

THE BIG HOUSE IN COUNTY LOUTH

STORY BOX

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Introduction:

As part of the **Explore Your Archive** campaign run by the Archives and Records Association (UK and Ireland) to raise awareness of archives and their value to society, Louth County Archives Service invites you to explore our Story Box on the theme of 'The Big House in County Louth'. The content of this Story Box is made up from a selection of archives taken from a number of different collections of estate records and family papers held in Louth County Archives. Items are arranged into groups according to record type: photographs; deeds and legal documents; maps, plans and drawings; account books and rentals; correspondence; other records; and sale catalogues. We hope you enjoy exploring the contents and discovering the places, people and stories that lie within.

For a list of descriptions for items contained within the Story Box, see page 3.

Background: the landed estate system

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the landed estate system was a central feature of life as the majority of the population in Ireland lived on large estates belonging to families who were often Anglo-Irish or English. The estates resulted from the grants of lands confiscated by the British Crown in the 17th century and sizes ranged from several hundred acres to thousands of acres spread over a county or province. On the landed estate there existed a system of letting and sub-letting from the landlord to the large farmer to the cottier and small tenant. At a local level therefore, the landed estate was fundamental to the rural economy being a source of employment.

The 'Big House' was the residence of landlord families and many of these were built in the approximate period 1720 – 1840. Many consisted of a large three storey mansion with a garden and a demesne (household farm). Staff were employed such as housemaids, footmen or labourers. Landlords were involved with the management of the estate and took part in sporting and social activities.

The administration of the estates produced a large quantity of records from maps and drawings to correspondence with middlemen, land agents, solicitors and tenants to accounts and rentals with the latter being a useful source of genealogical information (however, under-tenants and cottiers are rarely included). Changes in land ownership and local developments can be traced using records from estate collections. Such collections are an important source of information for local history.

Many of the estates in Ireland ran into financial difficulties by the mid-19th century. This was mainly due to the Great Famine and the build up of debt and rent arrears as sale and rental prices dropped, estate charges and annuities on the land to pay mortgages or 'sums' to family members contracted by marriage settlements or wills, high living costs and the cost associated with the upkeep and maintenance of buildings and land on the estate. Debts on estates soon exceeded earnings. The Encumbered Estates Acts in 1848-1849 allowed Court Commissioners to dispose of estates now bankrupt, upon application from the owner or an encumbrancer (someone with a claim on it). The Court was permitted to sell holdings where debt had risen above fifty percent of the annual income. Once all outstanding debts were fulfilled, the purchaser received full legal title to the property. In 1858, the court was succeeded by the Landed Estates Court, which was later replaced by the Land Commission in 1881.

As the nineteenth century progressed, there were economic depressions. Agitation and agrarian unrest became rife. The introduction of the Land Acts between 1881 and 1925 saw tenants gain more rights and fairer rents. Land ownership gradually transferred from the landlords to the tenants with tenants being able to purchase the land. By 1914, about 80% of tenants had purchased their holdings and landlords turned towards investing in stocks and shares for a new source of revenue. However, many had by now left the country having sold their estates.

For further research and reading see the section on 'Other Sources'.

Descriptions for Items contained within the Story Box:

Photographs

1. Four images of Ravensdale Park House. Ravensdale Park was, until 1898, the seat of the Barons and Viscounts Clermont (the Fortescue family). The estate was inherited by the 4th Viscount De Vesci before being sold in 1903 to the Right Honourable Sir Daniel Dixon, DL. Reference PP00067/
 - [Ravensdale House Exterior](#)
 - [Dining Room and Ballroom](#)
 - [Landing and Lounge Hall](#)
 - [Library](#)
2. Filgates of Lisrenny Papers (Lisrenny estate Ardee). Photograph of 'Mrs Filgate' of Lisrenny, Ardee, 19th century, [reference PP00001/004/012/001](#).
3. Six photographs of the Roden estate, Dundalk which was sold to James Hamilton of Tollymore, County Down in 1692 (later earls of Clanbrassil one of whom married Jocelyn, earl of Roden), c/o Old Dundalk Society Photographic Collection, reference P/256:
 - [Dundalk House](#), Church Street, Dundalk with St Nicholas's church in the background, late 19th century
 - [A second photograph](#) of Dundalk House, Church Street, Dundalk, mid-19th century
 - Playing polo in the [Polo Field in the Demesne](#), Dundalk, part of the Roden estate
 - [The China Bridge](#) in the Demesne, Dundalk with Demesne House in the background, part of the Roden estate. Original photo by Galbraith.
 - [The canal in the Demesne](#), Dundalk with Demesne House in the background, part of the Roden estate
 - [Portrait of Anne, the Countess of Roden](#) (1730 - 1802) who was married to Robert Jocelyn, the 1st earl of Roden (1731 – 1797)

Deeds and legal documents

1. Lease from the Roden Collection: Roden Place between earl of Clanbrassil and George Murphy, carpenter. The house he now lives in, being formerly one of the factory houses, known by the name of the Red Houses, as also the house next adjoining the same to the east therefrom, being also one of the said Red Houses, with 30 feet of ground to the east of said houses, formerly occupied by John Malone, bounded on the east by the said John Malone's house and garden, and west by one of the said Red Houses, on the south by the Dutchman's pond, and on the north by the street. Term, lives of George Murphy, the lessee, King George III, Prince Edward duke of York. Yearly rent, £9 15s. sterling, together with 12d. for every pound for receiver's fees, and two days work of man, horse and car. Witnesses, Isaac Read, Thomas Read. 23 Aug 1762 ref PP00069/001/001/019 – [full image](#); image of [part of lease](#).
2. Hatch papers (Ardee). Typescript copy of probate and will of John Hatch, The Castle, Ardee, county Louth, deceased on 27 October 1874. The estate and effects of the deceased were granted to Jeremiah Anthony Hatch, son of the deceased. 14 Dec 1874 [reference PP00016/0024](#)
3. Notice to quit issued to Alexander Cunningham of Pepperstown, county Louth informing him to quit part of the lands Pepperstown on 1st November 1842. Dated 27 Apr 1842 [reference PP00001/002/001/002](#)

Maps, plans and drawings

1. Filgates of Lisrenny Papers. Valuation book for the townlands of Lismanus, Mosstown North, Mosstown South and Puckstown. Valuations carried out by Robert Thompson, valuator. The

book contains coloured maps of the townlands, subdenominations and observations detailing the state of the land - for example arable, good roads or fences - size of lands (measured in acres, roods and perches), rate per statute acre and amount of land in pounds, shillings and pence. There is no date, however, it may have been recorded at the time of Griffith's Valuation (1850s) as it records 'there are no houses in this townland worth £5'. No date, reference [PP00001/001/004/004/003](#)

2. Caraher Papers. Two images from maps and surveys of meadows for Michael Caraher, Cardistown containing 30 acres, 1 rood and 16 perches. Surveyed and drawn by Loughlin Council Stormy Mount. Jul 1815 ref PP00012/018/007: image [one](#); image [two](#)
3. Hatch papers (Ardee). Map and survey of part of Ardee bog, the property of William Hatch. Surveyed By Matt Wainwright. 11.1 x 8.4 inches. Scale 10 Irish perches to an inch. May 1853 reference [PP00016/0030/004](#)
4. Fitzgerald of Fane Valley. Sketch map of ground floor plans of house with no scale. Sketch includes measurements for hall, library, dining room, drawing room, kitchen, dairy, butlers' pantry, butlers' bed, cooks pantry, scullery, and servants' hall. No date reference [PP00052/002/010](#)
5. Roden estate, Dundalk. (Outsize) Bernard Scalé map of Dundalk Demesne (1777), [reference P/310](#)

Account books and rentals

1. Filgates of Lisrenny Papers. Rental of the estate of William Filgate (1781-1875) esquire, for the half year ending 1 November 1842 and payments to 5 February 1843 for the following areas: Dromin, Knocklore, Arthurstown, Tattyboys, Pepperstown, Ardee, Ballinloughan, Little Ash, Harristown, Hoathstown, and Roestown in County Louth; and Drumboat, Keenoge, Miskish, Magoney, Kiltybegs, and Drumirril in County Monaghan. Includes names of townlands and tenants, arrears due, arrears received, half years rent due, rent received, rent and arrears in tenants hands, stamps for receipts, and poor rate. 01 Nov 1842 Reference [PP00001/002/003/001](#)
2. Roden Collection: accounts for the Dundalk Demesne farm for the year ended 31 December 1886, reference [PP00069/002/001/023](#)
3. Workmen's accounts, Heynestown (Clermont/Fortescue estate). The accounts feature two workers, John Hodgers and Thomas Hodgers. The days worked, the total number of days worked, wages per day in shilling and halfpenny, the total value of the weeks work in pounds, shilling and halfpenny, cash paid onto the account that week and any observations made about the workers. Each page also includes information in a header including the name of the writer of the accounts and the recipient. The observations note that work took place in both Dundalk and Heynestown. 23 Jul 1864 – 22 Oct 1866 reference [PP00017](#)
4. Maclvor of Dunmahon, Dundalk. Page from rental of the estate of Reverend James Maclvor in Dunmahon. Includes the following information: denominations, tenants names, rent and arrears due, amount received and details of account with J Randal Donaldson, Dundalk to 21 March 1887. 01 Nov 1885 reference [PP00051/002](#)

Correspondence

1. Bellingham family papers. Letter addressed to Mrs (Monique) Bellingham at Bath, regarding the situation of the Castle Bellingham estate now that Alan Bellingham has died (d1821) and William (son of Alan and Monique), currently at the Cape of Good Hope, is the legal owner. William's rental income is examined. The writer offers various advice to Mrs Bellingham including 'I think you had better write to Stein or myself and state your wishes respecting

William.' The writer informs Mrs Bellingham of the agrarian unrest in Dublin and Louth writing 'I am truly sorry to tell you that Ireland is in a most disturbed state...' Signed with the initials JW (this is probably Captain John Woolsey (1772-1835) who became 1st Lieutenant in 1808 in the Castlebellingham Infantry (a Yeoman corps) and High Sheriff in 1826, and married Janet Jameson in 1812. He was the founder of the brewery in Castlebellingham which employed about 70 people). 09 Dec 1821 reference PP00224/001/001/002 page [one](#); page [two](#); page [three](#)

2. Bellingham family papers. Letter to Mrs (Monique) Bellingham, 13 Paragon Buildings, Clifton near Bristol, from John Follett esquire (or representative of), 14 Great Ormond Street, Queen's Square (London) containing a letter written by L Purcell, Cape Town, to Follett in response to enquiries he made on Mrs Bellingham's behalf regarding particulars of the death and effects of the late Mr Bellingham of the 6th Regiment (her son William), who died suddenly of a fever and was buried at Graham's Town (in Eastern Cape Province, South Africa). 12 Dec 1823; 10 Mar 1824 reference PP00224/001/001/004 page [one](#); page [two](#); page [three](#)
3. Louth Hall papers: letter from Joseph Carroll, Quay Street, Dundalk to Messrs Stewart and Kincaid, 7 Leinster Street, Dublin, regarding 'twenty five percent off the years rent due May 1879' and 'settlement made with the tenants on Captain Plunkett's estate' 1882 reference [PP00103/027](#)
4. Louth Hall papers: letter from Ann Carolan, Corballas, Ardee to Mr Kincaid regarding settlement of her account and seeking 'a favour for a few months more' 1882 reference [PP00103/028](#)
5. Hatch papers letter from Bryan Durnin, Edmonstown to William Hatch, Ardee Castle outlining his intentions with regard to lands in Annagh he is leasing from Hatch, 1850 reference [PP00016/0023](#)

Other records

1. Filgates of Lisrenny Papers. Two images from recipe book of Mrs Filgate [Sophia Juliana Penelope de Salis (1807-1886)] commenced at Windsor on the 18th September 1847 by her eldest son WD Filgate showing the recipes '[Stephenstown Punch](#)' and '[Knockabbey Gingerbread](#)'. The book also includes cures such as 'cure for jaundice', sea sickness, or 'recipe for warts'. 18 Sep 1847 reference PP00001/004/001/007
2. Filgates of Lisrenny Papers. Printed Christmas card signed by Arthur Macan reading 'Manie a happy Christmas, unbroken friendship, greate accumulation offe cheerfulle recollections, affection on earth and heaven at last for alle offe us'. 19th century reference [PP00001/004/002/003](#)
3. Louth papers. Two pages from Lord Louth's diary, 24 – 25 Dec 1900. Reference PP00072/003: page [one](#); page [two](#)
4. Louth Hall estate papers. Document entitled 'List of silver plated articles taken up from Thomas McDonnell'. Includes list of various items of silver. 18 Oct 1883 reference [PP00103/033](#)

Sale catalogues

1. Roden estate, Dundalk. Page from auction book of properties to be sold from the earl of Roden estates, under the auspices of the High Court of Ireland, Chancery Division – Land Judges, to be held on 7 March 1879 before Judge Flanagan at the Four Courts in Dublin. 87 separate lots consisting of 'various parcels of land, arable and pasture, lying contiguous to the Town of Dundalk on either side of the river, and of valuable and well-secured fee-farm rents issuing out

of houses and blocks of house property situate in some of the best localities in the Town of Dundalk'. 07 Mar 1879 reference [PP00069/002/001/013](#)

2. Fitzgerald of Fane Valley. Notice to tenants from the Landed Estates Court in the matter of the estate of John Byrne concerning Allardstown west division containing 199 acres and 30 perches, part of Terpot, Waterstown, and Allardstown east division. Includes tenants name, yearly rent, quantity statute measure and details of lease of tenants concerned 1864 reference PP00052/002/004 page [one](#); page [two](#)
3. Glyde Court auction book, 1982 [reference P/39](#)
4. Auction catalogue for the Castle at Castlebellingham, 1957, [reference P/372 no 3](#)

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Further Sources:

- The Landowners of County Louth online exhibition: <http://www.louthnewryarchives.ie/online-exhibitions/landowners-county-louth/index.shtml>
- Louth County Archives online catalogue: www.louthcoco.ie
- National Archives of Ireland: <http://www.nationalarchives.ie/>
- Manuscript Collection Lists online at National Library of Ireland: <http://www.nli.ie/en/ManuscriptListResult.aspx>
 - Bellew
 - Bellingham
 - De Vesci
 - Louth
 - O'Byrne
- Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, see introductions to significant privately deposited archives:
http://www.prONI.gov.uk/index/research_and_records_held/introductions_to_significant_privately_deposited_archives.htm
 - Anglesey
 - Clermont/Fortescue
 - Foster
 - Foster/Massereene
 - Tipping
- Irish Archives Resource: <http://www.iar.ie/>
- The Landed Estates Court 'Rentals' 1850 – 1885 are in the National Archives and are searchable by description at www.findmypast.ie.
- Griffith's Valuation, online at <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/>