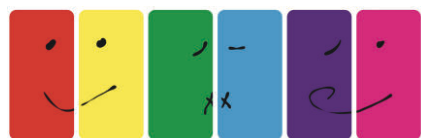
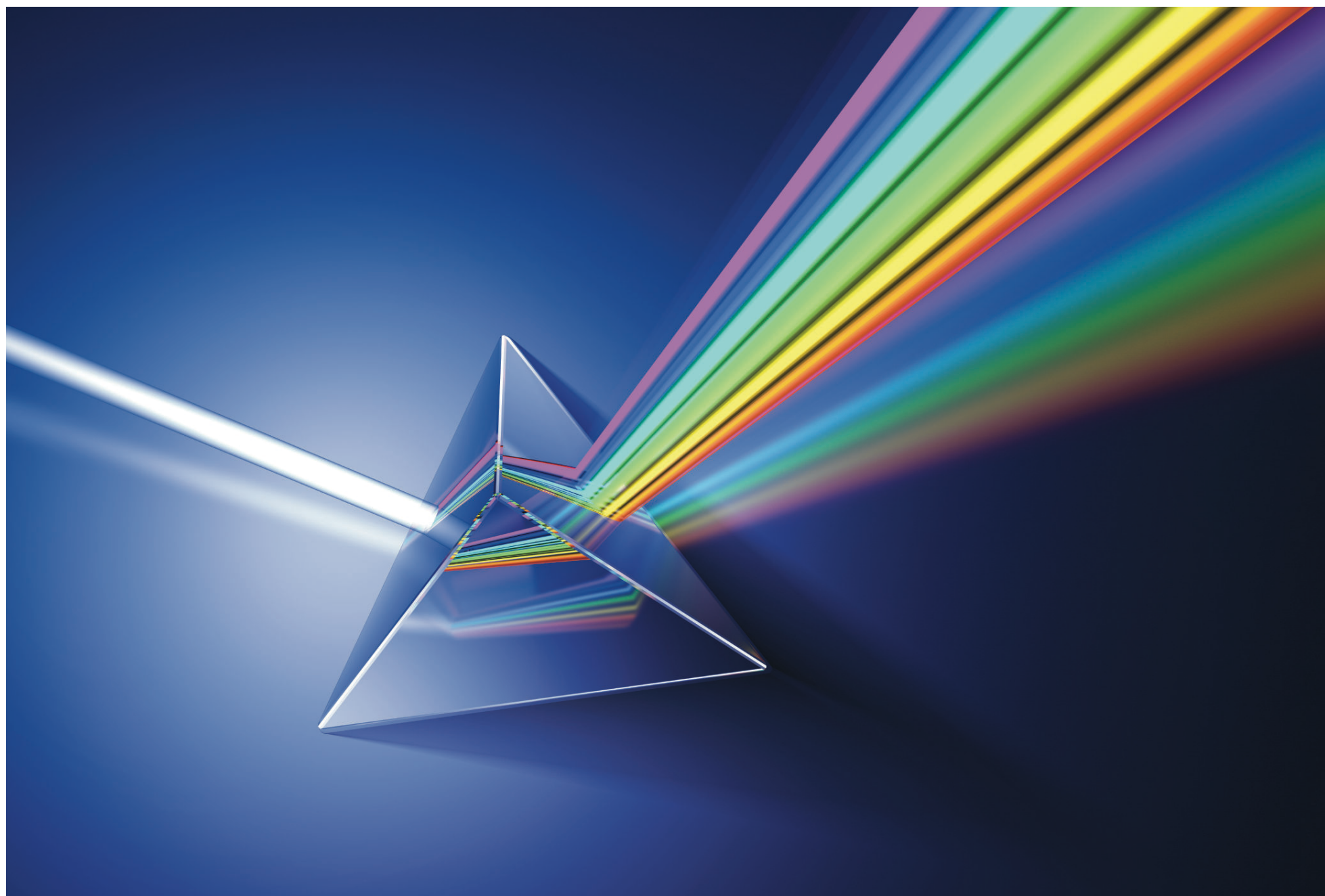


Southwark Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Network

Spring 2013 Newsletter

LGBT History Month in Southwark



Southwark lesbian gay bisexual trans network

The 2013 LGBT History Month theme was maths, science and engineering, celebrating the contribution of scientists, mathematician and engineers. The roll call includes one of the founding fathers of the scientific method Sir Francis Bacon, the mathematician who broke the Enigma code Alan Turing, engineer and artist Leonardo Da Vinci, biologist and HIV researcher Bruce Voeller, pathologist Louise Pearce who discovered the treatment for sleeping sickness, anthropologist Margaret Mead, astrophysicist

Neil Divine and geophysicist Allan Cox.

For the third year Southwark Council supported the Network's LGBT History Month Small Grants. Over twenty organisations and individuals applied for funding from the small grants scheme and, after consideration by a panel of executive members and council officers, twelve organisations were offered funding and support. The small grants scheme aims to support a wide range of projects by local LGBT people and organisations, as well as supporting LGBT projects from outside of the Borough which are delivered in Southwark.

The scheme funded a really varied range of projects this year, including an event

for LGBT refugees and asylum seekers by CAB, a reading of a new LGBT play written by a local Southwark resident, two literary events (Paradise Press book launch and Camberwell LGBT Book group), poetry readings at Canada Water Library and a LGBT Sewing Bee!

Several of the projects funded are still to come, including a queer arts festival and a shadow puppet show inspired by the life of Alan Turing, so the impact of History Month will go on throughout the year.

Over the past three years the LGBT History Month Small Grants Scheme has supported over 24 different organisations and individuals to deliver projects in Southwark, providing opportunities

and support for local LGBT people and organisations as well as creating new spaces and events for local LGBT people to network and communicate.



<http://lgbthistorymonth.org.uk>

Get Healthy for 2013

2013 is a year of change for the Network and our first monthly event found over thirty five members coming together at the Department of Health at Skipton House in Elephant and Castle. The event was co-hosted with PRISM, the Department of Health LGBT Staff Network, and we were grateful for their hospitality which gave us an insight into one of the main government offices for health and social care, right on our doorstep. The event brought together a panel of speakers who shared their thoughts on motivation and how to keep up all those promises we make on New Years day!

Joy Grimshaw and Julie Harris from the Bridge, a charity promoting health and wellbeing for women www.thebridge-uk.org, kicked us off with some really practical thoughts on how to build exercise into the daily routine. Joy's tips on power housekeeping were unique!

Teresa Edmans from NHS Southwark shared information about the NHS Health checks programme which provides free NHS health checks for people between 40 and 70yrs, or who are carers. The NHS Health Checks is a relatively new programme and designed to help people identify their health risks early on and try to prevent diseases like diabetes and coronary heart disease progressing too far undetected. This year the health check will also include tests for early signs of dementia and support for people who are struggling with their relationship with alcohol. You can find out more about NHS Health checks at <http://www.nhs.uk/Planners/NHSHealthCheck>

Finally Dr Jonty Heversedge gave us his thoughts from both a personal and professional perspective. He was fresh from recording an interview for BBC radio four on Books on Prescription - many of you will remember his talk on his mindfullness book at last years event - and doing a stint on This Morning where he has been working with a group of families supporting them to change their lifestyles. His words of wisdom were:

If you want to loose weight for good it is going to take time - there are no quick fixes - remember the tortoise and the hare - slow but steady wins in the long run. You should aim to loose 1-3lbs a week - this may not seem like much but even 1lb a week will add up to nearly 4

stone in a year.

Make changes small but permanent - trying to do too much too quickly is likely to result in you piling the pounds back on in the future.

Notice why you are eating - are you really hungry or just bored, frustrated, stressed or sad. If you are feeding your feelings then find alternative ways of managing these emotions.

Be kind to yourself - the changes you make to your diet and lifestyle are not a punishment. The fact you are overweight does not mean that you are 'bad', you are just like the majority of other people in the UK. The difference is that you have been brave enough to try and do something about it - so be proud of your achievements and don't beat yourself up when things don't quite go as planned.

Don't concentrate on calories, focus on healthier eating. Just because something is low in calories does not mean it is good for you. You are what you eat so make sure that your body is getting all the nourishment it needs.

Take an interest in your diet - challenge yourself to try new things. If you are used to eating food that is very sweet or salty it is going to take time for your palate to adjust to more subtle flavours, so give it time - let friends know what new foods you discover and share any recipes and health tips.

Eat more slowly and try not to be distracted by things like the TV when you eat. Notice the smell and texture of what you are eating and see how flavours change as you chew. Taking your time over meals will also allow you to sense when you are full.

Physical activity is important for weight loss but don't use it as an excuse to eat more. It is likely you will feel hungry after a workout so plan for this and try to eat a healthy snack such as a banana rather than binge out on a chocolate bar.

Exercise does not have to take hours - 30 minutes a day is all it takes. Think about how you might incorporate this into your day - by changing how you get to and from work for example. As your stamina improves challenge yourself to



do a little more each time you exercise.

Vary your routine - we all get bored, so try something different regularly. If you haven't been swimming, cycling, walking or to the gym for years, try them and you might be surprised how much you like them. If you normally do the conventional approach to exercise, maybe you should take up a sport like tennis or badminton, or perhaps try some activities such as dance. Having variety is proven to keep you on a programme for longer.

Changing habits is hard - most of us spend a lot of our time on autopilot and it is easy to find yourself half way through a biscuit or a packet of crisps before you even notice what you are doing. Before long you will get into new, healthier habits - but these will take time to develop. In the meantime try to identify your 'snacking habits' and, if you know that you are likely to reach for the biscuit tin whenever you have a cup of tea then do something simple like moving it to a different place in the kitchen to remind you what you are doing and help break the habit.

Involve your friends or family - having a "Training Buddy" is a proven way to keep you exercising. Committing to being

with someone else makes you less likely to drop out or cancel your training. People who train "together" lose more weight than those who train alone. Get your family on-side, they are your biggest help, and potentially your biggest barrier. Inspire and encourage them to join you in all ways or just in small ways.

Watch the booze - it is easy to forget how high alcohol is in calories - remember that for every glass of wine or pint of beer you have it will take you about 30 minutes of exercise to burn off the extra calories. If you drink spirits try halving the measure you use and diluting it with more mixer, you could even try finding a non-alcoholic alternative - perhaps some tonic water with a slice of lemon.

Stay motivated - identify specific goals that you can aim for - perhaps a special occasion that you want to look good for. It is fine to check your weight to get an idea of your progress but remember that as time goes on it may get harder to shed those pounds. Don't be disheartened.

In summary - Honesty is the best policy, Love yourself, Get real, Variety is the spice of life, It takes two baby!

New LGBT Parent and Toddler Group

At Henry Fawcett Children's Centre we celebrate diversity by welcoming and supporting families from many different backgrounds; we are located in one of the most multi-cultural boroughs in London. One of our aims as a children's centre is to facilitate environments where young children and their parent/carers can play and learn together safely. We are aware that families come in different forms and sizes, and we believe that every child has the right to access good



quality early years services regardless of the characteristics of their

parent/carers. We also believe that all parent/carers have a right to access support to assist them when raising children and to guide them positively to be able to provide guidance and good quality care for their children.

With this ethos in mind and as a response of the suggestion of a father who regularly attends the children's centre, we decided to start running a parent and child play group for lesbian and gay parent/carers. This is a free drop-in play group which aims to create a safe space for LGBT parent/carers to bring their children under 5 to play and meet other LGBT parent/carers with similar aged children. The group happens on the first Friday of every month 10.30am to 12pm, it is completely free. It takes place in our large hall, which is full of toys, soft play and many educational resources that families can use, with a family kitchen next door.

Upcoming dates of the LGBT parent and child play group: Fridays 1st March, 5th April, 3rd May, 6th June 2013.

The group is intended to be informal and

friendly; parent/carers can discuss about the challenges they face in different settings. Information about research undertaken by Stonewall organisation and their campaign: 'Different families: same love' is available. Families are encouraged to attend other sessions at the children's centre. We also offer other free play drop-in groups: Busy Babies Soft Play (for children – 24 months, sensory activities for babies, soft play, treasure baskets and advice from health and education professionals), Learning through play (for children 0-5 years old, we incorporate speech and language activities within the session), Wriggle and Roar (for children 0-5 years old, here families have a chance to join Lambeth libraries, children participate in story and rhyme time), Creative Family Workshop (for children 0-5 years old, families take part in arts and crafts activities, once a month we visit Tate Britain museum where an artist facilitates very creative activities). We also offer courses for parent/carers (ESOL, IT, further education), advice from other professionals (i.e. antenatal advice by a team of midwives, sleep clinic by an early intervention health visitor and one to one family support by outreach workers).

To access the services families need to complete a simple registration form in their first visit. We are located on Clayton Street, London, SE11 5BZ, a short walk from Oval tube station. For more information about Henry Fawcett Children's Centre please contact Sandra Fernandez on 0207 0911 282.

LGB&T Sewing Bee

Michael Petry and Melissa Jo Smith curated a 'Sewing Bee' at MOCA's South London gallery. The event invited the LGBT network to come together as part of a sewing circle, try out ideas and share their stories.

Everyone who came through the door was encouraged to decorate a handkerchief, either with hand embroidery or with a drawing, which was then reproduced on the sewing machine. Textile artists were on hand to offer guidance and advice and teach embroidery techniques and stitches.

The sewing bee recalls a sewing circle or quilting group, at the domestic heart of a traditional community. The LGBT experience is often excluded from traditional domestic settings, and LGBT people are locked out from their own families and heritage. This event allowed LGBT peo-



ple and their experiences to take a central role in the story.

We wanted to create an activity that was both intimate and educational. We hoped that – by making people feel safe and welcomed in a creative environment – we might allow them to share their stories, make connections with other people in the community and forge a sense of belonging and togetherness. We also liked the idea of passing on traditional textile skills to people as a means of expressing themselves.

A beautifully diverse mix of people wandered through the doors, despite the bitterly cold weather (it was snowing outside). Each group or individual was welcomed by the assistants and given a handkerchief. People who wished to watch were warmly encouraged to do so, but those wishing to sew – and they were greatly in the majority – were shown how to realize their ideas. There was a precious moment when one man shared the story of his father's cross-dressing with the group – an event he captured in textiles during the session.



Queer Technology - Today and Tomorrow

To mark LGBT History Month the Network looked to infinity and beyond!

Justin Finkelstein, who has made a career out of keeping ahead of the digital curve, shared his reflections on how the LGB&T community have adapted new technologies to support community from IRCQ, through social networks and what the future holds. Justin took us back to the early days of IRC chat and the arrival of the internet, before looking forward into the next stage of phone computer technology apps and virtual connectivity.



Justin Varney, Network Co-Chair, gave us a great overview of LGB&T imagery and identity in Science Fiction. Who knew that gay sci fi actually started in ancient Greece. The writer Lucian, in 120-185 AD, wrote about a man who is swept by a typhoon up to the moon where he meets an all male society where men give birth to the next generation through raising plants together grown from their testicles and he is offered the King's son in marriage when he demonstrates his strength in combat. Unfortunately there was then a bit of a lull until the 1950s and 60s when writers like Ursula K. Le Guin and Joanna Russ authored books with positive representations of lesbian and gay relationships and fluid gender identities in post-apocalyptic landscapes.

The meeting soon entered into a debate about LGB&T representation in sci fi on TV shows and there was a clear divide between the Trekkies and the Who fans! There was a celebration of the positive role models in series like Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Torchwood, which didn't shy away from the same-sex kiss before the watershed, but sadness that Star Trek still has yet to portray a positive LGB or T role model in either TV or film settings...but here's hoping for the new film!

An interview with Councillor Anood Al-Samerai

As part of the Network's approach to engaging across the political boundaries, in this newsletter we have interviewed the Liberal Democrat Councillor for Riverside Ward and Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group.

How long have you been a Southwark Councillor?

5 years

How long have you lived in Southwark, and what do you like most about the Borough?

I have lived in Southwark since I was 9 years old. My family had to leave the Middle East suddenly due to the Gulf War and my grandmother lived in Camberwell so we came here. I love the borough because it is a home to people from all over the world. It has fantastic history, real community and amazing potential for the future.

What brought you into Politics?

My family's life was turned upside down by international politics and that made me realise how important democracy and freedom of speech are. I strongly believe that people should be given a fair start in life in order to make the best of their potential. The Liberal Democrats constitution says that 'no-one should be enslaved by poverty, conformity or ignorance' and that is the goal which I work towards.

You represent Riverside Ward, what are the issues facing this part of Southwark?

Riverside is one of the most polarised wards in London and the real challenge is how to share the incredible economic and cultural wealth for all residents. To create equality of opportunity in such a diverse ward is crucially important. The biggest issues which residents raise with me are around affordable homes, school places and street cleaning.

How do you think LGBT people in Riverside feel in the community?

We have a wonderfully diverse community and I would like everyone to feel at home although I appreciate that is not always the case - it should be and we should work together to make it a reality. The LGBT Network does fantastic work in bringing people together and there are

many interesting events in the local area. Bermondsey is generally a welcoming pace with lots going on for all to get involved in.

You also are the leader of the Liberal Democrats and leader of the Opposition, can you explain to our readers what this means?

There are 25 Liberal Democrat councillors in Southwark and I am privileged to have been elected as Leader of our council group. We are the main opposition party at the council and it is, therefore, our job to hold the council to account in a constructive way. This means standing up for residents and challenging the political decisions which are made by the ruling party.

Liberal Democrats have always been keen to ensure that local people have a genuine say over council services and budgets which is why we have promoted passing decision making and funding to local community groups.

In this role, and following on from the Assembly delegation from the Southwark LGBT Forum, how are you working in your role, and how is the party group working together, to address the health and social care needs of LGBT residents in the Borough?

The Liberal Democrat councillors were extremely impressed with the forum's deputation and it echoed many of the concerns which we have raised over the years around domestic violence and isolation for different groups in our community.

Our council group had tabled a motion which asked the council to consider putting sexual health as one of the priorities for the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board given this is a huge issue for the borough. And I was particularly struck by the evidence described around the links between discrimination, health choices and mental health and the need to really target services effectively.

Finally what do you think the most important things that Southwark Council can do to support lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans residents and their specific needs?

The figures around the reporting of hate crime are worrying as they do not ap-



Cllr Al-Samerai

pear to reflect the reality and this must not be a hidden issue. More could be done to publicise the role of LGBT officers in the police and the council so that there is more reporting and response.

I am very proud that Liberal Democrats in government have promoted equal marriage and Liberal Democrat councillors in Southwark proposed a motion last year which achieved cross party support for the legislation. There is always more that can be done and the most important thing for us as councillors to do is to listen.

Give a roof to vulnerable youth

CAYSH's Emergency Lodgings Accommodation Network (ELAN) service provides Lodgings across South East London for 16-21 year olds who need some breathing space to consider their future. Young people are placed with Hosts (people with rooms to rent) for up to four weeks while their local authority makes longer-term arrangements.

Hosts receive £180 per week for each young person they rent a room to. They must first complete a thorough induction programme covering issues such as health and safety, safeguarding and insurance as part of CAYSH's on going advice and support. The assessment and

training programme is thorough and the on going support for Hosts is comprehensive. This is because the young people we work need a safe and stable home and the chance to build the lives they want.

CAYSH is looking for hosts from every section of the community to match those we work with. Young people find themselves homeless for all manner of reasons and in recent years we have seen an increasing number of young people who have been told to leave their home because their sexuality is unacceptable to their family. B is just one example (case study here) - we first met him when his options seemed exhausted. CAYSH provided him with a safe place to call home



and the chance to start building the future he wants. That was a while ago now, and these days he's doing rather well, working in the travel industry and living independently.

If you'd like to provide the starting point for a young person to start building their life after homelessness, please call 020 8316 3644 or email elan@caysh.org now.

LGBT History Month Book Launch

February was something more than a remarkable month for a number of the authors published by Paradise Press, the only independent LGBT publishing house in the UK. We had time for poetry, erotica, a great autobiography, the best in house selected fiction over the last down years and, more especially, we were able to share our work with readers as a way to captivate their imagination and make them participants in our creative worlds. Our first book launch held on the 5th February at Canada Water Library would not have been possible without the kind support of the Network.

It was a cold and rainy winter evening but that did not prevent us from giving the warmest welcome to all the authors. First we had a reading from *Nothing Stays the Same*, the conclusion of an epic trilogy by lesbian author Elizabeth Lister: she has achieved fame and recognition in her seventies after having taken seriously to writing only a few years ago. Her books, describing the journey of an innocent woman sent to prison for a crime she did not commit, present issues that are not just the substance of heroines and fiction but problems that have to be tackled by women in all walks of life.

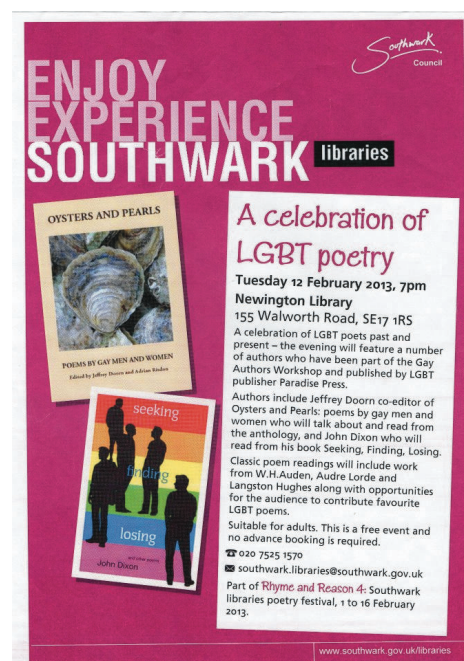
Elizabeth claims that marriage and divorce, single parenthood and years of school-teaching have provided the necessary material to become a writer and a performer. She wrote and acted in her own coming-out play, and in addition her pictures, promoting positive images of women, have been exhibited in Stoke-on-Trent, London and Berlin. Elisabeth continues expanding her artistic life by being a musician for a Stoke-on-Trent folk dance group.

On the same evening, a number of contributors gave the audience a taste of what they could find in *The Best of Gazebo*, an anthology of work from the in-house magazine *Gazebo*. poets John Dixon and Jeffrey Doorn, read from their stories: Joe Hucknall, whose memoirs would be published at the end of the month and Donald West, retired psychiatrist and criminologist, author of the classic *Homosexuality* (1958) and most recently his memoirs *Gay Life, Straight Work* both showed another string to their bow, and we heard Rod Shelton au-

thor of the exciting, thrilling, almost crazy and very sexy *Bokassa's Last Apostrophe*.

They are not by any means the only authors in this collection, but they certainly entertained us with original tales about lots of different subjects. It seems that *Gazebo* provides an opportunity to cut one's teeth in front of fellow writers, and its editor was present on the evening, enjoying the satisfaction of having assisted in bringing these authors to the attention of a wider public. This anthology is a compilation of the best material in the dozen *Gazebos* published until date and it constitute an extraordinary testimony of not only how LGBT people have changed over the last 30 years but also how the imagination and creativity of many writers have contributed to create a common literary identity under the Paradise Press umbrella.

We are all unique but yet when we meet once a month to discuss our writings we find a common ground to exchange ideas and receive friendly criticism which is always aimed at improve our writers' quality. We run workshops for



gay writers who feel they have something to say to their audience and among ourselves we polish our style until we reach a satisfactory level. It is gratifying that we have been able to help many writers not only to polish their work but to lead them towards publication, and we are always there to offer the support when needed, perhaps to break either the infamous writers' block or to share the moments of creativity spent in front of an initial white screen which slowly develop into a story.

That was Joseph Hucknall's case. When Joe introduced his autobiography on the 27th February at Housemans, in his so personal charismatic and charming style he briefly told us of his childhood poems and the first story that he wrote when he was 14. The story never got published,

even though he announced it as the best short story in the world. After listening to one of the chapters in his book we could feel that, almost 60 years later that could well have been the case, because he simply has style. Fortunately for us all *A Life's Tales* provided a more than succulent taste of his intimate and life-affirming account of growing up through war, social change and the sexual revolution, told with candour, humour and insight. When Joe read about all sort of fortunes and misfortunes in the boarding house where he was living during the fifties the audience could not stop laughing.

On the same evening we also launched our long-awaited and entertaining erotica anthology, called *Eros at Large*, also edited by Michael Harth. The book contains 27 short stories by 17 authors and shares the common topic of trying to explore how in one way or another lives are affected, sometimes controlled, or disrupted by the erotic instinct. We suspect that when Michael edited the book he had in mind the idea of providing a non-to-serious approach at the most common instinct in our lives.

We could not possibly finish this article without mentioning the fantastic poetry evening to which we were invited to take part by Southwark Council at Newington Library on the 12th February. Jeffrey Doom read from the book he co-edited, *Oysters and Pearls*, with his calm and serene intonation making every verse count as if they were crystalline waves silently breaking into white sands. John Dixon read from his book *Seeking, Finding, Losing* with his unique witty style which made us reflect on the consequences of brief affairs and how attraction can randomly appear and disappear just like the memory of a walk in the park when someone meets a stranger who can sweeten his life for a while

The poetry event also included a very funny poem written by the late Ivor Treby, read by Donald West, about the innocent faults and misbehaviours of a very coquette young lady whose fault was no other than been carefree and perhaps a little bit wild. On a more serious tone Ramon Gonzalez read a fantastic poem dealing with the eternal philosophical tension of being and becoming narrated on this occasion through an observational journey across earth and the starry night. Ramon's performance was so powerful that some members of the audience could not help taking off to get into the author's perspective. Jeremy Kingston, playwright and drama critic also read from his collection *On the Lookout* dedicating one of his poems to a man who wanted to be a woman. Nacho Diaz read a poem by Luis Cernuda

Overall, all these events organised as

part of the LGBT History Month, put us on the right direction to continue expanding our horizons and so, we have agreed to go on tour to every single borough in London to promote our writings. Thanks to the Network support we have realised that there might be more opportunities out there to meet our readers in public libraries and other occasional venues. We are ready to take the challenge and provoke another explosion of flourishing gay fine writing. Our next open mic evening, to which all of you are invited, will be held on the 24 April. Keep posted for more details and do not forget to bring along your stories, poems, ideas or any other thoughts passing through your head.

Award winning authors speak at History Month

The Gay Camberwell Book Group organised an authors' talk in Camberwell Library on Friday 8th February 2013. as part of LGBT History Month, supported by the Network. The authors were Neil Bartlett and Jonathan Kemp, whose work the Book Group had previously read, came to the event to talk about their writing and their experiences as gay authors.

The group aimed to use the event to promote awareness of the Book Group and increase membership as well as launching a new website at the event to help people engage with the group. The event also helped raise awareness of Camberwell library which has worked hard to promote LGBT reading and was delighted to host the event.

The event was extremely successful with over 36 people coming to hear the speakers and network. Bartlett and Kemp were extremely engaging and entertaining speakers, discussing issues such as whether they considered themselves to be writers of 'historical fiction' and the importance of imagining gay histories. They also read extracts from their work, and Bartlett read a passage from a yet-to-be-published novel which was very well-received. The provision of drinks and nibbles at the event meant that after Bartlett and Kemp had finished formally speaking, people stayed and mingled, and there was a social atmosphere with people mixing and chatting to the speakers and each other.

You can find out more about the reading group at their new website <http://gay-camberwellbookgroup.blogspot.co.uk/>

Four in Ten Event, 'Improving Mental Health Support for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) People'

Four in Ten hosts an evening event on Tuesday 16 April, 5.30pm to 7.30pm at the Ability Media Centre, (Add hyperlink to address of venue) to discuss the issues and challenges faced by LGBT people experiencing mental distress and exploring ideas for service improvement. Speakers include Dr Martin Baggely, Medical Director, SLAM, Dr Jonty Heaversedge, Public and Engagement Lead, Southwark Clinical Commissioning Group, Dr Joanna Semlyen, Senior Lecturer, Metropolitan University and Margaret Unwin, Chief Executive at PACE.

The programme will include a screening of 'Four in Ten', a short film about the lives of LGBT service users at SLAM made in 2011. This film, along with the dedication and commitment of members of Four in Ten, lead to the creating of the Four in Ten Project, delivered in partnership with SLAM, the Metro Centre

and Four in Ten to improve the experience of LGBT service users at SLAM.

Our invited speakers have a wealth of knowledge and expertise in the areas of mental health, LGBT issues and service improvement. The panel discussion will be chaired by Dr Jonty Heaversedge, a local Southwark GP and Patient and Public Engagement Lead at the Southwark Clinical Commissioning Group. Dr Jonty has a keen interest in mental well-being issues and is co-author of The Mindfulness Manifesto.

Martin Baggaley is the Medical Director of SLAM and lead for Clinical Governance and a consultant psychiatrist in the Psychosexual and Relationship service. He has a special interest in gender identity disorder and has written extensively on psychosexual issues. Martin Baggaley is a keen supporter of the Four

in Ten Project, lending his endorsement to the projects application for funding to SLAM Charitable Trust.

Dr Joanna Semlyen is Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Metropolitan University and has written extensively on LGBT mental health issues. Her research interests include sexuality, health and health experience, Heteronormativity and health, LGBT mental health. Joanna co-published 'A systematic review of mental disorder, suicide, and deliberate self harm in lesbian, gay and bisexual people' which found that LGBT people are at higher risk of mental disorder, suicidal ideation, substance misuse, and deliberate self harm than heterosexual people.

Margaret Unwin is Chief Executive at PACE, Project for Advice, Counselling and Education, an LGBT health charity in London. PACE has been funded by the Big Lottery to undertake a major research study on inequalities in mental health in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in England. The project, entitled the RaRE study, Risk and Resilience Explored is being undertaken at PACE in partnership with academics from Brunel, Aston and South Bank Universities. The study started in 2010 and will be completed in 2015.

cultural competency required to address these trends. Clients presenting to Antidote are using Crystal Meth and Mephedrone to have sex, and many find the concept of sober sex very challenging, for a variety of reasons, and seek to address these problems through the support provided in our clinics. There are obviously a range of dangerous sexual health and well-being consequences to this behaviour, and the Antidote Team employ a range of therapies to support these men in making the changes they wish to make. GBL use has become a major problem, particularly on the Vauxhall club scene, as well as in a number of saunas; the deaths reported last year, though devastating, did raise awareness of the dangers, and triggered a dialogue within our communities; the Royal Vauxhall Tavern is hosting an event in May that seeks to stimulate debate around the dangers these drugs are causing not only to individuals, but arguably to our community and "scene". Orange Nation supported an Antidote GBL Awareness campaign to be launched shortly; the media campaign hopes to direct people to a website that contains important information about playing safely, being informed, harm reduction tips and signposts people toward emergency and support services. Antidote also works in partnership with a number of NHS services, including the Club Drug Clinic at Chelsea Westminster hospital, which prides itself on its' LGBT&T inclusivity and sensitivity. The CODE clinic at 56 Dean st is a sexual health and drug support clinic just for gay men who use drugs for sex, and boasts a judgment-free policy. There are obviously very different trends being seen by Lesbian, Trans and bisexual people accessing our service, and Antidote has a variety of services, groups and partnerships to address these issues. A training programme around new drug trends and cultural contexts is also heavily resourced by London's A&E departments, drug services, GUM/HIV clinics and charities. The most valuable message the Antidote team would like to deliver, would be that seeking support around drug or alcohol use does not need to be the result of a chaotic addiction problem; whether it's about cutting down, stopping, or just being better informed about playing safely; a friendly confidential chat with one of our team can help a person lead a safer, happier and healthier LGBT or T life.

Contact Antidote to discuss your drug or alcohol issues on 020 7833 1674 (10am-6pm, Monday to Friday). Ask for one of the Antidote Team.

<http://londonfriend.org.uk/get-support/drugsandalcohol/>

Antidote - London's LGBT&T Drug Support Service

Antidote is the UK's only LGBT&T substance use service based in London, and is one of the many services provided by the LGBT&T health and well-being charity, London Friend. Having served the community for over 10 years, it has observed and adapted to the changing trends our communities have faced; most notably of late, the sexualised use of crystal methamphetamine ("Tina"), Mephedrone and the complicated dangers associated with GBL use. Antidote is made up of a large team, many of whom are volunteers, who provide harm reduction advice and information, as well as structured one-to-one support to any LGBT or T people, pan London and beyond. Drop In services, group support, alternative therapies and referrals to counselling, detox, rehab or medical services are also available, depending on a person's needs. The last few years have seen the emerging syndemic of HIV/HCV and sexualised substance use by gay men, and many statutory services are struggling to incorporate the skills and



Improving mental health support for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) People

A panel discussion exploring current issues and challenges faced by LGBT people with mental health problems. With screening of 'Four in Ten'.

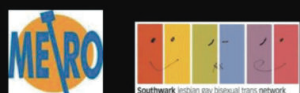
**Tuesday 16 April 2013
5.30 - 7.30pm**

At:

**Ability Media Centre
56 Southwark Bridge Rd
London
SE1 0AS**

RSVP

**Peter.Vittles@slam.nhs.uk
07711 376 258**



South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust

Speakers:

**Dr Jonty Heaversedge,
Southwark Clinical
Commissioning Group**

**Dr Martin Baggaley,
Medical Director, SLAM**

**Margaret Unwin,
Chief Executive, PACE**

**Dr Joanna Semlyen,
Senior Lecturer in
Psychology, London
Metropolitan University**



Getting Engaged

As the gay wedding legislation process trundles on in the UK and internationally more and more countries ratify lesbian and gay marriage and sort out the implications for trans, we thought we'd set up a regular column from one of our members, Justin, who is planning his own big day.

Getting engaged is really exciting and whether you are the one proposing or the one getting proposed to it should be a magical moment. There are no rules about who asks who in a same-sex relationships, so it's really up to you whether you're going to ask, but if you want to be asked then make sure your other half knows otherwise you could both spend a lifetime waiting for the other one to ask!

Choosing a moment when it feels right can take some planning, but the important thing is that you are asking and the rest is just icing on the cake so to speak. Think about what your partner would like, are they a public display kind of person or the very private kind? Some people like a public event, although there is always the risk that this could backfire if the answer isn't the one you'd hoped for. Others go for something intimate, a candlelit dinner at a favourite restaurant or a walk across along the river. The key bit is to think about what you're going to say so it's clear to your other half what you're asking, but make it personal and relevant to your relationship, and most of all try and make it romantic. Remember getting married, or civil partnered, is about love not about a tax break!

But first things first, getting a ring sorted. Not everyone wears rings and there isn't the same social pressure for same-sex couples to have engagement rings, but lots of people like them and most of us like a bit of bling. If you partner wears rings then it's a bit easier to get the size right, borrow a ring and use one of the online ring measures to get a match - most jewellers do offer resizing services so it doesn't matter too much if you don't get it right the first time and resizing is normally covered in the price for a limited period, but do ask about it

when you buy the ring.

Ring sizes vary between countries, the US and Canada uses a number system from 0 to 16 with half sizes and the UK, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand use a letter system running from A to Z4. India, China, Japan and South America use a scale running from 1 to 27 but the size difference between sizes aren't the same, so it's an uneven scale. Finally Italy, Spain, Switzerland and the Netherlands use a scale from 0.5 to 37.5. All the scales start at different points, size zero to a 1/4 in the US have no equivalent, and the largest British size is a Z4 which equates to 14 1/2 on the US scale and an Italian 33.5, so make sure you know which scale you are using when you measure and when you order. Lots of jewellers are used to civil partnership now, so don't be afraid to ask and be up front about your budget, remember you still have to buy wedding rings!

My partner came out straight and asked me to try on a ring measure device he'd printed off the internet, it wasn't stunningly romantic but then I don't wear jewellery so he didn't have much choice, and then it was another couple of months before he asked so it was still a lovely surprise, and I had no idea what the ring would look like....it's a silver band with a small diamond btw :)

Engagement rings are a very western tradition, although the origins can be traced back to Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome where betrothal bands were worn, the Roman rings often were designed with a key pattern to reflect the key to the husband's heart.

In contrast in Asia, a puzzle ring combined symbols of marriage with a form of chastity device. The puzzle rings were complex and beautiful structures which fell apart when removed and could only be reconstructed if you knew the knack. Wealthy middle eastern men used them for their wives, so they would know if they had been unfaithful or disloyal by removing the ring while they were away, because they would give them the ring



but not teach them how to reconstruct it.

The ring is worn on the fourth finger of the left hand because the ancient Greeks believed that the vein from this finger was directly connected with the heart (vena amoris). Although until the 17th century it was not unusual to wear wedding and betrothal rings on the thumb in England.

In Colonial America, a thimble was often given as a sign of eternal commitment as the wearing of jewellery was considered sinful. Women often removed the bottom of the engagement thimble to convert it into a kind of ring which could be worn.

The practice of engagement rings became common after the 13th century, following a decree by Pope Innocent III that there should be a period of waiting between the promise of marriage and the wedding ceremony itself. One of the earliest documented diamond engagement rings was commissioned for Mary of Burgundy by the Archduke Maximilian of Austria in 1477. Men started to wear engagement and wedding rings more commonly after World War Two, after soldiers started wearing them as a reminder of their wives and families at home.

Diamond rings became more common after the second world war after an extensive marketing campaign by the diamond industry, but the style and content of the ring varies hugely. There isn't really a set style or design for engagement rings, and although gold and platinum is common for engagement rings you can choose any metal or gem to suite your style and beliefs. Many gemstones are associated with specific meanings and so you may choose a gemstone which reflects your beliefs.

Some of the common gem stone mean-

ings and association are:

Sapphires - peace and happiness

Ruby - to open the heart and promote love

Opal - love and passion

Emerald - to achieve balance and fertility

Diamond - to strengthen and enhance

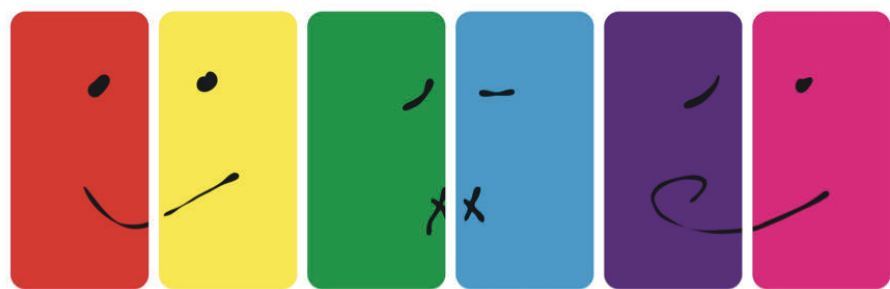
Whatever you choose, it should reflect your relationship and your feelings for each other.

Once you've got engaged then it's a good opportunity for a small celebration to share the happy news with your family, friends and loved ones. Almost everyone will ask if you've set a date, but don't rush into things, there is plenty of time to plan and save!

One of the great joys of planning a same-sex marriage is that there aren't fixed rules about who does what, there are two mothers of the bride or two fathers of the groom. On one side this is great but on the other this can create tensions and more than a few elephants in the room for both the happy couple and their parents and loved ones. Weddings are expensive and so taking time early on to have a realistic conversation about what you can afford is key and we will explore this more next time.

You can find out more about civil partnership in Southwark on the Council website at

http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/2/0/0/0/6/7/marriage_and_civil_partnership/109/civil_partnership/1



Southwark lesbian gay bisexual trans network

LGBT Health in Southwark

Tuesday 23rd April 19:00 Southwark Council Offices, Tooley Street.

Join Southwark's LGBT Forum for a meeting with local health and social care leaders for an update on the commitments made at last year's meeting, and the new commissioning and leadership arrangements for health services in Southwark. Meeting is open to all but please arrive early to allow time to get through security.

Give your views on plans to improve health services in Dulwich and the surrounding areas

NHS Southwark clinical commissioning group are currently looking at ways to improve GP and community based health services, that is the health services that you receive outside major hospitals like King's College Hospital. As part of a three month consultation they are asking for people's views on the range of health services that might be available in Dulwich and the surrounding areas and two different ways in which they could be delivered. The consultation includes proposals to improve GP services, pre and post-natal care, and prevention activities amongst many other services, and your views are really important in helping to shape how these could be delivered in the future.

Southwark LGBT forum members are invited to a special meeting at Dulwich Community Hospital on Thursday 16 May, starting at 7:30pm.

The meeting will take place in the exhibition area and some light refreshments will be provided. Find out more about the consultation by visiting www.southwarkccg.nhs.uk, where you can download the consultation document, watch a short film and also complete the consultation questionnaire.

Southwark LGBT Network Events

Wednesday 24th April 19:00

LGBT Open Poetry Night

Flying Dutchman Pub, 156 Wells Way, SE5 7SY

Bring along your poems for a celebration of LGBT favourite poetry and read alongside poets Jeffrey Doorn, John Dixon and Fatima Dupres, and others. Contributors will read from their own works and poems by famous LGBT artists such as Cavafy, Ginsberg, Tennessee Williams and Rich.

Wednesday 29th May 19:00

Sex, Porn and the Law

Flying Dutchman Pub, 156 Wells Way, SE5 7SY

Join us for an exciting debate about censorship and the British Justice system, with a panel of experts who have been on both sides of the system.

Wednesday 26th June 19:00

Celebrating the Network and the AGM

Venue tbc 19:00

Join us to celebrate the achievements of the last few years of the Southwark LGBT Network Small Grants Scheme and to elect a new executive committee.

GET INVOLVED IN THE NETWORK

The Southwark LGBT Network and Forum are run completely by volunteers, and we are looking for energetic, engaging, friendly people to join the executive.

Three of our executive volunteers have to step down for personal and work reasons in June and we are keen to bring on new members to help keep the Network going.

The Network executive meet on a monthly basis in the evenings to plan the events for the year for the Network and the quarterly Forum meetings. In between meetings there is the occasional email but we try to keep business simple and streamlined for everyone!

You can give as much or as little time as you want, the key thing is to want to make a difference and work with a bunch of other LGB&T people who want to help develop and improve things for people who live, work and play in Southwark.

Network members can live, work or play in Southwark, and we are particularly looking for any volunteers with financial or administrative experience, but a good heart and an imaginative mind are also welcome.

If you're interested then drop our chair Justin a line for an informal chat, chair@southwarklgbtnetwork.com

Great news for the Network.

The Network has been applying for funding to support the monthly network events to help build and strengthen our work supporting the local community. Over the last couple of months the Network has been very pleased to receive small amounts of funding from Hyde Housing Association and Bermondsey and Rotherhithe Community Council to support these meetings.



Southwark Council invite you to LGB&T housing consultation session

Let's talk about... the future of housing

We are consulting on the future of council housing in Southwark as a result of an independent commission report which was received by cabinet in October 2012 which asked the council to look at how we can make our borough's council homes and housing services sustainable for the future at the quality our residents deserve.

We want to hear your views on the following question...

Who should council housing be for and for how long?

How do you see things being different in the next 30 years? What do you think this could look like for those who will be living in council homes in the future?

Come and join the conversation, tell us what you think and help shape the future of housing in Southwark.

We will be holding community conversations on Tuesday 14th May,

11 a.m. - 2p.m. and 6 p.m. - 8 pm.

at

Room M5, Cambridge House,

1 Addington Square, Camberwell, LONDON SE5 0HF.

Further links to community consultation events taking place near you can be found on

http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/200463/community_conversations/2999/lets_talk_about_the_future_of_housing

Come along and have your say.