

Are You Butch or Femme?

From the Closet to the Screen, Women at the Gateways Club 1945-85 by Jill Gardiner

"The old diehard crowd with the Brylcreem saw us as an invasion. Their femmes had perms and clip on mumsy earrings, summer dresses and court shoes. They'd say 'What are you? Are you butch or femme?'"



Brighton Sue

Over the years lesbian and gay clubs have arrived and vanished with the sidereal rapidity of waves landing on Brighton beach. That this would happen to The Gateways Club, the most famous Chelsea cellar in the lesbian litany, had been inconceivable. But it did. On September 24th 1985 the final strains from the vinyl whirring on the DJ's turntable died away and the lights went out on a chapter of lesbian history which had, amazingly, endured for forty historic years.

Narrative tapestry

Brighton's own Jill Gardiner has compiled a narrative tapestry of eighty recollections from one-time regulars for whom "The Gates" was happy hunting ground, hostelry and home from home. Pasting them liberally upon a rolling diorama of changing fashion and social upheaval she has made more a cinematograph than a book!

The cover of *From the Closet to the Screen* shows Susannah Yorke and Beryl Reid relaxing outside The Gateways Club during the filming of *The Killing of Sister George*.

Her camera rolls on down the years, silhouetting the formal gents suits, shirts and ties of the 50s, wheeling on through the filming of *The Killing of Sister George* in the 60s and the brief but deadly blossoming of the jeans and cheesecloth of the casual and gorgeous 70s. Until the final credits in the sadder days of the 80s.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to Jill for her delightfully digestible and at the same time academically precise chronicle of a time that is already in the misty past for new ducklings on the lesbian pond!

Read and enjoy!

Published by Pandora Press and available from all good bookshops and amazon.co.uk

Help Wanted

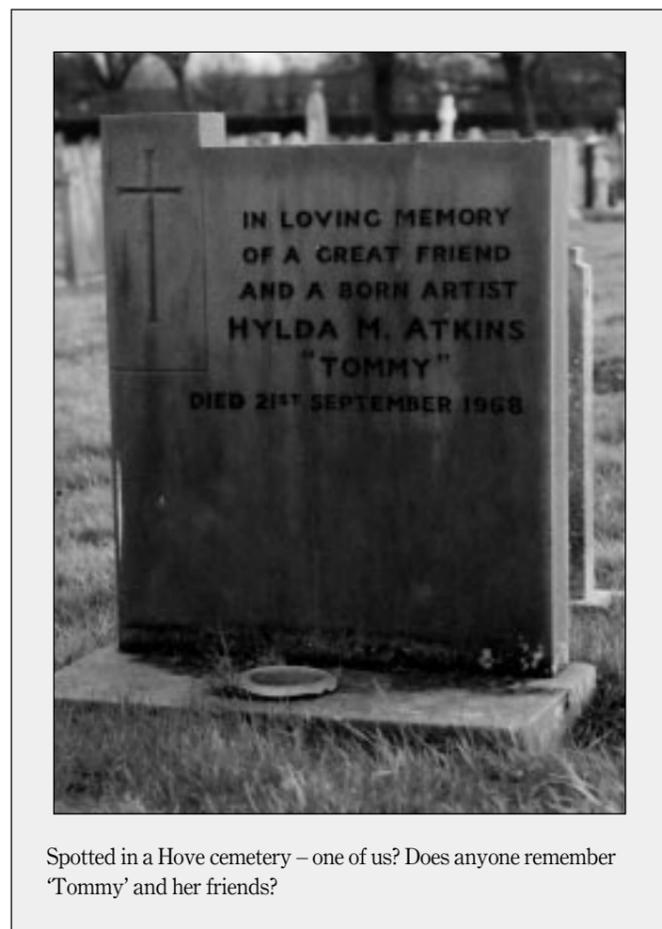
We have been contacted by a researcher who is working on a PhD. She is trying to find out the consequences on the lives of children, adolescents and young adults in the UK who were treated for intersex conditions and/or gender identity disorder. She writes as follows:

"What were the effects of medical treatment on the development of gender identity in individuals who may have been classified as 'intersex' and/or 'transsexual'. For the purpose of this research, this includes surgical, hormonal or psychiatric treatment. There does not appear to have been any research like this done before. I am not looking for details about the treatments themselves, but how people felt, what the impact was on their lives, and the development of their identity. That identity may be

lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, straight or whatever.

I would like people who think they may have been subject to such treatment who are interested in taking part to contact me. I will send further details of the study and some guidance so that people can tell me their "stories". I will use the memories and recollections of individuals' experiences from early childhood to early adulthood, and their hindsight now to see whether there are any lessons for the future. Everything will be in strictest confidence, and people rendered anonymous."

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Spotted in a Hove cemetery – one of us? Does anyone remember 'Tommy' and her friends?

BRIGHTON OURSTORY PROJECT

newsletter

All Systems Go!!

The view from the Ourstory offices in the city centre is surely one of the most scenic in all Brighton. Not that you'd know the view was there, however, as the view is blocked by box upon box of books, banners, photos, memorabilia and most of all, of course, memories.

We're bringing back some of these collected memories with the long awaited return of the Lavender Lounge Bar at the end of Pride Week, on August 10th. The show forms the climax to a whole day of Ourstory activities, centred on Hove's Dudley Hotel, at the bottom of Lansdowne Place, a few minutes from the West Pier.

New volunteers

Amid the frantic activity of organising these events, Tuesday evenings are a haven of peace when a dedicated team of cataloguers sifts gently through the contents of our many boxes. Recently several new volunteers have joined the Ourstory team. Their focus, along with everyone else, is to get our ever-growing archive into a more logical order and to make sure all the precious items we hold are preserved.

Acid-free boxes

We've invested in a computerised cataloguing system that will allow us to easily locate and co-ordinate

all our items. New acid-free boxes allow us to keep items from degrading. They're much more expensive than your common brown box but much safer.

As funds allow, we'll be buying more of these boxes and sending some of the most fragile items off for repair.

Ourstory's new Management Group has now been established for over a year. Alongside Linda, who has been with the Project since it began are Sally, Benedict and Chris. Sally and Benedict are

both graduates of the University of Sussex and became involved with Ourstory through the Queer About Campus exhibition. Chris was formerly owner of the much missed LGBT OUT! Books in Kemptown.

Tom and Alf, although no longer on the Management Group, continue to make a substantial contribution to Ourstory's work by cataloguing and managing the website. Jill has made the most of her time since leaving the

and museums to see how Ourstory could develop in the future. While downing a swift fall on Canal Street, Sally said of the trip, "It's interesting finding out the different directions groups have taken. We heard about funding, premises and some of the pitfalls they've had along the way."

Charitable status

The other main focus of the group in recent months has been our application for charitable status. Very few LGBT groups have it but we're hoping our application will cross all the t's and dot all the i's. Becoming a charity will bring with it many benefits. Firstly it means we will have official acknowledgement that we are completely transparent and

trustworthy. Secondly, it brings financial benefits and allows us to bid for pots of money previously closed off. We will report back on this in the next issue.

Pride

So enjoy yourselves at Pride and we hope to see you all at our stall in Preston Park on Saturday, August 9th or the next day in Hove for one of our three Pride events.

Benedict



Benedict, Sally, Chris and Linda – Ourstory's new Management Group

Management Group by getting her excellent book about the Gateways Club published (see the review on page 4 of this issue).

Manchester mission

Linda, Sally and Benedict recently went on a fleeting fact-finding mission up north to Manchester to see a variety of archives, libraries

How Much Is Owed to People Like Peter

We're sad to report the death, at the age of 60, of Peter Ludlam, who for many years worked at Downsview Special School (for children with learning difficulties) and was a prominent member of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality and of Brighton Gay Switchboard. Here, Eric remembers for us some turbulent times he shared with Peter in 1979.

"I want to talk about Peter Radclyffe Ludlam, to give him his full name. I met him through CHE in the late 1970s and he stood out somewhat from the rest of us, because we were all of us, maybe a few liberals, but really ardent reds! The radicals certainly were the major part of the group and he was the only Tory. And that made him almost one of the enemy, from the campaign point of view. But he always insisted somebody should be campaigning in the Tory Party, not least of all because he said there were a great many closet gays in the Tory Party and they were just as interested as anybody else in seeing law reform.



Peter Ludlam in Eric's back garden c1980

Quite a brave man

So quite a brave man, in the sense that he no great friends within the group – although I took to him and think quite a number of people did. He always gave this self-assured image of a person that knew just what was what and how things should be done.

He was very, very active. He lived in Wilbury Villas then, in a maisonette and did quite a lot of the entertaining for CHE because he had a huge, huge lounge and frequently hosted various functions, including jumble sales in the garden. So he was very much a live wire within the group.

Word is Out

But we became particularly close after the Wagner Hall incident and that's what I really think has to be emphasised – how much is owed to people like Peter.

Attacked

Anyway, the thing is that the National Front attacked the event. The place was absolutely packed. We were sitting at a table at right angles to the door and taking

money and suddenly all these guys rushed in and threw over the table. I remember the guy that led them said, "Right, let's have them, lads," or something like that.

No pushover

And we jumped up and Peter and I actually grappled with them. And they realised that this wasn't going to be a pushover, that there was opposition and they attempted to leave. And we pursued them, like fools, into the street, thinking OK, there were maybe half a dozen of them but we thought there was at least half a dozen of us – and there were only the two of us – and we ended up in hospital.

Shaken

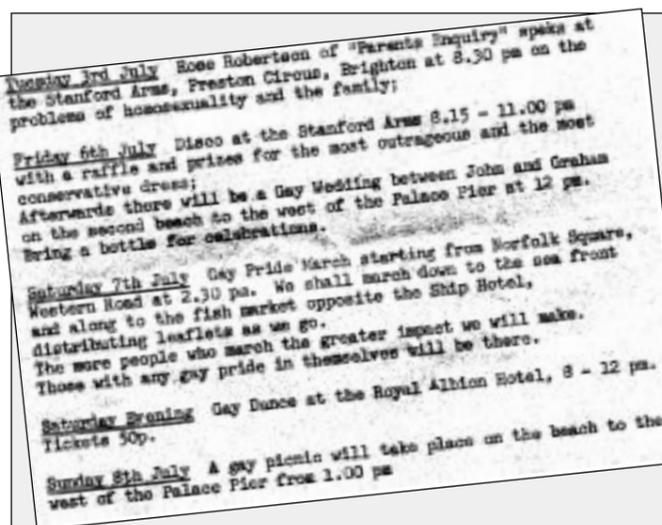
Peter and I were a little bit shaken and not least because sitting round that table had been some of the most articulate radicals from the university who didn't hesitate about lecturing us about political correctness – things that



Word is Out, conversations with 26 gay women and men, screened at the Wagner Hall in Brighton 23.1.79.

were quite new to me. (It was enough learning about the gay issues themselves). But we thought, where were they at that moment? And there was a way in which what Peter and I had done was not made a big deal of and I think really it should have been fêted.

I was a bit taken aback that Peter could pass away in this way and nobody knew what he'd done – what a brave man he was."



This year is the 30th anniversary of Sussex Gay Liberation Front's bold foray into the outside world – Brighton's first Pride Week. Way ahead of its time, the next Brighton Pride didn't happen until 1991.

What's New in the Archive



Grateful thanks are due to Malcolm for depositing with us a file containing transcripts of the posters, leaflets, articles and flyers produced by Sussex Gay Liberation Front between 1970 and 1976. Malcolm was a member of SGLF and has drawn on his own memories as well as those of Doug and Bob, who were also prominent in the group.

We were glad to receive too, *Left:* poster by Sussex Gay Liberation Front c. 1972.

from Val a biography of the poet, Charlotte Mew, and some newsletters of the Older Lesbians Network from 1998–2003. From Elsa, via Val we've gained our first original copies of the pioneering lesbian magazine, *Arena Three* and many issues from *Sequel's* first five years. Sally has given us a newsletter and photo of Brighton Badgers Football Club and Matt's contribution from a friend of a friend is also much appreciated.

A Marriage of Convenience

Those of you who are going (or have been) to our show, the Lavender Lounge Bar, on Sunday, August 10th, might be interested in these pieces from Kay Morley's collection.

She and Skip married early in 1951 and lived together at Kay's house in Preston Drove for

fourteen years. Kay was a business woman and Skip was in the RAF so having a spouse came in handy for both of them. They never let it inhibit the expression of their true feelings, however – as we hear at the Lavender Lounge Bar in Kay's own incomparable words.



Left: Kay and Skip (centre) – quite possibly on their wedding day.



Above: When called upon to do so, Kay dug out her gold lamé clutch bag and joined Skip at the Officers' Mess – in other circumstances she made a very convincing Harold MacMillan!