

# Salop Assizes 1949

In the Spring of 1949, a Shrewsbury man, Geoffrey, sought assistance from the police, after his friend, Percy, was assaulted. What followed was not what they expected.

Their call for help led, instead, to the arrest of many gay men from the town; suspected of **'gross indecency'**. By mid-Summer, Geoffrey and another man, William, had been sent to prison; for terms of two years and 18 months.

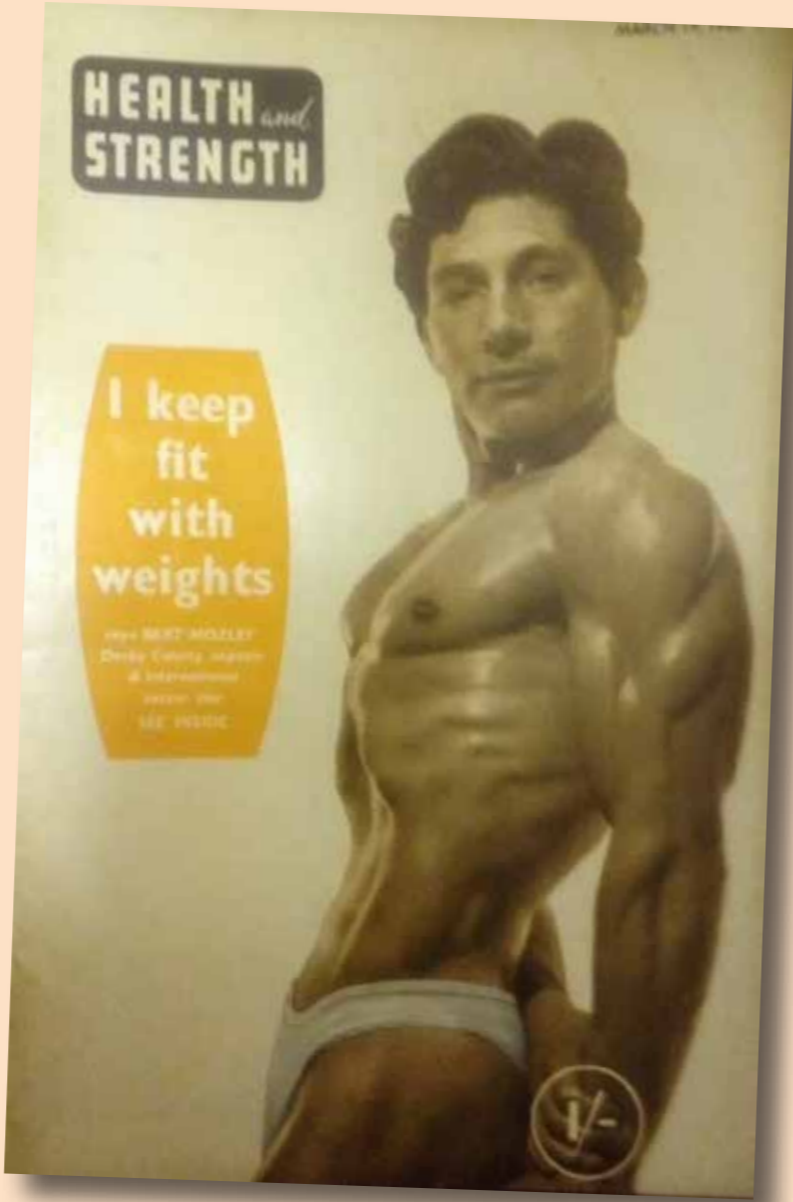
Their offence was that they were homosexuals.

Full details were reported in the local paper, together with their addresses and work details; a clerk, a photographer, a railwayman, a nurse...

The Judge, Mr Justice Hilberry, at Salop Assizes, described Geoffrey as **"a real danger"** and noted he and William **"had discovered** others **addicted** to the same **practices** through a magazine **'Health and Strength'**"

Along with thousands of men across the UK and the Commonwealth, Geoffrey & William's lives (and the lives of their friends and families) were wrecked.

The **real danger** was **section 11** of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885: its gross indecency' provision **not repealed until 2004**.



68 Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885.

11. Outrages on decency.] Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or is a party to the commission of or procures (a) or attempts (b) to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency (c) with another male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and being convicted thereof shall be liable at the discretion of the court to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour.

In the May of 1949, Alan, age 22, an engineer, who lived at William's address, committed suicide on Caer Caradoc.

In 2012 the Government passed law which allows William & Geoffrey (if still alive) to apply for their records to be disregarded. 'Pardoning' has also been considered, if they are deceased.



Protection of Freedoms Act 2012



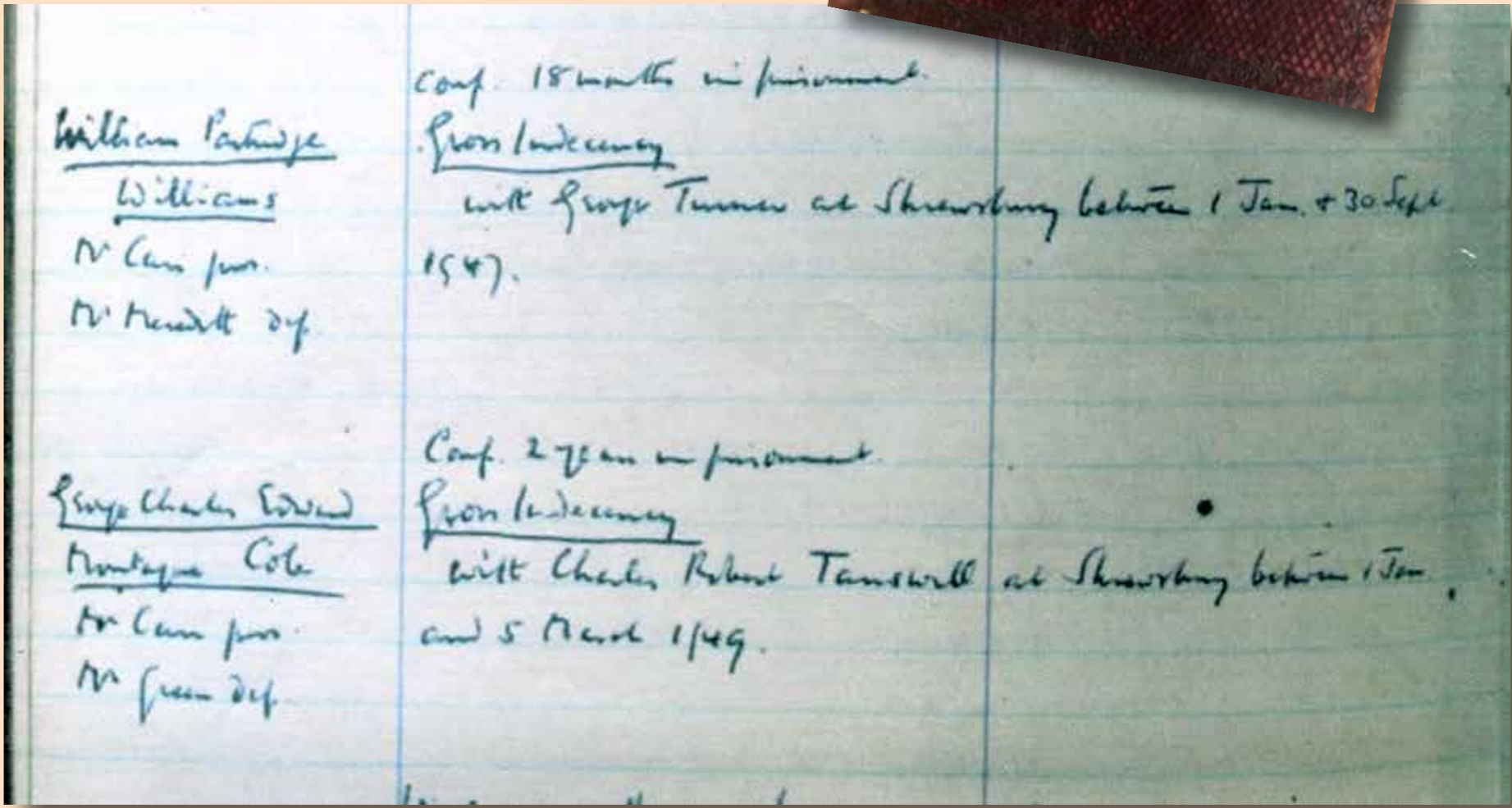
Salop Assize Court (at the Shirehall in the Square), Shrewsbury



The old Smithfield Market – a place where gay men met clandestinely



The 'Three Fishes Inn', Fish Street. Gay men met there – late 1940s



William & Geoffrey's names and sentences – recorded in the court's Minute Book

