



For better
mental health

THE BATH MIND MAGAZINE

Mindful: a freefall of thought

In the beginning

“Mindful: a freefall of thought”? A bit of a mouthful of news and views, dark and light, fact and fiction, madness and gladness - we hope that you will find it palatably consumable, leaving you wanting more.

Issue 1 has been developed by a group of writers with an urge to write but without a page to write upon.

Bath Mind has provided these pages.

If you have your own pen, pencil or processor and want to entertain, amuse, inform, enrage, stimulate, create or mystify - then we will be pleased to consider your writing for inclusion in Issue 2, which we hope to publish in December. Add your contact de

tails and send it to -

Mindful
13 Abbey Church
Yard
Bath
BA1 1LY

Tel: 01225 316199

e-mail:
bathmind@btconnect.com

The copy deadline is November 30th. Add a SAE if you want your contribution returned.

my fall and rise

i was nineteen when i first heard my grandfather's voice inside my head. he was remonstrating with me about the fact that i had got drunk and stoned again the night previously. all i can remember thinking was, "oh no, going mad - that's all I need." but i was.....

his voice was joined by others and they became constant. i couldn't think straight anymore, couldn't sleep. i was always arguing with them, begging them to leave me alone. nothing made sense anymore

eventually, at twenty-one i was admitted to barrow gurney and diagnosed with schizophrenia. at this time i saw no hope for myself and was seriously considering taking my own life. looking back, i can see just how helpless i was. i didn't have any friends or social network. i felt completely lost

not that everything is roses now but it's starting to improve. for a start i go out to groups and meet people and actually have some friends. also, as i get older, the voices become less intolerable and more something i can live with. sometimes we even have a chat. basically, what i'm saying is - you can get your hope back at any time. it just comes to you

nej

World Mental Health Day 2008
an event at the Guildhall, Bath
10 am to 4 pm on Thursday 9th October
More details inside

More friends please

Bath Mind is delighted to have secured a grant of £7 500 from St John's Hospital to support the expansion of the Befriending Service. This fund will provide the supervision and administrative support that the project needs.

Some befriending relationships are relatively short-lived, while others continue for years. Most bring benefits to both the befriended and the befriender. Isolation and loneliness can increase depression and feelings of lack of worth. Positive human contact from someone who cares can literally be a lifeline. Through providing support, befrienders can also find that value is added to their own life.

One long-term befriender said, "My friend's life was organised effectively in terms of finance, home and medical support: he had everything that he needed – except for a friend. Without that most basic of needs, his life was empty."

Advocacy & Community Services Manager, Tracey Phillips, is very keen to find new volunteer befrienders to match up with the demand for friendship from people isolated by their mental health. Training and ongoing support is provided. (For further information - Tel 01225 464656 or e-mail bathmindadv@btconnect.com)

MONDAY 11am – 1pm ART at Woodworks James Street West	TUESDAY 10.30am – 2.30pm SOCIAL GROUP at Hayhill Baptist Church The Paragon	WEDNESDAY 12 noon – 3pm VOLUNTARY WORK at Bath City Farm
THURSDAY 10.30am – 2.30 pm SOCIAL GROUP at Hayhill Baptist Church The Paragon	FRIDAY 11am – 2pm BOARD GAMES GROUP & WRITERS GROUP at 13 Abbey Church Yard	FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ANY OF THESE ACTIVITIES CONTACT GRANT DAVIES 01225 465463

An August Day in Lansdown

Gloria Temple

The August rain dripped and drizzled as I made my way home with my urgent Saturday supplies. Food and litter for my feline companion. As I stopped to de-tendrill my sweet peas growing in the incarcerated container garden behind the cast iron railings surrounding the frontage of my quirky Georgian flat, I noticed a tall young man loitering in front of my only

Having completed my token garden chore, I picked up the cat's provisions and moved slowly up the incline to the doorway. The tall stranger was now ensconced on the step, using it as a shelf for his tobacco pouch and as a ledge for his feet.

"Hello," I said, wondering how to sidestep him and his tobacco to gain entry to the inner hallway of my home. "Sheltering from the rain or trying to find a signal?" I enquired. He had a mobile pressed to his left ear, a roly dangling from his lips and a soft drinks can in his right hand.

"None of that," he said. "I've never been paid for my cash-in-hand work in Weston super Mare, where I live, and now I'm sacked." And soaked I thought.

"I've no money. I spent the last of it on my cat," I said, looking at the obvious evidence of this truth - a Waitrose 'bag for life' containing a bulky bag of paper litter and a box of cat food.

"I wasn't asking for money," he retorted. "I've got my own home but no electric, no food." He proffered his meter key as evidence of the truth of his statement.

Taking a sip from his can, he continued, "I had a drink problem and I'm so desperate, I'm afraid I'll commit a crime. Steal something to get some money."

Reflecting briefly on his state and after suggesting a couple of churches that might help him we had come to that point, as is the ultimate conclusion in casual encounters, where parting is imminent. At least I hoped we had!

I said all I could do for him was say a little prayer that he would not succumb to temptation, which I did. Just then, over his shoulder, gliding over the crest of Hay Hill, I saw a lone extra from 'The Sound of Music'! No, not an extra, my disbelieving eyes focused on a nun. A REAL NUN, flowing black and white habit following her down Lansdown Road.

"There's a nun walking down Lansdown," I exclaimed. The young man looked pityingly at me, an apparently erased woman. "No, really, there is a nun," I pleaded. "Hurry, run after her, she might be able to help you," I blurted out.

Hesitation gone, he carefully placed his soft drink can on the ground and ran off after my vision. My nightmare chasing the vision of a nun following her dream? I waited a few minutes. He did not return, so thankfully I stepped over my unobstructed step with a sigh of relief.

I expect you'll find this story hard to believe. A sob story, no cash, just a tiny prayer and whoosh - in a puff of August scotch mist - a nun in full habit!

But that's what I call service! Amen.

Returning home, Gloria Temple encounters an unsettling, tall young stranger with a problem. Is he what he seems?

Is a nun the answer to Gloria's prayer?

Coincidence or something more purposeful?

Happy endings?

A true tale.

**World Mental Health
Day
an event at
Guildhall, Bath
10am - 4pm
Thursday 9th October
2008**

Refreshments

Felt making

Drama

Music making

Gentle exercise

Stands and information:
Soundwell Music Trust
Bath Mind, SWAN,
Rethink, nesa,
B&NES Mental Health Team
CAB
& others

**EVERYBODY IS
WELCOME FOR ALL OR
PART OF THE DAY
JUST DROP IN**



Music for the Mind is Magic

Vocal Works Gospel Choir hit the right note with an appreciative audience at the Bishops Palace in Wells on Bank Holiday Sunday.

The sun made an appearance that was as welcome as it was unusual this summer while early evening crowds began to fill the lawns of the Bishop of Bath and Wells' garden with rugs and picnics.

Introduced by TV personality Richard Wyatt, the Bath based Vocal Works Gospel Choir provided a moving musical journey through darkness and light, reflecting the highs and lows of living with poor mental health. Special guests included the X Factor finalist, Bath and England rugby star Matt Stevens.

Growing Minds, a group of musicians that has developed from a South Somerset Mind project to explore music as therapy, played for visitors to the information

stands of the four Local Mind Associations that will benefit from the concert.

The Music for the Mind Concert was the project of Bristol businessman Richard Lowe, whose brother James took his own life ten years ago, aged just 30, while suffering from mental illness. Richard said, "I have organised the concert because I wanted to do something meaningful to remember James and to raise awareness and funds for Mind. It made sense to bring the event to Wells, which was James' home town. He loved music, gardening and rugby so to perform in this beautiful garden with rugby star Matt combines the things that James loved most."

Mental Health First Aid

It is a common experience that mental health issues bring out fear, irrationality, stereotyping and discrimination. Despite the fact that 1 in 4 people will experience mental distress at some point in life - and 4 in 4 of us will be touched in some way by family, friends, neighbours or colleagues who are having mental health problems - ignorance and a lack of confidence in relating to one of society's commonest experiences is widespread.

With financial support from B&NES Council, Bath Mind is preparing to play a part in countering this negativity and lack of understanding by providing free community training in Mental Health First Aid.

Mental Health First Aid is exactly what the name suggests - a first aid approach to mental health. It is the immediate help that can be given to someone experiencing a mental

health problem - such as depression, anxiety, psychosis, self-harm or risk of suicide - before professional help is obtained. The 12 hour course aims to provide guidance on how to -

- preserve life when a person may be a danger to themselves or others;
- provide help to prevent the mental health problem developing into a more serious state;
- promote the recovery of good mental health;
- provide comfort to a person experiencing a mental health problem.

The training will be made available to individuals, or members of community groups, who want to dispel their own ignorance by learning more.

Keep alert for details of dates and venues which will be announced by late autumn. Lunch is included. It's free!

Are you getting yours?

“Mindful: a freefall of thought” is available in paper or electronic formats. If you would like to be added to our distribution list, please contact us at: bathmind@btconnect.com or telephone 01225 316199

The Menace of Ponty Park

a dark tale by Meryl Williams

It was cold that night, freezing cold, and Charlie was running late. I looked at my watch for the umpteenth time and it was stuck on 3:12am. I'd thought I'd been there longer than that, but there was still no sign of Charlie. I'd been expecting Patrick to arrive by 3:15 but Charlie was meant to be there earlier. If they didn't get there soon it would be daylight before we finalised our plans.

Of course Charlie was coming on foot, all the way up from his Riverside bedsit. He had the gout something chronic and Dr Franklin's jabs didn't seem to help. I looked at my mobile, switched to silent mode, and felt it vibrate in my hand. A text from poor old Charlie to say he'd reached the gate of Ponty Park. Not long now, but Patrick had no mobile - he could be anywhere in the city. Paddy had just split up from his girlfriend Sheila and liked to console himself from the bottle.

At last, a shuffling sound across the grass and Charlie was by my side. He gripped my hand and stopped to draw breath.

“Where's Paddy?” he gasped as he hunched his bony shoulders in his old Mac.

“Dunno,” I muttered and stepped back away from Charlie's sour breath. Charlie coughed and started to light a roll-up. He drew heavily at the cigarette which went out again, and he looked upward.

“Cloud coming over,” he said. “Chance of rain. Have to tell you Sean, we have a problem.”

“Problem, what problem?” I demanded nervously, looking around helplessly at the darkened park. There were streetlights away in the distance but close by all I could see was Charlie's dim outline and the stone circle where we'd met to talk. Charlie stubbed out his roly on one of the stones of the circle and pointed a wavering finger at a tiny white light

The Menace of Ponty Park

down below on the path through Ponty Park.

“Cyclist!” he grunted. “He could say he saw us or he might even bump into Paddy. Paddy’s hardly ever sober, he could spill the beans and then we’d be done for. We’ll have to deal with this cyclist.” Slowly Charlie drew a gun from his belt and grimly fitted the silencer. We watched as the cyclist came nearer and nearer. Soon we could see him quite close by and hear the clicking as he changed gear. Charlie stepped forward and all we heard was a crunch as cyclist and bicycle fell to earth. Charlie’d shot him at point blank range through the temple and I must say, it was a quick end to an insomniac.

We had a Full English Breakfast at Deb’s café by the river and finished it off with coffee at Paddy’s. Charlie and me had agreed never to tell him. He was unreliable when drunk and indiscreet when sober. Charlie wanted to dump him and go it without him but he had his uses. Sheila was Dr Franklin’s secretary and gave out information straight from the top about The Movement and its goals. We’d buried the cyclist under a mass of loose stones not far from the scene of the killing. We’d filled the gaps with leaves and hoped for the best. It was an isolated spot in a lonely, empty park. Charlie said the body would soon rot. He’s a cool customer our Charlie.

Sheila got in touch not long after. She said that Dr Franklin had spoken to his opposite number in St Joseph’s and St Jude’s and they’d set a date. August 12th, room 377 at The Grand Hotel on 42nd Street. A fellah we didn’t know, called Eli, was to plant the device. We’d all go out of town to relatives in the country and avidly watch the six o’clock news. Mass destruction, carnage and chaos throughout Ponty City. We’d be heroes and live forever in people’s minds. This time it was going to be good. The emergency services would be overwhelmed, Parliament would panic and we’d put Charlie in charge.

Spring came and went and the summer was with us when a lonely girl came walking through Ponty Park. She’d come up from the countryside and had never been to this part of the city before. It was daylight, but a gloomy day. It was early morning when she walked happily to the stone circle and stopped to admire the view from the highest point in Ponty. As she approached, she was passed by a cyclist wearing leggings and a bright orange jersey. She heard the clicking as he changed gear and he reached the stone circle ahead of her. She never saw his face but, as she turned to look at him, the cyclist disappeared into thin air. She walked around the stone circle but could see no sign of him. Calmly, she went back to her hotel room in the city centre and returned to the country the next day.

For my sins, I read about it in the Parish Magazine shortly after. The woman had told her local church. A medium and the Dean of Ponty Cathedral were called in to exorcise the spectre and try to discover its history. The Parish Magazine had gone overboard, calling the woman Mystic Marj and saying that she regularly had sightings and could predict their meaning. I took the Parish Magazine to Charlie.

“Total rubbish!” he exclaimed fixing a roly. “Surely you don’t believe in ghosts?”

“But what are we going to do?” I asked. “We don’t want priests and weirdoes patrolling the park. What if they find the stones?”

“Relax,” smiled Charlie switching to a tailor-made cigarette. “In a couple of days the Dean, Mystic Marj and all will be dead and Ponty Cathedral will be a heap of rubble.”

I’ve heard it said that the murderer always returns to the scene of the crime but legend reckons without our Charlie. He went about his daily business, helped out in a charity shop, drew his pension at the bank and had his half of bitter every night. I couldn’t sleep; I kept thinking about this Mystic Marj and the Dean and wondering if they would have the park searched. I went to the Cathedral to find out what manner of man the Dean was. The verger was loud in his praise.

It seems the Dean was loved by everyone. A grandfather, he’d trained in the south and been at Ponty just five years. A strict disciplinarian people said but popular just the same. I took a dislike to this verger and I think it was mutual. He wanted to know why I asked so many questions. I just bluffed my way out of his presence.

Charlie, Paddy and myself split up and went down to the country, as planned. I stayed with an elderly aunt in Worth Mantravers. She did teas and I helped out in the café five days a week. I wore a pinny and smiled at the customers and tried not to look too nervous. Anxiously, I watched the six o’clock news every night. August 12th came and went and I realised that Eli had failed. Finally they announced that a bomb plot had been foiled and that there had been a series of arrests. Like a fool, I went back to the city.

I went to Charlie’s bedsit but he wasn’t in, the landlady hadn’t seen him in a while and thought his gout was playing up. The charity shop thought he’d passed away but it was the regulars at his local pub that said he was doing time. They spoke about Mystic Marj and how she’d had messages from the other side. The words that came through were of a man limping and they said that she could even describe Charlie’s grubby old mac. But I was to find out from Paddy, months later, that it was Dr Franklin who had squealed after finding out in Clinic.

Dr Franklin has gone to San Francisco now to start a new life. He’s at a big teaching hospital and they say he’s set to be a professor. He’s taken Sheila his secretary with him and they are planning to get married in Las Vegas. Paddy and me don’t see so much of each other now. We meet for breakfast but he’s usually the worse for drink.

I jump out of my skin every time there’s a knock at the door. I keep telling myself that I was weak and should have stopped Charlie - but its too late now. I read in the papers that prisoners serving life get prawns at Christmas and their own TV and hi-fi. Somehow, I don’t envy them in the least.

I’m saving my spare cash to join Dr Franklin in the States. He’s offered me a good job as a hospital orderly and I reckon I could better myself if I get away from Ponty. I’ve been back to Ponty Park and the heap of stones has gone but there’s a plaque to mark the spot, put there by the Dean. Oh well! Perhaps I misjudged that verger.

Supported Housing VACANCY

A private room is available in a lovely four bedroom house in Larkhall.

Bath Mind provides support to enable tenants to develop the skills and confidence to move on to independent tenancies after a two year period. Tenants are given priority in securing permanent homes through B&NES Homeseach Team.

Applicants must be supported by a mental health team.

**Contact Paul Cooper
01225 448396**

Bath



For better
mental health

Donation Form

I would like to support the work of Bath Mind with a donation of -

£100 £50 £20 £10 Other _____

I enclose a cheque or postal order made payable to Bath Mind.

If you would like to make a regular monthly payment to Bath Mind,
please telephone on 01225 316199 to discuss arrangements with us.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

E-mail: _____

THANK YOU

Your gift will help Bath
Mind continue working
to improve the lives of
people
labelled, diagnosed or
treated as mentally ill

GIFT AID

Make an even bigger contribution at no cost to you.

If you are a UK tax payer and would like to make your contribution worth 28% more, at no extra cost to you, please sign and date the following declaration -

- I am already registered with Bath Mind's Gift Aid scheme.
or (delete as applicable)
- I want Bath Mind to reclaim tax on all contributions I make from 1st September 2008 onwards.

I pay sufficient income and/or capital gains tax to equal the amount that Bath Mind will reclaim.

Signed: _____

Date: _____