



## *Archives Newsletter for Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain and its English speaking Region in Continental Europe*

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**Hi everyone and hope all is well with your Archiving.**

A little bit late in producing this latest edition of Past Particles, no excuses just a lot on at the moment. Later we have an article from John M. but first some really good news.

Yesterday the 24<sup>th</sup> of February I was at the Borthwick Institute with Paul from GSO and Roger Ellis who is from Microformat who do our microfilming. We met with Jenny, the Digital Archivist who most of you know and Dr Amanda Jones who is also an Archivist there. Our main topic was what do they want from us in terms of Archive material and what do we do about the microfilming.

Jenny has been at the Borthwick as their first Digital Archivist for about 18 months now and over this time I have been asking a lot of questions concerning Format, Quality and basically as I said before, what do they want from us and what can we deposit there. This gave them the opportunity to sit down together and ask themselves the same question(s). What they came up with was; All we want is the original. Quote...

This means that for example with the Minutes and Agendas, we have in the past microfilmed these, starting immediately they no longer will be but the original, digital format needs to be saved at GSO on the stand alone pc and be taken to the Borthwick for storage/archiving. Thus coming away from the microfilming process, saving money and time.

A letter is being written to all Region Chairs/Secretaries saying this and in the near future the same will apply to Intergroup Chairs and Secretaries. It is important for us as Archivists to see that this procedure is being carried out correctly so as to ensure the preservation of our heritage.

### **Blackpool**

Anyone going to the 40<sup>th</sup> Northern National Convention at Blackpool? If so make sure you take a good look at the Archives Display there, Charlie the NW Region Archivist and member of the Archives Sub Committee has been working on this for a while now and it should be a good one.

I shall be there myself so hope to see you all there.



## Share Magazines

Roy the Midlands Region Archivist is looking for back copies of Share magazine in particularly those dated March, April and May 1973.



## New Project

John M the South East Region Archivist mailed me quite a while ago now asking what I thought of his new project. John explains below.

### **IN SEARCH OF THE 50 YEAR OLDS**

When I took over the Archivist's position at South East Region back in 2008 I made a series of presentations to all the Intergroups in our Region in an attempt to raise awareness of AA Archives and to , also, try to recruit new archivists into posts.

In almost all cases the presentations were warmly received but there were a few people who had reservations. Surprisingly, I met with statements such as, " it is Principles before Personalities", "we should concentrate on newcomers not history" and " we have more pressing things to do".

It was as if Archives was some sort of luxury; not important or of value. These A.A's had, I felt, missed the point. The phrase is 'Principles before Personalities' not 'Principles and no Personalities' that we should put helping Newcomers and Archives on an 'either or' basis made no sense at all.

But these attitudes are nothing new. When GSO first discussed appointing a UK archivist, Georgia G. in 1985 she relates that there was no great enthusiasm for an Archives service. A non AA Board member who was the author of two books on Alcoholism was particularly disinterested. stating "Archives are just like history. Whoever survives gets to tell the story"

Obviously our non- Alcoholic friend had not heard of Bill W's letter to Clarence S in Cleveland in 1955 where he makes a heartfelt plea that:



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“We are trying to build up extensive records which will be of value to a future historian. It is highly important that the factual material be placed in our files in such a way that there can be no substantial distortion. We want to keep enlarging on this idea for the sake of the full length history to come “

In fact, one of the primary purposes of our Archives is to ‘separate the facts from the myths’ The distortions of memory that result from the passage of time if the facts are not written down.

The Board member had a point if he was referring to the self- opinionated histories written by many professional historians. It is essential in recording the experiences of AA interviewees that we allow no personal opinions or prejudices to intrude into their stories.

The whole history of AA is about personalities; the pioneers of the early days going all the way back to our founders, Bill W and Dr Bob. These were the people who laid the foundations of our wonderful Fellowship and passed the message down the generations.

I believe their massive contributions deserve to be acknowledged.

In 2008 we in South East Region, produced a book, ‘The Good Old, Oldtimers’ in which we recorded the experiences of fifteen Oldtimers each with around 40 years of sobriety.

The experience for me, personally, was revelatory. It was an experience which was both privileged and humbling. I was listening to members who had been around in the early, formative years of AA in the UK when there were few members and great obstacles to overcome.

Energised by this experience I am embarking on a project to try to record the experiences of AA’s with fifty years of sobriety. As you can imagine these hardy souls are few and far between. At the present time (January 2014) I have traced only seven in the UK and recorded two.

Hopefully, I might find more but, sadly I feel, not many.

I do feel that this is an important project and that Archives is the place where we find out where we have come from.

A.A. Archives’ mission statement is :

‘When any Civilisation or Society perishes one condition is always present—they forgot where they came from”

And that is why I feel that recording the experiences of these Oldtimers is so essential---so that we don’t forget where we came from. I would welcome any help from AA members in this project

John M. Archivist South East Region.



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## Publication

Research has started, actually its been going on for a while now, on the Publication (Book) by the Archives Sub Committee and Harry and myself were at the Borthwick to do some searching, found a lot and also found nothing...what we had hoped for wasn't there but found it later in the GSO Archives and also found some lovely memorabilia hidden away there.



## Annual Archivists Meeting

This years Meeting is on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of October 2014. At GSO and among other topics there will be a presentation on Cataloguing and Categorisation from Jenny M and I hope Dr Amanda Jones from the Borthwick Institute. I am also enthusiastic to hear about a new project there featuring a working Archives...more later on that.

## Next Issue

If you have any stories, anecdotes, anything to do with Archves or not with Archives they would be gratefully received and published.

Until them Happy Squirreling,

Stephen S., Fellowship Archivist