

Alphabet Soup

The official online magazine of
OutREACH Cumbria

April 2021 Issue

A note from OutREACH Cumbria ...

2019 saw our 25th year, with a fantastic anniversary celebration event held at Harraby Community Centre in Carlisle, showcasing our updated Celebrate Cumbria's LGBT+ history project.

Our celebrate project then went on tour, finishing at the Cumbria Pride event held in Carlisle Castle for their 10th year anniversary.

2020 however, saw Covid cause a standstill to many organisations, businesses and charities.

Whilst our office remains closed at the moment, our committee are still very much available, working remotely in these current times. So please do not hesitate to get in touch if you need us: info@outreachcumbria.co.uk

Now in 2021 we wish to restart our magazine Alphabet Soup, and we thank everyone for their support. The aim of the magazine is to give a voice to as many LGBT+ and GSRD individuals in Cumbria and the surrounding areas as we can, and we welcome everyone to write for Alphabet Soup!

If you have a story to share, a project you're working on, or a topic you feel passionate about then drop us a line ... mag@outreachcumbria.co.uk



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Alphabet Soup is edited by volunteers from OutREACH Cumbria committee.

Tales from the (Comfy) Chair

- Debbie Wood, Chair of OutREACH Cumbria

In my role as chair of OutREACH Cumbria I'd like to welcome you to this reincarnated edition of Alphabet Soup which, without wanting to seem irreverent, does seem apt in terms of timing. The last year has been a challenging one for all and the departure of Louise Askew for a fresh challenge meant that we had nobody on our team able to take over the production of an online magazine. Thankfully, Karyn has stepped up and as well as being our wonderful treasurer has produced this new and shiny edition for us. I really would like to thank her and all the wonderful contributors to this edition.



However, this is intended to be a community magazine – and that means we cannot produce it without contributions from you. Yes YOU esteemed readers...we need you. We welcome your input if you are LGBT or

an ally – your stories, articles about things that bother you, excite you, what it's like to be LGBT in Cumbria, your poems, photographs etc... and of course right now we also welcome your thoughts and experiences of being an LGBT person during a lockdown (or rather several lockdowns). So, pick up that pen, camera, whatever and send your material to us via

On another note, we are about to launch Talk-It-Out, our counselling/ psychotherapy service, which is aimed specifically at the LGBT community. The idea is that people will be able to talk to a therapist who is trained to work with people around their issues which relate to being LGBT - in a society which accepts us more than it used to, but where it can still be difficult to be different. An online referral form is due to go on our website in the next week or so and we hope that we can start arranging appointments sometime in April. This has been a long time coming and we would like to thank Cumbria Community Foundation for funding the birth of this service.

The chair, by the way, is not always comfy but to understand the title you would need to Google 'Monty Python, Spanish Inquisition'...

Best wishes to you all and hopefully we can soon start to meet up with one another again.

Debbie Wood

Chair, Outreach Cumbria

My journey as a Trans Person in sport

- Garryck Holmes

I am not a sporty person. I hated PE in school, with a passion. My amazing brother was the opposite - he loved football, tennis, darts, Formula 1 ... and I tried to like those things too, because I wanted him to think I was as cool as he is. Sadly, I never found the love. Sports have always felt like a barrier to me – not because of my gender identity as such, but because I've always been a big guy – a total chunk – and imagining myself running across a field just to badly kick a ball has always felt like the most embarrassing thing in the world.

But that's absolutely fine – sports aren't for everyone right? I was quite happy being the geeky kid, who was much more comfortable playing Crash Bandicoot and listening to Linkin Park in my room. But fast forward 15 years or so, if I could say anything to teenage me, it would be “you are stronger than you know. Oh, and heads up - one day you're going to be an athlete, and you're going to love it”.

That brings us to 2015. I was still the same sport-loathing chonk I'd always been, except I made an amazing discovery... *Roller derby!*

“Roller what? Is that like Rollerball / Whip it? Isn't that really violent? That's a bit unusual” – just some of the things people say to me when I tell them I coach and referee roller derby. Roller derby is the most inclusive, diverse, supportive sport I've ever come across. It is open to literally everyone – whether

you are sporty or not, short or tall, fat or thin, even disabled. And yes, it is kind of like the film “Whip It”, starring Ellen Page (it's a very cheesy film, but you should check it out).



Roller derby exploded into my life after I saw that an old friend from Sixth Form had joined the original Cumbrian league (Furness Roller Derby). I used to watch his videos with envy, wishing I could be as cool as that. I never dreamt of what was to come a few months later.

I was sitting in my old office, and a friend and colleague of mine asked me if I'd ever thought about roller derby.



My eyes lit up, and after much excitement, we decided to start the team I coach today – Border City Roller Derby – Carlisle's first and only roller derby league, and Cumbria's second.

Those first few months were hard. We didn't really know what we were getting ourselves into, and we never thought we'd actually get very far with it. The best we could hope for was a recreational team. Weeks passed, months passed, years passed... and now we are a 30+ member strong league, who this year skated in our first ever British Championship game, right before the first Covid-19 lockdown. It is one of the proudest moments of my life. But, I digress...

Rambling aside, I'm writing about this because roller derby has done so many things for me – it saved me from an unsafe situation, it found me my partner, I've made so many friends who I can rely on, it helped me overcome depression and anxiety, and it's given me skills and confidence that forever changed my life. I've had 3 job offers

based on the work I have done with BCRD, which is humbling. I was shortlisted for "Sporting Hero of the Year" which was such an unexpected but wonderful experience. But possibly the most important thing for me was that the sport, and my team, gave me a safe place to explore who I really am – a transgender person.

Being trans is tough. Being trans in sports is tough, and something I never thought would be possible, or safe to be. It takes a lot of courage to realise who you really are, and then share that with the world. I spent a long time exploring these feelings, and a long time in denial, but it wasn't until I found roller derby that I started to feel strong enough, and safe enough, to tell the world who I really was. I told my incredible partner and my amazingly supportive mum, dad and brother first, and then my roller derby team. It was so important to me that they were "ok" with who I really was. I don't know what I was worried about, because they practically exploded with joy when I told them. They have supported me

from day one - working hard to make sure I feel comfortable, using the correct pronouns, and making me feel just as loved as they always have.

I am so proud to be part of a team of people who will accept anyone for who they are, and I am proud to be part of a sport that is passionate about equality, diversity and inclusion. Since the league was born, we have competed all over the UK, travelled to other parts of the world, taken part in the Roller Derby British Championships, and won a Diverse Cumbria Award. We have LGBT+ members, black members, migrants, parents, teachers, grandparents, students, disabled members, people from all walks of life, of all abilities. We don't care who you

are, we love you, and you are *always* welcome on our team.

Thank you roller derby – for being a wonderfully inclusive sport, and thank you to my fellow team mates, Border City Roller Derby, for loving me and my brand new beard as much as you loved me before.

I'm still fat, I'm still "not a sporty person", but now I'm a transgender athlete who has a home in the safest place there is – roller derby.

By Garryck Holmes – Coach & Head Referee @ Border City Roller Derby
To find out more, visit bordercityrollers.com

Ssh! Join us on 23 April ...

- a request from OutREACH Cumbria



Day of Silence

No talking, no phone calls, no texts, no social media status updates
Sound difficult? Not being able to say how you feel or what you are thinking?
Many LGBT+ people are silenced EVERY day!

We ask you to join us in silence on **FRIDAY 23 APRIL 2021**
(if not all day, a few hours will do)
Let's help raise awareness of the bullying and harassment many of our LGBT+ community face!

If you would like to make a donation or perhaps get sponsors for your silence, any money raised will be greatly appreciated

To donate using a phone, text **SILENCE 1** to **70085** to donate **£1**.
Texts are charged at £1 plus one standard rate message,
To opt out of marketing text **SILENCENOINFO 1**

For more information visit www.outreachcumbria.org.uk

Cumbria Pride's Virtual Project

- Cumbria Pride Committee

When Covid 19 hit we were not sure what this would mean for Pride. It really was sad to see so many events being cancelled. We received lots of emails and messages asking us if the event was still going ahead and it was hard not being able to give a definite answer. We did not want to immediately cancel the event, were hopeful that levels would improve for September 2020, but obviously the safety of our community was paramount.

Sadly, as the months went on it became clear that it would not be safe to go ahead, so with heavy hearts we had to make the decision to cancel the event. Often Pride is viewed as just a 'party', and yes partly it is a celebration of strength and unity, BUT it is also a vitally important event which offers support to LGBT+ youngsters, teens, adults, seniors, their families, their friends, employers, and so on, all within a safe place where everyone can feel welcomed, included, and able to be who they are.

The pandemic meant a huge reduction in our physical presence, and we were aware that cancelling our main event would cause a great impact. As a committee we knew we needed to find a way to still meet the needs of the LGBT+ community, many of whom had found themselves in very difficult circumstances during lockdown, for example living with family who did not accept who they are. We decided to start work on a Virtual Project with the aim to continue to push for better representation, equal rights and to ensure the important

messages were still reaching the community. One of the most important parts of our Pride events are those links with vital support networks and services, which previously our community could engage with by visiting the information stalls. We therefore invite charities, organisations, and support networks to get involved, albeit different to usual.



Each month we focus on a different LGBT+ topic, and aim to combine a good mixture of advice, messages, memories, information, and music which we present in various digital forms. We upload a monthly project video to our YouTube channel 'Cumbria Pride', and we welcome everyone to contribute to the project through sharing videos, photos, music, and/or written text.

Further details about the Virtual Project and how to get involved can be found on our website:

www.cumbriapride.org/virtual-project.

Covid lockdown reflection

- anon

You know, there was this virus, and it was killing people. You were frightened of going out of your house. You felt the world you thought you knew slip away, and those rights you took for granted vanish over night. It was hard you know, we were living in a time of great changes in society, and living in secret from our own families. The 80s were fun, new music and travel, but friends would just disappear. One day they were there and the next, they were just gone. Now I know my friends were going home to die, in secret, and in shame.

It's sad, HIV and AIDs began just as Covid did, except Covid hasn't had to first come out of the closet to be fought. There's no shame, no secret, no judgement. It has brought that same fear, same death, but unlike in the early stage of HIV, it has brought us all together in a common goal. We are all human, we fight to survive and just to live. No stigma. In 1997 medication became available making Aids no longer the death sentence it once was. We now have vaccines to start the fight to survive Covid.

As a member of the LGBT+ community I have lived most of my life in secret, just so I can go out without being abused, without names being yelled at me and just being allowed to do what others take for granted and be allowed to live as me. I've spent my entire life fighting, being frightened and wondering what I did so wrong just to be born as me. Being gay wasn't a subject to be discussed. It was a taboo subject but luckily they're allowed to teach kids about homosexuality today. Unfortunately, even now in our great enlightenment, holding your

boyfriend's hand in public when you are both the same gender can still result in being yelled at, chased and punched. This is the 21st Century, yet we still have a long way to go at being accepted.

Lockdown is reminiscent of what we felt back then. We hid away out of fear, but not just of a virus, of judgement. Today everyone is told to act like they have Covid, to stand away from people, but the difference is it's everyone. Back then people just feared the gay man, it didn't matter if you have it or not, if you were gay you were deemed unclean. Shame, guilt and stigma stops you from talking, and talking is really important if you need help, advice or just a friend.

Now the fight has moved on again, more of us are being accepted, LGB, but being trans is the new 'taboo'. Being born in the wrong body isn't your fault, so why do other people think they have the right to make their life a living nightmare, for just being born. I was born, I was labelled gay, I don't need a label to be accepted as I wasn't created, I didn't turn and I can't be converted. I am just me. Don't judge me, learn to understand me and just accept me.

I'd like to take this moment to thank OutREACH Cumbria and Cumbria Pride for being a source of open minded support, advice and just being there as someone to talk to. Someone who doesn't just judge me for being me, and for providing this opportunity to have a voice. We still have a little further to go, but we have also come a long way. Be proud to be the best you, you can be!

PiNC (LGBT+ Youth Group) update

- Pride in North Cumbria (PiNC) committee

Due to the Covid restrictions the centre is currently closed, but we'll be back open as soon as it is safe to do so! For now, we are welcoming young people to join us on Discord. This is a place where you can chat with others and make new friends just as you would in the centre, and you can keep up to date with all our latest updates!



My view of how ‘Zoe Tate’ changed TV for Gay women

- Chloe Jones

It's fair to say the humble TV soap opera has seen better days. Increasing episodes, decreasing ratings, weaker writing and a tendency to put plot before character, have all damaged the British serial drama's reputation as kitchen sink and down-to-earth. TV companies though have a tendency to blame Netflix, the big bad wolf, which is a rather tone-deaf reaction that will only hasten soaps' decline.

It was all so different in the 60s and 70s, when Coronation Street, Crossroads and Emmerdale Farm ploughed on cosily in front of roughly half the nation. Then came enfant terrible Brookside, an unapologetically gritty and politicised serial as far away from other soaps as humanly possible. This distinction arguably paved the way for the far more successful and enduring EastEnders in 1985, its bleak atmosphere and incessant misery

made for compulsive viewing until around ten years ago.

Coupled with the glamour and sex appeal of Aussie soaps like Home And Away and Neighbours – hugely popular with the all-important younger audience – middle class and romanticised Northern soaps like Corrie and Emmerdale Farm suddenly seemed painfully out of touch with the modern world.

1989 was the start of that changing, with Emmerdale dropping the Farm and introducing its most important family since the Sugdens – the wealthy Tates. Many of us recently read about the tragic demise of Leah Bracknell, who played Zoe Tate in Emmerdale from 1989-2005. To the younger of you, Zoe Tate may just be a face or a well-known name. But for a whole generation of us, she was a landmark

character in British soap, who became arguably Emmerdale's most loved actor.

When the Tates arrived fairly modestly in 1989 – taking over the Home Farm estate – they settled in remarkably easily. Frank the wealthy haulier; Kim his glamorous but free-spirited younger wife; Frank's surly, workaholic son Chris and Frank's young, rather shy and awkward daughter Zoe. Ironically, Zoe was the weakest link in her early years - Leah Bracknell had to take maternity leave twice in her first four years onscreen, making it difficult to establish Zoe as a character and how she fitted in.

Initially she was rather sneaky, playing off two men and ending up with neither. But her decision to quit her first vet's job due to her boss's animal testing showed a more caring side to Zoe. Having returned for good in 1993, she and long-time friend Archie Brooks finally acted on the feelings they always had for each other, but it was a rollercoaster ride. Archie always knew that, despite his genuine feelings for her, something did not ring true about her feelings for him. Eventually she was honest with him, and being a true friend to her, he could not have been more supportive. Finally, Zoe had to face Frank with it. From the late 80s onwards, British soaps tended to focus on gay men. In August 1993, Zoe came out to Frank in a tender, beautifully written episode that is arguably one of Emmerdale's best.

In doing so, Zoe Tate became British soap's first gay woman. And for the first time ever, Zoe's character fell into place. From then on it was a rollercoaster ride of disastrous relationships, an award-winning battle with mental illness and an exit in 2005 that was quite literally explosive – as the

last Tate standing, she blew up Home Farm and moved to New Zealand. As you do.

Whatever Zoe went through – and she went through a lot – she was a survivor. Sadly, Leah wasn't. But what will survive is the legacy she left behind as Zoe Tate. When Brookside was making the headlines with a salaciously-portrayed lesbian kiss in 1994, Zoe's coming out story was done gracefully and humanly the year before. It was a brave step by Emmerdale in its day; at the time Emmerdale was very white, traditional and middle class. Something as bold as its first lesbian character was the first time Emmerdale began to feel genuinely modern.

But it's not just the fact that Zoe was gay that mattered; in the 80s and 90s gay characters stuck out. They were largely defined by their sexuality or, like Shannon Reed in Home And Away, their sexuality was somewhat glossed over. But Zoe had many exciting stories not related to her sexuality. She was never 'the gay one', she was just an ordinary character who happened to be gay, as well as the most likeable and down to earth Tate.

The fact that Leah herself was not gay only makes Zoe's legacy all the more impressive. And every lesbian in British soap today has Zoe Tate to thank for their acceptance, and equally, Leah Bracknell. Thank you, Leah.

Want to share your view about an LGBT+ soap character? Or perhaps you'd like to talk about an LGBT+ storyline that you feel would be of particular interest to our readers.

Drop us a line ...
mag@outreachcumbria.co.uk

Events to look forward to ...



JOIN US TO CELEBRATE VIRTUAL

FURNESS PRIDE

SATURDAY 15TH MAY 2021 @ 12PM

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT US ON
<https://dzyp.co.uk>
01229 812888
drop_zone@btconnect.com

Logos for Drop Zone Youth Projects and Furness LGBT Youth Group are visible in the top corners. The central image shows a colorful rainbow-themed vehicle. Social media icons for Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook are at the bottom.



Save the date!
Saturday 25 September 2021
Carlisle Castle

Cumbria PRIDE

Logos for PiNC, LGBThq, and The National Lottery are visible. The central image shows a group of people in rainbow clothing holding a large rainbow heart.

OutREACH Partners



Our 2021-2022 partnerships are now available, and will run from 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022. If you own a Business/Organisation that is an LGBT+ safe space and you would like to become an OutREACH partner, please contact info@outreachcumbria.co.uk.

Our Partners will be listed as a safe space on our website, and will also appear in every issue of Alphabet Soup.