



Gay West Journal

For September and October 2017

£1.50 for Non - Members

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Notice - Join us on Facebook you may find it easier
by going to the link at the bottom of our Website

Chair's Blog

Welcome to your Journal for September and October. In this issue you have the joy of reading articles sent in from members of GayWest, so if you have stories to tell or would like to pass on your views on life or anything really, then get writing and send to your Journal editor at Info@gaywest.org.uk.

Well the pride season is now at its end and this year I have been involved in lots of discussions about how we should go forward with these events. One thing we have noticed is that there are fewer L.G.B.T social groups at these events (GayWest and Pink Herrings the only ones at Bristol pride) yes there were stalls relating to gay life but mainly in the form of funded Charities relating to Hate crime, Drug addiction, sexual health, politics, student support etc. Commercial stalls selling all sorts of rainbow coloured bric-a-brac. It seems that social groups like GayWest are becoming a minority at these events Lets have your views!

GayWest's Annual General Meeting A.G.M. is here again and will take place on Saturday 30th September from 11.30am at **The Rainbow Café**. Committee Nomination forms can be accessed with this Journal from the website, with the printed version and at the Rainbow Café.

At the present time we have suspended putting the committee minutes onto our website due to problems with security issues. They still can be seen as always at the **Rainbow Café** or E-Mailed on request.

Have a good read and I will look forward to meeting some of you at the Café.

Colin

Announcements

Nominations are required for your next Committee,

get your nomination forms from the website or the Café to arrive 7 days before the A.G.M. on 30th September.

By popular request we can confirm that we have booked three **"Butlers in the Buff"** for our Christmas Dinner.

To be held on Friday 15th December at 7.15pm for a drinks reception followed by dinner at 8pm. Menu is to follow.

Included :- Drinks Reception, Raffle and the exciting company of The Butlers.

Venue :- Pavilion Restaurant, Victoria Park, Bath. BA1 2NR



The Rainbow Café

**The Rainbow Café meets every Saturday Morning
from 10.30am -12.30pm**

At St. Michael's Day Centre,
St. Michael's Place, Bath. BA1 1SG
(Next to the Little Theatre Cinema)

The Rainbow is open to all.

First-time visitors are made very
welcome and are entitled to their **first drink FREE.**

General Information

Official Notice

When attending GayWest Events, would everyone please make their own way to the venues and book independently where appropriate.



Gloucester Gay and Lesbian Community.

They will meet on the **1st Thursday of each month** at the same venue and time, 7.30 – 10pm. Details of all their social activities will continue to be on their Website. www.gglc.co.uk



Weston-S-Mare Rainbow Café at Cameo Bar

On the Second Saturday of every month from 2 - 4.30pm



All GayWest Post to :-

30, Woodpecker Close,

Keynsham, BRISTOL. BS31 2FU

Tel:- 0775 881 0134 or 0785 433 6047

Info@gaywest.org.uk

**You can now pay by Credit/Debit Card via the Website
Cheques should still be payable to Bath GCO (GayWest).**

Leather Tribes

We met Spencer at the Weston-super-Mare Pride. He was representing LeatherWest which promotes the gay leather community in the south west of England and south Wales. Last year Spencer was wearing a leather kilt, this year he was in leather lite: black leather jeans, slim waistcoat with white T-shirt and LeatherWest logo. In chatting to him, I discovered that within the leather scene are leather 'tribes' – each promoting individual dress codes.

Did you see the Leathermen at the Bristol Pride? They came out in force last year promoting their military-style leather cop look. At first glance, all rather intimidating, but they proved most friendly when you talked to them. This military uniform developed after World War Two via the motorbike clubs of the 1950's. So you have tall black boots, classic zipped jacket over leather shirt and tie, leather breeches, belt and Muir cap.



Leather Tribes

This is the dominant, sexy look as seen in the artwork of Touko Laaksonen (aka Tom of Finland), with a deliberate emphasis on gay masculinity.

The Biker look is similar, but as motorcycling became an established sport you had a choice of styles: the relaxed T-shirt and biker's jacket as worn by Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* (1954), or the sports biker racing suit which is more streamlined.

I love the James Dean look - this is the rebellious Cowboy, with his leather waistcoat, checked shirt, tight leather jeans half-hidden under leather chaps, heeled boots and Stetson.

Not all of us can manage the erotic Muscleboy look. Here you need a fit, toned body straight out of the gym emphasised by a leather chest harness, wrist-cuffs, jaunty cap and chains – and don't forget those boots.

We met 'Rocket', a delightful young guy sporting a leather studded collar around his neck. He identified as a Pup, a relatively new sub-tribe who like fetish role-play. He was not in full uniform at the Weston Pride, but you could opt for the leather puppy mask (think labrador), padded bondage mittens, knee pads and fitted tail. We won't explain about the tail.

My chat with Spencer proved interesting and it led me to the excellent LeatherWest website. LeatherWest is a not-for-profit organisation run by volunteers. Now in its fifth year, it promotes a wide range of events and workshops for the gay leather world, which is not just about whips and chains and 'ouch!', but helps to promote a healthy understanding of gay leather culture. The new titleholders, for example, Mr. Leather Wales and Mr. LeatherWest, act as ambassadors and role models for the leather community.

(www.leatherwest.com)

Michael Reid



GayWest Events for 2017

September: **Sunday 10th** A Prowl around Bristol Zoo or “The Wild Place” and tearoom, Time to be confirmed.

Saturday 23rd Age Festival at Bristol City Hall,
College Green. 10am – 4pm

Saturday 30th GayWest’s Annual General Meeting at
the Rainbow Café **YOU’R COMMITTEE NEEDS YOU!**
So get nominating

October: A walk in the park in Bristol up to Cabot Tower – to
be confirmed **November: A visit to the TV Studios at
Bristol** more information later in the year.

December: Saturday afternoon or Sunday, first weekend in
December: visit to Bristol Beer Factory for their Brewery Open
Day – (TBC – when they have updated their website. MR to
phone in autumn to enquire)). 12.00-6.00pm -
www.bristolbeerfactory.co.uk

GayWest Annual Christmas Dinner

This has been **confirmed** and is being held on the
15th December at 7.15pm for 8pm at The Pavilion Restaurant
in Victoria Park, Bath.

For further information on all listed events, contact us on
info@gaywest.org.uk or Colin on 07758810134



GayWest Social Evenings Second Wednesday of each month

- 13th September & 11th October etc.at **The Old Market Tavern**
in Old Market Street, Bristol.



575 WANDSWORTH ROAD

On a recent stay in London, we took a friend's advice and went to visit a National Trust property situated in Wandsworth Road, SW8. Purposefully encroached upon by shrubbery and trees, the facade conveyed nothing as to what lie behind the front door. A Georgian Grade II listed terraced property built 1819 it had been lived in by Mr Khadambi



Asalache, a Kenyan-born poet.

When he moved in, he became despondent about damp seeping in to his basement dining room from the commercial property next door. And so he decided to camouflage the discolouration by

fixing laths and old floor boards to the wall. Inspired by Moorish and Ottoman architecture he cut fret-work patterns and figures from pine wood timber (salvaged from builder's skips) and fixed these to the boards.

The satisfaction gained from this exercise gave him the impetus to decorate the entire room in a similar way. He drew patterns directly on to the wood, then using very basic tools – including a padsaw (on show for visitors) and a hand drill – he cut out the shapes and applied them to the ceiling, walls, window frames, cupboards, mantelpieces, skirting boards and doors.

Mr Asalache was then motivated to do the entire inside of the house and it took him 19 years to finish the task.

575 WANDSWORTH ROAD

The overall impression to the visitor is remarkable – with an endless variety of patterns: animals, trees, temples, arches, lattice work, and rows of ballet dancers with accompanying swans! It is so detailed and unlike anything I've ever seen before. I was fascinated and delighted. Asalache bequeathed the property to the National Trust in 2006, and it remains today intact and protected for generations to admire. Valentino August 2017

THE JURORS



On a recent visit to Windsor, we stopped by at Runnymede, which in 1215, was the site of the sealing of the Magna Carta. “The Jurors” is an Artwork commissioned by Surrey County Council and the National Trust to commemorate the 800th Anniversary.

A more interesting piece of sculpture is difficult to imagine as it consists of 12 bronze chairs each embellished with symbols relating to ongoing struggles for freedom

THE JURORS Contd.

The numbered chairs are arranged as if around a long table, and visitors are welcome to sit on them as well as touch them. On the back of chair No. 6 for example, a loud-hailer is depicted which belonged to HARVEY MILK the US campaigner for gay rights. Names on other chairs include

Lillie Lenton – a suffragette activist

Cornelia Sorabji – a legal advocate for women's rights in India

Phillis Wheatley – first published African-American woman

Mary Prince – anti-slavery petitioner

Mahatma Gandhi – Resistor to British rule

Nelson Mandela – attempted to overthrow the S. African State

and many others, including Confucius and Aung Suu Kyi.

Nearby is a memorial to John F Kennedy and another for the Allied Air Forces of the 2nd World War.

The meadows in which these memorials stand are of natural beauty and home to hundreds of wild flowers.

More information on website
www.artatrunnymede.com.

Valentino July 2017



“Bath Porn Case”

Bath porn case JPs Rule: This one's not obscene" proclaimed the *Bath Evening Chronicle* in its front page headline on Wednesday 17 April 1974. It went on to explain, "An issue of *Gay News*, one of 10,000 magazines seized by police in a raid on a Bath wholesale newsagents, was not obscene, the city magistrates ruled today."



To those Bath citizens who regularly read [Gay News](#), this would have seemed blindingly obvious. However, this was not the case for many in the police and judicial establishment. Most people interested in LGBTQ+ history have heard of the [Gay News trial for blasphemy](#), which resulted from a private prosecution brought by the morality campaigner [Mary Whitehouse](#) in 1976 and dragged on until 1979. Surrounding this, however, was a long-running effort by parts of the state to restrict and control the access of the burgeoning gay movement to the public sphere. This had started with the prosecution in 1969-72

The Other Gay News Trial

culminated in the [prosecution of the Gay's the Word bookshop](#) for importing books about homosexuality in 1984-85. In between, the police carried on a campaign against obscene publications, one of the major issues of the period equivalent to today's anxieties about internet pornography, and regularly raided bookshops and newsagents, seizing publications, including gay magazines, which they considered pornographic. The Bath case resulted from one of these raids on a wholesale warehouse owned by Johnson's Central News agency on 31 October 1973. The case had elements of farce, since among the titles initially seized were issues of the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *Spectator*, *Railway Modeller* and *The Lady*.

However, for a serious community newspaper like *Gay News*, which always struggled with its finances, the matter was deadly serious. The prosecution was brought against the distributors and *Gay News* only found out about it through them, meaning that it could have been condemned as obscene without even knowing about it. The newspaper hired a barrister to defend itself in court.

When the magistrates asked to see the offending issue, the police took a quarter of an hour to find it and it then emerged that no-one had actually looked at it. *Gay News* was included in the prosecution simply because of its title. Once the magistrates had examined it, they immediately ruled that it was not obscene. *Gay News* headlined the outcome as a "Triumph", but when it asked the court for its costs, it was awarded only £250 against legal bills of £1715. It then appealed to high regard with which it was held.

“Bath Porn Case”

its readers and raised over £1500 within three weeks, a sign of the case had important legal consequences. This and a similar case also involving the lesbian magazine *Sappho* in Bournemouth in February 1975 relieved *Gay News* of further legal pressure from the state and helped establish that publications produced by LGBTQ+ people were entitled to address the subject of homosexuality in the public sphere.

Locally, there were also some interesting repercussions. A Bath branch of the national campaign against censorship was set up to publicise the case and the Bath Gay Awareness Group (BGAG), which was founded in Autumn 1971, sent some of its members to the convening meeting, seeing it as an opportunity to extend its activism. The Bath Co-ordinating Committee of the censorship campaign held a small protest outside the Guildhall, where the trial was taking place, handing out free copies of *Gay News*. *Gay News* was vital to the LGBTQ+ movement in the provinces, listing pubs, clubs and local groups and so enabling newcomers to find their way onto the gay scene and become involved with activist organisations.

In Bath, it was available in a small number of newsagents and in the Garrick's Head, the city's longest-lasting gay pub. The BGAG ran a lengthy campaign to get *Gay News* into the local public library. Initially, this was rejected by councilors but in 1981, when Labour took control of Avon County Council, which then ran the libraries in the area, the leisure committee reconsidered and agreed that the three main libraries in Bath, Bristol and Weston-super-Mare could stock the paper, provided the activists paid for it. The subscriptions were jointly funded by the Bath Gay Group and the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE) Bristol group.

“Bath Porn Case”

The prosecution also throws interesting light on the role of the local press. The *Bath Evening Chronicle* recognised that it was a newsworthy event and gave it front page billing. It also published a sympathetic, half-page article on the Bath Gay Awareness Group, complete with a photograph, in July 1972, some months after the group was founded. Yet while it featured LGBTQ+ issues in its news pages, the paper’s Managing Director steadfastly refused to accept advertisements for the group, explaining that he thought that homosexuality was a gross abnormality. In contrast, the *Bristol Evening Post* raised no objection to printing advertisements for LGBTQ+ groups, reflecting a pattern of inconsistency across the provincial press at this time. The *Bath Evening Chronicle* reversed its policy in November 1978 and from then on accepted advertisements from the BGAG.

This episode illustrates how, for years after the passing of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act that partially decriminalised male homosexual acts, restrictions continued to be placed on discussing homosexuality in the public sphere. These restrictions were contested and finally overturned by LGBTQ+ activists working at both the national and local level but it was a long struggle, involving years of hard and often disheartening work before this was achieved. Published on the Queer Beyond London blog (<http://queerbeyondlondon.com/sources/bath-porn-case-the-other-gay-news-trial/>) and reprinted with their permission.

Robert Howes



