

The Southdown LEGACY

Southdown Intergroup Archives Newsletter | Issue One | Spring 2006



Fareham 19:30 FAREHAM: STEP

Fareham Baptist Church, Gosport

'Bill W' Plants



A Bill W plant interwoven with a plant passed on by the late Olive (Bognor)

This Swedish Ivy (Creeping Charlie) plant is a descendant of the plant that was in Bill Wilson's hospital room when he passed away on January 24th 1971, in Miami, Florida. Lois took the plant home to Stepping Stones in New York, where she cared for it until the mid 80s. She gave the plant to her housekeeper who in turn gave it to Michael Manning of Atlanta, Georgia. Lois asked that she pass it onto members of the AA fellowship in memory of Bill. Michael has taken pieces of this plant all over the world. She brought it to Washington in July, 1988.

This is a true AA plant because every time you pass it on, two new shoots replace the one that was given away and your plant grows stronger.

It is easy to grow. First repot this start in a larger container. It loves water and sunshine, so put it in a sunny spot and keep it moist. When it reaches 6-8 inches cut above the bottom pair of leaves and place in water to root. Two new shoots will grow above the bottom two leaves. After the cutting has rooted in water (7-10 days), dip the roots in rooting hormone and plant in soil. We also watered with plant food called 'Quick Start'. This plant is a vine in its natural state and an indoor plant in our climate. The more you repeat this process the fuller your plant becomes so pass it on in Bill's memory and enjoy.

The Southdown Legacy

Last year there was a lot of talk about archives and the importance of recording, collecting, writing and storing our AA heritage. Much of this material is part of our individual 'experience, strength and hope' and very little of it is on paper or some other medium. This publication seeks to provide a forum for not only recording but also sharing this information before it is lost forever.

In this issue we have a poignant reminder of why archives are important. We were very fortunate to have Sailor Bill share his experiences of service within Southdown Intergroup, before he died on Sunday 15th January. He is very much in my thoughts as I write this. It is up to us 'old stagers' to follow his worthy example.

We hope that as you read this issue it will act as a catalyst. Search the old dusty files, put pen to paper and send us what you can. If you find writing difficult then send in a tape. One of our aims is to produce *The Southdown Legacy* on a regular basis - how regular really depends on you, but it will certainly be once a year.

This history of individual groups, particularly the older ones, is of great interest. There are some details in the files but naturally we want more - who were the old characters? Are there any photographs? Who was secretary? The Southdown Archivist is already looking for material for the next issue - what will be your legacy?

Martin W.
January 2006



The old literature suitcase for the Southsea Thursday Evening meeting.

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Publication of any article does not imply endorsement either by Alcoholics Anonymous or *The Southdown Legacy*.

Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to AA as a whole. Manuscripts are invited, although no payment can be made. Contributed matter will be returned when requested.

The editors cannot guarantee to publish all material submitted.



A History of Southdown Intergroup

Whilst serving as the Archive Liaison Officer for Southdown Intergroup in 1997, Ruth S. wrote a brief history of the fellowship in this area.

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain in 1997 and 50 years of growth and service since that first meeting in London in 1947, it seems fitting to look at our own Intergroup's history. For seventeen of those fifty years Southdown Intergroup has helped to sustain the three sides of our symbolic triangle - Unity, Recovery and Service - since its 'birth' from the Southern Intergroup at the end of 1979.

The Southern Intergroup was first formed in 1960 but was short lived. However in October 1966 eighteen group service representatives from groups as far apart as Eastbourne, Woking, Reading, Chichester and Portsmouth met at Guildford for the first assembly of the Southern Intergroup. Groups at Staines, Horsham and the Isle of Wight were reported as inoperative at that time but Guernsey had joined Southern. Jersey was expected to join. The chairman said that he 'hoped this assembly would help the Growth of AA within the Intergroup area bringing groups into closer contact with each other and strengthen understanding within the fellowship'.

By February 1973 Southern Intergroup consisted of 49 groups including four hospital and 10 prison groups and in 1976 when 56 groups formed the Intergroup, Southern Intergroup was divided into Solent Intergroup and Central Southern.

Whilst part of Southern Intergroup the Portsmouth groups held their first public meeting, which some 50 people attended at St. James' Hospital on 17th April 1974. Contact with the Council of Alcoholism in Southampton and Social Services was also established and upheld.

In 1979 at the 18th assembly of Solent Intergroup held on 29th November at Petworth, the 11th item on the agenda was 'splitting the Intergroup'. It was decided that Solent would retain the current name and groups in Winchester, Hythe, Eastleigh, Andover, Chandlers Ford Whitchurch, Christchurch and eight Southampton groups whilst the new Intergroup, Southdown, would consist of twenty groups including Chichester Friday, Sandown Hospital, Petersfield, Newport IOW, Ryde IOW, Whitcroft Hospital IOW, Liss, Fareham Wednesday, Basingstoke Monday and Friday, Rooksdown Hospital, Alton, Haslemere, Hayling Island, South Warnborough, Portsmouth, Southsea, Gosport, Knowle Hospital and Haslar Hospital.

Southdown's first assembly was held in Petersfield on 21st February 1980 and consisted of thirteen GSRs, nine visitors, six committee members and one co-opted member and the name Southdown

was officially adopted. The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Colin H, Vice-chairman Don A, Secretary John W and Treasurer Georgia G. The Steering Committee members were Vic R and Anne C, Public Information Officer was Hugh McK assisted by Richard S. Hugh McK helped many find sobriety over the years and was instrumental in the growth of Alcoholics Anonymous in the South in its early years.

During Southdown's first year, Hugh printed a regular newsletter, the forerunner of our Interlink. Public Information had supplied speakers for schools and colleges at Alton, Sandown, Basingstoke and Portchester. Members had shared with Arundel magistrates and Probation Service, the Citizens Advice Bureau at Basingstoke, Samaritans and Mothers' Union at Basingstoke, Chichester Young Conservatives and a Church Youth Group at Bisley. A public meeting had been held at Alton, attended by 70 - 80 people. Vic R was appointed Prison Liaison Officer and Anne C took responsibility for Probation Liaison.

Shanklin Thursday and Basingstoke Thursday meetings had opened and Haslar Hospital meeting sadly closed. Bognor Monday and Petworth Groups decided to join Southdown and our first Mini-Convention was approved by Assembly to be held in April or May 1981. Georgia G was to be Convenor and Anny Co-convenor.

Georgia, Intergroup Treasurer, asked Groups not to hold funds in Group accounts, but to send them regularly to Intergroup, as funds were needed to carry the message of recovery. We sometimes hear the same plea today; perhaps we are slow to learn from experience.

Hugh McK Retired as PIO at the end of 1980, and was thanked by Colin (the Chairman) for the tremendous amount of work, time and commitment he had given to Alcoholics Anonymous. Richard S (Chichester) was elected as the new Public Information Officer.

In the same year the Guildford 24-hour telephone service was virtually ready to be operative and our list of Twelfth-Steppers was compiled to enable us to deal with calls passed to our area from Guildford. Our own telephone service was not in use until 1986.

By mid 1981 Vic R, Prison Liaison Officer, was appealing for speakers for Albany Prison, Isle of Wight and Anne C was endeavouring to link Groups with local Probation Services. An AA public service announcement appeared on TV during the week commencing 28th September 1981, but we were not deluged with newcomers, as we feared.

Bognor Saturday meeting opened in January 1981 and Ken (Chichester) reported that moves were afoot to start a meeting in the Havant/Waterlooville area. There were no meetings between Chichester, Cosham and Petersfield. Southdown's Chairman, Colin H, welcomed

the news (Havant Wednesday finally opened in September 1982), but warned that, - responsibility for support of the meeting remained firmly in the hands of those who may wish that such a meeting be convened - a wise warning not always heeded today.

Public Information was kept busy with school talks at Selsey, Alton and Portchester; talks to Gosport Guild and Birdham Housewives. The PIO asked Groups to take AA information to local doctors' surgeries.

Colin H was to attend Conference in Manchester in 1982 and following the Regional Briefing at St. Francis Friary, Crawley, would share with Intergroup Assembly prior to Conference - a tradition still carried on each year.

Graham, Regional Rep, was to arrange parties of members from the mainland to visit the Isle of Wight Groups at reasonably frequent intervals.

1982 heralded three new meetings: Basingstoke Sunday, Haslemere Sunday and Havant Wednesday. Public Information Officer Richard S was encouraging small local teams of members to become involved in PI, a principal which worked well. He had been approached about the possibility of an AA speaker being included in the Nurse training syllabus at Basingstoke and AA speakers were requested on a regular basis for Park Prewitt Hospital. A meeting was also held on Sunday afternoons at Sandown Unit, Graylingwell Hospital.

Colin H, our Conference Delegate, reported that Conference had discussed the following:

- The reluctance of individual members to make changes, although collectively the Fellowship did
- The need to monitor growth by way of Conscience Meetings or Inventory
- Acquaintance of all aspects of the Fellowship's policies, affairs and history
- Individually, the need to place principles before personalities
- Lack of communication was a big factor: AA trusted servants were not AA management:

how relevant these basic precepts still are today in 1997.

1983/84 saw new Groups opened in Portchester and Midhurst. Cowes closed in February 1983. The Intergroup experienced growth in all areas. As more Groups opened, our contributions to GSO grew. In August 1983 we sent £1,800 and a further £800 in November 1983, in contrast to £800 for the same period in 1981.

The Newsletter was flourishing under Georgia's editorship; at that time the Public Information Officer also took responsibility for the Newsletter.

Vic J of Gosport was seeking help from members in his task as

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Hospital Liaison Officer and had established the fortnightly talks at the Nelson Unit in St. James' Hospital, Portsmouth, which still take place today.

Assembly asked Richard S to make preliminary enquiries as to how best we could organise our own telephone service – a task later carried to fruition by Gordon L and team. After much deliberation they decided that the RCF system best suited our needs. The service was finally up and running on 21 April 1986.

Prison Meetings were well established at Albany and Camp Hill Prisons. Although a prisoner from Parkhurst wrote to GSO to enquire if a meeting could be started at Parkhurst, a meeting with the Governor had no positive outcome. In November 1985 a request from Archie in Kingston Prison for AA visits resulted in regular contact and eventually the current weekly meeting starting in 1989.

June 1985 marked the 50th anniversary of AA and press releases appeared in the East Hampshire Post, Basingstoke Gazette and Portsmouth News. Georgia took part in a Radio Victory 'Linkline' programme with a doctor, an AI-Anon member and the director of the Portsmouth Alcohol Advice Centre. Georgia's sharing was given the greater part of the time on the air and her introductory song (not of her choosing) was Wide-Eyed and Legless by Andy Fairweather Lowe!

Basingstoke Groups held a symposium in June at which Travers from Bristol shared and at least 50 guests attended. The PI team manned a tabletop stand at the Health Fair in Southsea, along with community nurses from St. James' and staff from the Alcohol Advice Centre: co-operation with our friends. The Isle of Wight Groups formed a Public Information team and made wonderful progress in talks to

the Director of Nursing Services, Area Medical Officers of Health, IOW Council of Alcoholism, Probation Service, IOW Youth Training and Social Services. A meeting with the Head of Psychiatry at Whitecroft Hospital resulted in the restarting of AA visits to Whitecroft on Tuesdays.

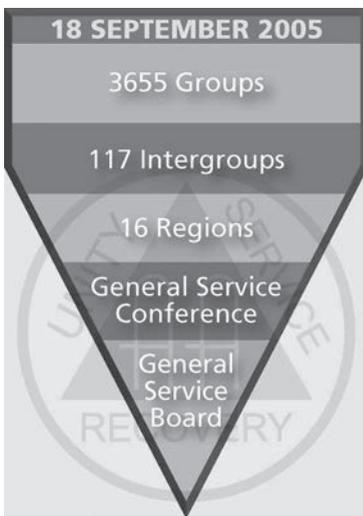
Our 1985 mini-convention theme Progress rather than Perfection, held on 12th May, was convened by

Joan W from Alton, who sadly died in sobriety in 1995. A 50th anniversary cake was enjoyed by all present.

A first for Southdown was a combined Workshop and Conscience Meeting held on 29th September 1985. The Conscience Meeting was held in the morning at 11:00 am and the Service Forum (workshop), attended by 25 members, started at 3:00 pm. It focussed mainly on telephones and resulted in Gordon L's election as Telephone Service Co-ordinator. We owe Gordon and his team for their work in getting the system running by April 1986. In the first quarter to 21st July 218 calls were taken – two thirds of calls were from suffering alcoholics. Vic J from Gosport and Wendy Z from Basingstoke had taken most of the calls for help until then. We owe both Wendy and Vic, who have both since died in sobriety, a debt of gratitude for their long and continued service in many areas for Southdown.

New Groups in 1984/5 were Midhurst in March 1984, Waterlooville in January 1985 and Gosport Tuesday in September 1985. The growth continued in 1986/7 when Titchfield Sunday, Chichester Tuesday, Basingstoke Wednesday and Saturday, Newport Tuesday and Fareham Monday opened - total of eleven new Groups in four years. Concern was voiced by many members as to the necessity for some of the new Groups and some meetings such as Fareham Monday Step Meeting struggled with a small attendance for some time.

Vic J, who had succeeded Wendy Z as Intergrupp Chairman in 1985,



retired due to ill health at the end of 1987 and Francis B, who had served as Intergroup Secretary, was appointed Chairman in February 1988. Francis was later to serve as a Board member, as was Georgia G.

Sailor Bill was elected Newsletter Editor, the Newsletter having been suspended in late 1985 due to lack of interest. Bill, who was also Share Representative, resuscitated Interlink, which is still a valuable means of communication within the Intergroup. Assembly voted to re-introduce the newsletter with the proviso that it was to be a vehicle to carry the message of Service and encourage members to become involved.

New meetings were opened in 1988/89 & 90 in Bordon, Bognor Regis (Wednesday), Havant Women's, Bishops Waltham and Fratton. At the end of 1989 Southdown Intergroup served 39 meetings. September saw a split in Southdown Intergroup when Alton and all the Basingstoke Groups joined Winchester in the formation of Northdown Intergroup. This decision was reached after much heart-searching and discussion over two years. In June 1988 a working group was set up to discuss the structure of Southdown as it was felt that communication within the Intergroup was adversely affected by its size in terms of the number of Groups (then 37), the ideal being 25 Groups. The working group reported back that the Intergroup should remain unchanged and be reviewed again in 1989. Once again the situation was reviewed and the same decision reached. However, in March 1990 the first approach was made to the Basingstoke Groups by the Winchester Groups and in September the split occurred. Although Southdown was relieved at the reduction in Groups, the Basingstoke and Alton Groups' contribution to service in the Fellowship was sadly missed at Assembly and within the Intergroup.

1988 heralded a symposium at Chichester and Ruth S was interviewed on Chichester local radio as Hazel and given a wonderful opportunity to share and carry the message.

Problems within the Intergroup of a meeting being held at a members home, that the Fellowship was being used to further a member's career, that sexual counselling had been offered at a meeting were all resolved and dealt with, with tact and diplomacy.

At this time an open forum was held at the end of the quarterly Assemblies, time permitting, for an un-minuted free exchange of feelings and ideas.

In August 1989 Hayling Tom, a member of some 20-plus years sobriety was killed in a traffic accident whilst crossing the road. Tom will be long remembered as a wonderful greeter of newcomers and for his warning of 'YET' when members failed to identify.

Our present Intergroup Chairman Nigel H was elected as Share/ Interlink Representative and immediately reported a saving of approximately £68 pa due to a change of technology.

Since 1990 twelve new meetings have been opened; not always for the right reasons. Some meetings only just attain enough attendance to pay their rent and expenses and are therefore not truly self-supporting; GSO and Intergroup need contributions to pay for printing pamphlets and the structure involved in servicing the meetings and carrying the message of hope. Perhaps today we need to look more carefully at our promise of responsibility to the still suffering alcoholic and less at our selfish need to have a very local convenient meeting.

Difficulty is being experienced in many areas of service in sponsoring members into service. A large percentage of members seem unwilling to make a commitment to service and to Twelfth-Step work: an essential step of recovery.

The Public Information Liaison Officer and team continue to share with schools and any Group that requests talks - efforts have been made to encourage industrial personnel officers of large companies to include AA talks in training. To this end we have made efforts to establish an Industrial Liaison discipline.

Hospital Liaison has blossomed and the understanding and co-operation of nursing schools, hospital medical staff and management has been obtained through symposiums and talks in various areas.

Our local meeting lists now show which meetings are accessible to wheelchairs and which are non-

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smoking. We have been given the opportunity to take part in programmes on alcoholism (anonymously of course) both on television and local radio. Our 24-hour telephone number appears in local telephone directories and efforts are being made in all possible areas of Public Information to ensure that the alcoholic who still suffers can find us - and find that we are not a secret society.

The Isle of Wight held a weekend convention in 1985 in Shanklin; it

was such a success that it is now an annual event. The first Isle of Wight convention was held in 1969 and 41 members crossed from the mainland.

Our Intergroup continues to be served by a dedicated committee and we are grateful to all that have served - too numerous to mention - in the past seventeen years.

This year, 1997, our convention theme was *It works - it really does!*. That brings to mind our responsibility and obligation

to each other: yes, it works as well as we work it, without willingness to share our experience at all levels we are not fulfilling our primary purpose.

We are the future history of Alcoholics Anonymous. Growth in the Fellowship's earlier years came from the enthusiasm to put into practice Bill W's and Dr. Bob's vision of the hand of AA being there for every alcoholic who seeks help. To continue that vision, we are responsible.

Group Memories

Bishop's Waltham

Writing in 1997, as Archives Liaison Officer, Joyce W. outlined the history of the Group.

I've chosen Bishop's Waltham as my first search into the origins of Southdown Intergroup not only because it is the first in the Where to Find, but it also happens to be my Home Group.

In 1990 Kevin B. inquired of Father Patrick Murphy O'Connor, who was the Priest of the Roman Catholic church Our Lady of Apostle in Martin Street, if a meeting could be held in any of the church buildings. The only place available was the church itself. This offer was gratefully received.

So on a cold dark November Tuesday night in 1990, the first meeting of the Bishop's Waltham

Group took place amid the pews of the Roman Catholic church.

Father Patrick was well aware that alcoholics who were trying to give up drinking would find it very hard to refrain from smoking as well. He therefore allowed the Group to smoke in the church!

It occurred to Kevin B. that this priest had more than a superficial understanding of alcoholism. What Kevin did not know was that Father Patrick had founded St. Dismas - a shelter for alcoholics and drug addicts in Southampton. Only at his funeral in August 1991, when the streets of Winchester were lined with recovering and grateful sober alcoholics, did the full story emerge.

The meetings in the church had an unusual ambience; not only

was this small group of AAs, all in their early stages of recovery, surrounded by holy statues, but on occasion a coffin would be in position ready for the next day's funeral. This puts a whole new meaning to 'going to any lengths'.

On many a Tuesday evening Kevin would be alone with his Big Book, when Father Patrick saw this, he would join him: one alcoholic, one catholic priest and one Big Book.

After Father Patrick died it was time to move on. The smoking rule was proving too much for the new management, so for a short interim period the group moved. In the minutes of the Southdown Intergroup 47th assembly held on the 29 August 1991, Bishop's Waltham was reported to have found a new meeting place: The Methodist Chapel in Swanmore. It was now to be called Bishop's Waltham Big Book meeting. The time was changed from 8.00 pm to

7.30 pm in the hope of attracting more members. This venue was a bone of contention between Les and John L., so John negotiated - for the princely sum of 50 pence per week - the Rectory Stables at St. Peters Church. By February 1992 the group had moved and had 5 regular members.

I think all of us who attended the Bishop's Waltham Friday meeting at this time, before the refurbishment, reflect with fond memories - perhaps coloured by time and sentimentality - on this most unusual AA venue. For a start the building itself was a stable and I think on a Friday night the horses were asked to vacate their property so that we could hold an AA meeting!

The seating arrangements consisted of awesomely large sofas stuffed with straw and long coil springs. How did I know this? Because most of the stuffing was on the outside. Once seated in one of these enormous chairs, it would take on a life of its own and absorb your whole body into its very core: thus making it impossible to make a hasty exit before the end of the meeting.

Without the help of the two friends who had accompanied you to this out-of-the-way meeting, there was no hope of extricating yourself. Those members not fortunate enough to be absorbed by a sofa would perch on the ladder leading to the hay loft.

The heating consisted of two bottled-gas heaters, but it was

warmer getting buried in one of the sofas. In May 1994 a revamp of the building and furnishings took place. During this period the Group moved out to The Institute opposite the Tandoori Restaurant. By the 58th Assembly, held in May 1994, the GSR's report simply said 'the stables have been refurbished. The Group thrives.' As it does today.

Bognor Regis

In 1976 Father Knowles, a frequent visitor to Allen House - a halfway house in Bognor - was asked by two of the residents if an AA meeting could be held in his Priory. They could not afford any rent, but promised a donation when funds allowed it. Father Knowles agreed. The first Saturday AA meeting in Bognor Regis began.

With the demolition of the old Priory in 1980, the venue moved to a room at the back of the church. It was always an open meeting, and anonymity was difficult - not least because of

the through traffic consisting of parishioners or clergy!

In 1992 a meeting started at 'Halt Whistle', a house owned by the Jesuits, on the corner of Albert Road. However, due to lack of funds, the Order had to sell the house and once again the meeting moved.

In 1985 a Thursday meeting was started in the rooms of the United Reformed Church in Linden Road. Originally a Women's meeting, it was changed to a Step meeting. The Group folded in October 1997.

Bognor Regis Monday

The first meeting was held in February 1979, and the group was a founder member of Southdown Intergroup.

The meeting was originally at St. Ninian's Church, Paghham Road, then at First Floor, Queensway House, Queensway. It then moved to Vernon House, Richmond Avenue in September 1983, when the meeting was reported as steady and growing with 20 to 25 regular members.



The Rectory Stables, Bishop's Waltham

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The group reached a 'low ebb' in the spring of 1984 with only 10 members and the spirit of willingness lacking. However, by August 1984 it was picking up and by November had moved again to its current venue at the United Reformed Church, Linden Road.

Ravenscourt Unit patients have always been regular visitors to the meeting.

Bognor Regis Wednesday

The founder member was John M. and the meetings were originally held at Ravenscourt, Ellasdale Road. In 1988 the meeting moved to its current venue at the United Reformed Church, Linden Road.

A Bognor AA member writes:

We all know that the town of Bognor Regis is the butt of a thousand jokes. Maybe that has made Bognor's AA members unusually paranoid, but we can feel that our AA groups have also been treated, from some quarters, a little disapprovingly. If so, that would fail to recognise the achievement of maintaining in

such a small town a minimum of three weekly meetings for a period of nearly 20 years, and it would also fail to recognise the startling amount of long term sobriety in Bognor - however one comes to measure that.

There are people who attend Bognor's meetings who can remember when there were no AA groups on the coast between Portsmouth and Brighton. There are others, around 30 years sober, who can recall the only 'local' meetings as Chichester Friday and Worthing Tuesday. Bognor's first meeting was at Pagham on Monday nights, a group which moved via Queensway and Richmond Avenue (where it numbered 20/25) to its present venue in Linden Road in 1984. By that time the Saturday night meeting in Albert Road was already well established (1981), Thursday nights (a Step meeting which dissolved in the 1990s and was re-constituted in 2005), and Saturday mornings (originally a Step meeting in 1998 which adopted its current "Newcomer" format some time in 2002).

These five meetings continue to thrive. Albert Road has been used by AA for 25 years, Linden Road for 22. Older members will recall the meetings 'upstairs' - 30 smokers, 4 gas rings blazing, a wooden staircase, an atmospheric death trap. They might also recall the issues familiar to AAs everywhere, the fists on tables, the drinking secretaries, the tragedies and the funerals, and the regular attenders who loved every step except the First.

Some old chestnuts have also recurred at regular intervals. Concern about attendance from treatment centres (in this case, Sandown House) was aired in Pagham as early as 1980, and a similar concern was expressed in the 1990s as the Thursday Step meeting went into abeyance, and still it occasionally resurfaces. Similarly the lack of volunteers for Service positions was noted by the Monday group over 20 years ago, and this was responsible for the death of a popular Sunday night group which, in 1994, had 15 regular attenders but not one volunteer or nomination for Secretary.



United Reformed Church, Bognor Regis

Bognor has not hosted AA Conventions nor contributed spectacularly to AA debate. Bognor Monday was a Founder member of Southdown Intergruop and our contributions of both money and personnel have been, in the main, respectable but the real strengths have been typically 'down home' - Bognor is over represented amongst telephone responders and, since its early days, it has had a marvellous record in 12th Step work. In terms of getting bums on seats Bognor

will have few rivals amongst small towns, and in terms of 'keep coming back' the evidence is there to see - of all those present during the week of the 50th anniversary of AA in England in March 1997 almost half still regularly attend in the Sussex area and almost half of that number still attend in Bognor Regis (2006).

In the intervening period, of course, at least twice as many have joined the ranks. Many wonderful members have joined us by moving into this area and a phalanx of committed newcomers have added great strength and, above all, humour, friendliness and warmth to our meetings. They have contributed more

than a growth in numbers and a growth in meetings (like the re-born step meeting and the effervescent Saturday morning group) - they have contributed to our fellowship in its deepest sense.

*A Bognor AA member
January 2006*

Gosport

The first meeting was held on 12 January 1973, and the group was a founder member of the Intergroup.

The meeting was opened by Jock M and chaired by Gill. It was registered at GSO in February 1973, when the only other meetings in the Portsmouth area were Wednesday at Portsmouth Community Centre and Thursday at Knowle Hospital.

Writing in 1997, as Archives Liaison Officer, Joyce W. outlined the history of the Group:

Gosport Friday holds a special place in my heart: it was my first AA meeting; it was the Group with which I got sober; it was my only Group for my first non-drinking year. Researching Gosport held few surprises, the same people who started this Group back in 1973 were around to help me in 1989, it was in the same building then as it is now and on the same night - Friday.

Consistency and commitment have been the bywords of the men who started and carried on this meeting for a quarter of a century. The Netley Hospital class of '72 were released back into society. Sandy M., Gill S., Tony M. and Bill B. were all serving members of the Royal Navy and their only AA meetings were Southsea and Knowle. With pressure from Auntie Nell and Don A. to open a meeting the "other side of the water", the lads set about making this happen.

With very little effort the venue was found in Bury Road and the first meeting was public. Invites went out to local services such as GPs and Social Services. Also on the invitation list were serving officers of the Royal Navy.

Three of these officers attended: Cdr Marjot, Cdr Scott Brown - both psychiatrists at Haslar Hospital - and a man of the cloth: the Reverend William Walters, a padre attached to the Navy. The padre had worked with the Eskimos in northern Canada and knew the effect alcohol - as well as AA - had on them. He was eager to carry the message throughout Naval establishments.

Because of the strong Naval attendance at the very first meeting, Public Information took off in a big way. Every week members would do talks at various naval establishments and by 1974 Gentleman Jim and Steve were regularly attending Netley Hospital.

The first and only lady for a long time to attend Gosport was Peggy, who arrived in November 1973. She holds my utmost admiration: to walk into the Thorngate Hall on a Friday night to a room full of matelots is no mean feat - I know, I've done it!

For 22 years Al-Anon ran alongside AA, both Fellowships supporting each other. Al-Anon folded 2 years ago through lack of support.

Today there is still a strong naval presence in Gosport, and any man or woman from any ship in any navy can make their way from the ferry to Thorngate Hall and receive the welcome that has been a life-saver to so many alcoholics.

*Joyce W.
1997*

Petworth

The first meeting was held in January 1970 at Leaconfield Hall and the group was a founder member of Southdown Intergroup.

By 1971 it was reported that membership was 'a bit thin on the ground'. The nearest groups were then Chichester, Guildford and Canterbury. The meeting moved to the United Reformed Church in 1986.

Writing in 2005, Richard recalled:

I went to my first A.A meeting in September 1981. My memories of that meeting are of 3 old boys, as I affectionately remember them, one of whom I already knew.

I was introduced to each member. I believe there were 7 or 8 people there.

The message I was given at that meeting was, 'If I was an alcoholic then I was in the right place, but, if I was there to keep my wife, children, home or job then I would drink again. If I had come to get sober for myself then contented sobriety awaited me'.

It was suggested that I should purchase the Big Book. At my second meeting the '12 and 12' was recommended.

The three old boys were Neville (secretary), Bob (literature & treasurer), both of whom were retired, and Jim who was an hotelier. Each of them had more than 10 years of sobriety.

The meeting was held each Thursday in Leaconfield Hall. There were no kitchen facilities so the tea person at the time brought with them to the meeting everything that was needed in the picnic baskets. Hot water was brought in flasks and the dirty cups were taken home to be washed.

Petworth meeting in the early days was quite small, especially during the winter months. Neville told me that he could recall meetings when there had been just him or Bob and sometimes a visitor. Nevertheless he would say, 'if you look in the Where To Find, on Thursdays at 8pm there is a meeting at Petworth', and so there was.

The blessings and benefits for me in my early recovery were being in the company of people who were caring, compassionate and direct in the way they passed on the message of A.A.

*Richard, Petworth
November 2005*

Writing in 2005, Helen recalled:

Twenty three years ago today I rang AA for help. I was living near Midhurst and was Twelfth-stepped by a lady who lived in Haslemere as there was no meeting in Midhurst at that time.

When I made my first call Willy answered the telephone, he seemed extremely matter of fact and not at all shocked to be called at 9am on a Monday morning by someone declaring they were an alcoholic, but when he asked

me for my name I couldn't tell him and put the phone down. Thankfully, five minutes later I managed to call him back and he took my details to pass on to Virginia. She called me within half an hour and arranged to visit me later that morning. I really can't remember a great deal of what she said to me but she insisted I was going to have to tell my husband when he returned from home and that she meet me at a meeting in Petworth the following Thursday. I think we spoke every day until my first meeting and I can remember phoning her, often several times a day, during the ensuing weeks, she subsequently became my sponsor.

The meeting at Petworth was held in the Leaconfield Hall at that time.

There was a small core of regular members, often referred to as 'the old boys', which consisted of Bob, Neville and Jim. I remember Francis and Richard and Graham, as they were 'new' like me and I think Terry lived closer to Petworth in those days. There were far more men than women at meetings, although Virginia was another regular member of the group, as was Ina. I remember she always had some crochet or embroidery in her hands. There were also a few ladies—and they were extremely smart ladies who visited on a fairly regular basis from Haslemere and Guildford, one of whom was called Dorothy, she had been in recovery for a very long time and was a great inspiration to me. Everyone seemed a great deal older than me; I was 28 at the time of my first meeting.

We always opened the meeting with the reading from Chapter 5 in the Big Book. As I recall there wasn't always someone to lead the meeting with an opening share so sometimes we went around the room or a theme was chosen for everyone to discuss.

We did not have access to the kitchen at the Hall so tea and coffee along with cups, sugar, milk and biscuits were brought in a basket or a bucket. This was

called the 'picnic' which had to be taken home to be washed and replenished each week by the tea person, a post I held for many years before taking a couple of stints as secretary for the group.

The meeting has obviously grown and flourished in the intervening years and I am pleased to say that there are still faces at the meeting that I remember from my early days. How pleased those founder

members would have been to see the strength of attendance and sobriety at the Petworth group today. Every day I thank God for my sobriety and the gift of a new life given to me by AA and am ever mindful of the contribution made by my fellow members of the Petworth group who have taught me so much over the past 23 years.

*Helen, Petworth
November 2005*

Portsmouth

Portsmouth Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Meeting

Our very first conscience meeting was held before we organised as a group. The meeting was held at Adam M's house and the following were present: Dave, Lesley, Paul H & Adam M.

Our group was split evenly between AA and NA members - the group agreed that it was important to have a 12 step GLBT meeting in Portsmouth. With God's grace we decided to be a part of the AA fellowship. This was willingly supported by every member. The location and time were also agreed at this meeting.

We advertised the meeting by circulating a flyer to all Portsmouth AA meetings and giving one to every GSR at Intergroup. Our first AA meeting was held on 17 February 2004. The following service positions were filled: Lesley - treasurer, Paul - secretary and Adam - GSR. Lesley and Adam remain in the same positions today.

Our meeting saw 24 different faces coming through the door in the first year with a maximum meeting strength of 12. The backbone of regular attendees are Lesley, Nicola, and Adam. Others attend when they can as work commitments keep them away.

Quite a few people have felt comfortable enough to share very sensitive information for the first time, which has stood them in good stead for their recovery, secrets keeping you sick. People have come from outside of Portsmouth to specifically do this.

We publicised the meeting again on our first birthday, using the same means. This had the desired affect and brought in new members and visitors from the outlying area. In our first year Wednesday Glebe Hall 7.30 pm meeting kindly donated their old Steps and Traditions scrolls as they purchased new ones.

To this day our meeting has not been able to contribute to Intergroup or even buy literature for the meeting. All our energy is focused on keeping the meeting running, and we are proud of the fact that it is still running.

*Adam
November 2005*

Liss

I first pitched up at Liss in April 1984 just a couple of weeks into sobriety. At the coffee table I met a tall, thin man who had a monocle. He had a lovely smile and he said to me, *'I drank to drown my sorrows, but the buggers learnt to swim'*. He really could not have put it better and on that basis I decided to become a regular at Liss!

At that meeting there was also a man called Dick (who has since died, sober) who lived about 200 yards from where I lived. He said *'I come every Monday; I'll pick you*

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up at 7.05pm' - not 'would you like to come?' Being ex-RAF he meant 7.05 and woe betide you if you were not ready and waiting.

There were a lot of military people there and the meeting was always very well attended – about 40 to 50 people. The Secretary was in the post for two years, and Brigadier Hugh always chose the speakers for the first 18 months of the secretary's tenure. At the end of one month the secretary would get a post card with the names and telephone numbers of the speakers for the following month. The secretary rang each speaker to check that they were coming. After 18 months the secretary was allowed to choose one speaker a month, the rest still coming from Hugh.

The tables were laid out in a long line from the door to the curtains, with the Secretary sitting at the head with his back to the door. On his left, sitting with their backs to the wall would sit, Hugh, General Charles, Dick, Willie (with the

monocle) and a couple of other old timers whose names elude me. There were also 'Auntie' Sheila, Michael M, Gordon (Parachute Regiment), Ghurkha Tony, Colin the Roof and Sailor Bill. Once the speaker had finished and the Secretary had thanked him (only a few sentences), the Elder Statesmen would start the sharing. They would usually start with something like 'You didn't state whether you are doing the steps on a regular basis, please enlighten us', or most common 'You did not mention your Higher Power – what are you doing about it?'

There was a lot of emphasis on reading and all sorts of books were lent out / recommended. The 'elders' used to have extra meetings in their own homes for newcomers, where it was hoped that you would feel more relaxed and be able to ask questions that you might have felt intimidated to ask in the hall. Olivia, Philippa and I attended some of these but did not feel at all relaxed. Their wives would be told to go out for a walk for a couple of hours!

The Liss meeting actually started in the Red Cross Hall which was in Liss proper (not Liss Forest which is where it is now) and moved to its current home in 1983. I do not know when it was first started. The Red Cross Hut, as it was called, had moss and other things growing up the walls INSIDE! It has since been demolished.

A lot of service was done by the Liss Group, but most notable was the setting up of the Telephone Service as we know it by Gordon L. He devised the whole thing, and then Annie B. or 'Rogate Annie' as we called her, was the first Telephone Liaison Officer (I think). In those days there were only 8 responders and you did two eight hour shifts or 2 nights a week. And to put another person on the Responders List cost £17.50 and you had to take one off – the numbers were finite. And at the same time Ghurkha Tony was Chairman of Region.

Lynette R.
January 2006

Isle of Wight

The first Ryde meeting was held in the early 1970s at the Red Cross Building, West Street, and it was a founder member of Southdown Intergroup. The actual start date of the meeting is uncertain, but the early 70s seems likely as Ryde Friday was a member of both Southdown and Solent Intergroups prior to joining Southdown in 1980.

The venue changed to Athena House in 1995. In 1984 there were

only three regular members, but by 1987 twelve to fourteen regulars plus seasonal visitors were reported.

Writing in 2005, Neil F recalled:

The defining feature of our group survival has been that small is beautiful. The greatest number I've ever counted at an Island meeting was some twenty-four AAs. Visitors are pounced upon to share their stories as we have heard our own sorry drunkalogs so many

times. I well recall this was one of the primary reasons for Elizabeth suggesting we had an IOW Convention way back in 1993.

However, small groups allow an intimacy not possible in larger groupings. No one enters or leaves a meeting without a greeting and a starter-pack. In the winter there is no useful public transport save the links between Newport, Ryde and Shanklin. Meetings have started, and folded, at Cowes, Yarmouth,

Freshwater; but there's been consistent help for newcomers from Ryde and Shanklin groups. Ryde is also a practical option for day-return AAs from Portsmouth if they can afford the ferry.

We have many telephones on the Island, but just a few dedicated

responders. We have three prisons on the Island, but just a few dedicated visitors. One factor is that perfect anonymity on a small island is impossible. I think AA on the Island continues to serve its purpose because we have made the effort, despite numerous attempted

unilateralist-coups over the years, to stay as part of the Southdown Intergroup. I know the Island groups have got far more from Intergroup than we have given. Isn't that the case for all of us AAs though?

Neil F, IOW
November 2005

Chichester

A picture paints a thousand words, and here are some photographs illustrating the different layouts for each of the Chichester meetings. They are all held in the same room at Fernleigh Community Centre.



Chichester Monday Meeting



Chichester Sunday Meeting



Chichester Tuesday Meeting



Fernleigh Community Centre

Chichester Friday Meeting

Service & Recovery

I speak only as I have found it and my story is just that, my story. I had been twelfth stepped in London but I walked into my first AA meeting in the old Health Centre in Chapel Street, Chichester on a Friday night in early March 1980. I had dressed very smartly (give or take the booze stains on the tie and lapels and probably the urine stains on the trousers) and found a bunch of grinning people inside dressed in an assortment of clothes. They all seemed to know each other and be happy. I was not.

For a start, I felt my dress was wrong, I was acutely self-conscious and, nice as these people seemed to want to be to me, I wanted to get out, fast. Only the fear of going home and saying 'I can't take AA' stopped me. I remember nothing of the chair, only more people giving me telephone numbers, details of a meeting at Pagham on the following Monday and shaking me by the hand as I left. I really could not see what these well meaning weirdos were going to do to sort out my life problems so that I would not need to drink as much to cope with it all. They did not seem remotely like me. I was very grand, you see.

Nevertheless, Brian T picked me up on the Monday and for some time after, he and Raymond M, both newly dry, took me around meetings. There were not so many then, about a thousand in the whole country as against three thousand or so now but, just as if you wanted a drink you would get to a pub or shop however far it was, if you wanted a meeting and it was thirty miles to the nearest that evening, you got there and you knew that someone would always get you home too! I soon found too that if I did not turn up at one of my regular meetings, someone would always ring up to enquire where I had been. There was no telephone service for Southdown as we know it now, just dear Brigadier Hugh, sober since 1955, using his single home line on the Guildford exchange.

It is all pretty hazy now, those early days, not least because it took 16 months until I put down the last drink, up to today. I had periods of dryness but they never lasted and, increasingly, I felt isolated and different in AA. All these other people, apparently, were not drinking. I was, although I frequently denied it. 'Are you tapering off or tapering on?' was a frequent greeting as I swayed into the meeting, crunching Polos and trying so hard to look and sound sober. 'If you want to drink, go out and bloody drink but don't waste our time in here until you are serious about getting and staying sober'. Not kind, I thought, especially from people who talked about love so much. I was experiencing 'tough love' and it was to get tougher.

I am very glad that there were people around when I came in who didn't pussy foot about, who called a spade a bloody shovel and told me exactly what games I was playing. But for them, and I really hated

some of them at the time, I would have died long ago. Only because I knew that they had 'something' which they did not appear to be going to give to me, I had to work for it, did I stick around. Oh yes, and because by then I was so paranoid with fear that the only place in the world I felt safe was an AA room. Looking back, there seem to have been many more people who unreservedly accepted that they owed their life to AA and AA alone.

Whilst there were a very few beds at Sandown House, Graylingwell, and at St James' in Portsmouth, there was practically nothing else, unless you went to Broadway Lodge at Weston-super-Mere. Perhaps that was why we seemed to get more low drunks coming in to the meetings than I see today. Yes, we get some but most people are all nice and clean and dry after weeks in a treatment centre. Don't get me wrong, I have absolutely nothing against the treatment centres, which have grown up in the past twenty years, or any other ways of getting off the merry-go-round of booze. Whatever works. It is just that for some it appears to be hard not to believe, deep down, that it was the treatment centre which saved their life rather than the message carried by AA members. For me it was AA or nothing really. And nothing meant just that—death.

The old Pagham meeting (where, on one occasion, I witnessed chairs flying through the air as tempers frayed) had moved to

the Probation Office in Queen Street. I asked to do the literature at the new Bognor Monday meeting sometime in mid 1981. I must have managed a few months without a drink. The officers and older (in sobriety) members of groups would discuss amongst themselves who to put forward. Nominations would be asked for (never 'volunteers', please, except for the washing up, most of us have seen plenty of examples of how the eager ego can cause havoc!) and the candidates left the room so that the group could discuss their suitability for the job. Perhaps memory plays tricks, but there always seemed to be several candidates for any service position at Group or Intergroup level in those days. It saddens me when I hear of long lists of vacancies for officers today. I did not understand it then but it is such a privilege to serve. All I was, was very scared of the responsibility, but I had to trust these people who had trusted me to do the job for the Group and believed I could do it.

Service positions were very much for the group's benefit, the benefit to the individual would or might follow but was not so important beyond the fact that the individual was making a commitment to service.

Unfortunately I went on what was to be the last of my periodic benders after about six weeks in office. Two members arrived at my house, removed the literature case and told me to be at the meeting to tell the group what I had done. All this happened before I could get my head up off the sofa, I was mortified and

begged them, saying, 'but everyone will know anyway'. Not the point, they replied, service is a privilege and a responsibility and you owe it to the group to apologise. It was a hard lesson that I have never forgotten. But it was necessary for me.

Sometime in mid 1980 I was encouraged to go to a smaller meeting, as well as both Chichester Friday and Pagham/Bognor Monday. These were big gatherings (quite often some members sat on the floor) and I was good at hiding. I was told to go to Petworth. It was not suggested, I was told! I protested that I would not know anyone, so my (tor)mentor told me he would meet me outside the Leconfield Hall in Petworth the following Thursday. There were only about three or four regular members but they had a wealth of experience. I could not hide there and learned to share. Petworth was, eventually, to prove a lynch pin in my recovery. I began to be introduced to the Steps and my first sponsor, Neville, was secretary. In those days he brought the coffee in a thermos flask in a picnic basket with the literature. We never had a chair but he would read something usually from an old Share and we would discuss it. I was a regular attender for a number of years, then more intermittently when demands of service meetings meant I cut my group meetings to two a week. (We all make mistakes and getting the Service side of the AA triangle longer than the Recovery side in my middle years was one of many I have made) but, for quite some years now I am back as a regular attender and regard it as my Home group. It holds a very, very special place in my heart. There are others too who came to Petworth very shortly after me and are still regular attenders twenty plus years later. It feels very special still to see each other there each Thursday, in a different hall but only yards away from our first meeting.

Early on, I was taken to Intergroup Assembly at St Peter's Church Hall in Petersfield. The then PIO, Richard S, who was a regular at Chichester Friday, told me to meet him at his house and he would take me. Once again, I wasn't given the option to say no. I remember little except an imposing line of people that I took to be the 'Board of Directors' facing the Assembly. It all seemed very orderly and serious. Little did I know that I would spend quite a few years at Intergroup. Around then too I was taken to a PI meeting in Willie G's house, to discuss a proposed public meeting, I think. At least they discussed and I listened but I felt included. I felt wanted and, in a very small way, I felt useful and met more people who seemed to get a great deal out of service in all sorts of different ways.

What I learned and have never forgotten is that service is privilege, not a chore. Something that, hopefully, someone else would do, if I stare at my finger nails for long enough when the subject comes up.... If your fellow members thought you could do something, however humble, then you did your best to do it. I remember at the first Bohunt Convention sweeping the floor afterwards. That gave me back a little self- belief, something utterly extinguished through my

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illness. I must have swept the floor well as for about the next five years I was responsible for the direction signs on the road and in the buildings and had to get to Liphook at 8.15 am. It was not a question of whether it was inconvenient. I owe my life to AA and I learned to make time to give back to this Fellowship. Yes, it has often been 'inconvenient'

but nothing like as 'inconvenient' as picking up a drink and, above all Service introduced me to many, many, people all over the country I would never otherwise have met, whose sobriety I could learn from and, just as importantly, whose mistakes I had a chance not to have to make. Dr Bob said that the whole of our programme boils down

to Love and Service. I am so grateful for all the opportunities I have been given to serve and even more grateful for the Love I have received and continue to receive from so many old and new friends in the Fellowship.

*Francis B.
November 2005*

Conference

I have been requested to write about my service experience at conference. My Home group is Portchester Saturday and we meet at Portchester Community Centre every Saturday night at 8pm It is an open meeting and was originally started by a man called Pelly in 1983. His motivation for starting the group was so that there was somewhere for recovering alcoholics to go (with their nearest and dearest if necessary) on a Saturday night, as there was no other group held in the area at that time.

The group has always had a strong service ethic at Group, Intergroup and Regional level. At Intergroup, the group, during its time has supplied a Secretary, Treasurer, Vice Chairman, two Chairmen and Steering Committee members. At Region the Group has supplied four Regional Representatives, two Conference Delegates, one Conference Committee Secretary, one Conference Committee Chairman and one Conference Chairman.

I represented my Group, Intergroup and Region at Conference from 2002 through to 2005. I was voted initially as an alternative delegate in 2002. This is a very demanding position as you have to be prepared to cover for any one of the six delegates from South East Region, and each delegate is allocated to sit on one of six committees. A committee consists of sixteen Delegates, two or three Board members and possibly an overseas visitor (participating, but non-voting).

My first conference was as an alternate delegate due to illness of one of the full delegates, I had very little notice (2 weeks). Fortunately I was well briefed by the delegate I was substituting for who was also from my home group. I travelled to York for the Conference with another delegate from Southdown Intergroup. The registration takes place from 2pm onwards on Friday, the day Conference commences at the University of York.

As a first year delegate I was known as a red spotter, named after the red spot that is on your identification badge to indicate a new delegate. I was made to feel very welcome although I felt

overwhelmed what with the delegates pack that is issued to all delegates on arrival, the allocation of accommodation and generally getting settled in before the first full meeting of conference at 4.30pm.

This is the formal opening of Conference consisting of an address by the General Secretary, the Conference Chairman's keynote address and the nominations for the Conference Chairman for the next year's Conference. The proposed chairmen give their AACV from the podium to conference, and the vote is carried out on Sunday morning before the close of conference using the modified third legacy procedure. After the opening of conference is completed the committees get together for the first time, this is a familiarisation session and a review of the committee questions and agenda for the weekend. There is then a break for dinner and then another full session of Conference for Board reports.

Saturday morning after breakfast the committees go into session to discuss and to formulate their findings which are to be

with the secretariat by 4.30pm Saturday afternoon for typing. These are to be ready for issue to conference by the end of the evening session of the full conference which includes the remaining board reports and a one hour open forum where questions can be put to the floor. It is the chairman's task to either answer the question or to allocate it to an appropriate member of the board. These open forum sessions can generate some lively discussion; they also demonstrate the concepts working in all aspects. Once this session is complete the conference adjourns to consider the draft conference report, some minor alterations can be made at this time, but anything major will have to be discussed in the final plenary session Sunday morning.

The final session of conference takes place on Sunday morning at 9am. It commences with the committees chairmen presenting their reports to conference. If there are any proposed changes they will be voted on. Then the report will be voted as to whether it is accepted or rejected. If there is a 75% majority, the board are mandated to act on the proposal if it is within the Fellowship's wherewithal and is financially possible. If it is 50%, it is advisory on the board. Once the committee reports are completed the election of the chairman for the next year is carried out. The voting procedure is such that the first candidate to get two thirds of the votes is elected. It is rarely that simple, in my experience of four conferences' it has only been a straight vote once. Which means that the third legacy procedure is invoked? The way it works is

that the candidate with the lowest number of votes drops out and this process continues until there are only two candidates remaining. If neither of the candidates have a two thirds majority then conference votes whether to allow the candidate with the majority of votes to be elected, or to go to the hat. This process is simple the two names are placed in a hat and the one that is drawn is duly accepted by conference to be conference chair for the following year.

Using this procedure I was voted as Conference Chairman for 2005. I had been a committee chairman for committee five the previous year. As a committee chairman I was part of the, conference steering committee for 2004 and as chairman of conference I chaired the conference steering committee for 2005.

The job of the steering committee is to review the questions that are presented to GSO for consideration as a conference question, they also set the agenda for the Conference weekend, and although the process is well established small changes have been made year on year. The experience of conference does not just include the conference weekend it is a whole year task with attending briefings and debriefings for Groups, Intergroups and Region, consolidating the conscience of the Region for presentation to the committee at conference It is important that the minority view is listened to and is presented at committee where it may not be a minority.

The experience of Conference as a delegate was a 'learning and growing' experience and allowed me to see the General Service Board working, also to witness the hard work that General Service Office does on our behalf. But most of all it allowed me to see the unity of AA working through General Service Conference as guardians of our traditions.

The one humbling thing about it all for me was when I was stood on the podium in front of Conference before my keynote address it occurred to me that anyone in the fellowship could do this job, probably better than me.

*John D
November 2005*

Archives

A subject that can be as dry as old bones or fascinating. When I was appointed as Southdown's Archivist, I was only the second member to be in the post as archivist and it had not been considered important enough to warrant a liaison officer post at Intergroup or regional level until the early 1990s.

By then over 55 years of our fellowship's history and archival material was in danger of being lost. Southdown were fortunate that many 'elder statesmen' in our Intergroup had kept documents such

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as the first assembly minutes of the Southdown Intergroup in 1980 and minutes from the Southern Region which stretched from Southampton to Kent. Many miles were travelled in those early days of AA in the South East England, as Intergroup meetings were held on a roving basis in Guildford, Canterbury, Brighton etc. Group meetings were also few and far between and early members travelled up to 50 miles to meetings. During my tenure of the archivist post I amassed and sorted two large chests on wheels - of paperwork and compiled two books containing details of all groups, the start date, a short history and signatures of members present at the groups meeting nearest to the 50th anniversary of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain in 1997.

Southdown Intergroup was very forward thinking and we were the first Intergroup to produce Aims and Structures, the original of which was written by Vic J from Gosport. Vic also compiled and printed the first short history of Southdown which in the early 80s was given to every newcomer along with advice on what AA does and does not do, i.e. loan money, find accommodation etc, and the meetings list.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time as archivist and produced a later history of Southdown which I believe Joyce my successor added to.

Today Nick ably carries on the Archivist Tradition. Please let him know any interesting facts YOU may know of and our past

in your area. We are AA's living history - share your 'Do you remember?' moments with us all please.

*In gratitude, Ruth S.
January 2006*

I was a GSR and tried to dishonestly direct my home group. Disaster was averted by taking myself out of the equation. I was keen to be involved at Intergroup but wanted to try and ease up on the controls. Archives I thought would see me with mouth shut - just recording events as they happened - ideal - or so I thought.

In 2000 I attended a Big Book Study hosted by Joe and Charlie in London. On the Saturday night John W. gave an hours presentation on the history of AA. Two things struck me - firstly I was so impressed that he took his shoes off on stage to feel more comfortable, and secondly I was gobsmacked at the number of names and dates he continually and effortlessly reeled off.

In 2004 I was privileged to attend the Archive Road Show in the Wirral. There were six presentations that day together with a very infectious all inclusive atmosphere. A certain Dave Shoulder's presentation really charged my enthusiasm. For in six weeks he had gathered historical information over the internet and produced a 32 page publication on The Wirral Intergroup. My ears pricked up at one sentence: 'you can do it - but you are going to need help'.

The seed was planted for the *Southdown Legacy* publication - and help we have had in abundance - thank you to the Publication Committee namely Martin W, Maurice, Malcolm, Juliet and Harry. Thank you also to all who have given and passed on so much.

*Nick, Archives Liaison Officer
January 2006*

Treasurer

From time to time some one comments on the changes within the Fellowship and there have been many, sadly not all for the good.

But there is one I heartily endorse and that is the role of Treasurer, whether it be at Group, Intergroup or Regional level. I have experience of 2 out of the 3 and I'd like to share my experiences of being an Intergroup Treasurer for Southdown Intergroup in 1980.

Picture the end of Assembly - Serenity Prayer said, mad dash to the laden table filled with sandwiches, cream cakes etc. and at the "top table" sits the treasurer surrounded by impatient GSRs clutching their plastic bags of coins, Treasurer frantically counting the money, then giving out receipts, finally counting the pot from IG (Intergroup) collection, paying out expenses to whichever group supplied the refreshments, also other expenses i.e. PI (Public Information)etc.. At last all monies counted bagged etc. Now the ironic part - by the time the Treasurer gets to the now unladen table, no luscious

cream cakes, if lucky maybe a piece of quiche.

The reason we had food at Assembly was that so many people came straight from work to St Peters Church walk in Petersfield. But sadly those feasts had to end, when at one Assembly the cost of food far outweighed the Assembly collection, and it was agreed that from then on biscuits would suffice.

As I mentioned earlier, changes were afoot regarding the handling of AA money. Groups and Intergroups were encouraged to open bank accounts. This didn't meet with much approval - many Groups felt they were being told what to do. GSO (General Service Office) issued pamphlets to assist, also to show where donations were allocated. Slowly Groups saw the wisdom of a Bank account; not so much responsibility for the Treasurer with sums of money at home. It was suggested 2 signatures were advisable, with 3 names on the mandate.

There will always be the old chestnut about the "pot money", can we buy flowers, cakes etc with it. The answer as far as I am concerned is NO. Once the money goes into the pot it becomes AA money. Most Groups if not Intergroups have "sundry pots" for Birthday cards/cakes etc.

So I'll end as I started by saying the Intergroup Treasurer job has changed greatly and cheques are so much easier to bank than nails and coins.

Georgia G.
January 2006

Twenty Years of Living Sober with Southdown Intergroup

I first attended Intergroup in 1984 as a brand new GSR. I did know something of the previous history going back to about 1975, when there was one huge Intergroup in the south of England. Around 1975 the Intergroup split, and Southdown, and Solent Intergroups were created.

I stress that in this article I give my impressions of Intergroup as they were at the time, and I will say at the end whether I still think those first impressions were true.

At my first meeting I felt that the Committee was a self perpetuating organisation prone to a touch of bullying, and a clique into which I would never break. I got off to a very bad start because I asked a question, and one of the committee members said, and I quote them precisely "Any GSR who asks a stupid question like that has no right to be a GSR".

I could have got a resentment, and turned on my heel, and left Intergroup for ever. Instead I got a resentment, and decided to learn as much about Intergroup as I possibly could, so that I could never have that sort of criticism levelled at me in the future. I did learn in the end. I stayed on as a member of Intergroup for 14 consecutive years, and then intermittently, helping out, for a further six years.

Within a few months, I had joined the PI committee and had been elected the Share Rep. I was able to change this title to Share Liaison Officer, and then have that change adopted nationally, so I was pleased that one of my proposals although small was accepted throughout A.A.

We'd had a newsletter in the 1970s but it had lapsed, and Intergroup asked for an editor to start the newsletter again. I was proposed, and duly elected, so we restarted the newsletter, and with a series of very successful editors it has run in a most satisfactory way since then.

I also joined the Camber Sands Committee for five years, and eventually became their Chairman, so I felt I had to go to Intergroup to report what was I was up to on the Committee.

Having finished my Camber Sands commitment I immediately transferred to the National Committee and became responsible for the speakers, programme of events, workshops and entertainment at the 1997 celebration of 50 Years of AA in Great Britain, and whilst doing that was elected by Region as a Conference Delegate for a further three years. So of course this tied me firmly to Intergroup throughout that time.

Despite my first impressions of Intergroup, which I held for a very long time afterwards, I came to believe that I belonged to the best Intergroup,

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the most imaginative, and best structured Intergroup in Great Britain, and I have never changed that view.

I joined Intergroup at a very exciting time. The new, as it was then, Telephone System was being discussed by Intergroup and I was fortunate enough to join the small committee who went to British Telecom. After a bit of a struggle we had the telephone system installed within our Intergroup, and this of course was to spread throughout AA over the next few years.

Another thing that happened during this time was that Francis and Vic 'set too' and produced the first edition of the Aims and Structure of the Southdown Intergroup, a remarkably effective and essential document. Unfortunately Vic is now dead, but Francis, from Chichester, is alive and well.

They were kind enough, having completed it, and having it accepted by Intergroup, to turn it over to me (this would be about 1986), and I have retained the responsibility for updating the Aims and Structure since that time, and the interesting thing is that each proposal I have made, however controversial, has received a unanimous vote of approval from the Intergroup. Those aims and structures also became an example for the rest of the AA Fellowship.

In those days Open Meetings (these are the big meetings) where we invite doctors, nurses and journalists to our meetings, were common place. I remember

attending one in Portsmouth, one in Petersfield, one in Chichester, and one in Haslemere, and find it odd that in recent times they have tended to lapse altogether.

By the very nature of staying with Intergroup for that long period of time, I inevitably got involved with Prisons, Hospitals, and Probation, and almost without any effort on my part gained an encyclopaedic knowledge of the way each service within the Intergroup works.

Intergroup is a marvellous organisation, but unfortunately it is peopled by alcoholics. We had, and still have, our share of bullies, single issue fanatics, and bloody minded individuals. However 90% of the GSR's are totally committed working hard on behalf of Intergroup, their own groups, and the fellowship at large.

I STRESS this is one mans view of twenty years of Intergroup history. During that time I grew to love my Intergroup, and am prepared to do anything I can to help them.

It is very frustrating at times. One can get very wound up. But at the end of the day, my experience has been that the collective wisdom of the GSRs, when they vote, always results in the best solution for Intergroup, at that time.

In addition I should add that in the late 80s Intergroup became too cumbersome to handle, and a small committee proposed that a further split was necessary. We all agreed that, and Northdown Intergroup was

created. However although there are large numbers of GSRs at the Intergroup, because it is so well run and so well chaired, over the years it has not been necessary to consider a further split.

The most controversial event of the last twenty years was the formation of the ladies group at Havant, and here I admit I'm being economical with the truth, I have simplified the argument. On the left was the Pinko Liberal Brigade and the Gay Liberation Front, on the right were the deeply Conservative Big Book Devotees of the Intergroup. The battle was fought over several weeks, and looked as if it would never be resolved. However in the event Conference decided (while we were still arguing) that groups like these Ladies for example, and Gay Groups, could be created, provided that they were Non Restricted, and the battle was over. The interesting thing to me is that this is the only group in Intergroup that I have never ever been invited to visit, I am familiar with every other group, except the most recently formed ones in our Intergroup.

In the mid nineties Patrick and I formed the Armed Forces Committee. He did all the work, and I elected myself Chairman. I was obviously learning the ruthless methods employed by the first Committee I got involved with. This too went national with me as Chairman before turning over to Donald who is presently our own Intergroup Chairman.

Throughout this period I was never considered to be a suitable person for either the Intergroup

Committee, or the Regional Committee, or the General Service Board. However, after twenty years I was nominated almost simultaneously, to be Chairman of Intergroup, to be Chairman of Region, and also nominated to the General Service Board, as a Board Member. An outsider no longer, I turned down Intergroup and Region,

though I was honoured to be asked. Ill health stymied the Board Nomination.

On balance, I feel now about the original Committee as I did then, although they were exceptionally able. The surviving members are all firm friends now. Perhaps new GSRs have the same opinion of the present Committee.

So there we are, Twenty Years of unbridled success at Intergroup, even though you would never believe it if you attended one of their sessions. Sailor Bill is still sober! Are the two connected? Go figure.

Sailor Bill
November 2005

Hospitals

I took over the service of Hospital Liaison Officer when I was around 10-11 years sober. In all of the years that I have been sober in Alcohol Anonymous, apart from being involved with the telephone service, this was the most rewarding service. Being a nurse and having had a father as a GP and my ex husband a GP, I was desperate to carry the message of recovery by the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. Neither my father or my ex-husband believed that alcoholism was an illness. I checked out many times with the chairman of our Intergroup and people who had more experience of recovery - of public speaking than I had.

1. The Twelve Traditions had to be upheld - and most importantly Traditions 10 & 11.
2. There is a pamphlet on public speaking that I sent out to all people to read, before they went to any presentations.
3. "Dress Code" Attraction rather than promotion (Tradition 11). Many professional people do not see alcoholics in recovery as being intelligent, caring, respectable people, living normal responsible lives. To go on a presentation always dress in the best way that you are able: scruffy jeans and a T-shirt are not acceptable. In our behaviour always be courteous, polite and agreeable: We are guests of these people and are always very respectful to them.
4. Tradition 10: As with voluntary agencies *eg* CATCH, which I went to one afternoon every month, I have no opinion on outside issues. I used to go each month and just sit quietly and if any of the visitors wanted to ask me any questions about Alcoholics Anonymous I would endeavour to answer them. We need always to remember that we may be the only example of AA that these people may see. Some alcoholics when sober, can have great dignity and I hope that is how I presented myself to these people.
5. We have an excellent video that may be shown at all presentations, as well as plenty of literature and cards for meetings and locations

of meetings and times plus the Alcoholics Anonymous helpline phone number.

6. A Team of people: I worked full-time during this service, so I needed a lot of help. It was good to involve other members in this service: sponsoring them into service. I was very lucky to have my closest friend Olive in this area. She did all the contacting of practice managers, hospitals *etc* in the area; setting up appointments and presentations in the surgeries. I would phone the team people in all areas, sending literature to them all and getting them to see their practice managers, district nurses *etc* and then go into all the local hospitals to leave literature and speak to the A & E Triage nurses. We were able to get into a huge number of surgeries for presentations, usually in their breaks. Other visits would involve GPs, GP receptionists and all other nurses attached to each practice. We were given a terrific welcome. Our honesty stunned a lot of people - very rewarding. Basically, the people I tried to get to were social workers, district nurses, occupational therapists,

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practice nurses and practice receptionists.

Hospitals: All I could manage here was the Triage staff and in A&E I made sure that there was plenty of literature: the blue card with the telephone number went everywhere. We made ourselves known at Greylingwell, but

at that time couldn't get very far. We got lucky at times, as GPs organized lunches for us themselves and on 4 separate occasions more than 40-50 GPs at each presentation.

This is an incredibly important service. The medical profession is frequently the first port of

call for the suffering alcoholic and we need more people out in the community talking to the medical profession about our recoveries in AA.

*Annabelle (Bognor Regis)
January 2006*

Public Information

I was 'sponsored' into the post of Public Information Officer (Southdown Intergroup) with barely the required years of sobriety suggested as a requirement in AA Guidelines for the position. That I was the only name put forward enabled selection, at an Intergroup Assembly, to go through unopposed. The 'office', consisting of muddled paperwork in two small battered boxes and a number of equally tatty plastic bags was handed over. Advice from my predecessor was to the point, 'You will be fine, just do your own thing and call me any time for help'.

My first little job was to sort through the boxes and bags, read the local Intergroup Handbook and any other AA Guidelines I could find to try and settle on a structured foundation for work. Coming from a military background this turned out to be less straightforward than first imagined. Not much seemed to make sense and I quickly became aware that Public Information, in AA, was nebulous to say the least and while the Guidelines offered the possibility of some kind of structure it appeared not to be reflected in the actual work of this strange department within the whole. I was slightly fazed by the word 'discipline' which attached itself to the various offices operated by AA Intergroups and Regions. A word that held tones of punishment for me and physical effort for athletes seemed quite out of place in a Fellowship, so dependent on spiritual growth as individuals and a whole for success. I cleared the paper work, destroying anything that was duplicated, keeping only one copy of relevant documents.

Having made myself known to the South East Regional PI, getting advice and pointers, I set about building a PI network. Not so easy, though completely enjoyable. There were, however, one or two problems that needed addressing. If AA was to make contact with professional organisations industry and education for instance — I felt we needed to appear organised. For the insider AA provided a stable Fellowship. Meetings, their conduct and most of all the Twelve Step Programme remained the same wherever AA existed. Different people, different problems and different titles for groups but, nonetheless, AA was essentially constant countrywide. When reaching out to the greater

community we presented a different face in all areas. The most obvious fault — if indeed it was a fault — seemed to be in the way we made outside contact, letters for instance. We had no 'corporate face', nothing to really show that we all belonged to a much larger whole, tried, tested and successful: A greater whole able to provide visually recognised reliability across the industrial community, State organisations and pastoral groups like the Church, Women's Institutes, Youth Groups to name just a few. Even within Intergroup each officer used different letter formats. In short, and my military life was difficult to ignore here, we were not uniform. After all it was a sure thing that all the groups we wanted to present to communicated with each other through Chambers of Commerce, Health and Safety meetings and at other times.

Without allowing it to cause too much damage to my PI serenity I was further concerned by the way AA was divided into Regions and Intergroups while most of those we wished to communicate with remained divided by County. I felt it essential to avoid doubling up in contacts, appearing to be

fragmented and this was entirely likely when dealing with schools in particular.

Southdown Intergroup spread itself across three Educational Authorities, as an example, and one Authority could be in receipt of correspondence from two Intergroups both presenting a different image. For a Fellowship that relied on mutual, structured support for survival this seemed to be at odds.

Despite these small worries the PI Team, such as it was, did get out and about spreading our message and did break into some areas new to the Fellowship. We gave presentations to a number of schools and it was at one of these that I learned something interesting, which led me to further study.

The State had started to look at alcohol and the problems it could cause to people, organisations and industry. In the case of schools, one of our local Education Authorities had employed a professional to visit schools, speak about the perils of alcohol to children and provide a resource for teaching staff on the subject. This may go some way to explain why, just before I took on PI work, schools had ceased to be a common venue for AA presentations in our area. That our 'bookings' to speak at schools grew during this time is a testament to AA and its value in the face of educated professionals with no experience of the alcoholic's journey through life, smitten by alcohol followed by recovery in the Fellowship. I also discovered, though my understanding of this remained

slight, that employers, State or independent, that had more than a certain number of employees, were required to provide facilities for their work force by the newish Health and Safety at Work legislation. This legislation included a 'Duty of Care' section. My understanding of this was slim, to say the least, but indicated to me that employers were obliged to provide some level of care and counselling to those workers with problems caused by their job or social problems that, maybe, had some impact on performance in the work place.

Letters of AA introduction had been distributed to many large employers in the Intergroup area, along with similar letters to almost every General Practitioner Surgery. Most of them, looking back, probably 99%, went unanswered. Pressure, from Intergroup members, to hold a Public Information Meeting produced the same results. Without the ability to provide absolute proof it seemed apparent the lack of response was the direct result of organisations employing counselling agencies. Budgets had been set up to provide

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A letter sent to interested professionals inviting them to a PI presentation in 2000



ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

SOUTHDOWN INTERGROUP

PLEASE REPLY TO

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problems and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership, we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution. It does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any cause.

Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

Dear Dr. Moore,

We have decided to hold an open meeting to bring to the attention of the medical community the purpose and aims of Alcoholics Anonymous.

AA is a self-funding self-help group with a world-wide membership of millions:

it's free and it works!

We have no waiting lists and are available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week.

Because of the promise of anonymity we make to all our members, the opportunity does not often arise for the professionals and carers in our community to learn first hand about Alcoholics Anonymous and how it works. We are therefore very pleased to invite you to a presentation at 2.30 pm on Thursday 8th June 2000 at St. Mary's Hospital Education Centre.

Our aim is to increase the awareness in our society of how AA has been able to help thousands of hopeless alcoholics to achieve sobriety and lead normal, sober lives. The programme will be as follows:

2.30 pm	Arrive
2.45 pm	Video "AA Works One Day at a Time"
3.15 pm	Personal experiences shared by three members of AA
4.00 pm	Question time and open forum, with informal talks with members over refreshments

We would be pleased for you to bring along your colleagues with an interest in alcoholism and recovery. To assist with our catering arrangements, will you please complete and return the slip below.

Yours sincerely,

Portsmouth AA Groups.

Name _____ Organisation _____ Tel. _____

I will be able to attend

I will be able to attend and would like to bring the following colleagues: _____

I will not be able to attend, but would like someone to contact me to arrange a talk to my organisation

I will not be able to attend

for the expense of engaging professional bodies whose visits were preceded by glossy publications promising audio-visual resources, eye catching safety posters and presenters in smart suits providing an overall look of professional excellence.

Of course, AA remained distant from the notion of competition and rightly so, but still lived ill equipped to spread its priceless message in the face of this corporate onslaught of information.

Towards the end of my time in office there appeared to be something of a drift, from many organisations, back to AA as a resource for information; most notably from schools and Social Services departments along with the Armed Forces. This had nothing to do with any particular Public Information Officer, of that I am certain. It was due, entirely, to those people who volunteered, and took the personal risk, of stepping in front of complete strangers to speak about themselves, their illness and their recovery in this remarkable Fellowship - in a word, courage. Showing people that alcoholism crosses all boundaries, all religions, all professions, all people. It needs no scientific explanation, no rules and lies well beyond the reach of any professional team of curers or counsellors unless they share the apprenticeship required to qualify and the experience of strength found in AA amongst those committed to it and the programme of recovery.

Public Information work helped to keep me sober and helped me to understand some of the greater workings of AA — some of them.

Looking at the relationship the country at large has with alcohol today and the massive thrust by government to deal with the problems it is causing I am comfortable that AA Public Information always spoke the truth. I look to a future in which our Fellowship remains the sheet anchor of recovery in this storm of alcohol chaos and remember that those who choose to organise the spread of our message publicly do so at the risk of personal exposure.

Strength in Fellowship.

Patrick

January 2006

SHARE Magazine

In my early days in the Fellowship service was something that everyone else did. I was far too fearful to volunteer (or perhaps still too arrogant). As the days progressed to weeks and months I was manoeuvred into 'teas and coffees' at the Godalming Friday meeting. At least it forced me to open my mouth – sharing was exceedingly difficult. I spent all my time during meetings at the back of the room eating very 'crunchy' apples and I did not care who heard. I was not a pleasant character.

When I became Treasurer for the Dorking Monday meeting I thought they were a bit mad especially since I had shared how I used to steal money to buy booze. I am certain I did not volunteer for this job, it just seemed to happen. These early service positions did however help me to gain a little sobriety and to learn more about daily living. I began to realise that people who said service had been a huge benefit to their growth in AA, were correct. Unfortunately in the early eighties there was still a 'them and us' situation regarding service away from the 'home' group. I do not think this is the case today as the message seems to be getting through that it IS good for all of us.

Around this time, my first sponsor asked if I would like to join him in London one night for a meeting of the Share team. I thought it might be nice to go further afield for one night. Five years later I rotated out

of service from the editorial team of the Share magazine. I still do not remember ever saying 'yes'.

The second half of the eighties was a period of immense change for the Share magazine and I hope most will agree that these changes were for the better. At my first meeting there were about twenty four people in the room and at my last meeting we were down to a small disciplined team of five. We were tasked to reduce costs, increase circulation, to secure more contributions from the Fellowship and to generally give the rather tired looking journal a bit of a face lift. The Share magazine of today is a great improvement and this has been achieved through a combination of hard dedicated work, modern

technology and the many personal stories of recovery.

One of the ways of trying to increase awareness of the Share journal was to ask members to volunteer to become a 'Share Representative'; if not for their Group then for their Intergroup. There were many comments about the creation of this new service position, many of which cannot be printed! However most Intergroups now have a Share Liaison Officer (as it is now known) who actively asks members to share their experience strength and hope – on paper. I remember having to chair a workshop at the Southern Region Assembly about the new Share Rep. position. It turned out to be easier than I thought it would be, only because I had a lot of help from all those who were present.

During my service with Share, I represented the magazine at Conference, for the statutory three years. It was an honour and a privilege as well as being both a moving and rewarding experience. I was there when the first Russian delegation attended Conference. I will never forget the atmosphere when they shared on that Saturday night. I will also not forget the time and dedication displayed by all the delegates throughout the whole weekend of proceedings.

The first Share Representative for Southdown was Sailor Bill. As always, Bill went about his work with energy, complete thoroughness and great enthusiasm. I was often at the end of a searching phone call when Bill needed clarification of a particular point. He was always

totally honest and never failed to tell us if he felt we had got things wrong. The most gratifying result of his hard work was a regular stream of interesting articles on a wide variety of aspects of recovery. Throughout my time on the Share team I was not directly involved with Southdown but I do know that the work begun by Sailor Bill has continued through a number of worthy Liaison officers with equal quality and conscientiousness. It should be noted that the Southdown Intergroup has not only provided a high proportion of articles over the years but also produced some of the most loyal readers of the magazine.

In many respects this article has been purely about my experiences on the Share team, but the work goes on. Today there are few groups who have a separate Share Liaison Officer as the job has often been added to that of the Literature person or the GSR. It is the perennial problem of filling all the service positions, which will probably always be with us. Because of this I think some of the early enthusiasm may have been lost. The circulation of Share did go up in the beginning but unfortunately it has remained around the same figure for several years now. All I know is that it is my 'meeting between meetings'.

The magazine we know today was originally a 'News Sheet', first published in 1949 by the London Groups, which gradually became the 'Newsletter'. Early in 1972 printing of this had to be halted over a controversial matter being aired in the correspondence. A new editor was appointed and the redesigned and renamed 'Share' made its first appearance at the 25th Anniversary Convention in London that same year. From an archive point of view and if my memory serves me correctly there is a copy of every Share magazine held in store at the General Service Office, in York.

I very much doubt if there is a complete set in the Southdown area – unless of course, you know better!

*Martin W
January 2006*

Internet

The proposal to create an Intergroup website was made to the Intergroup Committee in August 2004, who agreed to recommend the idea to Assembly for consideration. The 101st Assembly of Southdown Intergroup in February 2005 voted in favour of establishing, for the first time, an Intergroup website and appointing an Intergroup Webmaster.

Assembly agreed the provisioning of the website on the basis that it be in accordance with GSO's Guidelines on Electronic Communications and should utilise the hosting service provided at zero cost to Intergroup by GSO.

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The website was first published May 2005 as a single page, listing by 'day of the week', the AA meetings which make up the Intergroup. Added in September 2005 was the same listing by 'location', as an alternative presentation of the information, to show all the meetings in a particular town.

December 2005 saw the role of the website expand to provide information regarding the Chichester Public Information Seminar in February 2006. This use of the Intergroup website was part of a coordinated publicity exercise in conjunction with advertising in local newspapers and a traditional poster and mail-shot to.

GSO has a growing National Website that is continually being developed providing a professional, public facing presence for AA in Great Britain while developing electronic services for members. This Intergroup's website is just a small part of the growing usage of electronic media in how AA presents itself to the public and as a tool for communicating between members of the Fellowship.

My own expectation is that the next few years will see increasing development of electronic communications, including websites, for the majority of Intergroups and at Regional level. The challenges being, coping with the rate of change and growth of electronic communication methods, whilst maintaining AA traditions and

ensuring the continuity and integrity of AA's message is preserved.

On a personal note, having initially proposed setting up a few web pages listing meetings, intending it being a quick job using old skills to provide a small piece of service, I was surprised to see the role grow to a formal Intergroup Officer position of Webmaster. As with all my service positions thus far in recovery, this piece of service has provided a great learning opportunity and in particular has allowed me the opportunity to see how the Intergroup functions and its role while providing the encouragement to visit a regional forum with presentations from GSO. It has allowed me to gain a wider understanding of how

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <http://aa-gb.org.uk/southdown-intergroup/>. The page title is "Southdown AA Intergroup - Meeting List by Day". The main heading is "South East Region". Below this is a disclaimer: "Although every care is taken to ensure that information given is accurate, we cannot guarantee that all meeting dates and times are up to date. Please phone before travelling to meetings where possible. The content of this page is directly supplied by local A.A. members. It is not published by or on behalf of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous(GS)". A navigation menu on the left includes "Need Help?", "Is AA For You?", "A Message For Young People", "Frequently Asked Questions", and "Local AA Web Pages". The main content area features a "SOUTHDOWN AA INTERGROUP" header and a "Listing of Alcoholics Anonymous meetings in Southdown AA Intergroup by Day of the Week." Below this, there is a link to information regarding a seminar on the 24th February 2006. The meeting list is organized by day of the week, with "MONDAY" selected. The table below provides details for Monday and Tuesday meetings.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
MONDAY							
Boscoe Resid	20:00 BOGNOR			United Reformed Church, Linden Rd.		3rd Mon each Month Open	
Chichester	11:15 CHICHESTER: STEP			Ferneigh Community Centre, 40 North St.		1st Mon each month 'open'	
Cosham	19:45 COSHAM			Methodist Church, Sixth Ave, Wymering.		1st Mon each mth 'open'.	
Fareham	19:30 FAREHAM: STEP			Fareham Baptist Church, Gosport Rd. (next to Petrol Station).			
Liss	20:00 LISS			St Saviours Hall, Church Place, Forest Rd., Liss Forest.		3rd Mon each mth 'open'.	
Portsmouth	12:30 PORTSMOUTH: LUNCHTIME			Grebe Hall, near Portsmouth Housing Ass., Fratton Rd.		All mtgs 'open'.	
Ryde JCV	19:45 ISLE OF WIGHT RYDE: STEP			Swanmore House, 67-69 Swanmore Rd.		All Open	
TUESDAY							
Chichester	19:45 CHICHESTER: AS BILL SEES IT			Ferneigh Centre, 40 North St.		1st Tue each mth 'open'.	
Gosport	19:30 GOSPORT			Thornegate Community Centre, Thornegate Halls, Bury Rd.		1st Tue each mth 'open'.	
Hindhead	20:00 HINDHEAD: DISCUSSION			St Alban's Church, Tifford Rd.		'Open' mtgs on request.	

AA is organised outside my regular groups, the large amount of dedicated work members put in to maintain and preserve the fellowship and also to meet a far wider number of fellow

alcoholics than would have been possible from just attending local meetings.

aa-gb.org.uk/southdown-intergroup

John D, Southdown Intergroup Webmaster, 12 January 2006

Chichester Founders Day Dinner

The first Chichester Founders Day dinner was held on Sunday 8 June 2003 at Lacy

House in Chichester. The occasion was organized by 'Boxer' Frank who prepared an excellent meal and invited guest speakers Ruth and Joe 'The Pipe', not only in recognition of Bill W and Dr Bob's momentous meeting in 1935 and the subsequent founding of the fellowship of AA but also as a mark of gratitude, on behalf of Frank, to the members of Chichester AA who had welcomed him to Chichester and supported him through a difficult time.

The event was a resounding success and so enjoyable that it was felt an annual commemorative dinner to celebrate the birth of the fellowship would be a fitting mark of the gratitude that members in Chichester feel for the remarkable founders Bill and Bob.

To this end a joint committee of AA and Al-Anon members was formed in 2003. It was composed of Frank, Phil, Roger, Juliet, Janene and Liz from AA and Yvonne and James from Al-Anon. The event took place at the Newall Centre Chichester on Sunday June 20th 2004 with guest speakers Willem from Worthing and Sylvie

from Newmarket. Moira was Chairperson and James, from Al Anon was Master of Ceremonies.

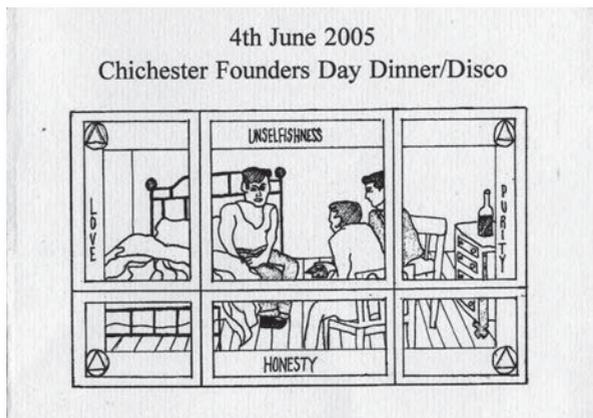
This event also proved to be popular and was supported by 130 AA and Al-Anon members. It was decided that in 2005 a larger venue would accommodate a dinner, speakers and a dance. The committee slightly altered and Liz and Janene were replaced by Annabel, Jo and Nick.

Larger premises were needed and after some discussion the group secured a venue at Chichester High School for Boys. A disco was booked. The guest speakers invited were Archie from London and June from Littlehampton. John D from Porchester was invited, as Chairperson, to host the meeting. Alex from Bognor

acted as Master of Ceremonies in the absence of Mick from the Isle of Wight, who was unable to attend. The event was attended by 160 AA and Al-Anon members and the meal and guest speaker meeting was a great success. The disco however, was poorly supported and fizzled out by 10pm. The committee felt that after such a large meal AA members and their families were fully content to end the evening without dancing to disco sounds.

The next Founders Day Dinner is to be held in June at the same venue in 2006. The composition of the committee remains much as last year with the exception of Frank, who has other commitments.

Juliet, January 2006



Conventions

I was co-convenor with Fran (Midhurst) for the 1995 Southdown mini-convention. It all went very smoothly, but to a large extent I was simply an observer

every service job I've done in the fellowship. From tea-boy at my first home group within months of getting sober, and every job since, I have yet to approach new responsibilities in a state

of serene faith that all will be well. I suspect that I'm not alone in this response, which gives an interesting perspective on the convenors of the very first Southdown Intergroup mini-convention.

The third convention saw 'one small hiccough, which perhaps arose out of inexperience and lack of understanding', as reported to the fourteenth Assembly. The report continues, 'It is regretted that bookmarks and various other items were offered for sale from the AA Conference Approved Literature table, without the prior knowledge or permission of the convenor. We were troubled that independent goods and independent takings should be intermingled with Conference Approved Literature in this way...' But these lessons were learned, noted and handed on to the subsequent convenor.

**ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
SOUTHDOWN INTERGROUP**

MINI CONVENTION 1992
"We Are Responsible"
10th MAY 1992

**BOHUNT SCHOOL
LIPHOOK
HAMPSHIRE**

10:30 am	ASSEMBLY & REFRESHMENTS
11:00 - 12:30	FIVE MINUTE SPEAKERS OPEN AA MEETING AL-ANON CLOSED MEETING
1:00 pm	LUNCH (individual arrangements)
2:00	RAFFLE
2:30	AA OPEN MEETING - GUEST SPEAKERS
4:00	CLOSE

**TICKETS £1.00 EACH
CHILDREN FREE**

The minutes of the fourth Intergroup Assembly, held on 20 November 1980, report that the committee received wholesale approval of their suggestion that a mini-convention be

held in April or May 1981. At the following Assembly Georgia G (Basingstoke) and Anny (Chichester) were confirmed as co-convenors, and a date of 10 May 1981 given for the first convention.

Georgia remembers that the work was undertaken by a host of willing workers, and that it was far from a single-handed effort. Her report to the sixth Assembly thanked 'everyone for their tremendous support ... the back-up team as a whole had been quite excellent'. This ethos has been successfully maintained to date.

'Living in the Now' was the theme of the second convention, held on 9 May 1982 at Bohunt School, Liphook - which has hosted all Southdown mini-conventions to

date - and was reported to be a 'lovely happening' by Wendy Z, the co-convenor.

Vic J (Gosport), convenor of the 1984 convention, noted in his report to the eighteenth Assembly that 'with the format that our predecessors left us and your help, no mini-convention in the Southdown Intergroup can help but be a success.' And in 1985 Joan W echoed reports of convenors through the years by reporting that 'It was a great privilege to be asked to be convenor. I could not of course have done it without tremendous help and support from many friends in the fellowship and the well-kept diary of the previous convenor'.

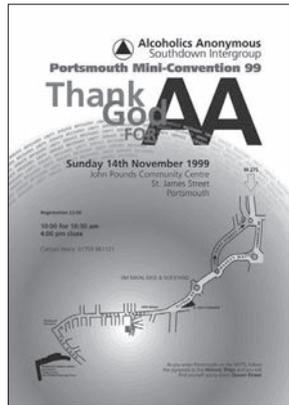
1990 marked the tenth anniversary of the founding of Southdown Intergroup and at the forty-first Assembly in February of that year, the convenor Bud (Midhurst) indicated that there would be some differences. The theme was 'Peace of Mind'. 'The entry fee will

- my main job being to chair the morning AA meeting. I had been very flattered to be asked to co-convene the convention. But when, some weeks later, Fran handed me a huge bundle of paperwork to carry forward to the next convention, I began to panic. It began to dawn on me just how much work was involved. But my initial fear that I would have to do everything myself gradually evaporated as I realised that some well-oiled machinery was in place - in the form of ready and willing help from members throughout the Intergroup.

The fear that I would not be able to do the job justice is one that has accompanied me with

be £2, for badge, coffee/biscuits, a single raffle ticket. More raffle tickets may be purchased and a donation may be made to refreshment expenses. There will be a creche.' Volunteers for literature, flowers, refreshments, setting up the hall, registration, sound, car-park and raffle were all found.

At the forty-sixth Assembly, the chair - Ruth S - read a letter of complaint about the taping of sharing at the convention. After a discussion it was decided unanimously that there would be no taping at future conventions. Subsequent reports in the minutes are very brief, perhaps reflecting the well-oiled nature of the organisation. But the minutes of the sixty-second Assembly held in May 1995 record that 'Fran was warmly congratulated on what most people felt was an outstandingly successful mini-convention'.



1999 saw an increase in convention activity on the mainland with Portsmouth holding its first mini-convention. A group of Portsmouth members formed the first steering committee with a view to holding a convention in the city. Initially chaired by Alan L, the committee held open meetings to invite comments and suggestions from all members. Six members of the committee each put up £50 for initial expenses. This was re-imbursed from the takings of the first convention, and since then a prudent reserve has been held over for the following year. This arrangement obviated the need to approach the Assembly for financial support and the minutes of the seventy-ninth Assembly report its blessing of the new Portsmouth convention, this latter being necessary for advertising the event in SHARE.

In the November minutes, my report as convener of the Portsmouth conventions reads:

'Held on Sunday November 14, 1999, it was a resounding success. Approximately 160 people attended, including about 35 from Al-Anon. We had visitors from many parts of SE Region and further afield.'

A core committee comprising of Joyce, Marlene, Pauline, Steve, Andy and myself (later joined by Kate and Ronnie from Al-Anon) got together in June to plan the day – initially with open meetings for any member to attend, and later with committee meetings in our homes to organise things in detail. Alan and Carina deserve a special mention for their contribution, as does Dee for her flower arrangements.

The teamwork by so many Portsmouth members was the real success of the Convention: turning up and helping with all the things that can be taken for granted – catering (especially), raffle, literature, registration, sound, parking, banners, setting up, clearing away ... and hardly a cross word exchanged!

On a personal level, it was a real privilege for me to be part of this team, working together in the AA triangle of Unity, Service and Recovery.

All the sharers – from across the spectrum and the Intergroup – were great, and together with all those who supported us by attending, contributed



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to a full day of companionship, conviviality and colourful imagination.

We do not have detailed accounts yet, but it appears that all initial expenses have been met, sufficient funds for next year will be held and a contribution to Intergroup will be made.'

The second Portsmouth convention *was another great success, especially for Al-Anon, with whom we worked closely to organise the event.*

Those who were unable to attend missed a day of conviviality,

companionship and colourful imagination, as well as excellent sharing from the platform. The theme was 'Choose Life' and it provided a moving counterpoint to the Remembrance services from which some members joined us in the afternoon.

As a preliminary estimate, we will be able to contribute £250 to Intergroup'.

The thin Assembly reports on the Bohunt convention continued in 2002 with the statement that *'The report from Bohunt indicated that it had been successful and had raised approximately £500'*. The brevity of the account is possibly a reflection of a verbal rather than a written report being given to the secretary for inclusion in the minutes. That year the Portsmouth convention also raised £500.

Clare's excellent report of the 2005 Portsmouth convention gives a vivid account of the day from the perspective of convenor, and provides a model for a report which conveys much for future archives activity:

The day started well, with a phone call at 7.30am advising me that the replacement Chair of the afternoon meeting was unable to attend as they were not very well. But I was assured that Mastic (not Mystic as I first thought) Bob would chair the meeting in their place. Initial reaction of panic soon passed after praying and handing it all over.

I arrived at the venue at 9.00am to find that it had all been set up ready for us by the Wesley Centre staff, by a lovely chap named Barry, who ironically was nursing a terrible

hangover. All the Committee members arrived, some discovering for the first time exactly what a Saturday morning looked like, so coffee was made for all by Barry. Initial nerves and flashes of several nightmares came and went as by 10.00am people started to arrive. Three out four sharers had arrived for the morning meeting when I was advised that the final sharer's car had broken down and that they were on their way, the raffle drawer was unwell and no sign of Mastic Bob.

I decided at this point to pray very hard and hand it over yet again. My

Higher Power was working with me as the sharer turned up just in time, and a very obliging Adam agreed to help draw the raffle.

The morning shares went really well, taking us through the whole gamut of emotions, and were well received by everyone who attended. Raffle tickets were sold at a rapid rate and tea and coffee flowed as lunch was eaten.

Mastic Bob and the afternoon shares all arrived from their various destinations and the afternoon meeting commenced. Laughter was

definitely the order of the afternoon and time seemed to fly by. Before we knew it thank-yous were being made and the meeting closed.

The feedback from the day was all very positive, from both AA and Al-Anon members. Particularly the change of venue, which seemed to

create a very friendly atmosphere. The convention was well attended and attracted a lot of members from out of town.

I would like to thank all the committee members for their help in the lead up to and on the day, but would like to thank Dave

particularly for his wonderful poster.

I did enjoy the day, but I am glad to handover to Andy R for next year. I will ensure the financial report is ready for the next Intergruop Assembly.'

Harry W. 2006

The Telephone Service

The original Gosport number was Vic's home phone number. He used to be the contact for the still suffering alcoholic and had been the contact number for several years. Around 1985/86, a telephone service was set up for Southdown Intergroup, using Vic's number as it was generally known, and Gordon L was instrumental in setting up the original responder's service.

There were 10 responders who covered the entire week. Every one either did a one night shift of 12 hours or two daytime shifts of 6 hours. Some people did it all in one day and some did two different shifts in the week, all according to convenience.

All the responders phone numbers were logged with BT and there was a transfer system similar to the one that operates now but much more restrictive. Everyone that was logged on the system had a number from 1-10 and the phone was transferred to the number that represented the next responder. If anyone was sick or on holiday, someone had to double up and the favour was repaid at some time in the future. The storm of 1987 was a big problem because several responders lost their phone service and there were about 4 people covering the whole week until everything was restored to normal.

BT made a charge of around £12.50 every time a responder's number had to be changed so it was not a thing that was done more often than necessary.

Gordon L handed over to Annie B as Telephone Liaison Officer (TLO) in 1988 and Annie B handed over to Wendy K in 1991.

It was during the 3 years that Wendy K was TLO that BT technology advanced and they started the new Remote Call Forwarding system which meant that AA did not have to pay for adding on new responders and that the line could be transferred to any number. For the first time there could be people who were reserves for times of holiday or sickness.

1994 saw Eric from Bognor as TLO, followed by Pat from 1995-1997, then Hannah took over in 1997 to 2000.

Phil was TLO from 2000 to 2003 and handed over to Tom from 2003 to date.

The list of 12 steppers was started at the same time as the telephone system and has been kept up to date throughout this time.

Around 1992/93 Intergroup gave their permission for the GSR to be an automatic point of contact on a list so that in desperation, a responder could contact the GSR for local knowledge if there was no one available in the area.

Sometime around 1992/3, the national number was started in Scotland and South East Region. These were the only two areas of the country, at the time, that had full 24-hour coverage on their telephone services. As further Regions developed 24 hour telephone help lines, they were then added to the National Number link. There were a few teething problems - if the caller was ringing from Scotland and all the numbers were busy, they were defaulted to Southdown and if anyone rang the national number from anywhere else in the UK, they were defaulted to Kent! It made for some interesting conversations.

Wendy
January 2006

Southdown Intergroup Timeline

1947

AA arrives in Great Britain.

1960

Southern Intergroup was first formed, but was short lived.

1966

Oct: 1st Assembly Southern Intergroup.

25 Oct: 1st Southsea Thursday.

1967

31 March: AA weekend, celebrating 20 years since 1st meeting at the Dorchester Hotel, held in London.

1968

June: 1st Chichester Friday.

1970

Jan: 1st Petworth Thursday.

June: 1st Southsea Tuesday.

1971

1st Liss Monday

24 Jan: Bill W. died

4 Feb: Big Book £1.90.

15 May: Memorial Service for Bill W. at St Martin's in the Field - well attended and a most impressive ceremony.

1972

25th Anniversary of AA in GB.

Oct: 'Share' first published.

1973

10th Jan: 1st Haslemere Wednesday.

12th Jan: 1st Gosport Friday.

Early 1970s

Ryde Friday started.

1974

17 April: Portsmouth Groups hold 1st public meeting at St. James' Hospital.

London holds 1st World Service Conference outside USA.

1976

Southern Intergroup divided into Solent & Central Southern.

1977

19 May: 1st Petersfield Thursday.

1978

8 Apr: 1st Fareham Wednesday.

1979

February: 1st Bognor Monday.

Solent Intergroup divided into Southdown & Solent

1980

21 Feb: 1st Southdown Intergroup Assembly.

1 June: 1st South East Regional Assembly

1st Shanklin Thursday.

1981

17 Jan: 1st Bognor Saturday.

March: 1440 Groups in GB

10 May: 1st Southdown mini-convention.

Sept: 1600 Groups in GB

1982

8 Sept: 1st Havant Wednesday.

21 Nov: 1st Haslemere Sunday.

1984

12 Mar: 1st Midhurst Tuesday.

10 Dec: 1st Portchester Saturday.

Spring: 2050 groups in GB

1985

Waterlooville and Gosport Tuesday started.

1986

9 Feb: 1st Titchfield Sunday.

21 April: Telephone Service up and running.

March: 1st Chichester Tuesday.

August: First edition of Southdown's Intergroup News "Interlink" this was in fact issue No 25 of the original newsletter - see 1980.

1987

1st Newport Tuesday.

28 Aug: 1st Fareham Monday.

1988

24 Feb: 1st Bognor Wednesday.

13 May: 1st Bordon Friday.

1989

7 Dec: 1st Havant Thursday. Regular meeting at Kingston Prison.

1990

29 May: 1st Bishop's Waltham Friday.

31 Oct: 1st Portsmouth Wednesday 'Joys of Recovery'.

1991

Ryde Monday started.

1993

9 January: Petersfield Saturday started.

14 February: Portsmouth Sunday afternoon started.
February: Newport Saturday started.
Spring: Hayling Island Sunday started.

1994

4 Jan: 1st Ryde Tuesday.
1 Feb: 1st Portsmouth Monday.

1995

4 Nov: 1st Portsmouth Saturday.

1996

20 Sept: 1st Chichester Sunday.
6 Nov: 1st Bognor Wednesday.

1997

50th Anniversary of AA in GB.
As of 31 March: 3279 Groups and 118 Intergroups in GB.

Hindhead Tuesday started.

1999

Nov: 1st Portsmouth Mini Convention

2001

22 Mar: 1st Southsea St Jude's Tuesday.
25 Mar: 1st Southsea St Jude's Friday.
23 Apr: 1st Chichester Monday.
25 Oct: 1st Southsea Lunchtime Thursday St Simon's.

2002

10 May: 1st Petersfield Friday.

2003

Jan: 1st Southsea Wednesday.
8 June: 1st Chichester Founders Day Dinner

2004

17 Feb: 1st Southsea Thursday GLBT.

2005

6 Jan: 1st Bognor Thursday
Feb: 1st Freshwater Town Sunday
18 Sept: 3655 Groups, 117 Intergroups, 16 Regions in GB.



Contributions Required

We need your anecdotes, group histories, articles on service, books, photographs, etc.

Please contact Nick H - Archives Liaison Officer for Southdown Intergroup.



