

Interlink

The newsletter for Southdown intergroup

In This Issue

We talk to Clare about the benefits of service

Moria sheds light on the recent Chichester exhibit

Kelly and Caroline share their first full reports

Get interlink in your inbox every quarter!

Email interlink.southdown@aamail.org to subscribe

Editor's Message

This is my third issue of Interlink and, to be honest, this alcoholic has really dragged her heels on this one. Part circumstance and (mostly!) unmanageability, has led to me grumpily cramming this wonderful service in while sitting on a plane. I mention this for one reason, to tell you that somewhere between editing Armed Forces LO Kelly's first report and putting the final touches on this month's Spotlight feature, my resentment vanished and was replaced with goosebumps of gratitude for the kind souls in this fellowship.

Service seems to be the theme of this issue - from Southdown Chair Matt's impassioned plea for more people to step up; to 12th Step Clare's heartwarming account of what her outgoing role has meant to her. As we continue to seek helpers for various roles within Intergroup, this couldn't be better timed. Please do check out our service notice board on the next page and, while you're at it, have a read of our LO reports as they guide more of us to the happy highway of recovery.

If you're anything like me and started off today in a self-righteous grump, perhaps once you get to the end of this newsletter, the magic thread of AA would have woven itself into your system and you'll be less "who can help me" and more "what can I do to help".

Take it from this unruly, sometimes slow-to-learn alcoholic, it's much more fun on the bright side...

Here's to spring!

Lucy S
Interlink Editor
Lucy S, Interlink Editor

interlink.southdown@aamail.org



OUR CHAIR CHECKS IN...

Happy New Year All!

I find the cold months especially challenging, sometimes failing to 'keep it in the day'. But hopefully a new season and a final end to the pandemic will bring a new positivity. Driving members out in their droves to step forward for service.

We are struggling, at group and Intergroup level, to fill service positions, which is a little concerning. A hot topic at our steering committee meetings - we constantly scratch our heads to find ways to inspire and support into new AA roles - so we would love to hear how we could do better. Please do continue to encourage sponsees and fellow members to volunteer for service. It's not only a vital part of personal recovery, but essential to the health of the fellowship as a whole. I was grateful for this when I had my rock bottom and will always be glad that my sponsor made service compulsory.

As more and more face-to-face meetings open up, we remain hopeful that they return to being fully self-supporting, especially where service is concerned. Making tea and greeting members was so very important in those early days of sobriety that it's worth reiterating. While Zoom is not my personal preference, it will undoubtedly continue to have a place and we will bring the subject of how we manage these to the forefront of our discussions. Meeting numbers have grown significantly since the pandemic and it will be important to see which stabilize and which falter. What I would like to emphasise is the importance, when having discussions about closing Zoom meetings or splitting meetings, that we treat each other's views with respect, love and tolerance.

As the Darkness into Light convention moves on, I would very much like to express my gratitude to everyone who continues to make this possible at all levels, it is greatly appreciated! I look forward to seeing you all at meetings and may even see a face-to-face Intergroup assembly finally!

Yours in Fellowship

Matt P, Chair Southdown Intergroup

chair.southdown@aamail.org

Intergroup Vacancies

- **Health Liaison Officer**
- **Young Persons Liaison Officer**
- **Employment Liaison Officer**
- **Regional Representatives**
- **Armed Forces Liaison volunteers**
- **Archivist**



Q&A WITH CLARE M

How long have you been in this role and how did you find out about it?

When the first Covid19 lockdown happened in March 2020, I felt guided by my HP to get involved in setting up a temporary online solution for my two local meetings on Hayling Island. I got in contact with Alan H who was the Electronic Communications Liaison Officer at the time. We spent some enjoyable time together online, testing and setting up Zoom meetings. I think Alan saw that some service was needed to help keep me out of mischief during lockdown. Alan introduced me to Greg B (via Zoom), who was in the process of taking on the Telephone Liaison Officer role. Greg explained that the 12 Step List was in need of some modernising and that Alan thought I was just the person for the job! I had some experience of contact databases/spreadsheets in the past and so the three of us started a project to get the existing 12 step list into an electronic format, remove duplicates, collect e-

mail addresses and to check that the information contained was correct. This involved telephoning a large number of Group Service Representatives (GSRs) and 12 Step volunteers. We also spent several months testing the list and training the Telephone Responders on how to use it.

We now have a single, secure, online list of 12 step volunteers, which is accessed directly by members of the Telephone Helpline Team. The list is contained in Google Sheets with access to view it centrally controlled through Google Drive, keeping everyone's contact details safe and secure. Nowadays the 12 Step Coordinator role is focused on registering new people to the list, emailing the volunteers and GSRs regularly and keeping the list updated with contact and availability details.

(Continued on page 6)



Liaison Officer's Reports

Armed Forces Liaison Officer's Report

I attended and delivered a brief to the Army School of Physical Training in Aldershot, as part of a Unit Health Fayre initiative. The attendance at the Veteran Outreach Society (every first Wednesday of the month) at the Royal Maritime Club, Portsmouth was disrupted due to Christmas, but I'll go back once its up and running again.

Other than VOS, which is a recurring activity, I don't have anything on the books by way of outreach. I would really appreciate assistance and any input from Intergroup or other groups on what has been done to reach members of the armed forces in the past.

One of my plans is to create a network of veterans or still serving members within AA; to create a further reach across the region. On that note, I'm looking for some volunteers (military or ex-military) who would be interested in conducting service by assisting in passing the message of AA through our own already established connections and helping to forge new ones. If this could be passed around at meetings and the details of anyone who is interested be passed to me I'd be very grateful. This would be treated in the strictest confidence of course.

Kelly, Armed Forces Liaison Officer

keloustep@gmail.com

"One of my plans is to create a network of veterans or still serving members within AA, to create a further reach across the region"

REGION: SOUTH EAST REGION 194TH ASSEMBLY 2022

Sonia was elected to the position of SE Region Treasurer

Treasurers Year-End Account – Check Intergroups' contributions correctly shown; be aware that the Treasurer had to estimate the numbers of groups (face to face and online) using National Website as no figures had been provided from intergroups including Southdown. These figures are necessary to negotiate the insurance premiums and therefore each intergroups portion. Zoom meetings are included in the premium costs, because of potential claims in connection with group bombing, identity fraud, etc. Zoom meetings covered are those who have asked to come under the Intergroup.

Payment to Region from each Intergroup to cover conference and assembly expenses, region will be holding at least two face-to-face assemblies in 2022. Regional Treasurer proposed forwarding £35,000 to GSO leaving the prudent reserve, plus money set aside to support Darkness Into Light (agreed). The assembly approved the accounts after discussion + Q&A

Each region has appointed an Ambassador. Our Ambassador Agnes has asked for names of anyone that Southdown to speak at the 75th Convention on June 2022 in Leeds. Details to be sent to her at pardoeagnes@googlemail.com Southdown have been asked to supply a 'Gratitude Banner'.

There will be a question for conference 2022 which is in two parts, both parts refer to an amount of money accepted from the government for furlough purposes and in direct contravention of our 7th Tradition and whether or not it should have been accepted and whether or no it should be paid back. After a lengthy discussion, 82% of those voting at Assembly felt it should not have been accepted and that it should definitely be paid back. Region will be writing to the Trustees and the Board of AA to express the views of SE Region in time for the GSB meeting next week. It is also suggested that Intergroups discuss this and let GSB know their views as early as possible.

SE Region Secretary also asked that Intergroups supply their Questions for Conference Workshops and their pre-conference workshops in order that Conference Delegates can get their calendars filled in ASAP to avoid any last-minute confusion.

Thank you

Moira
Regional Rep



Liaison Officer's Reports

Public Information

Since I took on the role, I've been busy reaching out. This includes renewing contact with the alcohol specialist team for University Hospitals Sussex and arranged to present to junior doctors for one hour on Tuesday 14th March at St Richard's Hospital.

I've also been chatting to Nicholas Mansfield, Bench Chair of Local Magistrates/ JPs, who has agreed to facilitate a meeting or presentation from AA to all local magistrates. He's currently liaising with his team to agree a suitable date and format based on the info and suggestions I've shared.

There is good news of a new joint venture between 2 Saints and Inclusion to open a new detox unit in the region (patients requiring the level of nursing care involved are currently sent to Kent for treatment.) They have asked for support from AA and I am in talks with them to see how we can assist. I'm also keenly awaiting a response from the Fire Service to see if we're able to present to the local watches. Watch this space!

Finally I have been able to support Titchfield Sunday night meeting with a poster and local free press ad to entice newcomers. This was self-funded by Titchfield and is perhaps an opportunity to be replicated at other meetings that are struggling? If anyone is interested, I'd love to hear from you.

Caroline, Public Information Liaison Officer

pi.southdown@aamail.org



Archives

We currently have three archive projects on hold that could do with extra hands to get off the ground again. If anyone has time to spare and is keen to learn about AA's history, please get in touch with me. Thank you everyone who has sent in articles for the 5th Edition. This is still a work in progress, and could also do with a hand or two.

In 1997, Ruth put together a beautiful Group History book to celebrate 50 years of AA in Great Britain. The plan is to repeat this in 2022, but we are running out of time for the March 2022 deadline. Two thirds of the project has been completed but if anyone can give some time, it may still be possible to produce a booklet to celebrate 75 years. We are also hoping to do another inventory for our archives, which have grown over 20 years and are still looking for an Intergroup archivist.

If you would like to give some of your time to help out, please contact me on the email address below.

Nick, Archives Liaison Officer

archives.southdown@aamail.org



Liaison Officer's Reports

Telephones & 12th Step

The 2021 stats are in! Calls stayed at a steady 380-400 per month, with the team handling a total of 4776 across the year, with an amazing 22% of these resulting in local 12th step action.

Although we currently have a full complement of responders, we still have the dreaded 'churn', which stretches us, and the service, on occasion. A precautionary step has now been taken with the Intergroup's committee permission to purchase a cheap mobile phone with an answerphone facility to divert the local helpline in cases of extreme emergency. Thankfully we have not had to use this facility yet. I am also happy to say that we will be back with our stand and banners at the upcoming Isle of Wight convention, to entice members to sign up like we did at the Portsmouth convention. Do come and say hello!

Following the last Assembly, we are currently trialling blocking withheld numbers from 10pm to 7am, which has helped overnight responders greatly. Unfortunately, we're now tackling a flurry of persistent withheld callers in the late afternoon/early evening. Ringing 20-30 times in succession and hanging up, our endlessly patient responders are finding this challenging to say the least, so do add them to your gratitude lists this month!

Greg B, Telephone Liaison Officer
telephones.southdown@aamail.org



Upcoming Events

**Darkness into Light
Exhibition
Winchester
March 2022**

**Isle of Wight
Convention
25th-27th February
2022**

Q&A WITH CLARE M (CONT.)

What are the benefits of this role?

There have been so many benefits to doing this role, but the highlight has been working closely with Greg and Alan and getting to know the other members of the Telephone Helpline Team. It would have been very easy to isolate and feel lonely during lockdown, but doing this service kept me right in the middle of the AA bed.

What impact do you think doing the role has had on your own recovery?

The role has helped me enormously in my recovery. As well as widening my group of friends and fellows in recovery, it has given me a better understanding of how our Southdown Intergroup works. It has also helped me to work step 12, to give back what was so freely given to me and ensure that the hand of AA is always there for the still suffering alcoholic.

To find out more about becoming a 12 Step Coordinator, email 12step.southdown@aamail.org



MOIRA SHARES HER EXPERIENCE OF JANUARY'S DARKNESS INTO LIGHT EXHIBITION

On 11th January of this year, Southdown Intergroup's contribution to the celebration of AA UK's 75th Anniversary opened at Chichester Library. It had been my privilege the previous afternoon, to help set up an exhibition designed to show the local community what Alcoholic Anonymous was, what it is now, and how we can help the still suffering alcoholics.

To me, this is what Tradition 11 is all about. We are anonymous, not invisible and this exhibition helps to dispel many myths about AA without breaking anonymity. It shines a great light out to those in the darkness that need us.

When I first came into the rooms over 25 years ago, it was impressed on me that service is vital to staying sober. Initially, it helped me feel part of the group, and then it was a way to repay the gifts I had been given by those who went before me. No one asked me to do it, it was gently suggested that I could play a part in helping the meeting to run smoothly. First I could welcome newcomers like me and eventually pass on whatever I had learned.

This year is a special year for UK AA, and one day at a time, it is just as important for me to do service as it was on day one. If you are reading this and are without a service position, please ask your sponsor or home group what you can do to help our fantastic fellowship carry on for another 75 years.

For more information about the Exhibition please visit website <https://aadarknessintolight.org.uk> and find out where else it can be seen after it leaves Chichester on 28th January 2022

Thank you.
Moira

