



INTRODUCTION

CHATSWORTH PAPERS

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Chatsworth Papers (T3158)

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Summary

The Chatsworth Papers in PRONI consist of photocopies of c.1,925 documents and volumes, constituting four main blocks of correspondence relating to Ireland during the period 1693-1812: 11 letter-books relating to the Irish estates of the earls of Burlington, 1693-1758 (which passed into the possession of the future 5th Duke of Devonshire in the latter year); correspondence, on all subjects, of the 3rd Duke of Devonshire while Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 1737-1745; correspondence of the 4th Duke while Lord Lieutenant, 1755-1757; and selected Irish estate and other Irish correspondence of the 3rd Earl of Burlington and his wife/widow, 1729-1758, of the 4th Duke of Devonshire, 1757-1763, and of the agents of the 5th and 6th Dukes, 1766-1812. Some other, scrappier Irish material of the period 1794-1727 has also been photocopied and calendared; and all the non-Irish and non-Viceregal correspondence of the period 1729-1756 has been photocopied. But with these two exceptions, the Chatsworth Papers in PRONI fall into the four broad categories outlined above. The actual arrangement of the photocopies is slightly different.



A complex archive

Even when ostensibly 'complete', the groups of PRONI photocopies represent only a selection from the originals, since they consist exclusively of correspondence and correspondence-related material; in other cases, the photocopies do not purport to be anything more than a selection from even the correspondence. It is therefore necessary to consider the PRONI Chatsworth Papers in the context of the entire family and estate archive at Chatsworth House, Derbyshire, the seat of the dukes of Devonshire (and even this leaves out of the reckoning the papers formerly at the Irish seat, Lismore Castle, Co. Waterford, which have been deposited in the National Library of Ireland in Dublin). In 1970, the late Professor G.R. Potter, honorary archivist at Chatsworth, published in *The Journal of the Society of Archivists*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp 124-9, 'A Note on the Devonshire Papers at Chatsworth ...', from which the following extracts are taken:

'The archives to be described, while not differing notably from those of many other great estates, have not yet been completely listed, let alone properly calendared. This is partly because, until the present century, they were necessarily scattered - some at Hardwick Hall [Derbyshire], some at Devonshire House [London], some at Chatsworth, and others in the Estate Offices from which the property was, and is, administered. Their bulk is considerable, and their variety so extensive that any description must be selective and imperfect. ...



Family history, 1694-1858

[From 1694, the year in which the dukedom of Devonshire was created] ..., the Devonshires were among the greatest of the Whig families upholding the Protestant succession. The 2nd Duke (1673-1729) married Rachel, daughter of William, Lord Russell, and brought to Chatsworth some of the drawings which are among its glories. The 3rd Duke (1698-1755) was an extremely able politician, Viceroy in Ireland, friend and supporter of the Pelhams, and a shrewd businessman as well. ... The 4th Duke (1720-1764) married in 1748 Charlotte Boyle, daughter of the 4th Earl of Cork and the 3rd Earl of Burlington, through whom came the considerable Irish property (Lismore) and the Clifford estates in Yorkshire and Cumberland. With them came also a great mass of archives concerning the property and the families. The political significance of this Duke, the only one of the family to become Prime Minister (in 1756-1757) is well known The 5th Duke (1748-1811) married the renowned Georgiana, daughter of Earl Spencer, herself a figure of considerable political as well as social significance, under whom Devonshire House saw the days of its greatest glory. Her son, the 6th Duke (1790-1858), remained unmarried, was Ambassador at St Petersburg and Constantinople, but withdrew more and more to Chatsworth, which he enlarged, adding to its contents and, with [Joseph] Paxton's help, reorganizing the gardens. ... [Also with Paxton's help, he completely rebuilt Lismore Castle, Co. Waterford, the family's Irish seat.]



Early arrangements for the archive



6th Duke of Devonshire

... The 6th Duke was greatly interested in the history of his family and of Chatsworth. He wrote and had privately printed in 1845 *A Handbook of Chatsworth and Hardwick*, and also was responsible for gathering together the correspondence of his predecessors and starting upon its identification and arrangement. Most of the letters, from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, are of political interest. ... In addition to examples from almost every prominent figure of the nineteenth century, there are approximately 20 letters from Lady Rachel Russell, 20 from Sir Robert Walpole, 70 from Admiral Vernon, 393 from Henry and Thomas Pelham (Newcastle), 70 from William Ponsonby, 247 from Henry Fox (Lord Holland), 137 from Lord Frederick

Cavendish, 4 from Pitt, 1692 from and to the duchess Georgiana and her mother Georgiana Poyntz, 137 from Lady Elizabeth Foster, 248 from Harriet Cavendish, 116 from Harriett Howard, 521 from Blanche Howard. Every aspect of Whig society has been illuminated by them. The simple identifying lists fill two large volumes, and they tell us only the persons and date involved; but there are also fuller typed calendars of the correspondence of the 4th, 5th and 6th Dukes.



The 4th Duke's letters to his father

The 4th Duke, as Marquess of Hartington, wrote long letters, sometimes twice a week, to his father, frequently describing exactly what was happening in the House of Commons, who was speaking, the impression made, how the votes were collected and the numbers present. All this was completely confidential: only occasionally, often when referring to the King, does he indicate that there are matters which he prefers not to write down. They also contain, as do the many letters from Henry Pelham, plentiful reports about and comments on foreign, chiefly European affairs. A certain amount of this is speculative "hot" news which is passed on with appropriate reservations, but it is of obvious significance. ...



Lord Burlington and the Burlington inheritance

[The 4th Duke's father-in-law,] Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington (1695-1753), [was] renowned for his patronage of the arts. It was from this quarter ... that some, but only a small proportion of the whole, of the drawings for which Chatsworth is famous, came. The Earl of Burlington [had] married Lady Dorothy Savile, daughter of the Marquess of Halifax, which explains the considerable bulk of the Halifax material available. ... From the same "Burlington" source came the papers relating to the Clifford family, Earls of Cumberland. Concerned with the Clifford estates in Yorkshire are books of grants, receipts, payments, leases and presentments, often in very considerable detail. ... With the Boyle inheritance came the Irish property which



3rd Earl of Burlington

the 1st Earl of Cork purchased from Sir Walter Raleigh and which was added to by his successors. A. B. Grossart extracted a great deal for *The Lismore Papers* (ten volumes printed "for private circulation only" 1886-1888) to which can be added a typed calendar in 8 more volumes. In addition, there are estate records, including a large number of deeds and charters, of the same nature as the other estate papers already described. They are not exclusively Irish because included is a good deal of correspondence with agents and others in England. In some respects they tie in with other Irish material among the correspondence of the 3rd Duke, who was Viceroy of Ireland from 1737 to 1745, and the 4th Duke, 1755 to 1757.



The two Devonshire Viceroyalties



Henry Fox, 1st Lord Holland

The correspondence of the 3rd and 4th Dukes while Viceroy of Ireland, 1737-1745 and 1755-1757, constitutes the core of the P.R.O.N.I. Chatsworth Papers. The correspondence is at its densest during the second Devonshire viceroyalty. The letters fall thick and fast, and the straight chronological arrangement introduced by PRONI (to the originals at Chatsworth as well as to the photocopies) makes it possible to follow, on a day-to-day basis, the interaction between British and Irish politics, and also the interaction between the 4th Duke's roles as lord lieutenant and, in right of the Burlington inheritance and his family connection with the earls of Bessborough, as leading Irish political interest. The rearrangement also

focuses attention on the similar interaction deriving from the connection between the 4th Duke's then mentor in British politics, Henry Fox, and Fox's Irish brother-in-law, the 20th Earl of Kildare.

The political storm which the 4th Duke (then Lord Hartington) was sent to Ireland in 1755 to calm is normally known as 'The Money Bill Dispute of 1753'. The circumstances of the case are fairly familiar. The ostensible issue was whether the crown or the Irish parliament possessed constitutionally the right to dispose of a surplus in the Irish Treasury, but the dispute was in effect a power struggle between Henry Boyle, Speaker of the House of Commons, and his highly independent allies, Lord Kildare, Anthony Malone and Thomas Carter, on the one hand, and the Lord Lieutenant (the 2nd Duke of Dorset), the Archbishop of Armagh (George Stone) and the 1st Earl of Bessborough, on the other. What is less familiar are the events of the Hartington administration, and the steps by which, with as much hindrance as help from his political masters in London, he patched up a political settlement which was at least superficially acceptable to all but Primate Stone. These events are conveniently summarised in the Earl of Ilchester's *Henry Fox, 1st Lord Holland, his Family and Relations* (2 vols, London, 1920), ii, pp 74-81. A selection from the Chatsworth Papers was available to Lord Ilchester in 1920 in the form of early 19th century copies made by Elizabeth, Lady Holland, for the purpose of a projected, though never written, life of Henry Fox by her husband, the 3rd Lord Holland. But the full story of the Hartington viceroyalty can be studied only in the Chatsworth Papers themselves.



1st Earl of Bessborough



Newly discovered Irish agents' letters, 1784-1811

Next in importance to the Viceregal papers, are the PRONI photocopies of the contents of a tin trunk in an attic which proved to contain long-unopened parcels of Irish agents' letters for the period 1784-1811. These letters were not part of the sequence of the 5th Duke's papers (virtually none of them being addressed to him) and bore no Chatsworth reference. However, they dovetailed with one very small section of papers bearing the then Chatsworth reference L/5/8 and covering the period 1753-1812, and they were a continuation of a small section of 'addenda' relating to the period 1766-1783 (between the death of the 4th Duke and the coming-of-age of the 5th). This entire run of Irish agents' letters, covering the period 1766-1812, has been placed in straight chronological order, and all of the 1753-1783 and 1812 material, and a selection from the voluminous 'tin trunk' material of 1784-1811, has been included in T/3158. These letters, used in conjunction with the ten agents' letter-books, 1693-1758, and with the occasional letters about Irish estate affairs to and between the Dowager Lady Burlington and the 4th Duke, 1755-1763, constitute a continuous though uneven epistolary record of the running of the estate over a period of 120 years.



The effects of the Union

What is particularly important about the c.1800-1811 letters from the tin trunk is their emphasis on the political aspect of the Irish estate. Before the Union, electoral interest in Ireland was not a matter of much concern to the Dukes of Devonshire. This was especially true of the 5th Duke, who concerned himself with little beyond the *ménage à trois* of which he was the centre. Immediately after the Union, his advisers saw that a ruthless exploitation of the old Burlington interest, in the counties of Cork and Waterford as well as in the Burlington boroughs which had not been disfranchised, would return more members to the United Parliament than the Duke could return from England. They had only limited success in rousing him to activity, but from 1811 onwards met with a ready response from his successor, the 6th Duke. In the 1800s, it was hard to conceive how relatively unimportant Irish electoral interest had been in the first half of two-thirds of the eighteenth century, and particularly how slightly it had been regarded by absentee proprietors like Lord Burlington. In 1738, when Burlington had sold the Clonakilty estate, Co. Cork, he had thrown in the borough of Clonakilty for nothing. The advisers of the 5th and 6th Dukes, and the 6th Duke himself, assumed that the electoral interest deriving from the Irish estate had been lost through sharp practice on the part of others rather than indifference on the part of Burlington and his heirs; and their crusading determination to recapture what had been lost sets the tone for the agents' correspondence of this period.



Organisation of the photocopied papers

The photocopied material, starting with the 2nd Earl of Burlington agents' letter-books, is sub-divided as follows: volume, September 1693-March 1694, consisting of memoranda of the contents of the 1st Earl of Burlington's letters to Irish and other agents mainly about Irish estate affairs; volume, April 1694-July 1695, of similar letters, also including letters to George Myers, who appears to have been agent for the Burlington estate at Londesburgh, Yorkshire; volume August-December 1695, including letters to and many mentions of Jeremiah Coghlan and the commissioners for Burlington's Irish estates; volume, June-November 1696, containing copy correspondence all apparently relating to Ireland; volume, October 1698-June 1710, containing copy out-letters from W. Snowe and his 'master', Hon. Henry Boyle [later Lord Carleton, a younger brother of the 2nd Earl of Burlington and apparently the guardian of his nephew, the 3rd Earl, who succeeded in 1704 and did not come of age until 1716], about Irish estate affairs, mainly to Thomas Forster, agent at Bandon, but including some letters to George Myers concerning Yorkshire; volume, January 1700/1701-September 1702, containing copies of out-letters (not in chronological order) from the 2nd Earl of Burlington and one A. Spurett, mainly about the Irish estates; volume, March 1703/4-February 1704/5, containing copies of A. Spurett's out-letters to the usual Irish employees, including some to Sir Richard Cox [of Dunmanway, Co. Cork, Lord Chancellor of Ireland, 1703-1711]; volume, October 1706-April 1708, containing copies of out-letters from one Joseph Waite to the same, including letters to Myers at Skipton and to Francis Bernard at Beverley, Yorkshire, but mostly about Ireland; volume, May 1708-November 1710, in continuation; volume, December 1728-October 1729, containing copies of out-letters from the 3rd Earl of Burlington and his head Irish agent, Andrew Crotty, dealing with on the whole more major aspects of estate policy than most of the foregoing letter-books, and relating particularly to the inauguration of the policy of raising ready money by extensive sales of land which was to be in operation for the next decade; and volume, January 1748-December 1758, containing copies of letters from Andrew Crotty's successor as head Irish Agent, William Conner, to the Burlington head agent in London, Sir William Abdy, with précis by Abdy of the content of his letters in reply.



Other agents' letters

The remaining agents' letters, which are not in volume form, consist of a small selection, 1694, 1707, 1716 and 1722-1727, from 'The Lismore Papers' at Chatsworth (in-letters to the Irish agents), made on the basis of political content, and a very extensive selection, 1784-1812, chiefly from the already-described 'tin trunk' letters at Chatsworth, again mainly on the basis of political content.



Viceregal and family correspondence to 1753



*William, 3rd Duke of
Downshire*

The Viceregal and family correspondence includes: selected letters, 1713, 1719 and 1724, mainly to the 3rd Earl of Burlington and the 2nd Duke of Devonshire, about Irish affairs; selected letters and papers, 1730-1737, of the 3rd Earl of Burlington and the 3rd Duke of Devonshire about Irish affairs; letters and papers, 1737-1745, of the 3rd Duke of Devonshire while Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, including selected letters and papers of the Burlington family relating to Ireland; letters and papers, 1745-1755, of the 3rd Duke of Devonshire, the Marquess of Hartington (his son) and the 3rd Earl of Burlington about Ireland and Irish affairs, mainly about Lord Hartington's marriage to the Burlington heiress in 1748, Lord Burlington's death in 1753 and the affairs of the Irish Revenue Board.



The Viceregal correspondence of the 4th Duke, etc

This comprises: letters and papers, March-October 1755, of Lord Hartington while Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, from just before his appointment on 2 April 1755 to the conclusion of his negotiations for an Irish political settlement, which was reached on the eve of the Irish parliamentary session in October, including selected Irish letters and papers of the 3rd Duke of Devonshire and the Dowager Countess of Burlington; letters and papers, October 1755-May 1756, of Lord Hartington (who succeeded in December 1755 as 4th Duke of Devonshire) while Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, from the opening of the Irish parliamentary session on 7 October 1755 to its close and the 4th Duke's return to England on 11 May 1756, including, as before, selected Irish letters and papers of the 3rd Duke of Devonshire and Lady Burlington; letters and papers, May 1756-January 1757, of the 4th Duke of Devonshire while Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, from his return to England in mid-May 1756 to the appointment of the 4th Duke of Bedford as his successor on 3 January 1757, including, from 16 November 1756, letters to Devonshire as First Lord of the Treasury in Great Britain as well as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and also including selected Irish letters and papers of Lady Burlington; selected letters and papers, 5 January 1757-October 1763, of the 4th Duke of Devonshire, including some of Lady Burlington, relating to Ireland; and selected letters and papers, 1766-1783, about the Devonshire electoral interest in Ireland during the minority and early years of the 5th Duke.

