

# **Henry Dundas papers**

**Ms. Coll. 888**

**Finding aid prepared by Mitch Fraas.**

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Last updated on July 26, 2017.

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2012

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
<b>Creator</b>	Melville, Henry Dundas, Viscount, 1742-1811
<b>Title</b>	Henry Dundas papers
<b>Call number</b>	Ms. Coll. 888
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1781-1839
<b>Extent</b>	4 linear feet (13 boxes)
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>Henry Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville PC and Baron Dunira (28 April 1742–28 May 1811) was a Scottish lawyer and politician. He was the first Secretary of State for War and the last person to be impeached in the United Kingdom. His son, Robert Dundas, 2nd Viscount (14 March 1771–10 June 1851), was at various times Keeper of the Signet of Scotland, First Lord of the Admiralty, and a member of Parliament. The collection includes correspondence and documents formerly owned by the First and Second Viscounts Melville, Henry Dundas and Robert Dundas. The materials come from the Dundas family archives and consist of ten bound volumes and four boxes of unbound manuscripts. The bulk of the papers relate to British India with a smaller but still substantial subset dealing with Scottish politics, patronage, and pensions. With a few exceptions the collection comprises incoming correspondence and enclosures to Henry and Robert Dundas but not their replies.</p>

**Cite as:**

Henry Dundas papers, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

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## Biography/History

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Henry Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville PC and Baron Dunira (28 April 1742–28 May 1811) was a Scottish lawyer and politician. He was the first Secretary of State for War and the last person to be impeached in the United Kingdom. His son, Robert Dundas, 2nd Viscount (14 March 1771–10 June 1851), was at various times Keeper of the Signet of Scotland, First Lord of the Admiralty, and a member of Parliament. Henry Dundas was Solicitor General for Scotland from 1766, and Lord Advocate from 1775. He was Senior Commissioner on the new Board of Control, established by Pitt's India Bill of 1784, and his unwavering objective was to formulate a financially effective India policy, controlling, or at least, containing the power of the East India Company. "Dundas is more active and diligent than any other, but also selfish and Scotch. His interest is pillage and patronage: pillage by conquest and patronage at home," wrote one of his detractors in Parliament, George Canning. Patronage--the gift of commissions in India in return for votes and support at home--become a flourishing industry.

After holding subordinate offices under William Petty, 2nd Earl of Shelburne, and William Pitt the Younger, Dundas entered the cabinet in 1791 as Secretary of State for the Home Department. It was during this period that he was influential in obstructing the abolition of the slave trade. Appointed Minister for War on the outbreak of the Wars of the French Revolution, Dundas was Pitt's closest advisor and planner for Britain's military participation in the First Coalition. He is largely held responsible for the lack of organization and confused planning in the Flanders Campaign, especially the aborted siege of Dunkirk in September 1793.

From 1794 to 1801 he was War Secretary under Pitt, his great friend. From about 1798 on he pleaded frequently to be allowed to resign on health grounds, but Pitt, who relied on him greatly, refused even to consider it. In 1802 he was elevated to the Peerage of the United Kingdom as Viscount Melville and Baron Dunira. Under Pitt in 1804 he again entered office as First Lord of the Admiralty, when he introduced numerous improvements in the details of the department. Suspicion had arisen, however, as to the financial management of the Admiralty, of which Dundas had been treasurer between 1782 and 1800; in 1802 a commission of inquiry was appointed, which reported in 1805. The result was the impeachment of Dundas in 1806, on the initiative of Samuel Whitbread, for the misappropriation of public money; and though it ended in an acquittal, and nothing more than formal negligence lay against him, he never again held office. This was the last impeachment trial ever held in the House of Lords. Another reason for his retreat could have been Pitt's death in 1806. An earldom was offered in 1809 but declined.

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## Scope and Contents

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The collection includes correspondence and documents formerly owned by the First and Second Viscounts Melville, Henry Dundas and Robert Dundas. The materials come from the Dundas family archives and consist of ten bound volumes and four boxes of unbound manuscripts. The bulk of the papers relate to British India with a smaller but still substantial subset dealing with Scottish politics, patronage, and pensions. With a few exceptions the collection comprises incoming correspondence and enclosures to Henry and Robert Dundas but not their replies. Documents in the collection are primarily in English with a few in French.

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## Administrative Information

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University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2012

Finding aid prepared by Mitch Fraas.

### Use Restrictions

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### Provenance

The papers in this collection were given to the University of Pennsylvania Libraries by the estate of Professor Holden Furber (1903-1993) in 1993. Furber used many of the materials in the collection to write his first book *Henry Dundas, First Viscount Melville, 1742-1811* (Oxford, 1931). They are cited in Appendix C, pp. 315-17. Furber purchased most of the collection from the London bookseller Francis Edwards sometime after 1928. Edwards himself purchased the items at the 1927 Sotheby's sale of Dundas family papers from the collection of Violet Marie Louise Dundas (wife of Henry Dundas, 5th viscount Melville).

All of the bound volumes and many of the manuscripts listed in this finding aid can also be found described in the 1927 Sotheby's and 1928 Edwards' catalogs. These catalogs, with manuscript annotations by Furber and others, can be found in the University of Pennsylvania Libraries Rare Book & Manuscript Library:

Sotheby's February 23, 1927 sale: *Catalogue of valuable autograph letters, historical documents & printed books, comprising the Melville papers : ... the property of Violet, viscountess Melville ... which will be sold by auction by Messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge* [part 3], London, 1927. [Call number: Z997 M523 1924]

Francis Edwards' May 1928 catalog: *The Melville papers : original letters and documents relating to the East but mainly concerning Bombay, Madras, and Mysore 1780-1815 : from the collection of Henry Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville*. London : Printed by Geo. B. Flower, 1928. [Call number: Z997 M5232 1928]

## Source of Acquisition

Estate of Holdern Furber, 1993

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## Related Materials

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### Related Materials

Because of the public sale of the Dundas papers, numerous libraries around the world contain portions of the Melville archive. Substantial collections are located at the National Library of Scotland, the British Library, the John Rylands Library, and the University of Michigan. For more on the disposition of the wider archive, see William Welke, "The Papers of the Viscounts Melville," *American Archivist* 26.4 (Oct. 1963), 449-462, as well as the *National Register of Archives* maintained at the UK National Archives (Kew). The Dundas papers related to British India held at the British Library as well as the extensive India correspondence with Henry and Robert Dundas (comprising GB 133 Eng MSS 523, 670-699, 926-927 at the John Rylands Library in Manchester, England) contain material closely related to that in this collection.

Related manuscript items in Penn's Rare Book & Manuscript Library include the following.

- (1) UPenn Ms. Codex 231 is a similar bound volume with the same provenance containing correspondence from Sir John Shore to Henry Dundas.
  - (2) UPenn Ms. Coll. 840, also owned by Holden Furber, contains proceedings from the House of Commons related to the impeachment of Henry Dundas in 1805.
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## Controlled Access Headings

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### FORM/GENRE(S)

- Correspondence
- Manuscripts, English--18th century
- Manuscripts, English--19th century

### GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)

- Edinburgh (Scotland)--Politics and government--18th century
- Edinburgh (Scotland)--Politics and government--19th century
- India--History--British occupation, 1765-1947
- Scotland -- Politics and government -- 18th century
- Scotland -- Politics and government -- 19th century

**SUBJECT(S)**

- East India Company--History--18th century
- East India Company--History--19th century

## Collection Inventory

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### **SERIES I. CORRESPONDENCE AND PAPERS RELATING TO INDIA, 1783-1828.**

#### **A. LETTERS OF SIR JOHN MACPHERSON TO HENRY DUNDAS, 1784-1786.**

Box

1

##### **Description of volume 1**

Bound volume of letters from Sir John Macpherson (1745-1821), sometime Governor General of India to Henry Dundas. Also included are various enclosures. The codex contains a loose manuscript index of the letters.

The volume also includes a rare piece of Calcutta printing (ESTC T145949) with Macpherson's gift inscription to Dundas: "Calcutta 7 April 1783 To the Right Honorable Henry Dundas Lord Advocate of Scotland and President of the Select Committee of the House of Commons for enquiring into the affairs of the East India Company – Copy of the treaty of Poona and alliance for the security of the British colonies in India is inscribed by his humble servant John Macpherson." The printed piece is entitled *Treaty of Perpetual Friendship and Alliance between the United Company of Merchants of England Trading to the East Indies, and the Marattahs, concluded by Mr. David Anderson with Mahdajee Sindia the 17th of May 1782, ratified by the Peshwa the 20th of December 1782, and finally completed and exchanged the 24th of February 1783* (Calcutta: Printed at Calcutta by order of the Hon'ble the Gov. General and Council, Charles Wilkins superintendant of the Press, MDCCLXXXIII [1783]).

Box

#### **B. ABSTRACTS OF OFFICIAL LETTERS FROM INDIA TO THE EAST INDIA COMPANY IN LONDON, 1784-1788.**

2-4

##### **Description of volumes 2-4**

This subseries comprises three bound volumes. Each volume contains abstracts of dozens of official letters sent from East India Company establishments in India back to the company in London. Complete copies of the original letters can be found at the British Library and some



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have been printed.

Volume 2: Abstracts of Letters sent from Bombay to the EIC in London: 4 May 1784 to 6 May 1788

Volume 3: Abstracts of Letters sent from Bengal to the EIC in London: 28 August 1784 to 30 March 1788

Volume 4: Abstracts of Letters sent from Fort St. George [Madras] to the EIC in London: 16 November 1784 to 30 March 1788

**C. LETTERS OF MAJOR FORBES ROSS MACDONALD TO HENRY DUNDAS, 1791-1799.**

Box  
5

**Description of volume 5**

Bound volume of letters from Major Forbes Ross Macdonald (d. 1799) to Henry Dundas. MacDonald was the sometime governor of Prince of Wales Island (now Penang, Malaysia) and an East India Company official. The volume includes two long reports by MacDonald on his overland journey from Madras to Cairo in 1791 as well as correspondence on Aden, Egypt, and his India matters generally. The codex also includes two loose manuscript letters. Holden Furber used this volume to prepare his "Major Forbes Ross MacDonald and the Arab World: Britain, India, and the Middle East 1791-1798," *Indica* 13 (1976), 93-104.

Box  
6

**D. LETTERS OF SIR RALPH WOODFORD TO HENRY DUNDAS, 1793-1798.**

**Description of volume 6**

Bound volume of correspondence from Sir Ralph Woodford (d. 1810) to Henry Dundas, primarily concerning opening British trade with the Philippines. Amongst the correspondence is a lengthy report by Woodford dated 1792 and entitled "Considerations for concerting a commercial arrangement with the Philippine Islands" . Holden Furber cited these letters extensively in his "An Abortive Attempt at Anglo-Spanish Commercial Collaboration in the Far East in 1793," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 15 (1935), 448-463.

Box  
7

**E. LETTERS OF GENERAL JAMES STUART TO HENRY DUNDAS, 1796-1800.**

**Description of volume 7**

Bound volume of outgoing letters from James Stuart (1741-1815) at Bombay to Henry Dundas. Stuart was commander and chief of military forces at Bombay from 1797 to 1800.

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Included in the volume are more than thirty letters, among them Stuart's own thirty-page "Paper of Observations respecting the present state of India" and hundred-page, "Observations on Malabar." In addition, the volume contains two items printed in Bombay. The first is a fragment of the *Bombay Courier* (6 January 1798), and the second is a complete copy of ESTC N11435: *A letter to an officer on the Madras establishment: being an attempt to illustrate some particular institutions of the Maratta people; ... Also an account of the political changes of the empire, in the year 1796, as published in the Bombay Courier*, by William Henry Tone (Bombay: printed at the Courier Press, 1798).

Box

**F. CATALOG OF HENRY DUNDAS' "MISCELLANEOUS EAST INDIA PAPERS" , UNDATED.**

8

**Description of volume 8**

This volume, bound in a different fashion from the nine other volumes, appears to be a manuscript index to many of the other volumes in the collection. It is "classed according to the names of the several correspondents in Alphabetical order" and includes some manuscript notes by Holden Furber.

Box

**G. LETTERS AND ENCLOSURES FROM JONATHAN DUNCAN TO HENRY AND ROBERT DUNDAS, 1789-1812.**

9

**Description of volumes 9 and 10**

Volume 9: LETTERS OF JONATHAN DUNCAN TO HENRY DUNDAS, SEPTEMBER 1795 TO FEBRUARY 1802. This volume contains fifty-six private letters (268 pp.) written by Duncan to Dundas. The letters touch on a wide variety of subjects, including the campaigns against Tipu Sultan and Nana Fadnavis, Malabar affairs, and the Red Sea trade. The enclosures included in this correspondence were bound and can be found in volume 10.

Volume 10: ENCLOSURES FROM THE CORRESPONDENCE OF JONATHAN DUNCAN WITH HENRY DUNDAS, 1796-1801. This volume consists of 105 numbered enclosures sent by Duncan with his letters to Dundas, between 16 January 1796 and 22 June 1801. It includes an manuscript table of contents. Among these enclosures are several particularly notable items, including: #68: Watercolor drawing of Jemalabad entitled "View of Jemalabad," formerly enclosed in a letter of 16 October 1800; #78: Translation of a description of Aden by Aga Mohammed Behany (1799); #79 Capt. Sir Alexander Walker's "Remarks and Observations on Malabar with Governor Duncan's Observations thereon," November 1799, 100 pp. The volume also contains several fragments of early newspaper printings from India, including excerpts from

the *Madras Courier* (1797) and *Bombay Courier* (1798, 1799). There are also complete issues of the *Bombay Gazette*, which was hitherto traced in only one issue for the eighteenth century: #14: *Bombay Gazette* (4 July 1798) Number 421, Vol. IX; #71: *Bombay Gazette* (13 November 1799) Number 942, Vol. X (Bombay – Printed by John Turner, for the proprietor of the Gazette Printing Office, No. 1, Nesbitt’s Lane)[ESTC P6146].

**H. CORRESPONDENCE FROM JONATHAN DUNCAN AT BOMBAY, 1781-1809.**

	Box	Folder
to Henry Dundas, 1789-1803.	10	1-6
<b>to Robert Dundas, 1807-1812.</b>	10	7-15

**Note**

Includes a 37-page document by Thomas Marshall entitled "Notes on a March from Maundwee [Mandvi] in Kutch to Hyderabad in Sind" (June-July 1808), which is enclosed in a letter of 21 January 1809.

<b>Printed newspapers enclosed with Duncan’s letters, 1809-1811. .</b>	10	16
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**Contents**

1. *Bombay Courier* (Saturday, 4 February 1809) Number 856, Vol. XIX. Supplement to the *Bombay Courier* (Saturday, 4 February 1809). MS note “13 July 1809 from Gov. Duncan.”
2. *Bombay Courier* (Saturday, 9 June 1810) Number 927, Vol. XX. MS note “In Gov. Duncan’s Letr 16 June 1810.”
3. *Bombay Courier* (Saturday, 15 September 1810) Number 941, Vol. XX. MS note “In Gov. Duncan’s Letr 15 September 1810.”
4. *Bombay Gazette* (Wednesday, 3 October 1810) Number 1062, Vol. XXI. No MS note.
5. *Supplement to the India Gazette* (Monday, 5 November 1810) [pub. Calcutta]. Also included is “Additional Supplement”--one sheet, same date. MS note “In Gov. Duncan’s Letr 25 Nov 1810.”
6. *Bombay Courier Extraordinary* (Monday, 21 January 1811). Broadsheet. MS note “In Gov. Duncan’s Letr 14 Feb 1811.”
7. *Bombay Gazette* (Wednesday, 1 May 1811) Number 1092, Vol. XXII. No

MS note.

**I. GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE ABOUT INDIAN AFFAIRS, 1784-1828.**

	Box	Folder
Notes and proposals of Richard Atkinson on the constitution of the EIC Board of Directors [published by Holden Furber as "The East India Directors in 1784," <i>Journal of Modern History</i> , v. 5, 482-495], 1784-1785.	11	17
Summaries of correspondence relating to George Baldwin, British consul at Alexandria, Egypt, 1786-1791.	11	18
Letters from Archibald Campbell in India to Henry Dundas, 1786-1788.	11	19-21
Letters from Colonel James Ross at Calcutta to Henry Dundas, 1788-1892.	11	22
Letters from Lord Hobart at Madras to Henry Dundas, 1795-1797.	11	23-24
Letters from George Buchan at Malacca, Calcutta, and Madras to Henry Dundas, 1796-1809.	11	25
"Memorandum relative to the late French Corps in the Deccan, from Captain Malcolm," 2 December 1798; also a second copy of the same in cypher with an enclosing letter by Henry Dundas, dated 19 August 1800.	11	26
Letters from Charles Grant to Henry Dundas, 1800-1801.	11	27
Letters from Lord Castlereagh to Henry Dundas, 1802-1804.	11	28
Two documents on the French in India, one entitled "Total Expulsion of the French from Maritime India" and undated. The second is a December 1807 letter about Napoleon's plans for India.	11	29
Correspondence of Sir John Barrow about China and Portuguese India, 1809-1812.	11	30

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Copy of the "Provisional Treaty of Commerce between his Highness Mehmed Ali Pacha Vice Roy of Egypt and Mr. Benzoni" , 28 May 1810.	11	31
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Miscellaneous India correspondence, including a 1785 petition to William Pitt from Capt. Charles Cathcart at Madras as well as a service history in the East Indies of Charles Oakley, an anonymous undated derogatory letter addressed to Henry Dundas about Parliamentary legislation, and an 1828 letter to Robert Dundas about a position examining appeals from India., 1785-1828.	11	32
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## **J. EAST INDIA COMPANY LISTS, 1799-1808.**

### **Description**

This subseries contains a number of manuscript lists presented to Henry and Robert Dundas or produced by them. Four relate to the process of appointing new recruits for East India Company service while one enumerates owners of EIC stock.

	Box	Folder
Earl of Mornington's (Richard Wellesley) list of "Persons Recommended for EIC service" , 1799-1800.	11	33
Applications for Cadetships, 1799.	11	34
List of Applications: Writers, Cadets, Assistant Surgeons, 12 December 1800.	11	35
"A List of Proprietors of East India Stock, who are supposed to be under the influence of Government " , April 1808.	11	36

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## **SERIES II. CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO SCOTTISH POLITICS, PENSIONS, AND PATRONAGE, 1781-1839.**

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**A. HENRY DUNDAS SCOTTISH CORRESPONDENCE, 1781-1809.**

**Description**

This subseries includes correspondence and papers relating to Henry Dundas' role in Scottish patronage and politics, especially as a member of Parliament for Edinburgh and influential member of the governing party.

	Box	Folder
Scottish political papers, 1781-1809.	12	37-39
Lists and correspondence related to the city government of Edinburgh, including lists of magistrates and merchant council members, 1785-1799.	12	40

**B. ROBERT DUNDAS PENSION AND PATRONAGE CORRESPONDENCE, 1796-1839.**

**Description**

This subseries includes voluminous correspondence with Robert Dundas, largely as Keeper of the Signet of Scotland and First Lord of the Admiralty, from political clients and other petitioners asking for favors, pensions, or other sinecures. Arranged chronologically.

	Box	Folder
Letters from Generals John and Alexander Hope to Robert Dundas, 1796-1815.	12	41-42
Lists of people drawing Scottish pensions, 1801-1803,1810-1826.	12	43
Miscellaneous pension and patronage correspondence with Robert Dundas, 1805-1839, undated.	12	44-47
Pension correspondence relating to Lord Erroll, 1802-1807.	13	48
Pension correspondence relating to Lord Kirkcudbright, 1803-1829.	13	49-52
Letters from David Hume (Scottish jurist) to Robert Dundas, 1807-1826.	13	53

Correspondence with Robert Dundas about marine insurance, 1810.	13	54
Copy of a royal pardon granted to Chaw and Pickdeean, two Chinese residents of Prince of Wales Island, 1811.	13	55
Letters from Phoebe Ferguson to Robert Dundas, 1813-1828.	13	56
Patronage correspondence relating to William Norton, 1819.	13	57
Pension correspondence relating to Sir Alexander Boswell, 1819-1821.	13	58
<b>Letters from William James and William Fitzroy to Robert Dundas about naval history, 1819-1823.</b>	13	59
<b>Note</b>		
Includes a printed pamphlet: Fitz Roy, William. 1823. <i>A brief statement arising out of a passage contained in the third volume of James's Naval history of Great Britain, on the conduct and character of Lord William Fitz Roy, in the year 1805.</i> London: Printed by S. and R. Bentley. (Penn copy signed by Fitzroy at end)		
Correspondence about the position of the Master of the King's Works of Scotland, 1824.	13	60
Pension correspondence relating to Lord Hardwicke, 1826-1829.	13	61
Correspondence between Robert Dundas, John Hill and others regarding victualing and naval stores, 1826-1830.	13	62

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**SERIES III. MISCELLANEOUS DUNDAS FAMILY CORRESPONDENCE, 1784-1830.**

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**A. LETTERS WRITTEN BY MEMBERS OF THE DUNDAS FAMILY, 1784-1830.**

**Description**

This subseries contains miscellaneous letters written by Henry, Robert, and David Dundas.

	Box	Folder
Copy and original letters from Henry Dundas, 1784-1802, undated.	13	63
Miscellaneous letters by Dundas family members David (1801) and Robert (1807-30), 1801-1830.	13	64

	Box	Folder
<b>B. MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE, 1800.</b>	13	65

**Contents**

Letter written by David Milne on board HMS Seine “off of St. Domingo 22 August 1800,” describing a naval action with French ships. The letter was sent to Lord Seymour and later enclosed in untraced correspondence with Henry Dundas.

	Box	Folder
<b>C. REPRODUCTIONS OF DUNDAS LETTERS, 1797-1803.</b>	13	66

**Contents**

Two xeroxed Henry Dundas letters from other collections: one from Walter Boyd dated 23 March 1797 and the second from Warren Hastings dated 25 April 1803.