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# **INTRODUCTION**

# **YOUNG OF CULDAFF PAPERS**

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# Young of Culdaff Papers (D3045)

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## **Summary**

c.30 volumes and c.1000 documents and folders comprising the estate and personal papers of the Young family, Culdaff, Co. Donegal, c.1600-1970.



## The Estate

Robert Young first came to East Inishowen as rector of Clonca in 1640 and later Culdaff in 1661 and astute family marriage arrangements aided the assemblage of townlands contiguous to the church lands he was responsible for. An effort was made during the eighteenth century to curb the influence of middle-tenants on the Chichester Inishowen estate by reducing lease terms but due to the indebtedness of the Chichester family this policy was abandoned by the end of the century when leases of up to 1000 years were offered to principal tenants. Amongst the main beneficiaries were the Youngs who successfully enlarged their lands to the extent that, by 1856, George Young had in his possession 10,500 acres, giving him a rental of £3000. However, just as Young's discretionary power seemed to be strengthened as a result of perpetual leases, it was thwarted by financial difficulties brought about by a lavish lifestyle.

George Young's diary outlines leisurely and prolonged family visits to England and his work as Justice of the Peace and regular entertaining of the neighbouring gentry absorbed income. The tradition of providing attractive settlements for younger children and wives on inheritance and marriage did not help either and by 1857 he was forced to lodge a schedule of encumbrances and claims affecting the estate with the Encumbered Estates Court. He also attempted to tighten his purse strings by offering 200 acres to the Sugar Company of Ireland for the production of sugar beet and attempting to hire a new agent who would take some of the financial obligations on board. Eventually, he was forced to sell the townlands of Glenagivney and Clare and mortgage the townland of Carthage to his spinster daughter Anne in consideration of the debt he still owed her. Despite measures such as these, by the end of the century his financial problems were far from over. In 1887 it was calculated that the sale of the estate would not cover all the debts and in 1901, interest on mortgages and family charges were still being paid absorbing all the income from the estate.



## The Papers

Irish Republicans burnt the Young family seat, Culdaff House, to the ground in May 1922 and there were accusations of inactivity or connivance by the southern authorities. In one sense this was an archival disaster in that all the manuscript material in the house was destroyed except for the 'private papers' of the then head of the family, George Lawrence Young. However, thanks to the indefatigable collecting and transcribing of the historically-minded members of the family, notably Mrs Amy Isobel Young, author of 'Three Hundred Years in Inishowen' (Belfast, 1908), many of these gaps have been filled by copy material. Moreover, some original documents of Young provenance pre-1922 must have been kept elsewhere than Culdaff House, because they are extant in the collection.

Consequently, the Young Papers are a rich source for the historian and contain a substantial amount of original and copy title deeds, leases and testamentary papers (including c.40 pre-1858 wills), 1658-1949, pertaining mainly to the Young family and also the related families of Cary, Redcastle, Co. Donegal; Nesbitt, Woodhill, Co. Donegal; Knox, Rathmullan, Co. Donegal; Cunningham, Londonderry and Hart, Kilderry, Co. Donegal. There are also photographs and portraits of various members of these families, c.1700-c.1920, and a vast quantity of letters of a genealogical nature and genealogical notes and pedigrees mainly from the seventeenth century. Originals and copies of Young family correspondence, 1755, 1777-1794 and 1834-1935, document the fortunes of the family as outlined above and also include: emigrant letters from Brooke Young, Guelph, Ontario, Canada, 1834, together with his diary describing the voyage to Quebec, 1833; correspondence of Robert Chichester Young about his role as agent for the Co. Antrim estates of Sir R. Shafto Adair and Lord O'Neill, 1928-1935. Young family diaries, 1808-1918, also complement the archive such as those of Mrs Jane Folliott, 1808, of her mother, Maryanne Young, 1809-1858, and of Lieutenant-Colonel Robert James Young, a member of General Devereaux's expedition to Margarita Island with the Irish Legion, Bolivar, Venezuela, 1819-1820. Another military diary is that of Guy Owen Lawrence Young, an officer in the Royal Irish Rifles, which includes accounts of life in the trenches during the 1st World War

The collection also contains interesting church material in the form of papers relating to Culdaff Parish Church, mainly 1736-1825, which consist mostly of cess applotments, but also include a list of parishioners, c.1800, and a statistical account of the parish of Culdaff by Rev. Edward Chichester, 1814. There are important original documents concerning the diocese of Connor, including a visitation report by Primate Newcome, 1796.

