

LGBT History Tour

Good Organisation

Stop One 54 Bootham

It is well worth a visit to 54 Bootham, the childhood home of Wyston Hugh Auden, one of the greatest 20th century British writers. This information is attributed mostly to the York Civic Trust. Born in York on 21st February 1907, he was the son of George Augustus Auden and Constance Rosalie Auden, née Bicknell, and lived here at 54 Bootham.

His father was a physician and his mother trained but did not practice as a nurse. He had two older brothers, George Bernard, a farmer, and John Bicknell, a geologist. His grandfathers were both Church of England clergymen and he was brought up an Anglo-Catholic, which he claimed influenced his later poetry.

These firm Christian family values would also play a role in his sexuality, which remained hidden until after his death. In 1908 the family moved to Solihull, where his father had become the school medical officer, and later a professor of public health. Thus Auden's residence in York was short-lived.

He attended boarding school from eight years old and expected to be a mining engineer until he was about 15. However, he was attracted by words at an early age. Auden went to Christchurch, Oxford, graduating in 1928.

At Oxford he made lifelong friends with Stephen Spender and Christopher Isherwood. This trio were influenced by the Weimar Republic, in particular the freedom and decadency of its homosexual subculture. This they experienced first-hand when Auden lived in Berlin, near the Cozy Corner, a working-class gay bar.

He and Isherwood were frequent visitors to this bar in 1929, and Auden's diary for this period is considered too obscene for publication. In 1935 Auden married Erika Mann, the daughter of the German novelist Thomas Mann. It was a marriage of convenience to enable her to gain British citizenship and escape Nazi Germany.

Auden was himself homosexual. He later fought in the Spanish Civil War and travelled widely. Auden's poetic themes range from love, politics, citizenship, the relationship between humans and nature, to religion.

His very sexually explicit poem about oral sex, *A Day for the Lay*, is not included in the official edition of his works. His many poems celebrating his homosexual love for Chester Coleman do not reveal his lover's gender. Coleman was an opera queen whom Auden met when he moved to New York in 1939.

Coleman deliberately set out to seduce Auden by sitting in the front row of a college audience for a reading by Auden and Isherwood, flirting and winking at them, and then

meeting them afterwards and offering his body to Auden several days later. In due course, they became lifelong companions. But whilst Coleman continued to enjoy open sexual relationships, Auden held to the ideal of monogamous marriage.

As Auden recalled in his poem, *Stop All the Clocks*, I thought love would last forever. I was wrong. Many British and American poets were inspired by his work and he continued to be influential after his death.

He moved on from his earlier socialism and his admiration for Freudian psychoanalysis to more overt preoccupation with modern Protestant theology. His latter years were spent between the US and Vienna, where he died on 29th September 1973.

Stop Two - Libertas

Libertas, those were the days when York had its own women's bookshop at 42 Gillygate.

However, you'll now be standing in front of the Snow Home Designer Shop, which took over the premises in 2003 after Libertas had moved to Fossgate. I'm Anne Murray, and actually, I was the one who thought of the name for the new bookshop.

Libertas means freedom in Latin, and liber is a Latin word for book. Bingo, Libertas was born. How did I get involved? Well, I met Jenny Roberts in the York Over 35 Social Group, which we joined when Sue, my partner, and I arrived from Canada in 1996.

Jenny asked if I would like to work with her in her new women's bookshop. Would I? I sure would. I remember traveling to Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre to purchase stationery for the start of the shop.

It was a huge place with hundreds of stalls, but Jenny knew what she wanted. We ticked off her lists and traveled home victorious in a loaded car. The bookshop, owned by Jenny Roberts and her partner Anne Croft, opened in November 1998, and this was the very first paid job I had in the UK.

On opening day, people came from all over the country, and the queue stretched halfway down Gillygate, with women chatting and laughing together. Champagne was served with finger food, and the place was buzzing. The shop contained books written by or about all women, including lesbians, bisexual and transgender women.

It was a cornucopia for us. Fiction, nonfiction, mystery, romance, biography, poetry, travel, name it, there was something there for everyone, all lovingly arranged. Jenny had designed the interior, and the space was light and bright, all very welcoming.

Women of all ages spent hours browsing and chatting. Some people said I was the first person that they had confided in. This was a safe space for them.

I'm not a business person, but I loved talking to people who came in to browse or ask for a particular book. I had helped to put all the books in alphabetical order in sections on the shelves, so knew where to find them. Well, most of them.

There were five of us on the staff, and we worked well together. But as time went on, it was clear they really didn't need five staff. So in October 1998, I left to go to work at York College, doing learning support for 16 to 19 year olds.

A totally different atmosphere, but an exciting new challenge which I took to like a duck to water. In August 1999, Jenny started a lesbian book list called Dyke Life, followed by a website in February 2000. Libertas moved to the shop in Fossway, but it didn't last too long there.

When the shop closed in December 2003, the focus turned to lesbian customers online, long the most supported, and the mail order and web service thrived both in the UK and abroad. In November 2004, these Libertas services were taken on by the publishers of Diva, Gay Times and the Pink Paper. Jenny moved on to writing crime novels and then became involved in Buddhism.

It was the end of an era, and left a gaping hole on the streets of York, which is now being filled by the Portal Bookshop in the shambles. Have you been there yet? Well, why not try and say hi to Lally Hewitson?

Stop Three - York Arms

A queer historical stroll down York's byways inspired by and with grateful acknowledgement to the late Mr Warwick Burton, founder of York Walks. Setting off at the gates of Museum Gardens, through Bootham Bar and up High Petergate, on the left we pass the York Arms pub, the oldest gay pub in York. I recall it often packed shoulder to shoulder with men and women carousing but barely unable to turn around or hear conversations over the hubbub.

Continuing down High Petergate and passing to the left of the Minster's west window, we enter Dean's Park, originally the site of York's Roman legionary fortress, which housed 6,000 men in close quarters. The ancient Greeks and Romans are well known for lacking modern sexual taboos and no doubt many frustrated legionnaires away from home indulged in nefarious carnal pleasures together with locals in the vicinity. Passing along Cobbled Minster Yard to College Street, St William's College on the left was built to house the Chantry priests who were said to have indulged in colourful nocturnal habits, no doubt not missing an opportunity to canoodle in local secluded snickets and alleyways.

Naughty frustrated monks residing in nearby Beedon no doubt similarly indulged themselves together occasionally. Returning along Deangate, the upside down Roman column is dedicated to the Emperor Septimus Severus who died in York in 211 AD. Though we don't know for certain whether he was gay, bisexual or hetero like the aforementioned legionnaires, as a Roman general he surely had ample opportunity to indulge his fantasies and desires to the full.

Continuing quickly down Minster Yard to Duncomb Place we pass the Dean Court Hotel which gay people are also reputed to have patronised and met in the past. Turning right into

St Leonard's Place, the de Grey Rooms on the right hand side was the venue for the trendy and hugely popular FEEL gay discos during the 1960s. Further along on the left is King's Manor, once owned of course by the renowned queer king James I who may well have had a lover's tryst here with either Esme Stewart, Robert Carr or George Villiers the Duke of Buckingham, all of whom he's been amorously linked with.

Finally on the right hand side is Manor House School, the girls' boarding school of Anne Lister, also known as Gentleman Jack, where aged 13 she shared a bedroom with Eliza Raine, her first love. Anne also had affairs with two gay pupils, Isabella Norcliffe and Marianna Belcombe, which caused Eliza to suffer a mental breakdown from jealousy and be admitted to Clifton Asylum. Anne was temporarily excluded from the school.

Read and written by John

Stop Four - Assembly Rooms

Hello, my name is Helena Whitbread and in the early 1980s I came across Ann Lister, a 19th century lesbian who kept an exhaustive five million words journal of her life and love affairs with women. Using extracts from the journal, I wrote two books, *The Secret Diaries of Miss Ann Lister, Volume 1, I Know My Own Heart*, and *Volume 2, No Priest But Love*. Both books are published by Virago Press.

Ann Lister developed a great love for the city of York. From her days when she was a boarder at the Manor School in York, she made many friends there and participated in the social life such friendships offered. The principal venue for social gatherings was a building known as the Assembly Rooms where, on the 18th of December 1809, Ann, then aged 19, and her first lover Eliza Rain, were formally introduced.

The York Assembly Rooms, situated on Blake Street, provided a venue during the York winter season where the cream of York society could gather to socialise with their peers. In this beautiful neoclassical building, patrons could indulge in such pastimes as dancing and gambling. Prior to the construction of the Assembly Rooms, social gatherings in York were often held at the King's Manor or at Lord Irwin's House near the Minster.

In the early 18th century, it became evident that the popularity of these assemblies needed a grander venue than either of these buildings could offer. An approach was made to Lord Burlington, a vice-admiral of the County of York, asking him to design a building with the capacity to accommodate York social events. Lord Burlington was a talented practitioner of the English classical architectural movement known as Palladianism, after the 16th-century Italian architect Palladio.

In 1730 he created a classically simple exterior which belied the more extravagant interior, from an illustration by Palladio which featured Corinthian columns and bays. The overall effect is that of an 18th-century version of an ancient Egyptian hall designed for festivals and entertainments. The foundation stone was laid on 1 March 1731 and the building was completed by August 1732.

The Assembly Rooms were first used during Race Week in August 1732, what we know today as Ybor Week. It is always interesting to read an account of an event by a contemporary figure in history, and Anne Lister's journals certainly provide us with many such small cameos. One or two instances of her attendance at the Assembly Rooms are available to us through the medium of her journals.

On Monday 17 December 1821, Anne Lister, with her married lover Marianna Lawton, attended the first Winter Assembly of that year at the Assembly Rooms in Blake Street, an occasion graced by what Anne described as a gentile, well-dressed assemblage. Although the odd idiosyncratic instance did not escape her mordant observations, such as the figure which a Miss Fairfax cut on the dance floor. Anne wrote she was very handsome, but shockingly disfigured with out-of-curl ringlets literally almost half a yard long, and an awkward dancer with elbows like skewered pinions.

On Wednesday 24 September 1823, during the Great York Musical Festival of that year, a great ball was held in the Assembly Rooms. Anne Lister and Marianna attended the even reverie, and Anne writes, we got to the rooms at ten and three quarters, paced up and down, and got home at one twenty. The Marchioness of Londonderry, a blaze of diamonds, most beautiful large bouquet of diamonds, the Marquis too wore his star, a splendid ball, and a very pleasant one, sixteen thousand people in the room.

Those were the glory days of the Assembly Rooms. Two years later, in 1825, it was noted that although the building was magnificent internally, the outside was a gloomy, dilapidated, and filthy pile of building. In 1828, a new front entrance, designed by J.P. Pritchett, improved the exterior, and in 1925 the building was bought by York Corporation, and substantial restoration began in 1951.

The York Conservation Trust purchased the building in November 2002, and today the rooms are used as a restaurant. The York Assembly Rooms are of seminal importance in the history of English architecture, and as one of the earliest Palladium buildings in Northern England, they are now a Grade I listed building.

Assembly Rooms Part Two

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Stop Five - Multangular Tower

As you enter Museum Gardens off Museum Street, you will see the Multangular Tower on the right. The Multangular Tower is the western corner towards the Roman fortress and consists of both Roman and medieval architecture. The tower has 10 sides from which it derives its modern name Multangular and is 19 feet high.

It housed 5,000 men of the 9th legion who were responsible for erecting Hadrian's wall. The 9th legion is famous for its disappearance after 120 AD. Emperor Hadrian was born in 76 AD either in modern day Spain or Rome.

He visited almost every province in the Roman Empire accompanied by specialists and administrators. He encouraged military discipline and he fostered, designed or personally subsidised various buildings and religious institutions. In Rome itself he rebuilt the Parthenon and constructed the vast temple of Venus and Roma.

He was an ardent admirer of Greece and sought to make Athens the cultural capital of the empire. So he ordered the construction of many opulent temples there. Emperor Hadrian came to Britain in the year 122 AD and ordered the construction of a wall that separated Rome from the barbarians.

During this time a shrine was erected in the personification of Britannia and coins were minted. But I hear you ask, what has this got to do with LGBT? Well, Emperor Hadrian had many male lovers. Although he was married to a woman it has been suggested that he had no sexual desire for women at all and was deeply unhappy with the marriage he had.

The most famous love of his was Antinous. Hadrian loved Antinous and he quickly became his favourite. Antinous and Hadrian toured the empire visiting its remote regions.

In late September or early October 130 AD, Hadrian and his entourage, among them Antinous, assembled at the Helopolis to set sail upstream as part of a flotilla along the river Nile. Possibly also joining them was Commodus, a young aristocrat whom Antinous might have deemed a rival to Hadrian's affections. On their journey up the Nile became something sad and terrible.

Antinous fell into the river and died, possibly from drowning. Some on the other hand believed that it was actually Commodus who murdered Antinous out of jealousy with his relationship with Hadrian. Regardless of what happened to Antinous, Hadrian was distraught.

In Egypt, at that time, and in his remorse, Antinous was deified by Hadrian and created a city, Antinopolis, for him. Hadrian also identified a star in the sky between the eagle and the zodiac to be Antinous and came to associate the rosy lotus that grew in the banks of the Nile as being the flower of Antinous. It is unknown where Antinous' body was buried.

It has been argued that it was either interned at the shrine in Antinopolis or at Hadrian's country estate in Tibia in Italy. It is unclear if Hadrian believed Antinous became a god, but he was keen to disseminate the cult of Antinous throughout the Roman Empire. He focused it mostly on the Greek lands and he promoted it and claimed him to be synchronized with the god Hermes.

However, as Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, the cult of Antinous died away like many pagan cults at the time. If you go on further into Museum Gardens, you will reach St. Mary's Abbey where there is a talk about King Henry VIII and the monasteries. It might be a small place, but it has lots of history.

Stop Six - Museum Gardens

As you enter Museum Gardens, you'll find the ruins of St Mary's Abbey. This was a Benedictine Abbey, established in 1088, and you've got to imagine what it will have been like in the 12th and 13th and 14th century. It was a really kind of thriving monastic community.

There would have been a much bigger range of buildings than what you can see the ruins of now, with a kitchen and a library and a community of monks, and the abbot lived in the big building which is now King's Manor. By the 16th century, St Mary's Abbey was the largest and the richest Benedictine house in the north of England. What has this got to do with LGBTQ history? Well, the same process that destroyed St Mary's Abbey, and created the ruins that you see today, was the process that saw the first criminalisation of sex between men in England.

To answer the question of how that happened, we need to go back to 1491, when Henry VIII came to the throne of England. Now his reign, as you might know, saw the English Reformation, the move away from the Catholic Church and the establishment of the Church of England, with Henry VIII at its head. It's often thought that this was motivated by Henry wanting to divorce his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and yes, that was a factor, but he was

also genuinely motivated by worrying that he'd made a religious mistake and that God as a result was punishing him by not giving him a son.

So there were genuine religious feelings as well as the kind of cynical divorce motivation. But anyway, the monasteries, like St Mary's Abbey, were a Catholic institution, and they were also very rich. And for both of those reasons, Henry and his chief minister Thomas Cromwell, who was one of the architects of the English Reformation, were keen to shut them down.

One of the reasons they cited for shutting down the monasteries was that the monks were engaged in sodomy. Now this word had a multiplicity of meanings in the early modern period. It referred to kind of general social, sexual and religious disruption.

But when Henry and Cromwell were talking about the monasteries and said the monks were engaged in sodomy, they did mostly mean sex. They weren't basing this on any evidence, but it is obviously also the case that men living together did create more opportunities for sexual and romantic relationships. Anyway, as part of that process of making himself head of the church, which included the dissolution of monasteries like St Mary's, Henry also brought a lot of laws out of church jurisdiction and under the jurisdiction of the state.

And this included laws about sex. In 1533, he passed the Buggery Act, which prohibited, and I quote, the detestable and abominable vice of buggery committed with mankind or beast. And it's notable, of course, that in that phrasing, buggery can be sex between two people or bestiality.

And that's a linkage, of course, that persists in homophobic discourse to this day. What's also notable is that buggery isn't really defined there. And that is symptomatic of a lack of clarity in this period with which they talked about exactly which sex acts were not allowed.

Now, there were no comprehensive dictionaries in this period, no dictionaries that had all of the words in English in them, but there were some dictionaries that included words like sodomy. And they defined it as, for example, when one man lieth filthily with another man. Not actually a very useful description, because if you're someone who's doing that sort of thing, you probably wouldn't describe it as filthy.

And this really is an instance of the whole history of LGBTQ experience being defined through a heteronormative gaze. Now, it's not that sex between men was allowed before 1533. It's just that this was making it a criminal rather than a religious offence.

But of course, what that did is it paved the way for it being treated as a social problem rather than a religious problem. And that meant it paved the way for it being criminalised even as society became more secularised later on. And of course, it remained decriminalised until the partial decriminalisation of 1967, over 400 years later.

And so the ruins of this abbey that we can see today are the memorial of a process that had real and devastating consequences for men who had sex with men. Some of them, of course, may have been the monks themselves.

Stop Seven - Spurriergate Centre

You are now at the Spurriergate Centre, an unlikely place for LGBT history. But in 2008, whilst undergoing gas works at St Thomas Church in Osbaldwick, there was an unlikely discovery. Whilst investigating the grounds, the archaeologist found a stone slab, and it reads as follows.

Here lieth the body of Mr Richard Wright, who lived as partner with William Hutcherson, gentleman of the City of York, in great union for thirty-five years, remarkable for justice and fidelity, who died April 5th, 1747, age sixty. It goes on to say, here also lieth the body of William Hutcherson, Esquire, who departed the life on January 5th, 1772, aged eighty-nine. So, the stone slab showed that there was indeed a double burial for two men in the 18th century.

Finding about this was remarkable, and they wanted to find out more about who these people were. When they were doing their investigation, they found William Hutcherson's will, dated on the 5th of September, 1770, and it provided some detailed information about his personal affairs and commitments to the community. It revealed that he was quite an affluent man, and had acquaintances in York and Dublin.

There was no indication he married or had children, and his estate was divided between extended family and friends. Mr Hutcherson owned several properties and gardens in York, including a house and other properties in Coppergate. He also was very close to St Michael, Spurriergate, and this is where the link is to the Spurriergate Centre for today.

He left £300 to the church, and asked that £5 be distributed among the poor of the parish after his funeral. He also made provisions for the vicar of St Thomas' and the poor of that parish, and arranged for a marble monument to be erected in each church to commemorate his benefactors. The monument at St Michael's Spurriergate still survives.

It is described by Pevsner as one of the finest works by the fishers, masons in the city. It is of grey and white marble, richly carved with an ox, a lion's head and top with an obelisk and a putto. The inscription provides more biographical details about William Hutcherson.

To the memory of William Hutcherson, Esquire, of this city, who served the office of Sheriff in 1724, paid the fine for that of Alderman 1740, and departed this life on 5th January 1772. A partiality to the place of his birth, in which he lived for 89 years, led him to distinguish by his will the rector and the poor of this parish of £300. The personal message on Hutcherson's gravestone provides an interesting contrast with the public duties listed on the monument in St Michael's.

Amongst his other charitable donations, he left £100 to the County Hospital outside Monk Bar in York, £100 to the Bluecoat Boys' School in St Anthony's Halls, Peasholme Green, and £50 to the Greycoats Girls' School in Marygate. His concern for the education of poor children extended to Osbaldwick and Muckston, where he bequeathed £40 to a

schoolmaster to teach four boys or girls how to read and write. In his will, Hutcherson specified that he wished to be buried near the remains of my late dear friend and worthy partner, Mr Richard Wright.

His gravestone confirms that these wishes were carried out after his death. The relationship between the two men requires further elucidation. The Wrights was described as Hutcherson's partner suggests a number of possibilities, like they were business partners, close friends, or perhaps had deep emotional relationships.

The fact that they requested burial together and the explicit description on the gravestone, lived as partner in great union for 35 years, may suggest that the latter interpretation is more likely. This comes to the end of this chapter and I hope you enjoyed listening about Mr Wright and William Hutcherson.

Stop Eight - Church Lane

Running behind the church of St Michael's Spurriergate, just off Bridge Street, is one of York's many Snickets. This one, called Church Lane, has great significance to the LGBT community, even today. It was on this lane where two young men met in an oft-frequented and notorious gentlemen's lavatory.

In those days, when homosexuality was illegal and persecution was rife, almost every town and city had at least one gay cottage. This toilet was one of York's. It was here, in 1956, that the young Stuart Feather, whose parents ran a fish and chip shop in Acomb, met another young man, John Chesterman, from Dringhouses.

If ever there was love at first sight, this was it. The following year, on 4th September 1957, Feather and Chesterman brought newspapers and went into Dean's Park to sit on the grass and read about the Wolfenden Report on Homosexual Law Reform. Whilst sat reading, one of Feather's work colleagues from the local engineering factory cycled past, and observed them together.

Putting two and two together, the news became hot gossip in the factory, and the consequences that followed were predictable. Feather faced severe ridicule when he arrived at work, and was immediately demoted to the mundane tasks of fetching and carrying, bringing with it the corresponding drop in wages. In the 1960s, Feather and Chesterman moved to London to find new work, and in 1970 went together to the second ever meeting of the Gay Liberation Front.

Chesterman founded Gay International Times, the forerunner of Gay News, and in 1972, together with Feather, organised the very first Gay Pride March, through Highbury Fields, London. The UK's first Pride March. Around 200 people turned up that afternoon, and now this annual event attracts well over a million people, alongside many prides in notorious cities and communities across the UK, including here in York.

In the early 1970s, Feather would often be seen dressed in the frock, as the notorious drag queen, Gretel Feather. He, together with Betty Bourne, who played alongside Sir Ian McKellen in the 1960s, was a founding member of Blue Lips, a radical drag commune, which premiered at the Tabernacle in Powys Square in August 1978. We were a sensation, remembers Feather.

Sadly, Chesterman died in 1996, but Feather remains actively involved in campaigns for liberation, ongoing into the 2020s.

Stop Nine - St John's Church

York LGBTQ in the 80s and 90s. It was late 1986. The HIV-AIDS pandemic was at its peak and suddenly newspaper headlines screamed victim buried in concrete coffin.

I was still in Enlightened London, a city of hope and support, but I was due to move to this northern city within weeks. What was this redneck place I'd chosen? But the decision had been made. York was that concrete coffin-burying city.

I moved north in the dreadful winter of 1987 when ice covered the Ouse. The windows of my rented top floor room in Howard Street froze inside and I was trying to find a public telephone to dictate stories about hypothermia victims on unfamiliar streets as part of my new job as a senior reporter on the Yorkshire Evening Press, then on Coney Street, where City Screen is now. No smartphones then, despite the temperatures outside, a baptism of fire.

To say the gay scene was small was an understatement. Everyone congregated in the York Alms in the shadow of York Minster on High Petergate, even though the then landlord was far from welcoming. It was some years before gay owners took over the White Horse on Bootham and the East Orange Disco opened in the former church of St John the Evangelist at the bottom of Micklegate.

The late 80s and early 90s were a period of LGBTQ activism in York, but the LGBTQ scene in itself was very limited. I'd been involved in LGBTQ youth groups in London, there supported by the then Greater London Council and the Inner London Education Authority. In York, we had to find our own way.

I was a founding member of AIDS Concern North Yorkshire, ACNY, which is now North Yorkshire AIDS Action, and the York Lesbian and Gay Social Group, YLAGS. ACT UP was also active, for instance holding a mock gay wedding ceremony on the steps of York Minster. ACNY ran an advice and support helpline, while YLAGS organised more social activities, including country walks, guest speakers who included singer-songwriter Tom Robison, and held weekly meetings at various venues around the city over the years.

These included the Priory Street Centre, Guppies on Nunnery Lane and the Friends Meeting House on Friargate. It was a welcoming venue, helping people to come out with other like-minded people, and I know couples who met there and are now happily married. As well as

raising awareness and calling for more support with HIV AIDS, the then unequal age of consent at 21 for gay men was also an issue.

YLAGS stood a candidate in the Bishop Hill Ward of the city to protest the issue. We didn't win, but we caused waves within the then Labour-run authority, and I like to think and hope, through at least some of these efforts, you'll find a much more welcoming city now.

Stop Ten - Three Tons Pub

1970 in York. At 16, now free from school, there was too little information about anywhere gay men could socialise. Fortunately, my liberal father took me into the York Arms by the Minster, which had been an illicit gay pub for years.

The barman at the York Arms was Dickon, a gay man who had been in prison for gay sex more than once. He was a hero to the local community and when I was young he had one serious chat with me and pointed out that if anything wasn't right or if someone was difficult, I was to tell him. This he did with a similar friend of mine some 20 years later, so thank you Richard for looking out for us.

One tea time, I went into the York Arms. It was empty. A couple of big Americans came in, getting a drink and sitting down.

Where are the gay men of York? They announced very loudly. After a minute or two, Dickon came out from behind the bar and responded, let them get home for their tea. He was a kind man.

Randomly, I came across the second issue of Gay News in Smiths in Kearney Street. This was a fortnightly newspaper that had local listings. I rang the national number for the Campaign for Homosexual Equality, CHE, who gave me a local contact.

I then rang the local number to find my old German teacher, Roger de Pleij. On Coppergate, CHE met surreptitiously at the Three Tons. I met a small group of men, of which I was definitely the youngest.

I learnt there was a gay society at York University and went along to find out who and what was happening there. This social group created a degree of safety at the university. I knew a few gay lecturers, but found many students shy of being out.

There were occasional university gay discos, which I had great expectations of. Unfortunately, students I knew didn't necessarily go to the disco nights, which I assumed at the time to be about being too visible. The event was in Derwent or Goodrick colleges, and there could be people who came and shouted at us.

We put up with this. After the 1967 Homosexual Law Reform Act, we were still illegal as we were mostly under 21.

Stop Eleven - Castle Museum

Hello there, my name is Philip Newton and I work at York Castle Museum as a Community Engagement Researcher. At the Castle Museum we have two 18th century buildings that were a series of prisons. There was another later building that was constructed in what is now the Castle car park in the early 1800s, but this was demolished in the 1930s.

Now I'm not going to go into the very complicated law system of the UK, but basically for much of the 18th and 19th centuries when people were arrested they were held in jail until their trial at the local Assizes. The Assizes were a huge regional event where people would travel to the city in a festival sort of atmosphere. York races were actually held to coincide with the Assizes to have the maximum number of visitors.

Today our main punishment for crimes is a loss of liberty through imprisonment alongside rehabilitation. For smaller crimes we have fines that are also handed out. In the two centuries where York Castle jail was in use, punishments included fines, short-term imprisonment, hard labour, transportation and of course capital punishment through hanging.

The Crown Court is right next door to the prison complex and prisoners would be walked from their cell to the court on the day of their trial and, if convicted, walked back to the prison until their sentence was carried out. I'll tell you a bit more about one person who was held at York Castle jail and tried for sodomy. Thomas Rogers was born in 1802 in West Yorkshire and was in the employment of a Mr Wilson, a solicitor, in 1834 in Sheffield.

Some references state that he was a carriage driver while others a general labourer to Mr Wilson. He confessed to his employer that he committed sodomy with another servant. Mr Wilson contacted the magistrate who then sent him to York Castle jail to be tried at the spring assizes.

Justice Alderson oversaw the trial and the prosecution brought Thomas's confession to his employer as evidence. Alderson, the judge, was wary about allowing this confession as evidence as it wasn't produced under caution by a magistrate. Nevertheless, he did allow it and left it to the jury to decide if the evidence was believable.

They did and Thomas was found guilty and sentenced to hang. Thomas left the court without saying a word and was turned to his cell at York Castle jail. He resided at York Castle jail until the 26th of April when his sentence was to be carried out.

In our collection we have a notebook from a journalist who reported on hangings at the castle and was an eyewitness to Thomas's death. He described Thomas as having a pleasant appearance and noted he was visited by his brother and sister-in-law beforehand. A few minutes before 12 noon, before a crowd of thousands, Thomas and two other prisoners appeared at the drop and the punishment was carried out.

Thomas and one of the others being hanged were buried together in York St Mary's Castlegate churchyard which is also looked after by York Museums Trust. Thomas was one of the last to be hanged in the country with James Pratt and John Smith being the last to be hanged later in 1835. At York Castle Museum we're committed to telling stories of the everyday lives of people, especially those that are and have been marginalised and discriminated against throughout history.

To find out more about our collection and stories we tell, check our website and our Twitter feeds.

Stop Twelve - Hartoft Street

My brush with Frankie Howard. Halfway through 1987, after six months in York, I bought a house in the red brick terrace, Hartoft Street, between Fishergate and the River Ouse. A few years later, I discovered the street's gay connection. Leaving for my job on the Northern Echo one morning, there was activity down the end of the street.

I tried to find out what was happening, but the crew were very cagey. It was only when I got home they were more forthcoming. They wanted to film a long shot from a mobile crane panning and zooming into the bedroom at 53, with the street covered in fake snow.

But they had a problem. There was a bright red 2CV car parked in their way. Well, I said, if you tell me what you're doing, and let us take a photograph of your filming, I'll move it.

With that, I had a nice exclusive for the next morning's front page. They were recreating the Snowy Night comedian Frankie Howard was born, for a biopic. Frankie Howard was a comedian from the mid-1940s through to 1990, two years before his death.

His catchphrase was, Titter Ye Not. He achieved fame, firstly in radio, and then TV and film. Among his most famous appearances were in Up, Pompeii and the Carry On comedies.

He also appeared in one-man shows, both on stage and a small screen. According to York Civic Trust, which placed a blue plaque on the property in 2016, Frankie Howard was born Francis Alec Howard there on 6th March 1917, although other records suggest he was born in a hospital in the city. But he did live there for the first two and a half years of his life, as his father Francis was a regular soldier at the nearby barracks on Fulford Road.

His mother Edith worked at the Rowntree Chocolate Factory. Frankie described a street as in a poorish area of the city, near the River Ouse. He later said he had only one memory of living in York, and that was of falling down the stairs, an experience which left him with a lifelong dread of heights.

With relatives in York, however, he returned on many occasions for family holidays, and later in life spoke of his fondness for the city. It was not until after he died in 1992 that the public became aware that Frankie was gay. His mother was apparently unaware, and, as active homosexuality was illegal in England and Wales until 1967, his career could have been ruined had the news leaked out.

His partner for the last 35 years of his life was Dennis Haymer, a waiter at the time they met, but later Frankie's manager.