



Public Record Office
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INTRODUCTION

SMILES PAPERS

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Smiles Papers, (D3437)

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Summary

The Smiles papers comprise c.1450 documents and five volumes and consist of correspondence, certificates, political papers, newspaper cuttings, photographs, sketches and paintings, 1830-1972, deriving from the Smiles family, sometime of Portavo Point, Donaghadee, Co. Down.



Samuel Smiles

The most famous member of the family is of course Samuel Smiles (1812-1904), the social reformer and author of *Self-Help* and other Victorian classics. He is represented in the archive by, among other things: 41 family letters, c.1830, 1867, 1874, 1878 and 1889-1904; an early commonplace book of 1851; 24 pencil and water-colour sketches and paintings, 1855-1885, a few signed by Smiles with initials, and most relating to engineering projects (e.g. Kilsby Tunnel); and a collection of contemporary and later press-cuttings, including a bound volume of cuttings relating to Smiles's death in 1904.

Smiles's letters (25) written from Kensington and Torquay, 1889-1896, to his granddaughter, Lily, give some insight into his philosophy of life. He encourages her with her schoolwork, discusses her teachers, praises her prose and poetry, and gives family news. '... Do not be utterly homesick. Your Grandmother went through it every year whilst she was at Harrogate 16 years school life. I suppose all my daughters went through the trouble. Keep up your health and spirits. ... Never mind hockey. Improve your mind, and attend diligently to your lessons. ...' (3 October 1892). '... You have the pen of a ready and attractive writer and I look to you as the coming literary lady of the family. I feel myself growing old and stupid; and can scarcely write as much in a day as you can in an hour. ...' (1 March 1894). But perhaps the most significant item in Smiles's (somewhat disappointing) correspondence is a copy of a letter of 15 May 1877 written to him by Dr Franz Takirbourtz of Nagy Karoli, [Hungary?], praising *Self Help* and informing Smiles that five years previously *Self Help* had been translated into Hungarian by Professor [?Konyves Thot Kalman]. Takirbourtz thanks Smiles for writing and enclosing his 'portrait': '... I can say with a certain amount of satisfaction that I have never thought of you as otherwise than your portrait shows you. Your genius and mind are pictured as clearly in your works as in your features. Darwin is right once more. ...'

Samuel Smiles's papers also include: a small, 48-page commonplace book inscribed on the first leaf 'Samuel Smiles, Haddington 1831', with sketches, mostly anatomical and some medical, and notes, largely in pencil, on most pages; 22 more or less finished watercolour sketches, a few in pencil, a few signed by Smiles with initials, some possibly by others, including small topographical paintings with captions in Smiles's hand, e.g. 'From North Berwick Harbour/The Bass [Rock], 2 April 1885' (a subject also to be found in the commonplace book above); a series of larger pictures, two signed with his monogram, relating to engineering projects such as 'Entrance to Kilsby Tunnel ...', 'Shaft over the Kilsby tunnel ...', 'Olive Mount Cutting', 'Blisworth Cutting', and 'The Sankey Viaduct'; 11 large sepia photographs, three unmounted in poor condition, some mounts stained, of topographical and engineering subjects including two railway locomotives, works on the Darent Valley embankment, and two railway views from the footplate of an engine; a collection of contemporary and later press cuttings, including a bound volume of cuttings relating to Smiles's death in 1904; c.20 theatre or music programmes, 1860s; a poem 'To Grandpa' by Lily Smiles, 1894, with a humorous playlet about a family meal; a note apparently by Smiles of sales by John Murray of various books including *Lives of the Stephensons*

(3000) and Self Help (4800); a letter of condolence to Smile's widow from John Murray, 18 April 1904; and a few other miscellaneous family papers.

It was Samuel Smiles's son, William Holmes Smiles, who established the family's connection with Northern Ireland. He was a businessman, and became a Director of the Belfast Ropeworks. His marriage certificate, dated 1874 (D3437/B/1J), describes him as a 'ropemaker'. He was educated at King's College, London, in the early 1860s, appears to have moved to Northern Ireland by the time of his marriage in 1874, and died c.1945.

His (few) surviving papers include: 3 letters from 'Mother' [Sarah Ann Smiles] to 'Willie', N.D.; a letter from Samuel Smiles' mother, Janet Smiles, to 'Willie' [her grandson], 1867; and 3 letters to 'Lucy' [Dorling Smiles, William Holmes Smiles's wife], 1874, 1878 and 1895, the last of them a fine letter from her daughter, Lily.



Sir Walter Smiles

W.H. Smiles's son, Colonel Walter D. Smiles, best-known as Sir Walter Smiles, is better-represented in the archive. Sir Walter Smiles was MP, successively, for Blackburn, 1931-1945, Co. Down, 1945-1950, and the new division of North Down, 1950 until his death in the 'Princess Victoria' disaster in January 1953. Sir Water had served throughout the First World War and was attached to the British armoured division operating in Russia, 1916-1917. For his services, he was awarded the DSO and the (Russian) Knighthood of St George. During the 1920s he was employed administering a tea estate in Assam, and became prominently involved in Indian local government as a member of the Assam Legislative Council, 1922-1930. He was knighted in 1930.

His Russian papers include a letter to his mother of 27 May 1916 in which he comments on his experiences in Russia and on the Easter Rising in Dublin: he reports that the Irishmen serving with him '... are contented with the news and consider rebellion properly squashed. We all hope Carson will be made Chief Secretary for Ireland ...' His Indian papers include an address to him of 12 May 1929 from the Assam Provincial Committee recording their appreciation of his 'tact, ability, capacity for leadership and breadth of outlook' as their outgoing chairman. His Northern Ireland political papers mainly comprise speech notes and election literature, c. 1945-1953, and newspaper cuttings, c.1930-1953.



Lady Fisher

Sir Walter Smiles was succeeded by his daughter, Patricia, Mrs Nigel Fisher/Lady Fisher. She also succeeded her father as MP (at Westminster) for North Down (1953-1955). Lady Fisher was founder and co-chairman of the Women Caring Trust. She married, firstly, in 1941, Capt. Neville M. Ford, and, secondly, in 1956, Nigel Fisher, MP. Nigel Fisher was, among other things, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies/Commonwealth Relations, 1962-1964, and was knighted in 1974. Her papers include: correspondence with her first husband, Neville M. Ford, then a captain in the Royal Horse Guards, during the Second World War; letters to her and a diary kept by her, 1953-1954, relating to her candidature and unopposed return for North Down, internal Unionist politics in the constituency and general British politics; and other, more miscellaneous papers and newspaper cuttings about her political career.

Other, very miscellaneous photographs, newspaper cuttings, formal and printed matter and correspondence of members of the Smiles family include a printed broadcast relating to the East Belfast election of 1891 discussing divisions in the Unionist ranks, The presence of a Victorian or Edwardian cookery book is a reminder that Mrs Beeton was a connection of the Smiles family though, unhappily, not represented in the archive except by newspaper cuttings and the odd reference.

