



Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

Oxford DNB: June 2023

Welcome to the ninety-ninth update of the *Oxford DNB*, which adds ten new articles accompanied by five portrait likenesses, with a special focus on noteworthy women active from the late fourteenth to the late twentieth century.

From June 2023, the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (*Oxford DNB*) offers biographies of 64,838 men and women who have shaped the British past, contained in 62,428 articles. 11,993 biographies include a portrait image of the subject – researched in partnership with the National Portrait Gallery, London.

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June 2023: summary of new articles

The west midlands landowner, **Joan Beauchamp, Lady Bergavenny** (1375–1435), daughter of Richard FitzAlan, earl of Arundel, married William Beauchamp, Baron Bergavenny. Outliving her husband by nearly twenty-five years, she became in widowhood perhaps the most formidable woman in England, drawing followers from the areas where she owned land. The plaintiff in at least eighty-eight lawsuits, she was a forceful litigant. The Gloucester benefactor and vowess, **Joan Cooke [née Massinger]**, (*d.* 1545/6), wife of a brewer and mercer, married John Cooke, the wealthiest man in the city. After his death she carried out their joint intention to found a free school in Gloucester, which became operational in 1539. She retained control over it until her death. Born in Rome into an élite dynasty, the literary hostess, memoirist, and royal mistress, **Hortense (Ortensia) Mancini, duchess of Mazarin** (1646–1699), was educated in France where her uncle Cardinal Jules Mazarin, was chief minister and *de facto* ruler during the minority of Louis XIV. She fled France in 1668 to escape her domineering husband, and after living for a while in Savoy, came to England in 1675 where she enjoyed the protection of Charles II, and became his mistress. The Mazarin salon which she established at her home in the grounds of St James's Palace became an important forum of Anglo-French exchange. The society beauty **Jane Baldwin [née Maltass]** (1763–1839) was born in Smyrna the daughter of a

Levant Company merchant. Reckoned one of the most striking women in the high society, she attracted admirers and was the subject of numerous portraits. She helped to secure high-level connections for her diplomat husband, George Baldwin. A talented harpist and singer, as well as an occasional poet, **Sarah Curran [married name Sturgeon]** (1782–1808), born in co. Cork the daughter of the Irish barrister and politician, John Philpot Curran, became the subject of romantic legend through her engagement to the executed Irish revolutionary Robert Emmet. After the murder of her husband by Fenians in Dublin, **Lucy Caroline Cavendish [née Lyttleton; known as Lady Frederick Cavendish]** (1841–1925), was admired for her measured public response to his killing. She undertook philanthropic work, was active in women's organizations and promoted women's education, serving as a member of the royal commission on secondary education. The graduate college for women, Lucy Cavendish College, was later named after her. The economist and university teacher, **Marjorie Eve Powell [married name Robinson]** (1893–1939), the daughter of a Shropshire tenant farmer, studied economics at Cambridge. In 1920 she became the first woman to be admitted to Lincoln's Inn, though was never called to the bar, and instead made a career as an economics teacher in Cardiff, London, and Newnham College, Cambridge, where – unusually for the time – she combined professional life with motherhood. She predeceased her husband, the physicist Harold Roper Robinson, who married her Newnham College friend and contemporary, **Madeleine Jane Symons [married name Robinson]** (1895–1957) who after studying economics at Cambridge became a trade union official,

campaigning for women workers, and was a member of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party. Independently wealthy, she was appointed a JP and latterly became a juvenile court magistrate in London, where she promoted penal reform. Born in Maidenhead, Berkshire, the daughter of schoolteachers, **Dorothy Mary Elliott [*married name Jones*]** (1896–1980), studied modern languages at the University of Reading, became a trade union organizer, representing women workers. In 1938 she became chief woman officer of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers. She advocated equal pay, and took a particular interest in the conditions of domestic workers and those in the catering sector. The Scottish-born socialite **(Ethel) Margaret Campbell [*née Whigham; other married name Sweeny*], duchess of Argyll** (1912–1993) spent her early life in New York, but returned to Britain, where she was a much-photographed débutante. After marrying a wealthy American, she was established in Mayfair as a glamorous society figure, but came to wider prominence in 1963 as a result of the salacious revelations that emerged during court proceedings arising from the breakdown of her second marriage, to the eleventh duke of Argyll.