



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

Volume One, Number Two

July 2011

**Hello and welcome** to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Past Particles. A couple of our fellow Archivists have asked for more “Nuts and Bolts” and so Carol has come up with an article on that subject. Dolores from CER reminds us of our Traditions and my input is a piece about Microfilming and Minutes.

Please enjoy!

### **Minutes, the Importance of...**

During my visit to GSO in April of this year in the position of Fellowship Archivist one of my tasks was to make a start on the sorting out of the many cupboards in the Archives room. These hold Region and IG minutes as well as various archive collections and documents. First the Region minutes will be done and then I shall make a start on the Intergroups. The aim is to be able to empty all the cupboards in the Archives Room leaving just the cupboards in the adjoining room for Archives storage, thus giving us more room in the Archives department.



The above mentioned minutes are sorted into year, then months and days, packed altogether after being de-stapled and then sent for microfilming. The microfilms are stored at GSO Archives and the original documents are sent to the Borthwick Institute of York University where they are stored.

Access is allowed to view the microfilms by applying to GSO for permission and filling out the various forms. We will also be introducing a new system whereby we can see who has looked at which film or file and for what reason. This will be in the form of a visitor's book.

From the minutes we can see the growth, or even the lack of it, of Groups, Intergroups and Regions as well as what topics were important at that time. When you read this a letter/email will have been sent to the 16 Region Secretaries reminding them of the importance of them sending the minutes to us and also thanking them for their continuous support in the past and we hope in the future. At some later date we will put together a letter to go to the Intergroup Secretaries with the same topic.

And so without further ado, happy reading hope to see you all soon.

In AA Love and Service,

***Stephen S. Fellowship Archivist.***



## Traditions and Archives

From a talk by Judith Santon, former Archivist at GSO New York to the GSC 2002

Reading the traditions is very much like visiting the Archives browsing through past experience reflected in the histories records. I believe that both the Twelve Traditions and the Archives symbolize the same treasure chest of stories to the newcomers: this is how we were, this is what happened and this is how we are now.

Bill frequently emphasized that the history of Alcoholics Anonymous is not a success story. Rather it is a story of “colossal human failures” converted by the divine alchemy of the living grace of God. Our Twelve Traditions rest on such failures at group level. If you take a look at the Twelve and Twelve, it is really a collection of anecdotes, humorous and tragic episodes.

Bill repeatedly emphasized that the Traditions are not codified laws, but merely suggestions. Underneath all the stories, with a touch of light humour, there is the dark abyss where fallen groups and fallen individuals disappeared, never to make it back to the Fellowship. The Traditions make us face the past instead of regretting it or shutting the door on it, and what would the archives be without the honest intention of protecting all historic documents, including the records of controversies and historic evidence for our pains of growth, as we were slowly coming of age. Paraphrasing 7<sup>th</sup> Step Prayer, archives should have all of us the good and the bad too.

An archive is not merely capturing the evidence, protecting it, and saving it for others yet to come. Archives also allow us to share a unique sense of historic perspective on current issues, no matter how burning they are, no matter how muddled they are with personalities getting in the way.

When we draw a close analogy between the Traditions and the archives, we recognize that collecting archives is more than simply gathering documents. It is collecting evidence of all the lessons we learned as we have grown in the Fellowship. Historically, it is well known, that when Bill introduced the Traditions almost everyone was against them. Bundles of complaining letters arrived at the office daily about Bill hammering the Traditions on the groups no matter where he was travelling. They were accepted in 1950. Now, years later, we are awestruck by the power of his insight and the many ways we could have fallen apart without having these Traditions. If we believe what Bill felt so strongly about, that the Traditions, and the stories embedded in them will provide powerful lessons to the Fellowship on how to survive, then we also have to believe, that the archives, with the multitude of such stories are paramount to our Fellowship.

*Dolores, CER Archives 2011*





## The Nuts and Bolts of It All

Much of this information is taken from the National Archives website, well worth a look.

I repaired a Big Book for my home group where the spine was detached with loose and ripped pages. It was a second edition and valued by the group which they wanted to keep using. Left alone it would be in bits by now, but I was very careful with the repairs and covered the book as well to protect it in the future.

I keep my archives in card folders in cardboard storage boxes. Each folder has a typed inventory of the contents, and this has reminded me that I should produce a master copy of it all. I remove all plastic sleeves and any metal staples, clips etc

### Storing Records

- Protect your records from heat and damp. At home, records are best kept in a cool, damp-free room where the air can circulate.
- Avoid storing them in attics or cellars where they cannot easily be monitored.
- Think about how you can minimize risks from fire, flood, theft or pests.
- Store all papers flat and unfolded.
- Use archival-quality folders and boxes of appropriate size.
- Melinex (known as Mylar in North America) is chemically inert and is a clear protector that contains none of the plasticisers that harm inks, and

does not yellow or become brittle with age.

- Keep papers in their original order or arrangement.
- Keep records out of direct sunlight or powerful artificial lighting. Protect them by blinds or boxing as appropriate.
- Protect records from dust.
- Don't store records in common household plastics such as bin liners, plastic bags or cling film. These emit harmful gases as they degrade and prevent air circulation.

### Simple Preservation Measures

- Don't try to repair damaged documents. Self-adhesive tape is highly damaging as it causes chemical reactions to paper and parchment.
- Use brass clips (clips made of other metal tend to rust) to hold single documents or small numbers of related papers together.
- Carefully remove metal paper clips, staples and pins, and rubber bands where this can be done without damage. Unbleached archival tape made of cotton or linen can be used to preserve original bundles of papers.
- Keep photographs in folders or pockets to protect them from dust and light and provide physical support during use.



## What is Acid-Free and Why does it Matter

If an acidic product comes into contact with paper, photos, textiles or other similar items, the acid can migrate, causing permanent damage and decay. This is why it is so very important to use good quality acid-free and archival materials for preservation. Storage in archival products will slow the ageing process.

Until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, most papers were made of rag or cloth stock. Around 1860 the paper mills started using ground wood with acids, bleach and alum-rosin sizing, resulting in papers with a high acid content (low pH). These papers react with water and the atmosphere to produce self-destructive acidic compounds. These acids act on the paper, shortening the fibres and causing them to become brittle, discolour and crumble into dust.

## The White Glove Debate

The National Archives policy is only to wear gloves when handling mounted prints, drawings, photographs and fine bindings as these have extremely sensitive surfaces which are irreversibly damaged by finger prints. Otherwise they do not require staff or visitors to wear gloves. I'm glad to find an authoritative source as I've often wondered what the rules are on this.

*Carol H., Archivist London Region South*

*We have prepared a list of Suppliers of various Archiving products and accessories which we hope to continually update. If you would like a copy please ask.*

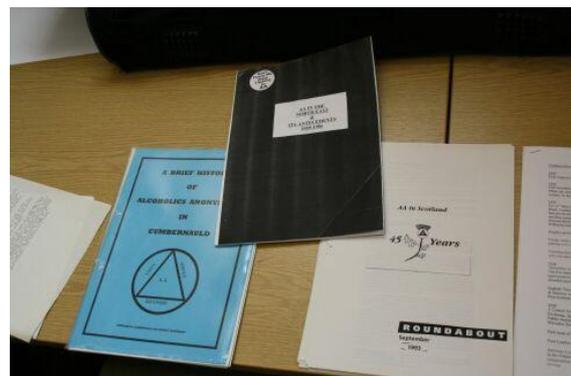


## The Future

We hope to build up on the Nuts and Bolts topic and put it in a form of a "How to..." pamphlet. Still very much in the planning though.

The Display Case for the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Big Book should be here any day now.

Look for the new sign on the door to the Archives Room.



Hope to see you all at the Annual Archivists Meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2011.

Until then,

**Happy Squirreling.**