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INTRODUCTION

HOWARD BURY PAPERS

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Howard Bury Papers (T3069)

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Summary

The Howard Bury papers copied by PRONI comprise c.500 documents and 3 volumes 1702-1919, deriving from the late Lt-Colonel Charles Kenneth Howard Bury (1883-1963), of Charleville Forest, Tullamore, King's County, and Belvedere, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. These two properties and estates merged, for the first time, in him; and the arrangement of the archive reflects their separate history prior to his inheritance of Charleville through his mother, the heiress of the Bury family, Earls of Charleville, in 1931, and his inheritance of Belvedere from his exceedingly remote kinsman (by the half blood), Charles Brinsley Marlay, in 1912. Of the two, Charleville and the Burys are more fully documented than Belvedere and its successive owners.



Bury family history

The following account of the Bury family, Earls of Charleville (who are pronounced to rhyme with 'fury', not as in Bury in Lancashire), is taken from Mark Girouard's account of Charleville, 'perhaps the finest Gothic Revival castle in Ireland', published in Country Life, 27 September 1962:

'... Charles William Bury (1764-1835) [was] a landowner of considerable wealth, derived partly from [Shannongrove], the Bury estate in Co. Limerick (where the family had settled in 1666), and partly from property in [and around] Tullamore, King's County, inherited through his father's mother, the only sister and heiress of Charles Moore (1712-1764), Earl of Charleville and Baron Moore of Tullamoore [as the Moores liked to call it]. He himself was created Lord Tullamoore in 1797, Viscount Charleville in 1800 and Earl of Charleville in 1806. [This was mainly because in 1795 he had purchased political control of the borough of Carlow, which continued to be represented in the Parliament of the UK after the Union, and used his nomination of members for Carlow to bargain for his advancement in the peerage.]

He was an amiable dilettante, with antiquarian interests [which led to his election as third President of the Royal Irish Academy], and a talent for writing ... [and translating occasionally indecent verse. His wife,] Charlotte Maria [widow of James Tisdall of Bawn, Co. Louth], whom he married in 1798, ... [and who died in 1851, was a gifted water-colourist and something of a Blue-stocking. As a result of her first marriage, she had landed property at her own disposal in Cos Cavan and Louth. She, in fact, is the pivotal figure in the extremely complicated family history which underscores this archive. It was because her daughter by her first marriage was Charles Brinsley Marlay's mother that the merger of the Charleville and Belvedere properties and archives later took place.]



The building of Charleville Forest

There was an older, late 17th-century house at Charleville on a different site, down by the river. It was originally known as Redwood; the name Charleville Forest seems to have come into use in the 18th century, 'Forest' being an allusion to the great wood of ancient oaks with which the house is still surrounded. ... The approximate date when the present castle was started is given in a letter of November 8, 1800, from Lady Louisa Conolly to Lady Charleville (or Lady Tullamoore, as she then was) ..., [who credited Lord Charleville with] "having planned it all himself". This letter comes from the large collection of Lady Charleville's papers which descended to her great-grandson, [Charles] Brinsley Marlay, and on the basis of which the late R. Warwick Bond compiled [after 25 years' work only volume one of] *The Marlay Papers, 1778-1820* (1937). The papers, [1778-1912], together with the unpublished manuscripts of two further books derived from them by Warwick Bond [to 1854, although the originals run up to 1912], are now in Nottingham University Library [for no better reason than that that was where their very slow-moving editor had been Professor of English!]. ...

If there is any point at which the Irish craze for castles may be said to have started, it is with the building of Charleville ... In the 18th century there had been a certain number of Gothick houses built in Ireland, or older houses remodelled with Gothick trimmings, but they form a comparatively small and disjointed group. Charleville was the first example sensational enough to start a fashion. ... The architect employed was [the Co. Armagh-born] Francis Johnston ..., and Lord Charleville's sporadic letters show that the house took a considerable time to finish ..., [being still incomplete] by the end of 1812. ... The house had the advantage of not being constricted (as was so often the case in Ireland) by the need to adapt and incorporate an older building. It was newly built from the foundations up. As a result, there is a consistency about it, a nobility of scale and unity of treatment in the great echoing rooms, that is very impressive.



Mounting debts

Charleville had not been cheap to build and the Charlevilles did not live in a cheap way ... [and] continued to live above their income. In the years that followed they rented the Duke of Queensberry's house in London and entertained there lavishly ..., [with Lady Charleville establishing a much-frequented salon.] A new church was built in ... Tullamore at Lord Charleville's expense, ... [and many other building costs were incurred when, at Lord Charleville's instigation, the county town of King's County was transferred to Tullamore from dilapidated and inconvenient Philipstown]. Tours were made on the Continent in the grand style. Their son, Lord Tullamore, and his expensive and fortuneless wife, [Harriet Beaujolais, nee Crawford, whom he married in 1821], were supported in a separate and increasing establishment; and two expensive election campaigns were paid for [in order] to get him an English seat in parliament [after the Great Reform Act had liberated the electorate of Carlow]. When ... Lord Charleville died in 1835 he left a heavily embarrassed estate.



The Bury estates

His heir (whom Creevey had described in 1833 as "justly entitled to the prize as by far the greatest bore the world can produce") was not the man to set things right. ...' The papers include the following (useful) statement of c.1835 of the whereabouts and value of the Bury estates, apparently based on the more than vague information which was all that Lord Tullamore was able to supply, though on the eve of inheriting them.

'The town of Tullamore, Charleville Forest and estates in King's County in the heart of Ireland of the annual value of about £9,000. In County of Limerick in the south of Ireland, Shannongrove on the expiration of the subsisting leases it is understood will be of the annual value of about £9,000, this latter estate now producing, as it is believed, only from £5,000 to £7,000. Sopwell Hall estate in the County of Tipperary of the annual value of £1,200 to £1,300. N.B. Lord Tullamore understands that the Sopwell Hall estate is entailed on him, having been the property of his grandmother, Miss Sadleir, afterwards Lady Dunalley, the mother of Lord Charleville. This latter estate is said to be let on leases in perpetuity. Lord Charleville has also property in the City of Dublin of the annual value of about £12,00, and also in the north of Ireland (Lord T. thinks) in Cavan [this was Lady Charleville's estate], of about £1,200.'

Girouard concludes: '... The inevitable crash came in 1844; the Limerick estates had to be sold. Charleville was temporarily shut up, and its owner retired to Berlin. The property was ultimately inherited by ... [the 3rd Earl's] daughter, Lady Emily Howard-Bury, [in 1874], and from her passed [in 1931] to her son ...', the late Colonel Charles Howard Bury. He was the leader of the first Everest expedition to find a route through Tibet to the North Col (1921), and is best known for that achievement. He abhorred Charleville Forest and stripped it of its contents at a now notorious auction in 1949.



Rochfort family history

In two earlier Country Life articles, of 22 and 29 June 1961, Girouard had discussed Belvedere, the other half of Colonel Howard Bury's inheritance, and the Rochfort and Marlay families, through whom he had inherited it:

'Belvedere is a house with a wonderful situation, cunningly designed so that only at the last moment does one ... suddenly see the gleaming expanse of Lough Ennell stretching, scattered here and there with islands, to the far horizon. The name of the house, Belvedere, then becomes easy to understand. ... [It] appears to have been started by [Robert Rochfort,] the 1st Earl of Belvedere, in the early 1740s as a fishing lodge ...

[The Rochfort family] were of English origin and had been settled in Ireland probably since the 12th century. But the prominence of the Westmeath branch dated from the time of Robert rochfort (1652-1727). He ... became a lawyer of distinction, was appointed Attorney-General in 1695, Speaker of the Irish House of Commons later in the same year and Chief Baron of the Exchequer ... [1707-1714]. He had made a considerable fortune in the course of his career, and by extensive purchases became probably the largest landowner in Westmeath ..., [where] the Rochfort family reigned almost as little monarchs, representing it in parliament continuously from 1696 to 1833. ... His property centred ... [on the Kinnegad-Rochfortbridge-Tyrrelspass area of the county, Belvedere being at one extremity of it], and he lived at Gaulston [Park, Rochfortbridge], an old building that he altered and improved. ...

A few miles away was the pretty landscape of Lough Ennell, the attractions of which were much appreciated in the mid-18th century, with its new cult for the beauties of nature. About 1740 Robert Rochfort['s grandson and successor, another Robert] began to build ... Belvedere; and next door ... [his younger] brother, George, built another house, known then as Rochfort, though the name was changed in the 19th century to Tudenham. The power of the Rochforts obtained recognition in 1738, when Robert Rochfort took his first step up into the peerage and was created Baron Belfield. ... In 1751 he was created Viscount Belfield; in 1756 Earl of Belvedere; in 1764 Muster-Master-General of the Irish Army. ...



An imprisoned Countess

On August 7, 1736, Robert Rochfort, as he then was, married as his second wife Mary Molesworth, the daughter of the 3rd Viscount Molesworth, a distinguished soldier Of all the inexhaustible wealth of strange stories connected with the Anglo-Irish gentry in the 18th and 19th centuries, few are better or stranger than that of the 1st Earl of Belvedere ... and his wife, ... [whom] he shut up ... for 30 years [1743-1774] on the suspicion of infidelity with one of his brothers. ... Whether the couple were guilty or not will perhaps always remain disputable. Fashionable opinion at the time seems to have taken it for granted that they were, and her father accepted the wife's guilt; but in the 18th century opinion tended to be heavily weighted in favour of the husband. ...

... In November 1774, ... [he] died, and her son, the new Earl of Belvedere, ... released her. He had not seen her for 18 years, and the change was appalling. ... Lady Belvedere did not survive her husband many years; she went ultimately to live with her daughter, the Countess of Lanesborough, and on her death-bed reasserted her complete innocence of the charge that had been made against her.



The 2nd Earl of Belvedere (1738-1814)

... The 2nd Earl of Belvedere succeeded to ... [an estate which] his father's extravagance [had left] ... much encumbered, and in 1776 he was given a government pension of £800 per annum. ... The old house at Gaulston was sold In ten years, however, ... [Lord Belvedere] had recovered sufficiently to erect Belvedere House in Dublin, a building that demonstrates that he had inherited his father's taste, for with its magnificent plasterwork by Michael Stapleton it is certainly the finest private house of its date in Dublin.



The 'King of the Jews'

On the 2nd Earl's death without children in 1814, the earldom and other titles became extinct and the estates were split in two. The Dublin house and the unentailed estates were left outright to his second wife; she married Abraham Boyd and her descendants by this marriage took the additional surname of Rochfort (though, of course, they had no Rochfort blood) ... [and lived either in Dublin or in a modest house in Tyrrelspass, now The Village Hotel]. Belvedere and the entailed estates went to his sister, Jane, Countess of Lanesborough Some years after her husband's death in 1779, she married a colourful character, John King, known as Jew King, and sometimes called King of the Jews ..., [with whom she seems] to have lived a somewhat rackets life veering between poverty and magnificence The last Lord Belvedere's death put an end to the financial worries of King and Lady Lanesborough.



Charles Brinsley Marlay (1829-1912)

King died in Florence in 1823, and his wife in the same town in 1828, at the age of 90. Belvedere passed ultimately to her great-grandson, Charles Brinsley Marlay. He was a man of considerable taste and discrimination, and during his long life built up a remarkable collection of pictures, drawings and objects d'art, specialising in Italian pictures of the 15th and early 16th centuries and Dutch pictures of the 17th century. The bulk of his collection he kept in London, at St Katharine's Lodge, his house in Regent's Park; on his death in 1912 this passed under his will, together with an endowment, to the University of Cambridge and now forms one of the major portions of the Fitzwilliam Museum. But the residue of his pictures ... [remained] at Belvedere; here he added the terraces in front of the house, altered the top-floor windows and inserted the overmantel in the drawing-room. Otherwise, however, he had the discrimination to leave the 18th-century character of the house unimpaired. The Belvedere property was left to ... his cousin, ... Colonel Howard Bury.'

On Colonel Howard Bury's death in 1963, Belvedere and the Howard Bury Papers passed under his will to the late Rex Beaumont, who presented the latter to the Longford/Westmeath Library. Prior to this, in the early 1970s, the family and estate papers to c.1920 had been sorted, listed and to a large extent photocopied by PRONI. Quite lamentably, the glass-plate negatives and numerous other papers documenting Colonel Howard Bury's Everest expeditions and other contributions to public life, have been allowed to be separated from the rest of the archive and sold to a private collector. Belvedere now belongs to Westmeath County Council.



The papers

The papers photocopied by PRONI and held under reference T3069, are as follows.

The Bury archive comprises: 3 diaries of tours, etc, made by the 1st Earl of Charleville and his eldest son, Viscount Tullamore, 1802-1803 and 1820-1822; 97 letters and papers of the Moore and Bury families, Earls of Charleville, relating to title, estates and family finances, 1702-1859; copies of 13 letters between and among Queen Charlotte, Lord Liverpool, Sir Benjamin Bloomfield, etc, about various royal sensations and scandals, including the possibility that Princess Charlotte (only child of George IV and heir apparent to the throne) was murdered, 1817-1825; 43 letters and papers of the 1st and 2nd Earls of Charleville relating to local politics and disturbances in King's County, 1817-1844, particularly a cause celebre which gave rise to a debate in the House of Lords, the murder of the 2nd Earl of Norbury at his seat, Durrow Abbey, near Tullamore, in January 1839; 25 letters and papers of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Earls of Charleville relating to their role in British politics and English elections, 1829-1841 and 1853, including a run of letters from the Duke of Wellington; 22 letters and papers of Viscount Tullamore, later 2nd Earl of Charleville, about the unhappy matrimonial affairs of Charleville's crony, Count Alfred d'Orsai and his wife, Lady Harriet d'Orsai, nee Gardiner (who had been more or less bequeathed to him under the will of her father, the Earl of Blessington, in 1829), and about Crockford's Club, London, of which Charleville and d'Orsai were leading members, 1834-1840; and 174 items of family correspondence of the Howards and Howard Burys (mainly the Hon. James Kenneth Howard, his son, Capt. Kenneth Howard, later Howard Bury, and Capt. Howard Bury's wife, Lady Emily Bury, niece and heiress of the 5th and last Earl of Charleville), 1839, 1854 and 1859-1885. These last include one or two amusing letters about the attempts of well-born fortune hunters, notably Lord Bennet, to ensnare Lady Emily.



The Princess Charlotte murder theory

The Royal Archives, Windsor, has provided the following background note on the copy correspondence about royal sensations and scandals, 1817-1825:

'The allegation that Princess Charlotte was murdered at Queen Charlotte's instigation appears in volume I of a work published by William Henry Stevenson, 13 Wellington Street, Strand, in 1832, entitled *Secret History of the Court of England from the Accession of George the Third to the death of George the Fourth*, including, amongst other matters, "Full particulars of the mysterious death of the Princess Charlotte". On the title page the author is given as Lady Anne Hamilton, sister of the Duke of Hamilton and Brandon and of the Countess of Dunmore, but there is a hand-written note in the front of one of the Royal Library copies of the book stating that Lady Anne Hamilton had nothing to do with it, and that, from information given to the writer of the note by the Hon. Charles Murray, when he was Master of the Household to Queen Victoria, it would appear that the book was "manufactured by some literary scamp from certain scraps of manufactured information received from one Sarah Woodward, her Ladyship's maid, who seems to have (as she said) the various facts herein mentioned from her mistress, who was so hurt at the publication of the work that she used every effort to buy it up - which accounts for its scarcity". Lady Anne Hamilton was Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Caroline, 1814-1821.

The copy letter in the Howard Bury papers, allegedly from Sir Benjamin Bloomfield to Dr Richard Croft, dated 9 November 1817, is printed on pp 369-70 of *The Secret History*, and Dr Croft's alleged reply of 10 November 1817 on pp 371-2. The account of how the letters were sent to a young lady and of the young lady's interview with Dr Croft contained in the Howard Bury papers differs in wording from that given in *The Secret History* (pp 365-9), but the gist is the same. The one letter in the Howard Bury papers which does not appear in *The Secret History* is that dated 11 March 1817 purporting to be from Queen Charlotte to Dr Croft, but the book contains a letter said to be from Queen Charlotte to Dr Croft, dated 12 November 1817 (pp 373-4) which is not in the Howard Bury papers.

The Miss C.E. Cary who appears from the Howard Bury papers to have produced these copy letters may be the Christian Cary who in 1816 was trying to extract money and promises of promotion for her friends from the Duke of Kent (RA.Add. 7/1212, 1213, 1221, 1227) and who was also implicated in the Mary Ann Clarke scandal (see *The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales*, vi, 2545n).

The 2nd Earl of Charleville, as Viscount Tullamore, married Charlotte Campbell, the daughter of Lady Charlotte Bury, Lady-in-Waiting to Queen Caroline, by her first husband, which probably explains how the papers came into Lord Tullamore's possession.'



The Belvedere papers

After all this, even the Rochforts are something of an anticlimax! The papers deriving from them are in fact very few, the main part of the Belvedere papers being of Marlay association.

They comprise: 8 scrappy Co. Westmeath estate papers relating to the Rochfort, Levinge and Smyth of Ballynegall families and to lands in the vicinity of Mullingar, 1782, 1826, 1840 and 1887-1894; 53 family and personal letters to Catherine Louisa, Mrs George Marlay (daughter of Lady Charleville by her first marriage), the Marlays' son, Charles Brinsley Marlay of Belvedere, and others, 1827, 1859-1882, 1892 and 1894; 10 letters and papers, mostly printed, of Charles Brinsley Marlay of Belvedere, relating to local politics and affairs in Co. Westmeath, and the Third Home Rule Bill, 1865-1895; 17 miscellaneous printed broadsheets, proclamations, bulletins, etc, almost all relating to Ireland, 1726-c.1843; 7 drawings, plans or specifications of (in date order) a 'horiscope' and an astronomical exercise (both 1801), a fire place and an ice-house (both c.1820), a plantation (1826) and a [church or library?] staircase (late 19th century); and 14 letters to Charles Howard Bury from the 5th Marquess of Lansdowne (his guardian) and others, mainly about family matters, but including some political comment, 1907-1919.



Note on Section C

(Provided by Miss V.J. Langton, MVO, Registrar of the Royal Archives)

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