

Oxford DNB: May 2020

Welcome to the sixty-second update of the *Oxford DNB*, which adds sixteen new lives, in fourteen articles, accompanied by five portrait likenesses. The release has a focus on Victorian women's lives, especially in the field of nursing, but also in art, education, authorship, embroidery, and prison government.

From May 2020, the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (*Oxford DNB*) offers biographies of 63,744 men and women who have shaped the British past, contained in 61,460 articles. 11,806 biographies include a portrait image of the subject – researched in partnership with the National Portrait Gallery, London.

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May 2020: summary of newly-added lives

Margaret Alexis Bell (1818-1889), born in Glasgow, the daughter of a Methodist minister, became a schoolmistress in her twenties, and in 1851 established at Winnington Hall, Cheshire, a notable boarding school for girls, whose wide-ranging curriculum and broad-church religious atmosphere was admired by like-minded contemporaries. These notably included John Ruskin, a frequent visitor and supporter of the school. Bell's innovative approach to girls' education was not matched by her business abilities, and her school was in financial difficulties by 1872 (the year in which the Girls' Public Day School Company was set up to raise capital for establishing academic day schools for girls). One legacy of Bell's remarkable school was the artistic training which it gave many of its pupils. Ruskin's involvement in Winnington Hall and its pupils followed his brief and unsuccessful marriage to **Euphemia Chalmers [Effie] Gray [married names: Ruskin; Millais], Lady Millais (1828-1897)**, who in 1853 sat for her future husband John Everett Millais. From the beginning of her marriage to Millais, Effie Gray acted as his studio manager, choreographing his shows, though despite her husband's elevation to the baronetcy she continued to face social ostracism for the failure of her first marriage. She was finally admitted to Queen Victoria's drawing room shortly before her husband's death. Like Effie Gray, **Catherine Elizabeth Macready [Kate] Perugini [née Dickens; other married name**

Collins], (1839-1929), daughter of Charles Dickens, sat for Millais; and like Gray, Kate Dickens's first marriage (to the Pre-Raphaelite artist Charles Collins) was a failure. She had shown talent for drawing and painting from a young age, and had attended Bedford College for Women. Married again, to another artist, Kate Perugini exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1877 to 1904, mainly genre scenes depicting children or young people, and often drawing on scenes from her father's novels. She undertook paid commissions and was a professional member of the Society of Lady Artists. Another figure in this release who sat for the Pre-Raphaelites (including Millais) was **Fanny Eaton (*née* Antwistle/Entwistle) (1835-1924)**, an occasional model at the Royal Academy of Arts School of Painting. Born a freewoman of colour in Jamaica, she came with her mother, a laundress, to London where she had ten children, born between 1858 and 1879 with her husband, a horse cab proprietor. Her face first appeared at the Royal Academy exhibition in 1860 and she ceased to model after 1867. Latterly she worked as needlewoman and housekeeper, and was living in Hammersmith at the time of her death.

Like Margaret Bell, the mother of the embroiderer and businesswoman **Elizabeth Wardle (1834-1902)** ran a small boarding school in north-west England (the father having left the family) and Elizabeth Wardle herself attended boarding schools in the region before her marriage to the leading silk dyer and printer, Sir Thomas Wardle. After the birth of the last of her fourteen children,

she founded the Leek Embroidery Society with her husband. The society was initially established as a school, modelled on the Royal School of Art Needlework, and Elizabeth Wardle was the principal instructor. The most famous product of the school, the creation of the facsimile (now preserved in Reading Museum), of the Bayeux Tapestry, which she instigated, and which was completed in 1886, was the work of thirty-five needlewomen. It was not only a marketing device for the school but also an echo of the belief that the original had been created by Queen Matilda and her ladies, and an assertion of the public role of women. A similar concern to recover the historical experience of women was evident in the writings of **Marian Andrews, [née Hare; pseud. Christopher Hare] (1839-1929)**, the eldest of three sisters whose lives are included in this update, daughters of the political reformer and advocate of proportional representation, Thomas Hare. Married to an Anglican parish priest, Andrews began writing short stories inspired by Wiltshire rural life, but went on to produce biographies of Margaret of Austria, and Isabella of Castile, and a collection of lives of *The Most Illustrious Ladies of the Italian Renaissance*. Her second sister, **Alice Westlake [née Hare] (1842-1923)**, married to the Cambridge jurist John Westlake, was a women's suffragist, a member of the Langham Place Group, and was elected a member of the London School Board, as well as being an amateur artist, exhibiting at the Royal Academy and Paris Salon. The younger of the sisters, **Katharine Clayton [née Hare] (1843-1933)**, signed the 1866 women's suffrage petition while living in the family home at

Gosbury Hill, Hook, in Surrey. After marrying an Anglican clergyman she settled in Peterborough, where she was made a freeman for her long voluntary service on local bodies. In 1895 she organized the raising of a memorial in Peterborough Cathedral to Katherine of Aragon by the unconventional means of inviting every Katherine in the country to donate a penny to the appeal.

Eight of the women whose lives are included in this update held positions of authority in public institutions – seven in hospitals, one in a prison. In 1853 **Emma Mary Martin (*née* Edgcumbe; *first married name* Pilcher) (1807–1871)** was appointed by the home secretary, Lord Palmerston, to the position of lady superintendent of the prison for female convicts newly-opened at Brixton, following the abolition of transportation of criminals to the colonies. Twice widowed, and with eleven children to support, she was the daughter of an official at the Chatham dockyard, and the widow of a prison chaplain. As well as responsibility for up to 600 convicts, she also supervised 60 staff. Her regime as prison governor is well documented, and reflected a belief in the possibility of reform, a view replaced by a more retributive emphasis in government policy after 1863. The prison closed in 1869, when she retired on a pension. In 1854, without prior training as a nurse, **Sarah Elizabeth Wardroper (*née* Bisshopp) (1813 – 1892)** was appointed matron of St Thomas's Hospital, London. Born at Bury, Sussex, the daughter of a farmer, she was the widow of a surgeon, left with four young children to support and (following her father's

bankruptcy) in need of income. Her role at St Thomas's was initially limited to domestic affairs, though she took on the supervision of the entire nursing staff, and became superintendent of the new Nightingale School of Nursing there. Her skills lay in hospital management rather than nurse education and her relationship with Florence Nightingale grew difficult, especially in the face of complaints about Wardroper's autocratic style. Nevertheless she improved the administration of the hospital and raised the status of nursing within it. In 1861 **Mary Merryweather (1818-1880)** was recruited by the Unitarian merchant and philanthropist William Rathbone to become the first Lady Superintendent of the Liverpool Training School and Home, to train nurses for the Liverpool Royal Infirmary. Born in Dorset but brought up in Caldbeck, Cumberland, where her father was a farmer and proprietor of a lead mine, Merryweather, who was a Quaker and needed to support herself financially, had previously run evening classes for working women at a silk factory in Essex organized by the Unitarian Samuel Courtauld. In 1874 she moved to a post at the Westminster Hospital Training School, where she was involved in a controversy with the medical staff over control of the nursing. One of the first generation of lady superintendents, she was not herself trained, and was mainly involved in the supervision, support, and discipline of the mainly working-class women who constituted the nursing workforce, while also taking part in the women's rights movement through her association with the Langham Place group.

On Florence Nightingale's recommendation, **Jane Catherine Shaw Stewart (1821-1905)** was appointed Superintendent-General of female nurses in army hospitals, a post she took up in 1861. Born in London, the daughter of a landowning baronet and MP, Shaw Stewart had divided her time between London and Renfrewshire, where she built and endowed an Episcopalian church. She met Nightingale in London in 1854 and after gaining experience at Westminster and Guy's hospitals joined the second party of nurses to go to the Crimea, where Nightingale appointed her a hospital superintendent. She was one of the few of the lady volunteers who gave direct care to the soldiers. She supported Nightingale in her endeavours after the war. However, there were complaints about her conduct as Superintendent-General of female nurses, and a commission of inquiry was held in 1868, when she resigned, after which the post was abolished. In 1867 **Lucy Osburn (1836-1891)** was selected by Nightingale to lead a party of nurses for the Sydney Infirmary, New South Wales. Born in Leeds, Yorkshire, Osburn was adopted by her maternal aunt and was well educated, learning several languages, but her High Church Anglicanism led to conflict with her evangelical family. After spending time as a governess to a surgeon's family in Jerusalem, she became a lady probationer at St Thomas's Hospital. In New South Wales she insisted that nursing was a vocation, replaced male nurses with women, and improved nurses' working conditions, though she was prevented from instituting formal training. She became the colony's third highest-paid female employee, and after attacks on her, a royal

commission vindicated her. Through her trainees she spread Nightingale's ideal of nursing throughout Australia. Nightingale was also responsible for selecting **Angélique Lucille Pringle (1846-1920)** to go to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary in 1872, and subsequently pushed her into taking the position of lady superintendent there. Born at Hawick, Roxburghshire, the daughter of a commercial traveller, Pringle enrolled in 1868 as a probationer nurse at St Thomas's Hospital. Nightingale regarded her as the best probationer and referred to her as 'a pearl'. She remained at Edinburgh for over fifteen years, modernising nursing at the hospital and overseeing Scotland's first school of nursing. Again under pressure from Nightingale, she moved to St Thomas's in 1887 as matron in succession to Wardroper, but stood down in 1890 after converting to Roman Catholicism. She went on to hold positions in Irish poor law institutions, where she trained the local nuns, and spent two years as matron of a hospital in Waltham, Massachusetts, where there was a training school. Her only book on nursing, published in 1905, emphasized her belief that character was a nurse's best qualification.

In 1878 **Catherine Jane Wood, (1841-1930)** became lady superintendent of the Hospital for Sick Children at Great Ormond Street in London. Born in London, the daughter of a Yorkshire landowner and mill owner, she had visited the recently-opened children's hospital to read to the patients. In 1863 she was appointed superintendent of one of the wards, following

Nightingale's idea of placing middle-class women in positions of authority in nursing. As lady superintendent at Great Ormond Street she worked alongside its founder, Dr Charles West, and developed a new approach to nursing sick children, putting the child at the centre, and developing a training programme for children's nurses. Her handbook on the subject became a standard work. She resigned in 1886 but continued to campaign for nurse registration, and was along with Ethel Fenwick a founder of the British Nurses' Association. She also inspected workhouse infirmaries, and promoted the appointment of female poor law inspectors. From 1884 to 1904 (**Lucy**) **Margaret Lonsdale (1846-1917)** was matron of the Sister Dora Convalescent Hospital at Milford on Cannock Chase, to which she had been a major benefactor, and became a lecturer in nursing for Staffordshire County Council. Born in Lichfield, Staffordshire, the daughter of a clergyman and grand-daughter of a bishop, Lonsdale took up nursing after being impressed by the example of Dorothy Pattison (Sister Dora) of Walsall Cottage Hospital, whose controversial biography she later wrote. Lonsdale became a 'lady pupil' at Walsall before a short stint of training at King's Hospital, London, and as a lady pupil at Guy's Hospital, where she publicly intervened in a row between the lady superintendent and the medical staff.