

FOREVER WITH PRIDE

**1ST AUG 2025
ISSUE 45**

A Note To All Readers

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At the heart of grassroots football lies passion—not profit. It's early mornings, muddy boots, and a community that shows up, rain or shine. For my wife and me, football was always more than just a sport. It's what brought us together—from the back-and-forth banter over rival teams to coaching side by side in girls' football. Seven years on, it's become our shared purpose.

and sponsors often hard to come by—especially for girls' teams—we knew something had to change.

Historically, girls haven't had the same access or visibility in football. In fact, they weren't even officially allowed to play for decades. Though progress has been made, barriers remain. Sponsors were lining up for boys' teams while girls were being overlooked. It didn't feel right, and we decided to do something about it.

Three years in, after trying everything and seeing our players in kits that wore out far too fast, we took matters into our own hands. That's when we discovered sublimated kits—game-changers in every way. Everything's printed directly onto the

What many people don't realise is that grassroots coaches and managers are volunteers. We juggle training plans, match logistics, squad welfare, and fundraising—often while working full-time jobs. One of the biggest struggles? Kits. The moment your team puts on a matching strip, they stop being individuals. They become a unit. A proper team. But with quality kits priced sky-high,

fabric: names, numbers, sponsors, logos, vibrant designs—durable, affordable, and sharp-looking. The difference was night and day. Best of all, sublimation meant we could create one-of-a-kind kits—designed specifically for each team—instead of settling for the same generic strips that so many clubs wear.

We introduced sublimation across our club to help teams save up to £20 per player, and the response was incredible. That was the spark that became Rush Sportswear.

Rush was born from the belief that all grassroots teams—regardless of gender, background, or budget—deserve to look and feel like champions. We've since helped clubs across the UK save thousands on kits and training gear. No frills, no inflated pricing—just tough, tailored sportswear delivered in a matter of weeks.

But our journey hasn't been without its challenges. As a lesbian couple coaching in grassroots football, we've faced judgment that has nothing to do with our ability. Just recently, someone questioned whether we were the right people to coach—based solely on the fact that we're two married women. It was a stark reminder that while the game is evolving, there's still work to do. LGBTQ+ people are still navigating bias in spaces where passion and skill should be all that matter.

That's why visibility is so important. That's why we keep showing up. Because every time we step onto the pitch, we're not just coaching—we're challenging outdated assumptions. We're showing young players that leadership looks like many things. That love, identity, and football can coexist proudly.

Rush Sportswear isn't just kit. It's a reminder that no one should be priced out of the game. That girls deserve the same chances, support, and kits as the boys. That volunteers deserve respect and that when we make the game more accessible at the grassroots level, we're building a future that reflects the diversity of the real world.

Because when you look good, you feel unstoppable. And we're here to make sure every team gets that chance—no matter who they are, who they love, or where they come from.

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To Find Out More**

I am a 51 year old Transgender Man, officially, and biologically Male, by virtue of a Gender Recognition Certificate and Corrected Birth Certificate. I also have Autism, a condition which goes hand in hand with Gender Dysphoria (and my Gender Dysphoria is very unusual in that it is caused by a Chromosome 9 fault, which is in every part of my DNA reproductive organs and it is so rare and unique that there are only a few known cases, of which mine is one) and over 50% of Autism sufferers are on the LGBTQIA+ Spectrum, according to the National Autistic Society (www.autism.org.uk/Autism and the LGBTQIA+ Spectrum).

I have been married to my husband and Carer, Colin, for fifteen years now, which is also very unusual as most marriages end when a spouse changes their Gender. I consider myself very fortunate that Colin agreed that he and I should stay together in a same sex marriage when I applied for my Gender Recognition Certificate, because we love each other so much and we Renewed our Vows on the 8th June 2025 to prove it.

This was a very special moment in our lives and our families have finally accepted me for who and what I am. I hope to have Gender Reassignment Surgery (Top and Bottom Surgery) in the near future – so my Transition Journey is not yet over.

Socially, including on-line via Facebook, I am a member of two Transgender Groups –

the Newbury Group in Berkshire, the monthly dinners of which Colin and I attend regularly and have made a good number of friends, some of whom I know from the Oxford Group when I was a member. I was also recently accepted as a member into a Naturist With Pride Group for Transmen (and LGB etc) and hope to participate in one of their events in August, but it is very dependent on how I feel.

I am extremely passionate about promoting Transgender rights in the Community, including socially and in healthcare, especially in the wake of the Supreme Court Ruling in April, and the impact on the Trans Community, generated by the EHRC (Equality and Human Rights Commission). Since June 2022, I have served on the NHS LGBTQIA+ Sounding Board as an adviser – a role I find very rewarding. I also sing, a very necessary part of my Transition, as I have been on a low dose of Testosterone for four and a half years now, and my voice has not changed.

I am a Counter-Tenor – which is the Male equivalent of Mezzo-Soprano – and I intend to keep it that way. I was advised to keep singing, which I do regularly and can still hit the high notes in my range. I actually started singing at the age of 7, and performed in various Choirs in my youth, In 1990, I started training as a soloist, performed at Weddings and taught by a professional singer until 2010, when I got married to Colin. Having over 20 years of experience behind me, I turned professional

in 2013 and started up my own Business, FM Sings (www.fmsings.co.uk) as a freelance professional singer, when I performed at Beer Festivals and other events, and I have my own Facebook Page FM Sings, which can be found by going onto Facebook and searching for FM Sings, via the FM Pratt Facebook Page, www.facebook.com/fmpratt08 or Googling it and going directly to the FM Sings Website. This has more information about me, and what type of songs I sing.

Colin and I also run another business called Optics3D Ltd, selling prescription and non-prescription 3D glasses for the cinema and 3D TV's, as well as prescription and non-prescription sunglasses on-line via Amazon Marketplace and via the website www.optics3d.co.uk. This also has a Facebook page. Links to both of them can be found via my Facebook Page, FM Pratt, or Googling them and going directly to the website.

I think that the best way for people who wish to engage with me in connection with either business should send me a message via Facebook Messenger in the first instance and I would respond accordingly. My work with the Sounding Board is highly confidential, so I cannot share anything about that, but I can share my personal experiences in accessing a Gender Identity Clinic and Hormone Treatment under the NHS with people, on request – again via Facebook Messenger.

Welcome to
Alphabetti ~ Amasatine ~
Miss Serpentina and Lord Skullington





August 2025

Sponsored By

**Gay Gardeners UK, Plants, Seeds and
surplus Exchange Group**

Now we have lots of hosepipe bans around the country I thought I would give you some tips with your pond particularly if you have some fish in it. They don't have to be prize coy just the humble gold fish like the ones I have in mine. A friend reminded me that Heron's like to spot a garden pond and then go fishing literally and take all of your fish. One of the ways you can help with this is do what I did and put some surface floating plants in which once they spread will give the fish somewhere to dash to and avoid the Heron.

The other good thing about the floating plants is they can help reduce water loss from evaporation and also help the fish by providing some shade which they like to hide under. They are cheap to buy from a garden centre and some are available online. They do tend to grow quickly so they will also take nutrients out of the pond which is a good thing. You can be ruthless with them and just divide them and throw some away if you don't have any friends that need any.

Try to top the pond up from water butts if possible as the rainwater is far better for your pond as it has no added chemicals. If you have ran out and the pond is low, don't wait for it to get too low as the tap water needs to be diluted with the rest of the pond water.

Despite the ban you can top up your pond with a hosepipe if you have fish in it as it is seen as cruel not to so if you receive a letter from the water authority because someone has seen you using the hose then take a photo and reply back that you have a pond with live fish in it.

Of course, ponds are also vital for birds in this dry weather to drink and to have a bath in and the same goes for insects so floating plants and surrounding stones will give an area for the insects to land and get a drink so please think about that. Lily leaves are idea for this. There is nothing better than watching your pond and seeing all the visitors that come for a drink knowing you have provided it and are doing good for the environment and wildlife!

Left – Replanted container with New Guinea impatiens that love the sun and will continue right through until the first frost.

Right – Still the same hanging basket just no Alyssum or Lobelia which die off early. This one has a Fuchsia, Begonias and Impatiens that will flower all summer long.

In a season as hot and bright as this you might want to revitalise your containers and baskets with fresh plants like the ones above. If you choose the right varieties they will carry on until the frosts come so are great value for money.

I've just replanted mine as above far left so there is no need to have planters full of bedding plants that have passed their best so early in the year. The New Guinea Impatiens are larger in flower and leaf and come in lots of different colours of flower and leaves and love plenty of sun. If you want to you can always bring one or two inside before the first frosts and keep them as a house plant. You can trim them and they respond with plenty of new growth and lots of flowers. Use liquid tomato feed to keep them in good shape.

You can even think about placing orders for your new spring bulbs and you will probably get an early order discount if you do. This way you won't get the sold-out notice when you're looking for some fresh spring bulbs. Equally if you want some bulbs for indoor flowering at Christmas, now is a good time to buy them and they will be delivered in good time to put them in pots ready for forcing. They need to be called, "prepared bulbs" for this purpose.

Keep the weeds down if possible as these will take valuable moisture from your plants.

- Plant of the Month -
Gladioli



I'm going to go for Gladioli this month. They are impressive in size and give height to borders or containers and come in a wide range of colours and are excellent for the indoor vase. They will often support themselves but might need a stick if you want to keep them nice and straight for cutting and bringing indoors. It's best to lift the corms in the autumn as they aren't frost-hardy but let the foliage die down before you do. Planting in a little sand in the soil is a tip to keep the corm clean when digging up.

Go for the largest sized corm you can as they will produce larger flower stems and be all the more impressive. Note they aren't call bulbs but corms but you can treat them exactly the same. When you lift them they can go in a dry part of your garage with no soil or water and then plant again next spring after the frosts have gone.

Left – Cut stems of Gladioli perfect in a vase with a full range of colours.

Right – Gladioli are corms rather than bulbs so they are flatter in shape and need to be lifted each year as they aren't frost-hardy. Just keep them dry when lifted and in storage.

Not much chance of frozen assets at the moment more like trying to stop them from over-heating! Avoid the hottest part of the day when you're working in the garden and watch out for insect bites - unwanted swellings can be embarrassing and not good at a barbecue!



*Where poetry tumbles like
water through wild stone
and silence*

Poeaxtry's Poetry Prism | Axton N. O. Mitchell
@poeaxtry_

AXTON MITCHELL

TRANS POET & AUTHOR

CLICK OR TAP HERE TO FIND
MY WORK



"Out on an Island" is a StoneCrabs Theatre project focused on uncovering and celebrating the LGBTQ+ history of the Isle of Wight.

The Oral Histories can also be accessed at the project's website

outonanisland.co.uk/history/our-stories/

The group meets at the first Saturday of every month at the Department in Ryde and the last Saturday of the month at One Holyrood in Newport, if you are interested in taking part either as a social group or if you are interested in contributing to the research, volunteering at events please contact us on:

outonanisland@stonecrabs.co.uk

It involves collecting oral histories, researching historical materials, and creating public exhibitions and events to share these stories. The project aims to highlight the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals on the island, including their struggles, triumphs, and contributions to the community.

Results of our research have been published as book by Medina Publishing:

medinabookshop.com/product/out-on-an-island-edited-by-franko-figueiredo-stow-and-caroline-diamond

And all the Oral History interviews have been archived at Carisbrooke Castle Museum Island Voices and the Wessex Film and Sound Archives in Winchester.

entertain participants, bringing the island's hidden LGBTQ+ history to life.

The walks explore the island's LGBTQ+ heritage and is linked to our local LGBTQ+ Trail map.

Next walk takes place on 31 August in Freshwater and sees Virginia Woolf guide the audience around her personal connection with the Island – you can read more about the walks here:

stonecrabs.co.uk/faces-places/

We are currently producing a series of performed walks around the Isle of Wight, focusing on LGBTQ+ history and figures associated with the island.

These walks, taking place from July to October, will feature actors portraying historical characters who guide and



This Is An Isle of Wight Only Service

We are an Isle of Wight voluntary group training our family pets to follow the scent of missing dogs to help reunite them with their owners.

We set up in 2019, some of our members have been involved in searching since 2013.

We train our pet dogs and take them to track the scent of dogs where it is safe for them to search. We also carry out ground searches without dogs, and have friendly drone pilots to help us.

Along the way we have built up quite a bit of knowledge of how missing dogs act, so we help the owners locate the areas their dog has been, and how to recover them.

We also advise on publicity because the biggest help is members of the public who provide sightings. The Isle of Wight has a large population of dog lovers. There are many island-wide and local community groups on the island that get involved. LOST PETS IOW is an important Facebook group with 23,000 members. If a pet goes missing in a specific area Lost Pets members are on the look-out.

Sightings are key to finding lost dogs. It helps us have a starting point for the tracker dogs, but also enables owners to be in the right area to secure their pet.

We offer support and advice on how to approach a missing dog, and what not to do.

How we search

If visual searches of the area have not been successful, we muster Track A Dog teams – a handler and dog, accompanied by a buddy.

Briefing: A team member will speak to the owner to find out how the dog went missing and collect information that will help us. For the best chance of success we need:

- An understanding of the dog's normal behaviour and familiarity with the territory, and any health issues
- The latest sighting – time and the direction the dog was travelling
- A scent item, toy, blanket, bed or towel that has been used exclusively by the missing dog, or fur from grooming that has been stored in an airtight bag.

We are careful not to put our search teams and tracker dogs at risk; all searches will depend on the terrain and weather. We do not enter private property without permission from the owner or owner's representative.

Communications: Timely reports of further sightings with as much information as possible are really important in finding the missing dog's most recent location.

Sometimes searches take place over several days. We keep a log of sightings and behaviour of our tracker dogs to pass on information to the search teams, the owners and other rescue organisations. When a pattern of behaviour is established it's easier to pinpoint where and when to locate them.

When a dog is recovered, we advise the owners to have a vet check and to keep their pet secure and calm in order to re-adjust to family life.

Searching: Our dogs are given the scent item where the dog was last seen and will follow the scent trail. A nominated team member will report progress to pet owners and liaise with other organisations.

Where possible we ask volunteers and dog walkers to keep other dogs away from the area to avoid contamination and give our trackers the best chance of success.



Author
Robin .S. Goodfellow

A Haunting Through Time

Welcome to the anthology of books
Book One & Two are our now
as are a selection of character short
stories and three standalone books

Website
www.robingoodfellow.uk
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Till the Stars Come Down

When an audience jumps to their feet the very second a show ends you know it's a winner.

Well this was the case on press night for 'Till the Stars Come Down'. It had an all too short run at the National Theatre last year so luckily for those of us who missed it we get a second chance to see this show - at the Royal Haymarket theatre - and it's a must see show.

What exactly does 'Till the Stars Come Down' really mean. Well, this show centres around a wedding between Sylvia (Sinead Matthews) and Polish Marek (Julian Kostov).

But it also focuses (very humorously too) on the rest of the family of Sylvia and her two sisters - including her sister Hazel (Lucy Black) - the one with the most serious issues of all the characters.

And then there is Maggie (Aisling Loftus), who can't seem to get her life together. So we are treated to many pre-wedding jitters and hilarious jokes (where the humour takes center stage), with funny one line zingers from Aunty Carol (Dorothy Atkinson).

And then the post wedding reception takes place when it all really hits the fan,

along with a naughty lie told by Hazels daughter that changes the trajectory of the wedding and the entire family relationship.

But the drama is very funny and the cast all work very very well with each other, working with a script by Beth Steel.

If there's anything negative about this show I would say that some of the accents (Midlands) of the actors are a bit hard to understand - so I missed some of the dialogue. Otherwise, it's an almost perfect show with an amazing and frenzied outstanding cast (my plus one for the evening said it's the best show he's ever seen). I don't know how the actors all get through eight shows a week - it's physically very intense - but

www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/productions/till-the-stars-come-down/



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Tales of the Second City

Misadventures on Birmingham's Gay Scene

Laid Bare: Hanging Out With Ya Bum Out

"I've got my ticket," my friend informed me, when we encountered each other in Birmingham city centre. "You are still coming on Sunday?" I had messaged him several weeks earlier about a unique event at *The Fox. Hang Out Naked Midlands* were hosting their first gathering for gentlemen who enjoy getting their kit off in a friendly, non-sexual environment. I'm not a naturist by nature but thought it would appeal to my nudity loving friend... and maybe give me a tale to tell.

To my surprise, my friend was initially hesitant.

"You have nothing to worry about," I assured this trim, tanned Italian. My body is so white, I'm practically translucent. "Stood next to you, I'm going to look like a pale ghost... with a dad bod!"

I had promptly forgotten all about this naked get-together after messaging my *amico*... but a few moments online secured me a place.

We met outside the pub that Sunday afternoon, just as it started to drizzle. Several weeks of stellar weather broke as we congregated to take off all our clothes.

Around forty men attended. Everyone bought drinks and sat around or mingled, wondering when to undress. Do we just whip off our clothes willy nilly or wait for a signal. *Now?... How about now?*

Suddenly, the organiser rushed to the back garden, where a group of enthusiastic naturists had already disrobed.

"You are prematurely naked," he informed them. "We stay clothed until the official start time and the front door is closed."

Well, now we knew the protocol.

When time came, everyone put down their drinks, took off their garb, and then carried on as though nothing had changed. It was just your average afternoon in the pub, but as though we had spontaneously developed x-ray vision.

"Now nobody is going to be able to scan me," my Latin friend lamented, as he stowed his clothes away. He indicated the QR code on the back of his t-shirt, embossed with the words *YOU WANNA TO DATE ME?* He explained that people could scan him at a distance and the code would direct them straight to his social media.

I didn't know this was a thing.

Twenty first century love, when even potential dates come with a barcode.

It was a pleasant, laidback event, and everyone was very welcoming.

I congratulated the organiser on a successful launch. Apparently, they had staged similar soirees in other cities, including Bristol, appropriately at the *Bristol Bear Bar*.

"How long have you been into naturism?" I was asked.

"Oh, I'm not," I explained. "I just came out of curiosity." ... and mischief.

Used to previous states of public undress being in dark clubs, hot saunas, or on gay beaches with busy sand dunes, this *wholenon-sexual aspect* was uniquely titillating. I was conscious of not showing any signs of enjoying myself too much (The exact opposite of the common male anxiety relating to these matters).

There was one *hair-raising* moment when conversation with an old acquaintance got a tad flirty... and I was obliged to stand awkwardly facing the bar, hiding my ardour.

It is the simple practicalities of being stark bollock naked that confound me. Where do I put my change?

Is it acceptable to lean over a pool table? Can I safely fry bacon? In the Gent's toilet, I washed my hands then, In the Gent's toilet, I washed my hands then, as the single air dryer was in use, automatically wiped them on my rear. Something guys casually do when wearing jeans, is not a pleasant sensation when it's your bare arse you have just rubbed your wet hands on.

I was engaged in conversation with a group in the garden. When I mentioned my partner, I was asked why he didn't come along.

"Oh, this would be totally out of his comfort zone." I explained how two major surgeries, one open heart and the other an abdominal emergency, had knocked his body confidence.

"He wouldn't be the only one here with scars," one of the group piped up, indicating vestiges of his own cardiac surgery.

And just like that, I understood and appreciated the true heart of these body affirming events. We all have bits and pieces we don't like. It can be liberating and confidence building to be laid bare in a safe and positive environment.

I breathed out... and stopped holding my stomach in.

I will certainly *behanging out with my bum outagain* with this group, showing my ongoing support... and everything else nature gave me.

Find more tales from the gayside of the UK's second city at: www.talesofthesecondcity.com



THE PARANORMAL

A Haunting Through Time!

Podcast

- WITH -



**ROBIN .S.
GOODFELLOW**

SCUNTHORPE PRIDE FESTIVAL 2025

Location:

**Church Square & Library Square
Scunthorpe, N Lincs,
DN15 6TB**

Date:

Saturday 23rd August (Bank Holiday)

Main event: 12pm -7pm

Parade Town Centre 11:30am

What is the event?

Scunthorpe Pride festival is back for it's 3rd year with a day that promotes diversity, acceptance and bringing the local community together. Providing a free and inclusive event for all. There will be a large main stage in Church Square, Licensed bar, Live music and entertainers, free activities, lots of food options and the popular Pride market.

The whole event is FREE, no tickets required. The main event will run from 12pm until 7pm at Church Square, with another on foot town centre parade assembling close to Natwest Bank on the High Stret before the gates open to the main event. Hundreds joined the parade through the town centre last year.

This year's headline acts are Sonia and Phats & Small and we are also focused on shining a light on upcoming talent within our LGBTQ+ community and local community.

How far has this Pride come since the first one?

We started with nothing, no experience in organising a festival and very little money in the bank but we pulled it off. In 2023 we saw 3,000 visitors and in 2024 we saw a shocking 10,000 people through the gates. This year we were granted charity status as Scunthorpe Pride. We have never known how many people to expect with it being a non-ticketed event but we have always been so grateful to everyone that has shown up to support the event. It has shown that the local community can come together to show solidarity for progression and change.

What is happening at this year's event?

This year we have a whole host of different artists performing with some returning favourites, we like to make sure there is a good mix of genres for all tastes and include local talent on the main stage. We've got plenty of drag, pop, punk and even some rap. This year is new territory for us as we have now taken the leap to move the event to a Saturday. This means more people can access the event via public transport and the footfall could potentially increase again. The pride market will be open for business with local charities, organisations and sellers. We have the food court with some new additions. The 20:21 Visual arts centre and Scunthorpe Central library are onboard again so they will be providing some great family friendly activities, games and crafts. We also hope to have a couple of fairground rides.

Who's on the main stage line up?

Sonia Evans, known from the late 80's early 90's for "You'll never stop me loving you" and coming 2nd in Eurovision representing the UK in 1993 with song "Better the devil you know". Finishing the event will be a high energy set from **Phats and Small**, bringing all the 90s and 00s bangers. The event starts with family disco time with **A OH K entertainments, Ken Lambert drag, Nate Ethan, Got to be Pop, Nora Divergent, BUZZKILL JOY, Dame Ida & Demi Jane, Smashby & DJ Anonymous.**

Who are we and what do you do for the organisation?

The main Scunthorpe Pride board team is made up of 4 volunteers. We look after all aspects of the event and even though the festival is just one day, it takes us a whole year to plan, from organising fundraisers, planning layout, sourcing acts and activities, booking equipment etc.

Leanne: "I'm responsible for creating the line up, running order and I do all of the social media, PR and promotion for the festival. I've been with the team since the beginning, and I've been running LGBTQ+ events on and off for a number of years. Our team works really hard, and we all work together so well, we have formed our own little chosen Pride family and that is how we are able to deliver this amazing event full of beautiful people."

What does LGBTQ+ Pride do for the local area?

In a world with so much hate and misunderstanding, local pride events bring light and love and remind people how far we've come but how far there is still to go. They show people that it's OK to be you and that people do care.

We want to bring people together as a whole community with no exclusions. We are all human and we all deserve respect and kindness. Having pride in Scunthorpe is progress, for years our community have had nothing, it can be very lonely at times for our LGBTQ+ community and can feel like the whole world is against us and the only place to find other like-minded people would have been out of town in the bigger cities. Our event allows people to meet, make friends, build connections, feel safe and be happy being themselves right on their doorstep, without having to travel elsewhere. It brings tourism to our town and supports local businesses in the area, from the bars, shops and hotels to the pride market stall holders and beyond. A big misconception of Pride is that you can only attend if you're part of the LGBTQ+ umbrella but that isn't true, everyone is welcome, and allies are just as important.

Pride plans for the future

We plan to keep the event free, because we want it to be accessible to everyone. It has been difficult at times to find support and funds for the event but we aim to eventually be able to fund ourselves with profits made at the event.

If you wish to speak to one of our volunteers, please email **team@scunthorpepride.co.uk**

www.scunthorpepride.co.uk (All plans for Scunthorpe Pride are subject to licensing & permit approval)



The logo for "OUT LOUD P.O.D.C.A.S.T". The words "OUT LOUD" are in a large, white, bold, sans-serif font. Behind the letters are numerous vertical bars of various colors, including purple, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red, creating a rainbow effect. Below "OUT LOUD", the word "P.O.D.C.A.S.T" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, with dots separating the letters.

The OUT LOUD Queer Music Podcast is presented by The Q LGBTQ Creative Network. Hear great Artist interviews and conversations and discover the latest and greatest new music releases by LGBTQ artists from around the globe. Hosted by The Q founder Kenney Fitzpatrick. LGBTQ artists can submit their music at curatedbyq.com to be featured on a podcast episode.



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Let your voice be heard!

Pride of Glasgow

If you've ever heard a brass band stop you in your tracks with its energy and emotion, chances are you'd remember it. For Scotland, that band is the cooperation band — a powerhouse of passion, rooted in Glasgow, and making serious waves well beyond it.

Founded in 1918, the band has grown into Scotland's most successful amateur brass orchestra. But don't let "amateur" fool you. These musicians play at a professional level — all while juggling day jobs, family commitments, and late-night rehearsals. Whether they're performing at European Championships or bringing holiday cheer to a local care home, this group lives and breathes dedication.

Making Music—and a Difference

Behind every performance is a team that works tirelessly. Rehearsals, weekend concerts, fundraising...

it's a full-time job in disguise. Band Manager Alan Douglas puts it plainly: "We take pride in supporting our musicians, but it's no small task. Members cover significant costs, especially younger players. That's why we're working on smarter fundraising, including corporate partnerships that can grow with us." It's a call to action for businesses who value culture, community, and collaboration.

Flying the Flag for Scotland

For Chairperson Keith Johnston, representing Scotland through music is more than a goal — it's a duty. "When you're performing as part of a 30-person team representing your country, it changes everything. In Stavanger, at the European Championships, our performance wasn't just music — it was a message. Scotland understands, Scotland connects."

It's cultural diplomacy, with a brass section.

Pride, Loud and Clear

Since 2015, the cooperation band has proudly marched through the streets of Glasgow as part of Pride, performing under the banner of Katie's Bar & The Coop. And it's more than just a parade — it's a statement.

Year after year, the band brings bold, joyful brass music to an event that celebrates visibility, inclusion, and love in all its forms.

"Being part of Pride isn't just about showing up," says one band member. "It's about standing with our LGBTQ+ community, using our platform to say: you belong."

The band sees this tradition as part of a bigger mission — to set an example in the brass music world and beyond. Diversity isn't a side note; it's in the score. Their continued presence at Pride signals a commitment to creating an environment where every player and listener feels seen, heard, and valued.

Led by Passion, Driven by Excellence

At the heart of the band's sound is Principal Conductor Katrina Marzella-Wheeler, whose leadership strikes the perfect balance between discipline and inspiration.

"My role is to draw out the best in every player," she says. "This band constantly pushes boundaries — and that keeps all of us growing."

Her approach feels more like coaching elite athletes than conducting a hobbyist group — and it shows.

One Band, Many Voices

What makes the cooperation band truly special is its commitment to diversity — of age, background, identity, and experience. Whether it's performing at Glasgow's Pride Parade or mentoring the next generation through its youth program, the band uses music as a tool for unity.

Stephanie Kennedy, who leads the youth ensemble, says it best: "Music helps us strip away tension and division. When we're at our best, we're just people—connected by something joyful."

Looking Ahead

The next chapter is already in motion. This autumn, the band takes on legendary venues like Symphony Hall (Birmingham), the Royal Albert Hall (London), and The Glasshouse International Centre for Music (Newcastle). Back home, they'll spread festive cheer across Glasgow. And in 2026? They'll carry Scotland's sound to the World Championships in the Netherlands.

From century-old roots to world-class stages — and from holiday concerts to Pride parades — the cooperation band is building more than music. They're building pride, purpose, and connection — one note at a time.



Website:

www.thecooperationband.co.uk

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facebook.com/thecooperationband

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PP HARTNETT

Peter Paul Hartnett, writing as PP Hartnett (born 1958), is a London Irish Queer Lit writer, editor and spoken word performer, whose work has courted controversy for over three decades.

Since the publication of his first novel entered the Books Etc. chart at #1 back in 1996, coverage of Hartnett's work can be found on the Internet, all manner of disclosures within interviews. He has given over two hundred readings on an international basis, not just in English but also in German, Spanish and Japanese.

Currently based at the edge of a forest near coastal Kirkcudbrightshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland, Hartnett groups writers who wish to challenge. The Manchester-based LGBTQIA+ fetish magazine XXXPOSURE recently dedicated an entire issue to Queer Lit, edited by Hartnett.

'The work is 18+. Adult-themed. Beware.'

Right now, with an eye on 2026, Hartnett is seeking a brave new wave of raw and real voices.

'I'm seeking transgressive LGBTQIA+ individuals for Stage #2 of the Queer Lit Now project,

to follow Stage #1, that was published in May 2025 by the free online resource, XXXPOSURE, a zine which dares to publish challenging 18+ adult-themed material.'

Hartnett has already edited The Gay Times Book of Short Stories #1 & #2, as well as co-editing a collection entitled City Secrets with Cathy Bolton for Manchester's Crocus Books. His novel Rock 'n' Roll Suicide (Sceptre) was selected as BOOK OF THE WEEK upon publication.

'I'm hoping for submissions that strike as short sharp shocks from innovators who dare to shake things up. I'm wanting nothing more than a page. Minimal. Unexpected short fiction. Poetry that booms like thought grenades. Personal statements that are far from what one might present within a CV.

Hartnett's fiction and editorial approach focuses upon trauma and its consequences, written from a moral perspective.

'Since the 80s, my main themes have been upon loneliness, isolation and the extremes of sexual compulsion. In this age of censorship, a focus upon predatory behaviours, self harm and suicidal feelings

can be a concern to some to clamp down on. Fuck 'em.' Hartnett's most notable works include I Want to Fuck You, Sixteen and Rock 'n' Roll Suicide.

Hartnett's more recent download titles, published by Autopsy, include Deletion and Full Screen. Hartnett has also produced two spoken word albums of his fiction, Ferris Wheel Kiss and The Very Idea.

'To avoid the control of a commissioning editor and publisher, I published a number of signed limited edition hardback works via Autopsy, to experiment without the steering control of an editor or publisher.'

To access Hartnett's free online audio resource, simply search for pp hartnett audiopresspack.

'The piece entitled schoolboy soul has created an enormous response. Abusers come in many shapes and forms and having been educated by the Benedictine monks of Ealing Abbey, I write from the perspective of a survivor whose soul was too close for comfort to so-called men of God.'



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