

Guide to the Ralph Heyward Isham Papers

MS 1455



compiled by Susan Brady

December 1989

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
Yale University Library
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(203) 432-1735
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CALL NUMBER: MS 1455

CREATOR: Isham, Ralph Heyward, 1890-1955

TITLE: Ralph Heyward Isham papers

DATES: 1780-1976

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 4 linear feet

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The papers consist of correspondence, topical files, business and financial documents, photographs, and printed material which document Ralph Heyward Isham's British army service and his collecting and publishing of the James Boswell Papers.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1455>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1455>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html. The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Jonathan Isham in 1986; transfer from Boswell Papers, SML, in 1996 and 1997.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Copyright status for collection materials is unknown. Transmission or reproduction of materials protected by U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.) beyond that allowed by fair use requires the written permission of the copyright owners. Works not in the public domain cannot be commercially exploited without permission of the copyright owners. Responsibility for any use rests exclusively with the user.

Preferred Citation

Ralph Heyward Isham Papers (MS 1455). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

Ralph Heyward Isham was born in New York City on July 2, 1890. He attended Cornell University (1908), Yale College (1910-1911), and New York Law School. He served in the British army during World War I, and following the armistice in November of 1918 he was named head of an intelligence unit which investigated and suppressed Bolshevik activities among military personnel. For his army service he was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire, and retired at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Isham returned to New York City and was associated with a number of business concerns including Trumbull Securities Corporation, of which he was president. His avid collecting of James Boswell papers resulted in the private publication of *The Private Papers of James Boswell from Malahide Castle in the Collection of Lt.-Colonel Ralph Heyward Isham (1928-1934)* in eighteen volumes. He died in New York City in 1955.

Scope and Contents

The Ralph Heyward Isham Papers contain correspondence, topical files, business and financial documents, photographs and printed material which document Isham's British army service and his collecting and publishing of the James Boswell papers. The papers were donated to Manuscripts and Archives by Jonathan Isham in 1986. The three linear feet of papers are arranged in two series: I. BRITISH INTELLIGENCE FILES and II. BOSWELL PAPERS FILES.

Series I, BRITISH INTELLIGENCE FILES, consists of materials relating to Isham's work as head of a British army intelligence unit known as A-2, G.H.Q. When British soldiers were not demobilized immediately after the armistice in November of 1918, some disgruntled troops conducted "strikes" and refused to parade or obey orders. Isham's work in dealing with disaffection among troops at his command was brought to the attention of Field Marshall William Robertson who appointed Isham to his staff in 1918 to investigate and suppress Bolshevik activities which were believed to be responsible for the strikes. In order to assist him in accomplishing these goals, Robertson authorized the formation of the A-2 branch at General Headquarters. Isham was named director with a major and six other officers under his command. Through undercover investigations of suspected Bolsheviks and lectures to troops on the dangers of Bolshevism, the A-2 Branch was successful in ending and preventing strikes among servicemen. Subsequently, the A-2 Branch was placed within the Home Office so that Isham could conduct investigations and take disciplinary action against nonmilitary British citizens who were believed to be involved in traitorous activities.

Materials within the series include administrative correspondence and memoranda; correspondence between Isham and his agents; investigative reports by agents on individuals, organizations, and locations; records of the lecture program which describe the units addressed and impressions of troop morale; printed material; and several photographs.

Series II, BOSWELL PAPERS FILES, consists of correspondence, business and financial records, printed material and photographs related to Isham's collecting and publishing of the papers of James Boswell and Isham's involvement in the literary arena. Correspondents include the Talbots de Malahide from whom Isham obtained Boswell material; William Rudge, the printer of the eighteen-volume *The Private Papers of James Boswell from Malahide Castle in the Collection of Lt.-Colonel Ralph Heyward Isham*; Charles Getts, who, as Isham's agent arranged the collector's speaking engagements, and numerous individual and institutional subscribers to the *Papers*. The bulk of the business and financial records consists of invoices, receipts, inventories, sales accounts, and subscriber lists from William Rudge.

Arrangement

Arranged in two series and two additions: I. British Intelligence Files, 1917-1949. II. Boswell Papers Files, 1921-1949.

Collection Contents

Series I: British Intelligence Files, (1917-1920)-1949

1.5 linear feet (3 boxes)

This series contains material arranged alphabetically by name of individual, organization or topic. Files containing three photographs and the chronologically arranged printed material appear at the end of the series.

A2 Branch		
b. 1, f. 1	Organization A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	1919, undated
b. 1, f. 2	Precis of papers received A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	1919 April-September
b. 1, f. 3	Beaudrie, John T.	1919 March
b. 1, f. 4	<i>The Billet</i>	1919 January-November
b. 1, f. 5	Bolshevism in England	undated
Byrnes, John C. [Agent No. 8]		
b. 1, f. 6	Accounts A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	1919 May-1920 January
b. 1, f. 7	Reports A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	1919 May-1920-Jan, undated
b. 1, f. 8	Duplicate [supplementary] reports	1919 May-Dec, undated
b. 1, f. 9	Correspondence and notes (miscellaneous) A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	1919 March-October
Gray, G. R.		
b. 1, f. 10	Correspondence	1919 March-Dec, undated
b. 1, f. 11-13	Reports	1919 March-Dec, undated

Isham, Ralph H.		
b. 2, f. 14	Lectures - private notes	1918 December-1919 Mar, undated
b. 2, f. 15	Papers for France	1919 April-July undated
b. 2, f. 16-17	Private notes and memoranda	1918 Feb, 1919 January-1920 January, 1939, undated
Lectures		
b. 2, f. 18	Correspondence	1919 March-Nov, undated
b. 2, f. 19	Reports	1919 March-Oct, undated
b. 2, f. 20	Lee, Melville	1919 Apr, undated
b. 2, f. 21	Leeper, R. A.	1919 March 12
b. 2, f. 22	Leland, F. W. G.	1919 May- October
b. 2, f. 23	Lucas, C. C.	1927-1949, undated
b. 2, f. 24	Michod, P. D.	1919 Mar, undated
b. 2, f. 25	N. S. L.	[agent]
b. 2, f. 26	Page Croft, H.	1919 June-July
b. 2, f. 27	Parkes, Stanley	1919 March- April
b. 2, f. 28	Pearson, Arthur	1919 April-1920 January
b. 2, f. 29	Pickering, C. J.	1919 July
b. 2, f. 30	Pridham, G. R.	1919 March
b. 2, f. 31	Pym, H.	1919 July- October
Reports by agents		
b. 2, f. 32	Battersea and Kempton Park	1919 February
b. 2, f. 33	Conscientious objectors meetings	1919 April

Reports by agents (continued)

b. 2, f. 34	Ewer, W. Norman	1919 February
b. 2, f. 35	Gallacher, William	undated
b. 2, f. 36	Ginnett, Mr.	1919 March
b. 2, f. 37	Liverpool	1919 March
b. 2, f. 38	Paul, Willy	1919 March
b. 2, f. 39	Petrograd	1919 March
b. 2, f. 40	Ramsay, David	undated
b. 2, f. 41	Smillie, Robert	1919 March
b. 3, f. 42	Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Union	1919 March-Jun, undated
b. 3, f. 43	Troy, Lillian Scott and Von Horst, Baron	undated
b. 3, f. 44	West of Scotland Soviet Conference	1919 March
b. 3, f. 45	Woolwich Shop Stewards and the Communist Club	1919 March-May
b. 3, f. 46	Miscellaneous	1919 March-Oct, undated
b. 3, f. 47	Robertson, William R.	1925-1933, undated
b. 3, f. 48	Romer, Cecil	1925-1942
b. 3, f. 49	Saleeby, Dr.	1919 May
b. 3, f. 50	Thompson, S.	1919 March- November
b. 3, f. 51	Thomson, Basil	1919 March-Nov, undated
	Photographs	
b. 3, f. 52	C. C. Lucas with others	undated
b. 3, f. 52	M. S. Mundy	1919
b. 3, f. 53	Printed material	1917-1919, undated

Series II: Boswell Papers Files, 1921-1949*1.5 linear feet (3 boxes)*

This series contains material arranged alphabetically within divisions by type of material.

Correspondence

b. 4, f. 54	Anderson Galleries, Inc.	1926, 1934
b. 4, f. 55	Bodleian Library	1929, 1932-1938
b. 4, f. 56-59	Boswell, James, Lord Talbot de Malahide and Joyce Talbot de Malahide	1927-1948
b. 4, f. 60	British Museum	1929-1934, 1939, undated
b. 4, f. 61	Brown, Joseph E.	1931-1935
b. 4, f. 62	Bumpus, John & Edward, Ltd.	1926-1930
b. 4, f. 63	Chadbourne, Hunt, Jaeckel & Brown	1926-1929, 1948, undated
b. 4, f. 64	Crary, Mary	1948, undated
b. 4, f. 65	Denton, Hall & Burgin	1941-1944
b. 4, f. 66	Doubleday, Mrs. Frank	1929
b. 4, f. 67	Ellis, Richard [The Georgian Press]	1929
b. 4, f. 68-69	Getts, Clark H.	1934-1937
b. 4, f. 70	Hyde, Donald F.	1948, 1953
b. 4, f. 71	Kennerley, Mitchell	1929-1930, undated
b. 4, f. 72	London Library	1929-1932
b. 4, f. 73	Miller, Frank	1930
b. 4, f. 74	New York Public Library	1930-1931, 1937, 1942, 1948
b. 4, f. 75	Nichol Smith, D.	1947-1948
b. 4, f. 76	Oxford University Press	1937, 1944
b. 4, f. 77	Pottle, Frederick A.	1929-1931, 1937, 1940, 1944-1945, 1948, undated
b. 4, f. 78	Princeton University	1931, 1937-1938 undated
b. 4, f. 79	Putnam and Company, Ltd.	1937
b. 4, f. 80	Rice Institute	1944-1945

Correspondence (continued)

b. 4, f. 81	Rivière, Robert and Son	1923-1931
b. 4, f. 82	Rogers, Bruce	1928-1932, 1934, 1948
b. 4, f. 83	Royal Bank of Ireland	1928, 1930
b. 5, f. 84-88	Rudge, William E., Publisher	1929-1935
b. 5, f. 89	Whibley, Leonard	1930
b. 5, f. 90	Yale University Library	1927-1928, 1946-1948
b. 5, f. 91	A - G	
b. 5, f. 92	H - L	
b. 5, f. 93	M	
b. 5, f. 94	N - R	
b. 5, f. 95	S - Y	
b. 5, f. 96	Unidentified	
Business and financial records		
b. 5, f. 97	Lists of manuscripts	1928, undated
b. 5, f. 98	Miscellaneous documents and notes regarding publications	undated
b. 5, f. 99	Miscellaneous receipts and statements	1928-1949
b. 5, f. 100	Rivière, Robert & Son, Ltd.	1921-1928, undated
b. 5, f. 101	Robertson, D. O.	1924
Rudge, William E., Publisher		
b. 6, f. 102	Inventories	1934, 1936
b. 6, f. 103-104	Invoices and receipts	1929-1935
b. 6, f. 105	Sales accounts	1927-1934
b. 6, f. 106	Statements of account	1930-1935, undated
b. 6, f. 107	Subscribers lists	1930-1935
b. 6, f. 108	Photographs of James Boswell, Mary Crary, and unidentified pair of men	1948, undated
b. 6, f. 109	Printed material	1930, 1937, undated

Accession 1997-M-024: Additional Material

This addition to the Ralph Heyward Isham Papers consists of correspondence; business and financial records; and printed material pertaining to Isham's collecting and publishing of the papers of James Boswell.

Boswell Papers Files

Correspondence

b. 1, f. 1	Personal/family	1920, 1925, 1933-1939
b. 1, f. 2	A-D	
b. 1, f. 3	Bank of Ireland [includes Edinburgh materials]	1949-1950
b. 1, f. 4	Brandt and Brandt [includes legal agreements]	1930-1937, 1948-1949
b. 1, f. 5	Butterfield, L. H.	1948 January 8- October 6
	Chapman, R. W.	
b. 1, f. 6-7	1923-1930	1923-1930
b. 1, f. 8	1936-1937	1936-1937
b. 1, f. 9	1945-1950	1945-1950
b. 1, f. 10	Chase National Bank	1946 August-1947 February
	Denton, Hall and Burgin	
b. 1, f. 11-12	1924-1944, undated	1924-1944, undated
b. 1, f. 13	Doubleday, Page & Co.	1927-1928
b. 1, f. 14	F-H	
b. 1, f. 15	Gauss, Christian and Alice	1930-1935, undated
b. 1, f. 16	Harvard University [includes request to obtain Isham's Boswell collection]	1929, 1939, 1948, 1953
b. 1, f. 17	Hilles, Frederick W. [includes typescripts of Sir Joshua Reynolds]	1946-1952
b. 1, f. 18	Hyde, Donald and Mary	1949-1953, undated
b. 1, f. 19	I-P	
b. 1, f. 20	Lewis, Wilmarth	1930-1949

Boswell Papers Files > Correspondence (continued)

b. 1, f. 21	Liebert, Herman	1946-1951
b. 1, f. 22	McGraw Hill Publishing Co.	1948-1954
b. 1, f. 23	McKenzie, Hyde, Murphy and Law [includes legal agreements]	1948-1949
b. 1, f. 24	Morshead, Owen	1937-1949
b. 1, f. 25	New York Public Library	1949
b. 1, f. 26	Oxford University Press/Clarendon Press	1939, 1941
	Pottle, Frederick A. [correspondence primarily with Isham; also includes numerous publishers]	
b. 1, f. 27-32	1926-1934	1926-1934
b. 2, f. 33	1935 English	1935
b. 2, f. 34	1937-1943, 1953-1954, undated	1937-1943, 1953-1954, undated
	Additional correspondence [includes letters pertaining to manuscripts from Fettercairn House]	
b. 2, f. 35	1935-1936	1935-1936
b. 2, f. 36-37	1938-1945	1938-1945
b. 2, f. 38	1947 English	1947
b. 2, f. 40	Scott, Geoffrey [to and from Pottle]	1928 July-1929 February
b. 2, f. 40	Q-T	
b. 2, f. 41	Rogers, Bruce A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	
	Salpeter, Harry See: box 2, folder 43	
	Scott, Geoffrey	
b. 2, f. 42	[correspondence to/from Isham and others; includes letters of condolence re Scott's death] English	1924, 1928-1930, undated
b. 2, f. 43	[includes papers re Scott's estate] English	1928-1930, undated
b. 2, f. 44	Simon and Schuster	1937-1943
b. 2, f. 45	Spingarn, Arthur B.	1949-1951

Boswell Papers Files > Correspondence (continued)

	Talbot family [of Malahide]	
b. 2, f. 46-47	1926-1927	1926-1927
b. 2, f. 48	Inventory of letters from Boswell estate	1929, undated
b. 2, f. 49	Tinker, Chauncey Brewster	1926-1937
b. 2, f. 50	U-Z	
b. 2, f. 51	Van Alen, James H.	1927-1937, 1942, 1949, undated
	Viking Press/Guinzburg	
b. 2, f. 52	1930-1937	1930-1937
b. 2, f. 53	1940-1949	1940-1949
	William Edwin Rudge, Inc. [includes legal agreements]	
b. 2, f. 54	1927-1933	1927-1933
b. 2, f. 55	1935-1940, undated	1935-1940, undated
b. 3, f. 56	William Heinemann Ltd.	1930, 1949
b. 3, f. 57	Yale Library Associates	1940, 1952
b. 3, f. 58	Yale University Library	1940-1954
b. 3, f. 59	Unidentified	1929, 1950, undated
	Subject Files	
b. 3, f. 60	Bank statements	1928, 1946-1949
b. 3, f. 61	Books, cost of	1927, 1929, 1940-1948
b. 3, f. 62	Correspondence [inventory of incoming/outgoing]	
	Estate legal documents	
b. 3, f. 63-64	1937 January-May	1937 January-May
b. 3, f. 65-69	1939 January-October-1949, undated	1939 January-October-1949, undated
b. 3, f. 70	Expense records	1927-1939, 1946-1949, undated
b. 3, f. 71	Manuscripts [cost of acquisition/related expenses]	1927-1947
b. 3, f. 72	Manuscripts/books [inventory]	1934, 1936, undated

Boswell Papers Files > Subject Files (continued)

b. 3, f. 73	Notes [miscellaneous]	undated
b. 3, f. 74	Notes [re the manuscripts]	1934, undated
b. 3, f. 75	Printed material	1911, 1928-1934, 1946, 1976
b. 3, f. 76	Project costs	1932, 1946-1950, undated
b. 3, f. 77	Yale Library Associates	1954

Accession 1998-M-098: Additional Material

This addition to the Ralph Heyward Isham Papers consists of correspondence, inventories, and background information relating to the acquisition of the Boswell Papers.

Boswell Papers Files		
b. 1, f. 1-2	1780-1798	1780-1798
b. 1, f. 3	1800-1806	1800-1806
b. 1, f. 4	1812-1828	1812-1828
b. 1, f. 5	1833, 1835, 1857	1833, 1835, 1857
b. 1, f. 6	1873, 1899	1873, 1899
b. 1, f. 7	1905, 1917, 1920-1921	1905, 1917, 1920-1921
b. 1, f. 8	1936 English	1936
b. 1, f. 8	1937	1937
b. 1, f. 9	June	June
b. 1, f. 10	July–December	July–December
b. 1, f. 10	1938	1938
b. 1, f. 11	January–June	January–June
b. 1, f. 12	July–December	July–December

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Communism -- Great Britain
Intelligence service -- Great Britain
World War, 1914-1918 -- Great Britain

Geographic Names

Great Britain -- History -- George V, 1910-1936

Names

Boswell, James, 1740-1795
Isham, Ralph Heyward, 1890-1955