

Ageing

Who we are, what we feel and how we act in our present life is all based on our past.

If the past includes experience of prejudice, discrimination, criminalisation, harassment – this is bound to have an impact on how we see ourselves as older people and how open we are with others.

'Before the Act' started around 1998, becoming the Older Gay men's Group, meeting in the Gay Men's Health Project offices until 2001, moving from there to Belmont in 2003 and then supported by Age Concern (AgeUK) up until recently when it has temporarily closed.

Several events were held in 2008 showing **Gateway to Heaven** – a powerful and often humorous performance based entirely on the memories of older lesbians and gay men, collected by writer and lesbian comedian Clare Summerskill.

In 2012 the



Rainbow Film Festival screened the film **Gen Silent** to an invited audience of people from the health and social care sector. The film powerfully reveals that many old and older LGBT people are a 'silent generation', fearful for their future, many going back into the 'closet' as they experience and/or are afraid of discrimination or worse, as they become increasingly dependent on

others. This raised a question amongst the audience – what is the experience of those who live in Shropshire and what do we need to do to make sure that people are not afraid and that 'care providers' understand the issues?

This proved to be a pivotal point and after some stops and starts SAND (Safe Ageing No Discrimination) was formally launched in Shrewsbury, to raise awareness and encourage our own communities to talk about the issues that are impacting on their lives.

Healthwatch Shropshire gave us a small grant to begin our research – finding out what the issues are. We concluded that there is much to be done in terms of awareness raising and a key aim for SAND is to encourage people to 'get that there is something to get' – that prejudice, discrimination, exclusion, fear, bullying, ignorance is still the experience of many LGBT people, despite changes in legislation, and impacts on their lives in many different ways – and that being older does not mean we have no sexuality!



Some context

1885

Offence of "gross indecency" created, making all sexual acts between men illegal.

1895

Oscar Wilde prosecuted for gross indecency and sentenced to two years in prison.

1933

Nazis round up homosexuals and send them to the concentration camps. Gay men have to wear a pink triangle on their camp clothes.

1954

Alan Turing commits suicide, 18 months after being given a choice between two years in prison or libido-reducing hormone treatment for a year as a punishment for homosexuality.

1957

Wolfenden committee recommends the decriminalisation of gay sex between consenting adults over 21, except in the armed forces.

1967

Gay sex decriminalised, with new privacy clause - no act may take place where a third party is likely to be present. Age of consent set at 21 (compared to 16 for heterosexuals and lesbians).

As well as the serious stuff, we have fun and attend local events



just because you can't see us,
doesn't mean we are not here

"Imagine someone living in a care home, or accessing care support who feels unable to talk about their life, their experiences, memories, hopes, family and relationships"



Allies

The struggle for LGBT rights is strengthened by the support of heterosexual allies. This was particularly important when times were hard and many LGBT people felt unable to be visible, particularly in a small town.



Parents need support when their offspring come out. Support groups were formed in the 1970's, later becoming **FFLAG**.

The campaign for equal marriage had large, active, support from allies. Meetings were held in the Unitarian church in Shrewsbury.



FFLAG members supported various campaigns, vigils (one in Shrewsbury's Pride Hill) and marches.



Window display in Crabapple -
Clause 28 demo in Pride Hill

Arthur Robert Hardy

ARTHUR Robert Hardy, a prominent member of FFLAG (Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), the support group for parents, has died at the age of 77. With his second wife, Rose, he ran a parents' support line from his home for many years.

The parent of a gay son, Arthur worked for gay rights within his trade union and in the Cyclists Touring Club. He wrote letters to the press and an article, with his son Geoff, for *Gay News*. He also appeared on television.

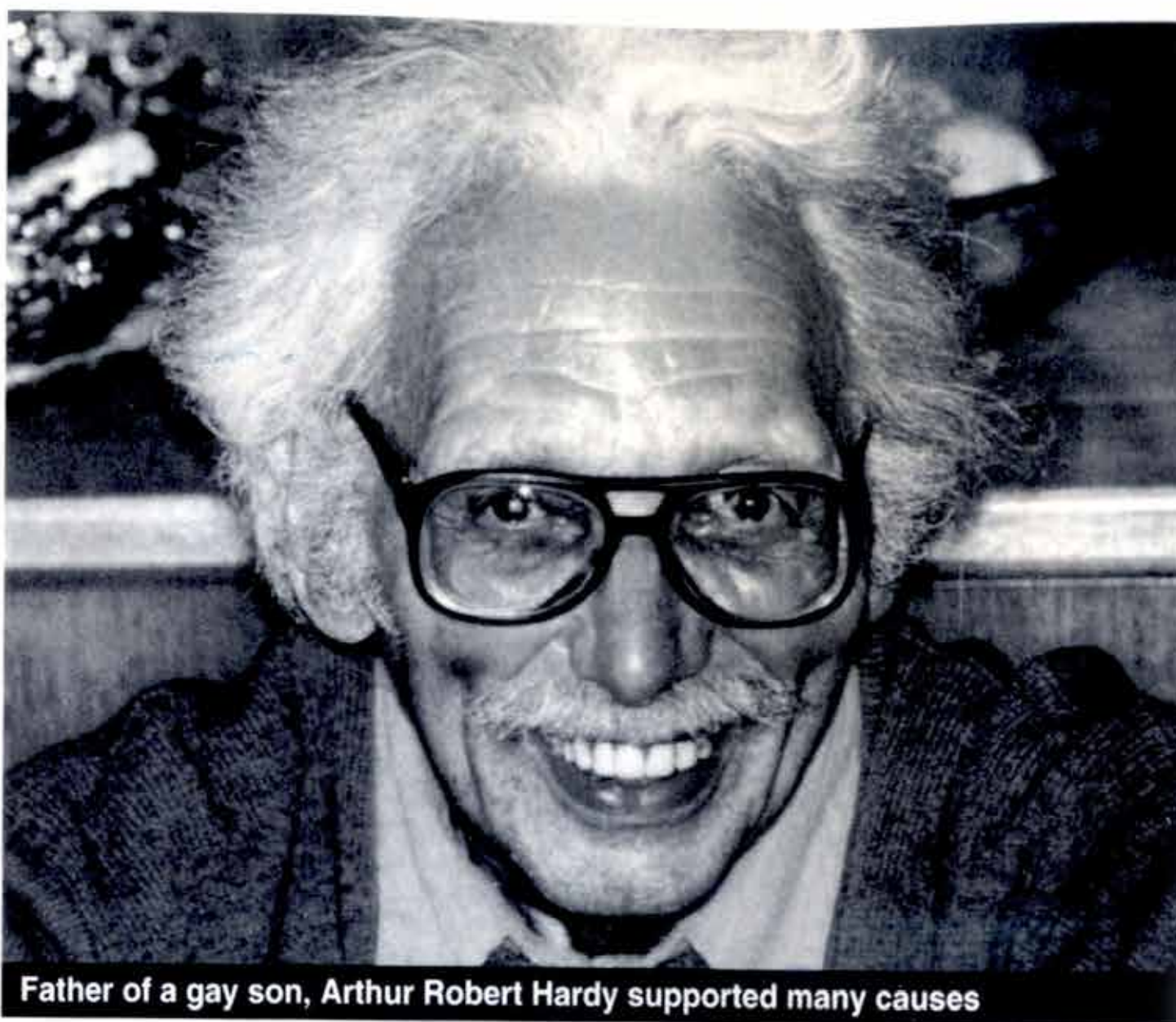
His involvement in gay rights spanned almost two decades and all the major political campaigns. During the struggle against Section 28, he attended a local vigil in Shrewsbury and a march in Manchester.

A pacifist, Arthur supported conscientious objectors during the Second World War and in the 1950s and 60s became involved in CND

and in non-violent direct action with the Committee of 100. A lifelong Libertarian Socialist, he also wrote for many years for the *Socialist Leader*, the newspaper of the Independent Labour Party.

In his later years he became a Quaker, describing himself "a spiritual sort of person, but not religious".

Arthur had been a keen cyclist all his life, but had recently suffered from minor heart attacks, which became more frequent, curtailing his ability to walk and cycle. His death



Father of a gay son, Arthur Robert Hardy supported many causes

was sudden. Arthur will be missed by his wife Rose, his son Geoff and his many friends.

Arthur Robert Hardy, born May 3rd 1921, died June 8th 1998

Crabapple, a wholefood shop in Castle Gates (now **Pomona Grocery**, who are Rainbow Film Festival sponsors), hosted window displays around various campaigns and Pride Weeks. Also, they stocked *The Pink Paper* and *Scene Out*.

Arthur Hardy, who came to live in Shropshire, was one of FFLAG's founding members. He set up the local Group.



Culture

Are We Being Served

Representations of LGBT in the media were often non-existent or negative. *Are You Being Served*, a TV comedy show, was a typical example; where a key character (played by John Inman) played out a very stereotypical role as a flapping, amusing, “silly old queen”. Research (Lesbians and Gays and Broadcasting Report, 1987, stated that “... 25 minutes out of 688 hours (of monitored national TV and radio, 12 -18 August 1985) ...given to lesbian representation”



Square Peg

Outlets for LGBT artistic expression became more common in the 1980s. Square Peg was an arts magazine. It proved a good opportunity for Shropshire born artist, Stephen Harwood. Alongside his painting ‘Drinks’ he wrote “being 16 and gay isn’t the easiest thing in the world.....” “If I wasn’t an artist I don’t know what I’d be like”

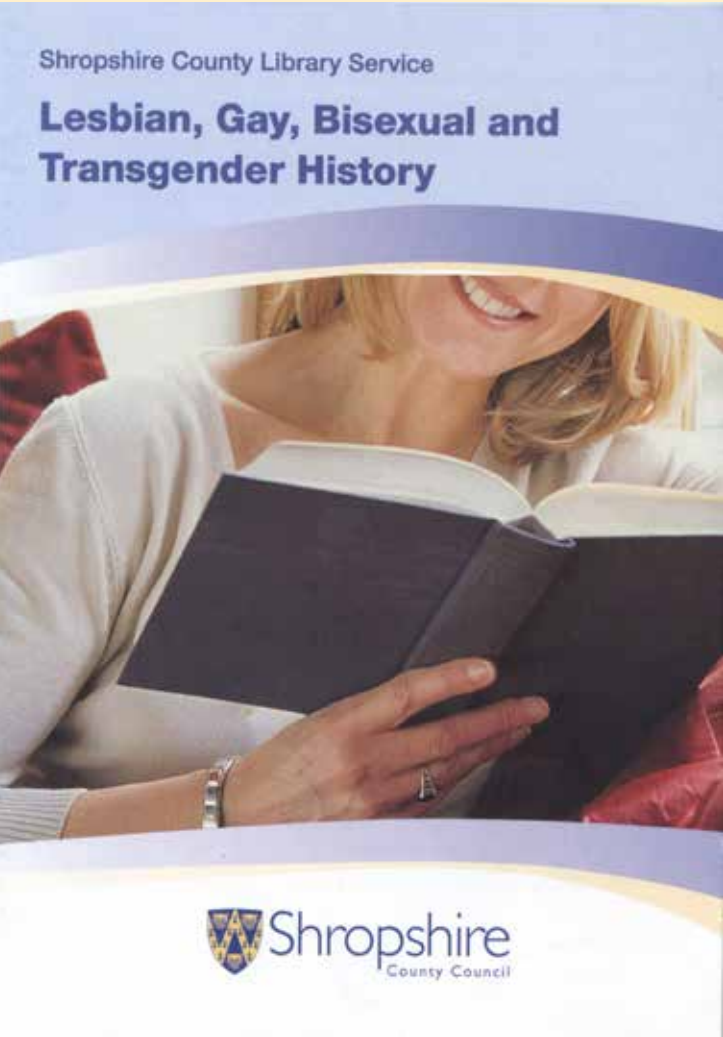


Coming Out

A need for positive images, especially for lesbians, was paramount. Postcards etc. became more available and LGBT people could more positively reflect and celebrate their lives eg by sending a nice postcard to friends!

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender History

Local Authorities began, some belatedly, to promote LGBT images, history and writings (although the spectre of “Section 28” still caused some reluctance for some). A leaflet put out by Shropshire County Library Service in 2007, may have reflected this reluctance – on the front page the image of a woman reading a book (which may, or may not be LGBT subject matter) doesn’t show her head, which makes her invisible.



Shropshire LGBT History Month

One of the founders of Schools Out (which started LGBT History Month in the UK), Paul Patrick, was booked to speak at Shrewsbury Library on 9th February 2007. Paul was one of the few LGBT teachers to be “out” in the classroom in the 1970s (but, unlike others did not suffer disciplinary action from his employer). Unfortunately he cancelled due to ill health and died not long afterward. It is quite likely that a life of dealing with homophobia played a part in his early death.



Manda Scott

Manda Scott, a prize winning local author, was pleased to lend her name to LGBT History Month 2010.

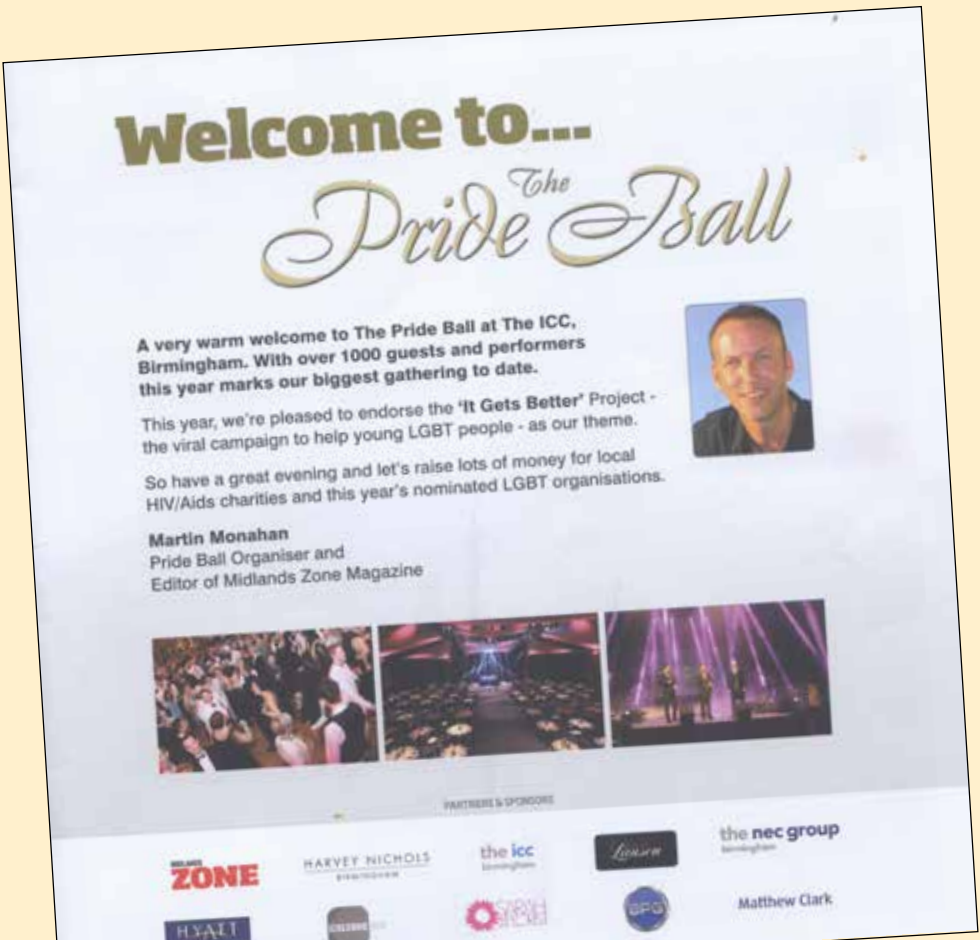
The Pride Ball 2012

Local entrepreneur, Martin Monahan has dedicated hours of his time and significant resources to help the LGBT community. The Pride Ball 2012 had over 1000 guests at the ICC in Birmingham, it endorsed the campaign ‘It Gets Better’ (to help young LGBT people) as well as raising a lot of money for HIV/AIDS charities and LGBT organisations.

The Shropshire Rainbow Film Festival

The Shropshire Rainbow Film Festival started in 2006, stating that “Films are the Mirrors of: Our Hopes, Our Dreams, Our Diversity, Our Lives”. A bold statement meant to challenge the the dominance of heterosexual stories and images in film.

Prior to the early years of this century, portrayals of LGBT people were generally as “mad, bad or sad”. LGBT films made by LGBT people have increased and are a popular entertainment (for both LGBT and heterosexual people). The Rainbow Film Festival celebrated its 10th anniversary with record audiences. However it is still a struggle to find good quality films that reflect lesbian or Trans lives.



Family

We all come from one. Some of us have children before we ‘come out’, some after, some have their children taken away from them and are deemed unfit parents. For many LGBT people who have been rejected by ‘family’ their own community becomes ‘family’

Marie Claire Magazine

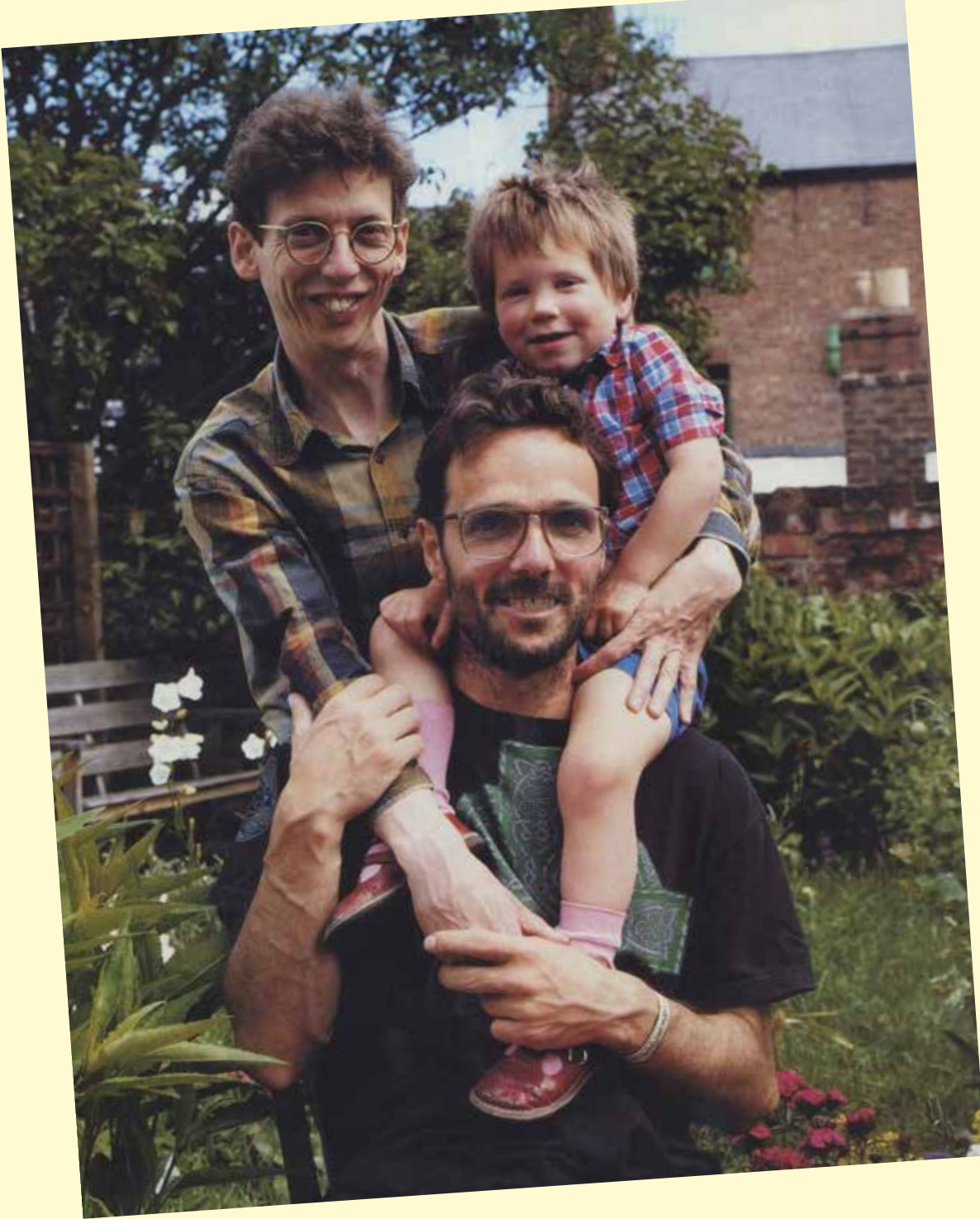
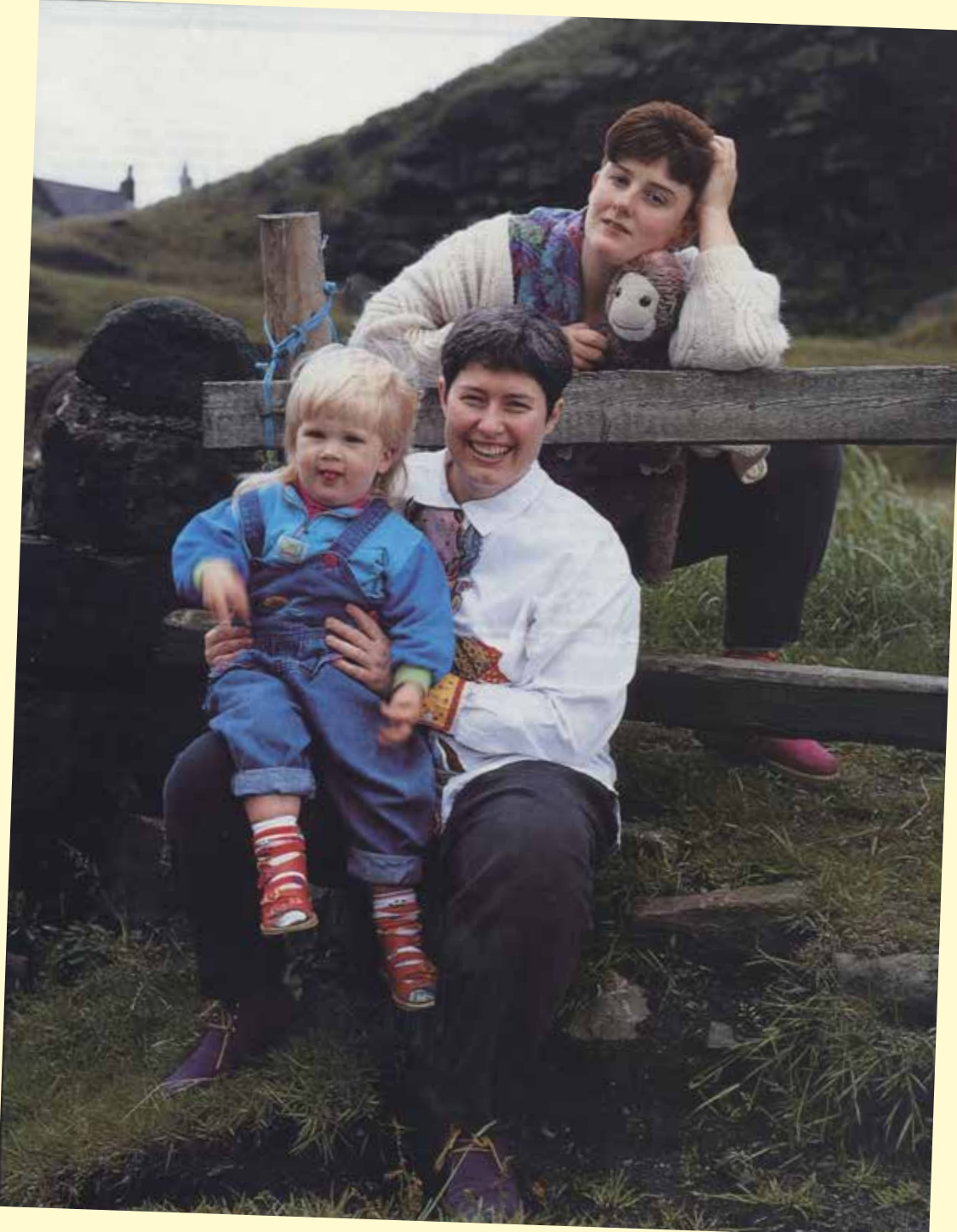
“Soon after we started our family, *Section 28* appeared to mean we only had a ‘pretended family!’” said the parents of Liam, born at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital in 1988.

Becoming parents has presented LGBT people with many dilemmas. Of paramount importance has been how best to protect the children from prejudice. Some equate those issues with similar concerns faced by couples from different races and/or a different cultural heritage.

The options can seem overwhelming in the different decisions to be made and the consequences for all the family, whether the starting point be e.g. adoption, fostering, shared parenting, donor insemination, IVF, donor womb.

Marie Claire magazine published a very positive article in its UK edition in September 1991, illustrated with nice photographs of what they called “gay families”.

The idea that LGBT people



EXCLUSIVE by Lucy Inett
A SHROPSHIRE church council is boycotting a children's charity because it has decided to allow gay and lesbian couples to foster and adopt youngsters.

Members of St Mary's Parochial Church Council in Albrighton said they "disagreed" and "disapproved" of The Children's Society's decision to place needy children with homosexuals. The church, which had coordinated an annual collection for the Society for a number of years, added it would no longer be involved in raising money. In a letter to charity collectors in Albrighton, the Reverend Roger Balkwill said the church council had discussed the charity's decision to "place needy children for adoption of fostering with homosexual couples".

It said members of the parochial church council were "unanimous in their disagreement and disapproval of this policy". It added: "The PCC have decided that they cannot coordinate the annual collection from the Children's Society boxes and send off to central funds of the Society, at least for the time being."

Instead, the money collected will be donated to an overseas millennium project. Katherine Warner, service manager of the joint adoption service for Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin said each adoption and fostering application was dealt with on its merits.

And Robert Ellis, spokesman for the Lichfield Diocese, said the decision lay with each individual church. Chris Lovitt, the manager of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin said he thought Rev Balkwill had a misguided view of gay people. "The best interests of the child should be at the core. The decision should be use by case in someone of what gay are like."

Boycott protest

I read with disbelief your report that a Shropshire church council is boycotting The Children's Society's because it has decided to allow gay and lesbian couples to foster and adopt youngsters.

I am opposed to all forms of bigotry and prejudice, and it is particularly sad that it still exists in the Church, of all places. Homophobia is just as unacceptable as any other form of discrimination.

The only consideration should be what is in the best interests of the child.

I will be making a donation to The Children's Society's, in order to express my support for a courageous decision.

Name and address supplied

Delight over mum award for gay man

By Ben Godsal
A gay man from Shropshire could be crowned Britain's best mum after winning his way into the final of a national competition. Simon Ryder has fostered around 10 children with his partner Chris Newton, and has now been chosen ahead of dozens of others for the work he has done to help troubled youngsters. The woman who nominated him said men should be recognised for the "mothering" they do in the same way as women.



Simon Ryder receives his gift voucher from Vicky Patterson from Asda

Mr Ryder, who has been together with his partner for more than eight years, was nominated for the Wonder Mum competition, which is being run by Asda superstore, by his friend Richard Brown.

Staff at Asda, Donnington Wood, in Telford, then picked Mr Ryder out from dozens of entries as the man chosen to represent the region for the national Wonder Mum finals in London. Simon, 39, from Malinslee in Telford, has looked after children between the ages of three and 11 and is currently caring for a seven-year-old and a 10-year-old.

Laugh
As well as being a foster carer he is also an education officer for a school project called Shropshire Sexual Health Awareness Work-shops.

He said he was "delighted and shocked" by his nomination. "It is very nice to be nominated and me and the kids have already had a bit of a laugh about it," he said.

"I have a lot of support from my partner, although he works full-time. I don't do anything different to any other foster carer. I just try to clean, feed and house youngsters until they are ready to move on."

"Just the other day one of the children came back to see us, which was very nice. He seems to be doing very well, which is great to see, so it can be very rewarding being a foster carer."

Speaking about the nomination, Richard Brown said men should be recognised for the "mothering" they do the same way as females.

She said: "If I had children Simon would be the one person who I could entrust them to. We try to build up children in a diverse society and men should be recognised for the role they play."

"Simon and his partner have treated each child the same and he has given each child support, time, care and most of all love and I'm glad he is being recognised," she said.

should be allowed to adopt was (and still can be) an area of contentious. In 1999 the Children's Society decided to place "needy children with homosexuals". Does this beg the question: would non needy children be reserved to heterosexuals?

Some Christian faith organisations were opposed to the whole prospect and St Mary's Parochial Church in Albrighton, Shropshire made their opposition very apparent.

By 2005 there were more positive stories about LGBT parents. The Shropshire Star reported, in April 2005, that a gay man living in Malinslee, Simon Ryder, had been nominated to represent the region by Asda staff at Donnington Wood, for the national Wonder Mum finals in London. Simon had fostered some 10 children with his partner, Chris Newton, between the ages of 3 and 11 years. Simon said "It is very nice to be nominatedme and the kids had a bit of a laugh about it"

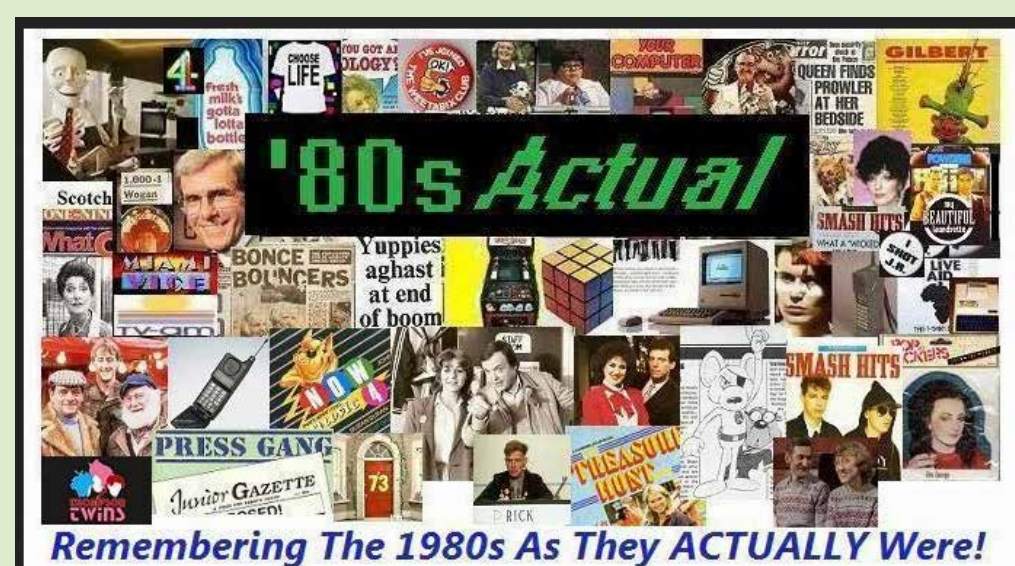
From the 1970s onward support groups for the families and friends of LGBT people had formed, first in London and then Manchester and elsewhere. By 2015 the need for specific support for the families of Trans people was apparent and in 2015 SOFFA Marmalade, based in the Midlands, produced a leaflet to advertise their group which aims "... to support those who may or may not be struggling to come to terms with the issues"



HIV/Aids



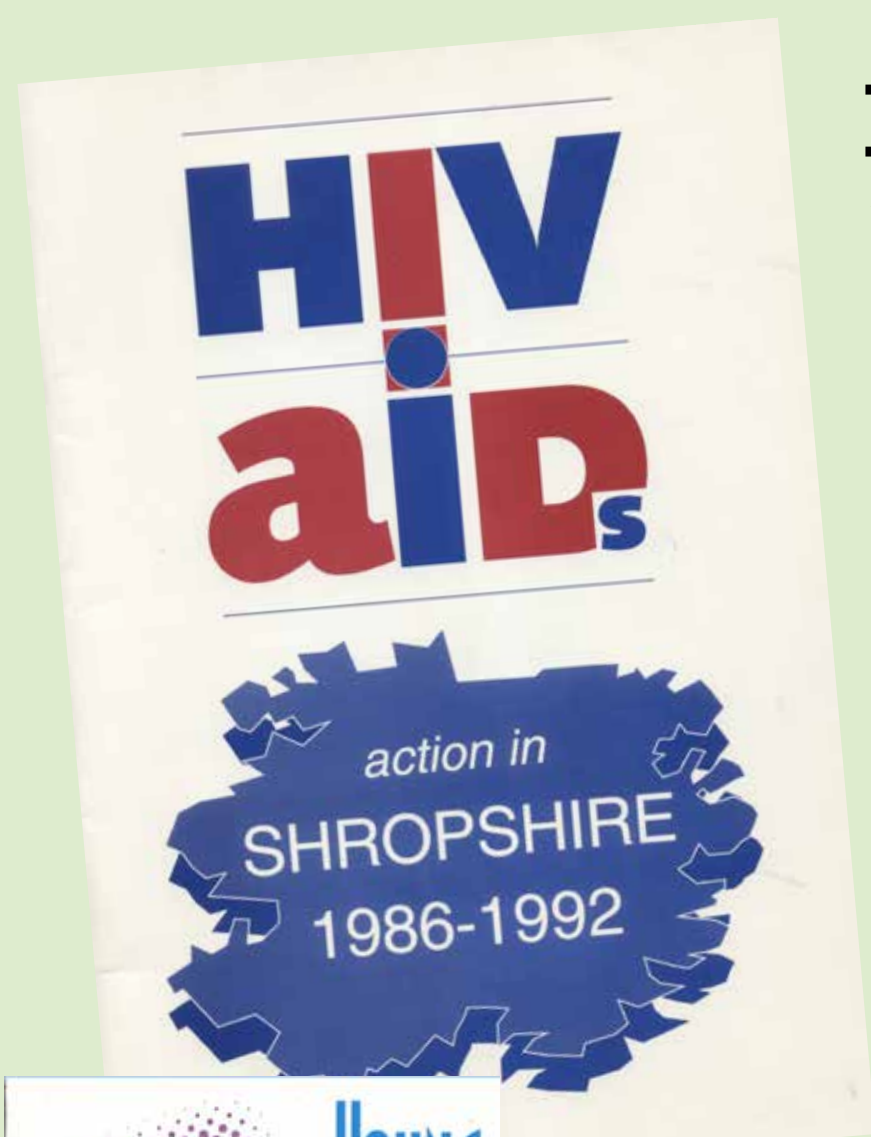
Don't Die of Ignorance



In 1983 the Gay Medical association published "A.I.D.S", the first attempt in the UK to warn people of the danger. Unfortunately, their work was not heeded by the Government. It took them until 1987 to act. Every household had a leaflet

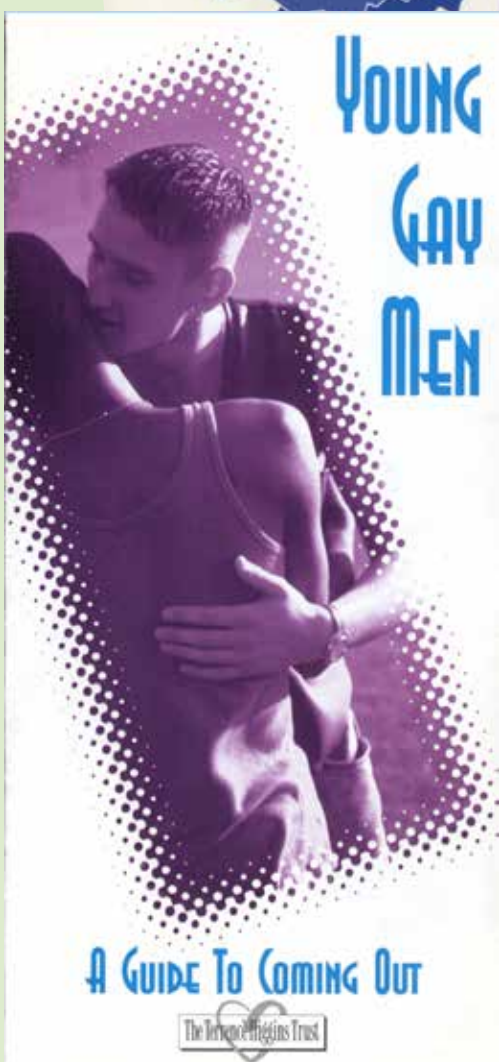
delivered and adverts appeared on the TV. Most people remember "AIDS, Don't Die of Ignorance", the adverts with exploding volcanoes and AIDS being chiselled into a block of stone.

For the first time the words "gay" and "straight" appeared on advertising hoardings. For many, not just gay men, it was a very frightening time



HIV aids

With money from the Department of Health, Shropshire Council Social Services, reported in 1993 on what had been done in the county from 1986 to 1992. The first case of HIV infection officially notified in the county was in 1989. By 1992, 30 people were known to be HIV positive



Young Gay Men

The Terrence Higgins Trust (named after one of the first British people to have died following Aids) made their leaflets available across the UK. Initially government agencies were reluctant to use explicit language about sex and were unrealistic in dealing with sex between young gay men. By 1994 the age of consent had lowered for gay men from 21 to 18, but many young men have sex before the age of 18. The Trust was better placed to deal with these issues.

Dykes + Safer Sex

The Shropshire Gay and Bisexual Men's Health Project, based in Shrewsbury took innovative steps to engage lesbians in the fight against HIV infection. They were aware of the prominent role of lesbians in US cities in giving blood donations and voluntary care and support services to people suffering in consequence of HIV.



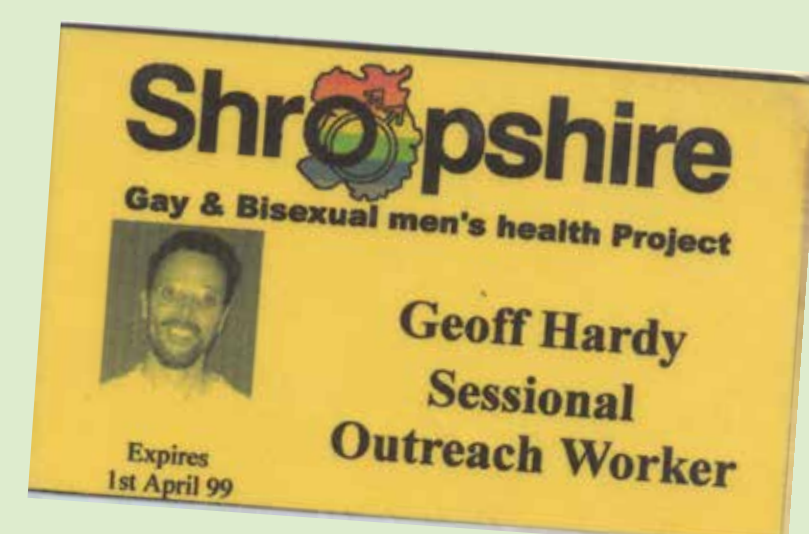
Shropshire Buddies & Male Out

Shropshire Buddies and Body Positive recognised that many men who have sex with men do not identify as being gay. Many were married men. Some thought that because they saw themselves as being heterosexual they could not become HIV positive.



Shropshire Gay and Bisexual men's health project outreach

There was an awareness that because of homophobia in society a significant number of gay men and, what became referred to as "mesmen" (i.e. men who had sex with men but were not gay) met at public toilets for sex, there or elsewhere. Outreach workers spoke to these men at the public toilets and gave advice about safer sex and offered lubricants and condoms.

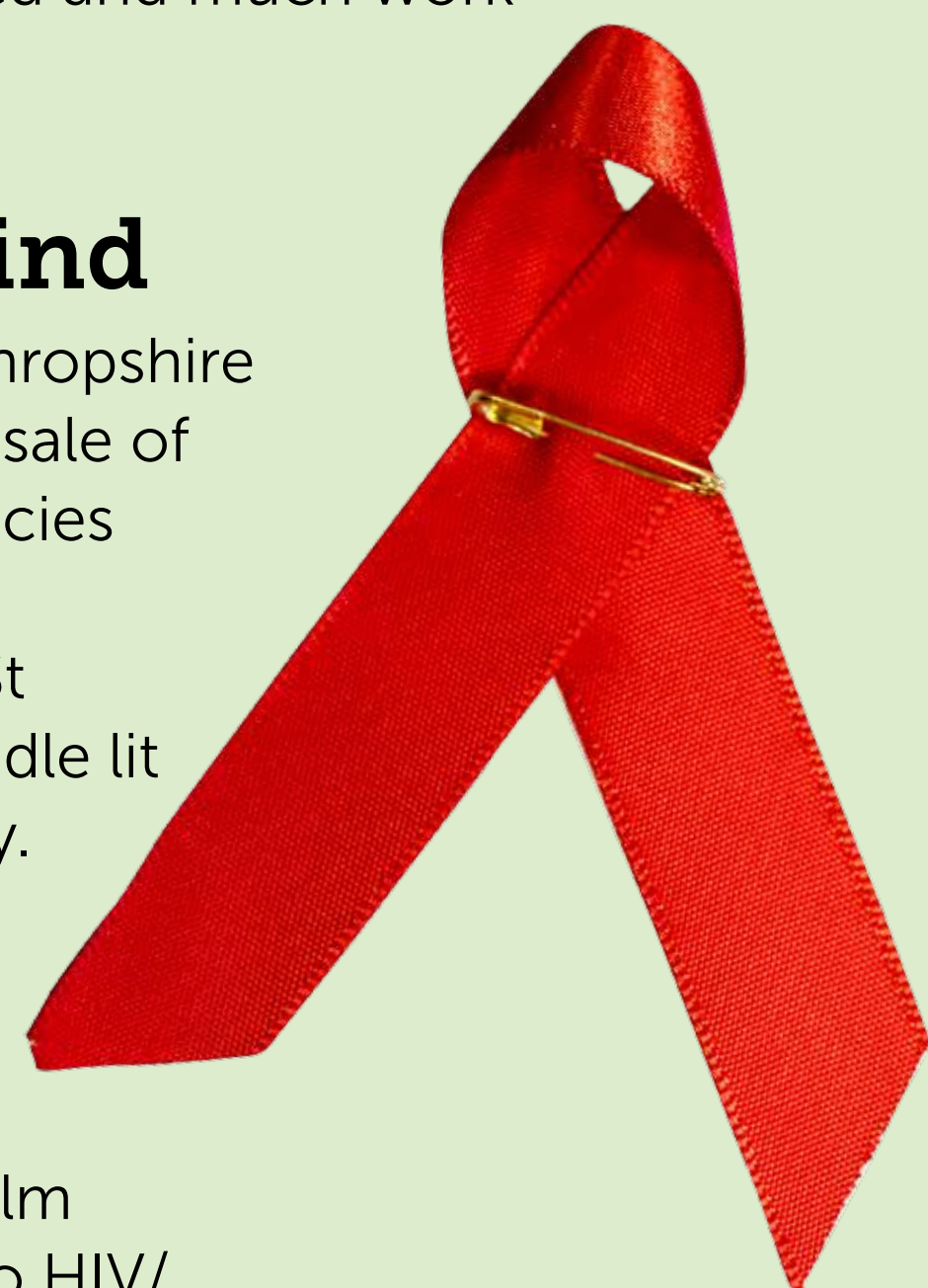


Shropshire & Telford Gay Health Closure

By 2001 the availability of combination therapies and a focus more on HIV testing caused the health services to review their funding of HIV/Aids treatment and prevention. In 2001 Shropshire & Telford Gay Health closed and much work transferred to voluntary agencies.

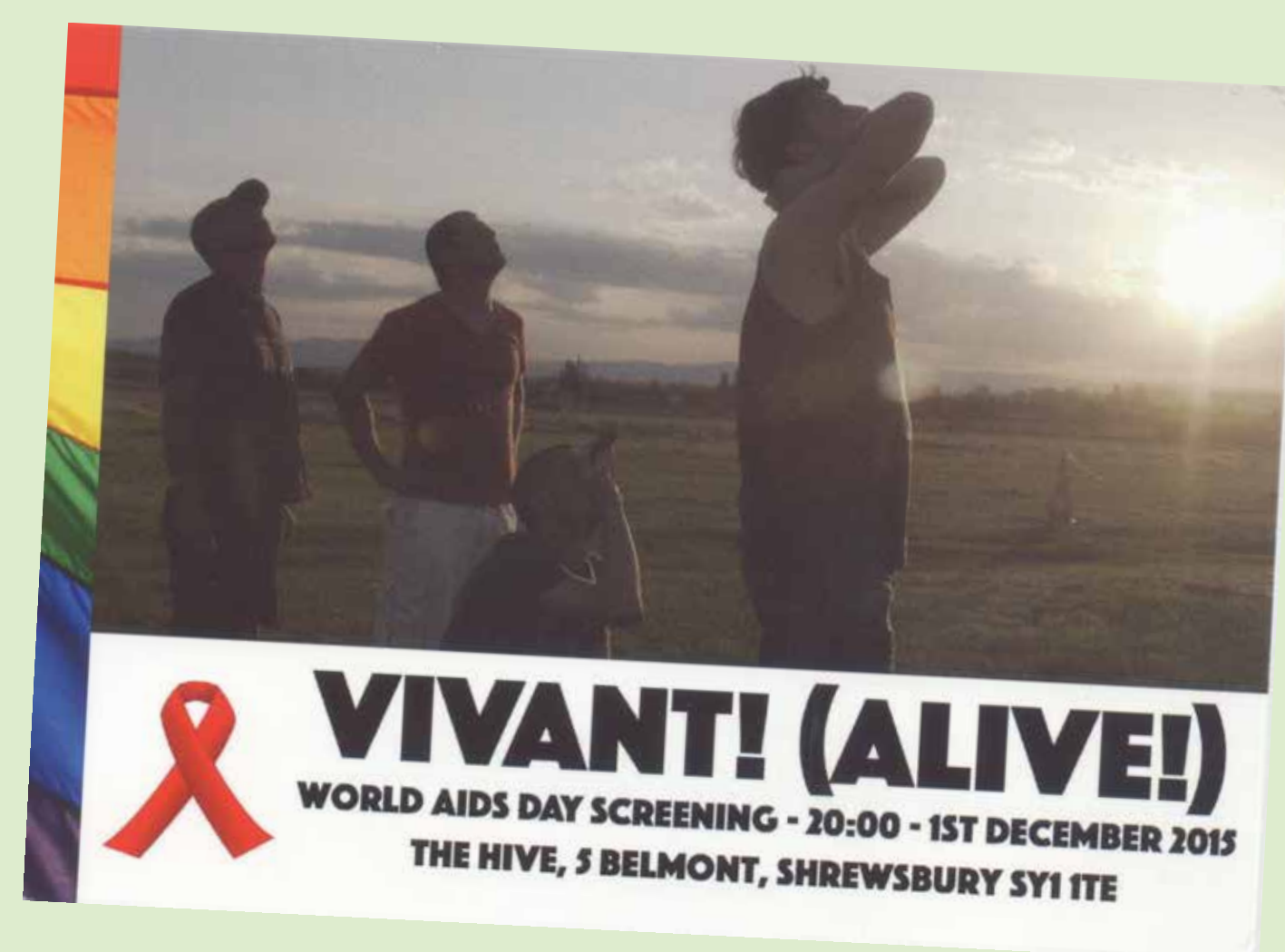
Out of Sight Out of Mind

December 1st is **World Aids Day**. In Shropshire the day was and still is marked by the sale of red ribbons. Funds are raised for agencies helping to prevent the spread of HIV. Over the years services were held at St Laurence's Church in Ludlow and candle lit vigils held in the Square in Shrewsbury.



Vivant

In recent years Shropshire Rainbow Film Festival has screened a film relevant to HIV/Aids at the Hive in Shrewsbury on World Aids Day. As time passes more hopeful films have been made. In 2015 the RFF screened 'Vivant', a film about five HIV positive men working together to take their first sky dive, with lots of humour and positive images.



Marriage

SM4A (Shropshire Marriage for All) was set up after a lobbying meeting with Shrewsbury MP Daniel Kawczynski, on March 10th 2012. Daniel said that he was ‘minded to vote for’ the Same Sex Marriage Bill.

SM4A members were LGBT and heterosexual allies and the majority were people of faith communities. The Group viewed marriage as an equality issue, not ‘gay marriage’.


It was a long, hard campaign. There was a lot of highly vocal opposition. Daniel received a lot of mail from both sides.

SM4A campaigned through the media, letter-writing, collected petition signatures in the Town Centre and distributed flyers and wristbands. Most people were supportive.

Daniel voted for the Bill, as did Telford’s MP David Wright.

The Same Sex Marriage Act was passed in July 2013 and the first marriages were in March 2014.

Marriage was a huge step forward in terms of legal equality, but heterosexuals were denied access to Civil Partnerships.



SHROPSHIRE MARRIAGE 4 ALL

ONE LOVE - EQUAL LOVE

SM4A welcomes anyone of any sexuality who is in support of equality for all.

ONE WORLD

Our aim is to educate people and dispel myths regarding equality in marriage

SEPARATE IS NOT EQUAL!

This is an issue that affects us all, whatever our sexuality. We all share this world and have similar views.

This is not about

Stonewall's Living Together research, based on polling of over 2000 people, published on 12th June 2012, has shown that seven in ten people in Britain and, crucially, three in five people of faith, support the Government proposals. This rises to four in five people under the age of fifty.

WHAT WE CAN ALL DO:


- Sign one of the online petitions in support of equality in marriage: Coalition for Equal Marriage, Equal Love.
- Write and post a letter to your MP - this is very important.
- Write a letter to the paper.
- Get your friends and family to do the same.
- Join our mailing list (we will keep you informed of what we are doing).
- Come along to one of our meetings

RAISE THE SUBJECT AND TALK ABOUT IT.

This will be a free vote, although it is being put forward by the Government.

With your help we can win this and be a step further to full equality.

Keep up to date:

 [twitter](#)

<http://www.sm4a.org.uk> shropshire-marriage4all@gmail.com

3/4/13
www.shropshirestar.com 25

Lobby over gay marriage Group is seeking bishop's audience

LEADERS of a Shropshire campaign for equal marriage have called for a meeting with the Catholic Bishop of Shrewsbury after he repeated his criticism of plans to legalise gay marriage.

Members of Shropshire Marriage 4 All have written an open letter to the Rt Rev Mark Davies in which they asked the bishop to 'stand in their shoes' on the issue.

It comes after he used his Easter homily at Shrewsbury Cathedral to again criticise Government plans to legalise gay marriage.

The bishop warned that the country stood at a 'crossroads' over the issue and other matters such as abortion and euthanasia.

Four members of Shropshire Marriage 4 All stood outside the cathedral on Town Walls before Easter mass began on Sunday to speak to members of the congregation and hand out leaflets on equal marriage.

Geoff Hardy was one of the protesters.

He said: "Some people in the congregation thanked us for being there and said they felt very awkward about the church's view of equal marriage."

"Others were angry. The bishop did not offer to speak to us."

Mr Hardy said the group had met Mark Ryland, the Anglican Bishop of Shrewsbury, and Martin Charlesworth, the leader of the Barnabas Community Church in London Colney, to discuss the issue.

He said: "It feels right for human beings to meet each other even if there are differences that can never be agreed."

"It is about equality and respect; we want to be part of society that respects everybody."

Mr Hardy's partner Peter Ruscoe, the chairman of Shropshire Marriage 4 All, has written an open letter to the Rt Rev Davies, calling for a meeting.

The letter says: "We spoke with many of your congregation and it became clear to us that a significant number do not share your opposition to marriage being available to same sex couples."

He added: "We are willing to try and stand in your shoes, what reason can you have to not try and stand in ours?"

A spokesman for the Diocese of Shrewsbury said: "The Shrewsbury diocese extends across the whole of Shropshire and Cheshire and includes parts of Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Derbyshire."

"This has not allowed the Bishop to hold meetings with local groups campaigning in either support of marriage or for the redefinition of civil marriage."



Kawczynski to hold public meeting on issue before he votes

Same-sex marriage decision for town MP

By Catherine Ferris

Shrewsbury MP Daniel Kawczynski today said he would hold a public meeting on the issue of same-sex marriage – to help him decide which way to vote.

Mr Kawczynski said that his 'gut feeling' was to support same-sex marriage, but he could not ignore the 'hundreds of letters' he has received from constituents who are opposed to the move.

He said it would be 'arrogant' to ignore the views of his constituents, and said the outcome of a vote at the end of the planned meeting would be a 'huge factor' in influencing his decision.

It is hoped the meeting to discuss the issue will be held in February. Plans to legalise same-sex marriage have divided the Conservative party. Prime Minister David Cameron, who supports the move, has promised a change in the law in England and Wales by the next election in May 2015.

But more than 100 of his MPs, including Environment Secretary and north Shropshire MP Owen Paterson, are thought to be against the idea.

Equal

The Prime Minister has offered MPs a free vote on the issue – due to take place in the spring.

Mr Kawczynski said: "On the one hand my gut reaction is to support gay marriage because I am very much against discrimination and it is an issue of equal rights. However, in Shrewsbury there is a very large element of society which is fundamentally opposed to this change."

"Before I decide how to vote I want to organise a large public meeting to hear the views of those who are in favour and those who are against. I have been overwhelmed by the number of letters from constituents opposed to this proposal. On a highly contentious issue like this I think it is important for MPs to have public meetings to find out the will of the people."

Mr Kawczynski said the meeting would be chaired by an independent adjudicator, and would end with a vote on same-sex marriage.

Yesterday a group of senior Tory MPs and peers launched a campaign group backing same-sex marriage.

Coalition for Marriage

SHREWSBURY AND ATCHAM FOR MARRIAGE

MARRIAGE IS UNDER THREAT

Politicians at Westminster want to rewrite the meaning of marriage to make it 'genderless'. But kids need a mum and a dad. Did you know all the rights of marriage are already available to same-sex couples through civil partnerships? The politicians don't own marriage, and they have no right to change it. This wasn't in any of the main manifestos before the last election, and they're ignoring well over 500,000 people who've signed a petition against the plans. Typical. Don't let them get away with it. Show them that Shrewsbury and Atcham are for marriage.

REDEFINITION HAS SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES

Politicians say this is a simple change, but it would have big repercussions across society.

- 'Genderless marriage' will be endorsed in schools, and parents who disagree will be sidelined.
- Teachers who refuse to do it could be disciplined or sacked.
- People could lose their jobs for backing traditional marriage, particularly in the public sector.
- Marriage will be undermined if it is redefined. In Spain, after they redefined marriage, overall marriage rates plummeted.
- If marriage is redefined once, what is to stop it being redefined to allow polygamy?

TELL YOUR MP

I Support Marriage Equality



SHROPSHIRE MARRIAGE 4 ALL

The Guardian

Pope calls for halt to 'evil' gay marriages

Rebecca Allison

The Vatican yesterday urged Catholic politicians to actively campaign against legalising gay marriages which it said were evil, deviant and posed a grave threat to society.

In a document which was immediately condemned by gay rights campaigners as shocking and inflammatory, Catholic lawmakers were warned that any support of same-sex unions was "gravely immoral" and there was a moral duty on them to publicly oppose moves towards legal recognition of such marriages.

In Britain gay couples are to be offered the same legal rights as married couples from 2010.

The Pope's new guidelines will make uncomfortable reading for the more liberal clergy as well as many Catholic politicians, including the Tory leader, Iain Duncan Smith, and the leader of the Liberal Democrats, Charles Kennedy.

The paper represents a ratcheting up of the Vatican's struggle to reverse the worldwide momentum behind legalising gay marriage.

"There are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God's plan for marriage and family. Marriage is holy, while homosexual acts go against the natural moral law," it said, adding: "Legal recognition of homosexual unions or placing them on the same level as marriage would mean not only the approval of deviant behaviour ... but would also obscure basic values which belong to the common inheritance of humanity."

The papal note says people extending cohabitation rights "need to be reminded that the approval or legalisation of evil is something far different from the toleration of evil".

The guidelines, which were issued by the Vatican's orthodox watchdog, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, also described gay sex as inhuman and gay couples adopting children as "doing violence".

The intervention comes as the Church of England faces splits over the appointment of openly gay clergy and moves towards legalising gay marriages in Europe and America confine space.

The Netherlands, Belgium and two provinces in Canada have passed legislation recognising same-sex unions. Germany and France allow gay couples some form of civil partnership with legal rights.

The issue is charged in the US, where some lawmakers in the House of Representatives have proposed a ban on gay marriages to counter state laws granting legal recognition to gay unions. President George Bush revealed this week that he wants to "codify" marriage to ensure it stays "between man and woman".

Gay rights campaigners said the Vatican was out of touch with the modern world and unnecessarily aggressive.

"It is deeply offensive language and the sort of language that comes from someone who has lost the argument. It is a desperate last bid to cling on to the 19th century from an organisation which has failed to admit that we are in the 21st," said the chief executive of Stonewall, Ben Summerskill.

The Roman Catholic Caucus of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement also hit out at the Vatican's language. "There isn't an awful lot which is new here in terms of the message but what is pernicious is the way the tone of the language has been ratcheted up. It is very aggressive and homophobic," spokesman Martin Pendergast said, adding: "It is a bit of deckchairs-on-the-Titanic time and the Vatican is clearly worried."

The note was greeted with anger across Europe, including in Italy. A small group of protesters in St Peter's Square held banners that read "No Vatican, No Taliban," and "Democracy Yes, Theocracy No."

Pope's message, page 12
Clifford Longley, page 24
guardian.co.uk/gayrights



more information call (01939) 202900. ... who is formerly of Wixall ... son work at the hotel. ... narty golf day can call 0844 8799049.

Gay marriage campaigners welcome news

The legalisation of gay marriage has been welcomed by Shropshire campaigners who have lobbied for the change for 18 months.

The controversial bill is likely to become law later this week after the changes were approved in the House of Lords on Monday.

It means gay and lesbian wedding ceremonies could take place from next summer.

The move was welcomed today by campaigners from Shropshire Marriage for All.

Kate Glennane, secretary of the group, said: "We are absolutely delighted. This is a moment in history to celebrate love, relationships and equality. We first met with Shrewsbury and Atcham MP Daniel Kawczynski in February 2012 and we are very pleased that both he and Telford MP David Wright strongly support the new law."

Over the last 18 months, the group has lobbied all of the county's MPs and also collected signatures for a petition in favour of the law change in Shrewsbury.

Peter Roscoe, chairman of Shropshire Marriage for All, said: "Our experience in meeting Shropshire people told us that, despite the negative views expressed by some of the county's MPs and religious leaders, clearly most ordinary people want equality at law for themselves, gay relatives, neighbours, friends and work colleagues."

"We are on the right side of history."

The same-sex marriage plans proved to be controversial in Shropshire, with Conserva-

ative MPs Owen Paterson, Mark Pritchard and Philip Dunne against the change.

The plans have also been repeatedly opposed by the Catholic Bishop of Shrewsbury Mark Davies. Earlier this year, he used his Easter homily at Shrewsbury Cathedral to condemn the proposals.

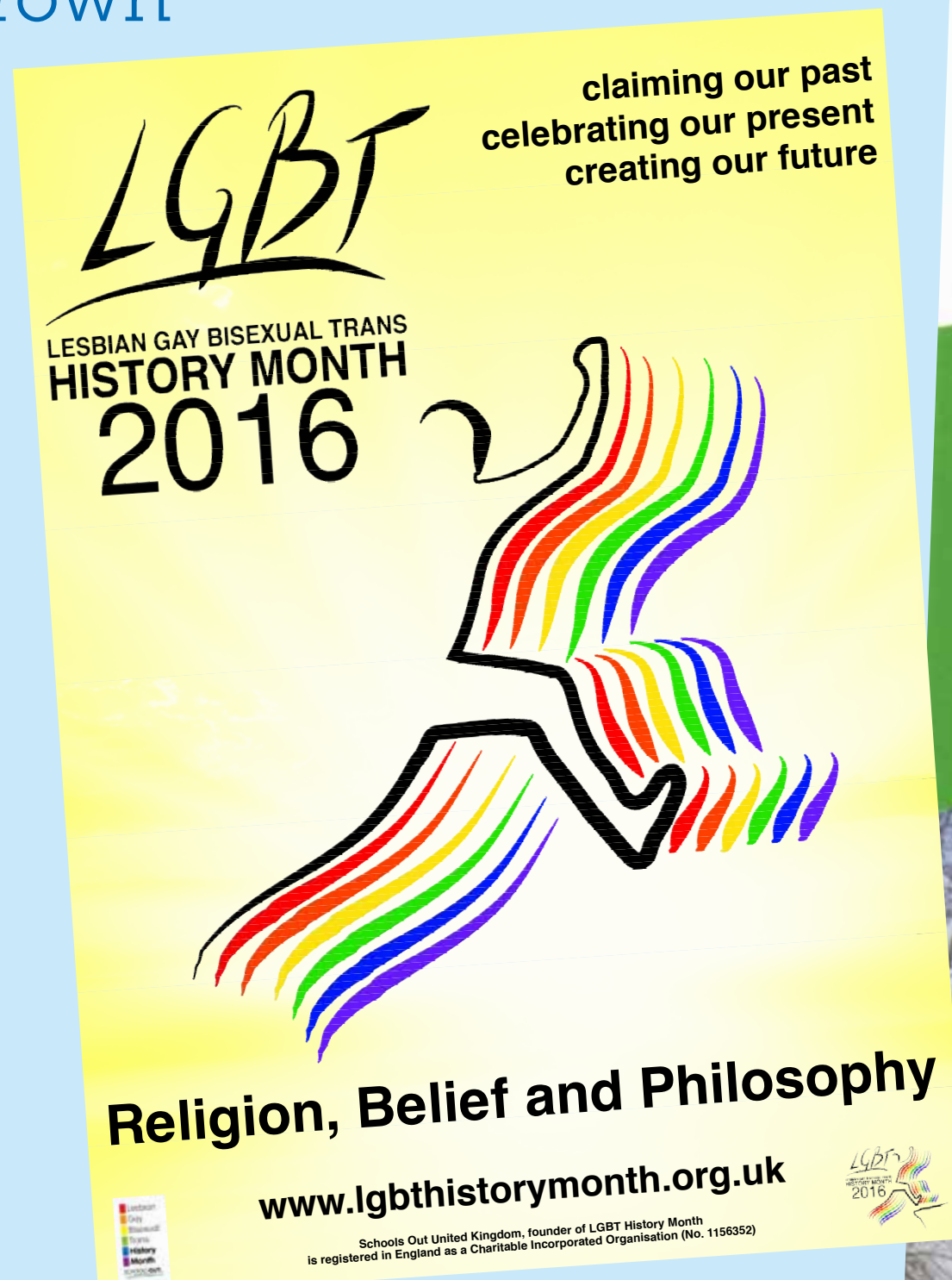
He said Britain risked "falling into darkness" with people unable to distinguish between good and evil due to the marginalisation of Christianity in society.

Schools Out

The National Festival of LGBT History has grown out of the work of Schools Out (www.schools-out.org.uk) who, in 2004, initiated LGBT History Month. Their intention is ambitious – nothing less than providing the general public and our community with the education denied and kept hidden from them in mainstream education,

Educating 'out' prejudice and making all LGBT people visible and safe. The idea is to enable everyone – LGBT and heterosexual alike – to discover the contributions and experiences of the LGBT community in all their diversity. This will only happen if the history, lives and experiences of LGBT people are made visible within educational curriculums and educational institutions are safe places for all.

Amongst other things Schools Out has created The Classroom (www.the-classroom.org.uk), offering a series of lesson plans to enable teachers to include the LGBT experience through a variety of lesson plans in all key stages. It also presents a simple but effective methodology to enable us all to be an inclusive practitioner and promoter of equality and diversity.



Looking at their relatively clear and straightforward methodology helps us to understand what we need to do to promote inclusion and equality. We think this can apply to other areas of life, as well as teaching.

What we need to do is 'usualise' and 'actualise'

'Usualise' isn't a word that is found in any dictionary but it describes very well the process and avoids the potentially negative connotations of 'normalise' – problematic when describing humans as it assumes there is a 'right' way of being and is therefore a pejorative term to many who consider themselves outside the majority. It also has connotations of 'trying to fit in' rather than embracing diversity.

When we usualise something, we acclimatise people to its presence, and take away the threat of difference which creates fear and discrimination. Usualising in schools has more to do with familiarizing learners with a subject's everyday occurrence or existence rather than an in-depth understanding of the subject.

In schools 'usualising' acclimatises children to the existence of something (e.g. LGBT people). This prepares them to be taught in more detail about those lives later on. This more in-depth teaching is the second teaching method called 'actualising' and involves lessons with specific objectives that include a greater understanding of LGBT identities, and their impact on people and culture.



Section 28

The Local Government Bill , probably, galvanised LGBT people, their families and allies to protest to a degree not seen before in the UK. Some would say that, in the long term, it was an own goal for the Government. Unfortunately, it was not repealed until 2003. One consequence was that many young LGBT people during that time failed to receive sensible advice, including how to avoid HIV infection, at school.

A YEAR OF LESBIAN & GAY ACTION FIGHTING SECTION 28 EURO-TOUR CONFERENCE

COUNTY HALL: Saturday November 26th 1988
9.30am-5.30pm Crêche provided. Tel: 247 1441 ext 22
Fully accessible; Signers and kanguage interpreters available.

AMSTERDAM	Oct 14
GRONIGEN	15
NUMEGEN	16
EINDHOVEN	19
ANTWERP	21
PARIS	22
STRASSBOURG	25
MILAN	28
ZURICH	29
MUNICH	Nov 2
FRANKFURT	3
BERLIN	4
HAMBURG	6
ARHUS	9
GOTEBURG	11
OSLO	12
STOCKHOLM	16
COPENHAGEN	19
THE HAGUE	23
LONDON	Nov 24
MANCHESTER	28
EDINBURGH	30
BIRMINGHAM	Dec 3

The clause (later Section 28) stated that local authorities could not fund or “intentionally promote” homosexuality...state schools could not promote “the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship”.

The drafting was mean in intent and most legal opinion was that it was unenforceable nonsense (no cases therefore, were ever brought to Court), but it gave succour to local authorities who wanted to continue to ignore, and be unpleasant to, their LGBT local tax payers.

The ‘Stop the Clause’ organisation organised many public demonstrations. For the first time action was co-ordinated across Europe.

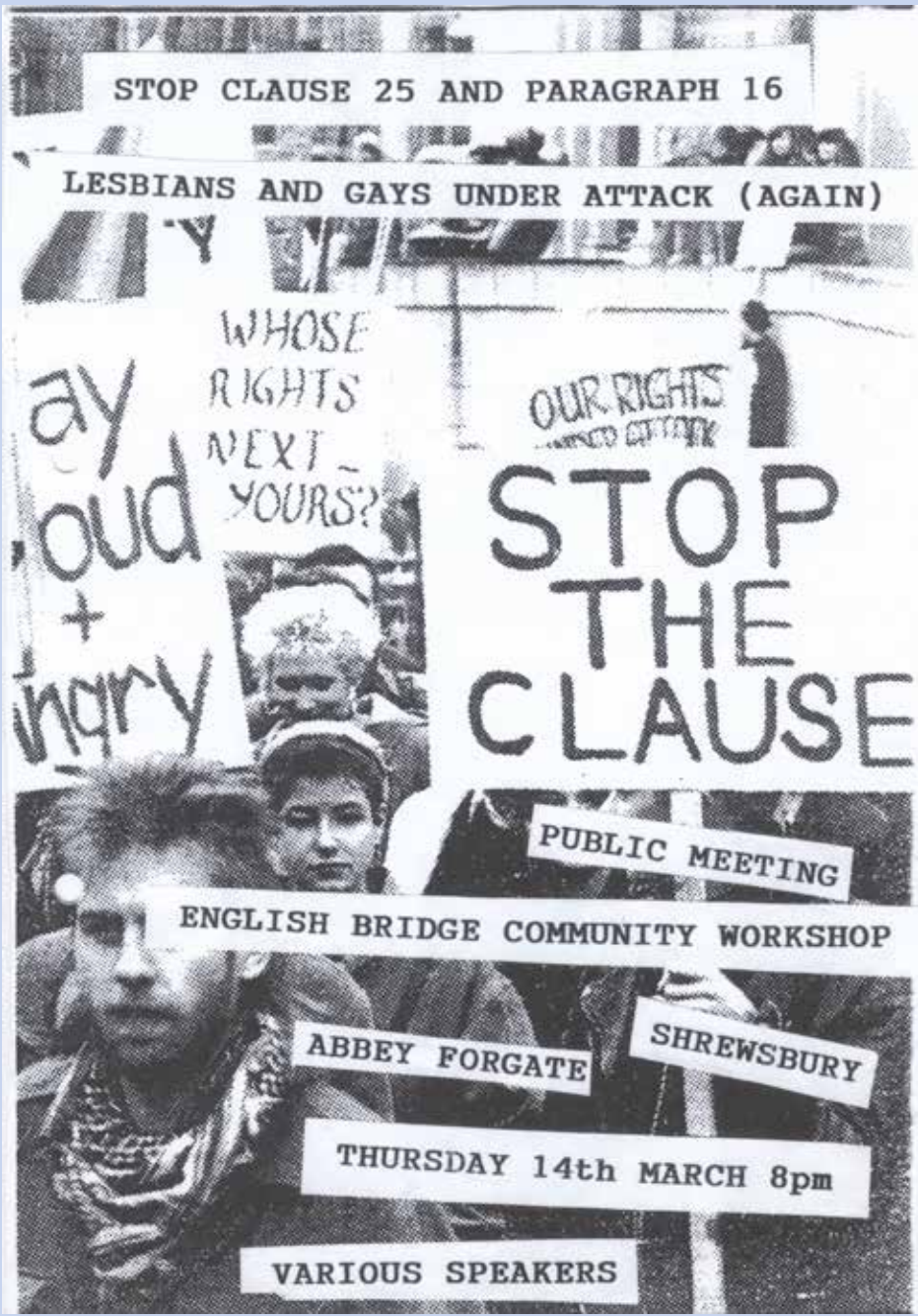


Humorous post cards aimed to highlight the absurdity of the law. It is suggested that the cartoon figure in one of the postcards had a likeness to Mary Whitehouse, a former Shropshire County Council Librarian and founder, some years before, with Malcolm Muggeridge, of the National Viewers and Listeners Association.

How do you promote homosexuality? A high profile advertising agency was asked, if hired, how it would do so. It had to say it could not be done!

Places that had never seen a LGBT demonstration saw angry LGBT people on their streets. Significant numbers of people travelled from Shrewsbury to demonstrations, not just in London, but nearer to home e.g. Manchester and Wolverhampton. Shrewsbury saw its own demonstration at the top of Pride Hill, which included a number of “pretended families”!

On 14th March people opposed to the clause held a public meeting at the English Bridge Community Workshop. As the clause passed through the parliamentary process it changed its number, at that time it was clause 25, this was very confusing.



People were very glad to see the back of Section 28, when it was repealed in 2003. However that was not the case for one of the Shropshire MPs, Owen Paterson. He was not at the House of Commons for the vote but said that “...I would have voted to keep Section 28 as a further means of protecting children”



MP worried at gay sex law reform

Tory MP Owen Paterson has voiced concern that the law banning councils from promoting homosexuality are to be scrapped.

The North Shropshire MP missed the Commons vote on Monday evening in which senior Tories attempted in vain to keep the Section 28 law because he was away for family reasons.

Mr Paterson said he would have supported an official Conservative amendment giving parents the right to object if they were unhappy with the way sex education was taught in their children's school.

“Failing that, I would have voted to keep Section 28 as a further means of protecting children,” he said.

Mr Paterson said every letter he had received on the subject had been in favour of keeping Section 28.



Visibility



2011: Shropshire Rainbow Film Festival created street banners, which hung over town centre streets. This increased numbers attending and raised LGBT visibility.

Peter Gilbert, inspired by the festival, set up **Chill Out**: a non-scene social group, meeting monthly at the OMH Café Bar.

The first Chill Out took place on Monday 6 June 2011. "I climbed the steps to the Old Market Hall nervously and couldn't believe the hubbub of voices audible before I even reached the entrance! Amazingly, there were thirty people there that first evening," Peter recalls.



Border Women: the network for lesbian and bisexual women on the Welsh-English borders continues to meet regularly and has done for the past 28 years.

SM4A (Shropshire Marriage 4 All) was formed in 2012, to campaign for same sex marriage. SM4A lobbied MP's, wrote letters to the media, distributed leaflets. Two Shropshire MP's: Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury) and Peter Wright (Telford and Wrekin) voted in favour.



2012: LGBT Shrewsbury set up Shrewsbury Carnival Pride.

2013 saw Shrewsbury's first LGBT float on the Town Carnival, which won First Prize for 'Most Original Form of Transport' and in 2015 won again for the 3rd year running.

2014: Shropshire Fire & Rescue HQ flew the rainbow flag to mark IDAHO (International Day Against Homophobia).



Women in Shropshire L Fest

L Fest – National Lesbian Festival, born West Midlands Showground, Shrewsbury 2011.

Inspired by women's football post-match parties, the original intention was to hold a festival of sport and music for 'women who liked women'. The concept grew when organiser, Cindy Edwards approached the Shropshire Rainbow Film Festival (later SpringOut 2012/13) who added film and arts to the programme. The Laughing Cows Provided comedy.

L Fest wanted to offer something different and the ethos of caring for those who came was high on the agenda – always provide clean toilets, never run out of toilet paper and – as the sun beat down – offer bottled water and suntan lotion.

Year one was a hit – but it needed to be bigger if it was going to survive. It also needed interim events and from the very first year there was a sister event L Festive during the Winter; and L fest del Mar – the Spanish version arrived on the scene in 2013.

L Fest is about bringing people together, having a good time and sharing important issues in a safe and friendly environment, whether as a single person or in a couple. It also provides a huge opportunity to encourage and promote lesbian music, arts, creativity, writing, poetry, dance, film and fun!

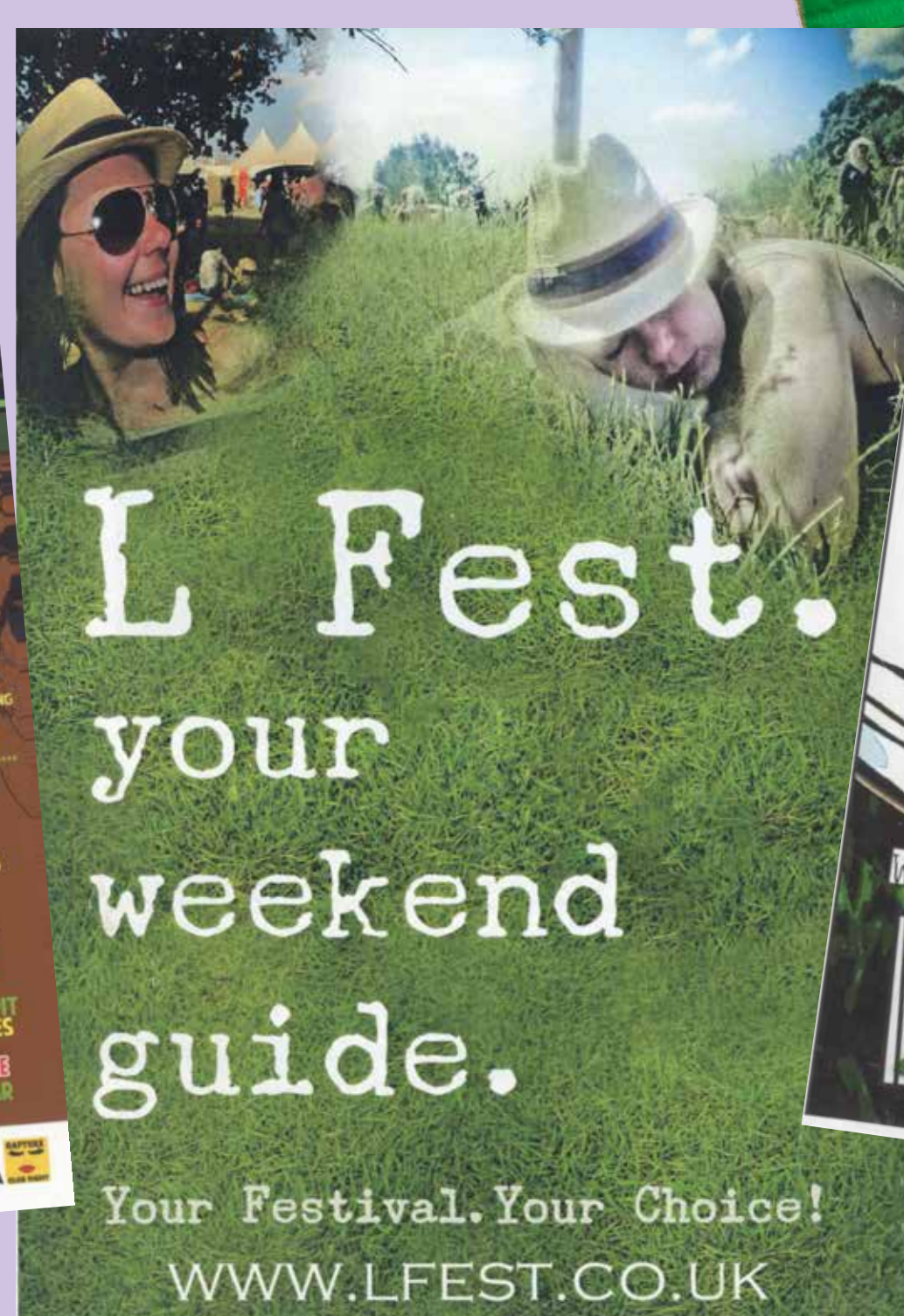
After two years in Shrewsbury, L Fest moved to Uttoxeter Racecourse where it continued to see a pattern of growth in

terms of what it offered and numbers attending. The demographic however was less expected, it was consistently attracting an older age group than the initial foot-balling audience! Time to investigate. In 2015, L Fest commissioned research to find out why younger lesbians were not coming along. This found that, despite huge progress, increased visibility and the presence of role models, many young lesbians still do not feel safe to be out.

So – what next?

2016 is the 6th year of L Fest and tickets are already selling fast – watch this space!

www.lfest.co.uk



Women in Shropshire Border Women

The network for lesbian and bisexual women on the English-Welsh border, born Leominster, Shropshire 1988.

Inspired by a woman who produced a flyer using her own personal contact details inviting others to join her in starting a local group. She contacted a reporter on the Hereford Times who agreed to write an article about lesbians in the Borders. About 20 women turned up for the first 'meeting' in Leominster Community Centre where the name Border Women was chosen.

A follow up letter, circulated to those present, described it as follows:

The meeting... was extraordinary in many ways – to be in Leominster with nearly 20 other lesbians felt revolutionary and miraculous! Although women might have felt anxious, scared to come, tense... I feel that we co-operated in a good way. It was intense and tiring – but just think, we'd never met before. For some of us, including me, the meeting was breaking the isolation of many years. I feel that it is worth the work and effort and personally I shall carry on: even if we only reach one new woman a month it's worth it for her and for us!

A monthly newsletter was initiated shortly after this inaugural meeting and two years later the group was still going strong as described in The Pink Paper (16th June, 1990):

Border Women, the lively lesbians from the Welsh Marches, are celebrating their second birthday... the group has spread from Telford to Brecon and Worcester to Aberystwyth with 100 women receiving their newsletter. They meet regularly in Shrewsbury and there is a social and disco every month in Ludlow, as well as one-off video showings, workshops, parties and picnics.

The network survived with collective input from women all over the County who organised as 'regional reps' to support and advertise Border Women, as well as editors who produced the essential monthly newsletter which was at that time based in Ludlow.

In 2007, one of the women central to the newsletter sadly died. Energy was low, membership had dwindled, and the archives were moved from Ludlow to Shrewsbury.

By 2008 the paper-copy newsletter was complemented by a revitalised electronic version and membership numbers started to grow once again. In 2010 the group moved to an entirely online social networking site where membership has now risen to 150 (in 2016) with an age range from 20-90; members post their own range of events, such as going to the cinema, picnics and parties, walking and cycling.

www.borderwomen.net



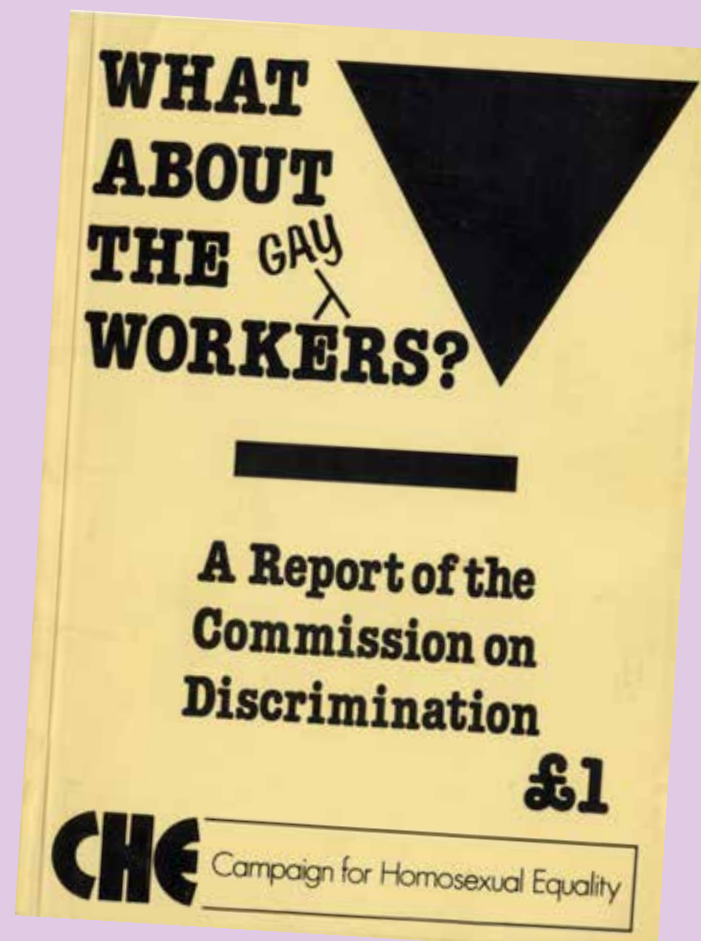
Work

What About the Gay Workers?

Until early this century LGBT people were vulnerable to dismissal by employers who were averse to homosexuality. In 1979 John Saunders, a handyman at a Scottish Youth Camp, was dismissed. The case made it clear in law that it was reasonable to sack a person because some people are prejudiced. The Campaign for Homosexuality reported on the vulnerability of LGBT people in employment, in 1981.

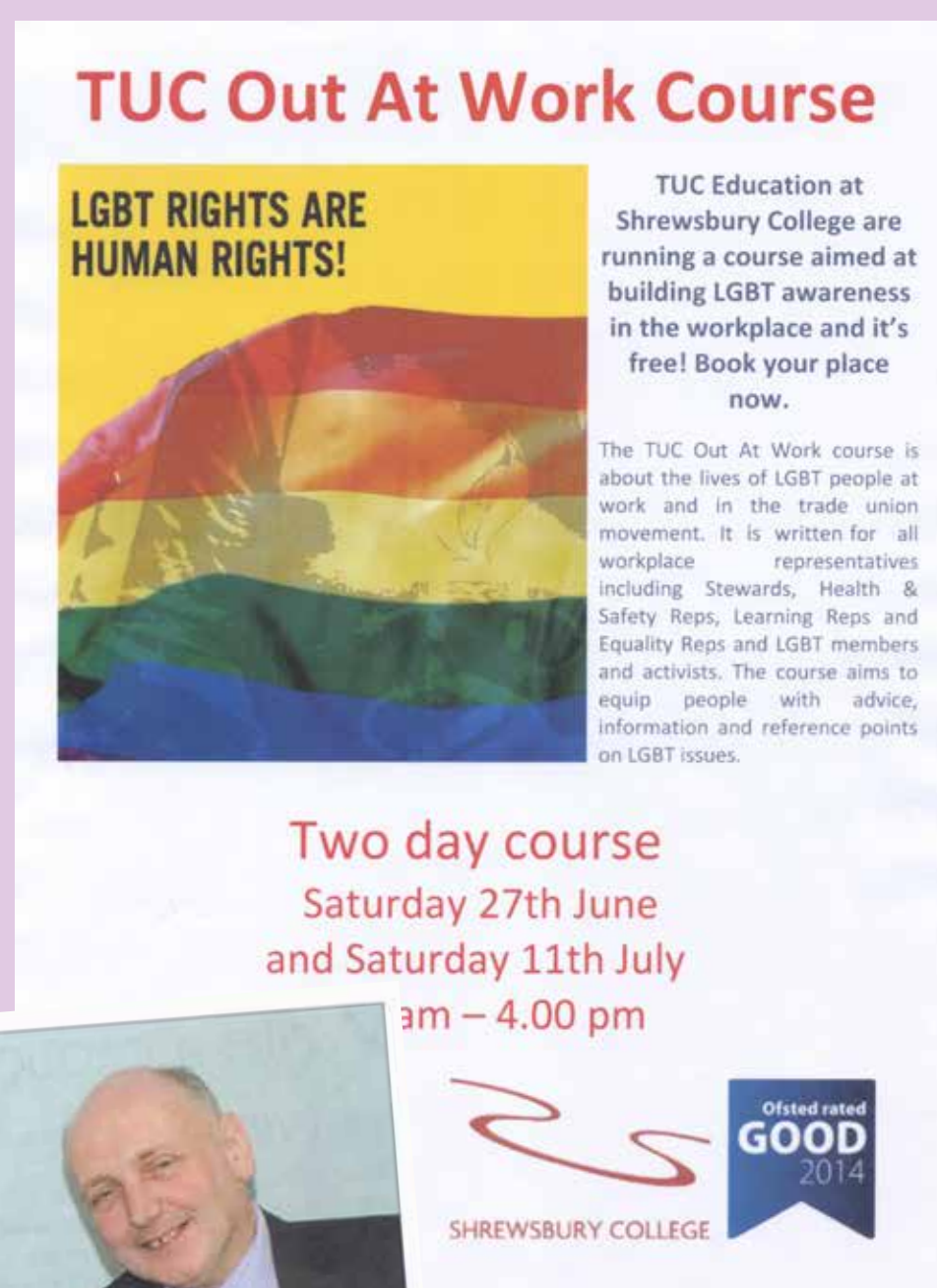
Susan Shell

Susan Shell was sacked from a local authority girls' home because of a conversation, in which she mentioned she was a lesbian. The campaign to get her reinstated, "Defend Susan Shell", was one of a number of similar campaigns that took the matter to the trade union movement. One of the first to take a positive stand was Nalگو (the National and Local Government Officers Association).



New Rights

In 2003 the Trades Union Congress could celebrate its role in the passing of the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 in its pamphlet "New Rights". This was thanks to European Union law, which caused the UK to protect LGB workers against being treated less favourably than their heterosexual colleagues.



Here to help: Members of the Shropshire LGBT Group (left to right) Liam McKenney (Assistant Director, Community Services), Sarah Bland (Area Manager, Community Services), Peter Roscoe (Solicitor), Pete Harris (Income Manager) and David Bell (Planning Officer, Community Partnership, Shropshire Partnership).

Group aims to combat homophobia

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Group by Peter Roscoe

GIVEN that at least 400 lesbians, gay men or transsexual people may work for the County Council, the Group has a wide remit. Set up just a year ago, the Shropshire Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Group is for SCC staff who identify as being L, G, B or T. Also, staff from member organisations in the Shropshire Partnership are welcome to join the LGBT Group.

Although in recent years there has been progress with regard to staff rights and other services for those who are L, G, B or T, we know that not all staff want other people to know their sexuality. The LGBT Group completely respects this, and confidentiality is essential to how the group works.

We also know that homophobia can affect others – some because they are mistakenly assumed to be L, G, B or T, or because they have friends or family who are L, G, B or T. Of most importance, though, is that the LGBT Group is all about celebrating individuality and building confidence and opportunity for all.

In its first year, the group has worked with Registration & Celebratory Services so it may proudly claim to be equal first in providing civil partnership ceremonies. We held a workshop (with films) as part of the Shrewsbury Summer Season, attended by some 50 people and addressed by Liz Nicholson, Corporate Director for Children & Young People's Services, on tackling homophobia in schools. And we've supported SCC's application to join Stonewall's Diversity Champions Programme (Stonewall is a national charity promoting lesbian and gay equality).

The Group has also worked with Human Resources in developing the council's policies on race, disability and gender.

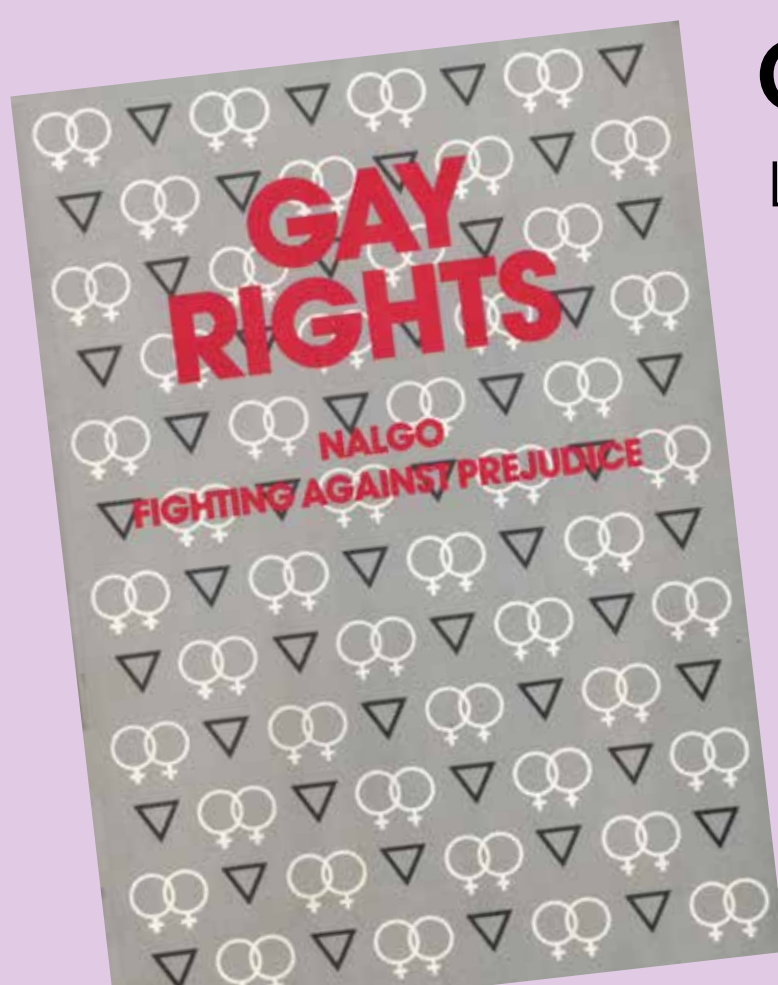
A Rainbow Film Festival, supported by local businesses, voluntary organisations, Shropshire Union and SCC, was held recently at the Old Market Hall in Shrewsbury. February 2007 will see LGBT history month events, with support from Community Services. If you have any ideas for them, please let the group know.

For further information, you can call me on (01743) 252753 or Sarah on (01743) 444599 – or visit the group's site on www.shropshire.gov.uk/equalopps.nsf.



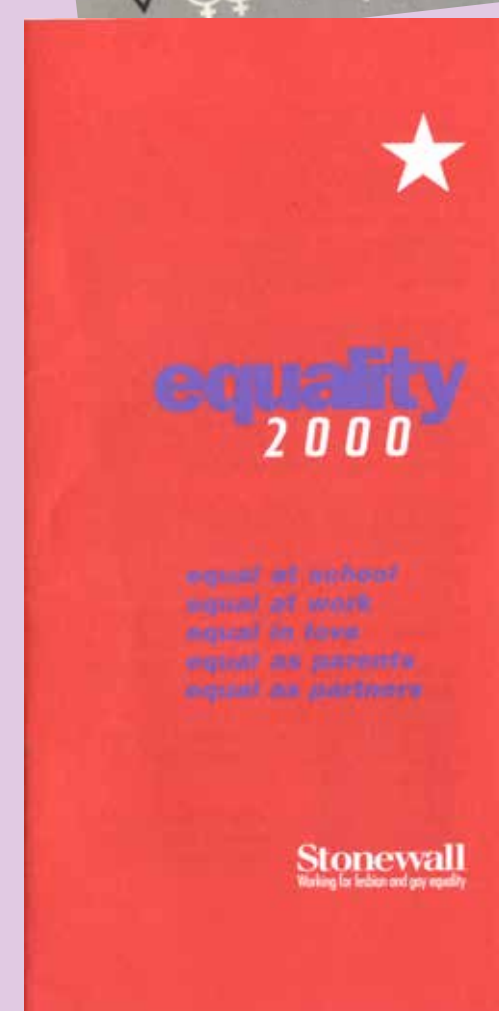
Gay Rights

LGBT members of the union for public sector staff, NALGO (today called Unison), formed a group, in 1974, called Nalgay. Over time they persuaded the union to have a policy which protected LGBT staff from prejudice at work. In 1984 the group "Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners" made positive links with the National Union of Mine Workers, this in turn led to the adoption of positive policies by the Labour Party, from 1985



Equality 2000

Stonewall, the national LGBT rights organisation, started an "equality 2000" campaign in 1997. Its aspiration was to achieve full equality in all aspects of life for LGBT people by the year 2000. (It got close with the criminal law, which became equal in 2003; equality in the civil law came about, nearly, in 2013 (if you are a Church of England Christian and wish to marry in your church – in law, it is forbidden). In 1997 there was still no direct protection for LGBT people at work.



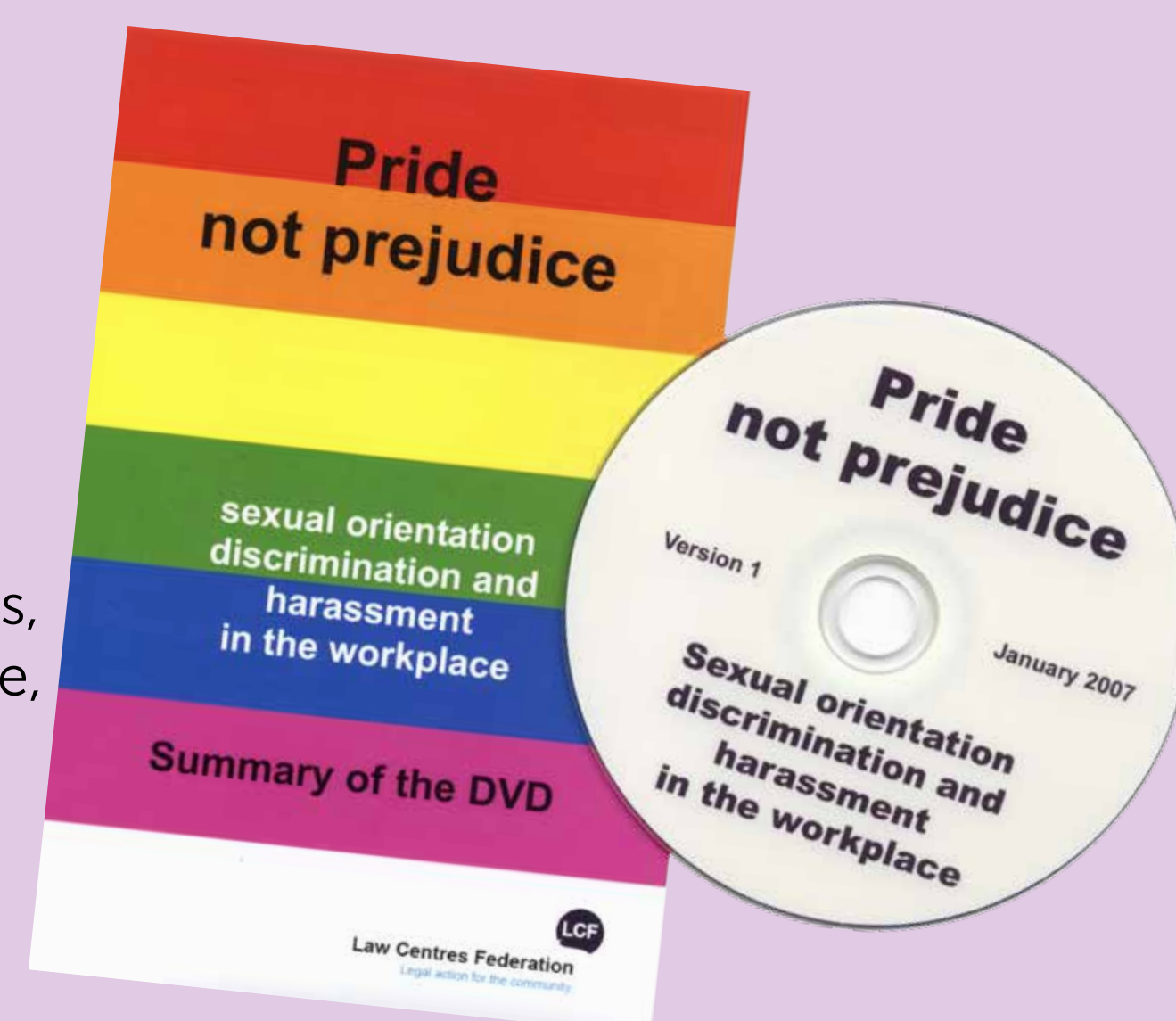
Talking Point staff newsletter

LGBT employees at Shropshire County Council set up a LGBT staff group in 2005. The Shropshire Star, of 10th August 2005, endearingly carried a headline "Council to cater for gay workers"! An image of members of the group, reclining on a sofa, in Shropshire County Council's in house newsletter of December 2006, was a source of consternation for some readers.

Pride not Prejudice

Although LGBT people had legal protection from 2003, the Law Centres Federation created a dvd to help them to use that law. They realised that a change in the law did not mean that employers' behaviour, in many cases, toward LGBT people had changed. They were dealing with many cases of harassment and discrimination..

In 2014 TUC Education at Shrewsbury College ran the first (free) Out At Work course aimed at stewards, reps, members and activists, equipping them with advice, information and reference points on LGBT issues.



An Introduction

History helps provide a map that shows where we have come from, the events that have inevitably shaped our lives and the societies we live in. Looking at history, we see the way certain actions and decisions brought about events and what the consequences of those events were.



Back in Time: the National Festival of LGBT History in Shrewsbury

Is a great opportunity to highlight Shropshire as a place where many LGBT people have always lived, loved, set up home, created families and lived their everyday lives. We

also know that there are many who have fought hard, campaigned, challenged the heterosexual and binary gender 'norms', making their voices heard as people with the right to live their lives.

We use the term LGBT as a catch all to include....Lesbians, gay Men, Bisexual People, Trans People and others who do not conform to heteronormative assumptions

A few of us attended the first National Festival of LGBT History in Manchester in February 2015 and following our presentation about LGBT activity in Shropshire, were asked if we wanted to be a 'hub' in 2016, alongside York, London, Newcastle, Bristol, Manchester. We knew that it would be a lot of work but how could we resist!

History stuff gets to you, especially once you realise how little we know ourselves, never mind how much the general public know about LGBT lives:

- **How people met each other**
- **Where they could meet and feel safe, non-judged, accepted for who they are**
- **The impact of being criminalised**
- **The impact of being abused, discriminated against, ignored, demonised**
- **The contact 'coming out' and sometimes lack of choice in 'being out'**
- **The 'codes' that helped people to 'find' each other and 'share' experiences without overtly announcing their sexuality**

In a large rural county, finding and meeting people is harder and undoubtedly a lot of people gravitate towards larger cities and towns where there is more likelihood of a 'gay' club, bar, group meeting and even an LGBT Community centre!! Also we know that some have come to the 'metropolis' of Shrewsbury from some very small rural communities

Same-sex marriage decision for town MP



History Month

The National Festival of LGBT History has grown out of the work of Schools Out (www.schools-out.org.uk) who, in 2004, initiated LGBT History Month. Their intention is ambitious – nothing less than providing the general public and our community with the education denied and kept hidden from them in mainstream education, educating 'out' prejudice and making all LGBT people visible and safe. The idea is to enable everyone – LGBT and heterosexual alike – to discover the contributions and experiences of the LGBT community in all their diversity. This will only happen if the history, lives and experiences of LGBT people are made visible.

Whether at school, through art, a museum, theatre, culture....we consistently need to be made aware of the presence of LGBT people. We exist in all times, places, all religions, cultures, ages. We should be referred to as part of everyday life without necessarily needing particular comment.

In schools '**usualising**' acclimatises children to the existence of something (e.g. LGBT people). This prepares them to be taught in more detail about those lives later on. This more in-depth teaching is the second teaching method called '**actualising**' and involves lessons with specific objectives that include a greater understanding of LGBT identities, and their impact on people and culture.

This exhibition

Largely based on material collected over the years by a few individuals. In the main it deals with the 1970s onwards. More funding is needed to do a more extensive job of collecting and displaying archival materials, shedding light on hidden lives and understanding more about the history of LGBT people and their communities, whether campaigning for change, pointing out injustices or simply getting on with their lives.

The focus is mainly on Shropshire but, we are aware that there are gaps. Where it seemed helpful we have added material from other sources. We appreciate that this exhibition is partial – we all have our own experiences, perspectives and views of 'what happened, when, how....'

We hope this exhibition will open up discussion and debate, encouraging others to start telling and sharing their own stories, adding our understanding of LGBT lives.

