This term: Civil Partnerships

Also inside this issue:
The politics of homosexuality in eighteenth century Ireland
Who was most in denial in my relationship with a married man?
The debate over the national blood service ban
Creative writing corner

...and lots more
Welcome to the new look issue of [no definition] with a new editor at its helm. This issue has a lot of varied articles and features to cater for all tastes so there is truly something for everybody. If whilst reading this issue you feel that you want to contribute to the content or production of [no definition] then it would be really great to hear from you, all feedback would be greatly appreciated as well. In the meantime I hope you all enjoy reading the new look [no definition].

Editor’s Shout- Confessions of a bubble
Page 2
I ask whether we are all guilty of living in a bubble and take our liberties for granted.

FEATURE ARTICLE
Blessing civil partnerships
Page 5
Dunni Alao interviews the Revd Jeremy Caddick, Dean of Emmanuel, over his groundbreaking decision to bless same-sex partnerships.

Talking Point: Is society ready for civil partnerships?
Page 7
Rob Briggs questions the social construct in which civil unions have entered.

From Patriots to Pederasts
Page 13
Robin Usher writes a great piece about the politics of homosexuality in eighteenth-century Ireland.

Real Life stories: Denial File
Page 15
Who was most in denial in my relationship with a married man?

The big debate: The National Blood Service ban
Page 17
We conclude by looking at the NBS’s policy of banning men who have sex with men from donating blood.

Also in this issue…
President’s Shout: Page 3
CUSU LBGT President, Jordan Holland, keeps us all up-to-date on the goings-on in the newly elected executive.

Letters to the editor: Page 4
Including an interesting perspective on LBGT life and events at the other place.

Creative Writing corner: Page 9

Ents page: Page 10
Introducing Precious* promotions.

The Cambridge Prowler: Page 11
A selection of finalists reminisce over their time in Cambridge.
Confessions of the bubble
Are we all guilty of thinking that the outside world is a perfect place?

We live in a bubble. How many times have we all heard this? How many times to the point that it has become a cliché which we have all accepted yet not really thought about? But how often, despite this, do we actually sit back and consider this overused idiom and try to understand why it may be so?

I, for one, am 100% guilty of this. Perhaps I would go as far as to say that I am the epitome of bubble-ness. I admit that I live in a wonderful bubble, my own little perfect idealised world where I wander in my happy-go-lucky state of naivety and simplicity. Where the nastiness and evils of the outside world are something absolutely foreign to me which I know won’t affect me; if they do then it’s because I’ve actually picked up The Guardian rather than Varsity. My life during term time revolves around the colleges, the departments, the UL and the restaurants, bars and shops that adorn the city centre and whenever I venture outside of this comfort zone I feel like a lost sheep in a field full of foxes.

It’s clear to see why this is the case; my bedder frequently tidies my room and washes my plates, my librarian reserves my books, my lecturers are experts in their field, my hall provides me with food every meal time, my LEA provides me with money (albeit limited), my utility bills are mostly paid for and my college bar is a stones throw away from my room. And long may this be the case for the next three years, or more if I decide that the prospect of the real world is far too terrifying!

There is, however, a serious side to what I’m talking about, after all this isn’t an editorial about how naive and feeble Luke Andrews is. I’m saying that from a gay person’s point of view we too are guilty of living in another kind of bubble. It takes many forms and on many scales. This realisation has evolved recently due to a number of conversations that have really made me consider how lucky it is to be LBGT in Cambridge. As a fresher I have found Cambridge to be one of the most liberating and tolerant places ever. I do not ever have to worry about being victimised or ostracised because of my sexuality, my views are represented at college and uni level, I do not think that it must define who I am. What’s more people I meet have a brain in their heads and seldom make judgements based on such a fact and so I feel that I can be me knowing that it won’t have a negative impact on my development here. To be honest, the most stressful thing about my sexuality is when people I fancy don’t poke me back on facebook.

book. Whilst I know that this is how it should be, I often think that it is no different from anywhere else. Wrong.

Not only has it taken an exceedingly long time to arrive at this status quo, but it is certainly not spatially uniform and (as ashamed as I am to admit it) I’ve only just began to realise how lucky we are here. In Kenya I knew that homosexuality was illegal as it is in many other African countries yet I never realised that it was punishable by death in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Nigeria. Although not illegal on the statute books, Jamaica has an appalling homophobic record; in October last year the UK granted refugee status to a gay man on the basis that homophobia is so severe it represented a threat to his personal safety. Whilst South Africa is one of the most liberal countries in Africa the vicious murder of Zoliswa Nkonyana, a lesbian killed by a mob in a Cape Flats township, points to the brutal reality that despite constitutional protections gay men and lesbians in South Africa continue to experience egregious assaults on their human rights. Yet we know that homophobia is rife outside of the ‘western world’ so what’s the problem?

The problem is that we must not be led to believe that it stops there. One only has to look at the religious right wing in the United States to realise further that this is not the case. Last year, a Christian radio talk-show host in Costa Mesa, California, (regarded as one of the most liberal states) openly commented, “Lesbian love and sodomy are viewed by God as being detestable and abominable. Civil magistrates are to put people to death who practice these things.” The more I scout the net, the more information I could put out. Yet, what I have found more striking is conversations with some people in
Hello everyone! The new exec. has been working together for almost a full term now and I hope you agree that they’re all doing a great job. One of the most important changes we’ve made is to our weekly Club 22 night. Unique@22 has become Precious@22 and we hope that by combining our own ideas with Precious’ own we can continue to make our night one of the most enjoyable and successful in Cambridge.

The campaign for a review of the National Blood Service’s guidelines on who can give blood is also a success in progress. There’s little doubt that this is a controversial issue but the whole exec, and many other people, got behind the campaign and our petition, which we will be sending to both the National Blood Service and David Howarth, MP for Cambridge, received an enthusiastic response beyond our expectations.

The news in February that the Dean of Emma would consider blessing same sex civil unions was, a positive and historic step. In light of his decision we sent out letters to every other Dean and Chaplain in the University about their views on this matter. Predictably we got a mixed response and are currently waiting for a final decision from many of them.

You may have also read in TCS last term that Sidney Sussex’s LBGT rep. became a full voting position elected solely by self definers. As I said then I believe this is the ideal situation for every college and, in conjunction with the Women’s Union and the Black Students’ Campaign I hope to begin discussions with all the remaining college unions to ensure that all minorities are fairly represented throughout the University.

Whilst these are all one-off events at the same time the exec has, as ever, been providing its usual variety of dependable services. We’ve had the weekly Sunday socials from our new Socials’ Officer Rob, which was rounded off by the Easter Egg Hunt at the end of term. These were complemented by the weekly Clowns socials for women ran by our Women’s Officers Emma and Cate and the Grad events organised by Carol and Josh, our new Grad Reps. If you want details of any these events in the future then just email computing@cusulbgt.com to be added to the relevant email lists.

We held our first Open Meeting at the end of last term and there will be another two during Easter Term. These are an opportunity for you to tell the exec what you would like it to do and where you think it’s going wrong so James (the LBGT chair) and I hope to see as many of you there as possible.

I hope you’ve all had a good Lent Term and will have a great Easter Term and, as always, if you have any comments or suggestions on what the exec should be doing then please don’t hesitate to email me.

Jordan
President 2005-06 CUSU LBGT
Cross campus

I hear that in Cambridge you have one organization that deals with the social and political sides of the LGBT world - we have taken a different approach. Over here in the ‘other place’ we have a committee of twelve people, who spend a good proportion of their week organising a huge number and range of events such as the upcoming Ann Summers party next term.

A student Queer Rights Organisation also exists within Oxford, and has various campaigns at any one time. Politics is kept very much separate from OU LGBsoc, because, at the end of the day, those who run the Soc generally do so because its aim is creating a safe and approachable environment and having a whole lot of fun. That is to say, we would rather go punting than deal with whether accusing a horse, lightly or wrongly, of homosexuality is damaging to the basic rights and dignities of the gay community.

Gay Tuesdays is LGBsoc’s busiest, longest-running and, many would say, most entertaining event. This is a time when committee comes together to carry copious amounts of alcohol to locations in a college, varying from dingy lecture theatres to Fellows’ Gardens, and provide liquid refreshment for all the assembled gays of the city. Afterwards we head onto one of the city’s gay nights of which there are a pretty good number running these days (one of which being on a Saturday night in a club that a large number of my straight friends view as being the best in town). Even though cheesy music abounds. Once a term we head down to London and go to G-A-Y or similar (depending on tastes) and soak up the opportunity to go clubbing somewhere that has more than about 200 people in the club on a gay night. This term saw a trip to the theatre for LGBsoc to see The Rocky Horror Show, among other things. One of my favourite quotes from the evening being when a female friend, dressed as Riff Raff, standing in the Purple Turtle Bar, announced “I feel like a dead, eighties, badly dressed transvestite”.

The next really big thing we are looking forward to is the Christmas Ball, which is going to be massive this year - we are hiring a gorgeous venue and putting on a huge, cross campus, Oxford, Cambridge (if you guys want to come), the London Uni’s, Reading, Bristol… Basically a regional ball and it is going to be superb and, perhaps, subsidized, which will work out very well for everyone involved! Well, watch this space for that one and, if there is anyone who would like to come see what we do, or send me any thoughts, then you can contact me (Ed-I have the address). I promise not to send my army of dead, eighties, badly dressed transvestites after you. Unless, of course, that is what you request.

Lucy Trinder, Lincoln College, Oxford.
President, Oxford University Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Society 2006. (www.lgbsoc.com)

Dear Sir,

Another Gay Games will soon be upon us, this time in Chicago, but I wonder to what extent such an event is really necessary. Of course the Games are, officially, open to heterosexual as well as homosexual athletes, but surely this means that we already have a suitable event - they’re called the Olympic Games. The Gay Games claim to be “Where the world meets,” but the fact is that the vast majority of participants come from relatively tolerant countries in Western Europe and North America, where homophobia is no longer a barrier to a place on the international podium. It is outdated and demeaning to continue to separate ourselves from the international sporting community. The Games’ other buzzwords, “participation” and “inclusion,” are a distant dream for the majority of the world’s LBGT population. As such, I cannot see much value in a Gay Games - aside from the tourist revenue accruing to the host city, a chance for mediocre athletes to gain a semblance of celebrity status (at least, in the back pages of the Gay Times) - and possibly most importantly, the images of athletic men and women in Lycra that will be flashing up on our computer screens this summer. Are there not more effective ways of fulfilling such pressing needs?

Yours,
RB in C.C.

Dear Sir,

I would just like to take this opportunity to write to [no definition] about my decision to be a member of Stonewall and their most recent campaign.

Many of you may not of heard of Stonewall so let me give you a brief introduction. Stonewall was founded in 1989 by a small group active in the struggle against Section 28. Stonewall is renowned for its campaigning and lobbying and some major successes include helping achieve the equalisation of the age of consent, lifting the ban on lesbians and gay men serving in the military, securing legislation allowing same-sex couples to adopt and the repeal of Section 28. More recently Stonewall has helped secure civil partnerships and ensured the recent Equality Act protected lesbians and gay men in terms of goods and services. Their recent campaign involves the stamping out of homophobia that is integral to the education system of Britain. Whilst I applaud the LBGT executive, I’m also immensely pleased with what Stonewall can help achieve. I don’t regard myself as a screaming queen but am very passionate about rights, not just for gay and lesbian people, but everybody and believe in the progress of society. It makes me realise that changes are possible, especially if everybody is on-board.

Yours Faithfully,
CD in P.C.
Blessing civil partnerships

In February 2006 the dean of Emmanuel College announced that, upon the introduction of civil partnerships, he would be happy to bless same-sex couples in defiance of the Church of England’s ban on clergy offering such services, so "[no definition]" sent Dunni Alao to interview the Revd Jeremy Caddick over his groundbreaking decision.

With regard to the gay community, the role of religion has always been a controversial one. For some there is an inherent incompatibility that cannot be escaped, for others it is simply a matter of compromise yet one thing is certain; the government's introduction of the Civil Partnership Act has not only made it difficult to ignore the debate but has set a clear line in the sand for those involved to take sides. The Civil Partnership Act effectively affords those in gay and lesbian relationships who wish to enter a civil partnership the same rights as married heterosexual couples, bringing the issue of homosexuality to the forefront of topical debate in certain circles. More so the Church of England's refusal to bless civil partnerships clearly illustrates that despite the Government's acceptance of homosexual relationships, Christianity is still publicly unwilling to do so.

Yet there is hope for Cambridge students within the gay community as demonstrated by Emmanuel College Reverend Jeremy Caddick and his decision to bless civil partnerships. I caught up with Jeremy to discuss his reasoning behind his decision and its implications.

If you'd like to begin just by outlining the issue over civil partnerships...

This issue arose because the House of Bishops of the Church of England issued a statement last July in preparation for the coming into force of the law that permitted civil partnerships to be formed giving some guidance about what Anglican clergy were to do. In particular they said that they wouldn't produce an order of service to bless civil partnerships and that they didn't think clergy should take services blessing civil partnerships, but they did leave the door open for clergy to pray with people who had formed civil partnerships if they thought that was pastorally appropriate.

Now I was quite dismayed by that because it seemed to me to be going in the wrong direction. One of the functions of college chapels is to help people who want to form positive relationships so therefore civil partnerships strike me as a positive way for gay and lesbian people to do that and I think the church should be helping them. So what happened was that the chapel committee here decided that it would be appropriate to have services for people and they left it up to me to decide what sort of service was appropriate in any given situation. It was left open whether the services would be 'blessings' as such or whether it would be something closer to praying with people (the sort of thing the House of Bishops envisaged) or whether it would be just having a normal service if you like and praying particularly for a couple who'd come along which I know is what some churches do.

So you decided that Emmanuel would also offer blessings?

That is right. Perhaps it is important to make clear that we offer wedding services to people that are connected with the college, so students, former students and staff. What we were envisaging is that it would be similar people so it's members of the college community we're talking about, not anybody.

So how would you perceive a gay or lesbian blessing to be like, how would you envisage it?

I would imagine that in some way we would be giving thanks for the couple's relationship and praying for them. I think more than that it'd be difficult to say, as it could be different for different people. Exactly how different couples articulate for example what it is they're giving
What has the response to your decision been from within the University pastoral and Christian community?

Well I’ve been quite surprised, I’ve had one letter from somebody who disapproves and I should say at least between a dozen and two dozen from people who are in favour. The people who are unhappy are so on the basis of what they hold to be what the Bible says. In some cases we’ve had quite long conversations about what the Bible does say, I don’t think that the Bible necessarily condemns gay or lesbian relationships as we know them today.

Given the hostility surrounding homosexuality within the Christian faith so what would be your basis for that belief?

Well I think that the prohibitions in the Bible about homosexual behaviour reflect the general morality of the time that they were written. In general the reason for saying some gay and lesbian relationships are worth celebrating is that gay and lesbian people say very much the same things as heterosexual people do about why sexuality is important and why sexual relationships are important to them. From a Christian point of view we say that being in love and participating in relationships that are based on love are important because it teaches us about God who we say is love. So gay and lesbian relationships that are about love I think should be celebrated in the same way that heterosexual relationships that are about love are celebrated.

I think there is a point, a question if you like for everybody: now we have some sort of state recognition of gay and lesbian relationships, what counts as holiness? From a religious point of view its clear if you’re heterosexual if you ask yourself what counts as being holy as far as relationships are concerned the answer is to do with marriage. I think it certainly is a good question what holiness consists of for gay and lesbian people. And perhaps that question becomes more urgent now that there is something called civil partnership that people can form.

Mr Don Horrocks, a representative from the Evangelical Alliance, is quoted to have said 'If you transport something unique, like marriage, into a different context, there’s always a cost. And the cost here is in terms of reduction of marriage and the undermining of it, ‘Do you think he has a point, do you think that blessing civil partnerships undermines... (I fail to finish the question as he’s adamantly shaking his head)

Absolutely not, quite the reverse. I think people who form civil partnerships are very unlikely to want to form marriages so I can’t see that allowing gay and lesbian people to form civil partnerships will harm heterosexual people planning to get married. And in general if it is clear that what we’re all trying to do is form stable and positive relationships then it’s a good thing that civil partnerships are available to people that wouldn’t otherwise get married.

Perhaps the point that Mr Horrocks is getting at is that there is now another dimension to marriage and thus in essence an alternative. Do you think that takes something sacred out of the institution of marriage or is Mr Horrocks totally off the point?

I think what takes the sacredness out of relationships are attitudes like the House of Bishops attitude which says in affect that clergy should not have anything to do with civil partnerships. Even people who aren’t particularly religious would often want to have a marriage service in a Christian context because they say if anything is sacred this is because they feel there relationship is important and they want to celebrate it. If the church turns its back on gay and lesbian couples forming civil partnerships it would be telling them that there is not anything sacred about their relationships whereas they as much as heterosexual people would want to say that there is and we should encourage them.

So what do you think the ramifications of your decision will be in the church context?

This possibility has arisen because college chapels aren’t under the direct jurisdiction of the Bishop of Ely so college chaplains have more freedoms than vicars of parishes. I’d hope that this would encourage people in other context who want to offer some helpful ministry to gay and lesbian people to be bolder in doing so.

If say your defiance was to result in some sort of uprising, do you think it could lead to the House of Bishops reviewing their position on the matter?

It would be nice if it did because I think that there are a lot of people in the Church of England who are sympathetic towards gay and lesbian people yet are unwilling to break ranks because there are also some people who would be offended. I think a very significant point about civil partnerships is that it asks a question of the church of where we stand about gay and lesbian relationships and I think an awful lot of clergy wish to be sympathetic but are not willing to be so publicly and an awful lot of clergy, I think, wish that the question hadn’t been asked. I would hope that they realise that refusing to take services, or going along with the public stance of the Church which refuses to offer services to gay and lesbian couples is not putting the clock back to the time before civil partnerships, but is actually colluding with homophobic attitudes.

Thank you for your letter, it is food for thought for me and I will pass it on to the applied ethicists. In the future we can hope that religious leaders would come to realise that there is a sacredness of love and relationships that people hold to and if they are willing to do this then they are opening the door in more areas than parishes. Once people have a voice in the church then we will be able to see what happens in the church. I’ve had one letter from somebody who actually colludes with homophobic attitudes.

I would hope that they realise that refusing to take services... is actually colluding with homophobic attitudes.
Don’t get me wrong - like most of the country, I enjoy a good wedding. Everyone wearing nice clothes and getting drunk (in the company of your grandparents, no less)... it’s enough to make you want to go right out there, drag any half-attractive man or woman off the street and register to get married yourself. Or rather, apply for a civil partnership. That’s what they’re called, and no-one is going to start making a fuss about a distinction as trivial as that. But should we nod and smile and send out the invitations just like that? Over three months after the first gay couple tied the knot, what do civil partnerships mean for us, and for society as a whole?

Recently, I was discussing the topic of weddings with a friend - a perfectly normal conversation topic, until of course she turned around and directed the conversation at me. I didn’t really know what to say. Despite all the media coverage of civil partnerships, I hadn’t really linked them personally to my own future. I’ve got a boyfriend, and of course I’d love to have a family, but if I got married (Civil partnered? Civilly partnered?) then what would that mean? I can already imagine - wedding lists, weekends spent trawling the aisles at Homebase and wandering around suburban show-homes... is this really what I want? Isn’t being gay one of the last valid reasons for doing things a little differently?

Of course that’s a ridiculous argument against the new laws. Us gay people can still go to Life on a Tuesday night and buy magazines that no-one else has heard of, but civil partnerships give us a choice to be a little more conventional and to feel more comfortable in New Labour’s supposedly inclusive, compassionate modern Britain. Beyond the matching morning suits or wedding dresses, and all the associated ostentation, civil partnerships are just a piece of paper, but an important one - one that recognises our right to the same legal provisions as heterosexual couples.

What really concerns me though is what civil partnerships are able to hide. Perhaps my shocked reaction reflected my continuing disbelief that gay rights in the UK have suddenly moved on so far. My concern is that, because gay people can no longer kick up a fuss about discrimination with regards to the law, the straight majority can more easily ignore us altogether with the thought that this particular ‘wedding present’ is a bit more than we deserve, or, worse, use our new rights as an justification for continuing to discriminate in other ways. A civil partnership is an important piece of paper but will never be a passport for social acceptance. Whether you’re straight or gay, an official stable relationship is no barrier against popular prejudice, to which jokes poking fun at gold-diggers and sugar-daddies are testament. A same-sex “marriage” is no more socially acceptable than one where the husband happens to be 40-years older than the wife. My argument is not so much about civil partnerships themselves, but rather about the social context into which they have been introduced.

Take this brief example. The day after Elton John married his partner of many years, David Furnish, The Sun carried the headline “Elton takes David up the aisle”. Although The Sun’s customary bigotry is fortunately atypical of the British media as a whole this headline represents a shocking return to vulgar humour that, we were led to believe, disappeared decades ago - a piece of journalism that is evidently accepted by the newspaper’s 3 million or so daily readers. Evidently much of society is lagging behind the
What exactly is a civil partnership?

A civil partnership warrants legal recognition for homosexual relationships that were previously invisible in the eyes of the law. This means same sex couples who enter into a civil partnership can now receive the same rights and responsibilities as married couples receive in a range of areas such as tenancy, ownership, life assurance, pensions, immigration (for those with partners of a foreign nationality) and inheritance as well as kin and child maintenance. There is also a court-based dissolution similar to divorce.

So it’s like a marriage then?

Well sort of, there are clear distinctions, for instance a partnership occurs when the second of two parties signs the partnerships papers, this means both signatures needn’t be obtained at the same time, thus a public ceremony needn’t take place and that the partnerships can be formed in private. Marriages on the other hand are public ceremonies that need to be witnessed and involve the exchanging of spoken words. However in a legal context the Civil Partnership does attempt to bring the rights of homosexual couples who form civil partnerships to the level of equality married couples have received for years. The institution of marriage however remains a separate one from that of Civil Partnerships.

So why the big fuss?

The state now legally recognises homosexual relationships for the first time, an important step for many monogamous gay and lesbian couples. It means society has recognised that homosexuals can have relationships just as meaningful and loving as heterosexual couples. Thus the Civil Partnership Act not only affords homosexual couples better financial security but also helps to tackle the issue of prejudice.

And the role of the Church?

The House of Bishop’s has stated it advises clergy not to partake in services which explicitly bless civil partnerships however homosexual couples can have prayers performed for them. Interestingly members of the clergy themselves are free to pursue their own civil partnerships.

supposedly out-of-touch political elite. One could optimistically regard this as evidence of the strength and direction of decades of gay rights campaigners, gently but consistently steering our country’s politicians up the path of acceptance, while the masses tear up the paving stones on the way. Alternatively, we could put this in perspective and see this for what it is, simple proof that no amount of political progress can change what discussions take place behind the net curtains of suburban England or in the offices of Fleet Street. What’s the point of having a gay wedding if none of your friends or family are open-minded enough to turn up?

For once, perhaps, the government has gone as far as it is able to go, and on this issue we must quietly applaud the Labour government’s progress, in a relatively short space of time - particularly when one considers the notable lack of progress in the USA, increasingly our cultural godfather. Similarly we should also be proud of the Dean of Emma’s decision, a decision that was made within our relatively conservative institution. Britain has moved on significantly from the days of police raiding pubs, but it’s barely seven years since a far worse atrocity took place at the Admiral Duncan, a gay pub in London, where three people were killed by a nailbomb.

It is now up to society to attack cultural homophobia in all its forms, whether in the playground, the pub, or in the pages of The Sun - and on this much wider, more important matter. Civil partnerships are an important development, but they remind us that the views of society continue to lag behind those of our elected politicians. Now that the honeymoon is over, the fight for social acceptance must continue.
Hi, I'm Col, a second year student at Homerton. As Welfare Officer I aim to help make your uni life as seamless as possible. Cambridge is an amazing place to be, with no end of opportunities. However, there may be times when you just need a little bit of extra help and this is where I come in.

I have been trained by the University Counselling Service as a Peer Supporter and I'm available to meet up on a one-to-one basis so that you can talk through whatever problem or issue you might have. This could be anything from coming out or being home-sick, to needing information on specific issues. If you'd prefer something a little more social, I can arrange 'coffee breaks', providing a relaxed group setting where you can talk to others in a similar position. Remember, all the contact you have with me is confidential so don't be afraid to get in contact with me.

Also, I will be revamping the parenting scheme, mainly through improving the training for parents and increasing awareness of the scheme. I aim to keep you well informed on issues that will affect your general well-being, such as sexual health and mental health, but also to be approachable and non-judgmental so that you can get as much or as little help as you may need. I intend to work closely with the Reps Coordinator, the Women's Officers and the University Counselling Service to ensure that you're well catered for. On that note, please do not hesitate to make use of the welfare services that are here for you! [nd]

---

Echo Of A… (Night)
Lara Bell.

We giggled, we danced, we fucked. Once.
Somewhat petite with tousled black hair
I remember when I met you Ms Bubbly Persona
Ms Excitable Nervous to my witty satire.
We chuckled, we exclaimed, amazement. Once.
A remarkable journey, terribly clichéd,
One moment a boogie then a slip into
Your arms everything else set to fade.
We laughed, we shopped, we kissed.
Once.
What was with all this emotion so new?
Back to the cliché of novel discoveries
Excitement, fervour unsure how to pursue.
We joked, we cooked, we hugged.
Once.
Suddenly lukewarm confusion mounting.
Where was the chemistry of that dark night?
Why this atmosphere suddenly about?
We wavered, we sighed, we faded.
Once.
Alcohol fever and stiletto wearing clowns
A memory upon a night of strobes.
Of masculine descent with feminine frowns.
We fucked, we talked, we parted.
Once.
And then, that was it.

Want to show off your creative side?
editor@cusu-lbgt.com
Cambridge’s first weekly LBGT night is back
... in prettier shoes

You may have heard that CUSU LBGT are making some changes to how they run Unique. Going forward, the Tuesday nights at Twenty-Two will be run by Precious* Promotion in conjunction with CUSU LBGT.

Precious* Promotion is run by Helene and Dan – the team who set up the night in 2002, and former LBGT chairs. We’re now in the event management business and wanted to bring our Precious* brand to a night we know and love. We’re going to be working very closely with CUSU LBGT to make sure the night continues to offer the best to Cambridge’s LBGT students and all of their friends.

Working completely in conjunction with CUSU LBGT, Precious* Promotion’s co-founders are excited about the future of this ground-breaking night:
“We’re really happy that the night we started nearly four years ago is still going strong and is still attracting a regular crowd from all over Cambridge and East Anglia,” says Helene. “It was the first night of its kind, and has remained an influential force on the Cambridge nightlife.”

But we’re aware that the night needs to evolve with the ever-changing student population,” adds Dan. “and we’re confident that our partnership with CUSU LBGT in running the night will offer the best in entertainment and support for the LBGT and gay-friendly crowd in Cambridge.”

The management team at Twenty-Two have also added their support: “We wouldn’t want to work with anyone else - Dan and Helene have always delivered on their promises,” says Ian Tarbut from the club.

If you think you’re a bit precious and would like to get involved with promotion, pre-parties and PR for the night, we’re having a training lunch for Precious* brand ambassadors soon – email join@preciouspromotion.co.uk for more details.

Precious* will run every Tuesday at Twenty-Two (formerly Life), 10pm-2am, throughout the Easter Vac, with the Official Launch Party in Week I of Easter Term.

Please have a look at our website, www.preciouspromotion.co.uk and don’t hesitate to get in touch if you have any queries.

precious*
The Cambridge Prowler is a spotlight on the LBGT community of Cambridge tracking down the latest gossip and issues from across the city. This term we take a selection of finalists due to fly the nest onto pastures new and ask them to reflect of their time here...

Name: Robbie Fulford  
College: Homerton  
Subject: Educational Psychology MPhil

If [no definition] was to track you down in a year's time what will you be doing and where?:  
Shedding blood, sweat and tears in London primary schools nearing the end of a PGCE course at the London Institute of Education.

What are your fondest memories of Cambridge?:  
Playing in some great university and college orchestral concerts, actually being pissed for a week in May Week '04.

What's the most important thing (besides a degree) will you take on with you?:  
Experience, wisdom and a f*** load of debt.

If you were a fresher, what would you do differently during your time here?:  
Have less sex. Oh, who am I kidding?!  
Describe your time at Cambridge in five words:  
Challenging, intense, random, surreal, sexual,

Name: Fish (aka Liz Gregory)  
College: Trinity  
Subject: Natural Sciences BA, Management Studies BA

If [no definition] was to track you down in a years time what will you be doing and where?:  
Having sold my soul to the city so as of July I'll be living in London working for Morgan Stanley. I'm envisaging schmoozing clients during the day, drinking/clubbing/molesting girls in Soho in the evening. I'll be considerably fatter than I am now unless I avoid Chinatown.

What are your fondest memories of Cambridge?:  
CUHC (university hockey club), getting my first girlfriend, when Supergrass played at the May Ball, trick-or-treating the Master's lodge, lazy days punting in summer term, scoring in the Blues Varsity Match, all the shenanigans we got up to on my first LBGT Exec, the day my mate broke her arm trying to have sex on Trinity fountain, that feeling after your last exam, and how stunning everything looks covered in snow.

What are you most sad to be leaving behind?:  
Sleesy, my best friend. Scotland is such a stupidly far away place.

What's the most important thing (besides a degree) will you take on with you?:  
Photos; the best years of my life recorded in .jpg format. And scarves. I can rest assured I will never run out of scarves.

If you were a fresher, what would you do differently during your time here?:  
Nothing. My one regret is how I messed up once and hurt someone I really loved, but I'll never make those mistakes again so it's made me a better person.

Describe your time at Cambridge in five words:  
Tempus fugit, non autem memoria
If [no definition] was to track you down in a year's time what will you be doing and where?:
Either as a banker in the City or slogging through an MPhil in Cambridge.

What are your fondest memories of Cambridge?:
Friends, the social life, punting on the Cam and May Week.

What are you most sad to be leaving behind?:
The entire lifestyle - doing your own thing, studying when you want to (or not) and arranging the rest of your life accordingly.

What's the most important thing (besides a degree) you will take on with you?:
A fantastic life-experience and mind-set

If you were a fresher, what would you do differently during your time here?:
I'd do more stuff at the ADC, pick up more languages, and fit in more weekends to London.

Describe your time at Cambridge in five words:
Fantastic, enchanting, demanding, worthwhile, successful.

If you were a fresher, what would you do differently during your time here?:
Get involved in things sooner (including LBGt stuff, which I didn't start doing until the 2nd year really)

Describe your time at Cambridge in five words:
Fantastic! (but glad to leave.)
FROM PATRIOTS TO PEDERASTS:
Archbishop George Stone and the politics of homosexual classification in eighteenth-century Ireland
By Robin Usher.

When Luke Andrews asked me to contribute something to this edition of [no definition], he said, ‘I have quite a few contributions for my magazine from undergrads but nothing from grads, as of yet. I was thinking that since you have SO much time because you are either on facebook or f[---]king someone from facebook that maybe you would be interested in writing for me.’ Nice. He continued:

It needn’t be named and it needn’t be long but with all those letters after your name, I could really use input from a clever graduate such as yourself. It can be on ANYTHING, I’d like to regard myself as an editor inspired by the Danish

There is a lot to unpack here. Smut. Presumptuousness. Trumpet-blowing. Tactical flattery. And perhaps I do spend too much time plugged into a computer. However, this shortcoming is excusable because there’s no way around it. Gone are the days when clever graduates such as myself with all those letters after our names had to hire a typist. (Yet some, I suspect, still recourse to their mothers.) What the moral Mr. Andrews was imparting is that boring word-processing work and one-off journalism might be compatibles. It was a relief to hear that I needn’t reconfigure my interests for the day: I could remain a database-using bore. The materials I would need were close at hand.

Today’s (or this term’s) story goes like this. Early in 1754 several hundred printed poems and broadsides published in Dublin told their readers that the primate of the Irish church, Archbishop George Stone, was a predatory homosexual. Most dealt with the primate’s supposed attraction to good-looking young men and his attempts at sexual assignation in molly houses and mew lanes. A few suggested pederasty. Occasionally, the details were explicit. Stone, one poetaster claimed, enjoyed being the penetrator. Others took the particulars further. The primate apparently had a taste for sexual humiliation. One historian has rightly said that these attacks on Stone’s character were ‘perhaps the most savage personal abuse to be aimed at a public figure during the Georgian era.’ Today, our tabloids fulfil the same role as the pamphlets being peddled around the city. However, as a brace of MPs can testify, such tittle-tattle usually blows over. In Stone’s case the innuendo stuck. The duchess of Leinster recalled that children mooned the archbishop in the street. Word got back to London that Stone’s private life involved acts of sodomy with men wearing jewellery and make-up.

Such allegations, it should be said, were not new, even in an underdeveloped country with a comparatively backward informational culture like Ireland. The best-known homosexual scandal in popular memory dated to 1640. Bishop John Atherton of Waterford, attained for acts of fornication, some of it homosexual, had appeared in the press as a man ‘who for incest, buggery and many other enormous crimes, after having lived a vicious life, died a shameful death.’ (Later editions of his biography included anecdotes about bestiality.) Research has shown that Atherton was probably done away with for a range of reasons, mostly political, but it appears that the central charge was true. The bishop was a sodomite; he had committed a capital offence. Stone was different. Charges were never brought. The primate, it is true, was not exactly an exemplar of eighteenth-century ideals of polite living: he lived in ‘Polish splendour’ in a five-storey townhouse noted for alcoholic fuelled parties that tended to get out of hand. Yet, in regard to his presumed deviance, nothing was proven, or (as far as I know) even subjected to investigation. The Irish primate was a victim of rumours, not the law. How did these circumstances arise? Here, once more, things begin to look familiar.

The archbishop’s real crime had been that he engaged in the kind of political warfare in which personal vilification is central to effective rhetoric. Most of us will remember the attacks on John Kerry in the U. S. presidential election of 2005. Republicans claimed that Kerry was not a hero of the Vietnam War, but a weak and ineffectual
From wider historical circumstances.

Where does this leave us? With any luck, gay smears are becoming a thing of the past. The mainstream left has generally avoided scandal mongering. Moreover, political movements of the centre-right often make a great deal of the fact that they may have gay members, which precludes homosexual jibes from their armoury. However, there have been exceptions to the norm. Only three months ago the Gaydar profile of a Co. Waterford councillor was cited by a provincial newspaper in an attempt to ‘out’ him in what was presumed to be a traditionalist constituency. Local rumour has it that the culprits are members of a rival party which usually likes to proclaim its progressive social attitudes. Perhaps, when power is at stake, allegations about sexuality are still regarded as fair game in some quarters. This is an inheritance that the readers of [no definition] will surely wish to challenge.

In the end, it matters little whether or not Stone was a practising homosexual. The sexual identity ascribed to him by his enemies was the outcome of a culture where good conduct among public figures could be framed in the language of masculinity, and political corruption linked with shortcomings in a person’s masculine credentials. The most extreme manifestation of this logic was the projection of homosexual stereotypes onto personalities that ranked personal gain above the betterment of the nation. Looking specifically at Stone, his defamation was also a function of the Anglo-Irish relationship. The ‘English’ interest, represented by Stone, was characterised as parasitical and therefore unmanly; Kildare’s goal, a prosperous Ireland loyal to the British crown but in charge of its own governance, chimed with the conventional ideals associated with maleness: strength, valour and autonomy. In looking at the early-modern period, as any literary critic will tell you, gender and sexuality cannot be detached from wider historical circumstances.

If you feel you have what it takes to write for [no definition] then we want to hear from you.

Articles, reviews, letters, satire…

editor@cusu-lbgt.com

Did this catch your eye? Then probably caught the eye of over 200 other people across 31 colleges.

Advertise in [no definition] for college events, theatre productions, campaigns, new societies and plenty more.

As a non-for-profit magazine we offer exceptionally low rates.
A year and a half ago, I started a relationship with a bank manager (Mr B.M.). Probably not a good idea given I worked at the bank myself, but it happens everyday right? The workplace is hardly the last place on earth you might find love. Thing is, this guy was 39 and married, with 2 kids. I was a 21 year old, out-and-proud gay man. As you might expect, there were a few obstacles in our way. I even remember telling myself it was doomed from the start! But I loved him and funnily enough, everything was fine for nearly a whole year. And I reckon I’ve finally figured out why this was the case: DENIAL. Not just his though; mine.

Yeah, of course one can argue he must have been in denial too. Like when he was standing in the church reciting ‘till death do us part’, in the knowledge that he’d sucked some guy’s cock just a few months prior. Or when he was making love to his wife, while having to imagine he was fucking something else just to push him over the edge. That’s denial right? Surely, deciding to marry a woman and have kids, whilst knowing you’re attracted to men but got married anyway in good faith. He didn’t want kids; he actually loved his wife and in many ways, was happy in his married life. The woman in the Times article basically states that true denial allows a man to cheat on his wife with another man, without perceiving that he’s betrayed her in any way. To the loo. In her struggle to understand how he could do this to her, she argues that whether it’s with a man or a woman, betrayal is betrayal. But then she points out an exception to the rule; ‘A person who is in denial can’t betray you because he doesn’t know what the truth is himself’. I cant decide whether Mr. B.M. was in denial. It comes down to self-awareness and I’ll never know to what extent he acknowledged his sexuality. On the one hand, Mr B.M. was aware he was attracted to men but got married anyway in good faith. He didn’t want kids; he actually loved his wife and in many ways, was happy in his married life. The woman in the Times article basically states that true denial allows a man to cheat on his wife with another man, without perceiving that he’s betrayed her in any way. Mr B.M. never cheated on his wife. When we started going out, he’d already told her he wanted a divorce and they’d separated. Yet appearances can be deceptive and what seemed like a step out of Narnia wasn’t the ‘coming-out’ story I’d expected. There was a different denial- not to himself, but to his wife: he hadn’t told her he liked men. He hadn’t actually attributed his failed marriage to being bisexual or gay. I thought, ‘How the fuck can you deny what is so blatantly the reason for your divorce?!’ There are many compelling reasons why Mr B.M. may never tell his ex-wife and it’s entirely his personal choice, but for me, learning to accept this choice without question was a total bitch of a pill to swallow.

However guilty Mr. B.M. was of denial, what I have figured out is that I was equally to blame. I believed 100% that his situation wouldn’t affect our relationship. I eventually realised that his decision not to tell his ex-wife about his sexuality would mean he could never openly acknowledge our relationship. I thought, ‘Fuck this! I’m not the one in the closet, why put up with this?’. But it’s amazing what you’ll put up with when you’re arse-over-tit in love with someone. Point is, it took a lot of soul searching for me to even realise what I was denying to myself about the relationship. Regarding sexuality, I can only imagine that denial is an even more powerful thing. [nd]
Welcome to the first ever Pink Newsletter!
And first, a look back at Pink2005...

The grounds of Cherry Hinton Hall in Cambridge were the place to be on Saturday 20th August 2005 as 8,000 people came together to enjoy the sights and sounds of Pink2005.

The East of England's only open-air gay event was hailed a huge success by all involved and special thanks go out to key supporters of the day Cambridge City Council, public sector union, Union and the region's largest commercial radio station, Vibe FM.

'It was fulfilling to see so many people from so many backgrounds and locations meet to celebrate diversity and individuality, Pink2005 was a huge success and demonstrates that sexual orientation is not a barrier to inclusion in society' commented Alistair Wilson from the Pink2005 committee.

Dozens of live acts performed throughout the day on the main stage and in the many themed tents, creating an unforgettable party atmosphere. The day also played host to the final of 'Pink Idols', a search for the region's best vocal talent, which was won by Cambridge entrant, Craig Peters.

The Community and Young, Pink and Talented areas showcased an array of work from local groups and individuals. And new this year, the Pink Games' arena proved equally as popular, with a variety of sports activities and demonstrations, including S-a-side football and Tug of War.

We were thrilled to see that everyone thoroughly enjoyed the day, which was reflected in the overwhelming number of comments received from visitors and participants alike. The positive feedback from local authorities has also supported this, as comments Sgt Karen Clegg, Hate Crime Manager for Cambridge Police: 'The crowd were very well behaved and good natured and clearly appreciated the high visibility officers that were at the event. Officers themselves took an active part in many aspects of the day which helped maintain the light-hearted atmosphere'.

For updates check out www.pinkpicnic.co.uk

All-new website and online Pink survey coming in March!

Editors comments: Whilst the Pink Picnic is not run by CUSU LBGT it is something that we are always very keen to support. The Pink committee is looking for a student representative from the University and would like to hear from you if you are going to be around Cambridge during the summer. Even if you are not going to be around but live near enough then I would wholeheartedly recommend this event to you... I’m also not being paid to say this! [nd]
The National Blood Service ban on gay men: NECESSARY POLICY OR INSTITUTIONAL HOMOPHOBIA?

The blood service is merely trying to reduce risks

Why does the National Blood Service (NBS) ask ‘men who have had [oral or anal] sex with men’ (MSM) not to donate blood, even if they’ve had safer sex using a condom? Contrary to popular belief, the restriction has nothing to do with ‘outdated images of AIDS and HIV as gay diseases’, but is based upon an understanding of how various transfusion transmissible infections (TTIs) travel through British populations.

Well over three-quarters of all HIV transmissions (84% in 2004) occur annually in Britain through sex between men. As such, it is MSM who are the people most likely to be in what is called the window period of HIV infection, the period of up to two months following the contraction of HIV where viral antibodies are undetectable by standard blood screening techniques.

Crucially, even if HIV could be detected during the window period, the NBS would have no reason to overhauls their policy. The spread of other TTIs (such as syphilis) is also on the increase amongst MSM. Whilst these other TTIs do not present the same diagnostic difficulties as HIV, it is standard NBS policy to minimise the risk of receiving an infected blood donation.

In order to construct a better defence, I’ll turn to some of the most common objections:

1. Heterosexuals who have engaged in unprotected sex are not prevented from giving blood. Yes, because TTIs are not spread along such routes – and ‘promiscuity’ has nothing to do with understanding patterns of TTI transmission. Whether heterosexuals shag like rabbits or abstain like nuns, what matters for the NBS is whether heterosexual sex practices facilitate the spread of TTIs. Crucially, some heterosexual sex practices do facilitate the spread of TTIs and exclusions have been introduced accordingly. Restrictions pertaining to prostitution and immigration, for example. Heterosexuals are excluded from donating blood, but in different ways to MSM.

2. The MSM restriction effectively bans people whose blood is free of any TTIs. A lot of other bans do this too (consider, for instance, the ban on people who have received a blood transfusion in the last twenty years). Restrictions like these are necessarily crude because: a) it is straightforwrad policy (this point should not be underestimated), and b) in order to fully exclude core risk groups, the NBS must target their margins. It’s safer to exclude collectives than it is individuals because it adds from the outset an extra level of risk minimisation.

3. Other exclusion policies pertaining to similar situations are less harsh than the blanket ban on MSM. Which policies, and where? And similar how? Different policies pertain to different situations, different rates of TTI transmission and different levels of risk. Some critics point to the Australian time-limited restriction as a revealing comparison, yet fail to notice that in Australia there are far lower rates of HIV transmission amongst MSM thanks to sustained sexual health programmes.

Why support the ban on MSM? Because the policy works. And before turning your back on it completely, note that ‘women who have had sex with women’ are not prevented from donating blood, whilst lots of heterosexual people are. Note also that the relatively small size of the MSM population means not only that higher rates of TTI transmission happen amongst a far smaller number of people, but also that MSM really don’t have that much blood to offer. Note finally that all the leading AIDS charities in Britain, including the Terrence Higgins Trust, fully support the ban on MSM – and with good cause.

But talk about ‘myth perpetuation’, ‘harmful stereotypes’, ‘promiscuous heterosexuals’ and ‘similar exclusions elsewhere’, really won’t impress anyone whose job it is to look in great detail at national patterns of HIV transmission. The priority for the blood service is to keep the blood supply safe.

Contributed by Nick Whitfield, Darwin College
The ban is ignorant, harmful and unnecessary

You may have noticed the CUSU LBGT blood campaign towards the end of last term. We were the ones standing with the clipboards outside the National Blood Service vans at King's, asking people to sign the petition, chasing our friends down King's Parade if they hadn't seen us. Our slogan? “Please give blood, because we can’t”. The publicity surrounding the campaign generated a fair amount of debate both within and outside LBGT student community. Why were we running the petition? And why were some people so hostile to the petition? Besides the woman who informed us with disgust in her voice that ‘the Bible doesn’t believe in homosexuals’, some valid points have been made. But still CUSU LBGT, and the 500+ people who have so far signed the petition, are standing by our campaign.

We’re not campaigning for a complete overturn of the ban on MSM (men who have sex with men) giving blood. We’re campaigning for a much needed review of the National Blood Service policy. NUS LGB championed this initiative last year. Earlier this year, Warwick students taking part in the same campaign were attacked by the Mail on Sunday for supposedly threatening nurses and obstructing blood donors. This was subsequently denied, and indeed, in the case of our members petitioning outside King’s, it was they who were the objects of derision from the NBS nurses! We’ve been openly appealing for others to give blood because we can’t, publicising the donor sessions and directing people looking for the right place to go. And we have been sticking to the line that the National Blood Service are acting discriminally.

True, the rates of HIV transmission amongst gay and bisexual men may statistically place us as a ‘high-risk group’. But why should a man who can prove that they have not had sex with another man for over twenty years, and that their blood is perfectly safe, be banned from donating? Indeed, the UNAIDS/ Inter-Parliamentary Union Guidelines 1998 state that screening should relate to an individual’s actual behaviour and not to membership of a group. Surely the National Blood Service are directly contradicting this, when their 2004 report states that they have ‘to regard all gay men, whether monogamous or not, as constituting a single group of the population’? In America, men who have had sexual relations with men before 1977 are not barred from giving blood.

Regardless of the claims made about the MSM group being higher risk, it is the treatment of other groups that is of most concern to campaigners against the National Blood Service policy. People who have engaged in unprotected heterosexual sex in high-risk areas are free to donate after twelve months. Women who have had sex with a man who has had sex with a man only have to wait twelve months before being allowed to give blood. Surely a woman having sex with a member of the banned group stands just as much chance as being infected?

Perhaps one of the most objectionable National Blood Service policies has to be the guidelines on their website on who can and who can’t give blood. You should never give blood if ‘you’re a man who’s had sex with another man, even “safe sex” using a condom’. This we already knew. But apparently this ranks higher on the list than if ‘you’ve ever worked as a prostitute’ or ‘you’ve ever injected yourself with drugs – even once’. CUSU LBGT have been criticised for saying that the National Blood Service are prolonging the myth that HIV/AIDS is a ‘gay disease’. Critics have pointed to the fact that HIV and AIDS are not the same thing. This we are perfectly aware of. However, there are many people who are somewhat more ignorant, and by seeming to state that MSM are a higher risk group than prostitutes and intravenous drug users, the National Blood Service seem to be only contributing to this ignorance.

It’s time that the National Blood Service took note and thought seriously about making some changes. [nd]

Contributed by Josh Black, Christ’s College
CUSU LBGT Campaigns Officer 2006-07

College reps should have copies of the petition at the start of this term, which CUSU LBGT will shortly be sending to the National Blood Service, David Howarth MP, and Liam Byrne MP (the Parliamentary under Secretary for Public Health, responsible for the National Blood Service). You can also add your name to it simply by e-mailing me at campaigns@cusu-lbgt.com, and the text of the petition can be viewed at www.cusu-lbgt.com.