

Hatfield House Archive – Correspondence of Edgar Osborne  
 Compiled by Kirsten Inglis, October 26, 2009

The correspondence file at Hatfield contains 119 letters, most of which were written by Edgar Osborne between 1955 and 1959. For the most part these letters refer to the business of organizing and running the library at Hatfield (of which Osborne was librarian from 1955-1957) and to Osborne's travels during this time. There was no reference in the correspondence to the University of Calgary's Osborne manuscript. Osborne (EO throughout these notes) does describe attending book sales and organizing the sale of books from Hatfield, but mentions nothing that would be relevant to our work. There is a mention of Arbury books being sold in 1956 and 1958 (see items 64 and 117). Osborne also mentions in a number of letters that he is working at Arbury with Humphrey Newdigate and with the Warwickshire County Records Office, but is no more specific than that (45, 48, 49). This perhaps refers to Osborne assisting in preparations for the book sale mentioned above. I have taken fairly detailed notes and I include these in order the date of each letter (when available). The bulk of the correspondence was between EO and his assistant and eventual replacement at Hatfield, Clare Talbot, with whom he seems to have shared a warm but sometimes stormy relationship.

1. Feb 13, 1955 – EO to Jackie (library assistant at Hatfield) – about new library shelving
2. March 6, 1955 – same to same – American group coming to view Hatfield library
3. March 8, 1955 – same to same – library business
4. March 23, 1955 – same to same – “my birthday!” and library business
5. April 22, 1955 – same to same – arrangements for his visit to Hatfield
6. April 24, 1955 – same to same – typewriter purchase
7. April 26, 1955 – same to same – more on the typewriter
8. April 27, 1955 – same to same – library business
9. May 29, 1955 – same to same – library business and a student who wants to come
10. June 21, 1955 – same to same – library business – his various contacts with people about books from and for Hatfield
11. Sunday – same to same – “Did you go to Hodgson's? I have their statements about the various lots, the total reached £890. I fear a little – lord Salisbury may feel I have parted with valuable books, we shall have to persuade him that they were only of value to university and similar academic institutions”
12. no date – same to same – he's aboard the Princes Ingrid – he may go to Arbury for two days on his way to Hatfield
13. July 12, 1955 – same to same – fixing a date for his visit
14. July 15, 1955 – letter from Eleanor Pitcher to EO – fixing an appointment on behalf of Dr. Wright of the Folger Shakespeare Library
15. Sept 4, 1955 – EO to Jackie – about sending books to the Folger and the delay in doing so
16. Sept 10, 1955 – private letter to EO from Lord Salisbury – requesting advice about the imminent departure of Drage (the present curator) and asking for EO's suggestions of a replacement
17. Sept 19, 1955 – EO to Jackie – some snide remarks about the Folger woman, Carolyn – “more and more Cats...and who wants more cats”
18. no date – same to same – about Stratford upon Avon letters – nothing has been decided

19. Sept 27, 1955 – letter from Salisbury to Edgar Osborne asking him to assume the position of Curator on top of his library duties
20. October 12, 1955 – EO to Jackie – library business including a newspaper clipping about the popularity of Chatsworth House (the competition!)
21. Oct 26, 1955 – Lord Salisbury to EO – He’s not sure if Neale’s suggestions will be right for the job as no specialized historical knowledge is required.
22. Oct 30, 1955 – EO to Lord S – he understands Lord S’s doubts about Neale’s candidates
23. Oct 31, 1955 - Letter from Carroll Main to EO – thanking him on L. Salisbury’s behalf for his efforts in suggesting a curator for Hatfield. Lord Salisbury has someone in mind who has experience with a London Bank.
24. Oct 31, 1955 – letter from M B. Johnston to EO declining to apply for the position
25. Nov 2, 1955 – same to same about same
26. Nov 3, 1955 – letter from Eve Sheldon-Williams to EO. EO has informed her about the job at Hatfield and she is eager to see him regarding it.
27. Nov 7<sup>th</sup>, 1955 – letter from Raymond Irwin noting that Prof. Neale recommends Audrey M. Taylor and Ann Cox-Johnson as potential candidates for the Hatfield vacancy
28. Nov 7<sup>th</sup>, 1955 – letter from FC Francis (British Museum) to EO – recommending Ann Cox-Johnson for position at Hatfield
29. Nov 10<sup>th</sup> – letter from Dr. Dodwell (Lambeth Palace Library) recommending Ann Cox-Johnson for the wardenship of Hatfield House
30. Typed letter about the qualifications of Ann Cox-Johnson for the Hatfield position
31. Nov 10, 1955 – letter from Lord Salisbury to EO – thanking him for his suggestions of candidates for the position of Curator and for his recommendation of a craftsmen to work on the Hatfield bookshelves.
32. Nov 11, 1955 –letter from Eve Sheldon-Williams to EO. “This is the little book I picked up at the junk shop around the corner...I wondered if all the illustrations are by Berwick as some are so much better than others\* [\*”ps I found a Visit to the Elephant in the same shop”] Discusses the job opening again – it will involve considerable domestic upheaval, but if EO feels she should apply (despite “my not being a MAN”) she will do so.
33. Nov 13, 1955 –letter from Carroll Main to EO – thanking him for his letter and discussing the extent of EO’s “proposals for trying to solve the problem here.”
34. Resume of Audrey M. Taylor (History lecturer at Royal Holloway 1946-51)
35. Nov 15, 1955 – letter from Audrey Taylor to EO confirming appointment at Chaucer House on Thursday Nov 17<sup>th</sup>.
36. Handwritten in pencil on lined sheet – headed: ‘Applications for curatorship’ apparently a draft rejection letter to potential candidates for the curatorship. 1955
37. Nov 20, 1955 – EO to Jackie – library business
38. Dec 2, 1955 - Brief note from Raymond Irwin to EO – asking if someone has been appointed at Hatfield yet
39. Dec 10, 1955 – EO to Jackie – business in London
40. Dec 12, 1955 - letter from Lord Salisbury to EO – regarding the potential appointment of a Mr. Beamand (a former Bank Manager) as curator at Hatfield. Lord Salisbury feels this position is better suited to a businessman than a historian. Also, he has heard that Mrs. Beamand is a charming woman, which “would be an advantage”
41. Dec 29, 1955 – EO to Jackie – library business

42. Jan 10, 1956 – same to same – Lord Salisbury has suggested putting shoe polish on the books so they are shiny!
43. Jan 18, 1956 – same to same – library business
44. January 23, 1956 – same to same – library business
45. March 4, 1956 – same to same – about ordering archival boxes – he’s still at Arbury
46. Feb 13, 1956 – letter from the Wigmore bindery regarding the re-backing of the Cecil papers.
47. Feb 29, 1956 – letter from EO to Lord Salisbury indicating that he thinks Wigmore’s terms acceptable and recommending they go ahead.
48. March 6, 1956 – EO to Jackie on Arbury Nuneaton stationary – notes that he was with the Warwickshire County Archivist “last Thursday” goes on to talk about a Miss Larkin who may be able to do their book repairs. “I shall be here at Arbury until next Thursday. I am so far not able to estimate how long the final Arbury effort will take but I will let you know about my next visit when I can tell how long the present work will take to finish”
49. March 17, 1956 – EO to Jackie – “I returned from two strenuous weeks at Arbury yesterday evening.” He supposes they could see Clare Talbot though her work record looks sparse...he’s getting frustrated with Lord S.
50. April 5, 1956 – note from Carroll Main to EO regarding fixing an appointment for Miss Talbot’s interview
51. April 6, 1956 – EO to Jackie – library business (he’s in Notts)
52. April 16, 1956 – note from Carroll Main to EO informing EO that Miss Talbot had a successful interview and will be taking up duties at Hatfield.
53. April 16, 1956 – EO to Jackie – Clare Talbot has been accepted; he’s sure Jackie will be of great help to her
54. May 24, 1956 – typed note asking EO to have a word with Lord Salisbury about moving “some books from my room to the Library” no signature
55. no date - EO to Lord Salisbury: thanking him for sending him “the letter you received from Pro Neale.” This seems to be in regards to filling the position of a Mrs. Woodfull.
56. June 10, 1956 – EO to Jackie – about beeswax
57. June 13, 1956 – same to same – about Stone, who should not be allowed to borrow documents; Liverpool documents should be deposited at Liverpool records office
58. June 22, 1956 – EO to Clare Talbot – about his upcoming visit and arrangements for this
59. June 29, 1956 – Clare to EO – about a Mr. Stone from Oxford who will no longer be allowed in the muniment room
60. June 29, 1956 –EO to Clare – about plans to visit and library business
61. July 1, 1956 – EO to Clare – about a flat
62. Postcard from EO to Clare from Boyumbreen
63. July 16, 1956 – Clare to EO – Lord S wants the Public Record Office to have the microfilms
64. July 20, 1956 – EO to Clare – “The Arbury Sale yesterday was a great success, reaching nearly £6,000. The News-Letters – about which Mrs. Pitcher has been so cagey – reached £2100! and I suspect they have been bought by Folger! Had the Pitcher been straightforward she could have secured them at presale negotiation for £500. The PRO do not want the Mfilms as they have no public facilities for study. Everything I try to do at Hatfield seems to lead to complications. Damn!”

65. July 31, 1956 – EO to Clare – he's arrived home; Carolyn will finish end of Aug.
66. August 1, 1956 – Clare to EO – pleasantries about his upcoming visit
67. August 2, 1956 – EO to Clare – about PRO microfilms; an obscure paragraph regarding Arbury materials: "Glad to know Louis Wright took my hint, previous to writing him I took an opportunity at Leamington to make my opinion plain to the Pitcher, who by the way had to pay £2100 for the Arbury news-letter for which she offered through me £500. The Arbury surplus reached over five thousand pounds." More about his coming visit.
68. August 2, 1956 – Clare to EO – about her vacation
69. August 16, 1956 – EO to Clare – about traveling to California; the hated Carolyn who proposes to edit the archives calendar; library politics... [encl: draft report to Salisbury about the arrangement of library rooms at Hatfield]
70. August 17, 1956 – Clare to EO – about rebinding etc
71. August 18, 1956 – EO to Clare – about rebinding and repairing books
72. August 23, 1956 – Clare to EO – about a girl 'house-guide' who has pretended to be from London University but is not actually.
73. August 24, 1956 – EO to Clare – library business
74. September 4, 1956 – same to same – library business
75. September 12, 1956 – Clare to EO – library business
76. Sept 15, 1956 – EO to Clare – library business
77. Sept 24, 1956 – Clare to EO – about the Dunn and Wilson list
78. Sept 25 – EO to Clare – "The Arbury people were delightful. Humphrey was wrapped up in his new Massey-Harris Combine Harvester, and his new grain drier. The latter costing £5000, housed in a building about 120 feet long. Farming on a big scale you see. I believe it will pay."
79. Sept 26, 1956 – EO to Clare – quick note about Dunn and Wilson books to be rebound
80. Sept 28, 1956 – Clare to EO – she is "glad you enjoyed your stay at Arbury"
81. Oct 6, 1956 – EO to Clare – his travel plans; Dunn and Wilson collecting the books
82. Oct 13, 1956 – same to same – library business
83. Nov 12 1956 – same to same – his work in Ottawa and Toronto
84. Nov 18, 1956 – on Boys and Girls House stationary – same to same – he's been doing interviews and TV appearances; he wouldn't live in Toronto for all the dollars in Canada ; intrigues with the Hatfield staff
85. Dec 23, 1956 – same to same – about his American travels
86. Jan 3, 1957 – same to same – from Pasadena – he met Cary Grant last week... he's going to the Huntington Library
87. Jan 11, 1957 – same to same – he has reached Toronto – he's busy and loves the crisp cold
88. Jan 23, 1957 – same to same – about an upcoming visit
89. January 29, 1957 – EO to Clare – about his upcoming visit
90. Feb 12, 1957 – Clare to EO – about the carpenters
91. Feb 12, 1957 – EO to Clare – damn the carpenters!
92. Feb 15, 1957 – Clare to EO about library shelves
93. note from EO to Clare about the library
94. Feb 18, 1957 – Clare to EO – about library organization
95. Feb 18 – EO to Clare –intrigue over a Shea, who has apparently told Lord S that EO has a financial stake in the Hatfield printed programs (untrue...he says...)

96. Feb 20, 1957 – same to same – about O’Shea, who they worry is keeping archival enquiries to himself
97. March 16 – same to same – talks about bidding on children’s books at Hodgson’s
98. same to same – note about organization of books in glass case
99. same to same – he’s recommended she get a raise
100. March 23, 1957 – EO to Clare – about possibility of missing folios (with Royal arms on them) – EO’s anger at the Hatfield library situation
101. March 25, 1957 – Clare to EO – long letter about business at Hatfield: missing books, difficulty of working with both lord S and EO as bosses, organizational matters
102. March 26<sup>th</sup> – EO to Clare – Lord S is concerned about some missing books
103. March 30<sup>th</sup> – EO to Clare – Regarding arrangement of the books at Hatfield
104. April 1 – Clare to EO – about a missing statement of account
105. April 1 – EO to Clare – note giving bibliographic details: James Aske. Elizabetha Triumphans: 1588
106. April 2 – EO to Clare – about a missing statement; his secret for leather preservative
107. April 3, 1957 – Clare to EO - about bookbinding and EO’s American tour
108. April 8, 1957 – EO to Clare – library business
109. April 11, 1957 – same to same – still nothing resolved about EO’s continuing connection with Hatfield
110. July 8, 1957 – same to same – holidays in Sweden; holiday rules for staff...he likes to draw smiley faces!
111. July 18, 1957 – same to same with details about his trip to Sweden
112. August 11, 1957 – same to same regarding the Rocaburgh list, which EO has sent to Fleming.
113. August 12, 1957 – same to same – advising about a potential book purchase which seems expensive to him
114. Oct 10, 1957 – from same to same about EO’s unwillingness to advise on the archives (though he will on the library)
115. Oct 20, 1957 – letter from EO to Clare (with envelope) – regarding an upcoming visit to Hatfield and expense accounts. He has been very busy with ‘Tacute’ (??) library matters. Then he talks about his intro to the Osborne catalogue, so could this word be Toronto?? He is happy to renounce any title to the Hatfield library position and suggests that Clare should be titled librarian and archivist. He was exceedingly frustrated at Hatfield where, he says, his “efforts at order were frustrated”
116. April 11, 1958 – EO to Clare: “The Boss told me to do whatever I liked with the books in the Black tin trunk...In addition to the few books in the trunk there were six illustrated books showing every phase of sexual intercourse unsavoury and otherwise! Homosexuality included. It was agreed that these should be destroyed they went on the office fire where they made a merry blaze” He has noticed that there are some similar books in Mrs. Main’s room...
117. June 10, 1958 – EO to Clare – “No, I have not been to any recent sales and have had no word from John Fleming. I read the sensational news about his purchase of Blake for £23 000. It is possible he may stay over to bid when the Newdigate Bacon comes up for sale on June 23<sup>rd</sup>. I shall be in London then with Humphrey Newdigate.” He goes on

to talk about the situation at Hatfield and the possibility that Clare has found 1640 STC books; in which case, EO tells her, “you will have triumphed over Lord Salisbury”

118. letter from EO, missing first page [must be to Clare Talbot since he congratulates her on making working conditions at Hatfield better – he is happy to be “busy on jobs much more agreeable than that weary time I spent in the draught and cold at Hatfield. Unfriendly place Hatfield” Notes that he and Kerstin stayed over Christmas at Deerie House, Leven (Scotland), where he spent a great deal of time in the unheated library and found a first edition of the Complete Angler though he thinks it may be a ‘botched copy.’
119. April 24, 1959 – letter from EO to Clare telling her she can do as she likes about the Canadian Catalogue. Touches on personal matters and best wishes etc.