

Ubuntu Workshops

[The Dreaming Butterfly](#), 2 March 2008

Autumn at Hafotty Gelynen began with South African Sangoma John Lockley's first Ubuntu Workshop. On the Friday night weary travellers were gently guided through a meditation and then listened to John's story. They were impressed with his gentle and caring nature as he spoke about his life's journey and the important work he is doing to 'cross the divide' between Western, Eastern and African traditions. John told of how the Xhosa (and all other African) tribes revere their ancestral lines and we all were offered the opportunity to name our ancestral line beginning with our father's line then our mother's line. For those of us who were adopted and/or married, we were encouraged to include those lines too. Before bed, each participant was invited to wash hand, face, backs of necks and crowns with a herbal mixture which would support a good night's sleep and possibly the remembering of our dreams the next morning. John explained how the ancestors can talk to us through our dreams.

On the Saturday, we met after a healthy breakfast (thanks Miles!) to meditate and discuss how we had passed through the night. Some participants found they had vivid dreams, while others had 'the best sleep I've had in ages!'. We spent the morning in a beautiful outdoor ceremony. We were guided across the fields to the winding stream to the North-West of our property to meet the 'people under the water'. John explained how the Xhosa people believe that the ancestral spirits live beneath the water. We were invited to give offerings of seeds and beads whilst asking for help and support from them. It was an excellent way to be clear about what it is that one is asking for in life and naming it.

On our way to the Kraal, we stopped to honour the spirits of nature by tossing offerings against a rowan tree.

A Kraal is an Afrikaans word used to name a place where animals used to be enclosed. Animals and plants are also sacred to the Xhosa tribe and most, if not all, ceremonies take place outdoors. Our Kraal was set aside, opened and blessed by John back in June 2007 purely for the purpose of giving thanks and praise to our ancestors. It was important to follow African protocol of allowing the oldest male member of the homestead to enter first, followed by the others in descending order of age. We were invited to 'toast' or praise our ancestors with a sip of expensive Brandy – only the best is used for the ancestors! For those of us who do not drink, a splash to the floor in their honour sufficed. The mood changed immediately to one of silent reverence and respect.



During all these ceremonies, we consistently called to and praised our own lineage of ancestors and included John's and his Xhosa teacher's as a sign of respect for the teaching being given.

After a hearty lunch (thanks again Miles!) and some time to ourselves to wander the land and reflect on our experiences, we returned to learn the dance and songs of the sangomas. John explained how the apprentice Sangomas would dance and sing and when moved to, one calls 'heke' to stop the dancers and gather around a central altar to offer praise and prayers for themselves and the community. For most of the participants this was the most moving experience as many offered prayers for their own communities back home.

In the evening there were stories shared and songs sung around a fire and just before bed, we were invited to wash one more time with the special herb mixture.

Sunday morning was a time of reflection and meditation where we were encouraged to write down our experiences. John offered to give extra time to those who wanted a private session. Everyone was grateful to John for his guidance and instruction, leaving Hafotty Gelynen refreshed and invigorated.

(John has returned throughout the winter to provide more introductory Ubuntu workshops)

"So good, so good, truly beautiful. My heart sings ..." S.T. Chichester

"John and all the people were amazing. So much more than I could have hoped for, and oh my gosh can John dance ..." P.P Chester