



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KEY WOMEN EDUCATORS
DELTA KAPPA GAMMA

GREAT BRITAIN NEWS



Spring 2017

Volume 15

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[The cover photo is explained in Kathy`s article on Page 7.](#)

Please send any contributions for the Summer 2017 edition of GB News to me by 23 April. As usual, text in Word, and photographs attached separately to an email. Photographs are always welcome, and we try to include as many as possible.

dbillam@hotmail.com

Also of particular note is the publication in the DKG Collegial Exchange of an article by Evelyn Goodsell, on the links between the Pestalozzi Children's Village and Gamma Chapter, referred to on page 13, together with encouragement to apply for International Scholarships. Do take advantage of the opportunities offered by DKG!

Kathy Hodgson

STATE ORGANISATION PRESIDENT 2015—2017



As we move into 2017, I would like to thank all of those members who have generously given their time – both at chapter and state level – to enhance the experience of belonging to our organisation: finding interesting speakers, running business meetings and organising stimulating visits and excursions can be a thankless task – so please do remember to show your appreciation to those around you. I do try to thank Liz Malik every time we have a Gamma meeting – she works so hard on our behalf.

Personally, I have commenced my second biennium on the International Finance Committee, and my first biennium as Chair of the European Forum Committee (more on the latter topic later in this issue of GB News). If you have ever considered applying to be a member of an international committee, and felt reluctant to do so, perhaps that should be your next step. At the state conference in April, it is planned for several members who have served on international committees, to speak briefly about their involvement and what they have gained from the experiences.

Which reminds me – our State Conference is to be held on **Saturday 1st April 2017 at the De Vere Venues Devonport Hotel, Greenwich, SE10 9JW**. We have several brilliant speakers, as well as the Annual General Meeting:

- Louise Fahey is returning to update us on her work with young Afghani refugees; those of you who were not able to join us in Eastbourne will enjoy – if that is the word – listening to Louise’s account of her work, and the difficulties her clients face in settling into a new and alien life. Those who came and enjoyed the sunshine of Eastbourne will appreciate hearing again from an excellent speaker who moved us all.
- Anne Hardy and Jessica Maddocks work for an organisation called KRAN – Kent Refugee Action Network. This is an independent charity supporting young, unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees; Anne and Jessica will talk about the projects that KRAN operates and their work within the organisation.
- Haymanot Tesfa is an Ethiopian artist and singer who came to Britain as an asylum seeker, finally being granted permission to stay. She sings in the Amharic language. You can listen to her on YouTube to find out more about her singing style.

You will be receiving a registration form via email in the next few weeks. Please put the date in your diary, and complete the form as soon as you can – it saves us a lot of time and worry when members commit early!

Another big event is the European Regional Conference in Tallinn, Estonia from 24-29 July, 2017. I have never travelled to Estonia, but am looking forward to discovering a new part of the world. If you have never attended a Regional Conference, this would be a really good place to start. By the time you read this, there should be more information available on the European website: www.dkgeurope.org

Finally, as my biennium comes to an end in June, now is the time to think about selecting new state officers for the coming biennium; certainly the Executive Committee has had this high on the agenda for the past few meetings. However, anyone can nominate officers – you can even nominate yourself! You may have a burning desire to be State President, but perhaps feel you should wait to be asked. Don't! An organisation is only as strong as its leadership and, as I look around me, our members have leadership qualities in spades!

Kathy Hodgson (*State President*)

EUROPEAN FORUM COMMITTEE MEETING **4th—6th November 2016**

At the beginning of November, the first European Forum Meeting was held in a small town called Stabekk, just outside Oslo. I had originally planned for this meeting to take place in Germany; you may not know that the only exam I ever failed was GCE Geography – there is a reason for this! Whilst in Nashville and, in my defence, without access to a map, I deemed Germany to be the most central and easily accessible location. It wasn't – at least, not the part of Germany I had chosen. Which is why we all ended up staying with our new European Regional Director, Bjørg Nakling.

The journey to Oslo was very easy – flights from Gatwick are plentiful. There were signs of light snow flurries around Oslo airport but, such is the efficiency of the Norwegians, neither the flight nor the train journey were delayed. Even better, the platform for the train was a short step beyond customs; I didn't even have to walk outside. Slightly odd were the number of railway employees standing around the 'automatic' ticket machines helping us to pay for our tickets – and not many of the customers were English. It appears 'automation' is a trial for all nationalities!

Björg knew when each of our flights was due to arrive, so she kindly collected us individually or in batches from the station nearest to her home. By this time it was mid-afternoon, beginning to get dark and, even more excitingly, starting to snow.

Having settled into our rooms, we awaited Daniela's arrival – she had been in school all day and so was the last to join. We whiled away the time by getting to know one another better and making inroads into the numerous bottles of wine we had brought along as our contribution to the weekend's provisions. An excellent chicken casserole, lovingly prepared by Björg, was followed by a delicious Norwegian dessert made by Anne Marie. Sadly, I do not remember the name or, indeed, the ingredients. But it was scrumptious – and large enough to provide dessert for both evenings. Remind me to tell you sometime about my first meal of reindeer!



Left to right: Björg Nakling (Regional Director), Kristín Jónsdóttir (Iceland), Anne Marie Solstad (Norway), Liilia Oberg (Estonia), Daniela von Essen (Germany), Iida Hyvönen (Finland), Ann-Katrin Swärd (Sweden), Ria Logtenberg (The Netherlands).

Camera operated by Kathrin Hodgson (Great Britain).

You are probably thinking by now – did they actually do any work? Yes – for two and a half hours on Friday evening, and eight and a half hours on Saturday. During this time, snow was gently falling. I was so delighted, and reprimanded myself inwardly when remembering the joy and excitement in the classroom on the few occasions it snowed while I was teaching – and all I could do was tell the children to get back to work!



Kristín and I share a pre-dinner joke – the glasses are incidental!

What does the European Forum Committee actually do? Well, among other things we amended our Goals for 2016-18:

- *to unite the European members, and celebrate their diversity*
- *to give opportunities to discuss issues of educational importance*
- *to find ways to accomplish these goals and turn them into action*

- to strengthen the links between the European Forum and the European Regional Director

So, what else occupied our time?

- We created a Strategic Action Plan for 2016-18 – you can view this on the European website.
- We made a decision about the European website – in future we will use a ‘free’ website, such as ‘Weebly’ as the cost of upgrading, necessary to keep up to date, was very expensive.
- We produced a draft plan for the Forum meeting in Tallinn at the Regional Conference.
- We selected the recipient of the European Achievement Award, to be presented in Tallinn. There were four nominations for the award, and it took us a very long time to discuss the merits of each individual member, comparing their forms with the criteria for the award. In the end, the decision was clear – the choice was unanimous.
- We discussed ways in which we could ensure continuity of the Forum by possible extending the length of time a representative will serve on the forum – currently two years. Four of the representatives are returning to their countries to speak to their executive committees about lengthening their service on the Forum.
- We certainly forged strong friendships and demonstrated, as if we didn’t already know, that language differences are no barrier.

I was a little overwhelmed at the prospect of being Chair of the committee, when I knew so little of the workings of the Forum, but I need not have worried. The Forum contains a group of formidable, intelligent and hard-working individuals. The joint Treasurers – Anne Marie and Ria – ensured we received our expenses immediately. Thanks to Bjørg’s generosity, we had no accommodation costs – just food (and wine of course, supplied personally by us all) – and so our travel expenses were able to be paid in full. (The money comes from an annual payment of \$3,000 from HQ).



Ria and Anne Marie worked long after the meeting has ended on Saturday – calculating how much money we can be reimbursed.

My thanks must also go to lida and Daniela, who took the minutes of the two days. I’m so glad I have never been asked to do the same in German or Finnish!

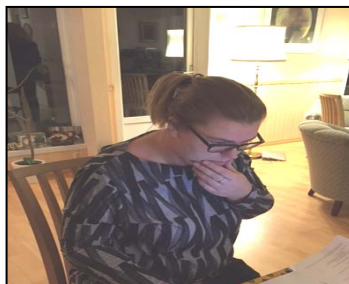
Interestingly, in planning for a possible Pre-Conference meeting in Tallinn, the topic of the speaker – when we find one – is likely to be *Refugees under 18 and*

their Integration in School. Sounds familiar!

On the front cover is a 'lamp' made by Bjørg. On Saturday night, she ventured out into the raging blizzard – well it was snowing a bit! – and made an outside lantern from snowballs and a nightlight. What a wonderful weekend.

Next year – Helsinki – watch this space!

Kathy Hodgson (*European Forum Chair*)



Iida ponders the minutes and wonders if the third glass of wine was a mistake!

'I WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK WITH MY GRANDCHILDREN IN THE ESTONIAN LANGUAGE' - A TRUE STORY

Estonians have been made to leave their home country many times during their history – either because of the fright of deportation, Soviet occupation or persecution. This happened to my distant relative, Aunt Ebba. When the Soviet troops were approaching Estonia's border in 1940, Ebba's family decided to escape from Estonia taking a long risky journey in a small boat across the stormy Baltic Sea. They arrived in Sweden as refugees. Although it was difficult to start living in a foreign country and find jobs, the family coped with the difficulties.

After finishing school in Uppsala, Ebba continued her studies in France at the Sorbonne University. One day she met a handsome man at the university and it turned out he came from Lithuania (the 3rd Baltic Republic now), his name was Julius. The young people fell in love and the language they used to communicate in was French. After graduating from the university Ebba and Julius returned to Sweden because, due to their politics, they were not allowed to return to their fatherlands. They married and Ebba gave birth to five children. They both wanted to **keep alive their nation's language**. Ebba started to speak with her children in Estonian and Julius in Lithuanian. Ebba and Julius spoke French to each other.

Time passed. Ebba and Julius's children grew up and started their own families. They all found Swedish spouses. Ebba and Julius moved to Germany where they both worked in Radio Free Europe for many years. As they grew older they decided to return to Sweden and be closer to their children and grandchildren.

In 1992, when Estonia had regained its independence, I visited Ebba and Julius. It was a heart breaking meeting after so many years. What a reunion! But when

talking to Julius I noticed a sad look in his eyes. And then he revealed a harsh truth – he could not communicate with his grandchildren as they knew neither Lithuanian nor French, and Julius was not able to speak Swedish... Julius showed me Swedish textbooks which he had bought from a bookstore. He had started to learn the basic vocabulary, but Julius was an old man already and he explained he could not understand grammar and remember enough words to develop conversations with his grandchildren who had become Swedes.

Why did I recall the story now? My younger son who has been a global citizen during the last 10 years is dreaming of marrying a French lady one day. But I cannot speak French. So I have asked my son that, whoever he is going to marry one day, I would like to speak and converse with my grandchildren in the Estonian language. He promised to teach them Estonian. I truly hope so.

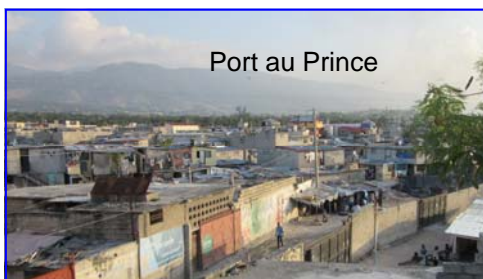
Margarita Hanschmidt (Estonia)

At the Europe Regional Breakfast in DKG International Convention in Nashville, Tennessee July 2016.

Haiti revisited

Introduction

In February 2013 I was invited by a small charity to work with staff in schools in Haiti. I was based in the capital, Port au Prince, but also travelled to a school in the mountainous area - St Michel – four hours drive from the capital. I returned in April 2015 to check on progress.



As I drove from the airport to my base I noticed that 'Tent City' (the acres of land that had been covered with plastic tents in 2013, housing approximately 66,000 Haitians that became homeless after the earthquake in 2010), was almost clear. Most of the residents have moved to a mountainous area five kilometres outside the capital. The fear is that this area will become another 'City Soleil' – a 'no go' area in Port au Prince. The new 'set-up' has no electricity or sanitation just like 'Tent city'.

On this journey to my base for the next five weeks I was told that 43 Religious houses had been targeted by violent gangsters in the previous four months. Nuns were beaten, raped and threatened with death. Valuables – laptops, phones, nun's rings and cash were taken. These attacks took place in the middle of the night. One of these attacks was on a religious community and their school that I had worked with in 2013. Sadly this community was so traumatised by the attack that they left at the first light of dawn, arranged to return to France and will not return.

This school had a very good reputation and has been run by the nuns for 60 years. It no longer has a headteacher and the religious community will not be involved in the future. Lawlessness and gang culture is widespread; violence has increased since 2013 and is expected to get worse. Life is worthless.

There are over 400,000 children without parents in Haiti.

Some children/adults are still in school at the age of 24/25 years. One of the reasons is that parents stagger their children's education because of lack of money, for example, one child may go for two years and then withdraw so that the next child can go. That child will then drop out and the first child will pick up from where s/he left off and continue with his/her education. So a family with four children will be educating their children forever!

Although education is free, every child must have a 'proper' uniform and books so there are a great number of children who never get the opportunity of schooling because of poverty. Out of all the children that begin in primary education only about 5% finish their secondary education.



Successful policies and strategies implemented since 2013.

I was delighted to see how well the staff has worked to improve their schools. In 2013 I held a number of staff meetings on 'The teaching of reading'. Although it was difficult to start with because there are very few books written in their own language – French Creole, but we found a way around it and it is now successfully implemented across the school.

My two students are in the process of recording 'Letters and sounds' CD with the intention of using it in their own schools first and perhaps selling it to other schools.

We spent quite some time working on lesson planning in 2013 that is now in place. The staff work together on the long, medium and short term planning. The planning is now co-ordinated and focuses on the children's ability.

I observed a 'Good Work Assembly' and was very impressed on how it was delivered. This was a policy that I worked on with staff in 2013. This assembly takes place on Friday and staff and children decide on who gets the awards and why. Both staff and children find this assembly very rewarding.

Following on from planning we looked at assessments and results. We then put in place a policy to make a more productive plan on the 'results' to enable the students to achieve greater results as a much faster rate. My son's Hedge fund in the City provided 'White boards' and pens for the students. Both staff and students found these to be a wonderful resource that enabled the children to progress at a much faster rate. We also worked on an anti-bullying policy that also



Students with their whiteboards

included the bullying of staff. (Staff in some schools feel intimidated by the students).

Scholarship

As stated in my 2013 article I set up a scholarship in memory of my darling husband David (Terry) Evans. This scholarship has supported two students through university. I have been

able to monitor these students through regular reports and also observe them teach and interact with students while I was there in April 2015. I was very impressed with both of them.

Jovinsky graduates this year and hopes to continue with his education to gain a Master's degree. He is very ambitious. Theosan will graduate next year and he hopes to be employed in the Restavac School (see Haiti's Restavac children) where he has had an opportunity to gain teaching experience. He also volunteers at the homework club in this school. My aim is to carry on with this scholarship in future once these students have graduated.



Anna with Theosan and Jovinsky

Haiti's Restavac children

Restavac comes from the French 'reste avec' or 'one who stays with'. It describes a child sent by their parents to work for a more affluent household (often relatives) as a domestic servant because the parents lack the resources required to support the child. It is common practice in Haitian culture. The children receive food and housing (and sometimes an education) in exchange for housework. However many restavacs live in poverty, may not receive proper education and may be abused, beaten or raped. The united Nations consider the practice of restavac to be a modern form of slavery.

Restavac children performing a dance



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Facts and Figures about Haiti

Decades of poverty, environmental degradation, violence, instability and dictatorship have left Haiti as the poorest nation in the western hemisphere and Americas. It has the highest rates of AIDS, malnutrition and infant mortality in the region. More than 66% of the population is unemployed and a

age live in abject poverty. Literacy rates were 45% in 2010. Haiti's most serious underlying social problem that remains unaddressed is the huge wealth gap between the impoverished Creole speaking black majority and the French speaking minority – 1% of whom own nearly half of the country's wealth.

Before they reach five years old, 42% of children will suffer from stunting of growth and one fifth of them will die. Haiti has a very large young population in part because of the high birth rate and shorter life expectations. 37% of Haitians are younger than 14 years, 59% between 15-64, and just 3% are 65 and older.

Anna Evans (*Alpha Chapter*)



Day Trip to Harwich

I really did not wish to wake up early to get to Liverpool Street station by 9am to catch the train to Harwich, a place I knew to be a little used ferry terminal and now a large container port. Liking to see Diana and the chance to see others, plus my curiosity for new places, made me overcome my lethargy. I discovered that these places were accessed from Harwich International, not Harwich itself. Harwich was at the end of the railway line past the estuary salt marshes. It has a wonderful deep harbour and some adjacent sandy shores, so has been an embarkation/landing place for soldiers and sailors for centuries.

After coffee on the first floor terrace of the Captain's house, the home of an official guide to the town who was another friend, we looked at her garden, a small paved rectangle with very high walls all around it. Bright and colourful pot plants made it very cheerful. Many other house gardens had these 10-foot walls. They cut out much sun and did not go all around the house so what were they for? To protect against flood or high winds or maybe to provide safety from excitable servicemen home on leave? I've not seen such walls around coastal towns elsewhere.

Our guide took us to the church. It was huge for such a small place and had an elegance coming from the slender, plaster clad iron columns that reached skywards. Troops prayed here on their way to war. Fortunately fewer seats and pews are necessary now.

We went on to the old restored Electric Palace Theatre that was originally lit by candlelight, reasonable in size for the local population. There was an out-



side iron ladder to the first floor. To reduce the risk of fire the projectionist's room had to be separate from the auditorium. It was accessed only from the outside because it contained highly inflammable celluloid film.



The sunshine made walking hot. We had an urge to catch a cooling breeze so we wandered to the pier where we ate delicious fresh crab salad and other seaside luxuries. Thames barges with red brown sails in distinctive gaff rig, pictured left, were tacking upstream, a must for camera pictures.

After lunch we strolled past old town houses and official buildings; past an unused naval station and along the shore to an ancient two-man tread-wheel crane, seen below, built in 1667, that was used to pull in the boats and fishing nets for repair. This is probably the only surviving example left in the UK.



We then reached the lighthouse and all but one, me, climbed the narrow stairs. The view must have been terrific across the wide estuary, the flat land and out to sea.

Afterwards everyone else was very tired and pleased to return to our guide's house for tea. After a rest, I went to find the sandy beach. Nearby, on the other side of a grassy space the land was held in by a wall, which dropped down to breakwaters and stony sand. I was surprised to see so many large, empty oyster shells just above the tide line. Apparently a beach with better sand lay around the next corner, some way away.

My return train was due, and others who had a long journey left too. Those who were staying overnight later enjoyed a meal at a local pub. At one time there were a large number of pubs, one was opposite the Captain of the Mayflower's house and he married the Landlord's daughter.

Was it worth getting up so early? Most decidedly yes!

Unity Harvey (Alpha Chapter).



Photos:
Diana Bell
(Alpha Chapter).

Harwich from the air,
picture by *Lavinia Soul*
(Alpha Chapter).



Congratulations to Evelyn Goodsell, whose article entitled 'Pestalozzi International Village and a DKG Chapter: A Collaborative Learning Experience' has been published in the latest edition of 'The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin Collegial Exchange'. Do make sure that you read it—and why not think about writing something yourself for this publication?

Don't forget that international Scholarships are available from Delta Kappa Gamma International: You should apply before 1 February. Application forms available via the DKG website.

ALPHA CHAPTER REPORT

Alpha members have enjoyed another series of interesting meetings and outings. October saw us gather in Richmond to visit the 117 year old theatre. We were given a fascinating tour of this gem, and our guide, Jemima, was extremely knowledgeable about the history. We were even able to go onto the stage itself, which gave us an interesting perspective of how the scenery was set up, and the view that the actors have of the audience. We then went and sat in the balcony to get an audience view. The theatre is home for touring drama and operatic productions as well as special one night performances and ceremonies plus the annual six week panto season of course. Jemima described this season as manic, but it was clearly a favourite time in the theatre's calendar for her.

Following our tour, we had lunch together and afterwards those who were able to stay on went to visit the Richmond Museum where there was an exhibition of drawings, plans and other memorabilia celebrating the tercentenary of landscape gardener, 'Capability' Brown as well as displays of artefacts about the history of Richmond and short films on its architectural history. Thanks to Penny who had arranged this day.

In November a small group enjoyed a talk and demonstration by Kevin Sewell on 'Gardening in the City, an Urban Project.' Kevin gave a very interesting presentation to the small group. He described how he became interested in the work of Urban Growth, aiding wellbeing and assisting vulnerable groups by use of community gardening and landscaping. Kevin is involved with teaching schoolchildren and helping people with learning difficulties get a qualification. He followed this with a practical session where he took us through all the stages in selecting and mixing the growing medium, planting the seeds, as he would teach it on his course. We each ended up with 2 foil trays planted, ready to take away, water and grow...! Thanks to Kevin, assisted by his dog Oggi, and to Dorcas who hosted the meeting.

'Fire! Fire!' was the theme of our December visit. Not (luckily), a description of our seasonal meal, but the exhibition about the Great fire of London, which happened 300 years ago. Our visit to the exhibition, at the Museum of London, gave us a fascinating insight into how it started, and how the fire spread over the next few days. A strong easterly wind fanned the blaze, but The Lord Mayor thought the fire was of little importance, and went away, and the rest is history. Members of the group found it very thought-provoking,- horrific destruction, how

did people live afterwards - no homes, loss of property. What would we do if it happened to us today?

The exhibition deserves a second visit, it had plenty to interest children too. Afterwards we repaired to the nearby pub, the Lord Raglan, for some festive pub fare. A historic building, dating from the seventeenth century. I have read that it has a section of Roman wall in the cellar!

Future Alpha meetings

Saturday 14th January 2017 at Holy Trinity Church, 3 Bryan Road, London SE16 5HF. Naomi Riches will be the speaker for the afternoon session telling about her “My Little Paddle” challenge rowing 165 miles along the Thames last September, to raise awareness of and funds for her charity In-Vision, which deals with Infantile Nystagmus.

There will be a raffle to raise further funds for her charity. A light lunch at 12:45pm of ‘Sandwich and Soup’ for £5 a head, is being kindly provided by Dorcas. There may also be some of Dorcas' crafts for sale.

Saturday 25th February at 2pm. We will have a speaker from Nordoff Robbins informing us about their methods of music therapy. Venue is Dulwich Hamlet Junior School.

Saturday 6th May. A visit to the Newly Developed Area of the Wetlands opening in Walthamstow, East London, on the old reservoir site. Details to follow.

June. Saturday (date to be confirmed) Education Today. Phase 2. A panel discussion on present educational concerns. Venue Dulwich Hamlet Junior School.

July. A day visit to The Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition, (Expected to be open from 3rd—8th July).

Saturday 15th July. Our Summer Visit. A Day in Cambridge.

DKG Estonia has invited us to attend the European Regional Conference in Tallinn on 24-29 July 2017—do take them up on it!

The most important date for your diary is the **GB State Conference**, which will take place on **1 April 2017** at the **De Vere Venues, Devenport House Hotel, in Greenwich**.

An application form is enclosed—do make sure you apply as soon as possible. It will, as always, be an interesting and enjoyable day.

Conference Information: When you are putting the 2017 conference date in your new diary the following information may help your planning:

Nearest rail stations: Greenwich – served by SE trains and DLR

Maze Hill – served by SE trains

Cutty Sark – served by DLR.

These can all be accessed from one or more of the following London rail termini – London Bridge, Waterloo, Charing Cross.

If you are looking for accommodation in Greenwich the following budget hotels are both within easy walking distance of the Conference venue, both having parking facilities:

Ibis Hotel – from £57 per night

Premier Inn – from £41.50 per night.

THE ROLE OF PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS

Emma Williams came to speak to Gamma Chapter in September at our usual venue, Beechwood School in Tunbridge Wells. I introduced her as the Executive Director of PTA UK, whose Head Office is in Tonbridge. Emma had previously spent twenty years working in the Arts, and took up her first leadership role two years ago.

PTA UK is the largest membership organisation representing parent bodies in schools. Emma explained that her organisation encourages parents to realise what an important, and critical, part they can play in schools. PTAs are in 56% of schools in the UK, 69% of which are in primary schools. PTAs are politically neutral but they encourage Government to listen to parents, who, in turn, feel empowered to increase pressure on academic outcomes.

PTA UK continues its policy of working to give parents a voice in their schools, and to take part by volunteering to help in schools as well as fund-raising.

Following her talk, Emma invited members to discuss the subject.

Ros Price gave the vote of thanks on behalf of members.

I attended a follow-up talk given by Emma at my grandson, Oscar's, school. It was made clear that the idea was to encourage everyone not just to participate in fundraising, but to offer skills, and time in other ways, running a sports club, designing posters, marketing, class help – cooking, sewing, reading, running the library. The premise of all the activities is that children benefit from seeing active engagement by parents.

Sandra Blacker (*Gamma Chapter*)

From PTA UK's website: 'PTA UK was established in 1956. As a charity, PTA UK's main objective is to advance education by encouraging the fullest co-operation between home and school, education authorities, government and all other interested parties and bodies.

We know that having a PTA is characteristic of a successful school. It demonstrates parental engagement and attitudes to learning which are fundamental to school success. A PTA can be a powerful way to engage parents, encouraging them to contribute to the way their child's school is run, and to have a say in deciding how valuable resources are used for the benefit of their child's education. We want to make sure that every PTA reaches its potential and that every school has access to a PTA'.

THE ROLE OF THE PSYCHOTHERAPIST

Gamma Chapter President, Liz Malik, introduced the speaker, Dr Hilary Brown, a UKCP accredited psychotherapist.

Dr Brown described some key concepts including thinking about things we feel and do that are out of our awareness, and changes of mood or state that are often recognized as physiological as well as psychological states. She described how we develop in relation to our caregivers and internalise dialogue with real people which we later realise as a critical voice, or alternatively as a nurturing, soothing voice.

After an initial discussion, Dr Brown explained the different styles of thinking, and how we do things unconsciously or assume that if we make mistakes it is our own fault. Some can get anxious or depressed. As adults we can demonstrate a range of activities or `roles`. For example, we may have one persona at work, another travelling home and another fulfilling family needs. Our interactions become almost automatic and habitually form attitudes.

As part of normal development, how we learnt to cope in childhood, for example the ways in which we try to avoid disappointment or to hold anger in, become a template in our adult relationships.

Not surprisingly, the next stage in our discussions with Dr Brown was to ask for advice for particular situations and share queries about experiences we have had as teachers.

The first instance was discussing the difficulty of a mother with her foster child, how to understand and to give her appropriate help. This led to an example from our speaker concerning a child of seven, who had been sent away to school and often felt homesick and overwhelmed. His father died when he was fifteen, and he then plunged into a depressed state, but to cover that up he adopted a rather superior position that pushed others away, so his initial and understandable withdrawal in the wake of his father`s death became his position of choice and kept recreating the lonely feelings he had experienced then.



*Dr Brown took this photo herself
using the wonders of modern
technology!*

Dr Brown suggested ways in which psychotherapists can make connections in a collaborative and supportive, not a blaming, way, and that they can help their patients to contain painful experiences and feeling by failing to be overwhelmed themselves. In these ways they give hope that painful events can be processed and worked with. They also encourage the person to learn self-care and self-soothing skills, and to seek appropriate assistance from others, be they partners or professionals, by being clear and assertive about their needs in relationships.

Sandra Blacker thanked Dr Brown for her most interesting talk, gave her a vote of thanks and presented her with a gift from the members.

Mary Wardrop (Gamma Chapter)

LIFE ON SUMBA

Sandra Blacker introduced the speaker, Ann McCue, MBE. Her talk was entitled 'Life on Sumba', and she related how, on an earlier visit to Indonesia, staying with an Indonesian friend, she had visited the island, and been appalled by the poverty. In 2002 they decided to set up a charity, which is still going strong, now mainly run by local people, although Ann continues to visit every year. Ann showed us on a map that Sumba is an outlying island, far from Jakarta, the capital. It is flat on the edges, with very hot, humid conditions and glorious white sand beaches, and has a hilly interior where it is cooler. People survive by subsistence farming. Ann showed us pictures of the Pasola, a battle on horseback, where two teams from rival villages on galloping horses throw spears, now supposed to be blunted! The village houses are built on stilts from wood, bamboo and thatch. Animals live underneath, the family on a platform about 1 metre above ground, and the spirits of the ancestors in the roof space. The cooking area, of four flat stones, is in the middle of the living area. Each family belongs to a clan, and yearly ceremonies are held in their clan houses.

Local markets sell fruit and vegetables, but the main product on sale is betel nuts. People chew a mixture of nuts + shoots from a vine + lime obtained from the ground. This mixture when chewed turns bright red, and produces a drug similar to coca, which is very addictive. Chewing also rots the teeth. Travel is by truck, van, or motorbike, often used as taxis. All fuel is imported, and in short supply, with long queues for each tanker full. People take jerrycans away to sell at inflated prices in villages.

There are 3 small towns on the island. In villages in remoter areas children suffer from worms and malnutrition, and are usually filthy. Grandparents often take care of children whose parents leave the island to find work. There is a shortage of water, as rainfall percolates down through the permeable limestone rock. Water has to be collected in cans.

Villages far from government schools try to build their own simple schools, and if they can run successfully for a year, government funding is available. The charity helps them petition the government to build better schools. Children often walk 6 km to the nearest school. There are state primary schools, junior high, and a few senior high schools, with a few private schools, and there is some minor support for bright children.

The charity set up 'Project Hope', to help provide water tanks, household and

school toilets, school classrooms, health education especially for mothers and babies, and help for disabled children. So far they have provided 38 school classrooms in 10 different schools (including water tanks, toilets, desks and chairs for each school), 500 water tanks and over 1000 household or school toilets. All building is done with simple manual tools.

Teachers used to be only part-time, badly paid and had to farm in order to survive. This has improved somewhat, though not enough, and there is now a teacher training school on the island. Once accepted by the government, schools are allocated per capita funding by the state to maintain buildings and buy all their supplies, including books and furniture.

For the health programme, the charity gives nutrition advice at the baby clinics and to groups of mothers, and helps to monitor the progress of malnourished children. Their programme for disabled people was started by a Philipino VSO volunteer who is a physiotherapist. Visiting teams from Singapore and Australia carry out cataract, hare lip and cleft palate operations, which YHS has set up in conjunction with the local hospital. Some children with more severe deformities are sent to Bali for operations. An Australian charity named Wheelchairs4Kids has this year provided 40 wheelchairs, with 169 to come in March YHS ensures that these are provided to children living in conditions which make their use possible, and monitors them regularly to make sure they still fit the child, and are used properly. These make an enormous difference to disabled children.

Sandra Blacker thanked Ann for her most interesting talk, gave her a vote of thanks and presented her with a gift from the members.

Diane Billam (Gamma Chapter)

This photo was taken by Ann`s brother, Jim, at the ceremony for the award of her MBE.



JOLLY HOCKEY STICKS! THE ENDURING APPEAL OF GIRLS' BOARDING SCHOOL STORIES

We had been looking forward to Anna Astin's latest talk, as she had spoken to us twice before, on Women in the First and Second World Wars respectively, and we had greatly enjoyed both talks. Sandra introduced her, and aided by her usual superb PowerPoint display, Anna showed us the front covers of a great array of books about life in girls' boarding schools, and explained the history of the genre. There have been boys' boarding schools in this country for centuries, but boarding schools for girls started later. There are 40,000 pupils in boarding schools in the UK, 50 single sex schools remaining. Anna reminded us with photos of some eminent girls' schools in our area: Walthamstow Hall, Benenden and Roedean among them. Some girls were sent because their fathers were missionaries, or in the army or colonial services, often not seeing their parents for years. Anna cited *'The Little Female Academy'* (1749) as a very early example: a teacher with 9 pupils, each having a chapter devoted to them. Famous authors such as Jane Austen, and W M Thackeray, the Bronte sisters, all used boarding schools in their stories, the last also experiencing them at first hand. Many were fairly grim places in the nineteenth century, as the Brontes described vividly.

A famous American example is *'What Katy Did Next'*. She is the daughter of a widower doctor, who sends her from their home in Ohio to New Hampshire, a 3-day journey at that time. Friendships are emphasised, coping with difficult personalities, 'best friends', snobs, bullying, introducing girls to bullying and how to cope with it: all these themes are common in this genre. Elsie Oxenham wrote the *Abbey Schools*, 38 in all, which were very popular with girls. They emphasised the campfire movement, about health, folk dancing, and tension between fee paying and scholarship girls. There was also a vogue for setting stories in European cities such as Florence. The *Dimsie* books, by Dorita Fairley-Bruce, were set in Kent, and come across much more like boys' schools, with uniforms, prefects, etc.

Covers of subsequent editions are often 'modernised', and Anna showed us a range of interesting examples. Angela Brazil wrote 50 books, which did not moralise but made girls aware of life around them. She showed girls she understood the problems they encountered: misunderstandings, 'passion' (but here the language can be misleading). Death often featured in early 20th century stories. Eleanor Brent Dyer wrote 57 *'Chalet Schools'* stories, and there is still a

fan club which holds conventions! Even more famous and prolific is Enid Blyton, who wrote 600 books, of which 600 million copies have been sold! Comic books and films are later additions, such as `The Belles of St Trinians`. Boarding schools rarely feature in fiction nowadays, with the notable exception of the Harry Potter series set in Hogwarts.

Another tour de force from Anna, for which she was thanked by Ros, and given a suitable present of a book about a girls` boarding school!

Diane Billam (*Gamma Chapter*)

GAMMA CHAPTER REPORT

I've been reminded lately of meeting up with three newly retired local primary school teachers I have known for some years. I thought perhaps I had found some new members and explained a little about our organization. I was quite shocked when one of them exclaimed, "Well, I wouldn't be interested because I'm not passionate about education anymore!" Later I thought that was one of the saddest statements I had heard all year, considering that even as we get older we all probably attempt to learn something new every day.

Three of the speakers we have been fortunate enough to listen to lately have certainly given us food for thought. They all came very well prepared to pass on an important message. As chief executive of PTA UK Emma Williams showed that she has some very inspiring fresh thinking about PTAs and their role in schools as team workers with parents, teachers and children. Dr. Hilary Brown, an experienced therapist, I felt gave us a real insight into how we can look at ourselves and others in a different light and have greater understanding of what makes us behave the way we do. Ann McCue transported us to Sumba, Indonesia with her beautiful, emotive photos and clear description of the way of life there. The charity she set up has in a short time made such a difference to the people there and enabled them to be independent and to have their children educated. How could anyone not be passionate about education when witnessing the changes that can be effected with support and care?

We look forward to organising more interesting talks in the New Year and of course to the State Conference in April. **Beechwood dates:** 21 January, 25 February, 18 March, 22 April.

Liz Malik (*Gamma Chapter President*)



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