

Oxford DNB: June 2020

Welcome to the sixty-third update of the *Oxford DNB*, which comprises 28 new articles, containing 7 newly-added and 22 revisited lives, accompanied by 2 portrait likenesses. The lives, which range from a sixteenth-century grammarian to a twentieth-century comedy double act, include a selection with a special focus on the publishing circles and radical networks of the social thinker, novelist, and philosopher William Godwin.

From June 2020, the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (*Oxford DNB*) offers biographies of 63,751 men and women who have shaped the British past, contained in 61,444 articles. 11,796 biographies include a portrait image of the subject – researched in partnership with the National Portrait Gallery, London.

Most public libraries across the UK subscribe to the *Oxford DNB*, which means you can access the complete dictionary for free via your local library. Libraries offer 'remote access' that enables you to log in at any time at home (or anywhere you have internet access). Elsewhere, the *Oxford DNB* is available online in schools, colleges, universities, and other institutions worldwide. Full details of participating British public libraries, and how to gain access to the complete dictionary, are available [here](#).

June 2020: summary of newly-added content

The revisited lives in this month's update draw on the projected six-volume edition of the *Letters of William Godwin*, the first two volumes of which (published by Oxford University Press in 2011 and 2014 respectively) cover the years 1778-1805. Newly-added biographies of people brought to light in the *Letters* have been published in recent updates: the radical journalist and author **John Fenwick (bap. 1757, d. 1823)**, the poet and philanthropist **Rachel Prescott (1765/6-1824)**, and the philologist and translator **Martin Smart (c. 1776-1812)**.

More is now known about the writings, friendships, and movements within the Atlantic world of **Eliza Fenwick (1766-1840)**, the novelist, educator, and children's author, who was married to John Fenwick. She became associated with the Godwin circle in the 1790s, and joined Mary Wollstonecraft in contributing to the debate on women's nature and education in the wake of the French Revolution. Her husband's debts caused her to leave him and seek sources of income to support her family, writing children's educational books, managing a bookshop for Godwin, and becoming a school proprietor in Barbados, the USA, and Canada. She was among the authors of instructional works employed by the publisher **Sir Richard Phillips (1767-1840)**, who had founded the *Leicester Herald* to express his sympathies with the French Revolution, and was imprisoned for selling Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*. After moving to London, he became a publishing magnate and received a knighthood in 1808. His most significant original

work was *A Morning's Walk from London to Kew*, which included reflections on politics, history, science, nature, economics, and industry. He is mainly remembered as an educational publisher, advocating the learning and reciting of facts. His 'useful reference' compilation, *A Million of Facts*, was advertised as offering '9000 Facts for a Penny'. The bookseller and political reformer **Thomas Clio Rickman (1761-1834)** became associated with Thomas Paine through his early life in Lewes, Sussex, and later wrote an unconventional biography of Paine. After moving to London, he became a member of radical circles in the 1790s, his friends including John Horne Tooke and Mary Wollstonecraft. The article points out that he became a principal supplier of controversial books to Godwin and other like-minded radicals. Godwin's works meanwhile were a target of the satirical fiction of the journalist, barrister, and parodist **Edward Dubois (1774-1850)**, who belonged to another literary and social circle, that of the book collector Thomas Hill, at Sydenham, Kent.

The Scottish lexicographer **David Booth (1766-1846)** who was largely self-taught, started out as a brewery manager (Phillips and Rickman also had early connexions with brewing) and schoolmaster. After the French Revolution he embraced the reformist views of William Godwin, with whom he began a lifelong friendship. His projects included an 'Analytical Dictionary of the English Language', offering 'in one continued narrative, the origin, history, and modern usage of the existing vocabulary of the English tongue'. He moved to London where he was employed by the

Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge to supervise its publishing branch, and continued to work on his dictionary, the first and only volume of which appeared in 1835. He worked on it until his death, encountering financial difficulties which caused him to seek assistance from the Royal Literary Fund – he was one of many writers whose lives are included in *ODNB* to benefit from its grants. Another lexicographer (though unlike Booth, not a member of the Godwin circle) whose life is revisited in this update is **Charles Richardson (1775-1865)**, who was master of a school in Clapham, south London. His *Illustrations of English Philology* (1815) was a critique of Johnson's *Dictionary*, and a defence of Horne Tooke's historical theory of the development of the vocabulary of the English language. The first instalment of Richardson's own dictionary, on the principles suggested by Horne Tooke, appeared in 1818, and 'was the most original major dictionary of English to be produced by an Englishman since that of Johnson'. His completed dictionary was issued between 1835 and 1837, and it influenced the plans for the dictionary of the Philological Society of London, later published as *A New English Dictionary* (subsequently the *Oxford English Dictionary*).

The update also revisits three radical lives from later generations. **James Acland (1799-1876)** began his political career at the end of the Napoleonic wars, and served five terms of imprisonment, including for libelling the corporations of Bristol and Hull. His trajectory as an orator and organizer culminated in his work for the Reform League in 1867. He published a compilation of

parliamentary election results from 1832 which was carried on after his death by Frederick Haynes McCalmont, who subsequently became more directly associated with the work. Acland, whose life can now be more fully recorded, polled only twenty-five votes when he stood for Bristol in 1830. More successful was the Birmingham businessman, active in the Birmingham Political Union, **William Scholefield (1809-1867)**, who was elected for Birmingham in 1847 and sat as a self-styled 'Radical Reformer', establishing himself as an industrious, plain-speaking, and well-informed contributor to debates on commercial policy. His significance is seen as smoothing the transition in Birmingham from the popular radicalism of the 1820s to the advanced Liberalism associated with Joseph Chamberlain later in the century. Another of the public voices of the mid-Victorian era was the Congregational minister **Thomas William Baxter Aveling (1815-1884)** who was from 1838 minister of the Congregational Church at Kingsland, Hackney. By the early 1850s he was attracting congregations of over 2,000, drawn to his sermons which drew spiritual lessons from contemporary spectacles. He declared the Crystal Palace at the Great Exhibition the 'eighth wonder of the world', and saw in the misfortunes of Brunel's *Great Eastern* steamship evidence of the limited power of man. The account of his life recovers him from the shadow of his better-known son, the atheist and Marxist popularizer, Edward Aveling.

The lives of two benefactors of the University of Cambridge feature in this update. The life of the collector and connoisseur, **Richard Fitzwilliam, seventh Viscount Fitzwilliam of Merrion (1745-1816)**, is

revisited following the bicentenary of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge which his will founded. He probably owed his artistic and musical tastes to his mother, Catherine Decker, daughter of a Flemish merchant and financier who had settled in London. After the French Revolution he was enmeshed in the world of the émigrés and also took advantage of the dispersal of aristocratic art collections in France to build on his family's own collections. These were among his bequests to the University of Cambridge. The book collector and benefactor, **Samuel Sandars (1837-1894)**, whose life is newly added, the son of a prosperous Yorkshire corn merchant and Member of Parliament, had wished to become an architect, but his father insisted on a career in law. Unsuccessful at the bar, he directed his energies to collecting rare books with a speciality in liturgical works. A member of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, he came to know successive librarians at the Cambridge University Library, Henry Bradshaw and Francis Nicholson, and made extensive donations of books to the library. His bequests included the endowment of a readership in bibliography and palaeography that still bears his name.

The study of language is a theme running through this update, and it was the activity of another revisited life, the schoolmaster and grammarian **William Lily (1468?-1522/1523)**. He learned Greek on Rhodes while returning from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and then spent several years in Rome where he met scholars later associated with humanist learning in England, before returning to London where Thomas More became a close friend. As high master of St

Paul's School, London, from 1510 he took part in the so-called 'grammarians' war', favouring the imitation of good examples as the road to good Latin, as against those who insisted on the inculcation of grammatical rules. He compiled various works on Latin grammar, one of which was revised by Erasmus, but became best-known for 'Lily's grammar', a composite work, drawing on his earlier works as sources, published in about 1540, some eighteen years after his death. It remained in use in English schools for over three hundred years, and also had a traceable influence on English literature.

Other revisited lives include the Church of England clergyman and religious author **John Aungell (d. 1568)**, best known for his anthology of texts upholding Catholic doctrine, but whose inclusive attitude to religious authority enabled him to adapt to and prosper under successive regimes in the mid sixteenth century. New evidence on his early life identifies him as a minor canon at St Paul's, and a priest in attendance at the funeral of Edward VI, the coronations both of Queen Mary and of Elizabeth I. The discovery of his will and date of death complete the account of his later life. A hugely prolific and successful writer of popular works in the seventeenth century, the life of **Laurence Price (fl. 1624-1667?)** remains shadowy, but it is now possible to reassess his output of at least 85 verifiable publications over a forty-year career. These range from the bawdy songs of his early publications in the 1630s, to his support for the monarchy and church in political pamphlets of 1640s, and his peak as the most prolific

popular writer of ballads and political squibs in the 1650s, finally culminating in the piety of his last known works in the 1660s. The naval surgeon **Sir William Beatty (1773-1842)** is best known for having attended the fatally-wounded Nelson at the battle of Trafalgar. Beatty's role in establishing an 'authentic account' of the hero's death can now be brought into sharper focus, together with a fuller recognition of his wider reputation as an efficient medical officer, which caused Nelson to recruit him to the *Victory*. The drawing skills of the army officer and customs official **Thomas Hastings (1778-1854)** have long been known from his mainly topographical works, though the details of his life were until recently obscure. His life and work can now be more completely recorded, partly as a result of the discovery of his earlier surname, Barnett, which he relinquished in 1812, and also by tracing his last appointments as a customs officers officer, which lead to his death in 1854 -some twenty years after the date of his previously last-known work.

The German-born ironmaster and philanthropist **Henry William Ferdinand Bolckow (1806-1878)** is commemorated by a statue in Middlesbrough, where he based his ironworks and where, in 1853, he became the town's first mayor and was later its MP. The scale of his business enterprise on Teesside can now be more fully established, along with the extent of his contribution to the area in which he made his fortune, through housing, public health improvement schemes, donations to a new infirmary and schools, and the entire cost of a public park in Middlesbrough, Albert Park.

Preston Park in Brighton was purchased by Brighton Corporation through a bequest from the bookmaker **William Edmund Davies (1819-1879)**, who had established his home in the resort following his retirement from the turf. His standing at the head of his profession dated from 1848 and was widely recognized in his own lifetime, though his own identity was not. The latter can now be established, and his personal trajectory from artisan obscurity to a significant fortune can be traced, along with the circumstances of his contested will, and continuing legacy in Brighton. The manager of the Royal Polytechnic Institution **John Henry Pepper (1821-1900)** is best remembered for his optical illusion known as Pepper's Ghost, first presented at the end of 1862 and widely used in theatre productions. While a showman, Pepper can also be seen as an important popularizer of science. He not only showed a commercial flare for attracting visitors to the Polytechnic in Regent Street with his shows and exhibits, but through his books for young people, packed with experiments and demonstrations from the physical sciences, he inspired several future scientists. The novelist **William Clark Russell (1844-1911)** spent his early life at sea in the merchant navy. Although he disliked aspects of life afloat, and left the service in his mid-20s, sea stories were the staple of his writing. He wrote some of his most successful novels while living in the historic maritime town of Deal, contributing to the revival of adventure romance in the last decades of the century. His focus on the merchant service rather than the Royal Navy forged a new direction for the nautical novel. The fishing community of Newlyn,

Cornwall provided the main subject for the Birmingham artist, **Walter Langley (1852-1922)**, whose life can now be traced in its own right, alongside other members of the Newlyn school to which he belonged. The realism and emotional intensity of Langley's work set him apart from others of the Newlyn school. His empathy with the working people who were his subjects attracted the praise of Tolstoy. The Glasgow-born comedy double-act of **Charles John [Charlie] Naughton (1886-1976)** and **James Joseph McGonigal [Jimmy Gold] (1886-1967)**, first met on a building site, where they worked, aged 19. They had been performing for nearly two decades as a highly professional variety and pantomime act before in 1932 joining the Crazy Gang with whom they became principally known. They were able to thrive in the organized mayhem of the new act until its final stage performance in 1962. Naughton was the focus of much of the gang's physical comedy, while Gold was the straight man, with a mastery of comic timing.

Alongside these revisited lives are a further six new lives. The Church of England clergyman **Thomas Harrison (1595-1649)**, vicar of Crick, Northamptonshire, devoted his energies to developing what he called his 'ark of studies'. This was a data retrieval system for the totality of human knowledge, based on slips of paper and a cabinet of wooden rods, but he failed to achieve the influential backing which he considered that his ark of studies warranted. Imprisoned for an outburst in the court of common pleas, which he intended as support for obedience to the monarch, but which was considered to be a demeaning of the king's justices, he was

imprisoned, and died a pauper there, his valuable living at Crick having been sequestered. The maps of thirteen English counties, part of a projected atlas of the counties of England and Wales, published between 1822 and 1835 by the surveyor and map maker Andrew Bryant have long been recognized for their exceptional quality. Bryant himself has been elusive. It is now established that he was **William Andrewes Bryant (1799-1878)** who was born into the family of an indebted attorney in Reigate, Surrey. The subscription model which Bryant and his brother relied on to fund the maps left them in serious financial difficulties and it is likely that an inheritance from their mother, in 1835, enabled them to give up their projected atlas. Bryant reverted to private obscurity, from which he is now recovered. The Kibble Palace, a glass house in Glasgow's botanic gardens, is a monument to the rather eccentric Glasgow businessman, photographer, and inventor, **John Kibble (1818-1894)**, who originally had the glass house built for his mansion, Coulport House, beside Loch Long. Born into a Glasgow business family, Kibble joined his father's wire and metal warehouse, becoming wealthy enough through inheritance to experiment with photography and with mechanical inventions. In 1871 he donated his glasshouse to the city of Glasgow, where it was moved in 1873. The ambition of another inventor, the electronics engineer and sailor **Donald Charles Alfred Crowhurst (1932-1969)**, forced him into deceit and certain exposure, when in 1969 he entered a competition for a large cash prize, to circumnavigate the globe non-stop in the fastest time. Desperate for funding to

promote his invention, a handheld radio direction-finder, he took risks and was ultimately led to deception, by fraudulently entering his positions in the south Atlantic. The last record in his logbook was written on 1 July 1969.

The lives of two women in the Georgian age, who entered into marriages founded (in different ways) on deception and subterfuge conclude the newly-added lives. When **Lady Augusta Murray (1761-1830)**, daughter of a colonial governor, married Prince Augustus, sixth son of George III, in her lodgings in Rome in April 1793, the proceedings were unlawful under the Royal Marriages Act of 1772 as the young prince (12 years Lady Augusta's junior) had not obtained his father's permission. The king instituted proceedings and in July 1794 the marriage was declared null and void. Lady Augustus remained the prince's unacknowledged wife until he ended the relationship in December 1801. She brought up their son and daughter, as well as a further son through a later relationship, and devoted herself to their upbringing, her considerable book collection including several works on the theory of education. The fifteen-year-old heiress to a prosperous calico printer and high sheriff of Cheshire, **Ellen Turner (1811-1831)** was lured away from the private school in Liverpool where she was boarding and was tricked into marriage at Gretna Green to Edward Gibbon Wakefield. The affair led to legal proceedings for abduction, complicated by the fact that no force had been used and that she had consented to marriage. The conspirators were nevertheless convicted, though it required an Act of Parliament, in 1827, to

dissolve the marriage. She married again, aged 17 to Thomas Legh of Lyme Park, Cheshire, but died in childbirth aged 19.