



Spring/Summer 2018 Newsletter

Welcome to the Spring/Summer Newsletter, we have had a busy few months, including our memorial evening for the late Dr Alan Corbett on 12th January where friends and colleagues gathered at the Freud museum. It was a very moving evening as people recollected what they best remembered about Alan, the legacy he left behind in UK and in Ireland.

Thank you for those who attended as we feel it was a fitting tribute. Please also find further below an additional tribute from Angelia Veiga.

As this is my first newsletter as the chair of the IPD it has prompted me to reminisce about how the IPD began, back in May 2000 at St George's hospital in South London. I remember the day well, travelling down on a Saturday morning and listening to the speeches of Sheila Hollins, Roger Bank and Brett Kahr, who were all setting out why we needed an organisation like the Institute of Psychotherapy and Disability (IPD). The speakers felt it was crucial we do this; pointing out, that people with learning disabilities are susceptible to the effects of loss and four times more likely to have mental health issues than the general population. They also discussed their vulnerability to abuse, trauma and bullying. Sadly this is still the case today.

Since then there has been a long list of organisations and programs trying to develop alternatives to the medicating of people with learning disabilities, the

latest is NHS England with its “Stopping Over Medication of People” (STOMP) programme. Consequently “Treating with Respect” was adopted as the motto of the IPD. This context for psychological treatment is as relevant as ever.

Sadly some of the initial aims of the organization have not come to pass, one particularly disappointing aspect for me has been the absence of a specialist training course. I was involved in the development of a MA in Psychotherapy and Disability at Hertfordshire University. Despite its success of being included in the college’s syllabus, not enough students applied for it to start. Another disappointment was the lack of recognition from the main psychotherapy registrar body, United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP); for a specialist section on ‘disability therapy’ despite the excellent work and contributions from colleagues. When my colleague, Dr Georgina Parkes, decided to finish her turn as the

Chair of the IPD, I thought long and hard about taking on the role. What was our purpose? How influential could we be? I am always struck by the curiosity evoked, the interest and the recognition of the value of what we do, whenever I have discussed my role as a ‘disability therapist’ and/or offered clinical supervision to psychology or psychiatric colleagues. This has demonstrated to me that we need an organisation advocating the importance of our psychodynamic focus approach to people with disabilities, more than ever.

Someone, who has done more than anyone in pushing this approach forward, was the final speaker on that inaugural day, Dr Valerie Sinason. I am pleased to say she remains an IPD trustee. We can now look forward to celebrating, her festschrift, ‘Being Human, the work of Valerie Sinason.’ This will be published next year by Karnac books. This is the first in a series of books in the IPD monograph series with Karnac, the others will be a collection of papers which examine the meaning of our motto, “Treating with Respect” and how it shapes the work of Disability Therapists. More importantly, it will illustrate how the key tenets of ‘Disability Therapy’ can be used in psychotherapeutic work with

patients without disabilities. I am currently working on a history of psychoanalysis and learning disabilities for this series as well.

We owe this monograph series to the work of the late Dr. Alan Corbett, who died in December 2015, who arranged this. I was fortunate to be part of a very moving event to celebrate, mourn and share thoughts and feelings about Alan Corbett at the Freud museum in January, for which Angelia has contributed a feature in the newsletter.

Finally we are arranging a conference for the release of 'Being Human, The work of Valerie Sinason' (date to be confirmed), but is likely to be in spring 2019. I know Alan Corbett will feature in the conference as he left a body of authoritative work, which Valerie will discuss. I very much look forward to this day.

David O'Driscoll

Its an exciting time for IPD with the monograph series of books. Next in the series is Treating With Respect a book which was close to Alan Corbett's heart. To paraphrase Alan "Treating With Respect" was adopted as the motto of the IPD and continues to inform its ethos and philosophy. The aim of the book is to "illustrate how the key tenets of Disability Therapy can be used in psychotherapeutic work with patients without disabilities". It's been an interesting journey for me so far editing this book together with our President Valerie Sinason. In our world of disabilities we always say that good practice starts with us before moving on into the general population and this is another illustration of that principle. It is an honour and a privilege for me to carry on Alan's legacy in this way. More information as the project takes shape.

Dr. Georgina Parkes

Upcoming Events

Intellectual Disability Mental Health Question Time #MHQT
Free to attend

Wed 13 June 2018 at 18:00 – 21:00

Location
Christopher Ingold Building
XLG2 Auditorium
20 Gordon Street
London
WC1H 0AJ

IPD Annual Meeting

Will be held in the autumn please keep an eye out for a save the date announcement.
All welcome to attend

The experience of being supervised by Dr Alan Corbett by Angelina Veiga

I was fortunate enough to be supervised by Dr Corbett not long after qualifying as a Psychotherapist in Dublin, Ireland. The initial idea was that he would supervise my disability work as he was referred to me as a specialist in this field. But at the time Alan did not have a vacancy and so I waited for about a year to begin working with him. Soon after beginning supervision Alan began to supervise all my clinical work, and I consulted him on organisational/systems work I was also involved in.

Alan was always a generous, humble teacher - astute, kind and encouraging. He taught me how to navigate the world of Disability Psychotherapy. During this time, he was developing his concept of the Disabled Transference which I was introduced to through our clinical discussion of case work, as well as the importance of treating the system as a whole

(system as patient), and he spoke often of the Three Secrets of Disability (Hollins and Sinason). He encouraged me to talk about these ideas in non-clinical settings as to widen out views on the experience of disability, which could be challenging.

Besides supervising my clinical work, Alan was also key in my involvement in two groups. The first our own IPD. He encouraged me to join as a member, then to become a trustee as a link for the growing work occurring in Ireland. The other group was the setting up of the then reading group – Disability Psychotherapy Ireland. There all the members were somehow connected to Alan and this is how we came together. The highlight was of Alan coming to Dublin in November 2013 for his seminar – Sitting at the edge of intelligence.

Once I came to London Alan suggested that he stop supervising me so that we could develop our friendship. I then had the task to get to know Alan not as a supervisor but as a friend. But this was not easy because Alan had kept such impeccable boundaries so that while I knew his warmth and interest I did have to get to know him outside of the consulting room arena! This was a wonderful and fun time.

Alan was a truly warm and gracious clinician, mentor and teacher, and also a good friend. I was fortunate to learn from him and to develop under his guidance. His death has been such a loss to our profession and for us all personally, and while his work is alive in us all he is very missed.

Angelina Veiga Reg UKCP, MIPD

“We’re treated like second class citizens”

This comment is from Daniel Doherty, a one time resident of Calderstones, a twentieth century large long-stay institution for people with learning disabilities in the Ribble Valley, Lancashire. Daniel’s pithy statement relates to unfolding moves to build a private crematorium, with accompanying car park and landscaping, on part of the site of the former institution’s graveyard. In this consecrated ground lie the remains of around 1200 women, men and children who all lived in Calderstones.

Although Calderstones (or Mersey Care NHS Trust Foundation Trust Whalley site as it is now known) is home to a low and medium secure unit, its existence as a large long-stay NHS hospitals for people with learning disabilities effectively ended in 2000. At this point most of its vast main site was demolished to make way for a housing estate and the Regional Health Authority sold its cemetery to a private developer for a knock down price.

Unfortunately, the cemetery’s twenty first century history has been largely a story of woeful neglect and vandalism. There has been wholesale removal of headstones by one of the many private owners over the years, along with a short spell of wanton destruction by local youngsters. In addition the site, until recently, has been allowed to resemble nothing more than a wild, unkempt and over-grown field. Yet it is the final resting place of well over a thousand fellow citizens.

The status of the graveyard is given an added twist, positioned as it next to a Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery. Here reside the bodies of a number of armed forces personnel who died when Calderstones was a military hospital during the two world wars. The site is given careful attention and is in immaculate condition. It is in stark contrast to the state of the hospital cemetery, through which you have to pass to reach the military graves and memorial. Many walk this route every November to attend the annual remembrance service.

It is of course right and proper to remember the war dead, and to honour them with a well-looked after burial ground. However, recognising and acknowledging the lives of those who died while in an institutional setting is surely of equal worth. The recent history of these two cemeteries, linked by the same institution, sadly seems to reflect attitudes and values which indeed view people with learning disabilities as 'second class citizens'.

Against this backdrop of neglect, which has long been in need of address, has entered an issue of urgent importance. This casts a dark shadow over the future respectful and sensitive use of the cemetery. In essence, the current private owners have been granted permission by the planning authority, Ribble Valley Borough Council (RVBC), to go ahead with erecting a crematorium, with a car park and landscaping. Earthworks started in autumn last year, and in fits and starts have continued on the site. At least one grave, that of John Newton, one of the small handful of former staff buried in the graveyard, has already been covered. However, the strong suspicion is that a number of other plots are seriously threatened. Those objecting to these developments confirmed earlier this year that the whole site is consecrated ground. Under the still relevant 1902 Cremation Act this status in itself would have prohibited any planning permission being granted in the first place. However, this seemed to have never been investigated or raised in either the original sale from the NHS, or any subsequent planning deliberations. Overall, the principal parties, including the site owners, have revealed a regrettable lack of due diligence.

The local Parish Council had raised concerns in the planning process about how crematorium related plans may impact on the graves of former residents of Calderstones Hospital. RVBC, in their report granting planning permission for a crematorium, responded by stating that this was,

'not particularly a planning issue. This is covered by other legislation with which the developer would need to comply in the event that planning permission is granted and the development is implemented.'

This was presumably on the genuine misunderstanding that the cemetery is not legally a consecrated site.

At the time of writing it is believed that the owners will apply to the Bishop of Blackburn for the removal of key legal restraints which apply to consecrated ground. It is within the gift of the Bishop to grant this under Section 22 of the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991. If allowed, this will enable the proposed building work to continue in an official and lawful manner.

Former residents, staff, families, members of the local community, people with learning disabilities more generally, along with friends and supporters are writing to the Bishop of Blackburn, or his legal representative, to make their concerns known. If you wish to add your own voice, as well as keep up with any developments, please see further details (including a short video) on the Friends of Calderstones Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/letourfriendsrestinpeace/>

Nigel Ingham