

Interlink

The newsletter for Southdown intergroup

In This Issue

**We talk to Greg B
about the benefits
of service**

**Patrick gives us his
thoughts on the
recent convention**

**Upcoming AA
events for 2022**

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inbox every quarter!*

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Editor's Message

Happy autumn friends,

I've always loved the words in the Big Book 'sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly' as it so simply and accurately describes the experience of growth in recovery. After what has felt like an endlessly slow period, things in our wonderful Southdown fellowship are on the move.

Firstly, AA members from across the region gathered in early October to celebrate sobriety at our first convention since the pandemic. I've personally heard post-event reports of rapturous reunions, stirring shares and newcomers experiencing that heady first flush of unity; but read on to hear from our Portsmouth Convenor Patrick on his own highlights from the day.

Our Liaison Officers have been busy this quarter finding new ways to reach the still suffering alcoholic. After much hard work and with the willing support of the Chichester fellowship, Health LO Danny brings news of a new permanent meeting in St Richard's Hospital in his report and Greg tells us how his tenure as Telephones LO has a positive impact on his daily reprieve from alcohol. Also, please join me in welcoming Caroline into the role of Public Information Liaison Officer and Kelly into the role of Armed Forces Liaison Officer.

Finally, you might have noticed our brand new look. We hope this acts as a gentle nudge to help us get these vital updates into as many hands as possible. We've also launched a new subscription service, simply email interlink.southdown@aamail.org and you'll get Interlink hot off the press and into your inbox every quarter.

As ever, thank you for letting me be of service and helping me to stay sober one day (or sometimes hour!) at a time.

Lucy S, Interlink Editor

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OUR CHAIR CHECKS IN...

How wonderful it was to be able to finally attend an AA convention and what a wonderful event the Portsmouth Convention was after all the turmoil of the last 18 months. A big thank you to Patrick, Rachel and everyone who helped for working so hard. I had the fortune of seeing old friends and meeting new ones - which is the beauty of local Conventions. The day was topped off with some fantastic sharing and we had some very positive feedback.

We are trying to improve ways we distribute Interlink, as it has been a concern for committee members and Liason Officers that the message contained in these pages is not being communicated effectively to the Fellowship, particularly since Covid. Interlink is a vitally important link connecting our Liason Officers and the work they do to the rest of the fellowship. By improving this service, we can learn how to help them get the word out and achieve our primary purpose, to help the still suffering alcoholic.

You may become aware of Lucy, our Interlink Editor, sharing Interlink and trying to distribute the magazine in different ways in order to boost readership. I would ask you to support her as best you can and also try to support your Liason Officers where you can. We all need each other!

I look forward to seeing you at the assembly in November, who knows hopefully the next one will be in person...

Yours In Fellowship

Matt P.

Chair, Southdown Intergroup

chair.southdown@aamail.org

Intergroup Vacancies

- **YOUNG PEOPLE LIAISON OFFICER**
- **EMPLOYMENT LIAISON OFFICER**
- **ARCHIVIST**



Darkness into Light

Following the success of Darkness into Light at Portsmouth Library in September, the enlightening exhibition moves to Chichester Library in January 2022! For those that missed it, Darkness into Light is part of Alcoholics Anonymous 75th Anniversary celebrations in Great Britain and is a retrospective of our work in the community.

Open to all and free to attend, it's a fantastic opportunity to learn more about AA. Darkness into Light will be touring the South East of England throughout 2022 starting at Chichester.

Visit www.aadarknessintolight.org.uk to find out more



Liaison Officer's Reports

Archives

An enjoyable day was had by all at The Portsmouth Convention on Sunday 3rd of October. We had lots of visitors to the archive table, which was displaying the 1997 Southdown Group and History Album commemorating 50 years of AA in GB.

Malcolm O was for many years the Share Editor. When he passed away his wife gave a couple of boxes of block print cartoons to the archives. These were recently taken to the Borthwick Institute to be with the National AA archive collection. However, about 50 cartoons were copied and placed into an album as a memento of Malcolm's work, lest we forget.

The archive network held its annual meetings in York on September 24th and 25th. There was much discussion around the interpretation of the archive question that was raised at the conference this year. The archive sub-committee is due to give guidance on the topic shortly.

Finally we are still looking for an archivist. If you are interested, there is going to be an archive workshop in January 2022. More details to follow!

Nick, Archives Liaison Officer
archives.southdown@aamail.org

Electric Communications

I've been busy this quarter with maintaining the Southdown website both with the list of online meetings and adding a new list of meetings restarting (last month saw five online meetings close down). Only one of these has shifted to hybrid and three groups have closed completely.

I've taken to sending the updated master spreadsheet of meetings to GSO once a week on Fridays and normally by Tuesday the following week the changes have been made. Details of any significant changes – new meeting, venue change etc., have been sent to our Southdown Secretary and GSO via a pink form by the GSR.

As always, I aim to update the website within six hours after receiving a request (during the week). The website shortcut is the easiest way to access it: <http://www.aa-gb.org/southdown>. This shortcut saves having to go through all the various menus from the main site.

Andrew, Electric Communications Liaison Officer
ecomm.southdown@aamail.org

REGION: SOUTH EAST REGION 193RD ASSEMBLY REPORT 26TH SEPTEMBER 2021

SJ (WSussex) asked for guidance in the regional rep role, Sue (VC) said RRs should have lots of info about the role and will give out a welcome pack including the 2007 guidance notes to anyone who contacts her

Maryllynn (Hyde & Rother) difficult to highlight groups to the Safeguarding draft document, their Intergroup is without a webmaster (ECLO) so updates to webpage difficult

Andrew (Brighton) has a convention flyer and has had a safeguarding meeting

StephenB (Midsurrey) most groups back to F2F meetings, difficult to get engagement with safeguarding, he was sponsored into the RR position by previous RR

Jim H (Southdown) had safeguarding meeting at end of October

Sally (H&R) New RR Difficult to update meeting details without effective ECLO

Topic 1: New members moving from online to live meetings

Ryan (WKent) newcomers have missed out on fellowship at F2F meetings but easier online. F2F should follow law regarding masks.

Stuart (NE Surrey) less online now but some not going back to physical meetings.

Paul (WSussex) Physical meetings must follow the law, AA not exempt.

JimH (Southdown) Zoom changed format with visitors from abroad and people who had moved now able to revisit former meetings.

Peter (NE Surrey) Many venues just started to allow physical meetings and with their own rules – struggling to fill service roles.

Topic 2: Finances

SJ (WSussex) flexible in ways to pay (Pay Pal, banking online) so finances up and down as people pay in chunks; extra cleaning charges.

TC (Cowford) staying on Zoom, finances a little chaotic, newcomers have stayed; discussions moved to WhatsApp groups.

Stephen (Midsurrey) has business WhatsApp group, venues want groups back and we have the money.

Andy (Brighton) have business WhatsApp group

Sally (H&R) using WhatsApp groups for safeguarding and bullying at F2F meetings

Topic 3 : How to make middle ground and promote Region

TC (WSussex) No management structure, important to explain the traditions and try to make interesting.

Ryan (WKent) need encouragement from sponsors, service should be according to experience, not moving up or down

Sally (H&R) We should try to demystify intergroup and region to newcomers.



Liaison Officer's Reports

Public Information

Since starting this role into October, I've attended the Darkness into Light opening ceremony and established several useful contacts including Portsmouth fire service, Portsmouth employment service, local magistrates, representatives of the clergy. Both the fire and employment services are keen to have AA members present to staff which is great news, I'm currently waiting for lists of possible dates but hope to have more news of this in the next newsletter.

I had a great follow-up meeting with regional representative to discuss possible liaison opportunities with local clergy including a potential opportunity with Portsmouth Cathedral contact. I'm also planning to assist with the upcoming Darkness into Light exhibition in Chichester in January with the aim of establishing new connections with clergy in that area.

I attended the regional PI workshop, which was fantastic! Have since received literature from Trish @ Mid-Surrey and am looking at how we might be able to replicate some of their PI initiatives in Southdown area. It was also great to host the Public Information table at Portsmouth Convention though sad to say there was little interest; but we gained experience, plus some ideas for future events!

The plan for PI activity pre-Christmas? Attend as many meetings as possible, over entire Southdown area, with a view to making more people aware of PI and it's role and, hopefully, to create some interest in getting involved. Overall aim is to have a team of Public Information reps who can cascade successful initiatives in their own areas.

To end, a big thank you to Greg B, Clare F, Ellie W, Moira S, Patrick and Danny S people for their help and support in getting me up and running in my PI role.

Caroline, Public Information Liaison Officer

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Prisons & Criminal Justice

All meetings at Parkhurst and Albany prisons are still suspended due to coronavirus and there are no updates on this.

Now for the good news... The Isle of Wight convention is confirmed! With the theme of "courage to change" the two-day event will be taking place from 25th to 27th February at the Broadway Park Hotel in Sandown. We have produced a flyer which we'll be sending to GSRs along with this issue of Interlink which has useful information on room packages, ferries and the location, so please share far and wide.

I look forward to seeing many of you then!

John K, Prisons Liaison Officer

yoda9957@yahoo.co.uk



Liaison Officer's Reports

Health

Due to COVID restrictions being relaxed slightly, communication are beginning with hospitals re physical presentations and/or meetings with professionals taking place.

Good news at the St Richard's Hospital in Chichester! A trial meeting started on 7th July within the hospital grounds with research done beforehand so as not to overlap other Chichester meetings. Taking place at the Munro Unit every Wednesday 6-7pm, attendance from patients and regular fellowship members has been high and all service positions are filled. In keeping with tradition 7, the pot is passed and rent is covered with conscience meeting held to follow AA's traditions. Having found its own feet, the meeting is currently in process of becoming registered as part of Southdown intergroup and being added to the website as a permanent meeting. Thank you to all involved in starting up a new meeting and to all in the fellowship for the support in making it happen.

Over on the Isle of Wight, there are still restrictions with 12 steppers unable to visit wards at St Marys hospital but they are managing to meet the still suffering on site. The AA Packs for patients and professionals were well received and went fast!

In other news, an AA Presentation for learning Health professionals took place on 11t August; the alcohol specialist team at St Richards remain open, eager and willing to work alongside AA and contact within QA Portsmouth remains in progress!

AA Packs for patients and professionals have been distributed to, and received by IOW St Marys and St Richards Chichester. Both packs contain various and relevant AA information alongside a 'Keep it simple A.B.C guide' card. I am also looking for Step 1 share magazines to replenish more of the Patient Packs. If anyone has any they wish to donate please get in touch, I would like to send to QA Portsmouth and Bognor as soon possible.

The ABC Keep it simple card can also be used by any of us in helping the newcomer, so if any GSRs are interested for distribution purposes within your home groups (or even to carry around) please do contact me as I will be more than happy to give you some.

Lastly, I worked with a small team to deliver flyers to health services in support of the Darkness into Light exhibition. Thank you to all involved! I am, as always, looking for members who may be interested in doing Health Service. This includes communicating with and delivering AA info to Health professionals, centres, chemists, doctors' surgeries or other healthcare providers in your local area. If you are interested in lending a hand, please get in touch!

Danny S, Health Liaison Officer

health.southdown@aamail.org

"A trial meeting started on 7th July within the hospital grounds with research done beforehand so as not to overlap other Chichester meetings."

Armed Forces Liaison Officer's Report

I assumed the post this August and unfortunately, there has been little progression as I'm encountering some internal pushback, primarily from my own chain of command. Disappointing I'm hopeful I will make steps forward!

I was invited to the Veteran Outreach Society outreach and will continue to attend on the 1st Wednesday of every month. I will also be submitting a request for Literature; am looking for feedback from IG and other groups on relevant background material and if there's anything similar conducted through VOS? Would welcome any thoughts or previous experience.

I'm on the hunt for military volunteers willing to discuss their experiences around service in the Forces and AA which could inform future plans for how liaison activity is conducted. If anyone would be willing to put me in touch with relevant personnel within their Service, this would be treated in strictest confidence and greatly appreciated.

Kelly, Armed Forces Liaison Officer

keloustep@gmail.com



Liaison Officer's Reports

Telephones & 12th Step

Our 12th Step Liaison Officer Claire is taking a much deserved holiday, so I'm sharing a double report this quarter. The past six months have shown a steady volume of calls with around 400 per month and approximately 100 calls resulting in local 12th step action.

·The summer months have proved particularly challenging with ten responders leaving the service as well as providing cover for holidays. Once again, we have done another big recruitment push and we now have a full roster of responders. The difficulty as always is how long will the new recruits commit to the service. We have suffered from a high degree of "churn" with responders leaving after less than 6 months service. If anyone has any ideas on how to prevent this then do get in touch!

·We created some intergroup-funded portable banners and printed literature to use for AA events and local conventions, as an additional attempt to continue to create ongoing awareness. It was great to take them on their first outing at the telephone service stand at the recent Portsmouth convention.

·Finally we are currently in the process of carrying out the annual 12th step list review with GSRs being asked to verify their individual group lists and a big thank you to Maria who is now assisting us in our training of new telephone responder recruits.

Greg B, Telephone Liaison Officer
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Upcoming Events

**Darkness into Light
Exhibition
Chichester
January 2022**

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

Q&A WITH GREG B

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

I remember hearing about telephone responding in one of the very first meetings I went to and feeling disappointed I wouldn't be able to do it until I had at least a year's sobriety. So as soon as I got a year underneath my belt there was no stopping me. Tuesday afternoon became my regular shift and I became Telephone Liaison Officer in March 2020.

What is the highlight of doing this role?

We receive calls from all across the UK, but when you do get one from a local person that you can directly help it is fantastic to watch them grow, change and develop in their recovery journey.

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

It allows me to be a useful person and give back whilst also keeping me sober. It expands my circle of fellowship contacts and friends through regular work with other responders and 12th step volunteers. Finally it also provides me a constant reminder of how desperate things were for me in those final days of drinking and reaffirms why I would never wish to be in that position again.

To find out more about becoming a telephone responder, email telephones.southdown@aamail.org



PATRICK H SHARES HIS EXPERIENCE OF OCTOBER'S 'CELEBRATE SOCIETY' CONVENTION

Any convention can only judge its success on the number of people who turn up, provide support in the preceding months and make generous donations of their time, gifts and money. Southdown gave those by the bucket full.

Our bunting came from an undisclosed source, three 'Big Books' were received, we had a £25 cash donation and some unbelievably generous items anonymously gifted for the Raffle. A cake, a big jar of sweets, a valuable Teddy Bear by Steiff and many Tombola prizes all added to our funfair atmosphere. Thank you to all.

Southdown Intergroup Committee supported the venture from the beginning and provided us with a little extra seed money. We were graced with complete faith to do a good job and when we asked for help – carrying the message to groups – everyone responded immediately. They turned out as facilitators for the Share Platforms and steered our guest speakers with quiet respect and gratitude. So, thank you to the Intergroup Committee.

Many individual meetings answered our request to support the Grand Raffle. I am not going to list them, they know who they are. We were sent monetary donations, books, with the wonderful things already mentioned. Thank you.

In the back of my mind, in the weeks spent preparing for the day, there was a small but dark cloud of doubt. *What if we shut down again if another 'rona surge breaks over us? What if our guests are too fragile to come. too worried about their safety?* You came. I was wrong to despair.

My 'duties' for the day were to welcome as many people as possible, thanking the volunteers doing service, manning their various tables with information, literature and acting as friendly hosts, as I went. You filled the room. And, in those few moments of absolute silence, after I rang the bell and looked at all the friends in recovery, I did not know what to do. There were so many of you!

The biggest thanks must go to all of you who came, joined in the fun, listened to the collective experience, strength and hope of our speakers, laughed, shook hands, hugged and just joined in. Most of all thank you for the trust you showed in the Convention Committee to arrange a good time. We have received a string of messages, emails and phone calls – some from people who did not attend – all expressing their thanks and congratulations for a brilliant event.

This was my last event as Convener. Through some tough moments, Rachel proved more than able as our Co-Convener and I would like to commend her to the Assembly to take over for the next convention. Sonia managed the accounts as we would expect from an outstanding administrator and Maxine worked hard wrangling volunteers for the day and rousing support for us around the meetings. Thank you.

During my years in the Fellowship, I have been fortunate enough to be trusted with service from time to time. Sunday 3rd October 2021, when so many of you came to "Celebrate Sobriety," will ever be a memorable day for me.

Thank you.
Patrick H

TC (WSussex) service positions need to be filled, experience you have that matters

Marylenn (H&R) explain the relevance of the scrolls and the rondel to newcomers at F2F meetings.

Fiona (WKent) do a step and then a tradition; progress through services eg. tea/literature/secretary/GSR/IG/ Region

Main Assembly

Confirmed safeguarding workshop 31/10/21

Vacancies

Chairman: Patrick H (Portsmouth) stood and was elected chairman.

75th Convention Rep: Agnes (Eastbourne) was elected.

Southern National Convention member: Peter F

Regional Reports

Brighton (Andrew) New YPLO, post-conference meeting, GSR best practice workshop, SG workshop.

East Kent (John) Assembly 21/09/21

East Sussex (Emma Jane) Last assembly on Zoom

MidSurrey (Stephen) Assembly 07/09/21, new treasurer, need a RR, WhatsApp group.

Solent only 1 RR, Assembly 12/08/21, Solent convention 05/12/21

Trustees report (Charles) updating the York office, barrister called to advise on safeguarding policy, conference delegates new matrix, AA news deadlines, health subcommittee. 6 regional safeguarding workshops around UK, ES region on 31/10/21. Young persons roadshow in Leeds in November. £18K to overseas development fund to support AA development. 75th Convention subcommittee

(Claire) Leeds Arena 10th – 12th June 2022, early bird tickets, pre-register at website aa75.co.uk

Darkness into Light (Nick) Portsmouth library venue opened by elected Mayor.

Treasurer (Brian) Increase Southdown insurance cost, 64 to 70 groups, new premium £811.90, new contribution £ 1,811.90.

Secretary (Jan) Asked us to write up the workshops and send to her. To book next June / September assemblies F2F.

AOB: Nick asked for a forum

