

## World War One resources in Special Collections

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### The Wolfson Reading Room

#### Special Collections Centre

The Sir Duncan Rice Library  
University of Aberdeen  
Bedford Road  
Aberdeen  
AB24 3AA

### Introduction

This factsheet provides an overview of the main archival and printed sources relating to World War One held by Special Collections. The papers comprise journals, correspondence, maps and plans, photographs and sound recordings and relate not only to the north-east of Scotland but reflect the impact of the war on the national and international stage.

### University Roll of Honour

A total of 2,852 University staff, students and alumni served in World War One, of whom 341 lost their lives. Their service spanned all branches of the Armed Forces. Many enlisted in the University's U Company of the 4th Gordons; others served with the Argyll and Sutherland, Seaforth, and Cameron Highlanders, as well as other army regiments and corps, the Royal Navy, Royal Army Medical Service, and the fledgling Royal Flying Corps. The youngest to die was 18, the oldest was 66.

In King's College Chapel there is a permanent war memorial to those who died in World War One designed by Dr William Kelly and constructed in 1929, and a stained glass memorial window designed by Douglas Strachan and installed in 1920.

In 1921, the University compiled and published the University of Aberdeen Roll of Service; this has been digitised and is available online. The roll includes photographs and short biographies of the men who died during World War One in addition to an alphabetical list of all those connected with the University who contributed to the war effort in some way. The website also includes collection highlights and a gallery of images.

### U Company

An Aberdeen University detachment of the 1st Volunteer Battalion, the Gordon Highlanders, was recruited in 1897 and in 1898 became a University Company (U Company). In 1908, following the introduction of the Territorial Forces, the 1st Volunteer Battalion became known as the 4th Battalion, The Gordon Highlanders.

The total number of students enrolled in U Company during the 17 years of its existence was nearly 600. It was mobilised on the outbreak of war and initially

underwent training at Bedford with the Highland Division before being sent to France in February 1915. At the beginning of the war the strength of the company was 132 men and this formed approximately one sixth of the Battalion. The majority of the members were from Aberdeen and the North-East but there were also students from Caithness, the Hebrides and the Lothians. U company experienced a terrible loss on the 25th September 1915 at Hooze, during the battle of Loos, when a large proportion of the men from the Unit lost their lives.

### Archival collections

#### University institutional papers

Court papers (UNIVERSITY 380) and Senate papers (UNIVERSITY 370). A set of minutes are available to consult in the Reading Room.

Edilis (Estates) Committee minutes: 1890-1947 (UNIVERSITY 662).

Military Education Committee minutes: 1912-1952 (UNIVERSITY 895).

Papers relating to the War Memorial including drawings and minutes of the War Memorial Committee: 1929 (UNIVERSITY 1494) (ref. A5/50/1-15).

War memorial - drawings of coats of arms: c.1923 (UNIVERSITY 573).

#### Family and estate papers

Fraser of Philorth papers - collection of lantern slides of photographs, cartoons, and propaganda material including Punch cartoons and photographs of damage to historic buildings in Flanders and to the town of Scarborough: 1914-1918 (MS 3004/434).

Fraser of Philorth papers - correspondence to Lord Saltoun on various military matters, including the treatment of prisoners of war in Germany: 1914-1918 (MS 3004/455).

Fraser of Philorth papers - correspondence regarding bombing tactics in the trenches and descriptions of the Gallipoli landings: 1915 (MS 3004/462).

Gordon of Cluny - papers relating to Deeside District Military Tribunals and conscription: 1915-1916 (MS 3600/7).

Gordon of Cluny - papers relating to charitable activities including Oldmill Red Cross Hospital and Aberdeen War Dressings Depot: 1915-1918 (MS 3600/9/1).

Leith-Ross family of Arnage - papers of Major Leith-Ross, officer in British Army and Indian Army during World War One: 1914-1918 (MS 3346).

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## Organisation papers

Aberdeen University Peace Society, minute book: 1912-1914 (UNIVERSITY 651).

1<sup>st</sup> Scottish General Hospital (later Woodend), Aberdeen - photographs of staff and patients taken during World War One: c.1915-1919 (UNIVERSITY 1439/3/1).

War Office Press Bureau - collection of censorship instructions sent to a British weekly newspaper: 1915-1919 (MS 2000).

## Business papers

Alexander Pirie & Sons, paper-makers. Includes registers of Pirie family members and staff who enlisted (from the firm's offices in Aberdeen and Melbourne, Australia) and a memorial ceremony programme: 1914-1921 (MS 2911/3/2; MS 2911/19/2).

## Personal papers

Baird, John Lawrence, 1st Viscount Stonehaven, diplomat and politician - war diaries during period serving with intelligence corps in France: 1914-1915 (MS 3064/3/11).

Bulloch, John Malcolm, journalist - scrapbooks: 'Gordon Highlanders in the Great War', volumes 1-26: 1914-1918 (MS 3051/4).

Butchart, Colonel Henry Jackson - papers collected in the course of his duties as Quarter-Master General in Egypt and Europe: 1917-1918 (MS 3134).

Cruickshank, Ernest, University of Aberdeen Professor of Physiology: diaries: 1916 – 1919 (MS 4027).

Davidson-Pratt, James - memories of work in chemical warfare: 1914-1918 (MS 2969).

Forbes, Robert Alexander, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Seaforth Highlanders – First World War letter: 1918 (MS 3896).

Fowler, Lieutenant Colonel Andrew and Colonel David Rorie papers - includes maps, documents and photographs relating to the Royal Army Medical Corps and their roles in the army medical services: 1911–1918 (MS 3031).

Godsman, James, local historian - papers including photographs and postcards from World War One: c.1914-1918 (MS 2804).

Hay of Seaton, Malcolm Vivian - papers relating to his work in Cork Street, for M.I.1b., the Cryptology Department of the War Office, in addition to papers relating to prisoner of war camps in Germany: c.1907-1919 (MS 2788).

Inkster, Walter, Lieutenant, 4th Battalion Gordon Highlanders - service and personal papers: c.1907-1915 (MS 3306).

Kelly, William, architect - sketches and photographs of war memorials in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire: early 1920s (MS 3759) and (MS 3859).

Laws, Amelia, nurse - correspondence to members of her family during the period she was working in

military and civilian hospitals in Italy and France: 1914 - 1920 (MS 3290).

Lockhart, Robert Douglas, surgeon lieutenant - papers and photographs relating to his service in the Royal Navy: 1916-1919 (MS 3270/1/3).

Nicoll, Catherine Robertson - war diaries and related papers: 1914-1918 (MS 3518/2/3).

Ogston, Sir Alexander, surgeon and bacteriologist - two journals recording his experiences as a surgeon in hospitals in Serbia and Italy: 1915-1917 (MS 3850).

Mackinnon, Captain Roy Livingston - 'Two years with the 4th Gordons in France'; memoir: c.1920 (MS 2007).

Morin, Maurice, soldier - letter describing his experiences as a teenage recruit sent to the German War front: March 1916 (MS 3626).

Summers, James (Provost, Rosehearty) - First World War correspondence with soldiers from Rosehearty serving overseas: 1918 (MS 3896).

Gordon Highlanders - World War One photographs and Field Service postcards: 1914-1918 (MS 3869).

Mesopotamia Campaign - British military maps: 1916 (MS 2365).

U Company - letter written by unidentified student, Flanders: 1915 (MS 3445).

## Oral history collections

University of Aberdeen Oral History Archive - comprises nearly 200 interviews with individuals connected with the University, including recollections on the impact of the war on life at the University (MS 3620). Of particular interest are the interviews conducted with Dr Mary Esslemont (MS 3620/1/2), George Fraser (MS 3620/1/102), Dr Stella Henriques (MS 3620/1/61) and Dr Daniel Gordon (MS 3620/1/44).

## Other relevant collections

### NHS Grampian Archives

The archive dates from the founding of Aberdeen Infirmary in 1739 and contains substantial material relating to hospital provision, notably general and specialist hospitals, cottage hospitals and asylums.

Many of the collections contain details of actions taken by the hospitals during World War One to help the war effort, such as setting aside beds for the admission of military patients or having to find replacements for staff volunteering or called up for active service. Two hospitals, at Torphins and Inch, were set up after the war as local war memorial hospitals.

### Medico-Chirurgical Society

The Aberdeen Medico-Chirurgical Society was founded in 1789 in response to the perceived lack of medical teaching offered by both King's and Marischal Colleges. The collection includes correspondence relating to the operation on Prince Albert, later King George VI, September 1914 AMCS/4/10/5 and a

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photograph album of the No.1 Scottish General Hospital, Oldmill, c.1917 AMCS/4/11/9. For more information see the website but please note that although the catalogue is available via the University, the papers are held by the Medico-Chirurgical Society.

### Printed collections

The Local Collection, accessible via our Reading Room, also contains relevant printed material. An important source of local contemporary reports on the war can be found in holdings of local newspapers.

Bulloch, John Malcolm - *The Gordon Highlanders* (London, 1903-10): four volumes of newspaper cuttings/articles concerning the Gordon Highlanders.

Alma Mater (Vol XXXII-XXXV) covering period 1914-1918 is an important record of how the war affected the student community in Aberdeen - see also two 'Memorial' numbers published in 1916 and 1919.

The printed collections also hold long runs of published military lists: army, Indian army, naval and some air force: 18<sup>th</sup> century – 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Access

Materials are available upon request for consultation in the Reading Room. Please search our online catalogues to identify individual items.

### Further reading

For further reading please also see the studies of a number of our manuscripts, printed books and collections in the journals *Aberdeen University Library Bulletin*, *Aberdeen University Review* and *Northern Scotland*.

A number of the above papers were highlighted in: Iain Beavan, Peter Davidson and Jane Stevenson. *The Library and Archive Collections of the University of Aberdeen: an introduction and description*, (Manchester University Press, 2011).

Allardyce, Mabel Desborough (ed.) *Roll of service in the Great War, 1914-1919: University of Aberdeen*. (Aberdeen University Press, 1921).

Anderson, R. Chapter 4: War, peace and politics, 1914-1939 in *'The student community at Aberdeen 1860-1939'* (Aberdeen University Press, 1988).

Duffus, J. B. *Town, gown and gun: a centennial history of Aberdeen Universities Officers Training Corps 1912-2012* (Aberdeen, 2012).

Fraser, James Fowler. *Doctor Jimmy, 1893-1979: some reminiscences* (Aberdeen University Press, 1980).

Fraser, James Fowler. *War Diary 1915* (published in *Aberdeen University Review* Vol XLVI, Spring 1975).

McConachie, John. *The student soldiers* (Elgin, 1995).

Ogston, Sir Alexander. *Reminiscences of three campaigns* (London, [1919]).

Rorie, D. A. *A medico's luck in the war* (Aberdeen, 1929).

Rule, A. *Students under arms: being the war adventures of Aberdeen University Company of the Gordon Highlanders* (Aberdeen, 1934).

Rule, A. *The Old "U" Company* in *Aberdeen University Review* Vol XXII, 1934-1935 (pp.128-131).

Smith, George Adam. *Two Years of War: The Record of the University* in *Aberdeen University Review* Vol III, 1915-1916 (pp.214-233) provides a summary of the impact of the war on the administration of the University and the role of U Company in the war.

Strathdee, Roy. *Aberdeen University contingent: officer's training corps, senior training corps* (Aberdeen, 1947).

Taylor, James. *Experiences in a Munitions Factory and Some Reflections Thereon* in *Aberdeen University Review* Vol V, 1917-1918 (pp.111-121).

Taylor, William. *Student and sniper-sergeant: a memoir of J.K. Forbes, M.A., 4th Battalion Gordon Highlanders* (London, 1916).

Terry, C.S. *Lectures at the Front* in *Aberdeen University Review* Vol V, 1917-1918 (pp.218-229).

Walker, Joyce A. *A Cloak of Conscience? Dyce Work Camp, Conscientious Objectors and the Public of NE Scotland, 1916* (Aberdeen, 2011).

Watt, Theodore. *Aberdeen Grammar School Roll of Pupils 1795-1919* (Aberdeen, 1923). Includes list of former pupils, some of whom went on to study at the University, on whom honours were conferred for service in the First World War and a list of names from the School War Memorial.