

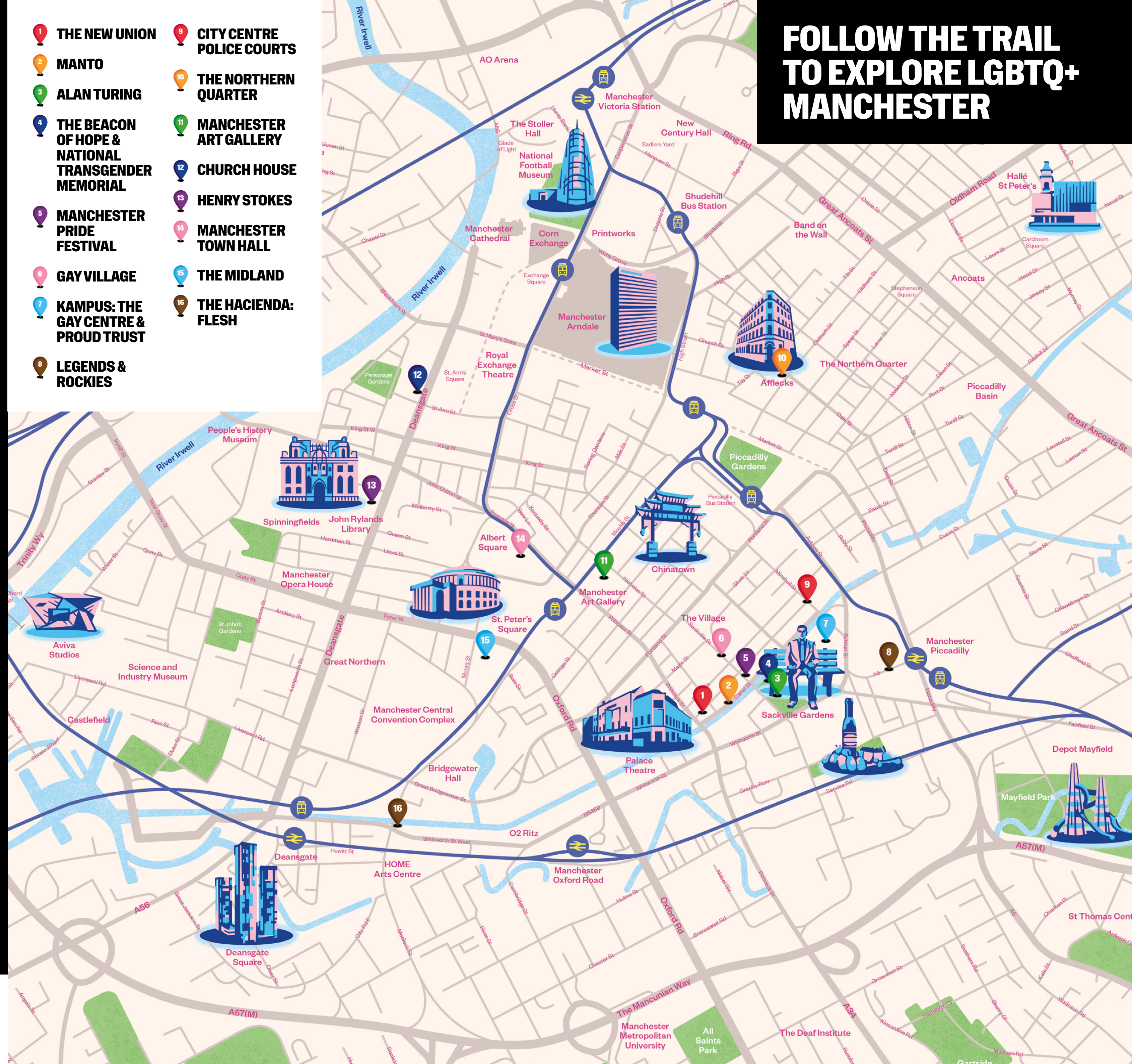
# EVERYONE WELCOME

## MANCHESTER LGBTQ+ TRAIL



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- 1 THE NEW UNION
- 2 MANTO
- 3 ALAN TURING
- 4 THE BEACON OF HOPE & NATIONAL TRANSGENDER MEMORIAL
- 5 MANCHESTER PRIDE FESTIVAL
- 6 GAY VILLAGE
- 7 KAMPUS: THE GAY CENTRE & PROUD TRUST
- 8 LEGENDS & ROCKIES
- 9 CITY CENTRE POLICE COURTS
- 10 THE NORTHERN QUARTER
- 11 MANCHESTER ART GALLERY
- 12 CHURCH HOUSE
- 13 HENRY STOKES
- 14 MANCHESTER TOWN HALL
- 15 THE MIDLAND
- 16 THE HACIENDA: FLESH



## FOLLOW THE TRAIL TO EXPLORE LGBTQ+ MANCHESTER



IT’S ALWAYS BEEN QUEER UP NORTH, AND MANCHESTER HAS BEEN AT THE VERY HEART OF LGBTQ+ CULTURE FOR A LONG TIME.

From Victorian drag balls to Canal Street, the Campaign for Homosexual Equality and the city’s famous Pride Parade, Manchester has always led the way with queer activism. Its people, its resilience, and its unapologetic queer energy have been present for hundreds of years.

For many, Pride is a time to celebrate and party. However, it is also a reminder of the past and the people who have led the way for the LGBTQ+ community today.

In 2003, a Heritage Trail was commissioned for EuroPride, funded by The Heritage Lottery Fund, to provide a better understanding of the city’s gay rights movement. The trail featured street mosaics designed by artist Mark Kennedy, unlocking many examples of queer life to remember, reflect on and celebrate. Some of these tiles still exist across the city.

Take this trail with local Playwright and Tour Guide, Chris Hoyle, which features new stops and new stories that reveal more of the city’s fascinating queer life.

Welcome to Manchester.



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MANCHESTER IN DRAG

Manchester has forever been a home for drag. During World War Two, US Veterans enjoyed the many drag shows at The Union on Canal Street.

The city’s love affair also goes back to the Victorian period. In 1880, 38 men were arrested at a ‘fancy dress ball’ in the working-class area of Hulme. Leading up to the raid of the Temperance Hall, police worked undercover to keep watch for hours. Attendees were mainly men and as written in the Manchester Times, ‘most were dressed in female attire’.

At around 9pm cabs started to arrive, and people had to whisper the password “Sister” to gain entry. Once in, they partied the night away to vulgar dances such as the Can Can, which was played on the harmonium by a blind organist, to ensure privacy.

Now, drag is everywhere in the mainstream media and across the city with many shows and drag brunches, even in traditionally ‘straight spaces’.

There are many sublime, diverse drag artists working today in Manchester; including: Liquorice Black, Lill, Violet Blonde, Banksie, Anna Phylactic, Lady Bushra, Monopoly Phonic, Juno Birch, Eva Serration, Val Qaeda, Barb, Sminty Drop, and drag king The Vicar’s Daughter.

Manchester queen Cheddar Gorgeous even appeared on RuPaul’s Drag Race UK dressed as the Manchester Bee.

1 THE NEW UNION Canal Street, M1 6JB

The New Union, originally called The Union, is one of the oldest LGBTQ+ establishments in the UK. The pub dates to 1865 and has been frequented by gay clientele since World War Two. The pub was ideally located on the edge of Canal Street with easy access to the underpasses, offering a safe place for men to meet without fear of being arrested (before part decriminalisation of homosexual acts in 1967).

Police raids and arrests were common along with arrests of prostitutes in the area. The two groups were always one step ahead of the police, however, arranging to meet at The Union to pass themselves off as a married couple. Resilience at its finest.

2 MANTO ON Bar, Canal Street, M1 3WD

Manto, meaning Manchester tomorrow, opened in 1990, offering a modern, hip, queer bar for the next generation. Owners Carol Ainscow and Peter Dalton transformed a trade union office into this new venue, with a full glass-fronted design and statement exterior balcony. LGBTQ+ people no longer had hide away in dingy basement bars. This was the gay community existing in the world, on full show. Out and proud.

The first two years were difficult, as people were still concerned about being seen at the bar. Persistence, however, paid off and Manto’s Breakfast Club became the place to be. After nights at the legendary Paradise Factory, Manto would bring together a vibrant, diverse, and bold collective of queer partygoers, dancing till dawn. Partying was a political act.

3 ALAN TURING Sackville Gardens, Sackville Street, M1 3WF

Alan Turing, inventor of the world’s first computer and celebrated codebreaker, is one of the most influential men of the 20th Century. He and his colleagues at Bletchley Park were responsible for helping to end World War Two, two years earlier than predicted.

After the war, Alan moved to Manchester to work at the University where he met his lover, Arnold Murray. Associates of Murray broke into Alan’s home. When investigating the crime, the police were more interested in their relationship, however. When Alan boldly told the police they were lovers, he was arrested, prosecuted, and charged with gross indecency. Rather than go to prison, he agreed to chemical castration.

Sadly, Alan was found dead from cyanide poisoning at the age of 41 at his home. A mere 59 years later, in 2013, he was pardoned by Queen Elizabeth II and featured on fifty-pound notes.



4 THE BEACON OF HOPE & NATIONAL TRANSGENDER MEMORIAL Sackville Gardens, Sackville Street, M1 3WF

Erected in 1997, The Beacon of Hope was designed by Warren Chapman and Jess Byrne-Daniels as a symbol to recognise Manchester’s response to the HIV and AIDS epidemic. The shrine symbolises remembrance, contemplation, and celebration. Within the tiled plinth is a time-capsule with messages addressed to loved ones affected by HIV and AIDS.

Manchester has always been the centre of HIV activism. In 1985, Manchester AIDSLine was launched, which later became the George House Trust. Every year the Beacon is the focal point for Manchester’s ‘World AIDS Day’ Vigil.

Next to the Beacon usually sits the National Transgender Memorial. Unfortunately, the memorial was damaged by fire in 2022. Manchester Pride and LGBT Foundation are currently working with other charities to restore and return the tribute back to Sackville Gardens. The area is also home to Manchester’s annual Sparkle Festival: a well-established free celebration of gender diversity.

5 MANCHESTER PRIDE FESTIVAL REM Bar, Canal Street, M1 3LZ

The city’s first Manchester Pride event took place outside the Rembrandt Hotel over the August Bank Holiday in 1985. The inaugural celebration was a fundraising event, raising money for people living with, and affected by, the AIDS crisis. It was a proper community affair. Organisers hosted a jumble sale, Gay Olympics, egg and spoon races, tug of war and boat races down the canal.

Manchester City Council then awarded a grant to extend the celebrations over two weeks, and the first Manchester Pride Festival was born.

Previously also known as Mardi Gras and GayFest, Manchester’s Pride Festival today includes the Gay Village Party, Candlelit Vigil, and the famous Pride Parade where LGBTQ+ communities and their allies march through the streets of the city.

6 GAY VILLAGE Sackville Street, M1 3LZ

Canal Street was constructed in 1804 as part of the Rochdale Canal. When the cotton industry fell into decline, the area quickly became deserted and rundown. It was then reclaimed by gay men and prostitutes, forming Manchester’s red-light district.

After the part decriminalisation of homosexual acts in 1967, a community of LGBTQ+ establishments opened-up, forming the city’s Gay Village. Venues included: The Rembrandt, Napoleon’s, Paddy’s Goose, New York New York, The Thomson’s Arms and lesbian bar, Vanilla.

Canal Street was made famous by the groundbreaking Channel 4 drama, Queer as Folk. At the time, in the early 2000s, thousands of visitors would try to find the fictional club, Babylon. This was actually the real night club, Cruz 101, which still runs a celebratory Queer as Folk night every year.

Situated just around the corner from Canal Street, on Sackville Street, is a dedication to Albert Kennedy, a young man who tragically died after falling from the roof of a carpark, after experiencing homophobic abuse.

Local foster carer, Cath Hall, inspired by his story, launched the world’s first ever service to support homeless LGBTQ+ young people: The Albert Kennedy Foundation.

7 KAMPUS: THE GAY CENTRE & PROUD TRUST Aytoun Street, M1 3GL

In summer 2023 the garden of Kampus hosted a public art exhibition documenting the history Manchester’s first Gay Centre.

Opening in 1970 on Oxford Road, the centre offered the city’s LGBTQ+ community a variety of services including support lines, counselling, and befriending groups (The Lesbian Link, Manchester Gay Switchboard and Friend).

In 1988, the national campaign against Section 28 (legislation that prohibited the ‘promotion of homosexuality’ by local authorities) was headquartered at The Gay Centre’s new home on Bloom Street.

Now located at The Proud Place on Sidney Street, The Proud Trust continues to provide vital services and serves as a LGBTQ+ community hub.

8 LEGENDS & ROCKIES A6, M1 3BS

Manchester institution Legends nightclub was the home to the famous Northern Soul night ‘The Twisted Wheel’ and many popular gay nights.

Previously Rookies, the club had a large dance area and basement called MineShaft. In 1994, the club was raided by the police and 13 men were arrested and charged with gross indecency.

Rookies then changed its name to Legends and still hosted iconic club nights including Bollox, HomoElectric and many fetish nights. The club’s labyrinth of rooms was very popular with leather and bear scenes.

Legends closed in 2012 after a ‘Save Legends’ campaign by the community. The alt queer scene continued across the city with club nights including Club Brenda, Black Angel, Drunk At Vogue, Cha Cha Boudoir, Good Afternoon, Tranarchy and Off the Hook in a variety of venues.

The current scene is thriving with nights like Misschief Cabaret, Creatures of Catharsis, Kiss Me Again, Tough Act, FriXXXion, High Hoops, What Do I Tell My Friends, Girls Night Out, Meat Free - and so many more. There are new queer clubbing venues The White Hotel and The DBA on the outskirts of the city.

HomoElectric is also still going strong. The legacy of this dance party now continues in the form of the yearly Homobloc at Mayfield Depot – hosting 10,000 queer ravers in one venue.

9 CITY CENTRE POLICE COURTS Minshull Street, M1 3FS

The present day Minshull Street Crown Court is the site of the former City Centre Police Courts, where countless men were charged with homosexual offences over a period of 100 years.

After World War Two, the police dramatically ramped up their campaign to arrest more gay men. Officers were encouraged to patrol the Rochdale Canal with floodlights to catch any men ‘in the act’. Due to subsequent charges and public shaming, this sadly increased the number of gay men taking their own lives.

Greater Manchester Police now have many LGBTQ+ officers and walk in the annual Manchester Pride Parade.

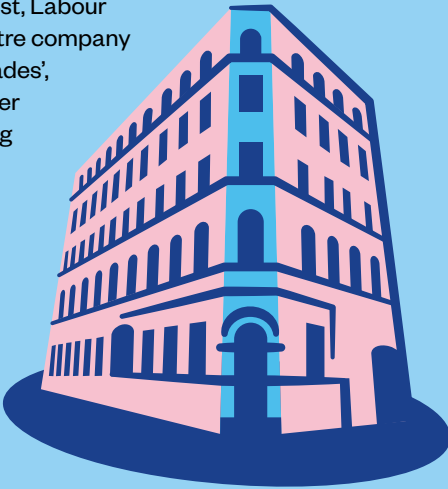
10 THE NORTHERN QUARTER Afflecks, Church Street, M4 1PW

Manchester’s first LGBTQ+ bookshops opened in this area of the city. Long before Waterstones, in the 1970s and 1980s, ‘Grassroots’ on Newton Street was the first bookstore to sell queer literature, including Gay News and The Mancunian Gay.

Tib Street was home to The Labour Press society which printed the works of Edward Carpenter, an influential socialist, Labour Councillor and early gay rights activist. In 1979, theatre company Gay Sweatshop produced ‘The Dear Love of Comrades’, a play that brought Carpenter’s ideas to a much wider audience and celebrated his love affairs with working class men.

Today, Tib Street is still home to several LGBTQ+ bookshops, including Queer Lit and the Gay Pride Shop in Afflecks.

The Manchester institution Afflecks also displays a gallery of mosaics on the outside of the building by artist Mark Kennedy. The artworks celebrate Manchester gay icons including Alan Turing and Quentin Crisp, who died in Chorlton, Manchester, in 1999.



11 MANCHESTER ART GALLERY Mosley Street, M2 3JL

Manchester Art Gallery has long been as supporter of queer culture. Artist, activist, and gardener, Derek Jarman had his first ever solo exhibition in 1992 and the gallery held a retrospective exhibition: ‘PROTEST!’, in 2021/22.

At this time, The Derek Jarman Pocket Park was installed outside the gallery. The green space was created by volunteers from the ‘Pride in Ageing’ programme at the LGBT Foundation and artist Juliet Davis Drufayard. The space was inspired by Jarman’s beautiful and iconic garden in Dungeness, Kent.

Derek Jarman is one of the most radical and influential figures of 20th Century British culture. He created art, films and literature and campaigned for equality and gay rights. He died of AIDS related illnesses at just 52, in 1994.

The volunteer group who designed and planted the garden are from a similar generation as Jarman and continue to be inspired by movements for LGBTQ+ equality that he and others started in the 1970s and 1980s.

As a finale to ‘PROTEST!’, Manchester performance art icon David Hoyle was ‘canonised’ as a ‘queer saint’ by The Sisters Of Perpetual Indulgence, a worldwide order of activist drag nuns.

12 CHURCH HOUSE Deansgate, M3 2ER

Church House was the site of the very first North-Western Homosexual Law Reform Committee meeting in 1964 (a time when all homosexual acts between men were illegal). Allan Horsfall was the most visible member and committee secretary. He was therefore one of the founders of the modern gay rights movement.

As a Labour Councillor, he took a huge risk putting his name to the committee, even using his own address for the organisation. This was when other male councillors wouldn’t even mention the word ‘homosexual’. Allan, with help from other gay men and women, led the campaign to top decriminalise homosexuality in 1967.

The committee was renamed the Committee for Homosexual Equality, known as CHE, and then in 1971 became the Campaign for Homosexual Equality. The organisation had more than 6000 members and 120 regional groups by the mid-1970s.

13 HENRY STOKES Deansgate, M3 3EH

In 1830, Henry Stokes, a successful bricklayer, landlord and Special Constable was a strong pillar of the Manchester community. Henry lived on Cumberland Street, which no longer exists but was a stone’s throw from John Ryland’s Library.

He became the subject of newspaper scandal after it was revealed that he was, in fact, assigned female at birth. Following the news, his wife of 22 years claimed the marriage to be null and void.

His story became the subject of much gossip and even street songs were composed about him. Sadly, Henry’s body was found in the River Irwell in 1859. It is thought he took his own life.

This sad tale is a reminder of the struggles for acceptance trans people have faced for many years.

14 MANCHESTER TOWN HALL Albert Square, M2 5DB

Manchester City Council has a long history of supporting the LGBTQ+ community and gay rights. In 1985, the Council appointed Margaret Roff as the UK’s first openly lesbian Mayor.

The Council was the first UK public authority to award grants for LGBTQ+ causes. Over the years, it has helped to fund many charities and organisations including Manchester AIDSLine, George House Trust, LGBT Foundation, The Proud Trust, and Manchester Pride.

In 1988, when a national campaign against Section 28 launched, the Council supported Manchester’s gay community. On 20th February, more than 20,000 people marched to protest the new law, forming a huge crowd on Albert Square outside the Town Hall.

The LGBTQ+ community, their allies, and friends, marched defiantly.

15 THE MIDLAND Peter Street, M60 2DS

The Midland hotel has been a refuge for many stars since it opened in 1904. This is the spot where famed playwright Noel Coward met his idol, actor Ivor Novello, on the pavement outside. He could have mistaken him for a busker. He was not the romantic idol the photos claimed.

Novello then shaved, scrubbed-up, and invited Coward to watch his musical, Arlette, followed by tea together at the hotel.

16 THE HACIENDA: FLESH Whitworth Street West, M1 5DA

Needing no introduction, The Hacienda is world-renowned. The club opened in 1982 and Madonna played her first UK live gig there. By the late 1980s, the venue had cemented its identity as the church of Acid House. The club brought together an eclectic mix of ravers to dance, sweat, and fall in love with strangers.

Launching in the early 1990s, Flesh was the Hacienda’s famous queer night from promoter Paul Cons. Most club nights that fell on a Wednesday would normally be full of students. Not Flesh. This extravagant dance party often sold-out weeks in advance, and party goers would plan elaborate outfits. That’s if you even wore an outfit. This legendary night must be Manchester’s version of Studio 54.

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Manchester Pride Charity is one of the leading LGBTQ+ charities in the UK. Work aims to fight against homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. Grants give support, empower, and enrich LGBTQ+ community groups and enable Manchester Pride to host annual events that give a platform to LGBTQ+ people of all ages.