

Gay West

A way of keeping in touch!

Top Stories in this Newsletter

Vol. 6 August 2020



Hi All...

Welcome to your 6th monthly newsletter, which I hope you will enjoy reading. Over these past months we have had many E-mails and letters of support from members, regarding the group. Many of you have renewed your membership and we have also welcomed three new members during this time.

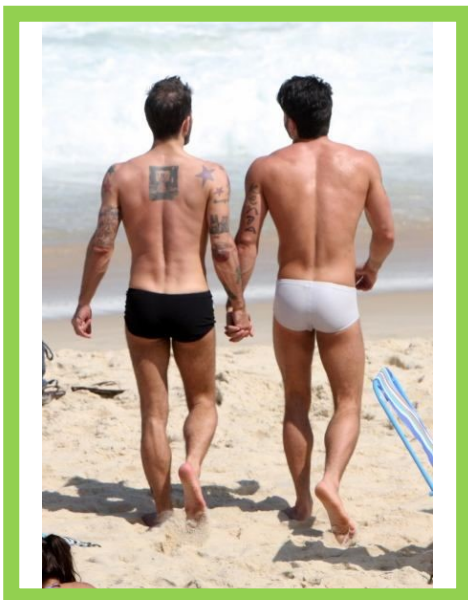
It has been a challenging time for all of us, so I want to let you all know that here at base camp we are doing all we can, to get us out and about again, and of course to get the café reopened.

GW is involved in the Bristol Pride On-Line, This runs from the 1st—12th of September and can be found on U-Tube. The Pride in Gloucester for September has had to be deferred until next year, so look forward to seeing some of you there. Confirmation of date and venue will follow nearer the time.

During September we are having a Picnic probably in Castle Park, Bristol. So if you are interested, please contact me for more details.

See you all soon...Colin

Apologies.. The Zoom Meeting on the 15th had to be cancelled due to Internet problems beyond our control.



Something to look forward to..

Rainbow Café News. I have recently been in communication with Age UK Bath, As you will be aware, many charities including Age UK Bath, are finding it hard to survive during these difficult times.

They are preparing all the background work, such as Risk assessments, to enable them and us to maybe open again in September, but we will have to wait and see, if this is possible, as soon as we know we will be in-touch with you all. This has been the longest period without our Café since its beginnings back in 1983. But we will be back there soon.

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National Service in the RAF.

In WW1. there was no conscription for 2 years, as appeals to patriotism had produced many volunteers, keen to 'have a go', some adventure and also beat 'Fritz' before Christmas.

But in WW2., men from 18-25 had to register for National Service. There were exemptions, for example farmers and workers in heavy industries, and those who failed a medical examination. National Service was to last until 1963, well after the war ended. I was deferred until I was 21 in order to complete my college education. I could have chosen the Army, but I chose the RAF as I was not very keen on combat. Had I been a Soldier instead of an Airman, I might have been posted to Canada, Germany, Cypress or the far east.

As the coal mines were losing so much manpower to the Services, Ernest Bevin, the Minister of Labour and National Service, decided that a proportion of those called up, chosen by lottery, would work for 18 months in the mines. They came from all walks of life. They were sent to various mines, and after a month's training, above and below ground, entered the mine to do menial work, but not at the coal face, that was too dangerous and highly skilled work. They became known as the 'Bevin Boys'.

When I was called up, I reported to Cardington in Bedfordshire, given my smart new uniform, and a medical examination. There were still huge hangars there for airships. We were taken by train to RAF Hednesford in Staffordshire for 'Basic Training, or 'Square Bashing' and the use of the rifle and light machine gun. We also experienced tear gas, which was extremely unpleasant. We were housed in 12-bed huts, our corporal in his room at the end. At 6 am. he entered noisily and we got up very quickly, washed and shaved, paraded outside and marched off to breakfast.

I was posted to RAF Stanmore Park, to work at Bentley Priory, HQ. Fighter Command, as a tracer, as I had been a draughtsman in a drawing office. Bentley Priory is a large, beautiful, Italianate house, it has since become a fine museum to Fighter Command.

As my home was in Ruislip, not far from Stanmore, I was able to live there and cycle each day to my work. Unfortunately, I had a puncture one day, and arrived late, put on a charge, marched at the double before the CO and sentenced to 3 days 'jankers' or 'combined to barracks'. I was paid £1.10s a week, (£1.50) this was not too bad as accommodation, clothing and meals were all provided.

I remained at Stanmore for my National Service, and on its termination, I resumed my reserved former employment. I do not regret being an Airman in the RAF, it broadened my outlook and was a fairly pleasant experience.

Ernie.

PS. We'll meet again, I know where, don't know when, but we'll meet again, Some Sunny Day, Some Sunny Day.

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Sculptor's pride to create lasting memorial to the genius of Turing

David Williams-Ellis is to create a bronze bust of Alan Turing

Alan Turing (Sherborne School 1926-31) is today one of the School's most famous former pupils. Sherborne resident, Kathryn Ballisat, inspired by Turing's story and his connection to the town, has commissioned David Williams-Ellis, the internationally acclaimed sculptor most recently known for his sculpture to commemorate the D Day Landings, to create a bust of Turing.

Once cast in bronze, the bust will be unveiled in July by Turing's nephew and former pupil of Sherborne School, Sir John Dermot Turing (Sherborne School 1974-78) and will stand on a plinth in the School grounds.

In 1939, at the outbreak of the Second World War Alan Turing joined the Government Code and Cypher School at Bletchley Park, Buckinghamshire, where he was part of the team deciphering the Enigma machine. In 1942 Turing travelled to the USA to liaise with US codebreakers and in 1943 commenced work on speech encipherment at Hanslope Park. In 1945 Alan Turing joined the National Physical Laboratory at Teddington where he designed the ACE computer. Awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for his war service, Turing gave the earliest known lecture to mention computer intelligence, so founding the field now known as Artificial Intelligence.

GayWest Members - *Now have a WhatsApp Group and a Zoom Virtual Rainbow Café Group.*

To join the WhatsApp group, Download the App and then search for GW WhatsApp Group then follow instructions.

The Zoom Virtual Café, contact us at

info@gaywest.org.uk to inform us that you wish to be included, by the Wednesday prior to the meet-up.

Membership *If you received a reminder with this newsletter, you can pay on-line Standing Order or by cheque, as your support is very much appreciated.*

Picnic Time

To try and start up some GayWest events to slowly get us out and about again and take advantage of some of the summer season, Jim and myself were thinking of having a small picnic somewhere within the Bath and Bristol area. This will not be the normal GayWest annual picnic which now is postponed until next year.

Just a small group get together.

It will be in *Castle Park Bristol* on Wednesday 9th September, to meet at *The Bandstand 1.30—2pm*

If you are interested then can you please contact us as soon as possible.

Contact us on info@gaywest.org.uk or by phone on 07758810134 Colin.

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Colin is always asking members to write something for the Newsletter, so I thought I would have a go and write a bit about my life, I hope it will be of interest.

For a start, along with Ernie, I must be one of the oldest, no, longest serving, members of GayWest.

I've had quite an eventful life..

When I was a good looking eighteen (18) year old, I had to do National Service, up until then I had reasonably sheltered life, so it was quite an upheaval to leave home for 2 years. I was sent to Aldershot, and enrolled into the R.A.M.C. (Royal Army Medical Corp.) after 4 months in England, I was sent overseas to Libya.

Quite a wrench, but I am glad I went, I left a few weeks before Christmas, we were dispatched to Libya which started as a six day train journey. This was the route the Army got their troop's of men abroad. We started by a trip to the Hook of Holland, then travelling on to Germany, Austria and onto Trieste in Italy, here we boarded a boat for a 7 seven day trip to north Africa arriving at Tobruk, then by road to our destination of Benghazi. Where I was to be based in the Military

Hospital. Again quite an experience. After a year I was transferred to The Royal Sussex Regiment in Egypt for the rest of my time out there, for some reason, they decided to put me in the Officers

Mess as a waiter. This was a nice easy number, long hours, but good food.

After being demobbed, and back home in Bristol, I was at a loose end, so I auditioned for The Bristol Musical Comedy Club, (This was the leading amateur group locally and they regularly did a show each year at The Hippodrome Theatre, again quite an experience, appearing on the vast stage in front of an audience of 2000. I did eight shows with them including Oklahoma, Carousel, South Pacific, Guys & Dolls etc., It was during this time that I met Ken Little, also a member of GayWest.

After this I joined The Western Opera Players who put on shows at The Victoria Rooms and I ended up doing nine shows with them, which were mainly operetta's. I started taking leading parts, eventually reaching "Leading Man" status.

Then I joined The Avon Light Opera Club, putting on nine shows as their leading man, it was then that I met and became friendly with Stuart.

I had about 20 holidays abroad with him, which included going to Italy, Austria, Greece, Turkey, Poland and Malta and many others. I then gave it up as I was looking after my mother, who lived until she was 101 years old. Then I started visiting GayWest regularly, but sadly I've slowed up a bit now, as I have bad arthritis.

Hopefully, when this virus clears, we will be able to get back to meeting with all our friends at GayWest's Rainbow Café. Roy Appleby