

## RWF/RWS The Adelphi Experience 2012

Report on the residential weekend: *Communications*. Fri-Sun 23-25<sup>th</sup> November

See full programme for this, as the end of this Report.

This event organised by RWF, in association with: the RW Society which organised the Key-note lecture on the Saturday afternoon; Philosophy in Pubs (PiPs); the Esperanto Association of Britain (EAB) which ran its own Drondoj (discussion circles) throughout the weekend; the WEA which was represented by activist stalwarts from Biggleswade, Kidderminster ...

68 were resident at the Adelphi with six non-residents, and some occasional visitors...

More than 40 written, with ten more verbal responses have been received – so the views of a high percentage of participants are represented here.

### **The education and learning experience** (each quote, separated below, from a different person)

Debates on varied topics: ‘models of what a democratic discussion group should be’; ‘fine examples of co-operative self-helping adult education’; Fellow participants - ‘a delight... inspiring a feeling of community... warmth, openness, kindness – let’s do it again!’; ‘What a wonderful group of people...skilled facilitators’; ‘great topics...excellent’; ‘...so stimulating and thought provoking... a wonderful opportunity now to set up something in S. Wales’; ‘excellent ambiance’; ‘fantastic range of subjects... good to get notes beforehand’; ‘great to have so much info... and meeting people from all over the country...sharing experiences’; ‘My first... the whole experience beneficial... rewarding ...opened new doors’; ‘..discussion sessions rather than ‘talks’ very welcome...’; ‘...my first time... a really good idea; thanks for subsidy – it really helped’; ‘range of discussion topics very well organised..’

**Specific sessions praised:** (Nb - no seriously negative comments received on any discussion sessions and these below each had several positive comments):

*‘Social and political perspectives:* a great introduction...’; *Communications:* ‘...amazed at how such a deep discussion could take place on children’s comics...’; *World wide web* ‘...my favourite session’; *The Mona Lisa* ‘ the best for me...’; *Dad’s Army* ‘...another brilliant discussion...’; *World without war* ‘...my first experience on views of pacifists... I was shocked... says more about me than them... made me think deeply...’; *Sandel* - ‘thoroughly enjoyed’; *Women and Media* ‘ a good (process) to find out and interpret...’; *Marx/ Occupy/ Consumerism* sessions ‘good discussions - which could have gone on longer...’; *Tressell* ‘outstanding’, ‘really enjoyed... so well researched’... ; *Poetry and Pub Methodology* sessions ‘fascinating’... ‘useful and practical’

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### **Constructively critical and more negatively...**

‘the only problem: facilitators trying to manage people who don’t know when they’ve said too much’ and ‘very few problems with dominant voices - but there were some...’

**Issues with the notes** in advance (for several): too many, confusing process, e-mail and computer problems.... **Solution/s:** all published in advance on web-site; smaller number of key notes sent to everyone in advance; more copies available for everyone on arrival.

‘sessions with notes worked best...’; ‘narrow age group’; ‘discussion circles too large...’ (two stressed this); ‘some discussions could have gone on longer....’

### **Key-note lecture**

Within the weekend, on the Saturday afternoon, *The Raymond Williams Society* held its annual lecture. This was open to all booked on the weekend. The Lecture, entitled **Scouse: A Social and Cultural History**, was given by Tony Crowley - Hartley Burr Alexander Chair in the Humanities, Scripps, California and Honorary Visiting Professor at the Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool.

There was a good turn-out (about 100) for the Key-note Lecture, which was followed by a Liverpool University Press sponsored reception at which Tony’s recently published LUP book, with the same title, was for sale. A healthy number of copies were sold ....

### **The Adelphi Hotel as venue**

Exceptional range of views on this venue –

From: ‘great, comfortable, well placed’; ‘stunning’; ‘remarkable public rooms’ ; ‘staff lovely’; ‘very happy to have stayed in this ‘shabby-chic’ institution’; ‘great for a nostalgic scouse like me’; ‘excellent value’ ; ‘fascinating’; ‘food good’; ‘excellent service by staff’; ‘amazing place’; ‘unusual and intriguing venue’; ‘great to be able to walk out into Liverpool’; ‘meeting rooms, great’ ; ‘great venue – a real place’ etc..

To: ‘badly run’; ‘my room was ice-cold’; ‘cavernous and claustrophobic’; ‘Kafkaesque – frequently got lost...’; ‘a dystopian experience’; ‘food awful’; ‘no good for vegetarians’ ‘poor beer’; ‘temperatures too hot, then too cold...’; ‘needs a very good clean’; ‘bedroom keys that don’t work’; noise, problems of access with no-go zones making long walk to bedrooms and back ‘a small nightmare’; health and safety issues etc ...

A case of parallel universes - were we staying in the same place?

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### **Subsidy issues**

With the support of grant from the *Westham House Fund* RWF had no real problem with the Adelphi subsidy which brought the fees down to a remarkable *budget-value* rate, enabling such a large residential booking from all over the UK. Even so, this was a risk - offering substantial financial support to all participants across three educational charities (RWF, RWS and the Esperantists – EAB). This event was a terrific example of charities working to help each other, which the CC recommends.

## **The Future - 2013** (25<sup>th</sup> year of RWF weekends)

There was strong support for more similar to the above, but smaller scale maybe. Plus, specific potential mentioned for future themes, for examples **'Future of the NHS'**; **'Scottish Independence'** **'Facilitator training'** ...

During 2013 it has been suggested we branch out - with residential events in **East Anglia**; **Berwick-upon-Tweed**; **Wortley Hall**, near Sheffield; **Coleg Harlech**, N Wales; The Grange, **Ellesmere**, Shropshire; **Shallowford House**, mid-Staffs; The above could be for about 25 residents each - more modest affairs!

**Most importantly, the 25<sup>th</sup> annual RW weekend** tradition. Proposal – next year a mid-week booking, as this year at Wortley Hall. WH has again offered a good budget

**Wed-Fri 8-10<sup>th</sup> May** for up to 40 bedrooms (ie up to 50 or more participants) Programme and e-leaflet will be posted on the web- site for this shortly

**November 2013** - another combined event (with RWS etc)? Decision on that will rest primarily on RWS with combined AGM and annual RW Lecture... Venue – mid/Southern England? Watch this space.

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This was the programme we started with..... It was modified throughout the event to manage the participants in the discussion circles.

## **Communications**

Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, November 2012

### **Programme**

We aim to be very flexible, allowing a range of at least six choices for most discussion sessions. Hence, this revised provisional programme may be modified and adapted on the day. We'll meet briefly in plenary for 'show of hands' preferences for discussions, then move to appropriate round-tables or separate rooms. (This worked OK at Wortley Hall).

Fri 23 Nov 2012

16.00            Arrival and registration.

17.00            Welcome. Introductions, and review of programme plans.

17.15           **Communications:** discussions with notes on the book, asking the question – what’s still relevant? **Pub discussion methodology; Leveson; Social and political perspectives in Britain 2012 > 2017...; The BBC and its future,**

18.15           Bar

18.30           Dinner

19.45           **Communications:** Discussions on recent changes (last decade) in ‘traditional’ media: daily newspapers; Sunday or weekend newspapers; local media; weeklies; radio; TV; women’s and men’s magazines; children’s comics...; **Poetry and Politics: speaking truth to Power; Leveson ; Dad’s Army; Why Marx was right – and wrong; Michael Sandel.**

21.15           Bar ...

Sat 24 Nov 2012

08.30           Breakfast

09.30           Workshops: **Today’s Newspapers** – analysed, as RW did in Chapter 3, ‘Content’; **Radio Times** – examples analysed from each decade, 1940s to 2012; what do these tell us about broadcasting trends? **Women and the Media** (Everybody encouraged to collect, and bring articles, cuttings and references to this big theme... These circles will filter and select, from writings and documents provided, quotes and references for presentation to the plenary session in the evening. Plus options for discussion: **Personal communication: speaking and listening to each other – not as easy as it seems?; Whither the www? Occupy 1; Social and political perspective s in Britain, 2012 to 2017.**

11.00           Break

11.30           Workshop/s: As at 09.30, plus options for discussion: **Slavery; Co-operatives and Mutuels; The Mona Lisa - a media creation? Occupy 2 and the avaaz pheonomon; Michael Sandel.**

13.00           Lunch

14.30           **Scouse: A Social and Cultural History** Key-note RW Society Annual Lecture by **Tony Crowley**, Hartley Burr Alexander Chair in the Humanities, Scripps, California; Honorary Visiting Professor at the Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool. Tony’s book with the same title will be published by Liverpool University Press (LUP) in October.

Followed by a **reception sponsored by LUP.**

17.00           Workshops as in the morning, plus options for discussion: **Leveson; Obstacles to a world without war 1; Politics as Consumption (NLR, Aug 2012; Slavery; Michael Sandel; Born Believers.**

18.00           Bar

18.30           Dinner

20.00            **The Dudley Pretty Memorial Session - Plenary: Women and the Media**

21.30            Bar

Sun 25 November

08.30            Breakfast

09.30            **Robert Tressell; Architecture in Liverpool; Born Believers; The Human Brain; Politics as Consumption; Obstacles to a world without war, 2;**

11.00            Break

11.30            **3 more Poems; Scouse - further discussion; Pub discussion methodology; ... Workshops (contd); Occupy 2 and the avaaz phenomenon.**

12.30            Forum: **Review and What Next?**

13.00            Lunch

13.45            **Optional guided visits:** Liverpool Architecture, The Tressell Trail; The Slavery Museum

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Suggested reading: as in earlier programme. If you have a lap-tap or i-pad with you these may be useful for possible use during some above sessions!