

AVP Newsletter Sept/Oct 2016

EDITED BY MARGOT LUNNON, 07766 758 405, FML25@HOTMAIL.CO.UK WITH THE SUPPORT OF
 Ops COMMITTEE

The 2016 Gathering



Please everyone understand that what follows is ONE person's view of the Gathering and she inevitably has axes to grind. It is the trajectory, in part, of a half buried quarrel and reconciliation. She hopes that the October/ November issue will contain other people's experiences, RSVP.

We were there, most of us, from just after lunch on Saturday 24th to mid- afternoon on Sunday 25th. There were lots of old hands but there were also a sprinkling of newbies). For example, there's the younger Yorkshire contingent including Tricia, Carl, Riley, Kerry and Marvina. I do hope one or more of these will be helping steer AVPB soon.

Colin Mallinson had us interrogating one another to find 8 rarities (eg one who goes to work in uniform? Colin himself). Then it was the AGM. The Trustees have had a grim time and the AGM didn't go smoothly. No-one could produce the minutes from 2015. The Treasurer left one of the Co Chairs expecting her to be there any minute and simply didn't appear; we accepted the accounts and also the Trustees' Report but there was no one to answer questions on the accounts. Here are some key figures:

- We have £95K in reserve but £69K of this is in the banks of the Regions
- It cost us £102K to run for a year and our reserves dwindled by £29K—understandably, since the fundraising was done in earlier years and the spending this last year
- The core did no fundraising this year BUT
- Our workshop receipts rose from £30K to £41K. (NB this is the gross earnings, not net of the costs of putting on workshops, but it's still encouraging.

We have a good looking Annual Report which will help us with funders; I go on wishing it had a Lessons Learned the hard way section.

Our Trustees now are

- Jane Harries, South Wales
- Anne Martin, SW (pictured)
- Alan Saleh, NW
- Colin Mallinson, Yorks
- Peter Horton, Notts (pictured)
- Joan Neary, London and SE
- Cristina Sargent



The next item was a very interactive talk from **Tim Newell** about (among other things) Escaping Victimhood He told us all sorts of things from his huge career in criminal justice: one I remember is that all the inmates in Grendon therapeutic prison had to tell their life stories once a year and other prisoners would challenge them if they appeared to be ducking issues. He told us how victims and bereaved people can shut down their lives and can benefit from workshops which aim to get them moving again. He has been involved with Circles of Support and Accountability, which organise groups to support but also to monitor sex offenders as they emerge from prison. Others threw in news of support-and-monitoring groups in other contexts, eg a Domestic Violence one in Bradford. Tim made us aware how dire things are in the Prison Service; prison have lost one in every three of their officers and there are now (among other problems!) 160 fires every week.

Then we had a **How are things?** session which began to reveal major communications failures across the organisation.¹ For example,

¹ **Many small voluntary organisations have lapsed altogether when they lost their core staff. What is special about AVPB is that the**

we can all email all the facilitators there are by sending to facilitators@AVPBritain.org.uk; who knew that?! There were multiple complaints of opacity and of needing to be in the know; and there were signs of serious discomfort between members of the AVP Trustees and the Operations Committee.² In the end Irene Marsh of NW said "Please will someone spell out the Elephant in the Room?"

Saturday after supper there was a fringe meeting for **people interested in prison work**; I hope Peter Horton will write that up for the next newsletter.



Sunday morning first thing was Margot Lunnon and Peter Horton talking about our Quaker background and whether it helped or hindered AVPB in promoting diversity and making decisions. In subsequent discussion the emphasis was on supporting people through a succession of workshops and into facilitation (York is succeeding well with this). Margot copped a deserved wiggling not for being too Quaker but for using Quaker terminology when there were general equivalents which would not make non-Quakers feel like outsiders.

Then we heard about the **Sunshine Project** (York, Carl Greenwood, pictured); this is a monthly session held in a drug treatment centre which spends two hours sometimes on a single AVP exercise to help the newly clean and sober rebuild their self esteem and their

workshops are run wholly by volunteers and these keep going no matter what.

² **Operations Committee aims to give the organisation the basic day to day support that a central paid worker might; it does a great deal of useful stuff, for example they have a combined manual with lots of valuable stuff nearly ready to be piloted, but the boundaries between it and Trustees need to be defined more clearly**

relationships. It is already getting good feedback from professionals because their participants need less supervision; and the linked AVP sequence has brought several people through normal AVP workshops into Training for Facilitators (T4Fs).



After coffee everyone had a chance to sleep on their issues and begin to feel more constructive. Arthur Charlton (pictured) conducted a Goldfish Bowl exercise in which Trustees and Operations Committee sat in the inner ring and voiced how they felt, and then the rest of us said how we felt. That left us feeling both less



anxious-or-resentful and more hopeful, and paved the way for the **after-lunch session**. **We had been compiling lists of issues that needed addressing** and that afternoon session prioritised them as follows

- **National coordinator**
- **Website and communication**
- **Future strategy**
- **Prison work**
- **Equality and Diversity Policy and Action Plan**

ALL THE PHOTOS ARE ALAN SALEH'S. Thanks Alan. **Also catchup**: that 10K run in Yorkshire raised £600, near enough!

As well as news items, please don't forget the possibility of Letters to the Editor. AVPB needs your opinions as well as your news.