

National Ambulance  
LGBT Network



Supporting Lesbian, Gay,  
Bisexual, Trans staff,  
patients and communities

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# Our Top LGBT Films



With Christmas round the  
corner here's some films  
to add to your present list!

Alistair Gunn, Gareth Thomas and Adam Williams  
15 December 2019



# Introduction



With Christmas just a few weeks away we thought it is a good time to think about some of the top LGBT films that are out there. It may be time to add a few of these to your present list if you are struggling for ideas.

Members of the committee have written their top six recommendations and we'll leave you to consider which may be of interest to yourself.

At this time of year we would also ask you to think about the people around you and what it really means. For some people Christmas is not the happiest of times for a number of reasons.

One of the true benefits of effective networks is helping to support the people around you and maybe make a difference to someone that really needs it. Read on, and we hope you enjoy our latest 15 Minute Read.



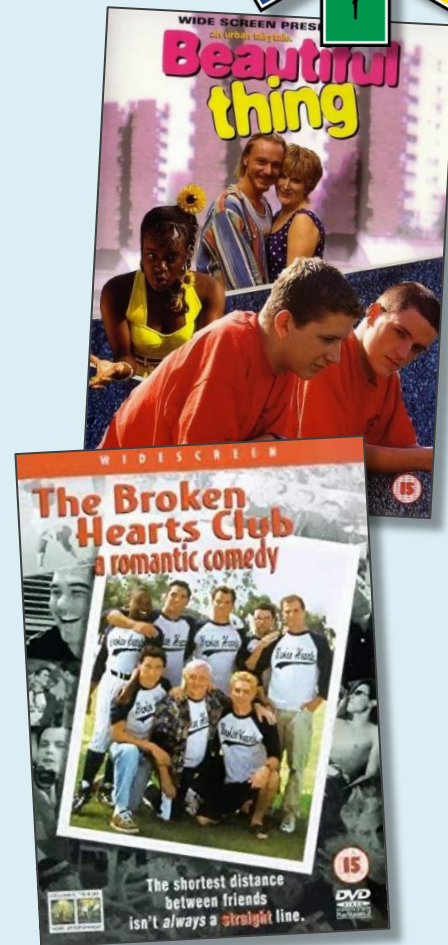
# My Top Six Films [1]



Now before I start this article, I need to make it clear that my criteria for a good film is an experience that makes you feel good and uplifted. I say this, because many of the early gay films I saw were completely the opposite.

The first film on my list is one that will always have a special place in my heart. I remember going to see **Beautiful Thing (1996)** at the Showroom cinema in Manchester when it first came out. It's funny and moving and just a lovely film about two young guys coming to terms about their sexuality against the gritty background of a London council estate. When this was released it was quite a revolution in being a positive depiction of young gay lives and paved the way for several copies. Get Real was released two years later and did a similar job.

During the Millennium I went along to a gay film festival and saw **Broken Hearts Club (2000)** for the first time. Set in America it tells the story of five gay friends whose common link is their membership of a softball team. Apart from this it is a tough question whether they have much in common and the film explores the true meaning of friendship as each one experiences their own trials and tribulations.



# My Top Six Films [2]

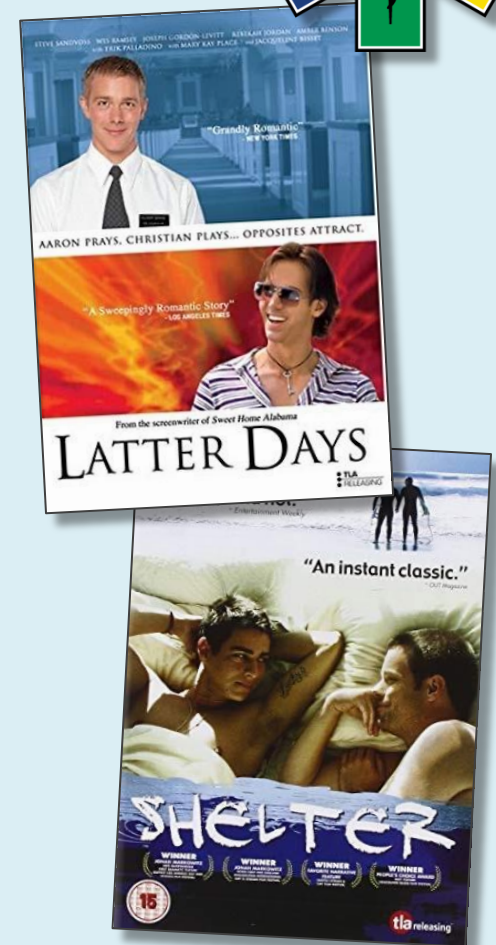


This film was very poignant to me at the time. Many people have questioned whether being gay is enough to bind people together or is just one aspect of our identity more likely to lead to indifference?

My next film is one you might think should challenge my success criteria. It won me over because it is so well put together.

**Latter Days (2003)** tells the story of a Mormon missionary assigned to big city in America but instantly discovers the conflict between religious belief and sexual orientation. This film goes on to graphically shows the hideous practice of aversion therapy and how people can be driven to make the ultimate choice. Despite this darkness the film is excellent and ends leaving us with a sense of hope.

The next film took me completely off guard. **Shelter (2007)** is set in California and follows the complicated life of Zach who spends his time surfing, trying to be an artist and looking after his dysfunctional family. All this gets more complicated when his best friend's brother comes home. The surprising part of the film is how gently and sympathetically the story is told and the backdrop of the California coast makes it a pleasure to watch.



# My Top Six Films [3]



I found the next film in the garden centre £5 bin and the day I watched **Pride (2014)**, I wondered how I had managed to miss it for so long. The story is another unlikely partnership, as the rising gay rights movement in London connects with the dissolution of the mining industry in Wales. Although campaigner Mark Ashton is the main subject matter the story is told through the eyes of closeted Joe. The film features some amazing stars, such as Imelda Staunton and Bill Nighy, and is very important because it is all based on true events. This is definitely one to watch, if only for its historical importance.

My final film takes us to my home county and the Yorkshire Dales. **God's Own Country (2017)** is another gritty film about a young man's struggle to accept his responsibility heading up the family farm. The complication comes when a Romanian farmhand comes to help out with lambing season. The interesting part of the film for me was how the issue of not being able to communicate and express feelings plays out. Needless to say when everything comes to a head, and futures are at stake, someone has to say how they truly feel.

Article by Alistair Gunn, Network Chair





# Our Favourite Films [1]



We asked our committee what their favourite LGBT film is and why...

**Val Nash from South Western Ambulance Service writes:**

**If These Walls Could Talk.** This is a film looks at the life experiences of three different women during different decades. It is really heart-wrenching film and makes me realise the privileges I have today compared to them.



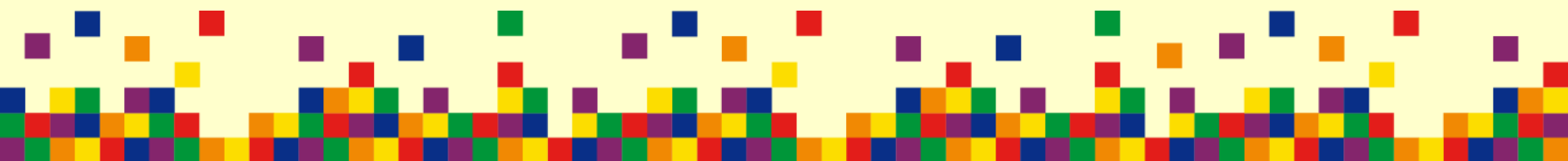
**Steph Meech from South East Coast Ambulance Service writes:**

**Rocky Horror Picture Show.** Enter the world of Dr Frank-N-Furter, a self-proclaimed 'sweet transvestite from Transsexual, Transylvania'. How else would we know how to do The Timewarp?!



**Tace Richards from Welsh Ambulance Service writes:**

**Shelter.** This film tells the story of a 'straight' guy falling for a gay man. It reminds me of the feelings I had accepting my own sexuality. I realised I was gay but didn't want to be.



# Lessons in Politics [1]

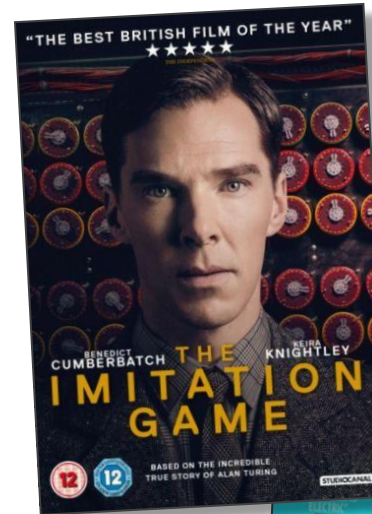


**Committee Member Adam Williams, from North West Ambulance Service, discusses the significance of two important films that reveal a lot about the politics of the past.**

Throughout history film and media has been a forum for highlighting true stories of social inequality and injustice and no two films, in my opinion, highlight this more than;

**The Imitation Game (2014)** starring the fantastic Benedict Cumberbatch and Keira Knightley and **Milk (2008)** starring Sean Penn.

**The Imitation Game** is set in Great Britain during World War Two and the Empire and it's allies are fighting for their survival against an unstoppable Nazi Germany. With most of Europe already under Nazi occupation Alan Turing and his team attempt to break the Enigma Code, success means victory, failure is not worth contemplating. Alan, a truly brilliant and awkward mathematician is harbouring a big secret, he is gay, at a time when it is illegal. Set against the backdrop of war and a time when the LGBT

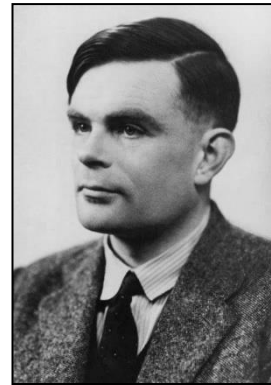


# Lessons in Politics [2]



community must hide their true selves to avoid prison and being ostracised, this film follows Alan's tremendous achievements towards the war effort and our society to this day whilst also highlighting his suffering at the hands of draconian anti-gay laws.

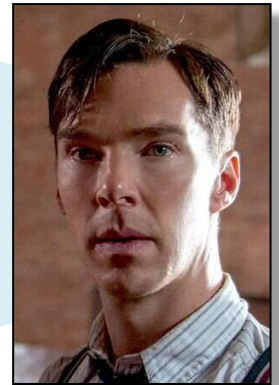
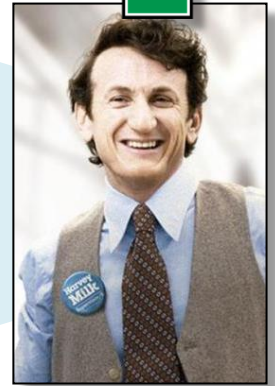
In the current political climate in the United States the film **Milk** is more poignant than ever. This film tells the true story of Harvey Milk, the first openly gay elected official in the United States. The film documents his fight for equal rights amongst gay and lesbian people against a backdrop of extreme prejudice from the press, the police and the government in a turbulent time. His ever lasting contribution to equality politics in the United States can be seen to the present day and will hopefully survive these troubling times.



## Uncanny resemblances:

The real Harvey Milk (top left) played by Sean Penn (top right).

The real Alan Turing (bottom left) played by Benedict Cumberbatch (bottom right).





# From Wales with Pride [1]



**Committee Member Gareth Thomas, from Welsh Ambulance Service, explains why one film is so important.**

I grew up in a little village in the Upper Swansea Valley called Ystradgynlais. It's your typical Welsh mining community where in the early 1980's most men worked down the mines. I was born in 1980 so I don't really remember too much about the miners' strike of 1984/85, but when I think back about my childhood and growing up in that village, LGBT activism and acceptance certainly aren't the things that first come to mind. So I'm sure you can imagine my surprise when a couple of years ago I heard about this new film called **Pride (2014)** that was being filmed in and around the community I grew up in and thought I knew so well. The film is in a village called Onllwyn, literally a stones throw away from where I grew up.



The film tells the story of a group of lesbian and gay activists who raised money to help families affected by the miners' strike. In London, many miles away from Wales, a gay activist called Mark Ashton realised that the police had stopped harassing the gay community because their attention was focussed elsewhere. He arranged a



# From Wales with Pride [2]



collection for the miners during the Gay Pride Parade in London and went on to found 'Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners' or LGSM as they were known. The film goes on to tell the incredible tale of the unlikely alliance formed between this Welsh mining community and a group of lesbian and gay activists.

One of the film's characters, Gethin, had a back story that really resonated with me. Gethin had moved away from Wales after struggling to come out in a mining village. Something I found myself doing when I was 18 in an attempt to find a place where I fitted in. Another of the film's characters, Dai Donovan, turned out to be the Dad of some friends I'd gone to school with, but I'd never heard anything of this story before! In the film Dai is invited to give a speech at a fund raising event called Pits and Perverts, organised by LGSM to raise money for the miners. In his speech Dai says; 'You have worn our badge, Coal Not Dole, and you know what harassment means, as we do. Now we will pin your badge on us, we will support you. It won't change overnight, but now 140,000 miners know that there are other causes and other problems. We know about blacks and gays and nuclear disarmament and we will never be the same'. The film closes



The cast includes stars such as Imelda Staunton, Bill Nighy and Andrew Scott.



# From Wales with Pride [3]



on the morning of the 1985 Gay Pride Parade where LGSM are joined by hundreds of miners in a show of solidarity and it's revealed that later, the Labour Party go onto incorporate rights for gays and lesbians in their party manifesto under pressure from the National Union of Mineworkers.



Mark Ashton is played by actor Ben Schnetzer (left) in the film.

The real Mark Ashton (right) just before his untimely death at the age of 26 in 1987.



I now live and work back in Wales and whilst attitudes here don't always seem to be as liberal or accepting as I might like, watching this film made me think again about the community I grew up in. Maybe it's more than the place I thought it was, even a place to be proud of.



# Christmas Blues



There are a whole range of reasons why Christmas may not be a happy time. Recent events may impact on your feelings, and even stress or personal feelings can be heightened by a big event.

There is no shame in admitting you need help and all our staff networks have a variety of support mechanisms linked to them. You can find more information at [www.ambulancelgbt.org/networks/](http://www.ambulancelgbt.org/networks/).

There are also a number of national organisations that can offer support. Some of these are:



**THE  
AMBULANCE  
STAFF  
CHARITY**



- **The Ambulance Staff Charity**  
0800 1032 999  
[www.theasc.org.uk/what-we-do/](http://www.theasc.org.uk/what-we-do/)
- **The Samaritans**  
116 123 (24 hours a day)  
[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)
- **Blue Light Programme / Mind**  
0300 123 3393 (09:00 to 18:00 Mon to Fri)  
[www.mind.org.uk/need-urgent-help/](http://www.mind.org.uk/need-urgent-help/)
- **Saneline**  
0300 304 7000 (16.30 to 22:30 daily)  
[www.sane.org.uk](http://www.sane.org.uk)



# Our Favourite Films [2]



We asked our committee what their favourite LGBT film is and why...

**Ben Barber from North East Ambulance Service writes:**

**Beautiful Thing.** After watching this I realised I was normal. Section 28 meant I never heard any discussion about sexuality and this film changed that.



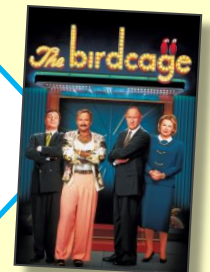
**Jim Graves from East of England Ambulance Service writes:**

**Love, Simon.** Beautiful Thing is always a favourite but this updated version is a great film too. This was released in 2018 so twenty plus years later, and things are a little different in terms of technology and how we communicate.



**Dom Gaffney from North West Ambulance Service writes:**

**The Birdcage.** This film, from 1996, is based on the stage play La Cage aux Folles and follows the fortunes of Armand and Albert. Hiding their true identity proves harder than planned, however you can't help but be amused at Robin Williams and Nathan Lane as a family visit unfolds.





# Merry Christmas



The National Ambulance LGBT Network Committee wishes everyone a very happy Christmas and we look forward to seeing you all in 2020.

