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INTRODUCTION

DE ROS PAPERS

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De Ros Papers (D638 and MIC573)

Table of Contents

Summary	2
Lord Coningsby.....	3
Famous correspondents	4
Chief Justice Hely	5
General Ginkell	6
John Pulteney	7
Lord Nottingham	8
Sir William Robinson.....	9
Lord Chancellor Porter.....	10
Lord Drogheda.....	11
Edward Southwell	12
A strong-minded lady	13
An Englishman abroad.....	14
Miscellaneous correspondence, 1712-1818	15
Lord and Lady Henry Fitzgerald.....	16
The barony of de Ros	17
Diaries and Journals	18
Correspondence	19
Duke of Wellington.....	20
Wilton Family Jewels	21
Royalty.....	22
Military Matters	23
Family Matters	24
Estate Material.....	25

Summary

The De Ros Papers comprise c.1, 100 original documents, 1682-1818, with a heavy concentration on 1682-1712 and few documents falling within the period 1712-1758 (D638), and a microfilm copy of c.2,900 documents and c.95 volumes, c.1675-1976 (MIC573).



Lord Coningsby

D638 mainly comprises letters and papers of a De Ros ancestor, Thomas Coningsby, Earl Coningsby, and some of his descendants. Thomas Coningsby of Hampton Court, Herefordshire (to be distinguished from the royal palace of the same name), M.P. for Leominster, Herefordshire, held several official posts in Ireland. He was joint Receiver and Paymaster-General of the Forces in Ireland, 1689-1693 and 1698-1710, and Vice-Treasurer for Ireland, 1693-1710. He helped organise the commissariat of the army during the Williamite War in Ireland, and was one of the Lords Justices from September 1690 to March 1692. In April 1692, he was created an Irish peer. His strong support of the Hanoverian succession secured him an English barony in 1716 and three years later the Earldom of Coningsby. The letters contain much information, political and social, about England and Ireland during the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, but the variety of topics dealt with by the writers renders the making of a general summary rather difficult.



Famous correspondents



*General Godart de
Ginckel, 1st Earl of Athlone*

The chief correspondents (with the covering dates of their letters in parentheses) include: John Hely, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas in Ireland (1682-1700); Godard de Ginkell, 1st Earl of Athlone (1690-1693), John Pulteney, who was secretary to Henry Sidney, Viscount Sydney and Earl of Romney, Secretary of State and then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (1690-1693); Daniel Finch, 2nd Earl of Nottingham, Secretary of State (1690-1693); Sir William Robinson, Deputy Receiver-General for Ireland (1690-1698 and 1701); Richard Jones, Earl of Ranelagh, who held several Irish offices and was Coningsby's father-in-law (1690-1710); Lord Sydney/Romney (1691-1693); Sir Charles Porter, a fellow Lord Justice with Coningsby and later Lord Chancellor of Ireland (1692-1696); Henry Moore, 3rd Earl of Drogheda, one of the Lords Justices (1697-1698 and 1708); Sir Thomas (later 1st Baron) Southwell, Commissioner of the Irish Revenue (1696-1712); Capt. (later Sir) John Pratt, Deputy Vice-Treasurer for Ireland (1706-1709); Lady Frances Williams, Coningsby's daughter (1758-1766); and the Rev. John Hinchliffe, later Bishop of Peterborough (1761-1784).



*Daniel Finch, 2nd Earl
of Nottingham*



Chief Justice Hely

Hely's letters (1682-1700) refer, among other things, to a report on Coningsby's management of the Irish Treasury, to a Parliamentary enquiry about Coningsby, to the 'missing clause' in the Articles of Limerick and to the charge made by the Forfeiture Commissioners against himself for felling trees at Feltrim, Co. Dublin, where lands (formerly belonging to James II's Lord Chancellor of Ireland) had been granted to Coningsby.



General Ginkell



General Ginkel

There are 129 letters in the Ginkell correspondence (1690-1693). Of these 82 are bound up. They are addressed either to Coningsby or to the Lords Justices. Most of them are in French and in the handwriting of Ginkell. All but one of those bound up are calendared in the Appendix to the Fourth Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission. A copy of this calendar has been made and incorporated in the PRONI calendar of the remaining letters. The additional letters deal with much the same subjects as those already published: the progress of the war in Ireland from the advance on Athlone, the battle of Aughrim, and the siege of Limerick. Securing the delivery of supplies of all sorts, food, money, and ammunition appears to have been Ginkell's

chief worry. After the fall of Limerick, Ginkell went to London where he remained until March when he left for the Low Countries. During his residence in London he was busy with Irish affairs and incidentally tried to serve the interests of Coningsby with whom he was on very friendly terms.



John Pulteney

John Pulteney gives parliamentary, war and general news (1690-1693). Among this may be mentioned: the passing of the Irish Forfeitures Bill, the decision of the Commons to make the East India Company a Regulated Company, the arrest of Lord Preston and others while attempting to cross to France, naval and military operations against the French, duels in Hyde Park and Lincoln's Inn Fields, the dismissal of Marlborough, the displeasure of William and Mary with Princess Anne for not dismissing Lady Marlborough from her household, the hanging of Sir John Johnston for assisting Mr Campbell to abduct Mrs Wharton, the Duke of Norfolk's divorce case, a sea monster in the Thames at Putney, and the request of the Commons for a new meeting place since the present chamber was in danger of collapsing. Sydney's letters (1690-1693) deal with much the same subjects as those of his secretary, Pulteney. He, like Coningsby, had received a grant of lands in Ireland, but the King was slow in signing Coningsby's warrant as his 'prodigious gettings hath made such a noise'. Sydney, however, assures Coningsby that he gets the lands free of rent.



Lord Nottingham

Most of Nottingham's letters (1690-1693) are addressed to the Lords Justices and deal mainly with matters arising out of the war in Ireland, such as the movement of warships, the Articles of Limerick, directions that Irish with no home should be formed into a regiment for the Emperor's service, the convoying of Danes to Flanders, the embarkation of troops, etc. Apparently Coningsby had made some proposal about troops from Ulster; for Nottingham in a letter of December 1691, says 'what your Lordship observes in relation to the Ulster regiments is very reasonable and His Majesty has already ordered two to be brought over'.



Sir William Robinson

Sir William Robinson's letters (1690-1698 and 1701) mainly relate to supplies for the army in Ireland, military accounts, Irish parliamentary affairs and the minting of new coin.



Lord Chancellor Porter

Porter deals almost exclusively with Irish affairs (1692-1696). He and Coningsby, as Lords Justices, had been charged with misconduct in the government of Ireland, and attempts were made by their enemies to prevent their getting a pardon. The country was still in a disturbed state, Tories were active and troops were being employed to suppress them, corn could not be exported except under convoy, political strife was bitter and the Lord Deputy (Capel) was not popular. The coinage appears to have been unsatisfactory, and there was much clipped money coming in from England. Coningsby had proposed some scheme for raising the price of guineas in order to keep money in the country, but, for the same reason as before, the Council did not adopt it.



Lord Drogheda

Drogheda's letters (1697-1698 and 1708) are mainly about parliamentary affairs, and Pratt's (1706-1709) are about military accounts and the Irish economy.



Edward Southwell

Southwell, who was Coningsby's son-in-law and a Commissioner of the Irish Revenue, refers (1696-1712) to difficulties about grants of forfeited lands, the Commissioners for enquiring into such grants being divided amongst themselves, and to the disastrous effect of the Act of Resumption (1700) on English settlers in the South. He writes in August 1699 of 'many family's that are starving who were concerned in the bay's trade and all of them English ... 300 H [sic] families left this city [Cork] last week and Embarqued for Holland in order to goe to Sweedland ... there are 800 gone in all from and about this Citty, Tallo[w], Bandon, Middleton and Youghall, so that there are no Common English left in this country at all, wch was the onely Place like an English Plantation in Ireland'.



A strong-minded lady

The letters of Lady Frances Williams (1758-1766) are addressed to her daughter, the Hon. Charlotte Walsingham, wife of Capt. Robert Boyle Walsingham, R.N. They are interesting and contain a good deal of social and domestic news, for example, a row between two ladies because one of them did not leave 'card money' on the table for the other's servant, Lady Waldegrave 'cocking her cap' at one of the Royal Family, advice to Mrs Walsingham to take 'one of Mr Hoare's notes for each [pound] payable to you or your order', and on the servant problem - 'you know all Servts. chuse the best season for distressing those they serve'. Fond of reading, Lady Frances frequently comments on the books she has just read. Swift's letters appear to have given her much pleasure, though she criticises Swift for not having destroyed Miss Vanhomrigh's letters with their 'strong passion and even blasphemous expressions'. She had strong political opinions and it is clear that she had no liking for the elder Pitt.



An Englishman abroad

Rev. J. Hinchliffe was a fellow of a Cambridge college. His letters, addressed to Capt. and Mrs Walsingham, contain accounts of a tour which he made to Holland, Germany, Switzerland and Italy and of journeys to various parts of England. He had a poor opinion of the Dutch and of their art which he considered mechanical. Why people extolled Italy he could not understand since it had nothing but its works of art. In England he made journeys through the south, west and north and mentions the famous houses he either visited or stayed at, such as Penshurst, Wilton, Welbeck, Warwick Castle and Chatsworth. He gives amusing descriptions of the ways in which visitors to Brighton, Tunbridge Wells and Buxton conducted themselves, each class of society keeping itself quite apart from the others. Hinchliffe enjoyed life. On his travels he went to races and other meetings, and when staying in a house such as Chatsworth spent his time sleeping, riding, eating, drinking and playing Backgammon.



Miscellaneous correspondence, 1712-1818

In addition to the foregoing, there are papers and letters about a dispute between the Coningsbys and the Jones's concerning the distribution of the late Lord Ranelagh's estate, c.1712-1714 (following his disinheriting of Lady Coningsby); letters to Capt. and Mrs Walsingham from Capt. the Hon. Augustus Hervey, R.N., John Montagu, 4th Earl of Sandwich, Hannah More and Horace Walpole, 1759-1788; over 80 letters to Mrs Walsingham from a Mrs Trevor, the guardian of Lady Frances Williams who had become mentally



Countess of Ranelagh



My Dear Walsingham
 For gods sake come to me immediately,
 in this moment I have much want
 of the comfort of a real friend; poor
 Miss Ray was inhumanly murdered
 last night as she was stepping into
 her coach at the playhouse door
 Thursday morning I am ever yours
 7 o'clock. Sandwich
 The murderer is taken
 & sent to Prison.

*Copy of distraught note from the Earl of
 Sandwich to R.B. Walsingham*

deranged, 1773-1779; and c.20 letters to and from Lord Henry Fitzgerald, fourth son of the 1st Duke of Leinster, 1792-1818, including one letter from John FitzGibbon, 1st Earl of Clare, asking Lord Henry to correct Charles James Fox's misapprehensions about Lord Clare's political stance, 1797, and a copy of a letter from Lord Henry about the fate of his more celebrated brother, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, 1798.

Lord and Lady Henry Fitzgerald

The bulk of MIC573 comprises papers relating to Lord Henry Fitzgerald, his wife, Charlotte Boyle, whom he married in 1791 and who established her claim to the barony of de Ros in 1806, and their descendants. Lord Henry Fitzgerald and his elder brother, Charles, who died in 1810, were endowed by their elder brother, William, 2nd Duke of Leinster, with the northern part of the family estates, mainly consisting of the barony of Lecale, Co. Down. By the end of the 19th century the estate of Lord Henry's descendant, the 24th Lord de Ros, amounted to almost 3,000 acres in Co. Down plus c.1250 acres in Co. Meath, and the principal family residence was Old Court, Strangford, Co. Down. The Meath estate was completely sold by 1929.



The barony of de Ros

In 1806 when Lady Charlotte Fitzgerald was successful in calling the title of 'de Roos' (the spelling of the name was altered to 'de Ros' in 1838) out of abeyance in her favour (see explanation below), she became 'suo jure' 21st Baroness and added the surname 'de Ros' on to that of Fitzgerald. The de Roos family has a distinguished lineage dating back to 1264 when the barony was created by writ of summons of Henry III. Robert de Roos, 1st Baron Roos of Helmsley or Hamlake, Yorkshire, then acquired Belvoir through his wife, Isabel, daughter and heiress of William d'Albini of Belvoir.

Few peerages - even baronies by writ - have passed through so many heirs female as this one. As a consequence, it had been enjoyed by the Manners, Cecil and Villiers families prior to the Fitzgeralds' succession to the title. It was to fall into abeyance once more in 1939 on the death of Mary Frances, 25th Baroness of Ros, but was again successfully called out of abeyance in 1943 in favour of her eldest daughter, Una Mary, and in 1958 in favour of the latter's granddaughter, Georgiana Angela Maxwell, 27th Baroness de Ros.

The relationship between the two families was compounded in 1824 when William Lennox Lascelles de Ros, later 23rd Lord de Ros, son of Lord Henry and Lady Charlotte, married his cousin, Lady Georgiana Lennox, daughter of the 4th Duke of Richmond, Lennox and Aubigny. As well as material relating to their immediate family and descendants the archive contains some 18th-century letters and diaries of the wider family of Lord Henry Fitzgerald and Lady Charlotte Fitzgerald, 21st Baroness de Ros.



The archive is now arranged as follows:

Diaries and Journals

59 diaries and journals of William, 23rd Lord de Ros, 1813-1815, 1824-1870, 1872-1873, whose military career began in the Life Guards in 1819 and culminated in his appointment as Colonel of the 4th Regiment of Hussars in 1865. In 1852 he was appointed Lt-Governor of the Tower of London. (His chief claim to fame is as originator of the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race, c.1820, but this has escaped documentation among his own papers.)

The diaries contain varying amounts of detail about his travels and his military, social and domestic life. Among them is a 3-volume account of his expedition with the 1st Earl of Durham to the Black Sea in order to observe the warlike preparations which the Russian government was said to be making, July 1835 - January 1836, and a 3-volume account of his mission to Turkey, April - July 1854, as Quartermaster-General to Lord Raglan, which contains some military details. He was sent in May by Lord Raglan to Shumla, to communicate with Omar Pacha. In June the army moved on to Varna, where the incessant hard work and heat of the climate took its toll and Lord de Ros succumbed to a severe attack of fever and ague at the end of July. Eventually he had to return home at the moment of Lord Raglan's embarkation for the Crimea.

There are: 16 diaries/journals of Dudley, 24th Lord de Ros (1874-1907), 1840-1891, which cover the period when he was equerry to the Prince Consort, 1853-1861, and extra-equerry to Queen Victoria, 1861-1874, and contain great detail about his court and social, as well as working and domestic, life; a diary of Lady Frances Coningsby, 1756, largely detailing her social life; 9 diaries of Charlotte Boyle Walsingham, 1779-1786 and 1788, written in largely indecipherable shorthand, which seem to be largely about social events; a diary of social happenings by Frances Charlotte Fitzgerald de Ros, elder daughter of William, 23rd Lord de Ros, 1848-1849; and a separate account of her tour of Belgium, Germany, North Italy and Southern France, 1840.



Correspondence

This includes: 28 letters to Lady Sophia Fitzgerald from other family members, containing family news, 1772-1833; 1 letter from, and 6 letters to, Emily, Dowager Duchess of Leinster, to other family members, 1791 and 1809-1812 respectively; c.14 miscellaneous letters to and from Fitzgerald and Lennox family members, etc., 1764-c.1815; c.970 letters addressed to Georgiana, Lady de Ros, 1811-1891, from family and friends, with several containing political allusions. They are chiefly from her brother, Lord March, A.D.C. to the Duke of Wellington (c.9 letters), writing from Spain and Portugal, 1811-1814, from her father, the 4th Duke of Richmond (c.18 letters) from Brussels and Quebec (he was Governor-General of Canada, 1818-1819), from her husband, William (c.145 letters), among them 38 from the Crimea, from her son, Dudley (c.550 letters), from one of her greatest friends, Hon. Emily Eden (c.80 letters), 1830-1841, among them 30 from India where she accompanied her unmarried brother, Lord Auckland, who was Governor-General, and from her aunt, Lady Bathurst, who kept Lady de Ros abreast of London affairs when she was in Ireland (c.51 letters), c.1839-1856; c.95 letters addressed to William, 23rd Lord de Ros, 1824-1872, from members of his family and from various aristocratic and political figures including the 14th Earl of Derby, then Prime Minister, some of them alluding to political matters; c.350 letters addressed to Dudley, 24th Lord de Ros, c.1840-1901, some making political references, mainly from his mother (c.150 letters), his father (c.70 letters), other family members and those who worked in Court circles including Henry Ponsonby, the Queen's Private Secretary; c.325 letters addressed to William Lord de Ros's daughter, Blanche, c.1838-1909, from her family and miscellaneous correspondents, largely of a personal nature, but some containing references to political, military and court matters; c.13 letters addressed to Frances de Ros, Blanche de Ros's elder sister, c.1835-1851; c.96 letters to Elizabeth, Lady de Ros, first wife of Dudley, 24th Lord de Ros, c.1854-1891; c.30 letters to James Swinton, an artist, and husband of Blanche de Ros, daughter of Dudley, 24th Lord de Ros, 1869-1933; and c.130 other letters relating to subsidiary members and acquaintances of the de Ros family.



Duke of Wellington

The archive contains c.275 documents, etc. relating to the Duke of Wellington, with whom Lady Georgiana de Ros's lifelong friendship began when her father was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 1807-1813, and Colonel Sir Arthur Wellesley, later Duke of Wellington, was Chief Secretary. After her marriage in 1824 she and Lord William often drove to London to dine or go to the opera with the Duke. They annually visited the Duke's home at Stratfield Saye during the Easter holidays with their children, and in the autumn stayed at the Duke's official residence, Walmer Castle, Deal. The Duke was god-daughter to Blanche de Ros, and Lord de Ros took part in the military arrangements for his funeral, 1852. In January and February 1889 Georgiana's Personal Recollections of the Duke of Wellington were published in Murray's Magazine.

Notable among this material is evidence of the Duke's concern for Lord March, A.D.C. to H.R.H. the Prince of Orange ('the Young Frog') at Waterloo, and Georgiana's brother, after he was injured in the Battle of Orthez, February 1814; material relating to the controversy conducted in the Times 1888 over the location of the Waterloo Ball, in which Georgiana joined (her mother had given the ball for the Duke and his officers in Brussels three days before the battle, and her father had been present, in the Duke's suite, and Georgiana herself had been 'the belle of the ball'); 127 typescript copies of letters from the Duke of Wellington to Georgiana June 1815-1850; typescript extracts from the diaries of Georgiana about the Duke of Wellington, and visits to Walmer and Stratfield Saye, etc., 1836-1852; extensive notes of the Duke's conversations from 1836 on diverse topics such as politicians, military matters, and foreign and English royals, made by William, Lord de Ros and his wife Georgiana, and a couple by Blanche de Ros (marked as 'private documents' by Lord de Ros); and a Spanish translation of the English prayer-book given to Georgiana by the Duke of Wellington, who wrote on the frontispiece, 4 April 1836. It had been given to the Duke by Lady Eleanor Butler, one of 'the ladies of Llangollen', in 1808 when he was going to take command in Spain, and he learnt his Spanish from it. The prayer book was described by Georgiana in her Personal Recollections of ... Wellington as 'a literary curiosity – there being no other copy of that editions extant'. There are also 2 letters from the Duke to Georgiana, 1837, re her imminent receipt of the prayer book, invitations to de Ros family members from the Duke, and letters from them recording incidents relating to him.



Wilton Family Jewels

There are c.22 letters relating to the dispute between Dudley, 24th Lord de Ros, executor and trustee of his father-in-law, the 2nd Earl of Wilton's estate, and Elizabeth, Countess of Wilton, wife of the 3rd Earl, over rightful possession of the Wilton family jewels.



Royalty

Most of this material derives from Dudley de Ros's position as equerry to the Prince Consort 1853-1874. It includes c.130 foolscap pages written by Dudley, in diary format, about his life at court during the period c.1850-1862, and his manuscript account written in 1901?, giving interesting personal reminiscences of certain events which occurred while he was acquainted with, and in the service of, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, as well as dinner and shooting lists, etc.



Military Matters

As well as various military commissions granted to 23rd and 24th Lords de Ros, the archive contains 16 typescript transcripts of letters from the Duke of Marlborough to Lord Coningsby, 1704-1714; copies, furnished by the Foreign Office, of all William, Lord de Ros's official reports and correspondence, in his own hand, relative to his mission to Russia, 1835-1836; and a copy by Dudley de Ros, of extracts from his father's letters written during his diplomatic mission to the Emperor Napoleon III, February-March, 1854 (when his brother-in-law, Lord Cowley, was ambassador to Paris).



Family Matters

The main distinguishing feature of this archive is the detailed documentation of the background to calling the de Ros barony out of abeyance in 1806, and the procedure and technicalities involved.

On her mother's death in 1790, Lady Henry Fitzgerald became a co-heir to the barony of Ros. She petitioned the King to terminate the abeyance in her favour. There were counter-petitions by Sir Henry Hunloke (who died in 1804), and the Duke of Rutland, who claimed to hold the barony for historical reasons by virtue of his tenure of Belvoir Castle. The three petitions were referred by the King to the House of Lords which referred them to the Committee for Privileges. The Committee reported and the House resolved on 9 May 1806 that the barony remained in abeyance between Sir Thomas Hunloke (Sir Henry's son and heir), George, Earl of Essex and Lady Henry Fitzgerald. The King, however, on Lord Grenville's recommendation, terminated the abeyance in her favour. By royal licence, 6 October 1806, she and her issue took the name of De Ros after that of Fitzgerald.

The archive contains c.60 letters, 1800-1806, about the procedure, among them 3 from the Home Secretary, the Duke of Portland, and 3 from the Prime Minister, Lord Grenville, and c.10 letters, 1806-1846, relating to technical matters arising after the barony was called out of abeyance; a volume containing Minutes of the Evidence given before the Committee for Privileges to whom the petition of the Rt Hon. Charlotte Fitzgerald was referred, 1804, pedigrees and the lists of proofs for the respective cases of Lady Henry Fitzgerald as to the barony of Roos or Ros and John Henry, Duke of Rutland as to the Barony of Hamlake, Trusbutt and Belvoir, and the barony of Manners of Haddon; official copies of both the cases of the Rt Hon. Charlotte Fitzgerald and John Henry, Duke of Rutland, to be presented to the House of Lords, 1804; and the King's patent, 30 July 1806, terminating the abeyance of the barony by declaring Lady Henry Fitzgerald, Baroness Roos.

There is also correspondence, etc, relating to calling the barony out of abeyance again in favour of Una Mary Ross, 1943.

Other family material relates to trusts, wills and marriage settlements, notably Lord Henry Fitzgerald's marriage settlement, 1791, and also includes sketches, water colours and engravings of Fitzgerald de Ros family members, and account books of Lady Frances Williams, 1735-1746, and of Mrs Boyle Walsingham, 1779-1786, together with a notebook of the latter, giving an account of a tour of Winchester and several country seats, 1784.



Estate Material

The remainder of the archive comprises material relating to the de Ros estate at Strangford and includes: 38 leases, 1716-1954; 8 conveyances, 1833 and 1921-1968; c.120 rental agreements, 1900-1971; miscellaneous financial papers; and typescript evidence, to which Lady Una Ross was to swear in court in an application for compensation for criminal injury to property, after a malicious fire by Sinn Féin had destroyed her residence at Old Court, Strangford, Co. Down at the end of 1921, together with two lists of articles lost.

