

Homosexual Relations and the Law in Britain from the Sexual Offences Act 1967 to the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013



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Introduction:

Having received its Royal Assent on 17 July 2013, the first marriages of same-sex couples will take place by Summer 2014. As this is a very recent development in LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) equality, the passing of the bill suggests that though this is a positive step forward, there is still a way to go until full equality, if possible, can be achieved.

Aims & Objectives:

- To undertake research into homosexual relations in terms of legal processes and societal attitudes, through use of a funded visit to the Hall-Carpenter Archives, housed at the London School of Economics. The Hall-Carpenter Archives, founded in 1980 and named after Marguerite Radclyffe Hall and Edward Carpenter, is the United Kingdom's national lesbian, gay and bisexual archive.
- The time period of my research aimed to begin with the Sexual Offences Act 1967 and concluding with the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013.
- To provide a background to homosexuality within the United Kingdom including knowledge of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885 and Wolfenden Report 1957.
- Include various areas within my research including key legal processes, events and individuals, resistance to reform and international context.



STAND BY GAY RIGHTS



Conclusions:

- Homosexuality was made punishable by death in the Buggery Act 1533 with the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1855 tightening the law on homosexual relations.
- Wolfenden Report 1957 recommended 'homosexual behaviour between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offence'. These recommendations were put into practice a decade later with the backbench bill, Sexual Offences Act 1967 partially decriminalising homosexuality.
- Section 28 of the Local Government Act introduced 1988 under Margaret Thatcher stating homosexuality should not be promoted. Repealed by Blair in 2003. Led to rise in groups such as Stonewall.
- Age of consent finally became equal for all in 2000.
- UK Government published Civil Partnership Bill, with the first partnerships taking place on 21 December 2005.
- The Government's Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill receives Queen's approval July 2013, facing strident opposition throughout legal process.

'[Thatcher] is privatising homosexuality. Well I for one intend to take out shares.' -Ian McKellen on Section 28

