



**GRESSENHALL**  
FARM AND WORKHOUSE  
MUSEUM OF NORFOLK LIFE



**Dereham Neatherd**  
High School  
*Traditional · Inclusive · Supportive*



**Norfolk**  
Museums

Behind the Scenes

# LGBTQ+ Stories

Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse

with

Neatherd High School



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL**  
ENGLAND



**Norfolk** County Council



*a former place, a brighter future*  
**Breckland**  
COUNCIL



**LOTTERY FUNDED**

# Behind the Scenes: LGBTQ+ Stories

LGBTQ+ stories will always be a key part of Norfolk's past, present and future and we hope to strengthen that truth.

Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse worked with Neatherd High School Strive for Pride Society to select and proudly present LGBTQ+ stories and connections from Gressenhall's collections in their own words.



# Exploring the exhibition

- [The Little Mermaid](#)
- [Huntley and Palmers](#)
- [Fairies](#)
- [Women in breeches](#)
- [Land Girls and Lumber Jills](#)
- [Sharing a bed](#)
- [Rainbow laces](#)
- [Carnations](#)
- [Unicorns](#)
- [Violets](#)
- [Lavender](#)
- [Pan](#)
- [Sheep](#)

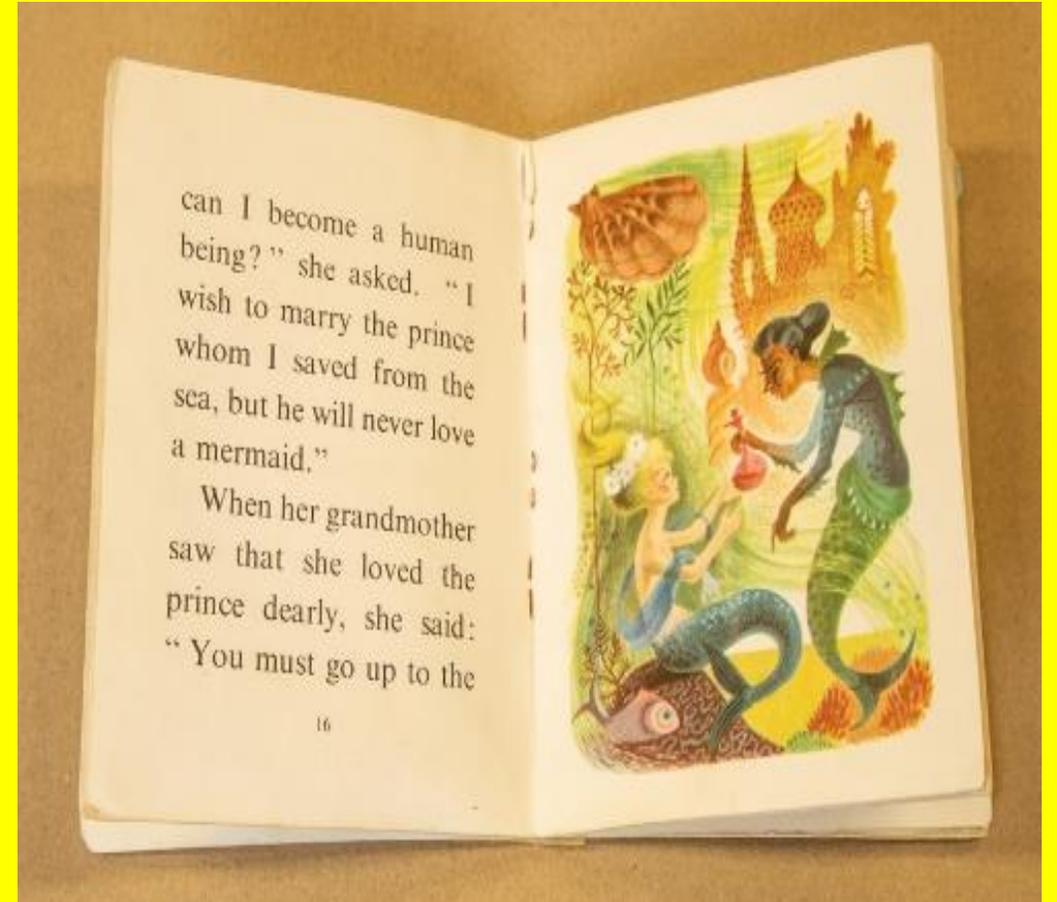
# The Little Mermaid

'The Little Mermaid' was first published in 1837. Today, the story holds great meaning to the transgender community. When Ariel changes from her mermaid form to human form, the process is incredibly painful for her, as if she is 'stepping on knives'. In becoming a human she is also disowned by her father and separated from her family. This is seen to reflect the transgender experience today. Today, the charity @MermaidsGender supports gender nonconformity in young people and children. GRSRM : 2003.24.2c

[Huntley and Palmers](#)

[Exploring the exhibition](#)

[Finish your tour](#)



# Huntley and Palmers

Huntley and Palmers made biscuits in England from 1822 until the 1990s and was a common household name. When John Wolfenden was commissioned to investigate homosexuality laws in 1954 and set up the Wolfenden Committee he used the terms 'Huntley' and 'Palmers' in reference to 'homosexuals' and 'prostitutes'. This was so the women on the committee would not be offended. The Wolfenden Report was published in 1957 and recommended that homosexuality should be legalised. It would still take another ten years before this happened.

**'Huntley and Palmers was used to mean 'homosexuals' and 'prostitutes' in the Wolfenden Report. We loved the biscuit tin, even though it made us hungry. This was such an important bit of legislation and we didn't think it would link to biscuits.'**

Neatherd Strive for Pride Society

[Fairies](#)

[Exploring the exhibition](#)

[Finish your tour](#)



# Fairies

The term 'fairy' has been used a slur against gay people. Imagery such as this, including pixies and fairies on a Huntley and Palmers biscuit tin, could then evoke different meanings to the LGBTQ+ community. However, by the 1960s the term 'fairy' was being reclaimed by the LGBTQ+ community to change its association as a slur.

**'Gay people are called fairies as a slur, so this Pixie tin could be seen as gay by people.'**

Neatherd Strive for Pride Society

[Women in breeches](#)

[Exploring the exhibition](#)

[Finish your tour](#)



# Women in breeches

In 1917 the Women's Land Army was formed. 23,000 women joined to work on the land to produce more food during the war. A part of the uniform was breeches. They were more practical than wearing a skirt to work in the fields. But, this was a challenge to traditional gender stereotypes. The reaction from men at seeing women in trousers ranged from disapproval, to outrage and violence. Olive Crosswell, who was a Land Girl in Norfolk, spoke about how men threw stones at her legs for wearing breeches.

[Land Girls and Lumber Jills](#)

[Exploring the exhibition](#)

[Finish your tour](#)



# Land Girls and Lumber Jills

In 2008 the work of the Women's Land Army (WLA) and Women's Timber Corps (WTC) was officially recognised for their efforts during the two World Wars. Any surviving members can apply for a commemorative badge. Mrs Gibson, who was a Land Girl in Norfolk, said that the badge was a 'long time coming'. The Land Girls and Lumber Jills have waited a long time for their efforts to be considered of equal contribution to that of men helping on the Home Front.

[Sharing a bed](#)

[Exploring the exhibition](#)

[Finish your tour](#)



# Sharing a bed

In the mid-nineteenth century workhouses were feared for being homoerotic spaces. In 1848 the Chairman of the Poor Man's Guardian Society commented on the 'disgusting practice of the male poor sleeping naked together', and Gressenhall's records describe boys sleeping together as 'evil'. These fears were also sensationalised by James Greenwood in his 1866 undercover report 'A Night in a Workhouse.' Whilst there were practical reasons for sleeping naked in one bed, such as to keep warm and wipe of lice, these reports reveal Victorian attitudes to homosexuality, including their fears and prejudices.

**'In the 19<sup>th</sup> century workhouses were feared for being homoerotic spaces that encouraged homosexual behaviour. In 1848, the Poor Man's Guardian Society's Chairman commented on the 'disgusting practice of the men sleeping naked together', even though there were practical reasons for it.'**

Neatherd Strive for Pride Society

[Rainbow laces](#)

[Exploring the exhibition](#)

[Finish your tour](#)



# Rainbow laces

This is a toy made to help children practice tying their shoelaces. In it are rainbow laces, which came from Norwich City FC (NCFC) who support the Stonewall Rainbow Laces campaign. This campaign aims to make sport everyone's game and challenge prejudice shown towards LGBTQ+ sports people. NCFC also have their own 'Proud Canaries'; their official LGBTQ+ fans and friends group who state Justin Fashanu as their hero. Fashanu was an NCFC player and the first professional footballer to come out during his career.

[Carnations](#)

[Exploring the exhibition](#)

[Finish your tour](#)



# Carnations

This is a white plant pot holder from the 19<sup>th</sup> century that has carnations on it. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the green carnation became a coded symbol and suggestion of homosexuality. In 1892 Oscar Wilde asked an actor in a performance of *Lady Windermere's Fan* to wear a green carnation and began to wear them on his lapel too. This association and the unnatural colouring of the carnation led people to believe Wilde was suggesting what was known as an 'unnatural' act at the time; homosexuality. GRSRM : 1984.104.124

**'This is a plant pot from the 19<sup>th</sup> century embellished with carnations. In the 1800s green carnations symbolised homosexuality. Oscar Wilde is well known for wearing a green carnation, leading people to believe he was making suggestions about his own sexuality.'**

Neatherd Strive for Pride Society

[Unicorns](#)

[Exploring the exhibition](#)

[Finish your tour](#)



# Unicorns

This is a Bristol cigarette packet sleeve that includes golden unicorns as part of its coat of arms. The unicorn has historically been a symbol for the LGBTQ+ community due to its mythical being and powers. Their existence blurs lines between societal norms and provides a sense of 'otherness', which makes the unicorn relatable to the members of the LGBTQ+ community. GRSRM : 2002.142.11

**'This is a Bristol cigarette packet sleeve that has golden unicorns on it. Unicorns have been a symbol for the LGBTQ+ community due to their mythical being and powers.'**

Neatherd Strive for Pride Society

[Violets](#)

[Exploring the exhibition](#)

[Finish your tour](#)



# Violets

This is an ornament in the shape of a shoe, decorated with small violet coloured flowers from the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Dating back to 600BC violets have been a sign of lesbian love. The Greek poet, Sappho describes herself and her female lovers wearing garlands of violets. Violets then became a coded symbol for lesbians. This ornament also states it was 'A Present from Hunstanton', could it have been a gift to show 'Sapphic' desire? GRSRM : 1989.23.42

**'Give flowers of love, not words of hate. #violetlesbian #flowerlove'**

Neatherd Strive for Pride Society

[Lavender](#)

[Exploring the exhibition](#)

[Finish your tour](#)



# Lavender

At Gressenhall we have lavender on site in our wonderful gardens. The flower symbolises different meanings to the LGBTQ+ community. The colour lavender comes from mixing pink and blue; culturally gendered colours. From the 1920s the term 'lavender boy' or having a 'streak of lavender' was used as a derogatory term for a man expressing 'feminine' characteristics. Today, lavender roses are sometimes shared between LGBTQ+ partners to celebrate their relationship.

[Pan](#)

[Exploring the exhibition](#)

[Finish your tour](#)



# Pan

Pan is the half-man, half-goat Greek God of music and the woods. He is loved by all when he plays his music. The word pan meant 'all' in Greek, with links to the term pansexual today, which is a person whose sexual or romantic attraction is not limited by sex or gender. GRSRM : 1981.178.21

[Sheep](#)

[Exploring the exhibition](#)

[Finish your tour](#)

at his treasures, so he wandered  
the woods and meadows.

There he used to talk to Pan, the God of the Woods, who lived in a cave in the mountains.



Pan had funny little pointed ears and horns, and legs like a goat's. He spent much of his time playing on a magic pipe which he had made from the reeds that grew by the riverside.

King Midas thought Pan's music the sweetest and jolliest in the world.

The wood-nymphs, too, and the birds, the trees, and the creatures of the forest all loved to hear him play.

In time Pan grew very proud of his powers, and he even dared to ask the great Sun God

# Sheep

We have different breeds of sheep on Gressenhall Farm, including the Norfolk Horn. Across the animal world, up to 300 species have been identified as being non-binary, intersex, gay and lesbian. Within this figure, sheep are interesting. Sheep show a same-sex preference for life, which is rare. Studies show that 8% of male sheep prefer other males, even when fertile females are available. There is still only one species of animal that shows homophobia.

**'It has been found that #sheep can identify as #gay and 8% of all sheep participate in #samesex coupling.'**

Neatherd Strive for Pride Society

[Exploring the exhibition](#)

[Finish your tour](#)





**GRESSENHALL**  
FARM AND WORKHOUSE  
MUSEUM OF NORFOLK LIFE



**Dereham Neatherd**  
High School  
*Traditional · Inclusive · Supportive*



**Norfolk**  
Museums

# Thank You!

Check out our other online resources.  
Stay in touch via our social media feeds.

#LGBTQ+Stories

@GressenhallFW

Facebook: GressenhallFW  
Instagram: gressenhall\_fw



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL**  
ENGLAND



**Norfolk** County Council



*a former place, a brighter future*  
**Breckland**  
COUNCIL



**LOTTERY FUNDED**