



Public Record Office
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INTRODUCTION

FALLS & HANNA PAPERS

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Falls & Hanna Papers (D1390)

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Summary

c.50,000 documents, 1613-1950, comprising the records of Falls & Hanna, solicitors, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh. This major legal collection is rendered all the more important because of the status and influence of its partner, Major Sir Charles (Fausset) Falls, 1860-1936, who was educated at Trinity College Dublin and served in the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, Ulster Division in France during the 1st World War. Deputy Lieutenant for Co. Fermanagh, he was also Co. Fermanagh Secretary to the Grand Lodge of Ireland and was Conservative Member of Parliament for Fermanagh and Tyrone between 1924 and 1929.



Major Sir Charles Falls

His influence in these and related spheres is reflected in the content of some of the records which comprise letters and papers mainly of Sir Charles, 1851-1935, about the local Orange Order, Ulster Volunteer Force and Ulster Special Constabulary affairs, IRA activity in Co. Fermanagh and nearby, and local political affairs generally. Included are journals, 1913-14, of John Sears, Instructor to Ulster Volunteer Squads in Co. Fermanagh, detailing members of squads, numbers enrolled, musketry tests, etc, and a minute book of the Enniskillen Protestant Hall Committee, 1851-1869.

There is also a considerable quantity of important and detailed Unionist agents' correspondence and accounts particularly for the 1885 and 1903 elections in Co. Fermanagh. Sir Charles Hanna was revision agent for North and South Fermanagh and these elections are covered in depth by out-letter books. In the 1885 North Fermanagh election, eg, the Nationalist candidate, Willie Redmond, defeated J.C. Bloomfield by 443 votes in a poll of 6077. The letter book gives a glimpse of Conservative anxieties about the campaign to retain a 'safe' seat. The agent, J. Whiteside Dane, writing to Major Thomas Auchinleck, agrees that the organisation of the Conservative register of voters had been 'terribly neglected' and describes the protestants as being 'excessively apathetic' and unfavourable to 'anyone connected with the Landlords'. A further letter suggests that transport ought to be organised for 'a great many small farmers and labourers who now have votes; but some of them might not be disposed to walk a distance of 7 or 8 miles to the place of polling...' A memorandum describes conditions at polling booths '...up till four o'clock the door of this booth was never shut while illiterates were voting and a policeman remained present in the booth all the time...with two of Redmond's agents at the open door within earshot asking every man his name - on Captain Bloomfield's remonstrating the presiding officer stated he had no instructions that the door should be kept closed'.



Business Records

The records of the firm of Falls & Hanna, itself, include out-letter books dating from 1900 to 1927, with in-letters from 1875 to 1937. There are also legal papers of the business as solicitors to Fermanagh County Council, mainly concerned with road developments, c.1900-1930, and a section of testamentary papers, 1831-1906, including the will, 1831, of George Morrison, Curran, in the parish of Magheracross, Co. Fermanagh. In addition, the collection contains large quantities of Irish Land Commission papers, title deeds and family correspondence, etc, for various families including: the Strathern estate at Silverhill, near Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, c.1870-c.1940, the Knox-Brown estate at Aughentaine, Co. Tyrone, c.1898-1937; the D'Arcy-Irvine estate at Irvinestown, Co. Fermanagh, 1902-1922; the Maude estate at Cabragh, Co. Tyrone and Lenaghan, Co. Fermanagh, c.1750-c.1900; the estate of J. Whiteside Dane, solicitor and election agent, Enniskillen, 1917-1929, with abstracts of title from 1739.



Landed Estate Papers

Falls & Hanna were also solicitors for all the leading landed estates in Co. Fermanagh the archives of which have been deposited in PRONI over the years. Consequently, the research value of these collections has been enhanced by the acquisition of related material from Falls & Hanna. This material includes: estate and legal papers of the Earls of Enniskillen of Florence Court, Co. Fermanagh, 1864-1935; estate and legal papers of the Earls of Belmore of Castle Coole, Enniskillen, and of other members of the Lowry-Corry (Belmore) family, 1768-1928; estate and legal papers of the Earls of Erne of Crom Castle, Newtownbutler, Co. Fermanagh; estate and legal papers of the Brooke family, baronets, of Colebrooke, Brookeborough, Co. Fermanagh, 1840-1934.

Nor were the business activities of Falls & Hanna restricted to Cos Fermanagh and Tyrone. For example, there are very early title deeds, leases, surveys, etc, pertaining to the Dodwell estate in Cos Sligo and Roscommon, 1617-80: Mar.1849. These include a 1668 copy of the 'Grand Office' report on Co. Sligo, as it relates to the estate of Henry Dodwell, son and heir of William Dodwell (died 1650) and Elizabeth Slingsby. This appears to have been a survey carried out by commissioners consisting of Roger Viscount Ranelagh, Sir Charles Coote, Bt, Sir Robert King, Sir Richard Parsons and Philip Perceval Esq., and it recites and apparently confirms previous transactions whereby lands in Cos Sligo and Roscommon came into Dodwell possession. Other non-Ulster items consist of: records of A.L. Tottenham's estate, Co. Leitrim, 1853-c.1911, comprising c.50 legal documents, c.250 letters and c.ten maps; conveyances and leases of the Dunn/Dunne family, Francis St and Grafton St, Dublin, 1789-1841; title deeds, etc, 1751-1856, relating to the Wilson family of Rusk, Co. Meath; c.20 legal documents pertaining to the Croane family who owned land in Co. Leitrim, 1740-1843.



Porter family of Belleisle

An area of this huge collection which merits particular mention is the papers of the Porter family of Belleisle, Lisbellaw, Co. Fermanagh, and Clogher Park, Clogher, Co. Tyrone, 1828-1950. The Porters are an interesting and rather unusual example of an English clerical family, which thrived in the Church of Ireland and settled in Ireland permanently. The founding Porter was John Porter, who had been Regius Professor of Hebrew at Cambridge, and came to Ireland in 1795 as a vice-regal chaplain to the 2nd Earl Camden, Lord Lieutenant, 1795-1798. In 1797, he was promoted to the unusually valuable bishopric of Clogher where he remained until his death in 1819. His son and heir, the Rev. John Grey Porter, was in 1813 preferred to the prebend and rectory of Kilskeery, also in the diocese of Clogher, which he held until his retirement in 1871. However, the bishop's palace and the son's rectory were 'official' residences, so it was natural that a family bent on putting down roots in Ireland should be on the lookout for a family seat. Consequently, when the Belleisle estate at Lisbellaw came on the market in 1830, the Rev. Porter of Kilskeery bought it from the Rev. Sir Charles Hardinge, 2nd Bt, of Tunbridge, Kent, for £68,000.

The history of the estate from this point is well documented in the Porter-Porter section of the Falls & Hanna collection. A deed of conveyance, dated 1 May 1830 (PRONI ref. D1390/10/3/1) provides a comprehensive description of the townlands and other components of Porter's purchase including '...all that and those the manor or reputed manor of Carrick estate with the several subdenominations thereof...and also all other the messuages lands and hereditaments being part of or appendant to the said manor and reputed manor with the several subdenominations thereof ... lying and being in the parish of Cleenish, baronies of Tyrkennedy and Magherastephana and county of Fermanagh aforesaid...'.

The papers tell how Rev. Porter made further extensive purchases of land, in both Cos Fermanagh and Longford, this time from the 2nd Earl of Belmore. In 1850, the bishopric of Clogher was merged with the archbishopric of Armagh and Porter seized the opportunity to buy the now abandoned palace and demesne, and re-named it Clogher Park. His will of 1869, subsequently much embellished with codicils, bequeathed Belleisle, Clogher Park and all his landed property to his son and heir, John Grey Vesey Porter. By 1890, it was the seat of John William Ellison-Macartney, MP for Co. Tyrone, 1874-1885, who had married Porter's third daughter, Elizabeth, in 1851.

An insurance inventory compiled for the Porter family in 1915 (D1390/10/3/9/1) shows that Belleisle was well furnished and pictured. The valuation of the contents was the large sum of £6400, of which pictures accounted for £1906. The pictures are also of special interest for the light they throw on family history. The most valuable single item was a portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence of John Porter, Bishop of Clogher. Of relevance to this is a very vaguely described portrait of 'Lord Camden', wearing the Order of the Bath - presumably the Lord Lieutenant who brought John Porter to Ireland as a vice-regal chaplain in 1795 and promoted him to the bishopric of Clogher in 1797.

Finally, to bring the story up to date, the owner of the estate from 1903 was John Porter-Porter who died in 1939 and was succeeded by his second, but first surviving, son, Nicholas Henry Archdale Porter (1890-1973). He was childless, and had long been pre-deceased by his wife. The heiress to Belleisle was therefore his niece, Miss Lavinia Baird, only daughter of his sister, Audley Josephine, and William James Baird of Elie, Fife. Miss Baird made history by becoming the first woman to become Deputy Lieutenant in Northern Ireland in 1983, and was later High Sheriff of Co. Fermanagh in 1987. In 1991, she sold the Belleisle estate to the 5th Duke of Abercorn.

