

Patrick our Chair has been part of the Out House now for several years. Although Irish by birth, Nottingham has played a big part in his life. He lives and works from his base in Colwick running a very thriving (or so he says!) antiques and haulage/removal business. One of his key roles is as provider of refreshments to each committee meeting; his soda/fruit breads play an important part in helping give us the energy to think clearly! Always on the move (!), Patrick admitted to always enjoying independent travel. "After dreaming for most of my adult life, about crossing the Sahara Desert, I fulfilled my dream a couple of years ago. Setting off from Nottingham with my partner Joe, we drove all the way to Ghana in an ex-army lorry. The adventure took six months and it was certainly a

Citizenship 21

More good news on the equal Opportunities front for North Nottinghamshire - a successful bid has been made to the Stonewall Citizenship 21 programme to help raise the profile of Gay, Lesbian and Bi-sexual issues and support around four key themes:

- To map existing provision and support in, and affecting, North Nottinghamshire.
- Address and support gaps in provision.
- Co-ordinate awareness training.
- Co-ordinate better information.

The broad approach will be one of capacity building and support. Bassetlaw CVS will be the lead organisation on behalf of a wider group of organisations in North Notts.

It is intended to 'run in parallel' with the new North Nottinghamshire Multicultural initiative to further progress areas of equal opportunities and social justice throughout North Nottinghamshire. We are now actively looking for an interested freelance consultant/researcher to develop this work for a fee (£3,000). For further details please contact Michael Newstead at the BCVS on 01909 476 118 or Email: hello@bcvs.org.uk



Our Captain (Chairperson) Patrick on his annual holiday jaunt. **Has he bought it or sold it?**

'landmark' in my life." Patrick is committed to the Out House because he believes in the idea of us all having a space in which we feel at ease and to take pride in. He also enjoys being surrounded with people who feel passionately enough to never take no for an answer. He says "when crossing the desert one had to pick their fellow travellers as if one's life depended upon it..... I think I would happily invite all of the members of the committee on such a journey." Maybe that's an idea for the next committee "away day"!!

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the OUT HOUSE project Newsletter

Volume 2 No 9
March 2002

Working to meet the needs of the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Communities of Nottingham and District by providing a community centre....

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Take your partners for the Queer Quadrille !!

What with private member's bills in both the Commons and the Lords, and responses from both the government and the opposition, the debate on same sex partnership rights is coming to resemble an elaborate dance for four with each showing off their finest footwork.

Lord Lester's Civil Partnership Bill which was drafted with the help of Stonewall was given an unopposed second reading in the Lords on 25th January, and aimed to give all same-sex and unmarried heterosexual couples the right to register their partnership after 6 months' co-habitation. Unlike Ken Livingstone's London Partnership Register this WOULD have had legal consequences (e.g. creating rights as next of kin, to inherit property, housing tenancies and pension rights, exemption for inheritance tax etc. In other words the Bill aimed to give same sex couples most (but not all) the legal

Unfortunately Lord Lester the government refused its the Lords. However it has, in the Commons (second on the government to comment review is currently reportedly hopes may lead to government has already intion of its own in line with nounced changes in the regisners" to register a partner's full equality however, it may reforms, giving some rights combe even believes that allowing unmarried partners to register a death would undermine marriage but perhaps the peroxide has gone to her head!

This fear is highlighted by the government's attitude to pension rights where a separate consultation paper on Equal Treatment in Employment was issued in December in response to an E.U. Directive requiring a law to be in force by December 2003 banning discrimination at work, including discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation.

The government intends to exclude state pensions from this law and proposes only that same-sex couples be treated like unmarried straight couples in relation to employers' pension schemes. This is clearly unfair since

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Church homophobia !

Some thoughts on Christian homophobia ~

As a member of the 'Out House' and also a member of the Church of England, I have been asked to write something about Christian homophobia, but where do I begin? I am aware that many gay people regard the Christian faith as a joke and many within the church regard gay people as anathema. I sometimes feel like I am caught between the devil and the deep blue sea with both the gay community and the church viewing me with some suspicion.

So the Church, maybe even the Christian faith itself doesn't rate highly among the interests and priorities of many gay people and that's not surprising since some Christian bigots have said some less than complimentary things about us over the years so I don't doubt that the Church is a difficult, if not a dangerous place for LGB people. But despite this fact many gay people, both men and women are still to be found within its ranks, both down in the pews, up there in the pulpit or presiding at the altar. For years bishops, synods and theologians have had to address the issue of homosexuality time and time again, because it is an issue that simply will not go away. Working parties have been set up, reports have been published but still the church seems as confused as ever when one of its members stands up and declares "I'm gay"!



Some Christian people claim that there is no confusion at all, and are happy to assert that their scriptural based position is the only one to adopt; they state confidently that it is wrong to be gay where one's sexuality is expressed in genital acts; they go on to dole out such platitudes as 'love the sinner but hate the sin', excelling at the hate bit, but not doing so well on the loving front. Officially that is where the church, across the denominations is at the present time. As a result many gay people have left

the church outraged that a faith community which bases its life on the supremacy of love, can have such blatant disregard for the integrity of so many folk who long to develop their spirituality and share the riches of faith and their giftedness too, with other like minded seekers. Ordination is out of the question to sexually active gays, as I know only too well myself having had to withdraw from ordination training once I had 'come out' to my bishop. The church has also publicly opposed the lowering of the age of consent, the recognition of same sex partnerships and gay parenting rights; not a good public record really?. In some churches gay people will experience exclusion and even bullying at the hands of self righteous bigots.

But that's not the whole story. There is another lesser known opinion of the church which even bishops are prepared to stand by and which is more honouring of the love which dare not speak its name. I am aware that some rather more welcoming and respectful congregations do exist and whilst there is a very vocal 'anti-gay' lobby in the church at large, there is also a growing and influential 'pro-gay' contingent and it's interesting that the gay issue is likely to be one that

will influence the choice of the next Archbishop of Canterbury.

It can't be denied that the Bible does refer in places to homosexuality but so often such references are taken out of context and are made to convey a message which is at best misleading and at worst damaging. There is a die hard troop of homophobes lurking behind passages of the Bible of which they have little understanding, giving the Christian faith a very bad press indeed, so LGB people in the church need to tread carefully, but not be put off entirely from giving it a go. The truth is, believe it or not that the Christian faith is honouring of all sorts and conditions of people whoever they may be and the Bible has little to say about gay sexuality as we understand it today. Indeed the church can provide a rich basis for an exploration of the 'otherness' of life which many long to embark upon. Sadly though, the church is often seen to be a platform for judgemental and prejudicial attacks on LGB people, and consequently succeeds in putting many off. In essence though the Christian message is one of inclusiveness and affirmation and the growth of the pro-gay voice is testimony to this.

Regrettably there is little room here for a fuller discussion but if there are any 'ex' or even potential churchgoers reading this who would value the opportunity to continue the debate, find a gay friendly church or maybe even meet for informal 'worship' but not in the church, feel free to drop me a line at the Out House office.

Andrew Wallis.
Reader in the Parish of St. Peter with St. James.

LGB FRIENDLY CHURCHES
Metropolitan Community Church has services at the Queens Walk Community Centre every Sunday at 2.00 pm.

Nottingham Lesbian and Gay Christian Group (LGCM) meets on the 3rd Friday of the month.

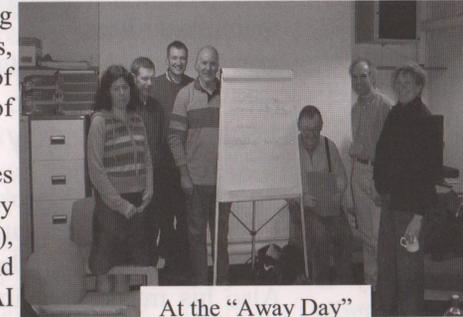
Adoramus, an open Episcopal Church with services every Sunday in the Wollaton area.

Contact the office for more information.
0115 911 0545

Out House Committee Happenings Shock !!

We're delighted to tell you that we've got 2 new committee members, Carol and Derek. Both had read about the Out House in a newsletter and felt compelled to join the committee. They were so keen we couldn't stop them !! Both bring with them excellent skills; Derek in raising funds through shops and events, and Carol with her knowledge of legal issues and experience of funding bids.

The committee now comprises of Patrick (chair), Anthony (Secretary), Richard (Treasurer), Teri Allan, Derek, Carol and Denis. Andy from the GAI Project also attends to advise (to throw in his 2 penny worth). With careful structuring management meetings now only last 1½ hours; (second Wednesday of the month) and that's including the tea and coffee break!! Would anyone like to join us....?? The committee had an "Away Day" on January 20th lead by Carolyn Shield from VOSE, to focus the project on the work needed for the year ahead. Actually billing this one as an "Away Day", was a bit of a failure as we only got about 300 yards—to the health Shop on Broad St.!! After discussing the highs and lows of the last 18 months (and recognising just how much we have achieved!), we looked at a number of key issues and devised ways of moving them forward. We recognised that our number one priority was find-



At the "Away Day"

ing the money to get the Centre open. To make this happen even more quickly, Carol will work closely with Chris (Development Worker) to prepare and submit bids. Since the day they have already drawn up a detailed plan listing many funders to target, and are busy researching/preparing bids. Derek will head the Fundraising group (see separate enclosure). Proper training, induction and support for volunteers will be addressed by the "Constituency sub-committee" as will getting the membership (you lot) more involved in the Out House. A Publicity sub-committee will look at raising the project's profile as well as overseeing newsletter production and the web-site. The committee recognised that restarting Social events was also important and will be looking into this. Alongside the existing Finance, Building and Personnel sub-committees, this will give us a good structure to really move the Out House closer and closer to its goal—the opening of the centre. All in all it was a very thought provoking and interesting day. We would welcome anyone who has a few hours to spare and who wants to get involved in the Out House. **We particularly need people with fundraising, newsletter writing, computer/dtp, or event organising skills and experience. If necessary, we can help with training. Call Chris on 0115 911 0545 now !**

Letters to the editor

From: A prominent member of the gay community

I would like to bring to your attention, your first article in Out House news letter Vol 2 No 8. I have the ears of most members of the gay scene, and we are all concerned about this article. We thought the Out House was short of funds, and this is the reason the centre is not open. So how can you justify the out-lay for the AGM at the Post House and its luxurious surroundings for just 30 members. This gives Nottingham's gay community the feeling that the subscriptions and all other funds are being squandered, no wonder you are seeking to employ a fundraiser. Is this so you can raise more funds? For more luxurious AGM'S. And you hope to get the support from other LGBT organisations, and secure money from the Health authority; you may have some difficulty after members have read that article.

Reply: *Thanks you for your letter commenting on the AGM. We were able use the Post House because we managed to get the room completely free and only had to pay for the tea & coffee. Angela Mason agreed to waive her fee for speaking and though we had to pay her travel expenses (£55) this is very cheap for a national speaker. I would assure that we try to keep costs as low as possible and our sole intention is to put every penny we can into getting the community centre open as soon as possible .*

From: Notts. Domestic Violence Forum

We were interested to read the article in the last newsletter on Domestic Violence, and would like to offer the following information.

Nottingham Domestic Violence Forum is an independent inter-agency initiative that brings together a range of statutory, voluntary and private sector organisations and individuals to tackle domestic violence issues throughout Nottinghamshire. We host seminars, provide training, work with young people on valuing non-abusive relationships, have a newsletter and hold meetings. If you are interested in getting involved or think that we may be of assistance to you then please let us know.

Contact, Email: enquires@ndvf.co.uk or contact the office on 0115 962 3237

Ps I am sure that you would be interested to know that AOL fund programmes in the USA to 're-educate' homosexuals!!

Reply *We were not aware of this, but are now in the process of changing our Internet Service Provider to one that is more ethical.*

East Midlands Bi Network....

A new e-mail group for bisexual people in the East Midlands. To subscribe, send an e-mail to embn-subscribe@yahoo.com

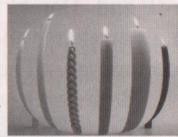
LL is lengthening !

Volunteers on Nottingham Lesbian Line are celebrating a double success. Their recent fund-raising event at the Foresters produced enough money to pay for their phone expenses and also encouraged 6 people to volunteer for training. By the time you read this, Lesbian Line should have resumed their regular twice-weekly service (on Monday & Wednesdays 7-9pm). You can find out by calling them on **0115 941 0652**

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Stay Warm

If you are aged 60 or over, or if a person who is permanently resident in your home is aged 60 or over, there is a unique way to heat and light your home. Stay warm lets you use all the gas and electricity you need for a low fixed regular payment, regardless of how much energy you use. More details phone: **0800 1694694**



Handel was gay ! (?)

So claims a new book on the life of Handel, by Ellen Harris. Apparently the composer was part of an influential gay circle in the 17th century Europe. Also his music contains a "clear homosexual sub-text". Hmmmmmmm.... Not so much b flat but f sharp !!!!

Thanks Thanks Thanks Thanks Thanks Thanks Thanks Thanks Thanks

The Out House Millennium of our community for recent nated the records of the place for men in the 60's and local and national records of Equality). Further thanks hang on to them for the time store them in ! Donations of historical materials are always welcome— phone the Out House Office on **0115 911 0545**



History project is grateful to 2 upstanding members donations to our archives. Martin Fox has donated "Pavilion Club" (the only decent meeting 70's!) and Ike Cowan has donated early CHE (Campaign for Homosexual are due to both of them for agreeing to being until we have an Out House to

(Continued from page 1) *Take your partners for the Queer Quadrille*

same-sex couples do not have the opportunity to marry. It is also ironic since the government has already introduced pension rights for same sex and unmarried MP's! Ominously however, it is reported that, in spite of Gordon Brown's good track record on gay rights, there have been serious objections to partnership rights from the Treasury on grounds of cost (e.g. pensions). The Torys' position is even more ambivalent. They oppose both the private members' bills but say that same-sex couples should have some of the rights of married couples e.g. a right to be consulted when a partner is seriously ill, and to inherit property and tenancies. This piecemeal approach could be seen as a damage-limitation exercise, at once giving an appearance of liberality whilst at the same time avoiding anything like full equality which they feel would undermine the "sanctity of marriage". This leaves the Lib Dems as the only major party giving partnership rights their unreserved support.

What can you do??

Out House urges all in the LGB community to make their views known on these important issues in support of those at the heart of the debate. One letter/email to the following could cover all the issues stating your support for full equality, your concerns and personal experience stories: -

- 1) Your M.P. at House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1 OAA
- 2) Lord Lester, The Odysseus Trust, 193, Fleet Street, London EC4A 2AH.
- 3) Stonewall, 46-48, Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1WOEB or suhraiya@stonewall.org.uk.
- 4) In relation to pensions and equality at work www.dti.gov.uk/er/equality. (The government's consultation paper can also be found at this site)

Out House News

The Corridors of Power...!!

Local Strategic Partnerships are the new bodies that will bring together the various plans for local services in order to reach agreement on an area's "masterplan" or Community Strategy. For so-called deprived areas like Nottingham, it will also co-ordinate work on the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. These plans will shape future services and other developments, so Out House felt it really important that our (LGB) voices were heard in this process and we weren't left out again due to our invisibility in the majority of statistics. To achieve this we joined the "Community Network" subgroup, which tries to represent the voluntary/community sector in this process.

To be honest this has not been an easy process so far, partly due to the getting up to speed on what it's all about, and also because of the sheer amount of paperwork that is generated before each meeting. The group is friendly, and meets about once a month over a very nice buffet lunch (yummmmy !!). With the present focus on getting the funding to refurbish the Centre building, Out House will be taking a back seat on the Community Network group but will try to keep you informed of developments. If anyone else from the LGB community wants to get involved we will provide support.

HIV risks calculated

The risk of transmitting HIV through oral sex is four in 10,000, according to scientists at the University of California. A report by epidemiologist Kimberly Page-Shafer also states the risk of getting HIV through anal sex with a condom is 18 in 1,000.

Stonewall—Housing advice
Housing advice for Lesbians & Gay men
Advice line—020 7359 5767
 Monday, Thursday and Friday—10am to 1pm
 Tuesday and Wednesday—2pm to 5pm
Minicom - 020 7359 8188 (Office Hours)

Want to Know More ???!

So you're not an Out House member, but have enjoyed this newsletter and would like to keep in touch with the progress we make towards opening Nottingham's LGB community centre? Then..... it's time you gave yourself the pleasure of getting our newsletter on a regular basis by joining the Out House !! Phone the Out House office NOW on 0115 911 0545 and we'll send you a membership form by return. It only costs £1 and membership will last until the centre is opened (and that must be a bargain !).

Gay Connection

A new group to promote understanding of the gay, lesbian and bisexual community.

'Gay Connection...' has been formed primarily to help the parents, partners and friends of gay, lesbian and bisexual people, to a better understanding of a different lifestyle. The aim of the group is to encourage discussion and acceptance of the life of 10% of the population. For more details see www.gayconnection.fsnet.co.uk

Would you like to take part in research that will give voice to your experience? Then read on ...

A team of researchers at the Nottingham Trent University are currently undertaking research into the experiences of Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals aged 50 and over. If you are interested in contributing please contact: Debbie Thompson at Debbie.thompson@ntu.ac.uk phone 0115 848 5588 or write to: Department of Social Sciences, The Nottingham Trent University, Burton Street, Nottingham NG1 4BU.