



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

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Welcome to a special edition Past Particles which celebrates the 65th Anniversary of the first recorded meeting in Great Britain. The following text is taken from the original script of the DVD "Journey of Discovery".

'Despite post war austerity, England in particular was still rebuilding its infrastructure, nevertheless a few letters in 1945 & 46 were getting through to the Alcoholic Foundation in New York. These 12th step enquiries were, in 1947, acted upon by Grace, contacting Canadian Bob who had joined AA in America in August 1945, but was now living in Kew.



Bob took Grace and her husband Fulton for lunch at a Hungarian Restaurant in Soho at which the Ourslers offered their room at the Dorchester for a meeting the following Monday. This meeting took place at 8pm on 31st March 1947 in Room 202. Present were Grace, Bob, Chris, Vernon, and Pat G. (whom Grace had met aboard the Cunarder, when she had advertised a meeting for 'friends of



Bill W'). Norman R-W was present, though at that time much the worse for wear, he demanded "a large gin and vermouth", an order which was quickly countermanded by Grace to the waiter, and subsequently Norman walked out, but remained in the hotel lobby.



Canadian Bob recalls the meeting.

"It was Grace O. who really triggered off the inception of AA in England. She had written to me before she and her husband Fulton embarked at New York on one of the Queens. During lunch in London, Grace, her husband and I mapped out on a Saturday plans for a meeting the following Monday. Eight of us met in her hotel room, the last night of March 1947 and the five Londoners chose me as secretary".

This hotel room meeting is generally accepted as the first AA meeting to take place in Great Britain although there is reference to some form of meeting in London in 1946, in letters supplied by GSO in New York.





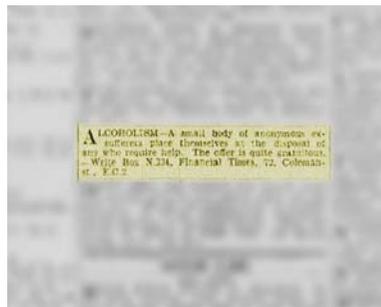
After that Dorchester meeting, three of the group met at the Dominion Theatre café where they agreed to meet regularly in the home of Canadian Bob at Mortlake Road, Kew.



Canadian Bob recalls:-

“ I would watch the approach to our house on meeting nights and what a switch from trepidation to a happy glow when three, four or even six hove in sight a quarter of a mile away”

During this time the group worked hard visiting hospitals and treatment centres and it was decided to advertise the existence of AA in the national press. All the national daily newspapers prevaricated except the Financial Times. This first example of public information placed by those early AA members in the Financial Times was published as follows on the 9th June 1947:-



‘Alcoholism – a small body of anonymous ex-sufferers place themselves at the disposal of any who require help. The offer is quite gratuitous.’



A deluge of response was awaited..... there were 2 enquires as the result of this tentative P.I approach.’.

Another couple of firsts are;

January 1946 - 1st known contact in Great Britain was Dorothy H E.

March 20th 1946 Dorothy sent £5 to GSO New York

March 21st First known 12th Step call was passed on to Dorothy, the enquirer was a lady in Sussex

Also in 1946 Philip D. went to America and was taken to AA meetings. He was to be registered in New York as a loner in Cambeltown

August 1948 Bill H volunteered his office in the London Fruit Exchange as a “service office” and where the 1st Help line was set up. Telephone number BIS 4980.

2012 also marks the 40th Anniversary of Share magazine, the first edition of which was published in October of 1972. This edition of Share informed us ‘Today there are 480 groups in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, a further 74 groups in hospitals and 62 in prisons.’

Congratulations to our friends in ‘Share’

