Overview of the Collection

**Title:** William Brydges Papers.

**Dates (inclusive):** 1719-1731

**Collection Number:** mssHM 75705-75763

**Creator:** Brydges, William, 1681-1764.

**Extent:** 59 pieces. 1 box.

**Repository:** The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Manuscripts Department
1151 Oxford Road
San Marino, California 91108
Phone: (626) 405-2129
Email: reference@huntington.org
URL: http://www.huntington.org

**Abstract:** The collection consists of personal, family, legal and business correspondence of Herefordshire landowner and lawyer William Brydges (1681-1764) and his gentry family, who had strong ties to the London legal community. The correspondence chiefly reflects news about the social activities and family matters; a long-running dispute over the repair of the chancel of Tibberton's church; and the buying and selling of various estates and other lands, chiefly as an investment.

**Language:** English.

**Access**
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**Preferred Citation**

**Provenance**
Purchased from Mrs. Inez Dakers of Bath, Somerset, in November 1958.

**Biographical Note**
William Brydges (1681-1764) of Tibberton (or Tyberton) in Herefordshire and London, landowner and lawyer, was the son of Francis Brydges of Castle Street, Hereford (d. 1727) and a cousin of James Brydges, 1st Duke of Chandos (1673-1744). He was admitted to the Middle Temple in 1702; the admissions register for Gray’s Inn lists William Brydges in 1713 as one of the Six Clerks of Chancery, but other sources suggest that that office was held by his father Francis or by a Thomas Brydges. William married as his first wife Jane, the daughter of Chandos's longtime lawyer Andrew Card; a daughter Elizabeth was born in 1718. His uncle, another William Brydges (1663-1736), stood unsuccessfully for the constituency of Wells (Somerset) in a Parliamentary by-election in 1719.

**Scope and Content**
The collection consists of the personal, estate, legal, and business correspondence of a Herefordshire gentry family with strong ties to the London legal world and with some slight connection to their more important relative James Brydges, 1st Duke of Chandos.

The first letter in the collection (26 Oct 1719) is written by William Brydges (1663-1736) to his brother Francis Brydges with regards to setting up a meeting between the two.

The next forty letters are written by William Brydges (1681-1764) to his father Francis Brydges. In these letters, William displays traits of a member of the British upper-class. Whether it’s by entertaining guests with a harp, mentioning an inclination to be “gentleman-like”, receiving invitations to dine and socialize with local lords, or being the second cousin of James Brydges 1st Duke of Chandos, William is not ashamed of his gentility. His title, Esquire of Tibberton (or Tyberton) in Herefordshire, reflects that as well. Although his work as a lawyer requires him to live in London during this time, he is still obligated to settle matters in Tibberton. The issue that is mentioned the most within this set of letters centers on the tithe dispute of Tibberton Parish. In the early 1700s, there were serious difficulties faced by the established church as the failure of the Anglican Church to meet the needs of its constituents all throughout Britain laid the groundwork for the rise of
Methodism and other non-conformist sects particularly associated with towns. In Tibberton, William and Francis Brydges have a difficult time getting the local citizens to pay for the repair of the collapsed chancel and tower of Tibberton Parish Church. In the case of the Tibberton church, neither the Dean and Chapter of the diocese nor the townspeople agreed to repair these damaged areas. According to William in one of his letters to Francis (17 Oct 1719), he states that the Dean and Chapter want parishioners to pay for the repair of the chancel but nobody is willing to pay. This disorganization leads to William and Francis demanding money from the person who collects the tithes of Tibberton parish, Mr. Tom Jones, in order to pay for the repairs themselves. Seeing as Francis and his father Marshall were both clerks of the church, their involvement in this case appears fitting. A further example of William’s dedication to the church lies in his search for records indicating the administrative status of Tibberton and its adjoining church with the name “Madley”. When the ownership of the church comes into question, William travels to the augmentation office at Westminster to prove that Tibberton is its own distinct parish. It is not known whether these issues get resolved, but what can be told from these letters is that William found documents proving Tibberton’s distinct existence from Madley; the damaged chancel was removed by the end of 1719 (though not yet replaced with a new one); and due to both Tom Jones’ refusal to pay his share and inaction from others involved with the church, William and Francis do not resolve the ecclesiastical conflict of law among all sides of this affair.

Along with Tibberton, real estate matters are the most mentioned subject within William’s letters to his father. These matters deal with William, his father-in-law Andrew Card (1653-1732) who served the Duke of Chandos as a lawyer, and Francis purchasing and selling estates within the towns of Bosbury, Hereford, Bristol, Moreton, Shirkway, and Upleadon. Some of William’s cousins play a role in these affairs as well; including Will Vaughan who informs William of his intention to purchase the Brampton estate in Hereford, and Tom Brydges who is selling the Brampton estate in the first place. Another involvement of Tom brought up in these letters involves a complex and strenuous financial affair wherein Tom purchases the life annuity of Andrew Card’s widowed sister “Aunt Holmes”.

The next sixteen letters are written from Joseph Hardwick (fourteen letters) and Stephen Reeves (two letters) to Francis Brydges from 1719 to 1720. Hardwick and Reeves are separate tradesmen hired by Francis to assist in the repairing of the church at Tibberton, but Hardwick also discusses land prices and other business affairs in his writings to Francis. The last three letters are written from notable architect John Wood (1705?-1754) from 1729 to 1731 to William Brydges concerning his estate purchase in Bristol. They consist of architectural suggestions for the estate- thus proving Wood’s loyalty to the Brydges family after designing the Duke of Chandos’ estate in Bath a few years earlier.

From the day to day occurrences illustrated in these primary sources, the Brydges’ way of life can be deciphered. The first thing to notice is that business for William, Francis, and Andrew Card is essentially localized. All of the estate affairs (except for Bristol being 40 miles from Hereford) occur in locations that are not only in Herefordshire but also extremely close within the county as well. The fact that there was no effective transport due to poorly maintained roads and a lack of modernized technology in this pre-Industrial Revolution era meant that business could be handled more easily when it was close by.

Another thing to note is how often William talked about his family to his father. Seeing as how there was no other means of communication except for talking in person, William felt obligated to inform his father in every single letter that he wrote during this time how his immediate family fared. He constantly mentioned his daughter Elizabeth and nieces Mary and Elizabeth Unett because he shared a close relationship with all of them. Unfortunately, sickness was prevalent among this time due to the instances of Elizabeth “Betty” Unett contracting smallpox, Francis acquiring gout for a brief stint, and Andrew Card suffering from an illness that prevented him from traveling for a whole year and forced him to resign his post as treasurer of Gray’s Inn in London in June 1719. William also wrote about politics mentioning that his uncle William Brydges (1663-1736) lost a by-election at Wells, Somerset on December 14th, 1719; and also giving an account (letter of 26 Sept 1719) of working out a deal with Lord Chandos regarding the British East India Company and an outside agent, meanwhile providing hints towards a warm relationship he shared with his second cousin.

The relationship between William, his father-in-law, and his biological father Francis is built on tremendous interaction and trust. Though other family members and various affiliates come to William for legal and financial advice, William constantly mentions throughout his letters to Francis that he relies on Card’s counsel before he follows through with these affairs as well. William also trusts Francis enough to let him know everything that is occurring in his life during this time so much so that the most repeated statement among these letters is: “I entirely submit my thoughts to you [Francis]”. This statement demonstrates that people actually come to both William and Francis for legal and financial advice, and at the end of the day the father decides what is best. Thus we observe the family dynamic of the Brydges family in this collection.

- The Brydges Family Papers, 1382-1910 (bulk 1650-1800) a sub-collection of the Stowe Archive, Approximately 15,800 items. See the Guide to British Historical Manuscripts in the Huntington Library (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1982), pp. 228-245.
• Lydia Catherine Brydges, Duchess of Chandos, Papers, 1538-2002 (bulk 1548-1780) (Call number: mssLB 1-926)

**Arrangement**
The collection is arranged in alphabetical order by author, and chronologically within each author’s letters.

**Indexing Terms**
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the [Huntington Library’s Online Catalog](#).

**Subjects**
Brydges family -- Archives.
Brydges, William, 1663-1764 -- Archives.
Wood, John, 1705?-1754.
Administration of estates -- Great Britain -- 18th century.
Architects -- Great Britain -- 18th century -- Correspondence.
Church buildings -- England -- Herefordshire -- 18th century.
Church maintenance and repair -- England -- Herefordshire -- 18th century.
Lawyers -- Great Britain -- 18th century -- Correspondence.
Great Britain -- History -- 18th century -- Sources.
Herefordshire (England) -- History -- 18th century -- Sources.
Tibberton (England) -- History -- 18th century -- Sources.

**Forms/Genres**
Business letters -- Great Britain -- 18th century.
Letters (correspondence) -- Great Britain -- 18th century.

**Additional Contributors**
Brydges, Francis, -1727, recipient.
Brydges, William, 1663-1736, correspondent.
Hardwick, Joseph, active 1719-1720, correspondent.
Reeves, Stephan, active 1719-1720, correspondent.
Wood, John, 1705?-1754, correspondent.

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**Box 1**

_mssHM 75705-75763_

- Brydges, William (1663-1736), letter to Francis Brydges. October 26, 1719. HM 75705.
- Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. May 2, 1719. HM 75706.
- Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. May 9, 1719. HM 75707.
- Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. May 21, 1719. HM 75708.
- Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. June 18, 1719. HM 75709.
- Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. July 18, 1719. HM 75711.
- Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. August 6, 1719. HM 75714.
- Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. August 11, 1719. HM 75715.
- Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. August 13, 1719. HM 75716.
- Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. August 15, 1719. HM 75717.
- Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. August 18, 1719. HM 75718.
- Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. August 22, 1719. HM 75719.
- Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. August 27, 1719. HM 75720.
- Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. September 26, 1719. HM 75721.
- Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. October 6, 1719. HM 75722.
- Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. October 13, 1719. HM 75723.
Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. October 17, 1719. HM 75724.
Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. October 20, 1719. HM 75725.
Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. October 22, 1719. HM 75726.
Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. November 5, 1719. HM 75727.
Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. November 12, 1719. HM 75728.
Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. November 21, 1719. HM 75729.
Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. November 26, 1719. HM 75730.
Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. December 1, 1719. HM 75731.
Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. December 5, 1719. HM 75732.
Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. December 19, 1719. HM 75734.
Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. December 26, 1719. HM 75735.
Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. March 8, 1719/20. HM 75743.
Brydges, William (1681-1764), letter to Francis Brydges. March 12, 1719/20. HM 75744.
Hardwick, Joseph (active 1719-1720), letter to Francis Brydges. April 14, 1719. HM 75745.
Hardwick, Joseph (active 1719-1720), letter to Francis Brydges. May 1, 1719. HM 75746.
Hardwick, Joseph (active 1719-1720), letter to Francis Brydges. May 5, 1719. HM 75747.
Hardwick, Joseph (active 1719-1720), letter to Francis Brydges. May 19, 1719. HM 75748.
Hardwick, Joseph (active 1719-1720), letter to Francis Brydges. July 1719. HM 75749.
Hardwick, Joseph (active 1719-1720), letter to Francis Brydges. July 18, 1719. HM 75750.
Hardwick, Joseph (active 1719-1720), letter to Francis Brydges. August 13, 1719. HM 75752.
Hardwick, Joseph (active 1719-1720), letter to Francis Brydges. September 20, 1719. HM 75753.
Hardwick, Joseph (active 1719-1720), letter to Francis Brydges. September 30, 1719. HM 75754.
Hardwick, Joseph (active 1719-1720), letter to Francis Brydges. October 27, 1719. HM 75755.
Hardwick, Joseph (active 1719-1720), letter to Francis Brydges. November 1, 1719. HM 75756.
Reeves, Stephen (active 1719), letter to Francis Brydges. October 28 1719. HM 75759.
Reeves, Stephen (active 1719), letter to Francis Brydges. October 30, 1719. HM 75760.