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# Searching for space

## Cork lesbian community 1975-2000

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In 1975 in Cork city there were no formal lesbian and gay organisations or social centres. Informal social networks did exist, centring around parties and gatherings, particularly in the homes of some of the wealthier gay men. These parties were open only to those 'in-the-know' and in the 'in-crowd.' If the house owner didn't like you, you were excluded. Public toilets and parks also provided loci for casual clandestine sexual encounters between men. In the mid-70s gay men would meet regularly in the Imperial Hotel, where they were sometimes joined by a small number of lesbians. Cork lesbians would sometimes travel to Dublin to socialise in the lesbian and gay scene there. Many Cork lesbians emigrated to cities where they could find a larger and more open lesbian community.

The first Cork gay rights organisation was established in 1976. An Irish Gay Rights Movement (IGRM) had been set up in Dublin in 1974, and a Cork branch was formed in 1976.<sup>1</sup> A combination of circumstances created the context and conditions for the emergence of these lesbian and gay organisations in Ireland: the changing nature and gradual liberalisation of Irish society, the emergence of Irish social change movements, in particular the women's movement. Also the new gay ideology of pride and assertiveness following the Stonewall Riots and the emergence of the Gay Liberation Front in the USA and Britain.

The aim of the IGRM was to improve the lifestyle of the homosexual in Ireland. The means by which this aim was to be achieved were by:

- (I) Reform of laws relating to homosexuality
- (II) Removal of social prejudice and misconceptions regarding homosexuality
- (III) Provision of counselling, befriending and social facilities for homosexuals<sup>2</sup>

The Cork IGRM succeeded in leasing premises at 4 McCurtain Street, thus establishing Cork's first gay centre. Weekend discos and social events were held there up until the mid-'80s, providing an essential space for gay men to socialise. Although the Cork discos were predominantly male, a number of lesbians did socialise there. The IGRM also set up a telephone counselling service and a number of newsletters and publications were produced. The Cork IGRM were also involved in a radio programme on 'Homosexuals in Cork' which was

broadcast on the Cork RTE local radio programme *Cork-About* on 20 January 1978.<sup>3</sup>

There were some attempts to set up a specifically lesbian social scene in Cork in the late 70s. A short article in the 1978 first edition of *Sapphire*, the Cork IGRM newsletter, notes that “since the formation of the Cork Branch of I.G.R.M. the gay women in this city have been considering setting up a social scene for themselves.”<sup>4</sup> There were negotiations with the Cork IGRM to try to make the centre available exclusively for women one night a week. A women’s meeting was held in the IGRM premises on 30 January 1978 to discuss setting up a lesbian social scene in Cork. This is the first lesbian meeting in Cork of which I am aware. There were plans to hold meetings on a weekly basis but it is unclear if this happened.

It is apparent that lesbians continued to encounter difficulties in trying to negotiate space and support within the McCurtain Street centre. One of the motions passed at a 1981 National Gay Conference in Cork proposed “that the men in McCurtain Street allocate one evening of each week for a social run by women for women. We demand that further resources be made more freely available to women.”<sup>5</sup> This would seem to indicate a lack of support for independent women’s activities in the McCurtian Street club and that the club continued to be geared primarily towards the needs of gay men in the city.

## Two new gay organisations

In 1980 two new gay organisations were set up in Cork. The Cork Gay Collective (CGC) was established as a new, more radical type of Irish gay group, a radical departure in many ways from what it would have seen to be the more reformist policies of groups like the IGRM and the National Gay Federation (NGF). The CGC recognised that legal change was important but that this was not enough. What was needed was a deeper challenge to society’s view of sexuality and gender stereotyping. They sought to encourage more positive and open attitudes among gay people to their sexuality. They also located the struggle for gay rights as part of a wider movement for social change and made links between homophobia and discrimination against gays and lesbians and other oppressions in Ireland and internationally.

The UCC GaySoc was set up in the university in December 1980. Its aim was “to promote and support socially, politically and legally the well-being of gay people in the University community and the community at large.”<sup>6</sup> From 1981 onwards the group continually applied to the college authorities for recognition as a college society in January 1981 but they were refused recognition and the associated access to college facilities and funding. The society was finally given recognition when in April 1989 UCC became the first constituent col-

lege of the National University of Ireland to give recognition to a gay group.

The establishment of these two new groups added momentum to gay activism in the city. Of particular importance was the organisation of the first ever Irish National Gay Conference in Connolly Hall in Cork on 15-17 May 1981. The CGC, the Cork IGRM, the UCC GaySoc and a number of individuals came together to organise the conference, bringing together lesbian and gay activists and organisations from throughout Ireland, with a number of British and American activists also attending. The basic aim of the Conference "was to fulfil an accepted need for a general assessment of the progress of the gay movement in Ireland to date and to consider fresh initiatives for the future."<sup>7</sup>

Over 200 people attended the Conference, participating in workshops on a wide range of issues.<sup>8</sup> Forty-nine motions were passed by the conference, and as Kieran Rose has commented, "these set the agenda for the lesbian and gay movement for more than a decade."<sup>9</sup> On the Saturday night of the Conference a Gala Dance for gays and friends was held in Connolly Hall. This was seen as an important event in its own right: "It was a wonderful night of fun....It was a unique experience to see hundreds of mixed couples dancing together in a public building. For us this dance was as politically important as the rest of the Conference and it certainly was a night to remember for anyone who had attended."<sup>10</sup>

The importance of the 1981 Cork conference has been acknowledged by a number of commentators. Kieran Rose claims that the "conference made a significant contribution to the development of an indigenous theory and practice of lesbian and gay politics in Ireland."<sup>11</sup> Writing in *In Touch* in June/July 1981, T. McC comments: "The Cork Conference will, I feel, become to the gay rights movement in Ireland what Stonewall is to the gay liberation movement worldwide....The Cork Conference is already the symbol of the unity of the gay movement in Ireland. All gay organisations in Ireland were represented, gay women were working with gay men, major goals of the 80s were isolated and the commitment to work *together* towards them was made. The conference was a statement about the growing confidence and maturity of the Irish gay liberation movement."<sup>12</sup>

### The Quay Co-op

Following the conference, the next major development in Cork was the opening of the Quay Co-op on Sullivan's Quay on 2 May 1982. It was established as a workers' co-operative which brought together gay men, women's groups, left-wing organisation, environmental and anti-nuclear groups. The building housed a café, bookshop, food co-op, women's place and meeting rooms which were used by various 'alternative' groups in the city.<sup>13</sup> From the early 1980s the Quay

Co-op was an important centre for alternative political and social activity and provided an important space for social and political activity for lesbians and gay men in Cork.

Of particular importance for lesbians in Cork was the establishment of a Women's Place as part of the Quay Co-op. Initially one, and later two, rooms were reserved for women, for meetings, information and as a space to 'hang out'. A range of women and women's groups were involved initially in the Women's Place, including the Cork Women's Collective which was active in the city during the late 1970s and early 1980s. It seems that in the early days there was confusion and a lack of clarity about what the Women's Place was to be, who it was for and how it was to be organised.<sup>14</sup> There were lots of different women involved, coming from very different political perspectives, and it was difficult to find a common denominator.<sup>15</sup> For some women, the location of the Women's Place in the Quay Co-op was problematic; it was seen as 'too alternative'.<sup>16</sup> It was "felt that the co-op was too exclusive a venue for Cork women i.e. seen as a gay hold-out."<sup>17</sup> Some heterosexual women did not feel comfortable with the number of lesbians involved in the Women's Place.<sup>18</sup> There were also tensions between the Women's Place and the Co-op. There was pressure on the women to work on a voluntary basis in the café, which was seen as the facility which would resource the other activities of the Co-op, including the Women's Place. Women felt that energies were being diverted away from the Women's Place, and that women were doing the 'donkey work' without being paid (at this stage the only people who were being paid were two gay men).<sup>19</sup>

### **The first lesbian groups**

Despite these difficulties a range of groups and activities were organised from the Women's Place, including the Rape Crisis Centre, a Women's Health Group and a library. The Women's Place provided an important base for the development of lesbian activism in Cork and it was here that the first lesbian groups began to meet. A Lesbian Discussion Group began meeting in the Woman's Place in November 1983 and the Cork Lesbian Collective was set up. An article on the Lesbian Group in the *Women's Place News* states: "It was felt that there was a need for lesbians to get together to combat isolation and provide support."<sup>20</sup> Meetings were held every Thursday night; they were "generally informal and unstructured. The nature of the group is variable, sometimes political sometimes social depending on the mood of those women who turn up."<sup>21</sup>

One Cork activist comments that, prior to the establishment of this group, "there was no identifiable lesbian scene or group at the time." She describes how she and a lesbian friend would be sitting in Loafers' pub, looking over at



two other women, wondering if they were dykes, while they would be sitting there, looking over at them, wondering the same thing! The lesbians gradually did get organised: "It was on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 1984 that we Politico-lesbians organised what we thought was the first Lesbian group. We had fifteen women at our first meeting. I remember it well the amazing feeling that there were so many of us and we were all so different."<sup>22</sup> Women began to gather in Loafers' Bar following the meetings, thus beginning the tradition that Thursday night is the night that Cork lesbians meet in the pub, a tradition which continues to the present time.

One of the interviewees in Jacqui O Riordan's study on the Cork Women's Place comments on the importance of the lesbian group: "for the first time there was a group, an actual identifiable lesbian group and that was like very important for Cork [...] an identifiable social scene, lesbian scene, started in Cork from that group and from that organisation." Many of the lesbians who were centrally involved in the Women's Place were feminist, but the lesbian group brought in other women who came because they were lesbian and who "thought feminism was just a whole load of crap or whatever." "The feminists would be in one corner and the kinda non-feminists in the other, we used to have huge debates about things." The group discussed various topics including sexuality, coming out experiences, relationships with parents and various difficulties which women experienced as lesbians.<sup>23</sup>

Another activist describes first attending the Thursday night lesbian discussion group: "I went alone the first time. There must have been fifteen lesbians in the room, some political, others not. There was heated debate. I kept going back after that. It seemed the way to meet most of the lesbians was through political activism and so I became involved."<sup>24</sup>

### **Women's Fun Weekend**

It was from the Women's Place that the first Cork Women's Fun Weekend was organised on the 13-15 April 1984. The early 1980s were a time of intense political activity and debates about women's rights in Ireland. The Cork women decided that, as well as all the political activity, what was needed was a weekend of fun events for women. As one of the organisers put it: "there was a lot of heavy-duty political women's conferences and discussions going on, and as an antidote we decided to have a weekend of just fun."<sup>25</sup> The Women's Fun Weekend is still running, having skipped only one year since it began. Women travel from many parts of Ireland and from abroad to participate in the Fun Weekend. While initially the Women's Fun Weekend was a mixed (lesbian and heterosexual) event, it gradually became an event which is attended primarily by lesbians and a small number of straight women who are comfortable at

lesbian events.<sup>26</sup> It has become one of the key events in the Irish lesbian calendar. In a presentation at the 2000 Lesbian Lives conference I noted how “every year in the middle of May lesbians come out of the woodwork to join in a weekend of fun and frolics in Cork.” The Cork Women’s Weekend is one of those “events and opportunities we create for the exploration, expression and celebration of lesbian culture – the kinds of events which recharge our batteries and give us the strength and motivation for political activity and for negotiating the daily stresses and perils of living in a society which does not support us as lesbians. Events which are time out from that, time that is lesbian centred and most importantly, time that is fun.”<sup>27</sup>

It was also from the Women’s Place that the Cork Lesbian Line was established, to provide support and information for lesbians, to counter isolation and to make it easier for lesbians who were exploring their sexuality and ‘coming out’, and to provide a positive image of lesbians. The Cork Lesbian Line began operating on Thursday nights in January 1985 and it continues to operate today.

One of the main problems facing both the lesbian line and Gay Information Cork was how to advertise the service they were providing. The local newspapers, the Cork Examiner and the Evening Echo, refused to carry advertisements for the Lesbian Line and Gay Information Cork, claiming that it would be illegal to do so.<sup>28</sup> [Sexual activity between men was illegal in Ireland up until 1993. Lesbians were not covered by that legislation but the Lesbian Line advertisements were still refused.] Negotiations with the newspapers continued over the years, but despite interventions on behalf of the information lines by politicians, trade unions and health professionals, the newspapers continued to refuse to carry the advertisements. This had serious consequences in terms of publicising the services available and the number of callers to the lines remained low in the early years.<sup>29</sup>

The Cork Lesbian Line produced stickers to advertise their service “but even in the most ‘alternative’ of places they were pulled down almost immediately.”<sup>30</sup> They did, however, succeed in having the number placed in the local telephone directory. One woman recalls: “We were brave for our time, I remember going in to put the listing in the telephone directory for the Lesbian Line. It was all done in a very strained silence, with a lot of pointing to the offending word ‘lesbian.’ It felt like a great victory that they accepted it.”<sup>31</sup>

Despite these difficulties, the Cork Lesbian Line continued operating throughout the ‘80s and ‘90s. It “has proved itself an important and necessary service many times over.”<sup>32</sup> Funding has remained an issue for the Line. In 1996 the Line received a grant from the Department of Social Welfare (grants to locally based women’s groups) but most of its funding comes from fundraising within the local lesbian community.<sup>33</sup>

A Cork Lesbian and Gay Action Project was started in 1984. A leaflet on the

project, produced by the Cork IGRM, the Cork Gay Collective and the Cork Lesbian Collective, states:

the need for closer consultation and co-operation within the gay community has prompted the recent formation of the CORK LESBIAN AND GAY PROJECT which has as its main objectives the improvement and expansion of the existing social, political, supportive and advice facilities for the lesbian & gay community.<sup>34</sup>

The project aimed to explore the possibility of starting a youth group, looking for a building for a lesbian and gay centre, starting a befriending group, expanding the phone service, having socials and forming a health group.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to the various political activities and groups, the availability of public social venues was very important for the emerging lesbian community in Cork. As Lapovsky Kennedy and Davis note in their study of lesbian bar culture in Buffalo in the 1930s and 1940s, public bars can play an important role in terms of lesbian community formation and assertion:

By finding ways to socialize together, individuals ended the crushing isolation of lesbian oppression and created the possibility of group consciousness and activity. In addition, by forming community in a public setting outside of the protected and restricted boundaries of their own living rooms, lesbians also began the struggle for public recognition and acceptance.<sup>36</sup>

Loafers Bar was opened in Cork in the early 1980s; it was owned by a gay man and quickly became a social meeting place for people involved in 'alternative' groups and lifestyles in the city. The clientele initially was mixed, with a large number of gay men and lesbians, although in later years it became more a gay bar than a mixed bar. This public social venue, and the contact and social interaction it facilitated, was an important element in the building of contacts, connections and elements of community. In 1992 *Munster LGCN* described Loafers as "an institution on the Irish lesbian and gay scene" which "has provided an invaluable, safe and welcoming meeting-place for the community down through the years".<sup>37</sup>

The December 1984/January 1985 edition of *OUT* lists a number of other social venues in Cork at that time. The IGRM club ran on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. There was also a club in Slick's Bar on McCurtain Street on Thursday nights and Sunday mornings. A women's social was held the first Tuesday of the month in the Berwick Tavern in Tuckey Street. In addition to Loafers Bar a number of other bars are listed which were presumably seen as being 'gay-friendly': Slick's Bar, McCurtain Street; Chateau Bar, Patrick's Street; Dan Lowry's Bar, McCurtain Street and Stripes, McCurtain Street.<sup>38</sup> I recall that women used to also meet in the Steeple Bar near Shandon during the

1980s. Other bars were occasionally and temporarily turned into a lesbian bar for an evening when hosting a women's band. For example I remember Pa Johnson's bar being almost entirely lesbian one evening when the lesbian band *Major to Minor*<sup>39</sup> played there.

### Lesbian organisations in other parts of Ireland

The Cork lesbian community was very conscious of the importance of developing links with lesbians and lesbian organisations in other parts of Ireland. Cork lesbians were actively involved in the annual Women's Camps, which began in Galway in 1988. From 1993 onwards this became the Irish Women's Camp, which is held each year in different locations throughout the country. Cork lesbians have been attending the summer camps from the beginning and many have been actively involved in organising the camps. Indeed the camp has become a key event in the calendar of many Cork lesbians, an event not to be missed.

In 1987 the Women's Place in Cork and the Women's News Collective in Belfast applied for and received Co-operation North funding to further develop links and exchange skills.<sup>40</sup> As the *Women's Space* newsletter put it:

Women from both collectives met and decided that it would be a good thing if the women of *Women's News* could teach the Cork women the intricate skills of producing a newspaper so that the Cork women could start one; and that, likewise, it would be a good thing if the women of the *Women's Place* could teach the Belfast women the delicate art of running a library, so that they could start one.<sup>41</sup>

Exchange visits were organised with the Cork women visited Belfast in June 1987 and the Belfast women came to Cork in January 1988. "Newspaper workshops and library workshops were organised, areas of future co-operation were discussed, life-long vows of friendship were made and LOTS and LOTS of fun was had by all."<sup>42</sup>

The Belfast women's visit to Cork on 29-31 January 1988 coincided with another lesbian gathering in Cork: the first National Lesbian Line Conference with women from Cork, Belfast, Dublin and Galway Lesbian Lines attending.<sup>43</sup> The women shared anecdotes of their experiences in setting up and running lesbian lines and worked together on developing their counselling and listening skills.

In 1988 the Cork Lesbian Line approached Lesbian Line Belfast to suggest putting in a funding application under the Women's Links (Community Programme) projects of Co-operation North. The Cork Line saw it as an opportunity "to open up discussion and network with other existing lines in Ireland...An approach to Belfast line was agreed for many reasons: they were an old and well established line and we were pleased with the opportunity to further friendship and support."<sup>44</sup> The funding application was successful and

the lines began to plan the exchanges. At this stage it was decided to open the exchange up to women from other lesbian lines in Galway, Dublin, Derry and Limerick. "What we had on our hands was an All Ireland Lesbian Exchange. Luckily there were already some personal friendships among various women which made planning quite a bit easier."<sup>45</sup> The first planning meeting was held in Dublin in September 1988. The first exchange was held in Galway in November 1988, followed by an exchange in Belfast in March 1989. While the first exchange was hosted by the Cork Lesbian Line it was held in Galway to facilitate equal travel for women from the North and South. "Also at that time Galway was a new line and we all felt that an exchange happening in that city would give much encouragement."<sup>46</sup> At the Galway meeting workshops were held on Lesbians and Alcohol, Befriending, Recruitment and Transsexuals.

Commenting on the Co-Operation North exchange one of the participants notes that "this exchange offered us a chance as Lesbian Lines to meet with relative ease with each other. It certainly wove a very strong network between us all for the continuation of skills, information and fund raising. It is only because the exchange took place that we were enabled to begin to do many of these things. As isolated groups we have neither enough information, skills or money to get much of the work needed to be done, done. As a larger national network all things are possible."<sup>47</sup>

The lesbian lines received an award from Co-operation North in acknowledgement of the work they had done. They were joint winners under the Women's Groups projects under the Community Programme, sharing the award with the Dublin Travellers' Education and Development Group and Newry Travellers' Group.<sup>48</sup> However, Hayley Fox-Roberts suggests that there was a 'cover-up' of sorts in relation to the Co-operation North awards: "These events had previously been public but were held that year in private, with no press, to avoid embarrassment over awards being made to queer-affiliated organisations."<sup>49</sup>

The Cork Lesbian Line affiliated to the Council for the Status of Women (CSW) and worked to increase awareness of homophobia and of issues of concern to lesbians in the CSW and its affiliated organisations. In June 1991 the CSW held a Workshop on Homophobia: *Building Alliances, Healing Divisions*.<sup>50</sup>

### **Tensions between the Quay Co-op and the Women's Place**

In the late 1980s relations between the Quay Co-op and the Women's Place deteriorated further. There had been tensions from the beginning. Women felt that, while in principle the women's centre was integral to the ideal of the co-op, in practice it was given low priority and the women had to constantly fight to justify its continuation.<sup>51</sup> In 1988 the space allocated to the Women's Place was reduced from two rooms on the first floor to a single cold attic room. The

Co-op was under increasing financial pressure and wanted to expand the café to increase its income.<sup>52</sup> The Co-op seemed to be becoming more business orientated and they argued that the Women's Place was not paying its way.<sup>53</sup> Membership of the Co-op was also increased from a minimal charge to £500. There was a feeling that the Co-op was changing from being a resource centre which would support facilities such as Women's Place and was concentrating too much on making money.<sup>54</sup>

Women 'up in the attic' in the Women's Place felt increasingly marginalised within the Co-op. Relations with the Co-op were tense and a lot of women stopped coming in because of this.<sup>55</sup> There was also a feeling that the Women's Place was being sabotaged by the Co-op in getting grants<sup>56</sup> and that the Co-op was hampering the development of the Women's Place.<sup>57</sup>

Women decided to move from the Co-op and set up a separate Women's Place. A public meeting was held in Connolly Hall in February 1989. Around 50 people turned up and supported the split from the Co-op. The move from the Co-op was "fraught with anger and bitterness."<sup>58</sup> The Co-op claimed that the Women's Place was their project and that therefore they owned its resources and that the women had no right to remove them. The main asset in dispute was the library which had been built up in the Women's Place over the years. In what has been referred to as 'the battle of O' Sullivan's Quay', there was a dispute between the women who were trying to move the books from the Co-op and one of the Co-op employees who was trying to prevent them. Eventually the women succeeded in moving the books but the dispute left a lingering feeling of bitterness and distrust between the women and the Co-op.

The Women's Place company was set up in September 1989. Its principal objectives were:

- (a) To promote the rights and welfare of all women, to promote women's culture and to provide for women's needs.
- (b) To provide information, education, meeting and other facilities for women including...to provide classes in all subjects conducive to knowledge of or skills in any trade pursuit or calling and the provision of childcare facilities.<sup>59</sup>

Problems were encountered in trying to find funding and new premises for the Women's Place following the break with the Co-op. Hopes of receiving low-cost premises from Cork Corporation fell through. A public meeting held before Christmas 1989 agreed to have a £10 membership fee and various fundraising activities were organised during Christmas.<sup>60</sup> Eventually, in March 1990, premises were rented in McCurtain Street and the Women's Place opened. However, energy and enthusiasm for the Women's Place seems to have waned a little by this time. A lot of energy had been put into separating from the Co-op, but the delay in re-

opening meant that some of this energy had dissipated and some women had become involved in other projects, such as the Rape Crisis Centre and the Lesbian Line.<sup>61</sup> Jacqui O Riordan suggests that “in addition, by the early 90s, there is a general feeling that there is no longer a need for a centre such as the Womensplace. Younger women, particularly, who presume they have not encountered direct prejudice, feel that it is an idea of the 60s and not of relevance to their lives.”<sup>62</sup>

A library and information resource centre operated in the Women’s Place in McCurtain Street. There was networking with other organisations in the city and a drop-in centre. The Cork Women’s Newsletter started up again. The Centre was initially run by volunteers. From November 1990 workers were employed on Social Employment Schemes and a Supervisor was employed. President Mary Robinson visited the Women’s Place in April 1991.

However, difficulties emerged which would eventually lead to the closing of the Women’s Place. There was a lack of clarity about the structures and direction of the Women’s Place. There were also differences in the relationships between women in the Women’s Place: some women knew one another a long time and had been involved in the Women’s Place over the years but others were totally new to the centre. There were difficulties in relation to effective decision making. The Women’s Place was dependent on FAS schemes to employ worker but it became increasing difficult to find women who met the criteria for qualification for the FAS schemes and women were employed to perform a particular task. At times these women knew little about the Women’s Place and did not share its feminist philosophy. Some of the heterosexual women employed were very uncomfortable working with lesbians which led to tensions and conflicts. A number of workers resigned because of the difficulties in the Women’s Place. In September 1991 the women involved in producing *Cork Women’s News* separated from the Women’s Place and set up independently. This led to bitterness and legal tangles about ownership of the newsletter.<sup>63</sup> The tensions and crises continued but were not effectively addressed. As O Riordan comments: “Interpersonal problems mounted and workers began to leave, carrying with them and leaving behind feelings of anger, frustration and hostility.”<sup>64</sup> A conflict over smoking in the centre escalated and led to rifts. The tensions between workers eventually led to a physical assault on one of the workers by a volunteer but even this situation was not adequately addressed.<sup>65</sup> It led to the resignation of three more workers (myself included). The Women’s Place closed in December 1991 and never re-opened.

## **A Lesbian and Gay centre**

The idea of establishing a Lesbian and Gay centre in Cork had been discussed since the early 80s. Among the aims of the Cork Lesbian and Gay Project, set

up in 1984, was to try to locate a building for a lesbian and gay centre.<sup>66</sup> In 1991 the Quay Co-op undertook the project of developing a Lesbian and Gay centre with part funding provided by the Munster Lesbian and Gay Trust Fund. The Trust Fund was established in 1989 to raise funds for the development of lesbian and gay community facilities in the Munster region. The Trust was administered by trustees representative of the lesbian and gay communities in the region.<sup>67</sup>

In 1991 a four story building in Augustine Street was leased by the Quay Co-op for the development of the new Lesbian and Gay Centre. Initially known as the Augustine Street Project, the centre soon became known as 'the Other Place.' The building was semi-derelict – "just a shell of a building... Floors had to be put down; ceilings had to be put up; walls had to be re-plastered; windows had to be put in...it was full of rubbish and it took six months to clean the building up."<sup>68</sup>

The acquisition of the building allowed the provision of a safe space and services for the lesbian and gay community. Weekly discos were held in the centre; there was a café and meeting spaces; bookshop; resource centre and office space. It also provided employment for lesbian and gay workers under Social Employment Scheme. The Munster GCN, a four page supplement to the national paper, began to be produced by staff in the Other Place.

By 1994 the Other Place began to run into difficulties: the allocated funding ran out and the short-term lease on the building was coming to an end. There were rumours that the centre was on its last leg. However a new long lease was signed and State funding allowed the centre to employ one full-time and 15 part-time workers on Community Employment schemes.<sup>69</sup> The new staff began working in the Other Place in September 1994, "bringing new energy and ideas to the centre."<sup>70</sup>

A leaflet on The Other Place, probably produced in the mid-90s, outlines the aims of the centre:

As a focus point for the lesbian and gay community, the centre aims to provide a resource catering specifically to the needs of this community in a supportive and safe atmosphere. The projects undertaken by the centre are initiated in direct response to the needs of the community and The Other Place aims to rise to the challenge of responding to these needs as the community changes and new requirements emerge. The provision of support groups, as well as information lines and services, is an integral part of the work of the centre. The drop-in, social space is provided in answer to a crucial need for a safe meeting place where lesbians and gay men can relax and feel comfortable...Less visible aspects of the Centre's work involve networking with State and voluntary bodies and responding to Government and social issues which affect the lesbian and gay community...The Centre is committed to supporting and initiating events which reflect the creativity of lesbian and gay people and our place in the wider community.<sup>71</sup>



At this stage a range of activities and projects were organised in or from The Other Place including a number of lesbian projects which are discussed below. In 1991 the Cork Lesbian and Gay Film Festival began in conjunction with the Cork Film Festival. It has subsequently become a regular part of the Cork Film Festival since 1991. In the first few years the launch of the Lesbian and Gay Film Festival provided an opportunity for the presentation of awards recognising individual's contribution to lesbian and gay politics. For example in the first year, a Cork gay man and a lesbian each received awards for their work in the Cork lesbian and gay communities and the following year one woman was presented with a gold telephone in recognition of her work with the Cork Lesbian Line.<sup>72</sup>

In 1992 lesbians working in the Other Place organised the first lesbian and gay entry in a Patrick's Day parade.<sup>73</sup> The decision to enter a lesbian and gay float in the Cork parade was mainly a response to the banning of the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organisation from marching in Patrick's day parades in New York. But it was also an opportunity for increased visibility for lesbian and gay men on the streets of Cork. We<sup>74</sup> decided to do this in a way which was celebratory and joyful – kind of like we're here, we're queer and we're having fun! We dressed in bright costumes and organised a bright, cheerful, colourful float with huge bunches of purple and pink balloons and we danced and sang through the streets of Cork singing 'Sing if you're glad to be gay.' While there were some negative reactions, the response to the lesbian and gay entry was mostly positive and in the end we won a prize for the best new entrant to the parade! The entry also generated publicity and debate in the media. The Cork community continued to organise impressive entries to the Patrick's Day parade for a number of years.

It is interesting to note that the majority of people involved in organising the Patrick's Day entry, as well as the majority of those participating, were lesbian. Thirty women, but only five men marched with the lesbian and gay float. Yet much of the public commentary on the event was done by gay men, much to the annoyance of some of the lesbians involved.<sup>75</sup>

In December 1992 Cork lesbians and gay men were among a group invited by President Mary Robinson to visit to Aras an Uachtaráin.<sup>76</sup> The visit was the result of initiative by Limerick Forum.<sup>77</sup> The visit had enormous symbolic importance for Irish lesbians and gay men. Kieran Rose commented that "being welcomed into the symbolic home of all Irish people" was very important and significant. "It seemed to me that those years of struggle, exclusion and abuse were being put behind us."<sup>78</sup>

One of the new workers employed in September 1994 under the FAS Community Employment scheme in the Other Place was given responsibility

for co-ordinating activities in the Lesbian Centre and for drawing up a funding proposal for an independent Lesbian Centre.<sup>79</sup> On 14 November 1994 a Lesbian Forum was held in Cork to get feedback from the Cork lesbian community on the activities and direction of the Lesbian Centre.<sup>80</sup> A Steering Committee was established to provide direction and feedback for the workers (by this stage three workers were involved in the Lesbian Centre project).

### **Proposed projects**

In March 1995 a funding application was submitted under European Union NOW (New Opportunities for Women) initiative. The proposed project was called LEAP (Lesbians for Employment Against Poverty). "The overall aim of project LEAP is to establish a Lesbian resource centre which will actively engage Lesbians in its management and development of employment and outreach projects...The resource centre will undertake different activities in education, employment, personal development and self employment options to combat poverty and social exclusion." So in addition to the establishment of a Lesbian Resource Centre the idea was to develop training packages to be used with employers and in schools and to develop projects for personal development and attainment of self employment skills for lesbians.<sup>81</sup>

The project didn't receive EU funding but some of the ideas in the proposal were taken on by a LEAP project based in The Other Place. A number of self-help groups were set up and facilitated by LEAP, including a Lesbian Addictions Group which met weekly, a Married Lesbians Group and a Coming Out Group, both of which met monthly and a Young Lesbians Group, which was set up in February 1995.<sup>82</sup> LEAP also began to organise monthly socials in The Other Place, beginning on 14 June 1995.<sup>83</sup> The idea was to provide an alcohol free lesbian social space as an alternative to the pub or club scene.<sup>84</sup> LEAP also provided information for lesbians on a range of topics and worked on the compilation of archival material on the lesbian community in Cork. LEAP later became known as CLASS (Cork Lesbian Advice, Support and Self-Help Project).

The Lesbian Health Project began in February 1996 with one worker funded under the FAS Social Employment scheme. A second CE worker subsequently joined the project:

The project was set up out of a recognition that even where there is adequate women's health care in society the needs of lesbians are often overlooked as the clientele are all assumed to be heterosexual. Whether this is in G.P. practices, ante/post natal care, sexual health (STD clinics), cancer screening, drug and alcohol treatment centres etc., lesbians can find it hard to get a sympathetic ear from health-care professionals who are unaware of the needs (and sometimes of the existence!) of lesbian women.<sup>85</sup>

The project workers provided advice for women on health care issues and services. The project organised a Lesbian Drug and Alcohol Recovery Group, a Married Lesbians group, Lesbians and Safer Sex Workshops and conducted a Women's Sex Survey. The project also aimed to develop lesbian specific information on STDs, addictions, bereavement issues, self-help groups, AIDS prevention.<sup>86</sup> The Lesbian Health Project received some funding from the Southern Health Board to organise an annual Lesbian Health Day. The first of these was held on 25 May 1996 with workshops on a range of issues.<sup>87</sup> The Lesbian Health Day, which was attended by around sixty women, was seen as "a major breakthrough in Lesbian visibility and access to health care information in Ireland... The first event of its kind."<sup>88</sup>

The Other Place provided an important space for lesbian socialising and political activism in the 1990s, as well as providing some employment, on CE schemes, for lesbians. Yet again, however, there seems to have been some tension in negotiating space and priority for lesbians within The Other Place. There was a feeling that some of the gay men were trying to control activities too much and sometimes were taking credit for lesbian organised activities. The monthly women's disco was not seen as profitable enough; it didn't bring in the same income as the mixed (i.e. mainly gay men) discos and some gay men resented losing out on one Friday night a month in the club. Eventually the Women's Discos were ended. In 2000 The Other Place was forced to reduce its physical space because parts of the building was deemed to be unsafe. With reduced space and CE schemes available it was mainly the lesbian projects which were axed.

## **Developments in the 1990s**

Important developments in the 1990s included the beginning of the Cork Lesbian Fantasy Ball in 1994. The first Ball, billed as Pandora's Box, a Lesbian Camp Drag Fantasy Cabaret Ball<sup>89</sup>, was held in Blackrock Castle on 19 November 1994. It has since become an annual event, providing an opportunity for lesbians to dress up and to express, explore and play with our fantasies. In many ways the advert for the 1996 Fantasy Ball captured its essence: it described the Ball as "A Time For Lesbians To Unleash Their Desires (Or At Least Wear A Silly Costume)."<sup>90</sup> The ball provides one of the few opportunities for overt lesbian sexual expression and play – an opportunity which is not often available for lesbians in Ireland. It also provides an opportunity for lesbians to play with notions of gender and identity as women assume various personas for the night, similar in some ways to more recent gender play by drag kings. Emma Bidwell, who was centrally involved in starting the Cork Lesbian Fantasy Ball, comments that it "is in many ways the Irish lesbian scene and herstory in miniature. There are all kinds: butch, femme, man, boy, girlie, goddess, slut. There are those still

finding their nerve to be what they want, those who are pushing the limits of what is acceptable to others, those who will always play safe, those comfortable as they are and the unseen many who are still so scared of being lesbian that they are invisible in this parade."<sup>91</sup>

Cork lesbians organised in support of Donna McAnallen, who was fired from her job as a life guard and fitness instructor in Brookfield leisure centre in September 1992, for allegedly kissing another woman in the changing rooms. The Cork lesbian community rallied to support Donna and protests were organised at the Brookfield leisure centre with women wearing t-shirts with the slogan 'I wished I had kissed Donna McAnallen.' Donna took the case to the Irish Labour Court which found that she had been treated unfairly but that the current Employment Equality legislation did not cover discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.<sup>92</sup>

Sporting activities provided another opportunity for lesbians to socialise together; this was particularly important for lesbians who were not interested in becoming involved in political activism. In 1994 a Cork lesbian soccer team, *Douglas Street*, was set up. Helen Slattery explained the motivation behind its establishment in an article in *LINC*. "I had been playing soccer for eight years with a straight club and I knew lots of other lesbians playing in other straight teams. At the soccer socials all the lesbians would hang around together but lesbians were not being recognised or valued. So I said: 'why not start a lesbian soccer team?' that's how the Douglas Street soccer team came about."<sup>93</sup> The team trained and competed in Cork soccer leagues for a number of years and even the non-sporty dykes came out to support the team at its matches. In October 1996 the Cork soccer team were invited to Galway for a friendly match against the newly formed Galway lesbian soccer team. It was a successful weekend of soccer, partying and flirting<sup>94</sup>. It led to further exchanges between the teams and ultimately led to the now annual lesbian soccer tournament in Galway.

In the summer of 1993 lesbians met to play softball each Sunday. A number of Cork lesbians were also keen pool players and played in the pub pool competitions. Groups of lesbians would meet in The Other Place or in various pubs to play pool and a lesbian pool tournament was organised in the Coliseum leisure centre in the early 90s. From the mid-90s Sunday walking trips in West Cork were organised by the Boot Women group, with occasional canoeing sessions organised by the same group, know then as Boat Women. Over the years there have always been informal gatherings and camping sessions in the gardens of various women living in West Cork.

A number of Cork lesbians competed in the Gay Games in Amsterdam in 1998.<sup>95</sup> A large group of Cork lesbians travelled to Amsterdam to support them and to enjoy the events.

In addition to all the fun and games, Cork lesbians love to sit around discussing issues, whether informally in the back bar of Loafers, or in more formal settings. In 1992 Joan McCarthy organised a course on *Lesbians, Feminism and Philosophy* in The Other Place lesbian and gay resource centre. This course provided a wonderful opportunity to explore philosophical questions about being lesbian – What is a lesbian? Do we define ‘lesbian’ primarily in sexual or political terms? Does its meaning change in different historical periods? Is there such a thing as a ‘lesbian community’?<sup>96</sup>

In 1997 *An Introduction to Lesbian Studies* course was organised over two weekends in March and April 1997 in The Other Place in Cork.<sup>97</sup> This was part of LEA (Lesbian Education and Awareness), an EU NOW funded programme which provided training for a group of lesbians from various parts of Ireland, including women involved with the Cork lesbian community. Sexuality issues have also been explored as part of Women’s Studies courses in UCC, beginning in the 1980s and further developed in the 1990s.

### Difficulties and tensions

Up until the end of the 1990s lesbians in Cork had never had their own separate, independent space or centre. Lesbians have continuously tried to eke out and negotiate space within mixed centres and with other women’s groups, alternative groupings or with gay men. These attempts have led to various degrees of success but have often been problematic.

These attempts can be traced from, seemingly unsuccessful, endeavours in the late 1970s to negotiate lesbian space within the Cork IGRM premises in McCurtain Street. The opening of the Quay Co-op in May 1982, and the Women’s Place it contained, provided an important social and political base for lesbians in Cork. The Women’s Place in the Co-op provided a space where lesbians could meet formally and informally and many lesbian groups and activities began there. There were, however, ongoing difficulties and tensions between the Women’s Place and the Co-op which eventually led to the Women’s Place separating from the Co-op in 1989, with a new Women’s Place opening in McCurtain Street in 1990. Here again, however, difficulties arose in attempts to share and negotiate space with straight, and sometimes homophobic, women and women’s groups. This tension was one of the factors contributing to the closure of the Women’s Place at the end of 1991.

At that stage lesbian activities were mainly organised in the newly opened Lesbian and Gay Resource Centre, The Other Place. The centre provided space for lesbian socialising and political activism. It provided some employment, on CE schemes, for lesbians and the development of a number of specific lesbian projects. The monthly women’s discos and the socials organised by LEAP /

CLASS provided a regular space for lesbians to meet and socialise together. Yet again, however, there seems to have been some tension in negotiating space with gay men and a sense that lesbian activities were not prioritised within the centre.

### **Cairde Corcaigh**

Given the ongoing difficulties in trying to negotiate lesbian space in mixed project the idea of a separate, independent lesbian space began to develop, particularly during the 1990s. As the Cairde Corcai Newsletter put it, "there was a strong feeling that our own space was badly needed, a Resource Centre completely devoted to the issues and concerns relating to lesbians."<sup>98</sup> This idea was expounded as part of the March 1995 LEAP funding application submitted under EU NOW initiative. Plans for an independent lesbian centre gained momentum at the end of 1998. A lesbian community meeting was held on 11 December 1998. Some Cork lesbians had heard that the NOW funded project LEA had some funding available to support lesbian activities around the country and the meeting was called to discuss if the Cork community wanted to develop and submit a proposal to LEA. Thirty-one women attended the meeting and a broad range of issues were discussed. "The overwhelming view of the meeting was the need to develop a resource base from which various initiatives and activities could be launched and housed."<sup>99</sup> A brainstorming session at the meeting produced a wide range of ideas which women would like to see developed as part of the project, including a meeting, workshop and social space, support groups, outreach initiatives, courses and seminars, café, sauna, sex shop and information, Gaelige for lesbians and a bike repair space!

A Steering Group was appointed to draw up a funding proposal for the Cork Lesbian Initiative Project (CLIP) and, having reported back to a community meeting, to try to secure accommodation and funding for the project. The CLIP Mission Statement was "to provide a safe, accessible and secure base / resource unit through which Lesbians can develop networks for the benefit of both the individual and the Lesbian Community as a whole." The key objectives identified were "to develop a Resource Unit" and "to employ an outreach development worker to support the aims and objectives of the project."<sup>100</sup>

The CLIP project adopted the business and operating name of *Cairde Corcaigh* (Cork Friends). This was partly in order to have a name which was both Irish and conveyed warmth and friendliness. It was also a strategic move. Affordable short-term leased premises were in short supply in the city and it was felt that the group would have a better chance of securing accommodation if it did not operate under an openly lesbian name. This strategy of not being fully open with landlords about the nature of the group was to cause problems at a later stage.

The proposal developed by the Steering Group had assumed that a substantial amount of funding would be available, particularly considering the size of the overall grant received by the LEA project. In the end, however, LEA offered a grant of only £10 000 to the Cork project. This financial support was "for the purpose of establishing a lesbian space from where to facilitate training, meetings and in general encourage lesbians to become actively involved in their own community." The grant provided was specifically to cover rent, rates and insurance. All other running expenses and equipment was to be funded or obtained by Cairde Corcaigh.<sup>101</sup>

The Cairde Corcaigh Steering Committee negotiated a lease on two rooms at 14 George's Quay for one year commencing 23 March 1999.<sup>102</sup> After a couple of 'hitches' Cairde Corcai moved into the George's Quay premises on 26 April 1999.<sup>103</sup> Cork lesbians finally had a centre of our own! An Administrative Group was set up to develop and administer the centre in the first year, with regular lesbian community meetings held to feedback on developments in the Centre and to make policy decisions. A range of activities were organised in the centre, including a number of Focus Groups, a referral service and with a 'drop-in' session on Saturdays. It seems, however, that the 'Drop-in' didn't really take off due to a lack of volunteers.<sup>104</sup>

A number of successful one-day events were held in Cairde Corcai. A Health Day was held on 6 November 1999, with a range of services on offer, including Reiki, Shiatsu, Indian Head Massage and Reflexology, followed by a Bingo session that evening. A Seminar on Racism and the Lesbian Community was held in the Centre on 21 November 1999. The official launch of Cairde Corcai took place on 11 December. An Arts and Crafts Fair was held in the Centre on 12 December with space for women to buy and sell their own arts and crafts.<sup>105</sup>

Two facilitated evaluation meetings were held in January 2000 to look at the past and future of the Centre. The meetings looked at what had worked well and what had not worked well in Cairde Corcai since it had opened. Among the problems identified was the very limited opening times, no one answering the phone and too few volunteers for the 'drop-in.' There seemed to have been some difficulties in terms of communication; not everyone heard what was going on in the Centre and thus didn't feel included.<sup>106</sup> New proposals were developed at the meetings, which were then presented and approved at a lesbian community meeting on 31 January 2000.<sup>107</sup> It was proposed that three new working groups be set up, each focused on a specific task with a limited time commitment until April and reporting regularly to community meetings. A Finding Premises Group, a Funding Group and a Communications Group were established.

As the lease on the George's Quay premises ended on 22 March 2000, fin-

ding new premises was seen as a matter of urgency.<sup>108</sup> Problems with the current landlord were also developing. In leasing the premises the Steering Group had been obscure about the lesbian nature of the project, fearing that landlords would refuse to lease to an openly lesbian group (the Equal Status Act had not yet been enacted). However, this strategy backfired as the landlord's homophobia was inflamed by his realisation that the premises were used as a lesbian centre. There were a number of incidents, culminating in a verbal homophobic attack on a woman who was teaching a children's dance class in the centre.

Following a successful application, Cairde Corcai received funding of £10 000 under the ADM Millennium Recognition Awards. This funding was essential in ensuring the continuation of the centre. In April 2000 new premises were located in Princes Street and Cairde Corcai moved there end April / beginning May 2000. Women worked hard sanding, peeling, scraping and painting the rooms and organising the move from George's Quay and to Princes Street.<sup>109</sup> A Review Day was held in the new premises on 6 May "to discuss progress to date, and to make decisions about future action."<sup>110</sup>

## LINC

At the beginning of summer 2000 it was decided to change the name from Cairde Corcai to LINC – Lesbians Incorporated or Lesbians in Cork. A 'Drop-in' was organised in the LINC centre every Thursday night. Since the early 80s Cork women had traditionally met each Thursday night in Loafers. However, after the bar changed ownership there were a number of disagreements with the new owner, as a result of which many women stopped going to that pub. Women tried a number of other venues attempting to find a new lesbian-friendly pub for Thursday night gatherings. Women met in another bar on Douglas Street for a while but the seemingly friendly owners were not comfortable with any overt lesbian behaviour and didn't really want too many lesbians in at the weekends in case it would offend their customers! Another more friendly venue was found for a while but it proved unsuitable for a long-term meeting place. May 2000 was also the first year since 1984 that there was no Women's Fun Weekend organised. So in this transitional period the LINC Thursday night drop-in provided a stable meeting place for Cork lesbians and one could find out where the lesbians were drinking that week!

In July 2000 LINC ran its first disco, MATRIX, in the Princes Street centre. It was very successful and it was decided to run it as a monthly event on the first Saturday each month. A second disco was run in the centre on 2 September. However this was so successful as to lead to the cancellation of the October disco. The numbers attending were too large to be safely accommodated in the venue. As *NewsL. Inc* put it: "We never expected so many of you and due to the



large numbers the safety aspect has just become impossible to ignore...Its great to know that it was so popular we had to cancel it."<sup>11</sup> Attempts to find an alternative venue proved unsuccessful.

On 21 October 2000 LINC hosted a reception for the Cork Lesbian and Gay Film Programme which was part of the 45<sup>th</sup> Murphy's Cork Film Festival. The night included poetry readings, music and a video. Following the launch plans developed to set up a Lesbian Film Club in LINC with regular showings of lesbian videos. In November 2000 LINC produced its first glossy lesbian magazine, with a range of articles around the theme of 'space'. Regular editions of the magazine continue to be produced.

Being able to employ staff to work in the lesbian centre was key to its development. LINC received funding to employ part-time workers under the FAS Community Employment scheme, thus enabling the centre to be open on a part-time basis and thus be more accessible. Then in Autumn 2001 LINC received significant funding under the Equality for Women Measure of the National Development Plan to develop and implement a three-year Action Plan. This funding enabled LINC to employ a full-time Development Worker for the lesbian centre, beginning in February 2002. This funding and staff time and commitment has enabled LINC to develop into a vibrant and active lesbian centre which is the envy of lesbian groups throughout the country. Activities include a Drama Group, Mural Project, Lesbian Parents Group, Older Lesbian Group, Woodwork, Writing, Lesbian Poetry and Music evenings and a Lesbian and Queer Studies course.<sup>12</sup> There is now such a range of interesting activities organised nightly in LINC that lesbians are complaining that they never get a night at home!

The search for a space of our own has been a continuous theme for the Cork lesbian community from the 1970s onwards. The community has continually tried to negotiate space for lesbians to meet, socialise and organise, often in very hostile or difficult environments. Despite these difficulties, however, a vibrant and active community was created, a community which combined committed political activism, with a sense of play, fun and exploration; a community determined to create spaces which fostered the development of lesbian culture and community in Cork.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Leaflet produced by Cork IGRM, Cork Gay Collective and Cork Lesbian Collective re the Cork Lesbian and Gay Action Project, 1984.

<sup>2</sup> *Sapphire*, Cork IGRM Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 1, Cork, 30 January 1978.

<sup>3</sup> *Sapphire*, p. p. 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> Marian Barry, "Woman", in *Sapphire* p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> 1981 National Gay Conference Report.

- <sup>6</sup> *In Touch* Vol. 3 No. 2 March/April 1981.
- <sup>7</sup> Report from Oliver P. J. Cogan, Chairperson, Organising Committee – part of general report on conference.
- <sup>8</sup> Workshops were held on the following topics: Gay Identity; Gays and Partition; Gay Archives; Gays and Religion; Young Gays; Gays and the Left; Women's Workshops; Structures for Development; Gay Rights/Human Rights; Gays in the Media; Gays and the Medical Profession; Gays and the Law; Gays in Isolation; Gay Activism; Gays and the Women's Movement; Gays and the Trade Union Movement; Disabled Gays and Gays and Education. 1981 National Gay Conference Report.
- <sup>9</sup> Kieran Rose: *Diverse communities, The evolution of lesbian and gay politics in Ireland* Undercurrents Series, Cork University Press, Cork, 1994. p. 17.
- <sup>10</sup> 1981 National Conference Report.
- <sup>11</sup> Kieran Rose 1994 op.cit. p. 17.
- <sup>12</sup> *In Touch* Vol. 3 No. 3 June/July 1981.
- <sup>13</sup> "The Quay Co-op" written collectively by a group of Quay Co-op members, in Mary Linehan and Vincent Tucker, *Workers Co-operatives: Potential and problems*, UCC Bank of Ireland Centre for Co-op Studies; Cork; 1983.
- <sup>14</sup> Interviewees 2, 8 and 13 in Jacqueline O' Riordan: *The Womansplace*, B.A. Thesis, Sociology, Arts III, UCC, 1992.
- <sup>15</sup> Interviewee 2 in Jacqueline O Riordan op.cit.
- <sup>16</sup> Interviewee 13 in Jacqueline O Riordan op.cit.
- <sup>17</sup> Interviewee 2 in Jacqueline O Riordan op.cit.
- <sup>18</sup> Interviewee 13 in Jacqueline O Riordan op.cit.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup> *Women's Place News* Cork (undated but probably September 1984).
- <sup>21</sup> Cork Lesbian Line, Gay Information Cork Information Leaflet No. 1 June 1985.
- <sup>22</sup> Deirdre Walsh: "My personal lesbian history of Cork" in *Linc Cork's Lesbian Magazine*, Vol. 1, Issue 1, November 2000. p. 6.
- <sup>23</sup> Interviewee 11, in Jacqueline O Riordan op.cit.
- <sup>24</sup> Deirdre Walsh interview with Helen Slattery, *Linc Cork's Lesbian Magazine*, Issue 2, May 2001.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup> Interviewee 12 in Jacqueline O Riordan op.cit.
- <sup>27</sup> Orla Egan presentation at the 2000 Lesbian Lives Conference, Women's Education Research and Resource Centre, UCD, Dublin, February 2000.
- <sup>28</sup> Series of letters between Cork Examiner and Gay Information Cork.
- <sup>29</sup> The Cork Lesbian Line article in *Out for Ourselves* states that the number of calls received averages at two calls per night. The Cork Gay Collective minutes note an average of 0-5 calls per night. *Out for Ourselves, The Lives of Irish Lesbians and Gay Men* Dublin Lesbian and Gay Men's Collectives and Women's Community Press; Dublin; 1986.
- <sup>30</sup> *Out for Ourselves* op.cit. p. 127.
- <sup>31</sup> Deirdre Walsh interview with Helen Slattery in *Linc op cit.*
- <sup>32</sup> "Cork Lesbian Line Collective" in *LEA/NOW Newsletter* Volume 1 Issue 2, December 1996.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>34</sup> *Lesbian & gay rights are human rights*, Leaflet produced by Cork IGRM, Cork Gay Collective and Cork Lesbian Collective, 1984.
- <sup>35</sup> Notice of meeting re Cork Lesbian and Gay Community Project to be held on 25 April in No. 4 McCurtain Street.
- <sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, "I Could Hardly Wait to Get Back to

- that Bar' Lesbian Bar Culture in Buffalo in the 1930s and 1940s" in *Creating a place for ourselves: Lesbian, gay and bisexual community histories*, Edited by Brett Beenyn; Routledge; New York and London; 1997 p. 27.
- <sup>37</sup> "Profile, Derrick Gerety" in *Munster LGCN* December 1992 / January 1993.
- <sup>38</sup> *OUT* Vol. 1 No. 1 December 1984/January 1985.
- <sup>39</sup> Two members of Major to Minor went on the form the lesbian band Zrazy.
- <sup>40</sup> Co-operation North was established in 1979 "to foster the growth of economic, social and cultural links between the North and South of Ireland and to encourage understandings and appreciation of the diversity of cultures and traditions on the island." *The Co-Operation North Guide A* directory for North-South co-operation in Ireland; Dublin and Belfast; 1985. P. iii.
- <sup>41</sup> Scotlyn Ruth, "Co-Operation North: The Co-op North exchange story" in *Women's Space* Issue 1 March '88, Cork.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>43</sup> G. McCarthy, "A new line" in *Women's Space* Issue 1 March '88, Cork.
- <sup>44</sup> Geraldine McCarthy "Co-operation North Exchange, Cork lesbian line 1988" – paper distributed to participants on the LEA/NOW *Introduction to Lesbian Studies* Cork, March and April 1997.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>48</sup> Co-operation North *Annual Report 1989*.
- <sup>49</sup> Hayley Fox Roberts, "'Always keep a lemon handy': A skeletal history of lesbian activism in late twentieth century Ireland" in *The History Review*, XII (2001), Journal of the UCD History Society; Editors: Coleman A. Dennehy and Noreen Giffney. P. 120.
- <sup>50</sup> Joni Crone, Workshop Report, *Journal of the Council for the Status of Women* Autumn 1991.
- <sup>51</sup> Interviewee 1 in Jacqueline O Riordan op.cit.
- <sup>52</sup> Jacqueline O Riordan op.cit. p. 13.
- <sup>53</sup> Interviewee 6 in Jacqueline O Riordan op.cit.
- <sup>54</sup> Interviewee 12 in Jacqueline O Riordan op.cit.
- <sup>55</sup> Interviewee 12 in Jacqueline O Riordan op.cit.
- <sup>56</sup> Interviewee 10 in Jacqueline O Riordan op.cit.
- <sup>57</sup> Jacqueline O Riordan op.cit. p. 14.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15.
- <sup>59</sup> Companies Act *Memorandum of Association of Cork Womenspace Limited*, quoted in Jacqueline O Riordan op.cit.
- <sup>60</sup> Interviewee 10 in Jacqueline O Riordan op.cit.
- <sup>61</sup> Jacqueline O Riordan op.cit. p. 28.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* p. 29.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* p. 65.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* p. 16.
- <sup>65</sup> Based on personal recollections as a worker in the Women's Place in 1991.
- <sup>66</sup> Notice of meeting re Cork Lesbian and Gay Community Project to be held on 25 April in No. 4 McCurtain Street.
- <sup>67</sup> Information sheet on The Munster Lesbian and Gay Trust Fund and the Augustine Street Project.
- <sup>68</sup> "This, That & The Other Place" Jason O Toole interview with Donna McAnellen about the Other Place in Cork; *Gay Community News* May 1995.
- <sup>69</sup> *GCN* May 1995.

- <sup>70</sup> *Information about The Other Place – the Lesbian and Gay Community Resource Centre in Cork, Ireland.*
- <sup>71</sup> *The Other Place, lesbian and gay community centre Leaflet.*
- <sup>72</sup> Personal recollection.
- <sup>73</sup> Parades are held in most Irish towns and cities on 17 March each year to mark St. Patrick's day (Ireland's Patron saint).
- <sup>74</sup> I was working in The Other Place in 1992 and was one of the key organisers of the 1992 lesbian and gay entry to the Patrick's Day parade.
- <sup>75</sup> Petra Stone, "Where do we go from here?" in *Munster GCN* April 1992.
- <sup>76</sup> Aras an Uachtaráin is the official residence of the Irish President.
- <sup>77</sup> *HIV prevention strategies and the gay community* Phase One Report, A Baseline Study; GLEN and NEXUS Research; Commissioned and funded by the Department of Health; 1996. p. 48.
- <sup>78</sup> Kieran Rose 1994 op.cit. p. 34.
- <sup>79</sup> *Information about The Other Place – the Lesbian and Gay Community Resource Centre in Cork, Ireland.*
- <sup>80</sup> The Forum identified issues on which the Lesbian Centre should provide information, including: Housing, Health, Mental Health, Legal Information, Directory of Referrals, Domestic Violence, Survivors of Child Sexual Assault, Alternative Insemination, Pregnancy, Drug and alcohol issues, Recover, Information about rights, lesbian mothers, HIV/AIDS, Sexuality, Safe sex, Grief and loss and Lesbian Skills Registrar. Groups which people wanted to see developed in the centre included a Lesbian Mother Group, Young Lesbians Group and Women and Spirituality Group and people expressed interest in workshops on topics such as safe sex, legal rights and alternative insemination. Ideas were also put forward in relation to social activities. Report from Lesbian Forum 14.11.94.
- <sup>81</sup> LEAP (Lesbians for Employment Against Poverty) funding application EU NOW programme, 1995.
- <sup>82</sup> *LEAP Update and Gay Community News* August 1995.
- <sup>83</sup> Poster for 1st Women's Social, Wednesday 14th June, The Other Side Cafe.
- <sup>84</sup> *LEAP Update and Gay Community News* August 1995.
- <sup>85</sup> *Lesbian Health Project* Leaflet.
- <sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>87</sup> Workshops were held on the following issues: Co-Dependency; Female Cancers; Menopause; Reproduction/Birthing; Mental Health; Lesbians and Domestic Violence; Homeopathy; Body Images; Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll; Women and Alcohol Abuse and Self-help to Health. *Notice for Lesbian Health Day* 25 May 1996.
- <sup>88</sup> Review of Lesbian Health Day – 25 May 1996, Cork.
- <sup>89</sup> Poster for Fantasy Ball.
- <sup>90</sup> *Inside Out* Issue 4 October 1996.
- <sup>91</sup> Emma Bidwell, "Where have all the dungarees gone?" in *Irish Journal of Feminist Studies*, Vol. 2, Issue 1; Special Issue: *Aspects of Irish Feminism*; Edited by Dolores Dooley and Liz Steiner-Scott; Cork University Press; Cork; Cork; July 1997. P. 60.
- <sup>92</sup> Labour Court Order, case EEO1293, Brookfield Leisure Limited and A Worker. Irish equality legislation has subsequently been changed to include protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.
- <sup>93</sup> Deirdre Walsh interview with Helen Slattery in *Linc.*
- <sup>94</sup> "Sweet and Cheers" in *Inside Out* Issue 5 November 1996.
- <sup>95</sup> Nikki Keeling and Soren Mayes participated in the Karate competition, Helen Slattery in

the women's 100 metres race and Deirdre Walsh and her three sisters in the 4 x 400 relay. *Irish Times* 29/7/98.

<sup>96</sup> Notes from Lesbianism, Feminism and Philosophy course, Jan-March 1992.

<sup>97</sup> The course sessions focused on the following themes: History of the lesbian movement in Ireland, Equality, recent achievements and future work, Ethical issues, Political strategies, Lesbians in literature, Strategic alliances, current discourse on lesbian sexual practice and Social policy. Course Pack, LEA/NOW An Introduction to Lesbian Studies, March 22-23 and April 26-27 1997, The Other Place (Lesbian and Gay Resource Centre) Cork.

<sup>98</sup> "Herstory of Cairde Corcai" in *Cairde Corcai Newsletter* Issue 1, September 1999, Cork.

<sup>99</sup> Cork Lesbian Initiative Project (C.L.I.P.) report.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> LEA/NOW contract with Cairde Corcaigh "Financial Support to Cairde Corcaigh for the Cork Lesbian Initiative Project".

<sup>102</sup> Cairde Corcaigh letter to LEA re CLIP.

<sup>103</sup> "Herstory of Cairde Corcai" in *Cairde Corcai Newsletter* Issue 1, September 1999, Cork.

<sup>104</sup> Report from Evaluation Gatherings 8 and 15 January 2000.

<sup>105</sup> *Cairde Corcai Newsletter* Second Edition.

<sup>106</sup> Report from Evaluation Gatherings 8 and 15 January 2000.

<sup>107</sup> Letter to members from Cairde Corcai Admin Group 17 January 2000.

<sup>108</sup> Letter from Cairde Corcaigh to LEA.

<sup>109</sup> *News Linc* 3 July 1 2000.

<sup>110</sup> Notice for Cairde Corcai Review Day (initially scheduled for 15 April, but postponed to 6 May due to delays in move to new premises).

<sup>111</sup> *NewsLinc* October 2000.

<sup>112</sup> Autumn/Winter Programme L.Inc 2002/2003 in *Linc* Issue 6 November 2002.

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