Deaf LGBT in Brighton

A short talk by
Iain Poplett
formerly co-ordinator of DLAGGS

Who am I?

- I worked for British & European Deaf lesbian and gay organisations at various times between 1985 and 2005. Editor & Secretary Brothers and Sisters Club. Co-ordinator of DLAGGS, Deaf Lesbian And Gay groupS, Committee Secretary of ELGAD, European Lesbian and Gay Association of the Deaf.

- I have Brighton fishermen of 17th to 19th centuries in my blood.

Brighton LGBT history

- Brighton as a town of leisure since 1700’s.
- Recorded local homosexual offences in early 1800’s.
- Rich bachelors and spinsters employed their lovers as private secretaries.
- With easy transport from London, artists, theatre people and writers came to live in town. Private clubs in 1920’s.
- During WWII, lots of armed forces personnel stay in town – lots of opportunities during blackouts!

First known record of Deaf homosexual – deaf mute man was hanged for committing a sodomy in 1810.
- First Deaf lesbian & gay meeting in London in 1978, followed by the founding of the Brothers and Sisters Club
- First Deaf lesbian & gay awareness meeting in Brighton at BDA Centenary Congress in 1990.
- Deaf & hearing lesbian group called DAHLING formed in 1988
- Strong bond built with Deaf LGBT groups all over the world since 1980.
What happened in Brighton – early years

- Deaf lesbians and gays from all over Britain came to Brighton for short breaks. Some lived in Brighton & Sussex.

- Punch & Judy Club set up by Deaf gay man, David Moller living in Eastbourne – he was also the founder of Brothers and Sisters Club.

- The Club first met in upstairs room of Bulldog Tavern, St James Street in April 1992. They meet on third Saturdays of the month to cater for Deaf lesbian and gay locals and weekend trippers from London.

- Punch & Judy Club hosted the National Deaf lesbian and gay club meeting at Sussex AIDS Centre in Brighton in 1994.

- Punch & Judy Club was disbanded in 1995 as few people volunteered to serve the Committee. Deaf lesbians and gays still met informally at the Bulldog tavern and Revenge night club.

What happened in Brighton – later years

- Local Deaf LGBT people now involved in Deaf community in Brighton & Sussex.

- But Brighton Deaf Club “banned” Deaf lesbians and gays in 2000. Some Deaf members petitioned for Deaf lesbians and gays to be banned after one Deaf Club event were peopled by Deaf lesbians and gays during the 2000 Pride weekend.

- Only after the Equal Opportunities Policy was adopted several years later, the Deaf Club was open to Deaf LGBT people. Deaf LGBT people still refuse to come as the old attitudes remain.

- Deaf LGBT professionals work in Brighton as welfare and community workers, career advisors, education personnel and sign language teachers.

Deaf LGBT Health in Brighton

- Deaf LGBT health issue raised in Brighton during the HIV/AIDS crisis during 1990’s.

- Several deaf Brighton residents lived with HIV/AIDS & some died. Lack of communication support with local HIV/AIDS support & care organisations a big problem. Only Deaf based national organisations, AIDS AHEAD & Deaf MESMAC, provided the support during the 1990’s.

- Now, Deaf LGBT residents able to have their own health issues arised with local organisations & PCT with interpreter support.

- But Deaf LGBT health and safer sex awareness is lacking nowadays.