



Pride of Place
Contemporary Arts Space, Hull, July – September 2017

July 2017 marks 50th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality in England. Historic England will mark this important historic event through its Pride of Place campaign and bring its national exhibition Pride of Place, to Hull.

Exhibition overview

The Pride of Place exhibition will be programmed within the Freedom Season. Drawing from the research by Leeds Beckett University, the exhibition content will be guided by the themes this research has revealed and include hidden and subversive histories. The exhibition will create narratives that reflect on the significance of the 50th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality and the hard fought history that achieved this freedom.

Below is a top line overview of the topics and histories that tell the national tale of LGBTQ suppression and emancipation. With each theme, we will use archive images, documentation, objects, testimony and ephemera to explore the topics and spark debate. We would also like to commission an artist to produce a new body of work that reflects and reimagines this history, and acknowledges that our freedoms are not yet international.

About the research project

Led by a team of historians at Leeds Beckett University's Centre for Culture and the Arts, people have been asked to give examples of the buildings and places special to them; from the private houses of trailblazing individuals; to the much loved local gay bar; to the first venue in town to host equal marriage and everything in between. The result is a map of England that plots the multitude of buildings across the country that hold a sometimes hidden, sometimes public, LGBTQ history. www.mapme.com/prideofplace.

Partnerships and events

Where possible, we want to tie in existing events to the exhibition and work with partners to make it as integrated into the City of Culture programme as possible. We'd like to work with artists already involved in the programme. We already have links with Duckie and would like to work with them in some way.

In the lead up to the exhibition, we would like to work with Hull Pride organisers and local LGBT+ groups to gather information and stories from Hull to feature in the exhibition.

The Pride of Place campaign

Historic England will also tie the exhibition in to its wider Pride of Place campaign for 2017 which celebrates the anniversary more broadly. We are working with Channel 4 to broadcast a documentary based on the Pride of Place research. We also want to mark some of the buildings and places to come out of the research holding a national event where we light them up across the country. If possible, we'd like to do this in conjunction with City of Culture so timings support each other.

Exhibition Outline

Leeds Beckett has not yet delivered all the content from the research, they are due to do so in July and we can then have a more informed conversation about the stories and narratives we want to draw out. This is a topline overview of what could be done alongside your curator. These are suggested themes and can be simplified if needed.



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Criminalised - Law and Oppression

Homosexuality has long been stigmatised, but it wasn't until the reign of Henry VIII that it became illegal, punishable by death. This section would look at previous generation's approach to punishing homosexuality and chart the levels of relative tolerance and oppression through the centuries.

- In July 1540, Walter Hungerford, 1st Baron Hungerford of Heytesbury, and owner of the fourteenth-century Farleigh Hungerford Castle, became the first person to be executed under the Buggery Act. The charges were likely politically motivated to undermine Hungerford, and also Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's chief minister.
- In 1835, James Pratt and John Smith were the last men to be hanged for sodomy in England. Supporters including the men's wives petitioned the Home Office for clemency and the Privy Council heard their case. Charles Dickens later wrote about his visit to the Newgate press-room where he saw the two men awaiting their executions:
[Pratt and Smith] had nothing to expect from the mercy of the crown; their doom was sealed; no plea could be urged in extenuation of their crime, and they well knew that for them there was no hope in this world. 'The two short ones', the turnkey whispered, 'were dead men.'
- Women were also targeted. Margaret 'Mother' Clap, proprietor of the notorious Mother Clap's molly house in London was brought to trial for keeping a disorderly house where effeminate men, or mollies, who were themselves convicted of sodomy, were permitted to congregate. Found guilty, she was sentenced to stand in stocks and imprisoned for two years. In the course of her punishment fainted several times. It is unknown whether she survived prison.

Fight the Power - Activism and Community Building

In response to oppression and social marginalisation, LGBTQ people came together to campaign against unjust laws that criminalised same-sex desire, and to advocate for greater tolerance and wider social change.

- Carpenter was the founding father of gay rights in Britain, living openly with his partner George Merrill at a time when hundreds of men were prosecuted for homosexuality. He was also an important socialist thinker, supporter of feminism and anti-war movements, environmentalist and vegetarian, living out his principles at Millthorpe. Millthorpe was a place of pilgrimage for many, including the writers E M Forster and Siegfried Sassoon, and ordinary women and men questioning their sexuality, including soldiers during the First World War.
- Section 28, that banned local authorities and schools from promoting Homosexuality, attracted widespread protest. On 20th February 1988 over 20,000 rallied in Manchester to protest. It was eventually passed in May 1988 and repealed in November 2003.
- The fight in other countries – highlight where it's still illegal to be LGBTQ around the world. Use Hull's twin town Freetown, Sierra Leone as a focus. Potential for City of Culture to commission a photographer to document LGBTQ life in Freetown.

Staying In - Domestic Spaces

Home can be a refuge. For LGBTQ people in the past, homes could provide security and safety when same-sex intimacy among men and women was condemned by society, and male homosexual acts were criminalised.



Home could also offer privacy away from the prying eyes of family and neighbours, and potentially dangerous attacks from authorities and others.

- Apethorpe Hall in Northamptonshire is a Jacobean Palace, visited by James I and his favourite Villiers. It was expanded by James to accommodate his 'princely recreation' and 'commodious entertainment'. Restoration of Apethorpe Hall, undertaken 2004-2008, revealed a previously unknown passage linking the bedchambers of James and Villiers.
- The Albany, elite bachelor chambers known as 'sets', were made out of mansion on Piccadilly London in 1803. They became a private space with a queer associations. Oscar Wilde had Lord Henry Wootton visit a bachelor uncle at the Albany in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and Ernest likewise lives there in the original version of *The Importance of Being Ernest* (1894). George Cecil Ives, early homosexual law reform campaigner, established the Order of Chaeronea, a secret homosexual society, there while living at the Albany in the 1890s.
- Gay men and lesbians were active in radical housing alternatives, building and creating their own families and communities, out of choice and out of necessity. The South London Gay Community Centre, opened in March 1974 in a squatted building at number 78, was the UK's first gay centre. The South London Gay Liberation Front, the journal *Gay Left* and the *Brixton Faeries* all were based at times in buildings in the area.

Going Out - Meeting Places and Socialising

When we think of LGBTQ areas in England we tend to think of a few prominent queer commercial centres like Soho, Canal Street, Kemptown or the Discovery District in Newcastle. Going beyond recent 'gaybourhoods' challenges us to recognise a longer history to LGBTQ places. Pubs, clubs, cafes, bookshops, and other commercial venues as well as Turkish baths, toilets, cruising areas existed in many places.

- Temperance Hall, Hulme, Manchester. The site of an infamous cross-dressing ball in 1880, raided by Manchester police. Police secured entry by giving the password 'sister' to the 'nun' guarding the door. Detective Sergeant Caminada reported seeing 47 men in 'most fantastic fashion', including 22 in ladies' wear. Detective Caminada and his officers rounded up the prisoners and took them to Manchester town hall for questioning. Several cab-loads of clothing were taken as evidence. All were arrested and charged the following day with having 'solicited and incited each other to commit an unnameable offense'.
- 'Paul Pry' observed in 1937's 'For Your Convenience', a thinly veiled cottaging guide, that these public toilets often developed a distinctive reputation. School teacher Bernard Williams explained further: 'if you wanted a piece of rough you'd look round the cottages in Covent Garden... On the other hand, if you wanted the theatrical trade you'd do some of the cottages round the back of Jermyn Street or if you did the cottage at Waterloo Station you'd have a good class of trade there, dear.'
- The New Penny on Call Lane in Leeds claims to be the oldest continuously operating gay pubs in the UK. Formerly known at the Hope and Anchor when it opened in 1953, and referred to by some as the Grope and W*nker. In many cities across the country, local pubs like the Hope and Anchor, even if secretive and known only to the initiated, offered one of the few spaces away from London where queer men, and sometimes also women, could meet and socialise with relative freedom and safety.

Together Forever - Love and Intimacy

The first same-sex civil unions were performed in the UK in 2004 and the first same-sex marriages a decade later. In cities and towns across the country, registry offices and town halls have become historic locations for LGBTQ heritage as they saw the first such ceremonies in their town, city, or county. Same-sex couples, have, however been solemnising relationships for centuries.



- Shibden Hall, Halifax, West Yorkshire. Home to the famed lesbian diarist Anne Lister, born in 1791. She inherited Shibden Hall in 1813 and managed the estate until her death. Her masculine appearance and sometimes eccentric behaviour earned her the nickname of "Gentleman Jack." Anne kept a diary throughout her life where she devised a code to record her innermost thoughts without fear of discovery, including her intimate feelings towards women. When her biographer began to decode and publish parts of the diaries from 1988, they caused a sensation, here was powerful evidence of sex between women in the 18th century. Lister had a relationship with Ann Walker, an heiress from a neighbouring estate. They marked and celebrated their partnership in a number of ways, including attending holy communion together at Easter at Holy Trinity Church, Goodramgate, York; an action that both (esp Anne) saw as uniting them in a state equivalent to holy matrimony in the sight of God.
- Marriages between men occurred at London's molly houses in the 18th century. For example, in 1727 a same-sex wedding was celebrated in a molly pub in Southwark, run by a man who took the nickname Sukey or Susan Bevell. The two men who got married were called Hanover Kate and Queen Irons; they were attended by men acting as bridesmaids, called Miss Kitten and Princess Seraphina; and guests at the wedding included a molly couple who were said to be "deeply in love" with one another, called Madam Blackwell and St Dunstan's Kate.