Carrying the Message to Black & Minority Ethnic Communities

Conclusions from the AA Survey
A Delegate looks back on Conference 2002

Editorial Note

This edition of AA News carries as its leader a General Service Board article on how we could best develop a strategy for extending the hand of AA within the growing black and minority ethnic communities in Great Britain. This response to the several requests for the preparation of such over past years has been made by a new Trustee, Pravin K., from London Region. The Board initiative outlines a plan for the way forward in this area and carries an appeal for help from the existing local and regional service structure in furthering its implementation.

In addition to these, from time to time it has been requested of me to carry out certain specific duties using professional abilities that I am fortunate to possess. One is, after all, expected to bring to the Board and to use talents or aptitudes acquired outside of AA. Indeed, I have always considered the application of these in service to be part of the essential expression of one’s gratitude to this Fellowship.

In necessarily transcribing the outcome of some of these duties for AA News I have always tried to address related articles from my position as Editor - rather than as author - and not to be influenced by my other Board responsibilities. However, because some of these issues have been seen at times by some members to be sensitive or controversial, I have often been the target and recipient of the criticism that seems inevitably to flow towards the Board when there is no-one else accessible or identifiable to blame.

It is, therefore, perhaps not a surprise to me that this Conference has seen a few Questions submitted relating to AA News. These contained proposals to combine AA News with Share Magazine or to have it produced by an Editorial Team in the fashion of Share. Personally, I think AA News would not take kindly to being produced by a committee and would soon cease to be the main outlet for informing the Fellowship of service matters of import.

The question finally selected by the Conference Steering Committee for Conference 2003 (Committee Four, Q 1 - contained in the Winter News) is ‘Would Conference please consider the purpose and objectives of the AA News and discuss how these can be better achieved.’ While there is always room for improvement, the use of the comparative to imply AA News has fallen somewhat short of the mark may, I feel, perhaps not be considered appropriate by everyone: but Conference must debate and decide that.

I take leave of the Board following Conference 2003. May I wish those who will come after me all the best in their endeavours with the Board and with AA News. At the same time, I wish to thank Sharon for making each edition both possible and so a pleasure and our Chairman, Mick W., for being a constant source of encouragement and understanding over my entire service time with the Board.

Ian H, Editor of AA News
and Board Trustee

For me, the occasion of this edition is a rather sad one since it marks the sixteenth and last AA News which I and Sharon Smyth at GSO have together been privileged to plan, prepare and edit over my four years service as a Trustee. It has been both a challenging and rewarding experience, requiring as it does at all times a balance to be struck between one’s personal beliefs - accruing from being a grateful alcoholic member of the Fellowship - and a requirement to interpret for the Fellowship one’s understanding of the activities and goings on within service matters that are mainly monitored or initiated by the General Service Board.

The other main article is a look back at Conference 2002 through the eyes of a member who not only served her full three-year term as a Delegate to Conference but also found the time and energy in her last year to further serve Conference both as a Committee Chairperson and as the alternate Conference Chair. It is a very timely example of what a willing delegate may expect to experience (and possibly achieve) in giving committed service at this most important AA event in the annual calendar. New delegates could learn from her account; it may not go amiss with older ones either.

A third article derives from the convenient summary prepared recently by GSO of the results of the AA Survey conducted in Great Britain last June. It is expected that this will be one of the General Service Board presentations at Conference 2003. The summary is presented here not only for wider interest but also to permit members to brief their delegates for possible related discussions on this subject at Conference. Each delegate will have received a full report of the survey, which confirms that the size of the Fellowship in Great Britain is less than may have been thought and is showing signs of little or no growth.

The other articles in the Spring edition are:

- the First Edition of an Employment Liaison Newsletter – being the initiative of the new trustee (Dianne C.T.) with responsibility for this area
- a similar inaugural Newsletter for the Glasgow East Intergroup from an old friend, Charlie G
- an article by Trustee Gareth L. on the probation Chit System
- a reminder from a regular contributor (Tony M., of Baldock) that we are all – or should be – Guardians of our Traditions
- the regular Archives feature by Joe H., including mention of the 50th anniversary of Bristol City Intergroup.

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CARRYING AA’s MESSAGE TO THE SUFFERING ALCOHOLIC IN THE BLACK & MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

The Office for National Statistics recently reported that Britain’s ethnic minority has risen by nearly one half in the last ten years and now totals some 4.5 million. Across England, the proportion has risen to 10% and, in London, one in three persons now comes from an ethnic minority. This article examines how we could develop a strategy within Great Britain for extending the hand of AA and Tradition Five within this new and growing population.

Background and Summary

In accordance with the wishes of General Service Conferences, the Board has recently formulated a strategy for carrying AA’s message to the suffering alcoholic in the black and minority ethnic communities.

In this regard, some experience and knowledge already exists in the Fellowship and in GSO York and the Northern/Southern Service Office concerning why our Fellowship does not attract alcoholics from differing backgrounds; and, consequently, why the local membership of the Fellowship does not reflect the ethnic diversity of the communities in which it exists. Efforts will continue to be made in gathering experience and knowledge in these areas so that a co-ordinated and more effective use can be made of what is already available, so enabling in turn appropriate new initiatives to be undertaken.

Contact has already been established with the Ethnic Minority Foundation in London, the National Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations, the Strategy Unit of the Cabinet Office in Whitehall and Turning Point, as well as with some other national and local agencies working in the field of alcohol abuse and alcoholism. These should lead to the development of new and more appropriate ways of carrying the message and conducting Twelfth – Step procedures in black and minority ethnic communities.

Also in this connection the Board will soon commission a small survey, focussing on two or three carefully selected areas in Britain. In addition, an initial contact has been made with AA’s World Service Office in New York to share in this regard our experience with them and their experience with us. In due course, similar contacts will be made with appropriate national service offices in other countries.

While a new Board Trustee (Pravin K, London Region) has been given this area of responsibility, carrying the message to the suffering alcoholic in the black and minority ethnic communities is - and must continue to be - an integral part of the Twelfth Step service of all of us, as individual recovering alcoholics, as members of AA groups, and in all our service work. In particular, it is an integral part of the Twelfth Step work of all service representatives in the Fellowship at Group, Intergroup, Region and Board levels. For this reason, he has prepared this article for the spring AA News and will also make a short presentation on the subject at Conference 2003.

The Way Forward

The following are among other steps which the Board has decided to undertake:

- **Television & Radio:** the Chairman of the General Service Public Information Committee (GSPIC) has written to two national Asian television & radio stations to arrange meetings with them to explore ways in which AA and they, together, can make their viewers/listeners aware of the help Alcoholics Anonymous can successfully provide to people in all sections of the society. These radio and television networks broadcast both in the UK and Continental Europe.

- **The AA Website:** there will be a section for minority ethnic communities in the Public Information section of the AA website.

- **The Contact AA posters, the Contact AA postcard, & the Contact AA card:** the Board has decided to make these available in a few minority ethnic languages as well as in English. These would then be more appropriate
cards and posters for use in some parts of the country in doctor’s surgeries; social, health & welfare agencies; community centres; educational establishments; hospitals & clinics; etc. The General Service Public Information Committee has undertaken this project and will take it forward.

- **AA Video, CD & Audio Tapes:** consideration is being given to producing a CD, an audio tape, and a video in other languages as well as English, for use specifically in prisons, on local radio and TV stations, for hospital radios & educational establishments, etc. GSPIC again will take this project forward.

- **Survey of available literature and tapes:** the General Service Office in York has an inventory of literature available in languages other than English. In due course, based on the gathering of further experience & knowledge, suggestions will emerge for adding to the available literature.

- **Newspapers which reach minority ethnic communities:** all Regions and Intergroups in urban areas may wish to give consideration to selectively placing small “Contact AA” notices and advertisements in local free distribution and other appropriate newspapers and periodicals in their areas. The General Service Office will continue to regularly place “Contact AA” advertisements in national black and minority ethnic newspapers. These advertisements and notices should be designed to let the suffering alcoholic, as well as key members of the community, know of the availability of AA and our ability and willingness to help any alcoholic who wishes to be helped.

- **Register:** as an aid to doing the Twelfth-Step service in this particular regard, consideration is being given to the best way of creating - and keeping up to date - a register of AA members who speak various languages.

### Appeal to individual AA Members, Groups, Intergroups and Regions

We would also like to appeal to AA members from minority ethnic communities to contact us via the General Service Office or the Regional Service Offices, letting us know your thoughts and experiences regarding the attraction (or the lack of attraction) of AA to suffering alcoholics from black and minority ethnic communities.

If any member of the Fellowship has any suggestion he or she would like to make in regard to this particular service work, we would be most happy if they would please contact us.

We would like to request all to share with us any information, experience and knowledge they may have in respect of carrying AA’s message to the suffering alcoholic in the black and minority ethnic communities, and to identify any black and minority ethnic members in their area who would like to assist in this particular service work.

Any help anyone can give will be gratefully received and treated with the utmost respect; the principle of anonymity, of course, will prevail.

### Concluding remarks

Our own observations and experience suggest, as does anecdotal evidence, that problems related to alcohol abuse and alcoholism are increasing rapidly in black and minority ethnic communities, in a similar way that they are reportedly increasing fast in society as a whole. In these circumstances, sustained, well co-ordinated and effective service work in this area will bear good results and will benefit and enrich we recovering alcoholics and our Fellowship.

The more experience and knowledge we share - and the more we know - the more effective we will all be in putting AA’s Pledge into practice and in practicing the Primary Purpose principle throughout all society in all our service work.

“**And above all, let us remember that great legion who still suffer from alcoholism and are still without hope. Let us, at any cost or sacrifice, so improve our communication with all these that they may find what we have found - a new life of freedom under God**” – Bill W., ‘The Shape of Things to Come’, February 1961, Language of the Heart, p.322

*Pravin K*

*Board Trustee London Region*
Conference serves and fulfills several purposes as follows:

- A business requirement for a meeting together of the Board of Trustees in a Plenary Session composed of 6 delegates from each of the 15 regions. The General Service Board is a registered charity and also limited by Guarantee, as well as the Fellowship we all know.
- A chance to review the year’s work of the Board of Trustees and vote on accepting this where it involves changes to Literature, Procedures, Guidelines and the AA Handbook for Great Britain.
- The Financial Reports of AA in Great Britain are heard and voted on for approval.
- Questions from the Fellowship are discussed (both in and out of the six committees and at the Conference) debated and voted on by the entire group of delegates.
- Any Fellowship utterings or disagreements tend to surface in Conference, and it is an ideal forum to address them and look for resolution, take group conscience and take this back home to add to the conscience of the individual groups. It helps complete the cycle of group conscience throughout the Fellowship.

Conference Committees took most of Saturday and we had to have formulated an answer to our designated questions by

**Third and final year as a delegate: or was it?** That was the question that I carried with me to Conference 2002. I was eligible to be nominated as the Conference 2003 Chairperson and the possibility of this had been broached by some other program members. So my job became carrying clean and folded tissues along with my usual overabundance of clothing and papers to this Conference.

This year I was a member of the Conference Steering Committee, by virtue of being selected by Committee Three as their chairperson. (I decided this was the result of having a loose tongue in committee and carrying a laptop). This meant four trips to York with Jerry and Steve, also committee chairs, to help prepare for the Conference: and much more time to fall in love with York in all the seasons.

In addition, going to York and working with the GSO staff, selected Trustees, and the rest of the committee chairpersons, I developed a healthy respect for the third legacy of SERVICE and the dedication to service in AA which certainly exists in the UK. Moving my schedule around to accommodate this much service time, gave me pause to reflect on the importance of giving back what has been so freely given. As the year wore on, the question became: am I returning or still receiving? The answer became - both. I developed increased willingness, a closer contact with my HP, lots of program relationships and the dedication to service in AA which certainly exists in the UK. Moving my schedule around to accommodate this much service time, gave me pause to reflect on the importance of giving back what has been so freely given. As the year wore on, the question became: am I returning or still receiving? The answer became - both. I developed increased willingness, a closer contact with my HP, lots of program relationships and another day sober. It all boiled down to gratitude.

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- The Financial Reports of AA in Great Britain are heard and voted on for approval.
- Questions from the Fellowship are discussed (both in and out of the six committees and at the Conference) debated and voted on by the entire group of delegates. Face to face meetings of the delegates promotes unity within the Fellowship and gives them a chance to voice issues at Conference which their Regions want debated. Additionally, the opportunity for change and clarification is provided through the answers/questions which the Fellowship forwards to Conference for approval.
- Conference ensures that all decisions fulfill the primary purpose of AA: carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic, in accordance with the Traditions and the Concepts set down by Bill W. and Dr. Bob when they handed over the reins of the program to the Trustees and the Conference.
- Any Fellowship utterings or disagreements tend to surface in Conference, and it is an ideal forum to address them and look for resolution, take group conscience and take this back home to add to the conscience of the individual groups. It helps complete the cycle of group conscience throughout the Fellowship.

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**The First Day.** So, as we have done for the past three years, there was the preparation, the travel, the meeting on Thursday, the greeting and the ‘not to be missed’ jaunt through York. Then we had dinner together. Our new delegates started to get a bit oriented. Our focus, as usual, was getting Jerry to eat and enjoy something he said he hated. We discovered that the restaurant’s apparatus had gotten better with time. It could be our taste buds had taken a back seat: the friendship and conversation were the important parts.

**On Friday** we prepared and moved from our hotel in town to the University dormitory housing, near our meeting facilities. Then Conference began in earnest! Having a report to give as Conference Alternate-Chair, committee preparation and protocol to attend to and friends to greet as a chairperson seemed, at first, just too much. How interesting to find many of the same feelings during the last year as the first one...only this time the promises were in place and I knew I wouldn’t be doing it alone. Fear receded.

I was so proud of our Continental European Region delegation: Dora, new on the Board of Trustees and Chairperson of the Electronic Communication Committee, readying for her report to Conference, Steve, Jerry, the other two corners of my little third year service triangle, Cyrus and Barbara, red dotters and alternate in their first year, and regrettably, our sixth, Brad, not able to attend due to his work schedule: We ate together, sat together in the full session, and amazingly, like a magnet, we drew others who wanted what we had, and it wasn’t always our dessert! Put a bunch of Americans in a room full of Brits, and you definitely notice cultural differences!

**At the first plenary session** I made my report, still sticky from many sweaty redraftings. My task, as Conference Alternate-Chair, was to describe the history and current functioning of the Conference Steering Committee. Since this was the first time such a report had been presented to Conference, I had no prior examples on which to base mine. Reading a scripted report was a new experience. What amazed me was that every time I looked over the banks of faces ahead of me, they were looking back, concentrating intently. It was quite a while later that I realized they were probably just trying to decipher my strange accent. Less humorously, I knew that they were as interested as I in what had happened in those many important committee sessions which had prepared the groundwork for this Conference.

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**For me, personally, Conference was the end of a long period of quiet dissatisfaction with my sobriety, and the beginning of a fresh new period, which seems to have a lot more happiness, acceptance, gratitude and peace of mind.** I had become so tired of being labelled the old-timer, when I was really just a rebellious adolescent acting the adult in my sobriety.

AA is founded on the principle of two drunks with a Big Book sharing their experience, strength and hope together to create the spiritual climate for another day of sobriety. Conference, in essence, is just that.
Friday at 5:00 PM. The question before Committee Three dealt with Conference Questions and came in three parts:

1. The Conference Steering Committee has established that, from 1994 to the present date, the number of acceptable questions for Conference that have been submitted has steadily decreased.

2. Would Conference discuss this situation and make recommendations which would assist the Conference Steering Committee in evaluating how we may best fulfil our primary purpose at the Service Conference?

3. This situation can no longer be explained by claims of apathy in the Fellowship. Have we, perhaps, reached the point in our development where most of the questions that need to be asked have been answered?

This question led us on from the work our committee had done in Conference 2001, describing makeup and general function of Conference committees. This year we focused on improving the functioning and efficiency of the Conference committees in general and - specifically – the Conference Steering Committee (CSC) for the Fellowship. Our question allowed us to delve deeper into the nuts, and practicalities of our committees’ functioning. Our committee was not composed of shrinking violets, so some of the most valuable work we did was contained in our lively discussions. Our members brought much valuable input from their Regions. Most of our actual ‘write on the board’ work was accomplished in the first and the last hours of the committee meeting.

That 5 PM deadline loomed ever darker as our committee stalled in repeated expression of individual region agendas. We struggled through these, with helpful clarification from the Conference Co-ordinator, the Treasurer, and our General Secretary, who had all attended our Steering Committee meetings throughout the year.

We tried to include the needs expressed by the Fellowship from several Regions as our priority. We proposed some practical, quite simple changes to the Guidelines to assist the Steering Committee in processing Conference questions and ensure clearer feedback on submitted questions. This also would help members determine if their question had been received or gone astray. Questions not selected for Conference and the reasons for their rejections would be available on request. Terms of Reference used for rejection of a question would be fully and clearly explained to the satisfaction of the questioner. We included some broader recommendations which would give the CSC and the Conference committees a more meaty and more ‘hands on’ responsibility in the work of the Conference. We recommended that all proposed reviews, changes and additions to the Service Handbook and Guidelines go before committee at Conference. We also freed Conference time for more interaction between the General Service Board and the delegates.

Our last bit of business was to elect Dave O of Midlands Region as Chairperson of Committee 3 for Conference 2003 and Alan L. of Eastern Region as our secretary. The baton having been passed, we submitted our questions and answers to Sharon – as the Conference Co-ordinator - for typing and collation with the other Committee reports.

But please do not think that at this point we could breath a sigh of relief! We had a Regional review (informal) which went on until much later that night after the second full session. We ended up reconvening our committee for some last minute changes. We lost our committee unanimity on the final vote. Our silent committee member who had sat mute through many entreaties to join in voted the sole opposing vote on our final count.

So, after midnight, when all had been heard, we headed wearily to our rooms for much deserved rest and quiet.

On Sunday we presented our Committee’s work to the plenary session. Each Chairperson read their answers slowly so that the group could add any last minute changes to their copy. Then came discussion and Conference – acting as the Group Conscience of the Fellowship of AA in Great Britain – took its vote. In this way, the work of all the Conference Committees received approval.

Then we voted for Conference chairperson. I was one of the four nominees. We all stood and chatted outside on the banks of the lake under the cherry blossoms and surrounded by the daffodils of York. How could anything be wrong in God’s world on such a day? Chris from our Conference Steering Committee was the choice of the four who had been nominated. How good to know I was as happy for Chris’s election as he would have been for mine. We had supported ourselves and each other with knowledge that our Higher Power would do the selecting. Later, we enjoyed more rambles through York, a final lunch together and then we went our ways.

What a privilege: to see service in AA from the inside workings, to carry the message in both directions in AA’s service chain, to learn more about the simple, but carefully crafted and maintained procedures for this society, to have the responsibility to help others along their service path in recovery and to support and encourage them - this was a privilege and an opportunity too vital to be missed on the road to a happy recovery.

This year the Conference delegates are, for the first time in our Region, staying active at region level for an additional year to help ensure more continuity in service in Continental European Region. Whatever I can do to help the past relate with the future is my current service duty. Thank you for having given me this opportunity to be sober in service.

Victoria G Alternate Chair and Delegate, Conference 2002

GSO acknowledges the following donations

In Memory of

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INTRODUCTION
AA has been in existence in Great Britain for just over fifty years. AA surveys have been held at various stages over the past 30 years: from 1972 to 1997 a total of seven were held - roughly one every five years. A recent survey was held in June 2002.

The intent of these surveys is to learn more about the Fellowship of AA in Great Britain so that the AA message may be carried more effectively to more suffering alcoholics, thus helping us to fulfil our Primary Purpose in the most effective manner possible.

SOME RESULTS OF SURVEY 2002
Average size of a meeting - meeting sizes varied from as low as 5 to as high as 90. The average size of a meeting is 19.2 members.
Average number of meetings attended per member per week is 2.94 meetings.
Total size of AA in Great Britain - the membership of AA in Great Britain is around 22500.
Number of Home Group members - 88% of members - i.e. some 19800 - said they considered a particular Group to be their ‘Home Group’.

COMPARISON WITH RESULTS OF SURVEY 1997
Gender of AA members - the proportion of women members has increased to 40% in 2002 from 36% in 1997
Age distribution of members - the percentage of members under 40 years in 2002 are down by one-third over 1997 while those over 50 are up by a third
Length of sobriety - the percentage of members with over ten-years sobriety in 2002 has also increased by one-third over those in 1997
Frequency of weekly attendance - down to 2.9 meetings per week in 2002 from 3.3 in 1997
Home-group membership - the percentage is down to 88% in 2002 from 92% in 1997
Addiction to drugs other than alcohol - members saying ‘yes’ to this question in 2002 are up by 5% over 1997, bringing the ‘yes’ figure for 2002 up to 23%

DEVELOPMENTS OVER THE PAST 25 YEARS
Surveys of AA have been carried out in the years 1972, 1976, 1978, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1997 and 2002. Since 1978, surveys have been carried out in a uniform manner. This enables meaningful comparisons to be made between various parameters that can be used to characterise trends in the development of AA over these years. These comparisons are shown in the Tables at the end and discussed in the paragraphs to follow.

Gender of AA members - the percentage of women members over the past 25 years has increased from a third to a present level of 40%. Bearing in mind that over this period the number of groups has increased threefold (from a little over 1000 to 3200 today), the proportion of women has remained surprisingly constant. It is now moving upwards.

Age Distribution of AA members - the relatively small percentage of younger members in 1978 has declined over the years, while the over-60 bracket has almost doubled during the same period. The middle bracket of 40-year olds hasn’t changed much. The trend suggests that younger members, if coming in, are not staying, while existing ones, of course, are growing older.

Number of years in AA - the profiles again show the decreasing proportion of younger - and the increasing proportion of older - members as the years progress. Whereas in the early 1980’s the modal age group was ‘one to two years’ it is now the ‘over ten years’.

Meeting attendance frequency - the pattern of attendance frequency has changed over the years. In the early years, 1-2 meetings per week seemed to be sufficient: in the mid-80’s the norm had shifted to 3-4 but has moved down to become more a 2-3 pattern for the present year. The trend to fewer meetings since 1997 is evident (the actual number was 3.3 in 1997 and is 2.9 now).

Influences on reaching AA - it is clear that most members reach AA either via another member - or are almost equally likely to come ‘On their own accord’. Quite a large number come in through a Treatment Centre. The Telephone Service, accounts now for 10% of total.

Addiction to drugs other than alcohol - this percentage has been fluctuating somewhat over the past 25 years but has always been around 20%. The percentage has increased by 5% since 1977 to a level now of 23%. This means that every fourth AA member has at some time been addicted to drugs other than alcohol.

GROWTH &TRENDS OVER THE PAST 50 YEARS
There has been a decreasing rate of growth in the number of meetings since 1986. The percentage growth rate per annum since the inception of AA in the early 50’s show, in the first ten years, huge - and unsustainable - growth rates of some 30 to 20%, falling to 10% by the mid 70’s and to 5% by the mid 80’s. The average growth level now is around 1%.
There can be little doubt that the number of AA meetings per week in relative terms has virtually ceased to grow. Those who consider that meetings are increasing in size are perhaps witnessing evidence characteristic of the high frequency (~3) of weekly attendance at them, rather than a real growth in members.

In business terms, the growth curve is characteristic of a product or process which has lost its novelty and is in need of some form of revitalisation.

Perhaps this could be achieved by the Fellowship thinking more in terms of substance than of form - i.e. by looking more outwards at influences, rather than inwards at procedures. In this way, we may be able to improve how we carry out our Primary Purpose.

**Errata**

The Editor apologises for an error in his Editorial Note for the Winter Edition of AA News in that the sentence under the fourth bullet point should read “The Conference Steering Committee will set the itinerary for all of Conference” as recorded from Committee Three, Conference 2001.
**NEWS FROM THE SOUTH WEST**

E.L. now have a team in place across the Region and are running workshops once or twice a year. Recent work included attending the Jersey and Guernsey Intergroups to help them discuss how to set up E.L. in their area. Presentations this year include twelve to companies in Devon, South West Water, Torbay Council, the Occupational Health services at both the Royal Devon and Exeter and the Plymouth College of Further Education. These presentations are continuing with other companies and employers.

**SOUTH MIDLANDS FLASH**

In my earlier report I missed the news from the Employment liaison team of their involvement with the P.I. Committee in the Bristol Awareness campaign. My apologies to them for not noticing their hard work in this area before – we know it was a great success, so well done!

**OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN CRAWLEY**

*Down in the South East, a great stalwart of Employment Liaison work is labouring mightily. Again this year, he and his team attended the conference and made many valuable contacts around the country. This year, he was ably supported by some of the London Region team. Since the advent of the national number, 0845 769 7555 they have probably done more to publicise it at this one conference than most of us will manage in a lifetime of service! Keep up the good work guys!*

**Retirement**-Brendan from Birmingham Intergroup is rotating out of service. Many thanks Brendan, for all your hard work.

Over the last few months, presentations have been given or information supplied to many companies around London and the South East. In particular, much work is being done with the Employment Service in both regions. My recent contact here in the North East with the ‘Action for Jobs’ team in Barnsley produced both the website information: *(www.dfee.gov.uk/actionteams)* for ELS to look up their local contacts, and the knowledge that requests for A.A. help may well increase due to the various new initiatives on alcohol abuse now coming from government. So clearly, we need to keep building our teams of help around the country, in order to be able to respond when asked.

*Yours in Fellowship*

*Dianne C-T (G.S.B. Trustee)*

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**What kind of Guardian am I?**

*Our regular reader and contributor Tony M. from Baldock reminds us that all grateful members of the Fellowship should at all times act also as Guardians of our Traditions.*

Recently my wife prepared an article for the Al-Anon magazine *News & Views*. The article made me think so I asked for permission to adapt it to apply to AA. You may not completely agree with what I have written but I think the theme is worth considering. So, with permission from the *News & Views* Editor and my wife, here goes!

Certain events have caused me to stop and look at my responsibility as a member of an AA group and I am not all together impressed with what I see. As a long time member with a varied service history I should be aware that I have a personal responsibility to act as a guardian of our Traditions. When I see those Traditions abused within the group and do not speak out, what sort of guardian does that make me?

I have listened to gossip and criticism, particularly of our trusted servants. I have sat in a group with a dominant member taking charge. I have heard members sharing of their affinity with other Twelve Step Fellowships. I have heard members giving their full names and seen members appear to take notes while others are sharing. I have felt uncomfortable, and I have done nothing.

I have heard newer members sharing from non-conference approved literature and sharing too long and too much. Have I taken these members to one side and explained, as kindly...
On occasions the Probation/Social Services require prove of attendance to an AA meeting. One way of doing this without breaking our anonymity or Traditions is by using the ‘Chit’ system

One way of introducing the ‘Chit System’ locally, would be for the Intergroup Probation Liaison Officer to make a list of all Groups in his/her area that agree to go along with the system and give each of them a number, e.g. 1 through to 25. Supply each Group with about 20 or so sealed envelopes, inside of which he/she will have placed a card with the group’s number written on it. If anyone present then requires proof of attendance, the Secretary or maybe the Group Rep. would simply write the date across the sealed back flap of the envelope and present it to the potential member. Nothing else needs to be written and anonymity (for the Group member and the newcomer) remains intact. However the newcomer should be 12 Stepped in the usual way.

The Intergroup PLO would supply the local Probation Offices with the list of Groups and meeting times, along with their number codes. The Probation Officer responsible for overseeing the attendance of the newcomer would simply open the envelope and compare it with the date and number. It would be wise at this point to discourage the Probation Officer from suggesting meetings other than those who are on the list and participating.

It should be noted that no one would be forced or sentenced to attend an AA meeting. They would be advised that if they could prove that they were doing something about their drinking problem, it could help their case, as well as helping them with their drinking problem.

The ‘Chit System’ is now well established in some parts of the Country and has Conference approval. It also appears in the Probation/Social Service Guidelines, which were approved at the 1998 Conference. Don’t expect a deluge of newcomers from the Probation Service, this has proved not the case, but a trickle are coming to the Fellowship and some are staying and getting sober. There are also some fears that the newcomers coming from the Probation Service will be disruptive. This has not proved the case where the ‘Chit System’ is working.

Gareth L
Board Trustee Wales & Borders Region

as possible, our use of Conference approved literature and the value of sponsorship for sharing at a personal level? No! I have not. What sort of guardian does that make me?

If I feel uncomfortable at a meeting, say nothing and stop attending, having said nothing to bring my discomfort to the attention of the group conscience, what is going to happen to that group? It follows that new members will arrive not knowing that there are frailties within that group, a sickness will develop which becomes unstoppable and many people may become damaged. Eventually, that group will fail and the membership splinter. Some will move to a new group but some may never return to AA and continue down the slope to oblivion. I will have let the newcomer down - and what sort of guardian does that make me?

The Fellowship has given me more than words can express: what must I do to guard it well for those still to come? Easier to say what I must not do. I must not be afraid to express what I feel within the group conscience. I must not let the risk of upsetting or offending a member or members hold me back from saying what must be said. I must remember that the Traditions are the cornerstone of our meetings and that, as an informed and I hope, a caring, member, if I feel that those Traditions are being breached I am one of the many guardians.

It does not do for me to wait and hope that what bothers me will go away, or that someone else will do something about it. I know from experience that my God lets me know when I should be doing something: and I know from experience that when I have ignored my inner voice, somewhere along the line the issue laid in wait for me. I should now have learnt that it pays to be more afraid of the results than of dealing with the original issue!

Tony M
Baldock Saturday
On the 6th September 2003 the Archivists ‘Road Show’ is being staged in Oban, Scotland. Anyone who is interested in the history of their group, Intergroup, Region, or the Fellowship in part or as a whole, is invited to attend.

September weather in Oban can be beautiful, and the local AA’s in staging the Archivists Road Show in Oban, are capitalising on this. Events are to be staged on Friday the 5th and Saturday 6th of September. To support these events, information about good value local accommodation is being made available.

The aim of the event, as with Hereford last year, is to bring people together, people who have experience in archives work. It provides the opportunity for them to share their experience with people who are keen to gather together the history of their Group, Intergroup, or Region.

The itinerary for Oban is as follows:-

Friday 5th Sept. 8 p.m. - A themed open meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous at the Church of Scotland Hall, followed by a social supper. There will also be an archives display about Bill W’s visit to Scotland in 1950.

Saturday 6th Sept. - Venue Church of Scotland Hall, Oban. Light refreshments will be served throughout the day from 9.00 onwards and timings may vary slightly on the day.

10.00 – 10.30 Welcome and orientation.
10.30 – 10.45 - Break
10.45 – 11.30 – Workshop 1 - Group Archives Work – 3 presenters
11.45 – 12.30 – Workshop 2 – Intergroup Archives Work – 3 presenters
12.30 – 13.30 – Lunch – Please provide your own. A local fast food shop is opposite the church hall

Each workshop will be followed by a short question and answer session.

14.15 – 14.30 - Break

Videos, hand-outs on archival topics, and displays will be staged throughout the day in the main hall, in addition participants will have the opportunity to meet and chat to the invited ‘Golden Oldies’.

Saturday 6th Sept. 8 p.m. – A themed open meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous at the Church of Scotland Hall, Oban.

A ‘pot’ will be taken at all three open meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, the proceeds of which will be sent directly to GSO.

If you are thinking of making a weekend of the Regional Archivists Workshop in Oban, there are many hotels and B&B’s offering reasonable rates for accommodation, brochures for which can be obtained from the Scottish Tourist Office in Oban, telephone 01631 563122.

The first ‘Archivists Road Show’ was staged at Hereford last year and we are aiming to build on that great success and provide an opportunity for AA’s in Scotland to further develop their own very rich AA heritage.

If you want further details of the Oban Archivists Road Show please contact Duncan 01631 563447 or e-mail joeh693@btinternet.com and please watch out for flyers and announcements in ‘Share’, ‘Roundabout’ and the next Archives Column of AA News.

Remember we all have our own piece of the AA history jigsaw, and history includes everything that happened until yesterday. The Archives Committee hopes this event will help YOU be a part of putting together that jigsaw on behalf of your Group, Intergroup, or Region, and what could be a nicer place to find out about that, than Oban in September.

Joe H
Fellowship Archivist

Exploring the Archives

If ever you have the opportunity to explore the archives chronicling the 50 years of Alcoholics Anonymous in Bristol - 1953 and the West of England - 1947, jump at it. I would recommend it to anyone, especially if you are feeling a little jaded or discouraged.

Here is recorded the efforts and the enthusiasm of the first members, from the first meeting in a local Pub (!) to subsequent meetings all over the region. I was particularly moved by a letter from a member of the first prison group, saying how much A.A. meant to him and how it would sustain him on his release: and it did.

Twelfth Stepping was Big in these early days, and the records make moving reading. You can also read of the beginnings of the fellowship or Region, and what could be a nicer place to find out about that, than Oban in September.

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Joe H
Fellowship Archivist

One box of archives contains all the copies of Bristol Fashion, an unofficial A.A. newsletter (journal) which was started in June 1968. It highlighted the belief that the A.A. programme was essentially a spiritual one. This publication still comes out regularly and is an invaluable resource for anyone wishing to renew their vision or learn of the roots of A.A. in the West of England. The start (in 1971) and subsequent growth of the annual reunions in Bristol is also recorded. The archives in the West of England, based in Bristol, began in 1980 following a trip by two Bristol members to the World Convention in New Orleans, where they met Nell Wing, A.A.’s first Archivist.

It is helpful to see that no new initiative, like true love, never did proceed smoothly and that it is only by hard, plodding work and the patient unravelling of difficulties that progress is ever made. It is also good to read of good ideas, long since forgotten, which may well be ripe for resurrection.

Did anyone ever say that archives were dull?

For further information, contact South Midlands Regional Archivist, Alcoholics Anonymous, P.O. Box 42, BS99 7JR Tel: 0117-9730736 E-mail: pjh@archives2000.fsnet.co.uk
This being the First Issue of the latest venture on behalf of your Intergroup, one would hope that ALL groups play their part in contributing in some small way towards it. For the Newsletter to be constructive, we need your input, no matter how trivial you may think that may be.

Alan M from Whitlawburn Sunday group has passed on to the Intergroup what you would call a "Group Information Sheet" This can be filled in when holding group conscience meetings and brought along by the Group Service Representative (GSR) to each meeting. Any constructive information in the content can be used for the Newsletter. Let us try this concept and do our best to support one another.

Only 18 groups within our catchment area subscribe to the Roundabout Magazine. Why don't YOU ask your group to support our AA journal in Scotland and be responsible. So come on guys, let's do our best. If you would like to write to the magazine, then by all means do. Pass on your articles to our Roundabout Rep, David D, at your local Intergroup...

The Intergroup is growing from “strength to strength” and positions are being filled. The position of Public Information Officer was recently taken over by Brian Q. Brian is a member of the Cambuslang Monday Night group and if you feel that you have some time to spare, then we are sure that Brian could do with your help.

Members Birthdays! We will place them in the Newsletter if sent on.

Group Changes or Group Anniversaries can also be used.

A new group opened in Easterhouse lately at Lochfield Tenants Hall Drumlanrig Avenue, Thursday 12 noon. Why don't you pop along and support them.

Many groups are coming back to our Intergroup and the average at our meetings is 18, so come on you other groups and get yourself involved in your Intergroup. Let us all work together in carrying AA’s message to the still suffering alcoholic.

This is your Newsletter, so let us all play our part by supporting it and of course contributing in some small way.

I Am Responsible!.................................................................................................................................

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**INTERGROUP CONTRIBUTIONS**

**October - December 2002**

**EASTERN REGION**

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**NEWSLETTER**

**ISSUE NO 1**

**JAN 2003**

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**GLASGOW EAST INTERGROUP**

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MARCH


9 SOUTH MIDLANDS INTERGROUP MINI-CONVENTION Theme: ‘Keep It Simple’. Exeter Hall, Kidlington, Oxford. 10.15am Registration. 11am AA Closed meeting and Al-Anon meeting. 12.45 Lunch (bring your own). 2pm Shared Platform Open meeting. 4pm Raffle and tea. Price £2.50, tea and coffee free all day. Contact: Convention 01296 331825.

14-16 9th WEST WALES INTERGROUP CONVENTION Theme: ‘Carrying the Message’. Fishguard Bay Hotel, Fishguard, Pembrokeshire, West Wales SA64 0BT. Full Al-Anon/Alateen participation. Thur 13th Earlybirds meeting 8-9.30pm. Fri 14th Registration from 3pm. For details of accommodation write to/contact hotel on 01348 873571. Fax 01348 873030. E-mail: MHAR177485@aol.com. Contact: Judy & John 01239 710590; Nigel 01646 600892; Beth 01834 860187.

22 OUTER EAST LONDON INTERGROUP MINI-CONVENTION Theme: ‘Growing Into Service’. Venue: Methodist Church, Bryant Street, Stratford, London E15. Two Speaker platforms one with joint AA, Al-Anon & Alateen + workshop. Disco in the evening to include a meal and come and go meetings. Doors open at 1.30pm with first platform commencing at 2pm. Disco will be 7.30pm-11pm. Tickets £7. Contact: Tony 0208 257 1509/07733 016636 or Dennis on 0208 534 7232/07799 653466.

APRIL


6 INVERNESS & DISTRICT 37th HIGHLAND GATHERING Thistle Hotel, Millburn Road, Inverness. Full meeting programme – dance on Fri & Sat nights. Accommodation at Thistle Hotel (Tel: 0800 181716). Contacts: Pat M 01463 233382. Rab or Mary 01463 226820.

11 EAST LANKARSHIRE INTERGROUP 28th ANNUAL CONVENTION Civic Centre, Motherwell. (PLEASE NOTE THAT ON THIS OCCASION THE CONVENTION WILL BE HELD THE WEEKEND BEFORE EASTER). AA & Al-Anon meetings throughout weekend. Friday evening Cabaret. Saturday evening Dance. For Tickets and further information contact: Willie M 01698 747236; John L 01698 745315.


13 JOINT AVONSIDE INTERGROUP 47th BRISTOL CONVENTION Theme: AA & Al-Anon Speaker meetings. Theme: ‘The Steps We Took’. Celebrating 50 years of AA in Bristol. £7/£5 non waged (includes lunch). Contacts: odaat@orange.net Bruce 0117 968 1938.

26 SHROPSHIRE INTERGROUP ONE-DAY CONVENTION Theme: ‘A New Beginning’. The Salvation Army, Oakengates, Telford. (Building is a non-smoking venue.) Registration £2 (under 18 free) 10am -11am. Morning AA, Al-Anon & Alateen meetings. Afternoon Shared Platform meeting. Bring your own lunch. Tea/coffee available all day. Raffle during afternoon. Childrens videos showing throughout the day. Further information from: Barry 01952 417349 or Rab 01952 592676.


MAY

2-4 47th SCOTTISH CONVENTION Quality Hotel in Perth. Mtgs Fri 7.30pm-9pm. Sat 10.30am-12am. Sat 1.30pm-3pm (Service mtg). Sun 5pm-6.30pm. Sun 10.30am-12am. Rollover meeting all day Saturday. Full Al-Anon participation. Registration £4. Disco/Karaoke Friday night £3. Band Sat night. Raffle Saturday night as alternative £3. Bookings please contact Guenter G 0141 647 7053.


10 BORDERS & EAST LOTHIAN INTERGROUP 26th ANNUAL CONVENTION Theme: ‘Just For Today’. Volunteer Hall, Galashiels. 10.30am AA & Al-Anon Closed mtgs, 2.40pm Public meeting. 4.30pm Soup & Bread. 5pm 5-minute forum. 7.30-11.30pm Dance and Buffet. For further details contact: Watson 01875 812529; Andy 01450 860256.


23-26 CESIG SURREY ROUND-UP BANK HOLIDAY CAMPING CONVENTION To be held at a Scout camp in Addington Surrey. Participants are expected to have their own camping equipment and be able to cater for themselves although there will be a café on site. Tea and coffee will be free. Please note this is a TENTS only site. Tickets for the weekend cost £15 for adults and £5 for children. Contact: Linda 020 8645 0650; Terry 020 8773 0827; e-mail: aaroundup@yahoo.co.uk