The writing retreat is a model of support by a professional society for practicing academics. The location was especially conducive to serious work. Madingley Hall is quiet, the service superb and the environs beautiful. The group chosen for the retreat was exceptionally collegial and supportive of each other while maintaining focus on their own work. The conversations over meals and breaks were very helpful. They not only served to help me clarify and work through some issues in my own research; writing and thinking along side others inspired me in ways that writing alone cannot. This was a new experience for me, and one I would appreciate being able to replicate. I accomplished more quality work in these two days than I have in months.

I was hungry for this experience, and was able to take full advantage of the time. One of the great advantages of this retreat was the absence of a list of outcomes we were expected to document by the close. Such a requirement would, I know, have deadened my work. Instead I was able to form my own goals with a degree of freedom and creativity that resulted in me accomplishing more than I thought possible. I was able to put together a strong outline for a public lecture I shall be giving next year, and develop the first two sections. This was what I intended, but the nature of the retreat meant that I was also able to work through some particularly knotty problems that have been brushed under the rug far too long. The nature of the retreat provided the perfect environment to explore fundamental ideas related to my research and form a clear direction as I move forward with my research. This was an unexpected but thrilling result of the retreat.

I cannot thank the PESGB and all those, whose vision and hard work made the retreat a reality.

I can say that the retreat was a really wonderful idea, and the support from the Society to engage in such activity was very much appreciated. For me, there were a number of very strong positives of attending such an event:

1. I work in an institution where research, and particularly work in philosophy of education is very marginal to the work of my department. This can be very isolating in terms of opportunities for academic discussion over philosophical ideas. The retreat gave very significant opportunities to have time to discuss research and writing ideas with like-minded colleagues, and this was invaluable;

2. Given the very significant pressures of teaching and administrative duties that many of us face, time dedicated to writing often gets pushed to the end of a very long ‘to do’ list. The retreat opportunity enabled me to spend quality time in addressing an idea about which I had been thinking for some time;

3. The surroundings at Madingley Hall were very conducive to such work. For me (coming from the North of England), it was a pleasant, but very long journey. I wonder if any other such events might move around the country to make them more central.

Given the time available, I was able to make good progress on my ideas. I was able to:

1. Draft an outline of, and write 3500 words towards, a journal article which I hope to also submit for a conference;
2. Talk to colleagues and gain feedback on my ideas which enabled me to shift the focus of my research in a positive way;

3. Make a contact for a potential research collaboration.

Given the relatively short duration of the retreat, I was extremely happy with the outcomes, and it was an entirely positive and extremely valuable opportunity.