

Galop and Stonewall Housing Oral History Project

Interviewee: Griffith Vaughan-Williams

Interviewer: Mark Hutin

Place of Interview: Hammersmith

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Key

MH: = Interviewer, Mark Hutin

GVW:= Interviewee, Griffith Vaughan-Williams

[time e.g. 5:22] = inaudible word at this time

[5:22 1A] = inaudible section at this time

Word 5:22 = best guess at word

MH: So Griff, if I could start with asking you where were you born?

GVW: Born in the ... it's no longer there, what was known as the County Hospital and renamed St. David's Hospital, Bangor, in Carnarvonshire when Carnarvonshire was spelt with a V, it later became spelt with an F, the other one. And in Bangor, Gwyneth, North Wales, 1940, 9th of November, a Saturday. Quarter to eight. I asked my mother, my father built me a garage, a model garage, and there was a clock face on it, why did he pick the time as quarter-to-eight? 'That was the time you were born on a Saturday night!'

MH: Excellent. Well to start with could you tell me a bit about your background and growing up in Wales?

GVW: Yes. Only child, brought up in Bangor, and then moved when I was just ten I think, to Menai Bridge, and then I'd been educated at the Infants and Primary School at Bangor, C of E school, and then moved for one term to the Menai Bridge Primary School on arrival at Menai Bridge, and then I sat my Eleven Plus and then became a pupil at the Beaumaris Grammar School, later rechristened the David Hughes County Secondary School, established in 1603 after David Hughes, and I think it was one whole year after I finished at school, it then moved to Menai Bridge to a site and adopted the name David Hughes County Secondary School.

Then I went to Cardiff for a couple of years, to study company law. I did actually apply to do architecture but I now realise it wasn't architecture I wanted to do, it was town planning. Town planning wasn't appreciated at that time as a discipline in a way. It was all muddled up with architecture. So I changed my mind half way through the application system and applied to Cardiff, to the Welsh College of Advanced Technology, part of what is now the University of Wales. Well now it's Cardiff University. Always used to have, I was brought up when it consisted of colleges, there was no such place as a University of Bangor etc. They were University Colleges or the University of Wales, but now they're all independent colleges, as in Cardiff, Swansea, Aberystwyth, and I think Lampeter is ... there may be a sixth one as well now. So I studied company law there and I'd already started freelancing as a journalist while I was still at school, having quite a good success, and then

continued in Cardiff. And then in '62 entered into fulltime journalism, subeditor on the Sunderland Echo, then Harold Evans invited me to join him when he was then the editor of Northern Echo before he moved to the Sunday Times. And he had a hurry job on. I did my day stint on the Sunderland Echo and went down to Darlington, you then spent a night subbing on the paper, then you had the job interview at two o'clock in the morning, which he then typed a letter saying yes, you've got the job. And then was driven back and started the next day on the Sunderland Echo at eight o'clock.

And then after Darlington I moved to Western Daily Press at Bristol, then up to the Birmingham Post and still I was a subeditor, but at Birmingham mainly doing the financial pages, subbing the financial pages, and then when Ron Reynolds, the editor, retired, we had David Hopkins, who'd come from Sheffield as editor of Sheffield Morning Telegraph, where he'd made his name on the rhino whip issue of the police, the way the police ... I'm not quite sure whether ... it was probably called Sheffield Police in those days, and been up to all sorts of things and he had exposed them and the Birmingham Post thought he was an ideal person to take the Birmingham Post forward. He introduced the regulation that you didn't have your meal break until the first edition was off, printed and off the press, and if you went in at three o'clock or four o'clock you didn't have your break 'til ten o'clock at night and you're leaving at eleven o'clock at night.

I then found that if you were under twenty-four you were only subject to two weeks' notice, not a month's notice, he was on holiday at the time, and he came back on the second week of my giving notice and I had made it quite clear to him that things had not been like they were when I arrived, and I was going to go. So here was somebody giving notice and ended up with less than a week to find a replacement and also telling him what to do with the job and why, *why* I was leaving. And then I went to William Hardcastle, the late William Hardcastle of the World at One fame. He interviewed me for a subeditor job on the University News Service in New Fetter Lane, and then from there ... journalistic-wise I then went to the Kentish Times as subbie editor of the Erith Observer in Kentish Times and the **Craver Chronicle** and Kentish Times, their idea was I would launch the Thamesmead edition of the Kentish Times, but they decided against it. Things were such that they didn't think it would be worth their while doing it. I think they may have taken a different decision now, in the 2009.

And then from there I went to the Dimpleby Group at the Brentford and Chiswick Times, made redundant from there and then I had fourteen years as Press and Information Officer at the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, and if I couldn't understand what this mechanical engineering was, there was not much hope of the readers of the Sun doing it, so I had to make sure everything was ... no technical terms. So I'm not an engineer at all, so that was my career.

I was made redundant again from there in 1993. So that's my career.

MH: Wow! I remember you mentioned to me some time before that you'd been up to London around 1964.

GVW: '64 it was when I arrived in London, it was the August bank holiday was at the beginning of the month. Now it's moved to the end of the month. '65 would have been the last time August bank holiday was at the beginning of the

month. And I then got heavily involved in homosexual reform, not Gay Rights, the word Gay Rights hadn't been invented by then.

MH: So tell me a bit about then. How did you get involved with that?

GVW: I knew there was a thing called the Homosexual Law Reform Society because I'd been reading the display ads, no, classified ads, in the New Statesman, and they had their winter talks, once a month from September through to about March in the Lions Hall in Palmer Street, SW1, and they had leading people talk about different things, touching on homosexual law reform. And I then realised I came out because I wanted to run their bookstall, not that they had much literature, but the idea of coming out didn't ... it wasn't to me ... you knew about then. But I now realise that was why coming out in public, being identified as being a supporter and worker ... never had members of the Albany Trust, the Homosexual Law Reform's subsidiary, because of the law. You were always 'supporters of'. Because it was feared that if you were described as a member of and you got into trouble with the police in those days, that would be a major conviction. But you can't use the same argument if you're only a supporter of something.

MH: Yes. So tell me, from the Homosexual Law Reform Society, the campaign for Homosexual Equality ... tell me a bit about that.

GVW: Well, HLRS was the daughter of Albany Trust. Albany Trust had a wide ... field of interest, but particularly the Homosexual Law Reform needed revision and we'd had the '79 Wolfenden Report ... might have been '65?

MH: '67

GVW: So it was the tenth anniversary I think when we had the law actually changed. The Honorary Committee were huge lots of do-gooders, Bishops and all that sort of thing, and Anthony Grey was in charge of both. And then there were the Executive Committee, that would be Jaquetta Hawkes and J. B. Priestly would have been on that one I think, from memory. They had a very, very long list and they had a short list of people actually doing the work, as the names to sell the ideas. And then there were volunteers going into 32 Shaftsbury Avenue, like myself, and the thing about that obviously, we had to be out by six o'clock. The owners of the property, which might have been J Lyons, might have been, because they were very much round the corner to that, and most of the things of these days stem from the ownership of that side. And there were a number of us wanted to do things so we launched, with a bit of difficulty, Anthony Grey was concerned how things might happen, we wanted to have a discussion group. So we had these discussion groups every fortnight, and we were continually wanting to do things but being no, no, no, no, the Executive Committee won't like the idea. I remember one person saying, 'Well can't I have a soap box and go and speak at Speaker's Corner.' Oh dear no! Anthony Grey nearly had a heart attack at the idea.

So we'd mainly do mailings, like reports, make sure we'd do copies and send off to all the MPs and peers, and so we'd be addressing the envelopes etc. That's the sort of thing we were doing. There wouldn't be any huge campaigning as such in public, 'cause 'Honorary Committee would be concerned about it.' The main activity was the journalists, like Alan Lamb and ... oh, Monica Furlong, Monica Furlong in the Daily Mail, when the Daily Mail in those days was a very pro law reform, and of course Associated

Newspapers, companion newspaper to the Evening News with Lord Arran writing his column under the advocate of law reform leading the bills in the House of Lords. And of course I've always wondered ... Peter Wildblood who was diplomatic correspondent for ... I think it was the Daily Mail or it might have been the Evening News, and he was involved with the Lord Montague thing, and I think perhaps Lord Arran had been hit by the ... by the court case, and the need for somebody to be able to get the law changed.

So that was going on, and people in the Northwest of England, they were concerned they couldn't do very much in London, they were up there, and they very much wanted to do things, and so they were fighting to get things done and so they formed themselves into the Northwest Committee for Homosexual Law Reform, led by Allan Horsfall, and then by the time the law was changed in '67, they decided there was scope to be doing things and they could be untied from the Albany Trust, the Homosexual Law Reform Society, and so they launched what was called the Committee for Homosexual Equality, later changed for Campaign for Homosexual Equality, and they had ... so at that time the Committee for Homosexual Equality was getting started in Manchester, 28 Kennedy Street, 33 King Street (?) and 69 Corporation Street, before it came to London. They in the very early days decided to try and launch a series of gay establishments, gay clubs, gay drinking bars, and meetings were held and a huge deal of opposition and people who were talking about agreeing to sell to the setup called Esquire Clubs changed their minds or upped the price and the whole thing went ...not according to plan, and they never ever got established. So there was still a feeling that something was needed to be done, the social aspect, and there were still things campaign-wise, so that got kicked off as CHE, Committee for Homosexual Equality.

I think I came on when it had become changed to Campaign. I joined the Executive in '75, 1975 I joined the Executive. And I may have attended a campaign in the year ... oh yes, I would have, because I was at Sheffield in '75 and Malvern in '74 but I wasn't at the Morecombe conference which would have been '72 in that case, 'cause I was at the Eurovision Song Contest in Luxemburg City that year. Couldn't be in two places at one time.

MH: So you mentioned the social aspects. How did CHE address the social aspects?

GVW: Well mainly through the local groups. In London we had up to 13 groups to begin with, they were known as Group 1, Group 2, up to 13, then when it came to Group 13 we decided to call them local ones like Lewisham. Lewisham, West End, Hampstead, different parts of London, where they were based and most of the members were coming from. And they would vary. Like the Monday Group specialised ... Monday Group is still there, meeting each Monday ... their big thing each year is the Capital Quiz, and over the years their big forte had been guest speakers, like Glenda Jackson, Leo Abse, show business and all sorts of people, very, very impressive list of speakers they'd had. The Hammersmith Group also was very good at getting speakers, but the Hammersmith group didn't have as many speakers. Virtually every Monday the Monday Group would have a well-known name. Hampstead perhaps once ... a month it might be the case. And then they'd have social things.

They varied considerably in the type of social activities each group had.

MH: So what was your role in things?

GVW: I was convener of the West End ...CHEWEG, CHE West End Group WEG, CHE-West End, and I was convener of that one and I was also ... the London groups we had a London coordinating committee and I was Chair of that and we funded a base in 22 Great Windmill Street, in the basement, where quite a largish room, there was a work area with a division and an area where you could have meetings, you could have probably 20 or more people in there. And that's where like the Gay Rights Media Group used to meet. And different groups would meet there and so I then came on to the CHE-Executive in '75, and I've been there ever since.

My portfolio was conference organiser and that really was a huge battle with fighting discrimination, local authorities, Trusthouse Forte, W H Smith, so my speciality was becoming a shareholder in the companies, which I still am in, and to go to the AGMs and raise awkward questions. And in the early days the W H Smiths one used to be a great deal of fun, because that row was about them not stocking Gay Times ... no, it might have been Gay News. Not stocking a gay publication. And there were two or three, or three or four of us might turn up, and we would sit in different parts of the room and I would raise my question and bring it round to the topic, get an answer; the next question, somebody over there ... they bring it up. We were not sitting together so they didn't know who, when they asked, what questions they were going to ask. However, over the years it's certainly changed W H Smith, and incorporated sexual orientation into its Equal Opportunities Policy.

Now Grenada ... why did I come into Granada? Oh I know. I came into Granada because Trusthouse Forte was taken over by Granada, but the thing about Granada is a very rare thing they have in their Equal Opportunities, they recognise <pause> gender reassignment as one of the things. And I think that is possibly tied in with why we have in Coronation Street Hayley. It must have been both about the same time, introducing the trans character and the company adding a policy.

MH: So you talked a little bit there about some of the changes that CHE have brought about. Talk a bit more about that.

GVW: Well the most important thing is the gays in the military. I was in America and Canada in '75 it must have been, and it was on the cover of one of the American or Canadian magazines like Time Life or something about this American <pause> ... he was air force wasn't he, Leonard Matlovich, and how he had been battling against the American military, and I came back to the Executive and I said, 'How about inviting him to be a speaker and taking the military on as a topic for the 1976 CHE conference in the Guildhall in Southampton?' They said yes. It cost well over £300 in those days, flying him over, and so we flew him over to address the conference. But in the meanwhile we used to have national councils every quarter, the groups seeking recognition and discussing everything, and I took a lot of stick from the CND lobby, and I think one of them I'm sure was Paul Patrick, one of the ... very much involved with schools, Paul Patrick, I'm sure he was, 'We shouldn't be allowing this.' They were not realising the fact it was not that we were encouraging them to fight, but if they're gay they should be allowed to pursue what career they want to. That was the purpose of the whole thing. And he came over and I remember I sat in on the interview he was being recorded on the Friday in the Polygon Hotel in Southampton, the reporter

from the Today programme asking, 'Do you plan to have sex while you're over here?' I mean <laughs> I couldn't believe he was asking the question! IT didn't go out. The reporter was lost.

And Leonard Matlovich was then the subject of a film, but he died about ten to fifteen years ago, I think he was an AIDS victim in the end. He moved up just north of San Francisco. But the point at stake was the right to serve your country in the way you want to and not be debarred because you're homosexual. And we had plenty of gays in the armed services. I remember the News of the World doing one about the Lesbians in the Mill Hill Barracks. Oh dear! And that was used with Jacquie Foster's voice over for the London CHE programme, it was the last in the series, the first series ever, of thirteen programmes, Open Door type programmes, and CHE London was given the opportunity. We came in at number 13. [24:01 IA] activities, filmed on a boat on the Thames, and the idea went that the last fifteen minutes of each programme was devoted to people commenting on the previous week. Well if you're the last one, you can't have any anti people, 'cause there's no programme for them to be on. But that was not [24:21 lost, that programme], because there'd been a big row developed in Tunbridge Wells where the council wouldn't allow Tunbridge Wells CHE to hire, I believe it would have been an assembly room, it was council property, for a concert to be given by a CHE Vice President, Peter Katin. And so Rothberger, who was now very much back on the scene in campaigning with Croydon Group, he was there in the studio with Peter Katin discussing this row.

The important thing is whatever Stonewall boasts about, it was 1976 in Southampton that was ...

And also it was my coming out with my step-brother as well, because there was a piece in the Daily Mirror, a fairly short piece about how the armed forces were going to be the topic of the CHE conference in Southampton, and he was in the RAF and somebody spotted it and pinned it up, and there of course was a quote from Griffith Vaughan-Williams, conference organiser. So that was my coming out to my step-brother.

MH: So what other things ... you mentioned this gays in the armed forces, in the military, what other things had CHE initiated changes in?

GVW: Oh well, the big thing we had was education. Tyneside CHE, Tim Bolton-Maggs, when was this about? Early '70s it must have been, perhaps up to about '75, the CHE education hit, and we had a fantastic response that had. From memory National CHE funded the cost of doing it, and then they recovered the costs as the orders came in, but Tim Bolton-Maggs, who'd been previously a teacher of like biology type thing, the right chap, a teacher, to be doing it. Of course now it's so terrible. We look at it and see the dresses an the hairstyles, and we keep on saying <laughs> this really needs to be updated, we've got to think of changing things. And that was a big thing and it got a huge amount of publicity about local authorities had been approached to order a copy of this Tyneside kit, and I'm sure we did television and things as well.

Something else came back to me on that one as well ... it'll come back probably.

<Pause>

Oh I know, I've remembered! 1974, Age Concern Manifesto Conference, they used to have them I think about every ten years, where they would actively review their whole strategy, priorities, that sort of thing. And they were having one in Church House, Westminster, and they had the paperwork. This is wearing the West End Group hat now. Absolutely nothing about people who are LGBT, so rather than just dismiss it we did a research document, and over 500 copies went all over the world, because it got a review in particularly I think it was the New England Journal ... a very well-known publication and you'll often find quotes from it like in the Daily Telegraph, and it's a very well-respected journal, and either we sent them out or else somebody got to hear about it, but anyway they went all over the world and a fantastic number went to the university in Ann Arbor, in Michigan. And somebody found out they were very strong in certain things and this was just the thing ... That was probably the address with the biggest number of copies going there. I do plan to visit there *one day* to see where this was! <Laughs> And the gay bookshop ... they were the keenest seller there. So there was me with my bag going off as if a purveyor of dirty magazines. And we had a nine inch review in the Times, because we put in this document as a research document pointing out they were not doing anything, and then Age Concern today, to tie in with their conference they had invited three people to do articles, there was housing, was it housing? Jack Jones was one, the former trade union ... Jack Jones, and now ... Peter Townsend ... what was his? Social Health I think, but anyway, Peter Townsend, I remember the name because Princess Margaret had a boyfriend of the same name, and myself. We were invited. And then five years later, Age Concern asked me to update it, and so this whole issue of the elderly LGBT, it was also ... the West End Group was mainly elderly people who were also supporters of the August Trust, which was set up to hopefully create homes for elderly LGBT, based on the Abbeyfield, about eight people in that property. And this is just in the last days of the old GLC.

[30:18 <pause and IA>]

And the August Trust, we never got anything done, we've still got the money in a bank, in a way it was perhaps a good job we hadn't entered into negotiations because, if with the demise of the GLC, we would perhaps have been lumbered with the property and the income had gone. We just hadn't gone that far enough. And so now in CHE there's ... today, 2009, there's a keen desire to get a similar sort of thing off the ground, and sheltered housing. The big problem is gay people want to be able to pick and choose who comes to service them if they have home help type of thing, and so many of them maybe are religious and ... they have to scurry and hide their GT – Gay Times, before they come. And in Hammersmith and Fulham I'm involved with Hubbard there and Hammersmith and Fulham Action on Disability and the Disability Forum, and ... the situation here is that councils can't discriminate.

<Part 2 starts>

... they can't ask 'Are you LGBT?' So you won't go and service LGBT people. How Hammersmith works is with agencies. What they work on is where they advertise for people to do the work. So if from the response they saw an advert in the Pink Paper, they can at least be sure they're going to be LGBT-friendly and they hopefully will flag it up so if there's an LGBT person able to come out they can then do them. But of course this whole issue of

discriminating and even positive discrimination is an ... issue. But that is one way of trying to get round it, where you advertise.

MH: Going back to what you mentioned previously about education, how do you think that was affected by the whole Section 28 thing?

GVW: Oh I'll give you an example. I'm a Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society and round about ... was it '82? <Pause> I think it was when I first off work for my first hip replacement, I remember reading it in Hyde Park, teachers had written in because the RGS had published in their monthly popular magazine, they'd done two successive months on the distribution of homosexual men and lesbians in the world, and I think they tied it in showing where it was legal etc. and of course they only had populations coming out if it's legal. You'd have nothing where it was illegal, where you'd be beheaded and all that type of thing.

And there were two very good articles in successive months, and the letters that came in! Teachers, 'We cannot use these magazines in the classroom because you've got homosexuality in them!' They went berserk. One would have hoped reasonable people, but very strange behaviour.

And of course misinterpretation. Local authorities also not appreciating what was allowed and what wasn't allowed. So it was a handicap but it brought together the het people, the het people were giving money to the fighting fund for Gay News because of what it was, not because they were gay but because what it represented. And the people who rallied round in anger about Section 28 ...

And it brought the gay community out on its feet again, and to sit up. They were beginning to get complacent. And something else is bound to have happened now, and hopefully that will get the LGBT people on their feet again.

MH: So what you're saying is Section 28 is something that was a galvanising force?

GVW: Yes, very slowly and long one. Quite costly as well. But the rally they had with Sue Johnson in Manchester about Section 28, and it brought out show business people and all sorts of things rallied round it.

MH: And did it breath new life, as it were, into CHE?

GVW: <Sighs> It may have halted any decrease. I can't recall now. Because new things came and new organisations were formed specifically so don't forget when CHE was born there was no other group to do things, so everything ... and then we had special interest groups, like those interested in homosexuality in religion, they later became Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement. Or GALHA, Gay and Lesbian Humanists, so different things then sprang up.

MH: Tell me a bit about the whole HIV/Aids thing in the '80s and CHE's response to that.

GVW: Well, most of the work was Terrance Higgins Trust. We would write letters, ask questions and support anyone, the more dedicated organisations his one

who appreciated ... oh, I'll tell you what, yes, the UK Aids Vigil. When was the time of the storm? '87 did we have the storm? I think it was December '87, Peter Tatchell decided to have a conference in parallel with the World Health Ministers were meeting in the QE2 Conference Centre, and Peter Tatchell decided to have a protest group raising issues in the Methodist Central Hall and CHE ... they had to do it very quickly, no constitution, there was a Peter Tatchell type thing, so CHE agreed to be the financial figure behind it, and it's surprising the money that rolled in. After all the expenses had been paid we were able to give Peter I think it was well over £1,000 surpluse back, he'd got such good will. So many organisations, LGBT organisations, aren't strapped, they haven't got a constitution, they haven't got a bank account, or else they are funded by ... they're a charity and they've got funders and their hands are tied behind their backs, and CHE ... about 18 months ago we went down the road, we met ... we paid half the cost of becoming a charity and a limited company, but because certain things would have to be exposed, such as our memberships, and the ... there was a minimum age, both major things against CHE's beliefs, CHE's always believed if a youngster was gay it's much better for him to go along to the local CHE group rather than hanging around cottages. And we expelled one CHE group because they wouldn't have anybody under 21 when the age was 21. Much better for that youngster to be in a CHE group and meeting responsible people.

Anyway, we decided against that, and we've been able because we don't have any funding, we haven't got any paymasters to worry about, haven't got to worry about going beyond our terms of reference, we've been able to do this over the years, and particularly now with so many organisations, charities .. the way they're structured they couldn't dream of opening their books, allowing the money say for Peter Tatchells UK Aids Vigil to be hosted.

MH: We were thinking about the different decades. If you could sum up, if I start off with say the '60s, and work right through to the Naughtyies, if we start with the '60s, could you sum up for me?

GVW: Yeah, in the '60s I was arriving in London in '64 and there was the winter talks, and then if you went to the winter talks Anthony Grey would say, 'We adjourn traditionally to the pubs opposite the Northern Entrance to ...'

<Part 3 starts>

...Park underground station, and do come along and meet and chat to people. And you'd go along to there and there was a person called Marian Dutter, and after she'd seen you at the pub a couple of times she would invite you to her ... soirée might be the word? She lived in one-bed bedsit type of room at the top of the block off Ladbroke Grove. It was on a Wednesday I think, once a month, and we'd all climb up there, there'd probably be 50 gay men in the room at any one time in the course of the evening from about say 7.30 to 10.30, probably about 150 come and gone, chat, have a drink and meet somebody and arrange to go to see a film or hear the latest gossip about what the police were up to, or even meet plain-clothes policemen who were in their civvies who were gay! And of course there were some people who loved to have sex with a policeman! I mean sex was of course illegal completely. So that sort of atmosphere, and if you went out on a Friday or a Saturday night, it was invariably there was a party to go to somewhere.

I don't do it now, I don't think there are these parties to go to.

And I'd go to, there's a pub in Westferry Road, they used to do drag, and on the wall, on the small stage, on the wall behind, it would say, 'This is Manns' (M-A-N-N-S, Watney Mann), 'This is a Manns Pub'. And then you'd come back and I'd then go to Pimlico to the ... oh, the club in Tachbrook Street, and you'd see there the same people that you'd seen over in the East End.

Well, I was ... I don't know, I did have a ... probably only had about two to three years of that, because I heard such language in them. But there was a lot more ... now, now one never seems to get invited to a meeting in a pub ... simply be a complete ... of course now there are fewer gay pubs. The Boltons, the Colherne, perhaps it's a good thing with the Colherne and all the murders as a result.

So the scene has changed so much. Of course I would expect most people are staying at home and seeing it on their DVD etc. And the cost as well ... I mean another factor. So I think the whole thing has ... but there is a marked difference in the '60s I think to the scene in the Naughties.

MH: So basically things have changed a lot in the last thirty or forty years, you'd say?

GVW: <Sighs> Yes. <Pause> No, I'm thinking of executive meetings in '75, letters, protests, now ... local authorities might want to do something but they know they can't do it because there's legislation forbidding it.

Well like at the South Bank, the Royal Festival Hall in the days of the ... I can't remember now what it's called but it's right on the ground floor with the big bloody windows, that was run by Forte and yes, this is when Ken Livingstone was involved with the GLC and so he then introduced all suppliers to the GLC, to the South Bank anyway ... had to take it in steps because of the control, the powers they had, if they practiced discrimination they would lose their contracts. And just at the time when the GLC was disappearing I think Trusthouse Forte concession was coming to an end anyway, but they were going to be subject to ... then there was a big row with Maggie Thatcher about the powers to withhold contracts to people who discriminated against gays and that sort of thing.

So ... now, last night, I was in the Purcell Room, virtually 98% capacity, to April Ashley talking. If you go back to the days of the '60s I think if April Ashley had been wanting to come and explain what was happening, and the issue of transgender, I'm sure the booking authorities in the South Bank Complex would have thrown their hands up in the air in horror!

MH: But now we have the Goods and Services Act.

GVW: Yes.

MH: So what do you think may be the next major change that CHE would want to spearhead?

GVW: The big thing I can think of basically is the age profile is mainly elderly. You see this is the thing which **Clare Somerfield** Clare Somerskill was digging into and I was explaining to her why there's a reluctance of elderly, gay men to deal with the police to report a crime etc. Because they And also at how the police only knew gay people who had fallen foul of the law, who they

picked up cottaging. They never came across a straight, law abiding homosexual. They wouldn't have recognised one, because they were so used to dealing with a homosexual who'd fallen foul of the law. That's a huge big thing with the Met, MPS and police generally, how they've had to ... sit up and realise that the gay community is more than just those who go cottaging and ... we've still got the law in there but ... that was the type of gay person they knew. So it was very unusual for them to actually meet a non-cruising gay, because they were only meeting cruising gays. So we had that one breakthrough, but CHE's profile is mainly of these people who were subject to the law and that's why they're reluctant to go and report a crime these days. Because in the olden days if they reported the person they took back had robbed them ... they couldn't go and report it because ... there was an illegal action taking place. And there's still the reluctance these days, although it's legal to have had the activity, they're still very apprehensive about reporting it because in the old days the big thing was going through your address books, and the address books of the contacts and on and on and on. And there was somebody I knew that had been in prison because he was picked up through an address book.

MH: So in terms of the work of Galop, and Galop works in this area, how do you feel from your perspective that Galop has helped, what sort of impact has Galop had?

GVW: Well it's had a rebirth. It was functioning OK in the days of the GLC.

<Part 4 starts>

... and then there was the GLC's function in awarding of grants was given to the London Borough Grants Committee, administered by the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames, and they used to have the meetings in Holloway Road in the ... there's a centre there, something like 365 Holloway Road, that they used to have their, I think it must have been monthly, meetings. And we reached a point where Galop had hit bottom and ... I'd be going to theirs picking up from the reports, because they were getting money and of course they only get money as they wrote the reports, so the reports were not very ... favourable, and ... <sighs> I'm trying to think who, Galop had an American, Paul, a short American, I can't remember his surname. Oh before that we must have had Jeremy Clark, Jeremy Clarkson? Jeremy Clark, who is now with the Albany Society down in Balham. And at round about that time, that is when the London Lesbian and Gay Policing Initiative was established. We ran for about ten years, ten years ago when we were put on a different footing but doing the same sort of work as we now are with the LGBT Advisory Group, we would meet monthly on MPS property, sometimes in New Scotland Yard, sometimes elsewhere, we'd probably meet at Galop's premises in the Cockpit Steps, the building there, 36 is it Queen Anne Street at that point? Anyway, before we went to get our points we wanted to bring to the police, who was going to lead on what, and then we'd come back after the meeting to do a press release on it. And that when on for ten years or so and then there was the Stephen Lawrence.

Now I'm assuming it's about that time when Galop ... there was a point ... it would have been before that, oh I know ... the LLGPI was very much outraged as well, so it must have been about twenty odd years ago.

Stephen Lawrence was ten years ago, then the LLGPI ten years before that, and it must have been just before then when Galop shrunk down. And I was raising issues with the London Borough Grants Committee about their grant to Galop, because it was questionable whether actually Galop ... and it was showing up in their reports as well, whether Galop was really doing anything.

And another person who supported me with this one was John ... John ... <pause> oh, he's a councillor and he's back at a councillor at Ealing now, Gallagher, John Gallagher, who would have been a councillor at that time at Ealing, and drawing to my attention who should be getting what letter, and then I think what Galop was then able to do was ... the Borough Grants Committee was able to do as they said to Galop, 'If you want this money, you've got to do so and so.' I've still got all that paperwork about trying to get Galop back onto its feet.

If you trace the real history and look it up for your records, you should find probably a handful of years there was virtually nothing showing what you'd been doing.

MH: So why was that then?

GVW: <Sighs> I think ... possibly you might have lost your grassroots support, then. This is taking us back 20 years. Lots of people had gone off to support the Section 28 campaigns ... 20 years ago? We'd got the basic law changed, age of consent, and ...

MH: So what you're saying is that the emphasis might have shifted elsewhere?

GVW: Elsewhere yes. You probably had a weak management committee or virtually no one on the management committee. I'm trying to think what your address was at that time. Where were you before Essex Road, now Leroy House?

MH: That's a good question. It started off at the Lesbian and Gay Centre.

GVW: I had a feeling you were there.

MH: It was there for a while.

GVW: You were at 36 Queen Anne Street in Westminster, just by Birdcage Walk, or I think then ... the body who hosted you there was changed and moved perhaps, therefore you then had to find somewhere else, and of course with the demise of the Gay Centre ... so I think there may have been a number of things. I was watching carefully 'cause I used to go to the meetings and to watch the ... this is when don't forgot, when he was in power with the GLC Ken Livingstone was being attacked by the Daily Mail about the grants for the LGBT groups, and I think he came up with a figure and it was 0.01% or something like that of the grants given to LGBT. If you read the Daily Mail it looked as if they were 75%. So I nagged and I think that's the reason ... new management committee and perhaps you had a weak ... lack of management committee members, and perhaps people you may have had may have been weak ones, they just took the job to make sure there was a management committee. But anyway there was that thing, and with John Gallagher's guidance I pursued this issue. And when I find the copies of the letters ... I find things when I'm not looking for them, and I never find them if I'm looking for them ... I think Galop should have a copy for their archives.

MH: I noted that speaking of policing and so on, and Galop's involvement, you were also involved in a recent report that was written about two years ago wasn't it?

GVW: Yes, May 2007. That was ... we worked on it for about four year altogether, getting the Metropolitan Police to dig out, they showed willing and we kept them at their word, murders, LGBT murders over the years which hadn't been ... solved, or ... because Colin Ireland ...

<Part 5 starts>

...handled the cases, so they hadn't got around to reviewing their cases, and we came out with this report, and a month ... was it 15? I think there were 15 murders, because of Colin Ireland, we had one big ... oh yes, and we were analysing those like the Colin Ireland, where two of the murders the pathologist thought they were self-induced sexual behaviour just gone wonky! And the whole setup, the police were working in their little boroughs and not relating their gay murder to any other gay murders. And of course they were all stemming back to the Colherne. So we were able to throw up these things. Anyway, a month after the report came out, they arrested somebody for one of the murders they hadn't solved and about two weeks ago he got I think it was seventeen years, because forensic, it appears, had become available. And of course The Sun boasted about how his palm print was on a copy of the Sun. And it appears How I was able to read it was that they could do fingerprints but they'd got somebody with an ear once on a pain of glass, but it appears ... sounds like they couldn't tell [1:35 interruption]

<Part 6 starts>

So this murder review, we got them to do the reviews and come back, and then they had new evidence as a result, and prosecution which ended with a conviction.

MH: I think it was basically concluded that the Met was constitutionally homophobic? Is that right?

GVW: I don't remember us saying that one. I think we might have said there were ... it's been with me for about six years, four years in the making and then two years back. I don't think we were saying as a whole, like the Lawrence Report was saying, but there could be examples perhaps were individual officers might be, and also their confusion on don't give them a transsexual murder or a person who is a transvestite, that really throws them! But hopefully we've not got them to make sure that before they issue their press releases they're passed by the advisory group co-chair that they've got the terminology correct. Because a big thing about these murders, or deaths of a trans person, is they may be known by different names to different communities, and if you say that John Smith has been found dead, people who know John as Jane Smith, it wouldn't ring a bell, and vice versa. And they've got to get it sorted now and also about the gender reassignment, that is a criminal offence to say they had been a person of a different gender, they'd had a sex change, even when they did. Because it carries on after death even. We got clarification specifically on this issue from years back on that one, that just because a person's died you can say 'Oh, they were trans ...' No, when they've once got that gender reassignment, everything must be forgotten about your past. So I think hopefully we're getting there on the trans deaths.

MH: So if you were to sum up the change that has occurred in policing in London since decriminalisation right through to the present, how would you see that, how would you describe it?

GVW: Well revolutionary I expect. Now you're going to ask me to define that. Well I've got to go back to the days when everything was illegal, and then gradually ... and the breakthrough. I can cite an example with CHE group, I've been with the Marylebone group, at the meeting there'd been a gay person been murdered, they'd come on to me as London convener, and because it was Marylebone group, must have been in that area, could they come and speak to the group? I said I'll go to the group, say that you want to come to them, and will they agree to you coming, maybe say 9.30 that evening, and make sure you're available earlier on, and if they agree I'll let you know if you can come then. They'll have to agree and anybody doesn't want to be there, they can go. Had to do it that way.

Now, I'm sure it's much more easier if the police come, but you knew the feeling ...

Oh now I think the challenge is to be open, to report it as homophobic, the crime, to see if they ... flag it up and challenge them if they're not. I've had a battle with the Richmond Upon Thames, where there are now new guidelines coming from the Home Office on flagging up the trans-phobic incidents, but ... I think most gay activists now will come out.

Oh, and another example, if you look at an old photograph of Gay Pride, a well known photograph going the rounds, they're coming up by Austin Reed ... is it Austin Reed? Coming up Regents Street on that curve where the British Airways used to be, and you can see all these CHE banners there, you can't see anybody from CHE. They're all hidden by this huge band of policemen!

Now ... Pride, it's open. I can remember being at National Council in Liverpool many years ago, we had a cruise on the river Mersey, on the Saturday night, in the days of Jacquie Foster, and she spotted these policemen coming on. 'This event, this boat cruise, had been advertised generally in Liverpool, anyone can turn up, when you come back at eleven o'clock at Pierhead, and there could be a riot. We've just got to be in with the captain so that when you come ashore there will be police presence.' And two Landrovers came down as well, when we were coming back, and it all went off peacefully. But there was reaction. 'Why are the police coming on here? It's a private function!' But they were there to make sure that we got back onto the pontoon at Pierhead there would be no trouble.

So this was positive policing, but you can see why people were reacting. Not thinking, ah, something might happen. We've got Pierhead on a Saturday night is ...if you were round Lime Street there's plenty of people as witnesses, but down at Pierhead there's very few.

So there's been big changes. There's still some changes to go ahead.

MH: What sort of changes do you think they need now, going ahead?

GVW: Well I can think when there used to be these yearly meetings with the advisory groups, and you looked to see which forces used to come along and

like from Wales there would probably be South Wales Police and ... Dyfed, and probably have Gwent, but you wouldn't have North Wales police attending. In North Wales police there's a famous case of Peter ... he was connected with four murders in North Wales, and my friend was a BBC television camera ... well he was freelance but doing work for BBC television, and I happened to be in North Wales when the second murder was discovered, and I got the Liverpool Daily Post and I thought I wonder if this is a gay one? And then it became four murders of gay people, all men who had sex with men, and on murder number two it must have been he'd gone along ... yes, they were having about two miles difference from the scenes on the A5, and same police division and he'd gone along to film and it's such-and-such, and 'there's no sound to be recorded while they're in the incident room' and he had [8:17 IA] and up came pathologists report, there was evidence that the victim had had homosexual sex. What did they do? [8:33 IA] And police denying anything, denying, denying there was any gay con ... when they had four they had to admit to it. So that was North Wales Police. They did a documentary on this mishandling of the Peter ... oh I can't remember his surname ... about eight years ago it was. Two on the [8:58 IA], one at Pensarn on the beach, and where was the forth one? And when they moved to the Pensarn, and the other one must have been in that area, different inspectors, and they started ... <Pause> That was various series. I don't think they'd have got away with it if there'd been an LGBT advisory group. And the thing is North Wales Police wouldn't go to these ... wouldn't see them on these LGBT advisory group meetings for the whole country.

One thing I was always pleased with was to see Dyfed would be there, because one might think that Dyfed is the back of beyond, but he used to turn up.

- MH:** So thinking more London-centric, do you think that London policing generally is much more LGBT focussed now and there isn't much more change to come?
- GVW:** Oh we've got to keep them on their toes, but no there are weaknesses. I think if it's very serious it will have gone up and the advisory group would have picked it up. Surely there'd be a weakness if not. And probably the advisory group is quick off the mark and asks about something if they haven't let on it's happened. But again we've asked. Like if we go via the team in the Empress State Building and they then have to ask, we're getting this question, can we have an answer? And they have to come out with the facts. But if we're waiting for the facts to come out from the borough, there may be questions then, but we're able to be there, asking the questions about the incident quite quick. And mainly due to the work of the leading lights within the advisory group.
- MH:** Changing the subject a bit to think about housing, and housing issues, as you know, Stonewall Housing works ... well originally worked and still does work with young people and it has some hostels where x amount of young people can be housed to give them a safe space, and it also provides an advice service to anybody of any age if they have any specific advice issues around housing and LGBT. From your recollections and experience, how do you think things have progressed or change for LGBT people over the years with regard to the way they work?

GVW: Very little. <Pause> Because don't forget, the elderly people's ones, **it was the police** but they still won't come out. And you never quite know how the service provider's going to react. And unless you get some who are prepared to stand up and scream about certain things, things don't get done.

<Part 7 starts>

... or won't get done. I was surprised that after the Hammersmith and Fulham Disability Forum it came up about carers, and how you have to pay for your carer if you have too much income that you don't get it free, this type of situation, and this particular person who is disabled, who uses a wheelchair, I don't want to have to go and put away my Gay Times, GT, and that sort of thing, actually came out and **[0:43 IA]** was on this committee, and there'd be many, many who wouldn't say what he said. But it's an important issue. He who pays the piper should be able to call the tune, and should be able to say, 'I don't want a homophobe coming into my home.' Some of them, you could see ... you can sense that person who's come to care for me is going to be a bit of a homophobe, **[1:28 IA]** which particular *church* they go to, and it's 'Oh, we know what the people at *that* church believe in.' That type of thing. And unless you've got people who are prepared to stand up and shout 'I don't want to be serviced by a do-gooder or a heterosexual, I want someone ... I don't mind if it's a Lesbian' if they're male, 'as long as we're on the same wavelength.' And there's a great deal of work got to be done there, and it's going to take a very long time because at the moment lots of the people are still suffering from it was criminal when they were growing up. They may have suffered as well and may have gone to prison as a result. You've got to be raising it, like my big thing is on disability. No matter where I am, I'll raise the issue about the access to the building, 'Who chose this venue?!' This happened to be last Thursdays, Queens Park Rangers Ground, there was a meeting of the neighbourhood watch, because there was a murder on Christmas Eve, a shooting, and the venue ... they had to go up stairs to the toilet, a policeman had to come and hold a lamp, a flash-lamp, because they hadn't put the lights on. I don't care where it is, I'll raise the issue. There are people going, 'Oh, be thankful.' No! I say, the way of doing my questions at AGMs of Plc's, soft soap to begin with and then come out with it. And this neighbourhood watch, 'you want to be inclusive don't you?' 'Oh yes, yes...' 'Right, well who chose this venue?' 'Oh ... ' And then the Queens Park Rangers person says, 'I did'. And then bang, bang, bang, 'anyone who's disabled couldn't come here because they couldn't go to the toilet!' And it was in a huge bar which, by law, you've got to have your toilets within your area! So I really ...

So they've got to have people speaking out. This goes back to what Matlovich said at this 1966 conference, that famous thing about who spoke out. There was a famous quotation about who spoke out for the Jews, and who spoke out for ... and there was no one to speak out for me. You know that thing, well known thing? And I remember him quoting that one, 'and then there was no one to speak out for me'. And so right ... we've gone off the track I think!

MH: That's fine, that's absolutely fine.

So you were talking about housing and I asked you about changes and you said there's still a lot of change that needs to take place with regards to the whole issue of housing, especially for older LGBT people. That's what we were just talking about.

<Pause>

Well, to wrap things up, something about [4:43 IA]

If you were to sum up for me the changes that you've witnessed and the changes that you personally have had have fed into ... I mean what for you would be the achievement that you're most pleased with, most proud of?

GVW: Oh ... oh I expect it's launching the International Lesbian and Gay Association, ILGA, launching as IGA, International Gay Association, in 19... 78, at the CHE Annual Conference in Coventry, when there was a thing coming on the scene called the Common Market, and ...

<Part 8 starts>

... so many gays in the past used to go to Amsterdam for a weekend, so we got to know the COC and these sort of things, and there was a desire by COC that we should capitalise on the Common Market issue coming up, and so we had panel sessions to the CHE Conference, with the recommendation coming to the final [0:27] session from the working group led by Peter Ashman and Trevor [Piercy] from CHE, that they should launch an organisation. CHE agreed and provided the funding that was needed and it was called the IGA, International Gay Association, which of course changes very soon afterwards, being comprehensive, as ILGA, and of course now we've got the Europe one and we've got the world bit and with the money from Europe, from 301, and also with the emerging natio... the new countries coming in, and they way they treat LGBT and with people like Michael Cashman in Brussels and the way the Brussels thing, the following there, that's been remarkable. I've been doing my little thing each year at the World [Travel 1:22] March at the press conference held usually on the first day, by the Mayor of Moscow to get more people to go to Moscow. For the last two years I raised the issue about the Gay Pride, this last one in November I raised the issue about, this was the Deputy Mayor who was there, 'Can you give an assurance there'll be no harassment of the LGBT attending the Eurovision Song Contest?' 'You asked this question last year.' So I had evidently left an impression! But it was a slightly different question, and he went on and on and then he suddenly had a brainwave, 'Oh of course, it's nothing to do with us. It's a Federal thing.' If he'd only said that he could have got out of it straight away, but no, he had to think and then he must have realised oh dear!

Anyway, so that sort of thing is raising in unexpected corners the issue. And I think also the Leonard Matlovich, having taken the initiative, with the support of the executive, to agree the funding, the expense of bringing Leonard Matlovich over in '76 and raising the whole issue of gays in the military.

Probably those two I think.

[2:50 IA] the Southampton Conference when I went down to do the arrangements ... oh dear ... it hit me, I've got near on a thousand people coming for four ... Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, four days! Oh what have I let myself in to? And then at about two o'clock on the Monday afternoon, the final plenary session had just begun, OH! What on earth do I do now? I was down in Southampton probably at least once a week doing the booking accommodation etc. and other things, and fighting the churches who

didn't want the conference to go there, and that build-up and then ... when it's all happened ... yeah.

So lucky in a way, I've been able to fit it in with my journalistic career as well, and my own nature ... as a journalist, inquisitive, asking questions, and a **concern with** like not letting the underdog suffer. So it all built up into the mixture that is me as a gay campaigner.

And I expect a bit of the Welsh hwyl

And perhaps using my voice.

Also, how long ... was it about four years ago, I had a bit of ... I had a ... I was here at George's one evening, might have been a Sunday evening, I said 'Feels like it's a stroke I've got coming on' so I was like, 'Can I stay here. I've got to pass the doctor to go home on Monday morning. If I go home now, I may not go that direction tomorrow.' So I stayed and then she sent me immediately to Hammersmith hospital for a scan and all that sort of thing, and I have recently noticed I've been having a bit of a slur in my speech again, but ... even if I didn't intend to ask a question, I ask a question, and I recommend this to anyone who has a stroke – on their speech problem – if you're a shareholder you've got to go to ask things when you go the annual meeting of the shareholders, questions, they've usually got a mic and the audience is yours, no one says a word because you've got the mic. And you can get out what you want to say, however slow it might be, they've got to wait, you haven't come out with the punch line yet and they've got to wait and it helps build up your speech again. Because when you're talking one-to-one you might interrupt straight away or something, so you never get ... but public meetings with a microphone, it's very good for people to ... practice their speech, because they're not having any interruptions. And it may feel like I might be being a bit slow, but you're going to get out in *your* time, not in their time. So that's my recommendation to anyone that's had ... and I think it's worked for me.

I probably would have been asking the questions anyway!

MH: <Laughs> Yes. That's true. Well thank you very, very much for this. That's brilliant. Thank you.

<End of recording>

