

MUNSTER GCN

MUNSTER'S LESBIAN & GAY NEWSPAPER

FREE

APRIL 1992

Historic Victory!

In Patrick's Day '92 we made history....and we did it in style. Our float was a blaze of colour with balloons, banners, streamers and dancing lesbian, bi and gay people blowing bubbles at the 80,000 people lining the streets of Cork.

How did it all happen?
Well...a couple of us were trying with the idea for a few months. Just imagine - Paddy's day - thousands of people on the streets - a perfect opportunity to visibly celebrate our culture in Cork.

A week before the parade we sat in the pub thinking it would never come off...no-one would be willing to participate. But as word spread enthusiasm grew and by the end of the evening we were all buzzing so we applied for entry to the Cork Parade! It was surprisingly easy, especially considering the hassle in New York.

After a hectic week of preparation the big day finally dawned.

Many of us awoke early worrying about what was in store for us - were we crazy? - but butterflies aside we made it in! That morning we set to work, transforming a boring blue pick-up truck into a bright colourful fun float. A loud cheer broke out as three brave women

The costumes were partly for disguise - many of us couldn't risk being recognised - but it was also because we wanted to give Cork the message that we are happy and that it can be fun to be lesbian, gay or bisexual and so we set off, en route dancing and singing.

The overall reaction was amazingly positive. Many people stared with stony faces trying to ignore us and hoping we would go away. An occasional finger or fist was raised at us. Someone was hit with a plastic bottle. Curiosity and disbelief were common reactions. "Are you really?" "Where's your girlfriend?" Most of the hassle came from young boys in groups - but we felt really powerful shouting "YEAH!" with pride when they accused us of being lesbians and faggots.

Despite this, all along the route there were people shouting, clapping and waving in support. Sometimes, in the middle of a silent crowd, one person would start cheering - others would



Photo: Maurice Ahern

jumping up and down frantically trying to attract our attention to encourage us. On the South Mall a 70-year-old woman waved enthusiastically and called out "you're gorgeous!" We passed lesbians and gay men who had decided not to join in the parade but who watched with pride as their float sailed by.

literature (including GCN) was presented to the dignitaries. The support we received and our own energy and pride overwhelmed and belated any negative reaction.

Later in Loafers relaxing with our pints, exhausted, we watched ourselves on the TV at a club... Then suddenly

Many of us even managed to go dancing in the Other Place that night, celebrating with Champagne showers.

And we had reason to celebrate! We brought the words LESBIAN, GAY and BISEXUAL into people's vocabulary and consciousness and we had made

Picture: Orla Egan, Cork LGBT Archive

A 1992 Munster GCN article about the Cork LGBT St Patrick's Day float.

GAY RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

5 to 10% OF THE IRISH POPULATION IS GAY

OVER 6,000 IN CORK ALONE

IRELAND IS THE ONLY EUROPEAN COUNTRY WHICH STILL LEGISLATES AGAINST GAYS

WE DEMAND SOCIAL AND LEGAL EQUALITY NOW!

A 1981 Cork Gay Pride Week poster.

Picture: Orla Egan, Cork LGBT Archive

Cork's LGBT history enters Ireland's digital archives

THE history of the gay rights movement in Cork is being painstakingly archived by a dedicated community activist.

Orla Egan is archiving LGBT literature, magazines, pamphlets and posters in order to preserve Cork's heritage.

Recently, the Digital Repository of Ireland has begun to digitise Orla's collection to preserve it for future generations.

Orla has been an LGBT activist in Cork since the 1980s. "There is a rich LGBT history in Cork. There were many community development events and supports set up as far back as the 1970s," she said.

"It's a hidden history, it's not the type of thing people would read about in history books. It was nearly invisible, and

■ Aine Kenny

younger members of the community had little knowledge of their own history."

Orla adds that a lot of LGBT history in Ireland has been configured as very Dublin-centric. "That's a trend worldwide, with London and New York. But a lot of key events in LGBT Irish history happened in Cork."

The collection came about thanks to the foresight of one man, Arthur Leahy. "He was very active in the 1970's LGBT community. He had the foresight to start keeping things. He kept them in his basement. It was like a treasure trove. But the collection was completely disorganised, they weren't being stored properly, and were becoming damp," says Orla.

"So I took the collection out of his base-

ment and started storing and sorting. Now, the physical collection has been given to the Cork Public Museum, where it will become part of a permanent LGBT exhibition."

Orla also scanned the documents she gathered and made digital copies, which she uploaded to corklgbtarchive.com. This collection is going to be archived permanently by the Digital Repository of Ireland.

Orla is a volunteer, and archives in her free time. "It's a bit of madness and passion," she jokes.

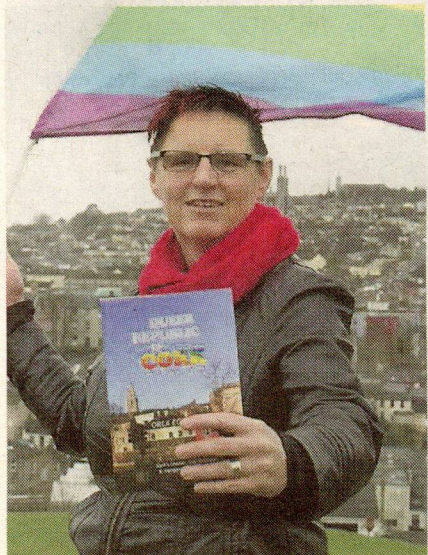
However, she says the support and recognition she has received from Cork City Council and the Heritage Council has been important and "symbolic".

The Heritage Council granted funds so that the documents from Arthur's archive could be safely stored. They also granted the LGBT archive a Hidden Heritage Award. Cork City Council also gave Orla a Heritage Publication Grant in 2016, which she used to publish a book called *Queer Republic of Cork*.

Orla says it is important to acknowledge that the LGBT community in Cork were actively organising in the 1970s. "The Cork Gay Centre was set up in MacCurtain Street in the mid-1970s."

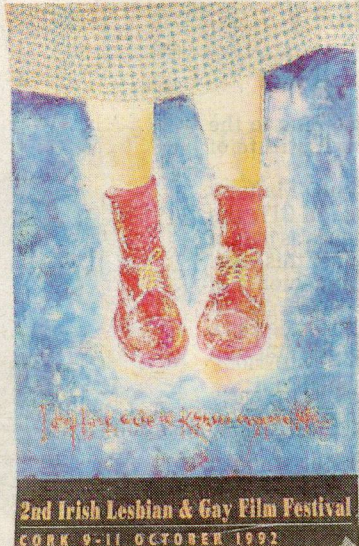
"In 1978, the Cork branch of the Irish Gay Rights Movement published their magazine, *Sapphire*. In 1981, the first National Gay Conference was held in Cork. This discussed the main issues facing LGBT people in Ireland, and really set the agenda for gay activism in the coming decades."

Cork also hosted Ireland's first-ever Lesbian and Gay Film Festival in 1991, as part of Cork's Film Festival. Cork's 1992 St Patrick's Day parade was also historic. Leaside had the first-ever LGBT float taking part in a St Patrick's Day parade, and it even won the prize of best new entry. "This was organised as a response to the New York and Boston parades banning LGBT floats. It was showing the world that the idea you couldn't be gay and Irish was not true," says Orla.



Orla Egan has helped archive the history of the gay rights movement in Cork and Ireland.

Picture: Domnick Walsh



A 1992 Cork Lesbian and Gay Film Festival poster, photographed by Josef Kovac.

Picture: Orla Egan, Cork LGBT Archive

HALLOWEEN

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INSIDE TODAY

**See
Wow!
INSIDE**

 I always thought
cancer happened
to other people
not me...

 Marathon
run to raise
awareness
of CPR

 Celebration
of strong
women


Born into homelessness

Men refused bail over burglaries

■ Liam Heylin

Three Cork men were refused bail in court yesterday accused of carrying out burglaries targeted at the rural homes of elderly people going off to mass.

The men were brought before Cork District Court yesterday charged with carrying out a burglary at the home of a couple in their 80s living in North Cork.

Strenuous objections were made to any of the three being released on bail.

Garda detective said the arrests of the men arose out of a highly resourced garda investigation going on before and since the alleged incident giving rise to the burglary charge.

They were denied bail in court yesterday and remanded in custody to appear again on October 29.

■ See Page 4

The Drama starts now for new graduates



Graduates in Drama Studies Úna O'Brien, Oysterhaven; Megan Haly, Clogheen; Maeve Korpela, Kenmare, and Aoife Commons, Wicklow, at the first day of conferrings in the CIT Cork School of Music. SEE PAGE 3

Picture: Darragh Kane

Shocking report into substandard housing

■ Sarah O'Dwyer

A FAMILY in Cork was living in a house without heating for five years, and resorted to using cloths and fabric to seal gaps in the windows.

The family is one of a number highlighted in a new report on homelessness and substandard housing in Cork city.

The report, by the Young Knocknaheeny initiative, which aims to reduce child poverty, found that homelessness and housing insecurity have a major impact on families and child development. According to the report, another Cork family living in private rented accommodation considered declaring themselves homeless, their living situation was so poor.

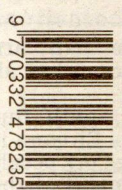
Young Knocknaheeny engaged with 60 families in the 12 months to January this year. Of those families, 29 — including 60 children — reported issues with homelessness or substandard housing.

Speaking at the launch of the report, the centre's manager Katherine Hosford said: "Young Knocknaheeny is concerned that for many families poor housing conditions undermines their children's development, and also creates a barrier for other family and child services trying to intervene and support them."

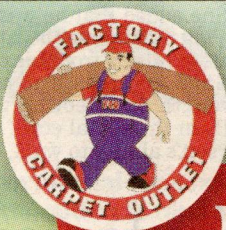
■ See Pages 10/11 for more

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shower


23.10.2019

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