

National Lottery-funded archives, museums and projects have shone a light on these six remarkable women.

Margaret Lucas Cavendish

1623–1673

Born in Colchester to an aristocratic family, Margaret went on to marry William Cavendish, Marquess of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, who was more than 30 years her senior. A prolific writer, she published the 1668 play *The Convent of Pleasure*.

The play told the story of Lady Happy, an heiress who resists all male suitors and turns her home into an all-female monastic institution. Lady Happy falls in love with a princess “of truly masculine presence”, and declares:

> “Why may I not love a woman with the same affection as I could a man?”

- Margaret Cavendish's life was explored by the Derbyshire-based Other Stories project.

Vera "Jack" Holme

1881–1969



Vera "Jack" Holme (left) and Dorothy Johnstone (centre) in 1918. Credit: LSE Library

Born in 1881, Vera “Jack” Holme lead an exciting and unconventional life. By her 20s she was an actress and singer, including as a cross-dressing music hall act where she used the stagename “Jack”.

She went on to join a group of singing suffragettes, and became chauffeur to the Pankhursts.

During the First World War she was an ambulance driver. In 1918 she began an affair with Scottish artist Dorothy Johnstone, whose work appears at Kirkcudbright Art Gallery.

- Jack was featured in the People's History Museum's Never Going Underground project.

Joe Carstairs

1900–1993



Joe Carstairs (second left). Credit: Classic Boat Museum

The dynamic Marion Barbara "Joe" Carstairs was an oil heiress who became a champion motorboat racer. A proud lesbian, she wore tailored suits from Savile Row, cut her hair short and tattooed her arms. Her partners included Dolly Wilde - Oscar Wilde's niece - and Marlene Dietrich.

In the 1930s “the fastest woman on water” came to the Isle of Wight where she commissioned powerboats from the boatbuilder Sammy Saunders.

- The National Lottery-funded Classic Boat Museum on the Isle of Wight holds the Carstairs Collection.

Enid Marx

1902–1998



Designer and painter Enid Marx is best known for her love of abstract and geometric patterns, particularly her work designing seating fabric and posters for London Transport, as well as books, wrapping paper and logos.

Known as “Marco”, Enid lived and worked with the historian Margaret Lambert for 50 years, with whom she shared a love of art.

- The Marx-Lambert Collection is held by the National Lottery-funded Compton Verney and The National Lottery Heritage Fund supported a recent project at the London Transport Museum which discovered a lost Enid Marx

design.

Roberta Cowell

1918–2011



Roberta Cowell shopping in 1954. Credit: Transas City

Roberta Cowell was a racing driver and pilot who was the first known British person to undergo male-to-female sex reassignment surgery.

She was born Robert Cowell in Croydon in 1918. She went on to become a racing driver, get married and have children. During the war, she was a Spitfire pilot and was captured by the Germans. In 1948, deeply unhappy, she left the family and went on to have the sex reassignment surgery. She continued to fly planes and drive racing cars.

- The National Lottery-funded Egham Museum recently devoted an exhibition to Roberta Cowell.

Sandi Hughes

1943–present



Sandi Hughes was born in Bristol to a white British mother and black American GI father. She was brought up in children's homes and married in 1963, going on to have three daughters and a son. The marriage broke up - and when Sandi applied for custody, she was judged to be an "unfit mother" because she was gay. Sandi went on to become a much-loved linchpin of the Liverpool gay scene, and a feminist film-maker, poet and DJ.

In 2015, The National Lottery Heritage Fund supported Liverpool Records Office and National Museums Liverpool's purchase of her rare archive of photos, videos and other memorabilia.

Find out more on the Rewind Fast Forward website.



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e stories of Pride

The project hosted a series of exploratory workshops

Her Hidden Histories: drama and performance project