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# **INTRODUCTION**

# **DOWNSHIRE PAPERS**

November 2007

# Downshire Papers (D607 and D671)

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## Summary



*Hillsborough Castle. 1892*

The Downshire papers comprise c.50,000 documents and volumes, and basically consist of family, political and general correspondence, 1707-1868, and estate correspondence and legal and financial records, 1523-c.1953, relating to all the Irish estates (and some of the English) of the Downshire family, which were managed from the Irish seat and estate office at Hillsborough, Co. Down.



## Family history

The following account of family history is taken from W.A. Maguire (ed.), *Letters of a Great Irish Landlord: A Selection from the Estate Correspondence of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marquess of Downshire, 1809-1845* (PRONI, 1974):

'... A hundred and twenty years ago – when a parliamentary enquiry established the ownership of the country's land – Lord Downshire's property, amounting to some 115,000 acres in Ireland and a further 5,000 in England, was among the most extensive in the United Kingdom. By far the greater part of it was situated in Co. Down, in scattered groups of townlands which stretched from the outskirts of Belfast in the northern part of the county to Newry in the south and Dundrum in the east; the area



around Hillsborough, however, known as the Kilwarlin estate, was the core. North of Belfast, there was another estate in and near the town of Carrickfergus in Co. Antrim. The remaining Irish property was at Blessington in Co. Wicklow and at Edenderry in King's County (Offaly). Blessington was about twenty miles by road from Dublin, Edenderry twice that distance from the capital by the Grand Canal.

Not only was the property extensive, and located within fairly easy reach of major centres of population, but it was also comparatively productive, unlike some estates of similar acreage in the western part of the country. Co. Down, though not the most fertile, was certainly one of the best cultivated areas in Ireland; and though almost half of the land at Blessington was mountain, and much of that at Edenderry was bog, there was a sufficient quantity of good land at both to yield a good return in rent. At its greatest, in the 1870s, the income from the Irish estates was not far short of £80,000 a year.



## **Moyses Hill (d.1630)**

The founder of the family's fortunes was Moyses Hill, who came to Ireland as a landless adventurer in the following of the 1st Earl of Essex, during the reign of Elizabeth I. After service under the 2nd Earl of Essex and then under Mountjoy in the wars against Hugh O'Neill, he attached himself to Sir Arthur Chichester. The first land he acquired - a grant from the crown in 1592 - was in the vicinity of Larne in Co. Antrim. In 1608 the corporation of Carrickfergus granted him some land within the liberties of the town, and he had an interest in the customs of the port until 1619. In addition, he leased land from Chichester in Islandmagee and at Malone on the river Lagan, building forts in both places. The Carrickfergus property, augmented by two substantial purchases in the early nineteenth century, became an estate of just over 5,000 acres.

The family's connection with Co. Down began in 1607 when Moyses Hill bought the manor of Castlereagh and eight townlands from the unfortunate Con O'Neill. Later, Hill and Sir James Hamilton acquired a larger tract in the same area from O'Neill; and in 1622 he was one of the parties in a legal conflict over O'Neill's property. The lands thus obtained, with some small additions at a much later date, formed an estate of some 13,000 acres. Hillhall was the site of the bawn which marked its southern extremity. From another native family, the Magennises, Hill acquired in similar fashion the beginnings of the Kilwarlin estate, which was to be the largest and most important of the family's possessions. Brian Oge Magennis in 1611 sold seven of his forty-three townlands to his new neighbour. By the time of his death in 1630 Moyses Hill had achieved the ambition of every landless younger son.



## **Arthur Hill (d.1663)**

His second son, Arthur, was cast in the same mould, and made his own way long before he succeeded a nephew as head of the family in 1655. Even before the rebellion of 1641 – for participation in which the Magennises forfeited all their property – he had apparently built up estates in Co. Down by buying or leasing land from the Magennises of Kilwarlin and Iveagh. He prospered further during the Civil War by espousing the parliamentary cause, and was elected a member of the united parliament of 1654. His Kilwarlin estate was erected into a manor by parliamentary grant in 1657. At the restoration of the monarchy, like many others he became a royalist, and was confirmed in his possessions by the Court of Claims. Before his death in 1663 he had the satisfaction of seeing Hillsborough made a corporate town and a parliamentary borough.



## **Arthur Hill (d.1664) and William Hill (d.1693)**

Arthur Hill's achievement was consolidated by his son Moyses, who prudently married his cousin Anne Hill of Hillhall and thus united the Castlereagh and Kilwarlin estates. He survived his father by only a year, however, and was succeeded by a half-brother, William, the child of Arthur Hill's second marriage to Mary Parsons, daughter of one of the Lords Justices appointed in 1640 to govern Ireland when Lord Deputy Wentworth was summoned to London. The connections formed by William Hill through his two marriages eventually resulted in considerable additions to the family estates. The first, to the daughter of Michael Boyle, Archbishop of Armagh, brought the lordship of Blessington in Co. Wicklow (but not until a century later, in 1778); the second, to Mary Trevor, daughter of the 1st Viscount Dungannon, brought a smaller estate at Loughbrickland in Co. Down. A son by the first marriage, Michael, inherited in 1693 and purchased a townland at Newry.



## **Trevor Hill, 1st Viscount Hillsborough (1693-1742)**

Most of the early Hills were members of the Irish parliament and privy council, and the family had become well established by the end of the seventeenth century. It entered the ranks of the peerage in 1717, when Trevor Hill was created Baron Hill of Kilwarlin and Viscount Hillsborough in the peerage of Ireland.



## Wills Hill, 1st Marquess of Downshire



*Wills Hills, 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess  
of Downshire*

His son Wills, who succeeded him in 1742, was the most distinguished public figure in the family's history. Like his father Governor of the county and an Irish Privy Councillor, he exercised his talents as courtier and politician on a wider stage, serving in several of George III's early ministries, notably – if unfortunately for his reputation – at the Colonial Office during a crucial period in relations between the king and his American subjects. Successive steps in the peerages of Great Britain and Ireland were crowned in 1789 by the title of Marquess of Downshire in the Irish peerage. Apart from the estates at Blessington and Loughbrickland which came to him by inheritance, he established the nucleus of the Banbridge estate by purchasing four townlands in 1749 from Richard Whyte. The subsequent growth of Banbridge as a centre of the linen trade was greatly fostered by the new landlord's encouragement, an encouragement also exercised on a national scale as a member of the Linen Board. A man of some taste and culture, Wills Hill was responsible for rebuilding the mansion at Hillsborough, along with the parish church and most of the village. He died in 1793.



## **Arthur Hill, 2nd Marquess of Downshire (1753-1801)**

Arthur Hill, who became the 2nd Marquess of Downshire, married a notable heiress, Mary Sandys, in 1786. In this way the estates at Edenderry in King's County (nearly 14,000 acres in extent, with a valuable additional income from tithes) and at Dundrum in Co. Down came into the family, along with a 5,000-acre estate at Easthampstead Park in Berkshire which was to become a second home. The Dundrum estate was enlarged in 1793 by the purchase of another 2,000 acres at Ballykinlar. As Earl of Hillsborough, the 2nd Lord Downshire had been active in county politics during the early 1790s. After his father's death, however, he spent most of his time in England, crossing to Ireland in the years before his death in 1801 only to exert his political interest against the proposed Union ... . The government's retribution took the form of depriving Downshire of the governorship of the county and the colonelcy of its militia, and dismissing his supporters from official posts.



## **An electioneering dowager**

His widow believed he had been hurried to an early grave by these vexations, despite the convenient financial windfall of compensation for disfranchised boroughs – over £55,000 – which resulted from the passage of the Union. Bought off by Addington's government in 1802 with the title of Baroness Sandys in her own right – a title which passed to her second son in 1836 - Lady Downshire ..., as guardian during her eldest son's minority, deliberately followed a policy of building up the family's political strength in Co. Down by creating freeholders, till the estates there became what one contemporary observer described as 'a warren of freeholders' and 'the best specimen of political agronomy to be found in Ireland'. She also added to the property by two purchases: the estate of a Miss Mauleverer at Downpatrick, bought in 1806 at a cost of £17,450; and the reversion of the Lyndon estate at Carrickfergus. Neither was fortunate, for the Downpatrick estate had to be sold in 1818 to help ease the pressure of debt, while the Lyndon purchase was the subject of a long and vexatious lawsuit.



## **Arthur Hill, 3rd Marquess of Downshire (1788-1845)**

The 3rd Marquess of Downshire came of age in 1809 and died in 1845. Despite the heavy financial burdens he inherited, he found it possible to add over 5,000 acres to the estates, at a cost of over £140,000. All but one of the additions were made during the later years of his occupancy, the exception being a single townland which was added to the Ballykinlar estate in 1810. By far the largest purchase was that of five townlands near Banbridge, bought from Chichester Fortescue in 1826 for £60,000. Three townlands bought from his own agent Reilly in 1843 cost about £20,000. The rest were comparatively small transactions, ranging in cost from the £4,500 paid for two townlands in King's County to twice that sum for a townland of the same size in Co. Down. The 3rd Marquess proved a careful, and caring, manager, who restored stability and indeed solvency to the family's finances and more than earned the title of "a great Irish landlord".



*Monument to the  
3<sup>rd</sup> Marquess of Downshire*



## **Post-1845 decline**

With the exception of a considerable addition (1,500 acres) to the Carrickfergus property, made by the 4th Marquess, the Downshire estates were by 1845 at their greatest extent. The gross rental at that date was about £72,500 a year, well over twice the estimated yield in 1800. A small property in Kilkenny, a minority share of an undivided estate which had proved difficult to manage and impossible to sell, was disposed of in the 1850s. This apart, there was little change in the composition of the estates until their dissolution in the early years of the present century, under the later land purchase acts. The rent yield, however, which had risen steadily for well over a century, declined after 1881. The effect of the application of the Land Act of that year was to reduce Downshire rents by an average of seventeen and a half per cent, which made a difference of over £10,000 to the total. ...'



## Title deeds

The title deeds in the Downshire Papers amount to 2,000 documents, 16th-20th century.

- The Banbridge estate is represented by title deeds which incant the following properties: Annaghmackeonan, 1631-late 19th century; Ballygown, Bavan and Ballydulany, 1636-1842; and the Fortescue estate, 1610-1873.
- Title deeds relating to the Blessington estate run from 1700-c.1900.
- The documentation of the Carrickfergus estate includes the following properties: Carrickfergus, 1610-1874; manor of Glynn etc., 1637-1684; Bryantang, 1743-1887; Gideon's Land, 1804-1831; Slievetrue, 1723-1873; Straid, 1709-1873.
- The Castlereagh estate includes the following properties: Castlereagh, c.1607-c.1710; Kilmood advowson, 1759-1819; Killaney tithes, 1770-1812; Besagh and Tullyard, 1811-1842; Lisnastrean, 1839-1873; Ballykinler, 1523-1880.
- The Edenderry estate includes the following properties: Edenderry, 1597-1894; Ballynowlan and Kilcumber, 1666-1842; Carbury tithes, 1735-1834.
- The Hilltown estate includes the following properties: Hilltown, 1622-1846; Clonduff, 1767-1879; Ballynagappoge, 1610-1792.
- The Kilwarlin estate includes the following properties: Kilwarlin, 1610-1747, with over a hundred 17th century deeds; Ballyhomra and Magheradartin, 1699-1790; Ravernet, 1692-1875; Bracknabullagh, 1664-1745; Cluntagh and Tullynora, 1683-1786; Listullycurran, 1681-1824; Magherahinch, 1666-1839; Hillsborough town, 1701-1953.
- The Newry estate includes various properties, early 17th century-1856.

There are also a large quantity of family settlements, testamentary papers etc., with some title deeds to properties in Co. Kilkenny, 1703-1872, in Clonderalaw, Co. Clare, 1720-late 19th century, and in Carlow town, c.1763-1833.



## Leases

Leases number c.5,000, running from the early 18th to the mid-19th century. They exist for all the estates, although the bulk are post-1750, and there are relatively few, c.700, for the early 18th century.



## **Maps and surveys**

There are c.700 estate maps, running from the early 18th to the early 20th century. The collection of maps is dominated by two surveys of the then estates, both providing detailed townland maps, by Brownrigg & Co., in 1803 and by Robert Manning in 1856-1857. The Banbridge estate maps begin in 1720 with surveys of what was then the Whyte of Loughbrickland property. The Castlereagh estate maps include as many as 12 maps of a single townland, Bresagh, surveyed within a relatively short period, 1723-1834; included also is a map of the proposed Carnamuck to Branial road in 1804. The Edenderry maps contain a group showing the line of the Grand Canal relative to the Bog of Allen, 1788-1795. Maps of roads or proposed roads are frequent among the Hilltown estate maps, and include details of roads into Rosstrevor in 1767 and 1785, the Hilltown to Newry road in 1790, Hillsborough to Bryansford in 1804, and Newry to Castlewellan in 1807. The Kilwarlin estate maps are the largest estate series, but apart from the normal surveys of townland and individual holdings, they contain a map of the manor of Hillsborough in 1771, together with such road maps as Hillsborough to Lisburn in 1790, Hillsborough to Comber in 1805, and Ballynahinch to Moira in 1806. There is relatively little material for the two smaller estates, Carrickfergus and Newry, but worthy of note are a group of early 19th century maps of the Straid area near Carrickfergus and two maps of the Newry Navigation at Newry by Bernard Scalž, 1763. Two later volumes contain, respectively, 6" to 1 mile O.S. maps showing the estates of the Marquess of Downshire in Cos. Antrim and Down, 1884, and copies of maps of Dillonsdown and Deerpark, Co. Wicklow, part of the Blessington estate, c.1880.



## **Plans and architectural material**

Plans number c.100 and date from the late 18th to the late 19th century. There are plans and elevations of courthouses, markets, inns, private houses etc., for most of the estates (the Downshire family were, arguably, the greatest landlord town-planners in Ireland). In particular there are: plans of Hillsborough House, c.1788; market and session house plans for Edenderry town, 1791-c.1833; plans and elevations for Hillsborough courthouse, c.1800-1819; plans of a proposed market at Newry, c.1800, and at Banbridge, early 19th century; a series of 19th century harbour improvement plans for Dundrum; a group of Lagan Navigation plans, 1842; plans and sections for the proposed Downpatrick, Dundrum and Newcastle Railway, 1865-1856, and of the Banbridge Extension Railway, 1872; and plans of the Woodburn reservoir, Co. Antrim, 1860s.



## **Accounts and account books**

There are c.1,000 volumes of accounts, etc., directly relating to estate management, 18th-20th century. These begin with the usual series of ledgers, specie books and cash books, for the Dundrum and Edenderry estates in 1707, when they were still Blundell property, for the Kilwarlin, Newry, Hilltown, and Castlereagh estates in 1726, for the Carrickfergus estate in 1742, and for the Banbridge estate, c.1750. The lease books begin in 1794 but record the state of leases from the early 18th century; and there is a complete series of rentals for all the estates from c.1800. From c.1813 the 3rd Marquess of Downshire keenly interested himself in the management of his estates, and created a new set of account books. His book-keeping reforms are explained in the first volume of each class of account; for example, minute books are introduced for each estate which summarise estate management topics and against these summaries the 3rd Marquess himself lays down a course of action for his agents. His reforming zeal seems to diminish in the 1820s, but for a period the minute books are an excellent statement of estate management policy. The remaining accounts relate to the demesne and household at Hillsborough from the late 18th century, and to agents, solicitors, tithes, rent charges, judicial rents etc., in the 19th century.



## **Corporation books, roll books, etc**

In addition, there are a further c.500 volumes and associated documents, 18th-19th century, which are not directly concerned with the running of the Downshire estates. They include: corporation books for Hillsborough, 1740-1841, Fore, Co. Westmeath (a borough purchased by the 2nd Marquess of Downshire in 1793), 1766-1800, and Blessington, Co. Wicklow, 1770-1800; a complete list of the freeholders of the barony of Lecale, Co. Down, in the year 1790, apparently compiled with a view to the celebrated election contest of that year, for the names are market 'H, S. & W.' (Hillsborough, Stewart, and Ward), according to their political loyalties; election accounts, Co. Down, 1790, and poll books, Co. Down, 1852-1857; a list of signatories to the Co. Down Loyal, Anti-Repeal petition, arranged by parish and giving the addresses and occupations of the signatories, 1848-1849; Belfast-Banbridge Turnpike Trust minute books, 1762-1786; correspondence leading to the erection of the St John's Point lighthouse, Co. Down, 1837-1843; and a 'regulation book' for the Downshire Arms, Banbridge, 1833-1840, full of scurrilous comments by guests at the hotel.



## **Correspondence, 1707-1809**

All the preceding papers bear reference D671. D607 consists of c.4,350 letters and related papers, 1707-1809, mostly deriving from Arthur Hill, Viscount Fairford/Kilwarlin, Earl of Hillsborough, and 2nd Marquess of Downshire (b.1753, d.1801), but also including the surviving correspondence of his father, and all the correspondence of his wife and her family which are in PRONI.

The 2nd Marquess is a less well-known figure than either his father or the 3rd Marquess, his son. The father held British Cabinet office, notably as Secretary of State for the American Colonies, 1768-1772, and as Secretary of State for the Southern Department (including Ireland), 1779-1782, and is the subject of an entry in the DNB. The son has been the subject of two recent studies, both by Dr W.A. Maguire *The Downshire Estate in Ireland: The Management of Irish Landed Estates in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1972), and the already-mentioned *Letters of a Great Irish Landlord*. The main source of information about the 2nd Marquess is A.P.W. Malcomson, 'The Gentle Leviathan: Arthur Hill, 2nd Marquess of Downshire ...', in *Plantation to Partition: Essays in Ulster History in Honour of J.L. McCracken* (Belfast, 1981).



## **Dundrum and Edenderry, 1743-1801**

The first c.650 letters in the D607 part of the papers relate to the administration of the Blundell estates in Ireland (Dundrum, Co. Down, and Edenderry, King's County), and the estate at Easthampstead Park, Berkshire, mainly in the period 1743-1801. These estates, as has been seen, ultimately passed into the Downshire family through the marriage of the 2nd Marquess, then Lord Fairford, with Mary Sandys in 1786. On the death of the 1st and only Viscount Blundell in 1756, his property passed into the possession of his three daughters and co-heiresses, Chetwynd (who married William Trumbull of Easthampstead Park), Mary (who married, firstly, Lord Raymond, and, secondly, Lord Robert Bertie), and Anna Maria (who was unmarried). The Trumbulls' daughter was Lady Fairford's mother, and after Mrs Trumbull's death in 1766 and a subsequent series of deaths, c.1787, Lord and Lady Fairford inherited Easthampstead and the Trumbulls' third of Dundrum and Edenderry; the remaining two-thirds fell to the Fairfords, by then Downshires, on the death of Lady Robert Bertie early in 1798 and Miss Blundell later in the same year.

The picture of Dundrum in the third quarter of the 18th century which the correspondence gives, is of extremely poor country in which land was rented at 4s. per acre if marl were not allowed from the estate, or at 5s. per acre if marl were allowed. Timber was very scarce. The profits of a rabbit warren at Murlough figure very prominently in the estate receipts. There was a great deal of difficulty in collecting rents, and with a certain Trimble, a middleman who had taken land from the estate and sublet it to under-tenants, and who gave great annoyance to the estate office by not paying any rent himself and by preventing the under-tenants from paying it. From 1787 - indeed, from c.1766 onwards - the letters relate to Edenderry rather than Dundrum, in spite of the fact that Dundrum was not integrated into the overall administration of the Downshire estates in Co. Down in 1787, but continued to be administered from afar by the old Blundell agent, John Hatch, until Hatch's death in 1797.



## Correspondence of the 1st Marquess of Downshire



*Coat of Arms for the Hill family  
when Earls of Hillsborough*

There are c.600 letters and papers, 1746-1793, of Wills Hill, 2nd Viscount Hillsborough, 1st Earl of Hillsborough and 1st Marquess of Downshire, including (during his lifetime) letters and papers of his second but first surviving son, Arthur, subsequently 2nd Marquess of Downshire, but excluding letters to Lord Kilwarlin about his wife's Blundell and Trumbull inheritance.

There are a few letters and papers about the 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess's career in British politics, including a series of notes (of unexplained origin) on the evidence given by various people about the part played by Lord Lovat in the 1745 rebellion. The infrequent references

to colonial affairs include an account of the surrender of Dominica in 1778, written by the officer in command, William Stuart. Projects for the domination of North and South America by the utilisation of the British West Indies and Nicaragua as military and naval bases are outlined by Robert Hodgson (21 June 1779). There are also accounts of naval operations off New York (11 August to 7 September 1778), St Lucia (4 February 1779), and Gibraltar (10 May 1779), printed sketches of the British siege operations before Charleston, South Carolina, 1780, and one or two letters from people who had interests in the revolted colonies, namely Thomas Greg, who had property in New York, and Haddon Smith, who had been rector of Savannah. Other letters of interest from the imperial point of view, come from William Dunkin, an Indian official, who gives a vivid picture of the high-handed methods adopted by Warren Hastings in his government of India, and the stubborn resistance with which he was sometimes met by his subordinates, particularly Lord Macartney, 1783-1784.

Letters to the 1st Marquess about Irish politics, elections, patronage and law and order, many of them from Dublin Castle, are much more numerous. Among the Lords Lieutenant who wrote to him, the most frequent correspondent is the 2nd Earl of Buckinghamshire, who during the period 1779-1780 also corresponded officially with him as Secretary of State. His letters dwell on the distress of Ireland during the American War, the contentions in the Irish Parliament, the difficulties of the Irish Treasury, etc. Fear of invasion was very prominent throughout the period; and the Irish Government was made even more uneasy by the spontaneous formation of the Volunteers.



*Coat of Arms for the Hill family  
when Marquesses of Downshire*

Most of the 1st Marquess's correspondence, however, relates to Co. Down estate management and to local politics, local government and local patronage. There are descriptions of how the town of Hillsborough is rising under the close direction of the

landlord, who receives long detailed letters at short intervals. The Lagan Canal (the oldest in the British Isles) is being promoted; roads are being built; the Donaghadee packet service is being organised; there are references to racing at the Maze, and the fostering of a linen market at Hillsborough in competition with that at Lisburn. An illustration of the position of the 1st Marquess in county politics is afforded by the bitter contentions which seem to have arisen over the election of a trustee of the Newry Turnpike Board. For the period 1790-1793, the chief features illustrated are the rise of the United Irishmen, whose influence, according to the letters, was already showing itself in local disturbances, and the successful raising of the Royal Downshire Militia. The Earl of Hillsborough, afterwards 2nd Marquess of Downshire, took a prominent part against the one movement and in support of the other.

In 1790 the supremacy of the Downshire interest in the representation of Co. Down was challenged, though unsuccessfully, by, among others, the Stewart family of Mount Stewart, Newtownards, later Marquesses of Londonderry. In 1793 a by-election was expected, and in this case the opposition came from the Clanwilliam family who, while apparently willing to accept the Downshire alliance, wished to preserve a certain liberty of action. The papers include correspondence about both elections.



## **Correspondence of the 2nd Marquess of Downshire**

There are c.2,000 letters and papers of the Earl of Hillsborough between his succession as 2nd Marquess of Downshire in 1793 and his death in 1801, of a similar nature to his and his father's papers in the preceding section, and relating to his property at Hertford Castle, Hertfordshire, as well as to the Irish estates. Additionally, the c.200 letters of 1793-1795 contain frequent references to Catholic Relief and Catholic Emancipation.



## The Downshire Militia

In 1793 Britain has gone to war with France, and in the same year the Irish Militia Act was passed. In the raising of this force the 2nd Marquess took a prominent part. He commanded the county regiment and apparently disposed of commissions and Deputy Governorships as he pleased. At the beginning of 1794 the regiment was sent from Newry to garrison duty in the South. Major George Matthews (of Springvale, Ballywalter) writes numerous letters describing regimental affairs. He complains bitterly that the regiment was divided into detachments before it was properly disciplined, contrary to a promise given by the Commander-in-Chief. The men are often praised for their cheerful endurance of hardships, and also for their physique. At one review it is noted that, though the Downshire Regiment wore the shabbiest clothes, they were the finest men present. In June 1795, Scottish fencibles arrived in Co. Down, apparently quite as ill-clothed and imperfectly disciplined as the native militia. A letter of 20 June 1795 describes one contingent as begging Falstaff's description of his company. A letter of 15 September 1795 relates that Banbridge Court House had been set on fire by another detachment of these troops. At this time a large camp was set up at Blaris, near Lisburn; which had the effect apparently of causing a rise in the price of provisions and a great scarcity of money. Brawls are reported between the Defenders and the Break-of-Day Boys and references are also made to what may be local factions under the name of the Broomhedge Boys and the Kilwarlin Boys. The 2nd Marquess was probably the most active county magistrate in Ireland in pursuing counter-insurrectionary measures, so this correspondence is of the widest possible significance.



## **Rebellion and Union**

The c.875 letters of 1796-1797 are dominated by the deteriorating security situation in Co. Down and in Ulster generally; the c.575 letters of 1798 are dominated by the Rebellion and its aftermath (in all theatres - for example, Co. Wicklow, where the 2nd Marquess's mansion at Blessington was destroyed by the rebels, and in the Dublin area); and the c.325 letters of 1799-1801 are dominated by the Union, which the 2nd Marquess took a prominent part in opposing, thereby forfeiting the colonelcy of the Downshire Militia and everything else of which the government could deprive him. He died in September 1801.



## **Correspondence of the Dowager Lady Downshire**

The later papers in this section derive from his widow, the Dowager Marchioness. The c.275 documents which cover the period 1801-1809, are particularly rich in material on Dundrum and Edenderry, because that section covers the period of the minority of her son, the 3rd Marquess, who did not come of age until 1809. (Thereafter, the Dowager Lady Downshire's correspondence continues to include some references to Dundrum, because she retained a life interest in two-thirds of that estate and of Edenderry.) Lady Downshire revived the electoral feud with the Stewarts, and signally but expensively defeated them at a by-election in 1805. The letters of 1801-1809 also document Lady Downshire's negotiations with successive British governments over the disposal of the still significant Downshire electoral interest. After 1809, the correspondence consists of c.200 letters to her from all correspondents and from her to the family's chief agent in London, Thomas Handley, 1810-1822, c.125 letters from her to Handley, 1825-1834, and a few stray letters of 1829-1829, 1838 and 1841-1842. The Dowager Lady Downshire died in 1836.



## **Correspondence of the 4th Marquess and his successors**

The rest of the letters and associated papers in the Downshire Papers will be found at D671/C – the correspondence section of the main part of the archive. This comprises c.35,000 letters and letter-books, c.1800-1920, consisting in the main of estate management correspondence passing between the marquess and his chief agent in Hillsborough, and between the chief agent and the agents of the individual estates. The correspondence is particularly detailed and full (c.18,000 letters) during the period 1809-1845, when the estates were under the active and microscopic management of the 3rd Marquess. Apart from the basic estate management topics, the correspondence reflects the interest and patronage of the Downshire family relative to road, canal and railway developments, to the building of schools, churches and markets, and to the involvement of the 3rd Marquess in agricultural improvements, the linen trade and local politics.

The majority of the post-1845 in-letters relate to the 4th Marquess's time – he succeeded in 1845 and died in 1868. Up to and including 1850, most of the letters are addressed to the 4th Marquess himself, and on the whole are less narrowly concentrated on estate management than the letters to the 3rd Marquess – perhaps because the 4th Marquess did not transact personally the same proportion of the estate business. Apart from estate management and financial matters, and related subjects such as the development of railways in both Ireland and England, the letters to the 4th Marquess include some important material on national and local politics. There are letters about Conservative election strategy, getting up anti-Repeal petitions and demonstrations, British hostility to the Irish landlords during the Famine period etc., etc. The general election year of 1847 produces many letters about election politics in Carrickfergus, Newry, Co. Down, and elsewhere. In 1848, there are numerous letters from the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Clarendon, and numerous letters about a Co. Down address to him. The most significant figure among the correspondents is Lord Stanley, afterwards 14th Early of Derby, who writes (1847-1850) about the Encumbered Estates bill, about the Irish Franchise bill, and about the Oxfordshire election. Another significant figure among the correspondents is Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford ('Soapy Sam'), whose letters fall in the years 1848-1849.



## Correspondence mainly of the Downshire agents, 1845-1915



*Hillsborough Fort. 1892*

The in-letters for the post-1850 period are almost all addressed to agents and sub-agents. The early 20th century material contains much on land purchase, but the rest of the letters relate primarily to non-agrarian matters: tithe composition all over the Downshire estates, but particularly in Killaney parish, Co. Down; Co. Down elections, particularly in [1869?] and 1874; mining at Carrickfergus; Dundrum harbour in the 1840s and the building of a new church there, 1885-1890; the Banbridge

railway extension and the Newcastle-Dundrum railway, 1850s-1880s; Hillsborough Fort and Wardens, 1880s; etc., etc. There is virtually nothing of non-local interest, apart from a printed scheme for Home Rule, 1886.

The volumes of copy out-letters, which begin in 1845, contain copies of out-letters from agents and sub-agents, and virtually none from any of the Marquesses. Thus, for the period 1845-1850, when the majority of the in-letters are addressed to Lord Downshire, the letter-books largely fail to provide the other half of the correspondence (though it should be noted that many correspondents addressed their letters to the 4th Marquess, and were answered by an agent or sub-agent). From 1851 to 1889 and from 1913 to 1915, when there is a reasonable quantity of in-letters addressed to agents and sub-agents, the correspondence comes near to being two-sided.

