

Oxford DNB: June 2022

Welcome to the eighty-seventh update of the Oxford DNB, which adds nine new articles and eleven new lives, accompanied by three portrait likenesses, with a special focus on women's lives in music, literature and the stage, art, textile crafts, and film, from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century.

From June 2022, the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford DNB) offers biographies of 64,467 men and women who have shaped the British past, contained in 62,112 articles. 11,914 biographies include a portrait image of the subject – researched in partnership with the National Portrait Gallery, London.

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June 2022: summary of newly-added lives

The French-born, and Italian-trained, opera singer **Elisabeth Rossa Duparc [La Francesina] (c.1715–1778)** was in England by 1736, when she performed before the royal family at Kensington Palace, and spent the rest of her life there. From 1737 until 1746 she was Handel's leading soprano for his Italian operas and English oratorios. Her 'natural warble, and agility of voice' inspired several 'bird' songs. After retiring from performance, she took up painting and exhibited pastel portraits. She was buried in Hammersmith. The author, traveller, and figure of scandal, **Isabella Howard [née Byron], countess of Carlisle (1721–1795)**, married the fourth earl of Carlisle in 1743, becoming mistress of Castle Howard, a patron of music, and an occasional poet. Her second marriage, to a studious younger baronet, ended in scandal when she moved abroad, and spent seventeen years travelling on the continent before returning to live in Bath in 1787. She published a moral essay of maxims for young married women, which enjoyed literary success, though her personal reputation excluded her from the female intellectual circles to which she might otherwise have been admitted. The actress, novelist, and correspondent, **Mary Ann Hunn (1747–1827)**, from an Irish family, moved to London where she married the lawyer,

poet, and pamphleteer, **George Canning (1736–1771)**, a self-confessed libertine. Their children included the future prime minister, also named George Canning, who was brought up by her brother-in-law after she was widowed. Needing an income, she took to the stage and in the face of hostile audiences. She meanwhile gave birth to five further children with a fellow actor. Her novel *The Offspring of Fancy* (1778) reflected her own experience of women's vulnerability and the lottery of marriage. The failure of another marriage left her dependent on her politician son, who persuaded her to leave the stage in 1791. Their relationship, mainly conducted by correspondence, dominated the remainder of her life, twenty years of which were spent as a resident of Bath. The painter, ornithologist, and naturalist, **Elizabeth Gwillim [née Symonds], Lady Gwillim (1763–1807)**, was born in Hereford, where she received an artistic education before her marriage to the legal writer and judge, **Sir Henry Gwillim (1759–1837)**, whom she accompanied to India when he was appointed a judge in the supreme court at Madras. She began painting birds soon after her arrival in India. Her paintings were exceptional for their size (preceding the full-length portraits of birds by James John Audubon) and were outstanding in terms of her attention to the placement of the birds' feathers and the patterning of individual feathers. In total 104 different species have been identified in them. She also took lessons in botany, acquired plants and accounts of their local names and uses from local

Indian plant collectors, doctors, and brahmins and sent seeds, plants, and trees to the Brompton Botanic Garden. She is credited with introducing two new species to Britain. Her paintings remained unknown until over a century after her death. The parents of the Norwich artist **Emily Stannard [née Coppin] (1802–1885)** were both amateur artists in the city, and it was presumably through them that she learned to paint, first exhibiting in 1816. Greatly influenced by Dutch still life, she went on to exhibit paintings of flowers, fruit, and game. She went on to marry another Norwich artist, Joseph Stannard, and continued to exhibit until 1883, living and working in Norwich through her entire life. The Honiton, Devon, lace manufacturer and dealer, **Charlotte Elizabeth Treadwin [née Dobbs] (1821–1890)** is believed to have been an apprentice to a dressmaker and milliner, before herself opening a school where children were taught lace-making. She established a successful business in Exeter making and selling lace, soon receiving a royal warrant from Queen Victoria. She had a background in fashion and was ambitious, taking great care over designs, and trying to maintain the standard of the Devon lace industry. She exhibited a Devonshire (or Honiton) lace flounce at the Great Exhibition in 1851. Her legacy was not only her skilled work and achievements as a lace maker, designer, teacher, and author, but also as a historian and collector of lace. The legacy of the weaver, **Margery Maud Gildersleeve Kendon [other name Marjorie Kendon] (1902–1985)** was the

collection and preservation of craft methods and the teaching of handmade textile practices, especially spinning and weaving. After starting a millinery shop in Tunbridge Wells, she became interested in weaving, and was drawn to the workshop in Ditchling, East Sussex, of Ethel Mairet, the leading figure in the revival of hand-weaving in Britain, going on to establish her own workshop at Midhurst, Kent. She travelled widely in Scandinavia, north-Eastern Europe, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, recording and collecting traditions of indigenous textile production. The writer, film critic, and film curator, **Iris Barry, [née Iris Sylvia Symes Crump] (1895–1969)**, had her first poetry published in 1914, bringing her to the attention of Ezra Pound, and later Wyndham Lewis. In 1924 she began writing what came to be recognized as the first serious film criticism to be published in Britain, in which film was discussed as an art as well as an industry. In 1932 she moved to the USA where she became curator of the Museum of Modern Art's film library, superintending the acquisition of historic and contemporary films. For the film-maker, writer, and feminist scholar, **Noreen Jean [Jill] Craigie (1911–1999)** the Second World War proved liberating, with opportunities in film-making as a scriptwriter for the British Council. She became one of very few women directing documentary films in the 1940s. In the postwar era her documentaries explored reconstruction, displaced children in war-torn conditions, and the impact of nationalization on the coal-mining industry. She also

developed creative projects about the women's suffrage movement, and perhaps her most influential work, a feminist documentary, *To Be a Woman* (1951), arguing for women's equal pay. Later she became a broadcasting celebrity and was active in Labour politics (she was married to the future Labour leader, Michael Foot). She directed her last film, on the destruction caused by the Balkan wars in former Yugoslavia, in 1994.