



Public Record Office
of Northern Ireland

INTRODUCTION

SALTERS' PAPERS

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Salters' Papers (D4108)

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Summary

The Salters archive comprises c.5000 documents, c.300 volumes and c.70 maps and plans relating to the Salters' Company Irish estate in Co. Londonderry, 1610- 1964. The contents of the Planted estate archive include charters, leases, minute books, rentals, account books, and correspondence from tenants and agents.

PRONI has microfilmed the following parts of the collection as MIC631 – The original documents are now closed.

D4108/1/1-28
D4108/2/1/1-6
D4108/2/2/1-13
D4108/3/1/1-109
D4108/3/2/1-30
D4108/4/1/1-32
D4108/4/2/1-44
D4108/4/3/1-6
D4108/5/1/1-14



Background

The Salters' Company's Irish estate, also known as the 'Manor of Sal', was originally granted in 1618. It consisted of 23,250 acres (55 townlands) bordered in the east by Lough Neagh, in the south by County Tyrone, and in the north and west by the lands of the Vintners' and the Drapers' Companies respectively. It was the most densely forested of all the proportions.

For the first decade of its existence, the Manor of Sal was administered through agents, the first of whom, Baptist Jones, began construction of the settlements of Magherafelt and Salterstown. In 1627 the Salters leased the estate to Ralph Whistler' of Combe in the County of Southampton'. During the upheavals of the 1640s, however, both settlements were destroyed and the lands as a whole abandoned.

In 1656 the lease passed to Gabriel Whistler, a nephew of Ralph, who along with a company of foot infantry rebuilt the castle at Magherafelt and commenced the reconstruction of houses at both towns. The incursion of Jacobite troops in 1688 led to the undoing of much of Whistler's work and even though he was granted a new lease in 1699, he appears to have carried out no further major improvements on the estate, much to the dismay of some of his tenants.

Whistler died c.1710 and the lease was divided and passed to various English relations who appear to have regarded the estate as something of a burden and administered it through agents. Years of neglect meant that the agents were faced with the task of placating both disgruntled tenants who wanted better dwellings and the Irish Society which constantly accused the agents of failing to keep the tenants in check. A particular bone of contention emerged over the Society's rights to timber from the estate and the fact that the tenants were in constant need of wood for repairs and for new houses.



*Robert Stewart,
1st Marquess of Londonderry*

Matters began to improve after 1744 when the lease was bought by Belfast merchant, Thomas Bateson, who hoped to foster the spread of the linen industry throughout the Magherafelt area. The tide of emigration to America coupled with the fact that he was unable to grant long leases to tenants, however, meant that these plans were never completely fulfilled. After 1786, Bateson held the lease in partnership with Robert Stewart (later Lord Londonderry), and together they initiated various improvements to the estate including the drainage of land and the construction of new public buildings.



Closer involvement on the part of the Salters

In 1830, twenty-three years before the Bateson/Londonderry lease was due to expire, the Salters' Company set up an Irish Estate Committee to take a greater involvement in the affairs of the lands and so ensure a smooth transfer of ownership. Other more immediate changes were taking place within the estate itself during this period with the introduction of the railways, the establishment of Poor Law Unions and the onset of the Great Famine.

The Manor of Sal reverted to the direct control of the Salters' in 1853 and from 1874 onwards the Company, in common with the other London Companies, began to sell off the estate. Between these dates, however, the Salters embarked upon an extensive building programme which did much to improve the area and the appearance of Magherafelt in particular.



The papers

The collection contains approximately 575 early charters, leases and correspondence, 1610-1853, all of which have been microfilmed on MIC631. These documents chronicle the distribution of the Salters planted estate in Co. Londonderry. Of particular interest is the award between the Salters' Company and Mr Jones, their agent in Ireland for building Magherafelt and Salterstown, 1615 (D4108/1/2B), and a bargain and sale of 1618 which marked the formal grant of lands in Ulster to the Salters' Company. The original lease to Ralph Whistler for the Manor of Sal can be found on D4108/1/3B. A further 139 leases, conveyances and assignments can be found in section 3 of the archive, 1853-1885, the period when the Manor of Sal reverted to the direct control of the Salters'.

The second section contains an incomplete run of Irish Estate Committee Minute Books, 1830-1936, complete with indexes. These very large leather bound volumes are recorded with fastidious detail. They are also complemented by a series of 13 volumes of Irish Estate rough minutes, 1851-1921. These have also been microfilmed on MIC631.

There are a total of 107 rentals, arrears and related papers, 1814-1892, which have been microfilmed on MIC631. These contain several comprehensive lists of rentals in the Manor of Sal, lists of arrears books for the Manor of Sal, two Notice to quit books, 1859-1892, nine transfers of holdings books, 1870-1886, and a number of schedules of tenants.

The fifth section contains correspondence, 1844-1892, and includes: 14 Irish Letter bound volumes, 1862-1892, written by the Irish agent to 'the worshipful Salters' Company' relating to issues such as land leasing, town and railway development, funding of schools and poor law unions; three volumes of letters from the company clerk to the Irish agent mainly concerning planning applications, 1866-1884; one volume of out-letters from the Salters' Company, 1866-1870; two damp-press letter books from the Irish Estate Office, 1887-1890; five volumes of letters and copy letters written by the Irish agent, 1869-1896; one volume of letters from the Saddlers' and Joiners' Companies, 1872-1876; four volumes of in-letters from the Irish agent to the Salters' Company in London, 1849-1889; nine bound volumes containing Irish land agent enclosures, 1867-1901; and 41 bundles of correspondence, 1844-1890, regarding the collection of rent, improvements carried out and financial assistance granted to tenantry and local organisations.

The sixth section of financial records contains 32 cash books, invoices, receipt books and poor rate books relating to the Manor of Sal, 1842-1895; three valuation books, 1850-1865; 14 ledgers for the Manor of Sal, 1853-1941; nine large cash books giving details of monies paid by the Salters' Company to churches, schools and insurance companies; ten Agent's account books listing details of rents received, 1853-1887; and four large receiving books, 1854-1895. The next section concerning works, repairs and improvements, 1850-1894, contain 12 volumes and documents relating to the draining of the boglands and 41 of Irish Vouchers relating to improvements on the estate.

The remaining sections contain four reports relating to the Salters' Company, 1854-1933; two boxes of papers relating to Rainey Endowed School, 1857-1891; two folders concerning the Killyboggin School, 1828-1964; 14 volumes and documents relating to the sale of the Salters' Estate, 1852-1895; and 70 maps, sketches, tracings and plans relating to the Salters' Company estate in Co. Londonderry, 1813-1873.

