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# **INTRODUCTION**

# **AIKEN McCLELLAND PAPERS**

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# Aiken McClelland Papers (D3815)

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## Summary

The Aiken McClelland papers comprise 150 volumes, c.900 documents and photographs of John Aiken McClelland relating to the Orange Order and genealogical matters, c 1799-1983. McClelland, who died on 27 January 1981, was the Librarian/Archivist at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum from 1967 to the time of his death. He was a member of the Orange and Masonic Orders and throughout the course of his life built up a remarkable personal archive of material relating to Orangeism and Unionism. As one of his obituaries stated: 'He epitomised to a unique extent the qualities one likes to consider characteristic of the Ulsterman at his best; though definite and uncompromising in both secular and religious loyalties, nevertheless his personal relationships were unaffected by tribal or group identities in a land and at a time in which one could be excused for regarding this as the exception rather than the rule'.



## **Published works**

McClelland was a prolific writer of periodicals and penned an eight volume series entitled *The Formation of the Orange Order* (Newcastle, Co. Down). *The Irish Harp Society* (Belfast, 1975), was an exploration of the society formed by Bunting in 1808 which brought together people of all creeds and opinions to preserve the dying harping tradition. He also published 'The Origin of the Imperial Grand Black Chapter of the British Commonwealth' (Dublin, 1968) and 'The Ulster Press in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries' (Belfast, 1974).



## The Papers

The Aiken McClelland papers provide a unique overview for researchers delving into the history of the Orange Order not just in Ireland but also in Canada, the USA and Australia. The collection can be separated into three main components: correspondence, Orange Order Papers and genealogical research undertaken by Aiken McClelland.



## Correspondence

The correspondence comprises approximately 430 letters. The first 103 are official communications between various Orange Lodges and their respective members; these include character references, resolutions, statements of membership and expulsion orders. The next 246 comprise more personal correspondence between Orange Order members and include a running commentary on topical events as they happened, 1904-1926, between two Belfast Orangemen, James Davidson and Edward Bradshaw. The events that they discuss include the First World War and the Easter Rising. Also of interest is a threatening letter from an anonymous source referred to as 'The Bloomer' relating to agrarian unrest.



## **Orange Order Memorabilia**

The strength of the archive lies in the quantity of Orange Order documents which it contains, including: 120 Orange Lodge membership certificates (plus Aiken McClelland's own Masonic Certificate of 1951); 13 applications for Orange Lodge warrants; 120 Orange Lodge stamps; and approximately 170 photographs of Orange Order marches, drums and symbols.



## **Genealogical research**

The final major section of the archive consists of working papers relating to research undertaken by Aiken McClelland himself, the majority of which was of a genealogical nature. These include approximately 140 notebooks with information relating to William Johnston of Ballykilbeg, Co. Down, the prominent Orangeman and Conservative MP for Belfast, 1868-1878, the Rev. David Stewart, and research into the family trees and background of the Birch and Ledlie families.

Other (slightly extraneous) items include: 12 title deeds, legal case papers and wills, dating from 1810 to 1925, relating to William Johnston and his property at Ballykilbeg; transcribed minute books of the Dublin Protestant Association, 1861-1864, of the Greyabbey Graveyard Committee, 1872-1893, and of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, 1798; and a bundle of 25 typed essays by the writer, Cathal O'Byrne, 1965-1970.

