



LEEDS

CITY COUNCIL

Councillor Terry Grayshon
Address to Mesmac AGM 24 November 2005



Good Evening, my name is Terry Grayshon and I am an elected member of Leeds City Council.

It is my privilege to be able to welcome you to Leeds Civic Hall this evening for the Annual General Meeting of Mesmac.

When Tom, very kindly asked me to speak this evening, I wasn't quite sure what he wanted me to talk about, so I sent him an e-mail and asked for his advice. He responded by e-mail and mentioned two things:

1. Not sure if there is anything specific maybe what the council is doing around civil partnership stuff?
2. Or generally how utterly fab MESMAC is.

So to answer point 1, I sent an e-mail to the registrar at Leeds City Council and checked on the Council Website, Leeds City Council do offer facilities for Same Sex Couples to have their relationship recognised. If you choose to do so you could take part in a Civil Partnership Ceremony, which is quite a formal matter, akin to a wedding. Or you may choose a commitment ceremony if you do not wish to legally register your relationship.

Leeds is a Multi Cultural City and one of my tasks as an elected member of Council is to ensure that all sections of the Community are represented and recognized.

Point 2 of Tom's e-mail posed more of a problem to me; I have never used the excellent services provided by Mesmac and could not profess to know a great deal about the work they do.

I decided therefore to check out the Mesmac Website to garner information on the subject. Surely enough the information I needed was made available to me by the press of a few buttons and the click of a mouse.

I found out about the BLAST project that works with men and boys involved in and or abused through prostitution

Leeds LGB Switchboard a listening and sign posting service.

The OUR project, a social support agency for people living with HIV, their families, friends and Carers.

The list goes on and I commend the Website to you.

The last time I had occasion to be in this room was on Remembrance Sunday; I had laid a wreath at the War Memorial in Victoria Gardens.

How things have changed since the Second World War, Homosexuals are now openly allowed to join the armed forces and fight for Queen and Country.

Homosexuality is no longer a criminal offence, we cannot be prosecuted for loving another of the same sex.

We now have organisations, such as Mesmac to offer support advice and information to Gay Folk, their families and Friends. With a click of a button and a magic mouse that information is available for anyone to see via the Internet.

In wartime Britain there were no computers, so I would not have been able to have e-mailed Tom, carried out my research or write this document using one.

Of course that is not strictly correct. During the second world war at a place called Bletchley Park (Known as Station X) a group of Academics carried out code breaking activities deciphering coded messages sent by the German army using Enigma Machines.

One of those academics was Dr Alan Turing, who appeared to be a rather timid individual. It was at Bletchley Park that Turing developed machines to break the coded messages and where the world's first programmable computer was built.

The concept of the Turing Machine has become the foundation of the modern theory of Computation and Computability.

Alan Turing is the Father of Modern Computing. Winston Churchill commented that Turing had single handily reduced the period of World War two by Four Years.

Alan Turing was gay.

Following the war, his efforts earned him an OBE; Alan took up post at Manchester University as Deputy Director of the computing Laboratory.

In 1950's England homosexuality was illegal. Alan was arrested and came to trial on 31 March 1952, after the police learned of his sexual relationship with a young Manchester man. He made no serious denial or defence, instead telling everyone that he saw no wrong with his actions. He was particularly concerned to be open about his sexuality. Rather than go to prison he accepted, for the period of a year, injections of oestrogen intended to neutralise his libido.

He was found by his cleaner when she came in on 8 June 1954. He had died the day before of cyanide poisoning, a half-eaten apple beside his bed. The coroner's verdict was suicide.

It is rather ironic that I have used, to research and write what I have said to you this evening, the machinery first developed by a gay man. A gay man who was subjected to what we would now see as unbelievable treatment at the hands of the British Legal System.

A gay man who changed the face of history.

A gay man who could have used the help and support offered by Mesmac.

Mesmac offers support and advice to Gay Folk, men who have Sex with men, and those who are HIV positive, amongst others. At times we all need a little support in our lives and that is what Mesmac does.

So yes, the work that Mesmac carry out, not only in Leeds, but also across West Yorkshire and North Yorkshire is indeed “Fab” and long may it continue.

I am sure that I speak for everyone at Leeds City Council when I say, Thank you Mesmac for the excellent services you provide.