

# Spilling The Tea On Our History!

**Date and Time:**

**Friday 23rd February 2023 at 6:30 pm to 8 pm**

**Location: Stockport Central Library**

**Description:**

**A relaxed discussion about LGBTQ+ history. Light refreshments will be available.**



Free Ticket here



**Laurence Michael Dillon**

Laurence Michael Dillon was born in 1915 in Kensington, UK.

Dillon was educated at Brampton Down School, then at St Anne's College, Oxford, a women's college. Dillon was president of the Oxford University Women's Boat Club and won a blue for rowing, competing in the Women's Boat Race in 1935 and 1936. After graduating he took a job at a research laboratory in Bristol.

In 1939, he sought treatment from George Foss, who had been experimenting with testosterone to treat excessive menstrual bleeding; at the time, the hormone's masculinizing effects were poorly understood. Foss provided Dillon with testosterone pills but insisted that Dillon consult a psychiatrist first, and the psychiatrist he consulted gossiped about Dillon's desire to express a male gender identity, resulting in the story

becoming widely known. Dillon left and took a job elsewhere in the country at a garage. The hormones soon made it possible for him to pass as male, and eventually the garage manager insisted that other employees refer to Dillon as "he" in order to avoid confusing customers. Dillon was promoted to recovery-vehicle driver and doubled as a fire watcher during the Blitz.

Dillon suffered from hypoglycemia, and twice injured his head in falls when he passed out from low blood sugar. While in the Bristol Royal Infirmary recovering from the second of these attacks, he came to the attention of one of the world's few practitioners of plastic surgery. The surgeon performed a double mastectomy, provided Dillon with a doctor's note that enabled him to change his birth certificate, and put him in contact with the pioneering plastic surgeon Harold Gillies.

He officially became Laurence Michael Dillon in 1944 when the birth certificate was amended; this meant that he was now heir presumptive to the baronetcy belonging to part of his family. Dillon was one of the

few transgender people able legally to change his identity at this time.

Gillies performed at least thirteen surgeries on Dillon between 1946 and 1949. He officially diagnosed Dillon with acute hypospadias in order to conceal that he was performing sex-reassignment surgery. Dillon, still a medical student at Trinity, blamed war injuries when infections caused a temporary limp.

In 1946 Dillon published *Self: A Study in Ethics and Endocrinology*.

*Self* brought him to the attention of Roberta Cowell, on whom he would perform an operation to help her become the first British trans woman to receive male-to-female sex reassignment surgery.

Dillon qualified as a physician in 1951 and initially worked in a Dublin hospital. He then spent the six years at sea as a naval surgeon for P&O and the China Navigation Company.

Dillon died in 1962 in India where he had moved to escape press attention after his story became more widely known in 1958.