

Guide to the Thomas Osbert Mordaunt Correspondence

LWL MSS 28



by Sandra Markham

January 2024

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Lewis Walpole Library
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CALL NUMBER: LWL MSS 28

CREATOR: Mordaunt, Thomas Osbert, 1730-1809

TITLE: Thomas Osbert Mordaunt correspondence

DATES: 1783–1804

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 0.21 linear feet

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The collection contains more than seventy letters received by retired Army general at his homes in London and Margate. The letters are from friends, relatives, and former military colleagues who relayed personal news and that of mutual acquaintances and family members, as well as social gossip, political news, and other items they felt would be of interest and entertainment. Of note are groups of letters from three women, Baroness Sophia Charlotte Howe (1762-1835), Catherine Hartopp Heywood (1728-1807), and Elizabeth Sotheby (1751-1827), as well as the poet John Delap (1725-1812).

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/lwl.mss.028>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/lwl.mss.028>.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from Bernard Quaritch, December 2017.

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

Thomas Osbert Mordaunt Correspondence. The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

Thomas Osbert Mordaunt (1730-1809)

Thomas Osbert Mordaunt, a British military officer, was born in London, the son of Colonel Charles Mordaunt (-1762) and his second wife Ann Howe Mordaunt (-1753); she was the daughter of Scrope Howe (1648-1713) and the aunt to two noted British military officers, Admiral Richard Howe (1726-1799) and General William Howe (1729-1814), the sons of her brother Emanuel Scrope Howe (1698-1735). Mordaunt's grandfather was Brigadier-General Lewis Mordaunt (1665-1712/13).

Mordaunt had a career in the Army, and was known for his heroic actions with the 10th Dragoons during the Seven Years War. In the Battle of Warburg (July 31, 1760), after a second volley on the field, he, as a captain, was the single officer remaining alive and rallied his squadron to capture 300 German prisoners, ammunition, wagons of stores, and two cannon. He eventually rose to the rank of major general and retired in 1787. Mordaunt was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1796. In retirement he was living for most of the year at Margate while keeping his London residence in St. James's Place. He died on February 13, 1809 and was buried at All Saints Church, Fulham.

Scope and Contents

The Thomas Osbert Mordaunt Correspondence contains more than seventy letters received by the retired Army general at his homes in London and Margate. The letters are from friends, relatives, and former military colleagues who relayed personal news and that of mutual acquaintances and family members, as well as social gossip, political news, and other items they felt would be of interest and entertainment. While the letters are primarily from friends and include groups of letters from three women, the collection also includes some military-related and financial material, including records of a land sale that Mordaunt made.

Of note are the number of letters he received from two women in the family of his cousin Admiral Richard Howe: his daughter Baroness Sophia Charlotte Howe (1762-1835) and her aunt Catherine Hartopp Heywood (1728-1807), the sister of Howe's wife Mary. Baroness Howe sent twenty-four letters and Mrs. Heywood a dozen, all friendly and carrying news of family, events, politics, and society meant to keep their retired friend up-to-date on their activities as well as to express their concern for his welfare.

Literary friends present in the collection are a fellow fossil collector Eliza (or Elizabeth) Sotheby (1751-1827) and the clergyman/poet John Delap (1725-1812), with a half-dozen letters each. Delap also wrote out a verse he had composed for the marriage of Lady Mary Henrietta Julia Osborne (1776-1862) to his friend Thomas Pelham, Earl Chichester (1756-1826), on July 16, 1801.

Land and financial transactions are recorded in the letters from Charles Butler, solicitors Thomas and William Dunn, and the agriculturist Thomas Eccleston, regarding Mordaunt's sale of the manors of Downholland and Halsal to Eccleston. Mordaunt's military friend J. C. Pleydell sent information on Fort Kehl

and a watercolor map of the area; the fort, set on an island in the Rhine River between Kehl and Strasbourg, had been the site of the recent Battle of Kehl (June 23-24, 1796). In the same letter he related his visit to the studio of John Flaxman to check on a sculpture of a faun commissioned by Mordaunt, and while there saw the memorials for Sir William Jones, Sir Robert Ladbroke, and David Murray, Lord Mansfield, in progress. In a second letter he wrote of having just seen from his window the French aeronaut André-Jacques Garnerin's flight in a hydrogen balloon.

Arrangement

Organized into two series: I. Letters, 1783-1804. II. Other Papers, 1795, undated.

Collection Contents

Series I: Letters, 1783–1804

20 Folders

b. 1, f. 1	Anderson, S. C.	undated
b. 1, f. 2	Bryant, Jacob	1796 April 9
b. 1, f. 3	Butler, Charles	1798 December 5
b. 1, f. 4	Cowper, Henry, 1758–1840 He reported the death of his father Major-General Spencer Cowper (1726-1797).	1797 March 13
b. 1, f. 5	Delap, J. (John), 1725-1812	1796–1803
b. 1, f. 6	Dunn, Thomas and William Thomas Dunn (1751-1802) and William Dunn (1760-1806) were solicitors at Lincoln's Inn.	1798–1800
b. 1, f. 7	Eccleston, Thomas, 1752-1809 Eccleston was a progressive farmer in Scarisbrick, near Ormskirk, south-west Lancashire.	1796, undated
b. 1, f. 8	Fezekerley, Rebecca Fezekerley, an impoverished resident of Halsall, asked for an annuity.	1803 June 29
b. 1, f. 9	Heywood, Catherine Hartopp, 1728-1807 Catherine Heywood was the first of two daughters born to Major Chiverton Hartopp (1690-1759) and Catherine Mansfield Hartopp (1711-1755); her sister Mary was the wife of Admiral Richard Howe. In 1754 she married James Modyford Heywood (1732-1798) of Maristow House in Bickleigh, near Plymouth in Devon, who also owned a plantation in Jamaica. The couple had four daughters: Francis (married Thomas Orby Hunter in 1796); Maria Henrietta (married Lewis Montolieu in 1786); Emma (married Admiral Sir Albemarle Bertie in 1782), and Sophia (married Sir John Musters in 1776). Catherine Heywood's twelve letters, mostly written from her home on Bruton Street in London, feature comments on her family and travels, social and political news, and fear of the French invading England. Her concern extended to General Mordaunt, and she regularly encouraged him to leave Margate and come to London for his own safety. Several of her letters discuss her daughter Emma, whose marriage to Admiral Bertie was troublesome for both women.	1800–1803

b. 1, f. 10	<p>Howe, Sophia Charlotte, 1762-1835</p> <p>Sophia Charlotte Howe was the daughter of Richard Howe, Earl Howe and Baron of Langar. As he had no sons, she succeeded him by a provision (a "special remainder") as Baroness Howe of Langar, on August 5, 1799. In 1787 she married Penn Assheton Curzon (1757-1797) of Gopsall Hall in Leicestershire, and in 1812, married Jonathan Wathen Waller (1769-1853).</p> <p>The Baroness sent two dozen lengthy letters from her homes Penn House, Gopsall Hall, and Little Strawberry Hill and Cross Deep in Twickenham, as well as from Weymouth in Dorset, where she spent time with the royal family in residence at the time. Howe was continuously renovating her properties so wrote often of her acquisitions, ongoing projects, and achievements. She generally addressed Mordaunt as "My Dear Sir" but occasionally as "My Dear Cousin."</p> <p>Howe's letters are dated only by month and day, so once their order was established each was numbered in the upper left corner by library staff.</p>	1800-1804
b. 1, f. 11	<p>Messrs Drummond</p> <p>A banking family in Charing Cross.</p>	1796 December
b. 1, f. 12	<p>Milner, Diana Sturt, 1757-1805</p> <p>Lady Diana Milner was the wife of Sir William Mordaunt Milner (1754-1811) of Nun Appleton in North Yorkshire. The daughter of Humphrey and Mary Pitfield Sturt of Crichel More, Dorset, she died in Exeter, Devon, on January 17, 1805, and was interred in Exeter Cathedral.</p>	undated
b. 1, f. 13	<p>Pleydell, J. C.</p> <p>Lieutenant Colonel Pleydell was a military strategist, author, equerry to the Duke of Gloucester, and a personal friend.</p>	1796, 1802
b. 1, f. 14	<p>Riddiough, James, -1807</p> <p>Riddiough wrote from Ormskirk, Lancashire, on behalf of Charles Lewis Mordaunt (1729-1808), the older brother of Thomas Mordaunt, about transferring Mordaunt ancestral portraits and genealogical records to Thomas.</p>	1800 February 26
b. 1, f. 15	<p>Scott, Mrs.</p> <p>Mrs. Scott hoped to have the pleasure of seeing him when she and Captain Scott are in Margate; she wrote on embossed letter paper.</p>	undated
b. 1, f. 16	<p>Slater, Mrs.</p> <p>She recommended a medication for treating diabetes.</p>	1799 January 3
b. 1, f. 17	<p>Sober, Mrs.</p> <p>She thanked him for a book he lent, and sought to return it to him.</p>	undated
b. 1, f. 18	<p>Sotheby, Elizabeth, 1751-1827</p> <p>Elizabeth (or Eliza) Sotheby was the second of five children of Colonel William Sotheby (1688-1766) and Elizabeth Sloane Sotheby (1725-); her younger brother was the poet and translator William Sotheby (1757-1823). A poet herself, her only known published work was <i>Patient Griselda, a Tale, from the Italian of Boccaccio</i> (London, 1798).</p> <p>Writing from her homes near Abergavenny, Wales, or on Sion Hill in Clifton, Bristol, Sotheby addressed Mordaunt in London and Margate, and encouraged him to visit. She recalled their times together in Clifton and their shared love of fossils, and sent news of her brother and sister.</p>	1783-1799

b. 1, f. 19

Unidentified authors

Two letters from senders whose names are indecipherable. One is military in subject, the other is financial.

Series II: Other Papers, 1795, undated*2 Folders*

Series II holds two folders, one with Miscellaneous Documents and one with a drawing of the head of a dog.

b. 1, f. 20	Miscellaneous documents The folder holds three documents: a text in French with marked passages (dated 1795); a manuscript titled "From the Begum of Oude to Edmunk Burke Esq."; and a chart recording the Regiments of September 1760 with Squadrons, Captains, Subalterns, and Field officers listed.	1795, undated
b. 1, f. 21	Drawing: head of a dog The unsigned drawing, in graphite with conte crayon highlights, is on paper watermarked B&T/SWEETAPPLE/1829.	undated

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Names

Heywood, Catherine Hartopp, 1728-1807
Howe, Sophia Charlotte, Baroness Howe of
Langar, 1762-1835
Mordaunt, Thomas Osbert, 1730-1809
Pleydell, J. C.
Sotheby, Eliza