

NQA Research Guide

Newnham Queer Archives Research Guide

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The Newnham Queer Archive (est. 2022) is a collective dedicated to documenting LGBTQ+ history at Newnham College, University of Cambridge. The team is composed of undergraduate, postgraduate, and alumni volunteers.

This research guide covers the archive's current collection. The guide is divided into collections and materials. The items are stored in the Newnham College Archive, which is open to researchers on weekdays, 10:00– 13:00 and 14:00– 17:00. If you are interested in visiting the collection, please contact the College Archivist at archivist@newn.cam.ac.uk.

We are currently seeking contributions from anyone who has been associated with Newnham College and identifies as LGBTQ+, or any marginalised sexual or gendered identity group. If you have any materials to donate, please reach out to us at queer.archive@newn.cam.ac.uk or newnqueerarchive@gmail.com.



Collections Overview

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Butch Soc

From their Instagram page, Butch Soc is a non-profit group of ‘butches, femmes, and those who love them’ founded by Newnham College students in 2022. Holding events for Cambridge’s wider LGBTQ+ community, the society’s activities include, but are not limited to: craft nights, open mics, film screenings, and organised activism. In this growing collection, find the Butch Soc tie, event fliers, crafted objects, and committee meeting minutes. Researchers may be interested in how this society upholds and represents modern butch/femme culture; their position in the wider Cambridge LGBTQ+ scene; and the workings of student-run societies.

Newnham Queer Archive

Founded in 2021 by Newnham students, Newnham Queer Archive (NQA) is a grassroots student organisation aiming to ‘celebrate Newnham’s rich history of LGBTQ+ life through the creation and maintenance of a specifically LGBTQ+ archive.’ NQA is voluntarily led by queer Newnham students and others associated with the college as ‘a meaningful collaboration of members of the MCR, members of the JCR, the Newnham Library, Archive, Roll Offices, and current and past college members.’

Its founding was funded by Newnham’s 150th Anniversary Open Programme, a celebration of the college’s diversity and innovation within the arts, sciences, and culture. Materially, NQA’s records are embedded within the wider college archive, holding art, books, documents, objects, photographs, posters, zines, and other independent collections pertaining to the archive’s mission. Researchers may be interested in the operations of queer societies; queer student-led events; the experiences of queer individuals related to the college; and the oral histories of past Newnhamites.

Newnham College JCR

At the University of Cambridge, ‘JCR’ (Junior Combination/Common Room) refers to a peer-elected committee of students, responsible for representing the undergraduate body within their particular college. JCR officers have roles specific to student interests. Alongside executive positions, ‘liberation’ officers represent different groups of students within College. Currently dating to 2020, this collection records the activities of Newnham’s JCR and its members, including official College positions on gender expression and identity. **Researchers may be interested in the impact of government policy of**

Newnham College MCR

At the University of Cambridge, ‘MCR’ (Middle Combination/Common Room) refers to a peer-elected committee of students, responsible for representing the postgraduate body within their particular college. MCR officers have roles specific to student interests. Alongside executive positions, ‘liberation’ officers represent different groups of students within College. Currently dating to 2020, this collection records the activities of Newnham’s MCR and its members, including handover documents between LGBTQ+ Officers and term cards of

events for LGBTQ+ students. Researchers may be interested in how organised student groups build community, and interact with the College as an institution.

Cait Findlay

Cait Findlay studied English at Newnham from 2016 to 2019. During their time at the university, Findlay served as the Women's Officer and Chair for the Cambridge University Students' Union LGBTQ+ campaign and in these roles, advocated for gender-neutral language across the university in addition to having more gender-neutral toilets. This collection consists of Findlay's written materials published in *The Varsity*, *The Cambridge Student* and *Attitude*. They wrote extensively on topics including women's colleges, queerness in Cambridge, pride as protest and gender identity. Researchers may be interested in gender neutral infrastructure at the university; student activism and protest on campus; women's colleges.

Flags

An important part of culture, expression, and protest in LGBTQ+ history, the flag collection contains a range of items relating to individual and group experiences at Newnham and on the wider Cambridge scene. Many of the flags are handmade; some contain personal stories, others represent the wider community, but all show the power of visual media in exploring a marginalised experience. Researchers may be interested in the use of flags at protests; the intersection of queer liberation with other progress movements; and what the flags show about the individuals behind their creation.

Rippengal, E.

Matriculating in 2021, E. Rippengal studied History at Newnham and was one of the leading members of the NQA steering committee following its re-launch in 2023-4. This collection tells a personal story of their queer experience at Newnham; Rippengal's donations relate to one event - a Christmas formal - that they highlight as being particularly significant in their expression of queerness. The Christmas formal was, for Rippengal, a moment of queer joy and celebration that this collection preserves. Researchers should be aware that two items donated by Rippengal are catalogued elsewhere in the Flag collection (NQA.06.01).

Researchers may be interested in: daily queer experience at Newnham; NQA contributors and history; queer joy; personal archive

Pickled Roots

Pickled Roots is a student organisation founded in October 2023 by Natalie Egar and Tiger Chan at Newnham College. The collective was founded to centre East, Southeast Asian queer people in Cambridge, and increasingly has grown to support a community of all Asian backgrounds. The collective aims to create a space where individuals can bounce ideas off each other, and where home and identity can be celebrated in its complexity. Pickled Root's collection at the Newnham Queer Archive includes items utilised during community events. Items in the collection include promotional as well as artistic material. Item NQA.08.02.01 holds a handmade canopy utilised during the Hestia Cambridge art festival in November 2023. The canopy aimed to adorn a cosy living room space, representing homemaking and

spacemaking in a diasporic experience. Researchers may be interested in: queer creativity; Asian-identity community initiatives; student art; home and diaspora.

Material Collections

Material Collections

NQA.Art

This collection comprises physical artworks across various mediums such as paper, print, and canvas created by or related to queer individuals and life at Newnham and Cambridge. This collection consists of donated and found pieces from around the college. Researchers may be interested in: multimedia artwork, queer student life, pride, art as protest, and trans joy.

NQA.Bo

This collection comprises books donated from the personal libraries of those living and working in Newnham. These books may be of particular value to the person for their content, or for the context in which they were read. Researchers may be interested in: the kinds of queer literature collected and read by students or staff at Newnham; personal archiving.

NQA.Do

This collection comprises material documents such as pages, leaflets, and small prints related to queer individuals and queer life at Newnham and Cambridge. The items currently in the collection were donated by Keir Hesse, founding member of the Cambridge University Butch Society, and encompass different materials utilised during sessions and discussions of the society. Researchers may be interested in: visual and written materials that influence or reflect queer life at Newnham; materials that occasion discussion amongst queer student societies; queer academia and activism.

NQA.Ph

This collection comprises physical photographs such as polaroids or printed photographs that capture queer life and moments of significance for queer individuals associated with Newnham and Cambridge. Researchers may be interested in: queer everyday life; art as resistance; gathering as resistance; queer joy.

NQA.Po

This collection comprises physical posters related to queer individuals and queer life at Newnham and Cambridge. The materials include promotional posters for a local dragshow, a research poster on asexuality, and protest banners taken to marches in London. Together, these items demonstrate the interplay of queer protest and joy at the college. Researchers may be interested in: drag shows, queer joy, asexuality and research, and protest banners.

NQA.Zi

A zine is a non-professional magazine produced for personal use or for a small audience; they are often handmade using collaging techniques. NQA has run several zine-making events using materials from its own collection as well as those shared by other Queer Archives (with permission). The zines donated from these NQA events are thus revealing of how current Newnham students engage with an existing queer archive, reworking the materials before then re-contributing their zines to the archive. The collection also contains zines produced at

other non-NQA events. Researchers may be interested in: craft as a form of liberation and resistance; queer community practices; NQA activities; archiving; queer academia