

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our Queer History Trail, produced and curated by Hastings Queer History Collective.

The Collective was formed in early 2020 to explore and document the stories of LGBTQIA+ people in Hastings, enhancing on a more permanent basis the visibility of queer history within the museum.

For this trail, they have chosen eleven stories from the collection that illuminate the trials and triumphs of our forebears, proudly affirming Hastings' place on the pink history map.

Samurai Suit of Armour Brassey Collection

Composite parts dating from
17th-19th century, Japan

Eighteenth century colonialism is responsible for the destruction of many ancient gender systems in countries around the world. Some of them are present in the Brassey collection.

This armour was worn by samurai soldiers whose systems of gender fluidity flourished during Japan's Edo Period (1603-1687).

At puberty, samurai boys became a third gender called *wakashu* (若衆). *Wakashu* entered a sexual, apprentice/master relationship with an adult samurai. At around 18 years of age, the *wakashu* complete a coming-of-age ceremony (known as *genpuku* (元服) to return to manhood and become a samurai.

When Japan industrialised during the Meiji era (1868-1912), Western influences began the inevitable dismantling of these traditions and beliefs.



Taxidermied Pheasant (Phasianus colchicus)

HASMG:1993.51.4

Colin Dunton, Taxidermist
c1990, United Kingdom

Despite queer behaviour in the animal kingdom being observed as far back as the 18th century, it is often ignored or hidden from the public. One example is of female pheasants changing their sex when they stop laying eggs and turn their brown feathers into the brightly coloured feathering typical of males.

Pheasants feature in some of the earliest European studies of queer behaviour in animals. In 1780, naturalist John Hunter (1728-1793) recounted his observations of 'sex changing pheasants' in *Account of an Extraordinary Pheasant*.

With queerness visible in the natural world, the argument that it is somehow 'unnatural' begins to unravel.



MUSEUM MAP

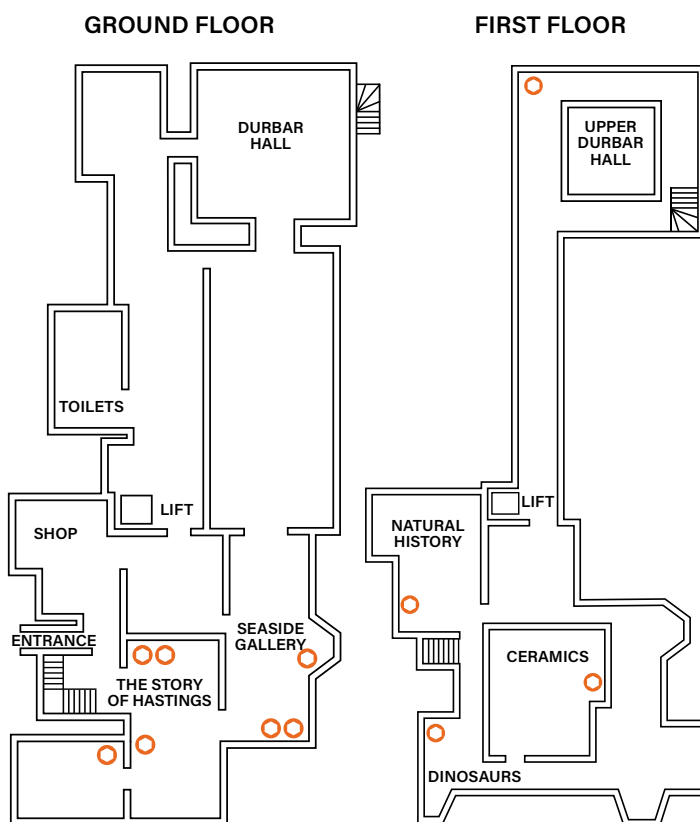
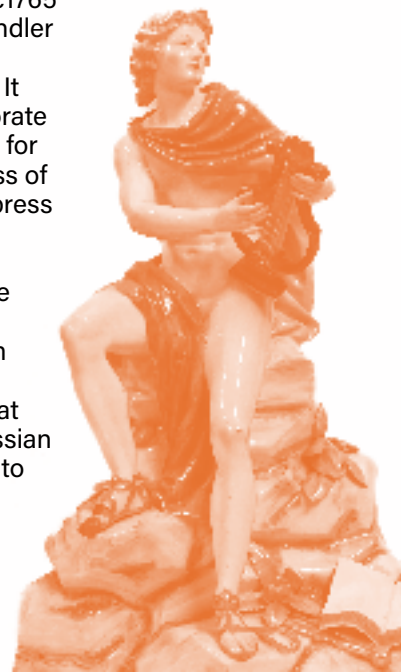


Figure of Apollo HASMG:1956.39

JJ Kaendler, Meissen Porcelain
c1765, Dresden, Germany

According to classical mythology, the Olympian god Apollo had many lovers of many genders, including the mortal man Hyacinthus. When Hyacinthus dies tragically, as told in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, the 'kind god', after failed attempts to resurrect him, creates the Hyacinth flower in memory of their love.

This figurine was designed c1765 by Master ceramicist JJ Kaendler (1706-1775), at the Meissin factory (est. 1710), Germany. It was intended to be an elaborate table centre-piece designed for Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia (1729-1796). The Empress was thought to have had relationships with men and women, including confidante and luminary Princess Dashkova (1743-1810), whom philologist, Diana Burgin, describes as "one of the great 'apparitional lesbians' of Russian history." Dashkova intended to be buried with the fan that Catherine gave her on the night they met.



Iguanodon Footprint (cast fossil)

HASMG:1993.63

Early Cretaceous period (c140 million years ago)
Gynde Gap, Bexhill, United Kingdom

Cast fossils occur when plant or animal remains impress into soft soil, creating a mould that is then filled with sediments over time. The fossil that forms is a three-dimensional copy of the organism.

We cannot comment on the sexuality of the dinosaur who made this footprint, but we do know that the 11-year-old boy who found it is now grown-up, happily married to his husband Greg and living in a pink house in Hastings.

Christopher Winter found the footprint with his father by their beach hut in Glynde Gap in 1979, after a storm dislodged it from the cliff. Christopher and Greg still cruise for fossils and are particularly proud of an ammonite they found on the Jurassic coast.

Queer history takes many forms, and in this case, it makes up an important part of the fossil's provenance.



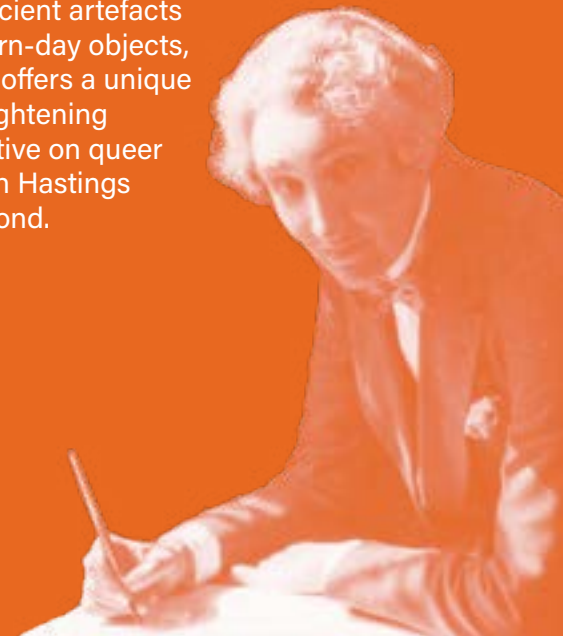
QUEER HISTORY TRAIL MAP

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery

QUEER HISTORY TRAIL MAP

Follow the map to discover eleven LGBTQIA+ histories selected by the Hastings Queer History Collective.

From ancient artefacts to modern-day objects, this trail offers a unique and enlightening perspective on queer history in Hastings and beyond.



William II Silver Penny

HASMG:T2022.194

1087-1100, United Kingdom

William II (c1056-1100) was the King of England from 1087 until his death in 1100. He was the son of William the Conqueror (c1028-1087), who won the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

Unusually for a monarch, William II was never married and had no children. This, along with his effeminacy and the fashions of his court, led medieval chroniclers, such as William of Malmesbury (c1095-1143) and Orderic Vitalis (c1075-1142), to speculate about his sexuality. Modern historians, Emma Mason and Frank Barlow have shared these speculations.



William II had an uneasy relationship with Anselm (1033-1109), the Archbishop of Canterbury, whom he appointed in 1093. Like the King, Saint Anselm is thought to have had queer sensibilities. Historians John Boswell and Rictor Norton highlight his intimate letters to male friends as evidence. Arguably, he could also be considered to have been a defender of gay rights. In 1102, the Roman Catholic Council of London decreed that sodomy was a sin punishable by imprisonment. Saint Anselm, the convenor of the Council, refused to publish this edict.

"Dear Derek, Wish You Were Here"

Zed Gregory
Giclee print, 2023

Derek Jarman (1942-1994) was a visionary filmmaker, queer activist and prolific diarist. This work was commissioned by Hastings Queer History Collective as an artistic response to a postcard Jarman found on a visit to Hastings in 1992. He recounts in his diary:

"I found a great card in Hastings of a boy holding a large stick of pink rock, wearing only the briefest pants, with the title: What a Sweetie. Bought their entire stock."



Jarman's connection to the South East was strengthened when in 1986 (the same year he was diagnosed with HIV) he moved to Prospect Cottage in Dungeness, Kent. Just 26 miles from Hastings, the cottage was a creative sanctuary in his final years. Under the stewardship of Creative Folkstone, Prospect Cottage protects Jarman's legacy by attracting queer pilgrims from across the UK.

Gwen Lally

(1882-1963)

Image courtesy of Egham Museum

Gwen Lally was a successful actor, theatre producer and pageant master. She lived with her partner and fellow actress Mabel Gibson (1887-1979), from 1924 until her death in 1963. In both her professional and private life, Lally fearlessly challenged the gender norms of her time, favouring male roles on stage and masculine dress. In 1934, she informed the Sydney Morning Herald that she could "...claim the distinction of being the only actress who has never worn skirts on the stage."

In 1932, Lally organised the Pageant of Battle Abbey. It was a large scale reproduction of the Battle of Hastings with a cast of over 2000 volunteers. In this photo, she can be seen first on the left in her role as Pageant Master.



Souvenir Book of Hastings, Newman & Co

HASMG:1976.132

19th century, England

In the 19th century, Hastings was a popular seaside destination. Lord Byron (1788-1824), Lewis Carroll (1832-1898), JMW Turner (1775-1851), and Dante (1828-1882) and Christina (1830-1894) Rossetti were some of the many famous people who visited Hastings. Another is the queer and lesbian icon, diarist Anne Lister (1791-1840). After a 'determined' search for accommodation away from any Cholera hotspots, Anne stayed at 15 Pelham Crescent with her unrequited love, Vere Hobart (c1803-1888), from 1831 - 1832.

Anne wrote in her diary on 28 October 1831, that she found St. Leonards as "a quite new good substantial village of various architecture - gothic and Grecian - and very pretty" Hastings too was described as a "very prettily situated and agreeable town - and all the company part handsome"



Marti Dean and Simon Costin, The Gay Bogies

HASMG:2022.48.1

Digital photograph
1996, Hastings, United Kingdom

In 2022, Jackie and the Queens were the first Hastings Pride troupe to march at the annual Jack in the Green festival. However, the May Day event's earliest queer history can actually be traced back to the Gay Bogies 30 years earlier.



From their first experience of the festival, Marti Dean and Simon Costin were captivated by its magical and friendly atmosphere. They founded the Gay Bogies (on Acid) with their friends Craig and Spencer. The four gay men attended the festival wearing extravagant costumes throughout the '90s. For Marti, the Gay Bogies "...proved that people just see people and the Jack In The Green community takes you for who you are."

Hastings Pier, 1930

HASMG:1990.18.175

London News Agency Photos Ltd
1930, Hastings, United Kingdom

This photo shows two young women enjoying a promenade on Hastings' Pier. The seaside became a destination for health and relaxation during the Victorian era. It's popularity was further enhanced when the new railways offered fast, convenient access.

The more relaxed attitudes adopted on holidays are thought to have enabled the embracing of behaviours that elsewhere may have been considered risky or unacceptable. Historian Alison Oram suggests that in the early 20th century, women began to challenge traditional gender roles and this subversion is reflected in their 'crossing over' to masculine clothing. Equally, it could also reflect more fluid ideas of gender, as well as lesbian dress codes. Oram highlights that masculine dress became more closely associated with women's same-sex desires in the public imagination.



Alan Turing

(1912-1954)

Alan Turing, the mathematician credited for breaking the German enigma codes during WWII, spent his childhood at Baston Lodge in St Leonards.

Homosexuality was a criminal offence during Turing's lifetime. In 1952, he was convicted of gross indecency and forced to choose between chemical castration or two years imprisonment. Turing was found dead in 1954 aged 41; the official ruling was suicide. Turing's death, and other high-profile cases, put public pressure on the Government to decriminalise homosexuality. The 1957 Wolfenden report recommended legalization, but in England this did not happen until 1967 with the passing of the Sexual Offences Act.

At the time of the report, conservative Hastings MP Neill Cooper-Key (1907-1981) continued to advocate for imprisonment, believing the country 'wasn't ready for decriminalisation.'

After a lengthy public campaign, Alan Turing received a posthumous royal pardon for his conviction in 2013.



CREDITS

This trail has been researched and developed by Kai Bossom, Kitty Fedoric, Zed Gregory and Kirsty Mitchell; with generous support from E-J Scott (Museum of Transology), Katy Baird (Home Live Art) and the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund, delivered by the Museums Association.

Map Designed by They/Them Studio

Please note: The use of different language with reference to identity expresses the personal wishes of each researcher.



If you have a story to share, please email museum@hastings.gov.uk

