

Acc.11777
Revised April 2014



Inventory

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Alexander Low Bruce Papers

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Correspondence and papers, 1858-1893, of Alexander Low Bruce (1839-1893), master brewer and supporter of commercial and missionary organisations in Central and East Africa. Bruce was born in Edinburgh, educated at the Royal High School and joined the firm of William Younger and Company as a young man of nineteen. He played a major part in the development of his Company from the 1860s, initially in their London office; in 1873 he was entrusted with a major sales tour of North America, and by 1876 he was one of the four partners in the firm, and co-manager with David Younger of the Edinburgh brewery. In 1887 he became Deputy-Chairman of the Company and was a major shareholder, though the correspondence also reveals that he had considerable financial interests outside brewing.

Described as a businessman “of great charm and ability”, Bruce had much wider political and philanthropic concerns. In 1875 he married Agnes, daughter of David Livingstone, a connection that may have stimulated interest in Africa and significant involvement with commercial and missionary organisations active on the continent, and with imperialist enthusiasts and movements at home. Bruce embraced his father-in-law’s views on the slave trade and the role of commerce in helping to bring about its demise, and he became friendly and involved with many of the leading figures of his time associated with Africa, notably Sir John Kirk, Sir William Mackinnon, Alfred [later Viscount] Milner and H M Stanley. He was a leading figure, as a director, in both the African Lakes Company and the Imperial British East Africa Company, the former based in Glasgow and both ventures in which Scottish capital and personnel took a leading part. The involvement with these companies (and the relationship of the Lakes Company with Cecil Rhodes’s British South Africa Company) is strongly reflected in these papers.

Bruce had been an active Liberal until the Irish Home Rule crisis in 1886 when he associated himself with the new Liberal-Unionist party. He appears to have become an important backer of the Liberal-Unionist cause in Scotland, having a close association, reflected in extensive correspondence, with George Joachim [later Viscount] Goschen and other leading Liberal-Unionists. Bruce’s sudden and premature death at fifty four, in 1893, cut short a developing public career.

The papers, originally contained in a mahogany filing cabinet with alphabetically labelled drawers, is mostly, but not exclusively, Bruce’s personal, rather than his business correspondence, mainly from 1885-1893 and largely concerned with his political and African interests. The box passed into the custodianship of his nephew, Robert Alexander Bruce, WS, of Inglis, Orr and Bruce, WS, Edinburgh, and latterly to the last senior partner of that firm.

Bequeathed, 1999.

The papers had been arranged in an alphabetical series, and this arrangement has been retained, although larger correspondences with single individuals have been listed first. Arrangement of the collection is as follows:

| | |
|-------|---|
| 1-20 | SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE (INDIVIDUALS) |
| 21-26 | AFRICAN COMPANIES & SOCIETIES CORRESPONDENCE |
| 27-38 | GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE, A-Y |
| 39-41 | PERSONAL AND FINANCIAL PAPERS |

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE

Numbers in brackets in the entries below refer to the number of letters and/or telegrams addressed to A L Bruce by his correspondent, inclusive of any letters of Bruce to them included in the series.

1. Letters (18) of Ernest Bentley, Acting Secretary of the Imperial British East Africa Company, 1891-2.
2. Letters (17) of Charles Cooper, editor of *The Scotsman*, 1885-93; letters and card (13) of Charles Cowan, politician and paper manufacturer, Penicuik, 1890-2.
3. Letters and telegram (37), 1890-92, of [Sir] Clinton Edward Dawkins, then Private Secretary to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, G J Goschen.
4. Letters and telegram (65) of George Joachim [later Viscount] Goschen, 1885-91, n.d.
5. Letters and telegrams of (38), 1889-92, or to Albert Henry George Grey of the British South Africa Company, later administrator of Rhodesia (1894-7) and 4th Earl Grey.
6. Letters (14), 1891-2, of or to Arthur Jeremy Mounteney Jephson, who commanded a detachment of the Emin Pasha Relief expedition (1887-90) under H M Stanley.
7. Letters and telegrams (32) of or to Sir John Kirk, 1889-93, largely concerning mutual interests as directors of the African Lakes Company and the East Africa Company, and related African matters.
8. Letters and telegrams (74), 1887-93, of or to Sir William Mackinnon, 1st Bart, shipowner, and founder and chief financial backer of the Imperial British East Africa Company.

9. Letters (32), 1886-93, of Alfred [later Viscount] Milner, imperial administrator and statesman.
10. Letters and telegrams (40), of or to George S Mackenzie, Secretary of the Imperial British East Africa Company.
11. Letters (24), 1890-93, of John W and Frederick L M Moir on African Lakes Company business.
12. Letters (14), 1891-2, of Sir Henry Babington Smith, financial administrator.
13. Letters and copies of letters (14 and 22 respectively) of Henry Morton and Dorothy Stanley, 1889-93; with a printed proof containing a letter of Lieut Stairs to Stanley, 1884, a copy of his North Lambeth election address, 1892, and other printed papers of or concerning him.
14. Letters (21), 1890-93, of John Stephen, shipbuilder, Glasgow, on African Lakes Company business.
15. Letters (24 and 13 respectively) of James Stevenson, Largs, and William Stevenson, Glasgow, on Lakes Company business, 1890-92.
16. Letters and telegram (18), 1881, 1891-3, of Dr James Stewart, Principal of the Lovedale Institution, South Africa, and Mrs Mina Stewart; the letter of 1881 is addressed to Dr W B Blaikie.
17. Letters (49), 1885-93, of Horace Waller, Superintendent of the Universities' Missions to Central Africa.
18. Letters (12), 1889-92, of A Silva White, Secretary of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, mostly on society business.
19. Letters (32), 1889-93, of William Waldegrave Palmer, Viscount Wolmer, and later 2nd Earl of Selborne, on Liberal Unionist business; Wolmer was LU Member for West Edinburgh, 1892-5.
20. Letters (16), 1864-93, of various members of the Younger family, partners of Bruce in William Younger and Company, Brewers.

AFRICAN COMPANIES & SOCIETIES

21. African Lakes Company: a general file of correspondence and papers, mostly transmitted by the Company Secretary, William Ewing, in Glasgow, to Bruce, and including copies of letters and telegrams to government ministers and officials.

22. African Lakes Company: letters and papers, 1889-93, many from Alexander Watt of the ALC and C H Weatherley of the S A Company, concerning the amalgamation proposals to merge the Lakes Company with the British South Africa Company and general relations between the companies: many items in file 21, above , also refer to this subject.
23. Copies of Lakes Company reports, correspondence and papers, 1883-92.
24. Imperial British East Africa Company board and general correspondence and papers, 1890-91.
25. IBEAC papers (in continuation), 1892.
26. A printed paper of the Central African Scottish Mission, 1891, containing instructions to the mission party proceeding to the territories of the IBEAC, and issued by Bruce, as Honorary Secretary and Treasurer of the Mission; and papers, 1891-2, relating to the Scottish Exploration Society Limited.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE A-Y

27. Correspondence, A-B, 1889-93: includes letters from the Duke of Argyll and Lord Balfour of Burleigh.
28. Correspondence, C, 1890-92.
29. Correspondence, D-F, 1889-93.
30. Correspondence, G-H, 1889-93.
31. Correspondence, J-K, 1889-93: includes 6 letters from Sir Harry Johnston, 2 from J S Keltie and a small series from Bruce's underwriter, John Jupe.
32. Correspondence, L, 1889-93: includes 6 letters of the Marquess of Lorne and 5 of F E Lugard.
33. Correspondence, M, 1889-93: includes a letter of Robert Moffat, and other letters from Mrs Agnes Bruce's Moffat cousins in South Africa.
34. Correspondence, N-R, 1889-93.
35. Correspondence, S, 1889-93: includes 6 letters of Sir Evan Smith.
36. Correspondence, T, 1890-93.
37. Correspondence, U-V, 1889-91.

38. Correspondence, W-Y, 1884-93.

PERSONAL AND FINANCIAL PAPERS

39. Testimonials for A L Bruce from employer and teachers, 1858-60; with an essay, n.d., on Adam Smith, possibly by Bruce.

40. General financial letters papers and receipts, some relating to personal investments in the UK, 1884-93.

41. Financial papers relating to investments or financial expenses in Africa, 1888-93.