

From April 2018, the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford DNB) offers biographies of 60,536 men and women who have shaped the British past, contained in 62,786 articles. 11,496 biographies include a portrait image of the subject—researched in partnership with the National Portrait Gallery, London.

Introduction to the update by David Cannadine



Welcome to the thirty-ninth update of the Oxford DNB which adds biographies of twenty-seven individuals who were active from the 1540s until the late twentieth century, as well as seven reference group entries ranging from 1604 to 1951. In future, and in addition to the regular annual updates of entries on the recently-deceased, we will be publishing monthly updates, including clusters or sets of related subjects exploring different themes over the periods and territories represented in the Dictionary.

This first monthly update of historical lives illustrates both the diversity and range of the Dictionary's coverage, several of which enhance our knowledge of the Jewish community in Britain. Naphtali Franks (1715-1796), born in the New York and the grandson of the founder of the Great Synagogue of London, belonged a family whose interests embraced the transatlantic world. He was sent to London aged fifteen, and the survival of correspondence from his mother in America documents the family's cultural interests. One of the hosts of concerts

given by the young W. A. Mozart in London in 1764, he also pursued botanical collecting interests, and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1764, the first Ashkenazi Jew to be thus recognized. For over two decades Nina Ruth Salaman (1877-1925) was resident in the Hertfordshire village of Barley, near Cambridge, where she pursued her life's work on the Jewish poets of medieval Spain; and in December 1919, she became the first woman to preach in an Orthodox synagogue in Great Britain (the same month as the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act was passed).

A trans-national theme also runs through many of the new entries for the early modern period, among them the protestant spy Ninian Cockburn (d. 1579), who served the Scottish, English, and French crowns at different phases of a life which reflected the differing chronologies of the Reformation in England and Scotland. The Dutch humanist scholar Hadriaan Beverland (1650-1716) came to England in 1680 after his writings on the cultural history and religious contexts of sexuality were denounced by the Dutch Reformed Church, and led both to his expulsion from

the University of Leiden, and a short period of imprisonment. In England he continued his studies, and became secretary and librarian to several noted scholars and collectors, including the philologist Isaac Vossius (himself born in Leiden and settling in England), and the collector Hans Sloane. Beverland's role in the disposal of Vossius's library, helping to ensure that it went to Leiden, rather than the University of Oxford, gained him a pardon for his earlier offences, but he found Dutch opinion too strong against his writings and remained in London, where he died in destitution in Henrietta Street.

A remarkable memorial tablet in St Mary's Minster, Cheltenham, records in an inscription running to fifty-three lines the life and achievements of Henry Skillicorne (1678/9-1763), a Bristol mariner whose trading voyages spanned the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. His distinctive legacy lay in his enhancements to a mineral spring in a field owned by his wife's family on the edge of the town. These stimulated the development of the spa as an attraction to visitors, culminating in the six-week visit to Cheltenham by George III in 1788. The portrait of another eighteenth-century subject included in this update, that of the county Durham banker, MP, and landowner Rowland Burdon (1756-1838) shows him with the Wearmouth Bridge, crossing Sunderland harbour, in the background. This was the second large iron bridge to be constructed in Britain (the first, constructed in 1781 over the Severn at Coalbrookdale by Abraham Darby, is currently under restoration), and was the outcome of Burdon's application of energy, ingenuity, and his own financial resources, as he sought to improve transport links for the growing coal industry in county Durham. Fundamental to Sunderland's growth, the Wearmouth Bridge opened in 1796.

The newly-added reference groups, which identify the people and networks responsible for some of the noteworthy collective endeavours represented in the Dictionary, include three which explore major themes in modern British history. The first Lambeth Conference, which took place in September 1867 – its 150th anniversary was last year – was the first time that the bishops of the Church of England had assembled in an international gathering, and among other things, it proclaimed the global reach of Anglicanism. Of the seventy-six bishops who attended, twenty-three were from the United Church of England and Ireland, six from the Scottish Episcopal Church, nineteen from the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States, seven from Canada, one from India, and one from Australia, along with five from Africa, three from the West Indies, and three from New Zealand, as well as serving bishops from Labuan, Honolulu, Gibraltar, the missionary bishop in China, and four retired bishops.

While Lambeth Palace, south of the Thames, was the meeting place for the men with mitres, London homes in Gordon Square and Tavistock Square, along with a Sussex retreat at Charleston, which were the bases of the Bloomsbury Circle (or Group), whose influence was felt in a number of fields of national life during the early twentieth century and between the wars. They have a particular association with this Dictionary as two of the members, Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell, were daughters of its first editor, Leslie Stephen, and lived in DNB's shadow during their early years. As the article on Bloomsbury points out, the end of the First World War saw the publication of some of its most representative works, Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (1918), Maynard Keynes' *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919), and Leonard Woolf's *Empire and Commerce in Africa* (1920). On their centenaries, it is timely to revisit the authors and their circle. A third group were primarily focussed on London's South Bank. The planners, architects, and designers of the Festival of Britain, which took place in 1951 on the anniversary of the Great Exhibition held in the Crystal Palace at Hyde Park, sought to demonstrate the nation's continued prominence in scientific invention and product design, even as the British Empire was already in retreat.

-- David Cannadine

General Editor, Oxford DNB

Jewish lives

This update extends the dictionary's coverage of the Jewish community in Britain, beginning with **Naphtali Franks (1715-1796)**, a warden and later president of the Great Synagogue in London, the first Ashkenazi Jew to be elected a fellow of the Royal Society, one of the hosts of concerts by the young W.A. Mozart during his visit to London in 1764, and much else besides. As our entry on him makes clear, the New York-born Franks was at the centre of a transatlantic business, family, and social network, and surviving letters from his mother Abigaill, who remained in New York, form a treasure trove for modern historians of the Jewish community in North America. Transatlantic connections were also important in the career of another remarkable Ashkenazi Jew, **Nina Salaman (1877-1925)**, whose translations of Hebrew poems, most notably those of the renowned medieval Spanish poet Yehudah Ha-Levi, were published by the Jewish Publication Society of America. Among many other achievements, Salaman had the distinction of being the first woman to preach in an Orthodox synagogue in Britain, in Cambridge in 1919 (the event causing quite a stir at the time, and *The Times* remarking that on this point Judaism was in advance of Christianity).

Salaman was an early and enthusiastic Zionist, publishing one of the first English translations of the Zionist anthem, 'Ha-Tikvah', and writing the marching song for the Judeans (the Jewish volunteers who fought against the Ottoman Empire during the First World War). She is joined in this update by another important figure in the Zionist movement, **Nahum Sokolow (1859-1936)**, secretary-general and later president of the World Zionist Congress, leader of the Zionist delegation at the Paris peace conference in 1919, and author of a standard history of the Zionist movement, who was based in London from 1914 until his death. **Artur Zygielbojm (1895-1943)** spent only fourteen months in London, in 1942-3, as the representative of the Jewish Labour Bund on the Polish National Council. In that time he did all that he could to alert British politicians and the press to the genocide being carried out on Hitler's orders; he achieved some success, but not enough to prevent him taking his own life in desperation at the news filtering through from Warsaw, where his wife and young son were among those murdered.

The Holocaust also defined the life of the artist and writer **Arnold Daghani (1909-1985)**, who escaped from a slave labour camp in Nazi-occupied Ukraine (and then again from Communist-controlled Romania), and whose prison camp diaries and subsequent writings and artworks (a large number bequeathed to the University of Sussex, near where he finally settled, in Hove) bore witness to man's inhumanity to man. Recording and preserving the culture of pre-Holocaust eastern European Jewry became an important goal for the bookseller and historian **Chimen Abramsky (1916-2010)**, who had escaped Soviet Russia with his parents in 1931, and whose erudition and intellectual range made him one of the most important figures in postwar Jewish studies in the UK. Among many other achievements, it was he who catalogued and assessed a cache of 1,564 torah scrolls hidden from the Nazis on the outskirts of Prague.

On a much lighter note, this update also includes the lives of four people of Jewish descent who made their careers in entertainment. **Meier Tzelniker (1894-1980)** was one of the last great exponents of Yiddish theatre in the UK, performing at the Grand Palais in Commercial Road and the New Yiddish Theatre in Adler Street, London; he was perhaps best known for his popular song, 'London iz a shetl', and his acclaimed appearances in the Yiddish version of *The Merchant of Venice*. With the rapid postwar decline of Yiddish theatre, he successfully crossed over to performing in English, most notably in the film and theatre versions of *Make Me An Offer* and *Expresso Bongo*, both written by the author and playwright **Wolf Mankowitz (1924-1998)**. The latter, a graduate of Cambridge (where he was taught by and impressed F.R. Leavis),

drew on his own childhood in the East End of London for his most enduring work, *A Kid for Two Farthings* (1953), though in a prolific career his screenwriting credits included the James Bond adventure *Casino Royale* (1967) and the film version of Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1971). The equally prolific composer and conductor **Cyril Ornadel (1924-2011)** orchestrated the musical versions of *A Kid for Two Farthings* and another of Mankowitz's books, *Pickwick* (1963), which provided Harry Secombe with his theme song, 'If I Ruled the World'; he also wrote 'Portrait of My Love', a chart success for Matt Monro in 1960, and produced 'The Living Shakespeare' in twenty-six LPs (1961-3) and 'The Living Bible' in twelve LPs (1962), narrated by Laurence Olivier. He is joined in this update by the popular singer and actress **Georgia Brown (1933-1992)**, born Lilian Claire Klot, perhaps best known for her collaborations with her East End schoolfriend Lionel Bart, including as Nancy in the original run of his musical, *Oliver!* (1960), and as a performer of the songs of Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht. Her Jewish roots were always important to her, and after her death her friend Steven Berkoff paid tribute to her as 'half-imp, half-Jewish princess, part-comedienne, torch singer, Brecht interpreter and Yiddish momma'.

Transnational, literary, and business lives

Three newly-added subjects from the early modern period lived trans-national lives. A career in espionage connected **Ninian Cockburn (d. 1579)** to figures at the highest level of politics in Scotland, England, and France including Mary Queen of Scots, the French Queen mother Catherine de' Medici, Sir Francis Walsingham, and Sir William Cecil. In 1556 he was granted an estate by the French crown, but by 1560 was again in the English spy service (under the codename George Beaumont), travelling between Scotland, England, and France. The secretary and scribe **Rowland Woodward (bap. 1573, d. 1636)** began a long friendship with John Donne when they were students at Lincoln's Inn, and Woodward later transcribed a collection of Donne's poetry, the Westmoreland manuscript. His own career was spent as a diplomatic secretary, for which he taught himself languages, accompanying embassies to Venice, which involved him in intelligence gathering arrest in Milan, and the Low Countries. The humanist scholar **Hadriaan Beverland (1650-1716)**, born in Middelburg in the Dutch republic, came to England in 1672 to study in Oxford. His studies in Utrecht on the cultural history of sexuality were denounced by the Dutch Reformed church, and he returned to England in 1680 where he was secretary and librarian to scholars and collectors, but died in destitution in London.

Several subjects of Oxford DNB entries are thought to have been sitters for portraits by **Garret Morphey (c. 1650-1715/16)**, whose mother was from a Yorkshire recusant family. During the 1680s he produced portraits of members of Yorkshire gentry families. From at least 1694 until his death he was in Ireland, where he was both successful and prosperous. Two lives were spent in learned publishing. **Martin Smart (c. 1776-1812)** wrote to William Godwin in 1800 pointing out grammatical errors in the latter's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, was the start of a friendship which led Smart to pursue interests as an editor, translator, and writer on lexicography and philology. From 1819 **Peter Austin Nuttall (1792/3-1869)** was a contributor to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, in which he anonymously reviewed (favourably) his own revision of an edition of Juvenal. He then began producing editions of reference works and abridgements of dictionary's, his *Standard Pronouncing Dictionary of the English Language* (1863) being aimed at a mass market, and surviving as a title for over a century. The popular newspaper press is represented in three lives. The printer and newspaper proprietor **John Browne Bell (1779-1855)** launched the *News of the World* in October 1843, offering 'News for the Million'. In 1891, when the paper's fortunes were flagging, it was purchased by the Cardiff newspaper

proprietor **Henry Lascelles Carr (1841-1902)**, who introduced innovations in appearance, content, and marketing, and brought in his nephew Emsley Carr as editor. The *Daily Chronicle* journalist (**Edward) Harold Begbie (1871-1929)**, an advocate of temperance and the work of the Salvation Army, was prominent in the early months of the First World War as the author of the verse 'Fall In!', encouraging enlistment, and in disseminating the idea that the British Expeditionary Force had enjoyed the protection of the 'Angel of Mons'. **John Cecil Moore (1907-1967)** gave up an intended career in his family's auctioneering business to become a writer. His novel *Portrait of Elmbury* (1945), set in his native Tewkesbury became a commercial success, and established him as a portraitist of a vanishing England of small town, provincial life. In 1949 Moore helped to found the Cheltenham Festival of Literature.

A selection of lives extend the Dictionary's coverage of business and technology. After forty years at sea, trading from Bristol to the Mediterranean, **Henry Skillicorne (1678/9-1763)** settled in Cheltenham, then a modest market town, where his wife owned farmland including a field with a mineral water spring. Its curative properties, and the enhancements to its surrounds which Skillicorne instigated, led to a growth in visitors from 1740, and established Cheltenham's reputation as a spa resort. The second large iron bridge to be built in Britain (after Coalbrookdale, Shropshire, which opened in 1781), crossing the mouth of the river Wear at Sunderland, was instigated and largely financed by **Rowland Burdon (1756-1838)**, a banker and owner of the Castle Eden estate in Co. Durham. Elected an MP for the county in 1790, he promoted the interests of its coal industry, improving transport links. The bridge was a great success, 'an engineering triumph, tourist attraction, and fundamental to Sunderland's growth', though Burdon's own fortunes went into decline following the failure of his family's bank. **Joshua Wordsworth (1780-1846)**, from Silkstone in south Yorkshire, served an apprenticeship as a carpenter, but through working for cousins of his wife, showed remarkable talent as a maker of textile machinery. In 1814 he set up in partnership at Holbeck, Leeds, where he produced machinery for flax, woollens, and worsteds, taking out patents for his inventions. Born into a silk manufacturing family, **Katherine Mina Courtauld (1856-1935)** began, aged twenty-one, running a farm bought for by her father, and survived the agricultural depression by adopting a system of mixed farming. She promoted farming as a career for women, and was chair of the Women's Farm and Garden Association, advising women on opportunities in the industry. The son of a German *émigré* of Huguenot descent, the physicist **Edmund Edward Fournier d'Albe (1868-1933)** supported himself by science journalism and books of popular science, developed interests in psychical research, and, while working in Dublin in the late 1890s took up Irish revivalism and pan-Celticism, promoting language revival. Back in Britain, he did scientific work for the Admiralty during the First World War, and in the 1920s promoted his inventions, including the 'octophone' (converting text into sound) and early forms of television. Though neither was successful, he was awarded a civil list pension in 1933. **Reginald Denny (1891-1967)** was born into a theatrical family and became a child actor. After service in the First World War in the Royal Flying Corps, he made a screen career in the USA. Denny's aviation experience, and developing interest in radio-controlled planes, led to him found the Radioplane Company which during the Second World War gained contracts from the US army and navy to produce models for training anti-aircraft gunners, and won him posthumous significance as a developer of early drones. A contemporary, **Ella Hudson Gasking [née Batchelor] (1891-1966)** had an unexpected career change, following the early death of her father, which led her to take a leading role in the Batchelor family business in dried peas and other produce. The firm expanded into canning processed peas, becoming a public company, and building a new factory at Wadsley Bridge, Sheffield, which she planned and ran. After Unilever bought the firm in 1943, she remained as chairman and managing director until 1948.

Reference Groups

Seven reference group articles are included in this update. The earliest comprised the privy councillors, bishops, senior clergy, moderate puritans, and civil lawyers who took part in the **Hampton Court conference (act. 1604)**, called by James I to discuss complaints about the Church of England, and address matters such as the church's doctrine, liturgy, discipline, and pastoral provision. The **Commissioners for the Propagation of the Gospel in Wales (1650-1653)** were seventy-one lay politicians and army officers, along with twenty-five clergyman, charged under an act passed under the Commonwealth government of 1649-53 to improve the quality of the church in Wales. **The Burlington Circle (act. 1715-c. 1760)** was a group of architects and other professionals interested in classical architecture who were associated with and promoted by Richard Boyle, third earl of Burlington. The **first participants of the Lambeth Conference (act. 1867)** comprised the seventy-six bishops who gathered in the chapel of Lambeth Palace in September 1867 – the first time in the history of the Church of England that its bishops had assembled in an international conference. The group of writers, artists, and thinkers who gathered in Bloomsbury and Sussex in the early decades of the twentieth century and who formed the **Bloomsbury Circle (act. c. 1904-c. 1940)** were a significant influence in many areas of national life. Although their reputation fluctuated thereafter, their beliefs and aims continue to resonate. The founding members of the Georgian Group (1937-c.1947) were a gathering of architects and architectural historians, curators, politicians, lawyers, writers, and socialites, who came together to intercede against the destruction of Georgian architecture, especially in English towns and cities, that took place during the interwar years. The planners, architects, and designers responsible for the Festival of Britain – a celebration of British Culture and industry held across the United Kingdom between May and October 1951 – are surveyed in the entry on **the creators of the Festival of Britain (act. 1948-1951)**, which reflects on the idealism for a better Britain which inspired their collaboration.

The Oxford DNB is updated regularly throughout the year, giving you access to the most up-to-date and accurate information available. Full access to all biographies is available by subscription.