

**Leabharlann Náisiúnta na hÉireann  
National Library of Ireland**

**Collection List No. 115**

**THOMAS CONOLLY PAPERS**

**(MSS: 41,341 /1-10)**

(Accession No.: 5493 (part of))

Letters and papers relating to the estate, business, political and family concerns of  
Thomas Conolly (1738-1803) of Castletown, Co. Kildare, 1760-1822

*Compiled by Dr A.P.W. Malcomson*

**MS 41,341 /1**

1760-1794

Letters to Thomas Conolly from the Rev. Richard Woodward, successively Dean of Clogher and Bishop of Cloyne, writing from Bristol, Clogher and Cloyne, together with some other correspondence of Conolly about promotion in the Church for Woodward.

Many of Woodward's own letters are about his promotion but at least one, written from Cloyne, 5 March 1794, relates to Conolly's financial affairs. '... I perfectly concur in opinion with you that it is essential to the happiness of your life to give up the (vain) pursuit of Lord Strafford's [Conolly's maternal uncle] fortune and to render your own, which is a noble one, more easily manageable by selling a part to pay off debt ... . Take the instance of Newtown Limavady. Lord Caledon's £60,000 applied to pay off 6 per cent creditors would have taken off a burthen of £3,600 per annum, of which you receive only £2,200. The wood stands and produces nothing; fines occur but now and then. It is certainly vexatious to sell for £60,000 what is (or rather was) worth £70,000. But we must all yield to [the] times, and to you who have no children to scheme for, a year's comfort is a considerable object. If I were in your place, I would undoubtedly sell at the price which I could get, especially as in your estimation (and indeed in mine, as you have no son), the borough is of no value. ...'

**MS 41,341 /2**

1763-9

Letters to Thomas Conolly from miscellaneous correspondents on miscellaneous topics.

On 15 August 1765, Nathaniel Clements writes from Dublin: 'I have the favour of your letter. I really am pleased that you think of parting with your Roscommon and Westmeath estates, as they never can rise, and [I] am persuaded they will sell very well. Anything you have occasion for me to do in regard to my consent to transfer the securities and debts that affect them to other part[s] of your estate, I am very ready and willing to do it, and you may depend upon my giving all the assistance in my power to have the bill carried through the House of Commons here. ... I was the other day at Castletown. You are making it an exceeding good house. Bob is much obliged to you for your kind remembrance of him. He has retired to Killadoon and has been there ever since he was married.' On 23 October 1769, the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Townshend, writes from Dublin Castle promising to do his best to promote Mr Staples and to obtain a deanery for [Richard] Marlay.

**MS 41,341 /3**

1765

Letters to Thomas Conolly from Michael Clarke, his head agent and man of business, mainly about the letting of Leixlip Castle.

Present in the folder are modern transcripts of these letters by the late Mrs Lena Boylan. She notes that Clarke had been appointed in 1754 under the late William Conolly's will (from which she quotes) to '... state and audit all accounts relating to my estates real or personal and that he shall from time to time and as often as he is requested by my other executors, guardians of my children, give an account of all matters and things relating to all or any of the said affairs under his care and management and shall from time to time be accountable to my son and other executors and guardians for such sum or

sums of money as he shall receive out of my real and personal estate'; in consideration of which £200 was to be paid to Clarke half yearly.

The letters are as follows:

... MS 41,341 /3

1 Jan. 1765

Clarke to Thomas Conolly, then in England.

He is forwarding £500 to Lady Anne [Conolly, née Wentworth, daughter of the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl; of Strafford; Conolly's mother] as requested. He has borrowed £1,300 and will pay several drafts that are due with the balance. '... As to Leixlip not one word about it since I wrote last; they have given possession of the land and Coane tells me your cattle are on it.' [Coane was Conolly's kinsman and agent, and lived in Kildrough House, Celbridge.] The letter also mentions Mr Fraigneau, [Conolly's former tutor and companion on the Grand Tour].

19 Jan. 1765

Clarke to Conolly.

'... Leixlip was advertised the Tuesday after you went away and to my great surprise nobody has bid for it since, or taken any notice about it except Sir Harry Cavendish, who I had some discourse with today, and by what I can find he is deterred from bidding anything for it, as he says your demand is so very large and he would not offer any rent that might have the appearance of undervaluing anything belonging to you, and as for Mr Trevor I am well assured that he has not the least thoughts of taking it on any terms. Sir Harry told me that he had spoke to Will Clements about it, and between you and me I make no doubt but he has undervalued the land and is in hopes of getting it for his brother [Robert Clements, later 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Leitrim] for much less than you offered it to him for, though you paid him a compliment about it. I begin to despair of getting it off our hands so soon as we had reason to expect, yet I would not recommend it to you to be too hasty in parting with it except Clements should close with you for what you first proposed, as his father [Nathaniel Clements] told me that he had wrote to him, and that if he had any thoughts of matrimony, he would consent to his taking it, and that he would enable him to keep it.'

30 Mar. 1765

Clarke to Conolly.

'I got your letter of the 14<sup>th</sup> two days ago about the things at Leixlip, and as I hear you intend being here before the Curragh races, you will then be best judge yourself of what things should be kept for your house use. As to what is out of doors, to be sure no body ought to buy them but you.'

4 May 1765

Clarke to Conolly.

'I am glad you have ordered *Bowers* [carpenter at Castletown] to be discharged, which Coane did yesterday; he is a good-for-nothing vain fellow. Mrs Stone and I have consented to Cooper Walker's valuing such things as are to be paid for in the house by you, and I hope we shall settle

it next week. Not a word of any bidding for Leixlip. I am afraid people are terrified at so great a rent. Yet I hope this summer will induce some of the great folks to offer something for it.'

1 June 1765

Clarke to Conolly.

'I hope in a few days I shall get the valuation of the fixtures, etc, at Leixlip which I am sorry to find there are no bidders for as yet. Mrs Stone (previous to your directions to have the flowers, shrubs, etc, bought for you) had made a present of five pots of the Magn'ola [sic – magnolia] to Lady Betty Ponsonby, but the Speaker [John Ponsonby, Lady Betty's husband], hearing that I had said Lady Louisa would be much disappointed in not getting them, sent for me and told me that she should have three of the pots, and that Lady Betty was determined to keep but two of them. The Speaker begged I would let you know this and that you would acquaint Lady Louisa with it.

Pray are we to see you here this summer. Though Castletown is not habitable, Leixlip is and may very soon be fitted up for you.'

6 July 1765

Clarke to Conolly.

'I wish with all my heart you may let Leixlip to some of those people you mention. I am sorry Lord Kildare has resigned. I fear he has done a hasty thing, but he knows his own business best.

Castletown by all accounts will take more time to fit it up for your reception than you imagine, but since the work is begun, the best way is to complete it and have done with the expense at once, and I hope when that is over we shall see ourselves gaining ground and no distresses presenting to our view which is now daily the case and for which I can't tell you how much I suffer, but no man will be more happy when I find your affairs mend, for I do solemnly declare, I have it as much at heart as if you were my own son to see you live in the world with the splendour that your fortune entitles you to.

I have in three covers sent to you the inventory of the furniture, etc, at Leixlip, and which Mrs Stone begged might be sent you, as I suppose she wants you to buy all the furniture as they are valued, but I think you will want nothing but the chimney pieces, locks, etc, and everything that is their property which might damage or deface the house by taking them away. All the fixtures and brewing utensils in the brew house will be necessary for you to keep.'

8 Aug. 1765

Clarke, Castletown, to Conolly.

'I must observe to you that what money I have directed to be paid to tradesmen that are now actually employed has been done in order to keep them going on with the work, which they declared they would leave if they had not some subsistence to pay their journeymen and maintain themselves.'

Original bundle of correspondence relating to Thomas Conolly's relations, personal and financial, with his mother and the Strafford family.

The folder includes a copy of a letter from Conolly, Dublin, 21 January 1766, to 'My dear Lord [Strafford]. I this moment received your very kind letter from London, and I think I can safely say that you do me but justice in thinking my mother and sisters may safely trust to my honour and integrity, as I can assure you nothing upon earth could ever prevail upon me to do anything that should injure any of them in the smallest degree, and even in regard to preferring Lady Louisa's interest to Lady Anne's, ... you will find by my answer to Lady Anne's queries [this] was by no means the case, but had been at first wrongly stated to Lady Anne. In regard to diminishing the load of my debts, I intend to do that in what degree I find most expedient, being entirely of your opinion that the less I can sell the better. But it is always right to put these affairs upon the clearest footing, and I am sure, if I had no debts at all, mine have been so perplexed with wills and settlements that it would have been worthwhile to get an act of parliament on purpose to make them intelligible. ...' He will not, however, allow this to interfere with his attendance in the House of Commons, if Lord Strafford wants him to go over.

On 19 January 1787, Conolly's mother, Lady Anne Conolly, writes to him from London: '... Since poor Lady Strafford died, my brother has often begun to talk of his affairs and has expressed the kindness of his intentions towards me, but I always put an end to the subject by saying (with truth) that I was glad my being so much older than him made it improbable I should feel so great a misfortune as that of losing so kind a friend and a brother I loved with so much affection. And as to what Mr B[yng] wanted you to propose, I declare from my heart I had rather live on a bare subsistence with a clear conscience than in the highest affluence with the thoughts of having wronged another of their lawful inheritance. I am very glad you are now well and am sorry 'tis necessary for you to attend the horrid House of Commons, as it don't agree with you, but there are duties that a man of property owes to his country and must go through. ...'

On 21 March 1793, she writes from London: '... As to your coming to England, that must depend on your affairs where you are, and there is nothing here that requires your immediate presence; and as to your note to me for £5,000, you are very welcome to let it remain a year longer ... . Mr Staples's is but a shabby excuse for his strange conduct to his son, and ... as William [Conolly Staples, the son] never has a farthing from him, *he* has nothing to do with that. He [W.C. Staples] is very well and is backwards and forwards between his ship and home. ... I ... abhor George Byng's public conduct, though I have forgiven his injuries to myself and let him use the furniture he so cruelly made me pay for. As the house in St James's Square is yours, I am glad you don't disapprove of his being in it in your absence. ...'

On 16 December 1793 she writes, also from London: '... I had spoke to Mr Pakenham and begged him to assist me, which he promised me to do, but he deceived me, and I shall never henceforward depend on his friendship. I am

glad of Mr Napier's appointment on this expedition that Lord Moira commands. It may put him in the way of doing something towards maintaining his very large family ... . I wish your letter to Lord Bristol in favour of his son may prove successful, but he is so uncertain a man, one can't flatter one's self much. ... You said when you came home the beginning of November you would order Mr Latouche to pay my jointure. I must entreat you to do so. With your large landed property in Ireland and what you have here, it can be no inconvenience to you to do this common act of justice ...'.

**MS 41,341 /5**

1778

General correspondence of Thomas Conolly for that year on political, financial and personal matters. Included are letters from his brother-in-law, General Sir William Howe, about the possibility of a parliamentary attack on Howe for his lack of success in North America. The Lord Lieutenant, Lord Buckinghamshire, writes on 14 June to 'My dear brother' urging him to attend the House of Commons and support the Roman Catholic Relief Bill. A letter from Edmund Burke, Beaconsfield, 27 August 1778, congratulates him 'most heartily on the success of the Irish toleration act'. There are also a number of letters about naval affairs, Co. Londonderry estate affairs (the correspondents in this instance being George Ash of Ashbrook and John Spotswood, Conolly's agent at Bellaghy) and, as usual with Conolly, horses and hounds.

One of Sir William Howe's letters, dated 12 July 1778 and written from Marble Hill [Twickenham], includes the following: '... I am truly yours either in prosperity or adversity ... . Your attention to me, as mentioned to me by Lady Viscountess Howe, "not to throw myself upon any *party* for my justification against the attacks of Lord George", is a mark of the sincerity of your friendship and of your opinion that I am not in need of any additional strength to the *facts* that I shall produce in the House of Commons when the time comes. I am in an odd state here - most graciously received by the K[ing] and still censured in the Ministerial paper or Morning Post. By your Lord Lieutenant's [Lord Buckinghamshire] goodness we are most comfortably situated at this place, but ready to quit it on the first intimation of her Ladyship's return from Ireland. How goes horses and hounds? I hope with the same success as at Almack's, from whence I hear you waddled off (for it was as much as you could do to walk under the weight) with £8,000, and I hope never to return where you may be subject to the frowns of Madam Fortune, who was so propitious last winter. I find Fanny in charming health, and as partial to the old gentleman [himself] as she was in her younger days. ...'

Present in the bundle is a précis by Mrs Boylan of the contents of the letters.

**MS 41,341 /6**

1779

The same, also with a précis by Mrs Boylan. In a rough copy of a letter to Buckinghamshire dated 17 October 1779, Conolly writes: '... I told you of my fixed determination to remain a freeman in parliament. The carrying on of the King's business, which is in truth the business of the kingdom, I never

wished to give any opposition to in any administration, much less in yours who have behaved so honourably by this country, as will be confessed by everyone. ...’ Several other letters relate to Volunteering and military preparations generally in Co. Londonderry [of which Conolly was Governor], and also the raising of (hitherto inadequate) subscriptions in Yorkshire for similar purposes of defence.

- MS 41,341 /7** 1781  
The same (including some correspondence about Conolly’s succession to the estate and borough of Newtown Limavady), and some letters praising the conduct of William Conolly Staples [as a midshipman] and commenting on the [trial and execution of Conolly’s brother-in-law, George Robert [Fitzgerald].
- MS 41,341 /8** 1782  
The same.
- MS 41,341 /9** 1784: 1795: N.D.  
Four miscellaneous letters and papers, including a letter of 22 May 1784 to Conolly from [?Edward] Garvey, a landscape painter, and a letter of 15 Nov. [1795?] from the Hon. Robert Stewart [soon to become Lord Castlereagh;’ husband of Conolly’s niece, Lady Emily Hobart], writing from London.
- MS 41,341 /10** N.D.: 1811: 1822  
Three letters and papers about Leixlip Castle, demesne and estate. The second is a valuation of the estate made for Thomas Conolly’s executors and trustees on 18 July 1811. This mentions that the castle and demesne are let in perpetuity to the Hon. George Cavendish at a rent of £400 per annum, plus a fine of £50 for each renewal, and that part of Stacumny is let to Sir Michael Cromie on the same tenure at £40 and £19. The sale value of the whole property, calculated at 20 years’ purchase of the rent and 4 years’ purchase of the renewal fines, amounts to £10,897.