

## Housekeeping

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- Please mute your mic during the talk
- There will be time at the end for discussion, publically or privately
- This session will be recorded
- Slides and recording will be available after
- Follow on twitter @equal4success

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# Queer scientists through history



Elizabeth Wynn  
She/her  
19/11/2020

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The Great Geysers of California by Laura De Force Gordon  
*If this little book should see the light after its 100 years of entombment, I would like its readers to know that the author was a lover of her own sex and devoted the best years of her life in striving for the political equality and social and moral elevation of women.*

*Wouldn't it be wonderful if all our letters could be published in the future in a more enlightened time. Then all the world could see how in love we are.*

Gordon Bowsher to Gilbert Bradley, 1940s

# James Barry

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- c. 1789 – 25 July 1865
- Irish surgeon
- Qualified as a doctor in 1812 and joined the British army the following year
- Served in many parts of the British Empire including South Africa, Jamaica, Malta and Canada where he promoted sanitation and nutritional reforms for troops and local residents
- Performed one of the first recorded successful Caesarean sections outside of Europe

# James Barry

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- He was named Margaret Ann Bulkley at birth and was known as female in childhood
- He changed his name before university and lived as a man for the rest of his life
- Despite requesting “in the event of his death, strict precautions should be adopted to prevent any examination of his person”, the woman laying out the body described him as ‘a perfect female’
- The doctor who signed the death certificate wrote, “it was none of my business whether Dr Barry was a male or a female, and I thought she might be neither, viz. an imperfectly developed man.”

# Trans people in history

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- Understanding of gender and gender roles vary hugely across time and place
- Since antiquity, various terms for gender non-conforming, trans or third gender people exist across many cultures
- Advances in medicine in the 20<sup>th</sup> century made sex reassignment surgery and hormone treatment a possibility

# Sara Josephine Baker

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- November 15, 1873 – February 22, 1945
- American physician
- Her work focused on public health and preventative medicine, especially in babies and children
- She helped track down ‘Typhoid Mary’ twice
- New York University Medical School asked her to become a lecturer but she only agreed after they started admitting women

# Sara Josephine Baker

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- In New York, she joined Heterodoxy, a radical women's discussion group with many openly bisexual and lesbian members
- She spent most of her life with her partner Ida Wylie, an author who described herself as a 'woman-oriented woman'
- In 1935, they set up a household together with another woman, Dr Louise Pearce
- After Baker's death in 1945, Wylie and Pearce continued living together



# Alan Turing

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- 23 June 1912 – 7 June 1954
- English mathematician, computer scientist and code breaker
- Elected a Fellow of King's College in 1935
- During WWII he worked at Bletchley Park and played a pivotal role cracking the Enigma code
- After the war, he worked on early computers and developed the Turing test for artificial intelligence

# Alan Turing

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- Prosecuted for gross indecency in 1952
- Chose probation with the condition he undergo 'chemical castration' to reduce his libido
- Died in 1954 from cyanide poisoning
- Granted a posthumous pardon in 2013
- In 2017, the 'Alan Turing law' was passed granting a pardon to over 75,000 people who had been convicted of gross indecency
- Will be on the £50 note from 2021

# Homosexuality in the UK

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- Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885 made any male homosexual act illegal whether or not a witness was present
- During the 1920s and 30s, despite being illegal, gay subcultures flourished among social and intellectual elites
- Post WWII saw an increase in prosecutions for homosexual acts, including several high profile cases which led to public backlash
- The Wolfenden report, commissioned in 1954 and published in 1957, recommended that homosexuality was decriminalised

# Possible LGBTQ+ scientists

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- Francis Bacon
- Florence Nightingale
- George Washington Carver
- Leonardo da Vinci
- Isaac Newton
- Margaret Mead

## BME LGBTQ+ scientists

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- Elena Rodriguez-Falcon, mechanical engineer
- Valerie E Stone, physician
- Ron Buckmire, mathematician
- Audrey Tang, programmer
- Lauren Esposito, arachnologist, co-founded 500 Queer Scientists
- Izzy Jayasinghe, molecular biologist

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Any questions?

## Further reading

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- [Queer Terminology: LGBTQ Histories and the Semantics of Sexuality](#)
- [Why queer history?](#)
- [The Extraordinary Secret Life of Dr. James Barry](#)
- [LGBT History Month: trans people have always been here](#)
- [100 Years Ago, This Lesbian Doctor Helped Contain NYC's Typhoid Epidemic](#)
- [Alan Turing's legacy in troubled times](#)