DATA PAPER

Selected Correspondence from the Papers of Thomas Pettigrew (1791-1865), Surgeon and Antiquary

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The papers of the nineteenth century antiquary and surgeon Thomas Pettigrew are of considerable interest in the histories of science, medicine and archaeology. The letters presented here were received by Pettigrew between 1817 and 1859, and form part of the Pettigrew Papers held at Yale University. They were transcribed during research into Pettigrew’s life and work, focusing in particular on his contributions to archaeology and Egyptology, and are presented in the form of texts. They are likely to be of interest and use to scholars of early nineteenth century intellectual history, and historians of archaeology in particular.

Keywords: British Archaeological Association, History of Archaeology, History of Medicine, Thomas Pettigrew

Funding statement

Context
Spatial Coverage
UK (54 00 N, 2 00 W) and Holland (52 30 N, 5 45 E)

Temporal Coverage
1817AD-1859AD

Methods
Steps
The dataset was collected by transcribing original letters from the period 1817-59 into an MS Word document. The letters form part of the Pettigrew Papers held by the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, which has created a detailed catalogue of the collection.¹

Sampling Strategy
Given the extent of the archive, letters were selected for transcription based on a number of factors. These included their relevance to my primary research project; the fame or prominence of the correspondent; and the inherent interest of the content. The letters presented in this dataset form part of the larger corpus of letters transcribed in whole or part, and have been chosen for archiving based on their likely interest and re-use potential for other researchers.

Quality Control
The letters included in this dataset were initially skim-read to ascertain their interest and relevance to my project. Those that were selected were read in full before being transcribed onto a computer. Finally they were checked through to make sure that details such as dates and names had been correctly copied.

Constraints
The entire collection of Pettigrew papers extends to thousands of letters, many of them of little interest, and many that are difficult or impossible to read. For this reason the dataset that has been selected constitutes a small sub-section of the whole collection.

Dataset Description
Object Name
pettigrew_letters_gm.docx / .txt

Data Type
Primary data

Format Names and Versions
Microsoft Word (Word for Mac 2011, v 14.2.0); Plain text

Creation Dates
10/2010 to 08/2011.

Dataset Creators
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Repository Location
UCL Discovery:
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/data.1335350291

Publication Date
10 May 2012
Thomas Pettigrew had a particularly large and interesting circle of friends and colleagues ranging from prominent surgeons and physicians of his era including John Coakley Lettsom and Sir Astley Cooper; scientists such as Michael Faraday; and writers and artists including George Cruikshank and Charles Dickens. He was a founding member of the British Archaeological Association and an active antiquarian best-known for his public autopsies of Egyptian mummies for which he earned the sobriquet ‘Mummy’ Pettigrew. Alongside a career in medicine he was honorary librarian to Augustus Frederick, Duke of Sussex, and published extensively on subjects including archaeology, biography, Egyptology and the history of medicine.

Given the breadth of his interests, activities and connections the life of Thomas Pettigrew is likely to be of interest to anyone working on early nineteenth century British intellectual history. A short biographical study of Pettigrew was published in 1931 and a recent study in the history of medicine noted that ‘He is a figure who merits a major study’. Other papers relating to Pettigrew’s life are held at the British Library and the Wellcome Library and have contributed to my wider project.

Acknowledgements
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References