

Roundabout

December 2020 £1

Your meeting in print



*Special Themed Issue:
Service*

THE TWELVE STEPS

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were *wrong promptly admitted it*.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.



Preamble

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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Cover picture: Loch Ledgowan near Achnasheen in the Highlands, courtesy of an AA member.

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email: roundabout@aamail.org

visit: www.aa-roundabout.org.uk

SUB-COMMITTEE NOTICE BOARD

ROUNABOUT SUB-COMMITTEE – VACANCIES

The Roundabout Sub-Committee of the Roundabout magazine invites applicants from all regions of Scotland to join the Editorial Team for a service period of four years. There are currently two vacancies for Proof Readers and a vacancy for the new role of Link Liaison Officer.

Role Requirements

A minimum of five years' continuous sobriety. A high standard of English literacy. A proficiency in computer technology. A desire and ability to work as part of a team. Service as a Roundabout Liaison Officer at group, intergroup or regional level would be advantageous. Flexibility to adapt and assist with other roles within the Editorial Team, as appropriate and delegated by the Editor.

Brief Description Of Roles

As a Proof Reader your primary duties will be to read the articles sent to Roundabout magazine by the Fellowship to ensure that they meet the criteria for publication.

The Link Liaison Officer will support the Editorial Team by establishing and maintaining regular contact with the group, intergroup and regional Roundabout Liaison Officers.

If you are interested in joining the Editorial Team and would like the full description of the vacancies please contact the Roundabout Trustee at: trustee.highlandsregion@gsogb.org.uk

Applications should be endorsed by intergroup or region and accompanied by a letter of support. Current application forms can be accessed and downloaded from the Roundabout vacancy page or document library of the AA website or by contacting admin.nothernserviceoffice@gsogb.org.uk or phone 0141 226 2214.

Applications should be forwarded by email to jenny.pryke@gsogb.org.uk or posted to Jenny Pryke at The General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, (Great Britain) Limited, PO Box 1, 10 Toft Green, York, YO1 7NJ.

The closing date for applications is: 18 December 2020.

Terri S – Board Trustee for Roundabout

Roundabout is published by the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (GB) Ltd. and is the official journal of Alcoholics Anonymous in Scotland, though views expressed in the articles are not necessarily those of Alcoholics Anonymous. All articles, cartoons and contents of Roundabout are copyright material of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous and Roundabout.

The Editor invites the submission of articles and letters which should be sent to:

ROUNDABOUT

**Northern Service Office
Alcoholics Anonymous
50 Wellington Street
Glasgow G2 6HJ
Tel: 0141 226 2214
or by e-mail to:
roundabout@aamail.org**

Articles and letters will be attributed to 'Anonymous' if the writer wishes, but the original submission to the Editor should include name, address and telephone number (these details will not be published).

The Editor cannot guarantee to publish all materials submitted or return contributed matter. Payment for any submissions cannot be made. **Roundabout does not publish poetry or obituaries.** Contributors are asked to accept these conditions.

Payments and administrative enquiries should be sent to:

AA ROUNDABOUT
Alcoholics Anonymous
P.O. Box 1
10 Toft Green
York YO1 7NJ

Telephone enquiries can be made between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday on: 01904 644026.

Editorial

This month's theme is Service – the Third Legacy. I have a sponsor who explained to me in words and deeds that the Twelfth Step is not just about sponsorship; it is also about being involved in the service structure of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is my duty to ensure that the message of AA is still reaching the still-suffering alcoholic in society. The fellowship, the friendships and the personal growth that have come into my life because of the service I'm involved in cannot be overstated.

And so it is for the AA members whose articles are featured in this month's magazine. Two Roundabout Liaison Officers, separated by nearly forty years, write about how nervous they were when they initially took on their role at intergroup but how they grew in confidence as they came to understand how important Roundabout was in carrying the message. In the Grapevine article an AA member from America speaks of his gratitude for a group in Edinburgh who encouraged him to do service at group level in the days following the sudden death of his wife. Another AA member reminds us of the importance of rotation in service which helps to ensure the arteries of our service structure do not become blocked by people staying in position too long and therefore preventing others from experiencing their own spiritual growth through service.

The Editorial Team would like to thank everyone who kindly submitted articles for the themed issues this year.

We are very pleased to announce that the magazines from 2020, which are a unique document of how the Scottish Fellowship responded to the global pandemic, will be reprinted in a special, hard bound yearbook. This will be published next year to celebrate Roundabout's 70th anniversary.

Finally, we would like to wish all readers of Roundabout the warmest of Christmas greetings however you may spend it in this year of Covid-19.

Extract taken from *The Language Of The Heart*, p131-134.

Services Make AA Tick

Once upon a time, all AA meetings were held in homes. There weren't any committees and nobody put up a cent. We hadn't even a name and founders were unheard of. It was simple...

By and by, meetings got big. Our front parlours couldn't hold them. We had to move into halls. Gathering places seldom came free so we must needs pay rent. Landlords weren't a particle interested in the spiritual advantages of group poverty. So someone passed the hat and we dropped money into it voluntarily. We grudgingly learned that rent was necessary to insure sobriety – our spiritual dividend, life itself.

This rent-paying process also produced the first A.A. "official." The gent we picked to pass the hat soon became our treasurer. Then phone calls had to be answered, letters written, literature ordered and distributed. The now familiar group secretary put in an appearance. Presently newspaper interviews had to be given, preachers and doctors canvassed, hospital arrangements made, banquets set up. Not by anybody either. Somebody special had to be picked to do these chores. That "somebody" became the group service chairman.

Of course, this was all quite troublesome, for it marred our sometimes fallible serenity. Squabbling began. Dark forecasts of our future were made, and everybody yearned to go back into the parlour. But we didn't because we couldn't. We saw we'd have to have service committees or fail to function, perhaps fall apart entirely. We'd actually *have to organize services in order to keep A.A. simple...*

Let us make our services respectable: let us rank them in importance with the Twelve Steps of recovery and the Twelve Principles of AA Tradition. Let us forget our fear of over-organization; let us remember that AA as a whole cannot be organized: but that we must so organize and support our special services that AA can function...

By our Twelve Steps we have recovered, by our Twelve Traditions we have unified, and through our Third Legacy – Service – we shall carry the AA message down through all the corridors of time to come.

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Abriged article from Roundabout: September 1981 which describes how one AA member became the Roundabout Rep for her intergroup.

For My Own Sake

Since one of my worst character defects is failing to listen properly I was engrossed in conversation with the intergroup delegate next to me when I realised the chairman had been speaking. "Sorry," says I "would you repeat that?" "It's to do with nominating a rep from this area for Roundabout, I nominate you. Seconded, came a reply from the back of the room. "Well," says I, "A.A. only asks me to try, but what have I just volunteered for?" The secretary will give you the details after the meeting, announced the chairman, and so, there I was, in at the deep end and didn't even know what. "God grant me the ability to shut my big mouth".

However, when I read the initial introduction to the job, a thousand memories came flooding back...

In the early days in A.A. getting to meetings was pretty difficult for me. Baysitters were a problem as no one really trusted me to be back when I said I would be. Since my head was in such a scrambled condition, all but the first step scared me, and I couldn't take in passages from the Big Book or Twelve and Twelve, but letters from people in varying stages of recovery, that I read in Roundabout, I could understand, especially from people like me that were new and struggling.

Many a night full of self-pity and resentment when I couldn't get to a meeting I would pick up that little magazine and get the strength and hope to keep trying "Just for Today."...

I remembered with gratitude that I had been given a load of back issues of Roundabout when I first came into the Fellowship, the sleepless nights when I read and re-read maybe one or two letters over and over from people who had experienced what I was going through at that particular time and they gave me the strength to cope. The minutes, while maybe waiting for the tatties to cook or kettles to boil when I wouldn't have had time to read a book but I had time for an article in Roundabout. The fact that it fitted into my handbag and I could have it with me all the time, I just knew I had to do my best. I owed it that much.

I have had many happy experiences collecting articles for the magazine. I have loved hearing people share from the top table, then asked them to put it on paper to share with the rest of us. I've been in since the beginning of the Roundabout Reps meetings and I now feel it's time to stand back and pass on the responsibility to another member, as I'm in great danger of hogging it as my special baby that I love so much and besides, rotation is an all important factor in our well-being.

My intentions were to "Keep it simple" and get back to the cups and ashtrays and take a back seat at meetings for a while, but I guess the Man Upstairs might have different plans for me. I've been asked onto the P.I.C. and if I'm accepting for the right reasons then it can only strengthen my quality of sobriety.

Yes, I'm involved, you see, I have to be. A.A. is the only thing in my life that I honestly qualified for. Please, please, keep the articles coming. I need you now as much as I needed you then. Someone, somewhere is going to pick up this month's Roundabout for the first time and get the hope and encouragement you gave me that day not too long ago.

Eleanor

IT'S EASIER THAN EVER NOW TO SEND US AN ARTICLE

Visit our national website at:

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk>

and navigate through AA Members Area > Fellowship Magazines >
Roundabout Magazine > Roundabout Flyer > this link.

Type your
article directly into the blank field then click 'Submit Article'.

My Service Story

Dr Bob defined the AA Programme of Recovery with two simple words: love and service. I'm Gordon, I'm an alcoholic and I think without service there is no AA.

A year sober I attended West Lanarkshire Intergroup to pay the no dues and fees. For another year I sat, wary and unsure. I wanted to get involved but procrastination set in which was typical for me! One particular night the Roundabout Liaison Officer (RLO) post became vacant. I raised my hand and the role was mine! "What have I done?" I thought, panic and fear gripping me as I drove home. My Higher Power had other ideas. I was inundated with support, the usual AA reaction seen all over the world.

A big thanks to all those involved with Roundabout. I have been privileged to attend three Annual Roundabout Liaison Workshops in Glasgow, met RLOs in Edinburgh and most recently attended a Roundabout Service Workshop online. I have been part of one day conventions in my intergroup, met the Share team and now have friends in York. Magic stuff.

As in says in our AA literature 'Faith without works is dead.' I encourage you to get involved with service be it at group, intergroup or regional level. Find out about the AA Telephone Helpline or become the Roundabout Representative for your home group. Service has definitely enhanced my sobriety.

Procrastination is not good for an alcoholic. Don't stand on the sidewalk wishing. Join the journey. Feel free to contact me about Roundabout as I have to give it away to keep it!

Gordon
Birkenshaw Friday





Trust God, Clean House, Help Others

I owe my life to the man who went from a dosshouse to a penthouse thanks to AA. He remembered his primary purpose the day I had an honest and sincere desire to stop drinking. That was in a homeless centre, 30 hours after I had my last drink on 10 March 1999. There was a warm welcome and I was offered a cup of tea and encouraged to listen. I went to a meeting every day for at least six months and have done an average of five meetings a week for the last 21 years.

Full of ignorance and arrogance I thought the Programme did not apply to me. I did not drink, went to meetings and prayed to a Power greater than me. Our Big Book tells us that 'faith without works is dead' and my mental obsession returned in early 2003. My logic told me that to drink would be an act of insanity and I've known people who committed suicide. The alternative was to swallow my pride and ask another member of AA for help.

A man full of compassion was put in my path. I asked him and we set off on a path of discovery in recovery. Once a week for two hours he guided me through the Programme and I walk a free man today.

There have been hurdles, challenges and adversities. In March this year my mum died one year after a diagnosis of terminal lung and ovarian cancer. I have not needed to take a drink though because I have been placed in a position of neutrality. I am safe and protected. Many meetings, many chances; few meetings, few chances; no meetings, no chances. Join a group and set out the chairs or meet the newcomer at the door. Ask a close-mouthed, trusted friend to help you with the Programme. Trust God, clean house, help others.

Gordon F
St Peter's Chapel Aberdeen



**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.**

Becoming The Person I Was Meant To Be

My name is Terri and I am an alcoholic. I fell through the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous a hopeless, helpless drunk on April 5 2000. I was beaten, broken, bankrupt and bald, as I had 'restyled' my hair in a blackout.

My introduction to AA was the opening meeting of the Inverness Gathering where an unknown man shared his experience, strength and hope. I identified with him and realised that maybe, just maybe, I too was an alcoholic and if he could do it there might be hope for me. Before I had listened, really listened to what that man shared I thought it was impossible for someone like me, who still held a responsible job, drove a company car and wore a business suit, to be an alcoholic. I was in complete denial. I had left my husband and two remaining children at home and was drinking myself into oblivion on a nightly basis. The unacceptable had become acceptable.

The following night I joined a home group and watched how everyone set up and washed up after the meeting. Eventually I asked if I could help and as an ardent and vociferous non-smoker I was allocated the task of emptying the ash trays. This was the first step on my service journey in AA.

I believe my Higher Power led me to meet my sponsor who introduced me to the 12 Step Programme of Alcoholics Anonymous. I was afforded time to grow in recovery and to understand, develop and build my relationship with my Higher Power. I was then introduced to AA's 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts and I learned to try to practise these daily through the example of other members that I had the privilege to work with in service at group, intergroup and regional level. At times throughout my recovery I have hit the wall of complacency. These are the very times I need to do more service, not less. My spiritual journey has been enhanced time and time again when I have actively engaged in my primary purpose and it was beyond my wildest dreams to be ratified as trustee for Highlands and Islands Region at Conference 2018.

As a trustee of the General Service Board (GSB) I was appointed to serve on the Nominations Committee (NOMS). My duties include conducting telephone

interviews of the nominees for the various service position vacancies on the Sub-Committees. This requires me to thoroughly prepare and to try to put the member at ease to ensure that they enjoy the interview. I then submit a written report to the chair and other members of the NOMS. As in all groups within the Fellowship decisions are based on the group conscience.

I also chair the Health Sub-Committee (HSC) along with another trustee and a non-alcoholic trustee (NAT). Since AA's earliest inception health professionals have played a vital role in AA's journey. Historically, Dr W D Silkworth, Dr Bob and Sister Ignatius set the bar very high and the current HSC work tirelessly to carry the message to as many health professionals as possible. From north to south, the Channel Islands and Continental Europe, countless presentations and Open Meeting Workshops have been delivered to more than two thousand student and vocational training doctors, nursing degree students, midwives, police, firemen and frontline staff.

In early sobriety my concentration was so poor that I could neither read nor comprehend whole chapters of text but every night my bedtime reading was the Scottish Fellowship Magazine, Roundabout. I identified with the members who did service by writing articles and sharing their experience, strength and hope and Roundabout became a well-used tool in my spiritual toolkit.

Imagine my feelings when in November 2019 I was asked if I would carry out the service responsibility of chairing the Roundabout Sub-Committee. I knew and respected previous trustees and editors of the magazine and understand the love the Scottish Fellowship has for Roundabout and, as in every other service role I have carried out I am only asked to try. The Editorial Team produce a wonderful magazine each month and my role is one of support and guidance. Even through Covid the team have made sure that AA members get their Roundabout.

When I came to AA all I wanted to do was get the hell out of my life. Instead, through practising the Twelve Step Programme, working with my sponsor, sponsoring others and having a Higher Power in my life, I have been able to give back, through commitment to my primary purpose and service, that which was freely given – enabling me to grow into the person I was meant to be.

Terri S

Friars Street Inverness



*“How come you’re all of a sudden easy to get along with?
What did I do, outside of joining AA and getting sober?”*

Rotation: The Heart Of The Fellowship

My name is Charlie and I’m an alcoholic. Over the past couple of weeks I have had a few enquiries about rotation and have been encouraged to share my experience. When we come to AA we are told we are embarking on a new way of life and that AA works by one alcoholic sharing their experience, strength and hope with another alcoholic. We join groups and quickly hear that the Programme of AA is a spiritual Programme. Our aim is spiritual progress not spiritual perfection.

As we settle into our new AA life we get a sponsor to guide us through the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions. Along the way our attention is directed to our three-sided logo of Recovery, Unity and Service and it is explained why we have the three sides – take one away and the other two would collapse. We would be left with a straight line, going nowhere. Many of us, though never enough, take the General Service Representative (GSR) post for our group and go along to the local intergroup where we enter general service and try to raise awareness of AA within the local community. We then have the opportunity to progress along the service structure to our regional assembly and for some all the way to the General Service Board of trustees who do exactly the same service at national and international levels.

Being convinced, I handed my will and life over to the care of God as I understood Him. In my prayer and meditation I became convinced that service was the path for me. I had heard alcoholics share their experience of the benefits of service, of how they had learned so much about themselves and how their attitudes to life had changed for the better. I wanted that experience so into service I went. I have since had many wonderful experiences.

‘Rotation: the Heart of the Fellowship’ was the theme of the first General Service Conference I had the privilege to attend, a learning curve indeed. Some of the many reasons for rotation being a foundation stone became apparent. So far in my new life I had shared regularly at meetings about how I was changing thanks to service. I saw then why I MUST rotate out of service positions – to allow another member to have the same experiences I was enjoying.

Attaining humility is another requirement to our character building and rotation is a great help in this. The growing confidence I felt doing service posts had led me on occasion to believe I was indispensable, that I was doing better than any of my predecessors. These were extremely foolish and dangerous thoughts. Through my daily meditation I had another penny dropping moment: I understood another reason for rotation: ‘Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern’. I knew then I was on the path of humility.

To be of service to my fellow sufferers, with rotation at its heart, is the life blood of humility. Rotation has expanded my experience, helped strengthen my character and filled me with the hope that many of us can feel as I do. Who am I to play God by being a blockage to another’s spiritual progress?

Charlie

Partick Lunchtime Friday

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Points To Ponder

“Service is at the centre of every AA concept and activity. It is as fundamental to AA as abstinence is to sobriety. Without this giving of oneself to another, there would be no Fellowship”

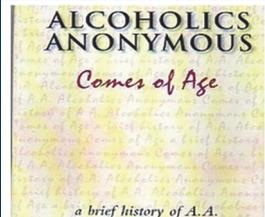
(The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain, pg 7)



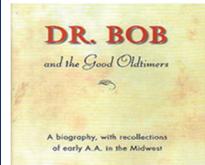
AA Conference Approved Books

New Items and Revised Prices

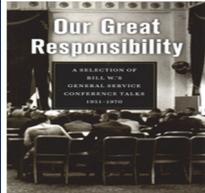
AA Comes of Age Soft Back

 <p>ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS <i>Comes of Age</i> a brief history of A.A.</p>	<p>AA Comes Of Age: a brief history of A.A. Written when nearly half a century had gone by since AA's historic 1955 Convention in St. Louis, when the founding members passed on to the entire Fellowship the responsibility for the Three Legacies</p> <p>Item code 2121 Price £6.00</p>
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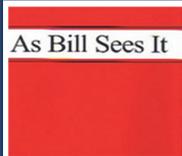
Dr Bob and the Good Oldtimers Soft Back

 <p>DR. BOB <i>and the Good Oldtimers</i> A biography, with recollections of early A.A. in the Midwest</p>	<p>Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers Soft Cover A biography, with recollections of early A.A. in the Midwest</p> <p>Item Code 2181 Price £6.00</p>
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Our Great Responsibility Soft Back

 <p>Our Great Responsibility A SELECTION OF BILL W.'S GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE TALKS 1951-1970</p>	<p>Our Great Responsibility A selection of Bill W's General Service Conference Talks, 1951 - 1970. 270 pages, softcover with over 60 black & white and colour images. Derived from original audio recordings.</p> <p>Item Code 6070 Price £6.00</p>
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As Bill Sees It

 <p>As Bill Sees It</p>	<p>As Bill Sees It The A.A. Way of Life (selected writings of A.A.'s co-founder).</p> <p>Item Code 2100 Price £5.00</p>
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Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions Pocket Size

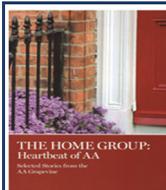


Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

How members of Alcoholics Anonymous recover and how the society functions.

Item code 2250 Price £5.00

The Home Group: Heartbeat of AA

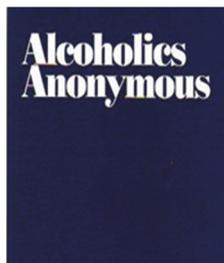


The Home Group: Heartbeat of AA

Selected Stories from the AA Grapevine.

Item Code 2230 Price £5.00

Alcoholics Anonymous Fourth Edition (2001) Hard Back



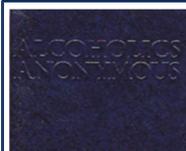
This is the Big Book

Rumour has it that at Bill's suggestion the first edition was printed on very heavy paper to make it look bigger, thicker and therefore seem to be better value for money! Hence the 'Big Book' nickname.

Often described as the basic textbook of our Fellowship the first 164 pages describe our recovery program and have hardly changed since that first edition. The personal stories contained at the back of the book are changed from one edition to the next to reflect changing social situations.

Item Code 2020 Price £8.00

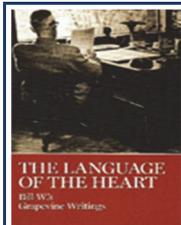
Alcoholics Anonymous Soft Back



Soft Back 4th Edition of The Big Book

Item Code 2040 Price £7.00

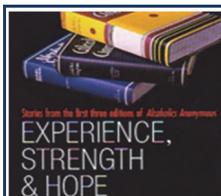
The Language of the Heart



The Language of the Heart
Bill W's Grapevine writings.

Item code 2220 Price £7.00

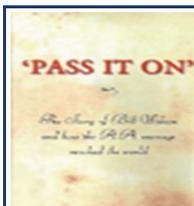
Experience, Strength & Hope



Experience, Strength & Hope
Stories from the first three editions of Alcoholics Anonymous

Item Code 2210 Price £7.00

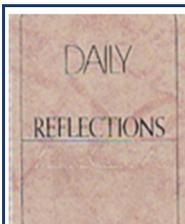
Pass It On



Pass It On
The Story of Bill Wilson and how the A.A. message reached the world.

Item Code 2200 Price £8.00

Daily Reflections



Daily Reflections
This is a book of reflections by A.A. members for A.A. members.

Item Code 2260 Price £5.00

TO ORDER ANY OF THESE BOOKS PLEASE COMPLETE THE FORM BELOW OR SCAN THE QR CODE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE WHICH WILL TAKE YOU DIRECT TO THE ONLINE LITERATURE SHOP

ITEM	CODE	QUANTITY	PRICE EACH	TOTAL PRICE
AA Comes of Age	2121		6.00	
Dr Bob & the Good Oldtimers	2181		6.00	
Our Great Responsibility	6070		6.00	
As Bill Sees It	2100		5.00	
Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions Pocket Size	2250		5.00	
The Home Group	2230		5.00	
Alcoholics Anonymous Hard Back	2020		8.00	
Alcoholics Anonymous Soft Back	2040		7.00	
Language of the Heart	2220		7.00	
Experience, Strength & Hope	2210		7.00	
Pass It On	2200		8.00	
Daily Reflections	2260		5.00	

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Shop | Alcoholics Anonymous – Great Britain

Using the camera on your smart phone, point the lens at this QR code and it will show you a link to the website.

How to Shop with AA. Use the category links to find the various sections from our literature order form. Use the link and buttons to view the item or to add purchases to your shopping cart.

The Roundabout Interview

Many thanks to Ean, Tuesday Night Rubislaw, Aberdeen

What brought you to AA?

I had a business trip to Hollywood, a wonderful opportunity. I was worried about my drinking and I did manage to cut down before the trip, right until the moment I got to Aberdeen Airport. My resolve was broken there and I went on to spend days in the hotel room just drinking 24-7. When I got home I said to myself "I can't do this anymore" and I went to a meeting.

Was there one thing that made you realise you had a problem with drink?

In my teens and twenties it was alright. My mates drank, it was just what you did. But then my mates stopped doing it and I just carried on and found other drinking companions. By my 40's I began missing things, falling out with people and not being invited to things because of my drinking. My blood pressure was high: solution – cut down on salt and sugar but not the booze.

I remember one incident. I was sitting in the bath at 9am with a 250ml glass of red wine by the side of the bath, listening to traffic jam reports on the radio. I remember thinking "You poor sods. I don't have to do anything like that – you're stuck commuting in traffic." Then I reached for the glass and I was shaking so much I spilled as much as I drank.

Did you know about AA and if so how?

About seven years before I got sober, I was suffering from the effects of alcohol. I didn't really understand what an alcoholic was. In my own mind I was a heavy social drinker, a maverick, like Oliver Reed, Peter O Toole and Richard Burton. Work hard; play hard. I was in the entertainment business, other people didn't get to do what I did because they had to do normal jobs. But at some stage I realised I had a problem and I phoned somebody I knew was in AA and asked for a chat.

Twenty minutes later we met in the park. What I wanted him to do was give me a bit of a bollocking, be told to cut down, control myself, etc. Instead he said "Right you, in the car" and took me to an AA meeting where I proceeded to do all the things you shouldn't do. I didn't identify with anyone, I desperately looked for the differences and when I saw the word 'God' all over the place my mind decided that this was a religion. Since everybody was so happy and smiling it wasn't just a religion it was a cult. I wasn't having any of that. That was my first introduction to AA and it took me another seven years to get back.

What do you remember about your first meeting?

My first meeting was not voluntary but it sowed the seed. My first voluntary meeting was after I got home from the Hollywood trip. I was staying in Oxford and I did something I don't recommend: I detoxed myself cold turkey, alone. It was horrific. But I was too proud to go to a meeting shaking. After a week I felt ready to go but I was still self will run riot.

I chose a meeting by time and location, one that I could walk to. Only one (very posh) guy greeted me. He came up to me and said "Newcomer, eh? Oh, you'll have something to say hahahaha." It was a one hour meeting on Step Eleven and that is all they did. Not one person acknowledged me as a newcomer and I was never given the opportunity to say what I was ready to say "I am an alcoholic." The next day I phoned the Oxford Helpline, which I should have done in the first place and asked for a meeting where I could say "I am an alcoholic." The lady I spoke to invited me to her home group the following day. Everyone there made me feel properly welcome and I also met my sponsor there.

Was there anything you didn't like about AA at first?

I didn't like the God thing. There was the Bible, the Big Blue Book. I had to get over that as well. When I went on to read the book it all made sense to me. People told me "This is not a hobby; it's a life saver." Saying yes to everything is what has saved my life.

How do you feel you have changed?

I got the opportunity to change my behaviour. Now I never use expressions like "That's just the way I am" or "That's the way I was born." My character defects were laid out very clearly for me. I wrote them down. I had the choice: did I want to keep them or get rid of them? I wanted to get rid of them.

I'm never going to be perfect but I can choose to change my life. I wanted to keep some things: the sense of humour, a bit of cheek, the non-dangerous recklessness. I wanted to be rid of the selfishness, sneakiness and dishonesty. As soon as any of those thoughts come into my head now I've got the tools to deal with them straight away. My conscience, my Higher Power, kicks in "Is this right or is it wrong? It's wrong? Oh, come on! No! I want to get away with it!" But I don't do it. I just try every day to do the next right thing and hope that my Step Ten isn't too long. In return I get peace, tranquility and serenity.

What does putting back into AA mean to you?

Service is a part of my daily life. The bit in the Big Book – Dr. Bob's four reasons: it's the right thing to do; it's a pleasure; I owe it to my sponsor who did it for me and it helps me stay sober.

What do you say to a newcomer?

This is a lifesaver. It's not a hobby. It's not a drop-in center. Give it three months, give it a full go, do what's suggested, then if you don't like it you can go back to your old life. If you haven't made someone a cup of tea at a meeting then you haven't done AA properly.

Has Roundabout played a part in your recovery?

Yes. I submitted articles on my first, second and third AA birthdays. The third one was selected for somebody to read on the audio page on the AAGB national website. Hearing an oldish sounding Scottish guy reading my words was a little weird but it was an honor to be chosen. Roundabout is a great service tool.

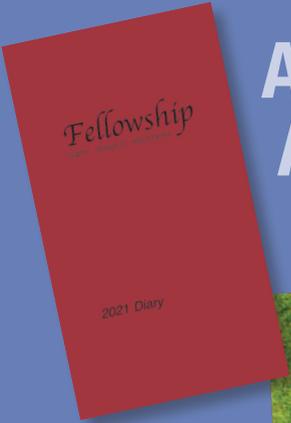
Do you want to say anything about Covid/Lockdown?

The Programme has made it possible for me to deal with Covid effortlessly. Not that it has had no effect – I can't travel so I'm not making money. But instead I am studying Scottish history, taking walks and enjoying nature. I'm accepting what is without anger. I have a new perspective on what is important. I have helped start a Zoom meeting for newcomers. It is wonderful to be a part of this.

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“... and you didn't see how one little glass of eggnog could hurt?”



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Article first printed in Grapevine in July 2020

EDINBURGH LOVE

A dream trip through the U.K. took a tragic turn, but the local AAs knew how to take care of their own

Over the last few years my wife and I were able to travel and experience the beauty of this wonderful world. We attended AA meetings in all of the countries that we traveled to. I would have never believed that a skid row alcoholic who came to AA years ago on parole from the state of Texas could have ever imagined the life that was given to me.

This past May my wife and I got to travel to the United Kingdom to spend a month experiencing England, Wales and Scotland. It was a trip of a lifetime. My wife had dreamed of it since she was a little girl. The history, the sites and the people were so wonderful. The AA meetings we attended were one of the highlights of our trip. On the 24th day of our trip, we arrived in Scotland – a dream come true for my wife and me. She was 58 percent Scottish and felt like she was home. We had a long day visiting Edinburgh Castle and walking the Royal Mile. We headed to the home where we were staying for the night and I went to bed early. My wife stayed up to work on the next day's journey.

In the morning when I woke, all the lights were on and I discovered my wife had passed away in the middle of the night. I was utterly in shock. Total powerlessness overwhelmed me. I felt like lying down and dying. If it were not for my friend who was traveling with us, I would not have known what to do.

She called the paramedics. They arrived and pronounced my wife deceased and then the police arrived. After everyone left, I sat there trying to figure out what my next step would be as I prayed for the knowledge of God's will and the power to carry it out.

In any respectable home in Scotland there is always a bottle of scotch. I took one look at it and smiled. I knew that would not be a solution to what I was feeling. I grabbed my phone and pulled up the U.K. meeting app and found the next AA meeting I could get to. I headed into Edinburgh to a noon meeting called the First Edinburgh, the oldest AA group in the city. I felt at home and safe. The group members loved me and let me share everything I was going through.

As it turned out, the mortuary where my wife was taken was one block away from the First Edinburgh Group. I smiled to myself, knowing that my wife would make sure she had gotten as close to a meeting as possible. She was one month

shy of 30 years of continuous sobriety. One of the members of First Edinburgh had been a mortician at that mortuary. I really started feeling like it was all going to be OK. When I shared that my wife had Scottish ancestors, someone mentioned that maybe my wife just needed to come home.

Over the next week and a half I attended meetings all over Edinburgh. They had me lead meetings, they had me show up early and help set up, they had me chair a Traditions study and they had me stay late and help clean up. They even invited me to have dinner with them. One day a past delegate of the U.K. General Service Conference sat with me in the train station and we talked and talked while I waited for my train. This was special, because I recently served as a delegate at our own General Service Conference in the U.S.

The AA members of Scotland all treated me just like my home group members back in Texas. They even sent me home with a 30-year token for my wife. If it were not for AA around the world, I would not have had the love and support that I needed to get through this.

The support continued when I got home, with members of AA waiting at the airport with open arms. Today I continue to do service at my home group. I work with newcomers, carry the message behind the walls and carry the message through Public Information and Cooperation with Professional Community in my community. Each day our spiritual principles guide me to live life as I continue on this spiritual journey.

I hope one day to return to Edinburgh to share my love with the AA members in Scotland. For now, I share my love with the AA members I meet here.

Paul M.
Galveston, Texas

National Helpline Number

0800 9177 650

email

help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

AA website

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk>

AA service website

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/members>



Random Acts Of Kindness

Kindness is a gift seeking no reward or recognition. When I came to AA in early 1973 I now see that I was very broken, alone and confused but I could not see that at the time.

I had no emotional language or understanding. I knew that I was hurting and angry but I tried not to show it because of the fear of even more rejection. Inevitably, with no alcohol to suppress these explosive emotions I found myself either depressed or having outbursts of anger or rage, mostly internal but occasionally aimed at and around others. I 'could not control my emotional nature'. Guilt, shame and remorse drove me into times of isolation, avoiding my fellows and self-destruction.

I had no idea that this was the illness working me over, the isms without the alcohol. Thankfully others could see and understand my frustrations, people who knew their own illness and were treating it with our 12 Step Recovery Programme.

That's where I met kindness. That's where I began to see that kindness was an act of service to the still-suffering alcoholic, me! "Keep coming back" they would say, "Try to be a bit more gentle with yourself." Our Programme, especially Step Four opened my eyes and I could see that all of my difficulties arose from my unresolved conflicts that continued to rage in my thoughts and emotions and that this ongoing wreckage had to be resolved and cleared. The service and kindness of sponsorship helped me navigate through some dark places and I came to realise that as my perspective changed so did my attitude, actions and motivations.

I was encouraged to join a group and do service. They trusted me to empty and clean the ash trays – there were a lot of ash trays in those days. I was then elevated to making the tea and doing the washing up. I was in a great panic when I was allowed to chair a meeting and eventually to find speakers. I was told that I had a voice at the group conscience. I was afraid to use it but with encouragement, in time it came. I've been in many groups over the years and had the great privilege of being involved in starting some new groups and I've always sought to show kindness to new members.

In time and as my interest in understanding how our Fellowship works grew, I went as a Group Service Representative (GSR) to intergroup and engaged in various service positions. All have been of great benefit to me in my own recovery. My introduction to our 12 Traditions opened a whole new world to me. I learned that they offered me the opportunity to grow in love and tolerance and to realise that we don't always see things the same way and that perhaps some might have differing motivations from me. I have learned to trust our ultimate authority, our group conscience – even if I disagree with the outcome and perhaps the way that outcome was reached. This attitude helps me keep peace in my personal recovery. All things are in hands greater than mine and I don't have to control others or outcomes.

The challenges and rewards of service, at all levels, are an ongoing education for my own growth and an opportunity to contribute along with other trusted servants to the carrying of our message to the still-suffering alcoholic and the sustainability of our Fellowship. I don't see one act of kindness through service as being greater or lesser than any other since all contribute and all are valuable. Personalities differ in our Fellowship and certainly within service groups and I know that I can only attend to my part. I've grown up and perhaps toughened up in service. It has enhanced my primary purpose and given me focus.

There are no ash trays to empty or clean anymore but I would suggest that if a member takes a service position and learns to work through the inevitable fears and frustrations that come along, your acts of kindness, random or otherwise, might well lift you to a higher place. We are told in the twelve promises that we will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows – and that has happened for me.

Charlie S
Grangemouth Morning Fellowship Saturday



That Was The Week That Was

Monday: A radio phone-in programme asked listeners what kept them going through the lockdown. Answers included socially distanced get-togethers with family/friends, TV box sets, music, books, exercise etc. My own immediate thought was of online AA meetings! Without these, I'd be clambering up the walls dementedly! We're really privileged to belong to a Fellowship that's adapted itself so deftly to the pandemic. Lochwinnoch's 8pm Zoom meeting filled the bill admirably tonight!

Tuesday: My home group has a members-only gathering this evening. Remarkable how such a mixed bag of individuals are all on precisely the same wavelength! Updates are exchanged on how we're coping. We chortle at silly jokes and stories. Anxieties are aired and help volunteered. A precious support bubble. Thank you AA!

Wednesday: Our two wheelie bins need to be trundled into the street today. Sometimes they're quite heavy. I also take out the bins for our elderly next door neighbour. I'm happy to oblige. Unexpectedly, the son of the senior gentleman across the road rang our doorbell today. His dad's recuperating from an operation. Would I mind putting his bins out for a while too? "No bother," I cheerily replied. I wouldn't have been quite so user friendly if I'd still been on the booze!

Thursday: AA service was mentioned at last night's meeting. In my early days in the Fellowship, I always automatically stacked the chairs at the end. I wasn't aware of it then but I was performing AA service, at a basic level. You don't necessarily need to hold an 'official' AA post, though there are always vacancies. We can all welcome newcomers, encourage those struggling or kindly offer our phone number. Simple but valuable acts of service, whether at a live or virtual meeting!

Friday: My nephew's birthday. I called to wish him well. A friend had given him an advent calendar as a present. But it didn't contain chocolates. Behind the little snowy Santa door there was a miniature bottle of spirits! An assorted seasonal tippie for every day until Christmas Eve. Back in my dismal drinking years, I'd have guzzled all 24 of them on the 1st of December!

Saturday: One of those gloomy winter days when you need to have the lights on indoors. I feel a lot brighter after a cyber visit to the delightful 11am Penilee group. In this bizarre world right now, frequent meetings are vital to keep my head in the correct zone!

Sunday: I drink a glass of cranberry juice each morning. Apparently it's healthy but it does rather resemble red wine! So whenever I'm at an online meeting (like yesterday's), I sip the dodgy looking extract from a coffee mug. Don't want folks to get the wrong idea! Stay safe and sober!

Take care

GL

AN INVITATION TO YOUNG MEMBERS and MEMBERS YOUNG IN SOBRIETY

Roundabout would like to hear from young people who are living sober thanks to AA. What are the challenges? What are the benefits? Send your experiences to the email address below so that other young people who may have a problem can benefit from your experience.

Roundabout would also like to remind Fellowship members that they should never consider themselves 'not long enough sober' to contribute to our magazine. If you are sober today and grateful for that then please write and share.

roundabout@aamail.org

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THE MAGNIFICENT OBSESSION

**Sobriety is the most important thing in your life without exception. You may believe that your job or your home life or some other things come first but consider:
if you do not get sober and stay sober, the chances are you won't have a job, a family, sanity or even life.
If you are convinced that everything in life depends on your sobriety, you have just so much more chance of getting sober and staying sober. If you put other things first, you are only hurting your chances.**



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THE TWELVE CONCEPTS OF WORLD SERVICE

1. Final responsibility and ultimate authority for AA world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.
2. The General Service Conference of AA has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.
3. To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of AA – the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees and executives – with a traditional “Right of Decision.”
4. At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional “Right of Participation”, allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.
5. Throughout our structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.
6. The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.
7. The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the AA purse for final effectiveness.
8. The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.
9. Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.
10. Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.
11. The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.
12. The Conference shall observe the spirit of AA tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote and, wherever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centres may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

GOD
grant me the
SERENITY
to accept the things
I cannot change,
COURAGE
to change the things I can
and
WISDOM
to know the difference

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