

SUSSEX COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY NEWS

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**SCAP 1985-2023
AN ORAL HISTORY**

**LEAVING A LEGACY
DECIDE WHERE
OUR FUNDS GO**

**MOVING ON
HOW IMAGE WORK CAN
HELP WITH ENDINGS**



**PLUS: MYTH AND THE LIFE CYCLE, EMMY VAN DEURZEN ON FREEDOM,
MICK COOPER ON SOCIAL JUSTICE, FUTURE FOR SCAP FACEBOOK PAGE**



SCAP's FINAL AGM

SATURDAY MAY 20 9AM-12NOON

**The Holiday Inn (Ashdown 2)
Brighton, BN1 2JF**

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Cover: istock/Vipul Umretiya

Welcome...



... to the Spring 2023 issue of SCAP Magazine. This is also the very last issue, and contains lots of important practical information around managing the closure of SCAP, including the dispersal of funds and the future of the Facebook page. You will also find two soul-filled features about working with endings – our clients' and our own.

Just before Christmas, Sheila Pope drove over the Downs on her motorbike to bring me a stack of her old SCAP magazines (originally more humbly referred to as 'the newsletter'). They dated back to May 2001. I ended up reading for hours, as absorbed by the organisational minutiae as the main articles. I found myself moved by how well-thumbed they were, with articles highlighted, trainings asterisked, forms snipped out.

SCAP has clearly meant a lot to a lot of people. So the remainder of this issue is dedicated to a rough oral history of the organisation. Via members' memories we hear about the growth of counselling, the impact of the digital revolution, the rise of CBT, the rumblings of the regulation debate, the move online. We also hear about SCAP's own development and demise.

As we were finishing this final issue, Helen Armstrong, who had been dusting off her own stack of backissues, emailed me a PDF of an article by SCAP's first ever Secretary, Philip Smith. Written in 2001 on the occasion of his retirement, it ended with the words, 'I salute those who, by not being afraid to offer, still carry the torch'. As SCAP winds down, I hope this final magazine will inspire you to think about what you might wish to carry forward.

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Spring 2023

Sussex Counselling and Psychotherapy News (SCAP Magazine) is the termly magazine for counsellors and psychotherapists working in and around Sussex who are registered members of SCAP. Sussex Counselling and Psychotherapy News is the official journal of Sussex Counselling and Psychotherapy. Views expressed in the journal and signed by a writer are the views of the writer and not necessarily those of Sussex Counselling and Psychotherapy. Publication in this journal does not imply endorsement of the writer's views. Publication of adverts does not constitute endorsement by Sussex Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Letter from the SCAP Chair



Endings... We are trained in them, we experience them in life and with our clients, over and over again – and they can still throw you off track...

At the beginning of last week, I had four clients. By Wednesday, I only had one! Such is the famine and feast of private practice. Two endings I was expecting, one I was not, with the result that I felt ineffective and insufficient. To further complicate matters, one of the ending clients gave me a gift! Horror of horrors: I mumbled something about not being able to accept it, professional boundaries, etc. etc. There was an awkward shuffle, then we went through to the room where we had our final session – and the gift was left in the hallway.

I failed to unpack during the session what giving me a gift meant to the client: was it somehow a payment for sessions funded by a third party? Would a refusal to accept it result in feelings of abandonment and rejection? After the session we had another awkward shuffle – and then she was gone and the gift remained. I immediately arranged a conversation with my supervisor who reassured me I could accept the gift as it was not too expensive and we composed an email which I sent to the client tying up some of these loose ends.

And then I remembered another ending with a gift: mine with a therapist I had seen during my initial training and for five subsequent years. When we started, I had disliked all the knick-knacks she had in her consulting room: little china figures, crystals and pictures, small toys and such. During our years together, I came to appreciate their presence and used many of them in my work. Indeed, when I left, I added to their number and gave her a small, wooden artist's mannequin with posable arms and legs. I left it with one arm raised, palm turned outwards, as if waving. But was she waving hello or goodbye?! I thought it was obvious that she (we decided it was female) was bidding farewell – this was our last session, after all! – but my therapist opened the possibility that, in the ending which we'd been working through, there was also a 'hello'. We had never said goodbye to each other before, we didn't know what it would be like, what we would feel or what it would evoke in us. The process was new to us and, in that, there was learning to be had – a 'hello' as we experienced a new aspect of each other and ourselves for the first time.

So when I saw the picture Isobel had selected for the front of this magazine I immediately asked myself if it was a sunset or a sunrise. It's impossible to tell, and maybe it's both... What can I learn about myself in this goodbye, the closure of SCAP, never experienced before? Maybe I'll do it differently to other goodbyes. What lies ahead? I do know I will miss being part of a therapeutic community, so I'm working on building up a local network of therapists in mid-Sussex, for social contact and making referrals. I wonder what you are leaving behind and what will you take away from your contact with SCAP?

Dickens' quote doesn't apply to the closure of SCAP: 'it was the best of times, it was the worst of times'. It wasn't the times that were the best. It was the people. I will leave my thanks to them (and there are many!) 'til the AGM – do please come along on May 20 to say one final goodbye – or maybe hello!'

Sheila Pope, Chair of Sussex Counselling and Psychotherapy

Leaving a legacy

What will happen to SCAP's remaining funds when the organisation closes? SCAP Treasurer Andy Brett outlines the process by which we can all help determine this aspect of SCAP's legacy, and introduces the two counselling and psychotherapy charities that will benefit.

Change is normal, healthy, and vital for any living essence if it is to conceive, gestate, grow, flourish and die within the Cycles of Life on Earth. All Life comes from 'no-thing' and returns to 'no-thing' while in-between offers an opportunity to contribute to the continuation of the living processes of which we are a part. In a healthy Cycle, we:

- emerge from a 'ground' where all possibilities exist
- become aware of something 'massing'
- consciously identify the 'need to be met'
- prepare ourselves to act
- act to have that need met
- enjoy the satisfaction and assimilation of the met need
- and return to the 'ground' where all possibilities exist once more

When I look back over the history of SCAP, I see this cycle represented in all of it's natural beauty. Our organisation was summoned from 'no-thing' through collective need and action and was actively engaged in meeting that need, for our Members and the wider systems we are embedded in, for many years. Now, the field we operate in has changed and it is time for the energy of SCAP to return to 'no-thing', opening the possibility for something else to take its place.

As part of our collective duty of care for the legacy of SCAP as we end, we need to decide what to do with the funds that remain in our accounts. At our last Committee meet-

ing in February 2023, we discussed options around this and you are now asked to reflect on and respond to the following approach.

My current estimate is that we will have just under £9,000 remaining in our accounts on 20 May 2023, the date for the final AGM. As a Committee, we are keen to donate these funds to two charitable organisations of relevance to the counselling and psychotherapy world – the As You Are Centre in Southwick and the UK-wide Black, Asian and African Therapists Network.

Our aim in selecting these two organisations is to maintain access to low-cost therapy for those attending the As You Are Centre and to further support the much needed increase in the diversity of qualified therapists in the UK.

We remain conscious that SCAP's money does not truly belong to SCAP, it belongs to our Members. And so, each of us now has three options to choose from:

By Tuesday 20 June, you should take one of the following actions:

- Email finance@sussex-counselling.co.uk or complete the slip enclosed with this copy of the magazine asking for your portion of the remaining funds to be returned to you, stating the Sort Code and Account Number of the bank account it should go to.
- Email finance@sussex-counselling.co.uk confirming your acceptance of donating

your funds evenly across the two charities named above.

- Take no action, which we will take as acceptance of donating your funds.

SCAP currently has 63 members, so I anticipate each individual who requests their portion returned to them would receive in the

region of £140. This money will be returned by the end of June to the details you provide when you request the refund. All remaining funds will then be split evenly and donated to the two charities.

Thanks for taking the time to read this, and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our final AGM in May.

Black, Asian and African Therapists Network (BAATN)

“We are the UK’s largest independent organisation to specialise in working psychologically, informed by an understanding of intersectionality, with people who identify as Black, African, South Asian and Caribbean. Our primary focus and area of expertise is to support people from these heritages. However, we are open to other People of Colour who are affected by oppression due to the colour of their skin and global white power.

One of the primary aims of BAATN is to address the inequality of access to appropriate psychological services for Black, African, South Asian and Caribbean people, which is a well-recognised reality. Our overall goal is the individual and collective processing of our inner experiences for the benefit of ours and other communities, and to give a voice to a ‘black empathic approach’ in therapy and therapy education. As a body, we seek to influence the integration of this approach into mainstream psychotherapy training, literature and practice. We also encourage other organisations to work with us and support our work.

We very much appreciate you considering a donation to our Each One Teach One programme. This would be instrumental in further supporting our mentees and helping us to achieve our mission to nurture Black and Asian psychological therapists through their training so they can contribute to Mental Health services in the UK.”



As You Are (AYA)

“We have been providing therapeutic counselling, psychoeducational support and group-work to individuals, couples and families since 2007. Based in Southwick, we support those living in East and West Sussex, Brighton and Hove. AYA strongly believes that all individuals should have access to positive mental health support whatever their circumstances. Over 50 per cent of our clients are unwaged or in receipt of means tested benefits.

AYA’s mission to provide affordable mental health support to people in the community is shared and delivered by our wonderful, committed team of receptionists, counsellors, supervisors, managers and trustees, many of whom have been involved with SCAP over the years.

We’re sorry to hear that SCAP is winding up and incredibly grateful to be considered as recipients of a donation from SCAP members. The current financial pressures that we’re all feeling threaten to make even low cost counselling unaffordable for many. Donations help us to keep our fees as low as possible so that we can continue to provide mental health support to those with limited financial resources.”



SCAP's Facebook page goes forth

Where might SCAP's 900 social media followers go to keep the organisation's collectivist spirit alive? Stay right where you are, invites Jay Beichman – the Facebook page has a new future connecting the Southeast regional branch of Counselling and Psychotherapy Union.

All things must pass. Yet, often, out of endings come new beginnings. And so it will be with the SCAP Facebook Page. Sussex Counselling (SC) which evolved into Sussex Counselling and Psychotherapy (SCAP) has been a part of my personal and professional life ever since I took my tentative first steps towards becoming a therapist. I attended one of their seminars, for the first time, not long after I began my PGDip training at the University of Brighton in the late 1990s.

Petruska Clarkson was the speaker. Her book, *The Therapeutic Relationship*, had only been out a few years, and she was communicating the principles in that book to an audience mostly unfamiliar with her conceptualisation of five types of therapeutic relationship. She was extremely funny with an intense, charismatic presence. I don't think I have been to a therapy talk or seminar since which has packed as much punch.

For several years, Sussex Counselling was putting on the most interesting and exciting events in Brighton – despite some competition from other local professional groups – as well as being the main networking group for therapists wanting to meet each other. There have been several near-endings of SCAP. My impression was that we faced some kind of crisis on a near-annual basis. But despite this sense of perpetual impending doom SCAP might have gone on

for another 40 years if the pandemic hadn't put an end to in-person meetings, whether seminars or socials. I think SCAP failed to make the transition from the analogue into the digital age.

I don't know when I started the Facebook page but it did not take too long to build up likes and followers. At the time of writing we have 728 likes and 900 followers – not bad for a page which has not paid for any 'sponsored' posts. When the page first started, Facebook was much friendlier to the idea of 'organic' reach so there were a few posts that reached up to a thousand people. Now, if you want to reach that number of people you have to pay, so, frustratingly, the reach is much lower for those of us still sticking to the idea of organic reach.

The Psychotherapy and Counselling Union (PCU) was founded in 2016 and I joined not long after its founding. The PCU offers support to therapists as working people. It is a much needed body for therapists. Many therapists mistakenly assume that their membership bodies will support them if they are unfortunate enough to be subject to, for instance, an unjust complaint or unfair dismissal. This is not the case and outside of taking on your own legal representation the PCU is the only body specifically for therapists (not working in the public sector) which will offer support in such

circumstances. Outside of that worst-case scenario it is worth joining the union to make your voice heard on a range of issues such as regulation, trainings, standards, SCoPED, the NHS, IAPT, NICE, medicalisation of distress, and workfare.

Recently I have taken on a role with the PCU as the Southeast Regional Representative. By the time this is published we will have had a first online meeting for current members. I hope PCU Southeast will also want to put on other events (such as socials and talks) at which non-members will be invited in the hope of growing the PCU membership.

So when SCAP is formally dissolved at the AGM in May 2023, the Facebook page will be renamed Psychotherapy and Counselling Union Southeast. The posts will remain much the same as they are now. However, it might be that if you follow the page you may not want to follow it anymore once SCAP comes to an end. That is easily done. In an instant you can unfollow and / or un-

like the page. But I hope you stay as I believe PCU Southeast can be an organisation which has the potential to be a kind of meeting place in real and virtual life that will carry on the spirit of SCAP, albeit with more of a political edge. It also covers a huge area from Wiltshire in the West, to Norfolk in the North, over to Kent in the East and the Isle of Wight in the South. So there is the exciting prospect of meeting our colleagues from a bit further afield than our admittedly beautiful county of Sussex.

I mourn the loss of SCAP but I hope its spirit will live on in other groups and activities for us Sussex-based therapists as we go forward in these difficult times.

Jay Beichman PhD MBACP(SnrAccred) has been practising as a therapist since 1998. He promotes his practice at www.counsellinginbrighton.co.uk and his writing: prose, poetry, fiction, blogs and articles at www.jaybeichmanwriter.com. You can read more about his memories of SCAP on p.21.



When things come to an end

Whether we are saying goodbye to a person, a place, a life stage or an organisation, our imaginations can prove a powerful resource. Dr Dina Glouberman shares an exercise, Saying Goodbye, Saying Hello, that she uses to help her clients and students let go and move on.



The ending of SCAP may well be a painful one for members as well as readers of this wonderful magazine. When things come to an end, and they have been precious to you, it can sometimes feel almost unbearable. How can that which was so important to us disappear without trace?

Yet, as an old saying goes, when we lose someone or something, we are ‘losing what we never had’. We cannot lose the experiences we have had. We can only lose the future we counted on and which is no longer there.

In a sense, we are saying goodbye to the old form only; the spirit can still be fully alive in our minds and hearts. So nothing can truly disappear without trace unless we close our hearts and minds to it.

At that moment, it is so important to acknowledge the joy of what you had – and the difficulties too – and to be willing to say goodbye, taking with you what was good about it and moving on to a new life perhaps with new commitments.

Let us widen the need for saying goodbye to whomever or whatever is ending or has ended in your life. Imagery and the

imagination are my first port of call at crucial moments in life, and I suggest that a really powerful way to say goodbye is to get an image of whom or what you are saying goodbye to, and engage in a healing conversation, at the end of which you can really let go.

Most of the healing imagery exercises I work with involve conversation. These conversations include not only an expression of your perspective and feelings, but also that of the other. In the world of the imagination, you can literally get an image of the other on a seat opposite you, and then sit in the seat of the other and see their perspective. The power of good conversation, which includes an honest understanding of both sides, is remarkable.

At this moment of saying goodbye, there is an ImageWork exercise that can hit the spot, called ‘Saying Goodbye and Saying Hello’. I have used this exercise to help people to say goodbye to people who have died or have left their lives in any other way, but also to animals, places, jobs, institutions, or life-stages.

I am reminded of a woman whom I worked with in an online group, using this exercise to facilitate a goodbye to her dog who was actually still alive but whom she would have to put to sleep. She spoke to the dog of how much she loved him but that now that he was disabled and incontinent it was hard to take care of him. She also wanted him to say if he had been happy with her, though she knew he had been.

When she switched roles and ‘became’ the dog, he told her how happy he had been and how much he loved her but now that he was so disabled he was ready to go. He reassured her that she would be okay without him. When she switched back to herself, she was relieved and light, and continued with the goodbye, happy about looking forward her new life. She later wrote me and told me

how that conversation had enabled her to let go of her dog and discover the joy of her newfound freedom.

Another example that comes to mind is Bernard, one of my ImageWork students. He realised he wasn’t able to find a new house because he hadn’t said goodbye to his old one. He sat on a park bench, and did a version of this exercise, ending with him dancing with the spirit of his house, and singing her a goodbye song. This shifted something within him so profoundly that he was free to move on.

Here is a brief script for this exercise, adapted from the full transcript in my book, *ImageWork*. Since you may be thinking of

**Before saying goodbye,
we can see the life of
the relationship with
the Other
flashing before us**

your relationship with SCAP, or you may be thinking of someone or something else you need to say goodbye to, I will call them Other; you can put in the name of the person, animal, institution, place or life-stage you are saying goodbye to. If you wish, you can also download an audio of this exercise from my

website (go to Individual Audios: Healing) so that you can be guided through it.

Try this:

1 Relax and invite the image of the other
Do a brief relaxation and allow an image to emerge of someone or something sitting opposite you that you need to say goodbye to. See them clearly. How do you feel in their presence? I will now call them Other.

2 Life review of the relationship
Allow to flow before your eyes all the pictures that come to you of your relationship with Other. They may be enjoyable or painful. If they are enjoyable, step inside the picture and relive them. If painful, you may wish to stay outside and look at them calmly.

Acknowledge with these pictures all the facets of the relationship that you have had with Other. Now wrap all these memories up in a bubble of light and blow them away.

Please note: It is often said that when someone is about to die, they see their lives flashing before their eyes. In the same way, before saying goodbye, we can review the pictures that represent the relationship, including both the happy scenes and the painful ones, and thus see the life of the relationship flashing before us.

3 Talking to each other

Now talk to Other opposite you and share everything you feel – the good things that you appreciate them for and the negative things you resent them for. Don't worry if it sounds irrational. Just let the feelings come out. Now switch roles and sit in the seat of the Other. What do you notice? How do you feel as Other and how does Self (the original you) look to you? Did you hear what Self said? What is your response?

4 Moving towards resolution

Continue the dialogue until you feel that you have reached some sense of completion. In the case of a recent painful separation or death this can take days or weeks or even months of conversations. Take as long as you need.

5 Saying goodbye and cutting the tie

When you are ready, say “Goodbye”. Feel the depth of that goodbye. Be aware that this doesn't mean that you cannot love or relate to the Other but that they are no longer involved with you directly in the kind of relationship you have had with them until now. It is now time to cut the tie. Imagine that the Other is on a boat, tied by a rope to the shore where you are standing. Cut the rope and let the boat float out to sea or down the river, wishing the Other well on their journey.

6 Saying hello

Now walk away, and imagine yourself having good things happen to you in your new life. Who or what can you now say “Hello” to? How is that for you?

In my own life, as I get older, I am finding that there are more and more people and things I need to say goodbye to. It is good to know that after a full goodbye, there can also be a hello.

Dina Glouberman is a psychotherapist and the creator of ImageWork, an approach she has pioneered for over 40 years that taps into the vast power of imagery to enable ourselves and our clients to understand and guide and transform our lives. She is also the visionary co-founder of Skyros Holistic Holidays. Her books include ImageWork: The Complete Guide to Working with Transformational Imagery (PCCS Books, 2022), and The Joy of Burnout (Skyros Books), and you can find out more via her website, www.dinaglouberman.com. She has lived in Hastings.



Working with myth and the life cycle

The cycle of life, death and rebirth is universal yet, in modern culture, some phases may be valued over others. Longterm SCAP member Isabella Florschutz shares how ancient myths can guide us and our therapy clients to face, and embrace, all points in the natural process.

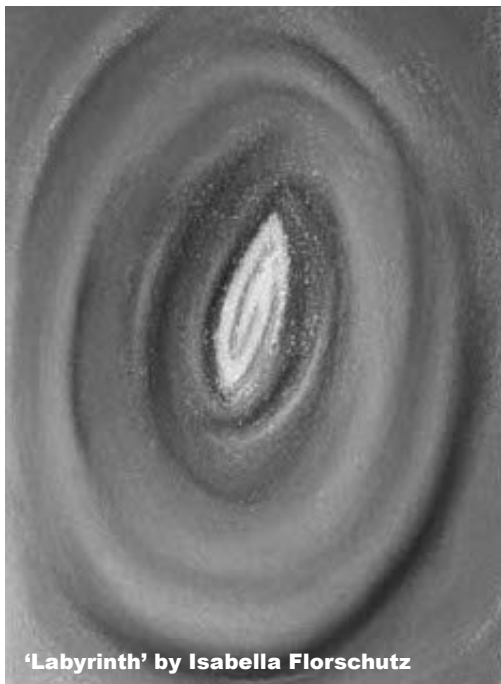
We all face the fact of death, an ending to our present life, and each one needs to find their own relationship to their mortality. In our life there may be many new phases and endings, many of which create turmoil for us. Clients come to therapy because of a struggle with a part of the cycle, including aspects of relationships, or jobs, that involve endings. Women experience particular thresholds of change – menarche, motherhood, menopause.

Many of the most famous myths speak of a Life Death Rebirth cycle. As far back as the stories of Gilgamesh and Inanna, the protagonist must endure a journey to the underworld. Inanna is left to hang on a hook for three days, until some very small helpers come to bring her back to life. In Egyptian times there is the murder and subsequent rebirth of Osiris. In the Greek myths we hear about the abduction of Persephone by Hades, God of the Underworld, to which she must subsequently always return for a part of the year. The life of Christ also shows this archetypal pattern, his life and death lead to resurrection, but not in the same form.

It is of course the cycle we experience in nature. The seed germinates into a tender Spring shoot, growing and developing into a blossoming plant, then fruiting until the signs of withering appear, with the resulting death and a falling back into the earth. In

this image, the cycle never has death as finality. There is both an ending to each phase and a transformational process within the entire cycle, a letting go and a step forward to the new.

The creative or energy cycle also follows this archetypal pattern. We have an idea, a seed of inspiration. We develop it in our consciousness and form a plan. It may flour-



'Labyrinth' by Isabella Florschutz

ish and bear gifts of our actions and then it might falter. The creative or energy cycle also follows this archetypal pattern. We might lose inspiration, energy or enthusiasm, or face challenges. It may not be received any longer, we may need to adjust or redesign it, or we may need to let it go. It is this process that SCAP has gone through as an organisation, with this final edition of the magazine, and the folding of the organisation in its present form.

In our culture there is a strong impulse for growth and development, for goals and achievements, and a turning away from the faltering and the dying. The wish for the youthful stage dominates. This can cause a

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**It is hard to let go
voluntarily, it takes
courage and surrender,
there is a fear of the void**

”



clinging to an outmoded phase, possibly a stagnation, which often leads to a crisis, where the situation implodes and chaos reigns. There is often still the wish to return to how it was before the loss, regrets around that which was not completed. The fear of loss of control and aversion to letting go into the grief creates a damming of the creative flow, the possibility for maturation and development into a more whole self.

It is hard to let go voluntarily, it takes courage and surrender, there is a fear of the void, of nothingness. Sometimes the life cycle is complete, sometimes it is wrenched away in mid-flow. This is about being in service to life and not trying to have domination over it. In the rebirth we carry a knowledge and experience of the death, no longer the unscathed naïve self, but the richer, deeper wounded self that can potentially serve others in their journey of life.

Can this mythic image of the cycle help us to cope with the phases of our life? The plant seed cycle needs the right conditions and input from the four elements – earth, water, sun and air. In the human soul's experience of death, loss, depression or impasse, we may also find the four elements an important source to bring life forces and vitality back. Moreover, we know how important the human qualities of compassion, warmth, patience, gentle tending to and witnessing are to enable a return to living.

Myths can also be a guide and a mirror for the soul's journey, and acknowledging the wisdom of this cycle can support us during struggles and endings. Something new can form. Celebration and rituals can be very important to acknowledge and help people with the change. So let's celebrate all that SCAP has achieved, given to and supported its members over its lifespan!

Isabella Florschütz (UKCP) is an Integrative Psychotherapist and Founder of Creative Soul Journeys®. For info about her practice, workshops and retreats, including the April 2023 retreat Phases of a Woman's Life, visit www.creativesouljourneys.co.uk.

SCAP: an oral history

Founded in 1985, SCAP has coincided with a period of great change – for our profession, for perceptions of counselling and therapy, and for the world at large. Committee members past and present share their memories, and reflect on what the organisation has meant to them.

There will be as many histories of SCAP as there have been members. What follows is a series of 11 edited conversations with individuals who came (or were coaxed!) forward to share their memories of the organisation when SCAP announced it would be closing. Their recollections take us from 1985, with the founding of what was then called South Coast Counselling, through to 2023, as current Chair Sheila Pope reflects on the impact of the pandemic.

Eva Hewitt (founding member, Chair early Nineties)

“I can’t believe how old I am, and how little I actually do remember about the beginnings! I recall going to a hall in Falmer in what was then the Brighton College of Education, with the people who were really keen to set up Sussex Counselling. Andrew Polmear, a well known GP in the area, was one of the people who inaugurated it. I remember there were quite lively discussions about whether to go ahead with this group. Once it got going it was very popular, it grew and grew.

I remember the early meetings, many at my house, and many at Adrienne Hirschfeld’s. She is no longer with us but was very energetic and influential in Sussex Counselling. We were also a bit of a social thing. We used to meet in pubs and have an evening session. That was pleasant. You got to know people in the area, people you could refer to. And there were trainings, offered by



“We played a huge part locally”

– Eva Hewitt

local people. I remember one on art therapy, which was enjoyable. We investigated ourselves with pen and ink!

Sussex Counselling was really a sort of branch of BACP. It was quite a journey up to BACP in the Midlands, and the training for BACP was always up there. We felt we could exchange information and recognised training at a local level. And then BACP itself grew, and I was on that committee for a while. So I brought information back for people who didn’t ever come up for the annual BACP conference.

I was Chair of Sussex Counselling for three years in the early Nineties. Philip Smith, who is also no longer with us, was an outstanding secretary, really conscientious and clear and helpful to his Chair. I co-opted in several local GPs, and they would refer people. We were also initiating things like counselling in schools. Now my grandchildren have access to counselling at school. That's all happened in my time.

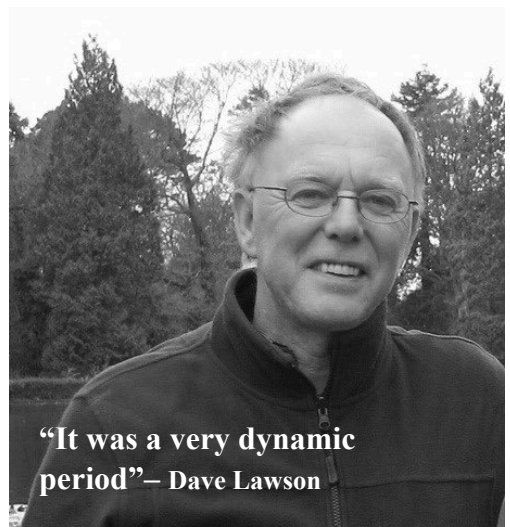
My introduction to the work was through marriage guidance counselling. I worked for Relate and did their training. And several of us from Sussex Counselling worked at Wistons, the BPAS (British Pregnancy Advisory Service) abortion clinic on Dyke Road. It was very early on, and people would still look at you as though you were a little bit unusual when you said that you were training to be a counsellor. Now the growing acceptance is that we all need to know ourselves better.

Sussex Counselling played a huge part locally in making counselling a normal way of looking at life and dealing with problems. It's a privilege to have been involved in that. I've kept all my journals, and wonder who to give them to one day. Maybe it'll be my family, my own children.

I am very sad that SCAP is closing, naturally, as it was one of my babies. But I do understand, and what else can one do except go with the reality in the end? I think the usefulness of such an agency and co-ordination in the county will come back again, perhaps when the risk of Covid is less, and politics have been sorted out further, and things have settled down a bit more. I think it will. And it will have its own life I suppose."

Dave Lowson (Chair 1985-1986/7)

"I was involved in what was initially called South Coast Counselling right from the beginning. I'd been chair of a trade union branch so I was a natural person to end up being the first Chair. I vaguely remember the



early meetings, and affiliating with BAC [now BACP]. At the time, Brighton was rife with bioenergetic therapists, primal therapists, any number of strange approaches. There was a wonderful man called Vincent Tilsley, one of the scriptwriters for the cult classic *The Prisoner*, who used to do therapeutic storytelling. There was a lot of good stuff out there. But there was also a sense that it was a bit of a jungle and, if we were under the umbrella of BAC, there was more likelihood of people getting support that was bounded by quality standards.

A lot of us who acted in the early days came through the counselling diploma run by Brighton poly, now the university. People were qualifying but there were very few opportunities out there, and the idea that counselling was just a do-gooding voluntary activity rather than a skilful profession. So it was people who wanted to emphasise the profile of the profession and, more altruistically, make counselling available not simply as private practice but on the NHS.

One very funny memory I have is of a workshop South Coast Counselling was involved in, something catchy like 'Images of Multidisciplinary Working in Mental Health'. There were social workers, occupational therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, counsellors – lots of whom were from South

Coast Counselling – and psychotherapists. In the afternoon we split into our different groupings to do a picture about what we thought our profession was about. Everybody was down on the floor, coloured pens out, enjoying themselves... except the analytic psychotherapists. They grumpily divided their bit of paper into seven separate boxes because they could not work together!

It was a very dynamic period. Around '83 I helped set up a young people's counselling service in Brighton, Ask Here, and in '86 I became involved in the Brighton Mental Health Project. Then I became involved in Mind, including as the first Chief Exec of Brighton Mind. I helped set up Survivors Speak Out and was quite connected with the anti-psychiatry approaches. The other thing I do, because I was adopted myself, is I sit on adoption panels.

One of the issues that has always been there is about counsellors thinking structurally and working together. It reminds me

of the great innovator Wilhelm Reich, one of the few people who understood about individual lives and about the collective. He was kicked out of the psychoanalytic association because he was a member of the communist party, and simultaneously kicked out of the communist party for being a member of the psychoanalytic association. Various counsellors who knew I was active in the trade union world said 'how can somebody as sensitive to issues be involved in something as nasty and twisted as trade union work?' And lots of friends of mine who are politicians thought counselling was self-indulgent, that if you wanted an individual path to change you needed to change the system. It's interesting how people split. I always thought it wasn't one or the other.

I moved away from counselling and became more involved in mental health activism. The 'mental health is everybody's issue' message is all fine, it's brought more awareness, but the reality is that with cuts to services, more poverty, more discrimination than there was, and the whole move towards brief interventions, for the people who are most dependent on mental health services it's got a lot worse."

Argie Labib (newsletter editor, Chair late Nineties)

"I thought I'd put Sussex Counselling behind me! I stopped counselling when I moved from Hove to Eastbourne and came to a natural end with all my clients.

I'd started life as a musician, qualified as a teacher from Guildhall School of Music, but had to retire because my sight was getting worse. Then I did a Masters in Counselling Psychology. My wife passed away in 1998, so I dived in, accepted a full time job at Sussex University and at the same time built up my counselling practice. It was a sort of cover if you like, hiding away through a lot of work.

At the time I first got involved, the organisation was beginning to go downhill. No



**"They were very good meetings,
always very jolly – Argie Labib**

money in the coffers. I stepped in and agreed to do the newsletter. Back then it was a typed sheet of paper with a logo. I took that and made it into a magazine, four pages of A4, once a month. I was fortunate that I'd learned IT before it was too late to feed it into my brain, and I did do quite a lot of work setting Sussex Counselling up online.

We used to meet at my flat in Hove.

They were very good meetings, never any friction, always very jolly. We used to have tea and biscuits and discuss things about the group and the membership and where to take it next. It was fun.

I brought in some big names to do a talk and presentation and bring in some money. I remember Brian Thorpe, the Person-Centered professor at East Anglia – the hall was absolutely packed. I just wrote to him and asked if he'd come and give a talk. Amazingly enough he only wanted payment for his travel.

We had quite an eclectic group. I was looking at things from the perspective of psychodynamic work, but we had people doing person-centered work, gestalt... I did encourage diversity in the team, didn't want it all to come from one viewpoint. There was pressure at some point to pay some people in posts like Finance an hourly rate. As Chair I resisted that because I felt, once you start paying for things, then the enthusiasm for being a volunteer goes, and the reasons for working in it would be different.

There was always very little feedback from members. But when we put on talks, people used to come. We always had a tea break and people would talk about what they were getting out of it – and what they disliked, very often!"

Helen Armstrong ("nearly all the jobs except Treasurer!", including Vice Chair 2000-2004)

"I joined in about 1990. I was working at the Carer's Centre as the Support Worker and they sent me to do a counselling certificate



"It was about mutual support"

– Helen Armstrong

course to learn how to listen properly. It was run by Adrienne Hirschfeld, who was one of the founder members of Sussex Counselling. When I needed to arrange my own counselling, I remember Adrienne gave me a piece of paper with three names on, and I went and saw them, and chose one. That was how you did it in those days.

I had a background in art and design, and took over the newsletter. At the time it was different coloured pages stapled together, and every article in a different font and a different shaped box. I took a much more stern approach, insisted on only one font, and got it properly printed in Bond Street.

There weren't seminars in those days, they came later. It was about mutual support. Accreditation always involved a lot of work and SCAP members would check over each other's stuff. We started having meetings in a place overlooking Preston Park, and also Garton House on Stanford Avenue. Lots of people used to come, at least 30. We'd chat, and maybe somebody would give a talk. I remember one – sadly I recently threw out

the text for it – but it was all about working with people who had been affected by witchcraft in Sussex. The speaker was convinced that there were people who were using witchcraft to intimidate. I'm sorry I threw it away now!

Supervision was always a topic: who was a good supervisor, who was hard work. And advertising of course, and that's where the directory came in. I did several years of compiling the members directory, and later on my son Joe was involved in a better-looking directory. My chief memory of the paper directory was that a good 30 per cent did not obey the rules when submitting their entries, you'd get huge essays! And then getting them to send in their cheques...

Both Jay [Beichman] and Jo [Moore] came to meetings as students while they were doing the course at Brighton, and were questioning a lot of what we were doing as a committee. That was interesting. They livened it up, brought in new attitudes. I remember thinking, 'this is different', and at first being annoyed about it, and then welcoming it. We're the establishment and here come these young upstarts!

I did the posters for the Susie Orbach, and the Dorothy Rowe events. My favourite approach is Attachment Theory so I particularly enjoyed any seminar on that theme. Bowlby's son came to one talk at Brighthelm. He said it takes the brain two years to assimilate big changes, that big events take time to get over – and I thought, well that's a very useful thing to remember!

In the course of 30 years I switched from being quite psychodynamic and strict to much more integrative. The opportunity to speak to other counsellors about these ideas was what SCAP provided. I made a number of very good friends who I'm still in touch with. We're all getting old together, exploring this new stage.

I was very sorry to hear of it closing because I had assumed that it would go on. I've done nearly all the jobs except Treasurer! Partly I was so involved because I liked being in it, the idea of being an insider. And

maybe that's what every committee member needs in order to stick with it. I do like to know what's going on, and I suppose I am a bit of a control freak, and like to make things go the way I want them to. So in fact my long membership of SCAP is not altruistic, it was purely for my own entertainment and pleasure!"

David Taylor-Jones (Helpline officer, Chair early 2000s)

"There was something very particular about the flavour of Sussex Counselling. From the outside it looked huge and important but once you bit the bullet and went along to a CPD, it was kind of homely. It felt solid and professional but it was a warm community.

Getting in the paper directory once you were qualified was such a significant thing, a rite of passage. There was some gatekeeping, showing your certificates, and then it was about writing your entry – looking through previous copies to see how people



"Getting in the directory was a rite of passage" – David Taylor-Jones

had described themselves, what fees they were charging, how you were going to pitch yourself. There was so much linked to self worth, and ‘I have I got the right to set up in practice alongside all these people with all this experience?’ It was about claiming your place within the community.

When you joined up you got given a bunch of these directories, and it was your responsibility to distribute them. I think everybody I knew had a box in their house somewhere. But wherever I went there were already directories there, because everybody was delivering them! So there was this sense of saturating the market place. That was part of the debate that really surfaced when I started to get involved in the committee.

First I took on the helpline. It was a weird one because you’d get all sorts of calls. Counsellors about their directory entry, people wanting to book CPD, and very vulnerable people looking for counsellors who you might also refer on to Samaritans. It was very occupying at the time.

Then one year the word was, don’t go along to the next AGM, because you’ll probably come away with a place on the committee! Low and behold it was sparsely populated and I was the last one standing when the Chair’s role came up. But it felt important, to keep it going, for continuity’s sake – and a bit of ego too of course.

It was a complicated time because the majority of discussions were about our on-line presence. ‘What are we going to do about transitioning into this new world?’ Decisions about the paper directory started to shift from what colour should we have the cover this year to should we continue printing this?

Sussex Counselling was a place to connect – about the complexities of finding work, running practices, finding rooms, the everyday stuff about being a practitioner. To feel that counselling was bigger than what was in your head; that it was happening around you, and that you were within it. I got my first therapy room through a Sussex



“We thought, can we dare to do something big?” – Biddy Harling

Counselling connection, and then through that they asked if I’d be interested in teaching on the certificate course, and that opened the door to where I am now [Head of Counselling Programmes at University of Chichester].

There will be a hole without it, and I will feel that when talking with our students at Chichester about the future. I always say, ‘Find your network. Be a part of your local therapy world. Cos that’s where it will start to happen’.”

Biddy Harling (Chair 2003-2005, Membership Secretary early 2000s and again 2013-2015)

“I was introduced to Sussex Counselling by my first supervisor, Argie Labib. I always remember him describing it as ‘the family of Sussex counselling’. As a counsellor working in isolation you need support and your development depends on the enrichment of other people and their ideas.

Together with Lynne Mansfield-Osborne, one of the early treasurers, I wrote a constitution for SCAP based on a model constitu-

tion. It covered everything, including what a quorum was for a general meeting, what the responsibilities of the committee were, and what to do if you had various kinds of trouble. It was adopted at the AGM in 2000.

When I chatted to Sheila Pope the other day and she was raising various questions about winding up the organisation, I said, 'it's in the constitution Sheila, have a look!' And it was.

When I became Chair Sussex Counselling had some financial problems, and it was important to set it on a more sound financial basis. We had to be very careful for a while, but also needed some fundraising. We thought, could we put on an event for the Brighton Festival Fringe? Can we dare to do something big? We invited Susie Orbach to come and speak, in a live conversation with Mick Burton from Sussex University. I'm not sure if it was before it became known that she'd counselled Diana, but she was certainly very famous then. We sold out the Brighthelm Centre. I met her at Brighton station and when I saw her off I thanked her and gave her a hug.

During my time as Chair we were trying to get the whole broad range together. Develop the directory, improve the journal, increase the membership, give a good training programme. Among our membership we had so many people who could offer different things: EMDR, child therapy, Adrienne Hirschfeld's accreditation workshops. We had an important speaker from the BACP come to talk to us too. We were from the beginning affiliated with the BACP (then called the BAC) – one of I think only seven affiliated organisations.

I felt the printed directory was important. I remembered a doctor saying to me, 'are you going to bring some of those little books round?' They didn't have counselling in GPs then, so the directory was a boon to them if somebody came with mental health problems. One of the big developments was when GPs started to get funding to have counsellors in their surgeries. It was a shame that mainly behavioural counselling was the

norm, because it was 'evidence based' and therefore approved for funding. That has meant CBT rules the roost when it comes to being seen as respectable, and everything else is seen as a bit woolly. Many skilled practitioners were sidelined and a lot of SCAP members retrained or added on CBT. I heard that they're now recommending GPs should be able to offer more than one approach to people seeking counselling. About time!

I think the organisation IS its membership. That's the problem now, we haven't got enough members. It is a shame. If people don't meet together in organisations, and form groups to support each other in one way or another, then they will miss out on things. Because it's a very lonely job, and a job where you can have a lot of self-doubt. Counsellors really need support."

As part of the Brighton Festival Fringe, Sussex Counselling presents psychotherapist and writer

Susie Orbach

in conversation with **Mic Burton**

Sussex Counselling is pleased to present the respected therapist and writer Susie Orbach in conversation with Dr Mic Burton, former Director of Counselling Services at Sussex University.

Tickets £10/£12, on the door or in advance from the Dome Box Office, New Road, Brighton. Tel 01273 709709.




2.00pm, Saturday 22nd May 2004
Brighthelm Centre,
North Road, Brighton BN1 1YD



(above – Helen Armstrong's poster for the 2004 Susie Orbach event)

ly on the committee and we were all keen to get SCAP growing again.

In life we have chapters. I had a chapter where I was really happy with SCAP, it gave me great pleasure, great kudos. The sad thing for me is I should never have gone back. In a sense that was what finally stopped me from being a rescuer. But I was glad that we re-introduced the directory in my second period as Chair, even if it was just for one final time. It was so important in our early days. For counsellors, seeing their name in the directory gave them a sense of 'okayness'. It was about being seen.

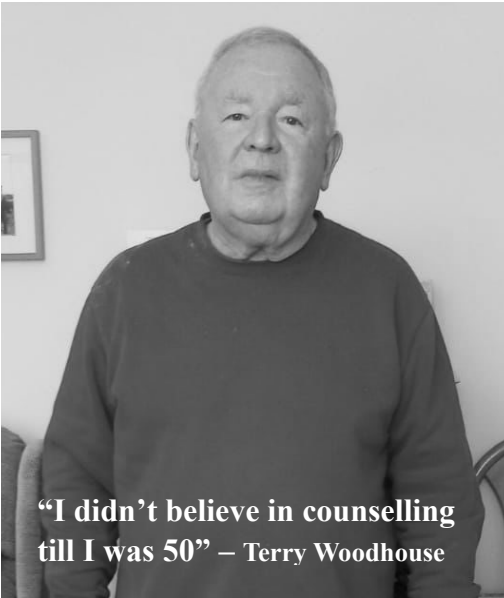
SCAP was a place to grow and develop, and to make friends who are counsellors. Because we see people in different ways once we've trained, we're not really the same. I don't seem to fit in with lots of things now. I don't do small talk and things like that. But I have a great belief in people."

Jay Beichman (newsletter co-editor 2003-2004, Facebook page 2013-present)

"Forty years is a long time. In my view if there hadn't been a pandemic I think SCAP would've still continued. But like a lot of things it lost momentum in that period. A lot of people lost momentum for a lot of things.

My first Sussex Counselling memory is a Petruska Clarkson seminar in the late Nineties. There was just such a buzz. It felt as if I was getting into something that was exciting. I was on the committee on and off. I forget what I really did. To begin with it was a dog's body thing. Every quarter we'd go to Garton House opposite Preston Park and stuff envelopes with newsletters. I think there were maybe 400 members at its peak, so that was a lot of envelopes. Then I took editing the newsletter on, and had a very steep learning curve on QuarkXpress!

And then I've always had this thing about putting on events. When I first arrived in Brighton in the late Eighties I started the



"I didn't believe in counselling till I was 50" – Terry Woodhouse

Terry Woodhouse (Chair 2005-2008; 2013-2014)

"My first stint as Chair was during a highly successful time for SCAP. We had about 250 members and increased that to 285 [350 according to the AGM report of the time!] We used to have a major speaker around the Brighton Festival: John Bowlby's son talking about absent fathers, Windy Dryden doing a live on-stage therapy session, Dorothy Rowe... Great times.

I hope those high-profile events really helped a lot of people get to know about counselling, because it saves a lot of people's lives. I didn't believe in counselling till I was 50. My dad said, you sort your own problems out, don't talk about it, just get on with it. Then when I took early retirement from managing old people's homes I found it really difficult, because I'd never been out of work. My lump sum ended up paying for my counselling training at Wealden College.

In 2003 I had an illness and nearly died. After that I was so full of pleasure at being alive that I pushed myself into my role as Chair wholeheartedly. Everybody was love-

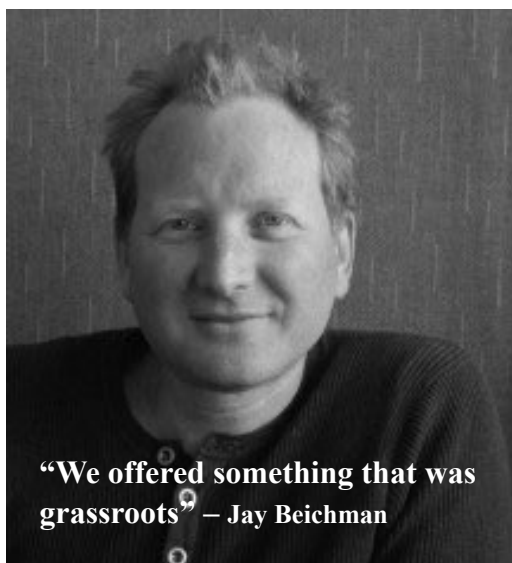
only poetry night in Brighton. So it became natural that I got involved with helping with events. That was my idea, to get Susie Orbach, but I can't take the credit for organising it.

I don't want to sound too pretentious, but loosely speaking I come from the counter-culture. In the late Seventies I went to free festivals, took psychedelics with my friends, was into punk and hippy music. And then when I came into Brighton in the late Eighties it was the time of the Levellers. Brighton had that vibe to it. And I saw counselling and psychotherapy coming out of the same thing. Being a counsellor and psychotherapist was very Brighton, even in the late Eighties. Infinity Foods had this massive cork board where you'd find therapists advertising their services. At least some therapists looked like they belonged there.

And then there was a more conventional psychotherapy which was medicalised. And I think that's still where there is quite a lot of conflict. SCoPED, regulation, CBT... I'd almost characterise the therapy wars as a conflict between the mainstream culture and the counter-culture. I'd say SCAP, as a representative sample... we're not that unconventional, not really. It was a good bunch but they weren't very Californian as such!

The biggest debate that I remember was a SCAP event in 2010, around this push for statutory regulation, with Diane Waller, who ended up being the supervisor for my doctorate, on the panel. There's a huge split in our profession, people who think it's ridiculous we're still talking about statutory regulation, 'should have happened yesterday', versus people who are really worried and sceptical about it. It got quite emotional. I remember one woman standing up and saying, 'What about love?' That was a great debate. And it still goes on.

I think there is also a generational shift happening. There was a culture of volunteering, second incomes, rich husbands – so lack of opportunities and so forth was more tolerated. It's not just me as a man saying this. Elizabeth Cotton talked about women with



“We offered something that was grassroots” – Jay Beichman

rich husbands who can afford to be therapists. People just weren't as literally poor and hungry. All these courses are mushrooming now, but they're not guaranteeing people any employment or opportunities afterwards. And I think that's not going to be tolerated much longer.

SCAP was about talking to therapists in real life – which of course is what we lost in the pandemic. The competitors in Brighton, they're quite commercial really. We offered something that was grassroots and interactive, and we put on socials. We had a thing that it was about therapists connecting with each other, not just seeing if you could make money off a gig.”

Jamie Pyper (Chair 2009-2010)

“I moved to Brighton around 2007, having trained in Bournemouth. I was a new guy in town and wanted to make friends, so I came along to the AGM, where I got to know Paola St George. Eventually we had a conversation about putting our names forward for Chair and Vice Chair. It felt like something useful I could do in the community and get to know more people.

SCAP 1985-2023: AN ORAL HISTORY

The main question in my mind was how we connect the people who need the services with our membership, and the membership with the people who need our services. The systems we were using were really archaic. We had three databases, one handwritten, one typed, one in a spreadsheet. None of them matched. I thought, this is crazy. But it was obvious why they existed, three people volunteering, in separate places. A mountain of duplicated workload and still not accurate.

My background was in the high tech industry and I was just like, technology is the way forward! We had the URL but the website didn't have much function to it. So Jo Armstrong, Helen's son, built the member-focused backend and all the money processing stuff. The website could be updated by the member any time they wanted, they controlled their billing information, when they paid, etcetera, whereas the directory was constantly out of date. It was expensive to print and distribution opportunities and vol-

unteers were increasingly rare. At the forefront of my mind was trying to be responsible with membership money.

There was a reasonable amount of resistance to the move online. Predictably it did alienate a few people initially but it was the way everyone was going.

We had a laugh overall I think. Being part of the committee and being able to informally talk about practice, perspectives, as we met to stick magazines in envelopes, was a really special thing.

The events we did were great quality. I saw a brilliant workshop on working with suicide, in the boiling sun in the glass box on the top of Community Base, and I still sometimes draw on a talk Jay [Beichman] gave on Dialogical Self Theory. And I remember the regulation debate at the Brighthelm Centre in 2010 that Paola led, that was exciting. It was well attended and there were lots of strong opinions. It felt like, actually, we do have a community when we get together and meet."

Jeanie Civil (seminar organiser 2015-2022, 2016-2019 Chair)

"I wanted to meet other counsellors. I'd taught counselling at several universities and had a huge professional network. But when I came to Brighton I didn't know a soul in the field. In 2006 I was volunteering at Arun Counselling and Jan Irwin, who was my supervisor there, told me about SCAP.

I organised the CPD programme before, during, and after my time as Chair. I had the wonderful opportunity to keep myself 100 per cent updated by bringing in all the flavours of the month. I met some really interesting, terrific speakers, Greg Madison, Carol Lloyd... I was always listening out for topics, and if I heard about a new book or new approach on the television or radio I would follow it up.

I tried to get all speakers to make the training as practical as possible, because all



"It felt like, actually, we do have a community" – Jamie Pyper



“It was very rewarding seeing people develop” – Jeanie Civil

the books in the world don't give you what you learn from experiential learning. One that sticks with me is Dwight Turner, when we did the Privilege Walk. You took a step back or a step forward with every statement. I was right at the back of the whole group, with my back against the wall, because of my very deprived childhood.

It was very rewarding seeing people develop through the seminars, the personal growth. The NQCs [newly qualified counsellors] were a delight, so open to the newness of things. There was an incredible support network around the training. I'm having a book published, *My Mind Made Me Me*, which is partly about the experience of working with so many people who educated and affected and influenced me.

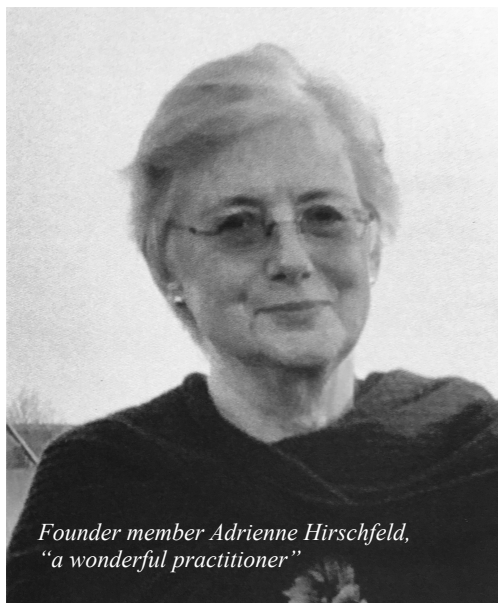
A lot changed over the years I was on the SCAP committee. For a long time we had a committee of many people who were in paid counselling posts, in education, council run projects, the NHS, managing an addiction unit. It changed to being made up of private practitioners, who often had to do other work to remain financially viable. You can't

volunteer when you can't meet your financial commitments.

I can still register the feeling of the news that SCAP is closing. Such grief. It is a bereavement. Rather than just an administrative organisation, for me it is a loss of this pretend family that I've always had from being a little girl. Close, trusting, loving and supportive. It has been predominantly a really happy time for me, and I have so much love and respect for SCAP and what it gave me.”

Sheila Pope (various committee positions between 2007-2020, Chair 2020-present)

“I joined SCAP in 2001, when I started my integrative diploma course at Crawley College. I looked up to these fellow practitioners with a great deal of respect and awe: Adrienne Hirschfeld, who was such a wonderful practitioner, Biddy Harling, who'd been a teacher of counselling, and Binah Taylor, who lived half her life in other countries and would fly back to deliver a lecture. I didn't even have a degree! I felt so much a fish out of water. When I joined the commit-



*Founder member Adrienne Hirschfeld,
“a wonderful practitioner”*

tee, and Terry Woodhouse wanted to meet me, I remember driving over the beacon from Burgess Hill and being so anxious I had to stop and find a bush to have a pee!

I took over as membership secretary in 2008. I was given two lever arch folders full of applications. People could pay a little bit extra and get an entry in the paper directory of our members which SCAP used to produce. We used to send that out to every GP in the county – 1500 of them. Bev Nolan, who worked in the NHS, came up with lists of names and contact details. Gradually the directory went online, but for two years I single-handedly produced it (with Adrienne's help – she was Membership Secretary at the time) because I thought it was a SCAP foundation stone.

I've only very recently started to ask myself an important question: what's in it for me? SCAP gave me companionship, definitely. Feeling part of a community. Enjoying being of service to others. And clients could see I'm in good standing with my professional community, it reaffirmed that they're safe with me. That's my fantasy anyway! I also discovered ecotherapy through a SCAP talk by Martin Jordan in 2008. I'm slow to the boil, it takes me ages to get my confidence up and make a movement, but I finally got the training I needed in 2014 and started practising outdoors in 2018. It has given a new depth in my client work.

As Chair I absolutely stood on the constitution, drawn up by Biddy. It kept us pointing true north: this is what we have a remit to do, this is how we do it. When the pandemic happened it was like a slow car crash – cancelling events, month by month, on and on. We none of us knew what the future held. In terms of individual practitioners there was a sense of fracturing for me, isolating ourselves in our little rooms with our computer screens, separate from our clients, separate from other practitioners. And as Chair not knowing how to contain it or manage it all, or even bear it. And under-



“None of us knew what the future held” – Sheila Pope

lying all that was this very existential fear – people were dying of Covid.

I have my CPD record here, ‘2004 to 2008...’. It's interesting, in May 2004 I can see I did a Sussex Counselling seminar called Facing Your Own Death, with Joy Oakley. I'm not particularly good with endings. My mother died when I was five, and I was raised by my grandmother. She had nine brothers and sisters, and during my childhood many of them died and I had a succession of funerals – none of which I was allowed to attend, I had to just go and play in the churchyard. Even the death of my own mother was never discussed, I wasn't allowed to cry or get upset about it... And here I was going to a training on death at the start of my counselling journey. Maybe that's why I'm so fascinated about death, I'm trying to get it right.

It's a different process for me to lay something down; to say, ‘we've come to an end’. I feel very moved when I think about what SCAP has achieved, and when I remember the people. I really wish SCAP weren't closing but I have to accept it. I've just bought a new motorcycle and I'm planning some rides out in the next few months, so maybe I can ride off into the sunset.”

Emmy van Deurzen:

What Does it Mean to Be Free?

Community Base, Brighton,
November 12 2022



I couldn't quite believe she was there –

Emmy van Deurzen, the world renowned author and psychotherapist who usually presents to 200-300 people at a time, speaking at our intimate SCAP CPD event.

Emmy is a passionate, energetic speaker and lives and breathes her existential approach to the business of being alive. I have attended her lectures before and her books (which I read and re-read) cover my shelves. Like a super fan I have spoken about her approach and her YouTube videos to my husband (a biologist), as her passion for psychotherapy as a philosophy in practice has invigorated my own thinking from university onwards.

In this lecture, Emmy's position was of locating the individual within a social and global focus. To be a counsellor, she argues, means you cannot ignore being an activist in both the personal and political realms. This is important to acknowledge as we and our clients do not exist in a vacuum, and freedoms are relative. She declined the offer of a chair for the three-hour talk as she invited us to explore and reflect on the challenges and limitations to freedom. The idealistic notion of the open road, freedom to choose, was challenged with the limitations ('givens') of our external and internal lives. She spoke of how our backgrounds and experiences shape our idea of freedom, from living in a wealthy country in peacetime to the upheaval and suffering in occupied Ukraine.

Emmy observed how her thinking about freedom was shared by knowledge of her parents' struggle in the occupied Netherlands, then travelling to different countries as a young woman. We also considered the impact of a sense of belonging to a community, or feeling like an outsider. Emmy shared the experience of being told, after 40 years living and working the UK, that she



should keep her head down about her feelings around having her citizenship threatened in Brexit.

The lecture was brave in its challenge to recognise our blind spots, and to examine where we give up our freedom to act in exchange for the security of learned helplessness. She also invited us to acknowledge where we have freedoms that others do not. Facing up to these can enable us to have more transparent discussions, and so move towards constructive challenge and change. In the counselling room, clients can feel more of an open invitation to reflect on this in their own lives.

We can begin this process by thinking about what thoughts, actions and circumstances prevent us choosing to expand and exercise freedom. I mentioned my negative self-talk, citing an example. Emmy's challenge to this was along the lines of 'would you talk to anyone else like this?' The voice may have come from somewhere, but I was reminded that I alone have a responsibility to challenge the content. As with Viktor Frankl in *Man's Search for Meaning*, and Erich Fromm in *Escape From Freedom*, freedom was presented not as an idealised individual walk into the sunset but as a challenge and a responsibility. *Katie Atkinson, NHS Health in Mind Psychotherapist (UKCP)*

Mick Cooper:**Therapy and Social Change**

Community Base, Brighton,

March 25 2023



If the energetic discussions at SCAP's final seminar were anything to go by, there is still an appetite for a local in-person group for counsellors and therapists... and perhaps for one with more political edge.

As Mick Cooper pointed out, there has always been a conflict in our profession between those who believe the personal is inherently political, and those who maintain that politics has no place inside the counselling room. But the tide is changing, with the release last month of BACP's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, the development of the Therapy and Social Change Network (co-founded by Mick), and widespread feeling – in the wake of the pandemic, Black Lives Matter and years of Tory austerity – that counselling and therapy must do more to engage with systemic inequality. As Mick mentioned, the climate crisis has a part to play in this political reckoning too.

Drawing on material from his new book, the Sussex-based author and professor of counselling psychology gave a theoretically broad overview of the ways in which social justice influences therapy, and vice versa.

He shared Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, and touched on parts-based approaches to suggest how therapy might provide the tools for operating in spheres of political conflict: "what we're trying to create in counselling is an internal democracy".

Mick modelled this by letting his presentation slides give way to group debate, especially when it came to the line between counselling and advocacy, attitudes to medication, and the concept of 'broaching'. At times the group sharing provided an uncomfortable but important reminder of how endemic racism really is in the counselling world. The son of a communist, Mick said he saw kindred spirit in the writings of Carl Rogers and early Marx. But he asked us to consider how a Person-Centered stance could also lead to a sort of willed blindness to the realities of power and oppression.

The seminar came alive when people spoke passionately about the experiences and needs of their particular client groups, including survivors, NHS patients and food bank users. I was left thinking of Jung's description of effective therapy as a meeting of two people in which 'both are transformed'. Perhaps the power of therapy to fight for progressive social change begins with allowing ourselves to be fully moved, and so fundamentally changed, by our clients. *Isobel Todd, Psychodynamic Counsellor*





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