

THE DIARY OF THOMAS SUTTON ESTCOURT OF SHIPTON MOYNE

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This journal<sup>(1)</sup> was written by Thomas Sutton Estcourt about 1864 and commences with details of his branch of the Estcourt family, touching upon the events which led them to inherit the Estcourt estates in Gloucestershire. The journal then goes on to give a more detailed picture of their lives and their gradual rise to importance in the House of Commons and public affairs.

Thomas Sutton Estcourt was born in 1801, the son of Thomas Grimston Estcourt and Eleanor Sutton (of New Park, Devizes). His birth was difficult and his father had to ride on horseback to London and back again the next day to fetch a Physician. This must have meant at least a ride of 90 miles in each direction. In 1803 Thomas Grimston was elected member of Parliament for Devizes in place of Henry Addington who was created Viscount Sidmouth. The family were great friends of Lord Sidmouth and they met socially fairly often.

Almost yearly a new member of the family was born, by 1809 six children had arrived, 4 boys and 2 girls one of whom died of measles in 1810. Thomas Sutton went to school on 4th September, 1810 to High Wycombe. The school was run by the Reverend James Price. He remained there 4 years, previous to this he had been taught by his mother English and Latin Grammar by his father.

Extracts from the Diary:-

- 1810            My mothers sister Sarah ran off with Captain Matthews and was married to him on 29th May.  
                 June, Riots between some soldiers of 102nd regiment and Canal men at Devizes.  
                 We went on summer holidays to Weymouth.
- 1811            I and my brother James went to school together.  
11th Feb.  
13th Feb.       My uncle Edmund married to Bertha Wyatt.
- 23rd July       My dear wife Lucy Sarah, daughter of Admiral Sotheron was born at Kirklington.
- 1813  
11th Sep.       I went to Harrow School.
- 1814  
7th June       The Emperor of Russia and King of Prussia arrived, there were great Fetes.
- 14th July       A Ball at Devizes on the Peace.

1815  
26th June News of Bonaparte's Abdication.  
4th Nov. My father gave up his mastership of the Harriers and had a Grand Dinner with the Hunt.

1817  
30th May Speaker Abbott resigned, many members wish my father to be proposed.  
26th July A good old friend Miss Carpenter came as Governess to my sister and remained with us 20 years.  
1st Aug. James my brother went to Sandhurst College.  
6th Nov. Princess Charlotte died.

1818  
We spent the summer at Weymouth and on 2nd December my Grandfather Thomas Estcourt died in Cheltenham of a Bilious attack and was buried at Shipton Moyne on 10th December.

1819  
3rd June The first stone laid of the new building at Harrow School. I was captain and made an impromptu speech to Lord Clarendon.  
21st June I left Harrow and in October I commenced to reside at Oriel College, Oxford.

1820  
6th Jan. Walter sailed to the East Indies.  
8th Feb. King George 4th Proclaimed.  
6th Sept. James went to Brunswick.

1821  
9th May My father was head of a commission with others to enquire into abuses alleged against the management of Ilchester Gaol by Hunt. Completed evidence on 30th June.  
18th July Coronation. I had a place in a Gallery erected on the left of Westminster Hall, and had an excellent view of the Procession and Champion (see Lords of Dymock). .

1822  
21st Nov. My examination for my degree at Oxford. Gained first class.

1823  
6th Sept. Walter sailed for South America on board the Spartiate, Captain Falcon.

31st Oct. Great Wind which blew down many elms near the Keepers Lodge. George Miles woodsman being alarmed for the house came along the lake at 4 o'clock, he returned the same way 2 hours later, and more than 50 trees had fallen across his path meantime. I had travelled abroad with Charles Wood, and returned home the night before this storm having had a rough passage and I had my hat blown away near Riems.

1826

17th Feb. My father was elected member for the University of Oxford, he had sat for Devizes for 21 years. Watson Taylor succeeded him as member for Devizes. The people of Devizes made a Festival with bands and presented 3 flags to him, Pearse and Watson Taylor. I rode at the head of 100 men on horseback into the Market Square.

2nd July Three boys were drowned while bathing in the Lake at Estcourt, one the son of the bailiff.

10th Dec. Mr. Wellesley arrived at Portsmouth, the Government of Portugal having appealed for aid from us. He made a wonderful fine speech which I heard from a Gallery in Richmond Park. My imagination was fired and with my fathers consent I got a berth with Wellesley, and took Walter with me as a Midshipman. We sailed for Lisbon with 1,200 guards and were under headquarters command of Sir William Vinton. The Fleet under Admiral Sir Thomas Hardy.

1827

14th Feb. Walter returned from Lisbon. I remained at Lisbon, domiciled with Mr. Matthew the great General, who had married my aunt. I left on the first day of Spring and rode to Leiria, I learnt to speak Portuguese from sheer necessity in a week. Sir William Clinton very kind and hospitable to me, I stayed with him a fortnight, riding about the great pine forests of the neighbourhood. After this I travelled intensively in the country and eventually to Spain, where I travelled to Seville, Cordova, Granada, and at Malaga I had an accident when my mule fell. So to Gibraltar, across to Tangier and back to Cadiz where I took a steamer to Lisbon. We were nearly shipwrecked. James and I then sailed to England and reached Estcourt on 15th December.

1828

Meetings at Devizes to found the Wilts. Friendly Society. I worked at the details all the year. I will be relieved by a permanent secretary.

6th March My father brought in the Metropolitan Police Bill, and headed a committee on it.

Lord Sidmouth resigned as Recorder of Devizes, my father was elected and I a justice of the borough.

6th Oct. The Queen of Portugal passed through Devizes from Bath. Old Mr. Hughes and I were sent down to settle how she should be received and had an interview. "Short, fat, round and good humoured".

Walter was invalided at Marsielle. Edmund was sent to nurse him and bring him home.

18th Dec. Lord Liverpool interred at Hawkesbury.

1829

3rd Feb. My Grandmother Estcourt died at the Priory, Long Newnton aged 80, and was buried at Shipton Church in the family vaults. The Government of Wellington and Peel bring in the Catholic Emancipation Bill. I busied myself in company with Walter Long in getting up Anti Catholic Petitions in the County.

13th March A vacancy being made at Marlborough by the retirement of Lord Bruce. I was put forward by Lord Citerley and returned, O'Connor attempted to take his seat for Ennis.

5th June My Dearest Mother became very ill, operation for a strangulated Hernia was performed by Brodie. She lingered till 23rd June then expired at 25 minutes after 5 a.m.

3rd July My Mother was buried at Shipton Church, Mr. Butler of Devizes conducted the Funeral Service.

1830

21st Aug. I married Lucy Sarah Sotheron.

The journal continues into the 1860's and records the gradual rise to fame and power of James Estcourt until his death in the Crimean War and of Walter the sailor. Thomas' life at Estcourt continues with parliamentary affairs. He becomes friends with Fox Talbot at Lacock and experiments with photography in the 1840's.

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### Sources

1. Gloucestershire Records Office, D1571.
2. Nympsfield Parish Registers, Gloucestershire Wills 1660-1800 nos. 182 and 294, and Estcourt Pedigree SFS,1(2-6) Gloucester City Library. Estcourt Pedigrees, Gloucestershire Records Office.
3. Wiltshire Forefathers, June Badeni (1965).
4. Edmund Estcourts Will and the results of the judgment, Wiltshire Records Office, 451/494.