

# National Newsletter

This issue of our Newsletter (Autumn 1979) has No. 27 on its cover. So amorphous are its origins, though, that this is in fact a fairly random number to give it—depending where you start counting Newsletter issues from.

When Maureen Nicol started the Register in 1960, with little idea of how it would endure and grow, all the letters she sent out were individual, in reply to enquiries. It was not until Brenda Prys-Jones took the Register over in Autumn 1962 that a duplicated 'Newsletter' with its own editors (Jose Newmark of Blackburn and Pat Roberts of Lytham St Annes) was sent to each member; only 'a few hundred copies' were produced. This was followed each Spring and Autumn by further duplicated issues, growing in numbers; 2,000 for April 1964, 3,500 that Autumn (seven pages). Retrospectively, we now call the six issues from Autumn 1962–Spring 1965, all duplicated, A, B, C, D, E and F.

Issue E, for Autumn 1964, included the summary of a questionnaire Brenda Prys-Jones had sent out. This showed that 84 Organisers then voted for twice-yearly circulation of the Newsletter to continue; 31 wanted more frequent circulation; three wanted annual production only. 'So twice-yearly the newsletter will continue', wrote Brenda; and so it has indeed for the past 15 years, and seems likely to continue so as, despite the copious availability of material and enthusiasm, the high cost of distribution (well over £500 per issue already) precludes more frequent issues.

October 1965 saw the first printed Newsletters; 8" x 5.5", eight pages, opening with

Lesley Taylor (of Derbyshire) writing, 'This is by way of an editorial as well as the National Organizer's letter, both responsibilities now being mine—for my sins'. This is where our present Newsletter numbering starts—October 1965 is No. 1. Printed Newsletters then continued to appear twice yearly, edited by the NO herself; Nos. 1–4 by Lesley Taylor, each of 8 pages, finishing in Spring 1966.

Jane Watt of Bottesford (near Nottingham) then took over, added brightly coloured covers and brought out Nos. 5–9. She wrote in No. 7, Autumn 1968, 'A great sigh of relief can be heard in our house when the last of the 8,000 newsletters are finally bundled and despatched. For days floor space is non-existent; packages line the hail; the sitting-room floor is covered with bundles counted out but not wrapped; in the dining-room are the cardboard boxes (obliging grocer!) into which the completed bundles go to be carted along to the post office. I think the village post-mistress is quite glad to see the last of them too'.

Jane's final issue was labelled '1969 No. 2', had 16 pages +cover, 9,000 copies printed; and first rocked our numbering system, as the final page reads; 'This newsletter is not going to appear before 1970 because I have been loth to have it printed before all the order forms were returned . . . I had the last newsletter printed before all the order forms were returned and found myself 400 copies short'. This system of LOs ordering the number of newsletters they require has since been abandoned as unworkable and uneconomic. The Spring 1970 Newsletter "has fallen by the wayside because of the tremendous publicity the Register has had this Spring" (our tenth anniversary), and our newsletter numbering leaps to Autumn 1970 for No. 10. Anita Brocklesby was then National Secretary, and Lesley Moreland of Potters Bar was Newsletter Editor and PRO.

Lesley adopted a smart white cover with grey 'newsletter' lettering and red logo, increased the format to 8.5" x 6.5" and

the number of pages from 24 to 32, in the course of Nos. 10–14. Again, our numbering falters as in Spring 1971 there was no printed Newsletter, due to a protracted postal strike as well as a severe shortage of NHR funds. In Autumn 1971 Newsletter No. 11 appeared, with 14,000 copies.

In No. 12, Spring 1972, with a print order of 20,000, Lesley wrote "This issue of the newsletter is the first which has been packed by the printers. It had become an impossible task at home, so there is great relief in the Moreland household, knowing we shall not be knee-deep in newsletters for weeks!" (Actually the Bell household is now similarly afflicted twice yearly, as we attempt to by-pass the postal system and distribute as many parcels as possible at LOs' meetings; but the printers will deliver free only to the nearby home of the editor!)

In Autumn 1973 Pat Williams of Walsall became editor, and wrote, "Let's make our Newsletter the magazine you always want to buy but nobody prints! Pack it full of news, ideas, radical thinking, challenge—all the outrageous thoughts you express at your group meeting which you're not sure you want made public." Valid and inspiring sentiments still. Pat brought out Nos. 15–20, changing the format again and raising the number of pages to 36.

I became editor as one of a National Group of fifteen, in Autumn 1976, and have brought out all issues since then.

I tried to find the newsletter a positive and individual name (vainly scanning lists of names of 18th-century coffee-houses where wits would meet for coffee and intellectual chat). "Meeting Point" found some favour, and I liked "Moot" or "Ex Domestica", but the majority were in favour of the nameless newsletter for the mis-named NHR.

As such it continues to appear twice-yearly, as our chief national link between members, groups and National Organiser through the Register; the one tangible thing members receive from NHR; the means of conveying and preserving our image and aims for members, outsiders and the media.

We are now printing 25,500 copies of each issue. With orders of such magnitude, printing costs per copy are not too high; a fifth of the total expenditure goes on postage.

With such a circulation we are getting into, if not the big-, the fair-sized time. Copies of our Newsletter now go regularly to repose in the British Library, National Library of Scotland, Libraries of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, Trinity College, Dublin, the Fawcett Library and the Arts Council; all for Copyright and historic purposes. I see no prospect but growth, with the inevitable further growth of NHR; an increasing circulation, both in the UK and internationally. Good luck to my successor, to be appointed next Spring!

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## Index wanted?

I have compiled an index to the contents of all our Newsletters to date; a massive work of 40 close-typed A4 pages. As well as its use for locating past references to any group or subject mentioned, it has interest as showing what groups and subjects have been featured, how often, and when. Can anyone who would be interested in having a copy, please let me know.

*Hazel K. Bell in NHR Newsletter No. 27, Autumn 1979*