

LGBTI HERITAGE WALK OF SOHO AND COVENT GARDEN

Covent Garden – with pansies

- In a 60 minute walk from Bow Street Magistrate's Court to Charing Cross Road you'll learn
- How Harry Potter and erotic Sapphic dancing are connected
- Where Crossrail irreplaceably damaged London's LGBT heritage
- Why the National Archive contains powder puffs
- It was devised and written by Andy Kirby.

Directions – Look for the former Court at the top of Bow Street.

Stop 1 – Bow Street Magistrate's Court



In November 1928 this court saw the banning of Radclyffe Hall's novel "The Well of Loneliness" after medical advice that it would encourage female homosexuality and lead to 'a social and national disaster'. This, Hall's fifth novel "The Well of Loneliness" got no racier than 'she kissed her full on the lips like a lover' and "that night they were not divided". The book was denounced by The Sunday Express: 'I would rather give a healthy boy or a healthy girl a phial of prussic acid than this novel. Poison kills the body, but moral poison kills the soul.' Hall attended the trial dressed in a leather driving coat and Spanish riding hat. The magistrate ruled the novel an 'obscene libel' and ordered that all copies should be destroyed. Casanova, Oscar Wilde, Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, Dr Crippen, Roger Casement and the Krays were also committed here.

Directions – cross Long Acre at top of Bow Street and walk up Endell Street, look for plaque on Dudley Court right past Shorts Gardens.

Stop 2 – St Giles' Workhouse



Simeon Solomon was a Jewish Pre-Raphaelite painter who entered a workhouse on this site in 1884, battling alcoholism, where he continued to work and died in the dining room on 14 August 1905. He exhibited at the Academy between 1858 and 1872 and had many society patrons. In 1871, Solomon attended the trial of the transvestites Stella and Fanny, aka Ernest Boulton and Frederick Park, and wrote letters about them to Swinburne. His career ended when he was arrested in 1873 with George Roberts, a sixty-year-old stableman in a public urinal in Stratford Place Mews, off Oxford Street. He continued unrepentantly, was arrested and imprisoned again in Paris and continued painting and drawing to the end of his life.

Directions – cross the road, look for 81

Stop 3 – Caravan Club 81 Endell Street



The club, in a basement was run by Billy Reynolds and strongman Jack Neave or "Iron Foot Jack" for his metal boot. The police surveilled it from October 1933 from the Shaftesbury Theatre and in August 1934 raided. Insp Clarence, noted in his report: "Men were dancing with men and women were dancing with women...hands on the other's buttocks and pressing themselves together."

103 men and women were arrested, charged at Bow Street police station. Many were working class shop assistants and waiters and were found not guilty if they never frequented such a club again. Reynolds and Neave, respectively got 12 months and 20 months hard labour in prison. In 2017 the club was recreated in the Freud Gallery.

Directions – Continue over High Holborn and cross over, Dyott Street continues Endell Street.

Stop 4 – Dyott Street Bill Chapman



Bill Chapman, a ballad-singer and seller, and gender-crosser, lived in a cheap lodging house in this street near St Giles, with his 'wife' Isabella Watson around 1834-5 and probably since the 1820s. Church built 1848. In 1835, Bill Chapman was brought before Hatton Garden magistrates as a common cheat and imposter, and for creating a disturbance. The magistrate observed: "I never saw a figure more like a man, and the voice is manly." Chapman was discharged by the court. The magistrate explained that although Chapman was "disreputable", he knew of "no law to punish her for wearing male attire." As they left, Isabella exclaimed, "Never mind, my lad, if we live a hundred years it will be in this manner."

Directions - Walk back to High Holborn, turn right, follow it into St Giles High Street, turn left past the church.



R E X - v - BILLIE JOYCE and OTHERS.		
LIST OF AND INDEX TO EXHIBITS.		
Exhibit Number.	Description.	Page.
✓ ①	Agreement for tenancy of 6, Little Denmark Street.	1.
②	Photograph of Club room.	-
③	Photograph of Club room.	-
✓ 4.	Small powder puff marked x.	-
✓ 5.	Powder puff in silk handkerchief.	-
✓ 6.	Powder puff and circular box of powder.	-
✓ ⑦	List of accused's replies when charged.	4.
✓ 8.	Members' Book.	-
✓ ⑨	List of defendants appearing to be members.	5.
✓ 10.	1 box powder, 1 box rouge, 1 box eye black, 4 powder puffs, 2 puff sacks, 1 tin powder, 1 comb.	-
✓ 11.	1 tin Harrisons Pomade Vaseline and 1 powder puff.	-
✓ ⑫	Plan of Billie's Club.	-
✓ 13.	Copy of the Rules of the Club Powder puffs (sent in by Insp. Fish)	-
14.	Ear drops.	Put in by Insp. Fish
15.	2 Powder puffs.	
16.	2 Handkerchiefs	
17.	1 Powder puff.	
18.	1 tube lipstick.	
19.	Tin Vaseline.	
20.	Small Mirror.	

No 6 Flitcroft St which used to be known as Little Denmark Street was the site of Billie's Club opened in October 1935. Billie's was run by Billie Joice, who encouraged a primarily queer clientele and hosted camp cabaret and music hall acts like Fred Barnes. Police officers went undercover and raided the club in 1936. They used blotting paper to test those arrested for the use of make up and some of the powder puffs seized are now in National Archive. Detective Sergeant George Miller reported that the 'majority of the males present were of the nancy boy type. They used makeup and their hair was waved or dyed'.

Stop 5 – Billie's Club Flitcroft Street

Directions – Go back to St Giles High Street, head towards Centre point tower block, look at building site on left.



Only the frontage remains of our first gay victim of Crossrail the First Out Coffee Bar. It was the first daytime gay venue in the West End. Opening in 1986 and run as a co-op it closed in October 2011. The Mayor's Night Czar Ame Lane worked there at one time. While mixed it was a favourite spot for lesbians, especially on first dates, and the downstairs area displayed art and became a bar in the evenings. A noticeboard there advertised flatshares, catshares and artificial insemination classes. It had something of the vibe of the London Lesbian and Gay Centre.

Stop 6 – First Out Café, St Giles' High Street

Directions – walk down Tottenham Court Road, right into Manette Street, right into Greek Street right past the church.

Stop 7 – Astoria, Substation, Soho Square



Another consequence of Crossrail was the end of the Astoria dance venue which housed gay nightclubs from 1976 to 2009 as well as concerts from Oasis, Manic Street Preachers and Nirvana. weekly G-A-Y nights were known for getting stars like Kylie Minogue and Britney Spears on stage, as well as dropping balloons on everyone at regular intervals. Also demolished behind the Astoria was Falconberg Court, home to a series of bars - Stallions, Substation and, from 2001, Ghetto. Further behind is Soho Square where William Beckford was born at number 22 in 1760. Though married he had a long standing affair with William "Kitty" Courtenay and fled the country when the latter's uncle Lord Loughborough publicised their letters.

Directions – backtrack to Charing Cross Road and look for Phoenix Theatre,

Stop 8 – Derek Jarman's flat, 16 Phoenix House



After being based at Butler's Wharf near Tower Bridge in 1984 queer film-maker, artist and activist Derek Jarman rented a small fourth floor corner studio flat at Phoenix House found for him by actor Christopher Biggins and stayed there and at Prospect Cottage Dungeness until his death in 1994 from an AIDS related illness. He did much work on Caravaggio here. He let Ron Peck film a scene here for "Nighthawks" when another location fell through. He writes about his life there in his memoirs "At Your Own Risk" and "Modern nature". He was an outspoken activist who fought for LGBTQ rights, and he spoke openly about his HIV diagnosis. The door is to the left of the theatre entrance.

Directions – continue past theatre to Phoenix Gardens, turn right and right again into Shaftsbury Avenue, cross, take Mercer Street to Monmouth Street.

Stop 9 – As You Like It Café 27 Monmouth Street



The 'As You Like It' Coffee House was opened by theatre agent Barrie Stacey in 1960, in the run-down Seven Dials area. It was very popular with theatricals and attracted names including Rudolf Nureyev and Quentin Crisp. It closed when Stacey devoted more time to managing performers like Jessie Matthews.

"weekends I was doing my dance training with London Contemporary Dance. A theatre agent ran the coffee bar based in Monmouth Street called the As You Like It Coffee Bar. We were aware that he had this agency and young men used to go through the coffee bar to go up to his office. We used to wink at each other and say "well I wonder what it would take to get onto his books."" Alan Herdman

Directions – Go back to Shaftsbury Avenue, turn left and head for Cambridge Circus junction.

Stop 10 – Palace Theatre – Maud Allan



Dancer Maud Allan's erotic dance *Vision of Salomé* based on Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*, was notorious and she performed it here. In January 1918, Noel Pemberton-Billing MP claimed she was one of 47,000 Britons named as 'sexual perverts' in a German Black Book and were open to blackmail because "in Lesbian ecstasy the most sacred secrets of State were betrayed". He claimed Allan was involved with Margot Asquith, wife of former PM Herbert Asquith. Allan sued him for libel. In June 1918 the defence claimed Allen's lesbianism was proven because she knew the word 'clitoris'. She lost her case and continued performing until 1934, and taught dance at her Regent's Park home where she lived with her secretary and lover, Verna Aldrich.

A map of Soho, London, showing a red route with 11 numbered stops. The route starts at 1 (The Shaftesbury Theatre), goes to 2 (Cillian Lynne Theatre), 3 (The Club London), 4 (Oasis Sports Centre), 5 (Flat Iron), 6 (Google London), 7 (Tottenham Court Road), 8 (Foyles), 9 (Monmouth Coffee), 10 (Prince Edward Theatre), and ends at 11 (Curler Soho). The map includes various landmarks like Soho Square Gardens, Leicester Square, and Covent Garden.

- 1 Bow Street Court Radclyffe Hall
- 2 St Giles Workhouse – Simeon Solomon
- 3 Caravan Club
- 4 Dyott Street - “Bill” Chapman
- 5 Billie’s Club
- 6 First Out Café
- 7 Astoria, Substation William Beckford
- 8 Phoenix House – Derek Jarman
- 9 As You Like If Café – Rudolf Nureyev
- 10 Palace Theatre – Maud Allan