

GayWest Newsletter - August Edition 2024

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Chair's Blog

I've always thought of August as rather a dull month - not much going on, but that's not true. We have the Swindon & Wiltshire Pride Day. I've been told that at least sixty exhibitors are on show this year, including a tarot reader well-known to all at our Rainbow Cafe.

We have our own 'Picnic in the Park' to look forward to, and this year we've chosen Henrietta Park hidden just behind Great Pulteney Street. It's a small park with lovely trees, and holding the picnic on Thursday 15 August should mean we have the grass all to ourselves. Parking is more or less residential and it's the usual problem when trying to park in the city centre.

It's not long now until September and our Annual General Meeting, so do be thinking about it and be ready to offer any suggestions and ideas on how we can improve things for you. The committee has decided to not have many events this year as numbers attending are down, but that's not to say we won't have any events in the future.

The good news is that George's Pavilion Cafe in Royal Victoria Park, now under new management, has had a facelift and lick of paint in dark green, a rather smart colour, and is now the Treetop Cafe.. We tested it out and gave it full marks, bearing in mind that it has only just opened with a slightly limited menu. The cake and coffee is recommended and you now have somewhere to go after our Cafe on Saturdays.

Michael Reid

Secret Ways to Dundas

I wanted to introduce you to Dundas via the secret green paths known to joggers. When I got to the meadows looking down over the Kennet & Avon Canal, I found that the farmer, or National Trust, had recently fenced off the land allowing only a narrow wet footpath for access. Unless you swam through mud you couldn't get down the hill, so I had to turn back along the narrow ways to the main road.

A better title might be 'How I walked down Brassknocker Hill without getting run over'. Somehow, I managed to reach Trollope's Lane in one piece and this led to Dundas.



It's unusual in that the canal is carried over the River Avon via an aqueduct in the beautiful setting of the Limpley Stoke Valley. Hidden down a side path beside moorings for canal boats is a local secret: The Angelfish Cafe and boatyard, where you can rent canoes and little boats for short outings. For a local secret it was busy.

The Cafe serves cakes and coffee to die for and it is quite likely that you will be waited on by wild ducks. A line of them walked under my chair trying to make me feel guilty, but you can't feed wild ducks lemon drizzle cake, can you?

There was an interesting exhibition on the old Somerset Coal Canal just past the Cafe. Then I returned via Monkton Combe up another shortcut, the Drungway, so steep it nearly killed me. Thankfully there was a bench at the top of the hill to sit down and take in the view.

Michael Reid

Surprising Salisbury

Our journey to Salisbury by car lasted just over an hour. Our hotel was south of the city by the Water Meadows and was situated alongside the slow-flowing and very picturesque River Avon. We could see the Cathedral spire from our room.

The next day, our first visit was to the peacefully set cathedral, which was built in 1258 and has the highest spire (404 feet) in the country. We were also able to see the thirteenth century Magna Carta. Kestrels have been nesting in the spire, but we did not see any.



We visited Arundells, the Georgian home of former Prime Minister Sir Edward Heath, which after his death in 2005 had been left intact. It is now open to the public and has been upgraded to a Grade II listed property with many beautiful rooms and a well-kept two-acre completely private garden leading down to the river.

We had an evening at the Playhouse Theatre, to see a local group perform *Kinky Boots*, - a very entertaining and funny show based on a true story. Although an amateur group, it was extremely well performed and in English one would say 'slick!' A shoe factory is facing permanent closure and is needing a boost. This arrives in the unexpected form of a drag queen, Lola, who wants red stiletto boots. She gets them and there is a very happy ending.

During our stay we had hot weather which somewhat slowed our progress, but we certainly had a good time and there's much more to see; so we do have a second visit lined up later in the year.

Valentino

Good Vibrations!

As you know, many members of GayWest are in their senior years and a percentage of you will have some hearing loss. My own hearing loss is at a crucial stage, unfortunately on the severe side, but this has got me fascinated with “vibrating molecules.” Every sound we hear, a hammer hitting wood, a loud note from a trumpet, the rustle of the wind in the long grass (memories, memories), all these sounds are made from the displacement of air molecules which then cause vibrations known as Hertz.

These vibrating air molecules are what reach our eardrum, and cause the eardrum to wiggle in and out at the same frequency as the vibrating air molecules. The information that our brain gets about the pitch of the sound comes from this wiggling. So now our inner ear and our brain must analyse the motion of the eardrum in order to figure out what vibrations out in the world caused the eardrum to move this way.

The human range is between 20 HZ to 20,000 HZ. The sound of the average male speaking voice is around 110 HZ and the females 220 HZ. The hum of a fluorescent light is 60 HZ. The sound that the singer hits when she causes glass to shatter might be 1000 HZs. The glass breaks because it, like all physical objects, has a natural and inherent vibration frequency. When the singer hits just the right frequency - the resonant frequency of glass - it causes the molecules of the glass to vibrate at their natural rate and vibrate themselves apart.

The high and low levels of the Hertz's range is lost to me due to the natural damage in my ears. They do not vibrate as they should, so my brain does not receive good information and becomes confused, no comments please. You're sitting in a noisy restaurant, pub or our Rainbow Cafe, you look at the person talking to you. Your eyes send the message to your brain to give you the vision of this person. The vibrating molecules from the sound of the person's voice are picked up by your ears and the message sent to your brain. Your brain then works out what you are looking at and that the sound is also from the same source and therefore reduces all the other surrounding sounds. So all you see is the person talking to you and hear their voice. But if as with hearing loss the brain is not receiving the correct information as to where the vibrations are coming from, then it will allow all vibrations to be involved. This means all sound is at the same level to the listener. Which is why people with hearing loss prefer quiet places to be able to interact with others.

But our brains are amazing organs, so people with severe hearing loss develop other senses to pick up these vibrating molecules, and one way is through your body's bone structure. When I practise on my guitar, my ears vibrate to the sound from the strings within the frequency I can hear, but at the low end that I cannot receive I can feel the vibrations from the guitar's body held close to mine and I can feel the beat of the music. For very deaf people there is a body vest that they can wear, so at a dance they will pick up the beat of the music and are then able to dance along with everyone else.

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The amazing thing is that the vibrations from different instruments are matched by your ear drums to the exact pitch (HZ s). Everyone with good hearing has this ability and that is why, even if you are not musical, you can tell if an instrument or singer is in the right pitch or not. Which is why I would be no good playing in a band any more. I would be in a different pitch to the rest of the band. Mind you, it could catch on!

Colin. (Related information from: *This is your Brain on Music* by Daniel Levitin)

Following on with our Sizzling Summer Cocktails - here's one to slay you:



The Brislington Bouncer:

One dash of Angostura Bitters
Two dashes of your favourite brandy
One half glass of sherry
One half of Bath Gin
Shake well with ice and strain.

***Under no circumstances must you drive -
let the police give you a lift home***

One of our members, Michael Gray,
will be displaying his Tarot reading skills at
Swindon & Wiltshire Pride
located in the GWR Park
on Saturday 10 August
from 11.00am to 4.00pm,
with music and jollities until 8.00pm
There are over 60 stalls and it looks like a truly
exciting day: www.swindonwiltshirepride.co.uk

***'Come and explore your Hero's Journey
with the mystery of Tarot'***

Hydrangea

This is a genus of eighty species of predominantly deciduous shrubs and climbers. Natively they come from Asia to the Americas but the largest diversity is from China to Japan. Here's a few of the more readily available types:



Hydrangea arborescens “Annabelle”, the most popular in this group. The flowers have large green heads then become a brilliant white flower. These can be so large that they need support especially when it's wet and can cause the stems to snap under the weight of the water-logged flower. There are now lime and pink coloured flowers in this group.



Hydrangea Hortensia “Mophead”

Small to large rounded oval flowers. The small star-like flower can be found within the centre of the four petals. Some flower heads can change colour once the flower itself has been pollinated. For instance, a white flowering hydrangea can change and have pink edges. Sometimes intense sunlight can cause colour changes but the biggest change is if you change the PH of the soil.

Hydrangea paniculata

Originating from China and Japan, this deciduous shrub has pyramid shaped petals. On the whole they are white or cream ageing to pink. Although some hybrids can grow to more than ten feet, most are small shrubs growing to a more respectable four-to-six foot. The flowers usually occur from mid-July.

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Hydrangea hortensia “ Lacecap”

Here the flower design is flat with clusters of flowers flat in the centre. Around the edge of the flower is a ray of sterile four/ five petaled bracts. Of interest is that the inner fertile flowers are often a different colour to the outer ones.

If you want to produce blue coloured flower heads in this group and do not have acidic soil then you can apply a regular solution of aluminium sulphate or sequestrene to the roots. It is thought that tea bags or leaves can also be applied to the roots to make the ground acidic but, as yet, I have not tried this method.

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**GayWest's Monthly Social
at the Lodekka in Brislington
Good food & good company
Wednesday 14th August from 7.30pm
easy bus service back to Bath !**

GayWest Summer Picnic
Thursday 15 August 2024
in Henrietta Park just behind
Pulteney Street in Bath,
From 1.30 to 4.00pm

If it's raining, we'll think of something !
Bring food to share



Whad'ya means Ducks like us don't eat Lemon Drizzle Cake !

