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London's famous Garrick Club votes to allow women, nearly 200 years after it was founded

By Jack Guy, CNN

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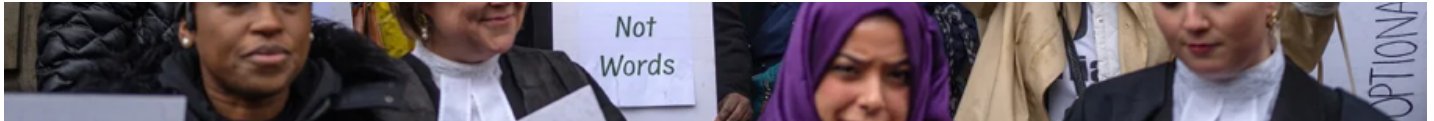
The Garrick Club, London Jonathan Brady/PA Images/Getty Images

London (CNN) — A London members club formed in 1831 has voted to let women join for the first time, after coming under scrutiny for its exclusionary policy in recent weeks.

Members of the Garrick Club, in London's West End, gathered Tuesday to debate admitting women to the club, the BBC and the Guardian reported.

A vote among almost 1,000 members passed by 60% to 40%, according to the Guardian, which sparked discussion of the club's men-only policy when it published a list of dozens of members, including influential figures from the British establishment, on March 18.





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Protesters are pictured outside the Garrick Club on March 28. Carl Court/Getty Images

King Charles III is one notable member, according to the paper, as are dozens of lawmakers, leading lawyers and theater directors, producers and actors, the majority of whom are White and aged over 50.

The publication of the list shone a spotlight on how women continued to be excluded, leading to the resignation of a handful of members and threats from others that they, too, would leave if women were not admitted.

Despite the vote, it may be some time before the first woman joins: The admissions process involves nominations by existing members and discussions among committee members, who are able to blackball anyone considered unsuitable.



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CNN has contacted the Garrick Club for comment.

Located in Covent Garden, the club is named after the celebrated 18th-century actor-manager David Garrick.

"Attracted by the combination of the traditions of the eighteenth century literary society with the advantages of a well-run dining and social club, the first members of the Garrick were a sophisticated and cosmopolitan group that included twenty-four peers of the realm as well as writers, actors, musicians and publishers," the club's website reads.

The club, which has around 1,300 members, boasts a coffee room, morning room, card room, billiards room, reading room, members' computer room and roof terrace, as well as 17 bedrooms. a members' lounge and a number of private rooms that can be booked for

group events.

It is also home to a theatrical library of around 1,000 items.

Men must wear jackets and collared shirts while in the club, with ties required if lunching or dining in the coffee room, apart from for those who arrive after 9.30 p.m. for after-theater supper, according to the website.

“Ladies may wear trousers but not jeans,” it adds. “No denim, trainers or gym shoes are allowed.”

According to its website, “The original assurance of the committee, ‘that it would be better that ten unobjectionable men should be excluded than one terrible bore should be admitted,’ ensures that the lively atmosphere for which the Club was so well-known in the nineteenth century continues to invigorate members of the Club in the twenty-first century.”

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