

alga NEWSLETTER

Australian Lesbian & Gay Archives Inc

Newsletter No 18, November 2002

PO Box 124, Parkville, Vic 3052

Incorporated Assn No. A0000240Z

ABN 92 450 443 760

ISSN 1037-3756

Midsumma Walk

The Archives will be hosting a History Walk again this year as part of the Midsumma festivities. But we have a new one on offer – we are heading to Fitzroy; and we have a new time – it will start at 7pm.

Following on from its triumphant tours of central Melbourne, the gang from the Archives has retreated to the suburbs. Well, Carlton, Fitzroy, Collingwood, anyway - our oldest suburbs. And guess what? We've found us. Perverts, camps and gays and lesbians lurking in the grandeur of the Exhibition Buildings and flaunting ourselves in the streets and secret laneways. The childhood of the world's oldest lesbian. Men passing as women. Some of Melbourne's first gay bars. A century and a half of fear and fantasticosity; dread and defiance; crims and celebration.

Saturday 1 February

Start Time: 7:00 PM

Meet at the Exhibition Buildings. Corner of Nicholson and Gertrude Streets.

Cost \$5

And after a bit of a lie down, we will be at Pride March as usual, the very next day – Sunday 2 February at 5pm.

Annual meeting

ALGA's Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 12 December, 7.30 pm at VAC. As well as the usual reports and election of office bearers, there will be discussion of a proposal for an endowment fund for bequests, which the committee has been considering over the past six months. The fund is seen as a way of giving confidence to potential benefactors who want to help secure the long term future of the Archives, particularly for accommodation and eventually staffing. But we are also aware that it needs to be set up in a way that does not unduly restrict future committees. No resolution will be put at the meeting, however members feedback is welcomed, as would help from anyone with experience or contacts in establishing funds of this sort.

There will be light refreshments after the meeting and all members are warmly invited to attend.

Newcastle hosts first regional HH conference

The fifth Australian Homosexual Histories conference was held at Newcastle on 28-29 October 2002. The first three HH conferences were in Melbourne, the fourth in Adelaide, and this was the first time the conference has gone to a regional centre. While still auspiced by ALGA, this conference had local organisers and local sponsors, including the Newcastle City Council, Rainbow Visions (a Hunter Valley group) and the Hunter branch of the AIDS Council of NSW.

Attended by about 50 people in a handsome room within the Newcastle Town Hall, the conference attracted the usual spread of interstaters while about half the participants were local. Some events were held in parallel with the Queer Studies conference including a most pleasant wine tasting to end day 1, and a well attended and stimulating public talk by Dennis Altman on day 2. Dennis' talk was titled '30 years on: gay liberation in retrospect'. Both conferences were part of the Gay Games VI Sport and Cultural Festival.

Robert French's keynote address on 'Martin Smith and the use of the archival record', took a critical look at Martin Smith's pioneering articles on gay history in *Campaign* 25 years ago, and from there a broader examination of how archival records have or haven't been used since, suggesting in the process several areas of future research.

The program was wide-ranging as usual. Not all of it was 'history' in the strict sense, but interesting nonetheless. Two presentations which I found most engaging were in this category. Sandy O'Sullivan, a PhD student at Newcastle University, talked about her performance work in regional NSW around lesbian issues, including a Drag King persona that she sometime performs – and how these are received by different audiences, lesbian, non-lesbian, and different age groups.

Jessie Morwood, an independent researcher and parent of an intersex child talked about the unnecessary pain that is caused by a society that enforces artificial categories of sex, and the (so far unmoved) response of government to her practical suggestions for a third box to be ticked on birth certificates (male, female, neither).

The work-in-progress reports were interesting too. Graham Willett talked about his research on the history of the camp world in Melbourne in the 1960s, to better understand the transition to the decades following, in which this world was so transformed. Peter Robinson (RMIT), who is researching 'Coming out late in life', presented findings from interviews with a sample of 20 lesbians, transgender people and gay men over the age of 50. Danielle Orr (Murdoch) presented some fascinating findings from her research into the journals of Anne Lister (1791-1840), an early nineteenth century Englishwoman who was a self-declared 'lover of the fairer sex'.

Alison Laurie from Victoria University, New Zealand analysed the depiction of the lesbian characters in Peter Jackson's film *Heavenly Creatures*, a fictionalised version of a 1954 teenage domestic murder in New Zealand, which for many years was used as a cautionary tale by New Zealand media to connect lesbianism with insanity and crime. Alison Laurie has co-authored a book on this murder ('Parker and Hulme: A Lesbian View', Auckland, New Women's Press 1991, and Ithaca NY, Firebrand 1995).

One of the nice things about these conferences being relatively small is that with a single group and no parallel sessions, you get acquainted with many of the participants over two days. As one of the regulars said to me, these conferences give him a feeling of collegiality that he doesn't experience at other conferences. I don't go to academic conferences, but I couldn't help contrast the HH conferences with the routine bloodletting at the national homosexual conferences I attended 1975-1985!

One special finishing touch at this conference was a visit to the Newcastle gallery where director Nick Mitzevich led a tour highlighting works by exhibited artists of local origin, including William Dobell and Brad Levido.

Thanks and congratulations to the conference organisers, Kevin Markwell, James Bennett and Marguerite Johnson, for their sterling work in bringing the conference together and for carrying it off so smoothly. Thanks too to Craig Johnston in Sydney who kept the webpage up-to-date for it.

GJ

Acquisitions

Recent donations have included:

Missing issues of the Australian gay male photographic magazine 'Not only BLUE' by the publisher, Studio Magazines with the kind assistance of Robert Gibbs.

Extensive personal collection of press clippings and magazine articles donated by Geoff A.

Sandy O'Sullivan, drag king performer in NSW, donated her CD titled 'Felt'.

Video of 'The Set' (1969) donated by Alan Duncan. This video is thought to be the first mainstream movie produced in Australia depicting homosexuality.

Photos of a lesbian commitment ceremony in response to an advertisement placed in *Lesbiana* to increase the representation of women in ALGA's photo collection.

AIDS vigil badges donated by Gary Clark from Adelaide, in response to request in the April newsletter.

Ephemera related to homosexuals' experience of the Holocaust, donated by Robert Chuter, producer of 'The Singing Forest', which performed at Midsumma 2000.

Mardi Gras History mailed out

In August, ALGA mailed out complimentary copies of Graham Carbery's 1995 book, *A history of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras* to all Victorian regional libraries. The mailout also included a list of gay and lesbian history references prepared by Graham Willett. Our thanks to Colin Billing at ALSO Foundation, and Graham Dudley from the Public Library Division for their help in enabling the mailout. Thanks, too, to the envelope stuffers who dragged themselves out of bed and out to the outer suburbs on a Sunday.

T-shirts – position filled!

We are pleased to welcome Kate Clifford as a volunteer to the Archives, working on t-shirt cataloguing and preservation. Over the past six months Kate has sought advice from a fabric conservator, arranged purchase of suitable acid-free materials, developed a structure for capturing essential information about the t-shirts collection, and is now well into the cataloguing task.

William and John

Lee Johns has finished his listing of contents of 'William and John', Australia's first commercial gay magazine (eight issues spanning 1972-73). One of our projects for the coming year is to make our lists, including Lee's, available through the ALGA website.

Logging of tapes

Anyone who has transcribed audio tapes verbatim will know what a painstaking task this is. ALGA has transcribed several of its oral history tapes (for which we are indebted to Helen P over many years), but this year has embarked on a new method of recording the content of tapes called logging. By this we mean the

listing of people, places and events mentioned in a tape, and the key passages with the time reference to where they occur on the tape. This has proved to be a valuable research tool, and thanks to Graham C and Naomi Stallard for their work so far. If you think this sort of work would interest you, please contact Graham Willett by email on gwillett@unimelb.edu.au, or telephone (03) 9482 1184.

Gay watch

Wandering through the new National Museum of Australia recently, alert to the absence of homosexual history, our roving reporter was pleasantly surprised to find at least a few of us in the displays.

Eternity: Stories from the Emotional Heart of Australia is a gallery organised around the theme of emotion – specifically: Thrill, Separation, Passion, Chance, and Joy. Under Thrill, we have Ron Muncaster, whose Mardi Gras costumes have, well, thrilled, so many of us often over the years. Other figures include Captain Moonlite, the bushranger, and the tragic loss of his young partner James Nesbit; and Monte Punshon, the world's oldest lesbian.

Well done NMA!

Up, up and away!

The Archives is continuing to contribute a history column to *MCV*, one of the Melbourne gay papers (which recently celebrated its 100th issue. This year we opted for a 7 Up theme – beginning in 1950 we do one item from each year for 52 weeks (hence '52 Up').

Here is the first in the series.

1950: THE LAMPSHADE SHOP

The nineteen-fifties opened in Australia with a homosexual scandal in Adelaide that came to be known as the Lampshade Shop Scandal.

The Lampshade Shop was in Rundle Street – the business premises of one Bert Hines. Hines, maker of lampshades and artificial flowers to the gentry, was on the one hand a gentleman of some repute. Indeed, no less a figure than the Governor's lady patronised his.

goods. On the other hand, this was the same man known, in rather different circles, as Big Bertha, described in the 1970s by one who knew him as 'outrageous, like an Edna Everage, he was a tall, big, butch chap'.

At night, when the society folk were safely at home, Big Bertha would host very camp parties in the residence above his shop. A flagon of wine and a secret knock admitted you into the presence of bevvies of flamboyant young men: 'flairy queens ... all fluffing and screaming, and ... all in drag'. Gatherings of as many as *fifteen* were reported!

Too much of a good thing, of course. Alerted by some outraged worthy (reportedly a parent of one of the young men), the police moved in in early 1950. Lacking hard evidence of wrong-doing (whatever else was going on in the Lampshade Shop, it wasn't sex), the coppers fell back on intimidation. One after the other, frightened boys confessed to acts of unnatural vice – and named their partners. In the end, ten men were charged.

A vengeful judge imposed prison sentences. The press revealed all, ruining lives and reputations. And the second half of the twentieth century was launched.

Thanks

The Archives acknowledges the following people for making donations since our last newsletter in April:

Marja Berclouw	Laurie Bebbington
David H	Libby Jamieson
Kendall Lovett & Mannie de Saxe	Murray McLachlan Richard Peterson
Sue Kentlyn	Ian Purcell

Donations have enabled us to catch up on a large backlog of periodicals binding, with annual expenditure this year of \$1770.

Why an Archives – and how you can contribute

The Archives is the memory of the gay and lesbian community. We aim to preserve records of Australian homosexual life, past and present, for use by future generations.

The Archives has been going since 1978. The collection of periodicals is probably the core of the Archives' collection. But we also seek records of gay and lesbian life outside of organised groups, through personal letters, photographs and other memorabilia, including from times before there was a gay movement. We also encourage those with recollections of pre-movement days to record these for posterity through the Archives' Oral History Project. Requests for confidentiality are strictly adhered to.

You can support the Archives financially by becoming a member (\$20, \$5 concession), or by making a donation. All donations to the Archives over \$2 are tax deductible.

For those with the time and interest, you can contribute as a volunteer. There is a range of tasks to suit people's different talents and levels of commitment. For example:

- ◆ writing to groups around Australia to let them know about the Archives, and seeking their support
- ◆ listing and ordering parts of the collection that are of interest to you, eg. t-shirts, banners or posters
- ◆ taking care of the collection of a group that has special significance to you – ordering and listing that group's papers, maybe interviewing some of the people who are involved in running the group
- ◆ photocopying and ordering press clippings
- ◆ liaising with other collectors of gay and lesbian material, and arranging swaps of duplicate material
- ◆ helping with fund raising and organising major events (trivia nights, conferences etc)
- ◆ helping us distribute ALGA publications to bookshops
- ◆ writing promotional material to help raise awareness of the Archives
- ◆ arranging displays
- ◆ helping us solve the perennial problem of insufficient space.

The Archives lives in the basement of VAC at 6 Claremont Street, South Yarra. We are open on most Thursdays nights from about 7pm to 9 pm, but we ask that people phone to let us know when they are coming. Tel. (03) 9482 1184, or email on gwillett@unimelb.edu.au

SUBSCRIBE FOR 2003

Note to members: a separate renewal form is enclosed indicating whether your membership is due. This form is for general readers of the newsletter who are not already members.

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Postcode _____

Phone _____

I would like to become a member and enclose

\$1 joining fee (new members only) \$

\$20 (full membership) \$

or \$5 (student or pensioner concession) \$

Donation (tax deductible over \$2) \$

TOTAL \$ _____

Please make cheques payable to 'Australian Lesbian & Gay Archives', or 'ALGA'.

Please indicate if you are agreeable to your donation being publicly acknowledged, eg. in ALGA's newsletter:

Yes No

If yes, please state if you are happy for your full name or only your initials to be used.

Full name Initials only

In the case of donations over \$50, ALGA would like to acknowledge the donation as sponsoring the binding of a periodical. This would be in the form of a slip pasted inside the cover of a bound volume. Are you agreeable to this?

If more than one person is the donor, please print names and \$ for each

.....

Signature

Please return this form to ALGA at

PO Box 124, Parkville, Vic 3052