



Public Record Office
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INTRODUCTION

FARNHAM PAPERS

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Farnham Papers (D3975)

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Summary

The Farnham Papers comprise c.450 documents and six volumes, c.1810-1920, of the Maxwell and Maxwell Barry family, Lords Farnham, of Farnham, Cavan, Co. Cavan, and Newtownbarry (Bunclody), on the Carlow/Wexford border. In 1756, the Maxwells had been created Barons Farnham, in 1761 Viscounts Farnham and in 1763 Earls of Farnham, and re-created Viscounts and Earls (after a collateral succession) in 1781 and 1785 respectively. The viscountcy and earldom became extinct in 1823.



The Maxwell estate

Although the Maxwells must have become the largest landowners in Co. Cavan by the 1720s and remained so until Land Purchase, they had not been among its large 17th-century grantees. In 16 Charles II, their Co. Cavan founder, Robert Maxwell, who held the local bishopric of Kilmore and died in 1672, was granted 'the small proportion of land of Drumkill and a small proportion of Drumell'. He is also supposed to have owned 'the manor of Farnham', parish of Urney, barony of Loughtee, by the time of his death. By 1719, the family's Farnham estate had a rental of £938. It included the best land in the county and was increased by further purchases, notably of urban property in Cavan town, up to the middle of the 18th century. In addition to Farnham, the Maxwells acquired other estates in the barony of Loughtee – Lisnamaine, with a rental of £258 in 1715, the manor of 'Drumaine' or 'Dromany', etc – in the parishes of Urney, Denn and Kilmore. Further south, in the baronies of Clanmahon and Castlerahan, they were also active in buying land, including c.7,000 acres, with a rental of £766, bought from the Skeffington family, Viscounts Massereene, in 1718. The last major purchase, made in the 1730s, was the c.6,500-acre manor of Castle Craig, parishes of Kildallan and Killashandra, barony of Tullyhunco, to the west or north-west of the rest of the estate.

In 1760, the total Cavan rental of the 2nd Baron Farnham was £3764 (and £5000 in 1779, according to Arthur Young); that of the 5th Baron was £16,709 in c.1830. The acreage was reckoned by Edward Gibbon Wakefield at 26,000 (statute) in 1810, and in 1879 it stood at 29,455 statute, valued at £20,938. In fact, the acreage fluctuated considerably over time. In c.1799, under the will of the 2nd Baron, c.1,000 (Irish) acres, and £375 a year in chief rents, were advertised for sale; and 982 (Irish?) acres, at a rental of £1,263, were sold at the time of the 2nd Earl of Farnham's death in 1823. These subtractions were offset by one major gain. In 1823, when the 2nd Earl of Farnham was succeeded as 5th Baron Farnham by a cousin, Colonel John Maxwell Barry, of Newtownbarry, Co. Wexford, the new Lord Farnham united to the estate of the main branch of the family considerable property which had hitherto belonged to his cadet branch. His father, Henry Maxwell, Bishop of Meath, had been a sizeable landowner in Cavan, and the 5th Baron himself had bought all or most of the land sold by the main branch in c.1799.



Papers of the 5th Baron

One major component of this deposit is a copy out-letter book, 1823-1832, started by the 5th Baron, just after his succession to the title and containing copies of c.150 letters together with lists of the names of numerous individuals to whom other letters were written. The letters relate to estate and business matters, including the jointure provision for the late Earl of Farnham's widow, leases held by the Farnham family under the see of Kilmore, disputes over the apportionment of Quit Rent on the estates, etc. There are also references to Treasury business, Lord Farnham having been a Lord of the Irish Treasury, 1807-1817, and of the UK Treasury, 1817-1823. Patronage, politics and law and order in Co. Cavan (which the 5th Baron had represented in parliament, 1806-23) receive frequent coverage, particularly the implementation of the Constabulary Act in 1823-1824 and changes in local government following the introduction of lieutenancies of counties on the English model in 1831 and the appointment of the Marquess of Headfort as Lieutenant of Co. Cavan. Lord Farnham's active interest in all manner of Protestant evangelical and missionary organisations, within Ireland and abroad, is also well to the fore. Among the correspondents are William Wilberforce, to whom he writes in 1823 about reforming some abuse in connection with the navy (convict ships?), Alexander Saunderson of Castle Saunderson, Co. Cavan, to whom he recommends in 1825 that the Orange Order should disband peaceably pursuant to act of parliament, Sir Henry Parnell, 3rd Bt, to whom he writes in the same year about Irish electoral reform, and successive Lords Lieutenant of Ireland and Chief Secretaries.

The others papers and correspondence of the 5th Baron include: correspondence, 1825, about his successful candidature for the Irish Representative Peerage (the first occasion since the Union when the government candidate in such an election was defeated); letters to him, 1832-1837, from John Young of Baillieborough, Co. Cavan, MP for the county, and the Rev. Dr J.C. Martin of Killashandra, Co. Cavan, about politics and law and order in Co. Cavan and 'The Protestant Cause' generally; and miscellaneous correspondence and printed matter, 1823-1838, on similar topics.



Papers deriving from the 7th and 8th Barons

Most of the remaining papers derive from the next generation of the Maxwell family, the 5th Baron's nephews, Henry, who succeeded him as MP for Co. Cavan, 1824-1838, and as 7th Baron in 1838, and Somerset Richard, MP for Co. Cavan, 1839-1840, who succeeded as 8th Baron in 1868. Their correspondence, 1832-1862, includes much on Cavan and Protestant politics (with a good deal of devotional material in the case of Somerset Richard Maxwell). In addition, Henry Maxwell's papers contain: material on mineralogy, 1812-1851, including references to a collection of fossils and other artefacts presented by him to the Royal Irish Academy; and numerous letters and prescriptions from doctors, 1832-1860, which are perhaps sufficiently abundant and arcane to warrant the attention of historians of medicine.



Papers of the 11th Baron

The most important material in the deposit is correspondence, newspaper cuttings, proofs of *Hansard* and other printed matter, 1913-1914 and 1919-1920, all deriving from Arthur Kenlis Maxwell, 11th Baron Farnham, Chairman of the Irish Unionist Alliance and a member of the Ulster Unionist Council (UUC), and relating to the Third Home Rule Bill, the UVF and the Government of Ireland Act. In 1919-1920, Lord Farnham tried unsuccessfully to carry in the UUC a resolution stating that a scheme of partition on narrowly Six-County lines was contrary to the Ulster Covenant.



Related Material

For other Farnham papers available in Northern Ireland, see PRONI D422 and T3422; also the Garron Tower, Carnlough, Co. Antrim, Antiquarian Library, which contains a personal scrapbook of 'Cavan elections, 1824 and 1826' kept by Henry Maxwell, the 7th Baron. This includes an extensive range of election posters, handbills and ballad sheets. In addition there is a handwritten list of Catholics who had converted to Protestantism during the so called 'Second Reformation'. For what appears to be a fuller version of this, see A/8/1.

