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Fragments of AA History

1st Dublin Group

The first AA group in Europe was founded in Dublin, Ireland in 1946; eleven years after Akron and New York, only four years behind Los Angeles.

The group met for one big open meeting on Mondays at which a panel of speakers and a moderator explained what AA was about, what it does and how it does it for the benefit of anyone who cared to come and attend. Anybody in Dublin was welcome and we placed notices in the newspaper for the calendar of events around town. Occasionally we would also write letters to the editor telling of this open AA meeting to which all were welcome. The meeting explained much to newcomers and their families as well as medical and social workers who needed to know how AA worked. The secretary and treasurer of that meeting were the overall group officers for a year.

On the remaining week nights the group also held regular closed topic

discussion meetings, each of which had its own secretary. Secretary and treasurer were part of a steering committee which met once a month or as needed.

Business matters were for the overall group's approval, but most minor decisions were made by the group secretary who consulted with them if he needed help. Group conscience was rarely invoked, but when it was it was a solemn and slow process following much discussion for weeks, maybe.

Known as the First Dublin Group or The Country Shop (after the restaurant where they met) the group was founded by Conor F., then three years sober and on vacation with his wife, in 1946. The first man to stand up and introduce himself as an alcoholic in Europe was Richard P. His was also the first European AA recovery. Jimmy R., the group's first recruit, came in the very first introductory meeting night.

Getting off to a shaky start, the secretary and a dozen others got drunk in the summer of 1947. Three remained sober - Richard, Jimmy R. and Sackville (who had joined in April) - and they re-formed the group in August with Sackville as secretary. After that they went from strength to strength for the new secretary was a good organizer who had clear and definite ideas of what they should do. They switched the open public information meeting from Friday to Monday as they found that was a better evening to catch newcomers in the first flush of a new week's resolutions.

In 1950 they were visited by Bill W. who held a press conference in the Mansion House (Lord Mayor's house). Many years later Jimmy R. took great pride in showing me the kitchen sink in his basement apartment into which Bill W. had knocked his cigarette ash as they sat around and talked for hours following the press conference.

In 1948 Sackville began a small paper, *The Road Back*, which did

much to give the group a sense of identity. It went all over the world. A bimonthly group newsletter celebrating birthdays and group news, it also carried recovery sharing in a simple unpretentious five-page format. Sackville edited it for twenty-eight-and-a-half years before I took over as its second editor in 1976.

This little bit of history gives, perhaps, some idea of the coherence of my first home group. Sponsorship was never spoken of but these men did a great deal of tutoring and gave much care and love to us. Although Jimmy R. was 22 years sober when I came in he took care to get to know me and would ask about me if I hadn't been seen around. He explained to me that an important reason for having a home group was that I would be missed if I stopped coming. Sackville's story is in the Big Book as "A Career Army Officer." He died in 1979. Jimmy died in 1975 and Richard joined them both in Heaven around 1981.

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