

## Oxford DNB: May 2021

Welcome to the seventy-fourth update of the *Oxford DNB*, which adds 18 new lives and 1 portrait likeness. The newly-added biographies range from the noblewoman Jane Dudley, duchess of Northumberland, to Eleanor Cavanagh, lady's maid and correspondent from Russia, and include a cluster with a focus on catholic lay culture in early modern England. They have been curated and edited by Dr Anders Ingram of the ODNB.

From May 2021, the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (*Oxford DNB*) offers biographies of 64, 115 men and women who have shaped the British past, contained in 61, 787 articles. 11,802 biographies include a portrait image of the subject – researched in partnership with the National Portrait Gallery, London.

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participating British public libraries, and how to gain access to the complete dictionary, are available [here](#).

### **May 2021: summary of newly-added content**

The lives in this month's update focus on Early Modern Women and particularly on the adaptations of underground catholic lay culture in the face of religious turbulence and persecution in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. **Joan Aldred [née Ferneley] (b. 1546, d. after 12 Oct 1625)**, and her husband Solomon were catholic activists who seem to have received a papal pension for their role in supporting the landing of the secret Jesuit mission of Edmund Campion. While Solomon became a double agent in the service of Walsingham, Joan was part of a book smuggling ring bringing catholic imprints from Robert Parson's press at Rouen into England. Joan was also associated with the catholic countess of Arundel, and her husband the thirteenth earl who was implicated in the Throckmorton plot and imprisoned (dying in the Tower). At the heart of this book smuggling operation centred on the Newgate and Marshalsea prisons was **Agnes Alford (b. c. 1523, d. after 1587)**, widow of a venetian doctor and wife of parliamentarian Francis Alford. A surviving manifest shows Agnes was responsible for distributing nearly half of the more than 600 continental catholic imprints brought to England. Contemporary, **Cicely Hopton [married name Marshall] (d. 1625)**, was the daughter of the keeper of the Tower of London. She fell in love with an imprisoned catholic gentleman named John Stoner and

secretly converted. Across the next seven years she seems to have covertly passed messages to and from her co-religionists imprisoned in the Tower and Marshalsea, including Francis Throckmorton, conspirator against Elizabeth I. These revelations were discovered in the investigations of the Tower and earl of Arundel following the defeat of the Spanish armada and undermined her father's position as keeper.

One of those due to receive a prohibited book smuggled by Alford *et.al.* was **Muriel Tresham [née Throckmorton] (1547x50–1615)**, a catholic gentlewoman whose family's decision to adhere to their religious convictions had brought considerable social and financial hardships. Muriel headed the family and sought support from relatives and correspondents during her husband Thomas's frequent imprisonments. In the wake of the general panic following the Gunpowder Plot (in which her son Francis Tresham was involved), she concealed her family papers in a wall cavity where they remained safe until 1828. They are a treasury for modern scholarship.

Associated with both the smuggling ring and the earlier covert book distribution activities of Thomas Alfield (as well as illegally harbouring priests) the crown's suspicions of **Dorothy Pouncefoot (1533?–1590?)** and her family were summarised in a formal seven-point 'articles of misdemeanor' in 1590. The document is one of the the most detailed and revealing official indictments of a prominent Catholic gentry woman of the Elizabethan period. The persecution of recusants continued into the seventeenth century. Despite this and her family's connections to Gunpowder Plotters **Helena Wintour**

**(1600?–1671)**, ignored the conventions for catholic gentlewomen – convent or marriage – and instead established an independent household. Notable among her activities was the creation of the extraordinary collection of embroidered Catholic vestments, for which she is now remembered, which survive largely intact today at Stonyhurst College, Lancashire, and Douai Abbey, Reading.

Amongst the most eye-catching of this month's subjects are important figures at court whose lives often intertwined with high politics. **Jane Dudley [née Guildford], duchess of Northumberland (1508/9–1555)**, wife of John Dudley, and a highly significant presence at the court in her own right. Following the death of Edward VI, the Dudleys attempted to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne, with disastrous consequences for Jane including the execution of John, her son Guildford, and Lady Jane Grey. Subsequently Jane Dudley tirelessly campaigned for the release and pardon of her surviving sons, successfully cultivating Spanish courtiers in Phillip's court, but dying shortly after achieving this goal. Edward VI's cousin **Margaret Clifford, countess of Derby (1540–1593)**, was dangerously close to both the succession and Dudleys. Following their fall, she married Henry Stanley, Lord Strange, although the marriage was an unhappy and fractured one. In 1579 careless gossip about Elizabeth I prospective marriage to François, duke of Anjou, led to Margaret being put under house arrest. In the investigation which followed a medical practitioner she had invited into her household was arraigned for conjuring. Margaret was later the dedicatee of Greene's *The Myrroure of Modestie*, while her son's players worked on an early

draft of Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part II*. Her mother **Eleanor Brandon (c. 1519–1547), countess of Cumberland**, is also included. **Margaret Neville (c. 1525–1546)**, was the daughter of John Neville, third Baron Latimer. When Latimer remarried for a second time his third wife was Katharine Parr. Margaret's childhood was overshadowed by violent events: during the uprising known as 'Pilgrimage of Grace', Snape castle was stormed, her father carried off, and the household held prisoner by a mob. Following Latimer's later death Parr married Henry VIII and Margaret was to all intents and purposes the new Queen's daughter, serving as a messenger between Katharine and princess Elizabeth in the year the latter was exiled from court.

Other prominent noblewomen and courtiers in this release include **Katherine Daubeney [née Howard; other married name ap Rhys], countess of Bridgwater (d. 1554)**. Daughter of Thomas Howard, second duke of Norfolk Katherine was married to Rhys ap Gruffudd (c.1508–1531) as a teenager. When Gruffudd was disappointed in his ambition to succeed to chamberlain and chief justice of south Wales, he violently forced his way into Carmarthen Castle but was arrested. Katherine raised a force to storm the castle and rescue him. The eventual consequence was that Gruffudd was executed for treason. Nor was this the end of Katherine's troubles, later reports suggest that she was involved in the 'Pilgrimage of Grace' and the following decade she was heavily implicated in the fall of her half-niece Queen Catherine Howard. **Lady Jane Vaux [married names Guildford and Poyntz] (c. 1462–d. 1537)** led a less tempestuous life. From a prominent family, she married first Sir Richard Guildford – who died

on pilgrimage – then Sir Anthony Poyntz. Her own career at court began as a Lady in waiting to Margaret Beaufort and later Elizabeth of York, to whose daughters, Margaret (1489–1541) and Mary Tudor (1496–1533), she served as governess. When Mary married Louis XII in 1514, Jane was appointed head of the large entourage of women who accompanied the princess to France. As a widow she lodged at a house of Black Friars near Bristol, and wrote frostily to Thomas Cromwell, concerning the blanket order excluding women from male religious communities in 1535. **Susan [née de Vere], countess of Montgomery (1587–1629)** was the daughter of Edward de Vere, seventeenth earl of Oxford and granddaughter of William Cecil, Lord Burghley. Her marriage to Philip Herbert, later first earl of Montgomery, was a grand affair displaying every mark of royal favour. A close affection between the Montgomerys and the royal couple proved lifelong, and as a favourite of Queen Ann Susan participated in many court masques. Part of the Sidney–Herbert circle of writers and literary patrons, Lady Susan was also celebrated by several prominent Jacobean writers.

Arranged marriages and social and legal strictures against divorce meant that marital breakdown might easily come to dominate the life of an early modern woman. **Anne Parr [née Bouchier], seventh Baroness Bouchier (1517–1571)** was the daughter and heir of Henry Bouchier, second earl of Essex, from a family rich in lands but heavily in debt. At the age of ten Anne was married to William Parr, with the expectation that he might inherit the title of Essex. From the outset two were badly matched in the extreme. Parr had a series of public

affairs and Anne eloped and lived separately with one 'Huntley'. Meanwhile the king had bestowed the title of Essex on his favourite Cromwell – and even following the latter's fall was not keen to bestow the title on Parr given his scandalous marital circumstances. Parr's subsequent efforts to annul his marriage to Anne became embroiled in the high politics of the protectorate of Somerset in the minority years of Edward VI and reign of Mary I. Anne was able to broker a lasting compromise of sorts through her relationship with Queen Mary. Of less import to high politics but just as fascinating is the life of **Elizabeth Bourne (c. 1549–1599)**. In her youth she had been the ward of Sir Henry Jerningham, however, his choice of a husband for her was disastrous. Anthony Bourne was a pathological cheat, liar, and philanderer, extremely prone to physical violence, who squandered the Bourne estate and ruined the family's fortunes. Elizabeth began to seek legal regress for Anthony's vicious and unrelenting crimes against her, and when the latter was sent to the tower Sir John Conway (1535–1603) was placed in trust of his assets, becoming a guardian to Elizabeth's two daughters. Bourne and Conway developed a passionate relationship and her surviving letters to him are strikingly unguarded about physical and emotional love, a rare quality in surviving women's letters from the period. Her correspondence affords unique insights into Elizabethan women's interactions with the legal and marital systems, and into their erotic imagination.

The extant auto-biographies and letters of early modern women are often written by aristocratic authors, however, the following two

sources illustrate the lives of servants. **Jane [also Rehova/Ryhova] Daniell [née de la Kethulle], (b. c. 1565, d. after 1612)** was the daughter of François de la Kethulle (Flemish, van de Kethulle), a protestant military leader in the Dutch revolt. She came to England as a religious refugee and entered the service of Frances (c. 1568–1632), soon to be wife of Robert Devereux, earl of Essex. In 1595 she married Essex's sometime retainer **John Daniell of Daresbury**, who found by chance a casket of letters entrusted to Jane and blackmailed the countess for £1720. Following Essex's fall Frances' powerful friends pursued John Daniell legally to his great destruction. Jane became a serial petitioner wielding considerable rhetorical poise in her numerous attempts to obtain relief for her family. Surviving in a presentation manuscript dated 1606 and, paired with a narrative from her husband, Jane's 'A True Declaration of the Misfortunes of Jane Danyell' is a remarkable autobiographical narrative, in which she sought to justify her action and clear her name. **Eleanor Cavanagh [Cavanaugh] (fl. 1805–7)**, was lady's maid to the traveller and diarist Katherine Wilmot. In 1805 she travelled to Russia with Wilmot, spending two years in the company of Princess Ekaterina Romanovna Dashkova. Cavanagh's experiences in Russia are recorded in two letters, providing a rare insight into the experiences and impressions of a lady's maid in the early nineteenth century, and are an important addition to the record of Irish travel and migration.