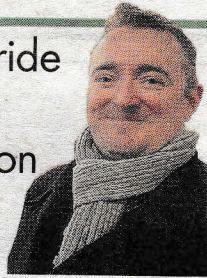


NewsFeature

Abingdon Pride
Committee's
Rob Jordan on
a landmark
moment



Civic PRIDE

So proud of whole town's reaction to first Pride occasion

HAVING lived in Abingdon since 2001, I don't believe I have ever felt the way I did on Saturday, June 22, standing in the Market Square. Seeing people of all ages, genders and sexuality coming together for a celebration that made me feel extremely 'Proud'.

The work of a small group of councillors and local volunteers had organised an event in just six weeks, that welcomed every single member of the community. It wasn't an LGBT+ exclusive event, nor did it at any time throughout day feel that way.

Pride, the word, not the event, has a definition that includes a 'a feeling of pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements'. I wasn't feeling proud from my achievements, this was very much an emotion that was delivered by the whole town. Numerous businesses went out of their way to dress their shops and establishments, donate prizes and come together to show their own 'Pride' and support for the community.

It's easy in 2019 to forget that Pride as an event started as a protest. Many see the passing of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act of 2013 as the final hurdle, and that there is still a need to fight for equal rights not just across the world but also in the UK. It's still not possible for same sex couples to marry in Northern Ireland. So just 450 miles away, the love of two people isn't recognised as it is here in Oxfordshire and across the rest of the UK.

So Pride is still relevant today, as it was in the Stonewall Inn, New York, on June 28, 1969. Abingdon Pride brought together the community, with colour, noise, costumes and smiles in a new different way than I had experienced before. The atmosphere was electric and you could actually feel the smiles and warmth from people.

The hope and intentions are that an Abingdon Pride will become an annual event that can grow and thrive. Since Saturday, the steering group have been contacted by many residents, businesses and visitors, informing us of the wonderful time they had, listening to music, watching dancers and cheering with the crowds.

The LGBT+ community felt so included and were overwhelmed with the businesses and townsfolk involvement. Watching the rainbow flag fly over the County Hall was a sight that, until recently, they didn't think was ever going to happen. While it seems a small, insignificant gesture, it isn't. Comments on social media were mainly positive, with very few exceptions, a few asking when 'Straight Pride' is, or that they 'hoped my taxes didn't pay for that!' Comments like this are nothing new and prove why the event still needs to occur.

Thank you, Abingdon, you made many, many people feel 'Proud' and for that we are truly grateful.