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# **INTRODUCTION**

# **MUSSENDEN PAPERS**

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# Mussenden Papers (D354)

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## Summary

The Mussenden papers comprise c.1100 documents, 1694-1831, consisting of c.650 estate papers relating to the Larchfield estate, Annahilt, Co. Down, and to Mussenden property in Belfast, 1694-1831, and c.450 business papers of Daniel Mussenden, an important Belfast merchant (d. 1763), and of his son and successor, William, 1712-1794.



## **Family history**

The family background of the Mussendens is obscure. According to Burke's Landed Gentry they are descended from the De Mussendens, who came to England with William the Conqueror, and were related to the Leathes of Herringfleet. There is evidence in the archive to support the latter claim, but whether or not the Leathes were the same family that had been prominent in Belfast in the 17th century, is uncertain. Burke has it that Daniel Mussenden was the son of Francis Mussenden, registrar of the diocese of Down. How long the family had been in Belfast is uncertain but Daniel Mussenden was active in business there from the very early 18th century.



## **Daniel Mussenden I, merchant and banker of Belfast**

He was one of Belfast's principal merchants from 1720 till his death in 1763, and in a period when specialisation was rare, owned a general merchant business, dealing in both exports and imports. The bulk of his wealth, which was considerable, came from his trade with the Baltic and Northern Europe and with the Americas and West Indies. He also conducted trade with England and Scotland. His offices and business premises in Belfast were in High Street. He had, besides, other business interests, including shares in a local wine company, an interest in a salt company, a partnership with John Bradshaw connected with the linen industry and an involvement in the Tyrone Colliery Company.

His principal non-mercantile activity was in banking and he was a partner in the first bank in Belfast, Mussenden, Adair & Bateson, set up in 1753. Although the bank went out of business within ten years, its establishment marks an important stage in the development of Belfast, and it was soon succeeded by other banks. Mussenden seems to have acted in a banking capacity before the bank was formally established, which was not unusual with successful merchants at this time.

By the late 1750s Mussenden seems to have acquired enough wealth to retire from the business and go landed. His new country residence at Larchfield, between Lisburn and Ballynahinch, was ready in 1757, and he moved out of Belfast. Although he continued in the business, his son, William, seem to have become more and more active. The bulk of the business archive relates to the years 1730-1760 and there are very few references to the continuance of the business under William, after his father's death in 1763. The archive is fragmentary thereafter, but both William Mussenden and his son, another Daniel, continue to be addressed as merchants in Belfast, although they seem to have lived in Dublin, on and off, in the 1760s and 1770s.

It is probable that the family were unable to live off the revenue of the Larchfield estate, which comprised only 1300 acres, and therefore retained their business interests, although they probably ceased to be actively engaged in trade.



## **Politics and Presbyterianism**

While the archive is particularly important for the economic history of the period, it has some political relevance also, as the family were connected with some important political figures. William Richardson of Richhill, who was MP for Armagh in the 1750s, married Daniel Mussenden's daughter, Isabella, in 1746, their son also being MP for Armagh; and Arthur Hill of Belvoir, Belfast, an MP for many years, and later Viscount Dungannon, was a close friend of the family. There are also several references to the Macartneys, merchants in Belfast at this time, but later to achieve fame in the political and diplomatic arena in the person of Lord Macartney. The younger Daniel Mussenden, who was called to the Irish Bar in 1770, was involved in local affairs in Co. Down and was a captain of yeomanry at the time of the '98 Rebellion. The elder Daniel appears to have been a member of the Belfast Corporation.

The Mussendens were Presbyterians and somewhat unusually remained so after joining the ranks of the landed gentry. The elder Daniel was a member of the Second Congregation of Belfast and later of Annahilt Congregation near Larchfield.



## **The Mussenden Temple**

One doubtful claim of the Mussendens to fame is their association with Frederick Hervey, Earl-Bishop of Derry, and the Mussenden Temple at Downhill, which was built for Frideswide Bruce, a second cousin of the Earl-Bishop, who had married the younger Daniel Mussenden in 1781. The Earl-Bishop, by now in his early fifties, had supposedly taken a great fancy to his young cousin and appears to have spent some time at Larchfield. Work on the construction of the Temple had begun after his return from a lengthy stay with his cousin and her husband at Larchfield. While its original purpose remains obscure, it was dedicated as a mausoleum to Mrs Mussenden after her death in 1784, when she was still only twenty-two. It is unfortunate that there are no documents in the archive relating to the Earl-Bishop, or, for that matter, to the 1780s.



## **Estate papers**

The estate papers, 1694-1831, include: leases, deeds, wills, a rent roll of Daniel Mussenden's lands in Co. Down (1758) and his will and codicil (1756). There are also estate letters of Daniel, William and Daniel Mussenden, 1719-1800, referring to various land transactions in Co. Down and to property in Belfast. These letters include some about the purchase of the townlands of Duneaght, Lisnow and Clogher, Co. Down, from the Montgomery family, Earls of Mount Alexander, by Daniel Mussenden in 1745. There are also letters from Arthur Hill, MP, later Viscount Dungannon, concerning the purchase of Robert Kyle's estate at Lisleen.

Several letters refer to a dispute between Colonel Henry Richardson, executor of his late brother, William Richardson, and William Mussenden, executor of his late father, Daniel Mussenden (1765), and, a letter from George Vaughan, reporting an attack on Larchfield House by the Hearts of Steel (1772).



## **Business papers**

The business papers include: charter-parties, indentures of apprenticeship, and bonds for the performance of covenants, 1712-1755, relating to shipping and trade with the West Indies, the Baltic, the Netherlands, France and Spain; bills, promissory notes, drafts, receipts, etc, 1720-1794, drawn on, or in favour of, Daniel, William and Daniel Mussenden, including a few papers documenting transactions with the Dublin firm of bankers, Latouche, Kane and Latouche (1738); business letters to Daniel and William Mussenden, 1720-1769, from various European merchants in France, Spain and the Netherlands, including several letters from the Blacks of Bordeaux; business letters to Daniel and William Mussenden, from various merchants and traders in Dublin, Limerick, Londonderry, Ballycastle, Belfast, Carrickfergus, Waterford and Drogheda, including also a letter from John Ryder, Archbishop of Tuam (1757); and invoices, ships' accounts, statements of account and other business papers of Daniel, William and Daniel Mussenden, 1728-1794, describing the trade which Mussenden & Co., carried on, their involvement in shipping and their dealings with other merchants. Included is a petition from nine masters of vessels in Belfast to George Macartney, Collector at Belfast (1736), the Earl of Hillsborough's account with Daniel Mussenden (1751-1753) and pages from the account book of Mussenden, Adair & Bateson, the first bankers in Belfast (1761). There are also some references to the registration of ships and the insurance of cargoes. Some of these accounts refer also to estate business.

Later business papers include: correspondence between Daniel Mussenden and McEvers, Van Horne & Roosevelt of New York and other merchants of New York and Barbados, 1734-1756, concerning trade with America and the West Indies; business letters to Daniel and William Mussenden from various merchants in London, Whitehaven, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Clifton Furnace, Berwick and Glasgow, 1740-1765, and one letter from Robert Black of Douglas, Isle of Man, about smuggling (1765); business letters to Daniel Mussenden from George Johnston, a merchant in Liverpool, 1753-1758, including one letter from John Perfect of Pontefract to Johnston about liquorice plants (1753); business letters to Daniel and William Mussenden from Archibald Gibson, a merchant in Danzig, Andreas Christian Friedlieb, a merchant in Trondheim, Norway, and other merchants involved in the Baltic trade with Ireland, 1754-1757; business letters to Daniel and William Mussenden from merchants in Berwick, Carmarthen, Cork, Drogheda, Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Limerick, Lochabers, London, Londonderry, Newry, Peterhead, Waterford, Wexford, Wick and Yarmouth, 1755-1759, concerning the corn trade; and, business letters to Daniel and William Mussenden from Rocquette & Van Toylingen, their agents in Rotterdam, 1755-1757, which include some letters dealing with methods and rates of exchange.

The papers of Daniel and William Mussenden also include various legal documents, 1738-1766, among them a deposition by Malcolm McNeil of Rathlin Island against Robert Miller of Coleraine and Robert Byrnt, Sovereign of Belfast (1738), and several letters from Daniel Mussenden's lawyer, John Arnold of Dublin, about Mussenden's dispute with a Mr Appleton of Liverpool (1757).

## **Belfast affairs**

Papers concerning Daniel Mussenden's involvement in Belfast municipal and non-business affairs, 1736-1758, include: an order from the Rev. Samuel Harper, a Presbyterian minister in Belfast, to the Rev. Robert Hutcheson about his portion of the Regium Donum, which he wants paid to Daniel Mussenden (1723); several accounts and bills for work done to the Market House of Belfast (1746); an address to the Lord Lieutenant, the Duke of Dorset, from the sovereign, burgesses and merchants of Belfast (1754); and a statement by the trustees of the Belfast Charitable Scheme (1758). There are also several letters from Arthur Hill, MP, later Viscount Dungannon, about the Lagan Canal and Mussenden's involvement in it (1756-1758), and a few other papers relating to turnpikes (1755-1756).



## **Political, military and personal correspondence**

Letters to Daniel and William Mussenden discussing political and military matters, 1742-1772, include a letter from William Richardson, MP, about the Money Bill dispute of 1753, and several letters from America on the state of hostilities there (1755). Private and family letters to Daniel and William Mussenden, 1746-1778, include two letters from William Richardson, MP, and a copy of a letter from Daniel Mussenden to Richardson, on the occasion of Richardson's marriage to Mussenden's daughter, Isabella (1746). There are also several more letters from Arthur Hill, Viscount Dungannon, who appears to have been a close friend of Daniel Mussenden.