

THE VAMPIRES OF LONDON

"Can you do vampires?" my editor said. "Vampires, eh?" I wondered to myself what this would involve. "Turn up at the Ben Crouch on Thursday for 8pm. They'll be expecting you". The Ben Crouch would be a suitable place to meet up with the undead, I thought. It certainly has that B-movie atmosphere, even if it's tainted on occasion with *Britany* blaring from the sound system.

On arrival I looked around the door noticed a gaggle of gothic-like people chatting and drinking in a reserved area of the bar. I'm greeted by Brenny, the group's press and publicity person and we start to chat about the group.



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The **London Vampyre Group** rose from the ashes of the Vampire Society that had disbanded a few years ago due to internal politics. The LVG now boast over 200 members "not just in London, but all over this country, the States, Norway and Italy to name a few" says Brenny. The aim of the group is to act as focal point for anything to do with the vampire genre; from films to folklore to gothic architecture. "Basically, whatever interests you've got that are loosely tied up with vampires, then that's enough to come and hang out with us!" says Brenny. The LVG have a committee that plan events, trips and parties that are of interest to the group. "The great thing is," says Brenny, "is that everyone has a say in what is laid on and what things may be of interest to others."

So is there such a thing as a typical member, I wondered? "We are from all walks of life," says Brenny. "Me? I'm a civil servant. We all have different jobs and different incomes. There are members of all ages, too. Not unsurprisingly, there is always a surge of new members when there is any vampiric publicity, such as when *Bram Stoker's Dracula* came out or *Interview with the Vampire* or *Blade* or *Buffy*. We encourage the appreciation of these cult hits and often members dress up as their favourite characters, but we want to stress that it's harmless fun and we want people to keep their fantasies in check. We have turned people away from the group if they seemed unsuitable."

One of the events held by the LVG, are the open monthly meetings held on the second Thursday of the month at the Ben Crouch Tavern on Wells Street. "It's basically a drop-in centre for friends to meet up, laugh, have a talk and meet new people; a social evening. It's the ideal opportunity for people to pass on information and hand out flyers for other events or clubs that are going on that are of interest to others. Anyone can come drink, have a laugh and have a normal night down the pub."

The LVG also organise outings for its members. One of the most impressive was to Transylvania. "The locals thought we were great but weird," says Brenny. "They were primitive people, superstitious and orthodox Catholics. They hadn't long come out of communism and then us weirdos turned up!!" Other excursions included a trip to New Orleans at Halloween for the Anne Rice Ball and a trip to Egypt. "They aren't all this grand, though" advises Brenny. "There are trips to suit every budget such as those to

Whitby for the Gothic Weekends, picnics in the summer and day trips to museums. We don't want anyone to be left out."

More details about the group's activities and membership can be obtained from the website (<http://www.revamped.co.uk/lvg/index.htm>) or in writing to the London Vampyre Group, PO Box 48, London, WC2H 9WA.



Major Lewis and Claire

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