



Public Record Office
of Northern Ireland

INTRODUCTION

GORDON PAPERS

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Gordon Papers (D4202)

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Summary

The papers of the Gordon family of Florida Manor (Comber) and Delamont (Killyleagh) comprise c.1000 title deeds, testamentary papers, leases, correspondence and Irish Land Commission papers, etc, 1630-1910.



Background

The archive has been arranged into eleven principal sections, A through to L. Section C comprising the leases has been further sub-divided by county and townland. Finally, section E containing the correspondence has been classified into separate categories according to individual members of the Gordon family.



Crawford and Gordon families of Florida Manor

The seventeenth and early eighteenth century material in the archive relates to the Crawford family who purchased part of Florida manor from the Montgomerys of Rosemount, Greyabbey, Co. Down, in 1691. A marriage settlement reveals that in 1755 Robert Gordon married Alice, widow of Thomas Whyte. She was the only daughter of James Arbuckle and his wife, Anne, daughter of John Crawford and niece and heiress of David Crawford of Florida. It was through this marriage that the Gordons acquired Florida manor. The later title deeds trace the succession of Florida manor through the Gordon family. [See family tree] Moreover, they also reveal that David Gordon purchased the Delamont estate for £8360 in 1793 from Viscount Northland and Matthew Forde, who were acting as executors for Mrs Margery Delahay. Thomas Delahay acquired the property from Viscount Limerick in 1733 for £1,117. He had married in 1721, Margery, the sister of the Rt Hon. Thomas Knox, MP and predeceased her in 1747. [See LR/583/1]



Florida Manor Estate and House

The Florida manor estate comprised the townlands of Ballybunden, Drumreagh and part of the townland of Kilmood. In 1791 the estate was described as containing 1300 acres of arable land and 400 acres of bog and let for £1000 a year. In 1867 when Robert Francis Gordon took possession of the Florida estate it was worth £4,634. However, the bulk of Florida manor including the townlands of Ballygraffan, Ballyminstragh, Kilmood, Lisbarnet, Raffrey, Ravara and Tullynagee formed part of the estate of the Marquess of Londonderry. [See D654/L/57-63, etc.]

There is very little information in the archive relating directly to Florida Manor House. However, it is possible to draw together some information about the building of the house or at least to establish an approximate date of when the house was completed. A bill of complaint recites that when John Crawford Gordon died in 1797, his brother, David, succeeded to the estate which included the mansion house called Florida manor and demesne. Moreover, a survey of 1794 for the Florida demesne of John Crawford recorded that it comprised just over 100 acres. Finally, the archive does contain a memorandum of agreement between Robert Gordon and Hugh Agnew, a brickmaker, for 'fifty thousand bricks or any greater number...' dated 1775. It is possible that this order was for the construction of the house, although this is admittedly rather speculative. [See D4204/J/3/1]



Testamentary papers

The archive contains a small number of pre-1858 wills comprising: copy codicil of the will of William Crawford of [Florida Manor, Co. Down], dated 1 June 1716; probate and will of David Crawford of Belfast, Co. Antrim, dated 27 May 1737; copy will of John Carse of Ballymacashen, Co. Down, dated 6 June 1771; copy will of Hugh Stevenson of Ballybunden, Co. Down, dated 1 October 1803; copy will of James Patterson of Ballymacashen, Co. Down, dated 30 May 1806; copy probate and will of Henry Carse of Ballymacashen, Co. Down, dated 18 June 1810; copy will of Viscount Castlereagh dated 14 August 1818; and the copy probate and will of David Gordon of Florida, Co. Down, dated 11 May 1837.



Co. Down estate leases

There are c.60 leases for the Florida manor estate of the Gordons. The bulk of these are for the townland of Ballybunden and cover the period 1779-1831. However, interestingly an unexecuted lease for the townland of Drumreagh contains on the reverse the conveyance of a pew to David Gordon in Killinchy [Non-Subscribing] Presbyterian Church for £21.12s in 1810.

Landholding on the estate can also be examine during the end of the nineteenth century. A relatively large quantity of Irish Land Commission papers include new tenancy agreements and related papers which chart the fixing of fair rents, etc.



Gordon correspondence

The correspondence is mainly business and estate related. It contains little of a family or a personal nature although some details are revealed such as the death of Mrs Anne Arbuckle, mother-in-law of Robert Gordon in December 1765. The correspondence chiefly relates to Robert Gordon (d. 1797), and his second eldest son, David Gordon (d.1837). The correspondence of Robert Gordon during the latter half of the eighteenth century reveals a litigious streak apparent from a constant run of disputes over bog boundaries with landlords such as Sir John Blackwood of Ballyleidy (Clandeboye) whose estate adjoined Florida Manor.



Kilmood Parish

The correspondence of David Gordon relates almost exclusively to the re-establishment of the parish of Kilmood. The letters are mainly between David Gordon, the 2nd Marquess of Downshire, patron of the living of Kilmood, and the Rev. John Cleland. They cover the period 1815-1830 and reveal the complicated but eventually successful process involved in obtaining a grant for the parish.

Additional papers relating to Kilmood Church of Ireland parish are located in section G of the archive including the conveyance of the alternate right of presentation to the vicarage of Kilmood dated 1819. The section also contains accounts and bills for the building of the new church detailing material, wages, etc, to a total of £2401.8s.8d. and there are also leases and related papers for a school house, sexton's house and glebe house for the parish. David Gordon's younger son, the Rev. James Crawford Gordon, served as vicar of Kilmood until his elevation to the precentorship of Down in 1828.



Florida Manor Grand Jury Papers

The archive contains Articles for the Grand Jury of the Manor of Florida dating from the late seventeenth century highlighting the myriad offences which could be brought before the manor court. The court still appeared to be in operation by the early nineteenth century as case papers dated 1805 recite David Gordon's title to the lordship of the manor and his accompanying rights. It also states that the court met at least once a year when petty constables were appointed.



Miscellaneous

One miscellaneous item of interest and with no obvious connection to the archive is a grant of 1777 from the Rt Hon. Thomas Conolly to Marmaduke Green of Dublin, formerly a Captain in the 67th Regiment of Foot, of an annuity of £200.

Other deposits of Gordon papers or about the Gordon family

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| D/671/C/173/1-38 | Letters and papers from David Gordon concerning Kilmoed Church of Ireland parish., 1816-1835. |
| D/671/C/174/1-6 | Letters from and about the Rev. John Frederick Gordon, Rector of Tyrella, 1838-1842. |
| D/1260 | Letter from James Gisborne Gordon, Rajputana, India to [his brothers] Robert Francis and John Frederick Gordon, Belfast, 1822. |
| D/1759/3A/6 | Volume entitled The Gordons of Co. Down containing biographical details of the Gordons of Florida Manor and Delamont, Co. Down, 1680-1910. |
| D/2229 | Correspondence and genealogical notes of the Gordon family, 1680-1950, compiled by Lt-Col Rt Hon. Sir Alexander Gordon; list of those who held the office of Seneschal in the Lordship of the Manor of Florida, 1784-1837; patents, commissions, etc, of Lt-Col Rt Hon. Sir Alexander Gordon, 1901-1964. |
| T/2642/1-6 | Maps of Delamont demesne, 1861:1868; newspapers cuttings on the Gordons of Co. Down by Philip Crossle from the Banbridge Chronicle, 1913; typescript notes based on the newspaper cuttings; and genealogical notes from the Gordon family Bible. |
| LR/583/1 | Title deeds, testamentary papers and Irish Land Commission papers for Delamont, Killyleagh, Co. Down, 1721-1906, tracing the title of the property from Viscount Limerick, through Thomas Delahay to David Gordon. |
| LR/638/1 | Title deeds and Irish Land Commission papers of the Gordon family for part of the townlands of Balloo, and Ballymacashen, Co. Down, 1638-1910. |

The Gordon papers (D4204) represent a significant addition to PRONI's holdings of estate records for Co. Down. The material relating to Kilmoed parish and Florida Manor Grand Jury should appeal to the academic. Moreover, the archive should be a useful source for both the local historian and genealogist.

