

## Queer and the State

Revealing, recreating and reinterpreting archival records about the criminalisation of LGBTQ+ lives and spaces

'Queer and the State' began with workshops for young people aged 16-25 at The National Archives and London Metropolitan Archives. Previously closed police and government files about the targeting of queer spaces before decriminalisation in the 1960s were revealed and discussed, and participants were encouraged to reflect on the resilience of the community in twenty-first century London.

Drawing from two archives meant the project team had the opportunity to compare and investigate both the state and community perspectives in the records, and work with young people to explore how they might be creatively interpreted. They transformed part of the London Met archives space into a pop-up recreation of the Caravan Club, a 1930s queer venue in Soho, using original documents to design the set, and hosting live performances.

Building on the success of this event, in 2017 The National Archives collaborated with the National Trust to bring the recreation of the Caravan Club to a wider audience. 'Queer city: London club culture 1918-1967' included daytime tours of the LGBTQ+ heritage of Soho, and talks, debates, and performances in the recreated Caravan Club near its original location in the West End. This collaboration then led to another when in 2018 The National Archives and the National Trust worked together again to create 'Suffragette City', an exhibition and immersive experience in a former theatre in the West End.

For the 2019 Being Human Festival, The National Archives worked with Bishopsgate Institute and LGBTQ+ artists and performers to explore the coded language of queer dating in the past. 'Classified: A Performance of Queer Dating Ads' was performed at the Royal Vauxhall Tavern following two archival research events to crowd-source original and new content. The resources continue to be used to create content for YouTube and TikTok and most recently to run creative writing sessions at a Science Museum Late in 2022.

The project team also worked in partnership with Queer Britain for the 2022 Being Human Festival to explore LGBTQ+ lives in the 1921 census records.

“ Being Human has given me the impetus to do things I just wouldn't be able to do otherwise and the impact has been huge.

– Victoria Iglkowski-Broad



### People:

- [Victoria Iglkowski-Broad](#), Principal Records Specialist – Diverse Histories, National Archives

### Institution:

- [The National Archives](#)

### Partners:

- [London Metropolitan Archives](#)
- [National Trust](#)
- [Bishopsgate Institute](#)
- [Queer Britain](#)

### Area:

- London

### Being Human Festival year:

- Hope and Fear, 2016 - Queer and the State
- Discoveries and Secrets, 2019 - Classified: A Performance of Queer Dating Ads

### Learn more:

- [Queer city: London club culture 1918 - 1967](#), National Trust feature
- [Classified Adverts to Club Culture blog](#)