

Introduction

Queer histories rely on anecdotes passed from one generation to the next. These memories replace an absence of recorded narratives, and while oral-histories prove questionable, the role of space in shaping gender and sexual identity remains certain.

A Map of Queer Brum is a directory of Birmingham’s LGBTQ+ spaces from 1850 to present. It brings together personal and collective descriptions of sites including bars, clubs and public toilets in response to ongoing threats of regeneration.

In December 2018, Prosperity Developments applied for permission to demolish existing buildings and to construct a 116 apartment complex in the Gay Village. Further venues were implicated in the Rea Valley Urban Quarter Masterplan in May 2019, a residential development comprising over 5,000 new homes. These structures will lead to noise

complaints, licensing restrictions and the closure of 13 community hubs.

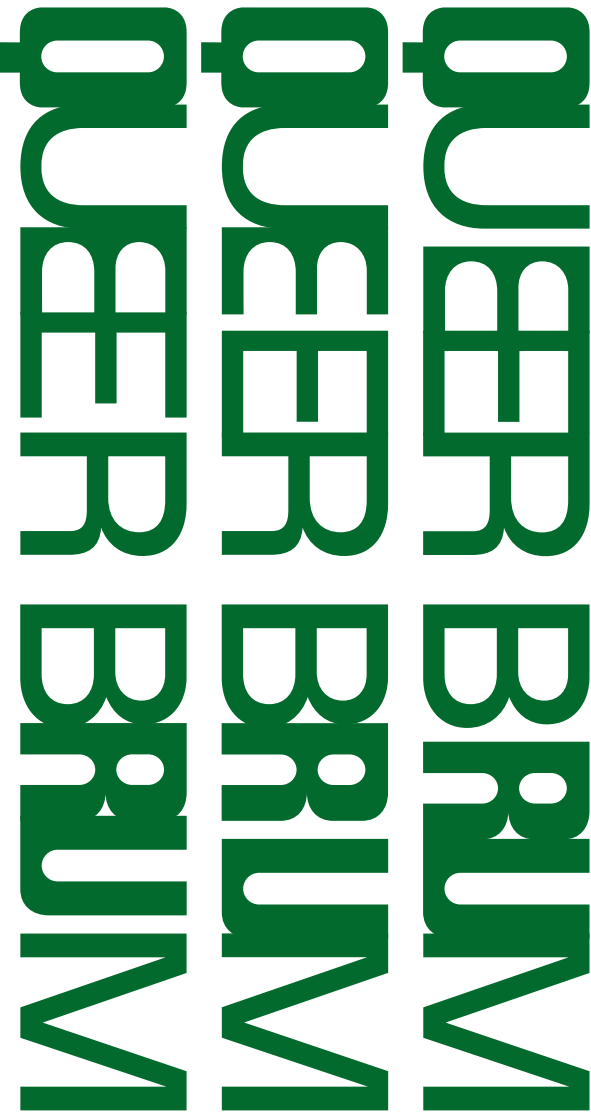
The displacement of LGBTQ+ groups is not a recent phenomenon and Birmingham has a history of prioritising urban development over its communities. In the 1970s, the Inner Ring Road construction led to the closure of the city’s earliest queer spaces. Again in 2000, venues in proximity to the Bull Ring Centre were demolished for redevelopment.

The recollections enclosed retrace histories of communal opposition, repeated iterations of clubs and pickets for women’s inclusion. *A Map of Queer Brum* echoes an ongoing need for support structures that can withstand the insecurity of space.

— Ryan Kearney

QUEER

The term ‘queer’ was reclaimed in the late-1980s by activists and academics. It is used to describe those who identify outside the confines of sexuality and gender norms.



A Map of Queer Brum

NOVEMBER 2019
FREE

2.27
The Nightingale Club
Camp Hill
1969 — 1974
50 Camp Hill,
Birmingham, B12

The first site of Birmingham’s longest-running LGBTQ+ space. It was subject to a compulsory purchase order in 1974.

2.28
The Nightingale Club
Witton Lane
1974 — 1981
10 — 12 Witton Lane,
Birmingham, B6

Visitors parked away from the club as police noted down license plates to compare with vehicles at cottages across the city.

2.29
The Nightingale Club
Thorp St
1981 — 1994
37 — 40 Thorp St,
Birmingham, B5

Modelled after a gay village, the club’s penultimate venue closed when Birmingham Hippodrome purchased the site for its expansion.

2.30
Tin Tins
1991 — 1996
308 Bull Ring Centre,
Smallbrook Queensway,
Birmingham, B5

CLUB NIGHTS

2.31
Bolts at The Dome
1986 — 1987
Horse Fair,
Birmingham, B1

2.32
The Powerhouse
1982 — 1985
1 Hurst St,
Birmingham, B5

A gay night held every Thursday. Madonna is rumoured to have performed while on tour for her self-titled debut album.

2.33
Victoria Club
n.d — n.d
Victoria Square,
Birmingham, B1

A gay night held before the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967. The owner is reported to have stolen with the community’s money, leading to the creation of The Nightingale Club.

COTTAGES

2.34
BT Tower
1966 — n.d
86 Lionel St,
Birmingham, B3

2.35
Kennedy Gardens
1972 — 2007
St. Chads Queensway,
Birmingham, B4

A roundabout dedicated to John F. Kennedy. The cottage was so infamous that it was listed in Spartacus, an international guide for gay travel.

2.36
Platforms 12 & 7
1950 — 1977
Snow Hill Station,
Colmore Row,
Birmingham, B3

'I used to make it a habit to pop to the cottage at the old Snow Hill Station on my way home. It was downstairs between platform twelve and seven with Victorian tiles [...] cottaging was very risky but it was the only way I knew how to contact men'. — Alan

2.37
The Electric Cinema
1909 — n.d
47 — 49 Station St,
Birmingham, B5

2.38
The Silver Slipper
1905 — 1987
New Street Station,
Birmingham, B2
(Outside John Lewis)

A large Victorian toilet. It is said to have gotten its name in the 1950s when police caught two men cottaging. One escaped so fast his shoe fell off, while the other was arrested. The police officer is said to have picked up the shoe and uttered ‘whoever the slipper may fit, shall be the one’.

HOTELS

2.39
Grosvenor Hotel
1971 — 1986
326 Hagley Road,
Birmingham, B17

2.40
The Imperial Hotel
1944 — 1973
31 Imperial House,
Birmingham, B2

A popular bar for gay men through the 1950s and 1960s.

2.41
The Wellington Hotel
n.d — 2019
72 Bristol St,
Birmingham, B5

The Wellington is rumoured to have held the first same-sex marriages in Birmingham. Folklore tells of a priest who would bless the wedding couple by sneaking in via the subway outside.

'It was run, quite dominated, by an older lesbian who lived up in Selly Oak; she was actually married to a gay man and this was a sort of front for them'. —Gill Coffin

PUBS
2.42
Dingly's
n.d — n.d
New Meeting St,
Birmingham, B4

2.43
Suffields
n.d — n.d
Crooked Lane,
Birmingham, B2

2.44
The Cabin
n.d — n.d
Union Passage,
Birmingham, B2

2.45
The Charrendon
n.d — n.d
'Corner of Upper Temple Street and Temple Row'

2.46
The Crown Inn
n.d — n.d
65 Station St,
Birmingham, B5

2.47
The Old Nelson
n.d — n.d
Temple Row,
Birmingham, B2

2.48
The Victoria
n.d — n.d
48 John Bright St,
Birmingham, B1

A popular meeting place for gay men due to its proximity to The Silver Slipper, a popular cottage.

SAUNAS

2.49
Kent Street Baths
1851 — 1997
Kent St, Birmingham, B5

A public baths that served as a space for gay men until its closure. The building was demolished in 2009, although part of the facade remains.

2.50
The Warehouse
n.d — n.d
16 Fleet St, Birmingham, B3

SHOPS
2.51
Cruisin'
n.d — n.d
Smallbrook Queensway,
Birmingham, B5

2.52
Prowler
2006 — 2014
28 — 30 Stephenson's St,
Birmingham, B2

Birmingham City Council attempted to reject the store’s license under fears it would turn the city into a ‘moral abyss of sexual depravity’.

WOMEN-ONLY SPACES

The earliest spaces were run by and for gay men. Women-only spaces existed out of necessity until venues became more inclusive in the 1990s.

2.53
Coach and Horse
n.d — n.d
Edward Road,
Birmingham, B12

A women-only night held every Thursday from 9pm.

2.54
Country Girl
n.d — n.d
1 Raddlebarn Road,
Birmingham, B29

2.55
Hare and Hounds
n.d — n.d
106 High St,
Birmingham, B14

2.56
Matador
1980 — 1995
'Old bullring market'

A popular venue for women-only discos. The bar held several charity fundraisers across its existence.

A Map of Queer Brum Acknowledgements

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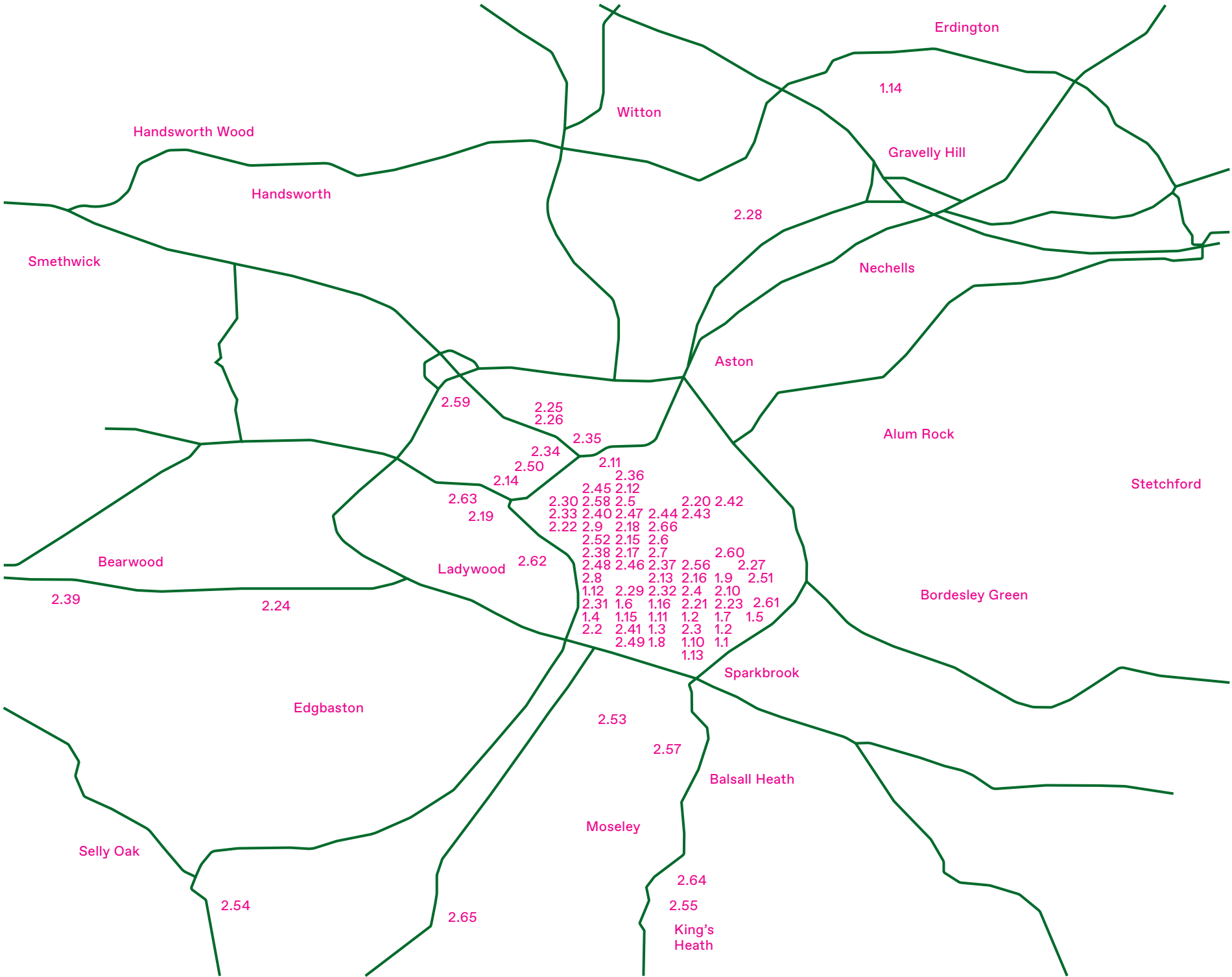
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This project relies on memories, rumours and anecdotes. If you would like to contribute, please get in touch:

Ryan Kearney

info@ryankearney.co.uk
@ryanpkearney

A MAP OF QUEER BRUM



1.

BARS

- 1.1** Eden
2008—
116 Sherlock St,
Birmingham, B5
theedenbar.co.uk
- 1.2** Equator Bar
2002—
123 Hurst St,
Birmingham, B5
- 1.3** Missing Bar
n.d—
48 Bromsgrove St,
Birmingham, B5
missingbar.co.uk
- 1.4** Sidewalk
1996—
125—127 Hurst St,
Birmingham, B5
sidewalkbirmingham.com
- 1.5** The Fox
1997—
17 Lower Essex St,
Birmingham, B5
thefoxbar.co.uk
- 1.6** The Loft Lounge
n.d—
143 Bromsgrove St,
Birmingham, B5
theloftbrum.co.uk
- 1.7** The Village Inn
c. 1990—
152 Hurst St,
Birmingham, B5
villagebirmingham.co.uk

CLUBS

- 1.8** Boltz
n.d—
40 Lower Essex St,
Birmingham, B5
boltz-club.com

Present Venues (16)

- 1.9** Chic
2004—
28 Horse Fair,
Birmingham, B5
chicnightclub.co.uk
- 1.10** The Core
2011—
135 Sherlock St,
Birmingham, B5
- 1.11** The Nightingale Club
1969—
18 Kent St,
Birmingham, B5
nightingaleclub.co.uk
- COMMUNITY CENTRES**
- 1.12** Birmingham LGBT Centre
2013—
38—40 Holloway Circus,
Birmingham, B1
blgbt.org

PUBS

- 1.13** The Fountain Inn
1991—
102 Wrentham St,
Birmingham B5
thefountain.bar

SAUNAS

- 1.14** Spartan
n.d—
127 George Rd,
Birmingham, B23
spartanhealthclub.co.uk

- 1.15** Unit 2
n.d—
78 Lower Essex St,
Birmingham, B5

SHOPS

- 1.16** Clonezone
1982—
84 Hurst St,
Birmingham, B5
clonezonedirect.co.uk

2.

BARS

- 2.1** Angels
1996—2008
125—127 Hurst St,
Birmingham, B5
Birmingham's first gay venue to have windows, allowing people to look in from the street.
- 2.2** Bar Jester
1970—2019
42 Holloway Circus,
Birmingham, B1
- 2.3** DV8
1999—2011
16 Lower Essex St,
Birmingham, B5
- 2.4** Glamorous
1975—2002
, 31 Hurst St,
Birmingham, B5
Formerly known as The Windmill, XL, Trisha's, Enigma and Partners Bar, Glamorous was popular for its themed parties and cabarets.
- 2.5** Howard's Bar
1945—1965
Colmore Row,
Birmingham, B3
Also known as Robbie's, the building was demolished for the Inner Ring Road development in the 1970s.
- 2.6** Jimmy's Bar
n.d—n.d
New St, Birmingham, B2
'It was a mixed clientele but there was no mistake when something young and pretty went down there, it was well and truly looked at and categorised.'
—Robin McGarry

Past Venues (66)

- 2.7** Jo Joes
1995—1997
Smallbrook Queensway,
Birmingham, B5
Managed by the world's fourth-largest retail group at the time, Jo Joes came under scrutiny for turning away drag queens and dismissing female staff members. The local community picketed the venue in August 1995 to demand fair access.
- 2.8** Legends
1979—1985
42 Holloway Circus,
Birmingham, B1
- 2.9** Peacocks
1990—2000
Bull Ring Centre,
Smallbrook Queensway,
Birmingham, B5
Formerly known as M&Ms, Peacocks remained until 2000 when the old Bull Ring Shopping Centre was demolished for redevelopment.
- 2.10** Queer Street
2010—2013
10—11 Hurst St,
Birmingham, B5
- 2.11** The Jungle
1950—1960
Colmore Row,
Birmingham, B3
The Jungle was situated beneath a barber's shop. Once it closed, a discrete knock gained you entry and visitors would be guided into an old sewer with a bar.
- 2.12** Unknown Bar
n.d—n.d
Snow Hill Station,
Birmingham, B3

2.13

- Viking
1969—1975
Smallbrook Queensway,
Birmingham, B5

CAFÉS

- 2.14** Caves
n.d—n.d
Summer Row,
Birmingham, B3
- 2.15** El Torro
n.d—n.d
Ethel St, Birmingham, B2
- 2.16** Pantheon
n.d—n.d
36 Smallbrook Queensway,
Birmingham, B5
- 2.17** Platform 1
n.d—n.d
New Street Station,
Birmingham, B2
'Open all night with a curious floating clientele. Considering there wasn't all that many night trains one wondered where all the travellers (mostly male) came from'.
—Peter Scott Fleeman, aka Ada
- 2.18** The Kardomah Café
1940—1970
40—42 New St,
Birmingham, B2
A popular meeting place for members of the same-sex. The brickwork still reads 'Kardomah Café'.
- 2.19** Towrope Coffee Bar
n.d—n.d
35 Broad St,
Birmingham, B1
- 2.20** Unknown Café
n.d—n.d
Martineau St,
Birmingham, B2

CLUBS

- 2.21** Guys Limited
1966—1973
7 Bromsgrove St,
Birmingham, B5
Birmingham's first openly-gay establishment. It was picketed by a group of lesbians in 1970 who demanded entry. Women were eventually given access to a mixed event, which became the most successful night for the club.
- 2.22** Hype
1991—1996
308 Bull Ring Centre,
Smallbrook Queensway,
Birmingham, B5
- 2.23** Route 66
1994—2011
139—142 Hurst St,
Birmingham, B5
The first gay establishment to be managed by a brewery, suggesting a shift in popular attitudes.
- 2.24** Sicilian Club
n.d—n.d
Hagley Road, Birmingham
- 2.25** Subway City
1995—2008
28 Water St,
Birmingham, B3
Subway City was infamous for its men-only rest areas. It eventually grew more popular with a straight clientele and closed.
- 2.26** The Jug
1980—1995
28 Water St,
Birmingham, B3
The Jug was an acronym for Just us Guys. It saw a decline in the 1990s as more venues opened in the Gay Village.