



Historic England

Pride of Place

A Guide to Understanding and Protecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Heritage



Summary

This guide has been published to make sure LGBTQ-related buildings, gardens, areas, monuments and other heritage assets are identified and the most important of these recognised in planning decisions and through the formal heritage protection system.

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Introduction

Historic England set up the Pride of Place project to reinforce the LGBTQ presence in the country's heritage record. Pride of Place aims to uncover new locations associated with England's LGBTQ past, and to revisit existing heritage sites and consider their LGBTQ significance. This history has often been hidden, marginalised or suppressed, so the LGBTQ presence in the historical and heritage record, the necessary protection for LGBTQ heritage places, and the LGBTQ contribution to places valued by the wider community may have been overlooked. These include homes and public places where LGBTQ people acted on their same-sex love and desire, or where they crossed gender to pass as a different sex. Theatres, town halls and churches; pubs, parks and streets are just some of the kinds of places that may be part of LGBTQ heritage. More information on Pride of Place can be found at www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/lgbtq-heritage-project/. The site includes an online exhibition exploring some of these heritage issues and the terminology involved.

This advice is for local planning authorities and consultants, archivists, local studies librarians and heritage custodians, as well as individuals and communities.

This advice offers assistance in researching the LGBTQ history and significance of buildings and sites, and in ensuring that significant LGBTQ historic places are recognised through the formal heritage protection system and in planning decisions.

Section 1 contains information on terminology and on researching LGBTQ people, buildings and sites. Section 2 looks at protecting places with LGBTQ heritage. It discusses how the significance of places can be derived from the historic and architectural/artistic interest of individual buildings and sites. Various heritage designations and their role in the planning system are also set out.

Pride of Place uses the acronym LGBTQ to acknowledge the widest diversity of lives and experiences. It advocates coalition-building between the heritage sector and LGBTQ communities as well as the vital need to acknowledge the relationship between race, ethnicity, class, gender, disability and sexual identity.

Researching LGBTQ History

Increasing our understanding of LGBTQ heritage assets, identifying new ones and assessing their significance requires accurate research to back up proposals for designation and in representations concerning planning applications. This first section gives advice on archive resources and the terminology to be expected in carrying out research.

Archives

There are many local and national LGBTQ community groups, historical and archival organisations and other resources that can assist in researching LGBTQ heritage places. Some of this information is included in this advice and more is available on the Pride of Place website.

Literature concerning local and national LGBTQ history offers important background to better understand LGBTQ lives in the past and the types of buildings and sites where such lives may resonate. The county record office or local studies centre may also hold valuable information for uncovering a place's LGBTQ past.

Some, including the [Lancashire Archives](#), [Manchester Libraries](#) and the [Surrey History Centre](#) have created guides to finding LGBTQ sources in their collections. Specialist collections in London include those at the [London Metropolitan Archives](#), the [Bishopsgate Institute](#), and the [Hall-Carpenter Collection](#) held at the London School of Economics. [The National Archives](#) at Kew also has a helpful online guide to its LGBTQ records.

Sex between men remained illegal in England and Wales until 1967, and some acts remained illegal even after decriminalisation. This means that much material in archives relates to men and to histories of oppression.

These aren't the only LGBTQ histories that can be revealed, however, and many histories of women's same-sex desires are available too if sources are approached with different questions. There is also the heritage of resistance and equality movements.

Where a person was convicted of a homosexual offence, local archives may hold criminal records. These include calendars of prisoners, prison and felony registers, and more detailed indictment rolls as well as quarter sessions' and magistrates' court records that relate to crimes and trials in the past. Records may include a summons, examinations of witnesses, and bail records. Some are indexed though many are not. They can offer more information about where a crime took place, and where the accused was from or lived.

Notions of self-identity and issues of visibility and legality have had a profound effect in the past and still make the uncovering of this hidden history complex. There can also be sensitivities about uncovering the LGBTQ associations of a place and care needs to be taken, for instance, when identifying LGBTQ pasts that this doesn't inadvertently out someone living who isn't open about their sexuality.



South End Green public toilets in Kentish Town, London, where playwright Joe Orton was known to have met men.

Terminology

When researching individual buildings and the people associated with them, references to LGBTQ heritage are unlikely to be found before the 1960s by searching for familiar terms such as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. The word 'gay' only came into common use from the early 1970s, although it has a history going back more than a century. 'Lesbian' too has a longer history. 'Homosexual', and derivations of it, were used in documents from the end of the 19th century to describe both offences and people, while 'sexual minorities' appears from around the mid-twentieth century. It is likely, however, that other terms and euphemisms will be more useful for uncovering earlier evidence.

Newspapers, official records, and other documents all used a variety of terms to describe what we would today call LGBTQ people. Some of these may be euphemistic, including words like 'bachelor' or 'spinster', 'companion' or 'friend', and it is only from reading around the documents that a better sense of how a word is being used will be gained. Men might also be described as 'artistic', 'theatrical' or 'musical', as a 'queen' or 'quean'. Documents occasionally use derogatory terms including 'pansy', 'queer' and 'dyke', but even these have been reclaimed and used by some LGBTQ people in other contexts. Going back in time even further you might uncover more unfamiliar terms like 'molly' for men or 'tribade' for women.

In terms of the history of gay men, expressions often identify criminal offences. Words like ‘deviant’, ‘pervert’, ‘sodomite’, ‘gross indecency’, persistent ‘importuning’, ‘unnatural offences’, ‘sodomy’ and ‘buggery’, were used to describe homosexual offences involving men. ‘Disorderly house’ may suggest private and public locations where these offences took place. Legal prohibitions were not extended to women, so other terms may have been used including

‘sexual invert’ or ‘inversion’ (which could apply to both women and men), ‘sapphic’ and ‘sapphism’ or references to ‘butch’ and ‘femme’ women. Combinations of words such as ‘immoral offences’ and the addition of ‘between men’ or ‘between women’ may relate both to records of crimes and other wider accusations against individuals. For trans and gender-variant people, references are more likely to ‘drag’, ‘transvestite’, ‘transvestism’ and ‘sex change’.



The church of St Peter in Brighton, where Colonel Victor Barker, gender-crossing as a man, married Elfrida Haward in 1923.

Individual People

Libraries and archives hold the papers of well-known local individuals, whose letters and papers may refer to other people and other places of interest. [Manchester Libraries](#) hold the papers of Allan Horsfall (1927-2012), for example, the founder and secretary of the North Western Homosexual Law Reform Committee, as well as those of Margaret Roff (1943-87), a Manchester City Councillor and lesbian rights campaigner.

The National Archives include further information on individuals who served in the armed forces or worked in the civil service as well as divorce proceedings, criminal appeals, London Metropolitan Police files, cases under the jurisdiction of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and other resources relating to the LGBTQ past in London and elsewhere.

LGBTQ men and women in the past might have been declared mentally ill, described as 'lunatics' or 'mad', and local archives may hold hospital and asylum records. Such records are closed for 100 years under the terms of the Data Protection Act, but older consulting case books and admissions registers may be available.

LGBTQ Community Organisations

LGBTQ community groups have often preserved some of their own history and, increasingly, archives and museums are encouraging groups to deposit their archives and papers with them. Holdings can include a group's founding documents and minutes from meetings that show where they met, and also the advertising of community and activist events at specific locations. Sometimes they include photographs of places and events. The Surrey History Centre, for example, has the papers of Gay Surrey and the LGBTQ charity Outline. The [Women's Library in Glasgow](#) has preserved the UK's Lesbian Archive as well as many collections of women's organisations including black and minority ethnic women's collections across the UK. The London Metropolitan Archives holds papers for many London-based groups including the black LGBT archive, '[rukus!](#)'. Local archives will also house the records from local councils, minutes of meetings, correspondence and other documents related to public health, morality, licensing, and areas that could cast light on a place's LGBTQ past.

Some local archives, and some of the national LGBTQ heritage collections, hold early underground LGBTQ newsletters as well as the more public community newspapers that began to circulate more actively from the 1970s and 1980s. Examples of some national publications go back to the 1960s.

Many other regional and often short-lived gay magazines are preserved, even if incomplete runs, in personal papers and community collections around the country. These are especially useful for researching the history of spaces that were important for LGBTQ communities in the more recent past including bookshops, cafés, and community meeting places.

Local 'alternative' publications are unlikely to be indexed, but are often held by local studies libraries, and, from the 1970s, might have a lesbian and gay page.



The New Penny, previously called The Hope and Anchor, was the first gay pub in Leeds

Pubs, Clubs and Cafés

Because businesses were also often homes in the past, many of the same local archive collections used to research people and homes can also often be used to uncover the histories of pubs and their owners, businesses and other tradespeople. Local libraries and archives also have trade and street directories, which contain further information on historic businesses, even those that are now gone, and archived newspapers may also be helpful in researching business locations as well as other details about LGBTQ lives and places in the past. Newspapers may have reported details of a trial or arrest following raids on pubs or clubs, information about where an LGBTQ person lived, advertisements for queer venues, announcements of an LGBTQ event and more.

Same-sex Institutions

Current or former schools, borstals, poorhouses or workhouses, prisons, convents, monasteries or other institutions that comprised either men or women, or separated men from women, may have had an LGBTQ past. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and even earlier, authorities were often concerned about the propriety of these institutions, and sometimes took special interest in policing same-sex desires, or in reassuring the public that no immorality existed there. The institution's own records and archives are a useful first step and punishment books, minutes of board meetings, letters to and from administrators, board members or trustees may offer insights into such places' LGBTQ history. These may be held at the institution if it remains active, but could also have been deposited at the local library or archive. [The National Archives](#) holds records for the Home Office and other government departments, including the education and prison services.

Oral History

Oral histories offer useful information and many local and national LGBTQ groups have collected oral histories including the North West Sound Archive, the [Hall-Carpenter Oral History Project](#) at the British Library, [OurStory Brighton](#) and [Our Story Liverpool](#). Some are available online.

It can be a valuable experience to talk to someone who remembers an area from previous decades, who remembers stories about places, and who had LGBTQ friends. They can often point you in the right direction to pursue further research. Remember, however, that for many people these were difficult times and many had painful encounters with the authorities, police, church leaders and family members. But many others will also have memories they may want to share with you. Treat people and their memories with respect.



Oscar Wilde spent eighteen months of his two-year sentence of hard labour for gross indecency at Reading Gaol. He later immortalised the prison in 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol'.

Protecting LGBTQ Heritage

Once the history and significance of a place has been researched and established, there are various ways it can be protected. Heritage protection, through statutory processes (listing, scheduling, designating historic parks and gardens and conservation areas, etc) and through other planning mechanisms, is based around the protection of the significance of buildings and sites. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) describes significance as ‘the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting’. In the case of LGBTQ heritage, though archaeological interest may contribute to the significance of particular sites, the main contributions to significance are likely to be from historic interest and architectural/artistic interest.

Local Plans

All protection at a local level stems from the Local Plan which contains policies on the development of the area over which a council, the local planning authority, has control. The NPPF points out ([paragraph 150](#)) that ‘Local Plans are the key to delivering sustainable development that reflects the vision and aspirations of local communities. Planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise’. It relates this to the historic environment, in its widest sense, by stressing that ‘local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment’, emphasizing its irreplaceability, the consequent need to conserve it in a manner appropriate to its significance and, in the context of LGBTQ heritage, the ‘social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring’.

Key to this positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment are heritage assets, both designated heritage and those which are not designated.

Heritage Assets

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires the conservation of ‘heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations’. Heritage assets are further sub-divided between those which are nationally designated, such as listed buildings, scheduled monuments, registered historic parks and gardens, conservation areas, and so forth, and those which are undesignated statutorily but which still require their significance to be conserved as part of the planning process – such as ‘locally listed’ buildings.

Designated Heritage Assets

These are defined by national legislation and include scheduled monuments (usually sites with archaeological potential) and the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. Their designation is decided by the Secretary of State on the advice of Historic England – a government body. Historic England also compiles the registers of parks and gardens of special historic interest, and of historic battlefields.

Such assets are of national importance and are recorded as entries in a central database – the [National Heritage List for England](#) (NHLE). This database is searchable online to find out what has already been identified and described. Alterations including internal changes, extension and demolition of listed buildings which affects their significance ‘special architectural or historic interest’ - need specific approval, called listed building consent, from the local planning authority (and sometimes the Government too). This is in addition to any requirement for planning permission (planning permission is required for works of development to buildings and sites, whether heritage assets or not).

Designated assets also include conservation areas that are normally declared by local councils and that are protected by policies designed to preserve or enhance their character and appearance. Conservation areas aim to protect a wider sweep of the historic environment and usually include concentrations of historic buildings and the spaces around them. There are nearly 10,000 across England. Demolitions and certain other changes within conservation areas are controlled through planning permission.

Further information on the process of listing buildings or sites is available on the Historic England website including [How to Get Historic Buildings and Sites Protected through Listing](#).

Although the [National Heritage List for England](#) (NHLE) is compiled by Historic England for the Secretary of State, Historic England encourages those with knowledge of historic places to share their understanding and images of designated sites through [Enriching the List](#) that allows further details to be added to current NHLE entries in the space beneath the main entry.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

There are further sites of heritage significance in addition to statutorily designated assets. These are sometimes known as non-designated heritage assets and might be places that are valued by communities because of their contribution towards a local sense of place and identity but are not of national importance.

Many local planning authorities compile lists of such assets and they may be known as ‘locally listed’ buildings or ‘buildings of townscape merit’ or similar terms. These lists are held by councils and should also be included in local databases of heritage assets called Historic Environment Records (HERs) which are held by the local archaeological service. Visit [heritagegateway](#) for more information on HERs. Although non-designated, their significance and what happens to them is still a material issue in planning decisions.

LGBTQ Historic Interest

A place’s LGBTQ interest might lie in its historic interest and/or its architectural/artistic interest. These contribute to the overall significance of a building or site and to its possible recognition as either a designated or non-designated heritage asset.

In heritage terms, ‘historic interest’ arises from past lives and events that places may illustrate or be associated with. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation’s history, but can also provide emotional meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as cultural identity.

Of particular LGBTQ historic interest are those places of historic social interaction, political action and community organisation. In living memory, these activities have often focused around pubs and clubs that were never officially 'gay' until the partial decriminalisation of male homosexuality in 1967. An example of a designation which recognises this kind of LGBTQ historic interest is the listing of the [Royal Vauxhall Tavern](#) in London at Grade II in 2015.

Other sites and buildings in this context may include those associated with creativity or those where LGBTQ historic interest adds a further layer to our understanding of already recognized heritage assets. These may range from grand homes and gardens such as Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson's Sissinghurst, to places of work and discovery such as Bletchley Park where Alan Turing helped crack the Nazi Enigma code. There may also be more humble locations that are especially representative of ordinary LGBTQ lives.



Bletchley Park where Alan Turing led the decryption of the German Enigma code.



Smallhythe Place, home of Ellen Terry.

Such buildings and sites can be found in both big cities and rural areas where LGBTQ people have inhabited spaces, even if not often visibly until recently because of the need to keep minority sexualities a secret.

An example (currently not designated in summer 2016) is Millthorpe, the house in Derbyshire of Edward Carpenter (1844-1929), the writer, early pioneer of minority rights and environmentalism and Labour movement activist. Visitors to the house with its ethos of living fairly and with nature included the architects and town planners Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker, who were influenced by Millthorpe's simple aesthetic and went on themselves to help shape the garden cities movement, as well as many political and cultural figures such as E M Forster and Siegfried Sassoon.

Smallhythe Place, near Tenterden, Kent, itself listed Grade II* and owned by the National Trust, had been bought by the Victorian actress, Ellen Terry. Her daughter, Edith (Edy) Craig, theatre director and pioneer of the women's suffrage movement, was given Priest's House in the grounds and lived there with the dramatist Chris St John (Christabel Marshall) and the artist Tony (Clare) Atwood. The barn in the grounds of the house, fitted up as a theatre by Edith Craig as a memorial to her mother following her death in 1928, is listed Grade II. Although the house and the barn would undoubtedly be listed for their innate architectural interest and the historic interest of the connection to Ellen Terry, the great and much loved late Victorian and Edwardian actress, the lives and work of her successors, including her daughter who gave the house to the National Trust, certainly adds to its historic interest.

Architectural Interest and LGBTQ Heritage

Where LGBTQ people themselves created buildings and sites, their importance may extend beyond historic interest and contribute to the architectural, or artistic, interest of sites – the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious

design or fortuitously from the way a place has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skills, like sculpture.



Entrance to Sissinghurst Castle, Kent, the home of Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson.

The question as to whether a LGBTQ sensibility has ever been expressed in built form continues to be debated. The past few decades have seen the rise of ‘queer theories’ that have examined how LGBTQ people shape, inhabit and appropriate spaces and places – the creation of urban ‘gay villages’ for instance. One cultural manifestation that has been written about in this context is ‘Queer Gothic’ of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Later, at the beginning of the Victorian period, the traveller and lesbian heiress Anne Lister remodelled her family home, Shibden Hall in Yorkshire, and re-landscaped the park with the assistance of the architect, John Harper of York, creating a picturesque ensemble which has been characterised as having hidden corners protected from the public gaze.

Architecturally, discussion of ‘Queer Gothic’ has focussed on William Beckford and Horace Walpole, both wealthy writers and public figures, and their particularly eccentric houses that revel in theatrical artifice, both provocation and mask. Beckford built Fonthill Abbey – it was too ambitiously tall to stand for long – while Walpole created his influential villa at Strawberry Hill.

In the 1930s, the Grade II* listed Modern house St Ann’s Court in Surrey by architect Raymond McGrath was built for a gay couple living together in an age when such a relationship could lead to imprisonment – sleeping arrangements could therefore be re-arranged if occasion demanded by the use of retractable screens.



Strawberry Hill House, Twickenham, home of Horace Walpole, is an example of Queer Gothic architecture.



Shibden Hall, Halifax, the home of diarist, landowner and traveller Anne Lister. Her diaries include details of her relationships with women.

Conserving LGBTQ Heritage through the Planning System

Local planning authorities engage with heritage assets through the formulation of their policies and plans and through decision-making on planning proposals. LGBTQ heritage might be recognised in matters such as documents appraising the character of a conservation area, assembling criteria for local lists, or in identifying assets for potential designation.

Specific consent mechanisms apply for the control of works to listed buildings and scheduled monuments – listed building consent and scheduled monument consent. Control of works in conservation areas to buildings and other structures, and to parks and gardens, is, however, through the general requirement for planning permission for works of development

(including the demolition of buildings which contribute to the character of a conservation area).

Where local planning authorities have compiled local lists of otherwise undesignated heritage assets, this helps enable the significance of these buildings and sites to be better taken into account in planning applications affecting it or its setting. Further information on Local Lists can be found in Historic England's Advice Note 7: [Local Heritage Listing](#).

Community groups and other interested parties concerned about a development affecting LGBTQ heritage assets, whether designated or undesignated, are able to respond during the public consultation stage of any application, a minimum three-week period when local planning authorities seek views on the merits of applications.

The Government's [Planning Practice Guide](#), published to assist practitioners in the interpretation of the National Planning Policy Framework, states that 'it is important that local planning authorities identify and consider all relevant planning issues associated with a proposed development. Consultees may be able to offer particular insights or detailed information which is relevant to the consideration of the application' Public consultation can be an important stage for revealing the hidden history of heritage assets, whether they are designated or not.

The Planning Practice Guidance gives further information on the importance of significance in decision-taking and on non-designated heritage assets. Historic England has also published advice on decision-taking in the historic environment.

Assets of Community Value

Under the Localism Act (2011), places that are valuable to local people, including historic buildings and sites, can also be nominated as Assets of Community Value (ACVs) by local authorities, parish councils or by groups with a connection to the community. Every local authority must maintain a list of assets of community value, whether buildings or land. This gives local community groups the right to bid for a property in community use; they must further the social well-being or interests of the community and nominations for the list may only be made by community interest groups with a local connection. Further information on ACVs is available on the [Historic England website](#).

This is not specifically a heritage designation, though some will be. Indeed, some places may have multiple designations – for example a building might be statutorily listed, be in a conservation area and be an asset of community value.

Other Sources

There is a range of Historic England guidance available through its [website](#).

The following institutions are among those holding important LGBTQ historical material:

The National Archives:
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

Hall-Carpenter Archive at the London School of Economics:
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/collections/featuredCollections/lgbtCollections.aspx>

British Library – Hall-Carpenter Oral History Project:
<http://cadensa.bl.uk/uhtbin/cgisirsi/x/0/0/5?searchdata1=CKEY1321162&library=ALL>

Bishopsgate Institute – Lesbian and Gay News Media Archive (LAGNA):
www.lagna.org.uk

London Metropolitan Archive:
www.lma.gov.uk

Glasgow Women's Library – Lesbian Archive:
www.womenslibrary.org.uk

The Lesbian & Gay Foundation archive at Manchester Central Library:
www.manchester.gov.uk/centrallibrary

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