

Community Building in Britain Newsletter

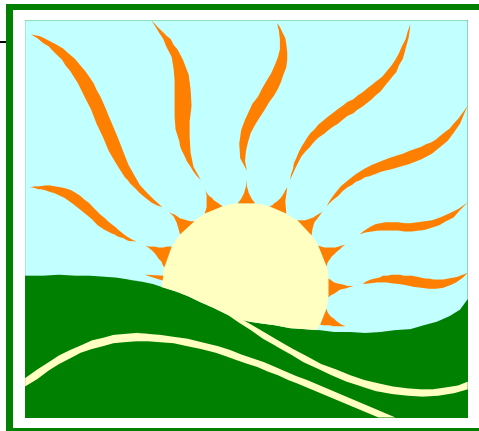
Number 62

May/June 1998

The newsletter is issued by a growing network of people in Britain who are committed to developing community building beyond that originally described in Dr. M. Scott Peck's book, 'The Different Drum', and as further developed by the Foundation for Community Encouragement in the USA (FCE).

In this issue:-

Scheduled Community Building events	page 3
On-going Groups	page 4
FTG Meeting Report	page 5
Letter from Germany	pages 6-7
Thoughts on the Brighton CBE	page 8
CBiB Confluence	page 9
My Search for Community	pages 10-11
Community Building Skills Seminar	page 11
Holding Group report	pages 12-14
Community in the Workplace	page 15
Feathers	pages 16-17
Letters	pages 17-19
Details of local groups	page 20



From the Editor

I want to say thank you to everyone who has renewed their subscription, and an especial thank you to those of you who have shared something of your experiences of community building. I have put a few of them in the box on this page, and will be using others (with permission) when it seems appropriate.

There is no doubt that experiencing a sense of community, whether only fleetingly or more substantially, has affected many of us profoundly.

Thank you

I also want to say a big thank you to everyone who has sent me an article or letter for this newsletter.

I have tried to get as much of what you have sent me as I can into this edition within the normal 20 pages. Sorry to those of you whose items I have had to leave until the next edition.

Do please keep things coming in. Many people have commented how interesting they find the newsletter, and particularly when contributors share about their personal experiences or feelings. I feel very privileged to be among the first to read what is sent in, and to be able to publish it for others to read.

LOG

And finally, you may not receive this in time, but I must mention that the Learning Opportunities Group are meeting June 6/7th at Douai. Contact Armando on 01926 337409 for more information. I do hope they have a productive time, and look forward to receiving reflections from anyone taking part.

Peter Cooper (details on back page)

"Doing CB gives me a feeling of space and freedom"

"My experiences of community building events have been profound, thought-provoking and life-enriching"

"CB is a chance to LISTEN more and more deeply, especially to what is going on inside myself. This can be hard and painful work - but sometimes leads to me 'hearing' amazing things!"

"Out of 4 events I have attended, one CBW in particular brought about the inner transformation that I continually look for. It was an expansion of awareness and an opening of heart in which I felt a true sense of community."

"Although at the moment I am not feeling moved to be actively involved in CBiB, there is no doubt that my participation in the past has been a life-changing experience. It has given me invaluable insight into the group process, to stay with the chaos and to trust my own inner voice; it has also heightened my awareness of the need to speak for myself alone, and to accept others as they are, through truly listening It seems that it is only through the challenge and creativity of chaos that true community can be reached."

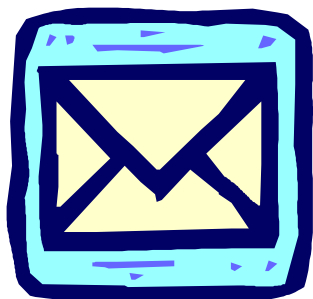
Community Building in Britain Events

<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Fee</u>	<u>Notes</u>
18-20 Sept	Unstone Grange near Sheffield	Teän Stuttaford 0121 420 4390	£90	Confluence (see later page)
5-8 Nov	Othona, Dorset	01308 897130	£130	CBW
1999 15-17 Jan	Grt Massingham Norfolk	Sue Hirst 01328 862940	TBA	CBW
27-28 Mar	Edinburgh	Ian Davidson 0131 445 3381	TBA	CBE

Events elsewhere				
<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Notes</u>	
9-11 Oct	Hamburg Germany	Regina Haß 0049 (0)40 86 23 62	CBW (First event in Germany)	

Note: - **CBE** stands for “Community Building Experience”, which provides an opportunity to build community in a large group over two days. In a “Community Building Workshop”, or **CBW**, a third day is added so that not only can participants experience the building of community but they can also learn about the process through discussion and reflection.

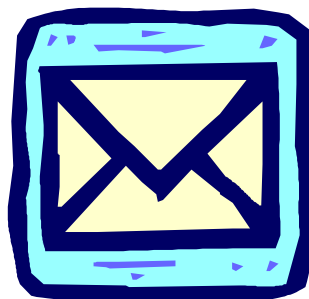
There are two other sets of initials you might hear about (although neither types of event has been arranged in the UK for a while). **CBSS** stands for Community Building Skills Seminar, which deepens understanding of community principles and behaviour; it focuses on the skills of facilitation and leadership and teaches how to evaluate and monitor the processes of community building in ongoing groups. **LEP** stands for the Leadership Education Programme.



The next mailing will be on **Sunday 28th June 1998**. A small group of us will be getting together that morning in North London to stuff envelopes.

If you feel moved to help please call Peter on 01438 813765 or just turn up at 14 Crown Road, N10 2HY between 10am and 1pm.

Thanks



On-Going Groups Page

A brief history of Malvern Hills Community Building Group

In Autumn '96, three of us met and decided to initiate an ongoing cb group. We invited 30 people to attend an introductory evening: 10 attended and nine of us decided to continue meeting one evening a month.

In March 1997 we held an evening open to others to come and see, and consider joining us, and started meeting fortnightly.

May '98: now I think we are seven, of which four or five attend any particular meeting.

We have been primarily 'interactive' and 'sharing', with protracted themes of 'what do these guidelines mean?' (and are we using them, anyway?) and noticing a prone-ness to 'discussion' in an intellectual manner. Lots of other guidelines and issues and approaches have found their place, too: we've agreed to try games, exercises and experiments several times.

Focus on a task

A few weeks ago, it was suggested that we take on some task: focus on 'doing' something collectively beyond meeting together. We agreed, seemingly very easily. There was some resistance: I voiced it and was struck at how the group listened to it with honour and respect. I felt my resistance was not received as an obstacle to be pushed out of the way, but as an important contribution: possibly a signpost to ramifications or ripples that maybe deserved some recognition before we moved on.

The next step was around a particular task: it was proposed we find some way of making a public presentation of ourselves and of 'community-building', as part of a public celebration of Beltane four weeks later. I don't know if any of the others thought this ridiculously ambitious.

We spent that evening very creatively - considering how to do this in a way visible and congruent (inclusive, self-disclosing, creative of 'safety', authentic) in the midst of an audience with limited and varying attention

and comprehension of what we were attempting.

Modelling

We thought we might 'model' the process-stages - intentionally perform pseudo-community (EASY!) for a few minutes, then chaos - visibly trying to convert/fix each other: attempting to remove our differences. (I thought this would be easy, too). Then, on cue, we were to empty ourselves and carry everyone into a blissful state of community.

Plenty of other ideas to weave in - use of silence, poetry, games and exercises to raise energy and openness to surrender and change.

We finished the evening committing ourselves to 'rehearsing' at our next meeting.

Rehearsal

Our next meeting was in a venue we hadn't used before, full of different and potent meaning for each of use. A substantial distraction from the task in hand.

We persevered, rehearsed 'pseudocommunity' (a little falsely, I thought) and then tried performing 'chaos'. This scared me a bit. I think I've grown used to subtly negotiating consensual levels of risk-taking (or maybe I mean 'controlling') and suddenly I was into the unknown, with insufficient time to absorb and 'catch up'. Anyway we did then, remarkably, achieve some degree of emptying. It felt very uneven and insufficient. I don't know where it got us to. I finished feeling very unready for our next meeting, in public. We lowered our expectations.

The evening arrived. Other things in life kept happening and I was there in body but barely more present than that. Three others of the cb group were there, at what turned out to be a low-key small occasion (outdoors in a cold north wind). There was singing, chatting, circle dance. The four of us didn't meet as a separate group and the evening passed fairly uneventfully.

Our next meeting is later this week.

Cliff Jordan

FTG Meeting Report - 17/19 April 98

The FTG (Facilitators Training Group) spent a rather chilly and somewhat viral laden weekend at the Monastery of Poor Clares near Solihull. The meeting followed its usual pattern - arrival on Friday and exhaustion by Sunday. In between we dealt with issues ranging from the financial state of the FTG, contractual relationships with the Holding Group, and whether selected elements of the meeting could be tape-recorded.

Discernment

The centrepiece of the weekend was finishing the process of discerning for new members that had begun in the previous meeting. Robyn Hawkridge had sent a letter withdrawing her application for membership within the FTG. As for the rest of those who had applied, the following decisions were recorded: Ruth Goffe, Johnny Hoggett, Paul Gee and David Saunders were all accepted as members of the FTG. Peter Laxton was not accepted as a member of the facilitator group - though it is hoped that he will stay involved with CBiB in other contexts.

Acceptance into the group did not necessarily imply an immediate or short-term consideration as a facilitator of public workshops. It was clear that training needs varied from person to person. There is more discussion to come about how these needs might be best met.

Finance

In terms of finance, Chrissie Sugden has agreed to take over as Bookkeeper of the accounts. This means that Erica von Boltensern's long tenure as Queen of the Purse has finally come to a close, though she remains as one of the authorising signatories on the account. Thank you Erica for holding the purse-strings so long and so well. Enjoy your retirement. In addition to Erica and Chrissie, new signatories also include Anne Rutherford and Anne Monger.

It was suggested that the FTG open a separate account and Chrissie will be looking into this. There was discussion about the current financial health of the FTG (not quite dead, but certainly bed-ridden) and what might be done. It was proposed that the FTG ask the Holding Group for £1000 each calendar year to cover its running expenses.

Contract

As part of clarifying the relationships between the various bodies within CBiB, the FTG finally managed to put down on paper a draft contract that will be submitted to the Holding Group for consideration at their next meeting. Much credit for this has to go to Anthony Kirke, who provided a number of proposals that were then accepted or re-worked by the group.

CBiB is now at the stage where such on-going conversations between its various bits and pieces is ever more essential. Especially as the conversation broaden out to include things such as re-designing the CBSS, or CB in organisations.

Discernment

Finally, we did discernment for facilitators for upcoming events, including the network's "Confluence" scheduled for 18/20 September 1998, a joint FCE/CBIB sponsored CBE taking place in Turin, Italy at the end of May, and facilitators for the next FTG meeting in September 1998.

The FTG agreed it was not in a position to discern facilitators for either the proposed Hamburg event or the Devon Christian event being mooted for October 1998. It was a lack of clarity rather than a lack of willingness on the part of the FTG that made these events currently undiscernible.

The next-but-one meeting of the FTG is to be on 15/17 January 1999 at Heronbrook House, Warwickshire.

Michael Jacobs

Letter from Germany

Dear friends of CBiB,

I much enjoy reading the newsletter and being in touch with the discussion in CBiB, and it is a big step to go into this discussion, because of the language-problem. But also I learnt so much about communication in the special situations. Sometimes because of the language-problems I could understand parts of the communication in a CB-circle much easier! Why? Using the same mother-language gives us the belief that we know what another person means. But take a dictionary and look for example for the translation of "community":

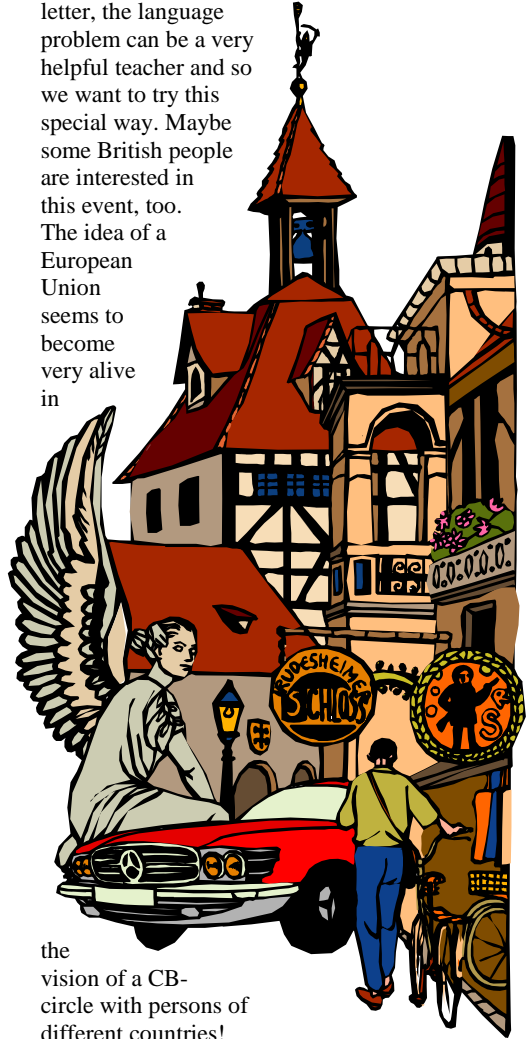
There are more than ten different meanings of that word in one little dictionary! And when I use that word in the german translation "Gemeinschaft", people react in so much variations, because of all the different experiences they have on personal, emotional and social level! So my most important experience of CB is to be very careful in judging a situation only by listening to the words without asking for the sense of the words and the personal background of the person using the words. It takes lots of time, I know, and often in the flow of a discussion I forget about that sensitivity. But in the end it takes less time, because it helps to avoid misunderstandings.

A workshop in Germany

The first reason for this letter is the CB-event, which I am trying to sponsor, together with a little group of interested people, in October 9th - 11th, in a christian conference center in Hamburg. After some irritations in the first planning steps, I hope very much, that we find a good way of cooperation with the British network.

The last years some Germans went to England and U.S.A. to learn about CB-work. But not all are able to do so and therefore we try to initiate a workshop in Germany. Hopefully we can do it together with two British and one American facilitator. It will be a special event, because we need translation. But as I mentioned in the beginning of my

letter, the language problem can be a very helpful teacher and so we want to try this special way. Maybe some British people are interested in this event, too. The idea of a European Union seems to become very alive in



the vision of a CB-circle with persons of different countries!

CB in small groups

The second reason for my letter is the discussion about "CB in a small group". With great pleasure I read the article of Mike Roth about it in the February Newsletter. Last year I had the chance to be in a small circle, too, in Hothope Hall, facilitated by Teān Stuttard and Peter Laxton - in many ways it was a key experience for me.

It threw me into the discussion about the question: "Who is allowed to facilitate?" And I am glad that Teän and Peter were willing to take up the situation, and for how they guided the group safely through a new process of community building.

Also it opens the view to think about the responsibility and ability of everyone in a circle to facilitate. This special experience brought me one step closer to the question: "How to implement the CB-process into everyday life - in relationships, teams at work ... ?" Although I enjoy the CB-events in big circles very much, there is still the feeling of special, experimental situations.

Everyday life

Please don't misunderstand: I know how important such special experiences are for all of us. We need safe places to learn, to open ourselves with all our wounds, fears and overcoming patterns. And it needs guidance to learn new ways of being and acting.

And by the way for me the big circles make it obvious that we are all connected in life and dealing with similar problems, even if we are coming from different backgrounds in education, culture, language or gender. But above all this I wish to translate this new experience of community into my everyday life - and that is often far away from a safe and guided circle-situation!

How to integrate?

For my own education I visited and continue to visit lots of workshops. As well in my working-life it is my task to lead workshops. At the end of a weekend-seminar just some weeks ago some participants mentioned, how inspiring the time was, but they wish to deepen their experiences and make them a part of their daily life. And after making seminar-work with very different themes and people for more than twelve years, for me the main problem is: "How to integrate workshop experiences into daily life?"

And that is not only a question of time or intensity, but a question of translating and

integrating. Since reading the books of Scott Peck I hope and believe there is a way. And the CB-events are one step on that way. But also only one step! Even in CB-work the step of integrating the new experience into everyday-life is a big and hardly guided one.

And for me the small group CB-events seem to be a bridge over that gap. More than a big circle the small group situation showed me my responsibility for the whole process, just as personal patterns become more obviously and painful to solve. And it showed me the only one I can change is myself, and even that is hard work!

Let's discuss

It's difficult to express all my thoughts in a foreign language, but I try because I would like to discuss the different value of small and big CB groups with all who are interested in and to share experiences of implementing the CB-idea into daily life and work processes.

And especially the second one is not a question of arranging a facilitated workshop for the company. The question is: "How to open up colleagues and chiefs for the need of CB-work?" Also I would like to discuss the question of the "facilitator gifts" in everyone of us. The world with all the different tasks and problems, the need of integrating far over the boundaries of countries, needs the open hearted consciousness and responsibility of each of us. And sharing facilitatorship in small CB-circles seems to be a step into that direction.

The present

At the end of my letter I like to share one sentence with you, that an older friend gave to me, long before I made my first CBW. She said: The only real opportunity of community is the one which is given to you in the present moment.

*Regina Haß,
Avenariusstr. 30, 22587
Hamburg, Germany
phone: 0049 (0)40 86 23 62
fax: 0049 (0)40 86 66 22 33*

Thoughts on the Brighton CBE

My experience of this group was of a collection of people who were willing to struggle and commit to the rough as well as the smooth. We were catapulted into some chaos early on the first day and the group really seemed to try to tackle the task of naming behaviours. This also seemed to lead to deep emptying and the first flushes of isolated blossoming into a community-type thing before the end of the first day.

Gentle, yet firm

The group continued to be gentle, yet firm and authentic, during the second day with continued rumblings of a crowd torn between emptiness and pseudo-community as a route out of chaos land. To me it seemed that the journey to the cliff edge was made repeatedly by individuals throughout Sunday, but for some reason we couldn't find a way to all hold hands and run off the edge together.

Nevertheless the depth of learning was reportedly powerful for most and the group finally found a way to close which honestly reflected the rather gritty and real life set of feelings that seemed to remain at the conclusion of our time together.

Personal discoveries

On a more personal level, I was able to discover many new bits of stuff which roughly go as follows:

- I touched a place that felt like a deeper

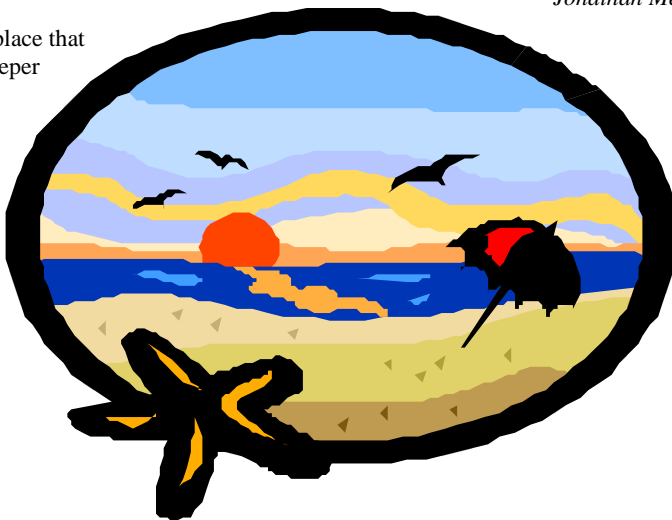
realisation of my aloneness which allowed me to more fully experience both the pain and joy of this truth

- A fuller recognition of the power of naming
- A recognition that my role as organiser would inevitably lead to a different type of connection with the rest of the group, ie a slight non-presence which for me just was so
- And in the week following a growing new look at my roles in relationships. This could be described as a recognition of the choices I made at the onset of repeated interactions in which I played the victim and how the pay off for the choices I made was to ascend to higher moral grounds and occupy them for sustained periods (part of me is still up there).

Carrying on

The event has also now spawned an On-Going Group which had a healthy attendance on its first meeting and is set to meet monthly (second Saturday of each month). The group hasn't yet come to any decisions re: openness/closed-ness, but if you're interested contact me on 01273 749520 before mid-June, or Tracy Barr on 01243 775745 after that.

Jonathan Melville-Brown



CBiB Confluence

18th to 20th September 1998

Come and meet other people interested in community building and explore different aspects and perspectives of the experience.

As well as spending time in diverse special interest groups and workshops, we will be facilitated in meeting in a circle as a whole group at least once a day.

We especially wish to support and encourage public event organisers, and this will be one of several focused session. Others will include:

- community theatre
- community building in business organisations
- voice improvisation

There are still workshop spaces available, and offers to present an interest or issue related to community building will be very welcome.

The location is a country house near Sheffield, with indoor and camping accommodation. We will be offering vegetarian cuisine, and children are very welcome.

Costs (for Thursday evening to Sunday lunch) are:

- Adults in the house.....£90
- Adults camping or non-residential£55
- Children under 16 sleeping on the floor, camping or non-residential£15

Book early to avoid disappointment

10% discount for fees received before 31st July

For further details and a booking form please contact Teän Stuttaford at:

Flat 2, 136 Poplar Avenue, Edgebaston, Birmingham, B17 8EH (tel 0121 420 4390).



A Christian Community in Croydon

Would you be interested in joining us to form an ecumenical Christian community in Croydon? The aims of the community will be to support one another in our lives and to serve the local community. We would like to buy a large house where 6 or more people, both married and single, can live together, praying together and taking some meals together. We are a married couple with one young child and are members of our local Baptist Church. If you are interested, please ring David Hawthorn on 0181 680 1146 (evenings/weekends).

My Search for Community

Ever since I became a Christian nearly ten years ago, I've felt excited whenever I've read the passage in Acts about the early Jerusalem church: 'All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people'.

As I attended various churches over the next few years that kind of communal lifestyle seemed like a very distant dream. I thought perhaps it was impossible to find community in this day and age. Nobody in my church or among my friends was talking about community, nobody seemed interested in it. So I put all thoughts of community life to the back of my mind.

Life-changing

Then in 1992 I had a life-changing experience. I attended a 'Praise Day' run by the Jesus Fellowship Church at Wembley Conference Centre. I knew hardly anything about this church - I just went along hoping for some lively worship or some good preaching.

What I found instead was a community, or rather a group of small communities. It was clear at once, observing all the Jesus Fellowship members sitting around me, that these people knew each other well. I later found out that around 900 of their 2,000-odd members live communally in shared houses in different parts of the country.

Instinct

I find it hard to put into words the impression that the meeting made on me. It was like seeing that Jerusalem church of 2,000 years ago alive and thriving in front of me. Here were people who shared their lives together - shared their time, their money, their possessions. My instinct was to join them. However, it wasn't so easy.

For one thing, as well as being a place of community, they were also a church and I wasn't sure if they were the right church for me. Also, my wife, although impressed by their radical lifestyle, did not then share my enthusiasm for community, and both of us felt uneasy about their rather fixed gender roles.

Search

So I kept in touch with the Jesus Fellowship, went to some of their meetings but started to look for other forms of community. I discovered NACCAN (the National Association of Christian Communities and Networks) and subscribed to their magazine.

I discovered the *Diggers and Dreamers* directory of communities, read other books about communities and visited a few. I talked about community to anyone who would listen.

Decision

Two years ago, my wife started coming round to the idea of living in community, encouraged by a visit she made to the Taize community in France. Around a year ago we decided we wanted to live in community with other Christians.

There weren't any communities close to us so we decided we would try to start one ourselves in Croydon where we live. We placed some adverts in Christian magazines and in the NACCAN magazine and *Diggers and Dreamers*. We had a few enquiries but nothing came of them. Then our first baby came along and life got busy. Community had to return to the back burner.

Communication

A few months ago someone recommended to me *The Different Drum* by M Scott Peck and I went out to buy a copy. I found it very intriguing, particularly the emphasis on community being a form of communication where the views of others are listened to and accepted. I have just started to subscribe to this newsletter, and am starting again to publicise the idea of a Christian community in Croydon.

My vision is for a community founded on shared lives - people living together, spending time together - and on serving people in the local neighbourhood.

Means to an end

Although I can see the attraction and value of being a group of people living together or spending time together for the benefits group members receive, for me community has always seemed a means to an end - that of serving others. We are all so needy, in so many different ways. Many of us are lonely, or have financial problems, are stressed, anxious or depressed. We need to support and encourage one another. As a Christian I am

inspired by the example of Jesus who lived a life of service and compassion.

I don't know if I will ever live in a residential community and be a part of the kind of community I envisage, but I try to build community in small ways in my own life. I hope to attend one of the Community Building weekends, perhaps when our little girl is a bit older and it is easier to get away. Until then I continue to read about others' experiences and am encouraged to find organisations like this one actively promoting community.

David Hawthorn



Community Building Skills Seminar (CBSS)

What is a CBSS? The CBSS helps to enable a deeper reflection on the process of Community Building than in a Community Building Experience or a Community Building Workshop. It begins the exploration of what helps facilitate the process (e.g. observation and feedback skills). More attention is given to the characteristics of, and the behaviours observed in, various stages of community working real-time with group issues.

Future CBSSs

At present it is a pre-requisite for attending a CBSS to have already attended at least a CBE or a CBW. Until now all CBSSs have been facilitated by American facilitators.

People have expressed an interest in having another CBSS. The Facilitator Training Group (FTG) have formed a sub-group to design a British CBSS which will be facilitated by UK facilitators.

This we feel to be an exciting development, and we are confident that we have the skills to produce a CBSS more in line with British culture.

The sub-group will design the CBSS. Putting it on will be the task of a separate as yet undesignated group.

Any thoughts?

The plan is for this design sub-group, to meet for a day on Thursday 25th June at The Abbey, Sutton Courtenay, near Oxford.

Written suggestions will be welcome, as will oral ones via any of the sub-group listed below.

Hopefully most of the work will be done at that meeting; I envisage the documentation being completed a few months later allowing an event to be put on any time from late 1998 onwards.

The present sub-group members are: Anne Monger, Anne Rutherford, Sharon Usher, Tracy Barr, Jill Firth, Johnny Hoggett and Anthony Kirke.

Anthony Kirke
125 Greenham Rd
Newbury, RG14 7JE
tel: 0163547377

Holding Group May 1998 at Douai Abbey

Suzy Adderley, Richard Benzie, Peter Cooper, Ruth Goffe, Cliff Jordan, Anthony Kirke, Gerri Moriarty, Yvonne Poulson, David Saunders and Teän Stuttaford were present at the meeting.

We decided a permanent record of our decisions was important: Gerri to purchase a suitable book for collecting past and future 'minutes'.

Suzy, David and Ruth have recently been through a discernment process and been accepted into the facilitator training group. Issues around this came up several times during the meeting.

Events

We heard from Suzy, link person about the recent CBE in Brighton: all places were filled, it was financial successful, many compliments for Jonathan's work in organising the event. An ongoing group arose and has already met twice.

A wide-ranging excursion ended with Gerri and Peter volunteering to produce a flow-chart of the organisation of events through CBiB.

Amongst this several of us reported about the CBW at Sutton Courtenay - my notes are blank at this stage so I guess I was talking a lot.

We also heard about the special event with Rusty - very positively from several people (see box). There was particular appreciation of the input in creating the event from Sharon, Johnny and Suzy.

US-based facilitators

These three events raised issues about our use of US-based facilitators. At present there is substantial extra cost incurred by CBiB, and some confusion about how much this is taken by co-facilitators.

We ratified the amount paid to each of Rusty's co-facilitators for the two events, and looked at the possibility in the future of offering US facilitators a fee equal to usual CBiB rates, and negotiating from that starting point.

We also clarified that whoever wants an external facilitator, whether an event sponsor, the FTG, or the holding group, needs to be prepared to make arrangements to cover the extra costs.

Unsupported facilitators

We found ourselves in various knots around Peter Laxton's place: the FTG have recently failed to include him, thereby not providing him with any support in his progress as a cb facilitator. He has been asked to facilitate by an event organiser, and in turn he has found a US co-facilitator. They are seeking a third, female, christian, German-speaking facilitator.

The event is in Hamburg in October, and we are keen to support Regina Haß in this. It may be the beginning of a network in

Germany. We struggled a lot with what support we can genuinely offer (in some ways reflecting on our experiences with FCE).

We agreed that Gerri and Teän would attend the Hamburg event as participants, and be available there to talk about

ongoing links between CBiB and others, and about training and support for German facilitators.

"very integrative of various cb experiences"

"sublime morning .. followed by an afternoon of acute discomfort"

"liberation and great discomfort"

"soft, powerful, NOT traumatic"

"widened perspective of FCE/CBiB/FTG"

"'vessel' quality - lots of emptiness"

(as our organisation and tasks complexify and intensify, empty space becomes more valuable)

"Valuable as a support group for its participants"

Holding?

We found ourselves in the midst of a right tangle: how to support ("hold") Peter Laxton, who wishes to actively move cb forwards; the FTG discernment of new members; relationships with FCE; the FTG discernment process for event facilitators; relationship between the HG and FTG; events solely for and by Christians.

We noted that the FTG has recently discerned prospective members, and accepted several in. We remembered several others who had either withdrawn, or been discerned as not having a place in the group.

This caused us some disturbance and disquiet: beyond communicating with each of them that we remembered they existed, and acknowledging that they may be left in a difficult place, we could find nothing that we could do about it.

Another event

Peter Laxton has also spoken of organising some kind of event this Autumn in Devon, which would provide him an opportunity to work with Jerry Hampton (a USA based facilitator) before the Hamburg event. He does not appear to be asking for any HG support in this. Peter Cooper to write to him (copy to Jerry) so that they know our position.

CB in an organisation

We heard from David about his work with FCE and a Dutch company he has links with. He had a very concentrated and powerful experience that lasted several weeks, and shared some of it with us. I believe it enriched and broadened our meeting enormously. It also threw into doubt any assumptions about easy co-operation between CBiB and FCE.

Rusty Myers, of FCE, is to facilitate an event in Turin, Italy, this summer. He has asked Anne Monger to co-facilitate with him; FTG support her in this. There is no apparent need for any HG involvement. Ruth will check this with Anne, offering support if it is wished for.

There was a brief report of progress so far on the Confluence.

Money

We looked at money:

- It seems that the cost of Rusty's visit was just about covered by all the revenue coming to CBiB from the events he co-facilitated.

- We expect no more income until the autumn at the earliest (and the Confluence is not expected to generate surplus).

- FTG have asked for £1000 pa to cover their costs: we agreed a one-off payment of £1000, and ask them to note our uncertainty regarding income.

- Tracy Barr (FTG) and Suzy Adderley (FTG/HG) both asked for financial support in attending FCE's annual "Community Continuity Conference" in July. Setting aside approximate amounts for essential expenditure we found we had £600 spare, which we agreed they could use as needed for this.

- There may be a volunteer to keep the books: Cliff to contact her to explore this further.

Enquiries

We decided to acquire a phone number specifically for CBiB enquiries, with the option to be routed to various people. Suzy to action this, at the cost of c £150pa.

Anthony, Suzy, Tean and Yvonne might each be available to answer this phone number. Suzy and Peter to prepare information pack for this job.

Contract with FTG

We looked at the FTG's proposed contract with HG. Many of us had lots to say. In the light of this Anthony and Peter to prepare a revised agreement for HG to consider at its next meeting.

Anne Rutherford had sent us a letter: we decided not to use its content, but thank her for the contribution.

Future events

There is an FTG-generated group working on the design of a UK CBSS, meeting on June 25th. Do we need to encourage someone to sponsor a CBSS next winter?

Anthony asked for support for a CBW in October 1999 for Christians, facilitated by Christians, probably with a USA-based facilitator.

Peter Cooper volunteered to be the link person, and with Anthony to prepare a 'brief' with the sponsors. We noted that the financial implications of an external facilitator will require HG approval.

We wish the FTG to take responsibility for whether or not it is fully supportive of the particular facilitator team (as would be the case using the flow-chart mentioned before).

Tension around 'exclusive' events would be lessened by the existence of plenty of other events to attend.

CB in courses

Anthony proposes that a useful progression from one-off public weekend events would be community building in temporary groups, such as those attending an academic course. David and Ruth are interested in developing this idea with him.

Various aspects to be considered include:

- goal
- design
- implementation
- ongoing support (through the life of the group)
- cost
- relating cb to its new environment
- participants' consent

Other groups

Fanny is not continuing in the publicity group, leaving Ruth, Richard and Peter. They continue to make progress, if slowly.

The Learning Opportunities group are meeting 6th June at Douai.

Next meetings

The next holding group meetings are 15/16th August in Derbyshire; then 4/6th December in Douai

We deferred various issues to our next meeting:

- "Giving attention to ourselves"
- FTG/HG agreement
- Entry/Exit surveys
- Review of insurance
- Ongoing groups
- Do we wish to take out membership of FCE?
- How Quakers constitute themselves
- Does CBiB share a goal?
- Do we want to expand our activities, or have a strategy to achieve this?

How best to communicate?

I have failed to write up lots of the exchanges and views expressed, some of which I am sure will turn out in the future to be very relevant. HG meetings seem increasingly difficult to record in a meaningful way: maybe the newsletter should cease to be a place for reporting a fairly dry list of decisions?

I feel the need to let go of assumptions about how we "should" operate and re-examine the purposes of these reports, and whether they can be better met in other ways.

Cliff Jordan

PS the easiest session to write up was the one I slept through!

(slightly summarised by the editor - how much detail from such meetings do you want?)

The Holding Group (or HG) is the group who hold responsibility for the work of CBiB, do some of the work, but not all, and support ('hold') others who are engaged in the availability and development of community building here in Britain. The FTG, or Facilitator Training group, is the group from whom facilitators for public events are discerned, and who are supporting each other in their continuous learning and training as facilitators. The LOG, or Learning Opportunities Group, is the group who come together occasionally to explore different facets of building community, and to try out new approaches. Some local ongoing groups are listed on the back page. Opportunities to join all these groups, and reports of what goes on are usually reported, are notified in the newsletter when appropriate.

Community in the Workplace

The idea of community building in the workplace gives me the same feelings as the idea of watching a love scene in a TV film in the same room as my parents and family. Somehow it is an inappropriate closeness that makes me feel uncomfortable.

I longed to be able to share

Yet at the community building workshop I attended, I experienced a team and community feeling which I longed to be able to share with my colleagues. The community concept I had just experienced was, I felt, destined for the work place, one day.

Project teams, such as the ones I work in, are tasked to create computer software, using a defined process or methodology. This methodology (one of our favourite words in the IT business - it just means a collection of methods) enables the team to work together in the same way towards the common goal.

Remarkably, us computer technologists are often highly trained (by our firms or companies) in the psychology of group interaction. It seems a paradox, that we work in teams suited to community building, we understand the issues involved in group working, yet the step of raising the concept of community with a project team would be as unthinkable as trying to convert them to a new religion.

Belongingness

Imagine my surprise to find the word community mentioned at an induction seminar in a substantial consultancy group. This organisation has decided to attempt to create small communities within the large organisation, to create a feeling of belongingness. The concept is still to be worked out, but the idea is to put back the soul into the organisation.

Whether these envisaged communities will turn out to be Scott Peck's 'karasses' or 'grandfaloons' we will have to wait and see, but the intention is clearly to create 'karasses'. If this is successful, it will make a big firm feel

like a small one and may be a crucial stepping stone to community in the workplace.

Acceptance of Covey

In newsletter 61, David Saunders discussed the Covey model. I have seen this used company wide within a large international oil company. We all had to attend a one week course with our colleagues, which involved some quite emotional work, although still a long way from community. Yet the Covey concepts did find long term acceptance.

Again, that company was and is near to a position where the community model could potentially be seriously evaluated and piloted. Tessa Lowe's doubts about the possibility of business and community coexisting are ones I can empathise with. One organisation I worked for, was so full of sociopaths that the dominant daily emotion was one of fear. Such an organisation would not even be able to consider evaluating the community model.

Different organisations are at different emotional stages. A model of the emotional maturity of an organisation and its people, would enable companies to evaluate whether they could consider use of community. We should try to develop such a model. We also need to be able to quantify the benefits of using the community model within a commercial organisation.

Community going back?

We must do more than simply recognise amongst ourselves that such a company would be a wonderful place to work. If a company could see that implementing the community model would lead to competitive advantage, some companies might well be interested.

I believe that we will eventually see companies taking up community. The very concepts of community were developed by M Scott Peck through his work in the US army. Community's roots in such a large organisation brings me hope that eventually community will find its way back to its true home, our workplaces. We must lead the way.

Ian P Johnson

Feathers

"We also sell books on Love" said the little blackboard I'd nearly fallen over as I blundered down Glastonbury High Street on this the worst day of my life. I went into the shop and bought 'The Road Less Travelled' and it changed my life.

The application of Love

Later, in 1997, I wrote to Dr Scott Peck after reading that he wasn't well. I wanted to tell him what he had done for me and how his inspiration had sent me to university where I wrote a dissertation on the application of Love to society.

Amazingly he wrote back. He said that I might like to become involved in community building. The idea meant little to me but the next day I was cleaning for one of my regular clients when I noticed 'A World Waiting to Be Born' on the bookshelf.

I borrowed it and recognised in community building the practical application of Love for which I'd been searching in my dissertation. I became excited and applied for my first CBE. In preparation I read everything else I could find on community building.

I felt alone

The CBE was the smallest ever - three facilitators and six participants. For me it was a harrowing two days. As far as I could tell no-one achieved community; I know I didn't. All my preparations came to nought. I found my intellectual brilliance actually counter-productive and when I left I felt humiliated and alone.

For three weeks I was depressed and physically ill. I'd had so much pinned on the outcome of that CBE. However Dr Peck had suggested I attend three or four before I drew any conclusions so I applied for the CBW at

Sutton Courtenay. A few close friends worried about me. Why, they wanted to know, was I trying to hurt myself again?

At Sutton Courtenay

This time there were thirty five of us. The feeling was much better but my confidence was gone. I resolved to speak as little as possible and certainly not intellectually and then failed to keep my resolution. My sleep pattern was wrecked by the snoring of my room-mates and as the weekend progressed I felt progressively more isolated and exhausted.

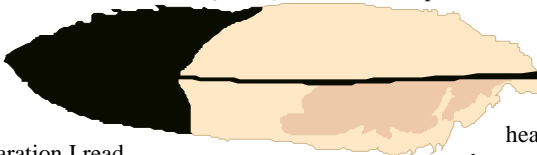
Love and acceptance

On the final morning, after a sleepless night, I got up early and went to the meditation room, desperate for some peace. To my exasperation, after I had settled down, I was joined by an entire yoga group. But strangely although I didn't open my eyes and thus never saw them, after ten minutes I found myself wrapped in the most profound feeling of love and acceptance.

When I joined our group after breakfast I didn't want to speak about my experience but my heart started pounding like a trip hammer. It wouldn't be denied and I found myself pouring out my story and several other things which I'd resolved to keep private. It almost hurt as it was wrenched from me but once I'd ridden the turbulence, to my amazed disbelief, the feeling was back but multiplied ten times. I was being held and accepted by the group.

A festival of being

The rest of the day was kind of crazy and it felt perfectly reasonable to sit quietly with tears streaming down my cheeks as others told of their hurts and triumphs. Coffee breaks and lunch dissolved into a festival of being. The strangest thing for me was that I no longer felt any compulsion to speak in the circle; me who loves the sound of his own voice!



One short sequel

If there was a theme running through the weekend it had been feathers. Feathers had featured in stories and dreams, as symbols and - feathers. On the Monday I had to walk to Didcot. I was striding out of Sutton Courtenay in dull, pearly light when twenty feet up and some distance ahead I saw a small white object tumbling out of the sky.

As we converged I saw that it was a perfect little white feather. When it reached a point ten feet ahead of me at shoulder height it stopped and hung in the air. I walked up to it and we looked at each other. I asked it if it would like to come home with me and it said yes.

Strange stuff this community.

Richard Yeo

(Editor's apology: sorry for my snoring!)



Dear Peter

I am enclosing the form to subscribe to the newsletter and thought that I'd like to write some thoughts on the first CBE that I attended at the end of March. I'm quite happy for you to quote anything from this letter and to include my name. You don't need to check with me first, that's fine!

True to myself

I was writing a letter to a friend and the poem attributed to Oriah Mountain Woman printed in the Feb/March newsletter suddenly came to mind. While the whole poem is very powerful for me, the verse about "disappointing" another to be true to myself has been very potent for me.

I guess that sums up the CBE for me - daring to be true to myself in the group meant acting in a way where I considered others and also honoured myself - by laying on the floor in the breaks, taking my shoes off when few others did, speaking my truth. All "small" risks and all met with enormous affirmation. How wonderful to speak and find that what I had to say resonated with others. And how wonderful to find others going with their truth which also spoke to me and resonated inside me.

The mystery of spirit

I don't understand how testimony can be so revolutionary. I think it's to do with truth coming from one's essence and that is where the mystery and magic of spirit enters community.

I feel blessed to have taken part in the CBE - to have my SELF, my outlook on life affirmed and mirrored in others. To have been able to communicate with authenticity and now be part of a new ongoing group in which we can nurture and grow this essence. I thank GOODNESS and find that coming from this good place in my everyday life is bearing rich and beautiful fruit in my contact with others.

Profound healing

Nothing else seems important when lived in this way. When I remember to trust the universe, then all is well, even when things are hard. There has been profound healing in my contact with people through CBiB so far, and I believe that it will continue.

Thank GOODNESS!

Well I think that's all for now. I am looking forward to getting the next newsletter!

Lisa Mophew
11 Beaconsfield Road
Brighton
BN1 4QH

Development

Dear Peter

I have been involved in various communities since 1960 and my commitment, despite setbacks, has been sustained by the accumulating scientific evidence and philosophical reflection that human groups and networks are the next stage of cosmic development. I write because it seems to me that such objective evidence should provide encouragement to those brave persons attempting the difficult task of forming ongoing groups.

Emergence

Science tells us that since the Big Bang energy has been transformed from particle to atom, to molecule, to cell and organism, and that the transformation occurs when some of the differentiated structures of a stage in the sequence transcend themselves by joining together as symbiotic parts in the new structures of a further stage.

The human species seems to be the only organism potentially capable of symbiotically integrating highly diverse individuals of the species as the interdependent parts of a basic social group. I would distinguish such basic social groups from the limited functional interdependence of individuals within work groups.

Universal significance

The difficulties experienced in achieving ongoing community in basic social groups

does not in my view undermine the proposal that in due course they will be ranked alongside atoms, molecules, cells and organisms as the next fundamental structure of the developing universe. Rather the reverse I suggest. In this cosmic context the work of CBiB acquires a new universal significance, or is this too revolutionary an idea to be useful?

Many thanks for your efforts that make the newsletter so interesting.

Yours sincerely

*John Woodcock
9 Gurney Close
Caversham
Reading RG4 7LE
01189 478156*

PS My wife and I are the "two friends of Brazier" mentioned twice on page 9 of the April newsletter.

Energy and enthusiasm

Dear Peter,

The Newsletter and your reminder of the annual subscription prompts a communication

I'm touched by the energy and enthusiasm that you exhibit through the production of the Newsletter and it makes me aware of what I'm not doing. I get a similar feeling when I experience the effort that others put into voluntary organisations

Alienation

The first community building experience I had back in 1993/94 gave me the feeling that 'relationship is possible', that it is possible to relate to other humans in a way that is fair, equitable, even supportive. In turn that development allowed me to acknowledge my previous distrust/ disenchantment. I was simply too hurt and frightened to allow myself to feel my sense of alienation



Lack of commitment

Successive workshops since then have confirmed that feeling. But when I try to apply the relationship principles that I have learned in the everyday life of my home and work/ social engagements I find that others have not gone to the same school as me. I'm angry about their lack of commitment and I wonder if it is them or I that is the cause of my grief.

In my saner, more in touch moments I realise that all the grief I experience is MINE. This is the challenge that I have been facing up to: Community per se, in its current state of development, does not have the resources to support the brokenness that I experience within myself and I'm too stubborn to join a live in therapeutic community.

Relationships

In the middle ground I have been engaging with increasing amounts of supportive therapy to help me dismantle the blocks that get in the way of my being an authentic human being. When I'm more comfortable with myself I

know that I'll relate more comfortably to others.

In this respect my relationship with community building and environmental issues can be more productive when I find more relationship with myself.

Authenticity

And so it is, dear Peter, that I'll be conserving my energies to gaining relationship with myself for the foreseeable future. It is not that I lack enthusiasm for what CBiB is doing but rather that I'm wanting to bring more authenticity into my everyday life.

The Newsletter will keep me informed and will help me to monitor how I feel. Print what you will, Peter, if it fits. This is my current truth - it may change.

*Tom Deevy
0181 444 9764
14 Crown Rd
London N10 2HY*



A Living Together in Community

Are you committed to personal and planetary healing?

Would you like to experiment in communal living?

My idea is to rent a large house within 1 hour of Central London (e.g. Victoria) and attempt such an experiment using the community building model. If at all interested please ring me.

Margaret 0171 794 9158

Chrissie's new address

Chrissie Sugden
Middle Flat
Toberdarroch
Ardrishaig
Argyll
PA30 8HB
01546-602459
e-mail
chrissie@phoenix.sonnet.co.uk

Local Ongoing Community Building Groups

Some groups are open to anyone interested in experiencing Community Building, some are open to you only if you have already attended a CB event, some are open all the time to new members, some may not be open to newcomers just now; some build community as in the CB events, some are support groups based on The Road Less Travelled... Check with the local contact person.

Brighton: Meets on the second Saturday of the month. Contact Jonathan Melville-Brown on 01273 749520 before mid-June, or Tracy Barr on 01243 775745 after that

Central & North London: Meets on the third Sunday of the month 2-6pm. New members very welcome. Please call Fanny Calder on 01986 873422 if you are interested in coming along

Leamington Spa: First Monday in the month, 8pm. New members welcome. Prior attendance at a CB event is necessary. Contact Debbie or Armando on 01926 337 409

Malvern Hills: Meets fortnightly on Thursday evenings. Contact Susie on 01684 540138

Oxfordshire: Currently not open to new members. Contact Sharon on 01235 848132

Sheffield: Meets monthly. Contact Alison 0114 263 0177

Other groups exist but are not currently publicised. If you are interested in joining, or forming, a group please feel free to contact Peter Cooper (address below) for information and help.



General Enquiries

... about Community Building in Britain or Community Building events:

Anthony Kirke, 125 Greenham Road, Newbury, Berks, RG14 7JE Tel/Fax: 01635 47377

Newsletter

Subscription rate [UK]: (Apr-Mar) £8; (Jul-Mar) £6; (Oct-Mar) £4; (Jan-Mar) £2.

Please make cheques payable to "Community Building in Britain" and send to the newsletter editor:-

Peter Cooper, 1 Evergreen Close, Woolmer Green, Herts SG3 6JN Tel: 01438 813765; Fax (telephone first): 01438 814986; e-mail: PeterCBIB@aol.com; Web page: <http://members.aol.com/petercbib>.

Please send items for inclusion in the next issue to the same address by 27th June 1998.

For convenience of personal contact, the address and telephone number of letter-writers will normally be published, unless other instructions are given. Contributions of any sort (articles, pictures, poems, letters etc.), and of any length, are welcome from all involved in any way with the CBiB network. While every effort will be made to reproduce items in full, please realise that the editor may have to shorten or alter them for publication