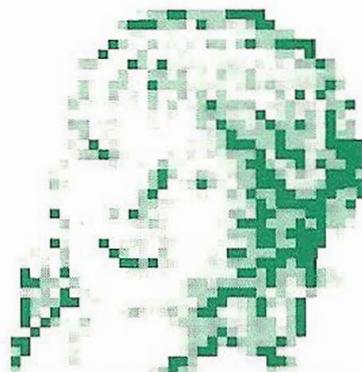

THE HISTORY OF

SEQUAL

25 YEARS



THE SEQUAL TRUST

Bridging the communication gap for disabled people

The Sequal Trust

A History

National Charity No: 260119

H.R.H. The Princess Michael of Kent
Patron of the Sequal Trust



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FRONTISPIECE

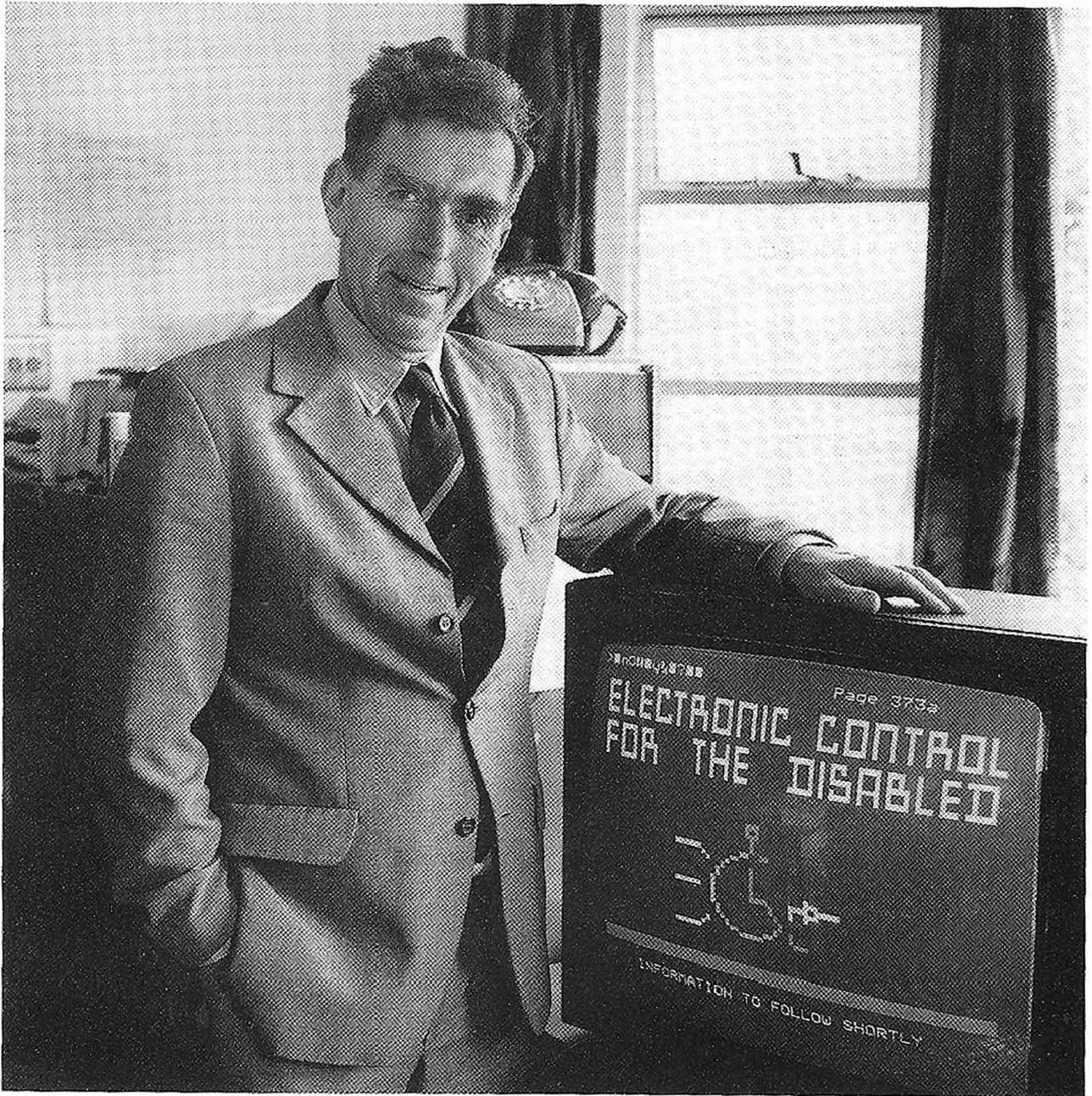
Dedicated to THE SEQUAL TRUST (P.U.A.)

25 years service to the disabled community

When things go wrong as they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all up hill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest if you must, BUT DON'T YOU QUIT.

Life is queer with its twists and turns,
As everyone of us sometimes learns,
And many a failure comes about
When he might have won had he stuck it out;
Don't give up though the pace seems slow -
You may succeed with another blow.
Success is failure turned inside out -
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,
And you never can tell just how close you are,
It may be near when it seems so far;
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit -
It's when things seem worst that you MUST NOT QUIT!

ANONYMOUS



Reg Maling

CHAPTER ONE

In the Beginning

'There is no such thing as a disabled person, only people who have certain disabilities.'
(Johnny ANG, Singapore)

The roots of the SEQUAL Trust grew from the pioneering work and achievements of a forward thinking man, Reg MALING. A research chemist, with a dedicated team of hard-working individuals, he was keen to use technology to provide greater independence for those people with restricted physical ability and communication problems.

Prior to the 1960's, the general public found difficulty in accepting the full potential of a handicapped person; many considered that their distorted or immobile bodies, lack of coherent speech and inhibited means of expression meant that they were mere "cabbages" - the 'Does he take sugar?' syndrome. There was little, if any, media coverage or discussion of their varied physical, mental, social and sexual problems in life.

The inspiration for Reg MALING's work was triggered by a request from a member of the Nursing Staff at Stoke Mandeville Hospital to assist a young man on the ward who was completely paralysed, after breaking his neck at a high level. Ian PRITCHARD (died 1972) was a gentle, courageous man, injured in a water-skiing accident, who longed to write a book on his first-hand experiences with the Mau Mau in Kenya. He now lay motionless in a hospital bed with a police whistle suspended over his bed-head - his only means of attracting attention.

Impressed by this man's determination in adversity and realising the considerable effort required to blow such a whistle, Reg felt that this energy could be harnessed to achieve much more. His colleague, Derryck CLARKSON, was an electronic engineer and between them they accepted the challenge, producing a remote-controlled Tape Recorder System operated by mouth control. At last, Ian had a means of processing his thoughts and speedily gained operational control of the unit - he was independent, apart from the occasional change of tape.

At about this time, there was a serious outbreak of poliomyelitis, and improved techniques in the care of high lesion Spinal Injury cases. Together these factors meant that many well motivated individuals were faced with a life-time on some form of respiratory support and/or with minimal physical ability.

Working from home in their spare-time, Reg and Derryck formed Possum Controls Ltd. They designed and produced the first prototype Environmental Control Unit - MPC 5 (Multipurpose Controller). This system enabled a disabled person to control a wide range of domestic electrical items including Emergency and non-emergency alarms.

The Polio Research Fund (P.R.F.) recognised the possibilities in developing such equipment and with encouragement from Sir Ludwig GUTTMAN (late Director of the National Spinal Injuries Centre, Aylesbury), accommodation was made available within the Hospital. The Electro-Mechanical Laboratory was established in May 1961 with a grant from the Fund and Reg and Derryck were sufficiently convinced of the usefulness of their spare-time activity to make the decision to leave their own jobs, taking up full-time work in the Laboratory.

An approach was made to the Ministry of Health (M.O.H.) for provision of Environmental Control Units (E.C.U.) through the Health Service. It was a long, hard struggle persuading officials of the need for such equipment, which provided a greater degree of independence for the disabled person; relieved the burden on the Carers and gave peace of mind to all concerned. In 1963, the M.O.H. agreed to a carefully planned trial of twenty prototype machines throughout the country, at a cost of approximately £150 per unit.

In the same year, many exhibitions and demonstrations took place to publicise the equipment: one of them resulted in an International Award. The Belle Greve Memorial Award was presented by the World Rehabilitation Fund for the exhibit representing the most significant contribution to rehabilitation at the 9th World Congress in Copenhagen. Apart from displaying the E.C.U. with full Telephone dialling facility, a range of Typewriter Control Systems (T.W.C.) were shown; also a demonstration of using the mouth to control accurately the movement and operation of an Industrial Machine Tool - this was progress indeed.

After 4 years the P.R.F. grant expired; although the M.O.H. were very satisfied with the trial machines, no cash was available for further research. The team faced an uncertain future but were convinced that somehow the work would continue and they were prepared to finance it themselves.

Due to the generosity of one of Reg's former employers, a plot of land was offered at a "peppercorn rent" and everyone set about cutting through the undergrowth to demolish a derelict cattle-shed piled high with fly-ridden manure! More new skills were learnt, including building the concrete base and support pillars for the erection of a second-hand Portacabin - the Authorities

only approved the foundations after the second attempt at concrete mixing! This was to become the new location of Possum Controls Ltd (P.C.L.) 1966.

By this time, the M.O.H. had agreed a contract for fifty E.C.U.'s - Possum Selector Unit Type 1 (P.S.U.1) to be built to a rigorous standard for "tailor-made" installation in homes and Units nationwide. The recipient had to meet a strict criteria for the provision of these systems through the National Health Service. Although the equipment was produced robustly with high reliability built-in, it was also important to ensure that there was good after-care service too.

One of the establishments nominated to receive a system was the Spinal Injuries Centre at the Promenade Hospital, Southport. From this provision, the POSSUM USERS ASSOCIATION (P.U.A.), the forerunner to SEQUAL, was launched through the initiative of Miss BEESTON (now Mrs Elizabeth Cartwright), the Group Head Occupational Therapist.



Mr. Mangan, F.R.C.S. beside his PSU 1 installation

CHAPTER TWO

Early Technology

'Possum is like having your best friend constantly by your side willing to do all within its power to help with only the simplest of gestures.'

(Brenda HANSFORD, Rugby)

The first specialised equipment for use by the disabled community was Possum, its name formed from the Company's initial P.O.S.M., standing for Patient Operated Selector Mechanism. Since "Possum" is Latin for "I can" or "I am able" it seemed an appropriate name for such equipment.

Paul BATES, of Horsham, a Respiratory Polio sufferer, was the first Possum User with a prototype Environmental Control System - MPC 5, graduating to the more complex Modular System in 1963, which later in 1975 was up-dated to a P.S.U.3, incorporating new technology. Paul made an enormous contribution to the early pioneering days, travelling extensively with Reg MALING to demonstrate the prototype systems, in an endeavour to convince the authorities of the many opportunities opening up for the disabled person, utilising the latest science and technology, to become as independent as possible; able to make a valuable contribution to society.

Paul also became the first severely paralysed person to pass a driving test, lying in a specially constructed bed with respirator attachment, on a disused Job's milk float modified for finger-tip control of his left hand - what would be the next challenge?

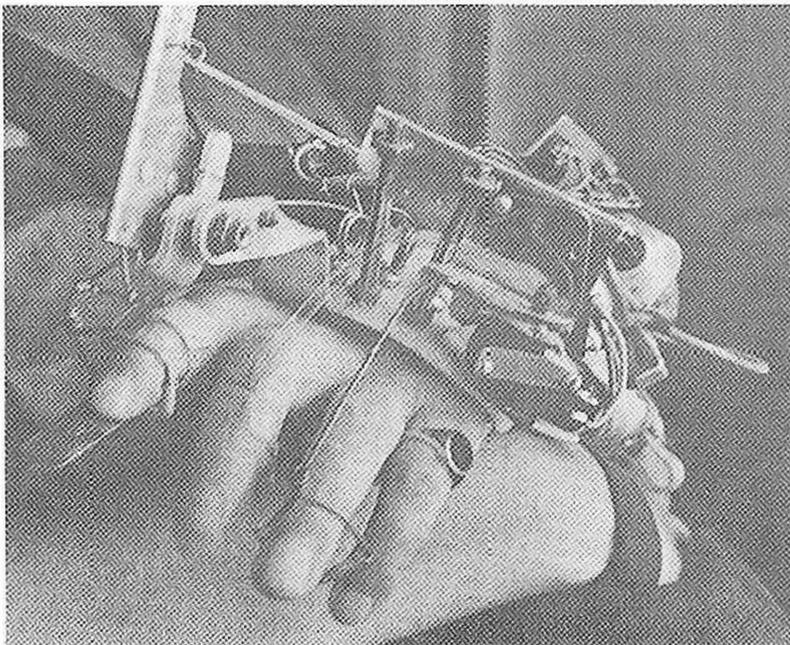
Apart from control over the environment, speech and reading difficulties, writing was a major problem for Possum Users. It is hard to allow thoughts to flow or say what you really mean when someone else is holding the pen. Therefore, remote controlled electric typewriters, tape recorders and dictation machines, by-passing the standard keyboard or push-button operation were the next consideration, along with a Page Turning device. All commercial products utilised were still capable of normal usage by the able-bodied person but the inventor of a "universal" page turner would be a millionaire!

The initial series of T.W.C. systems were each designed to match the precise residual function of the handicapped person. It was thought that many disabled people would enjoy the stimulation of an intellectual challenge learning a coded input, varying in complexity, to produce an efficient output when mastered. Morse code operators are able to send messages at approximately

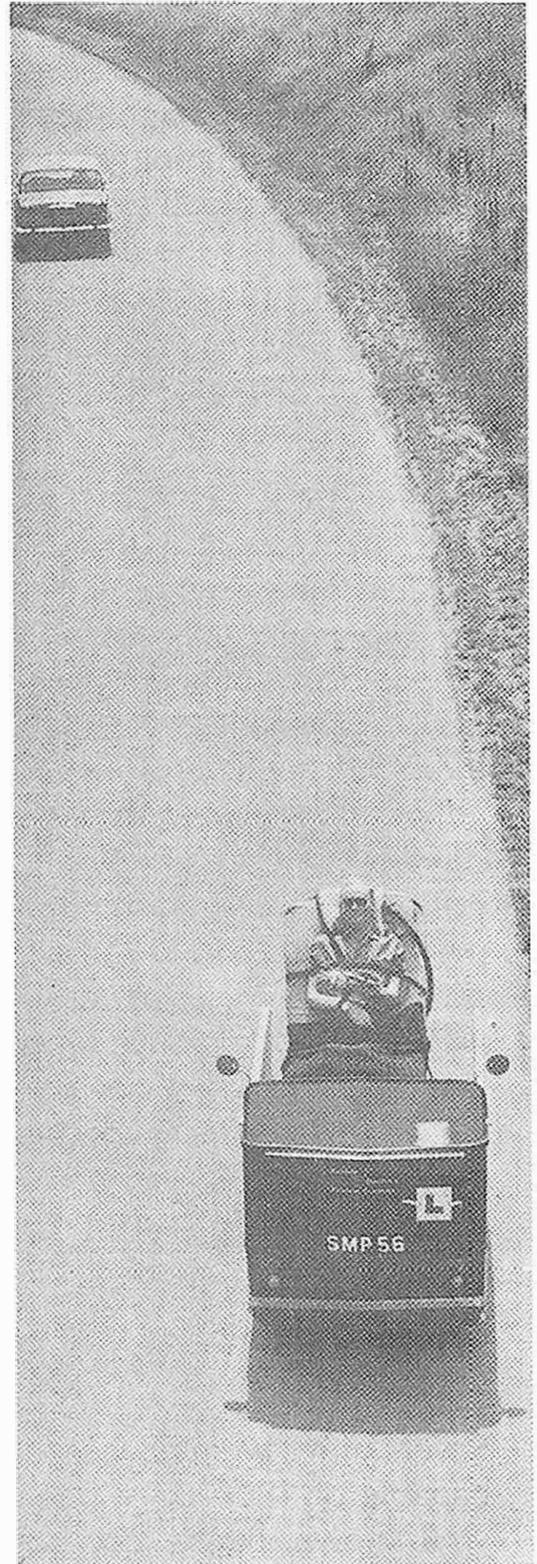
Paul Bates in his converted milk-float



*"Out shopping near Horsham"
(Photo: W. Sussex County Times)*



"Finger-tip control"



"On the road"

20–25 w.p.m., but David HYDE, using his 4-input mouth controlled typewriter system achieved 40 w.p.m.; this meant discriminating between two levels of “Suck” and “Puff”. Interfold continuous stationery overcame paper handling problems.

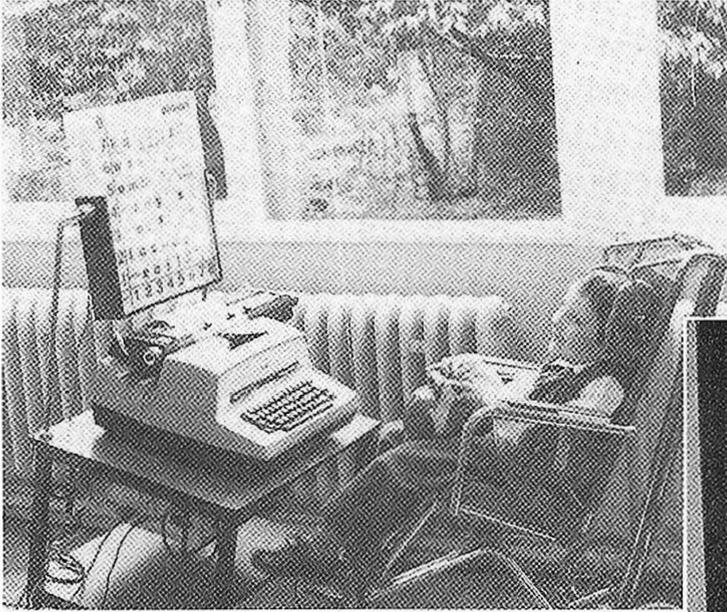
It was very essential to ensure the correct choice of control, as no two people are alike, even though they might be catagorised in the same disability group. Incorrect positioning of the control switch(es) can also mean that the full potential is difficult to attain without considerable effort. A large selection of control inputs were available to suit all forms of residual ability - a minute amount of air in the mouth to trigger a “Suck/Puff” switch; sensitive switches arranged for finger, toe, chin and eyebrow movement; heavy-duty and skate-type arrangements for whole foot operation; joysticks, wobblesticks - all mounted to maximise ability to control items with the minimum of effort.

Certain users required “tailor-made” inputs to harness weak and/or limited movements and thus the services of a dental technician were sought to design suitable light-weight splints. To meet this need, the Chailey Heritage Workshop in Sussex produced some ingenious arrangements for the younger Possum Users, many of them Thalidomide children who achieved much success. However, Chailey was unable to assist adults, so the Cordent Possum Mobile Laboratory was established in 1972 for a 3 year project, supported by a generous grant from the Leverhulme Trust. An experienced dental and medical physics technician, Roger McLEAN, was selected to tour the country, constructing special splints and mounting devices for those in need. When the project ended in 1975, the work was considered effective enough to be given space in the Max Rayne Research Institute at St. Thomas’ Hospital, London, where Roger continued his work under the direction of Dr. Geoffrey SPENCER, Consultant-in-charge of the Respiratory Unit. Various Trusts, including the P.U.A., helped to finance the project for a further two years. Many grateful members referred there were to regain a measure of independence in their restricted lives.

Technology was making swift advances; as manufacturers grew, a degree of competition became apparent, which is always a healthy situation for the consumer.

Several firms were now producing a variety of T.W.C.’s including a Word Store capable of 180–200 w.p.m. and both Expanded and Mini-Keyboards. Some well known, others less so - P.C.L., Maling Rehabilitation Systems, Electraid (owned by John FLACK, himself disabled and a former P.C.L. and M.R.S. employee, PILOT developed by Hugh Steeper (Roehampton Ltd.) based on a system of light sensor cells, VOTEM (Voice Operated Typewriter Employing Morse-code, Southampton University), System 7 and 8 produced in Essex and

Typewriter control systems

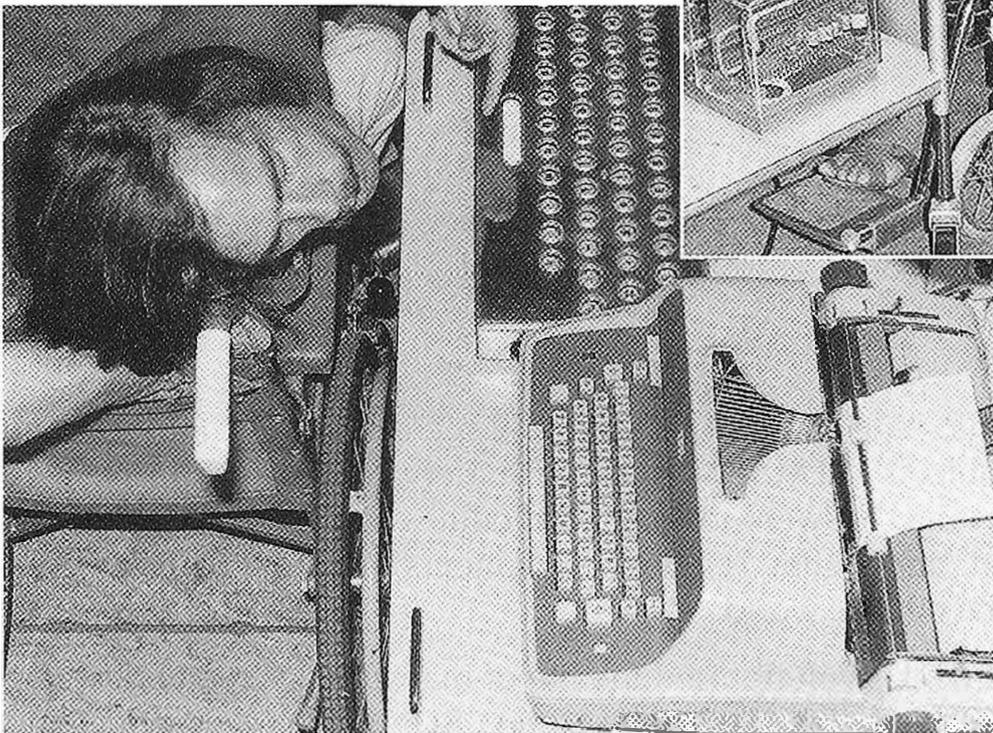


Barbara Pitchford with
8-input splint moulds



Young Possum User with
head control facility on
simple T.W.C.

Expanded Keyboard System



“Popstar”, a low cost mechanical typewriter controller supplied by Martin Creasey Rehabilitation, to name but a few.

Portable Communication Aids were in demand, too, by the more motivated non-communicants and gradually these devices became available - the “Talking Brooch” (Southampton University), Canon Communicator, Vocaid, Helpmate and Lightwriter (by Toby CHURCHILL, himself substantially paralysed by a virus disease and bereft of speech) - all designed to meet the varying requirement.

Some users were enabled to communicate for the first time in their lives and, by communicating their thoughts, were recognised as individuals with views and ideas of their own. Although limited control of equipment might seem hardly worth the high cost involved, the increased independence and assurance it can give to a physically handicapped person has to be seen to judge its true value.

Psychological and I.Q. tests proved difficult to effect where both lack of dexterity and communication were present, as well as children of an autistic tendency who shun personal interaction. A robust Pointer Board capable of simple or quite complex responses by means of activation of a rotating pointer was useful and when the board was positioned horizontally it could handle a selection of 3-D objects in a similar manner. Many P.U.A. youngsters benefitted from the provision of such equipment in their pre-school and early educational programmes.

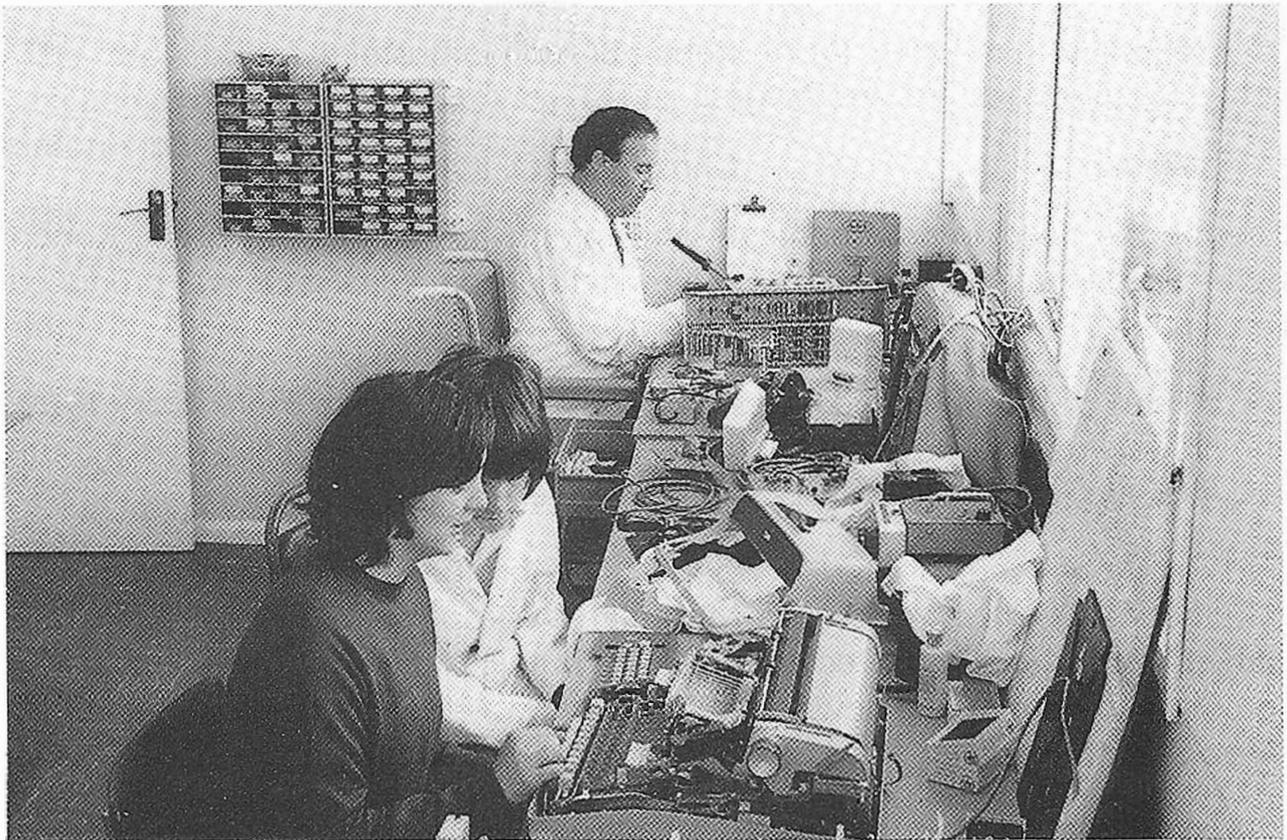
One of the Association’s aims from its inception was to publicise the various types of equipment on the market, as many manufacturers were working on slender or non-profit margins and could not afford to advertise their products widely. “Possibility”, the Association’s newsletter, tried to keep members up-to-date with current trends and a small P.U.A. Library, containing books related to disability, was managed by David HOGGETT, of Cheltenham; a postal service was also offered to interested members. Later, this valuable Library was presented to the Disabled Living Foundation in London.

Over the years, P.U.A. has been fortunate in having beneficial relationships with several engineers and organisations who have given willing assistance whenever a challenge was presented. Among them were: Bill GARFIELD, a retired ITT electronics engineer, who generously spent countless hours solving tricky control problems; REMAP - group of mainly retired engineers were interested in providing answers to many difficulties for just the cost of the materials involved; and skilful Telephone Engineers modified equipment to provide a link to the outside world.

Two other people who revolutionised the life of many P.U.A. members were Bob BLACKBURN and his colleague John BUNYAN, electronic and

mechanical technicians respectively, both members of the original Possum team. Their real understanding and patient approach, coupled with high standards of workmanship, neat installation and efficient after-care service will be remembered by many.

Differing opinions arose in management and policy within Reg MALING's old company P.C.L. and the representatives of the various Trusts who had been invited to sponsor and support the future of the company. By 1973, Reg had been removed from the Board of Directors and several key members of the team resigned from the Company, frustrated and disappointed by the Board's action. After the initial shock of the separation of Reg MALING's team of workers, along with its many uncertainties for the future, a tentative agreement was reached by late 1974 between P.C.L. and Reg's newly formed Company which it was hoped would avoid further litigation.



Part of the early Possum Team - with Stan Cross, himself wheelchair-bound, in charge of Wiring Workshop

CHAPTER THREE

The Foundation of the Possum Users Association (P.U.A.)

'It is my body, not my mind, in bed.'(Hilary POLE, MBE, Walsall, 1938–1975)

The Association was formed as a result of a questionnaire circulated by Miss BEESTON, Group Head Occupational Therapist at the Promenade Hospital, Southport, assisted by Johnnie DURR. It was Johnnie's idea to have a Possum Users Association and therefore, in March 1968, all existing users of such equipment were asked whether they were interested. From their enthusiastic response it was decided to form a Management Committee of three Possum Users who would start the Association.

The Management Committee comprised:-

Chairman	Robert BOWELL, Bristol
Secretary	David HYDE, Aylesbury
Treasurer	Christopher D. JONES, London

Feeling the need to communicate and inform fellow Possum users, Robert agreed to become Editor of a P.U.A. Newsletter and the first issue was produced in October 1968.

It consisted of 12 duplicated pages; 120 copies were printed. By February 1969, the Newsletter had expanded and was now called "POSSIBILITY" - POSS-um provides the ABILITY for greater independence.

Early editions were printed by the CURTIS brothers, Steve and Carruthers ("Ruthers"), both disabled with Muscular Dystrophy, ably assisted by their father. Sadly though, in December 1969, "Ruthers" died and Steve felt unable to continue printing the newsletter. The work was then taken over by another West Country printer.

During 1969, "Possibility" was sent abroad to West and Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Israel, North America, Canada and as far away as Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. P.U.A. Membership had risen to over 77 users, with an Associate Membership of over 100 interested persons. As the work in compiling the bi-monthly newsletter increased, Peter WILKINSON volunteered assistance acting as Sub-Editor. His stalwart support was greatly appreciated, along with many other volunteers who helped to pack and prepare the Newsletter for distribution - an invaluable service as P.U.A. grew!

In October 1969, two new Hon. Committee Members were appointed, Hilary POLE and Daniel HANLON. Their role was to supply practical help and ideas for planning the future.

The POSSUM USERS ASSOCIATION
became a registered Charity No: 260119
(under the 1960 Charity Act) on the 29th November 1969.

AIMS

The main aim of P.U.A. was to assist very severely physically disabled people with the purchase of equipment, special to their needs.

The Association was run in an entirely honorary capacity by severely disabled people who themselves used Possum equipment and it was dedicated to the financial and social improvement of conditions of its members and other disabled people.

The "Possibility" magazine was circulated to all members, facilitating the exchange of information, advice, ideas, innovations and experiences, and to inform members of new legislation and aids.

The P.U.A. also co-operated with other associations in improving the conditions of severely handicapped people.

Initially, there were two classes of Membership:-

FULL Membership for disabled people	5/- per annum
ASSOCIATE Membership for those wishing to help disabled people	10/- minimum per annum

COMMITTEE MEMBERS - 1972

Hon. Chairman/Editor



Robert BOWELL was born with Amyotonia Congenita which meant that his muscles had never developed or worked properly since birth. He lived at home with the advantage of loving family support. Five years before becoming Editor, he started his own home-based Accountancy business dealing mainly with Income Tax problems. This was achieved with the aid of a Possum T.W.C. with eight microswitches skilfully moulded into a special splint, a dictaphone, P.S.U.1 with Loud Speaking

Telephone (L.S.T.) and several different length sticks. Mobility was provided by a pneumatically controlled electric wheelchair. He was a devout member of Westbury Baptist Church; a caring Christian whose concern was for others and their rights. His many leisure interests included chess, rugger, theatre and music.

Hon. Secretary

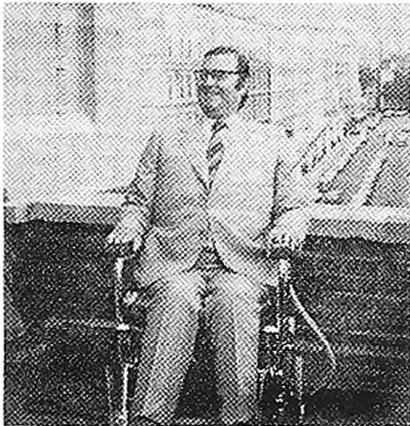


David HYDE broke his neck playing rugger at School in 1955 which resulted in paralysis from the shoulders downwards. He lived with his courageous mother, who although suffering from severe osteoarthritis herself, cared for and transported him to meetings, conferences and exhibitions all over the world, in support of his great work in the field of disability.

He was in full-time employment at Possum Controls Ltd. as a demonstrator of their equipment. His office equipment consisted of a complex Modular Selector Unit with L.S.T., a High Speed mouth-controlled T.W.C. and a dictation machine. Possum wasn't invented when he left hospital and he often wondered how different his life would have been if he had continued his education with the help of this type of equipment. In spite of this, his interests were numerous: a member of the Disabled Income Group Executive Committee and their representative on the Joint Committee for the Mobility of the Disabled; member of the Steering Committee of the Spinal Injuries Association; Chairman of the D.I.G. Bucks branch; member of the Post Office Users National Council and the local Aylesbury Council. It was difficult to comprehend how he found time for leisure

pursuits, but his main hobby was Amateur Radio; he also enjoyed watching rugby and playing bridge.

Hon. Treasurer



Christopher Docwra JONES qualified as a solicitor in 1956 and practised on his own account in Kensington and Fulham London, from 1959.

He contracted 'polio in 1963, which left him completely immobilised from the neck downwards and dependent on a breathing machine night and day. By 1964, he was able to continue working again in an environmentally controlled office, using a Possumised dictaphone operated with a minute flick of the thumb or slight foot movement. He

formed a small group of commercial companies mainly concerned with Property Development, Investment and Marine Craft. He was a Trustee of several charities and patron of Guru Nanak Home for Handicapped Children, Ranchi, North India. A second home was established in Portugal, enabling him to spend most winters in a warmer climate to avoid hospitalisation. His hobbies were varied, encompassing music, vintage cars, bridge, rugby and linguism (French, Spanish and Portuguese).

Assistant Hon. Editor



Ken WINTER from Timsbury, near Bath, felt he was left on the "scrap heap" of life - but Possum changed all that! He was asked to join the Committee early in 1971 and was initially appointed Assistant Editor. His ideas, drive and determination were a great asset to the Association, including his "Can we help you?" service to members.

He was diagnosed as suffering from Multiple Sclerosis some ten years before receiving Possum equipment which included a P.S.U.1 with L.S.T.

facility and Medium Speed T.W.C. incorporating a Tape Recorder Control. With this set-up, he was able to undertake clerical work for Robert's accountancy business, as well as estimates for local engineering firms. The Department of Employment financed the building of a purpose-built office beside his bungalow enabling him to take on more work for P.U.A., dealing with Welfare matters and appeal letters for funding of members equipment. Ken's main interests were watching various forms of sport and working hard!

Assistant Hon. Treasurer

When Christopher found pressure of work made it difficult to supervise the P.U.A. book-keeping, another Committee Member, Daniel HANLON of Newcastle, was appointed Assistant Treasurer. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the work, Daniel was only able to cope for about a year and then Jean JEFCOATE, an Associate Member, offered to assist for a short period until Joanna MAITLAND was ready to carry on the work and accepted the post of Assistant Hon. Treasurer in 1971.



Joanna, of Hertingfordbury, broke her neck in a car accident in 1964. Prior to the accident, she was an assistant secretary in London to Sir Malcolm Sargent. Although paralysed from the shoulders downwards, she was able to type theses for Chemistry students and graduates at Hatfield Technical College, using the "plonker" method. Mobility was provided by a Proportional Controlled Electric Wheelchair for which she acted as a "guinea pig" during its development at Stoke Mandeville Hospital by Reg MALING's team. She lived in a beautifully converted stable block, next to her parent's house, and was looked after by her faithful companion, Jane BROOKE. The P.U.A. accounts and Membership Lists were meticulously kept, yet she still found time for hobbies which included painting, "gardening", reading, television and enjoying the company of her two long-haired Daschunds, Heidi and Hanzel.

Hon. Committee Member



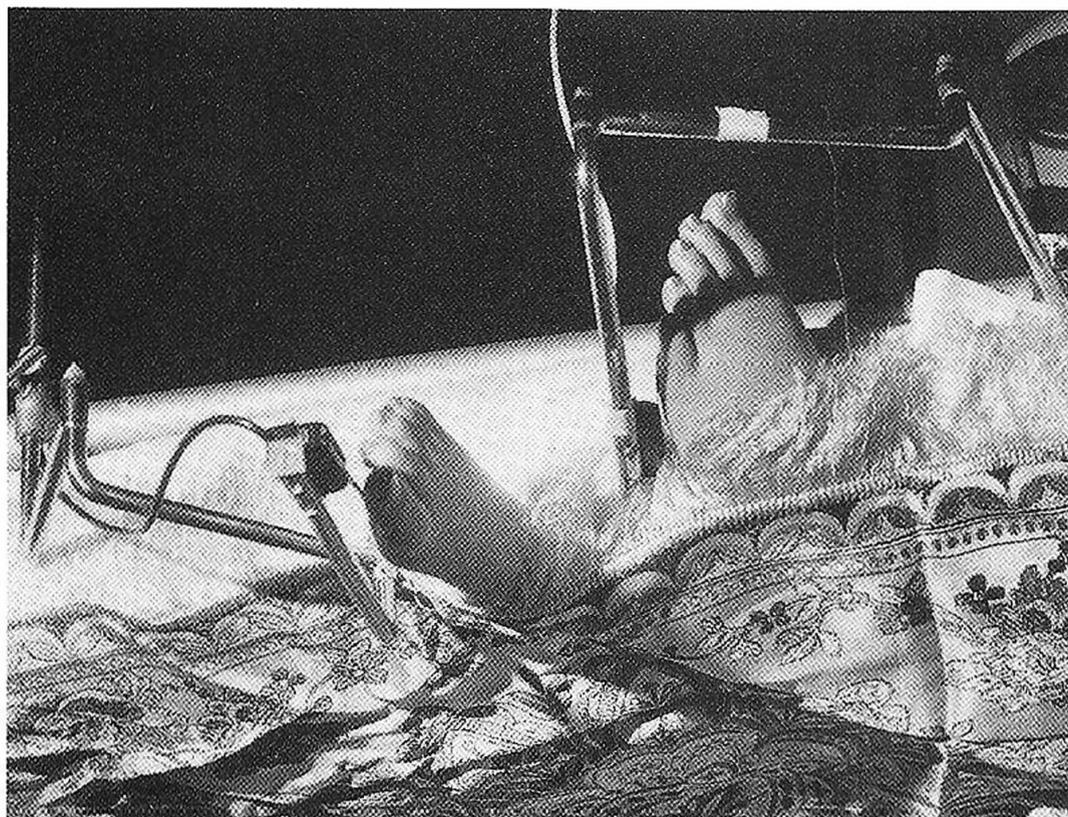
Hilary POLE had been a qualified Physical Education Instructor for only six months when Myasthenia Gravis was diagnosed. This is a rare disease which prevents nerve impulses generated in the brain from ever reaching the body muscles - virtually all body functions ceased. Unable to see, speak or swallow, she was kept alive by artificial respiration equipment and regular tube-feeds of Complian. When the disease stabilised, Hilary was left with 1/16" of movement in her big toes. She remained in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham, for ten years. Her parents then had a special extension built to their home capable of housing all the vital machines required to maintain life, this being her base for the rest of her life.

HILARY POLE

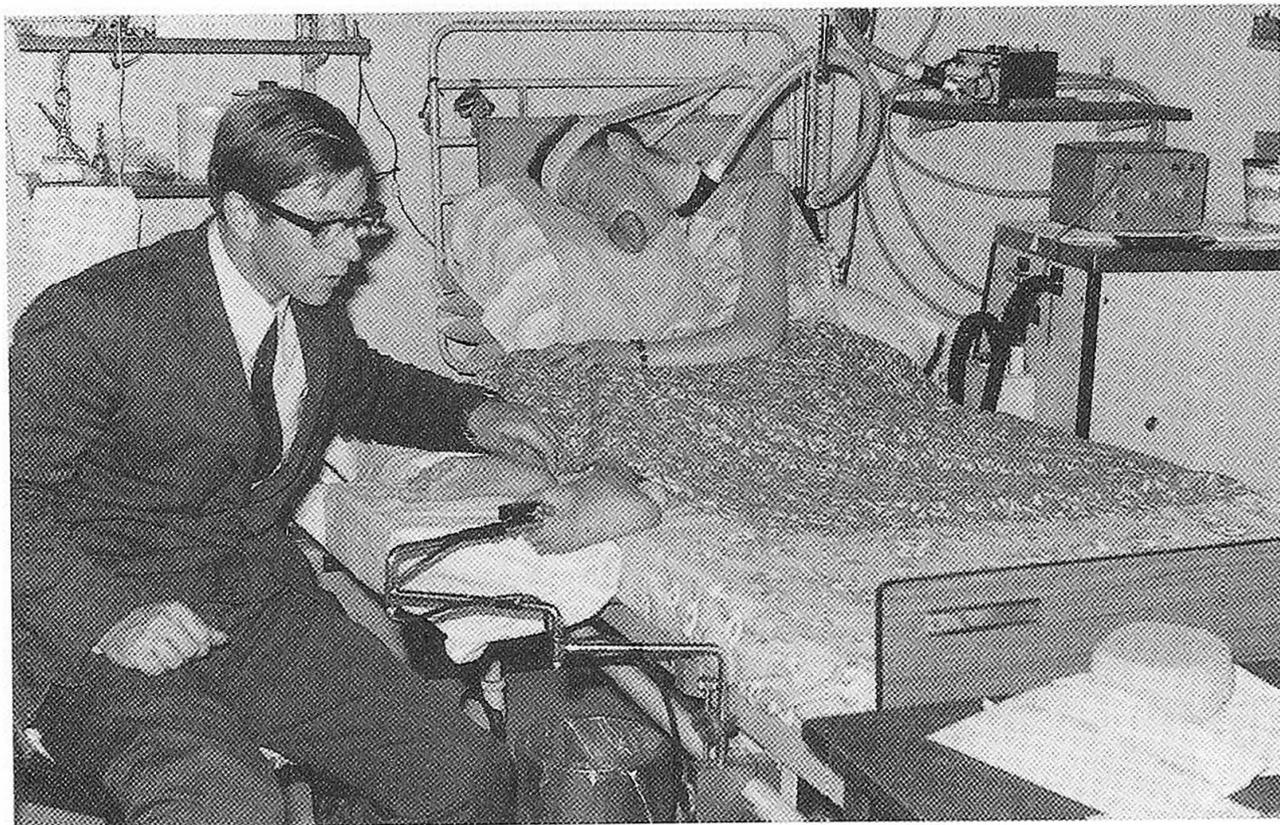


Above: Thought to be the most disabled person in the world

Below: Hilary's essential control arrangement to the world!



Hilary's Communication Systems



"Toe-twitching" with Roger Jefcoate

Letter typed "blind" on her T.W.C.

Ward E. 2 B.,
Q. E. Hospital,
Edgbaston,
B'ham 13.

Sept. 14 1968.

Dear Roger,

This is fantastic! Did you bark hysterically, or is it mere coincidence? Anyway this week has been action with a capital A! Possum has been chained down & is working well. I'm finding the second micro-switch much easier to control than the coil, & being a proper switch it has eliminated the hazardous "stray" currents. No longer having any excuse, the type-writer does not go careering off on its own!

I would like to thank all of you very much indeed for spending so much time & effort in perfecting these intricate mechanisms for me. I'm sure you will appreciate how thrilled & grateful I am to regain some of my independence. Now I can work these exciting gadgets, I've a new problem for you! Do you think P. O. S. M. could invent a time-machine which would give me -

at least 30 hours per day?

My love & thanks to you all,

Hilary

P S Do you need a private secretary?!

P P S I even typed the envelope

Considerable nursing arrangements were necessary to provide 24 hour nursing cover. A special bed was produced incorporating all the essential equipment to make her more mobile and Roger JEFCOATE worked with the Medical Team and a host of specialist advisors to make Hilary's homecoming a success in August 1970.

She was Guest Editor of "Responaut" and wrote numerous poems and articles for "Possibility" using a Possum T.W.C. controlled by slight movement in her achilles tendons - so much quicker than the "toe twitching" alphabet communication used previously! Her interests were many and varied: cricket, rigger, tennis, opera, classical music, reading by Talking Book; corresponding with her vast number of friends and relatives world-wide and "babysitting"!!

Thought to be the world's most severely disabled person, the Daily Sketch wrote: 'Hilary is living more than many people with all their faculties.' She died in 1975.

The Service

In the early days when P.C.L. was the only supplier of equipment, the Assessment was carried out by a representative of the Company, generally Roger JEFCOATE or Joy WAKEFIELD. They would recommend the most suitable system available to meet the member's needs. Valuable feed-back was also provided for the D.H.S.S. regarding the overall use and benefits of the E.C.U.'s installed. This information gave guidance in future design and requirements for equipment to meet all types of disabilities.

Assessment requests initially came from Possum Users anxious to exert control over more complex items around them - some needed a "voice"; others assistance with failing sight or a tremor, while some longed to turn the pages of a book unaided and enjoy their new-found independence.

With this ever expanding requirement for specialised systems, more manufacturers became involved in the design and production of a variety of machines and thus a greater choice was available. Much of the equipment comprised a range of remote controlled T.W.C. systems designed with varying degrees of complexity: Alarm and single switching units, as well as a limited choice of Page Turners and Tape Recorder Controls.

Most of the early E.C.U. installations were undertaken by Roger JEFCOATE, in conjunction with local electricians and carpenters, providing, where necessary, a "tailor-made" system. Time was also spent instructing members on its operation, enabling the users to gain the full benefits from its provision. Joy WAKEFIELD was also involved in the T.W.C. installation and could often cope with servicing the units in situ. Alternatively, she organised a speedy return of

the faulty equipment to the manufacturer and its re-installation after investigation and repair by an engineer, the most notable being Bob BLACKBURN.

P.U.A. was always aware of the necessity of ensuring efficient after-care service for all items supplied, bearing in mind the changing physical abilities of the user and different environmental situations. One member, Margaret DIXON, nursed in an iron-lung, will always be remembered for her grateful letter of thanks after each service visit; she also wrote a "Thank you" letter to Reg MALING each year on the anniversary of her E.C.U. installation - sometimes she could only manage a few words, but that meant a great deal to the team.

As the late Elizabeth TWISTINGTON-HIGGINS, of Chelmsford, once said: 'It takes a breakdown or a power-cut to make me fully appreciate how much my Possum equipment has become a way of life and an integral part of myself.'

The enactment of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 meant that disabled people had a recognised place in modern, civilised society, entitled to the same basic rights as everyone else. This was a triumph for some inspired P.U.A. members who fought hard on their own initiative, and in liaison with like-minded organisations, for a rise in standards and achievements in the Welfare of the Disabled Society.

Alf MORRIS, the first Minister for the Disabled; Jack ASHLEY, a profoundly deaf M.P. and Lewis CARTER-JONES, M.P., all took a very keen interest in the affairs and progress of P.U.A., as well as the Right Hon. Lord ABERDARE who as Minister of State at the D.H.S.S. from 1970 to 1974 met Robert BOWELL during his term in office.

Finance and Fundraising

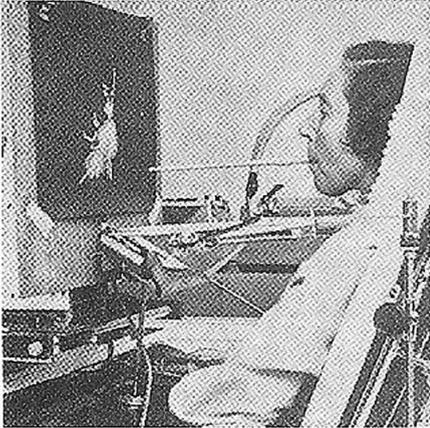
P.U.A.'s first account showed a balance of £131.10s.6d on the 8th September 1969.

A Life Membership fee for both Disabled and Associate members was introduced in 1970 - £5 and £10 respectively. This was considered a bargain offer as, with prices continually rising, the normal subscription would increase in future years. Making a Covenant with P.U.A. was another excellent scheme for those paying income tax at the standard rate, enabling the charity to reclaim tax on the amount promised, thus making the Government contribute to the funds.



The full P.U.A. Committee, forming the front row, meeting for the first time in one place. Left to right, Joanna Maitland, Robert Bowell, Hilary Pole, Ken Winter, David Hyde and Christopher Jones. Standing behind, from left to right, Peter Wilkinson, Michael Alison (Under-Secretary of State for the Department of Health and Social Security) and Roger Jefcoate. Taken in the Royal retiring room of the Royal Albert Hall after the Concert, by Ray Miller.

Elizabeth Twistington-Higgins



Elizabeth danced alongside Dame Margot Fonteyn as a student. After total paralysis with polio, she had to content herself by painting ballet and still life by mouth - known world-wide.

Photograph: Peter Russell



Elizabeth directing her own small ballet company, dancing to sacred music in churches and cathedrals. A mouth-controlled Tape Recorder Control assists the art of choreography. (Inset)



Copies of "Possibility" were made available to non-members in 1971, selling at 3/- or 15p each. This not only swelled the funds but also increased the number of people who became aware of Possum equipment. The more who knew about it, the greater chance of the provision of such systems to those in most need.

From the start of the Association, fundraising was an important aspect of the work, in order to provide the necessary equipment and assistance to the Members. The Charity relied a great deal on donations, bequests, Radio and T.V. Appeals and a number of other activities.

One of the earliest ideas was the sale of Christmas cards. Who better to execute the design but P.U.A. member Elizabeth TWISTINGTON-HIGGINS who was internationally recognised as a talented Mouth Artist, primarily for her ballet scenes. She was awarded an MBE in the Jubilee Honours in 1977. Hilary POLE composed a fitting verse for insertion in the card. Not knowing how many cards would sell, the initial order was for 5,000, but Hilary and her friends alone sold nearly 6,000 cards that year! By 1971, the sale of cards had risen to 12,000 and a target of 20,000 was set for 1972.

The first of many Charity Concerts took place on the 3rd November 1972 at the Royal Albert Hall (R.A.H.), under the patronage of H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh. The person mainly responsible for the organisation of this ambitious event was Mr. A.G. JEFCOATE (Roger's father), who had experience in planning the successful Friends of Vellore Concerts which many P.U.A. members were able to enjoy at the same venue. The London Philharmonic Orchestra (L.P.O.) was conducted by Sir Adrian BOULT; Gina BACHAUER flew from America especially to play Hilary's favourite concerto - Beethoven's "Emperor" Piano Concerto - both their services were given free.

H.R.H. The Duchess of Kent attended the concert and later met members and helpers. It was a memorable occasion for the Association's Management Committee who, for the first time, were able to meet together under one roof. Hilary's presence was a tremendous achievement for all concerned, as doctors did not give their consent.

Outside a side entrance to the R.A.H., onlookers were amazed to see an array of unusual vehicles and even more surprised to see the "strange" occupants - many with wheelchairs or modified beds housing their necessary life-giving apparatus. 5,000 people attended the performance: 180 in wheelchairs. Each disabled person had to be manhandled up the difficult stairs to the boxes - an Herculean effort.

Their participation in such an event would not have been possible without the co-operation of a large group of people, including the police, Securicor,

Guides, Scouts, Nurses, friends, supporters and not least the R.A.H. Management and Staff's assistance and generous hospitality. In return for the kindness of the latter, P.U.A. also helped to raise funds to install a second lift, so that more disabled people could attend future concerts.

The book "Hilary", written by Dorothy CLARKE WILSON, was launched a few days later at a reception at the Oriental Club in London, attended by H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh. In spite of two long journeys to London and back in a week, Hilary held an "At Home" at Walsall where her friends from far and wide gathered to receive a "personally autographed" copy of the book - she had prepared typewritten slips with her name to be pasted on the fly leaves. More than £6,000 was received by P.U.A. as a result of profit from the Concert and the sale of the book. The excellent publicity produced an increase in membership and encouraged members to boost funds still more by organising their own events in aid of the Association.

Hilary became the first Possum User and Member of the P.U.A. Committee to receive an honour for services to the Disabled. She was awarded the MBE in June 1973 - 'It is an honour for all disabled people and all who help us. I am specially delighted as it shows that at last, that mysterious body "the general public" has started to recognise that disabled people have their part to play in society.'

Several T.V. Appeals were made, the first being on BBC1 in January 1974, by Cliff MORGAN, former rugger international, supported by Hilary. A few donations started dropping through Hilary's letter-box that Sunday evening; on Monday, an elderly man, aged 82 years, knocked at her door - he'd walked 3 miles to bring his contribution! By Tuesday evening, £5,303-40p was received, but by the end of February, the staggering sum of nearly £30,000 had been donated.

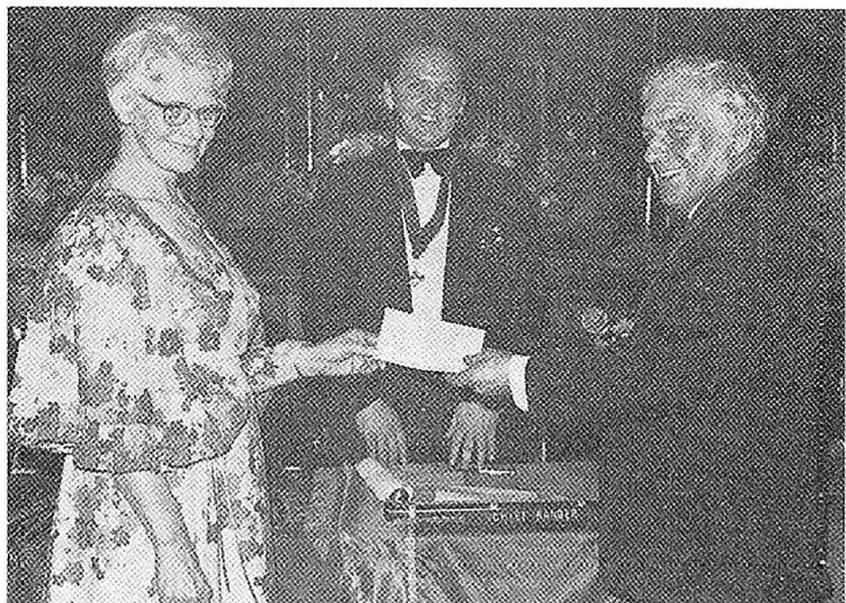
The response from the Appeal was overwhelming. Thousands of letters and cheques were delivered to Hilary, each requiring a reply; a general acknowledgement for all anonymous gifts was placed in "The Times" as well as local papers. Her friends and supporters rallied round and under the guidance of Joyce GLYNN, tackled the enormous task. This loyal band of friends snowballed into a group of 100 or more people, generously giving their time to set-up P.U.A. Market stalls, events for Bank Holiday crowds, talks and demonstrations to interested parties.



Photo: Michael Cooper

H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh and Dorothy Clarke Wilson at the launch of the book "Hilary". Hilary asked the Duke to bend down so that her eye-lid could be opened and she could see his face!

Mrs. Joyce Glynn receives cheque for P.U.A. from loyal supporters.



Hilary's motivation in 1972 stirred supporters in the North of England to establish the first P.U.A. Branch Committee known as the Wharfedale Branch. Their initial target was to raise £750 to supply a Possum T.W.C. for severely handicapped children at Hawksworth Hall Spastic Children's Home. After a great deal of hard work, set-backs, frustrations and delays the equipment was handed over in May 1974. A group of workers joined forces to form a P.U.A. Concert party, called "Possibilities" to assist the fundraising exercise.

Another P.U.A. Branch was started to care and support the most remote members of the U.K. - those living in the Orkney Isles. Overseas too, there were little pockets of loyal supporters in Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa North America, West and Eastern Europe - all working for the Association.

In the era when Green Shield Stamps were first distributed, Brenda HANSFORD offered to collect these stamps for P.U.A.. Brenda showed signs of her illness on her wedding day in 1958 when she was unable to open a suitcase because her thumb would not move. In a short time, Motor Neurone disease had rendered her speechless and totally paralysed, except for slight movement in her upper legs allowing her to use a Possum T.W.C. by minute outward movement of her knees. Undefeated and with her new communication skills, she set about obtaining finance to provide similar equipment for fellow disabled members. With the help of her devoted husband and young son, Philip, over a six year period it was possible to purchase at least three T.W.C. systems - nearly 800 books of Green Shield Stamps per system. Other Trading Stamps were also cashed-in at special charity rates to swell funds, as well as used postage stamps which needed thorough sorting and trimming to receive the highest return.

With all these efforts it was possible to support new projects in Mobility and Holiday Care, in addition to the purchase of a wider range of Communication Aids now available prior to the recognition by the D.H.S.S. for such financial assistance.

Vice Presidents

The Committee decided that there were several people to whom the Association owed a great deal and would like to recognise their tremendous efforts on P.U.A.'s behalf. Six Vice Presidents gratefully accepted this honour, they were:- Sir Adrian BOULT, Mrs. CARTWRIGHT (née BEESTON) the founder of P.U.A., Mrs. Joyce GLYNN, Mr. A.G. JEFCOATE, Cliff MORGAN and Peter WILKINSON.

Brenda Hansford

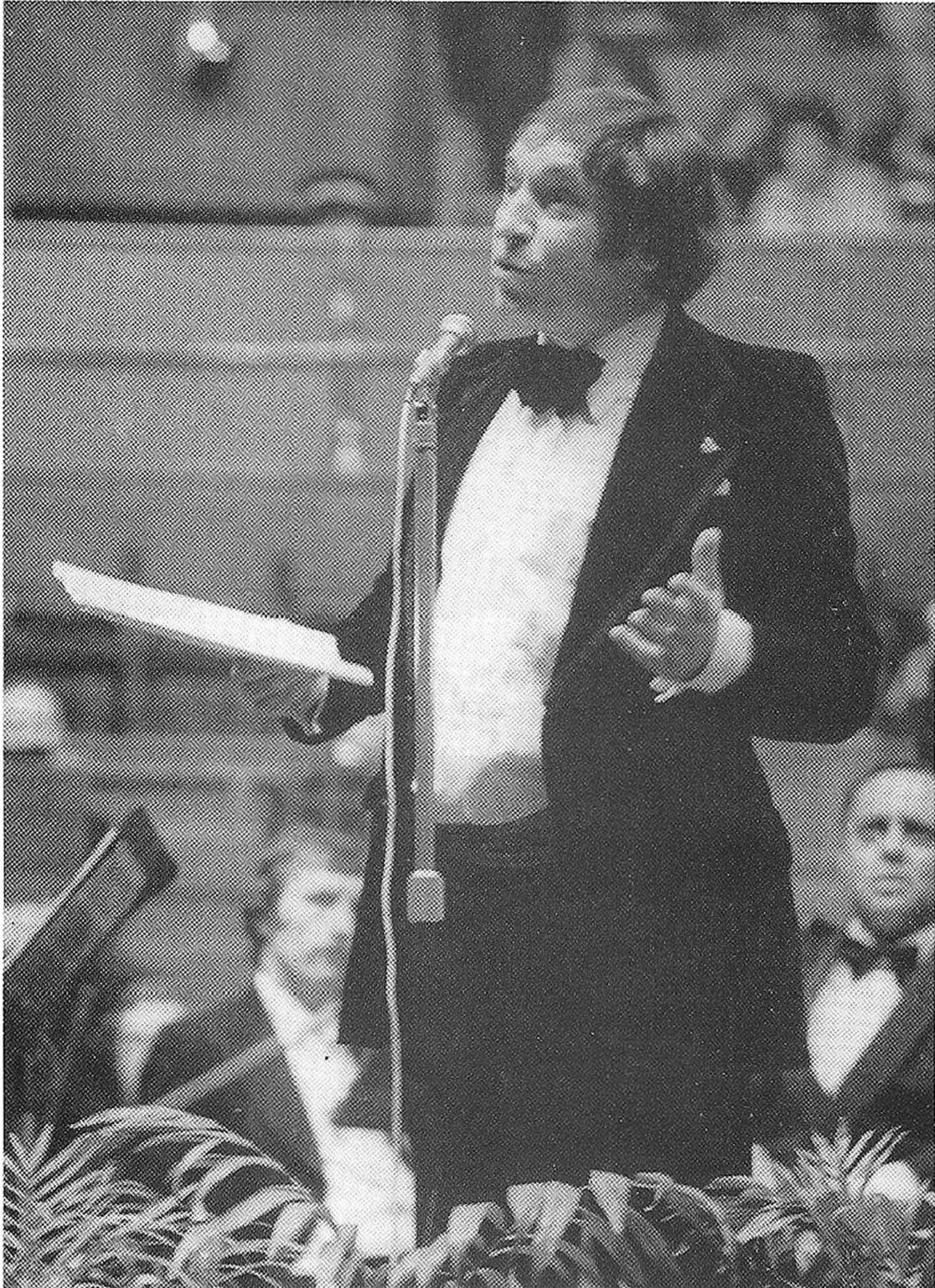


*Receiving instruction on her knee-operated T.W.C.
keenly watched by her husband.*



*Sorting through
the stamps.*

Unfortunately Mr. R.E. BODEY, the Hon. Auditor, felt unable to accept as he believed he would be considered an officer of the Association and therefore could no longer act as Auditor; however, his invaluable advice and generosity in those early years helped to set the Association on a firm foundation for which they were to be eternally grateful.



Cliff Morgan appeals on behalf of P.U.A. in the Albert Hall

CHAPTER FOUR

Building on a firm foundation

'In six years my life has changed from one of utter futility to a fullness I never believed possible.'

(David HYDE, Hon. Chairman)

On the 1st January 1975, a democratically elected management Committee commenced their two year term of office - P.U.A. Members obviously considered they had been served well in the past and thus the Committee remained unchanged. By this time, Hilary had already shouldered the responsibility of Hon. Appeals Organiser for a year, a job she mastered exceptionally well with her loyal band of helpers, whilst Ken's ability to tackle and solve the many Welfare problems clearly fitted him for the post of Welfare Officer. Later in the year, David and Robert accepted changed responsibilities - David became Chairman of P.U.A. and Robert, Hon. Editor/Secretary.

AIMS

The aims of the Association had broadened since its inception in 1969. They were now:-

- i) to unite very severely physically disabled persons who used special electronic equipment into one body of people.
- ii) to assist and encourage members to obtain gainful employment, or, where this was not practical, enable them to make a useful contribution to society.
- iii) to give support in the Educational field, assisting disabled children to reach their full potential, and adults to join Further Education courses or study with the Open University.
- iv) to raise a Central Fund for the provision of equipment or any other financial aid needed by P.U.A. members.

The exchange of information, advice and ideas, the production and distribution of the Newsletter, the social and welfare interests of disabled members were an on-going concern.

Contact Groups

The Committee examined ways in which they could keep in closer contact with members. Disabled members totalled nearly 700 in 1975 and it was not possible to write to or telephone each member regularly. Often it was only

through a third person that it was learnt of changing circumstances of members, loneliness, or equipment in need of servicing or modification requirements due to progressive disability.

The idea was to form small Contact Groups within an area consisting of five to six Possum Users, with possibly a few Associate members as well. A disabled volunteer in each group would be responsible for keeping in touch with the others weekly and would send Ken WINTER news of the Group and items of general interest for the magazine.

Initially the response was poor, although P.U.A. were prepared to re-imburse realistic expenditure on telephone calls or postage stamps. It wasn't until 1977 that sufficient members had come forward to enable P.U.A. to compile a list of members willing to participate in this group concept; by 1978 the intention was flourishing and much valuable feed-back was received by the Committee.

Welfare Service

A wonderful opportunity and challenge arose in October 1976 when the Government recognised the work of the Association over the past eight years and made a grant to P.U.A. to cover the salary and expenses of a Mobile Welfare and Publicity Officer, for a year initially. The post was something the Committee had discussed for several years but felt the expense was too great - now their hard efforts had been rewarded.

March 1977 saw the appointment of a full-time Welfare and Publicity Officer, Peter ALLEN. He was a family man, 42 years old, living in Devon with his wife Julia and four children. His background skills were varied; since qualifying as a State Registered Nurse, he gained Psychiatric skills with a Registered Mental Nurse qualification too; later, he became a General Manager of two large elderly persons' Homes and also established a new Cheshire Home at Brixham in Devon. Prior to joining P.U.A. he spent time working for an electronic firm specialising in equipment for the disabled - in all, he served a very good apprenticeship.

Robert BOWELL was Peter's immediate boss and on his death Ken WINTER took over some of Robert's work, becoming a salaried Welfare Director. He organised Peter's busy schedules of appointments to old and new members, arranged talks and equipment demonstrations, and took the necessary action following each visit. Peter achieved a great deal in the first few months, assisting at least 95% of those he visited. Contact was made with Social Service Departments and Hospitals where many staff were unaware of the Association and had limited knowledge of the provision of equipment by the D.H.S.S.

As the work-load increased, a decision was taken to engage a number of qualified people in different parts of the country, who could be called to assist

Peter Allen

Welfare and Publicity Officer



in an emergency; providing a prompt and efficient Assessment Service to those living in the more remote areas of the U.K. The estimated cost of such a project was up to £2,000 per annum and various Trusts and Charities were approached for financial support.

A year later, a donation was received specifically to start this Welfare project and additional financial help was promised by the D.H.S.S. Seven part-time Assistants commenced duty in October 1978, each operating within a 100 mile radius of home. Like Peter, they came under the supervision of Ken, who acted on their recommendations.

The first Welfare Assistants were:-

Jackie GRIFFITHS	(Physiotherapist)	Edinburgh
Barbara HEADLAND	(Occupational Therapist)	Herts & Essex
Albert HOLLINGWORTH	(Royal Navy/Physiotherapist)	S.E. area
Pam ROBINSON	(Physiotherapist)	Midlands
(Married to Richard, a tetraplegic and early Possum User)		
Chris WHELAN	(S.R.N.)	
Jean WILLIAMS	(Occupational Therapist)	S. Wales
Anne YOUNG	(Physiotherapist)	Northumbria

In the course of visiting members a number of extreme cases were seen where all means of communication was lost - the need for contact with family and nursing attendants was urgent.

Provision of equipment on temporary loan was desirable but placed a heavy drain on P.U.A. resources, so the matter was discussed with the D.H.S.S. in anticipation that they might be able to assist. This closer relationship with Government Departments proved very beneficial, as any serious problems could be taken direct to them for immediate investigation.

After considerable discourse, the D.H.S.S. in 1978 issued a limited number of T.W.C.'s to P.U.A. to be used in situations where prognosis was poor and a request had been channelled through a Consultant or G.P. Within a day of receiving three systems, two were installed for urgent cases. Soon the Emergency stock of equipment grew with a variety of Communication Aids and more and more disabled people were able to benefit from this service.

Mobility

It was after visiting the B.A.C. works at Bristol where the Concordes were under construction that Robert pondered the immense effort in time and money spent

Robert Bowell hard at work in the office



*Ken Winter with his combined T.W.C. and Dictaphone
Clearing estimates before tackling P.U.A. Welfare work.*

on building such a complex plane. What improvements could be made in the lives of disabled people if the same effort was directed to solving the relatively simple problems they faced? Wheelchairs and special transport requirements were a pressing topic, where P.U.A. could endeavour to ensure that manufacturers listened to their needs, incorporating the latest technology into the design of more comfortable wheelchairs and ease of access to vehicles.

By 1975, P.U.A. had already started assisting with special transport, the first vehicle being a specially adapted Commer 2000 for use by Betty WITHAM, of Swadlincote, and later transferred for daily use by patients at the Spinal Injuries Unit at Southport. Ken and others in the Bath area were next to benefit from a converted Mini-van, whilst a second modified Mini-van was based with Jack FITTON at Bolsover, Derbys. The only expense to those borrowing the vehicle was the cost of petrol used, the making good of any damage incurred whilst on loan, and of course finding a willing and qualified driver. Servicing was financed by P.U.A.

A special Transport project was launched to provide further converted vehicles to be based with members nationwide. Each of the Mini-vans cost nearly £2,000, so finance would be the limitation on the number of vehicles P.U.A. could make available. By the end of the '70's' the total number of vehicles reached 20!

Finance and Fundraising

The Association's finances were looking reasonably healthy by the mid to late '70's' and the provision of the D.H.S.S. grant enabled P.U.A. to provide a more efficient and varied service to its members. However, the need for fundraising continued to rise dramatically as more people were discovered who needed special equipment which was unobtainable through the normal statutory bodies.

Over the past years, Hilary and her friends had been a tremendous source of ideas and organisation of events to raise money to purchase a wide range of systems for members. Even after Hilary's death on the 18th June 1975, her influence and motivation were still apparent; a Memorial Fund was created to continue the good work. Shirley PAGETT, blind and severely handicapped with Rheumatoid Arthritis, was a Committee Member of this Fund.

Shirley gave numerous talks and demonstrations with her combined T.W.C. and Tape Recorder System to Schools and interested groups in the Midlands, supported by her Aunt and fellow members; they were transported everywhere in "Chariot", a specially built ambulance primarily designed to accommodate Hilary's bed and equipment, driven by the late Harry GLYNN.



David Hyde and his mother beside the converted Mini-van in which they travelled thousands of miles to publicise P.U.A. and associated work in the disability field.

Shirley's recipe for fundraising was: 'Firstly, take the main ingredient - a cause you wholeheartedly believe in - and keeping your enthusiasm on the boil, liberally coat every unsuspecting human ingredient in sight! Result - an exciting concoction of hard work, apprehension and real enjoyment, topped with a generous helping of eager supporters and giving an aroma of well-handled coins, to the sound of rustling pound notes!'



*Mrs. Shirley Pagett
accepting a cheque from
a group of young
fundraisers.*

*(Photo by kind permission
of the Walsall Observer)*

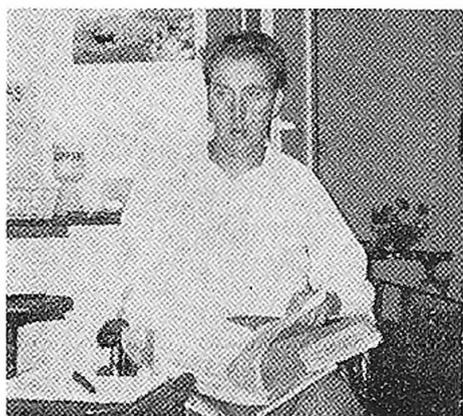
As mentioned previously, Trading and used postage stamps provided another input of finance thanks to the untiring support of Brenda HANSFORD and her family. Sadly, she died on the 23rd December 1976, but her ideals remain and the collection of stamps to be exchanged for cash continues. Charity Concerts, various events, as well as T.V. and Radio Appeals all helped to keep funds flowing into the Association benefitting members of all age groups and disabilities.

At a Management Committee meeting in 1978, it was realised that some members were unable to take a holiday because they required constant attention from another person. The expense involved in financing a holiday for that person and/or paying them a wage was far too great. P.U.A. agreed to consider applications for help to defray these expenses, giving priority to those who had not been away for at least a year and who needed to ask a friend or Agency nurse to accompany them. Amazingly, there were very few applicants to the scheme and it was dropped after about three years.

The Association continued to flourish, in contrast to the general economic climate and at the end of September 1981, the value of equipment purchased during the year was £47,414; the total value of systems owned by P.U.A. amounted to £264,725 of which nearly £69,000 referred to vehicles on the loan scheme.

Committee Member Changes

Following Hilary's death in 1975, the Management co-opted Michael TENNISON of Brough, Yorks., to the Committee.



Mike sustained a C3/4 complete spinal injury after a road accident, being paralysed from the neck downwards. He was employed at a local Hospital as an O.T. Helper responsible for the clerical and reception work of the Department; his wife, Liz, an Occupational Therapist, also worked in the same department. His name was already well-known in the North of England for his publicity work on behalf of P.U.A.; also a Member of the Management Committee of the Spinal Injuries Association; Secretary for a Disabled Swimming Club and Committee Member for the Community Voluntary Services of Humberside. Hobbies included wine-making, sport and travelling.

October 29th 1977 was a great occasion for one of the three Founder Members of the Association - Robert BOWELL married Betty, a Nursing Sister from Carlisle, near Glasgow. They became acquainted when she looked after him while his parents were on holiday. Buying a suitable house and the changed circumstances meant that he could not spend so much time on P.U.A. affairs without some small remuneration; Robert, therefore became an official of P.U.A., which prohibited him from remaining on the Committee.

It was decided to invite Shirley PAGETT to take his place. As mentioned earlier, Shirley had already gained much respect from P.U.A., being a member of the Hilary Pole Memorial Committee. In her spare time she enjoyed music, exchanging newsy tapes with friends and admitted to relishing a good rock 'n' roll in her more lighthearted days.

Hon. Chairman

David HYDE, Hon. Chairman and past Secretary of the Association, died tragically in October 1978. He was the first disabled person to become a full-time demonstrator of electronic aids, and his comments and advice concerning new developments were invaluable. As one of the three Founder Members, he unstintingly gave his time to P.U.A. work, achieving a great deal in the disability field - a great loss.

Christopher JONES agreed to resign as Hon. Treasurer and became Hon. Chairman instead.

Hon. Treasurer

Joanna MAITLAND had been handling the finances for several years in an Assistant capacity, so she accepted the vacant post of Hon. Treasurer. Joanna held the post until her unexpected death, after a short illness, in October 1979 - the loss of another much valued Committee Member.



A little later, Val BOWLER, who had recently been invited to join the Committee, accepted the post of Hon. Treasurer. Val suffered from Multiple Sclerosis which forced him to retire as a Modern Language teacher at Bexhill Grammar School. After a few months sitting at home with very little mental stimulation, Val began to realise the full meaning of being "housebound" - loneliness, frustration and periods of unrelieved boredom whilst his wife Chris was out at work. However, the arrival of his P.S.U.3



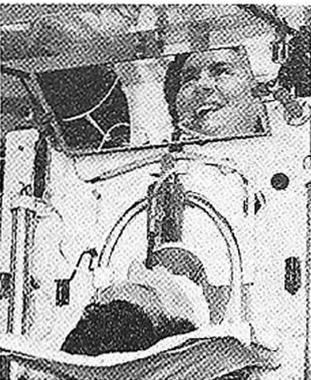
A very special day for Robert BOWELL

Members of the Committee - circa 1976



system with L.S.T. facility and above all his mouth-controlled T.W.C. provided by P.U.A. soon changed his outlook. As he was "able to communicate" he did not qualify for a Ministry typewriter, and it was this which enabled him to be creative. It transformed his life.

He worked for many local associations for the disabled; among them, Chairman and Fundraising Officer of the Bexhill Branch of the M.S. Society and Chairman of the local Access for the Disabled Group. Shouldering the responsibility of Hon. Treasurer in 1981 meant much of his local charity work had to cease to concentrate on P.U.A. activities.



The Management Committee were still one member short and invited Margaret DIXON to join the Committee.

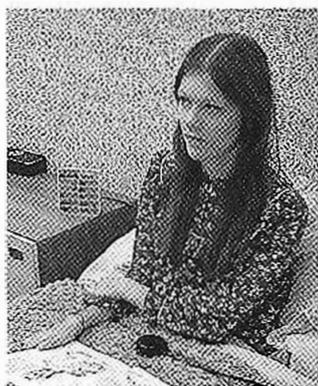
Margaret contracted polio in 1950, when a schoolgirl, and was completely paralysed, confined to an iron-lung. She was nursed by her devoted but elderly parents. Two Possum E.C.U.'s were installed in her home providing control over 21 electrical devices including the L.S.T. facility; her T.V. displayed a reversed image behind her head, corrected by an arrangement of mirrors attached to

the iron-lung. Control over these items was activated by a chin-switch, whilst her T.W.C. was mouth-controlled. She was the first Guest Editor of "Responaut"; contributed to Lord SNOWDON's Report "Integrating the Disabled"; a founder member of the D.I.G. group; and the subject of a "Man Alive" programme demonstrating how a severely disabled person, with willing parents, could live at home in a tiny cottage on a small income.

Selsea villagers presented her with an obsolete ambulance, enabling her to travel widely in her respirator; a near neighbour and good friend was Patrick MOORE, the astronomer.

She had many interests including current affairs, music, ballet, reading, picnics, village and church activities, most sports - especially tennis. Whenever possible, she joined the excited spectators during Wimbledon fortnight, positioned precisely where she could view most of the game on court through her mirrors. Above all, she greatly appreciated the company of friends, especially children. After only a very short period on the Committee, Margaret was forced to resign due to both her parents ill health; she felt the additional burden of P.U.A. meetings would be unfair to them.

Hon. Editor



Another major loss to the Association arose in January 1979, on the death of the Hon. Editor/Secretary, Robert BOWELL - another Founder Member. Fortunately, at least he lived to celebrate P.U.A.'s 10th Anniversary and could be justifiably proud of the Association's achievements over these years and to forecast its continued success in the future.

Mrs. Vivienne MacKENZIE (née FINCH) replaced Margaret on the Committee - she had taken on the Editorship of "Possability" in early 1979. Vivienne broke her neck in a diving accident in 1960, resulting in paralysis from the shoulders downwards. After completing her education, she launched into journalism, writing many book reviews and translations and in 1974 formed a small publishing company. Having contributed to "Possability" on many occasions, she was well qualified to continue the good work started by P.U.A.'s late Editor.



Hon. Publicity Officer

Mary STEVENSON, of Manchester, was invited to become a member of the Committee in 1980. She was involved in a car accident several years previously which

resulted in paralysis from the shoulders down. Initially, Mary resisted being "worked by a machine", but eventually her husband Steve persuaded her to apply for an E.C.U. Her new independence began a sequence of events that kept her very busy and with the assistance of a mouth-controlled T.W.C., managed to fill every hour of the day. At the beginning of 1981, Mary became Publicity Officer.

Hon. Subscriptions Secretary

Due to the increased membership, Mike TENNISON undertook this aspect of work in 1981.

Vice Presidents

When Mr Ron BODEY, of Bristol, retired from the Hon. Auditors position in the Association in 1975, he was invited once again to become a Vice President, as a small token of P.U.A.s appreciation of the demanding work he undertook over the years - this time the invitation was accepted.

Both Brenda and Richard HANSFORD became Vice President's in recognition of their initiative in raising funds through various stamp collections, providing equipment for fellow members.

After David's death, his mother Mrs Margaret HYDE accepted Vice Presidency, as thanks for her dedication and stalwart support of P.U.A., in spite of her own increasing arthritic problems.

Book of Remembrance

P.U.A. has a book of remembrance containing the names of all deceased members. In 1982, the Keeper of the Book was Mona POLE, Hilary's mum. Many individuals entered in the last few years have excelled, using their varied talents to help others, as well as retrieving some of their lost dignity in adversity.

CHAPTER FIVE

Advances in Technology

Technology had made tremendous advances since the early Possum days, when electro-mechanical selectors and capacious relays were encased in clear perspex boxes; then came the start of miniaturisation through the transistor stage, until micro-chips became the order of the day. The Association had no wish to be left behind in the technology race but the initial costs were high and it was necessary to delay entry until prices became more realistic.

One of the first space-age spin-offs to be used to up-date the old 8-input T.W.C. system in use by Joyce NIXON, of Chelmsford, was a multi-input "bubble pack". Attached to a 6 inch square wooden board, this piece of white plastic measuring 3" x 1 1/2" incorporated eight minute switches - it was ideal for her limited hand/finger movements, enabling her to increase her typing speeds considerably.

Another enhanced version of a Possum T.W.C. was the WOMBAT (Word Orientated Microprocessor Based Assembly of Text) used in conjunction with a Slow Speed T.W.C. and small T.V. monitor. This system greatly assisted Ken WINTER's task in tackling the mounting pile of administration incurred by P.U.A. Welfare work.

For those with speech, the Citizen's Band Radio was a particularly valuable means of communication for disabled and housebound people - one need never be lonely, as there is always someone "on air" interested in a chat on a whole range of subjects. One channel is dedicated to round-the-clock coverage for emergency purposes.

1982 was designated Information Technology Year, and encouraged manufacturers to consider the various difficulties experienced by handicapped people, producing ideas and aids to overcome these problems.

For those interested in simple word-processing via a keyboard, the electronic typewriter with or without memory capacity was portable and lightweight compared with the earlier bulky but reliable IBM machines. However, they do tend to be rather expensive, ribbon-wise, if the user is a prolific writer.

The Memowriter, a typewriter-cum-calculator was portable, capable of being strapped to wrist or chair and was useful for printed messages. A small message display Communication Aid became available from Lightwriter, who still produce their larger machine with optical print-out and speech synthesiser.

A portable word-processor capable of storing approximately 1,250 words or 2¹/₂ typed A4 pages operated by a combination of six keys instead of a standard QWERTY keyboard increased the speed of a one-handed typist, right or left hand. Several versions of this system called the Microwriter were available with a 14 character display and output to printer, monitor or speech synthesiser. The Toucan Communicator was designed to enable a severely disabled person to communicate using two switches which scanned an array of lights, selecting the appropriate letter required and displayed in an 80 character window. This system, too, could be coupled with a printer or computer.

By 1983, the "homely" T.W.C.'s were deemed to be obsolete - the Computer Age was upon us; it was felt that their use in the disabled community would open up the fields of opportunity. Those with learning difficulties, the deaf, blind and multi-handicapped would be able to break barriers and compete more realistically with their able-bodied fellows in both education and employment.

One of the first disabled Commercial Computer Programmers was a remarkable young man called Dick BOYDELL. Dick suffered from cerebral palsy, was wheelchair bound, dependent on others for all his physical needs and unable to communicate with anyone but his parents and very close friends. However, in 1963, although having received no formal education, he was given the chance to express himself through a simple Possum T.W.C. - within nine days he had typed his first letter - a door had been unlocked to a brilliant scientific brain. He made staggering progress and in 1967 was offered a place at Oakwood Further Education Centre at Kelvedon, Essex, where he intended to study solid state electronics with a view to contributing to the development of electronic aids for the handicapped; he soon became interested in computers and the logical thought processes required for computer programming.

The Ford Motor Co. carried out an aptitude test on interested Oakwood students and heading the list of successful candidates, Dick leapt at Ford's subsequent offer to train and employ him. At this stage he carried out the programming work on a 4-input T.W.C. requiring considerable physical effort.

Several years later, he was able to improve his work output greatly when he took delivery of the first production Wordstore T.W.C. system. 100 computer language words plus approximately 400 frequently used words were stored in the system and were accessed by selection of three, from a total of eight switches, built around a pivoted foot-skate arrangement.

By June 1972, Dick was admitted to full membership of the British Computer Society (B.C.S.) and in April 1975, he was presented with the first Hon. Member of the B.C.S. certificate. As a result of the success of the Oakwood group of

Dick Boydell

Severe spastic, two-switch system
operated by feet. 3 weeks after start.

*1st draft
MS*

4 Hanyard's Lane,
Cuffley,
Herts.

20th January, 1964

Speed 1.

Dear Mr. Maling,

Thank you for your comments on my first letter, perhaps I should have told you that it was my second attempt, the first contained so many mistakes that I had to re-type it. But once again there were no mistakes in X selection, except once when I forgot the code. There was one +Y, eight -Y and one "E" instead of "M" which I suppose counts as "-4Y"! The other mistakes were not the result of faulty selection, but were typing errors and poor composition.

Thank you for sending the new switch, which I am now using. Because the buttons are so far apart I find it easier to use both feet. Unfortunately, occasionally when I press the Y switch it fails to make proper contact and the machine either cancels, or types the first letter in the column. But it might be as well to wait a little before deciding whether it is a faulty switch, or foot.

I would very much enjoy a visit to the Laboratory; thanks for the invitation. I have discussed it with my parents and we all feel that it would be better to wait a few weeks ~~xxx~~ until I have had more practice.

Thanks for the reminder about the speed switch, I am still on the slowest speed and have marked this letter ~~XXXX~~ ~~align~~ at the top, I hope I have got it right.

I was very interested in your remarks about driving in fog, particularly in the use of a tape-recorder as navigator. I have heard of talking books, but not talking maps.

As an experiment I am re-typing this letter to check the difference in time between thinking what to say as I type and just copying. The first draft took two days and had .x mistakes, the final result

Y

L

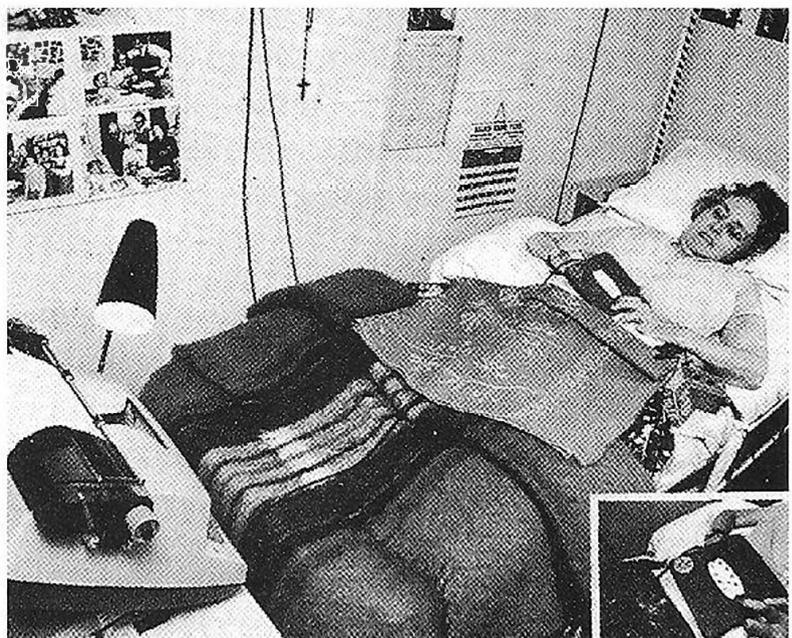
D

R

A



Dick Boydell with his Wordstore Typewriter



Mrs Joyce Nixon, a polio victim shown using her 8-input special input switch. (See inset)

students, including Geoff BUSBY, another cerebral palsy sufferer who operates the keyboard with his nose, the B.C.S. specialised group for disabled persons was formed.

Dick's success story was due once again to the devoted determination of his parents, technological advances and his own tremendous qualities and spirit. When conventional medicine and education had written him off, he broke through victorious at the age of 31!

Computer programming, requiring mental aptitude rather than physical co-ordination and dexterity, opened up the field of professional employment to many disabled individuals. Later Committee Member, Mervyn BAKER, was an enthusiastic computer user, gaining a B.A. through the Open University. As Mervyn once remarked: 'A computer is quite a simple thing really. Its great strength is its ability to do laborious tasks, hour after hour, at lightening speeds!' Many peripheral adaptations and software modifications became available, enabling those with hand-writing difficulties to utilise the flexible computer system, producing acceptable work, as well as exploring the world of Art and Graphics.

A speech synthesiser coupled with a portable Communicator gave a disabled person a "voice", a means of expression and social contact. For many mentally/physically handicapped children, the range of specialised software promoted the necessary stimulus to make learning interesting and fun. Severely disabled children often become bored and frustrated through their inability to play as a normal child; educational games allow them to play individually or in competitive groups.

'Not just a technical help to our lives but psychological treatment as well!'

(Vera STADLER, Budapest, Hungary)

CHAPTER SIX

The Transitional Years

'That safe, insular rut can be comfortable; I know because I've been settled into it myself, but you'll have much more to think about if you join in. You might just give other people more to think about too!'

(Florence BUNN, Southport)

1981 was designated the United Nations International Year for Disabled Persons (I.Y.D.P.). The P.U.A. Committee hoped that everyone would try to mark the occasion in a way that benefitted the Association, thereby helping other disabled people too. In the past, the amount of apathy or total lack of reaction from members, despite repeated requests for involvement was a great disappointment to the hard-working Committee. Participation, equality and integration were the key-words of I.Y.D.P.

Publicity

The work of the Association was publicised in many ways by individuals, Branch and Support Groups, through talks, demonstrations, exhibitions and various advertising media. Twelve Travelling Display Units were available to Schools, Clubs or Libraries for a set period of time. By staging a static display of P.U.A.'s range of activities, it was felt that the Association would gain from the prolonged publicity and that news of P.U.A. would reach those in the area in need of specialised help.

A stand at the Annual NAIDEX exhibitions reached an even wider audience and afforded the Committee an opportunity to meet members in person when they wandered in for a chat - a welcome break from travelling around the exhibits. Peter ALLEN, the Welfare Officer, was heard to comment that he would 'have to travel 1,000 miles to get through to as many people as we've reached in just a few hours.'

Peter also encouraged members to act in a positive way by making contact with their local Radio Station, Health Clinic or Hospital, telling them in no uncertain terms about the benefits of the equipment provided by P.U.A. To send a write-up and photo of themselves using the equipment to the local Newspaper Office - with a little effort P.U.A. could be really newsworthy!

For those members suffering from deteriorating sight or total blindness, the introduction of "Possability" on tape/cassettes was good news.

Finance and Fundraising

The Association was flourishing in 1981, demonstrating the extent of public recognition of P.U.A.'s service to the disabled community. The continued financial support of the Department of Health was greatly appreciated, as without this funding P.U.A. would be unable to run the Welfare Service. The Committee frequently stressed that the maintenance of the present growth was dependent on each member doing their best in the fundraising field - the Association belonged to them and needed an input in order to be able to take something out; lack of funds resulted in the inability to provide the necessary equipment or grants it offered to members.

The Hon. Treasurer, Val BOWLER, proposed the formation of a fundraising venture known as the "100 + Club", to which 100 or more members would contribute £12 per annum subscription. The advantages of the Club to both P.U.A. and subscribers were great; the Association would benefit by £600 annually and each member would have 40 chances to win a worthwhile cash prize from the quarterly draw. It still prospers to the present day.

The astounding energy and enthusiasm of the Hilary Pole Memorial Committee helped to raise money by organising Concerts, Dances, Fayres, Get-Togethers, Sales, Raffles and many other events. In the Chairman's Annual Report for the year ending 30th September 1981, it was learnt that after many years of full-time work without financial reward, devoted to the sale and despatch of an ever-growing range of P.U.A. goods, Joyce and Harry GLYNN felt it was time to give themselves a chance to lead their own lives and enjoy the company of their family. Their work was comparable to running a small mail-order business - who would be strong enough to follow in their footsteps?!

The P.U.A. Branches too were actively involved in caring and providing for members in their area still. John ARMISTEAD, a Committee Member of the Wharfedale Branch was made an honorary citizen of Otley in January 1981, in recognition of all he had done to help the disabled community, since joining P.U.A. in 1969.

Radio and T.V. Appeals over the years contributed nearly £85,000. The London Marathon proved to be a money-spinner for several charities including the P.U.A. "Team", who reached a grand total of £1,048-99 - a great run!

By 1982/3 the subscription rates had risen to:-

Full Membership for Disabled person	£2.00
Life Membership for Disabled person	£15.00
Associate Membership for Able-bodied person	£4.00
Life Membership for Able-bodied person	£30.00

All Life Members were now issued with a Membership Card; some would have thought their luck had changed had a P.U.A. draft been passed unnoticed, it read:

'Dear Member,

We have great pleasure in enclosing a P.U.A. Life Membership Car which we are sending out to Life Members in acknowledgement of their most valued support!'

Vehicles

The provision of an expanding range of vehicles on loan benefitted many members who appreciated the facility and made good use of the scheme. '... life has been more pleasant because we are now able to go out, even if only to the local shops. We enjoy so much getting outside our four walls and meeting new friends!'

(Evelyn and John WILSON, Essex)

Some of the larger vehicles were capable of accommodating several wheelchairs and were fitted with a tail-lift for ease of access. However, it was necessary to go to great lengths to modify vehicles to fit some members - Nora HARDING of Swansea, needed a 15cwt van or special conversion as she relied on her respiratory equipment at all times. The cost of a new 15cwt van with tail-lift was in the region of £7,000! After discussions with Mr. POYNTING, of Salisbury who converted many of the P.U.A.'s Mini-vans, he decided that there was no problem - simply cut a standard Mini-van frame in half, add 12 inches in the centre of the vehicle, assemble, then add the necessary roof space - estimated cost £3,800.

A generous donation from the British Polio Fellowship enabled P.U.A. to provide this specially converted vehicle for Nora, who was delighted with her newly acquired mobility.

Another grateful recipient of a refurbished Mini-van was the Orkney branch, who by their own efforts were able to re-imburse the Association with the purchase and delivery costs. Ken WINTER's eldest daughter Jill, with her friend Helen, volunteered to drive the 1,000 miles or more to the Scottish Isle, while various ferry services and British Airways lent a helping hand with their return passage.

In spite of encountering mechanical problems on their first trip to Scotland, a year later the two girls offered to deliver a second adapted Mini-van to the Orkney members, who had once again succeeded in raising sufficient funds to cover the cost - they felt mobility was more important to them than specialised electronic equipment, but it was not long before they sought more independence within the home.

A recent addition to the specialised transport range, providing ample room for wheelchair users, was based on the Talbot Matra Rancho. At the touch of a button, the electro-hydraulic system lowered the rear section of the car to ground level; after securely clamping the wheelchair in position, the whole section was raised to car floor level again, thus easing the back-strain on the attendant.

By summer 1983, the total number of loan vehicles had reached 26, five of which were large vehicles with tail-lifts. The Hull fleet organised by Mike TENNISON was almost a Dial-a-Ride service, as caring, voluntary drivers were provided. The vans are still running seven days a week and the local members fund this service themselves.

Welfare Service

The dedicated Welfare team of Ken WINTER and Peter ALLEN greatly contributed to the progress and growth of the Association. During 1981, Peter visited over 300 members, not only assessing each equipment requirement but also imparting practical information on disabled people's rights, allowances, claims etc. of which many were ignorant, partly due to communication difficulties caused by their disabilities.

Peter also endeavoured to carry a few portable Communication units, donated by several well-known Trusts and Corporate bodies, around with him, so that he could provide on-the-spot assistance where necessary. The Cooper Charitable Trust were approached for financial help in the purchase of suitable Communication Aids - their response was a very generous donation of £15,000 at the rate of £5,000 per annum for three years. With the first year's donation, ten Possum Communicators were procured for emergency issue.

There was still a demand for the provision of Possum T.W.C. systems from the Emergency Equipment Pool, to those with a very poor prognosis. A further ten or more systems were made available from the Department of Health to assist urgent cases, the only problem being the high cost of running such a loan scheme. Escalating costs for the emergency installation, collection and refurbishing of the systems were in the region of £300 per issue.

Committee Member Changes (1982/3)

The running of the Association was seriously disrupted by the sudden and unexpected resignation of Ken WINTER, for personal reasons, in the latter half of 1982. He had been P.U.A.'s solid pillar of support and strength in the Welfare field. Stalwartly sustained by his wife and family over the past decade, Ken had played a large part in the development of the Association, acting as right-hand man to Robert BOWELL in those early, formative years. Under his

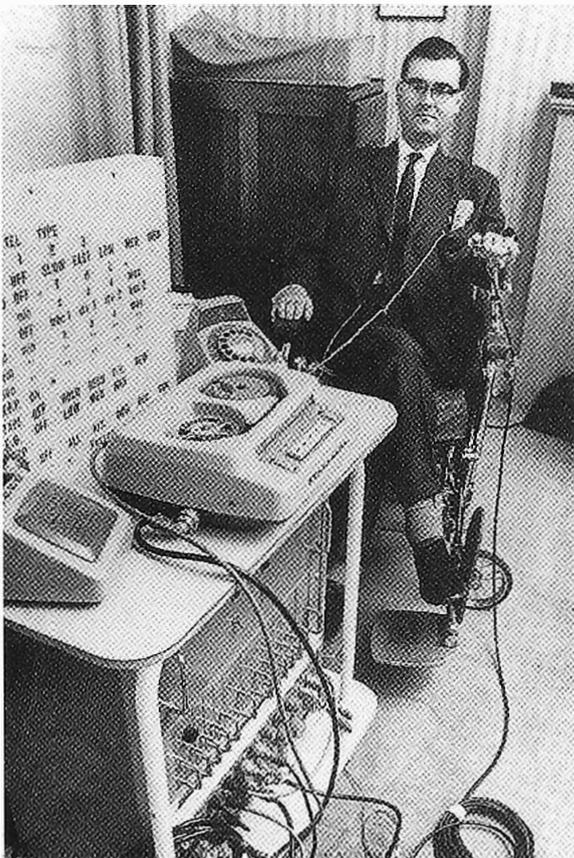
direction, P.U.A.'s income had risen to just under £100,000 for 1982. The Committee knew he would be sadly missed, expressing their great appreciation of his past efforts and regret that he would not be there to accompany P.U.A. into the new technological era.

Swift reorganisation was necessary to maintain the smooth running of the Association and everyone made an effort to do their bit, not least Peter ALLEN who was the Committee's link with the members. It was felt that it would be wise to share the burden of responsibilities more, thus, the post of Welfare Director and Co-ordinator were separated, attracting their own staff and the task of Fundraising and Accounts was tackled individually.

Vivienne MacKENZIE also stunned the Committee in June 1983 by announcing her resignation, but she offered to continue her excellent work on editing "Possability" and was also prepared to assist in Fundraising as an executive of the Association.

The Welfare Office moved to Bexhill in the capable hands of Val and Chris BOWLER and from there they organised and directed Peter's Welfare work around the country. A further Welfare Assistant, Anne SMITH, was recruited to cover the West Midland area.

After a period in temporary accommodation, the Central Administration Office was set up at the South Bank Business Centre in Battersea, London. The new Co-ordinator was Hilary FINCH, Vivienne's sister, and Mary WHITE was her willing assistant.



Since the advent of computers, more and more members were seeking further information and advice on how they could fulfil their varying needs; with the expert back-up of her husband Steve, Mary STEVENSON set about trying to answer these queries and thus she added Information to her role as Hon. Publicity Officer.

Christopher JONES, Hon. Chairman, in spite of his own heavy business work load, continued to campaign hard to ensure the Association's future. Due to all the extra work created by the success of

The Hon Chairman in full control!

P.U.A., full Committee Meetings were held four times a year, instead of bi-annually. It was therefore felt advisable to create the post of Vice Chairman to cover occasions when Christopher was absent through ill-health, vehicle problems or the winter breaks in Portugal, and Mike TENNISON accepted this responsibility in addition to that of Membership Secretary. The increasing Membership list absorbed a great deal of Mike's spare-time as not all members paid promptly, resulting in the issue of "reminder" letters, which inevitably increased postal expenditure.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Sequal – change in name only

'SEQUAL is nobody's aftermath, and we shall go on increasing our help to the disabled, and our efficiency, as well as preserving independence, for as long as we are needed.'
(Christopher Jones, Hon. Chairman)

London Office period

When the Possum Users Association was formed 15 years previously, P.C.L. was the only major company in the field producing specialised equipment for the disabled. Confusion was created in the minds of handicapped people and those concerned with their welfare, due to the similarity of the Association's name and that of the Commercial Company to which the Association had had close ties in Reg MALING'S days. Thus P.U.A. became an anachronism, as the steady influx of other manufacturers equipment was provided for members use. An increasing proportion of P.U.A. members were not necessarily Possum Users!

After countless hours of soul-searching, and lengthy lists of possible names with recourse to commissions and companies, the Management Committee eventually chose the name SEQUAL to supersede Possum Users Association – SEQUAL (Special Equipment and Aids for Living). Whether by accident or design, the subsequent Newsletter was entitled "Possibility" – the SEQUAL magazine – now known as "SEQUAL NEWS".

The aims of the Association and the Management Team remained unchanged, and John DAVIES from Stoke-on-Trent was co-opted to the Committee.



John has been confined to a wheelchair with Muscular Dystrophy since the age of five, but his parents and family endeavoured to treat him as a normal child and he enjoyed an active life. The lack of education did not seem to deter this very outgoing young man who became a Parish Councillor, member of the local Sports Council and Secretary of a local Cricket and Football Club. A sports fanatic, he has twice been voted the local "Sports Personality of the Year". Although leading a busy life, John accepted the Committee's

offer to become Specific Fundraiser in March 1985, which entails writing numerous letters requesting sponsorship for member's equipment – his motto: 'go out and ATTACK life.'

By this time Peter ALLEN had been Welfare Officer for over eleven years and had visited or made contact with a high percentage of members nationwide, enjoying a relationship of mutual respect and trust. At the same time, he had put an enormous effort into ensuring the smooth transition through the various changes, to provide an uninterrupted service to members.



David BROOKES, from Cheshire, joined Peter in 1984; he acted as Area Welfare Officer for the Northern region of the U.K., while Peter traversed the Southern half of the country. He had a technical engineering background and was no newcomer to modern electronics having worked in the computer field and latterly owned Toucan Ltd. which marketed many types of Communication Aids.

Neurological oriented disabilities attracted his interest, triggered by the development of Multiple Sclerosis in two of his relatives.

Peter had a strong desire to help severely brain damaged children and adults who were unable to cope with standard toys, lacking stimulation and communication skills. A pilot scheme was started in the South West called "STEPS" (Sequal Toys and Educational Postal Service) – this was gradually extended to members in the rest of the country.

The suitability of each toy to the individual was important because for many it was the first time they had achieved anything for themselves – the correct stimulus had to be graded to the different development stages. This project proved successful after initial teething problems and was soon to become a charity in its own right, its service available to-day.

Abingdon Office Period

The Association was growing rapidly and had reached the stage when a full-time Administrator was desirable to manage the day-to-day affairs in running the Charity, under the strict directions of the Management Committee who remained in charge of all policy making decisions. The Administrative Headquarters was transferred from its London base to the Abingdon Office and Linda ALDRIDGE was appointed Administrator for SEQUAL in January 1985, assisted by two part-time secretaries, Nonie HAMILTON-MARTIN and Jane PEARSON.



Linda was an experienced State Registered Nurse and immediately prior to taking up her post with the Association had been running a local charity for the elderly and disabled close-by in Wallingford, Oxon. Married with two children, her husband had recently retired early due to ill-health; her daughter Elizabeth was studying for her "A" levels; while her physically disabled son Mark was already employed by SEQUAL in a clerical capacity, and was soon to have his own special page in the Newsletter, "Diary of the Office Boy" – witty and

humorous, members eagerly turned to his page when the magazine arrived every quarter. Apart from the general administration work, Linda spent much of her time in publicity and fundraising activities and representing SEQUAL on a number of national co-ordinating bodies concerned with the disabled person's need.

Fundraising was still of great importance as new technology was not cheap and more and more handicapped people were being referred to the Charity. The equipment now handled was bulky, for example a complete BBC computer system might comprise twelve fragile packages requiring careful transit to arrive in good working condition. Two nationwide carriers R/T and Securicor, both offered reduced rates for despatch and collection of systems throughout the country which was an enormous help in making ends meet.

Two new Committee Members were given the task of General Fundraising, Jeff DAVIES and Philip LEWIS, both from the Bristol area.



Jeff suffered from Muscular Dystrophy and welcomed the opportunity to do something practical for a Charity who helped him.

He managed a local amateur football team, while his wife was a keen hockey player.

Philip had a varied career in the Management Business and Third World projects before becoming

wheelchair bound as the result of an accident. He also had an interest in Car Chair Ltd., a company manufacturing wheelchairs which fitted directly into a car with the aid of a specially adapted internal lift.





Mike SUTTON, born in Egypt of Maltese parents, kept a close watch on the Association's cash-flow, in his role as Hon. Finance Officer.

Before retiring early for health reasons, he had been responsible for a computer installation, as well as a large office in London and one at Skelmersdale. In his spare time, when not keeping his eye on SEQUAL'S books, he

enjoyed motoring and walking with his wife Peggy in the Surrey hills.

SEQUAL was fortunate to have friends in the House of Commons and two more M.P.'s, Mr. Tom CLARKE, CBE and Mr. Bob PARRY, both pledged their support to the disabled community. Mr. CLARKE was attempting to push his private Members Bill through Parliament regarding the disabled, while Mr. PARRY showed special interest in Human Rights and Civil Liberties among other things. Both became Patrons of the Association, along with a Town Councillor, Derek SOUTHERN, who lived in Wallingford and took a keen interest in the welfare of the disabled.

By the beginning of 1987, SEQUAL had a total of 3,000 members many of whom were well equipped with the latest technology.

The Welsh Headquarters

CROESO I GYMRU – Welcome to Wales

The Administration Office was on the move again, this time hopefully to a more permanent site in a purpose-built office and stock room situated in the beautiful Glyn Ceiriog valley, near Oswestry. The Office staff comprised Linda and Mark with two new part-time secretaries, "Bunty" EVANS and Rowena HOFBAUER, who rapidly got to grips with organising the work and minimizing the general upheaval.

Mark was now known as the Assistant to the Administrator.



He was born with Spina Bifida making a weak start in life but proving he was a fighter, surviving numerous operations and now walking with the use of elbow crutches. His education was completed at Hephaistos School, near Reading, from which he emerged with a Diploma in Business Studies; each pupil at this Special School would deny they were disabled but just found it a little harder to do some things than others. Mark was

discovered on Peter ALLEN's travels and was offered a 12 months training course in the SEQUAL office, supported by the M.S.C.; his permanent appointment was confirmed in September 1986. He is a great snooker enthusiast and enjoys his trips to the "local".



"Bunty" was an experienced short-hand Secretary. When a Wordprocessor was installed in the Office she was hesitant to touch it, but after a short course on computers, she successfully mastered it and vowed she would never return to a typewriter again!



Rowena had a varied work experience, including some practical nursing skills and thoroughly enjoyed the type of work SEQUAL offered, where no two days were alike!

Although officially part-timers they were certainly not "clock watchers" and carried out many unscheduled duties beyond their job specification.



Val Bowler, Welfare Director, with page turner and T.W.C.

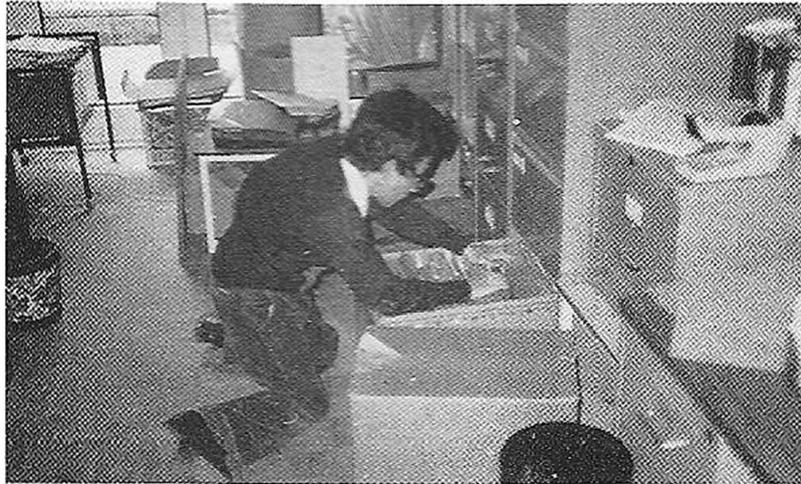


*Mary Stevenson – Publicity & Information Officer
(Photo: Salford City Reporter)*



*Julian Joss & Gladys Halis
receiving a cheque from the
Managers of Dillons shops.
Craig Matherson received
computer*

Mark Aldridge – "It's in here somewhere!"



The sad loss of Mary STEVENSON in December 1987, as well as Shirley PAGETT earlier in the year, was an unexpected shock to the Management Committee – valuable and dedicated workers on behalf of SEQUAL/P.U.A. There were more Committee Member changes in 1988/9 when Mike TENNISON, Jeff DAVIES and Philip LEWIS left the Management Team; they were replaced by Diana STAPLES for a short while and Mervyn BAKER, a non-communicant resulting from a massive stroke and the first Committee Member, apart from Hilary, to use a Communication Aid.

Since Mike's resignation, the posts of Vice Chairman and Membership Secretary were vacant, but the first place was soon ably filled by Val BOWLER using a Voice Amplification System to preside over meetings. His will kept his mind going long after his body had served its time – regrettably he too passed away in June 1990. John DAVIES continues as Deputy Chairman to the present day.

The Membership lists had already been computerised by Mike and thus Mervyn, already a long-term and active supporter, readily agreed to take over this side of affairs.

Christopher still remained Chairman of SEQUAL and the responsibility for the four-monthly Newsletter was placed in the hands of Linda and her colleagues.

Mike SUTTON, the Finance Officer, unfortunately developed an eyesight problem in Spring 1987, which was partially overcome. Although unwise to strain his eyes unnecessarily, he was prepared to carry on until the end of the financial year, March 1988. His successor, Maelor FIELD, also developed serious eye troubles soon after joining SEQUAL and tragically died a few weeks later. Mike agreed to hold the fort once more, realising the risk involved and the Charity greatly appreciated his loyalty and unselfishness. The situation was eventually resolved when Judy READ, a qualified accountant and John DAVIES' sister, kindly offered her services and financial guidance.

Another new face appeared on the Committee in 1990, that of Julian JOSS, a young man suffering from Spina Bifida. He was studying Computer Studies at Bourneville College, Birmingham, and soon was prepared to share his knowledge by becoming Computer Adviser to SEQUAL, filling the gap Mary STEVENSON had left. He succeeded in obtaining a full-time job with the West Midlands Police Traffic Division, scanning a monitor displaying the flow of traffic along the motorway; this involved shift-work and meant that he had less time to spend on SEQUAL affairs, so after two years Julian decided to resign to the disappointment of the Management team.



The Welfare Service was now controlled from the Administration Office. Peter and David, the two Welfare Officers, had worked well in their respective areas visiting members old and new, but after three years David was forced to resign due to his wife's ill health. The chosen Area Officer for the North was Joy WAKEFIELD, an Occupational Therapist, plucked from semi-retirement in Devon.

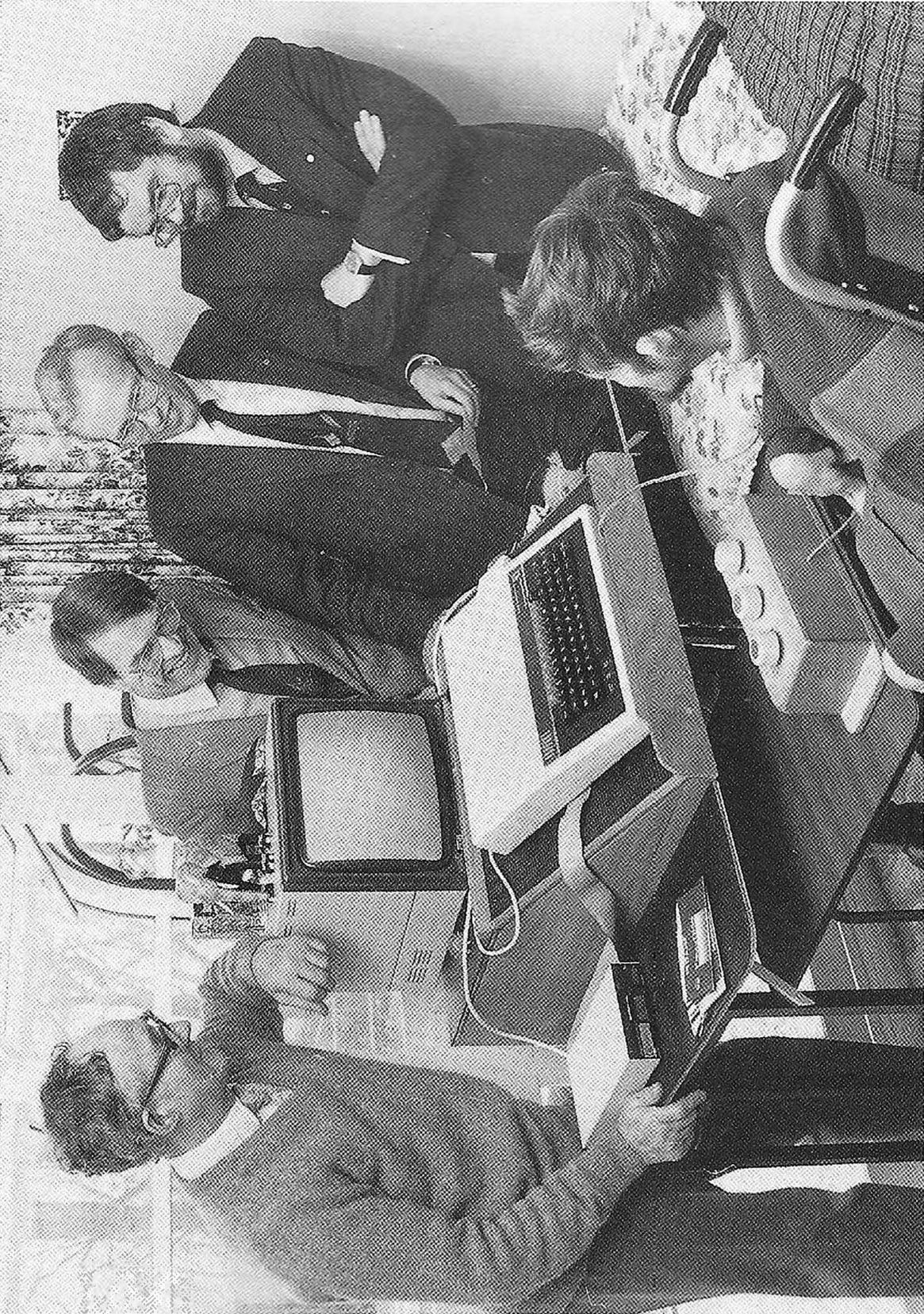
She was no stranger to Communication Aids – a member of the original Possum team – who had been working in the disability field for over twenty years. Joy started nurse training in Oxford and later at the West Cornwall Hospital, Penzance; her time there was short lived when she contracted polio and was discharged in a wheelchair to vegetate at home. For a period between Oxford and Penzance, several interesting years were spent as a Personal Assistant to the Head of the Electronics Maintenance Division at A.E.R.E., Harwell, where she acquired some technical “know-how” which proved invaluable later in Reg MALING's team. A close bond with the Association in its formative days has matured over the years.

After twelve years spent on the road, coupled with ever increasing traffic problems and unsociable working hours, Peter felt the need to have more time with his family. His loyal and admirable service would be missed by SEQUAL but the residents of the Christian Alliance Old People's Home in Torquay, which he now runs will have gained an understanding and kind friend.



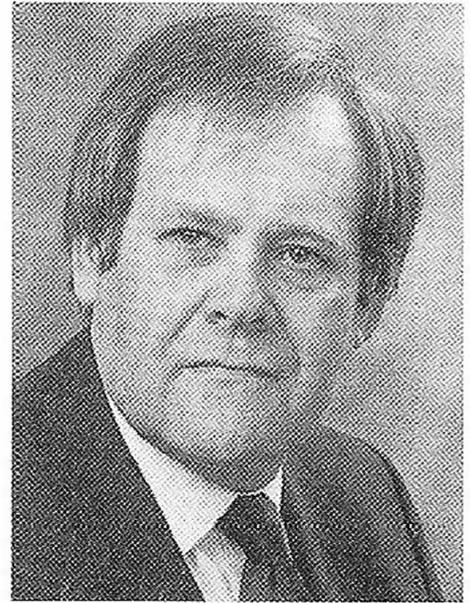
Jim WALLWORK, Peter's successor, underwent an intensive three month training programme supervised by Joy, before he took over the Northern territory and Joy came South to work nearer home. Jim was an ex-Army man who later qualified as an S.R.N. and also obtained a B.A. (Hons) degree with the Open University (O.U.). Wishing to gain skills in the modern sciences he studied

Computer languages and technology too. His other interest are reading, music, local history and philosophy.

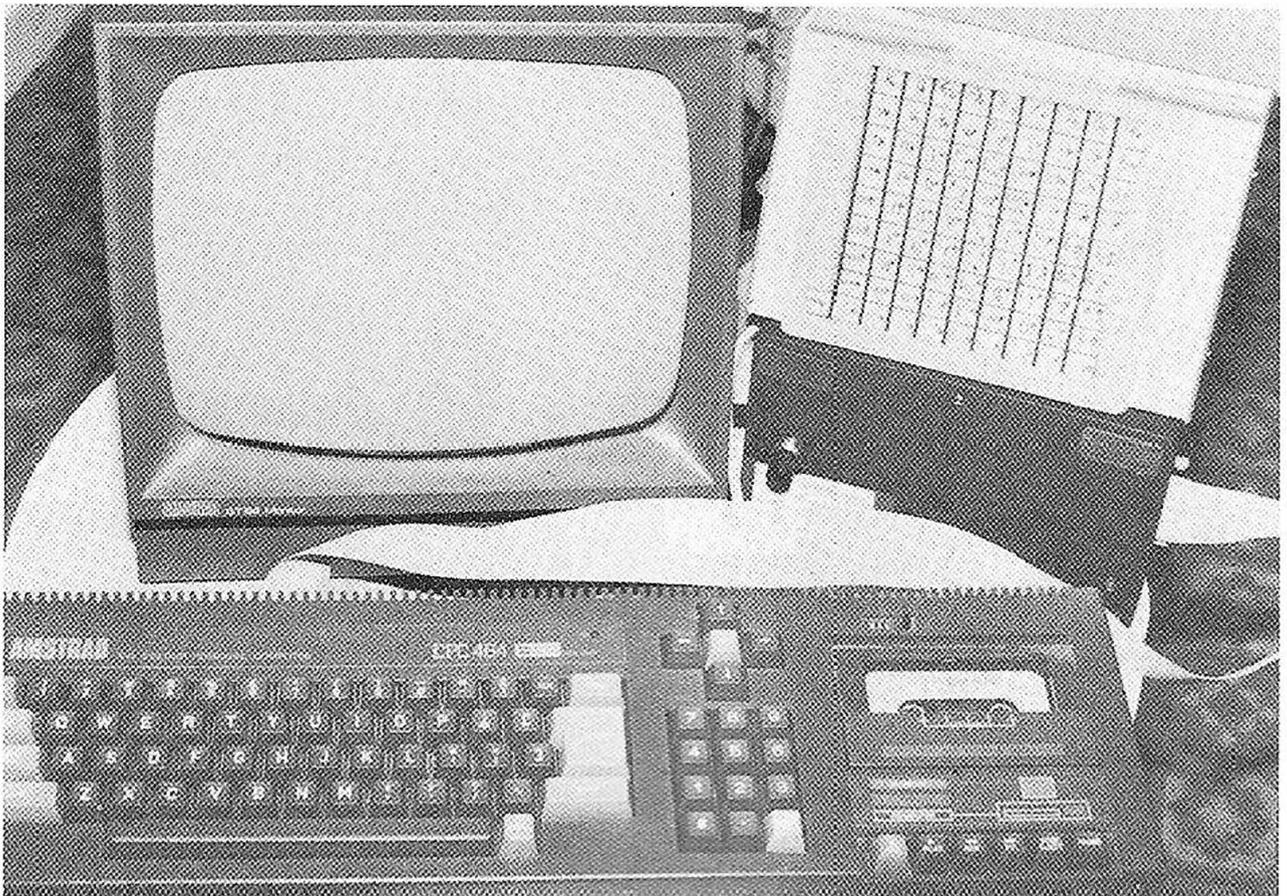


The Computer Age
Photo: Herald Express, Torquay

Tony Mace – Fundraiser



The Toni Emulator



The advent of the computer certainly opened up a whole new world to some members; its versatility compared with the standard typewriter was sufficient to encourage them to write poetry and books and for those keen, enthusiastic ones to tackle an O.U. degree or Open College course. However, for those who felt unable to delve into the complexities of such systems, a few less flexible units became available, designed to facilitate wordprocessing and environmental control using modern techniques and simplified operation. Two of the designers were Dr. Alan PITCHFORD, whose late wife was a polio responent and early Possum User and Dr. Stan COCKING, of Sutton Courtenay who, along with Tony STEVENSON – Mary's husband, made it possible for a disabled person to use a simple Amstrad computer with a single switch input via a TONI emulator, by-passing the keyboard.

Thanks to the generosity of Sutton Coldfield and Vesey Rotary Club, Richard PATCHING and his film crew from Central Television produced a sincere and informative video to enliven lectures and help fundraising. The stars of the show were Mary STEVENSON, John DAVIES and two year old Rebecca FIELD, with supporting cast, Su EVANS of Central T.V. and Linda ALDRIDGE.

At the same time this video was released, SEQUAL decided to see if a full-time Fundraiser would be worthwhile. Organising fundraising events takes a considerable time and an enormous amount of effort and goodwill by all concerned. They felt the appointed person should be prepared to travel and organize events nationally as well as lecturing and demonstrating some of the range of equipment used by members. Tony MACE was chosen as SEQUAL's new mobile Fundraiser. Sometimes the chance of winning a good prize will make people part with their money – 'Win a Mini for £1!' Tony's other ideas included a sponsored Greyhound race at local stadiums, Wellesbourne Lions Raft Race at Stratford-on-Avon and a great individual effort by Max FIELD, the local family butcher, who did a sponsored Lakeland walk of 46 miles and 4 by 3,000 ft. mountains in 17 hours 41 mins. Tony made a great number of friends during his two years with SEQUAL, introducing others to the Charity and raising much needed funds.

Quietly in her own individual way, Gladys HALLS made a super-human effort on SEQUAL's behalf, in memory of her dear husband Colin who suffered a brain haemorrhage in 1978, benefitting from equipment provided by the Charity. Together, they started saving half-pennies in a whisky bottle in 1979, then when Colin received his chin-operated equipment he demonstrated it at Coffee mornings and Bazaars. After his death in 1983, Gladys doubled her fundraising activities and with the help of family and friends, encouraged and supported by members of the Hilary Pole Memorial Committee, including

Hilary's family, Joyce GLYNN and Anne SMITH, and latterly, receiving great support from DILLONS chain of shops, working towards her goal.

£5,000 had been raised by 1985 – Gladys intended to double this amount in 1988, and on December 4th, 1987 at 11.20am she reached her target of £10,000! SEQUAL were the first to congratulate Gladys when she won the Regional Fundraiser of the Year Award in 1988 – 'Raising the money has been hard work, but I wanted to give something back.'



Mrs Gladys Halls – Fundraiser Supreme

One of the many computer presentations she attended made possible by her own hard effort and stalwart backing of her many friends and supporters of P.U.A. in the Midlands.

(Photo: Courtesy of Post Studies, Birmingham)

CHAPTER EIGHT

21 Years Old - Planning for the Future

'SEQUAL is the only national organisation helping to provide what is surely not a "luxury", but a basic human right.'
(Alison QUAYLE, 1989)

SEQUAL (P.U.A.) reached the age of maturity in 1989 – 21 years service dedicated to the disabled community.

Demands on the service were continually rising; the financial cost to cover member's equipment needs was nearing £200,000; waiting lists for systems were becoming unacceptably long. Income to the Charity fluctuated and it was therefore necessary to raise SEQUAL's profile in order to gain more substantial financial backing.

A decision was taken to seek Professional Fundraising guidance and the late Patrick NEWELL, MBE, and his Associates Dorothy HARVEY and Alison QUAYLE, all members of Charity Fundraising Managers, kindly agreed to carry out a feasibility study on the prospects of mounting a national Appeal for SEQUAL.

The Appeal Target was to be £250,000. Prior to the setting-up of the full Appeal Committee it was thought useful to make approaches to various individual Grant-making Trusts. Each Trust has specific terms of reference and thus every application had to be researched carefully, a long and painstaking exercise. Over 100 five-page letters were sent to Trusts - the initial response was encouraging. As some Trusts only met once a year there was an inevitable delay in discovering how successful the effort had been. The Charities Aid Foundation gave considerable assistance by awarding a grant of £4,000 to help cover the Appeal costs, which was much appreciated.

In the latter half of 1987, the Charity was both proud and honoured when the Right Hon. Lord HAVERS of St. Edmundsbury, former Lord Chancellor, agreed to accept the position of President of SEQUAL.



*The Right Honourable LORD HAVERS
in his robes as Lord Chancellor.*

Thanks to Lord HAVER's influence and enthusiasm for SEQUAL's work, it became possible to establish an Appeal Committee under the Chairmanship of Sir John CUCKNEY (Chairman of 3i). Other members were: Her Grace the Duchess of St. Albans; Lord FANSHAW (Sedgwick Group plc); Mr. Douglas CRITCHLEY (Retired Actuary and Patron of SEQUAL); Mr. Christopher HAWKINS (Managing Director of Phillips); Mr. Christopher LEWINTON (Chairman of T.I.); and Admiral Sir John TREACHER, KCB.

The Appeal was officially launched on the 14th June 1990, at a splendid reception held at Trinity House, London, in the presence of Her Royal Highness The Princess Michael of Kent, Patron of SEQUAL. Two of SEQUAL's young members were among the guests; Louise McCARTHY presented flowers and David JONES "spoke" to her Royal Highness using equipment supplied by SEQUAL. The venue, organisation of the event and hospitality were all financed by several Commercial Groups and the Charity was very grateful for the tremendous hard work which had taken place to make the evening a success - the publicity gained also helped to promote SEQUAL's activities.

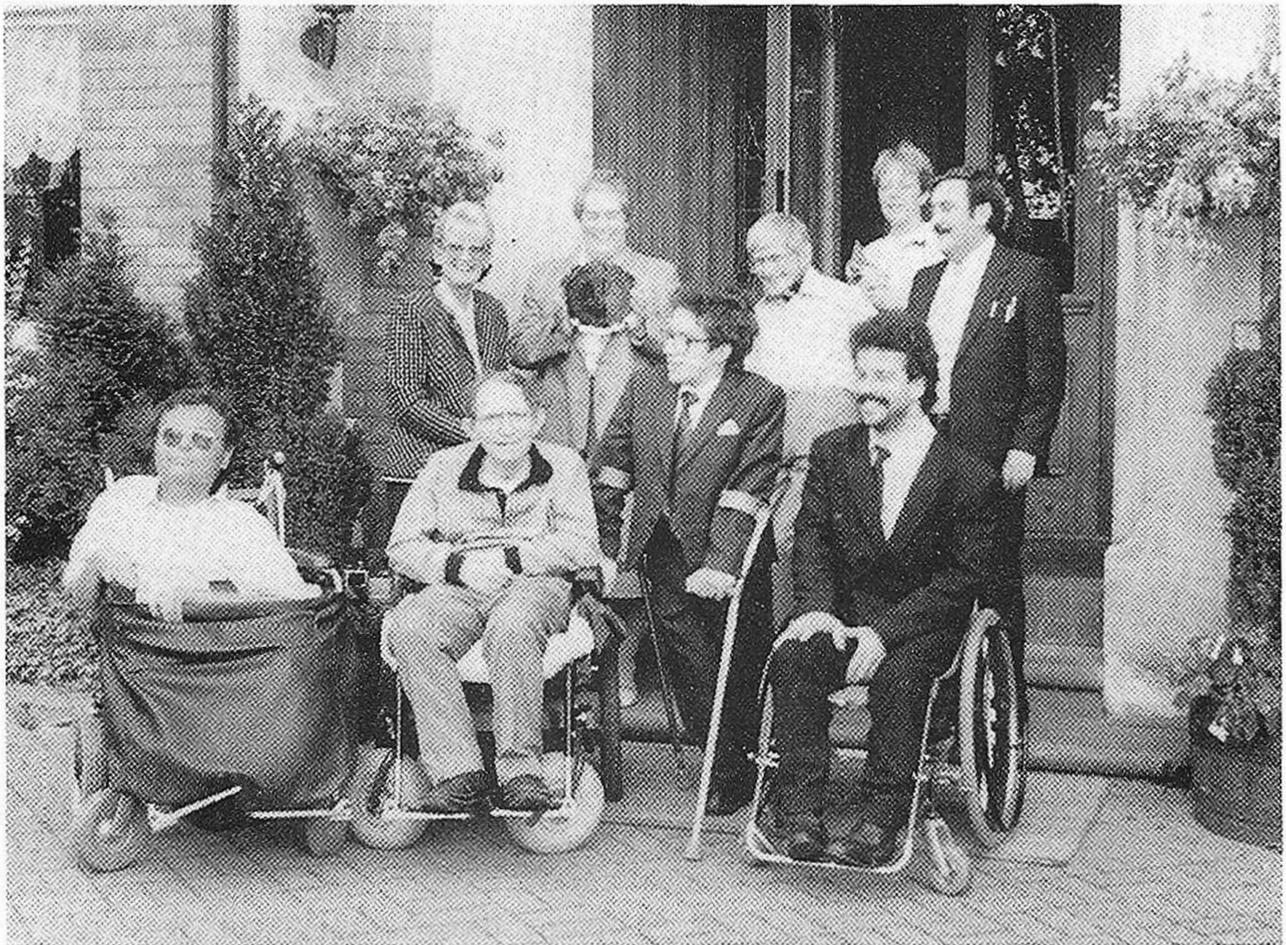
By September 1990, the Appeal had almost reached the initial target of £250,000. The SEQUAL Management Committee were aware that the annual grant from the Department of Health was being reduced, due to the financial restrictions imposed on the Health Service and soon they would be faced with the prospect of their support being withdrawn altogether.

The Appeal was due to terminate in December 1991, and the aim was to achieve sufficient contributions to establish an Endowment Fund to ensure a fairly substantial and steady income to maintain the service. It was decided that anything over the £250,000 Appeal Target sum should be placed in this Endowment Fund, which would be known as The Robert BOWELL Memorial Fund, in recognition of the Charity's Founder Member and Chairman of the Possum Users Association. The balance held in this Fund at the 31st March 1992 was £114,675: a great achievement by all concerned. Especial thanks must go to Nigel HAVERS, son of the President, Lord HAVERS, who broadcast in March 1991 on the "BBC - Weeks Good Cause", bringing SEQUAL to the attention of around 500,000 listeners and swelling the Appeal Fund by nearly £20,000.

It was a surprise to many when SEQUAL registered with the Gaming Board in 1990/1; Linda ALDRIDGE had approached the U.K. Charity Lotteries Ltd. requesting a possible grant, not realising the organisation was not a "conventional" Trust. However, this misunderstanding materialised into the sum of £35,505 in three months, as part of SEQUAL's share in the 1991 London lottery. What a stroke of luck!



100 + Club
Father Ray Wilcox and Val Bowler on Comic Relief Red Nose Day '89.



Committee Meeting - September 1991
(excluding our Hon. Chairman - Christopher Jones)



The Guide & Brownie Units at Waterhouses who took over work done previously by the Guides at Pill - packing and posting the SEQUAL NEWS.



The 1st Waterhouses Guides & Brownies receiving their shields awarded for service to SEQUAL from John DAVIES.

In 1991 continued support was received from ITV Telethon '90 totalling £13,250 from the various regions, whilst the BBC "Children in Need Appeal" provided a grant of £12,000 enabling special equipment to be supplied to ten young and very appreciative members.

Gratitude was also expressed for the support of Lady Muriel CUCKNEY, the wife of Sir John, SEQUAL's Appeal Chairman. The proceeds of an exhibition of her art work in 1991 was generously given to the Appeal Fund amounting to nearly £7,000. Lady Muriel also used her artistic skills to design Christmas Cards which were bought by W.H. SMITH, their sale commission also contributing to the Charity funds.

As a result of the Appeal, the Management Committee were responsible for the control of substantial sums of money; it was therefore considered wise to convert SEQUAL into a Limited Company - limited by guarantee, in order to protect Committee Members from personal liability. Thus, the Charity was now to be known as SEQUAL (formerly Possum Users Association) Ltd.; the aims and services remained unchanged. The Auditors, Leslie KNOTT and Co., of Leek, Staffs., kindly agreed to audit the accounts free of charge.

1992 saw many changes: sadly SEQUAL lost its President, Lord HAVERS, who had been a great friend and supporter of the Charity, but everyone was delighted when his son, The Honourable Nigel HAVERS, accepted the vacant position, while his mother, Lady Carol HAVERS became a Vice President. The names of Mr Frank CARSON (the North Country comedian), Mr Douglas CRITCHLEY and Professor Stephen HAWKING of Black Hole fame, were added to the list of Patrons. Many of those actively involved in the Appeal accepted an invitation to become Vice Presidents: The Duchess of St. ALBANS, Sir John and Lady CUCKNEY, Lord FANSHAWE, Mr Christopher HAWKINGS, Mr Christopher LEWINGTON, Sir Maldwyn and Lady THOMAS and Admiral Sir John TREACHER.

Although Joy WAKEFIELD officially retired in the latter half of 1991 after 40 years work in the disability field, she still continued to work on a part-time basis in the South West of England. As a result, Jim WALLWORK had his boundaries rearranged. In the areas no longer covered by an Assessment Officer, the services of the local para-medical teams have been engaged to offer advice or recommendation for specific needs in individual cases.

After "Bunty's" retirement from her secretarial post in the Office, Rowena, Linda and Mark agreed to shoulder the extra burden of office work, until Rowena decided to move nearer the family in Northamptonshire.

Mark, having passed his driving test, felt an increased urge for independence and courageously obtained a job at Wrexham Inland Revenue Office. Two new faces

were then recruited to the Office: Eirian LAZENBY, taking Mark's place as Assistant to the Chief Executive and Janet PEACE as Secretary. Both were no strangers to disability as Eirian's eldest child has been partially deaf from birth and Janet had been a secretary at the local Cheshire Home for a while and had also nursed her husband through a serious back operation. However, the magnetic power of SEQUAL drew Mark back to the Office after a short while, to grapple with the work of Membership Secretary - far more interesting than Tax affairs!



*Mrs. Eirian Lazenby
Assistant to Chief Executive*



*Mrs. Janet Peace
Sequal Secretary*

As SEQUAL steps into 1993 - its 25th Anniversary - it is only right that the present Directors: Christopher JONES (Hon. Chairman), John DAVIES (Vice Chairman and Fundraiser) and John REDFERN (Computers) should be given an opportunity to express their aspirations for the future work of the Charity.



*Sequal President
The Hon Nigel Havers*

CHAPTER NINE

Forward with the Sequal Trust

Coda and Acknowledgements

'Life is like a jigsaw puzzle - one piece follows another, some easy, some more difficult, but they all slot into place'
(Nora HARDING, Swansea)

The author considers it an honour to be allowed to write the "History of SEQUAL's 25 years service to the disabled community." Like most organisations it has had its fair share of problems, but with the Management Committee's strong belief in their aims, coupled with the hardworking Office staffs endeavour to ensure the service runs smoothly, supported by the many local friends who have given valuable advice over the years, the Charity has survived and grown in strength.

In the last few years SEQUAL has blossomed into a small but significant National Charity due in part to the successful approaches made by the Chief Executive, Linda ALDRIDGE. She has been helped by the invaluable advice and assistance of Mrs Wendy FOREMAN (née MILLARD), formerly of 3i, who played an important part in setting-up the Appeal Fund and continues her enthusiastic support as Advisor to the Committee.

I am very aware that many individuals have been omitted. Those who have extended a generous hand or performed acts of kindness which deserve a mention - to you all on SEQUAL's behalf may I say a very big "THANK YOU" for all contributions towards the Charity over the last 25 years. One wonders whether Reg MALING and his team ever imagined how much their pioneering work would achieve in the field of rehabilitation.

Over the years, one meets some wonderful and courageous people, makes many friends and is privileged to share in their experiences and enhancement of life. An endeavour has been made to show the various facets of SEQUAL's varied activities, interspersed with some anecdotal references, in the hope that others might be inspired to become associated with such a worthwhile cause.

Wishing success and prosperity for SEQUAL's next 25 years.

Joy. S. WAKEFIELD,
Sidmouth, Devon.

30th March 1993

THE FUTURE

My part in Sequal has run parallel to Joy Wakefield's involvement in equipment for the disabled for nearly 30 years, she at the giving end and mine at the receiving. I think we have a bond of fellow feeling. Joy herself is an 'ex-polio' and probably knows more about polio equipment than anyone else I can call to mind. When she applied to work with us in Sequal, it was rather like a family meeting and no one could have been more delighted than I was when she joined. I was deeply flattered when she asked me to write the last chapter for this book. My immediate reaction was to query the need, all the ground having been gone over with much more effectiveness and expertise than I could possibly pretend to bring to it. I hope, however, that Sequal has a future as well as a past which I pray will be equally successful. The best contribution I can make is to look to the future of Sequal from where we stand now and consider aims for the future.

Firstly, we must look at Sequal's role. When it was formed 25 years ago, I confess that I tended to shut myself out and say - "Not another group producing long winded unreadable amateur and hand produced publications, badly printed, stapled together and containing very little of any interest at all except to the publisher". I thought the group had no particular role but I was reckoning without the formidable fertility of Robert Bowell's mind and his competence in building it up. He recognised what I was closing my mind to; mainly that there was, and is a wide gap between what technology can provide to severely disabled people, such as environmental controls and communication equipment of every kind and what they hope to receive. The highly sophisticated electronic equipment that is available today was not conceived in 1948 when the Health Act came into operation, but equipment in the form of Possum had started to emerge in the early 1960s; then Miss Elizabeth Beeston (now Mrs Elizabeth Cartwright) conceived the idea that the users of Possum equipment should co-operate and join forces. The DHSS had adopted a sort of mid-way stance which went part of the way in supplying the environmental controls on prescription, but that was very far from bridging the gap of needs for disabled people. The one glaring omission was help in the realm of communication and peculiarly the DHSS has maintained this blind eye principle persistently and unrelentingly.

It is strange that it is often not recognised that disabilities do not respect personal purse. The families of one members may have no problem covering the finance immediately for the equipment required, whereas many have no conceivable hope of funding. Sequal sets out to correct the imbalance but the

burden of the less endowed is heavy and creates a chronic need for funds, the chasing of which takes so much of our time and effort.

In my second year in hospital, before returning to live at home, one of my best friends from school days, who had become something of a tycoon early in life, told my then wife "don't worry about Chris - he's in another world". I think he wanted to believe this for his own ends because I was already working from hospital and resuming my practice, but it angered me more than I can say. I have heard such prejudiced ignorance issuing from the mouth of an even more eminent man who purported to espouse the cause of the disabled, to whom is attributed the statement that anyone in a wheelchair is a congenital idiot. I have to accept the sad reality that, however much talk, pressure grouping and protest, the majority of the able bodied, will always tend to look upon the disabled as a world apart, but active achievement is the best way to exorcise that spirit.

This attitude will remain an unshakeable conviction while beliefs prevail that enforced idleness or inactivity is the inevitable lot of those who are wheelchair bound or otherwise disabled. This is one of the established notions which it is our purpose to dispel. I was lucky enough to have a profession when I caught polio, which I could continue. I know others who have picked up careers - with much more difficulty - using equipment supplied by Sequel; such people, materially productive, even to the point of financial self support, are the essence of our endeavour. No less important are those whose enforced idleness can be transformed from the sad situation of a person with a useful mind staring idly into space, dependent on television, books and the kindness of others, but whose lives seem essentially purposeless. A computer or word processor, operated by special remote controls, can give a different complexion on someone's life, their productive ability (whether financial or not) which in turn restores self respect - probably the most important benefit of all.

While the causes of disability may change there are always people who require communication either because they can't talk or move or both - from speech affected children up to the 80 year old who has suffered a stroke with speech loss amongst other disabilities. Polio may not be so prevalent, but the muscle wasting and nerve destroying diseases continue to take their toll; accidents with paralyzing results will never stop.

The nature of the equipment has changed too. Up to ten years ago the great call was for remote controlled typewriters, apart from the small communicators such as pointer boards and small hand printers. The call now is for computers and word processors, light writers and so on. The more progress made in these areas, the more they are likely to be able to be adapted to help the disabled but they become correspondingly more expensive.

Sequal's need now after 25 years is to satisfy that need, which is ever more demanding on our resources as time goes on. In 25 years time, who knows what will be available. Whatever it is there is every likelihood that we shall be needed to bridge the gap, increasing as the Health Service continues with its policy of cutting back on core funding and drawing in its financial horns.

Secondly, constrained as we are financially, how does Sequal propose to continue to function with what it has at its disposal? We have to work out a programme of provision which we propose to follow. In general and in principle we have been concentrating on four key areas:-

Assessment

This is the first vital step in providing a disabled person with any equipment. It is useless handing someone the most expensive box of tricks in the world if they are unable to work the keyboard or operate it themselves. It is the role of the assessor, whose task becomes more complex as technology advances and so much becomes available, to identify a person's requirements. It is vital to ensure that the equipment is right for the user, realistic in relation to their requirements and their capabilities. Someone with flailing arms is not going to be able to make much sense out of a standard keyboard, but an expanded keyboard works wonders; with no arms at all of any use, one needs to suck and blow - and so on.

Once the assessment is made and we know what is required, our next aim is to get the equipment to the person needing it as quickly as possible. Here again we are back to money; we have to aim to reduce the waiting period. It is one of the main purposes of the endowment fund set up three years ago (The Robert Bowell Memorial Fund). It was set up to provide funds specifically to enable gaps to be bridged and where otherwise there would be a long waiting period. We must address ourselves to quick delivery and for that it comes back to basics, the continued replenishment of the Robert Bowell Fund.

Once the member has received the equipment and learned to use it competently he is often totally dependent on it. It is relied upon - sometimes even a lifeline to the outside world. The effect of breakdown or failure is catastrophic; through the years I have relied on a dictaphone - one of the first pieces of Possum equipment made functioning on old fashioned relays. If that goes off, I come to a halt, my output diminishes by half and worst of all, I become very mean to know, and I feel frustrated and helpless. I can still carry on doing other things; but for others the devastating effect of the loss of one's means of contact with the outside world is hard to imagine. In such cases of absolute dependence, the need to provide excellent quality maintenance and fast repair service is paramount. That must be our third aim - to keep this up and improve it if and wherever possible.

Arising out of the expertise and experiences of our assessors our advice is often sought by local authorities and other bodies working in the field. We welcome this; an exchange of information and making as many contacts as we can in our field of work is really vital if Sequal is to widen its contacts in whatever way possible; conferences, seminars, associate membership of other bodies and contact with local authorities.

The guideline for the Sequal Management Committee (all of whom are disabled) has always been that if a policy decision has to be taken it must pass the test of whether it will be for the benefit of the Sequal members directly or indirectly. Will it help to provide significant improvement to the quality of life? If it passes the test then the matter must be approached in a professional manner to produce practical results with fairness to other members in the amount expended and with a reliable service facility. Our aim is to provide independence to our members and the ideal to make them productive financially or otherwise. To do this, Sequal itself must have a measure of independence - maintaining its funds is vital, which brings me to the next and third point.

Funding

The struggle for funds has always been our greatest problem. There is increasing demand on the voluntary sector and we have never seen a year where the calls upon us from new members has dropped. This situation has been aggravated by the decision that as from 1991 Sequal should receive a reduction in support from the DHSS and no further support after 1993. This was a crushing blow and it may well be that if we had not had our first general Appeal over the two years when that came about, which enabled us to open the Robert Bowell Fund, we would not have been able to go on. The money that came in through that Appeal saved us and provided us with a bedrock on which to build and achieve just enough to cover the operating costs of providing assessment experts, previously met by the Department of Health grant. With that, we have a healthy base from which to tackle long term needs and the fundamentals of operating costs.

If there is any area of Sequal's activities where we need the magic wand, the elixir to transmute dross to gold, or more realistically The Brilliant New Idea, it is in the field of raising funds. Fundraising, as everybody knows, is big business nowadays. Supporters and fundraisers can be totally assured that every penny provided is well spent and for direct benefit of our members. Our accounts bear witness.

I see fundraising as a three tier structure; most of Sequal's supporters are traditionally locally based all over the country and provide the real core

funding; their importance cannot be estimated by the amount that they raise. They preserve a basic fabric which extends over all the areas where they are active, and that fabric itself is a retention of the homespun element from which the present organisation grew. Without them we should be lost - but we need many many more and Sequal must address itself to extending and encouraging the individual and groups as widely as possible over the country. It is important not to underestimate the usefulness of these generous people, not just for what they produce but for the function they perform as representatives of Sequal in their various outposts.

Secondly come the grant making Trusts and Foundations, the large commercial sources, bequests and straight gifts. The second group provide the mass of money for equipment and repairs. These are the generous sources upon which the actual provision of expensive equipment is wholly dependent, but alas of which we cannot find enough. To those who do contribute to us, we are deeply grateful for what we get.

In the third category come the Professional fundraising bodies. It's a question of finding the company which is most efficient and most likely to coax the maximum out of the general public or teach us how to do so. To be reserved for special occasions, appeals, anniversaries and such. To repeat special appeals too often will obviously dilute their effect. A feature introduced in 1993 which it is hoped will help heighten Sequal's vital role is a new logo consisting of a smiling face of a girl which was drawn by computer. We want people to fix this in their minds and be reminded when they see it to call to mind Sequal and ask themselves what contribution they can make on our behalf. On the practical side we are building up a loyal band of supporters. Our first plan in 1994 is to introduce an affinity charity card to precede other high profile events.

Fourthly, we need continuing support, and we are thankful for the helpfulness and positive action provided by our distinguished Royal Patron, HRH the Princess Michael of Kent, and the celebrated actor, The Hon Nigel Havers, our President. The sheer charm and outgoing personalities of both these committed supporters made our Reception on the 19th October 1993 great fun and a resounding success. It was an evening to remember and I would like to think that they enjoyed it as much as everyone else. For those of our vice presidents who have extended help and support - I must mention Sir John and Lady Cuckney, Sir Christopher Lewinton, Sir Maldwyn Thomas, Admiral Sir John Treacher, Christopher Hawkings and Douglas Critchley in particular, to whom we extend our sincere thanks and ask you please to keep up your support.

Fifthly - and lastly, Joy Wakefield's excellent work on the history of Sequal has been written to celebrate our 25th anniversary. My initial casual attitude about P.U.A. changed, - indeed to wonderment, at the fact that this was a unique

situation, never seen before, of a few really severely disabled people forming a Committee and actually doing something of practical value and making a real impact. It was like watching a member of the All Blacks spotting an opening and driving through to put the ball straight in the middle of the posts. Robert Bowell found his opening and he dived through. In the nature of things, the jealously guarded tradition of limiting Committee membership to the severely disabled has meant a rather unfortunately rapid turnover. Severe disability is not conducive to longevity; many times I have attended meetings to see a new face replace the last member and an empty seat to remind me of another good friend gone. I hope, nevertheless, that we shall always keep this special veto to demonstrate that the disabled, - who emphatically do not live in a world of their own, are fully competent to fulfil a major role in providing fundamental help to their fellow disabled, if needed.

Although I did so little at the outset, I cannot but feel proud of the way Sequal has grown and performed over a period of 25 years. My period as Chairman is now entering its 15th year - 15 years of doing an immensely interesting and by far the most satisfying job I have ever tackled. Sequal has given me much. I hope it will go on for 25 more years and then another 25 years and so on. It would be a happy thought if the need for Sequal to exist were removed and indeed perhaps that will happen.

Until it does, we must focus our minds on the fact that The Sequal Trust is concerned with giving expression to the spirit trapped by some unkind act of fate, from the basic cry of a small child who is able to make his needs known with the equipment we supply, to the upper flight of setting a lively mind free to express itself in productive activity.

Price £3

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