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The World's First Transsexual Man

Laurence Michael Dillon

Article courtesy of the [Transgender Zone Team](#) 

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Laurence Michael Dillon

Born on the 1st May 1915 in London Laura Maud Dillon, daughter of Robert Dillon of Lismullen, County Meath, was anatomically a healthy female child. Her mother died two days later and her father rejected her and sent her with her brother to his three unmarried sisters in Folkestone, England. In 1925 her father and grandfather died and her eleven-year-old brother became Sir Robert Dillon, eighth baronet.

In 1945, Gillies and his colleague Ralph Millard carried out the world's first sex-change of a woman into a man on the young aristocrat, Michael Dillon.

She was educated at an exclusive girls' school and at St Anne's College, Oxford, winning her rowing blue in a women's crew and graduating in 1938. She spent her Summer holidays with a housekeeper on the family estate in County Meath.

Facial hair and a deep voice confirmed her feelings of being physically and emotionally a man, and she took a job as a garage hand, living in loneliness and anguish for four years.

A Doctor Foss agreed to give her male hormone pills, she had a mastectomy in 1942, and in 1944 she had her birth certificate amended, changing "daughter" to "son" and "Laura

Maud" to "Laurence Michael". Sir Robert reacted with disbelief and horror and cut him out of his life.

Michael, as he now called himself, entered medical school in Trinity College Dublin in 1945 under his new name. During the long holidays he had protracted and painful operations at the hospital of the plastic surgeon Sir Harold Gillis to complete the physical changes.

Sir Harold Gillies, internationally renowned as the father of modern plastic surgery, played a pioneering wartime role in Britain developing pedicle flap surgery.

What is not so well known is that Sir Harold was also one of the pioneers of sex-change surgery. He later performed surgery on the United Kingdom's first male-to-female transsexual, Roberta Cowell.

In 1945, Gillies and his colleague Ralph Millard carried out the world's first sex-change of a woman into a man on the young aristocrat, Michael Dillon.

Michael is also believed to be the first woman to have taken the male hormone testosterone in order to look like a man.

Within months of starting testosterone, he had grown a beard and was living as a man. It was the dramatic transition in his appearance that finally persuaded Gillies to operate.

Michael later showed his amended birth certificate to Debrett's Peerage, who agreed to change their entry, thus acknowledging his claim to the baronetcy as the next male in line after his childless brother. The editor assured him that changes in Debrett were automatically followed by Burke's Peerage.

He won his rowing blue, this time as a man, graduated in 1951, and became a ship's doctor, serving on voyages to Asia, Australia, and America.

Burke's Peerage failed to change their entry, and the discrepancy with Debrett's was discovered in 1958 by the *Sunday Express*, which investigated further and publicised the change of sex.

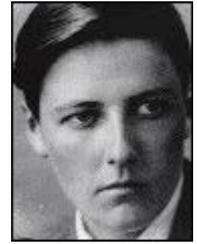
Michael was devastated at this revelation of a secret he had sedulously concealed, and he fled to Calcutta, then took refuge in a Buddhist monastery at Sarnath, Bengal.

He was ordained a monk of the Tibetan order, taking the name Lobzang Jivaha, and spent his time studying Buddhism and writing. He gave what money he had to help struggling students.

The hardships of life in primitive conditions, made worse by the meagre vegetarian diet required by Buddhism, took their toll. His health failed, and he died in hospital at Dalhousie, Punjab, on 15th May 1962, aged 47.

Two books by him were published in London in 1962: *The Life of Milarepa*, about a famous 11th Century Tibetan yogi, and *Imji Getsul*, an account of life in a Buddhist monastery.

Michael Dillon

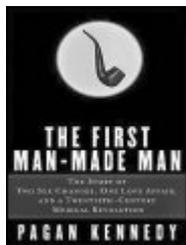


Edited from Wikipedia: Laurence Michael Dillon was born in Ireland in May 1915 in Ireland, his mother dying of sepsis ten days after giving birth. Dillon, then physically female and known as Laura Maud Dillon, was raised with his brother by their aunts in the town of Folkestone, Kent, England. He received his undergraduate education at Oxford and after graduating he took a job at a research laboratory in rural Gloucestershire.

Dillon had long been more comfortable in men's clothing and felt that he was not truly a woman. In 1939, he sought treatment from Dr. George Foss, who had been experimenting with testosterone to treat excessive menstrual bleeding; at the time, the hormone's masculinizing effects were poorly understood. Foss provided Dillon with testosterone pills but insisted that Dillon consult a psychiatrist first, who ultimately gossiped about Dillon's desire to become a man, and soon the story was all over town. Dillon fled to Bristol and took a job at a garage. The hormones soon made it possible for him to pass as male, and eventually the garage manager insisted that other employees refer to Dillon as "he" in order to avoid confusing customers.

Dillon suffered from hypoglycaemia, and twice injured his head in falls when he passed out from low blood sugar. While he was in the Royal Infirmary recovering from the second of these attacks, he happened to come to the attention of one of the world's few practitioners of plastic surgery – at the time, a rare specialty maligned by most physicians. The surgeon performed a double mastectomy, provided Dillon with a doctor's note that enabled him to change his birth certificate, and put him in touch with the pioneering plastic surgeon Harold Gillies. Gillies had previously reconstructed penises for injured soldiers and performed surgery on intersex people with ambiguous genitalia. He was willing to perform a phalloplasty, but not immediately; the constant influx of wounded soldiers from World War II already kept him in the operating room around the clock. In the meantime Dillon enrolled in medical school at Trinity College, Dublin under his new legal name, Laurence Michael Dillon.

Gillies performed at least thirteen surgeries on Dillon between 1946 and 1949. He officially diagnosed Dillon with acute hypospadias in order to conceal the fact that he was performing sex reassignment surgery. Dillon, still a medical student at Trinity, blamed war injuries when infections caused a temporary limp. In 1946 Dillon published *Self: A Study in Endocrinology and Ethics*, a book about what would now be called transsexuality ... [Read more about Michael Dillon at Wikipedia](#)



The First Man-Made Man: The Story of Two Sex Changes, One Love Affair, and a Twentieth-Century Medical Revolution

Author: Pagan Kennedy

Published by Bloomsbury U.S.A. (2007)

I.S.B.N.-13 978-1596918313

From Amazon Books: In the 1920s when Laura Dillon felt like a man trapped in a woman's body, there were no words to describe her condition; transsexuals had yet to enter common usage. And there was no known solution to being stuck between the sexes. Laura Dillon did all she could on her own: she cut her hair, dressed in men's clothing, bound her breasts with a belt. But in a desperate

bid to feel comfortable in her own skin, she experimented with breakthrough technologies that ultimately transformed the human body and revolutionized medicine. From upper-class orphan girl to Oxford lesbian, from post-surgery romance with Roberta Cowell (an early male-to-female) to self-imposed exile in India, Michael Dillon's incredible story reveals the struggles of early transsexuals and challenges conventional notions of what gender really means.

Further Information

[Wikipedia: Michael Dillon](#)

[Michael Dillon: The World's First Transsexual Man](#)

[L.G.B.T. People of History Part Thirty: Laurence Michael Dillon](#)

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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.