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INTRODUCTION

RICHMOND PAPERS

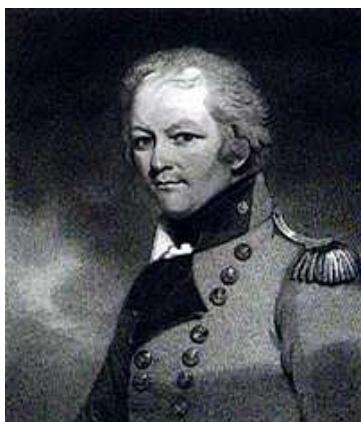
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Richmond Papers (MIC336, T3415)

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The Richmond Papers



Charles Lennox, 4th Duke of

The Richmond papers, which comprise c.1930 documents, 1789-1804 and 1807-1818, are the papers of Charles Lennox, 4th Duke of Richmond, mainly as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 1807-1813. The originals are in the National Library of Ireland, Dublin, and constitute NLI MSS 48-74.

Ms. 75A is an index to the correspondents, and Ms. 75 is a descriptive list, giving the reference number, date, correspondents (where appropriate) and a very brief summary of contents, for each document. Ms.75-75A should therefore be consulted *in advance* of the documents. The documents are bound into volumes, the spines of which give the NLI Ms. number (58-74), the volume number (1-17) and the running document number; the documents are numbered, not foliated. They appear to have been bound according to an original office or family filing-system, which is not only hopelessly inconsistent, but also takes in a considerable volume of material which has nothing whatever to do with Ireland.



A pen-portrait of Richmond

Perhaps the best description of Richmond during the time of his Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland is that given in Norman Gash, *Mr Secretary Peel: the Life of Sir Robert Peel to 1830* (London, 1961), pp 91, 98-99 and 130:

'... Richmond [was] a kindly and sociable man of the world He ... [was] only forty-three ... when appointed Lord Lieutenant in 1807 He had done some soldiering in the West Indies and had sat in the House of Commons as a member for Sussex under Pitt. He was a sportsman, a cricketer, a patron of the prize-ring and, as Colonel Lennox, he had achieved distinction by fighting a duel with a prince of the blood, the Duke of York. He and his Duchess, a daughter of the Duke of Gordon, enjoyed their Viceregal position in Dublin and maintained it with stateliness and hospitality. His portrait in Dublin Castle shows a small, thin-featured man, like an athlete on whose spare and active frame comfort and good living were beginning to tell.

As both friends and enemies were well aware, he was fond of the wine-bottle, and his too frequent excesses exposed him in the savage warfare of contemporary politics to damaging public criticism. It is also true that he was conscious of his weakness and made ... efforts to overcome it, even though opportunities for a relapse presented themselves with tempting frequency. Partly perhaps because of the pleasures of the table, his health was not strong, and he also had some trouble with his eyes. But to his staff at the Castle he was a good and kindly superior. His stout Protestantism [i.e. opposition to Catholic Emancipation], open expression of which he largely suppressed at the desire of the Cabinet, endeared him to the ring of equally stout Protestants who surrounded him; and his intemperance, if a fault, was his only fault in their eyes. ...

Richmond ... [was] in Ireland [for] over six years, the longest period of any Lord Lieutenant in the first half of the 19th century, and he ... [was] served by no fewer than four [Chief] Secretaries. His rule coincided with some of the most difficult and depressing years of the war, and ... [saw] the first serious renewal of the Catholic movement since the Union. ...'



Four different Chief Secretaries

Richmond's four Chief Secretaries, who are among his most important and frequent correspondents, were: Sir Arthur Wellesley, later 1st Duke of Wellington, 19 April 1807-13 April 1809; Robert Saunders Dundas, later 2nd Viscount Melville, 13 April 1809-18 October 1809; William Wellesley Pole of Ballyfin, Co. Leix, later 1st Lord Maryborough and 3rd Earl of Mornington (and an older brother of Sir Arthur Wellesley), 18 October 1809-4 August 1812 (and Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer mid-1811-August 1812); and Robert Peel, later Sir Robert, 2nd Bt, from 4 August 1812 until long after Richmond's departure. Richmond himself was appointed Lord Lieutenant on 11 April 1807 and handed over to his successor on 26 August 1813.



Sir Arthur Wellesley

Sir Arthur Wellesley, Richmond's first Chief Secretary, '... was not a party man', according to the biography of him by R.G. Thorne in the History of Parliament volumes covering the period 1790-1820. He was also mainly interested in his military career, and only accepted the Chief Secretaryship because Ministers assured him he was ' "... at liberty to give up the office in Ireland whenever an opportunity of employing me professionally will offer, and that my acceptance of this office ... will be considered as giving me an additional claim to such employment." ' His first duty as Chief Secretary was '... the management of [the] Irish elections, which preoccupied him in the spring of 1807.



Sir Arthur Wellesley

In this, as well as in his patronage duties, Wellesley acquitted himself well. ... Richmond [a fellow-soldier] thought him "particularly well suited to Ireland. He is very steady and quiet ..., but does not suffer himself to be bullied, a thing Paddy always tries to do at first." ...

In July 1807 Wellesley, who had no illusions about the prevalence of disaffection in Ireland, introduced the Irish Insurrection Bill, regretting only that he had not been able to prevail upon ministers "to adopt the plan of a reciprocal exchange of the militia of the two countries, although I went far towards it". ... He spoke regularly on Irish business, defending a disunited government's measures, as he complained to the Viceroy, particularly the grant to Maynooth College and the appointment of [the buffoonish, extreme Protestant,] Dr Patrick Duigenan, to the Privy Council. In June, to his relief, he was given command of an expeditionary force to assist the Peninsular insurrection against the French, [and won his famous] victories at Roliça and Vimeiro A combination of circumstances now induced Wellesley to give up parliament and office. ...' In February 1809, he had to defend himself in the House against censure for retaining the Chief Secretaryship while away on active service. '... On 2 April he was awarded the command of the British troops near Lisbon and on 4 April resigned his office and seat. ...'



Robert Dundas

Wellesley's successor, Robert Dundas, was Chief Secretary for only a short time and never gave Ireland his undivided attention. He was President of the Board of Control for India at the time of his appointment, and accepted the Chief Secretaryship reluctantly, because it was arguably a side-lining and demotion. He was also distracted all the time by the expectations and recriminations of his father, the 1st Viscount Melville, who had recently been disgraced and a result of the impeachment proceedings against him and was hungry for office and rehabilitation. Dundas's successor at the Board of Control did not pick up the reins until 17 July 1809, so Dundas had to do the work of both offices. On 30 May he opposed a motion for Irish tithe reform and then had to defend Indian policy in June. In September, when Dundas was in Dublin, the Prime Minister, the 3rd Duke of Portland died, and the ministry collapsed. Following the protracted negotiations over its reconstitution, Dundas went back to the Board of Control.



William Wellesley Pole



William Wellesley Pole

He was succeeded in Ireland by Wellesley's older brother, William Wellesley Pole, who had the disadvantage of being an Irish county MP. When Wellesley had been Chief Secretary, Pole (again in the words of R.G. Thorne) '... was not a little put out to discover that Arthur would not do his Queen's County jobs for him, exclaiming, "Mr Pole is not the government, he does not guide my sentiments". ... On 2 October 1809 Lord Liverpool recommended Pole ... to the Irish Viceroy as "an excellent man of business", and an experienced debater, and the Duke of Richmond's only quibble was: "his temper is rather too warm and he would try to do jobs for the Queen's County. The first I can't get the better of; the latter I can." ... Pole was pessimistic about the prospects for Perceval's ministry in the spring of 1810 and clearly wished [his eldest brother] Lord Wellesley to be premier Nevertheless, he was committed to Perceval and opposed radical agitation, ... sinecure, criminal law and parliamentary reform, Irish tithe reform and Catholic relief.

As Chief Secretary, although he had advocated a relaxation of coercion in Ireland in 1810, he was "not conciliatory", so the Viceroy conceded, and when on 12 February 1811 he issued, without consulting London, a circular to magistrates prohibiting the Catholic Committee from proceeding to elect a convention in Ireland, and on 26 February made a bid to break up a meeting of the committee, there was a storm of protest from opposition in parliament, and Pole received "a gentle check" from his colleagues. He returned to England "with his tail between his legs", but contrived to gloss over his conduct in debate on a Whig censure motion Subsequently Pole proceeded against the Catholics by proclamation, this time with Perceval's advice and the Regent's approbation. He also overcame Perceval's reluctance to try the "experiment" of amalgamating the Irish Exchequer, which had become too independent under the aegis of John Foster [its Chancellor], with the Chief Secretary's office as from the end of the session of 1811. This ... was, in his view, a decisive step towards restoring the Castle's authority in Ireland, though the experiment ended with him. Meanwhile, he was credited in early November 1811 with "... effecting a number of unostentatious and silent, yet signal and salutary, reforms in all the public departments".

... In his reply to [Lord] Morpeth's motion on Ireland, February 1812, Pole maintained his stand against the Catholic Committee. [But] he was weary of Ireland: "he received letters threatening his life every day ... signed Pat Pikeman, Kit Killman, and Sam Shootman, true to the last as to Irish humour". He ... [declared that he] would not stay in Ireland if the Duke of Richmond left it - which ... [Richmond] wished to do On 19 May 1812 Pole asserted his independence ..., [following] the failure of the negotiation with Lord Wellesley and Canning, which he regarded as heralding "eternal exclusion to the Catholics". He admitted that this conclusion might seem startling, as he was regarded in Ireland as "the greatest bigot of them all", but

explained that, though he had remained staunch to Perceval, he had not shared his views on the [Catholic] question. ... He accordingly resigned [on] 21 May 1812, ... having agreed to remain in office until the end of the session.

The Viceroy deprecated Pole's decision, [and] ... commented that Ministers had lost Pole by the "folly and vanity of his brother", who would not be subordinate. ... This seemed confirmed by his speech in favour of Canning's pro-Catholic motion of 22 June 1812, which pained the Viceroy and led to further embarrassing correspondence between them. Pole maintained that the time was now ripe for sympathetic consideration of the Catholic claims and ridiculed the Viceroy's insinuation that he was one of those Irish Members who turned pro-Catholic to save their seats. ... On 1 March 1813, ... [he spoke] in favour of Catholic relief, which he supported throughout the session The Viceroy could find no excuse for Pole ..., who was also critical in debate on Irish education, the Irish budget and the suppression of illicit distillation by collective fine, which he had suspended while in office ...'.



Robert Peel

His successor as Chief Secretary, Robert Peel, was appointed without proper consultation with Richmond (partly because it was known that Richmond was soon going to retire). But there was soon 'an easy and friendly relationship', as Professor Gash calls it, between the two men. Richmond had been afraid that 'a Catholic or a timid man' might be appointed, so Peel was highly acceptable because he was neither. Richmond deferred to him when the issue of the grant to Maynooth (later to play a very important part in Peel's career) again arose in March 1813. In August Richmond ceased to be Lord Lieutenant.



Sir Robert Peel, 2nd Bt

The archive

The earliest material in the Richmond papers is non-Irish and consists of: correspondence about the celebrated quarrel and duel between the Duke of York and Richmond, then Lt-Colonel Lennox, May 1789-May 1792; and what Ms. 75 describes as '... copies of correspondence between the 3rd Duke of Richmond [Richmond's uncle and predecessor] and the Rt Hon. William Pitt, 1794-1795; also correspondence between the [3rd] Duke of Richmond and Major-General Lennox [i.e. the future 4th Duke], 1796-1803'.

The Irish Lord Lieutenancy material begins with a packet described in Ms. 75 as 'Instructions with regard to Lord Lieutenancy and a variety of loose letters of various dates to 1815', including letters from Richmond's first Chief Secretary, Sir Arthur Wellesley, later 1st Duke of Wellington, and other people who feature elsewhere in the arrangement. There is further correspondence between Richmond and Wellesley, 1807-1808, '... miscellaneous letters and documents from 1808 to 1813', including letters from Wellesley and his successors as Chief Secretary, William Wellesley Pole and Robert Peel, '... correspondence from the Rt Hon. W.W. Pole to the Duke of Richmond from 1809 to 1811', copies of letters from Richmond to Pole, January-December 1810, letters from Pole to Richmond, January 1811-June 1812, correspondence between Richmond and Pole, January 1812-1813, '... originals and copies passing between ... Richmond ... and Rt Hon. Robert Peel and W.W. Pole, August 1812-March 1813' and correspondence between Richmond and Peel, February-May 1813. There are other, equally overlapping, packets of correspondence with his Chief Secretaries, this time including the short-lived Dundas, and also with Sir Charles Saxton, Civil Under-Secretary in Dublin Castle.

Richmond's dealings with successive British Prime Ministers, Home Secretaries and other Ministers are documented by (among other things): '... copies, with some originals, passing between ... Richmond ... and the Earl of Liverpool, Rt Hon. S[pencher] Perceval, Lord Bathurst, September 1807-December 1811'; 'Originals and copies passing between ...' Richmond and the Rt Hon. Richard Ryder, July 1809-December 1810; '... correspondence between the Rt Hon. R. Ryder and the Duke of Richmond, together with other letters etc, dated 1811 and 1813'; and copies of letters from Richmond to Lords Sidmouth and Liverpool, August 1812-August 1813. There are also packets of 'miscellaneous' and 'various' correspondence from 1807 to 1811, prominently featuring Lord Liverpool (then Lord Hawkesbury), from November 1808 to May 1813, prominently featuring Perceval, Ryder and Sidmouth, and from c.1807 to c.1813, prominently featuring Lord Bathurst, George Canning, William Huskisson (who is described as 'Sir W Huchisson' in Ms. 75), Lord Castlereagh, Major-General Mackenzie, Lord Mulgrave, Charles Long and the Duke of Portland. Other packets of correspondence of a similar kind include '... correspondence between ... Richmond ... and the Rt Hon. Spencer Perceval relating to the Regency Bill, the rest miscellaneous, April 1809-June 1813'.



Defects of arrangement and selection

From the above it is apparent that the physical arrangement of the documents is hopelessly inconsistent. The papers appear to have come to the National Library of Ireland in original 'packets', deriving from an office or family filing-system. It does not look as if they have been individually selected for their Irish content, and for this reason, it may well be that the Richmond papers subsequently deposited in the West Sussex Record Office also contain Irish material.



Topics of correspondence

The topics covered by the papers include: dismissals by the previous administration from offices in the Irish Treasury, Exchequer and Revenue, and reinstatements/appointments made by the in-coming Richmond administration, 1807; the general elections of 1807 and 1812, and intervening by-elections (these being a major topic throughout the Lord Lieutenancy); the rejection of the Catholic petition to parliament of 1807; the passing of the Insurrection Act of 1807; the agitation at county meetings in 1807 for the abolition of tithes, various plans for tithe reform, and proposals for the best way of obtaining accurate returns of the actual (and compared to Great Britain) light incidence of tithes; plans for building new churches and glebe houses, 1807; the work of the Board of Education in Ireland generally, 1807; the grant to Maynooth and the regulation of that institution, 1807; detailed military plans to repel a threatened French invasion, 1807; and Sir Arthur Wellesley's prominent role in the highly controversial bombardment of Copenhagen, 1807.

The letters and papers beginning in 1808 include discussion of: Richard Griffith's proposed Bill to extend the Irish canal system, 1808; the Dublin Paving and Police Acts of 1808; a proposal (scouted by Wellesley) to make propaganda for Irish Catholic consumption out of Napoleon's ill-treatment of the Pope, 1808; the controversy over whether the Crown might be allowed a veto over the appointment of Irish Catholic bishops, 1808; Wellesley's bill to extend the privilege of free postage, 1809; Martello towers and other defective defence works erected [in 1802-1803] without the approval or supervision of the Board of Ordnance, 1809; the appointment of the 2nd Earl of Rosse as Joint Postmaster General in 1809; and the filling of vacancies in the Irish Representative Peerage in 1809 and 1811.

The letters and papers dating from William Wellesley Pole's appointment as Chief Secretary in October 1809 include discussion of: the ambitions and schemes of John Foster, Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer, and disputes between Pole and him over the powers of their respective offices, 1809-1811; the activities of the Catholic Committee, 1809-1812, and the Irish government's measures, under the Irish Convention Act of 1793, to prevent it from electing delegates or assuming a representative character, by a combination of proclamation and arrest (1811-1812); the enforced retirement as Chairman of the Board of Excise of the 2nd Earl Annesley, on a pension of two-thirds of his salary, and his succession (under certain conditions) by Alexander Marsden, 1810; the relief of distress among unemployed manufacturers, 1810; the restricted and unrestricted powers as Regent conferred on George, Prince of Wales, and the successive ministerial crises in Britain, 1810-1812; a Co. Meath meeting held to address for the Repeal of the Union, 1810, and subsequent Repeal agitation; a proposed relaxation of the Insurrection and Arms Acts, 1810; objections to the policy of fining whole townlands and parishes where illicit distillation has been going on and no offender has been brought to book, 1810; the vacant sinecure of Constable of Dublin Castle (and innumerable other jobs, patronage claims, patronage disputes, etc), 1811; opposition plans early in 1811 to make the 2nd Earl of Moira Lord Lieutenant and Sir John Nonport Chief Secretary; the composition of the Irish Finance Committee, 1811; the Militia Interchange Act of 1811 and the choice of Irish militia regiments to be sent to England; Ireland's

complete inability to pay its Act of Union quota and need of financial assistance from Britain, 1811; the Catholic Petition and the debate on Catholic emancipation to which it gave rise, 1812; the consequent resignation of W.W. Pole in that year, in obedience to the wishes of his Emancipationist eldest brother, Marquess Wellesley; and the replacement of Pole by Robert Peel (as Chief Secretary) and by William Vesey Fitzgerald (as Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer).

The year August 1812-August 1813, during which Peel and Richmond overlapped in the Irish government, is documented by discussion of: the succession, soon after Peel's appointment, of William Gregory to Sir Charles Saxton as Civil Under-Secretary in Dublin Castle; a renewal of the demarcation disputes between the Chief Secretary and the Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer, 1812-1813; a mild disagreement between Peel and Richmond over the Irish Pension List; the increasingly obvious shortcomings of the government's policy of subsidising the pro-government press, 1813; the respective roles of John Leslie Foster and William Conyngham Plunket as the best parliamentary proponent and opponent of Catholic Emancipation, 1813; Maynooth again, 1813; and the departure of Richmond in the same year, to be replaced as Lord Lieutenant by Earl Whitworth.

The post-Lord Lieutenancy material, which has little Irish relevance, consists of: correspondence between Sir Arthur Wellesley, Marquess and then Duke of Wellington, and Richmond's son, the Earl of March, subsequently 5th Duke of Richmond, 1811-1829; and '... papers relating to the Sussex and Chichester elections from 1807-1812' (Richmond's seat, Goodwood, was outside Chichester). This latter packet relates in part to Ireland, because it includes letters from the 2nd Earl of Egremont, mainly about Sussex, but bringing in Irish ecclesiastical preferments and estate and local political matters in Cos Clare and Limerick, where Egremont was a major landowner.

