

A PARTICULAR ASPECT OF THE GUIDE TO AUSTRALIAN AND PACIFIC MANUSCRIPTS

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Miss Mander Jones has described her plans and preliminary work for the projected Guide to Manuscripts Relating to Australia and the South West Pacific held in Great Britain and Ireland (*Archives and Manuscripts*, November 1964 and November 1965). The work has gone steadily ahead, directed from her office in London, and the holdings of several of the larger repositories have been surveyed. In this article an attempt is made to give an idea of the nature and scope of the work in relation to a specific part of the holdings of one repository with which the writer was personally concerned. It is one of the most important repositories and a straightforward one to tackle — the British Museum's Department of Manuscripts.

From the beginning of the project, guidance has been provided by the similar works published recently relating to America and to South and South East Asia. The Australian Guide will probably be of comparable size to these two predecessors, the first being some 700 pages and the second 550 (larger) pages. They are *A Guide to Manuscripts Relating to America in Great Britain and Ireland*, edited by B. R. Crick and Miriam Alman (1961), and *A Guide to Western Manuscripts and Documents in the British Isles relating to South and South East Asia*, compiled by M. D. Wainwright and Noel Matthews (1965).

The description of the holdings of the British Museum covers 56 pages of the first, and 68 pages of the second. These are substantial proportions of the whole works, being 9% and 14% respectively of the texts proper. It must be pointed out, however, that Crick and Alman's work began as a supplement to similar published Guides to Americana (of a total of some 230 pages), which the Carnegie Institution had sponsored before World War I. In the instance of the British Museum, the authors are describing the Americana collected by the British Museum in the past fifty years.

The repositories next in amount of space allotted in the Guides are the Public Record Office (38 and 48 pages), and the House of Lords Record Office (32 and 10 pages). The India Office Library was completely excluded by Wainwright and Matthews, since its inclusion would have doubled the size of the work, and since the Library will bring out its own Catalogue eventually. The Public Record Office will similarly deserve minimum attention in the Australian Guide, because of the work being done there under the Joint Copying Project.

Focussing the Australian survey of the British Museum still further, a most important collection, the Gladstone Papers, occupy six pages and little more than one page respectively in the previous Guides. The differing proportions are due more to the differing depth of description rather than to variation in the extent of the materials uncovered. The quantity of material relevant to each of the three surveys does invite comparison, in spite of the difficulty of comparing three areas of the globe so different in their political and constitutional set-up in the one era. That there are comparable quantities is simply due to the tremendous extent of the preserved papers of a Prime Minister of the world's foremost power of the time, whose public life was so long and whose interests were so wide.

Comprising some 750 volumes, the Gladstone Papers are the largest collection of those of any Prime Minister in the British Museum. Although treated as a normal accession in that the volumes were allotted "Additional Manuscript" numbers, they were so extensive as to warrant a special catalogue of their own in the series of Catalogues of the Manuscripts in the British Museum. The compilers of the three Guides have relied heavily on this Catalogue (published in 1953, after some years' work). Yet it by no means did the work for them, having an index light in subject entries compared with name entries.

Crick and Alman were dealing with an isolationist America in Gladstone's time, and yet found not inconsiderable material relating to the American Civil War, its ramifications in the matters of shipping and trade, and the Treaty of Washington. They were careful to exclude material relating predominantly to Canada and the West Indies. They decided on description in some detail, indicating individual folio numbers for many particular subjects and correspondents. But there was still a limit. In regard to Gladstone's "general correspondence" (175 volumes), they were content with the summary: "Scattered American references include the following (correspondents) . . ." They appear to have been consistent with their treatment of another important collection in the British Museum — the Liverpool Papers. For this collection of 300 volumes covering an era (of the Wars of Independence and of 1812) when records could be expected to be prolific, they allotted some eight pages. The Liverpool Papers, by the way, yielded surprisingly little material concerning early Australia.

Wainwright and Matthews deal with the heterogeneous area from Afghanistan to the Philippines. This area received its share of Gladstone's interest, especially, of course, the British possessions there. His papers in this case are treated very summarily. His correspondence with three viceroys is compact, and such treatment is therefore sufficient and probably necessary. But neither is there detailed location given of his correspondence with various other maharajahs, bishops, officials and writers, who were much less prolific. "Correspondents include . . ." has to satisfy them. In any case, the Gladstone Papers are small fry compared with the Wellesley Papers also in the British Museum (1,414 volumes; 13 pages in the Guide).

It had to be decided for the Australian Guide how deeply the Gladstone Papers (and other British Museum manuscripts) should be described. Gladstone was certainly intimately concerned with British expansion in the south seas and with the progress of the Australasian colonies towards self-government. Yet references to relevant subjects and correspondence with individual people was decidedly scattered. A detailed description was considered justified. Some summarising was possible for the more voluminous correspondents, such as Sir Arthur Gordon, Sir George Bowen and J. R. Godley. The reader will sometimes be told that there is substantial reference to the career outside Australia of such men as Sir Robert Herbert and Bishop Alfred Barry, though little about their time in Australia. In large measure, however, the user of the Guide will have the benefit of specific reference to individual folios. He will have ready access to material on such subjects as the annexation of Fiji and New Guinea, the establishment of mints in Australia, the constitutional position of the Church of England in the colonies, colonial customs tariffs, the dismissal of Sir Eardley Wilmot, and the awarding of honours. Gladstone's

occasional correspondence with such figures as Sir Henry Parkes, J. E. Fitzgerald and Count Strzelecki will be precisely shown.

It is not to be pretended that the value of Gladstone's papers for Australian and Pacific material has only just been discovered. Their wealth was indicated even before the collection was deposited in the British Museum, in, for example, the work of Paul Knaplund, whose *Gladstone and Britain's Imperial Policy* was published in 1927.

It must be emphasised all along, however, that balance and consistency of description cannot be expected within such Guides as the three here concerned. So much depends on the nature of the different repositories' holdings, and the existing descriptions of them. In many cases costs will not justify a detailed description, and a first indication of likely usefulness is ample and as far as is warranted. The Australian Guide will undoubtedly be of great value to scholars in the Antipodes.

THE NEW SOUTH WALES STATE ARCHIVES: A NOTE ON CITATION FROM THE FILES OF THE CHIEF SECRETARY

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Recently A. J. Hutchins and B. Stuckey published an interesting and able paper on 'The Development of registration and record-keeping systems in New South Wales Government Departments, 1788-1910,' in volume II of the papers of the 13th Biennial Conference of the Library Association of Australia. The paper discusses the confused, conservative techniques adopted by the government officials in controlling their records. It was an era of copying clerks, quills then pens, large leather index volumes (curse their decayed dustiness!), and pigeon holes. Registration systems varied from office to office. For example, in the mid-1820s in the Colonial Secretary's Office an annual running number was given to letters received. From 1850 the Colonial Secretary's inward correspondence was filed primarily by registration number; before this, ordinary correspondence had been filed by subject or provenance. Connections of related papers were noted in the registers from the inception of the system in 1826. Special bundles, (as distinct from the ordinary 'subject-provenance' groups for each year) had been set aside from 1826, and this practice was continued after 1850. The registers, however, do not indicate papers placed in special bundles.

The important *List of Series Titles in the Archives Office of N.S.W.*, published by the Archives Authority in 1965, lists its holdings and is a stimulus to work on them. In it, as one would expect, the largest single group of items appears under the heading of the Colonial Secretary. The special bundles are listed in an appendix to the *List*. All now have shelf location numbers. It is an important collection, as several historians have already shown.

It is to be emphasised that with a few exceptions of estrays from the records which are located elsewhere, these government documents are now in the custody of the Archives Authority of New South Wales in the Archives