

# Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance



# Newsletter

Issue 3

March 2011

Hastings & Rother  
Rainbow Alliance  
Working to support the  
LGBT local community



Di Nichols, Acting Chair

## Snippets

- Azur buzzes! See Out and Proud item on this page
- LGBT 1066 Country leaflet reissued. Check your local library or see website
- HRRA continues to raise awareness on forums like Hastings Equality & Human Rights Charter and Rother District Council Equality Group
- New address for HRRA, see back page

## Welcome from our Acting Chair

Les Tostevin has stepped down as Chair of HRRA after more than three years in the post.

In that time, he has led HRRA from a near moribund state to the thriving organisation it is now, all with patience, consideration and good humour. Therefore, it is with some trepidation that I take over as Acting Chair until the AGM when again, it is you who will elect your Chair.

I am very relieved that Les will remain very active as a Trustee and will concentrate on finding and accounting for Funding, and on general administration. If it were not so, I do not feel that I could do the job. Les did all this before as well as being Chair.

With all the cuts, nationally and locally, we are presently struggling to get our core funding for 2011-12. We now have the Equalities Act and the respect and support of Hastings and Rother local authorities, and of other statutory and non-statutory organisations, but actual cash is very hard to get.

The problem is made worse because, although we can give guesstimates of the total number of LGBT people in Hastings and Rother, say between 8000 and 10,000, we cannot prove it.

Only you, and the LGBT people you know who are not yet members of HRRA, can do that by fully and accurately completing all monitoring forms you receive.

Di Nichols, Acting Chair

## Out and Proud

There was a bumper turnout in February at the Azur, Marina, for a free event celebrating the local LGBT community.

Over 300 people came to view more than 25 stalls from charities, voluntary groups and fire and police services, amongst others.

The aim was to encourage more LGBT people to be involved in their communities by joining organisations or becoming volunteers. There was a very positive response.

The event was opened by Hastings Mayor, Kim Forward, wearing a rainbow skirt specially made for the occasion. Cllr Jay Kramer, deputy leader of Hastings Borough Council (HBC), spoke about the council's aim to promote greater community cohesion.

Flying the rainbow flag over Hastings Town Hall for the first time ever made a powerful statement and shows that HBC is behind what HRRA is trying to do. It also indicates that Hastings is a welcoming and safe place for the LGBT community, whether for working, living or visiting.

Throughout the afternoon, there was a variety of entertainment with local talent well represented. Carol Prior, sang several songs and local author/stand-up comedian Val Lee performed, much to everyone's delight. Ququlele gave another polished performance and we finished with songs from Jean Fessey, also known as Dungaree Jean.

We were very pleased to have signed up some more members for HRRA. Membership free and helps us when applying for funding.



## Coming Out Training

HRRRA delivered two half day training courses to 40 staff who work in Adult Social Care, ranging from management and policy making to delivering care and support services. They came from Local Government, Voluntary Agencies and the Private Sector. Thanks to the "Awards for All" Lottery funding, HRRRA was able to provide the courses free to participants.

A main aim was to promote the understanding of issues that LGBT people have to face every day and why they might be reluctant to 'come out' to those who provide services.

Common life situations that posed 'coming out' dilemmas were given to small groups who had to decide whether to 'come out' or not for each one. This proved a very thought provoking exercise as many participants had never really thought about the life long process of 'coming out'.



Next the course focused on the impact of oppression on LGBT people and also looked at the particular experiences of trans people. Small groups then worked on and submitted questions for the panel which comprised four of the HRRRA committee. Finally course participants were given 'tips' on what to remember when working with LGBT people.

The courses were very well received. Examples of comments:

"This was a very thought provoking course which raised my awareness of the need to support both residents and staff". "More follow up training please".

"I work with people with learning disabilities who I feel are 'forgotten' about when it comes to sexuality

whether LGBT or heterosexual. I will speak with my manager".

## 2011 Census

27<sup>th</sup> March is Census Day. Why is it important to fill in your census form? Because the information provided is used by central and local government to identify need and inform the allocation of funding for local authorities.

There is unfortunately no direct question on sexuality in the census. However, the census can provide information on how many same sex couples there are in a particular area. In 2001 just 178 people in Hastings said they lived in a same sex couple. In order to get a true representation, it is important for lesbian and gay couples to answer the questions honestly – we are assured everything is confidential, no personal data being released to anyone for 100 years. The information is turned into numbers.

Help us show the true extent of LGBT people living in Hastings and Rother!

## Victim Support Service threatened

The contract with the Local Authorities (Hastings, Rother, Wealden, Eastbourne, Lewes and East Sussex) is coming to an end and there is uncertainty as to the future of this service, as we know it.

Currently Victim Support has the contract and they offer a reporting service with case work input. They also have backup support from The Gay Helpline as well as volunteer advocates. This service has been well established and it has developed a sense of confidence within the LGBT community which was very much needed. As we all know Hate Crime, especially Homophobic Hate Crime, is very much hidden and people have accepted abuse as part and parcel of life.

At The Resources and Performances Committee (made up of reps from the Local Authority under the umbrella of the County Council) in February, where the future of

this service was discussed, it seems that they have decided to discontinue the present contract and it is not sure how they plan to continue this important service. They have extended the current contract with Victim Support until July 2011.

It is reported that they plan to develop a provision around the Anti Social Behaviour Service, which is currently being piloted by the police. It seems that it will be based on risk assessments and that only high risk clients will get a service. In other words this will be a police driven service and we will lose the case work support that the present service provides.

It goes without saying that the confidence building that the current service has engendered and sustained will be lost.

## HRRA Walking Group

The walking group has got off to a great start. We had a beautiful sunny winter's day for our first walk in January at Rye Harbour. Ten humans and four dogs enjoyed a three mile walk down to the sea, where we paused to take in the views across the Rother mouth to the sands of Camber and beyond to Dungeness.

We walked on along the seashore and stopped in a bird hide for refreshments and sightings of feeding waders. The second part of the walk gave us views of Camber Castle and Winchelsea. We ended at the William The Conqueror where we had a sociable pub meal.

Our second walk took place in February. 17 of us and five dogs enjoyed a muddy excursion from Icklesham up to the restored windmill



(Paul McCartney's former recording studio) and along the field paths to the old Winchelsea gate where we stopped for refreshments.

We walked back with misty views across the marshes down to Winchelsea beach, and spotted a handsome ram in a field, before taking the path through the orchards back to Icklesham. We finished the walk with a look inside Icklesham Church. At lunch time we met some HRRA non-walkers in the Queens Head for drinks and a leisurely meal.

We welcome new members in the walking group, so do come and join us for a walk, or meet us for drinks/meal after the walk. See back page for contact details.

## Book Club

Our lesbian book club has continued to thrive, as we have welcomed new members and explored new authors.

East Sussex Library have provided us with sets of books and we enjoyed some lively discussions and often find ourselves talking about how the books we read relate to our own lives and experiences. We have had lots of laughs as well as serious chat.

East Sussex Library organised a wonderful event for LGBT History Month at Lewes Library. This featured a live performance by the fabulous lesbian ukulele band,

'Qukulele' and a comic presentation of pulp lesbian fiction and readings by Val Lee and Sophia Blackwell.

Members have kindly donated books for our HRRA lesbian book box. We now have a wide range of lesbian literature available to borrow including crime and lesbian detective stories, non fiction, biography and contemporary novels.

We meet in a member's home on the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday evening of every month. Do come and join us if you are interested in exploring lesbian literature in a friendly group. See back page for contact details.

## Supper Club

Since its re-launch in March 2010, we have held six Lunch/Supper Club events ranging from "cheap and cheerful" to "up market".

The Supper Clubs are usually held on a Friday or Saturday evening while lunches are more likely to be held during the week. We have ranged across the Hastings & Rother area, from Rye in the east to Bexhill and we plan others in Little Common and Battle.

In September we had our biggest turnout of 30 people at the Fish Café in Rye. Everyone who had the panache (a mix of steamed fresh fish with baby vegetables and saffron sauce) raved about it.

In November we went to the Azur, always a favourite and in February this year we tried something different. We hired Ore Community Centre and people brought their own food or organised a take-away. This proved most popular, especially since we had the hall to ourselves and had musical accompaniment as well as a quiz.

We aim to find good quality venues which offer value for money as well a safe place for LGBT people to meet up. We also try to have a variety of food types, as some people do not want to spend a lot, whereas others do. If you have any suggestions of venues please email Julia, contact details on the back page.

## HASTINGS & ROTHER RAINBOW ALLIANCE

**New address**  
c/o HVA  
Jackson Hall  
Portland Place  
Hastings TN34 1QN

Phone: 07505 819344  
Email: info@hrra.org.uk



*Working to support the  
LGBT local community*

**Website is  
www.hrra.org.uk**

Trustees are elected by you, the HRRRA members, at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). All members are entitled and encouraged to stand for election to the Committee, but you need to complete a Nomination Form. This will be available in good time before the next AGM.

Current Trustees/Officers:

Di Nichols	Acting Chair
Jackie Langley	Vice Chair
Mary Benton	Secretary
Ben Sallows	Treasurer
Dave Burke	Teresa Fowler
Abigail Luthmann	Ambrose O'Boyle
Julia Parsons	Les Tostevin
Nadine West	

If you are interested in helping us as an Associate Committee member, please contact Di on info@hrra.org.uk

## Forthcoming events

### HRRRA Events

#### AGM 2011

This is planned for September but a venue has yet to be found. Please check on the website [www.hrra.org.uk](http://www.hrra.org.uk) or call 07505 819344.

#### Lunch and Supper Club

The next Supper Club is at the Peking Garden, Little Common, Bexhill-on-Sea on Friday 27th May at 7pm. We will be having the Set Menu Buffet, three courses of "all you can eat" delicious Chinese food for £16.50. Book at [supperclub@hrra.org.uk](mailto:supperclub@hrra.org.uk) or phone Julia on 07505 819344.

We also plan an impromptu beach picnic, weather permitting in June or July. This will probably be at short notice, so register for the "What's On" email by contacting Pam at [hastingsrainbow@btinternet.com](mailto:hastingsrainbow@btinternet.com).

#### Walks

We organise short, medium and sometimes long walks on the third Sunday of the month, finishing at a pub for lunch. Contact Helen on 01424 440928 or Peggy on 01424444777.

### Regular Events

Every Sunday - **Hastings & Rother Gay & Lesbian Social Group** meet from 1pm at the **Azur Bistro**, Marina, St. Leonards on Sea (downstairs, sea level entrance). Snacks are available, and from 12pm a roast meal can be purchased for £5-95.

1st Tuesday of the month - **HRRRA Women's Book Group in Hastings**. We read books chosen by members from the whole range of lesbian literature – novels, thrillers, romance, biography, history etc. Please contact Barbara or Helen by email or phone. Email: [martinbarbara@btinternet.com](mailto:martinbarbara@btinternet.com) Phone: 01424 44 0928.

**Ladies Afternoon Tea/Coffee** 1st Thursday of every month 3pm - 5pm. Cafe at De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill. Come along for some fantastic sea views & good company. Look out for a likely looking group of 15 to 25 women.... usually found seated in the 2nd/furthest part of the cafe. Email [Jane\\_meerkat53@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Jane_meerkat53@hotmail.co.uk).

**Pink Monday @ the JD Bar** run for LGBT people and their friends is at 4 Claremont, Hastings, TN34 1HA, telephone 01424 420099.