

Army hounds two men to death

Two members of the armed forces killed themselves and another tried to, during investigations of homosexual "misconduct", the Government has announced.

Both deaths happened during the last five years, said Armed Forces minister Philip Goodhart.

But even these stark statistics underestimate the real extent of suicide by gay servicemen and women, says ex-Bombardier John Bruce.

John, chucked out of the army last year for being gay, described the figures as "rubbish". He knows of five attempted suicides in the army alone during the last three years.

In each case the person was undergoing the strain of an official investigation into their homosexuality.

PRISON

In a Commons written reply Mr Goodhart said there had been 137 discharges from the army and 54 from the RAF — all involving men — following conviction of homosexual "misconduct" in the five years up to the end of 1980.

120 soldiers and airmen were given military prison sentences before discharge.

As well as those, another 504 women and men were discharged 'quietly' from the services on the grounds of homosexuality, without any disciplinary proceedings being taken, said Mr Goodhart.

John, who is keeping an eye on gays and the forces for the Campaign for Homosexual Equality, said: "There are more gays in the army than they will admit. There is no way of proving it and no way they will admit it."

"Figures can be juggled to suit whoever produces them."

In one of the five cases he knows of personally, a soldier who tried to kill himself during the army probe was then taken to an army hospital where they tried to force him to have electric shock aversion therapy. The soldier told his mother and the army cooled to the idea.

"When the army knew an outsider knew this they backed off and he was court martialled" said John.

TORMENT

He said that when the army investigates you for being gay "you are put under the most immense pressure."

The Special Investigations Branch tells you you are gay and that they are making investigations but you hear nothing more for up to six months. Meanwhile other soldiers hear



about it and often torment the person involved.

Senior officers will make sure the gay person is given the most menial tasks so the other people will say 'look at that pathetic queer'.

"As far as they (the army) are concerned, they don't know they are talking about human beings. You are a nothing", said John, who served for eight years until his discharge last October, after three months in prison.

**What
water- sport
antics are
these?
Find out
on page four.**



It was the day the circus left town...

Last Saturday Londoners travelled north as guests, instead of staying put to act as hosts, for the very first national Gay Pride March to be held outside the capital city.

It was a generous gesture, and a tough statement of support for

the beleaguered gays not only of Huddersfield but of a hundred and one other small towns where the living isn't so easy for the gay population.

Just how successful the day was you can read inside this issue of Capital Gay in our special report on the parade.

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HUDDERSFIELD

special report

Left, Londoners take the train to Huddersfield. Below - eat your heart out Gertrude Shilling! Some of the natty hatters enjoying the sunshine. Photos on this page and opposite by Carl Hill and Michael Mason.



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FIELD GAY PRIDE '81

ON A TYPICAL midsummer Saturday, Huddersfield football ground is quiet as a graveyard.

But July 4 was no ordinary Saturday. It was the first time that the annual Gay Pride March had been held outside London, and it was round the football ground that marchers began to gather shortly after noon.

Cassandras had predicted that nobody would come. Where's Huddersfield? Too far. . .

At half past twelve, just thirty minutes before the march was due to leave, it looked as though they were right. A few ragged dozens stood forlornly around looking for company.

Ten minutes later came the first signs of reinforcements — a trickle of them down the long road from the station, then a coachload, then another, and soon they were spilling out of buses, tumbling off coaches and swelling to a colourful crowd of 1500.

It was the prettiest march in years. More and more groups have

got the hang of banner making, and San Francisco's parade fashions are starting to invade.

There was punk, there was drag, there was carnival gear and national dress, there were hats, there were banners . . . there was excitement.

And if we all had our doubts about four mounted police in crash helmets, here could be no complaint about the well-judged, minimal policing of the procession itself. Whilst London marches have come to resemble demonstrations by the Police Federation, all hemmed about in a solid band of blue, Huddersfield laid on scarcely one officer in 50 yards.

POINTED

Those who did shepherd the march through the town centre, men and women, soon seemed happy enough to chat to demonstrators after their early nervousness, and took home with them a few pointed messages about the local force.

For nobody had forgotten what brought us all to the town — the bid to close the only gay club for miles around, dawn raids on gay homes and places of work, lengthy detention without charge, enforced medical examinations, the dread of the police that haunted the local gay community at the turn of the year.

The march was to show nationwide unity in support of the 65 men faced with prosecution after

the purge, and for others who had been scared away from their gay haunts, from their gay friends.

So it was with jubilation that marchers received the news from David Whitehead, a member of the Huddersfield Gay Action Group and one of the parade organisers, that assorted prosecutions had been dropped in 59 of the pending cases. "As far as we can tell," said David, "the only ones left are six people who pleaded guilty without contacting the Action Group."

"You're being here is helping us," he said.

The help came from all over the country — from Aberdeen and Bristol, Brixton, Paddington, Streatham, Islington, and the East End.

Ten deep

Out in front fluttered the 1981 Gay Pride banner, pursued by a disco float decked out in a dancing Red Indian, a cowboy, a Statue of Liberty and a one piece Stars & Stripes swimsuit. The float played the loudest music — If My Friends Could See Me Now, Bette Midler numbers, Broadway show stoppers. And they stopped Huddersfield too. Crowds sometimes ten deep lined the street as they heard the music approach.

Not that many of them knew what to make of it. "I don't know, I really don't know," was the commonest answer when we asked.

But Alan Porter, a 42 year old driver from Manchester, had a crisp verdict: "Noisy buggers aren't they?"

The verdict of the marchers was at times almost ecstatic. "Unbeatable . . . Can't remember anything like it . . . Only one wail of dissent went up as we tackled another hill: "Why Huddersfield? Why not Norwich? Norwich is flat!"

After the march David Whitehead told Capital Gay: "We think we've covered our costs. At a rough guess it cost us about £300. The collection took £170 and there is money from the benefit."

"The march itself was an unqualified success. It was colourful, full of atmosphere, and it made all the efforts we put into it seem more than worthwhile."



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FREE MEMBERSHIP WITH THIS AD.

Questions will be asked the next time that CHE's executive committee meets — and the most pertinent one will be: "Where were EC members on the day of the Gay Pride March?"

They certainly weren't in Huddersfield, agreed Vice Chair Harry Coen, one of only two members to put in an appearance.

He knew of two others who had found it impossible, for good reason, to make the trip to Yorkshire. "But we will want to know why the rest weren't there."

CHE's EC had promised its "full support" for the Huddersfield march.