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Nelson Museum and Local History Centre

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NELSON MANUSCRIPTS AT MONMOUTH MUSEUM

The Nelson Collection

In 1923 the collection was bequeathed to Monmouth by Lady Llangattock, a prominent collector of Nelsoniana. The original Nelson Museum was opened in Monmouth in 1924. Lady Llangattock was an indiscriminate but comprehensive collector, and the manuscript material she purchased forms one of the most important Nelson archives.

Sources of the MSS collection

Most of the Monmouth collection comes from two of the main sources for Nelson manuscript material: the papers which belonged to Lady Nelson, and those which Lady Hamilton owned and inherited. The third main source, Nelson's brother, Earl Nelson, is not represented in Monmouth.

The best known feature of the Monmouth collection was acquired by Lady Llangattock in 1914, consisting principally of Nelson's letters to his wife from 1785 until 1800. Bound in fine blue leather volumes, one containing Lady Nelson's wedding ring in its cover, these papers form the centrepiece of the collection.

Most of Lady Hamilton's inheritance of papers, including official letter books, log books, official reports, and Nelson's letters to her, were sold to raise much-needed cash in 1813. The rest, in the hands of a Nelson biographer on Lady Hamilton's death in 1815, also found their way into the sale room. Subsequent re-sales split up Lady Hamilton's collection to a large extent. Monmouth has some of her letters from Nelson, other odd letters and papers, a series of letter books for 1796 and 1799 to 1804, and log books for 1798 to 1805.

The remainder of the collected papers have come from various sources, usually through the sale room. Some of these have been bound into volumes, without any inherent unity. The origins of some of these papers have been traced to William Hazelwood, Nelson's solicitor, Sir William Hamilton, and John McArthur, secretary to Lord Hood.

Importance and Use of the Collection

Many of the Monmouth letters have been published in transcript, and the collection has been used by all of the serious biographers, before and after acquisition by Lady Llangattock and Monmouth. The letter books, log books, and unpublished letters in particular represent a valuable and under-used resource for re-assessment and interpretation of Nelson's career and life.

A SHORT LIST OF THE NELSON MSS AT MONMOUTH MUSEUM

1. Papers from Lady Nelson's collection

- Nelson's letters to his wife, 1785-1800 3 volumes
Nelson's letters to members of his family, 1793-1802 1 volume
Contemporary pamphlets and documents 1 volume

2. Papers from Lady Hamilton's collection

- Official Letter Books, 1796, 1799-1800, 1801, 1803,
1803-1804 5 volumes
Official Log Books. Boreas 1784-1787
Vanguard, Foudroyant, and Sam & Jane 1798-1800
Victory 1803-1805
Letters to Lady Hamilton, 1799-1805 1 folder
Collected Nelson MSS, 1782-1813 1 Brown portfolio
This portfolio includes some papers of Sir William
Hamilton which are not from Lady Hamilton's collection.

3. Papers from various sources

- Nelson holograph correspondence and other papers,
1795-1813. This collection includes several
letters from Nelson to Lord Hood which passed
into the hands of John McArthur, and later his
daughter Mrs. Conway. There are also autographs
of several naval officers of the period. 1 volume
Nelson autograph and signed documents, 1780-1805. 1 volume
This mixed collection includes several original
Nelson letters which N. H. Nicolas printed from
letter book copies only (The Dispatches and Letters
of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson, with notes by
Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas, G.C.M.G. Published by
Henry Colburn in 1845.). It is an arbitrary
collection and the papers have no continuity with
each other.
Nelson collected documents, 1787-1813. 2 Blue portfolios
This includes a number of Haslewood's papers,
several letters to him from Nelson which have
not been printed, and some from Lady Hamilton.
There are some papers from the collection of
Sir Richard Bickerton and other original Nelson
letters to various correspondents.
Papers of the Hoste family, 1794-1829. 1 volume
This collection includes Nelson letters to the
Rev. Dixon Hoste about the progress of his son
William as a naval officer and other papers
relating to Sir William Hoste's later career.

3. Papers from various sources cont.

- Papers relative to Lord Nelson's law suit with Lord
St. Vincent, 1802. A copy of the argument in the
Court of Common Pleas from Mr. Gurney's shorthand
notes and an abstract of evidence of usage prepared
by Booth and Haslewood. 1 volume

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