

## Nomination Form

### ARA Archive Volunteering Award 2021

Required fields are marked\*

1. Title of the project \* **Pride in Suffolk's Past**
2. Institution conducting the project \* **Suffolk Archives**
3. List of key partners involved in the project (if applicable)\* **Suffolk Pride, Evolve Trans, Suffolk County Council LGBT+ Staff Network, Britten Pears Arts, Outreach Youth, NHS, OUTing the past festival, University of Suffolk, Queer Rural Connections, Access Community Trust**
4. Names of team members working on the project

Staff: Mandy Rawlins (Community and Learning Officer East, CLO), Emily Shepperson (Exhibition and Interpretation Officer, EIO), Holly Wright (Heritage Trainee Assistant, HTA) and other supporting staff.

Volunteers: Gail Broom, Anna Phillips, Catherine Strainer, Emily Bird, Alice Bowers, Becky Hirst, Allanah Peck, Thomas Seggons, Sam Woodward, Bronwen Lynch, Thom Hollyer, Ruby Hunter, Sarah Haskins, Sarah Kafala, Tonia Lawes, Evie Coleman, Sapphire Ryder, Matthew Stothard, Craig Buxton, Camelia Atomei

Unpaid Placements: Sam Steele (University of Suffolk), Calum Emmett-Buck (UOS), Amiee Leverett (UOS), Abi Suttle (UOS), Sally Dix (Transforming People to Transform Museums), Charlie Davis (TPTTM), Grace Roberts (TPTTM)

5. Final year \* **2021 (Ongoing)**
6. Project start date \* **2019**
7. Project end date \* **2021**
8. URL link to project website

[Pride in Suffolk's Past - Suffolk Archives](#)

[Pride in Suffolk's Past: Sharing LGBTQ+ stories past and present - Suffolk Archives](#)

## 9. Description \*

Suffolk Archives has developed a countywide programme of activities aimed at engaging more people than ever before with Suffolk's archival heritage.

The Sharing Suffolk Stories initiative enables groups of people to learn more about where they live, create their own responses to it, and share their work as widely as possible – including to new audiences.

Volunteers are supported to delve into our collections to uncover unique stories about the people, places and events of our county, often hidden in the archives.

The Pride in Suffolk's Past project (part of the Sharing Suffolk Stories initiative) is two-fold; to explore and share the hidden stories of lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and queer people in Suffolk, but also to collect contemporary stories of Suffolk's LGBTQ+ Community, documenting people's experiences through a period of monumental societal change towards sexuality and gender identity. Due to legal and social repression these stories have all too often gone untold. Through original documents found in Suffolk Archives and local collections, these experiences can be shared for future generations to understand how things have changed over time and what work is still to be done.

## 10. Target audience

LGBTQ+ community

18-24 year olds

Previously unengaged audiences in archives

## 11. Aim \*

It was highlighted by staff that LGBTQ+ stories were often underrepresented in our collections. There were stories in our archives that had not been explored fully which it was felt needed to be brought to the forefront of archive to demonstrate the potential of archives and hidden histories.

We also aimed to enthuse new audiences to engage with our archive. We wanted to reveal that there are stories for everyone to relate to in our archive, even if that means we have to dig a little deeper or they are a bit harder to find. It's important, especially for underrepresented groups, to find their place in Suffolk's heritage and to relate to stories in the past to feel rooted in the present:

*"Pride in Suffolk's Past will connect the LGBTQ+ people living in Suffolk today with those who have come before them. Often in rural communities, LGBTQ+ people can feel isolated and alone; Pride partly exists to help with this in a physical and geographical sense, but this project will help those people find their place in history.*

*"The historic Suffolk people that will feature in this research will serve as a reminder to our county that LGBTQ+ people are not a*

*new or 'trendy' phenomenon, and the public perception of the issues those in the community face has and should continue to be a cause for progress.*" – Thom Hollyer, Volunteer and Pride Community and Outreach Officer, speaking in 2019.

As well as looking into the past, it was important to look to the future. We need our archive to reflect our community therefore, we set out to collect new stories to readdress the balance.

## **12. Process \***

The CLO initially consulted with several local LGBTQ+ networks, support groups, archives and employers to establish if there was an appetite for engagement in an archival project. She attended committee meetings, joined in with support groups for different ages and raised awareness of the potential stories that could be uncovered in our archive.

The CLO liaised with the Volunteer Engagement Coordinator to build appropriate volunteer roles which were publicised on our website, social media and at outreach events such as Suffolk Pride and Freshers events. Volunteers ranged from experienced researchers to complete beginners, so we offered searchroom, writing copy and oral history training. The approach to research was unique: entirely independent, and volunteer led. This produced a diverse and rich amount of research; from linguistic studies to discovering intimate stories of individuals. Volunteers also steered the sharing aspect; they decided on a pop-up touring exhibition and collecting events, then a Pride time tunnel to be displayed at Pride 2020.

We constantly evaluated our work by sending research to the LGBTQ+ Staff network and UOS history department and building on feedback. We asked for feedback from volunteers through the volunteer survey and conversations in the searchroom.

Resources included funding from our NLHF programme, focused student placements and volunteers.

## **13. Number of participants in the project or visitors to date \***

Volunteers/placements/participants: 27  
Suffolk Pride in 2019 where we had an outreach stand:  
UOS 2019 Fresher Fair: 1000+  
UOS 2019 New Student:  
2020 Pop-up Touring Exhibition: 439  
2020 Online display: 906  
2020 Online Survey: 24

## **14. Impact and outcome of the project \***

Running Pride in Suffolk's Past has certainly raised the profile of archives amongst the LGBTQ+ community and generally a younger audience due to the subject matter:

*'we are grateful for the amount of work you have put in to make sure that you are accurately and fairly representing us, our community and our experiences.'* Adria Pittock, Chair of Suffolk Pride and Co-Chair of Suffolk County Council LGBT+ Network

Some of our volunteers were from the LGBTQ+ community and the volunteer cohort as a whole was a lot younger (18-55 compared to our then average of 65+). Importantly, volunteers have enjoyed their participation on project, uncovering hidden histories and shedding light on their stories:

*'It has been a great experience working on the Pride in Suffolk's Past project. Looking at original documents and letter is fascinating and finding the voices and experiences of people in the past has been both moving and inspiring'* – Gail Broom, volunteer

*'Coming into this project, Louisa Garrett Anderson wasn't a name I had heard a huge amount about...perhaps the reason why Louisa's names doesn't appear much in the history books is because of her sexuality. This idea really intrigued me. Featuring Louisa in this [online] display is my own small way of sharing her story.'* Charlie Davis, Transforming People to Transform Museums placement.

We have developed skills of volunteers through training and built their confidence in using an archive for research and realise the potential of archives.

The involvement of voluntary student placements has increased the employability within Suffolk. We have worked with a graphic design student who will now have a public exhibition in her portfolio. History students and museum placements have used their skills to turn raw research into online family activities and an online exhibition. In turn they have developed marketing, digital engagement, event and digital event development (OUTing the Past festival), market research and press relations.

In Spring 2021 we will be opening our Pride in Suffolk's Past exhibition. This will challenge perspectives on the LGBTQ+ community through their own voices and the heritage of the community in Suffolk. The exhibition will also showcase the research undertaken by the volunteers. As a legacy of the exhibition, a publication will available to buy in our shop and local bookshops across Suffolk. The book includes the research but also specific contributions from the LGBTQ+ community.

*'Suffolk Pride is 100% behind the Pride in Suffolk's Past project and are really looking forward to the launch, exhibition, publication and we are keen to help wherever we can to make it the great success it deserves to be with all your hard work.'* Adria Pittock, Chair of

Suffolk Pride and Co-Chair of Suffolk County Council LGBT+ Network

*'It [the publication] was SUCH an interesting read and a really exciting moment for our local queer history.'* - Esther Alcock, member of Suffolk Pride Committee

The CLO will continue her work with the community groups to support them to find their rightful place in Suffolk's rich heritage.

## **15. Evaluation \***

The Covid-19 pandemic meant we could not go ahead with the physical collecting days which were advertised with the pop-up touring exhibition (February 2020). These collecting opportunities were replaced with an online survey which is still being contributed to today. Although we still intend on running the physical collecting days, the online survey has proved incredibly useful to the project. It has captured stories that may not have been told directly to another person, therefore we will continue online surveys to compliment physical collecting events.

The exhibition was intended to be a time tunnel experience hosted at Pride 2020 which was cancelled due to the pandemic. Therefore, we created an online exhibition to complement the online Pride parade which has been widely accessed. We will continue with online exhibitions moving forward as a different way to engage people with our archive.

The cancellation of the Pride time tunnel resulted in the EIO to develop the work and ideas into a full exhibition at The Hold, intended to open in Spring 2021 and accompanying publication.

Quantitative and qualitative evaluation is on going throughout the project and full evaluation will be presented as part of our NLHF report.

Due to the success of this project, we will be continuing to uncover underrepresented histories through similar projects going forward and fuse the digital and physical elements together. We will continue our contemporary collecting.

This project has established and built on relationships with the LGBTQ+ community but also seen us partner on projects such as Queer Rural Connections and develop a national audience through OUTing the Past.

## **16. Tips \***

When embarking on a project about underrepresented or marginalised histories, it's important to consider the ethical responsibility of the research and how it is presented. In both the exhibition and publication trigger warnings are displayed, outdated/offence terms are explained and used only within context and the ethical issue around outing people who may not have identified as LGBTQ+ due to the historical or cultural context.

Context to this project was vital. One volunteer created a legal timeline which helped us interpret the research with more accuracy. Another volunteer developed a linguistic and terminology guide to inform what to research and explanations as to why terms were used.

Training was essential on how to get the most out of our archive. However, due to the subject matter and unfamiliar research methods (index cards!), more comprehensive training will be necessary for future projects.

## **17. Future Developments \***

In 2020 and early 2021 we have had to rely on digital engagement. We have learnt about the good ways to use it and how it does not substitute for engagement at events or physical exhibitions. Moving forward, we would recommend using both to full capacity to engage a broad audience in our archive.

We will continue to build on our learning from this project and use a targeted approach to uncovering marginalised or underrepresented groups. Engaging a range of community groups and networks has been essential to the success of this project, as well as the enthusiasm of the research volunteers and placements.

## **18 Domain \***

*Select (using underline) one or more from the list*

Archives

Arts organisations

Historic environment

Libraries

Museums

Other:

## **19. Role in developing the sector**

*Select (using underline) one or more from the list:*

Advice

Advocacy and strategic marketing

Commissioning

Evaluation

Funding

Liaison

Partnerships

Policy

Research and Evidence

Standards

Other: Community engagement

## **20. Social groups**

*Select (using underline) one or more from the list:*

Children and young people  
Older people  
Disabled people  
Ethnic minority groups  
Homeless people  
Prisoners and ex-offenders  
Looked-after children and those leaving care  
Lower socio-economic groups  
Refugees and asylum seekers  
New communities  
Unemployed people  
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender  
Other: Students

## **21. Social outcomes**

*Select (using underline) one or more from the list:*

Community cohesion & inclusion  
Celebrating local identity  
Local economy  
Health & well-being  
Learning & skills  
Local infrastructure & regeneration  
Tourism  
Community empowerment & active citizenship  
Raising participation  
Positive outcomes for vulnerable groups  
Other: Underrepresented groups

## **22. Higher level geographical coverage \***

*Select (using underline) one or more from the list.*

International  
Europe  
Ireland  
UK  
Wales  
Scotland  
Northern Ireland  
England  
East Midlands  
East of England  
London  
North East  
North West  
South East  
South West  
West Midlands  
Yorkshire and the Humber

**23. Main person leading the project \***

*Enter as many details as possible*

Name: Mandy Rawlins

Organisation: Suffolk Archives

Phone number:

Email address: [mandy.rawlins@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:mandy.rawlins@suffolk.gov.uk)

**24. Alternative contact**

*Enter as many details as possible*

Name: Emily Shepperson

Organisation: Suffolk Archives

Phone number: 07708 319407

Email address: [Emily.shepperson@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Emily.shepperson@suffolk.gov.uk)

**25. Estimated budget\***

Sharing Suffolk Stories: £2500

Exhibition budget: £6000

Publication: £4000

**26. Final budget**

**27. Funding source(s)**

National Lottery Heritage Fund

Suffolk County Council

Images:

Image 1 – Volunteers at Suffolk Pride 2019. Gail Broom (Volunteer), Thomas Seggons (Volunteer) and Catherine Strainer (Volunteer)

Image 2 – Publication front cover, designed by volunteer Sarah Haskins.

Image 3 – Newspaper report about the pop-up exhibition with a photo which includes volunteer Anna Phillips and Mandy Rawlins, CLO.



Photos

