

Resources relating to Old Aberdeen in Special Collections

September 2021

QG HCOL048

The Wolfson Reading Room

Special Collections Centre

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

Introduction

Many individuals, families, organisations and businesses 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.

Old Aberdeen was originally a separate burgh and was erected into a burgh of barony in 1489. It was incorporated into Aberdeen City in 1891.

Archival collections

University institutional papers

The University's own records are diverse and range from the original senatus books to charters, dispositions, writs and other legal documents relating to the regulation of the colleges, their teaching, and in support of their considerable landholdings. There are letters, licences and agreements between the two colleges of King's and Marischal and between them and the Town, Parliament, and even Crown; the colleges had a powerful political dimension, and they operated on a local, national and international level. More comprehensively, from the 18th century onwards we have student registers, bursary and trust papers, inventories and catalogues, records regarding building repairs and papers concerning rectorial elections and staff appointments (KINGS).

The University's collection of plans relating to King's College, King's College Chapel and the University of Aberdeen is a rich resource charting the history of the University's buildings. The plans range from the detailed architectural drawings of James Cromar Watt to utility plans used by the estates teams. This extensive collection dates from the 1850s through to the mid 1960s; unfortunately many of the items are not dated: 1850s – 1960s (UNIVERSITY 1494).

Collection of prints, drawings, photographs and plans of buildings at King's College: 19th century – 20th century (MS 2920).

Building plans for King's College by John Adam and James Byres: 1773 (KINGS/2/2/1).

Family and estate papers

Forbes and Hay of Seaton: 18th century – 19th century (MS 2253 and MS 2414).

Kilgours of Old Aberdeen papers [endorsed "from the Seaton Inventory "]: 1655 – 1699 (MS 3815).

Organisations' papers

Aberdeen Burgh and Shire, poll book: 1696 (MS 568).

Bishop Dunbar Hospital Trust papers: 1373 – 20th century (MS 3861).

Chanonry Cricket Club: 1858 – 1880 (MS 587).

Chanonry School, Old Aberdeen, various administrative records: 1879 - 1892 (MS 2633).

Gardener Fraternity of Old Aberdeen: 1821 – 1864 (MS 41).

Grammar School, Old Aberdeen, Register of pupils, 1870-1885 (MS 648).

Merchant Society of Old Aberdeen: 1700 – 1901 (MS 42, MS 44 – MS 47). Also see records of Ledingham Chalmers, solicitors MS 3665.

Mitchell's Hospital Trust, Old Aberdeen papers: 1920s (MS 3108).

Old Aberdeen Savings Bank: 1816 – 1860 (MS 638).

Scottish Episcopal Church, Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney. Also relating to individual churches, King's College Chapel and St Luke's Chapel, Balgownie: 20th century (MS 3320).

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, restoration papers including sketches and notes: 1867 (MS 1059).

St. Machar's Cathedral inventory: 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).

St. Peter's Cemetery, Aberdeen, record of burials: 1769 - 1828 (MS 2459).

Business papers

There is much relevant material across collections of solicitors and surveyors. For example:

Davidson and Garden, advocates, Aberdeen: 14th century – 20th century. This extensive collection contains records of some 200 families, estates, businesses, trusts and other organisations which the firm represented including Hay of Seaton and Balgownie Lodge estate (MS 2769 and MS 3744).

Ledingham Chalmers, solicitors: 18th century – 20th century. Includes papers from various families and estates (MS 3257, MS 3277, MS 3394, MS 3662, MS 3665 and MS 3713).

F. A. MacDonald and Partners, engineers and surveyors, Aberdeen (incorporating Walker & Duncan, Aberdeen): 18th century – 20th century (papers MS 2626 and maps and plans MS 3860).

Personal papers

For papers relating to individuals see the separate factsheet.

Some collections are particularly useful for local history research:

Kelly, William, architect and antiquarian: papers, 1805 – 1944 (MS 2380 and MS 3859).

Logan, James, artist and antiquarian, drawings of St. Machar's Cathedral: early 19th century (MS 2055).

Orem, William, Clerk of Old Aberdeen: 'Description of the Chanonry of Old Aberdeen' manuscript: 1724 – 1725 (MS 147, MS 666 – MS 667 and MS 982).

Thom, Donaldson Rose, secretary to the Senatus of Aberdeen University, Snow Kirk historical notes: 1879 – 1902 (MS 2387).

Simpson, William Douglas, historian and archaeologist, papers including collection of archaeological, monumental and architectural plans, 19th century – 20th century (MS 2729, MS 2818 and MS 3759).

Webster, Sarah Barclay, memoirs of life around Old Aberdeen: c. 1900-1940 (created 1988) (MS 3825).

Burgh records and other legal documents extracts concerning the Chanonry, Old Aberdeen and text of William Orem's Description of the Chanonry: 1660 – 1725 (MS 503).

Plan of Old Aberdeen, showing the sites of the palace and manses: c.1898 (MS 924).

Other relevant collections

Scottish Catholic Archives

There are numerous sources within the records of the Scottish Catholic Church. This extensive collection relates 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 of Scotland (SCA).

Printed collections

The Local Collection of printed material geographically speaking covers the north-east corner of Scotland and is available to consult on open-access in our Reading Room. It contains local area histories, plans and maps and reports of local institutions. Also in the Local Collection you will find a number of local newspapers.

For more information on printed collections relevant to the local area see the separate factsheet.

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 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*.

Anderson P. J. (ed.). *Studies in the History and Development of the University* (Aberdeen University Press, 1906). This contains the most detailed bibliography relating to the Universities.

Davidson, Peter et al. *The Lost City: Old Aberdeen* (Edinburgh, 2008)

Johnstone, James. *A concise bibliography of the history, topography and institutions of the shires of Aberdeen, Banff and Kincardine* (Aberdeen, 1914)

Johnstone, James and Robertson, Alexander. *Bibliographia Aberdonensis: being an account of books relating to or printed in the shires of Aberdeen, Banff, Kincardine or written by natives or residents or by officers, graduates or alumni of the Universities of Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1929)

Ogston, Derek and Carlaw, Margaret. *King's College Aberdeen: history, buildings and artistic portrayal* (Kelso, 2009)

Robertson, Alexander. *Handlist of bibliography of the shires of Aberdeen, Banff and Kincardine* (Aberdeen, 1893)

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).