

More Than Oliver Twist: Biography Style Guide

We hope the following brief notes will be of use when you come to write your biography for the More Than Oliver Twist project. If you have any questions about what to include in your biography, or its content (including proposed word length), then please do contact your Regional Mentors and/or contact other volunteers on the online forum. We are all happy to offer help and advice at any stage.

General format:

Examples of the project's style, and tone may be viewed on Workhouse Network's More Than Oliver Twist webpages. We hope these will offer you a guide to our general approach to biographies. We are basing our style on that used by the National Dictionary of Biography. As well as publicly accessible content on the Dictionary's webpage (<https://www.oxforddnb.com/>), the complete online Dictionary (more than 58,000 lives) may be freely accessed through most public libraries in the UK. On its submission your text will be edited by your Regional Mentor, and then copy edited, at which point amendments may be made to conform with house style. It is more important that volunteers focus on providing a full, rounded, balanced and engaging account of your person's life.

Content:

Biographies should be accurate, clear, engaging, and interesting to read. They should supply detailed personal information with reference—wherever possible—to the following core components:

- subject's full name
- date and place of birth (where known)
- parentage (father and mother, with dates where known)
- places and dates of education (where known)
- marriage(s) and significant relationships with reference to the spouse/partner, the date and place of marriage, and any children from the relationship (where known)
- date, place, and cause death (where known)
- date and place of burial and any memorial services (where known)

We seek to provide readers with a concise and lively assessment of the person's life, put in his or her context. Anecdotes and quotations that bring colour to a life are very welcome!

Structure:

Biographies should as far as possible follow a chronological structure, opening with the person's birth, and names of parents, and should give an account (with dates, where possible) of the principal events and achievements of the life. A concluding appraisal of the subject's character, impact and legacy can be a valuable element of an entry.

References:

Footnotes are not required, but references are needed within the text to identify direct quotations and to support contentious statements. These should be given in the format '(Jones, 37)' with a full citation to the quoted work in the list of sources used.

Your signature:

Please give your name at the end of the article in the form in which you wish to see it acknowledged. Please note that qualifications to volunteers' names like Professor or Dr are never used.

Length:

You should offer a balanced account of the person's life. The length of an entry will depend on how long the person lived, what s/he achieved during their lifetime and how much archival information was available to you. Biographies should not be padded with extra interpretation where there is no source to evidence this and volunteers should avoid waffle or over-lengthy description. If you have concerns about length, please contact your Regional Mentor and/or the online Forum.

Sources:

The sources listed at the end of each entry will comprise the following sections:

- details of the primary or secondary sources used in preparation of the article
- (where available) listings of principal paper archives relating to your subject
- (where available) listings of biographical material in sound and film archives
- (where available) portrait likenesses of the subject taken from life
- (where available) wealth at death records, drawn from wills, inventories or probate registers

For some people the source list will be very short.

Please list your sources at the end of the entry. See the References Style Guide for help with this – your Regional Mentors and the online Forum can also help.

Submitting your biography:

Wherever possible we ask that you submit your biography and the accompanying reference sections electronically as email attachments to your Regional Mentor. This will make editing and exchange of any future drafts much more efficient for all. If you do submit your biography in paper format, then please use double-spacing with generous margins to allow for editing. And thank you again for agreeing to contribute to the More Than Oliver Twist project.

These notes have been based on the “Notes for contributors” provided by the Dictionary of National Biography.