



# **BOB CANT ARCHIVE**

**(CANT)**

**CANT**

**Bob Cant Archive**

**1975-2021**

**Name of Creator:** Cant, Bob (b1945) LGBT educator, activist and trade unionist

**Extent:** 5 Boxes

**Administrative/Biographical History:** Bob Cant (born 1945) grew up on a farm outside Dundee. After university, he taught in Tanzania for two years between 1967 and 1969 and became fluent in Kiswahili.

September 1971 was a particularly important month for him as he went to his first Gay Liberation Front meeting and he joined a trade union. The issue of being able to come out at work remained a central part of his political activity over the following decades. He was one of those who set up a self-organised gay group within his union. He was a member of the Gay Left collective between 1975 and 1978. He was a volunteer on London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard for a number of years in the 1970s and 1980s. He became a member of Haringey Council's Lesbian and Gay Sub-Committee in 1986 and was active in campaigns to oppose Clause 28 of the Local Government Act which sought to prevent local authorities from 'promoting homosexuality' or 'pretend families'.

He was concerned to ensure that the stories of lesbians and gay men were not erased from history and in 1988 he co-edited, with Susan Hemmings, *Radical Records: Thirty years of lesbian and gay history, 1957-1987*. He went on to edit *Footsteps and Witnesses: Lesbian and gay lifestories from Scotland* (1993), *Invented Identities? Lesbians and gays talk about migration* (1997) and *Footsteps and Witnesses: Lesbian and gay lifestories from Scotland – second edition* (2008).

He was an activist in many anti-racist campaigns and was, between 1991 and 1996, the Racial Equality Development Officer for the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations.

He underwent surgery to have an ileostomy and campaigned in a number of settings to raise awareness about the issues experienced by gay men with ileostomies. He carried out various research studies into healthcare issues experienced by gay and bisexual men in relation to both HIV and Primary Care. He was awarded a PhD in 2004 for a thesis entitled *Exploring Gay Men's Narratives, Social Networks and their experiences of health services targeted at them: A London Study*.

He published a novel, *Something Chronic*, in 2013. He has written a variety of opinion pieces and reviews for publications such as *New Statesman*, *Gay Times*, *Gay Scotland*, *Lesbian and Gay Socialist*, *Scottish Review*.

**Custodial History:** Deposited with Bishopsgate Institute by Bob Cant, May 2021.

**Scope and Content:** Archive of LGBT educator, activist and trade unionist Bob Cant, including: papers, articles and other material regarding LGBT politics and trade unionism, 1981-2020; full run of Gay Left magazine to which Cant contributed, 1975-1980; publications and other material by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, Racial Equality Development Unit, 1992-1996; articles and letters by Cant contributed to the Scottish Review, 2011-2018; journalism by Cant for various publications, 1980-2021; Typescript memoir, 'Belonging/not belonging: Tales of times I spent with friends and comrades and fuckbuddies between 1967 and 1981' by Bob Cant, 2021; Publications and writings by Cant regarding Clause 28, Haringey Council and local government's response to Gay rights in the mid-1980s, 1986-2021; articles written by Cant for various newspapers and journals, regarding, among other topics, Cant's memories of and relationship with LGBTQ+ history in Scotland, 1989-2013; Cant's writing on Primary Care and HIV, 1999; draft biography of Oscar Wilde written by Bob Cant, 1976; copies of Cant's published books, 1988-2013; VHS tape and photocopied press cutting regarding Cant's ileostomy, 1985-1997; hardback notebook filled with publishers' publicity and press reviews of Cant's oral history anthologies, 1988-2013; Two typescript drafts of Bob Cant's novel, 'Something Chronic', 2000-2012; papers regarding Cant's PhD thesis, 'Exploring Gay Men's Narratives, Social Networks and Experiences of Health Services Targeted at Them: A London Study', 1999-2004; Audio cassette tapes of oral history interviews, 2004-2007.

**System of Arrangement:**

No further arrangement required.

**Language/scripts of material:**

English

**Access conditions:**

OPEN

**Copying conditions:**

Photocopying, scanning and digital photography (without flash) is permitted for research purposes on completion of the Library's Copyright Declaration form and with respect to current UK copyright law.

**Finding Aids:**

Copy of handlist available in researcher's area.

**Rules and Conventions:**

Compiled in compliance with General International Standard Archival Description, ISAD(G), second edition, 2000; National Council on Archives Rules for the Construction of Personal, Place and Corporate Names, 1997.

**CANT/1**

**Trade unionism**

**1981-2020**

Papers of Bob Cant regarding trade unionism, [1981-2020]

Includes:

- Audio recording (two CDs), accompanying transcript (14pp), collection guide and email exchanges regarding Seth Atkin's interview of Bob Cant and his life as a gay trade unionist, recorded in 2008 as part of The Millthorpe Project: Interviews with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Trade Unionists, deposited with the British Library Sound and Moving Image archive. Collection description papers state that the Project was 'initiated after the adoption by the TUC in 2007 of a formal resolution calling for a pilot oral history project of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans trade unionists' (2010)
- unpublished essay by Cant, 'Gay Politics and Trade Unions' (1983)
- complete issue of The Lecturer, with an article (page 13) by Cant entitled 'Ch-ch-changes: Bob Cant looks back over 30 years as an equality activist' (February 2006)
- print-outs of two articles (and accompanying comments) by Cant for Notches ('a peer-reviewed, collaborative and international history of sexuality blog'): 'Working Out: Reflections of gay trade union activism in the 1970s UK' (30 July 2020) and 'Coming Out in the Trade Union Movement' (17 October 2017)
- 'Gays and Trade Unions - an exploration of the way gay people are oppressed at work and of the strategies used and required to resist that oppression': dissertation by Cant for his Diploma in Industrial Relations and Trade Union Studies at Middlesex Polytechnic (April 1981)
- newsletter from Teachers in Further and Higher Education, Lesbian and Gay Group (TFHELGG) (January 1990)

**OPEN**

**CANT/2**

**Gay Left magazine**

**1975-1980**

Numbers 1 - 10 of 'Gay Left', initially sub-titled 'a socialist journal produced by gay men' (No. 1), then 'a socialist journal produced by gay people' (Nos. 2-5) and then 'a gay socialist journal', published by the Gay Left Collective.

Gay Left No 1 includes an article by Cant entitled Gays and the Trade Union Movement; this was the first theoretical article on this theme in the UK. [Autumn 1975 - Summer 1980)

**OPEN**

**CANT/3**

**Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations – Racial Equality Development Unit**

**1992-1996**

Publications from the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, [1992-1996]

Includes:

- issues 1-14 of the newsletter 'Connect: working for racial equality in the Scottish voluntary sector' (March 1992 - June 1996)
- conference report, 'Partnership in a Climate of Change: community care and the Black and Minority Ethnic communities in Scotland' (31 March 1993)
- conference report, 'Needs - Not Numbers: setting an agenda for racial equality in the Scottish voluntary sector' (02 November 1994)
- article, 'Why is there a need for racial equality activity in Scotland?', jointly written by Cant and Elinor Kelly, from Scottish Affairs (1995)

**OPEN**

**CANT/4**

**Scottish Review**

**2011-2018**

Print-outs of articles (essays, reviews, biographical pieces) and letters (from or in response to Cant's) from the online journal Scottish Review, published weekly by the Institute of Contemporary Scotland (ICS), [2011-2018]

Cant's pieces include:

- 'The best first ministers Scotland never had: a series of fables' (22 June 2011)
- 'In 41 of the 54 countries of the Commonwealth, it is still a crime to be gay' (06 December 2011)
- 'Tomorrow is Holocaust Memorial Day. These people are part of it' (26 January 2012)
- 'The importance of burying our dead' (08 February 2012)
- 'War of the Roses' (20 March 2012)
- 'Why the Spanish Civil War still goes on' (07 March 2012)

- 'The driven personality who led a Scottish crusade' (09 August 2012)
- 'Only 47,923 people in Scotland have decided to come out' (20 September 2012)
- 'Beaten and burned, but without hate: the death of Stuart Walker' (15 January 2013)
- 'A man who can tell us how Scotland became the country it is today' (22 January 2013)
- 'Scotland's neglected film-maker of world stature' (08 August 2013)
- 'The Scots who were victimised for fighting fascism' (30 April 2014)
- 'The pariahs of the Glasgow Games' (09 July 2014)
- 'Vain and difficult: a thrown hero of our time' (03 September 2014)
- 'The Glass Bucket' (24 February 2016)
- 'Place of safety no more: a gay man's reflection on Orlando' (15 June 2016)
- '"Get back to Lithuania": the new life for England's migrants' (24 June 2016)
- 'From worst to best: the progress of gay Scotland' (24 May 2017)
- '69 nights: Bob Cant on a near-death experience' (21 June 2017)
- 'Blood red rose: the murder of a playwright whose resting place is still unknown' (13 September 2017)
- 'Dundee has a long way to go' (24 October 2018)

**OPEN**

**CANT/5**

**Journalism**

**1980-2021**

Journalism by Cant and correspondence from Thom Gunn, [1980-2021]

Includes:

- Outcome: a magazine of sexual politics produced by lesbians and gay men, No. 9 (January-March 1980)
- '"Not yet ready?": Bob Cant on why the GLC is popular in Heaven', New Statesman (March 1984)
- 'Stonewall and After', Lesbian and Gay Socialist magazine, issue 18 (Summer 1989)
- 'Patriotism - Whose patriotism?', Lesbian and Gay Socialist magazine, issue 19 (Autumn 1989)
- typescript 'review article on Diverse Communities: the evolution of lesbian and gay

politics in Ireland by Kiran Rose (Cork University Press)' (December 1994)

- three handwritten letters from Thom Gunn regarding the preface for the book 'Invented Identities?'
- research paper, 'Improving lesbian, gay and bisexual healthcare: a systematic review of qualitative literature from the UK', Diversity in Health and Care vol 6 (2009), which cites three articles by Cant
- "Anyone who thinks of homosexual love is our enemy": remembering the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people during the Nazi terror', Diversity and Equality in Health and Care vol 9, no. 4, pp239-241 (2012)
- 'Out and about with GLF in London, September 1971', Notches (23 April 2020)
- 'Campaigning for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ireland, 1981-1993', Notches (26 January 2021)
- book review of 'Assertively Gay' by Terry Sanderson - followed by subsequent debate in Gay Times (September - November 1993)
- obituary of Derek Jarman by Cant, from The Scotsman (2 March 1994)
- letter on Islamic Fundamentalism, followed by responses (December 1995 - January 1996)
- letters to The Guardian on the theme of left-handedness (August 2003)

**OPEN**

**CANT/6**

**Memoir**

**2021**

Typescript memoir, 'Belonging/not belonging: Tales of times I spent with friends and comrades and fuckbuddies between 1967 and 1981', Bob Cant. Four pages of frontmatter; 157 pages, [2021]

**OPEN**

**CANT/7**

**Local Government (Haringey) and Clause 28**

**1986-2021**

Publications regarding Clause 28, Haringey Council and local government's response to Gay rights in the mid-1980s, [1986-2021]

Includes:

- Local Government reports and feature articles by Bob Cant, in Lesbian and Gay

Socialist, Issues 9-12 (Winter 1987-Winter 1988). Includes 'Wolfenden: Past and Present' (Issue 11) and 'Positive Images: a personal view' (Issue 12)

- photocopied letter from Haringey Borough Council to the Mayor and Councillors of Haringey, regarding an extraordinary meeting 'following receipt of a requisition ... This Council resolves that it will not allow teaching of homosexual or lesbian education' (15 October 1986)

- photocopied flyer, 'Support Lesbian & Gay classes for Haringey schools'

- photocopied chapter 'The Limits of Tolerance? Lesbian and gay rights and local government in the 1980s' by Bob Cant, in Tara Kaufmann and Paul Lincoln (eds), 'High Risk Lives: Lesbian and Gay politics after the Clause' (Prism Press, 1991)

- print-out of article, 'Thatcher and Homosexuality: Waiting for Section 28', Notches (17 June 2014)

- transcript of The Molly Spoon Archive: Bob Cant interviewed by Tim Redfern (14pp; November 2014)

- print-out of article, 'Challenging Heterosexism: The Haringey Experiment, 1986-1987', Notches (09 December 2014)

- print-out of article, "'Promoting homosexuality", 1987-2017', Notches (05 December 2017)

- print-out of article, '1986. Politics: Local authorities and LGBT rights', incorporating an earlier article (typescript attached) of a piece by Cant, commissioned by the New Socialist in 1986 but never printed at the time, 'Outsiders and Citizens: a discussion of the issues relating to the adoption of Equal Opportunities policies for lesbians and gay men by some Labour local councils', (2021)

**OPEN**

**CANT/8**

**Scotland**

**1989-2013**

Articles written by Cant for various newspapers and journals, regarding, among other topics, Cant's memories of and relationship with LGBTQ+ history in Scotland, [1989-2013]  
Includes:



- 'Chance to talk lost for ever: Bob Cant reflects upon the relationship with his late father', The Scotsman (04 April 1996)
- 'No longer a taboo subject: Homosexuality: Classroom discussions can help to promote understanding', The Scotsman (19 June 1996)
- 'Footsteps and Witnesses: LGBT history in Scotland - twenty years after'. Three-part article by Bob Cant, History Scotland (2013)
- letter to Cant from Dundee Branch of Outright Scotland regarding Cant's 'work on lesbian and gay oral history in Scotland', with accompanying hand-written notes by Cant (August 1994)
- 'Clyde Unity Theatre' Rouge: a Lesbian and Gay Socialist Quarterly, Issue 1 (Winter 1989-1990)
- 'Work being done in Lothian Region ... Stonewall Youth Project', Concept: the Journal of Contemporary Community Education Practice Theory, vol 2, No 1 (Spring 1992)
- 'Worlds apart', Gay Times (January 1997)
- CD labelled 'BBC Radio Scotland Sense of Place', 'Prog. 2 Dumbledykes', 'Prog. 3 Dundee'
- letter to Cant from Brian Thompson of remember when ... celebrating the histories of Edinburgh's LGBT communities, attached to a transcript of 'your interview' (16pp; 08 August 2005)
- article, 'Breaking the Scottish silence on homosexuality' from The Scotsman (11 May 1995)
- correspondence between Cant and his former Secondary School Rector which resulted in the article 'No longer a taboo subject....' (June 1996)

**OPEN**

**CANT/9**

**Writings on Primary Care and HIV**

**1999**

Cant's writing on Primary Care and HIV, [1999]

Includes:

- 'Primary Care & Gay and Bisexual Men: report of research into the Primary Care needs of Gay & Bisexual men and their perceptions of Primary Care practice', Bob Cant (Bromley Health Authority, January 1999)
- 'South Bank University Final Report on Social Networks, Social Support, Health and HIV

Positive Gay Men', prepared for Health First, Leroy White and Bob Cant (September 1999)  
- guest editorial article, 'Out for the counting' by Cant, from Diversity in Health and Social Care (2006)  
**OPEN**

**CANT/10      Biography of Oscar Wilde      1976**

Draft biography of Oscar Wilde written by Bob Cant: 156 typescript pages plus six handwritten pages of footnotes, [1976]  
**OPEN**

**CANT/11      Radical Records      1988**

Paperback copy of the book, 'Radical Records: Thirty years of lesbian and gay history, 1957-1987', edited by Bob Cant and Susan Hemmings (London: Routledge, 1988)  
**OPEN**

**CANT/12      Footsteps and Witnesses      1993**

Paperback copy of the book, 'Footsteps and Witnesses: Lesbian and Gay Lifestories from Scotland', edited by Bob Cant (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1993). Also Polygon catalogue for Autumn 1993-Spring 1994, which includes an entry on 'Footsteps and Witnesses'  
**OPEN**

**CANT/13      Invented Identities?      1997**

Paperback copy of the book, 'Invented Identities?: Lesbians and Gays Talk about Migration', edited by Bob Cant (London: Cassell, 1997)  
**OPEN**

**CANT/14      Footsteps and Witnesses      2008**

Paperback copy of the book, 'Footsteps and Witnesses: Lesbian and Gay Lifestories from Scotland', edited by Bob Cant (new expanded edition; Edinburgh: Word Power Books, 2008)  
**OPEN**

**CANT/15      Something Chronic      2013**

Paperback copy of the novel, 'Something Chronic' by Bob Cant (Edinburgh: Word Power Books, 2013)

**OPEN**

**CANT/16 Living with a stoma 1985-1997**

VHS tape and photocopied press cutting regarding Cant's ileostomy, [1985-1997]

Includes:

- VHS cassette recording labelled 'Let's Talk About Sex: Bob Cant Interview' (14 March 1997)

- photocopied press cutting, 'Pain in the arse', Bob Cant, New Statesman (15 November 1985)

**OPEN**

**CANT/17 Reviews 1988-2013**

Hardback notebook filled with publishers' publicity and press reviews of Cant's oral history anthologies ('Radical Records', 'Footsteps and Witnesses' and 'Invented Identities?'), and of his novel, ('Something Chronic'). Includes reviews from the magazines and journals Spare Rib, Everywoman, Gay Life, Gay Times, Pink Paper, Square Peg, Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement Journal, City Limits, Time Out, Lesbian and Gay Socialist, Socialist Worker, New Statesman, Guardian, The Scotsman, The List, Independent, Gay Scotland, Tribune, Glasgow Herald and Edinburgh Review, [1988-2013]

**OPEN**

**CANT/18 Drafts of 'Something Chronic' 2000, 2012**

Two typescript drafts of Bob Cant's novel, 'Something Chronic': first draft (2000); second draft (2012); both with handwritten comments

**OPEN**

**CANT/19 PhD thesis 1999-2004**

Papers regarding Cant's PhD thesis, 'Exploring Gay Men's Narratives, Social Networks and Experiences of Health Services Targeted at Them: A London Study', [1999-2004]

Includes:

- hardback notebook with handwritten research notes on 'thesis on homoscepticim' (July 1999), with printed inserts describing Cant's proposed research; correspondence with peers; literature review; checklists; lists of themes and sub-themes
- five articles from peer-reviewed academic journals arising from Cant's PhD research: 'An exploration of the views of gay and bisexual men in on Lodnon borough of both their primary care needs and the practice of primary care practitioners', Primary Health Care Research and Development vol 3, no. 2 (April 2002); 'Social networks, social support, health and HIV-positive gay men', Health & Social Care in the Community vol 11, no. 4 (July 2003); 'Facilitating Social Networks Among Gay Men', Sociological Research Online (30 November 2004); 'Exploring the implications for health professionals of men coming out as gay in healthcare settings', Health and Social Care in the Community vol 14, no. 1 (2005); 'Gay men's narratives and the pursuit of well-being in healthcare settings: A London study', Critical Public Health vol 18, no. 1 (March 2008)
- draft copy of the thesis, ringbound, entitled 'Health Services Tarrgeted at Gay and Other Homosexually Active Men in London' (167pp; December 2003)
- bound final copy of the thesis, 'Exploring Gay Men's Narratives, Social Networks and Experiences of Health Services Targeted at Them: A London Study', submitted to London South Bank University (iv + 237pp; April 2004)

**OPEN**

**CANT/20**

**Oral history interviews**

**c.2004-  
2007**

Audio cassette tapes of oral history interviews, [c.2004-2007]

Includes:

- Twelve audio cassette tapes of interviews with ten contributors (gay men and lesbians) to the second edition (2008) of the book 'Footsteps and Witnesses', labelled with the first names (and, in two cases, the surnames) of participants: Lewis, Graeme, Andrew, Brian, Sheila, Chris, Corinna, Grace, Ellen, Annette,

- Thirty-four audio cassette tapes of interviews with service users of health services targeted at gay men (indicated by the letter 'R' and the interviewee's name)
- Thirteen audio cassette tapes of interviews with managers of health services targeted at gay men (indicated by the letter 'M' as well as the interviewee's name)
- One audio cassette tape of interview with focus group of young South Asian gay and bisexual men, labelled 'Focus Group'

**APPLY TO ARCHIVIST**