

## Welcome to our first newsletter of 2010



### Open Courses

Would you like to improve your facilitation skills?

Our Masterclass workshop is designed to build on and enhance existing facilitation skills and is aimed at providing managers, supervisors – or training professionals – with a set of practical and robust facilitation tools to improve the effectiveness of facilitated events.

We are running our acclaimed\* 2 day Facilitation Expertise Masterclass on the 24th and 25th February 2010 in Winchester

Please go to our website to view the workshop outline – just click on Events & Workshops  
[www.stepchangetraining.com](http://www.stepchangetraining.com)

There are still 3 places left so if you or any of your colleagues are interested in attending, please contact me on 07966 459876 or email [jane.hooper@stepchangetraining.com](mailto:jane.hooper@stepchangetraining.com). costs are £150 per day

We are planning another Facilitation Expertise Masterclass in London in the late Spring – please let me know if you would be interested in attending.

### \*Some Feedback from previous Facilitation workshops

*\*'Brilliant'*

### Update from Jane

A very Happy New Year to you all.

This edition is all about feet, somewhat appropriate to StepChange as our logo is two feet in a circle – both ready to step forward.



I once gave my card to a long lost cousin I met at a wedding, and he assumed I was a chiropodist. But I digress. I have been inspired by a fabulous artist called Raymond Cowling. A friend of mine suggested that I take a look at his website and I was immediately stunned by 'The Path' see above. So much power in those feet; so much life, experience and sense of purpose.

It made me think about how important our feet are. They enable us to balance our way through life and to move forward, a combination most of us are seeking to achieve in different aspects of our lives.

I wrote to Raymond (who lives in Italy) and asked him if I could use the picture in this newsletter. It seemed so appropriate to what we do in coaching and change. Delightful man that he is, he not only agreed but sent me an evocative description of the process of the creation of the series. He is as eloquent as he is skilled as an artist and I urge you to read his words below. Enjoy, and take a look at his website as his work is wonderful.

*'Now I know what it's all about'*

*'Extremely useful – the mix of learning and active participation worked very well'*

*'Presented in a structured, easy to understand method that was great fun'*

*'Very enjoyable – especially the opportunity to actually do a facilitation'*

*'A very resourceful course, my achievements were enhanced'*

*'Course was excellent and I now feel a lot more capable and ready for working with customers'*

*'I'd recommend this to all consultants'*

*'Excellent training, lots of enthusiasm from both the trainer and attendees'*

*'Inspiring stuff for the future not telling you what you should do but showed you how to achieve it'*

Just to close the circle, on opening a book I have just started, I read just before the title page, a quote from the Spanish poet Anthonio Machado

*"Caminante, no hay camino,  
Se hace camino al andar."*

*"Traveller there is no path,  
Paths are made by walking"*

Now that is a thought to take me into 2010.

All best wishes

Jane

**Raymond Cowling** [www.raymondcowling.com](http://www.raymondcowling.com)

**The Elephant Series ...** I have waited for nearly forty years to see my first fully grown, wild, African elephant. And when that moment finally arrived, in the Kruger National Park, South Africa, it left me feeling so completely overwhelmed by its presence, that I knew there was nothing I could do, other than try to capture that moment on canvas. It would take a lot of paint and even more emotion.

I came so close to the creature that I could smell it, but I felt totally calm and completely at ease, if I was to die or live, it was his choice, all life was frozen in those few sacred moments. And although we all physically go onto other places and spaces, I was, and always will be, standing motionless, there – with my elephant before me.

He had no name; he has no use for one. He embodies all elephants everywhere, all of their feelings, and every one of their footsteps.

I mentally jotted down a few poignant words that came straight from his eyes into mine. Those words, within these paintings, are the direct results of that encounter. I knew I had to speak from the mind of my elephant, and that would certainly require some very special emotions on my canvas.

That night, as I lay under the African skies, I realised that I was probably closer to my elephant than I will ever get, simply by lying on the dust from the bones, of the creatures that had lain there before me. The dust from many tusks, the essence of the elephants was right there, under my back.

Elephants come from the soil, and just like us, they will go back to it. But the elephant breathes it, eats it, bathes in it and lives his life as part of it. Only the African soil can create the African elephant, they are one and the same.

The textures, colours and contours that build the landscape, must be a part of the very creatures that walk through it – the landscape and the creature cannot be separated.

Years ago, whilst on a painting trip to North Wales, I had a strange dream. For days, I had been trying to paint a distant mountain, in the changing light and weather and it was not going well.

On one particular night, I dreamt that I was painting this same mountain, but it was pouring with rain, the clouds

were dark all around me and the mountain was flat grey against the stormy sky.

All around was gloomy and wet, everywhere, except where I sat. Where I sat was in a bright spotlight of sunshine that shone for a metre or so all around me. Within this circle where my easel stood, the earth was dry and the grass was crisp and tanned. But still, my painting wasn't going well.

No matter how I mixed the colours, they all came out as a mud brown and disgusting image.

Then I looked down to the ground and dipped the end of my brush into the soil, scooping up the dried earth onto the canvas in front of me.

Suddenly, with every brush stroke, there were rainbows that leapt from the painting and they danced and swirled up into the broken sky. And the painting began to come alive with every piece of earth.

It was only a dream, but it was very powerful for me, and I still remember every detail to this day.

The soil and rainbows of my dream, combined with my experience in Africa with my elephant in the Kruger Park, showed me again the spirit in my work and what it all meant. And how it came alive for me in this elephant painting series.

I needed the very soil and all that came with it, to put into my paintings, for those very same reasons, it's the only way the paintings can 'live' and eventually – 'speak.' The words that came to me from the elephant in that moment of our meeting, became endless volumes.

I feel I could paint the words until I too become the dust I paint from.

The elephants had become my landscapes, because they 'are' the landscape. Within each painting there is Africa itself – and by nature – the elephant too.

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