

Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives

History Walk

Midsumma 2013



ALGA's 19th lesbian and gay history walk of Melbourne

Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives

For 35 years, the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives has been collecting and preserving Australia's very queer history. From camp life in the 1950s, through Gay Liberation in the 1970s and eighties, to the vibrant queer communities of today – all of this is part of our heritage; and all of it is represented in the holdings of the biggest such collection in Australia. The Archives is volunteer-run, not-for-profit and community-based.

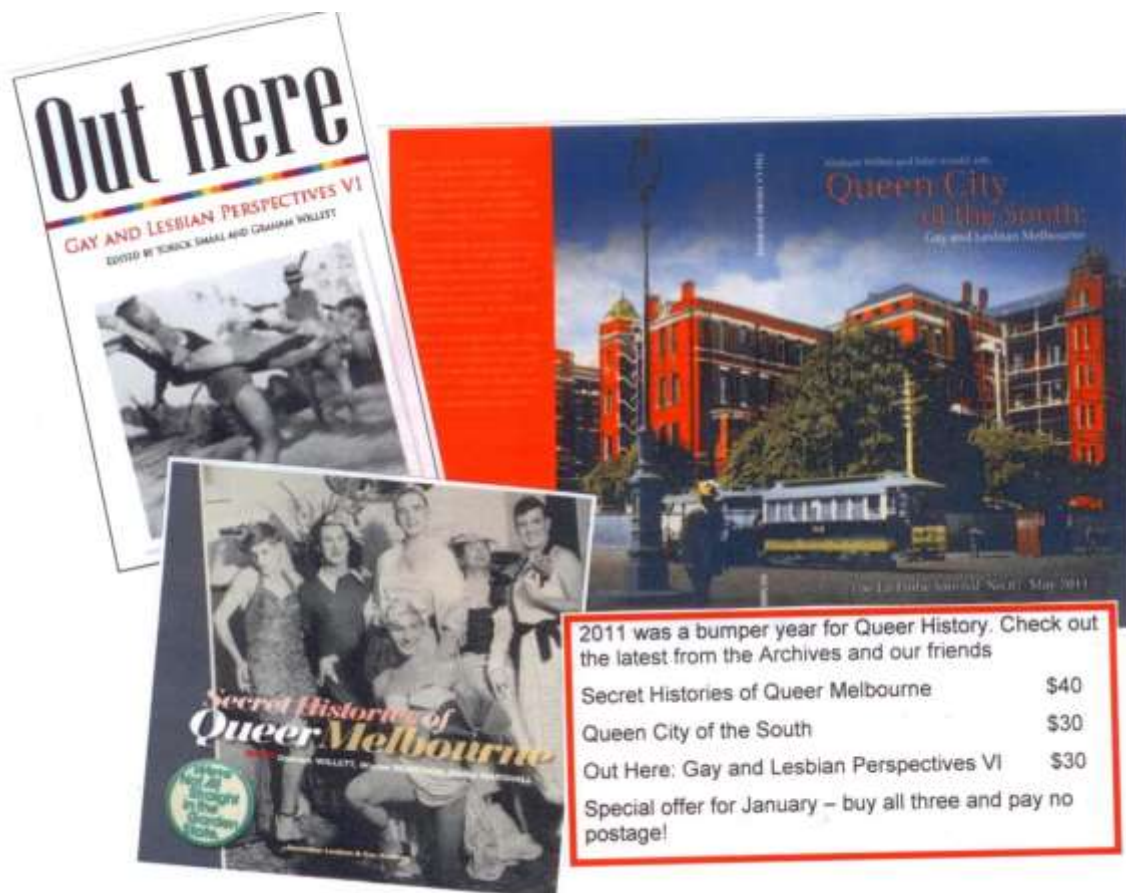
What we collect and preserve

Books, badges, posters, t-shirts, gay and lesbian newspapers and magazines, newspaper clippings, photographs, court transcripts, newsletters, videos, scrapbooks, banners and placards, postcards, party tickets, theatre programs, flyers, personal memorabilia. The collection has been used by students, filmmakers, novelists and historians, researchers and activists – as well as the just plain curious ...

The Archives has no ongoing government funding and relies entirely on the support of its members and the community. You can become a member for \$20 per year (\$5 concession) plus \$1 joining fee – and if that's not enough you can donate as much as you like (it's tax-deductible).

We have regular working bees to bring order to the collection. Why not join in?

For more info, check out our website – alga.org.au



2011 was a bumper year for Queer History. Check out the latest from the Archives and our friends

Secret Histories of Queer Melbourne	\$40
Queen City of the South	\$30
Out Here: Gay and Lesbian Perspectives VI	\$30

Special offer for January – buy all three and pay no postage!

Stop 1: SLV

Welcome to the very queer history of Melbourne – and to the gang that collects, preserves and celebrates it.

Stop 2: Swanston Street

In the early 1970s, a rather new thing happened: gays and lesbians started to speak for themselves – and the love that dared not speak its name could hardly be made to shut up. Here we celebrate the origins and the early years of the movement.



Stop 3: Myer



Myer – an iconic Melbourne site. And not just for shoppers. Fred Asmussen ruled the window dressers with a rod of iron but Freddy's boys, as they called themselves, loved him and their work – and each other.

But what would Freddy have made of the demo in 1972? Same sex couples testing out the beds? Aghast!

Stop 4: Royal Arcade, Block Arcade



The Royal Arcade was the site of a Turkish Bath from the 1870s to the 1930s. Turkish Baths were a 19th century favourite; steam, dry heat, cold plunge pools and the chance to be naked with other men (or women at particular times of the day). Lots of things were gotten up to in the steam of the Turkish Baths – but no one ever spoke of them.....

Stop 5: Hotel Australia



THE COLLINS STREET PUBLIC BAR

From World War II, at the latest, the Hotel Australia was home to a lively camp scene. Upstairs, men in suits; downstairs ... that was a very different story. Known to its habitués as the Snakepit or the Pink Sink it attracted a rougher crowd, and those who admired them.

... and the Continental Baths

Conveniently located across the road from the Hotel Australia, the Continental Baths provided a place to pick up and get off for those who fancied such things. The Continental baths – a sauna as we would say today – welcomed discrete gay men from the late 1950s until the gay CBD started to die in the late 1970s.

Stop 6: Queensland Tourist Bureau

There was a time, not all that long ago, when Queenslanders were made a laughing stock by their government. Bjelke-Joh bring back any memories? Repressive and stupid, he sacked gay teachers and banned pubs from serving us alcohol. But we protested.

Stop 7: Manchester Unity

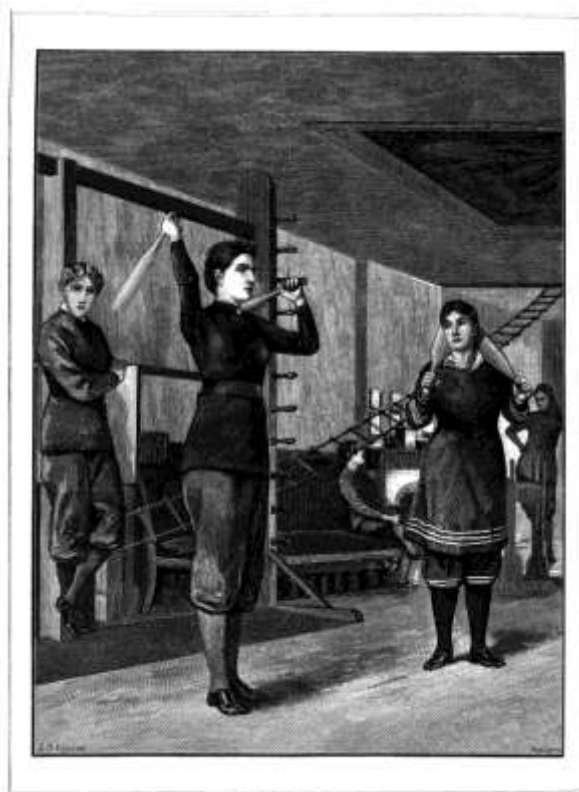
Naked men in Melbourne? Once you start looking, they (like gays) are everywhere!

Stop 8: Old City Square

A bit of a pause; a chance to sit for a moment while we regale you with Harriet Elphinstone-Dick (an old favourite) and remember the Collins St cafes. In the 1940s and early fifties, this part of Melbourne was like the Oxford Street of its day.

Stop 9: Georges

Myers was not alone in providing work and careers for camp men. Georges, unquestionably the place to shop and be seen in Melbourne for such a long time, offered a sanctuary. We let an insider tell us all about it.



Students in gym of Harriet Elphinstone-Dick, 1881
– photo courtesy State Library Victoria



Stop 10 100: Collins St

Hotels that welcomed camps (as long as they were discrete) were pretty common in central Melbourne in the 1950s and sixties. But eventually, gays started to demand something more. Somewhere where they could be themselves. High atop 100 Collins St, the University Club was created to cater for gays and camps and homosexuals, straddling the old world and the new.

Stop 11: The Top of Collins

Once the Paris End of Collins St, before the developers turned it into the East Berlin End, this part of town was home to a rich bohemian world – Bernard, and Bunny, and Cinderella put in an appearance. As does Bert Davies Gray, the photographer.

But when a low-life tabloid journalist was invited for a coffee, he got more than he was bargaining for.

Stop 12: Treasury Building



The steps of the Treasury Building provides sweeping views down Collins St. But the coppers, in their tireless pursuit of Dr Storer, found a very different sight over at the Alcaston. Medical men who thought that ordinary people ought to know about sex were fair game for the agents of law and order – especially if their tastes ran to men to whom they were not married.

Stop 13: The Women's Suffrage Monument

The struggle for the vote brought thousands of women into political action in the late nineteenth century – a movement that is celebrated and remembered here. Many of those women found themselves sharing feelings stronger than solidarity and sisterhood. Mary Fullerton wrote of her passion for Mabel Singleton in poems she never published. Such love was not rare.

Meanwhile, up the way a little, men were enjoying the delights of the flowerpot.



Stop 14: Treasury Gardens



And, last but by no means least, the newly discovered tale of Charles Marks and Edward Feeney and the 'Strange Tragedy' that unfolded in the Treasury Gardens one night in 1872. What happened? What did the public make of it? And what does it tell us about 'improper intimacy' in the nineteenth century

... and really, finally, last: why not retire with us to the kiosk in the gardens (next to the Fairy Tree, of course) for a refreshing beverage.