

Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance



Newsletter

Issue 4

September 2011

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



Snippets

New HRRRA History Project

We are setting up an exciting new History project that will gather and record our LGBT life stories, starting with oral history recordings. We have a steering group to guide the work. Come and join us. See back page for contact details.

New address for HRRRA

We have new office premises at Ore Community Centre. See back page.

HRRRA AGM

Come to the AGM on 7th October. See back page.



HRRRA stall at Egerton Park Fair, Bexhill.

We have stalls at local events and festivals to publicise our work and encourage new members.

What Does HRRRA Mean To You?

The HRRRA Committee met on 15th June for a Strategy Day. Our membership has increased 21% in the last 6 months. We discussed the successes of HRRRA since its beginnings 8 years ago and looked at how best to develop this thriving organisation. Here are some reflections from Committee members.

Mary Benton "Being part of HRRRA enables me to be involved in something I feel strongly about, namely raising awareness of the issues facing LGBT people and helping reduce their isolation. It has also meant I work with, and socialise with, a great bunch of friendly and positive people."

Julia Parsons "Before joining HRRRA we had no lesbian friends. At the Supper Clubs run by Pam & Sandra, we met loads of lovely people and were made to feel like we were part of a community".

Dave Burke "LGB&T communities have achieved a great deal over the years but people can still suffer abuse and discrimination- or even violence. HRRRA helps us all fight for total equality and eventually acceptance. I found the event we organised last year with Peter Tatchell particularly inspirational and I'm gratified by how much support we now find in the wider community."

Nadine West "I became involved in HRRRA by default so to speak as it was going through an impasse and I just said "why not". Since being a member of the committee I have met a wonderful dedicated group of individuals who all have independent skills which enables awareness projects to go ahead which affects LGBT people. I feel very proud to be a part of the organisation."

Les Tostevin "I was involved with HRRRA from its concept in 2003, and I believe that it has served the LGBT communities in Hastings and Rother well. It has put LGBT on the map and established a profile of inclusiveness for all LGBT people in all aspects of community. It has encouraged a lot of people to 'come out' and has offered support in many ways to the local LGBT population. I was particularly pleased with the 'Out and Proud' event at the Azur, which involved a lot of work but had very positive feedback and was a very entertaining day."

Ben Sallows "I think there are two elements to HRRRA. Firstly, the social aspect organises activities and events. This hopefully helps to reassure members that there are others like them and they can be completely themselves without any worries that they will be treated differently because of who they are. Then, the activism element, which is possibly more important, attempts to educate and inform others, so that LGBT people are treated fairly and equally by the whole local community. The 'Out and Proud' event was such a great success because it managed to combine both of these elements in one celebratory event."

Abigail Luthmann "HRRRA is friendly and welcoming to people new to the area."

Now we want to know what HRRRA means to you!

This is YOUR organisation! Tell us what you value and what you need from HRRRA.

Email us at info@hrra.org.uk

What does HRRRA Really Do For You?

You've probably heard that Committee members of HRRRA attend meetings and forums to raise issues on behalf of the LGBT community. You may think, what's the point of that? Mary Benton and Ambrose O'Boyle explain why this is important.

From attending such meetings we have become increasingly aware of how the dominant culture (which in the main is heterosexual) does not think about, nor do they realise, what life is like for LGBT people. This is a very important part of our work and it gives us the opportunity to engage with our communities and work towards developing a more inclusive culture in our area.

Consider two scenarios:

A lesbian couple in their 40s, Joan and Berta, are walking down their street when they are accosted by a group of teenagers who shout "Lezzies!" and other homophobic abuse, block their way and are generally threatening. This is repeated on successive days. They start to change their route and become very nervous about going out. Friends say they should go to the police, but they are not out in the community and are worried about what response they would get from the police.

HRRRA reps sit on the hate crime steering group and have raised awareness of issues confronting LGBT people and why they may be reluctant to report hate crimes. Police and Victim Support are now more aware of concerns and

more receptive to LGBT people coming forward, and proactively advertise for them to do so. However, this needs persistent profile raising in the hope that Joan and Berta will get a good response, and that something can be done about the situation.

An elderly man, Bob, is forced to move into a residential home because he can no longer manage at home. Although he has been out for the past twenty years, he feels isolated in the home with all the talk about past wives and husbands and does not feel safe to come out. He becomes increasingly lonely and depressed.

HRRRA reps have undertaken training courses for care home and sheltered housing staff, and sit on partnership forums for the elderly with local authority, health and housing staff. It is not enough for service providers to say they treat everyone equally, or for them to make assumptions about people's sexuality. By raising awareness of the difficulties that coming out raises for some older people and how this affects their health and social situation, staff in care homes are encouraged to address each person as an individual and discover what is important in their life. Publicity to show LGBT people are welcomed is important. HRRRA's work encourages the care home manager to assess Bob's needs appropriately and the outcome is that he is linked with LGBT people and relevant social activities organised by HRRRA and other organisations.

Support for LGBT from Rother Police

James Scott, Rother NTP Inspector tells us of initiatives within the police force to meet the needs of LGBT people.

"I have been with Sussex police since 1998, and I have held my current post of the Neighbourhood Inspector for Rother District for the last 2 years. I have three teams working for me based in the three main towns in the area, being Bexhill, Battle and Rye and these are made up of a Sergeant, Police Constables and Police Community Support Officers. I would like to think that you would know who your local PCSO is and that you would stop and have a chat with them if you were to see them out in your villages. One of the key principles of Neighbourhood Policing is for every area to have a named officer, and for them to spend as much of their time as possible being visible in that area.

The idea is that they build up the trust of the community to enable people to report issues, crimes or pass intelligence knowing full well that this will be handled in confidence and dealt with effectively. I see this as being key to your local policing teams working with the LGBT community, and providing you with the means to contact a local officer you know you can trust. As well as this direct link with your local teams, Sussex Police have supported the relaunched True Vision site which allows anonymous and third party reporting which may encourage more reporting from the LGBT community. I do hope that this brief article has given you some insight into Neighbourhood Policing on Rother, and also how within the Police force there is a real drive to break down any barriers that exist."

LGBT point of contact for Rother District:

PS Warren Downs - warren.downs@sussex.pnn.police.uk or telephone 0845 6070999 ext 66226

Out and About with the Walking Group

We are now an established group, and have enjoyed friendly, interesting walks in many different areas in our part of East Sussex. We meet on Sunday mornings, walk about four or five miles and then enjoy a pub meal together. We are usually a group of about eighteen, and we always make new people welcome. It is an excellent way to meet fellow LGBT people, to get to know different landscapes, and take some exercise! We have enjoyed the bluebells in Hastings Country Park, seen newborn lambs on Pett Level, climbed over a huge fallen tree on the 1066 walk near Battle, and survived a high wind on the downs near Wilmington. Above all we have had great fun on the walks, not to mention the real ale and pub lunches! See back page for details if you would like to join us.



Read and Reflect at the Book Club

Our lesbian Book Club has now been going for two years and we continue to welcome new members. Hastings Library is a great support to us as we are able to borrow sets of books free of charge and they have ordered more brand new sets of books for us. As one of our aims is to get more lesbian stock into East Sussex libraries this is particularly good news. Recent popular reads have been 'Tipping the Velvet' by Sarah Waters and 'Fried Green Tomatoes' by Fannie Flagg. Our reading has prompted lively discussions about the difficulties of 'coming out' and issues affecting lesbian relationships past and present. We shared memories of our childhood friendships after reading 'Mrs Keppel and Her Daughters' by Diane Souhami. We have lots of laughs as well. If you would like to read and discuss lesbian literature in a friendly group do come and join us. See back page for details of meetings.

Meet and Eat at the Supper Club

The Supper Club continues to hold lunches and dinners in a variety of locations in and around Hastings. In April we went to the Trattoria Italiana in Hastings, where we enjoyed typical Italian food. Then at the end of May, we had a wonderful 'All you can eat' feast at the Peking Dragon in Little Common. We sat at one huge table in the middle of the restaurant and were able to order from their menu of over 50 items. We have yet to return to a restaurant, because there are plenty of good places we haven't yet tried. However, there have been calls to return to the Fish Cafe in Rye and St Clements in St Leonards - which we will be doing in the autumn. If you have any ideas for good places to meet and eat contact Julia on info@hrra.org.uk

Making Local Services Work for LGBT Communities

Do you want to make sure the police, the NHS or your local council work for you and other Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans people? Do you know what they have promised you? Do you want to know how to ensure they do what they have promised?

On *Saturday November 5th* (location TBC), the LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother & East Sussex Forum invites local LGBT people to a half-day of discussion, awareness-raising and empowerment. The day will make clear what local LGBT communities can and should expect from their public services.

Get the Latest Local Research: 'Mapping LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex'

Ask Questions and Get Answers from your public services

Answer Questions and Raise Awareness about your experience as an LGBT person

Share Stories and Discuss Issues at round table discussions

To find out more, contact the LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother & East Sussex Forum through Nick McGlynn (n.mcglynn2@brighton.ac.uk)

HASTINGS & ROTHER RAINBOW ALLIANCE

New Address

HRRA c/o Ore Community Centre

Ore Centre

455 Old London Road.

Hastings

TN35 5BH

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

Trustees are elected by you, the HRRA members, at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Current Trustees/Officers:

Di Nichols Acting Chair

Mary Benton Secretary

Ben Sallows Treasurer

Dave Burke Teresa Fowler

Abigail Luthmann Ambrose O'Boyle

Julia Parsons Les Tostevin

Nadine West

All members are entitled and encouraged to stand for election to the Committee, but you need to complete a Nomination Form. Contact Mary Benton on info@hrra.org.uk for a form. This needs to be returned by 3rd October if you wish to stand for election at this year's AGM.

**Not a member yet? Do you want to join HRRA?
It is free to join!**

Download a membership form from our website or email info@hrra.org.uk or write to us c/o Ore Community Centre, or telephone us on 07505 819344



*Working to support the
LGBT local community*

Website is
www.hrra.org.uk

Forthcoming events

HRRA Events

AGM 2011

Friday 7th October 7pm at Bexhill Youth and Community Centre, Station Rd. Bexhill. Free drinks and buffet.

New HRRA History Project. Come and get involved! Steering Group initial meeting Tuesday 27th September 7pm. For details contact Barbara on 01424 440928 or email: martinbarbara@btinternet.com

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 - **HRRA 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 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

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 email helenmfletcher@btinternet.com or Peggy on 01424 444777.

Lunch and Supper Club

Next lunch is on Wednesday October 19th at 1pm at St Clements restaurant, 3 Mercatoria, St Leonards. 2 course menu for £13.50. To book email: supperclub@hrra.org.uk or phone 07505 819344 by 10th October.

Keep up to date with all local LGBT events : Register for the weekly "What's On" email by contacting Pam, email: hastingsrainbow@btinternet.com