



Public Record Office
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INTRODUCTION

SHANNON PAPERS

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Shannon Papers (D2707)

Table of Contents

Summary	2
Henry Boyle, 1st Earl of Shannon.....	3
Richard Boyle, 2nd Earl of Shannon.....	6
Henry Boyle, 3rd Earl of Shannon	8
Papers of other Boyles	10
Miscellaneous papers	11

Summary

The papers of the Viscounts Shannon and Earls of Shannon and other members of the Boyle family of Castlemartyr, Co. Cork, comprise approximately 4500 documents. Of these, c.400 are photocopies of that part of the Shannon archive which found its way into the National Library of Ireland. The latter consist mainly of eighteenth and early nineteenth century letters and, as they are in no sense a self-contained unit, the photocopies have been integrated with the original documents deposited in PRONI. The combined archive includes the private papers of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Earls of Shannon, together with estate, financial and miscellaneous family papers, and covers the period 1687-early twentieth century.



Henry Boyle, 1st Earl of Shannon



*Henry Boyle,
1st Earl of Shannon*

Henry Boyle, 1st Earl of Shannon (1684-1764), was the second son and heir of the Hon. Colonel Henry Boyle, son of Roger, Earl of Orrery, and grandson of Richard, 1st Earl of Cork. Boyle sat in the Irish Parliament for Midleton, Co. Cork, 1707-1711, for Kilmallock, Co. Limerick, 1713-1715, and for Co. Cork from 1715 until his elevation to the peerage of Ireland in 1756 as Earl of Shannon. He was Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, 1733-1756, Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer, 1733-1735, 1739-1754, and 1755-1757, and a Commissioner of the Revenue, 1735-1739, and served no fewer than nineteen times between 1734 and 1764 as one of the Irish Lords Justices. Though he usually acted as the Irish government's chief agent in conducting the business of the House of

Commons, he was the spearhead of the opposition to the government in the mid-1750s, and won popularity by his resistance to the government's proposal in 1753 to appropriate a surplus in the Irish Treasury. After his creation as Earl of Shannon, he continued to be politically active until his death in 1764.

The private papers of the 1st Earl of Shannon consist largely of correspondence and include:

Estate and financial letters, 1710-1762, relating chiefly to the Shannon estates in Co. Cork, and the Burlington estates in counties Cork and Waterford, of which Henry Boyle was entrusted with the management by the 3rd Earl of Burlington, his brother-in-law. (98 documents)

Letters to Henry Boyle about politics and patronage, 1713-1733. Among the topics dealt with are: the general elections of 1715 and 1727; bye-elections, mainly for boroughs in counties Cork and Waterford; municipal elections, chiefly in Co. Cork; and the attempts made in 1729 to persuade William Conolly to relinquish the Irish speakership, the possibility of Henry Boyle's succeeding him in that year, and Boyle's successful bid for the office in 1733. The correspondents in this group include: Lords Burlington, Orrery, Barrymore, Meath, Duncannon and Southwell; Henry Maule, Bishop of Cloyne; Lord Burlington's agent, Andrew Crotty; Thomas Carter (afterwards Secretary of State), M.P. for Trim, Co. Meath, 1719-1727, and for Hillsborough, Co. Down, 1727-1763; Arthur Hill (afterwards Lord Dungannon and Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer), M.P. for Co. Down; John Bourke (afterwards 1st Earl of Mayo), M.P. for Naas, Co. Kildare; and other members of the Irish Parliament. (124 documents)



*Richard Boyle,
3rd Earl of Burlington*

A letter-book containing copy correspondence of the Irish Lords Justices, Primate Boulter, Lord Chancellor Wyndham and Henry Boyle, with the Duke of Dorset, Lord Lieutenant, Walter Cary, Chief Secretary, and Thomas Tickell, Irish Under-Secretary, about the enlistment of Irish Catholics for foreign service, the payment of Irish troops serving abroad, and appointments to offices in the church, state and government, 1734-1735.

A letter-book containing copy correspondence of the Irish Lords Justices, Primate Boulter, Lord Chancellor Wyndham and Henry Boyle, with the Dukes of Dorset and Devonshire as successive Lords Lieutenant, about administrative appointments, 1736-1737.

Letters to Henry Boyle as Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, about politics and patronage, 1738-1756. They relate chiefly to bye-elections and municipal elections in Co. Cork, but include several about Lord Kildare's memorial to George II concerning discontents in Ireland under the Duke of Dorset's administration (1753). The correspondents in this group include the Duke of Dorset, Lord Lieutenant; the Marquess of Hartington, Lord Lieutenant; Lord Orrery; John Bourke, MP for Naas, Co. Kildare; Henry Cary, MP for Coleraine, Co. Londonderry; Sir Maurice Crosbie (afterwards Lord Branden), MP for Co. Kerry; and other members of the Irish Parliament. (47 documents)

Letters to Henry Boyle, now Earl of Shannon, about politics and patronage, 1756-1764. These concern, inter alia, the general election of 1761; bye-elections for Co. Cavan, 1756, and for Cork city, 1764; municipal elections in Co. Cork; Lord Shannon's pretensions to the lord treasurership in 1764; and military and ecclesiastical patronage; with scattered references to English politics. The correspondents include the Duke of Dorset, Lord Lieutenant; the Duke of Devonshire (formerly Lord Hartington), Lord Lieutenant; Lords Carrick and Strangford; Richard Rigby, Chief Secretary; Isaac Mann, Bishop of Cork; James Dennis (afterwards Lord Tracton, and Lord Chief Baron of the Court of Exchequer in Ireland), M.P. for Rathcormack, Co. Cork; General Michael O'Brien Dilkes; and Lord Shannon's eldest son, Viscount Boyle. (63 documents)

Copy correspondence of the Irish Lords Justices, Primate George Stone, Lord Shannon and Speaker John Ponsonby, with the English Privy Council and the Duke of Bedford, Lord Lieutenant, mainly about the refusal of the Lords Justices and the Irish Privy Council to transmit a money bill to the English Privy Council as a cause for summoning a new Parliament in Ireland, 1760-1761. (22 documents)

Letters to Lord Shannon from his fifth son, Captain Robert Boyle Walsingham, RN, who sat in the English Parliament for Knaresborough, Yorkshire, 1758-1761 and 1768-1780, and for Fowey, Cornwall, 1761-1768, and in the Irish Parliament for Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, 1758-1760; together with letters from his wife, Charlotte, largely about their financial difficulties, but including references to Boyle Walsingham's naval career, and comment on English politics, mid-1750s-1764. (52 documents)

Copy letters and other papers about the illegal export, by a merchant of Cork city, of beef, butter and other goods to Martinique, 1744-1745. (9 documents)

Miscellaneous letters, c.1710-1764. These include: a memorial from forty-seven Cork merchants, seeking the introduction of measures to ensure that the weigh-houses of Cork would operate efficiently and to prevent the export of inferior goods (1731); an unsigned letter which presents, at length, the case for co-operation among tenant farmers to maintain the prices of agricultural produce (1732); a series of letters about the debts of Bellingham Boyle of Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin, M.P. for Bandon, Co. Cork, 1731-1760, and for Youghal, Co. Cork, 1761-1768, and a relation of Henry Boyle's (1732-1733); several letters about the insolvency, at his death, of Hugh Dickson, M.P. for Cork city (1741); and a short series of letters from Lord Carrick to his father-in-law, Lord Shannon, about the activities of Whiteboys (1764). (108 documents)

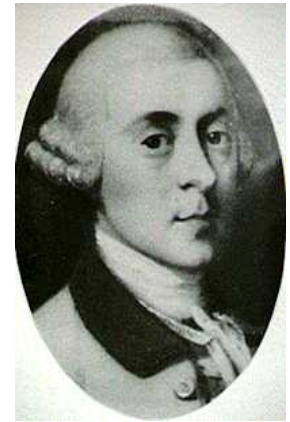


Richard Boyle, 2nd Earl of Shannon



*Richard Boyle,
Viscount Shannon*

Richard, 2nd Earl of Shannon and, in the peerage of Great Britain, 1st Baron Carleton, (1728-1807), sat in the Irish Parliament for Dungarvan, Co. Waterford., 1749-1760, and for Co. Cork from 1761 until 1764, when he succeeded his father as Earl of Shannon. He was a Privy Councillor, 1763-1770, 1774-1789 and 1793-1807, and held, among other offices, those of Vice-Treasurer of Ireland, 1781-1789, and First Lord of the Treasury, 1793-1804. He was created Baron Carleton in 1786. PRONI's



*Richard Boyle,
2nd Earl of Shannon*

book 'Lord Shannon's Letters to his Son ... 1790-1802'... (Belfast, 1982) includes as part of the Introduction a lengthy political biography of the 2nd Earl of Shannon. Although he was not so prominent a politician as his father, his formidable influence at constituency level made him a force with which any administration had to reckon. He married, in 1763, Catherine, daughter of John Ponsonby, Speaker of the Irish House of commons.

The private papers of the 2nd Earl of Shannon include:

Letters to Lord Shannon about estate and financial matters, 1772-1804. (29 documents)

Letters to Lord Shannon about politics and patronage, 1765-1807. The topics covered include: general and bye-elections and municipal elections in Co. Cork; the Volunteers, in which Lord Shannon was, for a time, actively involved; the embargo on Irish trade with France, and its contravention by merchants in Cork; the United Irishmen; the recurring question of a legislative union of Great Britain and Ireland; the attempted French landing at Bantry Bay in 1797; Catholic Emancipation; military and ecclesiastical patronage; and English politics. The correspondents include the Earl of Northumberland, Lord Lieutenant; the Marquess of Buckingham, Lord Lieutenant; Lords Clare, Frankfort, Hardwicke, Inchiquin, Mountmorres, Strangford and Townshend; Lord Amelius Beauclerk; George Chinnery, Bishop of Killaloe; Thomas Orde, Chief Secretary; and members of the Irish and subsequently of the United Kingdom Parliament. (180 documents)

Letters from Lord Shannon to James Dennis (afterwards Lord Tracton), who was Lord Shannon's legal adviser, and acted as 'whip' for his parliamentary following. The group also contains several letters from Dennis to Shannon, and concerns local and national politics, Dennis's career and Shannon's efforts to secure his promotion, Shannon's relations with the government, and legal and estate matters, 1765-1779. (62 documents)

Letters to Viscount Boyle, later as Earl of Shannon, from his brother, Captain Robert Boyle Walsingham, and his wife, Charlotte, 1760-1780, about debates in the English House of Commons, Boyle Walsingham's naval career, and Irish and English politics. (26 documents)

Letters to Lord Shannon from his sister-in-law, Charlotte Boyle Walsingham, 1783-1786. Most of these concern the debts of her late husband and the gaming debts of her only surviving son, Richard, but they include occasional references to English politics. (39 documents).

Letters to Lord Shannon from his nephew, Richard Boyle, son of Robert and Charlotte Boyle Walsingham, c.1784-c.1786, about Boyle's debts, his strained relations with his mother, and his ill-health. Several of these letters were written from France, where Boyle spent the winter of 1785-1786 in the hope of effecting a cure for his illness. The group also contains a few letters from Captain John Colpoys, a friend of Boyle's late father, who accompanied Boyle to France. (23 documents).

Letters from Lady Catherine-Henrietta Bernard, later as Countess of Bandon, to her parents, Lord and Lady Shannon, 1784-1809. Most of these are written in French, and they contain family and social chit-chat. The group also includes several letters from her husband, Francis Bernard, later as Earl of Bandon, to Lord Shannon, 1788-1800, about Irish politics. (26 documents).

A small bound volume of letters from Lord Shannon to William Houghton, a protégé of the Shannon family, 1801-1807, about Houghton's naval career; together with a small group of letters to Lord Shannon, on the same subject, which includes several from Houghton. (13 documents).

Letters and related papers concerning the sale of parts of Lord Inchiquin's estate in Co. Clare, under the trusteeship of Lord Shannon and the Duke of Leinster, 1778-1783. (22 documents).

Letters from Lady Henry Fitzgerald (afterwards Baroness de Ros), daughter of Captain Robert and Charlotte Boyle Walsingham, and her lawyers, to Lord Shannon, her uncle, about her claim to the barony of de Ros (see PRONI's De Ros Papers, MIC573), 1803. (27 documents).

Miscellaneous letters to Lord and Lady Shannon, c. 1760-1805, mainly about family matters, but including a lengthy paper, unsigned, c.1760, outlining and advocating a system of tithe-commutation. (19 documents).



Henry Boyle, 3rd Earl of Shannon



*Henry Boyle,
3rd Earl of Shannon*

Henry, 2nd Baron Carleton, 3rd Earl of Shannon (1771-1842), represented Clonakilty, Co. Cork, in the Irish Parliament, 1793-1797, and Co. Cork, 1797-1800. He sat in the Parliament of the United Kingdom for Co. Cork, 1801-1807, and for Bandon, Co. Cork, for a few days in 1807, before taking his seat in the Lords on the death of his father. From 1806 until 1822, he held the valuable sinecure office of Clerk of the Pells. He was appointed Custos Rotulorum for Co. Cork in 1807, and Lieutenant of the county in 1831, both of which offices he held until his death.

The private papers of the 3rd Earl of Shannon include:

Letters to Lord Shannon, about politics and patronage, 1778-1829. The subjects covered include: his election (as Viscount Boyle) for Clonakilty in 1793; the terms on which a union of Great Britain and Ireland would be acceptable; Boyle's election to the United Kingdom Parliament, and his speech moving the address at the start of its first session; elections in Co. Cork; political, military and ecclesiastical patronage; and English politics. The correspondents in this group include the Dukes of Wellington, Richmond and Buccleuch; Lord Castlereagh; Charles Agar, Archbishop of Cashel; Dr Joseph Warton, headmaster of Winchester; William Elliott, Under-Secretary; and Lord Shannon's nephew, James Bernard (afterwards 2nd Earl of Bandon), MP for Youghal, Co. Cork, 1806-1807 and 1818-1820, for Co. Cork, 1807-1818, and for Bandon, Co. Cork, 1820-1826. (59 documents).

Letters to Lord Shannon, and to and from R.S. Ball, mayor of Youghal, other members of Youghal corporation, and various legal advisers, together with related papers, c.1812-1822, about the litigation between Lord Shannon and the Duke of Devonshire to determine which of them had the right to the control of the borough, (c.300 documents).

Letters from the 2nd Earl of Shannon to his son, then Viscount Boyle, 1790-1802. The earlier letters in this group were written while Lord Boyle was making the Grand Tour, and include a few references to his activities abroad. For the most part, however, they are concerned with current events in Ireland and contain some vivid and detailed accounts of the 1790 election campaigns for Co. Cork and Cork city, as well as comment on the elections, in the same year, for Co. Tipperary; Co. Down; Lisburn, Co. Antrim; and Ballinakill, Queen's County; and accounts of the re-election of John Foster as Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, in 1790; the Co. Cork bye-election of 1790; and parliamentary debates. Among the other topics covered are: municipal elections in Co. Cork; the Catholic Relief Bill of 1795; ecclesiastical and military patronage; the election of 1797; military and administrative appointments; Lord Kingston's trial for the murder of his nephew in 1798; the union of Great Britain and Ireland; and English and foreign politics. There are also a few letters about family and estate matters. A substantial series of letters in this group,

from Lord Shannon, in Dublin, to Lord Boyle, at Castlemartyr, 1798, constitutes an almost day-by-day commentary on the '98 Rebellion and on the political, military and social events of the time. Lord Shannon's letters to his son are full of surprises. Though written by an experienced, accomplished and elderly political magnate, their most striking characteristic is their almost boyish sense of fun. They span the 1790s, a decade during which Ireland underwent major political, social and economic upheaval, and they were written by a man who was certainly neither insensitive nor stupid; and yet they are filled with unconscious demonstrations of the surprising extent to which upper-class life in Dublin and in the country proceeded without serious dislocation. It is a style of upper-class life which is not eccentric, over-bearing or irresponsible - in short, not unappealing: a kind of hidden Anglo-Ireland which has not yet found its way into the text-books. (191 documents).

Letters to Lord Boyle, in his capacity as captain of the Imokilly cavalry corps, 1796-1805, about the payment and equipping of the yeomanry; resignations from, and applications to join, the corps; the capture of a French ship at Cove in 1796, and the distribution of arms found aboard it; preparations for defensive action by the yeomanry in case of a French landing in 1797; duels among the officers; and a proposal to build a new military barracks at Youghal. (54 documents).

Letters from Sarah, daughter of John Hyde of Castle Hyde, Co. Cork, who married Lord Boyle in 1798, to 'my beloved Lord B.', c.1797-1801. These contain family news and some amusing social gossip, with occasional vague references to Irish politics and current events. (27 documents).

Letters from Catherine, Countess of Shannon, to her son, Lord Boyle, c. 1797-1802, most of which were written from Dublin, 1797-1798. They concern Irish, English and foreign politics, with comment on the events of the '98 Rebellion, reports of rumoured and actual administrative and military appointments, and news of births, marriages and deaths among the family's friends and acquaintances. (22 documents).

Letters from Catherine-Henrietta, Countess of Bandon, to her brother and sister-in-law, Lord and Lady Boyle, 1798-1809, mainly about family matters, with a few general allusions to the Rebellion. (8 documents).

Letters from Jane, Countess Montagu, to Sarah, Countess of Shannon, 1814-1816, about family matters. (5 documents).

Accounts and letters from F.C. Blackstone to Lord Shannon, 1825-1826, relating to the education of his sons, Richard, Viscount Boyle, and the Hon. Henry Boyle. (14 documents).



Papers of other Boyles

The archive also contains:

Papers and related correspondence of the 1st and 2nd Viscounts Shannon (great-uncle and second cousin respectively of the 1st Earl of Shannon) and of the 2nd Viscount's daughter and heir, Lady Grace Boyle, later Countess of Middlesex, concerning their estate at Shannon Park, Co. Cork, 1675-1757; together with papers and correspondence of the 3rd Earl of Shannon, 1820-1828, relating to Shannon Park, which came into the possession of the Earls of Shannon in c.1780 after Lady Middlesex's death in 1763 and the expiration of a life interest created under her will. (70 documents).

Papers and related correspondence, c.1716-1818, concerning the successive disputed claims of the 2nd Viscount Shannon, Lady Middlesex, and the 2nd and 3rd Earls of Shannon to the advowson of Carrigaline, Co. Cork. (c.300 documents).

Papers relating to the Hon. Colonel Henry Boyle, the 1st Earl of Shannon's father, 1687-1693. (6 documents).

Estate and financial papers and related correspondence of successive Earls of Shannon, 1720s-early twentieth century, which include papers relating to the management of the Burlington estates in counties Cork and Waterford and to Speaker Boyle's purchase from Burlington of the Clonakilty estate and Clonakilty borough in 1738; papers relating to Speaker Boyle's trusteeship of Mrs Anne Coote's estate at Ballyclogh, Co. Cork, c.1750-1753; papers relating to the Norfolk estate of Speaker Boyle's second son, Henry Boyle Walsingham, 1751-1755; agents' weekly labour accounts describing work carried out on the Castlemartyr demesne, 1764-1766; together with title deeds, rent-rolls, rentals, agents' accounts and rent and quit-rent receipts, relating to the Shannon estates in Castlemartyr, Clonakilty, Cloghmacsimon, Courtmacsherry and Duhallow, Co. Cork, bonds and related papers of the 1st and 2nd Earls of Shannon, bankers' accounts and related receipts of the 2nd and 3rd Earls, miscellaneous domestic accounts and receipts, mainly of the 3rd Earl, and nineteenth century financial papers and related correspondence of the 3rd Earl's six unmarried daughters. (c.2200 documents).



Miscellaneous papers

Includes two bound volumes of the proceedings of the Hanover Society of Youghal, 1753-1792 and 1792-1819; and eighteenth and nineteenth century verse, mainly by members of the Boyle family, and by Charlotte Boyle Walsingham in particular. (c.200 documents).

