



MAPPLETHORPE: EXPOSURE IN EASTBOURNE

At his most controversial, Robert Mapplethorpe photographed leather-clad men indulging in S&M sex, and full frontal nude shots of eye-wateringly well-endowed black men. He became famous for these as well as iconic portraits of his artistic contemporaries (Andy Warhol, Grace Jones, Keith Haring) and the society figures of New York.

He was Patti Smith's lover in the early 1970s, living for some time at the famous Chelsea Hotel, and was internationally regarded as a major figure in photography during the 1980s. He was diagnosed with AIDS in 1986 and died three years later. He sounds

Especially poignant was the self-portrait with a skull-headed walking cane...

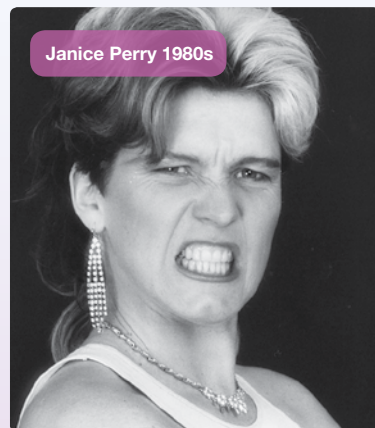
like an unusual choice for a major retrospective exhibition in Eastbourne, a seaside town with one of the highest percentages of people over 65 in the region. Given the subject matter surely Brighton would have seemed the obvious location. I'm guessing, but I strongly suspect it went to Eastbourne to showcase the impressive Towner art gallery (owned jointly by the Tate and National Galleries of Scotland), which opened in April 2009, as it contains a large enough gallery space in which to display such a extensive collection of Mapplethorpe's work.

The photographs spanned his creative life and indeed his death. Especially poignant was the self-portrait with a skull-headed walking cane taken shortly before his death, the skull in sharper focus than Mapplethorpe's own

face. This certainly wasn't a show of his most sexually explicit work, his *Self-portrait with Bullwhip* and *Man in Polyester Suit* were notably absent. But if you were really looking for it there was probably just enough to re-ignite the debate about public funding for explicit/challenging art that his work sparked during his lifetime. Not only were there over 60 photographs on display, but also a handful of sculptures never seen before in a UK public gallery. As well as a number of talks the Towner hosted a Studio 54 night, inspired by the legendary New York nightclub that defined Mapplethorpe's era.

Eastbourne and homosexuality, how times have changed you may be thinking. Once this would

have seemed inconceivable, with even the idea raising enough influential eyebrows to prevent it from ever taking place. This thought had plainly occurred to the curators at the Towner too. On a wall opposite the entrance was a small oil painting of an almost naked Constant Lambert in 1927 by bisexual artist Christopher Wood, from the Towner's permanent collection. Alongside was a small card explaining this wasn't the first time Eastbourne had flirted with such scandal. Bless. **Alf**



Janice Perry 1980s

Erik Borg

EXPOSURE IN BRIGHTON: JANICE PERRY AT ZAP

Despite the controversy that Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs caused in the 1980s, I'd never heard of him until lesbian stand-up comedian, Janice Perry, came over from the States. At the time, senator Jesse Helms (America's equivalent of Mary Whitehouse) was kicking up a stink about Mapplethorpe's work, to the extent that museums and galleries were cancelling his exhibitions. Sympathetic to his plight, and determined to help out, Janice took out needle and thread, made for herself the necessary addition for a show depicting well-endowed, naked men and performed a live version of Mapplethorpe's work. She had her all-women audiences in stitches. My memory is of Janice at the Zap Club on Brighton's seafront, in a little black dress and fishnet tights, bright red stilettos - with jacket and penis to match. She remembers...

"When I did the Mapplethorpe piece that night, some people gasped, and looked nervously around the room, because lesbians and penises were not supposed to be in the same room together. Then they broke into laughter, a very beautiful moment. Sadly, just this past year I was asked not to do that piece at a women's event in Germany, because the presenters were afraid that some of the women would be angered by the sight of my big brown schwanz."

To see a recent version of this hilarious routine, look for "Janice Perry" at www.youtube.com.

Incidentally, in the early Eighties, Janice had a show at the Drill Hall in London, called *Janice Perry and Friends*. One of her friends was a lesser-known, Brighton-based comedian - a slender sapling called Simon Fanshawe. **Linda**

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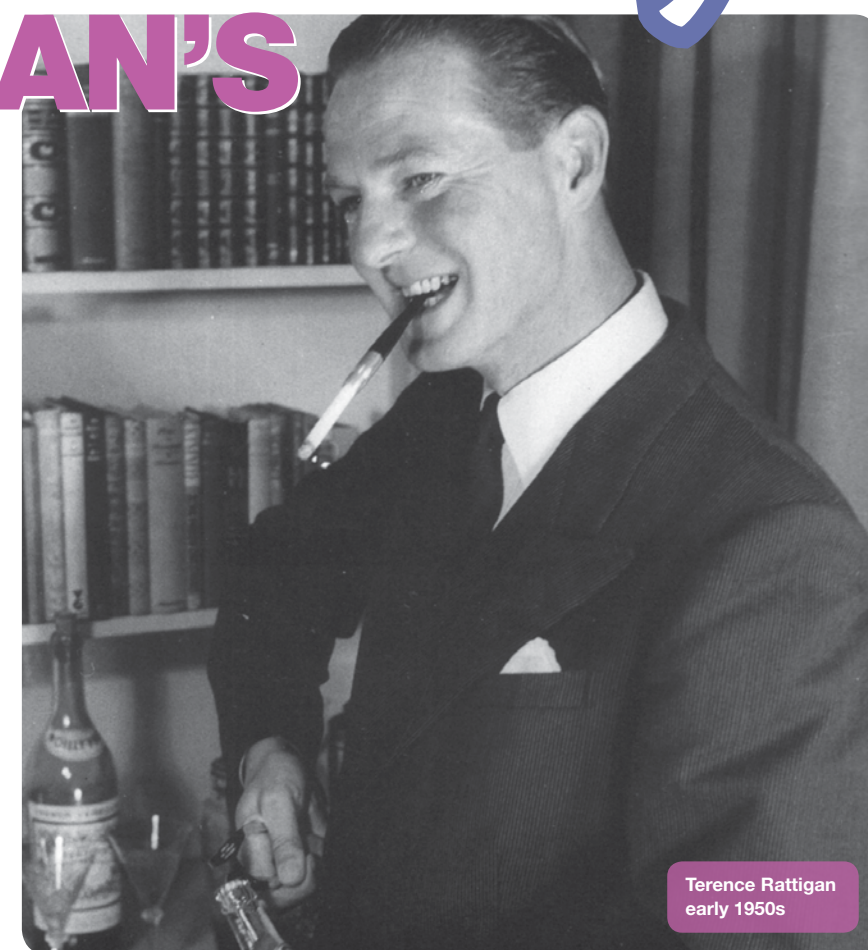
RATTIGAN'S BACK!

June 2011 saw the centenary of Terence Rattigan's birth. Rattigan was the most successful British playwright of the mid 20th Century. His first hit was *French Without Tears* in 1936, while the 1940s brought among others *The Winslow Boy* and *The Browning Version*. The plays were exceptionally well written - structured and witty and usually concerned with morality and depth of feeling. In one the question is posed, "You know what the real Vice Anglais is? It is not flagellation or pederasty, or whatever the French think it is, it's the inability to express emotion."

Many of the plays had gay undertones, most notably *Separate Tables* where the Major is revealed as having had unspecified peccadilloes in a cinema. This was in the 1950s when homosexual relationships could lead to imprisonment, blackmail and public disgrace. It was also a subject almost forbidden under the theatrical censorship operated by the Lord Chamberlain. Rattigan and his affluent upper-class lifestyle went out of fashion after *Look Back in Anger* opened at the Royal Court in 1956. An assertive heterosexuality had arrived, sidelining the homosexual coterie of Binkie Beaumont's circle that had dominated the theatrical world for a long time. Rattigan carried on writing until his death aged 66 in 1977. His later work did deal a little more explicitly with gay themes but he never considered 'outing' himself.

Terry was a Brighton resident for a few years. In 1960 his long-time lover Michael Franklin decided that sea air would help him recovery from pneumonia. They moved to a 7th floor flat in Embassy Court, Hove. Rattigan hated it. The following year he rented it out and bought Bedford House at 79 Marine Parade. Frederick Ashton and Cuthbert Worsley were regular visitors.

A new audience is discovering Rattigan in this centenary year, with several highly-praised revivals already. Most eagerly awaited is the Chichester Festival Theatre's celebration from July to September. There are rehearsed readings of five of his plays and three full productions of others including *The Deep Blue Sea*, possibly his best piece of writing. **Mark**



Terence Rattigan early 1950s

THANKS BE TO...

Like (nearly) everyone else in this current financial climate, we're feeling the pips squeak but thanks to help and support from funders and individuals we're managing to keep afloat. In the last twelve months, we've received a sum from Brighton & Hove City Council's Small Grants budget, equal to about a third of our running costs, while the newly operational Rainbow Fund - set up by Gscene Magazine in conjunction with other local LGBT businesses and administered by the Sussex Community Foundation - has given us help towards the cost of moving premises.

We rely heavily on gifts from individuals

and every contribution is welcome and appreciated. This year's star of the show, though, is Malcolm who has made a donation of £1,000 from a legacy he received! In these uncertain times, when charities are going to the wall, we are very grateful to him for sharing his good fortune with us.

And let's not forget everyone who saves us money by giving their professional services for free or less than the going rate. We love you all.

By the way, we have recently added to our website the facility to make donations securely online using PayPal. You don't need to have a PayPal account, just use your credit or debit card. Look for the DONATE button on our Home page and elsewhere on the website.

Brighton Ourstory PO Box 2861, Brighton BN1 1UN

Visit us online at www.brightonourstory.co.uk

MOVING ON!

This time last year, as Brighton Ourstory looked forward to future months of creative work on a revised edition of our 1992 classic *Daring Hearts*, snug in our city-centre office at Mitre House, little did we know we would shortly be looking for another home. Part of Mitre House is to become a hotel and our offices were wanted as conference rooms. Little did we also know that the *Daring Hearts* project would be set back by the recession when British Bookshops folded leaving our publisher, QueenSpark Books short of funds. To new contributors who were expecting to see their stories in print by now in the new edition, please accept our apologies. The project is not forgotten or abandoned but on hold while we settle in and boost our funds sufficiently to go ahead with publication.

Finding a new home for the archive took a while and we headed up a few blind alleys, where estate agents failed to understand our budgetary constraints but are now bedded into a bigger space, where we hope soon to entertain our usual variety of researchers, depositors and other guests. More apologies go to those who have put forward their names as volunteers and not been invited for interview – the upheaval of moving has put everything on hold but we will soon be in a position to start archive work once more. And we hope this double-issue of the newsletter will make up for the one missed at Christmas.

Our thanks go to Shaun Johnson and his team (Chris and the Mystery Toad!) at man-with-a-van.com, Brighton's only out-gay removal contractor, who undertook the

arduous task of moving several hundred heavy boxes of archive material carefully, efficiently and with good humour. We'd like also to say how much we've appreciated the help and understanding of the manager and maintenance staff at Mitre House during the protracted negotiations on our new premises. We'll miss the waft of Tony's brass polish and the gleaming stair rail.

We'd like to take this opportunity to say farewell and thank-you to three trustees who've retired from the Brighton Ourstory board in the

The *Daring Hearts* project is not forgotten or abandoned but on hold...

last year. Sally, was with us for seven eventful years, in which she kept order and kept us positive! She is now focussing on the demands of work and

new baby. Melita and Mark joined the board in November 2009 to help out while I was in hospital and their work since then has helped Ourstory move forward in difficult times. They have all made their mark and their contribution has been very much appreciated.

Soon after we moved, we were very pleased to play host to our first guests: Bart and his partner Steven from the Belgian equivalent of Ourstory, Fonds Suzan Daniel (named after the woman who started the first Belgian gay/lesbian group in 1953). It was really good to hear how they have been getting on in this, their fifteenth anniversary year and to swap experiences – here's to the next fifteen! **Linda**



Una and John in August 1923 (still cold)

The Queen magazine



Toupie (middle row, centre) with some of her ambulance unit



Rose in action

IS ANYONE THERE?

In August 1920, lesbian author, Radclyffe-Hall, known then to her friends as John, and her lover, Una, Lady Troubridge came to stay at the Prince's Hotel on Hove seafront (now Brighton & Hove council offices and renamed King's House).

Their great friend, Toupie Lowther, another lesbian, came down from London to be with them and stayed with her mother in a nearby square. Toupie, daughter of the Earl of Lonsdale, was the first woman in Britain to own and ride a motorcycle! In the First World War, only recently ended, Toupie had formed a spectacular, women-only ambulance unit, which had driven on the battlefronts alongside the French army, despite opposition from the authorities. John later used Toupie's experiences in her famous novel, *The Well of Loneliness*.

Soon to divorce, at the time Toupie was married with two small children. This didn't impede her lesbian activities and her lover, Nellie Rowe joined John and Una at the Princes Hotel. Sadly, they didn't like her very much and one

evening they waited until she'd gone to bed and crept out to join Toupie at a Brighton nightclub, where they all "talked and howled until 1.30am."

The main purpose of their stay in Hove was for John to get some advice from Toupie on the matter of purchasing a motor car, so one morning she and Una, - wearing thick winter coats, despite the season - set off for a car showroom at 26, St John's Road, near Palmeira Square. While they were still thirty feet away, Una had the following spooky experience:

"I could see two cars, one a black touring and one a red touring car outside the garage to which we were bound and between the red car and the entrance of the garage, I distinctly saw Miss Lowther. She was wearing a thin, dark navy blue suit... and a black felt man's hat. I said to Miss Radclyffe-Hall, 'Oh, there is Toupie, what a baby, she is already there, she has got there before us to look at the engine.'

"As we entered the doors, I said to the

engineer, 'Where is Miss Lowther?' and looked around, surprised at not seeing her... the man replied, '...she hasn't arrived yet.' In view of something Miss Lowther had told me not long ago regarding a supposed hallucination of her, seen by a friend, I then understood that something of this nature had occurred – and had the presence of mind not to exclaim aloud that I had seen her – but, having walked all round the showroom and ascertained that she was not there, I remarked in an undertone - in French - to Miss Radclyffe-Hall, 'All the same, I saw her.'

John and Una then hurried round to see Toupie who had not yet left the house and found

her dressed in the exact outfit that Una had described. They then both wrote a detailed account of the occurrence, which was published the

following year in the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, of which John was an enthusiastic member. **Linda**

● Taken from Una's account in that journal, for which many thanks to Alf Le Flohic, local gay historian and trustee of Brighton Ourstory and from Sally Cline, "Radclyffe-Hall, A Woman Called John".

The main purpose of their stay was to get advice on purchasing a motor car...

WALKIE TALKIE THIS WAY...

● Something to look out for during July and August is a new season of Rose Collis' enjoyable and entertaining history tours.

Rose is taking to the streets to track down personalities from literature, stage, screen, medicine and politics, including many of interest to an LGBT audience. They include Kemp Town Tea Tours, Bloomsbury in Brighton and The Clifton, Montpelier, Powis Tour.

On Saturday August 6, Rose will be leading a special 'Pride Promenade' commissioned by Brighton & Hove Libraries, starting at 2pm by the Peace Statue on the seafront - near what's left of the West Pier - with free refreshments and discounted copies of *The New Encyclopaedia of Brighton* available.

As if this isn't enough, every third Tuesday in the month she will be hosting 'Up Your Street', a regular monthly local history supper club at The Swan, 9 Rock Street

For full details of all tours and booking information, see www.rosecollis.com



Street puppets Hate, Fear and Ignorance get a brief spell in the light



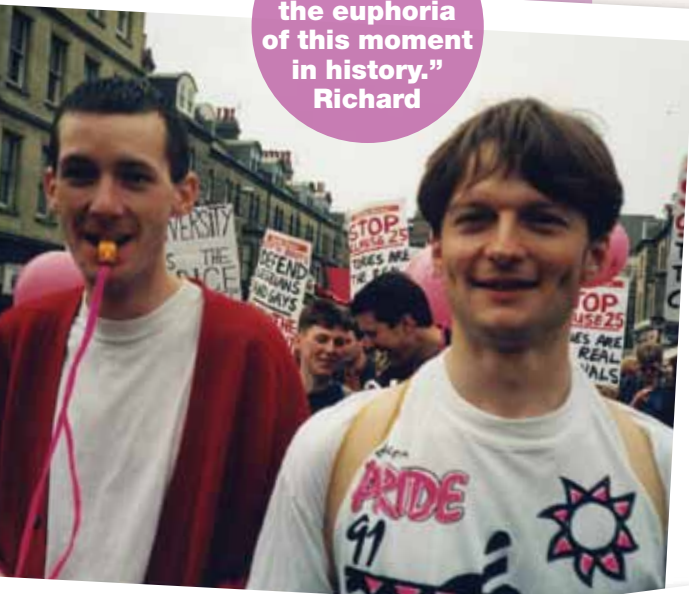
Linda with Bart and Steven



Shaun

Contact us by email on info@brightonourstory.co.uk

"Great to be part of the euphoria of this moment in history."
Richard



"I just remember going along and having a good time!"
Helen Jones



"Brighton Pride 1991 was a moment of fury and passion. Fury at Clause 28, the abusive bigots lining the march and the rage only a queer in the early 90s could feel against Thatcher. The passion came from the pride of reclaiming the city I lived in."
Kate Wildblood



CREATIVE ENERGY

It's always interesting to meet researchers when they come to consult Ourstory's archive collections but we don't always get to see the end results of their labours. So it was a treat to go to the Nightingale Theatre during the Brighton Festival to see David Sheppard's illustrated performance (with Alice Booth) of his piece, *Photographic Memory*. Funny and moving by turns it traced key figures and moments in David's life, blending them into a wider social and political context with sensitivity and care. He explains below how the project came about:

Something personal and candid as well as a bit political...

Photographic Memory began life with a personal frustration with Pride. I don't think it is essential for us all to have an encyclopaedic knowledge of LGBT history but a healthy curiosity of how people who faced similar issues to ourselves led their lives can only help us learn lessons and protect traditions that we value. For me this is an important part of what Pride is, and could be about, and this is why I think Ourstory is so valuable as an organisation.

I started researching at Ourstory where Linda helped me unearth some truly inspiring materials about where Pride, especially in Brighton, came from. A key moment was seeing a photo of someone I know from the Pride protest in 1991. This encouraged me to

start talking to people and I was blessed to find that people - when given the space - want to connect, to share and to be heard. A particular area of fascination for me was the double lives LGBT people have been forced to create in order to be accepted in society, the effect this has on people's personal lives and how this behaviour has evolved to the present day.

The job was then trying to create a coherent theatre piece, transmitting the excitement of hearing others' stories, historical context and my own life experience. I wanted to make this something personal and candid as well as a bit political!

With the support of The Nightingale (www.nightingaletheatre.co.uk), The Drill Hall (www.drillhall.co.uk) and the Arts Council things gradually came into focus and the finished piece was presented as part of Brighton Festival Fringe 2011. Visit www.davidsheppard.co.uk for more information about my work.

I am also director of Pink Fringe, supporting queer art projects in Brighton and we are presenting an outdoor performance called Parade Protest Perform investigating the significance of the Parade/Protest in LGBT history over the Pride week. Visit www.pinkfringe.co.uk for further details.

David Sheppard

BRIGHTON LESBIAN & GAY PRIDE, MAY 24-27 1991

Even though I was there, when I think of Brighton Pride in 1991, I think of a rather rough old affair, just a renamed Anti-Section 28 march really. Lots of angry shouty people with banners, spending a Saturday afternoon marching from Hove Town Hall to Brighton Town Hall. And a fair number of the general public weren't pleased to see us - they glared and swore at us from the pavements as we passed by.

And whilst all that was all true, it wasn't the full picture - hell no! It was a impressive four day lesbian and gay festival of events, with it's own programme and everything, which included: A 'Tack' disco at the University of Sussex, screenings of *Torch Song Trilogy* and *Poison* at the Duke of York's cinema, pavement drawings in Churchill Square from *Guardian*

cartoonist David Shenton, a 'Lesbian and Gay Brighton' walking tour from Brighton Ourstory, a cabaret show at the Sallis Benney Theatre with The Well Oiled Sisters, a women only barn dance at the NALGO Club, A Pink Picnic in Preston Park on the Monday - "look for the pink balloons" and also that weekend there was an

Alternative Miss Brighton event in the train station car park hosted by Lily Savage (Paul O'Grady) and Simon Fanshawe followed by a huge party at Club Shame (The Zap Club).

It was very homemade yet very powerful in its determination. It was arranged by passionate volunteers and funded by gay friendly local businesses and the odd jumble sale at the Hanover Community Centre, literally!

It wasn't the first Gay Pride Brighton had

seen - that took place in 1973, organised by the Sussex Gay Liberation Front, formed in 1971 by a group of students from the University of Sussex with lesbians and gay men from the town. However only a tiny minority of Brighton's gay population were ready to take to the streets in 1973 and it wasn't until 1991 that Pride returned.

I don't remember the 1991 march so much as how I felt, there was a new sense of direction - we may have failed to stop Section 28 of the Local Government Act in 1988 (banning the 'promotion' of homosexuality), but it had made so many of us angry, we were determined to reclaim the one thing that law was supposed to stop us having - pride in being lesbian and gay people.

The homophobia of the then Conservative government had inadvertently galvanised lesbians and gay men across the country into co-ordinated opposition. In Brighton we turned it into Pride. **Alf**

It was very homemade yet very powerful...



May 6th-9th, 8:30pm at The Nightingale.
Do you have that friend who makes you pose for photographs whenever something happens? What is so terrible about forgetting? People, places, principles, our youth. Personal stories capturing intimate moments that change everything, inspired by conversations with gay people. A collage of humour and heartbreak told through storytelling, music, film and dance.

NEW IN THE ARCHIVE

Although we had to have an embargo on new deposits for the archive during the protracted period we were packing up and moving, we still have some exciting additions to report. Squeezing in before the move is a donation from Jackie of two boxes of *DIVA* magazines from 1999-2009. Mark sneaked in his 1972 New Curtain Club membership card - Brighton's premier venue for gay men throughout the 1970s reverberated from the basement of the Queen's Hotel. Melita donated five T-shirts - all brand new so we can't use the sweat to clone future activists. First off the mark when we re-opened for business was Reet (thanks to Jean for courier services), with two boxes of lesbian fiction from the 1960s and a set of items, which together spotlight a pivotal time in Britain's lesbian consciousness.

The items are: a copy of Brian Magee's book, *One In Twenty*, several copies of *Arena*

Three magazine from 1969 and two substantial articles from Sunday paper, the *News of the World* of the same year. The articles come as a surprise in this particular organ of the press. They present thoroughly *unsensational* portraits of women who have given up heterosexual relationships in favour of a lesbian lifestyle. Their author, Maureen Lawless, spent several months interviewing members of lesbian social network, Kenric. What resulted reads as a genuine and honest account of both reasons and feelings. Not unsurprisingly, given the source of the interviewees, lesbian clubs and butch/fem role-playing get something of a rough ride. There are photographs of the women, who all look quite normal and the text emphasises just how normal they are. Being the *News of the World*, though, a sub-editor has added a few completely unrelated pictures of two affectionate women in diaphanous nighties (this is about lesbians, when all's said and done).

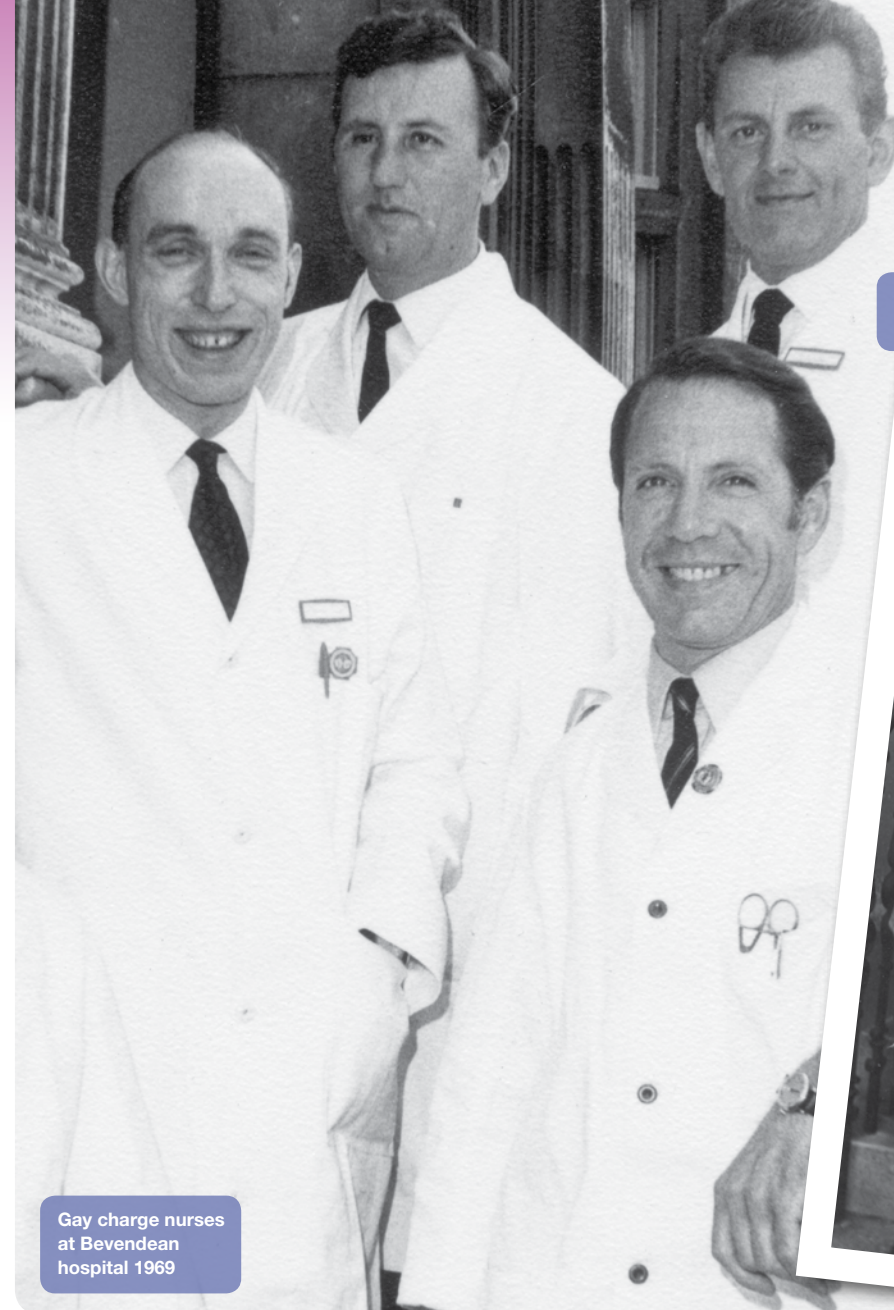
A pivotal time in Britain's lesbian consciousness...



NEWS OF THE WORLD
LOVE WITHOUT MEN
A FRANK INQUIRY

DEFY THE CLAUSE!

T-shirt message



New arrival, Ron Strank (centre) with his team.

Gay charge nurses at Bevendean hospital 1969



Bachelor is their new Mr Matron

THE Brighton Hospital Group has its first male matron. He is 34-year-old Mr. Ronald Strank, who has just taken up his duties at Bevendean Hospital. Previously he was assistant matron at Claybury Hospital, Woodford, Essex, and has had a year's post-graduate nursing experience at the John Searby Hospital, Teesside. Mr. Strank is a State registered nurse, a registered mental nurse, holds the certificate of the British Tuberculosis Association, and took a year's course in hospital administration at the Royal College of Nursing. When I was 19 I had a girlfriend, and had to be careful not to get caught out in about seven minutes. It was while I was at the hospital that I decided to become a nurse. And, as a nurse, I became a matron. Being a matron, I was in charge of a few men in the country, and I believe for them will increase growing emphasis on mental and business the post.



Ron Strank (centre) with partner Roger, Linda at Meet Our Ancestors

LGBT HISTORY MONTH

● We were delighted to take part in two events for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender History Month in February. Linda gave a talk about the history of gay rights in Brighton to Sussex University's LGBTQ Group. A lively discussion followed on the role of Pride events in the city. Our exhibition, *Meet Our Ancestors*, had an outing to the Brighton & Sussex University Health Trust's LGBT Forum event, where Ron Strank shared memories of his work in Brighton (see main article, this page) and James Ledward talked about his experiences as editor of G-Scene magazine over the last sixteen years. It was a pleasure to be involved in both these events and to see the tide of interest that LGBT History Month is creating. Libraries in particular have answered the call with exhibitions, talks and poetry readings taking place at Jubilee, Hove, Shoreham, Eastbourne and Hastings libraries. Proudest moment, no doubt, for the fearless and tireless group of teachers who started LGBT History Month nationally six years ago, was Vardean School's programme of awareness events, which also raised funds for Allsorts Youth Project. Reaching young people was always the primary goal of LGBT History Month and Vardean is a shining example of just how well this can work.

BEVENDEAN BEVY

I answered an advertisement for matron at Bevendean Hospital - mainly to get the interview experience but I ended up getting the job! I was the first male matron in Brighton & Hove. The hospital had started life as Brighton Sanatorium - for the frail elderly. It was up on a hill off Bear Road. When I started there, in 1968, it was reeling from a controversial death. People were frightened to go there because it was seen as a place to die. I wanted to change that image. We put on nativity plays on the wards at Christmas and friends and family came, we had a float in the Lions Carnival and a feature on Radio Brighton. We got publicity and the staff thought it was fun. Four years later, patients were asking to go there.

At first, we couldn't get staff so I put out an advertisement and we had a number of men apply - because me being a man in charge - and a number of those were gay. There were about half a dozen that I appointed. Previously

Bevendean had been known amongst the other hospitals as 'Little Vatican' because the matron had been a great Catholic and then after I got there it was known as 'Fairyland'. I didn't go round saying, "I'm gay!" but it was pretty well understood. When my partner, Roger, came to stay, they knew he was 'the fella'.

I was conscious all the time of being watched - sounds a bit paranoid but why shouldn't they? All the other hospitals in the group were headed by very able women. I think they found me a curiosity. But they couldn't really do much in case they pulled the whole house down. If they started saying, "This guy's gay and he's got a boyfriend"... well, there were women in the group who had girlfriends and they were open secrets but everybody kept shtum. One of the other matrons was a kindred spirit - I just knew. We weren't bosom buddies but we talked about things and if

I'd been in a tight corner I could have shared with her. And one of the assistant matrons lived with a woman and knew how many beans made five.

I had a chum who was a GP in Brighton. He was gay and a bit repressed. He it was who took me to the 42 Club for the first time. And then one of us found a gay club where you could dance.

One of the other matrons was a kindred spirit...

The guy on the door said, "You know what sort of club it is?" We said, "Yes, it's gay isn't it?" "Why, are you gay?" We took that as a compliment. I never

said I was matron in that club - I tried to keep my professional life separate. But people in the 42 Club were very generous to the hospital and in my last year there it was the beneficiary of the wonderful 42 Club pantomime. **Ron Strank**

You can contact us by phone on **07552 778577**