

**THE BRITISH ARMY:**

# LGBTQ+ VOICES



**Assembly**

# WHAT CONNECTS THESE PEOPLE?



**Ethel Mary Smyth**

Suffragette, composer,  
British Red Cross  
radiographer



**Edward Brittain**

Soldier awarded  
the Military Cross



**Wilfred Owen**

Poet and soldier



**Alan Turing**

Mathematician, computer  
scientist, code breaker



**Roberta Cowell**

Fighter pilot



**Dudley Cave**

Soldier, prisoner of war  
and activist

They all made significant contributions to World War One and World War Two.

# WHAT CONNECTS THESE PEOPLE?

Ethel Mary Smyth

Edward Brittain

Wilfred Owen

Alan Turing

Roberta Cowell

Dudley Cave



Also, they are all what would today be considered part of the LGBTQ+ community.

- What does LGBTQ+ stand for?
- Are you surprised at this second connection? If so, why?
- Challenge: What do you know about the progress pride flag?

**Progress Pride Flag!** The traditional rainbow pride flag, used to represent the lesbian and gay community, was redesigned in 2018 to increase inclusion. The black and brown stripes represent people within the community who might have also been excluded because of their race and the pink/white/blue represents the transgender community.

# LGBTQ+ VOICES



**Ethel Mary Smyth**

- A composer and a suffragette.
- Served with the British Red Cross in WWI.
- Made a Dame for her services to music.



**Edward Brittain**

- WWI soldier awarded the Military Cross in 1916.
- Warned by his commander to 'be more cautious' about his relationships.
- Reported to have died in action in 1918.

LGBTQ+ people were there and contributing in WWI/II and in all periods of history, although many had to keep this part of their identity secret.

## LGBTQ+ VOICES



**Wilfred Owen**

- Military Cross winner killed just before WWI's end.
- One of Britain's most famous war poets.
- Had a romance with fellow poet Siegfried Sassoon: 'I was always a mad comet but you have fixed me'.



**Dudley Cave**

- WWII soldier and Japanese Prisoner of War (POW).
- Described how drag artists 'helped lift the men's spirits' in WWII.
- Post war he was angered by the reinforced ban on gay service people in the Forces.

## LGBTQ+ VOICES



**Roberta Cowell**

- A competitive racing driver.
- Pilot and German POW during WWII.
- Transitioned from male to female in 1950. She was happy with the result, but was forced to stop racing.



**Alan Turing**

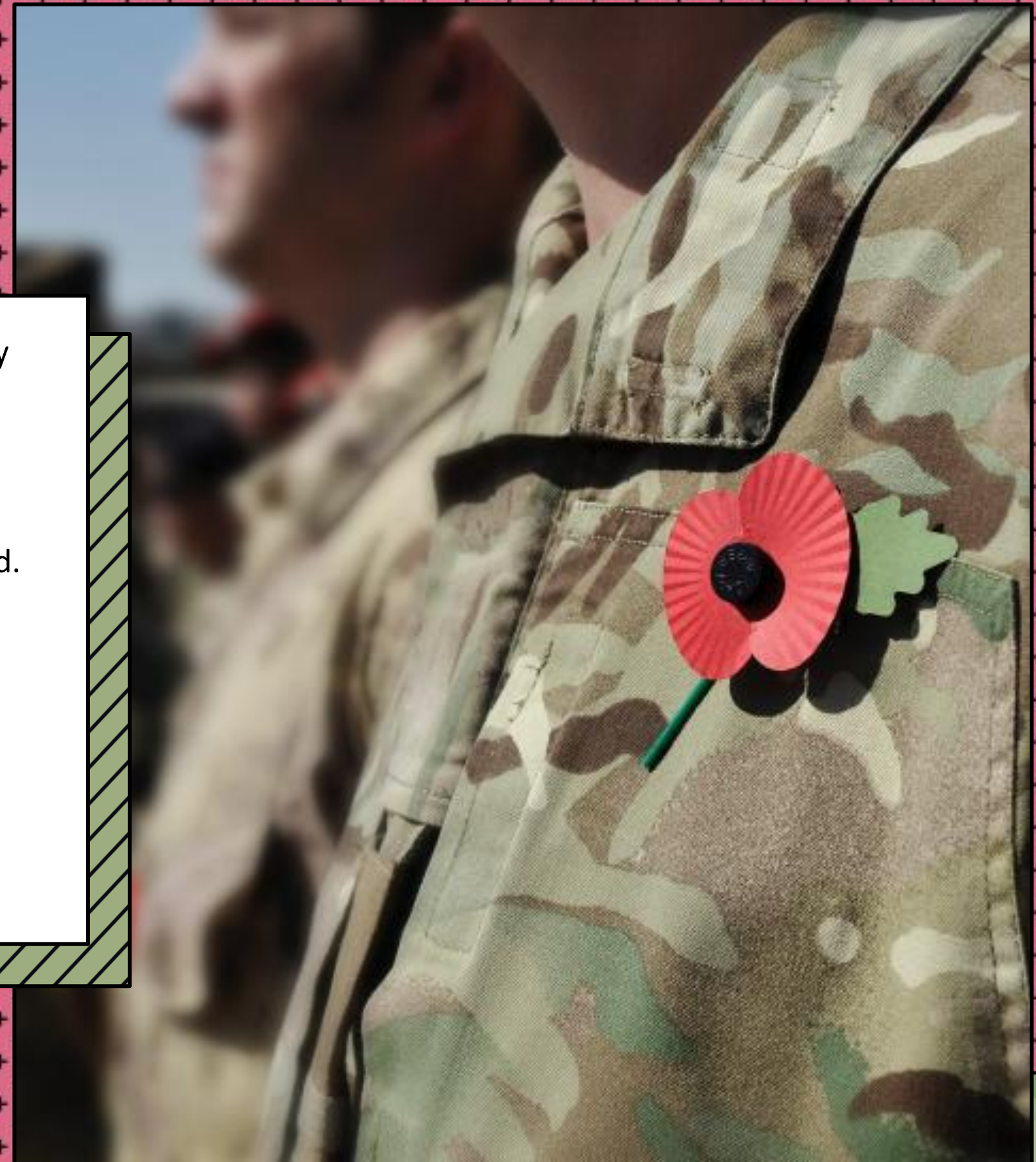
- Built a codebreaking machine which helped end WWII.
- Prosecuted for his relationship with another man. He died by suicide in 1954.
- Received a government apology in 2009 and a royal pardon in 2013.

## LGBTQ+ IN THE PAST

- One important challenge that all six of these people faced was that they weren't able to be themselves.
- Laws and social attitudes meant it was hard for them to be open about being LGBTQ+.
- Homosexuality was against the law and trans rights were not recognised.
- Gay, lesbian and bisexual people weren't allowed to join the Army until 2000, though many did.

### Reflection:

- What is the impact of having to hide who you are?
- Why is it important to remember these people and tell their full stories now?



# LGBTQ+ TODAY

- Social attitudes have changed and there are many laws that **protect LGBTQ+ rights** and protect people from discrimination.
- There is still more that can be done to ensure **everyone feels comfortable** being themselves and can make the most of their unique qualities and talents. One thing we can all do is be an ally to LGBTQ+ people.
- Being an ally means **supporting LGBTQ+** people, even if you don't identify as LGBTQ+. Some of the ways to be an ally are:

**Learning** more about LGBTQ+ issues.

**Challenging and reporting** any form of bullying towards LGBTQ+ people.

Making sure LGBTQ+ people **feel safe and supported**.

**Connecting** with LGBTQ+ people and celebrating the strength in diversity.

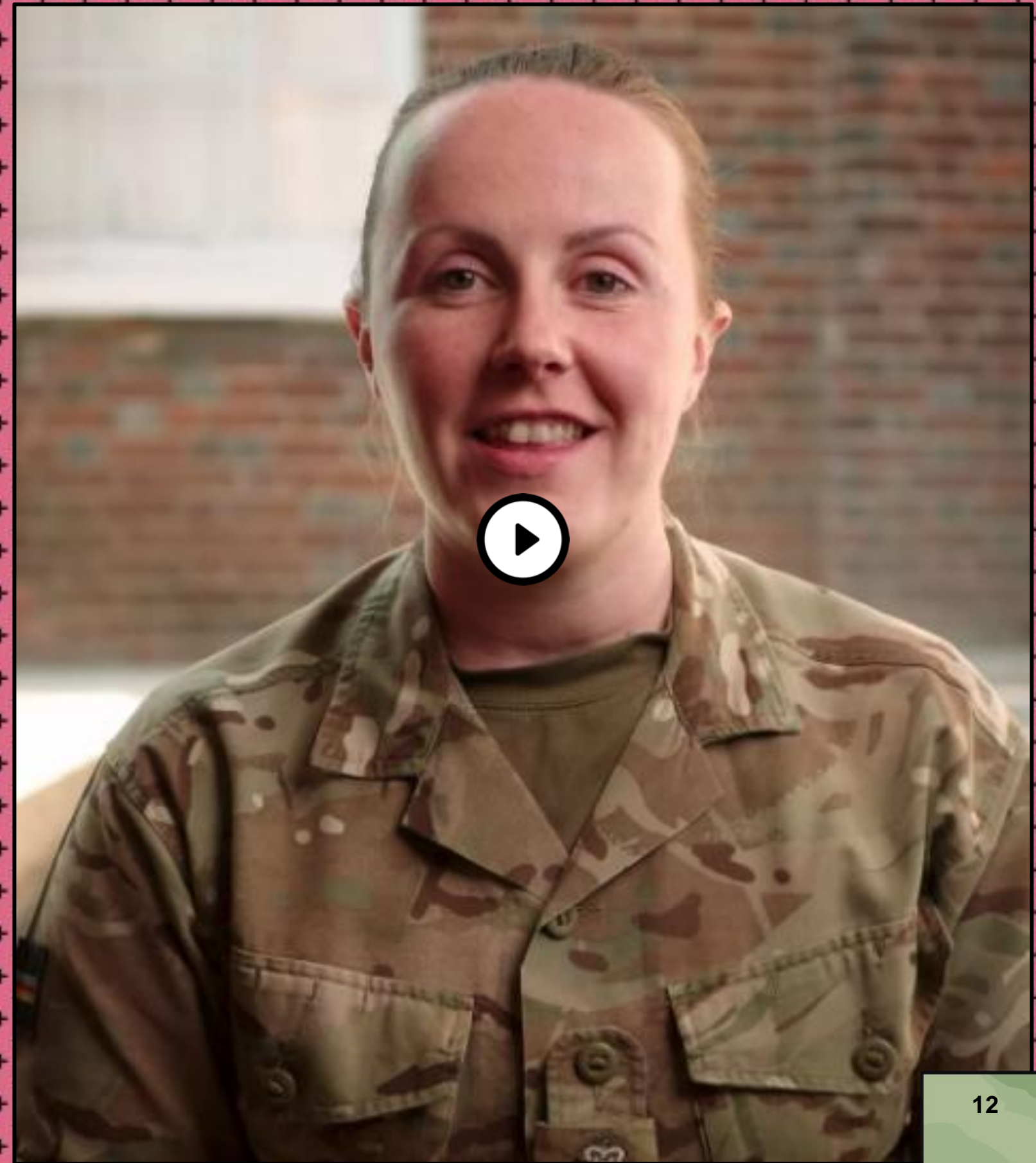


## THE ARMY – EVERYONE IS WELCOME

The Army has a large LGBTQ+ network and actively celebrates and encourages diversity and the strength it brings.

Watch the [video](#) with current LGBTQ+ Army members to find out more about their experiences today.

Find out more at: [armylgbt.org.uk](http://armylgbt.org.uk)



# OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY – EVERYONE IS WELCOME

## Reflection:

What one thing can you do to be an ally to the LGBTQ+ Community?

- Challenging and reporting any form of bullying towards LGBTQ+ people.
- Connecting with LGBTQ+ people and celebrating the strength in diversity, e.g. supporting Pride, learning about LGBT history.
- Learning more about LGBT issues, e.g. read/listen to podcasts.
- Making sure LGBTQ+ people feel safe and supported, e.g. looking out for LGBTQ+ classmates, checking in with LGBTQ+ friends to see how they are.

## Sources of Support:

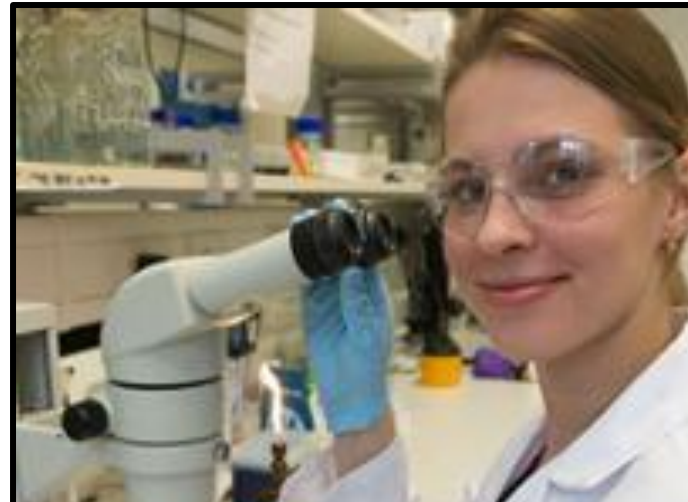
- School Pastoral System
- Trusted Adult
- Stonewall
- GIDS Gender Identity Development Service
- Childline/NSPCC
- The Proud Trust

# FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BRITISH ARMY CAREERS



## Army Foundation College Harrogate

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## Army Apprenticeships

Explore the 40+ apprenticeship schemes in the British Army, from animal care to vehicle maintenance. [More](#)