Family and estate papers in Special Collections
Andrew MacGregor, May 2018
QG HCOL018 [www.abdn.ac.uk/special-collections/documents/guides/qghcol018.pdf]

The Wolfson Reading Room
Special Collections Centre
The Sir Duncan Rice Library
University of Aberdeen
Bedford Road
Aberdeen
AB24 3AA
Tel. (01224)272598
E–mail: speclib@abdn.ac.uk
Website: www.abdn.ac.uk/special-collections

Introduction
Many notable families have deposited their papers with the University and as a result it has acquired an unrivalled collection of material relating to the history and culture of the north-east of Scotland.

These archives are fantastically rich for the study of estate management, local and regional politics, law enforcement, art and architecture, foreign trade, military adventure and colonial power.

Some collections are particularly rich for family historians as they contain large series of tenants’ records, such as those of Arbuthnott of Arbuthnott and the Earls of Fife (Duff House). The sources include writs, letter books, rentals, tacks, accounts, correspondence (between owner and tenant) and plans.

Some collections are weightier than others with certain types of record but many will include these general types:
- Legal and business documents: comprising the collection of title deeds and other legal papers relating to land ownership, including financial papers.
- Estate papers: comprising those documents relating to the administration of the estates, including accounts, rentals, and estate development.
- Family papers: comprising the records relating more particularly to the history and genealogy of the family, together with personal papers and correspondence.

Please note that if there is a description of individual papers (for example Gordon of Haddo), this indicates that only part of the collection of family papers are held at Special Collections.

Selected list of prominent collections
Arbuthnott of Arbuthnott: 13th century – 20th century (MS 2764).

Burnett of Leys (Crathes Castle papers): 14th century – 20th century (MS 3361).
Davidson of Kebbaty, Midmar, Aberdeenshire: 1711 – 1878 (MS 4018).
Dingwall Fordyce of Brucklay family: 16th century – 19th century (MS 999).
Dunечt Estate Office (Viscounts of Cowdray): 18th century to 20th century (MS 3040).
Dalrymple of Tullos, Nigg, Aberdeen: 1813 – 1937 (MS 3700).
Duff of Meldrum: 15th century – 19th century (MS 2778). For more material relating to the Duffs see the main Earls of Fife catalogue, MS 3175, above. Erskine of Pittoodrie: 17th century – 18th century (MS 2524).

Ferguson of Kinmundy: 16th century – 20th century (MS 3816).
Forbes family, of Newe, Aberdeenshire: 16th century – 19th century (MS 3402).
Forbes and Hay of Seaton: 18th century – 19th century (MS 2253 and MS 2414).
Fordyce family of Brucklay Castle and Aberdeen: 1844 – 1865 (MS 3220).
Fraser of Castle Fraser and Inverallochy: 16th century – 20th century (MS 3470).
Frasers of Inverallochy: 16th century – 19th century (MS 2701).
Fraser of Philorth: 14th century – 20th century (MS 3004).

Gordon, Dukes of Gordon: 1644 – 1906 (MS 907, MS 908 & MS 909). Please note that the main family papers are held by the National Archives of Scotland.
Gordons of Buthlaw and Cairness: 17th century – 20th century (MS 1160 and MS 3193).
Gordon family of Craig Castle and Auchindoir, Aberdeenshire: 1511 – 1730 (copies) (MS 2499).
Gordon family, Earls of Aberdeen, relating to Cromar estate, Aberdeenshire: 19th century – 20th century (MS 3198). Please note that the main collection of papers are still held by the family.
Gordon of Haddo papers relating to the construction of Haddo House: 1732 – 1734 (MS 2520).
Gordon of Letterfourie: 1508 – 1819 (MS 3745).
Gordon of Pillurg and Straloch (The Straloch papers: 17th century – 20th century (MS 2223).
Grierson family, Lerwick, Shetland: 17th century – 20th century (MS 3044).
Guthrie family of Gagie: 1628 – 1745 (MS 2857).
Hay family, Erroll Estates papers, estate accounts of Cruden and Slains: 18th century (MS 2110).
Innes of Cowie: 16th century - 20th century (MS 2970).
Innes of Learney papers: c.1750 – 1920 (MS 3667).
Innes and Walker of Craignetherty: 18th century – 19th century (MS 2531).
Irvine of Drum: 18th century (MS 3263). Please note that the main collection of papers are still held by the family.
Keith family of Ravelston papers: 1550 – 1832 (MS 2233).
Keith of Kintore: 15th century – 20th century (MS 2707, MS 3064 and MS 3538). This also includes some records of Baird of Ury.
Kinharrachie Estate, Ellon, Aberdeenshire records: 1603 – 1885 (MS 2621).
King of Tertowie: 16th century – 20th century (MS 2957).
Leith of Glenkindie and Freefield: 17th century – 20th century (MS 2847 and MS 2849).
Leslie of Balquhain: 14th century – 18th century (MS 3043).
Leslie of Warthill: 18th century – 19th century (MS 2580).
Moir family of Peterhead: 1688 – 1857 (MS 2909).
Murray, Dukes of Atholl: 18th century – 20th century (MS 2607).
Ogilvie-Forbes of Boyndie: 15th century – 20th century (MS 2740).
Robertson Nicoll, Sir William, and his family, Old Manse, Lumsden: 19th century – 20th century (MS 3518).
Seton of Mounie: 16th century – 20th century (MS 2787).
Seaton of Pitmedden: 15th century – 20th century (MS 2463 and MS 3531).
Scott family, Achath, near Castle Fraser: papers: 17th century – 20th century (MS 3873).
Shand and Milne of Craigellie, Aberdeenshire: 19th century (MS 2619).
Shand of The Burn, Fettercairn and Straloch: 1816 – 1835 (MS 3652).
Sinclair Wemyss of Southdun, Caithness: 18th century – 20th century (MS 3203).
Skene of Rubislaw: 19th century (MS 2720).
Tayler of Rothiemay: 19th century – 20th century (MS 3356).
Yule family and Napier of Magdala papers: 1838 – 1890 (MS 1162).

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. www.abdn.ac.uk/special-collections/scottish-catholic-archives-73.php.

Other collections
There is much relevant material across the collections of antiquarians, solicitors and surveyors.
For example:
Adam, Cochran and Company, advocates, Aberdeen: papers. This collection contains records from families, estates, businesses, trusts and other organisations which the firm represented: 1630 – 1919 (MS 3066).
Davidson and Garden, advocates, Aberdeen: 15th century – 20th century. This extensive collection contains records of some 200 families, estates, businesses, trusts and other organisations which the firm represented (MS 2769 and MS 3744).

Ledingham Chalmers, solicitors: 18th century – 20th century. Includes papers from various families and estates such as Burnett of Elrick and Davidson/Douglas of Inchmarlo (MS 3257, MS 3277, MS 3394, MS 3662, MS 3665 and MS 3713).

Records of F. A. MacDonald and Partners, engineers and surveyors, Aberdeen (incorporating Walker & Duncan, Aberdeen): 18th century – 20th century. This extensive collection contains records created by the firm in the course of their duties as estate factors and land surveyors (MS 2626).

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).

Miscellaneous documents, mainly letters, relating to county families and other persons in Aberdeenshire: 1772 – 1930 (MS 2332).

Printed collections
The Local Collection, accessible via the Reading Room, contains material about families, estates and the relevant geographical areas.

Please note that many of the families who have deposited their papers have also deposited their libraries, for example the Duff of Meldrum and Ogilvie-Forbes families. For more information see: www.abdn.ac.uk/special-collections/cld/index.php.

Access
Materials are available upon request for consultation in the Reading Room. Please search online catalogues to identify individual items: www.abdn.ac.uk/special-collections/search-catalogues/catalogues-60.php.

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). Burke’s genealogical and heraldic history of the peerage, baronetage & knightage (London, Burke’s, various editions).

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

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