Introduction

Special Collections hold a wealth of material relevant to the study of labour history. Manuscripts and printed material survive to chart the lives of working people via friendly societies, trade unions and the political parties that sought to represent them.

Trades councils and numerous local trade union branches have deposited their papers with the University; as a result, it has acquired an unrivalled collection of material. The University holds more than 30 collections of local trades union branches relating to the region’s traditional industries (including fishing, textiles, printing, granite-cutting, construction, engineering and boat building) and a range of service and public sector industries are represented dating from the mid-19th century to the present day. Most recent additions are papers relating to unionisation in the oil and gas industry. Allied collections include the records of Aberdeen Trades Council, Wick and District Trades Council and local Labour Party branches.

Please note that this factsheet should be consulted in conjunction with the factsheets QG HCOL016: Business records in Special Collections, QG HCOL020: Government and political resources in Special Collections and QG HCOL027: Organisations’ records in Special Collections.

Organisations


Banchory Farmer Friendly Society: 1776 – 1866 (MS 3244/7).


Free Master Gardeners of Fintray: 1818 – 1842 (MS 1024).

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

Union of Women Workers: 1900 – 1926 (MS 2769/I/126).

Woodside Oldgroves Farmers Friendly Society: 1792 – 1832 (MS 2769/I/123).

Trades councils

Aberdeen Trades Union Council: 1876 – current (MS 2270).


Trade unions

Aberdeen Association of University Teachers: 1921 – 2002 (MS 3738).

Amalgamated Engineering Union (Aberdeen Branches): 1832 – 1962 (MS 2640, MS 2667).


Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers: 1868 – 1961 (MS 2652, MS 2653, MS 2668, MS 2674, MS 2679).

Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers including Aberdeen Operative Masons’ and Stonecutters’ Society, Granite Cutters’ Union, United Operative Masons: 1892 - 1948 (MS 2655).

Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, Keith Branch: 1918 – 1968 (MS 2676).


National Union of Seamen: 1926 – 1959 (MS 2644).
National Union of Sheet Metal Workers and Braziers: 1912 – 1967 (MS 2645).
National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers: 1898 – 1952 (MS 2656).
Offshore Industry Liaison Committee collected material: 1989 – 2012 (MS 3852).
Plumbing Trades’ Union: 1866 – 1958 (MS 2646).
Scottish Commercial Motormen’s Union: 1922 – 1964 (MS 2660).
Scottish Typographical Society: 1853 – 1958 (MS 2471, MS 2648).
Society of Graphical and Allied Trades: 1924 – 1949 (MS 2649, MS 2650).
Steamfishing Vessels’ Enginemen’s and Firemen’s Union: 1899 – 1957 (MS 2880).
Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers: 1900 – 1949 (MS 2662).
Union of Post Office Workers: 1894 – 1941 (MS 2661).
United Operative Cabinet and Chairmakers; Association of Scotland: 1897 – 1929 (MS 2654).
United Patternmakers’ Association: 1889 – 1952 (MS 2651, MS 2681).

Other relevant collections

Local Labour Party branch records: 1920s – 1960s (Aberdeen City, Banffshire, Keith) (MS 2663, MS 2891 and MS 2892).

Printed collections

The Local Collection, accessible via our Reading Room, also contains relevant printed material including literature from campaign groups and political organisations.

There are numerous other printed collections that contain material of particular relevance, including publications by 19th century working men’s associations (both established for political and social purposes).

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 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.

W. Diack, History of the Trades Council and the Trade Union Movement in Aberdeen, (Aberdeen 1939)

K. D. Buckley, Trade Unionism in Aberdeen 1878 – 1900 (Edinburgh 1955)

Links

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

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

‘Collection Highlight’ – 20th Century Radicalism
www.abdn.ac.uk/special-collections/20th-century-radicalism-464.php

Steamfishing Vessels’ Enginemen’s and Firemen’s Union: 1899 – 1957 (MS 2880).