

THE MAD HATTERS AND FRIENDS TAKE OVER THE

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Limbrick Centre
Limbrick Rd
Sheffield, S6 2PE
peterbullimore@yahoo.co.uk

Executive Editor:

Phil Virden: tigerpapers@btinternet.com

General Editors:

Prof Alec Jenner: alecjenner@btinternet.com

Lin Bigwood: lin.bigwood@btinternet.com

Business Manager:

Peter Bullimore: peterbullimore@yahoo.com

Poetry & Creative Writing:

Clare Shaw: shaw_clare@hotmail.com

Phil Thomas: philipthomas@talktalk.net

Members of Asylum Collective:

Jim Campbell: allingoodfaith@hotmail.com

Clare Crestani: cncronin@hotmail.com

Jacqui Dillon: jacquidillon333@aol.com

David Harper: D.Harper@uel.ac.uk

Paul Hammersley

Paul.Hammersley@manchester.ac.uk

Ian Parker: I.A.Parker@mmu.ac.uk

Helen Spandler: hspandler@uclan.ac.uk

Stephen Ticktin: sjticktin@hotmail.com

Design:

Old Dog Graphics

Administration & Distribution:

PCCS Books

2 Cropper Row, Alton Rd

Ross-on-Wye

HR9 5LA

Subscriptions (see below for rates):

www.pccs-books.co.uk

sales@pccs-books.co.uk

tel: 01989 763 900 fax: 01989 763 901

Front Cover Picture: Mad Hatters of Bath

Back Cover Picture: Mad Hatters of Bath

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Asylum magazine is a forum for free debate, open to anyone with an interest in psychiatry or mental health. We especially welcome contributions from service users or ex-users (or survivors), carers, and frontline psychiatric or mental health workers (anonymously, if you wish). The magazine is not-for-profit and run by a collective of unpaid volunteers. Asylum Collective is open to anyone who wants to help produce and develop the magazine, working in a spirit of equality. Please contact us if you want to help.

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Mad Pride edition. This is organised by the Mad Hatters of Bath but we had contributions from nutters all over the country, and beyond.

When we started organising this edition we didn't know what material we would get. We just asked people to write about what Mad Pride means to them. Not academics researching our culture, not professionals defining us, just what yer average diagnosed crazy, multi-dimensional traveller thought. What we got is a selection of views which, we think, complement each other.

The struggle to define our cultural identity will be difficult (but not impossible) so long as the medical model of madness as illness predominates. Often we hear people arguing why Mad Pride is 'a bad thing'. They say: 'What is there to be

proud of? I am ill. People with cancer are not proud of their illness.' Or: 'I am an individual. There is no such thing as a Mad Community.' In this issue of the magazine are the writings of people who know there is a community of the Mad and who celebrate it - from big festivals in Ireland to tea parties in Bath. And best of all, the Normals are joining in.

A big thank you to everyone who sent us stuff, but unfortunately there wasn't room to publish everything we got, so we'll just have to get a book together. Until then you can always go to YouTube and type in 'Mad Pride'. There you can find videos from all over the world of Mad Pride events, and a few subversive adverts. My personal favourite is the remake of the anti-stigma advert, 'Time to Change', put up by Mad Pride UK.

Clare Crestani
The Mad Hatters of Bath

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF MENTAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

WE HOLD THIS TRUTH
THAT ALL HUMANS ARE CREATED DIFFERENT

That every human being has the right to be mentally free and independent.

That every human being has the right to feel, see, hear, sense, imagine, believe or experience anything at all, anyway, at any time.

That every human being has the right to behave in any way that does not harm others or break fair or unjust laws.

That no human being shall be subjected without consent to incarceration, restraint, punishment or psychological or medical intervention in an attempt to control, repress or alter the individuals thoughts, feelings or experiences.

NO, WE'RE NOT 'ALL IN THIS TOGETHER'!

Dave Harper

Since Autumn 2008, when the economic crisis began, unemployment has risen drastically, and especially amongst young people. So the country receives less taxes and has to pay more benefits.

Unsurprisingly, there is a greater demand for benefits during a recession. For those who already experience mental distress, a recession causes further problems. They will find it harder to find work which might help their recovery and, with huge cuts in welfare provision, they will receive less support. There is a strong link between poverty and unemployment and increased mental health problems such as depression or suicide. As well as an increased demand for benefits, the recession will increase pressure on charities and mental health services.

The playwright David Hare recently observed that a crisis in capitalism – the recession caused by the banking crisis – has somehow been transformed by many politicians into a crisis in the welfare state. We are told that welfare spending is 'profligate' and that it needs to be cut so that the UK is not down-rated by Credit Ratings Agencies. (These are the same Agencies which gave the Icelandic banks a clean bill of financial health just before they failed.) But the reason that the proportion of national income spent on welfare is rising is due to people's rising needs.

Was it 'profligate public spending' which caused the economic crisis? No. Was it those receiving mental health services and other welfare payments? No. So why is it that these groups are the ones to suffer from the Government's cuts? The crisis was caused by banks which gambled recklessly with financial products – Weapons of Financial Mass Destruction – that very few financiers properly understood. It was also caused by Governments, for ideological reasons, failing to give the financial regulators any teeth. And by dodgy Credit Ratings Agencies which gave risky banks Triple-A ratings.

Many users of mental health services will feel uncertain when they hear about proposed cuts in Local Authority budgets and reports of NHS managers cutting services (even though there is not supposed to be a cut in the NHS budget). These cuts already affect many of the charities which provide much-needed help – the very charities supposed to be supported by David Cameron's Big Society initiative. So, as well as introducing changes to benefits just when they are most needed, it is worrying to hear about plans to reduce welfare spending.

In typically dramatic fashion, The Mad Pride demo in London last November brought attention to these issues. Despite miserable weather, a group of over a hundred people converged at Speakers' Corner to hear speeches about the problems to be caused by welfare cuts. Speakers challenged the claim by coalition politicians that 'We're in this together'. What utter nonsense. Surely no one in the Government is strapped for cash, and twenty-three out of the twenty-nine members of the Tory-Liberal Cabinet are known to be millionaires!

“

'How could you, a mathematician, a man devoted to reason and logical proof ... how could you believe that extraterrestrials are sending you messages? How could you believe that you are being recruited by aliens from outer space to save the world? How could you ...?' 'Because', Nash said, ... 'the ideas I had about supernatural beings came to me the same way that the mathematical ideas did. So I took them seriously.'

Sylvia Nasar, *A Beautiful Mind*, p. 11

”

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What is Mad Culture?

Dolly Sen

Mad Culture is a celebration of the creativity of mad people, and pride in our unique way of looking at life, our internal world externalised and shared with others without shame, as a valid way of life.

It is an acknowledgement that we are reacting to a society that is scared of us and will hijack our art and literature once our artists and writers are dead and therefore deemed safe and easy to control, corrupt and capitalise.

Our culture insists that we keep control of our lives without being brutalised by a psychiatric system that wants us to conform to an ideal of normality that doesn't exist anyway. It challenges the idea that madness is something to be hidden: it realises that visibility counts, so as to break the stigma that has a stranglehold over every single mad person alive today.

Mad Culture is saying 'Yes, yes!' to life, even if this embarrasses 'the normals'.

Mad Culture is saying: 'I won't hold your sanity against you. My reality is good enough. Is yours?'

Not all mad people are artistic. Some are quite happy to be accountants, and I don't think mad accountants should be discriminated against either.

We are already an alienated sector of society,

in fact the most alienated sector of society. We are not full members of this society or culture and that is not going to change without us changing it. Because why is it in their interest to change what makes them feel comfortable and superior? So we need to create our own culture in which we feel comfortable. Some would argue that this leads to separation. But we are separate. Where does madness fit in 'normal culture'?

We are the untouchables. Only fit enough to work in sheltered workshops, to be cleaners, media scapegoats, and to paint multi-million pound masterpieces. Put simply, in this present culture we have victim status. Whereas, in our culture, we are just ourselves. WE want a culture that doesn't produce a suicide every 40 seconds.

Some may say: 'Why have pride about suffering distress?' But it's not about that. It is pride in our strength to survive that distress and what it teaches us, and not to feel like lesser beings because of it. And to question why we feel lesser beings because of it, to question the idea that madness is an illness and not a human response to a sick society, a sick upbringing.

Can you imagine a world without music, art, dance and drama? It would be an empty, bland place. So why is the world without your music, art, dance and drama? If life is a stage, is yours worth watching? What would make the show better? Can we change the ending? Or make it a better story?

Culture is letting us tell the story, not them. It is as simple as that.

Dolly Sen, Mad Chicks

ADOPT-A-NUTTER



Being mad means being poor. Being mad means being rejected by society and sometimes your family. It can be lonely. So why not adopt a nutter? The benefits are many: whenever you have company you want to get rid off, introduce them to the nutter in your family. They will magically disappear. Maybe you have a business rival...just introduce a nutter as your rival's relative... they will all come running to you for your products...

- £1.50** will buy a coffee to counteract the sedating medication will buy cleaning fluids so the nutter can clean the eggs thrown on their front doors by normals
- £5** will pay for telephone bill costs of the nutter trying to contact a professional to help them when they need support but find themselves having their phone calls not returned.
- £10** will pay for the junk food that nutters eat because the medication makes them crave sugars and fat
- £15** will pay for a nutter walker - they will take your nutter out for a run, so they don't lie in bed all day and they can scare off your neighbours ...
- £17** will buy new shoes. The old shoes being worn thin from the largactyl shuffle
- £20** will pay for sex toys. Nobody wants to go out with a nutter, bless them and anyway the medication makes the poor dears impotent (it's a blessing really)
- £50** will pay for Eurostar ticket out of UK after hospital escape.
- £1000** will pay for the nutter to stay out of the UK so they can't scrounge off the benefits.

The Mad Hatters of Bath have been a consciousness-raising group since the run-up to World Mental Health Day in 2006.

It all began at a meeting of the Manic Depressive Fellowship (MDF). We discovered that WMH Day was not being celebrated in Bath so we decided to do something. We came up with the idea of a Mad Hatters Tea Party, with Alice and company. This was an off-the-cuff decision which ended with five of us meeting in pubs and cafes over the next few weeks. Little Claire was Alice, Tash was the white rabbit, Jen the caterpillar, Jer was the Mad Hatter, and I was the Red Queen. We invited MIND and Rethink to join us, but they never did. Still, we put up posters, phoned friends and got an article in the local rag. October 10th came around and we turned up in the Abbey Churchyard with our props, plenty of cakes and no idea what would happen next.

We turned on a CD player with an eclectic collection of songs about being mad. We distributed cakes and flyers, talked to people about madness and played with the props. Loads of our mates turned up and soon we had an event to be proud of. After a couple of hours we had a procession through town to a friendly café for tea

Nobody is pressured into doing something just because they say they will, we all help each other out, and there is a constant acceptance that we are all living with severe and enduring mental extremes, and as such we are vulnerable. The only thing we have in common is our experiences of madness and the mental health system. Actually, not all of us have experienced the mental health services, but we have all certainly experienced something outside the realms of acceptability.

Our philosophy is that anyone who has experienced any form of mental extreme has learned something about life. They deserve respect for that, for the journey they have taken and the strength to have survived the mental health services. We believe we are all individuals and as such can make our own choices about medication and how to live our lives. Most of us prefer not to use medication. Instead we turn to alternative treatments ranging from homeopathy to shamanism, Buddhism, Spirituality, exercise and creativity. We agree we need to accept responsibility for looking after ourselves and support each other doing it.

Mad Pride celebrates the rights of an individual to be an individual, but that does not mean you cannot

The Mad Hatters of Bath

The story so far

Clare Crestani

and a sit down. After all, performance insanity is hard work.

From the café we meandered through town with a megaphone calling out such things as 'My only form of relaxation is insanity!' The cops strolled past, saw our colourful cavalcade and carried on strolling. We ended up in Green Park and served squash and cakes to shoppers while conversing with them about mental health issues.

The successful reception of this event inspired us to greater things. We decided to stick with the name: The Mad Hatters of Bath. It gives a friendly, culturally acceptable image and yet still incorporates the identity of Mad. Many fellow nutters (or service users as they prefer to be called) are put off by the name and won't get involved in our activities. But there are still plenty of people who embrace the idea that Madness has its own culture and comedy. They come along to whatever we are doing.

The Mad Hatters of Bath really are an anarchic group. The policy is that anything can happen as long as the person who comes up with the idea puts in the work.

be part of a community. Many people prefer to put their extreme mental experiences behind them and say it is their own personal trauma they need to deal with. We feel that finding a commonality between those who have experienced mental extremes breaks down stigma and isolation, and that inviting 'the normals' into our world allows them to accept their differences as well. Nobody is truly normal, and the division between Us and Them disables 'the normals' as much as it disables us.

The next event we decided on was a Mad Hatters Tea Party in the Park, to celebrate Mad Pride Day 2007. This was a much bigger event and completely bonkers. We raised funds through such diverse means as a 'Ladies Who Lunch' fund raiser, a Leftism gig, a street collection, and a generous donation from one of the Mad Hatters. We also produced and sold a magazine to which we all contributed, and which gave us an opportunity to voice our views and creativity. We begged and borrowed generators, gazebos, sound equipment and tea urns.

We invited everyone we knew to come along but didn't really do enough publicity. We'd met Rufus May at the previous year's bed-push and called him to see if

he was interested in doing a bed-push all the way from Bristol's Callington Road loony bin to Bath City Centre. He agreed enthusiastically, and the bed-push crew rocked up in Bath to join the fun. The council provided free access to water and parking. Jen and Charlie supervised the Mad Hatters Café, the best example of complete anarchy I have ever seen! Tash and Frank sorted out the stage, sound system and performers. Friends, families and supporters turned up to help run the kids' area and information. We had two lovely ladies doing the alternative treatment area, Sheila the Shaman and Usha, a homeopath.

The aftermath of the event meant we were all so exhausted that we kind of lost the plot for a bit. But we still managed to bounce back with a magazine in October, with the theme of Halloween, True Stories from Beyond. By May 2008 we had produced an edition on Spirituality.

The magazine was fun to make but we were running out of material and it was getting harder and harder to distribute them. Short-term attention spans and erratic lifestyles meant the Mad Hatters of Bath were never going to be one of those 'service user groups' that become structured. The whole point of the Mad Hatters is the anarchy, comedy and creativity of a loose network of people.

So when a couple of us created Mad Pride stickers, and we started sticking them on lampposts around town, Mad Pride suddenly took on a more hard core image, and some activists became involved in our activities.

To celebrate Mad Pride Day 2008 we decided on a Normality Testing skit. We got the idea from the Mindfreedom website and adapted it to our skills and abilities. We contacted the local media. Our local rag didn't cover the event but we did get three radio interviews. Asking a complete nutter to talk about Mad Pride at 7.30 in the morning on live radio was an act of faith you can only admire.

This was a fab day. We used the usual technique of a costume theme. This time we were 1950's cleaners, but it's quite a loose interpretation of that theme. We called and emailed a diverse collection of people who came from far and wide to join in the fun. The video of it can be found on YouTube.

The excessive range of bizarre props acquired from charity shops meant that we were able to 'test for

normality' in new and interesting ways. Once again, the enthusiasm of the general public was a joy to behold.

In September 2008 a couple of the Mad Hatters went to the Asylum conference in Manchester and did a workshop on how to do Mad Pride events on a shoestring and with no organisational structure. The next video was completed at the conference and shown at the end. Entitled 'Violent and Crazy', it is a response to an open offer from Violent Femmes to make a video to go with their version of the Gnarl's Barkley song 'Crazy'. In October 2008 the Mad Hatters of Bath joined Rufus May and the bed-push crew in London for a 'dash' across Hackney. This video is on youtube, too.

That year we also celebrated World Mental Health Day by holding a Mad Hatters Tea Party in a church hall. Several mavericks from Birmingham came along to join in the fun. That was a lovely and well attended, chilled-out tea party. So many individuals in Bath support what



we are doing, despite not having the confidence to join in the street theatre.

We produced one last magazine in January of 2009. The costs of production and distribution were becoming too much of a challenge. Besides, we were beginning to enjoy the fun of making videos.

In July of 2009 a couple of Mad Hatters went up to London and met members of Mad Chicks Mad Pride group, when we did a joint talk at a Tree House project in Regents Park.

By the summer of 2009 we wanted to do something different. The dream of a Mad Pride festival, with three or four days camping, was just too difficult to organise. So we decided on a Camp Out. A dozen of us from

around the country rocked up to a campsite just outside of Oxford and had a holiday. It is so much fun to just be yourself with others just as bonkers as you are. Conversations about voices, visions and the crazy things we do whilst 'off the planet' interspersed with a trip to Elder Stubbs allotment festival in Oxford. There we talked on the main stage, did a workshop on Mad Identity, and generally chilled out. Shared cooking, playing with fire and walks along the river bank completed the trip.

In November 2009 we began regular weekly meetings. Originally we intended these to be structured support groups, based on what we had learned from working with each other over the last few years. But we found that we had learned stuff because we had all started from a shared view of what madness meant to us. However, to run workshops would mean beginning by explaining our entire ethos – and why it was valid – to people who fully embraced the medical model of mental illness. We didn't have the resources to cope with this, and we soon retreated to smaller weekly meetings where we just chatted about whatever was important to us.

By July 2010 we decided to make the meetings monthly, and they are going well. Of course, not all the Mad Hatters turn up to every meeting. But we also keep in contact with casual meetings over coffee, by emails, phone calls and by just bumping into each other.

In 2010 Mad Pride was celebrated by another Mad Hatters Tea Party. This was purely because too many of us have difficulty walking any distance, so there was a trip to the local church for a couple of tables, emailing everyone we could think of, a ring round of friends and family, and once again the Mad Hatters shared their Madness with the tourists and locals of our home town. (See the video on YouTube.) Despite requests to organise another Camp Out, life was too busy for many of us in 2010 and it couldn't be done. Maybe this year.

In October a few of us Mad Hatters went to Birmingham and to London to join the Mad Pride demos against the cuts. We feel that networking and meeting other nutters around the country is how to build a consciousness of our own culture and identity.

Sometimes it is hard not to wonder if we are paranoid. We always invite MIND to join in any event we do, and they always ignore us. Despite persistent requests that they refrain from it, our local newspaper will not report our events without using the words 'mentally ill'. They rejected the press release we sent them this year on the grounds that it was too surreal. However, this year we did manage to get an article by the Mad Hatters of Bath printed on World Mental Health Day, so maybe things are looking up.

One thing certain about the Mad Hatters of Bath is that we are not confined to Bath: we have friends and fellow-performers around the country

who we invite to any of our events. We are not a group with a membership list. Mad Hatters is a network of like-minded people. A lot of us have difficulties going out in public. We would love to go to a festival and do our events, but that many people in an enclosed area is more than we can stand. We are a friendly, supportive bunch of nutters, with compassion and comedy which we love to share with the general public.

When we take our Madness to the streets of Bath and invite people to join in, we find that they love it – the opportunity to be bonkers for a while, to talk to people about mental health issues. But at the same time they can see a diagnosis is not all doom and gloom. This is real anti-stigma work.

Our point is that we are not 'just like them'. Our events are obviously bonkers, there is no logic to the madness, there is no grand plan, we just all turn up and do whatever it is that we do. So those who don't like talking to people and want to be invisible take photos and film the event. Those who talk far too much and are completely manic are the front people. Those who want to join in but don't quite know what is going on arrive in costume or are soon dressed up, and then they can test for normality, talk to the public, carry all the tat (we always have plenty of props: if in doubt use a prop), or just have a cup of tea in a safe environment.

Anarchy does not have to mean wearing a black hoody (although it is my favourite article of clothing). For me anarchy is about being yourself, with no worries about how that is interpreted. Having a cup of tea in the Bath Abbey Churchyard becomes a political event when it is accompanied by flyers about Mad Pride – and a slice of cake.

YouTube has several videos about Mad Hatters of Bath events. Check them out. Just type in 'Mad Hatters of Bath' and see if you are inspired to go out and play! We also have a facebook site you can join. And you can contact us at bathmadhatters@hotmail.co.uk



Mad Pride Leeds: 2002 - 2010

Terry Simpson

Things really kicked off for us in Leeds in 2002, when legendary local performance poet and Mad Pride supporter, Johnny Solstice, suggested that the money remaining from a Disability Festival in the city in the previous year should be donated to the newly formed Mad Pride group. This amounted to several hundred pounds. So we had a picnic on Woodhouse Moor and hired a local Community Centre to put on a 'cabaret extraordinaire' with local performers, including Johnny and local survivors band 'The Schizos'. There was a fighting speech from Derek Hutchinson, a psychosurgery survivor who'd set up the anti-psychosurgery campaigning group SCALPS. Also conspicuous were members of the Monster Raving Loony Party, who came over from York with a huge bag of home-made badges, my favourite being 'Vote Kafka'. Although I can't quite believe it now, we bought quite a lot of beer, cider and wine, and ran a free bar, which was very popular.

We'd nevertheless only managed to spend half the cash we had, so in 2004 we booked the extraordinary Ceramic Hobs to play at Joseph's Well, one of the most popular venues in Leeds at the time. Simon Barnett, one of the originators of Mad Pride, came up to Leeds for the event. For the occasion he produced some special Yorkshire Mad Pride tee-shirts, in Leeds United blue and yellow. The Hobs gave an extraordinary performance, very political in a mad kind of way, with lots of catchy choruses, of which the only one I still remember is 'Fuck the War on Terror'.

For the next couple of years we contented ourselves with having picnics on Woodhouse Moor in July. Thirty or forty of us would gather to eat, play music and read poems. The highlight of these events was the time our party coincided with a punk party across the park. I don't know who challenged who to a footy match, but we Mad Priders lost heavily. I think the problem was a difference in age and in drug-taking habits. They were relatively young and fuelled by alcohol and speed, while we were mostly older and mainly running on stelazine and largactil. You can see the problem. I think the technical term for what we received is 'a right hammering'.

The formation of Leeds Radical Mental Health Group,

who were mainly younger social activists inspired by the Icarus Project, led to a new lease of life for Mad Pride in Leeds, as we joined forces. In July 2007 and 2008 we held parties at The Common Place, a radical social centre which became the hub for all kinds of alternative projects. We'd have a big vegetarian feast and live music and poetry, with an open mic. One year Bob Mills, founder of local survivor-art project Prescription Art, ran a series of European films with madness themes. We had a workshop on the poetry of Rilke, and normality testing along the lines pioneered by Mind Freedom in the USA. Attendees were screened for worrying signs of normality. We also devised 'The Normality Check', a questionnaire with the same intention. And a banana-holder was presented to me for being Runner-Up Poet Laureate at the 2006 Bonkersfest, a Festival of Mad Culture, in London. Both parties were filmed, so one day perhaps we'll get them uploaded and they can be shared.

In 2009 we had a picnic in the park, and a party along similar lines to the ones at The Common Place, at the Oblong Social Centre in Woodhouse.

Then, in June 2010, we were all gutted when Chris Ginger, lead singer of The Schizos, who were regular supporters of our gigs, died of lung cancer. Partly because of this we didn't get anything organised in July, but in September we supported a fundraiser for the High Royds Memorial Garden Project. This

is a local campaign to have a memorial for the people who died at the city's Victorian asylum and are now buried, with no individual markings, in a mass grave. We paid for local music project, Cloth Cat, to run a stage in an old ward of the hospital, which is now a social club. Again, following the lead of Mind Freedom, we had a ceremony worshipping a giant pill made for us by Prescription Art. This was a very irreverent and satisfying thing to do in that setting.

We still have about £90 in the account, so anything is still possible.

Leeds, October 2010



Madness killed my stepmother's budgie

a brief history of Mad Pride, London

by Hugh Mulhall

The first time I came out of the hospital I was incredibly bored most of the time. Mindful of the psychologist's warning that I was recovering from the equivalent of a car crash, I sat about frustrated at the desire to get on with life, and yet aware of the fact I was gonna have to be a patient patient.

Terminal boredom had been a phrase thrown about by middle-class punks during the 70s, and now as Brit Pop had taken over the pop charts and the national news, it had become a reality. (Only joking.) In an attempt to get my life back in some kind of order I volunteered for The Albert Kennedy Trust, a charity of homeless gay youth, and after what seemed like the hurdle of the interview, I did some work with them for a short while. I also volunteered for City and Hackney Mind, where I did admin on a part-time basis for a year and a half.

It was the realisation that the young adults at Albert Kennedy were doing better than me that turned my attention to Hackney Patients Council and to Survivors Speak Out, who I discovered through Mind.

For ten years Survivor Speaks Out (SSO) had been the mental health patients' voice, but as funding ran out it fell apart. Cash chaos resulted in a redundancy notice being handed to the one part-time paid member of staff upon the realisation there was no money for her wages. This led to acrimony and the loss of someone who may have been a friend of the next step.

But it was there that I met Pete Shaughnessy and Simon Barnett. Pete was a ball of energy and ideas who inadvertently named the influential and highly sought after fanzine 'Dope Psychosis' that may not have made money but fulfilled ambition. Pete was already organising direct actions in protest at conditions in the hospitals – which I and others will testify have improved in the intervening 15 years (a Labour Government may have helped). Simon was the Chair and a charismatic spokesman.

At the final AGM, held in Birmingham, a lively and



angry crowd demanded that SSO choose not to become a charity, despite the monetary benefits that might accrue from such a designation – that the cause to be fought was political. Funding was becoming an urgent if not frantic subject, and whereas the NHS was willing to fund SSO no one was sure who would fund a political grouping.

This unparalleled threat to this nations' saving grace has been exterminated

In the dying days of SSO, Mad Pride was created from replies to a questionnaire in which we were invited to select a name from a choice of options for an organisation to take up where Survivors Speak Out had left off. I was one who ticked the box for 'Mad Pride' – a phrase that could unite a variety of diagnoses and was easy on the tongue. It was the popular choice.

Back in Hackney, fuelled by a desire for non-stop hedonism, Robert Dellar worked as an advocate at City and Hackney Mind, and was responsible for the creation of the Patients' Council, of which I was a member. He had also been organising punk gigs in the Hackney area. One memorable event was a night during Hackney's Anarchist week at Chats Palace. There was a packed and appreciative audience for ATV, who have become Mad Pride stalwarts over the years.

Quite how Robert linked up with Pete and Simon I've no idea, but I guess he had already defined himself as a mental health activist – as I guess his 26 years working in the industry testifies. He has been the man to find the funding, having already done so for Core Arts and The Patients' Council – through books, gigs, and grants. He has brought what he was already doing – and an audience – to Mad Pride events.

Debbie McNamara completed the line-up at those early meetings, bringing her experience of working with Survivors Poetry, and having produced an award-winning TV documentary on the housing conditions of people leaving the hospital. Forgive me if I've missed anyone. Perhaps because everyone was based in East London, meetings were arranged and thus Mad Pride was born (with honourable mentions to Frank Bangay and Mark Roberts).

Perhaps an issue for those who seek autonomy, non-mad Robert Dellar was the impetus behind the Mad Pride book which I am proud to have been involved with (though I have my reservations about certain aspects of it). Also, much of the publicity accrued to Mad Pride has been his work. Although over the years I've come to distrust his cash-from-chaos mentality, much (but not all) of what has been achieved wouldn't have happened without hours on the phone and his coordination.

An overview of the book might suggest it is a call to keep people locked up, something that feeds paranoia. Our brief was to write about 'the mad things we had done while out of the hospital, and specifically not to write about conditions in it'. I broke this rule somewhat and wish I could say all I wrote was true. The reality was a lot grimmer – but I got to write what I wanted to write and made a few points.

I bought him a packet of mints –

The Mad Pride punk festival in Clissold Park brought a great crowd, some great bands and a generosity and interest from the crowd that might have been missing elsewhere. But I also saw a couple of people who'd been brought from the hospital distressed at the music, and Pete (now spokesman for the group) was hurling so much verbals about on the stage that residents in the area were phoning the police, who did turn up. Too much alcohol, probably. I enjoyed it, but I think there are certain avenues accepted where we can be mad and on the occasion, etc.

Pete generally was a very charismatic man with great charm and humour who had a gift for speeches and could get everyone roused up in a positive way. When he and his partner, Penny, moved out to the coast, he turned up with a coach-load of people from somewhere in the middle of nowhere, to lobby MPs in Parliament against what was being described as the Mental Health Bill from Hell. Indeed there was a fine turnout out from mental health groups from all over, as people got to hear the issues debated and speak to their MPs. But it didn't work.

Pete's mood for direct action led to perhaps a dozen-and-a-half people waiting for a Minister who turned up half-an-hour late for a Mind conference in Cardiff. Though I wasn't there till the end of the protest, I guess his charm

worked, for when she went back to London a bill that Mind and the Institute of Psychiatrists couldn't halt was put on hold.

I was working on my magnum opus, aka *A memoir of The Divine Ms Thing!*, when I was told of Pete's death. I had been hoping to return to Prague and instead was startled to be at a funeral. It was in this confusion that I found myself in the beauty of a full Southwark Cathedral. I can't claim to know either how or why the place was so full or how it was that Pete had garnered so much good will. I knew his marriage with Penny was on the rocks – and fear, love and war with the fascists? Alcohol will have played its part. It did with me, it has with Robert. I do think alcohol is the worst drug of the lot partly because it's so available but also it makes things seem so grim sometimes. (I'd say the same for Heroin but have no experience of it.) Pete was a sad loss, and Mad Pride in London never really recovered from it.

– and a flamethrower

Though with hindsight Pete Shaughnessy's death would suggest that we are no better at looking after each other than the NHS – and that I think is something that needs to be dwelled on – Mad Prides' goals, such as I know them, were not to provide an alternative to the caring services but to campaign for the civil rights of psychiatric patients. Certainly, Pete Shaughnessy led direct actions, changed laws and led to important changes and a greater acceptance – perhaps unwillingly given – to our voices.

One of Mad Pride's lines was about being 'out' about your diagnosis in the way that gay people are supposed to be. But the people involved in Mad Pride have had no experience of 'coming out' in the 'gay' way – they are the brave for whom it will go yeh or ney. It's a long way to



travel from saying you get depressed to saying you're schizophrenic; it's a long way to travel if it's the only label you get to define yourself with; and it's a long way to travel if there's nothing else to talk about. Tell them you are an insane homosexual with an insatiable desire for spliff, and most people run off.

Worse than that, I fear the good times are over. In times of crunch, us and our kind, though swelling in numbers, will get marginalised, and our issues become unimportant. But there are some signs of good news: laws passed under the last Government mean that the NHS is obliged to interact with us on a more meaningful basis. There are jobs going, but they don't like you shouting at them and more than likely you'll have to agree to their ways. I said to my psychiatrist recently: "As far as I can tell, you're trained to hate us." Probably not clever. My local MIND has put fortifications and obstructions up in the way of involvement. And I've heard of others having problems. Following the user-led Mind takeover in Southwark, now they fear Mad Pride.

Mad Pride has shown that there is a desire and need for social activities where we can meet without prejudice and stigma, where we don't have to be concerned that everything we say or do is being written down and recorded, and where we can discuss our experiences and share coping mechanisms and solutions to the problems we face.

Personally, I got a bit tired of all the punk, but some of them, especially Vic Godard, ATV, The Larry Love Showband and Ceramic Hobbs, Gertrude, Frank Bangay, Ernesto Sarezale, and many others, were excellent. The space for poetry was appreciated and some of the light shows were quite good. And I think there should be a special mention for Eddie Murray, Mad Pride's troubadour in those early days, and whose contribution to the books

displayed something of the variety of the problems faced by someone in the mental health system.

I suggest people go out and organise some social events where you can relax, discuss, enjoy and share some good times – possibly a better cure for many forms of mental illness than the far more expensive therapies and plans for the future. But be warned: I put one on once, and though I think it was an artistic success I needed more help – it was chaotic and cost fortunes.

For my own part, I've stuffed envelopes, lobbied MPs, been a steward, written stuff, gone on a couple of marches and met some nice people.

1. A charming document best described as a work of excavation set at the end of the last century. This was partially funded by MIND and uncompleted until a revelatory experience in Prague provided me with the necessary tools to complete the task. (It is shortly to be reissued with recently discovered added material.)

LETTER

Dear *Asylum*

In the review of Helen Spandler's *Asylum to Action* (*Asylum* 17:4), Mark Cresswell refers to a beautiful fish being offered as a symbol for the Mental Patients' Union. This brings to mind Janet Frame's book, *Faces in the Water* (The Women's Press, 1961, p167):

Sometimes one would surprise a human look on the face of a Tilly or Lorna but there was no way to capture it; one felt like an angler who discerns the ripple of a rainbow fish which will surely die if it stays in the foul water. How to trap it without hurting it? But the ripple of humanity may take the forms of protest, depression, exhilaration, violence: it is easier to stun the fish with a dose of electricity than to handle it with care and transfer it to a pool where it will thrive. And it may take many hours and years angling for human identity, sitting in one's safe boat in the middle of the stagnant pool and trying not to panic when the longed-for ripple almost overturns the boat.

Anne Plumb

“

*Life may not be the party we
hoped for but while we're here
we should dance.*

Proverb

**IF I COULD TURN YOU ON,
IF I COULD DRIVE YOU OUT OF
YOUR WRETCHED MIND.
IF I COULD TELL YOU I WOULD
LET YOU KNOW.**

The Bird of Paradise (ed. R.D Laing)

”

write to *Asylum* ...

The Editor
Asylum
c/o Limbrick Centre
Limbrick Rd
Sheffield, S6 2PE

email: tigerpapers@btinternet.com

NATIONAL PERCEPTIONS FORUM – A MAD NETWORK

Chris Barchard (former Chair)

In spite of attempts to break up their networks by closing down day centres, mad people like to get together. "Perceptions", as we refer to it – although it is still often known as "Voices" – is a group of over 600 mad people who have been allowed to form an organisation by Rethink. It has been around for twenty-four years.

A lot of people still seem to believe that it is a group run by Rethink, i.e. by carers and staff members, but that is not what it was set up for – which was to give a voice to mad people. It has long since been controlled by the mad people, and although Rethink administrate the money and provide funding, there is a very real understanding that you cannot give people their voice by telling them what to say. (That is something which is very difficult to get mad people to do, anyway.) So it carries on its own thing, notwithstanding that some members take part in Rethink's governance committees. They do not have a brief, however, beyond what the other mad people in the Perceptions National Meeting might suggest.

There is a large website, www.perceptionsforum.org.uk, which has much of what has been published in our magazine, *Perceptions*, over the years, as well as much else. This was put together and managed by a member. *Perceptions* has run to 38 quarterly issues, and followed directly on from the original newsletter *Voices' Voices*, which ran to 14 quarterly issues. That was more like a short magazine and it provided a template for the bigger publication.

As well as including numerous takes on the system and personal accounts of madness, *Perceptions* magazine has a lot of mad culture in it in the form of drawing, painting and poetry. Not a lot of enthusiasm for the system will be found, although there was one member who extolled the virtues of a particular antipsychotic only sadly to die prematurely. (Although I cannot say whether it was related to the drug in question, which amongst antipsychotics, has a stronger than average association with heart problems.)

There are quarterly business meetings and editorial meetings for the magazine, the former being where all the activities of the organisation

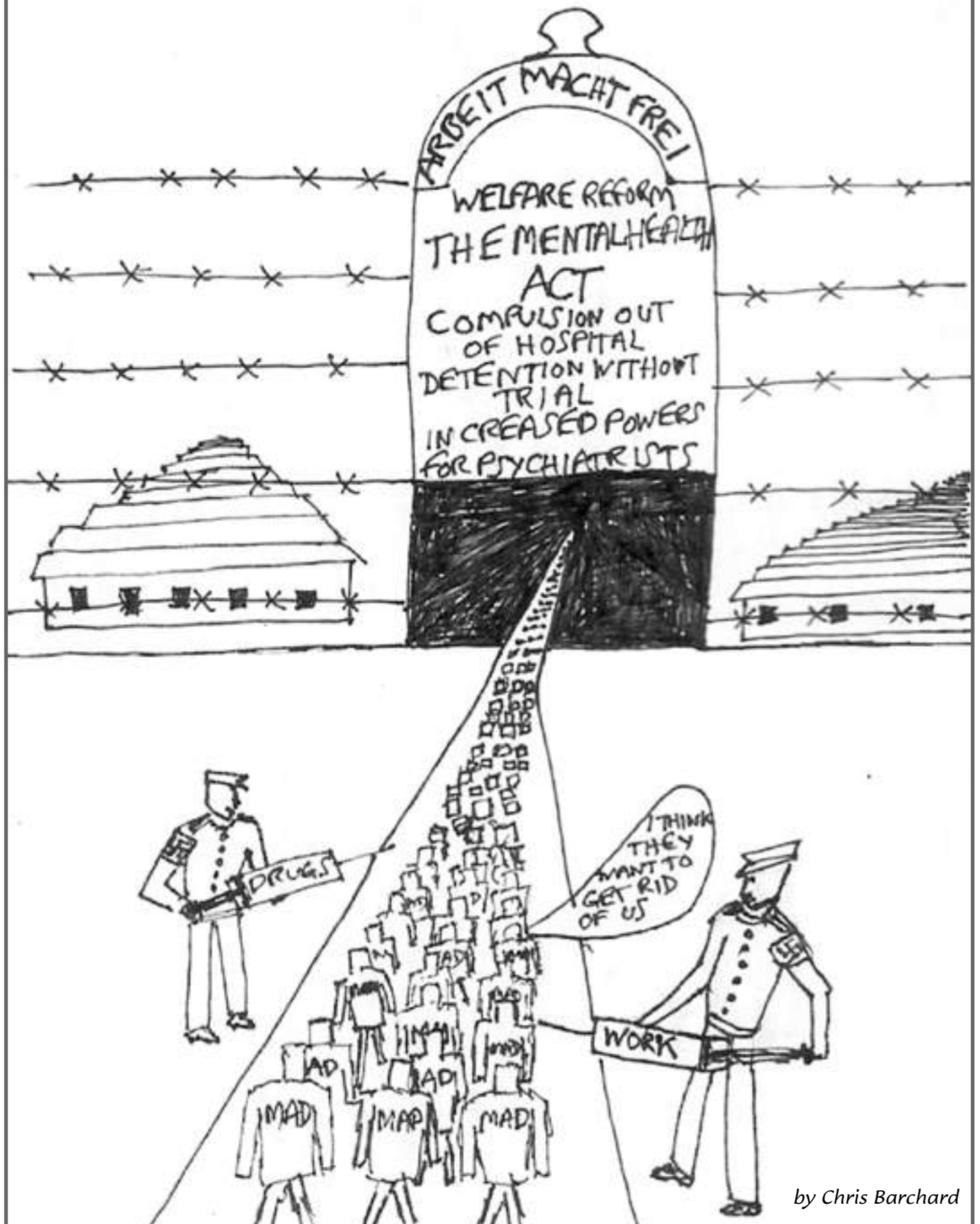
are agreed. These meetings tend to run in a somewhat loosely structured way and much debate takes place about mad issues as well as the business. Certainly most of the time I was Chair, for several years, they were only open to mad people who were members, with others attending at times by invitation only and not as voting participants. A Rethink staff member who did attend sometimes said they would do it differently but at the same time asked how it was that it was such a going concern when they often found it difficult to get 'user' groups going. I used to say that the anarchy helped because it gave freedom of expression and an atmosphere that was creative. Indeed, several conferences were organised which were well attended and were themed around our very individual takes on what we called self-management and autonomy.

One member wrote a series of articles in the form of a diary about coming off medication. Almost everything in the magazine and on the website is by members. We've had several poetry competitions: "The Martha Robinson Poetry Competition". There is one going on about now. Also there was an art exhibition in Chatham in the first half of November, organised by a member, and a conference planned for 2011. A couple of years ago we made a DVD about ourselves which can still be obtained from the office. There is a little downloadable music on the website, some of it sung by a member from Scotland who is a prolific musician: in his work, he covers the whole ambience of being mad. Almost everything *Perceptions* has done has been genuinely organised and carried out by members, not Normals. Some members have been or are involved in studies and committees within or outside Rethink, and many other activities.

I have to credit Rethink for supporting *Perceptions* Forum over the years and for allowing it to be what it is. You may not find them publicising us very hard, but they have their own collective message to get across. We don't have one.

If you're interested in finding out more you can ring Rachel in the office, Monday to Wednesday: 0207 840 3085. Or visit our website: www.perceptionsforum.org.uk

THE ENSLAVEMENT OF THE SICK



by Chris Barchard

MAD CULTURE, MAD COMMUNITY, MAD LIFE

Just For the Fun of It

By Just Fancied a Rant Clare

For a real Anti-Stigma Campaign to work for us Nutters we need to begin by asking what it is that makes us different from 'Normals'. Because we are different, and anybody who has experienced mental extremes and the mental health service knows that. So why don't we talk about it? Why don't we include it in the dialogue about madness and stigma?

Each one of us wants an anti-stigma campaign, but how many of us want to define ourselves as Mad, let alone Mad and Proud? We are too used to labels defining us, and the labels applied to us by the psychiatric profession are the most debilitating of all. The label of 'severe and enduring mental illness' is one which closes doors to us, it affects our work opportunities, our relationships and our ability to get insurance or travel abroad. Every aspect of our life is affected by this label. So in a way it makes sense to choose to reject labels and claim 'I am just me, I am an individual'.

But do we really believe this? As we reject the labels and the stigma that goes with the labels and diagnosis, so we also reject any chance of change. We need to unite to fight against society's discrimination against us, just as black people have, as women did with feminism, as gays did in the fight for equality. All these changes did not take place because society felt guilty about ostracising sections of society. The changes took place because a group of people came together and demanded change. We can never truly fight the oppression we experience every day so long as we are afraid to demand change, afraid to define ourselves as a cultural group.

Every mental health anti-stigma campaign takes for granted the medical model of mental illness. This immediately closes the doors to discussion about what it is to be Mad. It closes any debate on what the culture and community of the Mad is. And worse of all it closes any chance of us truly believing in our own identity because, no matter what the psychiatric profession says, we are a community.

As each psychologist and psychiatrist believes they are treating an individual with individual problems they divide us, they isolate us, and they contribute to the control and restraint imposed on us. This control amounts to a type of genocide, the

systematic destruction of a cultural identity and its assimilation into the dominant culture. Its methods includes detention without trial, forcible drugging, electrocution and (most insidious of all) persistent brain washing until we accept psychiatry's definition of us as 'mentally ill' before we are allowed out into the public arena. But always with the threat of compulsory treatment orders and incarceration if we deviate from idealised notions of normality.

We live our lives in fear of being found out. Because ultimately, it is a crime in our society to trance out, to lose the plot, to go bonkers, to explore new and interesting dimensions. Maybe we need to start asking what is it we do that is criminal? What do we do that deserves such abuse? Because there is no doubt about it, the mental health system is not there for us to 'recover': it is for us to be controlled or rehabilitated back into the world of the Normals.

Before we ever enter the world of the insane we know that Madness is something to be feared and denigrated, something to be ashamed of. We learn this in the playground with the taunts 'You'll end up in (your local loony bin inserted here) if you do that'. We learn it through the media: representations of Madness in soap operas show it as a condition which disrupts people's lives and promote the idea that really nutters should take their medication and stop being so selfish. News reports still tend to use the term 'Madness' in relation to dangerous behaviour. We learn it throughout history, in paintings and plays. Long before we actually get a diagnosis, we know that Madness is a failing of the individual.

The moment the psychiatrist shares his infinite knowledge – after all, he is the professional and we are so vulnerable at this point – we become one of the Legion of the Lost.

I remember being told in no uncertain terms: "You have a severe and enduring mental illness. If you do not take the medication the psychotic episodes will get longer and more severe." When this happens, a vision of life locked up in a loony bin complete with control and restraint lingers in our minds - and we conform. We conform as quickly as possible to what the psychiatrist tells us to do. Because we fear Madness as much as the Normals do.

Our fear and our guilt is based not just in the learned and shared knowledge of society, but also in the memory of the bin and it's violence and disrespect, and in the horror and confusion of what has happened to us. The first encounter with visions and voices, the first encounter with terror and/or bliss is so disorientating we need to make sense of it: we need help to understand what on earth is going on. And for far too many of us help is only available from the Mental Health Services with their aggressive medical model of treatment.

And so we buy into the MIND, Rethink, Time to Change anti-stigma campaign. We agree we are individuals who have 'mental health problems'. We agree with the campaign which is backed by the Government, that we are just like you, but we take medication and then we are all normal again.

maybe we just reflect on the hardships of travelling into inner space – but always we understand the trauma and the comedy in a way a psychiatric professional never can. We can find a community in our shared experiences. We can find a culture in our shared creativity, our comedy and compassion. Sit in a room full of Nutters and one Normal, see how quickly the Normal is either controlling the conversation or outside of it. They do not share our understanding of the world, and here you can see evidence of our Culture, our Community. And that is what makes us different, that is what makes us a community: we know something the Normals don't.

Is this why they try to control us in every possible way? It begins with indoctrinating every member of society with folk lore and the media, and then once we are Mad it intensifies. We enter a Kafkaesque

world where there are no longer any rules we can understand. Here survival is based on admitting you are ill, and then hiding any emotions and finally agreeing to take the drugs. It is here the underground culture of the insane begins. So as to survive, we learn to hide our truths from the authoritarian regime of the bin. This is not treatment, this is not support, and it certainly isn't kind. This is a form of social control to stop us believing there is anything of value in our experiences.



But this is ridiculous. We are not just like the Normals. We have experienced something most Normals could never understand. Because Madness is amazing: it is a roller coaster ride of experiences that make absolutely no sense. It is living in a nightmare, it is knowing you are god or the devil, it is wandering through time and space, multiple dimensions abound and how can you tell what is real when all your senses are exploding?

Any tale of crazy behaviour told by a Normal will never come close to what we have lived with. The stories we tell our friends or professionals are greeted with sympathy, or as evidence of insanity. But these are the same stories we can share with each other and empathise with, and maybe we laugh together or

Alternatively, if you experience mental distress, the Mental Health Team work with you in your own home. Isolated from any peer group, you become totally dependant on the Mental Health professionals to define your experience for you, to teach you how to live with your illness. They become your only contact with the world of madness. Your identity is defined by the Mental Health system. And this is what the economic system wants. The sooner you accept that your aberration from the norm was a bad thing to do, the sooner you can get back to normal. And if you can't get back to normal – as many of us can't or won't – then at least stay out of the way, take your drugs and join in the great con that Madness is dreadful, it is painful and traumatic, it is horrifying and isolating.

Suppose we started talking to each other.

Suppose we started to share our stories. Suppose we recognised our own culture and discovered that we liked it. Suppose we discovered that Madness had its own value. And it's not just happening in my head, it's happening to lots and lots of us. And as we sit together, laughing, we can see that Madness is not what they tell us in the media, Madness is not what they tell us in the bin. Madness is what we experience, and what right has anybody to tell us what it is? We know what Madness is, we live with it everyday. Suppose we started to be proud of our experiences, suppose we felt they had value, suppose we were proud of our ability to survive the mental extremes that drive us to self-harm and too often to consider suicide, suppose we were proud of our ability to survive the Mental Health system, suppose we were proud of our ability to go amongst the Normals. Suppose we knew we had a right to be proud to belong to a group of people who are strong.

Madness is something people aspire to. Check it out: walk down town and look in shop windows, and somewhere in town today you will find a sign in a shop referencing Madness. (It is usually advertising a Sale.) During the World Cup, the England football strip was promoted with the slogan, 'England Madness'. Then look inside the shops and see the mugs on sale: 'Crazy Chick', or 'Are you normal? NO!' Look at the T-shirts people wear: 'you're just jealous the little voices are talking to me', or 'one by one the penguins steal my sanity'. Let alone the birthday cards and coasters and cute little knick-knacks which give everybody the opportunity to reject the perfection of Normality in a Capitalist world. Because Madness is not just experiencing mental extremes, it is an act of rebellion. Madness is not an illness: it is a response to our Capitalist society.

Whilst the Government, business and mass media work to create an image of Madness as suffering

and deficit, the public question that idea. They buy products which promote Madness as a positive experience, they take recreational drugs so they can try and see what we see, so they can do what we do everyday. They are fed up with Normality, they want to play, they want what we have, and they don't know what it is, but they want to know. Not to control us, but to join in. And the publicity of celebrities like Stephen Fry coming out as 'Mad' has increased this desire for Madness to be part of their lives. Madness has become aspirational. And we should rejoice in that. Now is the time to throw off our self-imposed chains of guilt and shame and celebrate our culture, our lives and our Mad identity.

The greatest fear of a society like ours is Anarchy. Anarchy will destroy the carefully created myth of Capitalism. Suppose we stopped listening to the rules and did what we wanted? Suppose it was OK to walk naked through the streets, purely as a desire to show our truth. Suppose it was OK to swim in the Roman Baths, because we are a Goddess of Bath. Suppose it was OK to play with a wheelchair in a supermarket, because we are testing theories about magnetic power and gravity. Suppose it was OK to knock on someone's door and ask for sanctuary, because the monsters are coming to get you. Suppose it was OK to just walk away, because the alternative is too bad.

All these actions will get you sectioned. But is this because you are a danger to yourself or others, or is it because you are a danger to the society we live in? Madness is far more of a threat to Capitalist society than terrorism. We are dangerous, not because of our potential violence, but because of our rejection of society's values. And that is why we must be Normalised. And that is why our Mad identity is so popular nowadays.

“

Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted.

Martin Luther King Jnr

'But I don't want to go among mad people,' said Alice.

'Oh you can't help that,' said the cat, 'we're all mad here.'

Lewis Carroll

”

IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE

John McCarthy

Mad Pride Ireland

Another year gone by and we are getting ready for Mad Pride 3. Well, finishing getting ready really. It is as good as done, just short some money not a lot, we are grand, and we will be fine. You should never let money stop you doing a good thing. People ask me how I get the funds. "I asks um for it, dats all, I just asks um an dey says 'yes', dats dat. Tis fierce hard like d'ye know like." I love that character in *Shakespeare in Love*, the producer played by Geoffrey Rush. In his life everything that can go wrong does go wrong, but it all comes together in the end. Whenever he is asked how it all comes together he replies: "I don't know, it just happens." We have adopted that as the driving force behind Mad Pride Family Fun Days. It is a great philosophy.

We have encountered every problem along the road to bring us this far, but then we pick up a phone, ask for help, and we get it. Nobody is saying "No" to Mad Pride. There is something about the whole concept of what we do at Mad Pride Days that people like. You see, we want people to laugh, have fun and celebrate difference, respect the normality of madness, not fear it. We want to have a party in the centre of the community, paint your children's faces, test you all for normality with clowns and rubber chickens, make puppets you can take home, put on a concert that starts with some new acts, to give them an opportunity to learn, throw in a legend or two, and finish with Cork's biggest rock group, all for free.

But we work so hard to do all of this, we are a great team. My son David does the PR and Marketing; he is brilliant. My wife Liz and my daughter Jill designed our logo and whatever there is required, we all muck in. Me, I simply collect the money to pay for it all, so that you can do it all free.

To date, 43,000 people have spoken in support – with their feet and their smiles. There is a great feeling of community at Mad Pride, it is a beautiful thing to see people being at peace.

I sat in the Corner House last Friday night in my new toy. I have a walker now because of the motor neuron, but it is great, it has its own built in seat. I badly needed a 'G and T', it'd been a hard week, a lot of work, a lot of pain. Moray Bresnihan from Goldfish Events came in and sat and we began to talk. It was a great day for me when Gerry Kelly suggested I get together with Moray. I had nothing but an idea back three years ago. Moray put a structure to it all. He is a professional with

moral integrity. They are the professionals along with McCarthy Consulting, Pica, Noel Condon, who put Mad Pride together. Acts, markets, health and safety, shows, insurance everything – they are fantastic, they do it all. I take all the credit. It is a fantastic system for me; works so efficiently, I do give a word of encouragement now and again. Not much though, because I hate to spoil them!

We, Moray and I, had a few pints, in the Corner House, and a few more, things started to get mellow, we talked of what was really underneath Mad Pride, and we talked of families sitting on blankets, parents hugging kids. People, smiling and sharing the joy. And we talked of us: he and I, and how Mad Pride had opened emotional doors. And sitting there at the bar, he on a small stool, to be at head height with me in the walker; at ass level with those on high stools. We stepped into each other's secret places – two grown men, one older, spoke; and like a scene from *Sex in the City*, we shared a moment. Not very masculine at all, but it was good so we had a few more pints, just for the mellow!

We got to the root of what Mad Pride is about and why people buy into it, by talking about how our friendship has grown and why. I am having a hard time writing this next sentence because there are a bunch of losers and mockers who know me reading this, and they will slag me (well maybe slag Moray as well) to death with these next words. It was all about love, just that: love. There, I said it: love. That is the root of Mad Pride Ireland Family Fun Days. Simple love, not such a bad thing, humanity loving each other no matter what the differences.

johnfmccarthy_90@hotmail.com
and www.madprideireland.ie

“

We respect the voyager, the explorer, the climber, the spaceman. It makes far more sense to me as a valid project – indeed as a desperately urgently required project for our time – to explore the inner space and time of consciousness.

Perhaps we will accord to the so-called schizophrenics who have come back to us, perhaps after years, no less respect than the often no less lost explorers of the Renaissance.

R.D. Laing;

The Politics of Experience

”

MUCKS + UP



Mad Pride Celebrates

You!

MindFreedom International
Mad Pride Campaign Committee

Mad Pride celebrates the universal craziness of being a human being. Mad Pride calls for a nonviolent revolution of human rights and choice in mental health care. Mad Pride is not just about mental health. Mad Pride is for everyone!

Here is your brief guide so you can get involved in Mad Pride. You can celebrate unique, eccentric, creatively maladjusted individuals. Applaud the creativity, strength and resilience of the human spirit! Empower psychiatric abuse survivors and raise public consciousness! Create art, theatre, music, poetry, peaceful protests, vigils and more! It is totally up to you.

Help “normalize” being different!

Mad Pride is a movement that celebrates the human rights and spectacular culture of people considered very different by our society. Mad Pride emerged at the end of the 20th century as a mass movement of psychiatric abuse survivors and their allies. London psychiatric survivor activists famously saw a Gay Pride march go by and asked, “What about Mad Pride?” By reaching the public and media directly, Mad Pride educate about the wide variety of reasons for creative maladjustment and to shine a spotlight on the human rights violations experienced by those using the mental health system.

One of Mad Pride’s main aims is to reclaim words such as ‘mad’ and ‘madness’. Mad Pride reminds us of the great cultural contributions that those deemed mad have made in our world. When you think of madness, remember that Vincent van Gogh, Ernest Hemmingway, Emily Dickenson, and Frances Farmer were all non-conformists considered ‘mad’.

While this subject matter can be weighty, people are invited to learn about Mad Pride in entertaining ways:

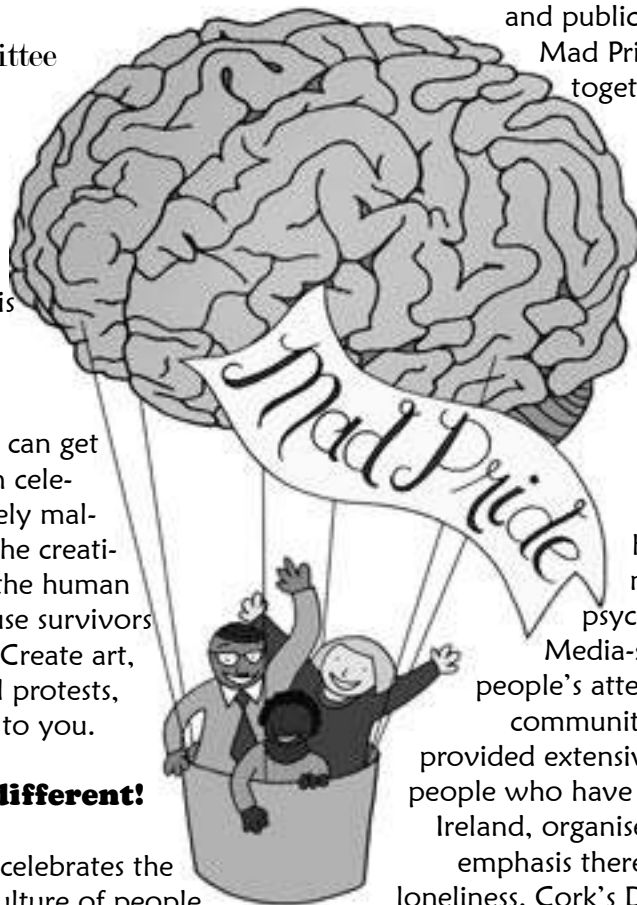
through theatre, literature, poetry, film, music, parades and public rallies. Creating and presenting Mad Pride events weaves a community together, combining compassion and hope with some comic relief. The public is invited to let their hair down and discover the liberty that comes with dropping social norms and busting out of the ruts of conformity.

Why organize a Mad Pride event?

Because Mad Pride increases awareness! Mad Pride events have helped bridge the fear and misinformation gap surrounding psychiatric survivors and their allies. Media-savvy Mad Pride events capture people’s attention and build alliances within communities. For example, the media has provided extensive coverage of the thousands of people who have attended Mad Pride Festivals in Ireland, organised by poet John McCarthy. The emphasis there was on ‘family fun’ to combat loneliness. Cork’s Deputy Lord Mayor pledged the city’s support to make it an annual event, reaching thousands of people!

Every movement that has succeeded in producing social change required a focused effort by a large number of people keeping the movement and its cause in the news. In order to keep human rights for mental health consumers on the public radar, we have to keep building successful Mad Pride events!

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. repeatedly said he was proud to be psychologically maladjusted to oppression, and said, “The salvation of the world lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted.” He even said, “The world is in dire need of a new organization, an International Association for the Advancement of Creative Maladjustment.” King hoped that “we may be able to emerge from the bleak and desolate midnight of man’s inhumanity to man, into the bright and glittering daybreak of freedom and justice.”



Please help this mad movement by adding your voice, your talent, and your energy. Start a Mad Pride event in your community!

Any time of the year is good for Mad Pride. But if you want to pick a month, then July is Mad Pride month! And an especially good day is Bastille Day, 14 July, because a few psychiatric survivors were freed in Paris on that date in 1789. Join an annual Mad Pride event in your neighborhood!

A few examples of some successful Mad Pride events in the past decade include:

- BonkersFest in England. For instance, they held a free one-day summer arts and music festival in a park, illuminating and celebrating madness, creativity, individuality and eccentricity. They started with a staged cannon launch of little plastic bananas!
- “The Great Escape Bed Push” has been held in England, Canada, Germany, and the USA. In this guerilla theater, a group in costume pushes through the streets a bed with a mannequin tied down in four-point restraint, escaping from the psychiatric system to a place of safety and celebration, raising awareness about the over-use of forced treatments in mental health services and the need for holistic choice-based services.
- Mad Pride parades and marches have been held in Belgium, Ghana, Canada, USA and Ireland.
- Toronto, Canada has focused on the theme of celebrating ‘Psychiatric Survivor’ resiliency and pride. They have regularly held a week of arts, workshops, film, parades which explore, celebrate and educate folks about our movement.
- Gallery Gachet in Vancouver, Canada has held Mad Pride events using their art gallery to hold art exhibits, poetry, speakers and parties.

Mad Pride Vigils have been held around the globe. Vigils honor and bring awareness to those who have suffered or died due to the failure of the current state of mental health services.

Mad Pride activist Mike Crowley said, “I think Mad Pride is important because I know for a fact that madness can be found in everyone, regardless of whether they’ve been diagnosed or not. We are the Mad! When we oppress others considered mentally different, we oppress ourselves. But we don’t have to. Mad Pride is creativity aimed at ending our society’s pattern of hurting ourselves.”

How to get involved - it’s easy!

All it takes is a small group of committed people to get the ball rolling! For example:

- Host a Mad Pride Party
 - Open your living room to host a night of music, laughter, and good ole camaraderie – encourage and support one another, show a mad video, and create a safe environment to explore difficult issues.
- Organise a Neighbourhood block party
 - Gather your neighbours for a night of music, food, fun, and storytelling by psychiatric survivors.
- Leaflet with Your Friends
 - Distribute leaflets and information about Mad Pride issues and events. Download easily printable information from the MindFreedom website, or create your own!
- Stage a Normathon
 - Create a day of guerrilla theatre! A Normathon brought an improv troupe consisting of psychiatric survivors to an outdoor plaza and presented comedic skits, staging a Bed Push, and sharing the stories of experience with the mental health system. See it on YouTube.
- Create a Night of Mad Culture
 - A more organic approach to staging a Mad Pride event, gather together community members to host different kinds of works of art in a collaborative setting. Gallery Gachet has led the way.
- Assemble a Mad Pride Festival
 - A Mad Pride festival is fun for the whole family! One example is Mad Pride Ireland’s festivals, where they host a fun family day in the park with clowns, music, food, theatre, face painting and puppets. The festival associates madness with fun and families, breaking the stigma of danger and hospitals.

What next?

- Make sure to register your Mad Pride event for free via MindFreedom at news@mindfreedom.org. Ask about MindFreedom’s Mad Pride e-mail list for planners.
- Write and submit press releases to your local news agencies, who will sometimes cover even small events.
- Write letters to the editor addressing issues of mental health injustice and inequalities, also plugging your Mad Pride event.
- Have fun! Take photos and video to upload on the web: In the 21st century each of us is our own media.

For more information about MindFreedom’s campaign to support Mad Pride: see: www.mindfreedom.org/campaign/madpride



Tired of waiting in queues? T.shirts by MadPrideInk

The Fantastic Time Traversing Magician *By The Buddhist Babe*

I met the magician on Saturday. By Monday we were walking in the snow. The land of Narnia opened up gateways to new dimensions and we whirled through space and time within the vortex of snow and rabbit holes.

Afterwards we held a tea party with cherries on the top of everything and Nail Clipper tea, (with Clipper Fair Trade organic tea bags added for extra flavour). The magician rearranged the time machine elements of the house, pocketing the ball of elastic bands, forensically marking the Great Escape and moving the dice and chip to another dimension.

The non-stop talking made perfect sense, once you realised he was on a personal journey to discover the meaning of time. Once he managed to get through the gates and tests laid in the labyrinth, and carried his willing accomplices with him, everything would be in balance for the birth of the thirteen months.

Mayan calendars and Arthurian legends merge and meld as he winds his way through the time-space continuum, dragging us all in his wake.

If only he could stop talking and moving for just a moment. Sleep would be good for all of us. Luckily for us he had been picked up by the police on a 136 for exploring gravity and magnetic fields in Waitrose. This meant we all had seven hours peace and quiet. Even more luckily, he hadn't got sectioned.

An urgent need to go shopping meant we headed for the Co-op. He was doing the same as any great explorer or philosopher

would do. He was in the Agora, the market place, the one true public space in our society, where we communicate our ultimate desires.

So when he picked up an enormous cardboard alarm clock and wandered around the shop with it, and his ancient travel clock beeped its alarm, it all made perfect sense.

He is the perfect magician

Time in motion. Exploring concepts, and sharing the opportunity to learn another way of being with the populace of the supermarket.

He stands by the checkout and places a copy of *The Times* beside someone else's shopping. He smiles the world's most engaging grin, look at this gift of knowledge I share with you.

Time travel

The checkout woman looks askance at his gift and her hand drifts towards the alarm button beneath the counter. I smile and say we are leaving now, it is all fine. She hesitates, and we leave the store.

He leaves his time-travelling clock in my car and I know I am in the loop. Me and my house have become part of the matrix of magic he weaves and I wonder what will happen next, because he travels between dimensions while we stand still, the centre of his storm.

How we choose to treat people traversing the Universe, inviting us on their journey of discovery, tells us so much about who we are, and what kind of society we live in.

Problem Page

Between us we have lots of problems which can be resolved with a little creative thinking. The Mad Hatters suggest ways of dealing with some of them.

What Would the
Mad Hatters
Do?

Dear Mad Hatters, I have been diagnosed as bonkers, I am able to manage most things, but I do have a problem that is making my family life difficult. Please help me, I can't cook.

Answers: Many of us Hatters have this problem and we share our ways of resolving the issue with you, - only eat a raw food diet; ask someone to cook for you; that's what takeaways are for; go round friends as often as possible just before meal times; eat out.

Dear Mad Hatters of Bath, I am extremely concerned about what to do as I see elephants when I go into town.

Answers: Take peanuts so you can feed the elephants; wear dark glasses as it tends to make them less noticeable; as long as they don't squash you, what is the problem? Make sure you have no mice on your person.

Dear Mad Hatters I find it hard to relax and go to sleep as monsters come in the dark. What can I do?

Answers: Leave the light on; get someone to stand guard; rig up a complicated selection ofooky traps; Feng shui where you sleep.

Dear Mad Hatters of Bath, I hope you can help me. It is very scary going out as I know everyone can hear my thoughts and use it against me.

Answers: Think funny thoughts and make them laugh; only have nice thoughts; plan the overthrow of the Capitalist society - if they are listening then maybe they will start the revolution.

Dear Mad Hatters this is doing my head in, my Gran insists I am ill not mad, how can I get her to understand?

Answers: Climb on the back of the sofa and quack like a duck; give her a copy of this magazine; invite her to one of our tea parties.

Dear Mad Hatters of Bath, I am extremely confused, I saw a shaman and now I feel much better. Is this just part of my delusion and now I am actually more ill because I now believe in shamans?

Answers: It made you feel better so that's what counts; it works for me - and me - and me.

Dear Mad Hatters I think I am God, no I'm sure I am.

Answers: No, you're not, you're indecisive; so you're the boss - what's the problem?

Dear Mad Hatters, I am the Devil and this is Hell.

Answers: Well, you can make hell whatever you want it to be; so you're the boss - what's the problem?

Dear Mad Hatters of Bath, I am convinced a knowledge of Quantum physics is useful in psychosis. What do you think?

Answers: Only if you want to come back to this plane of existence; I agree it is useful - and me.

Dear Mad Hatters of Bath, my Mental Health Support Worker keeps taking me to the supermarket. Why?

Answers: The support worker is stealing your nectar points; because you never told her you didn't want to go; so she can do her own shopping; to encourage you to believe in the importance of the economy.

Dear Mad Hatters of Bath, I am sure the local MIND drop-in is run by Zombies. Has anyone else noticed this?

Answers: Oh yes, I call them zompies, that smile - the worst kind, whilst they're smiling at you, you never notice that they are eating your soul. Wow, I thought it was just me and I was completely paranoid!

Women's HInstitute of Institutionalised Patients or WHIP for short



Manifesto

1. To promote the cooking of psychiatric cakes, such as the Diazepam Doughnut.
2. To participate in Kitchen Terrorism, by breaking into homes, cooking cakes, and then leaving
3. To knit and croquet S&M equipment and accessories such as handcuffs and whips.
4. To knit angora straitjackets: just because you're restrained doesn't mean you can't appreciate good quality wool.
5. To knit transvestite clothing, and willy warmers for Tory MPs.
6. To promote the arranging of hallucinogenic flowers.
7. To promote self-raising flour arranging
8. To promote cocktails made out of tea and Diazepam.
9. To improve diction of lunatic ravings.

Dolly Sen

If you're not pissed off then you're not paying attention

For me, Mad Hatters is the fulfilment of a long held passion - 40 years long. At eighteen I was 'arrested' out of a spiritual experience into the mental health **CONDITION**. This record followed me through my developing life. During those years my younger sister was **OWNED** by mental health conditioning. She took medication everyday and had treatment (including ECT) from the age of 16 until the day she died, at fifty. Her early death was a result of the long-term administration of medical drugs ruining her physical strength. Her life had a tragic sadness that can still move us - her family - to tears. A hugely warm and colourful woman, with talents in music and art and food and a **BIG MAMA LOVE** for every child on the planet. My *raison d'être* for **MAD HATTERS** is you - Susan Anita Court/Davis - and all those like you, of whom there are too many!

by Jenifer Whatever

Poems

'CARE IN THE COMMUNITY' by Tash

LOCKED UP, HIS BODY
LIKE A PRISON.
"BEND OVER, PLEASE."
IT'S NOT LIKE WE WANTED,
THIS ISN'T FROM CHOICE.
THE NEEDLE IS CLEAN,
A FRESH DOSE, "SEE YOU IN TWO WEEKS."
NO, HIS CHEEK IS BLEEDING.
WE SIT AT HOME AND TRY TO DECIDE
WHAT TO DO NEXT.

ITS SIMPLE -
CARRY ON, CARRY ON MATE.
JIN?
MAYBE.
JUST HAVE SOME FUN.
MAKE THE MOST OF WHAT YOU GOT.

I MAKE A BREW, WE SOURCE UNDERSTANDING
FROM THIS NORMALITY.
THE STRANGER IS GONE,
YOUR FACE IS PINK
YOU LOOK AWAY BUT,
THE NEUROLEPTICS ...
"SEE YOU IN TWO WEEKS."

SOMETIMES I WALK IN BEFORE HE'S FINISHED,
YOUR TROUSERS AROUND YOUR CALVES
OR YOU BUTTONING UP, TIGHTENING YOUR BELT.
I DON'T MEAN THIS IN A HARSH WAY.

YOU MIGHT NOT UNDERSTAND
BUT YOU'VE NEVER BEEN THERE.
WE HAVE TO MAINTAIN
DIGNITY FOR OUR CHILDREN,
AND THOSE IN CARE,
WE HAVE TO MAINTAIN
THAT EVENTUALLY THE DRUGS WILL WORK.

WE SIT ON THE SOFA AND TRY TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO NEXT.

'If' By Martin

If you can keep your head,
When all about you are losing theirs,
Then you have seriously underestimated the seriousness of the situation,
and should be on medication

This is light work

By The J.D. Factor

The one concept I lived with when apparently psychotic is that I was on a mission with a firm purpose. I have called it WORKING FOR GOD (Tongue in cheek!) I am on shift for a period of weeks and in the early years sometimes months.

My actions are vital and under guidance from other realms. It is like being in a war-zone. Eating, sleeping and all daily functions become perfunctory and done on the run. Travelling is an adventure into new work programmes.

I am aware that I am constantly under surveillance from darker forces. The bizarre actions that I have to take to avoid this interference make my behaviour appear eccentric. For example: avoiding barcodes and asking friends to use bank machines on my behalf; under telepathic instruction, keeping still for minutes at a time, so that my body-print cannot be tracked. I met others who had identical experiences, especially when on trains and in public buildings. It is all a bit *X-Files*, but it makes perfect sense in our unusual world.

Eventually I met people who referred me to certain books. In particular, *THE AWAKENER: The Time Is Now*, by Sandy Stevenson, Gateway Books, which describes those experiences in a broader context. It became clear that we were all volunteers acting within a Light Force directed by more advanced souls, to heal the planet and keep safe the future.

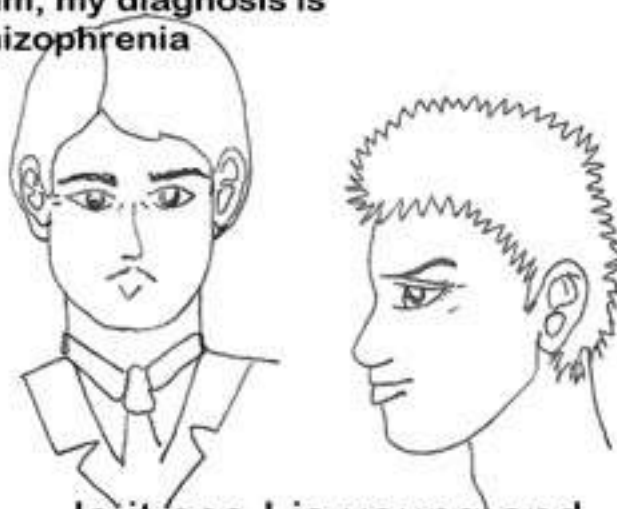
So however bizarre my behaviour appeared, any sacrifice made in reputation was nothing compared to the movement of light, and repair to the damaged earth. My reward was being filled daily with light and love.

Mmm, my diagnosis is manic-depression



Is it because I am white and middle-class?

Mmm, my diagnosis is schizophrenia



Is it cos I is young and black?

Random rants by Embrace The Madness Martin

We have experienced the Terror and it has created a huge chasm between us and those who have not. It is a fear so intense it cannot be articulated and life can never be the same again. Only by experiencing it can it be understood. Everything is contaminated by that knowledge, but we can find solace, support and community amongst our own.

Many psychiatrists think we are idiots. It's beyond their imagination to understand that we can go away and re-search our 'condition' for ourselves. We can get information about the medication they have prescribed and possible alternatives, some that may involve drugs and some that may not. But when we go back and ask to try a different way that we believe might be more effective, they get angry, "I'm the doctor! What do you know?". It's as if we've just punched them in the face. They find it impossible to credit us with any intelligence and simply can't believe we have any self knowledge. We're the ones suffering the extremes; we really would be mad if we didn't want to find out more about the condition and spend a lot of time trying to think of possible ways to alleviate the suffering we're experiencing.



Options- because we always have a choice

Although I feel there is no further point in me seeing a psychiatrist, the mental health authorities believe I should. Therefore, I have adopted a personality disorder so cunning it will baffle and bamboozle even the greatest brain tampering drug pusher in the land. Vestiophobia: the fear of clothes. I shall arrive at all future appointments clad only in my birthday suit. It is not a pretty sight. Once upon a time, in the very distant past, it may have been relatively pleasing upon the eye, but, alas, no longer. However, this does not mean I cannot use it to my advantage. They will pay me the maximum Disability Living Allowance, and some, just to stay away.



Finally made it outside? T.shirts by MadPrideInk

OF BED KNOBS AND SYRINGE STICKS

by Rufus May

Around the world, in cities and on country roads, pyjama-clad protesters have been seen pushing a psychiatric bed with purpose – away from incarceration and towards liberation. On the bed a dummy patient lies, sometimes shackled. The group often have clowns and musicians and dancers joining them. More sinisterly, they are sometimes chased by men in white coats who brandish giant syringes.

These are the Great Escape Bed-Pushes. We started them in the UK in 2005, to meet up with the original Kissit protest. This was organised by artist Aidan Shingler, to speak out against forced psychiatric treatment. ‘Kissit’ was named in reference to the institutional tendency of pinning people down so that forced injections could be given to them in the buttocks. As an alternative, we were inviting proponents of forced treatments to ‘kiss my cheeks!’

Our bed-push was On World Mad Pride Day. We put a Mad Pride banner on the side of the bed so as to celebrate the unique and often forgotten contributions madness makes to our culture. We started the bed-push with a symbolic escape from a private psychiatric hospital in Wyke. Hospital management and security were anxious, particularly with two film crews documenting the event. Then we pushed the bed 36 miles in three days, across the Pennines and into the heart of Manchester.

Along the way we gave out leaflets so as to raise awareness about how common forced treatment is, and what the alternative of a more holistic respectful approach might look like. We were always well received by the public. Once, when I was wearing a tasteful paisley number, I went up to a woman with a leaflet telling her “I’ve just escaped the asylum.” She responded “With pyjamas like that, I’d go back!” We had found a fun way to raise attention to the emphasis on paternalism and drugging in psychiatry. We have often been reported by both local and national media.

For many years a group of us had wanted to find an entertaining way of flagging up the serious issue of how we deal with mental health in our society. We were people who had witnessed psychiatry’s colonial approach to our minds – the mistaken assumption that ‘We know what’s best for you, whether you like it or not’. We were survivors, relatives and friends working in and outside the system for a better, more compassionate way. The bed-push antics represent a passion for escapology. We need to escape language that confines us, to find alternatives to judgemental language and the violence of forced treatment. ‘Escape’ means ‘find other ways’. Maybe in exceptional circumstances there are arguments for compassionate restraint of some sort. But we believe the use of forced drugging is very likely to alienate people from themselves and from others.

It is no coincidence that in Bradford, where the Bed-Pushes first started five years ago, a group of people are planning a Soteria style house. Soteria is a therapeutic community based on holistic principles (see www.soterianetwork.org.uk). The group organised a bed-push to help raise money for the project, with Coronation Street's Steve Huison (Eddie Windass) leading the 30-strong parade.

The media like a figurehead, and in the past it has been me who has played that role, but ultimately it has always been a collective effort. We are mindful of the thousands of people who would love to join us but are incarcerated in psychiatric institutions.

Many of us felt silenced by coercive psychiatric treatment, trapped by the sense that forced treatment is inevitable and should not be discussed. (Where are the research papers on compulsory psychiatric treatment?) The global Bed-Push movement is one way of giving us back our legitimate pyjama-pride craziness, and imagining a better way to treat our madness.

For a film about Mad Pride and the first Great Escape Bed-Push see:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DaiT7V8WLCM>

For archived information about the Kissit protest see:

http://www.kissit.org/kissit_content.html

Back Page Comment

The ConDem Government is destroying any sense of equality in this country. With cutbacks in public services affecting the most vulnerable in society, it is time for us to fight back. In October 2010 Mad Pride activists gathered in Birmingham and joined the Disability Alliance in a protest against cuts in benefits and services, and London Mad Pride organised its own creative demo.

However, as the Mad Pride Bedpush of 2008 illustrates, demonstrations do not always have to be banner-waving. That event was to celebrate the life of Daniel Galvin who, aged 29, died of a heart attack. He had been diagnosed and drugged by the mental health system since he was 16. The Bedpush highlighted

how young lives are being destroyed every day by a psychiatric system which does not listen to people. For a film about the 2008 Mad Pride Bedpush, check out the Mad Hatters of Bath video on youtube.

As a community, it is hard for us to take to the barricades, or even to demonstrate: problems with anxiety, paranoia, panic attacks, and often physical disabilities and fear of reprisals, mean that many of us just can't cope with it. This is why we feel our protests have to be creative and inclusive.





2008 bedpush



Stephen Fry

He just couldn't resist the chance to wear the

Solidarity Mad Hatters Hat.



As part of our on going mission to assimilate Stephen Fry into the ranks of the Mad Hatters we took this quote of his from the Time To Change website. "Once the understanding is there, we can all stand up and not be ashamed of ourselves, then it makes the rest of the population realise that we are just like them but with something extra."



WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY 2008



**MAD PRIDE DAY 2007
FESTIVAL AND BEDPUSH**



MAD PRIDE DAY 2008



**2009 MAD PRIDE CAMPOUT
AND WORKSHOP OXFORDSHIRE**



BEDPUSH 2008



DEMO'S OCTOBER 2010



MAD BATTERS TEA PARTY 2010 MAD PRIDE DAY



LONDON



BIRMINGHAM