

Our Stories

Oral histories gathered from members of the trans* community as part of the April Ashley heritage project and exhibition.

2012

2004

1966

1971

1935-
2013

1870

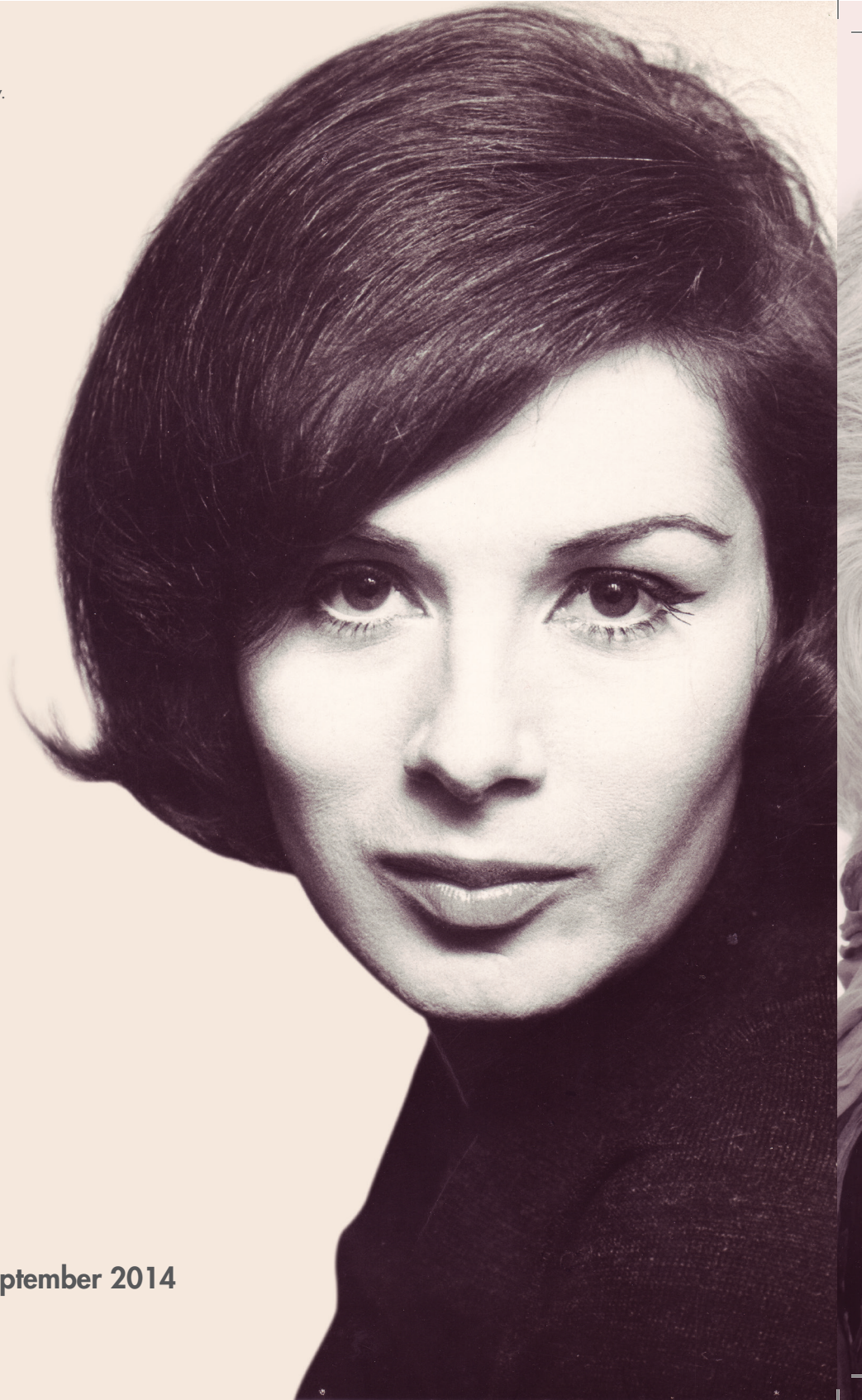
1941



homotopia



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Images taken from

April Ashley; portrait of a lady

Museum of Liverpool

27th September 2013 - 20th September 2014



INTRODUCTION

The following extracts are taken from oral history interviews conducted between October 2012 and July 2013. They are part of the April Ashley heritage project and exhibition April Ashley; portrait of a lady. The project charts the life of the pioneering model and icon against a timeline of political, social and legislative change from 1935 - 2012. As one of the country's first and most renowned trans* people, April's life has had an impact on changing cultural attitudes and legal conditions pertaining to gender in Britain.

This collection of interviews features a variety of people whose gender identity and/or expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth – trans*. Some of them talk of the influence April has had on their personal journey to transition, others of the effects society, medicine, employment and education have had on their lives and their own unique experience of gender and sexuality. Participants generously gave hour long oral history interviews of which only a selection are offered here in edited form. Some names have been changed and the extracts amended to protect anonymity. To hear the full histories and for further information visit:

www.aprilashley.org.uk

Our Story
Liverpool

WORDS

Gender	A range of physical, mental and behavioural characteristics pertaining to masculinity and femininity.	Intersex	Where male and female biological characteristics are present at birth. A person may choose to have surgery or treatment to further define their gender.
Sexual orientation	Sexual attraction to the opposite sex (heterosexuality), the same sex (homosexuality) or both (bisexuality). This does not determine gender identity.	Transvestite / cross dresser	A person who dresses occasionally in the opposite gender but may not wish to transition.
Transsexual	Describes a person who wishes to transition to the opposite sex to which they were born. This does not determine sexuality.	Drag queen	A man who dresses as a woman for entertainment but may have no wish to transition. There is a long history of drag within the gay community.
Transgender	FTM – transitioning from female to male. MTF – transitioning from male to female.	Drag king	A woman who dresses as a man for entertainment.
Gender Queer	Rejecting binary definitions of gender.	LGBT	A common abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*.

TIMELINE

This timeline includes some significant dates in trans*, lesbian, gay and bisexual history. Trans* people share the experience of prejudice and discrimination with the LGB community and have played a significant part in the struggle for equality. They have been prevented from changing their legal sex and historically have also been targeted by anti-gay legislation, under the mistaken assumption that all trans* people are lesbian or gay.

CATHERINE

I'm Catherine, I'm 58 and I grew up here in South Lancashire which is now Merseyside, my parents were both teachers.

It would have been in 1961, I'm pretty sure that is the date, it was the weekend that The People newspaper published the exposé of her (April). I was staying at my Nan's house, can't call them my grandparents that's too posh, which I often did at the weekend and I was 7 at the time. I was probably in the lounge, the papers were there and it was all over the headlines. Well I didn't have a word for how I'd been feeling because I was aware, even at the age of 7, that something was different. I had some sensibilities that I couldn't make sense of, some affinities I couldn't make sense of, so I read the headline and the article and something just clicked. I just thought 'My word! So that maybe explains why I've been feeling this way?' Even though I had no words and vocabulary to describe it but reading her story somehow made sense. It seemed unattainable, it seemed well... this was someone who'd worked in a nightclub and who was beautiful and you know...so it seemed fairytale like.

Just think of it in the early '60s, the only thing we had was newspapers and magazines. Subsequently we managed to get hold of copies of the Encyclopedia Britannica and I remember looking in there and that wasn't a good read at all. Basically it was saying I was dysfunctional if that was

a description. Transgendered or transsexual was not a good thing to be. It's interesting isn't it that? Why I should feel that? Thoughts and feelings up to that point I hadn't wanted to share. There would have been a tone in that article, it would have been judgmental I'm guessing, I haven't read it since. If I read it today I'm sure it would be fairly journalistic and sensational and 'Well this is weird isn't it?' And maybe shameful. A lot of that fits in with work I've done over the years, more particularly with some research I've done recently with some trans* people. One of the things I came across was some work by a woman called Natasha Kennedy and she'd interviewed some adults looking back on their lives as trans* children. All children who'd had thoughts or feelings of gender variance had that sense of shame, of shamefulness and that might be generational but the sense of shamefulness is something that you really can't be proud of, that you really need to keep hidden.

So I suppose from 7, 8, onwards I would be secretly sneaking into mum's room when she was out or when I had a bit of time and maybe messing around with her make up, sneaking to the loo and just trying out make up and putting some of her clothes on and of course I knew, I knew somehow all of this was wrong and that what the hell would happen if I got found out? Because whilst my parents seemed educated, they were also quite prejudiced and my father in particular. Given that as a child I wanted approval, the last thing I wanted to do was to do or say anything that was going to get disapproval. So it was all about hiding away.

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The Roman Emperor Elagabalus is assassinated, after attempting to obtain sex-change surgery.

1726

A squadron of police constables arrest the 'mollies' at the house kept by Mother Clap in Field Lane, London. The mollies were gay men, often prostitutes, who frequently dressed as women.

WORK

LYNETTE

I've always wanted to work as Lynette in the workplace. I know a lot of trans* girls just want to, so I did and I still do that kind of work. And I work with the NHS in Sefton PCT in Bootle and the hospital, I work as Lynette. I'm Lynette as much as I possibly can be. I'm a plumber. So if somebody wants plumbing doing, I do revert back to John, which I don't really want to. But people go to me 'Why don't you be Lynette and work as a plumber?' but you can't, it's just impossible.

HEATHER

Most of the gay prisoners are on our side of the prison so they've all been really supportive of me. It was quite funny because I went back on the 19th November 2009 which was just before or after Pudsey's Day. I went into work and I'm one of only 3 female officers that wears a skirt at Wymott and I walked in, there was these two prisoners, they were overheard by a colleague of mine and one said to the other, 'Have you seen that male officer?' 'Which one?' 'The one with the bald head and earrings, he's wearing women's clothes!' The other one said 'I can't understand why.' And a few minutes later one said to the other 'I know, he's doing it for Children In Need!' So it's been a long Children In Need if you know what I mean! That day I went back to work as me, I had a bonfire when I came home and all the male uniform went into my chiminea and I set fire to it in the back garden.

JENNY-ANNE

I'd lost my job because the company I was working for had found out about me and I was on the redundancy list again. This time they were really naughty because they wrote to all the companies I applied for jobs with and said, 'Don't employ this person, they are trans*.' One or two people rang me and said you need to know what's happening but don't look to us to be witnesses.

TRACEY

The first half of my life at Rolls Royce, I was on the manufacturing and development side and the second half I was on the factory support and facilities side and there were some fairly butch fitters working, like body builders, big guys. I went into the Flying Handbag. I was having a drink and four of our fitters walked in and I thought 'Oh they are going to give me loads of stick here' but they didn't. They looked at me and went to the bar, got a drink, kept looking across at me until I thought 'They're going to say something.' I finished my drink and my friend came in and we left. I was telling a female friend of mine and she said, 'It wasn't your face they were looking at.' Everybody knows I wear really short skirts and with my big boobs I got away with it. On Monday I went down to see them about doing a job. They mentioned this girl with big tits and I said 'Where did you see them?' And they said 'A place called the Flying Handbag in Blackpool.' I said 'Is that the gay bar on the pier? You shouldn't shame yourself going to places like that!' I kept a straight face and walked out.

1777

John Hunter transplanted the testes of a cock into male subjects as a form of rejuvenation – it made no difference to the men.

1861

King Louis XV of France orders the Chevalier d'Éon de Beaumont (1728-1810) to dress permanently as a woman for the remainder of her life. S/he had dressed as a woman in order to spy at the court of the Empress Elizabeth of Russia and later as charges d'affair for the French ambassador in London. In 1785 s/he returns to London where s/he lives as a woman until her death.

SISTER MARIA RENATE

I was received into the Franciscan community in '84, I made my vows in '87 and I made them perpetual in '92. In '92 that's when the shit hit the fan to be precise. I had spoken about my condition to a priest in confessional and this priest felt it was his duty to inform the arch diocese. My documentation and everything was all in order, it wasn't as if it had to be talked about because as far as I was concerned it was sorted, it was something of the past, it was gone. I suddenly got a letter from the arch diocese asking me to come in and speak to them. It was put to me like this; 'I have received a phone call from somebody who is known to me but wishes to remain anonymous to you, and he has said this, this and this. What's your response?' I wrote to them and put it all down on paper and told them the whole thing and I went to see them with my spiritual director, a Franciscan priest. I was still in habit at that time. I knew basically that the writing was on the wall and I went in and there was nothing that I could say that was going to sway them. I even went to see a private consultant at the Lourdes hospital to get a letter describing my condition for their benefit. I had to pay £50 for that and that was disregarded as well. As far as they were concerned because there was the time I was a boy that was enough. They said it would cause scandal to the faith and they could be put in a difficult position. If it came out elsewhere, if the papers got hold of it, you know, 'The Trans* Nun.'

SALLY

Within my work colleagues everything is perfectly fine. The supervisor is bisexual. I have a gay co-worker. We only have one straight guy working for us and the rest of us are girls. They have trouble sometimes just using the right pronoun but that's the case with most people when they first meet a transgendered person and they've got better. The bigger problem is the customers, I work on the cafe and have to serve them food and get their drinks. I have to wear a hairnet and a silly little cap and black uniform so I look more androgynous than ever. The less intellectually endowed members of the local community as I affectionately call them, idiots as everyone else calls them, they tend to stare more and make comments beneath their breath.

JOEY

I remember forgetting my suit at Glasgow teacher training college. I had to drive down to an interview in the North West and I borrowed some of my sister's clothes, which felt like a dragging up exercise. Of course after the seventh interview that was the one I immediately got. Then I had to slowly phase out the person they had met at interview. It wasn't very long before all the kids were calling me 'Sir'.

1869

Life in prison for sodomy was introduced in law in Britain replacing the death penalty.

1870

One of the first public trials for cross dressing was held. Ernest (Stella) Boulton and Fred (Fanny) Park were arrested for indecency. The prosecution was based on their transvestism and the soliciting of men as women. They were acquitted, as the jury could not imagine such a thing could really happen.

SEXUALITY AND GENDER

JOEY

I have been heterosexual and I've been a dyke. I guess being pan or poly is something that lots of trans* people use because once you start to see multiple genders everywhere there is no binary, so bisexuality makes no sense anymore and once we move into that framework these boxes of lesbian, gay and bisexual make absolutely no sense. Surely that's the world which we are moving towards - a world in which people can just fall in love with people and genders are multiple and separate from sex and sexuality. So these boxes of queer or straight no longer make any sense. For me that's a feminist future that I try to actualise in my life.

GLORIA

I had to explain to the eldest one of my three brothers, that gender dysphoria, wanting to change your sex, has got nothing to do with sexuality because the first thing when I told him he says, 'Cor I didn't think you were gay!' I said, 'I'm not bloody gay you fool, it's got nothing to do with sexuality.'

EM

For me gender is fluid, its completely fluid in terms of how I feel, how I act, how I dress. I don't expect the rest of the world to be that progressive yet, I don't think they will be in my lifetime to be honest but hopefully in my nieces' and nephews' lifetimes it will be. There will be a third way where they don't see little Jimmy who is playing with a pram as wrong or little Ella who wants to be called Jimmy on a Sunday as wrong, they just accept that. So for me gender is feelings, expressions, politics as well because people don't expect me to automatically question and say 'Well why is that right for a man but not for a woman?'

ELEN

I think I realised some while ago that I was potentially bisexual. I did wonder quite early on, I thought 'Why do I have all these funny sexual feelings? Am I gay?' I thought about it and I thought 'Well I can't be gay because I don't like men.' But I realised that I'm not against the male physical body, it's men as the personalities that go with them that I don't like. As far as having a deep meaningful relationship it's only ever been with a woman. In a sense I don't feel any great desire to go out and have sex with a man but a trans* person, they can have a male body and to me trans* women, even cross dressing ones, some of them there's a beauty that has a different edge to it because it's a mixture of male and female. I find a lot of that very attractive.

1885

The Criminal Law Act was passed in the UK, making all homosexual behaviour, not just sexual activity, illegal. Those convicted (such as Oscar Wilde and subsequently Alan Turing) faced imprisonment and hard labour.

1886

Richard von Kraft-Ebbing wrote 'Psychopathia Sexualis' differentiating transsexual people from homosexual people. Case 92 is the first recorded example of a patient saying they felt like they were "a man trapped in a woman's body".

SAM

I always fancied lads on the sly anyway, especially gay lads, it was something I couldn't tell my gay mates. Transitioning and realising that gender is a construct anyway, breaking free of that binary thing, it has a real effect, I started fancying people not the gender. I'm in a gay relationship but I wouldn't say that I'm gay. I'd say I'm queer and I generally fancy queer people, I fancy quite butch women and I fancy quite camp men. I'm not restricted on who I fancy now. It blows the concept of gender apart it's just not relevant anymore, it's not relevant at all, it's great.

DAN

Before I ever found anything out about transitioning I had just seen myself as being a lesbian forever, which is not a problem but it's just not me. I was getting really unhappy. I didn't know where I stood or what I wanted to do. I just didn't have any sense of direction. I was very anxious and relationships weren't working, obviously because I wasn't a lesbian but I was in lesbian relationships. I don't think my future, had I stayed a lesbian, would have been successful. Speaking for me personally, I think gender is definitely something that you are born with, it's a mental state as well as something that's on the outside. I've always felt more male but I've not been able to describe it. I think it's different for everyone though isn't it? I've never felt like a girl. I've always felt very awkward around girls because I didn't fit in with them.

JENNY-ANNE

Before I got gender recognition and before I transitioned, people would probably have seen us as a gay male couple who occasionally dressed up. When I transitioned it was almost like we'd become a heterosexual couple and when I got my gender recognition legally we became a heterosexual couple. Now we see ourselves as lesbians and were Elen to ever get legal recognition we'd become legally a lesbian couple. So we've done the whole lot and what's changed? Nothing! We are just two people who love each other and care about being together.

JASMINE

I lived most of my sentence in a male prison, it used to be a bit of a struggle for me to get in the female estate. They'd say 'We don't know what to do with you because you have both sets of genitalia.' This was something new to the system totally. I got raped in prison, sexually assaulted, they just used to move me about from prison to prison. I was in an open prison and if I was talking to a bloke too long – if I was sleeping with him or even if I wasn't, they just moved me. I went to the female estate and they kicked me back out of there because they said I was sleeping with the girls – well I'm a lesbian for christ's sake, I'm gay!

Circa
1900

The field of sexology was developed in medicine. Early sexologists included Havelock Ellis and Magnus Hirschfield. People who cross dressed were easy targets of legislation and many trans* people sought a 'cure' to escape persecution and prosecution.

1906-7

Karl M. Baer, born Martha Baer, enlisted psychiatric, medical and legal support for surgery creating a medical and legal precedent for transforming an otherwise healthy female body into a male one.

STEPHEN

My name's Stephen Whittle. I was born on the 29th May 1955 so I'm getting on.

My dad was an interesting chap. He was very poorly educated, fell in a vat of green dye when he worked as a cleaner for Shell Petrochemicals, went green, they offered him money but he said he wanted a job because he had 5 kids. He couldn't read or write so he went into technical drawing and did so well in the end he became the plant manager. My mum was a medical secretary for much of her working life. Quite dynamic and ambitious people.

I was born in Wythenshawe in Manchester. I come from a family of five children. I think the assumption would be that my sisters and I would be the people who played together, right from the very beginning that just didn't work. I didn't want to play with the things they wanted to. I wanted to be a cowboy. God the Christmas's I asked for a cowboy suit! I had two younger brothers and I did play quite a lot with them but I was immensely jealous right from being very small, jealous of the clothes they could have. I remember my brother Malcolm being given a sort of little suit of camel coloured jacket and trousers with a velvet collar. Why couldn't I have that? I must have only been about 4 at that time.

My mother says she knew from about that age that I was not going to fit in. When I started school there were endless rows about what I should wear for school, how my hair

should be done and things like that. It was very unhappy. I was about 8 when my father took me in and walloped me and told me I wasn't to play with the boys any longer. I couldn't see why I couldn't play Spies or Cowboys. I didn't know what was wrong at all, I couldn't work it out. Then I was 10 and I remember it was school sports day and there were boys' races and girls' races and it just sort of absolutely struck me that I was always going to be in the wrong race. Nobody could understand why I was crying, it was like the worst realisation that it was always going to be wrong. It could never be sorted out, never be made correct.

My mother realised that I was deeply unhappy. Because I was quite academic she put me in for the exams for the local direct grant school. I was fortunate enough to get a scholarship place, which in many ways was the saving grace of me, because in that all-female environment all sorts of types of women were tolerated, all sorts of types of girls. There were obviously staff who lived in what we'd now identify as lesbian relationships. There were all sorts of models on how to be a different sort of person. And I tried very hard to try and think whether I could perhaps fit into some of those models.

I was very lucky actually the local library gave me an adult ticket when I was 11 because I'd devoured the whole of the children's library section. That gave me access to a little corner which had medicine and psychology in it so I used to go after school and sit there for a couple of hours

1919

Dr Magnus Hirschfield established the Institute for Sexual Research clinic in Berlin where some of the early gender reassignment surgery was developed. Surgery was experimental and dangerous.

1922

Los Angeles City Council makes it unlawful to be dressed in clothing of the opposite sex on the streets. If caught, the person could face six-months in jail or a fine of up to \$500.

JASMINE

I was born as Sarah Jane Goode, 1976 in Bromsgrove.

reading these books. I wouldn't have dared take them out or take them home. I used to sit in that library and try and read who I was. And the nearest thing I found was in DJ West's 'Homosexuality' which he wrote in 1961 which talked about stone butches. I didn't mind being butch but he also indicated in this book that stone butches didn't actually like to be touched and didn't like sex. I think I discovered the nature of sexual pleasure personally at about the age of 11 and the idea of not having that in my life was a bit horrendous. So I knew that wasn't me. But there was nothing that said what I was. I'd read stories about transsexual people but they were always male to female so there was no indication that they could do this for people going the other way.

I had a spate of about 3 years where I went off with anybody and had sex with anybody to try and cure myself of it. If I had sex with lads maybe it'd cure me and I'd become a woman, if I had sex with girls maybe it'd cure me and I'd become a lesbian and actually I didn't like sex with women. I didn't mind sex with boys but it wasn't me, it didn't cure me, it was quite pleasurable but it didn't cure me. What I really liked was that it was fairly straightforward; you didn't have to fall in love. Then when I was 18 I was doing last year at school and I went to the GP. Sat in the doctors I was reading women's magazines there, it was Woman's Realm and there was a story about a woman who'd become a man. And it was like 'That's it!'

When I was born they turned and goes, 'Congratulations you've got a little girl!' and then all of a sudden they looked and go 'Oh you've got a boy as well!' because they noticed there was a little tiny penis. At the time, in the 1970's, they weren't too sure how to deal with these situations, so basically they brought me up as a girl for a few years until my father decided otherwise and he chopped all my hair off and had me as a boy and called me Darren.

I don't know exactly how it happened. It came as a bit of a shock to myself. Even now I'm still trying to work pieces out. A few months ago I spoke to my birth mother and she seemed fine but shortly after the visit I got a text message saying she didn't want nothing else to do with me anymore. Obviously I was digging a bit too deep.

All of my stuff, all of my dolls went out the window. That was it, they chucked everything out and they were like, 'You will be a boy and that's that'. It caused a lot of heartache and pain for myself. At school I was picked on. I was bullied and eventually because the hassle was too much we moved area to a different school to try and get me into a better life.

1929

Scientist Adolf Butenandt isolates oestrogen from the urine of pregnant women.

1931

Trans woman Lili Elbe (named Einar Wegener at birth) died from the complication of tissue rejection following surgery, in 1930, to implant a uterus from a female accident victim. Earlier surgery had included removing the scrotum, and implanting the ovaries of female goats. The goat's ovaries had also been rejected.

Scientist Adolf Butenandt isolates testosterone from the urine of policemen.

It got to a stage where my father was giving me testosterone which was illegal. He used to get hold of it wherever and he used to inject me because I was forming too girly-girl and my female features was taking over. I was pretty gobsmacked. I weren't too sure exactly what was going on, like when you was walking down the streets and people would go 'Hi Sarah you've had all your hair cut off!' and then all of a sudden you'd hear the voice of my father or my mother go 'No it's not Sarah, it's Darren.'

I struggled with friends. As a child I was confused and it got worse and worse as I got older because as I got into teenage adolescence then I knew my past, I knew my body. It went round the school 'God almighty! Darren's got a dick and a fanny' and that was basically the words that young lads and girls know. 'Bit of a freak' and everything else.

*“All of my dolls went out the window,
That was it. They were like ‘you
will be a boy and that’s that’.”*

Then I started bunking off school and before you know it I got chucked out of school and it was completely a rollercoaster. You've got this anger, you know, inside you and you're just trying to get rid of it. You can't explain it because you don't know what's going on yourself. I've spoke to people now, trans* men who are on testosterone and they explain to me what they are like on it. How they have gone from the female that they used to be to the male they are now and how more aggressive they can actually be. Since I've got no testosterone my body's been a hell of a lot better. You suddenly realise what was causing you all of the problems. What led you into prison. Trying to be someone else that you wasn't.

At puberty I started developing hair, whiskers on the face, hair on the chest. I was suffering from morning erections. It wasn't very nice. I didn't know if I was coming or going. I'd cry. I was always trying to commit suicide. There was so much anger inside all the time. I've tried it several times in the past (suicide) even from an early teenager you'd try it but then there'd be something that would stop you. It's because it's like you are trapped within the wrong body totally. If you're looking at something that's not right then obviously it's going to make you really sick. It's going to make you suicidal basically.

1935

April is born George Jamieson in Sefton General Hospital, Smithdown Road, Liverpool.

Bill (nee Margaret) Allan (1906-1949), the 20th of 22 children, from Bolton goes into hospital. On his return he claims he has been made "from a woman (in)to a man".

Aversion therapy introduced in psychiatry to 'eliminate' transgenderism and homosexuality in individuals.

1936

Mary Weston who represented Britain at the Olympic Games in shot putt and javelin undergoes surgery at Lennox Broster's intersex clinic at Charing Cross Hospital to become Mr Mark Weston.

ELEN

My feminine name is Elen Heart. H-e-a-r-t. It's not my legal name. I'm still legally male.

I'd been kicked out of home after my teenage years. I then went off my own bat because I had to keep getting the testosterone. I was too scared of coming off the testosterone for other people to suddenly realise what you are.

I was with Pauline, who's now Christopher. We settled down, there was children involved, I was just the mum, we lived on this estate. Well, I was showing as if I looked like a boy. I brought my children and looked after them. I had them weighed in at the clinics, done all the shopping, everything else. Then all of a sudden there was children on the estate being abused by a paedophile and because I was new on there and because I was playing with my own children on the parks they presumed it was me and we got attacked. Then this bloke said, 'If you do this, this, this and this for me I will then keep all the pressure off your back.' I went out and committed the crime, it was worth nearly £80 million the crimes because it was all the stately homes and I got locked up in prison, got a sentence. I was in prison about 6 months, then all of a sudden the paedophile got found out. I got a load of apology letters saying 'I'm ever so sorry' but it was too late. I'd got my sentence there wasn't a lot else I could do about it.

My original name was Alan Hart. When I decided to be Elen I thought a lot about a name. When you change your name you've got to get used to it. People might call the name and you don't respond and I thought it's near enough to my male name if anyone says it I'll respond anyway. I've got a big birthday coming up this year; in June I'm going to be 70. A lady of mature years.

My father did all sorts of things. His very first job years ago was an apprentice barge builder in the days when they still had barges on the Thames. My mother was basically a housewife.

I was born in Epsom and lived most of my life in Surrey with my family. I fell in love with north Wales when my parents brought us up here for a holiday and I said 'I want to retire and go and live in north Wales.' When eventually the opportunity came I thought 'Yeah I'm going to do that.'

I had a very happy childhood. I am not like a lot of trans*people who realise they were trans*early on. I was just me. We weren't particularly well off but I enjoyed life. I've always been fortunate. I was fairly creative. I went to

1937

April's family move from Pitt Street to Teynham Crescent, Norris Green.

1938

Electroconvulsive therapy treatment is introduced in psychiatry – commonly used throughout 20th century to 'treat' transgenderism and homosexuality.

The News of the World reports story of Doris Purcell who was having a series of operations at Charing Cross Hospital to become Donald Purcell.

art school and then I got a job working in that sort of area. The first job was with the Barratt shoe company doing window displays. I joined British Telecom when it was still the Post Office. I was there until I took early retirement.

I've always had an enormous respect for girls and women, although I was never particularly forceful as a male. Looking back now I think it's because I was trans*, my personality, the way I wanted to be in the relationship was a more feminine one. I didn't want to particularly be the one who had to go out and do the hunting, I was quite happy to be the hunted. I've always got on well with women.

“I'd got quite a clear image of my ideal woman and I thought ‘She's inside me’.”

I knew an awful lot about cross dressing and things before I'd ever tried it because I used to read a lot of books on psychology, I was very interested in that. To some extent my life has been a quest to understand me, the inner me. I'd read quite a lot so I knew about homosexuality and I knew about cross dressing. I knew about all sorts of different things which didn't relate directly to the way I felt. I loved women's clothes, not so much I hadn't thought of wearing them, I loved my partners to dress up in all these

lovely sexy clothes. I did have a lot of feeling for women's clothes, I remember one day I thought I'd try and see what it was. I was with a partner but she wasn't there at the time and I got some of her underwear out and put it on and I remember I was rather underwhelmed, I thought, 'I've put these clothes on so what!?' That was it.

It wasn't until I came and lived up here, nearly 10 years ago now, I was on my own. I got onto the internet, I'd found out there was a lot more people out there who liked doing all this sort of thing. Anyway I was on my own so I contacted some and started talking to them via email and one or two were saying, 'You've got to try dressing properly.' I loved the clothing. I loved being feminine. I thought perhaps I will try it and see. One of them sent me an old wig. I put some make up on and I put this old wig on and I looked in the mirror and I thought 'I'm going to look like a pantomime dame.' There was this rather badly made up 'me' face. It was like a double image. Behind it there was another face, a woman's face I recognised and I thought 'Ah that's my ideal woman I've been looking for all my life.' I'd got quite a clear image of my ideal woman and I thought 'She's inside of me.' It was quite a shock, it was sort of like a door opening, suddenly it started to fall into place, I thought 'Ah things make sense!'

1939-45

Michael Dillon (formerly Laura) obtains gender reassignment treatment during the Second World War and works as a ship's doctor for many years before being 'outed' by the Sunday Express in 1958.

1941

Premarin (oestrogen) is extracted from female horses and first used to treat male to female trans* people.

EM

I'm Em, I'm 26, I was born in Crewe in Cheshire. My dad was a baker and my mum was a shop assistant.

It was quite a strange childhood really because I was in a Polish/English household, my dad's family were all Polish so I grew up in a house where you had at least two languages going at once, all the time you would hear two. I didn't do very well, when I was younger, I was born prem, I was 2 pound 4, I was 3 months early. That was quite an entrance. They told my mum she wasn't pregnant then yes she was and here I am!

My mum knew there was something then, she sort of knew, she put me in dresses and I'd get covered in mud and play football. I was too rough to play with the other girls. I'm an only child, usually that would be good but it led me to be quite insular. I realised when I was younger that I was gay and I thought 'Right all my mates are fancying what's his name over there' and I was like 'Well my maths teacher's quite hot!'

Did some GCSE's, found out I had a limited drone dyslexia and thought I'll do performing arts, did performing arts for 3 years and then got ill with ME so I stopped that and I moved to Chester. I was 18 and on the scene, shaved my hair, took every drug under the sun, drinking, dancing

the week-ends away - went down quite a bad path and at that point I was like 'Hang on there's something not right.' I'd never identified as femme, always got called 'He' and thought 'Yeah that's fine' but didn't know what trans* was, it wasn't really brought up where I was, being gay was quite a shock plus being the only Polish family on the street at that time was different. It was difficult because you never heard it, you never saw it.

Moved to Wales due to a family breakdown and joined another youth group which I knew and it was 'Yeah I'm gay,' ok I struggled with it and they all saw me as a woman and that was fine and then a friend of mine, Jason, who's now died, he turned up and he's like 'I'm trans*' and his story clicked in with mine and I was like 'Oh hang on, yeah I get that, I see that.'

Then there was a time when I completely tried to rule out my female side and that was hard because it was a complete battle of the two genders just sat there in my head. It was hard for my mum even though she knew I was a tomboy she couldn't get round the fact that some days I'd walk in and look like a guy and some days I wouldn't. I'm not your average guy, I've got long hair, I grew up with a lot of bikers around me so those guys really influenced me, you can have long hair and its fine. I like pink which isn't usual, but then again neither am I.

1944

Robert Allan, a London radiologist, claims he had 'naturally' changed from being female to male. His birth certificate is altered to reflect his new 'sex' in a marginal note, and he marries his fiancé.

1949

April joins the Merchant Navy cadet ship T.S. Vindicatrix and then serves aboard the SS Pacific Fortune.

Bill Allan, (1906-1949) is hanged at Strangeways prison by Albert Pierrepont, the official executioner for the murder of his neighbour (see 1935).

I'd identify with other friends who were also lesbian and they were just really proud of having boobs and a figure, they liked the clothes that they went and bought and they could get into heels and I was always like drunken giraffe with heels, it never fitted. Even though I identified as a lesbian there was something inside me going 'I am different'. The female side of me got pushed back and I just knew that I was different. My genders used to fight with each other because if I had to be very feminine for any reason the male side of me was like 'No'. I felt like a drag queen, hair up, make-up on, it felt wrong, there was some sort of storm going on. But perversely on the other side when people referred to me as 'He' my brain just went 'That's not right either!' because no one had ever done it before. So it was such a battle to get used to people recognising my male side, there is a male side within me, it does need to be expressed, it is expressed. And trying to express it and pass is difficult for me because I do have long hair and because my voice isn't deep, a lot of people sometimes look at me and don't know.

"I like pink which isn't usual but then again neither am I."

HEATHER

My name is Heather Ivy Jean Stanley. I was born on the 23rd of May 1952 in a village in North Wales.

My father was a steel worker and my mother was a housewife. I was the baby of the family. We were all mistakes because my mother had rheumatic fever when she was young. When my brother was conceived in 1949 my mum was told not to have any more children because it could kill her. My mum used to help out at weddings and when all the ladies got together there's a load of chronic biscuits but there's one nice cake and someone always grabs it. There was one chocolate eclair left on this plate and my auntie Flo said to her 'You take that and you'll come on a baby.' She took it and came on me! So I come from a chocolate eclair. Maybe that explains quite a bit really!

I always felt a bit different because I didn't want to play with the lads. I've got photographs of me pushing my sister's pram. I'd prefer to play with my sister's toys. Growing up was difficult because the sports I wanted to do were netball, tennis and what the girls did. I've always been interested in cooking. I knew I was different and you had to be macho. When I was young it didn't matter so much because it's unisex but soon as I realised who I was and what I was things were more difficult.

1950

John Randall is appointed psychiatrist at Charing Cross Hospital, London where he works with intersex people at the clinic of surgeon Lennox Broster.

1951

Roberta Cowell (formerly Robert) becomes one of the first male to female trans* people to have surgery in Britain and successfully changes her birth certificate.

In my teenage years my mum had a couple of panty corselets and there was always one in the airing cupboard. I used to put it on and feel great and then I'd always have to try and put it back in exactly the same position. I think my mum must have realised something was happening.

“I was missing my mum and I wasn't allowed to cry. I was a man you see.”

I had a couple of dates with girls. I did fancy fellers but I didn't know anything about being a homosexual or gay person. So I did what I was supposed to do and go with the girls.

I knew from 1962 that I was different. This is the connection with April. I hadn't really guessed what I was. In them days you wouldn't have found anything in literature or books about it would you? I read this newspaper article. I'm not sure if it was the Sunday People or the News of the World. What drew me to it was the picture of this gorgeous woman standing on the top of aeroplane steps and a merchant seaman at the side. It gives a little bit of

the story of April. One of her so-called friends had outed her and I knew.... well that's me. I'm a girl. Something just clicked inside and I knew from there on sometime in the future I would actually become me, the woman I should have been when I was born. I carried that with me all the way through my life. I'd have been 10.

In 1972 my mum passed away. I was coming up to 20. Later that year I met my partner, as was, Anne and we decided to get married. I was missing my mum and I wasn't allowed to cry. I was a man you see. I joined the prison service in 1973..macho image. I think that's why I joined..to blot it out of my mind. But you never blot it out. I started going out and getting women's clothing, bit of make-up, and hide it all over the house. Then I'd feel really guilty, get rid of it, destroy it. It must have been flaming expensive over the years. I didn't know where to get a wig from or anything. I didn't know about trans*people. You'd hear stories about a fellow in Ruthin, not far from where I lived, who used to dress in women's clothing. But that was about it. They didn't have things like that in the library. It would have been totally frowned upon. All I knew was I was different.

1952

April attempts suicide in Los Angeles whilst serving in the Merchant Navy.

1953

April attempts suicide in Liverpool. She is admitted to Ormskirk Hospital psychiatric unit and receives ECT treatment. April moves to Wales to work in a hotel in St Asaph's. She shares digs with John Prescott who is working as a commis chef at the hotel.

The Wolfenden committee was appointed to consider the law in Britain in relation to homosexual offences.

CHANGING THE PHYSICAL FORM

JOEY

And the long term health implications of taking hormones haven't been really researched. It's a very fierce drug to be having effect on ovaries and a female body and in a way, if I kept taking it, I would age massively. I've aged 10 years physically in the way I look just by taking it for two years. I've already got quite a receding hairline which is shocking to me being almost read as Peter Pan. I'm nearly 40 but I've always been read as 17 or something and now I'm seen as an adult, as a man.

TRACEY

All the time they are asking you, 'Are you sure you want to go ahead with this? Are you sure you want to go ahead?' At the end of the day you decide, then they find a hospital that will do the operation, mine was Mr Terry down in Leicester. I went to see him, by this time I'm 70 and he looked at me and I said 'I'm Tracey' and he said 'I'll just go through your details. 'Right Tracey' he said and there was a silence it seemed like forever but it wasn't and he said 'Well the normal age for this operation, the cut off age is 65, but in your case I'll make an exception.' I nearly kissed him but I didn't.

CATHERINE

Five years ago I went to Leicester, I went to one of the leading consultants in urology to have it done, it was on the NHS, staunch supporter of the NHS, didn't want to go privately, couldn't afford to go privately but the experience was woeful. Stuck in a standard urology ward, ignored by staff, not even a proper welcome when I got there, just given 'Oh you need to clear yourself out. Take these.' Then you are on the loo for the next five hours. Your surgery is in the morning about lunchtime so you can't have anything to eat and no conversation. I mean this was a really big event but no acknowledgement of that. The nurses were poor, they were just there to monitor, take your temperature, take your blood pressure and be the gatekeepers of pain relief so it wasn't, I wasn't impressed with it. The surgeon had done probably as good a job as he could but there were all sorts of post-operative complications and I was off work for 6 months not 6 weeks. So actually the whole thing was a bloody anti-climax, it was pretty grim, I ended up with MRSA.

SALLY

I feel that my body is a giant birth mark and it just needs to be altered because it's such a horribly disfiguring birth mark which I need to get rid of.

1954

Alan Turing commits suicide after being convicted of indecent behaviour and choosing chemical castration with female hormones as an alternative to prison.

1955

April moves to London.

April moves to Paris and works in Le Carrousel club.

SAM

I wasn't really getting anywhere with the NHS, it's been difficult especially in the Wirral, their policy is not exactly progressive so even getting past the GP is quite difficult. Nobody's really sure what to do. Your GP gives you a referral to St Cath's to the psycho sexual clinic then you are supposed to have a general mental health screening to rule out any underlying thing. Then they are meant to refer you on then to the Gender Identity Clinic either Leeds or in London. But on the Wirral, the clinicians there think they've got to give a diagnosis and they don't feel comfortable doing that, so a lot of people tend to get stuck. So months went by and during that time you've got to go through your real life experience. Living in role is pretty much impossible without hormones, I didn't look any different. It's difficult to get people to take you seriously and call you 'he' when you don't look or sound male in any way. I looked into going private for hormones, weighed up the options and decided that that was the best choice for me. It was the best £400 I ever spent to be honest with you.

JASMINE

After about 6 or 7 months of being in prison my body started to change more and more. I was starting to look more female and it was coming out, which naturally it's going to. I'm not saying it hurt coming off the testosterone because I used to have vivid dreams and I was all over the shop but one day when I was stood in the prison and somebody goes 'God almighty she's a bit of alright isn't she!' And I can remember the officer going 'What? That's

Goode that is. That's a bloke.' 'That's a bloody bird that is I'm telling you, that is a girl.' I can remember them arguing and that was when things started opening up.

STEPHEN

By the time I saw Professor Goldberg again, at that stage I'd done 6 months in role, changed my name, changed everything, went to see him and he said 'No'. He said 'No, you will never live as a man. I will never treat you that's it.' And threw me out. So I went home to kill myself. My GP, Greta, was sat outside the house and said she'd had a letter from him that morning so she'd been sat there all afternoon waiting for me to come back from this appointment because she thought I'd top myself. She said 'I've decided that I'm going to give you hormones because it's worth it to save your life.' And she did. She had a tough time, she got disciplined as a consequence of doing it. But she had, within a very short space of time, about 40 transsexuals in her surgery! She saved my life and I never passed the psychiatric test. I eventually got treatment because doctors along the way were nice to me. They recognised who I was. So I transitioned really effectively just before my twentieth birthday. I had my surgery 5 years later, 6 years later, my chest surgery after I'd met Sarah. I'd actually been to see a surgeon about my chest and he'd said that they had a waiting list of 11 years, now we can look at that and go 'That's bloody stupid, of course that's rubbish!' But actually I was 19 and I believed him. Why would he lie to me? It's only years later I that realised he'd been lying through his teeth just to put me off. But I eventually did get my chest done and I had a hysterectomy.

1956

The Sexual Offences Act 1956 becomes law, determining much of the police activity against homosexuality for the remainder of the century.

1958

Christine Jorgensen, ex-American marine and Cocinelle, performer at Le Carrousel, Paris, become two of the first widely reported gender reassignment cases in the world.

The Homosexual Law Reform Society is set up in the UK.

SAM

My name is Sam Carr I am 33. I was born in Liverpool.

My mum just used to work at odd jobs and my dad worked on the railway. Growing up wasn't very nice actually because I was totally shy and a bit isolated. I think a lot of it was down to my gender identity and just not fitting in.

I came out to my mum when I started my transition which was about 15 months ago. I said to her 'I've got something to tell you, I am trans*' and she was like 'Oh I know'. Apparently when I was just able to talk, I used to sit in the bath and I used to cry and go 'Where's my willy? Where's my willy?' I was always aware, I felt like a boy always. I really knew that something wasn't right when puberty hit. I struggled quite a bit because I was sort of outed as a lesbian which I thought I was at 14. But that was weird as well because I didn't fit in with lesbians. I feel like a gay lad.

I was so at odds with myself. I ended up going to 4 secondary schools. It was hard to make friends changing schools so often, so I left school at 14 with no GCSEs. I was having quite a hard time at home as well because I started using drugs and hanging around with the wrong people. I was 14 and ran away to London. Through my childhood I couldn't connect with anybody. So to be in

London meeting people, gay people, people I just didn't have access to in the places where I lived, it was totally liberating, it set me on a path of living a different life. I started going to gay bars and I remember seeing my first ever drag queen... Dave Lyn. I'll always remember it. I was just in awe. I'd never seen anything like that before.

I came back because I realised I was really out of my depth. Just didn't know how to cope. I remember being sat in this flat, I didn't have a stick of furniture didn't have any idea how to budget or look after myself. I needed to go home. You can imagine the shock when I knocked on the front door with a skinhead.

After the experiences I'd had in London and freedom there was just absolutely no way I could have gone back to living under their roof. I stayed in the YMCA in Runcorn. I must have been there about a year then I started getting quite badly into drugs so I ended going back to London again. I was on the streets for two and a half years. I was a heroin addict. I think a lot of these problems were all related. I was so at odds with myself, with my identity, who I was. Nothing seemed to fit. I ended up sleeping rough in London then had a pretty horrendous experience with a friend of mine overdosing. It frightened me into getting off of it. I was pretty lucky because although I hadn't been in

1959

John Randall reports that he is seeing transvestites and transsexuals as patients, but does not agree to provide gender reassignment treatment 'unless absolutely necessary'.

1960

April travels to Morocco for gender re-assignment surgery.

contact with my family much, I just rang up and spoke to my mum about it and was honest with her, then went back to get clean. It was a hard time. I'd lived a whole life by the time I was 18.

"I didn't fit in with lesbians. I feel like a gay lad."

My nan and granddad are my closest family members and my nan got cancer. A few days before she died she sat up in bed and said, 'I need you to promise me something. You need to make something of yourself. You're intelligent, you can do it.' So I applied to do an Access course for Edge Hill Uni - finishing that course was the first time I'd ever achieved anything. I was 30.

As part of my degree one of my lectures was about transgender and I couldn't wait. It was really good, it was all about the different issues and I sat there and I thought 150 people of my cohort have all got an understanding about it. I felt like the universe was telling me something. The next day I started binding my chest. I got the ball rolling with changing my name by deed poll. Then that week I went to my GP armed with a load of information and said 'I'm transgender I want to medically transition' and that was the start of the change of my life really.

GLORIA

My name's Gloria Jones. I was born on March 13th 1941 which makes me 72.

Dad was a leather dresser, mum was a factory worker before I was born. I had a good early life, it wasn't so clever after dad came back because he'd had nothing to do with me. He never saw me until I was what 4 or 5 year old and he was actually jealous of me because my grandfather had done everything with me that you start to do with little boys.

Boys and girls in our village were all the same, they just wore different clothes. They all did the same things, you know play with the animals, muck the chickens out, get up to your eyeballs in mud, get sworn at and very often if you got into such a state when you got home you were given somebody else's clothes to go in and whether it was boys clothes or girls clothes it didn't matter.

When I was at junior school I usually used to go and spend the weekends with my grandma and granddad and I was always put to bed in one of gran's nighties. When I was little I thought I might grow up to be a girl. With only my mum at home everything was female. You'll see little girls clomping around in their mum's shoes, well I used to do that. Funnily enough when I grew up later on she'd

1961

April is 'outed' by a 'friend' in the Sunday People newspaper.

US transgender activist Virginia Prince sets up the Hose and Heels Club in Los Angeles, probably the first support group in the world for trans* people.

1963

April marries the Right Hon Arthur Corbett.

buy some new shoes and say 'Coo these are a bit tight, wear these in for me will you?' So I was stamping around the house in her blooming high heels wearing her shoes in for her - it was encouragement if you like. I never really gave it much thought. I liked mum's clothes, I liked seeing her clothes but I never got round to wearing any of mum's clothes because I was too small. By the time I grew up and was a big lad there was a house full of boys anyway because I've got 3 brothers, so nothing ever came out of that. I'm not one of those people who knew the minute they popped out of the womb they should have been a girl. I was a big roughly-toughy feller you know, from a teenager right through until I came up here really.

I'd had enough of dad.... He was talking to an Army officer and a RAF officer and I heard him say, 'Oh there's my boy now.' I must have been nearly 18. I went across and this Army officer pipes up and says, 'Will you be following in father's footsteps and joining the regiment?' I said 'No', so the RAF officer grinned and said 'No he's got more sense than that he's going to join the RAF aren't you?' I said 'No I'm going to join the Navy.' I shot off to the recruiting office and joined the navy.

I liked it, I was always quite happy thinking about sort of feminine things and if an opportunity arose to show my feminine side. It was difficult though in the navy because during that time if there was any inclination that you might be gay then you were out on your ear straight away.

I wouldn't say that it was repressive it was purely that for anybody who had any alternative feelings of being gay, bi or trans* you had to keep it well hidden otherwise you'd be turfed out because it was a big no-no in the forces, particularly in the Navy. But there again you see you got an entire male compliment on a ship together and you're going to get all sorts of things going on and they did.

I would say about 8 out of 10 of the civilian NAFFI staff that were on ships were gay. It was always said that the navy ran on rum, bum and baccy. I met up with some merchant seamen in Mombassa in '62 from one of the Castle Line liners... Well out of 50 stewards on there 49 of them were gay, the only one that wasn't was the chief! Those were the days!

1966

Compton's Cafeteria Riots, San Francisco. Trans* people demonstrate against police mistreatment and help create the first U.S. support network. Virginia Prince (of the Hose and Heels Club) visits Europe and UK transvestites form the Beaumont Society.

1967

Sexual Offences Act decriminalises homosexual acts between two men aged over 21 in private, in England and Wales.

The Homosexual Law Reform Movement sets up the Albany Trust to help lesbians and gay men with psychological and social well-being, 20% of clients are trans*.

SISTER MARIA RENATE

I was born August 1957 and I was born in Seaforth and my dad was a tradesman welder and my mother was a housekeeper, housewife.

As children we never feel that we are different it's only when somebody perceives you as being different, that's when you are made aware of your difference. Growing up in a community where everybody knew everybody else and everybody was everybody's friend, we were just who we are, so to be who you were was quite acceptable. The likes of androgyne insensitivity syndrome and intersex - these words were just not used, we just never knew them, we didn't know what they were, how they manifested themselves.

I was assigned male at birth purely on gonadal identification which is what they do, it's the only way, they lift you up by your legs or by your feet and say 'Oh it's a boy', that's it. How you develop from then on is really another matter. It wasn't until I was going to attend the secondary school when I was told it was going to be an all-boys school, my hair started to fall out with shock because something inside of me was saying 'Can't cope with this, can't cope'.

I was quite pretty, more than what a boy should really look, quite frail looking really, thin and not developed at all and of course as we know now it was down to the fact that the hormones, the testosterone is blocked so you don't masculinise as you should, you stay pretty much androgynous. So of course when you don't follow the pattern, when you don't follow the norm, you become the target. You know you are very different, extremely different so therefore you are 'queer' you are 'effeminate' you are all the multitude of names because they did not know how to define me and boys when they are lost for words use the first ones that they think of namely 'queer'. I can't blame them nobody can blame them because we are talking about 11, 12, 13 year olds who are confronted with something quite extraordinary and teachers didn't know how to handle it either.

My dad's passed away now, God rest him, my mum very gentle, just ordinary working class people, never really had cause to look deeper into the way I was because I was just a child, just their child. Me and my sister spent all our time together, we were constantly together even when she got older her friends were my friends, we were inseparable and she would stand up for me. I suppose that's why it was such a shock for me when I had to enter a boys' school without her. I would say there was quite a

1969

Stonewall Riots, New York mark the start of the Gay Liberation Movement. Committee for Homosexual Equality is set up in Britain. The First International Symposium on Gender Identity is held in London.

1970

The judgement in Corbett v Corbett divorce (April Ashley) sets a precedent preventing trans* people from legally changing their gender. John Randall, psychiatrist at Charing Cross hospital is the key medical witness. He says that April's presentation is a good 'pastiche' of a woman but nothing more.

The first lesbian and gay pride march was held in New York.

few crisis points when I was either kicked to death before I entered a classroom or set upon. I dreaded PE, dreaded it because you were expected to do all these boy things and it was just so difficult.

The episode in my life that really left a big mark was when I was at a local swimming pool I must have been about 11, I was being watched by a guy from the other side of the pool constantly and when I came out of the pool he tried to pick me up and I would say that was the shock because I think it made me aware of the fact that I was attractive and yet I wasn't a woman, I wasn't female but I was attractive. And I couldn't make it out. I was brought into a world of sexuality then that was my awakening to it and my vulnerability, how vulnerable I was being, looking like I did, it was frightening then because I was prey. My mum couldn't handle the fact that I had been exposed to that kind of experience, it was sex and she couldn't cope with that at all.

Something very desperate happened to me, I was being picked on and I was kicked dreadfully violently between the legs and I couldn't talk about it, I couldn't tell anybody I was in so much pain. Everything was swollen I was bleeding into myself and I just couldn't tell anybody. I never talked about it, I never sought help and the damage was done. What was there was destroyed basically they

had become not productive so that made it worse, the little bit of testosterone I would have got through was no longer there.

I left school and I went to work in a shop. I realised that I really couldn't cope with being at home the way I was because I was starting to be very much aware of who I was, the fact that I was very different. That's when I joined P & O, which meant I was away from home a lot of the time.

I remember coming home and telling my mum and dad 'I think I'm gay because I'm very different to everybody else' and they said 'Well what should we do?' So we went to go and see the GP and they sent me to an endocrinologist at Walton hospital and also a psychologist to see what was going on mentally as well. I sat through a lot of psychological testing and also blood tests and what have you and I still remember being called back to see this consultant with my dad and sitting there and she said to my dad 'I have to tell you that you don't have a son. You have a daughter.' My dad was so relieved, of course she told him what was what and what was needed to be done, so of course I was on hormones then. It was like I just became a brand new creature, actually to use the cliché, a caterpillar turning into a rather acceptable moth, that's exactly the way I was.

1972

The first Gay Pride march was held in London.

Sweden introduces the first law in the world allowing transsexual people to gain legal recognition but only if they are Swedish, unmarried and surgically sterilised.

1973

Germany introduces a law allowing transsexual people to gain legal recognition but only if German, unmarried and surgically sterilised.

The Times journalist Jan Morris, who reported on the conquering of Everest in 1953 as James Morris, publishes her autobiography 'Conundrum'. Robin Day conducts a rude and intrusive interview on television.

DAN

My name is Dan, I'm 24, I was born on the Wirral. My dad was in the Marines and he's a lecturer now and my mum's a PA.

When I was growing up I lived on a naval base in Portsmouth just for a few years until I was about 4 then I moved up to Coventry then I moved back to the Wirral. When I was about 5 my mum and dad divorced so I just moved with my mum and just grew up mainly in Hoylake. Growing up was alright it was just my sister and my brother and my mum which was nice.

I was always more of a tomboy I was always playing more with my brother and I always had like a trunk full of action men and dressing up stuff and just messing around building tree houses and all that while my sister was just the most girliest person you can ever imagine. I never used to play with girls at all, I didn't mix with them really well. Then I went into secondary school. I think at that age when you are getting to about 12, 13, kids start to realise differences between girls and boys so a girl playing with a boy didn't really seem that acceptable, so from then growing up I was a bit of a loner.

When I was about 15 years old I started fancying girls basically. About 16 that's when I came out and identified as a lesbian because I think at that time that was the only sort of label I could find that I fitted into but I didn't know that I was like trans* at all. I hid it for quite a while because I didn't know anyone else who identified as being gay until it must have been I was about 17. My best friend, he was a gay guy and he came out and it was just me and him and we just used to like hang around. Getting to 18 that's when I started going out as well and my friendship group grew and I had lots more gay and lesbian friends to hang around with.

I used to wear jeans and shirts, my hair was just cropped short but I didn't wear make-up or nothing like that, very boyish, bit similar to how I am now really nothing has really changed. My hairs gone a bit shorter and I've got a bit more facial hair I suppose.

I moved to Manchester when I was 18 and all my mates were lesbians. I always felt like a bit of an outsider looking in, even though I was supposed to be part of this group but I never felt the same, it always felt like something didn't fit right. I just didn't feel like a lesbian, I don't know how to explain it, it was strange but I knew there was something else to it. It was only when I was about 21, 22, I started

1974

The first National Transvestite and Transsexual Conference held at the University of Leeds.

1975

The Manchester transvestite and transsexual local support group is formed. It is followed by the London and then Leeds group.

A psychiatrist in Manchester refuses hormone therapy to Stephen Whittle, saying that "he would never make it as a man".

realising people do transition, I'd never heard of it before in my life and I came across someone who was female to male and it blew my mind completely. It didn't make me want to transition, it scared me a bit, it made me go a bit withdrawn and I started drinking a lot just trying not to think about it because I didn't really want to see myself as something different.

“I came across someone who was female to male and it blew my mind.”

I was in Manchester, I was in uni and things started going downhill because I just felt very out of place. I started getting anxiety because of it. I couldn't even go into uni. I just knew I had to do something about it so I dropped out, came back home, started researching loads about it. Before I threw myself into anything, I did identify, I did see myself as transgender, I just kept researching. I told my mum eventually - this was last year - and she just took me straight to the GP who started sorting it out.

TRACEY

My name is Tracey Nicola Dyson I was born in 1941. My father was in the RAF and I grew up in Manchester and Rossendale.

I always envied my sister's lifestyle, even from a small age. I couldn't understand why I couldn't play with her and her friends. My father, being an ex-serviceman and decorated for bravery during the war, didn't want to know that his son wanted to be a girl, I soon realised that and I kept that low key. My sister and myself were both physically similar sizes although she's 18 months younger. I thought this was very brave at the time. I tried on some of her clothes. I would only be about 5 maybe 6 at this stage and it felt great. I was absolutely terrified of my father finding out or my mother. In those days we didn't have charity shops we had jumble sales. I always volunteered to take the stuff to the venue, church whatever, but not all of it arrived! How I got away with what I did for as long as I did I will never know. I must have been very good at concealing things. That continued through my life.

I had a feeling that my mother knew that something wasn't right. I can't remember exactly how she phrased it but said something to the effect 'I think you would have made a better girl than boy.' I was a bit terrified and I thought she'd latched on, but she didn't.

1979

Ex-major in the British Indian Army and professional sculptor, transsexual woman Judy Couzins forms the first national support group, the Self Help Association for Transsexuals. It becomes the Gender Dysphoria Trust in 1989, and later the Gender Trust.

1980

'A Change of Sex' is broadcast on BBC television. Following the gender reassignment of Julia Grant, it is the first true film about gender reassignment on popular television.

Then my sister went down to college in London. I regularly visited down there and that's when I realised I wasn't the only person in the world that did this. I went round Soho and places and they were very coarse, what we'd call drag queens and drag kings these days. It would be the early 60's. I had an old car. I was able then to get dressed and go out at night on my own I felt great. And then I got married.

“My father, being an ex-serviceman and decorated during the war, didn't want to know that his son wanted to be a girl.”

I met Sue, she's a very attractive woman and she had stunning legs... very tall, slim, and athletic, she was a very good tennis player and I thought 'Put it all behind you, grow up.' I realise now that Sue was the person I always wanted to be which is a bit cruel really. She went off on these tournaments and left a whole wardrobe of clothes and I slipped up. I put one of her favourite dresses back in the wrong place. She questioned me about it and she called me some rude words. That was the beginning of the end of that marriage. We went our separate ways.

I became an engineer, I worked for Rolls Royce in Barnoldswick making jet engines. I did my apprenticeship and then I went in the drawing office. When I joined the company in 1957 there were a lot of women because they were left over from the war. We didn't have computers everything we did we had to calculate on slide rules and log tables, but all our mathematicians were women. We had lady foremen. Before that when Dad was in the RAF he said some of these women that flew these planes were very brave. So all this was building up to realise that women weren't just tied to the kitchen sink.

I was getting bolder and able to go out in my own car. I was able to afford proper dresses and things. As time was going on people were actually seeing me but they didn't recognise me.

1980 -
1982

Male homosexuality was decriminalised in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

1981

News of the World out's Caroline Cossey (the model Tula) with the headline 'James Bond Girl Was a Boy.'

FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS

DAN

I told my mum eventually, this was last year, and she just took me straight to the GP who started sorting it out. She's pretty cool like when I came out as gay she's never really had an issue she's been really supportive of whatever we do. We are a very open family. Me and my brother and sister can talk about anything and its fine so that's really nice. I was a bit worried at first with what her reaction would be but she went 'Oh, OK, let's go and sort it out.'

JASMINE

I got kicked out when I was 17. I worked full-time in a slaughterhouse. I just wouldn't do as they wanted any more basically. They was coming into my bedroom, my father came in there and he found things like tights and knickers and women's clothes and stuff and he went absolute nuts and that was really the final straw because I was still fighting against them all the time. 'I'm not a boy, I was born as a girl and you've changed me into a boy but the fact is you can't stop the way that I'm feeling inside, the way that I should be.'

TRACEY

I thought, 'I've got to tell Rita' and that's the hardest thing I've ever done. Now in all fairness to her she said 'Well I can't live with you'. She said she was worried about being classed as a lesbian. That's what she was worried about because she had had a couple of ladies at work and they were lesbians and you know all the tittle tattle that goes on and she said 'I'm not going down that road'. So I said 'Well we'll get split up' but she said 'What will the children say?' By this time they're young adults. So I said 'I don't think there will be any problems' and James was a bit reluctant for a week or two then he said 'Oh well thats life' and they've all been absolutely marvellous. We all get on really well together, Rita's met another guy and he's a really nice guy and I'm really pleased for her and he's accepted me as well. We got married in 1984 and I told her about 4 years ago. So it was quite a long time.

HEATHER

I've made the right decisions. Initially there was that big hole, that big black pit of despair. Things are coming right, if my daughter doesn't want to speak to me that's fine. My son's here for me and my granddaughter. My wife still speaks to me or my ex-wife. I've still got my friends, I've got my cats, they're my family.

1986

April marries Jeffrey West in the USA.

Rees v UK, Mark Rees loses his case for recognition at the European Court of Human Rights – but the Government agree to change the title on passports from 'Miss' Mark Rees to Mr Mark Rees.

1988

Clause 28 is introduced preventing local authorities from 'promoting' homosexuality and restricting education and support for young people and in particular LGBT people.

SALLY

It was about six months later I told my parents and it was done via a letter... I could phone them up but I didn't know if I could face that because it was going to be a difficult conversation. I knew instantly when they had opened it... I got a phone call off my father who started quite calmly saying 'Did you send us a letter?' He then proceeded to read out the letter to me getting steadily angrier and angrier and by the time he got to the end he said, 'Is all this true?'... and he went off into a tirade saying it was unnatural... imagine how the grandparents would react. Then he brought up God... and then he got quiet and said that if I ever spoke to him again he would punch me in the face.

STEPHEN

Anyway the church had written to us saying that if we'd like to get married they would like it if we got married at the church. When that offer is made to you, under the circumstances we felt we couldn't really disappoint them. We had 180 people out into the street, every nook and cranny was filled with people. The big thing for me was when Sarah walked in that church she looked absolutely beautiful and she had the biggest smile on her face I have ever, ever seen, absolutely ear to ear. She was smiling so much it was like there was a golden aura, it sounds like such romantic nonsense, she looked absolutely astonishing! It suddenly struck me, we'd been doing this campaigning about people like me but it was about people like her and the children as well. It was everybody who loved people like me, who had relationships with people like me.

EM

My birth mother sort of understands. On my birthday card she identifies both genders, so fair play she's trying, but she tends to use the female pronoun all the time. I get that because she's had 24 years of having a girl, ok quite an unusual girl, who used to take the heads off dolls and bury them in the back garden and have a police car and fight with the lads and play rugby. She just had a girl and that was it and she had all the problems a girl had with puberty and stuff. She tries to understand but she never will fully.

ELEN

Both my sons have met me as Elen, my youngest son he's really relaxed about it. He said, 'Can I come up and stay for a week before christmas?' I said, 'I'm going out with the church to a carol concert in Manchester. He said 'Oh could I come along?' I said 'I'm going as Elen' and he said 'Ok'. That's when he first met Jenny Anne. He said, 'Oh you've got some lovely friends there'. I said to him when I got home 'How did you feel going out with me as a woman?' He said 'Well it seemed a bit weird at first but I got used to it'. That was it. He and his fiancé came to our wedding, he sort of played the best man role which I thought was great.

1989

The UK's FTM Network for trans* men is founded.

1990

April begins a campaign to have her true gender recognised in law.

Caroline Cossey loses her bid to win the right to legal recognition at the European Court of Human Rights.

SALLY

My name's Sally Higginson, I was born 14th of August 1991 in a barn in the hamlet of Nash in Worcestershire.

My father was and still is a financial advisor and inventor and my mother kind of assists him. My early childhood was full of running round the fields with my dogs, very rustic upbringing, rural to the core. Being born in a barn says it all and I do leave doors open all the time. Quite a lot of going out on pheasant shoots, duck shoots, partridge shoots. Fox hunting was a big thing, especially around Christmas time. I had a flat cap from a very young age and Barbour coat and I actually trained a gun dog.

I spent most of my first fifteen years embracing it. I felt slightly different but I did enjoy being that British person, the atmosphere, although you've got the stereotype of prim and proper it really wasn't like that because you're living in the countryside, people are really down to earth. It wasn't an unhappy childhood at first. There was a lot of emphasis on good physical labour. I spent a few years when I was about 13 helping out on a farm with my brother. I learnt all my swear words from him in one afternoon when he was trying to back up a trailer. He's 12 years older than me so he was very much a guiding influence for most of my early years. So it was quite a masculine upbringing, which, because I didn't really know anything else, I emulated. My sisters were both quite masculine as well. In the end I think I'm the most feminine one out of all four of us.

I was bullied all the way through primary school and almost all the way through high school. Once Year 10 hit I'd grown about a foot in the summer and so I went from being sort of average height to being taller than almost everybody in the school and then it kind of stopped. Also they'd heard that I'd been learning Taekwondo and I wasn't viewed as so much of a target anymore.

Because I didn't have access to many sources of information apart from the local library I couldn't figure out why I didn't seem to be enjoying puberty quite as much as everyone else. It wasn't until I saved up and bought my own laptop at the age of 16 that I started to find... 'Oh this is what I am! That makes sense. Damn I wish I'd had the internet sooner!'

A couple of weeks after I got my laptop I was going through a down patch emotionally and I just started searching for a few things. One of the things I searched for was 'confused about my gender' and that brought up quite a lot of things. I found the Wikipedia page on transsexualism and I read that and I read it again, then I followed some links and I read those. I spent about a whole day just reading links upon links and I've been doing it ever since just to keep on track with how many different branches of the transgender umbrella there are. And it was really from that point I started thinking about all the terms and thinking about which one I associated myself with more and it wasn't until nearly the beginning of my second year at university that I decided how I identified and what I needed to do from there.

1992

Press For Change is founded after 6 transsexual people meet with Alex Carlile, Liberal MP at the House of Commons.

1994

The House of Lords votes to reduce the age of consent for gay men to 18.

JENNY-ANNE

My name is Jenny-Anne Bishop, I am a transsexual woman.

I was born in Surrey in April 1946 immediately after the end of the war. My father at the time was a training pilot in the RAF and my mother, before she became pregnant with me, worked for the Ministry of Transport. Then when my father came out of the air force he went back to being an accountant. Unfortunately both of my parents are now dead, my dad died in 1996 and my mother in 2005 and it was really only after they passed away that I could contemplate transitioning full-time. Although they knew about me and indeed they sent me to see psychiatrists twice - once when I was 6 and once when I was in my twenties - my mum persuaded me to go and see the right psychiatrist, they wouldn't accept what the people said. The second time I went to a gender identity clinic, the very early one run by John Randall who was the person I saw and he said I was probably transsexual and my mum said 'No. He would have told you you're wicked and you mustn't do this'. So my parents were certainly not ones who were going to back me.

Although I wasn't brought up, for me, in the right gender I had quite a happy childhood. But I always liked to play with the girls so I was always with my sister and her friends and I liked to dress as a girl when I could but that wasn't really

allowed and it's why my parents sent me to see the school psychiatrist at 6. He just said 'It's just a child exploring, don't worry about it'. In fact there were times when I wore my mum's clothes to school because I was practising for the woman I was going to grow up and be and I had this silly idea in my mind that one morning I'd wake up and I'd be exactly like my sister because my childish mind said girls were just castrated boys.

All of my life I have felt that I was in the wrong gender. As long as I can remember I wanted to present as a girl rather than as a boy. In the late 40's and early 50's that was definitely not behaviour that anybody would countenance. So after a bit I learnt that I did that when everybody was out the house. My mum would often be out doing charitable work, she didn't work after me and my sister were born and my sister would perhaps be out playing or at school and I'd borrow their clothes and dress at home and spend a bit of time as myself and then I had to rush and put it all away.

Puberty was very difficult, you are hoping your body is going to start feminising and it all goes the wrong way and you just have to cope. We used to play rugby and you had to have a shower after rugby and I didn't want to be in the showers with everybody else so I took the option of cross country running. It meant I could come back before

1995

The European Court of Justice (P v S & Cornwall County Council) holds that people intending to undergo, undergoing, or who have undergone gender reassignment have protection from discrimination in employment and vocation training.

1996

Channel 4 screens a two-part film in a series entitled 'The Decision'. The film concerns three British female-to-male transsexual people visiting the Gender Clinic at the Free University of Amsterdam. 12 year old Fred, a gender variant adolescent is the star of the show (he is now a doctor).

anybody else, use the showers and get dressed before anybody saw me because I was ashamed of my body, it wasn't the right body.

I went to City University in London, I had access to all sorts of libraries and I found out about people like Kinsey, Masters and Johnson and I started thinking 'Well I'm not the only one.' Then I discovered a nice little shop in Islington very close to where my accommodation was and that was called Pauline Cutler's and she did large high-heeled shoes for drag artists and cross-dressers.

When I finished at university I was already engaged to the person who became my wife and I'd been told and I'd read lots of times 'Don't discuss it with your fiancé because it might put her off' and 'When you get married it will all go away and it won't be an issue.'

"When you get married it will all go away and it wont be an issue."

In between getting married and my daughter coming along we managed to buy a house out in Hampshire and my daughter was born in June 1970. At that point I had told my wife because of course we were living together and

I'm thinking, 'It's not going away. I want to be a woman around here' and when we knew we were going to start a family I had what I would see now as quite maternal feelings. She was reasonably happy for me to dress in the evenings at home and she encouraged me to, as she put it, 'Do it properly.' So she helped me find a nice wig to wear, she was a dressmaker so she could make my clothes fit very well and she was quite good at styling them. I think initially my wife thought it was just a nice game we were playing because we went out a few times as girls together. Then she got to a point and I think the key question she asked me was - did I want to be buried as Jenny Anne? As quick as a flash I said 'Yes of course, that's who I am.' I think that was the point that she realised that I was transsexual and that at some point I might transition. I said to her 'No I'm not going to do that while I'm still with you and the children, that's my responsibility and I won't transition, I won't take hormones or have surgery until we are no longer together. I don't want that to happen so if you can tolerate me cross dressing my compromise is I won't leave you.' But I don't think she believed it because she could see how important being me was and I think she saw how much happier I was when I was being more feminine.

1997

X,Y & Z v. United Kingdom. European Court of Human Rights recognises the partner (Y) of trans* man (X) and her children by donor insemination (Z's 1-4) as being his family.

Trans* people march in London's first LGBT & T Pride. Trans* activists from Press For Change present 10,000 signature petition at Downing Street and march to Parliament.

1998

Transsexual Hayley Patterson (née Harold Patterson), acted by actress Julie Hesmondhalgh first appears on Coronation Street.

Krystyna Sheffield and Rachel Horsham lose their bid to win the right to legal recognition at the European Court of Human Rights.

JOEY

I was born 1975 at RAF Cosford which was the nearest hospital, my dad was a chartered accountant, my mum a hairdresser.

I have a sister who is 3 years younger and my dad always says that he has one daughter and he has me. I was very much the boy of the family and we were very gendered in the way that we grew up and our personalities. I would always play rough and tumble with my dad, my sister was very much into her Barbie's and there I was with my Action Men - not fitting in with the girls and not fitting in with the boys, knowing I was a bit different.

I kind of tried to have boyfriends and went through so many different kinds thinking it was just the type of boy that I needed to find but I remember that now as being almost like a drag performance in that I realised that this was what I was supposed to do.

Then a very good friend of mine came out to me and later on told me that they were in love with me which I hadn't even considered, even though looking back there were loads of crushes that I'd had on girls. Coming out I slowly became less feminine and realised that lots of the guys in the college didn't like that very much and we got things thrown at us, lots of verbal abuse and then I became very politicised and went to uni.

I guess I went out with older butches a lot when I was younger because I was more feminine and then as I became more androgynous then I started to go out with more androgynous people. So this relationality of gender and sexuality grew into me becoming more masculine and my partners became more feminine.

Not being particularly butch, being more boyish I was completely read as a boy, I continually got challenged in the Women's (toilets) and found all kinds of entertaining comeback lines and did a show about that. I guess I always wanted to be a performer, actor. I did a theatre degree and there weren't any parts for me as an actor so I started to make my own theatre.

I got a scholarship to do an MA in gender and education and started to get really into the trans* stuff. Finishing that, I turned down my PHD funding and moved to Manchester and toured my first one person show about female masculinity. I was very politically non-medicalised, non-surgically trans*.

I knew I would never want to lose my androgynous, boyishness so I knew that there'd come a time when I would take a little bit of testosterone and I might have chest surgery but that would be further down the line. But I had a lot of joy of being in the middle and it was really political for me.

2003

The European Court on Human Rights holds in the cases of Goodwin and I v United Kingdom that transsexual people must be given legal recognition in their new gender and the right to marry.

Section 28 of the Local Government Act 2000 is repealed.

2004

Following the decision in Goodwin and I v United Kingdom [2002] the Gender Recognition Act is passed, allowing transsexual people to change their legal gender and get married from 2005.

The Civil Partnership Bill is introduced giving lesbian and gay people similar rights to marriage.

I also battled with taking on male privilege massively. I have only taken testosterone for 2 years because I passed so well and I'm still coming to terms with the fact that I now pass. I was always hit on by gay men anyway but it's much worse now. It's been interesting the lesbian community's reaction to me at 'women only' events and the terminologies that they've now been changing and using to include me. There will be a massive influx of trans* people coming through and lesbians' awareness will shift and change.

"I guess I'm very proud of being a female man."

I guess I'm very proud of being a female man. My discourse and performance and political perspective often is at odds with those people who feel like they've spent all of their life trying to be a 'real' man or a 'real' woman. My whole purpose is to break down those binaries and I'm really interested in the way trans* identity has been westernised and medicalised and the hijras and two spirited people and the indigenous cultures that have always worshipped people in the middle as shamans. It's now interesting that lesbian, gay and trans* people are almost excluded from religion when we were essentially seen as gifted beings.

LYNETTE

My male name is John and my female name is Lynette and I'm 64.

I was born in Liverpool just off Scotland Road in 1948. My mum was a sort of cleaning lady, she had menial jobs all her life. My dad was a labourer type. My mum's 90 now, she's still alive and my dad passed away 15 years ago.

I went to St Johns in Kirkdale, the church is still there, I'm a Roman Catholic. It was a tough school because the time I remember going there, there was nuns teaching us and they were pretty tough, they used to drag you all over the place. It wasn't nice. I remember getting smacked and everything. Then we moved up to Fazakerley and that's where my house is at the moment. I went to St Philomena's. I think it was a happy time. I didn't realise what I was until later on. I had a normal boy childhood, I liked trains and I liked motor cars like boys do. Dolls never interested me. We weren't well off, we were quite on the breadline, my mum battled to bring us up. We didn't have a lot of money to spare ..just a basic upbringing in a council estate. I left school in 1965. I went to work in a cake factory, Sayers, in Liverpool. I enjoyed it... gosh cream cakes! I didn't have any prospects. I was there about over a year and I went with this driver and I got quite friendly with him and he said to me, 'Are you going to be a van lad all your

2005

April is legally recognised as female and issued with new birth certificate.

Section 146 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 - courts may impose tougher sentences for offences aggravated by victim's sexuality or disability. The Gender Recognition Act 2004 enables trans* people to gain legal recognition in their new gender. Married trans* people must divorce first and religious organisations may refuse to marry them. Sterilisation or gender reassignment surgery is not required. The first Gender Recognition certificates issued. Same sex and trans* couples gain equal adoption rights - Adoption & Children Act 2002. The national trans* celebration Sparkle founded in Manchester.

life? A friend of mine runs a plumbing business, I'll talk to him and see if I can get you an interview.' So I started working as a plumber in 1965. I served my time with this company for 4 years.

From about 12, 13, I started experiencing clothes, like putting bras on, they were big but I experienced that. I remember when I was about 17 I was off work for a time so no one was in the house and my sister's clothes were there and I used to wear them. I think that's really how it began. I felt like, well it was amazing the sensation. Whether something triggered off in my brain I don't know but I can still remember that time.

“If my wife went out I'd wear her clothes. I didn't open up to her. I didn't tell her these things.”

Anyway I served my time and then I went to work a season in Newquay and I met my first wife. She was a chambermaid and I was a kitchen porter so we met and got to know each other and we got friendly after the season ended. She lived in Manchester and I used to go and see her. She fell pregnant with my eldest one so - I'll

be honest with you, I didn't really want to get married but I got married.

Then my sister, my twin, she went to South Africa with friends and she wrote to me and said, 'Why don't you come over to South Africa?' So we went off to South Africa, we bought a house and we stayed for a while. We had 2 more kids, so I had 3 children, 3 boys, they all went off to England in the early 70's for a holiday, about '74, '75, and I was by myself in the house. I must have had a few drinks, I just started wearing her clothes and that was it. It all came back to me, I just felt so fantastic.

If my wife went out I'd wear her clothes. I didn't open up to her, I didn't tell her these things. If she went out I was dressed up in her clothes. She had a lovely figure, she was a very smart dresser my first wife. When she came back and we were having a meal I felt guilty, like I'd been going out with another woman or cheating on her. Strangest feeling ever. I continued to wear her clothes – it's a double life.

2007

The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007 provides protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, when accessing housing, goods, services and facilities.

2008

The Sex Discrimination (Amendment of Legislation) Regulations provides protection from discrimination on the basis of gender reassignment, when accessing housing, goods, services and facilities.

MOVING FORWARD

HEATHER

I refer to my past as my twin brother who's gone to live in Australia. One of the ladies I work with in Citizen's Advice is quite high up in Lancashire Federation of WI's so I asked about joining. She said, 'What do you want me to tell them?' I said 'Well you can tell the committee a bit about my background' but she didn't go into lots of depth. I went to my first meeting and it was like going home, I was accepted with open arms. The WI is a fantastic organisation, they welcome every woman.

CATHERINE

I think you are very lucky as a trans* person if you can get through this whole journey relatively unscathed. Either in terms of your physical health, your mental health, your standard of living, your quality of life, your set of relationships, where you live, what community you're a part of, whether you still have a family that wants you to be part of it or not.

JOEY

I'm now in a position where I've worked on me and I've had support and I support others. It's been a hell of a long journey. I'm nowhere near reaching an end point, that's always going to change. I'm continually up and down and all over the place and I don't want it any other way because I'm a person of extremes. I want all of it. How do I pull all of these different, incredible, diverse, headspaces and personas inside of me to make a unified 'I' at any given point in time? 'Let everything happen to you' it's Rilke 'beauty and terror, just keep going, no feeling is final.' So it goes on. Challenging myself to be everything I can be at any given point is part of transitioning continually on every level.

DAN

I think it's important that visibility and awareness of trans* people is made accessible and people understand it better. Hopefully work like this will grow and grow and people will lose transphobic views because it will be part of everyday life and not something that's out of the blue or taboo to speak about. Hopefully more and more people can get involved and spread the word that we are out there, we are not nobody.

2010

The Equality Act is introduced banning unfair treatment of people because of protected characteristics such as gender reassignment and sexuality.

The Gender Identity Clinic at West London Mental Health Trust (formerly the Charing Cross Clinic) reports seeing 500 new cases each year.

2012

April is awarded an MBE in Birthday Honours List for services to the transgender community.

SISTER MARIA RENATE

I am an intersex woman but I've transitioned so I'm transitioned. We use the word trans* because it covers a multitude but whatever happens if you have surgery you have transitioned. I have a friend who is equally intersex who is now female to male, his words are, 'I am a man with a trans* history.' I'm a woman with a trans* history. I don't live in a transitional state I have actually transitioned, I am one person, not two anymore, but because of my trans* history that keeps me where I am with everybody else. We don't have to wear it as a badge, we don't throw it in everybody's face, we say we have a trans* history and it's said to enable people. It's not said as a sensationalist thing.

GLORIA

One week I had to spend the whole week waiting for deliveries and workmen and I was 'dressed' all the time. When Friday came I got cabin fever, I thought 'I don't care who sees me' I just walked out that door. I went into Debenhams and bought tights, coming out of there and this make-up demo girl asked, 'Would you like a make-over madam?' - just like that. I thought 'I've done it, I'm there!' Well I'd got some shopping to do so I bought a bottle of champagne, come home and between then, this was Friday to Saturday, opened the champagne, drank it. Telephone, computer, told everybody, friends, family, old workmates, that was it. Since then I haven't looked back.

SALLY

In the future, the far flung future, I'm still not entirely sure what I want to do... something high paying because money is useful. I'm not sure that I want to do anything related to my old degree because it's ridiculously difficult to get a job in zoology. I was thinking of something more achievable, a sort of pipedream is to become a pilot, I don't know why I like heights, I haven't been on planes much but each time I did fly I always enjoyed it.

LYNETTE

I wanted to go and volunteer, I wanted to show people who I am and let them accept me. Sometimes they look at you and I'm sure some people think I'm off another planet, then they get to know you and get to know who you are. I think we should go into schools and teach kids 'cos I say to people 'You've got your kids, one day they'll come along and say 'Mum, I'm thinking different.' One day it might hit them, it's a shock. We are all different.

SAM

Transitioning changed my life completely, absolutely changed my life. Best thing I could have done.

2013

The Marriage (Same Sex Couples Act) 2013 allows transsexual people to remain married to their spouses when obtaining legal recognition of their new gender.



I think initially April was for me a reference point at a very young age, when there was no one else around that I'd heard of. I know, because I've talked to her, that no one chooses to be a reference point for others. It happens because you are one of the early few who go through this process, whose lives are highlighted by the media. But in doing what she did, or what other people did to her by splashing her story all over the newspapers, I became aware at the age of 7 of who I was and who I wanted to be. Without that I could have carried on for years in ignorance and in a lot of confusion and probably in an increasing

amount of pain. She's managed to go through her life with grace and dignity and charm, with certain humility and with a sense of humour. She is the storyteller of her own life, she is her own biographer. I think this is how people become iconic, because they are able to step beyond the grimness and the difficulties and the social exclusion that are inevitably part of being transgendered. She is undeniably beautiful of course, which we are all dreadfully jealous of. Having met her, she's just a lovely person.

CATHERINE

We would like to thank all the participants who have shared their lives and stories with us in interviews or by taking part in workshops. We are indebted to Professor Stephen Whittle OBE for his invaluable assistance in drawing up the social and legislative timeline and to Jenny-Anne Bishop and Elen Heart for their advice and support throughout the project.

Our Story Liverpool

Our Story Liverpool is a sister project of homotopia. Developed and managed by Louise Muddle and Bev Ayre, it is an oral history project which seeks to uncover, record and present the hidden histories of Liverpool's marginalised communities. Contact us at info@ourstoryliverpool.co.uk

homotopia

Homotopia is an arts and social justice organisation that draws on the LGBT experience to unite and regenerate communities through the production, promotion and commissioning of great art, heritage and culture for everyone. In November 2013, the Homotopia Festival will be celebrating its 10th anniversary with events staged across Liverpool.

For more information: www.homotopia.net and www.aprilashley.org.uk

Homotopia is funded by:



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Merseyside Police continues to support Homotopia as part of their ongoing commitment to challenging prejudice and reducing Hate Crime. A Hate Crime is any crime which is perceived by the victim or any person as being motivated by hate. Hate Crime can affect Trans* people and also Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Black and Racial Minorities, Disabled and Religious individuals and groups. If you believe you have been the victim of a Hate Crime or know of someone who has or if you would like to talk to someone in confidence regarding Hate Crime contact Merseyside Police on **0151 709 6010** and ask for your nearest SIGMA Unit or contact Merseyside Police Gay and Lesbian Support Network on **0776 462 1430**.