

## **The Buxton Tap House afternoon events, hosted by TheFED during the Buxton Fringe Festival, Derbyshire, on 15, 16 and 17 July 2015**

The free Spoken Word events which took place at the Buxton Tap House during the Buxton Fringe Festival in July this year were hosted by TheFED in an effort to increase TheFED's membership in the north and the midlands of the UK, and to publicise the work of the TheFED. These events were surprisingly successful, attracting 24 writers and performers, including 6 young children, over 3 afternoons. However, this did not happen by chance as I had been advertising the events online and through letters, telephone calls and word of mouth, exhausting practically every possible publicity channel, since early February. Those I targeted included: the Literature Development Officer for Derbyshire; West Midlands Arts; Yorkshire Writers' newsletter; Cultureword (formerly Commonword) in Manchester; the WEAs in the Midlands; Salford Working Class Movement Library, near Manchester; Manchester Central Library; Sheffield Central Library; Bollington Arts Centre, near Buxton, in Cheshire; Macclesfield Library in Cheshire; as well as many other libraries in Derbyshire. High Peak Community Voluntary Support produced multiple copies of the flyer to advertise the events, and also TheFED's tri-fold flyer giving details of TheFED's work and membership fee structure, all at very low cost. The Buxton Fringe itself is a massive publicity machine with its list of press contacts for participants; thousands of copies of the Fringe printed programmes being freely available; the Fringe desk, where flyers advertising all the events can be left for the duration of the Fringe; the Fringe website; as well as free publicity in the Buxton Advertiser and artsderbyshire. Buxton attracts many visitors from all over the world in July every year because both the celebrated Buxton Fringe and Festival take place at virtually the same time.

As Buxton in the East Midlands is bordered by so many counties, such as Yorkshire, Cheshire, Lancashire, Nottinghamshire and Staffordshire, it was surprising that some of the writers, who had travelled some distance to reach Buxton, knew writers from geographically distant county towns. Without having distributed a single flyer, to my surprise, I started to get quite a number of bookings, several weeks before the events, from far and wide, and a few from Buxton itself: clearly, having advertised the events by word of mouth at the popular monthly Spoken Word event at the Tea Chest in Buxton, had born fruit. There was a good mix of writers, with off-the-page work, as well as seasoned performers, and varying degrees of confidence and experience. As some people who had booked to perform or read failed to turn up, I suggested to people they could have more than one performance slot to fill the gaps and, happily, this worked out well. Dave Chambers, Vice Chair of TheFED Committee, was Master of Ceremonies on Wednesday and George Fuller, also from Newham Writers, accompanied him that day. They both made a supreme effort to travel such a long way from London, getting up at the crack of

dawn, although they had so many other commitments that week, and I am very grateful to them both. However, it was a pity they couldn't have stayed longer, at the very least to enjoy the unusually good summer weather in Buxton. On Friday afternoon Bruce Barnes, also on TheFED Committee, came from Bradford to introduce the acts. Both Bruce and Dave went off in search of audience members by scouring the streets of Buxton, but, alas, to no avail and, fortunately, the venue was so small that it never looked empty, although audience members were a little thin on the ground at times. Quite a number of writers came with family members, including 2 single parents with 3 children apiece, while another brought his mum. I was a member of the Monday Night Group, part of Commonword in Manchester, from 1996 – 2000, so it was strange to meet a writer from that Group after so many years. The writer, who read some of her fascinating work, also joined TheFED the day she came. I wrote to her asking if she could encourage her Group to join TheFED, and soon afterwards I received a newsletter from Commonword notifying me of their change of address and their open day in September. Noam Livine, who was in a former FWWCP Group in Staffordshire, also became a member and, not only was he tremendously helpful in promoting the events, he is now thinking of setting up his own mental health self help writers' group in Derby. Another participant, an excellent short story writer and poet, based in Wirksworth, Derbyshire, may also try and form her own TheFED-style Group where she lives.

In my amateurish way I filmed most of the writers and performers and, as I have just purchased a Mini IPAD, I may be able to edit the film-clips I produced and turn them into an entertaining webpage for our website. I have secured permission from most people to use footage of them, so fingers crossed that the film clips will do their readings and performances justice.

The events did prove to be fruitful as TheFED now has three new individual members and one participant gave us a small donation. We have also made some good contacts across 5 counties, and I have written to quite a number of the participants asking them if they would like to join TheFED and attend our annual Festival of Writing and AGM. A few of them responded by saying how much they enjoyed the events, and that they would be very happy to attend another similar event, hosted by TheFED. The appreciation of the participants alone was recompense for all the effort involved. We also had a good review (attached)!

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TheFED