

QUEEN OF THE BLUES

*An exhibition exploring Elizabeth Montagu
and The Bluestockings*

Co-curated by Unity Arts and Dr Johnson's House



QUEEN OF THE BLUES is a set of community created responses to the life, work and letters of Bluestocking, *Elizabeth Montagu* and funded by the **National Lottery Heritage Fund**.

This exhibition (has been created and filmed by **Unity Arts** and our community, in collaboration with **Dr Johnson's House**. You will be able to book slots if you wish to visit in person when the house opens later in the year.

<http://www.drjohnsonshouse.org/visit.html>

Queen of the Blues was the name given to *Montagu* by *Samuel Johnson* and the pieces that are displayed have been created during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The artwork, 3D installations, audio installation, and information panels came out of online workshops, heritage trips in pairs and one to one socially distanced meetings with the researchers and artists also using Primary Sources, archive materials, art, poetry and music as prompts.

Our thanks to Dr Johnson's House for their support and the loan of their original Elizabeth Montagu Letters and portraits and objects of Montagu and Johnson for this installation.

The museum were also hosts and partners to our **Hackney Dissent** project last year and have made this event possible by welcoming us as their first virtual exhibition.

We are so happy to be back.

The online version of **Queen of The Blues** the exhibition can be found here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BsvhgNHKeiY>

The audio documentary **Queen of The Blues** can be found here

<https://www.mixcloud.com/UnityArts/queen-of-the-blues/>

The documentary **Hackney Dissent** can be found here

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFoRxMDTM60&feature=emb_logo

More information on our website <https://unityartslondon.wordpress.com/>

Queen of the Blues

When women were the submissive members of the Georgian era, and for the most part, at the mercy of men, Elizabeth Montagu created sparkling London assemblies, where she placed a new emphasis on conversation for both sexes as a pleasurable and enlightened pursuit.

Women were encouraged to engage in debate, their thoughts and opinions relished, their art and writings shared.

Christened "*Queen of the Blues*" by Samuel Johnson, Montagu emerged as a British social reformer, patron of the arts, literary critic and writer. She championed intellectual pleasure and facilitated talents of many kinds to flourish.

Yet today, many people have never heard of her.

This exhibition encompasses a collective response to her life and her voice and to remind us all that we must never forget to pursue human connection and together celebrate the power of knowledge and the arts.

Jayne Walters

Loaned by Dr Johnson's House



Portrait of Dr Johnson Attributed to circle of Joshua Reynolds

Oil on canvas, mid-18th century

This portrait of Dr Johnson is a spectacular piece with a fascinating, and well-documented, provenance. Bought at a Sotheby's auction in 2011, it is attributed to 'Circle of Reynolds'. A Glasgow sale also featured the piece in 1849. Collection of Lord Harmsworth.



Mrs Montagu by John Raphael Smith

Engraving, 1776

Elizabeth Montagu, 'Queen of the Bluestockings, was close to Johnson and a revered female literary host. Best remembered for her voluminous correspondence and as a benefactor of several writers, she achieved a great deal for the intellectual pursuits of women outside their traditional social roles. Her fellow Bluestocking Elizabeth Carter urged Montagu to publish her spirited defence of Shakespeare against the criticism of Voltaire, who had attacked Shakespeare as inelegant and inferior to French equivalents. She did so anonymously in 1769, but the piece was so well received that by 1777 her name appeared on the title page. [98]

DJH_124

Letter from Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott 18 February 1766

Carter was very shy when she was young and hated talking in company. In this letter Montagu jokes to her sister, the writer Sarah Scott, that Carter is sitting next to her 'looking as if she had a great deal to say, which is certainly singularly malicious, as she is of all Womankind the most silent.'

DJH_MS_002

Portrait Medallion of Elizabeth Montagu

Wedgwood, green and white jasperware, eighteenth century

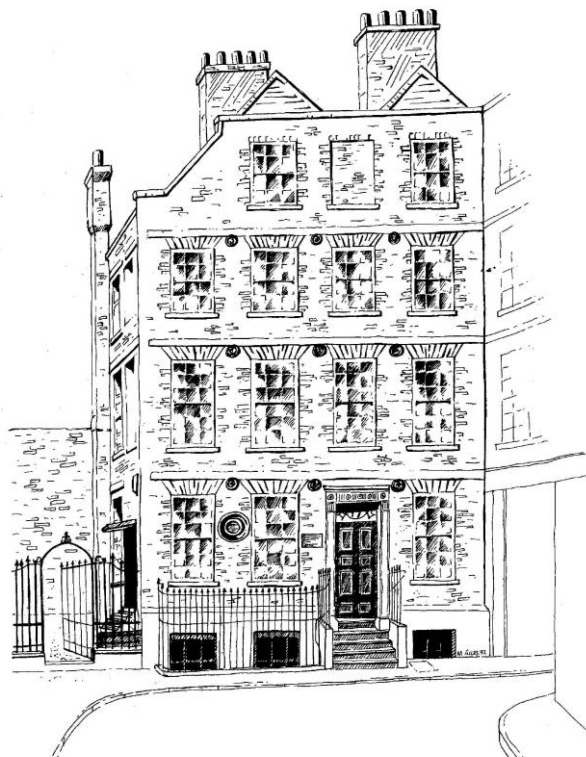
Elizabeth Montagu (1720-1800) was dubbed 'Queen of the Blues' by Johnson in reference to her membership of the group of learned ladies known as the 'bluestockings'. This portrait medallion is possibly a trial piece by Wedgwood.

Presented by Frederick Rathbone, **DJH_86**

Letter from Anna Williams to Mrs Montagu Johnson's Court, London, 26 June, 1775

Miss Williams acknowledges a 'tender and affectionate Letter with its most welcome contents'. Mrs Montagu's benevolence has doubled her income and removed the fear of trusting to chance; she might otherwise have been forced to seek support from a charity.

DJH_044



Dr Johnson's House

Created by Unity Arts



Queen of the Blues by Derek McLuckie

Pencil on paper, framed and mounted

I listened to the Unity Arts documentary *Queen of the Blues* and was inspired by the intelligence in the accompanying image of Elizabeth Montagu by John Raphael Smith.



School girl by Isabel Walters

Acrylic on canvas

In this painting I wanted to capture the pressure and anguish created in British Education.



Indigo Resist by Lu Firth

Stitch resist and Indigo Dyed. Linen. 10ins. X 10ins.

The poem 'Bas Bleu' was written by Hannah More (1745–1833) who was a second generation Bluestocking member, a famous poet, playwright, education reformer and abolitionist. Her poem was the first published account of the Bluestockings from one of their own members. I include 'Dissent' here to acknowledge the revolt and demonstrations of the Framework Knitters who tirelessly fought for their employment rights in the face of violence from the state, and the rights of the slave employees of the Indigo trade.



Feather Panel by Jayne McVeigh

Inspired by research of Montagu House

Montagu House is chiefly remembered for its famous 'feather room' which was ornamented with hangings designed by Elizabeth Montagu and made of plumage from every bird imaginable. Ten years in the making with parcels of feathers arriving from all round the world to Sandleford to be sorted and sewn. Its eventual unveiling prompted a visit to view it from Queen Charlotte and several of her daughters.



Georgian Costumes by Nellie Noodle The costume on the right was inspired by the picture of Montagu, found in Dr Johnson`s House. I imagined the colours she may have worn and hand drafted the pattern using the Georgian shape. The boys` frock coat is a typical example of the Mid Georgian Period when Frock Coats had skirts that were nearly circular. Frock Coats derived their name from the coats skirt resembling a lady`s frock. Mid-century they were made from elaborate beautiful material, embroidered, depending on the wealth of the wearer and was seen as a way to show their status in society.



Young Dissenter by George Walters

Acrylic on wood

Using different hues of black and blue, I have tried to capture the emotion of a young dissenter feeling trapped in today`s chaotic and hopeless world.



Glittering Conversation by Ella W Green

Watercolour and glitter on canvas

Elizabeth Montagu was famous for her beautiful homes and the sparkling conversation at her salons.



Blue Lady of Dissent by Jayne McVeigh

Acrylic on canvas

In my painting I wanted to capture the idea of how a dissenter of the 1700`s is relevant today. I was initially inspired by the quote from Elizabeth Montagu, a portrait of her and a modern cartoon by *Brighty* of Dominic Cummings and Boris Johnson. I chose to use a blue colour palette to tie in with Elizabeth Montagu`s connection with the Blue Stockings Society and added text to drive home the corruption of the Tories in today`s cut throat political arena.



Boss Woman, Mary Wollstonecraft by Nellie Noodle

Oil on canvas

As a starting point I used the colourless stipple engraving by *John Chapman*, published 1798. I found the image inspiring as it captured an expression in Mary rarely seen in other works. To me Mary is forever the Boss Woman standing firm in a tall black hat, taking on the world.



Children by Caterina Belo

Acrylic on canvas

Older generations' hate and anger has an inescapable influence on the younger generation.



Opposite the Green by Kath Best

Acrylic on canvas

In an imperfect world the Newington Green meeting House represents a space for all. The idea of making a painting of this building was to highlight the importance of community space and the complexities of human endeavour.

HACKNEY HEROINE



Contributors: Kath Best, Michael Blankson, Gary Cain, Ellie Cummings, Cerys Davies, Trinity Dirnberger, Ella Warren Green, Amii Griffith, Grace Hammonds, Haydn, Yasbera Hialeu, Cate Holmes, Poppy Kay, Pat Kenniston, John Kenniston, Scarlett Lindsay-Allan, J McVeigh, Nellie Noodle, Green Onions, Jamie Powell, Keira Sanz, Shanksy, Tega Umurhohwo, Jayne Walters, Beryl Warren, Lil Warren, Sara Warren, Sarah J Warren, Hannah Woods, Lily Wright and Unity Arts and Hoxton Hall Youth Arts Participants.

Stencil image used by kind permission of the artist STEWY <https://stewy.bigcartel.com/>

Cut art board and decorated laminates

The piece you see above you has been over a year in the making. What started off as a means to ignite interest in Mary Wollstonecraft at events and workshops then turned into a collaboration that every part of our community could enjoy.

NOTABLE BLUESTOCKINGS



Portraits in the Characters of the Muses in the Temple of Apollo, by Richard Samuel (d. 1787)

In this painting found in The National Portrait Gallery, by Richard Samuel, the leading Bluestockings are portrayed as the nine muses, who in Greek mythology were the daughters of Zeus – each presided over a different art.

On the left, the painting features artist **Angelica Kauffmann** at her easel, in front of the writers **Elizabeth Carter** and **Anna Barbauld**. At the centre of the composition stands the singer **Elizabeth Sheridan** (née Linley). To the right stands the writer **Charlotte Lennox**, the historian **Catharine Macaulay** (holding the parchment), writer and abolitionist **Hannah More** and the novelist **Elizabeth Griffith** (holding the tablet).

The co-founder and matriarch of the Bluestockings, **Elizabeth Montagu**, sits in the middle on the right-hand side.



Elizabeth Vesey 1715-1791

Irish-born poet and scholar Vesey, was a close friend to Montagu who established an even more informal salon at her London home. She was renowned for her slender figure, flirtatious nature and unassailable charm. Her nickname was 'Sylph', referring to a mythological air spirit.

In 1781, Montagu wrote a letter to Vesey, in which she stated: *"We have lived the wisest, the best, and the most celebrated men of our Times, and with some of the best, most accomplished, most learned*

Women of any times."



Mary Delany 1700-1788

One of the earliest members of the group was Mary Delany an artist and letter writer, and friend to the Baroque composer **George Frideric Handel**.

Delany was infamously against the strict traditions of marriage, once proclaiming: *"Why must women be driven to the necessity of marrying? A state that should always be a matter of choice!"*



Elizabeth Carter 1717-1806

Elizabeth Carter was an influential writer, poet, classicist and polymath who was an important member of the Bluestocking circle. She famously translated the work of Stoic philosopher **Epictetus**.



Hester Thrale 1741-1821

Hester Thrale who was later known by the name of her second marriage 'Piozzi', was a Welsh-born author and patron of the arts. Like many of the Bluestockings, she was very close to **Samuel Johnson**, publishing the controversial bestselling ***Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*** in 1786, which caused a stir amongst other members of the group. **Horace Walpole** condemned her for the publication, comparing it to a *"heap of rubbish."*



Anna Seward 1742–1809

Showing signs of talent from a young age, Anna Seward was a published poet by the time she was a teenager. Allegedly her father (also a poet) did not want her to become a 'learned lady' and tried to squash her passion for poetry. Nevertheless, Seward became successful and a member of the **Lunar Society**, an informal dinner club of notable Enlightenment figures who met regularly outside of Birmingham. Like many other ambitious, literary female figures of her time, she received backlash. She too was criticised by **Walpole**, who claimed she had "*no imagination, no novelty.*" She famously eschewed marriage and sexual love, proclaiming that friendship was superior to other relationships.



Hannah More 1745-1833

A second generation Bluestocking member, Hannah More was a famous poet, playwright, education reformer and abolitionist. She publicly campaigned against the slave trade and established and published the widely successful ***Cheap Repository Tracts*** – a series of literary tracts that intended to educate the general public on religious and political matters.



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Elizabeth Ann Linley 1754–1792

Elizabeth Ann Sheridan (née Linley) was a celebrated singer, poet and writer who was famed for her beauty.

She was painted several times by **Sir Joshua Reynolds** and **Thomas Gainsborough** and became involved in the Bluestocking society.



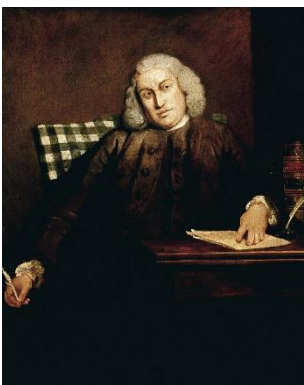
Fanny Burney 1752–1840

Before Jane Austen, there was Fanny Burney. A prolific novelist, playwright, and diarist whose satirical fiction was widely read. Burney's novels were trailblazing, in that they were written from the perspective of a woman, by a woman. In 1778, she published her first novel *Evelina* anonymously. The humorous book is a portrayal of a young woman navigating eighteenth-century polite society. Burney satirized the Bluestockings in her unpublished play *The Witlings* (1779), in which she portrayed Montagu as a character called 'Lady Smatter'. Upon the advice of her father, who feared the play would greatly offend Montagu and the Bluestockings, Burney never published the play. For a woman, to write comedy, let alone make a living from her pen, was unheard of.



Sarah Scott 1723-1795

Sarah Scott, Elizabeth Montagu's sister was an English novelist, translator, social reformer, and member of the Bluestockings. Her most famous work was her utopian novel *A Description of Millenium Hall and the Country Adjacent*, followed closely by the sequel *The History of Sir George Ellison*.



Samuel Johnson 1709-1784

Often referred to as Dr Johnson, he was an English writer who made lasting contributions to English literature as a poet, playwright, essayist, moralist, literary critic, biographer, editor, and lexicographer. His best-known work is his *Dictionary of the English Language*. Religiously, he was a devout Anglican, and politically a committed Tory. *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* describes Johnson as 'arguably the most distinguished man of letters in English history'.



David Garrick 1717 – 1779

Widely lauded as one of the most talented, convivial, and influential actors of all time, David Garrick remains, to this day, an iconic global thespian. More portraits were painted of Garrick than of **King George III**; he introduced methods of acting, staging, and lighting to the theatre as well as financial rewards and sick pay for his actors; and he put **Stratford-upon-Avon** on the official Shakespeare map.



Joshua Reynolds 1723-1792

Reynolds was the leading English portraitist of the 18th century. Through his committed study of ancient and Italian Renaissance art and the work of Master painters **Rembrandt, Rubens** and **Van Dyck**, he brought great variety and dignity to British portraiture. He was apprenticed in 1740 to the fashionable London portraitist **Thomas Hudson**, who also trained **Wright of Derby**. He spent 1749-52 abroad, mainly in Italy, and set up practice in London shortly after his return. He soon established himself as the leading portrait painter, though he was never popular with **George III**. He was a key figure in the

intellectual life of London, and a friend of **Dr Johnson**. When the **Royal Academy** was founded in 1768, Reynolds was elected its first President.



Edmund Burke 1729– 1797

Born in Dublin, Burke served as a member of parliament (MP) between 1766 and 1794 in the House of Commons with the Whig Party. Burke was a hugely influential Anglo-Irish politician, orator and political thinker, notable for his strong support for the American Revolution and his fierce opposition to the French Revolution. He was provoked into writing his ***Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790)*** by a

sermon of the Protestant dissenter **Richard Price** welcoming the Revolution. Burke's deeply felt antagonism to the new movement propelled him to the plane of general political thought; it provoked a host of English replies, of which the best known is Thomas Paine's ***The Rights of Man (1791–92)***.



Horatio Walpole 1717–1797

Horace Walpole, 4th Earl of Orford, was an English writer, art historian, man of letters, antiquarian and Whig politician.

He had **Strawberry Hill House** built in Twickenham, south-west London, reviving the Gothic style some decades before his Victorian successors.

His literary reputation rests on the first Gothic novel, ***The Castle of Otranto*** (1764), and his ***Letters***, which are of significant social and political interest.

TIMELINE of the life of ELIZABETH MONTAGU

1717



In 1717 Elizabeth's parents, Matthew Robinson (1694-1778) and his wife Elizabeth, née Drake (1693-1746) became tenants of the Treasurers House York holding the lease until 1720. Both parents were wealthy, well-connected members of society and the family estate included land in Yorkshire and Cambridge and later Kent.

1718

Elizabeth Robinson was born in York on 2 October 1718.

Baptised in Holy Trinity, Goodramgate in the same year. Elizabeth had seven brothers and one sister, Sarah (1723-1795) with whom she was very close.

1725

In 1725, Matthew Robinson bought the Treasurer's House, raising a mortgage of £1,575 to do so. Yet, in that same year, Robinson sold the Lesser House to Bacon Morritt and, in 1728, the Greater House to Canon Finch.

Education

Whilst Elizabeth and Sarah received no formal education, their brothers were sent away to school. Meanwhile, the girls were eager to learn and resented the fact that, in an era when debates in philosophy, science, the arts and religion were opening up the intellectual and rational world, women were viewed as incapable of taking part. Elizabeth spent much of her childhood in Cambridge at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Conyers Middleton, Elizabeth's grandmother and her second husband. On these stays, Elizabeth and Sarah, were introduced to academic pursuits and pleasures. They were educated in Italian, French, and Latin and read classical and English literature and history. Her nephew wrote of Elizabeth: *"Her uncommon sensibility and acuteness of understanding, as well as her extraordinary beauty as a child, rendered her an object of great notice in the University"*.

1730

As Elizabeth grew, she soon demonstrated a serious interest in literature and, at 12 years old, began a correspondence with Lady Cavendish Harley that lasted 50 years. She also visited the Duchess of Portland in London and widened her glittering network of acquaintances to include: Mary Pendarves, the poet Edward Young and Gilbert West. Elizabeth was known in her youth as "Fidget", as she was very fond of dancing. On this she remarked *"Why shall a table that stands still require so many legs when I can fidget on two?"*



Lady Cavendish

1736

In 1736, unwilling to face the expense of a London property, the Robinsons moved to the Drake family's Mount Morris estate near Hythe in Kent.

1741

Elizabeth's sister Sarah contracted smallpox, which left her disfigured.

1742



On 5 August 1742, a 20-year-old Elizabeth married Edward Montagu (1692-1775) 30 years her senior. Montagu was a grandson of the 1st Earl of Sandwich and MP for Huntingdon and owned coalmines and estates in Northumberland, Yorkshire and Berkshire. They had several homes, including a country estate at Sandlesford Priory, near Newbury, and a prestigious London house in Mayfair. Elizabeth (here as Anne Boelyn) moved away from home, leaving Sarah to care for their ailing mother.

1743

Elizabeth has a child called John born on 11th May 1743 in London. The couple nickname him "Punch".

1744

In September 1744, Punch died suddenly leaving Elizabeth devastated and from this time onwards, she became increasingly religious. There were to be no further pregnancies; the marriage was considered perfectly amicable but not passionate.

1746

Elizabeth's mother dies. Her father moved to London with his housekeeper or possibly mistress, giving no money at all to his children.

1747

Elizabeth's brother Thomas dies.

1750



After 1750, the bereaved Elizabeth and Edward lived in their Mayfair residence of Hill Street in London. A routine of visiting their Berkshire estate of Sandlesford Priory, near Newbury was established for the spring and summer.

The couple remained on friendly terms, but often spent time apart. Edward often visited his estates in the north alone whilst at various times, Elizabeth visited Bath, Tunbridge Wells, Paris, the Rhineland, the Low Countries and the Scottish Highlands.

1751

Elizabeth's sister Sarah married Mr George Lewis Scott on 15 June 1751. The marriage, according to family letters, was never consummated.

1752

In April 1752, Sarah's father and brothers came to remove her from her husband's house for undisclosed reasons. Speculations persisted of incompatibility, abuse, an illicit affair, or even nondisclosure of a prior marriage. Regardless of the reason, the scandal if made public would have damaged George Scott's career so he agreed to pay Sarah a settlement of £100 a year.

Elizabeth's father (whose ward she was) not only gave Sarah no financial help, but forbade either Elizabeth or Matthew, her brother, from relieving her distress.

Sarah and her friend Lady Barbara Montagu settled in Bath where they lived frugally and became active in helping the poor through the creation of a "cottage industry" for poor and disgraced women and children, and they organised programmes to educate poor children in such subjects as reading, maths, and needlework.

1750-1759



Elizabeth now settled in London Mayfair made an explicit attempt to set up a central point for intellect and fashion. Known for giving intellect the precedence of rank, she wrote: *"I never invite idiots to my house."* Through her lead, Salons became known throughout London. Elizabeth Montagu's wealth and superior London address put her at the heart of hosting these events and The Blue Stocking Society was formed.

1760

The Salon became ultra-fashionable and spread throughout society. Rules were developed for such occasions which were now held at other times of the day and evening: no alcohol, no gambling or game-playing, no music, and men and women to be valued for their wit, intelligence, creativity or knowledge and not for their status or gender. Seating was arranged in a semi-circle to promote conversation and group debate. Writers and thinkers such as Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke and Horace Walpole found in these salons a convivial forum for their latest work; painters, authors and actors such as David Garrick could exchange new ideas in the arts with those in the fields of science and astronomy.

Young or inexperienced writers and artists found rich patrons and mentors amongst the Bluestocking men and women and the barriers to women publishing in their own name were challenged. The term "bluestocking" evolved from the scholar Benjamin Stillingfleet's decision to abandon formal evening dress and obey Vesey's call to "Come in your blue stockings."

In 1760 Elizabeth anonymously contributed three chapters to Lyttelton's *Dialogues of the Dead*.

1767



In 1767 the Royal Crescent in Bath was completed. Designed by John Wood the Elder (1704-1754) and his son John Wood the Younger (1734-1781) begins with Queens Square built 1734-36 and continues up Gay Street to the Circus built 1754-67. The Younger Wood concluded this grand scheme for Bath by constructing the Royal Crescent between 1767 and 1774. But to Elizabeth's disappointment she failed to obtain one.

"To my great mortification," she wrote, "there was not a house to be got there when I came, so I was obliged to content myself with one in the Circus."

Eventually Elizabeth Montagu succeeded in moving into the much sought after centre house, No 16 Royal Crescent which became the setting for her evening Salons.

"The beautiful situation of the Crescent cannot be understood by any comparison with anything in any town whatsoever"



16, Royal Crescent, Bath

1769

After several years of study and research and her offence of Voltaire's contempt for Shakespeare, in 1769 she published her book **An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare** compared with the Greek and French Dramatic Poets, with some Remarks upon the Misrepresentations of Mons. de Voltaire.



Shakespeare circa 1610

"Few people know anything of the English history but what they learn from Shakespeare; for our story is rather a tissue of personal adventures and catastrophes than a series of political events."

This was a great success going into re-prints and she became known as its author. Montagu is attributed for elevating Shakespeare to being our National Bard.

1775

Edward Montagu died in 1775 leaving Elizabeth almost his entire estate – an income of around £7,000 per annum. Elizabeth also inherited his assets and became such a shrewd businesswoman that she increased this annual income. Friends recalled her as *"handsome, fat, and merry"*.

1776

Elizabeth attempts to cultivate her nephew Matthew Robinson (1762-1831), the second son of her brother Morris, to become the ideal heir to transmit her surname and values to posterity. In early 1776 Elizabeth decided to adopt Matthew as formally as the law would allow, by petitioning for the King's Royal Licence for him to relinquish the surname of Robinson and take the name and arms of Montagu instead.

1777

Elizabeth commissioned James Stuart to build Montagu House in Portman Square.

1781

She was finally able to move into the mansion in 1781 and continue her literary assemblies here. Montagu House became the focal point for intellectual and artistic debate in the capital. She had a special room made to display her feather work – a huge tapestry made entirely from feathers which Queen Charlotte visited Montagu House to see. Elizabeth was called the "Queen of the Blues" as the most prominent hostess and Hester Thrale, a noted Bluestocking, stated that Elizabeth *was "brilliant in diamonds, solid in judgment, critical in talk"*. It was said that the numbers of visitors grew so large, tickets had to be issued.



Montagu House

It was here too that she gave her annual chimney sweep boys parties, entertaining them with roast beef and plum pudding. One of them who later grew rich as a builder named Montagu Square and Montagu Place after her. Unfortunately, the house was bombed in 1942 and the remnants demolished.

1800

As the 18th century drew to a close, revolutionary events in France resulted in the British Government clamping down on radical thought and action. The Bluestocking connections with French philosophers would not be helpful to them but the decline of the movement was also due to the original leaders coming to the end of their lives and their influence.

Elizabeth Montagu died at Montagu House on 25 August 1800 and was buried in Winchester Cathedral (the Montagu memorial pictured here on the right can still be visited) alongside her husband and infant son. Her sole heir was her nephew Matthew Robinson Montagu.



BLUESTOCKING TEA

The period between 1714 and 1830 saw Britain's population treble to 24 million, and saw the beginnings of social mobility and expanding trade, servant and middle classes. The great influences were largely economic: the agricultural revolution which created widespread wealth, the foreign trade and colonies which brought such high returns and the beginnings of the industrial revolution.

The Bluestocking assemblies challenged the fashion of the day, offering stimulating conversation rather than cards or dancing and instead of alcohol, tea.

Three of the most prominent Bluestocking hostesses were Elizabeth Montagu, Elizabeth Vesey and Frances Boscawen. These wealthy, well connected women held literary salons in their homes in London.

Montagu in Hill Street and then later in Portman Square, Vesey in Clarges Street and Boscawen in South Audley Street.



Tea drinking became popular although very expensive at 10 shillings per pound in comparison to chocolate which sold at 3 shillings per pound. Green Tea was also very popular but it was to be served correctly with milk although there was also a black tea was for medicinal purposes. It appears the first tea cups made their way to England from imports from China. These first tea cups were handle-less and were called tea bowls. And it was not until early **1700** that saucers appeared. It is said in about 1750 Robert Adams inspired tea sets where the tea cups had handles.

Tradition holds that the sandwich was born around 1765. The new dish grew highly in vogue, it was called by the name of the minister who was of course related to Elizabeth Montagu by marriage, John Montagu the 4th Earl of Sandwich. At a time when dinner was the large meal of the day served at 4.p.m. and lunch yet not invented it would make sense a busy man would need some sort of pick-me-up either in the late morning or early afternoon.

Some of the repasts on offer at salons would have been:



Tea Party by Joseph van Aken

Tea rivalled beer in popularity, the beverage has only been an afternoon habit since the early 1800's before that it was only ordered after dinner when the ladies and gentlemen gathered in the drawing room. Tea soon became a custom in English households from middle class families to upper class at home events. At home teas in the upper class establishments were social events often by invitation only.

Lemonade - a refreshing beverage that has been enjoyed throughout the world. Temperance movement of the late 1700's endorsed the innocent non- alcoholic drink as an alternative to alcohol made of sparkling water, honey and lemon juice.

Sandwiches – were always made with very thin sliced bread and a popular sandwich was very thinly sliced roast beef with horseradish.

Savoury Crab Cakes - food historians say minces mixed with bread and spices came about to reason taste and economy. Primary evidence suggest recipes for crab cake type dishes were introduced to the colonies by English settlers.

Pineapple Upside Down Cake – According to most food historians this cake dates back to the 1700's it was originally named the "*Skillet Cake*" as it was cooked as it was made on top of the stove and baked without the benefits of cake pans and ovens. Pineapples are known for symbolizing hospitality so there is no better way to welcome guests.

Chocolate Cake - Of course this is the era where chocolate was very dominating transforming coffee beans into readily usable chocolate this was a fundamental activity of the Royal chocolate Kitchen during the Georgian Period. Chocolate cakes became a very luxurious delicacy.

Lemon Layer Cake – Lemons and citrus fruits were very popular and accessible and they became one of the most preferred choice of cake originating from the pound cake.

Orange Poppy Seed Cake - Poppy seeds replaced the Caraway seeds in cakes using generous amounts of oranges and zests giving this cake a moist and also a fresh fruit taste and a popular choice.

Researched and written by Green Onions

ELIZABETH MONTAGU AND THE CHIMNEY SWEEPS

There is a tale that remains today of Elizabeth Montagu and the Chimney sweeps found in the book; *The Days Before Yesterday* by Lord Frederic Hamilton (1856)



"The story of Mrs. Montagu is well known. The large house standing in a garden at the corner of Portman Square and Gloucester Place was built for Mrs. Montagu by James Stuart at the end of the eighteenth century, and the adjoining Montague Street and Montagu Square derive their names from her.

Somehow Mrs. Montagu's only son got kidnapped, and all attempts to recover the child failed. Time went on, and he was regarded as dead. On a certain 1st of May the sweeps arrived to clean Mrs. Montagu's chimneys, and a climbing-boy was sent up to his horrible task. . . he lost his way in the network of flues and emerged in a different room to

the one he had started from. Something in the aspect of the room struck a half-familiar, half-forgotten chord in his brain. He turned the handle of the door to the next room and found a lady seated there. Then he remembered. Filthy and soot-stained as he was, the little sweep flung himself into the arms of the beautiful lady with a cry of "Mother!" Mrs. Montagu had found her lost son. In gratitude for the recovery of her son, Mrs. Montagu entertained every climbing-boy in London at dinner on the anniversary of her son's return and arranged that they should have a holiday on that day. At her death she left a legacy to continue the treat. Such, at least, is the story as I have always heard it."

This tale obviously cannot be true as Elizabeth`s son died when he was just over a year old. However, in delving deeper, the author John Timbs (1801-1875) wrote of Elizabeth`s nephew, Edward Wortley Montagu;



Edward Wortley Montagu with his mother
Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

"This hopeful boy was born at Wharnccliffe Lodge, in Yorkshire, about the year 1714; he was sent to Westminster School, whence he ran away, and was more than a year apprentice to a fisherman at Blackwall; he was sent back to Westminster, again ran away, and bound himself to the master of an Oporto vessel, a Quaker, from whom he escaped immediately on landing. In one of these flights, he changed clothes with a chimney-sweep, and for some time followed that occupation. After a long and anxious search, he was discovered by his family, and restored to his parents, on the first of May, at the family mansion in Portman Square."

"Yesterday being the 1st of May, the Honourable Mrs. Montagu entertained the Chimney-sweepers according to annual custom, with roast beef, mutton, and baked plumb-pudding, in the lawn of her house in Portman-square, and after their regale gave them each a shilling. Mrs. Montague appeared in good spirits among the Nobility whom she invited to see the motley company. The outside of the place was thronged with people, carriages, and carts; among the latter several broke down by being overloaded with spectators. The Duchess of York, in her curricle, stopped some time, and seemed highly delighted with the Jacks in the Green, the pyramids of tankards, and the dancing of the sweeps and their ladies on the lawn".



Montagu House Portman Square

(Staffordshire Advertiser, 6th May 1797)

THE BLUE STOCKING JOCKIES

“A good woman, Mrs. Montagu famous for her wealth, and annual dinner to the wretched chimney sweeper apprentices, as also for having written a book, in answer to Voltaire's criticisms on Shakespeare, unequal contest, a pigmy against (a giant,) was a principal ring leader of this new academy. The meetings were to be held at her grand hotel in Portman Square, and it was there wisely decided, that her opinion, on all occasions, should be final and conclusive ; nor is this respectful distinction to be wondered at, when we consider, that she had composed a work, which some persons had read, and which a few had praised . — The victory to be sure, was rather partial, because it evidently appeared from the lady's book, that Voltaire did not understand English, and that she herself was wholly ignorant of the French.

Besides, she seemed so unique, so liberal in her annual banquet to the poor little sweeps, that all her decrees passed unanimously in the society. We, however, who examine the benevolences of those who style themselves the Great, with an impartial eye, cannot discover any transcendent charity in a public, ostentatious expenditure of a few pounds once a year, out of an immense property, which bestows on the Lady's dear self every indulgence, and luxury all the year round. What a profanation of terms to call this charity; to bestow plenty one day, that famine may be more cruelly felt the next. These children of sorrow are trained to the hardest of all servitude, and yet perhaps, in every respect, they fare worse, if possible, than persons in any other condition of life. To behold these little victims of an arbitrary, unnatural system, regale themselves today, without procuring them the same consolation, or even a morsel of bread for tomorrow, must excite pain, rather than pleasure, in a truly feasible, compassionate heart.— They have an equal right from the God of all, and an additional right from their severe labour, to the comforts of society, and it is only the hardened depravation, and cruelty of political institutions, that rob them of these comforts. Let us hear no more then, of Mrs. Montagu's public chimney sweeper festival, a subtraction of five pounds, from an income of 8000 a year. It is provoking when one hears such language, an insult to reason, an outrage on humanity; and when we are told of a Lord, a Duke, or an Esquire, with ten, twenty, forty thousand per annum, wasting more than half their estates on their hounds and their horses, their equipage, and their palaces ; while on the other side, we are triumphantly told that these grand seigniors bestow a few pecks of coals, and a few pounds of beef at Christmas, on naked shivering villagers, the feeling heart recoils from the pane gyric, and disdains the virtue of such frozen charity”.

**Excerpt from *The Female Jockey Club, Or a Sketch of the Manners of the Age.*
Published 1794. By Charles Piggot**

PATRON OF SWEEPS

After her death, Montagu was celebrated as the "Patron of Sweeps" in "The Sweeps' Lamentation For the Loss of their Friend, Mrs Montagu:

**'Tho' I'm only a Sweep,
Yet allow me to weep
And with sorrow my loss to deplore.
While the shovel and brush
For a time let me hush
Since the Patron of Sweeps
is no more!
She'd a heart that could melt
At the troubles we felt
And in soothing 'em thought
herself blest.
So that once in the year
We partook of her cheer,
And she provided the best.'**

**If you would like to be informed
when Queen of The Blues is open to
the public please contact us**

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