This guide provides an overview of the scope and content of the archives of Joseph Chamberlain held at the Cadbury Research Library and is intended to highlight particular areas for research within the collections.

### Biography

Joseph Chamberlain (1836–1914) was a successful industrialist who became a hugely influential figure in later nineteenth century political life both in Birmingham and nationally. He was also instrumental in the establishment of the University of Birmingham and was its first Chancellor.

He was born in London on 8 July 1836 into a Unitarian family. His father was a cordwainer and metal manufacturer, and after studying at University College School he became an apprentice in the family business. He was sent to Birmingham in 1854 to look after his father’s investment in the wood screw manufacturing business of John Sutton Nettlefold, and worked to expand the firm’s markets in Britain and overseas. He also implemented ways of increasing productivity by introducing shorter working days for the firm’s employees.

Chamberlain became involved in Liberal politics in Birmingham in the 1860s and campaigned for electoral reform. He supported the provision of education for workers and, with other businessmen with similar views, founded the Birmingham Education League in 1867 to campaign for free, secular, elementary education, to be funded by local authorities. The Birmingham Education League developed into the National Education League, and the adoption of the Elementary Education Act of 1870 was a response to the objectives of this political movement. Chamberlain was a member of the Birmingham School Board from 1870 to 1876. Joseph Chamberlain became a member of Birmingham Town Council in 1869 and was elected Mayor of Birmingham in 1873. He brought the gas and water supply under council control, bringing the municipal schemes into profit and improving public health. He began a civic improvement programme in 1875 to demolish slum housing and to build a commercial centre.

He was elected MP for Birmingham in 1876 and became involved in efforts to organize the Liberal Party through the newly formed National Liberal Federation in the late 1870s, which helped the Liberals gain victory in the General Election of 1880. As a result, Gladstone offered Chamberlain the position of President of the Board of Trade. He resigned from the Cabinet in 1886 because of his opposition to Gladstone’s intention to implement Home Rule for Ireland.

Chamberlain allied himself with others opposed to Home Rule who identified themselves as Liberal Unionists and, though separate, developed closer links with the Conservative government in the late 1880s. He was invited by Lord Salisbury to lead a diplomatic mission to Washington in 1887 to resolve a fisheries dispute between Canada and the USA, and assumed leadership of the Liberal Unionists in 1892. The Conservatives and Liberal Unionists formed a coalition government in 1895 and Chamberlain became Colonial Secretary.

Chamberlain encouraged trade between Britain and the crown colonies and was keen to fund railways and make improvements to infrastructure in these areas. He made a major contribution to research in tropical medicine, raising money for the establishment of the London School of Tropical Medicine in 1899. His time as Colonial Secretary, however, came to be dominated by his handling of events in South Africa which began with the Jameson Raid in December 1895 and culminated in the Boer War.
The last phase of his political career was devoted to campaigning for the adoption of tariff reform, introducing preferential rates for the exchange of goods between Britain and its colonies, and imposing tariffs on imports from elsewhere. He resigned as Colonial Secretary in 1903 when his proposals were rejected. He also led the campaign for the transformation of Mason Science College into the University of Birmingham from 1898 and was personally responsible for securing large donations from Andrew Carnegie and Lord Strathcona towards new University buildings at Edgbaston.

Chamberlain was married three times, first to Harriet Kenrick in 1861 who gave birth to a daughter, Beatrice, and a son, Austen. Harriet died shortly after Austen’s birth. Chamberlain married Florence Kenrick in 1868, with whom he had a son, Neville, and three daughters, Ida, Hilda, and Ethel. Florence died in childbirth in 1875. Chamberlain’s third wife was Mary Endicott, daughter of Massachusetts politician William Endicott, whom he married in 1888. He lived in Edgbaston during his first two marriages, and in 1880 moved into Highbury, the house he commissioned on land between Moseley and Kings Heath.

Guidance to the archives

The Joseph Chamberlain Papers form a major source for the study of many aspects of his life and career. This collection primarily consists of political and personal correspondence, but there are also notebooks, copies of speeches and articles, press cuttings, illustrations and political cartoons, and photographs. Other material relating to Joseph Chamberlain can be found in the Chamberlain Family Collection, which includes testimonials, ceremonial programmes, and scrapbooks.

Material relating to Chamberlain’s business career includes a notebook he kept while partner of Nettlefold & Chamberlain in the 1860s and early 1870s. There are also papers concerning his political activities in Birmingham particularly his involvement in the Birmingham Education League and Birmingham School Board. His role as Mayor is less well documented, but the archives include letter books and printed sources. The personal and political papers are particularly strong sources for the study of Chamberlain’s impact on national politics in the 1880s, as Liberal and then Liberal Unionist MP following his split with Gladstone over Irish Home Rule, and for the study of his time as Colonial Secretary from 1895 to 1903. They include substantial correspondence discussing government policy towards British colonies, particularly in South Africa. There is also good coverage of Chamberlain’s support for Tariff Reform after 1903.

The papers provide an insight into Chamberlain’s personal life through some correspondence of and relating to his first two wives, Harriet Kenrick and Florence Kenrick, and substantial correspondence to and from his third wife, Mary Endicott. The Chamberlain Family collection contains a number of photographs of Highbury including its gardens.
Chamberlain's central role in the campaign to establish the University of Birmingham is revealed not only in his personal and political papers, but also in the Joseph Chamberlain Letters Additional collection (JCLAdd). This is an artificial sequence of letters and other papers which complements the personal archive and includes important correspondence between Chamberlain and the Principal, Oliver Lodge, from 1900. The two men discuss the development of the University of Birmingham, the expansion of academic departments, the construction of the new buildings at Edgbaston and improvements to the old Mason Science College buildings in the city centre. They also exchange opinions about University policy and the continued need to raise funds.

The University’s own institutional archives also contain correspondence relating to the establishment of the University, including letters to and from Joseph Chamberlain, and minutes of committees on which he served.

The archives contain letters between Chamberlain and Lord Calthorpe discussing the donation of land on the Edgbaston estate which was used for the new university, and several letters to and from some of the individuals and organisations targeted by Chamberlain to donate towards the provision of new buildings and additional staff. One of the most generous of these benefactors was Andrew Carnegie, the industrialist and philanthropist, who donated £50,000 to the University fund on condition that it was used to construct new buildings for science teaching. Correspondence in the archives records details of Chamberlain’s diplomatic attempts to secure the donation, and Carnegie’s reasons for setting his conditions.

Evidence of Chamberlain’s influence over the design of the new buildings can be seen in minutes of University Council and of the Buildings committee, as well as in the drawings by architects Sir Aston Webb and Edward Ingress Bell in the University archives. The drawings chart amendments made over time, even during the construction process.

Chamberlain regularly took part in University events and is shown in his Chancellor’s robes in several photographs, including those of the first degree ceremony in 1901. He is also featured in articles in the student magazine, The Mermaid. He was forced to retire from public life following a severe stroke in 1906, and ceased to be directly involved in the University’s development after this time. However, he was acknowledged in celebrations to mark the official opening of the buildings by Edward VII in 1909, and is featured on a number of souvenir postcards produced for the event, contained in the archives. The inscription on the base of the clock tower records that this structure is dedicated to his achievements as founder of the University, and serves as a memorial to his work.

The first degree ceremony in July 1901 was filmed by Mitchell & Kenyon, a Blackburn company. The short film includes footage of the ceremonial procession, featuring Joseph Chamberlain, University staff and graduating students, including the first women to receive a University of Birmingham degree. Stills from the film can be seen on the British Film Institute website http://www.bfi.org.uk/
Other Chamberlain Family archive sources for research

Resource guide developed by Dr Helen Fisher, University Archivist, Cadbury Research Library

- Papers of Austen Chamberlain (1863-1937) and Chamberlain Family Papers document Austen Chamberlain’s political career as Liberal Unionist MP for East Worcestershire (1892-1914) and then West Birmingham, and Cabinet member with roles including Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1903-1905 and 1919-1921; and Secretary of State for India, 1915-1917. He was Leader of the Conservative Party, 1921-1922 in Lloyd George’s Coalition Government, and was Foreign Secretary, 1924-1929 when he played a key role in securing the Locarno treaties in 1925 which formed a security pact between France and Germany, for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1926. Papers contain correspondence, speeches, articles, press cuttings, and photographs.

- Papers of Mary Endicott Chamberlain can be found in both the Austen Chamberlain and Chamberlain Family collections including correspondence between Mary and Austen as well as substantial correspondence from Mary to her mother in the USA, providing detailed and vivid accounts of her life in Birmingham and London, including her political and social engagements as the wife of Joseph Chamberlain. The collections also contain diaries and photograph albums compiled by Mary documenting family life at Highbury and British and overseas travel in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

- Papers of Neville Chamberlain are a rich source for the study of his political career and family relationships. They include correspondence written during his time managing a sisal plantation in the Bahamas in the 1890s, travel diaries containing accounts of visits to Egypt, India and European countries, particularly Italy and France in the early 1900s, papers relating to his role as Mayor of Birmingham (1915-1916) and later Liberal Unionist MP for Birmingham Ladywood (1918-1929) and Birmingham Edgbaston (1929-1940), and correspondence and political diaries discussing policies he enacted as Minister of Health (1923 and 1924-1929), Chancellor of the Exchequer (1923 and 1931-1937) and Prime Minister (1937-1940), including material relating to the Munich crisis of 1938 and his meetings with Hitler.

- The Neville Chamberlain papers also contain a valuable sequence of letters between Neville and his sisters, Ida and Hilda, written weekly from 1915 to 1940, which contain discussion of contemporary political, economic, and social issues, seen through Neville’s political career and his sisters’ local government and voluntary work in the Hampshire village of Odiham, including Ida’s work for the District and County Councils, and Hilda’s role in the National Federation of Women’s Institutes. Domestic themes are presented alongside exchange of political thought. The correspondence provides a comprehensive record of Neville’s political career and personal life.

- Further correspondence of Ida and Hilda Chamberlain, but also of their sister, Ethel, and half-sister, Beatrice, can be found in the Papers of Beatrice Chamberlain, which also include travel diaries and personal items.

- The Chamberlain Family Collection is a useful source for photographs, printed material, scrapbooks and press cuttings relating to Joseph, Austen and Neville Chamberlain.

Catalogue References
- AC: Austen Chamberlain Papers
- BC: Beatrice Chamberlain Papers
- C: Chamberlain Family Collection
- JC: Joseph Chamberlain Papers
- NC: Neville Chamberlain Papers

Other archive resources at Birmingham Archives, Heritage & Photography Service, Library of Birmingham; portraits and artefacts at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery and Research and Cultural Collections, University of Birmingham