

Under the Rainbow

Documents and Artefacts from Five Decades of LGBTQ+ Struggle and Liberation

A retrospective by The Sparrows' Nest, People's Histreh, CJ DeBarra and Alan Lodge.



From Thursday 25th July to Sunday 4th August 2024 we put on an exhibition at Broadway Cinema Gallery to coincide with Nottingham Pride. We worked with our regular collaborators, People's Histreh and photographer Alan 'Tash' Lodge, and also our fab new friend, journalist and author CJ DeBarra. CJ has just submitted the manuscript of their new, two-volume work entitled *Queer Nottingham*, forthcoming in early 2025 from *Five Leaves*. They also gave a sell-out talk at Nottingham Central Library on Thursday 1st August.



Many thanks must also go to David Edgley who opened the exhibition with an informative and entertaining talk on local LGBTQ+ history, as well as Nottingham's White Rose Outlet store who provided us with a mannequin so we could scare new generations with Chris Richardson's nightmarish Thatcher mask.



This has been our second exhibition at Broadway Cinema Gallery, following 2023's event *Regime Change Begins at Home – Nottingham Opposition to the 2003 Invasion of Iraq*.

The exhibition could not have taken place without the generous support of so many people, including everyone who promoted the event and the veterans of the liberation movement who provided invaluable feedback during installation, especially on the more disturbing subjects such as homophobic violence and the AIDS epidemic.



We tried to offset the bias in our archival collections towards materials produced and donated by white gay men by including materials e.g. focussing on lesbians and LGBTQ+ people of colour, but especially trans people are almost invisible in our twentieth century materials.

As such we are very thankful that [The Nottingham Centre for Transgender Health](#) allowed us to display their enormous trans flag and a beautiful painting celebrating Brianna Ghey (Rest in Power!). Our very heartfelt thanks must of course also go to all the incredibly supportive workers at Broadway Cinema, notably Lee Nicholls who enabled us to use Broadway Gallery.

Of course there would be no archive of local LGBTQ+ struggles if it had not been for the many persons who collected materials over decades, most notably our dearly missed friend and comrade [Chris Richardson](#) and his partner Richard McCance. Richard was the first openly gay person ever elected to public office in Nottingham and Chris was instrumental not only in producing many of the exhibited artefacts, but crucially also in preserving them for the future, with their archive eventually being kindly donated to the Sparrows' Nest.

Finally, we are incredibly thankful to every single one of the 505 visitors of all ages, backgrounds and genders who visited over the course of ten days (we sadly lost one day when Broadway closed as a fascist mob descended on the City Centre).

We were amazed how long people spent looking at the various exhibits and grateful for the feedback and encouragement, new contacts, donations of new materials, and all the stories relating to the exhibits and peoples' life experiences.

The visitors' engagement, humbling feedback and heartfelt contributions made the event the huge success it was.

The title of the exhibition reflected the focus of the exhibited materials. It was not just about celebrating Nottingham Pride by displaying Tash's wonderful photos of local events going back to the early 2000s, but focussing more generally on LGBTQ+ struggles, activism and solidarity since the 1970s.

Key exhibits were the cover pages of Nottingham's many local LGBTQ+ community newsletters, such as *Chimaera*,

Outlook, *Gay East Midlands*, *Diversion*, and many more. They contextualised the other photographs and artefacts, recounting the struggles of local LGBTQ+ people, who always stood shoulder to shoulder with others, ever pushing back against a tide of bigotry and hatred, whilst creating vibrant communities that not only survived, but thrived.

The exhibits depicted both heartbreaking and heartwarming stories which clearly made an impact on our visitors, both on the veterans of the movement as well as on younger persons. Many of the former stressed how younger generations need to remember the struggles fought and many of the latter were visibly moved and upset by discovering this side of their history, sometimes for the first time. We hope we have contributed to keeping these stories alive, offering an opportunity to old and young to learn from and be inspired by the past to better fight the struggles of our day.



As such it seemed an appropriate end to these remarkable two weeks that on the last afternoon a young protester, engaged in a lone LGBTQ+ vigil outside a restaurant a few doors down, was spontaneously reinforced by older activists who had been visiting the exhibition.

Once more many thanks to all of you who made the exhibition possible.

Please [continue to use our extensive LGBTQ+ resources in our free Digital Library](#) and please do get in touch if you have any materials which may be of interest. We remain very keen to collect, curate and digitise any relevant materials you may have.