

NEW IN THE ARCHIVE...

Wow! New stuff, and then some. First of all, apologies to Dr Gordon Hunt's sister Gloria for the late notice of her generous donation of objects from his estate, including the remarkable 1958 book *Homosexuality: A subjective and objective approach*, which collects much earlier information and was entirely new to Ourstory. Another 24 books (see example top right) kindly came our way from Fiona who had used them in her Masters. And Peter Burton donated the latest in a continuing series of new American titles, where queer publishing houses survive in some variety.

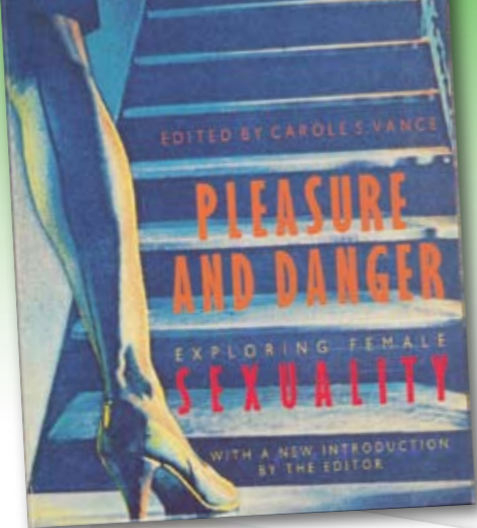
Magazines came in abundance. Thanks to Jeremy for a very full run of *Bound and Gagged* (unavailable for open sale in the UK for many years) and many copies of *HIM*. Mark sent two bulging carrier bags of important pornos; many *Zippers* among them, together with such delights as a single copy of the delightfully-named *Butch Trade*.

Peter cleverly found an astonishing kaftan with the label of Ken of Lancing, made

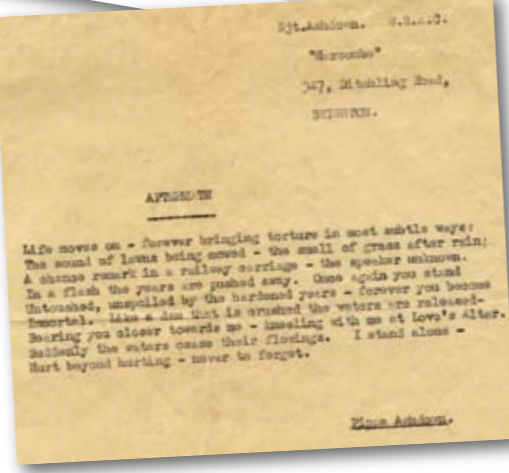
perhaps in the Seventies when Ken continued his Filk'n Casuals threadwork alone. Textiles – in the form of banners and quilts – also feature largely in an enormous deposit made by the Diocese of Chichester at the closing of the Open Door HIV and Aids drop-in service which Father Marcus Riggs had started in 1988. More of this treasure trove and Ourstory's role in documenting Open Door's sad demise in 2009. Textile again was a London Pride 1991 T-shirt sent by Gwen along with a copy of the 45rpm vinyl *Shout! Official Anthem for Pride 88*. Thanks to Gwen for wishing us 'good luck in your valuable endeavours'.

Finally, two dusty envelopes came from Jim, who'd been their custodian since 1993. We nearly wet our pants on finding that one of them included Bubbles Ashdown's collection of the lesbian love poetry she'd written and kept from the 1940s onwards (bottom right). Our apologies to anyone we've forgotten in this – necessarily – brief listing of recent spoils.

We nearly wet our pants...



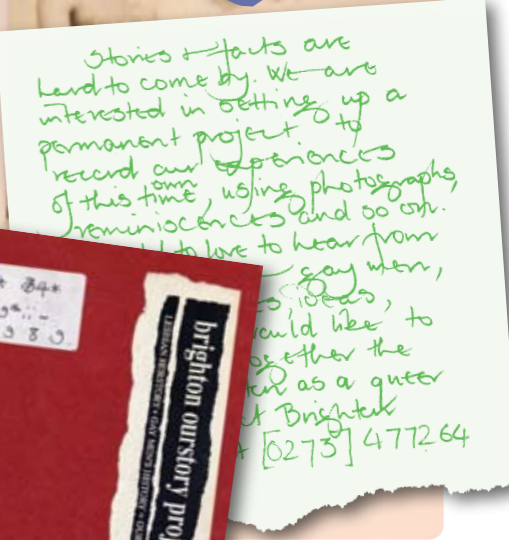
Portrait by anonymous artist in the Open Door collection



brighton ourstory..



Paul Disney



Early Ourstory note-books (above and left)

TWENTY AND DEFINITELY STILL OUT!

Somewhen during the course of 1988 – my memory says Spring but I wouldn't swear to it – at a meeting of the campaign against Section 28 in the Brighthelm Centre, Tom Sargent (above left) asked me if I'd be interested in helping set up a lesbian and gay history group. He was approaching a number of people he thought might be interested. I said yes straightaway – I'd long harboured an ambition to have a gay museum and this seemed right up the same street. I paused to wonder why Tom thought I might be interested as (my memory says) we'd never had a conversation before. It occurs to me now that it was because I was old. I was thirty-six! I would have memories – and did. Despite being a callow youth of twenty-two, Tom already had a genius for spotting in history books and biographies subtle clues about sexuality. He could also see with piercing clarity how prejudice and institutionalised homophobia kept the histories of our communities hidden from view.

Just as Brighton Ourstory Project was being born, the pioneering Hall Carpenter Archives, started by community activists in London, were

winding down and being dispersed to the safe-keeping of large institutions, where they remain. The Lesbian Archive in London was an inspiration and so was the London-based Lesbian History Group. As new kids on the block we learnt from them all and we plunged in! Just two years after we'd begun, our first show, *Really Living*, was staged – a mixture of memories, music, film and documentary evidence of what life was like for six generations of lesbians and gay men. Within four years our first book, *Daring Hearts*, was on the press. A string of shows followed and by 1997 we were taking over Brighton Library with our exhibition *Gay Girls and Bachelor Boys*. And we've never stopped – a complete list of our prodigious output is on our website (which is, thanks to Alf and Fraser, a work of art in itself).

Ourstory's story is essentially about people – their lives, their memories, their ideas, their creativity, intuition and inspiration. Also their organisational flair, technical wizardry, abilities to sort and sift, and willingness to get on with the job.

At least 240 people have made a contribution to Ourstory's success over the last twenty years – some by telling their story, some by giving things to the archive, others by acting, designing, cataloguing and (probably the most challenging task) undertaking the management of the group. As we celebrate our twentieth birthday, we'd like to extend our thanks to all who've been involved from the founders to the most recent recruits – you are Ourstory and without you it wouldn't have happened and we wouldn't be able to go on to the next exciting stage of opening a trial museum (see issue 23 of this newsletter).

It also wouldn't have happened in quite the same way without the generosity of all those who've supported us financially over the years – individuals and funding bodies. As we find ourselves now at the start of a world recession and the government is encouraging us to spend, spend, spend, you can do nothing better to help the country than by giving money to us – because we need to spend, spend, spend on our museum! And to keep the archive in fine fettle. We have all made Ourstory's past and we can go on to make a very fine future.

Generations of lesbians and gay men...

SYD LEWIS

● We were sad to hear that the lovely and very talented Syd (pictured right) died in Spain in the autumn of 2008. He hailed from Wales and came early to Brighton where he became the partner of Tony Stuart, owner of the famous 42 Club on Brighton's seafront. Ourstory newsletter 22 displays the graphic flair he brought to the presentation of the 42 Club shows, the programmes for all of which he designed. A number of his photographs were still on loan to Ourstory when he died. His niece has kindly agreed that they, with further items she has saved, will now join our collection permanently.



Tony Stuart as drawn by his partner Syd



EVERSO GRATEFUL!

To an anonymous lesbian donor who has dipped into her own pocket to provide a quarter's rent on our office and storage premises: thank you! To Styles at the Marlborough Hotel for allowing us to place collection boxes – Ourstory's first – on the two bars now under her new overall management: thank you! And to Nina for asking that all presents received at her last birthday party be in the form of money for us: thank you! We love cash: it underwrites our work and keeps us moving forward.

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UNCOVERING LOST WORLDS

Curiouser and Curiouser. was the title of this year's LGBT History and Archives conference held by London Metropolitan Archives on Saturday 6 December. As part of a thrilling day's happenings and exchanges Brighton Ourstory gave a talk with the title *Sodomy and Suffrage*. It was very well received. Focussing on the joys and perils of this kind of research – much of it being done in readiness for our trial museum opening in 2009 – Linda spoke about lesbianism among the Suffragettes in the Edwardian town and Tom gently knocked the audience sideways with a six-minute tour of his three years investigating local pooviness from 1800 to 1900.

BROTHER SODOMITES

The public record of same-sex activities among men on the streets and in the law courts of 19th-century Sussex is dazzlingly rich. So far we have collected around 200 legal cases, which begin to cluster and multiply in Brighton from the 1820s onwards. It's no longer possible to pretend that 'unnatural' men have been invisible or played a negligible role in creating the Regency city we know and love today.

To take just one example we might focus on the case of Charles Allen Grover who met a London postman called William John Clark on the seafront one September evening in 1889. They talked and walked eastwards to a spot close to the Aquarium

where Charles apparently became amorous and William became alarmed. The case was heard by the bench of magistrates soon after and sent to the Assize court in Lewes. Charles appeared there in December, respectably dressed and with a blue piece of ribbon in his coat. He denied the charge and was found not guilty. Lucky man! What happened to William is currently unknown but it's more than possible this was not his first or last brush with the law.

This story of The Postman and The Gent is just one of many. Men with a fringe involvement in the famous London 'Men in Woman's Clothes' case of Ernest Boulton and Frederick Park were later found to have taken refuge in Brighton, getting into fresh trouble down here.

Robert Henry Cliburn, one of Oscar Wilde's renters, began his blackmailing career in the town as a very young man. The list goes on. Sodomitical history is not a matter of the occasional outbreak of activity but rather a steady blizzard across the country during the century. Tracing it all in its entirety is probably an impossible task; but one worth attempting if only for the sake of justice, of truth and the riveting human interest of the tales revealed.

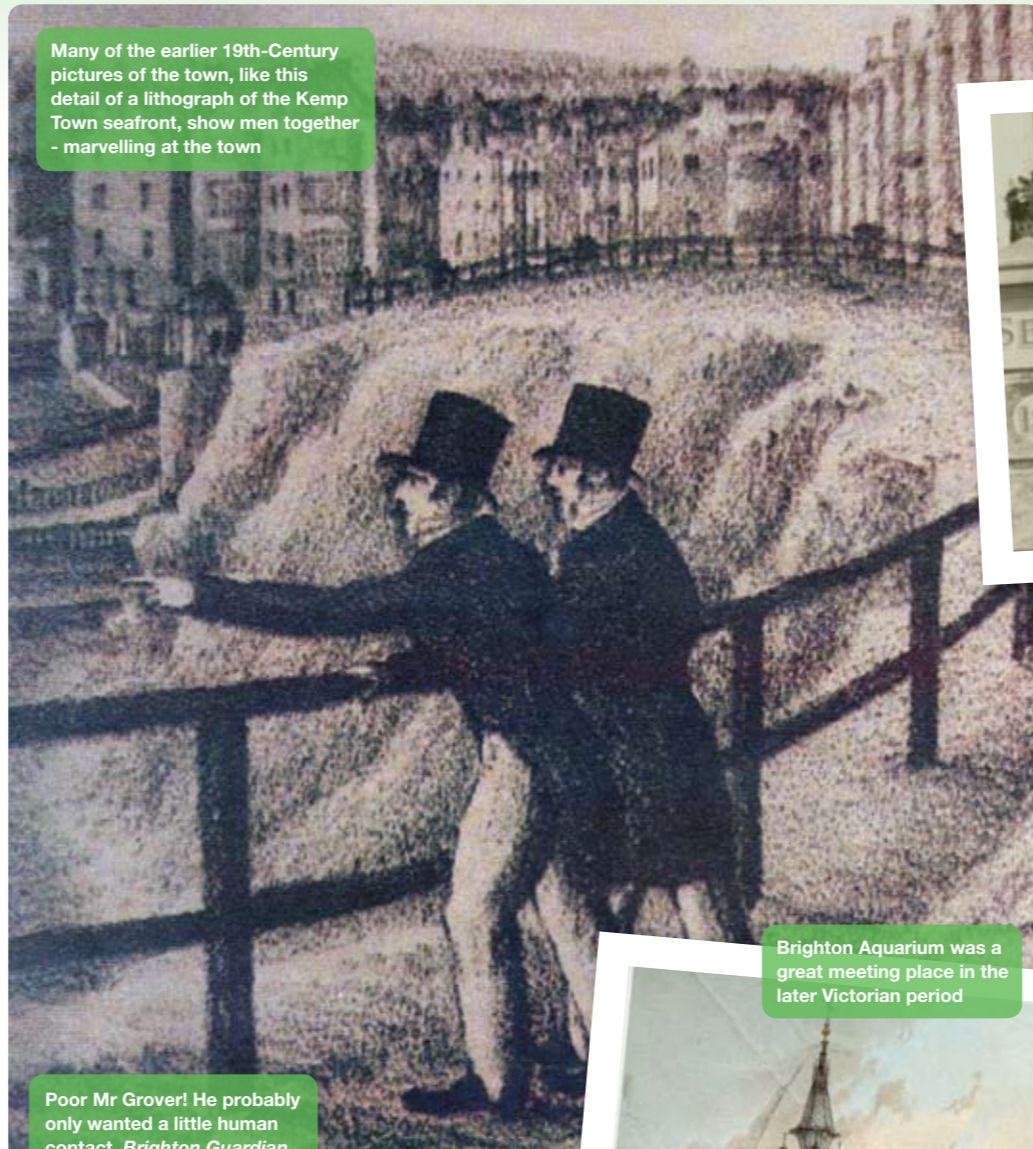
The glad news is that items held by the Brighton History Centre, Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, East Sussex Record Office,

private collectors and Brighton Ourstory itself together show the strength of the safety and solidarity offered

by the men who lived here - and also some of the sad stories triggered by others - often outsiders - who did not understand the ways of Sussex and Brighton men.

In case the Nineteenth Century seems irrelevantly distant to younger queers today, it's important to remember that older people have sex lives too, and messages of survival to impart to a new generation, and that some of these old and dusty examples of men in terrible trouble or triumph still - like the famous trials of Oscar Wilde - echo down the years and flavour and inform our lives today.

Know your roots if you wish to flourish...



Many of the earlier 19th-Century pictures of the town, like this detail of a lithograph of the Kemp Town seafront, show men together - marvelling at the town

Poor Mr Grover! He probably only wanted a little human contact. *Brighton Guardian* 2 October 1889

ALLEGED INDECENT ASSAULT.—*Charles Allen Grover, 49, was charged with attempting to commit an act of gross indecency with another male person. Mr. J. C. Buokwell appeared for the prisoner. The details given are not fit for publication.*

The prosecutor, William John Clark, a London postman, living at 5, Ifield Road, West Brompton, but at present staying at 78, Cowper Street, Hove, stated that on the previous evening, while walking on the lower esplanade near the West Pier, the prisoner spoke to him and accompanied him to near the Aquarium, where the acts complained of were, he said, committed. He gave prisoner into the custody of P.C. Rean. He then said he was very sorry for what he had done and would apologise. He repeatedly asked to be let off.

Prisoner totally denied the charge, and was committed for trial at the Assizes. Bail was allowed, prisoner in £50 and one surety in £50 or two of £25.



Brighton Aquarium was a great meeting place in the later Victorian period

Tom Sargent Collection Brighton

Museum of London Suffragette Fellowship Collection



Sea View boarding house 1916



Minnie Turner by Ada Schofield

SISTER SUFFRAGETTES

In 1910, as women's battle for the vote escalated, Miss Minnie Turner, a militant member of the Women's Social and Political Union (known as Suffragettes), opened a guest house at 13 Victoria Road in Brighton. Called Sea View, it operated as a home, a refuge, a place of convalescence for women who'd suffered ill-treatment in prison and a place to stay for the many WSPU speakers who

came to Brighton. At this stage, Minnie was in her mid-forties and had been living in Brighton for about twenty years.

Sea View acted as a hub for WSPU activities. These included a punishing programme of open air meetings on the seafront (a bit like Speaker's Corner), running their shop near the Clock Tower, distributing their papers, *Votes For Women* and *The*

Suffragette on the streets of Brighton (actually, in the gutters, so that they couldn't be charged with obstruction) and holding weekly 'at homes', where new members could learn the ropes.

We're still hot on the case looking for lesbians among the Suffragettes (see

newsletter 23). There are plenty of candidates (most of the militants were single - either

unmarried, divorced or widowed) and Minnie Turner could well be the jewel in a dyke's crown. Certainly she never married and seems only ever to have had women guests during Sea Views forty-year history.

We're still hot on the case...

● To learn much more about Minnie and her mates, come to Linda's talk for the Friends of Brighton Ourstory in January

Call Brighton Ourstory on **01273 206655** or contact us by email on **info@brightonourstory.co.uk**