

GayWest

A way of keeping in touch!

Vol. 3 March 2021

Welcome to your March Newsletter.

I hope that we are now in the time when slowly we will get back to normal.

Its been a difficult twelve months since the first lockdown last year, a roller coaster of a ride for us all. Maybe it has also given us a time to think about our lives and the lives of others, our place in the world and where we go from here.

The one thing I have noticed is the proliferation of action groups, all having their say on this that and the other, but rather than helping to bring people together, I fear they are pushing everyone apart, like the planets in our universe that are drifting further away from each other. The more we find fault with someone or their views the more we will become fragmented and nothing will get resolved no mater how good our intentions are about certain things we must all come together for the betterment of all.

Membership fees

At any time but especially now it is important for you all to keep up to date with your membership fees being paid on time, a good way for this to be done is to set up a standing order with your bank that will be paid on a fixed date each year automatically into the GayWest account or can be set up as monthly or half yearly This saves a lot of work being done, and time spent sending out reminders, remember all your committee members do the work voluntarily and in their own free time.

Rainbow Cafe

Great news! We have two dates for the Café in April and will start back weekly from May 1st, the bad news is that until we have confirmation we will still be restricted to numbers as at present so booking to attend will be paramount. Normally the Café pays for itself from the weekly takings but for the last few months and well into this year this will not be the case so your support and membership fees are extremely important to keep this wonderful event up and running for the benefit of us all. Our members who have attended in recent months have commented how beneficial it has been for them to have something to look forward to and has been of great help for them. This is what our group is about, supporting each other.

The Committee needs you.!

Are you bored, fed up with routine, looking for something to get involved with, get the old brain cells going? Then give me a call about joining us on the GayWest committee. Hopefully this summer we can be back to organising more events and meeting more in the physical world. So this could be the time for you to show your skills and hidden talents and share them with your GayWest friends and members.

Colin.

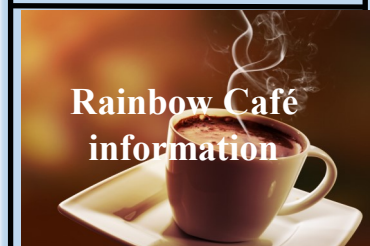


From the Chair

CHE & GLF
Ernie's Story

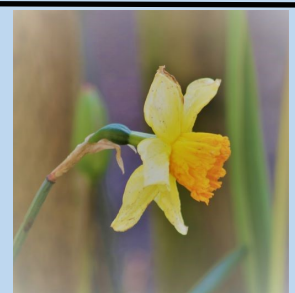


LGBT Care &
Retirement
Homes



Rainbow Café
information

This Months
Reviews



GayWest

A way of keeping in touch!

CHE and GLF

In 1967 a law was passed that partially decriminalised sexual behaviour between men. I was pleased, it was a small step in the right direction, but I still had to keep my feelings to myself. Three years later, I found in a library book, an allusion to an organisation in London where I was living, called The Albany Trust. It counselled homosexuals without condemning them. I contacted them and arranged a visit.

They were quite helpful and told me about gay social groups in the Campaign for Homosexual Equality, or CHE, in London. They referred me to Group Eight of CHE, their chairman contacted me, so I went along with some trepidation. They met at a pub in a hired room, there were about 20 people, all men, of various ages.

At last, I had found other men like myself, and at last I could socialise with and confide in others like me, about things that mattered to me. Within CHE there were also special interest groups, such as a Motoring Group, they arranged day trips to places of interest, also weekends at members' homes, such as Norwich and Cambridge. There was The Allegro Music Group who met at people's homes and listened to their choice of recorded music. Then there was The Sunday Walking Group, they would go by train to country spots near London and walk 8 to 10 miles, including a pub lunch, I led some of them.

There were also Annual National Conferences of CHE, I went to one in Sheffield, at the Crucible Theatre, I remember someone unplugged the sound system because they disagreed with a decision, I bravely plugged it in again. There was a conference at Malvern, it was most enjoyable and included a delightful walk in the Malvern Hills.

This was all fine to socialise, but many wished to campaign for the sexual rights enjoyed by heterosexuals, we had an age minimum of 21, theirs was 16, it was not until 2001 that equality was achieved. Stonewall has achieved so much that CHE wanted and is a professional organisation and continues to fight for our rights.

CHE founded London Friend, a gay telephone helpline, I was one of the Befrienders for some years. It preceded Gay Switchboard and eventually split from CHE to become a charity.

Returning to 1970, the Gay Liberation Front, or GLF, was formed. It met at the London School of Economics on Wednesday evenings, it was very militant, and had a Steering Committee that ruled that a member of it shall stand down after 2 months, and heterosexuals were not allowed. I went to one of the meetings, it was noisy and chaotic, because they felt so strongly about their cause. It grew from 100 members to 500 in a year, but after two years, it fragmented and folded.

There is a book about CHE called *Amiable Warriors* by Peter Scott-Presland that tells its history. Coming up to the present, GayWest had its roots in CHE, as described by Robert Howes in his excellent book about GayWest, do read it.

Postscript.

I have a brief addendum to CHE and GLF. I would like to mention that Vivian Waldron of Group 8 led the walk in the Malvern Hills, and he with A.N. Other also inaugurated London Friend in 1972, which now flourishes after 49 years.

Ernie

GayWest

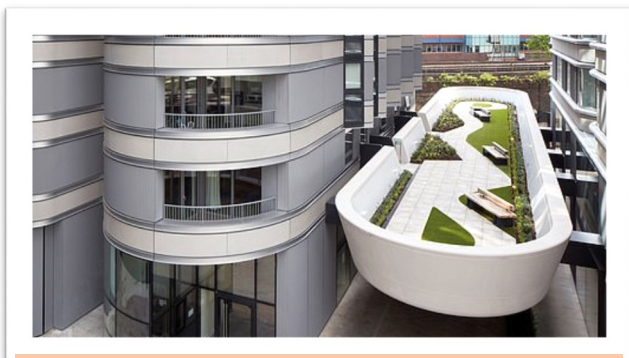
A way of keeping in touch!

Under our voluntary work criteria, On the afternoon of Thursday 25th February Jim and myself travelled to the City of Wells on an invited visit to a new build care home in the city. The Manager of the complex had contacted GayWest via our website and was interested in letting it be known that she wished that LGBT people were going to be as welcome at this new home as equals, among all their residents and that she would like her new staff when all finally recruited to have open discussions regarding the LGBT community. This will be achieved by a talk from GayWest at some time in the future.

The home was a modern spacious place with a welcoming public café as you entered. There were separate dining rooms with their own kitchens and all more like a 5 star hotel rather than a care home. The ground floor is for the more able and the second floor offering more a care. Both floors having 32 rooms.

We were shown around and made very welcome and look forward to a future visit. The home is part of the Barchester group.

Leaflets available at the Rainbow Café.



LGBT Retirement Flats in London

Another development in this area is the UK's 1st retirement homes for the LGBT community in London on a new development in Vauxhall. Tonic Housing Association have purchased 19 flats with a loan from the Mayor of London.

Now I ask you, which do you think benefits making us all equal as humans the best and which still believes in keeping all groups as separate identities.

Answers on a postcard please!

The Rainbow Café

Under government regulations during these restricted times we are allowed to open.

But we can only have a maximum of 15 persons.

So booking your place is essential,

our next Café dates are March 20th, April 3rd and 17th

so contact us by email info@gaywest.org.uk or telephone 07758810134

Gay West

A way of keeping in touch!

This Months Reviews

All the young men is about how one Women risked it all to care for the dying. An incredibly moving true story of Ruth Coker Burks, who helped the dying during the aids crisis

In 1986 26 year old Ruth is visiting a friend in an Arkansas hospital when she notices a patients door painted red, with trays of food piled up on the floor, the nurses reluctant to enter. Out of impulse she goes into the quarantined space and begins to care for the young man lying there crying for his mother in the last moments of his life. And in doing so Ruth's life changes for ever.



Skin Kerry Andrew/ Jonathan Cape

On the last day of school in 1985, 11 year old Matty's father walks out of their home never to return. Nobody will explain where he has gone, or why. Matty starts sneaking out to the men's ponds at Hampstead Heath where his dad liked to go to search for him. Years later, Matty, now a Wild swimmer, is travelling across Ireland when events take a dangerous turn... Artfully paced, with queer undercurrents.



The Happy Prince

This is an insight into the life of Oscar Wilde, Written, and Directed by Rupert Everett. Who also plays Oscar in an excellent character performance of the man

THE HAPPY PRINCE tells the story of the last days of Oscar Wilde. This great man of letters, once one of the most famous authors in England, is now a superstar on the skids. As Oscar lies on his death bed, the past comes flooding back to him, transporting him to other times and places.

This film was shown on BBC 2 a few weeks back as part of the LGBT History month I thoughtfully recommend it. A very sad story of how society can change towards someone who they all wanted to be friends with until due to their sexuality you don't fit in.



Colin Firth as Reggie Turner



Rupert Everett as Oscar Wilde