

Guide to the The Danby Papers

OSB MSS 6



by Beinecke Staff

March 1995

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	3
Requesting Instructions	3
Administrative Information	4
Immediate Source of Acquisition	4
Conditions Governing Access	4
Conditions Governing Use	4
Preferred Citation	4
THOMAS OSBORNE, EARL OF DANBY (1631/32-1712)	4
Scope and Contents	5
Collection Contents	7
Series I: Correspondence, 1673-85	7
INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE	7
OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE	8
Osborne, Thomas, 1631-1712	8
THIRD PARTY CORRESPONDENCE	8
Unidentified	8
Series II: Danby Papers	9
PAPERS CONCERNING THE POPISH PLOT	9
Coleman, Edward, d.1678	9
PAPERS RELATED TO DANBY'S IMPEACHMENT	9
PAPERS OF THE ADMIRALTY OFFICE (1671-73)	9
PAPERS OF THE TREASURY	9
DOCUMENTS CONCERNING THE WEST RIDING MILITIA	10
MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS OF AFFAIRS OF STATE (1660-1700)	10
OTHER PAPERS	11
Series III: Later Osborne and Godolphin Papers, 1686-1709	12
Oversize, 1670-1700	13
PAPERS CONCERNING THE POPISH PLOT	13
PAPERS OF THE TREASURY	13
DOCUMENTS CONCERNING THE WEST RIDING MILITIA	13
MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS OF AFFAIRS OF STATE	13
Selected Search Terms	14

Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: OSB MSS 6

CREATOR: Leeds, Thomas Osborne, Duke of, 1631-1712

TITLE: Danby papers

DATES: 1661-1748

BULK DATES: 1661-1684

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 2.5 linear feet (3 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The papers document aspects of Danby's political career, particularly his investigation of the Popish Plot and his impeachment in 1678. They include correspondence with Robert Spencer, Earl of Sunderland on the negotiation for the Treaty of Nijmegen; letters from several members of the House of Lords on affairs of state; extracts from the correspondence of Edward Coleman and from informants' testimonies; letters and documents relating to Danby's impeachment and imprisonment, including copies of his petitions for release; and papers concerning his various offices, including muster rolls for the West Riding Militia and Treasury accounts.

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

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

The majority of the papers which comprise this collection were part of a collection purchased by John Webster in 1872, and later acquired by George Moffatt. James Osborn subsequently acquired the papers, lot 355 of the Sotheby's Moffatt sale, in October 1959. The Danby Papers were given to the Beinecke Library by Mr. Osborn in 1976.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Danby Papers are the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

The Danby Papers. James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

THOMAS OSBORNE, EARL OF DANBY (1631/32-1712)

Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby, Marquis of Carmarthen, and Duke of Leeds was born on February 20, 1631/32, the son of Sir Edward Osborne and his wife, Anne. He spent his early years at the family estate of Kiveton in Yorkshire and succeeded his father as second baronet in 1647. In 1661 he was appointed High Sheriff of Yorkshire, probably through the influence of the Duke of Buckingham, his patron. He served as a member of Parliament for York (1665-73), Joint Commissioner of Public Accounts (1667); Joint Treasurer of the Navy (1668-71), and Treasurer of the Navy (1671-73). His administrative skills earned him the favor of Charles II and in 1673 he was appointed to the office of Lord High Treasurer. A year later, he was created Earl of Danby.

As chief minister to Charles II, Danby became one of the most powerful men in English politics during the 1670s. Proud and ambitious, the Earl had few friends. Instead, he concentrated his efforts on organizing a Court party which served the Cavalier and Church interests. He was active in foreign affairs and attempted to secure the permanent adoption of a Protestant and anti-French policy. However, he failed to gain the support of Charles II, who directed the Lord Treasurer to accept subsidies from France as the price for English neutrality in the wars fought by Louis XIV.

In 1678, Danby pressed for an investigation into an alleged conspiracy against the king, the government and the Protestant religion, an episode which became known as the Popish Plot. He was responsible for securing a warrant to obtain copies of the papers of Edward Coleman, a suspected intriguer, an action which had consequences for his own political security.

The Popish Plot gave Danby's enemies a chance to strike. In December 1678, the Privy Council ordered the seizure of political and diplomatic papers belonging to Ralph Montagu, the former ambassador in Paris. The papers contained highly damaging letters written by the Lord Treasurer which revealed the French subsidy to an outraged House of Commons. Danby was accused of high treason and charged with endeavoring to introduce arbitrary government. He was described as "popishly affected" and was said to have concealed

the Plot. Danby was committed to the Tower of London and refused bail by the House of Commons. He resigned from his office as Lord Treasurer in March 1679.

Danby remained in the Tower for five years, during which time he made unremitting efforts to secure his freedom, appealing to both the king and Parliament. He finally was released on bail in 1684. The order of impeachment against him was annulled a year later.

In subsequent years, Danby took an active part in opposition to the government. He was one of the seven noblemen to sign an invitation to Prince William of Orange in 1688. After the Revolution, he served as the Lord President of the Council (1688-99). He was disliked by many of his fellow courtiers, one of whom described the earl as "a thin, ill-natured ghost that haunts the king" (DNB, p. 1195).

In 1689 he was created Marquis of Carmarthen and in 1694 he became Duke of Leeds. He served as the Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding (1674-79, 1689-99), the East Riding (1691-99), and of the North Riding (1692-99). He married, in 1653, Bridget, 2nd daughter of Montagu Bertie, 2nd Earl of Lindsey, and had five daughters and three sons, among them Edward, Viscount Latimer (1655-89), and Peregrine, 2nd Duke of Leeds (1659-1734). He died on July 26, 1712 at the age of 81 and was buried at Harthill, in Yorkshire.

Scope and Contents

The Danby Papers consist of two boxes of correspondence and related papers that document aspects of the Earl of Danby's political career, in particular, his investigation of the alleged Popish Plot and his impeachment by the House of Commons in 1678. The collection also includes papers and correspondence of Danby's sons and other family members of the Godolphin line. Hence, the papers span the years 1661-1748 but the bulk of the material concerns Danby's political career in the years 1670-1684.

[*Series I, Danby Correspondence*](#), 1673-1685, contains letters to and from Danby, as well as third-party correspondence of contemporary political figures. Of particular interest are three petitions Danby wrote while imprisoned in the Tower in 1681, begging the king for his release on bail and a speedy trial. As the correspondence demonstrates, Danby's political associates and friends also pressed for his release. Henry Cavendish (1631-1712), Duke of Newcastle, in a letter to Danby, promised his "reddyness to be your [i.e. Danby's] Baile, and this day I was reddy in ye House to be soe." Many of the letters concern administrative and diplomatic matters, but there is some political gossip and intrigue as well. Roger Boyle (1621-1679), Earl of Orrery, wrote such a letter to Danby with the names in cipher. Fortunately, Danby decoded the cipher and wrote a key, which is with the letter. Another letter of interest, also partially in cipher, was sent to Danby by Arthur Capel (1631-1683), Earl of Essex.

[*Series II, Danby Papers*](#), c. 1660-1710, consists of memoranda, drafts, and other documents from various aspects of Danby's political career. Of particular note are the papers relating to the Popish Plot, including extracts of letters of Edward Coleman, and papers concerning Danby's subsequent impeachment. Also of interest is the list of supporters and opponents in the House of Lords drawn up by Danby while he was in the Tower. He divided the Lords temporal into three columns: those Lords "for my Baile;" those "against;" and those "neuter." Not willing to leave the possible question of bail to chance, Danby also sent a memorandum of private instructions with the list and advised the bearer to "show this List of the Lords to any of the Lords abovenamed, but to no others, & I would have you keep this list to yourselfe." Together, the list and instructions provide an indication of Danby's supporters and enemies as he perceived them during his imprisonment. The series includes documents from Danby's tenure as Secretary of the Navy, mainly memoranda of expenditures; papers from Treasury, particularly for the expenses of the royal household in 1673-1675, copies of the civil list for 1696 and 1708; and an estimate for the remodeling of St. Paul's Cathedral, 1708. The series also includes memoranda and correspondence relating to the activities of the West Riding Militia, primarily 1670-80; miscellaneous documents related to affairs of state, 1670-1700; and other papers including a piece of Tory propaganda entitled "Narrative of the growth of Whigg" from the 1690s.

[*Series III, Later Osborne and Godolphin Papers*](#), 1684-1748, contains correspondence and papers concerning family matters as well as affairs of state. These include letters to Danby's son, Viscount Latimer

(1674-89) and to Thomas 4th Duke of Leeds (1713-89); correspondence and wills of Sir William Godolphin (1634?-1696) and his sister Penelope; and letters to Sidney Godolphin, 1st Earl Godolphin (1645-1712).

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence, 1673-85

0.25 linear feet (1 box)

Correspondence is organized into three subseries: (1) incoming correspondence; (2) outgoing correspondence; (3) third party correspondence.

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

b. 1, f. 1	Bisset, Lady Bridget Fitzcharles, Countess of Plymouth, d. 1718. ALS to the Earl of Danby Regarding a letter that she has been advised to send to the king.	1680/1 Feb 17
b. 1, f. 2	Boyle, Roger, 1st Earl of Orrery, 1621- 1679. 2 ALS to the Earl of Danby, Bath Written in cipher with 1p. key.	1674 Jul 23, Jul 24
b. 1, f. 3	Butler, James, 1st Duke of Ormonde, 1610- 1688. ALS to the Earl of Danby, Dublin	1678 Jan 13
b. 1, f. 4	Capel, Arthur, 1st Earl of Essex, 1631- 1683. ALS to [Thomas Osborne, Viscount Latimer of Danby], Dublin Castle Part of the letter, written in cipher, was decoded by Danby.	1673 Dec 30
b. 1, f. 5	Cavendish, Henry, 2nd Duke of Newcastle, 1631-1712. ALS to the Earl of Danby, Oxford Offers himself as bail for Danby.	1680 Mar 24
b. 1, f. 6	Fairfax, Henry, Deputy Lieutenant of the West Riding, Yorkshire. 3 ALS and 1 enclosure to Thomas, Earl of Danby, Wakefield and Leeds Also contains "An Account of all the Arms taken from Papists and reputed Papists within the City of York and County of the same..."	1678 Oct 10 - Nov 7
b. 1, f. 7	Fitzcharles, Charles, 1st Earl of Plymouth, 1657?-80. ALS to the Earl of Danby, Saumur	1677 Jan 2
b. 1, f. 8	Lloyd, Sir Philip. ALS to the Earl of Danby, Covent Garden	1679 Mar 18
b. 1, f. 9	Lloyd, William, Bishop of Landaff, 1637 -1710. 2 ALS to the Earl of Danby, Malham Concerning evidence in the murder of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey.	1678 Nov 15, Nov 18
b. 1, f. 10	Moore, William. 2 ALS to the Duke of Leeds, Rycott Includes a one page account of King James II at Magdalen College, 1687 Sep 4.	1687 Sep 10, n.d.
b. 1, f. 11	Shaw, John. ALS to [the Earl of Danby]	1673 Sep 26
b. 1, f. 12	Spencer, Robert, 1st Earl of Sunderland, 1640-1702. 2 ALS to the Earl of Danby, Paris Negotiations prior to the Treaty of Nijmegen. The first of these letters is printed in Browning, ed. <i>Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby and Duke of Leeds, vol. II, Letters</i> , (Glasgow, 1944), pp. 520-21.	[1678] Aug 4, Aug 2/12

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE (continued)

b. 1, f. 13	Spencer, Robert, 1st Earl of Sunderland, 1640-1712. ALS to the Duke of Leeds, Whitehall	1685 May 22
b. 1, f. 14	Vane, W. ALS to [the Earl of Danby], Duffel	1674 Jun 9

OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

Osborne, Thomas, 1631-1712
Thomas Osborne, 1st Earl of Danby, Marquis of Carmarthen, 1st Duke of Leeds

b. 1, f. 15	6 letters (copies) to Robert Spencer, 2nd Earl of Sunderland, London Concerning negotiations prior to the Treaty of Nijmegen.	1678 Jul 28 - Sep 11
b. 1, f. 16	2 letters (copies) to Henry Fairfax and the deputy lieutenants of the West Riding, Cockpit	1678 Nov 14, Nov 16
b. 1, f. 17	3 petitions (copies) to Charles II, King of England and Ireland Pleading for his release from the Tower and for a speedy trial.	1681 Apr 1 to June 2
b. 1, f. 18	Letter (copy) to Charles II, King of Great Britain and Ireland Requests that Edward Fitzharris be given a reprieve of 10 to 14 days, as he and his wife were "useful witnesses against my Ld Howard, & can tell as much as any who those are who have been the chief suborners of Witnesses in all these Villanies..."	1681 Jun 27

THIRD PARTY CORRESPONDENCE

b. 1, f. 19	Copley, Sir Godfrey, d. 1709 Deputy Lieutenant of the West Riding, Yorkshire. ALS to unknown recipient Also signed by Sir John Reresby. Regarding robberies committed in Yorkshire and neighboring counties.	[c.1672]
b. 1, f. 20	Cooper, Anthony Ashley, 1621-1683, 1st Earl of Shaftesbury. Letter (copy) to [Charles Howard, 1st Earl of Carlisle, 1673 Feb 3] Endorsed: "Copy of a letter of the E. of Shaftesbury's." He writes that he will not come to court during this Parliament "until the king thinketh frequent new parliaments as much his Interest as they are the people[s] rights..."	n.d.
b. 1, f. 21	Gurdon, A. ALS to Sir Henry Capel, Lincolns Inn Unidentified	1675 Aug 12
b. 1, f. 22	AL (draft) to unknown recipient Endorsed: "Copy of a letter about the Lord Shaftesbury."	[c.1680]
b. 1, f. 23	AL to unknown recipient, London Newsletter describing the reaction of Lords Buckingham, Shaftesbury, Salisbury, and Wharton on learning that they would be punished for their attempts to dissolve the present parliament.	[1676/7] Feb 16
b. 1, f. 24	AL to Edward Proggers Newsletter, endorsed: "a letter out of the north without a name, 1667."	1667 Apr 10

Series II: Danby Papers*0.25 linear feet (.5 box)*

Material concerned with the Popish Plot and Danby's impeachment is filed first. Thereafter, headings follow a roughly chronological order according to the positions held by Danby (e.g. Lord Admiral, etc.).

PAPERS CONCERNING THE POPISSH PLOT

Coleman, Edward, d.1678

b. 2, f. 25	Extracts from Coleman's letters to and from various correspondents Includes Sir William Throckmorton, Father Sheldon, and Monsieur de St. Germain. Many of the letters were included in Sir Robert Southwell's report to the Privy Council. The papers also contain a copy of the declaration found in Coleman's papers.	[1674-78]
b. 2, f. 26	Extracts from various informants' testimony 6 extracts from examinations of various informers. Mentioned are William Bedloe, Lady Abergavenny, Mr. Jenison, Mr. Pratt, and Dr. Tong.	c.1678
	Abstract of the proceedings of the Council concerning "Dr. Tong's paper." See: Oversize, Box 3, folder 54	7 Sep. 1678

PAPERS RELATED TO DANBY'S IMPEACHMENT

b. 2, f. 27	Drafts and memoranda 12 items, including notes on speeches made in the House of Commons by Sir H[ugh] W[yndham] and Sir John Trevor; private instructions sent by Danby, requesting that the recipient "wait upon all my Friends" and "bespeak their Kindness in my business"; also, a list of supporters and opponents in the House of Lords.	c.1679-81
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PAPERS OF THE ADMIRALTY OFFICE (1671-73)

b. 2, f. 28	Documents relating to Naval affairs 10 items, including orders for payment, signed by various officials, including Lord Brouncker, Sir Thomas Allin, John Pepys and J. Ernle, and letters of the Earl of Danby.	1671-73
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PAPERS OF THE TREASURY

b. 2, f. 29	Letter to the Commissioners of the Nottinghamshire poll Signed by Charles Fitzroy, 1st Duke of Southampton, and Anthony Ashley Cooper.	1667 Mar 25
b. 2, f. 30	Copy of Commission of Accounts and proposals for the increase and collection of revenue Includes information on collecting excise and other revenue in England and Ireland, including proposals for the coal trade and requests for patents for collection of the excise. 12 items total. See also: Oversize, Box 3, folder 55.	1667-77

PAPERS OF THE TREASURY (continued)

b. 2, f. 31	Documents concerning revenue projections Includes a 24p MS proposal concerning the excise revenue with notes in the autograph of Danby [c.1675]. 15 items total.	1673-75
b. 2, f. 32	Documents concerning military expenditures Includes memoranda of Sir Stephen Fox (1627-1716), expenditures of the garrison at Tangiers, and sailors' wages for 1673. 11 items total.	1673-75
b. 2, f. 33	Documents concerning expenses of the royal household Drafts of expenditures, proposals for improvements, financial situation of the royal household at Michaelmas 1673, estimate of expenses for the Great Wardrobe for 1674. 13 items total.	1673-74
b. 2, f. 34	Miscellaneous papers related to state finance and expenditure Includes copies of the civil list for 1696 and 1708. 5 items. See also: Oversize, Box 3, folder 56.	1673-1708

DOCUMENTS CONCERNING THE WEST RIDING MILITIA

b. 2, f. 35	Two militia muster rolls Two MSS bound, 11p and 8p, which contain muster rolls. The 11p MS contains names of soldiers under respective officers while the 8p MS is a list of 'common soldiers' by village or area (e.g. Wentworth, Brightside, Sheffield, etc.).	[c.1670s]
b. 2, f. 36	Documents pertaining to commissions and musters Includes a warrant signed by George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham, (1627-1687), 1661, and letters and memoranda concerning the state of the militia addressed to Danby. 13 items total.	1661-72
b. 2, f. 37	Correspondence, memoranda, and drafts Includes lists of deputy lieutenants, for 1677, correspondence to Danby from the deputy lieutenants concerning plans for muster, troop strength, etc. In- includes correspondence from Sir Godfrey Copley (d. 1709); Sir Henry Goddricke (1642-1704); Sir Ralph Knight; William Hayes; and Richard Blanshard. 31 items total. See also: Oversize, Box 3, folder 57.	1677-78
b. 2, f. 38	Drafts and copies of letters of com- mission for Deputy Lieutenants Vellum and paper, some including Danby's seal as Lord Treasurer. X items total. See also: Oversize, Box 3, folder 58.	c. 1678

MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS OF AFFAIRS OF STATE (1660-1700)

b. 2, f. 39	List of queries put to the Duke of Buckingham in the House of Commons Contemporary copy of the queries concerning the Commons' attack on Buckingham as the author of the French alliance and as a promoter of arbitrary government. Endorsed by the Earl of Danby.	1674
b. 2, f. 40	Draft of a speech of Charles II Draft of a speech delivered by Charles II before parliament. Endorsed: "Draught of the K.'s Speech in Mr. Charles Bertie's Hand."	1679

MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS OF AFFAIRS OF STATE (1660-1700) (continued)

	Copy of the bill to exclude the Duke of York See: Oversize, Box 3, folder 59. 6p, bound at the top. Copy of the proposal to exclude the Duke of York from the royal succession.	1681
b. 2, f. 41	Copy of the proceedings against Edmund Fitzharris at the court of the King's Bench 12p, copy, addressed to the Earl of Danby.	1681 May 7-May 11
b. 2, f. 42	Miscellaneous state papers Includes a copy of King Charles II's proclamation of peace with the States General of the Netherlands, 1667; list of payments made by the French ambassador to William Chiffinch (for Charles II), 1670-72; copy of a dispensation to Obadiah Walker, 1686; abstract of Royal Patents to Sir Robert Long; copy of orders by the king in council, 1667 Jan 31; a copy of a prophecy made by John Sadler, 1661; and a document concerning the case of Col. Thomas King and his actions to secure the Tower of London in 1688. 23 items total.	c.1660-1700
OTHER PAPERS		
b. 2, f. 43	The principle reasons for the great fail of rents occasioned by the low price of corn Anonymous MS concerned with the efforts of brewers in London to fix barley prices and the subsequent impact upon land rents.	c.1675
b. 2, f. 44	Narrative of the growth of Whigg An anonymous MS "shewing the defects in these measures which have been taken to suppress them from time to time with a modest advice touching a remedy." 10p.	[c.1690s]
b. 2, f. 45	Question upon the prorogation of parliament Anonymous MS of legal inquiry concerning "whether a prorogation of Parliament extended beyond twelve months to be not by construction of law a dissolution." 3p.	[early 18th c.]

Series III: Later Osborne and Godolphin Papers, 1686-1709*0.25 linear feet (.5 box)*

b. 2, f. 46	Glarwood, George. ALS to Edward Osborne, Viscount Latimer	1686/7 Jan 14
b. 2, f. 47	Godolphin, Sir William, 1634?-1696. 4 documents concerning members of the Godolphin family Includes a copy of the wills of Sir Sir William Godolphin and his sister, Penelope Godolphin, and a Latin epitaph on Henry Godolphin (1648-1733).	1696-97
b. 2, f. 48	Howard, R. ALS to Edward Osborne, Viscount Latimer, Long Acre, London	1684 Apr 27
b. 2, f. 49	Campbell, Hugh, d. 1731, Earl of Loudon. 2 ALS to [Sidney Godolphin, 1st Earl of Godolphin], Edinburgh Concerning the proposed Treaty of Union with Scotland.	[1706] Aug 26, Sep 2
b. 2, f. 50	Finch, Daniel, 1647-1730, 2nd Earl of Nottingham. ALS to Sidney Godolphin, 1st Earl of Godolphin, Whitehall Concerning Marlborough's campaign.	1702 Sep 2
b. 2, f. 51	Pelham, Henry, 1695?-1754. ALS to [?Thomas Osborne, 4th Duke of Leeds]	1748 Aug 11
b. 2, f. 52	Talbot, Charles, 1666-1718, 1st Duke of Shrewsbury. 2 ALS to [Sidney Godolphin, 1st Earl of Godolphin], Rome Current general news.	1704 Jul 5, Sep 8, n.s.
b. 2, f. 53	Wharton, Thomas, 1648-1715, 1st Marquis of Wharton. ALS to [Sidney Godolphin, 1st Earl of Godolphin] Concerns passage of a money bill.	1709 Aug 15

Oversize, 1670-1700*1.75 linear feet (1 box)*

Oversize contains material from Series II, arranged in series order.

PAPERS CONCERNING THE POPIISH PLOT

b. 3, f. 54	Abstract of the proceedings in Council concerning "Dr. Tong's paper." Summary of the testimony given to the special council appointed by Charles II. Concerns the allegations of a "Jesuit conspiracy" made by Dr. Tong in a letter sent to Danby on 3 September. 1p.	7 Sep. 1678
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PAPERS OF THE TREASURY

b. 3, f. 55	Copy of Commission of Accounts Also contains list of profits of the Alienacion Office for 1676.	1667
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b. 3, f. 56	Miscellaneous papers related to state finance and expenditure Account sheet for the financing and cost of rebuilding St. Paul's, 1708	1708
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DOCUMENTS CONCERNING THE WEST RIDING MILITIA

b. 3, f. 57	Correspondence, memoranda, and drafts List of deputy lieutenants' regiments and officers.	1677-78
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b. 3, f. 58	Drafts and copies of letters of commission for deputy lieutenants Vellum and paper, some including Danby's seal as Lord Treasurer.	c.1678
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MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS OF AFFAIRS OF STATE

b. 3, f. 59	Copy of the bill to exclude the Duke of York 6p, bound at top. Copy of the proposal to exclude James Stuart, the Duke of York, from the royal succession.	1681
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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.

Preferred Titles

Treaties of Nijmegen (1678-1679)

Subjects

Popish Plot, 1678

Geographic Names

Great Britain -- Court and courtiers
Great Britain -- Foreign relations -- 1660-1688
Great Britain -- Foreign relations -- France
Great Britain -- History -- Charles II, 1660-1685
Great Britain -- Politics and government --
1660-1688

Names

Boyle, Roger, Earl of Orrery, 1621-1679
Buckingham, George Villiers, Duke of, 1628-1687
Coleman, Edward, -1678
Essex, Arthur Capel, Earl of, 1631-1683
Fairfax, Henry
Fitzharris, Edward, 1648?-1681
Godolphin, William, Sir, 1634?-1696
Leeds, Thomas Osborne, Duke of, 1631-1712
Lloyd, William, 1627-1717
Loudon, Hugh Campbell, Earl of, d. 1731
Nottingham, Daniel Finch, Earl of, 1647-1730
Shrewsbury, Charles Talbot, Duke of, 1660-1718
Sunderland, Robert Spencer, Earl of, 1640-1702

Corporate Bodies

England and Wales. Sovereign (1660-1685 :
Charles II)
Great Britain. Parliament. House of Lords