



OutStories Bristol

Annual Report 2025

OutStories Bristol collects and preserves the social history and recollections of LGBTQ+ people living in or associated with Bristol, England.

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1. Membership report

Membership at December 2025

92 registered members (87 in December 2024)

462 names on the newsletter email list (451 in December 2024)

2. Trustees and roles

The Trustees manage the affairs of OutStories Bristol, decide policy and oversee activities.

The Trustees with active volunteers held six meetings in Bristol during 2025. All were in-person with live webcasting for those living further afield.

Current trustees:

Name	First elected or co-opted	Role
Chris Leigh	10/10/2011	Web Administrator from 10/10/2011. Secretary from 11/10/2024.
Andrew Foyle	16/10/2024	Historical lead
Nick Gill	4/11/2024	Treasurer from 4/11/2024
Mark Small	11/1/2025	

3. Activities in the past year

LGBTQ+ History Day, 22nd February 2025

Last February's History Day at Bristol's M Shed museum was a big success by all measures. Our audience increased by an estimated 150% on the previous year (averaging 87 people for each talk) and feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Speakers presented five 40-minute talks:

- Lori Wylot: *Charley Wilson: Victorian Gender Rebel and the Changing Face of Media*
- Jonathan Rowe: *A Crown of Friendship: Fabian Strachan Woodley*
- Lucy Bonner and Alec Temple: *Bristol Archives – sources for researching LGBTQ+ history*
- Kim Renfrew: *What is she wearing? 20th-century lesbian dress in the press*
- Andrew Foyle: *Bristol Gay Switchboard - 50 years on.*

Work is now in hand developing our 2026 History Day which will be at M Shed, 14th February.

Bristol Pride, July 2025

Andrew Foyle and Jonathan Rowe delivered two LGBTQ+ history ferry boat tours around Bristol harbour, 6th July. Both tours were fully booked and very well received.

Our stall in the (very hot) Community Tent at Pride Day on Durdham Downs, 12th July, generated several good history leads and new contacts, with many visitors stopping to chat and take information

John Addington Symonds Annual Lecture

These lectures celebrate the life of John Addington Symonds (1840-1893), Bristol-based writer, art historian and pioneer of homosexual rights. They are presented by OutStories Bristol in collaboration with the University of Bristol Institute of Greece, Rome, and the Classical Tradition (IGRCT).

This year's lecture (the 12th) on 4th October was given by Alexander Taylor and Nicky Sugar of the University of Bristol Special Collections and titled "*No man can see himself as others see*"- *bringing the personal papers of John Addington Symonds to new audiences*.

Alex described aspects of Symonds' life and work drawn from his recently completed re-cataloguing of the Symonds archive. Nicky discussed some of the current issues archivists have to balance when working on collections with sensitive or contentious topics.

Talks, walks and events

Andrew Foyle gave two lectures titled *Why LGBTQ+ History Matters* (November 2024 and February 2025) to about 50 undergraduates from U.S. universities attending Advanced Studies in England (ASC), Bath. The event forms part of their Core Lecture series and is likely to be repeated.

During LGBTQ+ History Month (February) Andrew visited the Bristol LGBTQ+ staff group of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and gave a well-received talk on local history themes.

In April Robert Howes gave a talk titled *The Counterculture and the LGBT Press – Bristol and Beyond* at the 2025 Bristol Radical History Festival.

Andrew Foyle delivered a lunchtime talk in June 2025 at the American Museum in Bath on the U.S. roots of the Stonewall Uprising, the resulting Gay Pride marches and the Bristol and Bath response to those events by the Gay Liberation Front and Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE) groups of the early 1970s.

Joe Jukes, with help from Nick Gill and Mark Small, researched and led two queer history walking tours in Bristol city centre on 24th August for members of 'Out to Swim' and 'Bristol Gay Men's Social' groups. We will conduct similar walks in 2026.

38 people attended a fundraising event at Clevedon Court on 22nd November. We were given a private tour of the house with full access to non-public areas, generously hosted by Julia Elton. The event raised £585 for OutStories funds.

Local research and liaison:

Blast! From the Past! is a project initiated and run by local women to document Bristol's history of self-organised lesbian social groups over the last 40 years or so. OutStories supported this by featuring the project during our LGBTQ+ history day at M Shed in February, and in suggesting resources and contacts as requested.

Several members attended the launch event for the *Gender Stories* exhibition at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery in May, having contributed to the consultation process to develop the content.

The University of Bristol Special Collections were given a generous donation to re-catalogue their archive of the papers of John Addington Symonds. The re-cataloguing was completed in July. Some money is allocated for public engagement with the archive and OutStories members are actively engaged in developing events and resources to broaden the audience beyond University staff and students.

OutStories was asked to take an advisory role in developing a Swindon and Wiltshire based community LGBTQ+ history project *We Were Always Here* which should come to fruition from 2026. Preliminary planning and advice is already in progress.

Mark Small helped research the history of Freedom Youth, and members attended Freedom's 30th Anniversary exhibition launch on 10th October.

Website and social media

The OutStories Bristol website www.outstoriesbristol.org.uk provides a permanent record of LGBTQ+ people, places and events in the Bristol region. In 2025 it averaged 1400 visitors and 2400 page views per month, a 20% increase on the previous year.

A feature is the *LGBT+ Life Map* which presents stories in geospatial form. The same data can also be viewed on Bristol City Council's *Know Your Place* website <https://maps.bristol.gov.uk/kyp/?layer=LGBT+life>.

The website and other IT functions are maintained by Chris Leigh. Thanks to Jonathan Rowe who has contributed many informative articles about people, and Andrew Foyle who has made numerous additions to the map.

Our Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/outstories.bristol/> has 475 members, up from 460 last year.

During 2025 we discontinued using 'X' (formerly Twitter) because its new owner Elon Musk publically attacks trans people and the site promotes hatred and division.

4. Financial report

Our financial year runs 1st July to 30th June.

We began 2024/25 with an Opening Balance of £1790.

Our total income was £1155, comprising:

- £493: donations
- £662: Grant from Quartet Community Foundation (ref. QCF A757112)

Our total expenditure was £1149, comprising:

- £281: website and IT
- £602: speaker fees and M Shed staffing costs for LGBTQ+ History Day, February 2025
- £25: AGM room hire
- £170: Bristol Pride 2025 costs, plus 2024 Pride stall hire in arrears
- £71: bank charges.

The Surplus for the year was £6. The Closing Balance was £1797.

The accounts were independently verified by Mike O'Callaghan:

"I can confirm that the accounts for OutStories are accurate for the year" (email 17/11/2025).

Our thanks to Mike for his help.

5. Thank you

Thank you to all members and supporters of OutStories Bristol. Thanks also to our regular donors for their generosity.

A special thanks to our active volunteers for their invaluable contributions that make it happen:

Andrew, Chris, Dave, Gem, Joe, Jonathan, Lori, Mark, Nick and Robert.

End