

**Oxford DNB: August 2019**

The August 2019 update adds 34 new articles, containing 36 biographies, accompanied by 6 portrait likenesses. The particular focus is on women, citizenship, social action, and philanthropy in the early twentieth century, tracing the lives of women active in local and central government, as Justices of the Peace, and in voluntary organizations.

From August 2019, the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford DNB) offers biographies of 63,367 men and women who have shaped the British past, contained in 61,096 articles. 11,703 biographies include a portrait image of the subject – researched in partnership with the National Portrait Gallery, London.

**Introduction to the lives of women in philanthropy and social action, by Dr Eve Colpus**

It has been immensely enjoyable working as Editorial Advisor on a new group of lives for the ODNB on women who were active in the spheres of philanthropy and social action.

Philanthropy and social action are broad categories with no single set of definitions. Historically, the Dictionary of National

Biography recognized the category of 'Philanthropy' (initially as part of the broader grouping of 'Social reform') but not 'social action'. Of the women who made it into the DNB, however, very few were described as 'Philanthropist', a notable exception being Angela Burdett-Coutts, whose life was published in 1912 in the supplement to the original volumes. The new group of biographies published today focuses attention upon the range of women's contributions in the sphere of voluntary action in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including the interconnections between voluntary and professional activity and voluntary and political engagement, through which women both understood and shaped their commitments.

Philanthropic engagement, in the sense of donating money and founding projects, is a key feature in some lives (Mary Haslam, Sarah Anne Lees). A number of these women were pioneering, and in some cases 'firsts' in their respective fields: Mary Haslam was Bolton's first female poor law guardian; Mary Noble was the first woman county councillor in England; and Clara Andrew founded an early, national child adoption agency. The nature of voluntary work was varied, and women took up roles that maximized best their own capacities, talents and skills — as administrators (Gertrude Emmott), fundraisers (Ethel Hartland), lobbyists (Cicely Craven, Florence White), and patrons (Susan Buchan). Many women undertook multiple roles and for multiple

organizations, as the lives of Buchan and Janet Trevelyan show.

The benefit of using the ODNB, not only as a tool for researching individual lives, but for reflection upon historical specificity and context, is highlighted here. Themes and patterns emerge in relation to the impulses and opportunities of women's voluntary work, what was accepted as women's roles, and how this was evolving across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Religious impulses remained fundamental in many instances, explored here in a number of cases in relation to the growth of new women's organizations in the early twentieth century (Margaret Fletcher, Hilda Grenfell). Voluntary work was a political commitment for many women. Lives in this release show charitable and community work was central both to the living traditions of Conservatism (Clara Andrew, Jean Trustram Eve) and Liberalism (Eleanor Acland, Bertha Fischer) — other lives in the ODNB show connections between the twentieth-century Labour Party and women's charitable work, for example Emily Kinnaird's life, which is found in the biography of her mother, Mary Jane Kinnaird. Suffrage and feminist politics was frequently a route into voluntary work (as well as political action), and a thread of connection here between women born between the decades of the 1840s and the 1900s.

The moveable scale of women's voluntary work is underlined in the trajectories of many lives. The setting up of new organizations and causes took a number of these women into national life. Wartime (both the First World War and Second World War) saw an expansion of women's work in international contexts and campaigning, in particular in relation to work with refugees and international organizations (Eleanor Acland, Clara Andrew, Bertha Mason). Nevertheless, the importance of the local and the regional as organizational spaces of social life throughout the period is striking, and many women became well-known in their own lifetimes for their influence within local communities.

In my own research on female philanthropy in the interwar period, I have found that women's voluntary engagement crossed over spheres of religious commitment; international relations; intellectual thought (economics, social sciences); new technologies of communication; and politics and campaigning in ways that moved women's profound commitment to individual initiatives across multiple contexts of influence. I am excited that the publication of lives in this release further underlines not only the vitality of women's voluntary engagement, but also its centrality to the modernization of social life in multiple fields. Voluntary engagement was not an alternative to a professional or political identity, but rather for many women in this era (and

beyond), it has been both constitutive of those fields and of fundamental personal and social significance in itself.

**Introduction to the lives of women magistrates, by Dr Anne Logan**

This month's new biographies include eight women who performed significant public service as justices of the peace (JPs, also known as magistrates), fittingly so in the year which marks the centenary of the legislation which allowed women to take up that role for the first time. The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 also opened the legal professions to women, but the impact of the new law was felt rather more quickly on the magistrates' benches than in other parts of the legal system. The appointment of the first seven women to be made JPs was announced on the very day the Act became law (24 December 1919) and just one week later, Ada Summers became the first woman to preside in court when she took the chair on the Stalybridge bench. Meanwhile the seven women appointed by the Lord Chancellor, under the chairmanship of Lady Crewe, set about the task of drawing up a list of recommendations of women suitable for appointment as JPs.

Among the current release of biographies, three (Lady Acland, Lady Emmott, and Almyra Gray) were nominated on the Crewe committee's list which was published in the Times

on 20 July 1920. Ethel Hartland and Lady Trustram Eve were both appointed in the 1920s under the customary process of recommendation by a local committee, as were the three women from a younger generation, Cicely Craven, Charis Frankenburg, and Clare Spurgin. Party politics played an important part in JP selection at the time and the seven women advising the Lord Chancellor were variously associated with the Conservative, Liberal, and Labour parties. Of the eight women under consideration here, seven were strongly connected to political parties: Acland, Emmott, and Hartland were Liberals, Trustram Eve, Frankenburg, and Spurgin were Conservatives, while Craven served as a Labour local councillor.

The biographies of the eight women also reveal many common threads in their political, philanthropic, and social activities which transcend party politics. Among the older generation featured here active involvement in the non-militant women's suffrage movement was almost mandatory, and although Frankenburg was too young to have been a suffragette she displayed precocious enthusiasm for the cause as a child. Perhaps unsurprisingly those nominated so soon after the Great War had extensive war-related voluntary work to their credit, for example involvement in the Red Cross, county agricultural committees and food production initiatives, and/or aid to Belgian refugees. Among the women nominated for county benches in particular, involvement in

the fledgling Women's Institute organization (founded in 1915) and work with the Girl Guides was common. All these activities are represented by one or more of the eight women. The three women from a younger generation (Craven, Frankenburg, and Spurgin) and some of the older ones also had extensive involvement in the Magistrates' Association, which was founded in 1920 as a direct result of the influx of new women JPs.

Women such as these brought a new quasi-professionalism to the voluntary work of the magistracy and became involved in national and international discussions on criminal justice policy. But the single most important network connecting this group of women JPs was the National Council of Women (NCW), particularly its Public Service and Magistrates' Committee, originally chaired by Gray. In June 1920 the NCW prepared an extensive list of recommendations of women deemed suitable for nomination as JPs, very many of whom were among the list announced the following month. For decades to come the NCW – both through its national committees and local branches – brought the female magistrates of the country together and campaigned for the causes that mattered most to them, including the treatment of young offenders, the representation of women in the courts, and the rights of victims of crime.

## **August 2019: summary of newly-added lives**

The earliest, chronologically, of the newly-added lives is **Mary Fildes (1789x1792-1876)** married to a weaver and living in the cotton manufacturing area of Ancoats, the mother of six children, who came to public prominence as president of Manchester Female Reform Society in July 1819, advocating parliamentary reform. She took part in reform meeting at St Peter's Field, Manchester, 16 August 1819, and was beaten to ground in the armed attack on the meeting by the yeomanry and special constables in the episode known as the Peterloo Massacre, whose bicentenary is marked this month. She petitioned Parliament and remained an active reformer.

Nearly ninety years later **Dame Sarah Anne Lees [née Buckley] (1842-1935)**, the daughter and widow of Lancashire cotton manufacturers, became the first woman councillor in Lancashire, when elected to Oldham Town Council in 1907, and was mayor in 1910 – the second woman mayor in England. As a wealthy widow, active in local philanthropy, and a supporter of women's education at Manchester University, and a suffragist she was appointed DBE in the first honours list of the newly-created order of the British Empire in 1917, and is commemorated in a large memorial at Werneth Park, Oldham. Her daughter **Marjory Lees (1878-1970)** was also involved in civic activity in Oldham as a suffragist and poor law guardian, and received

the freedom of Oldham. In 1907 **Mary Eleanor Noble (1845-1925)** daughter of a Westmorland landowner, whose estate she inherited, was elected to Westmorland County Council, the first woman councillor in an English shire county, having gained experience as a Poor Law guardian and parish councillor. Politically a Conservative, Noble took a particular interest in local schools, and published works of local history. **Mary Haslam [née Heywood] (1851-1922)**, the daughter of a Bolton cotton manufacturer, and Liberal and Unitarian family, married a Unitarian cotton manufacturer, became the first female Poor Law guardian in Bolton in 1895; was a women's suffragist, organizing the Bolton Suffrage Society and after the First World War was a founder Bolton Womens' Citizens Association. **Bertha Mason (1855-1939)** daughter of a cotton mill owner and Liberal MP in Ashton under Lyne, Lancashire, promoted temperance and Liberal party politics as president of the Lancashire Union of the British Women's Temperance Association, treasure of Women's Liberal Associations. In 1894 she became the first woman to be elected to the Ashton board of poor law guardians, and during the 1890s was involved in official roles in north of England bodies promoting women's suffrage. She moved to London in 1903 and became secretary of the Women's Local Government Society and executive of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. In 1912 she published *The Story of the Women's Suffrage Movement*. During the First World War she

undertook Red Cross work in France, and after the war remained active in the Women's Local Government Society and National Council of Women.

**Eleanor Henrietta Hull (1860-1935)**, daughter of the director of the Irish Geological Survey, attended Alexandra College, Dublin, as well as lectures at Royal College of Science. She became involved in the Gaelic League, and when she moved to London she joined Irish Literary Society of London. She was a founder in 1897 of the Irish Texts Society and its longest-serving secretary, herself contributing editions and anthologies. She was a constitutional Irish nationalist and wrote a two-volume History of Ireland (1926, 1931). **Clara Andrew (1862-1939)**, daughter of a mayor of Exeter, attended university extension courses, and was active both in the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies and the Primrose League. Belgian refugee work during the First World War led to an interest in adoption. In 1918 she formed the National Children Adoption Association, which campaigned for adoption to be made a legal entity, enacted in legislation in 1926 and 1939, and created a model of adoption that lasted until 1970s. **(Fanny) Jean Trufram Eve [née Turing], Lady Trufram Eve (1862-1934)**, married to a prominent land agent, was a staunch Conservative, prominent in Primrose League, a tariff reformer, and a Conservative suffragist, who during the First World War recruited for the Women's Land Army in

Bedfordshire, was active in the Girl Guides, and at the end of the First World War belonged to a Ministry of Reconstruction committee on the domestic servant problem. After the war she was a Conservative member of the London Council, promoted education and parks for children, sat as a JP, and became president of the National Council of Women.

**Margaret Fletcher (1862-1943)**, daughter of an Anglican clergyman, was educated at Oxford High School for girls and enrolled at the Slade School of Art, where she petitioned for equal opportunities for female students. She converted to Roman Catholicism in 1897, and proposed an organization for Catholic women, the Catholic Women's League founded 1906, of which she became president, to educate members in citizenship to exert Catholic influence in the post-suffrage era, and wrote on Christian feminism. **Almyra Gray [née Vickers] (1862-1939)**, daughter of Sheffield steel manufacturer and an American mother, married a solicitor in York, where she became involved in philanthropy, was a Poor Law guardian from 1898, and promoted maternity and midwifery services. A suffragist, she founded the York Women's Citizens' Association after the First World War and in 1920 was appointed a JP in York. From a Glamorgan gentry family, **Gertrude Eaton (1863-1940)** studied at the Royal College of Music, was a founder of the Society of Women Musicians in 1911, and was also a suffragist and a member of the Women's Tax Resistance League. She was an executive member of the Penal Reform League from 1910,

and in the 1920s was a leading figure in the Howard League campaign for minimum standards treatment of prisoners, to establish international norms. **(Mary) Gertrude Emmott [née Lees], Lady Emmott (1866-1954)** daughter of an Oldham cotton manufacturer, was educated Queen's College, Harley Street, and married a Liberal politician. In 1899 she became a member of the board of Poor Law guardians in Oldham, and on moving to London combined suffrage and welfare activity, chairing the parliamentary committee of the National Union of Women Workers. In 1920 she was appointed one of the first JPs in London. She was a Liberal parliamentary candidate in 1922; president of the National Council Women in 1928-9, and president of the Fawcett Society.

From a family of artists **Louisa Harriet (Louie) Burrell [née Luker; other married name Moore] (1873-1971)**, studied art at South Kensington and at Bushey under Hubert von Herkomer. Widowed, she painted miniatures to support her young family, and encouraged by Lucy Baldwin (wife of the prime minister), she received significant portrait commissions between wars. She adapted her art to her circumstances, showed ingenuity at selling it, and forged a career. **Blanche Coules Thornycroft (1873-1950)**, the daughter of the shipbuilder, helped her father testing ship hull designs, and did so during the First World War for military purposes. She was one of the earliest female

associates of the Institution of Naval Architects (1919), continued to test designs after her father's death, and was a member of the Women's Engineering Society (founded in 1919). The poet **Olive Eleanor Custance [married name: Douglas] (1874-1944)** poet, belonged to a Norfolk landowning military family, but became connected to decadent literary networks in the 1890s, contributing poetry to the Yellow Book. Her work, and its constructions of gender and sexuality was rediscovered in the late twentieth century, and her life is now recovered from the shadow of her husband, Lord Alfred Douglas, whom she married in 1902.

**Bertha Bowness Fischer [married name: Foulkes] (1875-1920)**, born in India the daughter of a captain in Madras Staff Corps, came to England 1888, and in 1900 was elected to the Portsmouth Board of Poor Law Guardians. A suffragist, who worked for Liberal candidates at 1900 general election, she studied election law, passed the relevant exams, and in 1902 was admitted a fellow of the Society of Certified and Associated Liberal Election Agents, becoming the first woman to be admitted formally to the agents' profession. After her marriage to an officer in the Indian Medical Service, she was killed following an attack by tribesmen on North-West Frontier. Born in Swansea the daughter of solicitor, **Ethel Mary Hartland (1875-1964)** settled in Gloucester where became secretary of the League of Pity branch (the children's branch of NSPCC) – and was a suffragist. During the First World War she undertook war

saving work and raised funds for Belgian refugees. In 1922 she became the first woman JP for Gloucestershire and went on to found Gloucestershire Women Magistrates' Society which promoted new penal methods and training, campaigned for women police officers. Active in the League of Nations Union, she organized Peace Ballot in Gloucestershire. **Edith Bessie New (1877-1951)**, daughter of clerk in Great Western Railway Works, Swindon, was a pupil teacher in Swindon before gaining a scholarship to Stockwell Teacher Training College and in 1901 moved to London, where she taught in Deptford. She joined the Women's Social and Political Union in 1906 and in 1907 was among 75 women arrested outside the House of Commons, and opted for prison rather than paying a fine. She was imprisoned in January 1908 for chaining herself to the railings of 10 Downing Street, gave up teaching and became a full-time WSPU organizer, and was imprisoned again after breaking windows in Downing Street in June 1908, and in September 1909 after disrupting a Liberal rally in Dundee and went on hunger strike but was not forcibly fed. By 1911 she had returned to the teaching profession, and campaigned for equal pay in 1914. Between the wars she became a member of the Suffragette Club to perpetuate the memory on the militant suffrage campaign. Born into a Westmorland Liberal family, **Eleanor Mary Acland [née Cropper], Lady Acland (1878-1933)**, educated at Somerville College, Oxford, where she read history, married

a Liberal politician, campaigned for women's suffrage, and undertook war work for Belgian refugees, and joined the League of Nations Union on its foundation in 1918. In 1920 she was appointed a JP for Devon. She was active in the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, and was on the governing body of the National Birth Control Council. She was an organizer of the peacemakers' pilgrimage in 1926, and a Liberal parliamentary candidate for Exeter in 1931. **Janet Penrose Trevelyan [née Ward] (1879-1956)**, daughter of the novelist Mary Augusta Ward (Mrs Humphry Ward), was renowned for her force of intellect. Married to the historian G M Trevelyan, she was the moving force in the establishment of the British Institute of Florence, becoming its honorary secretary in 1920. Her second area of public engagement, also begun in 1920, was as chair of Children Play Centres Committee. She led the campaign to save Coram's Fields (1931) as a playground for London's children, raising the sum needed within 5 years, and was made a Companion of Honour in 1936. In 1941 over 50 play centres were handed over to the London County Council. She later regretted that the welfare state had rendered such individual initiatives unnecessary. Her daughter **Mary Caroline Moorman [née Trevelyan] (1905-1994)** read history at Somerville, wrote a monograph, married the future bishop of Ripon, devoted herself to Wordsworth studies, publishing editions of letters of William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy, and chaired the trustees of Dove Cottage.

**Susan Charlotte Buchan (née Grosvenor), Lady**

**Tweedsmuir (1882-1977)** was born into a well-connected family, and her mother founded the Colonial Intelligence League which directed educated women to careers in the British Empire. Married to John Buchan, she undertook voluntary work, including running an infant welfare centre in London, joining the Voluntary Aid Detachment during the First World War, running a settlement house in South Wales, and taking an active part in the Women's Institute movement. Accompanying her husband to Canada, where he was governor-general in 1935, she established the prairie library scheme to assist readers in remote areas, though she disliked gilded social life which came with the role of vicereine. **Edith Helen Pratt (1882-1959)**, daughter of a Devon landowner and land agent, studied at Girton College, Cambridge, and became a welfare officer in munitions factories during the First World War, moving to the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps. She was appointed OBE in the first such honours list (1917). In 1920 she was appointed general inspector of women's agricultural education and was active in the Women's Institute movement, arguing for importance of women's role in agriculture and in efficiency of farming. She was also prominent in the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship and the British Federation of University Women. She left the family estate at Prattshayes

to the National Trust. Born in India, **Hilda Margaret Grenfell [née Lyttelton] (1886-1972)** was, like her childhood friend Susan Buchan, well connected, and shared an interest in colonial emigration of educated women. After the First World War, moved by her interest in women's welfare and personal religious faith, she became involved in the YWCA lobbying on working conditions, but especially to provide spiritual as well as social support to young women, and became president of its British branch in 1934. **Florence White (1886-1961)** born in Bradford, Yorkshire, the daughter of an illiterate mill worker and a salesman, who abandoned the family, left school aged twelve to work in mill. She and sister later ran a confectionary shop in Bradford. Her fiancée was killed in the First World War and she took up issue of single women's pensions. In 1935 she founded the National Spinsters' Pensions Association, which sought equality with widows, and stood as parliamentary candidate at a by-election in 1936. The association organized a petition with 1 million signatures 1937, reflecting its standing as the largest women's campaigning group of 1930s.

**Cicely Musgrave Craven (1890-1962)** , born in Westmorland, the daughter of a medical officer of health ,and educated at Wycombe Abbey school and St Hilda's College, Oxford, became a civil servant during the First World War. In 1926 she was recruited by Margery Fry as her successor to run Howard League penal reform; she

established good relations with officialdom, was appointed a JP for St Albans, and was elected a Labour Party district councillor. **Charis Ursula Frankenburg [née Barnett] (1892-1985)**, whose mother was a keen suffrage supporter, was educated at Somerville College, Oxford, and trained as a nurse during the First World War, and undertook Quaker war relief work. After the war she was a founder of the Manchester and Salford Women's Citizens' Association, and took up social work in Salford where her main concerns were maternity care and properly trained midwives. She founded a birth control clinic in 1925 and urged the National Council of Women to support provision of birth control advice. As a JP for Salford from 1938 she applied feminist principles on bench, advocating women police, and campaigning against the exclusion of women from juries. **Sarah Winifred Benedict Mayer [née Tapping] (1896-1957)**, followed her parents onto the stage and enrolled at the Academy of Dramatic Art, and after the First World War founded a touring company. She also began to learn judo and became a member of the Budokwai Society. She went to Japan in 1934 where she trained and gained dan (black belt) grade, attracting wide publicity promoting participation by women. **(Frances) Clare Spurgin [née Skurray] (1897-1986)**, the widow of an officer in the Indian army, settled in the North Cotswolds where she was involved in the Women's Institute and became a parish councillor. Appointed a Gloucestershire JP in 1943, she became a specialist in youth crime work and

was involved in international organizations for magistrates, receiving many honours for her international work in building networks of judges involved in youth justice

**Gertrude Isabella Morton Horton [née Robertson]**

**(1901-1978)**, who like others in this release had a suffragist mother, studied science at University College, London and worked for the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship as organizing secretary. She became involved in the foundation of a new group to provide education in citizenship for women enfranchised by the 1928 Act, named the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds 1933. She organized the central office until 1949 and in the early 1950s took part in the equal payment movement. She was also secretary of the Fawcett Society. **Anne Messel [married names: Armstrong-Jones; Parsons], countess of Rosse (1902-1992)**, the daughter of a stockbroker whose family owned Nymans, in Sussex, was a socialite in the 1920s. A debutante 1922, she learned high-class dressmaking at fashionable couturier in Sloane Street. Conservation became her driving passion and in 1957 she founded the Victorian Society. Her conservation interests extended to the dress collection inherited from her mother, and the collection of fans from her father (now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge), while her own wardrobe is preserved in Brighton Museum's costume department. She maintained the family connection with the garden at Nymans, let to the

National Trust by her father and opened to the public in 1954. The release also includes lives of her grandfather **Ludwig Ernst Wilhelm Leonardt Messel (1847-1915)** the German-born stockbroker who settled in Britain and bought Nymans in 1890, and her father **Leopold Charles Rudolph Messel (1872-1953)**, a stockbroker and collector, who inherited Nymans in 1915. **Constance Babington Smith (1912-2000)**, the daughter of a civil servant, was a debutante in 1933, and trained as a milliner. She became involved in motor and air racing at Brooklands, and contributed to the Aeroplane from 1936. Enlisting in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, she trained in photographic interpretation and joined Central Interpretation Unit at Medmenham, and was appointed MBE in 1945 for war work. In 1946 she became the first British woman to receive US Legion of Merit. She published Air Spy in 1957, which inspired a comic strip and a film. **Florence Ogilvy Bell [married name: Sawyer] (1913-2000)** read natural sciences at Girton College, Cambridge and undertook X-ray crystallography research at the Cavendish laboratory before becoming research assistant to William Astbury at Leeds, working on the application of X-ray crystallography to biological materials. Her 1939 Ph.D thesis included the first successful X-ray images of DNA, but her work in this area was brought to an end by war service and marriage.

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