



Allan Horsfall (1927-2012) was born on 20 October in Laneshawbridge, Lancashire, the son of publicans Tom and Elizabeth Horsfall (nee Ratcliffe). After an education at Nelson Grammar School, Horsfall served in the RAF. It was at a servicemen's association in 1947 that he met Harold Pollard, a teacher who later became Chair of CHE. They remained partners until Harold's death in 1996; residing for much of their lives in Bolton. Horsfall went on to work for the National Coal Board and later for the Salford Education Committee. From the late 1950s to the early 1960s, he was a Labour councillor and chair of NE Lancashire Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

But Horsfall is known for his pioneering work for homosexual law reform and as the grandfather of the modern gay rights movement, beginning when he joined the newly-formed Homosexual Law Reform Society, established with the aim of implementation of the 1957 Wolfenden Report. Alan was a leading figure in developing the first proposals for a centre for homosexual support services.

He was not persuaded that HLRS had the right composition or approach. It was elitist, London-centred, aloof and closeted. Horsfall saw the need for a grassroots campaign group in which gay people would take the lead and be out and proud. In 1964, he helped found North-West Homosexual Law Reform Committee (NWHLRC).

Horsfall lived in the mining village of Atherton, Greater Manchester, at the time. He used his home address and phone number as a public contact point. It was a brave thing to do, especially in those days. Many people thought him foolhardy for being so open. There was, however, little hostile reaction. Horsfall saw the Wolfenden recommendations as brave but flawed; being critical of its limited decriminalisation, which applied in narrow circumstances - not in Scotland or Northern Ireland and not in the armed forces or merchant navy. As well as a higher age of consent, the abetting of some homosexual acts remained punishable by up to five years imprisonment. The battle was far from finished.

NWHLRC morphed the Campaign for Homosexual Equality, the leading public voice against homophobia the 1970s and 80s. Horsfall was CHE's first secretary and later its president. In 1971 he took part in a public meeting in Burnley championing the right to open what was then termed an 'Esquire Club'. This meeting was seen by him as a turning point in the development of openly gay civil rights campaigns. CHE played a role in the establishment in 1978 of ILGA, the global federation of LGBT organisations. Horsfall was involved in the second wave of gay law reform after 1999 - ending the ban on gay people in the military, equalising the age of consent at 16, repealing Section 28, introducing civil partnerships, allowing gay couples to adopt children and giving LGBT people protection against discrimination - crowned by the Sexual Offences Act 2003, which finally repealed the 1533 'buggery' law and the 1885 'gross indecency' statute used to jail Oscar Wilde. Although his was spent working for law reform, Horsfall sympathised with more radical queer politics of activist groups like OutRage! in the 1990s. Indeed, he encouraged and supported each new generation of LGBT campaigners. A warm-hearted, generous and much loved humanitarian, he will be long remembered with admiration and affection by those who knew him. Gay law reform and CHE are Horsfall's two great legacies. The modern LGBT community walks in his shadow. He was still campaigning until a few months before he died of heart failure in the Royal Bolton Hospital on 28 August 2012.

**Peter Tatchell - LGBT rights and civil rights activist,
Director, Peter Tatchell Foundation**



Faces of 2017: Allan Horsfall



Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans
History Month