

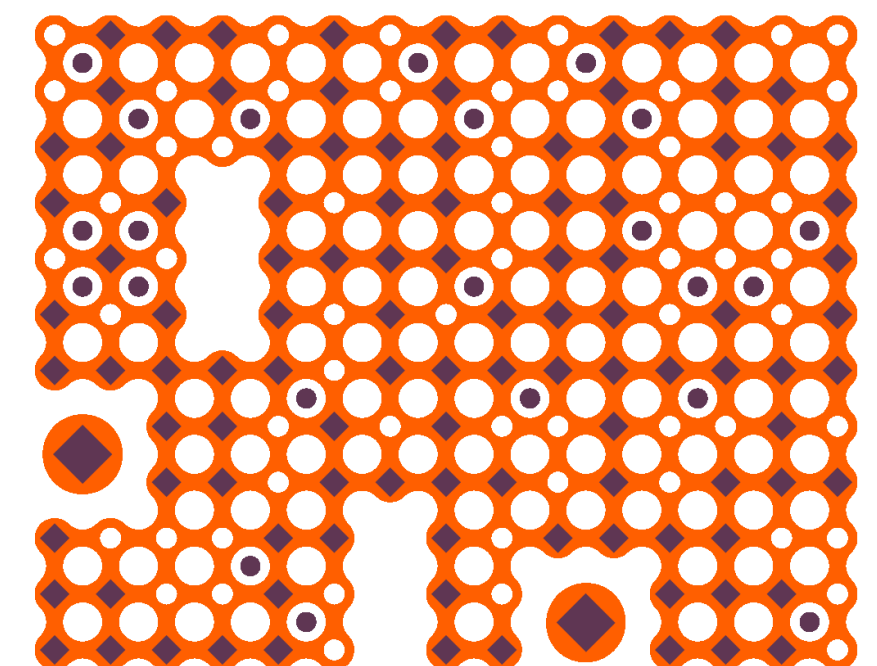
Community Archives & Digital Preservation

Dr Sharon Webb, Lecturer in Digital Humanities

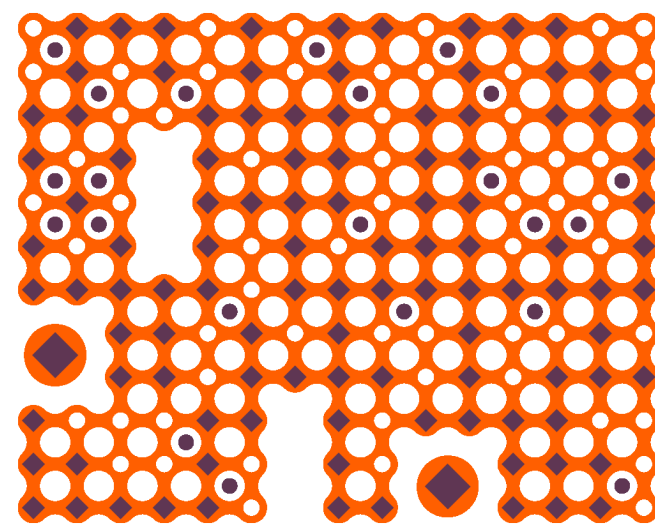
Sussex Humanities Lab and History Department

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www.preservingcommunityarchives.co.uk



CONTEXT - THE SUSSEX HUMANITIES LAB



- Sussex Humanities Lab, tasked with embedding digital humanities across the university research and teaching programme.
- Multi-Disciplinary team, located/embedded in different schools, but working collaboratively
- We lobby and advocate on behalf of the Lab from within our departments & can initiate & develop digital humanities and/or digital history programmes as part of a wider programme of development (e.g. beyond the school).

COMMUNITY ARCHIVES - MOTIVATIONS

‘There was a great sense of the culture under attack...
of a need [to] put down our roots strongly’

Tom Sargant in Sinfield, 2009

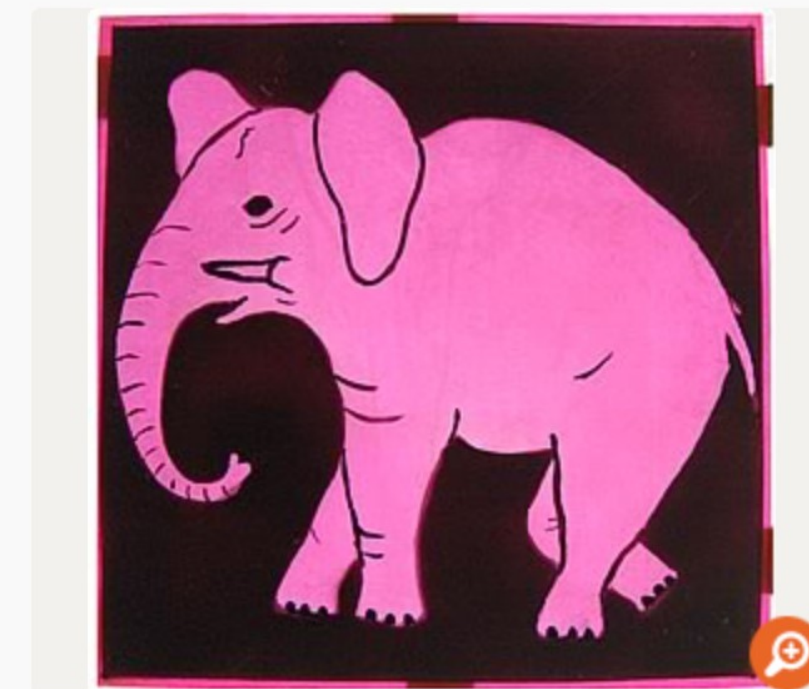
Brighton Ourstory



Brighton Ourstory was set up in 1989 to collect and preserve lesbian and gay history. Its long term aim is to establish an archive in its own premises. Our main objectives are:

1. Oral history interviews to preserve a record of our lives
2. Producing exhibitions, publications, performances to increase awareness of our lives and visibility of our history
3. Establish a lesbian and gay history archive in its own premises

Our approach is very much that of an oral history group interested in ordinary lives: our primary focus is not academic or theoretical. We focus especially (but not exclusively) on material about Brighton or with some Brighton connection.

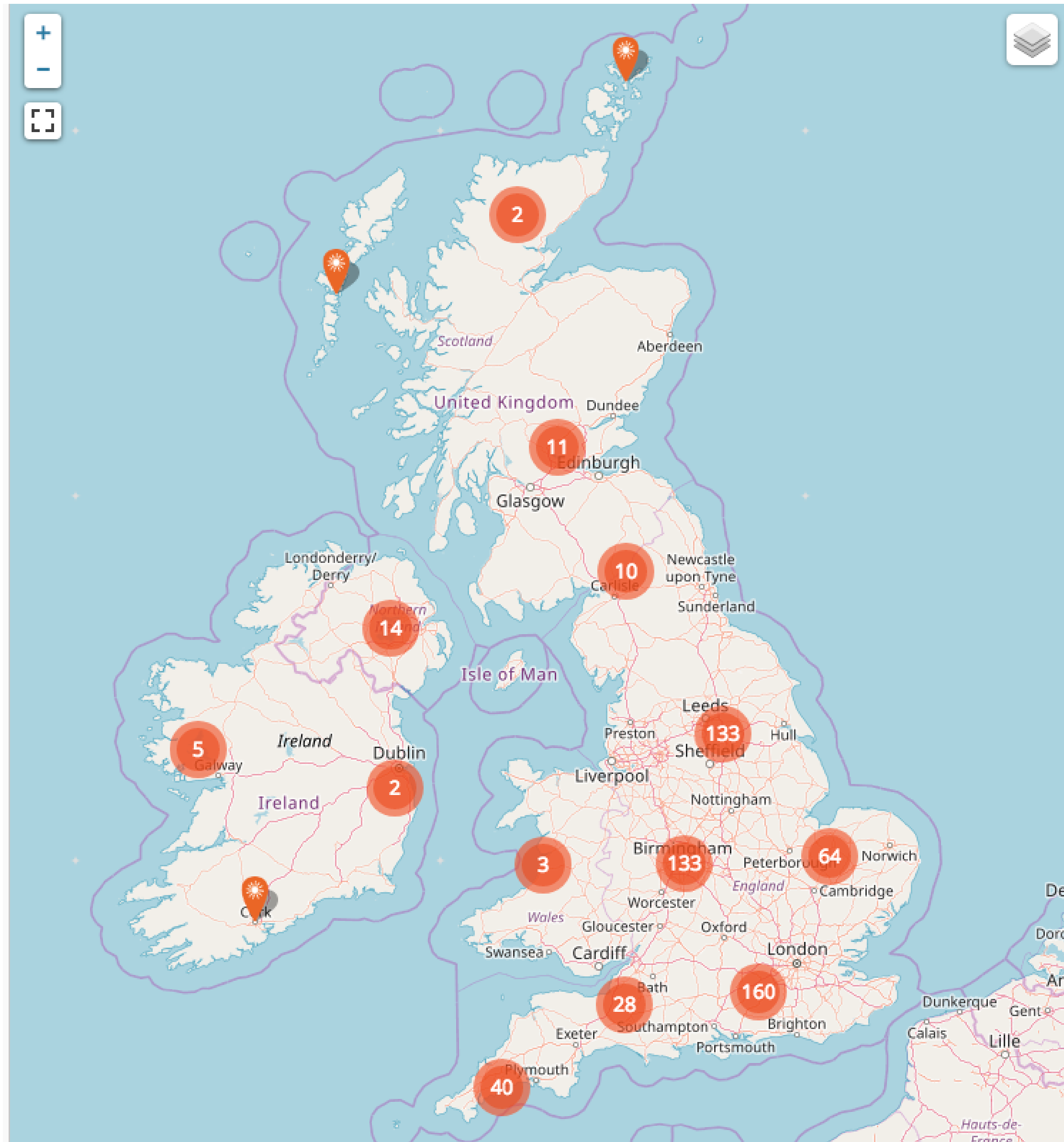


Window sign from the Pink Elephant Club, 131, King's Road

South East

Ash Heritage Centre
Aylesham
Bampton Community Archive
Banstead History Centre
Basingstoke Archaeological and Historical Society
Berkshire Family History Society
Betteshanger Colliery
Bitterne Local History Society
Botley and Curdridge Local History Society
Brighton Ourstory
British National Yachting Archive
Buriton's Heritage Bank
Caterham and District Local History Centre
Chislet Community Archive
Coalfields Heritage Initiative Kent
Cranleigh Local and Family History Centre

(DOCUMENTED) COMMUNITY ARCHIVES



‘Community Archives and Heritage Group’ - Interactive Map

<http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/archives>

‘COMMUNITY ARCHIVES, AND COMMUNITY GENERATED DIGITAL CONTENT’



Digital Preservation Coalition -
November 2017

CRITICALLY ENDANGERE

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Digital materials are listed *Critically Endangered* when they face material technical challenges to preservation, there are no agencies responsible for them or those agencies are unwilling or unable to meet preservation needs. This classification includes *Endangered* materials in the presence of aggravating conditions.

'COMMUNITY ARCHIVES, AND COMMUNITY GENERATED DIGITAL

CONTENT

Digital content generated by community interest groups with great enthusiasm but dependent on project funding and limited or no prospect for long term support after creation, and no funding to deposit in digital archive.

Action:

Action and Assessment is now Urgent
(Action within 12 months in presence of aggravating conditions)

Assessment Completed:

November 2017



Examples:

Data of marginalized or sub-culture groups;
one-off projects in art, heritage, environment or community development;
content from small or volunteer societies where preservation is not a core functions;
digital and digitized oral history; AV content at Glasgow Women's Library;
recordings of BME Oral history;

Aggravating conditions:

dependence on obsolete or proprietary formats or processes;
single copies;
conflation of bit preservation with logical preservation;
ill-devised funding programmes;
lack of skills;
single points of failure;
lack of clear stewardship or sense of ownership dependency on portable media;
inadequate provision or over-dependency with social media, webhost or service provider

Practically Extinct: in the presence of Aggravating Conditions.

Endangered: where good practice can be demonstrated.

British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award



British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award

- 3 events
- June 2018 – Community Archives and Preservation (2 day event)
- October 2018 – Queer Archiving: Recommissioning Queer Oral Histories & ‘Hear-Me’ an audio-visual experience performed by Ioann Marie, Sussex Humanities Lab (re-thinking the uses and presentation of oral history and archival records....what we do with things....)
- February 2019 – ‘Covert Code Breakers’ an installation/exhibition by commissioned digital artists Elle Castle (to coincide with LGBTQ+ History month) –concerned with reaching new audiences (people interact, listen in different ways)

‘COMMUNITY ARCHIVES, AND COMMUNITY GENERATED DIGITAL CONTENT’

- The burden of no/low budget or inadequate funding streams which have plan for the after care of the collections (e.g. oral history recordings)
- Lack of skills or adequate training - not knowing which the right technological choice
- The challenge of keeping up with technology and implementing systems that last (with little/no training, little/no additional support...)

‘COMMUNITY ARCHIVES, AND COMMUNITY GENERATED DIGITAL CONTENT’

- One gate-keeper for the entire digital collection/archive
 - ‘I must create a system, or be enslav’d by another man’s;’ (William Blake, as quoted by Topher Campbell)
 - But ‘technology is only the third of the problem in #digitalpreservation, the other challenges are organisation and resourcing and often these are the most challenging’ - Paul Wheatley, DPC, 20th June 2018
- #preservingcommunityarchives

‘WE ARE WHAT WE KEEP, WE KEEP WHAT WE ARE’



- ‘Queer Archiving: Recommissioning Queer Oral Histories’
- Ways of listening (collectively, bias)
- Ways of archiving (capturing emotion, reaction, writing together, writing meta-data as community members)
- Challenging metadata structures and controlled vocabularies that can be restrictive

THANK YOU!

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