

## **Psychosis: Stories Of Recovery and Hope" Conference and book launch, London, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2011**

I was really unsure as to whether to go to this conference due to my lack of self esteem which was threatening to dominate my decision to travel. The whole booking of a place to stay, getting train tickets, planning the process of getting there felt too difficult to handle.

The day before the conference I decided that if I didn't face my insecurities I would miss out on a good day.

I sent a couple of SOS emails and it soon became apparent that Lindens travel plans suited my needs and she was happy for me to travel with her. With the joys of the internet I was able to book tickets to travel on the same train to London and even managed to book up at the same hotel! (This was all much to my sons delight, who was planning an evening at home with friends – one of those evenings that wouldn't be possible if you Mum is in the house)!

We talked and talked on the train together. This was such a grounding and reassuring experience. As a result, the train ride to London felt far shorter than normal. I'm sure it was less than an hour and we had been travelling on a new high speed model.

Then there was the tube station.

Being a Devonshire lass the tube is not something I am over familiar with but I have used a little in the past. I was glad that both Linden and I had a sense of humour around our unfolding experience which was an attribute which was to serve us well on our return tube journey the following day!

We decided to walk to our hotel from our final tube station rather than catch the bus. The walk was a lot longer than we had planned, but it yielded some of the wonderful photographs of the 'writing on the wall' that Linden took. It also enabled us to meet various people who we stopped to ask how near we were to reaching our, at times, seemingly elusive hotel.

On arrival we were not disappointed. On the outside, in a rather run of the mill corner position stood our rather unimposing boutique style hotel.

'Never judge a book by its cover' is a phrase that comes to mind at this juncture.

As soon as we stepped inside we were met with a small but heavily dressed Spanish/Moroccan reception area. It was really beautiful. The rooms were stunning; mine was bright green and had amazingly colourful tiles in the bathroom. Breakfast was great and that was just the hand painted decorations on the jam pots. There

were the homemade jams, freshly squeezed organic juices, free range boiled eggs, homemade bread.....

The walk to the Institute of Psychiatry yielded another photo opportunity. The array of blue and purple, speckled with white that we spotted in somebody's garden. A sure sign that spring was evolving all around us in the middle of London

And this was all before the conference!

Others who attended the day have done some wonderful pieces on the conference itself. I felt this was something I had nothing more to add too. I have decided that covering the 'behind the scenes' part of my experience was a different approach to the conference.

After the conference... well, I had better not talk too much about the tensions around the taxi that was ordered but either couldn't find us or we couldn't find it. Once again humour came to our rescue and we trudged through the rush hour tube traffic to arrive at our 'phew, we've made it' destination of Paddington station!

No longer would the backup plan of sleeping rough on London's streets become a reality. Finding a seat together on the correct train and talking, eating, reading and resting (despite being in the quiet zone) was the triumphant outcome we were able to share.

Thanks to everybody, with all the wide ranging parts played, who made this experience possible.

Elaine Hewis