

## Slave trade resources in Special Collections

September 2021

QG HCOL034

### The Wolfson Reading Room

#### Special Collections Centre

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

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### 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 University's collections have a justified reputation for being a rich source of documentary evidence relating to the transatlantic slave trade, the abolitionist movement and plantation slavery. The geographical range of the holdings is considerable – from the southern states of America to the former British colonies of Jamaica, Tobago, St Kitts, Saint Vincent and Dominica in the Caribbean. The chronological spread is equally impressive, charting slave practice from the early 1700s through the apprenticeship years of the 1830s and on into the post-abolition era.

Aberdeen and the north-east's involvement in the trade was extensive and reflected a pattern familiar elsewhere. Many of the area's prominent rural landowners profited from long established economic ties with the Caribbean and southern states of America, both as businessmen engaged in the triangular traffic and as plantation owners directly involved in sugar production.

The types of records that exist reflect these myriad networks of patronage, trade and politics and include correspondence, accounts, bills, vouchers, slave lists, inventories, journals, treatises and reports.

### Archival collections

#### Family and estate papers

Duff, Earls of Fife: includes papers on the administration of the Lucky Hill and Friendship Estates of Gibson Dalzell and his successors in St Mary's Parish, Jamaica. See bundles Z/61, Z183, Z198, Z204, Z208, Z214, Z216 and B2(56)1: 1739 – 1789 (MS 3175).

Gordons of Buthlaw and Cairness, papers including correspondence, reports, accounts, lists of slaves and some Jamaican publications, relating to estates in Jamaica, in particular their estate of Georgia: 1727 – 1899 (MS 1160/5, MS 1160/6, MS 1160/7, MS 1160/9/4 and MS 1160/14/1).

Gordons of Buthlaw and Cairness: papers concerning the Georgia estate of deceased Randolph Norman Lesmoir Gordon, planter, St. James, Falmouth, Jamaica: 1876 - 1894 (MS 3193/10).

Gordon of Cluny, papers including letters and reports relating to the Tobago estates in Bacolet, Speyside and Trois Rivieres. Also more current material collected for historical research purposes: 1847 – 1990s (MS 3600/1/14).

Leith-Ross of Arnage, papers of John Ross of Arnage relating to his residence in East Florida as plantation factor including a ledger and a claim made against him (including land grant and manumission of a slave): 1775 - 1790 (MS 3346/4 and MS 3346/12).

Ogilvie-Forbes of Boyndlie, papers mainly relating to America which contains references to the West Indies: 1742 – 1825 (MS 2740/10).

Shand of The Burn, Fettercairn and Straloch, papers including correspondence, accounts, legal documents and slave lists relating to the Jamaican estates of Kellits, Mamee Gully, Belmont and others: 1816 – 1835 (MS 3652).

#### Personal papers

Anderson, John: 'A Magistrate's Recollections in St. Vincent's'. The considered record and analysis of all aspects of Vincentian natural, social and legal history during the significant apprenticeship transitional period from slavery, supplementing official report to the Colonial Office: 1836 – 1838 (MS 602).

Beattie, James, Professor of Moral Philosophy and Logic, Marischal College: correspondence and also Essay on Slavery: 1788 (MS 30/49).

Bulloch, John Malcolm, journalist: papers relating to the Gordon family specifically relating to the West Indies. Compilation of news cuttings, letters and written articles: c.1913 – c.1928 (MS 3051/4/43).

Irvine, Charles and Friendship Estate, St. Thomas in the East, Jamaica. Includes estate records of accounts, lists and valuations of slaves, shipping

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lists and inventories of the estate: 1794 – 1859 (MS 2769/1/72).

Johnstone, Alexander, M. D.: microfilm reels of personal papers and notebooks relating to Jamaica and Pennsylvania: 1750 – early 19<sup>th</sup> century (MS 3527).

Troup, Jonathan, physician of Aberdeen, Scotland and Dominica, West Indies. These three volumes of journals record his voyages to and from Dominica and his life at Fort Shirley. They give a graphic picture of life on the island, including detailed observations of the health of slaves on plantations, illustrated with sketches: 1788 – 1797 (MS 2070, MS 2900 and MS 3027).

## Printed collections

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

There are numerous other printed collections of particular relevance, such as those of the Aberdeen Anti-Slavery Society, 1820s – 1830s.

## 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*.

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

McDonald, Roderick. *'Between Slavery and Freedom: Special Magistrate John Anderson's Journal of St. Vincent during the Apprenticeship'* (Philadelphia, 2001).

Rice, Charles Duncan. 'Abolitionist and Abolitionism in Aberdeen: A Test Case for the Nineteenth-Century Anti-slavery Movement' (*Northern Scotland* issue 1, 1972).