

Val Brown. Born 1942

I can only give you the story of how I tried to put together a film club which for various reasons to do with Brighton being Brighton, eventually I gave up after a couple of years. That would have been 1995/96. It was supposed to be a lesbian film club and the way that came about was, for some reason, we were at the Marlborough Theatre and it came upon me that we would show a film called The Killing of Sister George. It was quite difficult because they only had a bit of a sheet hanging up but they did have a projector which was standing on some steps and it went down very well so I thought we would try to make a lesbian film club because it's a small audience and I continued from there until eventually, after about 5 years I ceased doing so.

For several reasons - mainly to do with premises. Having a film club in Brighton, showing films needs premises. Not only do they need premises, they need equipment to show the film, which is not always that easy. You need to get the film itself and then you have to tackle questions of copyright. It was a challenge. The next thing that was most interesting was hiring the very small cinema at the Odeon. They've got 8 cinemas and of course you can hire privately at a cost. This is the problem. Then you pick up the cash from people on the door. That was quite a long time ago and what did I show there - That was Hannah Free. A film called Hannah Free. That was incredibly successful. People queuing up to come in but of course it's a very small cinema, it's only about 40 people there.

The films were lesbian films but may i say not of a (sexual nature?) No! I'm interested in films that are good films that are well done and well put together and I'm not just films that are somebody and somebody else writhing all round the place. It's really difficult because there are no places in Brighton that you can actually do this. I tried the library. You can show films in Jubilee Library. On a Sunday afternoon they do films. It's not very satisfactory because people's heads get in the way. It's hideously expensive just to hire, so I only did that once with a film called Olivia. Then I came here (to the Duke of Yorks). I did a film called Born in Flames here. That wasn't too bad. It wasn't too expensive because here things have moved on a bit but if you want to hire this place, mostly they do all the work for you. You can provide the DVD and then you pay them money - they figure out about the copyright which is always difficult because that usually costs money as well. The idea was, and generally speaking I did get enough people to pay to come in to cover it. One or two didn't, but it was fun really and I quite liked it, standing up speaking to people about it.

It was of no financial benefit. It was just because I liked doing it. And then the other place I hired was the Sallis Benney theatre, and that was hideously expensive. The chap who did the projection couldn't get it right on the DVD so some of the subtitles disappeared which was not humorous so that's here, Duke of Yorks, the library, Sallis Benney and the Odeon. Done all that, and then I thought I can't be doing with this any more. Then, I can't remember the dates, we had a hotel, opposite Somerset Day Centre, there was a hotel and they had a room that they let for Sunday afternoons and a big screen and a lot of people came along there. By that time we got wise about the copyright. If you don't get

any gain from showing the film, and you show it privately, then you don't have to cough up money. So we just passed the hat around. Even so, it's an awful lot of effort. But the hotel was very good but as usual the hotel was sold, and different people said "No, we can't have you on a Sunday afternoon any more".

I don't know what could be done. I like showing proper films and it costs money and they always get people. We did about 5 at the hotel, and I can't remember all the titles. We did *Matron in Uniform*, that was the modern one. When that disappeared I gave up pretty well and I now hold films where I live, on the television, and I can seat 4 on the sofa and 2 on the ground and I do that every 3 months. Things have changed. Last time I had that we had a real monster of an afternoon. We did *Portrait of a Marriage*. Four episodes. Two in the morning then we all had lunch and then we had the other 2 episodes in the afternoon. That was the last time I did anything but I have other films. If I show films at home I don't have this worry. I have the old version, the 1930s version, of *Mädchen in Uniform* and a great film called *Caged* which was made in the 1950s about women in prison in America. Great fun. The other really good film I did at home - actually I have a feeling I did it elsewhere as well, called *A Marine's Story* - that was about a woman being in the American marines.

It just didn't really work out because what I really wanted was a small place, a club or something, that had about 20 or 30 seats that you could show a film privately, but at the time there was nothing that I knew of in Brighton. I tried hiring cinemas, I've tried the library - ah, you know, you just say "Been there, done that!"