

Ecclesiastical resources in Special Collections

September 2021

QG HCOL017

The Wolfson Reading Room

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

Introduction

Many individuals and institutions have deposited their papers with the University; as a result it has acquired an unrivalled collection of material not solely relating to the history and culture of the north-east of Scotland but also of national and international importance.

Theology took pride of place in the hierarchy of learning for centuries after the foundation of the University, and no discipline is better served by its historic collections. Far from the homogeneous Presbyterianism associated with Scotland in the popular mind, the religious culture of the north-east was remarkably diverse, and successive waves and countercurrents of religious thought and practice over the centuries have left rich deposits of manuscripts and printed texts in the University's library.

Devotional texts

As would be expected from an ancient University, the collections have substantial holdings of devotional texts such as bibles, books of psalms or psalters and books of hours. Most famous is the Burnet Psalter, an early 15th century manuscript. It has been digitised and is available on-line.

Scottish Catholic Archives, Historic Archives

The Historic Archives of the Scottish Catholic Archives predominantly relate to the Catholic Church from the 12th century prior to the restoration of the Scottish Catholic Hierarchy in 1878. The collection contains material of regional, national and international significance and provides evidence of the survival of Catholicism both in Scotland and abroad through the archives of its missions, seminaries and colleges. There are also extensive collections relating to prominent Catholic families many in the north-east of Scotland (SCA).

Other collections:

Aquhorthies Roman Catholic College papers: 1804 – 1817 (MS 2249).

Roman Catholic Church, Glengairn and Braemar: 1703 – 1845 (MS 536, MS 537, MS 538, MS 918, MS 919 & MS 2005).

Scots Colleges: papers collected by Peter John Anderson, librarian: 1600 – 1909 (MS 2899).

Collegiate Church of Turriff: register: 1548-1558: also includes notes made in the 20th century (MS 2255).

Episcopalian Church records

This extensive collection comprises records of the (pre-1865) Diocese of Aberdeen and the (post-1865) United Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney. Records of the (pre-1865) Diocese of Orkney and its churches are not included in this collection.

Besides the registers (baptism, marriage and burial), minutes, accounts and miscellanea relating to the Diocese itself, the collection contains records of St Andrew's Cathedral Aberdeen and of many other local churches throughout Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Banffshire and Kincardineshire; of various Episcopal societies; and relating to the Episcopal Church in America. The coverage of the individual churches varies greatly, from very scant to fairly comprehensive. A large 'miscellaneous' series contains bishops' papers and correspondence, and a good collection of sermons and liturgical works dating from the 17th century – 19th century: c.1600 – current (MS 3320).

The records of St Andrew's Cathedral Aberdeen have been catalogued separately: c. 1700 - 1989 (MS 3499).

Other collections:

St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Fraserburgh: inventory: 1963 (MS 2450).

Scottish Episcopal Church: A Shorter Catechism: 1726 (MS 2074).

Scottish Episcopal Church papers, including letters of Thomas Rattray and Alexander Jolly: 1703 – 1799 (MS 2180).

Manuscript of ecclesiastical canons and constitutions, Scottish Episcopal Church: 1636 – 1700 (MS 904).

Aberdeen Diocesan Library: manuscript volumes: c.1665 – 1907 (MS 3337).

Church of Scotland records

Kirk session records extracts for Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire: 17th century – 19th century, compiled early 20th century (MS 1083).

Kirk Session records extracts, Maryculter, Aberdeenshire: 1719 – 1812, compiled early 20th century (MS 2041).

Extracts from the Presbytery and Kirk Session records of Kincardineshire: 16th century – 19th century, compiled early 20th century (MS 2192).

St Clement's Church, Aberdeen: register of baptisms: 1837 – 1885 (MS 1015).

Church of Scotland collected committee papers: 1950s – 1960s (MS 3112).

Presbytery of Deer papers: 1884 – 1930 (MS 2300 – 2302).

Newmachar Parish: kirk session records (part): 1642 – 1649 (MS 2544).

Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland: 1560 – 1736 (MS 227, MS 228, MS 229, MS 230, MS 231, MS 232, MS 233, MS 234, MS 235, MS 236, MS 237, MS 238).

Trinity Chapel of Ease, Aberdeen records: 1793 – 1843 (MS 2769/I/11 and MS 2769/II/115).

St Machar Cathedral Collections:

St. Machar's Cathedral: procuratory of resignation: 1643 (MS 2638).

St. Machar's Cathedral inventory (copy of 1559 inventory): 18th century copy (MS 2012).

St. Machar's Cathedral, Aberdeen: restoration papers including sketches and notes: 1867 (MS 1059).

Inventory of St. Machar's Cathedral: 1436 – 1599 (MS 247).

Necrologia ecclesiae Cathedralis Aberdonensis: 16th century (MS 248).

Registrum capellanorum chori Ecclesiae Cathedralis Aberdonensis: 1460 – 1552 (MS 249).

Inventarium jocalium necnon aliorum ornamentum Cathedralis ecclesiae Aberdonensis: 1549 (MS 250).

Registrum assedationum Cathedralis ecclesiae Aberdonensis: 15th century (MS 251).

Other Protestant Church records

Aberdeen Shuttle Lane Mission records: 1897 – 1913 (MS 3242).

Papers transferred from Christ's College, Aberdeen and records of Shuttle Lane Mission: 1843 - 1986 (MS 3701).

Drumlithie Free Church, Kincardineshire records: 1865 – 1890 (MS 3032).

Trinity Congregational Church, Aberdeen: 1793 - 19th century (MS 2769/I/45)

United Free Church Maud cash book: 1880 – 1933 (MS 3688).

United Presbyterian Church, Aberdeen: seat rent book: 1844 – 1864 (MS 3773).

Other churches and faiths

Necrologia Coenobii Sancti Francisci apud Aberdonenses: Obit-Book of the Franciscan Friars in Aberdeen: 16th century (MS 278).

Charles Smart, representative of the Chistadelphian Church, Aberdeen: annotated Bibles: 1950s – 1970s (MS 2885).

Liturgy of the Coptic Church papers: c.1760 (MS 101 – 102).

Bible: Old Testament: Masora: 1494 (MS 23).

Megillah: The Book of Esther: c.19th century (MS 1004).

Digest of Quaker births, marriages and burials in Scotland: 1647 - 1878 (created in the 20th century) (MS 2705).

University institutional papers

Faculty of Divinity papers: 1860 – 1987 (UNIVERSITY 649).

University Chapel papers: (UNIVERSITY 593 - 594, UNIVERSITY 596 – 598).

For Christ's College records see 'Organisations' section below.

Families and estate papers

Many notable families were strong proponents of the Episcopalian and Catholic faith, such as the Leslies of Balquhain.

Please see separate factsheet.

Organisations

Aberdeen Ecclesiological Society: 1894 – 1902 (MS 2452).

Aberdeen Clerical Association: 1858 – 1907 (MS 3337/16).

Aberdeen Free Church College: Free Church Theological Society, 1895 – 1910 (MS 3241/5/1).

Aberdeen Preachers' Society: 1832 – 1834 (MS 1078).

Aberdeen Society of Probationers: 1834 – 1838 (MS 541).

Christ's College, Aberdeen (previously United Free Church College, Aberdeen and Free Church College, Aberdeen): 1852 – 1981 (MS 3241 and MS 3701).

Bethany House, Aberdeen: mid-19th century (MS 2801).

Old Machar Parochial Association: 1864 – 1868 (MS 1020).

World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh: papers: 1910 (MS 3291).

Personal papers

Cairns, David, Smith, Principal of Christ's College, Aberdeen, and theologian: 1883 - 1946 (MS 3384).

Campbell, Archibald, Bishop of Aberdeen: 'A Book of Prayers and several Holy Offices': 18th century (MS 2418).

Campbell, George, Principal at Marischal College: theological papers: 18th century (MS 649 - MS 655).

Caseby, Rev. Alexander, missionary, Africa: 1908 – 1929 (MS 3289).

Cargill, David, missionary: 1826 – 1881 (MS 2566).

Cooper, Dr James, minister and Professor of Church History, Glasgow University: 1867 – 1922 (MS 2283).

Craven, Reverend James Brown, clergyman: papers: 1880 – 1922 (MS 2150 - MS 2156).

Cumming, Rev. John, minister at Crown Court Church, Covent Garden: 19th century (MS 3761).

Davidson, Dr Alexander Dyce, minister of the Free West Church, Aberdeen, 1832 - 1872 (MS 3243).

Donald, Reverend Francis Cantlie, minister of Lumphanan parish, Aberdeenshire: c.1905 – c. 1974 (MS 3202).

Eeles, Francis Carolus, ecclesiologist: 20th century (MS 2143, MS 2241, MS 2348, MS 2351, MS 2379 and MS 2507).

Fullarton, John, minister: papers: 1682 – 1755 (MS 2267).

Gray, Rev James Gordon: 19th century – 20th century (MS 2890).

Hastings, Edward, United Free Church minister, theological editor: papers: 1905 (MS 3381).

Hay, Malcolm Vivian, historian: Blairs College papers transcripts (copies): 1653-1960 (20th century copies) (MS 2193 and MS 2402 – MS 2404).

Laws, Rev. Robert, missionary, Africa: 1872 – 1975 (MS 3290).

Leslie, Rev. Alexander, minister of St George's Episcopal Church, Folla Rule, Rothienorman, Aberdeenshire. Diary: 1878 (MS 3382).

Lewis, David, relating to Karl Barth, theologian: c.1960 – 1995 (MS 3478).

Macartney, William MacLeod, Church of Scotland Minister: literary papers and sermons: 1936 -1999 (MS 3757).

McHardy, Professor William Duff, Professor of Hebrew: papers: 1927 – 1984 (MS 3638).

Miller, Rev Dr Alexander, photograph album of contemporaries and missionary conferences: 1859 – 1879 (MS 3683).

Murray, Dr. Gordon J., Church of Scotland minister: papers: 1886 – 1936 (MS 3434).

Skinner, Reverend John, of Linshart, Episcopal minister, Longside, Aberdeenshire: papers: 1751 – c.1940 (MS 3230).

Smith, Professor William Robertson (1846 – 1894), Professor of Oriental Languages and Old Testament Exegesis, Free Church College, Aberdeen: 1866 – 1894 (MS 3674).

Stewart, Reverend James S., Professor of New Testament, Language, Literature and Theology, Edinburgh University: collection of sermons and addresses: 20th century (MS 3530).

Sympson, A. and R.M.: An alphabetical account of all the churches or paroch kirks in Scotland and An alphabetical account of all the abbacies or monasteries in Scotland: c.1680 – 1710 (MS 2244).

Wilkinson, Thomas, Quaker philanthropist and writer: transcripts of journals: 1785 - 1807 (copy) (MS 2394 – MS 2396).

Oral history collections

University of Aberdeen Oral History Archive: comprises nearly 200 interviews with individuals connected with the University (MS 3620). Of particular interest is the interview conducted with Very Rev. Alan Main, Chaplain at Aberdeen University (MS 3620/1/189).

Online collections

Many of our collections are now being made available in digital format, such as The Burnett Psalter.

Printed collections

The Local Collection accessible via the Reading Room contains much relevant material published by the University Chapel and the many churches that serve the local area. There are also publications from various societies such as the Aberdeen Ecclesiological Society.

There are numerous other printed collections of, or containing material of, particular relevance. The development of printing in the mid-15th century allowed the market for devotional handbooks for the laity to expand and the University's collections reflect this. The most famous of these was the Aberdeen Breviary.

There are also named collections of relevance:

Karl Barth Collection

Bibliothek of Kirkwall Collection

Blairs College Library

The Brown-Lindsay & Christ's College Pamphlet Collection

Diocesan Library Collection

London Missionary Society Lending Library, Edinburgh

Nicoll Manse Collection – from the library of the Rev. Harry Nicoll (1812-1891). There are some 2,460 titles, see the main library catalogue.

Society of Friends Collection

Taylor Psalmody Collection

Theological Library Collection

Access

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

Further reading

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

Bertie, David (ed.), *Scottish Episcopal Clergy* (Edinburgh, 2000).

Donald, Stuart, *The Incumbants of St Andrew's Chapel, & Church, Aberdeen 1723 – 1955, 3 volumes* (Aberdeen: Diocese of Aberdeen & Orkney, 2007)

Ewing, William, *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland 1843 – 1900* (1914)

Gammie, Alexander, *The churches of Aberdeen: historical and descriptive* (Aberdeen, 1909)

Innes, Cosmo, *Registrum episcopatus Aberdonensis : ecclesia cathedralis Aberdonensis: regesta que extant in unum collecta* (Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1845)

Johnson, Christine, *Scottish Catholic Secular Clergy 1879 – 1989* (Edinburgh, 1991)

Lamb, J.A., *The Fasti of the United Free Church of Scotland 1900 – 1929* (1956)

Scott, Hew and John Lamb, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae : the succession of ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1915 – 1961) -9 volumes (plus see later volumes and indices)

Small, Robert, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church 1733 – 1900* (1904)

Innes Review (Scottish Catholic Historical Association) volumes 17, 34 and 40 for lists of Roman Catholic priests 1732 - 1878