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Stephen Whittle: Married at Last

Accomplishing the Impossible Dream

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Stephen Whittle marrying his long-term partner, Sarah Rutherford.

A man who changed sex after being born a woman has won his final battle against discrimination by marrying his long-term partner.

For many years marriage seemed an impossible dream for Dr. Stephen Whittle O.B.E. and his partner Sarah Rutherford, 45.

Stephen, 50, is a female-to-male transsexual who was born female and has had surgery to become a man.

Now, after years of campaigning, the law has been changed for transgender people, allowing Stephen to be recognised as a man and paving the way for marriage.

Getting married wasn't about politics, it was about family, but without the politics it would never have happened.

He said: "We both thought it would be the one thing they wouldn't change. We thought we would get recognition but being able to marry seemed impossible you never, ever thought about it as even holding down a job down seemed impossible at times."

Stephen said that as well as being one of the happiest days of his life, his marriage to Sarah may also be the first transsexual wedding in the country.

He added: "Getting married wasn't about politics, it was about family, but without the politics it would never have happened. There was a moment of truth when we finally got our marriage certificate - I held it up and everybody cheered, it was terrific," he said.

Stephen, of Mauldeth Road, Heaton Mersey, Stockport, helped to form the Manchester Transsexual Group and launched the Press For Change campaign for equal rights. "I remember thinking quite early on that I never did anything to hurt anybody else but I was being treated like a criminal and there were a lot of people in the same situation."

In 2002, after ten years of campaigning, the European Courts ruled that transsexuals had the right to privacy and could be registered under their new persona.

That meant people like Stephen could get a new birth certificate which, in turn, opened the door to marriage and a new life.

Now the couple, who have been together for twenty-six years and have four children - all conceived by sperm donor - were able to prove their love on Saturday when they married at Heaton Mersey Methodist Church.

"It was wonderful and it's hard to say how good we felt," said Stephen "We could feel the wave of happiness and positive thought behind us and it was quite overwhelming."

All transgenders of our time owe a debt of gratitude to Stephen Whittle and to his colleagues in Press For Change. This is particularly true for those of us who have British birth certificates and have been able to take advantage of the Gender Recognition program. Congratulations, Stephen and may your formal marriage be as happy as your informal one has been and last many times longer.

Stephen Whittle

Edited from Wikipedia:  Professor Stephen Whittle (O.B.E.) was born in 1955 in Manchester, United Kingdom. He was the middle child of the five children in his family and suffered from rickets in early childhood. In 1966 his mother, being concerned at how different he was from his sisters, entered him in the examination for Withington Girl's School. Being one of the highest scorers in the city in the exam that year, he received a scholarship to attend. It was during his time at Withington Girl's School that he started



reading medical books. He knew that he was romantically attached to other girls at school – he never told them, and so his love was not reciprocated – but he also knew that he was sexually attracted to men. On top of that was a strong desire to be a man, to grow a beard and to have a hairy chest. He had read articles about people like Della Aleksander and April Ashley who had had a sex change. In 1972, at the age of sixteen, whilst visiting his doctor about a sore throat he read about a female to male transsexual person.

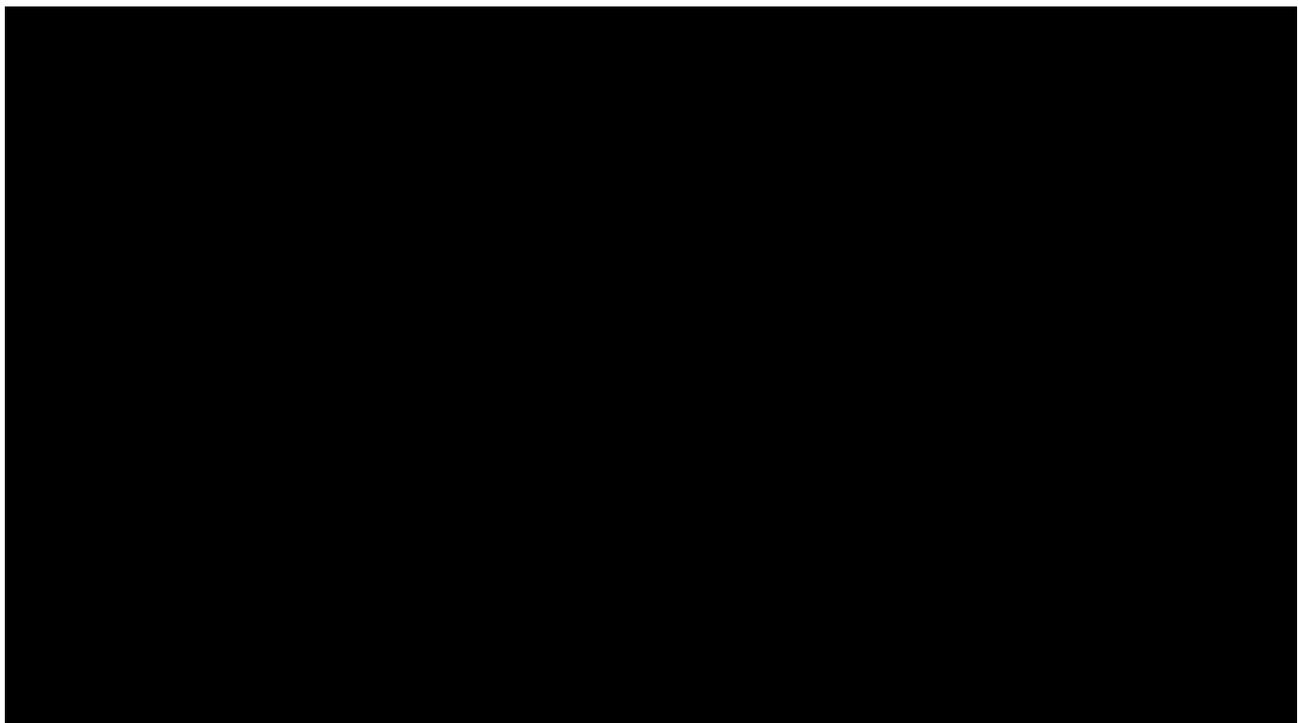
In 1974 Whittle came out as an F.T.M. transman, after returning from a Women's Liberation Conference in Edinburgh, which he attended as a member of the Manchester Lesbian Collective. He began hormone replacement therapy in 1975. He has been active in transsexual and transgender communities since the age of twenty when in 1975 he joined the Manchester TV/TS, the first support group for transsexual people in the United Kingdom. In 1979 he joined a former army officer and then royal sculptor, Judy Couzins, a transwoman in the Self Help Association for Transsexuals (SHAFT). In 1989, he founded the U.K.'s F.T.M. Network which he coordinated until November 2007. In 1992, along with Mark Rees, the actress Myka Scott and an airline pilot Krystyna Sheffield, he founded and became vice-president of Press for Change, an organisation that works to change the laws and social attitudes surrounding transgender and transsexual lives. Whittle remains as one of the vice-presidents. Whittle underwent phalloplasty surgeries from 2001 to 2003. The Channel 4 documentary *Make Me a Man* followed his life during the surgeries.

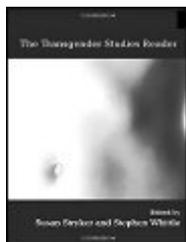
Though unable to marry legally in the United Kingdom until the passing of the Gender Recognition Act 2004. He and his partner (now wife), Sarah Rutherford, have four children by artificial insemination.

He has written and spoken extensively on his personal journey, his writings have included, among other things, an article on the ground-breaking transsexual employment discrimination case presided over by the European Court of Justice. In 2005 he was awarded The Sylvia Rivera Award for Transgender Studies by the Centre for Lesbian and Gay Studies for the monograph "Respect and Equality". In 2007, along with his co-editor, Susan Stryker, he was awarded a Lambda Literary Award for their annotated collection of fifty key historical and contemporary transgender science, political and theory texts - "The Transgender Studies Reader".

In 2002, Whittle was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis which has become an increasing problem since late 2005, yet he continues in his fulltime university post, and his fight for the human rights of trans people throughout the world. In recent years, he has collaborated with other members; Paisley Currah, Shannon Minter and Alyson Meiselmann, of the World Professional Association of Transgender Health W.P.A.T.H. on amicus briefs to courts in many jurisdictions. In 2007, he was the first non-medical professional and first trans person to become President of W.P.A.T.H.

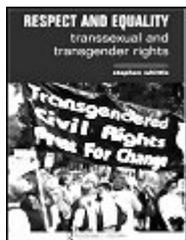
He is the recipient of the Human Rights Award by the Civil Rights group Liberty, for his commitment and dedication to ensuring the advancement of rights for transsexual people through judicial means in the United Kingdom, Europe, and around the world; he was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.) for services to Gender Issues; and was awarded the Virginia Prince Lifetime Achievement Award by the U.S.A.'s International Federation for Gender Education.





A Transgender Studies Reader
Author: Stephen Whittle and Susan Stryker
Publisher: Routledge (2006)
I.S.B.N.-13 978-0415947091.

From Amazon Books: Transgender studies is the latest area of academic inquiry to grow out of the exciting nexus of queer theory, feminist studies, and the history of sexuality. Because transpeople challenge our most fundamental assumptions about the relationship between bodies, desire, and identity, the field is both fascinating and contentious. *The Transgender Studies Reader* puts between two covers, fifty influential texts with new introductions by the editors that, taken together, document the evolution of transgender studies in the English-speaking world. By bringing together the voices and experience of transgender individuals, doctors, psychologists and academically-based theorists, this volume will be a foundational text for the transgender community, transgender studies, and related queer theory.



Respect and Equality: Transsexual and Transgender Rights
Author: Stephen Whittle
Publisher: Routledge-Cavendish (2002)
I.S.B.N.-13 978-1859417430.

From Amazon Books: In this fascinating work, theoretical discussions of sex, sexuality, gender and law, and an extensive range of primary and secondary research materials, are combined to provide an insightful analysis into the inadequacies of current law.



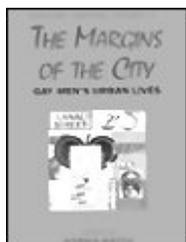
The Transgender Debate: The Crisis Surrounding Gender Identities
Author: Stephen Whittle
Publisher: South Street Press (2000)
I.S.B.N.-13 978-1902932163.

From goodreads: Transgender has become a cultural obsession. From the high camp of RuPaul to the working class transsexual icon, Hayley of Coronation Street, it pervades our lives. Yet for many it remains a freakish interest on the sidelines. For transsexual and transgender people, though, it is a reality bound up in complexities, legal contradictions, family discord, and a desperate need to explain what it means to be a man or a woman, or neither, or both. Addressing the historical, social, legal and medical issues surrounding this new community, this book throws a light onto the complex issues, clarifying them in a way that all those who think they know what they mean, will be called to question the certainties that gender roles are no longer about.



Reclaiming Genders: Transsexual Grammars at the fin de siecle
Author: Stephen Whittle and Kate More
Publisher: Continuum International Publishing Group (1999)
I.S.B.N.-13 978-0304337774.

From Barnes & Noble: An interdisciplinary work bringing together an international group of transgender writers, this text provides a collection of essays that are central to both academia and activism. Based on academic and "street" experiences, the book addresses the practical issues faced in changing the world view of gender while forcing theory a step forward from limitations of "queer", feminism and postmodernism. In a wide-ranging set of contributions, it addresses our engendered places now and what we can aim for in the future. It evaluates the mechanism we can use to galvanize both the micro theories of gender as a personal experience of oppression and the macro theories of gender as a site of social regulation. The collection aims to take identity politics and reclaim identity for the "self".



The Margins of the City: Gay Men's Urban Lives
Author: Stephen Whittle
Publisher: Ashgate Publishing Group (1994)
I.S.B.N.-13 978-1857422023.

From World of Books: Within cities, gay life has always been marginalized in social, political and cultural terms, even although significant gay places have often been geographically centrally placed. This work looks at the physical and spatial development of gay places over the last twenty-five years in a social context.

The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, family members and friends in New South Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.