

PRESS RELEASE

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***Out in Oxford* – a University of Oxford LGBTQ+ community project**

On 11 February the University of Oxford's Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM) launch an innovative new project *Out in Oxford*. Spearheaded by the Pitt Rivers Museum and funded by Arts Council England (ACE) and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), *Out in Oxford* explores items from across the University's collections. Through public events, a new website and a specially commissioned printed trail, *Out in Oxford* provides platforms for people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ+) and allies to speak out about the fascinating, important and often overlooked queer histories that exist within the University's collections. Through collaborations between curators and volunteers, new perspectives are being foregrounded and personal experiences shared as staff and the public queer the collections.

Central to the project is a specially commissioned trail. With all interpretation newly written by project volunteers, the *Out in Oxford* cross-collections trail provides fresh and personal perspectives on some of the iconic and also lesser known items cared for by the University. Launching on 11 February at *Out in Oxford: Party at The Pitt* (<https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/afterhours>) and available throughout 2017, visitors can download the trail from the *Out in Oxford* website (www.glam.ox.ac.uk/outinxford), or pick up a copy at the Ashmolean Museum, the Bate Collection, the Botanic Garden, the Museum of Natural History, the Pitt Rivers Museum, the Museum of the History of Science and the Weston Library. 2017 is also significant as the 50th anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in England and Wales, and the 60th anniversary of the Wolfenden Report, which advocated that change in the law.

With powerful forewords from Stephen Fry and Professor Richard Parkinson, the *Out in Oxford* trail will take visitors on an alternative journey, delving deep into the archives of the collections. Trail-goers will be encouraged to consider the Museum of Natural History's Bluehead Wrasse cast as an example of non-standard biological sex in nature, and the fluidity of gender in Japanese Noh theatre performances as they visit the Pitt Rivers Museum. At the Ashmolean, trail-goers will find objects ranging from antiquity to present day including a US banknote stamped 'lesbian money' linked to gay and lesbian rights movements. Moving on to the Botanic Garden, the gay association with the hyacinth and the Polish secret police will be highlighted, while at the Bate Collection, a pink plastic recorder will invite visitors to think about how certain colours have been used to alternately victimise and celebrate LGBTQ+ people. The *Out in Oxford* trail will be a fascinating experience for any visitor looking to discover the University's Gardens, Libraries and Museums for the first time, or existing visitors wishing to discover something new about their favourite collection.

To mark the launch of the *Out in Oxford* trail, Pitt Rivers Museum will host a series of exciting events for the general public, co-produced by volunteers and local LGBTQ+ community organisations. Working with groups such as Oxford Pride, community project Tales of Our City, the University's own LGBT Staff and Student Networks and youth group My Normal, the galleries will be taken over by performances, talks and interactive

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activities designed to celebrate aspects of LGBTQ+ culture. The event series begins with *Out in Oxford: Party at the Pitt* (11 February, 19.00-22.00, ages 16+). Students from St Hilda's College (University of Oxford) will curate performances in the galleries; Molly: Party for Queers, will be making slogan t-shirts; Tales of Our City will display their rare archive of local queer ephemera from the 1970s, '80s and '90s. Visitors can pop into the Balfour Library to find out what Oxford's gay women got up to on Tuesdays in 1983 and why something called 'Project October' caused so much excitement in 1991. We will also be joined by Oxford Pride and performance artists who will lead a Drag Kings workshop. Tickets are available for free and there will be a cash bar. *Party at the Pitt* will be followed by a discussion based event, *Is Gender Identity a Choice?* (16 February, 19.00-21.30); an *Out in Oxford Spotlight Talk* (18 February, 14.30-15.30); and a youth takeover night from My Normal with a non-alcoholic bar and live music from bands Lucy Leave and Rainbow Reservoir (25 February, 18.00-21.00). The *Out in Oxford* series of events will close with a special film screening of cult classic *Paris is Burning*. This film chronicles the underground 'voguing' scene in 1980s Harlem, a dance trend led by young gay black men and appropriated by Madonna in her 1990 chart hit *Vogue*. The screening will be followed by Q&A with special guests (28 February, 18.00-20.30, ages 16+). Most events are free, but some require booking in advance. Ticket links and more information can be found here: <https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/afterhours>.

Notes to Editors

- **Out in Oxford** is a new project celebrating LGBTQ+ history. The project is based at the Pitt Rivers Museum and examines items from across the University's GLAM division.
- **LGBTQ+** is the acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer, with '+' indicating that there are many more ways in which people experience biological sex, gender and sexual identity. Through consultation with community groups and individuals at workshops and focus groups, LGBTQ+ was the acronym that project participants preferred to use in relation to the Out in Oxford project.
- **GLAM** is the acronym for the University of Oxford's Gardens, Libraries, Archives and Museums. Website: www.glam.ox.ac.uk/outinoxford
- **LGBT History Month** is celebrated in February in the UK. LGBT History Month is a charity whose work to educate against prejudice continues throughout the year. Website: <http://lgbthistorymonth.org.uk>
- **Oxford Pride** is a celebration of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer life in Oxfordshire. Pride promotes awareness of LGBTQ+ issues by providing information, education and entertainment in a safe and encouraging environment. Oxford Pride is a membership based non-profit organisation run by a dedicated team of volunteers. Website: www.oxford-pride.org.uk
- **My Normal** is a creativity based project aiming to give LGBTQ+ youth safe spaces and a bigger voice in Oxfordshire. They provide a meeting space for people aged 16-24. Website: <https://www.facebook.com/mynormaloxford>.
- **Tales of Our City** is a community project aiming to create a conversation through time about queer life in Oxford. Website: <http://tocox.weebly.com>
- **Stephen Fry** is a comedian, actor, writer, presenter and activist. Website: www.stephenfry.com.
- **Richard Bruce Parkinson** is the author of *A Little Gay History*, Professor of Egyptology at the Faculty of Oriental Studies and a Fellow of The Queen's College, Oxford. During LGBT History Month 2016, Professor Parkinson gave a lecture highlighting the demand for more explicit, not implicit, LGBTQ+ representation within museum displays, which inspired the Out in Oxford project: <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/great-unrecorded-history-lgbt-heritage-and-world-cultures>.
- **Molly: Party for Queers** is a community run organization aiming to be an inclusive and welcoming space for Oxford's queer community. They produce monthly LGBTQ+ friendly events in Oxford. Website: <https://www.facebook.com/ohhellomolly>.



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