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LINK

The Journal of **The Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Limited (A.S.B.A.H.)**

Winter 1966/67 **One Shilling**

The gadgets column

A child needs legs to get from where he is to what he wants and if the legs don't work, then a wheelchair is the next best thing until the necessary operations can be performed to help him walk.

Mr. N. J. Blockey, surgeon in charge of the Orthopaedic Department at Glasgow's Royal Hospital for Sick Children, reports :—

We found that the smallest wheelchair supplied by the Ministry of Health is 14in. broad, 11in. deep and 19½in. off the ground. This is called the Tiny Tot model, but is far too big for the two-year-olds we have been trying to help. They need a seat 10in. wide 8in. deep and 9in. off the ground to make them equal in height to their friends.

We found a suitable seat sold as a car carrier. "Cumfifolda" and "Kumficar" are the trade names. We then bought a pair of 18in. wheels and an axle from the pram makers and fixed the axle so that the seat was about 9in. off the ground and so that the child's hand could hold the wheel for at least a 12in. movement at the side of the plastic tray.

To the front, we fixed furniture castors on earlier models, but more recently, trolley castors. We cut off the handles and put a notice on the back to dissuade well-wishers from pushing the chair.

This has been remarkably successful and the cover picture of this issue of "Link" shows our first model with the proud owner. When the little boy became mobile, his interest perked up, and he became brighter and happier, and he is now at home, having acquired incredible skill at manoeuvring the wheelchair.

Total Cost

This basic design has been altered in some to accommodate the sac of fluid on the back, and in others so that they can be used by children who walk a little and want their legs straight.

The total cost of the components is £5 14s. The staff of the Splint Department, Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Glasgow, would be glad to give any help. Remember this is not a chair for an adult to push. The child with a good brain and arms will soon learn himself the skills necessary and remember also that walking on one's own two feet is best. Wheelchairs are only helpful when this is impossible.

Our new executive

The Extraordinary General Meeting on November 19th, postponed from October 15th, was attended by representatives of the affiliated local Associations.

A new executive committee was elected and sub-committees were formed to advise on the urgent problems. Full details will be published in the next edition of "Link".

Our thanks go to the retiring committee and in particular to Tudor Williams for all the work that has been done to start the Association off on a sound footing.

Please note that the new Secretary is Mr. F. G. Armour, 3, Hengist Close, Horsham, Sussex. and the new overseas correspondent is Mr. A. C. Bassett, 273, Lincoln Avenue, Twickenham, Middlesex.

LINK

WINTER Vol. 1 No. 3

The Journal of the ASBAH

Chairman: Mr. R. B. Zachary, West Lawn, 54 Clarendon Road, Sheffield, 10.

Secretary: Mr. F. G. Armour, 3 Hengist Close, Horsham, Sussex.

Treasurer: Mrs. G. Raymond, 3 Burton Road, Withington, Manchester, 20.

Editor: Mr. S. Hinchliffe, 13 Cowlersley Lane, Cowlersley, Huddersfield.

Advertisement Manager: Mr. D. T. D. Nash, 15 Orchard Avenue, Thames Ditton, Surrey.

Contents

Editorial: Aberfan and us

Those who, as parents, know the ache of personal tragedy can well sympathise with the parents of Aberfan. With the country as a whole, we must trust that the Inquiry will reveal the facts, so that such disasters cannot happen again.

In the case of our Association, we are thinking in terms of numbers equalling 30 Aberfans each year. More than 3,000 children are born in this country each year with spina bifida and hydrocephalus. In "rule of thumb" figures, this is 1 every 3 hours. Our Association has been formed to seek help for all those affected by each of these tragedies.

These numbers introduce such tremendous problems that a team of experts has been studying the situation for some time. Their conclusions will be published shortly in a Ministry of Health Report. This report will not tell us how to prevent children from being born with spina bifida, because, to the best of our knowledge, the reasons and therefore the means of prevention are not known.

What we must hope is that, following publication, the services will be mobilized to a greater effort to alleviate the problems in the light of existing medical knowledge.

This will involve vast amounts of public money, and many people will argue that the country in its present state cannot afford such amounts.

This will not be said, and should not be said, about the Inquiry at Aberfan, and the cost of any work necessary to eliminate similar dangers.

As an Association we must use every available means of publicity to persuade public opinion that it MUST afford whatever is necessary for the treatment of present day patients, and those yet to be born.

The prejudices which prevent people from living normal lives within their capabilities, must be shown up for the crimes which they are.

A child not allowed to attend the local school with his playmates, despite the fact that his only handicap is incontinence which he controls himself with the aid of an appliance. A young woman, physically active, practically and theoretically trained and qualified to teach, restricted in her opportunity because she is a spina bifida.

These things we must fight. Our best weapon is deserved public sympathy, as has been shown by the tragedy of Aberfan.

CAN IT HAPPEN A SECOND TIME?

Many parents of a spina bifida or hydrocephalic child are anxious to know the chances of their having a similarly affected baby. Here Dr. John Lorber, of Sheffield University, discusses the difficult question.

Most parents who have a child affected with spina bifida are anxious to know whether it can happen again. Many of you must know, from unfortunate experience, that indeed it can happen as you already have two or more such affected babies. Perhaps you had a baby with spina bifida and another with hydrocephalus, or you lost a baby who was stillborn with an even more severe form of these disorders.

Such cases could be due to just chance and very bad luck — but evidence shows that unfortunately this is not always the case. There is very strong evidence indeed that spina bifida results from an inherited tendency, though the exact mode of inheritance is not fully known or fully agreed by the experts. What is certain is that the inheritance depends equally on both parents.

The chances

What are the chances, though, if you have other babies that they will be also affected? In a large study in Sheffield, I found that among 722 babies treated by us for spina bifida, 539 had 1,256 brother or sisters. Of this very large number, 1171 did not have spina bifida, hydrocephalus or a condition called anencephaly, which is the most severe form of this family of disorders and which is not compatible with life. There were, however, 85 brothers and sisters who did have one or more of these malformations, representing 6.8% of all brothers and sisters.

If we take only those brothers or sisters who were born after the birth of our patients, then 25 out of 306, or 8%, were so affected. Based on this figure, we say that the risk of having another affected baby is 1 in 12. This means that this chance exists for each and every pregnancy which follows the birth of one affected baby. Those figures were recently confirmed by another study in Wales.

It may be, of course, that the chances in onc family are greater than in others. For example, there is a strong possibility that couples who have already had two affected babies run a greater risk than those with only one affected child. Of 23 children born to families after the second affected child, 13 were also similarly affected.

In practice, the chances are rather more favourable for family life than the figure of one in 12 suggests. Some of the affected babies may have a relatively innocent spina bifida or a simple hydrocephalus, and after treatment, have every chance of a full normal life. At the other extreme, some babies are so severly affected that they are born dead. Among the 85 affected brothers and sisters, 32 fell into this category, so that only 53 presented clinical problems.

Of these 53, some 12 were not severely affected and are now to be regarded as normal children. It seems therefore, that whereas about 1 in 12 new babies will be affected, only about 1 in 24 will present major problems of treatment, disability and social and educational management.

Affected baby

To look at the family situation in another way, we found that the more children there are in a family who had at least one affected baby, the higher is the chance that they will have other affected children. In 216 families with two children, in 14 cases both children were affected, or 6.5%. In 85 families who had four children, in 14 instances, or 16.4%, there were two or more affected babies.

The situation is not quite clear in babies with hydrocephalus which is not associated with spina bifida, partly because there are many acquired causes of hydrocephalus in babies. If however, we take only those hydrocephalic babies, in whom we are quite certain that the hydrocephalus was congenital, then the situation is similar, although the evidence is based on smaller figures, as this condition is much less common.

I studied the family history of 51 babies with congenital hydrocephalus, who, between them, had 90 brothers and sisters. Six of these 90 also had hydrocephalus, spina bifida or anencephaly, which is the same proportion as was found among the brothers and sisters of babies with spina bifida.

There have been clearly illustrated family histories from Birmingham, in which hydrocephalus occurred in several generations, but only in male members of the family. This, no doubt, is a different group and different type of inheritance.

Other children

These are the facts which should be considered by parents of children with spina bifida or hydrocephalus before they decide whether or not to have other children. We do not wish to be dogmatic in our advice and we realise that much depends on the individual family situation.

For example, couples may come to very different decisions, depending whether they are optimists or pessimists; they may draw a different conclusion, if they already have several normal children than if they haven't any.

We very rarely advise sterilisation of either partner in the couple. This is an irrevocable step which may be regretted. For example, a couple, who already have normal children, may decide not to have any more, but they may well change their mind, if through some disaster, they should lose their normal children.

It is also possible that one of the parents might remarry. With a different spouse, the increased chances of having affected babies largely disappear and a parent may well wish to have children from a second marriage.

One day it may be possible to give even more accurate advice than is possible today, if increasing knowledge could separate those families with higher risk than others. Much more research is needed to achieve this. Such research, to detect "carriers" for example, can only be pursued with the active co-operation of parents and doctors. We in Sheffield have been very fortunate in this respect. Our search for more knowledge will continue, if you will help us.

Among other things, I would very much like to know, is: what happens to children of parents who themselves were born with spina bifida? I know of fathers and mothers who are born with spina bifida and who have normal children, but I do not know about nearly enough to draw any conclusions. If you know of any such examples, I would like to know about it.

That cover!

They looked like mother and child and everybody wanted to know more about them. We mean, of course, the young woman and small boy who appeared on our last cover.

They were in fact, Mrs. Jean Temple, the dedicated physiotherapist who serves the Lanarkshire branch of the Scottish association, and Mark Orr, one of her patients.

Mrs. Temple, mother of two small boys, offered to set up her clinic in Motherwell nine months ago. This meant that parents and patients were saved the long trip to a Glasgow hospital.

Play group

The hospital staff were delighted to have their work-load cut and parents found Mrs. Temple's twice-weekly sessions convenient.

Dr. Young, M.O.H. for Motherwell, kindly made premises available for the clinic and a play group.

Mark, who had a severe hydrocephalic condition when he was born four years ago, is today a bright spina bifida youngster who is extremely mobile in a new wheelchair.

He is, in fact, learning to walk. And, in the firm but gentle hands of Mrs. Temple, there is every hope that walk he will and with very little in the way of aids.

The youngster on our cover this issue is demonstrating a wheelchair which is dealt with fully in the Gadgets Column,

The John Holter story

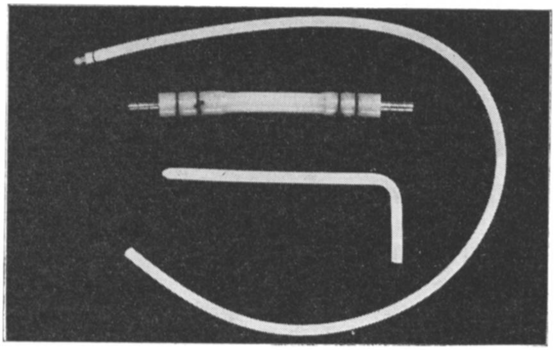
John Holter's thoughts were centered on the sufferings of his own son when he devised his hydrocephalus valve. But his invention proved a boon to mankind. Dr. Lorber, of Sheffield University, tells the Holter story of triumph - and tragedy.

For a very long time surgeons have grappled with the problem of treating hydrocephalus, but a truly effective method was not developed until John Holter, an American engineer, devised his own well-known valve. There is a real human story behind this.

John Holter was always more interested in mechancial devices, like motors and boats, than in the subjects taught at school. He finished his High School studies with barely passing grades. In his early twenties he had already designed and built several motor and sailing boats. He was then called into Army. After serving in Europe and Africa during the war in a mechanised cavalry unit, he went back to work in automotive and mechanical device research laboratories.

He married a schoolteacher, Mary. Their son, Casey, was born in November, 1955, and he had spina bifida. After operative repairs he developed meningitis, which he survived well and he went home for his first Christmas.

Before he was 3 months, it became evident that Casey also had hydrocephalus. For this he again received surgical treatment, but of a kind which was known to produce only temporary relief — as there was nothing better available at the time. It was known that the baby would outgrow the tube that drained the fluid from the brain or that it would clog up.



The Holter valve

John Holter set himself a task of developing a clog-free tube, which could stay in the body indefinitely and which would control the pressure in the brain with mechanical precision. It would have one-directional valves, which would allow the fluid to flow in only one direction and which would open and shut, automatically, as the need arose.

He didn't have much time — his son's life was at stake. He gave up his job, set up a workshop in his garage, and laboured night and day, seven days a week. While he worked Casey took his fourth trip to the hospital to have excess fluid removed. During the operation his heart stopped beating. The surgeon cut open his chest, began massaging the tiny heart — and prayed. Casey survived, but with the terrible price of severe brain damage.

So accurate

John Holter produced the miracle tube in about 3 weeks. A small valve of durable plastic that withstood all body action, temperatures as high as 460 F., when sterilized, and small enought to fit behind the ear. It was connected to the jugular vein, so excess brain fluid would be absorbed into the blood stream. It was so accurate that it permitted fluid to pass through automatically when the brain pressure went above normal.

It worked with Casey. It worked with other children. John Holter never went back to his job. He continued making the valves for the thousands of children who get hydrocephalus every year.

John Holter, with his wife and son, Casey.

As of now, he has made about 75,000 of these valves which are in use in some 50 countries. Very many of these were presented, free, to children of those countries, who cannot afford to buy them, or to others for initial research purposes.

When I saw many hydrocephalic babies in Singapore who could not be treated, I asked if John could send some. A large batch was sent immediately. John Holter now employs 37 men and women making these valves, as well as other artificial replacement parts for surgical use. These include artificial hearts, heart valves, as well as infusion pumps and other apparatus.

Unfortunately, his personal story ended in tragedy. Casey, his son, lived for only five years. He survived 13 major operations, and his father's valve kept the pressure in his brain well under control. Casey was, however subject to occasional convulsions and during one of these attacks he vomited. As he was unconscious, he inhaled some of the vomit and had no strength to clear his throat. Attempts by his mother to help him and by nurses in the ambulance on the way to hospital failed, and he died leaving a large gap and a nostalgic memory in his devoted family. His life was short but not in vain.

'Link' turns the spotlight on two plucky girls

THE SPORTING WORLD OF CAZ BRYANT

In just three years, Carol Bryant has blazed a proud trail in international sport.

Caz, as she is known to her friends, was born 19 years ago with a spina bifida. Until she was 12, Caz could walk with a limp. Then in 1959 she had a series of seven operations on her left leg which were all unsuccessful. Thereafter, Caz was confined to a wheelchair.

Yet she has won no less than 29 gold medals at major paraplegic contests.

And in Jamaica recently the six "golds" which Caz chalked up assured the British team of the lead at the second Commonwealth Paraplegic Games.

In Tokyo two years ago, Caz won two gold medals in the Paralympics despite fierce competition.

Wheelchair dash

Her victories in Jamaica included the 50-meters breast stroke; the 60-metre wheelchair dash; the 60-metres wheelchair salaom; throwing the javelin, throwing the club and the table tennis singles contest.

The world record for the wheelchair dash is held by Caz whose speed of 60-meters in 15.9 seconds makes her vehicle sound more like a chariot than a wheelchair.

Nor is she prepared to rest on her laurels. Caz plans to enter the British Games next year and she has a list of ambitions which is as impressive as her achievements.

They are to compete in the '68 Paralympic Games, to write a best seller, to make a parachute jump and to surf ride on Australia's Bondi beach.

When she is not collecting sporting honours Caz indulges in her other hobbies. She plays the guitar, writes, studies mythology, rides horses and motors in her invalid car.

Caz Bryant

She also has a sense of humour and tells hilarious tales of the fun she had with other contestants during her visit to Tokyo.

With two friends she had gone in search of a slap-up meal on the last night of the Games. They arrived at an establishment which looked like London's Ritz and charged prices to match its exclusive decor.

"Imagine us, three scruffy, starving hungry plonkers (people in wheel chairs)," writes Caz. who lives in Tanholme Road, Penge, London.

"Picking up her chop sticks one of the girls proceeded to show us how to use them. Suddenly a little waiter appeared and said 'Excuse me, madam, but you are holding those chopsticks upside down,!."

Caz is, to use her own words, a plonker, To use our own she is an extremely plucky one.

The difficult career of Faith Seward

So far in "Link" we have tended to concentrate on the sufferings of babies and children who have hydrocephalus and spina bifida.

But we are no less concerned with the problems — particularly the social ones — of adults who have grown up with these complaints. Indeed their problems may well become the problems of our own children.

One case that has been brought to our attention is that of 26-year-old Faith Seward, of 27, Lidgett Grove, Acomb, York. Faith was born with a spina bifida during the early war years — the complaint was actually blamed on the war! Despite medical advice that she would be unlikely to live and more unlikely to walk, Faith's mother was determined that she should do both.

After years of struggle, knee irons and operations, Faith gained a place at a grammar school and was leading a normal life. It never occurred to her school friends that she was in any way "different" and was shown no special consideration. Two days before entering hospital for yet another operation she learned that she had obtained G.C.E. O levels in seven subjects. She added another subject a year later.

Holiday operations

Although in and out of hospital during the next three years — she arranged for her operations to be done during her school holidays — she was accepted by a London teaching college. She missed most of her last term, but took her examinations in York — and passed.

But Faith's troubles were by no means over. She developed a curve near the top of her spine, and there were further complications with her legs and feet. She also found serious obstacles to her new career.

Faith has had two teaching jobs. The first was with a group of mentally retarded children. The headmistress there had no knowledge of her condition. Faith became keenly interested in specialised education and took a temporary post at a hospital school.

Faith — as she puts it — "lives life to the full". She plays tennis, ten-pin bowling and takes an active part in the Girl Guide movement. And she is dedicated to her career.

Faith Seward

But she has been refused a number of teaching posts, not for lack of qualifications or ability but because of her physical disability.

She says: "My spina bifida has been an obstacle to me, although I have almost completely overcome it. This came as a surprise to me at first as there seemed no reason for it. Not being accepted is a problem that I must overcome. It will no doubt occur again and again."

Other people of about Faith's age must share similar problems. She would like to hear from them. She suggests that they might meet to discuss their common difficulties — and perhaps even form a group.

We would like to add that "Link" does not accept the form of discrimination that Faith has come against — and nor, we are certain, will the thousands of members of our national Association.

Problems like those of courageous Faith Seward will undoubtedly form one of our bitterest battles.

Theatre notes

At this time of the year, pantomimes and children's plays are taking over the theatres. Ann Pacey, film critic of the Sun newspaper, gives some examples of the entertainment which is available for all the family.

This is the season for children. It is a time of wonderment for them, of celebration and gaiety, and for the little ones a sort of joyous bewilderment.

The West End theatre knows this well, and is busily setting up the traditional shows that are as much **a** part of Christmas as puddings and trees.

"Peter Pan", of course, at the Scala Theatre. It must be so. It could not be otherwise.

This year Ron Moody is playing both Mr. Darling and Captain Hook.

And, naturally, there is the Palladium pantomime. Elaborate, expensively dressed and staged, often stunningly presented, and always with a star attraction.

He is of course Cliff Richard this time and the pantomime is 'Cinderella'.

Cliff plays Buttons, the Shadows are the Brokers Men, and television's 'Hugh and I' team, Terry Scott and Hugh Lloyd, are the Ugly Sisters.

Matinee season

The man who wrote the script for the film "The Wizard of Oz" has come up with a play for children — particularly 5 to 12 year olds — called "The Land of Green Ginger".

This will have a season of matinees, including Sundays, at the New Arts Theatre Club.

At the same Club, but during evenings only, there will be the first showing in Britain of James Thurber's story 'The Thirteen Clocks'.

It has been adapted for the stage, music has been added, and it is said to be suitable for children over 12 — as well as all grown-ups.

Another mantinee season at the Hampstead Theatre Club. This is "Circus Adventure", a play for children by James Ambrose Brown.

Another play by the same author, the famous "The Three Wishes", goes into the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre at Guildford just after Christmas.

Most children are familiar with Sooty the bear, who appears regularly on television with Sweep, the dog, and Soo — Sooty's new girl friend.

Harry Corbett, their creator, takes them to the Mayfair theatre for a three-week season starting on Boxing Day.

At the Mermaid Theatre, overlooking the Thames, they are celebrating the season with a new production of Stevenson's much-loved "Treasure Island".

Book reviews

In "The Child Who Never Grew", Pearl S. Buck tells the true story of her daughter who was born mentally handicapped. It is a most moving story and many of her feelings will be common to us who have found ourselves parents of physically handicapped children.

It is quite a revelation how closely many aspects of the care of our children coincide simply because there are many problems in common for parents of children with any severe handicap.

How Pearl Buck worked out her own particular problems in her search for the best care of her handicapped child, and how her interest in the welfare of handicapped children has continued down through the years makes this a book well worth reading.

"A Question of Living" by R. F. Mackenzie, (Collins, Glasgow) has the sub-title "Common Humanity and Public Education". It is a book which is really a must for those who feel that there is a great deal of reform needed within the educational field. We, ourselves are going to be very concerned with the future educational needs of a minority group.

Mr. McKenzie says: "It would be a good thing if the great majority of people started enquiring into education, taking policy out of the hands of the experts, and basing it not on tradition but on their own ideas of what is the best way to prepare a child for life and for making a living."

Such words could almost have been written as a blue-print for our handicapped youngsters. The author is well-known in Scotland both as a headmaster and a prolific writer on the need for education in the widest sense of the word.

Mrs. Dorothy Glynn, who writes "Teach Your Child to Read" (Pearson, London) is Senior Lecturer in Education at Nottingham Training College and mother of a 9-year-old son. So her experience is two-fold, This book shows us very clearly how the written word not only opens up the world to children but provides them with the means of communicating ideas, thoughts and feelings. We can do a great deal to make the early stages of reading more interesting for our children and this book is full of excellent ideas.

Incidentally this "Teach Your Child" book is one of several put out by Pearson. The range covers "Teach your Child Cooking . . about Pets . . to be Handy . . about Needlework . . to Swim . . about Sailing.

All are possible interests for the less mobile person.

Elsie Wilson

Reader's problem

One of our members, Mrs. Mee, would like some advice. Her son suffers from a looseness of the bowels, which is believed to be contrary to most spina bifida cases who are usually constipated.

She would like to know if anyone else has had this problem and found a solution.
A. C. Bassett, 273 Lincoln Avenue, Twickenham, Middlesex.

Children's corner

13 Cowlersley Lane,
Cowlersley, Huddersfield.

Dear Boys and Girls,

I do hope you all had a good Christmas. Perhaps some of you would like to write and tell me all about the things you did at Christmas.

For your competition this time, I have divided you into two groups: Those who are nine years old or under and the 10 to 15-year-olds.

I would like those who are nine years or younger to send me a picture or a story or a poem about a dog or cat.

For the older ones, I want to see how many words you can make from the letters of

CONSTANTINOPLE

Each word must have at least three letters. No proper names allowed. My prize will go to the boy or girl with the highest number of words.

Please print your name, age and address neatly on your entry and send it to me.

Regards,

UNCLE ED.

ANNE ROSS

the spina bifida girl from Scotland concludes her advice to parents

Q: Any hints for youngsters who are about to start work?

A: Get a job lined up as far in advance as possible so that you can have a "test run." Imagine you have to be at work at 9 a.m., find out how long it takes to get there and allow extra time for traffic or other unforseen problems. Then imagine you are at work and behave as you will at work all day to discover how you will cope and how work will effect you.

If you do this for a number of days beforehand you will have a chance to smooth out any difficulties before they arise and should have a fairly smooth start.

Q: How can parents avoid giving their children too great a sense of being handicapped?

A: If parents treat a child like china he will grow up to believe he is fragile. This is unpleasant for everyone and limits the child's activities. It can also cause jealousy among other children in the family. For instance my parents encouraged my yearning to ride a cycle and eventually, rather bruised and scratched, I managed to achieve my ambition.

Young Andrew, a spina bifida boy, points out a tip to hard-pressed housewives. They are patches — from imitation leather handbags etc. sewn on to proctect his rompers and knees.

Q: Can you pass on any other tips for helping youngsters to live the fullest possible lives?

A: One lesson I learnt, when at my first dance on crutches, was never to rise and move away during a dance. The vibration of the dancers and band tends to knock one off balance.

One fairly big snag of walking is crowds, particularly as I am not too steady on my feet. I avoid crowds where possible by arriving early at dances although I don't dance, plays and the cinema. I leave before everyone else or wait until they have gone. Shopping is done on quiet days.

If . . .

Mrs. Finegan, sends from New Zealand, these observations made by an American speaker at a meeting in New Zealand :—

"Our children are CHILDREN first, handicapped second. Important factors are attitudes which determine everything.

If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.
If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight.
If a child lives with fear, he learns to be apprehensive.
If a child lives with pity, he learns to feel sorry for himself.
If a child lives with ridicule he learns to be shy.
If a child lives with jealousy, he learns to feel guilty.
If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.
If a child lives with encouragement, he learns to be confident.
If a child lives with praise, he learns to be appreciative.
If a child lives with acceptance, he learns to love.
If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself.
If a child lives with recognition, he learns it is good to have a go.
If a child lives with honesty, he learns the truth.
If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice.
If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith in himself and those about him.
If a child lives with friendliness, he learns the world is a nice place in which to live.

News from the Groups

Central and North London

This branch ended the year on a festive note with a Christmas party for 80 children and their parents. The guest of honour was, of course, Santa Claus who handed out gifts to all the young guests. Workers at a local factory kindly raised £35 for the treat. Branch members raised an extra £25 with raffles.

Members regret the loss of their founder-chairman, Mr. John King, who has taken up a position at Edinburgh University. There is no doubt, however, that London's loss will be Scotland's gain, for Mr. King and his wife, Gillian, have devoted much time and effort towards the building of this flourishing branch.

Mr. and Mrs. Mee raised £80 for branch funds from a toy fair and sale.

Huddersfield

Over £40 was raised at a Toy Fair on November 26th.

A programme of meetings is being arranged for the Spring. These will follow the Xmas Party on January 14th.

Leeds

At a meeting on 3rd November it was decided to form a group to cover the Leeds area. A Committee under the Chairmanship of Mr. J. Faunt, Linnets, 69, Aspin Lane, Crag Top, Knaresborough, has been contacting parents in the locality and will carry on until such time as the members are able to run their own affairs.

Leicester

Recent fund raising activities in the Leicester area resulted in a total of £655 being sent to the Richard Fund in the past 8 months.

N. Hants, S. Berks and W. Surrey

Membership of the Group is increasing and now stands at 80. Mr. A. Field, Headmaster of Coney Hill School for spina bifida children, Bromley gave an interesting talk, illustrated with films, about the school. The school is one of 6 administered by the Shaftesbury Society and was among the first where handicapped children were entered for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.

The Group are holding a pool of surplus equipment such as baby bouncers baby crawlers etc., for use within the Group, and other equipment will be purchased, and evaluated for suitability, by members before purchase by members themselves.

The Group are pleased to report that representations which they made have resulted in the successful re-housing of the parents of a severely handicapped spina bifida child.

North Lincolnshire

Members from Grimsby and Cleethorpes organised a Mannequin Parade. This was most successful raising over £100.

North West

The outstanding event of the past few months was a Garden Fete held on September 10th at the Oaklands School Salford. The event was organised by the Parent-Teacher Association and the North West Association and was a tremendous success. The proceeds amounted to £600 and a cheque for this amount was handed to the North West Association during a Social Evening held at the School on October 21st.

The money will be used to purchase equipment to help the children.

Mr. Strach the Orthopaedic Surgeon gave a talk in Manchester on November 19th which was greatly appreciated and aroused great interest among those present.

The Annual General Meeting will be held in the Natural History Theatre inside Manchester University on Saturday, February 4th, 1967. This will be followed by an address from Dr. Emery.

South Hants.

At the beginning of October the Group was presented with a new £850 mini-bus by the Bonhomie Society, a Southhampton charity. The bus will be used to take the children on outings.

The presentation was made outside the Westbury Manor council offices at Fareham by the urban council chairman, Councillor C. E. Pryke on behalf of the Bonhomie Society. He handed over the keys of the mini-bus to Dr. D. A. J. Williamson of Southampton Children's Hospital, an honorary member of the Association.

Preston

This group, part of the main North West Group, now has approximately 26 members. £30 was raised at a Coffee morning and the local College of Midwives donated £20.

Surrey

The Surrey Group held a meeting on October 15th for the purpose of approving a set of regulations and appointing a Committee.

A news item of special interest is that last April 23-year-old Maureen Davies of New Addington gave birth to 8lbs Tracey Jane. Maureen who has spina bifida has had 23 operations, can walk without sticks and in the words of Gordon her husband "is most capable about the house".

Scotland

Several groups are now operating in various parts of Scotland and in order to maintain contact an information sheet is being sent to all members. Fund raising is in progress to support a full-time Secretary.

South Mercia

The Group has launched an appeal for a caravan and its Committee is now concentrating on fund raising for it. A rent free site on the Norfolk coast has been given and it is hoped to have a caravan there for the 1967 holiday season.

Recently a party of parents visited Cambridge for a talk by the headmistress of a school for handicapped girls.

A children's party was held at Stevenage on September 10th. Amusements, tea and a film show were arranged for the thirty children who thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

News from the Groups

South Wales

The Association has recently made a donation to the South Wales Physically Handicapped Children's Holiday Home Appeal and members were invited to a Conference held in Cardiff on 19th November. Among the proposals for the Holiday Home is the building of a swimming pool designed for children who are also incontinent.

Various activities have been held in South Wales in order to raise funds. Activities include dances, concerts and mannequin parades. A generous donation has also recently been received from the Order of Forresters at Cardiff.

Sussex

The Association now has over seventy members, and held a very successful "Brains Trust" at Shoreham early in October. The panel consisted of two teachers of handicapped children, a physiotherapist and a Handicapped Services Officer from West Sussex County Council, and a lively discussion took place on various topics.

The film "Stress", which has been shown on BBC 2, has been booked for showing at Crawley on Saturday afternoon, January 28 next. This is a film about parents with handicapped children and anyone from neighbouring counties will be welcome. Details will be available from the group Secretary.

In addition to selling the ASBAH Christmas Cards, members had ordered over 8,000 Christmas Cards sold in aid of the Sussex Association. Six different designs were available at different prices and this variety led to larger sales.

Swinton, Mexborough

Mr. A. Willoughby of 147, Fitzwilliam Street, Swinton, informs us that a Swinton group has been formed. Their present membership is about 30 and they are hoping to attract many more parents.

Sheffield

Over £50 was raised at a Toy Fair. A new venture is a baby sitting service. A group of medical students have offered to baby sit for members.

Warwickshire

A Group numbering over 30 members was formed on April 20th and among various fund-raising efforts was a very successful dance held on September 16th.

Relatives and neighbours of one of the members — Michael Chawner who is 18 months old — have begun a group called "Friends of Michael Chawner" and have been tremendously enthusiastic in their work to raise money and have in a very short time made over £75.

Plans are being made to hold meetings of parents and to invite guest speakers.

News from Overseas

Since the last issue of Link, we have heard from the Spina Bifida Association of South Australia and from the Spina Bifida Club of Mobile, Alabama. The South Australian Association is centered in Adelaide and its objects and Rules are very similar to those suggested for our local groups. It grew out of the spina bifida clinic at the Adelaide Children's Hospital, which was formed in 1957, and as well as arranging talks for members, the Committee has concerned itself with integrating the children into schools as smoothly as possible, with proposals for a permanent holiday camp site and also with the question of providing transport to and from school.

The Club in Alabama began in 1964 and has close links with the Association in Texas. Its Committee support our aims for the eventual formation of an international organisation and they are keen to make further contacts. News of ASBAH Ltd. has appeared in the press in Alabama.

We have also heard from individuals in New Zealand, Holland, Malta, and in different parts of Canada. We are anxious to hear from interested people anywhere in the world, and especially from Europe, or from other Groups or Associations which we have not yet contacted. Anyone with friends abroad is asked to help in this by starting enquiries, so that the movement as a whole can gather strength all over the world.

Several hundred copies of the booklet "The Child with Spina Bifida", by Dr. Chester A. Swinyard, of the Association for the Aid of Crippled Children, New York, are being sent to us, free of charge. This is the second edition of a twenty page booklet published to help parents understand spina bifida and the problems they will have to cope with. It explains with diagrams the nature of the condition, the management of the bowel and bladder, the need for physiotherapy, and many other points of importance.

All local secretaries can obtain a supply of these booklets from the national secretary, notifying the number of copies they would like. The copies received from America will then be distributed by him on January 15th, 1967, pro rata to the orders received by him. Secretaries will have to pay postage.

Order "Link" regularly — which will be four times a year — by filling in the coupon below and sending it to your GROUP SECRETARY. Cost 5s. per year, inc. postage.

Please send me each issue of "Link" for the next years.

Name ....

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THEIR PROUDEST MOMENT

One of the proudest moments of the South Hants. Group was in October when they became the owners of a sparkling new mini-bus, complete with a large supply of petrol. The bus — and the petrol — was a gift from a Southampton charitable organisation, the Bonhomie Society.

In our picture above, officials of the group are seen receiving the mini-bus, worth £850 from the Society.

The vehicle will be used to take children on outings. But it has already been put to one good use. It took South Hants delegates to the Extraordinary General Meeting at Birmingham.

Save your Stamps

Would you ever have thought that ordinary used stamps could be valuable? The Richard Fund is wanting, used or new, postage stamps, British or Foreign to sell to dealers in large numbers. Unwanted collections of stamps would also be very acceptable. Used stamps should be on paper with ample margin. No attempt should be made to tear them off as this could cause damage.

Please send your stamps to — Richard Fund, Mrs. J. Lorber, 305, Ecclesall Road South, Sheffield 11.

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58, Plover Way,
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Mr. T. F. Halls,
24, Mount Close, High
Wycombe, Bucks.
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91, Broadview Avenue,
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31, Nash House, Churchill
Gardens, London S.W.1.
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35, Oakhill Road, Putney,
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45, Sydney Road, Sutton,
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Mr. A. Rae,
16, Clifton Road, Lee-on-Solent,
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Fl. Lt. I. Davies,
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8, Arnold Close,
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Mr. M. W. Batt,
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14, St. Albyn Terrace,
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[illegible]
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9, Milncroft Place,
Glasgow E.3.
Mrs. D. Farr,
94 Great Northern Road,
Aberdeen.
Mr. P. Orr,
211, Range Road,
Motherwell.

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Bowers School, Standon, Staffs.
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