

The Rainbow Plaque Trail



2018



Leeds Civic Trust & Leeds LGBT+ HUB, have worked together to prepare this special #RainbowPlaques trail to celebrate & highlight the history, events & people that have influenced our LGBT+ heritage.

To all who have made a nomination for a Rainbow Plaque this year, thank you, the stories you've shared with us have been inspirational, heart-breaking and fun in equal measure!

Leeds Civic Trust is a charity that works with its members and community partners to help make Leeds a great place to live, work and play. @leedscivictrust leedscivictrust.org.uk

Leeds LGBT+ Community Hub is facilitated by Leeds City Council, & led by members of the community with various groups & individuals leading & participating on discussion topics affecting our community @leedsCC_LGBT

A #RainbowPlaque is just the beginning of the conversation, we will all have places, events and people that have personal significance to us.

Spotted a missing plaque? Then get nominating! We hope to expand the trail beyond the city centre next year, nominations will open again in February 2019, so keep them coming in via the Trust website!

The Rainbow Plaques will be on display until 17 September.

Happy Pride everyone!

An estimated 77,000 people identifying as LGBT+ live in Leeds. We've celebrated Pride for over 12 years; this is a time to celebrate who we are and who we love. It is also a time to remember the experiences, people and events that have shaped who we are. National and international events have all influenced local LGBT+ freedoms.

LGBT+ communities and their allies have often been forced to challenge the status quo to receive fair and equal treatment.

#RainbowPlaques aim to make LGBT+ heritage, achievements and stories visible.



1843 ³

Leeds men, Thomas Sykes and Edward Rayner were sentenced to death following a liaison in a toilet in The Regent pub's yard, later amended to life-imprisonment. The death penalty was abolished in 1861, however committing 'homosexual acts' still carried harsh penalties.



1885 ⁹

The Labouchere Amendment was passed. This prohibited 'gross indecency' between males; making any sexual acts punishable by law. Writer Oscar Wilde and Enigma code-breaker Alan Turing were both sentenced under this law. In Leeds, under this repression, artist Robert Hawthorn Kitson left the United Kingdom, building a beautiful villa in Sicily.

1921 ⁵

Cyril Livingstone was born (d. 2011). He had a couturier shop on Albion Place, dressing the fashion-conscious of Leeds. Livingstone was also a well-known actor, director and theatre critic. He famously fell out with fellow Loirer Peter O'Toole... that's show business!

1921

An attempt to make 'gross indecency' between women illegal was defeated in the House of Lords - in an attempt not to raise awareness of lesbian relationships!

1934 ⁸

Playwright, actor and author, Alan Bennett is born in Armley.



1953

The New Penny on Call Lane opens, this is the city's longest-running gay pub. Now celebrated with a blue plaque.

1957

The Wolfenden Report recommends that homosexuality should be decriminalised. Ten years later The Sexual Offences Act is introduced, which decriminalises homosexual acts between two men over 21 'in private'.

1969

Becoming infuriated by police oppression, a series of spontaneous and violent demonstrations by the LGBT+ community started in the Stonewall Inn, New York. A pivotal moment in LGBT+ history, it started the modern movement for LGBT+ rights.



1971 ¹⁰

The Leeds Gay Liberation Front start to meet at Leeds University. The Swarthmore Centre becomes another safe space for LGBT+ friendly meetings to be held openly, with the Committee for Homosexual Equality hosting some of their meetings there.

1973

With very few dedicated places for LGBT+ people to meet, many men met other men by cruising or cottaging in public toilets. This carried a very serious risk of arrest, entrapment by the police and public naming in newspapers. On his blog, historian John Murphy details his experience of being arrested as a student in Leeds "...one of the most traumatic experiences of my life. I felt so ashamed. The police persuaded me to plead guilty - saying they'd go easy on me. I did but it turned out the police lied. For weeks I lived in total fear... but it also was a turning point. I came-out. I swore I'd never be conned; never be lied to and never to be a victim again - just because I was gay. And I would never again feel ashamed of being gay." john-murphy.co.uk



1974 ⁷

Kirkstall born musician and conductor, Angela Morley, becomes the first openly transgender person to be nominated for an Academy Award. A real Hollywood idol, and former BBC Big Band conductor, Morley composed music for Watership Down, Star Wars, Dallas and other well known productions.

1974 ¹³

The first trans conference is held in Leeds University. Featuring workshops, discussions, bookstalls, fashion services and a disco. With help from the Leeds Gay Liberation Front, and Leeds Student Union, organisers The Beaumont Society said; "Here was a chance, once, and hopefully for all, to dispel the Sunday newspaper scandal image which has dogged our steps for so long".

1970s/80s ¹ ²

Many LGBT+ friendly events, pub nights and clubs open in Leeds in response to a growing visibility of the scene. Ye Olde Red Lion, The Grove, Charlie's, The Bridge Inn to name a few.



1981 ¹¹

'Tainted Love' storms to the top of the charts. With a striking New Romantics and androgynous image, Leeds 'Poly' (now Beckett) student, Marc Almond becomes a household name as the lead singer of Soft Cell.

1982

Leeds Lesbian Line opens a switchboard to support women questioning their sexuality and provide information about the LGBT+ community in Leeds.

1987 ⁶

DV8 Physical Theatre perform 'My Sex Our Dance' having rehearsed at Yorkshire Dance. The AIDS outbreak during the 1980s claimed the lives of a disproportionate amount of gay men. Against a painful backdrop of prejudice surrounding AIDS, their performance provided a cathartic and powerful response.

1988 ¹⁴

Introduced by Thatcher's government in 1988, Section 28 forbade councils and schools from "intentionally promoting homosexuality". Many teachers felt unable to support students who may be bullied or questioning their sexuality. It forced many professionals 'into the closet' for fear of prosecution and of losing their livelihoods. Section 28 was repealed in 2003.

2005

Legislation allowing civil-partnerships becomes legal. Terry George and Michael Rothwell became one of the first couples in the country to have a civil partnership at Bar Fibre on Lower Briggate (which Terry George owned). Although dubbed 'gay marriage' by the media, civil-partnerships weren't recognised as 'marriage' by Government.

2012 ¹²

Nicola Adams OBE beats Ren Cancan and becomes the first openly LGBT+ person to win an Olympic boxing gold medal. Born and raised in Leeds, Nicola topped 2012's 'Independent' list for Most Influential LGBT+ people. She continues to fight and has won each of her bouts since turning professional. Don't mess with the Lioness!

2014 ⁴

2013's Marriage Act becomes law and means that same-sex couples can marry on an equal footing with heterosexual couples. Ceremonies can be performed at licensed venues, and by religious venues that have 'opted-in'. Mill Hill Chapel became one of the first venues in Leeds to perform same-sex marriages within a religious context.

#RainbowPlaques

The Rainbow Plaque Trail

- 1 The Grove, Hunslet
- 2 Charlie's Nightclub, Queen's Court
- 3 Sykes & Rayner, The Regent
- 4 Mill Hill Chapel
- 5 Cyril Livingstone, Hotel Chocolat
- 6 DV8 Physical Theatre, Yorkshire Dance
- 7 Angela Morley, BBC Building
- 8 Alan Bennett, Leeds Playhouse*
*subject to building work at the Playhouse
- 9 Robert H. Kitson, Leeds Art Gallery
- 10 Swarthmore Centre
- 11 Soft Cell, Leeds Beckett University
- 12 Nicola Adams, First Direct Arena
- 13 First Trans Conference, Uni. of Leeds
- 14 Section 28, Central Library
- 15 Polari, City Varieties



We are grateful to the following organisations, groups and businesses who have sponsored #RainbowPlaques - if you would like to sponsor one next year, get in touch with us via office@leedscivictrust.org.uk for more details.

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