

## **Edward Bankes (HPS) – Toronto, Canada and New York City, April 2014**

My grant from Pembroke enabled me to travel to two archives in North America, one in Toronto and the other New York, as part of my research for my Part III HPS Dissertation, entitled 'The experience of human kinds: safe-sex in Toronto 1980-1989', that traces the response among the gay male community to safe-sex advice that emerged as a response to the AIDS epidemic, and seeks to frame this case-study within the philosophical framework of looping human kinds posited by the Canadian philosopher of science Ian Hacking.

I had originally planned for my dissertation to concern the medieval medical faculty at Oxford. However, after my aspiration to learn insular Latin over the summer did not come to fruition, and a long conversation with the department's newly appointed history of medicine fellow, who specialises in the history of gay health, I decided to turn my attention to the ways in which HIV and AIDS were imagined historically. I was advised to look at Canada, where gay communities were very aware of AIDS, yet the relatively low rates of infection meant the response to safe-sex and AIDS prevention were very different to United States.

In Toronto I was able to visit the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archive, which holds material on the AIDS Committee of Toronto, which was responsible for the bulk of AIDS education in the cities during the 1980s, as well the person papers of some of its key members, such as the Education Officer Ed Jackson. Based on the suggestions of the volunteers at the CLGA, I also found useful material from the Toronto bathhouses, which were specially targeted as sites for running educational campaigns, and the Hassle Free Clinic, that predominantly served the gay community and was an early advocate of anonymous HIV antibody testing. The archive also has that only complete physical holding of *New York Native*, a fortnightly gay publication that was marked during the period initially for its extensive coverage of the AIDS epidemic, and later for its increasingly AIDS denialist stance in reporting. I was very fortunate that the archive volunteers were willing to extend the opening hours for the duration of my time there, meaning that I was able to get through a large amount of content, and scan roughly 40 examples of safe-sex literature produced during the 1980s in Toronto, that will form the basis of my dissertation.

Following a leisurely 14 hour train ride through New York State, the highlight of which being a two hour delay where the train ran onto a track that run out a mile or two out of Buffalo, requiring the train to go backwards for half an hour, I then visited the holdings for the Gay Men's Health Crisis, which fortunately are held in the New York Public Library, which proved to be one of the nicest places imaginable to work. Again aided by the library staff, who went out their way to offer recommendations of avenues to explore, I was able to identify material showing the impact work in Toronto had in New York, specifically health campaigns that were recreated in Queens and Upper Manhattan.