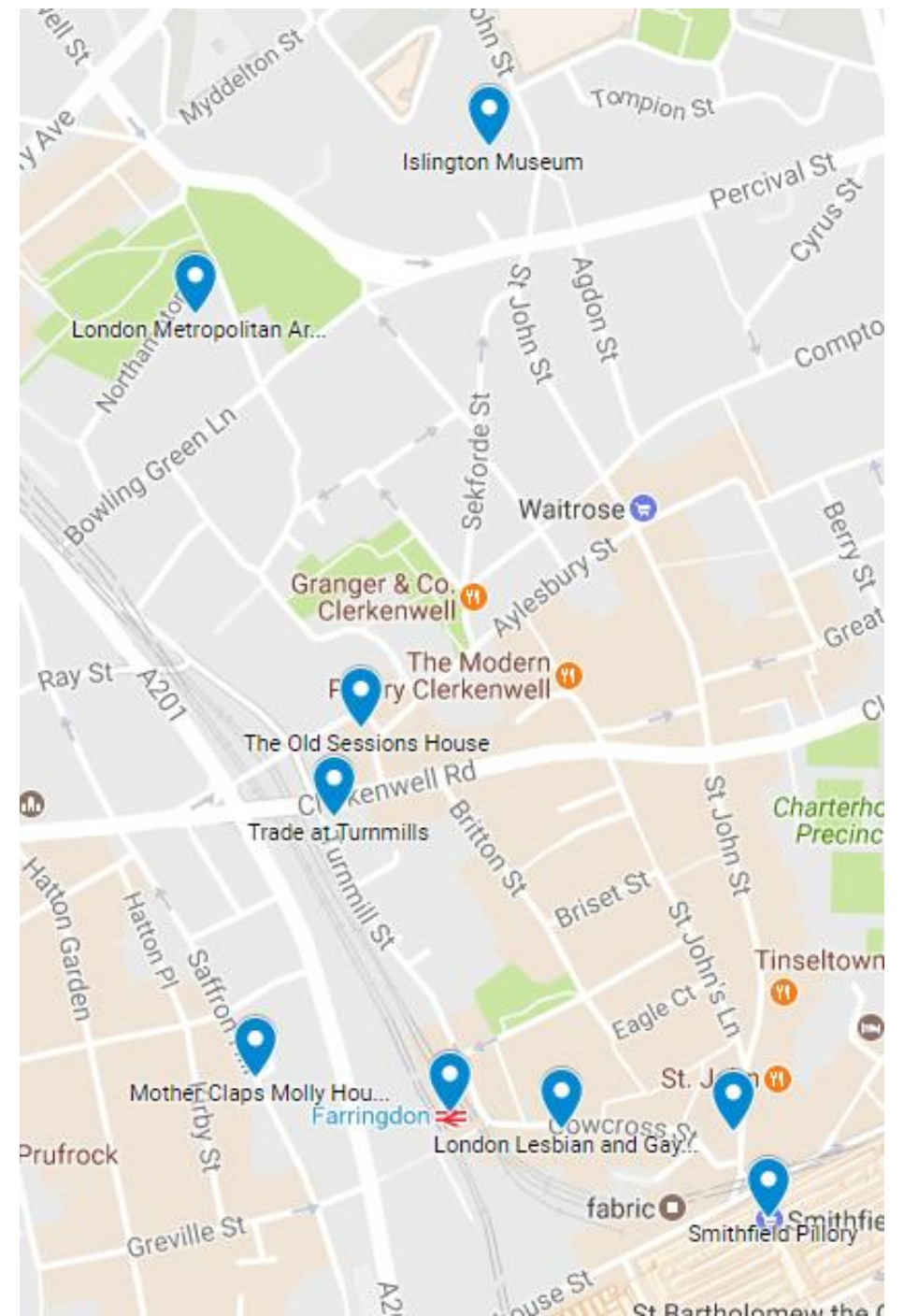


# LGBTQ+ HERITAGE WALK OF CLERKENWELL

This walk, starting and ending at London Metropolitan Archives, takes about 90 minutes.

Text, layout and contemporary photos by Andy Kirby

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1YKXqbmwwEALgtoefQv77t6mnzPA&usp=sharing>



Directions – from LMA cross Spa Fields Gardens opposite the Bourne & Hollingsworth Building, then left into Exmouth Market and continue to Our Most Holy Redeemer Church. Look down the road.

The large white Mount Pleasant Sorting Office at the end is the site of Coldbath Fields Prison, before then a rubbish tip ironically known as Mount Pleasant. In 1755 Samuel White records visiting Mrs Charke here in “a wretched thatched hovel, situate on the way to Islington, not very distant from the New River Head.”

## Stop 1 – Charlotte Charke’s cottage



This English actress/playwright, child of actor/Poet Laureate Colley Cibber, played female and male roles at Drury Lane, alienating her father after satirising him on stage. Married twice she had one daughter, Kitty. In the late 1730s Charlotte appeared in public as male, under the name Mr. Charles Brown and was imprisoned for debt as a man. She performed in her own plays, wrote novels and one of the first autobiographies ever written by a woman. In 1760, at the age of forty-seven, Charlotte fell ill with a "winter disease" and died on 6<sup>th</sup> April.



Directions – retrace your steps to the Bourne and Hollingsworth Building, go past its left side, down Northampton Road into Clerkenwell Court to its end in Clerkenwell Green. Cross to the traffic island at the entrance to disused public toilets. To your right, covered in scaffolding at present, is the Middlesex Sessions House. The older picture is 1796.

## Stop 2 – Middlesex Sessions House



Site of the 1810 trial of the Vere Street Coterie, men arrested at a molly house (gay club) in Clare Market (now Mansion House) for sodomy and attempted sodomy. 8 were convicted, 2 hanged and 6 pilloried. The club had been operating for less than six months when, on 8 July 1810, it was raided by the Bow Street Runners. 27 men were arrested, but the majority were released (perhaps as a result of bribes). This episode was one of the major events in gay history in England during the 19th century.



Directions – Take the road to the left of the Sessions House and follow it into Clerkenwell Road. Turn right to the junction with Turnmill Street.

## Stop 3 – Trade Nightclub



Image: Rubberist public domain

Trade was a pioneering gay nightclub that was started in 1990 by Laurence Malice. Unlike any other club at the time it opened from 3am till 1 pm on Sundays. Trade resided in Turnmills on Clerkenwell Road, and was the first club to have a 24 hour 'Music and Dance' license.

Trade ended its weekly London Sunday slot on 27 October 2002 and held its final event there on 24 January 2008 when Turnmills officially announced its closure.

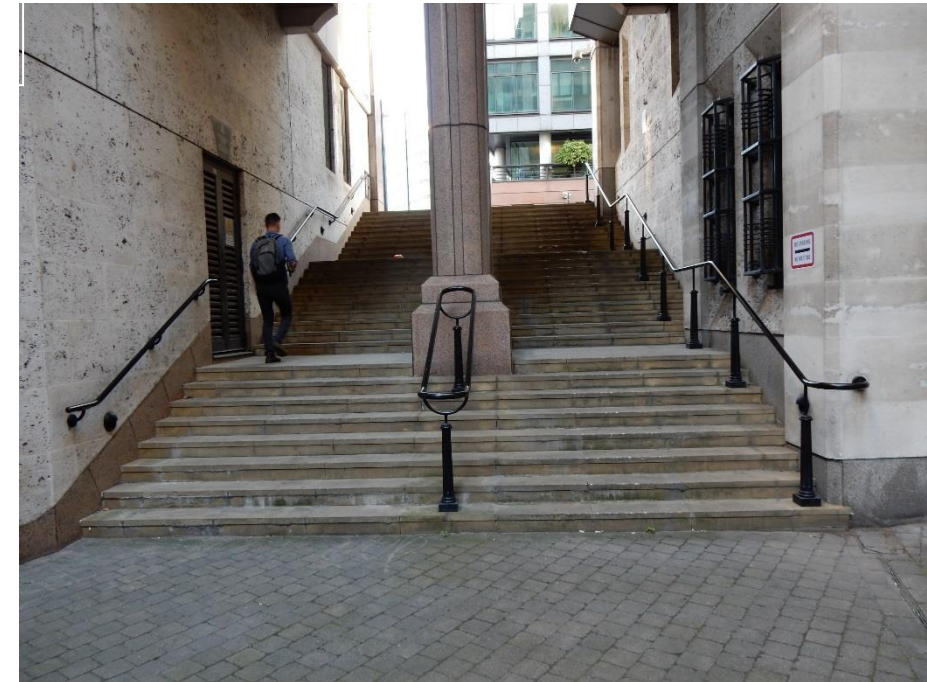
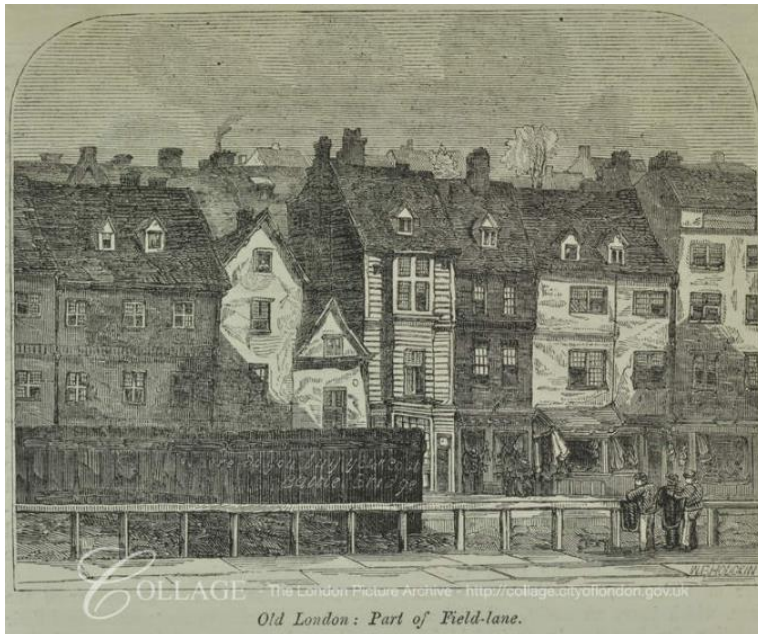


Directions – Continue down Clerkenwell Road to the junction with Farringdon Road and turn left into it. Continue down until you reach Greville Street on your right, go up it and then left into Saffron Hill. Continue to the foot of a set of steps

This part of Saffron Hill was then Field Lane, beside the River Fleet which ran at this level where Farringdon Road is. Mother Clap's molly house is described as between an arch and the Bunch o' Grapes pub, perhaps where Holborn Bridge crossed the Fleet near here.

This famous molly-house (gay club) was owned by Mother Margaret Clap between 1724 and 1726. A raid led by the Society for the Reformation of Manners had it closed. It was notorious during the 1720s through the trial of Margaret Clap, indicted for keeping a disorderly house and for encouraging her customers to commit sodomy. She and 6 customers were pilloried, fined, and imprisoned for periods and 3 hanged for sodomy: Gabriel Lawrence, a 43-year-old milkman; William Griffin, a 43 year old furniture upholsterer; and Thomas Wright, another molly house keeper.

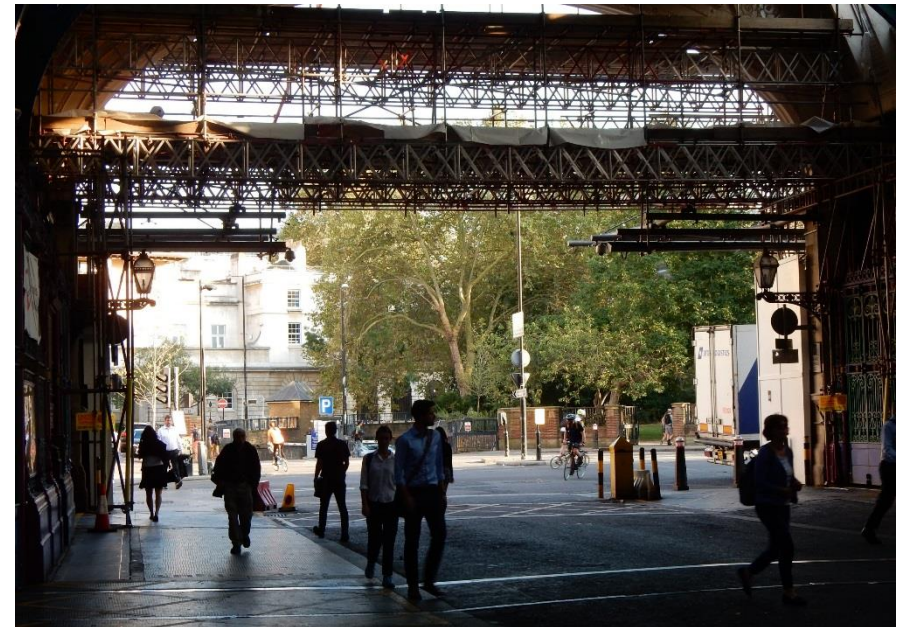
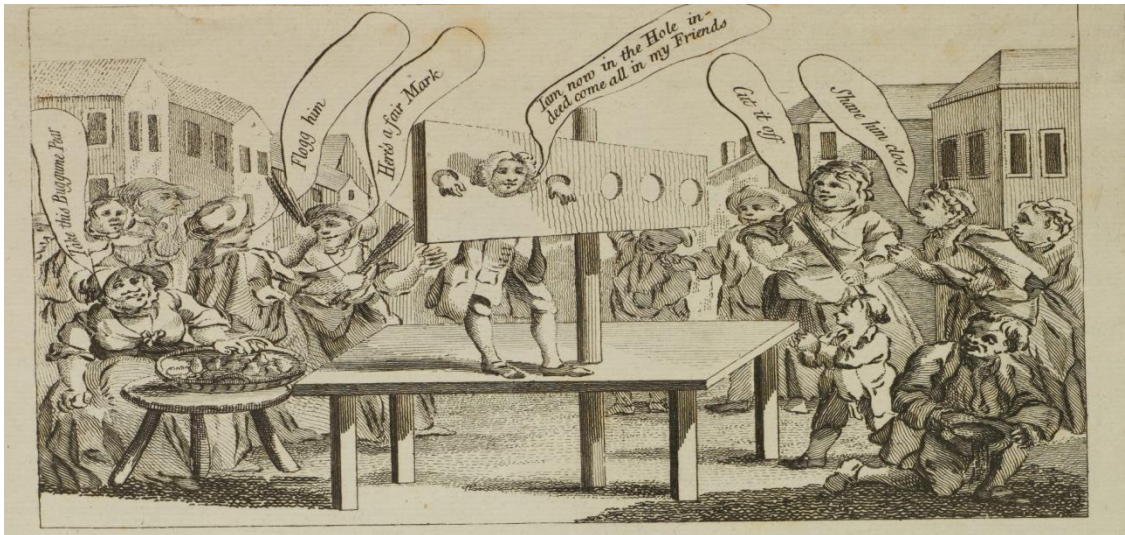
## Stop 4 - Mother Clap's molly house



Directions – Ascend the steps into Charterhouse Street, turn left and cross Farringdon Road and continue until St John Street is on your left and Smithfield Market clock under the market roof on your right.

The pillory was a hinged wooden board with holes through which the head and/or various limbs of criminals were inserted. The public would mock and pelt offenders with food, mud, dead animals and even stones. One was set up between the livestock market and the still existing St Bartholomew's Hospital. Mother Clap and her customers were pilloried here and she reportedly died of her injuries. Religious martyrs and William Wallace are commemorated here but not Mrs Clap.

## Stop 5 – West Smithfield pillory



Directions – Turn left and walk into St John Street to the left of Barclay's Bank. Continue up to Number 7, the Vinoteca Wine Bar. Here the Dream City gay cinema also called the New City Cinema suffered a major fire on 26 February 1994. The unlicensed cinema was a small private club showing gay pornographic films. Clerkenwell Fire Station (closed in 2014) answered the call and is opposite the Mount Pleasant Sorting Office at Stop 1.

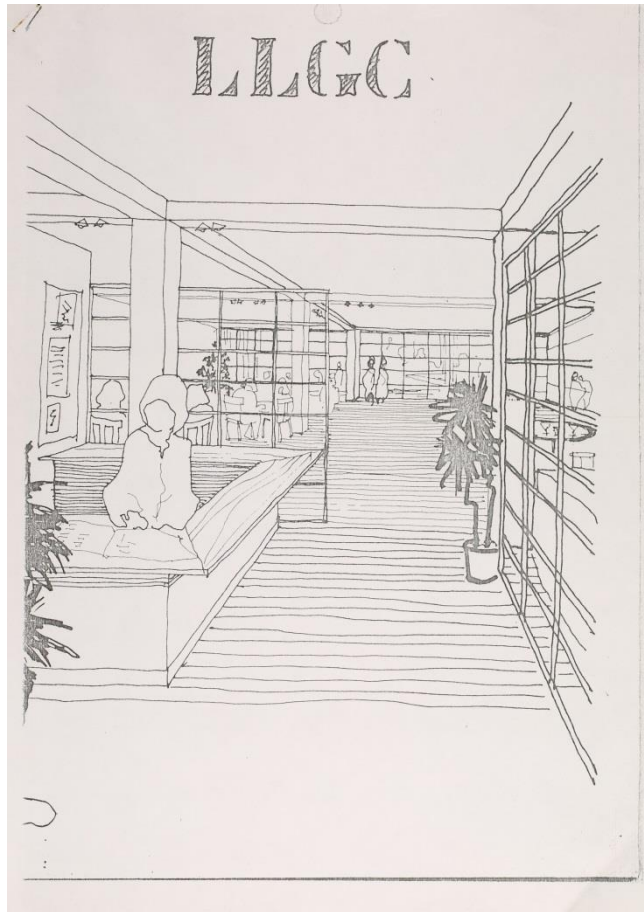
11 people died in the fire and 23 more were injured in the blaze. At least one person suffered multiple fractures leaping from an upper storey window as the building was consumed what witnesses said was a giant fireball. The dead and injured were a mix of out, closeted and homeless men. The fire was found to have been arson started deliberately after an argument over refused re-entry. Tailors assistant David Lauwers gave himself up and was sentenced to life imprisonment for the incident and died in prison

## Stop 6 – Dream City Fire



Directions – Retrace your tracks to Smithfield Market and take the road on your right, Cowcross Street until you reach 67-9. Here the London Lesbian and gay Centre was established in 1985 by the Greater London Council (GLC), which donated three-quarters of a million pounds to its establishment

The Centre was purchased by the GLC and opened unofficially in December 1984. The second floor was a women only space. It was London's first non-commercial gay venue and was popular and innovative, particular with less affluent community members. With the abolition of the GLC in 1986 the centre's management team kept the building in operation for another five years, mounting losses, and a robbery of several thousand pounds resulted in its closure and subsequent sale.



## Stop 7 – Lesbian and Gay Centre





Directions – Continue to the end of the road and continue into the square and stop with the old quite Farringdon Tube Station on your right. The frontage of the new Farringdon Crossrail station is where Chariots Sauna was.

Chariots Sauna was a sauna venue for gay men opened in 1999. It included a swimming pool, Jacuzzis, steam room and saunas. It was closed in 2010 due to Crossrail development at Farringdon Station.

## Stop 8 – Chariots sauna



Directions – Return to the end of St John's Street and go up it for half a mile until you reach the Peasant pub on your right. Just past it on the left under the public library is the Islington Museum.

Only do this if the Museum is open - Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday: 10am - 5pm.

At other times turn left at the Peasant into Skinner Street and follow next slide to LMA.

Major gay playwright Joe Orton and partner Kenneth Halliwell lived in Noel Road 1959 -67 when Halliwell killed Orton in the flat and them himself. The flat was decorated with collages made from art books stolen from the library which is still at 115 Essex Road. They also defaced books with fantastic covers and returned them to the shelves, for which they were fined and imprisoned in 1962. The covers, displayed in Islington Museum and sold as postcards, are now worth more than the books.

## Stop 9 – The Orton/Halliwell book covers

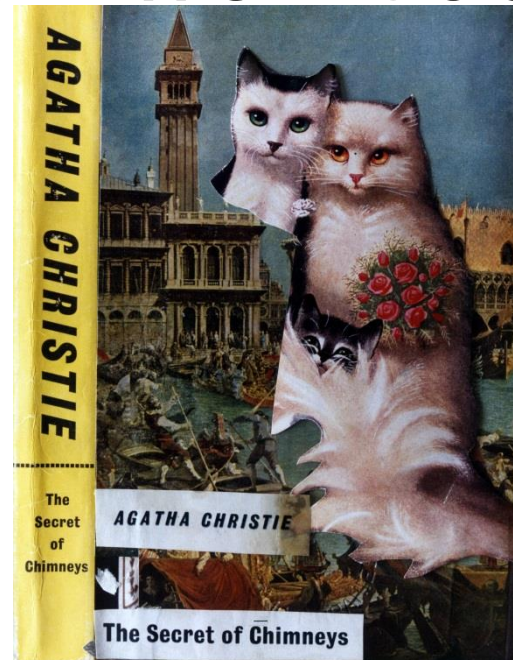


Image Courtesy of  
Islington Local History Centre

Directions – Retrace your steps back to the Pheasant and then turn right into Skinner Street, follow it round and you will see Northampton Road between two parts of Spa Feld which will leads you to the Bourne and Hollingsworth Building, an next to it the LMA.

Speak Out London Diversity City was a Heritage Lottery funded project that included an exhibition, interviews with LGBTQ+ Londoners, catalogue annotations, a website and this guided walk.

## Stop 10 – London Metropolitan Archives

