

# Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

## What is the *Oxford DNB*?



- The *Oxford DNB* is an illustrated collection of **more than 55,000 specially written biographies** of the men and women who left their mark on all aspects of British history from the fourth century BC to the year 2002. The dictionary is the **story of Britain told through the lives of those who shaped our past**. It's an essential work for anyone with an interest in people, groups, or topics in British history.
- The men and women included in the dictionary encompass **all walks of life**, from ancient to contemporary history: **royalty, politics, literature, science, technology, art and architecture, business, theatre and broadcasting, medicine, agriculture and industry, sport, travel and exploration, music, and religious life**. The dictionary includes men and women who were active in the **British empire**—as well as Britons who made their name in the wider world and those, born overseas, who made Britain their home.
- The *Oxford DNB* was published in print (60 volumes, 62 million words) and online in September 2004. The **online edition ([www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com))** has since been extended by regular updates that add new biographies and ideas for reading and study. From October 2006 the online dictionary includes **almost 51,000 articles which tell the life stories of 55,800 people**. No living person is included. Currently the online edition provides entries on men and women who died on or before 31 December 2002.
- *Oxford DNB* biographies are **concise and authoritative** essays written by 10,000 specialist historians, literary scholars, art historians, and biographers worldwide. All biographies are signed by the author and **peer reviewed by experts** to ensure they provide **up-to-date and balanced research in an accessible and readable form**. Biographies vary in length from a few dozen to over 30,000 words for major figures, the average length being about 1200 words.
- As of October 2006, **10,300 of the biographies are illustrated with a portrait image**. Illustrations range from the first century AD to 2002 and comprise the largest collection of national portraiture ever published. Images are chosen by curators at the **National Portrait Gallery, London**, and provide a likeness undertaken during the subject's lifetime.
- In addition to its 55,800 biographies the online *Oxford DNB* includes a **'themes' area that acts as a companion guide to British history**. Material in this part of the site takes three forms: lists of office-holders (ideal for quick fact-checking); essays on well-known groups and associations (to explore how individuals came together in the past); and feature essays in which experts discuss popular historical topics and anniversaries (for example British medical pioneers, shapers of the industrial revolution, or the impact of the 1906 Liberal government).

[www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com)