

## Papers relating to Alexander Bartlet & Co, West India merchants

This document describes a collection of records held by NatWest Group Archives, including details of their background; publications relating to them; summary of the contents of the collection; and information about related records held in other archives.

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**collection reference** WC/41/

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**background history**

Alexander Bartlet, his brother William Bartlet and their partner George Campbell were merchants trading between London and the West Indian islands of Grenada, Carriacou and Tobago in the 1770s. They traded mostly in cotton, sugar, cocoa and rum, all of which were produced through the labour of enslaved people. Alexander Bartlet and George Campbell also owned slave labour plantations on Tobago. William Bartlet and his brother James owned slave labour cotton plantations on Carriacou.

The co-partnership of Alexander Bartlet and George Campbell traded under a succession of names: Alexander Bartlet & Co, merchants of London; Bartlet, Campbell & Bartlet; William Bartlet, Campbell & Co; and, from 1778 (after William Bartlet's death), George Campbell & Co, merchants of Grenada.

The co-partnership was dissolved in March 1779 due to financial difficulties, and the estate placed in the hands of trustees. These difficulties probably arose from a combination of William Bartlet's death, general distress in the West Indian trades, and specific problems in Tobago, including several rebellions of enslaved people prior to 1774; an ant infestation in 1775 which forced sugar to be replaced by cotton as the main crop; and American ships attacking the island in 1777-8. Further pressures came from the American War of Independence and the rising cost of shipping insurance. Many planters and merchants went bankrupt in the latter decades of the century.

The trustees' role was to administer the estate for the benefit, and eventual repayment, of the creditors of Alexander Bartlet & Co. The last transaction in the administration did not take place until 1815. The three main trustees were William Annand, a London linen draper; William Matthews, a merchant; and Robert Williams (1734-1814), banker and managing owner of fourteen trading vessels, largely East Indiamen, between 1778 and 1810. It is through Williams, who was a partner in [Lowe, Vere & Williams](#) and was the last survivor of the three trustees, that these papers are thought to have arrived in the archives of Williams, Deacon & Co.

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**our archive holdings**

- title deeds, land in Tobago 1771-1815
- estate inventories, including inventories of enslaved people: Tobago 1773, Grenada 1785
- balance and profit and loss accounts 1777-9
- ship insurance policy, including reference to the insurance of an earlier slave trafficking ship 1778
- customer correspondence 1778-84
- correspondence and accounts of trustees 1784-1815
- bills of charges of trustees' solicitors 1784-1815
- notices of creditors' meetings 1786-1815

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**archives held**

- [The National Archives](#): Letters from William Bartlet, Grenada, to Alexander

- elsewhere**      Bartlet & Co, London, re ship insurance in the case of Bartlett v. Campbell 1776-7 (Ref: E140/2/5).
- [University of Bristol Library](#): Assignment of mortgage between Alexander Wilson of Grenada and Alexander Bartlet, late of Grenada 1775 (Ref: DM 41/91/1); articles of agreement respecting lower quarter estate in Courland Division, Tobago, between Robert Williams and William Annand as surviving trustees of Alexander Bartlet and George Campbell, John Collow, William Collow and Samuel Bishop Peppin 1799 (Ref: DM 41/91/2).