

# brighton ourstory..

## WE ARE FAMILY

It's been all go since the last newsletter – our show, *Really Living* and our exhibition, *Bona Books*, both went down well during the Summer's Brighton Pride and we're delighted that the exhibition will have another airing in February (3rd-28th) for the Winter Pride Festival and LGBT History Month. This time it will be in the Jubilee Library in Brighton city centre and as well as the display panels there will be glass cabinets to show off some of the books from the 1,000+ we have in our Heritage Library. They include fiction (both serious and saucy), biography, history, crime, politics, theory & analysis (both sensible and daft), plays, poetry and some odd things that don't seem to fit anywhere. Thanks are due to all those who have donated books to the archive, to Brighton & Hove Library Service and to Brighton Pride for supporting and funding the exhibition – and to the dedicated band of Ourstory volunteers who have spent a good part of the last year cataloguing this fantastic collection.

### LEGACY PACK

We have also taken some time to put together information to help you work out if you'd like to leave Brighton Ourstory something in your will. The result is an eight-page booklet that contains all you need to know (well, quite a lot) about making or amending a will and about the financial benefits of leaving a gift to charity.

### ROOM FOR ONE MORE ON TOP...

Patrick has been in touch with news that another of the city's bus fleet has been named after one of us. Look out for music hall star Dougie Byng, trolling along the number 25 route from Hove/Kemp Town to the universities. (For more about Dougie see Brighton Ourstory newsletter #16).

We'd particularly like to thank Susy for taking the cover photos and everyone who posed for them.

### LOST TRUTHS

Brighton Ourstory is eighteen years old in January – and like all young adults is preparing to make its way in the world. As a bonnie baby, Ourstory drew to it a vast and previously unknown extended family, whose gifts of life stories, photographs, skills and care have enabled it to thrive. An £18,000 legacy a few years ago has been paying for our adolescent's upkeep and education, along with small grants from local funders and welcome contributions from family. Bursting with ideas for the future and embarking soon on vocational training, in three years time Ourstory will be ready to play a full part in society by providing a centre that has something for everyone of us – bringing back memories, uncovering lost truths and valuing our lives. As it stands at the moment, though, what it won't have is anywhere to live. Without large-scale support from family and friends old and new, Ourstory is likely to be sleeping on someone's sofa – or worse still, out on the streets.

We live in a time of low taxation and high consumer activity – everything around us encourages us to spend our money on *things*,

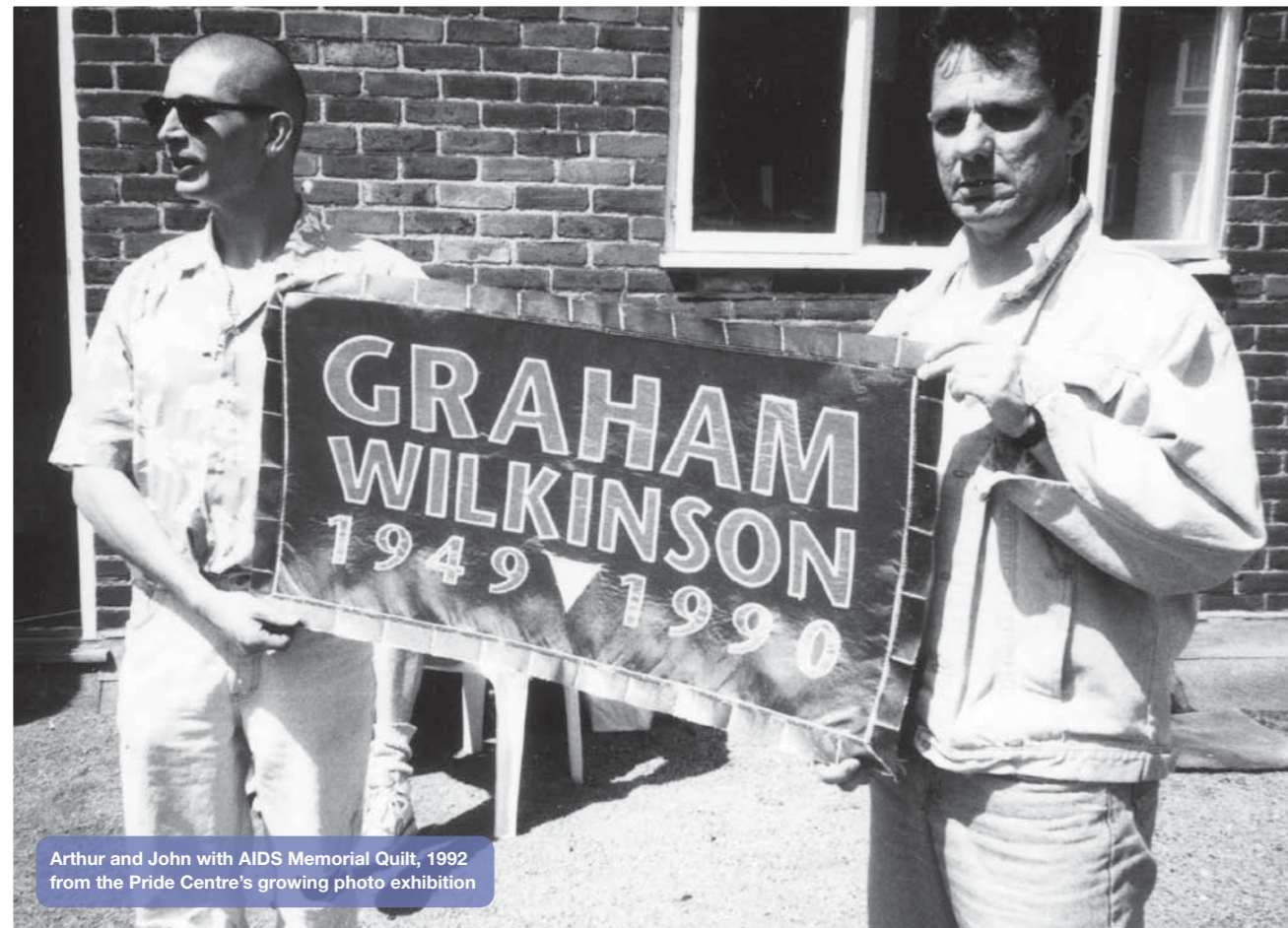
you can help save our  
lesbian and gay heritage by  
including brighton ourstory  
in your will



whether we need them or not!  
Have you got cupboards containing household appliances/clothes/bits of mysterious technology, seldom if ever used? Ourstory now really needs those who care about its

### Bursting with ideas for the future...

future to think twice before buying more of those things – or taking another exhausting short break – and consider whether their money might be more productively and creatively spent on supporting the cultural activities for our community that Ourstory uniquely provides. Sending a donation, setting up a standing order from your bank, asking your employer to deduct an amount from your salary each month are all good ways to keep Ourstory buoyant – and a legacy would help take care of the long-term future.



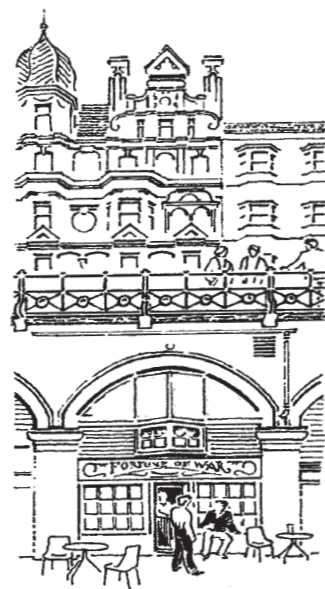
Arthur and John with AIDS Memorial Quilt, 1992 from the Pride Centre's growing photo exhibition

## NEW IN THE ARCHIVE

We were delighted to receive from Jo – one of the pioneering souls who organised the first Brighton Pride to take place in Preston Park, back in 1992 – a collection of photographs she'd found in her attic. They include those pinned to the wall at the Pride Centre in West Street and some shots of the Brighton Area Action Against Section 28 National Tour. Thanks to Jo, now living in far flung parts, and to Brighton Pride for forwarding this collection to us for safe-keeping. From Val, a complete set of *The Ladder*, as reprinted and bound after its sad demise for lack of funds in 1972. Originally conceived and published by the Daughters of Bilitis in San Francisco in 1956, this lesbian magazine gives a fascinating insight into changing attitudes in the years leading to the

Women's and Gay Liberation movements. Includes an invaluable index. From Elizabeth via Jill, a number of lesbian and feminist books and periodicals, including issues of *Common Lives*, *Lesbian Lives*, *Conditions*, *Gossip* and *Sinister Wisdom*: "We believe that what we read affects our lives. That the images we look at influence how we see. That there are pictures and words that numb us, dull us, keep us circling in one place, others which can challenge us to the quick, heal and empower us." Adrienne Rich, Issue 17. We are glad to add these to our Heritage Library. Alf has brought in some queer tableware and Ben has sent from his travels the programme of a photographic exhibition staged by the Lesbian and Gay Archives of New Zealand. Thanks to all.

### Alf has brought in some queer tableware...



### LARRY BERRYMAN

It's with great sadness that we report the death, in his early sixties, of graphic artist, Larry Berryman. Larry worked with us on our book, *Daring Hearts*, and produced for it a number of elegant illustrations. Shown here is his sketch of the Fortune of War pub on Brighton seafront. We've lost a fine intelligence and a very sweet man. He is survived by his partner, Nigel.

# THEORY & PRACTICE

The International Women's Day celebration on 12 March 1977 – a surging of women's energy in Brighton – marked the formalisation of International Women's Day by the UN General Assembly. The slogan on the banner pictured here referred to a demand adopted at the Women's Liberation Movement's national conference in Edinburgh three years earlier.

The Women's Liberation Movement in Britain had a number of demands that it made of the world. To start with in 1970 there were four, which dealt with equal pay and educational opportunity for women, contraception, abortion and child care. At the 1974 national conference, two more were added – the sixth being "An end to discrimination against lesbians and the right of all women to define their own sexuality." Brighton Women's Liberation Group member, Sandy Best remembers:

"Back in 1974 there was still a tremendous amount of discrimination against lesbians within the Movement. The women who instigated the Sixth Demand were women from the North London Women's Centre and somehow I got myself involved in that. I wasn't happy with the last part of the demand. The word sexuality was all-encompassing and was therefore up for abuse - the demand was meant to be there as a Women's Liberation support for women who

choose to be lesbians or bisexual."

At the Birmingham conference in 1978 Sandy and the Brighton Women's Liberation Group further championed the lesbian cause by getting the Sixth Demand shortened to simply "An end to discrimination against lesbians." There was fierce debate and disagreement about this and the newly adopted Seventh Demand which was about male violence, with the result that 1978 was the last national conference of the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain.

Sad though this was, the Brighton Women's Liberation Group had laid the foundations for later discussions in all areas of sexual politics:

Lynda Birke of the Brighton group: "What lesbianism did for the women's movement was that it put sexuality onto the agenda and it provided a framework in which women could talk about emotional binding to other women. What the Women's Movement did for lesbianism, I suppose, it began to help to politicise it, the Women's Movement allowed lesbians to have a political handle on their existence."

## An end to discrimination against lesbians...



International Women's Day March, 1977. From the Susy Taylor Collection



Churchill Square, Brighton



The London lounge of Patrick Bellew; Schrijver's 'scheme is blue and white throughout'



Herman Schrijver at home in Onslow Square, London

## "ALL DRAPERIES MUST BE HEAVILY FRINGED AND TRIMMED" HERMAN SCHRIJVER (1904-1972)

One of the curious features of the early history of the BBC is that advice on domestic matters for housewives was almost entirely dispensed by queens. Among those employed to poove away on the airwaves were the chef Marcel Boulestin, the knitting expert James Norbury and the interior decorator Herman Schrijver, a firm guide to the perils of skimpy pelmets and the ruinous effects of hefty furniture and covered radiators.

Born in Holland into a family of Jewish diamond merchants, Schrijver moved as a boy to Preston Court, a large Italianate villa at 253 Preston Road, while his father was involved in a scheme to employ local war veterans in a diamond-polishing factory.

Herman was by his own account a precociously gay child who delighted in picking up men in the local park and spending their gratuities on gifts of flowers for his mother; the scene of these early pleasures was possibly the nearby Preston Park.

In 1922 his father's company collapsed, the victim of swindlers, and Schrijver was forced into uncongenial employment as a clerk in a Swiss bank. He soon found happier work in the soft furnishings department of Peter Jones in Sloane Square and then an antique shop in Brook Street before launching his influential career as a decorator with Elden's Limited, designing for such exalted clients as Wallis Simpson and the Prince of Wales at

### Austere with touches of opulence...

Fort Belvedere. Schrijver's taste - austere with touches of opulence - is documented in his 1939 compendium *Decoration for the Home*. Alongside Wells Coates' and Marion Dorn's designs for Embassy Court in Brighton are illustrations of Schrijver's favoured mixing of modern and traditional styles in the likes of silver-gilt Queen Anne chairs upholstered in zebra skin.

Readers wanting further details of this charming man should seek out Charles Burkhart's *Herman and Nancy and Ivy: Three lives in art* and Hilary Spurling's *Secrets of a Woman's Heart* which documents his friend Ivy Compton-Burnett's pleasure in his 'flightiness, cheerfulness, unflinching pessimism and wild overstatements'.

### BOOK REVIEW... *Women's Hospitals in Brighton & Hove* by Val Brown

This lively account of early twentieth century pioneering women doctors is teeming with facts, not only about the medical profession but also the women's suffrage movement and the First World War. Val traces the development of the two local women's hospitals from the first gleam in an idealistic eye, to their successful operation followed by sad absorption into the National Health Service, which led to their eventual demise.

I found it a fascinating read, not least for the descriptions of women's networking and committees, still going strong in today's community organisations. I particularly felt for these doctors in the challenge they faced securing funds to turn their vision into bricks and mortar! Unlike today though, they had the local aristocracy to help out through the tradition of *noblesse oblige*.

There's also plenty here for future researchers of lesbian history to get their teeth into – lots of "lifelong companions" and pairs of single women. The ball has already rolled a little way on some of these – see Brighton Ourstory newsletter no.12 for more on Val's two heroines, Dr Louisa Martindale and Dr Helen Boyle.

Linda

