

A slice of LGBT History ...

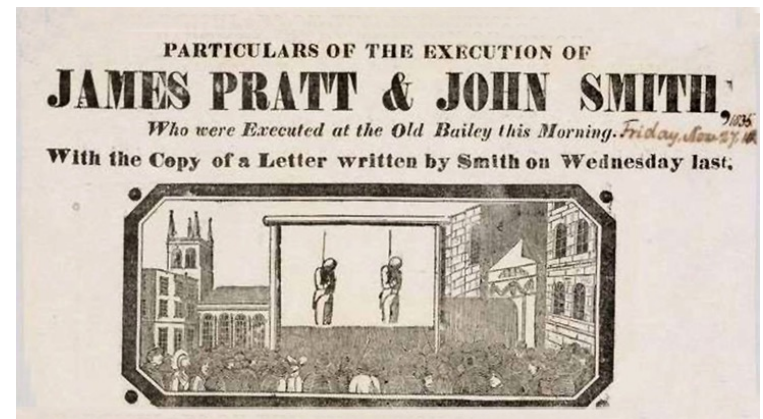
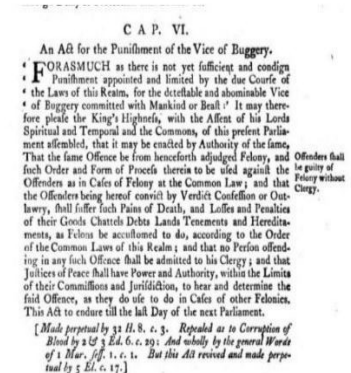


1533 Buggery Act

Under Henry VIII, the 1533 Buggery Act made same sex acts between men illegal and punishable by death.

Homosexuality between men remained punishable by death until a 1961 updated version of the 'Offences Against the Person Act' when the death penalty was replaced by a minimum of 10 years imprisonment

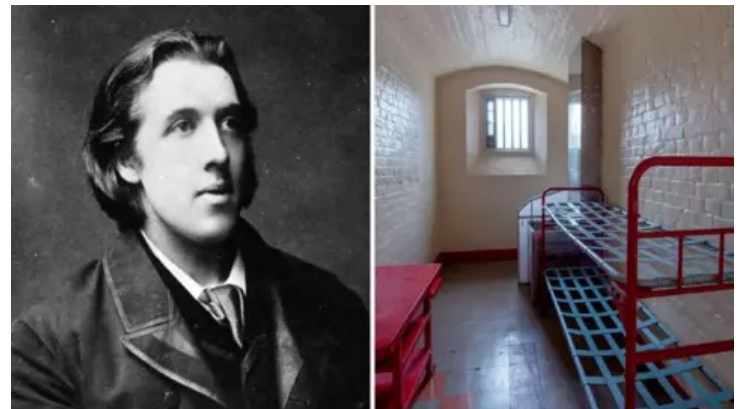
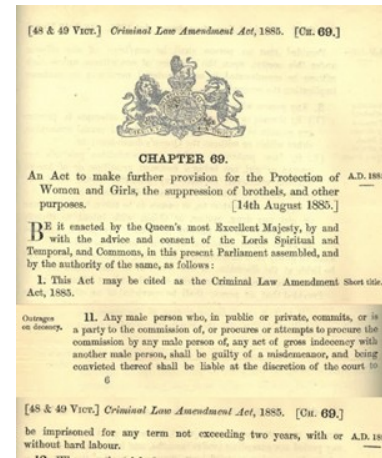
The last people executed for homosexuality in the UK were James Pratt and John Smith, who were hanged at Newgate Prison in London on November 27, 1835.



1885 Labouchere Amendment

The Labouchere Amendment of the Criminal Law Amendment Act made ‘gross indecency’ between men (in public and in private) a crime.

Oscar Wilde was convicted under this legislation in 1895 and sentenced to two years hard labour. He served time in Holloway Prison, Wandsworth Prison and Reading Gaol before his release in 1897.



1921 Proposals to extend the law to cover acts of 'gross indecency' between women rejected

The House of Lords rejected the proposal that 'gross indecency' between women become a criminal offence because of fear that this would publicise lesbianism.

After clause 3 insert as a new clause :

. Any act of gross indecency between female persons shall be a misdemeanour, and punishable in the same manner as any such act committed by male persons under section eleven of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885.

Acts of
indecency by
females.

The Earl of Malmesbury to move that the Lords do disagree with this amendment.

The Lords disagree with the Amendment made by the Commons to insert clause A after clause 3, for the following Reason :

Because the Amendment introduces a new offence which may lead to unlooked for and evil results, and which should not be introduced without the fullest consideration.

1928 Lesbian novel 'The Well of Loneliness' banned

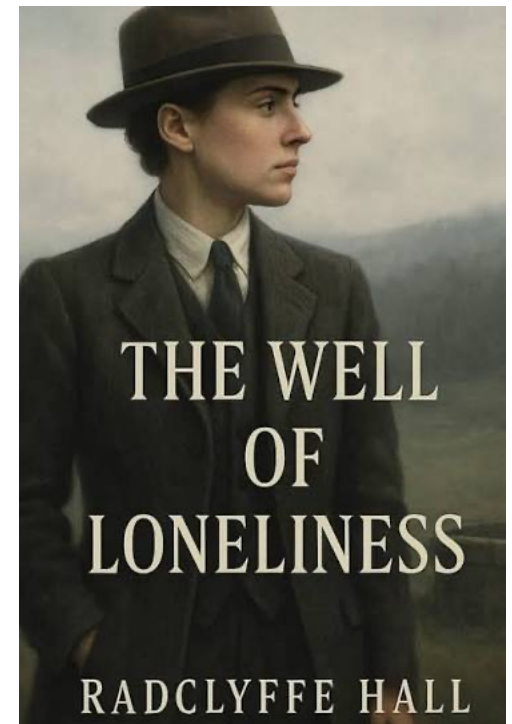
Radclyffe Hall's book *The Well of Loneliness* was banned in the UK for 'obscenity' because of its positive portrayal of lesbianism.

James Douglas, editor of the Sunday Express launched a campaign against the book calling it '*moral poison*' that '*kills the soul*'. He wrote

"I would rather give a healthy boy or a healthy girl a phial of prussic acid than this novel"

This led to a trial in which the Magistrate deemed the novel '*obscene libel*' because it did not condemn '*unnatural practices between women.*'"

The book was published in France, but although the official ban was lifted in 1949, it was not republished in Britain until 1959.



1948 Homosexuality classified as a ‘mental disorder’

World Health Organisation formally classified homosexuality as a mental disorder in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) – the diagnostic system used in the UK.

Homosexuality was variously described as a form of *‘arrested development’* or *‘phobic avoidance of heterosexuality’* caused by inadequate early parenting or a *‘sociopathic personality disorder’*



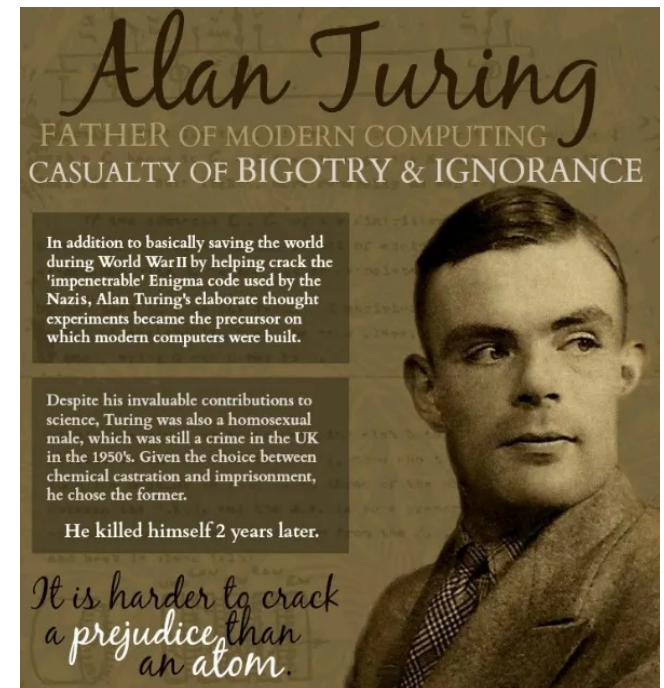
1940s to 1970s The 'treatment' of homosexuality

The supposed 'mental disorder' of homosexuality was treated by various forms of 'conversion therapy'.

Treatment included 'aversion therapy' using electric shocks and in its most extreme form brain surgery (in the 1940s and 1950s in the USA) and 'chemical castration' like that endured by Alan Turing as an alternative to prison.

There is no evidence that such therapy can change sexual orientation, but it can cause depression, substance abuse and increased risk of suicide (as in the case of Alan Turing, who was thought to have taken his own life in 1954).

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1955 First lesbian rights group founded

In the USA the Daughters of Bilitis – the first lesbian political and civil rights group - was founded in San Francisco by four couples, most notably activists Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon

Originally a secret social club to escape police raids on underground bars, it evolved into a prominent national and international network advocating for lesbian visibility and rights. They produced a magazine called 'The Ladder'.

The name comes from *The Songs of Bilitis*, a collection of poetry by French poet Pierre Louÿs about a fictional ancient lesbian character associated with Sappho.

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1957 The Wolfenden Report

The Wolfenden Report recommended that homosexual behaviour between consenting adults over 21 in private should no longer be a criminal offence.

The Wolfenden Report paved the way for the decriminalisation of homosexuality.

Some religious groups and certain politicians condemned it as a "threat to public morality".

It was not until 10 years later that the law began to change.



1967 Partial decriminalisation of homosexuality

The 1967 Sexual Offences Act decriminalised homosexual acts between two men aged over 21 in private ... but following this Act penalties for street offences *increased*.

Sexual contact between men in public – even simply touching or kissing - continued to be prosecuted under ‘unnatural offences’ laws such as ‘gross indecency’ and ‘soliciting or importuning’ which criminalised men chatting up men or ‘loitering’ in public places. In 1966 420 men were convicted of ‘gross indecency’ – by 1974 this had risen to 1,711.



The 1967 Act ***did not*** apply to the armed forces or merchant navy who could still be jailed for private behaviour that was no longer a crime for gay civilians.

1969 The Stonewall Uprising

The police raided the Stonewall Inn – a gay bar in Greenwich Village, New York. This was a common occurrence, but on 28th June 1969, the patrons resisted and fought back against arrests and harassment. This led to several nights of unrest and protest in the Greenwich Village area involving a diverse range of gay men, lesbians, trans people and drag queens.

This uprising is often considered the catalyst for the modern LGBT+ rights movement. The Gay Liberation Front in the USA was formed following these riots.



1970 First Gay Pride March in New York

First Gay Pride March took place in New York City on June 28th marking the one-year anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising.



1970 UK Gay Liberation Front established

The Gay Liberation Front was set up by students Bob Mellors and Aubrey Walter after they returned from the U.S.A.

The first Gay Liberation Front meeting was held at the London School of Economics on 13th October 1970.

The Gay Liberation Front was active between 1970 and 1973.



1970 First same sex kiss between men on UK TV

First same sex kiss between men on UK TV was on a BBC2 broadcast of the play 'Edward II' between Sir Ian McKellen and James Lawrenson.



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In 1970, Ian McKellen made television history—not just as an actor, but as a trailblazer for LGBTQ+ representation.

1972 First UK Gay Pride March

First UK Gay Pride March took place on 1st July 1972 – around 2000 people marched from Trafalgar Square to Hyde Park.



1974 First lesbian kiss on UK TV

The first lesbian kiss on UK television occurred in 1974 on BBC Two in a *Second City Firsts* episode titled "Girl". It featured actresses Alison Steadman and Myra Frances kissing.



1974 London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard

The London Lesbian and Gay switchboard was set up to provide information and support to London's gay community

Today Switchboard is an LGBT+ support line for anyone, anywhere in the country, at any point in their journey.



1977 London Lesbian Line started

Lesbian line was a volunteer-run service to provide support, information and safe connection for lesbians dealing with relationships, health and societal isolation.

It was disbanded in 1999.

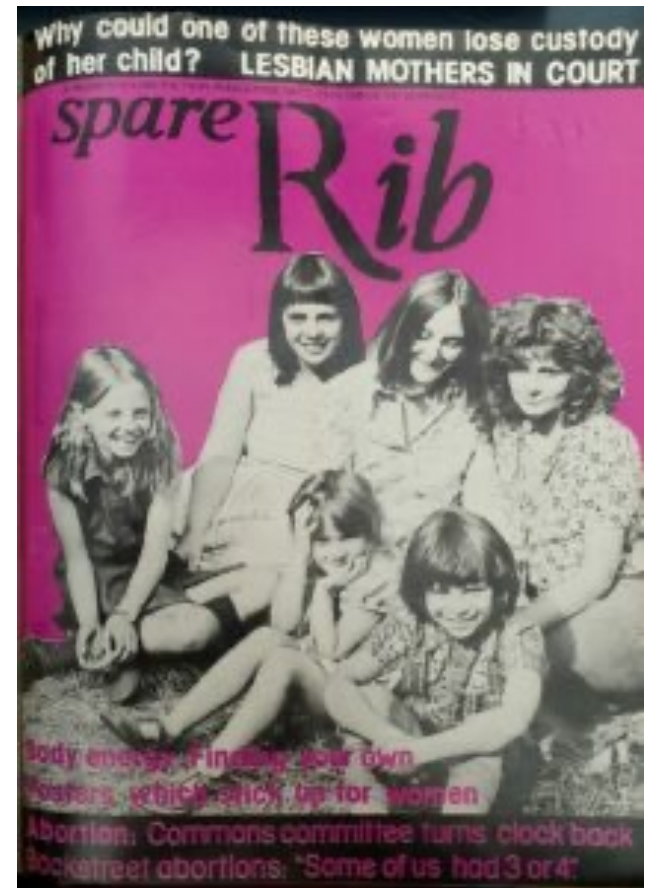


1970s and 1980s lesbians losing custody of their children

In the 1970s and 1980s, family courts frequently stripped lesbian mothers of child custody in divorce proceedings.

Judges often reflected societal prejudices, ruling that a mother's homosexuality made her inherently an 'unfit parent' or claiming that living in a lesbian household would negatively impact a child's development.

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1981 First Lesbian Strength March

First Lesbian Strength March held on 27th June 1981 – designed as a women only event to demonstrate lesbian solidarity.

Lesbian activists often felt overlooked by both the gay rights movement and the broader women's movement. These marches were organized to provide a distinct space for lesbians, and focus on women's experiences, lesbian visibility, and feminist solidarity

The most recent Lesbian Strength march and rally was held in Leeds in 2024.



1982 First person died of AIDS in the UK

Terrence Higgins was the first named person to die from an AIDS related illness in the UK on 4th July 1982. However, John Eadie was probably the first to die of AIDS in October 1981, but the cause of his death was not immediately recognised as AIDS at the time.

At the peak of the UK AIDS epidemic in the mid-1990s, there were roughly 1,700 deaths annually.



1982 Terrence Higgins Trust founded

Terrence Higgins Trust founded by partner and friends of Terrence Higgins in 1982. It held its first meeting at the London Apprentice pub and was recognised as a charity in 1984.

This was the first UK AIDS charity focused on raising awareness of AIDS and funds for research as well as direct services, including buddying, counselling and education.



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1987 First gay kiss on a UK soap opera

First UK gay kiss on a British soap opera – Eastenders – a peck on the forehead between characters Colin Russell (played by Michael Cashman) and Barry Clarke (played by Gary Hailes).

The reaction was a highly polarized mix of conservative outrage and groundbreaking LGBT+ praise. The Sun newspaper reported *“It’s Eastenders ... a homosexual love scene when millions of children are watching”*

Later in 1989, when Eastenders broadcast the first mouth-to-mouth kiss between gay men on a British soap opera, there was also a media furore.



1988 Section 28 of the Local Government Act

Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act was introduced by Margaret Thatcher's conservative Government. It prohibited local authorities from *'promoting homosexuality'* or teaching the *'acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship'*.

There were widespread mass protests against Section 28 across Britain including lesbian activists storming a live broadcast of the BBC's Six O'clock News. The fight against Section 28 directly led to the formation of Stonewall and Outrage!.



1989 Stonewall organisation formed

The Stonewall organisation was formed by a group of LGB activists - including Sir Ian McKellen and Michael Cashman - in response to Section 28 of the Local Government Act, which banned schools and councils from 'promoting' homosexuality.

Stonewall has been a major driving force behind the achievement of LGBT rights.



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1990 World Health Organisation declassifies homosexuality as a mental disorder

The World Health Organisation
(WHO) removed homosexuality
from the International
Classification of Diseases (ICD)
... but the change was not
actually implemented until 1992.



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1990 Outrage! formed

Outrage! A radical LGBT rights organisation was founded in May 1990. This was a direct-action group fighting against homophobia, police harassment and demanding equal rights that ran until 2011.



1994 Age of consent for male homosexuality reduced from 21 to 18

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 reduced the age of consent for homosexual men from 21 to 18 ... still not equal to heterosexual age of consent



1994 Imprisonment for gay and lesbian armed forces personnel stopped

... but the ban on lesbians and gay men serving in the military continued. Lesbians and gay men in the armed forces were still dishonourably discharged and lost their medals and pension rights.

David Bonney is believed to be the last person to have been imprisoned for being gay. In October 1993 he was court martialled, received a dishonourable discharge, a criminal record, multiple fines and was sentenced to six months in detention – one month of which was in solitary confinement.



LGBT veterans reveal how they hid their sexuality to stop them from being sacked

1994 First lesbian kiss in a UK soap opera

First lesbian kiss on a British soap opera – Brookside – between characters Beth Jordache (played by Anna Friel) and Margaret Clemence (played by Nicola Stephenson). The episode was watched by over 6 million viewers.



2000 Ban on being lesbian or gay in the armed forces lifted

The ban on lesbian and gay personnel serving in the UK Armed Forces was finally lifted on January 12, 2000.

A European Court of Human Rights ruling ended a decades-long policy that had subjected service members to interrogation, discharge, and discrimination.



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2000 Repeal of Section 28 in Scotland

Section 28 of the Local Government Act which banned local authorities and schools from ‘promoting homosexuality’ was repealed in Scotland on June 21, 2000 – 3 years before the rest of the UK.



2003 Repeal of Section 28 in England and Wales

Section 28 was finally repealed in England and Wales on November 18, 2003, through the Local Government Act 2003.

The Labour Government, led by Tony Blair, made an initial attempt to repeal Section 28 in 2000, but it was blocked in the House of Lords.



2003 The Sexual Offences Act fully decriminalised homosexuality in England and Wales

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 completed the decriminalisation of homosexuality in England and Wales by abolishing discriminatory laws like "buggery" and "gross indecency".

It removed all legal distinctions between heterosexual and homosexual activity, ensuring that the same laws applied equally to all consenting adults.



2003 'Employment Equality (sexual orientation) Regulations'

The 'Employment Equality (sexual orientation) Regulations' made it illegal to discriminate against workers based on their sexual orientation.

These regulations made discrimination, harassment, and victimisation in the workplace illegal for the first time.

Before this, lesbians and gay men could be sacked or denied employment simply because of their sexual orientation.



2004 Gender Recognition Act

The 2004 Gender Recognition Act allowed people to legally change their gender and obtain a Gender Recognition Certificate.

A Gender Recognition Certificate legally alters a person's gender, allowing them to obtain a new birth certificate and update official documents to reflect their acquired gender.

Non-binary is not currently a legally recognized gender in the UK. The Gender Recognition Act only provides for male or female legal recognition.

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2005 Legal recognition of civil partnerships

The Civil Partnership Act of 2004, which took effect on December 5th 2005, granted same-sex couples the legal recognition to form civil partnerships, entitling them to the same rights, responsibilities, and protections as opposite-sex married couples.

The UK's first same-sex civil partnerships officially took place on 19 December 2005 in Northern Ireland, closely followed by ceremonies in Scotland on 20 December and in England and Wales on 21 December.



2005 Adoption rights for same sex couples

The 2002 Adoption and Children Act became effective in 2005. This allows same-sex couples enjoy the exact same legal adoption rights as heterosexual couples.

Once the adoption order is granted, both individuals are fully recognized as the child's legal parents with identical rights and responsibilities.

Agencies are prohibited from discriminating based on sexual orientation.



2009 Recognition of parentage for lesbian couples

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 granted female same-sex couples the right to be recognized as legal parents and register both names on a child's birth certificate for fertility treatments conceived on or after April 6, 2009

Stonewall and other equality advocates campaigned heavily for these rights, ensuring female same-sex couples share the exact same registration rights as heterosexual couples.



2010 Equality Act

Discrimination against gay men and lesbians people was not fully outlawed until the 2010 Equality Act.

Before this, lesbians, gay men and trans people could be denied 'goods and services' – many were turned away from hotels, pubs, restaurants etc.

The law covers direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.



2012 Equal access to IVF for same sex couples.

Under the UK Women's Health Strategy, NHS England updated guidance to give same-sex couples the same NHS-funded access as heterosexual couples.

However, there is a 'post-code lottery' in implementing this guidance. Because local Integrated Care Boards control local budgets, many still operate with variations and delays in their funding criteria.



2014 Same sex marriage

The 2013 Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act took effect in March 2014 making same-sex marriage lawful in England and Wales. The first couple married at one minute past midnight on March 29, 2014 at Islington Town Hall.

Same-sex marriage has been legal in Scotland since December 2014

Same-sex marriage has been legal in Northern Ireland since January 2020.

Religious organisations who oppose same sex marriage do not have to conduct same-sex marriages.

In the Church of England, the law explicitly bans their ministers from leading same-sex weddings

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2021 First same sex-parent family featured on children's television

The BBC CBeebies documentary series 'Our Family' featured 5 year old Henry, his sister Sophie and their two mums- Mama and Mummy - who are both nurses.

Henry said that *the "best thing"* about having two mums is *"double cuddles"*.

"My mummies show me they love me by tucking me in at bed and giving me a kiss and reading me stories,"



2022 First same sex-parent family featured in mega-hit animated show Peppa Pig

Peppa Pig introduced its first same-sex parent family in September 2022 during an episode titled "Families". The character Penny Polar Bear shares with her classmates that she lives with her "mummy and her other mummy".

Penny Polar Bear explains

"I live with my mummy and my other mummy. One mummy is a doctor and one mummy cooks spaghetti. I love spaghetti"



2023 Apology and compensation for LGBT veterans dismissed from the armed forces

On 19th July 2023 UK government formally apologized for the historic ban on homosexuality in the armed forces. The Ministry of Defence launched a £75 million compensation scheme to provide restitution to affected personnel which opened in 2024.



Vito Ward, who set up the Furzedown Project LGBT Coffee Morning, waited 54 years for an apology for being discharged from the Wrens for being gay

