

Papers relating to Alexander Bartlet & Co, West India merchants

This document describes a collection of records held by RBS 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.

collection reference	WC/41/
background history	<p>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. Alexander Bartlet and George Campbell owned plantations on Tobago; William Bartlet and his brother James owned cotton plantations on Carriacou.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 insurrections 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.</p> <p>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), senior partner in the bank Lowe, Vere & Williams. Williams was also managing owner or 'ship's husband' of fourteen trading vessels, largely East Indiamen, between 1778 and 1810. He was the last surviving trustee.</p>
our archive holdings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• title deeds, property in Tobago 1771-1815• estate inventories: Tobago 1773, Grenada 1785• balance and profit and loss accounts 1777-9• ship insurance policy 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
archives held elsewhere	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The National Archives: Letters from William Bartlet, Grenada, to Alexander 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).