



MACROBIOTICS
INTERNATIONAL

Conference

May 2023

International Macrobiotic Conference, Oxon Hoath, UK, May 2023

Arriving at Oxon Hoath country estate was mesmerizing. Such a short distance from bustling Tonbridge on the outskirts of London, the winding country lanes a taste of what was to come. Immersed in nature, grand Oxon Hoath welcomed the macro' delegates from many countries and the sun lit up the green fields and meadows. The committee arranged rooms whilst Tina, the venue coordinator led each of us through the maze of hallways to our individual rooms. Angela, our gifted macrobiotic chef, had prepared an inviting red lentil soup and snacks for us to enjoy before officially opening the conference circle at 3pm on Monday the 22nd of May.

After a short introduction from the committee everyone gave a brief description of themselves using the "talking stick". It was good to hear Rosalina tell us how many trees had been planted in Portugal with a donation from the IMC.

Then Paul Lambeth led a Do-In movement exercise followed by his informative and amusing talk titled "What I have Learned from Macrobiotics". Next Marion Price spoke about her vision of a macrobiotic community and gave us all the opportunity to express our own understanding of community with fascinating descriptions. Dinner was served and in the dining room which filled with conversation, catching up with familiar friends and getting to know new ones. The first meal together was magical.

That evening Ken Prange presented "The art and purpose of chanting" with a descriptive Power Point presentation demonstrating that words have spirit and are a powerful vibration when used correctly; where chanting can help to ground us in the moment and elevate us to higher levels of awareness. Later we moved to the library and lit the open fire ending a fabulous day drenched in warmth.

Next morning Melanie Hubbard used her lifelong skill to instruct us in her yoga class. Exercise and movement were major themes in this year's event. After breakfast Anna Mackenzie talked in depth on "Cultivating Gratitude and Deep Ecology" with many examples on how advancing technology disturbs the natural energy flow replacing harmony with artificial distraction. She emphasized that natural beauty and complex ecology in everyday life, often taken for granted, are essential to gratitude and reciprocal.

Warm sunshine prompted us to continue outside for open discussion on "relationships". This was popular, where each one of us had the opportunity to describe a heartfelt relationship.

Mieke Verdecken later spoke in the conference room on "Cooking Quick Macro Meals" recalling her experience through macrobiotic cooking and teaching, she gave a visual description on how to use the knowledge of nutrients and YinYang to create satisfyingly quick meals.

Next on the program was "Being a Macrobiotic Chef" by Angela Prange. How wonderful it was to listen to the in-depth knowledge and experience of the person who cooked all the meals to a very high standard. How fortunate we were!

Downstairs, Simon Markson skillfully brought us into the realm of sound with his demonstration of "Music with Singing Bowls". In the last part we lay on the floor, eyes closed, whilst the sound resonated mystically after each bowl was struck gently.

The IMP institute in Lisbon, Portugal, was an inspiration to so many for so long and Geninha Varatojo, (with translation by Ana Torres) beautifully and articulately told us the remarkable story of its' creation with Francisco (Chico). The challenges after his passing, and then the pandemic. More warm and pleasant conversation over the evening meal before—we went outside under magnificent trees where Manuel Cristiano introduced us to "Chi Kung movement. It was cool by then and we were happy to sit by the roaring log fire again to listen to "The Future Teachers and Counsellors" by Oliver Cowmeadow. His concern that

the macrobiotic movement was not advancing with the times thus preventing mainstream exposure. This provoked a dynamic and diverse debate on how to resolve the dilemma with focus on how to educate children with some of the broader macrobiotic principles in schools. Ana Torres responded with interesting observations. The discussion continued as the fire dwindled, until late.

Wednesday morning movement is “Biodanza” led so well by Alicia Kon. Moving to the rhythms of captivating music we danced the 5 transformations fabulously. After breakfast Kristiane Ravn Frost demonstrated a refreshing take on the classic macrobiotic principles of George Ohsawa, entitled “7 levels of Judgement, energetic approach to life”. Another inspiring talk to stimulate thought.

Tomoko Ogawa next showed her excellent Power Point presentation on “Oil and Salt in Cooking, 2 Meals a Day” Her talk was informative and reflected the beginnings of macrobiotics.

Everyone sat outside on the lawn, in sunshine to hear the “Macrobiotic Confessions” of Jan Verweken from Belgium. He told us that once in the past he was very sick, and how with macrobiotic understanding and principles, he was able to reverse his sickness and travel to Boston U.S.A. to study with Michio and Aveline Kushi and with Master Oki in Japan. He shared this with his growing family as well as the art of shiatsu which he continues to share today.

After lunch Sandy Pukel, was inspiring as he spoke on “Macrobiotic people can have illness,” about the importance of friendship and positive attitude to all aspects of our lives and within the macrobiotic community. We are not immune to sickness. We each give what we can while we can and it’s usually very rich.

Then with Bruce Caswell on the violin, Mary Nino led us in a traditional Irish dance. We clapped and whooped and got the steps right, it was truly fabulous.

Maria Serrano, shiatsu practitioner and teacher taught us strong, elegant stretches.

Then we sat on the floor with a partner to follow her detailed instructions for pulse diagnosis on the wrist of the inner arm. It was good and she encouraged us to practice consistently on friends and family to gain experience.

Upstairs the Q & A panel included Oliver, Geninha, Georges, Kristiane and Isabel. The questions had been written previously by participants and opened many different subjects. The variety of answer’s were appreciated by everybody.

The party dinner was spectacular accompanied with a glass or two of organic wine, followed by dancing, talking, and Bruce on the violin, until quite late. While some retired earlier.

On the last day Jan gave a great Oki-Do yoga class and everyone went for a walk in the grounds before reassembling in the conference room. Huge applause was given to the cooking team. Then two presentations were given to host the next International Macrobiotic Conference. Both Kristiane from Denmark and Georges from Belgium presented residential venues. Uniquely this time (post pandemic) it was decided to vote for them both for 2 consecutive years instead of just one year. By unanimous vote, Denmark in 2024 and Belgium in 2025. Then followed a productive discussion about updating the IMC website, finding a manager, the membership system and networking; with excellent suggestions and offers from all present and newcomers Bruce, Erica, Sabrina and Siobhan. Marion Price thanked the organisers.

After brunch a few delegates had to start their way home and we congregated in the bright first floor room to conduct the closing ceremony for which we had written on a placard the names of all teachers past and present and placed it in the centre of our circle. There was a profound feeling of connection and gratitude for those who have gone before and the commitment, sharing and co-creation of this special event. In particular very special thanks to Rosalina Silva for her joy, efficiency and strength!

Together we recited Michio’s 1976 poem “We all have come from Infinity.” The conference was a success and we left Oxon Hoath inspired and looking forward to the next one in Denmark.

