed this drum to the floor!"
Eileen, looking away- "It wasnae me!"*



Jane showing the conference what Boomwhackers are all about



The Bipolar Fellowship getting on down

We were shown into a side room that seemed 1000 feet long, but the best thing was the two settees to rest upon. Sarah, Jackie and Christine remained in the conference room, to take in the morning's speakers, and afterwards commented on how interesting and informative it had been.

We chatted amongst ourselves and Jane instigated a laughter challenge, where we were asked to laugh and the trick was to see if everyone would end up giggling. We hadn't reckoned with Anne Dowie, who

issued this laugh from the pit of her stomach that had whales replying to her from 12, 000 miles across the world. That sent Jane into near heart attack mode.

Tom and Stephanie went into Perth for a stroll around the many charity shops where they uncovered several finds and were later followed by Jane and Frances who like bargain hunting too. The remainder stayed on the couches and just when the conference broke for lunch, one of the gentlemen popped his head into the room and told us that we had been fantastic.

Lunch was buffet style and it was excellent and we all filled our tums. Buddy Beat was due back on at 1.30 to 3.00 for our workshop. Also running at the same time was a Laughter Workshop and a Dance Workshop. We quickly set up the chairs in a large circle and placed all the drums in the centre.

We were soon joined by 9 people and that gave us a good and healthy 21 participants. Jane began by speaking about drumming and what it provides and then asked ourselves if we had anything we would like to add. Anne Ross picked up the challenge first and spoke about the way Buddy Beat had helped in confidence building and also about the community we have built and that we help each other in ways that many professionals simply can't. Anne Dowie echoed that sentiment and spoke about her drama group, stating that the empowerment she received from drumming gave her the confidence to take up drama. Then Lesley also recalled how the Buddy Beat gave her courage to stand up during last year's Mental Health Festival and read out one of her poems in front of 150 strangers. Jackie and Christine also spoke about the confidence drumming has given them.



Jackie- "If we don't get this right Christine, it will be curtains for us!"



The Colours of the Rainbow-Eileen, Noreen, Lesley, Christine, Jackie and Frances.

Jane started the session without the use of drums or instruments. We played three short games with simple hand clapping and foot tapping to show our visitors how easy it is to make music together in a group. That seemed to relax everyone and then we took to the drums and we did some echo and response, going around the circle with each individual playing at a time and everyone repeating. There was one gentleman who had spoken at the start of the workshop of his concern of making a mistake, and being embarrassed as he thought he had no sense of rhythm and when it came to his turn to “make a noise” he turned out a splendid beat, that surely lasted for a count of 16!

After that we jammed together and it sounded wicked and when we stopped some of the group asked for a comfort break. We stopped for ten minutes and upon the restart, Jane suggested that we play our Organic Music exercise. Eileen stepped into the circle to change her drum for a percussion instrument and on the way back she trod on Jane’s large wooden frog. “Oh! I’ve killed it!” she shrieked and then picked it up and added “It’s okay, I’ve kissed it better!” Quick as a flash Stephanie piped up “It’s a Prince now! He’s mine!”

We jammed for 5 minutes with everyone interchanging their instruments along the way and after it had wound its way to its end, Jane asked if anyone around the circle had any comments. One of the directors of The Bipolar Fellowship of Scotland, George Cairns, said that he was disappointed that we only meet in the morning because he works 9 to 5 most days and as he lives in Renfrew, he would love to come along out of work hours and drum. Anne Ross replied instantly and informed him that we are redressing that problem and told him of our proposed night-time drum circles for the public in Paisley Art Centre. He seemed very interested and Tom gave him the upcoming Festival pamphlet, showing him our forthcoming Drum Circle on the evening of Monday October 5th. Everyone seemed to have enjoyed the workshop and as we packed up, we received some great comments. A gentleman spoke up and said that the morning session had been excellent and he thought that the Boomwhackers were extraordinary and also that the drumming had really drawn him in.



The Supremes- Stephanie, Anne Dowie and Anne Ross

After an excellent day, we packed up Jane’s Berlingo and Ken’s minibus, taking a moment for a group photograph on the steps of The Dewar Centre. Then we said goodbye to Jane and Frances before setting off.

On the way back, some of the Buddy Beaters were done in and couldn’t keep their eyes open. Ken insisted on taking everyone home and Tom was the 1st to be dropped off which unfortunately let all the gang know where he lived, which clearly contravenes Rule 1 of The Anti- Stalking Handbook!

And so another good day out for Buddy Beat closed. A day out when we won a few more converts, had more than a fair share of giggles, taught some people to do something they couldn't before and spread the Buddy Beat Word just that little bit further.

And lastly, a huge Buddy Beat Thank-You to our driver, Ken. We couldn't have done it without you-cheers!



The BBC had The Two Ronnies- Buddy Beat has The Two Annies

Programme	
09.30	Registration & Coffee
10.00-10.45	Annual General Meeting
10.45 – 10.50	Welcome & Introduction <i>Alison Cairns, Chief Executive, BFS</i>
10.50-11.10	ENERGISER <i>Buddy Beat</i>
11.10-11.40	Scottish Recovery Indicators <i>William Ellis, Scottish Recovery Network</i>
12.10-12.30	The Laurence Wilson Keynote Talk Mental Health and Nutrition <i>Dr Liz Miller</i>
LUNCH	
13.30-15.00	Workshops Laughter Therapy <i>The Caring Clown</i> Drumming Workshop <i>Buddy Beat</i> Dance <i>Black Swan Dance Theatre</i> BFS Discussion <i>Alison, Alan, David and Gordon</i>
15.00-15.20	"Bipolar" – A Dance Production <i>Black Swan Dance Theatre</i>
15.20-15.45	Closing Q&A Session

The Conference Programme

The End