

World War Two Resources in Special Collections

September 2021

QG HCOL042

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 papers comprise diaries, journals, correspondence, maps, plans, photographs and sound recordings.

University roll of honour

In World War Two a total of 182 staff, students and alumni lost their lives. Their service spanned all branches of the Armed Forces and there were exceptional numbers, 85, who served with the Royal Air Force. Soldiers were posted around the world illustrating the global reach of the war with service in the Medical Branch of the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force, Indian Medical Service, Federated Malaya Volunteer Reserve, Indian Mountain Regiment and Kenya Defence Force. They died in places including Malaya, Libya, Java, Burma and Italy, in Japanese prisoner of war camps and on flying operations off Norway and Australia.

The Rolls of Honour have been digitised and are available online (please note that there is a fuller record for World War One including photographs of the fallen and a record of all those who served):

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.

Battalion history of 9th City of Aberdeen (University) Home Guard: c.1939 – c.1945 (UNIVERSITY 575).

Emergency Hospital Scheme: correspondence relating to use of University building as temporary hospital accommodation in event of air raids, 1940-1942 (UNIVERSITY 702).

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

Military Education Committee minutes: two volumes covering period 1912-1948 (UNIVERSITY 895).

Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health papers, includes records created as part of the Carnegie Dietary Survey: 1913 – current (UNIVERSITY 1451). Also see the papers of John Boyd Orr.

Royal Artillery Board of Duties minute book: 1940-1945 (UNIVERSITY 878).

Royal Artillery Cadets Aberdeen University photograph: 1943 (UNIVERSITY 1383).

University of Aberdeen papers concerning registration of female students for National Service in World War Two: 1941 - 1945 (MS 2109).

Family and estate papers

Fraser of Philorth, Lord Saltoun, correspondence received and sent, whilst working for the Directorate of Salvage, the War Office (1939- 1940); Letter from Sir Anthony Eden refusing access to German propaganda leaflets: 1943 (MS 3004/491).

Gordon of Cluny, management of the estate during the Second World War, including papers relating to calling up of estate workers, 1939 – 1945 (MS 3600/1/16/2/4/18).

Leith-Ross family of Arnage, Aberdeenshire relating to the military service of Major William Leith-Ross and Mrs Leith Ross relating to the United States Army: 1930s – 1940s (MS 3346).

Ogilvie Forbes, Sir George, diplomat in Mexico (1927-1930), Vatican (1930-1932), Baghdad (1932-1935), Madrid (1935-1937) and Berlin (1937-1939). Including official correspondence and telegrams: 1920s – 1930s (MS 2740). Please note that the depositor has placed access restrictions on these papers and permission will therefore need to be sought.

Robertson Nicoll and family contains material collected by Catherine Robertson Nicoll, his wife, during the Second World War such as ration books: 1930s – 1940s (MS 3518).

Organisation papers

North Eastern Scotland Local Tribunal for Conscientious Objectors: 1939 - 1946 (MS 2108). Please note that this collection is subject to restrictions under the Data Protection Act (1998).

Air Squadron and former members association, University of Aberdeen: 1941 – current (MS 3871).

Business papers

P&O Scottish Ferries Ltd., photograph album of crew members' photographs who served in World War Two: 1940 – 1944 (MS 3697/10/3).

Personal papers

Bickersteth, Professor G L, Professor of English Literature: notices on the Home Guard and fire-fighting: c.1940 (MS 2906/43).

Hay of Seaton, Malcolm Vivian, historian and author: papers relating to his publication 'Prisoners of War News': 1940 – 1945 (MS 2788).

Lockhart, Robert Douglas, Professor of Anatomy: papers relating to Anatomy Department war time procedures: 1939 - 1942 (MS 3270/2/1/3).

McLaren, H. C., major in Royal Army Medical Corps: account of 'Sandbostel Horror Camp, Germany, 1945': 1945 (MS 3154).

McNeill, William Martin, University Officer Training Corps papers: 1942 – 1976 (MS 3830).

Orr, John Boyd, nutritional physiologist, papers relating to food policy during the war: 1930s – 1940s (UNIVERSITY 1451/2).

Fowler, Lieutenant Colonel Andrew and Colonel David Rorie: military papers: 1911 – c.1960 (MS 3031).

Small, Bernard, soldier, war diaries: 1930s – 1940s (MS 3056).

Smith, Ronald, conscientious objector papers: 1939-1945 (MS 3870).

Diaries of a local Ministry of Food official, 1946-1950 (MS 2792).

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 R. V. Jones, Professor of Natural Philosophy, relating to his war time service (MS 3620/1/82).

Other relevant collections

NHS Grampian Archives

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

The records of hospitals across the north-east reflect war-time conditions, showing staff arranging for the fitting of blackout blinds, coping with fire-watching duties and, in some hospitals, dealing with war casualties. The Infirmary had to keep some 300 beds free for military wounded and air raid casualties, so patients were frequently sent to convalesce in local auxiliary hospitals - large houses loaned for the purpose. Extra wards, with 200 beds and twin operating theatres, were built at Woodend as part of the Emergency Hospitals Scheme to deal with military wounded, while Haddo House was used for most of the war as an emergency maternity hospital, admitting many pregnant women who had been evacuated from the Central Belt. For more information see the Infirmary minutes (GRHB 1/1), Infirmary admission/discharge registers (GRHB 1/3), Aberdeen Town Medical Officer of Health reports (GRHB E1/1), Aberdeen County Council Medical Officer of Health reports (GRHB E2/4) and with respect to Haddo, the register of notification of births (GRHB E2/8).

Aberdeen Royal Mental Hospital (now Royal Cornhill Hospital) was severely affected by an air raid on Aberdeen in April 1943 when multiple bombs fell on the site, killing three members of staff and one patient and causing extensive damage to hospital buildings. For more information see the hospital minutes (GRHB 2/1).

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. Amongst their collection is included a scrapbook relating to the 153rd (Highland) Field Ambulance R.A.M.C. (T.A.): c.1939 (AMCS/4/11/12). 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 the Reading Room, contains relevant printed material. An important source of local contemporary reports on the war can be found in holdings of local newspapers such as the student magazines and

newspapers Alma Mater and Gaudie. Other printed sources are:

Prisoners of War News (volumes 1–8 covering the period November 1940 – June 1945) issued by the British Red Cross Society, Scottish Branch and edited by Malcolm Vivian Hay of Seaton.

The printed collections also hold long runs of published military lists: Army, Indian Army, Naval and some Air Force: 18th century – 20th century.

Access

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

Please note that some records contain personal information and may be closed for 75 years (for adults) and 100 years (for children aged 16 and under) under the Data Protection Act (1998).

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*.

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).

Book of Remembrance (including 1939-1945), University of Aberdeen, published in 1952.

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).

Harris, Paul. *Aberdeen and the north east at War* (Aberdeen, 1987).

Orr, John Boyd and Lubbock, David. *Feeding the People in Wartime* (1940).

Strathdee, Roy. *Aberdeen University Contingent: Officers' Training Corps, Senior Training Corps* (Aberdeen, 1947).