

# Community Building in Britain Newsletter

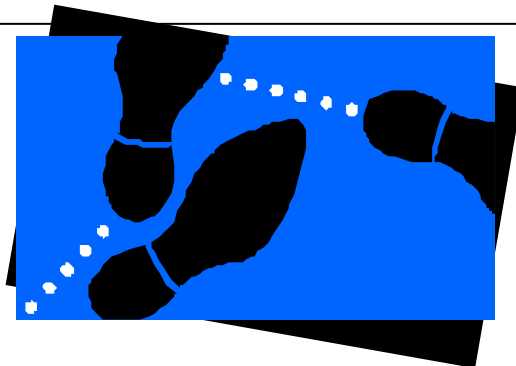
Number 72

January 2000

*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).*

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# Editorial

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**"When everybody, no matter what rank or position sits on the same level, eye to eye with nothing in the way, an extraordinarily powerful statement is made about equality of participation and the conditions for a truly collaborative event are created"**

Harrison Owen in Open Space Technology  
- A User's Guide.

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In the last issue I mentioned that we would be focusing on Open Space Technology and sure enough much of this issue is devoted to exploring OST - an article by Christopher Cooke on The Power of Open Space and some notes from Anthony on the use of OST within Community Building events.

There's also a 'mastermind' type interview with a wandering philanthropist from Africa who answers to the name of Paul. I found this most interesting... thought-provoking even...

## Facilitator training

In fact it is a thoughtful issue all round with Tracy's thoughts on being a Design Team member...it's an account of her experience of co-creating the Facilitator Training. I would be grateful if anyone who took part in the November Training felt moved to share their experiences, reflections or thoughts via the newsletter. I am feeling very excited about the training in facilitation scheduled for 19-26 May 2000 at Braziers in Oxfordshire.

I have had some mail requesting information on the Brighton Community Building event scheduled for February and I'm sorry to disappoint those interested but it has been cancelled. I would really like to see an event in Brighton before the Facilitation Training in May...however I'm not feeling able to commit to making it happen myself...

I'm rather feeling that editing is quite enough to do.

## FCE

I've also received a most discouraging letter from the President of the Foundation for Community Encouragement - check out the Letters page. Possibly it was unclear to readers that the facilitators Jerry Hampton and Carroll Langston of the Training in Germany mentioned in newsletter 71 are no longer members of or working with FCE.

## Request for a computer

I am currently editing this newsletter on an old IBM386. I would like to be able to do more. Peter, our last editor is still doing the design and layout. I would like to be able to relieve him of these tasks but I need a system where I can receive email.

Editing this issue in particular has been complicated by the fact that people have not been able to communicate with me via email; at least I now have an email address: it is **castagne\_rachel@hotmail.com**. I'm wondering if anyone out there reading this has a spare computer gathering dust in some forgotten corner? If so, I'd deeply appreciate a donation to the CBiB cause....

Last but not least, the deadline for submissions for the next newsletter to arrive is Monday 28th February. Wishing you all your hearts desires for the year 2000.

*Yours*

*The ED.*

*Rachel Castagne  
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PS. The Editor wishes to make it clear that the newsletter is not the voice of CBiB although many individuals in the network may choose to use it as a forum to give their voice a wider audience.

PPS. Sorry this edition has been delayed - there have been various reasons for this, including finding a new printer.

# Community Building in Britain events

<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Fee</u>	<u>Notes</u>
20-26 May 2000	Oxfordshire	Tracy Barr 01243 775 745	TBA	Training in facilitation

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.

## On interning

"Interning" is a word we have inherited from FCE and it means people who are learning to be facilitators go to a CB event and do one of several things:

1. Join with the facilitators for a meeting before the event, and get tuned in to the excitement and the mood of the facilitators. Then join in their meetings between sessions, and discover what they actually talk about and think about. I have never done this. To those who do it (speaking as a facilitator still in process of gaining confidence and abilities) I would beg: please don't ask too many questions! Please don't give too many interpretations! We UK trained facilitators are still a bit fragile on the whole, and don't have a lot of spare energy to do like experts and teachers.

2. Or you can have much less contact with the actual facilitators. Go as a twosome or a threesome; build your relationship, energy and community, and think facilitation while you're in the circle. Try to hear the flow of the process, feel where the group is, tune in to the whole thing, try to keep your attention balanced between maintaining your own alert presence, and receiving whatever is coming from the group. Also, you and your co-interns get together in the breaks to pool your understandings, and consider together: what intervention would we like to give to the group, if we were the actual facilitators?

It's an open question how you should behave in the circle. You don't have to keep

silent, or "outside" the group.... you can say or do whatever you are moved to do, and you can wonder how your input affected the emerging pattern of the group dynamic. This isn't about "right" or "wrong" so much as what happened? How was I received? How did my communication convey a feeling to others, either that I had received them, or that I ignored them? Lots of people will have their own ideas about what it's useful to pay attention to, and what it's useful to think about. Mainly, I'm saying it's alright to try things out and learn from what happens; you don't have to try to be a "perfect participant".

Finally, there is the question "when are you ready to intern?" I personally think that anyone who wants to learn how to facilitate, should do this at every possible opportunity. I would not ask "are you ready or not" but only "are you the person (amongst others who may want to do this at the same event) who is most likely to benefit from this learning opportunity? I think it is one of the best facilitation learning opportunities there is, so it is a pity if there are not one, two, three, or four interns present at a workshop. (The only proviso is, too many people who are electing to be silent for their own reasons of learning and/or observation, would be a drag on the group - better to remain open to being moved to speak - to give more of yourself to the emerging community, or in other words, to participate.)

*Mike Roth*

# It finally happened!!!!!!!

Much of my work in organisations is done without declaring where my thinking is derived. (Not every organisation wants to hear about 'operating from emptiness'). And also what is true, is that I have never, in the past 8 years, had anyone in an organisation approach me about CB.

Last week I was working on a project which brought together two consultants with a common client. As I prepared for the meeting, as one of the 'consultants' I hoped that the other would not treat me as competition to be beaten.

The meeting started and we explored the project and who we were and what we did. As

the conversation unfolded I was increasingly taken by the other person's approach and he was most surprised when I understood most of what he was talking about. After about an hour we found ourselves alone for a few moments.

By this time we were exploring a shared passion for working 'holistically' with people in organisations and he turned to me, and said in a very low voice, "Hey have you come across the work of a guy called M Scott Peck? I attended a workshop a couple of weeks ago - it was awesome - I never spoke for 2 whole days"

*Christopher Cooke Dec 99*

## **Report of the Holding Group on 9 and 10 October 1999**

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*Present were, Gerri Moriarty, Ruth Goffe, Anthony Kirke, Suzy Adderley, Rachel Castagne, Margaret Bell, Teän Stuttaford and Peter Cooper.*

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The weekend contained an unusual amount of comings and goings which we negotiated with quiet grace. We managed to get through all agenda items and spend some time focusing on process.

One of the first things we looked at was our present insurance cover and a possible alternative. We ended up deciding to stick with the former for now and review the arrangement next year.

CBiB is running on a minimalist budget at the moment, which is being co-ordinated by Gerri - until February. (Gerri announced her intention to leave the HG after the joint FTG/HG meeting in February). We will spend more time on finances next meeting, especially the need to set up a financial decision-making policy that will 'sit' with CBiB's 'new paradigm' way of being, as well as looking at contractual arrangements between event sponsors and CBiB.

We reviewed forthcoming events: The Christian event near Birmingham, and the CBW at Othona were about to happen. The millennium event near Bristol was given attention, as was a possible event in Brighton some time next year. We were reminded of

the need to hold these events in prayer/mind before and as they happen, and the value of as many people doing this as possible.

We decided to hold a working day on Sunday, 14.11.99 to look at results from the network-wide questionnaire, respond accordingly and co-ordinate feedback for the next meeting.

We paid attention to the training programme and how best to support it. Communication with the design team would be channelled through one identified person who would pass on various concerns and recommendations from the HG. Requested financial assistance was given.

In an attempt to make more use of feedback from events we agreed on a pilot scheme to run for the next two events, whereby post-event questionnaires would be returned directly to the event support person, who would deal with immediate issues and then write a report based on this feedback for the sponsor, HG and FTG, before sending the questionnaires on to the FTG. The scheme will be reviewed in December, after the two events in October and November.

*By Teän from Rachel's notes*



## From the President of FCE

*(Editor's note: FCE stands for the Foundation for Community Encouragement - the companion organisation to CBiB in the USA.)*

November 5, 1999

Dear Rachel Castagne,

The article in the September/October 1999 CBiB Newsletter entitled "Training in Germany" was extremely disappointing for me to read. Jerry and Carroll have severed their ties with FCE and launched out on their own in this training endeavor. I wish to make it clear that they do not have the support of FCE in this undertaking, nor do they have the support of Scott Peck. Your article ends with a promise to those training participants that certificates will be available and "will include the fact that both Jerry and Carroll received their initial training from M. Scott Peck in person!"

Scotty has asked me to make it clear that,

"The fact I was part of training Jerry Hampton and Carroll Langston through FCE should not be construed as my giving them any personal blessing. To the contrary, I am strongly committed to the facilitator training design work FCE has been engaged in this year. During this year the FCE program has received the input of more than 100 people, was developed in community by 11 people and will be delivered by a team of people. I am saddened by the action taken by both Jerry and Carroll to resign their facilitator positions with FCE a month before undertaking this training. I do not believe the participants in the training in Germany will be well served by their actions. Their training should stand on its own rather than attempting to do so through my reputation."

There is nothing to prevent Jerry and Carroll, or people like them, from taking what they've learned through FCE (or CBiB) and using it for their own ends. The sad part to me is that their actions in severing themselves from their community of FCE facilitators, rather than choosing to work this through together, speaks more loudly concerning their view of community than any training content they may offer.

*Most sincerely,  
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## Facilitation Training

Open letter to: Bill Thatcher via CBiB  
Newsletter from: David Saunders 14/12/99

Dear Bill,

Your letter to our Newsletter came as a shock to me. It got very careful consideration at our CBiB Holding Group meeting. It may cause concern among our readers, many of whom are unaware of any rift between FCE and some ex-facilitators. Some may wonder why you challenge something happening in Germany through the medium of CBiB newsletter. And that's OK...

## Encouraging

To backtrack, I was very inspired by your presentation of FCE's vision at CBiB's Confluence in Sheffield last year. It's great that this vision of making facilitation training more widely available is now coming to fruition.

We have just conducted our own first pilot facilitator training here, also with very

gratifying and encouraging results. We also hear good reports of FCE's own first facilitation training, and accounts of great benefits from the training just conducted in Germany - it was in this spirit that Teän Stuttatford wrote in our last newsletter. I/We are thrilled that all these initiatives are taking place.

## Dialogue

I feel tentatively encouraged that something really good is happening - and some of us are keen to cross-train, to dialogue and learn with both you and CB in Germany, to bring together the best of all these experiences and trainings.

My own personal hope goes beyond the point where facilitation skills are widespread - to the point where we are all so emotionally mature and spiritually aware that groups don't need facilitation anymore! In this regard, I'm increasingly impressed with the way everyone in our own Holding Group takes responsibility for facilitating a successful outcome.

But meanwhile, the need for facilitation skills is huge, and the training opportunities should be endless. I'd hope we'd all want to bless all efforts in that direction, and can feel abundant - to dialogue with each other and share best practice. There's much to learn about bringing our accumulated CB wisdom to bear on facilitation outside our scheme of CBEs and CBWs, so it can be a useful tool everywhere. We're just setting out on a new phase of growth, and I'm sad to feel that somehow you are raising issues of divided loyalties - it feels like we are being asked to take sides in a family dispute.

## Anger

I confess my first reaction on reading your letter was anger. It reminded me all too painfully of the challenges I faced personally, trying to build community with FCE in Holland in early 1998. I wanted us to use a business opportunity I felt I had helped create, to strengthen links between FCE and CBiB and significantly expand the possibilities for both of us. I returned to CBiB feeling frustrated, rejected and sad - it felt like FCE was so focused on its own strategy and growth

that it could not acknowledge or hear other, lesser, voices.

I know the challenge we face in CBiB, supporting and enlisting the enthusiasm and goodwill of those who long for community, and who have the commitment and energy to offer to help. It seems we often fumble, and people do feel left out and rejected. But we have a process we trust, we hang in there, and sometimes magic happens. It seems to me we look to you for a lead and a model, and are disappointed if it's not there.

## Wonderful generosity

My gut reaction may seem churlish - you and FCE have often shown wonderful generosity to us in the UK and Europe, like an elder sibling as we started on our journey. But here, it feels to me like you are modelling 'before CB', and not 'after CB'.

Organisations, businesses and governments often adopt authoritarian approaches which leave individuals in society feeling frustrated, unheard, disempowered. My hope is that CB - FCE and CBiB - will create a new model of leadership for the Organisation of the Future which goes beyond that, and includes people - with room for dissent, debate and dialogue. And teaching ways to stay in community, create shared visions, and then work together in harmony to implement them...

## Making space

I hear your disappointment at a loss for FCE. But your use of the FCE letterhead and a quote from Scott Peck creates a powerful authority position rejecting Jerry and Carroll. I feel they have done much for CB and FCE in the past, and have really valuable wisdom about facilitation they are willing to share. Can't we make space for them to do this, or at least feel proud and act gracefully when they do it anyway?

Scotty writes on how civility can lead to World Peace, and you have written beautifully on 'The Power of Acceptance'. I look to you to model these principles in a way that I can learn from. Right now, I feel let down. How can I scale the organisational wall, and meet Bill

Thatcher the man, and the people who make up FCE?

## Inspiration

I want something better than your letter, Bill. I'm looking to FCE for a willingness to provide inspiration to be doing great things in this new millennium, so peoples' aspirations for a better world really flower at last. I hope we can find space to build community with you and FCE, with room for Carroll and Jerry and CB in Germany. Let's not wait any longer, or waste time on petty squabbles and old-fashioned power politics - let's all take a lead in building bridges now to a better future.

*Yours in hope  
David Saunders  
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## Spreading community

Dear Rachel

We have learned from several CBiB friends about the letter submitted by Bill Thatcher for publication in your newsletter. Neither of us has received any communication from Bill since our resignation from FCE in the fall. We appreciate having been informed of his letter and an invitation to respond.

It seems to us that a response might serve only to further chaos instead of building community as exemplified by CBiB. We are deeply committed to community building and know that the world needs all the CB it can get. It seems to us there is a great shortage of community and we want to do our part to help spread it.

*Jerry Hampton and Carroll Langston*



## Newcastle Quest - November 9th 1999

Christopher Cooke presented a public workshop entitled 'Community Building' on the 9th of November in Newcastle. This event was at the invitation of 'Newcastle Quest'.

The first part of the evening explored, through a talk, the development of 'true' community based upon the work of M Scott Peck. The talk gave an overview of M Scott Peck's work and linked his early work, discovering 'True Community' through crisis, accident and intent, to the crisis driven development in the 16th Century of The Q'ero Indians in Peru.

The talk also included reference to the work of Professor Clare W Graves (Spiral Dynamics) to show how the 'True Community' of today in the west, whether created through crisis, accident or intent, can handle greater complexity than the 'True Communities' of indigenous people such as the Q'ero. It aimed to show the relevance, and importance, of applying the CB 'intentional community' approach in today's increasingly complex world.

The second half of the evening was run as a CB Taster (the CB Taster was developed by myself and Geri Moriarty in the early 90's). The CB Taster ran for 35 minutes.

# CBiB and Y2K

At a recent CBiB Facilitator Training event at Little Grove near Chesham we informally discussed CBiB and our possible response to the Millennium Bug (also called Y2K).

## Preparations

No one can be sure what the effects will be or how long they could last for (i.e. a few days to a year or longer). Some think they can, I am unimpressed by their arguments. So I want to look at what kind of preparations can be sensibly made by individuals and what policies CBiB in case of various levels of Y2K related disruptions.

I encourage people to go along with the New Zealand and Japanese governments' recommendations of stockpiling about three days of food and water (in empty litre pop bottles, four pint plastic milk bottles, etc.), a large box of candles or night lights and perhaps a small camping gas stove.

Some people are taking out a small amount of cash, a week or two's wages, and keeping them somewhere safe; if lots of people do this the banking system will collapse, however we are a small group so go ahead if you want to. These are the sort of things we do if there is an emergency (the after effects of a hurricane, the 1970's oil crises, major floods etc.)

## At least four months

Get all this ready before the end of December and plan to keep it for at least four months. The computer problems will not show up over New Year holiday - some will show up on February 29th and some will not show up until January 2001.

The international situation may take a few months to affect the UK. Prepare now, 'Just In Case'. It does not cost much. You could hand out leaflets in your neighbourhood on

making sensible precautions (available from me). If services broke down for a longer period of time we would need to work with our neighbours.

## Meeting

You could organise a meeting for your street/neighbourhood/town, and look at who in your locality is at risk in the case of short term disruptions in services (the poor, the homeless, the elderly, the ill etc.). Churches are a good place to start, the church hall will house lots of community groups already and often gets involved in social care.

There is a campaign to make Nuclear installations safer over the Millennium, I have information about this if you want it.

## CBiB preparations

For CBiB as a whole the following areas came up as concerns;

Very severe long term disruptions to public services such as transport would mean getting to facilitator training group meetings, for example, could become a problem, and attending events would be low on peoples priorities, but CB work could be done locally.

Severe disruption of the economy, as predicted by some economists, could mean less CBiB events as there would be less disposable income around. However, CBiB might help communities work together well.

Some people do not want to think about these things, but one of part of CB rhetoric talks about 'Dealing with difficult issues with integrity' - so I am writing this article as one of my contributions to this debate.

Better prepared than scared, I say.

*John Hoggett*

*0118 926 5671*

*hoggett@hotmail.com*

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**Better prepared  
than scared**

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# Community

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*Dear Rachel, We had the great honour to entertain this man for a short while. Our meeting was by sheer accident, yet I'll never forget the experience if I live to be 100. He called himself a philanthropist and answered only to the name of Paul.*

*The conversations were so fast we took hours to recall much of what he said and it seemed to me just like 'Mastermind' so I wrote it that way. We asked if he minded sharing his views with others and he said 'please do'. Sometimes I wish I lived in Africa in his tribe!*

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Q What is your name?

A Paul.

Paul you have one minute on your specialised subject, Community, Starting now.....

Q What is wrong with monogamous marriage and family in the West?

A It does not allow for the full expression of human feeling in a relationship.

Q Why is that?

A People have tribal genes, they are more suited to tribal living.

Q What did St Paul mean when he said a Bishop needs only one wife?

A That by his choice of career he should be more interested in matters attaining to the wider community.

Q Why did Jesus say 'take someone else into your home and your family and love them'?

A For he could see something was lacking in all. That in sharing the togetherness brings fulfilment to all.

Q Why is polygamy right but polyandry wrong?

A It isn't, it depends on a child's upbringing, some want to belong to a patriarchal family and some to a matriarchal, but all know in themselves.

Q Can people truly call themselves individual?

A Yes and No, all are individuals of thought process yet they copy each others behaviour until they grow up - most never do.

Q When is it right to join a larger family?

A When you do it only by the truth of your feelings, never for wealth or sex.

Q Does sexuality come into this?

A Of course it does, it's the biggest motive behind all human beings.

Q Why does the Church of England approve of polygamous marriages in Africa yet not allow it here?

A I don't know.

Q Is this not bad for children?

A Of course not, they love interaction with more than two adults and it helps them develop.

Q Can three or four people really live happily in one marriage?

A Of course, they aren't doing very well with two and people have been doing this for four thousand years you know.

Q Why is western culture so paranoid about sexuality?

A Because people seek each other's approval instead of themselves, it's a lack of self confidence.

Q So what is a bad community?

A It's one that judges others out of ignorance and is so narrow minded it won't try anything a different way.

Q So what is a good community?

A It's one which accepts itself and others, shortcomings and all, minds its own business yet cares for the wider community of the human race without prejudice.

Q Will people really find joy in the whole life experience if they follow the whole truth of their natural feelings?

A Oh yes, true human fulfilment, health and peace of mind depend on it.

Paul, we'll have to wait and see what your score!

*Anonymous*

# Thoughts about being a design team member

I am at the end (and the beginning) of a significant and powerful journey. I feel delighted, awed, hopeful.

## Passion

The journey started over a year ago when I presented an initial draft for facilitator training for new FTG members. I felt bold, inspired but terribly alone as I ached for support to turn my vision into reality. I carried great passion for this training and all the birth pangs seemed present from the start - conflicting feelings including anger (for God's sake get off your backsides and help me!).

Initially working with Mike, Cliff and Johnny my major concern was obtaining peripheral support. I stated clearly and often that my vision specifically encompassed design - I could not and would not carry organisational or financial concerns. Foolish child! Like it or not it felt that we were lumbered - I couldn't have just the "good" bits. I did feel a lot of support from the FTG and wider network but the bottom line seemed to be that I really needed to share full responsibility for all aspects of making this training happen. I did some research and found a nurturing and supportive venue which seemed a big step forward and tried hard and mostly succeeded in letting go of financial worries

## Scotland in the summer

After lots of juggling in my everyday life and with good solid work under our belt, Mike and I drove to Scotland in the summer with two of my children for a week with Chrissie who had now stepped in to the team - Cliff and Johnny now wanting to step aside.

Magical, creative time. Flowing, energetic, with some extra burdens for me - juggling child care negotiations and feeling a little out of things. (Mike stayed with Chrissie - I was required to stay with my parents and children). It felt hard knowing that Mike and Chrissie were probably having all sorts of fascinating conversations that I was missing out on because I needed to be with my

children as well as working. Ouch! The relentless struggle of my needs versus their's.

## Best and worst

Scotland represented for me the best and worst time in my journey of co-creating this training. I felt what we were trying to bring to fruition was not only of immediate importance but also would have a significant ripple effect for CBIB.

How I would have loved the sheer luxury of immersing myself fully in this glorious and challenging task, not having to somehow "fit in" with my real life of single parent. I do like my stubborn determination and capacity to survive well but it was still a huge stretch. I just did not want to be a parent AT ALL that week!

## From the start

So, beautiful Argyll, ancient, peaceful with its slow rhythms clearly felt in me - soothing and healing (I lived there for a very important year in 1997). We sat by the sea and started again from the start. What is community? What is facilitation? What special features do we have to teach that differ from other disciplines?

With mounting excitement we brainstormed furiously, ideas spilling out, some times of stuckness, times of doubt and confusion at the enormity of the task. A flood of questions touching the heart of this complex, difficult, confusing and often mysterious world of C.B. Times when I felt lost - others when I knew we were carrying something far beyond the collective wisdom of three dedicated individuals. At these times, support, encouragement and prayer from the network were truly inside me, spurring me on through the hard times.

## Reconciliation

Mike coined the phrase of this task being the work of reconciliation. We believed that everything hinged around this - how we build and maintain our relationships as co-facilitators and as a group.

So finally, staggered by the sheer volume of what was unleashed, we spread a huge sheet of paper on the floor and started to create a shape for the training. Help! We needed two weeks (or a lifetime), never mind six days. OK - real discernment required now - what can and must we provide, albeit in "taster" form?

## Sense of flow

I had a particular desire to monitor the overall "feel" of the training - a sense of flow between modules, balancing intensity with less intensity. I also wanted a really solid structure to hold us all, looking closely at how we would work to encompass the spectrum of individual reflection to pairs, small groups and large circle. We also wanted as much variety as possible in our ways of working. I kept in mind the question of how it might feel to receive this training.

Early on we decided each day needed to begin with circle time and end with small groups - the function of which was providing opportunity for daily support, review and debrief. We also knew we had to incorporate major group dynamics of the FTG for quite a long time, I had a particular need to have these issues clearly out on the table (having allowed myself to suffer a lot from them myself!).

## Excited

I left Scotland feeling really excited, knowing there was much fine tuning needed within something that felt solid, real and valuable. I loved how Mike, Chrissie and I had worked, consistently building and maintaining our community of three.

But then, back to earth, not with just a bump but and almighty thump. Who actually

wanted this training? Who would show up? Briefly my excitement turned to fury as I felt ripples of "fears" and "concerns". I tried my best to really hear all of this and to let go of my own desired outcome. I managed well enough. We responded by giving detailed information to potential participants, ironed out as many last - minute details as possible and worked hard at Trusting The Process. A complete change of energy, yes, they were coming, yes they would put themselves in our hands (albeit cautiously!).

## Strong emotions

In those last vital weeks the community between Chrissie, Mike and I grew ever deeper as we shared strong emotions and supported each other. So many blessings, so many

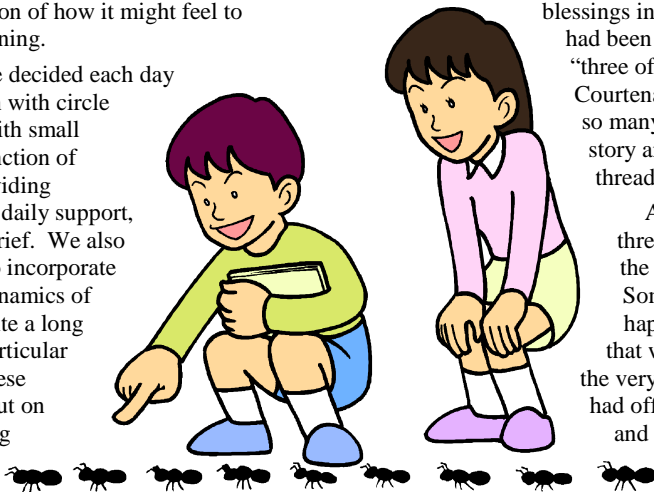
blessings in disguise! We had been after all the "three of Sutton Courtenay". There were so many threads to that story and so many threads to this...

And now it is three weeks since the training. Something magical happened. It felt that we had offered the very best we had, had offered it with love and that the

participants received it

whole-heartedly, and made it their own. It was their willingness to receive, their dedication, courage and open-heartedness, their hard work and willingness to share the journey that created magic. The baby is alive and kicking; is now a shared responsibility. And that feels the greatest gift of all.

*Tracy Barr*  
01243 775 745



# Open Space Technology (OST) in CBWs

In the last two Community Building Workshops OST has been used to help participants look beyond the event to see what the consequences could be for them.

Previously, exercises held during CBWs have concentrated on helping people see what is going on and what helps build community. Little has been said about what happens afterwards except to warn of the difficulties on return to everyday situations.

## One 1½ hour session

OST in other arenas normally takes place over a whole day or several days; it was with some hesitation that I thought it could be of use done over only one 1½ hour session - all the time that could be afforded in a 3-day workshop.

Before our first trial, in the CBW for Christians at the end of October, I had only cursorily read the book and had never experienced OST in

use before. I was subsequently told that Chris Cooke had used it in the last CBiB Gathering held in 1998 which I had not attended. Careful preparation didn't alleviate the anxiety I felt in launching the exercise!

However, the introduction took less than fifteen minutes and, with wonderful co-operation from the participants, the exercise took off well.

## Process

I had asked participants to note what process they used in their discussions and report writing but had not complicated the instructions further by suggesting that some people might want to be "butterflies" (who flit from group to group) or "bumblebees" (who gather ideas from one group and take them to another).

The theme we chose to help them look forward was around: "After today, what next

for me?". About twelve different concerns related to the theme were raised by persons prepared to become convenors, from which five groups evolved to discuss the popular ones. We noticed with what dignity those people whose concerns were not so popular were prepared to let go of their concern and join another group.

Asking groups to perform a task of writing a report on their proceedings was designed to help them realise the difficulty of decision-making using CB principles. (The reports were published to all participants after the event.)

## Othona

The Othona CBW provided a second opportunity to use OST.

This time I had prepared more documentation to assist the convenors. Someone who had experienced OST before explained the role of butterflies and

bumblebees; The theme followed the same lines (what other theme could one have? - suggestions, on a postcard please ...).

One participant had a good time being a butterfly.

There were not so many concerns raised but again five groups emerged, all of whom reported despite being rudely interrupted for Sunday lunch!

One participant remarked how he had found himself, being convenor, having difficulties with handling responsibility of the management role using CB principles.

## Safe enough

I was touched that my two fellow facilitators felt it was safe enough for them to join and enjoy the discussion groups as full participants.

Again the reports were copied to all participants after the event.

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I think OST should be considered as one of the best tools in the armoury to get group members to look forward with realism, support and enthusiasm, beyond the weekend

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At the November facilitator training OST was again used; no doubt details of that will emerge in due course.

## Conclusion

I do not conclude that Open Space Technology should be used in every CBW; for a start I haven't yet experienced it myself as a participant! But I do think it should be considered as one of the best tools in the armoury to get group members, when they are ready, to look forward with realism and support and with enthusiasm, beyond what is often seen as the "orgasmic high of Community" of these weekends.

I have written detailed notes of how the OST was introduced and conducted. If anyone plans to try doing it I am happy to let them have a copy.

The book I learnt it from is "Open Space Technology - a Users' Guide" by Harrison Owen (in print, I understand).

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01635 47377*



## The role of CB in economic development

In January 2000 a research project is to be launched in a former mining community in Yorkshire which will address the issue of 'Youth Employability'. This project will be under scrutiny from wide range of interests and is the first such pilot in the UK.

The project will engage public, private and voluntary groups, from 11 years old upwards, to jointly explore this issue. The project is being developed at the request of those in the community who recognised that 'something

needs to be done' and are also aware that it is the 'how do we do it' that is lacking.

This project is about discovering the 'how'. The project will include much large group work as part of a 'Whole Systems Approach'. The CB approach will form part of a 'Whole Systems Approach'. As far as I am aware this will be the first time that such a large scale opportunity has existed to use the CB knowledge and practices. Findings will be issued in October 2000.

*Christopher Cooke Dec99*

# The power of Open Space

*As a recognised large group process, Open Space is one of the few approaches that enable individuals and organisations to consistently deliver 'delightful results'. This brief article provides an insight into why it works so well, how the facilitation links to CB facilitation, and a brief overview of where it is currently being applied and the key to its success.*

## Why Open Space works so well?

Open space is one of approximately 14 proprietary large group processes used across

the world - See Table 1. (Other obviously will exist and will have been fortunate not to have attracted 'commercial labels', also many hybrids or custom designed approaches are in use.)

Name	Developed By	Purpose and Key Points
Future Search	Weisbord and Janoff	To create a future vision
The Search Conference	Merrylyh and Fred Emery	To create a future vision
Real Time Strategic Change	Dannemiller and Jacobs	To create a preferred future with system-wide action planning
ICA Change Model	Institute of Cultural Affairs	Strategic Planning
Conference Model	Axelrods	Work Design
Fast Cycle Full Participation Work Systems Design	Pasmore, Fitz and Frank	Work Design
Real Time Work Design	Dannemiller and Tolchinsky	Work Design
Participative Design	Merrylyn and Fred Emery	Work Design
Simu -Real	Donald and Alan Klein	Real Time work on current issues, test future designs, learn about system.
Work-Out	General Electric	Problem Identification and Process Improvement
Large Scale Interactive Events	Dannemiller and Jacobs	Problem Solving
Open Space Technology	Harrison Owen et al.	Discussion and Exploration of System Issues.
Community Building	M Scott Peck	Developing Community
Dialogue	David Bohm	Discussion and exploration of system issues.

Table 1. A List of Large Group Processes

Unlike many of the highly structured processes, Open Space, along with the Community Building Model and The Dialogue Process create an environment where a very diverse range of individual and collective needs and points of view can work together to achieve a common goal.

Open Space creates an environment where the principles of self organisation can apply, freeing individuals to produce creative and owned results. As Harrison Owen says 'Each event is an adventure.' A successful Open Space is a place of real passion (for the issue being worked upon), bounded by a collective responsibility that the matter at hand will be worked on with some intent.

The power of Open Space lays in the blending of focussed action with the power of working together as a community through the communication medium of a circle. On a full Open Space event it is the circle work that creates the opportunity for the community to let go of the barriers to truly working together.

Quite simply Open Space works because it creates an environment where everyone, should they choose to, and regardless of point of view can find their own best way to work on the matter at hand.

It is also simple, takes little preparation and it is efficient - It always works.

## How the facilitation links to CB facilitation

The headline attributes for a Facilitator of an Open Space event are roughly someone who will:

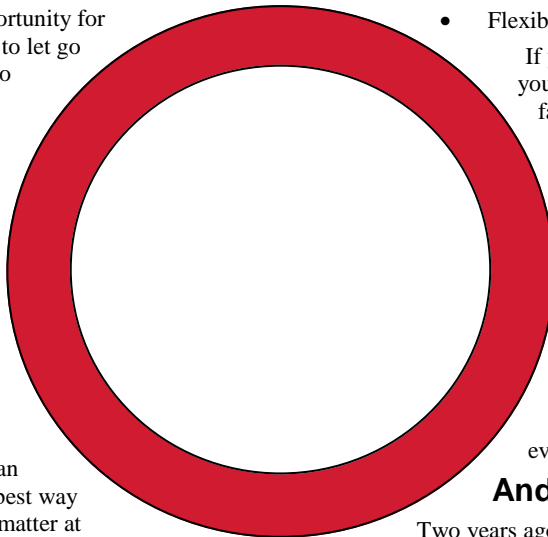
- Turn up ready - prepared and able
- Prepared to be fully present - NOW
- Tell the truth - Quality of presence
- Let go - Have no attachment to fixed outcomes
- Under ideal circumstances to be present and yet invisible
- Prepared to hold the space especially in times of silence and despair
- Will never interrupt Open Space with anything else. When you are doing open space do-it. When it is over it is over.
- Can work with the whole group
- Can create the space/time and hold the space/time for the group working with that issue
- Keeps safe time - Not just on-time
- Understands the process
- Flexible and culturally aware

If you compare this list with your own experience of the facilitation of a CB event just notice the similarities.....

In my view, the facilitation training for the CB intentional approach to Community Building is probably one of the best ways of learning how to facilitate the community building elements of an Open Space event.

## And who is using it?

Two years ago I used Open Space as the core process to Launch the Health Action Zone (HAZ) initiative across the UK. At the time it was viewed as quite radical and quite different to the very structured approaches that were being used across the public sector. Recently the Project Manager of HAZ commented 'Everyone's using it (Open Space) now!!!'.



Over the past 15 years users of Open Space have included: The World Bank, Pepsi - Cola, RSA- Tomorrows Company initiative, Utility Companies, NHS Executive and Trusts, Police Forces, BBC, Local Communities and Local Authorities, Texaco, Schools, Youth Workers, Drug Action Networks, The Engineering Council etc. etc etc.

Most recently Open Space approaches have been used as part of the third day of a CBW. (Anthony Kirk Nov 1999)

And why do they use it? It is simple, easy to use and always works.

## The keys to successful Open Space?

If you are planning to use Open Space Technology consider the following:

### Appropriateness

Use when:

- A diverse group of people must deal with complex, and potentially conflict material in innovative and productive ways.
- It is particularly powerful when no one knows the answer and the ongoing participation of a number of people is required to deal with the questions.

Don't use:

- In any situation where the answer is already known
- Where someone at a senior level thinks he or she knows the answer
- Or that individual is the sort that must know the answer and therefore must always be in charge

### On the Process Design

- Never interrupt Open Space with anything else. When you are doing open space do-it. When it is over it is over.

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**Above all else the key to success is to have a compelling and specific question to be worked on for which there is passion and for which people have freely chosen to get involved.**

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- Put any structured approaches, presentations etc before the Open Space.
- Allow space to create a sense of community at the start of the event.
- Allow further space for review and news at start and end of each day (or more frequent with shorter events) - this

maintains and enhances the community

- Define the geographic boundary - "work anywhere within the grounds of this hotel".
- If at all possible do enable the participants to leave at the end of the longer events with a written summary of the proceedings.
- On the subject of timing. It works well with two or more people for periods of 2 and 1/2 days down to a couple of hours.

## Key to success

Above all else the key to success is to have a compelling and specific question to be worked on for which there is passion and for which people have freely chosen to get involved.

For example: One major UK bank recently worked on the question:

"How do we reduce our operating costs by £10m?" Within two days a group of 120 people had found a way to achieve £15m savings with no redundancies.....

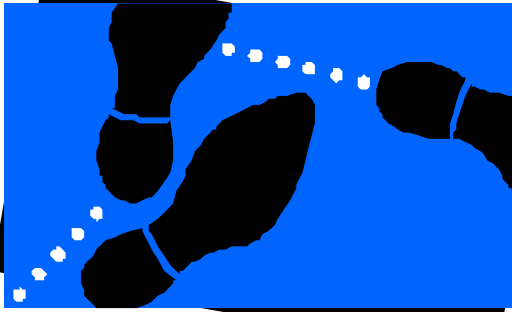
And finally trust the process - it always works.

*Christopher Cooke  
Dec 1999*

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## Open Space Technology

*(Some background - from Rachel)*

'The job of a facilitator is to create the time and space in which a group can realise it's potential'

'It is necessary to be physically on hand, be fully present, be the truth and get out the way'

### Four principles

- whoever comes are the right people
- it starts when it starts
- when it's over it's over
- whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened

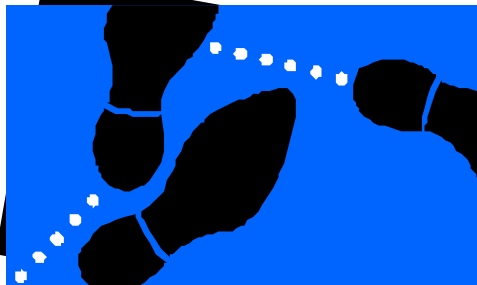
### One law

- law of two feet
  - if you're not learning and you're not contributing, get up on you're two feet and find somewhere you can learn, contribute or both.

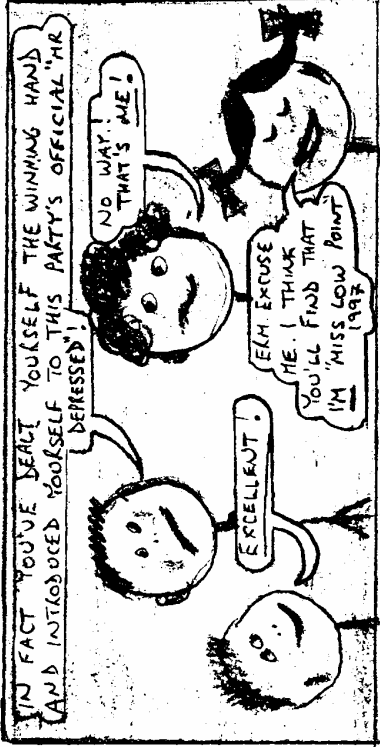
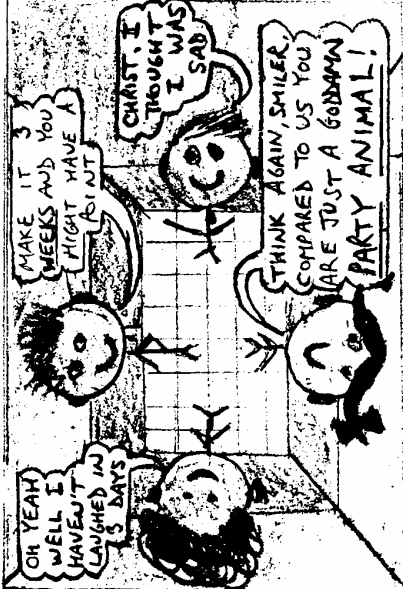
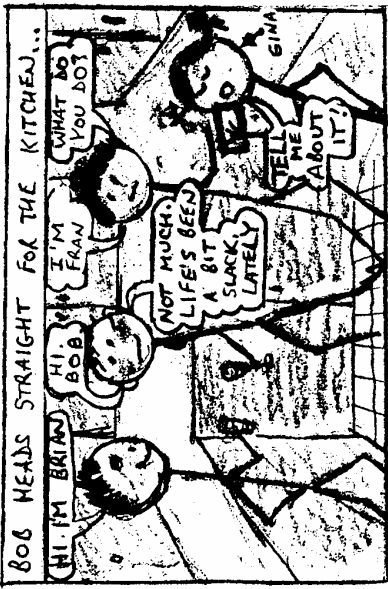
The facilitator must be truly and authentically present.

When living fully on the planet or facilitating open space, Angie suggests that the following four things are necessary:

- Show up
- Be present
- Tell the truth
- Let it all go







THE END? .....

Bob and May  
by  
Jonathan  
Melville  
Brown

## 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... Check with the local contact person.*

**Brighton:** Meets on the second Saturday of the month. Contact Tracy on 01243 775745

**Leamington Spa:** First Wednesday of each month, 8pm. New members welcome. Prior attendance at a CB event is not necessary. Contact Debbie or Armando on 01926 337 409

**Manchester:** "Community Building based Support Group" meets every 2 or 3 weeks on a weekday evening. Contact Barry at Flat 1, 143 Hamilton Road, Longsight, Manchester, M13 0PL for more information

**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 events: Tel **07071 880858** (premium rate), write to 52 Sole Farm Avenue, Bookham, Leatherhead KT23 3DE email to [PeterCBiB@aol.com](mailto:PeterCBiB@aol.com), or see the Web page: <http://members.aol.com/petercbib>*

## Newsletter contributions

*Please send items for inclusion in the next issue to the editor Rachel Castagne at Flat C, 257 Preston Road, Brighton, BN1 6SE by **28/2/00** (Tel: 01273 382 864; [castagne\\_rachel@hotmail.com](mailto:castagne_rachel@hotmail.com)).*

*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.*

## Subscriptions and mailings

*Subscription rate [UK] to March 1999: (Apr-Jun) £10; (Jul-Sep) £7.50; (Oct-Dec) £5; (Jan-Mar) £2.50. Please send cheques (payable to "Community Building in Britain") and any address changes to: Peter Cooper, 52 Sole Farm Avenue, Bookham, Leatherhead KT23 3DE Tel: 07974 961301 ([PeterCBiB@aol.com](mailto:PeterCBiB@aol.com))*