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INTRODUCTION

STEWART-BAM

PAPERS

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Stewart-Bam Papers (D4137, D2784/19)

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Summary

PRONI holds two small but choice groups of Stewart-Bam/Stewart of Ards Papers ('Stewart-Bam' is an early 20th century double-barrelling, which took place following the marriage of the heiress to Ards in 1910) from two different provenances and bearing the different reference numbers D4137 and D2789/19.

D4137 comprises c.375 documents, almost entirely correspondence, 1771-1849 (with some later items), deriving from the Stewart family of Ards, Dunfanaghy, Co. Donegal. The first of these Stewarts was Alexander (1746-1831), younger son and namesake of the Alexander Stewart who acquired the Newtownards and Comber estates, Co. Down, in 1744, and younger brother of Robert Stewart of Mount Stewart (1739-1821), later 1st Lord, Earl of and Marquess of Londonderry. The papers document the estates and political activities of both branches of the family in Cos Londonderry and Donegal, as well as the estates and political activities of the senior, Marquess of Londonderry, branch in Co. Down, and, to a much lesser extent, in Co. Durham. They are complementary to PRONI's other small cache of Stewart of Ards papers (D2784/19), which is almost entirely an estate archive, 1781-1937.



Background – Family correspondence, 1771-1774



*Robert Stewart,
Viscount Castlereagh, later
2nd Marquess of Londonderry*

Alexander Stewart of Ards and his son and successor, Alexander Robert Stewart (1795-1850), were both MPs (they sat successively, on the combined Stewart family interest, for Co. Londonderry, 1814-1818 and 1818-1830). They were therefore of consequence in their own right, and their papers reflect this fact. Nevertheless, their main consequence - and the main consequence of D4137 - lies in the light they throw on the senior and more celebrated branch of the family. Among the various categories of Londonderry papers deposited in PRONI, of which the most relevant is D3030, there is no family correspondence of as early date as 1771-1774, for which period there are some 40 letters between and among the Stewarts in D4137. These letters bring to life the founder of the Stewart family's fortunes, Alexander Senior (1700-1781) and his fretting, hypochondriacal heiress-wife, Mary - Alexander Snr's zest for picture-collecting, his town-planning in Newtownards, his Whig and 'Patriot' political stance, his anti-French prejudice (which his eldest son, Robert, 1st Marquess of Londonderry inherited), his views on the education of an 'English' gentleman (he was an early reader of Chesterfield's Letters to his Son), etc, etc. The same run of letters also throws light on the Hearts of Steel disturbances, the first Irish parliamentary session attended by young Robert Stewart, and the early precocity shown by the even younger Robert Stewart who was to become Lord Castlereagh and 2nd Marquess of Londonderry.



The Two Brothers

Robert, 1st Marquess of Londonderry and his younger brother, Alexander Stewart of Ards, were on close terms all their lives - as the 64 letters written by the one to the other, 1771-1774, 1796 and 1800-1814, attest. They and their sons married into the same English aristocratic families (headed by Lords Hertford and Camden); they each held long leases of large estates in Co. Londonderry under different London Companies (the Salters and the Mercers respectively); and they co-operated closely in the running of those estates and the exploitation of the political influence derived from them and from their respective fee simple estates in Cos Londonderry and Donegal. The Ards estate itself was purchased by Alexander Stewart Junior in 1782 (for £13,250 - probably money left him by his father). But the Stewart family had a long association with the Derry/East Donegal area, and originally hailed from Ballylawn, Co. Donegal. (In the 19th century, following the falling-in of the Mercers' lease, probably in 1830, the Stewarts of Ards concentrated on Co. Donegal, acquiring property at Doe Castle and Letterkenny, both in that county.)



*Robert Stewart,
1st Marquess of Londonderry*



The Prickly Marquess



*Sir Charles William Stewart,
3rd Marquess of Londonderry*

After the death of Robert, 1st Marquess of Londonderry, in 1821, and that of Robert, Lord Castlereagh, now 2nd Marquess of Londonderry, in 1822, the unity of the two branches of the family dissolved. This was partly because Castlereagh's half-brother, General Sir Charles Stewart, Lord Stewart and now 3rd Marquess of Londonderry, was a prickly and difficult man (and had bigger fish to fry in Durham thanks to his second marriage to the great heiress, Frances Anne Vane-Tempest of Wynyard Park, Stockton-on-Tees). However, there was also a problem of generation bedevilling good relations between the two branches of the family. Robert, 1st Marquess of Londonderry, had married in 1766, as his first wife, a daughter of the 1st Marquess of Hertford; Alexander

Stewart Junior did not marry until 1791, and his one and only wife was a granddaughter of the same Lord Hertford. Alexander Stewart Junior's eldest son, Alexander Robert Stewart, was born in 1795, and was thus a generation younger than his first cousin, the 2nd Marquess of Londonderry, and nearly a generation younger than the 3rd Marquess, also a first cousin.

As Alexander Stewart Jnr grew older and Alexander Robert Stewart increasingly came to make decisions for the Ards branch of the family, relations with Lord Londonderry progressively deteriorated, reaching a nadir in 1828-1830. This deterioration was, if anything, accelerated by the 'good offices' of the 1st Marquess Camden (Alexander Robert Stewart's father-in-law and Lord Londonderry's uncle); Camden, a professional go-between and busybody, whose major achievement to date as a peacemaker had been to cause the duel between Castlereagh and Canning in 1809 (D4137/A/6/3-D4137/A/6/4), undoubtedly contributed to making a bad business worse. The correspondence about relations between the two branches of the family in the period 1822-1839 (D4137/A/6/21 and D4137/B/2) throws light on the career of Lord Londonderry - although he, unlike his grandfather, Alexander Stewart Senior, is a man already voluminously represented in other archives, including his own.



Education and India

Two other topics episodically featured in D4137 are education and India. The already-mentioned family correspondence of 1771-1774 is very informative about Alexander Stewart Snr's educational plans for his son, Alexander Jnr, who was sent to an academy in Angers, France, and afterwards went on the Grand Tour. History repeated itself in 1814-1817, when the same Alexander Jnr wrote a series of letters to his son, Alexander Robert, about the latter's education under a clerical tutor in Kent (no doubt found for him by the ever-helpful Lord Camden), at Cambridge and on the Continent (D4137/B/1). There is also one isolated but important letter (D4137/A/8/2) written to Alexander Stewart in 1816 on behalf of the Belfast Academic Institution by the Belfast Radical and erstwhile United Irishman, Dr William Drennan. The letters about India (D4137/B/4) are to Lady Caroline Pratt, afterwards Stewart, Alexander Robert Stewart's wife, and written by her friend, the Hon. Sarah Elizabeth Amherst, in 1823-1826, during the time that Miss Amherst's father, William Pitt Amherst, 2nd Lord and 1st Earl Amherst, was Governor-General of Bengal.



The Papers

D4137 includes some estate papers, but D2784/19 by contrast contains almost nothing else. It comprises five volumes, one file and c.40 documents relating to the estate of the Stewart, later Stewart-Bam family, mainly at Ards, Doe Castle, Dunfanaghy and Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, 'Drummatticonnor', near Listooder, Co. Down, and in the Lawrencetown area of the same county, 1781-1790, c.1816 and 1855-1937.

They include: account book, 1781-1790, relating to the estate and personal affairs of Alexander Stewart of Ards, which records expenses and rent accounts in connection with the Mercers' Proportion at Kilrea, Co. Londonderry, Ards and Killygordon, Co. Donegal, 'Drummatticonnor', Co. Down, and Co. Donegal election expenses for Sir Annesley Stewart in 1783; a lease of property in Knockagore, Co. Down, 1816, and a map of the Stewart property in the Lawrencetown area, c.1890; maps and tracings of Ballymore Lower, Cashelmore, Castlebane, Corcreggan, Creenary, Derryart, Derryfad, Derryharriff, Drumleavalliagh, Dunfanaghy, Glassan, Greenhill, Kildarragh, Killoughcarron, Port, etc, part of the Ards estate, 1855-1890; a draft rental for the Letterkenny estate, 1885; rental and accounts for the Doe Castle estate, 1921-1937; a general cash book. 1922-1933; plans and elevations for Ards House by Grame-Wart & Tulloch, architects, Belfast, 1905; and correspondence of William T. Arnold, estate agent, about the sale of the Doe Castle estate. 1914-1925.

