The Wolfson Reading Room
Special Collections Centre
The Sir Duncan Rice Library
University of Aberdeen
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Website: www.abdn.ac.uk/library/about/special/

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.

There are personal papers of politicians and diplomats, of organisations such as political parties, and records created by local administrative units (such as Baronies and Regalities, Burgh Councils, Commissioners of Supply, Harbour Commissioners, Heritors, Lieutenancies, Parochial Boards and Turnpike Trusts) covering the historic counties of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. Some key sources include early taxation records (valuation books and poll books).

In addition, many north-east families had links with the colonies, especially North America and the West Indies; thus there are a number of papers related to colonial governance.

Please note that this factsheet should be consulted in conjunction with the factsheets QGHCOL018: Family and estate papers in Special Collections and QGHCOL022: Labour history resources in Special Collections. Also, for kirk session records see factsheet QGHCOL017: Ecclesiastical resources in Special Collections.

Archival collections

Records of local administration

Aberdeen burgh, Stent Roll: 1748 – 1749 (MS 57).
Aberdeen Burgh and Shire, poll book: 1696 (MS 568).
Aberdeen valuations: 1674-1786 (19th century copies) (MS 2793).
Aberdeen Commissioners of Supply papers: 1587 – 1743 (MS 3175/Z/174/5) and (MS 3175/Z/175).
Aberdeen Sheriff Court record extracts: 17th century -18th century (MS 3155).
Aberdeenshire valuations: 17th century – 20th century (MS 252, MS 507, MS 1037, MS 1038).
Alford poll book: 19th century (MS 3470/21/44).
Alford Turnpike Trust papers: 1822 – 1897 (MS 2769/I/104 and MS 2769/I/117).
Banffshire, various Baronies: Cullen, Fortry, Montbleatton, Kirk of Alvah, and Doune (Macduff): 1775 – 1831 (MS 3175/V/755).
Banffshire Commissioners of Supply, various papers amongst the Earls of Fife papers: 18th century – 19th century (MS 3175).
Crichie Barony, court minutes: 1640-1644 (MS 3004/V406).
Fraserburgh Heritors minutes: 1837 - 1867 (MS 3004/507).
Fraserburgh Parochial Board: 1862 – 1865 (MS 3004/277).
Morayshire, various Baronies including Innes, Coxtown, Garmouth and Pluscarden: 1776 – 1798 (MS 3174 V/1159).

Morayshire Commissioners of Supply, various papers amongst the Earl of Fife papers: 18th century – 19th century (MS 3175).

Philorth Barony and Fraserburgh Regality court books: 1633-1720 (MS 3004/V405).


Rathen Heritors (copies): 1832 – 1853 (MS 3004/587).


Election papers (Barons, Commissioners of Supply and Members of Parliament), part of the Earls of Fife papers: 1548 – 1741 (MS 3175/Z/174).

Personal papers
Arbuthnot, Charles, diplomat and politician: 1767 – 1850 (MS 3029).

Arbuthnot, Charles George James, diplomat and politician: 19th century (MS 3029).

Alava, Miguel Ricardo De, Spanish Soldier and diplomat (part of papers of Charles Arbuthnott, diplomat and politician): 1824 - 1832 (MS 3029).


Halkett, G. R., cartoonist: caricatures of Prime Minister Gladstone: 19th century (MS 2176).

Hume, Joseph, surgeon and M.P.: correspondence principally relating to political matters: 1830 – c. 1850 (MS 2135).

Keith-Falconer, Algernon, 9th Earl of Kintore, politician and Governor of South Australia (from 1889 – 1894). Includes an important series of letters relating to his political and court functions as Conservative Chief Whip in the House of Lords and Lord in Waiting in the 1880s. Also notable papers relating to his role as Governor, including some official papers, non-official papers and scrapbooks of life in Australia created by Lady Kintore: 1870s - 1895 (MS 3064).

Baird, John, 1st Viscount Stonehaven, diplomat and politician. Diaries of Baird from 1897 when he was in Sudan, from 1899 in Abyssinia, from 1900 as private secretary to Sir William Garstin, under-secretary for public works in Egypt and from 1902 – 1903 acting agent and consul-general in Abyssinia and political officer with the British East Africa and Abyssinia Frontier Survey. Also war diaries when he served with the intelligence corps in France: 1890s – 1915 (MS 3064).

Burnet, Alexander of Kemnay: Prussian letters to Sir Andrew Mitchell, ambassador (typescript copies): 1764 – 1765 (MS 2339).

Esslemont, Mary, physician. Papers relating to her role in the Liberal Party and membership of political and humanitarian groups: 20th century (MS 3179).

Gordon, Lord Adam, politician and commander of H.M. forces in Scotland: correspondence with Henry Dundas, politician and others: 1783 – 1795 (MS 966).

Leatham, James, author and publisher: 1911 – 1958 (MS 2776).

Mackintosh, Sir James, politician: correspondence and biographical notes: 1819 – 1837 (MS 2164).


Stewart, James, British government officer, Fiji and British Guiana, correspondence to his parents in Aberdeen: 1880 – 1900 (MS 3385).


Washington, George, President of the United States of America: letter to Richard Lee regards the writing of a history of the American Revolution: April 1788 (MS 906).

Organisation papers
Liberal Association, Aberdeen, minutes: 1878 – 1923 (MS 2472 – MS 2473).
Liberal Party, executive committee minutes, circulars, election papers in Aberdeenshire constituencies: 1930s – 1960s (MS 3037).
Local Labour Party branch records 1920s – 1960s (Aberdeen City, Banffshire, Keith) (MS 2663, MS 2891 and MS 2892).

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 political dimension 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. Of particular relevance are the manuscript memoirs of King James VII & II from 1633 – 1701.

See main website portal: www.abdn.ac.uk/library/about/special/scottish-catholic-archives/

Printed collections
The Local Collection, accessible via the Reading Room, contains relevant printed material such as local Parish Board and Council minutes and publications from the Harbour Commissioners, hospital boards, Medical Officers of Health, the Police and school boards. At a national level there are publications such as the Illustrated London News and Punch. There are also examples of literature from various political and campaign groups.

There are also named collections of relevance:

MacBean Jacobite and Stuart Collection
www.abdn.ac.uk/library/about/special/collections/cld/27/
This collection was donated to Aberdeen by the New York businessman William MacBean, and is a resource of international importance. Some 3,500 books and 1,000 pamphlets, as well as numerous contemporary engravings cover many aspects of the histories of the Stuarts and the Jacobite risings. Some are held in no other collection in the UK, and some are unique, with the collection also being added to continually. The Collection also includes later, 19th century, retrospective and romantic depictions of Jacobite history, as well as some two dozen manuscripts. For more information see here.

See also Allardyce, Mabel, Aberdeen University Library MacBean Collection (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1949).

See also: Drawn Sword: Engravings and Woodcuts from the MacBean Jacobite and Stuart Collection. This is an online resource providing access to c.1,300 loose engravings and woodcuts, including portraits, topographical subjects and historical incidents. http://www.abdn.ac.uk/historic/mac_searchpage.shtml

Scottish nationalist pamphlets collection (Lib R 3 (41) Sco).

Access
Materials are available upon request for consultation in the Reading Room. Please search online catalogues to identify individual items: www.abdn.ac.uk/library/about/special/search-catalogues/

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.

‘Satirical Prints, Pamphlets and Polemics’ (University of Aberdeen Development Trust, undated).
Links

National Register of Archives
http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/

On-line exhibition marking the 300th anniversary of the Anglo-Scottish Union in 1707
www.abdn.ac.uk/historic/actsofunion/

The Voice of Radicalism
www.abdn.ac.uk/radicalism/introduction.shtml

Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives

The archive holds the finest and most complete collection of medieval and early modern burgh records in Scotland. The centre of this collection is an unrivalled series of council registers - or minutes - which date from 1398. These records chronicle the political, social and economic life of the royal burgh. The records of Old Aberdeen burgh are also held.

Since local government reorganisation in 1996, the historic documents of Aberdeenshire Council along with some for the Moray Council have been administered by Aberdeen City Council. The records include those of the former counties of Aberdeen, Kincardine, Banff and Moray up to 1975 and Grampian Region from 1975 to 1996.
www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/education_learning/local_history/archives/loc_archiveshomepage.asp

Scotland's Places
www.scotlandsplaces.gov.uk/