

LGBTQ+ History Month



Alan Turing

Alan Turing was a gifted mathematician and computer scientist whose work was so influential that he is considered by many to be the father of modern computing.

During World War 2 he worked in Bletchley Park, which then housed Britain's codebreaking centre. His work there contributed to many allied forces victories, as he developed several techniques used to speed up codebreaking. Most famously he worked on breaking the Enigma Code used by Nazi Germany to secure their messages.

After WW2, Alan's contributions to science and computing continued, designing early digital computers and writing papers that would be the foundation for artificial intelligence.

Alan's personal life was troubled however. In 1952 he was convicted of "gross indecency", after a police investigation into a burglary at Alan's home revealed that he had a sexual relationship with a man. Rather than go to prison he was given the option of medical treatment to reduce his libido. He was subjected to hormone injections that caused him to develop breast tissue, and caused impotence. As a result of his conviction, he was no longer allowed to work with the government, or travel to the USA.

In 1954, Alan died of cyanide poisoning. It is commonly thought that he took his own life, though there is some debate about a possible accident.

After a long campaign by activists and politicians, Alan Turing was eventually pardoned in 2013, with a subsequent Alan Turing Law that would go on to see over 75 000 men pardoned for similar historic, and often posthumous offenses.

A hero, a genius, an innovator, and in the long run, a pivotal figure in getting justice for those who suffered under homophobic laws in the UK.