

Sir George Cockburn Papers

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Prepared by Jeffrey Boswell
Revised and expanded by Susie Moody

Collection Summary

Title: Sir George Cockburn Papers

Span Dates: 1788-1847

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1800-1820)

ID No.: MSS16295

Creator: Cockburn, George, Sir, 1772-1853

Extent: 4,400 items ; 18 containers ; 7 linear feet ; 11 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Summary: British naval officer. Correspondence, logbooks, journals, fleet orders, reports, and other papers relating to Cockburn's career in the British Royal Navy. Subjects include the War of 1812 and British naval activities against France and Spain, especially in the Mediterranean, Caribbean, and Indian Ocean.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People

Bertrand, Henri-Gratien, comte, 1773-1844--Correspondence.
Cochrane, Alexander Forrester Inglis, Sir, 1758-1832--Correspondence.
Cockburn, George, Sir, 1772-1853.
Daschkoff, Andreas, Graf--Correspondence.
Ferdinand VII, King of Spain, 1784-1833.
Gladstone, W. E. (William Ewart), 1809-1898--Correspondence.
Monroe, James, 1758-1831--Correspondence.
Montholon, Charles-Tristan, comte de, 1783-1853--Correspondence.
Napoleon I, Emperor of the French, 1769-1821.
Nelson, Horatio Nelson, Viscount, 1758-1805--Correspondence.
Pinkney, William, 1764-1822--Correspondence.

Organizations

Denmark. Søværnet.
Great Britain. Royal Navy--History--19th century.

Subjects

Napoleonic Wars, 1800-1815--Naval operations, British.
Ship's papers--18th century.
Ship's papers--19th century.

Places

Bermuda Islands--History.
Caribbean Area--History, Naval.
France--Foreign relations--Great Britain.
Great Britain--Foreign relations--France.
Great Britain--Foreign relations--Spain.
Great Britain--Foreign relations--United States.
Great Britain--History, Naval--19th century.
Indian Ocean--History, Naval.
Mediterranean Region--History, Naval.
Middle Atlantic States--History.
South America--History.
Spain--Colonies--America.
Spain--Foreign relations--Great Britain.

United States--Foreign relations--Great Britain.
United States--History--War of 1812--Destruction and pillage.
United States--History--War of 1812--Naval operations, British.
Washington (D.C.)--History--Capture by the British, 1814.
West Indies--History.

Occupations

Naval officers, British.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Sir George Cockburn, British naval officer, were purchased by the Library of Congress in 1909 and 1912. Three additional items were given by James C. Bately in 1982.

Processing History

The papers of Sir George Cockburn were arranged and described in 1978. The collection was expanded and revised in 1999.

Copyright Status

It is the researcher's responsibility to determine requirements of domestic copyright laws and international treaties and conventions.

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Sir George Cockburn are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Microfilm

A microfilm edition of part of these papers is available on eleven reels. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, Sir George Cockburn Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1772	Born, England
1781	Enlisted as captain's servant in British navy
1786	First assignment to sea duty
1793	Commissioned lieutenant
1793-1802	Commanded ship in Mediterranean under Horatio Nelson
1808	Stationed in West Indies

1809	Married cousin Mary Cockburn Stationed at Schelde River, Belgium Commander of naval forces on shore during British conquest of Martinique
1810-1911	Patrolled coasts of Spain and France
1812	Promoted to rank of rear admiral
1813	Blockaded American shipping in the Mid-Atlantic states; attacked American coastal fortifications; participated in the Battle of Bladensburg; coordinated, ordered, and participated in the burning of Washington, D.C.
1815	Conveyed Napoleon to St. Helena
1815-1816	Governor of St. Helena
1819	Promoted to rank of vice admiral
1820-1846	Member of British Parliament and Lord of the Admiralty
1837	Promoted to rank of admiral
1851	Promoted to rank of admiral of the fleet
1853, Aug. 1	Died, (location unknown); buried in Kensal Rice Cemetery, Maida Vale, London, England

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Sir George Cockburn (1772-1853) consist of [logbooks](#), [journals](#), correspondence, [fleet orders](#), [miscellany](#), and a small [addition](#) related to Cockburn's military career in the British Royal Navy. The papers span the period 1788-1847, but are concentrated in the years 1800-1820.

The Cockburn Papers cover numerous events in British naval history. Documented in the papers are the blockade of the French at Toulon, Horatio Nelson's Mediterranean exploits, the victory over the Spanish at Cape St. Vincent on the southwestern coast of Portugal, the conquest of Martinique, the bombardment of the seaport of Flushing, New York, the attempt to rescue King Ferdinand VII of Spain, negotiations with the Spanish at Cádiz, English military offensives conducted against the Americans in the Chesapeake Bay and the destruction of the city of Washington during the War of 1812, the conveyance of Napoleon Bonaparte to his exile on St. Helena, and British naval activities in the Caribbean during the early decades of the nineteenth century. There is also material pertaining to the history of the West Indies, Bermuda, and the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States, which includes descriptions of the social and political conditions in these areas during the early 1800s.

Correspondence and [logbooks](#) detail Cockburn's involvement in the War of 1812. His letter of 27 August 1814 to his commander in chief, Sir Alexander Cochrane, discussed the Battle of Bladensburg and the destruction of the Capitol and other public buildings in Washington, D.C.

The majority of the correspondents in the Cockburn Papers are British naval officers, although there are letters to Cockburn from statesmen, diplomats, and generals as well. Included are counts Henri-Gratien Bertrand and Charles-Tristan de Montholon, generals under Napoleon's command; Graf Andreas Daschkoff, the Russian ambassador to the United States; British prime minister W. E. Gladstone; James Monroe; Baron Reland, Swedish ambassador to Great Britain; Horatio Nelson, British admiral; William Pinkney, American legislator and statesman; and Baron Reland, Swedish ambassador to Great Britain.

The [Miscellany](#) series includes numerous reports, several of which were written by Cockburn himself. An account by Cockburn of Nelson's military engagements in the Mediterranean includes the Battle of the Nile in August 1798. A second report described the battle between the British and Spanish navies off the coast of Puerto Rico on 15 November 1799. There are also reports concerning the destruction of the Danish navy at Copenhagen, 12 April 1801; the victory over French and Spanish forces at Algeciras, 3 August 1801; Nelson's victory against the French at Boulogne-sur-mer, 8 August 1801; and encounters with the Spanish and French in the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, and the Indian Ocean during the years 1801-1804.

Several of the reports concern diplomatic issues. One provides an account of the futile attempt to rescue King Ferdinand VII of Spain from imprisonment by Napoleon. Another records a meeting between the English and the Spanish held at Cádiz in 1811-1812 concerning the granting of independence by Spain to its colonies in South America. A paper written by Cockburn, possibly directed to the attention of English prime minister Robert Banks Jenkinson, Earl of Liverpool, discussed the possibility of using English troops to suppress insurrectionary movements in Spain's South American colonies during the early 1800s. Cockburn, in advising against this joint venture with the Spanish, presented his appraisal of colonial politics in the Americas.

The [Miscellany](#) series also includes an 1847 memorandum by Cockburn in which he proposed a reorganization of the Board of Admiralty in order to simplify its management.

The [Addition](#) consists of a commission dated 1830, photocopies of a Cockburn family tree, and information regarding Cockburn's naval career.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in seven series:

- [Logbooks, 1788-1815](#)
- [Journals, 1833-1836](#)
- [Letters Sent, 1794-1846](#)
- [Letters Received, 1794-1816](#)
- [Fleet Orders, 1794-1837](#)
- [Miscellany, 1811-1847](#)
- [Addition, 1830](#)

Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1-7 REEL 1-5	<u>Logbooks, 1788-1815</u> Nautical records of ship voyages. Arranged by name of ship and chronologically thereunder.
BOX 7-9 REEL 5-6	<u>Journals, 1833-1836</u> Accounts of daily transactions including lists of official and private letters sent and received, a brief note of their content, and a report on events of the day. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 9-13 REEL 6-8	<u>Letters Sent, 1794-1846</u> Copies of correspondence by Cockburn, including miscellaneous letters, letters to the Admiralty, and private correspondence. Arranged by category and in chronological order therein.
BOX 13-14 REEL 8-9	<u>Letters Received, 1794-1816</u> Copies of letters from the Admiralty, other British officers, American naval officers, and members of the exiled French party on St. Helena. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 15-18 REEL 9-11	<u>Fleet Orders, 1794-1837</u> Orders received by Cockburn from his superior officers and those given by him to his subordinates. Arranged in chronological order.
BOX 18 REEL 11	<u>Miscellany, 1811-1847</u> Accounts and reports, notes, dispatches, and a memorandum. Arranged according to type of material and chronologically therein.
BOX 18 not filmed	<u>Addition, 1830</u> A commission, genealogical chart, and outline of Cockburn's naval career. Organized alphabetically by type of material.

Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 17,576; includes 1978 version of the finding aid

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Logbooks, 1788-1815

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Logbooks, 1788-1815

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Arranged chronologically.

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Letters Sent, 1794-1846

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Copies of letters from the Admiralty, other British officers, American naval officers, and members of the exiled French party on St. Helena.
Arranged chronologically.

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Accounts and reports, notes, dispatches, and a memorandum.
Arranged according to type of material and chronologically therein.

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Miscellany, 1811-1847

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Notes on New Spain, 1812, Aug. 10

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BOX 18

Memorandum on Board of Admiralty, 1847

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BOX 18

Addition, 1830

not filmed

A commission, genealogical chart, and outline of Cockburn's naval career.
Organized alphabetically by type of material.

BOX 18

Commission in Royal Marine Forces, 1830

not filmed

BOX 18

Genealogy and outline of Cockburn's naval career, photocopies, undated

not filmed