

# THE RETREAT 2013

by Ron Blackwell



What retreat you may ask! There was no retreat, it was advance all the way through, until perhaps by 2.00pm Sunday when the final call was made.

The strength of **Body, Mind and Spirit** was well expressed by all participants and presenters.

At a personal level I began unsure of what was in it for me. Very little thought given to what I might contribute. However both were fulfilled by the time Sunday afternoon came around. I listened to many who expressed issues in their journey that I had not - the pain and attempts to straighten limbs and backs, to say nothing of the pain inflicted by society attitudes to calliper wearing sufferers.

Of the Retreat itself: The choice of topics and presenters were many and varied, it was a pity that there were not alternative time slots for attending some activities.

## Day 1 – Body

I attended a “falls and balance concerns” with Ann Buchan who had opened the day’s proceedings. Though, like some present, falls are not a big issue for me, it was a valuable session. The major point I took from the session was not to attempt to lift someone to their feet, but rather provide assistance so they get themselves on their feet. The human body is an awkward thing to lift, but providing some supporting device, a chair, set of steps, even your own body on hands and knees may be helpful (writer’s own idea).

In the same time slot, were three other sessions and maybe other attendees will give some insight to those.

Polio feet: subject of the 2pm session, which opened my eyes to what this field can do to assist, well beyond simply helping your feet. I will be following up on the programme - Posture Podiatry.

The first day was rounded off with the “Holistic approach to Health”, and later screening of the movie “The Sessions”. A worthwhile serious but light hearted look at extreme polio and one man’s struggle.

## Day 2 - Mind

Began with a presentation by Susan Hillier, titled Neuroplasticity - basically the adaptability of facets of the brain and the advances in knowledge of the brain from the Egyptians who didn’t seem to think much of that body organ, through to the notion that removing parts of the brain to overcome illnesses, to the modern understanding

of the complexities of our brain including that we still don't have a complete map of the brain.

Yoga, Feldenkrais, Mindfulness, Early polio memories to lunch, and then Hydrotherapy, Miniature gardening, Art and Music, Writing your story, Partnering polio, to afternoon tea. Believe me when I say, the food breaks came around regularly.

The 4pm session of Card making, Singing, Cryptic crosswords, Wine and Beer making were on offer to stimulate the mind in the run up to dinner. As in all time slots it would have been great to have been involved in all sessions, and no, the writer did not attend Beer and Wine making!

A Magician entertained us during dinner.

### **Day 3 – Spirit**

Once again following the 9.15 plenary from Dr Ian Maddocks A.M., three sessions were available; The Gift of the Holy Spirit, Practical Wisdom, and Meditation.

Dr Maddocks spoke of the Community Spirit as evident in Papua tribal villages and the decline as the modern world imposed itself. He talked of the spirit of will that drives us as human beings.

My session with Seamus Baker was a discussion of the spiritual skills that build resilience. His discussion catered on a planned approach to problems that beset us.

Apart from the socializing and exchange of ideas that I enjoyed, I participated in Mary-ann's choir of 12 who after 3 short rehearsals gave a presentation to the final assembly.

I hope other contributors can give more detail to what was an educational and uplifting experience- An opportunity to share ideas and ideals.

Many thanks to Mary-ann for pulling the event together with such vitality, and to Gillian, Alex and Vivienne for the behind scenes work that must have caused them much time and effort.