



Public Record Office
of Northern Ireland

INTRODUCTION

LONDONDERRY ESTATE OFFICE ARCHIVE

December 2007

Londonderry Estate Office Archive (D654)

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Summary

The contents of the former Londonderry Estate Office, Newtownards, Co. Down, comprise c.12,000 documents and volumes, running from the 17th to the 20th century.



Background

The Stewart family of Stewart's Court and Ballylawn, Co. Donegal, settled in that county in the early 17th century. Letters of designation were granted to John Stewart in 1629, together with the proportion of Ballyveagh which was erected for him into the manor of Stewart's Court. The history of the family for the remainder of the century is obscure, but they do not appear to have obtained any additional lands outside Donegal.



The Cowan inheritance

Their fortunes were transformed by a well-chosen marriage. Alexander Stewart, who was born in 1699, appears to have inherited the Donegal estate from his brother Thomas about 1730. In 1737 he married his cousin, Mary Cowan, daughter of Alderman John Cowan of Londonderry (d.1733), and heiress to her brother, Sir Robert Cowan, Governor of Bombay, 1729-1734. Sir Robert entered the service of the East India Company before 1720. He retired in 1735 and died in 1736. There was a protracted lawsuit over his will, which ended favourably for Alexander Stewart in 1743. In the following year Alexander Stewart employed a portion of his wife's legacy to purchase the manors of Newtown and Comber, Co. Down, from Robert Colville of Newtown. On the death of Alderman Cowan, Stewart's wife had also inherited a small estate in Co. Londonderry and some property in Londonderry City.

Apart from his good sense in choosing a wife, Stewart appears to have been a man of business ability and experience. Before his marriage he was a partner in a Belfast commercial concern trading in flax with the Baltic and with Russia. He appears to have maintained his business contacts for many years after his purchase of Newtown and Comber. He died in 1781.



Robert Stewart, 1st Marquess of Londonderry



Mount Stewart, from a watercolour of 1996 by Alison Muir

His son, Robert, 1st Marquess of Londonderry (1739-1821), exerted a marked influence on the administration of his estates. By purchasing outlying townlands he rounded off the boundaries of the Co. Down estate and in 1817 he acquired the neighbouring manor of Florida, Co. Down. In Co. Londonderry he bought a half-share of the lease of the Salters' Proportion at Magherafelt in 1786, which he and his descendants retained until 1853 (for the records of this estate, see PRONI, D4108). He was meticulous in the keeping of accounts, and

initiated some of the principal series of records of estate administration, in particular the 'Journals of Accompts' and 'Ledgers'. He has also left accounts and voluminous electoral registry papers relating to Co. Down elections, 1789-1824, notably for the celebrated contest of 1790 at which his son, Robert Stewart (1769-1822), later Lord Castlereagh and, briefly, 2nd Marquess of Londonderry, was first returned. The house at Mount Stewart, built in the 1770s-1780s, was enlarged by the 1st Marquess to the designs of George Dance Jnr in c.1803-1805, and he drew up plans for the reconstruction of the centre of Newtownards, of which a portion only were completed. His schemes for the reclamation of much of Strangford Lough are of considerable interest, but little of it was effected.



The Vane-Tempest inheritance



3rd Marquess of Londonderry

Charles William Stewart, who succeeded as 3rd Marquess of Londonderry in 1822, had married (as his second wife) Frances Anne Vane-Tempest, heiress to her family's Co. Durham estates and collieries and to their seat, Wynyard Park, near Stockton-on-Tees.



Frances Anne, Marchioness of Londonderry

In addition to her inheritance in Co. Durham (which the Londonderrys substantially increased by acquiring the Seaham estate of Lord Byron's father-in-law and thus gaining a coastal outlet for their coal), Frances-Anne, Marchioness of Londonderry, inherited in 1834 roughly one-third of the Co. Antrim property of her maternal grandfather, the Marquess of Antrim (d.1791). Her share of this estate was centred on the fishing village of Carnlough, above which her husband and she built a new house, Garron Tower, in 1848-1850. The Antrim Estate Papers in PRONI (D2977) include most of the correspondence and reports, 1840-1865, of John Lanktree and other agents concerning the administration of this estate and the construction of Garron Tower.

As a result of the Vane-Tempest marriage, a considerable quantity of correspondence and other papers relating to Co. Down and Co. Antrim estate and political affairs has come to rest in the Durham County Record Office, much of which – dated 1826-1880 and 1910-1917 – has been photocopied by PRONI and either added to D654 or separately accessioned. The main instance of a separate accession is T3438, which comprises photocopies from the Durham R.O. of the 3rd Marquess's correspondence, 1834-1835, 1839-1840 and 1849, with Robert Jocelyn, 3rd Earl of Roden, about Irish politics, relations between some Irish Conservatives and the Tory Party led by Sir Robert Peel, and the Dolly's Brae affair of 1849. The Durham Record Office photocopies which have been incorporated in D654 comprise c.900 items, mainly correspondence and accounts, relating to the estates of the Marquesses of Londonderry at Carnlough, Co. Antrim, Magherafelt, Co. Londonderry, and at Comber and Newtownards, Co. Down. They include: letters about the Carnlough estate from John Lanktree, agent at Carnlough, and others, to the third Marquess of Londonderry, 1844-1849, and a substantial group of letters from Richard Wilson, Carnlough agent to the 3rd Marquess and Lady Londonderry, with some references to Mount Stewart, 1852-1864; statement of accounts for Carnlough railway and harbour, 1854-1855; agent's account for Mount Stewart house and garden, 1850-1851; letters to the 3rd Marquess from John Andrews of Comber, agent for the Co. Down estates, covering such topics as the relief of distress during the Famine, tenant right and improvements at Mount Stewart, 1846-8 and 1855, and from Mark Cassidy, Newtownards, about an epidemic of smallpox in 1837; letters and

accounts of Andrew Spotswood, Millbrook, Co. Londonderry, to the 3rd Marquess, about the Magherafelt estate, 1837-1847, and in particular, the relief of distress in 1847; correspondence from John Vandeleur Stewart, a kinsman of the 3rd Marquess, relating to his unsuccessful candidature in the 1852 Co. Down election; letters from Edmund McDonnell, Glenarm Castle, Co. Antrim, to Lady Londonderry [his step-daughter], mainly about the settlement of the Earl of Antrim's estates, 1834-1846; and letters from Charles Vane-Tempest-Stewart, 7th Marquess of Londonderry, to his mother, in which he comments on the Irish Convention of 1917, of which he was a member.



7th Marquess of Londonderry

The Vane-Tempest marriage and the Durham connection also explain the presence in D654 of an original volume of plans and elevations by James Gibbs, c.1720s-1740s, for a house which is almost certainly a Wynyard Park that was never built.



*Charles William Stewart,
3rd Marquess of
Londonderry (1778-1854)*

The 3rd Marquess died in 1854 and Frances-Anne in 1865.



Dynasty

The position of the Stewart family as one of the great ruling families of the United Kingdom was founded, first, on Lord Castlereagh's achievements at the Foreign Office and the Congress of Vienna (in recognition of which the marquessate of Londonderry was conferred on his father in 1816), secondly, on his half-brother's marriage to the Vane-Tempest heiress and the subsequent discovery of coal on her Durham estate, and, thirdly, on the confluence of all the different family estates in England and Ireland in the one branch of the family and bearer of the marquessate.

This last, however, occurred only by accident, and as the result of the failure of two successive plans of a quite contrary tendency. In 1804, at the time of the first marriage of the future 3rd Marquess of Londonderry, his father settled the family estates so that those in Co. Down would pass to Lord Castlereagh, the future 2nd Marquess, and those in Cos Donegal and Londonderry to the future 3rd Marquess (who was created Baron Stewart of Ballylawn in the peerage of the United Kingdom in 1814). Similarly, following the future 3rd Marquess's second marriage to the Vane-Tempest heiress in 1819, arrangements were made whereby her Durham estates would pass to the sons of this second marriage, for whose



*Viscount Castlereagh, later
4th Marquess of Londonderry*

benefit an earldom of Vane and a viscountcy of Seaham, both in the peerage of the United Kingdom, were created in 1823), while all the Irish estates would pass to the 3rd Marquess's only son by his first marriage, Lord Castlereagh, later 4th Marquess of Londonderry. Both these partition schemes foundered from natural causes. The 2nd Marquess of Londonderry committed suicide in 1822, leaving no children, so that the marquessate and the other Irish honours, together with the Co. Down estate, devolved on his half-brother, the 3rd Marquess. Likewise, the 4th Marquess died childless, in 1872, with the effect that the Irish honours and estates devolved on his half-brother, the 2nd Earl Vane, who now succeeded as 5th Marquess of Londonderry.



*George III, portrait from patent
creating Robert Stewart, Baron
Londonderry, 1789*

In the end, the only estate which the family managed to hive off from the main branch and the bearer of the marquessate was the Co. Antrim estate at Carnlough.



The papers

The estate archive which comprises most of D654, begins with c.1000 title deeds, trust deeds (with accounts), abstracts of title, legal and testamentary papers, etc, c.1670-c.1850, relating to the estates in Cos Down, Donegal and Londonderry.

Next come c.2500 leases, late 17th century - c.1870. There are c.250 pre-1750 leases relating to the estates in all three counties, but chiefly to Comber and Newtown. For the period from 1750 to 1799 there are c.600 leases for the Newtown estate, c.200 for the Comber estate and c.60 for the Florida estate. For the period from 1800 to 1850 there are c.800 leases for the Newtown estate, c.500 for the Comber estate and c.200 for the Florida estate. For the post-1850 period there are only c.70 leases and these are all for the Newtown estate. Throughout, there are only a handful of leases for the Co. Londonderry and Co. Donegal estates.

The townlands comprising the different estates, in alphabetical order, are as follows:

Manor of Newtownards

Ballyalicock	Ballyalton	Ballybarnes
Ballyblack	Ballycastle	Ballycullen
Ballyewry	Ballyhaft	Ballyharry
Ballyhenry	Ballyhenry	Ballymagrechan
Ballymoney	Ballyrea	Ballyrogan
Ballyskeagh	Ballywatticock	Castleaverry
Craigogantlet	Cronstown	Crossnamuckly
Cunningburn	Drumawhy	Glass Moss
Greengraves	Gregstown alias Botown	Killarn
Killinaterny	Loughmyronie	Loughriscouse
Milecross	Movilla	Newtownards demesne
Newtownards corporation lands	Newtownards town parks	Newtownards town
Scrabo	Sheepland	Templecron
Tullynagardy	Whitespots	

Manor of Comber

Ballyaltikilligan	Ballyloughan	Ballymagreehan
Ballyrickard	Ballyrush	Ballystockart
Ballywalter	Ballywilliam	Barnamaghery
Castlebeg	Cattogs	Comber town parks
Comber town	Longlands	Ringcreevy

Manor of Florida

Ballygraffan
Lisbarnet
Tullynagee

Ballyminstragh
Raffrey

Kilmood
Raverra

Co. Londonderry estate (excluding the Salters' Proportion)

Ardnaguniog
Ligg
Campsie
Main
Greenan

Carnmoney
Lisdellin
Cloughole
Dunamoney

Gortlagherty
Tully
Londonderry City
Faughanvale

Co. Donegal estate

Ballylawn
Veagh

Stewart's Court
Ballybiglymore

Tirkeeran
Monghaghley

At its full extent, the estate comprised more than 80 townlands. To each has been allotted a number which it retains throughout those sections of the catalogue relating to the estate records. Thus, Ballyblack is allotted number 6: title deeds for this townland appear at D6, leases at L/6 and maps at M/6.



Maps, plans, surveys, accounts books, rentals, etc

Maps, plans and surveys number c.800 and run from 1721 to the mid-19th century. They include surveys of the manors of Newtown and Comber made in the 1720s by John Sloane. But the majority of the maps are surveys of individual townlands on the Newtown, Comber and Florida estates, and most of these were made by David Geddes in the late 18th century and early 19th century; these maps are a vital source for any study of the growth of Newtownards and Comber. In addition there are late 18th century plans and elevations for buildings in the Square and elsewhere in Newtownards, late 18th century plans of Mount Stewart demesne, maps of road systems in Ards Lower generally and the Comber-Newtownards area in particular from the mid 18th century, and a group of early 19th century plans showing reclamation schemes in Strangford Lough.

Account books, rent ledgers, rentals, vouchers, correspondence, etc, mid-18th century – c.1940, relating chiefly to the management of the estates, amount to c.5,000 documents and volumes. Although the main series of rentals begins in the mid 18th century there is a singleton rental of the Comber property for 1684. The accounts include references to the building work at Mount Stewart in 1805, and to reclamation projects in Strangford Lough in the early 19th century. A small group of papers relating to mining interests on the Newtown estate, includes a journal of the Bangor and Newtown lead mine, 1780-1782, and an account book, with vouchers, of the Craiganu slate quarry, 1807-1818. Among the more miscellaneous items are several inventories of furniture and books at Mount Stewart from 1770, and a Newtownards cotton spinner's account book, 1807-1811.



The 1803 invasion scare

Among the non-estate papers created by the family is a remarkable series of returns of live and dead stock for more than 40 mainly maritime parishes in Co. Down; these returns were made in 1803 to the 1st Marquess of Londonderry, as Governor of the county, in anticipation of a French invasion of Ireland, and constitute a valuable, if partial, agricultural survey. The parishes covered are as follows:

Ardglass	Ardkeen	Ballycultra
Ballee	Ballyhalbert	Bright
Clonallen	Clonduff	Comber
Donaghadee	Donaghcloney	Donaghmore
Dromara	Dromballyronan	Drumbeg
Drumbo	Drumgath	Drumgooland
Dunsfort	Garvagh	Hillsborough
Holywood	Innishargie	Killclief
Killcoo	Killinchy	Killmegan
Killyleagh	Knockbreda	Maghera
Magheralin	Moira	Newry
Rathmullen	Saintfield	Saul
Seapatrick	Slanes	Tullylish
Tyrella	Whitechurch	Witter

There are also 16 abstracts of returns and some miscellaneous crop returns, all for the same year, 1803.



Local government and election material

Papers about local government and local law and order include Co. Down commissions of the peace and appointments as Governor, Deputy Governor, Custos Rotulorum, etc, 1791-1880, copy charters of incorporation of the boroughs of Newtownards, Co. Down and Limavady, Co. Londonderry, 1612 and 1614, copy correspondence about Alexander Stewart's (unsuccessful) litigation to gain control of the Newtownards corporation, 1748-1758, a case for the opinion of counsel concerning the rating of the borough of Newtownards for lighting, 7 May 1785, an applotment book for town cess in Newtownards, 1819-1820, bye road cess papers, 1820, extracts from the Riot and Whiteboy Acts and from Acts preventing the administration and taking of unlawful oaths and the giving of arms to unauthorized persons, 1821, a memorandum book on the Lieutenancy and Deputy Lieutenancy of Cos Antrim and Down, 1843, a Royal South Down Infantry appointment book (from 1812), 1855, and a list of the plate of the Royal North Down Regiment of Militia, 1871.

The electoral registry material, 1781-1824, includes an election check book for Co. Down containing the names of freeholders from A to G only, registered from 1746 to 1789, arranged alphabetically; and another containing the names of freeholders arranged by the townlands in which their property lay, and apparently including all the townlands and freeholders in Co. Down, c.1789.

In addition to the above formal documents relating to Co. Down, the archive includes: the patent creating Robert Stewart Baron Londonderry, 1789; a photocopy of the commission granting Lord Castlereagh full powers to represent Great Britain at the Congress of Chatillon, 1813; and the patent creating the 3rd Marquess of Londonderry a Knight of the Garter, 1852.



Business records

Much further removed from estate management are two important series of business records which had found their way into the Newtownards Estate Office.

The first is the business papers of Alexander Stewart (purchaser of Newtown and Comber), comprising c.200 letters and papers and three ledgers or account books, 1725-1735. Alexander Stewart was in partnership in Belfast with Isaac Macartney, James McClure, John Gordon and John Wallace. The firm dealt largely in flax, and the letters demonstrate its contact with agents in Narva, St Petersburg, Stockholm, Hamburg, Rotterdam, La Rochelle and Cadiz.



A 'nabob' and his archive

The second (primarily) business archive derives from Sir Robert Cowan. It is likely that these papers were produced in court during the protracted lawsuit that followed his death, and were preserved later with some care. They include long series of accounts of his private trade at Goa, Mocha and Bombay, and a fine run of outward letter-books and many bundles of original inward letters. From them it should be possible to create a detailed picture of his extensive commercial activities in the period 1720-1735. In this section, too, are the accounts of Charles Boone and William Phipps, Sir Robert's predecessors as Governors of Bombay, whose private affairs he appears to have cleared up after their retirement; and those of Arnoldus Paauw, once of the Dutch East India Company.

Information on Robert Cowan's earlier years in the East India Company's service is limited, so it can only be presumed that he arrived in India from Portugal about 1717, after being in (private?) business in Portugal for several years. He was granted permission to reside in Bombay as a free merchant in February 1719, and was transferred to Goa as the chief of the factory there in December 1720. At Goa, as a result of successful negotiations with the Portuguese, he was appointed a member of the Bombay Council in 1721, became Chief of the Mocha factory in 1724 and returned to Bombay about 1728 to take up his appointment as Governor on 10 January 1729. On Cowan's appointment as Governor of Bombay, Henry Lowther, the Chief of the Bombay factory from 1718 and a member of the Council from 1725, was transferred to the Surat factory.

Shipment of goods to and from China and Persia as well as the ports along the west coast of India was under constant threat from a fleet of pirate ships under the command of Angria, a former Maratha admiral, who acted in conjunction with a band of European pirates. In an endeavour to lessen, and where possible to eliminate, this threat Cowan encouraged the assistance of Seydee (Mosoot?), a Moghul admiral who was envious of Angria's power and determined to thwart the growth of the Maratha Empire. Cowan was also forced to use the services of men like Mahmed Alley who could provide information on the intrigues and quarrels in the native governments, the majority of which were under Maratha influence, although any help he gave was counteracted by the trouble caused by his under-hand methods of trading. Trade was, in spite of these threats, prosperous.

In the run of letters from Lowther to Cowan, written during 1731, prices are quoted, and the best markets advised, for goods such as iron, copper, tin, cloth, rice and sugar. Brief comments are made on the purchase and disposal of diamonds. Relations with the Dutch, Portuguese and French, and the need for diplomacy in dealings with them as with the Government of Surat, are also mentioned. There are comments on the Surat factory, the number of men employed, the poor standard of living of the Surat population and the characters of the commanders of the Company's trading vessels.

The following are some definitions of words used in the Lowther-Cowan correspondence:

Aurora	Probably an orange coloured fabric.
Candy	Crystallised sugar.
Chank	A large kind of shell, used by Hindus for offering libations.
Fiscal	A legal official.
Gallivat	A large boat having cars and a triangular sail.
Goz	A thin transparent fabric.
Grab	A large coasting vessel, built with a prow and usually two-masted.
Hing	The drug Asafoetida.
Pattamar	A courier; a dispatch boat, particularly a lateen-rigged sailing vessel.
Toothinaigue Zinc	A copper alloy.



Structure of the archive

The different components of the Londonderry Papers in PRONI are as follows:

- D654** The Londonderry Estate Office Archive, 1629-c.1940, consisting of most of the Irish estate papers and the mercantile papers of Alexander Stewart and Sir Robert Cowan.
- D665** The Galway, McIlwaine & Seeds Papers, a Belfast solicitor's archive including title deeds, legal papers, accounts and testamentary papers relating to the estates of the Marquesses of Londonderry in Co. Down, 1812-c.1880, with particular reference to the settlement of the affairs of the 2nd Marquess following his death in 1822.
- D714 and D3232** The Cleland Papers, principally of the Rev. John Cleland, perpetual curate of Newtownards and Londonderry agent, mainly about 'the Saintfield informer', Nicholas Magin, United Irish activity, the '98 Rebellion in Co. Down, the Rathgael yeomanry, estate management, etc, 1797-1803.
- D1088** The Cassidi Papers, including those of the Rev. Mark Cassidy, 1810-1839, as perpetual curate of Newtownards and, apparently, a trustee for Londonderry family settlements, about local charities, Co. Down elections, c.1810-c.1820, etc.
- D2846** The Theresa, Lady Londonderry Papers, the rest of which, together with those of her husband, the 6th Marquess (1852-1915), are in the Durham County Record Office.
- D2977** The Antrim Estate Papers, including agent's correspondence and reports, 1840-1865, about Lady Londonderry's Co. Antrim estate.
- D3030** The Castlereagh Papers consisting of the bulk of the political and personal papers of the 2nd Marquess, of which only a small quantity are in Durham; and such correspondence of his half-brother, the 3rd Marquess, and the 3rd Marquess's wife, Frances-Anne, as are not in Durham.

- D3084/C** The H. Montgomery Hyde Papers, containing some Londonderry Papers (Hyde was private secretary to the 7th Marquess, and biographer of members of the Londonderry family).
- D3099** The Londonderry Papers, consisting of the bulk of the papers of the 7th Marquess, and his wife, Edith Helen, the rest of which are in Durham; together with the papers of Lady Londonderry's father, Henry, 1st Viscount Chaplin.
- D3984** The H. Montgomery Hyde Papers, including some original Londonderry correspondence (Hyde was private secretary to, and biographer of, members of the Londonderry family).
- D4127 and D2784/19** The Stewart-Bam/Stewart of Ards Papers, 1771-1849, deriving from a junior branch of the family and closely linked with D654 and D3030.

