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# Who would you like to meet today?

Welcome to a guided tour  
of the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB).



# The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography...

Includes the life stories of nearly **60,000 men & women** who shaped the British past, worldwide.

Covers all aspects of British history, literature, art, science, popular culture, etc.  
- from the **Romans to 21st century.**

Is written by **specialist contributors** and edited by historians at **Oxford University.**

Includes **10,000 + portraits** curated by the National Portrait Gallery.

Offers extensive thematic material, setting **people in context.**

Is used for **local & family history,** as well as for study & research.

Is regularly **updated and extended.**

Please click the forward arrows to advance to the next section, or click on a topic in the top section navigation to skip ahead. Revisit the previous section by clicking the back arrow.



Quick search

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Themes: reference lists

Themes: reference groups

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Results list

Topical free content

Regular updates

The screenshot shows the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography website. At the top, there are navigation links: Home, About Oxford DNB, What's new, Subscriber services, Contact us, Help, and Logou. Below this is a search bar with a dropdown menu set to 'person' and a 'GO' button. A callout bubble points to the search bar with the text: "Quick name search is on every page." Below the search bar is a section titled "Search for a person in the Oxford DNB" with another search input field and a 'GO' button. A callout bubble points to this section with the text: "Find people by name. You can also search by: title names (e.g. 'Lord Chesterfield'); pen names ('George Orwell'); nicknames ('the Iron Duke'); colloquial names ('Mrs Beeton'), and others...". Below this is a "More search options:" section with links for "full text", "date, place, occupation", "image", and "more ...". A "Themes" section follows, with a sub-header "Your guide to the who, when, and what in British history > Go to themes" and a list of "Featured themes": Mersey Sound, Pilgrimage of Grace, and Holders of the Order of Merit. An image of The Beatles is shown next to this list. On the right side of the page, there are several featured content sections: "Life of the day" with a portrait and the text "Today's life The vote > Lives of the week" and a "Free email or RSS feed" link; "Featured in March" with a Twitter icon and "News & features", a bust image and "Ideas of March", and "Mothering Sunday"; "Listen to a life" with the text "We've recorded 200+ ODNB life stories to download" and a "Current episode: Charles Craft, founder of Crufts dog show" with a play button and "00:00 / 11:40"; and "Browse our new e-brochure All 200+ episodes". The left sidebar contains statistics: "59,003 biographies, 68 million words, 11,180 portraits", a description of the Oxford DNB, and various resource links. The Oxford University Press logo is at the bottom left of the page.



Quick search

Biography page 1.

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**Oxford Dictionary of National Biography**

Search | Browse | Themes

Quick Search person

People | Full text | References | Contributors | Images

Samuel Johnson (1696–1772) | William Samuel Johnson (1727–1819)

Print | Email | Cite

**Johnson, Samuel (1709–1784), author and lexicographer** by Pat Rogers

Schooldays  
Oxford and unemployment  
Marriage  
Going to London  
The Dictionary  
Bereavements  
Pensioner and clubman  
Home and abroad  
The last phase  
Johnson and posterity

References

See also  
James Boswell (1740–1795)

Themes  
Bluestocking circle  
Club  
Essex Head Club  
Ivy Lane Club

Other online resources  
Bibliography of British and Irish history  
Electronic Enlightenment

**Johnson, Samuel (1709–1784)**, author and lexicographer, was born in Breadmarket Street, Lichfield, on 7 September 1709 (after the change of calendar in 1752 he celebrated his birthday on 18 September), the first child of Michael Johnson (1657–1731) and his wife, Sarah Ford (1669–1759); later the couple had another son, Nathaniel (1712–1737), of whom little is known apart from the fact that he went into the family trade of bookselling and did not enjoy good relations with his elder brother. Samuel's birth took place in the Johnsons' home, a new four-storey house on the corner of Breadmarket Street and the Market Square; it survives today as the Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum. Overlooking the property stands St Mary's Church, where Samuel may have been baptized on 17 September 1709, although he appeared so frail at first that a baptismal ceremony was carried out in his home within hours of his birth. Attending his birth was George Hector, 'a man-midwife of great reputation' (*Yale Edition*, 1.3), whose nephew Edmund Hector (1708–1794), a Birmingham surgeon, became a close lifelong friend. As godfathers the parents chose Richard Wakefield, the town clerk, and Samuel Swynfen (c.1679–1736), a prominent local physician. The child was named after his maternal uncle Samuel Ford.

Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1756–7

REFERENCES

Sources | Archives | Likenesses | Wealth at death

Sources

- Boswell, *Life* [Find]
- The Yale edition of the works of Samuel Johnson*, ed. A. T. Hazen and others, 13 vols. (1958–) [in progress] [Find]
- The letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. B. Redford, 5 vols. (1992–4) [Find]
- A. L. Roade, *Johnsonian gleanings*, 11 vols. (1909–52) [Find]
- G. B. Hill, ed., *Johnsonian miscellanies*, 2 vols. (1897) [Find]
- H. L. Piozzi, *Anecdotes of Samuel Johnson*, ed. S. C. Roberts (1932) [Find]
- J. L. Clifford, *Young Sam Johnson* (1955) [Find]
- J. L. Clifford, *Dictionary Johnson: Samuel Johnson's middle years* (1979) [Find]
- J. D. Fleeman and J. McLaverty, *A bibliography of the works of Samuel Johnson*, 2 vols. (2000) [Find]
- The works of Samuel Johnson LL.D.*, 12 vols. (1823) [Find]
- P. Rogers, *The Johnson encyclopedia* (1996) [Find]

Michael was a high-churchman and Plagued by 'a vile melancholy' that he evidently subjected to Sarah's consoling. They have found an ideal companion in Michael's mother.

carried out on the glands in his neck when he was two, in March 1712, he was told that his left ear, and this may well have been factors or from these infant diseases. The only result of his contact with the queen seems to have been the gift of a gold 'touchpiece', which he wore round his neck as an

ally apprenticed to a member of the London trade in 1673 and set up business in Lichfield in 1681. He published a few success. sheriff.

essed some learning and ambition. At the same time he was ny, strictly pious, and uninterested in books, she can hardly le sign that he enjoyed a warm or loving relationship with

ed in George Lane nearby. By the time he returned home a eased infant, almost blind' (*Yale Edition*, 1.5), he had an attracted from the nurse's milk. An operation was later ut of smallpox which caused further disfigurement. When erofula by Queen Anne. Johnson was almost totally deaf in behaviour in adult life may have derived from congenital s syndrome, where the symptoms often grow more



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Samuel Johnson (1696–1772) William Samuel Johnson (1727–1817)

Print Email Cite

Schooldays  
Oxford and unemployment  
Marriage  
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Bereavements  
Pensioner and clubman  
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Essex Head Club  
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National Portrait Gallery  
National Register of Archives

DNB archive

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Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1756–7

Michael Johnson's bookshop occupied the ground floor of the house and made a freeman of the Stationers' Company. He sold books and operated in other local towns on market days. In later years he also practised medicine, following in the footsteps of his father, including those of surgery. He was a Jacobite, although his political views are not clear. He was a friend of James Boswell (*Life*), whose social origins. As a result of his father's death, he and his mother have found an ideal companion in Michael; later in life her son respected her memory and his mother.

Almost immediately the parents placed Samuel in the care of a wet-nurse named Mary, who was a Quaker, and who had several children of her own, which affected him all his life. He was also afflicted with a disease of the lymph nodes (tuberculosis of the lymph nodes), which left him with visible scars. At some stage he also travelled to London, in order to be 'touched' for the scrofula by Queen Anne. Johnson was almost totally deaf in his left ear, and this may well have been apparent from infancy. The convulsions that marked his behaviour in adult life may have derived from congenital factors or from these infant diseases; one theory is that his condition can be diagnosed as Tourette's syndrome, where the symptoms often grow more apparent in adolescence. The only result of his contact with the queen seems to have been the gift of a gold 'touchpiece', which he wore round his neck as an

Expand the portrait likeness; then click for information on all portraits.

Link to the person's page in external resources, such as the National Portrait Gallery.

Compare today's entry on Samuel Johnson with that in the Victorian DNB.

Johnson, Samuel (1709–1784), by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1756–7  
Picture credit © National Portrait Gallery, London  
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See also > Oxford DNB's complete list of likenesses of this subject



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**Themes**  
Essential reference for British history, all linked to relevant biographies.  
> show me all themes

**Themes by field of interest**

- > Armed forces
- > Arts and culture
- > Law
- > Politics: British Isles
- > Politics: overseas
- > Religion
- > Royalty
- > Science and technology
- > Sport
- > Trade and finance

**Themes by type**

- > reference lists
- > reference groups
- > feature essays

**Reference groups**  
Each May and September we publish essays on well-known historical groups that make connections between individuals in the Oxford DNB.  
Nearly 300 essays are now available. Recent additions include the Yorkshire Association, the Primrose League, Spasmodic School, and the Magic Circle. Who were they? How did they work together? What did they achieve?  
> Full list of reference groups to January 2014

**Reference lists include**  
Health ministers

**Features include**  
Lives of the law

**What are themes?**  
Your reference companion to British history:  
Reference lists of people from all walks of British history, from kings and queens to the captains of the England cricket team.  
Reference groups cover the groups, clubs, factions, and movements that shaped our past.  
Feature essays on topical anniversaries and interesting slices through the Oxford DNB.

**Drinking circles**  
Inklings  
Fitzrovia  
Kit-Cat Club  
Mermaid taverners  
Rainbow coffee house

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Sounds of a century



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# Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

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Reference list

## Poets laureate (1668–2010)

See also

- Benjamin Jonson (1572–1637)
- Thomas Gray (1716–1771)
- Samuel Rogers (1763–1855)
- Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832)

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## Poets laureate (1668–2010)

Some accounts date this office from 1616, when Ben Jonson was named poet laureate. The official post dates from 1668, when Charles II gave John Dryden a formal warrant awarding him the title. Since then the poet laureate has been appointed by the lord chamberlain, acting on the instructions of the reigning monarch, although since 1790 the prime minister has been responsible for recommending the appointee. Since 1689 the post has been awarded for life. (In the same year the Catholic John Dryden was stripped of office for failing to take the oath of allegiance.) The laureateship is largely an honorific post, except that poets laureate are expected—though, not since William Wordsworth's appointment in 1843, required—to write verses for court and national occasions (such as birthdays, baptisms, marriages, and deaths, victories, peace treaties, and various acts of national endeavour). The tradition of writing a new year ode started with Thomas Shadwell, who also introduced the practice, largely discontinued after 1820, of writing a yearly ode on the monarch's birthday.

The poet laureateship has twice been refused: by Thomas Gray in 1757, and by Samuel Rogers in 1850. In 1813 the laureateship was turned down by Sir Walter Scott, who recommended Robert Southey—which was fortunate, as Southey had also already been offered the post.

Reference list

Reference lists chart office-holders in British history: here, all the poets laureate

## Masters of the king's (and queen's) music (c.1626–2008)

- 1668–1689 John Dryden (1631–1700)
- 1689–1692 Thomas Shadwell (c.1640–1692)
- 1692–1715 Nahum Tate (c.1652–1715)
- 1715–1718 Nicholas Rowe (1674–1718)
- 1718–1730 Laurence Eusden (1688–1730)
- 1730–1757 Colley Cibber (1671–1757)
- 1757–1785 William Whitehead (bap. 1715, d. 1785)
- 1785–1790 Thomas Warton (1728–1790)
- 1790–1813 Henry James Pye (1745–1813)
- 1813–1843 William Wordsworth (1770–1850)
- 1843–1850 Alfred Austin (1835–1913)
- 1850–1892 Robert Seymour Bridges (1844–1930)
- 1896–1913 John Edward Masefield (1878–1967)

**Wordsworth, William (1770–1850)**, poet, was born the fifth child of John Wordsworth (1741–1793) and his wife Mary (1768–1846), who became a lawyer; Dorothy Wordsworth (1771–1842), poet, and Christopher Wordsworth (1774–1842), cleric. The imposing house in which they were born was James Lovelace (from 1794 first earl of Lovelace) in marriage also bailiff and recorder of Cockermouth, poets he owed

**Childhood and schooling**  
William and Dorothy spent long periods of their early childhood in the village of Hemerly, where William attended Ann Birkett's dame-school, but in 1787 March, Dorothy was dispatched to relatives in Halifax, and Richard, at the grammar school at Hawkshead in Furness for nine years, a separation which had enormous effects on his life.

**John Wordsworth senior died on 30 December 1793. W relations with his relatives worsened. At his death John Wordsworth was owed large sums of money, which he declined to honour the debt (after his death in 1800 they were acknowledged by his successors themselves reliant upon the goodwill of their guardians, their uncles Richard Wordsworth of Hawkshead, and Christopher Wordsworth, by his own account a child of strife, moody, and violent temper, resented every slight against his family).**

**Themes**  
Poets laureate  
Immortal dinner  
Other online resources

Link from a person in a list to his/her biography; or from a biography to a list.

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Reference group


**Gunpowder plotters** (act. 1603–1606)  
by Mark Nicholls

References

See

- Robert Catesby (b. in or after 1572, d. 1605)
- Thomas Winter (c.1571–1606)
- John Wright (bap. 1568, d. 1605)
- Christopher Wright (1570?–1605)
- Thomas Percy (1560–1605)
- Guy Fawkes (bap. 1570, d. 1606)
- Robert Winter (c.1566x8–1606)
- Ambrose Rookwood (c.1578–1606)
- Sir Everard Digby (c.1578–1606)
- Francis Tresham (1567?–1605)
- John Gerard (1564–1637)
- Oswald Tesimond (1563–1636)
- Henry Garnett (1555–1606)

**Gunpowder plotters** (act. 1603–1606) were thirteen Roman Catholic gentlemen who planned to initiate the overthrow of the Jacobean regime by exploding a mine beneath the House of Lords during the opening session of parliament in November 1605, thus killing the king, James VI and I, his principal ministers, and a large and influential part of the English political nation. The term is also rather loosely applied to the plotters' confederates and associates, men and women implicated in some part of the overall design.



**Gunpowder plotters** (act. 1603–1606) by unknown engraver, c.1605 (*The Gunpowder Plot Conspirators, 1605*: (left to right) Bates, Robert Winter, Christopher Wright, John Wright, Thomas Percy, Guy Fawkes, Robert Catesby, and Thomas Winter]

Most of those involved in the plot were from the English midlands, or in the East of England. Robert Catesby was responsible for assembling the inner circle of conspirators in Northamptonshire. His cousin Thomas Percy, a member of the House of Huddington, Worcestershire. Thomas Wright and Christopher Wright [see under Wright, Christopher] were brothers-in-law of another prominent conspirator, John Wright, who was the father of Alnwick Castle and the trusted confidant of the influential Henry Percy, ninth earl of Northumberland. Both Wrights had also been schoolfellows—at St Peter's School, York—

with the plotter whose name is today so closely identified with this treason, Guy Fawkes. Kinship also bound together some of the secondary conspirators, men and women who were brought into the plot either to help finance the operation or for some other logistical purpose, and also a number of those particularly unfortunate individuals who became enmeshed in the futile rebellion that broke out in the midlands after Fawkes was discovered with thirty-six barrels of gunpowder in a vault under the Lords' chamber early on 5 November. Robert Winter and John Winter (d. 1606) [see under Winter, Thomas], for example, were respectively Thomas's brother and half-brother, while John Grant of Norbrooks (d. 1606) was his brother-in-law. Other late recruits to the plot, notably the wealthy Sir Everard Digby of Gothurst, Buckinghamshire, were recusants who moved in the same small social circles as Catesby. Catesby's servant, Thomas Bate (d. 1606), was brought in to help with excavating the tunnel under the Palace of Westminster.

Some members of the group had a long history of resistance to successive English political administrations. Catesby, Fawkes, Thomas Winter, and Christopher Wright had been active in the efforts, stretching back into the 1590s, to engineer a Spanish invasion of England and a consequent restoration, through force or arms, of Catholicism as the official state religion. Before the death of Queen Elizabeth, in 1603, their plans had been shared by several other Catholics, among them William Parker, Lord Monteagle. Several of those later implicated in the Gunpowder Plot had also supported Robert Devereux, second earl of Essex, in his rebellion of 8 February 1601, and many, including Monteagle, Catesby, and the Wrights, had been imprisoned and fined in the aftermath of Essex's disastrous gamble. The accession of James I led Monteagle and others to reject these dangerous courses and to make their peace with a new government set on ending the long war with Spain. For those disinclined to accept any form of protestant rule, however, the eventual peace treaty between England and Spain, concluded in London in August 1604, was a catastrophic development, forcing them to set aside the easy option of foreign aid. Instead, they came to recognize that they could achieve their goals only by direct action.

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'Reference groups' provide information on well-known historical clubs, gangs, and networks: explore a group's members, actions, and legacy.

Link from a member of the group to his or her full biography



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The screenshot shows the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB) website. At the top, there are navigation links: Home, About Oxford DNB, What's new, Subscriber services, Contact us, Help, and Log out. Below this is a search bar with a 'Quick Search' button and a dropdown menu set to 'person'. A 'Search Tip' icon is also present. The current version is noted as 'January 2011'.

The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Search for a person in the Oxford DNB:** A search input field with a 'GO' button. A blue callout box points to this section with the text: "Use More search options to find sets of people with things in common...".
- More search options:** A link to "full text | date, place, occupation | image | more ...".
- Browse:** A section for browsing people or contributors, with a "Get a life at random" button.
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**People Search**

Use this page to find people in the dictionary by searching different indexes. Fill in the fields and then start your search.

Find lives that match all the following criteria:

**Name**  > See More Name Options

**Fields of Interest** Any  **...by profession...**  
 Select one general area above, or ... > Open Full List

**Sex**  All  Female  Male  Family / Group

**Life Dates** Year  to Year   Alive  Active  
 in or from:

**Places, Dates, Life Events** Event: Any   
 Year:  in or from:  to:   
 Place:  **...and/or by date.**  
 Day on: Any Date  Month: Any Month   
 on: Any Date  Any Month

**Religious Affiliation** Faith: Any  Denomination or group: Any   
 Select one faith and denomination above, or... > Open Full List

**Image**  Presence of an illustration

**Text Search**  Complete text   
 Exact  All words  Any words

**...for example, you can search for people by life event (birth, baptism, education, residence, death, & burial)...**

**...by place (county, city, town, village, church, school, or street)...**

pane, or any ? help icon.  
> more

Name  
Fields of Interest  
Sex  
Life Dates  
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Your search returned 23 subject(s) with entries in the *Oxford DNB*. 1 - 20 shown in alphabetical order, ascending  
Searching for subjects: field of interest: Politics - women - resided between 1875 and 1900 in / at Manchester

Ashton, Margaret (1856–1937), local politician and philanthropist

Baines [*née* Hunt], Sarah Jane [*Jennie*] (1866–1951), suffragette and social reformer

Barton [*née* Stockton], Eleanor (1872/3–1960), socialist and co-operative movement activist

Becker, Lydia Ernestine (1827–1890), suffragist leader

Booth, Eva Selina Gore- (1870–1926), suffragist and poet

Brailsford [*née* Malloch], Jane Esdon (1874–1937), suffragette

Bulley [*married name* Brooke], (*Agnes*) Amy (1852–1939), promoter of women's education and

Chew, Ada Nield (1870–1945), labour organizer and suffragist

Davison, Emily Wilding (1872–1913), suffragette

Dickenson [*née* Welsh], Sarah (1868–1954), trade unionist and suffragist

Drummond [*née* Gibson; *other married name* Simpson], Flora McKinnon (1878–1949), suffragette

Greig, Teresa Mary Billington- (1876–1964), suffragette and political theorist

Marsden, Dora (1882–1960), suffragette and philosopher

Maxwell, Lilly [*Lily*] (c.1800–1876), suffragist

Mitchell [*née* Webster], Hannah Maria (1872–1956), socialist and suffragette

Pankhurst, Dame Christabel Harriette (1880–1958), suffragette

Pankhurst [*née* Goulden], Emmeline (1858–1928), suffragette leader

Roper, Esther Gertrude (1868–1938), suffragist

Sieff, Rebecca Dora (1890–1966), feminist and Zionist

Simcox, Edith Jemima (1844–1901), anthropologist and political activist

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Reorder results

- Alphabetical order
- Birth date order
- Death date order
- Reverse Order

Search within these results

Female  Families/groups

Male

Alive  Year:

Any  Place:

Fields of Interest

Any

Illustrated only

Search > Back to original search

Results per page: 20

Reorder results, or search within your results.

You can combine any or all of these searches. Here we looked for women active in politics living in late-19th century Manchester.



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- Life of the day:** A section for 'Today's life' featuring 'The vote' and 'Lives of the week', with a 'Free email or RSS feed' option.
- Featured in March:** A section for 'News & features' including 'Ideas of March' and 'Mothering Sunday'.
- Listen to a life:** A section for 'Current episode: Charles Cruft, founder of Crufts dog show' with a play button and a duration of '00:00 / 11:40'.

Blue callout boxes highlight specific features: 'Selections from the ODNB include: a topical 'Life of the Day'...', '...monthly features...', and '... & a biography podcast with 200+ episodes.' A blue box on the left side of the page states: 'Ideas for making the most of the ODNB, for research or pleasure.'

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Regular updates

# Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

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New! January 2014 update

New biographies and Themes are added every **January, May & September**: here people who died in 2010.

## January 2014 update

The January 2014 update of the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography adds new biographies of 219 men and women who died in the year 2010. Click on the portraits to read a selection of new lives. Here you'll find Beryl Bainbridge, Tom Bingham, Michael Foot, Tony Judt, Malcolm McLaren, Alexander McQueen, Egon Ronay, Claire Rayner, Alan Sillitoe, Norman Wisdom, and others.

A full list of subjects is also available, along with the editor's introduction to the new update. Online access to all 219 new biographies, together with the Oxford DNB's 58,780 existing entries, is freely available—anywhere, anytime—via nearly all UK public libraries, as well as university and college libraries worldwide.

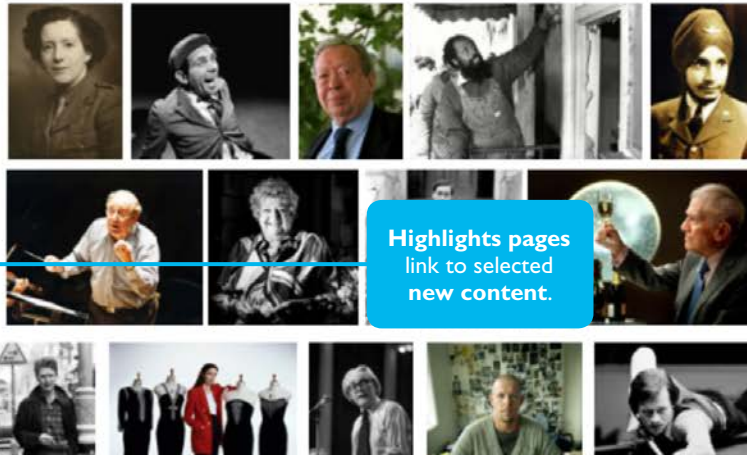
The new update in numbers: by age, place of birth, occupation ... Try our infographic

The story of the author Beryl Bainbridge (1932-2010) is also available as an episode of the Oxford DNB's free biography podcast.

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### Quick links

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Highlights pages link to selected new content.

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**McQueen, Lee Alexander (1969–2010)**, fashion designer by Kristin Knox

Childhood, education, and apprenticeships  
Building a global brand  
Major themes  
Personal life  
Death and legacy

References

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Who Was Who

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Lee Alexander McQueen (1969–2010), by unknown photographer

McQueen's mother was his only ally when he responded to a television report about a shirtless Anderson and Sheppard with no experience. He walked out with a job. He quickly mastered positions with Gieves and Hawkes (Savile Row tailors), the theatrical costumiers Angelo (the Italian designer). It was during this period that he is rumoured to have sewn 'I am a'



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