

GayWest Magazine

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Gay West
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The Chair's Blog

We are fortunate to be residents of the U.K. and now in this the 15th year of the 21st century we enjoy freedoms and equality that many others in the world are still struggling to obtain.

With more and more Gay weddings taking place, is it not also time that some in the Gay community stop wanting to be separate and different, but also to be treated as equal in society as a whole. Myself having only came out to my family and friends late in life was due to the freedoms that many others in my age group fought hard for. However those same people now need to embrace the openness of the younger generation, who, on the whole, accept people for who they are and as another human-being. There are still many pitfalls such as Religion, politics and old myths and beliefs that over time will be overcome.

I have over the past year spent time talking and mixing with people in their 20s and 30s and quite honestly I feel the future looks bright for L.G.B.T. people. But we must be open and honest, respectful and courteous to achieve the aims we wish for and get away from wanting to be treated as special individuals with special needs. Maybe we should say L.G.B.T.Q.s to cover all the labels or just try not to label people at all and treat all people who you come across in the same way, as we are all Humans, all just wanting a good happy existence. One area that will be putting this to the test are the new dramas "Cucumber" and "Banana", that have started broadcasting on Channel 4 and E4.at 9pm and 10pm on Thursdays. There is also Tofu on the Internet.

So this year GayWest with its new forthcoming website and streamlined publicity will be reaching out to a wider community which I hope will embrace everyone gay or straight that would like to be involved with a social and support group like ours where we can all help each other to live and have fun without prejudice.

As ever to achieving our aims, we need your support, so as this year Valentine's Day falls on a Saturday, we will be having a Valentines Raffle at the Rainbow café, maybe some speed dating or more probable slow dating, so come along and join in the fun.

Have a good month Colin

Bill Carridine

Bill Carridine, who was GayWest Treasurer, 2007-2008, died on 16 December 2014, aged 64. We extend our sympathy and sincere condolences to his partner, Philip.

John Pritchett (1937-2014)

John Pritchett made an enormous contribution to GayWest, serving on the committee from 1981 to 1994, with one break. He was twice Chairperson, from September 1984 to September 1986 and again from September 1991 to September 1992. At various times he also acted as Campaign, Membership and General Secretaries. Below, we print tributes from Bob Johnson and Martin Pickard. They provide a portrait of the man and also, during LGTB History Month, of the times. Editor.



John was born in 1937, when homosexuality was illegal and to be prosecuted for sex with another man could result in a hefty prison sentence and certain public humiliation. John suppressed his homosexuality for a substantial part of his early life, getting married in the early sixties as very many men in his situation did. A few

years after the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967, he separated from his wife and began to explore his gay inclinations.

I think that this background helps explain John's desire to help others coming to terms with their homosexuality and lead a life that was right for them. John and I met through Bristol C.H.E (Campaign for Homosexual Equality) and the Bristol Gay Centre. In the early eighties C.H.E. formed Gay Community Organisations to support and fund it's campaigning groups; from this Gay West was born. When, as Treasurer of Bristol C.H.E., I transferred it's very meagre funds and membership over to the newly formed Gay West I had no idea of how successful and influential the new group would become. John and I were involved with the new Gay West as committee members from its inception, with John serving as Chair of GW for a number of years. GW in the early days was regarded as quite a radical organisation and the media sought its views on a number of occasions. John even appeared on T.V. to discuss the plight of married gay men when many gay men (myself included) were not ready to be that open.

For John and myself, it was the best and worst of times. The best of times for us on a personal basis as we sold our separate homes and bought a house so that we could live together, a course of action that caused problems with some family members. However, as we were leading the life we wanted and had each other, we felt quite equal to taking on bigotry and prejudice whether from family or society in general. It was the worst of times in that it coincided with the start of the HIV/AIDS 'epidemic' and we saw gay men vilified in many parts of an increasingly hysterical media as disease ridden perverts who should be sent to

internment camps away from 'decent' society. John quickly rose to the challenge and joined the Aled Richards Trust – later to merge with the Terence Higgins Trust – and amongst other things manned a telephone help line in his spare time.



GayWest went from strength to strength during this time and John put in a lot of effort to help make the group the success it was, organising events, acting as the public face of GW and generally facilitating the running of the group. John and I acted as telephone contacts for GW for a number of years, talking to people who were trying to come to terms with their sexuality at all times of the day and night.

(Contd. on p. 10)

GayWest events for February 2015

The Rainbow Café meets **every Saturday morning from 10.30 am to 12.30 pm** at the St Michael's Centre, St Michael's Place, Bath (next to the Little Theatre cinema).

SATURDAY 7TH – Rainbow Café, Bath, 10.30 am – 12.30 pm. All welcome.

WEDNESDAY 11TH – Bristol Pub Evening, Old Market Tavern, Old Market. 8.30 pm.

TUESDAY 10TH – ‘Can we help?’ The Historical Role of LGBT Voluntary Action in the West. Talk by Robert Howes. Bath Spa University, Newton St Loe campus, Commons Building NP.CM.134. 4.00-5.30 pm. All welcome. Part of LGBT History Month.

SATURDAY 14TH – Rainbow Café, Bath, 10.30 am – 12.30 pm. All welcome.

SATURDAY 21ST – Rainbow Café, Bath, 10.30 am – 12.30 pm. All welcome.

SUNDAY 22ND -- LGBT History Walk around Bath. Meet at War Memorial, Royal Victoria Park, 2 pm.

WEDNESDAY 25TH – Bath Pub Evening, Mandalyn's, 8.30 pm.

SATURDAY 28TH – Rainbow Café, Bath, 10.30 am – 12.30 pm. All welcome.

Events of other Groups

Gay Outdoor Club

The new GOC local coordinator details are:

01793 770099 (ask for Nigel) (North Wiltshire)

07790 759162 Ken (Bristol)

07503 650354 Bill (West Wiltshire)

Sun 15 Feb 2015 River Avon Valley

A mainly level walk of approximately 6 miles near Keynsham. This area features some early industrial relics, in a mainly rural setting, giving some excellent views towards the Cotswolds and along the River Avon. Café stop for coffee or tea and a short stop to eat your picnic lunch during the walk. Pub with food and Sunday lunches at the end of the walk, estimated arrival around 15.00.

Meet for 11.00 at Keynsham Railway station on the A4175 Keynsham to Willsbridge road, nearest post code BS31 2BN. Parking at the station costs £1.40 all day, alternative free parking is available near the Lock Keeper pub, but this can be very muddy and full. There are trains from Bath and Bristol as well as regular buses on Sundays, check [Traveline South West](#) web site for times. Further information about the pub menu: www.lockkeeperbristol.com Leaders are Martin and John

GMG South West

The group's website is <http://www.gmgswsouthwest.com/>.
For more information about the social events listed below, email gmgsw@hotmail.co.uk.

Thursday 5th February 2015 Social evening hosted by Tony and Russell in Bristol. Tel: 0117 973 9855 for details.

Thursday 19th February 2015 Social evening hosted by Brian & Malcolm in Weston Super Mare. Tel: 01934 633415 for details.

Gloucestershire Gay & Lesbian Community

The GGLC meets in Gloucester on a Thursday evening at 7.30pm. New members and visitors can contact the committee in **advance** via the group email (info@gglc.co.uk) or phone 07050 627273. For more info, see: <http://www.gglc-glos.co.uk/> or write c/o the Secretary, GGLC, 50 Knowles Road, Gloucester GL1 4TP.

Snowdrops at Camers

The wonderful gardens at Camers in Old Sodbury will be open for visitors on three days in February. The garden has all-year interest but at this time the snowdrops are the main attraction. Opening days: Wednesday 11th, Thursday 12th & Saturday 14th February. Gates open at 10am till mid-day. Entrance £4 – hot drinks (tea, coffee, hot chocolate (and biscuits. Parking in the field from Chapel Lane - see signs. For directions, see <http://www.camers.org/camers-direction.html>

John Pritchett (contd.)

Abusive calls at 2am were especially unwelcome! It was not all hard graft, however; we all had a lot of fun as well, attending the many activities that featured each month in the magazine. Holidays were organised by GW members, including a fortnight in Portugal (the naturist beach for some reason seemed to be especially popular with a large number of the GW committee!), a long weekend in Paris (the hotel was so awful it was funny) and a number of trips to the Cliff House Hotel in Torquay. Several Christmas holidays were spent in The Mead at Bath. GW was an integral part of our lives for quite a number of years and going to Coffee Shop was a normal part of Saturday morning, we didn't have to think about it, Saturday was Coffee Shop and lunch at the Garricks Head afterwards.

John and I went our separate ways in the late nineties but were always able to remain on good terms. I found a new partner and John was lucky enough to find his soul mate in Martin who provided him with much love and support, especially in his last year when he developed a brain tumour.

So, I hope that I have been able to do justice to the John that I knew as someone whose basic instinct was to help others and who was willing to stand up in public and fight for gay rights. John was not without a sense of humour and as a man who had been Out & Proud for decades, I think that he would have been well aware of the irony that none of this was mentioned at his funeral oration.

Bob Johnson [edited and abbreviated by Robert Howes, Editor].

John and I were together for fifteen years. The first few years whilst I was living in Warwickshire we would meet every weekend alternating between my home and his in Saltford. Our friendship blossomed quickly and, at some unknown point, became a relationship, which was cemented by the many things we had in common, including a passion for old cars, cynicism of the modern world and an evening G & T.

John was a kind, generous and sociable guy, organising nights out, or tea/dinner parties for friends, where he would go to a lot of trouble to cook and present the meal. He was a very focussed, fastidious and well organised person, but not controlling. John loved his garden, taking great pride in his lawn – and its straight edges!

His last eleven months, after being diagnosed with a brain tumour, were not easy. He gradually lost his taste, mobility and independence, but he never took out his fear or frustration on others, maintaining a calm dignity to the end. He died peacefully in his sleep of a chest infection – for which he had refused treatment.

John was a lovely man and my best friend. Oh... and he made great cakes! Martin Pickard

LGBT History Month

GayWest is organising two events as part of LGBT History Month, a talk by Robert Howes on the history of LGBT voluntary groups on Tuesday 10 February and a History Walk on Sunday 22 February. See GW events for more details. Information on other LGBT History Month events

can be found at <http://lgbthistorymonth.org.uk/> and <http://lgbtbristol.org.uk/history-month/>.

EGM in March

An EGM will be held on 21st March to discuss changes to the Constitution and report on the group's future course. Details in the March issue of the magazine.

Forthcoming events

April 4th Easter Saturday Raffle
May 15th Bath Music Festival Friday Evening
June 13th Gloucester Pride
July 11th Bristol Pride
July 12th After Pride Lunch
July/August Annual Picnic, Raffle
August 1st Brighton 25th anniversary Pride
(Early bird tickets £9.00 and £12.50)
August Weston Super Mare Pride
31st October Halloween Raffle
November Bath Christmas Market Friday Evening
November 20th Transgender Remembrance Day
December 1st World Aids Day

Contact us

To contact us, call the GayWest mobile phone number **0758 469 6771**. If there is no answer, please leave a message and one of the committee will get back to you. Or email us at: info@gaywest.org.uk.

This month's cover is in solidarity with the people killed in the attacks in France and in support of press freedom.