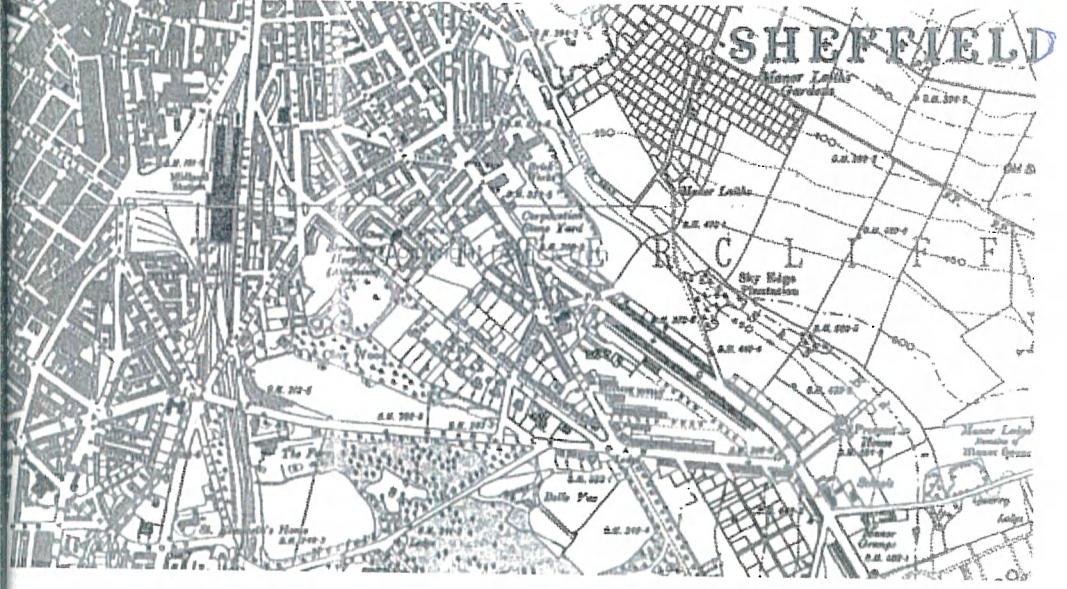


A DIY Guide to the Queer History of...



On a cool evening in autumn of 2018, a few of us met up at the Red Deer pub on Pitt Street (map #16) for the second attempt at getting a local queer/LGBT+ history club off the ground. As we sat down over a pint, one of our members remembered an oral history interview she had conducted with a Sheffield resident called Linda, who recalled that the Red Deer was also an informal queer hangout spot in the 1980s:

*I found out that there was one person in Sheffield that had actually put her phone number out there for people to ring, if they wanted to get to know people, and had organised meetings at The Red Deer on Pitt Street, for people to meet up once a week. And again the first time I went there it was just amazing, it was absolutely fantastic. And those are the people that became my friends and uh, who I met other people through and everything else and built up a friendship base in Sheffield, and round the country because most of them have actually moved all around everywhere by now.*

We may not have intended to, but we were exploring our LGBT+ past at a site with its very own queer history! And that really is the heart of what this project is about. LGBT+ people have been in our city for a long time, socializing, organizing, forming relationships. But our histories are not always the ones that get officially told, despite some valiant attempts by the Sheffield Museum and other institutions.

Queer history is sometimes difficult to research, with people not always identifying with labels we would recognise now, or only appearing in the historical record when their gender identity or sexuality has brought them to public attention for the wrong reasons.

So this is a first attempt by a few volunteers to make visible the queer pasts that sit around us in our city. What follows on these pages are some maps, a few stories, and some archival materials. We hope it gets people excited about what might be possible to explore about Sheffield's history. But it's not perfect.

It is unfortunately too contemporary - we struggled to get much information easily about the pre-war periods for example, let alone before the 20th century! It also tends to skew towards those who could be out - it is more white and more male than we might have liked it to be. But this is just a first attempt. We welcome anyone interested in joining us to collect, retell and share the stories of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other queer ancestors.

We've called ourselves Steel City Queer History. Join us, by emailing [steelcityqueerhistory@gmail.com](mailto:steelcityqueerhistory@gmail.com)

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The Red Deer on Pitt Street - our first meeting place, and a place for queer hangouts since at least the 1980s!

## Bars and venues

In the late 1960s gay and bisexual men in Sheffield made use of the top room in a pub that some people remembered as "the King William" (map #14). Men have recalled being jeered at on their journey to the stairs and up into the relative safety of the gay bar.

*"But to get to it you had to come through the straight bar, straight pub, and you always got comments. You always got comments about 'Oh fucking puffs' and all this lot. Umm, you just learned to ignore em"* Trevor oral history interview.

In the 1970s and 80s, women in the Sheffield LGBT+ community also made use of straight venues, partly to be away from the male dominated gay bars. Two of these were The Hole in the Wall (map #11) and The Royal Standard (map #15). However the presence of

lesbian and bisexual women in these spaces was not always welcomed.

Sheffield is not very well known for its gay scene and the community has historically used mainstream venues in addition to 'gay' bars to socialise and meet.

### DISCOS

We realized it was ridiculous for different women's groups to compete on the disco market, so we started having joint monthly Women's Liberation discos, which not only raised money (split between NAC, Women's Aid, the Women's Centre) but also gave a public face to the WLM in Sheffield. Our experiences have forced us to think about some very important issues.

We used to hold our discos in a rather sleazy joint, with a resident sexist DJ and extortionate drink prices. We found that we didn't actually enjoy them much, though they made lots of money. So we changed to a big church hall in a largely West Indian area, ran our own disco, found a friendly band, hired a bar and tried again. Briefly, what happened was lots of Black kids turned up (it was their youth club other nights, we didn't let them in because of the bar—they were pretty young—and because they wouldn't pay. There was a lot of tension and women on the door felt confused and unsupported (it didn't help being accused of being racist by a anti-fascist committee meanwhile we finally let the kids in—no money got nicked, gay women got hassled. Next time round we couldn't get a bar; some of the kids came and it was much less—but we didn't make much money.

There were obvious conflicts: we need to raise money and so

we need to have a bar—if we have one we can't have kids around, our own or anybody else's, if we change the place again we either lose control of the music and pay a lot for drinks or we attract the same old crowd of assorted-fannies in a student hall.

For the present we've decided to have alternate money-making mixed discos (somewhere) and socials for women and kids only (in the women's centre). As feminists I think the way we raise money is as important as the raising of it, we should try to find new ways and open the WLM here out a bit to people who don't know anything about it—we could make our own music, have a festival... I suppose it takes time, meanwhile we'll keep on hoppin'.

Gelia

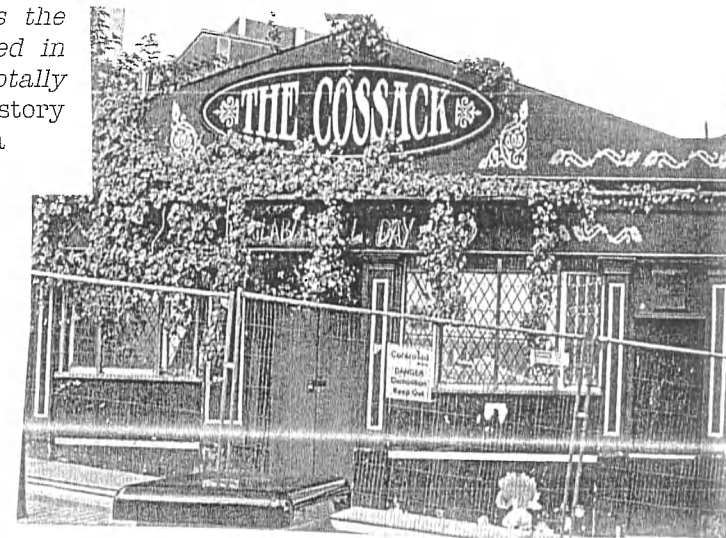


*"They all knew, the landlord knew that there was this group of women that came in on a Monday night and it was like the Women's corner, right but we all kind of presented a well behaved face and ... there were some young women there and they were playing pool or something and they were kissing, and he said 'out.' right, and we thought actually we're sitting her quite closet really, and we can't tell them not to kiss, because this is a lesbian support group."* Ros Wallen oral history interview.

*"And that was the first time I had ever been in a gay bar, and that was the Cossack (map #2). And I walked in and it was like Christmas and birthdays all together. It was the first time I'd walked in anywhere and felt totally at home."* Oral history interview with Linda

This interaction shows that the use of straight venues by the LGBT+ community during this time was carefully negotiated and was not without risk. The begrudging acceptance of gay men at the King William pub contrasts sharply with the rejection of kissing women from a pub in later years.

By the 1970s there were a number of LGBT+ specific bars and pubs in Sheffield, both in the City Centre and in the suburb of Attercliffe. For many these spaces provided a safe haven, and allowed LGBT+ people to meet and socialise.



SECTION TWO - DISCOS

Checkers Society For information Telephone (0742) 307112

Founded in 1980: previously known as Sheffield (Reconstituted, and with a venue at The Top Rank, Arundel Gate, Sheffield; Checkers Society holds on the first Friday of each month, and is the last successful of it's kind in the country: regular appearances take place; in addition to other social

The Top Rank Sheffield Suite provides:- Four large food bar, two dance floors; fully air conditioned Clone Zone has a permanent stall here selling clove kinds of accessories.  
All profits go towards the opening of a gay centre.  
Doors Open 9pm Doors close at 12.30 am.  
Disco ends 2am  
Admission £1.90p  
Limited No. of UB 40 Tickets at £1.00.  
Coach parties (minimum of thirty) a special reduced (By prior arrangement) please telephone (0742) 307112  
Checkers Society Discos - May to December 1984

- Friday, May 4th.
- Friday, June 1st.
- Friday, July 6th.
- Friday, August 3rd.
- And Checkers Society 5th Anniversary Christmas Party  
Wednesday, December 19th, 1984.

Stars Discos For information Telephone (0742) 307112 or (0742) 307112

Formed in 1982 as an alternative disco, specialising in music, a commercial, but non-profit making organisation byt women are welcome; occasional cabaret.  
Venue:- Stars Disco, Queens Road, Sheffield, a few minutes from the rail and bus stations.  
Admission £1.20p The discos are held fortnightly on Fridays.

- Stars Disco dates May - December, 1984
- Friday, May 11th.
  - Friday, May 25th.
  - Friday, August 10th.
  - Friday August 24th.
  - Friday, August 31st.
  - Friday, November 9th.
  - Friday, November 23rd.
  - Friday, November 30th.
  - Friday, June 8th.
  - Friday, June 15th.
  - Friday, June 29th.
  - Friday, September 21st
  - Friday, September 28th
  - Friday, December 1st
  - Friday, December 8th

By 1984 though, the Checkers Society could publish an 'informative guide to the gay community in the Sheffield district, which would list a wide array of bars and venues, including Cossacks 'the gay bar in Sheffield'; monthly Checkers Society discos at 'The Top Rank Sheffield Suite' on Arundel Gate; a fortnightly 'American-style' disco at a venue on Queens Road; a women only gay disco at the Mail Coach hotel on West Street; queer-friendly Tuesday night discos at the Leadmill; a gay-friendly pub in the Rutland Arms; as well as other venues in Barnsley, Atercliffe, three discos in Chesterfield and one in Doncaster. 1984 was a pumping year it seems!

In more recent years Sheffield has been host to a number of LGBT+ venues, and the relationship between the community and the "scene" can still be a complex one.

There have also been many one-off parties, dances and performances in spaces all over the city.

# Cultural Spaces

Many histories have focussed on the bar and pub scene as the centre of the LGBT+ community. However other spaces and platforms have also allowed identities to develop and thrive.

In 1886 Edward Carpenter, a Sheffield based gay socialist, feminist, writer and campaigner, opened a vegetarian cafe together with the Sheffield Socialist Society. Located on Scotland Street (map #4), this became a site for socialising and sharing ideas between Sheffield's working class and political thinkers through talks from left wing speakers. The cafe formed part of a hub that grew around Sheffield's working class socialist community during a time of significant economic hardship. (Tsuzuki, 1980)

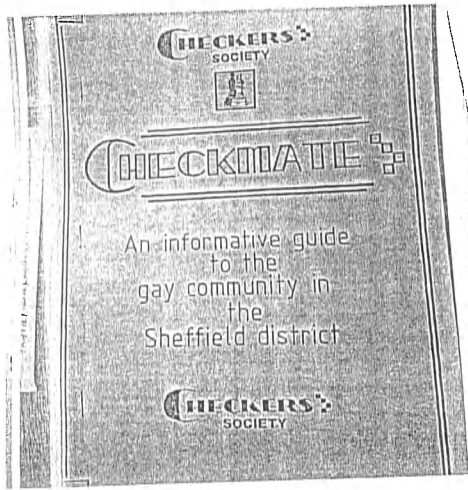


During this period Carpenter was in a relationship with a man called George Hukin. It is not clear to what extent their relationship was known amongst Carpenter's circle of liberal comrades. Hukin and Carpenter's relationship did not last however and Hukin later married a woman called Fanny. (Rowbotham, 2008) Carpenter went on to have a

lasting relationship with another man, George Merrill and he is now considered to be a founder of the modern gay rights movement.

Theatres are a space in which many people have historically been able to express their sexual and gender identities in a way that went unchallenged, compared to the rest of society at the time.

*'With its liminal status as both real and not, as ephemeral and transformational, theatre has long been a site where misfits and the marginalised have congregated.'* (Miller and Dolan 2010)



The Crucible theatre in Sheffield was opened in 1971 and staged many plays which have resonated with LGBT+ people (map #10).

Gay Sweatshop was established in London in 1974 as a group of creative queer people who staged plays with gay themes. Their first play featured at the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE) national conference, in 1975 in Sheffield. The play was called Mister X and was based on a combination of personal experiences and a book called 'With Downcast Gays: Aspects of Homosexual self-oppression' by Andrew Hodges and David Hutter.

Campaign for Homosexual Equality

Theatres also served as an important space for women in the LGBT+ community in the 1980s and 1990s. Some women in Sheffield's LGBT+ community found that local gay bars and pubs were not welcoming or safe spaces for them and created their own events.



Women-only performance nights took place at The Leadmill (map #7) for several years which featured a variety of musicians and comedians.

Women's events took place in theatres and performance spaces. This includes the stage adaptation of Calamity Jane, called 'Calamity Takes the Stage' written by Joy Anagnostis and performed at the Library Theatre in 1995 as a 'gender-bending musical parody of the 1950s Doris Day film'.

Around this time a group of local women set up the Women's Cultural Club on Paternoster Row (map #13). This was a women only bar and whilst not specifically a gay space, it was largely run by and welcome to gay and bisexual women.



## Public Spaces

It is in public spaces that LGBT+ identities have been most frequently policed. Sometimes it is about who we are, sometimes it is about what we do.

In 1967, Candy Roberts was arrested on a charge of public indecency on Cambridge Street for merely being dressed as a woman. She pleaded before magistrates that, although she had been assigned male at birth, "I am not a homosexual, I was looking for a friend and she wasn't there. I have never importuned" (Sheffield Star 1967). She further told magistrates that she was going to Manchester that week "to have the necessary operation to become a woman".

**Trans Rights are Human Rights**

### Man 'due to have sex-change operation'

**WEARING** a red costume, heavy make-up and high-heeled shoes, a man told Sheffield magistrates today that he had been living as a woman for the past ten months and had wanted to be a female since he was seven.

David McMillan, aged 20, unemployed, of Mitrovichs Road, Sheffield, said he went under the name of Candy Roberts, and was going into a Manchester hospital next week to have the necessary operation to become a woman.

"This is a tragic case, and it is not an affliction on the defendant's part," said Mr. Roy Barlow, defending. Roberts was charged of persistently and unlawfully importuning for immoral purposes in Cambridge Street. The charge arose after he was seen by a woman on Cambridge Street. She was Miss Ann McMillan, who said she had been told she had been living as a woman for the past ten months.

#### RECOGNISED

"She spoke to a man of about 40 and they walked together, then after a short conversation he walked away."

P.C. Steeds said he formed the impression "she" was a prostitute, but when he approached he recognised McMillan, whom he had met before.

In answer to Mr. Barlow, P.C. Steeds denied that at West Gate police station he told Roberts to "cuss" to the sergeant.

Roberts said he went to a child guidance clinic at seven years old, and had been under a psychiatrist since he was 19.

"I am not a homosexual. I was looking for a friend and she wasn't there. I have never importuned," said Roberts.

He added he testified to the sergeant, as P.C. Steeds told him, because he was frightened.

Assumptions around being LGBT+ in public is sometimes focused specifically on having gay sex in public spaces. There were a number of cottaging sites for gay men around Sheffield city centre, including on the Wicker and the toilets underneath the Town Hall. But it was also here where plain clothes police officers would go around to make arrests.

*I got picked up by two coppers, two plain clothes police in The Wicker toilets. Uh cos I'd seen them for ages and ages and ages. So they used to go around toilets and I used to go around and I thought 'Yeah I'm gonna try you'. And they got in and I went to one, and I made advances and the t' other one, came and said 'Police!'*

Trevor, Oral History.

After being caught, Trevor was given the choice of arrest or conversion therapy; choosing the latter he was taken to the hospital to see a psychiatrist. It was less than successful in its aims:

*I don't know I just got a day off school to go. I can't remember much about it, wouldn't have take much notice of him (laughs) well I wouldn't! I'd been doing it long enough.*

Trevor, Oral History.

### Warrant out for man's arrest

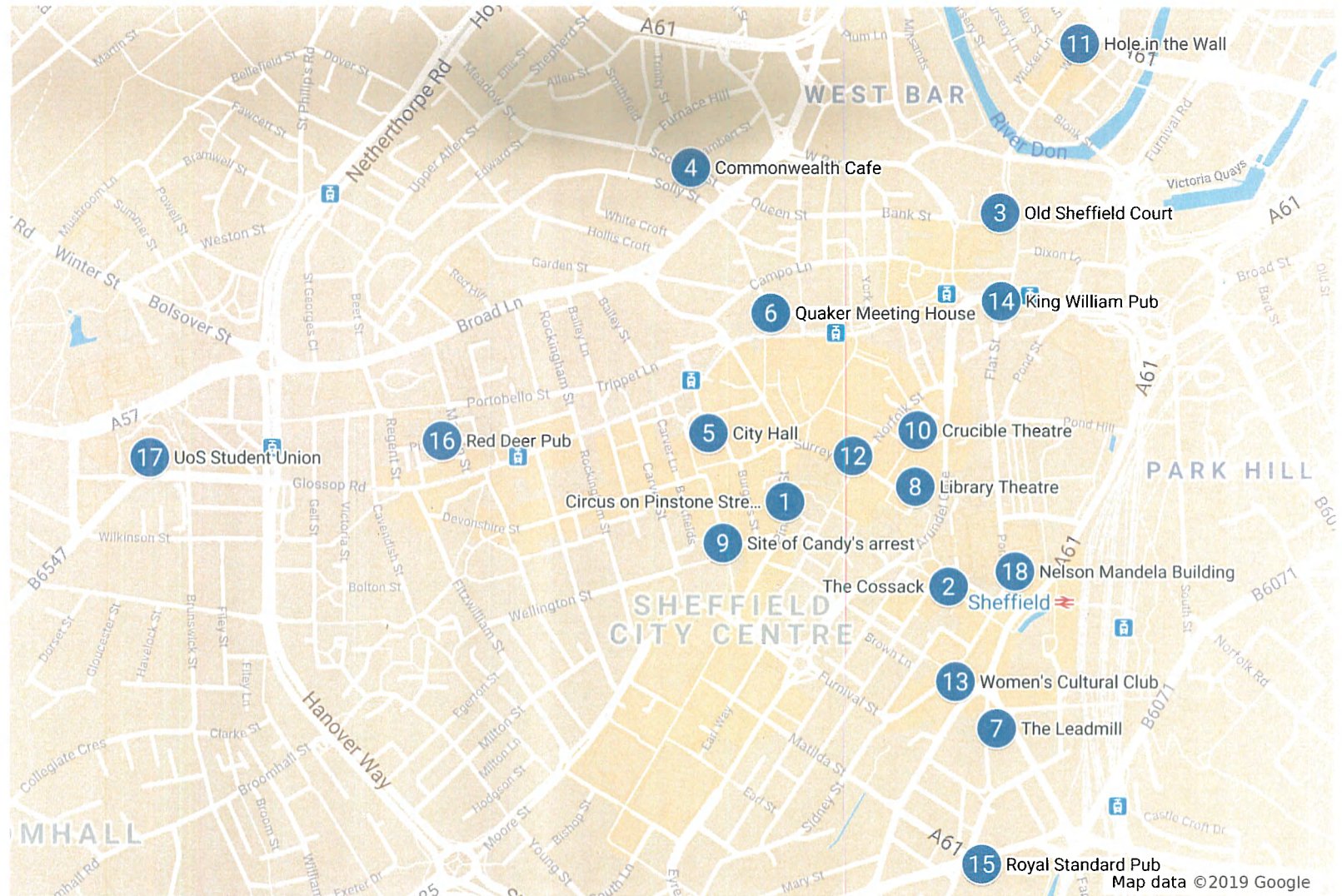
Sheffield magistrates today issued a warrant for the arrest of ~~A. H. H.~~ aged 25, unemployed labourer, of Pickering Road, Sheffield, who was stated to have failed to surrender to bail.

~~H.~~ and ~~S.~~ aged 47, crane driver, of Oxford Street, Rotherham, are accused of committing an act of gross indecency with each other in a public convenience at The Wicker, Townless, who appeared, was remanded, on bail until April 22.

# Some Queer Sites from Sheffield's Past

Untitled layer

- 1 Circus on Pinstone Street
- 2 The Cossack
- 3 Old Sheffield Court
- 4 Commonwealth Cafe
- 5 City Hall
- 6 Quaker Meeting House
- 7 The Leadmill
- 8 Library Theatre
- 9 Site of Candy's arrest
- 10 Crucible Theatre
- 11 Hole in the Wall
- 12 The Independent Bookshop
- 13 Women's Cultural Club
- 14 King William Pub
- 15 Royal Standard Pub
- 16 Red Deer Pub
- 17 UoS Student Union
- 18 Nelson Mandela Building



You can access this map via Google Maps at the following URL: <http://tiny.cc/6dxaaz>  
Good luck exploring Sheffield's queer history!

# Institutions

Following police interactions (discussed in the last section), we can find LGBT+ lives in legal archives. Court records show that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was a much higher number of prosecutions in London than in any other area of the country, including Sheffield. That doesn't mean that there were no gay or bisexual people in Sheffield, of course, but as historian Helen Smith suggests, people may have been less targeted for their sexual preferences in places like South Yorkshire (Smith 2015).

*"According to the Sunday papers of the time there was a 'twilight world' somewhere where gay vicars and schoolteachers and scout masters 'assaulted' their youthful charges. It didn't sound very pleasant, but I was still anxious to find it."*

Terry Sanderson  
"Pattering from the Closet"

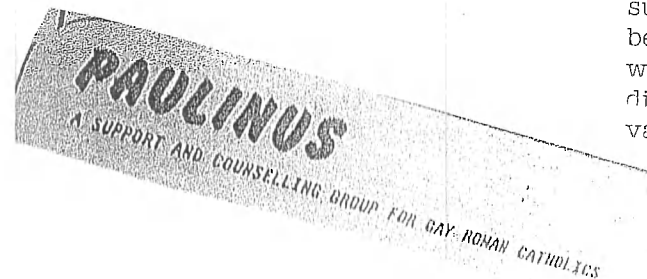
1967 saw the partial decriminalisation of male homosexuality in England and Wales. This is an important milestone in our history, though it is important to remember that both before and after this date the lives of LGBT+ people in Britain have been shaped by oppressive institutions that tried to push them to the margins. While stories of people's encounters with legal and religious institutions are often negative, reading 'between the lines' of these records, reveals queer people not just surviving but thriving.

This is not to say that arrests and charges were not made, and as sex and sexuality came more into the public eye in the mid-Twentieth century these became more talked about. The cases that made the news tended to be the ones that sparked outcry beyond simple (homo)sexuality, such as cases involving paedophilia and other abuse.

Fortunately for the young Terry, there was a much broader 'twilight world', where he eventually found more positive gay interactions not reported by the press. Consensual relationships, evidently, did not make for scandalous stories.



In 1977, too, a group for gay Catholics named Quest was set up in Sheffield. In the CHE newsletter, *Gay Scene*, the primary aim of the group was 'to associate lay men and women who are looking for ways of reconciling their Catholic faith with full expression of their homosexual natures and to provide opportunities for them to meet together for study, discussion, worship and social activities'. They also aimed to bring discussion and understanding between gay and lesbian Catholics and the clergy and the Catholic press more broadly.



Religion is also frequently seen as an oppressive institution towards LGBT+ identities, but around Sheffield there were a number of moments of positive interaction in the twentieth century. Early meetings of the Sheffield branch of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE) met in the Anglican Chaplaincy of the University of Sheffield. By February 1973, however, they had moved to the Friends Meeting House in Hartshead, a place set up by the Quakers, who have long been LGBT+ friendly (map #6).

It was not all plain sailing, of course - in the 70s Pastor David Powell of Rotherham Pentecostal Church went as far as to ban gays from his services (Sanderson 1988), and the 2017 Pride event had a challenging encounter with a group of conservative evangelicals - but reactions such as this are notable for being exceptions in a city where religious and other diversity has often been valued.



# Campaigns and Politics

LESBIANS AND GAY MEN  
ARE ANGRY!  
♀♂

By the 1980s and the debates over the Thatcher government's introduction of Section 28, which banned schools from the 'promotion' of homosexuality, the left in places like Sheffield were opposed to Thatcher's overt campaigns against gays and lesbians. However, sometimes this support was begrudging: 'Enid Hattersley, a Labour councillor and Lord Mayor of Sheffield in the early 1980s, saying that though she had nothing against homosexuals she would not 'bend over backwards to help them' (Payling, 3017).

The "People's Republic of South Yorkshire" - the term might have been coined by a journalist and used by Tories to disparage the progressive Labour council led by David Blunkett in the 1980s, but was soon adopted by the people of Sheffield and the surrounding cities who valued the fact our local authorities stood up to conservative leaders in London and prioritised the needs of regular people. But socialist and left politics and gay/lesbian rights haven't always been fully on board with each other.

LGBT+ people nevertheless organised in a range of our own groups and associations for us to be taken seriously. Sometimes that was alongside those on the radical left or in the Labour party, and other times it was independent and at arms-length. Here are some of the groups, campaigns and protests that shaped our city's attitude to LGBT+ people.



The most prominent organisation of the late 1960s and 1970s was the Campaign for Homosexual Equality, which had branches all over the UK. The national conference was also held in Sheffield in 1975 and was supported by the Council. Historian Daisy Payling said this about it: "Sheffield City Council welcomed the CHE conference with a £1000 civic reception in 1975, and allowed them to use the Cathedral forecourt for a demonstration despite complaints from the Cathedral authorities."

Payling also highlights the positive experience of this event for some delegates, including 68-year old Trevor Thomas, who found himself quoted in *The Sheffield Star*: "I was out, and could not have been more obviously out... I've summed it up in the phrase that three days in Sheffield did more for me than three years on Valium."

Sheffield has also played host to several other activist conferences over, including the Gay Rights at Work conference in 1981, which had a focus on the experiences of queer workers and in trade unions. They also notably drew on the pink triangle design that later became famous when used by ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power).



CHE News PO box 107 Sheffield S1 1EJ

# cheeky!

National Office: 70 Kennedy Street, Manchester, M2 4BT  
International Centre: 72 Great Windmill Street, London, W1

More radical elements of the queer community met in other spaces around the city, such as the Sheffield University Student Union (map #17), and 1 Sheaf Square in front of the station, which was home to the Sheffield Polytechnic Students' Union, now Sheffield Hallam. It was renamed the Nelson Mandela Building in 1982 (map #18). ACT-UP's Sheffield chapter met here.

Paying: "Rather than making use of other activist spaces in the city such as the Common Ground Resources Centre, Sheffield ACT-UP preferred to organise around existing student spaces, and valued the radical University milieu over the labour movement and Sheffield's wider politics."



# GAYS SOS

## HOMOSEXUALS IN SHEFFIELD

During the August Bank Holiday Weekend, the Campaign for Homosexual Equality is holding its Annual Conference and Festival in Sheffield. Over 1000 homosexual and bisexual women and men of all ages will be meeting to demand equality in law and an end to the prejudice and hostility faced by them in Britain. They will also be mounting many social events — concerts, recitals, exhibitions, discussions and dances — and inviting the people of Sheffield to take part and enjoy themselves at some of these.

CHE, Britain's largest organisation for homosexual people, pursues three main aims: changing society's attitudes, changing the law, and providing social facilities. By meeting in Sheffield, CHE hopes to stimulate a public debate locally to enlighten public opinion, and nationally to achieve publicity for its current law reform campaign. Through its network of local groups, one of which is in Sheffield, CHE provides meeting places and a befriending service for many people.

On Saturday afternoon, 23 August, between 3 and 5.30pm, there is a chance for you to hear more about the organisation and its aims, and to ask questions at a special Speakers' Corner debate in the precincts outside Sheffield Cathedral. Do tell your friends about this and come along yourself. Also over the weekend there are two exhibitions and several major concerts which are open to the public (details overleaf).

If you would like more information about the work of CHE please contact your local group: Sheffield and Rotherham CHE, PO Box 107, Sheffield S1 1EL; Bradford CHE, PO Box 47, Bradford BD1 3YZ; Doncaster CHE, 59 Auckland Road, Doncaster DN2 4AF; Huddersfield CHE, PO Box 809, Huddersfield HD1 1AA, or call into the Conference Information Office at the Royal Victoria Hotel; or contact CHE National Office, PO Box 427, 28 Kennedy Street, Manchester M60 2EL.



\* Sheffield Gayphone  
Tel. 684489  
8-10pm, Mon & Wed \*

20p

SPRING 1981



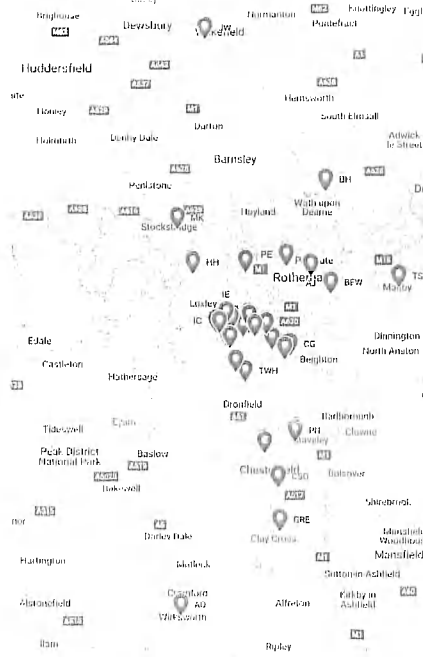
# SHEFFIELD WOMEN'S PAPER

## Where did LGBT+ people live in 1971?

LGBT+ people are everywhere, of course, but their everyday lives are often less obvious to historians than experiences forged in spectacular moments of arrest, demonstration, performance or the like. These maps give a sense of the diverse living situations of some LGBT+ people in the greater Sheffield area in 1971.

It contains the rough street addresses (though deliberately obscured) of 32 of the 37 inaugural members of the Sheffield Campaign for Homosexual Equality, as of October 1971. We got these addresses from the CHE membership directory. The CHE drew its membership from as far afield as Wakefield and Wirksworth, yet these people still came together in Sheffield to find community and campaign for our rights through the Campaign for Homosexual Equality.

We can see from these maps that, like now, Sheffield attracted queer people from all over South Yorkshire, Derbyshire and beyond.



# CHE

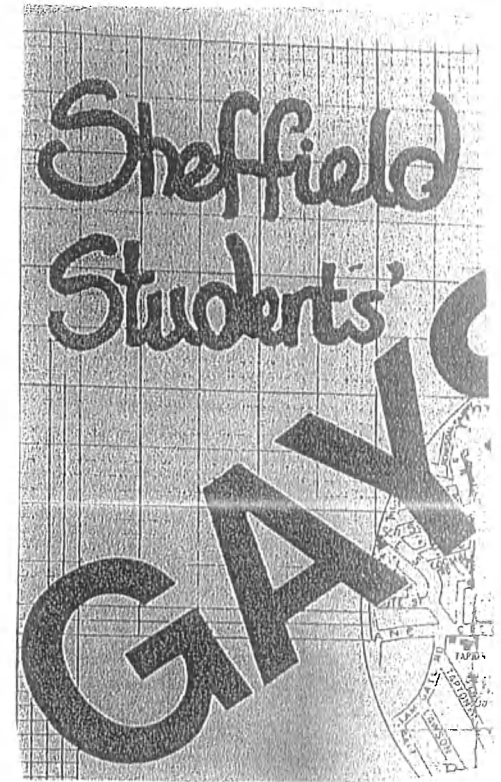


## Where did we get this stuff from?

This material is drawn from a range of sources, including:

- Sandra Baker Donnelly's MA thesis on Sheffield's LGBT+ history at Sheffield Hallam University
- Memoirs and autobiographical writings, like those of Terry Sanderson
- Academic histories, by scholars like Helen Smith, Daisy Payling, Sheila Rowbotham and more

We may not have everything right of course, so get in touch if you have anything you want to correct or contribute!





Email: [steelcityqueerhistory@gmail.com](mailto:steelcityqueerhistory@gmail.com)