

# GayWest

A way of keeping in touch!

Vol. 11 November 2021

## Welcome to your November Newsletter.

This is now my 9th year as Chair of GayWest and its been an interesting time.

I have only been a member of the group for 12 years and have been on the committee for 11 years starting as the Rainbow Café host & coordinator, which I still do and then Chairman from 2013. In this time I have been to many prides with GayWest. Attended other LGBT organisations functions, Gay History events. Events run by Charities wishing to be friends with the Gay communittee.

Been Visiting Prisons many times, as Chair of GayWest, to religious groups, Help the aged events. Nursing homes, Care homes. New LGBT Café's and societies.

So what have I learnt from these visits and how has it helped GayWest.

Well not a lot really. Many of the care homes/nursing homes after the initial meetings and how they can help LGBT people when they may need their help. we have not heard from again.

Many of the LGBT groups have since disappeared and the Cafes closed down.

Mainly due to lack of funding and initiative by those people involved.

The Prisons are still sometimes in touch but very little now going on helping their own Gay inmates. The pride events have become more about getting drunk in the sunshine and the sale of tacky rainbow souvenirs, rather than being a place to show your pride in being Gay and celebrating the fact.

Yes it's better today being Gay, you can get Married you have the same rights under the law of the land. But organisations such as Stonewall seem to have lost their way. Local councils are only interested, so they can tick the box that says they are supportive of the LGBT community.

So do all these groups matter to GayWest? Well once I thought they did, but I am beginning to think, well do they?

During the last difficult year and a half, none of them have supported our group, none have been in touch, and all have been conspicuous by their absence.

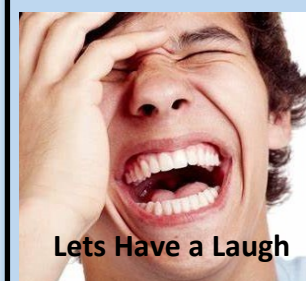
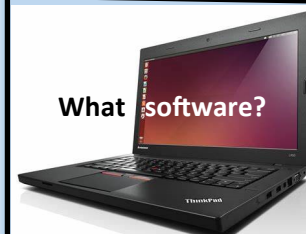
But I have been over whelmed by GayWest members who have supported each other and who have given myself and the committee huge support which has enabled GayWest to be one of the few LGBT groups still going strong and looking to a bright future.

This year at our Christmas buffet party we will also be toasting the groups 50 years + celebrating the groups forerunners who had a vision to help fight for Gay equal rights and the social wellbeing of LGBT people by getting together to form an organisation that became GayWest. We owe them a huge debt.

**Colin.**



GayWest events



Lets Have a Laugh

**Chris Brown,**  
*Some remembrances.*

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## GayWest events



### **GayWest's members 50th Christmas**

**Join us on Friday December 10th at your Rainbow Café to celebrate Christmas 2021 and 50 years of GayWest.**

**The event starts at 7pm and finishes at 10pm.**

**You will receive a complimentary drink on arrival followed by a buffet. There will be a festive quiz, Christmas jokes, Raffle and more.**

**A free event for members only but we are limited on numbers due to venue size .**

**Tickets will be available for this event from Saturday 30th October 2021**

**By contacting us on [info@gaywest.org.uk](mailto:info@gaywest.org.uk) or call/text 07758810134 or in person at the Café.**

### **Sunday Lunch**

**Sunday November 21st**

Our second regular Sunday Lunch outing will be at

**The Crown, Saltford. 500 Bath Rd, BS31 3 HJ**

Time 1pm

Please let us know by no later than Saturday 6th November if you wish to come along so we know numbers for booking.

[info@gaywest.org.uk](mailto:info@gaywest.org.uk) or 07758810134 or at the Café.



**The next Social evening at  
The Old Market Tavern**

**Will be Thursday 11th  
November at 8pm**

### **Woodpecker Walks**

We have now had four Woodpecker Walks, ( a review of number 4 will be in the December Newsletter) so we will now take a break until the new year, time to put your feet up have a nice warming winter drink and build up your strength for the new year.

So watch this space for more trecks around the beautiful local countryside.

# Gay West

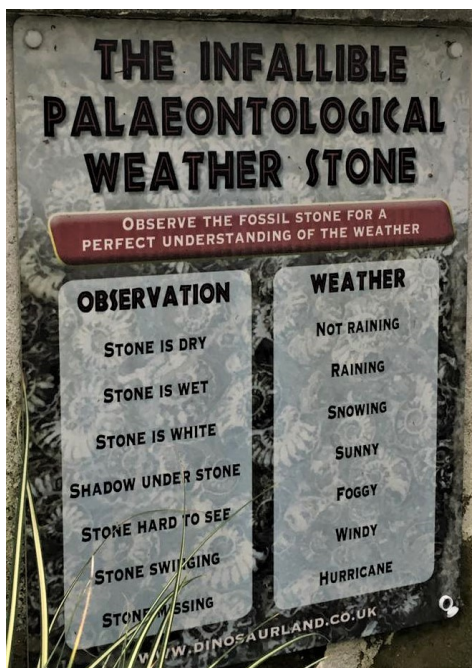
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## Computer compatibility.

We now live surrounded by Smart phones ,Tablets, Laptops, desktop PC's and all manner of IT gadgets. But there lies a problem with this as there are many different operating systems that run this stuff. We all know about Apple iPhones and PC's these use Apples Os' system. Then we have Android the power behind Googles operating empire. Which include many smart phones computers and tablets. Add to this we have the various software that run these devises.

One of the main software packages used in many homes is Microsoft's Windows. AS time goes by, all these systems get updated and it is advisable for you to update your computers, tablets etc. The new operating system for Microsoft is Windows 11. Windows 10 is still ok but if you still use anything below this , say, Windows 7 you will be more likely not be able to access email attachments or forwarded messages , along with many other applications. Its easy to update just download the app to your stuff. Happy computing.!

Colin.



Public told to plan ahead for Christmas due to supply issues, forcing majority of men to bring their shopping forward to December 23rd.

Back in my day we only started panic buying when the barman called

“ last orders please “

## Message from Paul Hunter.

Following the death of his mother, he would like to acknowledge with the group that his late mum regularly donated for the GW raffle.

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## Chris Brown: some reminiscences from Chris Watkins

Many of you will have known or at least heard of Chris Brown who sadly passed away on 28<sup>th</sup> September this year, a few weeks away from his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Chris created Chris's Coffee Club, set up as a friendly gay drop-in group, over 30 years ago. For many years he opened his house every Thursday without fail for his Coffee evenings and up to 80 people would regularly attend these highly popular get-togethers. It was through his Thursday Coffee evenings many people met friends and some met their long-term partners. Many of the friendships started at these events continue today and form a lasting legacy for Chris.

Besides Coffee evenings, the group also arranged other events such as meals out, trips to stately homes, theatre visits and long weekend holidays. Coupled with this was the Saturday evening Supper Parties, organized by John Bescoby. All this contributed to a very sociable time for Gay people in this area – thanks largely to the Coffee Club that Chris initially set up. At the height of this group's success there were one or two events every month. The group continues as GMG Southwest. Chris was also a fund raiser for the local Gay Switchboard and the Coffee Club donated a lot of money to this very worthy cause.

Chris could be very thoughtful and would meet new people half an hour before the Coffee Club started at 8.00pm to settle them in and reassure them. When I lost my partner Bob nearly sixteen years ago, I remember Chris being supportive especially in planning Bob's funeral. Like all of us, Chris had his faults. He had a determined spirit and could be opinionated and stubborn but on the other hand he was very generous and tried to see the good in everyone. He was often the life and soul of any party.

Chris was a big, bear of a man and could be a little clumsy; I can remember Chris collapsing on an antique chair at someone's home and also causing a flood by sitting on a radiator at a party. Being in public with Chris could be embarrassing. He would flirt outrageously with handsome waiters or any young man and luckily most of the men took it good part. Chris joined in group holidays with weekends in Torquay and Bournemouth and a holiday to Benidorm.

Chris was very trusting in all his relationships and, for a number of years, had a loving relationship with a man called Gopal. I think this may have been the happiest time of his life.

For many years Chris worked as a Car Salesman at Dando's in Chipping Sodbury - he helped many people in the group purchase a new car. He often went the extra mile to help people in the group – he used to pick up and return cars that needed a service at his garage. Chris had high standards and, if he felt someone's customer service was a little lacking, he could be fierce.

Chris unfortunately suffered from diabetes and over time lost both of his legs to this disease. Until a few years ago Chris drove a mobility car and managed to go to Turkey on holiday, mostly on his own in a wheel chair.

Chris had been living in a disability Bungalow in Lockleaze. Three years ago, he had a very bad fall from an electric buggy that damaged his head quite badly. The open wound on his head never fully healed. After this fall, Chris was about six months in intensive care in Southmead hospital in an induced coma. Miraculously he survived and went through a long period of rehabilitation while staying in a Sir John Wills House nursing home at Westbury Fields and another nursing home in Avonmouth. There was also a short period in a rehabilitation center in St. George. Up until the fall, Chris was driving his disability car and could manoeuvre himself in and out of the vehicle.

Chris came back to live at his Bungalow just before Covid struck. Because of the lockdowns, we were unable to visit him for some time until the restrictions were eased. Because of arthritis, Chris lost some dexterity in his hands and so had difficulty in answering his mobile or even texting messages, - so it appeared to some people that Chris had become a recluse when in fact, being Chris, he craved company.

In the last couple of years, Chris had a care team going in about five times a day to see to his complex needs. He would be put into a special electric wheelchair early in the morning and put to bed again by mid-day because he couldn't stand the pain of being in the wheel chair for too long. He had a TV installed in his bedroom above his bed for entertainment.

Chris made a lot of friends in his life and, when able, enjoyed his life to the maximum. He was a very positive person and mostly remained upbeat, and cheerful even when things were going badly for him. The last time I spoke to Chris he was planning a short trip on the bus to the doctors and into Broadmead. He was a loyal friend to me, and certainly many others, are sad to see him go but pleased that we knew him as a friend.