

**Biographical Background:**

David Smith (b.1781) was a wheelwright in Skipton, in the West Riding. With his wife Susan (1771-1841) he had two sons, Thomas (1816-1847) and John (d.1848). John was also a wheelwright and the earliest letters in this collection were written by John and his wife Hannah Holdsworth (d.1848) after they left Skipton and moved firstly to Dumfries, and then to Queenwood, Stockbridge in Hampshire. Queenwood was the most important Owenite community established in this country, and the Smiths were amongst its earliest members. The letter of 20 January 1840 indicates that they had recently moved to Queenwood with their son Joseph (1832-1857) and daughter Susannah (Susan) (1838-1902).

Their son Robert Guyer Smith was born around 1840 whilst they were living there. The main building on the site, Harmony Hall, was completed in 1841 at a cost of £30,000 - 'C.M. 1841' on the building indicated that this year was taken by the Owenites as the commencement of a new millenium. However the community did not have enough capital to sustain spending on this scale and the poor quality of the land in the region meant that farming was not profitable enough to meet the rent. The community collapsed in August 1845 when its members were evicted and the buildings were leased to the Quaker George Edmondson and used as an agricultural college. Queenwood College is famous for its association with the natural philosopher John Tyndall (1820-1893), who was the first Superintendent of its Engineering Laboratory.

There are no letters during the period after October 1840 until January 1846, but the Smiths are listed as members of the community until March 1845 (Royle: 1998, table 4). The last letter from John Smith is dated to 1847 and at some point after this, John and Hannah emigrated to America to settle at another Owenite community. Their oldest child stayed behind at school in England. John, Hannah and their son Robert died during the journey, having reached St. Louis, Missouri, and their daughter Susan had to return to England. She lived in Manchester for most of her adult life and married John Robinson (1833-1905) in 1875.

They had one son, Robert Guyer Robinson (1876-1948), who was born in Folkestone. The majority of these letters reveal Susan's relationships with her maternal aunts, Judith Hartley (1825-1917), who was married to Richard Hartley (1825-1891), a farmer in Lothersdale, and Mary Scowcroft (1821-1897), who was married to James Hamer Scowcroft (1810-1897), a vicar at St. Matthew's church, Birmingham. There is also news of her maternal uncle John Holdsworth (1811-1882), vicar of Lothersdale, and his wife Elizabeth Hirst (1825-1882), known as aunt Bessy. Samuel Robinson was John Robinson's son by Martha Emily Harris and he made contact with his stepbrother in 1897.

Note: this description was compiled with information from David Robinson

**Custodial history:**

Held within the family until donation to Hull University Archives by David Robinson, Salford, 12 September 2006

## Hull History Centre: Letters of the Smith and Robinson Families

### Description:

Incomplete but very interesting series of family letters primarily relating to exchanges of news about other members of the family including updates on their health, work and activities.

### Arrangement:

- U DX300/1-6 Letters to David Smith from John and Hannah Smith, mainly relating to their time at an Owenite community in Hampshire, 1838-1847
- U DX300/7-30 Letters to Susannah Smith (later Robinson), 1851-1883
- U DX300/31-32 Letters to Robert Robinson from Samuel Robinson, 1897
- U DX300/33 Transcripts

A large number of these letters are undated and dates were estimated by David Robinson's mother based on her knowledge of the family's history

**Extent:** 32 items & 1 bundle

### Access conditions:

Access will be granted to any accredited reader

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|-----------|---|------------------|
| U DX300/1 | Letter to David Smith, Skipton, from John and Hannah Smith, Dumfries<br>Addressed to 'Dear Father & Mother Brother and Son'<br>Discusses his new job, the cost of food and living in Dumfries, his recovery from fever, his daughter Susan's illness, and reading the Northern Star<br>1 item   | [23] Nov<br>1838 |
| U DX300/2 | Letter to David Smith, Skipton, from John Smith, Queenwood, Stockbridge<br>Addressed to 'Dear Father & Mother'. Discusses his son Joseph's feelings about moving to Queenwood and missing his grandparents and uncle, the family's lodgings at Broughton, how Joseph occupies his time, food, their journey to Queenwood via Manchester and London, his work as wheelwright, the size of the community and the development of the main residential building at Queenwood (Harmony Hall)<br>1 item | 20 Jan 1840      |
| U DX300/3 | Letter (incomplete) to David Smith, Skipton, from [John Smith], Queenwood, Stockbridge<br>Discusses Robert Owen's manifesto, human nature and free will, the cottage where the family lives, Joseph's tuition and feelings towards his grandparents and uncle, and Robert Owen's visit to Queenwood to give a lecture<br>1 item   | 13 Apr 1840      |

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U DX300/4	Letter to David Smith, Skipton, from Hannah Smith, Stockbridge First part addressed to 'My Dear Father & Mother' Discusses the healthy conditions they are living in, her son Joseph (who is back in Skipton with his grandparents) and asks for news of her aunt Betty, sister Mary and brother John. Second part addressed to 'My Dear Little Son' Advising him on his behaviour and sending news of his sister Susan and brother Robert 1 item	4 Oct 1840
U DX300/5	Letter to David Smith, Skipton, from John Smith, Poplar Square [no town/city given, possibly Manchester] Addressed to 'Dear Father'. Discusses how he has been occupying his time recently and asks after his father's work, discusses his children, the family's situation and his brother Tommy 1 item	18 Jan 1846
U DX300/6	Letter to David Smith, Skipton, from John Smith, no.1 Queen's Road [no town/city given, possibly Manchester]. Addressed to 'Dear Father'. Discusses renting out part of his lodgings, his father visiting next summer with his wife, and hopes of visiting Skipton soon 1 item	1847
U DX300/7	Letter to Susan Smith, from Hannah Wormald, Lothersdale. Discusses Susan visiting at Christmas, a recent visit to Skipton and meeting various friends 1 item	17 Dec 1851
U DX300/8	Letter to Susan Smith, from aunt Mary Scowcroft, [Birmingham] Discusses visiting Mr Stockdale, sending a comforter to uncle John in Skipton, Mary Anne Holdsworth [Susan's cousin], a little girl who lives opposite, 'working for the soldiers' and her husband having to go to Cambridge 1 item	[1855]
U DX300/9	Letter to Susan Smith, from brother Joseph Smith, Training College, York. Discusses his recent move to York and intention to stay for 3 months, living in the school house, and Susan wishing to visit Stow with him 1 item	[1856]
U DX300/10	Letter to Susan Smith, [York], from Hannah Wormald, Lothersdale. Sending personal and family news, discusses Susan living with her brother [in York] and Mr Butler leaving Lothersdale 1 item	1 Jul 1856

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U DX300/11	Letter (incomplete) to [Susan Smith], [Stow], from aunt Mary Scowcroft, [Cambridge] Discusses [her daughter] Sarah's illness, sends news of various acquaintances and asks for news of Susan and her brother now that they have moved to Stow 1 item	[1857]
U DX300/12	Letter to Susan Smith, from aunt Mary Scowcroft Consoling Susan in her sorrow [following the death of her brother Joseph] 1 item	1 Jan 1858
U DX300/13	Letter to Susan Smith, from aunt Mary Scowcroft, Lothersdale. Sending news of family & acquaintances, discusses a recent trip to Morecambe Bay, Margaret's work as a teacher and her husband's return to Birmingham 1 item	[1860]
U DX300/14	Letter to Susan Smith, from aunt Judith Hartley, 51 Bold Street, [Liverpool?] Sending news of the death of her son the previous evening and asking Susan to come over before they leave for the funeral in Lothersdale 1 item	[1860]
U DX300/15	Letter to Susan Smith, from [Alice] Lomax, Marlborough Hotel, Upper Moss Lane, Hulme, Manchester. Asking Susan to write & send back her portrait and let her have news about Mr Foster, discusses servants and a dress 1 item	26 Dec 1860
U DX300/16	Letter to Susan Smith, [Manchester], from aunt Judith Hartley, Crompton Row, Stone Clough. Discusses the recent illnesses suffered by her children, herself and her husband, Susan's lodging with Mrs Cope in Manchester and her duties there, and the birth of a son to Susan's uncle John, to be named Hampden Scowcroft Holdsworth 1 item	[1861]
U DX300/17	Letter to Susan Smith, from aunt Judith Hartley, [Oxford or Lothersdale]. Giving advice about Mrs Pimlet and Susan's moral welfare, discusses an outbreak of cattle plague in Yorkshire and sends news of family and acquaintances in Lothersdale 1 item	[1863]
U DX300/18	Letter to Susan Smith, [Manchester], from cousin Mary Jane Hartley. Sending news of a visit to Lancashire by aunt and uncle Scowcroft and of a planned mission meeting 1 item	[1863]

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U DX300/19	Letter (incomplete) to [Susan Smith], from cousin Mary Jane Hartley. Sending news of family & acquaintances 1 item	[1866]
U DX300/20	Letter to [John and Susan Robinson], from nephew Alfred Carbine, 38 East St, Lower Mosley Street, Manchester. Addressed to 'Dear Uncle and Aunt'. Discusses their recent move to [Kent] and the possibility of them visiting France, family news and his inability to find work in Manchester since returning from the Isle of Man 1 item	7 Oct 1875
U DX300/21	Letter to Susan Robinson, [Folkestone], from aunt Judith Hartley, Woodhead, Lothersdale Discusses Susan's failure to pass on her new address or to visit at Christmas, and the birth of Susan's son 1 item	[1876]
U DX300/22	Letter to Susan Robinson, Folkestone, from aunt Mary Scowcroft, St. Matthew's Parsonage, Birmingham Advising Susan on the benefits for her baby of living in Folkestone or the countryside, compared to Manchester, and sending family news 1 item	[1876]
U DX300/23	Letter to Susan Robinson, from aunt Mary Scowcroft, St. Matthew's Parsonage, Birmingham. With family news 1 item	[1876]
U DX300/24	Letter to Susan Robinson, from aunt Mary Scowcroft, St. Matthew's Parsonage, Birmingham. Discusses Susan's ill health after the birth of her son, Susan's habit of not writing to her aunts and Sarah's recent marriage 1 item	[1876]
U DX300/25	Letter to [John and Susan Robinson], from nephew Alfred Carbine, 38 East Street, Manchester. Addressed to 'Dear Uncle and Aunt'. Sending family news, discusses the possibility of them returning to live in Manchester, a visit by Mrs Morris and the Knott Mill Fair 1 item	28 Apr 1876
U DX300/26	Letter to Susan Robinson, from cousin Polly Hartley, 6 Bedford Street, Brook Street, [Chorlton on Medlock], Manchester. Note asking when Susan will arrive 1 item	[1879]

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U DX300/27	Letter (incomplete) to Susan Robinson, from aunt Judith Hartley, Woodhead, Lothersdale, Cononley, Leeds Discusses Susan's marital problems, the possibility of her staying at Lothersdale and her uncle leaving her son Bobby a bequest to set him up in business 1 item	30 Jun 1881
U DX300/28	Letter to Susan Robinson, [Manchester], from cousin Josephine Hartley, Woodhead Farm, Lothersdale, Cononley, Leeds. Asking for news and sending family news, discusses leaving school and a recent thunderstorm 1 item	7 Jul 1881
U DX300/29	Letter to Susan Robinson, from aunt Judith Hartley Sending news of the deaths of aunt Bessy and uncle John [Holdsworth], discusses uncle's funeral and the sale of his house, Sarah's teaching post in Ipswich and other family news 1 item	1 Nov 1882
U DX300/30	Letter to Susan Robinson, [Manchester], from aunt Judith Hartley, Woodhead, Lothersdale, nr. Cononley, Leeds. Discusses arrangements for Susan's son Bobby to return to Manchester, her daughter Josephine's illness and aunt Mary's recent accident 1 item	[1883]
U DX300/31	Letter to Robert Robinson, from Samuel Robinson, B Company, Depot West Yorkshire Regiment, York Making arrangements to have further contact following his notice in Lloyds Register 1 item	10 Mar 1897
U DX300/32	Letter to Robert Robinson, from Samuel Robinson, B Company, Depot West Yorkshire Regiment, York Addressed to 'Dear Brother'. Explaining his delay in replying due to the amount of work at the depot 1 item	9 May 1897
U DX300/33	Set of photocopied ts. transcripts of letters at U DX/300/1-32 1 bundle	1838 - 1897