Resources relating to the Highlands and Islands in Special Collections
Andrew MacGregor, May 2018

QG HCOL046 [https://www.abdn.ac.uk/special-collections/documents/guides/qghcol046.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 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.

Please note that this factsheet should be consulted in conjunction with the other factsheets relating to the north of Scotland, and also QG HCOL054: Map and plan resources in Special Collections and QG HCOL010: Photographic resources in Special Collections.

Archival collections

Family and estate papers
Duff of Braco and Wharton-Duff of Orton: 17th century – 19th century (MS 2727).
Fraser of Castle Fraser and Inverallochy: 16th century – 20th century. Including papers relating to the Ross-shire militia and the papers of Fraser, Major-General Alexander Mackenzie, commanding officer of the 78th Highlanders Regiment (1791 – 1809) (MS 3470).
Gordon of Cluny, relating to properties in the Highlands: 17th century – 20th century (MS 3600).
Grierson family, Lerwick, Shetland: 17th century – 20th century (MS 3044).
Rosehall, Creich parish, Sutherland: estate journal: 1821 – 1822 (MS 2240).
Sinclair Wemyss of Southdun, Caithness: 18th century – 20th century (MS 3203).
Yule family and Napier of Magdala (Tarradale House, Ross-shire): papers: 1838 – 1890 (MS 1162).

Organisation papers
Cairngorm Club papers: 1889 – 1990 (MS 3405).
Highland Society of Scotland: 1786 – 1814 (MS 960-MS 963).
Inverness Academy: historical notes: c.1900 (MS 2396).
Inverness-shire militia, muster rolls (Earls of Fife papers): 1805 (MS 3175/2262 and MS 3175/2337).
Inverness Town Council, inventory of the records held by: 1883 (MS 2702).
Scottish Episcopal Church, Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney. Although the records of the (pre-1865) Diocese of Orkney and its churches are not included in this collection, there is still relevant material: 1865 – current (MS 3320).
Session records of South Ronaldsay and Isle of Burray, Orkney (copy): 1657 - 1669 (1905 copy) (MS 894 – MS 895).

Business papers
Lewis Chemical Works history (copy): 1855-1874 (MS 2723).
Invergarry and Fort Augustus Railway, and the Inverness and Lochend Light Railway papers: 1897 – 1899 (MS 3238).
Ledger of an Inverness writer to the Signet containing accounts chiefly concerning Inverness Academy: 1807 – 1838 (MS 874).
P & O Scottish Ferries Ltd. incorporating predecessor businesses including North of Scotland and Orkney and Shetland Steam Navigation Co: 1810 – 2002 (MS 3697).

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

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 including Sir John Sinclair, Murlie, Caithness (MS 2769 and MS 3744).

Ledingham Chalmers, solicitors: 18th century – 20th century. Includes papers from various families and estates including Mackenzie of Kincraig (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 factsheet QG HCOL030: Personal papers in Special Collections.


Carson, William, author, journal and photographs of a Tour Through the Hebrides and the Western Western Isles: 1897 (MS 897 – MS 898).

Clark, Peter Moir, diary of holiday in Shetland: July 1868 - August 1868 (MS 2251).

MacGillivray, William, Professor of Natural History, journal of residence and travel in the Hebrides, including a record of observations of the flora and fauna of the isles, 1817 - 1818. (MS 1033).

McLachlan, Ewan, 1775-1822, Gaelic scholar and Librarian of King’s College, Aberdeen 1800-1818. (MS 499).

Ross, Alexander, writer: ‘Southerlandiae comitum annales’ (annals of the county of Sutherland): 1631 (MS 2049).

Ross, Edward, collection of Scots bagpipe music, c.1820-1877 (MS 2428).

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).

Wilkinson, Thomas, Quaker minister, Highlands, transcript: 1785 – 1807 (MS 2394 – MS 2396).

Collection of letters on the state of the Highlands, 1745-1813. (MS 954).

An account of a tour of the Highlands by an unknown author: 1806 (MS 1023).

Papers regarding the administration of Inverness-shire and the Western Isles, 1817. (MS 2015).

Papers relating to conditions in and administration of Invernessshire and Western Isles of Scotland: 1817 (MS 2016).

Papers relating to conditions in and administration of Invernessshire and Western Isles of Scotland: 1817 (MS 2023).

Letters on the state of the Highlands after the Jacobite rebellion: 1745 – 1813 (MS 954).

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. Of particular interest is the series: Oban letters: Highland, Western Vicariate: 1764-1863.

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

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.

The printed collections have strength in depth and contain numerous items such as the published Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, Highland Society of Scotland and the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

There are also named collections of relevance:

Cairngorm Club Collection
www.abdn.ac.uk/special-collections/cld/12/

The Brown-Lindsay and Christ's College Pamphlet Collection
This collection contains many sermons preached to, or under the aegis of, the Society in Scotland for
the Propagation of Knowledge in the Highlands and Islands).

J. Murdoch Henderson Collection
www.abdn.ac.uk/special-collections/cld/20/

The Macbean Jacobite and Stuart Collection
This collection, donated to Aberdeen by the New York businessman William M. MacBean, is a resource of international importance, the finest collection of its kind outside the British Library. It includes both 17th and 18th century engravings, 19th century romantic and retrospective depictions of Jacobite history, and a rich variety of pamphlets and broadsides, with not a few manuscripts. Some 3,500 books and 1,000 pamphlets, as well as numerous 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.

For more information on the collection and to consult the catalogue see here. Also see Mabel Allardyce, Aberdeen University Library MacBean Collection (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1949).
Also see Drawn Sword: Engravings and Woodcuts from the MacBean Jacobite and Stuart Collection, an online resource providing access to the c.1,300 loose engravings and woodcuts, including portraits, topographical subjects and historical incidents.
www.abdn.ac.uk/historic/mac_searchpage.shtml

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

Further reading
For further reading please also 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.
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).
‘Highland Collection: The Scottish holdings’ (University of Aberdeen Development Trust, undated).

Links
National Register of Archives
http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/
Highland Council Archives
www.highlandarchives.org.uk/
Scotland’s Places
www.scotlandsplaces.gov.uk/
Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. Canmore
www.rcahms.gov.uk/canmore.html