



1 THE CIVIC / BARNSELY CIVIC
44 – 56 Eldon Street, S70 2JL (1962 – 1998) and
Hanson Street, S70 2HZ (2006 – 2023)



Prior to opening its doors as The Civic Theatre in 1962, the grand building that occupies 44 – 56 Eldon Street was originally established as Barnsley Mechanics Institute and Public Hall built by Henry Harvey in 1877. The building has a long history of free to access arts education and a platform for accessing culture. Before 1962, the build was also home to the Barnsley Naturalist and Scientific Society and Barnsley School of Art.

When the building reopened at The Civic Theatre in 1962, it also housed the town's library, dance schools and on the top floor, The Centenary Rooms, a small concert room which played host to 1960s pop discos, Barnsley Folk Club, Barnsley's first punk gig and a gamut of rock and heavy metal gigs. In the 1980s, the theatre even hosted performances from drag entertainer Danny La Rue and transgender showgirl Lyn Daniels.



The local authority run venue closed its doors in 1998, but reopened in 2009 as a new contemporary arts space. Today, Barnsley Civic is a LGBTQ+ friendly employer and programmer of arts and culture.

"There was zero lesbian culture at college in 1968... I knew that I wasn't like the other ones. I decided to do some research, so I read all the Collette I could get my hands on. Collections had been translated into really nice Penguin editions. There was some quite frisky stuff in there. We got it from WHSmith's and the library in the Civic." – Kate

"When I were at Art College, there used to be absolutely fantastic art college discos in the Centenary Rooms, which used to be upstairs in The Civic. It were a phenomenal space for discos... the art school used to hire it and we used to put on art school Christmas and birthday parties. All the art school used to pile down there and, you know, dance and be wierd. And that strangely, even though it weren't specifically a gay space, that always felt like a really safe space." – David

2 ANTONIO'S
Former address is Old Mill Ln, S71 1LL. Demolished mid-1990's.

"I discovered a gay bar called Antonio's [previously Tollgate Inn, Old Mill Lane] that were down near Asda. It were only one day a week. But yet again, I used to go there and feel completely isolated again... Men that used to wear leather, or wear body harnesses used to be called 'clones', and it were full of clones. I didn't identify with that, because I were a bit of a freak you know. I were kind of more into the music scene, than the gay scene" – David

3 DOLLYS
25 Eldon Street, S70 2JJ (1980s – 1990s)
THE ROOM
25 Eldon Street, S70 2JJ (2000s – 2010s)



Barnsley radio and TV presenter and DJ Stephanie Hirst, cut her teeth DJing at Dollys on Eldon Street in the early 1990s. In 2014 and 2015 Hirst was included in The Independent On Sunday's "Rainbow List", an annual celebration of 101 influential LGBTQ+ people in the UK,

and in 2016 was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Leeds Beckett University for her LGBTQ+ activism.

For a decade, The Room was the town's only 7 day a week Rock and Metal bar. This period coincided with the rise of Emo culture, and became the home of black eyeliner and nail-varnish wearing misfits and outcasts. It also became a same space for young LGBTQ+ people, with a big overlap between the two communities.

"Some of my favourite and best times of being in my late teens into early 20s were in The Room... But I guess, for me, that was about a separate part of my identity. That was about my love for alternative music... But yeah, I guess for the other part of my identity, which might be classed as my sexual orientation, I went over to Chicago Rock" – Faith

4 CHICAGO ROCK
Island Corner, 27 Wellington Street, S70 1SW (1990s – 2010s)

Chicago Rock occupied the ground floor of the old Co-operative building. The upper floor was home to the Hedonism Night Club. The building was demolished following a fire in 2016.

5 THE OUTPOST
2 Union Street, S70 1JS (2020s)

The Outpost is currently the home of Thirsty Thursday's and regular drag hosts, providing entertainment and a LGBTQ+ safe space on the outer edge of the town centre.

6 PUBLIC TOILETS
Corner of Eldon Street / Kendray Street (1970s – 1990s)

Postcode no longer exists, but was sited where Salt House, 46 The Glass Works, S70 1GW now stands.

"We'd been put into a situation where you only could ever find a community in public toilets. They were known as 'cottages', and before Grinder and Gaydar and all these internet sites, you could find friends or sex in public toilets. There used to be one on Eldon Street, that people just use to meet up in and hang around and kind of stand and chat, because that was a safe space until the police cottoned on to what gay men were doing and then they'd raid them all the time. Most of the time, people weren't up to anything, it was just a safe space and it was just like one of those situations that you could have a conversation with another gay person in a public toilet" – David

7 TREADLES
9 Peel Parade, Barnsley S70 2RN (1990s – 2010s)

Treadles was one of a few pubs, bars and clubs that started to promote 'gay nights' in the 1990s, as part of a mainstream LGBTQ+ night, which took place on Tuesdays.

8 WHARNCLIFFE HOTEL / CHARLEY'S BAR / BAKER STREET
46 Sheffield Road S70 1HS (1960s – 2000s)

Sited at 46 Sheffield, and more commonly known for the period it was called Charley's Bar, the venue was known for being a 'gay friendly' pub in the 1980s and 1990s. Prior to that, it was known as The Wharncliffe Hotel, and before it ceased trading as licensed premises, it was briefly known as Baker Street.

"Us older gays would go in Baker Street on Sheffield Road" – Annette

9 FUNNY GALS
Theatre Royal, 5 Wellington Street, S70 1SS (2006 – present)
ROXY'S
25a Wellington Street S70 1SW (2020s)
CORNER PIN
2 Wellington St, Barnsley S70 1SS (2010s – 2020s)
PRIDE BARNSELY
Wellington Street (2010s – 2020s)

Occupying the former Theatre Royal building on Wellington Street, Funny Gals is Barnsley's self-proclaimed NO1 PARTY Showbar! With regular drag hosts and lip syncs, Funny Gals has been a LGBTQ+ safe place since 2006 and a regular Pride Barnsley festival location for over a decade.

10 MANDELA GARDENS
Hanson Street, S70 2HZ

For many decades, Mandela Gardens has been a hang-out spot for Barnsley's alternative youth, including skaters, goths, Emos, music and art students.

In recent years it has also been a location for Pride Barnsley. The 11th edition of the festival, which took place in 2022, was notable for the high proportion of young people that attended.

"When I was going through my Emo phase, we would go to Mandela Gardens at the back of The Civic quite a lot... We'd also go to Lucroum, which were like just a back of The Civic because my mate were in a band. That's where I met a lot of people a lot like me, a lot were gay, a lot of them bi, a lot of them were Goths and Emos." – Jess

11 CHILYPEP HOME
1st Floor, 1 Blucher Street, S70 1AP (2021 – present)

Sited in a space that was once home to YMCA (who still occupy another section of the building), Chilypep (the Children and Young People's Empowerment Project) is a charity dedicated to raising the voice of children and young people, giving them the platform to shape their world and stay connected. Chilypep's Barnsley hub is a safe and nurturing environment for LGBTQIA+ young people aged 14 – 24.

"We have some outstanding youth groups in Barnsley. The kids can be who they need to be. If they want to wear a dress, they can turn up in a dress - it don't matter whether that's a gender or a sexuality issue, they're just encouraged to be their normal selves and I think that's great. It's good for their mental health. If I'd have had groups like that when I was a teenager, I may well have found myself to be honest with you. We saw a lot of that Pride Barnsley." – Michaela



Teenage Wildlife is project that explores 70 years of youth culture and teenage experiences in Barnsley and the Eldon Street Heritage Action Zone; funded by Historic England and supported by Barnsley Council. Since the project's start in 2021, we have collected oral histories from over a hundred people who were teenagers in different decades. Many of those identified as LGBTQ+ As part of the project, we have created this map which plots some of the key locations mentioned in the collected interviews. It also identifies LGBTQ+ safe spaces over the last 70 years. The way the local LGBTQ+ scene has developed and adapted over the years, is a reflection of the nation's legal framework, and the constant fight for sexuality and gender identity equality.

Homosexuality was part-decriminalised (in England and Wales for men over 21) in 1967. However, the threat of violence or harassment still loomed heavy for many men and teenagers. In the 1980s, and throughout the AIDS epidemic, the dangerous and negative narrative that appeared in the mainstream media, meant that many in the LGBTQ+ community were driven underground, with few safe spaces available in public. In the 1990s, more publicly advertised safe spaces for the LGBTQ+ community and its allies started to appear reflective in the way the local scene developed.

Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, introduced by the Conservative Government under Margaret Thatcher, banned local authorities from 'promoting homosexuality' or 'pretended family relationships' preventing the discussion of LGBTQ+ issues and stopping pupils getting the support they needed. Section 28 was repealed in 2003.

Sex between women has never been illegal. However, the cultural expectations of women set by patriarchal society, meant that many lesbians weren't able to be their true selves until much later in life. Publicly visible lesbian culture and role models were limited, and even now in the 21st century, stories of gay men are much more commonplace than those of gay women.

TEENAGE WILDLIFE 70 YEARS OF LGBTQ+ YOUTH CULTURE IN BARNSLEY



TEENAGE WILDLIFE

70 YEARS OF LGBTQ+ YOUTH CULTURE IN BARNSLEY

The Civil Partnership Act 2004 allowed same-sex couples to legally enter binding partnerships. The subsequent Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act 2013 then went further, allowing same-sex couples in England and Wales to marry.

The Gender Recognition Act 2004, which came into effect in 2005, gave trans people full legal recognition of their gender, allowing them to acquire a new birth certificate – although gender options were limited to 'male' or 'female'. In May 2021, the Government rejected a petition to legally recognise non-binary identities.

The Equality Act 2010 gave LGBTQ+ employees protections from discrimination, harassment and victimisation at work.

The legislation brought together existing legislation and added protections for trans workers, solidifying rights granted by the Gender Recognition Act.

Much of the current conversation about LGBTQ+ rights, concerns the continued fight for equal workplace, healthcare and educational rights for trans and non-binary people. In 2022, Trans Barnsley launched, offering support to transgender and non-binary people and their families.

In 2022, Barnsley held its 11th Pride festival in Mandela Gardens. It was one of the biggest town centre events of the year seeing thousands of LGBTQ+ people and allies come together to celebrate.



Photo: Helen Constantinou



Thank you to Annette, Danni, David, Faith, Jess, Kate, Michaela and Steven for sharing their stories.

The project was curated by Barnsley Civic and its LGBTQ+ Craft Group volunteers Cara Chambers, Lucy Dewsnap, Tammi Baxter, Phoebe Archer and Anastasia Eddy.

This map was designed by Black Bee Creative, with images donated by Barnsley Archives and Bluebeany Design.