

## Ireland and the State Papers, 1603–1714

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The State Papers are an essential resource for writing the history of Ireland in the period 1603–1714. The majority of relevant material is included in SP 63, 65, 66 and 67, though further documents can be found in other collections as well. While that history may be perceived by some as the story of a colonial or occupying power only, the truth is otherwise. The State Papers provide insight into a wide range of matters of Irish concern; be they that of the New English or Scottish in Ireland, the Old English descendants of the Normans, or the Gaelic Irish.

The first decades of the seventeenth century were a formative time in Irish history. The Tudor conquest was finally completed in 1603 with the conclusion of the Nine Years War on 30 March, when terms were agreed between Hugh O'Neill, earl of Tyrone, and the Irish lord deputy, Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy. The treaty was considered lenient towards Tyrone because Mountjoy was keen to expedite it before word of Queen Elizabeth's death and the succession of James I became known, as such news might have induced Tyrone to continue the war in hopes of a settlement weighted even more heavily in his favour. The 'humble submission of the earl of Tyrone, before the Lord Deputy and Council at Dublin' on 8 April 1603 detailed that agreement, including his restoration to the 'title of earl of Tyrone, and all the lands that he enjoyed before by virtue of his Letters Patent, save only that country possessed by Henry Oge O'Neill, and the Fews possessed by Turlough Mac Henry'.<sup>[1]</sup>

The end of the war marked the beginning of an even greater challenge: the practical extension of English government throughout the country. Such an undertaking was to be attempted in a variety of ways. From the outset, it was deemed essential that the chief governor, or his deputy, should be resident in Ireland, 'lest the country (yet unsettled) should conceive (as usually they do) that he will return no more thither, and thereupon break out into new disorders'.<sup>[2]</sup> Religious conformity was also seen as crucial, especially in light of the belief among Old English Catholics that the new king was sympathetic towards Roman Catholicism. To counter such views, James I issued a proclamation on 4 July 1605 for enforcing religious uniformity.<sup>[3]</sup> Yet the Protestant Church was not without its problems either. The difference between the theory and reality of the Protestant Reformation in Ireland was at times starkly revealed through particular incidents, such as the conflict in 1622 between the archbishops of Dublin and Armagh over precedence at public events in Dublin. In a society where the majority of the population were not adherents of the established church, it was of little surprise that James I felt it necessary to become directly involved in resolving a damaging public dispute among an ecclesiastical hierarchy whose attentions were meant to be directed toward more edifying activities, such as saving the souls of the misguided majority.<sup>[4]</sup>

The endeavours to extend English rule also resulted in the momentous plantation of Ulster,<sup>[5]</sup> an event facilitated by the flight of the Ulster Earls in 1607. In the lead up to the departure of Tyrone and others, the secretary of state, Sir Geoffrey Fenton, had reported the growing rumours of plots being hatched against the crown by leading members of the Gaelic Irish and Old English communities. However, once they had departed, Fenton found himself at odds with his own superior, the lord deputy, Sir Arthur Chichester, over the policy to be pursued in light of the opportunity created in the absence of the leading Gaelic nobles from Ulster. Fenton advocated a much more extensive plantation and, although he died in 1608 before it began to be implemented, the government policy that was eventually pursued bore a close resemblance to that which he had proposed.<sup>[6]</sup>

Extending English rule also meant clarification of the constitutional framework for government, in particular the adherence to the dictates of the 1494/5 statute, Poyning's Law. The Irish parliament was an irregular event, having sat only once during James I's reign, in 1613–15. In accordance with article 34 of the 51 'Instructions and Graces' agreed in May 1628 between the government of Charles I and leading Protestant and Catholic nobility and gentry in Ireland, a new parliament was to be summoned on 3 November of that year.<sup>[7]</sup>(Manuscript / Calendar) However, it was postponed indefinitely on 20 October 1628 because of the Irish executive's failure to adhere to the dictates of Poyning's Law. The English and Irish governments were therefore able to

avoid the enactment of legislation based upon the 'Graces' and, in time, to refute any of those articles that hindered the more unpalatable aspects of government policy, especially in relation to land confiscation and plantation.[8]

A dominant theme throughout the reign of Charles I was the need for money. In the 1630s the desire to increase the King's revenue served as a prime motivation for the actions of the chief governor, Thomas Wentworth, although he also tried to increase the size of the army, impose the administration of justice in accordance with English law, and improve the state of the 'ill used' Protestant Church.[9](Manuscript / Calendar) Parliament was convened in 1634-5 primarily for the purposes of financial supply, although most MPs were more concerned with securing legislative confirmation of the 'Graces'. Wentworth however had other plans, and by interpreting Poyning's Law in a manner that denied parliament the right to amend or initiate legislation, he ensured the sessions concluded 'without making any promises which will hamper the king'.[10]

Another parliament was convened under Wentworth in March 1640 in order to finance the raising of an army to assist Charles I against the Scottish covenanters. The preamble of the Irish Subsidies Act was used to present a propagandist message in support of Charles I and Wentworth, now earl of Strafford, though as events worsened in England and Strafford departed Ireland, the Irish parliament became emboldened against their chief governor, resulting in, amongst other actions, a petition of remonstrance in November 1640[11] and a protest in early 1641 against the preamble to the Subsidies Act.[12]

The outbreak of rebellion in Ireland in October 1641 marked the commencement of two decades of violence and turmoil. In March 1642, the Catholic synod of Kells advocated the formation of a council for the enforcement of law and order, while in May a national ecclesiastical congregation met in Kilkenny to discuss the various options for establishing a civil government. A series of meetings of leading figures involved in the rebellion took place that summer and autumn resulting in the formation of the Confederation of Kilkenny, which acted as a Catholic government in Ireland thereafter.[13] Having experienced significant victories such as that at Benburb in 1646,[14] the tide turned against the Confederation after the arrival of Oliver Cromwell in 1649. The English Council of State hoped that 'the terror' of the infamous massacre carried out under Cromwell's orders at Drogheda would 'much facilitate the rest of your work'.[15] However, it took until 1653 before Parliamentary forces finally subdued Ireland. The ensuing land confiscation was the most substantial yet undertaken in Ireland, though the sheer scale of the endeavour meant it remained unfinished by the time of the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660.[16]

The newly restored Charles II was both conciliatory and vague in his November 1660 'Declaration for the Settlement of his kingdom of Ireland and satisfaction of the several interests of adventurers, soldiers, and other his subjects there'.[17] There were many, both Catholic and Protestant, who could legitimately expect favour from the king, but it was Catholics who were the most dissatisfied with the final outcome of the settlement.[18](Manuscript / Calendar) and (Manuscript / Calendar) For the government, the financial settlement was satisfactory, because the Irish parliament agreed to vote substantial public revenue to the crown in perpetuity which enabled the government to function without recourse to parliament again for several decades.[19] The comprehensive farming of revenue collection and management to private syndicates however led to serious corruption within the financial administration.[20] Ultimately, the underlying and unresolved tension between Protestant and Catholic remained,[21] and towards the end of Charles II's reign, as the succession of his Catholic brother, James, duke of York, became more of a probability, that tension erupted in the form of the Popish Plot of 1678.[22] In 1685, James succeeded to the throne and Protestant fears of a Catholic revolution started to become a reality.

In the early days of his reign James II acted with sufficient moderation to assuage the concerns of many Protestants, as demonstrated by the appointment of his own brother-in-law, the staunch Anglican and Englishman, Henry Hyde, earl of Clarendon, as lord lieutenant. However, it was not long before Clarendon began to express concern at James' true intentions, particularly in respect of the powers given to the leading Old English Catholic, Richard Talbot, earl of Tyrconnell, which enabled the latter to implement a policy for the Catholicisation of the army and civil government.[23] By January 1687 Clarendon had been removed and Tyrconnell made chief governor, thereby accelerating the policy of Catholicisation.[24]

While the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 brought James' reign in England to an end, in Ireland it led to a country-wide war which commenced in early 1689 and concluded with the negotiated surrender of James' supporters to the Protestant government of William of Orange at Limerick in October 1691. Despite being on the victorious side, Irish Protestants still felt the need to introduce significant changes within Irish society. A process of political conflict and negotiated compromise resulted in the advent of regular parliamentary sessions and the introduction of English-style party-politics,[25] while at a religious, social and economic level a body of legislation was introduced which imposed a vast array of penalties upon the Catholic majority.

In the last years of Queen Anne's reign, with the Tory party in the ascendant in Ireland and the lord chancellor, Sir Constantine Phipps, to the forefront of the attacks on Whig politicians, parliament was convened in November 1713. Surprisingly, it had a small Whig majority, which resulted in an onslaught against Phipps and an early prorogation at the beginning of 1714. The parliament was dissolved without further sittings following the death of Queen Anne in August and the peaceful accession of the House of Hanover to the thrones of England, Scotland, and Ireland which marked the beginning of a new era in Irish history.[26]

## Citation

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## Further Reading

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## Notes

[1] The National Archives, SP 63/215, ff. 40–1, 47–8

[2] Petition, n.d. [c. April 1603] (SP 63/215, ff. 34–5)

[3] Proclamation by James I, 1605 (SP 63/217, ff. 127–8)

[4] The King's orders and instructions to the Lord Deputy, 12 July 1622, concerning the Lord Primate and the Archbishop of Dublin (SP 63/236, ff. 188–9)

[5] Proclamation by the Lord Deputy and Commissioners. Regarding the [chief provisions of the] Plantation of the escheated lands in Ulster, 20 Aug. 1610, in *The Calendar of State Papers Ireland, 1608–1610* (London, 1874), no. 852, p. 490 (original source: Carew Papers, vol. 630, p. 73)

- [6] Sir Geoffrey Fenton, Dublin, to Robert Cecil, earl of Salisbury, Secretary of State, England, 9 Sept. 1607 (SP 63/222, ff. 141-2).
- [7] Certain humble requests on behalf of the subjects of Ireland and the 'Apostills' of the lords committees appointed to investigate and report on them, Whitehall, 24 May 1628, in *The Calendar of State Papers Ireland, 1625-1632* (London, 1900), no. 1007, pp 330-8 (original source: SP 63/246, f. 149).
- [8] The Lord Deputy and Privy Council, Dublin Castle, to the English Privy Council, 8 Sept. 1628 (SP 63/247, f. 128); Sir William Jones, Sir Francis Annesley, Sir Henry Holcroft, Richard Hadsor, Serjeants Inn, Fleet Street, London, to the English Privy Council, 9 Sept. 1628. Endorsed: Irish Com. certificate touching a parliament in Ireland (SP 63/247, ff. 141, 143).
- [9] Report by the Lord Deputy on the State of Ireland, with suggestions, Hampton Court, 21 June 1636, in *The Calendar of State Papers Ireland, 1633-1647* (London, 1901), pp 131-4 (original source: SP 63/255, ff. 343-46, formerly ff. 130-2).
- [10] Lord Deputy [end. 'Wentworth'] to Sir Thomas Rowe, 12 March 1635, in *The Calendar of State Papers Ireland, 1633-1647* (London, 1901), p. 100 (original source: SP 63/255, f. 54 (f.19)).
- [11] Sir George Radcliffe's answer to the Remonstrances of the Committee of the Irish House of Commons, c. 9 Jan. 1641, in *The Calendar of State Papers Ireland, 1633-1647* (London, 1901) pp 252-6 (original source: SP 63/258, f.132 (f. 62)).
- [12] Protest of the Irish House of Commons against the preamble to the Irish Act of Subsidy, 'received' 9 March 1641, in *The Calendar of State Papers Ireland, 1633-1647* (London, 1901), pp. 265-6 (original source: SP 63/258, f.203 (f. 73)).
- [13] Acts, Orders, and Constitutions made and established by the Lords and Gentry of the Confederate Catholics within the Kingdom, assembled together at the City of Kilkenny, 7 June-13 July 1642, in *The Calendar of State Papers Ireland, 1633-1647* (London, 1901), pp. 362-5 (original source: Conway Papers, SP 63/260, f. 67).
- [14] Further Orders of the Committee of both Houses for Irish Affairs, [Westminster], 7 July 1646, in *The Calendar of State Papers Ireland, 1633-1647* (London, 1901), pp. 471-2 (original source: SP 63/262, f. 162 (f. 30), pp 101-3).
- [15] The Council of State to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 3 Oct. 1649, in *The Calendar of State Papers Ireland, 1647-1660* (London, 1903), p. 792 (original source: SP Interregnum I. 94, p. 467).
- [16] Draft of the Agreement ad directions and Instructions made, given and concluded by us, the Adventurers for Rebels' Lands in Ireland, whose names are underwritten, this ----- day of 1655, upon which all our agents, &c., are to proceed for settling our lands, in *The Calendar of State Papers Ireland, 1647-1660* (London, 1903), pp. 592-3 (original source: SP 63/286, f. 131 (f. 81)).
- [17] Printed copy of His Majesty's Gracious Declaration, 30 Nov. 1660, in *The Calendar of State Papers Ireland, 1660-1662* (London, 1905), p. 104 (original source: SP 63/304, f. 282).
- [18] Memorandum criticising the Restoration Settlement in Ireland, c. 1667, in *The Calendar of State Papers Ireland, 1666-1669* (London, 1908), pp. 543-59 (original source: SP 63/323, f. 382 (f. 195)); Print of the Faithful Protestation and Humble Remonstrance of the Roman Catholic Nobility and Gentry of Ireland to the King, 'about April' 1666, in *The Calendar of State Papers Ireland, 1669-1670*, with addenda, 1625-1670, (London, 1910), pp 560-3 (original source: SP 63/346, f. 192 (f. 131)).
- [19] The Lords Justices and Council, Council Chamber in Dublin, to Secretary Nicholas, 13 Aug. 1661; Instructions to the Marquis of Ormond as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 14 June 1662, in *The Calendar of State Papers Ireland, 1660-1662* (London, 1905), pp 394-6, 555-9 (original sources: SP 63/307, f. 22 (f. 179); 63/310, f. 50; SP Dom. Entry Book IV, pp. 52-61).

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[20] The Lord Lieutenant and Council to Secretary Bennet, 11 Nov. 1663; Entry of the King to the solicitor General for Sir Peter Pett and others, 19 July 1665, in *The Calendar of State Papers Ireland, 1663-1665* (London, 1907), pp 283-6, 606-7 (original sources: SP 63/315, f. 33 (f. 18); SP Dom. Entry Book XXII, pp 229-30); Notes by Williamson about Ireland. The setting of the farm, Sept. 1675, in *The Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1675-1676* (London, 1907), pp. 480-2 (original source: SP 63/335, f. 208).

[21] Proclamation by the Lord Lieutenant for disarming Catholics, 8 Nov. 1673; The Lord Lieutenant and Council, Proclamation, 27 April 1674, in *The Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1673-1675* (London, 1904), pp. 12, 231 (original sources: SP 63/309, f. 190; SP 63/309, f.195 (f.383)).

[22] Notes by Williamson, 28 Sept. 1678, in *The Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1678* (London, 1913), pp. 426-8 (original source: SP 63/406, f. 214 (f. 182)).

[23] Henry Hyde, earl of Clarendon, Dublin Castle, to the Lord President of the Council, Robert Spencer, earl of Sunderland, 31 Aug. 1686 (SP 63/351, f. 281 (ff. 317-18)).

[24] Instructions to Richard, Earl of Tyrconnell, Lord Deputy of Ireland, 10 Jan. 1687; Commissions which the Earl of Tyrconnell took over with him, [Jan.] 1687, in *The Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1686-1687* (London, 1964), nos. 1335-6, pp. 339-40 (original source: SP 63/340, f. 95v (pp 190-208)).

[25] Henry, Baron Capell, to William III, 27 July [1694] (SP Dom. Kings William's Chest, 8/14. no. 29, f. 95; *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1693* (London) p. 237 [This letter is calendared under the wrong year]); English Privy Council Minutes, 11 July 1695 (PC 2/76, p. 160); [Edward Southwell] to [Secretary Hedges], 1 March 1705 (SP 63/365, ff. 97-9).

[26] Sir John Stanley, Dublin Castle, to Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke, Secretary of State, England, 25 Nov. 1713 (SP 63/369, ff. 106-8).