

Scientific resources in Special Collections

September 2021

QG HCOL032

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.

The history of science represents a major strength in Special Collections. From the earliest years of King's College (founded 1495) and Marischal College (1593), scientific concerns have been included in the teaching syllabus. Notable persons connected with the University are individuals such as James Gregory (1638 – 1675), Colin Maclaurin (1698 – 1748), James Clerk Maxwell (1831 – 1879), Richard Synge (1914 – 1984), Frederick Soddy (1877 – 1956) and George Paget Thomson (1892 – 1975).

The collections cover all disciplines: astronomy, chemistry, mathematics, meteorology and natural philosophy (physics). The collections include lectures notes, treatises, records of scientific societies and individuals, including correspondence, diaries and journals.

Archival collections

University institutional papers

Faculty of Science minutes: 1889 – 1989 (UNIVERSITY 648).

Organisation papers

Aberdeen Observatory records (copies): 1822 – 1837 (MS 2834).

Balfour Stewart Auroral Laboratory and British Astronomical Association Aurora Section: 1964 – current (MS 3152).

International Biological Programme papers and publications, collected by Dr E. M. Nicholson: 1961 – 1981 (MS 3162).

Personal papers

Bain, Alexander, Professor of Logic and Rhetoric: 1895 – 1905 (MS 522 - MS 524).

Beattie, James, poet and scholar: 1758 – 1806 (MS 3977, MS 3978, MS 3979, MS 4015, MS 30, MS 555, MS 2065, MS 2901, MS 3294, MS 3486 & MS 3522).

Burnett, Dr D., lecturer in particle physics, research papers: 1917 – 1987 (MS 3487).

Copland, Patrick, Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy: 1770s-1870s (MS 2886, MS 2999 and MS 3376).

French, George, Professor of Chemistry, Marischal College: papers: 18th century – 19th century (MS 52).

Gill, Sir David, astronomer: letters concerning scientific article: 1891 (MS 2574).

Gray, Frances, chemist: 19th century – 20th century (MS 2893).

Gregory family: David, astronomer; James, mathematician; James, professor of medicine; John, professor of medicine; William, chemist: 1582 – 1912 (MS 2206).

Gregory, David: 'Notae in Isaaci Newtoni Principia philosophiae': c.1693 (MS 465).

Hamilton, Robert, Professor of Mathematics, Marischal College: 1766 – 1829 (MS 36, MS 451 – MS 464, MS 4004 & MS 4012).

Jones, Professor R. V., Professor of Natural Philosophy: papers regarding arrangements for Royal Institution Christmas Lectures: 1981 – 1982 (MS 3827).

Knight, William, Professor of Natural Philosophy: 1837 – 1842 (MARISCHAL/8/1/1, MARISCHAL/9/1/4 and MS 2020).

Kosterlitz, Hans, Professor Emeritus and Director of the Unit for Research on Addictive Drugs: 1920s – 1990s (MS 3682).

Maxwell, James Clerk, Professor of Natural Philosophy at Marischal College, correspondence: 1856 - 1872 (MS 980 and MS 3838).

MacLaurin, Colin, Professor of Mathematics at Marischal College: 1720 – 1743 (MS 34, MS 206, MS 207, MS 208 & MS 209).

McKay, Andrew, mathematician: astronomical observations made in the Observatory at Aberdeen: 1785 – 1791 (MS 504).

Mallard, John R., Professor of Medical Physics: collection of publications: 1950 – 2007 (MS 3819).

Moir, James, industrial chemist, papers relating to the Mines Department of the Transvaal Government: 1900 – 1920s (MS 3129).

Paton, James, meteorologist: 1920s – 1970s (MS 3188).

Reid, Thomas, philosopher (MS 2131, MS 2739, MS 2744, MS 2814 and MS 3061). Many papers have been digitised and are available online.

Rettie, Robert, inventor: 1847 – 1859 (MS 2381).

Skene, David, physician and scholar: 1750 – 1780 (MS 37, MS 38, MS 39, MS 40, MS 471 – MS 483, MS 501 and MS 540).

Wilson, Charles Thomas Rees, physicist: c.1890 – 1959 (MS 3525).

Medical and scientific texts collection: 1600 – 1946 (MS 2872).

Oral history collections

University of Aberdeen Oral History Archive: comprises nearly 200 interviews with individuals connected with the University (MS 3620) - of particular interest are the interviews conducted with Professor John Mallard, Professor of Medical Physics (MS 3620/1/109 and MS 3620/1/183) and R. V. Jones, Professor of Natural Philosophy (MS 3620/1/82).

Printed collections

The Local Collection, accessible via the Reading Room, also contains relevant material such as core reference works.

The printed collections also reflect the University's long history of engagement with the sciences. There are numerous other printed collections

containing material of particular relevance, such as those relating to Renaissance science which include two editions of Copernicus' *De Revolutionibus* (1543, 1566), the latter containing Duncan Liddel's transcription of the *Commentariolus* of Copernicus.

Additionally, there are named collections of relevance:

Alford Mutual Improvement Association Library contains many works on popular science.

FL (Fixed Location) Collection

Gregory Collection

Henderson Collection

Phillips Library of Pharmacology and Therapeutics

Theses

Please search the library catalogue to identify individual items.

Access

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

Further reading

For further reading please 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*.

'The Medical Collections: The Leaves of Life' (University of Aberdeen Development Trust, undated).

Lawrence, Paul; *The Gregory family: a biographical and bibliographical study to which is annexed a bibliography of the scientific and medical books in the Gregory Library, Aberdeen University Library*. 3v. Ph D thesis, Aberdeen University, 1971.

Reid, John; *Mechanical Aberdeen : an engineering view of Aberdeen's industries from 1888-1913, the first 25 years of the Aberdeen Mechanical Society* (Aberdeen, 1990).

Wightman, W. P. D.; *Science and the Renaissance Vol.1 An introduction to the study of the emergence of the sciences in the sixteenth century* (Edinburgh, 1962).

Wightman, W. P. D.; *Science and the Renaissance Vol.2 An annotated bibliography of the sixteenth century books relating to science in the Library of the University of Aberdeen* (Edinburgh, 1962).