

Oxford DNB: September 2019

The September 2019 update adds 35 new articles, containing 32 biographies, accompanied by 6 portrait likenesses. 2019 is the bicentenary year of Queen Victoria's birth and the particular focus of this month's update is on the Victorian age. The themes covered include art, literature, music, business, medicine, women Chartists, suffragists, and the Great Exhibition.

From September 2019, the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford DNB) offers biographies of 63,399 men and women who have shaped the British past, contained in 61,131 articles. 11,709 biographies include a portrait image of the subject – researched in partnership with the National Portrait Gallery, London.

Introduction to the suffrage biographies, by Elizabeth Crawford

Mrs Pankhurst, leader of the militant Women's Social and Political Union, was a follower of Thomas Carlyle in believing that history was the biography of great men, his theory amended, of course, to include women. This notion was until relatively recently one to which the popular narrative of the

women's suffrage movement also adhered. Published biographies and autobiographies had revealed something of the lives of the leaders of both the constitutional and the militant wings of the movement, but the individual women who had conducted the campaign remained ciphers, their names perhaps known, their personal histories a blank. It is, therefore, particularly pleasing that since 2004 the ODNB has chosen to bring to the fore those whom we might regard as the 'foot soldiers' of the women's suffrage movement. By giving space to so many suffrage campaigners – both constitutional and militant – the ODNB has opened up the movement, allowing us into the lives of those who thought it important that women should be treated as full citizens.

The twentieth-century militant campaign has long dominated the popular narrative of the women's suffrage movement but is only part of the story. It is, therefore, satisfying that the ODNB now includes so many entries on women active in the constitutional campaign, members of societies who would not consider breaking the law in order to gain the vote. The names of these women, once so familiar to their co-activists, have slipped out of the narrative and it is right they should be reinstated, to take their place alongside those whose deeds brought them greater notoriety. For instance, this month's release includes Marion Reid, the Scots author of *A Plea for Women* (1843), whose life links the anti-slavery movement to the women's cause, Phillippine

Kyllmann, who, in the early days of the suffrage campaign, defied opinion by chairing a public suffrage conference, the first annual general meeting of the Manchester Society for Women's Suffrage, and another northern suffragist, Katharine Thomasson, who provided much-needed financial support to the movement. Like so many other suffrage campaigners, such as, from the August release, Mary Haslam, Sarah Lees, and Bertha Mason, Katharine Thomasson was also active in a wide range of philanthropic enterprises. Women such as these knew that, despite their personal attempts at ameliorating poverty, it was only a parliamentary vote that would give them real agency.

By making known details of the campaigners' lives the ODNB entries allow us to assess something of their social backgrounds. The majority, it is clear, were middle-class, but we can also read biographies of some of the working-class activists, such as Selina Cooper and Annie Barnes, the former a suffragist, the latter a suffragette. This month's update month additionally provides us with an entry on Lolita Roy, one of the Indian women known to have been involved in the suffrage campaign.

As well as biographies of members of the non-militant National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, the ODNB includes numerous biographies of militant suffragette 'foot soldiers', members of both the Women's Social and Political Union and of the Women's Freedom League. Three members

of the latter are included in this month's release; Alexia Jack from Edinburgh, Marion Holmes from Croydon, and Mary Hare from Brighton. The fact that they campaigned in different localities is worth noting because the centenary in 2018 of the passing of the Representation of the People Act, which gave the vote to many women over the age of 30, has led to a noticeable 'geographical turn' in the public appreciation of the women's suffrage movement. The campaign is no longer seen as London-centric; there is now a real interest in discovering how and by whom the campaign was conducted at a regional and local level. An increasing number of local studies of the suffrage movement are appearing and there is interest in mapping the distribution of suffragette and suffragist activists throughout the British Isles, together with a desire to commemorate their lives with plaques and even statues. The ODNB is a very useful and accessible resource for those wishing to discover something of the suffrage campaigners in their locality, as well as giving an insight into the varied lives of the women throughout the country who, for over 60 years, were prepared to devote so much time and energy to the Cause.

Introduction to Makers of the Great Exhibition of 1851, by Professor Anthony Howe

Despite revisionist doubts, the Great Exhibition of 1851 remains a unique defining moment in the history of

Victorian Britain, symbolising a new balance between aristocracy and the middle class, land and industry, free trade and protection, the metropolis and the provinces, the state and private enterprise, Britons and foreigners, war and peace. Coming to this entry from having edited four volumes of the letters of Richard Cobden (2007-2015), his part as a member of the Royal Commission for the Exhibition was itself emblematic of this transition, while he also shared a common enthusiasm, 'The great charm of that exhibition was its novelty as a collection and a building. For myself I found the great attraction which made me pay numerous visits to be the glorious effect of the glass building especially at the transept' [to Catherine Cobden, 27 March 1862, Letters of Richard Cobden vol. 4, p. 280]. In 1841, Cobden had been the 'Gothic invader' in the House of Commons as a newly-elected MP, leader of the Anti-Corn Law League at daggers drawn with Sir Robert Peel, and seemingly bent on undermining the aristocratic constitution. By 1850 we find Cobden not only sitting with many erstwhile political enemies such as Peel and Stanley on the royal commission but summoned to Windsor to give advice to Prince Albert, and enjoying cordial relations with courtiers such as Charles Phipps and Charles Grey, Whig aristocrats such as Lord Granville. Cobden had made (and recently lost) a fortune in the cotton industry, but among his fellow commissioners were other newly-wealthy men of industry such as the cotton master Thomas Bazley (also active in the Anti-Corn Law League) and John Gott,

Leeds woollen manufacturer. Also well-known to Cobden were promoters of the Exhibition such as Morton Peto and Joseph Paxton, who advised him on the construction of his conservatory at Dunford in West Sussex. Cobden's intimate friend Salis Schwabe (with whom he had toured France and Spain in 1846-47) also typified the important part played by provincial leaders in ensuring effective collaboration with a still often distrusted metropolis, and a distrusted state. For that collaboration – on this point Cobden had been insistent in discussion with Prince Albert – rested on voluntary efforts, not on the French model of central state support for a 'national exhibition'. This too is a reminder that Cobden, soon to earn the soubriquet 'The International Man', fully shared both Albert's and Henry Cole's determination that the Exhibition should not be national nor simply imperial but international. It is also worth recalling that Cobden's links with Cole went back not only to the days of the League but to the campaign for the Penny Post in 1840. In that sense the Exhibition was seen to continue the reform and utilitarian agenda which had preceded the campaign against the Corn Laws but which radicals such as Cobden and Cole sought to resume in the wake of repeal.

The Exhibition did, however, briefly compromise Cobden in one aspect of his reform aspirations: his support for the peace movement. Cobden proved unwilling to press the wish of the Peace Society and his friends such as Joseph Sturge and

Henry Richard to exclude weapons from the Exhibition, although he supported the idea of the peace congress to accompany the Exhibition and remained the most effective exponent of the peace principles in mid-Victorian politics. Here too it is interesting to put 1851 in a comparative perspective. The next great international or universal exhibition was that of 1855 in Paris, held in the midst of the Crimean war and for which Cobden could evoke no enthusiasm for even visiting. In 1862 for the next Exhibition in Britain, Cobden, similarly depressed by the American Civil War, played only the role of spectator. In 1865, the year of his death, in some of his last letters, he also allowed himself to be nominated as one of the Commissioners for the French Universal Exhibition of 1867. This was to be masterminded by his great friend Michel Chevalier as the true successor to 1851, marking France's adoption of free trade and proclaiming the same message of technological modernism and global economic progress. Following Cobden's death, the organisers of the Anglo-French working-men's exhibition of 1865 struck a commemorative medal in his honour.

Cobden's correspondence network, although in many ways global, was of course never fully representative of all aspects of national life - it did not include engineers such as Brunel, John Scott Russell, Robert Stephenson, or Francis Whishaw (added this month) suggesting the world of the textile-based 'industrial revolution' was to some extent remote from the

second-wave 'capital goods' based industrialisation. Nor did Cobden typically have dealings with London contractors such as George and James Munday, nor architects such as Digby Wyatt. Cobden's views on foreign policy also aroused the ire of Alfred Bate Richards, who dubbed Cobden 'one of the worst enemies this country ever had'. Richards was the journalist husband of Emma Gaggiotti (whose life is included in this month's biographies), a painter patronised by Prince Albert. But Cobden's role in the Exhibition clearly extended his range of sympathies and connections, embodying the wider integration of the nation which the exhibition proclaimed. Even so, in writing about the makers of the Exhibition, apart from the important role of Queen Victoria, it proved very difficult to identify a major feminine contribution. This contrasts significantly with the Anti-Corn Law League bazaar of 1845, often identified as a precursor to Exhibition, in which Mrs Cobden and the wives of the cotton masters played a leading organisation role. Significantly too in the next generation, many daughters of Anti-Corn Law League households would feature prominently in the ranks of first-wave feminist and suffrage organisations. Those households included the Thomassons, for Thomas Thomasson, future father-in-law of Katharine Thomasson included in this month's additions, was one of Cobden's leading correspondents. Absalom Watkin also featured here as an early ally of Cobden in municipal reform in Manchester while his son Edward Watkin was not only his

vigorous adjutant in the League and future Liberal colleague but also biographer of Alderman Cobden of Manchester. Finally, Cobden played a central part in the Association for the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge (whose leading members are the subject of a group article in this month's ODNB update) for the history of which his letters remain an invaluable source.

September 2019: summary of newly-added lives

Mary Ann Gilbert (1776-1845) who was in line to inherit extensive lands in Sussex, was given an expensive education, and went on to marry Davies Giddy, president of the Royal Society. Settled in Eastbourne, she devoted her energies to agricultural improvement on her Southdown estates, where she sought to reduce poverty by providing allotments, enriching wasteland and bringing it into cultivation, and launching local agricultural schools. The radical bookseller and printer in Leeds, Yorkshire, **Alice Mann (1791-1865)**, took over her husband's business after the latter's death in a cholera epidemic, was twice imprisoned for selling unstamped newspapers, Leeds Chartists being among her customers, and she went on to develop the publishing side of the business, including almanacs and practical manuals which appeared under her imprint until after her death. Married to a Spencean revolutionary tailor in London,

Elizabeth Neesom (1797/8-1868) was founding secretary of the London Female Democratic Association and drew up its foundation address, which argued that lack of education was the main obstacle to women's participation in political and social affairs. She ran a school in Brick Lane and promoted temperance and 'knowledge' Chartism, before embracing vegetarianism. Another influential female Chartist was **Elizabeth Hanson (1797/8-1886)**, who spent most of her life in the woollen textile industry town of Elland, West Yorkshire, where she was married to a shoemaker, campaigned against the New Poor Law, and in 1838 founded a Female Radical Association to bring a female perspective to the formative period of Chartism. She came to wider attention when she disputed predictions that economic expansion would alleviate poverty. In 1843 the feminist writer **Marion Reid (1815-1902)**, daughter of a Glasgow tobacconist and married to a chemistry lecturer in Liverpool, wrote her *A Plea For Women* which was an early statement of the case for equal rights for women, in opposition to influential contemporary anti-feminist writings. Her arguments foreshadowed those of John Stuart Mill on this subject, and her book was admired by the early women's suffragist Anne Knight.

Philippine Eléonor Estelle Esther Kyllmann (1833-1916), born in Paris and married to a German businessman who settled in Manchester, was a member (with her

husband) of a committee founded in Manchester in 1865 to work for the enfranchisement of women, and chaired its annual general meeting in October 1868. In November 1868 she was claimant in a test legal case which (unsuccessfully) sought to establish that the wording of a historic freehold franchise might apply to women equally with men. She had contacts with Mill and Taylor, and broke away from the Manchester Society after its secretary, Lydia Becker, alienated Mill and Taylor and the London suffrage movement. The daughter of a Suffolk landowner and sister of an MP, **Mary Henniker-Major (1838-1902)** grew up in a political household, and took part in organized philanthropy. She was a notably effective organizer of the Primrose League in Suffolk, to mobilise popular Toryism in the late nineteenth century, and involving women who, though disfranchised, she regarded as essential participants in the politics. Also from a political family was **Katharine Thomasson (1841-1932)**, whose mother and aunt were suffragists, while two of her uncles were MPs. She married an MP, and one of their sons became an MP. From 1870 she was active in suffrage organizations. After her cotton-manufacturer husband's death, leaving her extremely wealthy, she became a donor to the Aborigines' Protection Society, and continued her involvement in the women's movement. Born in Roehampton, the daughter of a wealthy banker, **Adeline Mary Chapman (1847-1931)** experienced the inequality of Victorian divorce laws when she was unable to divorce her

former MP on the ground of his adultery. From 1901 she was active in the suffrage movement and, unable to support militancy but feeling that the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies was insufficiently effective, became in 1910 a founder of the New Constitutional Society for Women's Suffrage, which had a policy of opposing government candidates at elections. She became president of the new society and travelled around the country addressing meetings, evaded the 1911 census, and as a member of the Tax Resistance League had goods distrained. **Alice Abadam (1856-1940)**, the daughter of a Carmarthen landowner, converted to Roman Catholicism in early adulthood and undertook philanthropic work in Carmarthen before moving to London where she belonged to a variety of suffrage organizations and became a peripatetic speaker for the cause, regarded as particularly effective, and frequently directed at the exploitation of women and girls. **Mary Elizabeth Cozens (1857-1920)**, the daughter of a prosperous farmer, became involved in women's suffrage organizations after moving to London in the early 1890s and gained a reputation as an outspoken advocate of the cause. Eased out of existing organizations, she was the moving force behind the Parliamentary Committee for Women's Suffrage, supporting Conservative pro-suffrage candidates and she publicly attacked the existing societies. **Edith Charlotte Bury Palliser (1859-1927)** from an Anglo-Irish landowning family, became in 1895 paid secretary to the Central

Committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage in succession to Helen Blackburn, and remained at the heart of the constitutional suffrage movement until 1919. She also funded and edited the Women's Suffrage Record from 1903 to 1906. Trained a schoolteacher, **Alexia Butter Jack (1863-1948)** was promoted to 'first assistant' at a school in Edinburgh, the highest position then open to women in that school system, and she believed that only by gaining the parliamentary vote could women teachers achieve equal pay and prospects. She had also been confronted with the problems of extreme poverty, and became an early member of the Women's Freedom League, which campaigned before for women's suffrage and social welfare, becoming first secretary of the Edinburgh branch. She was an effective public speaker for the cause. **Mary Adelaide Hare (1865-1945)** attended the Ealing College for Teachers of the Deaf, and established a school for the deaf which moved to Brighton in 1894 and Burgess Hill in 1916. Her experiences as teacher, and the need to earn her own living, led her into the suffrage movement, in which she was secretary of the Brighton branch of the Women's Freedom League, and boycotted the 1911 census. A school for the deaf was named after her following her death. **Bessie Lyle Hatton (1867-1964)**, born in Worcester the daughter of a journalist, showed theatrical talent from childhood, toured provincial theatres in early twenties, and wrote fairy tales before writing plays for the suffrage movement. In 1908 she

founded the Women Writers' Suffrage League and was its organizing secretary. **Marion Emma Holmes (1867-1943)**, brought up in East Retford, Nottinghamshire, the daughter of a colliery manager, married a grocer and lived for a while in Margate, Kent, where she founded the Margate Pioneer Society, to involve women in progressive movements, include the suffrage. Moving to Croydon, she became a member of the national executive of the Women's Freedom League and jointly edited its paper, *The Vote*. In 1918 she acted as election agent for the first woman to stand for parliament, Nina Boyle, though the nomination was rejected.

(Sara) Jessie Stephenson (1873-1966) born into a landowning family in Lincolnshire, moved to London in 1903 and found employment as a clerk to a barrister. She joined the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) and became devoted to the Pankhursts. A speaker at the Women's Sunday rally in June 1908, she damaged the door at the home of a Liberal minister in 1910, in protest against the brutal treatment of women by the police, and was imprisoned in Holloway. As WSPU organizer in Manchester, she organized the 1911 census boycott there, but retired from militant action.

The release includes the lives of two women born in Calcutta. The first, **Toru Dutt (1856-1877)**, was the daughter of converts to Christianity who were strong formative

influences, encouraging her literary interests and study of Sanskrit. In 1869 the family travelled by sea to Europe, first to France where she learned French before moving to England where she studied in London and Cambridge. Returning to India she read the works of French and English Romantic writers as well as Sanskrit epics, and in series of writings, many published posthumously, she pioneered the Indian women's literary tradition in English. She died from consumption aged only twenty-one. Born in Calcutta and married to a barrister there, **Lolita Roy (b. 1865)** moved to London with her six children at the turn of the twentieth century, and became involved in social associations for Indians in London. In 1911 she took part in the suffrage procession to mark the coronation of King George V, and in 1919 she campaigned for women's suffrage in India. In 2018 she was among the names commemorated on the plinth of the Millicent Fawcett statue in Parliament Square.

Four lives of artists whose careers began in the Victorian age are included in the update. **Emma Camilla Angela Maria Gaggiotti (1825-1912)**, born in Rome where she had an artistic training, came to Britain on her marriage to the journalist Alfred Bate Richards, but the couple soon separated, and she was forced to support herself through painting. In 1850 Prince Albert acquired the first of six paintings by her now in the Royal Collection. Three were

allegorical paintings given to Queen Victoria by Albert on her birthday in 1851 and Christmas in 1851 and 1852. She exhibited at the Royal Academy before leaving London in 1854. In 1861 Albert commissioned a further work from her. She returned to Italy in 1865 and settled in Florence. **Edward Robert Hughes (1851-1914)**, nephew of the Pre-Raphaelite painter Arthur Hughes, trained at the Royal Academy Schools, and made his exhibiting debut at the academy in 1870. He initially specialized as a portrait painter and gained a reputation for his sensitive images of children, but also privately worked as a studio assistant to Holman Hunt. In the 1890s he embarked on a series of watercolours on subjects from English and Italian literature, and in the last years of his life, in the early twentieth century, became best known for his 'blue phantasies'. **Sir Arthur Stockdale Cope (1857-1940)**, the son of a successful genre artist, started at the Royal Academy Schools in 1874 and made his exhibiting debut at the academy in 1876. In 1888 he opened his own art school, Vanessa Bell (who rebelled against his Victorian orthodoxy) being among his most famous students. He developed a successful career as a portraitist, specializing in male subjects, particularly those in high office, and in the early twentieth century was chosen for royal portraits. He earned greatest renown for his monumental group portrait, *Some Sea Officers of the War* (1921), presented to the National Portrait Gallery and restored in 2013. **Beatrice Emma Parsons (1869-1955)** enrolled in Saturday-morning art

classes for women at King's College, London, before being admitted to the Royal Academy Schools where in 1891 she was among 96 students who petitioned against the exclusion of women from life classes. In the 1890s she became associated with the Arts and Crafts circle in west London and embarked on a series of religious paintings influenced by high church Anglicanism, but it was her garden pictures which drew the attention of galleries, secured lucrative commissions, and were the subject of her first solo exhibition in 1904 – the first of at least twenty-one over the course of her career. Thirty-one watercolours by her are in the Royal Collection.

The other Victorian lives include **Absalom Watkin (1787-1861)**, a reformer in the early years of Victoria's reign. He was an only moderately successful cotton broker in Manchester, where he helped formulate the campaign for the city's incorporation, was on the first list of its magistrates, and was a prominent campaigner against the corn laws. Self-taught, he was an avid reader and member of Manchester's literary institutions, and his greatest significance lies in the diary that he kept from 1803 to 1856, offering a view of Manchester in its years as 'the shock city of the industrial revolution' and the civic culture of the Manchester radicals at the moment of their greatest national significance. **(Robert Cunningham) Graham Speirs**

(1797-1847), whose family wealth was grounded in the Glasgow tobacco trade, became Sheriff of Midlothian in 1840, prominent in the civic affairs of Edinburgh, taking an interest in prison reform and ragged schools, and serving on the kirk session of the church of St Giles. During the Disruption in the Church of Scotland, he took the side of the Free Church of Scotland and in 1845 took up the cause of those congregations of the Free Church denied a site for their places of worship by landowners and forced to worship in the open air or in tents. His early death was reckoned to have robbed the Free Church of its leading layman. In 1813

Andrew Ross (1798-1859) was apprenticed to a mathematical instrument maker, and in 1830 started his own business as a mathematical and optical instrument maker, and received awards from the Society of Arts for his optical inventions. Moving to Regent Street, London, he was a founder member of the Microscopical Society in 1839 and at the Great Exhibition in 1851 won medals for his microscopes and for his large equatorial telescope. The civil engineer and inventor **Francis Whishaw (1804-1856)**, was an advocate for the expansion of Britain's railway system. In 1842 he became secretary to the Society of Arts which was close to bankruptcy. He recruited new paying members, and revived its influence in other ways. He attempted to use the society to introduce national exhibitions of industry, and held events combining demonstrations of new inventions combined with entertaining social occasions. His ideas were later revived,

after he left the society, and culminated in the Great Exhibition of 1851, though he subsequently received only limited recognition as the originator of the idea. **Waller Augustus Lewis (bap. 1816, d. 1882)** qualified in medicine and developed an early interest in public health, and made investigations into the spread of cholera. His work was encouraged by the home secretary, Lord Palmerston. In 1855 he was appointed the first medical officer of the General Post Office, responsible for establishing the medical service for one of the largest employers in the country. He established a health care system that by the turn of the twentieth century employed over 1,800 doctors and administered free medical attendance to over 100,000 workers across the United Kingdom. **Charles Horner (1837-1896)**, born near Halifax, Yorkshire, shortly after Victoria's accession to the throne, was apprenticed to a watchmaker and jeweller, and set up a thriving retailing and manufacturing business, one of whose most widely used products were reinforced safety thimbles, which he patented. In 1880 **Edward Heneage, first baron Heneage (1840-1922)** was elected Liberal MP for Great Grimsby, where his family had property and commercial interests, and took office under Gladstone in 1886 but resigned over the prime minister's conversion to Irish home rule. He became a key organizer of the Liberal Unionist party and was raised to the peerage in 1895. The first major solo engagement of the tenor singer **Edward Lloyd (1845-1927)** was the Three Choirs Festival at Gloucester in 1871 and

continued to perform there for twenty-nine years. From 1873 to 1900 he was a firm favourite at the Philharmonic Society of London, and also at the triennial Handel festivals at Crystal Palace. By 1880 he was considered one of the pre-eminent oratorio signers of his age. His farewell concert took place at the Albert Hall in December 1900. **Sir William George Watson, first baronet (1861-1930)**, the son of a Warwickshire tenant farmer, was apprenticed to a Birmingham provisions merchant, with whom he started a dairy chain store business in 1887, selling Danish premium butter and margarine. Watson opened his first store in Wolverhampton in 1887, and in 1891 rebranded his stores the Maypole Dairy Co. By 1895 they had sixty retail shops, and merged the parallel Jackson business to create a chain of 187 branch stores and 17 creameries, and went on to enlarge by acquiring ownership of margarine factories. By 1915 the company had over 800 stores and Watson acquired a country house near Reading. In the First World War the company was undermined by competitors and in 1924 was acquired by Home and Colonial Stores. The failure of a second generation to carry on the business has been seen as an example of dynastic failure.

Three group articles bring together the individuals involved in collective endeavours during the Victorian age and after.

The Makers of the Great Exhibition of 1851 (act. 1848-1851) surveys those who planned the Exhibition of the

Works of Industry of All Nations, held in London between May and October 1851, with 14,000 exhibitors and over 100,000 exhibits, and attended by six million British and foreign visitors to the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park. It brings to light 'their divisions, mutual suspicion, personal rivalries, and often bitter disputes' which were submerged by the harmony and common purpose which accompanied the successful staging of the exhibition. The **Association for Promoting the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge (act. 1851-1868)**, founded shortly before the Great Exhibition opened, sought to repeal the financial burdens – advertising duty, stamp duty, and the excise on paper – which fell particularly on newspapers, and which were augmented after Peterloo(1819) both to control political expression and to raise revenue. The campaign for their repeal brought together 'a loose and frequently tense coalition of interests' across the range of mid-Victorian radicalism. Its successful campaign led to scores of new daily newspapers and hundreds of new provincial weeklies, which transformed the British press. The **Founders of the Victoria League (act. 1901-1914)** created a predominantly female imperial propaganda society, named for Queen Victoria and inaugurated shortly after the monarch's death. It was non-political, including members from all major parties, as well as pro- and anti-suffragists, and provided a forum for imperial activism.

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