

Bank accounts of Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown and his executors with Drummonds Bank, 1753-89

Account dates and activity **Lancelot Brown 1753-83**
Brown’s account was opened on 13 July 1753 with a credit of £200 and continued in use until 3 March 1783, almost a month after his death on 6 February 1783. Brown’s account was an active one, and from 1757 the account transactions required at least 4 folios in each year’s ledgers. The account was particularly busy between 1763 and 1779.

Executors of Lancelot Brown 1783-89
The final balance of Lancelot Brown’s personal account was transferred to a new account opened by his executors (his widow Bridget, his son-in-law the architect Henry Holland junior and Henry’s father Henry Holland senior, and lawyer John Edison). By 7 October 1786 the account had a balance of £16 13s 2d, which remained unchanged until the final two payments were made on 16 January 1789.

Ledger format The mid- to late-18th century customer account ledgers of Drummonds comprise one or more ledgers per calendar year, containing the accounts of all of its customers. When Brown’s account started in 1753 the bank was opening a single ledger every year, but by 1761 the number of accounts had grown to the extent that the bank required 2 ledgers a year, rising to 4 ledgers each year by 1779.

Each open spread in the Drummonds ledgers is referred to here as a ‘folio’, and each customer account which appears on a folio comprises

- debtor transactions (i.e. payments made out of the customer’s account) on the left hand page
- creditor transactions (i.e. credits received into the customer’s account) on the right hand page

When the bank’s clerks were making up a new year’s ledger(s), they tended to allocate for each established customer a similar space in the ledger to that occupied in the current ledger(s), and so over time the folio numbers on which a long-standing customer’s account appears tend to be similar in successive years (until the number of ledgers per year increases).

Where an account had (or was expected to have) few transactions, it might share a folio with the accounts of other customers. 10 folios containing Brown’s account also include accounts of other customers, and the details of those accounts have been obscured on the pdf copies with coloured panels.

On 5 folios containing Brown’s account the folio number is either incomplete or illegible – for each of these folios, the correct folio number has been verified against the position of the page in the original ledger and appears in the relevant folio list and is also included in the name of the relevant pdf.

Account transaction format The accounts are presented in a standard format as shown below, though the column headings do not actually appear in the ledger folios and are provided here for clarification. Further information is provided on the following pages concerning the types of information which may appear in each column.

Year	Month	Day	Narrative	Cross reference	Amount			Totals		
					£	s	d	£	s	d
1754	January	2	To Cash paid E. Shortland	231	20					
		5	To d ^o paid Will. Donn	237	25					
	February	7	To d ^o paid W ^m . Donn	264	80		125			
	June	6	To d ^o paid Jn Jackson	89	18	4				

Year	The year is usually only noted at the top of each page within the folio and/or the top of each account – each ledger contains accounts for a single year only.
Month	The month is usually only noted against the first transaction for that month, and is not repeated for subsequent transactions during the same month.
Day	The day is usually only noted against the first transaction for that day, and is generally not repeated for subsequent transactions on the same day. Dates are generally not specified where a balance is brought forward from a previous ledger (usually on 1 January) or carried forward to a new ledger (usually on 31 December).
Narrative	The contents of this column vary, but usually include the name of the person to whom funds were paid or from whom funds were received. The function of the narrative entries was to enable both the bank and its customers to verify each transaction recorded in the accounts in the ledgers - there was no need to specify the purpose (or in Brown's case the location or site) to which a transaction related. This means that it is difficult to identify to which Brown commissions particular payments relate without external corroborating evidence, though in many cases the credits into his account identify the client and therefore might also point towards a site. The only entries for which there are descriptions appear to be those in which the bank had a role, for instance in dealing in stock, receiving dividends or arranging fire insurance.

In general the Drummonds customer account ledgers contain less information on creditor transactions than debtor transactions, and this is also true of Brown's account. This means that in many cases the source of funds credited to Brown's account are not identified, so that any attempt to link these entries to a particular client will be dependent on information from other sources to corroborate dates and amounts of payments to Brown.

Transaction prefixes

Each transaction is prefixed with one of the standard formulas shown below, though from 1765 these formulas are only written out for the first transaction in an account and are implied for subsequent transactions by the presence of a blank space or a dashed horizontal line at the start of the narrative. The wording is purely formulaic, and should not be taken to indicate that a payment or receipt was made using coin, and the abbreviation **d^o** (ditto) is often used:

- **To Cash paid** – often abbreviated, e.g. **To Cash p^d** or **To d^o paid**
- **By Cash received** – often abbreviated, e.g. **By Cash rec^d** or **By d^o recd**

Balance transfers

Where a balance is brought or carried forward at the top or bottom of a folio or beginning or end of a year, the narrative appears in the following format:

- **By Balance brought from Old Ledger** – this is used at the top of the first folio of an account within a ledger, and is often abbreviated, for instance as **By Balance from Old Ledger**
- **Brought forward** – this is used at the top of a folio where the total of debit or credit transactions is brought forward from the bottom of the previous folio of the account within the same ledger, and is often abbreviated, for instance as **Bf^d** or **Bro^t forward**
- **To Balance carried forward** – this is used where the account has been balanced during the year and the balance amount is entered before any new transactions are entered in the account
- **To Balance carried to New Ledger** this is used at the bottom of the last folio of an account within a ledger, and is often abbreviated, for instance as **To Balance C^d to New Ledger**

**Narrative
(continued)**

Common narrative elements

By Cash received Name A on Name B

This formula indicates a payment to Brown from another individual (Name A) by means of a paper instrument via a third party (Name B), the latter usually a banker. These paper instruments are most likely to be cheques (also known at this date as 'drawn notes'), banknotes or bills of exchange.

- **By Cash received Montague on Hoare**
- **By Cash received Stanley on Coutts**
- **By Stirling's bill on Child**

Although sometimes the words 'note' or 'bill' are included in the narrative, it is not always clear to what they refer – for instance 'note' may refer to a banknote or cheque (drawn note), whereas bill might refer to a bill of exchange or a cheque.

Per (often abbreviated to p)

The intended meaning of per is not always easy to determine, but is generally thought to mean 'on behalf of'.

- **By Cash received Freeman's bill on Smith per Clark**

In the example above, the most likely interpretation is that Clark has paid into Brown's account a bill or cheque drawn by Freeman on the banker Smith. Certain categories of bill or cheque could be assigned to another payee, and in this case it is possible that Clark has endorsed (to make it payable to Brown) a cheque signed by Freeman and payable to himself. In this interpretation the person paying Brown is Clark.

An alternative reading of this entry might be that Clark is merely the person who physically delivered to Drummonds Freeman's bill or cheque for payment into Brown's account (in which case the person paying Brown is Freeman).

It may only be possible to be sure of the real payee by using other sources to corroborate the transaction.

A group of such transactions where the final name (Lapidge) is identical can be found in Brown's account in 1782 (folio 175) where 5 credit transactions are of the form **Name A on Name B per Lapidge**

Stock transactions

On occasion Brown invested in, disposed of, or received dividends from stock.

Stock transactions are usually identifiable by the inclusion in the narrative of the name and nominal value of the stock and/or the number of months (often 6 months) covered by a dividend payment. Among those stocks in which Brown is known to have invested are

- **3 Per Cent Annuities** (often abbreviated to **3 Pc^{ts}**)
- **4 Per Cent Annuities** (often abbreviated to **4 Pc^{ts}**)
- **Consolidated Annuities** (often abbreviated to **Consols** or **3 Pc^t Consols**)
- **Long Annuities** (often abbreviated as **Long Anns**)
- **East India Stock** (often abbreviated as **India Stock**)

There are also references to purchases of Scrip, an abbreviation of 'Subscription', indicating the payment of a first instalment towards purchase of a stock.

Cross references

These references are thought to be to entries in day books or journals. Such books have not survived for Drummonds, but on the basis of the extant records of other banks it is known that transactions would have been entered chronologically in the books as they took place throughout each day. Each day's transactions would later have been written up into the relevant customer accounts within the customer account ledgers.

When a balance was brought forward from a previous ledger or carried forward to a subsequent ledger the figure in this column is the folio number in the previous or subsequent ledger.

Account totals and balances

At the bottom of each ledger folio, the clerks recorded the cumulative total of the value of transactions on each side of the account since the last balance was calculated, including the totals brought forward from the previous folio (unless the account had been balanced within the period covered by the current folio). Sometimes the right hand columns on each side of the account include sub-totals which were calculated during the year, though there does not seem to have been a set schedule governing when or if such sub-totals were calculated – it would appear that the clerks undertook this task when convenient in order to make the year-end totalling less onerous.

The value of transactions on each side (Dr and Cr) of the account were totalled and balanced at the end of each year and the outstanding balance was carried forward to the following year's ledger. Sometimes the account was also balanced during the year, when Brown or his representative was given or sent the 'vouchers' (such as paid cheques) and asked to agree the account up to that balance date. On such occasions Brown would sign the ledger against a phrase such as 'Settled my account & received the vouchers'.

Often there are also marginal notes (such as 'Vouchr^s exam^d') indicating that the vouchers had been checked (possibly by bank staff)

In common with most other Drummonds customers, Brown's settling of his account was not carried out with any regularity, and there were some years in which Brown did not settle the account or sign the ledger. On some occasions the vouchers were sent but the account was not signed, for example on 16 July 1772 the ledger (folio 26) is annotated 'Vouchers sent per his Servant, D[elivere]d to him by S Morrow' and the ledger was balanced without being signed.

It is assumed that Brown must have visited the bank to sign the ledgers. Although some of the annotations refer to a book being sent out with the vouchers – for example on 26 August 1776 (folio 24) 'The Book & Vouchers sent to Mr Lapidge per S Morrow' and the ledger was signed by Brown as having settled the account and received the vouchers – it seems improbable that the ledger itself would have been sent to Brown, and the book referred to is more likely to have been a pass book containing a copy of the transactions. A number of annotations to the ledgers indicate that there was a standing instruction in place in relation to the vouchers – for example, the annotation of 24 September 1778 (folio 175) states that 'The Vouchers were sent along with the Book to Mr Lapidge in pursuance of his Order in the Voucher Drawer, Mr Brown having formerly given a General Order for that purpose (S.M.)' and on this and other such occasions Brown signed the ledger to say that he had settled the account and received the vouchers. This evidence suggests that Samuel Lapidge had a significant role in managing and monitoring Brown's account at Drummonds.