

**U DX324**

**Material relating to the Courtney Family**

**1761-1976**

**Biographical Background:**

John Courtney was the son of John Courtney of Wakefield and Elizabeth Bourdenand nee Featherstone of Beverley. His father had been in the East India Company and served a spell as governor of Surat. John Courtney was born in Beverley in 1734 and attended Beverley Grammar School before being admitted as pensioner at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1752. He inherited land and property in Beverley and the surrounding area from his grandmother, mother and from his uncle and aunt, Ralph and Margaret Featherstone, and went to live in Beverley. His diaries, which begin in 1759, are thus filled with local information about Beverley elections, the Minster, the Assembly Rooms, the Beverley races, turnpikes, the Beverley Arms, the Beverley Bank, the East Riding Bank, the coffee house at the Blue Bell and so on. All the main local families are included in his gossip; the Legards, the Broadleys, the Barnards, the Gees, the Stricklands- Mark Sykes he calls 'an artful cunning fellow'. The elopement of Captain Hotham and Miss Gee in 1792 rates a mention.

On 8 June 1759 he recorded 'This day I kept my act in the law schools'; he had been in Cambridge for a while before taking his LLB and the diary is quite good for college talk. He used his legal qualification to manage his lands and property. He was also heavily involved in the local militia (the diary is filled with reference to East Riding militia activities), possibly as a response to the threatening international events that he also recorded. In 1762 and 1763 he was recording his thoughts on the war with Spain, and the French Revolution later gets good coverage. By 1792 he was saying of events in France: 'What a terrible tragedy...what savage wretches'. This eventful year also sees him recording tea conversations with William Wilberforce (who rates further mentions through the decade), as well as his thoughts on the slave trade and the publication of Tom Paine's Rights of Man. In 1802 he was recording his thoughts on Horatio Nelson and the Peace of Amiens.

John Courtney married Mary Smelt (b.circa 1744), daughter of William Smelt and Ursula Hankin and sister in law to the botanist Sir Thomas Frankland (1750-1831), 6th baronet, and Colonel Cornelius Smelt (c.1748-1832), lieutenant governor of the Isle of Man. Her uncle, Leonard Smelt, was sub-governor to the sons of George III. John Courtney and Mary had at least five sons and three daughters: John (see below), Ralph (b.1770 and died the same year), Cornelius, who was weak and died at the age of 20 in 1793, Henry (1774-1844), Thomas (1776-1818) and Septimus (1779-1843), Mary (1777-1787), Margaret Jesse (b.1780) and Dorothy Anne (b.1781). These children receive mention throughout John Courtney's diaries and they are also much mentioned in the correspondence from Mary Smelt's family.

Mary Smelt died at the very end of 1805 and her husband died the following year. Their eldest son, John Courtney, inherited his father's lands. He had been born in Beverley in 1769 and was admitted pensioner to his father's old college, Trinity, in 1788. He took MA in 1795 and was ordained as a priest in the same year. He had some difficulty getting livings and moved around a bit, though most of his career was spent as rector of Goxhill, Yorkshire (1801-8) and then Sanderstead, near Croydon in Surrey (1821-45). He was a pluralist- while at Sanderstead, he continued to be incumbent at Goxhill (1818-45) and his curate, the Reverend Christopher Forge, reported back on his charities, his rents and rectorial tithes at Goxhill (DDX/60/15). John Courtney, like his father before him, was able to live well on the proceeds of his landlordism; his tenants in Beverley ranged from yeoman farmers like John Wilson of Storkhill farm to John Lockwood, his solicitor, and Dr Berkeley who rented his property in Newbegin Lane, Beverley.

Hull History Centre: Material relating to the Courtney Family

**Custodial history:**

Donated by Mr Dennis Clement in April 1985

**Description:**

A small file containing genealogical research and notes including family tree for the Courtney family (covering 1670-1966) and a small book and needlework sample from the 1760s.

**Extent:** 1 file

**Related material:**

Main body of papers relating to the Courtney family of Beverley, 1578-1972 [Ref U DDX/60]

**Access conditions:**

Access will be granted to any accredited reader

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| U DX324/1 | File of photocopied papers and genealogical research regarding the Courtney Family<br>Includes a copy of the Courtney family tree (covering 1670-1966). There is also material from 1761 including a small book titled "The rules of the most noble order of the needle", needlework sample, and a letter to Mary Smelt, Lady companion of the order of the needle.<br>1 file | 1761-1976 |
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