



Public Record Office
of Northern Ireland

INTRODUCTION

CRAWFORD PAPERS

November 2007

Crawford Papers (D2003)

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Introduction

The Crawford papers consist of c.3000 documents mainly relating to the life and career of the Rev. Alexander Crawford (1790-1856), missionary in India, domestic chaplain to Lady Olivia Sparrow, and minister of 1st Randalstown Presbyterian Church, Co. Antrim, and his grandson, the Rev. Alexander R. Crawford (1868-1935), missionary to Manchurip. The archive also contains significant material relating to the Rev. James Glasgow and his brother, the Rev. Adam D. Glasgow, Dr John C.C. Crawford and Dr Agatha Randal Crawford. There are also varying quantities of papers pertaining to miscellaneous Crawford family relatives.



Background of the archive

The Crawford papers result from several small deposits and two major deposits, one in the 1960s from Dr J.C.C. Crawford who was concerned about the long-term preservation of the family papers and has personally contributed a considerable amount of genealogical and historical papers to the archive. The other deposit, principally of material of the Rev. A.R. Crawford, was made in 1997 by Christine Gaston, daughter of Dr J.C.C. Crawford. The original deposit mainly consisted of correspondence and missionary papers relating to the Rev. Alexander Crawford (1790-1856) and his wife, and to a lesser extent the Rev. A.R. Crawford (1868-1935) and his wife, and the Rev. James Glasgow (1805-1890). Unfortunately, the original catalogue contained several instances of overlap between the various families and the structure of the initial deposit has been superseded with the addition of the new material. However, the classification of the archive has retained largely similar outline.



Structure of the archive

The papers have been divided into six major categories: section A containing material pertaining to the Rev. Alexander Crawford and his family; section B the Rev. A.R. Crawford and his family; section C the Rev. James Glasgow and his brother, Rev. A.D. Glasgow; section D Dr J.C.C. Crawford; section E Dr Agatha Randal Crawford; and finally section F miscellaneous. It was decided that anything that had been mentioned explicitly in the original list would also be highlighted in the new composite list thus enabling those who were familiar with the old calendar to be able to find their way round the archive. Moreover, a more clearly defined structure was imposed on the archive. Within each of the principal sections new sub-sections were created such as missionary papers, correspondence, photographs, genealogical papers, etc.



The life and career of the Rev. Alexander Crawford

Alexander Crawford was born 12 November 1790 in Peebles, Scotland. He was the son of James Crawford, a local stonemason, who died as the result of an accident in 1793. Thus he was brought up with his four brothers by his widowed mother, Jane Crawford née Marshall. In 1811, he began a career in business in Edinburgh spending two years with a cloth merchant in the city. He then pursued an educational course in preparation for beginning a degree at Edinburgh University. From 1819 until 1822 he took various theological subjects under Dr William Brown, tutor for the Scottish Missionary Society and divinity classes under the tutelage of the United Associate Synod.

He graduated from Edinburgh in 1822 and was ordained on 6 August of that year as a minister of the United Secession Church. Alexander Crawford married Anna Gardner, daughter of John Gardner, an Edinburgh merchant, on 22/23 January 1823. In March he sailed for India under the auspices of the Scottish Missionary Society with his young wife. They spent seven years with the missionary society in Bankote, seventy miles south of Bombay. However, eventually Alexander Crawford's health failed and he and his family returned to Edinburgh in 1829. He recovered sufficiently to attend the divinity classes of Dr Thomas Chalmers. In 1832, he moved to Brampton, Huntingdonshire, with his family to become domestic chaplain to Lady Olivia Sparrow. Lady Olivia was the daughter of the 1st Earl of Gosford and had married Brigadier-General Bernard Sparrow of Brampton and Tanderagee Castle, Co. Armagh. Alexander Crawford was chaplain to the family until 1836.

On 5 July 1836, he arrived in Ireland with a desire to join the Presbyterian ministry. In the ensuing months he spent his time travelling around preaching at various churches in Belfast and the surrounding countryside. In 1837 he was installed as minister of 1st Randalstown Presbyterian Church, Co. Antrim. He served as minister for nearly twenty years and died 4 April 1856.



The papers of the Rev. Alexander Crawford

The papers of the Rev. Alexander Crawford cover virtually all of his life except for his early childhood. The archive contains class attendance cards of Crawford whilst at the University of Edinburgh, 1819-1822, and class cards of his later theology classes under Dr Thomas Chalmers, 1829-1832. The period he spent as a missionary in India is also well-represented in the archive. There is an account describing his early missionary endeavours and there are also copies of sermons preached in India.



Letters from India

There is a significant run of letters from the Rev. Alexander Crawford and his wife, Anna, describing their journey to the sub-continent and passing on considerable detail relating to their missionary work from 1822 to 1829. The correspondence is a chatty mixture of news about their new style of life, the birth of a son and daughter, their work amongst the locals, visiting schools, tract distribution, missionary tours, the death of their colleague, Rev. Mitchell, etc. The letters also contain a medical certificate declaring the necessity of Crawford's return home for the restoration of his health.



Letters from Edinburgh and Brampton

The letters of the Crawfords continue on their return to Edinburgh and reveal the decision of the Scottish Missionary Society not to allow him to return to India because of his ill-health. In 1832 Alexander Crawford and his family moved to Brampton and the letters describe his new position as domestic chaplain to Lady Olivia Sparrow. He writes of his new employer:

'Lady Olivia [was] very kind and open and ladylike,... she is an excellent and amiable lady and sound in the faith, I should think very intelligent and clear, and as meek as you can conceive ...'.

The correspondence gives many details of his duties including conducting the family worship, and visiting the estate schools. They also describe Lady Olivia's, son-in-law, Lord Mandeville, later 6th Duke of Manchester, who on occasion assisted Crawford in his duties.



Move to Ireland and Ministry at Randalstown

The letters of Alexander Crawford continue to convey details of his work as he travels to Ulster. He writes of his experience of the people and the country and once established at Randalstown as minister describes local events. He comments on the impact of the famine in the vicinity, 'Our potatoes are a good deal injured ... but what the poor will do who knows ... It may be that God is going to put down that great O'Connell party the mob that has bullied Government so long if this is the end what a wonderful arrangement'. The correspondence continues but less frequently until his death in 1856.



Correspondence of Anna Crawford and her family

The remainder of the correspondence relates to the widow of Alexander Crawford and their children. There are several interesting letters from Jane Gall, daughter of Alexander and Anna Crawford, writing in 1860 about life in Jamaica and describing colourful local elections. However, on the whole there is only a relatively small amount of material pertaining to the Crawfords' children. It is the grandson of Alexander Crawford, his namesake, Alexander Robert Crawford, whose life and career is extremely well-represented in section B of the archive.



Early life and career of the Rev. Alexander Robert Crawford

Alexander Robert Crawford was born 29 November 1868 in Paris. He was the son of William Crawford, fifth son of the Rev. Alexander Crawford and Annie Glasgow, daughter of the Rev. Dr James Glasgow. William Crawford was representative of the York St. Flax Spinning Company in Paris and the family was resident in the city during the siege of 1870. They later returned to Belfast in 1888 and lived at Mount Randal, Belfast. Alexander Robert Crawford's early education was in Paris but he later enrolled at Royal Belfast Academical Institution in 1885. He began a degree course at Queen's College in October 1886 and graduated in Classics in 1890. In the same year he entered the Presbyterian General Assembly's theological college, where he remained for two years. In 1892 he went to Princeton and in 1893 returned to Ireland before graduating with an M.A. from the Royal University of Ireland in 1894.



Missionary career of Rev. Alexander Robert Crawford in Manchuria

Alexander Robert Crawford was licensed to preach on 1 May 1894 and was ordained in the following year as a Presbyterian missionary. He began his journey from Liverpool to Manchuria on 6 April 1895, travelling via New York, Canada and Japan, and finally arrived at Newchwang, China, on 25 June 1895 to start his missionary work. He was posted to Kirin to assist at the mission station established there. A chapel was opened in January 1896 and a hospital in the following year. During the period of the late 1890s he made many 'Great Journeys' in the surrounding areas and established out-stations. In June 1900, he and the other missionaries in Kirin escaped the Boxer rebellion troubles by river and rail to Vladivostock. He was unable to return until autumn 1901. In June 1902, Crawford was back in Ireland for his marriage to Anna Graham, daughter of David Graham of Portadown, Co. Armagh. They left for Kirin together on 29 August 1902 via Siberia and arrived 5 October. They resumed the missionary work together and stayed in Kirin until 1910 before being moved to Kwanchengtze. During their first few months in residence there was a severe outbreak of plague in the locality which lasted until March. In 1912 they started a YMCA and schools for boys and girls in Kwanchengtze. However, the health of the Rev. A.R. Crawford began to fail and in February 1913, he and his family returned home to Ireland.



Return to Ireland and retirement of the Rev. A.R. Crawford

The Crawfords on their return to Ireland resided with Sir William (knighted in 1906 for his contribution to charitable work) and Lady Crawford, parents of A.R. Crawford, at their home, Mount Randal. In 1914 Rev. Crawford was elected fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in recognition of his mapping work in Manchuria. He later worked as editor of Daybreak, the children's magazine of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. He was also appointed Dean of Residence for Presbyterian students at Queen's University, Belfast. However, his health continued to deteriorate and he died on 8 November 1935.



Personal and missionary papers of the Rev. A.R. Crawford

Section B of the archive comprises the papers of the Rev. A.R. Crawford and his wife and family. The life and career of A.R. Crawford are well represented in the archive. His personal papers include class cards from his period at Queen's College and the Presbyterian College, Belfast. Crawford was quite a talented sketcher and water colourist and the archive is complemented by depictions of scenes from Princeton and of his travels in Europe and Ireland.

His personal papers also contain a range of diaries, account books, notebooks, etc, which reveal much about his life before and after the period spent in Manchuria as a missionary. However, it is his time as a missionary which is covered in the greatest details and is perhaps the most interesting. These papers have been classified into two categories, essentially correspondence and other missionary-related material. The two sections are complementary and illuminate his experiences in China.



Missionary correspondence of the Rev. A.R. Crawford

The letters from Alexander Crawford and after 1902, his wife, are plentiful and crammed with detail about their life in Manchuria. The correspondence numbers over 1300 documents and covers the period from 1895 to 1913. The letters from the Rev. A.R. Crawford convey news about re-establishing the mission station in Kirin, the opening of a preaching chapel, the Boxer Rebellion, outbreak of plague, etc. After 1902, the letters are mainly from Anna Crawford to her mother and sister. She passes on news about their young son, Jack [John Cameron Christopher] and the local routine of life. She also comments on her views about Home Rule for Ireland.



Mission photographs and family albums

The missionary papers of the Rev. A.R. Crawford contain a volume of photographs which cover virtually the whole of his period in China. The photographs are a fascinating pictorial complement to the correspondence. There are pictures of the various missionaries in the locality, local life in Manchuria, Chinese Church elders, Russian soldiers, the impact of the plague and attempts to counteract the spread of disease, etc, etc [see D/2003/B/2/9/1]. There are also a significant quantity of family snaps and albums. Of interest amongst these are photographs depicting Sir William Crawford reading an address to King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra at the Royal Victoria Hospital in 1903 and of him in his honorary degree robes at Queen's University, Belfast. The wide range of photographs cover not only the Crawford family but also related families such as the Grahams of Portadown, and the Browns of Donaghmore, Co. Tyrone, etc.



Genealogical and family notes of the Rev. A.R. Crawford

The Rev. A.R. Crawford had a keen historical interest and after his return from Manchuria he compiled five volumes of family history during his retirement. The first three volumes relate to the Crawford family and contain genealogies, biographical details, historical notes, transcripts of the correspondence of the Rev. Alexander Crawford and his wife, Anna, and a record of the last days and death of the Rev. Alexander Crawford. The other two volumes contain a history of the Glasgow family and their contents include: a life of Dr James Glasgow, a memoir of Mrs Acheson [Harriet Glasgow], literary work of Harriet Glasgow, the Fultons of Lisburn, the Wightman family, the Lisburn Philanthropic Society, etc, etc.



Life and career of the Rev. Dr James Glasgow

James Glasgow was born on 27 May 1805 near Clough village, Co. Antrim. He was the third child of a family of seven. John Glasgow, his father, was a weaver from the Bannside, who had married Jean McClure from Drumack in the Braid. James Glasgow later attended the college department of the Royal Belfast Academical Institution, where he excelled in Mathematics. Whilst at college he attended Fisherwick Presbyterian Church and was later licensed by the Belfast Presbytery. He was ordained minister of Castledawson on 6 October 1835.

In 1840 with the union of the Synod of Ulster and the Secession Synod to form the General Assembly, one of the first acts was to inaugurate the Foreign Mission and appoint two missionaries, James Glasgow and Alexander Kerr to go to India. On 27 June of the same year, Glasgow married Mary Wightman. During their honeymoon they spent a weekend at Randalstown with the Rev. Alexander Crawford, who was able to give them some insight into their potential experiences in India. They left for Liverpool on 25 August and arrived in India on 26 February 1841. James Glasgow spent over twenty years as a missionary in India and was later joined by his brother, the Rev. Adam Glasgow. He finally returned to Ireland in 1864 and died in 1890.



The papers of the Rev. Dr James Glasgow

There is only a relatively small amount of material within the archive pertaining to the Rev. James Glasgow. However, it spans much of his life and reveals some details about the pioneering work of the early Presbyterian missionaries. The earliest papers include a large number of class cards of James Glasgow issued by the Royal Belfast Academical Institution showing the wide range of subjects he took from 1827 to 1834. The missionary papers comprise printed resolutions and letters announcing their arrival in Bombay and the death of the Rev. Kerr. There are also printed sermons which he preached in India. The remainder of the material mainly consists of miscellaneous personal papers such as poems, visiting cards and photographs.



The life and papers of Dr J.C.C. Crawford

John Cameron Christopher Crawford was born 5 June 1906 at Chefoo, China, the eldest surviving son of the Rev. Alexander Robert Crawford and his wife, Anna. He pursued a career in medicine and worked as a G.P. in Belfast for over thirty years. However, like his father his main pre-occupation was with family history. He has contributed a large quantity of genealogical and historical volumes to the archive. He died in 1994. The material includes typescript copies of the Glasgow and Crawford family volumes prepared by his father, to which he made his own additions and a series of folders which detail the life of the Rev. A.R. Crawford. The later folders are an excellent complement to the original material in section B and fill out much of the background on his time as a missionary.



The life and papers of Dr Agatha Randal Crawford

Agatha Randal Crawford was born 9 July 1913 at Mount Randal, Belfast. She like her brother pursued a career in medicine, and later specialised in pathology. She also followed in her father's path by going to China as a Presbyterian missionary in 1946 to teach at Moukden Medical College. Her papers include typescript copies of letters describing her journey through China, her medical activities, and local customs, etc, etc. The correspondence is colourful and crammed full of interesting details. The archive also contains her recollections of the period she spent in China in which she writes about the arrival of the communist army at the college and the impact of the communist regime in Moukden.

This archive containing the papers of the Crawford family presents a unique insight into missionary work across the generations from the 1820s to the 1940s. It provides an invaluable coverage not only of the missionaries as individuals but of the countries in which they worked.

