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# **Sneyd Papers**

## **Calendar of correspondence to Ralph Sneyd from Walter Sneyd**

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CORRESPONDENCE

To Ralph Sneyd (d.1870) from his father, Walter Sneyd (d.1829)

- |    |                           |   |
|----|---------------------------|---|
| 1. | Keele.<br>25 Jan.<br>1812 | W[alter] S[neyd] to Ralph [Sneyd],<br>abroad.<br><br>'You seem (tho['] I allow at some<br>expenxe of patience) to have managed<br>your journey well; & to have arrived<br>at your destination like an Able<br>General, with all your baggage about<br>you...' Hoped he began to feel settled<br>and comfortable. The greatest pleasure<br>of the writer's future life would be to<br>add to that comfort. Advises him on his<br>first setting out in the world as a man.<br>'I speak my dear Ralph from woeful<br>experience. - When first I went to<br>Oxford it was my bad Fortune to become<br>acquainted with some very clever, very<br>Idle, & I am sorry to add very profligate<br>young men - I was easily seduced into<br>Idleness, & consequently lost all the<br>advantages I might have gain'd there;<br>ran into expenses I could not afford,<br>which distressed me extremely, and made<br>some of the years of my Life, which<br>ought to have been the happiest, the<br>most miserable. And at last into Vices,<br>which I look back upon with disgust - |
|----|---------------------------|---|

& shall repent as long as I live. - But still I was more fortunate than many have been - for I had at last resolution enough (when I became acquainted with the characters of those I had associated with) to break from [their] society, & withdraw myself from their acquaintance altogether.' But Oxford was, he hoped, a better place now than it had been at that time, 'but it still requires some discernment, to avoid intimacies with those of doubtful characters, and bad propensities - of which in all probability you have some even at Ch[rist] Ch[urch]...' By a letter from Mr Ryder he believed he should be clear from the office of sheriff for that year. That would probably make them think of going to London in the course of next month. He should endeavour to keep a room of some sort, that he might pass his Easter vacation with them in London. Lord and Lady Bagot, and all their babes were there [at Keele]. They, the writer and his family, the Dod girls, Uncle William and (?) Griffin were all to go to Capesthorpe on Monday next. When he [Ralph Sneyd] wrote to the writer or his mother, he should recollect every circumstance of his mode of living. How, for the most part, he arranged his day, what for study, what for (?) recreation and exercise, and with whom he chiefly associated, &c., it was highly interesting to them.

2.           Keele.  
              29 Aug.  
              1815

The same to the same, [in Florence].

A letter just received by his mother from Lady Bathurst, saying she could send a packet direct to Florence if it arrived in town on Thursday morning, had set all the family to writing, as not a moment was to be lost. Would not add to the repetition of events, which had not been numerous or interesting. His object in writing was that he should know there was such a 'Person', who wished not entirely to lose his acquaintance with him. Was afraid, already, their intercourse by correspondence had been so (?) rare that he would not feel the same ease and freedom in writing to him that he would to his mother. That was natural enough and he did not find fault with it, 'as she has generally been the means of communication - between you & your family. - But I do wish to prevent its getting to such a length, as entirely to prevent Confidential Letters sometimes passing between us - I have sometimes wished when we have been together, that there was more confidential communication between us, we are perhaps both a little too much reserved towards each other, considering the mutual affection & regard I am convinced we each of us feel - But if [I] do not take care, this Letter, which is merely intended as a caution, to prevent that reserve from becoming a habit, which I am satisfied is not meant in either side to be reserve at all - may have the appearance of a complaint - It is by no means such -' Did not want frequent or studied letters, when he heard from him he wished for the sort of letter he



would send to any friend. 'My liberality towards you, is, & must be checked by Consideration for the rest of my family - but that shall not prevent me from every Attention to all reasonable plans of yours - & I trust they will all be of that description - Of course I shall allways [sic] wish to be informed of your plans of travelling & the demands you in consequence of them make upon me - which you will allways find complied with - I am almost inclined to burn this, but as I trust you will understand it, as it is meant, I will ee'n send it, tho' I have not time to read it over Myself - '.

3. Keele.  
26 Nov.  
1815

The same to the same, poste restante Rome.

In the true spirit of answering a letter he must, of course, begin with the first part of his, namely his excursion to Rome. 'Now whether it may proceed from a want of that chivalrous spirit in me, which has gain[']d you so much applause at Florence, or whether from other Causes - I confess I cannot quite approve of that expedition - (disapproving of a thing past, can only be intended to operate on the future.) - I am not perfectly aware of the different degree of merit which might have existed between Amadis De Gaul, & the no less illustrious Don Quixote - but if I had been of the Council to vote a Crown - I should have thought that heretofore worn as a helmet by Mambrino inapplicable to the Occasion. - But seriously, as I cannot give Mrs Rawdon, or even the Old Polish Princess the credit of inducing you to act as Convoy upon this Occasion - it is only to be attributed to your admiration of the other Lady - And tho' I am not so unreasonable as to insist on your not admiring a very pretty & as you say very clever Girl - I think I may expect from your own good sense, that you should not make yourself too particular towards Her - this you should Consider for her sake, as well as for your Own. - My other Objections are, - that if that journey is attended with any danger, I do not like your exposing yourself to it three times, instead of once - & lastly I must suppose that three journies, are three times as expensive as One. All these considerations do certainly with me more than preponderate against the fine Eyes of Miss R. -, which you may possibly attribute to my not having seen them.' His despatches to his mother, which he had generally either read or she had read to him, were, as far as they went, excellent, but there were many points upon which they should like to be informed, such as his mode of living, how he passed his mornings, where he passed his evenings, and at what expense he was living. He must be aware that his longer or shorter stay in foreign parts must, in a considerable degree, depend upon that latter circumstance. It was not his wish to shorten his excursion, unless he [the writer] should find it so expensive as to break in too much upon his family arrangements, which were a matter of necessity, in pursuance of a plan he had laid down

for the future provision of his younger children, which, for as far as it might remain unfinished, would, he trusted and believed, be cheerfully carried to its conclusion by him. Should he live 6 or 7 years longer, he thought he should have completed his arrangements. 'So much for finance, a dry subject at best.' Douglas would, he took for granted, return to the meeting of parliament '(we can't go on without Him)', and perhaps Lord Belgrave might do the same. These events might prevent his wishing to remain longer abroad, otherwise he would have no objection to his remaining till the end of the next summer. It was probable in the autumn that they might all visit Cheltenham, ' - at that time, & at that place, I should like to have you with us - as I take for granted, that the change of Climate, Food, manner of living &c[.]&c[.] will have left you tolerably bilious by that time.' He would then have the winter to look about him and fix upon the sort of establishment that would best suit his means and pursuits. He ought to know that the writer should not be able to increase his allowance beyond £500 at least for 3 or 4 years after his return. Hoped that if expensive plans should be proposed by richer men of his party, that he would have the sense and courage to say at once, 'Such a thing I cannot afford.' They had returned last Monday from Blithfield, leaving a large party, all the Lady Legges, Sir Edward and Harriet Paget, Mr and Lady Sarah Lyttelton - 'both of whom I thought very agreeable - The narrative of his Conversation with Bonaparte was extremely interesting & amusing, & He very good humouredly let us all read it in our turns - It may give some of the friends you are with, a good opinion of Bonaparte[']s discernment to hear that he mention[']d Mr. F. Douglas amongst the cleverest Englishmen he had conversed with.' Plans for further family visits.

4. Keele.  
29 Feb.  
1816

The same to the same, in Florence.

He might be assured they rejoiced in the continuation of the good accounts they received from him. 'They are not however such as to alter our wishes in respect to your return home - But tho' I mean to impress this as my very decided wish, - the manner and precise time is of course left to your own judgement.' Considers various ways in which by might return. Did not think it prudent for him to remain long at Paris - 'Only take a cursory view of it now, - it is so near that you can at any time (when you can afford it) cross over there.' Could assure him the present moment was not one of affluence in this country. 'I never saw anything like the general distress for want of money - Tenants are not paying their rents - and all the Country Bankers breaking one after another as fast as possible.' Mr (?) Eyster of Wellington was among the number and there was every evidence to suppose he had made away with himself, 'he was found dead in his room, in half



an hour after being told Government was going to take out an extent against him, for not paying up the taxes - He was receiver general for the County - And it is said that S[i]r John Hill, & Mr. Rynaston Powell, who were his securities, will lose 20,000£ each, by this Event.' Details further bank failures and bankruptcies, including Mr Coombes of Windsor, by whom it was possible the princesses might be sufferers. Hopad Disbrowe had not been a loser by it. Lord Gower had got into a comical scrape - unluckily he had forgotten he had vacated his seat for Newcastle and been elected for the county, or that it was necessary for him to take his seat (?) afresh. The consequences of his voting without having done so had made him liable to such severe penalties that it had been necessary for him to have an Act of Parliament to indemnify him. The Dowager Lady Jersey, Dick and Harriet had come there the day before. The former had left Cheltenham last week and had said his friend Miss Hicks had just run away with an Irish gentleman, a son of Sir Michael Cromie, who was not worth a sixpence. News of other friends and acquaintances, including F. Douglas, who had been speaking on the side of government. The grand stand of the Opposition was against the continuation of property tax and the expensive peace establishment. Supposed Princess Charlotte would be married immediately. She was gone with the queen and Princesses Elizabeth and Mary to meet him at Brighton. The prince, as soon as the marriage had taken place and not before, would send a message to parliament to desire an establishment. They had a bad cold (influenza) going through the family. It was his present intention to leave that place so as to be in London by 30th March, 'but I have some anxiety to see how my Tenants pay their rents at L[ad]y Day next - & also about the Newcastle Bank's - both of which have had heavy runs upon them - tho' hitherto they have stood firm.'

5. London.  
19 May,  
1816

The same to the same, in Paris.

Had to acknowledge the receipt of one or two of his letters, which he should have been better pleased with if they had given a better account of his health. 'At your age I do not like - to hear of spasms, weakness &c[.] - which might better become mine - tho' rather unbecoming even then -'. They had been established in London since the 5th of April, but had not had much to relate - indeed, the girls, that was Harriet and Fanny, 'who are the two to go about', had been alternately confined by colds almost ever since they had come, 'and London till lately, has been esteem'd particularly dull.' However, it was then very full, 'and I believe more gay'. Everybody complained of poverty and probably in most cases with some cause, but the general complaint gave to all the same excuse for economy. 'There certainly has been a good deal of distress in the Country, and not in the least degree amongst the

Agricultural part of it - but I am inclin[']d to believe that the worst is over, - tho' it may still perhaps be some time before arrears of rent are paid up - in those parts where the pressure has been most felt -'. Had not himself much room to complain, his greatest failures in punctuality were from the neighbourhood of Nantwich, and those lay in a very small compass. The marriage of Princess Charlotte had given a spur to the poor. The royal couple had returned to town and taken possession of Camelford House on Sunday last, a house as little suited to them as most they could have found, to say nothing of the enormity of the cost, which was £2,500 per annum. A good deal of the blame of taking that house for them was attributed, with some cause, to Col. Stevenson, who did not on that occasion act with his usual judgment. The night before the marriage, 'I was at the Queen's House, & sat at Commerce between Princess Charlotte, & Princess Mary - both of whom were very pleasant & very agreeable - the former inquired very much after you - talk'd of her own marriage which was to take place the next day - as I thought, in a pleasant & sensible way.' The fullest drawing-room that ever was seen would probably take place the next day, and they said that the Prince was to have a very numerous assembly on Monday, in compliment to the queen's birthday, but the cards for that were not yet out and some people thought that the Prince would get off, on the grounds of not being sufficiently recovered. [MS. imperfect]. Harriet was nursing a cold at home, in the [hope] of being able to go to the drawing-room. Did not think that either she or her sisters were in perfect health. Charlotte was much the best grown of any. Hoped he would be in Paris before the letter got there. Comments on the adverse effect on the country's economy of the 'spirit for emigration'. Concludes with the news that, since writing, they had been to the drawing-room and presented Fanny.

6. Blithfield.  
Saturday,  
12 o'clock.  
[13 July,  
1816]

The same to the same, at Keele.

Trusted they were not materially worse than when he had left them, 'tho' poor Georgy is very ill yet'. Discusses her chances of recovery.

7. Blithfield.  
(?) 20 July,  
[1816]

The same to the same, at Keele.

'I write to you because I cannot bear to have had no intercourse with you, tho' I have not any thing particular to say'. Had ordered Joseph to come back there again on Monday, for he could not do without a horse, and they were all gone to Pool Park. Had also directed him to bring back the buggy, as it might be the means of giving airings both to Lizzy and Walter. Daniel would attend the girls whenever they rode, '& you cannot go with them, tho' I am sorry to find they have not yet been able to hear of any horse likely to carry



them.' Lizzy was certainly improving and he trusted a day or two more would make Walter quite well. It was truly uncomfortable to be so separated, but they must bear patiently, and be most thankful 'if this dreadful disorder, spreads no further'. Hoped they found themselves as comfortable at Keele as they could be under their present feelings. 'We now find out that we did not know how much we all loved poor dear Georgy till we lost Her - But God[']s will be done - And grant that we may all in due time meet where she now is -'.

8. [(?) Blithfield.  
July, 1816]

The same to the same, at Keele.

They were, he trusted, going on as well as they could expect there; Lizzy improving, though she would certainly be long before she recovered her strength. She was not yet apprised of the very serious loss she had sustained, and at present they feared to apprise her of it. Walter was well. Had long been anxious to tell him their plans, but his mother had been, and was, so nervous, that he could not settle anything satisfactorily. She was frightened at the thought of being at Ridware by herself with Lizzy, and there was no room for the writer. His wish had been for her and Lizzy to have gone to Ridware on Monday, stayed there till the end of the week, and then for a week to John at Elford, where he could have joined her, '& by that time I should hope there could be no possible danger in bringing her to Keel - For myself I am being mis[se]d for ought I know by my protracted absence; having several very serious concerns of business upon my hands at this moment.' Gives his kindest love to his three dear girls. Had been much pleased with their letters. Hoped the one he had written to Harriet had not distressed her. Thought that, if they heard nothing to the contrary, he should bring Walter back on Monday. They would all rejoice at hearing of Lady Harriet being safe in her bed and having a little girl. With 2 postscripts, (?) one from Louisa Sneyd.

9. Bath.  
Thursday.  
1 Mar.  
[1819 or  
later]

The same to the same.

Had just received his very distressing letter, which ~~too~~ sadly confirmed all those apprehensions which his mother had apprehended from the very first. Had done very properly in writing to her brother, 'tho' God knows what can be done when he arrives'. It was distressing to the writer not to set out immediately, but if he did he gave up all chance of securing a house in that place, as he was to see the house in the Crescent on Saturday, and Charlotte Denny's answer about the other in Sydney Place would not come till either Saturday or Sunday morning. Thought it uncertain whether Mr Fench would be at Keele as soon as Saturday, but if he should he had better stay till the



writer returned, not later than Tuesday. 'Poor Soul, she must not, & shall not be left to [?] want & distress.' She had money due to her from him, of her year's salary, £60 or £65. Had intended, in the event of her going to her mother, to have made her a present of £50. Now everything would depend upon the state she might be in. If absolutely deranged it might be worth consideration whether the lunatic asylum at Stafford might not be best for her present comfort. Not knowing how far his mother was apprised of the present circumstances of her case, he would perform his promise of writing to her without entering into the subject. He could, if he saw good, communicate the contents of this letter to her.

10. '½ past 5',  
8 Mar.  
[? 1820]

The same to the same, at Keele.

He must make his excuse to Walter for this letter being to him. His account of the meeting as far as it went had been very satisfactory, and he hoped he had not suffered from the rigour he had exerted. Any handsome thing Lord Anglesea might have said about the writer would have been highly gratifying 'had I not felt that I had no claim upon Them - tho' that circumstance, makes the obligation to him greater.' Approved of anything he might have done in support of the present members, 'who shall certainly have all the support I can give them', but was afraid his influence would not be very extensive, 'I suspect that the only freeholders in these [parts] besides myself, - will rather prefer being in opposition to me - but if you could get William to go with you, you might at any rate canvass Mr. Poole, Mr. Tho[ma]s Berks - & Rowley of Madeley, tho' I suppose, L[or]d Crewe will have secured Him'. Had received the threatened letter from Sir J. Boughey that morning. Should assure him of all the opposition he could give him. Had seen nobody, except a large and pleasant party at John Drummond's the day before, which he could not enjoy as he should otherwise have done, 'being under the influence of a most determined cold'. That day he was going to the Davenports. Davenport was to set off for Cheshire the next day, meaning to arrive at Capesthorpe on Saturday, which was the day of the county meeting. 'He has however sent a Letter to say that whatever may [be] the opinion of that meeting as to Him - He shall obey it - At the same time, I suppose, not meaning to stand a Contest if he cannot come in without one.' Mrs St John was better than he had expected to hear. Had that moment had a note from the Dowager [Lady] Essex, to go to her that night, which he did not intend to do.

11. [London.  
21 July,  
1820]

The same to the same, at the Earl of Ashburnham's, Manvers, Sussex.

Took the opportunity of getting a frank 'to inclose L[ad]y Worcester's note', to give an account of his mother, who certainly had been

very ill since he had gone. She had been taken on Monday morning with a violent spasmodic pain in her chest, so as to make him think it necessary she should see a physician. After some hours lost in trying to find one, Sir H. Halford and (?) Bagley being both out of town, had succeeded in getting Dr (?) Warner (and believed he had been lucky in so doing). He certainly had thought she had some unpleasant symptoms of inflammation, insomuch that he had ordered her to be blooded 10 ounces, 'and in a few hours afterwards was again blooded the same quantity', and she had had a tolerable night. However, another bleeding had been performed the following day, and that morning she was better and doing well. There was now no reason for alarm, and, indeed, were he to return, they did not know where they should lodge him, 'as at present I am obliged to sleep in your room'. Feared that at all events their leaving town would be postponed.

12. Blithfield.  
Sunday,  
13 July,  
[? 1st quarter  
of 19th cent.]

The same to the same.

Had intended writing him a line that evening, if it had only been to say how he rejoiced in his safe return to England, and how happy he should be to receive him at Keele, where were several alterations which he hoped he would think as improvements. The writer should have told him all he knew of the present prospects of that county, 'prospects not more agreeable to me than they are to you - But as Dick has just shew[']d me a letter he received to day from you - I may perhaps go more into that Business than I had originally intended. I do not however believe that any steps I could have taken, could have availed in your favour, without a very good chance of a Contest. - It is an easy thing for you friends to say, why do you not offer yourself to represent the County - those friends are probably none of them acquainted with the state of this County, as far as concerns its political associations. The same Politicks (namely those who call themselves Whiggs), who brought in S[i]r J. Boughey, are now in Operation for S[i]r John Wrottesley - L[or]d Anson - I believe, had at first the [?] to think of proposing George Anson for the County - but finding Sir J. Wrottesley had the advantage of a first Canvass - & probably upon Consultation thinking that dividing the Radical interest might defeat both - they have, I hear[,] agreed to support S[i]r J. Wrottesley - who is to be proposed by Mr Tollett, seconded by Mr G. Anson.' That was the report he had. However, Dick and he were going to the nomination the next day and he should hear what took place. 'You surely cannot for a moment suppose that if it had been in my Power by any exertions of mine to place you in the situation of one of the Members of this County, that I should have hesitated at any deprivations I might myself have suffered from such an exertion - But that is not the question - I have no reason to suppose that any exertions of mine, could have



ended in such a result - But I am certain that now it could not be done without a contest - which I am by no means in a situation to support.' Was not acquainted with Sir J.Wrottesley's affairs, therefore did not know how far he could go. Was inclined to believe he would not undertake a contest against a decided superiority in point of purse, as he had a very large family, but he had now committed himself too far to recede (except under the circumstances he had mentioned). What the Tory interest in that county might be, he had yet to learn, as to extent, 'but I do know that it is actuated by various principles - and probably divided amongst as many objects to whom they may severally look - To me, I do not know that any of them point - And of course it is only those to [sic - ? who] look towards me, who would adopt you. I am not, I have no right to be, a popular man in this County, - in a certain degree, respectable, I hope I am - But that respectability, I presume, proceeds from my being consider[']d, perfectly Independant [sic] - & not one, who has ever obtruded themselves unnecessarily upon the notice of the County - I am sorry to add that if the County has any respect for me, I cannot return the Compliment - And it certainly will not rise in my esteem by receiving another Member, proposed by Mr. Tollet & seconded by Mr.G.Anson.' Had probably written a very incoherent letter - 'As they are all talking round me in the Old drawing room'.

13. Blithfield.  
Monday evening.  
14 July,  
[? 1st quarter of  
19th cent.]

The same to the same.

Had nothing satisfactory to tell him. A more triumphant assemblage of Whiggism and Radicalism had never appeared in one place. Excepting Dick Bagot and himself, he had not seen a person that was not groaning under a weight of 'Lawral bowghs.' Had he been with them he would have at once been convinced that no second man of Tory or Toryish principles would be returned for that county without a contest - supposing Littleton to be of those principles. Sir J.Wrottesley had been proposed by a Mr Foley of Prestwood, and seconded by Mr G.Anson, of Mr Foley he had not heard a word, Mr Anson had been rather prolix, '& talk[']d of the glorious triumph of Liberty at S[i]r John Boughey's Election - & he certainly saw as great a triumph to day - Now it may still be said that if what is called the Tory Interest - were to act together as much as these Whig Radicals do, that they would carry every thing before them - This I believe, - but I also am certain that there never will be such a Combination - There are hardly half a dozen of them, that think alike - and have no common object - but the greater part of Them still look to somebody belonging to the House of Stafford...' Blithfield was rather in confusion that day, in preparation for what would really be a very magnificent fete the next day - 'I believe we shall be about 18 at dinner to day - tomorrow about 118.' They were all to return to Keele on Thursday, and



the sooner they saw him the better. 'God bless you, my dear Ralph - & do not let any Idea's of other people - for a moment induce you to think that I ever gave up your present or future advantage for any selfish Considerations -'.

14. 10 May,  
[1826]

The same to the same, at Honiton, Devon.

Had not had time the day before to say more than merely that he had left his determination of standing or declining the poll entirely to his own discretion. Considers the issue. If he judged wrong he need not fear any disapprobation of his. Mr Davenport was materially better that day.

15. Bath.  
1 Feb.  
1828

The same to the same, at Keele.

Had promised to write and would not be worse than his word, 'tho' the multiplicity of our Letters must necessarily make them all dull, for we do not enter into the Gay scenes of this place, which however would be any thing rather than Gay to us - who have no acquaintance in the place - except a few of the Residents - & those chiefly among[s]t the oldest of the place.' Fanny had shown no disposition to go to any of 'these fancy Balls', and the writer did not know that they could get to them if they wished it. They had changed their quarters from the 'Eliphant & Castle' to that house, '(Eve's)', on Wednesday, a change certainly much for the better. His present intention was to remain at that place till about Wednesday sennight, which would bring them to Keele on the 14th. Having been away so long, he should not like to make many visits on their way back - 'And am rather myself annoyed by knowing that the place I do not particularly wish to go to - Is just the place that Fanny would most like - which is Elford.' Had continued to drink the waters and certainly thought with good effect, his stomach felt better and was, he thought, improving every day. Was sorry to say Fanny had never drunk the waters. Could not feel satisfied that she had by any means given them a fair trial. Walter, he hoped, might have benefitted from his visit there. Dr Crawford said his liver was enlarged. They had dined twice with the Fords and once with the Watts's, and were to dine with Mrs Willett. But they wished, if they could, to avoid dining out altogether, 'as it puts us rather out of our Way - Walter is order'd not to drink wine at present, which is difficult to manage when dining out. Beside which, we really dine better & wholsomer at home than any where else - And pay for our dinner whether we dine at home or not. So that we save nothing ourselves & put our friends to expence by dining with them.' Fanny and he had visited Lady Malmesbury the day before, and had found Lady Sherborne with her. Lady M. had asked much after him, and John, and had been very gracious to them, and had asked them to visit her in the evening whenever they chose. Had some thoughts of offering to go there that evening. Lady M. had been much

affected by the death of Miss Hay, who had lived a great deal with her. Well, what did he say to all these changes in the state? Were they calculated to last - or was it only a patch up for the moment? Did not see W.(?)Herton's home in any official situation - which, he should have thought, he would have himself lamented. 'And I suppose our Cousin Phillimore does not quite understand how they will be able to go on without his Assistance - '. He was to tell his mother that his [the writer's] next visit would be to her after Crawford had seen Walter again.

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