

London's LGBTQ+ history

Key moments



122 CE

Emperor Hadrian visits Roman London, where male relationships are common. The following year he meets Antinous, a young Greek man, who becomes his lover.

ID: 77.63**



ID: 82.8/7*

The legend of St Wilgefortis – a bearded female Christian saint – reaches London.

14th century



The Buggery Act makes having any type of sex which is seen as against the 'will of God' punishable by death. Although not specified, this would have included sex between two men.

1533



ID 39.132*

'Molly houses' – taverns where men could have sexual liaisons with other men – spring up across London.

18th century

1835

The last men to be sentenced to death for homosexual acts are hanged in front of Newgate Prison.

1861

Offences Against the Person Act replaces the death penalty with a prison term for sexual acts between men.

1885

The Labouchere Amendment makes punishment for same-sex desire more widely enforceable.

1895

Oscar Wilde is sentenced to two years hard labour for gross indecency.

ID: 74.418/1**



London's first Pride march.

1972

ID: 2007.11/27*

London's Gay Liberation Front is founded.

1970

The Sexual Offences Act decriminalises sex between two men over 21 and 'in private'.

1967



Croydon-born Roberta Cowell becomes the first (known) British trans woman to undergo reassignment surgery.

1951



1984

'Gay's the Word', opened in 1979 as London's first bookshop specialising in gay and lesbian literature, is raided by Customs and Excise.

1988

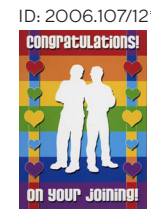
Section 28 of the Local Government Act prohibits local authorities from teaching or publishing about homosexuality.

1991

London's Pride parade attracts around 25,000 people and continues to grow.

2003

Section 28 is repealed in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.



ID: 2006.107/12*

2014

Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act comes into effect, allowing same-sex couples the opportunity to get married in England and Wales.

* Visit londonmuseum.org.uk/collections and search these ID numbers to discover more about these objects and their connection to London's LGBTQ+ history

** When this timeline was created these objects were not yet on the museum's Collections Online catalogue

These are a small selection of landmark moments which are important to London's LGBTQ+ community through time.