

Oxford DNB: March 2021

Welcome to the seventy-second update of the *Oxford DNB*, which adds five new lives from the late-medieval and early-modern periods.

From March 2021, the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (*Oxford DNB*) offers biographies of 64,085 men and women who have shaped the British past, contained in 61,759 articles. 11,798 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](#).

March 2021: summary of newly-added content

The lives in this month's update have a focus on immigrants, craftspeople, artists, and the court. The first group of lives were

master masons. **William Joy [Joye] (fl. 1310–1346/7)**, was a fourteenth-century mason best known for his work on Salisbury, Wells, and Exeter Cathedrals. Among the surviving examples of his work are the celebrated ‘strainer arches’ at Salisbury cathedral and the scissor arches of the crossing at Wells. Pragmatic in working with the constraints of existing material, and original in both his engineering solutions and design work, Joy is considered a trail blazer of the English Decorated style. Brothers **Thomas Strong (c. 1632–1681)** and **Edward Strong (d. 1724)** were sons of Valentine Strong (d. 1662), a freemason and quarry owner from Taynton in Oxfordshire. The brothers might have continued as successful building contractors in Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire were it not for the great fire of London in 1666, following which the city relaxed restrictions on who might work in the city as tradesmen. Subsequently, Thomas won contracts to rebuild the churches of St Stephen Walbrook, St Benet Paul’s Wharf, St Augustine Watling Street, and most notably St Paul’s all under the direction of Christopher Wren. On his brother’s death Edward went on to complete these contracts, later also working with his son (also Edward) on Blenheim Palace and the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich, both of which are now UNESCO world heritage sites.

The second group of lives are immigrants to early modern London who found positions or built careers connected to the court. A mercenary with the English at the siege of Boulogne in 1544 **Giovanni**

Battista Castiglione [alias John Baptist Castillion] (c. 1515–1598), was provided with letters of introduction to the privy council by Henry VIII, and by October was in London serving as Italian tutor to Princess Elizabeth (and possibly her brother Edward), in whom he instilled a love for both the Italian language and culture. Tortured badly during the reign of Mary I, Castiglione became a gentleman of the Privy Chamber in Elizabeth's reign. A respected figure in London's Italian community Castiglione was involved in the publication of the first book in Italian in England - Aconcio's *Una essortatione al timor di Dio*. He married Margaret Compagni (c.1535–1622), who became a gentlewoman of the Privy Chamber and mother of the maids. A native of Haarlem in the Netherlands (and possibly an orphan) **Peter Richardson (c. 1505–1587)** emigrated to London in the 1520 and by the 1540s had become one of the foremost goldsmiths and jewellers in the city. In 1540 he became goldsmith to Anne of Cleves, and on Henry VIII's marriage to Katherine Parr in 1543 the new queen took him into her household. Richardson was one of a handful of artists in gold and gems whose works became the currency of the court during the Tudor period.