

Contents

Page 1 A Learning Curve

Page 2 Winking Gorgons

Page 3 42nd Street & Events

Page 4 It's not the seagulls & Social Events

Welcome to your October Newsletter.

A Learning Curve

You have a new editor for the GayWest Newsletter, which means that I have had to learn Microsoft Publisher in a hurry.

I now own a large MS Publisher manual with illustrations, think of a telephone directory, but after twenty minutes of reading I'm in urgent need of a coffee. So I put the kettle on and then come back to it. I hope to keep up the high standard set by Jim Phimister, our previous editor, and I give him and Colin a huge 'thank you' for all their hard work on the magazines over the last ten years. We've had some wonderful editions - especially with the illustrations on the front covers.

Since the Covid-period, we have streamlined from a magazine-style format to a more simple newsletter, which is easier to manage. Contributions are always welcome from everyone at GayWest, and we plan to entertain, inform, and perhaps offer a bit of inspiration where we can.

We have a slight conundrum, in that our AGM is on 16th September, and we all want to get this October edition out early before Colin and Jim go on holiday. I don't mind drinking lots of coffee, but do need to sit next to them when I hit Publisher for the first time!

The results of the AGM will be published in the next edition.

Michael Reid



Winking Gorgons

If you stare at a Gorgon you get turned to stone, but if you wink at a Gorgon you get a day's luck. Not a lot of people know that.

The city emblem for Bath is the Gorgon's head and you can buy souvenir plaques in the shop at the Roman Baths. Yet, in the late 18th. Century a mistake was made in interpretation, but to understand the mistake we need to look at three mythic figures: King Bladud; the Celtic goddess Sul; and the Roman goddess Minerva.

Quite a cast list: Bladud was a mythic pagan king, long before the time of the Celts, and possibly based on an heroic chieftain in the south-west. Sul, or Sulis, was a Celtic goddess, worshiped specifically at the hot springs of 'Aquae Sulis' (the old name for Bath) and located at the end of Bath Street, deep under the pavements. That's the little street with the columns not far from our Rainbow Cafe. Minerva was the later Roman goddess, originally a fearsome deity of war, but became more peaceful by the time the Romans arrived for their 300-year visit.

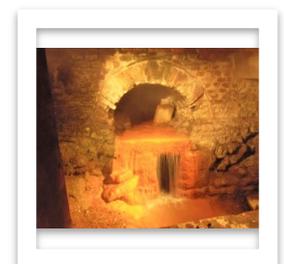
Bob Stewart, as the prolific author R.J. Stewart, lived in Bath and wrote many books on pagan culture and the mythology of the Celts in the 1980's. In 'The Waters of the Gap', all about the hot springs of Bath, he gives a wonderful explanation of how our cast list of three were slowly linked together under the Romans to form the Temple of Sulis Minerva, parts of which we can see when visiting the Roman Baths.

The mistake about the Gorgon's head came about when, in 1790, parts of the triangular pediment above the main entrance to the old Roman temple were dug up. Archaeologists of that day, with their classical education in Latin and Greek, knew not a great deal about the Celtic world. That has only come about recently. So they interpreted what looked to them like a male Medusa as a Gorgon. But we now think that they were wrong.

It's thought more likely that this is not a Gorgon's head at all, but a Celtic fire god and protector of the eternal fire that heated the hot springs. Sul was the goddess of the waters while her partner, the god, tended the fires beneath. In effect, the Gorgon that we think of, had not snakes but tendrils of flame around the head, pre-Celtic style, and possibly representing Bladud, who in myth was the patron of fire, similar to the Roman god, Apollo.

Just think all this time we've been winking at the wrong guy! So there's no need to worry about being turned to stone, and if you do wink, and the Gorgon winks back, then you know you're on to a winner.

Michael Reid



42nd STREET

Before the pandemic, I ventured into Drury Lane theatre, London

to see a production of 42nd STREET:

This was one of the very best musical shows I have ever seen and I still have vivid memories of it. The spectacle, the colour, the costumes, the scenery and the exciting tap-dancing sequences were just perfect.

It was set in the 1930's depression era.

So during August 2023, we ventured into the Hippodrome Bristol to see another staging of the show.

This was a touring version with a completely different cast, costumes and sets, and far less chorines!

But much to my surprise and delight it was just, well, gorgeous. With the exception of one, all the songs were there, the choreography and acting were good and the leading lady was an accomplished non-white top-tap-dancer. There were several superb production numbers - all of them good, but my favourite was "We're in The Money" where the cast tap-dance on huge golden coins! (I wished I was an understudy!) After the Bristol performances, the show goes on a nationwide tour including Plymouth, Milton Keynes, Woking, Dartford, Southampton and Cardiff.

The local theatre-goers are in for a treat.

Valentino

The return of the Woodpecker walks.

Sunday October 22nd will see a return of the Woodpecker walks.

We will meet at

30 Woodpecker close , Keynsham, BS31 2FU at 11am.

This will be a gentle start to our new walking season mainly on road and lane and footpaths a circular walk taking in the local scenery and some of its history.

We arrive back at Woodpecker close for refreshments

Contact :- Colin 07758810134



It's not the seagulls

Colin and Jim are standing down from the Committee after ten successful years. They have worked so hard at promoting GayWest and we owe them a great vote of thanks for all their efforts.

Colin, as Chairman, has networked tirelessly and helped GayWest make many friends and contacts. Jim, who prefers to stay in the background, has managed several posts all at once. He was the membership secretary, the treasurer, the magazine editor, and finally a job that's still a work in progress - keeping an eye on Colin.

They've waved the flag at many Prides and events and are a hard act to follow. They're not leaving GayWest, just having a well-earned rest and a holiday.

So, Colin and Jim, when you hear that strange sound, it's not the seagulls but GayWest sending you applause from all of us.



GayWest Social evening Wednesday October 11th

Join us for our social evening at **"The Lodekka"**

Tramway Rd, Brislington, Bristol, BS4 3DS

Meet from 8pm for a chat, a laugh and to put the world to rights.

The venue is part of the Hungry Horse chain and the food is good and reasonably priced.

