

## A History of Gratitude Week in the UK.

Somebody asked me recently how Gratitude Week started and I had to admit that I didn't know.

I knew it was held around 10th June each year, which is the date AA started in Britain, and that you were supposed to contribute the cost of a day's drinking (at today's prices!) to show your gratitude for your sobriety.

There it stopped. I knew nothing else. After some prodding from our Hon Treasurer, Ann S., I decided to find out.

In the USA Gratitude Month (yes Month!) started in the 1940's with GSB giving small annual dinners in November to thank the media for the help they had given in the previous year. In the 1960's they extended to Gratitude Luncheons which were more of a public information effort of GSO. The media were invited to them, Bill W. gave an address and literature was made available to take away. They ceased in 1968 when the cost of these functions was brought into question.

The USA's Gratitude Week itself started in 1956 when the 6th General Service Conference approved an annual fundraising week pre-Thanksgiving to raise funds for AA's worldwide services.

In Britain the whole thing was started by Chiltern & Thames Intergroup in 1985. At that time GSO in Britain was short of funds and a member called Danny from Maidenhead came up with a Sobriety Week idea. It was proposed in the March and held in the May of 1985 – no hanging about down their way! The first collection raised £1190, solely from the Chiltern & Thames groups.

The idea was taken up and adapted by Central London Intergroup and in the summer of 1987 a report appeared in *AA News* that led to even more groups taking up the idea. At this stage it was still very unofficial.

That changed in 1988 when Conference recommended that it became an annual event to be held around June 10th and that the name be changed to Gratitude Week. The rest is history.

From the humble beginnings in 1985 when Chiltern & Thames raised £1190 on their own, the amount raised has increased steadily and in 2007/8 a total of £47,917 was sent to GSO.

So now you know.

Even in these tight economic times it is still worthwhile to contribute a small sum once a year to remember and acknowledge our sobriety and the part AA has played in it.

Can't afford it – all I can say is that we used to find the money to drink, didn't we? And we did that every day, not once a year!

*John N.  
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