

## **Lives from the Archives: Buster Transcript**

So my name is Buster. I was Mr Leather UK 2019. I'm chairman of London Fetishmen, one of London's Fetish clubs. I'm on the committee for London Leathermen, which is one of the oldest running leather clubs in Europe.

So the archives have a bit of everything in terms of our history, so I find them fascinating in that on one side of things we've got kind of pages and pages of minutes from committee meetings of clubs that closed years ago, all the way through to kind of raunchy German pornography from the mid-seventies and actually being able to look at a broad cross-section of, "What does our history look like warts and all?"

So I'm going to sound really nerdy here. But I love going back through the old editions of all the magazines that the clubs used to put out. So every club had like a little booklet, pamphlet thing that it would put out every few months with all the news of the club, before we had the internet of course, starting in the early seventies and everything is couched in this wonderful language of being a motorcycle club, to avoid discrimination. And we're able to kind of see almost into this kind of Polari-esque world that's very ... it's very couched in innuendo and there's... when you're looking for it, you can see it a mile off... Well, in order to run a motorcycle club of course, you have to have at least one motorcycle ride a year in order to get away with calling yourself a motorcycle club.

So they used to have this motorcycle ride, and that was kind of the big event for the year and everyone's kind of jabbing each other in the ribs, turning up to the pub with a motorbike helmet in full leather, having just come on the tube. It's one of those collections that's just been built up by a myriad of small donations. And I think that Bishopsgate Institute should take a lot of credit for developing a relationship with the leather scene as such that when something like that comes out, or somebody discovers the photo collection of Pride being a riot from 40 years ago, bit more than 40 years ago now, that actually people's first thought is, "This should be in the archives."

If somebody randomly picked up something out of the archives, I hope, first of all, they'd find the sense of humour that's inherent in the leather scene in there. In almost everything from AGMs to gay, leather Barbie dolls that are in the archives can put a smirk on your face. I always look for kind of like, there's always stuff that's really quite amusing in the archives. So if it was somebody's first time, I'd hope they found something that is funny, but also is very human. Actually, within the gay scene, we've always relied on humour as the way of

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combating some of the most horrendous homophobias and I think that a lot of the stuff in the archives kind of naturally, innately has that kind of humorous tone to it, like the Barbie doll. I always want to see our young LGBT people seeing our history and learning from that history, so as I said earlier, we don't make the same mistakes again as a community.

We're entering a difficult time, I say we're entering, we are in difficult times right now for the LGBT community and we're probably in more trouble now than we've been in for decades, despite kind of... we've had a lot of legal changes and we've had some societal changes. But, in many ways, those are being undone on a subtle basis and being able to kind of look at what we find in the archives, and go, "Actually this is a bit of a warning sign, but what worked then? What can we do now?" And learn as well from the kind of the approach of what worked.

Actually, what brought the early leather scene together was regular communication, bonds of fellowship, they kept their dramas to themselves. They didn't throw it out all over the place. Not everyone felt like they had to put their two cents worth in, and they had a commitment to sticking together with each other because they had nobody else to stick with. And actually having that mentality to go, "Well actually our community's worth more than each of us individually" is an enormously powerful thing to learn.

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