



Conference 2002 – the Proceedings, Outcome and other Important Matters

Editorial Note

In setting the scene for this ‘Conference’ Edition of AA News we are mindful that this year’s event could well attract the same comment that Bill W. gave in 1958 and which was quoted also by the present Chairman of the General Service Board in his Introduction to the Annual Report for 2001: ‘I think that this particular General Service Conference holds promise and has been filled with progress – because it has had trouble: and it has converted that trouble into an asset...’.

Conference this year was conducted under a new set of procedures in that the Conference Steering Committee, responsible for all aspects of Conference - from the selection of Conference Questions and Initiatives through to the Programme and Agenda for the proceedings – was, under the recommendation of Conference 2001, chaired by the annually elected Conference Chairman with the six annually elected Committee Chairpersons forming the Committee and two General Service Board members serving for guidance and continuity. There were some difficulties in getting acclimatised to this new way of working: time alone will show whether the change was for the overall good of the Fellowship.

This edition reports in full the ‘Keynote Address’ given by this year’s Conference Chairman – Roger B. from Jersey Intergroup – which set the tone for conference. Also contained are the Answers to the Questions submitted to Conference and discussed in the six committees. Considered to be of particular note here is the answer that Committee No. 4 gave in response to the question ‘*Does our behaviour reflect that we are a loving Fellowship*’ and which may be strongly recommended for further consideration by all members.

This year saw the formal acceptance by Conference of the ‘Conduct of AA Members’ paper as a new approved Guideline, surely a milestone in what has been a rather stormy passage in some respects from some quarters over the past few years. Perhaps this acceptance serves to exemplify other words attributed to Bill W. – ‘*as individuals we don’t have to like it, but we do have to comply with it.*’ Other important editions to the Guidelines were submitted by the Literature Committee and received the endorsement of delegates.

Among the Reports given by members of the General Service Board – the General Service Conference is akin to an AGM in which the Board is held accountable to the Fellowship for its stewardship of AA affairs in Great Britain during the past year - was on the workings of the Electronic Communications sub-committee, which has been recently reconvened by the Board to look at what the future holds for AA in this important and continuously developing area of technology. Because it has been a subject of intense discussion of late in some circles, the Board Trustee responsible for it, Dora M. from Continental European Region, has kindly paraphrased for all members to see in this edition her Report to Conference – which sets the proposed way forward which the GSB intends to take on your behalf in this area.

From another Board Report, Conference also learned that the Fellowship of AA in Great Britain, after a slow start in the 1950’s followed by a period of rapid growth during the 1970 – 80’s, is now reaching the end of a steadily declining period of growth occurring over the 90’s to a level of virtually no growth at all today. If this trend is maintained, the number of groups in Great Britain will level off at around 3500 (it is presently around 3400) in the next few years - in spite of an increasingly alcoholic and otherwise addicted population.

At the end of this report it was announced at Conference that the five-yearly ‘AA Survey or Census’ would be held this year during the first week of June, the last one having been taken in 1997. While the two matters are not connected, the survey is being taken this time in a manner that should permit more light to be shed on the above area of concern, so permitting the General Service Board to look into the predictions in a more detailed way and to plan how best we may arrest this disappointing downturn in the ability to meet our primary purpose.

This edition of AA News will be available in time to be on group tables at meetings during census week – June 2nd to the 8th – and it is important statistically that this week be a perfectly normal one in the AA calendar. So, please treat it as such and do not feel it is important to attend a meeting in that week specifically ‘to be included in the census’, or the purpose will be nullified. However, if you are one of the members to be given a form to fill in at your meeting please be sure to do so and return it there and then to your group secretary.

In preparing this edition we are aware that several people have been heard to remark ‘*why do they put all this conference stuff into AA News when it will appear in the Conference Report which goes out at about the same time?*’ In answer to these we would note that the General Service Conference is the prime service event of the year and it is appropriate that the AA publication charged with covering our service activities makes the proceedings available to all comers.

However, in this edition and to show that the backbone of AA will always be its individual members, we gratefully include some contributions on various other service matters from some of our readers in the South: perhaps these will encourage those North of Watford to send some in!

Ian H, Editor and Board Trustee

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Our Common Welfare

2002 Conference Chairman - Roger B, Jersey Intergroup

I have already expressed to you my feelings on having been given the inestimable privilege of serving this Conference as its Chairman. It is by far the greatest honour which has been bestowed upon me, and I accept it with all humility, especially when I consider the great respect I hold for the qualities and abilities of the other candidates who offered themselves. After the euphoria comes the hard work, and choosing the theme for the Conference is just the start. Having the opportunity to stand before you as I am now, and set the tone for the Conference is, whilst being another great honour, very daunting. I hope you will understand that I am neither a great teacher, nor great orator. I am your trusted servant.

OUR COMMON WELFARE - Why did I choose this as a theme? One of the things that happens to Conference Chairs, is that you become famous and people can discover your name, address phone number and e-mail address without too much difficulty! It also means that quite a lot of people get to know who you are, and they are likely to "have a word" at Conventions and the like. So my phone rang, my visits to some, conventions were interrupted by discussions on weighty matters, and my e-mail did whatever it is that e-mails do, there may well be an adjective for it. In short, I got lobbied. This was sort of expected, I had, as recommended, spoken to previous conference chairs, and so to a large extent I was expecting to feel more popular than usual. I have been lobbied by members from all over the place, as well as by intergroup and region officers. And I have been hugely grateful for all of it. I hope I have been able to encourage people to extend their service to AA by not only having opinions and expressing them, but also by putting themselves forward for service offices, including Conference, where they can actively contribute to the debate. All of these people have one thing in common, and that is that they all believe that what they are doing is for the betterment of AA, and that without their efforts the Fellowship would be the poorer. And, they are right! These people are, and you may note that I am talking in the present tense, as dedicated and as committed to the service of this Fellowship as are all of us here today. In fact some of them are here today!

We are all trusted servants of this Fellowship, if we were not, we would not be here. We have been selected to represent those who elected us to use our best endeavours to ensure that we continue to achieve our primary purpose, and in doing so, strengthen our own sobriety. One of the people who contacted me said that as our leaders are trusted servants, we follow those we trust. Now AA has many examples of clever wordplay, some of it quite amusing. I consider my friends comment to be dangerous. Let us remember that our leaders are elected by the conscience of whichever group is electing them, and we are all well aware that the decision of the group conscience is the expression of a Higher Power as clearly stated in our second tradition. Accepting that expression, even though I may not agree with it is what I

have to do, it is sane sober behaviour. To say that I did not vote for you, therefore I will not follow you, even though the groups conscience has elected you, is divisive and destructive.

Our leaders are trusted servants, and, in this case, we are those leaders. We are not messengers. If the job of the Conference delegate could be done by a messenger then there would be no need for Conference. We could do all of this by post and thereby save a lot of time and money. In our recommended reading you will have come across Section 4 of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain. It is about leadership and there is no need to go over the whole thing again. An extract succinctly covers the whole thing for me "Our leaders do not drive by mandate, they lead by example" in effect we, the leaders in this case, are being told to act for the Fellowship, but not to boss it. This is the right of decision given to us in Concept III, which also includes the sentence "There will always be plenty of ultimate authority to correct inefficiency, ineffectiveness or abuse", and "there should always be charity for occasional mistakes" please, and "then trust must be our watchword, otherwise we shall wind up leaderless." The final paragraph includes the phrase "Therefore we cannot do less than trust our leaders in service", and we are those leaders. It came as a bit of a surprise to me to find out that the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous did not need me to protect it, that it was in fact in the hands of a power greater than myself, and my disappearance would make not the slightest difference. The Fellowship exists by the grace of God, and there is no need for me to jump up and down and shout to put across my opinion. It will be just the same if I state my truth quietly and clearly, as it says somewhere.

The General Service Conference of Great Britain is the unifying forum of the Fellowship in the geographical area it serves. It is the collective conscience of the Fellowship in Great Britain, and it carries responsibility for the three legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service delegated to it, albeit indirectly, by our co-founders, Bill W and Dr Bob. Again, the details of these facts are clearly described in our literature, particularly in AA Comes of Age which was written by people who were present when these momentous events took place. We are the contact, liaison, facilitator, whatever you want to call it, of unity. We bring together the Fellowship generally, the General Service Board with its alcoholic and non-alcoholic members, the General Service Office, groups, intergroups and regions. We are entirely inclusive and we act on behalf of the Fellowship. We have the will, the power and the authority, and most of all my friends, it is our duty, our duty to act as a united entity. To paraphrase a great man, your Fellowship expects that each person will do their duty, and I know that we will, and that this weekend will be fruitful.

There will be moments of controversy, contention even, perhaps heated debate at times. There will also be compassion,

understanding, compromise, and most of all love. There will be something for everyone, even if you have only come to find fault, there will be something for you. If you have come to find love and compassion, caring, and consideration, then there will be an abundance for you. Ultimately, there will be decision rising out of indecision and direction rising out of confusion. Most of all, there will be unity, unity under our message, and our common welfare.

In The Twelve Concepts for World Service Bill compares political evolution with that of the Fellowship. He says:

“Throughout the entire world today we are witnessing the breakdown of “group conscience” It has always been the hope of democratic nations that their citizens would always be enlightened enough, moral enough, and responsible enough to manage their own affairs through chosen representatives. But in many self-governing countries we are now seeing the inroads of ignorance, apathy, and power seeking upon democratic systems. Their spiritual resources of right purpose and collective intelligence are waning. Consequently many a land has become so helpless that the only answer is dictatorship”.

He went on, by comparing the world situations with those of AA

“Happily for us there seems to be little prospect of such a calamity in AA. The life of each individual and each group is built around our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. We very well know that the penalty for extensive disobedience to these principals is death for the individual and dissolution for the group.”

Over this weekend we are going to be given some figures, analysed data, regarding the development of our Fellowship. This information may surprise you, it certainly surprised me. It deals with the growth of the Fellowship over a number of years and predicts how that growth is likely to change over the next few years. What if the Fellowship stops growing, or even starts to shrink? Then what for our common welfare, on which personal recovery depends. And whose job is it to unite the Fellowship and to lead it in passing it’s message to the still suffering alcoholic? Whose job is it to unite and lead the Fellowship and to set an example of how we should behave towards each other so that newcomers and not so newcomers will stick around? And whose job is it to unite and lead the Fellowship by holding out the hand that will help, support and nourish those within the Fellowship who need it? It is our job, yours and mine, individually and collectively.

Let me share a relevant experience with you. Over the weekend of the final meeting of the Conference Steering Committee held here in York in early February, some of the committee had to stay over on the Saturday night after business was concluded. I was one of those people and we all decided we would go to an AA meeting, and the nearest one we could find was in a nearby town, it was about half an hour by train. When we arrived at Nearby Town Saturday Night meeting we announced that we were visiting from York, and that we had been in York organizing the General Service Conference. I was asked to share my experience strength and hope at the meeting which I was very happy to do, and just before the meeting started the lady who was going to

open the meeting said to me “excuse my ignorance, but what is the General Service Conference?”. Now it is all very well saying that this lady should read AA News or all the other excuses we can think of. If Nearby Town has not heard of us then we have a lot of work to do. It seems that we have trouble carrying our message amongst ourselves, it is therefore less of a surprise to find that our message passing skills could do with some brushing up.

Keynote is a wonderful word, it refers to expounding the central principle or setting the tone for a conference. Unity is another wonderful word. It is one of those words which cannot be vague, it either is or it is not. It is an axiom. So, how important is unity? Well, if we are not united we are divided, which is, as they say, a sobering thought.

There are many poets, songwriters and raconteurs who will tell you that in order to achieve unity we must follow them. There are many great leaders past and present who have said the same. We of Alcoholics Anonymous have the chance to be different. I do not say to you, unite behind me, or unite behind my committee or the Board. I urge us all to unite behind our message, the message of recovery from the disease of alcoholism which is so precious that money cannot buy it. We know better than anyone how vital that message is.

I am responsible

When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

And

This we owe to AA’s future
To place our common welfare first
To keep our fellowship united
For on AA unity depend our lives
And the lives of those to come.



Archives

London Cameo
will appear in the *next* edition
of AA News

Your invitation to the
Regional Archivists Meeting
in Hereford in September is on
page 8 of *this* issue of
AA News



Questions to and recommended Answers from Conference 2002

Committee No. 1

1. **When questions for Conference are considered by the Conference Steering Committee (CSC), should the questions be categorised to indicate the source of the question, i.e. from a member, group, intergroup or region?**

To ensure the anonymity of the questioner is observed, a letter code could be used, e.g.

I = Individual G = Group
IG = Intergroup R = Region

This information could provide an indication of the volume of opinion supporting the issues involved in the question.

This Committee recommends that questions for Conference should not be categorised as to source.

Any question submitted for consideration by the Conference Steering Committee (CSC) should be considered solely on its merits.

Members should be encouraged to share their intended questions at their home group, intergroup and region meetings.

This was a unanimous decision.

2. **Would Conference consider recommending that all new groups register with GSO through their intergroup and that all groups confirm their details annually through their intergroup in order to be included in the Where to Find directory.**

This committee recommends that new groups should register with GSO through intergroups and that all groups should confirm their details annually through their intergroups in order that up to date information may be maintained in the Where to Find directories. Groups can of course, send this information directly to GSO, but this may mean that local intergroup information is not kept up to date.

There is a minority opinion that in order to be included in the Where to Find directories new groups should register through their intergroups and that all groups should confirm their details annually through their intergroup.

Committee No. 2

1. **There are members who feel the need for more guidance than is currently available as to what suggestions can safely be made to newcomers in the Fellowship concerning 'putting down the drink'. Are we sufficiently aware of the possible risks when we simply suggest that newcomers should 'just stop drinking'? Would Conference please share its experience and give guidance.**

The AA message is NOT to "just stop drinking". This Committee feels strongly that the AA message is that "There is a solution".

It is not our experience that AAs generally advise

newcomers to "just stop drinking"; however, some Committee members had come across instances of such advice being given.

We offer a spiritual programme of recovery. We share our experience, strength and hope in that regard. The Committee recommended we remind ourselves that AA does not give medical advice, although we should be aware that detoxification may require medical supervision.

The Committee points out that all necessary information is already contained in the existing literature. It is to be found principally in the Big Book, and also in other Conference-approved literature such as the 12 Steps & 12 Traditions, Living Sober and Hints & Suggestions for 12th Steppers.

The Group is responsible for sponsoring members into 12th step service. The Committee recommends that all members should be encouraged to become familiar with the AA-approved sources of information, which are already available.

The Committee's recommendations were unanimous.

2. **National Where to Find**

There are many entries in the national "Where to Find" which refer readers to a Telephone Helpline number.

The Telephone Helpline is provided for enquiries from the still-suffering alcoholic and not for members seeking directions for meetings.

Please discuss and make recommendations.

This Committee wishes to emphasise that Telephone Helplines (national and local) are provided primarily for enquiries from the still-suffering alcoholic, and should not be engaged unnecessarily. When existing members use the Helplines they may be stopping such enquiries. They may well be unaware of the cost involved.

This Committee recognised that Helplines are not always being used for their intended purpose. In particular, the Committee noted that they are being used by existing members seeking information such as meeting times, locations and so forth.

In the absence of other information sources, some use of the Helplines by existing members is unavoidable. To minimise this and to enable such callers to obtain information about meetings, groups should be encouraged to make available the personal telephone numbers of two group members for publication in national and local Where To Finds. The Committee has been mindful of the AA Pledge in making this recommendation. Any local Where To Finds distributed to outside agencies should be separate versions not containing personal telephone numbers.

The Committee further recommends that Telephone Helpline numbers should not be shown in the national Where to Find following group entries.

The Committee's recommendations were unanimous.

Committee No. 3

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

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

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

This Committee feels that there are still questions to be asked that haven't been answered. To avoid feelings of disillusion and frustration, reported by some Regions, we recommend:

AA Service Handbook section 10, subsection 5, part b (Conference Questions) should be reviewed. After the first sentence insert:

- a) All questions to be addressed to Conference Co-ordinator at GSO with sender's name and address on the question itself.
- b) If acknowledgement hasn't been received within 14 days, phone or write to Conference Co-ordinator at GSO.
- c) Questions should be researched by referring to our literature, (especially General Service Conference Digest & Index), guidelines etc before submission.

This Committee suggests that the Conference Steering Committee could be assisted in fulfilling our primary purpose by:

- All proposed reviews, changes and additions to the Service Handbook and Guidelines going before Committee at Conference.
- Only published Terms of Reference being used as reasons for rejection.
- Questions not selected for Conference and reasons for rejection being made available on request.
- The Terms of Reference used for rejection of a question being fully and clearly explained to the satisfaction of the questioner.
- Workshop time being used for careful consideration of the reports from GSB.

The recommendations of this Committee were carried by a substantial majority.

Committee No. 4

1. **Does our behaviour reflect that we are a loving Fellowship? Discuss and report.**

Many views were brought from the regions into the committee. These ranged from disbelief that it was necessary to ask this question to a perception that it was a matter that needed much thought and consideration. It became clear to the committee that this was really something that needed to be asked on an individual basis, as a personal challenge, as much as of the fellowship as a whole.

Experience showed that, in the main, group meetings are where love is shown most effectively. It is the committee's experience that at business meetings sometimes our concentration on business matters can deflect our attention from exercising a caring attitude regarding our own behaviour as part of a loving fellowship. Passions can run high as we work on matters affecting our groups and how we carry the message. Frictions sometimes arise due to differing interpretations of our Traditions and Concepts and occasionally failures to accept the group conscience.

For the purpose of our deliberations we agreed on a working definition of a loving fellowship, as being "a group of individuals, bound by our primary purpose, who not only cherish, value and respect each other, but are seen to do so by both members and outsiders alike".

This is only one of many possible definitions and every A. A. member will probably be able to provide their own.

However, love and tolerance of others is our code and gratitude is an action not a word. The phrase "let it begin with me" was one that was often voiced by members of the committee. Our consensus was that we intend to be a loving fellowship but are not always successful in translating words into action. We need to be vigilant and seek improvement.

Loving and caring, to a degree interchangeable terms, are best seen as examples. Committee members shared many personal experiences of love in action, mentioning cases of illness, bereavement and relationships, where they received overwhelming support from AA members, which we considered sharing with you today. We came to the conclusion however, that every member has a similar story to tell. We would ask you to take 15 seconds now to think of one such experience in your life, one that made you want to keep coming back.

Thank you. However we also shared many experiences where our behaviour could not be defined as loving. Examples shared included difficulties in finding 12th Step support and telephone responders. A few horror stories about inappropriate behaviour in all types of meetings were also brought forward.

So what is the point of our deliberations? Our experience shows that we are a loving fellowship. Adherence to the Traditions, Concepts and Guidelines will keep it so.

The effect of unloving behaviour in our Group meeting is self-evident – the newcomer may not stay. The consequences of not showing each other respect, tolerance and consideration in our business meetings may have far reaching effects. It may divert us from our primary purpose and could be prejudicial to the best interest of the still-suffering alcoholic.

Meetings that fail to demonstrate these principles of respect, tolerance and consideration are in danger of becoming unattractive to members, especially those coming to service for the first time.

In closing, we would ask you to consider this question - Does your behaviour reflect that we are a loving fellowship?

All members of the Committee contributed to these discussions.

Committee No. 5

1. How can we take the politics out of AA? Make recommendations.

This committee agrees that politics is an activity through which contending interests are considered for the collective welfare, advancement and survival of the Fellowship.

It is impossible therefore to remove politics from AA.

This committee also accepts that there is a harmful side to politics. This may arise when an individual or group has an agenda contrary to our Primary Purpose.

Often this is owing to the absence of an informed group conscience or the misunderstanding/ignoring of AA Traditions, Concepts, Structure, Guidelines and Service Literature.

This Committee recommends that at all levels of AA

- 1) Members are sponsored into Service.
- 2) Members practise AA principles in all their affairs.

This can be encouraged through:-

- Sponsorship
- Education about AA structure
- The Home Group principle
- Group Handbook on display at meetings
- Conscience meetings
- Rotation of service positions
- Recovery, Service, Unity.

These recommendations were agreed unanimously by the committee.

“The Unity, the effectiveness and even the survival of AA will always depend on the continued willingness to give up some of our personal ambitions and desires for the common safety and welfare. So, sacrifice means Unity and survival for the group and for AA’s entire Fellowship”. – Bill W, from *As Bill Sees It*.

Committee No. 6

After the informed conscience of all delegates on this Committee was presented, we realised that an impasse had been reached regarding the relevance of part of the questions in both 1 and 2, because they had been discussed in another form at the General Service Conference 2001.

A proposal was adopted and seconded asking for the questions to be rejected. The proposal was defeated by the casting vote of the Chairman.

After full and frank discussions the following expectations were agreed:

1. a. What are the personal expectations of a delegate when attending General Service Conference?

Delegates expect to be welcomed on arrival with AA’s hand of friendship being offered, ideally by Committee Chairs and Secretaries.

Some members were of the opinion that their personal needs were secondary to their responsibilities as trusted servants.

Delegates can reasonably expect that their informed conscience will be respected and noted.

Delegates expect to improve their knowledge of the workings of the Fellowship.

Delegates also expect to return to their regions with fully-informed reports on their deliberations and those of the General Service Conference.

At a personal level, Delegates to Conference can reasonably expect to deepen their own sobriety as a result of free and frank sharing on matters of service.

Through their participation, delegates may experience a connection with their spiritual journey as described in Concept IV of the World Service Handbook.

b. How best can we achieve these expectations?

Delegates can best achieve their expectations by reading all relevant materials, including the Conference reports of the previous two years.

2. a. What is expected from Conference delegates by: Conference and the Fellowship as a whole?

After considerable deliberation, this committee recognises that the recommendations of General Service Conference 2001 are adequate.

b. How may we best fulfil these expectations? Make recommendations.

The Committee suggests that we can assist delegates to fulfil the expectations of Conference and the Fellowship by constant implementation of recommendations made by Committee 6 at General Service Conference 2001.

We would further recommend:

- That previous delegates share their experience and assist by the sponsoring of alternates and first-year delegates.
- Conference Committees should concentrate on Service matters e.g. EXTERNAL/INTERNAL/FINANCE/LITERATURE/GENERAL ISSUES.
- Board members attending the Committees to have knowledge relevant to the question.
- An open forum be included on future Conference agenda.
- Delegates bring to Conference the Informed Conscience of their membership and take back the Informed Conscience of Conference to the membership.

What Does the Future Hold for Electronic Communications in AA?

The following article is a paraphrasing of the presentation given with illustrations to the General Service Conference 2002 by Dora M. of Continental European Region who is the Board Trustee with responsibilities for developments within the Electronic Communications sub-committee of the General Service Board.

With so many people in today's society still suffering from the disease of alcoholism, it is imperative that Alcoholics Anonymous makes use of as many means as can be found to carry our message as far and as wide as possible. One of those methods is through the use of technology. There are many possibilities open to us. The General Service Board recently reconvened the Electronic Communications Sub-committee, which has met twice in 2002 to create and implement a plan of action for the Fellowship. Because of my experiences in and knowledge of this technology it asked me to be its Chairman.

I would like at the outset to say and emphasise three things:

- we are very excited about the directions in which we are looking and working
- when we consider electronic communications, we must keep our Primary Purpose in mind
- it is our express desire to deliver ideas and products that are soundly steeped in the Traditions of our Fellowship.

AA has always proceeded with the utmost care and deliberation when undertaking new projects. The committee has many suggestions that have already come forth to our attention. We will address all concerns in future meetings and present you what we believe will be the best practices for the Fellowship.

What Does the Future Hold for Electronic Communications in AA?

The answer is quite simple: more than we could ever have dreamed just five years ago, even three years ago. Here are some suggested answers to four simple questions.

1. How Can We "Carry the Message"

The first thing that comes to mind is our own website, which has been very productive since its inception. There are plans underway for revisions and updates to the existing website. Any substantive changes will be made with the approval of Conference. We may be able to put a modified version of the "Where to Find" on the website. There is a possibility of creating a second website dedicated to service work. These are "considerations" so far - nothing is set in concrete.

Other means of Electronic Communications can be better utilized to carry the message. For instance, we can send out bulk faxes of press releases or other information to our friends in the media and in the helping professions. We can develop a list server for professionals and students with information about Alcoholics Anonymous.

2. How Can E-communications Enable us to do our Service Work?

- A. We can build a list server for our service workers. A list server is a way of mass mailing information to subscribers with a common interest or task.
- B. We can look into using teleconferencing where face-to-face meetings may not be cost effective or necessary.
- C. We can create e-mail lists and contacts specific to certain areas of service, for instance different liaison positions in Regions or Intergroups.
- D. We can create Electronic Bulletin Boards where

questions can be discussed and monitored.

- E. We can create CD's of service materials available through our literature orders.

3. What will be "Best Practices?"

The committee will be preparing several documents for the Fellowship:

- A. Hints and suggestions for E-mail. What are the best ways to use it? How do we protect our service workers and their anonymity?
- B. Hints and suggestions for local, intergroup, and region websites. How do we stick to the traditions when building a website. How do we keep within the copyright laws?
- C. Hints and suggestions on 'SPAM' or unsolicited mail. How do we protect the Fellowship and its integrity and reputation?
- D. Publication of "Best Websites". As websites in our Fellowship are mushrooming, the committee will visit each one as it comes to our attention, and publish a list of those sites that are developed following the Traditions and good practices.

4. What will we need?

As all of us doing service work in the Fellowship can attest to, anything done well in the Fellowship needs:

- A. **Time.** We are all volunteers, most of whom are fully employed as well. So, of necessity, all new endeavors take time: time to research, time to execute, time to assess, and time to adjust to new methods of doing things. We intend to take as much time as necessary to ensure that the job is well thought out and implemented.
- B. **Careful planning.** There is no necessity for rushing. We know the old saying that "haste makes waste" and we don't want to waste our time or money on endeavors that are not productive. We want to research what is the best technology for the job we want done.
- C. **Resources.** We have many talented people in the Fellowship in the area of Technology and Electronic Communications. Several are volunteering their time already on our committee. Some projects will require very little in the way of money, others will cost the Fellowship for the travel of the people involved, plus the additional training & technology that may be required. This will all be proposed carefully in budgets for the committee.

What comes next?

Finally, and again, it is the desire of this committee that we bring you ideas and products that will be useful in carrying the message to our fellow alcoholics. Look for future articles in AA News for updates and a set of finished "Hints and Suggestions."

*Dora M.
Chair of Electronic Communications sub-committee
and Trustee of the General Service Board*

The Growth of the Fellowship of AA in Great Britain

AA Survey week June 2nd – 8th 2002

Surveys of the Fellowship in Great Britain have been carried out at more or less regular five-year intervals since 1972, being in 1972, 1978, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1997. It is planned that the next survey will be conducted during the week of June 2nd - 8th 2002 throughout the Fellowship in Great Britain with aim: *'through learning more about ourselves as we are today - and where we have come from and seem to be going to - the intent is that we will be able to plan to carry the message more effectively to more people in the future.'*

The surveys provide information on the following aspects:

- the gender ratio of members
- the age distribution of AA members
- the number of continuous years spent in AA
- the years of sobriety in each age group
- the frequency of attendance at meetings
- the ratio of members addicted to drugs other than alcohol.

The results obtained within these categories were presented at Conference 2002 in the form of charts and graphs (see Conference Report 2002). Snap shots taken for 1997 on the length of sobriety by age group for all members and the point of entry into AA for the 'one-year sobers' will be compared, in due course, with those to be gathered in a similar way for the June survey (details of this survey have already been sent to all groups).

In addition to these statistics, and using data made available from GSO for the years since 1970 and data given in Archives and in the Service Handbook for the earlier years, the survey has been extended to look at the growth rates for the Fellowship in Great Britain, deducing these from the number of recorded groups in England, Scotland & Wales since the formation of AA in the early 1950's.

The analysis leads to the observation that the earlier rapid growth of AA in Great Britain during the first half of the 25 years has slowed progressively over the second half to a level today of very little or no growth at all. Indeed, the situation could be said to be characteristic of that of a fully developed and stagnant organisation in need of a re-vitalisation process or product to

stimulate further growth.

Without this stimulation, it appears that the size of AA in Great Britain will probably level out at around 3500 groups in the next couple of years: the present figure is around 3400. Steps have already been initiated by the General Service Board to broaden the visibility of and access to AA by way of the:

- introduction of the National Telephone system
- ongoing development of the Website and other forms of electronic aids
- new approach to PICPC taken through the PICPC Committee
- new look being taken at Employment Liaison

To further correct these disappointing trends in *our apparent inability to carry the message*, Conference was asked to reflect on the extent to which delegates and members should perhaps focus their efforts more on matters of substance rather than of form i.e to focus less on *how* we should be doing things and more on *what* things should we be doing.

Please help the General Service Board to be able to look more fully on your behalves into this matter of considerable concern by completing and handing back promptly to your group secretary the survey form which you may be given at a meeting during 'census' week. *But remember, please treat it like a normal week – we do not want an exaggerated attendance at meetings – and fill in one form only.*

*Ian H.
Board Trustee & Editor*

Regional Archivists Meeting

An invitation to Hereford on 7/9/02, where you might get bitten by the archives bug!



Last year the G.S.B. approved a plan put forward by the Archives Committee to widen the scope of the annual Regional Archivists meeting and move the location of the Regional Archivists meeting around the country, instead of always being in York. The first venue for this occasion is being hosted by Wales and Borders region in Hereford.

The aim of moving this archivists workshop around the country is to actively involving many more people, put across in simple terms what archives work is about and to allay many myths about archives work.

This strategy is being pursued in the hope that we will enable more people to become actively involved in archives work at Group, Intergroup and Region, thereby supporting the work of their Regional Archivist.

The first workshop is planned for **7th September 2002 in the Shire Hall in Hereford**. We have written to Regions seeking support for their Archivists. In addition the Archives Committee is covering the venue and light refreshment costs, but attendees will need to bring a packed lunch. Admission is free.

I must emphasise this invite is extended to all those interested in archives work at any level and not only from the S.W., S Midlands, and Wales and Borders Regions.

The format of this meeting will include two or three 'hands-on' workshops about archives topics, a 'swop' shop, video's and slide shows, concluding with an open 'Old Timers' meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, with the pot being sent straight to GSO.

The workshop will start at 10 a.m. finishing approximately at 4.00 p.m.

Following the Hereford workshop the next venues will be held somewhere within the following groups of Regions:- Scotland – Oban 2003; London and North of England 2004 and 2005.

Please come along, it promises to be an entertaining and enlightening day out, you never know **you** might get bitten by the archives bug!

*Joe H
Fellowship Archivist*



News from our South East Corner

Proposed P.I. Seminar for 2003

A few of the 61 comments received from professionals following the successful Seminar in 2001*:

- An informative, well spent afternoon.
- A great insight into the Fellowship.
- Informative. Very well organised and enjoyable.
- Very Interesting. I leave being better informed about your good work.
- I found this very useful.
- Perhaps a full day, should you have the time for it in the future.

The core committee comprised of East and West Kent Intergroup's Chairmen, Vice Chairmen and PI-CPC Liaison Officers met in February to discuss if and how to follow on from here. It was determined that unlike previous exercises the momentum should be maintained. Consequently it was agreed that with the approval of both Intergroups another Seminar should be held without a lengthy intervening period but the earliest date, for practical purposes, would be in the autumn of 2003.

In 2000, East Kent Intergroup approved a budget of £600 to stage a Seminar in 2001. However, in the final analysis, by combining our efforts with West Kent, we were able to prepare a half day Seminar which cost each Intergroup only £300 – and we also ended up coming within this budget.

The core committee, after initial research and by using facilities at Aylesford Priory, calculates that it can stage a full day Seminar, with workshops, for the same amount. We therefore seek your support and your approval to proceed.

Thank you.

Harry A
PI-CPC Liaison Officer, East Kent Intergroup

*For more information on this seminar see article by Peter G. overleaf

Letter from a worker in the mental health sector:

“Thank you for your letter of 15th January. I am really pleased that you are acting on the information that you received from the evaluation forms completed at the AA Public Information Seminar in Canterbury last November.

May I take this opportunity to congratulate and thank you for all the hard work and energy which went into arranging the event. It is one of the best I have attended and I have attended quite a few. The venue was an inspired choice, but the quality of the welcome, the

involvement of your members in catering, sharing information and hosting the event made the greatest impression. The calibre and balance of your speakers was impressive and it was a bonus to have an opportunity to speak to them during the refreshment break.

Regretfully I am not in a position to take on any more volunteer responsibilities. You may remember from earlier telephone conversations that I am fully committed to volunteering in the mental health sector. I already help the P.I.P. representative in Thanet for your sister organisation Al-Anon whenever I can. What I can do is to spread the word, when I have the opportunity, to key contacts in the work I do on an ad hoc basis. Please let me know of any more P.I. Seminars and I will try to get some useful contacts to attend, who in turn will spread the word and help create greater awareness of AA.

Anything you can do to boost awareness of Al-Anon would be appreciated. Awareness of Al-Anon trails way behind AA.

Again many thanks for inviting me to attend your enjoyable and stimulating Seminar. I am sure the benefits will last for a long while.

Best wishes, Yours sincerely,”

(Name and address supplied).

Another First in Kent!

For the first time, a few days ago, a suffering alcoholic sent an email to our local web site using the information therein which explains how to contact us. Our member in West Kent (who created the local website) sent her an email requesting a telephone contact, if she had one. She replied immediately, revealing that she was located in East Kent and she asked to be telephoned on the following Monday evening upon her return from rehab –so the details were passed over to East Kent. A female 12th Stepper in Canterbury was given her number. She accordingly telephoned the suffering alcoholic as requested and has arranged to pick her up with another female 12th Stepper so as to get her to her first meeting. It works if you work it! Thought you might like to have the details of this ‘new’ method of service in AA NEWS?

Anonymous, but not Invisible

On the 23rd November 2001, Kent AA opened its doors to the professional community, in the form of a Public Seminar, where invited members of that community were able to come along and have a inside view of what has always been seen as a “secret society” (their words not ours).

Over 5000 flyers, emails, press release and personal invitations were sent out to the clergy, doctors, prisons, probation, police, clinics, surgery’s, support groups, schools and as many major industrials that where humanly possible to contact within the year, throughout the County of Kent. A website was created, to assist in bridging a vital link.

These were all co-ordinated by a PI committee involving the Intergroups of East and West Kent, which had held monthly meetings between Maidstone and Canterbury. The venue itself was held at The Education Centre of Canterbury Cathedral and it was a truly “spiritual” setting.

A total of 98 confirmed replies were received which turned into a response of 91 attendees on the day. A chairman and three AA speakers did a great job of putting across the benefits of AA to those professionals who come into contact with the “still suffering alcoholic” that has never heard of our fellowship. A question and answer session followed and the feedback was very interesting.

Some there have NEVER heard of AA, some thought that it was a secret society, who did not communicate with anybody and who kept themselves to themselves. It was however suggested by those same people that regular workshops would be very rewarding and helpful, not only to alcoholics but also to the professionals as AA has a reputation of keeping people sober.

Everyone went away with an information pack, local where to find and contact numbers were exchanged. Many people commented on the warm and friendly atmosphere that they recieved, on arrival everyone got a handshake and was made to feel special. A superb buffet lunch was put on and although it was a bit of a squeeze and a great British queue, everyone was fed and watered.

There was a great feeling of satisfaction from the committee, that although this had taken the best part of 14 months to prepare and execute, it had been well worth it. Since that day, other contacts have been made in other areas, and already the benefits can be seen.

So it leaves me only to thank all those who took part in this, from the tea boy to the chairman, a big thankyou for making it possible. In service I am often heard saying, that the hours are long, the pay is lousy, but the rewards are immeasurable, you cannot buy it. Thank you.

Peter G.

SELF SUPPORTING?

Over my time in the Fellowship there has been much written and talked about apathy towards service and I wonder if our tradition of self-support is too narrowly interpreted. Tradition 7 explains the need for the Fellowship to pay its own way and not to expect financial help from outsiders. Our third legacy tells us of the importance of service to our recovery.

I wonder how the Fellowship can claim to be self-supporting when we seem to be unable to fill all the posts at Intergroup and Region level? I only have to look at the number of vacancies in the register of Intergroup and Region officers to see that the principle of service does not seem to be regarded with high importance.

As an analogy I think of the man who works all hours to provide his family with all the material things of life, he is then confused when his children go off the rails and his wife runs off with the milkman. His cry is ‘how can this happen, I gave them everything’. He forgot that money is not everything.

Many words have been written and spoken about the importance of service to individual recovery but little about the importance of service to the Fellowship as a whole. I cannot pretend to know the answer to this problem, but I offer my thoughts for consideration.

I am as much to blame as anyone for this sad state of affairs, for it is only recently that I have come to realise where J am letting the Fellowship down. Although I have been committed to service from an early point in I my recovery, I have failed to effectively encourage newcomers into service. Talking and doing service is an essential part of sponsorship but am I doing enough to make it possible for the newcomer to learn?

When I joined the Fellowship the groups that I attended elected group members into positions that mirrored the offices in Intergroup and their GSR. The group office holders were then supposed to maintain contact with their Intergroup liaison officer. In this way newcomers were able to develop the concept of service, gain a greater feeling of belonging and discover how the Fellowship worked.

I realise now, that by being encouraged to learn a little of the service responsibilities at group level was able to fit into Intergroup service more easily and was able to feel part of the wider AA community at an earlier stage.

By encouraging the newer group members to learn a little of the Intergroup responsibilities we might eventually start to gain GSR’s and Intergroup office holders.

As I have said, I do not claim to have all the answers but I believe that we must find a way to encourage the newcomer to learn the value of service, not just hear how good it is.

I do not believe that the Fellowship can be truly self-supporting if we cannot fill all our offices. And if we do not fill all our offices, how can we effectively spread the word to the still suffering alcoholic?

Tony M, Baldock

INTERGROUP CONTRIBUTIONS

January - March 2002

LONDON REGION		NORTH EAST SURREY	1620
CHELSEA	4000	NORTHDOWN	900
CROYDON, EPSOM & SUTTON	750	SOLENT	1440
LONDON EAST	2000	SOUTHDOWN	2520
LONDON NORTH EAST	4000	WEST KENT	1620
LONDON NORTH	800	WEST SUSSEX	1980
LONDON NORTH KENT	1000	SOUTH MIDLANDS REGION	
LONDON NORTH MIDDLESEX	350	AVON NORTH	1590
LONDON OUTER EAST	1000	CHILTERN & THAMES	2200
LONDON SOUTH EAST (EAST)	900	SEVERN	2003
LONDON SOUTH	1520	SOUTH MIDLANDS I/G	3090
LONDON SOUTH MIDDLESEX	1592	THAMES VALLEY	1820
LONDON SOUTH WEST	4600	WILTSHIRE	90
LONDON WEST END	4000	SOUTH WEST REGION	7500
MIDLANDS REGION	2500	DEVON CENTRAL	119
BIRMINGHAM	1968	WALES AND BORDERS REGION	4500
POTTERIES & DISTRICT	882	SOUTH GLAMORGAN	600
NORTH EAST REGION		EAST OF SCOTLAND REGION	2500
HULL & EAST RIDING	374	GLASGOW REGION	14000
NORTH YORKSHIRE	1125	HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS REGION	1500
NORTHUMBERLAND	35	SCOTIA REGION	6000
TYNE & NORTHUMBRIA	297	SOUTH WEST SCOTLAND REGION	4000
WEST RIDING	2569	CONTINENTAL EUROPEAN REGION	-1071*
YORKSHIRE SOUTH	1300	CYPRUS	200
YORKSHIRE WEST	1300	TOTAL	£117469
NORTH WEST REGION	9600		
CHESHIRE EAST	367		
SOUTH EAST REGION			
LONDON NORTH KENT (TELEPHONE)	180		
BRIGHTON AREA	1260		
EAST KENT	900		
EAST SUSSEX	1080		
MID SURREY	4500		

*Please note negative contribution from Continental European Region to counter balance entry on previous quarterly report. Funds attributed to contributions were in fact Conference delegates' fees.

GSO acknowledges the following donations

<i>In Memory of</i>		£
Olive	Chichester Groups	120.00
Stef	Stevenage Sunday	100.00
Jim	Hyde Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday	75.00
Kate	Tunbridge Wells Thursday Step	36.00
Cyril B	Hanham Bristol	20.00
Kate	Tunbridge Tuesday	33.00
Peter C	Littlehampton Sunday	12.96
Peter C	Bognor Regis Saturday Morning	23.52
Emmett	Birmingham West Heath Groups	60.00
Kim	Kingsbridge Group	30.00
Tom P	Weymouth Sunday Lunchtime	20.00
Tom P	Portland Saturday	46.85
Ian R	Tuesday & Saturday Castlegate Groups Aberdeen	30.00
Kate G	Sevenoaks Wednesday	28.27
Sheila	Southend Groups	140.00
Cyril v d M	Warminster Tuesday	329.15
Martin K	Warlingham Park Hospital	35.00
Maurice S	Leeds Keep It Simple	20.00
Maurice S	Leeds Headingley Big Book	160.00
Paula	Horsham Thursday Morning	49.04
Martin	Whitby Group	135.00
Ian	St. Albans Group	114.51
John K	Horley, Redhill & Reigate Groups	125.00