

U DCR

Papers of John Cordeaux

1864-1899

Accession number: 1979/09; 2000/18

**Biographical Background:**

John Cordeaux was one of the foremost ornithologists of his day. He was the eldest son of the Reverend John Cordeaux (b.1802) who held livings successively at Tothill, Lincolnshire, and Foston and Flickney in Leicestershire. John the elder married Elizabeth Taylor of Tothill, and they had six sons and five daughters. John, their first child, was born at Foston Rectory on 27 February 1831. He began his education at Sheffield Collegiate School, after his father had become vicar of St Mary's, Sheffield. On his father's move to St Giles, Liverpool, young John and his four brothers moved to Liverpool College. As a child he often visited the home of his maternal grandfather, Christopher Taylor, at Tothill, near Louth, and it was here that he first gained his love of nature, exploring that part of Lincolnshire between the Wolds and the sea. Ironically, he enjoyed shooting from an early age - wild duck, snipe and golden plover. When he was about 22, his great uncle, Richard Taylor, died and left him the right of occupancy of Great Cotes House and the tenancy of an adjoining farm and land. He later became agent for Sir Richard Sutton, and managed the Sutton estates in the Great Cotes area, where he remained for most of the rest of his life. In 1860 he married Mary Anne Wilson of Horton Hall, Cheshire. They had two sons.

Great Cotes, close to Grimsby and about one mile from the Humber estuary, was an ideal place for the study of birds and their migration. Cordeaux's visitors were customarily treated to a 20-mile trek through the marshes to Tetney. His comprehensive natural history records are shown in his four surviving notebooks, one entry from which is particularly poignant:

2 Dec [1879]. Very severe frost, water froze in hand basin in bedroom soon after being poured out. Walked in marshes in afternoon . . . there was a flock of 10,000 golden plover . . . when they rose I could not see daylight through them.

Like Morris, his early publications were modest affairs. His first contribution to *The Zoologist* appeared in April 1864, and concerned an influx of goldcrests on the east coast in October 1863. His first pioneering work was in the area of bird parasitology, in an article which appeared in *The Zoologist* in March 1869. As a meticulous recorder of natural life, his *Birds of the Humber District* was based chiefly on observations made during the previous decade. In it he listed 276 species, and provided details of their habitats in the Humber area, including Spurn, to which he was a regular visitor. A revised edition appeared in 1899, in which 322 species were listed.

However, the area in which he perhaps made his greatest impact was migration studies. This may have been influenced by the visit he made in September 1874 to Heinrich Gatke, secretary to the governor of Heligoland (which was a British possession until 1890). Gatke was a renowned expert on bird migration. The two men kept in regular contact by letter thereafter, describing their respective findings to each other.

Cordeaux began his first small-scale enquiry into migration patterns on the Yorkshire and Durham coasts in the autumn of 1876, and published the results in a short paper in *The Zoologist* in January 1877. These were based on observations collected from lighthouse and lightship keepers. In his own recordings he noted how many of the migrating birds were shot as they came in to land. On repeating the experiments in 1877 and 1878, it quickly became apparent that a rapid fall was occurring in certain species, notably the short-eared owl, as a result of large-scale shootings in previous years. In Scotland, John Harvie-Brown followed Cordeaux's example, and organised a similar enquiry. Cordeaux and Harvie-Brown undertook a joint enquiry in the autumn of 1879. Printed forms and letters of instruction were sent to 64 lighthouses and lightships around the

Scottish coast and 37 stations on the east coast of England. Their report was published in the May 1880 issue of *The Zoologist*. Alfred Newton, Professor of Zoology at Cambridge, delivered a paper to the British Association at Swansea in August 1880 on their findings and as a result he, Harvie-Brown and Cordeaux were invited to form a committee, with the last as secretary, to report on the next survey. This survey was expanded to cover the west coast of England, the Channel Isles and the Isle of Man, and about 160 stations were involved. Thereafter the Committee became more formally constituted, with an annual grant from the British Association. The ninth and last report was issued in 1887. A summary of the reports was eventually published in 1896.

Between 1864 and 1898 Cordeaux produced some 476 papers, reviews, and other publications. His stature as a researcher was recognised fairly late in life: in 1893 the Lincolnshire Naturalists' Union was founded, and Cordeaux was elected President. In 1896, the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union invited him to be their President. He died on 1 August 1899 and is buried in Louth cemetery.

**Custodial history:**

Deposited by Dr W. L. Cordeaux, Mar 1979, through the good offices of John Cordeaux's biographer (and former head porter in the Brynmor Jones Library) the late Brian Pashby. The original material was transferred into the custody of the British Trust for Ornithology on 16 Apr 2004, and photocopies were retained by Hull University Archives.

**Description:**

The collection includes photocopies of lecture notes, copies of articles, four ornithological field notebooks (1876-1888) and several hundred letters, including over 100 from Gatke (1874-1895) and 95 from Professor Alfred Newton (between 1868 and 1899).

**Arrangement:**

U DCR/1 Photocopies of articles and lectures, 1883-1898  
U DCR/2 Photocopied correspondence, 1864-1899  
U DCR/3 Photocopies of notebooks and notes, 1876-1897  
U DCR/4 Photocopied miscellanea, 1869-1899

**Extent:** 3 boxes

**Related material:**

Papers of T Michael Clegg [U DCG]  
Papers of Reverend F O & Reverend M C F Morris [U DX21 & U DP180]  
Records of the Association for the Protection of Sea Birds [U DSB]

**Access conditions:** Access will be granted to any accredited reader

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**Language:** English

Hull History Centre: Papers of John Cordeaux

U DCR/1	<b>Articles and Lectures</b> <b>U DCR/1-7 Miscellaneous articles and lectures by John Cordeaux</b> <b>U DCR/8-12 Printed articles by John Cordeaux</b> <b>U DCR/13-14 Printed articles by others</b> <b>All are photocopies.</b> <b>14 items</b>	1883-1898
U DCR/1/1	Photocopy. 'Birds of the Humber District' Lecture at Hull, by John Cordeaux, Parts 1 and 2. 1 item	12 Oct 1883
U DCR/1/2	Photocopy. 'The Rush of Arctic birds on the East Coast of Great Britain in the Winter of 1894-95' Lecture at the Woolhope Club, by John Cordeaux. 1 item	30 Mar 1884
U DCR/1/3	Photocopy. 'Some facts about Old Lincolnshire' by John Cordeaux 1 item	late 19th cent.
U DCR/1/4	Photocopy. 'Our Spring and Autumn Migrants' by John Cordeaux 1 item	late 19th cent.
U DCR/1/5	Photocopy. 'Some Notes of a Tour in the Highlands', Parts 1 and 2, by John Cordeaux 1 item	late 19th cent.
U DCR/1/6	Photocopy. 'On the Shap Fells', Parts 1 and 2, by John Cordeaux 1 item	late 19th cent.
U DCR/1/7	Photocopy. 'A Night in the Haunted Grange' by John Cordeaux 1 item	late 19th cent.
U DCR/1/8	Photocopy. Presidential address to the Lincolnshire Naturalists' Union by John Cordeaux 1 item	24 May 1894
U DCR/1/9	Photocopy. Excerpt from a Presidential address to the Lincolnshire Naturalists' Union, from The Zoologist, by John Cordeaux 1 item	1894
U DCR/1/10	Photocopy. Presidential address to the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union by John Cordeaux 1 item	26 Nov 1896

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U DCR/1/11	Photocopy. 'Some Shore Birds', from The Leeds Mercury Weekly Supplement, by John Cordeaux. 2 items	27 Aug 1898
U DCR/1/12	Photocopy. 'In Upper Coquetdale', from The Naturalist, by John Cordeaux 1 item	late 19th cent.
U DCR/1/13	Photocopy. 'In an Indian Jheel', by 'D. G.' (W. W. Cordeaux?), from The Naturalist 4 items	late 19th cent.
U DCR/1/14	Photocopy. 'In the North-West Himalayas', by 'D. G.' (W. W. Cordeaux?), from The Field 2 items	12 Jan 1889
<b>U DCR/2</b>	<b>Correspondence</b> <b>U DCR/1-40 Letters to John Cordeaux</b> <b>U DCR/41-45 Letters to others</b> <b>c.300 items</b>	<b>1864-1899</b>
U DCR/2/1	Photocopy letter. George Adrian, Lincoln, to John Cordeaux 1 item	13 Dec 1869
U DCR/2/2	Photocopy letters. R. Almack, Sudbury, Suffolk to John Cordeaux 4 items	7 Feb 1865- 2 Aug 1869
U DCR/2/3	Photocopy letters. Reverend H. F. Barnes, Vicar of Bridlington to John Cordeaux 2 items	16 Nov 1868- 29 Mar 1869
U DCR/2/4	Photocopy letter. W. W. Boulton, Beverley to John Cordeaux 1 item	19 Dec 1867
U DCR/2/5	Photocopy letter. T. Boynton, Ulrome Grange to John Cordeaux 1 item	3 Aug 1870
U DCR/2/6	Photocopy letters. E(dward) Cordeaux (brother), Satara to John Cordeaux 3 items	27 Jan- 26 Oct 1866

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U DCR/2/7	Photocopy letters. William Wilfrid Cordeaux (his son), India and Egypt to John Cordeaux Some letters are illustrated with pen sketches and the bundle also includes 10 loose sketches. Includes a letter from John Cordeaux to B. Bowdler Sharpe from the British Museum, asking for identification of skins sent home by W. W. C. from Cashmere [Kashmir] (28 Nov 1887) and reply (3 Dec 1887). c.120 items	31 Dec 1885- 7 Apr 1899
U DCR/2/8	Photocopy letter. Editor, Cornhill Magazine, to John Cordeaux On the envelope in the hand of John Cordeaux it is signed 'A Trollope'. 1 item	24 Nov 1864
U DCR/2/9	Photocopy letter. H. E. Dresser, London to John Cordeaux 1 item	18 Apr 1875
U DCR/2/10	Photocopy letter. John Garniss, Great Coates to John Cordeaux 1 item	8 Feb 1864
U DCR/2/11	Photocopy letters. H. Gaetke, Heligoland to John Cordeaux c.100 items	9 Oct 1874- 25 May 1895
U DCR/2/12	Photocopy letter. William H. Goy, Barton upon Humber to John Cordeaux 1 item	12 Nov 1868
U DCR/2/13	Photocopy letter. T. E. Gunn, Norwich to John Cordeaux 1 item	1 Jun 1868
U DCR/2/14	Photocopy letter. J. H. Gurney, Darlington to John Cordeaux 41 items	26 Apr 1868- 28 Sep 1870
U DCR/2/15	Photocopy letter. S. F. Harmer, Museum of Zoology, Cambridge to John Cordeaux 1 item	13 Jan 1899
U DCR/2/16	Photocopy letters. Edmund Harting, Kingsbury, Middlesex to John Cordeaux 10 items	17 Apr 1867- 18 Mar 1870
U DCR/2/17	Photocopy letter. Royal Gardens, Kew to John Cordeaux Two botanical specimens. 1 item	[26 Jul 1867]

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U DCR/2/18	Photocopy letter. John Jackson, Bishop of Lincoln to John Cordeaux 1 item	23 Dec 1863
U DCR/2/19	Photocopy letter. Fitz [Maxre], Heligoland to John Cordeaux 1 item	16 Dec 1874
U DCR/2/20	Photocopy letters. Reverend F. O. Morris, Nunburnholme Rectory to John Cordeaux 3 items	19 Oct 1863- 21 Mar 1870
U DCR/2/21	Photocopy letters. Edward Newman, London to John Cordeaux 4 items	31 Aug 1867- 18 Mar 1870
U DCR/2/22	Photocopy letters. Professor Alfred Newton to John Cordeaux 95 items	18 Nov 1868- 16 Jun 1899
U DCR/2/23	Photocopy letters. Professor Richard Owen, British Museum to John Cordeaux 2 items	16 Apr 1866- 24 Dec 1867
U DCR/2/24	Photocopy letter. William Postlethwaite, Walney Island to John Cordeaux 1 item	23 Dec 1876
U DCR/2/25	Photocopy letter. F. D. Power, Lewisham to John Cordeaux 1 item	22 Apr 1868
U DCR/2/26	Photocopy letter. F. P. Readlands, March to John Cordeaux 1 item	28 Jan 1869
U DCR/2/27	Photocopy letters. H. Reekes, Thruxton, Andover to John Cordeaux 3 items	1 Mar- 29 Jun 1869
U DCR/2/28	Photocopy letters. Richard Richardson, Beverley to John Cordeaux 2 items	18 Oct 1869- 24 Feb 1870
U DCR/2/29	Photocopy letters. George Roberts, Lofthouse, Wakefield to John Cordeaux With off-print 'Notes on Church Sun-dials' by Roberts. 3 items	10 Nov [1867]- 26 Mar 1868
U DCR/2/30	Photocopy letter. H. Saunders, London to John Cordeaux 1 item	16 Sep 1875

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U DCR/2/31	Photocopy letter. Henry L. Saxby, Shetland to John Cordeaux 1 item	17 Mar 1869
U DCR/2/32	Photocopy letters. W. G. Smith, London to John Cordeaux With botanical specimens. 2 items	5-7 Aug 1867
U DCR/2/33	Photocopy letter. John Stephenson, Hull Bridge, Beverley to John Cordeaux 1 item	15 Jul 1868
U DCR/2/34	Photocopy letter. H. Stevenson, Norwich to John Cordeaux 8 items	3 Jun 1868- 23 Sep 1870
U DCR/2/35	Photocopy letter. George Stuart, Leicester to John Cordeaux 1 item	17 Oct 1868
U DCR/2/36	Photocopy letters. Reverend H. B. Tristram, Greatham Vicarage, Stockton on Tees to John Cordeaux 10 items	Aug 1868- 14 Jun 1869
U DCR/2/37	Photocopy letter. E. Walford, editor of 'Once a Week' and 'Gentleman's Magazine', London to John Cordeaux 1 item	14 Nov 1867
U DCR/2/38	Photocopy letters. Reverend M. G. Watkins, Vicarage, Ottery St Mary to John Cordeaux 5 items	30 Jan- 26 Aug 1867
U DCR/2/39	Photocopy letter. Lord Wharnccliffe, Wortley Hall to John Cordeaux 1 item	24 Dec 1864
U DCR/2/40	Photocopy letter. Mrs Woodhouse, Cupar Fife to John Cordeaux 1 item	14 May 1868
U DCR/2/41	Photocopy letters. William Wilfrid Cordeaux (eldest son) to Mrs Mary Ann Cordeaux 51 items	23 Nov 1885- 12 Feb 1899
U DCR/2/42	Photocopy letters. William Wilfrid Cordeaux (his brother) to Edward Kyme Cordeaux 2 items	27 May 1886- 19 Dec 1887

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U DCR/2/43	Photocopy letter. William Wilfrid Cordeaux (his grandson) to Reverend John Cordeaux 1 item	6 Mar 1887
U DCR/2/44	Photocopy letters. Edward Cordeaux (brother-in-law) to Mrs Mary Ann Cordeaux 3 items	7 Jun 1866- 3 Sep 1867
U DCR/2/45	Photocopy letter. Wen [Edward Cordeaux] (his uncle) to [William Wilfrid Cordeaux?] 2 items	7 Dec 1866- 20 Aug [1867]
<b>U DCR/3</b>	<b>Notebooks and Notes 19 items</b>	<b>1876-1897</b>
U DCR/3/1	Photocopy. Ornithological notebook of John Cordeaux 1 item	10 May 1876- 20 Jun 1878
U DCR/3/2	Photocopy. Ornithological notebook of John Cordeaux 1 item	21 Jun 1878- 5 Sep 1881
U DCR/3/3	Photocopy. Ornithological notebook of John Cordeaux 1 item	17 Sep 1881- 5 Jun 1884
U DCR/3/4	Photocopy. Ornithological notebook of John Cordeaux 1 item	27 Jun 1884- 7 Jul 1888
U DCR/3/5	Photocopy. General notebook of John Cordeaux 1 item	c.1898
U DCR/3/6	Photocopy. Notes of a lecture on birds at Great Coates Chapel, by John Cordeaux 1 item	17 Dec 1884
U DCR/3/7	Photocopy. Notes of a lecture on botany to Grimsby Field Naturalists' Society, by John Cordeaux 1 item	15 Apr 1886
U DCR/3/8	Photocopy. Notes of a lecture on Heligoland at Great Coates, by John Cordeaux 1 item	12 Jan 1888
U DCR/3/9	Photocopy. Notes of a lecture on nature at Great Coates, by John Cordeaux 1 item	4 Dec 1889
U DCR/3/10	Photocopy. Notes of a lecture on politics, by John Cordeaux 1 item	1892



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U DCR/3/11	Photocopy. Notes of a lecture on politics at Easington, by John Cordeaux 1 item	20 Jul 1895
U DCR/3/12	Photocopy. Notes of a lecture on Norway at Great Coates, by John Cordeaux 1 item	17 Dec 1896
U DCR/3/13	Photocopy. Notes of a lecture on bird migration at Haileybury College, by John Cordeaux 1 item	13 Nov 1897
U DCR/3/14	Photocopy. Notes of a lecture on birds, by John Cordeaux 1 item	late 19th cent.
U DCR/3/15	Photocopy. Notes of a lecture on local societies, by John Cordeaux 1 item	late 19th cent.
U DCR/3/16	Photocopy. Notes of a lecture on local societies, by John Cordeaux 1 item	late 19th cent.
U DCR/3/17	Photocopy. Notes of a lecture on politics, by John Cordeaux 1 item	late 19th cent.
U DCR/3/18	Photocopy. Notes of a lecture on politics, by John Cordeaux 1 item	late 19th cent.
U DCR/3/19	Photocopy. Notes of a lecture on home rule, Bassetlaw, by John Cordeaux 1 item	late 19th cent.
<b>U DCR/4</b>	<b>Miscellaneous 7 items</b>	<b>1534-1899</b>
U DCR/4/1	Photocopy. Extract from History of Newmarket Regarding the arrival of Viscount Rochester in Dover, where he spent a few days fowling dotterel (5 May 1534). 1 item	19th cent.
U DCR/4/2	Photocopy. Copy of a Licence under sign manual (Charles I) to Sir John Thimellby, 29 Oct 1638 To take partridges and pheasants on his land in Lincolnshire. 1 item	19th cent.

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U DCR/4/3	Scrapbook. Photocopied press cuttings Mainly ornithological and botanical but some historical and archaeological. Includes letters from, and reviews of work by, John Cordeaux and his obituary from 'Nature', which is indexed. 1 vol	1869-1899
U DCR/4/4	Photocopy. Extract from 'Ornithologie Europienne', by Deyland: sand-piper 1 item	19th cent.
U DCR/4/5	Photocopies. Posters [sent home by William Wilfrid Cordeaux] Includes: a) Goods offered at Umballa by Ellahi Buksh and Son, of Delhi (Jan 1887) b) Murree Horse and Dog Show (30 Jun 1888) c) Murree Gymkhana (14 Jul 1888) d) Details of light bamboo cart ('Ekka Draught') designed by WWC (n.d.) 4 items	1887-1888
U DCR/4/6	Photocopy. Reprint from The Naturalist: 'Heligoland', by John Cordeaux 1 item	Jan 1888
U DCR/4/7	Photocopy. 'List of plants collected by Captain W. Wilfrid Cordeaux (21st Lancers) in Cashmere [Kashmir] and Ladakh (1894-1896), and now in the British Museum' 1 item	19th cent.