

There it was, on my computer, staring me in the face and being quite confrontational! An email from Drummergirl advertising of the next Retreat. Initially I thought that this sounded OK, I mean, I enjoy djembe drumming and I need and want to learn more so why not. I had been enrolled in “Beginners” for 2 terms at this time. (alright I’m a slow learner). Then the doubting birds circled. All sorts of thoughts ran through my head:

- “what happens at these retreats?”
- “who is going, would I know anybody?”
- “would I learn anything?”
- “would I be good enough to fit in?”
- “would I make an absolute dill out of myself?”

With encouragement from my wife i.e. “have a go”, “what have you got to lose”, “you’ll have fun” but still with complete apprehension, I expressed my intention to attend and duly paid the fee- “Oh my God I’m locked in now”

Well, THE Saturday finally arrived and the sun warmed the crisp early morning – “at least the weather’s good” I thought, it won’t be a complete waste of time if I’m out of my depth.

Off we set (yes I said we - I needed someone to hold my hand and given my wife “made” me attend this thing, she had to accompany me). Heading up the Calder the stomach doing flips (you can see that I handle pressure well), the CD’s helped a little to soothe the mounting pressure as we got nearer and nearer to Newham (where the hell is Newham anyway). Unfortunately we couldn’t get lost as the directions were spot on and we duly arrived at “the farm”.

What an absolutely beautiful and peaceful place this is!

Now I’m really nervous. We park the car and get out. People are milling about and seem to be congregating under the porch. There is tea and coffee on offer so I grab one and wait. Everybody is really welcoming and conversation with strangers really easy. The doubting birds were dissipating! Being very brave I turned to tell my wife that she could go but she had gone already!

We broke up into two groups and went to opposite areas of the property to commence the Retreat. I was in Simone’s group so this was good, a known face. There was one other student from the Wednesday night class and the rest from other classes.

As we commenced, it occurred to me that we were all there for the same reason – to learn, to enjoy and to experience the love of djembe drumming. There were no judgements regarding skill level or anything else for that matter. It was a hoot.

We stopped for lunch, which was provided and let me tell you what a great lunch it was. During the lunch break I spoke to most of the people who attended and what an interesting and diverse group it was but with the one reason for being there. What a fantastic mix of friendly people.

After lunch we swapped groups and we had a teacher/leader who I didn't know but what an experience. I lost all inhibitions and really got into it. Then we all got together in one big group and played what we had learned in our last group.

What a mind blowing experience this was. The mood in the group was so generously supportive and positive and such a great way to end the day.

My wife had returned just before the final big group celebration and she said that it sounded brilliant. I didn't want to leave as I was still on a drumming high.

Would I attend another Retreat - in a heart-beat. One of the best days I've had – beautiful scenery, great people, learnt heaps, great music. What more can you want?

### **Warning**

If, like me, you don't practise that much, I suggest you take some tape for your fingers. You will not be able to stop drumming once you get there.

David Wood