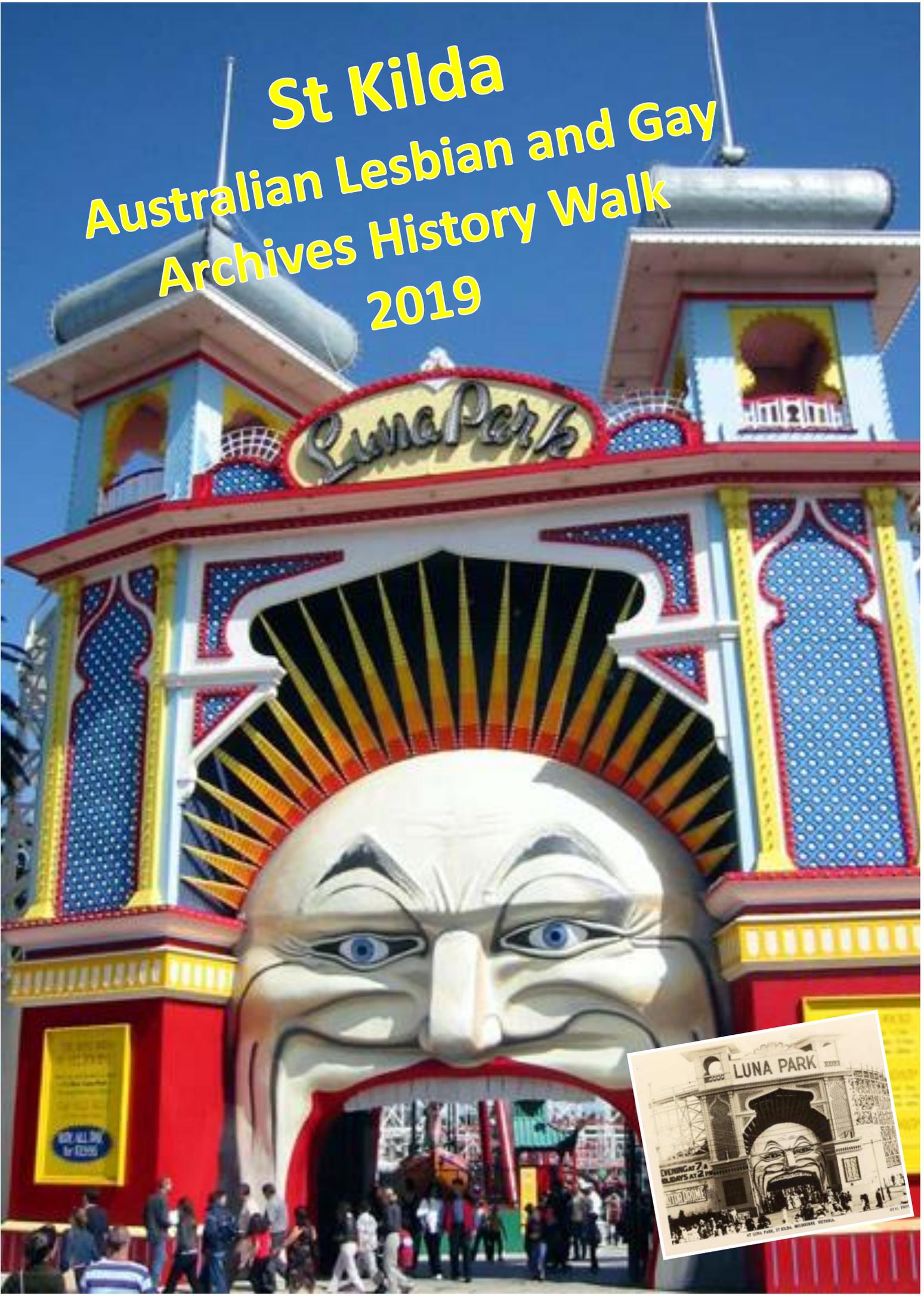


**St Kilda
Australian Lesbian and Gay
Archives History Walk
2019**



St Kilda

2019 ALGA History Walk



★ indicates stopping points, Total distance is about 2.2Km

Stopping points

1. Luna Park entrance, cnr Acland and Cavell Streets
2. Roundabout, cnr Acland and Carlisle Streets
3. Acland Street near corner Eildon Road
4. Eildon Road, about half way to Grey Street
5. Grey Street, cnr Acland Street
6. Fitzroy Street, cnr Grey Street (George Hotel cnr)
7. Fitzroy Street, opposite Prince of Wales
8. Catani Gardens, cnr Jacka Bvd and Acland Street
9. Sea Baths, Jacka Boulevard

Thank-you

... to the State Library of Victoria for making available the photos, as credited.

Front cover images: Luna Park 2002 photo by Matt Jones; Luna Park c. 1915 photo from La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria.

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For over 40 years, the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives (ALGA) 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.

ALGA celebrated its 40th year in 2018. We are volunteer-run, not-for-profit and community-based.



If volunteering for ALGA interests you, we'd love to hear from you. All skills welcome – archiving, IT, fundraising, promotions, design, data entry, admin. We try to match up volunteers with projects that fit their interests and time available. See details on back cover.

ALGA's 25th annual lesbian and gay history walk



Stop 1 – Luna Park entrance

There have been in effect four St Kildas in the past 160 years: genteel village, popular resort, gritty streets and gentrified bohemia. Have a look around you today as we walk the streets of St Kilda and notice the “layers” of St Kilda’s history.

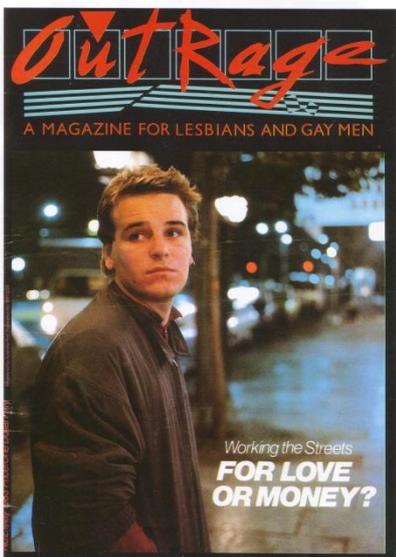
In a world without cheap overseas holidays, without cruises, without weekend getaways, St Kilda offered all the escape and anonymous fun of Bali, the Sea Princess, or a weekend in Sydney rolled into one.

Jan and girlfriend, over the moon at Luna Park, 1965 (photo from Forbidden Love, Bold Passion travelling lesbian exhibition, curated by History Inverted, 1995)

Arts Balls

During the 1920s and 30s the St Kilda Town Hall was the venue for the Artists’ Ball – an annual masquerade ball which gave people a chance to dress up. From 1947 to the 1980s there were National Theatre Arts Balls – where year-long preparation went into producing lavish entries for individual and group awards.

The Boiler’s ‘Burmese Dancers’, winning entry at the 1962 Arts Ball (source: personal collection of the late Campbell Busch)



Stop 2 – Acland St Corner Shakespeare Grove

One of the consequences of St Kilda’s history as a centre of bohemia, crime and sexual dissidence is that the criminalised and despised sexualities have been thrown together. For the cops, the courts and the scandal-mongering press, the association of prostitution and homosexuality has been a god-send, generating easy convictions and lurid headlines. Gay and lesbian activists, however, have worked with and for sex workers as part of a broader struggle for social justice.

An early OutRage (May 1983) highlighted controversies over gays and sex work in St Kilda (photo by John Brennan, posed by a model.)



Carlisle Street

(a) Mandate, 31 Carlisle Street After a decade of gay-for-a-day pubs being the norm, Mandate's opening in 1980 represented a major breakthrough – here at last was a pub aimed openly at gay people most nights of the week.

And the décor ... Its masculine style, especially the original prison theme, is remembered still.

Boys in Blue poster from Mandate (ALGA collection)

(b) Galleon, 9 Carlisle Street/Zasu

Cafes of all sorts and types have been a part of the St Kilda scene since before the turn of the 20th century. Different cafes were popular with different groups; daytrippers, crime figures, heavy drinkers, musicians, postwar European refugees, prostitutes, and of course, gays and lesbians. An earlier incarnation of the Galleon was at 126-132 Acland Street, a 1930s to 50s hangout for some of Melbourne's best jazz musicians. Many a camp liaison began here – including a much publicised one in 1950 involving Zasu Pitts.

Photo by Graham Willett, 2005



Headline from a famous inquest – a death on Queen's Bridge. Zasu was later acquitted of a murder charge. (*Truth* headline, 23 December 1950)



(c) Daughters of Bilitis/Checkmates

Daughters of Bilitis (later called the Australasian Lesbian Movement) can lay claim to being Australia's first openly homosexual organisation. Established in January 1970, it lived for a time at 151 Acland Street.

A little later in the 1970s, Checkmates made a name for itself as a very active social group for camp men and lesbians with premises in Carlisle Street.

Picture – Checkmates badge (ALGA collection)

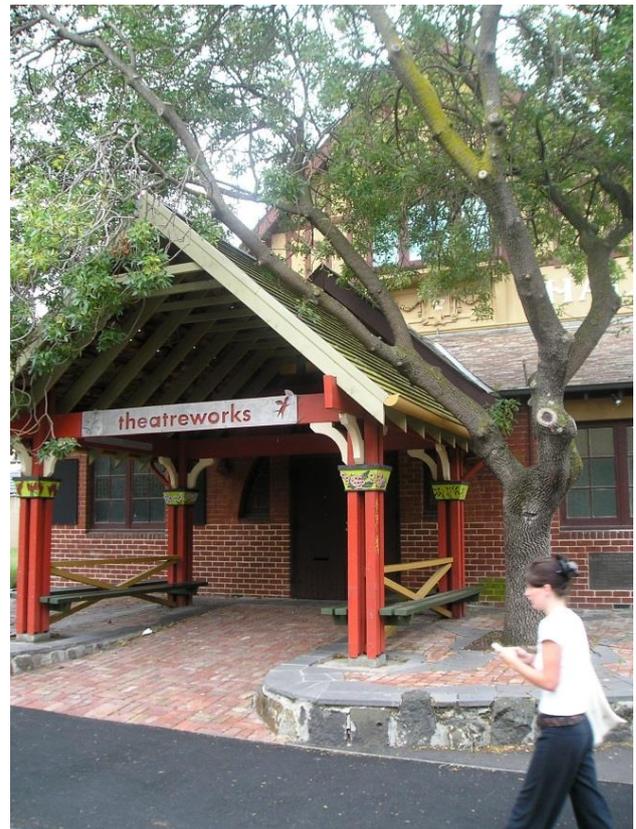
Stop 3 – Theatreworks

14 Acland Street, cnr St Leonard's Avenue

The rise of gay politics in the 1970s opened up new opportunities for lesbians and gay men to represent themselves to the world. Plays by and for and about the gay experience started to appear. And small independent theatres like Theatreworks were long the only outlet for such performances.

Theatre was important too for camp people of earlier generations and again St Kilda was at the centre of the action. The Arlen Theatre in Blanche Street boasted actors who later became household names in Melbourne – Frank Thring and Bunney Brooke among others.

Photo by Graham Willett, 2005



Linden

Linden was built in 1870 and is representative of many of the large houses of the early period of St Kilda's development.

In its current incarnation as a centre for community arts it is a prime example of the way in which the bohemian and the gay have been embraced by community-builders as assets rather than problems.

Photo by Graham Willett, 2005

Stop 4 – Eildon Road – Flatland

During St Kilda's time as a popular seaside resort (from the 1890s to the 1920s) many of these large houses became boarding houses, or were converted into flats. An article in Truth newspaper from 1921 asserted that Melbourne was in the grip of "Curious Creatures - Painted and Powdered Effeminate" and that "Melbourne's flat-land is infested with these pests".

Photo by Graham Willett, 2005



Stop 5 – Grey Street, corner Eildon Road

Large scale prostitution came to St Kilda in the 1930s when a Melbourne City Council clean up campaign forced women who had been working in the city area south of the Yarra. Camps mixed socially with prostitutes in the St Kilda cafés and streets, harmoniously from all accounts and occasionally there was some cross-over, as in the story of a late 1940s drag queen, Box Hill Annie, renowned for sharing the Fitzroy Street beat with her female colleagues.

Stop 6 – The George Hotel corner Grey and Fitzroy Streets

Also known as the Terminus and the Seaview. Current building built in the late 1880s. In 1949 Hal Porter was manager of the George.

Over the years, changes at the George mirrored changes to St Kilda, with the once grand hotel becoming the haunt of prostitutes, strippers, drug deals, criminals and punks in the 1960s and 70s.

El Sombrero Coffee Lounge, 15 Wellington Street, was a camp friendly haunt from around 1957 to 1963. Sometimes the target of ASIO surveillance because of lesbians serving in the defence forces.

St Kilda Railway Station - The St Kilda Railway station opened in 1857 and is the oldest remaining railway station in Australia. The railway turned St Kilda from an isolated village into a seaside commuter suburb and genteel resort.

Photo by Graham Willett, 2005



Stop 7 – opposite Prince of Wales Pokeys, 29 Fitzroy Street

The Prince has been camp-friendly since before World War Two, but from 14 October 1977 Pokeys' drag shows livened a dull Melbourne Sunday night. Jan Hillier's business acumen and Doug Lucas' lavish costumes and choreography, ensured that for 14 years drag was stylish, witty, extravagant ... It is now 42 years since 300 people paid \$3 to enjoy the first Pokeys' show – another 300 were turned away!

Among many memorable nights at Pokeys was Monte Punshon's "coming out" on her 102nd birthday in 1984. Monte was a much loved figure on the Melbourne gay scene until her death in early 1989 at the age of 106. We are fortunate to have a record of Monte in conversation through Nancy Peck's film, made for the Australian Women's Archive in 1993.

Doug Lucas compered Pokeys for 14 years (photo by Leigh Klooger, Focus)



Café 31

31 Fitzroy Street. Just next door to the Prince – now Café Di Stasio – is a landmark of Melbourne camp history from two decades earlier. In 1952 Val, who had originally set up the camp-friendly Val's Coffee Lounge, opened Café 31, the second of a string of venues that Val ran from 1951 to the late 1970s. These included coffee shops and cafés in the city, St Kilda, South Yarra and Kallista and a restaurant in Hawthorn.

Val's venues were a magnet for camps – men and women – as well as the theatre crowd and bohemian Melbourne generally.

Val and Jan are two of the most significant entrepreneurs in Melbourne's camp scene from 1950 to 2000.

Portrait of Val as a young woman by Veni Stephens
(photo by History Inverted)

Tolarno Gallery

42 Acland Street. Across the road from the Prince is another part of Bohemian Melbourne – Tolarno Gallery run by Mirka and George Mora from 1965 till late 1970s. Their contribution to Melbourne's artistic and culinary life is vividly told in Richard Peterson's book, *A place of sensuous resort: buildings of St Kilda and their people*.

Stop 8 – Catani Gardens corner Acland and Fitzroy Streets

Beats have always been an important part of the gay male subculture – in the days before the advent of a commercial gay scene and gay press, they were often the main way that many homosexual men first met others. Names of beats in St Kilda included the Spanish Mission, so named for its architectural style and known to be hazardous because of Vice Squad surveillance.

A man who was out and about in St Kilda in the late 1940s recalled Sunday afternoon rituals of 'dedicated queens' – promenading the area around Fitzroy Street, dropping by the Old Boys Coffee Inn (11 Acland Street), looking for 'trade' (an outwardly masculine man, as opposed to 'tootsie trade')... and trying to keep out of harm's way with police.

The Beaconsfield Hotel was a gay pub in the early- to mid-1990s – but long before, Beaconsfield Parade was a beat, where Zasu Pitts met a friend on that fateful night in 1950.

Drag was big in the 1940s and 1950s in Melbourne – and while for some it was frivolous and for parties only, for others it was more of a full-time profession. Maxwell George Smye, known as Maximillian Eugene Nigel du Barrie or Max Du Barrie, was one who paid heavily for his penchant. A star at Arts Balls in his Heather Page persona, Max was arrested with others at a drag party in his South Melbourne flat in 1951, dragged through the courts and sentenced to 14 months prison. Reading the endless reports in *Truth*, one senses Max's biggest crime was to have sold kisses for charity at the 1952 Arts Ball – including to an unsuspecting Governor of Victoria who thought Max was a woman. Nearly twenty years on, Max appeared in the 1970 semi-documentary film, *The Naked Bunyip...* the only homosexual the film makers could find to go before the camera. A survivor against great odds, Max lived to see better times, which he certainly had a hand in bringing about.

Max Du Barrie, pictured at the Arts Ball 1952, on cover of *Truth*, 5 July 1952.



Pride March

Since 1996 Pride March has graced St Kilda's streets, bringing colour and politics and a chance to show off the community in all its diversity. From PFLAG to Vintage Men, from the cops to revolutionary socialists, everyone is out, out, out for the day.

Victorian Pride Centre

79-81 Fitzroy St, formerly Munroes restaurant. Due to open in mid-2020.

Stop 9 – St Kilda Baths Jacka Boulevard

Sea baths were first established in St Kilda in the late 1840s, as a means of protecting the public from the sight of men swimming naked off the beach. Most of the baths operated on a system of admitting men in the morning and women in the afternoon, or vice versa, and from the 1850s to the 1930s there were usually several baths operating along the St Kilda foreshore.

The various St Kilda baths all did their duty as meeting places for homosexual men.

Nude bathing in the male section of the St Kilda Sea Baths, c 1945 (Port Philip City Collection, copyright St Kilda Historical Society)





One of the stars of early St Kilda swimming was **Miss Harriet Elphinstone Dick**, who taught swimming to the ladies attending Hegarty's St Kilda Baths in the 1870s. She lived in St Kilda with her partner, Miss Alice Moon, although the two also owned a farm in the country at Clayton, on which they allowed no male animals.

above: Harriet Elphinstone Dick portrait; right: Harriet Elphinstone Dick's pupils at her women's gym (both pictures from La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria)

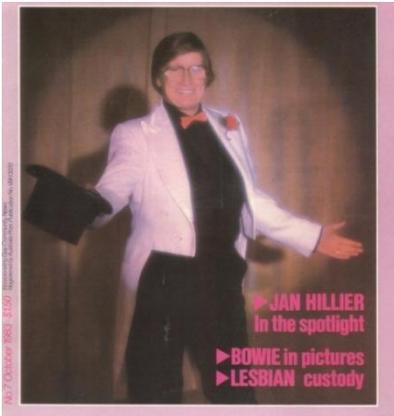


Bojangles

In the 1970s to the mid-1980s, the Baths' domed café was home to a series of night clubs, including Bojangles, where Les Girls operated in its last years. Les Girls started in 1970 in Melbourne at the Ritz Hotel (169 Fitzroy Street) and a nightclub called Olivia's, next to St Moritz skating rink on the Upper Esplanade. Many of the Pokeys drag artists found their way in professional drag through Les Girls including Debra Le Gaye, pictured here with Monte, celebrating Monte's 104th birthday and Pokeys' tenth year in 1986.



Debra Le Gaye with Monte Punshon at Pokeys, November 1986 (photo by Jay Watchorn, City Rhythm).



Hilliers

Another resident of the Baths was Hilliers, a 1970s club run by the doyen of Melbourne homosexual entrepreneurs. Coming out at the age of sixteen as an unabashed butch, Jan Hillier evolved into a major force behind any number of gay and lesbian events and venues from the mid-1960s till the 1990s. Many people have fond memories of both Pokeys and Hilliers.

Picture of Jan Hillier, *OutRage* No. 7, October 1983 (photo by John Brennan)

Resources

Richard Peterson, *A place of sensuous resort; buildings of St Kilda and their people*, St Kilda Historical Series No 6, 2005. St Kilda Historical Society, PO Box 177, Balaclava, Vic 3177, <http://www.richardpeterson.com.au/a-place-of-sensuous-resort-st-kilda/>. Includes gay references in the chapter on the Prince of Wales. See also chapters on the Sea Baths, the Palais and the Tolarno Gallery.

Stories of Melbourne drag at https://web.archive.org/web/*www.melbournedrag.com/history/history.htm, includes brief histories of Pokeys and Les Girls.

John B Murray on the making of *The Naked Bunyip*: http://sensesofcinema.com/2006/australian-cinema-38/naked_bunyip/ - includes a section,

'Do gays and lesbians really exist?' which refers to Max Du Barrie's appearance in the film, and making contact with lesbians in the 1950s through Val's Coffee Lounge.

'Monte Punshon', documentary of Monte in conversation, directed and produced by Nancy Peck for the Australian Women's Archival Project, 1993, 53 min. Reference copy held by ALGA (not for loan). Further information on the Australian Film Commission's website <http://colsearch.nfsa.gov.au/nfsa/search/display/display.w3p;page=0;query=Nancy%20Peck;rec=9;resCount=10>

St Kilda

History Walk on Sunday 27 January 2019

was conducted by Nick Henderson, Daniel Marshall, Wayne Murdoch, Clare O'Hanlon, Helen Pausacker and Graham Willett. Gary Jaynes, Daniel Marshall and Helen Pausacker produced this programme. This is the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives' 25th History Walk.

Join us!

The Archives has no on-going government funding and relies entirely on the support of its members and the community. You can become a member and/or give a (tax-deductible) donation through ALGA's website.



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 ...



2nd printing. Now available again!

- Check out the books from ALGA and our friends:
- Secret Histories of Queer Melbourne \$40/\$35*
 - Queen City of the South \$30/\$25*
 - Out Here: Gay and Lesbian Perspectives VI \$35/\$30*
 - Intimacy, Violence, Activism \$35/\$30*
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ALGA turned 40 in 2018!



Errata

The text on page 7 regarding Miss Harriet Elphinstone Dick should read:

One of the stars of early St Kilda swimming was **Miss Harriet Elphinstone Dick**, who taught swimming to the ladies attending Hegarty's St Kilda Baths in the 1870s. She lived with her partner, Miss Alice Moon, and together in 1881 they opened Melbourne's first gymnasium for women.