

Every February since 2005, LGBT History Month aims to promote tolerance and raise awareness of and help to combat the prejudices faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. It started as a Schools OUT UK project. The 2020 event was launched in November 2019 at The British Library. After centuries of criminalisation, discrimination and invisibility, initiatives such as this show that LGBT+ people are not a new phenomenon.



Although some of the press have dismissed the project as mere 'political correctness', LGBT people suffer disproportionately not just from discrimination by employers, family members and the public, but also from unprovoked violence. The project tries to educate the public about the fact that LGBT people have existed throughout history (and prehistory!) and that some past societies have been more welcoming of diversity than our own.

We like to think of our society as tolerant and welcoming of diversity, but there has been an increase in homophobic hate crimes in recent years, with 21% of LGBT people (41% of trans people) experiencing a hate crime or incident in the past 12 months. Discrimination affected 10% of LGBT people looking for property to rent or buy and 17% of those visiting a café or restaurant.

Throughout February, we will post occasional articles relating to the history of LGBT+ people in North Hertfordshire. We don't have a lot of material in the museum collection, so we are asking for people to consider donating things that help tell the stories of these people from the past who are usually overlooked in our history books. There is a small display in the entrance hall of the museum that illustrates the diversity of people in the history of the district, with characters such as Baldock's 'female husband' landlord of The Sun and the Roman Emperor Elagabalus, and themes like the introduction of Civil Partnerships in 2005.

Curator Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews will be giving a talk relating to the exhibition on Wednesday 19 February at 1.00 p.m. and 7.30 p.m. Tickets are available from <https://north-herts-museum.arttickets.org.uk/> or from the Museum reception.

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