

## THE WELCOME WEEKEND

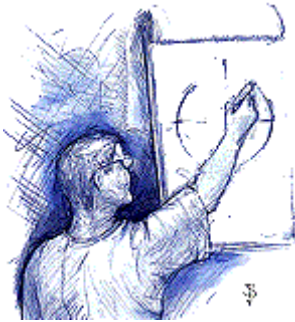
From the moment we arrived at Reaseheath, the welcome wrapped around us like a favourite fleece.

The friendly and well-organised team leaders had prepared a skilful mix of information and team building sessions. The introductory warm-up session on the front lawn ensured interaction with other group members and relaxed us for the classroom sessions to follow. Already individual personalities began to reveal themselves.



***"I have never felt so positive about anything in my life before!"***

From information on the country to the expedition itself, the many questions on all our lips were mostly answered, and the conversation buzzed at lunchtime about all aspects of the journey. The curious names which we had been given upon arrival became code words for group participation – careful facilitation capitalised on the enthusiasm and some super ideas were put forward for fund raising.



The disparate group of wary individuals who gathered in the morning was thus transformed into an enthusiastic party and there was strength in the realisation that potential barriers were removed by the common purpose which united us. Had we really only met ten hours earlier?

The presentation after dinner was amazing – so many of us shared the view that we could have listened for another two hours to Dave Shaw as he effortlessly entertained us whilst handling many of our worst fears – tarantulas, scorpions, giant stick insects and a giant millipede.

The energiser on Sunday morning got our joints and brains moving again, and by the time we watched the stunning slide show, I realised that the question I faced was not "whether to go to Guyana?" but, more, "is there enough time to prepare myself for this expedition?"

***"Frightening and thrilling, all at the same time!"***

It would be too easy to regard the training weekends as information gathering sessions, but if the first is anything to go by, they are so, so much more. Dig said that someone on an earlier expedition said that, after the weekends, if they didn't make it to Guyana, it still would have been worth their while, and I really understand what they meant.



***"I lack self-confidence, but I feel 100% better from this weekend, just being with like-minded people!"***

That tingling sensation up and down my spine was the emerging realisation that I was about to embark on a journey which will change my life. Forever.

Our journey into the Land of Many Waters has begun.

*Jill Mitchell, Sept 1999,  
with quotes from group members,  
gathered from the weekend.  
Illustrations provided by Sean Palmer.*