

Local History Series: 4



The Books of Survey and Distribution

The Books of Survey and Distribution were compiled around 1680 as the result of the wars of the mid-seventeenth century when the English government needed reliable information on land ownership throughout Ireland to carry out its policy of land distribution. They were used to impose the acreable rent called the Quit Rent, which was payable yearly on lands granted under terms of the Acts of Settlement and Explanation. It is possible to discover to whom, if anyone, the confiscated lands were granted so that we have a record of landowners for 1641 and 1680. As a result it is possible to determine the amount of lands lost by the 1641 owners and to discover the names of the new proprietors.

Although the original books were destroyed, manuscript copies had been made. One set of these manuscript copies can be found in the Annesley Papers (**MIC532/1-13**). They consist of 22 volumes and each volume includes an 'alphabet' which is an index of denominations. The text includes a physical description of each barony, with details of woods, bogs, rivers, soil, etc. The information is laid out in tabular form on a barony and parish basis. The details include: 'Proprietors in 1641 by the Civil Survey'; 'Denominations of lands by the Downe Survey'; 'Number of acres distributed', 'persons to whom distributed'; and 'Rent per annum payable to His Majesty'.

The surviving volumes cover the following counties: Kilkenny, Waterford, Kerry, Kildare, Carlow, Wexford, Longford, Louth, Mayo, Tipperary, Monaghan, Armagh, Limerick, Westmeath, Clare, Roscommon, Galway, Cork, Down, Antrim, Leitrim, Sligo, Cavan, Fermanagh, King's and Queen's Counties, Wicklow, Donegal, Londonderry and Tyrone.

