



Public Record Office
of Northern Ireland

INTRODUCTION

FAULKNER PAPERS

November 2007

Faulkner Papers (MIC21 and T1617)

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Summary

The Faulkner papers photostated and microfilmed by PRONI comprise c.1,400 documents and c.20 volumes, 1699-1839.



Background

The following account of the archive and the Faulkner family is taken from 'An Eighteenth Century Family Linen Business: the Faulkners of Wellbrook, Cookstown, Co. Tyrone' by Amy Monahan, in *Ulster Folklife*, vol. 9 (1963).

'At Castletown, Co. Carlow, is preserved a rich collection of documents relating to the Faulkner family who moved to Carlow from Co. Tyrone at the end of the eighteenth century. These papers, which cover the period from 1764 to 1800, not only provide a remarkably detailed record of the life of a typical Ulster middle-class family of the period but also give fascinating glimpses of contemporary Irish economic and social life ... [and document] the founding of the family linen business at Wellbrook, near Cookstown, which is fully documented in a series of letters, maps and leases covering the years 1764-1795.

In 1764 the Faulkner family were living at Gortalowry, a townland which lies to the west of Cookstown. The head of the family, William Faulkner, worked for the local landlord, William Stewart of Killymoon and also rented a farm from him. William Faulkner had four daughters and two sons; Sam, the eldest of the family, was then aged about fifty and lived in Dublin, where he was agent for the [Wicklow, Carlow and Armagh] estates of Richard C[hapel] Whaley of St Stephen's Green [and the Wexford and Carlow estates of the Rt Hon. George Ogle of Richfield, Co. Wexford]. He also had a flourishing legal practice, and later was to become an Alderman of the City of Dublin and Sheriff of Carlow and Wicklow. Hugh, the younger son ..., was then only twenty-three. His letters show that he was well educated: he could read both Greek and Latin, loved books and music, and played the fiddle. He was an accomplished mathematician, and was able to draw plans to scale, to survey and make maps. Like his elder brother he was an able man; he never became really rich or famous but had the knack of bringing success to most of the enterprises in which he became involved. One of his sons was knighted, and there has been a constant supply of gifted men among his descendants, right down to a present-day Admiral.

In 1764 Hugh Faulkner was a linen-draper, one of several in the district who rode out to fairs to buy the rough brown linen from the weavers. The drapers bleached and beetled the cloth and sent it off for sale at the Linen Hall in Dublin or shipped it direct to England. These young drapers were credited with a certain wildness, and Hugh for instance, was accused at one time of some prank with the "Hearts of Oak ..."; however, he managed to establish an alibi and was not formally prosecuted.

The first reference to the linen business is contained in a letter of 1764 in which Hugh sent the accounts for the previous year to Sam. ... 1765 was the year that the bleach yard was built and first operated. Tortuous negotiations over the lease were completed and a right of way to the turf-bog was secured. There is a map headed "A Map of Wellbrook Bleachgreen, erected by Sam and Hugh Faulkner, containing 10 acres 30 perches, surveyed by Hugh Faulkner, February 3rd 1766". ... In 1767 "presentment" ... money was allocated for the repair of the road from Orior [Co. Armagh] to the green. A good road was essential in order to bring in loads of turf from the bog. It was also in this year that Sam first mentioned building a dwelling-

house at the green, but Hugh was not enthusiastic about the plan. ... Sam did decide to build, but the house was not finished till 1779, and the fifteen years he lived there were hard ones for Hugh. The linen trade was not prosperous and more and more he had to turn to farming. But as he feared, the land was poor and his crops gave low yields. In addition there was a lot of poverty and political unrest; he could not get payment of even half of reduced rents from his tenants. The political unrest finally flared in the 1798 rebellion, but by that time Hugh had left the ... North and was successfully farming the bigger and better estate in Co. Carlow. ...

In December 1794 Hugh set off for the South. He was 53 years old. Three of his sons who had been educated at Dungannon Royal School were now at Trinity College, Dublin, and his daughter was soon to get married. Hugh lived at Castletown, Co. Carlow, till his death in 1801. Castletown was a bigger and better farm and the family prospered. Characteristically, one of the first things he did at Castletown was to divert a river, a mile out of its way and bring it over a hill and so down to supply the house, yard and garden. He let it rejoin the main river a quarter of a mile below the house. A man who had spent his life in the linen industry obviously expected to bring water wherever he wanted it. This water comes down to the house in a series of waterfalls and it is both useful and beautiful.

When Hugh died, Wellbrook passed to his daughter's husband, William Martin, who sold it in 1805 to James Irwin for œ1,425. Irwin carried on the bleaching business until his death in 1833, when it was leased by his widow to James Gunning, a linen draper, whose name appears in the 1834 valuation. In Griffith's valuation of 1859, the mills appear as unoccupied and in 1860 Mrs Irwin sold Wellbrook to a Mr Samuel Bryson; four years later it was sold to James Leeper, head of the weaving firm of John Gunnings & Co., lived there until he died about 1958. Wellbrook was then bought by John Henderson of Coleraine. Wellbrook is now a pleasant country house set among beautiful beech trees, smooth lawns, rockeries and waterfalls.

When Hugh selected the site it was a rocky waste of very little value; but he saw its possibilities. He brought water to the green, designed the bleach works, bought the timber and iron and transported these heavy loads over very bad roads. He had the buildings up and working in less than ten months. Getting a good lease was perhaps his hardest task. A bleacher needed sound financial backing. The raw material of the industry was the brown linen, woven in the homes of people all over the country. Hugh had to have capital to buy up this linen at all the small fairs for miles around. He was often worried that he had bought too dear and might have to sell cheap after he had spent time and money processing it. Linen prices were very unstable and probably accounted for the lack of prosperity of these small industries. ... Hugh also had a finance the carriage of linen to Belfast, Dublin or London; we know that one cargo was ruined with salt water in the hold. Finally, he had to provide enough turf to keep the furnaces going throughout the year. Labour costs, too, must have been considerable even with the low wages of those times There were also the mason and carpenters who worked on the mill buildings, and the cottages which had to be provided for the workers. One map shows nine cottages for the bleachers as well as Jack Norwood's, the foreman's house. ... A short history of the Faulkner family was published in the Mid-Ulster Mail for 8th and 15th August 1925, 12th and 26th September 1925 and 31st October 1925.'



The papers

The papers copied by PRONI include: title deeds and leases relating to lands in Cos Armagh, Carlow, Dublin, Kildare, Kilkenny, King's County, Longford, Louth, Mayo, Queen's County, Tipperary, Tyrone, Wexford and Wicklow, the property of various people including the Faulkner, Molesworth, Montgomery, Ogle, Richardson, Stewart (of Fort Stewart, Ramelton, Co. Donegal) and Whaley families, 1699-1823 and 1839; rent agreements for lands in Co. Galway and King's County, the property of John Whaley, 1778-1791; letters from various people to Samuel or Hugh Faulkner or John Whaley, mostly estate correspondence, or about the linen trade, 1764-1793; rent and other accounts relating to the manor of St John the Baptist (the Merchant Tailors' Proportion, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry), in the possession of John Richardson of Somerseate/Somerset, Coleraine, 1748 and 1772-1777; solicitor's costs, advice notes and estate rentals and accounts, mainly Faulkner and Whaley estates, 1756-1796; maps, estimates and plans, mostly relating to Faulkner property in Co. Tyrone and Whaley property in Co. Armagh, 1766-1792; letter from Quebec to Samuel Faulkner about trade and the American war, 1775; indenture of apprenticeship, Thomas Norton to Thomas Whaley, 1787; letter to Samuel Faulkner about trade in mahogany with the West Indies, 1792; brief about the estate of the late Samuel Faulkner, 1813; and release in connection with an action for trespass in respect of lands in Co. Dublin, 1839.

